

PREVALENCE OF MALTREATMENT AMONG CANADIAN NATIONAL TEAM ATHLETES



Definition of maltreatment

“all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence, and commercial, or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power” (World Health Organization, 2020).

Participants

- 758 current athletes and 237 athletes who retired in the past 10 years responded to the anonymous online survey (n = 995)
- 61.5% female, 38.4% male and 1% other
- Sports : 64 sports, including gymnastics, volleyball, athletics, swimming, rowing, rugby, hockey, and freestyle skiing, among others



Highlights



Neglect and psychological harm were most frequently reported, followed by sexual harm and physical harm.



Overall, a high proportion of athletes (75%) reportedly experienced at least one harmful behaviour in the sport context.



The findings indicate significant positive correlations between the various forms of harm, suggesting that an environment that is conducive to one form of harm is likely conducive to many forms of harm.

Findings

What is the prevalence of maltreatment?

- 68.8% reported at least one neglectful behaviour
- 60.2% reported at least one psychologically harmful behaviour
- 20.5% reported at least one sexually harmful behaviour
- 14.3% reported at least one physically harmful behaviour



When do experiences of harm occur?

The athletes reported significantly more experiences of each form of harm when they were on a national team compared to their prior athletic careers.

Retired athletes reported more experiences of neglect and physical maltreatment than current athletes.

Who experiences harm?

- Female athletes experienced significantly higher rates of all forms of harm than male athletes
- Athletes who identified as Indigenous experienced significantly lower rates of psychological harm than non-Indigenous athletes
- Athletes who identified as racialized experienced significantly higher rates of physical harm than nonracialized athletes
- LGBTQ2I+ identifying athletes experienced significantly more sexual harm than non-LGBTQ2I+ athletes



Who are the perpetrators of harm?

Coaches were the most common perpetrators of all harms except for sexual harm, which was most frequently perpetrated by peers.



Sport'Aide provides a support service to the various actors in the sports community, both at the elite and recreational levels.

Coaching Association of Canada Safe Sport Training available at <https://safesport.coach.ca>

Universal Code to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS)

UCCMS Document – [English](#)
UCCMS Document – [French](#)

Resources

The **Canadian Centre for Mental Health in Sport (CCMHS)** offers anonymous, confidential, independent services for people to share and validate their concerns, obtain guidance on required next steps, and get referrals to other resources for follow up.

1-888-83SPORT (77678)

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Acknowledgments

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