

RALLY REPORT INSIGHTS

Rallying for Girls' Body Confidence

Designing Sport with Girls in Mind



Sport has the power to transform lives. But for girls, many barriers stand in the way of them fully experiencing the benefits of sport.

One barrier is body confidence. During adolescence, body changes and menstruation, combined with social and cultural pressures can contribute to low body confidence in girls.^{1,2} As a result, many girls are pushed out of sport. Added factors like inadequate uniform options, menstruation-related stigma, and unsupportive coaching practices can impact whether girls keep playing.³

Designing sport environments that take girls' body confidence into consideration is one way we can build better, safer sport for all.

Body image impacts mental and emotional health, and influences overall wellbeing.

It includes the way people think about, feel, and see their bodies. For some people, feeling positive or confident about their bodies may be impossible. Body neutrality offers a powerful alternative by allowing individuals to focus more on what their bodies can do rather than how they look. This can reduce the pressure to maintain a positive body image.

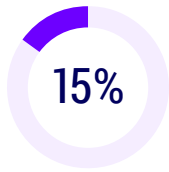
1 Canadian Women's Foundation. The facts about barriers girls face. Accessed July 14, 2023.

2 Plan International. Menstrual health. Accessed July 14, 2023.

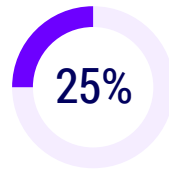
3 Canadian Women & Sport. The Rally Report (2022).

HOW BODY CONFIDENCE IMPACTS GIRLS' SPORT PARTICIPATION

In Rally Report 2022, we asked more than 4,500 Canadians about their experiences playing and leading in sport. We learned that:



of adolescent girls are dissatisfied with their appearance and body and this limits their sport participation.



of girls said menstruation limits their sport participation.



Racialized girls, girls with a disability, and those who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+

EXPERIENCE HIGHER LEVELS OF BODY CONFIDENCE CHALLENGES.

Among girls who use equipment for a disability (such as a wheelchair or prosthetic),

16% REPORT DISSATISFACTION WITH ITS APPEARANCE OR FUNCTION.



Despite these challenges, girls know the benefits of sport: **60% of girls told us that engaging in sport and physical activity helps them develop positive body image.**

THE ROLE OF COACHES AND ADULTS

Coaches and sport leaders play a critical role in helping girls and gender-diverse youth navigate body confidence challenges so they stay in sport, but there is work to be done as:



ONLY 50%

of coaches feel comfortable supporting adolescent girls with body-related challenges. Even fewer have received education on key topics such as promoting body confidence or understanding the effects of menstruation on participation and performance.



ONLY 10%

of girls feel comfortable approaching coaches or sport leaders to discuss body-related concerns. Girls feel that only 1 in 3 coaches are aware of how these concerns may affect their sport experience.

Parents and caring adults also need to be included in efforts to build body confidence. Although 60% of girls feel comfortable approaching their parents/caregivers about body-related challenges, less than 40% of those adults feel ready for these conversations.

RALLYING FOR GIRLS' BODY CONFIDENCE: TAKING ACTION

We all have a role to play when it comes to creating better, safer sport that supports and promotes girls' body confidence on and off the field. We call on:

1 SPORT ORGANIZATIONS TO TRAIN COACHES AND ACTIVITY LEADERS in gender equity so they understand and can meet the unique needs of girls.

To support body confidence, this includes:

1. Helping coaches and activity leaders build knowledge of the body confidence barriers girls and gender-diverse participants face. Athletes Embodied is currently developing evidence-based resources for Canadian coaches and parents.
2. Training coaches and activity leaders on how to foster trusting environments where girls and gender-diverse participants have bodily autonomy, are empowered to wear uniforms they are comfortable in, and feel confident seeking support with body-related challenges.

2 SPORT ORGANIZATIONS TO TRAIN ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF on why and how to apply a gender equity lens to everyday decision-making.

To support body confidence, this includes:

1. Consulting girls and gender-diverse participants from diverse backgrounds when creating uniform policies and options.
2. Taking an intersectional approach to gender equity by asking whose perspectives are being considered when developing solutions and supports. For example, hijab-wearing athletes are often discouraged from participating in sport based on discriminatory policies.

3 BOARD MEMBERS to become gender equity champions.

To support body confidence, this includes:

1. Learning how gender equity and inclusion are essential elements for better, safer sport.
2. Supporting administrators to prioritize keeping participants in sport and physical activity over other outcomes with intentional efforts targeted toward girls and gender-diverse participants.

4 FUNDERS AND GOVERNMENT to provide long-term consistent investments in gender equity with clear progress targets.

To support body confidence, this includes:

1. Funding research and resources aimed at understanding and supporting body-related experiences of girls and gender-diverse youth in sport.
2. Investing in programs and initiatives that promote girls' participation in quality, safe sport and physical activity such as The Gender Equity Playbook, Same Game Challenge or the Gender Equity LENS e-Learning Module.

If we're going to be successful in building a better, safer sport system where sport lives up to its potential to foster body confidence, we must consult women and girls. It is our responsibility to ask better questions, listen intently, and value what they are telling us.

Canadian Women & Sport can support sport organizations and leaders to take action.

Visit www.womenandsport.ca to read the full Rally Report and learn more.