



Status of the High Performance Athlete in 2004

FINAL REPORT

Submitted to:

AthletesCAN
and
Sport Canada

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UNDER SEPARATE COVER:

APPENDIX A:	Athletes Questionnaires (English and French)
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the third study of high performance athletes in just over a decade. As was the case with the previous studies in 1992 and 1997, the primary goal was to gather information from various sport stakeholders in order to paint a current picture of high-performance athletes' social and economic characteristics.

The findings reported are based on evidence collected from multiple sources (athletes, coaches, high performance directors, and retired athletes), which increases the validity of the results. Where possible, comparisons have also been drawn between current results and previous findings. These results are also intended to be used as a basis of comparison for future measurements with the sample populations.

- A survey represents a snapshot in time. In some cases, results suggest the need for further investigation to uncover why certain results were reported. In the case of this study, some additional investigation may be needed in a few areas, where findings beg further questions.
- It is important to note the timing of the survey, which was conducted prior to the \$4,800 increase in stipends, that occurred in September 2004, and represented a \$400 per month increase in the financial support that athletes receive through the Athletes Assistance Programme. Results based on the funding, economic and financial status of athletes today may look very different with this increase in place; nonetheless, this affords a unique opportunity to examine the full impact of the stipend increase over a period of time (and suggests the need to re-examine some portions of this survey in future years.
- This third survey of high performance athletes builds on much of the data from the earlier studies. Areas of interest include: satisfaction levels; funding; training; employment; and athlete representation, as well as other areas.
- The two overriding themes drawn from the athlete survey are the degree of commitment and dedication that athletes have for their sport and the concern with the level of financial assistance and general recognition that they receive from government and others (corporate community, sport organizations and national team) for their participation in their sport.
- Athletes are very positive about their participation in sport, ranking it higher than family in terms of the importance that they attach to it in their lives. Sport is considered a way of life and athletes are motivated by the pursuit of excellence, their desire to win and the enjoyment that comes from the physical activity and self-development that it brings – generally, contributing to an enhanced quality of life.
- While satisfaction with the enjoyment, achievement and pace of their athletic career is very high, athletes are far less positive about the level of recognition and financial support that they receive, particularly the older and more elite athletes, who are the most critical. Yet, virtually all of today's carded athletes say that they would choose the same path again in the future, if they

had to do it over again. Coaches also share some of these same concerns. They are least satisfied with the proximity of adequate and affordable housing to training sites and the level of corporate support for athletes.

- Most athletes surveyed agree that full-time training is required in order to be the best that one can be in their sport. Athletes spend an average of 36 hours per week in training and the average period that an athlete is carded has been increasing, from 3.7 years in 1991-92 to 5.7 years in 2003-04.
- Half of the athletes who responded to the survey are students, although this was adjusted to three in ten in the final results to be better aligned with the incidence of students in the athlete population. Most student athletes are pursuing a university degree in a wide variety of fields of study, particularly the younger, developing athletes. Use of deferred tuition credits is of wide interest, with two in three athletes saying that they will likely exercise this option, particularly older and part-time athletes (who in contrast to the younger athletes are no longer in full-time studies). Compared to Canadians, carded athletes are generally more educated.
- One-third of athletes indicate the need to complete a university degree in order to pursue a post-sport career.
- Adequate financial support is considered to be the most important support for athletes, followed closely by the quality of the technical support. Two of the top four supports required by athletes make reference to the quality of technical supports for athletes (e.g. high quality coaching and international competitions).
- Six in ten athletes surveyed are employed in some capacity, although few are employed on a full-time basis, year round. About half of employed athletes work 40 weeks of the year or more. The largest proportion is working in recreation or sports, but many are working in other areas, such as social sciences and sales and services (with the latter being a popular area among the youngest athletes).
- Athletes earn in the range of \$25,000 to \$29,000 a year (which is moderately lower than the average Canadian personal income in 2000, which was \$31, 757, however, the athlete population is a significantly younger population than that of the average Canadian worker)¹, mostly from sport-related income, with government assistance forming the lion's share of it.² The average expenses incurred by athletes total about \$2,500 a month. About half of athletes have incurred debt somewhere along the way, with most owing money to their parents or to financial institutions. The average debt is \$8,302 among student athletes who are in debt. This is lower than the average debt reported by post-secondary students more generally³.

¹ 2001Census, Statistics Canada

² Data for the study were collected prior to the \$4,800 increase in stipends, which occurred late in 2004.

³ *Making Ends Meet: The 2001-2002 Student Financial Survey, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2002..*

- Although most athletes surveyed agree that the AAP has allowed them to further their athletic career, most also say that the amount of support is insufficient and that higher stipends should be a top priority for change. ⁴ Likewise, coaches also realize the benefits to AAP, although they are somewhat less complementary than athletes.
- Athlete representation has a low profile. Many athletes are unsure of whether they have brought an issue forward, and when they have, many are unsure about whether the issue was resolved or not, and how it turned out. Athletes are also divided in their satisfaction with the representation that they receive. Older and more senior athletes are more positive.
- Awareness of AthletesCAN is high, and athletes are moderately satisfied with how well represented they feel, and in terms of the impact that AthletesCAN has on issues that affect their lives.

⁴ Data for the study were collected prior to the \$4,800 increase in stipends, which occurred late in 2004.

1. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

This represents the third study of high performance athletes in just over a decade. As was the case with the previous studies in 1992 and 1997, the primary goal is to gather information from various sport stakeholders in order to paint a current picture of high-performance athletes' social and economic characteristics. The original 1992 study provided a comprehensive examination of athletes' social and economic characteristics and was a key contributor to the development of athlete support policies at Sport Canada. That report drew upon multiple lines of evidence collected from carded athletes, coaches and National Sport Organizations. In addition to updating the information collected in 1992, the 1997 report allowed Sport Canada to develop a business plan for sport in Canada. Specifically, it provided a close examination of the costs of sport and the needs of athletes with respect to assistance through Sport Canada's Athlete Assistance Program.

This third survey of high performance athletes builds on much of the data from the earlier studies. The specific areas of investigation include: socio-economic conditions and characteristics of the athletes; employment status and sources of income, including income support, scholarships, bursaries, and awards; participation in education and training activities and their level of educational and skill attainment; athletic training, activities and achievement; the integration of athletic activities with employment; views and use of athletic (training and medical) support systems; degree of athletes' motivation and commitment; and perceptions of the competitive sport environment and changes in it.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

This project involved four individual lines of evidence with four separate target populations: a survey of currently carded athletes, a survey of previously carded athletes, a survey of coaches and high-performance directors associated with National Sport Federations, and individual interviews with representatives of Canadian Sport Centres.

a) Online Survey of High Performance Athletes

The survey of athletes was designed as a self-administered, web-based survey. All 1,400 currently carded high-performance athletes were invited to participate in the survey and every attempt was made to reach as many of these athletes as possible. Specifically, an advanced communications plan was

put in place with the assistance of Athletes CAN and Sport Canada with the ultimate goal of raising awareness and interest in the survey. In addition to these communications, an initial covering letter was distributed by e-mail, prior to the official survey invitation, describing the survey and study and its purpose, while underlining to athletes the importance of participating in the survey. The actual survey invitation, sent by EKOS to all athletes on the contact list, included a brief description of the survey and assurance of confidentiality (in both official languages), along with a hypertext link to a survey website and the athlete's personal PIN. Multiple reminders were also issued by e-mail to athletes who had not yet completed the survey, encouraging them to participate in the study. The survey began in April of 2004, however, response was slow in coming in and continued over the course of the summer. Following the initial invitation and several reminders, a full paper copy package (including questionnaire, covering letter and postage paid return envelope) was mailed to each non-respondent. Little was done to boost response rates over the period of July and August (particularly given that it was an Olympic year). Additional e-mail reminders were issued in September, as well as reminder calls made to over 300 non-respondent athletes by telephone. The overall response rate for the survey, out of the athlete pool for whom there was full, valid contact information (roughly 1,116 currently carded athletes), is 46 per cent.

The survey instrument, as well as all communications components were designed by EKOS and approved by Sport Canada and Athletes CAN. The questionnaire focused on the areas of investigation already cited and included many of the questions the same as those asked of athletes in the 1992 and 1997 surveys of high-performance athletes in order to track changes in status and experiences. Prior to survey start-up, the instrument was tested over the Internet. Thirty-five athletes were invited to participate and 20 athletes responded. Changes were effected to the wording, programming and language as needed. The average time to complete the interview was 35 minutes.

The survey includes a total of 511 completed interviews. This sample size carries an associated margin of error of up to +/- 3.5 per cent, at a 95 per cent confidence interval (i.e., 19 times out of 20) for the overall sample, based on a finite population of carded athletes. While this rate of participation is lower than found in either the previous 1992 or 1997 surveys, the number of cases is similar. The lower participation rate in the current study is a caveat that must be kept in mind when considering the results.

b) Key Informant Interviews

The second line of evidence for this study included a series of individual telephone interviews with presidents and staff of all eight (8) Canadian Sport Centres (CSCs). All contact information on potential interviewees (name, organization, and telephone number) was provided by Sport Canada, who also helped determine which staff to interview. EKOS designed and translated the introductory letter and interview guide. Key informants were asked for their views on the state of Canadian athletes, what is working in terms of training and funding, and what needs to be done to improve their performance. The questions in the interviews were open-ended in nature. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to an hour.

c) Other Surveys

Surveys were also conducted with previously carded athletes, and coaches and high-performance directors. Each questionnaire was designed as a self-administered interview. In the case of previously carded athletes, the survey was administered over the Internet, using an invitation and reminders delivered by e-mail. In the case of coaches and directors, the questionnaire was mailed out, along with a covering letter and a pre-addressed, prepaid envelope. Once again, EKOS was responsible for developing, revising, translating and administering the survey instruments and invitation letters (including reminder letters), which were approved by Sport Canada and Athletes CAN. In the case of the coaches and directors survey, 75 responses were obtained, out of 200, for a response rate of 38 per cent. In the case of previously carded athletes, however, over 800 athletes were invited to participate and only 61 responses were obtained, in spite of several reminder attempts. As such, it is very difficult to assess whether the responses from previously carded athletes are in any way representative of the wider population. Partially because of the small sample sizes and, in the case of previously carded athletes, because of the poor response, the survey results for these two populations are presented as more findings that are more qualitative in nature and meant to suggest a broad trend, but not to be interpreted with any fine precision.

1.3 SURVEY SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

The following table provides details on the sample of athletes represented in this report. The comparison shows that the sample is well aligned with the population on most parameters. The sample is weighted to restore it to population proportions in terms of gender, type of sport, season of sport and educational status.

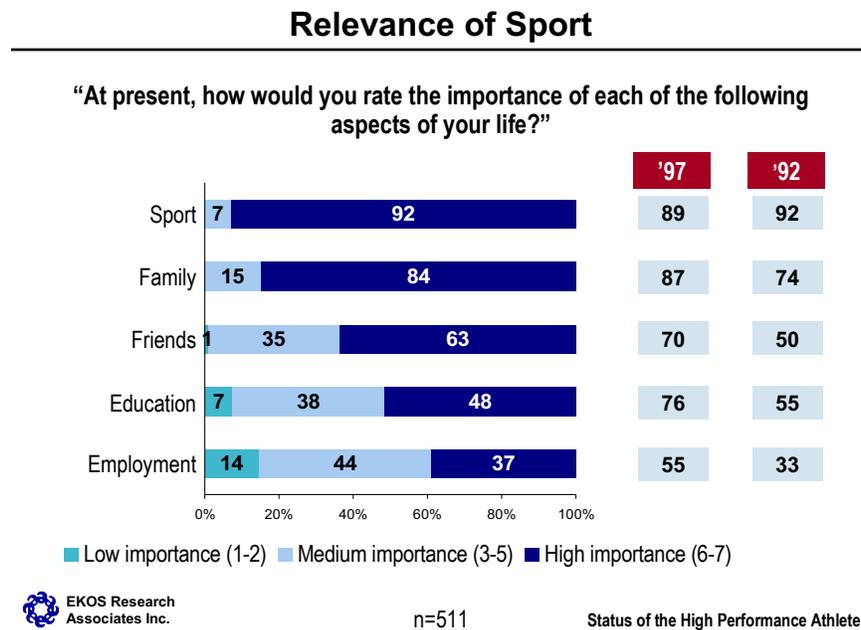
	2004 Sample Proportions	2004 Population Proportions
Total n=511	%	%
Age		
<24	39	42
24-26	25	22
27+	36	37
Gender		
Male	46	55
Female	54	45
Athlete Type		
Individual	67	64
Team Sport	33	36

	2004 Sample Proportions	2004 Population Proportions
Education		
< College	25	--
College/University	39	--
University	34	--
Language		
English	77	83
French	20	17
Carding Level		
International Card	30	27
National Card	41	44
Developing	29	29
Season		
Winter	27	21
Summer	73	79

2. OBJECTIVES, MOTIVATION AND COMMITMENT

2.1 RELEVANCE OF SPORT

High performance athletes continue to demonstrate a high degree of dedication to their athletic career. When asked to prioritize various aspects of their lives, nine in ten (92 per cent) identified sport as most important. Family is a close second (rated “highly important” by 84 per cent), followed by friends (63 per cent) and education (48 per cent). Four in ten - 37 per cent - say that work is moderately important, but it is clearly not something that they focus a great deal of attention on at this point in their athletic career. Interestingly, athletes were previously more inclined (in 1992 and 1997) to rank their education above their friends, however, this is no longer the case.



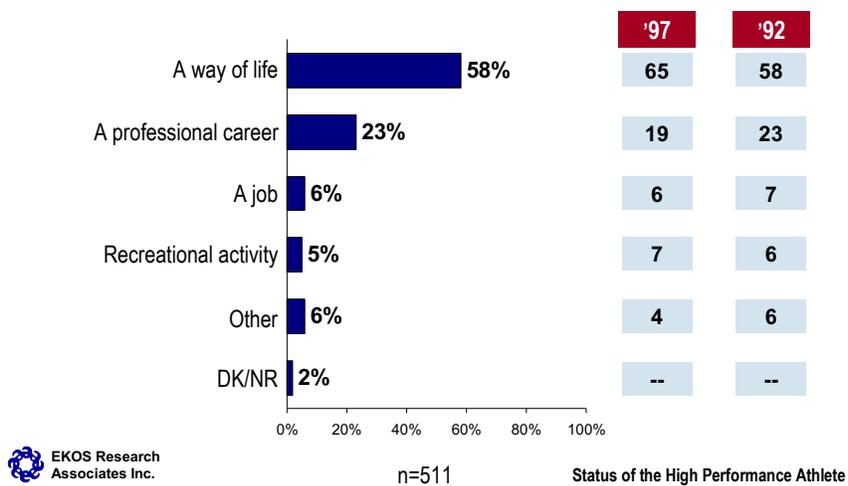
The importance of family and education resonates more strongly among women than among men. Developing athletes, full-time students and athletes who participate in team sports also attribute a higher degree of importance to education than others. While the importance of education declines with age, employment only becomes more important. Athletes with national cards, those with a university degree, athletes who are employed or who participate in team sports also ascribe higher levels of importance to

employment. The only difference in the importance placed on sport is that fewer employed athletes place a high level of importance on sport than those who are not employed.

Even greater evidence of the importance of sport in athletes' lives exists in the fact that more than half of high performance athletes (58 per cent) consider sport to be a way of life – far beyond a professional career (23 per cent), a job (six per cent) or a recreational activity (five per cent). These views have remained relatively consistent over time.

Sport in Context

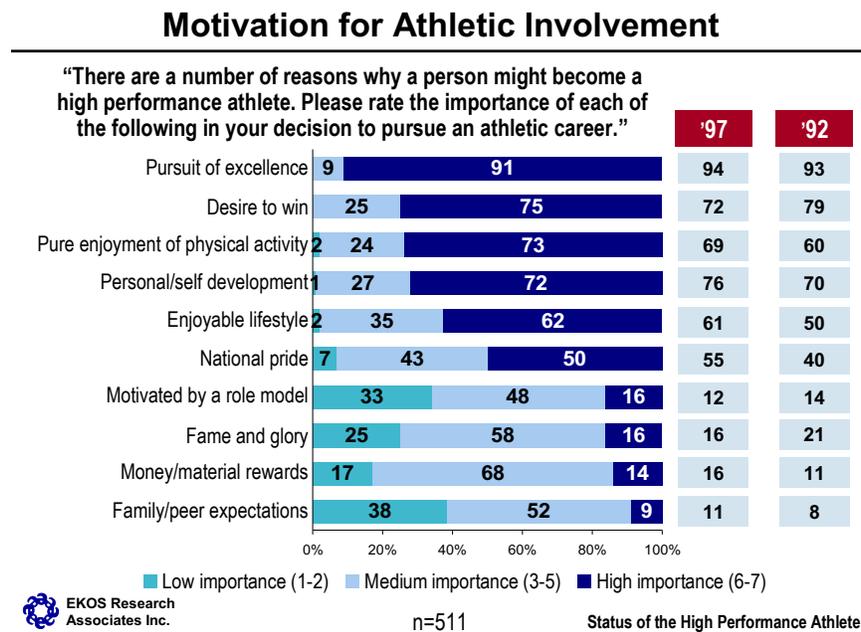
“Athletes can think of themselves in several different ways. Although more than one of the following may apply to you, which one best describes how you view your involvement in high performance sport?”



High profile athletes who have access to commercial opportunities are more inclined to characterize sport as a professional career, whereas athletes who do not have such opportunities are more likely to think of sport as a way of life. Athletes participating in winter sports (who are older) also identify more with sport as a professional career than do athletes pursuing summer sports.

2.2 MOTIVATION FOR ATHLETIC INVOLVEMENT

Findings from this latest survey of high performance athletes also reflect previous trends in the motivation for athletic involvement. Athletes continue to be driven to competition primarily for intrinsic, rather than extrinsic reward – especially the pursuit of excellence (cited by nine in ten athletes), a desire to win, enjoyment of physical activity and personal development (all cited by approximately three-quarters of athletes), while half of athletes reported that national pride is the main reason they pursue sports. In addition, athletes continue to downplay the importance of role models, fame and glory, money or material rewards or the expectations of others as factors influencing their decision to pursue an athletic career (all cited by less than one in five athletes).



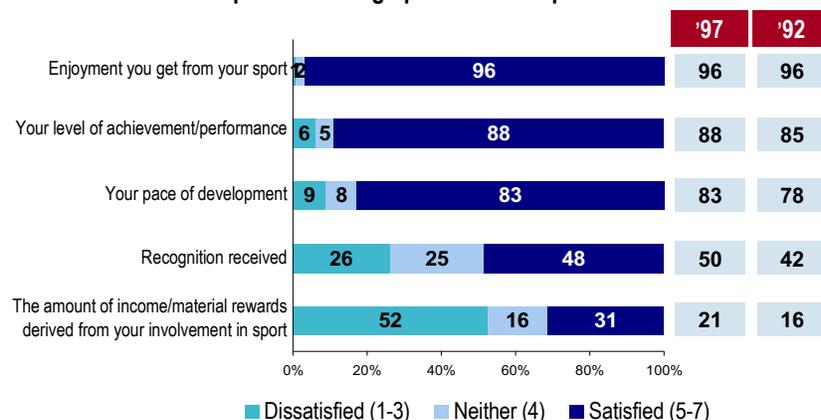
The most educated athletes are less inclined than others to identify a desire to win, fame and glory or money and material rewards as significant motivation for their pursuit of an athletic career. Winter athletes, on the other hand, are more inclined to cite a strong desire to win. Women are more likely than men to consider the pure enjoyment of physical activity and the personal/self development to be important aspects of their decision to pursue sports.

2.3 SATISFACTION WITH CAREER

As seen in previous years, high performance athletes also continue to exhibit high levels of satisfaction with their athletic career. Most (96 per cent) are content with the amount of enjoyment they get from participating in their sport and many are satisfied with their level of achievement (88 per cent) and the pace of their athletic development (83 per cent). Less than half of athletes (48 per cent), however, say they are satisfied with the amount of recognition they receive and only one-third (31 per cent) are happy with the amount of income or material rewards they derive from their career (although this is generally not considered to be a primary motivation for athletic involvement and athletes' satisfaction with this aspect of their career has increased from previous years). By way of comparison with other segments of the labour force, athletes are more satisfied with their pace of development than public service employees, according to results of the 2002 Survey of Public Service Employees, conducted by the Treasury Board Secretariat, where 74 per cent said that they were satisfied with their career progress in the Public Service). On the other hand, athletes are much less likely than federal government employees to be satisfied with the recognition they receive (48 vs. 71 per cent of public service employees).

Satisfaction with Athletic Career

“To what extent are you satisfied with the following aspects of your experience in high performance sport?”

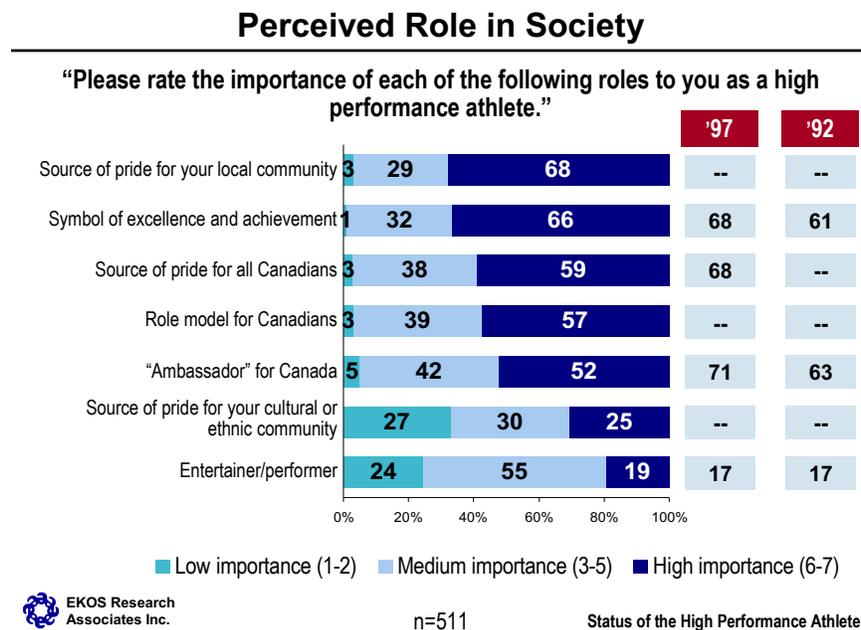


Naturally, the athletes with the highest standing (i.e., international cards) exhibit higher levels of satisfaction with their level of achievement and performance, and the recognition they receive. Satisfaction with recognition is also higher among the youngest athletes (under 24), women, those who have not completed a post-secondary degree, full-time students, the unemployed and developing athletes, as well as those who have access to commercial opportunities (all of whom are younger). Athletes who have not completed a post-secondary degree and those who participate in winter sports are more content

than others with the pace of their development. Satisfaction with the amount of income and material rewards that flows from their involvement in sport is greater among Francophones and those with access to commercial opportunities. On the other hand, the oldest, employed athletes are less satisfied with this aspect of their athletic career.

2.4 PERCEIVED ROLE IN SOCIETY

In terms of the importance of a number of roles of sport, athletes like to view themselves foremost as a source of pride for their local community and a symbol of excellence and achievement (roughly two-thirds perceive these to be their role in society). More than half perceive themselves to be a source of national pride or a role model for others (59 and 57 per cent, respectively), while 52 per cent see themselves as an “ambassador” for Canada. Generally, self-perceptions are not based on personal characteristics such as culture or ethnicity (25 per cent), nor do athletes like to think of themselves as entertainers or performers. Compared to 1992 and 1997, athletes are less inclined to think of themselves as a source of national pride or “ambassadors” for Canada.



The oldest athletes (over 26) are more inclined than others to perceive themselves as a symbol of excellence and achievement. Athletes involved in team sports are more likely to see themselves as a source of pride for all Canadians, while women’s self perceptions are more likely to be characterized as a source of pride for their local community. Francophone athletes are more inclined than others to view themselves as entertainers or performers, but less as ambassadors for Canada – which is a role that resonates more strongly with athletes holding international cards and those involved in team sports. Athletes

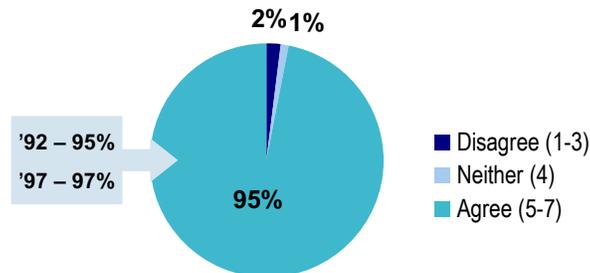
who have not completed a post-secondary degree are also more likely to cite the importance of the role of entertainer/performer and to see themselves as a source of pride for their cultural or ethnic community.

2.5 COMMITMENT TO SPORT AND RELOCATION

In addition to the relative importance of sport in athletes' lives and their satisfaction with the career elements they consider to be most important, high performance athletes also demonstrate a significant amount of commitment to sport. Nearly all (95 per cent) said that, if given the chance to re-live their decision, they would still choose to become a high performance athlete, which is consistent with previous findings. Previously carded athletes also demonstrate a great deal of commitment to their sport. Nearly nine in ten also said that they would still choose to become a high performance athlete.

Commitment

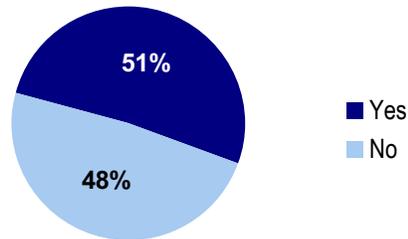
**“To what extent would you say you agree or disagree with the statement:
If faced with the same decision again, I would still choose to become a
high performance athlete?”**



This level of commitment is also reflected in the fact that half of high performance athletes (51 per cent) have relocated to another part of the country to pursue involvement in their sport.

Relocation for Sport

“Have you ever relocated to another part of the country to pursue your sport?”



n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

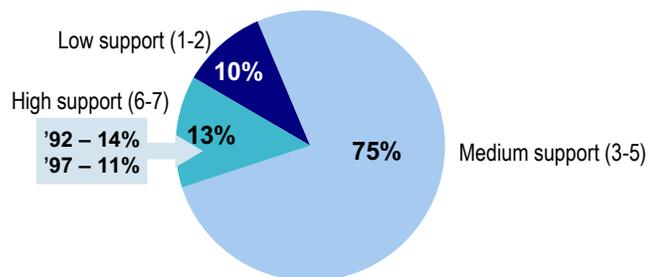
The incidence of relocation to other parts of the country to pursue an athletic career is higher among the older athletes (24-26), Anglophones and those with a university degree.

2.6 CANADA'S INVOLVEMENT IN HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT

Generally speaking, athletes think that the Canadian sport system has been moderately supportive in helping them achieve their goals (75 per cent say it has been moderately supportive – 13 per cent “highly”).

Canadian Sport System

“Thinking about what you need to reach your potential, how supportive would you say the Canadian sport system has been overall?”



n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

Relative to others, the perception of a supportive Canadian sport system is slightly higher among athletes who have not completed a post-secondary degree and lower among the oldest athletes.

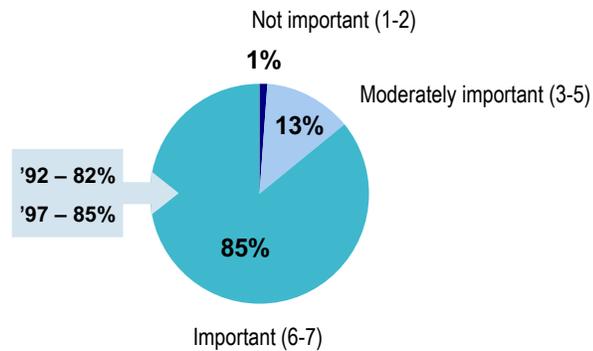
In addition, nearly all athletes believe that it is important for Canada to have an overall goal in high performance sport (98 per cent think it is important – 85 per cent “very important”). Three-quarters (76 per cent) agree that Canada should rank among countries of comparable size and wealth in the Olympic and Paralympic Games and seven in ten (69 per cent) agree that Canada should set its goals on the basis of available resources. Athletes are less inclined, however, to link our national sport goals to performances at the Summer and Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games (48 per cent agree with this suggestion).

Coaches also strongly agree that Canada should have an overall goal that drives our involvement in high performance sport. In addition, given Canada’s present resource situation, they are most inclined to believe that Canada can excel in a few sports where we perform well. One-third of coaches feel that Canada should rank among countries of comparable size and wealth across all sports and that we should be able to provide a comparable level of support to the best athletes in all sports. Coaches, however,

are notably less confident than athletes about Canada's ability to rank in the top five or 10 countries worldwide across all sports.

Performance Goals

"How important would you say that it is for Canada to have an overall goal in high performance sport?"

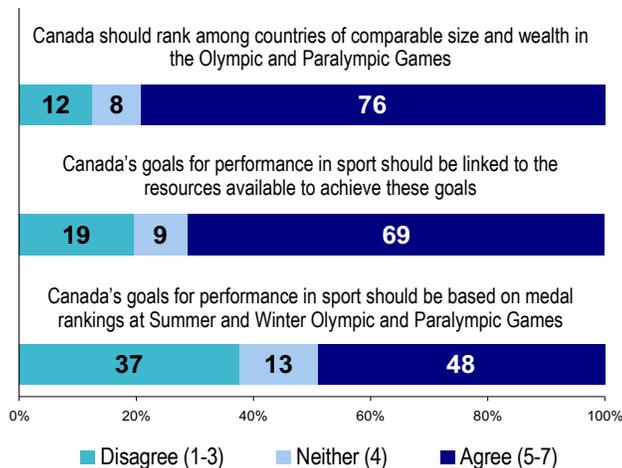


n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

Canadian Sport Goals

"Agreement with:"



n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

Athletes with a university degree are more inclined than others to agree that Canada should rank among countries of comparable size and wealth in the Olympic and Paralympic Games. In addition, Francophones and national team carded athletes are less likely than others to agree that Canada's national sport goals should be linked to medal rankings at the Summer and Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

With regard to ethics and sport, coaches report that they do address these types of issues with their athletes, but it appears to be a topic that does not receive a great deal of attention. One in three said that they discuss sport-related ethical issues with their athletes "to a great extent" – i.e., 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale.

3. INTEGRATION OF SPORT AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

3.1 QUALITY OF LIFE

As in past studies, nearly all athletes agree that their involvement in sport has enhanced their overall quality of life (93 per cent – which may not be surprising given the fact that nearly all athletes say that, if faced with the same decision, they would still choose to become a high performance athlete). On the other hand, there is a strong divide with respect to the impact of sport on personal lives, with similar proportions agreeing and disagreeing that their personal relationships have not been adversely affected by their sport career (relatively unchanged since 1992, but higher than found in 1997).

3.2 EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Slightly fewer than half of athletes (44 per cent) agree they are working only because they need additional money to pay their basic living and sport-related costs (down considerably since 1992 when nearly two-thirds felt this way). Just over one-third are satisfied with their current financial situation compared with their friends and peers outside sport (35 per cent), but more than half of athletes are not satisfied, which is similar to previous measures taken in 1992 and 1997.

Slightly more than half (59 per cent) of athletes feel that services provided by Canadian Sport centres have enhanced their overall ability to train and compete.

3.3 EDUCATION

The large majority of high performance athletes are willing to make sacrifices in their employment or education in order to pursue their athletic career (82 per cent); and half (50 per cent) feel that their education has indeed suffered as a result of their sport career (relatively unchanged in the past 12 years) and roughly one-quarter (27 per cent) feels their education commitments make it impossible to train as much as they should.

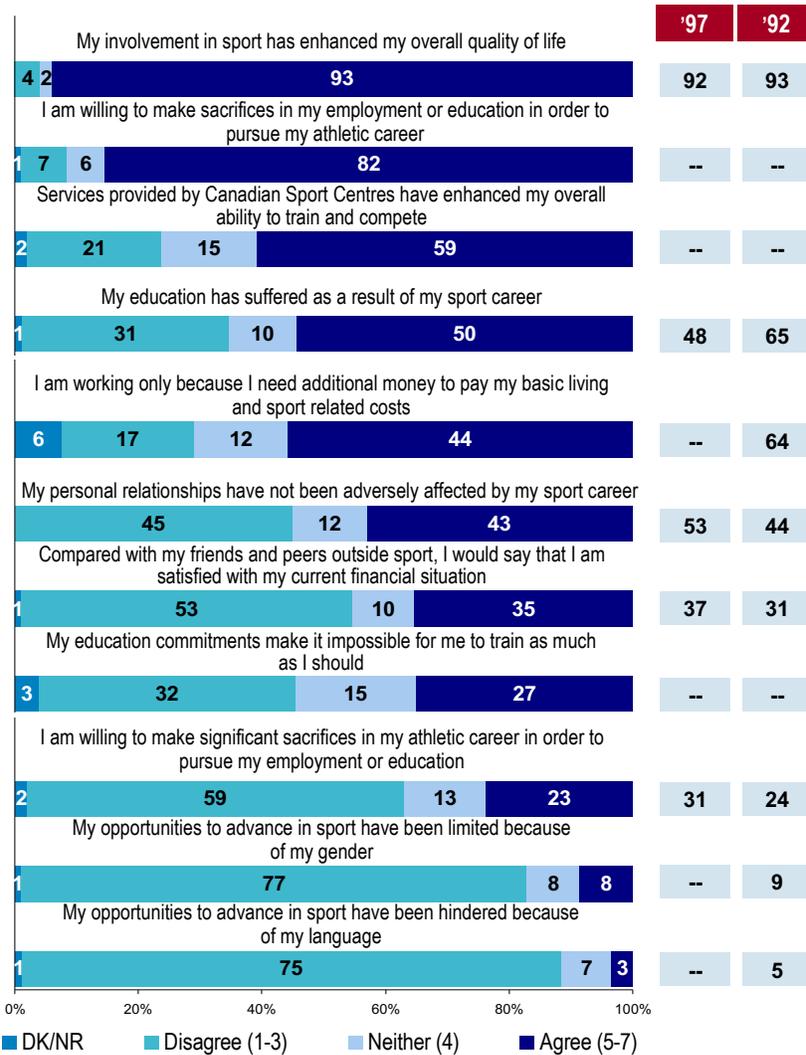
Generally, younger athletes (less than 25 years of age) are more likely than older athletes (older than 27 years of age) to feel their education has suffered (65 per cent, compared to 36 per cent, respectively), and that their education commitments make it impossible for them to train as much as they should (44 per cent, compared to 17 per cent, respectively). On the other hand, members of this group are also more satisfied with their current financial situation, and are more positive about the services provided by Canadian Sport Centres in that they enhance their ability to train and compete. (It should be noted that younger athletes are more likely to be in university and since they cite a higher financial dependence on their parents, it is not unlikely to think that their parents are contributing towards their education).

The same can be said of full-time students (who are younger) compared to athletes who are not in school (who are older). They are more likely to agree that their education has suffered (63 per cent, compared to 44 per cent of athletes who are not in school), and that education commitments make it impossible to train as much as they should (63 per cent, compared to 15 per cent). They are also more willing to make significant sacrifices in their athletic career in order to pursue their employment or education (40 per cent, compared to 19 per cent of athletes who are not in school), and less willing to make sacrifices in their employment or education in order to pursue their athletic career. Full-time students are also more satisfied with their current financial situation compared to athletes who are not in school and are more positive about services provided by Canadian Sport Centres.

Anglophones are more likely than Francophones to agree that services provided by Canadian Sport Centres have enhanced their overall ability to train and compete. Anglophones are also more likely to feel that their involvement in sport has enhanced their overall quality of life. The opposite is true, however, when it comes to satisfaction with their current financial situation – more than half of Francophones are satisfied (53 per cent), compared with only one-third of Anglophones (31 per cent). On the other hand, Francophone athletes are far more likely than Anglophone athletes to feel that opportunities to advance have been hindered because of their language (13 vs. one per cent, respectively).

Integrating Athletics with Life

“Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.”



Naturally, as education increases, athletes become less likely to feel their education has suffered as a result of their sport career, but they are also less satisfied with their current financial situation, when they compared it with friends and peers outside sport.

Athletes who participate in winter sports are more likely than those who participate in summer sports to feel their education has suffered as a result of their sport career, but are less willing to make significant sacrifices in their athletic career in order to pursue their employment or education. This is perhaps not surprising given that slightly more athletes who participate in winter sports are pursuing studies, and most are attending school part-time (55 per cent, compared to 29 per cent of athletes who participate in summer sports).

Developing athletes are more likely than their more elite counterparts to agree that their education commitments make it impossible for them to train as much as they should and that they work because they need additional money to pay for basic living and sport-related costs.

Naturally, those athletes who have relocated in order to pursue their sport career are more likely than those who have not relocated to believe that their personal relationships have been adversely affected by their career. On the other hand, they are less likely to feel that their education commitments make it impossible to train as much as they should (following the pattern of older athletes over the age of 26).

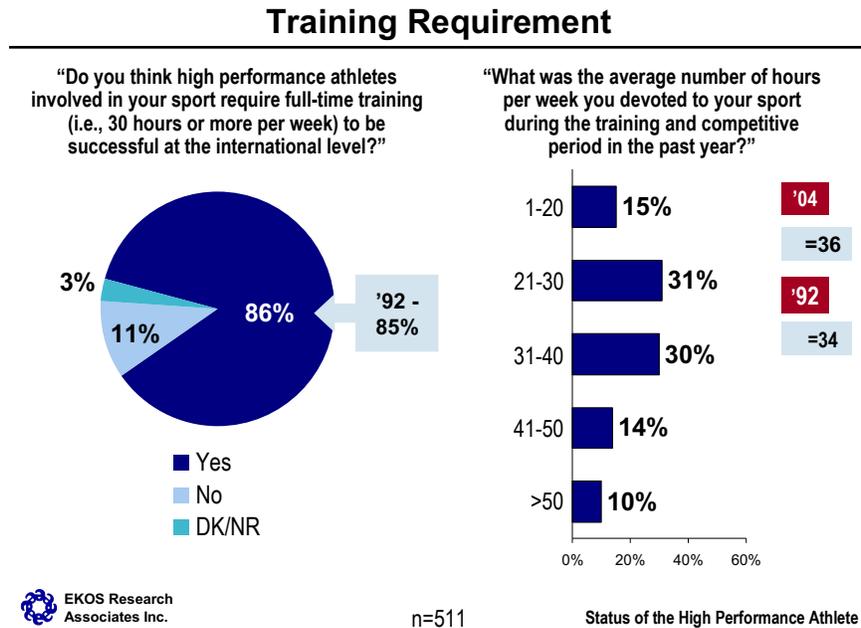
Women are more likely than men to agree that their opportunities to advance in sport have been limited due to their gender (15 per cent, compared to two per cent, respectively). There are not enough cases, however, to be able to further identify any strong characteristics that set these women apart from other women. It should also be noted that the question specifically refers to "limitations due to gender"; which would likely illicit a greater response among women than men.

4. TRAINING AND COMPETITION

4.1 TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

As in 1992, the lion's share of athletes feel that in order to be successful at the international level, high performance athletes require full-time training (86 per cent). This is especially true of men and, perhaps not surprisingly, athletes who have relocated in order to pursue their sports careers. Francophones and those who have not moved to pursue their sport are somewhat less apt to agree. Approximately the same number of coaches agrees that full-time training is required in order for high performance athletes to be successful.

Despite the overwhelming number who feel that full-time training is required, only half report actually training at that level or higher. The average number of hours devoted per week during the training and competitive period is 36 hours, which is unchanged since 1992. Almost half of athletes train for 30 hours a week or less, 30 per cent train for 31 to 40 hours a week and one-quarter (24 per cent) train for more than 40 hours a week.



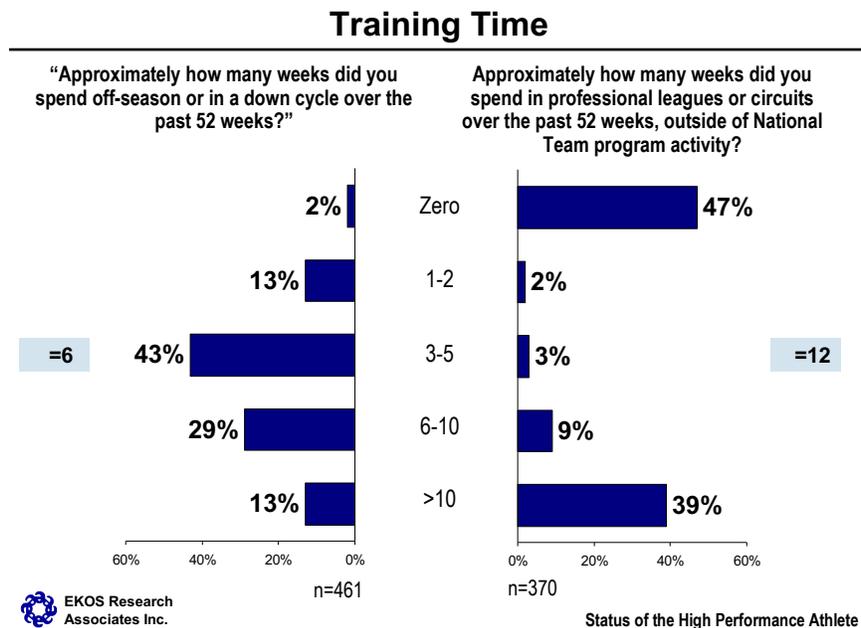
Athletes aged 24 to 26 report devoting more time per week than the youngest group (39 hours compared to 35 hours per week)⁵. The same is true of men compared to women (38 hours compared to 35 hours) and athletes not attending school (who are also older), who devote 38 hours to their sport every week, compared to 30 hours devoted by full-time students.

Elite athletes devote more time than their developing counterparts (37 hours, compared to 34 hours) as do winter athletes compared to summer athletes (44 hours, compared to 35 hours). Those who have relocated in order to pursue their sport careers (who are also older and more elite) are also more likely to devote more time per week to their sport (40 hours, compared to 33 hours devoted by those who have not relocated).

⁵ The oldest athletes, over 26 years of age, report a marginally (but not statistically significantly) lower average of hours training, at 37 hours.

4.2 TRAINING TIME

The largest portion of athletes (43 per cent) report spending between three and five weeks in a down cycle in the past year and nearly the same number report spending more than six weeks in a down cycle. Considerably fewer spend less than two weeks in a down cycle. As education increases, so too does the amount of annual down time, with considerably more university graduates reporting 10 weeks or more of down time in the past year. Perhaps not surprisingly, those who are employed also report more than six weeks of down time in the past year, as do those who participate in team events (which is higher than the number reported by athletes pursuing individual sports). Athletes who compete individually are more likely to report only one to five weeks of down time in the last year and athletes who participate in winter sports are more likely to report spending three to five weeks in a down cycle.



While the vast majority of athletes report more than three weeks of down time, nearly half report spending no time in professional leagues or circuits, outside National Team program activity, over the past year. That being said approximately four in ten report spending more than 10 weeks in professional leagues or circuits.⁶

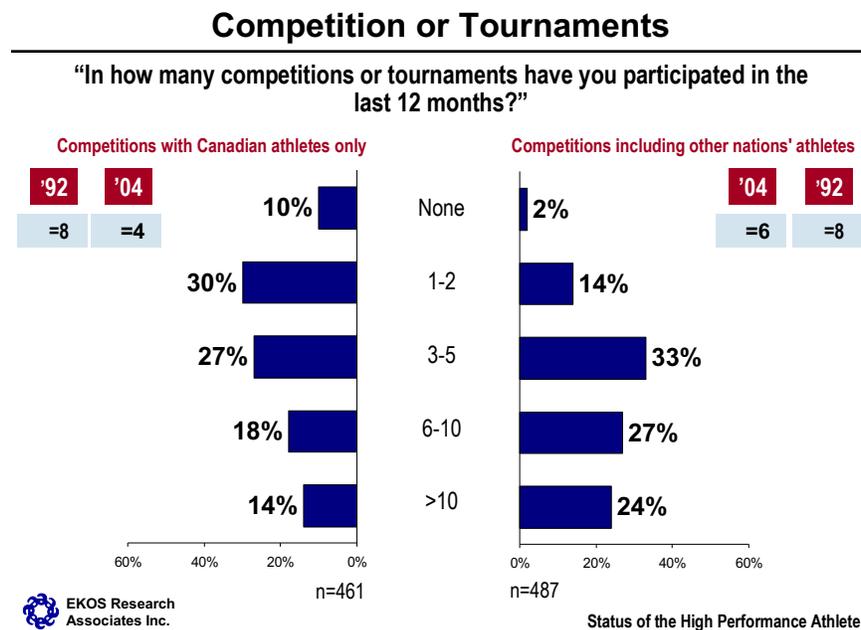
Overall, carded athletes spend 12 weeks on average in professional leagues or circuits. As age increases, so too does the average amount of time spent in professional leagues. Those who are employed spend more time in professional leagues on average, as do athletes who participate in summer

⁶ Time spent in a professional league is not included in downtime.

sports, compared to those who participate in winter sports. The same is true of those who participate in team events compared to those who compete individually, and those with commercial opportunities.

4.3 COMPETITION OR TOURNAMENTS

A strong majority of athletes report having participated in between one and five domestic competitions. One-third has participated in more than six in the last year. The reported average (median) for domestic competitions is four, half of that seen in 1992. When it comes to international competitions, half had participated in between one and five events and half had participated in more than six. Athletes have participated in an average (median) of six international competitions (which is down slightly from 1992).



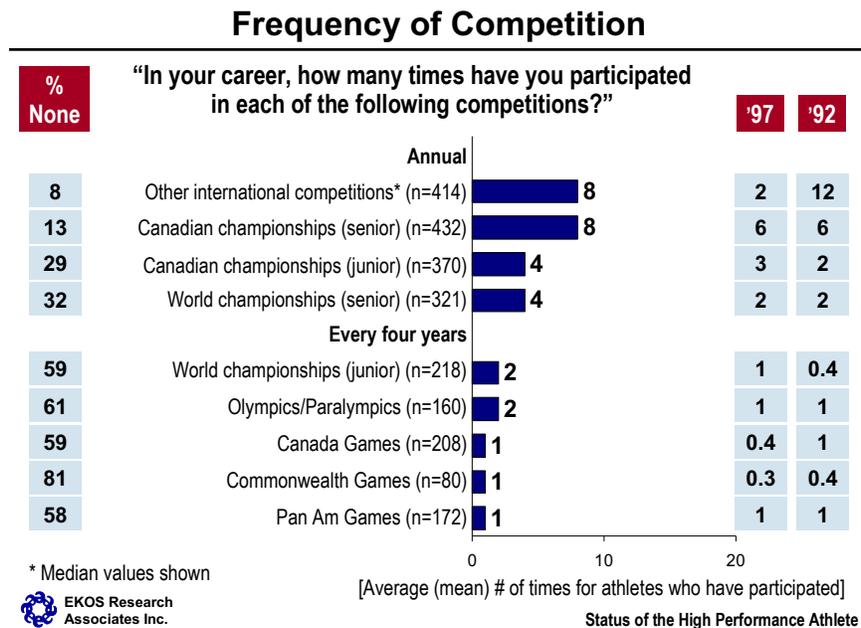
Developing athletes report having participated in more competitions with only Canadians, on average, when compared to their elite counterparts. This is also true of those who compete with a team (where more developing athletes can be found), and those with commercial opportunities.

When it comes to events that include other nations, athletes with national cards report attending more of these competitions, on average, than any other card level. The same is true of winter athletes and, again, those with commercial opportunities.

4.4 FREQUENCY OF COMPETITION

It is not surprising to find that athletes report higher levels of participation in events such as the Canadian and World championships than they do in other competitions such as the Olympics/Paralympics and Canada Games given that these events are held on an annual basis rather than every four years. Besides annual competitions such as the Canadian Junior and Senior Championships (attended an average of four and eight times, respectively), athletes report the highest participation in annual international competitions (eight times on average) and have attended an average of four World Championships (senior). In terms of competitions that occur less frequently (i.e. every four years), athletes report an average participation in two World Championships (Junior) and two Olympic/Paralympic Games. They report the lowest participation in the Canada Games, Commonwealth Games and the Pan Am Games (an average of once for each).

It is interesting to note that data provided by Sport Canada demonstrates that the average period that an athlete is carded has been increasing, from 3.7 years in 1991-92 to 5.7 years in 2003-04. Given this extended period of athletes' carded careers, the lower average of other international competitions from 1992 is even lower on an annual basis that it was in 1992.



Perhaps not surprisingly, older and elite athletes report having attended more senior Canadian and international competitions compared to their younger, developing counterparts. The same is true of athletes who are not attending school (who are typically older), compared to students.

In addition to these general trends, those who compete individually attend more competitions, on average, than athletes who compete in teams (and include a higher proportion of developing athletes).

Anglophones and athletes pursuing winter sports attend fewer Senior Canadian championships than Francophones and those who compete in summer sports.

Junior Canadian championships are attended more frequently by athletes who have relocated and/or compete individually, compared with their counterparts.

4.5 PRIMARY TRAINING AFFILIATION

One-third of athletes are primarily affiliated with a single-sport national training centre. Slightly fewer are associated with a club program and even fewer use the Canadian Sport Centres. Less than one in 10 use a university program, an international club or a single-sport regional training centre most often for their training. In 1997, by comparison, 19 per cent of athletes were affiliated with a Single Sport Regional Training Centre, seven per cent were associated with the Commonwealth Centre for Sport Development in Victoria, British Columbia and two per cent were affiliated with a Single Sport National Training Centre. Less than one per cent were associated with the National Sport Centre in Calgary. More than half (59 per cent) cited an affiliation with a facility other than one provided in the survey.

Primary Training Affiliation

“What is your primary training affiliation?”



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n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

The single-sport national training centres are reported more often by part-time students, athletes pursuing a winter sport, those who compete individually and those who have relocated in order to pursue their sport careers. Club programs are mentioned more often by those with the least amount of completed education, elite athletes, athletes pursuing a summer sport, and those who have not relocated to pursue their sport. Those aged 24 to 26 and athletes who compete on a team are more likely to cite Canadian Sport Centres as their primary training affiliation. University programs, on the other hand, are mentioned more often by full-time students, younger athletes (under 24), Anglophones, those between college and university in terms of education, developing athletes, and those who compete on a team.

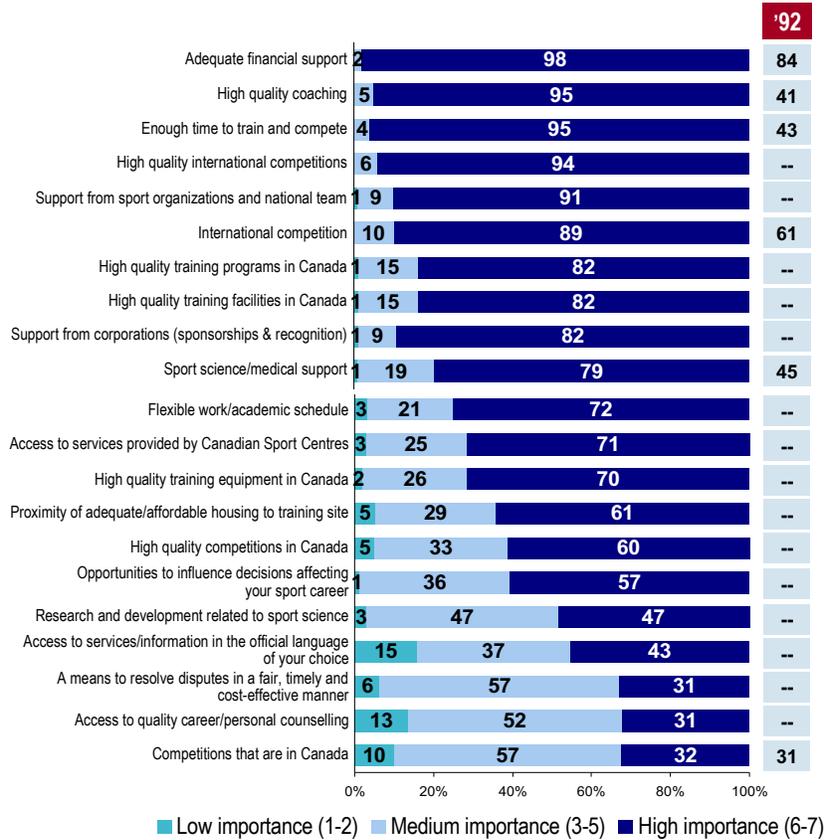
5. SUPPORTS FOR ATHLETES

5.1 IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORTS FOR ATHLETES

When evaluating the types of supports that athletes have to help them reach their full potential as an athlete, economics and the quality of the technical support seem to be among the most important. Athletes were asked to rate the importance of 21 different types of support and the most important are access to financial support, high quality coaching, enough time to train and compete, high quality international competitions and support from sport organizations and the national team (each of these was identified as very important by at least nine in ten athletes). It is instructive to note that two of the top four supports required by athletes point to the quality of technical supports for athletes (i.e., coaching and international competitions). In addition to these, athletes also place a high premium on the availability of quality training programs and facilities and sport science and medical support (cited as highly important by eight in ten athletes). Access to services provided by Canadian Sport Centres and quality training equipment follow as important technical supports (cited by seven in ten athletes), while athletes tend to place a lower level of emphasis on research and development in sport science (47 per cent say this is important) and access to career or personal counselling (cited by 31 per cent).

Importance of Supports for Athletes

“First, how important are each of the following types of support in helping you to achieve your full potential as an athlete?”



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n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

There is a general consensus among all demographic groups regarding the importance of the top five rated supports (i.e., there are no significant differences between sub-groups on these issues). The importance of high quality training programs in Canada declines with age and education, while internationally carded athletes are more inclined than others to assign a high level of importance to sport science and medical support. As might be expected, athletes who are full-time students, those who are employed and have never relocated to pursue their athletic career are more likely than others to think that a flexible work / academic schedule is an important support. The importance of high quality training equipment in Canada decreases with education, but is higher among athletes who are unemployed. The oldest athletes (over 26) and those with the highest levels of formal education are less inclined than others to see the importance of access to services and information in the official language of their choice and access to quality career/personal counselling. On the other hand, Francophone athletes and those who have not completed a post-secondary degree are more apt to view these supports as important. The proximity of

adequate and affordable housing to their training site is less relevant for the oldest athletes, but more so for Francophones and developing athletes. Full-time students and those participating in team sports place a higher degree of importance than others on the existence and quality of competitions in Canada.

5.2 SATISFACTION WITH SUPPORTS FOR ATHLETES

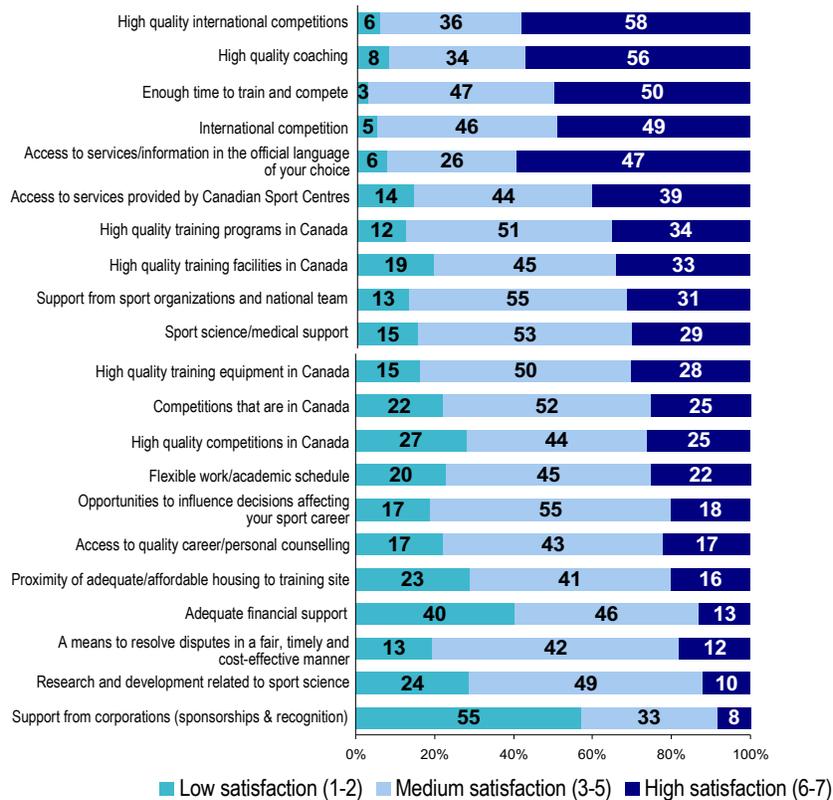
In addition to measuring their relative importance, the survey also asked athletes to indicate their satisfaction with these same 21 types of support. This evaluation accentuates significant gaps in the importance of these supports to athletes when compared to the corresponding level of satisfaction with the “real-world” support they receive. It is important to notice that the largest gap is found in the level of financial support (i.e. 98 per cent of athletes think this is very important, yet only 13 per cent are highly satisfied with the financial support they actually receive⁷). In terms of technical supports for athletes, the largest gaps exist in the sport science/medical support (50 per cent gap) and quality of Canadian training facilities (49 per cent gap). Significant gaps also exist in terms of the quality of training programs (48 per cent gap) and available time to train and compete (45 per cent gap). Furthermore, coaching is another area where athletes’ experiences do not necessarily align with their expectations (39 per cent gap), as is the amount of research and development in sport science (37 per cent gap), although these gaps are smaller. The greatest alignment between importance and satisfaction is found with having access to services and information in the official language of choice (43 per cent identify this as highly important and 47 per cent are highly satisfied with the support they receive in this area). It should be noted, however, that there is a significantly lower level of satisfaction among Francophone athletes compared to the overall pool of athletes (whereby 63 per cent say that it is important and 38 per cent are satisfied, resulting in a gap of 25 per cent among Francophone athletes specifically).

Comparatively speaking, coaches share, to a certain extent, the concerns of athletes regarding the adequacy of these sport system supports. Like athletes, coaches are least satisfied with the proximity of adequate and affordable housing to the training site (slightly more than half are at least moderately satisfied) and the level of corporate support for athletes (less than half are at least somewhat satisfied).

⁷ Readers should be reminded that the survey took place prior to the \$4,800 increase in stipends provided to athletes late in 2004.

Satisfaction with Athlete Supports

“Next, how satisfied are you with each of these same types of supports in helping you to achieve your full potential as an athlete?”



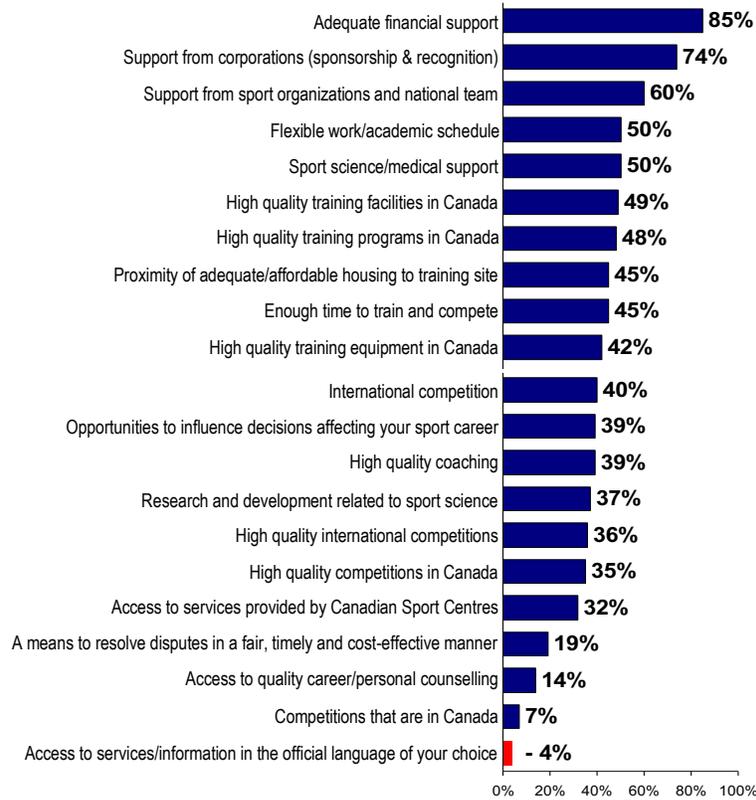
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Status of the High Performance Athlete

Generally speaking, older athletes (27 years of age and older) are less satisfied than others with the number and quality of competitions in Canada, the quality of training programs in Canada, research and development related to sport science, access to quality career/personal counselling and the level of financial support they receive. Francophone athletes exhibit higher levels of contentment than others with the number of international competitions, the proximity of adequate and affordable housing to their training site and the level of financial support they receive, but are less satisfied with the quality of training equipment and access to information in the official language of their choice. Winter sport athletes demonstrate a higher level of satisfaction than others with the amount of time they have for training and competition, the number and quality of competitions in Canada, the quality of training facilities and equipment in Canada, the level of support from sport organizations and the national team, and the access to information in the official language of their choice. On the other hand, they are less satisfied with the flexibility of their work/academic schedule. Athletes with national cards also exhibit lower levels of

satisfaction with the number and quality of competitions in Canada and the amount of corporate support. Conversely, athletes holding international cards exhibit higher levels of satisfaction with the quality of competitions in Canada and amount of support from sports organizations and the national team.

Gaps in Athletic Supports



(difference between importance of support and satisfaction with support: calculated as *Importance - Satisfaction*)
Ranked according to largest gap.



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n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

Previously carded athletes were also asked to identify the most important supports required by high performance athletes. The large majority of athletes identified the need for additional financial support.

5.3 TYPES OF SUPPORT – COACHES

Perhaps not surprisingly, when asked to rate the adequacy of a series of types of support, coaches are most pleased with the quality of coaching (half feeling this type of support is very adequate) in helping athletes achieve their full potential. This is followed by their satisfaction with support from sport

organizations and the national team. High quality training programs are rated as at least moderately sufficient by a strong majority, as is high quality training equipment, sport science and medical support, and enough high quality competitions.

Slightly fewer, although still a strong majority provide at least a moderate rating for access to services and information in the language of their choice (with half feeling it is very adequate) in helping athletes achieve their full potential, followed by time to train and compete, and high quality training facilities.

Just over seven in 10 coaches rate opportunities for input into decisions affecting their sport career as at least moderately adequate, followed by access to services provided by Canadian Sport Centres, research and development related to sport science, a means to resolve disputes in a fair and cost-effective manner, and access to quality career and personal counselling.

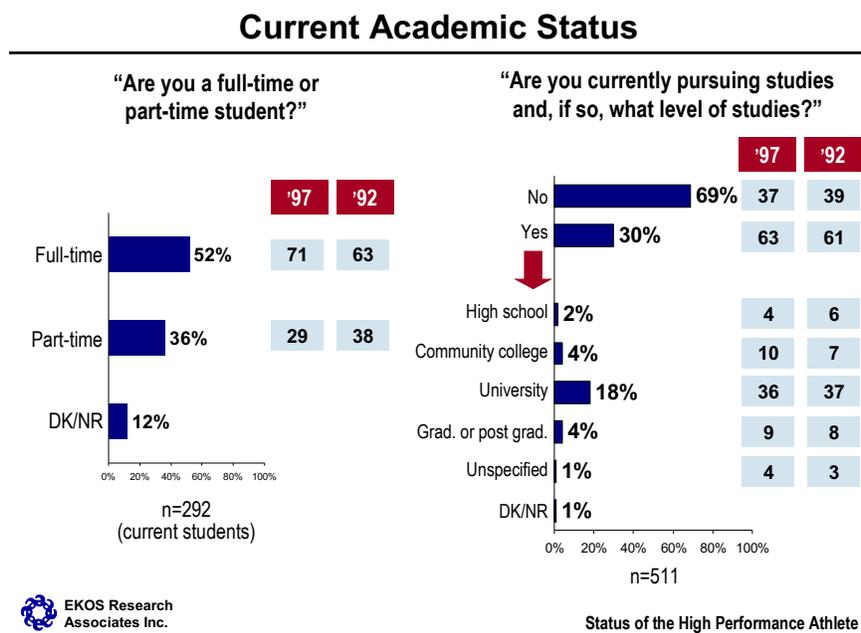
Approximately two-thirds feel that flexible work and academic schedules are somewhat or very sufficient and slightly fewer feel that financial support is at least moderately sufficient in helping athletes achieve their full potential.

Just over half of coaches rated the proximity of adequate and affordable housing to the training site as somewhat or very sufficient, while less than half feel the same about support from corporation in helping athletes achieve their full potential.

6. EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROFILE

6.1 CURRENT EDUCATION STATUS

Three in ten carded athletes participating in the survey are currently in school (30 per cent), with the largest proportion of these students studying at the university level. Proportionately fewer carded athletes are in school today than was the case in 1997, although the level of schooling being pursued is relatively unchanged since 1997. The proportion of carded athletes pursuing studies at a university, at either the undergraduate (18 vs. 15 per cent of the general public) or graduate level (four vs. two per cent of Canadians in general) is very similar to that seen in the broader Canadian public. On the other hand, there is a lower proportion of carded athletes in either high school or college (two vs. 14 per cent of Canadians in high school and four vs. 24 per cent in college).⁸



⁸ These comparative education data are taken from the 2001 Census. This is based on those aged 15-34 in the general population, which represents the age range of 92 per cent of the carded athletes in our sample.

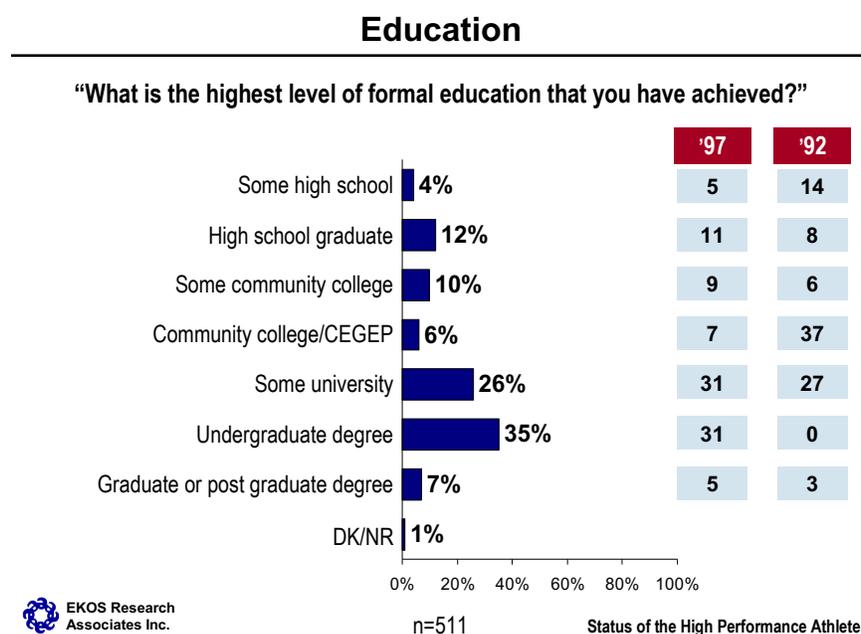
Younger athletes (under 24 years of age) are more apt to still be in school than older athletes, which is a pattern that also shows up by carding level. Developing athletes are far more likely to still be in school than older athletes. What is interesting to note, however, is that national team carded athletes are more likely than either the international or the developing athletes to be studying in college. Naturally, athletes who are in the labour force (and typically older) are less apt to be pursuing education.

Just over half of carded athletes who are in school are studying on a full-time basis, although younger athletes are considerably more likely to be attending full-time. In fact, 63 per cent of athletes under 25 are full time students, while only 27 to 43 per cent of athletes over 24 have a full-time student status. This also translates into differences by carding level and type of sport; with developing athletes and those pursuing team sports (each of whom are younger) both being more likely to be pursuing their studies full-time. Athletes engaged in summer sports are also more apt to be studying full-time, perhaps because this is a better fit with athletes' sport cycle over the year.

Francophone athletes are more likely than Anglophone athletes to be part-time students, and athletes who have relocated (who are typically older) are less likely to be studying full-time.

6.2 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Almost all athletes report having at least a high school diploma or higher (95 per cent), with the largest proportion having some level of university education or a university degree (61 per cent). These education levels are fairly stable when compared to the findings from 1997.



Athletes who are 24 years of age or older are most likely to have a university degree. In fact, it is only after 26 years of age that athletes show a considerably higher attainment of graduate degrees. Athletes under 24 more often have “some university” education (41 per cent), largely because they are still pursuing their studies (at the university level). An additional third (26 per cent) of younger athletes (under 24) have not gone beyond high school at this point in time.

Employed athletes (who are generally older) are more likely to have already attained a university degree. Slightly more women than men report having a university degree, as is the case with Anglophones, compared with Francophones.

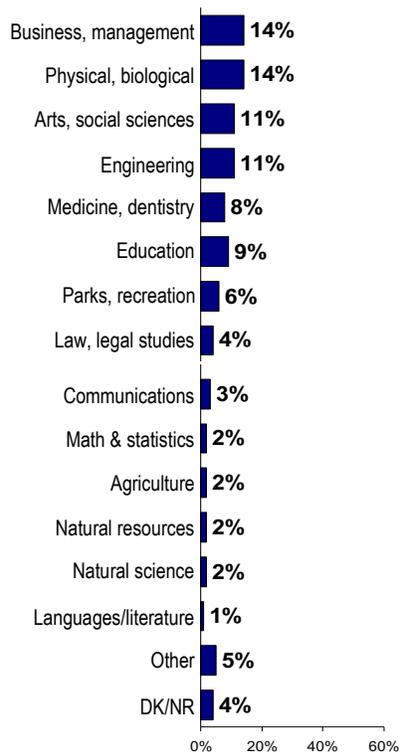
Following the age pattern, developing athletes are less likely to have a university degree, since a higher proportion are still in school. Athletes pursuing summer sports (who are typically older) are more likely than athletes pursuing winter sports, to have a university degree.

6.3 FIELD OF STUDY

The largest proportion of athletes report having studied in either the business management or physical and biological science fields, followed by arts and social sciences.

Program of Study

“What type of program did you study?”



(athletes with post-secondary education)



n=298

Status of the High Performance Athlete

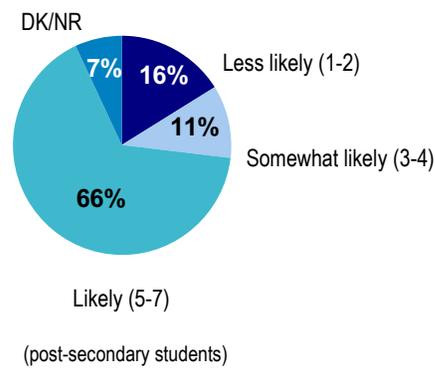
There are very few differences between athletes regarding their chosen area of study across all demographic and sport characteristics of athletes. Arts and social sciences, however, are more likely to have been pursued by athletes in the middle age range of 24 to 26 years of age.

6.4 ATHLETE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Two in three carded athletes who are currently pursuing education indicated that they are likely (or extremely likely) to use the deferred tuition credits from the AAP to complete university.

Athlete Assistance Program

“How likely is it that you will use deferred tuition credits from the Athlete Assistance Program to complete your university education?”



n=206

Status of the High Performance Athlete

Among student athletes, it is the older, and part-time students who are more likely to say that they will use the deferred credits from AAP towards their university degree. This intention is more prominent among men, compared with women, as well as among Francophones, compared with Anglophones.

Athletes participating in winter sports, as well as those pursuing individual sports, are more apt to apply AAP credits toward their university degree than athletes engaged in summer or team sports.

6.5 EDUCATION AND PREVIOUSLY CARDED ATHLETES

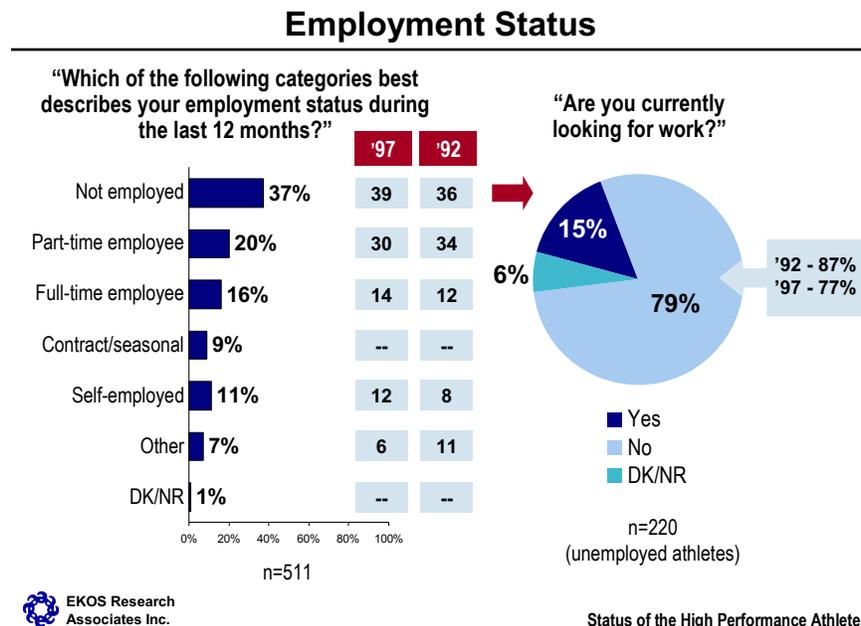
Roughly one in three previously carded athletes who responded to the survey have at least some university education, and another one in three have completed a university degree. By comparison, 28 per cent of the general public have some post-secondary education and 15 per cent have a university degree (Bachelor's level or higher)⁹. Liberal arts, social sciences or humanities and medicine, dentistry, nursing and other health science fields were all cited in relatively equal numbers as fields of study.

As with currently carded athletes, just over half of previously carded athletes indicated that they are currently attending school. This is on a full-time basis in about half of the cases, and about half are pursuing university degrees.

⁹ Statistics Canada 2001 Census Data.

6.6 EMPLOYMENT

Six in ten carded athletes are currently employed in one form or another, although only 16 per cent are employed on a full-time basis. In fact, unlike employment in the broader labour force, there is a considerably higher proportion of athletes who are employed part-time, relative to full-time employment and a much higher rate of contract or seasonal employment (although self-employment is similar to the proportion found in the broader labour force). Nearly four in ten carded athletes (37 per cent) are not currently in the labour force, and very few of those are actively looking for work (15 per cent of those not employed or six per cent of the athlete population) - which is quite similar to the findings in 1992 and 1997. Although it would seem that part-time work is on the rise, in fact, when seasonal and contract are included, the percentage distribution of athletes who are working but doing so less than full-time is similar.



The oldest athletes are the most likely to be employed on a full-time basis or self-employed. Since younger athletes (under 25) are the most likely age group to be actively involved in their academic studies, it is not surprising that they are least likely to be employed. In fact, 58 per cent are not employed, compared with 36 per cent of 24-26 year olds and 26 per cent of those over 26. Athletes with a university degree (who are also older) are much more likely than those who have less than a college education to be employed. Francophone athletes are less likely to be employed than Anglophone athletes.

Developing athletes are somewhat more apt to be employed on a seasonal or contractual basis than more senior carded athletes, whereas athletes with international cards are somewhat more prominent among those full-time employed.

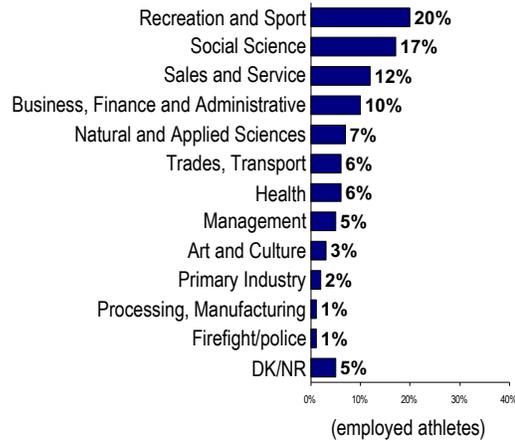
Of the athletes working full-time, one in five report under 36 weeks of full-time work during the year, another one in five report between 36 and 40 weeks of full-time work. Over half of athletes working full-time, do so on a regular basis, working more than 40 weeks of the year.

Of those athletes who worked part-time in the past year, two in three did so for 35 or fewer weeks of the year. Only one in five part-time athletes worked for more than 40 weeks of the year.

The largest proportion of athletes (one in five) report working in the recreation and sport fields followed by athletes working in the social sciences, sales and service, and business and finance (each at just over one in ten).

Current Occupational Group

“Which of these occupational groups best describes your current employment?”



n=197

Status of the High Performance Athlete

Recreation and sport is far more often the chosen area of employment among athletes with commercial opportunities than it is among those who do not have these same opportunities.

Social sciences is somewhat more prevalent among the oldest athletes (over 26), as well as those with a university level of education.

The youngest athletes (under 25) are substantially more likely to report working in the sales and service industry (31 per cent of employed athletes in this age group do, compared with six to ten per cent of older athletes). Similarly, this occupation is more often filled by athletes with no post-secondary education.

a) Employment of Previously carded Athletes

One in four previously carded athletes are working full-time in the past 12 months, and a slightly smaller proportion are currently looking for work. Of employed previously carded athletes, about one in three work full-time, on a regular basis, with the remainder working part-time. Roughly one in four are employed in recreational and sport occupations, however, most do not have a sport-related job.

Previously carded athletes perceive that their personal income is lower than it would have been otherwise as a result of their sport career.¹⁰ Relatively few said that their athletic career has led to a higher level of income, mainly a result of their athletic skills and their ability to be flexible and effectively manage stress. In 1992, by comparison, nearly half of previously carded athletes (47 per cent) said that they perceived no difference in their personal income as a result of their sport career. Nearly one in three (29 per cent) perceived their income to be lower as a result of their sport career and only slightly fewer (25 per cent) perceived their income to be higher.

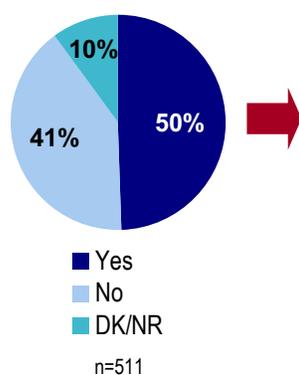
¹⁰ It should be noted that this perception is not borne out by the evidence in the 1992 Status of Athletes Study, which indicated that retired athletes experience an increase in their income after retirement from amateur sport.

6.7 VOLUNTEERISM

Half of athletes are involved in volunteer work in a sport-related capacity, with most of these athletes volunteering between one to five hours a month.

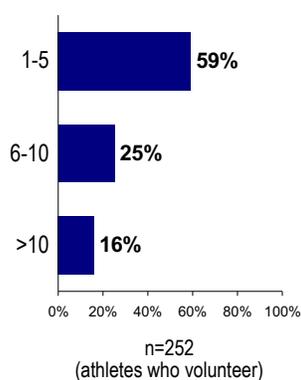
Volunteer Activity

“Do you do volunteer work in a sport-related capacity?”



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“How many hours a month?”



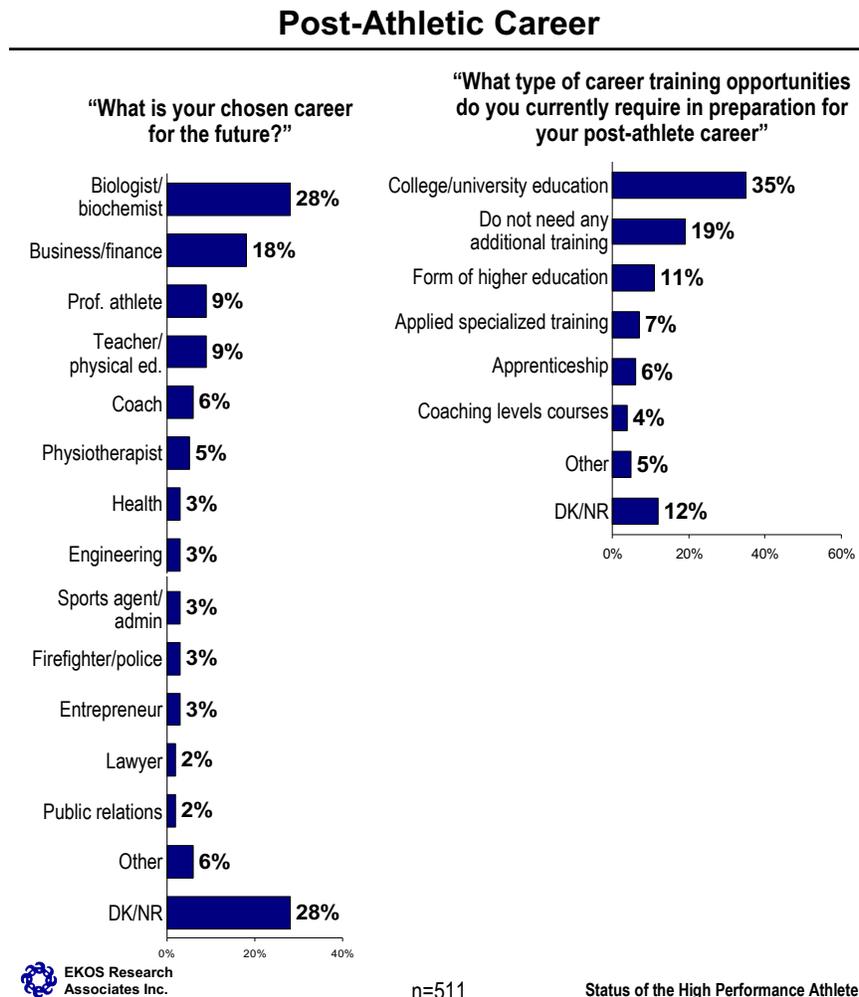
Status of the High Performance Athlete

While there are no significant differences between athletes sub-groups, in terms of who volunteers their time, Anglophone athletes typically volunteer more of their time than Francophone athletes (averaging eight hours a month to three for Francophones). Athletes pursuing summer sports also donated more time (seven hours a month on average), compared with athletes in winter sports (who volunteer an average of five hours a month).

Part-time students also volunteer fewer hours (five on average) than full-time students do (seven and a half per month), perhaps because full-time students are fulfilling some academic requirement.

6.8 FUTURE CAREER

The largest proportion of athletes who responded to the survey have chosen a future career in the biology/biochemistry fields, followed by business and finance. One in ten athletes report “professional athlete” as their chosen career for the future.



Biologist is a more prevalent response among 24 to 26 year old athletes, compared with athletes who are younger or older.

It is interesting to note that it is the youngest athletes (under 25) who are most likely (14 per cent compared with only seven to eight per cent of older athletes) to have their sights set on professional

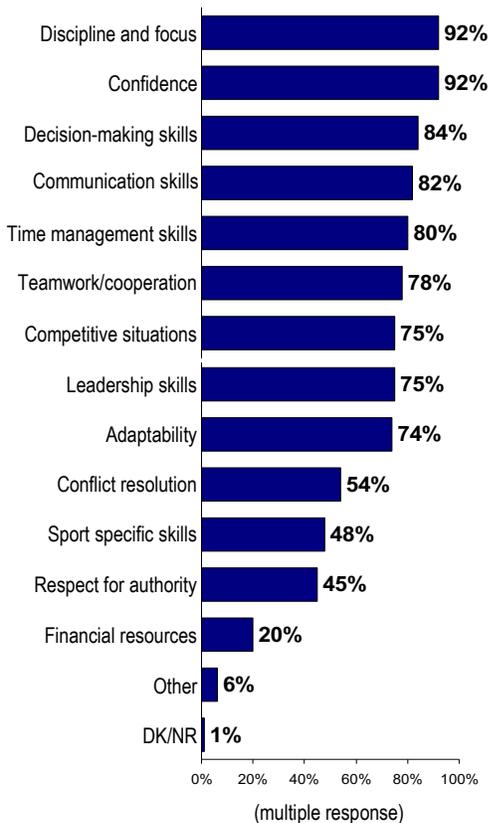
athlete status. This is also a more predominant response among athletes with no post-secondary education. Similarly, developing athletes, as well as those in team sports are more apt to be thinking about professional status.

The largest proportion of athletes report a need for a college or university as preparation for their post-athletic career (35 per cent). The youngest athletes (under 25) are most likely to say this, compared with older athletes (56 per cent versus 40 per cent of 24 to 26 year olds and only 19 per cent of older athletes). This is also true of athletes with less than a university education and those who are not currently in the labour force, as well as developing athletes. The oldest athletes, as well as those who are working and not in school, are more likely than others to say that they do not need anything else in order to pursue their post-athletic careers.

Lastly, the overwhelming majority (92 per cent) of athletes reported that confidence, and discipline and focus are the characteristics that their athletic careers had provided them with as preparation for a post-athletic career. Financial resources are most lacking according to athletes.

Preparation for Post-Athletic Career

“In which of the following areas has your athletic career prepared you for a post-athlete career?”



n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

Women are more likely than men to have cited time management skills as an area of preparation. Athletes with no post-secondary education are more likely to have cited sport-specific skills, as are the athletes with international cards, and those reporting commercial opportunities. Athletes pursuing team sports are more likely to point out teamwork and cooperation, and those who have relocated cite adaptability, competitive situations and leadership more often than those who have not relocated.

7. TRANSITION TO POST-ATHLETIC CAREER

7.1 FIRST FEW YEARS

Previously carded athletes were asked what they did in the first few years after their career as a carded athlete. Over half report continuing with their education. Roughly one in five reports having become a coach, continued their non-sport career, entered a new field of employment, or married. A very small number report having started a family. Virtually no one pursued a second athletic career.

7.2 IMPACT OF CAREER

When asked about the impact that their athletic career had on a series of items, almost all previously carded athletes feel that their sport career had a positive impact on their personal development and their range of personal experience. Around half feel that their sport career had a positive impact on their preparation for a future career, understanding of what they wanted to do and their education. Only three in 10 feel that their sport career had a positive impact on their financial status. In fact, more than half feel their career had a negative impact on their financial status.

7.3 MAKING THE TRANSITION

When it came to making the transition from carded athlete, most previously carded athletes feel that the maturity and discipline gained from competing in high level sport helped them a great deal. Roughly half feel that their contacts within the sport community helped them make the transition, followed by deferred tuition support, recognition/profile resulting from their own career, and public goodwill towards athletes. One in five to one in 10 feels that support from national sport organizations and career transition programs helped them make the transition to a post-carded career.

There are a number of ways athletes can be assisted in making the transition to the workplace. Previously carded athletes were asked to rate the extent to which each of a series of potential sources of assistance was actually useful. Approximately half feel that their ability to accumulate tuition credits was very useful, followed by about one-quarter who feel that their employer contacts were useful, career planning and guidance, and assistance to continue in a sports-related career. It should be noted, however, that around one-quarter of respondents felt that these types of assistance were not applicable to them.

7.4 ATHLETE CAREER CENTRES, PROGRAMS AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Only three in 10 previously carded athletes were aware of the Canadian Olympic Association's athlete career centres and programs. Of those who were aware of the centres and programs, about half had made use of them and just under half of those feel the programs were adequate in helping them make the transition to a non-carded athlete.

Three-quarters of athletes feel that their sport involvement had a positive impact on their employment opportunities after they ceased being a carded athlete. Only a small number feel that their sport involvement had a negative impact and few also feel that their sport career had neither a positive nor negative impact on their employment opportunities.

7.5 RETIREMENT

Fully half of previously carded athletes report that they feel they retired as a carded athlete before they had reached their full potential. Another quarter does not feel this way and the same number do not know. When asked why they had retired prematurely, many report retiring due to lack of financial backing and injury. Slightly fewer indicate a lack of support from coaches/training facilities, the pursuit of education, or family reasons for early retirement.

After retirement, approximately one-third indicated that they had been very interested in both employment and volunteer involvement in high performance sport and the same number indicated that they were not interested in pursuing either type of continued involvement in high performance sport.

Despite the divided interest in employment or volunteer involvement in high performance sport, a strong majority are still involved with competitive sports and, in fact, continue to actively compete in their sport at an international level.

Coaches were also asked for their opinion on athletes' retirement decisions. Many (69 per cent) also agree that high performance athletes retire prematurely from the national team and, similarly, coaches are most likely to cite financial difficulties as the most important factor in athletes' decision on retirement (63 per cent say it is an important factor). Four in ten also think that athletes retire mainly because their sport responsibilities interfere with their non-sport career goals.

8. ECONOMIC STATUS, WORKING CONDITIONS AND PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

8.1 PERSONAL INCOME

High performance athletes report an average annual income of \$27,367 last year (which moderately lower than the average Canadian personal income in 2000, which was \$ 31,757¹¹). The largest proportion of this income is derived from government athlete assistance (39 per cent or \$10,608 annually, on average¹²), while 37 per cent (an average of \$10,090) is actual employment income and 21 per cent (\$5,850) is sport-related income. A relatively small proportion of an athletes' annual income is in the form of direct financial support from the National Sport Organization (four per cent) or in-kind rewards (four per cent). High performance athletes in 1997 reported an average income of \$21,559, up from \$19,865 in 1992¹³. In these years, however, the largest proportion of income came from employment rather than government athlete assistance. While employment and sport-related income has come down over time, at least since 1997, athlete assistance has nearly doubled over that same period.

Previously carded athletes, by comparison, reported an average annual personal income of approximately \$27,000 for 2003.

Student athletes (carded) report an average personal income of \$20,802 (from all sources), which is 70 per cent higher than the personal income reported by Canadian post secondary students in general in 2001 at \$12,200 (from all sources) over the course of an academic year.¹⁴

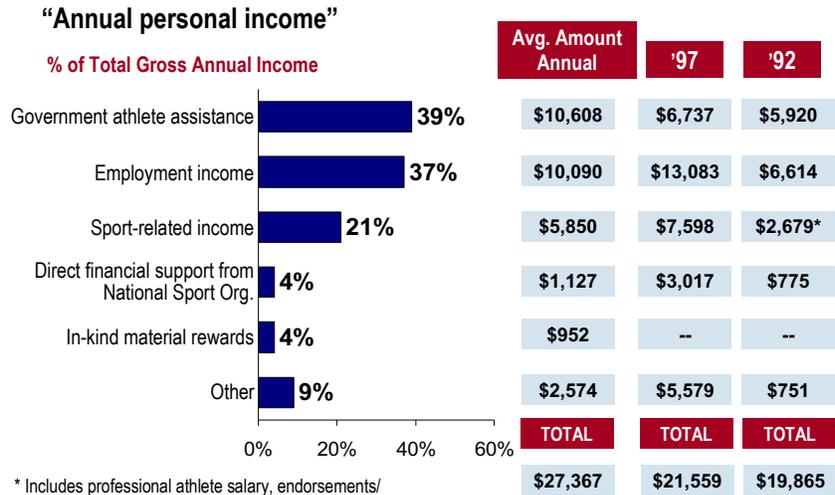
¹¹ 2001 Census, Statistics Canada

¹² This amount does not include the recently announced increase of \$4,800 in athletes' stipend.

¹³ The income figures for 1997 and 1992 have been adjusted for inflation.

¹⁴ *Making Ends Meet: The 2001-2002 Student Financial Survey*. p.100

Employment Income



* Includes professional athlete salary, endorsements/ sponsorships, and appearance fees/prize money



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1992 and 1997 income amounts adjusted for inflation
n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

(*Note: the total average annual income shown in the slide above (\$27,367) is the actual average amount reported by athletes responding to the survey. It is not the sum of the individual sources of income.)

The level of personal income increases with age, education and carding level. Personal income also tends to be higher among athletes participating in individual (as opposed to team) sports and, not surprisingly, athletes who have commercial opportunities in their sport, as well as the employed. There are no significant differences in income on the basis of gender or season of sport participation (summer vs. winter). The table below provides this information in greater detail for the total income and top three sources of income.

Average Personal Income by Athlete Characteristic

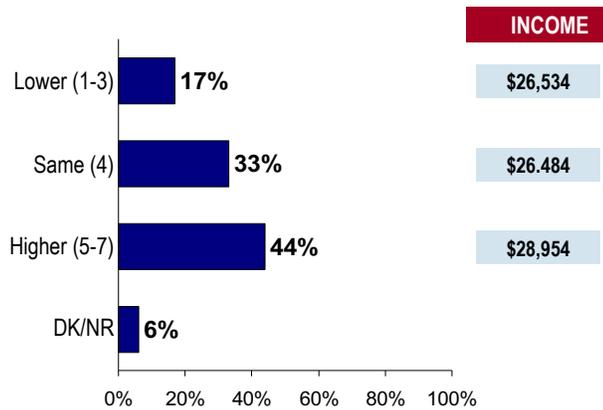
	Total (\$)	GAA (\$)	Employment Income (\$)	Sport-Related Income (\$)
All athletes	27,367	10,214	7,853	5,917
Age				
<24	18,166	8,496	2,306	5,004
24-26	22,103	10,502	5,493	4,872
27+	35,719	11,901	16,621	6,934
Education				
< College	23,487	10,647	6,123	5,548
College/University	26,968	10,918	10,252	6,478
University	29,874	10,357	12,154	5,527
Carding Level				
International Card	36,889	13,198	15,479	9,409
National Card	25,955	11,165	8,603	5,106
Developing	16,383	5,723	5,387	2,599
Season				
Winter	27,869	10,633	9,535	9,315
Summer	27,226	10,601	10,247	4,844
Athlete Type				
Individual	28,377	11,144	9,891	6,087
Team Sport	25,529	9,679	10,427	5,429
Commercial Opportunities				
Yes	29,657	10,796	10,650	9,350
No	25,506	10,450	9,603	2,585
Language				
Anglophone	27,058	9,666	10,456	5,532
Francophone	29,554	14,813	9,261	6,685
Employed				
Yes	31,223	10,358	15,652	4,327
No	21,406	10,780	1,001	7,151

With respect to the top three sources of income, note that, while patterns by age and carding level follow the same pattern as the overall income pattern by age, for education it is only employment income that is higher for the university-educated. Winter athletes and those with commercial opportunities are only better off than other athletes in sport-related income. Individual-sport athletes show a larger income in government assistance. Naturally, employed athletes report a higher employment income, whereas athletes who are not employed show virtually no employment income.

It is interesting to note that nearly half of carded athletes (44 per cent) reported a personal income in 2003 that was actually higher than in previous years. One-third (33 per cent) said that their income has remained fairly stable compared to previous years and roughly one in seven (17 per cent) said they earned less income in 2003.

Changes in Personal Income

“Was your personal income in 2003 higher or lower than your typical annual income over the previous few years?”



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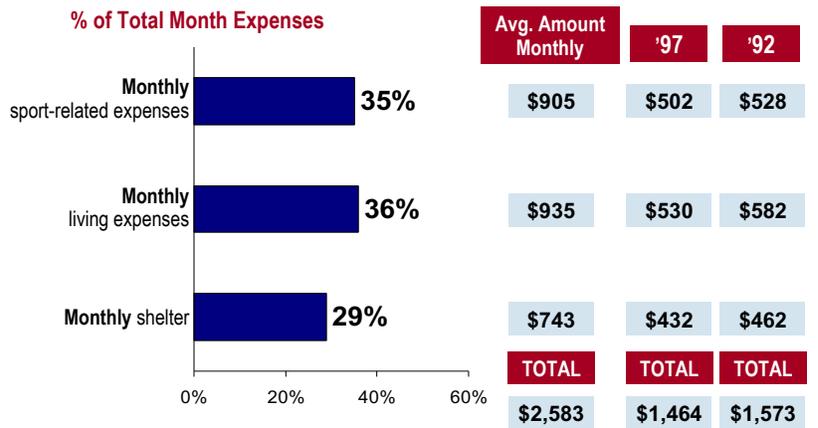
Although older athletes report higher levels of personal income, they are also more inclined than others to say that their income in 2003 was lower than it has been in previous years.

8.2 PERSONAL EXPENSES

Athletes report their monthly expenses to be roughly \$2,500, on average. Nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of these expenses are related to daily living (shelter and other living expenses) and roughly one-third (35 per cent) is sport-related. In 1997, by comparison, an athlete's monthly expenses for these three areas were approximately \$1,464¹⁵, and in 1992 they were \$1,573. More specifically, athletes report monthly sport-related expenses are nearly double that reported in 1997, living expenses are also almost double and shelter costs are 54 per cent higher. As shown, there are virtually no differences between figures reported in 1992 and 1997.

Average Monthly Expenses

"What are your average personal expenses in each of the following areas?"



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1992 and 1997 income amounts adjusted for inflation
n=511

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¹⁵ This amount excludes all "other personal expenses", which was \$283 per month, on average (figures presented in 2004 constant dollars which are adjusted for inflation).

Monthly expenses generally increase with age and carding level and are higher among employed athletes (who are older). Since the average age of carded athletes is older than it was in 1992 and 1997, this may be part of the explanation for the sharp increase in sport-related expenses in 2004. Monthly living and sport-related expenses are also higher for Francophones and athletes participating in individual sports. The table below provides this information in greater detail.

Average Monthly Expenses by Athlete Characteristic

	Total (\$)	Sport-Related (\$)	Living (\$)	Shelter (\$)
All athletes	2,583	905	935	743
Age				
<24	1,723	678	624	421
24-26	2,314	800	895	619
27+	3,183	1,083	1,121	979
Carding Level				
International Card	3,048	953	1,067	1,028
National Card	2,598	950	967	681
Developing	1,833	737	672	424
Employed				
Yes	2,965	982	1,069	914
No	1,981	728	744	509
Language				
Anglophone	2,482	821	872	789
Francophone	3,107	1,239	1,257	611
Athlete Type				
Individual	3,032	1,190	1,061	781
Team Sport	1,771	361	730	680
Season				
Winter	2,624	940	890	794
Summer	2,571	895	947	729
Region				
Quebec	2,954	1,199	1,163	592
ROC	2,474	817	870	787

The following two tables provide a summary of average income and expenses by age and carding level. Except for International team members, athletes do not generate enough total income to cover their total expenses, and even with this group the difference is only marginal. On average, athletes are required to supplement their total income with another \$3,629 in order to cover all expenses for the year. Considering their sport-related income (GAA plus sport-related), reduced by their sport-related expenses, athletes largely experience a more positive financial situation. Regardless of age or carding level, athletes generally earn enough to cover all their sport-related expenses, although the youngest, developing athletes seem to be feeling the pinch more than other athletes, which is largely shouldered by parents, creating a

divide in terms of access to high performance sport, between the youth with parents who can afford to subsidize their children's sport career and those who cannot. The recently announced increase of \$4,800 in athletes' stipend, however, represents a larger percentage increase for developing athletes which may go a long way toward closing this gap.

Average Annual Athlete Income and Expenses by Age

	Total (\$)	<24 (\$)	24-26 (\$)	27 or older (\$)
Current income				
GAA	10,608	8,496	10,502	11,901
Employment	10,090	2,306	5,493	16,621
Sport-related	5,850	5,004	4,872	6,934
Direct financial support	1,127	1,135	1,395	987
In-kind material rewards	952	671	943	1,116
Other	2,574	2,757	2,235	2,680
Total income	27,367	18,166	22,103	35,719
Expenses				
Shelter	8,916	5,052	7,428	11,748
Living expenses	11,220	7,488	10,740	13,452
Sport-related expenses	10,860	8,136	9,600	12,996
Total expenses	30,996	20,676	27,768	38,196
Total income minus sport-related expenses	16,507	10,030	12,503	22,723
Total income minus all expenses	-3,629	-2,510	-5,665	-2,477

Average Athlete Income and Expenses by Carding Level

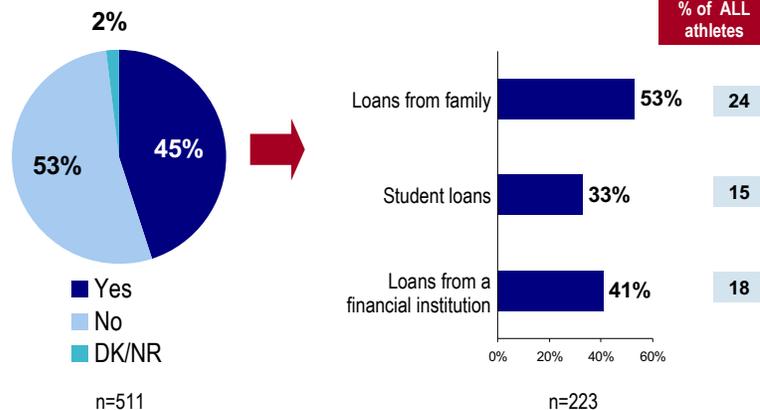
	Total (\$)	Developing (\$)	National (\$)	International (\$)
Current income				
GAA	10,608	5,723	11,165	13,198
Employment	10,090	5,387	8,603	15,479
Sport-related	5,850	2,599	5,106	9,409
Direct financial support	1,127	790	801	1,836
In-kind material rewards	952	662	807	1,232
Other	2,574	2,445	2,345	3,169
Total income	27,367	16,383	25,955	36,889
Expenses				
Shelter	8,916	5,088	8,172	12,336
Living expenses	11,220	8,064	11,604	12,804
Sport-related expenses	10,860	8,844	11,400	11,436
Total expenses	30,996	21,996	31,176	36,576
Total income minus sport-related expenses	16,507	7,539	14,555	25,453
Total income minus all expenses	-3,629	-5,613	-5,221	313

8.3 PERSONAL DEBT AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT

In terms of personal debt, more than half of athletes (53 per cent) report that they have not incurred any loans while pursuing their athletic career, although more than four in ten have incurred loans. Among these athletes, 53 per cent have received loans from family. One-third have received student loans (33 per cent) and four in ten (41 per cent) have taken out personal loans from financial institutions (although private loans are most often taken out only in the last stages of post-secondary education). Comparing the portion of the athlete sample that is currently in school with post-secondary students in the broader Canadian public, the incidence of personal debt among student athletes is lower. *Making Ends Meet: The 2001-2002 Student Financial Survey* reports that, overall, 74 per cent of students reported incurring at least some personal debt, compared with only 40 per cent among student athletes.¹⁶ This may not be surprising, given that Sport Canada supports athletes attending post-secondary education by paying for their tuition, which is a major expense for students.

Financial Loans

“Have you incurred any loans while pursuing your athletic career, and, if so, what type of loans?”



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Older athletes are more inclined than others to have incurred loans, especially a loan from a financial institution, while pursuing their athletic career. The same holds true for athletes who are not currently in school. On the other hand, full-time students and those with a university degree are more likely than others to report student loans. Athletes who have relocated to pursue their sport and who do not have

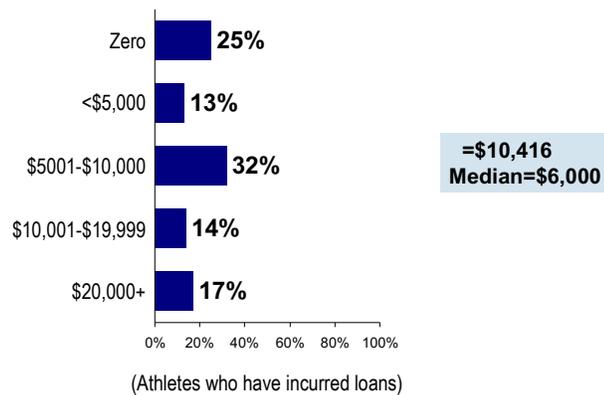
¹⁶ The incidence of “overall debt” refers to debt incurred in the study year, as well as any debt from previous years.

commercial or professional opportunities are more likely than others to have accepted a loan from their family.

Some athletes have incurred substantial personal debt during their athletic career (the average balance on these loans is \$10,416). One-quarter (25 per cent) have completely repaid their loans (i.e., currently owe nothing on their loans), but 32 per cent owe between \$5,000 and \$10,000 and one in seven (17 per cent) owe more than \$20,000. In 1992, the average personal debt for athletes was \$5,751. By comparison, the average overall personal debt for the typical Canadian student in 2001 was considerably higher at \$12,300.¹⁷

Balance of Loans

“How much do you currently owe in these loans?”

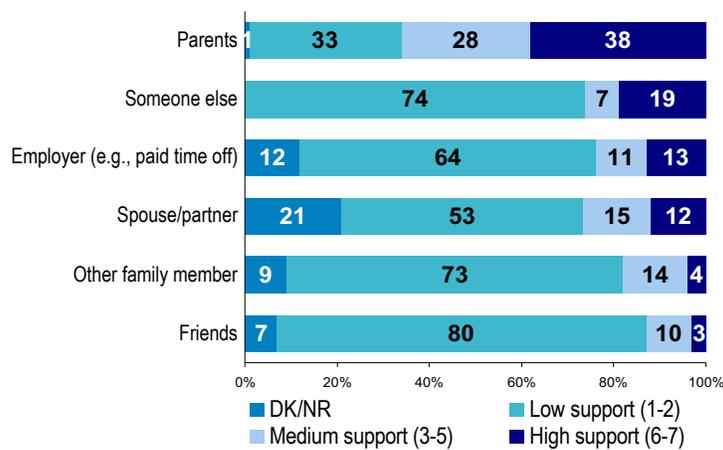


¹⁷ *Making Ends Meet: The 2001-2002 Student Financial Survey*. p. 108

By and large, the most common source of financial and material support for an athlete, outside of government assistance, is their parents. Among their personal sources of funding, four in ten (38 per cent) say they are highly dependent on their parents for support. Beyond this, one in five (19 per cent) report a high level of dependence on someone other than a relative, and a few athletes look to their employer, spouse, other family members or friends for financial or material support. These results reflect the findings from previous years. In 1997 and 1992, athletes' parents were also cited as the most common source of financial support.

Source of Financial Support

“Financial and material dependence upon:”



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n=511

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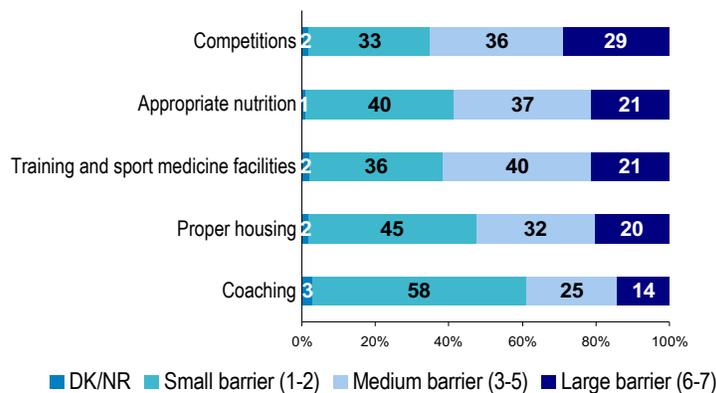
The degree of dependency on parents declines with athletes' age, education and carding level, but it is higher among the unemployed and those who do not have professional or commercial opportunities in their sport. Similarly, the level of dependency on a spouse or partner increases with age, education and carding level. Older athletes, those who are employed and athletes who have not had to relocate for their sport report a higher dependence than others on their employer.

8.4 FINANCIAL BARRIERS

With the exception of access to adequate coaching, more than half of athletes participating in the survey report that money has posed at least somewhat of a barrier to most of their sport-related needs. This is mostly the case regarding access to competitions (65 per cent say that money has been a medium or large barrier), which is further supported by the decrease in other international competitions reported in 2004 over 1992 (section 4.4) Six in ten say that money has had at least a moderate impact on their ability to follow proper nutritional guidelines and gain access to training and sport medicine facilities, while half say that it has been a medium or large barrier to access to proper housing.

Financial Barriers

“To what extent has money been a barrier to your accessing coaching, facilities, competitions, food and proper housing?”



n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

Athletes participating in team sports are less inclined than others to report that money has been a significant barrier to their access to four of the five areas listed (except for nutrition). In addition, athletes with access to professional and commercial opportunities are less likely to say that money has been a barrier to competitions, appropriate nutrition and training and sport medicine facilities.

To elaborate on this idea, athletes were asked to indicate the minimum level of personal income needed to support themselves while training on a full-time basis. Half of high performance athletes (48 per cent) say that, at a minimum, they need to earn between \$20,000 and \$39,000 to support a full-time training regimen and one in five (24 per cent) say they need between \$40,000 and \$59,000. Because respondents were asked to select ranges of support, it is difficult to provide a median or average minimum support overall, however, it would likely be roughly \$35,000. By comparison, the average minimum income required by athletes in 1997 was \$24,299 and \$20,863 in 1992.

Athletes were then asked about the level of income at which AAP would no longer be necessary. One in five (21 per cent) believes that support from the Athlete Assistance Program should not be linked to personal income (i.e., they do not believe that there should be an upper limit on personal income for AAP support). Again, given that respondents selected income ranges, it is difficult to pinpoint an exact average, however, it would likely be roughly \$50,000 (which is considerably higher than the average income needed to support one's self while training full-time), suggesting that athletes believe that AAP support is necessary for reasons beyond actual monetary needs, but more related to payment for the services that they provide.

Required Income Levels

	What level of total annual personal income would be the minimum necessary to support yourself to enable you to train on a full-time basis?	At what level of personal income do you believe that support from the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) would no longer be necessary to cover your own annual living and training expenses?
\$0,000-\$19,999	10%	3%
\$20,000-\$29,999	25%	7%
\$30,000-\$39,999	23%	12%
\$40,000-\$49,999	16%	12%
\$50,000-\$59,999	8%	14%
\$60,000-\$69,999	7%	11%
\$70,000-\$79,999	3%	4%
\$80,000 or above	3%	6%
"No upper limit"	--	21%



n=511

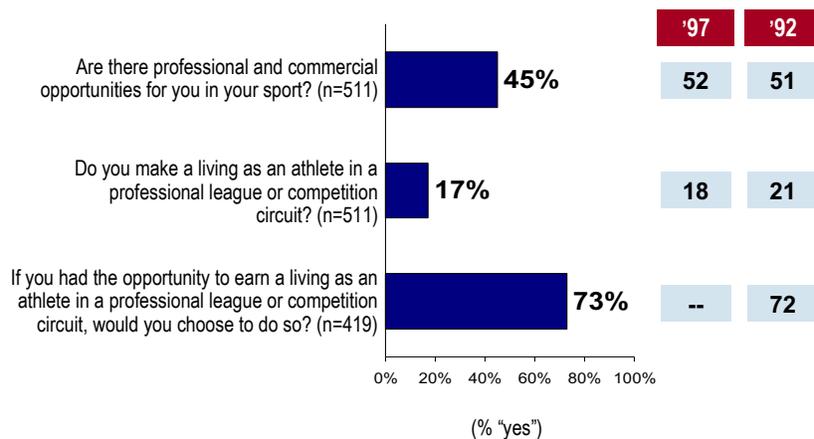
Status of the High Performance Athlete

- Younger athletes are more likely than others to specify lower required income levels to support a full time training regimen (50 per cent estimated between \$10,000 and \$29,000). The estimates provided by the oldest athletes tend to be somewhat higher (46 per cent anticipated between \$40,000 and \$69,000, compared to 31 per cent of athletes in general).

8.5 PROFESSIONAL AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

These types of opportunities are less prevalent now compared to previous years. Less than half (45 per cent) of athletes have professional or commercial opportunities in their sport and only 17 per cent actually make a living as an athlete in a professional league or competitive circuit. This may be caused, at least in part, by the overrepresentation of student athletes in the current sample, compared with the samples of 1992 and 1997. Most athletes (73 per cent), however, would welcome the opportunity to make a living by these means.

Professional or Commercial Opportunities

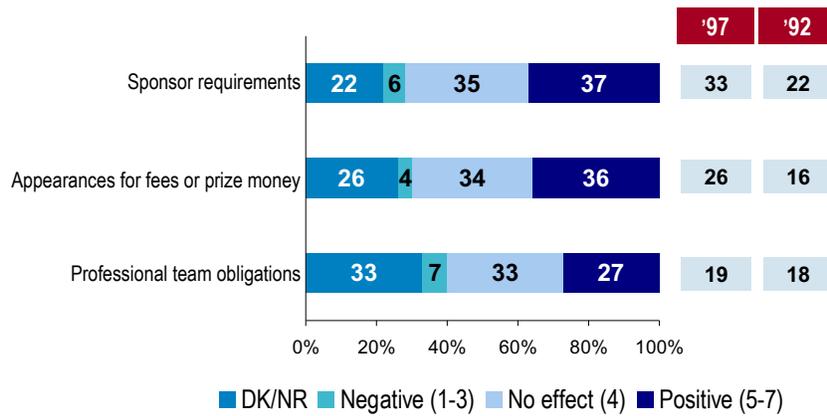


The existence of professional or commercial opportunities is higher among athletes participating in winter sports than it is among those participating in summer sports, but they are no more likely to make a living from the opportunities (which is something that is more common among athletes who have relocated in order to pursue their sport).

In addition, athletes have mixed views over the impact that these opportunities would have on their athletic career. The majority believe that commercial aspects such as sponsor requirements and public appearances would have a positive impact, however, there is a perception that the obligations associated with professional team sports would be cumbersome and disruptive. It should be noted, though, that positive perceptions regarding these opportunities have been increasing since 1992.

Impact of Professional or Commercial Opportunities

“Rate the impact of the following aspects of commercial and professional opportunities on your ability to fully participate in the national team program.”



n=511

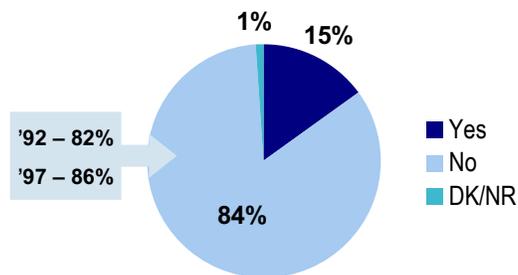
Status of the High Performance Athlete

Athletes participating in winter sports and those in individual sports are more likely to perceive a positive impact resulting from commercial appearances, while the youngest, developing athletes are more inclined than others to perceive a positive impact from professional team obligations.

The lack of professional or commercial opportunities would also largely explain why a majority of athletes (84 per cent) do not have an agent. Those who have access to commercial opportunities in their sport are more likely than others to have an agent. It is also interesting to note that athletes who have an agent report a higher average sport-related income (\$15,575) than those athletes who do not have an agent (\$4,247). Caution should be exercised when considering this result, however, as the total number of respondents in the survey who have an agent is relatively small (n=76).

Sports Agent

“Do you have an agent?”



n=511

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9. ATHLETE SUPPORT SYSTEM

9.1 ATHLETES' VIEWS OF SUPPORT

Athletes were asked their opinions of the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP). The vast majority of athletes (80 per cent) report that the AAP made it possible to achieve higher levels of athletic performance.

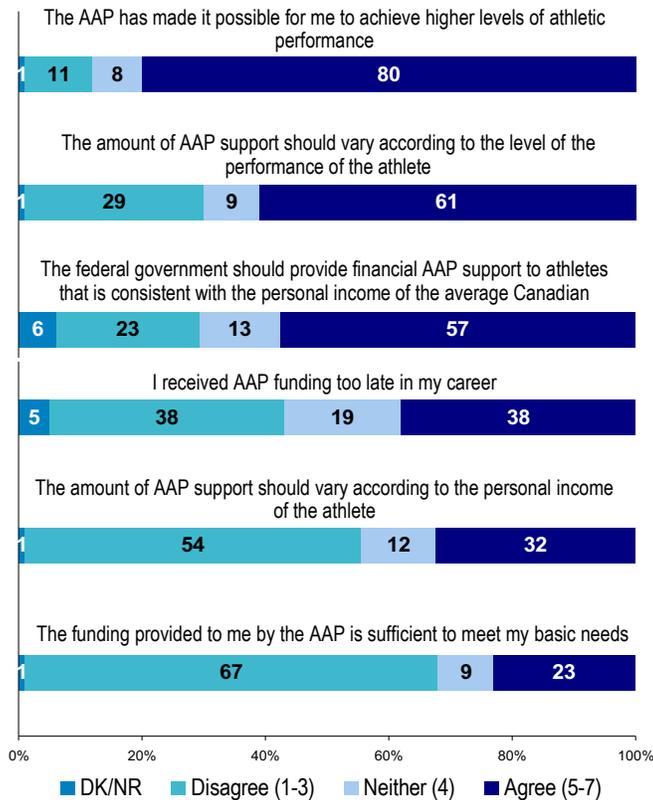
Almost two in three athletes (61 per cent) agree that AAP payments should vary according to athletic performance and over half (57 per cent) also agree that AAP payments should be aligned with the average Canadian income. More than half of athletes (54 per cent) disagree with the idea that AAP vary according to individual personal income (although one in three agree with this proposal).

Two in three athletes feel that the level of AAP support is not sufficient to provide for their basic needs (67 per cent)¹⁸. Furthermore, athletes are divided in terms of whether they believe that they received AAP funding too late in their careers, with equal proportions agreeing and disagreeing with this statement (38 per cent). In 1992, by comparison, many (59 per cent) agreed with the statement *"I received AAP funding at the stage of my career when I most needed it"*, indicating a decline in the level of satisfaction with the timing of AAP funding since 1992.

¹⁸ This is prior to the increase of \$4,800 in athlete's stipend, provided late in 2004.

Sport Canada Financial Support

“Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.”



 EKOS Research Associates Inc.

n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

Although most athletes say that AAP support made it possible to achieve higher levels of athletic performance, this is even more predominant among part-time students (compared with full-time students or athletes who are not in school). Developing athletes are least likely to report the positive impacts on athletic performance compared to other athlete types, even though, the majority still agree that the AAP made a difference to their athletic performance.

In terms of varying AAP support according to athletic performance, younger athletes (under 25) are more in agreement than older athletes (27 and older), as are athletes with no post-secondary education, compared with the university-educated. Interestingly, athletes holding international and developing cards are more in agreement than national athletes.

Older athletes are less likely to believe that AAP support should vary according to personal income level, compared with younger athletes, as is also the case with employed athletes. Similarly, athletes with an international card are less apt to believe that support should vary with income, compared with less senior athletes.

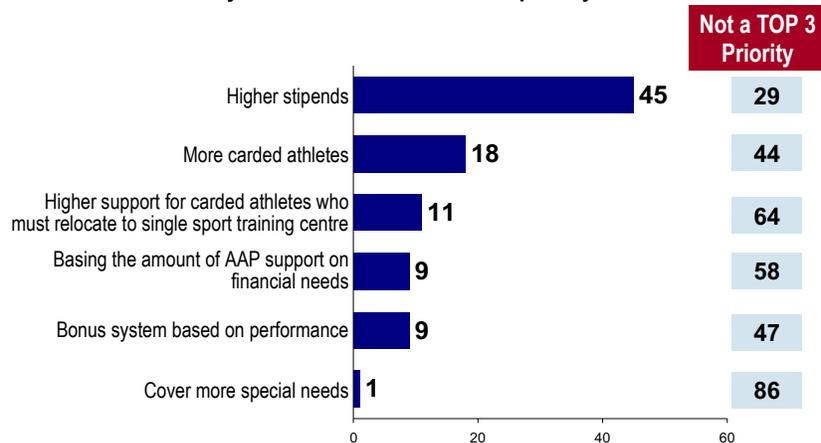
Older athletes, those with a university education and the currently employed, as well as Francophone athletes, are more likely than their respective counterparts to say that the AAP support is not sufficient in providing for their basic needs. This is also more often the case among, individual sport athletes and those who relocated for their athletic training.

Older athletes (27 and over) are more likely than the younger athletes (24 and younger) to say that they received AAP funding too late into their careers, as is also the case with Francophone athletes, the university-educated and those currently employed.

In addition to opinion on the financial support received from Sport Canada, athletes were asked what they believe should be the top priorities for the Athletes Assistance Program (AAP). Nearly half (45 per cent) think that the first priority for the AAP should be to provide higher stipends for athletes.¹⁹ Considerably fewer believe that the program should focus primarily on more carded athletes (18 per cent said this should be the first priority) or provide higher support for carded athletes who must relocate for training (11 per cent). Relatively few athletes think that the first priority of the AAP should be to base the amount of financial support on the needs of the athletes, to implement a bonus system based on athletic performance or cover more special needs.

Priorities for Athlete Assistance Program

“What do you think should be the *first* priority for AAP?”



EKOS Research Associates Inc.

n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

¹⁹ This was prior to the increase of \$4,800 in athlete's stipend.

Athletes participating in team sports are less inclined than others to think that providing higher stipends should be one of the top three priorities for the AAP, while those participating in individual sports are less likely to think that providing higher support for athletes who have to relocate for training should be one of the top three priorities.

Francophones are more likely to think that the program should focus mainly on more carded athletes, but they are less inclined to think that a performance-based bonus system should be one of the top three priorities for the AAP.

A performance-based bonus system is seen as a higher priority among international carded athletes than it is among athletes with national cards (who are more inclined to think that it should not be one of the top three priorities). Athletes participating in winter sports are less likely to think that basing the amount of support on the financial needs of the athlete should be one of the top three priorities for the AAP.

9.2 COACH VIEWS ABOUT AAP

Half of coaches and high performance directors consulted in the study feel that the AAP has made it possible for athletes in their respective sport to achieve a higher level of athletic performance (which is less positive than the 81 per cent of athletes who agreed with this statement), however, fewer than half believe that the basic carding standards of the AAP are reasonable and fair. As with athletes, two in three coaches believe that the amount of AAP support provided to athletes should vary according to athletic performance.

Coaches were also asked about the extent to which a number of suggested changes to the AAP should be given priority, based on the existing resource situation. Two in three identified deferral of tuition credits until after they have retired from competitive sports as the most important area of change, followed by a bonus system based on performance, and providing higher stipends (both suggested as a priority by more than half of coaches who responded). By comparison, athletes also place a high priority on higher stipends (45 per cent identified it as the first priority for the AAP), however, they are less likely than coaches to place great stock in a bonus system that is based on performance (only eight per cent of athletes said this should be the first priority for AAP and 46 per cent did not identify it as a top three priority).

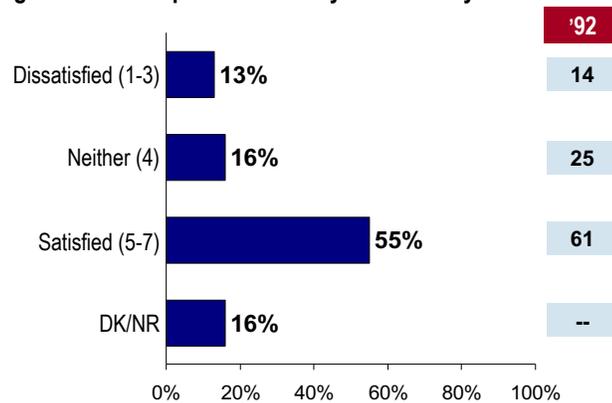
Coaches were asked about the various needs that high performance athletes have in their respective sports. At the top of the list is the need for flexible education programs (according to three in four respondents), followed by assistance finding flexible employment (according to a similar proportion). Financial assistance for relocation to a high-performance centre was the third most area of support identified, according to about half of coaches who responded.

9.3 NSO Athlete Agreement

A key component of the AAP involves a formal agreement between athletes and National Sport Organizations (NSOs) that specifies the obligations and responsibilities of both involved parties. More than half of athletes (55 per cent) say that they are generally satisfied with the quality of the information included in that agreement, which is down somewhat from 1992. By and large, satisfaction with the NSO agreement is consistent across the various athlete demographic groups.

NSO/Carded Athlete Agreement

“As part of the AAP, athletes and National Sport Organizations (NSOs) are required to enter into a formal arrangement: i.e., the NSO/Carded Athlete Agreement. Are you satisfied that this agreement adequately describes the obligations and responsibilities of yourself and your NSO?”



EKOS Research
Associates Inc.

n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

Coaches were also asked about various elements of the NSO/Carded athlete relationship. Just under half of coaches are satisfied with the NSO/Carded athlete agreement being able to adequately describe the obligations and responsibilities of both the athlete and their respective NSO. Just over one in three are satisfied with the NSO/Carded athlete agreement for their respective sport, and a similar proportion are satisfied with the NSO/Carded athlete agreement.

Coaches were also asked about the involvement of high performance athletes in NSO's decision-making in a variety of areas. The top three areas where coaches would suggest athlete involvement (according to about a third of coaches in each case) are anti-doping policy/programs, the code of ethics/standards of behaviour, training regimens.

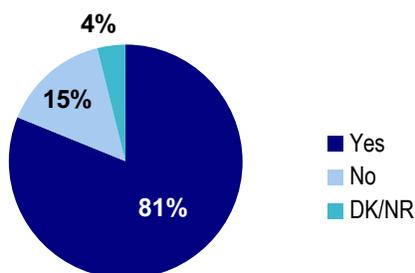
10. ATHLETE REPRESENTATION

10.1 ATHLETE REPRESENTATIVES

A strong majority (81 per cent) of athletes (currently active) know who their sport's athlete representatives are. Nearly one in five do not know (15 per cent).

Athlete Representatives

“Do you know who the athlete representative(s) in your sport are?”



n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

Perhaps not surprisingly, those in the oldest age groups are more likely to know who their representatives are, as are elite athletes and those who compete individually. Full-time students are less likely to know who their representative is compared to part-time students, as are athletes who participate in summer sports compared to those who participate in winter sports.

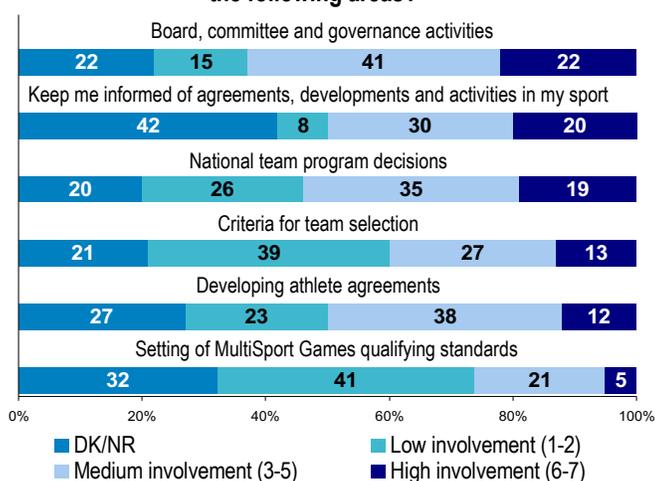
Previously carded athletes are about as likely as currently carded athletes to report having known who their athlete representative was.

10.2 INVOLVEMENT OF ATHLETE REPRESENTATIVE

Of those who knew who their athlete representative was, nearly two-thirds of current athletes felt that their representative was at least moderately involved in board, committee and governance activities. About half feel their representative keeps them informed of agreements, developments and activities in their sport, and are involved in national team program decisions to at least a moderate extent. Half also feel their representative is involved (to at least a moderate extent) in developing athlete agreements and four in ten feel they are involved in setting out the criteria for team selection. Fewer feel their representative is involved in setting MultiSport games qualifying standards.

Involvement of Athlete Representative

“To what extent are/is your athlete representative(s) involved in the following areas?”



n=434 (athletes who know their rep.)

Status of the High Performance Athlete

Generally, Francophones are more likely than Anglophones to feel their representative is involved in these issues to a great extent. Those who have relocated in order to pursue their sport careers are more likely to feel their representatives are not highly involved in these issues.

Athletes who participate in summer sports are more likely than those who participate in winter sports to feel their representatives are highly involved in national team program decisions but are less likely to feel this way when it comes to developing athlete agreements.

Older athletes are more likely than younger ones to think their representatives are not involved in developing athlete agreements or setting MultiSport Games qualifying standards.

Athletes not attending school are more likely than those attending full-time to think their representatives are not involved in criteria for team selection or setting MultiSport Games qualifying standards.

Athletes with commercial opportunities are more like than those without them to feel their representatives are very involved in criteria for team selection.

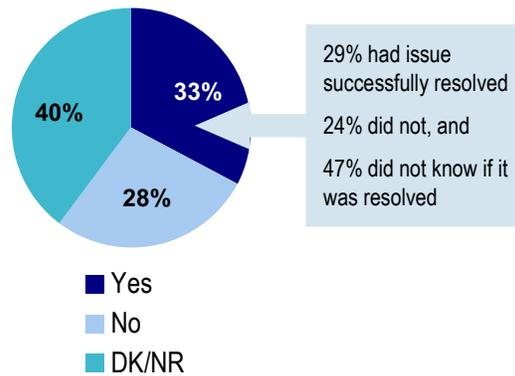
Those who compete on a team are more likely than those who compete individually to feel their representatives are highly involved in developing athlete agreements.

10.3 CONTACT WITH ATHLETE REPRESENTATIVE

One-third of athletes report that they have brought an issue of concern to their sport representative. Slightly fewer have not, and four in 10 are unsure. Elite athletes are more likely than developing athletes to have brought an issue of concern to their representative. This is also true of athletes participating in individual sports compared to those who compete on a team.

Contact with Athlete Representative

“Have you ever brought an issue of concern to your sport representative?”



(athletes who know their rep.)



n=434

Status of the High Performance Athlete

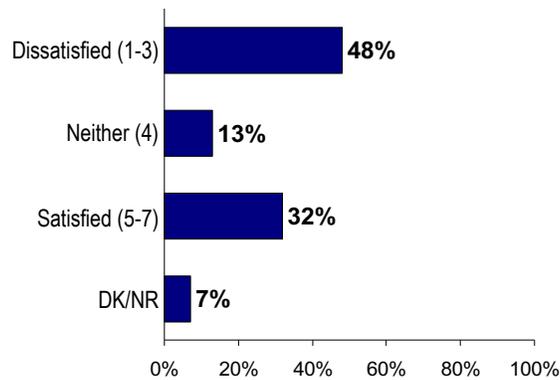
Of those who have brought an issue of concern to their representative, just over one-quarter had the issue successfully resolved, approximately the same number did not, and half did not actually know if it was resolved at all. Older athletes are more likely to have had an issue of concern resolved to their satisfaction.

10.4 SATISFACTION WITH ATHLETES' INFLUENCE

Half of athletes report that they are dissatisfied with the amount of representation and influence athletes have in decision-making and policy-making in their sport. Just under one-third is satisfied and one in seven are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Satisfaction with Athletes' Inference

“How satisfied are you with the amount of representation and influence athletes have in decision making and policy making in your sport?”



n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

As age increases, so too does satisfaction with the amount of influence athletes have in decision- and policy-making. The same is true as athletes move from developing to elite cards.

Athletes who participate in winter sports are more likely than those who participate in summer sports to be satisfied with the amount of influence athletes have, as are those who have commercial opportunities available to them.

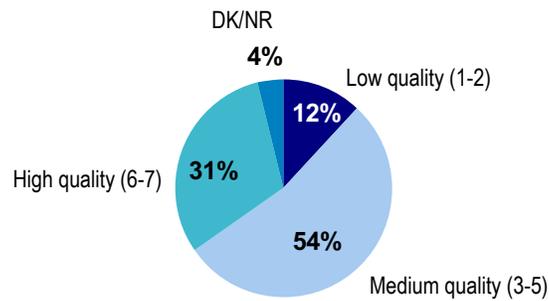
More than half of previously carded athletes are dissatisfied with the amount of representation and influence athletes have in decision-making and policy-making in their sport. One in five report being satisfied and one in 10 report being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

10.5 QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP

Just under one-third of those surveyed rate the quality of their relationship with their National Sport Organization as high. Half rated it as medium quality and one in ten rate it as low quality.

Quality of Relationship

“How would you rate the quality of your relationship with your National Sport Organization?”



n=511

Status of the High Performance Athlete

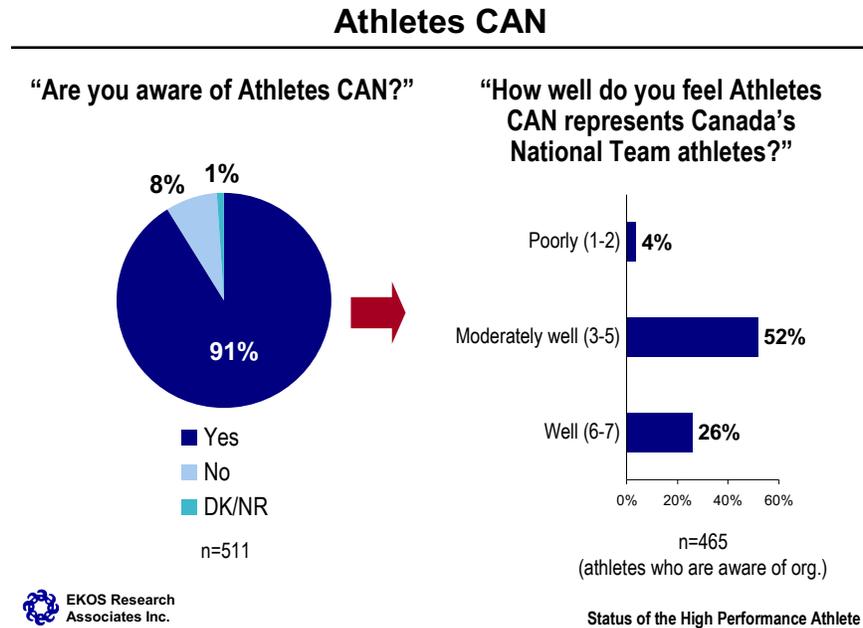
The number of athletes rating the quality of their relationship with their National Sport Organization as high increases with age and as athletes move from developing to elite cards.

Athletes who participate in winter sports and those with commercial opportunities are also more likely to have rated the quality of their relationship as high.

Previously carded athletes are equally divided on the issue, with one-third rating the quality of their relationship with their National Sport Organization as high, one-third rating is as low and one-third rating it as medium quality.

10.6 ATHLETES CAN

Nearly all athletes are aware of Athletes CAN and half feel that the organization does moderately well at representing Canada's national team athletes. One-quarter feel that Athletes CAN does a good job of representing national team athletes.



Older athletes, those with a university degree and those who are not currently employed (each of whom are older) are all more likely to be aware of Athletes CAN.

The same is true of those who compete individually and those who have relocated to pursue their sport. As athletes move from developing to elite card levels, their awareness of Athletes CAN increases as well. For example, all elite athletes are aware of the organization, compared with 76 per cent of developing athletes.

There are no particularly systematic or large differences in how well athletes think that Athletes CAN is representing athletes.

10.7 IMPACT OF ATHLETES CAN

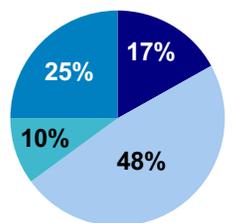
Nearly half of those surveyed feel that Athletes CAN representation has a moderate impact on their sport. One in 10 thinks the organization has a high impact on their sport, one in six feels it has a low impact. It is noteworthy that one-quarter do not know.

Previously carded athletes are divided on the issue. One-quarter feels that Athletes CAN representation has had a high impact on their sport, one-quarter feels it has had no impact and one-quarter feels that Athletes CAN representation has had a moderate impact on their sport. Among this group, two in 10 do not know.

Most athletes feel that communication tools provided by Athletes CAN would be most useful to their career, followed closely by sponsorship assistance. The usefulness of a funding directory and representation are indicated six times in ten, and networking, updated information and legal services are cited half of the time or less. Leadership training and personal skills are noted as least helpful services when it comes to their athletic careers.

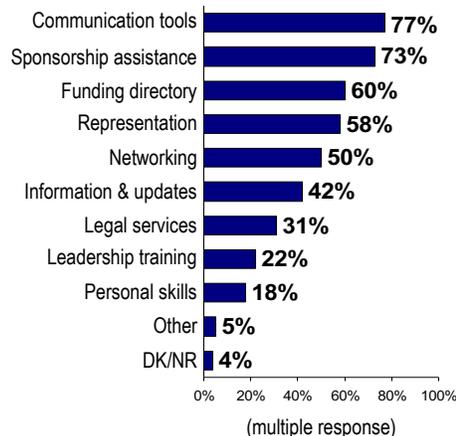
Impact of Athletes CAN

“How much of an impact do you think representation provided by Athletes CAN has had on your sport?”



■ Low impact (1-2)
■ Medium impact (3-5)
■ High impact (6-7)
■ DK/NR

“What product or service can Athletes CAN provide to you that would be most helpful to you in your athletic career?”



EKOS Research
Associates Inc.

n=465 (athletes who are aware of org.)

Status of the High Performance Athlete

Younger athletes are more likely to indicate communication tools and a funding directory as most useful to their career. Older athletes are more likely to feel leadership training would be most useful.

Anglophones are more likely to mention information and updates, and sponsorship assistance when compared with Francophones.

Those with the least amount of education are more likely to find a funding directory most useful, while the university-educated (who are older) are more likely to find leadership training useful.

Athletes who participate in summer sports are more likely to feel that information and updates would be most helpful in their career and those who compete individually are more likely to find legal services most helpful.

Perhaps not surprisingly, those with no commercial opportunities are most likely to see sponsorship assistance as a helpful tool that could be provided by Athletes CAN.

11. VIEWS OF CSC'S ON SUPPORT SERVICES

As part of the study a number of interviews were conducted with Presidents and Support Services staff from Canadian Sport Centres across the country. Following are the results of those interviews.

11.1 SERVICES OFFERED TO ATHLETES

CSCs offer athletes services in three main areas:

- Performance services;
- Life services; and
- Support services.

Performance services include: services related to health (e.g., physician care, physiotherapy, chiropractic care, massage therapy); sports science (e.g., sport psychology, nutrition, physiology, strength and conditioning); and other services such as access to training or fitness facilities. A number of CSCs offer discounted or free access to training and fitness facilities in their region. The Pacific Centre also offers discounted services in other areas such as restaurants and garages (for car repairs).

Life services include services such as career counselling, personal counselling and financial management assistance. Support services include other supports to athletes related to their professional and academic careers such as business cards, self-marketing, resume preparation, media skills, guides and tuition support.

11.2 DEMAND FOR SERVICES

CSC representatives (athlete service managers and presidents) were asked to identify the services in greatest demand from athletes. All CSC representatives agree that the most often requested services are those in the performance category. Furthermore, within this category, many noted that the greatest demand is for health services (such as chiropractic care, massage therapy and other services to address injuries), followed by services related to sports science. A few suggest that the demand for or emphasis on sports science is growing, and one believes that demand for sport science services is now becoming greater than the demand for health services.

In addition to health services and sport science, several interview respondents noted that programs offering access to fitness facilities are well-utilized and popular with athletes. One example is the Gymworks program offered by PacificSport in Vancouver, providing free access to facilities around the province.

CSC representatives were asked to identify any services that they believe athletes require but are not being requested. Several CSC representatives believe that athletes are not making adequate or full use of the life services offered. In particular, they believe that many athletes do not give adequate thought to preparing for life after sport through education or training. They argue that athletes should be preparing for a post-sport career simultaneously while training for their sport. Many athletes do not give serious consideration to the life services available (such as career counselling) until they have retired. Athletes who are “school-based” are obtaining an education for their life post-sport, but many others are not. These CSC representatives noted that some athletes experience great difficulties with the transition from sport. One Athlete Service Manager suggests that a counselling session be made mandatory upon retirement.

Other services that a small number of respondents argue athletes need but are not requesting include information on drugs and supplements, and the development of communication skills. Two Athlete Service Managers noted that communication skills and assertiveness are important skills in enabling athletes to manage their careers.

Several CSC representatives also argue that the demand for sport science is not as great as it could or should be, and that these services are underutilized. One respondent in particular noted that the demand for sport science should be greater than for sport health, and that through reliance on sport health services (such as massage and other therapy) athletes are seeking to repair “problems” which may or not be addressed at the source (in training plans). Another noted that many athletes and sports are missing out on potential gains in performance which sport science and sport medicine services can provide. As well as being underutilized, one respondent also argues that there is a need to purchase more sport science equipment and to obtain more qualified personnel to operate this equipment. At least two interview respondents believe that Canada is lagging far behind other countries in making full use of the potential of sport science.

In terms of the provision of services, some centres have shifted away from providing services to athletes on an individual basis and are instead channelling resources through coaches who are in a better position to make decisions on the allocation of resources and services to best influence performance. One respondent described this as a performance centered-approach as opposed to an athlete-centered approach.

11.3 GAPS IN CSC SERVICES

Gaps in services were explored through interviews. First, CSC representatives were asked to identify services that athletes need or request but that are not currently provided by the CSC. A number of themes or gaps were identified by respondents. These include:

- Requests for financial assistance: representatives from several CSCs stated that they receive requests for financial assistance to which they cannot respond. In addition to requests for financial assistance, one respondent noted that there have been requests for assistance in finding flexible employment (e.g., job sharing, part-time employment) which can accommodate the training schedule of the athlete.
- Needs of developing athletes: Several interview respondents noted that the CSC does not have the resources to extend services to developing athletes. They must focus their attention on high-end athletes. A few argue that developing athletes could benefit from additional attention, and are caught in a difficult dilemma: they need additional services to help them advance and achieve, but cannot obtain those services until they have attained a certain level of performance. One interview respondent argues that some developing athletes may be lost to the sport when needed physiotherapy or other services are not provided to injured developing athletes. Lack of services to developing athletes can have a detrimental effect on the future of sport.
- Additional assistance with accommodation, meals and travel: While some CSCs offer discounts on meals and accommodation, others do not. Several CSCs which do not currently offer services in this area wish to, but must develop the required sponsorship and partner support. Some CSC's have found it more difficult to develop this type of program in their region (e.g., due to lack of sponsorship support).
- Media relations: In some instances, CSCs are being asked to provide assistance with media relations such as when companies look to the CSC to arrange for athletes to act as motivational speakers or athletes are asking for help with media relations. One CSC has put together an athlete appearance plan, although they are not marketing this service actively.
- Need for more sport health services: Several interview respondents noted that the CSC does not have the resources to meet all requests for health services. There is a need for even more therapy, massage, etc. One respondent also argues that athletes should be able to obtain quicker access to MRIs and specialists than is currently the case.
- Access to services year-round: A few respondents argue that athletes should have access to services year round, including when they are training outside the country or competing internationally.

A few interview respondents believe that their CSC has the right mix of services and did not identify any gaps in services, although they do believe that they need to provide more of the services they already have.

As well as gaps in particular services, several interview respondents argued for the need to shift resources with a view to creating training centres or to developing a facility based approach. In most regions, facilities and athletes are spread out, and services are not integrated. Athletes are training in a variety of facilities without any professional monitoring. Another respondent noted that centralized facilities would also make it easier to provide housing and meals, rather than providing athletes with monthly subsidies. Centralized centres would also provide an important opportunity for athletes to interact and train together, gaining synergies from each other.

In addition to integration in training environments, a few interview respondents also noted that it would be preferable to see an integration in health services, so that an athlete is treated holistically instead of in a piecemeal fashion by various health practitioners without any knowledge or reference to other treatments the athlete is receiving.

11.4 GAPS IN THE SYSTEM

CSC representatives were also asked to identify services that they believe are missing but that should be provided outside the CSC. A number of gaps in the current system of services were identified. These are:

- Basic needs of athletes: some CSC representatives argue that the basic needs of athletes must be met (i.e., food and accommodation) in order to free the athlete to focus on their training and development. Athletes often face difficulties in “making ends meet”. They may retire with a significant debt load. This additional stress detracts from their training. One respondent contrasted Canada to the US, stating that universities in the US are providing meals to athletes, ensuring that they receive three balanced, nutritious meals daily.
- High quality coaching: Additional assistance or emphasis on high quality coaching was identified as a need by a large number of interview respondents. Several interview respondents argue that all high performance athletes should have access to high quality coaching, yet some sports do not have a full-time national coach, or coaches have too many athletes under their responsibility. Some noted that coaches’ salaries are paid on a piecemeal basis, and that many coaches are not even working full-time. Sport Canada, NSOs and CSC are all contributing to coaching salaries. Respondents argue that this is too fragmented and inconsistent. One respondent stated that Canada is not supporting our coaches sufficiently, and is losing the best to other countries. Several also identify a need to increase the number of specialists working with coaches (e.g., sport psychology).

- A less fragmented system: Several interview respondents noted that the sport system in Canada is very fragmented. A great number of organizations are involved in sport. Often, athletes (as well as the public) do not know where to go for different issues or needs. As a result, one interview respondent stated that CSCs end up acting as a referral service for requests. One respondent also stated that the fragmentation of our system is also evident in our piecemeal training environment.
- Additional competitive opportunities: A number of interview respondents argue that many athletes do not have sufficient competitive opportunities, either nationally or internationally. Athletes need exposure to competition (particularly international competition) in order to learn to perform under pressure. In addition to more competitive opportunities, a few respondents noted the need for financial support or assistance to get athletes to events. Some athletes are asked to pay large sums out of pocket to attend competitive events which they may not have the financial means to do.
- Better links between sport and education: A few respondents believe that sports should be better integrated with education in many instances. Many athletes do not have access to flexibility in their education to accommodate their training schedule. One respondent highlights the difference between varsity and non-varsity sports, and argues that more sports should be offered in varsity. This respondent believes that athletes in varsity sports have better access to services, and are given much more flexibility in their education (e.g., in schedule).

Gaps identified by one or a small minority of interview respondents include:

- Re-entry of previously carded athletes: One interview respondent noted that there should be a way for previously carded athletes to re-enter the sport system without having to start over from zero. This individual noted that there have been cases where an athlete has won a medal, retired, but then changed their mind. They return into the system, but have lost their status, and are treated almost as a burden to their sport.
- A need for incentive systems: One interview respondent argues that the system should recognize higher levels of achievement or performance by providing additional access to services.

11.5 HOW TO ALLOCATE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CSC representatives (athlete service managers and presidents) were asked to identify what they would change about the services they offer high performance athletes if they were to receive additional resources in their annual budget. Specifically, they were asked what they would do differently with an extra 10 per cent annually, an extra 30 per cent annually, or an extra 10 to 30 per cent for one year only.

Most interview respondents stated that if their budget were to increase by 10 per cent annually, they would simply provide more services in the categories they are already providing to improve access to services and provide greater support to athletes. One respondent also noted that they would contract sports health and science experts to provide services to ensure that athletes can continue to return to the same suppliers, thereby building a rapport. A few respondents stated that they would invest the additional 10 per cent in coaching salaries.

A few respondents stated that with 10 to 30 per cent more in their budget they would focus on providing additional assistance to the high end athletes with the greatest performance, and provide these athletes with additional services and equipment. According to one respondent, this investment will help further improve the performance of these athletes, resulting in more medals, inspiring the next generation of athletes and having a positive impact on the system overall.

With 30 per cent more resources annually, many interview respondents indicate that they would focus in additional areas of need, such as increasing support for coaches, and services to developing athletes (future national and Olympic team members). Several emphasize the importance of investing additional resources in coaching. One respondent also noted that they would retain more sport science and health experts (e.g., sports psychology, strength training, nutrition, physiologists) with an additional 30 per cent.

Several respondents also noted that with a 30 per cent increase in budget, they would attempt to focus on developing centralized facilities, where athletes could meet and train together, and receive services in an integrated fashion.

With additional resources for one year only, some stated that they would make the same investments identified above, but only for one year. Several, however stated that if the increase were for one year only, they would invest in equipment and materials. This could include sport science equipment, computers, or sports equipment. One respondent noted that if they received additional funds in an Olympic year, they would provide additional support to athletes and coaches to help them prepare (including support to attend competitive events at which they can prepare). A few respondents also noted that a one-year investment is not a very worthwhile option, as it does not make sense to make a short-term investment in coaching or athletes.

11.6 GREATEST OBSTACLES HIGH PERFORMANCE ATHLETES FACE

Interview respondents from the Canadian Sports Centres (CSCs) were asked to identify what they believe are the greatest obstacles high-performance athletes face to achieving their best performance. Several interview respondents stated that the obstacles vary by sport and athlete, and may include the need for equipment. However, most interview respondents identify some key obstacles or ingredients which are pivotal to ensuring performance. Many of these obstacles echo earlier comments regarding gaps in services. These include:

- *Coaching:* Again, most interview respondents emphasize the need for full-time, world-class coaching. They stated that the current approach (where coaches are paid piecemeal, there is little stability, many are not working full-time, or have too many athletes to coach) is an obstacle to performance. Athletes, themselves, also perceive a noticeable gap between their experience and expectations of coaching in Canada.
- *Training environment and facilities:* The lack of high quality and centralized facilities is identified by some as an obstacle. Athletes may be spread out, do not have the opportunity to train together, or have to travel to several different facilities to find what they need. Similarly, athletes identify their support in these areas to be significantly lower than what they need.
- *A fragmented system:* The lack of clarity in roles in the current system (and the number of players involved) is identified as an obstacle. One respondent stated that there are too many national organizations trying to do the same things in a very uncoordinated fashion.
- *Competitive opportunities:* The lack of competitive opportunities (at home and abroad) is identified as another obstacle.
- *Basic needs:* Again, respondents noted that the basic needs of athletes (for food, accommodation, travel) must be met in order to allow them to focus on their performance and achieve the best performance possible. Some also point to the need for financial assistance to attend competitive opportunities. The financial insecurity of athletes (and the stress of making ends meet) is identified as an obstacle. Similarly, for athletes, the largest and most significant gap between their experience and expectations of the athletic support system is related to adequate financial assistance.
- *A system that does not reward performance:* Under the current system, all athletes are recognized equally. Some respondents believe that rewards or incentives for performance would encourage or enhance performance. A few respondents stated that athletes should be held accountable or have expectations placed on them that are linked to funding (e.g., demonstrate improvement or meet milestones to continue receiving funding).

- *Focus on applied sport science:* A few respondents noted that an insufficient emphasis on sport science is an obstacle to performance. Likewise, athletes also perceive a definite lack of support in this area.

11.7 MOST COST-EFFECTIVE MEASURE TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

Finally, CSC representatives (athlete service managers and presidents) were asked to identify what they see as the most cost-effective measure to help athletes to improve their performance (i.e., that would yield the “biggest bang for the services dollar”).

Several interview respondents point to the creation of CSCs as a very cost-effective measure. Respondents noted that CSCs have been able to identify the best service providers in each category, help athletes gain access to services, and have gained efficiencies by negotiating favourable rates. They have also realized economies by negotiating favourable rates for access to facilities. CSCs have also provided athletes and the community with a direct point of contact. One respondent also stated that it is much more cost-effective to share expertise and services among sports.

A number of interview respondents stated that the most cost-effective measure or investment which could be made in athlete performance would be the development of a facility-based approach which creates synergies among athletes and allows sports to learn from each other. It is more cost-efficient to have athletes and service providers centered in one location. One respondent believes that there should be a gradual evolution to two to four national centres.

Other interview respondents stated that the most cost-effective measure that could be taken would be an increased investment in quality coaching, or in the development of a more integrated sport system.

12. ATHLETE PROFILES

12.1 ATHLETES UNDER THE AGE OF 24

Generally speaking, compared to others, the youngest athletes are more likely to cite the importance of an education, while placing less emphasis on employment. They demonstrate greater satisfaction with the recognition they have received so far in their career and are less apt to have relocated to pursue their athletic career.

From a training perspective, the youngest athletes are more inclined to agree that their educational commitments have made it impossible to train as much as they should and that their education has also suffered because of their sport career. On the other hand, they are less likely to agree that their sport opportunities have been limited by their gender.

In terms of different types of supports, these athletes are more inclined to identify high quality training equipment and programs in Canada as most important. In rating supports for athletes, they demonstrate greater satisfaction than others with the time they have to train and compete, as well as with their coaching, the competitions in Canada, financial support, and support from corporations.

These athletes are more likely to be unemployed or working in a contract or seasonal job, but also exhibit a higher satisfaction with their current financial situation. In addition, they are less likely to have incurred loans during their sport career, perhaps due to their greater financial dependence on their parents. Furthermore, these athletes are less likely than others to say that money has been a barrier to gaining access to proper training and sport medicine facilities.

The youngest athletes are more inclined to perceive a positive impact from professional team obligations, are more likely to agree that the amount AAP should vary depending on athlete performance and are less likely to know their athlete representative.

12.2 ATHLETES 27 AND OLDER

Athletes 27 and older are generally less content on a wide range of issues than younger athletes are. Compared to other athletes, those 27 years of age and over are less likely to cite the importance of education at this point in their lives and place a greater priority on employment. They demonstrate lower satisfaction than others with the amount of material awards they have received in their sport career and perceive their role in society to be mainly one of a symbol of excellence and achievement.

They have been able to integrate sport into their everyday lives, evidenced in part by the fact that their education has generally not suffered because of their sport career. They are, however, less likely

than others to say that the Canadian sport system has been supportive in helping them reach their potential and that the services provided by the Canada Sport Centres have enhanced their overall ability to train and compete.

In terms of supports for athletes, they are less likely to say that competitions in Canada, access to quality career/personal counselling, adequate affordable housing close to training sites and access to service in the language of their choice are important. In terms of the adequacy of supports, these athletes are also less satisfied with competitions in Canada, the quality of competitions and training programs in Canada, research and development, the means of dispute resolution, access to quality career/personal counselling and the financial support available to them.

The oldest athletes are more likely to be employed or self employed, especially in the social science field and are more likely to make a living in a professional league or competition circuit. They are still, however, less satisfied than others with their current financial situation and are generally more inclined to report a lower income in 2003 than in 2002. Furthermore, they indicate a higher incidence of loans (especially from a financial institution) and cite a higher financial dependence on their spouse and employer.

Regarding the Athlete Assistance Program, these athletes are generally less inclined to think that AAP should vary depending on an athlete's income. They also believe that the amount of AAP is not sufficient to meet their basic needs and that they received AAP too late in their sport career. Moreover, they are less satisfied than others with the description of athlete obligations in the NSO/Carded Athlete agreement. They demonstrate a greater awareness of Athletes Can.

12.3 FEMALE ATHLETES

Generally speaking, there are relatively few differences between the views of men and women in this study. Compared to others, female athletes are more likely to signify the importance of education and family in their lives. For these athletes, sport is mainly considered to be a way of life and they cite the importance of the pure physical enjoyment of sport and the personal/self development as motivating factors in their decision to pursue an athletic career.

Female athletes exhibit a greater satisfaction than others with the level of recognition they have received in their sport career and are more likely to think it is important for them to be a role model and source of pride for Canadians, as well as their cultural / ethnic community.

In terms of supports for athletes, they are more likely to identify access to quality career/personal counselling as an important.

Female athletes are more apt to agree that their opportunities have been limited by their gender (15 per cent compared with only two per cent of men), although women would likely be more

sensitive to the issue of gender bias than men, naturally evoking a higher response from women²⁰. They are also more likely to report having a student loan.

²⁰ Particularly given that the wording of the question may have influenced men and women differently in how they responded, caution should be used in interpreting this results and further investigation of the issue may be warranted.

13. ATHLETE SUMMARY

There are two overriding themes that stand out in the results of the athlete survey. The first is that athletes love their sport and are thoroughly committed to it, demonstrated, in part, by their willingness to relocate and make other sacrifices in their lives in their pursuit of excellence through their sport. The second is that they are fundamentally dissatisfied with the level of financial assistance and general recognition that they receive from government and others (corporate community, sport organizations and national team) for their participation in their sport. And, based on the level of income and expenses that athletes report in the survey, although government assistance has increased over time, the pressures from expenses are increasing even faster. This is particularly true of the youngest developing athletes, who are relying on parents to bridge the gap. This initial reliance on parents points to an argument for increasing the emphasis on government support early in athletic careers to broaden the access to sports to young new talent from all economic backgrounds.

These themes are also evident when considering the perspectives of coaches on these issues. Like athletes, coaches are also highly passionate and positive about high performance sport in Canada. They strongly believe that our athletes are able to excel in a variety of sports and that the country should have an overarching goal that drives its participation. Coaches also share with athletes a significant degree of concern about the adequacy of sport system supports and the benefits that athletes derive from them, especially with regard to the amount of corporate support athletes receive.

With the exception of calls for greater financial support (athletes recently received an increase in their stipends), athletes want to be recognized for the effort they put into their chosen career. They love what they do and are not drawn to it for monetary reward. Instead, they derive great satisfaction from their sport and consider it a way of life and they feel that the high degree of commitment they have to their sport should be met with an equally high commitment to provide the best possible environment for them in which to pursue their sporting goals, whether that be in terms of support from corporations, sport organizations and the national team (financial and otherwise) or sport infrastructure (training facilities, programs and equipment).

13.1 VIEWS ABOUT SPORT

Athletes are very positive about their sport, which they rank as coming even before family in terms of importance that they attach to it in their lives. Members of the general public almost always identify family as being the primary group with which they identify, a contrast which emphasizes even more, the importance that athletes associate with their sport. Sport is considered by athletes as a way of life, far more than a career, and it is almost never seen as just a job or form of recreation. Athletes say that they push themselves in their sport in a pursuit of excellence, to fulfill their desire to win and because they enjoy the

physical activity and self-development that it brings. They generally see their sport as a means of enhancing their quality of life. Fame and glory, and money are not part of the drive that motivates today's high performance athletes, nor was it at any point in the past decade or so (based on two other measurements taken on this issue in 1992 and 1997). Similarly, athletes emphasize the pride generated in their local community and across the country, as a reason to continue, seeing themselves as symbols of excellence and achievement. They do not see themselves as entertainers.

Satisfaction with the enjoyment, achievement and pace of their athletic career is also very high. The resulting commitment to their sport career is exemplified by over half of carded athletes who have relocated to another part of the country to pursue their sport and half say that they have suffered adverse affects to their personal relationships because of their sport. Athletes are far less positive about the level of recognition and financial support that they receive, however, particularly the older and more elite athletes. Yet, virtually all of today's carded athletes say that they would choose the same path again in the future, if they had to do it over again. In fact, this enjoyment of sport is so strong that although few previously carded athletes actually take up a second athletic career, most continue their involvement in sport in some capacity, such as coaching.

There is a general consensus among carded athletes that Canada needs a common goal for achievement in sport, and the most popular goal would seem to be to rank on par with other countries around the world that are similar in terms of size, wealth and available resources.

13.2 TRAINING

Most athletes agree that full-time training is required in order to be the best that one can be in their sport. To substantiate that view, the average number of hours that carded athletes train is 36 hours per week, and very few train less than 20 hours a week. This is similar to the pattern of training reported over the past decade or so. Athletes report year round training, with an average of 46 weeks on and only six weeks off from training annually.

Fewer than ten per cent of high performance athletes say that they did not attend any competitions over the last year. The average (median) number of competitions attended is four for games attended by only Canadian athletes and six for competitions attended internationally.

The largest proportion of athletes train in a single sport training centre. A slightly smaller portion of athletes say that they use a club program. Canadian Sport Centres are used by roughly one in six athletes across the country and fewer than one in ten use a university. Most importantly perhaps, is that there does not seem to be a single recipe that serves as the best training environment for all athletes.

13.3 SUPPORTS FOR ATHLETES

In terms of supports that are seen as the most important, adequate financing tops the list. This is closely followed, however, by the quality of the technical support that athletes receive. Two of the top four supports identified as most important (access to financial support, high quality coaching, enough time to train and compete, high quality international competitions and support from sport organizations and the national team), point to the quality of technical supports for athletes, not to mention the high premium placed on the availability of quality training programs and facilities and sport science and medical support (cited as highly important by eight in ten athletes).

With respect to satisfaction, international competitions, high quality coaching and time to train are at the top of the list (although these are rated as highly satisfactory by only half of Canada's high performance athletes). At the bottom of the list are dispute resolution, research and development and corporate support. Older, more senior athletes, are even less satisfied on a range of issues, than younger athletes.

Matching satisfaction against importance creates a measure of support gaps. At the top of the list of gaps is financial support. In terms of technical supports for athletes, the largest gaps exist in sport science/medical support (50 per cent gap) and the quality of Canadian training facilities (49 per cent gap). Significant gaps also exist in terms of the quality of training programs (48 per cent gap) and available time to train and compete (45 per cent gap).

Coaches and directors have a different view, saying that coaching and support from sport organizations and the national team, along with training programs are all very strong. In fact, coaches say that housing and flexible education programs and employment are the more problematic issues for athletes.

The perception of gender discrimination in the pursuit of their sport is more prevalent among women than men in the carded athletes circles, which is disconcerting and may be an area for further investigation.

13.4 EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Three in ten are students. Most are pursuing a university degree, particularly the younger, developing athletes. Roughly one in four carded athletes already have attained a university degree. The youngest athletes, of course, have not yet attained a degree, but are currently pursuing that goal. Athletes are engaged in a wide variety of fields of study, with business/administration, biological/ physical, and arts and science at the top of the list. The proportion of carded athletes pursuing studies at a university, at either the undergraduate or graduate level is very similar to that seen in the broader Canadian public.

Use of deferred tuition credits is of wide interest, with two in three athletes saying that they will likely exercise this option. It is a more popular option with older and part-time athletes (who in contrast to the younger athletes are no longer in full-time studies). To demonstrate the usefulness of this idea, roughly half of previously carded athletes say that they are currently in school and or went back to school as soon as they became a non-carded athlete. Additionally, coaches also suggested that deferred tuition credits to be applied in a post-athletic period, would be a top priority, as well as flexible education programs.

Six in ten athletes are employed in some capacity, although few are employed on a full-time basis, year round, and very few athletes are looking for employment (six per cent). There are slightly fewer athletes who are working today than was the case over the past decade. About half of employed athletes work 40 weeks of the year or more. The largest proportion is working in recreation or sports, but many are working in other areas, such as social sciences and sales and services (with the latter being a popular area among the youngest athletes). Even previously carded athletes are more apt to be in school than to be employed full-time.

Most athletes have targeted the field of biology or business for their future post-sport career, although many are unsure as yet, particularly the younger athletes. One-third of athletes indicate the need to complete a university degree in order to pursue a post-sport career. One in five say that they are currently prepared for a post-sport career and do not need anything in order to fulfill it. According to most athletes, there are many skills that they can bring to their post-sport careers as a result of their sport experiences, not the least of which are discipline and focus, confidence, and ability to make decisions. Financial resources is at the bottom of the list of what athletes say that they can bring to a new career.

13.5 INCOME AND EXPENSES

Athletes earn in the range of \$25,000 to \$29,000 a year, mostly from sport-related income, with government assistance forming the lion's share of it. Assistance is almost double what it was in 1992 and 1997, based on the current survey findings. The average expenses incurred by athletes total about \$2,500 a month, which is high compared to other people in this young age range, however, 40 per cent of it is related to sport (an expense not incurred by most young people). Excluding the roughly \$10,000 in sport-related expenses (which the average individual would not incur), the average income across all athletes is closer to \$16,000 a year. In spite of the young age of the population and the fact that three in four are not married, this is still a very low income level that rallies only slightly above minimum wage in Canada. The concern is that while the average income has risen about 32 per cent since 1997 (largely from an increase in government assistance to athletes), expenses have almost doubled across the board, leaving athletes even more cash strapped than ever before.²¹ Almost half of athletes have incurred debt somewhere along the way, although most owe money to their parents or financial institutions. The average debt is about \$10,000 among athletes who are in debt (\$8,302 among the 40 per cent of student athletes who have incurred debt). Comparing the incidence and average amount of debt among student athletes with those reported by the broader population of post-secondary students in Canada, student athletes are less apt to have taken on loans and report smaller amounts of debt.

Access to competitions is also a money problem for athletes, as many cannot afford to incur the expenses of these competitions. Athletes say that the minimum required income to be able to pursue training to its fullest is between \$20,000 and \$40,000 (with an average of about \$35,000, as a best guess). On the other hand, athletes feel pretty strongly that the government should be recognizing and financially supporting athletes, as the amount of income required by an athlete to make AAP no longer necessary is much higher at about \$45,000 (and one in five athletes say that there should always be support, irrespective of the income level of the athlete).

13.6 AAP SUPPORT

Layered onto the findings about athletes' expenses outstripping their income, is the fact that athletes are really only consistently negative about one aspect of their lives – the degree of recognition and financial support that they receive. Although most athletes agree that the AAP has allowed them to further their athletic career, most also say that the amount of support is insufficient and that higher stipends should be a top priority for change.²² This is evidenced by the fact that half of athletes are drawing employment income of some kind, to supplement their sport-related income, which does not cover all expenses. Further evidence that AAP support is perceived to be lacking is that half of coaches and high performance directors say that the AAP support is not fair or reasonable. (Coaches also suggested that additional support for relocation is a high priority for athletes.)

²¹ Data for the study were collected prior to the \$4,800 increase in stipends, which occurred late in 2004. This increase in stipend represents almost a doubling of sport-related income for most athletes.

²² Data for the study were collected prior to the \$4,800 increase in stipends, which occurred late in 2004.

13.7 REPRESENTATION

Athlete representation has a low profile. Many athletes are unsure of whether they have even brought an issue forward, and when they have, many are unsure about whether the issue was resolved or not, and how it turned out. Athletes are also pretty divided about whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with the representation that they receive (although older and more senior athletes are more positive). The picture is also similar among previously carded athletes as well.

Awareness of AthletesCAN is high, but the impression of it formed by athletes is only moderate, in terms of how well represented they feel and in terms of the impact that AthletesCAN has on issues that affect their lives. The most useful areas for AthletesCAN to target for athletes, according to survey results, are communications tools, sponsorship assistance, followed by funding and representation. Leadership training and personal skills development are seen to be somewhat less useful, which is expected since these skills are applicable to a very small segment of athletes. As such, its relative placement compared to other areas cannot be taken as a true measure of its value among those athletes to whom it is targeted. As a fairly new area of focus, it will also be interesting to see if the demand in this area grows over time, as awareness of this issue increases.