



CHANGE THE GAME RESEARCH — 2.0

Change the Culture, Change the Game



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

In 2021, MLSE Foundation launched the **Change the Game Campaign** and its namesake research project - the largest youth sport study in Canada.

Through an intersectional approach, the study examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on youth sport, the demographics of access & engagement, barriers to participation, and ideas for building a better sport system for Ontario's diverse youth. Key insights and recommendations were used to directly inform funding and community investment into youth sport and **Sport For Development*** spaces, programs, and capacity-building. Workforce development initiatives aligned with calls for "coaches who look like me," such as the Hockey Coach Education Program launched by MLSE Foundation in partnership with Scotiabank and the Greater Toronto Hockey League to change the face of hockey and coaching for Black and Indigenous youth, are now expanding. New partnerships were forged to more deeply explore mental wellness impacts related to the loss of sport, such as a longitudinal research study led by Nipissing University, MLSE LaunchPad, and the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario designed to chronicle the mental wellness of youth through their return to play journey.

* **Sport For Development** is the intentional use of sport and physical activity to build healthy communities and help people reach their full potential. Combines sport with development components to enhance effectiveness.

One year later, Change the Game 2.0 was launched, following the removal of most COVID-19-related restrictions on sport in the province of Ontario, Canada. In collaboration with Dr. Simon Darnell, Director of the University of Toronto Centre for Sport Policy Studies, and an Advisory Team of sport industry, research, and community-based experts, an online survey of youth (aged 6-29) and their parents/guardians was conducted. The purpose of the study was to better understand the current state of sport offerings in Ontario and to explore consistent themes of access, engagement, and equity for youth in sport alongside a 2022 sub-focus on mental health and belonging.

This report provides fresh insights on who has been able to return to play, the quality of their experience and, more profoundly, explores issues of culture, belonging and wellness, reinforced by two years of data and the perspectives of thousands of youth. As sport policymakers, providers, and funders deliberate the renewal of the Canada Sport Policy in 2023, important questions remain in light of continued awareness of longstanding inequities within and beyond sport related to the status of women and girls, Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities. How equitable are opportunities for the diversity of youth? How do engagement, culture, and the quality of experience differ based on intersections of identity such as race, gender, ability, income, and geography? Much media discourse in 2022 relating to sport and youth sport specifically has centred on safe sport and toxic sport cultures – what are data-driven avenues to address these longstanding issues currently facing public scrutiny?

The Change the Game research program challenges sport policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to actively – and consistently – ask **whom** they are working to grow and change the game **for**.



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF KINESIOLOGY & PHYSICAL EDUCATION

SURVEY RESPONSE

In total, 8202 youth and parents across Ontario participated in this research by sharing their return-to-play experiences relating to sport access, engagement, equity, and culture.

The sample was robust and representationally diverse in gender, age, geography, race, income, and disability status. Respondents included youth who have collectively participated in more than 60 different sports, as well as those who are not engaged in sport.

Research questions were aligned with MLSE Foundation's overall Change the Game campaign themes, including items adapted from standardized population surveys such as the Canadian Community Health Survey. Data collected included both qualitative and quantitative inputs.

All key insights and recommendations emerging from this research will be shared broadly across the sport and Sport For Development sectors including providers, funders, policymakers, parents/guardians and researchers.

To access the data directly and learn more about how youth overall, from different regions, or from specific demographic groups responded, please visit mlsefoundation.org/how-we-give/research to access an interactive online dashboard of results and an anonymized open data set which can be downloaded for additional analysis.

The Change the Game Campaign is dedicated to raising funds and awareness to address systemic barriers preventing youth from reaching their potential. Told through the lens of real kids MLSE Foundation works with, it shows us what's possible when you level the playing field. Our hope is that if we all play a role in changing the game, then every kid will have a fair chance to write their own story.

Learn more at mlsefoundation.org



ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE YOUTH SPORT

Expand access to free and low-cost sport opportunities that prioritize social connection and a welcoming, engaging environment for youth.

“I have no one to play with.”

The state of play in Ontario is improving in 2022 – albeit with continued fragility and risks.

With pandemic restrictions on in-person gatherings lifted, access to sport has improved across all demographic categories sampled, with 70% of youth reporting being able to access a sport opportunity of some kind compared to 30% in 2021. An acceleration of return to play plans has followed across competitive leagues and clubs, programs, and youth sport initiatives in community, recreation, and public settings. While the availability of sport overall has improved, essential questions remain on how equitable and accessible opportunities are for the diversity of Ontario’s youth, and who is being left on the sidelines.

Overall interest in sport participation remains unchanged for most (62%) youth since 2021. However, the actual uptake of available opportunities continues to be impacted by health and safety considerations. For example, more than 3 in 10 racialized youth consider maintaining strong health and safety protocols important for in-person participation, even if they are no longer mandated. In addition, both participation overall and frequency of participation remain stratified by income level and ability. Youth from the lowest income households (36%) and youth with a disability (48%), for example, are both more likely to be **playing sports less than once per week** than youth overall (25%).



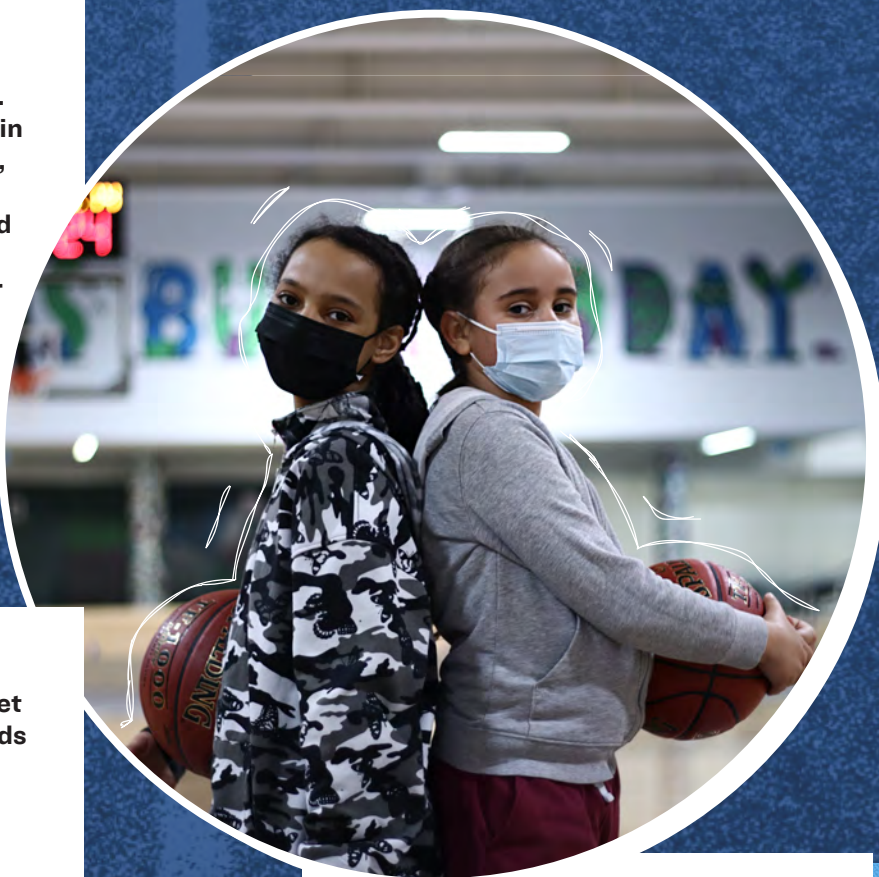
Across Ontario, there continues to be a vital need to reduce the financial burden of sport participation, access, transportation, and specialized equipment. Affordability and the “cost of play” remain key barriers across all demographic groups, with inflation concerns and household incomes not keeping up with the rising costs of living cited frequently.

Exacerbating this reality for lower-income households is that extra-curricular sport opportunities have not been available in most Ontario school jurisdictions for the past three years, a traditional source of free or low-cost access to spaces, coaching, competition, and equipment province-wide.

Further, the social element of sport is a growing theme from 2021 to 2022, with a lack of friends or peers to play with being cited as the top reason for less frequent or no participation in 2022 (51%), closely followed by experiences or perceptions where youth did not feel included as part of a team. These trends were particularly prominent among youth aged 19-29 (70%), as well as Indigenous youth, Middle Eastern youth and youth with disabilities.

“Challenge systemic oppression in sports that have benefited able-bodied white males predominantly. Fund women and girls to stay active in sports and have pro league options, have representation for minority groups in spaces like ice hockey, and ensure equal access to resources (coaches, equipment, facilities) for lower-income communities.”

“It should be easier to find a way to let all kids try all different sports that kids are not normally exposed to in our school system.”



“As a parent, the social development is most important for my kids. My daughter gets along better with adults like family and teachers than she does other kids her age. I am hoping that signing her up for sports will help her to make friends and bonds with other kids her age.”

IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSION & TRUST

Develop a culture of inclusion rooted in transparency and trust.

“I have no one to talk to.”

It is vital to create an inclusive sport environment where teammates are welcomed by their fellow players and participants and where individual cultures are acknowledged and respected at a coach and organizational level. Conversely, a lack of trusting relationships and a lack of trust in sport providers are a concern. They may contribute to a culture of silence around experiences of discrimination or racism in sport.

82% of youth report not having anyone they feel they can talk to about experiences with racism or discrimination in sport. This includes Black and Indigenous women and girls, and increases among Latinx women and girls (89%), youth from Northern Ontario (91%) and youth with a visible disability (94%)

Experiences with racism and discrimination in sport continue to be disproportionately felt by Black youth, Indigenous youth, women, girls and youth with disabilities. However, the perceived lack of trust among teammates, coaches, and the sport provider paints a sobering picture of when a sport environment is not an authentically safe space for those it intends to serve.

Youth who have experienced an adverse event report not feeling comfortable raising or reporting the issue due to a **lack of trust that teammates, coaches, or the organization will protect them.**

Youth and parents responding who may be aware of a serious issue having occurred to someone else have also expressed concerns about speaking up or engaging on the issue out of fear of losing their spot or status on a team. Amidst widespread discourse on safe sport, a consistent challenge remains that the concept of safe sport itself is often narrowly defined or assessed by the absence of harm. A holistic approach to implementation should also consider the preventative “how” of promoting and achieving positive environments or cultures rooted in trust and belonging which contribute to a reduced likelihood of harm.

In light of several recent high-profile instances of toxic cultures in hockey, basketball, gymnastics, soccer, and other sports, independent third-party reporting and investigative systems receive outsized attention as a part of the solution. While important, such accountability mechanisms are reactionary by design. Lasting change also requires the development of positive cultures within organizations and teams that are both physically and psychologically safe. When investing in policies, processes, and approaches to improve the culture of sport for all, indicators such as trusting relationships at all levels of a team or organization can serve as an important area of initial focus and a source of measurable indicators of progress over time.

Safe Sport refers to practices and policies that support the creation of safe sport environments that are free from all forms of maltreatment. Learn more and access Safe Sport resources at the links below.

**YOUTH AND PARENTS
COACHES AND ORGANIZATIONS**

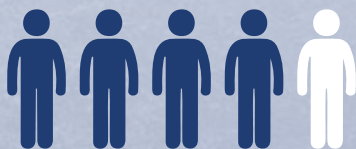
“The game of hockey must change and become more inclusive. The mental health crisis my son had from the racism he experienced on and off the ice (including from his own teammates and the refusal of coaches/league to support him) was devastating and as a result, he almost left the sport he loves. His story of racism in hockey is certainly not unique and comes with consequences that will echo through his life and ours. We are proud of him because his love of the sport has conquered the years of sadness he experienced however no child should experience this and the sport should do better to protect them.”

“Weighing benefits of whether to sign up: How much activity I’m going to get out of it, if it is a positive environment, if I’m able to go with friends. Weighing risks: the type of area, the diversity in the area, sometimes the places with the least diversity are the places where you feel most judged or uncomfortable, me personally as a black woman, this step is very important to me.”



“Change the game means that team sports are less exclusionary for kids who have a clear passion for the game but who may need additional support and acceptance socially and developmentally. Kids need to feel believed in and that their teammates and coaches are behind them. It is not about ability!”

More Than



80% of Youth

report not having anyone they feel they can talk to about experiences with racism or discrimination in sport.

This perception increases among Black youth (89%), Black women and girls (92%), Indigenous youth (93%), and Indigenous women and girls (95%)

HEALTHY MIND

Reimagine sport and play as an intervention for positive mental health and wellness.

“Sports should help me feel better.”

Following an outpouring of qualitative feedback from 2021 on feelings of sadness, frustration, and anger stemming from the inability to access sport and play, the 2022 questionnaire adapted items from the Canadian Community Health Survey to further explore the relationship between sport and mental wellness.

60% of youth not active in sport and 40% of youth who have participated in a sport activity in the past year rate their mental health as worse now than before the pandemic. Relative to youth overall, Black youth, women and girls, youth aged 19-29, and youth from lower-income households were all **more likely to rate their current mental health as either poor or fair** rather than good, very good, or excellent. The impact of the COVID-19-associated lockdowns continues to loom in this regard, with youth reflecting on how reduced opportunities to play throughout the pandemic have impacted their wellness in practical ways.

Beyond reflecting on the challenge, youth and parents have identified clear opportunities for change. When asked what would specifically improve their or their child's mental health, more **frequent access to organized sport opportunities** were important across all demographics, including more than 1 in 3 youth from all but one racial groups and more than 40% of all Black youth, youth aged 6-10, and youth aged 19-29. All racial groups frequently cited **access to outdoor play opportunities**, including more than 60% of South East Asian youth. Outside of sport and play, **easier access to mental health services** is especially important to 38% of girls compared to boys (26%) and to youth from lower-income households (40%) compared to high income households.

Altogether, access to sport, play, and physically active recreation opportunities are widely understood as important interventions for promoting positive mental health outcomes among youth, alongside access to appropriate mental health services when they are needed. Importantly, comparatively higher proportions of youth do not feel that the pandemic has had an adverse impact on their confidence for engaging in sport and physical activity – provided there are opportunities to play.

THE CHALLENGE

49% of youth aged 19-29, 29% of women and girls, and 53% of youth with an invisible disability report **not feeling as good about themselves** now compared to pre-pandemic.

46% of youth aged 19-29, 31% of youth aged 11-14, 37% of youth with an invisible disability, and more than 40% of Indigenous youth cite **having a harder time connecting with others** now compared to pre-pandemic.

42% of youth aged 19-29, 29% of women and girls, and 40% of Latinx youth report **feeling stressed more frequently throughout the day** now compared to pre-pandemic.

F&N CHANGE THE GAME

“The loss of contact with friends and coaches, and the loss of seasons and training have all taken a mental toll on kids. Allowing kids to be kids and play sports without having to worry about when their activities will be cancelled will go a long way to rebuilding their confidence and **improving their mental health.**”

YOUTH AGE 19-29



43%

report not feeling as good about themselves now compared to pre-pandemic



45%

cite having a harder time connecting to others now compared to pre-pandemic



43%

report feeling stressed more frequently now compared to pre-pandemic

“Sport should play an active role in **improving the mental health** of our youth athletes, which should be top of mind for all youth coaches.”



SENSE OF BELONGING

Invest in sport to build community belonging.

“I belong to a community.”

A recurring theme from 2021 to 2022 is that investments providing access to local sport opportunities are also a catalyst for building a sense of community belonging among youth.

Controlling for all demographic factors, access to sport opportunities had a meaningful impact on a youth's likelihood to report **a strong sense of belonging to their community**. Race, gender, newcomer status, and geography all correlated with sense of belonging, as did participation status.

The connection between sport access and sense of belonging was strongest among youth from Northern Ontario, newcomer youth, and Black and Indigenous women and girls.

Whereas the strength of these year-over-year trends supports a broader case for sport as an intervention for more considerable societal outcomes such as sense of belonging to community, a recommended area for deeper qualitative exploration is the interpretation of what community means and what types of communities are most impactful for youth. For example, does the community itself refer to a local geographic neighbourhood or other types of the community such as cultural, online, or those bound by a common interest?

23%

of youth who have been able to access sport opportunities within the past year reported a **very strong sense of community belonging**, compared to 7% of youth who have not been able to access a sport opportunity within the past year





“The Change the Game initiative is a great opportunity to give visible minorities and new immigrants opportunities to play and excel in sports that are widely played. Too many times we see kids not being able to have these experiences and left behind socially leading to further issues.”

“Implementing more Truth & Reconciliation towards the Indigenous community in sport is an asset to increase the numbers of Indigenous athletes but also make them feel welcome and comfortable. For so long the Canadian Government has stripped Indigenous people of their identities and cultures, it is necessary for us to try and incorporate & respect their culture in sport as well as respect the Indigenous land that we are on by creating more Indigenous community centres and spaces for the Indigenous community.”



SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT IN SPORT

Invest in outcomes and experiences which sustain a lifelong passion for sport.

“Inspire me to stay engaged.”

While return-to-play metrics are trending upward, significant questions remain regarding how equitably opportunities are distributed, how accessible they are, and the overall commitment or motivation among diverse youth to re-engage in post-pandemic play. Other recent research such as that published by **Canadian Women & Sport** has specifically called attention to concerns about comparatively sport lower interest among women and girls, who were already at heightened risk of drop-out during adolescence pre-pandemic.

Beyond change-making initiatives at the level of a program, team, or organization, sport industry leaders and policymakers should also consider what strategies or investments are likely to elicit a deeper personal connection and passion among youth for staying engaged in the sport they love.

In the words of youth and parents, three core themes emerged when asked to reflect on what could help inspire ongoing engagement in sport over the long term.

01 Sport as a vehicle for learning and development, with almost 60% of youth voicing support for sport and sport programs being used to teach and develop social, emotional, and developmental life skills within youth growing up in the game. Other specific ideas receiving broad endorsement among youth surveyed include the ability to access mentorship opportunities with sport professionals and requiring physical education classes in schools beyond grade 9. These themes were especially prevalent among youth with disabilities, Black, Indigenous South Asian, and Mixed-race youth, and youth from Eastern Ontario and the GTA.

02 Visible representation in sport and role models in careers associated with sport, building upon key recommendations such as “coaches who look like me,” which emerged in the 2021 Change the Game study. Additional items of interest to a diverse cross-section of youth one year later include having a new local professional women’s league or team to cheer for, seeing greater diversity in sport-related broadcasts on TV, and delivering on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action for sport. These themes were especially prevalent among youth from all racialized categories sampled, women and girls, and youth from lower-income households.

03 Although not as popular as the above two themes, specific youth demographics also cited greater access to opportunities for sport experiences outside of direct play. Transportation assistance and travel opportunities to experience a sporting event live, bringing another major international sporting event to Ontario, and campaigns for sport to advance larger global initiatives such as climate change received broad support among Black and Indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, youth from lower-income households, and youth from Northern Ontario.

“Change the Game means creating equal opportunities for all people from all different types of communities.

This can be done through mentorship opportunities for youth but also people who work in sport so they can have an opportunity to lead kids and set an example. This can also be done through increasing the diversity and representation in sports and the media and broadcasts that are associated with it.”

“Change the Game means education and the history and stories of the contributions of Indigenous athletes to the sports and games people play.”



“As a young Black girl in a predominantly white community I gravitated towards track & field because that is where I saw the most Black women - Flo Jo, Allison Felix and Sanya Richard Ross. I was inspired by the strong Black women in the sport of track; that inspired me to do it.”

THE OPPORTUNITY AHEAD

Reform sport with positive youth development outcomes at the centre.

“I’m more than an athlete.”

Are all sports Sport For Development opportunities?

At its best, sport can be a powerful vehicle to help youth recognize and reach their potential. However, access to sport and quality sport experiences that are both physically and psychologically safe for all remain inequitably distributed.

The renewal of the Canada Sport Policy in 2023 presents a unique moment to reset the objectives and outcomes of sport and recreation in Ontario and Canada-wide. In doing so, it presents an opportunity to refocus its accompanying implementation strategy toward grassroots investments that ultimately increase the number and diversity of youth who can experience and benefit from the kinds of opportunities sport can provide.

Emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, youth have been clear about how the ongoing barriers of affordability, health, safety, and social factors continue to leave too many on the sidelines.

Youth have also been clear about what constitutes a safe and inclusive environment to engage and the positive culture, social, emotional, and learning components necessary to sustain their continued engagement.

Notably, youth have also shared the blueprint for how to get there: an accessible system, healthy opportunities, and social experiences - provided by organizations where the culture is physically and psychologically safe.

Considered as a whole, the diversity of participants across all demographics and regions of the province make a case for sport reforms rooted in positive youth development principles - where the game itself is as much of a place for youth to learn, dream, forge healthy relationships and develop as people, as it is a place to play and compete.

Let’s listen to what they had to say!

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LET’S CHANGE THE GAME.

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CHANGE THE GAME

RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR POLICYMAKERS & FUNDERS

How to CHANGE THE GAME.

- 01 **Colonialism & Reconciliation:** Commit to supporting the implementation of Calls to Action #87-91 of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, specifically related to sport and reconciliation. Explore what this means for your organization and context.
- 02 **Policy Development:** Renew the Canada Sport Policy in 2023 with a clear mandate for the widespread provision of free or low-cost accessible youth sport and sport for development opportunities in urban, rural, and remote communities, and focusing the policy on positive social and economic outcomes at all levels of sport.
- 03 **Sport For Development:** Apply Sport For Development principles as a means to reimagine sport overall. Emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, youth and parents are looking to sport as a source of learning, mentorship, role models, and social and emotional life skills to support the development of players in the game and people outside of the game. This will require enabling investments in the practical implementation of Sport For Development methodologies, operational standards, and coaching competencies in the intentional transference of life-skills through sport.
- 04 **Data Governance:** Change the Game research insights add to a growing body of evidence that access to quality sport opportunities is a powerful intervention to advance a wide range of health, wellness, social, and community outcomes. The measurability of these trends at scale is limited until a critical mass of shared data on disaggregated demographics, participation trends, and health and social outcomes is achieved. A systems planning and oversight body should be empowered to explore infrastructure, governance, and multi-jurisdictional access issues for data necessary to enable appropriate tracking, monitoring, and evaluation of large-scale policy and investment strategy in sport.
- 05 **Social Capital:** Invest in community sport, recreation, and play initiatives in contexts where sense of belonging and social capital are issues. The availability of accessible sport infrastructure and local policies or by-laws which support expanding play and recreation opportunities in neighbourhoods are a means toward achieving these outcomes.
- 06 **Defining Youth:** Broaden the definition of youth whom investment in first-try and multi-sport play experiences is intended to reach. Grassroots sport is often associated with children, adolescents, and teenagers, whereas some of the starkest challenges, barriers, and needs associated with sport are experienced by young adults between the ages of 19-29.

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FOR POLICYMAKERS & FUNDERS (CONT'D)

How to CHANGE THE GAME.

- 07** | **Scale Promising Practices:** Several pilots and programs aligned with youth calls for “coaches who look like me” have been initiated in the past year to increase visible representation and diversification of the sport workforce. Funders and policymakers are called upon to engage in continued needs assessment, evaluation of efficacy of diversity initiatives across the youth sport sector, and investment in the scaling and expansion of initiatives that demonstrated the most promising outcomes.
- 08** | **Broadening Concepts of Safety:** Redefine sector-wide concepts, standards, and measurable indicators of “safe sport” to more fulsomely include the preventative elements of internal culture, organizational environment, and psychological safety within teams to complement the higher profile aspects of reporting mechanisms, transparency, and accountability in the event of undue harm.
- 09** | **Inflation Fighting Partnerships:** Formulate partnerships with providers and manufacturers of sporting goods and equipment to support the development of regional or community-based equipment libraries to help offset the rising inflationary costs of participation for youth and families.



FOR SPORT & RECREATION PROVIDERS

How to CHANGE THE GAME.

- 01 **Positivity by Design:** Design sport programs and outreach or recruitment plans to address the primary barriers to engagement and retention. Sports most likely to achieve post-pandemic growth in their game are ones providing experiences that are healthy, social, and physically and psychologically safe.
- 02 **Healthy Relationships:** Youth and parents signing up to play are seeking a safe place to form or develop friendships and healthy relationships. Alongside affordability, a lack of friends or peers to play with and not feeling welcome or included as part of a team are the strongest barriers to engagement in sport emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 03 **Space:** Organizations responsible for facilities, venues, and permit access are encouraged to consider how their spaces can support an equitable, multi-purpose approach to access. Are space and permit allocation decisions informed by an ongoing needs assessment that considers activity type, competitive or recreational purpose, equity factors, and variety of offerings for different age groups?
- 04 **Culture:** Advance a positive culture of inclusion rooted in respect for others, quality relationships, and trust. Cultural change is often cited as a priority for addressing issues of toxicity across the sport landscape, without defining what that could look like in practical terms. Here are five initial steps to consider for getting started:
 - i. Promote a welcoming environment for athletes, participants, staff, and volunteers through the adoption of culturally relevant approaches in operations, programming, and team-building.
 - ii. Seek to understand current access, equity, and engagement issues within your own membership and community. Discuss Change the Game findings on inclusion, culture, and trust for internal relevancy, how they may be experienced by your stakeholders, and what actions can be prioritized within your operating context.
 - iii. Implement, review and evaluate internal policies and processes intended to promote transparency, respect for others, accountability, and learning and development opportunities for youth.
 - iv. Review recruitment, hiring, mentorship, and coach training standards to align with youth calls for “coaches who look like me” while training the next generation of leaders in Sport For Development competencies involving transference of life skills, positive youth development, and wellness outcomes through sport.
 - v. Adopt a data-driven approach to monitoring the quality of internal culture. Apply a data equity lens to collect, anonymize, and use demographic data, including race, gender, ability, and household income, on an ongoing basis to better understand needs and experiences of athletes, coaches, and staff. This will help to deepen understanding, identify blind spots, inform decision making and monitor progress over time. If interested in sharing practices or refreshing your approach toward equitable data practices within your organization, the MLSE’s Community Engagement & Social Impact Research & Evaluation team is available for consultation and support, [here](#).

FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

How to CHANGE THE GAME.

01

Survey Milestone 3.0: Data collection for this research occurred shortly after the removal of most COVID-19 gathering restrictions in Ontario, at a time when most youth sport providers were able to accelerate their return to play plans. With schools having been a historically important source of free or low-cost youth sport opportunities, a follow-up census-style study is recommended after extra-curricular school sports have been fully reintroduced. Complementing insights from 2021 and 2022, this will enable a more fulsome understanding of post-pandemic youth sport access and barriers.

02

Open Data: Insights associated with broader impacts, such as mental health or sense of community belonging, emerged from questions adapted from standardized population measures such as the Canadian Community Health Survey. Students, researchers, and data professionals interested in more deeply exploring the relationship between youth sport participation and health or social outcomes at a population level are encouraged to analyze the Change the Game datasets for comparison with other openly accessible data from the general population, such as those made available by Statistics Canada.

03

Qualitative Validation: For two consecutive years, some of the most statistically meaningful trends highlight the impact of accessing youth sport opportunities as an important vehicle or intervention for fostering a sense of community belonging. Additional qualitative research is recommended to develop a deeper understanding of sport access itself as an “intervention.” Key follow-up research might explore whether youth or parents conceptualize the language of community as referring to a geographic neighbourhood, or another type of community bound by affiliation with a culture, interest, or network, and the additional implications of community belonging through sport.

04

Motivation: Evidence from the past two years suggest a broad cross-section of youth have reprioritized what they hope to gain from sport opportunities, away from competition and in favour of opportunities that are physically and psychologically safe, where healthy relationships can be forged, and where they feel included as part of a team. Researchers and evaluators interested in physical literacy, pandemic recovery, and the state of play overall are encouraged to continue asking sport and community program participants about their motivations to play in order to continue monitoring and measuring the extent to which these shifts in motivation and interest are lasting.

NOTE: Anonymized versions of Change the Game data from both 2021 and 2022 are available for download [HERE](#), and interested researchers and data professionals from across the sector are encouraged to use it to advance further exploration, analysis, and discovery of important insights to guide youth sport forward.



END NOTES

This report may be cited as:

MLSE Foundation, Change the Game 2.0: Change the Culture, Change the Game, (October 2022).

All key insights from this research will be shared broadly across the sport and Sport For Development sectors, including community organizations that use sport as a tool for social change, as well as sport organizations, funders, policymakers, and researchers. For an anonymized version of the data and to learn more about how youth overall or from different regions or demographic groups responded to the questions, please visit <https://www.mlsefoundation.org/how-we-give/research> to access an interactive online dashboard of results and an anonymized open data set, which can be downloaded for additional use.

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- **Leger**





LET'S CHANGE THE GAME.