

Written Submission  
to the  
**Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO)**  
Study on  
**Women and Girls in Sport**

Submitted by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA)



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## Introduction

The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) is a national organization dedicated to realizing the full potential of parks and recreation as a major contributor to community health and vibrancy. We appreciate the opportunity to submit this brief which includes recommendations about how community-based recreational sport can help the federal government achieve its goal of gender equality in sport at every level by 2035.

## The current situation

To achieve gender equity in recreational sport, Canada has much work to do.

The [Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute \(CFLRI\)](#) found that while [36% of adult men participate in sport, only 19% of women do so](#).<sup>1</sup>

According to the recently released [Rally Report](#) (Canadian Women & Sport, 2022)<sup>2</sup>:

- By adolescence, half of girls are not participating in sports
- One in three of 13 to 18-year-old girls currently engaged in sport are unsure if they will continue to participate
- 37% of sport leaders report that gender is not considered when they determine how to allocate resources such as funds, facility access, and coaching time

Further, in a 2021 survey conducted by CPRA, 80% of recreation leaders reported that gender was not considered when allocating time and space at recreation facilities. This results in the continuation of the current situation, which is rooted in a lack of knowledge, inadequate policies on which to base decisions, and a lack of financial resources, a status quo that is biased against women and girls.

Lifelong participation starts at the grassroots, community level. Women and girls face many barriers which lead to higher dropout rates. These include:

- Lack of access to facilities due to policies that most often favour male-dominated sport leagues
- Facility design that makes women and girls feel unwelcome or unsafe. Many aging facilities do not have adequate space or amenities to meet the needs of equity seeking groups, including women and girls, newcomers, and 2SLGBTQ+ communities
- Lack of women in leadership positions and lack of role models
- Lack of access to high quality, safe programs that are free from harassment and bullying
- Lack of access to childcare
- Lack of access to transportation
- Inadequate funding

To the detriment of all Canadians, women and girls are not experiencing the physical, mental, and social benefits of participating in community recreational sport.

## CPRA and the sector are enhancing gender equity

CPRA shares the Government of Canada's laudable goal of achieving gender equity in sport at every level by 2035. We look forward to supporting the Government of Canada in achieving that goal by contributing to the implementation of the recommendations above.

CPRA has a proven track record of success delivering programs at a national level, in both official languages. Some examples of program outcomes that CPRA has delivered, with funding from the Government of Canada include:

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<sup>1</sup> Monitoring & Tracking The Field, Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, February 2022, <https://cflri.ca/sites/default/files/2022-02/CFLRI-TrackingTheField-SportParticipation-EN-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Rally Report 2022, Canadian Women & Sport, December 2022, <https://womenandsport.ca/rally-report-2022/>

- [CPRA Gender Equity in Recreational Sport Initiative](#): With \$2.5 million from the Government of Canada (Sport Canada), this initiative included a community grants program, toolkit to optimize facility use and design, workshop series in partnership with Canadian Women & Sport and webinar series in an effort to help achieve gender equity in sport at every level by 2035.
- Women and Gender Equality Canada initiative: This project, with an investment of \$549,149, builds on the initial investment from the Government of Canada described above. The goal of this project is to build community capacity in the recreation sector to address gender inequities through the delivery of community workshops, an enhanced gender equity toolkit of resources, and the development of a community of practice.
- [Reaching Each and Every One](#): This program received \$8 million from the Government of Canada's Community Sport for All Initiative. This new opportunity provides funding for community-led projects that aim to remove barriers and increase participation rates in recreational sport for equity deserving groups, in particular for Black, Indigenous, racially diverse, 2SLGBTQIA+, low-income and newcomer populations, as well as people living with disabilities. Building on previous project work, and with the data included in the Rally Report, women and girls will certainly play a key role in the delivery of this program.

## Recommendations

1. Create a federally led taskforce, that includes multi-sector and multi-level partners focused on gender equity in sport, that will, together, make recommendations related to evidence-informed practices, innovative solutions, the coordination of efforts and the tracking of progress towards gender equality in sport at every level by 2035.
2. Through the deployment of financial and other resources, build on existing initiatives in the recreation and community sport sectors that remove barriers for women and girls to participate in community recreational sport.
3. Provide directed funding that can ultimately support municipalities and non-profit sport and recreation facility operators to enhance and retrofit facilities to be physically and emotionally safe and more inclusive.
4. Ensure federal initiatives are aimed at all levels of sport, especially recreational level community-based sport, in communities across Canada.

## Conclusion

Achieving gender equity in sport at all levels is achievable but requires action. CPRA believes implementing the recommendations above will help achieve better outcomes for women and girls by providing more opportunities for participation in recreational community sport. We welcome the opportunity to appear at Committee to discuss our recommendations.

## About CPRA

The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) is a national organization dedicated to realizing the full potential of parks and recreation as a major contributor to community health and vibrancy. Membership includes the 13 provincial and territorial parks and recreation associations and their extensive networks of service providers in over 90% of Canadian communities. To learn more about CPRA, please visit <https://cp.ra.ca>.