

Maunga Wāhine – Female Snow Sports Athlete Survey – RESULTS ARE IN

August 2024

First and foremost, a massive thank you to all the brilliant wāhine who completed our survey. I'm so grateful to you for taking the time and for sharing your experiences with such clarity and honesty.

Key findings of the survey

Athlete Experience

- 89% of respondents agree that competing in snow sports brings them happiness and joy and the same proportion would actively encourage other girls and women to pursue competitive snow sports.
- 34% don't think they're treated fairly, irrespective of their gender. 37% don't feel safe to speak up and present different ideas. And 33% don't feel supported to grow and thrive in snow sports.
- 55% of respondents over the age of 16 report having encountered specific barriers or obstacles that make it harder for them to thrive in competitive snow sports than men and boys. This number increases to 70% among our youngest, 12-15 year old respondents.
 - When asked to describe those barriers or obstacles our women and girls largely describe a whole host of ways in which they're treated as second class citizens - from having smaller trophies, less investment, fewer opportunities and fewer role models through to receiving less attention, support and understanding from coaches and also having to deal with criticism and negativity from others simply for being female.
 - When asked to describe what changes they'd recommend are made to the culture of snow sports to make it a better place / space for girls and women the themes that emerged most strongly were: 1) more female coaches 2) more support for women and girls 3) more education / understanding about female athletic health and performance and to 4) stop treating girls and women as 2nd class citizens.

Training and Development

- 45% of respondents do not agree that the development programmes they participated in were well designed to support them succeed as female athlete.

- When asked what changes they'd recommend are made to those development programmes the topics raised most often were 1) More female coaches, and more females involved in general 2) Better education for coaches about female athletic performance and health, 3) have SOME girl only sessions in camps and programmes, though most respondents don't want separate camps or programmes, 4) more off snow development 5) improve quality of coaches so they're more skilled in creating supportive, encouraging, confidence building environments where athletes support and build each other up rather than put each other down 6) make sure girls and women get as much attention from coaches as boys and men.
- When asked what "off-snow" development would significantly contribute to their development as athletes the following were identified as the top 5 topics: 1) Strength and conditioning 2) Female focused sports medicine 3) Performance psychology 4) Confidence & resilience 5) Nutrition.
- Of female athletes who have had a female coach, more than 85% report there is either some difference or a big difference in having a female coach compared to a male coach. When asked to describe that difference the following reasons were raised most often 1) They understand me better 2) More relatable, easier to build a relationship with them 3) More supportive and empathetic 4) Easier to talk 5) More inspiring or aspirational. 43% of respondents preferred having a female coach and of those who have never had a female coach, more than 55% would have liked one.

Career Consideration

- More than 90% of respondents are or did consider a career in snow sports and areas of greatest interest were 1) coaching, 2) instructing and 3) being a professional athlete.

Safeguarding

- 80% of respondents report having experienced or witnessed negative attitudes and prejudices being expressed around gender. 47% report experiencing or witnessing bullying, harassment or abuse from professional adults in the industry and 41% report experiencing or witnessing the same treatment from peers.
- While 71% of respondents do feel confident in raising concerns to others if they witnessed or experienced wrong-doing, only 55% are confident

appropriate action would be taken to protect them and others and hold wrongdoers to account.

Demography

- We had useable responses from 111 women and girls. 2/3 were former athletes and 1/3 were current athletes. Respondents were broadly representative of our membership – 54% were alpine ski racers, 30% compete in freeride, 26% in freeski and 20% as snowboarders. We had good representation from clubs and programmes right across the country.
- Alpine ski racers report a more positive experience overall relative to athletes in other disciplines – though still with plenty of opportunity for improvement – and female snow boarders report the least positive experience overall. Current athletes are more positive than former athletes, but the difference isn't large.

What's happening in response

There's much to digest. And while women and girls love competing in snow sports, would encourage others to get involved and considered pursuing it as a career, there's still much to do to before girls and women feel equally included, valued and supported. Here are some of the first moves we're making in Snow Sports NZ in response to this feedback:

- **Female Athlete Development Support** – we will develop and share resources to educate our female athletes about strength & conditioning, female focused sports medicine, performance psychology, confidence & resilience and nutrition. We'll make those resources available to parents and coaching teams too. And when they're ready, we'll run workshops to bring the content to life for our female athletes.
- We're **raising awareness of the experience women and girls have in snow sports** by sharing these survey results with our pilot partners and giving them the chance to consider their own response activities. I want to give a particular shout out to the team at Cardrona and Treble Cone who've organised to have me in to share the full results with their leadership and coaching teams. I'm looking forward to doing the same with the coaching teams of our other pilot partners too.
- We're pushing our '[Peak Respect – Snow Pact](#)' which sets out the standards of behaviour required by everyone involved in Snow Sports NZ events to create a safe, fun and respectful environment for all competitors.

- We're now **gathering feedback about all Snow Sports NZ events more consistently** so we can better measure and track the athlete experience at our events. We'll also be able to identify where that experience differs for girls and women so we can do something about it.
- We're introducing a **Maunga Wāhine Award** to the Snow Sports NZ Awards to recognise and spotlight female contribution to Snow Sports.
- We're about to launch a **Female Snow Sports Coaches Survey** so we can better understand the experience of female coaches. Together with the athlete feedback it'll help us identify what can be done to support more women into snow sports coaching and what might be done to upskill existing coaches to better support female athletes.

These are just our first moves. We'll continue to develop our plan as we learn more. We'll work with our pilot partners and wider industry to build safe, welcoming, inclusive, fun and fair snow sports environments that enrich the lives of everyone in them, including women and girls. And we'll encourage and support people to speak up when those standards are not met. We'll raise the flag and take action when we spot opportunities to do better by women and girls and we encourage everyone in the wider snow sports community to do the same.