

# ATHLETES 4 SOCIETY PROJECT

EMPOWERING THE PUBLIC VALUE OF SPORT THROUGH ATHLETES AS ROLE MODELS

## Results report: Athletes & federations survey

*Sofie Smismans  
Lynn Praet  
Inge Derom  
Veerle De Bosscher*

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# ATHLETES4SOCIETY

## WP2 – Evaluating the public value of sport

*Athletes & federations  
survey*



# EVALUATING THE PUBLIC VALUE OF SPORT

## OVERVIEW

### WP1: Project Management

#### WP2: Evaluating public value

WP2.a: Literature search

WP2.b: Develop survey

WP2.c: Programme & start population survey

WP2.d: Survey amongst federations & athletes

#### WP3: Inspirational practices

WP3.a: Detection of inspirational practices

WP3.b: Evaluation of inspirational practices

WP3.c: Sharing of inspirational practices

#### WP4: Managing public value

WP4.a: Develop toolkit with guidelines

WP4.b: Develop 'train the NGB' bootcamp

WP4.c: Test & evaluate toolkit

WP4.d: Test & evaluate bootcamp

#### WP5: Stimulating public value

WP5.a: Setup campaign 'Athletes 4 Society Challenge'

WP5.b: Launch 'Athletes 4 Society Challenge' across EU

WP5.c: Evaluation of submitted projects

WP5.d: Award of 'Athletes 4 Society Challenge' winner

### WP6: Communication, dissemination and legacy strategy

# EVALUATING THE PUBLIC VALUE OF SPORT

## RATIONALE






By involving elite athletes and sport federation representatives as the main stakeholders, this research aims to gain a more in-depth view at:

- **Self-perception** of being an athlete role model and what this role entails;
- **Willingness** to develop and participate in athlete role model programmes;
- **Thresholds** concerning developing and participating in athlete role model programmes.

# EVALUATING THE PUBLIC VALUE OF SPORT

## DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected using an **online survey** with European elite athletes and sport federation representatives of Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Poland and Portugal. A representative sample of the athletes and federations was obtained during the **period of April 2022 - June 2022**.

Country	Number of final responses		
	Athletes	Federations	Total
Belgium 	2	4	6
Czech Republic 	133	35	168
Finland 	17	16	33
Poland 	4	8	12
Portugal 	47	15	62
	<b>203</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>281</b>

# EVALUATING THE PUBLIC VALUE OF SPORT

## RESULTS

The survey provided insights into the following themes, which will be discussed in further detail on the following pages:

- Socio-demographic data;
- Athletes' and federations' perceptions about athletes as role models;
- Athletes' and federations' perceptions about athlete role model programmes;
- Athletes' and federations' perceptions about corporate social responsibility.



# **SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

### EUROPEAN SAMPLE



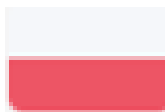
2%



60%



22%



4%

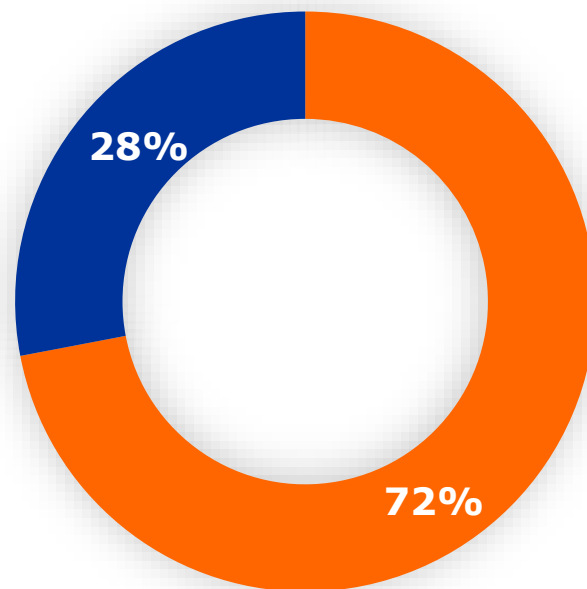


12%



## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

### ELITE ATHLETES & SPORT FEDERATION REPRESENTATIVES



■ Athletes ■ Federations

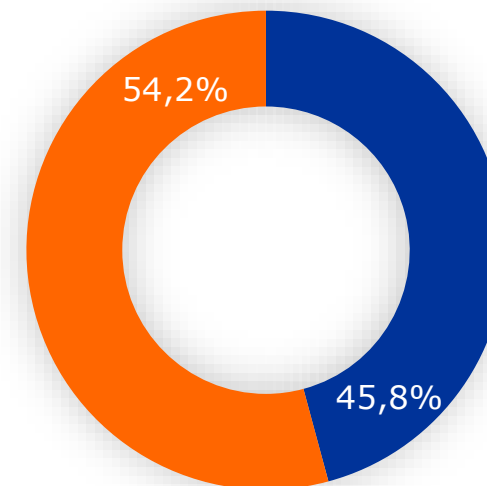
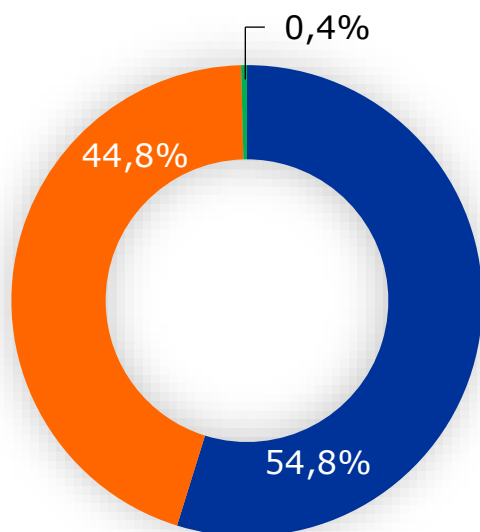


# SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

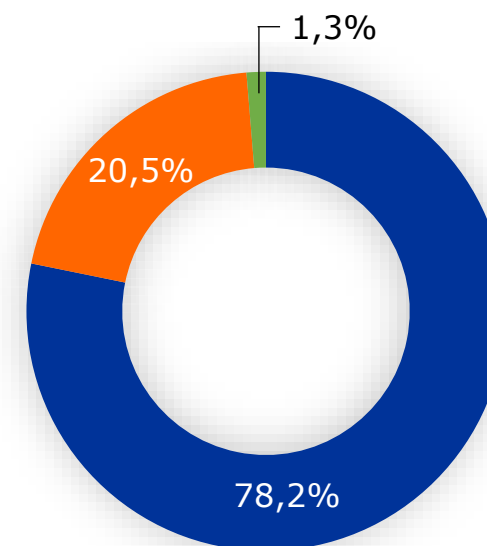
## GENDER



- Male
- Female
- Other



- Male
- Female



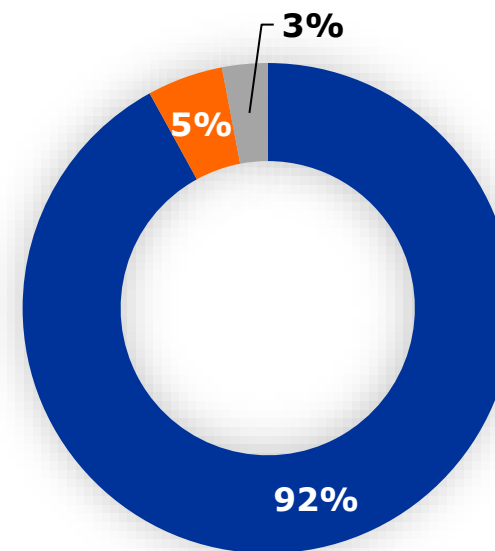
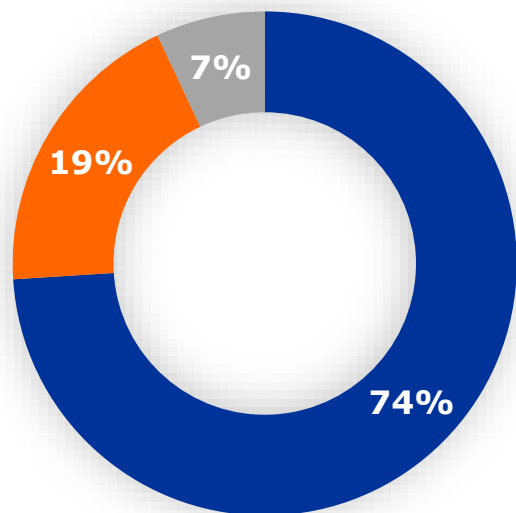
- Male
- Female
- Other

# SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

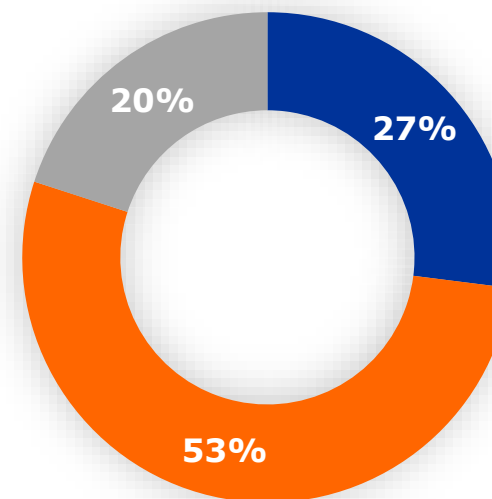
## AGE



- 18-35y
- 36-54y
- 55+y



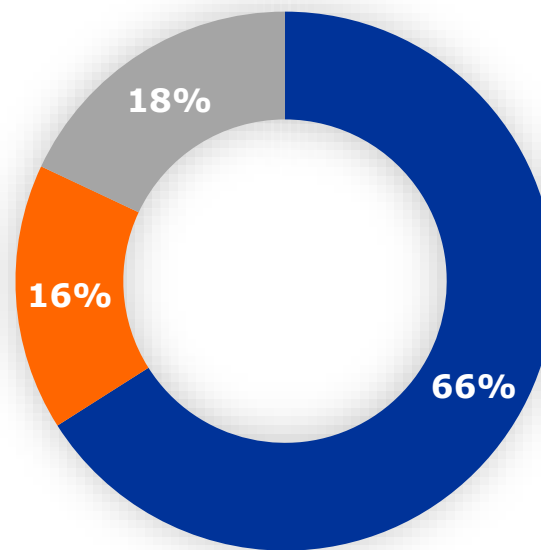
- 18-35y
- 36-54y
- 55+y



- 18-35y
- 36-54y
- 55+y

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

### STATUS OF THE ELITE ATHLETE



- Active elite athlete combining elite sport with education
- Active elite athlete combining elite sport with employment\*
- Active elite athlete not involved in education or employment\*

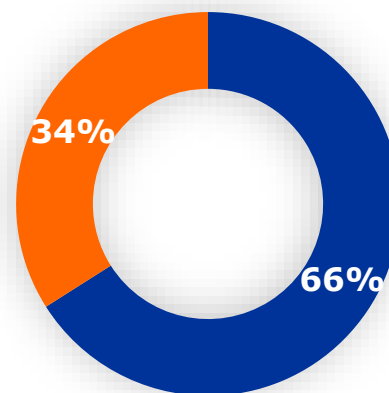
\*When you, as an active or former elite athlete, are earning an income not generated from your own active participation as an athlete in elite sport.

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

### MONTHLY INCOME OF THE ELITE ATHLETE



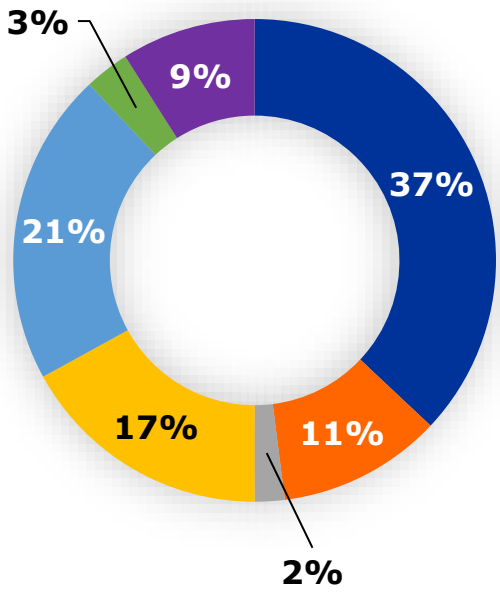
*Do you receive a monthly income (salary/stipend) for your elite sport activities?*



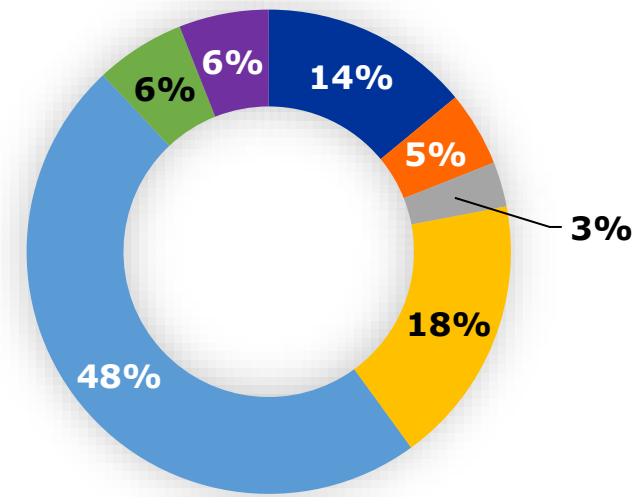
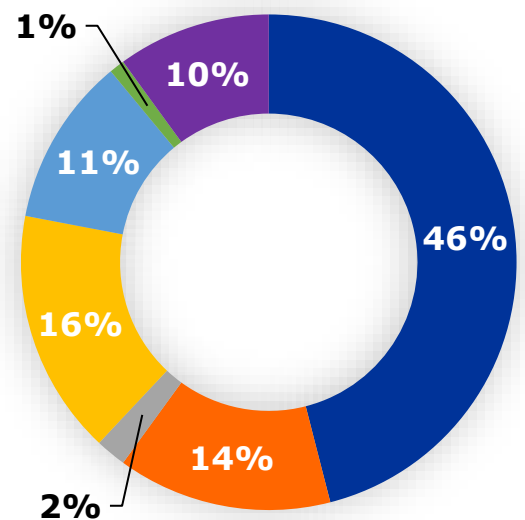
■ Yes ■ No

# SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

## EDUCATION



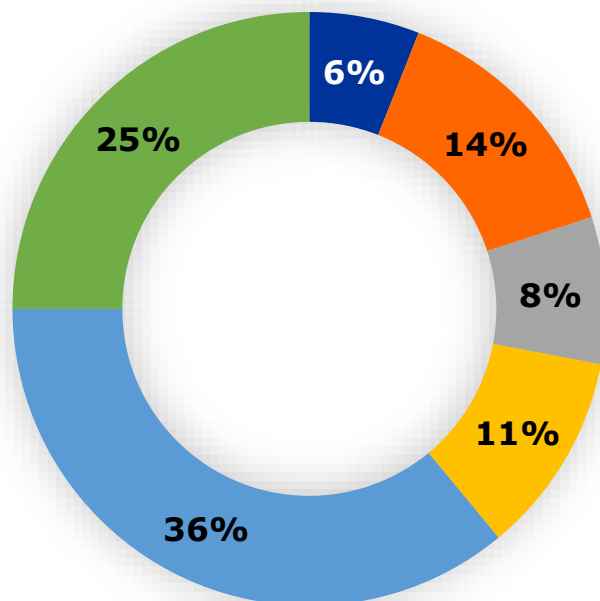
- Secondary education diploma
- Baccalaureate / A-level
- Vocational degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- PhD
- Other\*



\*only pass primary school, AA degree, still in high school, IGCSE.

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

### HIGHEST LEVEL OF SUCCESS OF THE ELITE ATHLETE

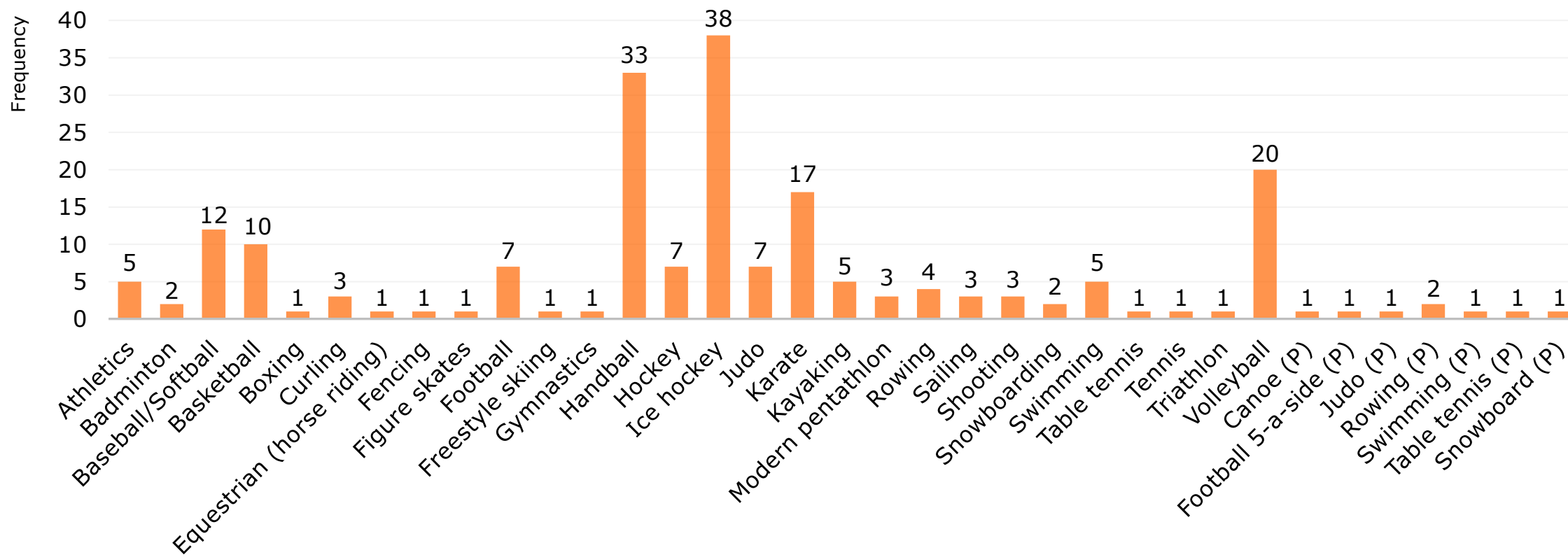


- International level (i) – top 3 in the world
- International level (ii) – top 8 in the world
- International level (iii) – top 16 in the world
- International level (iv) – top 8 in your continent
- National level
- None of the above\*

\*for example, you do not compete at a senior competition level yet.

# SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

## SPORT OF THE ELITE ATHLETE

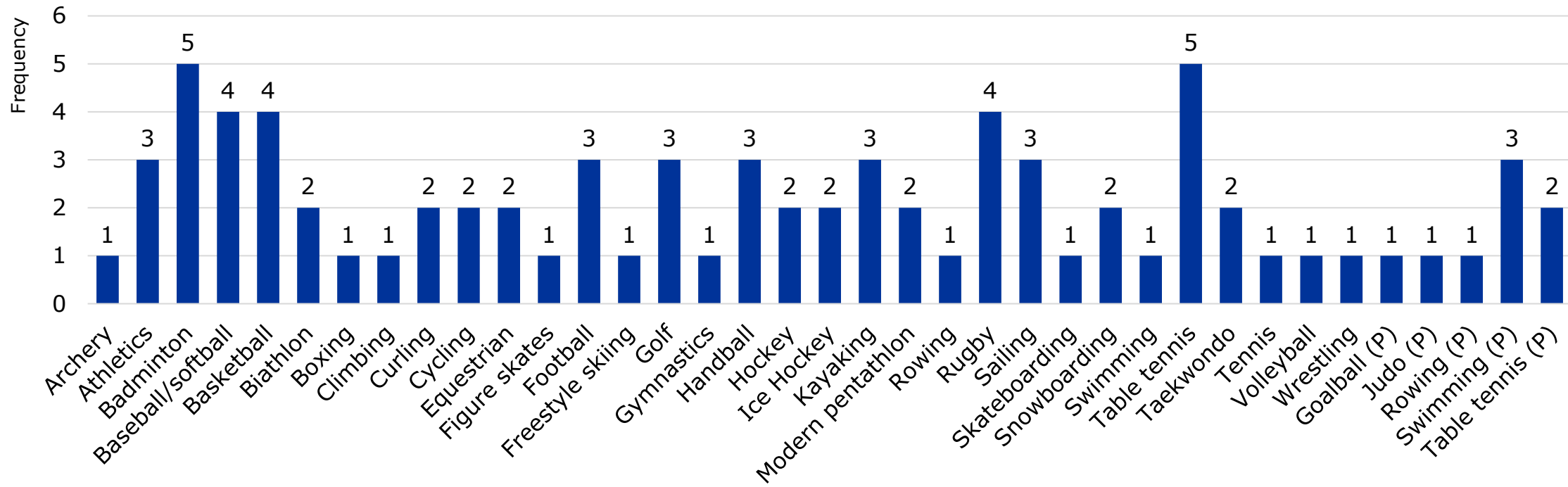


P = Paralympic sports



# SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

## SPORT REPRESENTED BY THE FEDERATION



P = Paralympic sports



# **ATHLETES AS ROLE MODELS**

# ATHLETES AS ROLE MODELS

## LIKEABLE CHARACTERISTICS OF OLYMPIC ATHLETES

**Why do you think citizens in your country are a fan of Olympic athletes?**



1. The athlete sets a **positive example** to others (89%)
2. The athlete's top matches against their biggest opponents are very **exciting** (87%)
3. The athlete's achievements motivate me **to do more sport myself** (84%)
4. The athlete is among the **world's best** in his/her sport (84%)
5. The athlete shows **sincere appreciation** for his/her fans and spectators (83%)



1. The athlete is among the **world's best** in his/her sport (91%)
2. The athlete's top matches against their biggest opponents are very **exciting** (88%)
3. The athlete has an **attractive match style** (88%)
4. The athlete sets a **positive example** to others (83%)
5. The athlete is a **role model** for the general population (78%)

# ATHLETES AS ROLE MODELS

## CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD ROLE MODELS

To what extent are the following characteristics important for elite athletes to display in order to act as role models for the general population?



1. The athlete **gives it his/her best** (92%)
2. The athlete **does not give up**, even after making mistakes (91%)
3. The athlete **respects the rules and regulations** of society (90%)
4. The athlete sets a **positive example** for others to follow (90%)
5. The athlete **treats people fairly** (88%)



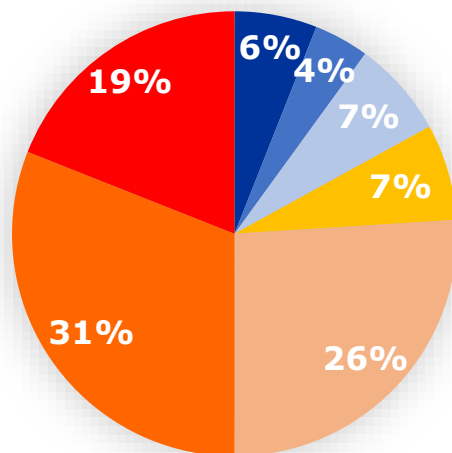
1. The athlete **does not give up**, even after making mistakes (98%)
2. The athlete sets a **positive example** for others to follow (93%)
3. The athlete **treats people fairly** (92%)
4. The athlete **respects the rules and regulations** of society (90%)
5. The athlete has a **charismatic personality** (89%)

# ATHLETES AS ROLE MODELS

## SPORT FEDERATIONS' AND ATHLETES' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ATHLETES AS ROLE MODELS



- Not at all
- Slightly
- Somewhat
- Neutral
- Moderately
- Strongly
- Definitely

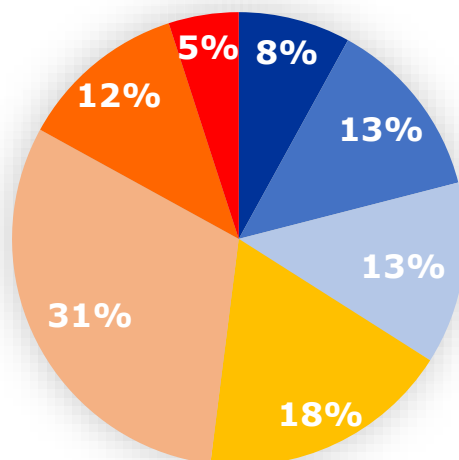


### Do you perceive elite athletes in your federation as being role models?

When European sport federation representatives are asked if they see their elite athletes as role models, **about three quarters (76%) leans towards "yes"**. In contrast, 17% of European sport federation representatives are more likely to not see their athletes as role models and 7% remain neutral.



- Not at all
- Slightly
- Somewhat
- Neutral
- Moderately
- Strongly
- Definitely



### Do you perceive yourself as a role model?

The analysis show that **almost half of the elite athletes (48%) see themselves as role models**, which is slightly less than what the sport federation representatives think. On the other hand, 34% of European elite athletes tend to say "no" and 18% remain neutral.

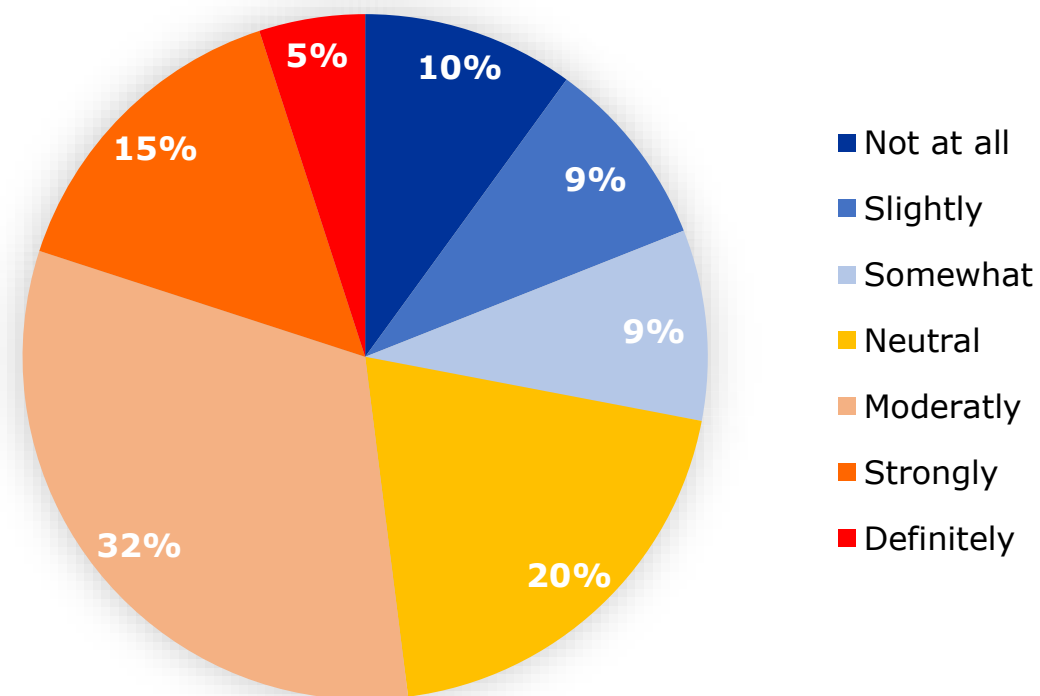
## ATHLETES AS ROLE MODELS

### SOCIETY'S EXPECTATION OF ATHLETES BEING A ROLE MODELS

#### Do you perceive that society expects you to be a role model?

It is widely claimed or assumed that elite athletes have a duty to be a role model (Lynch et al., 2014). This survey examined how participating athletes view society's expectations.

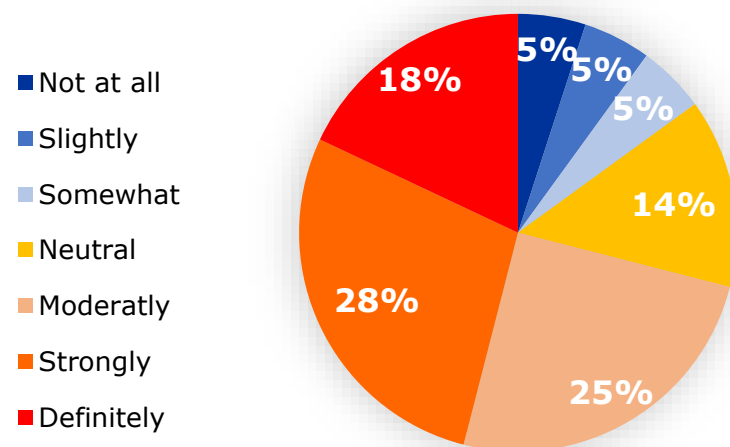
The results show that **52% of elite athletes perceive that society expects them to be a role model**. However, 28% of elite athletes do not feel these expectations and 20% are rather neutral.



## ATHLETES AS ROLE MODELS

### ATHLETES' PERSONAL MOTIVATION TO BE A ROLE MODEL

**Are you personally motivated to be a role model?**



Another finding was that **71% of the elite athletes are moderately to definitely motivated** to be a role model. The following motivators emerged from our analysis: (a) they want to **learn new things** (83%), (b) they want to be really **proud of themselves** (81%), (c) they think it is **important to try to be a good role model** (79%), (d) they like to **inspire people** (78%), and (e) they think it is **important to be an inspiration to people** (71%).

In contrast, 15% of the elite athletes indicate they are less motivated to be a role model, with 5% indicating they are "not at all" motivated. A closer look at the reasons why elite athletes are not motivated reveal that: (a) they want to **focus on their sporting careers** (2,5%), (b) they **feel that it is unnecessary** for them to be a role model (1,5%) and (c) they do **not want to share their life with fans** (1,5%).



# **ATHLETE ROLE MODEL PROGRAMMES**



# ATHLETE ROLE MODEL PROGRAMMES

## OBJECTIVE



The second objective of the survey was to measure the societal impact of elite sport. To reach this objective:

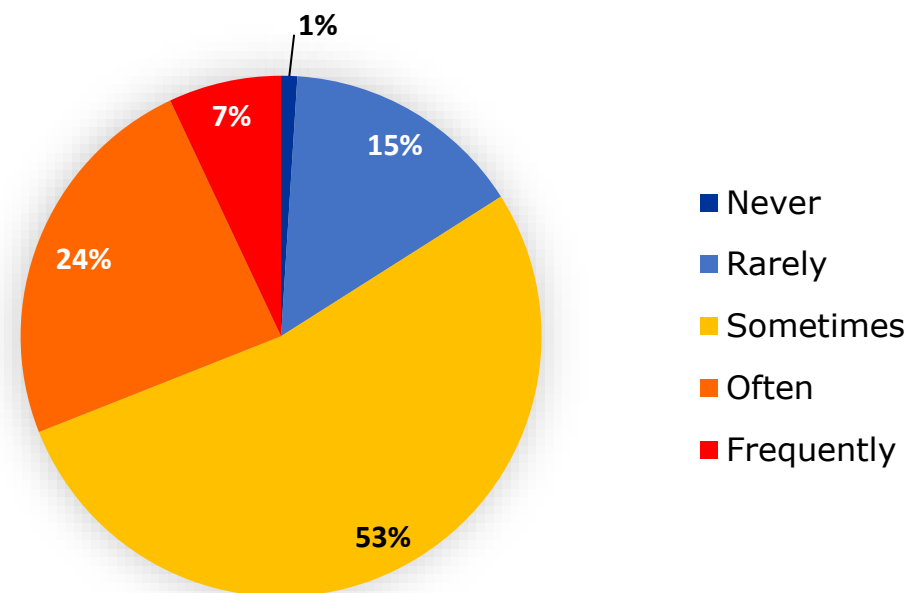
- Sport federation representatives were asked if they use elite sport as means for societal good;
- Sport federation representatives and elite athletes were asked if they are involved in athlete role model practices.

## ATHLETE ROLE MODEL PROGRAMMES

### SPORT FEDERATIONS: PRACTICES

#### Does your federation use elite sport as means for societal good?

The majority (53%) of the sport federation representatives indicate that they sometimes use elite sport as means for societal good. In contrast, 1% of the federations indicate that they never use elite sport as means for societal good.



## ATHLETE ROLE MODEL PROGRAMMES

### SPORT FEDERATIONS: PRACTICES

#### **Does your federation use elite sport as means for societal good?**

Most of the federations **promote sport participation**. More specifically, they encourage and assist non-active people to start doing sport, they introduce people to their sport, or they renovate sports infrastructures. Furthermore, the campaigns **promote a healthy lifestyle** where, among other things, they explain the importance of physical activity.

Federations also **support their athletes** who are involved in athlete role model practices, are committed to **charity** or are **donating money** to non-governmental institutions.

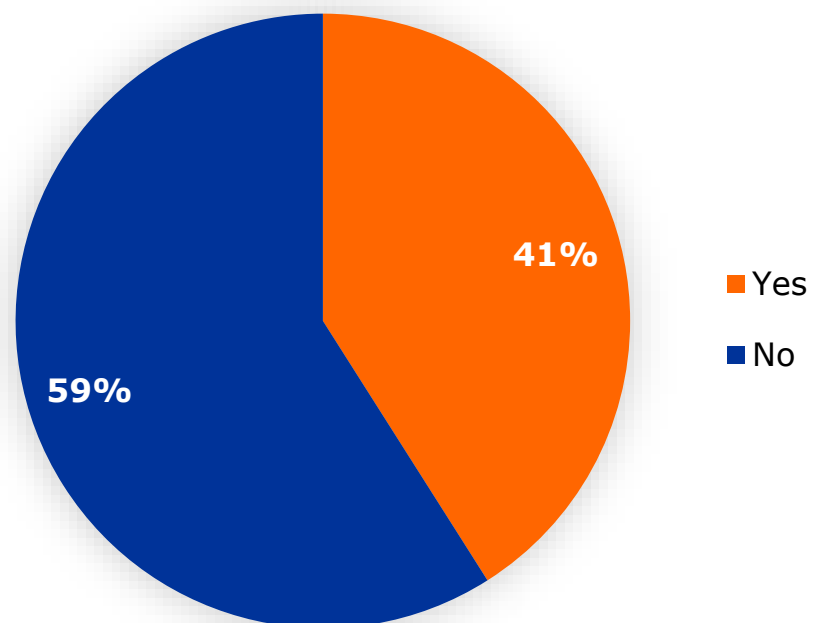
A lot of programmes and campaigns **promote values and ethics** through sporting practices. In fact, many campaigns are aiming at fair play, anti-discrimination, equality, equity, inclusion, integration, respect, and so on.

Federations regularly use **social media** to promote their campaign.

Most of the described campaigns are **primarily focused on youth**. For example, federations or their athletes regularly visit schools where they interact with the children, athletes visit deprived neighbourhoods, they promote sport participation through social events and sports camps and they organise coaching activities.

## ATHLETE ROLE MODEL PROGRAMMES

### SPORT FEDERATIONS: ATHLETE ROLE MODEL PRACTICES



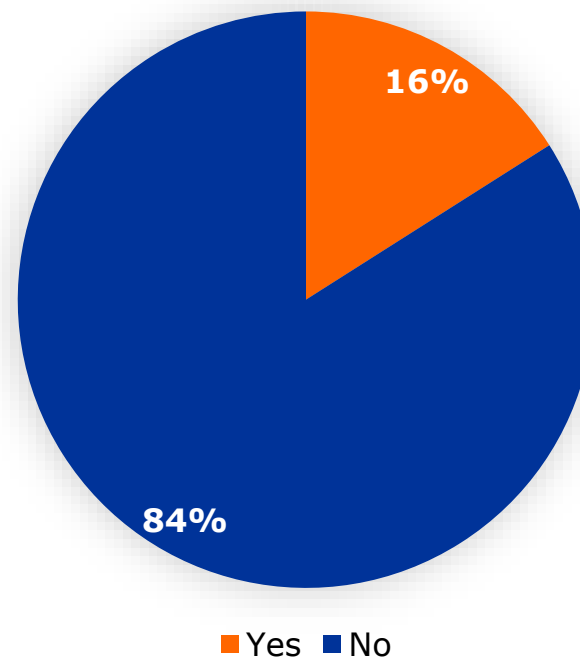
**Does your federation implement practice(s) that use elite athlete as role models?**

**41%** of the sport federations indicate that they implement practices that use elite athletes as role models.

## ATHLETE ROLE MODEL PROGRAMMES

### ATHLETES' INVOLVEMENT IN ROLE MODEL PRACTICES

In total, **16% of the elite athletes indicate that they are involved in a role model practice**. The majority (84%) of athletes indicate that they are not involved in a role model practice developed by, for example, sport federations or sponsors.



# ATHLETE ROLE MODEL PROGRAMMES

## PRACTICES



### Type of the practices

Elite athletes and sport federation representatives engage in different types of practices: (a) organising events where, for example, the **athletes are visiting** schools, children's homes, hospitals and/or senior homes, (b) organising physical or online **meet and greets**, which give fans the opportunity to discuss certain topics with the athletes, (c) **supporting charities and non-profit organisations**, (d) **coaching young athletes**, (e) **(social) media appearances**, where the athletes participate in commercials, talkshows, video's or podcasts, and (f) **organising youth recruitment campaigns, youth tournaments and youth camps**.

# ATHLETE ROLE MODEL PROGRAMMES

## PRACTICES



### Objective

The practices focus on helping people to **become the best version of themselves**, both in their sport and in their private life. Sport policy literature indicates that several elite sport practices put an emphasis on education and learning (De Rycke & De Bosscher, 2019). Besides, the indicated practices aim to **inspire children** and **set a good example** for others to follow. The practices also aim at **passing on the values and ethics of sport** (such as equality, integrity, equity, solidarity), as elite sport has the power to promote harmony between different groups (Berry 2011, Heere et al. 2013, Hermann et al. 2013). Moreover, they are aimed at **promoting their sport** (i.e., attract new people into their sport) and increasing **sport participation**. Indeed, elite athletes can provide inspiration, motivation and meaning for people to develop an active lifestyle (De Rycke & De Bosscher, 2019).

Overall, looking at the practices through the eyes of the MESSI-framework (De Rycke & De Bosscher, 2019; see appendix), it can be concluded that the objective of the practices cover one or more dimensions.

# ATHLETE ROLE MODEL PROGRAMMES

## PRACTICES



### Target audience

Most practices in which elite athletes and sport federation representatives are involved focus on the **general population**, with an emphasis on **youth**.



### Finances

The practices are mainly financed by the **club or federation** of the elite athlete.



# ATHLETE ROLE MODEL PROGRAMMES

## PRACTICES



### **Main actors**

In most practices (former) elite **athletes** are involved, followed by **members of the federation** along with **coaches and staff** of the athletes.



### **Partnerships**

Most elite athletes and sport federation representatives establish **partnerships with external organisations in their practices.**

# ATHLETE ROLE MODEL PROGRAMMES

## PRACTICES



### Points for improvement

To increase the quality of their practice, elite athletes and sport federation representatives indicate that they would like to (a) **organise events more regularly**, (b) **promote their practices more** through the (social) media, (c) try to get **more people involved**, (d) try to get **more finances**, (e) and collect more **feedback** from the young athletes.



### Success factors

Success factors indicated by elite athletes and sport federation representatives in the context of role model practices include: (a) **motivated and enthusiastic target audience**, (b) **choosing the right athlete** to participate in the practice, (c) **sharing personal information** (e.g., life stories) of the participating athlete, (d) an **athlete who sets a positive example** for others to follow, (e) sharing the **values of sport**, (f) sufficient **media coverage**, (g) having the **right amount of dedication, education and discipline** when participating in the practices, and (h) handing over **gadgets** to the participants.

# ATHLETE ROLE MODEL PROGRAMMES

## BARRIERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ROLE MODEL PRACTICES



### What barriers does/did your federation encounter in the development of athlete role model practices?

Overall, 83% of the sport federation representatives indicate that they encounter barriers in the development of athlete role model practices, with the main barriers being:

- 1. Lack of human resources (41%)**
- 2. Lack of financial resources/lack of funding (33%)**
- 3. Difficulties to set up process for evaluating the effectiveness of the programme (22%)**



# **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

# CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

## SPORT POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

**What are the most important elements for national sport organisations (e.g., Olympic Committee, sport federations) to engage in ?**



1. Providing **inspiring role models** that activate young people (40%)
2. Promoting **ethical conduct and fair play** (35%)
3. Creating **national identity, belonging, togetherness and pride** (35%)
4. Making **society more attractive and interesting** through sport (32%)
5. Providing athletes with a **safe environment and a high quality of life** (30%)



1. Providing **inspiring role models** that activate young people (41%)
2. Creating **national identity, belonging, togetherness and pride** (33%)
3. Making **society more attractive and interesting** through sport (32%)
4. Promoting **ethical conduct and fair play** (28%)
5. Increasing overall **happiness, enthusiasm and well-being** (27%)

# Questions or remarks? Get in touch!

***Sofie Smismans***



<https://www.athletes4society.eu/>

***Lynn Praet***



[athletes4society@vub.be](mailto:athletes4society@vub.be)

***Inge Derom***



[@athletes4society](https://www.instagram.com/athletes4society)

***Veerle De Bosscher***



[/company/athletes4society](https://www.linkedin.com/company/athletes4society)

This report would not have been there without the contribution of the Athletes 4 Society consortium.

Thank you!



## APPENDIX

## MAPPING ELITE SPORT POTENTIAL SOCIETAL IMPACT – MESSI FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework guiding the project is the '**Mapping Elite Sport potential Societal Impact**' (MESSI).

Considering the current upward trend of investing resources in sport, a better understanding of the **public recognition of athletes (as role models) and opinion about (elite) sports' societal impact** is deemed valuable (Grix & Carmichael, 2012). As there is little insight on the societal impact of major sport events, sporting success, sport stakeholders and athletes as role models in particular, De Rycke and De Bosscher (2019) recently attempted to fill this gap by presenting a comprehensive framework that maps the potential positive and negative societal impact spheres of elite sport.

The **MESSI framework** emerged from a systematic literature review of 391 scientific articles that empirically examined the social effects of elite sport. All 79 positive and negative societal impacts were clustered into **10 categories**:

1. Social equality and inclusion
2. Collective identity and pride
3. Ethics and fair play
4. Feel good and passion
5. Fans and (media) attraction
6. International prestige and image
7. Athletes' ability and quality of life
8. Sport participation and health
9. Sponsors and commercial activity
10. Local consumption and living conditions

# Mapping Elite Sport's potential Societal Impact (MESSI)

athletes & teams

success

events

stakeholders

## VALUE CREATION

Stakeholders: corporations, sponsors, media, governments, (inter)national federations, the public...

stakeholders

dimension

themes

pro's

con's

1. Social equality & inclusion

2. Collective identity & pride

3. Ethics & fair play

4. Feel good & passion

5. Fans & (media) attraction

6. International prestige & power

7. Athletes ability & quality of life

8. Sport participation & life skills

9. Sponsors & commercial activity

10. Local consumption & living conditions

integration  
social equality: racial & ethnic  
Inclusion

community identity  
community pride  
socializing opportunities

ethics  
fair play  
social debate

pleasure  
experience  
passion

fandom  
mass media  
sport knowledge

globalization  
international prestige  
country/city marketing

fame  
role model function  
quality of life

sport participation  
volunteering  
health awareness

economic boost  
Sponsorships  
sport industry assets

consumption  
employment  
tourism

sexism  
exclusion  
racism

rivalry  
nationalism  
shame

corruption  
Hooliganism  
doping

disappointment  
failure  
losing

gambling  
repulsion  
drop sport's image

power abuse  
bad international image  
war propaganda

pressure  
injuries  
safeguarding issues

discouragement  
unhealthy habits  
unrealistic body image

association with scandals  
financial losses  
window dressing

legacy costs  
environmental impact  
living conditions



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