

abuse-free

SPORT  ^{TM/MC}

sans abus

YEAR ONE REPORT

June 2022 – June 2023

A program of the



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INTRODUCTION

Abuse-Free Sport (the “Program”), the independent safe sport mechanism developed by the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (the “SDRCC”), launched operations on June 20, 2022, with the aim of preventing and addressing maltreatment in sport and influencing a positive culture shift within the Canadian sport system.

With the launch of the Program as a whole came the establishment of several new offices and offerings, including:

- the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (the “OSIC”), the Program function responsible for administering the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (the “UCCMS”);
- the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes (the “DSO”), the Program function responsible for making decisions regarding provisional measures and violations of the UCCMS and imposing sanctions where relevant; and
- Support services in the form of Mental Health and Legal Aid programs.

In addition to these new Abuse-Free Sport functions, the Canadian Sport Helpline, Resource Centre and Safeguarding Tribunal all saw their role expanded to serve the objectives of the Program.¹

The jurisdiction of Abuse-Free Sport to address UCCMS-related complaints at the national level was progressive, with the majority of Program Signatories only coming on board as of the April 2023 federal deadline. As of June 30, 2023, all federally-funded National Sport Organizations (“NSOs”) were signed, along with a number of Multisport Service Organizations (“MSOs”). In total, **86** Program Signatories were signed during Abuse-Free Sport’s first 12 months. This represents an approximate total of **17,000** full-time national-level

participants, with an additional **60,000** covered during national championships, as well as **70,000** covered full-time on a provincial/territorial and club level through Volleyball Canada.

The province of Nova Scotia also signed onto the Program, and is looking to on-board its first provincial sport organizations before the end of 2023.

During this initial year, foundational elements of the Program were established, including the Sport Environment Assessment services, the online Program Signatory portal, the Sanctions Registry and a suite of Policies and Procedures.

Abuse-Free Sport also launched several new programs and tools, some of which include:

- the Abuse-Free Sport Education Accreditation Program and Education Library;
- the Abuse-Free Sport Research Grant Program;
- the Abuse-Free Sport Webinar Series;
- the Annotated UCCMS version 1.0 (a collaboration with Pro Bono Students Canada);
- various FAQs, flowcharts and explanatory resources.

Significant milestones have been achieved across the Program’s three pillars of Prevent, Respond, and Engage in this first year. Yet there remains much to accomplish, as Canada works collectively toward the ultimate goal of a safe, positive and enriching experience for all throughout the sport system.

Read on for a comprehensive overview of Abuse-Free Sport’s first year of operation.

¹ For an organizational chart describing the various functions of the Program, click [here](#).

MILESTONE TIMELINE

- » July 2021 - Government of Canada announces SDRCC selected to deliver new independent safe sport mechanism
- » August 2021 - Launch of safe sport focus groups / national consultations
- » December 2021 - SDRCC publishes Summary Report of National Consultations on the independent safe sport mechanism
- » February 2022 - Funded 10 knowledge syntheses (first phase of the Abuse-Free Sport Research Grant Program)
- » April 2022 - Sport Integrity Commissioner appointed
- » May 31, 2022 - Publication of UCCMS version 6.0

Abuse-Free Sport launches operations on June 20, 2022

First Abuse-Free Sport Research Symposium



2022

June

September

October

Abuse-Free Sport Webinar Series premieres

Appointment of OSIC Investigation Unit and Sport Environment Assessment Unit



MILESTONE TIMELINE (continued)

- Abuse-Free Sport Education Accreditation Program call for applications
- 1st Quarterly Information Session with Signatories

- Abuse-Free Sport Research Grant Program recipients announced (9 projects funded totaling \$512,826)
- Annotated UCCMS version 1.0 published
- Signatory Portal launches



November

December

2023

January

April

June

- Abuse-Free Sport Research Grant Program call for proposals



- Publication of knowledge syntheses' executive summaries

- Abuse-Free Sport Education Accreditation Library launches

All federally-funded NSOs signed as Program Signatories on June 30, 2023



PILLAR ONE – PREVENT

Investment in safe sport research and education is key to preventing maltreatment. The Abuse-Free Sport program includes education and research initiatives that are beneficial to all, no matter the sport, the level or the role of the individual.

Abuse-Free Sport Education Accreditation Program

Given that many education trainings and programs already exist across Canada, the Abuse-Free Sport Education Accreditation Program promotes collaboration, aims to facilitate consistent messaging and accessibility across the sport system, and ensures education and trainings are aligned with the UCCMS. During Year One, the Abuse-Free Sport Education Accreditation Program was launched, with an initial call for applications and first review cycle completed.

- Education Working Group convened to draft program guidelines, including national standards;
- Selection Committee established;
- First review cycle accreditations:
 - Coaching Association of Canada - *Safe Sport Training*;
 - Canadian Centre for Child Protection - *Commit to Kids for Coaches*; and
- Abuse-Free Sport Education Library launched June 2023.

Abuse-Free Sport Research Grant Program

Following the funding and publication of 10 knowledge synthesis papers by prominent academics on different aspects of safe sport, a research symposium was held in October 2022, laying the basis of the Abuse-Free Sport Research Grant Program. **Nine** research projects were funded during Year One. These projects focus on topics that seek to advance knowledge in the root causes of maltreatment in sport, the positive behaviours that lead to fun and welcoming sport experiences, and the impact of Abuse-Free Sport's independent programs and services.

- Symposium collaboration with researchers, Research Working Group, SDRCC Board members and staff, members of the Athlete Advisory Committee;
- Safe sport research priorities identified;
- Program guidelines finalized;
- Nearly **\$1.5 million** requested in proposals; and
- **Nine** research projects funded for a total of **\$512,826**.

Research Project Titles

- More than Medals: Challenging Organizational Cultures That Inhibit Social and Leadership Development in Performance Sport
- Fostering a Positive, Safe and Brave Culture for Youth in Sport
- Inclusive and safe sport environments for LGBTQ2+ coaches and referees: identification of barriers and potential solutions*
- Digital Violence in Canadian Sport
- Addressing the Silent: Understanding Safe Sport for Indigenous Participants in Canada
- Investigating Equity-Denied Sport Stakeholders' Perspectives on the Barriers and Facilitators to Experiencing Safe Sport
- A National Investigation of Safe Sport Practices and Decision-Making in Community Sport Organizations in Canada
- Analysis of the training needs of stakeholders working with athletes about maltreatment in sports environment*
- A Tolerated Intolerable: A Longitudinal Examination of Soccer Referee Abuse in Canada and its Impact on Health

**Translated from the original French title*

PILLAR TWO – RESPOND

Abuse-Free Sport is working to address maltreatment through extensive support services, a robust complaint management system, and by conducting Sport Environment Assessments into alleged systemic issues.

Support Services

Canadian Sport Helpline

Created in 2019 as a pilot project by the SDRCC, the Canadian Sport (the “Helpline”) assists anyone in the Canadian sport community with listening and referral services for concerns related to abuse and maltreatment. In 2022, the Helpline was integrated into the Abuse-Free Sport program as the first point of contact for the complaint intake process.

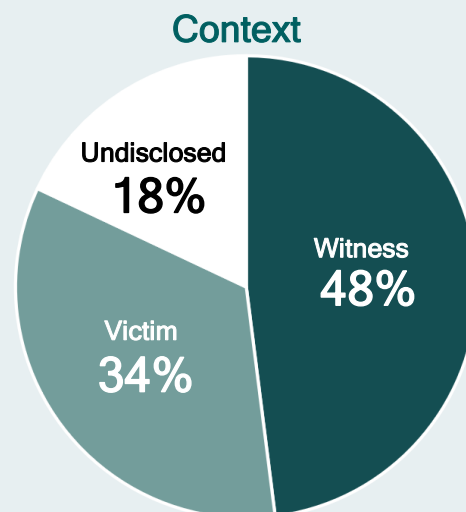
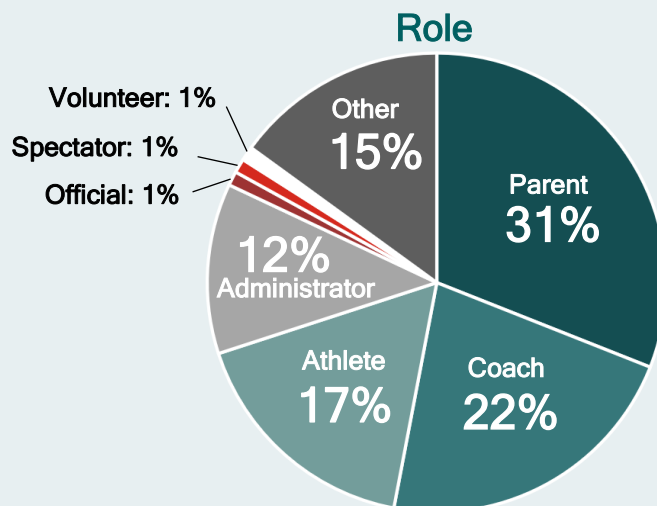
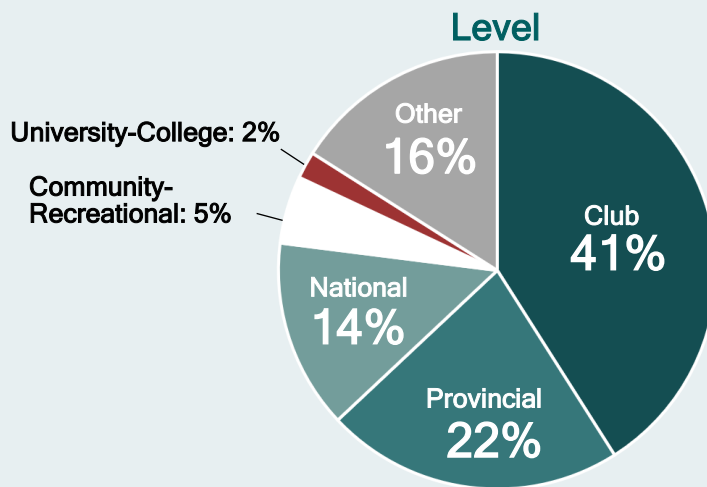
The Helpline operators assist users to identify possible avenues to address a safe sport complaint (whether under the Program or elsewhere), to provide assistance on how to file a Complaint/Report under the Program intake form and to provide them with access and information regarding the Abuse-Free Sport Support Services and other external resources.

Over the past year, to improve the Helpline’s services and to meet demand during certain events (e.g., the 2022 and 2023 Canada Games, and 2023 Arctic Winter Games), operating hours have been extended, the number of operators increased in peak periods and more bilingual specialists recruited. These operators have also benefited from increased trainings and resources.

This past year, the Helpline supported **486** clients with safe sport concerns. The following statistics provide insight into the topics, level, role and context of the person calling (reporter), as identified by said reporter.

Five most-reported topics of concern

- *Bullying (15%)*
- *Abuse of power (11%)*
- *Discrimination (8%)*
- *Psychological abuse (8%)*
- *Verbal abuse (7%)*



Mental Health Support Program

Beyond the initial support provided by Helpline operators, eligible individuals have access to a suite of professional services in collaboration with the Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport (CCMHS).

Year One:

- Designed and implemented a safe and confidential infrastructure with bilingual options;
- Revisited CCMHS eligibility criteria to offer services to more individuals;
- Overall, **nine out of 15** applicants accessed mental health services.

Legal Aid Program

Eligible individuals have access to a pool of specialized lawyers offering legal advice and assistance to help navigate the complaint management and the Sport Environment Assessment processes.

Year One:

- **18** lawyers recruited;
- Orientation for the Abuse-Free Sport program provided;
- Overall, **14 out of 17** applicants accessed legal services.

Complaint Management Services

Abuse-Free Sport’s complaint management process was available immediately upon launch, with an established online complaint intake and reporting system. A suite of Abuse-Free Sport policies and procedures have also been published, and reviewed as necessary, throughout Year One.

Policies and Procedures Created or Updated in Year One

- Guidelines Regarding Initial Review and Preliminary Assessment of Complaints
- Guidelines Regarding Provisional Measures
- Guidelines Regarding Investigation of Complaints
- Guidelines Regarding Sport Environment Assessments
- Code of Conduct for the Members of the Investigation Unit and Sport Environment Assessment Unit
- Confidentiality Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Policy Regarding Treatment of Information Related to Alleged Prohibited Behaviour(s)
- Protection of Privacy Policy
- Safeguarding Tribunal Rules

PILLAR TWO – RESPOND *continued*

Complaint Management Services *continued*

A total of **193** Complaints² were received through the OSIC during Year One. Of these, a total of **66** were deemed admissible, with another **nine** cases pending determination as of June 30, 2023. Jurisdiction was denied in matters where:

- the organization listed was not a Signatory of Abuse-Free Sport;
- the organization listed was a Signatory, but the Respondent was not a Participant under the authority of a Signatory;
- the matter was unrelated to the UCCMS; or

- the Complaint contained inadequate information to proceed and there was no method of contacting the Reporter to obtain the necessary information.

When a Complaint is inadmissible, the OSIC aims to accompany the person who came forward in identifying alternative services that may be available to them, through the Abuse-Free Sport Program or externally. If appropriate, and with the person's consent, the OSIC may refer the Complaint to another organization that has authority to address the matter. During Year One, an alternative reporting option was identified in approximately **50%** and referral made in **38%** of the inadmissible cases.³

	TOTAL June 20, 2022 – June 30, 2023	4 th Quarter April 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023	3 rd Quarter January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2023	2 nd Quarter September 20, 2022 – December 31, 2022	1 st Quarter June 20, 2022 – September 19, 2022
Program Signatories	86	13	38 ⁴	30	5
Clients helped (Canadian Sport Helpline)	486	164	155	111	56
Complaints received	193	97	48	24	24
Complaints listing Program Signatories	162	95	39	18	8
Complaints deemed admissible	66	34 ⁵	18	8	6

² For the purposes of simplicity, refers to both Complaint/Report, as defined on the [OSIC website](#).

³ The identification of an alternate reporting option (in approximately 50% of all inadmissible cases) includes cases where the reporter was referred (38% of all inadmissible cases), as well as cases where the reporter was not referred (e.g., because the reporter was anonymous, or because the reporter expressed distrust in the alternate mechanism or did not consent to the referral). Note that the existence of an alternate reporting option does not guarantee that said option would assert jurisdiction.

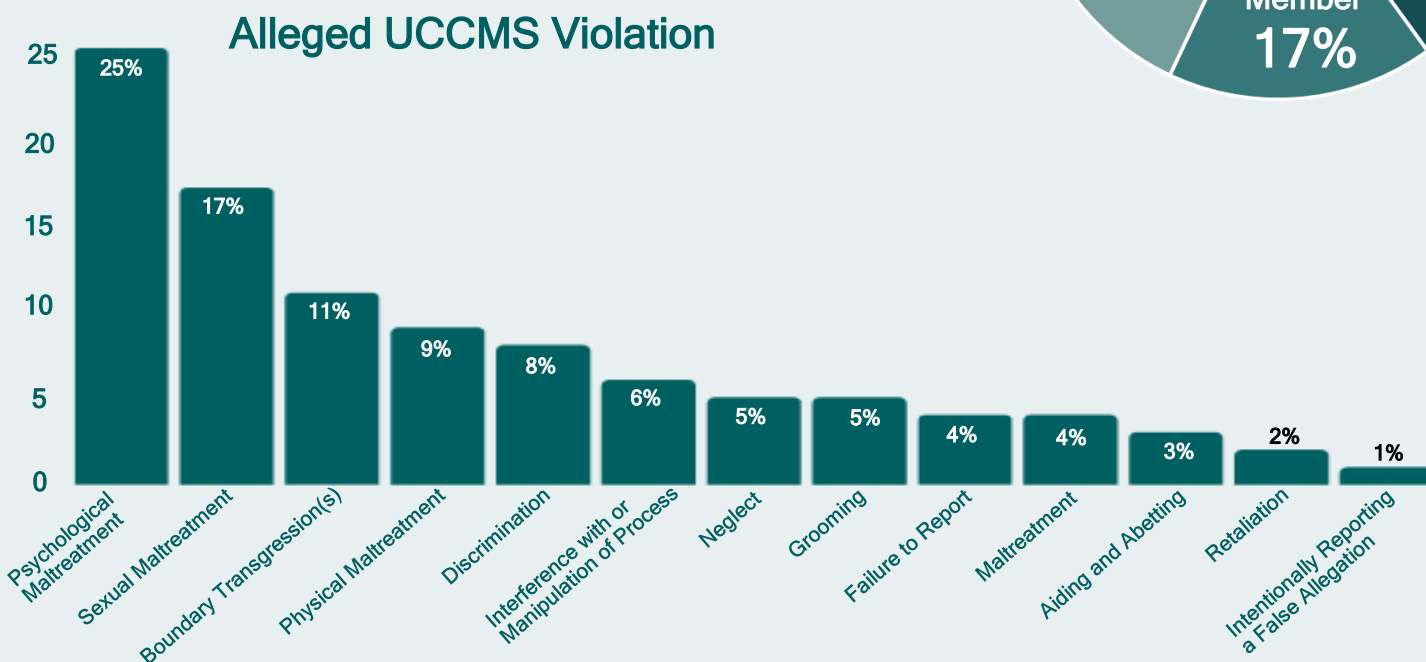
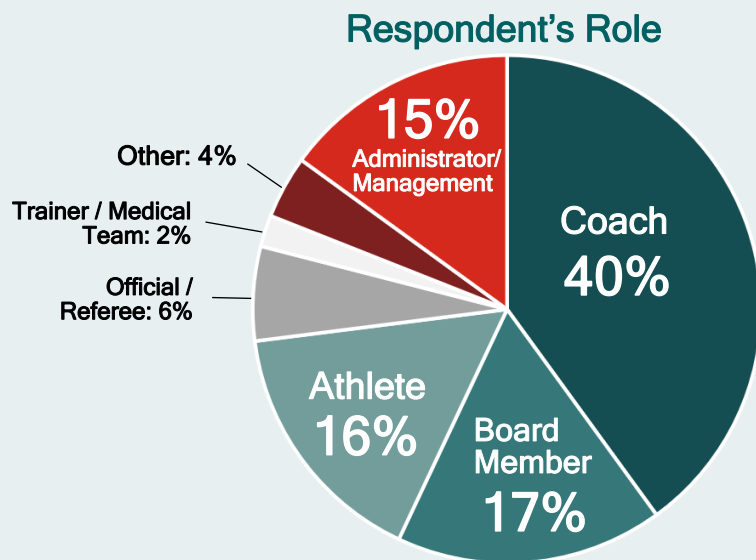
⁴ Abuse-Free Sport's 3rd Quarterly Report was published on April 17, 2023, and quantified a total of 75 Program Signatories. This total included two signatories who signed after March 31, 2023.

⁵ As of June 30, 2023, nine additional cases have their admissibility determination status pending.

PILLAR TWO – RESPOND *continued*

The pie chart to the right shows the categories of Respondent roles, as and when identified in the complaint/report intake forms received by the OSIC in Year One.

The bar graph below displays the categories of alleged violations of the UCCMS (i.e. section 5) for all admissible complaints addressed by the OSIC in Year One (66 complaints).



25.76
days

Average length of a complaint case to assess jurisdictional determination⁶



117.67
days

Average length of an independent investigation⁷

A total of **22** cases underwent independent investigation during Year One; of those, **one** is complete with a decision on violation finalized, while **five** are complete with a decision on violation pending as of June 30, 2023.

⁶ From date the complaint was received to date relevant parties were informed of the determination.

⁷ From notification to parties that the case has been transferred to an independent investigator to date of final investigation report.

PILLAR TWO – RESPOND *continued*

Office of the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes

The office of the DSO addressed a separate total of **22** cases at different stages of the Abuse-Free Sport Complaint Management process up to and including June 30, 2023:

- Provisional Measures imposed in **13** cases;
- DSO was engaged in **three** cases for mediation, of which **two** were not resolved and one remains ongoing;
- **one** final finding of a violation/sanction;
- **one** challenge of a provisional measure, which was upheld; and
- **one** challenge of a finding of violation, which is ongoing.

Safeguarding Tribunal

As on June 30, 2023, there have been **five** cases filed with the Dispute Resolution Secretariat arising from the Abuse-Free Sport complaint management process:

- **three** mediations;
- **one** challenge on provisional measures; and
- **one** challenge on violation.

Of these cases, **two** mediations did not reach a settlement, the challenge on provisional measure was denied, and the other two cases are ongoing as of the publication of this report. The average duration of a mediation was **41** days, while that of a challenge on Provisional Measure was **two**.

Sport Environment Assessments

As an identified priority from the start of Abuse-Free Sport, the OSIC developed and launched the Sport Environment Assessment (SEA) services in September 2022. SEAs serve a dual function in both addressing and preventing maltreatment, discrimination and other prohibited behaviours related to the UCCMS. These assessments are designed to identify and remedy alleged systemic issues with the

goal of improving the sport environment for both current and future participants. During this first year:

- the SEA process and guidelines were created and launched;
- the SEA Unit was created and **18** members were selected;
- the SEA Advisory Group was formed;
- the OSIC received **six** Requests and analyzed a total of **14** potentially impacted sport environments; and
- **four** assessments were formally initiated and have progressed through different phases of the process, ranging from scoping to assessment engagement.

Sanctions Registry

For purposes of carrying out the objectives of the UCCMS in accordance with applicable laws, Abuse-Free Sport created a registry of individuals whose eligibility to participate in sport has in some way been restricted in relation to Provisional Measures and sanctions. A privacy impact assessment and other actions were taken to establish the conditions in which relevant contents of the registry could be searchable publicly, in compliance with applicable privacy and other laws. The registry is expected to be made public by the end of March 2024.

Organizational Excellence Framework

Per OSIC's mandate to oversee Signatory compliance under Abuse-Free Sport, a request for proposal was issued in May 2023 to develop the Organizational Excellence Framework and the vendor selection process was completed by June 30, 2023. This project will seek to optimize Signatories' organizational excellence in relation to the objectives and the matters covered by the UCCMS and will also serve as an available resource for the broader Canadian sport community. This framework will be developed and launched progressively during Year Two.

PILLAR THREE – ENGAGE

In the spirit of influencing a positive culture shift, Abuse-Free Sport is actively promoting its services to and engaging with the sport community, both within Canada and internationally.

Events and Information Sessions

Abuse-Free Sport representatives participated in a number of events, including the Safe Sport International Global Conference, SPort INnovation (SPIN) Summit, Sport Leadership sportif Conference, AthletesCAN Forum, Sport for Life Summit, Japan Sports Arbitration Agency Annual Conference, and Canadian Academy of Sport and Exercise Medicine (CASEM) Annual Symposium. Representatives also gave over **15** presentations on safe sport and the services offered by Abuse-Free Sport.

Quarterly information sessions for Program Signatories were introduced in December, with sessions also held in March and June. These will continue into Year Two.

Athlete Engagement

Meaningfully engaging athletes in all key aspects of the Program is a priority. As such, the Athlete Advisory Committee was established to represent the voice of athletes, and provide feedback and recommendations on different initiatives of the Program. The committee is currently restructuring to increase the participation and meaningful engagement of its members.

In addition, athletes have been invited to act as moderators or panelists during the Abuse-Free Sport Webinar Series. Athletes are also represented in different committees and working groups related to the Program.

Provincial and Territorial Engagement

In order to have a concerted approach across the sport system, there is collaboration with provinces and territories to have them join the Program or support them in creating their own independent mechanism. Alignment with other jurisdictions will be beneficial for the sport community at large in order to create a positive culture change in the country.

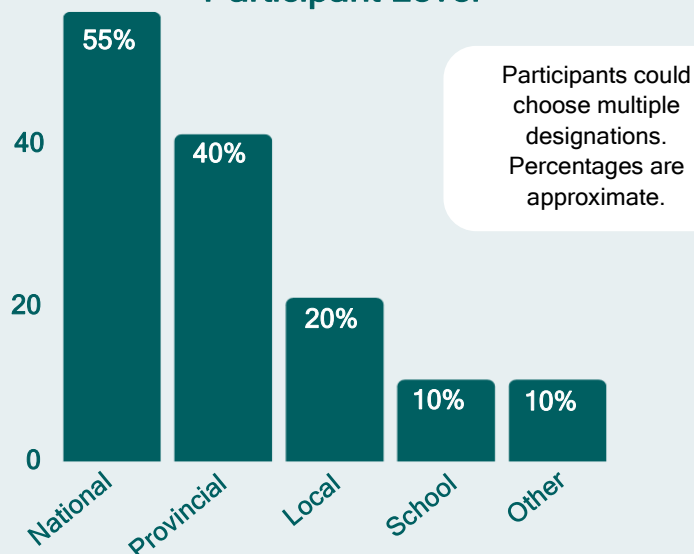
Abuse-Free Sport Webinar Series

The Program also created and hosted the inaugural five-part Abuse-Free Sport Webinar Series, held from September to December 2022. With free registration open to the public, these webinars address a wide range of areas, aiming to enhance understanding of the Abuse-Free Sport program and its services, while also serving as a key education source with regard to safe sport. The 2023 series launched in July this year.

2022 Abuse-Free Sport Webinar Series

- Total registrants: **654**
- Total recording views: **143**

Participant Level



Communications

Two websites (one for Abuse-Free Sport and one for OSIC) were created, along with Abuse-Free Sport social media accounts (Twitter or 'X', LinkedIn and Facebook). Through these channels, as well as the creation of short, explanatory videos, the accessibility and public awareness of Abuse-Free Sport's services and resources have been enhanced.



Abuse-Free Sport Sans Abus



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