

Sport Environment Assessments (“**SEA**”) serve a dual function in both addressing and preventing maltreatment, discrimination and other prohibited behaviour related to the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (“**UCCMS**”). A SEA is designed to identify and remedy alleged systemic issues.

Unlike an investigation, in a SEA, there is no complainant or respondent. Survey respondents and interviewees (“**Assessment Participants**”) are asked to provide answers that describe their experiences. Therefore, the information in the SEA reflects how the Assessment Participants perceived the issues, systems or dynamics within the sport environment subject to the SEA.

The answers that Assessment Participants provide in interviews or to surveys are not subject to further examination to establish validity; it constitutes their individual perspectives.



Report to  
Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner

In this matter of

Gymnastics Canada – Sport Environment Assessment

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Tab 1: Executive Summary of the Survey Responses

Tab 2: McLaren Report Recommendations with GymCan Responses



## Key Acronyms and Defined Terms

Assessment	Independent sport environment assessment
Board	GymCan's Board of Directors
CAC	Coaching Association of Canada
CAAT	Culture of Excellence Assessment and Audit Tool
CAM	Club Accreditation Model
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COC	Canadian Olympic Committee
CRLT	Culture Review Leadership Team
Cromwell Report	<i>Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review</i>
CSGC	Canadian Sport Governance Code
Google Survey	Informal Google survey circulated to WAG stakeholders in January 2024
GymCan or GCG	Gymnastics Canada
HR	Human Resources
IST	Integrated Support Team
MAG	Men's Artistic Gymnastics
McLaren Report	<i>A Framework for Change: How to Achieve a Culture Shift for Gymnastics in Canada</i>
OSIC	Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner
OTP	Own the Podium
Participant	Survey participants and interviewees
Project	Creation and implementation of a holistic safety and safeguarding approach
PTO	Provincial/Territorial Sport Organization
RG	Rhythmic Gymnastics
TG	Trampoline Gymnastics
Steering Committee	National Gymnastics Safety Steering Committee
UCCMS	<i>Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport</i>
UNCRC	<i>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>
WAG	Women's Artistic Gymnastics



## Background

This report is provided to the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (“OSIC”), pursuant to the Sport Environment Assessment Mandate and Terms of Reference.

I was retained by the OSIC to conduct an independent sport environment assessment (the “Assessment”) of the National Team programs and general administration of Gymnastics Canada (“GymCan”) spanning from 2019 to present. The Assessment has been assigned the following case number by the OSIC: 2023 01 0006. The Assessment was initiated by the OSIC under its mandate to conduct assessments following an anonymous complaint and the gathering of information in accordance with its review process.

The purpose of this Assessment is to:

- a. Review GymCan’s implementation of recommendations of a report authored by McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc. titled *A Framework for Change: How to Achieve a Culture Shift for Gymnastics in Canada* (the “McLaren Report”)<sup>1</sup> and identify outstanding gaps (addressed under *McLaren Report Recommendations*);
- b. Review GymCan’s effective ability to prevent and address maltreatment, discrimination, and other prohibited behaviours, and examine relevant GymCan policies and procedures (along with the interpretation and implementation of those policies and procedures) (addressed under *Ability to Prevent and Address Maltreatment, Discrimination, and Other Prohibited Behaviours*);
- c. Explore systemic issues regarding prohibited behaviours under the *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport*<sup>2</sup> (the “UCCMS”) (specifically sections 5.9 to 5.14), including if, how, and why systemic issues prevail in this environment, and particularly within the Rhythmic Gymnastics (“RG”) and Women’s Artistic Gymnastics (“WAG”) programs at GymCan (addressed under *Prevalence of Systemic Issues in GymCan, Women’s Artistic Gymnastics, and Rhythmic Gymnastics*); and
- d. Provide recommendations and sustainable solutions to improve safety, well-being, and inclusion in this sports environment, including any immediate tangible measures (addressed under *Recommendations*).

The Assessment provides a high-level, comprehensive view of themes and trends revealed by the participants’ contributions, as well as my analysis of the interpretation and implementation of GymCan’s policies flowing from the relevant information and recommendations of the McLaren Report. I have detailed recommendations in this report, mostly coming from the participants themselves, that I hope will assist GymCan, with the support of the OSIC where needed and where applicable, in addressing the noted concerns in the spirit of inclusion, safety, and positive change.

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<sup>1</sup> McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc., “A Framework for Change: How to Achieve a Culture Shift for Gymnastics in Canada” (25 January 2023), online (pdf): *McLaren Global Solutions* <<https://www.mclarenglobalsportsolutions.com/pdf/Gymnastics-Report-Jan-22-2023.pdf>>.

<sup>2</sup> Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, “Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport” (31 May 2022), online (pdf): *OSIC* <<https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/UCCMS-v6.0-20220531.pdf>>.



## Overview of GymCan

GymCan, also known as Gymnastics Canada Gymnastique (“GCG”), is a federally incorporated not-for-profit organization whose member organizations are described in its by-laws as “the sole governing bodies for gymnastics in a province or territory of Canada.”<sup>3</sup>

When the GymCan community is referenced in this report, it includes GymCan staff members (there are currently 23 staff members included in the GymCan organizational chart provided to me, some of whom have both administrative and coaching functions), GymCan’s Board of Directors (“Board”) with eight Directors and one athlete representative, and at the national level, athletes, their parents, coaches, judges / officials, and integrated support team (“IST”) members. The National Team composition is fluid, meaning individuals from the GymCan community may transition on and off the National Team. As such, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact number of National Team members at any given time.

There are four main disciplines that compete internationally: WAG, Men’s Artistic Gymnastics (“MAG”), RG, and Trampoline Gymnastics (“TG,” which has two additional groups, Tumbling and Acrobatics, that compete nationally).

GymCan only has jurisdiction over the National Teams, and the composition of athletes and coaches on these National Teams is somewhat fluid.

In December 2022, GymCan formally adopted the UCCMS and joined the Abuse-Free Sport<sup>4</sup> program.

## Methodology

Creating safe and confidential opportunities to hear from the GymCan community provided me with perspectives and potential recommendations to improve GymCan’s national sports environment, taking into account the needs and views of the community members, and in particular, the athletes themselves.

### *McLaren Report*

I spoke to GymCan’s leadership, primarily Andrew Price, Chief Executive Officer (“CEO”), and Dr. Kacey Neely, Director, Safe Sport, both of whom were recently hired, and were forthcoming and transparent in all their meetings with me, to get input and insight on the McLaren Report recommendations and GymCan’s policies and procedures regarding safeguarding and safety practices.

### *Survey and Interviews*

Members of the GymCan community were advised that the Assessment was commencing by introduction letter sent in English and French by the CEO on December 12, 2023, which included a video clip of me introducing myself and the Assessment process. Recipients were encouraged to invite community members, who may not have received an invitation to participate, to connect with me. To broaden the

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<sup>3</sup> GymCan, “By-laws” (16 June 2013), online (pdf): *GymCan* <<https://trello.com/b/5UTO7QaA/gymnastics-canada-gymnastique-canada>>.

<sup>4</sup> Visit <https://abuse-free-sport.ca/> to learn more about the Abuse-Free Sport program.



reach, the OSIC played the video introduction at an information session for the GymCan community on Dec 13, 2023, and both the OSIC and GymCan posted invitations to participate on their websites.

An initial email was sent to 212 members of the GymCan community, in both French and English, on December 13, 2023, with the survey link and an invitation to meet with me in virtually. There was also an option to obtain the survey in French. A consent form to participate and covering letter were sent to 37 parents of athletes under 18 on December 13, 2023. In the letter, those parents were also invited to participate. A total of 14 consent forms were received, so the survey was then sent to those athletes. Athletes under 18 also had an option to reach out to me directly if consent was a barrier to them participating (none did). In addition, five community members contacted me directly to receive the survey. The majority of the 231 recipients were athletes (current and former), while approximately one-third were coaches, and the remaining were GymCan staff members, parents, IST members, judges / officials, athlete representatives, and Board members (current and former). The survey was left open until January 30, 2024. In total, 128 responses were received (a 55% response rate).

An executive summary of the survey responses (the “Survey Summary”) is attached at Tab 1.

A total of 17 GymCan community members requested interviews. These took place via Zoom and by phone between August 2023 and February 2024, and were conducted in English and French. Scheduling requests and requests for additional meetings were accommodated until the end of the interview period. Additional interviews, including in March 2024 with GymCan’s leaders (including the CEO, the Director, Safe Sport, and the Board Chair), provided an opportunity to discuss GymCan at the strategic level, and specifically, to comment on relevant policies and procedures, and the McLaren Report.

I informed the survey and interview participants that this Assessment was a review carried out with the purpose of improving safety and inclusion in GymCan’s National Team environments and general administration, and of making recommendations for addressing the same. I encouraged the participants to be open and forthcoming about their perceptions and experiences, and I ensured the interviews were conducted in a trauma-informed manner where appropriate. I also offered interview participants the option of having a support person present, if they wished. Finally, I noted that the survey and interview tools were meant to facilitate a “pulse taking” of the GymCan National Team environment from 2019 to present day (rather than an in-depth follow-up on the extensive and comprehensive 277-page McLaren Report and associated surveys<sup>5</sup> completed by McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc.) and should be taken in that spirit.

Except for GymCan’s leaders in regard to the *McLaren Report Recommendations* review, the participants were told the information they shared in the survey and in interviews would be confidential and would be referenced in this report thematically in order to preserve their confidentiality. Participant names are not used in this report, and participants are not identified as the source of any particular opinions or pieces of information; their views are not attributed to them directly and are summarized generally with the information provided by other participants.

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<sup>5</sup> The surveys conducted for the McLaren Report were extensive, pilot tested, and quality checked prior to being issued.



I reviewed the information gathered in the Assessment, and when concerns were regularly cited among participants, I grouped those concerns into ‘themes.’ The themes and the information underlying those themes are set out in the report; however, concerns raised underlying the various themes are interconnected, resulting in some overlap among the themes.

### Assessments Versus Investigations

I clarified with interviewees that the Assessment was not an investigation but rather a review carried out with a view of providing a summary of their experiences with GymCan and of any concerns, and of making recommendations for addressing the same. Interviewees were encouraged to be open and forthcoming about their perceptions and experiences.

I confirmed with them that none of my recommendations would include the termination of employment or volunteer position, or discipline of anyone employed by or associated with GymCan. As was emphasized to every interviewee, the issues identified through this Assessment are not about any particular individual in the performance of their duties or in relation to a specific complaint where there is a respondent and/or a complainant. Rather, and consistent with the process being an assessment (versus an investigation into misconduct), I have detailed recommendations that I hope will assist GymCan in addressing any concerns in the spirit of positive change.

To further clarify, unlike an investigation, in an assessment, there is no complainant or respondent, and survey participants and interviewees were asked to provide information that described their experiences in GymCan. The information in this report reflects how participants perceived the issues, systems, and dynamics within GymCan. Where the same or similar information about the culture or environment was disclosed by multiple participants, I have specifically made note of this. The information that participants provided in their interviews or survey responses was not subject to further examination to establish validity; it constituted their individual perspectives. In short, this report contains my assessment of the environment but does not contain any findings of fact.

### *Document Review*

I have reviewed and considered all documents provided by participants in this Assessment, which included emails, the UCCMS, the relevant GymCan policies and associated procedures, the McLaren Report, and information on GymCan’s Trello platform and website.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Visit <https://gymcan.org/> for more information on GymCan.





## Definitions

I have incorporated a simplified version of the definitions of ‘maltreatment’ and ‘discrimination’ based on the UCCMS definitions into the survey, the interviews, and this report:

*The UCCMS prohibits “maltreatment.” **Maltreatment** in sports is when someone does something (or fails to do something) that either causes harm or could cause harm. It includes psychological, physical, and sexual maltreatment, as well as neglect and grooming.*

*‘**Psychological maltreatment**’ is behaviour that hurts someone’s mental well-being or sense of self-worth (emotions, thoughts, mood, or outlook). It includes bullying and harassment behaviour. Types of behaviour include:*

- *Spurning (e.g., belittling, ridiculing, or humiliating)*
- *Terrorizing (e.g., having unrealistic expectations accompanied by threats if not met or placing in unpredictable situations)*
- *Isolating (e.g., confining to one space or restricting social interactions with others)*
- *Exploiting / corrupting (e.g., encouraging inappropriate behaviour)*
- *Denying emotional responsiveness (e.g., limiting interactions or praise)*
- *Mental health neglect (e.g., refusing to seek medical help)*

*‘**Physical maltreatment**’ is the use of physical force such as shaking, hitting, kicking, throwing, or touching another person’s body in a way that causes or could have caused harm. This contact does not have to be violent. It also includes the threat of physical force.*

*‘**Sexual maltreatment**’ means doing or saying something sexual that could cause harm to someone. The harm could be to the body or mind.*

*‘**Neglect**’ means not giving someone the care or support they need or taking away access to care or support.*

*‘**Grooming**’ is when someone (usually in a more senior or powerful position) builds a relationship, trust, and emotional connection with someone so they can manipulate, exploit, and/or abuse them. Examples are encouraging someone to keep secrets, making sexual innuendos or comments, unnecessary touching, and making repeated boundary transgressions.*

*‘**Boundary transgressions**’ are actions that do not necessarily meet the criteria of ‘Maltreatment’ but are still inappropriate because they cross boundaries that most people think should exist. An example is the expected boundaries between a coach and an athlete. Example actions are sharing personal photos in an inappropriate way; giving gifts in situations that would make the athlete uncomfortable; discussing personal issues with the athlete that have nothing to do with coaching; or showing favouritism.*

*The UCCMS prohibits ‘discrimination’. **Discrimination in sports** can be direct (overt) or indirect (subtle) things that someone does (or fails to do) that either causes harm or could cause harm to a person based on factors such as their race, national or ethnic origin, colour, Indigeneity, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, language, genetic characteristics, or disability. Examples include homophobic jokes, racial slurs, athletes of colour being made to feel unwelcome or being ignored, and not allowing athletes breaks for religious observation.*

*Discrimination also includes policies and/or practices that contribute to creating an inappropriate or inequitable environment. Examples include decisions made that restrict one group of athletes from participating in an event or policies that do not accommodate an athlete’s religious needs.*

*The **Rule of Two** is a guideline that says there should be two adults present when interacting with minors to serve as safeguards for each other and to protect the well-being and safety of young athletes.*



## McLaren Report Recommendations

Significant stakeholder engagement, as well as examples of best practices from sport in Canada and internationally, resulted in 46 recommendations being noted in the McLaren Report, primarily related to the formation of a “Culture Review Leadership Team.” The McLaren Report also included a review of GymCan’s policies and procedures, and outlined a number of serious deficiencies in its safeguarding and safety practices, as well as in the cultural fabric of gymnastics in Canada, that required action.

In December 2022, just prior to the release of the McLaren Report in January 2023, GymCan became a signatory to the OSIC, the joining of which effectively addressed some concerns in the McLaren Report. In February 2023, the former CEO of GymCan and the former Chair of the Board resigned. There were also other changes in GymCan’s Board. As identified by many participants, this was a challenging period for GymCan, and at that time, it did not have capacity to review, respond, or implement the McLaren Report recommendations. In April 2023, the Director, Safe Sport was appointed, and in August 2023, the current CEO was appointed. These leadership appointments were seen by many as key to bringing about needed changes.

The CEO noted that his approach, with the support of the Board, was to leverage the valuable information, tools, and resources outlined in the McLaren Report and action them under the direction of a National Gymnastics Safety Steering Committee (“Steering Committee”) and a project team to guide GymCan in creating and implementing a holistic safety and safeguarding approach, instead of creating a Culture Review Leadership Team as envisioned in the McLaren Report. I summarized the CEO’s description of the Steering Committee below under *Culture Review Leadership Team Composition and Function: Recommendations 1 to 4*.

The CEO stated that gaps in safety mechanisms and practices were known and understood, and accordingly, “action can and should be undertaken in a cohesive manner, sooner rather than later.” He described these actions as an iterative process, involving continuous examination, improvement, and tweaking of the design, and implementation of safeguarding measures.

The CEO acknowledged that although the recommendations were not being implemented in the way the McLaren Report suggested, concerns were being addressed (discussed below under *GymCan’s Responses to Specific McLaren Report Recommendations*).

Several leaders interviewed over the course of the Assessment, including Board members, discussed that it was important to understand that while GymCan was a national organization, it did not have jurisdiction over Provincial/Territorial Sport Organizations (“PTOs”). They said GymCan’s aim was to co-create a plan that could be implemented from local to national levels. The CEO suggested this “all-of-sport” approach was critical to address the McLaren Report’s key concern that the lack of jurisdictional alignment across the sport system inherently created an “Achilles heel” for safe sport efforts.

In regard to the holistic safety and safeguarding approach, the leaders said GymCan developed several safety principles to frame the safety work and associated decision making, summarized as follows:

- Athlete / young person centred: Ensure young people’s and athletes’ needs and opinions are designed into processes, practices, and structures;



- Humane: Lead with humanity and compassion as opposed to bureaucratic and procedure-centric approaches;
- Pragmatic: Link policy and procedure to individual and collective action and behaviours;
- Equity-based: Understand inherent structural power imbalances and use the concept of equity to design standards, processes, and practices; and
- UCCMS-aligned: Wherever possible, leverage the UCCMS definitions, principles, and standards to inform current practice.

The leaders suggested it was through the application of these principles that gymnastics could be “fun and enjoyable,” as mentioned in the McLaren Report, as well as be safe, inclusive, and have a culture of excellence in high-performance sport. GymCan’s approach to addressing specific recommendations and underlying concerns are set out in detail below.

### *GymCan’s Responses to Specific McLaren Report Recommendations*

#### Culture Review Leadership Team Composition and Function: Recommendations 1 to 4

1. *A single individual be appointed to lead an independent multi-disciplinary team referred to collectively as the Culture Review Leadership Team (“CRLT”). The appointed individual to serve as the independent Chair of the CRLT.*
2. *The Board of Directors of Gymnastics Canada appoint a Canadian lawyer to Chair the CRLT and lead the Gymnastics Culture Review. The appointed individual must be independent of the sport of gymnastics in Canada with no actual or perceived conflicts of interest.*
3. *The Chair of the CRLT consider the appointment of individuals with the following roles and expertise: 1) Child protection (x1), 2) Organisational behavior/change management (x1), 3) Trauma-informed Interview Associates (x3), 4) Coach and Judge representatives (x2) and 5) Gymnastics Athlete Representatives (x2). The Chair of the CRLT is to have discretion concerning the eventual final composition of the team.*
4. *The Gymnastics Canada Athletes Commission nominate one male and one female member of the Commission to be included on the CRLT to provide athlete perspectives and technical expertise to the Chair.<sup>7</sup>*

As mentioned earlier, rather than completing the independent review contemplated in the McLaren Report, the CEO indicated that GymCan would create and implement a holistic safety and safeguarding approach, informed by the Steering Committee. He said the Steering Committee would be comprised of many of the same types of stakeholders contemplated in the McLaren Report, albeit the focus of the work would be more operational in nature than that of an independent review. He noted there would be members who would be independent of the sport of gymnastics, bringing expertise in safeguarding, sport

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<sup>7</sup> The quoted recommendations throughout this section are from the McLaren Report, *supra* at 28–33 [footnotes omitted].



administration, and good governance, as well as members such as athlete representatives, coach representatives, and judge representatives, who would not be fully independent from the sport of gymnastics: all members would have vigorous conflict-of-interest and code-of-conduct requirements. In addition, he said a full-time project manager with safeguarding and/or safety experience would be hired to oversee this work (the “Project”) and would provide ongoing support to the Steering Committee, manage stakeholder engagement, and ensure monitoring and evaluation would be in place. He said the CEOs and Executive Directors of the PTOs would be given the opportunity to provide feedback on the composition of the Steering Committee and the proposed overall approach, which would assist with buy-in for requisite changes.

#### Communication of the Gymnastics Culture Review: Recommendations 5 and 6

5. *A dedicated section on the Gymnastics Canada website be created to communicate information and progress about the Gymnastics Culture Review.*
6. *A coordinated announcement about the Gymnastics Culture Review be made by Gymnastics Canada in collaboration with its PTO members, including email notification to all participants through GymCan, PTOs and local clubs. The announcement also should include a call for participation, a link to the dedicated website and how to become involved with the Gymnastics Culture Review.*

The CEO said GymCan would create a public space to inform internal and external audiences about the Project, including the composition of the Steering Committee, and Project timelines, milestones, and key measures.

More specifically, he said an initial announcement and communication would be made to all PTOs and National Team stakeholders with a request that they further share the announcement with key stakeholders across the sport community.

#### Support and Processes for Victims of Maltreatment: Recommendations 7 to 9

7. *It is imperative that protocols are established by the CRLT for the reporting of allegations of abuse that may arise through the consultation process.*
8. *A safeguarding statement and protocol be developed by the CRLT and posted on the dedicated website.*
9. *Resources to support victims of maltreatment be communicated to all participants in the Gymnastics Culture Review, including Abuse Free Sport and the Canadian Sport Helpline, among others.*

The CEO advised that all of the work undertaken as part of this Project would be trauma informed. Additionally, he noted mechanisms would be put in place to support the effective involvement of survivors of maltreatment, ensuring their involvement would have the least possible negative impact on their health and well-being. As well, he said reports of maltreatment brought forward over the course of this work would be directed to the appropriate authority (whether that be to the OSIC, GymCan’s Independent Third Party, or other civic authority).



Further, he highlighted that one of the key deliverables of this Project would be a set of ongoing supports, tools, processes, and practices to ensure that athletes and other participants subjected to maltreatment in the sport environment would be effectively supported at all stages, from complaint to healing. Additionally, the CEO noted the reporting and complaints management practices would be trauma informed and human centred.

#### Stakeholder Consultation Methods: Recommendation 10 to 13

- 10. Consultation to incorporate a combination of methods including individual and group meetings, personal interviews, focus groups, surveys and written responses at the discretion of the Chair.*
- 11. Interview techniques to follow a human rights-based and participatory approach to ensure all aspects of the Gymnastics Culture Review, from design to data collection, are focused on the principles of dignity, equality and respect. To this end, the IRT [the McLaren Report's Independent Review Team] recommends the Gymnastics Culture Review be guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ('UNCRC').*
- 12. A representative sample of stakeholders be consulted amongst athletes and disciplines. Additionally, the CRLT is to consult with coaches, judges, parents, administrative staff, IST members and leadership of gymnastics governing bodies.*
- 13. Sport Canada, the COC [Canadian Olympic Committee] and OTP [Own the Podium] be consulted to inform the Gymnastics Culture Review and its recommendations, particularly as they relate to how high-performance gymnastics programs are directed, supported and evaluated.*

The CEO advised that a variety of stakeholder and consultation methods contemplated in the McLaren Report would be deployed to help direct the Project. He said any qualitative and quantitative survey methods and engagement activities would be conducted ethically in accordance with generally accepted best practice. He also noted the broad variety of stakeholder groups contemplated in the McLaren Report would be involved in co-designing and providing feedback into components of the Project, including Sport Canada, the OTP, the COC, and the Coaching Association of Canada.

#### Scope of the Gymnastics Culture Review — Levels of Gymnastics Participation: Recommendation 14

- 14. The Gymnastics Culture Review must include an examination of all levels within the sport in Canada, from recreational participation (Gym for All) at the grassroots level through competitive provincial gymnastics to national and international levels of competition.*

#### Sub-cultures by Competitive Discipline: Recommendations 15 to 17

- 15. The Gymnastics Culture Review examine and compare competitive sub-disciplines in the sport, with specific attention paid to the Olympic disciplines including features of Women's Artistic Gymnastics and Rhythmic Gymnastics that make these disciplines more prone to negative cultures and abuse.*



16. *The Gymnastics Culture Review be focused on the welfare and experiences of athletes within the system irrespective of level or discipline.*
17. *The Gymnastics Culture Review must identify the systemic trends and drivers related to experiences of maltreatment and align recommendations to address these trends and drivers.*

The CEO stated that the safety and safeguarding work contemplated with the Project would be designed to be implemented at all levels and within all disciplines of gymnastics in Canada. He noted specific subcultures and requirements across disciplines and levels of the sport would be better defined to ensure that strategies and practices established would be appropriate and effective.

#### Own The Podium “Culture of Excellence Assessment and Audit Tool” (‘CAAT’): Recommendations 18 and 19

18. *The Gymnastics Culture Review implement the Culture of Excellence Assessment and Audit Tool (‘CAAT’) developed in partnership with OTP to assess culture within high-performance disciplines of gymnastics in Canada.*
19. *Sport Canada evaluate the opportunity to support the development of a companion tool to systematically assess and audit culture at the grassroots developmental level of the Canadian amateur sport community.*

The CEO confirmed that GymCan and OTP had already agreed to complete the CAAT across all high-performance disciplines and that the work commenced in February 2024.

#### Local Gymnastics Clubs: Recommendations 20 to 22

20. *The Gymnastics Culture Review include a systematic examination of local gymnastics clubs in Canada to assess culture.*
21. *The review of local clubs includes a confidential web-based survey distributed to the management/leadership of every gymnastics club in Canada for distribution to their members and stakeholders.*
22. *The survey of clubs be augmented with personal visits to a selected number of clubs on behalf of the CRLT.*

While understanding Recommendations 20 to 22 are outside the scope of this Assessment, it is helpful to recognize GymCan’s willingness to address these concerns by better understanding club-level practice and culture, as these aspects will be within the scope of the Project.

The CEO confirmed that the work needed to understand current and potential safety practices would be undertaken with an eye to establishing a foundational set of standards that would apply to all clubs across Canada. He said club-level administrators and owners would be provided meaningful opportunities to contribute to the establishment of these standards to ensure greater understanding, buy-in, commitment, and ultimately cohesive implementation across all clubs. He noted that physical site visits to clubs would be contemplated as required in order to inform this work.



### Governance of Gymnastics in Canada: Recommendations 23 to 27

23. *The relationship and alignment between national, provincial and local governance be examined as they relate to culture.*
24. *Gymnastics Canada's governance structure be measured and evaluated against the Canadian Sport Governance Code ('CSGC'). The CSGC can also be used to inform the exploratory review of governance best practices at the club and PTO levels.*
25. *The Cromwell Report<sup>8</sup> be reviewed by the CRLT and be used as a reference document to identify best practices and recommendations that may be applicable to the governance of gymnastics in Canada including the governance of Gymnastics Canada.*
26. *Performance management structures for coaches and other staff be reviewed at all levels.*
27. *The current Terms of Reference for Gymnastics Canada Athletes Commission be reviewed as it relates to gymnastics athlete representation within GymCan's governance structure, including expanded opportunities for athlete voices to be heard.*

The CEO noted Sport Canada's announcement of the requirement that all national sport organizations adhere to the CSGC by 2025.<sup>9</sup> He said GymCan and the Board were currently developing an implementation plan to ensure GymCan would adhere to the CSGC in the timeline established, and he affirmed GymCan would inform itself of good practice in the sport system as well as other sectors within Canada and abroad. He highlighted that the involvement and space for athlete voices in decision making and governance of the sport in Canada were of paramount importance, and that the work undertaken in service to safety and safeguarding alongside the work to improve governance would contemplate meaningful ways to involve athletes. He added that performance management of staff (including coaches) within the direct control of GymCan would be enhanced and would include objectives relating to effective safety leadership.

### Gymnastics Canada Organisational Structure and Leadership: Recommendations 28 and 29

28. *Gymnastics Canada's organisational structure be reviewed including roles, leadership, reporting relationships and employee performance management structures.*
29. *A 360-degree review process be implemented for senior GymCan positions including the CEO and the lead staff member of each of the high-performance leadership teams.*

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Cromwell, "Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review" (31 October 2022), online (pdf): *Hockey Canada* <<https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>>.

<sup>9</sup> Government of Canada, "Safety in Sport" (11 January 2024), online: *Government of Canada* <<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/safety-integrity-ethics-sport.html>>.





The CEO was hired in August 2023 to lead GymCan. He advised that one of the key objectives of his role as CEO was to ensure teams and structures were in place to enable safe and effective sport programs and to provide meaningful leadership to the sport operations. He added that a new staff role at the director level with responsibility for human resource management (“HR”) (specifically organizational structure, roles and responsibilities, and performance management), approved by the Board, was expected to be staffed in early 2024. He said GymCan had already partnered with a leading HR consulting firm to complete a number of diagnostics, including employee engagement, athlete engagement, and 360-degree feedback, and it was anticipated that regular monthly engagement surveys would be circulated on an ongoing basis with key GymCan stakeholders (including athletes, coaches, IST members, and staff) starting in 2024. Additionally, he highlighted that 360-degree feedback tools were anticipated to be available by May 2024.

#### Jurisdiction, Safe Sport Reporting and Accountability: Recommendations 30 to 38

- 30. Processes related to jurisdiction, Safe Sport reporting and accountability be examined between local clubs, PTOs and Gymnastics Canada.*
- 31. The CRLT identify the accountabilities and reporting relationships required by PTOs for member clubs operating within their jurisdictions.*

The CEO advised he was anticipating that the Project would clarify reporting and complaint management accountabilities in a consistent manner across all levels of the sport in Canada. He noted the clarity would require a systematic review of requirements in place at provincial and federal levels, and added that safety and safeguarding standards would be established for all levels, from clubs and PTOs to GymCan.

- 32. The CRLT review and comment on the Sport Funding Accountability Framework as it relates to supporting and encouraging a positive culture within the sport of gymnastics.*
- 33. The CRLT review and comment on current program funding and evaluation requirements required by OTP for targeted high-performance sports as it relates to supporting and encouraging a positive culture.*
- 34. The CRLT answer the question: Is there a ‘win at all costs’ approach within high-performance sub-disciplines of gymnastics in Canada? The answer to this question should include the role of funding agencies including Sport Canada, the COC and OTP.*

The CEO indicated that as work unfolded to design and implement effective safeguarding and safety practices within gymnastics, any reflections pertinent to funders or partners at the federal and provincial levels would be shared. He said GymCan would advocate for changes to funding and other programs as necessary in order to strengthen the culture of safety within gymnastics as well as in the broader Canadian sports system.

- 35. A comprehensive review of complaint reporting processes be implemented. This must include an examination of the relationship between local, PTO and GymCan policies on reporting versus actual practice in the implementation of these policies.*





The CEO stated it was GymCan's hope to have a clear and consistent complaint reporting process for violations that would be applicable at all levels of the sport. He noted that mechanisms would need to be in place to monitor the effectiveness of reporting and any response to said reports, and that any regulatory or other reporting requirements would need to be integrated into the complaints reporting process to be implemented.

*36. An analysis of all complaints that have been reported at the local, PTO and GymCan levels over the past 5 years be implemented.*

The CEO advised that at this time, GymCan did not anticipate completing this five-year review of all complaints received at all levels of the sport. A primary reason given was that there was no consistent complaint reporting standard in place against which such an assessment could be completed. Additionally, he noted many of the stakeholders had called attention to a lack of action or consistent action with respect to these complaints. As such, in the absence of a clearly defined complaints management process and with existing evidence of inconsistent application, he suggested efforts would be better expended on achieving an agreed-upon consistent approach. He noted that if, as the Project unfolded, it became necessary to review prior complaints in order to inform a new process, such a review would be undertaken on a sample basis.

*37. The impacts of GymCan's adoption of the UCCMS and agreement with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner be reviewed, including how this affects reporting as it relates to individuals who are not identified by GymCan or OSIC as being under the jurisdiction of the OSIC national reporting mechanism.*

*38. The feasibility and advantages of developing a Club Accreditation Model ('CAM') for gymnastics in Canada be examined by the CRLT drawing upon the Club Licencing Model recently introduced by Canada Soccer for inspiration.*

The CEO explained that the contractual relationship between GymCan and the SDRCC continued to evolve. Based on the 2024 contract renewal and lessons learned to date, he said GymCan was committed to reviewing its practices to ensure clarity with respect to all safety and safeguarding measures, and the Project as planned would ensure there were no gaps in understanding or execution as a result of GymCan's relationship with the OSIC.

The CEO expected the work being undertaken would define and establish a baseline standard of expectations to be delivered at the club level, and he noted this might take the form of an accreditation model. Ultimately, he asserted it would be critically important that safety and safeguarding standards existed at all levels of the sport and were adhered to at every member club across Canada.

#### Safe Sport Education: Recommendations 39 to 41

*39. The content, delivery and frequency of mandatory Safe Sport education and training be assessed including the Coaching Association of Canada's ('CAC') Safe Sport training and any programs that have been granted equivalency including Respect in Sport modules.*



40. *The CRLT review the effectiveness, alignment and delivery of Safe Sport education for gymnastics in Canada based on different gymnastics stakeholder roles – including athletes, coaches, parents, IST, judges and staff.*
41. *The CRLT review the effectiveness of the ‘Values-Based Coaching Module’ that was launched in 2020, including an analysis and profile of coaches who have completed the Module.*

The CEO confirmed that the Project contemplated education and professional development requirements for all stakeholders, including base requirements for all sport participants, alongside role-specific competency development in areas of safety and safeguarding leadership. Further, he noted existing educational modules would be evaluated and educational opportunities available inside and outside of the sport community would be assessed for effectiveness. Ultimately, from a sustainability and progress standpoint, he said GymCan would adopt pre-existing educational materials and approaches wherever possible, especially in the space of child and youth safeguarding where GymCan did not have, or did not anticipate having in the future, industry leading expertise. As such, the CEO asserted that it was incumbent upon GymCan to identify potential partners with such expertise and to work alongside them to benefit from their knowledge and understanding to support professional development and capacity building of individual sport participants and the sport system at large.

#### Implementation of Gymnastics Culture Review Recommendations: Recommendations 42 to 46

42. *Recommendations provided by the CRLT must be measurable, actionable and should be prioritised with suggested implementation timelines.*
43. *Gymnastics Canada be responsible for implementing the recommendations published in the Gymnastics Culture Review.*
44. *A timeline of 10 months be considered to complete the review, which may vary according to the final Terms of Reference.*
45. *External oversight of GymCan’s implementation of the Gymnastics Culture Review’s recommendations is necessary to ensure accountability in the implementation of the recommendations.*
46. *Progress towards the achievement of milestones and recommendations be communicated on the dedicated website for the Gymnastics Culture Review (further to recommendation #5).*

The CEO stated that the Project, guided by the Steering Committee, would be broken down into a clear set of objectives and milestones with measurable outcomes, and it would not have a defined end date but would evolve with the degree of understanding and learning that would come with associated actions and implementations. He said an initial comprehensive phase of the work was expected to be completed within the next few years, and where specific tactics were obvious (or a clear best practice existed), agreement on an implementation plan would be put into place in as timely a manner as possible. In areas where the path forward was less clear, he anticipated there would be pilot projects or other methods to gain a greater understanding of effectiveness and the ability to implement what had been designed. He



noted that all elements of the agreed-upon strategic approach would be linked to key safety and safeguarding outcomes, which would be measured and monitored.

The CEO stated that the ultimate oversight for the Project would be provided by the Board and its newly formed Risk and Safeguarding Committee. He explained that the work of the Risk and Safeguarding Committee would be to ensure that effective monitoring and oversight were in place and the Project was functioning as intended. In addition, he verified that ongoing monitoring would be undertaken to track meaningful and timely progress against the key safety imperatives.

### *Summary*

The table attached at Tab2 provides an overview of the McLaren Report recommendations and the plans contemplated and actions undertaken to date by GymCan. Most of the recommendations were aligned with plans and actions, and some of McLaren's recommendations were beyond the scope of my mandate so I did not delve into the details; however, it is valuable to see the broader efforts by GymCan to address concerns.

The CEO stated that progress against the established plans and monitoring of results would be shared publicly on a regular basis in a manner consistent with the communication recommendations in the McLaren Report. He emphasized that the underlying concerns of the McLaren Report recommendations had been carefully considered, and plans and actions were in place to lead change. The CEO indicated it would take time to determine if these intentions and actions would result in the changes GymCan wished to implement.

## **Ability to Prevent and Address Maltreatment, Discrimination, and Other Prohibited Behaviours**

I was asked as part of my mandate to review GymCan's effective ability to prevent and address maltreatment, discrimination, and other prohibited behaviours; examine relevant GymCan policies and procedures; and explore systemic issues regarding prohibited behaviours under the UCCMS, including if, how, and why systemic issues prevailed in this environment, and particularly within the RG and WAG programs at GymCan.

The survey participants thoughtfully and generously shared their views on GymCan's sport environment from 2019 to present, adding valuable perspectives to this snapshot, all of which I felt privileged to read and learn from. The Survey Summary is attached at Tab 1.

### *Participant Overview*

As discussed in the *Methodology* section, I undertook a survey and interviewed community members and GymCan leaders as part of this Assessment. When I refer to a 'participant,' I am including survey participants and interviewees.

The survey asked several questions to identify, in a general way, the 128 survey participants so as to better understand their perspectives.



When asked to identify primary and former roles at the national level, as illustrated in Figure 1, of the survey participants who replied, there was almost an equal number between current and former coaches, and current and former athletes, with 27% and 26% respectively. There was also representation by GymCan’s staff and Board members (13%), and IST members (6%), with lesser participation from judges / officials (2%) and parents (1%). Previous roles at the national level included athletes (34% of responses), coaches (16% of responses), judges / officials (10% of responses), GymCan staff or Board members (8% of responses), parents (6% of responses), and IST members (5% of responses).

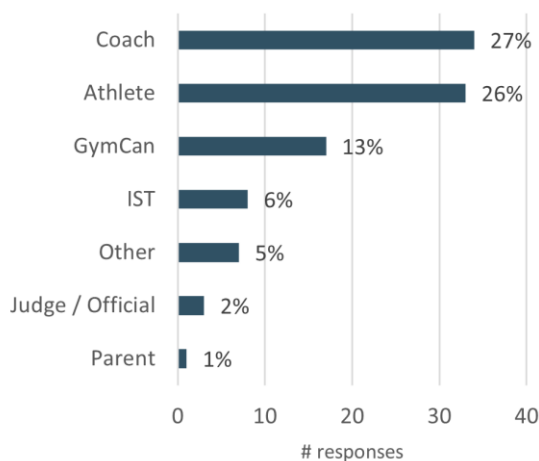


Figure 1: Primary and current former roles

Of those connected to a team, 41% said they were connected to a senior team, 5% were with a junior team, and, as shown in Figure 2, most were connected with WAG (30%). The remaining survey participants who answered these questions were connected to MAG (16%), RG (13%), TG (9%), and GymCan staff and Board members (8%).

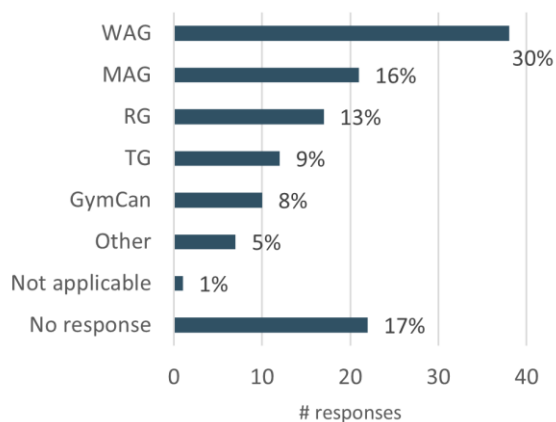


Figure 2: Area of specialty

The survey participants brought a wealth of experience to their replies, as 82% had been involved in gymnastics for 11 years or more, a further 27% were at the national level for 10 years or more, 36% between 2 and 10 years, and 20% less than 2 years.

When asked where they were from, the majority of survey participants who answered the question were from Ontario (30%) and Québec (23%). A total of 15% of survey participants called the western provinces home (British Columbia accounted for 10% while Alberta totalled 5%). Saskatchewan and New Brunswick added 1 survey participant each, while Nova Scotia added 2 survey participants. No survey participants identified Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon, Northwest Territories, or Nunavut as home. It is also interesting to note that 70% of survey participants did not identify as a person of a marginalized or equity seeking group (and given the protection of confidentiality, 5% noted they would rather not say and 17% did not respond, indicating that they were mistrustful of the Assessment process in this regard or perhaps that inclusion, diversity, and equity were not important or relevant in their minds).

In addition to learning from the 128 survey participants, I had the honour of listening and learning as interviewees shared personal stories and perspectives during online interviews. I met with the leadership of GymCan, and I interviewed 17 community members who requested an interview. There was



representation from various stakeholders, such as Board members, IST members, athletes, and parents, but mostly participation was from coaches, and many of them from WAG.

All of these voices showed a deep caring and passion for gymnastics and a desire for an improved sport environment. They welcomed the Assessment process, though some of them were sceptical of any real change coming from it.

The participants reflected and thought deeply about the gymnastics climate. They expressed frustration, disappointment, fear, anger, resignation, bewilderment, impatience, mental exhaustion, exclusion, and sometimes even trauma and distress. Some expressed concern for their own mental health and that of their peers and others, as well as sadness that committed, dedicated people with much to contribute may simply walk away from the sport of gymnastics if the environment did not change. Some of them had thought about leaving themselves.

Participants were, however, hopeful.

What follows is a summary of the survey and interview responses, grouped by topic:

- GymCan’s environment;
- Policies, procedures, and practices;
- GymCan’s administration;
- Coaching environment: practices and impacts;
- IST members, judges / officials, and parents; and
- Education.

### *GymCan’s Environment*

When asked about GymCan’s current environment, many participants compared it to the environment under the former GymCan leaders, and felt very strongly that the former GymCan leaders (including the CEO and the Board) “let the programs down” and that their actions and inactions impacted everyone, especially those in WAG. They talked about poor HR and hiring decisions; lack of fair process, including lack of due diligence; conflicts of interest; bias; lack of transparency; and poor communication. Many described the previous leaders as “being complacent” and “not taking responsibility or accountability,” and the organization as divided into “factions” and “dysfunctional.” Some described athletes as being “caught in the crossfire.”

The last few years were described by several participants as being very challenging for GymCan with the departure of the CEO and the Chair of the Board, the creation of a new Board, and not having a Director, Safe Sport in place for some time.

It is in this context that I was asked to assess GymCan’s effective ability to prevent and address maltreatment, discrimination, and other prohibited behaviours.



Most participants felt that GymCan’s environment was improving and going in the right direction. Several participants noted that more recently, the Board had been “building capacity” and had hired “great leaders,” including the Director, Safe Sport (a committed and dedicated PhD-level Director, whom many participants described as being a “gem” who was “putting out fires and preventing fires” on the ground) and the CEO (with expertise in “business and safety,” who was described as “a breath of fresh air,” with wellness as a high priority and a willingness to listen). Though there were reservations about whether the CEO would truly hold community members accountable and questions as to whether he had the formidable qualities and skills necessary to “pull us together” and transform GymCan, these changes in leadership were said to have brought hope and feelings of positivity.

As shown in Figure 3, over half of the survey participants (57%) rated the overall sports environment as “good to excellent.” Survey participants also listed the hiring of the CEO, the Director, Safe Sport, and other staff members as one of the top things GymCan had done to create a safer sports environment, along with providing education and resources around safe sport, and committing to / enforcing safe sport policies. Stemming from those listed were also the implementation of the complaints process, GymCan’s heightened commitment to athletes, and its improved collaborative and inclusive approach.

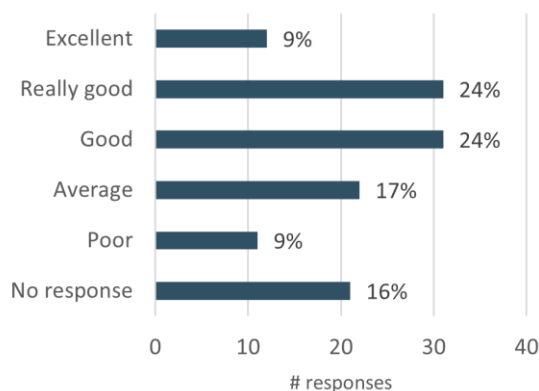


Figure 3: Overall experience in GymCan sports environment

As noted in the Survey Summary, those newer to the National Team environment rated their overall experiences more highly, another indication that the environment was improving.

When asked about what they liked most about being involved in the sport of gymnastics, survey participants reflected on the beauty, power, and artistic expression of gymnastics itself; their role within the sport and being in a position of having a positive impact on athletes; being able to share their passion and knowledge of the sport; and being part of a larger supportive team and community.

### *Policies, Procedures, and Practices*

I was tasked with examining GymCan’s policies and procedures, and the interpretation and implementation of those policies and procedures, as they related to discrimination, maltreatment, and prohibited behaviours. The McLaren Report had a large section (section 4.2) that extensively examined GymCan’s policies and noted that “GymCan’s current policy framework has no glaring shortcomings” and further that the suggestions provided “need not be fully realized.”<sup>10</sup> That said, safe sport policies were a focal point for survey participants and several interviewees as they noted that a lack of enforcement and

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<sup>10</sup> McLaren Report, *supra* at 182.



inconsistent application of safe sport policies, in addition to an ineffective complaint resolution process, were things they liked least about the sport of gymnastics.

During interviews with the CEO and the Director, Safe Sport, I reviewed the McLaren Report's suggestions for improvement and discussed the policies, procedures, practices, and measures currently in place. I learned the following.

The McLaren Report's examination of GymCan's safe sport policies was based on 2019 policies that have since been updated or eliminated to ensure alignment with the UCCMS when GymCan became a signatory in December 2022. For example, the *Abuse, Maltreatment and Discrimination Policy* was eliminated and replaced with the UCCMS. As another example, GymCan has updated definitions and references so that they are consistent with each other, the UCCMS, and associated bodies (such as federal and international associations). The policies and procedures clarify who they are intended for, and they continue to be reviewed, improved, and updated as "living, breathing documents" that are to reflect the UCCMS when amended and as required internally. In addition to signing onto the UCCMS and Abuse-Free Sport, everyone associated with GymCan is required to sign the *Code of Ethics and Conduct*, with role-specific code provisions.

GymCan's efforts to ensure the safe sport policies and related information are accessible extend to their online sites. GymCan is in the process of implementing Trello<sup>11</sup> (designed for collecting and reviewing documents easily) in addition to its website, and the plan is to house information and resources, such as help hotlines, including Kids Help Phone. GymCan is also using social media, such as Instagram and Facebook, to post accessible and bilingual information, such as on how to file a complaint.

In addition, GymCan is looking internally and externally to see how to improve its processes. Internally, ongoing training is being provided for staff so they can better understand and communicate (for example, by providing appropriate referrals and resources) that "safe sport is everyone's responsibility." Externally, GymCan understands that ongoing input from the community is required to improve, develop, and enforce policies as the community is broad (including, for example, partners and parents in the training and competitive environments) and ever changing.

GymCan's community is noticing the work it is doing. Its commitment to implementing, enforcing, and communicating safe sport policies was one of the top things survey participants said it had done to create a safe sport environment. As a communication example, 77% of the survey participants said they had heard of the Rule of Two, and almost all had seen the Rule of Two being used sometimes, usually, or always by all those interacting with minors.

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<sup>11</sup> Visit <https://trello.com/w/gymcan> to learn more about Trello.





The community is also suggesting there is more work to be done. For example, there is a lack of clarity on the rules and expectations around the consumption of alcohol when coaches, athletes, IST members, and GymCan staff are together, as only 45% of the survey participants said there were rules and expectations, whereas 24% said they did not know, and 15% said they did not exist.

### Complaint Resolution Policies and Procedures

As a brief overview, the complaint resolution policies reflect GymCan’s current jurisdiction and do not apply to PTOs, though there are some reciprocal arrangements (such as those related to sanctions). The updated complaint resolution process is relevant to all National Team members and GymCan staff (everyone involved with GymCan is subject to the Abuse-Free Sport not just athletes and coaches). All complaints are to be reported to the OSIC or the Independent Third Party, including potential HR issues. All vetting is done outside of GymCan to ensure complaints are handled by an independent party. The approach taken by GymCan is meant to eliminate concerns related to “bias,” “favouritism,” and “protecting GymCan staff” by ensuring there is a clear process in place.

There were compliments about the updated complaint resolution process. Several participants noted the independent complaint resolution process through the OSIC “gave more legitimacy to results” and reassurance regarding fairness and conflicts of interest; they also appreciated the signing onto the UCCMS.

The UCCMS sets rules that many Canadian sports organizations, including GymCan, use to ensure that sport environments are safe and respectful. Among other things, the UCCMS describes behaviours that are not supposed to occur in sport environments. One of its key tenets is the complaint resolution process. Understanding the definitions (provided in the *Definitions* section) of maltreatment, discrimination, and other prohibited behaviours is not straightforward, nor is perceiving if misconduct has occurred to oneself or others. As identified by several participants, the ‘grey zone’ (is it misconduct or not) is particularly tricky to identify. Then the questions of whether, when, and how to report the conduct, along with the consequences and potential repercussions of reporting, come into play. The resolution process itself can be uncertain, the official outcomes of a complaint are not always known to the complainant (the person experiencing or witnessing the conduct) unless there is a clear resolution requiring sanctions or remedies, and there may be fear of retribution, all leading the complainant to question whether to proceed. Up to this point, the complainant is still solo in deciding how to proceed. Once reported, GymCan, the OSIC, and other parties join in, which can further complicate the situation. Indeed, when asked about the top three things GymCan had not done to create a safer sport environment, survey participants put “ineffective complaint and resolution process; bullying and harassment was continuing, and safe sport policies were not enforced” in second place.

I have structured this section around the five areas associated with the complaint resolution process, described in Figure 4, and present a summary of the participants’ input.



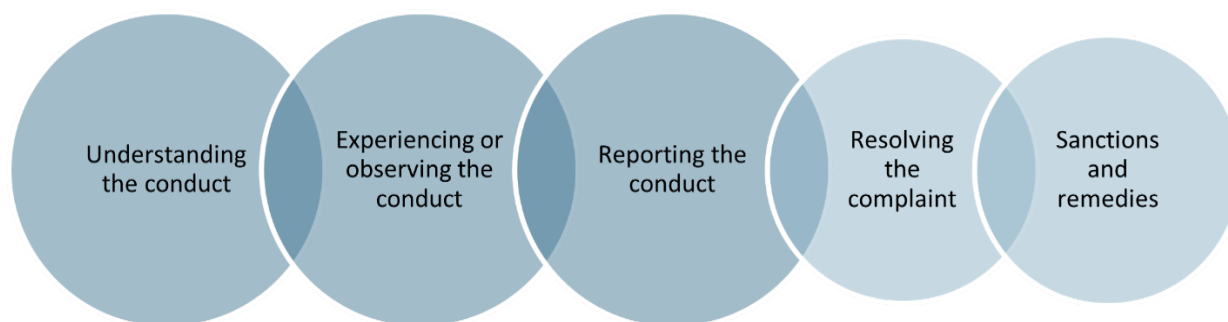


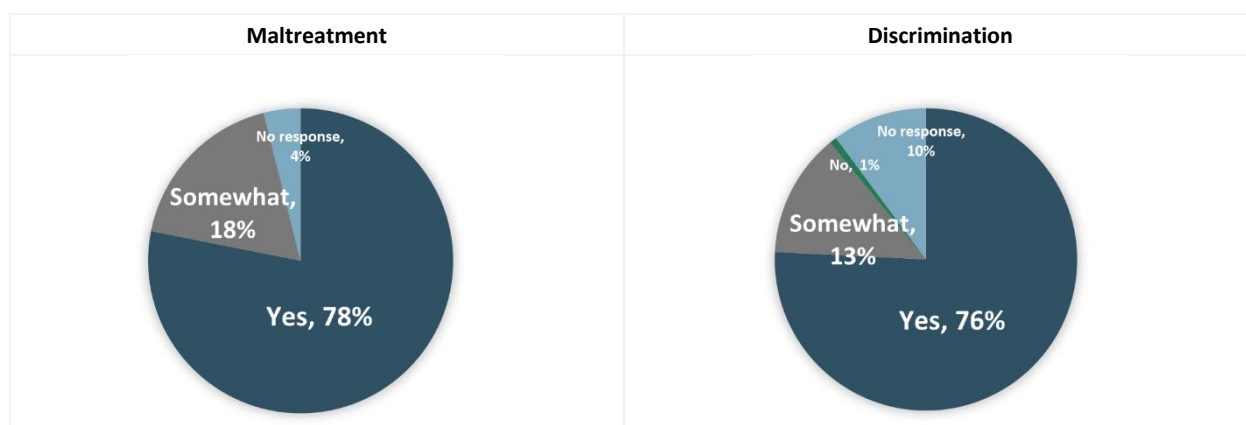
Figure 4: Complaint resolution process

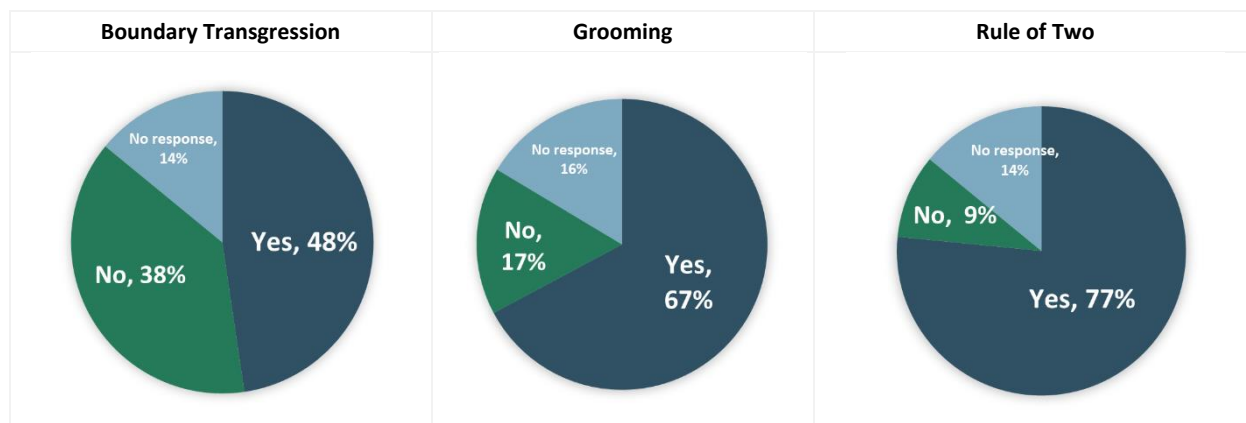
### Understanding the Conduct

When asked in the survey about how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement “Since 2019, GymCan has done things that have helped create a safer sport environment,” 65% agreed / strongly agreed. One obvious thing GymCan has promoted is a heightened awareness of the UCCMS and the meanings of key terms related to maltreatment in sport: the majority of survey participants (73%) knew of the UCCMS.

As the UCCMS sets out behaviours that are not supposed to occur in sport environments, I asked the survey participants how familiar they were with its key terms and definitions (provided in the *Definitions* section). The responses, as illustrated in Table 1, depict a high level of understanding overall. The term ‘maltreatment’ was understood by 78% of survey participants, along with another 18% who knew what it meant but could not list the forms of maltreatment, for a total of 96%. Similarly, for ‘discrimination in sports,’ 76% knew what that meant and 13% somewhat knew, for a total of 89%. Drilling down, the term ‘boundary transgression’ was understood by less than half of survey participants (48%), while ‘grooming’ was understood by 67% of survey participants and the ‘Rule of Two’ by 77% of survey participants.

Table 1: Understanding of terms





### *Experiencing or Observing the Conduct*

In terms of experiencing the conduct, some participants were willing to share their personal experiences of maltreatment and discrimination. Survey participants indicated that they had personally experienced (in descending order by number of occurrences in the past four years / in the past year) psychological maltreatment (23 / 11 responses), discrimination (6 / 5 responses), neglect (5 / 4 responses), boundary transgressions (4 / 3 responses), physical maltreatment (1 / 1 responses), and grooming (1 / 0 responses), with no one reporting sexual maltreatment.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of witnessing the conduct, when offered the choice of noting frequency (often, sometimes, occasionally, rarely, or never), of the survey participants who answered the associated questions, there were 23 boundary transgression incidents and 8 grooming incidents witnessed in the last year, and 29 boundary transgression incidents and 14 grooming incidents witnessed in the last four years. Looking at the responses a different way, 67 survey participants answered that they never or rarely witnessed a boundary transgression incident in the last year (60 since 2019), and 79 never or rarely witnessed a grooming incident (71 since 2019).

Several other factors are also critical to enabling safety, well-being, and inclusion in this sports environment. Participants were asked to rate how concerned they were in the last year about seven factors considered to be impactful on an athlete's mental and physical health. Ordering the factors from those receiving the highest percentage of very to extremely concerned resulted in the following:

- High demand for results: 33%;
- Parental influence: 30%;
- Overly harsh coaching: 27%;
- Pressure to specialize: 23%;
- Body shaming: 21%;
- Heavy training loads: 19%; and
- Pressure from GymCan: 15%.

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<sup>12</sup> While Question 34 was intended to elicit as many answers as applied, respondents could only select one due to a survey error; therefore, the prevalence and extent of these abusive experiences is likely higher.



Similar factors were examined in the McLaren Report (at page 227) and were placed in the following order by 13 PTO leaders (highest percentage of those very to extremely concerned). ‘High demand for results’ was the factor that moved the most in the current list (from the least concern to the most concern):

- Body image perceptions / sensitivities: 46%;
- Authoritative coaching: 46%;
- Frequency of training load: 31%;
- Parental influence: 23%;
- Pressure to engage in early specialization: 23%; and
- High demand for results: 15%.

Some participants identified the negative psychological impact on athletes of delays, poor planning, and unfair processes related to competitions and selection, including lack of inclusion and fear of or actual retaliation with respect to selection if they spoke out. They also shared concerns about the psychological toll of the complaints process.

#### *Reporting the Conduct*

Being able to report misconduct can be hampered by the environment one is in, and the reporting system one must use.

#### Environment

In responding to the question related to their level of concern in the four disciplines and in GymCan about a culture of fear, defined as “an environment where people are hesitant to express their views or report problems out of fear of punishment or negative consequences,” there were high non-response rates in the survey by TG (75%), RG (69%), and MAG (60%) survey participants, implying the ones who did respond to the question were knowledgeable about the concerns. The two disciplines most noted as having *slight to extreme* concerns by those who did respond to the question were WAG (65 responses) and GymCan (42 responses).

More specifically, counting the number of responses of those very to extremely concerned (out of those providing a concern level), as shown in Figure 5, most were *very to extremely* concerned about a culture of fear in WAG (48%), followed by RG (38%), GymCan (27%), TG (16%), and MAG (12%). In the McLaren Report, similar findings were noted, and WAG was described as being the most negative and subject to abuse.

Several athletes during interviews discussed that some athletes “know that things are not right”; however, they would not say much, if anything, until they retired because of “the power dynamics” and fear.

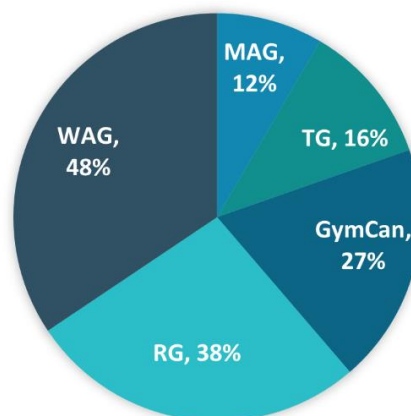


Figure 5: Very to extremely concerned re: culture of fear



## Reporting System

The top three things survey participants said they would do if they experienced or observed maltreatment or discrimination, in addition to speaking up in the moment to stop the behaviour, were to 1) speak to the person privately; 2) tell the Director, Safe Sport about it; and 3) tell a member of the team. Those are appropriate top responses to the situation.

Submitting a complaint to the OSIC or GymCan’s Independent Third Party was noted as something they would do as the sixth and seventh options, again well placed, as in general and when appropriate, it is best to deal with this type of behaviour directly and early on.

When someone decides to make a report, as discussed above, knowing how to report prohibited behaviours and one’s comfort level with reporting are two important factors to consider in the complaint resolution process. Participants overall appear to be relatively knowledgeable and comfortable with reporting, as summarized in Table 2.

With respect to reporting the conduct, 75% were extremely, very, or somewhat familiar on **how** to report maltreatment. When asked **how comfortable** they would be reporting maltreatment if it happened to them, that percentage decreased roughly by 10%. Although 25% of survey participants said they would be somewhat to extremely **uncomfortable** reporting maltreatment if it happened to them personally, 49% said they would be somewhat to extremely comfortable reporting it, and if the neutral responses (not more or less comfortable) were added to that (assuming if it did occur, they may lean more towards reporting), the percentage would increase to 65%. If they were a **bystander** observing maltreatment within their regular daily training / working environment, or outside of their regular daily training / working environment, 73% and 74% respectively indicated they would be somewhat to extremely comfortable, or neutral, in reporting.

Participants were not as familiar with **how** to report discrimination at the national environment as compared to maltreatment; only 60% were somewhat, very, or extremely familiar. The **comfort** levels for reporting were similar to that of reporting maltreatment: 66% were somewhat to extremely comfortable, or neutral, in reporting if it happened to them, and as a bystander, 72% in their daily training / working environment and 73% outside of their daily training / working environment.

*Table 2: Familiarity with and comfort level of reporting*

	Extremely, very, or somewhat familiar with how to report	Extremely, somewhat, or neutral on comfort level to report		
		Personal	Bystander in regular daily environment	Bystander outside of regular daily environment
Maltreatment	75%	65%	73%	74%
Discrimination	60%	66%	72%	73%

Of the 21 survey participants in the last year who said they witnessed or experienced maltreatment, discrimination, or any other prohibited behaviours, 71% said they reported it, a slight increase from the period 2019 to 2022 (of 64%).



I also examined the discipline and roles of survey participants to see if there were any other insights related to reporting. I combined the number of witnessed and experienced incidents of maltreatment, discrimination, or any other prohibited behaviours in the last year and in the period 2019 to 2022 against the number reported, by discipline. Table 3 summarizes the results. Survey participants from WAG and coaches reported the highest number of incidents and also the propensity to report. IST members reported all incidents. Athletes, however, had the lowest reporting ratio to incidents (2 reported to 7 incidents). Note that concerns in WAG and RG were reported in the McLaren Report and continue to be a focus of concerns.

*Table 3: Reporting by discipline and role*

Discipline	Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>WAG:</b> 22 incidents / 16 reported</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Coach:</b> 18 incidents / 10 reported</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• RG: 4 incidents / 3 reported</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• IST: 9 incidents / 9 reported</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• GymCan: 4 incidents / 3 reported</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Athlete: 7 incidents / 2 reported</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MAG: 3 incidents / 0 reported</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• GymCan: 5 incidents / 4 reported</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• TG: 3 incidents / 0 reported</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parent: 2 incidents / 2 reported</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Judge / Official: 0 incidents / 0 reported</li></ul>

When examining the barriers to reporting, the top reasons listed in the Survey Summary for making it less likely for someone to report were as follows:

- Being afraid of negative consequences to them or others (112 responses for maltreatment and 88 for discrimination);
- Thinking nothing would change if it was reported (62 responses for maltreatment and 56 for discrimination);
- Being afraid of upsetting those involved (63 responses for maltreatment and 50 for discrimination);
- Not regarding the process as confidential (63 responses for maltreatment);
- Being afraid that what they saw or experienced was not actually maltreatment (54 responses); and
- Not knowing the process for reporting it (46 responses for discrimination).

The response of ‘being afraid that what they saw or experienced was not actually maltreatment’ was further echoed by interviewees, who indicated they were not confident about what behaviours were or were not included, described as “grey areas,” where context was likely important and it was not always clear. Several interviewees stated that everyone in the community needed to understand what was and was not acceptable behaviour.

Two significant themes emerged from the survey and interviews related to reporting: that the OSIC’s complaint resolution process was being misused for “control, power, and revenge” on the one hand, and



on the other, that the consequences of submitting a complaint were “so huge” that some legitimate complaints were not being filed and not being dealt with appropriately. For example, one participant mentioned that going through a complaint resolution process as an athlete could be very intimidating as “it is very serious, often athletes don’t want to do harm to the coach, and they may have already tried various things and shared with other athletes [for support].” Another participant summarized that complainants and their complaints were not properly prepared and lacked transparency, and that the community needed more education and support about how to decide whether to participate in the complaint resolution process. Several noted a lack of (or lack of use of) informal complaint resolution options.

### *Resolving the Complaint*

I did not have the mandate to explore how current complaints, including those related to retaliation, were actually being resolved under the OSIC. The steadfast and consistent approach by GymCan that all complaints be referred to the OSIC or the Independent Third Party was largely favoured by the participants, with the hope of heightened transparency of the outcomes of those complaints compared to the past.

### *Sanctions and Remedies*

As noted in the *McLaren Report Recommendations* section, GymCan and its PTO counterparts have agreement cross-jurisdictionally related to sanctions. I did not review sanctions and remedies as part of this Assessment.

### *GymCan’s Administration*

GymCan’s Administration is one of the key stakeholders in creating a safe sport environment, and it is responsible for implementing the UCCMS and other relevant policies and procedures. While a few participants commented that they felt relationships with GymCan staff were improving, that they were optimistic, and that there was work being done on evolving shared values, many participants identified several areas in need of improvement:

- Lack of timeliness and disorganization;
- Poor governance, lack of transparency, and lack of accountability;
- Favouritism and bias;
- Selection and discretion issues;
- Lack of an athlete-centred approach; and
- Lack of communication.

It should also be noted that there were many newer GymCan staff members on staff when I conducted this Assessment. Participants were hopeful that staff and coaches in particular could work better together.



### Lack of Timeliness and Disorganization

Many participants expressed frustration with GymCan's Administration, describing it as disorganized, understaffed, and unable to deliver on deadlines or provide critical information in a timely manner. This lack of organization and timeliness was one of the least liked aspects of gymnastics, as noted in the Survey Summary.

### Poor Governance, Lack of Transparency, and Lack of Accountability

In addition to delays, many participants highlighted issues with poor governance, transparency, and due processes. They were critical of, for example, the carding process, the Olympic selection processes for WAG, the organization of competitions, and the release of important dates and information. One participant shared an example of an upcoming competition that was two weeks away and GymCan had not released the rules, which made preparing and training for it difficult. Several participants discussed GymCan's lack of transparency around process, and suggested GymCan needed to be more mindful. They further suggested that eliciting feedback from athletes about decisions made and fairness of process, for example, had to be done in a way that created a safe, open, and inclusive environment. A few participants mentioned that GymCan's staff and leaders needed to work harder to demonstrate the highest level of ethics and integrity to lead by example in order to improve communication, teamwork, and culture.

### Favouritism and Bias

Some participants, mostly coaches, felt that the messaging from GymCan Administration was "don't trust coaches," and said there was both "discrimination and favouritism" by staff. Some participants commented on low levels of trust in the environment and noted GymCan staff were positioning themselves as being there to take care of athletes instead of working as a team with the coaches and athletes. One stated, "If you push aside part of the team, the team gets weaker." Several participants said that in the past, complaints were ignored to protect GymCan staff.

### Selection and Discretion Issues

National Team selections were perceived by some as unfair due to covert decision making, favouritism, and conflicts of interest. Many examples were provided to back up these perceptions. At the leadership level, several participants raised issues of favouritism and conflicts of interest, including on committees and on the Board, as well as a lack of enforcement or inconsistent application of policies. At the coaching level, there were concerns about the discretion given to National Team head coaches in selection processes and calls for more objective criteria. For example, some participants expressed that "there was no clear criteria for National Team selection" and that the current National Team's head coach ("Head Coach") "had too much influence." One athlete expressly stated, "If the National Team Head Coach doesn't like your coach or if they don't like you or know you, you will not be selected and you will get vetoed." At the athlete level, some participants felt there were not equal opportunities for athletes from different regions, backgrounds, and styles. They further noted that athletes were not treated equally because processes and policies were applied unfairly, there was bias, and decisions were being made in "covert, underground ways," with "backdooring perpetuating a toxic culture." Participants described some decisions as "not transparent, understandable, or appealable," and "not athlete centred." One





athlete suggested that removing discretionary decision making and making selections based on transparent rules could be a solution as “everyone could read and know the rules (assuming they were made in a fair and transparent manner), they could know where they stood, and even if they did not like the results or outcomes, they could more readily accept them.”

Providing more opportunities to diverse members of the National Team to compete was also seen as important (in other words, not just sending “the A-Team, but sending the B-Team,” even if they could not be fully funded). One athlete stated that “only a few make it to the top, but there are many meaningful opportunities for athletes to participate.”

Some athletes also said there was unbalanced access to IST members.

### Lack of an Athlete-Centred Approach

Most participants felt that things were better for athletes in general in that there was a greater awareness of maltreatment and safe sport, many athletes seemed more able to share their opinions and thoughts on their experiences, their mental health seemed better, their gymnastics experience seemed better, and they seemed to be staying longer in the sport. As one example, a few participants noticed there was less referring to female athletes as “girls” or to athletes as “kids,” and more references to them simply being “athletes,” indicating a shift in culture.

The positives were quickly countered with negatives. One participant stated that the current lack of an athlete-centred approach created “powerlessness,” a “subservient mentality,” and “vulnerability for athletes.” Several attempted to frame an athlete’s daily reality to illustrate why an athlete-centred approach was critical, stating athletes “face more disappointment than others do in a lifetime” and “it shapes how we feel about failure”; others noted that “sports are hard” and that athletes needed and deserved better. One athlete expressed that they needed to learn and be empowered to have “confidence that they can disappoint others to be true to themselves,” giving the courageous example of USA gymnast Simone Biles and saying, “When she took a step back for her heart and her mind, she came back and excelled.”

Many participants expressed a desire for greater focus on athletes’ needs and well-being that went beyond “just talk” and that supported “their real lives.” This theme was present in the survey when survey participants were asked about the top three things GymCan had not done to create safer environment; there was a lack of commitment and focus on athletes (and coaches).

Athletes told me about how their concerns and satisfaction levels were not prioritized, with examples provided of how GymCan’s lack of organization, particularly around competitions, impacted their ability to balance school, work, and other responsibilities. The uncertainty caused by poor planning and lack of preparation time for competitions was seen as being disrespectful to athletes (in addition to reflecting poorly on GymCan as an organization). Examples were shared such as a training camp conflicting with final exams that would impact that athlete’s university admissions, and an athlete being unable to get time off work to attend a training camp because it was announced so late.

There were also calls for treating athletes as mature individuals and giving them a voice in decision-making processes. One athlete suggested that the Athlete Representatives were being heard by the leadership





and gave an example of feedback given by the Athlete Representative that resulted in changes to a training camp. Others were unclear on the scope of the position, including not knowing about its role, job description, expectations, or available resources.

For athletes having to support themselves financially, they said this made the sport less inclusive and added stress to their lives.

One participant expressed that there was inadequate education and understanding of adolescent athletes, their behaviours, and their growth patterns. Several participants discussed the gaps in knowledge about athlete health and development.

In sum, giving a greater voice to the athletes was seen as important, as well as balancing their unique individual needs within the sports environment.

### Lack of Communication

Many participants raised concerns about a lack of communication by GymCan, particularly regarding deadlines and selection processes, and not just for competitions but also for hiring and oversight. They noted that a lack of understanding and clarity regarding selection criteria and decisions had led to confusion and frustration, particularly with coaches and athletes. The McLaren Report also identified concerns related to poor communication and transparency.

In response to this concern, during my interviews with GymCan's leaders, they noted they were undertaking initiatives to improve communication. For example, they said they were piloting automated solutions for compliance with forms, screening checks, and educational requirements so that system-generated messages could inform people of what was needed, forms could be renewed, reminders could be sent, and receipt of needed information could be tracked. They were expecting this initiative to free up staff time so that they could manage other issues and help GymCan be timelier in its service provision.

### *Coaching Environment: Practices and Impacts*

The hiring and oversight of coaches (which includes team leads and head coaches), along with coaching practices (concerns also noted in the McLaren Report), continue to be concerns for many participants.

When discussing coaching with participants in this Assessment, they were reminded that "Coaching is a very important aspect of the sport of gymnastics. There are different coaching styles and approaches in GymCan's national gymnastics environment that can create tension and sometimes conflict."

It is important to note that GymCan is not responsible for hiring many of the coaches as much of the hiring is done at a local club level; however, even within its limited reach, GymCan can require minimum standards of coaching qualifications be met and can provide oversight of coach behaviour at the National Team level.



## Hiring and Oversight in the Context of Safety and Wellness

As illustrated in Figure 6, while 18% of survey participants said they were either extremely or very concerned about how coaches were hired within GymCan, the majority said they were either not at all or only slightly concerned (37%), or only moderately concerned (13%).

Survey participants suggested improving the screening process, the decision-making process, and the overall hiring process:

- Screening suggestions: Heighten screening of applicants and ask for more requirements (such as National Coaching Certification Program, safe sport standards, and proven positive coaching approaches);
- Decision-making suggestions: Request more feedback on applicants, especially through key stakeholders such as existing coaches, athletes, and IST members, and avoid conflicts of interest and nepotism in the decision making; and
- Overall hiring suggestions: Keep the hiring process standardized and consistent with the published terms, and stop seeking coaches from Eastern European countries and instead invest more in Canadian coaches.

With respect to oversight of the performance of coaches by GymCan once hired, as shown in Figure 6, 23% said there was enough oversight, 30% said there was somewhat enough oversight, and 25% said there was not enough oversight. Breaking down those results:

- Coaches and IST survey participants suggested more was needed; athletes and judges / officials suggested there was enough; GymCan survey participants were equally divided between enough and not enough; and
- WAG, MAG, and GymCan survey respondents suggested more was needed; RG and TG survey respondents suggested there was enough.

Responses related to oversight focused on conducting better performance evaluations and broadening those involved in evaluating coaches to include other coaches, athletes, parents, and other community members. Several suggested improving the oversight process by establishing clear roles, responsibilities, accountabilities, and deliverables as well as completing more planning in advance to ensure coaching needs are met. In conjunction, a few others suggested better involvement of key stakeholders by assigning knowledgeable supervisors to provide oversight and improving communication to better listen to stakeholder opinions. In terms of performance management, several responses were about enforcing a probation period for new coaches, providing individualized improvement plans for those needing improvement, and providing discipline when required.

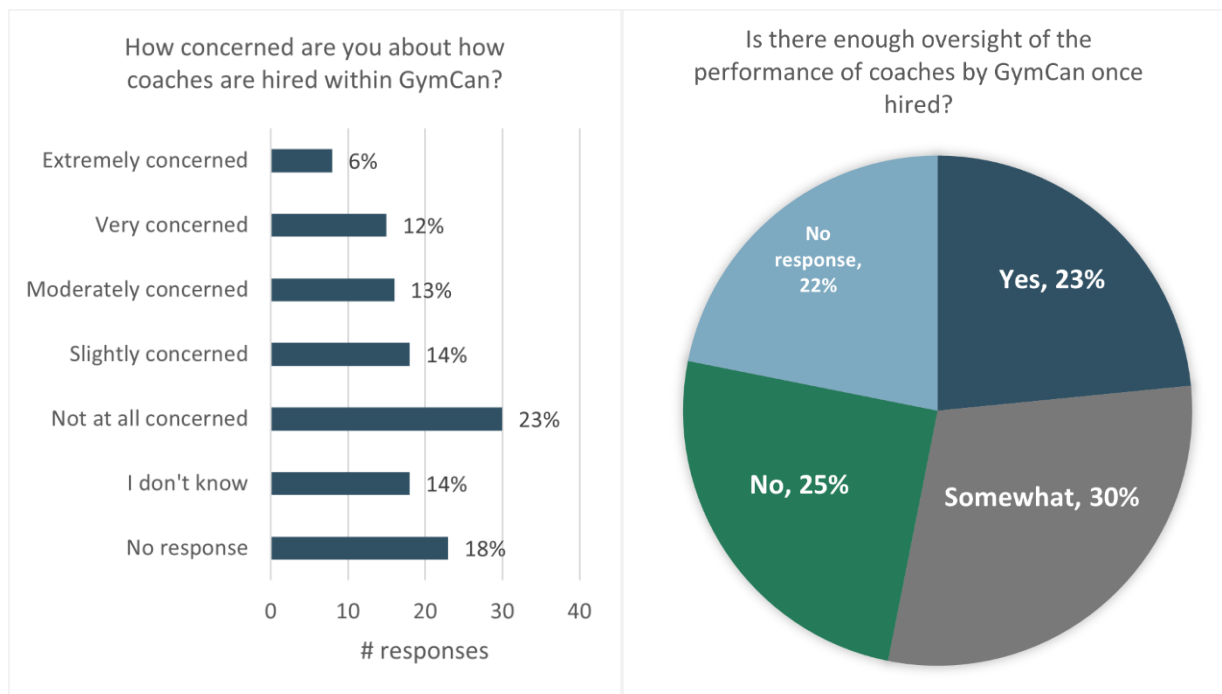


Figure 6: Hiring and oversight of coaches

### Changes in Coaching Practices

Survey participants were reminded that “A ‘positive coaching approach’ involves providing encouraging and constructive feedback, focusing on strengths, and fostering a growth mindset to create a supportive training environment to enhance skill development and overall well-being.” As show in Figure 7, adding together the ‘yes’ (44%) responses and ‘somewhat – there is some support but there could be more’ (27%) from the survey, the majority of survey participants (71%) suggested coaches who had a positive coaching approach were supported at GymCan. Only 9% suggested they were not supported.

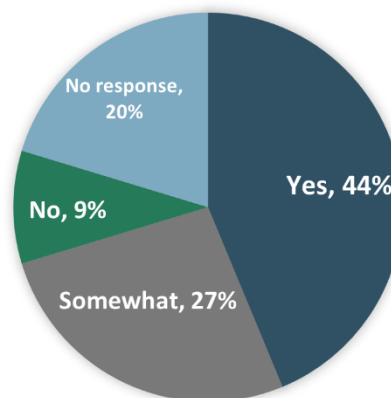


Figure 7: Positive coaching approach

This response was repeated in the interviews. Interviewees noted that there were shifts towards safer and more respectful coaching practices, with an emphasis on safe sport awareness and accountability worldwide. One noted that in Canada, this included “not stretching athletes, not touching them without permission,” and not “yelling.” One interviewee stated that GymCan “has changed greatly in terms of safe sport awareness and willingness to take action against those who have not followed safe sport practices.” Another said, “Yes, there are some bad coaches” but “there are thousands of good and great coaches.”



While there were hopeful comments about positive coaching approaches, there were, however, also participants who spoke of outdated coaching methods, including autocratic approaches and intense training, that were having negative impacts on athletes (27% of survey participants were concerned about overly harsh coaching on athletes' well-being). Changing these approaches was seen as challenging by some participants who explained that the coaching methods were based on the education coaches received reflecting the standards and acceptable practices of that time, and that some practices were "trickling down to the next generation of coaches." A few participants noted that historically, coaches who were recruited from "high-performing countries" brought with them "autocratic methods where the coach was second in line to god" and "a very demanding coaching style" where the athlete did not have a voice. Some participants felt that GymCan's recent approach to changing these outdated coaching approaches, while well intentioned, fell short, as several coaches felt "watched," giving the impression to athletes that "they are in trouble" and did not appear to buy into the positive coaching practices. These participants expressed that more efforts were needed by GymCan to communicate their intentions to improve coaching practices and set up coaches for success. These comments also speak to the transition that GymCan is still undergoing with the shift to positive coaching approaches and its commitment to safe sport practices.

Many participants, including those who were not coaches, stated that everyone, including athletes and parents, needed to have a better understanding of how to create a safe sport environment (in other words, it was not just up to the coach to create and uphold a safe sport environment). An example was provided of holding back an athlete to complete their work or calling out an athlete for not doing their work at practice, and of worrying that this would be defined as shaming. Some coaches discussed parents pressuring the coaches to coach in certain ways that were probably no longer acceptable under the UCCMS.

#### Safe Sport Environment for Coaches

Many participants expressed deep concern for the mental health of coaches. During our interviews, many coaches themselves expressed high emotion, and even despair, about the current coaching climate. They described themselves as very stressed, burnt out, under intense pressure, overly cautious, paranoid, and frustrated. One coach stated the climate was "affecting coaching horribly, I want to retire, be done," but had not done so as they and other coaches did not "want to see it all fall apart."

Several participants identified a lack of mental health supports for coaches, though many coaches shared they were using counselling services. One coach stated that coaching was "not just a nine-to-five job; it involves personal time and an emotional investment," and while they agreed with an athlete-centred approach, they said there also needed to be more support for coaches. One participant, who was not a coach, said, "We can't leave them high and dry to manage [this transition to a safer sport environment] themselves."

In relation to the complaint resolution process, many coaches during our interviews said they constantly feared that their actions or words might be misconstrued or used against them. The reputational damage from having a complaint made against a coach and to be "painted with that brush, even if allegations ultimately are untrue" was a concern I heard repeatedly by coaches. One coach stated, "You coach 500 kids, one complaint can take your life, work, everything." The coaches said they were fearful of false



complaints being filed and the consequences, including the cost and stress of insurance and hiring lawyers to defend against the allegations. They described navigating a very difficult space without adequate support.

One issue in this context is the giving of feedback and when that crosses the line to maltreatment. One athlete stated, “Great coaches are worried and scared, they don’t want to be accused of anything,” while one coach stated, “Holding athletes accountable is uncomfortable, but having players fail because you won’t coach or correct them is unacceptable.” Another coach indicated it was important to build more resilience with athletes because coaches “can’t serve milk and cookies every time we give feedback,” while another participant stated that there “needs to be compassionate coaching and feedback to improve, not criticism.” The provision of feedback is obviously a contentious issue amongst participants.

### Coaching Approach: Women’s Artistic Gymnastics

#### *Overview*

It is telling that many of the participants who wanted to be interviewed were connected to WAG, and 30% of the survey participants identified WAG as their area of specialty. The concerns with WAG were identified in the McLaren Report, including a very fraught hiring process for the head coach position, poor onboarding, and poor communication about the hiring process itself. WAG survey participants had a more negative rating of their overall experience compared to the other area of specialty groups, with 45% rating it as average to poor. As another indicator, when asked in the survey if participants had witnessed or experienced maltreatment, discrimination, or any other prohibited behaviours in the last year or in the period 2019 to 2022, adding together the responses for the two time periods, WAG survey participants noted 22 incidents of which 16 were reported, by far the highest number for the four disciplines.

#### *Concerns with Leadership, Oversight, and Accountability*

Several participants commented on the difficult dynamic between the current Head Coach and the previous Interim head coach. Descriptions of the current atmosphere included “vicious,” “a mess,” and “low trust.” A few participants discussed factions and division as the “old group” versus the “new group” and “resistance to change” versus “it’s okay to change.” While there was a lack of unity, I did not view this as there being “camps,” and characterizing it in this way only serves to increase mistrust and division, to fuel negativity and toxicity, and to not see people with unique perspectives and in their full humanity.

Several participants expressed dissatisfaction with the Head Coach’s leadership, citing lack of oversight / inadequate performance management, and concerns about the hierarchical structure. Some felt that the Head Coach “operated like a dictator” with disregard for rules and regulations, using phrases such as the following to describe his approach: “he has carte blanche and can do whatever he wants,” “he didn’t work within the rules,” “he changed the rules to satisfy what he wanted,” and “several processes were violated, including for carding selection.”

Although many participants had scathing criticism of the Head Coach, I was struck that even while relaying experiences involving conflict and mistrust, many of these same participants also had positive comments and empathy for him. Many participants described the Head Coach as having strong technical skills and being competent in the gym. In addition, some said the training camps were getting better as a result of



his direction. One participant said that while the Head Coach was not perfect, he was trying to improve. Another said the Head Coach “was delightful with athletes,” “had good rapport with athletes,” and was “technically excellent” but lacked knowledge to lead a senior program at this level. Another said athletes liked him and he had good potential, but his “values were not aligned [with those of GymCan].”

Several participants described concerns about a guest speaker at a training camp (described in the *Education* section). One participant ironically described this as a unifying moment between coaches at WAG in that “everyone was on the same page about the content that was provided.” There were concerns that the Head Coach did not address it with the athletes, leaving the impression that this approach was supported, and concerns grew that the CEO did not hold the Head Coach accountable.

#### *Lack of Fairness*

Several participants expressed concerns about the Head Coach’s favouritism, and the creation of a double standard where certain coaches could break the rules and still be favoured. These participants said the Head Coach had created a high level of distrust by his own behaviour, and he “lost credibility” by not treating other coaches and colleagues with “integrity, honesty, and fairness”; they explained this had created a “high level of maneuvering, manipulating, and power struggle,” leading to further “mistrust and mistreatment.” Some participants worried that the Head Coach was being manipulated by other coaches, while others questioned his attitude (saying he believed he “knows better than anyone in Canada” and had “negated help from people who want to help him”). The atmosphere was described by one participant as a “tug of war for control, power, and influence for their athlete.”

#### *Concerns About Safety and Retaliation*

A few participants cautioned that the Head Coach was overly familiar with athletes, perhaps indicating there was still lingering distrust based on the allegations related to the Head Coach that were investigated and unfounded, as noted in the McLaren Report.

Several coaches expressed feeling unsafe and concerned about potential ramifications for their athletes of speaking out. They spoke of bias and retaliation in selection criteria and selection processes when deciding which athletes would compete, and felt silenced, ignored, and afraid when attempting to address their concerns. There were calls for improvement and change to the selection criteria and selection processes, which athletes also shared.

I became aware that an informal Google survey had been circulated to the “WAG stakeholders” in January 2024 (the “Google Survey”),<sup>13</sup> and I was provided a copy of the Google Survey and the results by the designer of the Survey. The objectives of the Google Survey were set out as follows:

1. *For GCG WAG stakeholders to have an opportunity to share their experiences and knowledge in a risk free environment.*
2. *To come to a clear and objective overall understanding of the experiences, perspectives and knowledge of GCG WAG stakeholders.*

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<sup>13</sup> The Google Survey was distributed during the same period as the Assessment survey (which was distributed on December 13, 2023, with a closing date at the end of January 2024).



3. *For the feedback to be communicated to and utilized by those in decision making positions to unify and strengthen the Canadian Women's Artistic Gymnastics Program.*

The Google Survey asked survey participants to rate the WAG program from 1 to 10 on the following areas for the period of January to December 2023 based on their experience and knowledge:

- *Communication*
- *Unity*
- *Trust*
- *Performance*
- *Integrity*
- *Teamwork*

The Google Survey asked for specific feedback on coaches, also on a scale of 1 to 10, examining factors such as:

- *Gymnastics technical knowledge/expertise*
- *Administrative competence*
- *Knowledge and history of the Canadian WAG program*
- *Overall job performance*
- *Integrity*
- *Transparency*
- *Your trust of [the WAG coach]*
- *Respect for WAG stakeholders (athletes, coaches, judges, IST members, GCG committee/sub committee members, P/T staff)*
- *Leadership & unification of WAG stakeholders*
- *Adherence to WAG GCG regulations, policy's, processes, and procedures*

The Google Survey also explored whether the survey participants thought there was sufficient oversight, performance management, and accountability for a number of GymCan staff positions based on the current GymCan staffing structure, and level of experience, knowledge, and history of the WAG program.

Information shared with me during the confidential interview process indicated that feelings of desperation and powerlessness led to the creation and distribution of the Google Survey along with a deep concern for gymnastics generally, the state of the WAG program specifically, and a perception that GymCan was not doing enough in relation to oversight, accountability, and improvement. The factors listed for examination in the Google Survey were also areas of concern raised by many participants in my interviews and in the Assessment survey responses I received.

The distribution of the Google Survey could be seen as a drastic measure, one which may have been greeted with mistrust by the recipients, but the fact that these lengths were chosen to raise issues that were perceived to be unheeded by leaders is concerning.





### *WAG Coaching Approach Summary*

Underlying the maltreatment and abuse-related concerns in WAG appears to be an unhealthy, toxic dynamic between coaches and between coaches and athletes. Several participants stated that the current situation was not sustainable, while another said it was “do or die” as it was an Olympic year and they had “to come together.” The challenges obviously stem from many sources, including resistance to change and misdirected managerial authority; however, the maltreatment and abuse that has been identified, together with the toxicity described, is a red flag calling for intervention. How can there be a safe environment in WAG so athletes can feel safe and thrive, and where coaches, IST members, and others can feel safe and valued? How can trust be built within WAG? What needs to happen to bring acceptance of existing hiring and a reset? In many ways, the Head Coach was not set up for success and many of his subsequent actions (whether intentional or unintentional) have, at the least, been poorly received and have had ramifications for the entire WAG program. Leaders must be held accountable to ensure safe spaces.

In my discussions with GymCan leaders, it was apparent they were aware of and attempting to address the WAG environment. As one example, many participants commented positively on the recent hiring of the WAG program manager and suggested she could have a key role in bringing about change in WAG.

### Suggestions to Support a Positive Coaching Approach

To better support a positive coaching approach, several participants offered suggestions on supportive activities, such as promoting and rewarding based on positive coaching results, and furthering the training provided, possibly through a mentorship program and inviting more coaches to cross-discipline training camps. Other suggestions were about heightening understanding and improving the enforcement of safe sport processes by requiring everyone to undertake safe sport education, and listening and responding to complaints. A few responses were about improving for coaches both the space available to communicate by making it safer and the amount of encouragement they received for their positive coaching approach, and getting more athletes involved in the approach. A few also suggested better pay and benefits, as well as access to counselling services, would help. Lastly, one suggestion was to ensure decision making on positive coaching approaches was in line with GymCan’s policies and procedures.

### *Integrated Support Team Members, Judges / Officials, and Parents*

Survey participants were reminded that “Judges / officials and Integrated Support Team members often have or have had other roles in the gymnastics community and bring their knowledge and expertise to their role in the national gymnastics environment. Many are aware of maltreatment, discrimination, and prohibited behaviours in the national gymnastics environment.” It was in this context that I asked about these groups’ contributions to a safe sport environment.

As shown in Figure 8, judges / officials have a role to play in creating a safe sport environment: 18% of survey participants found their contributions extremely and very impactful, and another 16% found their contributions moderately impactful. With their experience and knowledge internationally, some participants hoped judges / officials could share their insights as part of the team. Several survey participants stated that judges / officials could do more to contribute to a safe sport environment by





collaborating, communicating, and providing feedback respectfully; being fair, honest, unbiased, and clear on their roles; taking safe sport training; and confronting and reporting unsafe behaviour. Avoiding the perception of bias, for example, in the selection of judging panel members was also seen as important.

For IST members, 45% of survey participants noted their contributions were extremely to very impactful, while 9% said it was moderately impactful. Several participants suggested IST members were in a better position to advocate for athletes and report unsafe behaviour without the fear of retaliation, and they could contribute more to a safe sport environment by building relationship with athletes and coaches; collaborating, communicating, and providing feedback respectfully; taking safe sport training; and confronting and reporting unsafe behaviour. Some participants wanted IST members to be more involved and have more time with athletes, whereas others were concerned about boundaries and overlap. Several participants suggested IST members could spend time understanding the sport of gymnastics better as well as have a more thorough understanding of their role and its boundaries so that they could develop a deeper relationship with coaches and athletes. Along with judges / officials, ensuring IST members were part of the team and having a team perspective were also seen as important. As one participant summarized, “Everyone involved has a role in contributing to a safe sports environment.”

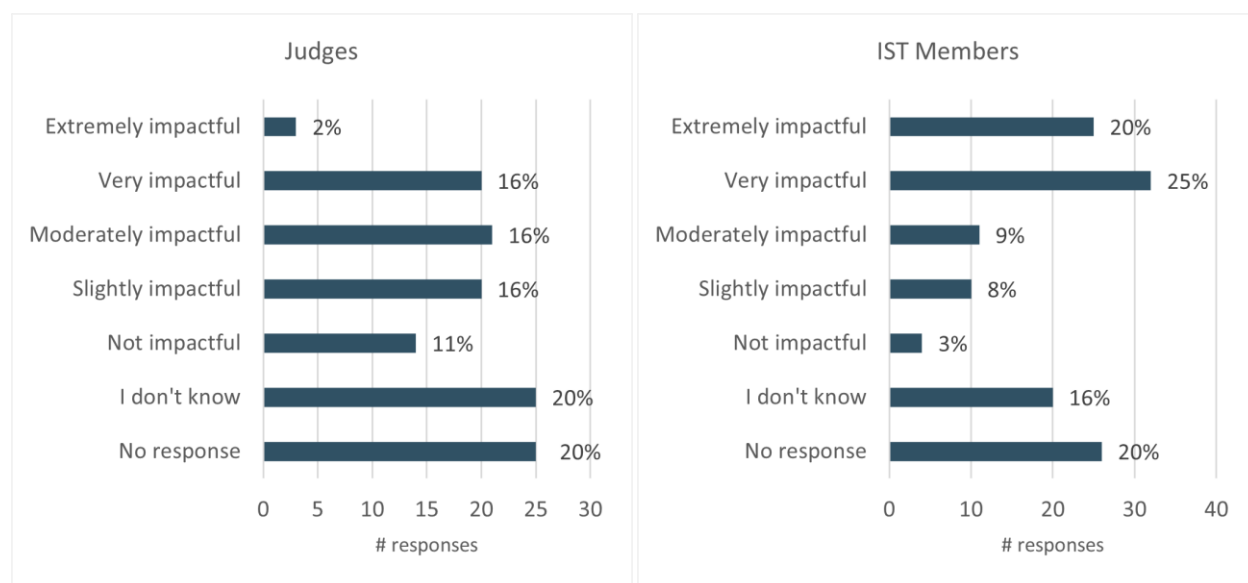


Figure 8: Judge and IST member contributions

Parents were discussed by participants as having a large role in ensuring the safety and well-being of athletes and were seen as a critical partner. That said, their influence on the sport and on athletes was identified as a top concern. When asked in the survey about how concerned they were about parental influence in the context of national gymnastics training, competition, or related activities in the last year, survey participants rated parental influence as the second highest of their concerns (the first was the high demand for results). Pressure on athletes and scrutiny or mistrust of coaches were some of the reasons noted for these concerns. Participants provided several suggestions on how to improve this environment. Again, the team approach was prevalent as several expressed the importance of the three-way partnership (athletes, coaches, and parents). Survey participants suggested that one of the top things GymCan could do to improve its education program was to broaden the audience to include parents, and



for GymCan to provide parent-focused education on their role, on conflict resolution strategies, and on safe sport initiatives, as ensuring that everyone had a shared understanding of what was (and was not) acceptable behaviour was key to creating a safe sport environment.

### Education

One of the top things participants stated that GymCan had done to create a safer sport environment was the provision of education and resources around safe sport. When asked in the survey about how satisfied they were with the education received from GymCan and if it met their needs, 47% of survey participants said they were satisfied to very satisfied (only 11% said they were dissatisfied to very dissatisfied). As shown in Figure 9, 76% said it somewhat or did meet their needs (only 6% said it did not meet their needs).

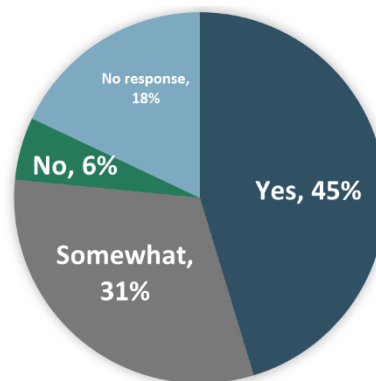


Figure 9: Education needs being met

### Recipients of the Education

Many participants suggested that mandatory safe sport education was key to making positive changes, and several noted this included further educating the Board, PTO representatives, parents, and others in the community, although the education of athletes should be the focus. Education and the practice of the psychology of safe sport for athletes were noted as important because, as one participant aptly stated, “If athletes don’t feel safe, they won’t perform well,” and conversely, “Athletes can win and feel 100% having both flourishing well-being and high performance.”

### Education Delivery

Many suggestions were offered on how to broaden the way the education was delivered. Several suggested more in-person and interactive training (not just checkboxes) be made available to make it more engaging, paired with case study / role-play methods, hands-on training, roundtable discussions, team building sessions, and scheduling in-person workshops during training camps. In terms of online training, suggestions included creating an online resource hub of educational materials to make them more accessible, and decreasing the number of trainings using videoconference technology.

Language was seen as a barrier for participants for whom English was their second language (the barriers included not understanding as easily the nuances, details, or complex concepts when presented in English). Participants suggested offerings be available for everyone in both French and English with help to ensure understanding for those who did not speak either as their first language.

A few suggestions were aimed at how the delivery could be more thoughtfully planned and timed to be more accessible and relevant. A few participants provided an example of an education program at a training camp that was not properly prepared as its content was inconsistent with GymCan’s safe sport philosophy.



In terms of educators, a few participants requested the hiring of higher quality educators, and suggested that screening and confirming credentials of guest speakers was important and that there should be deference to those already working with GymCan (for example, mental health performance coaches for education related to athletes' mental health, and nutritionists for education related to nutrition).

### Education Topics

Many suggested that safe sport education should include a wider variety of topics tailored to the specific group, the community, and the sport of gymnastics; and should be age appropriate and targeted to the participants' level of understanding. There were also suggestions about improving the quality of the education with respect to modernizing the program to reflect current society's expectations.

For each group, the topic suggestions included the following:

- For athletes, suggestions ranged from nutrition, load management, and mental performance to a series of how-to courses that would deal with the environment in which gymnasts trained and competed (for example, athlete governance, specialization, and how to be a professional);
- For coaches, suggestions ranged from technical proficiency, coaching styles, and alternative coaching models (for example, how to coach from a place of mutuality rather than from a place of power) to conflict resolution strategies and tools to evaluate personal trauma and abuse, as well as the coach-athlete relationship, to better understand their coaching perspective;
- For coaches and athletes, suggestions included being able to better understand their respective roles and responsibilities; preventative rehabilitation protocols; benefits of post-event debriefs; and a series of how-to courses on resilience, self-compassion, receiving correction, dealing with failure, and "being a good sport." One participant explained that with the nature of gymnastics being a judged sport, people were trained to be evaluative and critical, thus creating a negative cultural norm; as such, education on how to improve communication and interactions was key. Some participants suggested workshops on how to set boundaries, for example, handshakes versus frontal / side hugs and sharing versus oversharing personal stories. As one participant summarized, "Any education that would help us work as a team to define and discuss our standards would be valuable"; and
- For parents, suggestions included parental roles and responsibilities and improved communication and conflict resolution strategies.

For all groups, suggestions included the provision of more safe sport education, with a focus on the complaint process (how to report a complaint, what it means to report a complaint, and what is a valid complaint), preventative measures, and personal safety. Also seen as important was training around favouritism, rule setting, and conflicts of interest not only for committee members and others who would be making decisions regarding, for example, selection for competitions, but also for judges / officials and the community generally to have a better shared understanding of the community's standards and expectations.



## Prevalence of Systemic Issues in GymCan, Women’s Artistic Gymnastics, and Rhythmic Gymnastics

I was tasked with exploring systemic issues regarding prohibited behaviours under the UCCMS (specifically sections 5.9 to 5.14), including if, how, and why systemic issues prevail in GymCan’s sport environment, and particularly within the RG and WAG programs. Sections 5.9 to 5.14 address the following:

### *5.9: Subjecting a Participant to the Risk of Maltreatment*

*5.9.1: Sport administrators or other sport decision-makers in positions of authority who place Participants in situations that they know or ought to have known make the Participant vulnerable to Maltreatment are subjecting a Participant to the risk of Maltreatment.*

### *5.10: Aiding and Abetting*

*5.10.1: Aiding and Abetting is any act or communication taken with the purpose of directly assisting, furthering, facilitating, promoting, or encouraging the commission of Maltreatment or other Prohibited Behaviour by or against a Participant.*

### *5.11: Failure to Report*

*5.11.1 a): It is a violation for any adult Participant who knew or ought to have known of a Participant’s Prohibited Behaviour toward another person to fail to Report such conduct.*

### *5.12: Intentionally Reporting a False Allegation*

*5.12.1: It is a violation to Report a knowingly false allegation, or influence another to Report a knowingly false allegation, that a Participant engaged in Prohibited Behaviour. An allegation is false if the events Reported did not occur, and the person making the Report knows at the time of Reporting that the events did not occur.*

### *5.13: Interference with or Manipulation of Process*

*5.13.1: It is a violation of the UCCMS for a Participant to directly or indirectly interfere with or manipulate an investigation or disciplinary review process ...*

*5.13.2: All Participants are expected to act in good faith throughout any investigation or disciplinary review process ...*

### *5.14: Retaliation*

*5.14.1: It is considered retaliation for a Participant to take an adverse action against any person for making a good faith Report of possible Prohibited Behaviour or for participating in any UCCMS enforcement process.*



While concerns related to maltreatment, abuse, and prohibited behaviours in GymCan’s sports environment under the UCCMS were reflected in both the survey and interview responses, based on the information gathered in the survey and in the interviews, these were not identified by participants as systemic issues of maltreatment, abuse, or prohibited behaviours.

Regarding RG, there were also concerns raised related to maltreatment, abuse, and prohibited behaviours under the UCCMS arising from participants who identified RG as being their specialty, but the concerns were few in number, and based on the information gathered in the survey and in the interviews, these concerns were not identified by participants as systemic.

Similarly, with respect to WAG, there were numerous concerns raised related to maltreatment, abuse, and prohibited behaviours under the UCCMS; however, based on the information gathered in the survey and in the interviews, these concerns were not identified by participants as systemic.

Even though concerns related to maltreatment, abuse, and prohibited behavior were not identified as systemic by participants to the Assessment, there are, however, factors that could be seen as systemic. The hierarchical structure and seemingly unfettered discretion given to head coaches is one example. A culture of fear – specifically around retaliation, real and perceived conflicts of interest, and bias in committees determining selection criteria – fuel mistrust and toxicity. In some disciplines (especially WAG), this seems to be leading to the perception, whether real or not, that complaints are being made in bad faith and are weaponized, and that valid complaints are not being made because of fear. Speaking out can be, as one participant noted, “terrifying,” not just because of fear of retaliation and power imbalances, but also because of the emotional and physical toll on the complainant with respect to the process itself and the concern of the impact. In addition, responding to a complaint can also be devastating and can impact a respondent’s reputation, even if the allegations are unfounded. This dynamic can create further mistrust and toxicity and an unhealthy environment for athletes in particular, but also for coaches. These concerns are more prevalent in WAG, but have also been raised with respect to GymCan staff and RG participants.

In addition, deeper systemic societal issues related to marginalized and traditionally oppressed groups, such as girls and women, cannot be ignored given the particular challenges of the women’s disciplines in GymCan. Further, systemic issues facing the sports community as a whole (for example, the funding models that are deeply ingrained in the sports culture) can create unhealthy environments for athletes.

The CEO and his team are working to create a safer sport environment and through that process deeper underlying systemic issues regarding prohibited behaviours will also be inevitably influenced for the positive. For example, the CEO is ensuring that key GymCan stakeholders (discussed in this report as staff, Board members, athletes, coaches, IST members, judges / officials, and volunteers) sign onto the UCCMS and the *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. He is also enforcing that complaints be referred to the OSIC and the Independent Third Party, thus setting a clear expectation of the acceptable behaviours around complaint resolution.



## Conclusion

Concerns set out in the McLaren Report, unsurprisingly, continue to be concerns, albeit there are improvements. The hiring of the CEO and the Director, Safe Sport to lead GymCan are positive and hopeful steps in the right direction. Realizing that real and sustainable change takes time, it is important to recognize that GymCan is working to create safety and inclusion in the sport environment.

GymCan is not implementing the specific McLaren Report recommendation to create a Cultural Review Leadership Team and embark on a cultural review; instead, it is addressing the underlying concerns set out in the McLaren Report recommendations by creating the National Gymnastics Safety Steering Committee to help guide action to address needed changes. It is too early to evaluate GymCan's progress, though its intentions and plans have been thoughtfully set out and progress has been made in establishing the Steering Committee, creating a safeguarding and safety officer role that reports to the Director, Safe Sport, and developing guiding principles. Challenges to bringing about sustainable change include the jurisdictional issues (beyond the scope of this Assessment), in that GymCan is not a national governing body, and though many clubs have improved the quality and rigour of training for coaches, there is no standardization of coaching qualifications. That said, because GymCan handles National Team athletes, it does have influence on standards across the country and is working on a collaborative plan with PTOs to improve safeguarding across jurisdictions.

GymCan's effective ability to prevent and address maltreatment, discrimination, and other prohibited behaviours has improved given its deep commitment to the OSIC's complaint resolution process and to education on safe sport. However, maltreatment, in particular, continues to be of concern, especially in WAG. Addressing underlying issues of mistrust and toxicity – often warning signs that could elevate to abusive behaviour – would be beneficial.

In my interviews with the CEO, he was frank and open about the challenges facing GymCan. I was struck by his unwavering commitment to safety and inclusion. He demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the complaint resolution processes, including the fundamental requirement that complaints be resolved in a timely and effective manner, with transparency and accountability (while factoring in confidentiality and privacy concerns). He noted that one of his priorities was to rebuild trust by being more open about timing, process, enforcement, and discipline. The Director, Safe Sport echoed the CEO's priorities and said she believed trust was starting to be rebuilt as more athletes were confiding in her and seeking her help.

Policies and procedures, though not having “any glaring shortcomings” according to the McLaren Report, have been improved to align with the UCCMS. For example, everyone associated with GymCan must commit to upholding the UCCMS as well as sign the *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. The policies are also more cohesive and accessible to the gymnastics community through GymCan's new online platform. Complaint resolution and sanctions both currently bypass GymCan and go directly to the OSIC or the Independent Third Party for actioning. GymCan's interpretation, implementation, and enforcement of other policies for the most part is acceptable, with improvements needed specifically in the policy related to alcohol use and in ensuring that both rules and enforcement of them related to selection of athletes for National Teams comply with the *Code of Ethics and Conduct*.



Some participants philosophized that society as a whole was trying to grapple with abuse in all its forms, not just the sports sector, and noted there was “intense scrutiny” in gymnastics that the GymCan community was grappling with. They also suggested that notwithstanding education and prevention, “bad things could happen.” They suggested that in this complex environment, excuses for not confronting abuse were unacceptable.

In addition to these larger societal issues, many participants discussed the challenges brought by the financial requirements of competition, with funding being tied to athletes’ results, which was different to models used in some other countries where athletes more readily received funding. They noted the inherent contradiction in Canada’s funding model as they deemed it negatively related to well-being, inclusivity, fair process, and creation of a healthy environment. Athletes sacrifice for their love of gymnastics and for the opportunity to perform at such a high level. Financial pressure simply adds to their stressors.

In sum, a key takeaway for me in conducting this Assessment is the understanding of how each discipline is unique, with its own athlete composition, funding, philosophy, and culture. Under the National Team umbrella, I understand how each discipline deserves a level of care and commitment, including not just to athletes, coaches, and IST members, but also bringing in parents and judges / officials, designed specifically for each group’s own unique needs, challenges, and strengths. Said differently, I understand there is not a one-size-fits-all model as each discipline needs to be assessed individually but also viewed holistically within the National Team environment of GymCan.

A second key takeaway is the realization of GymCan’s uniqueness in Canada’s national sport environment, in that it has its own “personality” separate from other sports and needs to understand and address its safe sport environment in ways that reflect its requirements and its stakeholders. Regardless of discipline or sport, the athletes’ voices need to be heard and further amplified. Their voices are critical to preventing and addressing maltreatment in sport.

## Recommendations

Signing on to the Abuse-Free Sport Program and providing education and raising awareness of maltreatment, abuse, and prohibited behaviours are, of course, not enough to ensure a safe sport environment. As one participant noted, change requires “instruments in place to remind and encourage behaviours we want,” such as recognizing and awarding coaches with positive learning approaches and finding other instruments to “constantly support the change of habits and practices” that are inconsistent with the safe sport values and the guiding principles adopted by GymCan. Developing these instruments to encourage this type of change should be an important priority, including communication of enforcement and consequences of breaches.

The gymnastics community is passionate and committed, reflected in the myriads of suggestions from participants for improving safety, well-being, and inclusion in the gymnastics environment. Below, I have attempted to honour and respect their voices. Note that some of the suggestions received, while noteworthy, are beyond the scope of this Assessment (for example, those related to funding and jurisdiction); as such, I have not included them except in describing in the *Conclusion* section some of the challenges brought on athletes by the financial requirements of competition.





GymCan is already addressing the underlying concerns set out in the McLaren Report recommendations (examined in detail in this Assessment in the *McLaren Report Recommendations* section and summarized at Tab 2), and I recommend that it continue with its work using a trauma-informed and compassionate lens, ensuring that the steps it is taking are transparent and measurable against its stated goals and outcomes. Some of the recommendations below overlap with the steps already considered by GymCan's leadership, but I hope that these additional recommendations and specific suggestions for consideration, organized into four topic areas (Communication, Trust, Leadership in the Disciplines, and Educational Opportunities) and under 'immediate,' 'short term,' and 'long term' where appropriate, will be helpful options, subject to the priorities and resources of GymCan.

I would like to again highlight that the athletes' voices need to be included in any decisions that impact them (the "no decision about us, without us" motto) and that a safe environment is ensured where athletes feel they can speak openly without fear of non-selection or retribution. These points underline all the recommendations.

### *Communication*

Developing opportunities for establishing trust and building connections, collaboration, collegiality, and community align with GymCan's recently developed safety principles to frame the safety work and associated decision making.

**Recommendation 1.** Increase opportunities for direct communication and collaboration between and with GymCan leaders, athletes, coaches, judges / officials, IST members, and other key stakeholders.

Consider the following:

#### *Short Term*

- a. Build in formal communication channels between coaches and athletes to encourage open and safe communication, especially for female athletes (on subjects such as coaching and communication needs and wants) and for both groups around positive coaching approaches.
- b. Several athletes described deep hurt and anger due to incidents where they felt they had been mistreated. Others had many suggestions on ways to improve the safe sport environment. Send out to all athletes an invitation to meet and discuss personal past incidents and/or the safe sport environment in a confidential setting; if necessary, assist athletes who request it to find ways to move forward, potentially through healing, restorative facilitated conversations, and mediations, with GymCan providing these resources.
- c. Invite coaches to meet with GymCan's leaders to collaborate on ways that they can feel more supported as they incorporate positive coaching techniques, including handling "grey zone" areas.
- d. Invite judges / officials and athletes to attend facilitated dialogues hosted by GymCan to encourage respectful collaborations and communications around safe sport (one item of discussion could be on how to give thoughtful feedback).





- e. Invite IST members to meet with GymCan’s leaders and head coaches to brainstorm about ways they could better collaborate and contribute as members of the National Team (one idea could be for them to be more involved in the training camps).

*Long Term*

- f. Schedule exit interviews of retiring athletes with a GymCan leader representative.
- g. Organize an open, annual summit where participants (including parents and those outside of the GymCan community) can hear directly from GymCan’s leaders about what they are doing, get clarity on the direction GymCan is taking, and be informed and educated about the role GymCan plays nationally and internationally.

Recommendation 2. Continue finding ways to improve communication.

Consider the following:

*Immediate*

- a. Set clear requirements for early notice related to dates of competitions, training camps, and important events (that are within GymCan’s control) and provide information directly to those who need it (such as athletes, coaches, and parents of young athletes); monitor, evaluate, and report on meeting these requirements at a minimum annually.

*Short Term*

- b. Provide training to all GymCan community members on conflict resolution techniques, and specifically on how to have difficult conversations.
- c. Offer safe sport training tailored to judges / officials and IST members; during that training, focus on the importance of reporting unsafe behaviours.

*Long Term*

- d. Build up GymCan’s online library with sport-related resources on direct conversation and conflict resolution techniques.
- e. Create and post a preferred supplier list of dispute resolution professionals who understand the sport of gymnastics that GymCan’s community members can access.
- f. Organize a communications campaign directed at highlighting IST contributions to the sport of gymnastics.
- g. Create a policy that an IST member representative and a judge / official representative are to have a seat on relevant committees and decision-making bodies; monitor, evaluate, and report on that policy’s implementation.
- h. Create a policy that requires judges / officials to communicate details on the selection of members of a judging panel; monitor, evaluate, and report on that policy’s implementation.



## *Build Trust*

Trust needs to be at the foundation of a safe sport environment, and it has to be constantly worked on and improved, especially in the GymCan environment where impacts of decisions can be immediately consequential.

Recognizing this is an Olympic year is important, but the safety and well-being of athletes are paramount and the spill-down effect of turmoil impacting National Team coaches and others is inhibiting a safe sport environment. A “reset” is possible and involves agreeing to leave the past hurts behind, and to give new processes and commitments a chance to succeed, while also holding leaders accountable.

**Recommendation 3.** Improve governance, such as ensuring natural justice, due process, transparency, accountability, follow through, and compliance with policies and procedures, including the *Code of Ethics and Conduct*.

Consider the following:

### *Short Term*

- a. Provide training to the GymCan community on issues such as conflicts of interest, confidentiality, and fairness, including the importance of not only real, but perceived, conflicts, and on all policies relevant to creating a safe sport environment (ensure the Rule of Two and those pertaining to the consumption of alcohol are addressed).
- b. Review the system in place for athlete access to the services offered by IST members; make any changes required to ensure access is equitable and transparent.

### *Long Term*

- c. Improve the transparency of selection criteria for athletes to make the National Team by articulating the criteria in a timely, transparent, and acceptable manner; by sharing the research-based, objective (or other) criteria being applied; and by providing safe opportunities for feedback and review. Build in monitoring, evaluating, and reporting requirements.
- d. Create self-evaluative processes for leaders to examine their actions in relation to governance issues.
- e. Provide in a publicly accessible annual report statistics on the nature and outcomes of complaints in a non-identifying anonymous way to build trust, educate, and demonstrate commitment to safe sport.

**Recommendation 4.** Improve the process of hiring coaches by ensuring clear, collaborative, and transparent decisions with publicly accessible criteria.

Consider the following:

### *Immediate*

- a. Post clear and consistent notices of the hiring process for each vacant coaching position.



- b. Add 'a positive coaching approach' to the list of required competencies when hiring coaches.

*Short Term*

- c. Create a policy that the decision on who is invited to be a member of a hiring committee be transparent, and when relevant, the invitation list includes coaches, athletes, and other members of the GymCan community, including parents; monitor, evaluate, and report on that policy's implementation.

Recommendation 5. Improve oversight of coaches by implementing more comprehensive monitoring and evaluation processes.

Consider the following:

*Short Term*

- a. Broaden those involved in performance management of coaches to include other coaches, athletes, stakeholders with relevant knowledge, and other members of the GymCan community, including parents.
- b. Review the current oversight process in discussion with each coach and suggest improvements to the process in order to establish clear roles, responsibilities, accountabilities, and deliverables, and to ensure positive coaching approaches are evaluated and rewarded.

*Long Term*

- c. Review current HR processes related to coaches to identify shortcomings, and revise as necessary, such as the enforcement of probation periods and disciplinary measures, and the provision of individualized improvement plans.

Recommendation 6. Better understand each discipline's context, issues, and needs around communication and trust building.

Consider the following:

*Long Term*

- a. Involve a third-party professional (such as a leadership and team building specialist or a mental health professional) to assist with communication and trust building of members within the individual disciplines; task the professional with assessing how and what would be helpful by engaging with National Team members, and in particular, hearing from the athletes.

Recommendation 7. Provide WAG with immediate professional help to manage the toxic, mistrustful, and abusive environment (initially identified in the McLaren Report), as it could escalate to more abuse without professional intervention.



Consider the following:

*Immediate*

- a. Engage a third-party professional to work with the WAG community to help eliminate its toxic, mistrustful, and abusive environment.

*Short Term*

- b. Provide a variety of resources for mental health support, such as individual counselling, to help with healing and restorative processes for WAG in particular (and other disciplines if needed).

*Long Term*

- c. Facilitate a community-wide town hall virtual discussion on how a reset / improvement is possible within the WAG community.

### *Strengthening Leadership in the Disciplines*

Each discipline is unique, with its own athlete composition, funding, philosophy, and culture. As such, its leaders need to be capable of leading within their disciplines and also in the broader context of GymCan, national sports in Canada, and internationally.

Recommendation 8. Provide resources to improve leadership skills of leaders in each discipline.

Consider the following:

*Short Term*

- a. Provide internal and external leadership coaching and mentorship tailored for each discipline and designed to be cross-disciplinary.
- b. Provide tailored resources to assist leaders with team building within the disciplines.
- c. Organize a facilitated team building session in conjunction with each discipline's leaders during which the participants create team charters.

### *Improving Educational Opportunities*

I have set out in detail the ideas for educational offerings and the participants' suggestions for improvement in delivery in the *Education* section. One conflicted area raised by many participants was the 'grey zone' complaints that depended on context in terms of deciding whether to proceed. Work is being done by GymCan to ensure everyone understands what is and is not prohibited behaviour according to the UCCMS. That work must continue to be a priority. Having a common understanding of what is and is not acceptable behaviour coupled with communication skills in having difficult conversations and tools to support all GymCan community members (especially athletes) to speak up (on their own behalf and on behalf of others) could be effective and impactful preventative measures.



Recommendation 9. Provide more support and psycho-educational resources to build resiliency and strengthen well-being.

Consider the following:

*Immediate*

- a. Offer more internal and external resources for coaches, including counselling resources, and opportunities for coaches to “self-report” or learn in an anonymous, safe way about ‘grey zone’ concerns, such as an anonymous helpline where coaches could explore different approaches.

*Short Term*

- b. Provide more internal and external educational supports for athletes to build their resiliency. This should also extend to retired athletes for help transitioning to retired life and for some, healing.
- c. Offer cross-discipline coaching and mentoring to coaches so they can learn and exchange ideas more openly and build on positive features of culture in some disciplines and identify negative ones in others.
- d. Provide more support, practice tools, and resources to coaches during this transition to using more modern and positive coaching approaches; include a guide on the practical application of the UCCMS to gymnastics.

*Long Term*

- e. Create more capacity for safeguarding and safety through the hiring of staff to assist the work of the Director, Safe Sport and the Director of Operations.

Recommendation 10. Create an information campaign to help the gymnastics community, including parents, understand that they must do their part to ensure safety and inclusion and to positively contribute to a healthy environment by examining how to better achieve those goals within their own roles.

Consider the following:

*Immediate*

- a. Develop a resource to support complainants at the very beginning of the complaint process when they are deciding whether to proceed; resources should include information on when the respondent learns of the complaint, and at what point information in the process could become more public.
- b. Develop a resource that outlines the options the complainant has to resolve an issue, from informal to formal resolution methods.



### Short Term

- c. Provide focused training on the understanding and prevention of physical forms of maltreatment, abuse, and other prohibited behaviours as it helps all GymCan community members to understand what these are, and what behaviour is permissible and what is not; in particular, heighten awareness of what discrimination is, how to identify it, and how to prevent it.
- d. Offer annual education and information sessions specifically for parents new to the National Team environment to learn about safe sport expectations and to connect and collaborate with GymCan, as parents are a necessary and critical partner for safeguarding and inclusion.

### Long Term

- e. Continue to offer training and resources related to the *Code of Conduct and Ethics* and the UCCMS for those new to the sport environment at key times during the year, and refresher training, updates, and resources for those already in the sport environment on an annual basis. Ensure the training and resources are easily accessible, clear, and tailored to the stakeholder group, the discipline, and the role of those receiving the information; provide opportunities for users to evaluate the training and resources so that they are continually improved.

### Post Assessment

I understand that pursuant to the OSIC process, GymCan will be requested to provide a publicly accessible commitment statement regarding its planned implementation of the recommendations within 21 days pursuant to section 7(g) of the *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Sport Environment Assessments*,<sup>14</sup> and I recommend that the OSIC follow up with GymCan in six months and again one year after this Assessment is published for an update in respect of the implementation of these recommendations.

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<sup>14</sup> Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, “OSIC Guidelines Regarding Sport Environment Assessments” (1 August 2022), online (pdf): *OSIC* <[https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/OSIC\\_Guidelines\\_Regarding\\_Sport\\_Environment\\_Assessment\\_updated\\_version\\_July\\_2023\\_final\\_draft\\_EN.pdf? t=1691693286](https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/OSIC_Guidelines_Regarding_Sport_Environment_Assessment_updated_version_July_2023_final_draft_EN.pdf? t=1691693286)>.



## In Closing

As set out above, the Assessment was a “pulse check” on previously identified concerns of maltreatment and abuse in GymCan, particularly in WAG and RG. Under the leadership of the CEO and the Director, Safe Sport, some of the changes needed to improve safety and inclusion have already commenced; however, opportunities for improvement were identified, particularly for the WAG program.

It is hoped that the Assessment and its recommendations will help GymCan on its path to making gymnastics safer and more inclusive.

I sincerely thank you for the opportunity to work with the GymCan community on this Assessment.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

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Shelina Neallani, LLB, Southern Butler Price LLP

Dated: October 29, 2024

## **Tab 1: Executive Summary of the Survey Responses**

### *Introduction*

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (OSIC) engaged Shelina Neallani, Barrister & Solicitor, Southern Butler Price LLP (SBP) to complete an independently initiated Sport Environment Assessment (Assessment) of Gymnastics Canada (GymCan). The overall goal was to identify any systemic issues related to the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS) and any other systemic gaps that might exist. It was also a valuable opportunity to evaluate progress against GymCan's safeguarding and safe sport work: to identify what is going well, to pinpoint challenges, and to gather feedback. The Assessment focused on the National teams and the general administration of GymCan from 2019 to present day.

This report summarizes responses to a survey Ms. Neallani distributed to gather information about stakeholder understanding of existing policies and initiatives, experiences and observations related to conduct within GymCan, and ideas for improvement.

### *Methodology*

As Ms. Neallani was tasked with identifying issues from a broad, national audience associated with GymCan, including youth, a very structured methodology was put in place that included letters and videos that offered introductions to the Assessment, detailed instructions and permission forms for youth, and confidentiality statements. The total number of surveys received was 128 (125 in English and 3 in French) (a 55% response rate).

### *Summary of Demographics*

#### Home province / territory:

- ▶ Ontario was home to 30% (or 38) survey participants; Québec home to 23% (or 30 survey participants); 15% of survey participants called the western provinces home (British Columbia accounted for 10% or 13 survey participants while Alberta totalled 5% or 6 survey participants) while Saskatchewan and New Brunswick added 1 survey participant each and Nova Scotia added 2 survey participants
- ▶ Women's Artistic Gymnastics (WAG) and Men's Artistic Gymnastics (MAG) each had 13 survey participants from Québec while Ontario was the home province for 12 Rhythmic Gymnastics (RG) survey participants, 4 Trampoline Gymnastics (TG) survey participants, and 7 GymCan Administration / Organization (GymCan) survey participants
- ▶ Senior team survey participants were mostly located in Québec (17), Ontario (13), and British Columbia (10) while the junior team survey participants were located in Ontario (4) and Québec (3)





#### Gymnastics-related indicators:

- ▶ Length of time involved in gymnastics overall: 82% (105 survey participants) have been involved for 11 or more years in the sport of gymnastics and 9% (11 survey participants) for 5 to 10 years; only 8% (10 survey participants) have been involved for less than 4 years
- ▶ Length of time involved in gymnastics at the National level: 27% have spent 10 or more years (34 survey participants) at the National level, with the remaining 36% (45 survey participants) having spent between 2 and 10 years and 20% (26 survey participants) less than 2 years
- ▶ Primary role at the National level: 34 current and former coaches (27% of responses) and 33 current and former athletes (26% of responses); GymCan was represented by 17 staff and Board members (13% of responses); the remaining responses comprised 8 (6%) Integrated Sports Team (IST) members, 3 judges / officials (2%), and 1 parent (1%)
- ▶ Previous role at the National level: 49 athletes (34% of responses), 23 coaches (16% of responses), 14 judges / officials (10% of responses), 11 GymCan staff or Board members (8% of responses), 8 parents (6% of responses), and 7 IST members (5% of responses)
- ▶ Team involvement: Of those connected to a team, 41% (52 survey participants) were currently on or with the senior team while only 5% (7 survey participants) were on or with the junior team
- ▶ Area of specialty: 30% (or 38 survey participants) were with WAG while the remainder were split between MAG (16% or 21 survey participants), RG (13% or 17 survey participants), TG (9% or 12 survey participants), and GymCan Administration (staff members) and Board members (8% or 10 survey participants)

#### Other:

- ▶ Marginalized or equity-seeking survey participants: 70% (or 89) of survey participants did not identify as a person of a marginalized or equity-seeking group, while 10 survey participants did (8%)

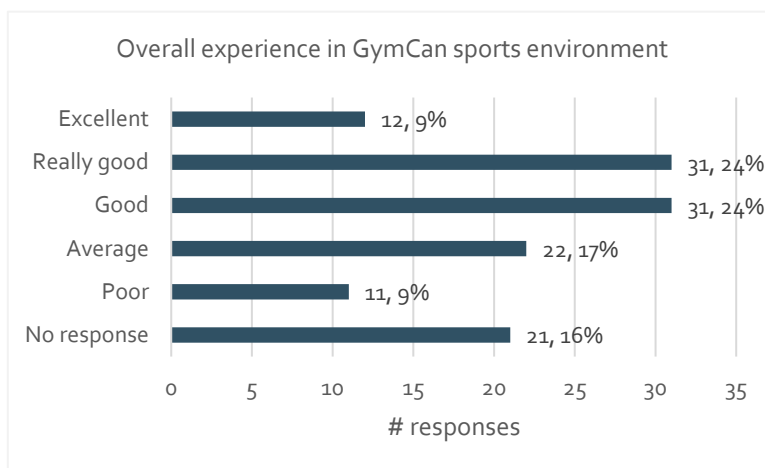


## Summary of the Sport of Gymnastics Section

We asked survey participants how they felt about the sport environment of GymCan to get a general sense of the climate.

### Overall experience rated highly

- ▶ 57% of survey participants rated their overall experience as good to excellent; 17% rated it as average and 9% as poor
- ▶ 45% of WAG survey participants rated it as average to poor
- ▶ 30% of GymCan survey participants rated it as average
- ▶ As the survey participants' years at the National level increased, their rating of their overall experience decreased



- ▶ Those newer to the National level are rating their overall experiences more highly

What they **liked the most** about being involved in the sport of gymnastics

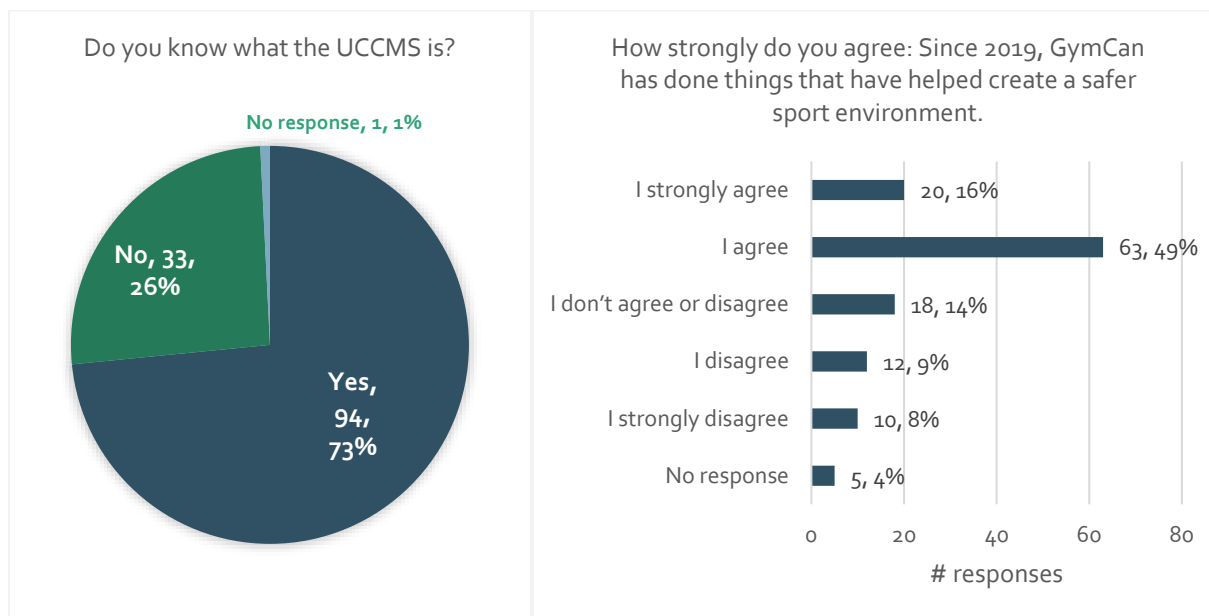
- ▶ The sport itself (its beauty, power, and artistic expression)
- ▶ Their role within the sport and being in the position of having a positive impact on athletes and of being able to share their passion and knowledge of the sport
- ▶ Their involvement at the National level with all that entails (training, travelling, competing, and being part of a larger supportive team and community)

What they **liked the least** about being involved in the sport of gymnastics

- ▶ Certain people in the sport
- ▶ The lack of support provided to athletes, coaches, IST members, and GymCan staff
- ▶ The lack of enforcement and inconsistent application of safe sport policies
- ▶ The time commitment
- ▶ GymCan's inadequacies, such as its disorganization and unprofessional approach, lack of transparency, politics / conflicting cultures, and inadequate staffing levels



## Summary of Safe Sport Policies Section



Top 3 things you think GymCan **has done** to create a safer sport environment:

1. Provided education and resources provided around safe sport
2. Hired the new Chief Executive Officer, the Safe Sport Officer, and other staff members
3. Stated commitment to / implementation, enforcement, and communication of safe sport policies

Top 3 things you think GymCan **has not done** to create a safer sport environment:

1. Not enough clarity for / focus or commitment on coaches and athletes
2. Ineffective complaint and resolution process; bullying and harassment was continuing and safe sport policies were not enforced
3. Ineffective communication generally and specifically around safe sport initiatives



## Summary of Maltreatment and Discrimination Sections

	Maltreatment Responses	Discrimination Responses
Do you know what 'maltreatment / discrimination in sports' means?	78% knew 18% somewhat knew	76% knew 13% somewhat knew
How familiar are you with how to report it	35% very to extremely familiar 40% somewhat familiar	25% very to extremely familiar 35% somewhat familiar
How comfortable would you be to report <i>personal</i> incidents?	49% somewhat to extremely comfortable	48% somewhat to extremely comfortable
How comfortable would you be to report incidents occurring in your regular daily <i>training / working environment</i> ?	64% somewhat to extremely comfortable	60% somewhat to extremely comfortable
How comfortable would you be to report incidents occurring <i>outside</i> of your regular daily training / working environment?	58% somewhat to extremely comfortable	53% somewhat to extremely comfortable
What are your top reasons for not reporting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being afraid of negative consequences to them or others (112 responses)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being afraid of negative consequences to them or others (88 responses)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being afraid of upsetting those involved (63 responses)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being afraid of upsetting those involved (50 responses)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thinking nothing would change if it was reported (62 responses)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thinking nothing would change if it was reported (56 responses)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being afraid that what they saw or experienced was not actually maltreatment (54 responses)</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not regarding the process as confidential (63 responses)</li> </ul>	
What actions would you take if you experienced or observed it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speak to the person privately (58 responses)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speak to the person privately (63 responses)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell Director, Safe Sport (57 responses)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell Director, Safe Sport (51 responses)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell a member of the team (49 responses)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell a member of the team (48 responses)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speak up in the moment to stop the behaviour (47 responses)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speak up in the moment to stop the behaviour (51 responses)</li> </ul>



## *Summary of Athlete Interactions with Adults Section*

1. Relatively knowledgeable survey participants:
  - a. 77% had heard of the Rule of Two
  - b. 67% understood the term 'grooming'
  - c. 79% familiar with the terms 'psychological maltreatment,' 'physical maltreatment,' 'neglect,' and 'sexual maltreatment'Although only:
  - d. 48% understood the term 'boundary transgression'
  - e. 45% familiar with rules and expectations about the consumption of alcohol when adults were together with athletes
2. Mostly safe interactions occurring:
  - a. Rule of Two is being used by adults in all roles on a fairly regular basis
  - b. While boundary transgressions had been witnessed, the number was dropping, occurrences were rare, and more survey participants were never witnessing it
  - c. While grooming incidents had been witnessed, the number was dropping, occurrences were rare, and more survey participants were never witnessing it
3. Areas of concern:
  - a. Culture of fear concerns mostly around WAG, RG, and GymCan
  - b. Psychological maltreatment, followed by discrimination and neglect were most personally experienced
  - c. Most concerns rated "very" and "extreme" in the last year: high demand for results, parental influence, and overly harsh coaching
  - d. Areas of concern by area of speciality:
    - WAG survey participants were mostly concerned about their area and GymCan
    - MAG survey participants were mostly concerned about WAG and RG
    - TG survey participants were mostly concerned about WAG
    - RG survey participants were mostly concerned about their area
    - GymCan survey participants were mostly concerned about WAG and RG
4. Reporting statistics:
  - a. Of those who witnessed incidents of maltreatment, discrimination, or any other prohibited behaviours, there was an increase in number of those reporting, from 64% from 2019 to 2022 to 71% in the last year

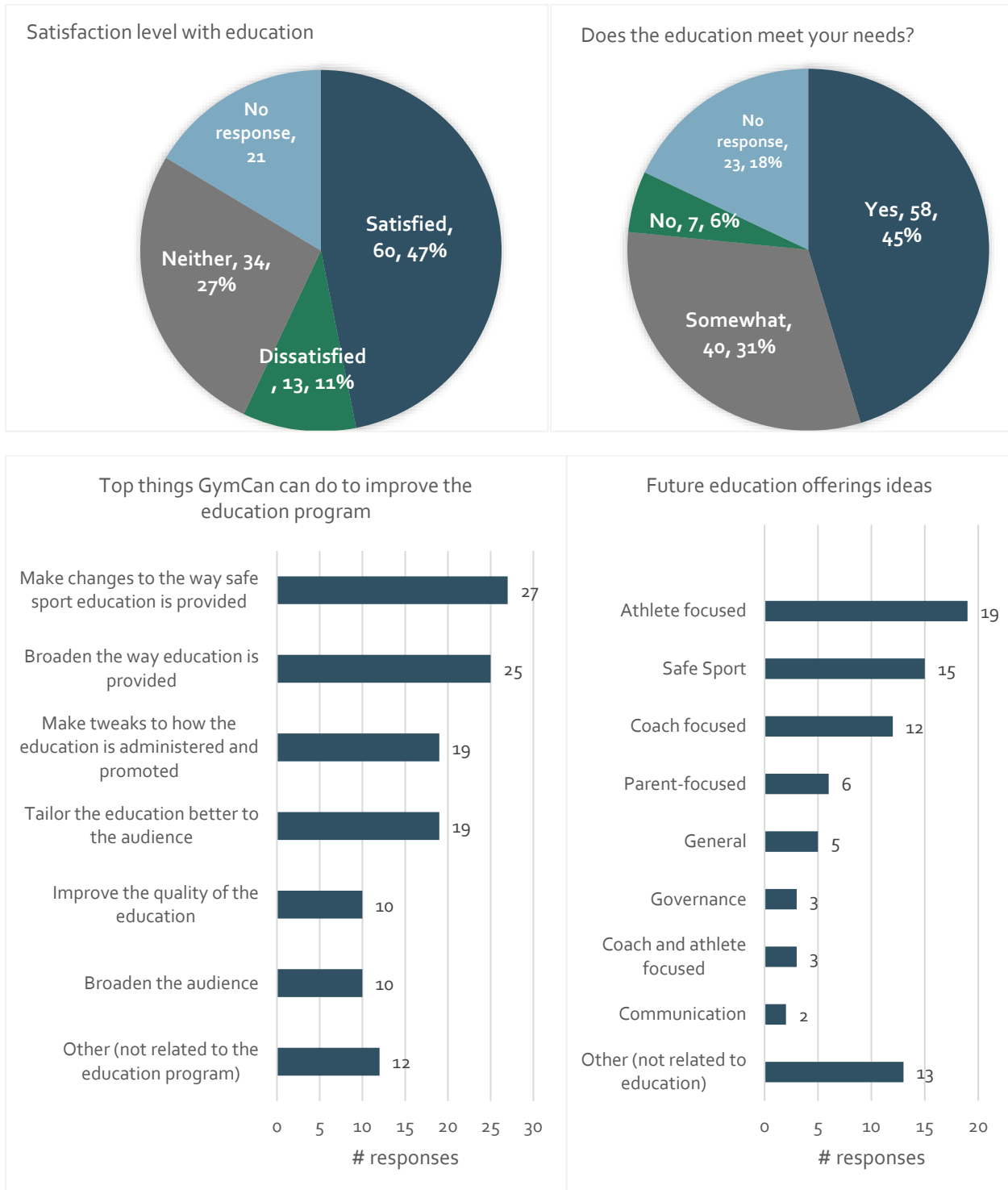
Reporting by area of specialty:	Reporting by role:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• WAG: Higher % reporting than not reporting</li><li>• MAG: Higher % not reporting (no one reported it)</li><li>• TG: Higher % not reporting (no one reported it)</li><li>• RG: Higher % reporting than not reporting in the last year</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coach: Only slightly higher % reporting to not reporting</li><li>• Athlete: Higher % not reporting in 2019-2022 period</li><li>• GymCan: Higher % reporting</li><li>• IST: Higher % reporting</li><li>• Judge / Official: No witnesses / experiencing</li></ul>



- GymCan: Higher % reporting than not reporting

- Parent: Higher % reporting

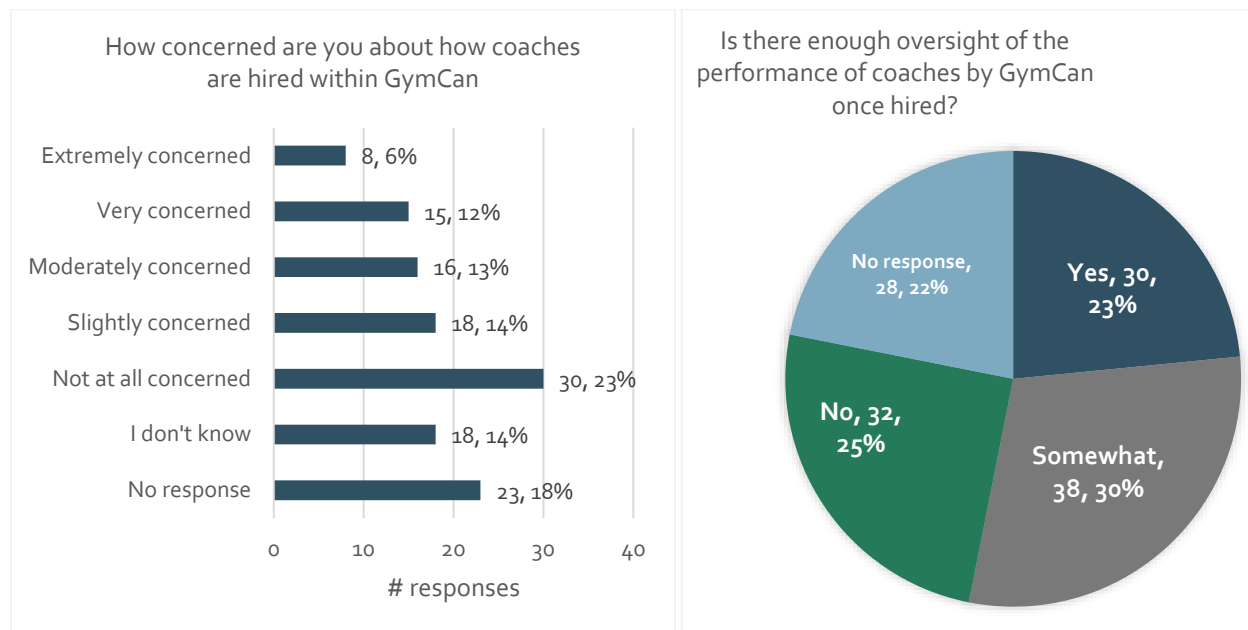
### Summary of Education Program Section





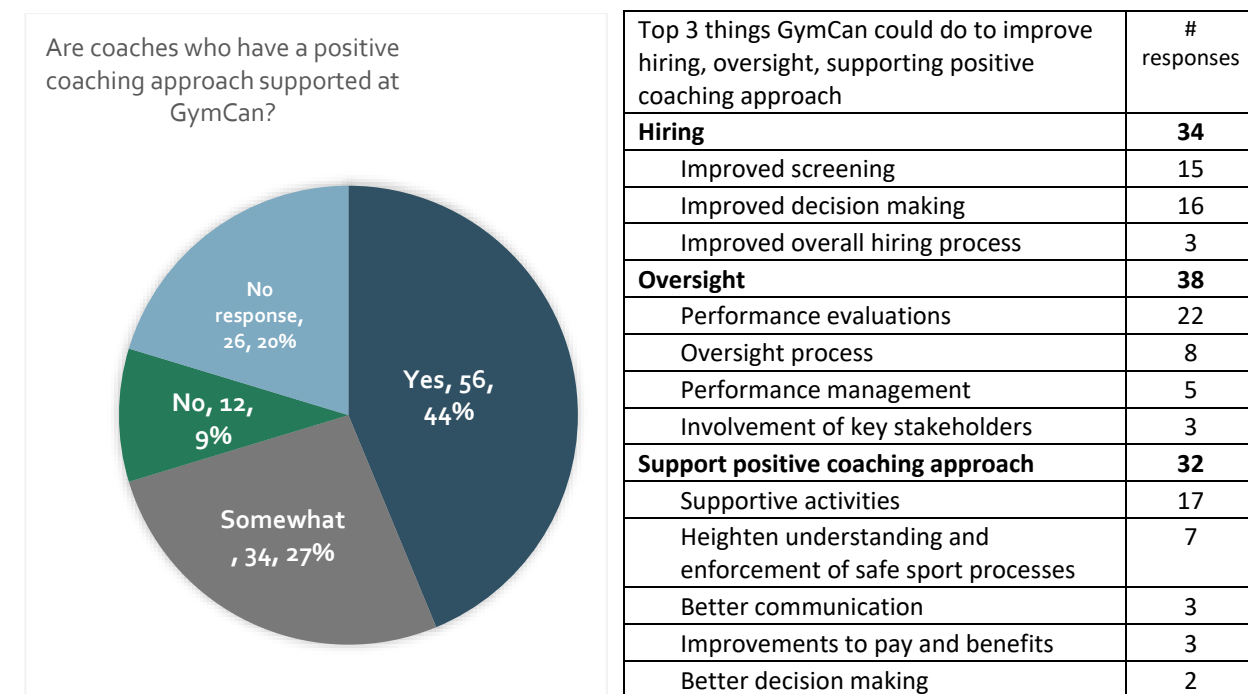
## Summary of Coaches, Judges / Officials and IST Members Section

### Coaches



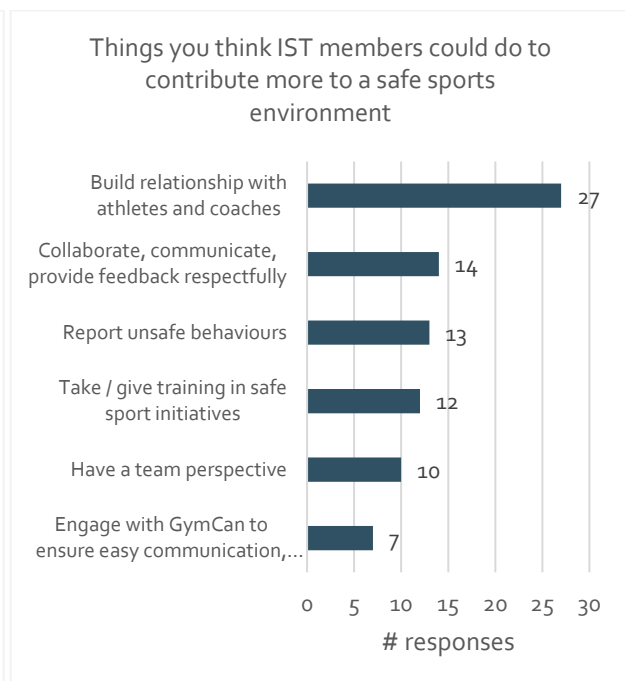
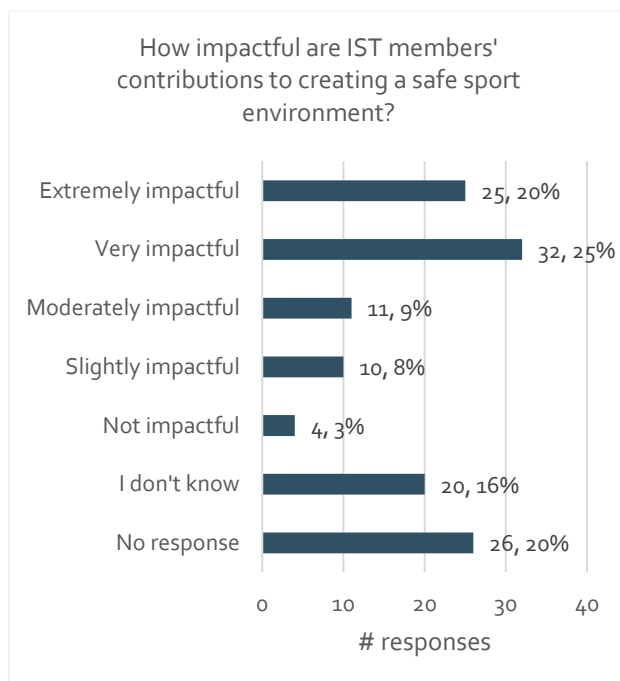
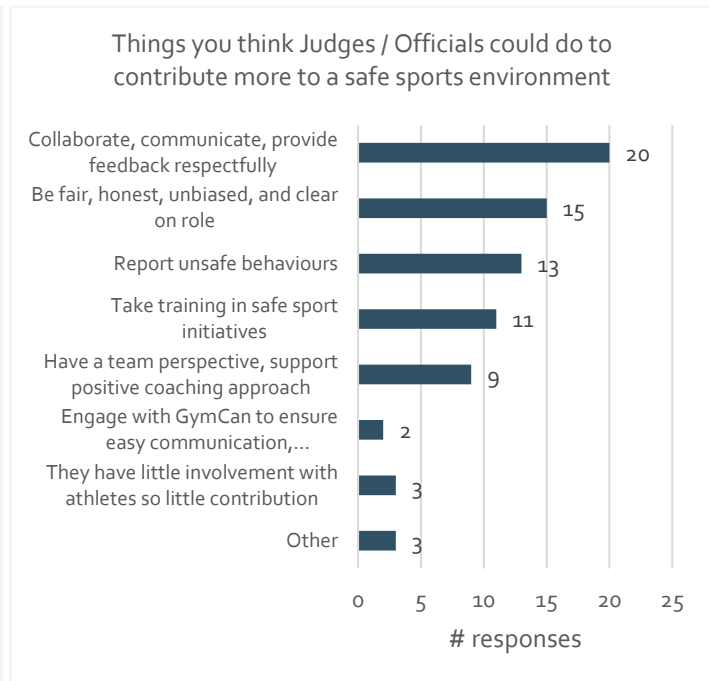
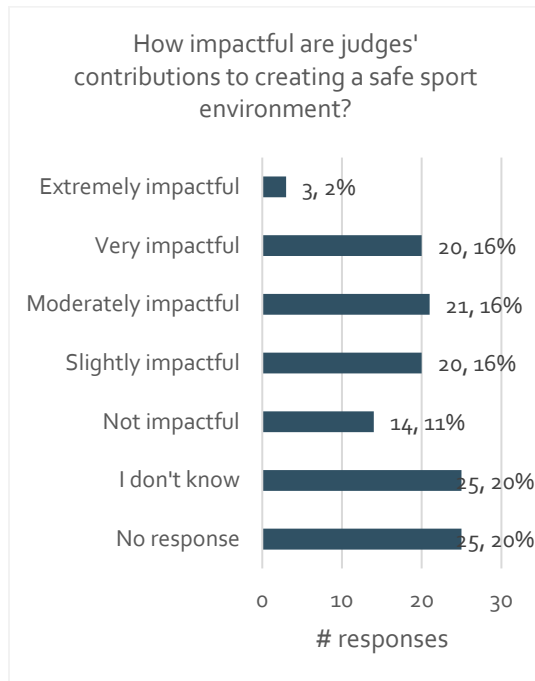
#### Amount of oversight:

- Coaches and IST survey participants suggested more was needed; athletes and judges / officials suggested there was enough; GymCan survey participants were equally divided between enough and not enough
- WAG, MAG, and GymCan suggested more was needed; RG and TG suggested there was enough





## Judges / Officials and IST Members







**Tab 2: McLaren Report Recommendations with GymCan Responses**

McLaren Report Recommendations	GymCan Responses
<p>Overview: McLaren Report recommendations focus on the creation of a Culture Review Leadership Group to further evaluate GymCan</p>	<p>GymCan’s responses focus on creating a National Gymnastics Safety Steering Committee and Project Team to operationalize the recommendations (rather than a further review) – GymCan is currently in the planning phase.</p>
<p>Culture Review Leadership Team Composition and Function</p>	
<p>1. <i>A single individual be appointed to lead an independent multi-disciplinary team referred to collectively as the Culture Review Leadership Team (‘CRLT’). The appointed individual to serve as the independent Chair of the CRLT.</i></p>	<p>Under the direction of a newly formed <b>National Gymnastics Safety Steering Committee</b> (“Steering Committee”) and a <b>Project Team</b> with a project manager, plans to guide GymCan in creating and implementing a <b>holistic safety and safeguarding approach (the “Project”)</b> guided by five safety principles (athlete / young person centred, humane, pragmatic, equity-based, and UCCMS-aligned)</p>
<p>2. <i>The Board of Directors of Gymnastics Canada appoint a Canadian lawyer to Chair the CRLT and lead the Gymnastics Culture Review. The appointed individual must be independent of the sport of gymnastics in Canada with no actual or perceived conflicts of interest.</i></p>	
<p>3. <i>The Chair of the CRLT consider the appointment of individuals with the following roles and expertise: 1) Child protection (x1), 2) Organisational behavior/change management (x1), 3) Trauma-informed Interview Associates (x3), 4) Coach and Judge representatives (x2) and 5) Gymnastics Athlete Representatives (x2). The Chair of the CRLT is to have discretion concerning the eventual final composition of the team.</i></p>	<p>Plans to appoint Steering Committee members who are independent of the sport of gymnastics and those involved in the sport (athlete representatives, coach representatives, and judge representatives)</p>
<p>4. <i>The Gymnastics Canada Athletes Commission nominate one male and one female member of the Commission to be included on the CRLT to provide athlete perspectives and technical expertise to the Chair.</i></p>	
<p>Communication of the Gymnastics Culture Review</p>	
<p>5. <i>A dedicated section on the Gymnastics Canada website be created to communicate information and progress about the Gymnastics Culture Review.</i></p>	<p>Updates to the website are underway</p>
<p>6. <i>A coordinated announcement about the Gymnastics Culture Review be made by Gymnastics Canada in collaboration with its PTO members, including email notification to all participants through GymCan, PTOs and local clubs. The announcement also should include a call for participation, a link to the dedicated website and how to become involved with the Gymnastics Culture Review.</i></p>	<p>Plans to conduct coordinated communications about the Steering Committee, the Project Team, and the Project</p>



McLaren Report Recommendations	GymCan Responses
Support and Processes for Victims of Maltreatment	
<p>7. <i>It is imperative that protocols are established by the CRLT for the reporting of allegations of abuse that may arise through the consultation process.</i></p>	<p>Plans to produce a set of ongoing supports, tools, processes, and practices to ensure that athletes and other participants subjected to maltreatment in the sport environment are effectively supported at all stages, from complaint to healing, and plans for reports of maltreatment to be directed to the appropriate authority</p>
<p>8. <i>A safeguarding statement and protocol be developed by the CRLT and posted on the dedicated website.</i></p>	<p>Updates to the website are underway</p>
<p>9. <i>Resources to support victims of maltreatment be communicated to all participants in the Gymnastics Culture Review, including Abuse Free Sport and the Canadian Sport Helpline, among others.</i></p>	<p>Plans for reporting and complaints management practices to be trauma informed and human centred; updates to the website are underway</p>
Stakeholder Consultation Methods	
<p>10. <i>Consultation to incorporate a combination of methods including individual and group meetings, personal interviews, focus groups, surveys and written responses at the discretion of the Chair.</i></p>	<p>Plans to consult a wide variety of stakeholders and use a variety of consultation methods when creating and directing the Project, with all consultations done ethically in accordance with best practice</p>
<p>11. <i>Interview techniques to follow a human rights-based and participatory approach to ensure all aspects of the Gymnastics Culture Review, from design to data collection, are focused on the principles of dignity, equality and respect. To this end, the IRT [the McLaren Report’s Independent Review Team] recommends the Gymnastics Culture Review be guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (‘UNCRC’).</i></p>	
<p>12. <i>A representative sample of stakeholders be consulted amongst athletes and disciplines. Additionally, the CRLT is to consult with coaches, judges, parents, administrative staff, IST members and leadership of gymnastics governing bodies.</i></p>	
<p>13. <i>Sport Canada, the COC [Canadian Olympic Committee] and OTP [Own the Podium] be consulted to inform the Gymnastics Culture Review and its recommendations, particularly as they relate to how high-performance gymnastics programs are directed, supported and evaluated.</i></p>	



McLaren Report Recommendations	GymCan Responses
Scope of the Gymnastics Culture Review — Levels of Gymnastics Participation	
Sub-cultures by Competitive Discipline	
14. <i>The Gymnastics Culture Review must include an examination of all levels within the sport in Canada, from recreational participation (Gym for All) at the grassroots level through competitive provincial gymnastics to national and international levels of competition.</i>	Plans to design the safety and safeguarding work contemplated with the Project to be implemented at all levels and within all disciplines of gymnastics in Canada (an “all-of-sport” approach), and to better define subcultures and requirements across disciplines and levels of the sport to ensure that strategies and practices established would be appropriate and effective, including identifying and addressing systemic trends and drivers related to maltreatment
15. <i>The Gymnastics Culture Review examine and compare competitive sub-disciplines in the sport, with specific attention paid to the Olympic disciplines including features of Women’s Artistic Gymnastics and Rhythmic Gymnastics that make these disciplines more prone to negative cultures and abuse.</i>	
16. <i>The Gymnastics Culture Review be focused on the welfare and experiences of athletes within the system irrespective of level or discipline.</i>	
17. <i>The Gymnastics Culture Review must identify the systemic trends and drivers related to experiences of maltreatment and align recommendations to address these trends and drivers.</i>	
Own The Podium “Culture of Excellence Assessment and Audit Tool” (‘CAAT’)	
18. <i>The Gymnastics Culture Review implement the Culture of Excellence Assessment and Audit Tool (‘CAAT’) developed in partnership with OTP to assess culture within high-performance disciplines of gymnastics in Canada.</i>	Work started in February 2024 to complete the CAAT across all high-performance disciplines
19. <i>Sport Canada evaluate the opportunity to support the development of a companion tool to systematically assess and audit culture at the grassroots developmental level of the Canadian amateur sport community.</i>	This recommendation is directed at Sport Canada, and no specific response or plan was needed from GymCan
Local Gymnastics Clubs	
20. <i>The Gymnastics Culture Review include a systematic examination of local gymnastics clubs in Canada to assess culture.</i>	Plans to assess culture at local gymnastics clubs as one element of the Project, with an eye to establishing a foundational set of standards that would apply to all clubs across Canada; assessment to include opportunities for clubs to participate and could include site visits
21. <i>The review of local clubs includes a confidential web-based survey distributed to the management/leadership of every gymnastics club in Canada for distribution to their members and stakeholders.</i>	
22. <i>The survey of clubs be augmented with personal visits to a selected number of clubs on behalf of the CRLT.</i>	



McLaren Report Recommendations	GymCan Responses
Governance of Gymnastics in Canada	
23. <i>The relationship and alignment between national, provincial and local governance be examined as they relate to culture.</i>	Plans to review
24. <i>Gymnastics Canada’s governance structure be measured and evaluated against the Canadian Sport Governance Code (‘CSGC’). The CSGC can also be used to inform the exploratory review of governance best practices at the club and PTO levels.</i>	Currently developing an implementation plan to ensure GymCan adheres to the CSGC by 2025
25. <i>The Cromwell Report be reviewed by the CRLT and be used as a reference document to identify best practices and recommendations that may be applicable to the governance of gymnastics in Canada including the governance of Gymnastics Canada.</i>	Plans to review good practice in the sport system as well as other sectors within Canada and abroad
26. <i>Performance management structures for coaches and other staff be reviewed at all levels.</i>	Plans to enhance performance management of staff (including coaches) within the direct control of GymCan and include objectives relating to effective safety leadership
27. <i>The current Terms of Reference for Gymnastics Canada Athletes Commission be reviewed as it relates to gymnastics athlete representation within GymCan’s governance structure, including expanded opportunities for athlete voices to be heard.</i>	Plans on incorporating meaningful ways to involve athletes in decision making and governance
Gymnastics Canada Organisational Structure and Leadership	
28. <i>Gymnastics Canada’s organisational structure be reviewed including roles, leadership, reporting relationships and employee performance management structures.</i>	The current CEO was hired in August 2023; the Director, Safe Sport in April 2023; and a new Director of Operations position was created (one significant responsibility is performance management); reporting relationships, organizational structure, and performance management expectations will be defined with support from the Director of Operations
29. <i>A 360-degree review process be implemented for senior GymCan positions including the CEO and the lead staff member of each of the high-performance leadership teams.</i>	Currently partnering with an HR consulting firm to complete diagnostics including employee engagement, athlete engagement, 360-degree feedback, and monthly engagement surveys
Jurisdiction, Safe Sport Reporting and Accountability	
30. <i>Processes related to jurisdiction, Safe Sport reporting and accountability be examined between local clubs, PTOs and Gymnastics Canada.</i>	Plans for the Project to clarify reporting and complaint management accountabilities in a consistent manner across all levels of the sport in Canada



McLaren Report Recommendations	GymCan Responses
31. <i>The CRLT identify the accountabilities and reporting relationships required by PTOs for member clubs operating within their jurisdictions.</i>	Plans to complete a systematic review of requirements in place at provincial and federal levels, and establish safety and safeguarding standards for all levels
32. <i>The CRLT review and comment on the Sport Funding Accountability Framework as it relates to supporting and encouraging a positive culture within the sport of gymnastics.</i>	Plans to advocate for changes to funding and other programs as necessary in order to strengthen the culture of safety within gymnastics
33. <i>The CRLT review and comment on current program funding and evaluation requirements required by OTP for targeted high-performance sports as it relates to supporting and encouraging a positive culture.</i>	
34. <i>The CRLT answer the question: Is there a ‘win at all costs’ approach within high-performance sub-disciplines of gymnastics in Canada? The answer to this question should include the role of funding agencies including Sport Canada, the COC and OTP.</i>	Plans to share any reflections pertinent to funders or partners at the federal and provincial levels
35. <i>A comprehensive review of complaint reporting processes be implemented. This must include an examination of the relationship between local, PTO and GymCan policies on reporting versus actual practice in the implementation of these policies.</i>	Plans to have a clear and consistent complaint reporting process for violations that would be applicable at all levels of the sport, plus mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of reporting and any response to said reports, and integration of regulatory or other reporting requirements into the complaints reporting process
36. <i>An analysis of all complaints that have been reported at the local, PTO and GymCan levels over the past 5 years be implemented.</i>	No current plan to complete this review as no past or current consistent approach
37. <i>The impacts of GymCan’s adoption of the UCCMS and agreement with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner be reviewed, including how this affects reporting as it relates to individuals who are not identified by GymCan or OSIC as being under the jurisdiction of the OSIC national reporting mechanism.</i>	Plans to review practices to ensure clarity with respect to all safety and safeguarding measures, and the Project as planned would ensure there were no gaps in understanding or execution as a result of GymCan’s relationship with the OSIC
38. <i>The feasibility and advantages of developing a Club Accreditation Model (‘CAM’) for gymnastics in Canada be examined by the CRLT drawing upon the Club Licencing Model recently introduced by Canada Soccer for inspiration.</i>	Plans to define and establish a baseline standard of expectations to be delivered at the club level, and this might take the form of an accreditation model
<b>Safe Sport Education</b>	
39. <i>The content, delivery and frequency of mandatory Safe Sport education and training be assessed including the Coaching Association of Canada’s (‘CAC’) Safe Sport training and any programs that have been granted equivalency including Respect in Sport modules.</i>	Plans to require all stakeholders to undertake education and professional development, including base requirements for all sport participants, alongside role-specific competency development in areas of safety and safeguarding leadership



McLaren Report Recommendations	GymCan Responses
40. <i>The CRLT review the effectiveness, alignment and delivery of Safe Sport education for gymnastics in Canada based on different gymnastics stakeholder roles — including athletes, coaches, parents, IST, judges and staff.</i>	Plans to evaluate and assess existing GymCan and other relevant educational modules
41. <i>The CRLT review the effectiveness of the ‘Values-Based Coaching Module’ that was launched in 2020, including an analysis and profile of coaches who have completed the Module.</i>	Plans to adopt pre-existing educational materials and approaches wherever possible, and identify and work with potential partners with required expertise
<b>Implementation of Gymnastics Culture Review Recommendations</b>	
42. <i>Recommendations provided by the CRLT must be measurable, actionable and should be prioritised with suggested implementation timelines.</i>	Plans for the Steering Committee to break down the Project into a clear set of objectives and milestones with measurable outcomes
43. <i>Gymnastics Canada be responsible for implementing the recommendations published in the Gymnastics Culture Review.</i>	Plans for the Steering Committee and Project Team to guide the implementation
44. <i>A timeline of 10 months be considered to complete the review, which may vary according to the final Terms of Reference.</i>	Plans for no defined end date but rather an evolution of understanding and learning, and for ongoing monitoring to be undertaken to track meaningful and timely progress against the key safety imperatives
45. <i>External oversight of GymCan’s implementation of the Gymnastics Culture Review’s recommendations is necessary to ensure accountability in the implementation of the recommendations.</i>	Plans for oversight of the Project to be provided by the Board and its newly formed Risk and Safeguarding Committee
46. <i>Progress towards the achievement of milestones and recommendations be communicated on the dedicated website for the Gymnastics Culture Review (further to recommendation #5).</i>	Plans to communicate progress against the established plans and monitoring of results on a regular basis; updates to the website are underway