

Inside Track: Exploring the gender gap in motorsport

**MORE
THAN
EQUAL**



We have an ambitious goal at More than Equal – find and develop Formula 1’s first female world champion. There are wide ranging opinions in the sport on why women have not progressed to the elite level, but you need facts and data to make any meaningful change to the status quo.

This report represents a significant step towards removing the many barriers that have stopped the best female drivers rising to the top, and gives us important evidence so we can build a programme to make our goal a reality.”

Ali Donnelly

More Than Equal, CEO



My passion for wanting to support female racers to success at the top level goes back to my childhood when I saw how talented my younger sister was at karting. When I began to achieve a degree of success, all the family’s support went on me and she was not given the same opportunity as a consequence, yet I know that she was just as good as me if not better.

Motorsport is an incredibly difficult sport to take part in – regardless of gender. To get to the top requires immense skill, financial backing and ultimately, some luck.

“We should all work to try to make sure that other talented girls don’t get left behind.”

What this research makes clear is that **female drivers face a range of challenges and barriers that extend beyond those faced by their male counterparts.** This report provides all the insight we need to help the sport to catch up.

We should all work to try to make sure that other talented girls don’t get left behind.”

David Coulthard

Former F1 driver and

More than Equal founder



David and I founded More Than Equal to ensure that **we can celebrate elite racing successes by female drivers sooner rather than later.** This research marks our first step in helping to make that happen. We asked some tough questions, and we got back some tough answers, but if the sport can come together to solve some of the difficult issues, the rewards will be enormous.”

Karel Komárek

Entrepreneur and

More than Equal founder

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Who we are

More than Equal is an independent, non-profit organisation with an ambitious goal: find and develop the first female Formula 1 World Champion.



Who we are



David Coulthard and Karel Komárek

Founders of More Than Equal



Karen Webb Moss

Chair and

Strategic Advisor



Kate Beavan

Board Member and

Strategic Advisor



Alison Donnelly

CEO

Founded by 13-times F1 Grands Prix winner David Coulthard and entrepreneur Karel Komárek, **More than Equal is committed to investing in research and data to understand the barriers holding women and girls back, and finding and supporting the best young talent to climb the ranks through a world-first female driver development programme.**

We will work alongside the other great initiatives underway, and those being developed, to support female racing talent, so that one day female drivers will be able to enjoy successful, professional and sustainable careers at the highest reaches of global motorsport.



Executive Summary

Despite being one of the few sports in the world where men and women can compete together, no woman has raced in F1 – the highest level of motorsport – since the 1970s.



Executive Summary

This research was commissioned so that **More than Equal could work to build a programme to change this, and it **identifies the real barriers** that have stopped this from happening as well as **bringing to the surface other ideas that would make a real difference.****

Female fans are a growing force in the sport, and so we have given them a voice to share their views on progress in equality, diversity and inclusion at all levels across motorsport, and they have told us where they want to see change.

The report highlights the urgent need for collaboration and collective action to address the challenges that are holding female talent back and the issues that are preventing many women from feeling truly included in the sport.

The reality of female participation

Our research found that the participation of women and girls in motorsport at all levels is depressingly low and this needs to be greatly improved if we want to give female drivers the best possible chance of reaching the top.



Female participation currently represents on average of about 10% across all categories of competition, broken down further in karting, where about 13% of participation is from female drivers and formula and GT racing where it drops to about 7%.

Karting is a vital format and entry point making up 40% of all overall female participation.

We call this the **gender participation gap**.

Exploring current data, we also found a significant **gender performance gap**.

Even as that small percentage of female racers continue to compete, they are not progressing at the same rate into the top talent rankings of the sport. Female drivers currently represent just 4% of those talent

rankings, which we define as the top 5% of the championship rankings.

Based on the current numbers, without significant intervention, the chances of a woman ever reaching the top is incredibly small.

Even if we can imagine a future world where the drivers on the F1 grid were a clean 50/50 gender split, the scale of the challenge ahead means that at current participation levels and performance levels, female participation would need to grow to 84% of the entire global racing population. This is likely because as female talent progresses through the sport, they face significant barriers, over and above those faced by male drivers – though undoubtedly progress in motorsport is difficult for everyone.

However, this does not make our goal an impossibility.

Rather, the facts highlight that focusing on both growing participation and improving performance at the same time are key.

More than Equal's work will primarily focus on tackling the gender performance gap, with the introduction of programmes and initiatives that remove or mitigate the systemic biases against female talent in motorsport.

If our work is coupled with a sport-wide approach to tackling the gender participation gap, then together we will help to deliver real and lasting change.

Barriers holding female drivers back

Our insights highlight that there has been small but positive growth in female participation in recent years.

Established markets, the United States and countries in western Europe, are feeding this modest growth but there are clear challenges to progressing the talent that is emerging.



Our research highlights:

- The absence of a large enough pool of female talent.
- The cost of competing – a universal challenge to both men and women, but too few investors and sponsors are willing to take a chance on female drivers early in their careers, preventing their progress at crucial periods.
- That stereotyping or negative perceptions about women's ability to drive fast or compete physically exist, but they are at odds with what most fans of the sport actually think.
- The absence of dedicated technical, physical, psychological and tactical training tailored specifically to female drivers is a significant issue.
- Female drivers get significantly less track time compared with male drivers throughout their careers.
- A lack of female role models is a blocker to participation growth.
- Female fans and racers in the sport often find the culture unwelcoming or inappropriate.
- Not enough research has been done into looking at the possibility of 'mechanical challenges' such as whether there are gender design biases in equipment or whether different requirements at different levels around power steering are specific barriers for female drivers.
- Female drivers are dropping out much earlier than their male counterparts, with female careers lasting on average between one and five years, whereas male careers are more likely to last over 12 years.

Views about women in motorsport

Committing to tackling the challenges faced by female drivers is not just an important recognition that women have faced long-term systemic barriers in the sport, it is also key to ensuring that the sport's emerging young and female fanbase remain engaged.

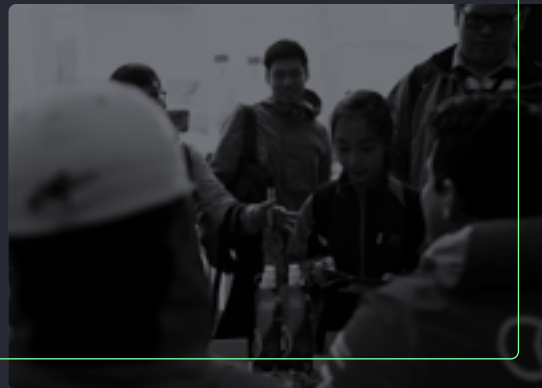
Motorsport, especially F1, has a growing female fanbase. Our research showed that fanbase is:

Younger

female fans are around

10 years

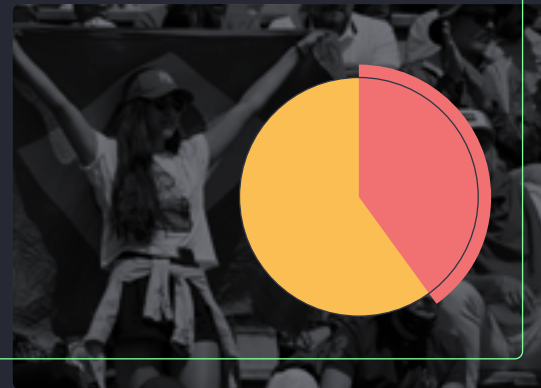
younger than their male counterparts.



Newer to the sport

40%

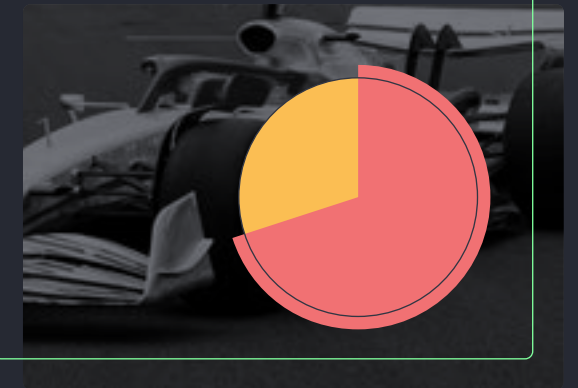
have become supporters within the last five years.



Highly driven by social media

70%

more likely than male fans to engage with digital platforms for content.



Views about women in motorsport continued

Our research found that:

Men and women agree on key issues about women in motorsport.

There is a universally strong belief that female drivers have all the necessary technical racing skills and emotional intelligence to compete at an elite level, and on an equal footing with their male counterparts.

There is also a strong belief that male and female competitors should race head-to-head, rather than in gender-specific series.

Over 80% of fans believe women will be racing in F1 within the next 10 years.

There is limited understanding of where head-to-head racing is possible. Even though most people who responded to our survey described themselves as avid supporters, only 50% of all respondents knew definitively that women could compete in F1 with many unsure or unclear.

While there is an awareness of the multiple industry initiatives designed to increase female participation, detailed knowledge of their aims and objectives is far less understood.

The FIA is seen as the most important organisation to lead positive change with F1, sponsors and media figuring also highly on this list.

Over

80%

of fans believe women will be racing in F1 within the next 10 years.

Views about women in motorsport continued

Our research found that:

Female fans have stronger views in certain areas.

They are passionate

about being part of it. Female fans will follow, watch and attend in significantly greater numbers if they see more female competitors on track.

They are dissatisfied

with the sport's lack of female inclusion. While all fans believe motorsport is falling short in delivering progress on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives and is lagging far behind other sports in driving the necessary change, this is felt significantly more by female fans.

They are sceptical

about initiatives for change. Sponsors are currently viewed as performing very poorly in driving change, but fans are aware of the positive impact they could make. Compared with male fans, female motorsport fans show a remarkably strong willingness to alter their buying habits and switch to sponsor brands who support women – with

56%

agreeing they would do this compared with just

0.1%

of males.

Views about women in motorsport continued

Other interesting findings about the fanbase.

- Male fans are more likely to be engaged in motorsport through live race broadcasts, while female fans are more likely to have been introduced through lifestyle or social media, along with friends and family. Unsurprisingly, fans aged 16–24 are far more likely to have been introduced to motorsport through social media.
- Female fans are more likely to follow motorsport series that showcase female talent, namely Extreme E and the W Series, although the latter has now entered administration.
- While female fans are avid social media consumers and are 70% more likely to use this platform for motorsport content than male fans, similarly, social media is the most accessed platform for content among the 16–24 age group and this finding supports evidence of a new, emerging, younger, increasingly more female, digitally engaged motorsport audience.
- Social media is the third most accessed platform for motorsport content (TV is number one and dedicated motorsport media is second) , with 54% of fans accessing it frequently. YouTube (68%), Instagram (61%) and Twitter (48%) are the primary 'go-to' social media sources for content. Use of TikTok is increasing among younger (16–24) and female fans. Among male fans, YouTube and Facebook are more widely used.

While female fans are avid social media consumers and are

70%

more likely to use this platform for motorsport content than male fans.

Conclusion

This research was commissioned to help More than Equal to meet its ambitious goal of finding and developing F1's first female World Champion but it has thrown up insight and views that should be taken seriously by the sport.

It makes clear that motorsport is lagging behind most other global sports in both meeting the aspirations of its female fanbase and in embracing and supporting female drivers as they progress through the ranks.

Yet it is also a reminder that industry has some crucial advantages that should enable it to make change quickly.

As a high tech, global and increasingly popular sport that offers men and women a rare chance to compete side-by-side and on an equal footing, it can and should be at the forefront of gender equality.

We believe the insights in this report pave the way for real change and we consider this a catalyst and a perfect opportunity for the sport to come together and collectively identify what more it can do.

This work demonstrates that the barriers are real, the gaps are evident, the appetite is tangible, and the opportunity is now.

We're not alone in our ambition to see women driving and winning in F1 and we salute the excellent initiatives already underway.

Delivering sustainable change means collaboration from everyone who has influence, and we are ready to play our part.

Conclusion continued

More than Equal is committed to



1

Being evidence-driven, via research and insight



2

Building a world-class female driver development programme



3

Taking a data-driven approach to finding talent



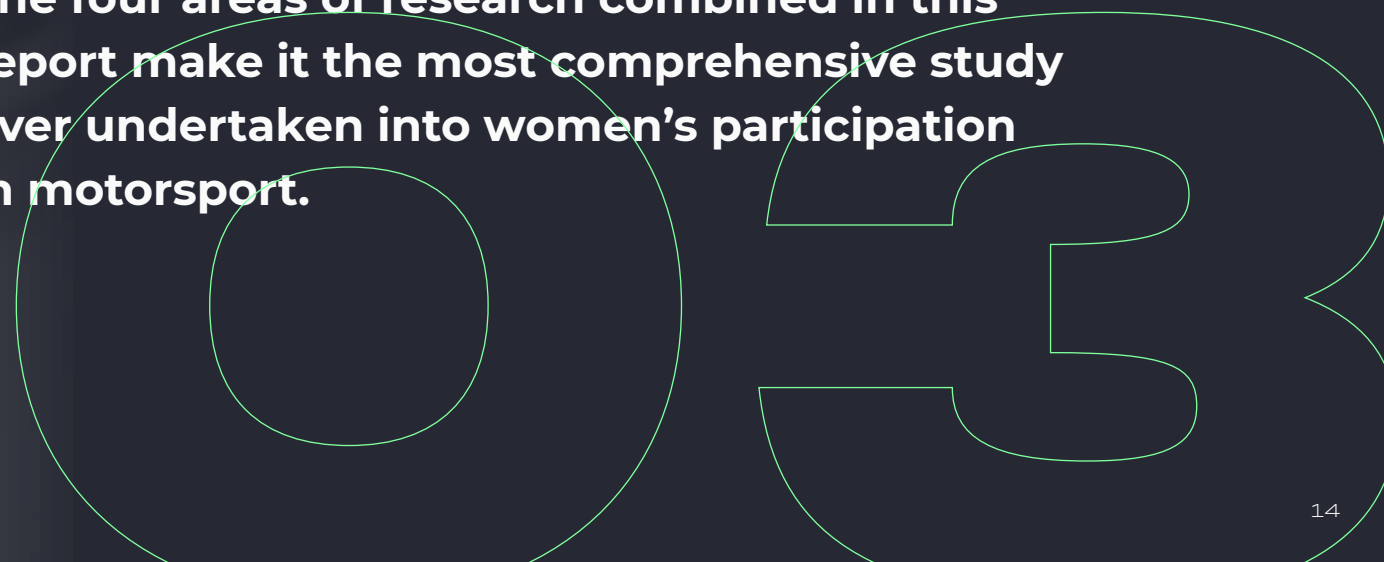
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Connecting female talent with investment and teams



Our research approach

The four areas of research combined in this report make it the most comprehensive study ever undertaken into women's participation in motorsport.



Our research approach

Global Attitude Survey

Our Global Attitude Survey was created and translated into 16 languages and hosted via a common, multi-lingual website run by Motorsport Network.

Almost 13,000 fans from 147 countries shared their feedback over a 24-day period earlier this year, making this study the largest ever conducted on female participation in elite motorsport.

The survey received feedback from over 3,200 female fans, equating to 27.6% of the total sample, the highest level of participation for female fans since global motorsport fan surveys were introduced in 2005. The previous highest level of response from female fans was just 18.8% received in the F1 Global Fan Survey of 2021.

The study also provided us with data to identify feedback from active and former competitors, together with parents of active competitors. In total, we collected 1,362 responses from this segment (11.6% of total). This broke down into 502 active, 787 former and 73 parents.

The survey is an integral component of a programme of dedicated research projects which will be commissioned by More than Equal to inform and drive change. This fan-centric approach provides invaluable insight across a broad range of subjects, spanning motorsport engagement, consumption habits, attitudes towards female elite competitors, awareness and perception of motorsport gender equality initiatives, as well as sponsorship habits.

One-on-One interviews with over 70 experts

We interviewed a range of motorsport stakeholders, including current and past female drivers and those with experience of working in the sport alongside women.

We spoke to coaches, parents and family members of female drivers, as well as brand and sponsor representatives, influential F1 team members and those working for the organising bodies of various racing series.

This insight gave us rich detail of the lived experience of those who are trying to progress as a female driver and of those who are supporting them or have the power to make real change.



Our research approach continued

Understanding and collating existing and relevant insight

To complement the key pillars of our research, we commissioned in-depth desk studies to explore data across other women's sport and to summarise the history and current dynamics of the space More than Equal is entering.

This included looking at progress in other sports such as tennis and football while also looking at how other mixed-gender sports are developing and what barriers they face that may be common to motorsport.

We've examined where motorsport is doing well in supporting and integrating women, such as progress made in Extreme E which has established regulations that enforce an equal gender balance in each of its competing teams.

Our global driver aggregation project

We wanted to understand how many women and girls have participated in motorsport over the last two decades and identify key trends over the past five years.

With no official central global database available, we explored the DriverDatabase – the most accurate available dataset relating to all-category female participation and the trusted source of information relating to international career and performance history.

Thank you

We are extremely grateful for the support and expertise of the key partners who have worked with us throughout this research programme, including MPA Commercial, IRIS Sport, Smedley Group and Motorsport.com.

Most importantly, we are indebted to everyone who took part in our survey and participated in our interviews for giving us their time and insights. Your input has been of incalculable value.



Stereotypes as barriers

We wanted to investigate whether attitudes, stereotypes and beliefs could in themselves be barriers for women in motorsport.



Stereotypes as barriers

There are a plethora of traditional perceptions in the sport when it comes to female drivers – that women aren't strong enough, that they don't have the emotional capability to handle the pressure or that they are not as likely to take risks in a car.

Surprisingly, we found that public attitudes do not buy into these views.

Across genders, regions, ages and competitors, the majority view is that female competitors have all the necessary technical and racing skills to compete at an elite level, and on an equal footing with their male counterparts.

Our one-to-one interviews, including with those working in technical roles, also suggest that there is no widely held belief that women are less physically capable of competing at the highest levels. We also know that here is no scientific evidence to support this.

Rather, those we spoke to cited challenges such as inadequate track time and inferior access to female specific technical and tactical training early enough, as being the real major barriers stopping women from reaching the top.

Through this, and the work of our performance partners Hintsä, we have not found any evidence that there are physical or psychological barriers in preventing women from reaching the top of the sport, if given the appropriate support and training.

Stereotypes as barriers continued

As one F1 coach told us:



Based on the research we have done there is no reason why a woman cannot compete. This is one of the beauties of the sport, that a man and woman can compete on equal grounds. I believe there will be a woman in F1 in the future and I hope we can make that happen very soon.”

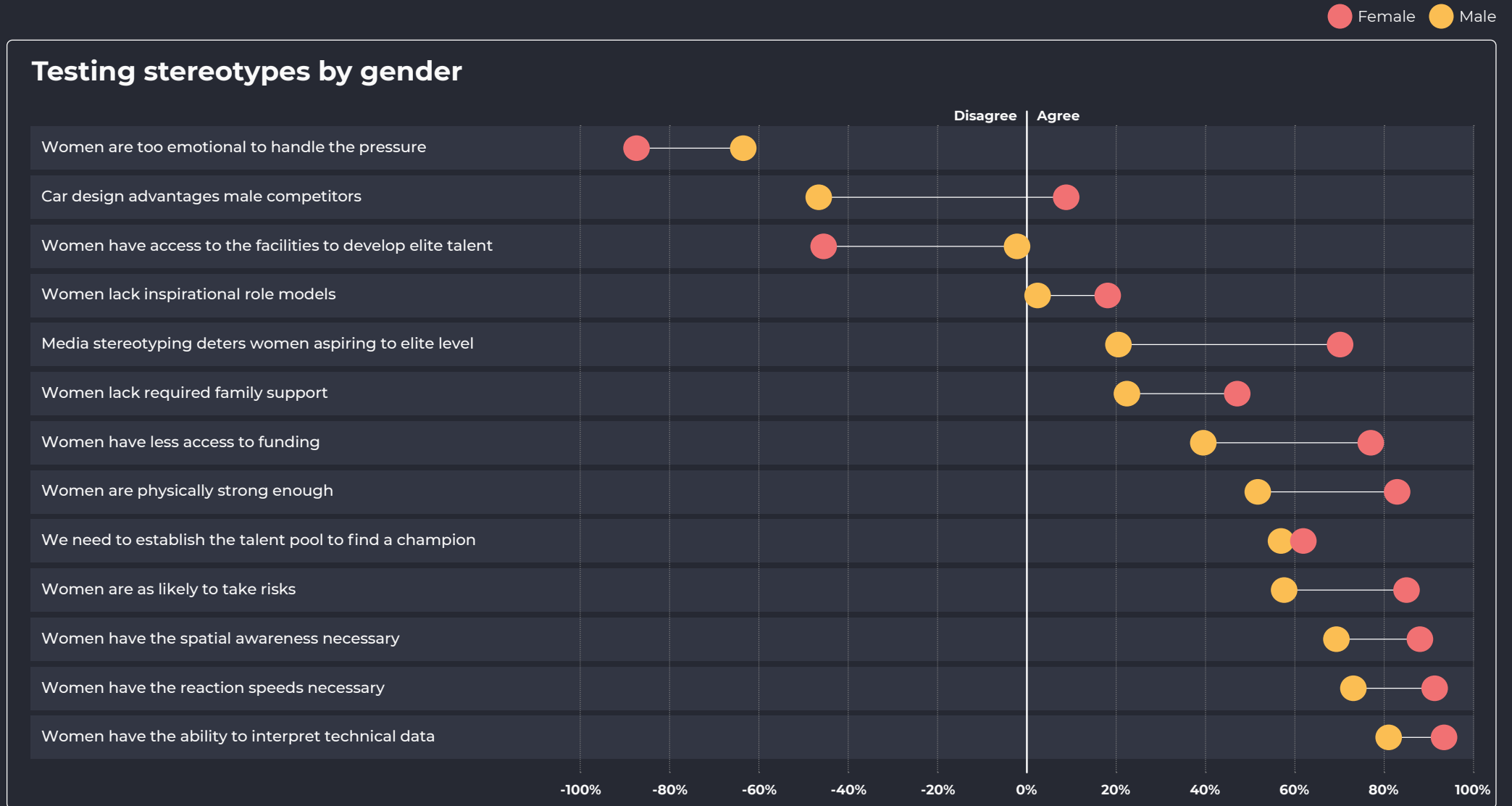
As one former F1 driver told us:



We have the science, we know how to make drivers capable to succeed, whether they are male or female. These cars are increasingly technical but physically easier to drive. So, combining the science and the training methods, there should be no problem to developing a powerful female driver. Add to this the direction of technology development in motor racing and we can easily develop the racing car that females can race in the top-level of motorsport.”

Stereotypes as barriers continued

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Lack of knowledge about women in motor racing


In our survey only 50% of respondents knew that women could compete in F1. This is despite 82.3% of the survey respondents classing themselves as avid fans. Many other motorsport series suffered a similar lack of knowledge or understanding of the rules.

These results show the effects of the lack of any presence or visibility of women at the elite levels of motorsport. Women have been absent from Formula 1 for so long that they have effectively been written out of the narrative completely in the public consciousness.

This strongly suggests that a lot more awareness and education is needed about the current series where the rules allow women and men to race together and reinforces the need for better information and more marketing. **If women and girls don't even know what is possible then how can they aspire to succeed?**

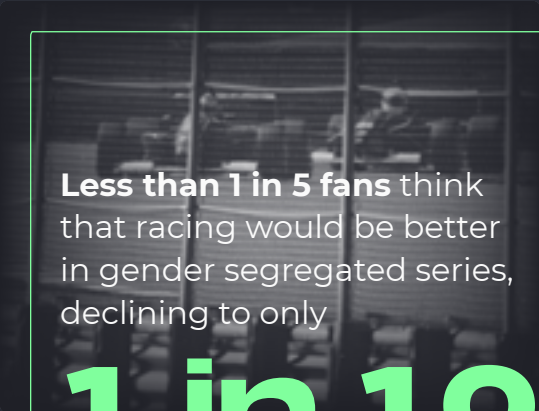
When we asked about women racing head-to-head against men, fans articulated their clear sentiment that motorsport would be best served by having men and women racing head-to-head rather than in gender segregated series.

The benefits of separating talent by gender to increase the female talent pool are clear, but they need to be better articulated to the female participants and fan base.



3 in every 4 fans believe racing would be better with head-to-head competition; this rises to

7 in 8
among female fans



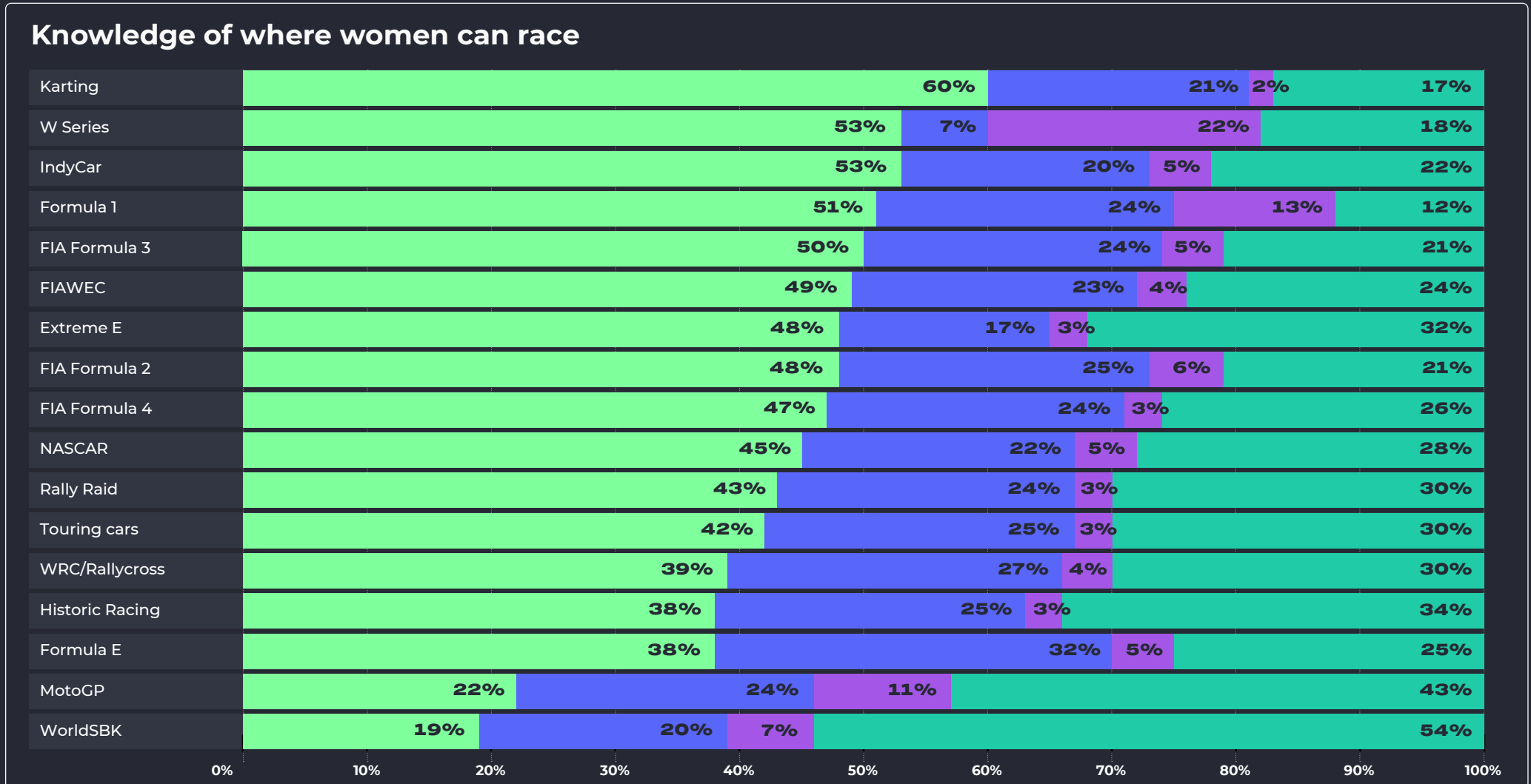
Less than 1 in 5 fans think that racing would be better in gender segregated series, declining to only

1 in 10
among female fans

Lack of knowledge about women in motor racing continued

Do you think that women can compete head-to-head with men in the following motorsports?

Can Maybe Can't Don't know

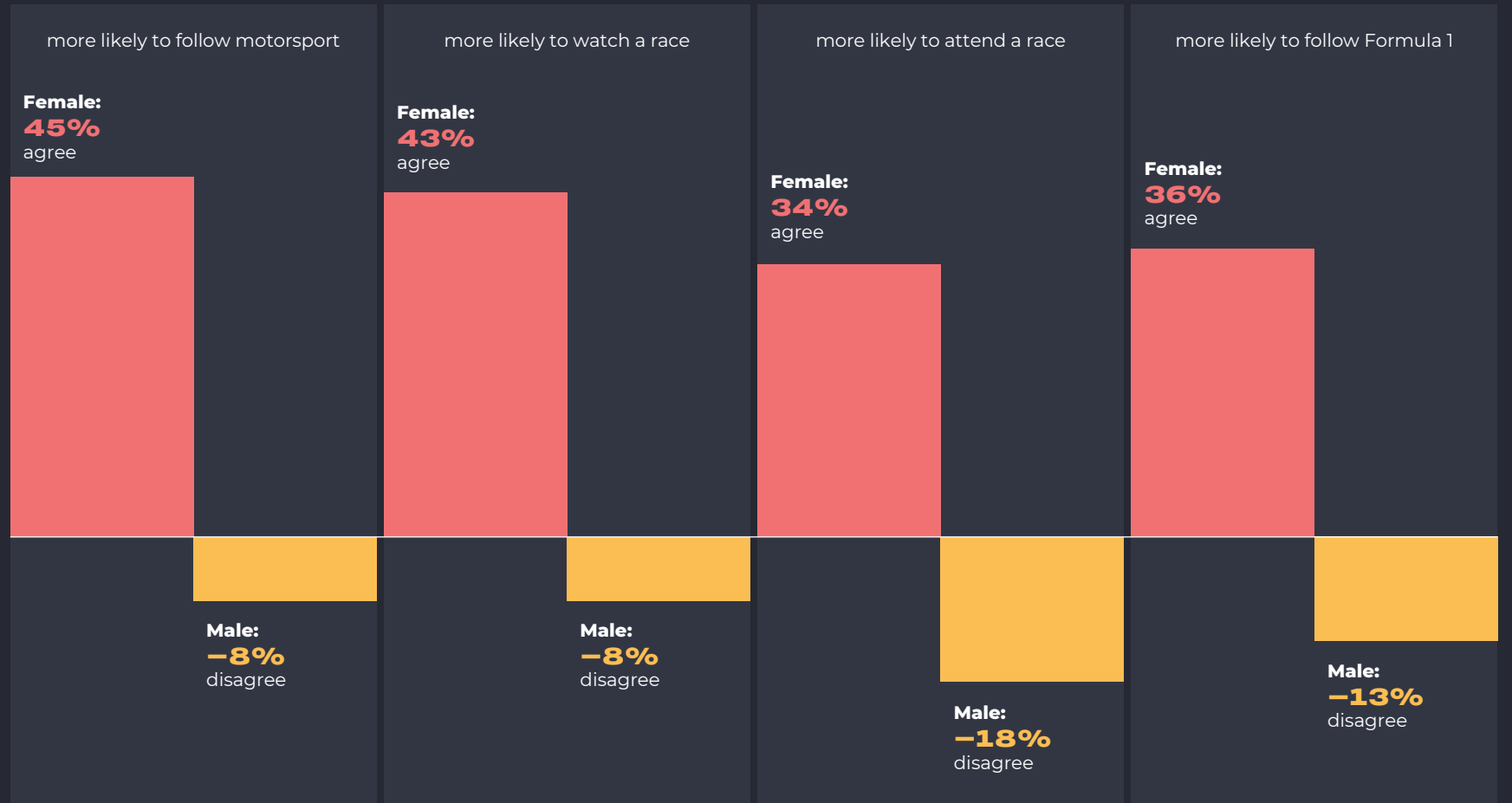


More women will mean more female fans

Female fans gave a clear indication that they would follow, watch and attend motorsport in greater numbers if more female competitors were involved.

Clearly this provides a huge opportunity for the sport to continue to grow and sustain the new and younger female fanbase.

With more female competitors taking part I would be:



Positivity about women in F1

There is strong belief that F1 will one day have a female driver winning races.

The research showed that within the next 10 years, 80% of all fans believe a woman will race in F1, with over 50% believing a female competitor will win at least one race in that time.

Within a five-year timeframe, 40% of fans believe there will be female competitors, with 13% believing there will be a female F1 race winner.

However, when it comes to crowning a female F1 World Champion, there is less optimism with only 22% of respondents believing a female driver will be world champion in the next decade.

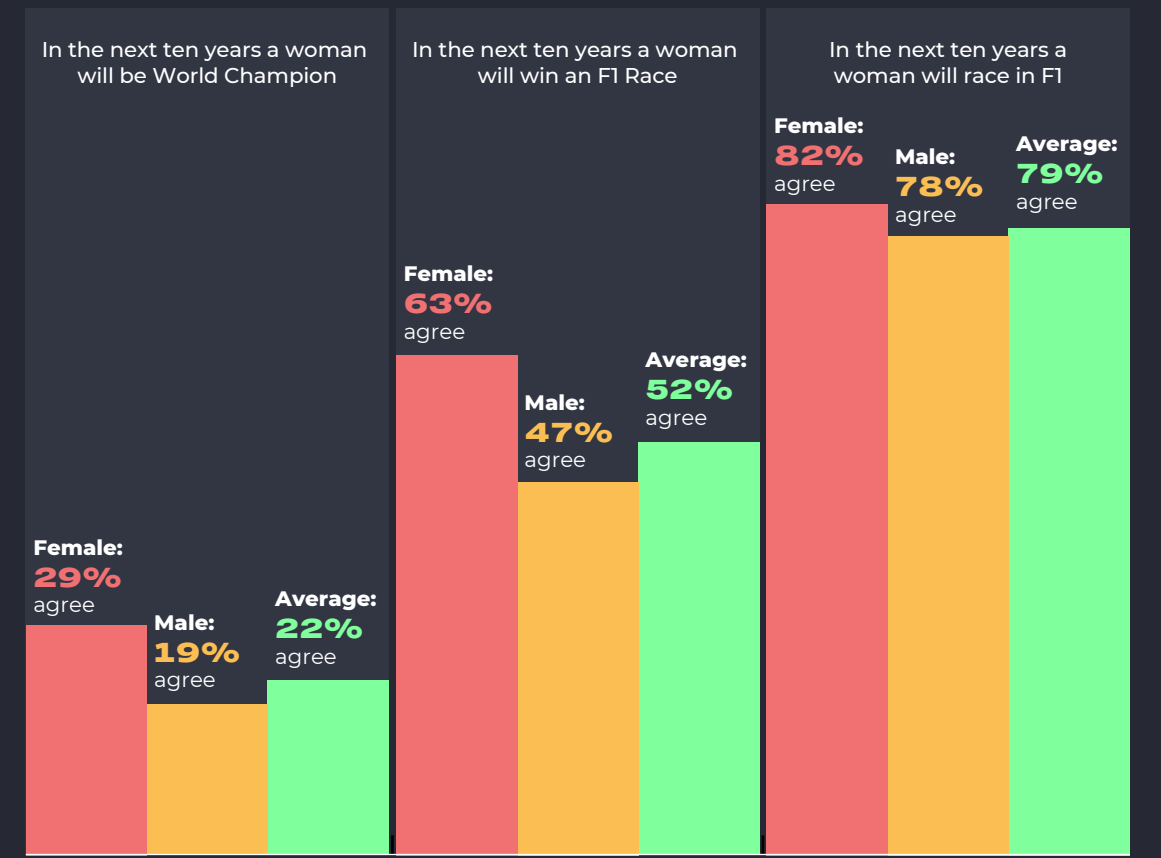
Across our demographic segments, expectations remain largely similar, with the exception of gender – where we documented an increased belief in female F1 success among female respondents.

Within a five-year timeframe

40%

of respondents believe there will be female competitors

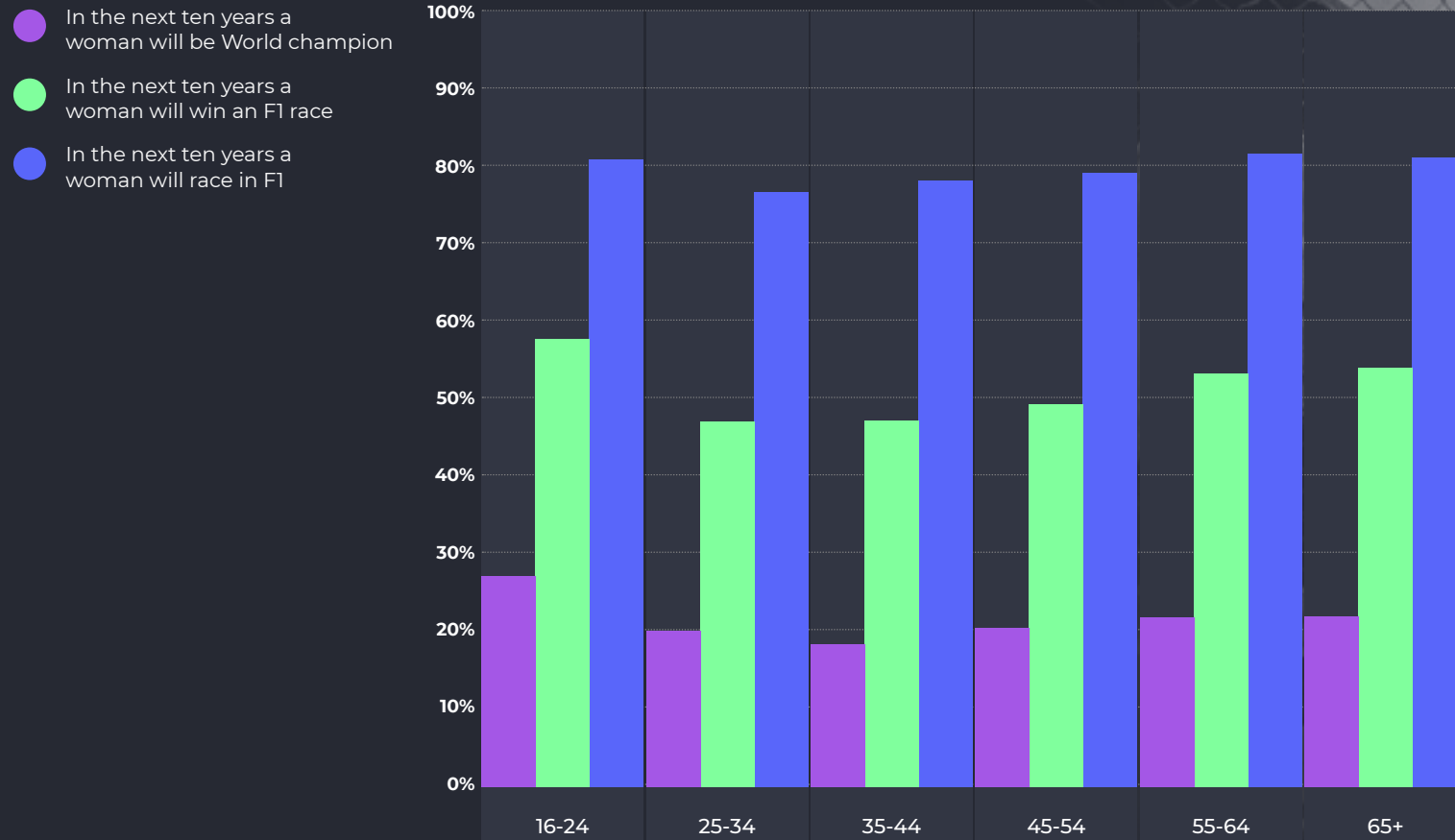
Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Positivity about women in F1 continued

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Breakdown by age





culture and change

While practical barriers play an important role in preventing women and girls from progressing in sport, cultural barriers are increasingly recognised as being blockers to progress.

05

Overview

The research confirms that in the heavily male dominated world of motorsport, there are systemic and cultural barriers holding women back from full involvement and in turn, from reaching elite level.

These include:

- A lack of inspirational role models at all levels
- The absence of a pool of female driving talent
- Stereotyping
- Unwelcoming or inappropriate environments
- Sub-standard facilities for female racers
- A lack of understanding about existing women in motorsport initiatives

We also asked supporters about motorsport initiatives aimed at improving Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and it is clear that expectations are not being met in this area.

When it comes specifically to female drivers, supporters also believe that the sport is failing to deliver.

In our one-to-one interviews, female competitors cited examples of how they felt unwelcome or were given access to inappropriate facilities while competing, while some were clear that although there have been improvements, many still experience sexist and misogynistic comments.

Overview continued

A leading female driver told us of her experiences:

“

Looking back, especially when I was younger, the environment wasn't one that as a girl I was particularly comfortable to be in.”

“

I regret doing this, where you laugh along at sexist jokes or you laugh along at things that make you feel uncomfortable, but you do because you don't want to feel like you're the odd one out. You feel awkward about being the only girl in that sense, so you try to become one of the boys, which really is backwards.”

The survey results show that **female participants and supporters have significantly stronger opinions on these issues than their male counterparts.**

These are valuable insights for those running the sport if they want to sustain and grow female audiences.



Equality, diversity and inclusion — performance vs expectation

Fans overwhelmingly ranked motorsport as performing very poorly on EDI, when measured against a range of other sports.

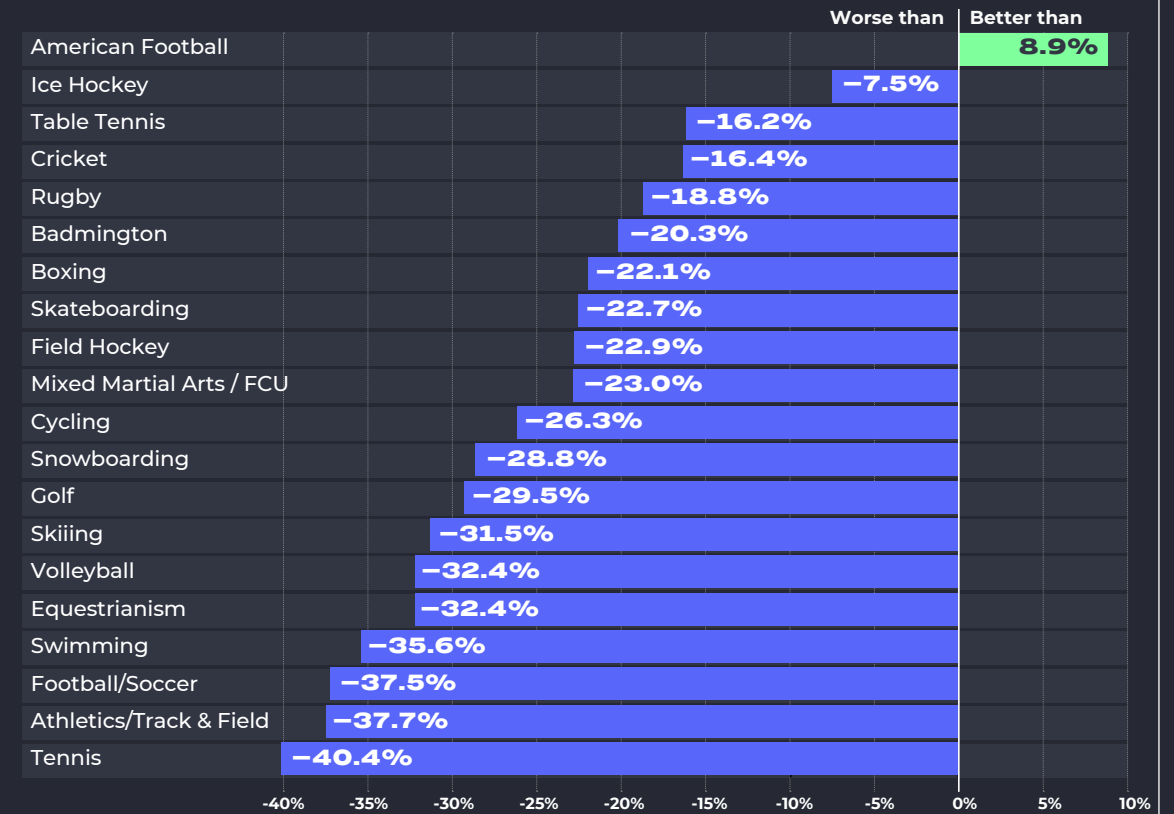
In fact, motorsport fans across genders, ages, regions and backgrounds rank motorsport as underperforming against every sport offered to them (21 in all), with the exception of American Football.

Female respondents displayed a higher degree of dissatisfaction with motorsport's delivery against expected EDI measures than their male counterparts, although the overall sentiment of both groups remain similar.

These results should worry the sport— highlighting a highly negative public opinion of efforts in this area, even amongst its most avid fans.

How well does motorsport rank against other sports in terms of driving change?

(English language respondents)



Equality, diversity and inclusion – performance vs expectation continued

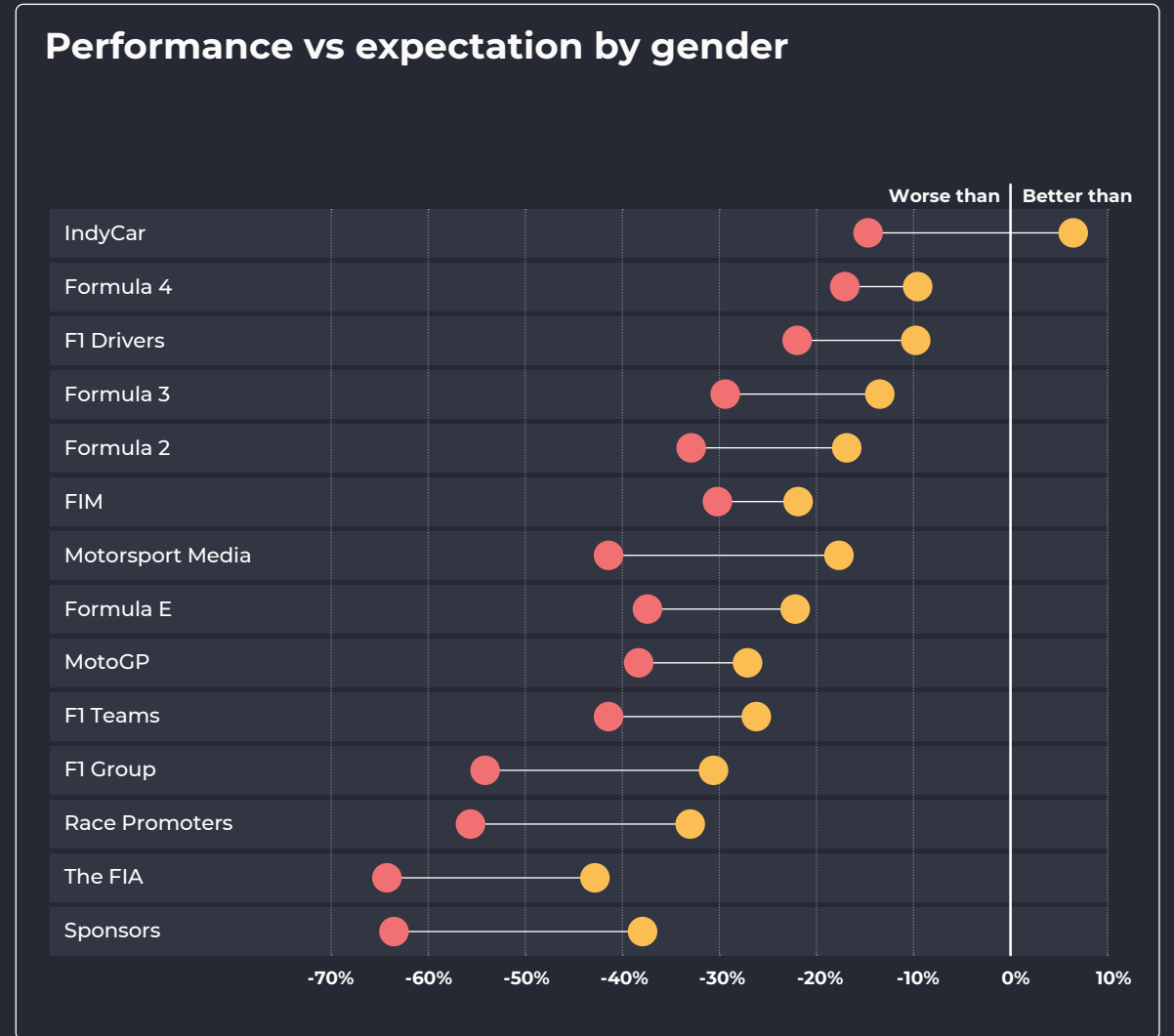
We asked respondents to rank the key stakeholders in motorsport on a scale of one to five, in terms of delivering against their expectation on EDI, where one is 'well below' expectations and five 'far exceeds' expectations.

Across a broad spectrum of stakeholders spanning regulators, series, championships, competitors and media, the only body to be perceived by fans to be 'in line' or 'just above' expectations is IndyCar.

Efforts across all other stakeholders, especially in two-wheeled series, were universally considered as poor.

Interestingly, female respondents and fans aged 45+, show an even greater level of dissatisfaction across all stakeholder bodies. In comparison, fans under 24 indicate that both F1 Drivers and F4 are performing in line with expectations. Competitors hold similar opinions to non-competitors, placing particular emphasis on the shortcomings of race promoters (-39%) and sponsors (-44%).

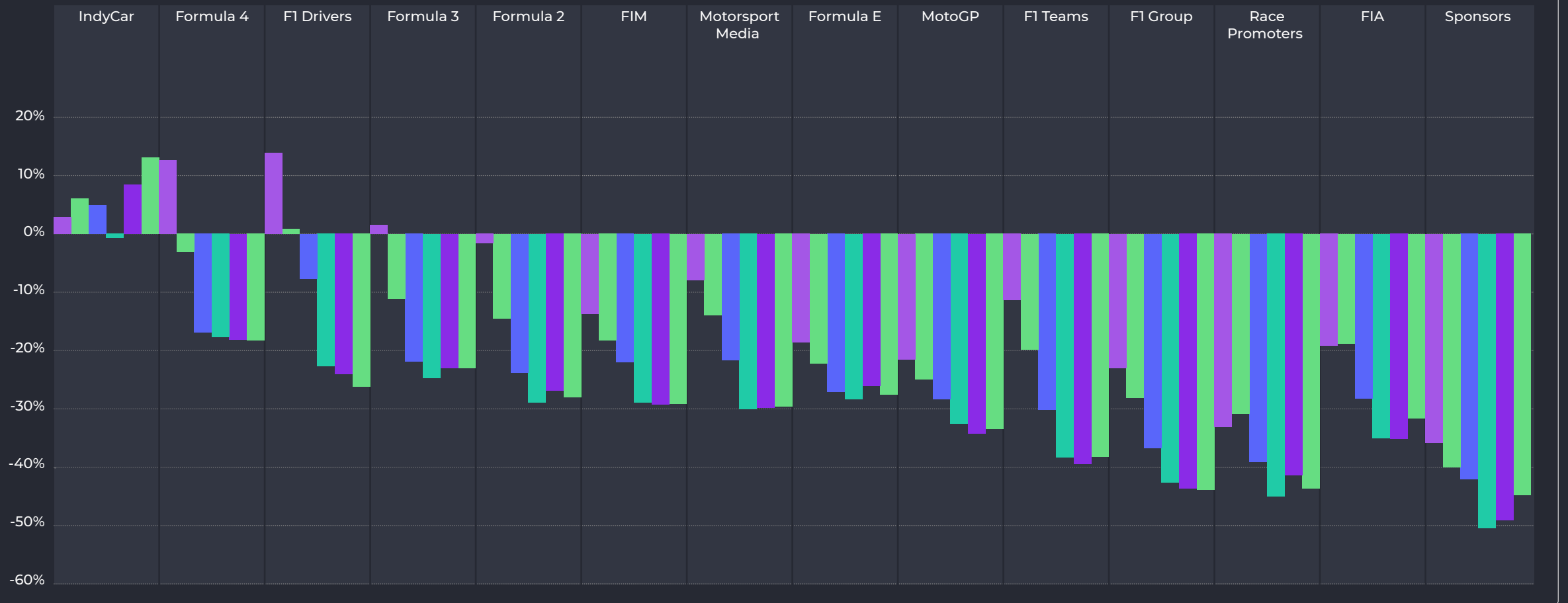
Female Male



Equality, diversity and inclusion – performance vs expectation continued

16-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+

Performance vs expectation by age



Leaders, influencers and the media reinforcing stereotypes

As the research makes clear, fans of the sport no longer buy into historic misconceptions and stereotyping about women and girls in motorsport.

However, at elite levels of the sport these are often reinforced, highlighting divergent views between the fanbase and the sport's leadership and its influential personalities.

When we explored past statements made by key stakeholders, when discussing women in motorsport, the dominant themes included:

- Lack of physical strength
- Lack of a necessary mindset
- Lack of talent

There are unfortunately plenty of historical and even recent examples where prominent figures have made public comments that have belittled or dismissed women in motorsport or female fans of the sport.

The media also has an important role to play. Women feel strongly that it should be doing a much better job at promoting opportunities and championing success, and doing so in a way that does not conform to outdated misconceptions.



Leaders, influencers and the media reinforcing stereotypes continued

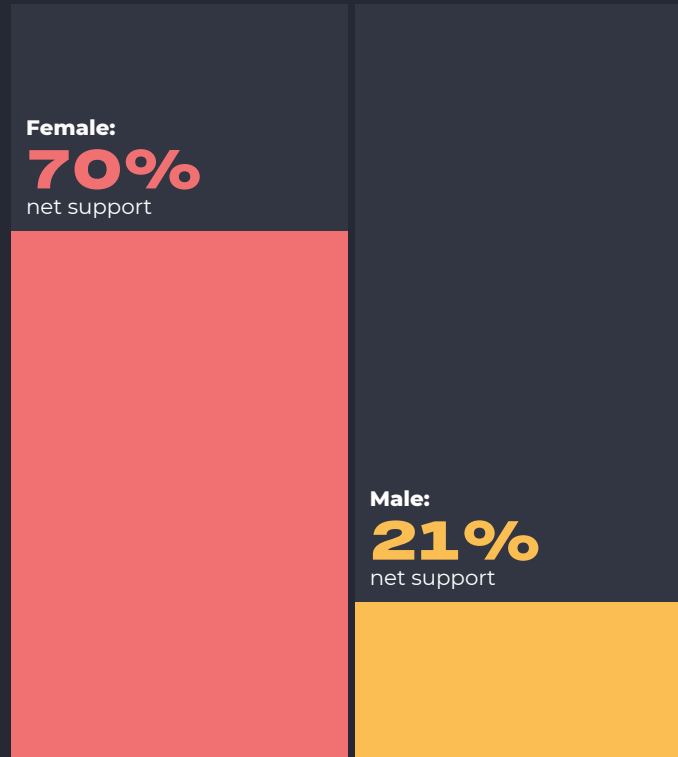
66%

of fans believe that current media coverage is reinforcing gender stereotypes and

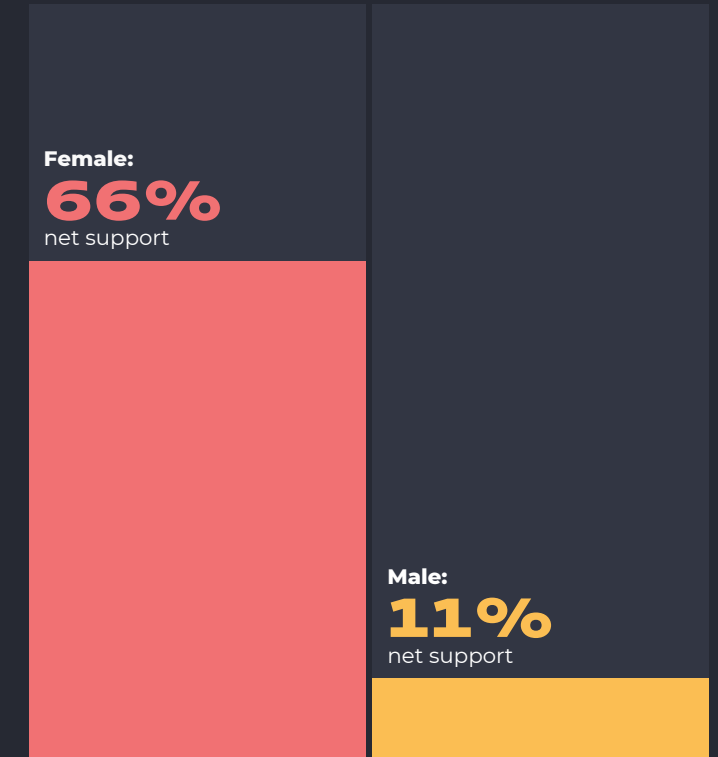
70%

believe that this deters female participants.

I believe that gender stereotyping in the media deters women from aspiring to elite level motorsport



I believe that women don't have aspirational role models



Women in motorsport Initiatives

While fans show a high degree of dissatisfaction with the progress made by motorsport stakeholders in driving change for women and girls, there is knowledge, especially among female fans, of existing initiatives developed to fast-track it.

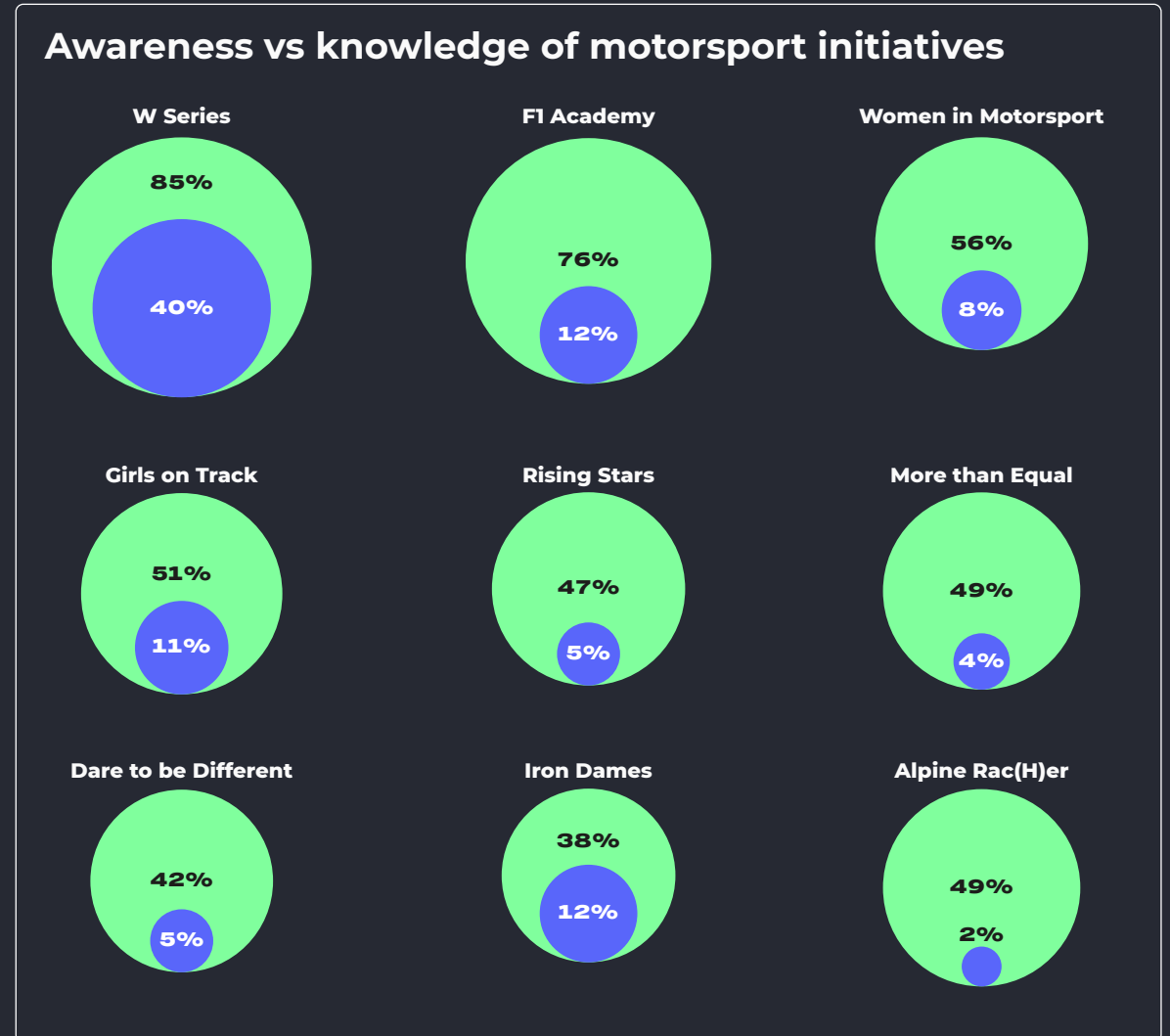
Most recognised among these is the W Series, which was mentioned by 86% of respondents.

Overall awareness of these initiatives was higher among female fans.

In addition to name recognition, we explored respondents' understanding of objectives and aims of these programmes. We discovered, with the exception of W Series, the understanding of the objectives of all initiatives was uniformly low, with <15% of respondents claiming to have a good knowledge of an initiative's aims.

More education regarding the objectives of these programmes is needed although since the survey was completed, initiatives like the F1 Academy have been growing in prominence.

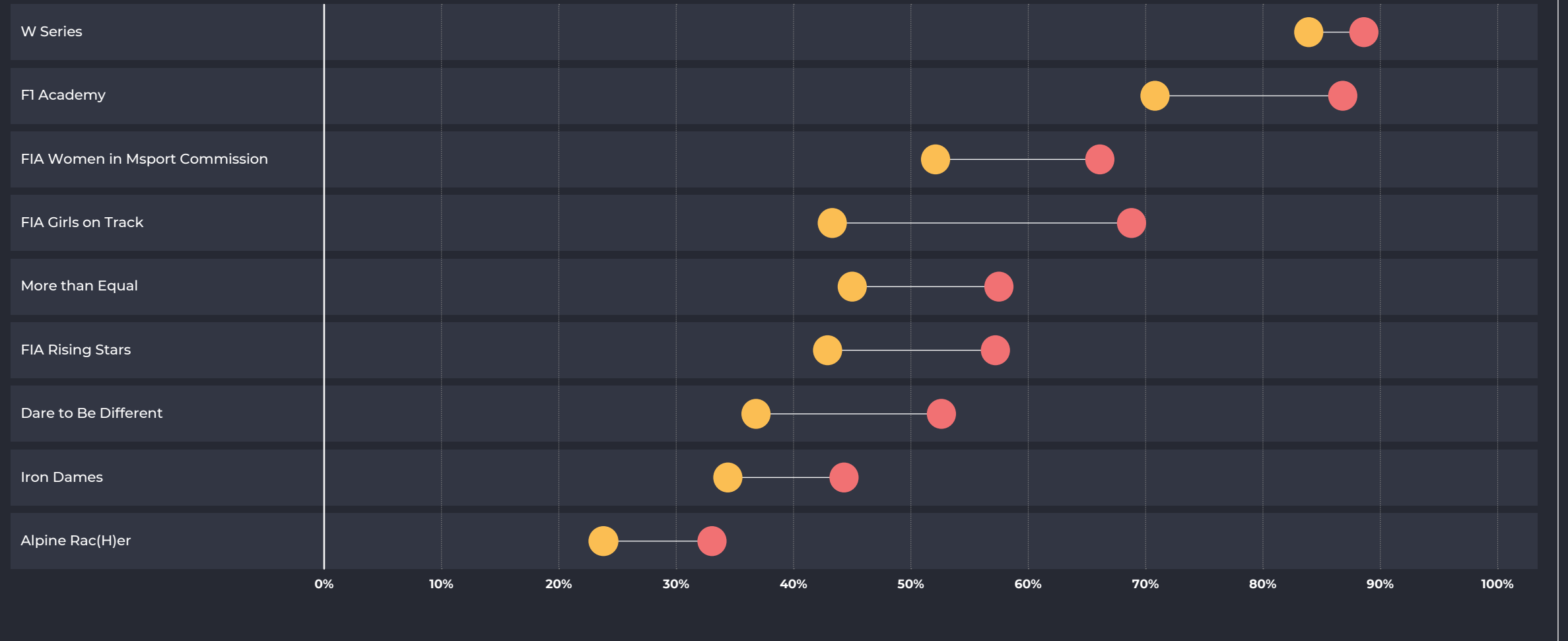
● Have heard of ● Have knowledge of



Women in motorsport Initiatives continued

Female Male

Awareness of initiatives



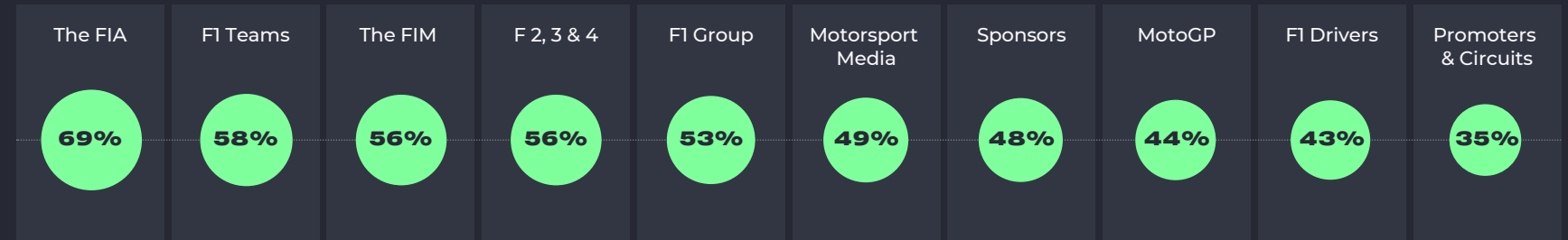
Who should drive change?

Almost 70% of respondents believe that the FIA have the most influence in driving change.

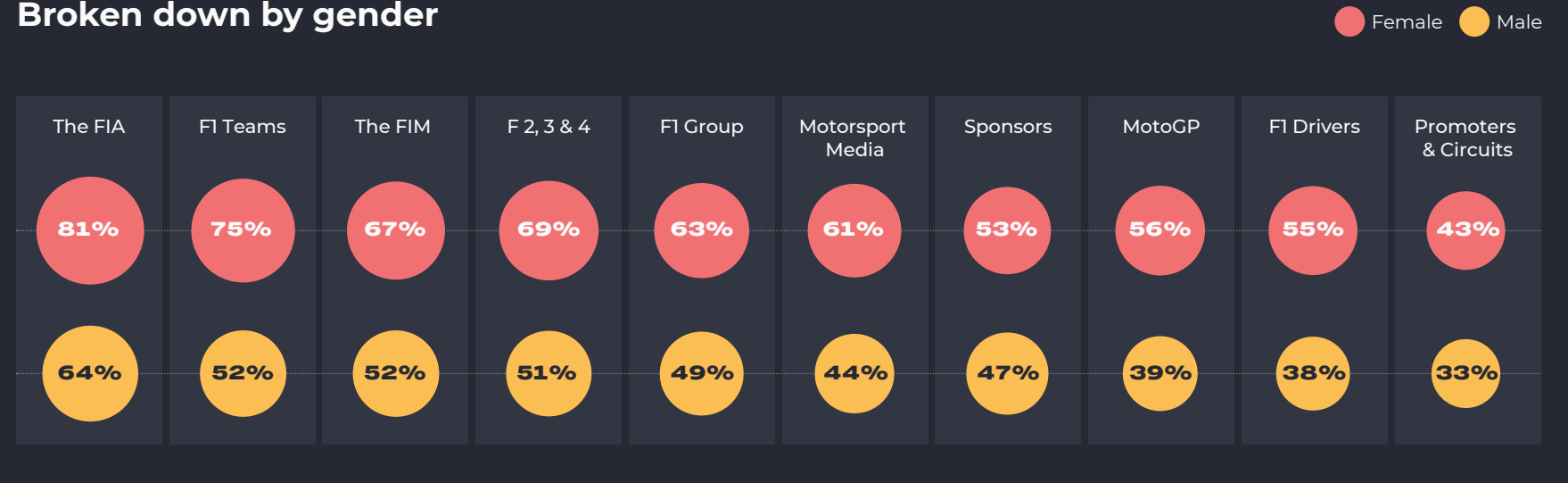
This presents a huge opportunity for the FIA to accelerate work in this area; however, fans understand and recognise that a **multi-agency approach is required to effect and deliver sustainable change.**

This includes major contributions across the various stakeholder groups spanning F1 Teams, the F1 Group, drivers, junior single seater categories, the motorsport media, sponsors and circuit operators.

Which entity is best placed to influence increasing participation by female competitors in motorsport?



Broken down by gender

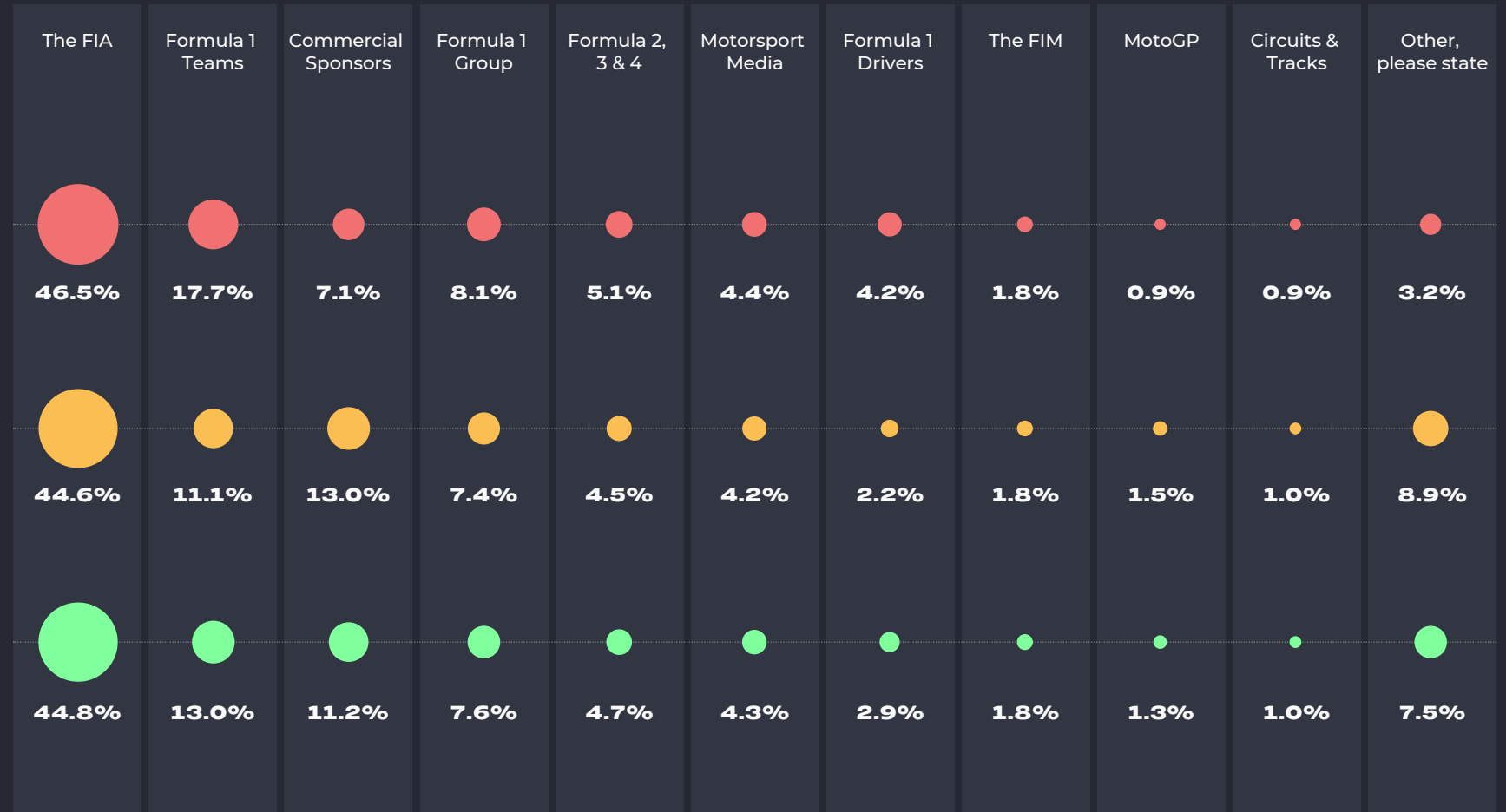


Who should drive change? continued

Female Male Total

It is noteworthy that the three stakeholder bodies considered to be the poorest performers in terms of meeting fan expectations on driving EDI initiatives are the FIA, Formula One Group and sponsors all of whom are cited as being pivotal in driving change for the future. This should be seen as a strong opportunity for these entities to take the lead.

Which entity should now lead the drive for increasing female participation?





The role and impact of sponsorship

The important role played by sponsorship and investment in helping talented female drivers progress up the motorsport ladder was evident when speaking to those who are currently attempting to do so.

Overview

While there is recognition that motorsport is an expensive sport for everyone, many believe that it is much harder for women to access the funding they need, feeling that sponsors would rather play it safe with men or boys.

One leading female driver told us



It's getting more expensive to find the sponsors to support you to go racing and give you a real chance to compete with a good team is really difficult. As long as women's motorsport series sit separately from men, it's not going to be taken as seriously."



Some people think you could have an advantage to get a sponsorship as a woman because there's not that many of us in a male dominated sport; on paper it should be, but something is stopping big companies supporting women in motorsport; maybe they don't think we have the credibility."

While a parent of an aspiring female driver added



When we speak to sponsors and say that our daughter has the potential of reaching F1, we get the same answer: 'we don't believe you.' There is no single evidence over the last 30 years or more that a female racer is able to reach and race F1 so they will not take a risk."

A huge opportunity for brands who do invest

The survey also documents the recognition and value attributed to brands and companies that are willing to invest in sportswomen, though there are stark contrasts along gender lines.

- Recognition of sponsorship's positive impact **exceeds 90% among female respondents** and declines to circa 70% among their male counterparts. Overall, **46% of respondents think more highly of companies that support female sport.**

However, this positive impact also has two contrasting gender narratives: **male audiences have a +33% approval rating**, while agreement among **females is more than double that at +76%.**

- The gender difference is most apparent in purchasing habits where **female fans display a strong propensity to purchase a sponsor's product above that of a non-sponsor** – a net +56% approval.

- **The positive brand impact of sponsoring women's sport is relatively uniform across ages, with all age brackets showing 40%+ net agreement.**

There is, however, a slightly stronger affinity to sponsors among 16–24-year-olds, with 54% indicating they would think more highly of a company sponsoring women's sport.

A huge opportunity for brands who do invest continued

Insights on sponsorship

Opinion of sponsorship

I think more highly of companies that support women in sport

46%

Sponsorship can make a positive contribution to the success of women in elite sport

78%

I am more likely to consider purchasing products from companies involved in supporting women in sport

17%

Opinion of sponsorship by gender

Female Male

I think more highly of companies that support women in sport

33%

76%

Sponsorship makes a positive contribution to the success of women in sport

74%

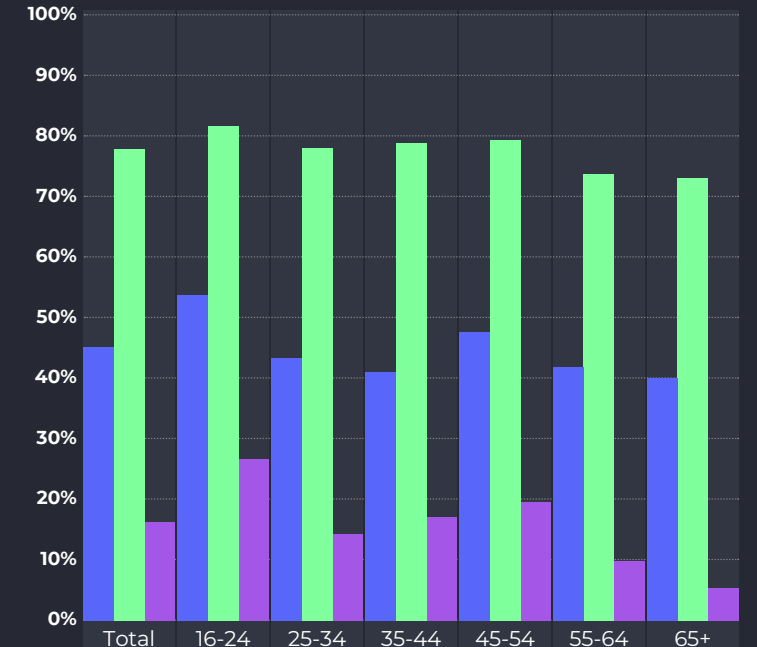
89%

I am more likely to consider purchasing products from companies who support women in sport

56%

Opinion of sponsorship by age

- I think more highly of companies that support women in sport
- Sponsorship can make a positive contribution to the success of women in elite sport
- I am more likely to consider purchasing products from companies involved in supporting women in sport



A huge opportunity for brands who do invest continued

There is recognition that the more progress is made, the more sponsors will be interested.



One leading director from an existing sponsor brand in motorsport said



In Equestrian, the Top 20 is a competition between men and women; there is a parallel with motorsport in that it's not just your strength, it is the strength of your ability, your technique and the strength of your partner, whether that is a horse or a car. There are similarities between the two and hence the interest to explore and to support the development of female drivers."



Global participation of women and girls

Analysing the numbers relating to female participation and performance in global motorsport has proved a significant challenge.

Overview

Unlike most other major sports, data on participation by gender is not centrally collected. This is surprising given the history, size and global prominence of motorsport.

Not only does this make it almost impossible to get an accurate world view of the number of women and girls participating and progressing, this lack of basic data makes it more difficult to take evidence-based decisions and interventions, as well as depriving the sport of a growth narrative to help attract investment.

We recognise that this is a challenging landscape with many stakeholders collecting multiple types of data. Motorsport is also not a mass participation sport making available sample sizes relatively small.

There is also significant geographic clustering that exacerbates sample size issues and in some regions, credible data sources are limited and there is little integration between individual sources.

Perhaps most significantly, where data is available, gender marker designation is currently very mixed.

For this initial piece of work, we chose to use the DriverDatabase as our single source of truth.

Although other (typically series specific) datasets exist, their level of completeness and accuracy is questionable. We explored data from the years 2000 to 2023 with a particular focus on the past five years.

It is important to note that, at this point and given these caveats, we are simply describing the current biggest data sets within the base.

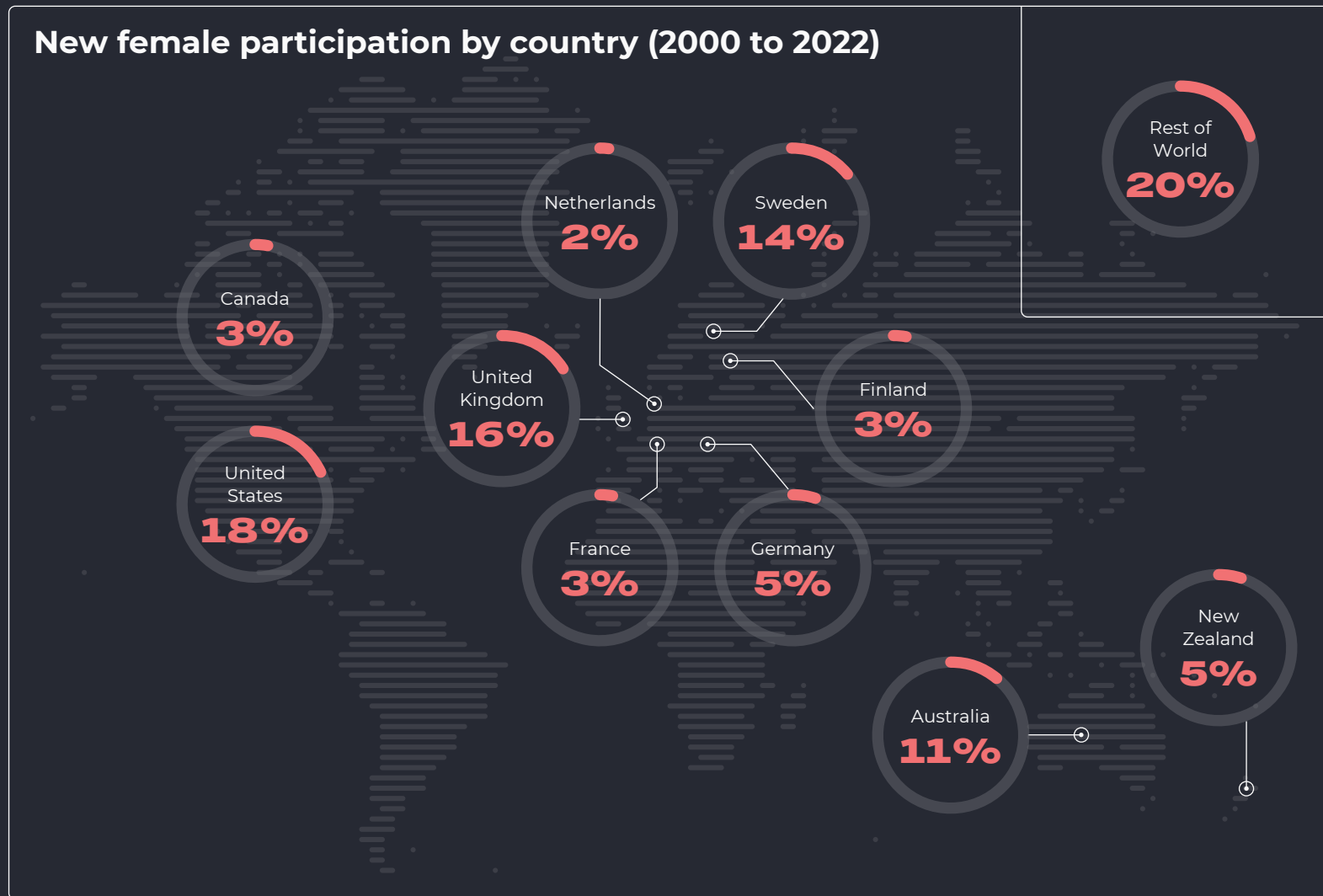
We are committed to helping develop and improve all available data sources in the future, but even with these caveats our initial analysis is that even with the addition of other sources, the trends we outline below are unlikely to change significantly without meaningful interventions.

Where are all the female drivers?

We also looked at where globally there were hot spots and opportunities. We found that:

- The **region topping overall participation over the last 20 years is Europe**, which accounts for 43% of all new participants in this period.
- The **country with top participation during the last 20 years is the United States**, accounting for 18% of all new participants in this time.
- Lower, but **notable regions of uptake** for new female participants are **South and Central America**.
- **Hotspots of participation** per capita are **Sweden, New Zealand, Finland, Australia and Denmark** – mirroring male data.
- Isolating data from the last five years shows that the geographic picture of participation for women and girls is changing. **While Europe and the United States continue to drive participation, East Asia and Oceania are also starting to grow numbers.**

New female participation by country (2000 to 2022)



The reality of female participation

The results highlight two key themes which we will explore further below.

The gender participation gap

Participation of women and girls in motorsport at all levels is depressingly low.

It currently represents on average 7-13% across all categories of competition, with the highest in karting – a format that contributes 40% of overall female participation.

The gender performance gap

Even as those participants continue to compete, they are not progressing at the same rate into the top talent rankings, where female drivers represent a tiny percentage – currently just 4%.

Based on the current numbers, without significant intervention, the chances of a woman ever reaching the top is incredibly small.



The Gender Participation Gap

It is clear from our research that female drivers are dropping out far too soon; their careers are much shorter than their male counterparts and they compete in fewer events.

Our key findings

- Female careers in the sport are on average between one to five years, whereas male careers are more likely to last for 12 years or more.
- Most drivers (male and female) appear to start between the ages of 10 and 16 but females are almost twice as likely to retire within the first five years.
- Female participation ranges on average between just 7% and 13% across all categories of competition.
- Of all motorsport categories, karting has the highest female participation rate, almost double the participation levels seen in other series. Female karting entry can be as high as 30% in some series although more typically participation averages 13%.
- GT and Formula categories follow a similar ratio distribution to each other reaching up to just 20% in the best case but being more typically around 7% on average.

We need to **better understand** why there is such a significant drop off after just a few years and **find ways to keep women and girls participating for longer.** Recruitment efforts are important, but retention is even more so.

Females are almost twice as likely to retire within the first

**five
years**

The Gender Performance Gap

As the best female drivers climb the performance rankings, our data shows that the barriers they face, over and above those faced by male drivers, mean that they are ever only likely to make up a tiny percentage of the top of the talent rankings – currently this stands at just 4%. This is clearly significantly lower than the average 13% participation rate across all series and is what we mean by the Performance Gap.

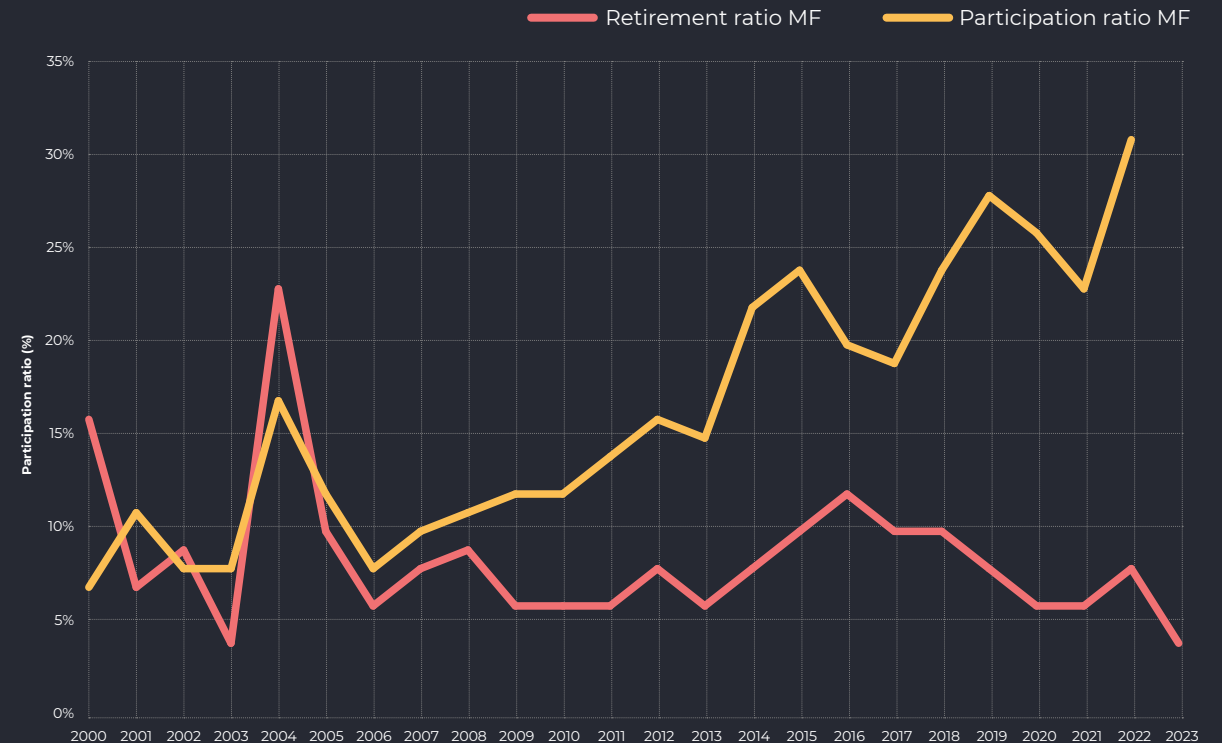
This is the challenging environment and vicious cycle facing talented young female drivers who participate in fewer races, leading to less track experience, which results in poor performance, reduced financial support and ultimately, early retirement.

We need to continue to invest in research to understand more how to break this cycle.

This cycle underpins the fact that:

- Females are unlikely to appear in the top 20% of any rankings.
- Female drivers are more likely to finish within the middle 70% of races but are twice as likely to appear in the bottom 10%.

These trends are the same regardless of category.



The current chances of female drivers reaching the top

As things stand, the chance of getting a woman onto the F1 podium, without significant intervention and support, is incredibly small.

We cannot yet dream of a world in which the gender split in F1 could be 50/50 but imagining what would need to change for that to happen does set out the scale of the challenge.

Based on current participation and performance levels, with no additional interventions, to have a 50/50 gender split in F1, female participation would need to make up 84% of the entire motorsport participation population.

These stark numbers assume that the current Performance Gap

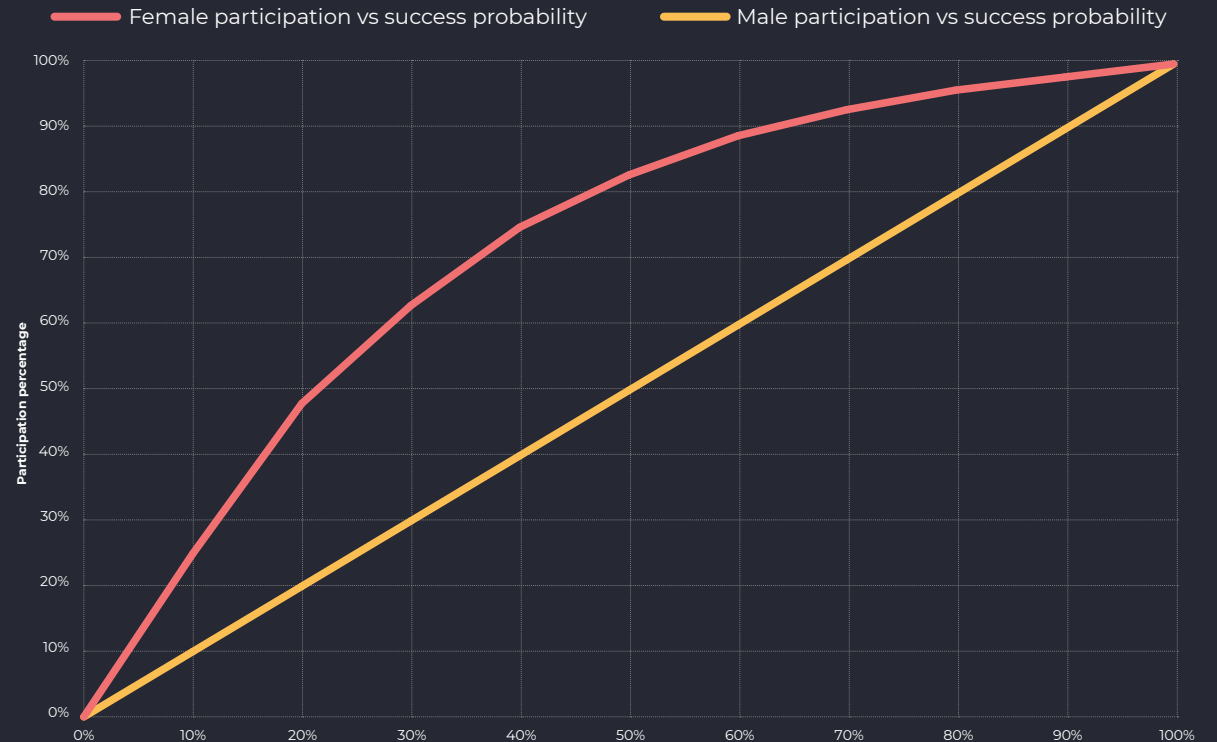
remains and that the barriers contributing to this fail to be removed or mitigated.

If steps are taken to close that gap so that female talent has an equal chance of reaching the top performance rankings at each stage of their career, then the participation growth required will be much less and more realistic. This is why interventions, such as those being implemented by More than Equal, and others introduced recently such as the F1 Academy, are vital.

To have a 50/50 gender split in F1, female participation would need to make up

84%

of the entire participation base.





conclusions

Each driver currently competing in F1 has had very different experiences on their path to the top, but the most important similarity is that they had lots of opportunity to compete.



Overview

To build skill and experience, all competed across different series, in different equipment and in different conditions. This exposed them to a variety of competitive environments, giving them wide, essential experience that enhanced their race-craft and raised their visibility.

It's clear that talented young female drivers are not consistently getting these opportunities, though initiatives such as the F1 Academy, W Series, Iron Dames and Girls on Track have and are seeking to address this.

We believe that putting a woman on the podium will increase momentum, encourage investment and inspire generations of girls who dream one day of holding the F1 Championship trophy.

That is why More than Equal exists and why we will focus on developing evidenced-based high performance pathways for elite-level female drivers and work to ensure that the sport has its first female F1 World Champion sooner rather than later, based on the insights this report has delivered.

Identifying areas for change

More grassroots participation

Our research shows how statistically challenging it will be to find a female F1 World Champion with the current numbers of girls taking part in competitive motorsport. This needs to be urgently addressed.

Participation levels at the grassroots level needs to increase substantially in the short and medium term and this is something that can only happen if the sport comes together with imaginative and innovative ideas that result in measurable outcomes. Recent initiatives such as 'Discover Your Drive' are very welcome, but we need more.

Motorsport could:

- Explore steps to provide financially accessible karting for all
- Provide grant funding opportunities for participation initiatives
- Set transparent targets for female driver participation growth

More data and research

The current level of data around female participation is not robust or adequate enough to inform the sport. The industry needs to collaborate urgently to improve this.

We have been given some valuable insights through our initial work, but good research is rarely a one off event and there is so much more to learn, such as whether there are biases in the design of equipment or whether power steering creates a barrier to women progressing.

Motorsport could:

- Commit to improving global data collection on female participation
- Introduce mandatory gender markers at all competitive events from karting championships upwards
- Explore under-researched areas such as the possibility of gender design biases in equipment

Identifying areas for change continued

More recognition of the cultural change needed

Many women in motorsport have a very low degree of confidence in the sport when it comes to its culture, particularly around inclusion, with many finding the environment within the sport unwelcoming.

Research shows that the media plays a vital role in championing gender equality and that currently there are frustrations with how women and girls are represented. This needs to be acknowledged honestly and addressed.

Motorsport could:

- Commit to a zero-tolerance approach to sexist and offensive behaviour including among fans at events
- Improve facilities at karting tracks for female drivers, for example providing dedicated female changing and toilet facilities as a minimum
- Commit to better storytelling about progress in gender equality and inclusion

More support for talented young female drivers

Although the reason female drivers are dropping out of the sport early needs to be further investigated, we know that in part it is because they do not receive the same backing, especially financially, as their male counterparts, with a far lower risk appetite among funders.

We need better and earlier support for young female drivers who show promise.

Motorsport could:

- Establish clear and documented pathways for talented young females in motorsport from entry to elite level
- Commit to providing wider racing opportunities for young female talent and where that is in gender separate events, better explain the benefits
- Work harder to build an evidence base and growth narrative for women and girls in motorsport to help attract external investment to support female drivers

Identifying areas for change continued

More collaboration

In motorsport, winning is fuelled by collaboration, innovation, and the pursuit of excellence. Yet, an unfortunate gender disparity continues to persist within the sport, limiting the potential growth and depriving us of diverse perspectives.

It is imperative that stakeholders come together to address and unlock the obvious benefits that expanding the talent pool, growing the fan base and inspiring the next generation will bring.

Motorsport could:

- Recognise that change for women and girls requires a multi-agency approach
- Embrace the opportunity to bring stakeholders working in this area to come together to share insight and learning
- Better celebrate the success of those initiatives and programmes doing well

More than Equal will

Continue to invest in building an evidence base

that supports the development of women and girls in motorsport and consistently commission, undertake and publish relevant insight and research.

Launch a world-class driver development programme,

based on this evidence, which will provide tailored support and training for young female drivers, with an initial cohort coming on board in time for the 2024 season.

Build the first dedicated global female driver talent database

from championship karting upwards, with the intention of identifying talent and potential earlier and wider than has ever been done before.

Leverage our networks

to connect the talent we are supporting with the best opportunities including with potential teams and investors.





Appendix



Appendix

Useful existing research on women in motorsport, women in sport and other areas where mixed gender challenges are explored.

Michigan State research on female drivers:
<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/04/190404143745.html>

University of Chichester on women in motorsport:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301277836_'What_on_Earth_are_They_Doing_in_a_Racing_Car'_Towards_an_Understanding_of_Women_in_Motorsport

Comparative study Women's G tolerance:
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/3753357/>

Biomedical Research on Health and Performance of Military Women:
<https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/pdf/10.1089/jwh.2005.14.764>

Women's Service in the Israel Defence Forces research:
<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/israel-defense-forces#pid-18535>

Nasa research into women's health in space:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-49744892>

National Academy of Sciences research on men and women in space:
<https://www.nasa.gov/content/men-women-spaceflight-adaptation>

Changing attitudes towards female athletes, Sport Journal:
<https://thesportjournal.org/article/exposure-to-womens-sports-changing-attitudes-toward-female-athletes/>

Canadian study on women, sport and physicality:
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1012690297032003006>

University of Carolina research on women in sport:
https://journals.humankinetics.com/view/journals/wspaj/wspaj-overview.xml?tab_body=about

UN Women: women and girls in sport:
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-sport>

Athlete assessment research:
<https://www.athleteassessments.com/gender-equality-debate/>

Women and the Army Combat Fitness:
https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/army-fitness-test-women/2020/09/24/20ed51e2-e244-11ea-ade1-28daf1a5e919_story.html

Research by the US Army on women in military:
<https://www.wired.com/2006/01/military-women-can-hack-it/>

International Journal of Public Health Effects of Mixed-Gender Competition:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9031995/>

University of Toronto research on the experiences of girl athletes playing on boys' sports teams during adolescence:
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2159676X.2023.2187444>

Journal of Sports Economics:
Gender and Jockey Success on the Thoroughbred Racetrack
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1527002520975839>

University of Liverpool: Female jockeys, what are the odds?:
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4040586

Altman Solon Survey into the changing commercial landscape in sport:
<https://www.altmansolon.com/sports-and-news-survey/>

Sports Innovation Lab Project on how Women's Sports will lead the future:
https://assets.ctfassets.net/40abn7j4v349/XWdrSeEOYWHefrzMISVnq/277baf2fdca326672da90a683538daa/SIL_The_Fan_Project_Report.pdf

Appendix continued

Useful sources and organisations supporting women in motorsport.

FIA Girls on Track:

<https://www.fia.com/news/fia-girls-track-rising-stars-four-junior-and-four-senior-drivers-race-through-decisive-ferrari>

Women in Motorsport Commission:

<https://www.fia.com/women-motorsport-around-globe>

Formula Female:

<https://www.formulafemale.org/>

Iron Dames:

<https://www.ironlynx.it/iron-dames/>

F1 Academy:

<https://www.f1academy.com/>

Females in Motorsport:

<https://www.femalesinmotorsport.com/>

Wheel Sisters:

<https://www.wheel-sisters.com/>

Play Like a Girl:

<https://iplaylikeagirl.org/>

Formula Student:

<https://www.imeche.org/events/formula-student>

Ferrari Driver Academy:

<https://www.ferrari.com/en-EN/fda>

Rac(H)er:

<https://www.alpine-cars.co.uk/rac-h-er.html>

Extreme E:

<https://www.extreme-e.com/>

WIMNA:

<https://womeninmotorsportsna.com/network/>

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