

2024 Research Highlights

Advancing Gender Equity in Sport



This document was prepared by:
Dr. Francine Darroch & Sydney Smith

The Race Towards Equity and Accessibility for Pregnant and Parenting Runners

PROJECT GOAL: Contribute to addressing issues of equitable access to recreational races/running events for pregnant and parenting runners.

This project is led by Sydney Smith, Dr. Francine Darroch, and Janina Winnicki in partnership with Alysia Montaño and &Mother; with support from Dr. Audrey Giles and Talia Ritondo

◆ Mass participation running event participants:

- **Interviews:** We have completed n=18 interviews (all participants are mothers and self-identify as women)
- **Online Survey:** We have collected survey data from n=202 individuals (83.7% pregnant/parenting; 16.3% not parents)
 - We are planning to keep the survey live until January 15, 2025
 - Our aim is to reach a wider audience of non-parenting folks

◆ Race directors/organizers:

- We have received Ethics Clearance to also conduct interviews with race directors/organizers - we will begin these interviews in January 2025

Breaking Records, Not Budgets: Taking on the Motherhood Penalty in Women's Sports

PROJECT GOAL: Quantify the impact of the motherhood penalty and maternal wall in how and when women leave professional sports because of real or perceived limitations of career and motherhood.

This project is led by Dr. Francine Darroch, Sydney Smith, in partnership with Alysia Montaño and &Mother; with support from Molly Huddle, Tomoko Mcgaughey, and Janina Winnicki

- We have finalized the development of our online survey
- We have successfully conducted an internal pilot of the survey with our *Health & Wellness Equity Research Group* team
- We are in the midst of the next pilot stage with the &Mother team
- The survey is set to launch on January 29, 2025, targeting elite and professional female athletes



Safe Sport Training Module: Considering Pregnant and Mothering Athletes

PROJECT GOAL: Create a framework to outline content for a safe sport training module focused on understanding and supporting the rights and needs of pregnant and mothering athletes. This document is designed for coaches, athletes, trainers, staff, and all other members of professional sport organizations.

This project is led by Talia Ritondo and Dr. Francine Darroch; with support from Alysia Montaño and &Mother, Sydney Smith, Dr. Audrey Giles, and Janina Winnicki

- We have completed the final version of this training module, covering a wide range of important topics including:
 - improving accommodations, policies, and supports for pregnant and parenting athletes
 - planning for pregnancy and handling disclosures
 - training during and after pregnancy
 - navigating postpartum challenges like identity shifts, childcare, and travel
 - the importance of creating supportive and safe sport environments for pregnant and parenting athletes, including consideration of topics such as emotional and physical misconduct as well as harassment
- Our goal for 2025 is to engage key stakeholders across the sport industry to implement this training, ensuring the content is integrated into existing Safe Sport Training Modules
- This initiative aims to prioritize and address the unique needs of pregnant and parenting athletes within the safe sport context



Knowledge Mobilization: Key Deliverables

- **BLOG ARTICLE: *Fast as a Mother: Elite Runners' Training During Pregnancy and Postpartum***
- Published on the Sport Information Resource Centre (SIRC) website and profiled in the November Canadian Sport Daily
 - 🔗 **Article:** <https://sirc.ca/blog/fast-as-a-mother-elite-runners-training-during-pregnancy-and-postpartum/>
 - *This project was led by Dr. Francine Darroch & Sydney Smith*
- **ANIMATION PROJECT: *Gender Equity in Elite Athletics***
- **VISUAL NARRATIVE: *Pregnancy, Motherhood, and Elite Athletics: A Timeline***
- These visual pieces illustrate the progression of how considerations for pregnant and postpartum bodies have become increasingly acknowledged within elite athletics as well as key calls to action for continued change
 - 🔗 **Animation:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfY9k4wWemg>
 - 🔗 **Timeline:** <https://carleton.ca/healthequity/resources-3/>
 - *These projects were led by Sydney Smith, Dr. Francine Darroch, and Dr. Audrey Giles, in partnership with Alysia Montaño and &Mother*

- **RESOURCE FOR RACE PARTICIPANTS: *World Athletics Label Road Races Charts***

- The *6 Majors Chart* and the *Label Road Races Chart* are meant to inform potential and registered race participants about provisions and policies concerning pregnant and parenting athletes
- These charts provide an overview of deferral, bib transfer, refund, insurance, and stroller policies and on-site support services available to pregnant and parenting racers and their families before and during race day

🔗 **Charts:** <https://carleton.ca/healthequity/resources-3/>

This project was led by Dr. Francine Darroch; with support from Emily Spencer, Talia Ritondo, Janina Winnicki, Alysia Montaña and &Mother, and Sydney Smith

- **POLICY ANALYSIS: *Elite Running, Pregnancy, and Parenthood: An Intersectional Policy Analysis of World Athletics' Gold, Platinum, and Major Label Road Races***

- Building on the *6 Majors Chart* and the *Label Road Races Chart* resources we created (linked above), we developed this manuscript and submitted it to the *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*
- In this paper, we used an intersectionality-based policy analysis to look at 52 World Athletics Gold, Platinum, and Major Label races to examine the extent to which the needs of pregnant and parenting athletes are considered within World Athletics' road race policies

This project was led by Talia Ritondo, Dr. Francine Darroch, and Dr. Audrey Giles

Looking ahead to 2025 ✨

Our team has an exciting year ahead in 2025! Alongside the key next steps for the projects outlined above, we are also looking forward to several other initiatives in the New Year, including:

🌟 **Two mixed methods manuscripts currently in the works:**

1) Examining maternal and fetal outcomes among 42 elite middle- and long-distance runners (over 50% of whom competed at the World Championships or Olympics)

- Using retrospective self-report questionnaires and 25 semi-structured interviews, this study explores behaviours and experiences before, during, and after pregnancy, including delivery and postpartum outcomes

This project is led by Dr. Francine Darroch; with support from Dr. Amy Schneeberg, Sydney Smith, Dr. Audrey Giles, et al.

2) Building upon our project *The Race Towards Equity and Accessibility for Pregnant and Parenting Runners*

- This study uses a mixed methods approach with survey and semi-structured interview data to look at barriers and benefits to race and physical activity participation among pregnant and parenting runners, as well as participant-driven recommendations for improving race policies and practices to enhance accessibility and support

🌟 *Tracking Internet Trolls and Mental Health Tolls: Professional Track Athletes' Perspectives on Online Bullying* - A qualitative study exploring elite athletes' mental health coping strategies for managing the (often negative) impacts of being in the public eye, highlighting the need for greater protections and formal training to help athletes navigate these challenges

This project is led by Dr. Francine Darroch, Dr. Audrey Giles, Sydney Smith, and Talia Ritondo

🌟 *At the Crossroads of Elite Athlete and Dad: Male Athletes' Experiences Navigating Parenthood* - Another upcoming blog article to soon be published by SIRC will highlight some of the key findings from some of our recent work where we interviewed elite/international and world-class male athletes who are fathers (the full article from this work can be found in *The Journal of Men's Studies*)

🔗 **Published Academic Article:** <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10803200/>

This project is led by Sydney Smith, Dr. Francine Darroch, and Dr. Audrey Giles

🌟 As we look ahead to the new year, we're excited to put many other moving parts into motion, all with the shared goal of advancing gender equity in sport and creating lasting, meaningful change. We invite you to please follow along in this journey!



@heresearchgroup
@andmother_org

Please also feel free to reach out to our research team by email



research@andmother.org