

# Sexual violence in a sports environment. What are we talking about?



## Sexual violence

Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, committed or attempted by a person without it being freely consented to, or against someone who is unable or refuses to consent. The term sexual violence includes sexual assault, sexual abuse and sexual harassment.

### Examples of sexual violence in a sports or leisure-related environment:

- Touching any intimate part of a participant or a person involved in the field.
- Forcing a participant or a person involved in the field to perform sexual acts in exchange for favours, privileges, or under the manipulation of a peer, to have a verbal or written conversation of a sexual nature.
- Making offensive sexual jokes, gesturing suggestive, exposing his private parts;
- Exposing a participant or a person involved in the field to sexual images.

## Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is a more subtle form of sexual violence. It is conduct of a sexual nature that is abusive, hurtful and unwanted and which, for the person who is subject to such behaviour, leads to direct consequences in terms of maintaining or improving their living conditions and/or creates an environment of bullying, humiliation or hostility. These behaviours are just as unacceptable from a coach as any other member of the sports community. Nobody has to accept such behaviour.

### Examples of behaviour that can be related to sexual harassment:

- Any form of undesired attention or advance of a sexual nature, such as: being whistled at, any suggestive or vulgar behaviour, persistent solicitation, looks, kisses or sexual touching, sexist insults, obscene language, sexually offensive jokes or images of a sexual nature through any means, technological or otherwise.

## Sexual assault

Gesture of a sexual nature, with or without physical contact, committed by an individual without the consent of the person concerned or in certain cases, particularly children, through emotional manipulation or blackmail. This act aims to subject another person to an abuser's desires through abuse of power, by using strength or coercion or by implicit or explicit threat.

## Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is when one person makes gestures or acts of a sexual nature towards another person, with or without physical contact. Any unsolicited sexual harassment or conduct of a sexual nature is considered sexual abuse.

### Examples of sexual abuse with physical contact:

- Inciting the athlete to engage in sexual touching or be subject to sexual touching.
- Offering to trade favours or privileges in return for sexual favours.
- Kissing an athlete on the mouth or any other part of the athlete's body.
- Having a sexual relationship with the athlete (oral, vaginal or anal).
- Forcing the athlete to have sexual relations (rape).

### Examples of sexual abuse without physical contact:

- Exposing one's genitals in front of the athlete.
- Asking the athlete to get undressed.
- Asking the athlete to caress themselves or masturbate.
- Showing sexually explicit images or movies.
- Calling, texting, sexting or sending emails of a sexual nature.
- Using the Internet to contact minors online and enticing them to their home for sexual, pornographic or criminal purposes.

## Sexual consent

If a person is in a position of power or a position of trust with a minor (under 18 years of age), this child's consent to any sexual activity is **never recognized by law**, regardless of the age difference.

28%

of athletes report having experienced sexual violence\*

# Psychological violence in a sports environment. What are we talking about?



## Psychological violence

When a person is subject to serious and continuous behaviours that result in harm to the person by a parent or another person involved in sports.

These behaviours lead to indifference, denigration, emotional rejection, excessive control, isolation, threats, exploitation, particularly if the child is forced to do a job or an activity disproportionate to their capacity.

### Examples of psychological violence in a sports or leisure-related environment:

- Shouting insults (e.g., swearing), saying mean things or making humiliating comments to the athlete.
- Striking or throwing objects out of anger and frustration (throwing a hockey stick, kicking a garbage can, etc.).
- Saying mean things or making humiliating comments to the participant.
- Threatening the participant with physical injury or pretending to throw something at them.
- Systematically ejecting or excluding the participant from a training session, rejecting or voluntarily ignoring the participant (e.g., systematically pretending the person is not present).
- Forcing the participant to train in spite of an injury known to the coaching team.
- Inflicting extra training sessions which lead to exhaustion or which make the participant sick.
- Asking the participant to perform moves or technical skills too difficult for their capacity.
- All other requests which could have negative impacts on a participant's health (e.g., using dangerous weight techniques, doping products, etc.).

## Psychological harassment

Any vexatious behaviour in the form of repeated and hostile or unwanted conduct, verbal comments, actions or gestures, that affects a person's dignity or psychological or physical integrity and that results in a harmful environment for the person. A single behaviour can also constitute harassment if it affects the person and produces a continuous harmful effect.

### Examples of behaviours that could be linked to psychological harassment:

- Bullying
- Isolation
- Cyberbullying
- Verbal violence
- Threats
- Denigration
- Offensive or defamatory statements about a person or their work

## Psychological abuse

Psychological abuse is assimilated with *psychological violence*. It is probably the most frequent form of violence in sport, but the least visible as well. Often, nobody in the victim's entourage even realizes the abuse is taking place.

Psychological abuse occurs when a person who takes care of another person (e.g., coach, therapist, volunteer, etc.) regularly ridicules, belittles them in front of others, intentionally excludes them or adopts other behaviours that shake the person's confidence and self-esteem.



59 to 62%

of athletes report having experienced psychological violence\*

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# Violence and neglect in a sports environment. What are we talking about?



## Violence

Violence means any intentional demonstration of verbal, written, physical, psychological or sexual force which causes distress and injures, hurts or oppresses a person by attacking their psychological or physical integrity or well-being, or their rights or property.

In a sports or leisure environment, this violence can be demonstrated by a person in authority (e.g., coach), peers (teammates, adversaries), parents, managers, team representatives, spectators, a member of the medical or support team (example: physical preparer, massage therapist, etc.). It can occur in locker rooms or showers, on the field during a game or a training session, at a coach's house or, during competitions, sports initiations or travel.

## Physical abuse

Physical abuse is when any person (it can be a person who takes care of you, such as: coach, therapist, volunteer, etc.) uses physical force to hurt or injure you or another young person. It can also involve the use of inappropriate training methods which risk leading to worsening an injury. This type of violence is often the most visible!

Physical abuse also occurs when a person is subject to physical violence, which may or may not leave marks, or is subject to unreasonable educational methods by one or both parents or any other person involved in the field.

### Examples of physical abuse in a sports environment:

- Pushing, shaking or striking an athlete.
- Forcing an athlete to train in spite of injuries known to the coach.
- Pinching the athlete.
- Inflicting extra training sessions which lead to exhaustion or which make the athlete sick.
- Asking the athlete to perform moves or technical skills too difficult for their capability, requests which could have negative impacts on the athlete's health.

## Negligence

1 When the child's parents or the person having custody of the child do not meet the child's basic needs, fail to give the child the care required for the child's physical or mental health, or fail to provide the child with the appropriate supervision or support.

2 When a person does not act with the same prudence that a reasonable person would under the same circumstances.

### Examples of neglect in a sports or leisure-related environment:

- Asking a participant or a person involved in the field, to drop out or take a break from school, to train rather than go to school outside of scheduled events (e.g., competitions, sports/study program).
- Knowing that a participant or a person involved in the field is not receiving the care required by the state of their mental and physical health and not intervening. Knowing that a young person is practicing self-destructive behaviours (eating disorder or using doping substances) and not intervening.
- Knowing that a participant or a person involved in sports is or has been the victim of physical, psychological or sexual violence and not doing anything to protect that person.



50% of athletes report having experienced bullying/physical violence\*

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# Bullying in a sports environment. What are we talking about?



## Bullying

Any repeated direct or indirect behaviour, comment, act or gesture, whether deliberate or not, including in cyberspace, which occurs in a context where there is a power imbalance between the persons concerned and which causes distress and injures, hurts, oppresses, intimidates or ostracizes.

Being the target of bullying is painful, scary and sometimes makes the person feel like isolating themselves. Being a witness to bullying can also cause a strong feeling of discomfort for the witness. Even though it is hard, there are ways to stop bullying, whether you are a witness or a victim. To begin, you have to be well-informed to recognize all the types of bullying. Bullying in sport can also come in the form of sexual violence, which means sexual harassment or sexual assault.



### Examples of bullying:

#### Physical

- Tripping someone.
- Intentionally jostling someone.
- Preventing someone from doing something.
- Striking someone.
- Perpetrating a sexual assault.
- Etc.

#### Verbal\*

- Insulting, ridiculing or mocking someone.
- Threatening someone.
- Making sexist, homophobic, transphobic or racist comments.
- Making discriminatory comments based on age or other personal characteristics.
- Making comments with a sexual connotation.
- Etc.

#### Social\*

- Spreading rumours or lies about someone.
- Denigrating, humiliating someone.
- Looking at someone with contempt or in a threatening manner.
- Isolating, excluding someone.
- Etc.

#### Material\*

- Destroying something.
- Vandalizing a place.
- Appropriating someone else's property (including, for example, intimate photos in cyberspace).
- Etc.

12 to 20%

of athletes report having experienced physical violence\*

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# Consequences of violence



## Violence

Violence leads to serious repercussions on the physical, psychological and social development of young people who experience it in their daily lives or in their sport. Here are some of the ways the possible consequences are demonstrated.

### Consequences of violence:

#### Sports consequences

- Decrease in sports performance.
- Abandonment of a sport.
- Trouble trusting people involved in sports.
- Change sports.
- Absence from training sessions.
- Lack of concentration.
- Compulsive training.

#### Physical and psychological consequences

- Increase in the number of injuries.
- Nutritional problems.
- Sleep disorders.
- Dependence (alcohol, drugs, gambling).
- Various physical symptoms (headache, weight fluctuation, gastro-intestinal problems, etc.).
- Self-harm.
- Psychological problems (anxiety, depression, etc.).
- Lower self-esteem.
- Poor self-image.

#### Social consequences

- Social development problems.
- Suicide.
- Tendency to spend less time with family members, friends, etc.
- Trouble developing social relationships.
- Reduced academic performance.
- Behavioural disturbances.
- School absenteeism.
- Trouble trusting others.

### Short, but also long-term, consequences:

13%

of active athletes and 20% of retired athletes who are experiencing or have experienced violence in their sports environment reported having suicidal thoughts

35%

of active athletes and 33% of retired athletes who are experiencing or have experienced violence in their sports environment reported having developed mental health issues

16%

of active athletes and 22% of retired athletes who are experiencing or have experienced violence in their sports environment reported having developed an eating disorder