



## Multisport Games Participation Survey Report

### PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

This survey was designed to better understand how people engage with the Arctic Winter Games, Canada Games, and North American Indigenous Games, and what shapes their experiences.

It explores why individuals choose to participate, what barriers they face, and how these experiences can help inform efforts to strengthen access and participation across communities. Ultimately, the findings provide insight to support more inclusive, accessible, and sustainable sport opportunities going forward.

After cleaning the data and removing incomplete responses, a total of 29 people completed the survey. This is a relatively small sample, so the findings should be viewed as directional rather than fully representative of everyone involved in the Games. The responses also mainly reflect the perspectives of people who are already highly involved—especially coaches, volunteers, and others in leadership roles.

While this means the results don't capture every experience, they do provide valuable, real-world insight into how people engage with multisport Games in the Northwest Territories.

### Looking Ahead

Overall, these findings offer a helpful starting point for understanding participation across the Games. They highlight key strengths to build on, as well as areas where access and support could be improved.

As next steps, there is an opportunity to build on this baseline by collecting more data over time and exploring additional ways to reach a broader range of participants. This would help strengthen understanding and better support future planning and decision-making across the sport system.



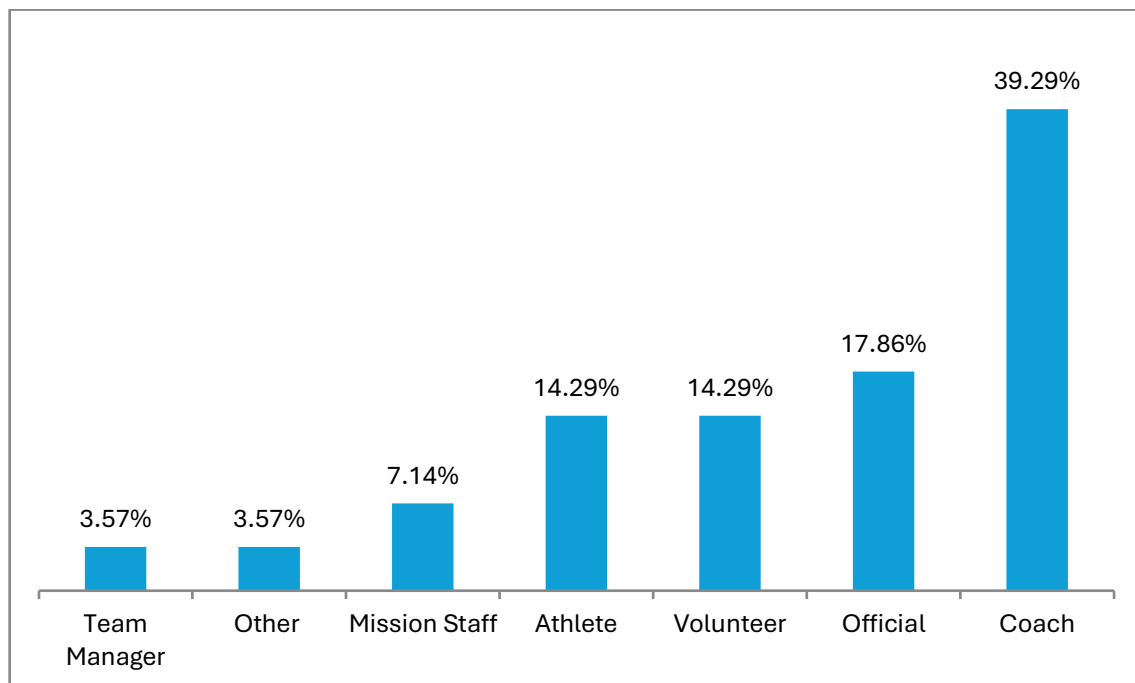
## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: WHAT WE LEARNED

### Who Participated in the Survey

- The sport system is driven by leaders (coaches, officials, volunteers) rather than just athletes
- Highlights reliance on community capacity and leadership
- Respondents reported being involved in multisport games in the following capacities:
  - Coach: **39%**
  - Official: **18%**
  - Volunteer: **14%**
  - Athlete: **14%**

The sample included 34% of respondents who identified as Indigenous, highlighting an opportunity to expand inclusive participation pathways. While gender representation was relatively balanced, there was limited representation among newcomers and individuals with disabilities.

**Figure 1. Participant Roles**



### Geographic Representation

- Participation is centralized, but reflects a broader northern network
- Remote communities likely face greater barriers to engagement
- Majority based in Yellowknife
- Additional participation from:

- Hay River
- Fort Smith
- Other communities

## **Participation across the Multisport Games**

The Arctic Winter Games appear to be the primary entry point and anchor event for northern sport participation. However, survey respondents reported participation across the three major multi-sport events:

- Arctic Winter Games (AWG) – highest participation
- Canada Games (CG) – moderate participation
- North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) – limited participation within sample

### *Arctic Winter Games (AWG)*

AWG shows the highest reach and retention among respondents, this suggests it could be more deeply embedded in regional sport pathways.

- 17 respondents reported participation in 2024 AWG
- 16 respondents reported past AWG participation

The most common sports participated in included:

- Badminton (3)
- Hockey (2)
- Volleyball (2)
- Table tennis (2)
- Basketball, Curling, Dene Games, Snowboarding, Speed skating (smaller numbers)

This participation reflects a mix of team and individual sports and also includes other culturally relevant events (e.g., Dene Games), highlighting the AWG supporting both mainstream sport development and cultural sport participation.

Participation was reported across multiple years: (2023, 2018, 2016, 2014, 2012 and earlier years including 2008–2010 and beyond). Among this sample, many individuals participate in many participated in multiple AWG's and across different roles over time (e.g., from athlete to coach to volunteer). One respondent noted this is motivated by, "Seeing others succeed and grow through sport"

Overall, the AWG seems to enable a long-term engagement and leadership transition and could act as a career pathway within northern sport given its role in supporting repeated participation and cultural and sport integration.

### *Canada Games*

- 7 respondents reported participation in 2025 Canada Games
- Additional historical participation reported across previous Games
- Lower participation than AWG, but still shows ongoing engagement

In 2025, respondents reported participating in:

- Hockey (2)
- Badminton (1)
- Snowboard (1)
- Table tennis (1)
- “Other” included basketball and indoor volleyball

Though smaller, this still demonstrates diverse sport representation and a strong participation in team sports and indoor competition sports. Historically, participants reported involvement in:

- 2023 PEI Winter Games
- 2022 Niagara Summer Games
- 2019 and earlier Games
- Older historical participation (e.g., 1980s–2000s)

Participants engaged as athletes, coaches, mission staff, and volunteers. Therefore, hinting towards evidence of long-term engagement across decades and continued involvement beyond athlete stage. Similarly, it reflects a high-performance pathway progression and continued involvement. Lower participation could be due to sample size or potentially accessibility of the Games.

### *North American Indigenous Games (NAIG)*

4 respondents reported participation in 2024 NAIG with limited historical responses (n=3: 2017 (Toronto), 2014 (Regina), 2008 (Cowichan)). However it is important to acknowledge this a very underrepresented sample and could be due to potentially lower access or participation rates among respondents. be do to the fact that findings are based on very small sample representation.

Among those who did report participation (in 2024);, roles reported included athlete, volunteer, and coach across primarily team -based sports:

- Soccer (2)
- Badminton (1)
- Basketball (1)
- Beach volleyball (1)

### *Cross-Games Participation*

- Some individuals participated in:
  - AWG + Canada Games
  - AWG + NAIG
  - Multiple combinations across their career

This indicates existence of a connected sport pathway system. Moreover, there was also some noted role progression across games for example from athlete to coach to official or other support roles over time. This highlights that sport participation supports leadership development and long-term retention in the sport system.

### **Why People Participate in the Games**

Among the respondents, the top motivations for participation in Multisport Games were:

- Fun and enjoyment: **79%**
- Staying active: **76%**
- Supporting community: **76%**
- Giving back: **72%**

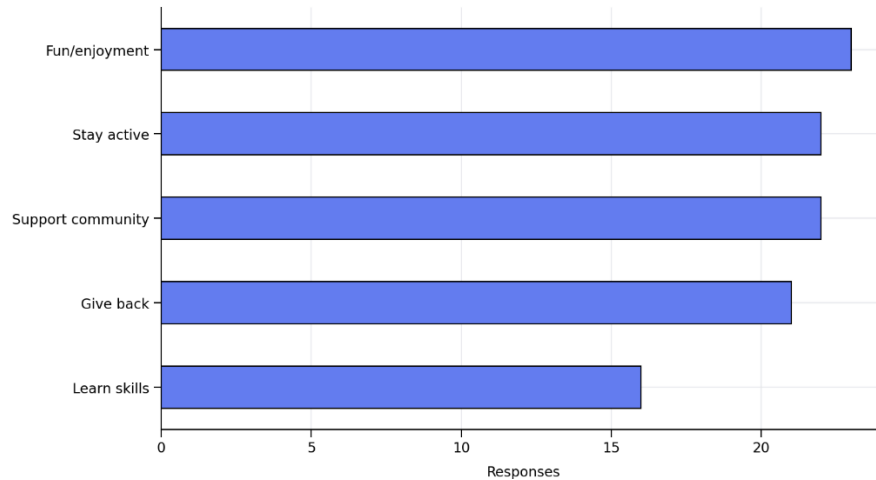
Given this, motivation appears to be intrinsic and community-driven, as oppose to purely competitive. For example, respondents further shared that their motivations for participating included:

*“Opportunity to mentor, coach, or support others”*

*“To give back to my community”*

For these individuals, the Games act as a social connector and platform for community-building.

### **Figure 2: Motivations**



The Multisport Games deliver social, developmental and leadership value amongst the respondents. For example, the top experiences reported by respondents included.

- Mentorship: **79%**
- Friendships: **66%**
- Personal growth & competition: **~62%**
- Contribution to sport development: **69%**

Participants also expressed strong pride in representing their region and culture, as well as valuing the broader community and cultural spirit of the Games:

*“The pride in representing my community or region”*

*“The cultural and community spirit of the Games”*

There is also strong intent to continue participating. More than 80% of respondents indicated they would definitely continue their involvement, with an additional 15% reporting they would probably continue. This suggests a high level of sustained interest and highlights an opportunity to support ongoing engagement through improved access and programming.

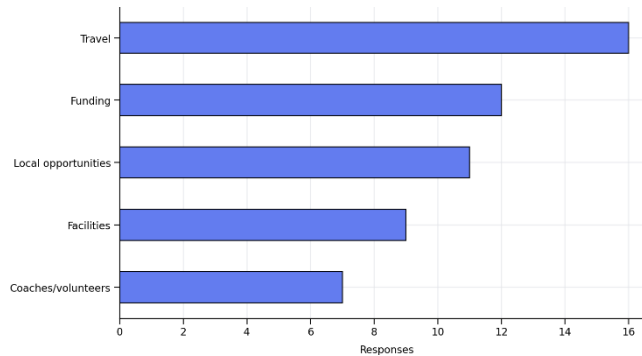
## **Barriers and Challenges to Participation**

More than half of the respondents reported travel and transportation as the biggest barrier to participating in the games (70%). Other barriers included:

- Financial cost: **52%**
- Limited local opportunities: **48%**
- Facilities/equipment: **39%**

Interestingly, barriers appear to be structural, rather than motivation. Meaning, geography and funding are the primary limiting factors for long-term participation. This indicates system-level constraints, rather than a lack of interest among individuals: *“A lot of people are volunteering... but are not given the power to truly make change.”*

**Figure 3. Barriers to participation**



More specifically, almost half of the respondents reported insufficient local opportunities. This suggests there is unmet demand for local sport programming and further demonstrates that participation often depends on travel and access to the Games.

Respondents also reported other challenges in the sport environment itself. For example, common issues mentioned were parent behaviour, sport politics and inefficiencies, and volunteer frustration

*“Parents... 2% of parents are 98% of my problems as a volunteer coach.”*

*“Parents that are too competitive.”*

*“The politics”*

In fact, participant retention was reported to be influenced by the **culture and environment**. Volunteers who are critical to the delivery of the Games, were noted as often facing avoidable stressors.

## CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The findings above provide a helpful starting point for understanding participation across the Games. They highlight strong community engagement, while also pointing to opportunities to improve access and support.

Overall, the survey highlighted that:

- The Multisport Games are community-driven and centered on relationships, mentorship, and opportunities to give back.
- Travel and financial costs are the most significant barriers, creating inequities across communities and highlighting structural constraints to participation.
- There is a strong need for increased local opportunities, including expanded community-based programs, regional competitions, and year-round access to sport.
- Coaches and volunteers are the backbone of the Games; the system depends on their commitment and would benefit from greater support, empowerment, and recognition.
- Sport culture plays an important role in participant experiences and should be addressed (e.g., parent behaviour and governance issues) to foster positive and inclusive environments.
- There is a strong desire among participants to remain involved, indicating potential for growth if key barriers are reduced.

More broadly, the findings demonstrate that sport in the Northwest Territories is resilient, community-driven, and sustained by committed individuals. However, future growth depends on:

- Reducing travel and financial barriers
- Increasing local access and opportunities
- Strengthening support systems for coaches and volunteers

Despite the small sample size, respondents are highly motivated and committed. With improved access, stronger support systems, and more inclusive structures, there is significant potential to expand participation across the territory.

Building on this baseline over time—through broader and more consistent data—can help strengthen future planning and decision-making across the sport system.