

Gendered environmental pathways to sports injury: Insights from retired athletes in the UK high-performance context

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Women remain at elevated risk for some sports injuries, including ACL rupture and concussion. Research into gendered injury disparities has traditionally subscribed to a biomedical paradigm focused on the scale of the individual body as site of intervention. Informed by a health geography approach, this research applies a biosocial perspective to women's sports injuries that situates injury experiences and outcomes in the social, cultural, and material context of the sport environment. In doing so, we identify upstream modifiable social, cultural, and material contextual features as targets for intervening in women's injury burden. We employ a creative methodology combining semi-structured interviews, visually elicited storytelling, and poetic transcription, to actively centre women athletes' voices and communicate their experiences in modalities intended to stimulate system change and innovate on evidence delivery within the sport system. Drawing on interviews with 20 recently retired women athletes from 11 different Olympic and Commonwealth sports, our reflexive thematic analysis identified five gendered environmental challenges shaping women's injury experiences, risk, and outcomes: (1) Stereotypes trivialise injury, (2) Physiology is all or nothing, (3) The 'ideal' female athlete, (4) In/visible inequities, and (5) Uneven power dynamics. In this presentation, we share our online multimedia exhibition *More Than Medals* representing these findings, conceptualised as a creative intervention for turning insight into action within the sport system. We argue that intervening upstream in the socio-cultural conditions of sport is necessary to support effective injury prevention and reduce gendered inequities in sports injury.

Primary authors: COEN, Stephanie (University of Nottingham); Dr DOWNIE, Victoria (UK Sports Institute); FOLLETT, Lucy (UK Sports Institute); Dr MCCAIG, Steve (UK Sports Institute); Dr PARSONS, Joanne (University of Manitoba)

Presenter: COEN, Stephanie (University of Nottingham)

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