

## **The 'Inside Track' on women in motorsport - results published from major study into the reality of female participation**

- *Motorsport fans want significant improvement on gender equality and inclusion, and will reward the sport if it delivers*
- *Largest survey response rate ever from female fans, who have given candid views on women's involvement in the sport*
- *Report finds female drivers face additional barriers blocking their potential to reach the top and shocking lack of data on female participation*
- *More than Equal to focus on creating better talent spotting and driver development programmes & calls for sport to act collectively to make change*

Motorsport has an opportunity to capitalise on a clear call from its fanbase, especially its younger female fans, for greater inclusion and support of women and for improved opportunities for female drivers.

More than Equal has unveiled its extensive, expert-led research into female participation in motorsport – the most comprehensive analysis of the subject ever conducted, and one which outlines the barriers faced by female drivers who want to compete at the highest level.

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

The majority of the sport's fanbase is frustrated with progress on equality, diversity and inclusion, ranking motorsport as performing very poorly in this area, against a range of other sports.

Fans universally ranked motorsport as underperforming against every sport offered to them (21 in all), except for American Football.

It also found that efforts in this area by stakeholders, especially in two-wheeled series, were widely considered as poor, though there was recognition that many of those stakeholders - especially the FIA, F1 teams, the F1 Group and sponsors – were also pivotal to driving change.

The research found that the sport, specifically F1, has a growing female fanbase which 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.
- Driven by social media: they are 70% more likely than male fans to engage with digital platforms for content.

More than Equal, a global, independent, not-for-profit initiative, was launched with the mission to find and develop F1's first female world champion and the research commissioned aligns with its commitment to be evidence based.

The research comprised insight from:

- Nearly 13,000 respondents in 147 countries
- Over 70 in-depth executive interviews with motorsport leaders including female drivers
- A detailed analysis of global motorsport participation and success across genders and geographies
- A review of research exploring female participation in global sport
- The research was supported by partners including the Smedley Group, Hintsa, MPA Commercial and Motorsport.com

The report clearly shows that there are huge opportunities for the sport, with female fans strongly indicating that they will reward it and sponsors who do back female drivers.

- Nearly 60% of female fans said they would follow motorsport more keenly if there were more female drivers
- Over 50% said they'd be more likely to buy products from sponsors who backed women.

The findings also point out the challenges facing female drivers, identifying that the participation of women and girls in motorsport is depressingly low and needs to be greatly improved to have any chance of female representation at the elite level at F1.

- The results show a major **gender participation gap** where female drivers represent an average of about 10% of participation across all categories of competition. This is as high as 13% in karting but drops drastically to 7% in formula and GT racing.
- It also found a significant **gender performance gap**, showing that female drivers make up just 4% of the top talent rankings across all race series, highlighting that there are a range of barriers blocking their progress.

The research highlights that these barriers include:

- 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 and a negative perception about women's ability to drive fast or compete physically still exist within the sport – even though these are at odds with what most fans actually think.
- The absence of dedicated technical, physical, psychological and tactical training tailored specifically to female drivers is a significant issue.
- Significantly less track time compared with male drivers.
- A lack of female role models which is a blocker to participation growth.
- Women across motorsport 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.

The report also reminds that there is no evidence anywhere that women are not capable of driving at the pinnacle level. It sets out that Hints, who have worked with multiple F1 world champions, have reviewed male F1 benchmark data and found that all of these levels are achievable by female drivers.

More than Equal plans to use the insight to fuel the building of a new female driver talent spotting and development programme with Hints.

This programme aims to work with a cohort of young talent over the coming years, providing support in areas such as racing opportunities, technical and tactical coaching, physical and cognitive preparation, commercial opportunity and personal brand development.

**David Coulthard: Former F1 driver and More than Equal founder**

*“My passion for wanting to support female racers to the 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 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. 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 together to make sure that other talented girls, like my sister, don’t get left behind.”*

**Karen Webb-Moss, More than Equal Chair, added:**

*“From the outset we have been committed to being evidence based. In conducting this research, More than Equal asked tough questions and we’ve now got some answers which show the challenging reality for girls and women in motorsport.*

*“The report shows that fans want change and that female drivers deserve real opportunities, so, despite the negative opinions of the industry’s efforts around inclusion – the time is now for the sport to come together and address challenges that if tackled, would bring great rewards.”*

**ENDS**

**About More than Equal**

More than Equal is a global, independent, not-for-profit initiative aiming to find and develop F1’s first female world champion.

Thirteen-time Grand Prix winner David Coulthard and entrepreneur-philanthropist Karel Komarek founded the organisation, bringing on board Karen Webb Moss as Chair, Ali Donnelly as CEO and Kate Beavan as a strategic advisor.

It is seeking to deliver on its goal through four core areas of work.

- Commissioning and publishing research and data in areas which have not been explored in depth before, so we and the sport have an evidence base for taking decisions.
- Scouting globally for top female racing talent with a data-led approach

- Developing a world-class female driver development programme to help talented drivers receive the same support young male talent receive, but in a way that is tailored towards maximising female athletic performance.
- Connecting that top talent with backers and teams that can help them succeed.

**For more information or interviews with co-founder David Coulthard, Strategic Advisor and Board Member Kate Beavan and CEO Alison Donnelly, contact**

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