

CHALLENGES AND NEEDS OF FEMALE ATHLETES IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The research has been conducted to gather information on the challenges and needs of former and current South African female athletes across different sports, and to provide baseline information on which the South African Women and Sport Foundation (SAWASF) can use in development programmes to empower, mentor and provide support.

Surveys of female athletes across South Africa were undertaken and the findings are reported below. The survey tool comprised of a questionnaire sent to women that are active within the Sport Confederations in the nine (9) provinces of South Africa. A total of 199 questionnaires were returned and form the basis of the interpretation and findings provided herein. Gauteng Province had the most respondents at 84, followed by the Western Cape. The sport of Football had the most respondents at 26 followed by Rugby at 22, and Athletics (track and field) and Ring Ball at 13 each. The ages of the respondents ranged from 17 to 81.

The findings indicate most respondents had an athletics/sport career of over 5 years and with a significant number having participated at national and international levels. The challenges the respondents have faced are predominantly lack of sponsorships, and as such, they and their family had to support their sporting careers. Due to a lack of equipment, not able to take leave of absence from work or having to take unpaid leave to participate at higher levels, forced some of the female participants to stop participating. Sport bursaries, for those who were in tertiary institutions were also not available. It is evident that these women find it difficult to pursue sport as a career. The research reflects very little support for women athletes in terms of sponsorships, support from sport governing bodies as well as by themselves or their families.