

Methods Supplement: A New Narrative about Elite Child Athletes

Reframing Wellbeing and Abuse Prevention

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**FRAME
WORKS**

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Appendix A: Research Methods and Samples

To arrive at the recommendations in this brief, we applied Strategic Frame Analysis®—an approach to communications research and practice that yields strategies for shifting the discourse around social issues. This approach has been shown to increase understanding of, and engagement in, conversations about scientific and social issues.

This work builds on earlier research we conducted that involved interviews with members of the public and experts and advocates working with elite child athletes and in the field of child athlete abuse prevention, which are described in a separate brief and methods appendix.

Below, we describe the research we conducted in which we designed and tested frames to address the challenges and leverage the opportunities in public thinking about abuse prevention and wellbeing of elite child athletes. These frames were tested in 2021–2022 and refined using three methods: on-the-screen (OTS) interviews; a pilot survey; survey experiments with a nationally representative sample; and peer discourse sessions (PDS), a type of focus group. In total, 7,083 people from across the United States were included in this research.

Frame Design

To identify effective ways of communicating about abuse prevention and wellbeing of elite child athletes, FrameWorks researchers developed a set of tasks the frames needed to address and then brainstormed potential reframing strategies that might accomplish one or more of these tasks (for example, metaphors, values, and issue frames). After generating a list of candidate framing ideas to test, researchers solicited feedback on these ideas from project partners to ensure the frames were both apt and potentially usable for those working with elite child athletes and in the field of child athlete abuse prevention. Based on this feedback, researchers refined a set of frames and brought them into empirical testing.

On-the-Screen Interviews

Frame design was followed by a set of OTS interviews conducted to explore potential framing tools with members of the public. FrameWorks researchers conducted 35 brief one-on-one interviews over Zoom in May 2021. A diverse sample of participants was recruited in terms of age, gender, race/ethnicity, household income, education level, geographical location, and political party identification.

We first asked participants to respond to open-ended questions about elite child athlete wellbeing and abuse prevention. Participants were then presented with different issue frames and a metaphor and asked questions that explored the frames' abilities to open new ways of thinking about elite child athlete wellbeing and abuse prevention and overcome fatalism about the issue. The candidate metaphors and issue frames we tested are itemized in Appendix B.

Pilot Survey

Prior to beginning experimental work, we conducted a pilot survey to better understand how the general public conceptualizes terms that are either commonly used, or could be used, to describe high-level child athletes. This was particularly important, given that the field will sometimes use “elite child athletes” and “competitive child athletes.”

The pilot survey was designed to test eight different terms that might be used to describe high-level child athletes:

- Child Athlete
- Competitive Child Athlete
- Elite Child Athlete
- Top Child Athlete
- Youth Athlete
- Competitive Youth Athlete
- Elite Youth Athlete
- Top Youth Athlete

Participants were recruited via MTurk, and the survey was hosted through the SurveyMonkey platform. Participant demographic data was not collected, and participants were paid 50 cents for their time. Participants were randomly assigned to see only one of the eight terms listed above across their survey questions. There were approximately 62 participants per condition ($N = 502$).

A total of nine survey questions assessed, based on the term participants saw, how old they thought these athletes might be, at what level they typically compete, and their concerns for issues in high-level child/youth athletics, among other outcomes. The survey began with three open-ended questions, followed by a series of Likert-type questions. All survey items can be found in Appendix C.

After data collection was completed, a series of ANOVAs (analysis of variance) and chi-square analyses were conducted. Pairwise comparisons were conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in outcomes by term. A Bonferroni corrected threshold of $p < .05$ was used to determine statistical significance.

Results indicated that unqualified terms (for example, “youth athlete” or “child athlete”) did not make people think of athletes who compete at high levels or train for their sport every day. Terms including the words “top” and “elite” evoked thoughts of high-level athletes who are unique, engage in more rigorous training, and compete at higher levels than other athletes. More specifically, participants who saw the “top” and “elite” *child* terms responded that participation in athletics at such a level was less common than participants who saw other terms. Overall, the “top child athlete” and “elite child athlete” terms were best understood by participants to indicate children who compete in athletics at a very high level. Given that the field already sometimes uses the term “elite child athlete,” we decided to use this term moving forward with the research.

Experimental Surveys

After analyzing how the candidate frames performed in OTS interviews, FrameWorks researchers refined the frames to bring forward for testing in the survey experiment. Two online experimental surveys involving a total sample of 6,510 adults in the United States (Wave 1: $N = 2,246$; Wave 2: $N = 4,264$) were conducted between February and August 2022 to test the effectiveness of frames on shifting public understanding, attitudes, and support for programs and policies to prevent abuse and promote the wellbeing of elite child athletes. Target quotas were set according to national benchmarks for age, sex, race/ethnicity, household income, education level, and political party affiliation. See Table 1 for more information about the sample composition for each experiment. Data were not weighted.

Table 1*

Variable Level	Wave 1 %	Wave 2 %
Gender		
Male	52	46
Female	47	53
Nonbinary/Other	1	1
Age		
Under 18	0	0
18-29	18	15
30-44	27	29
45-59	27	26
60+	28	30
Income		
0-24,999	23	22
25,000-49,999	25	26
50,000-99,999	31	31
100,000-149,999	13	13
150,000 or more	8	8
Education		
Less than high school diploma	10	10
High school diploma	27	24
Some college or associate's degree	31	31
Bachelor's degree	20	22
Graduate degree	12	13
Race/Ethnicity		
Caucasian/White (non-Hispanic/Latino)	62	63
Hispanic or Latino	16	18
Black/African American	11	10
Asian	4	3
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	<1
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	< 1	<1
Other/Biracial or multiracial	6	6
Political Party		
Democrat	41	<42
Republican	31	30
Independent	24	24
Other	4	5

*Percentages listed may equal greater than 100% due to rounding.

Party Leaning		
Closer to the Republican Party	27	36
Closer to the Democratic Party	25	49
Neither	48	15
Know someone or participated in elite child athletics?		
Yes	21	23
No	78	76
Prefer not to answer	1	1
You or someone you know was abused while participating in elite child athletics?		
Yes	5	27
No	16	70
Prefer not to answer	< 1	3
Not Asked/Not Applicable	79	77
Currently work in profession interacting with elite child athletics?		
Yes	5	6
No	95	93
Prefer not to answer	1	1
Currently work in profession interacting with current or former abused elite child athletes?		
Yes	4	5
No	95	94
Prefer not to answer	1	1

Participant recruitment and survey hosting was completed by Dynata. Participants were recruited from some combination of the following sources: proprietary loyalty panels, open invitation, or integrated channels that recruit from partnerships with external sources such as publishers or social networks. All participants opted in to complete the survey. Participants with Dynata earn points for completing surveys, which they can then exchange for various rewards. These rewards vary by panel and recruitment method but may include things such as airline miles or gift cards.

Participants with Dynata are required to verify their identity at multiple points during survey enrollment and routing. Dynata uses various methods, such as third-party validation and digital fingerprinting, to detect fraud, identify bots, and monitor and detect suspicious activity from participants.

Participants were not allowed to complete the survey more than once. Participants who did not fully complete the survey were removed from the data and were not paid. In addition, participant data was removed if they completed the survey within one-third of the median survey time, if they straightlined, or provided nonsensical responses to the open-ended questions included in the survey.

After providing consent to participate, participants were randomly assigned to one of several experimental conditions. All frame treatments focused on improving the wellbeing of elite child athletes and preventing abuse in elite child athletics. All tested frames can be found in Appendix B.

Participants assigned to an experimental condition were asked to read a short message, which they were required to view for at least 30 seconds, before answering a series of survey questions. These questions were designed to measure specific outcomes of interest. Each battery consisted of multiple questions and were primarily measured using Likert-type items with five- or seven-point response scales. Open-ended questions requiring free-text answers were also included in the survey but were not analyzed.

Prior to any inferential analysis, we conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to determine the psychometric qualities of our outcome scales. Items with rotated factor loadings below $|.50|$ were dropped from each battery. Once finalized, Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to assess internal consistency among the items in each battery. Given that there are various heuristics for determining acceptable internal consistency, we determined that batteries with internal consistency scores approaching $.60$ or above would be considered acceptable. After assessing internal consistency, items within each battery were combined into composite scores that indicated participants' average ratings of the attitudes or stereotypes measured by each battery. Select survey items from the experiments can be found in Appendix C.

After conducting the preliminary analyses described above, we used multiple regression analysis to determine whether there were significant differences on the outcomes between each of the experimental frame conditions and the control condition. A threshold of $p < .05$ was used to determine whether the experimental frame conditions had any significant effects. Significant differences were understood as evidence that a term influenced a particular outcome (for example, collective efficacy).

As with all research, it is important to remember that results are based on a sample of the population, not the entire population. As such, all results are subject to margins of error.

Peer Discourse Sessions

After an analysis of both waves of the survey experiment was conducted, FrameWorks researchers retested and refined frames that tested well in the experiment in PDS with 36 participants (six sessions with six participants each). These sessions were conducted virtually over Zoom in September 2022. A diverse sample of participants was recruited from across the United States in terms of age, gender, race/ethnicity, household income, education level, geographical location, and political party identification.

These two-hour-long sessions included a variety of discussion prompts and activities designed to evaluate how the frames were taken up in social context and their usability during conversations with peers. We tested values and narratives (stories). The frames we tested in PDS are itemized in Appendix B.

Appendix B: Tested Framing Strategies

OTS

Issue Frames

- **Child development:** We can't talk about competitive child athletics without talking about child development.
- **Safety:** We can't talk about competitive child athletics without talking about keeping children safe.
- **Children's rights:** We can't talk about competitive child athletics without talking about children's rights.
- **Health:** We can't talk about competitive child athletics without talking about health.
- **Diversity & inclusion:** We can't talk about competitive child athletics without talking about diversity and inclusion.
- **Institutional reform:** We can't talk about competitive child athletics without talking about institutional reform.

Metaphor

Healthy connections with coaches, trainers, and sports institutions are like roots supporting competitive child athletes' wellbeing and development. Just like roots support and nourish trees as they develop and grow, healthy connections with responsible adults nourish child athletes' development by giving them guidance and opportunities to develop mastery, joy, and personal growth in their sport and in their lives. Yet right now, the roots child athletes rely on often aren't as deep and connected as they should be because winning competitions is prioritized over thriving in all aspects of life. We need to cultivate and foster stronger roots in competitive child athletes' lives, to nurture and support their ability to do well and accomplish their goals in their sport and in their lives.

Survey Experiment

Wave 1

Values

Moral Responsibility (n = 225):

We Have a Moral Responsibility to Protect Elite Child Athletes from Harm

As a society, we have a moral responsibility to make sure that all children do well and are protected from harm. But right now, elite child athletes—children under 18 who engage in competitive sports at a very high level—are at risk for physical injury, psychological burnout, and emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, and that’s wrong. Too often, coaches and sports institutions are only concerned about winning, and they willingly put children at risk of physical and mental harm to boost their own financial gains. And because sports institutions regularly cover up abuse to protect their reputations, mistreatment of athletes is common and goes unchecked. By putting elite child athletes in harm’s way and failing to hold sports institutions accountable for their wellbeing, we fail in our most basic responsibilities to protect children.

This is why we need to pass the [*Responsibility to Elite Child Athletes Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes’ wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have “safeguarding officers” who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions. The bill will also impose harsher fines for sports institutions and governing bodies—like the US Olympic & Paralympic Committee—that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse. In addition, the bill will require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children’s Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and the implementation of easy and simple reporting policies.

As a society, we have a moral responsibility to make sure all children do well and protect them from harm. But right now, we aren’t holding sports institutions accountable for protecting elite child athletes. To live up to our responsibility and do the right thing, we must pass the Responsibility to Elite Child Athletes Act to ensure that we are taking care of elite child athletes.

Prevention (n = 225):

We Can Prevent Abuse in Elite Child Athletics

As a society, we believe in preventing problems before they happen. But right now, elite child athletes—children under 18 who engage in competitive sports at a very high level—are at risk for physical injury, psychological burnout, and emotional, physical, or sexual abuse—and we’re not doing enough to prevent all of this from happening. Too often, coaches and sports institutions are

only concerned about winning, and they willingly put children at risk of physical and mental harm to boost their own financial gains. And because sports institutions regularly cover up abuse to protect their reputations, mistreatment of athletes is common and goes unchecked. We need to be doing more to promote the wellbeing of elite child athletes and prevent harm before it occurs.

This is why we need to pass the [*Elite Child Athlete Abuse Prevention Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes' wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have "safeguarding officers" who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions. The bill will also impose harsher fines for sports institutions and governing bodies—like the US Olympic & Paralympic Committee—that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse. In addition, the bill will require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and the implementation of easy and simple reporting policies.

As a society, we believe in preventing problems before they happen. But right now, we aren't holding sports institutions accountable for preventing harm from coming to their elite child athletes. To promote wellbeing and prevent harm in elite child athletics, we must pass the Elite Child Athlete Abuse Prevention Act.

Child Potential (n = 225)

Elite Child Athletes Should Be Supported to Reach Their Full Potential

As a society, we believe that all children should be nourished to reach their full potential. But right now, elite child athletes—children under 18 who engage in competitive sports at a very high level—are at risk for physical injury, psychological burnout, and emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, which means that they can't thrive. Too often, coaches and sports institutions are only concerned about winning, and they willingly put children at risk of physical and mental harm to boost their own financial gains. And because sports institutions regularly cover up abuse to protect their reputations, mistreatment of athletes is common and goes unchecked. We need to be doing more to promote the wellbeing of elite child athletes so that they can develop their full potential.

This is why we need to pass the [*Thriving Elite Child Athlete Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes' wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have "safeguarding officers" who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions. The bill will also impose harsher fines for sports institutions and governing bodies—like the US Olympic & Paralympic Committee—that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse. In addition, the bill will require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to

remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and the implementation of easy and simple reporting policies.

As a society, we believe in supporting all children so that they can grow and flourish. But right now, we aren't holding sports institutions accountable for the role they must play in making sure that their elite child athletes thrive. To promote wellbeing and ensure that elite child athletes have what they need to reach their full potential, we must pass the Thriving Elite Child Athlete Act.

Common Sense (n = 225):

It Just Makes Sense To Prevent Abuse in Elite Child Athletics

As a society, we believe in common sense solutions to our problems. But right now, the way elite child athletics is set up doesn't make any sense because it puts elite child athletes—children under 18 who engage in competitive sports at a very high level—at risk for problems like physical injury, psychological burnout, and emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. Too often, coaches and sports institutions are only concerned about winning, and they willingly put children at risk of physical and mental harm to boost their own financial gains. And because sports institutions regularly cover up abuse to protect their reputations, mistreatment of athletes is common and goes unchecked. It doesn't make sense that we allow this to happen. We need practical solutions in place that promote the wellbeing of elite child athletes instead of putting them in harm's way.

This is why we need to pass the [*Common Sense for Elite Child Athletes Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes' wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have "safeguarding officers" who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions. The bill will also impose harsher fines for sports institutions and governing bodies—like the US Olympic & Paralympic Committee—that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse. In addition, the bill will require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and the implementation of easy and simple reporting policies.

As a society, we believe in common sense and good judgment. But right now, we aren't holding sports institutions accountable for the harm they cause to elite child athletes, which is totally unreasonable. Passing the Common Sense for Elite Child Athletes Act is a practical solution to ensure that we do more to promote wellbeing and prevent harm in elite child athletics.

Issue Frames

Child Development (n = 225):

Promoting Wellbeing in Elite Child Athletics Is Good for Child Development

Elite child athletics should be about child development. Childhood and adolescence are crucial periods for brain and physical development, which are heavily influenced by environments outside of the home. Elite child athletes—children under 18 who engage in competitive sports at a very high level—need the right supports so that they experience healthy development, just as all children do. But right now, elite child athletes are at risk for experiences that harm their development, including physical injury, psychological burnout, and emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. Too often, coaches and sports institutions are only concerned about winning, and they willingly put children at risk of physical and mental harm to boost their own financial gains. And because sports institutions regularly cover up abuse to protect their reputations, mistreatment of athletes is common and goes unchecked. We need to hold sports institutions accountable and make sure that elite child athletes have experiences that are positive for their development as they train, practice, and compete.

This is why we need to pass the [*Child Development and Elite Athletics Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes' wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have "safeguarding officers" who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions. The bill will also impose harsher fines for sports institutions and governing bodies—like the US Olympic & Paralympic Committee—that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse. In addition, the bill will require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and the implementation of easy and simple reporting policies.

Like all children, elite child athletes need the right supports so that they can experience healthy development. Sports institutions should be providing these supports, but right now, they aren't doing enough, and that's bad for child development. We must pass the Child Development and Elite Athletics Act to make sure that we are supporting healthy development for elite child athletes.

Safety (n = 225):

Elite Child Athletes Should Feel Safe in Their Sports

Elite child athletics should be about child safety. Children deserve to be safe with the adults in their lives, and elite child athletes—children under 18 who engage in competitive sports at a very high level—need the right safeguards to ensure their wellbeing, just as all children do. But right now, elite child athletes are not safe, and are put at risk for physical injury, psychological burnout, and emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. Too often, coaches and sports institutions are only concerned about winning, and they willingly put children at risk of physical and mental harm to boost their own

financial gains. And because sports institutions regularly cover up abuse to protect their reputations, mistreatment of athletes is common and goes unchecked. We need to hold sports institutions accountable and make sure that elite child athletes are safe from harm as they train, practice, and compete.

This is why we need to pass the [*Elite Child Athlete Safety Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes' wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have "safeguarding officers" who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions. The bill will also impose harsher fines for sports institutions and governing bodies—like the US Olympic & Paralympic Committee—that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse. In addition, the bill will require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and the implementation of easy and simple reporting policies.

Like all children, elite child athletes need environments that ensure their wellbeing and safety. Sports institutions should be providing this safety for their elite child athletes, but right now, they aren't doing enough, and it makes elite child athletics unsafe. We must pass the Elite Child Athlete Safety Act to make sure that sports institutions promote wellbeing and keep elite child athletes safe.

Health (n = 225):

Elite Child Athletics Should Support Children's Health

Elite child athletics should be about children's health. Children's mental and physical health is vitally important, and elite child athletes—children under 18 who engage in competitive sports at a very high level—need the right supports to ensure their health, just as all children do. But right now, elite child athletes are at risk for health concerns like physical injury, psychological burnout, and emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. Too often, coaches and sports institutions are only concerned about winning, and they willingly put children at risk of physical and mental harm to boost their own financial gains. And because sports institutions regularly cover up abuse to protect their reputations, mistreatment of athletes is common and goes unchecked. We need to hold sports institutions accountable and make sure that elite child athletes' physical and mental health is supported as they train, practice, and compete.

This is why we need to pass the [*Health for Elite Child Athletes Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes' wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have "safeguarding officers" who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions. The bill will also impose harsher fines for sports institutions and governing bodies—like the US Olympic & Paralympic Committee—that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse. In addition,

the bill will require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and the implementation of easy and simple reporting policies.

Like all children, elite child athletes need the right supports to promote good physical and mental health. Sports institutions should be prioritizing the health of their elite child athletes, but right now they aren't doing enough, and it's putting children's health at risk. We must pass the Health for Elite Child Athletes Act to make sure that sports institutions promote elite child athletes' physical and mental health.

Children's Rights (n = 225):

Abuse in Elite Child Athletics Is a Violation of Children's Rights

Elite child athletics should be about children's rights. Elite child athletes—children under 18 who engage in competitive sports at a very high level—have the right to be safe, healthy, and supported by the adults in their lives, just as all children do. But right now, the rights of elite child athletes are being violated because they are put at risk for physical injury, psychological burnout, and emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. Too often, coaches and sports institutions are only concerned about winning, and they willingly put children at risk of physical and mental harm to boost their own financial gains. And because sports institutions regularly cover up abuse to protect their reputations, mistreatment of athletes is common and goes unchecked. We need to hold sports institutions accountable by ensuring that they guarantee the rights of their elite child athletes as they train, practice, and compete.

This is why we need to fund the [*Rights for Elite Child Athletes Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes' wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have "safeguarding officers" who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions. The bill will also impose harsher fines for sports institutions and governing bodies—like the US Olympic & Paralympic Committee—that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse. In addition, the bill will require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and the implementation of easy and simple reporting policies.

Like all children, elite child athletes have the right to a healthy, happy childhood. Sports institutions should be protecting the rights of elite child athletes, but right now they aren't doing enough. Passing the Rights for Elite Child Athletes Act is one way for us to make sure that sports institutions uphold the rights of elite child athletes by preventing abuse and promoting their wellbeing.

Institutional Reform (n = 225):**It's Time for Institutional Reform in Elite Child Athletics**

Elite child athletics requires institutional reform. Organizations and institutions that work with children should always place children's needs and wellbeing first. But right now, sports institutions don't do this, and as a result, elite child athletes—children under 18 who engage in competitive sports at a very high level—are at risk for physical injury, psychological burnout, and emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. Too often, coaches and sports institutions are only concerned about winning, and they willingly put children at risk of physical and mental harm to boost their own financial gains. And because sports institutions regularly cover up abuse to protect their reputations, mistreatment of athletes is common and goes unchecked. We need to hold these sports institutions accountable and require that they reform their policies and practices to ensure the wellbeing of their elite child athletes as they train, practice, and compete.

This is why we need to pass the [*Reform of Elite Child Athletic Institutions Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes' wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have "safeguarding officers" who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions. The bill will also impose harsher fines for sports institutions and governing bodies—like the US Olympic & Paralympic Committee—that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse. In addition, the bill will require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and the implementation of easy and simple reporting policies.

Just as any organization that works with children should advance their best interests, sports institutions should prioritize the wellbeing of elite child athletes. But right now, sports institutions aren't doing this, and it's putting their child athletes at risk. We must pass the Reform of Elite Child Athletic Institutions Act to make sure that sports institutions are preventing abuse and putting the wellbeing of their elite child athletes above everything else.

Wave 2

Positive Valence Issues

Institutional Reform (+)

It's Time for Institutional Reform in Elite Child Athletics

Elite child athletics needs institutional reform. We need to hold sports institutions that work with elite child athletes accountable for ensuring that children's needs and wellbeing are placed above all else. Sports institutions must ensure that elite child athletes are physically and mentally well, safe with coaches and staff, and thriving in their sport. We need to hold sports institutions accountable for reforming their policies and practices, because when they put the wellbeing of their athletes above winning and financial gain, child athletes can thrive both within their sport and in their lives outside of practice and competitions.

This is why we need to pass the [*Reform of Elite Child Athletic Institutions Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes' wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have safeguarding officers who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions, and ensuring that sports institutions are safe environments for children. The bill will also require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and harsher fines for sports institutions that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse.

Sports institutions have a responsibility to prioritize the wellbeing of their elite child athletes. We must pass the Reform of Elite Child Athletic Institutions Act to make sure that sports institutions have rigorous policies and practices in place that keep child athletes safe from abuse and put the wellbeing of their elite child athletes above everything else.

Children's Rights (+)

Sports Institutions Must Protect Elite Child Athletes' Rights

Elite child athletics is an issue of children's rights. Elite child athletes have the right to be safe, healthy, and supported by the adults in their lives, just as all children do. Sports institutions must protect the rights of elite child athletes by ensuring that they are physically and mentally well, safe with coaches and staff, and thriving in their sport. We need to hold sports institutions accountable for upholding the rights of elite child athletes, because when they put the rights of their athletes above winning and financial gain, child athletes can thrive both within their sport and in their lives outside of practice and competitions.

This is why we need to fund the [*Rights for Elite Child Athletes Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes' wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have safeguarding officers who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions and ensuring that sports institutions are safe environments for children. The bill will also require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and harsher fines for sports institutions that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse.

Just as any organization that works with children should work to protect children's rights, sports institutions must ensure the rights of elite child athletes. We must pass the Rights for Elite Child Athletes Act to make sure that sports institutions have rigorous policies and practices in place that put the rights of their elite child athletes above everything else.

Issues

Exploitation

Sports Institutions Cannot Exploit Elite Child Athletes

Elite child athletics is an issue of exploitation. Elite child athletes should never be pressured to compete while injured or train to exhaustion. Yet right now, child athletes are often taken advantage of by their coaches and staff, who place winning, their reputation, and financial gains above the wellbeing of their athletes. We must hold sports institutions accountable for ensuring that child athletes are not pressured to train, compete, or win at the expense of their own health and wellbeing.

This is why we need to pass the [*Ending Exploitation in Elite Child Athletics Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes' wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have safeguarding officers who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions and ensuring that sports institutions are safe environments for children. The bill will also require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and harsher fines for sports institutions that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse.

Coaches and athletic staff should never be allowed to exploit their elite child athletes by pressuring them to overtrain or compete while injured. We must pass the Ending Exploitation in Elite Child Athletics Act to ensure that sports institutions place the wellbeing of their elite child athletes above winning and financial gains.

Positive Valence Values

Prevention (+)

We Can Prevent Abuse in Elite Child Athletics

As a society, we believe in preventing problems before they happen. Sports institutions can prevent harm by ensuring that their elite child athletes are physically and mentally well, feel safe with coaches and staff, and enjoy their sport. We need to hold sports institutions accountable for preventing harm to elite child athletes, because when they put the wellbeing of their athletes above winning and financial gain, child athletes can thrive both within their sport and in their lives outside of practice and competitions.

This is why we need to pass the [*Elite Child Athlete Abuse Prevention Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes' wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have safeguarding officers who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions, and ensuring that sports institutions are safe environments for children. The bill will also require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and harsher fines for sports institutions that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse.

To prevent harm before it happens, we need to make sure that sports institutions are prioritizing the wellbeing of their elite child athletes over winning and financial gain. We must pass the Elite Child Athlete Abuse Prevention Act to make sure that sports institutions have rigorous policies and practices in place that prevent harm and put the wellbeing of their elite child athletes above everything else.

Common Sense (+)

It Just Makes Sense to Prevent Abuse in Elite Child Athletics

As a society, we believe in common sense solutions to our problems. Sports institutions need practical solutions in place that ensure their elite child athletes are physically and mentally well, feel safe with coaches and staff, and enjoy their sport. We need to hold sports institutions accountable for using good judgment to protect their elite child athletes, because when they put the wellbeing of their athletes above winning and financial gain, child athletes can thrive both within their sport and in their lives outside of practice and competitions.

This is why we need to pass the [*Common Sense for Elite Child Athletes Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes' wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have safeguarding officers who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions, and ensuring that sports

institutions are safe environments for children. The bill will also require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and harsher fines for sports institutions that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse.

With common sense and a practical approach, we can make sure that sports institutions are using good judgment to ensure that the wellbeing of their elite child athletes takes priority over winning and financial gain. It just makes sense to pass the Common Sense for Elite Child Athletes Act because it will ensure that sports institutions have rigorous policies and practices in place that prevent harm and put the wellbeing of their elite child athletes above everything else.

Fairness

Elite Child Athletes Deserve to Be Treated Fairly

As a society, we believe that all children should be treated fairly. This means that sports institutions should treat their elite child athletes just as any child should be treated, by ensuring they are physically and mentally well, feel safe with coaches and staff, and enjoy their sport. We need to hold sports institutions accountable for the fair treatment of elite child athletes, because when they put the wellbeing of their athletes above winning and financial gain, child athletes can thrive—as we believe all children should—both within their sport and in their lives outside of practice and competitions.

This is why we need to pass the [*Fairness for Elite Child Athletes Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes' wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have safeguarding officers who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions, and ensuring that sports institutions are safe environments for children. The bill will also require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and harsher fines for sports institutions that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse.

Just like all children, elite child athletes deserve to be treated fairly. We must pass the Fairness for Elite Child Athletes Act to ensure that sports institutions prioritize the wellbeing of their elite child athletes and treat them with the same fairness that we expect for all children.

Prevalence/Types of Abuse:

Moral Responsibility

We Have a Moral Responsibility to Protect Elite Child Athletes from Harm

As a society, we have a moral responsibility to make sure that all children are protected from abuse. But right now, elite child athletes are at high risk for many kinds of abuse. We often hear about the high-profile cases of sexual abuse in elite child athletics, but emotional and physical abuse such as bullying, overtraining, and not properly attending to injury are also common. This abuse is often disguised as “tough love” and considered normal by many sports institutions. This is simply wrong. If we want to fulfill our moral responsibility to prevent child abuse, we need to hold sports institutions accountable for preventing all types of abuse from harming their child athletes.

This is why we need to pass the [Responsibility to Elite Child Athletes Act], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes’ wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have safeguarding officers who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions, and ensuring that sports institutions are safe environments for children. The bill will also require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children’s Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and harsher fines for sports institutions that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse.

As a society, we have a moral responsibility to make sure that all children are protected from all types of abuse. To live up to this obligation, we must hold sports institutions accountable for preventing all types of abuse and ensuring the wellbeing of their elite child athletes. Passing the Responsibility to Elite Child Athletes Act is the morally correct thing to do.

Child Development

Promoting Wellbeing in Elite Child Athletics Is Good for Child Development

Elite child athletics is an issue of child development. Childhood and adolescence are crucial periods for brain and physical development, but elite child athletes are at high risk for many kinds of abuse that can harm their development. We often hear about the high-profile cases of sexual abuse in elite child athletics, but emotional and physical abuse such as bullying, overtraining, and not properly attending to injury are also common. This abuse is often disguised as “tough love” and considered normal by many sports institutions, but it’s bad for child development. If we truly want to support elite child athletes’ development, we need to hold sports institutions accountable for preventing all types of abuse from harming the development of their athletes.

This is why we need to pass the [*Child Development in Elite Athletics Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes’ wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions

have safeguarding officers who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions, and ensuring that sports institutions are safe environments for children. The bill will also require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and harsher fines for sports institutions that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse.

To support the development of elite child athletes, we must hold sports institutions accountable for preventing all types of abuse and ensuring the healthy development of their elite child athletes. If we truly care about child development, we must pass the Child Development in Elite Athletics Act.

Health

Elite Child Athletics Must Support Children's Health

Elite child athletics is an issue of children's health. Good mental and physical health is vitally important for children, but elite child athletes are at a high risk for many kinds of abuse that can harm their health. We often hear about the high-profile cases of sexual abuse in elite child athletics, but emotional and physical abuse such as bullying, overtraining, and not properly attending to injury are also common. This abuse is often disguised as "tough love" and is considered normal by many sports institutions, but it's bad for child health. If we truly want to support elite child athletes' health, we need to hold sports institutions accountable for preventing all types of abuse from harming the health of their athletes.

This is why we need to pass the [*Health for Elite Child Athletes Act*], which is a federal bill that will spend \$500 million per year over the next 10 years to support elite child athletes' wellbeing and also prevent abuse in elite athletics. The cornerstone of the bill is requiring that sports institutions have safeguarding officers who are responsible for promoting the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within their sports institutions, and ensuring that sports institutions are safe environments for children. The bill will also require that sports institutions adopt a universal Children's Bill of Rights in Sports to remain eligible for state or federal grant funding. The Bill of Rights would require comprehensive background checks for all staff, improved health and safety standards for child athletes, and harsher fines for sports institutions that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse.

To support the health of elite child athletes, we must hold sports institutions accountable for preventing all types of abuse and ensuring the mental and physical health of their elite child athletes. If we truly care about child health, we must pass the Health for Elite Child Athletes Act.

Narratives:**Abuse Prevention (+)****Institutional Change Prevents Abuse in Elite Child Athletics**

Sports institutions need to prevent the abuse of their elite child athletes. When considering new policies or reforms, sports institutions should implement changes that more effectively prevent abuse from harming their athletes.

Christopher's story shows us how institutional reform can prevent abuse from harming elite child athletes. Last year, Christopher qualified to become a member of the National Youth Tennis League. He had heard that the head coach was "demanding" and "tough." The coach was known to yell often and call players names when they didn't perform well, and although his players often won their matches, lots of them also ended up with injuries. That same year, the National Youth Tennis League hired a safeguarding officer, whose job it was to prevent player abuse. The safeguarding officer quickly established mandatory athlete check-ins and also began to periodically observe training sessions. The officer quickly realized that the head coach was engaging in abusive behavior towards his athletes. Just a few weeks into the season, a new head coach was appointed.

Because the National Youth Tennis League hired a safeguarding officer, Christopher wasn't subjected to emotional or physical abuse from his coach. With good coaches and a safeguarding officer who was actively focused on his safety and wellbeing, Christopher had a great first season, enjoys training, and continues to grow and excel as a tennis player.

Mental Health & Wellbeing (+)**Institutional Change Promotes Health and Wellbeing in Elite Child Athletics**

Sports institutions need to prioritize the mental health and wellbeing of their elite child athletes. When considering new policies or reforms, sports institutions should implement changes that put the wellbeing of their athletes above all else.

Christopher's story shows us how institutional reform can promote good mental health and wellbeing for elite child athletes. Last year, Christopher qualified to become a member of the National Youth Tennis League. His training schedule was intense: he had very few days off and his weekends were full of matches or practices. That same year, the National Youth Tennis League hired a safeguarding officer, whose job it was to ensure player wellbeing. As part of a newly established routine check-in with the safeguarding officer, Christopher shared that he was feeling burned out, his grades were slipping, and he felt like his friendships were suffering. The safeguarding officer worked with Christopher and his coach to adjust his training schedule so that Christopher had more time to rest, focus on his schoolwork, and spend time with his friends.

Because the National Youth Tennis League hired a safeguarding officer, Christopher had the opportunity to share his concerns before they turned into major problems. With good coaches and a safeguarding officer who was actively focused on his wellbeing, Christopher had a great first season, enjoys training, and continues to grow and excel as a tennis player.

Abuse Prevention (-)

Institutions Are Failing to Prevent Abuse in Elite Child Athletics

Sports institutions need to prevent the abuse of their *elite child athletes*. When considering new policies or reforms, sports institutions should implement changes that more effectively prevent abuse from harming their athletes.

Christopher's story illustrates how common forms of abuse can harm elite child athletes. Last year, Christopher qualified to become a member of the National Youth Tennis League. He had heard that the head coach was "demanding" and "tough." The coach was known to yell often and call players names when they didn't perform well, and although his players often won their matches, lots of them also ended up with injuries. Early in the season, Christopher was regularly kept after practice for drills, which often only ended when Christopher started vomiting. If Christopher didn't perform well, his coach would yell in his face, calling him a "pathetic waste of time." And even though Christopher mentioned his elbow pain, his coach told him to "suck it up" and play through it. His coach only let him rest when he finally tore a ligament and needed surgery.

If the National Youth Tennis League had hired a safeguarding officer, Christopher wouldn't have been subjected to this mental or physical abuse from his coach. Without a safeguarding officer to monitor Christopher's safety and wellbeing, nobody was around to see what was happening. Christopher ended up needing months of rehabilitation for his elbow injury, and was so nervous to return to his coach that he decided to leave the sport.

Mental Health & Wellbeing (-)

Institutions Are Failing to Promote Health and Wellbeing in Elite Child Athletics

Sports institutions need to prioritize the mental health and wellbeing of their elite child athletes. When considering new policies or reforms, sports institutions should implement changes that put the wellbeing of their athletes above all else.

Christopher's story illustrates how common forms of abuse can harm elite child athletes' mental health and wellbeing. Last year, Christopher qualified to become a member of the National Youth Tennis League. His training schedule was intense: he had very few days off and his weekends were full of matches or practices. About halfway through the season, Christopher felt burned out, his grades were slipping, and he felt like his friendships were suffering. When Christopher mentioned this, his coach said that he was disappointed in Christopher, and that if he really wanted to be a "winner," he would stop making excuses. Between school, homework, and practice, Christopher was so busy that he often forgot to eat. Eventually, Christopher collapsed during a match and was admitted to the hospital for exhaustion.

If the National Youth Tennis League had hired a safeguarding officer, Christopher wouldn't have been subjected to this emotional abuse from his coach. Without a safeguarding officer to monitor Christopher's safety and wellbeing, nobody was around to prevent what was happening. Christopher ended his first season early, and was so nervous to return to his coach the next season, that he decided to quit the League.

Explanatory Examples:

Prevention 1 (one-on-one time w/ adults)

Limiting One-on-One time Can Prevent Abuse in Elite Child Athletics

Sports institutions need to prevent the abuse of their elite child athletes. One way for sports institutions to do this is by implementing policies that limit one-on-one time between elite child athletes and adult athletic staff.

When one-on-one interactions between elite child athletes and athletic staff—such as coaches and trainers—are limited, the risk of abuse declines. To reduce these one-on-one interactions, sports institutions can modify their training facilities and competition spaces to ensure that rooms where one-on-one interactions might occur are always visible from the outside. For example, all staff offices could be outfitted with windows that are required to stay uncovered whenever an adult and child are interacting in the space. Sports institutions can also prohibit one-on-one time between athletic staff and child athletes in areas outside of official facilities.

Elite child athletes benefit from policies that limit one-on-one time with athletic staff. The reforms outlined above work to hold athletic staff accountable for their interactions with elite child athletes and reduce the likelihood of abuse. When sports institutions implement these types of policies, they show that they are dedicated to preventing the abuse of their elite child athletes as they train and compete.

Prevention 2 (codes of conduct)

Adopting a Code of Conduct Can Prevent Abuse in Elite Child Athletics

Sports institutions need to prevent the abuse of their elite child athletes. One way for sports institutions to do this is by implementing policies that adopt a code of conduct and make expectations about appropriate behavior clearly visible for all to see.

When sports institutions implement policies that enforce codes of conduct and increase awareness about athlete rights, the risk of abuse declines. To increase awareness of athlete rights and anti-abuse, sports institutions can implement a strict code of conduct for how athletic staff are expected to interact with athletes. For example, all staff might be required to annually sign a code of conduct, and institutions could require that the code be posted in visible areas around the gym. Sports institutions can also post signage that clearly outlines athlete rights, as well as information about how to spot and report different types of abuse.

Elite child athletes benefit from policies that adopt a code of conduct and make expectations about appropriate behavior clearly visible for all to see. The reforms outlined above work to reduce abuse in elite child athletics by reminding athletic staff of how they should be interacting with child athletes, while also reminding athletes of their own rights. When sports institutions implement these types of policies, they show that they are dedicated to preventing the abuse of their elite child athletes as they train and compete.

Wellbeing 1 (institutional training)**Institutional Training Can Promote Wellbeing in Elite Child Athletics**

Sports institutions need to prioritize the mental health and wellbeing of their elite child athletes. One way for sports institutions to do this is by ensuring that all staff are adequately trained in methods for monitoring and improving athlete wellbeing.

When sports institutions require that all staff are appropriately trained, it improves the overall wellbeing of elite child athletes. To ensure that staff are adequately trained, sports institutions can mandate that every employee—including coaches, trainers, medical staff, and the leadership of the organization—attend regular training on methods for ensuring the wellbeing of elite child athletes. For example, employees might complete courses about things such as athlete rights or the fundamentals of child development. They might also attend seminars or training sessions on methods for preventing athlete stress, burnout, and physical injury.

Elite child athletes benefit from policies that require everyone on staff to understand and promote athlete mental health and wellbeing. The reforms outlined above work to hold athletic staff accountable for ensuring that their athletes are mentally and physically well. When sports institutions implement these types of policies, they show that they are dedicated to ensuring the wellbeing of their elite child athletes as they train and compete.

Wellbeing 2 (counselors)**Hiring Mental Health Professionals Can Promote Wellbeing in Elite Child Athletics**

Sports institutions need to prioritize the mental health and wellbeing of their elite child athletes. One way for sports institutions to do this is by hiring specially trained counselors and mental health professionals to support child athlete wellbeing.

When sports institutions hire mental health professionals to work with elite child athletes, it improves overall athlete wellbeing. To ensure that elite child athletes have the mental health support they need, sports institutions can implement policies that require all training facilities to hire at least one mental health professional dedicated to working with athletes. These professionals could, for example, provide counseling and mental health services to individual athletes or teams. They might also consult with coaches or athletic staff to ensure that athletes' mental health and wellbeing are considered as they develop training or recovery plans.

Elite child athletes benefit from policies that require the employment of professional mental health staff. The reforms outlined above work to provide tailored support for athletes and also hold athletic staff accountable for ensuring that their athletes are mentally and physically well. When sports institutions implement these types of policies, they show that they are dedicated to ensuring the wellbeing of their elite child athletes as they train and compete.

Peer Discourse Sessions

Values

Common Sense

As a society, we believe in common sense solutions to our problems. With common sense and a practical approach, we can make sure that sports institutions are putting rigorous policies and practices in place to prevent abuse and ensure that their elite child athletes are physically and mentally well, feel safe with coaches and staff, and enjoy their sport. We need to hold sports institutions accountable for using practical, good judgment to protect their elite child athletes so they can thrive in their sport and in their lives.

Prevention

As a society, we believe in preventing problems before they happen. Sports institutions can prevent harm by putting rigorous policies and practices in place to prevent abuse and ensure that their elite child athletes are physically and mentally well, feel safe with coaches and staff, and enjoy their sport. We need to hold sports institutions accountable for preventing harm to elite child athletes so they can thrive in their sport and in their lives.

Narratives (stories)

Abuse Prevention (-)

Sports institutions need to prevent the abuse of their elite child athletes. When considering new policies or reforms, sports institutions should implement changes that more effectively prevent abuse from harming their athletes.

Christopher's story illustrates how common forms of abuse can harm elite child athletes. Last year, Christopher qualified to become a member of the National Youth Tennis League. He had heard that the head coach was "demanding" and "tough." The coach was known to yell often and call players names when they didn't perform well, and although his players often won their matches, lots of them also ended up with injuries. Early in the season, Christopher was regularly kept after practice for drills, which often only ended when Christopher started vomiting. If Christopher didn't perform well, his coach would yell in his face, calling him a "pathetic waste of time." And even though Christopher mentioned his elbow pain, his coach told him to "suck it up" and play through it. His coach only let him rest when he finally tore a ligament and needed surgery. If the National Youth Tennis League had hired a safeguarding officer, Christopher wouldn't have been subjected to this mental or physical abuse from his coach. And if they had a code of conduct for all sports staff and mandatory trainings on child health and development, the coach would have received training about what are and aren't

appropriate ways to train elite child athletes. Without a safeguarding officer or a code of conduct to monitor and ensure Christopher's safety and wellbeing, nobody was around to see what was happening. Christopher ended up needing months of rehabilitation for his elbow injury and was so nervous to return to his coach that he decided to leave the sport.

Abuse Prevention (+)

Sports institutions need to prevent the abuse of their elite child athletes. When considering new policies or reforms, sports institutions should implement changes that more effectively prevent abuse from harming their athletes.

Christopher's story shows us how institutional reform can prevent abuse from harming elite child athletes. Last year, Christopher qualified to become a member of the National Youth Tennis League. He had heard that the head coach was "demanding" and "tough." The coach was known to yell often and call players names when they didn't perform well, and although his players often won their matches, lots of them also ended up with injuries. That same year, the National Youth Tennis League hired a safeguarding officer whose job it was to prevent player abuse. They also implemented a code of conduct for all sports staff and mandatory trainings on child health and development that all staff attend. The safeguarding officer quickly established mandatory athlete check-ins and also began to periodically observe training sessions. The officer quickly realized that the head coach was engaging in abusive behavior towards his athletes and wasn't complying with the code of conduct. Just a few weeks into the season, a new head coach was appointed. Because the National Youth Tennis League hired a safeguarding officer and implemented a code of conduct for its staff, Christopher wasn't subjected to emotional or physical abuse from his coach. With good coaches and a safeguarding officer who was actively focused on his safety and wellbeing, Christopher had a great first season, enjoys training, and continues to grow and excel as a tennis player.

Health and Wellbeing (-)

Sports institutions need to prioritize the mental health and wellbeing of their elite child athletes. When considering new policies or reforms, sports institutions should implement changes that put the wellbeing of their athletes above all else.

John's story illustrates how common forms of abuse can harm elite child athletes' mental health and wellbeing. Last year, John qualified to become a member of the National Youth Tennis League. His training schedule was intense: he had very few days off and his weekends were full of matches or practices. About halfway through the season, John felt burned out, his grades were slipping, and he felt like his friendships were suffering. When John mentioned this, his coach said that he was disappointed in John, and that if he really wanted to be a "winner," he would stop making excuses. Between school, homework, and practice, John was so busy that he often forgot to eat. Eventually, John collapsed during a match and was admitted to the hospital for exhaustion. If the National Youth Tennis League had hired a safeguarding officer, John wouldn't have been subjected to this emotional abuse from his coach. And if they had a code of conduct for all sports staff and mandatory trainings on child health and development, the coach would have received training about what are and aren't

appropriate ways to train elite child athletes. Without a safeguarding officer or a code of conduct to monitor and ensure John's safety and wellbeing, nobody was around to prevent what was happening. John ended his first season early, and was so nervous to return to his coach the next season, that he decided to quit the League.

Health and Wellbeing (+)

Sports institutions need to prioritize the mental health and wellbeing of their elite child athletes. When considering new policies or reforms, sports institutions should implement changes that put the wellbeing of their athletes above all else.

John's story shows us how institutional reform can promote good mental health and wellbeing for elite child athletes. Last year, John qualified to become a member of the National Youth Tennis League. His training schedule was intense: he had very few days off and his weekends were full of matches or practices. That same year, the National Youth Tennis League hired a safeguarding officer, whose job it was to ensure player wellbeing. They also implemented a code of conduct for all sports staff and mandatory trainings on child health and development that all staff attend. As part of a newly established routine check-in with the safeguarding officer, John shared that he was feeling burned out, his grades were slipping, and he felt like his friendships were suffering. The safeguarding officer worked with John and his coach to make sure the coach was complying with the code of conduct and to adjust John's training schedule so that he had more time to rest, focus on his schoolwork, and spend time with his friends.

Because the National Youth Tennis League hired a safeguarding officer and implemented a code of conduct for its staff, John had the opportunity to share his concerns before they turned into major problems. With good coaches and a safeguarding officer who was actively focused on his wellbeing, John had a great first season, enjoys training, and continues to grow and excel as a tennis player.

Appendix C: Sample Survey Items

Survey Items from Pilot

Open-Ended Questions:

1. What comes to mind when you hear the term *[pipe in term]* athletics?
2. Who do you picture when you think about a/an *[pipe in term]* athlete?
3. What age do you think of when you think about a/an *[pipe in term]* athlete?

Closed-Ended Questions:

1. Which statement is closer to your opinion?
 - a. You are more likely to find a/an *[pipe in term]* athlete competing at school and local levels.
 - b. You are more likely to find a/an *[pipe in term]* athlete competing at regional, national, and international levels.
2. In your opinion, how likely is it that a/an *[pipe in term]* athlete will train for their sport every day? *[7-point Likert scale, 'Very unlikely', 'Unlikely', 'Somewhat unlikely', 'Neither likely nor unlikely', 'Somewhat likely', 'Likely', 'Very likely']*
3. In your opinion, how common is it for children to participate in *[pipe in term]* athletics? *[5-point Likert scale, 'Not at all common', 'Somewhat common', 'Moderately common', 'Very common', 'Extremely common']*

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. Winning competitions is the most important part of being a/an *[pipe in term]* athlete. *[7-point Likert scale, 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Somewhat disagree', 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Somewhat agree', 'Agree', 'Strongly agree']*
2. *[pipe in term]* athletes start training and competing at a very young age. *[7-point Likert scale, 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Somewhat disagree', 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Somewhat agree', 'Agree', 'Strongly agree']*
3. We should all be concerned about issues in *[pipe in term]* athletics. *[7-point Likert scale, 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Somewhat disagree', 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Somewhat agree', 'Agree', 'Strongly agree']*

Sample Survey Items from Wave 2

Battery A: Support for Specific Initiative Components

1. Do you think the government should fund the [*pipe in name from assigned treatment*] Act?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. How much do you favor or oppose the [*pipe in name from assigned treatment*] Act? [7-point Likert scale, 'Strongly oppose', 'Oppose', 'Somewhat oppose', 'Neither favor nor oppose', 'Somewhat favor', 'Favor', 'Strongly favor']
3. How much do you favor or oppose each of the different parts of the [*pipe in name from assigned treatment*] Act? [7-point Likert scale, 'Strongly oppose', 'Oppose', 'Somewhat oppose', 'Neither favor nor oppose', 'Somewhat favor', 'Favor', 'Strongly favor']
 - a. Require that sports institutions hire designated safeguarding officers whose sole responsibility is to promote the wellbeing of elite child athletes by challenging harmful norms and practices within the institution, and ensuring that sports institutions are safe environments for children.
 - b. Impose harsher fines for sports institutions and governing bodies that are found to be actively covering up or ignoring accusations of abuse.
 - c. Require that all sports institutions adopt a Children's Bill of Rights in Sports in order to be eligible for state or federal grant funding.

Battery C: Understanding—Healthy Child Development

C1. Who do you think is *most* responsible for ensuring the healthy physical development of elite child athletes?

**randomize order of response options*

- a. Parents
- b. Coaches
- c. Sports institutions [*correct*]

C2. Who do you think is *most* responsible for ensuring the healthy mental and emotional development of elite child athletes?

**randomize order of response options*

- a. Parents
- b. Coaches
- c. Sports institutions [*correct*]

C3. Who do you think is *most* responsible for preventing mistreatment and abuse of elite child athletes?

**randomize order of response options*

- a. Parents
- b. Coaches
- c. Sports institutions *[correct]*

C4. Overall, how much responsibility do you think **sports institutions** hold for ensuring the healthy physical development of elite child athletes? *[5-point scale: 1 = No responsibility, 2 = A little responsibility, 3 = Some responsibility, 4 = Most responsibility, 5 = Full responsibility]*

C5. Overall, how much responsibility do you think **sports institutions** hold for ensuring the healthy mental and emotional development of elite child athletes? *[5-point scale: 1 = No responsibility, 2 = A little responsibility, 3 = Some responsibility, 4 = Most responsibility, 5 = Full responsibility]*

C6. Overall, how much responsibility do you think **sports institutions** hold for preventing abuse and mistreatment of elite child athletes? *[5-point scale: 1 = No responsibility, 2 = A little responsibility, 3 = Some responsibility, 4 = Most responsibility, 5 = Full responsibility]*

Battery D: Prioritizing Physical/Mental Wellbeing (Please name items D1–D6)

1. You are the CEO of the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee. You sometimes watch team practices, and have noticed that several child athletes who are set to compete in the upcoming Youth Olympic Games haven't been performing well. The Youth Olympic Games are a major event for the Committee and bring in a lot of revenue, so it's important that these athletes perform well. Which of the two following options do you think would be the best way to handle this situation?
 - a. The athletes might be burned out. Tell the coach to reduce practice time for the next several weeks to allow for more rest and recovery. *[correct]*
 - b. The athletes might be nervous as the games get closer. Tell the coach to increase practice time so that the athletes have a better chance of winning.
2. You are the Director of USA Swimming—the national governing body for elite swimmers. It's the height of the season, and swim meets are happening almost every week. Recently, some rumors have been swirling that the head coach of the National Junior team has been verbally abusing athletes who don't perform well. However, the rumors have not been confirmed. Which of the two following options do you think would be the best way to handle it?
 - a. Do nothing. You know the head coach well and trust that the rumors aren't true. If you hear anything more, you'll investigate it after the season is over.
 - b. Open an official investigation to assess whether there is any truth to the rumors. In the meantime, require that an additional coach or director is present at all Junior team practices and meets. *[correct]*

3. You are the senior director of Athlete Performance at US Figure Skating—the national governing body for elite figure skaters. Recently, a young skater qualified for the US Figure Skating Championships, but they have told their coach that they feel exhausted and overwhelmed, and they don't want to compete. The coach has come to you for advice. Which of the two following options do you think would be the best way to handle it?
 - a. Schedule a meeting with the athlete and their parents, and try to convince them to compete. The athlete should know that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity, and if they place well enough, they could even go to the Olympics!
 - b. Schedule a meeting with the athlete and their parents, and listen to the athlete's concerns. Have a conversation to see if there's a way to make it work, but ultimately respect the athlete's choice. *[correct]*

Battery F: Collective Responsibility for Ensuring Wellbeing

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements: *[7-point Likert scale: 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Slightly disagree', 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Slightly agree', 'Agree', 'Strongly agree']*

Society

CR3. If elite child athletes suffer from physical, psychological, or sexual abuse, we will have failed in our responsibilities as a society.

CR4. We, as a society, have an obligation to ensure that our elite child athletes are physically and psychologically healthy.

CR5. We, as a society, are responsible for making sure that coaches and sports institutions prioritize the wellbeing of their elite child athletes.

Government + Sports Institutions

GR1. It is our government's responsibility to ensure that sports institutions make the wellbeing of elite child athletes their top priority, above winning or financial gain.

GR2. Our government has an obligation to support policies and programs implemented by sports institutions that improve the wellbeing of elite child athletes.

GR3. The government should be doing more to ensure that sports institutions do their best to ensure that elite child athletes are physically and psychologically healthy.

Sports Institutions

SR1. It is primarily the responsibility of sports institutions to ensure the wellbeing of elite child athletes.

SR2. Sports institutions have an obligation to support policies and programs that improve the wellbeing of elite child athletes.

SR3. Sports institutions should be held more responsible than parents and coaches for ensuring that elite child athletes are physically and psychologically healthy.

Battery G: Collective Efficacy for Preventing Abuse

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements: [7-point Likert scale: 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Slightly disagree', 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Slightly agree', 'Agree', 'Strongly agree']

Society

CE1. I am optimistic that we, as a society, can ensure that no elite child athletes are abused.

CE2. It is realistic to think that we, as a society, can prevent the abuse of elite child athletes.

CE3. We, as a society, can prevent the abuse of elite child athletes.

QC2. I am optimistic that we, as a society, can read instructions carefully. Please answer "somewhat disagree" to this question.

Government

GPE1. I am optimistic that the government will hold sports institutions accountable for preventing the abuse of elite child athletes.

GPE2. It is realistic to believe that our government will implement policies that hold sports institutions accountable for preventing the abuse of elite child athletes.

GPE3. Our government can effectively hold sports institutions accountable for preventing the abuse of elite child athletes.

GPE4. Our government is capable of implementing policies that hold sports institutions accountable for preventing the abuse of elite child athletes.

Sports Institutions

SPE1. I am optimistic that sports institutions will take the necessary steps to prevent the abuse of elite child athletes.

SPE2. It is realistic to believe that sports institutions will implement policies and programs to prevent the abuse of elite child athletes.

SPE3. Sports institutions can effectively prevent the abuse of elite child athletes.

SPE4. Sports institutions can implement policies and programs that prevent the abuse of elite child athletes.

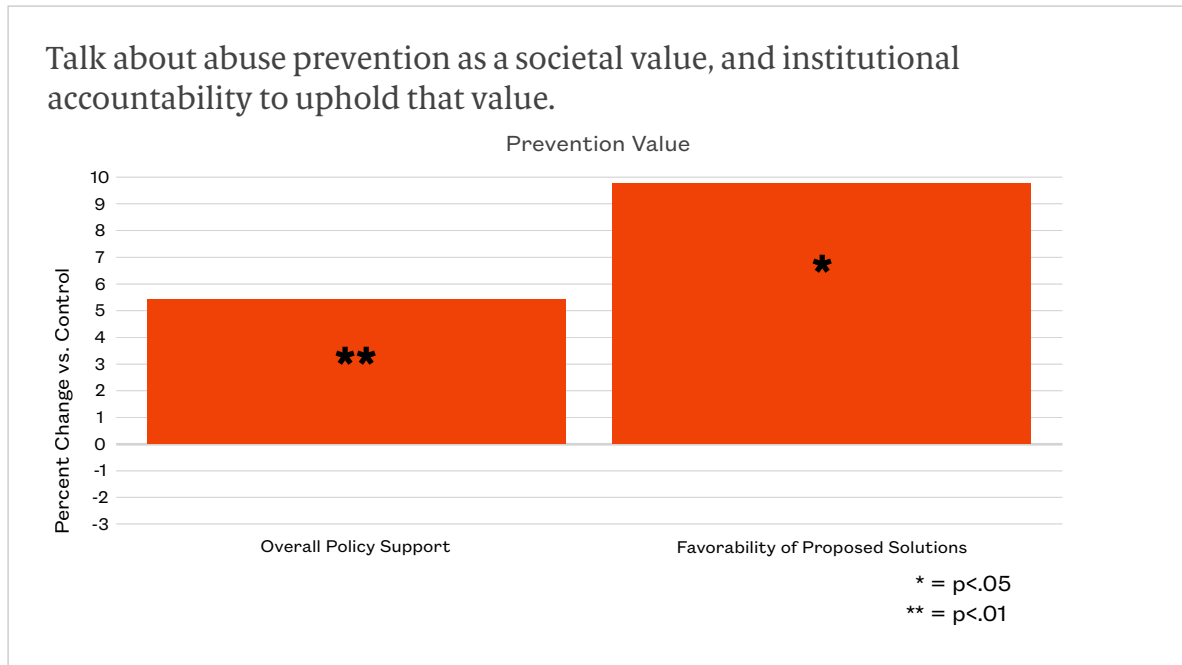
Appendix D: Quantitative Data Supporting Recommendations

How to Talk about Abuse Prevention:

RECOMMENDATION #1:

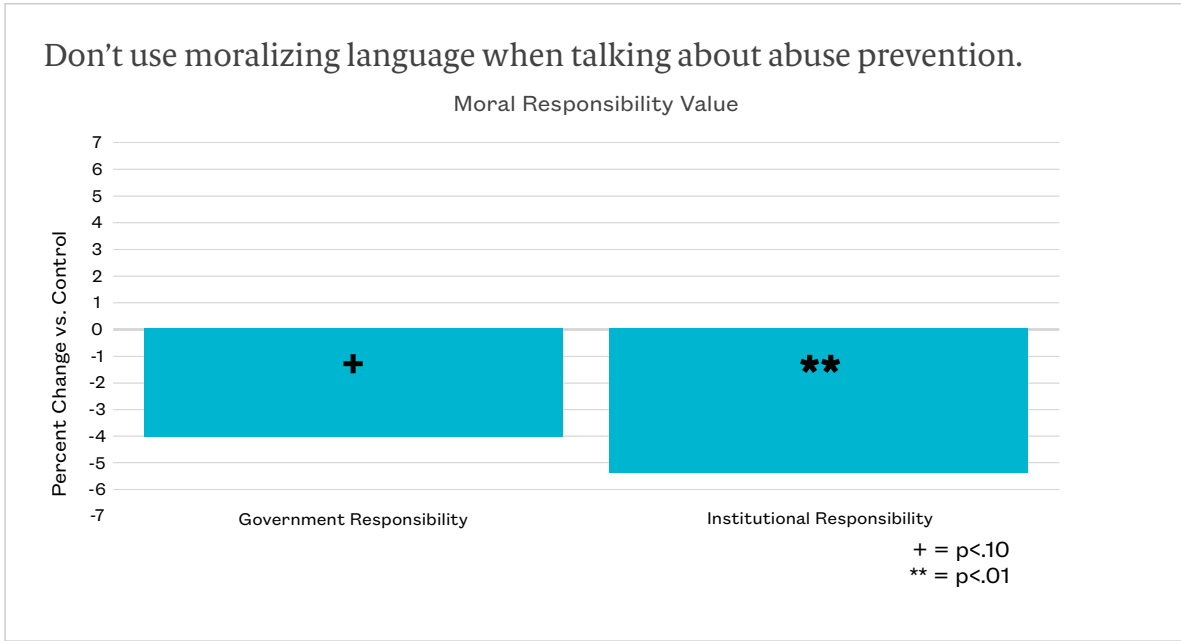
Talk about abuse prevention as a societal value, and institutional accountability to uphold that value.

Talking about abuse prevention as a value we all aspire to also helped build support for institutional policy change to prevent abuse, such as the implementation of safeguarding officers, improving health and safety standards, requiring comprehensive background checks, and imposing fines on sports institutions who cover up or ignore accusations of abuse.



Don't use moralizing language when talking about abuse prevention.

In the survey experiment, talking about a moral responsibility to “protect children” or “keep them safe from harm” didn't shift thinking in productive directions, and it made people *less* supportive of institutional or governmental responsibility.



RECOMMENDATION #2:**Tell stories about how sports institutions can prevent the abuse of elite child athletes from diverse backgrounds and experiences.**

In the experiment, the positive valence narrative about abuse prevention helped build people's understanding that sports institutions are responsible for ensuring the wellbeing of elite child athletes. In our qualitative and quantitative research, the story of sports institutions preventing abuse before it occurred also helped build understanding of what's involved in the healthy development of elite child athletes and helped build understanding of the prevalence of abuse.

**Don't shy away from using the term "elite" to describe high-level child athletes.**

In our quantitative research, we found that talking about "elite" child athletes helped people understand that competing at such a high level is uncommon. Specifically, participants who saw the term "elite child athlete" believed that it was significantly less common for children to compete at such a level when compared to participants who saw the terms "competitive child" ($p = .012$), or "competitive youth" ($p < .001$).

How to Talk about Abuse Prevention and Wellbeing:

RECOMMENDATION #3:

Use safeguarding officers as examples of what preventing abuse *and* supporting wellbeing looks like.

Talking about how safeguarding officers help support elite child athletes' mental health can help build public understanding of elite child athlete wellbeing. In the experiment, the positive valence narrative about mental health helped build understanding of what's involved in the healthy child development of elite child athletes. Participants who read this narrative were significantly more likely (twice as likely as the control) to choose sports institutions as primarily responsible for ensuring children's healthy mental and emotional development, and they were significantly more likely (1.6x more likely than the control) to say sports institutions were primarily responsible for preventing mistreatment and abuse.

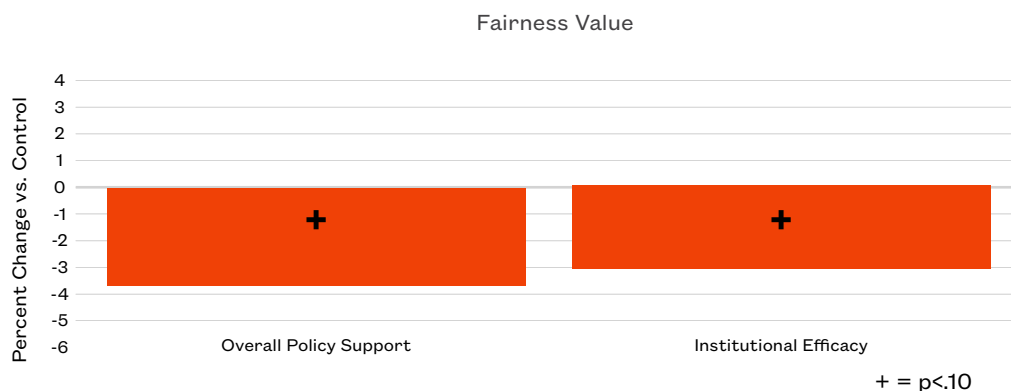
How to Talk about Wellbeing:

RECOMMENDATION #4:

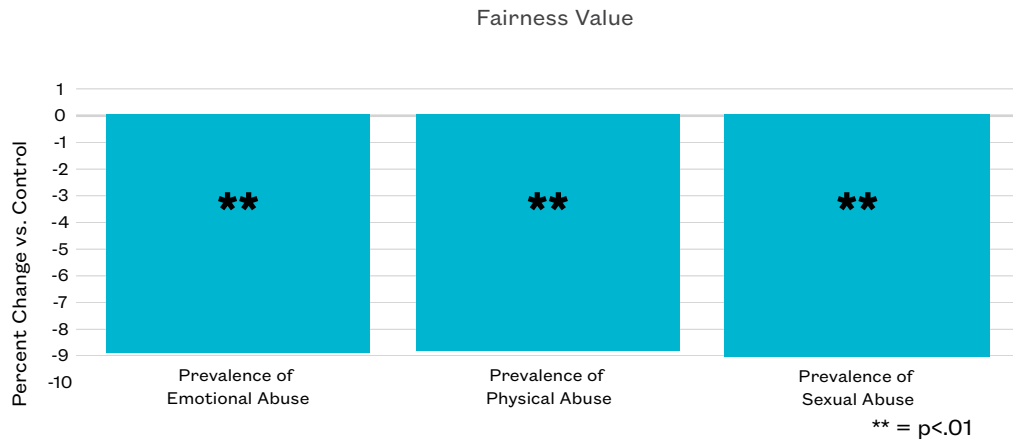
Talk about what elite child athletes need from sports institutions to develop well, without comparing them to other children.

In our quantitative and qualitative research, we found that comparing elite child athletes to other children failed to shift thinking in productive directions, triggered competitive thinking and a scarcity mindset, and triggered default thinking about elite child athletes as either too vulnerable to be treated the "same as" other children, or too superhuman to require anything that other children might need.

Talk about what elite child athletes need from sports institutions to develop well, without comparing them to other children.



Talk about what elite child athletes need from sports institutions to develop well, without comparing them to other children.

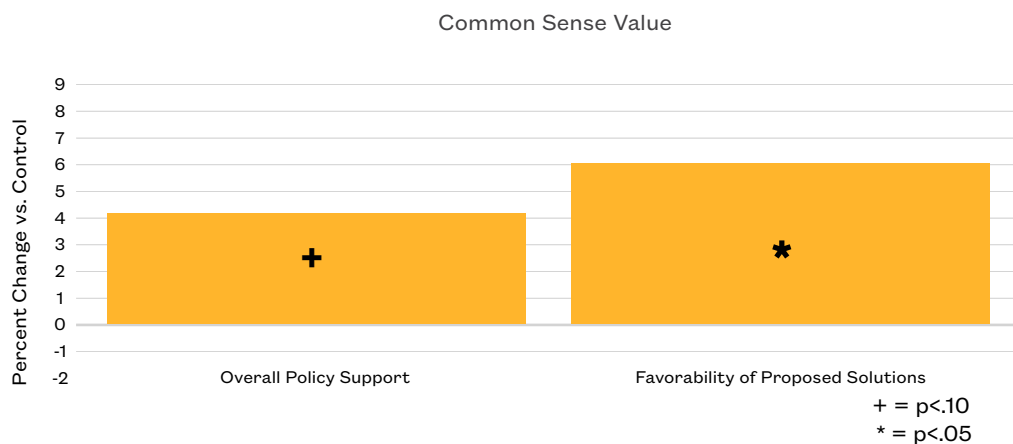


RECOMMENDATION #5:

Talk about elite child athletes’ wellbeing as a matter of common sense.

In the experiment, we found that the *Common Sense* frame helped build support for systemic solutions, particularly among Democrats. When asked “do you support the initiative” (Y/N), Democrats in the *Common Sense* condition were significantly more likely to say yes than no.

Talk about elite child athletes’ wellbeing as a matter of common sense.





About FrameWorks

The FrameWorks Institute is a nonprofit think tank that advances the mission-driven sector's capacity to frame the public discourse about social and scientific issues. The organization's signature approach, Strategic Frame Analysis[®], offers empirical guidance on what to say, how to say it, and what to leave unsaid. FrameWorks designs, conducts, and publishes multi-method, multidisciplinary framing research to prepare experts and advocates to expand their constituencies, to build public will, and to further public understanding. To make sure this research drives social change, FrameWorks supports partners in reframing, through strategic consultation, campaign design, FrameChecks[®], toolkits, online courses, and in-depth learning engagements known as FrameLabs. In 2015, FrameWorks was named one of nine organizations worldwide to receive the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

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Methods Supplement: A New Narrative about Elite Child Athletes

Reframing Wellbeing and Abuse
Prevention

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