



# ONTARIO CYCLING

2023

## Track Categories

Survey Report



## 2022-2023 Track Categories Survey Report

During the 2022-2023 Track Season, a few participants expressed interest in having combined, ability-based categories, where men and women would race together. Due to this, Ontario Cycling considered eliminating specific gender categories (outside of beginner women) in order to create a more inclusive racing experience. The categories would consist of ability-based gender-free A, B, C, D, E, and F (for beginner women only) or strictly A, B, C, D, E. To determine if this would improve the event experience that our members desired, a survey was created. Those who participated in the 2022-2023 OCup Track series, specifically those who participated in categories C, D, E, A Women, and B Women, were asked to complete a survey about last season's category format and if they would prefer combined, ability-based category formats.

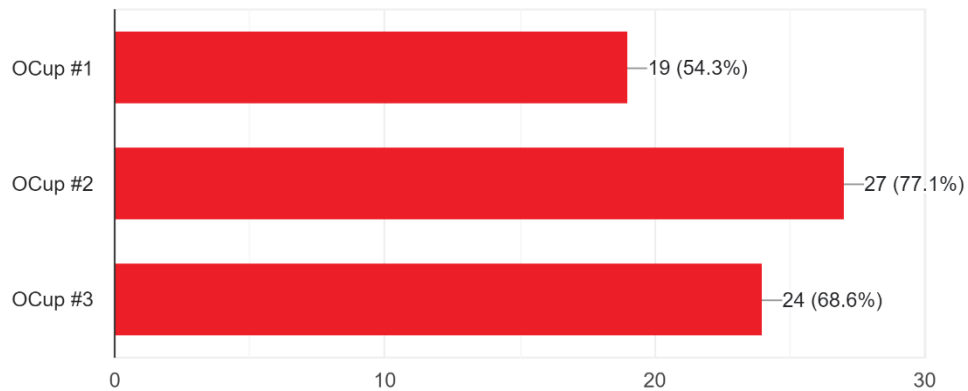
It was found that a majority of Track participants want to keep the current status quo category format of A, B, C, D, E, A Women, and B Women. Many respondents justified this desire by stating that having combined racing categories increase risk and worry about safety, and that racing with other women was not only empowering, but a good preparation opportunity due to Provincials and Nationals also using gendered categories. Therefore, Ontario Cycling recommends keeping the current category format structure status quo and with the focus on increasing promotion and understanding that categories A-E are not solely Men's categories.

### Question #1: Which event(s) did you attend last season?

The majority of respondents competed in OCup #2 (77.1%, 27 people).

Which event(s) did you attend last season?

35 responses

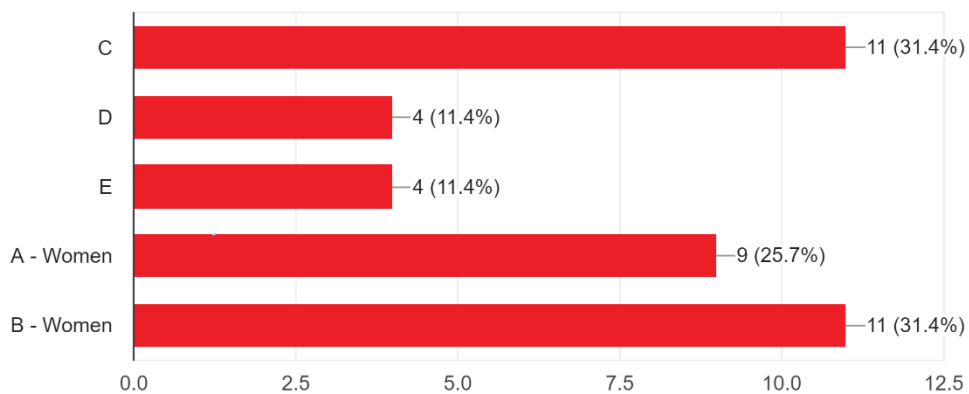


### Question #2: Which category did you compete in?

The categories most respondents competed in was C and B-Women (31.4%, 11 people).

Which category did you compete in?

35 responses

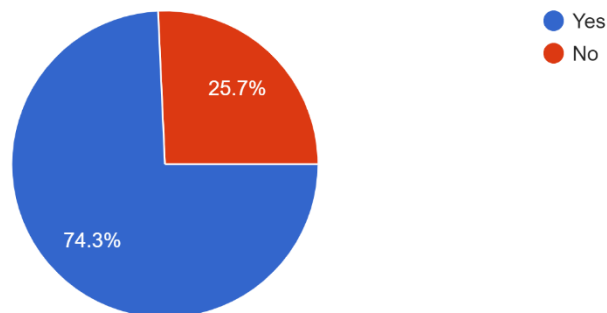


**Question #3: Did you find the category format of the 2022-23 Track Season to be inclusive and favourable to quality racing (A, B, C, D, E, A Women, B Women)?**

Out of the 35 respondents, 26 (74.3%) believed last season's category format was inclusive and favourable to quality racing.

Did you find the category format of the 2022-23 Track Season to be inclusive and favourable to quality racing (A, B, C, D, E, A Women, B Women)?

35 responses



**Question #4: Please explain why you did or did not feel the category format in 2022-23 felt inclusive and either did or did not provide a quality racing experience.**

The majority of respondents believed last year's category format was fair, stating reasons such as racing with other women is nice and competitive and that they felt safer than they would have racing with men.

Many respondents who believed last season's category format was not inclusive and or did not provide quality racing stated they felt that way due to the lack of women in these categories or a lack of competitiveness, mostly due to the low numbers.

**Table 1:** Summary of Respondents' Answers to Question #4

<b>Felt it was Fair</b>	<b>*Felt it was Unfair</b>
It was fine, competition was perfect	Aren't enough women racing, so fields don't always feel very strong or competitive
As long as everyone seeds themselves in the appropriate category, current system is fine	Getting rid of A and B women, might allow for more Category E which makes it more inclusive for beginning racers
Too difficult for the women when their categories are combined with men	Lack of competitors meant some categories were merged; less strong riders did not stand a chance
Current categories allow for inclusivity	Small number of participants
Racing against fellow females felt good and competitive	<p>Too much disparity between racers in the same categories, many were challenged too much, and some weren't challenged at all.</p> <p>Categories based in ability would allow the best to compete against the best, allows newcomers to be with newcomers and high performers to be with high performers regardless of gender and age</p>
Racing with women was nice, fought along time for this, women only categories made it feel inclusive	More entries in D/E class would improve racing experience
Having beginner women race with high performance u17 riders is not a quality experience	
2022-23 format allowed for you to race against women, which more suited our abilities	
Already inclusive and competitive, women and men don't need to compete together for it to be considered so	

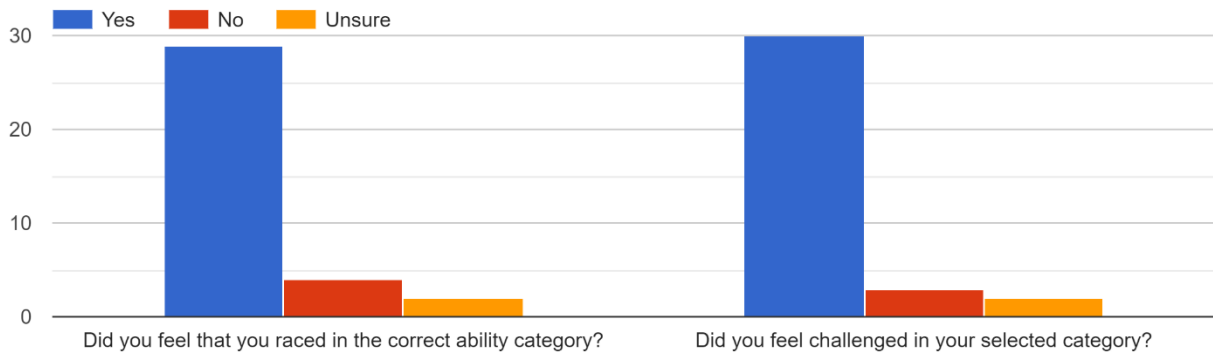
Women racing against other women made it more inviting, it was challenging, but still motivating	
Loved racing women of my own ability, wasn't forced to race men who are sometimes aggressive and give me a heightened fear of crashing	
Races fast, felt like good training	

\* One consistent theme that is not relevant to this survey, was respondents stating that the self-seeding was unfair. Many believed riders purposely seated lower to win medals, while others seated too high, over-estimating their abilities. Both are dangerous and they feel as though there should be a little more structure to the seeding and selection of categories. In addition, the lack of competitors was another factor as to why respondents felt the category format was not inclusive or did not provide quality racing experience.

**Question #5: Did you feel that you raced in the correct ability category?  
Did you feel challenged in your selected category?**

29 out of the 35 respondents felt as though they raced in the correct ability category, and 30 felt challenged in their selected category. Only 4 participants felt as if they raced in the wrong ability category and 2 felt unsure if they raced in the correct ability category. Regarding feeling challenged in their selected category, 3 racers felt that they were not challenged in their category and 2 racers were unsure if they were challenged in their category.

Please answer the following questions.



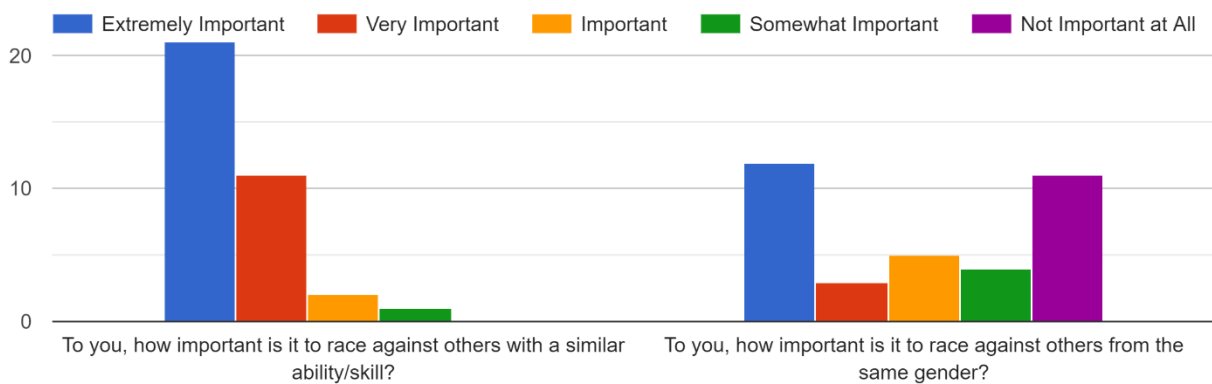
**Question #6: \*\*To you, how important is it to race against others with a similar ability/skill? To you, how important is it to race against others from the same gender?**

A majority of respondents find it extremely important (21) or very important (11) to be racing against those with similar ability/skill. 2 respondents find it important and 1 believes it is somewhat important.

Regarding how important it is for respondents to race against those from the same gender, 12 people stated it was extremely important, while 11 stated it was not important at all. The remaining 12 respondents fell in the middle with 3 stating it was very important, 5 saying it was important, and 4 answering it was somewhat important.

\*\*For this question, it’s important to consider that those who said it is extremely important to them to race against others with similar skill/ability may believe, as the comments below seem to be hinting at, that others of the same gender are truly the ones who hold similar skills/ability to themselves. They may not consider the opposite gender as holding the same or similar skills/abilities to them as they have different advantages and disadvantages.

Please answer the following questions.

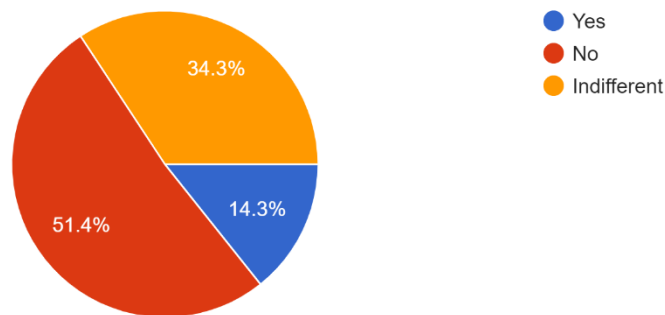




**Question #7: Do you believe that racing categories should be combined to include all genders?**

Just over 50% of the respondents believe that racing categories should not be combined to include all genders (18 people). 34.3% of respondents are indifferent to the combining of categories (12 people), and 5 participants believe categories should be combined.

Do you believe that racing categories should be combined to include all genders?  
35 responses



**Question #8: Please elaborate on your answer above. If yes, why? If no, why not?**

The majority of respondents do not want the categories combined to include all genders. Many state they would prefer for them to stay separated because men and women do not compete in the same way and at the same level; provincials and nationals are split and OCups are like practice for those; NCIM already has mixed race night so it's nice to have the opportunity to just race against other women; and racing with men can bring about many safety issues.

**Table 2:** Summary of Respondents' Answers to Question #8

Yes	No
Provides a better racing experience for all and reduces number of categories which would make the race day shorter	Won't be fair – men are stronger and faster
Racers should be graded by ability to qualify for that category	NCIM already combines genders, no need to combine them at OCups since there is already a lack of regard for females in cycling, combining genders would take away all of the progress made
Results should be an indicator of category not gender	Would worsen the race experience of women
Small numbers in the categories are discouraging	Would not want to race with any men
	Women will rarely podium if they compete with men, which would take away all the fun
	Worried about the small young riders and the erratic inexperienced riders
	Racing styles are different
	Women feel more comfortable racing with other women, and smaller women's bunch races makes it feel safer and more inviting to new/novice/intermediate racers
	Skill level and ability are not the same thing, women would have to race in less skilled categories to match ability. Women get short end of stick
	Men will either be much stronger or will be the same speed, but not have the same ability/bike handling skills as everyone else in the field

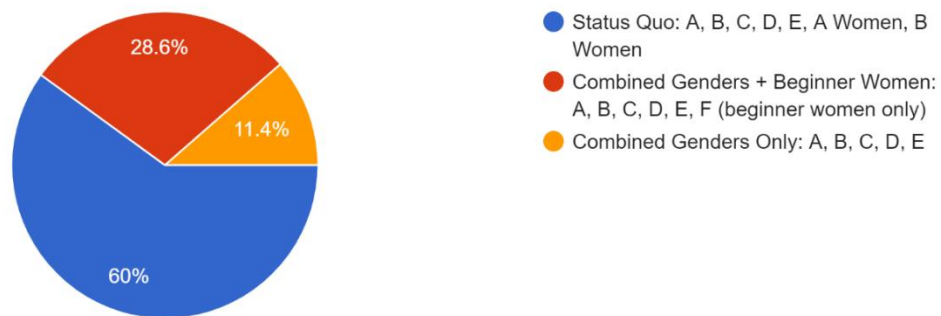
	It can be dangerous to women, especially if there is a crash
	Worked so hard to get women only categories and don't want them taken away
	Promotes women/girls in cycling, this makes it inclusive
	Unfair to women because men speeds are faster and those women who don't usually get dropped will be
	Women never get to race just women on the track – also good training for provincials and nationals
	Racing with men means we get put with less experienced men, which causes possible safety issues given their larger size and lack of skill

### Question #9: Which category format would you prefer next season?

60% (21 out of the 35 respondents) prefer to have the same category format as last year's track season. 28.6% (10 people) wanted combined genders + beginner women, and only 11.4% (4 people) preferred having combined genders only.

Which category format would you prefer next season?

35 responses



### Question #10: Please provide any additional comments you may have regarding the category format.

#### ***Why We Should Combine Categories:***

- Combining genders may increase fields
- Some Women could benefit from racing in a non-gendered category

#### ***Why We Should Not Combine Categories:***

- Combined gender categories are not found at larger events throughout the world
- Women deserve to have a space within the sport
- Racing with men can be dangerous and it can be scary to race with or against them
- Likes the practice of racing against people they'll race against at provincials and nationals
- Combining categories will result in less women; opposite of what we want
- There is a number of women who want to complete against those of the same gender

- To encourage women, it needs to be fun and safe, if we combine categories, more women may fear crashing and believe the risk of crashing is higher – they'll be less likely to compete
- OCups for women means they get to celebrate their success

***Alternative Suggestions:***

- Instead of combining categories, encourage more women to ride and race track
- If we do a Cat F, maybe also do a beginner men's category
- If we do combine categories, women should have their own podium
- Racing committee with rider representative – Will Trishuck would be willing to participate
- A & B Men and A Women stay status quo, rest become combined
- Lower categories should be ability based so fields are larger, elite categories should adapt the national level approach
- Open categories A-E, women specific A & B (what it currently is) because some women, no matter their skills/ability will feel uncomfortable racing against men and high\_ performance women do not want to have to race beginner women just to avoid men
- After first OCup, top 3 women get an option of racing with A Men

***\*Seeding Suggestions:***

- To help with seeding, could be beneficial to include "expected average (or maximum speed)"

## **Discussion**

It seems that a majority of the racers do not want combined categories. Women feel safer and competitive with the current format and any adjustments to it runs the risk of discouraging them from participating. They feel as though the current format is inclusive and favours quality racing and have fought for years to get these two women-only high performing categories established. Taking the categories away may make it seem as though we do not see or care about them.

Those respondents who have found this current format discouraging and uncompetitive, seem to attribute it to the overall lack of women competing (small pool) and of competitive women. Combining categories may solve the surface-level problem of small categories and lack of competition within the categories, but it will not truly solve the underlying problem that is upsetting many of these women - which is the lack of women competing in the Track OCup Series. Therefore, remaining status quo with the current category format will continue to allow women to feel safe and empowered. The current format is also more likely to encourage women of higher competition levels to register for our events.

Instead of changing the category format, Ontario Cycling believes it would be best to increase promotion and understanding that categories A-E are not solely men's categories. Categories A-E are for men and women, whereas Categories A Women and B Women are women only. With better knowledge of the categories and who they are available to, women who enjoy racing against other women will have the opportunity to feel safe and comfortable, while women who do not feel challenged or as though they are racing in a competitive environment will have the opportunity to race against those they feel better match their skill/ability.