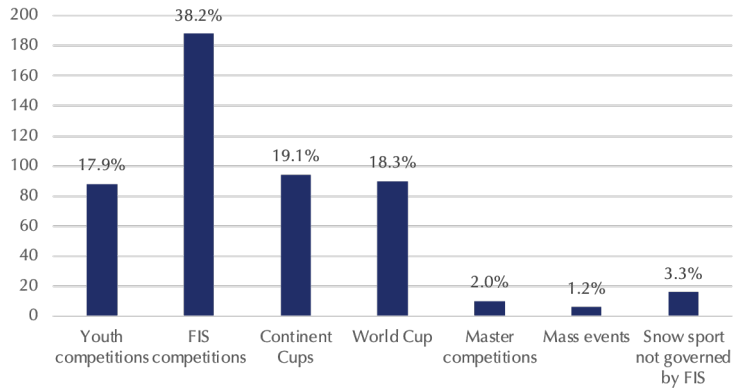
FIS Survey on Injury and Illness Prevention Practices, Needs and Responsibilities

Findings from the Athlete Lens

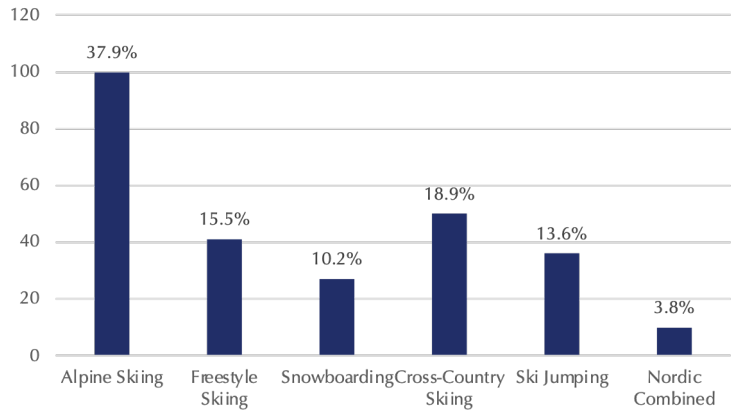
1. Athlete Characteristics

The 261 athletes in this survey represent a seasoned yet youthful cohort. Respondents reported a **mean of 14.6 years of experience** in competitive snow sports, despite their median age falling within the **15–19 years category**, potentially reflecting athletes who have grown up immersed in their sport from an early age.

Respondents were **almost equally divided by gender (49.4% female and 49.4% male)**. The majority competed at the FIS competitions level (57.2%) or youth competitions level (42.9%), providing insights from athletes actively competing across both the development and elite pathways.



Across disciplines, **Alpine Skiing represented almost half of the athletes (37.9%)**, followed by Cross-Country Skiing (18.9%) and Freestyle Skiing (15.5%), with minor representation from the other disciplines.



2. What Athletes Target and Do

Injury Prevention Practices

The primary injury prevention targets cited by athletes were consistent with the overall stakeholder findings:

1. **Knee injuries (79.7%)** – the dominant concern across all disciplines.
2. **Head injuries and concussions (46.4%)** – reflecting awareness of the serious consequences of head trauma.
3. **Ankle, foot, and toe injuries (42.5%)** – common across disciplines involving boots and bindings.

Among **alpine skiing athletes**, knee injuries (85.4%) and head injuries and concussions (60.5%) were even more prominently highlighted, underscoring the high-speed, high-force nature of alpine racing.

Illness Prevention Practices

Respiratory illnesses (36.8%) and **cardiovascular illnesses (24.1%)** were the main illness prevention targets. However, a significant proportion of athletes (**39.1%**) reported targeting no specific illness, mirroring the overall stakeholder finding (37.8%) and suggesting a clear opportunity to raise awareness and provide clearer guidance on illness prevention.

Main Prevention Areas Targeted

Athletes prioritize strategies that directly involve their performance and physical state:

1. **Physical aspects (85.4%)** – conditioning and physical preparation as the foundation.
2. **Protectors and helmets (74.7%)** – protective equipment as a tangible safeguard.
3. **Mental aspects (69.7%)** – psychological readiness and mental resilience.
4. **Ski/board preparation (65.1%)** – equipment tuning and maintenance as risk management.

A notable gap emerges when comparing athletes to coaches and team staff. Athletes showed **significantly lower engagement** in **load management** (34.9% vs. 62.1% for coaches and 57.4% for team staff) and **education and awareness** (38.3% vs. 72.4% for coaches and 77.9% for team staff). This highlights an opportunity to better engage athletes in **understanding the "why"** behind prevention strategies, not just the "what."

Beliefs and Motivations for Prevention

Athletes strongly affirmed the importance of prevention, with **83.9% reporting that they believe in snow sports prevention**. Their motivations centered on athletes' health and welfare, performing at their best, avoiding injuries to enjoy the sport and ultimately "feeling good," and practising safety and risk management. These motivations reveal that athletes see prevention not as a burden, but as integral to sustaining their careers and passion for the sport.

3. Needs for Additional Information and Knowledge

Athletes overwhelmingly reported needing more information to strengthen their prevention strategies: **72.8% stated "Yes" to needing more information**. This finding underscores a clear demand for accessible, athlete-relevant prevention resources.

Injury Prevention Knowledge Priorities

Knee injuries (65.9%) remained the top priority, followed by **head injuries and concussions (53.6%)** and **spinal injuries (34.9%)**, a concern particularly relevant for acrobatic disciplines.

Illness Prevention Knowledge Priorities

Athletes prioritized knowledge on **respiratory illnesses (43.7%)**, **cardiovascular illnesses (37.9%)**, and **endocrinological illnesses (32.2%)**, reflecting the physiological demands of training and competing in cold, high-altitude environments.

Main Prioritised Prevention Areas

Mental aspects (69.7%) led as the top priority, signalling strong demand for psychological support resources, followed by **physical aspects (65.1%)** and **snow surface (55.6%)**.

Notably, athletes also showed significant need for knowledge regarding specific prevention interventions, including the **Return-to-Sport (RTS) process** and information on **warm-up,**

activation, and cool-down strategies. These practical, actionable areas represent prime opportunities for targeted educational content.

4. Stakeholder Responsibilities

Athletes' roles are clearly defined as **central to implementation**, with 82.0% of athletes themselves reporting this responsibility. In contrast, their reported responsibility is much lower for development (49.0%) and dissemination (39.5%).

This raises an important idea: empowering athletes as co-creators and ambassadors of prevention knowledge may strengthen buy-in and adoption across the snow sports community.

5. Knowledge Dissemination Preferences

Athletes' preferred communication channels lean heavily toward immediate, accessible digital and visual media:

1. **Social media (39.8%)** – reflecting how athletes consume information daily.
2. **Website (38.7%)** – a central hub for comprehensive, reliable information.
3. **Audio podcasts (37.5%)** – convenient for learning during travel or downtime.
4. **Video podcasts (30.7%)** – visual formats that demonstrate techniques and concepts.

The strong preference for social media among athletes (39.8%) stands in **contrast to coaches (11.2%) and team staff (13.2%)**.

This indicates a generational and functional difference in how knowledge should be delivered to the primary end-users of prevention measures. To reach athletes effectively, prevention knowledge must meet them where they already are: on their phones, in their feeds, and in formats designed for quick, engaging consumption.