13 Race to equality

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Introduction

In 2022, 30.4% of permanent employees in Formula One (F1) were women, an increase of 2.4% over the previous four years (F1, 2022). In July 2023, female drivers represented only 4% of driver talent rankings (More Than Equal, 2023). The lack of representation at all levels means that a high percentage of even the most engaged fans do not know that women are eligible to compete. "*Women have been absent from F1 for so long that they have effectively been written out of the narrative completely in the public consciousness*" (More Than Equal, 2023: 21).

Motorsport has traditionally been considered male-dominated, both in terms of participation and media representation (Matthews & Pike, 2016). Whilst both participation and representation has been increasing, women continue to face challenges and gender biases.

Issue identification

In 2022 ex-F1 driver David Coulthard and businessman Karel Komarek founded the not-for-profit More Than Equal with the stated aim of "*finding and developing a female F1 world champion*" (More Than Equal, 2022). The underrepresentation of women in motorsport was cited as contributing to low levels of female participation (More Than Equal, 2023). The Chief of F1 Stefano Domenicali, stated that the prospect of a female entering the F1 grid before 2027 is "*very unlikely*" (Sky Sports, 2022).

This chapter aims to address "*one of the most neglected topics in sports history*" (Williams, 2016), by identifying challenges for women working in motorsport. It examines the representation and experiences of women in business and a case study of motorsport, analysing the factors contributing to the persistent gender imbalance and what the potential repercussions are on those aspiring to work in the sector. Despite abundant literature on women's work experiences in male-dominated fields, there is a significant gap in understanding women's experiences in motorsport. Rahim et al., (2021) argue that there is a need to further explore the