



Prevalence Survey

Participant Information

What is the purpose of the survey?

Determining the prevalence of doping behaviour is a strategic priority for WADA and the wider anti-doping community. Without a measure for doping behaviour, it is more difficult for anti-doping organizations to understand the effectiveness of their programmes. Thus, this survey is set for periodic assessment of doping prevalence. It aims to assist the work of organisations with responsibility for anti-doping. It does not aim to identify individual athletes or groups of athletes.

How long does it take to complete the survey?

The survey is very short. For most athletes, it takes less than five minutes to complete.

Why is doping prevalence an important issue?

Having a reliable and accurate estimate of what percentage of athletes are involved in doping is important because it helps organisations with responsibility for anti-doping to evaluate how well (or not so well) anti-doping programmes work. Prevalence estimates inform risk assessments for test distribution plans. They can also inform education programs to help provide better support to potentially vulnerable groups of athletes.

Why I have been chosen?

There is no specific reason to select you individually. You are invited because you are a registered/licensed athlete in your country and/or sport.

Do I have to take part?

We encourage all athletes to take part so we can have a representative view on how well (or not so well) we are doing but it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part.

Can I change my mind about taking part?

Yes. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time before you submit your responses; and you may do so without giving a reason. However, because we do not use any identifier (that is, we can't identify you), once you submit your responses, we will not be able to remove it later if you change your mind.

If you decide to take part after you initially declined, you still can do so while the survey is open for data collection.

Can I change my mind after I provide the information?

Because your data are completely anonymous and we do not record anything that could identify you or your survey, after you submit your responses, we can no longer remove your data.

What will happen if I take part?

You will be asked to complete a short survey using the web-link. The instructions will guide you what to do. It is a simple survey that does not require any prior knowledge.

Can I ask for help completing the survey?

Yes.

What are the disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There is no foreseeable risk of taking part of this survey. You will not be identified or exposed in a negative way. The data we collect is stored in encrypted format and only reported in a summary form. There is no way anyone can associate your answers to you.

What are the benefits of taking part?

Your participation will benefit the athletic community and athletes like yourself. It may not be you directly who benefits, but a person just like you.

Have you done this survey before?

Yes. Prevalence survey has been implemented since 2021 by different countries, sports and sport events.

Are data we provide confidential?

All data we collect will be kept strictly confidential with limited access. We do not ask or record any identifiable personal information about you.

How do you know if I am telling the truth or not?

We don't know if you personally tell the truth, but we hope you do. We can estimate the percentage of the respondents who did not comply with the survey instructions, but we cannot identify who they were, or why they did not comply. It could be for a myriad of reasons: because they were hiding the truth or because they did not understand the task or rushed through and did not read the instructions properly.

How does this method work?

To provide protection beyond anonymity, we deliberately add a degree of uncertainty to contaminate the response options. In practice, this simply means that we ask you two questions on the same page and only look for one answer combination. One of the questions is related to something that you, and only you can know. This way, there is no way to link any potentially discriminating or sensitive information to you personally. However, we know a lot about this contamination. We know how the uncertainty we added is distributed. For example, we can't tell if the number *you* selected is on the list, but we know how likely it is for *any* number from the first list

to appear on the second list. Because we know the distribution of all elements but the question we are really interested in, we can use this knowledge to estimate the proportion of 'yes' answers to the question of our interest. This is the only unknown element in the equation. The limitation is that we can only do this for the whole sample and not for every individual. That is why the method provides total protection.

Where can I find more information about this method?

You can watch a short, 4-minute video explaining how the survey works. You can also refer to a step-by-step guide.

You can also read a review by the WADA Prevalence Working Group here: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.655592>

Is it anonymous?

Yes, it is completely anonymous. We do not ask any identifiable personal information.

How do I give my consent to participate?

By completing the survey and submitting your response, you actively give your consent to participate. This is called 'implied consent'. You do not need to sign anything or give your name.

The answers look 'odd'. How do you know how I responded?

We don't know how you responded. This is exactly how the method provides complete protection. The data are very useful but only at the aggregated sample level. We cannot tell who admitted using supplements, prescription medications, and/or prohibited substances or methods, but we can estimate the proportion of athletes in the sample who did.

What will happen to my data?

Your responses will be pooled together with other athletes' responses and analysed together. Because of the methodology, individual responses are meaningless. The data can only be analysed for the whole sample together.

Why is my contribution desired?

We believe that all athletes should be represented and have a voice in this nation-wide/event-wide survey. One response often given by doped athletes is that they use prohibited substances because everyone else is, and to not do so would mean losing their competitiveness. Your participation can help the current and future generations of athletes by exposing the truth about doping and other risky practices in your sport or country. If the results from this survey show that the prevalence of doping is not as high as it is perceived to be, it could result in a change of thinking and, hopefully, practices about the use of supplements, prescription medication, and banned substances and methods. If the results show that the prevalence is higher than the official figures, the anti-doping community needs to know to make competitive sport safe and fair.

What will happen to the results of the project?

The findings of the survey will be used to inform anti-doping programmes, including raising awareness and education. Aggregated results will also be shared publicly via peer-reviewed scientific publications and presented at conferences.

Who is funding this study?

WADA and the organisation implementing the prevalence survey jointly cover the costs associated with this project.

Who can I speak to about this study?

Prof Andrea Petroczi (email: a.petroczi@kingston.ac.uk), who is the Chair of the Prevalence working Group; or

Marcia MacDonald (WADA Associate Director, Science & Medicine, +1 514 375 6667; email: science@wada-ama.org).