

Prevalence of Menstrual Cycle Symptoms and Tracking Methods Among Canadian Female Athletes



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BACKGROUND: Athletes need to be in tune with their bodies to maximize their performance. Understanding how female athletes track their cycles can help athletes and coaches best plan training to improve performance and wellbeing of athletes.^{1,2}

METHODS

- We surveyed Canadian female athletes (17-50 years) on topics related to demographics, menstrual cycle symptoms, tracking methods, and training
- Responses are represented as proportions and compared using Chi-squared, Fisher's Exact, and ANOVA tests ($\alpha=0.05$)

RESULTS

- Female athletes reported experiencing general symptoms of headaches, migraines, and nausea
- They also experienced mood swings, irritability, depression, breast tenderness, food cravings, and acne that they perceived to negatively affect their training
- Athletes who experienced these symptoms were less likely to use an App as part of menstrual cycle tracking

DISCUSSION

- Female athletes who experienced psychological menstrual cycle symptoms, breast tenderness, and acne were less likely to use Apps in their tracking methods
- This highlights the need to address both physical and psychological symptoms in tracking apps and by coaching staff
- Next we will investigate the accuracy of using temperature to track menstrual cycles in this unique population

Specific non-physical menstrual symptoms that affect the training of female athletes are deprioritized in their use of menstrual cycle tracking Apps.

73%

of athletes experience menstrual symptoms

43%

of athletes experience menstrual symptoms that affect their training

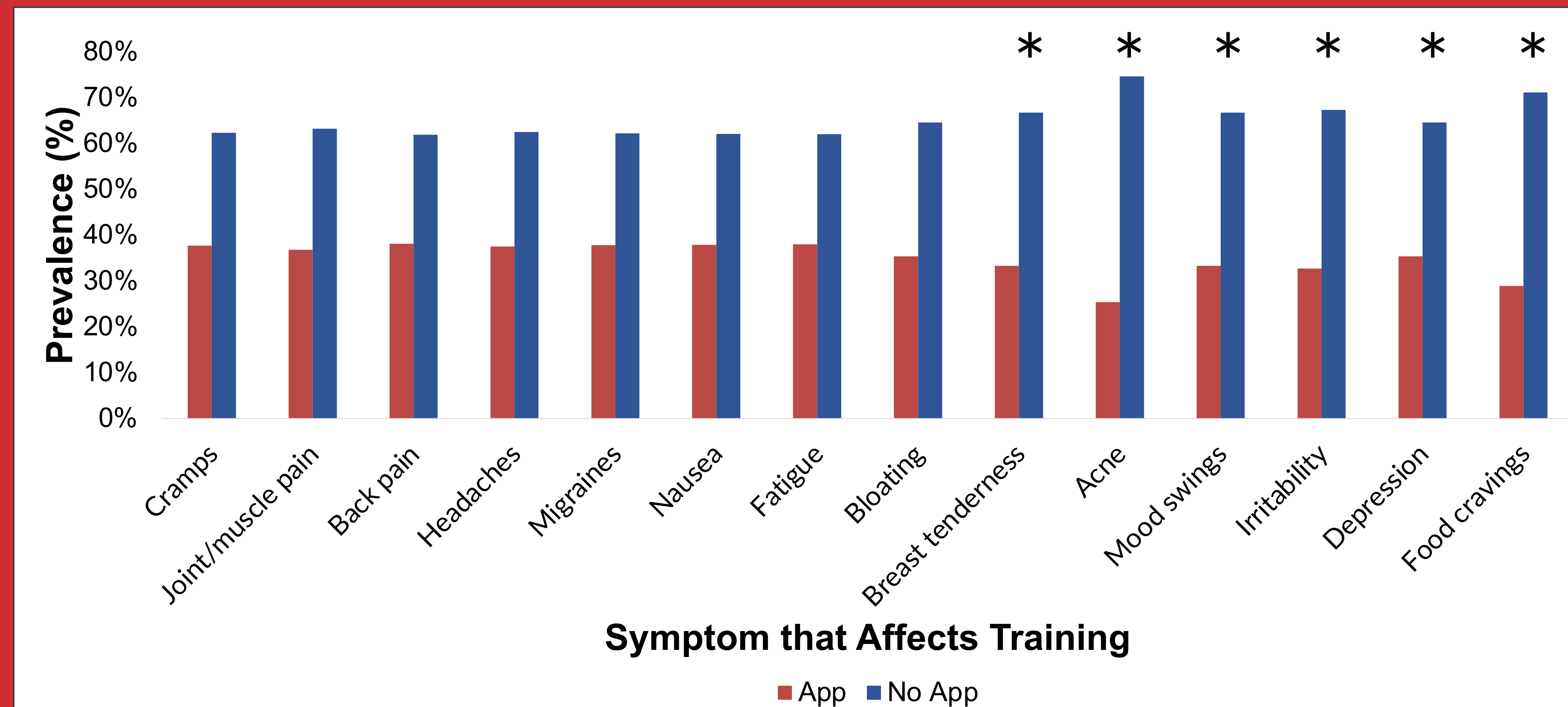


Fig. 1: Prevalence of App use by athletes who experience a menstrual symptom which is perceived to negatively affect their training. *Significance denotes an association with App use and a symptom interfering with training.

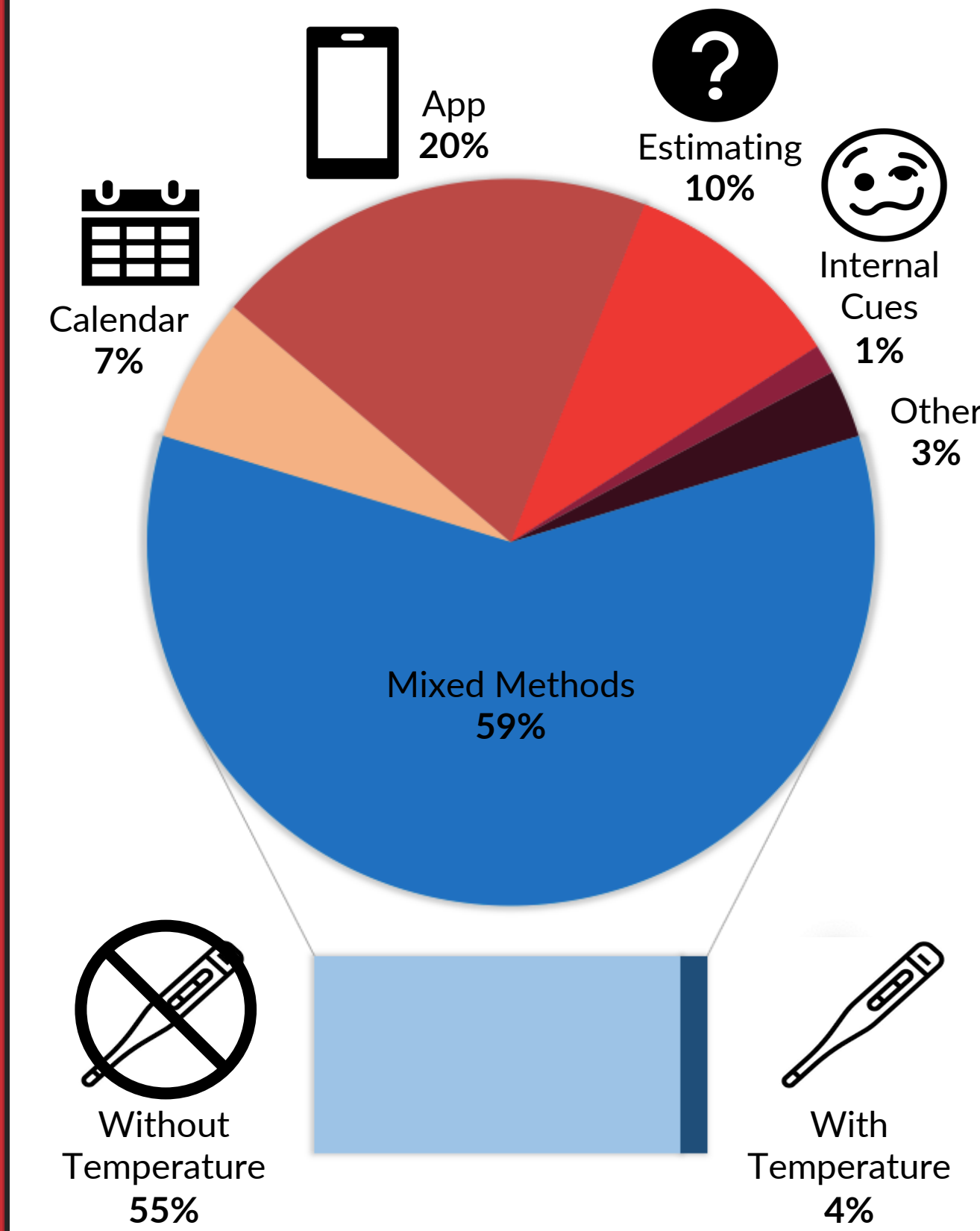


Fig. 2: Cycle tracking choices used

- No impact of age on method of cycle tracking
- Preference for App use was associated with the level of education achieved
- Lack of representation of ethnic minorities in participant pool
- Equitable recruitment and reduction of barriers to sport for female ethnic minorities is needed

REFERENCES

1. Brown, N. et. al (2021). Scandinavian J Med Sci Sports, 31(1), 52–69.
2. Elliott-Sale, K.J. et. al (2021). Sports Med, 51(5):843–61.

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