

Equality in motorsports from grass roots to Grand Prix



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When it comes to equality and diversity, the motorsports industry is making big changes and becoming more inclusive, from grass roots to F1. Motorsports is now becoming a viable sporting career option to everyone, including those with a disability, women, and people from all ethnic and financial backgrounds.

For richer or poorer

Toto Wolff, team principal and CEO of F1 constructor's title champions Mercedes, stated back in 2015 that young drivers needed at least €7m to enter into the world of motor racing and rise up through the ranks. Initiatives such as the McLaren Young Driver Programme¹ however, aim to break down any finance-related barriers, offering guidance, assistance and endorsement to help promising young racers climb the motorsports ladder. Another organisation, the Young

Racing Driver Academy (YRDA)² aims to provide young drivers with support and opportunities to succeed as motorsports champions.

In addition to initiatives such as these, esports is another great way for younger or disadvantaged drivers to get a foothold in motorsports - without requiring funding to get started - and there's still potential to win big money. By competing against professionals online it's accessible for most people and a fantastic way to begin racing.

¹ <https://www.mclaren.com/racing/team/young-driver-programme/>
² <https://www.yrda.co.uk/about>



Girls at the wheel: not on the grid

Up until 2018, in the era of grid girls, more females were seen alongside the cars rather than racing in them. Although still in the minority, increasing numbers of women are now putting their foot down on the racing track and proving they are equals when it comes to speed and skill in the car. A number of organisations have been set up to encourage females to take part in the sport, including Dare to be Different, set up by former racing driver Susie Wolff. The organisation aims to increase the participation of women in all forms of motor racing and change the views of women in male-dominated industries. It runs events throughout the UK, inviting girls between the ages of eight and fourteen to take part in activities related to motor racing.

Girls on Track³ is a further joint initiative between the FIA and Motorsport UK. It unites with Dare to be Different to inspire and encourage girls aged 8-18 to build interest in STEM subjects, using motorsport as a medium to expose them to opportunities within the sector. Gallagher will proudly partner with the Girls on Track, Motorsport UK programme from 2021.

There is also the W Series, an all-female racing championship that will, from 2021, be seen as support races at eight F1 Grand Prix weekends. Lewis Hamilton, an advocate for diversity in motorsports, is hopeful that the W Series can be a catalyst for change all the way through the racing ladder.⁴

Driving potential with disability

Disabled drivers are now proving their ability and equality when it comes to racing, driving with as much speed, athleticism and skill as any able bodied driver. In 2019, Team BRIT launched the UK's first racing academy for disabled drivers, aiming to offer around two million people⁵ in the UK a completely new opportunity, with simulator training, expert coaching and specialist controls to suit most disabilities.

We must make a special mention here to our client and ambassador Nathalie McGloin⁶ who has been working closely with the sports team at Gallagher for a number of years. Nathalie is the only female tetraplegic racing driver in the world. She became the first woman with a spinal injury to be granted a racing licence in the UK in 2015, and within just four years she became the first ever female disabled rally driver. She is the FIA Disability & Accessibility Commission President and ambassador for Dare to be Different. She also co-founded Spinal Track, a charity giving track and rally experiences to disabled drivers.

4 <https://www.skysports.com/f1/news/12433/12131062/f1-drivers-welcome-w-series-onto-f1-support-bill-from-2021-season>

5 <https://www.teambrit.co.uk/news/team-brit-and-nic-hamilton-launch-the-uk-s-first-race-academy-for-disabled-drivers>

6 <https://nathaliemcglain.com/>

Expanding ethnic diversity

Back to Lewis Hamilton and onto the topic of ethnic diversity. Hamilton acknowledges that within the Mercedes team just 3% of its workforce belong to minority ethnic groups⁷. He recently set up the Hamilton Commission in a bid to increase ethnic diversity in motorsports – with the goal of identifying the “key barriers to the recruitment and progression of black people in UK motorsport” and providing “actionable recommendations to overcome them”⁸. Hamilton is F1’s first and only black driver. The sport’s only other non-white competitor is Red Bull’s Alexander Albon, a Britain-born Thai.

Across the pond in the USA, it is exciting to see the announcement that Michael Jordan has formed a NASCAR team, diversifying NASCAR championship with Bubba Wallace as the driver. A moment in history for NASCAR, watch this space at Daytona in January 2021.

From watching their first esports event to jumping into their first kart race, right through to their final Grand Prix, Gallagher is helping to protect racing teams and stakeholders from grass roots to Grand Prix. We’re also proud to be supporting high-profile names in the industry who are fighting for equality, making positive changes in motorsports, and welcoming anyone who has an interest in a career in this sector.

Contact our team for cover

We provide suitable cover for our motorsports clients and we’re fully supportive of every diversity initiative. Far more than just a transactional insurance product, our team of motorsports professionals are well placed to advise you on the specialist racing cover you need.

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⁷ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/formula1/54273775#:~:text=Lewis%20Hamilton%3A%20Commission%20members%20named%20for%20motorsport%20diversity%20push,->

⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/formula1/54273775#:~:text=Lewis%20Hamilton%3A%20Commission%20members%20named%20for%20motorsport%20diversity%20push,-By%20Andrew%20Benson&text=Lewis%20Hamilton%20has%20vowed%20to,together%20will%20make%20a%20change%22>

