

WHY DO WOMEN STOP PLAYING CLUB SPORT AT 15?

Ausplay data shows that women are much less likely to play team sport than men, with just 15% participating at the club level by the age of 25.

The data suggests that from about the age of 15, nearly a third of girls will stop playing club sport. Within five years, another third will have left the club.

Looking at these numbers, you might think that women and girls are less active than men, particularly as they grow older.

However, the same survey shows that women and girls *are* just as active as men; they're just getting their exercise fix elsewhere.

Over half of the women surveyed keep fit by pounding the pavement, walking or running in their local areas. Another 37% stay active by going to the gym.

The most popular team sports are netball and tennis. Yet just fewer than 10% of women surveyed were a part of a netball or tennis team.

SO WHY DO GIRLS STOP PLAYING SPORT?

Staying fit and active is important for many women, so why do women and girls look for other ways to keep fit as they get older?

An issue of equality.

A recent survey of Australian girls found that they felt inequality was most profound in sport.

There are fewer opportunities.

While the landscape certainly is changing, there are many cases when girls are forced to leave their local club as there's no team for them to play with.

An absence of role-models.

In Australia, women's professional sport receives just 7% of Australian sports programming. There are plenty of incredible female athletes for young girls to aspire to, but many of their achievements are not celebrated.

Changing self-image.

Many girls are stopping playing sport at fifteen during those tricky teenage years. A change in self-image can lead to insecurity and a lack of confidence, or even just a change in interests.

CLUBS TAKE ACTION

For local sporting clubs, it's important to take notice of these results – after all, women and girls make up over half of the population! Being an inclusive club for women and girls is not only the ethical thing to do, it will also help to attract new members.

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PROVIDE THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS.

A growth in the participation rates in sports like cricket, rugby and AFL is proof that women and girls enjoy playing team sport.

Sure, you can only field a team if there are players – but your club can play an important role in developing interest and demand for girls' sport.

Do your bit by spreading the word and campaigning for a women's team using social media, the club newsletter and your existing club community. You may be surprised by the response.

MAKE SURE THE CLUB ENVIRONMENT IS INCLUSIVE AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY.

Local sporting clubs should be environments where everyone feels safe and included. Having policies that focus on alcohol management, player conduct and safe celebrations can help to ensure the club is welcoming for those groups that might feel intimidated by the sporting environment.

This also means ensuring there are appropriate facilities for women and girls – think change rooms and uniforms.

CONSIDER OFFERING ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL SPORT.

Having a child is proven to affect many parents' ability to lead an active lifestyle, particularly whilst their children are young.

Many sports have had success introducing new forms of participation for busy, time-poor parents. Do some research to see what other clubs and leagues are doing to make local sport more flexible for different groups. Consider a Come and Try Day or a social competition for parents at the same time their kids are being coached.

ASK FOR AND LEARN FROM FEEDBACK.

It never hurts to ask! If you already have female members at your club, ask them about the things they love and what they might change about the club environment.

If you're a junior club, it might also help to talk to parents about any concerns they have about their kids playing team sport. After all, parents are major influencers when it comes to the club and team their child is a part of.

From Good Sports website (www.goodsports.com.au)