



Quantum
Market
Research



GIRLS COMMUNITY FOOTBALL ACQUISITION & RETENTION RESEARCH SUMMARY

2022

WHAT THE RESEARCH TOLD US

We interviewed and surveyed over 500 current and previous girls participants aged between 5 – 18 across Australia. Three key barriers to retention were identified.

LACK OF CRITICAL MASS

57%

OF GIRLS WHO DON'T PLAN TO CONTINUE PLAYING FOR MORE THAN ONE YEAR (OR AT ALL) SAID THERE WERE NOT ENOUGH GIRLS TO PLAY WITH.



THIS IS A PARTICULAR ISSUE FOR THE 5-9-YEAR-OLDS.

UNEQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR GIRLS

THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF NOTICING DIFFERENCES CAN WEAR DOWN GIRLS ENTHUSIASM.

ALMOST
1 IN 5

SAY THAT EQUAL TREATMENT OF GIRLS IS MISSING AT THEIR CLUB.

ALMOST ALL
90%

SAY THAT IT IS A VERY IMPORTANT ASPECT TO FIX.

UNEQUAL TREATMENT MANIFESTS IN SEVERAL WAYS FROM STRUCTURAL ISSUES SUCH AS;



INAPPROPRIATE FACILITIES



SCHEDULING



LACK OF SUPPORT STAFF



ATTITUDES/ DISRESPECTFUL COMMENTS AND ACTIONS.

UNCLEAR PATHWAYS & DEVELOPMENT



FEELING ON THE BACKFOOT AND UNCERTAIN ABOUT HOW TO PROGRESS CAN LEAVE GIRLS FEELING LESS CONFIDENT ABOUT THE GAME.



5-9-YEAR-OLDS ARE EXPERIMENTING WITH MULTIPLE SPORTS AND CAN BE DRAWN TO SPORTS THAT OFFER BETTER CLARITY ON PROGRESSION



16-18-YEAR-OLDS ARE LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE AND MAKING CHOICES ABOUT WHERE TO INVEST EFFORTS.

WHAT THE RESEARCH TOLD US

These barriers also have implications for acquisition:



CONFIDENCE TO TRY

Girls can feel on the backfoot coming to the game, but this feeling of being unsure can also prevent initial trial.

Evidenced by the fact that family encouragement is a number one driver of up-take, rather than a personal driver being top of the list, which demonstrates outside influences are stronger at bringing girls into the game.



COMPETITION FROM SPORTS WITH CLEARER STRUCTURES AND PATHWAYS

More established games can be an 'easier in' for girls. Offering known outcomes and structures, girls can find it easier to trial sports where there is more clarity about milestones and progression.

For younger girls who are trying out lots of sports, there is a small window to deliver a sense of achievement to help girls connect with the game.



SO WHAT DO GIRLS LOVE ABOUT THE GAME?

IT'S ICONIC

AFL is a unique and iconic sport with a strong base of passionate supporters. The legacy and foundation are pulling girls (and their parents) towards the game.

IT'S A DYNAMIC GAME

The physicality and dynamism of the game is attractive to girls and not something to shy away from – it's about the athleticism and high energy required by the game.

THE ROLE MODELS

The elite game is a huge asset to grassroots clubs. Promoting these players and giving the girls access to elite players in some way drives real enthusiasm.

THE UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT

Sport is seen to be about much more than the play and competition - it is seen as a place to learn life skills. Footy, is believed to offer a strong community environment - one where girls can learn from people of all ages and backgrounds.



HOW CAN WE DRIVE GIRLS ENJOYMENT & COMMITMENT TO THE GAME?



ELITE WOMEN'S GAME

Parents and players stress the importance of the women's game in driving girl's enthusiasm for the sport.



PLAYING WITH FRIENDS

Two thirds (66%) of current players say commitment would be strengthened with more friends to play with.



EXPOSURE AT SCHOOL

Exposure to footy through school is an important driver of enjoyment and commitment as it increases confidence with the game.



APPROPRIATE SUPPORT

Over half (55%) agree that girls require a different approach to skills building and development, this is largely due to more limited out-of-club exposure.

Our research tells us that creating positive experiences for 5-9's is critical as it cements commitment into the following years and clarifying opportunities for 16-18's is key for continued connection to the game into adulthood



5-9-YEAR-OLDS (FINDING MY TRIBE)

Footy needs to stand out above other sports in **delivering the sense of achievement**.

Parents suggest they need:

- Opportunity for stability in team & to play with friends
- Encouraging coaches to help develop confidence with all aspects of the game
- Dynamism in play and training, but a structured approach to milestones

10-15-YEAR-OLDS (CEMENTING AN IDENTITY)

By this age, girls who are playing footy tend to 'go all in', so **getting girls through the younger bracket to this point is an important focus**.

However, addressing issues like critical mass and equal treatment of girls can positively impact this group as well as others.

16-18-YEAR-OLDS (FOCUSING & PRIORITIZING)

They are making decisions about their future. They feel pressure to focus on study and are **narrowing their focus when it comes to after-school activities** like footy.

They need:

- Clarity on opportunities to stay connected to footy (whether elite, social, support roles etc.) is important.
- A sense of security in the team environment

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

The AFL launched the Women's Football Vision in December 2021, outlining its commitment for the continued progression of the game for women and girls across all levels of Australian Football. This research played a key role in informing Phase 1 (2022 – 2025).



HOW CAN LEAGUES AND CLUBS USE THIS INFORMATION?

LACK OF CRITICAL MASS

- Identify gaps in your all-girls pathway
- Establish all-girls competitions/teams in age groups where they currently don't exist
- Establish an all-girls NAB AFL Auskick Centre, or all-girls group within your current Auskick Centre
- Run activities to recruit more girls into your club, i.e., bring a friend, skills sessions, develop partnership with local schools, etc.
- Speak with your local AFL Staff member

UNEQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR GIRLS

- Improve change room facilities to make it female friendly.
- Implement a facilities access rotation policy to ensure girls get equal opportunity to access the oval and facilities
- Use scheduling that gives equal footing to girls
- Ensure resources and support provided to boys & girls teams are equitable
- Ensure the language used the club is appropriate (see resource [here](#))

UNCLEAR PATHWAYS & DEVELOPMENT

- Follow the AFL's Player Development Framework & Female Community Football Club Guidelines
- Ensure coaches and support staff are qualified, friendly and approachable and know how to help their players develop
- Highlight the pathways for girls in your league/club
- Provide flexible commitments to girls aged 16 – 18 around work and school commitments