

# GENDER STEREOTYPES

## Background

A 'stereotype' is a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing. For example, stereotypical 'feminine' personality traits are affectionate and compassionate, and by contrast, 'masculine' traits are considered to be assertive and dominant.

### Differentiating between 'sex' and 'gender'

It is important to understand that gender stereotypes and gender roles are underpinned by the intersection of sex and gender: **Sex** is generally referred to as a biological category, whereas **gender** is a set of characteristics which are attributed to either the masculine or feminine.

### Nature vs nurture

This brings in the 'nature vs nurture' debate whereby certain differences between men and women in the past have been treated as biological or scientific but are actually a result of societal causes and ingrained attitudes. For example, girls were stereotyped as being 'naturally' good at communicating and bad at maths, but we now understand this to be a result of societal conditioning.

## BRINGING SPORT INTO THE CONVERSATION

The way these attitudes and stereotypes filter through society can put women and girls at a disadvantage, particularly when it comes to sport. Negative gender stereotypes are harmful to women and girls participating in, or wanting to participate in, sport and physical activity.

### **“75% of girls have heard disparaging statements about girls in sport”**

Research showed that disparaging comments came from male and female peers, teachers and coaches and parents.

# CHANGING THE GAME

Some things to consider:

- How do you portray girls in your club? E.g. on your website is there a mix of photos of both girls and boys?
- Do boys and girls get an equal amount of time at training and on match days?
- Do girls and boys pay the same fees and get the same from coaches/ staff/ kit in return?
- Do you encourage girls to try less stereotypical sports?
- Do you assume girls are less interested in sport?



## Activities to deliver

E.g. 1: Show the girls these campaigns and talk about why they exist

- [#likeagirl](#) by Always.
- [#banbossy](#) by the US Girl Scouts and Lean In.
- [I will what I want](#) by Under Armour.
- [GirlEffect](#) by Nike Foundation.

E.g. 2. Get creative – run a ‘like a girl warm up’ with girly push ups and girly running – talk about the actions the girls used afterwards, were they strong and the best version they could be, or did they play to the stereotype

E.g. 3. Ask the girls to imagine a fireman, doctor, police officer, nurse, coach, hairdresser – are the male or female? Why do they imagine that – have a discussion.

## Summary

- Gender Stereotypes aren’t always conscious and are often overly simplistic generalisations.
- We are challenging gender stereotypes more but our research shows they still exist especially around some types of sport.
- Peers, parents, teachers and coaches all play a role in gender stereotyping
- IF girls can get past these stereotypes, they are more likely to become MORE active in a range of sports.
- You can make changes and support your girls to make changes in your setting.