

“BOYS WILL BE BOYS”

Creating a new generation of male allies for girls in sport

March 2024



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Women in Sport has been challenging gender inequality in sport for forty years. We believe sport transforms lives and can give girls and women resilience, courage, self-belief and a sense of belonging. We know gender stereotypes and institutional bias are holding girls and women back in sport, and in life. That's why our purpose is to create lasting positive change for women and girls in sport and society.

Our work with women and girls has uncovered that at every life stage they face negative attitudes and discriminatory behaviours from some boys and men, whether conscious or unconscious. From the playground to the pitch, from the workforce to the boardroom, a consistent loud voice is saying that women and girls don't belong in sport. Our research, *Sport, Stereotypes and Stolen Dreams*,¹ with primary school aged girls showed that girls start experiencing these negative attitudes and behaviours very young. We heard many stories of boys excluding girls from 'their' spaces and games, belittling girls' abilities and being derogatory about their appearance. This comes together to crush girls' self-belief and steals their joy and freedom when it comes to sport.

Girls and women do belong in sport, and playing sport matters to their happiness, to their physical and mental health both as children and in adulthood. If we could only normalise women playing sport we would help to reduce some key gendered health inequalities such as self-harm in teenagers or osteoporosis in wiser life.

If we are to succeed in changing the narrative around girls in sport we need to change the narrative around boys. Because this is where it all starts. Gender equality is not a women and girls' issue, it is a human one which requires a deeper understanding of, and engagement with, boys and men.

This report summarises key insights from a major research project we conducted with primary school aged boys. Through this research we have begun the journey to tackle the issue at the very root from which it grows, by working with young boys and their families to understand what influences their attitudes to girls in sport. We want to break the cycle early and find ways to create a new generation of boys who can be agents of change for girls and women in sport.



¹ Women in Sport (2023) *Sport, Stereotypes and Stolen Dreams: Why girls still feel they don't belong in sport*

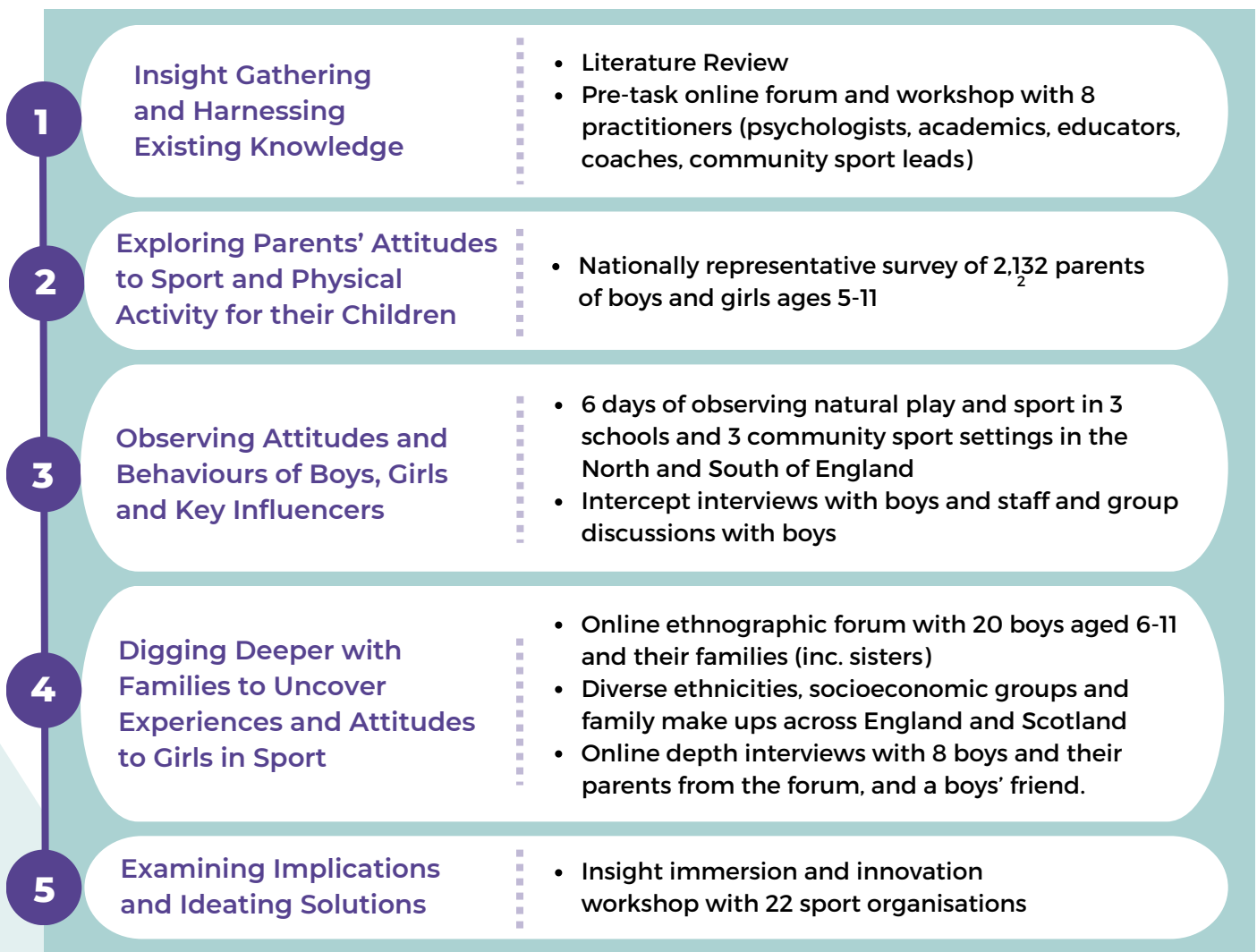
Women in Sport set out to explore what causes boys' negative attitudes and behaviours to girls in sport in the early primary school years. We believe that by tackling the causes early at a young age, there is great opportunity to increase young children's understanding, empathy, acceptance and skill sets to create a more respectful, level playing field in sport, resulting in increased opportunities and better experiences for girls.

Methodology

We adopted an iterative mixed-method approach. A nationally representative survey of over 2,000 parents of children aged 5-11 years was run alongside work to uncover deep insights into the experiences, attitudes and behaviours of boys.

At the heart of this research was an in-depth qualitative ethnography with twenty families and their sons aged 6-11, from a variety of locations, backgrounds, socioeconomic groups and ethnicities, including White British, Black British, British Pakistani, Black Caribbean and British Asian. We explored their everyday lives through an online community and also observed young boys (and girls) in sport and exercise environments, including school and community clubs.

We collaborated with Platypus, a research agency specialising in children and families to design, implement and interpret the research findings. The research was carried out between February and September 2023.



What influences boys' attitudes & behaviours to girls in sport?

Gender stereotyping and traditional masculine ideals underpin boys' negative attitudes and behaviours to girls in sport

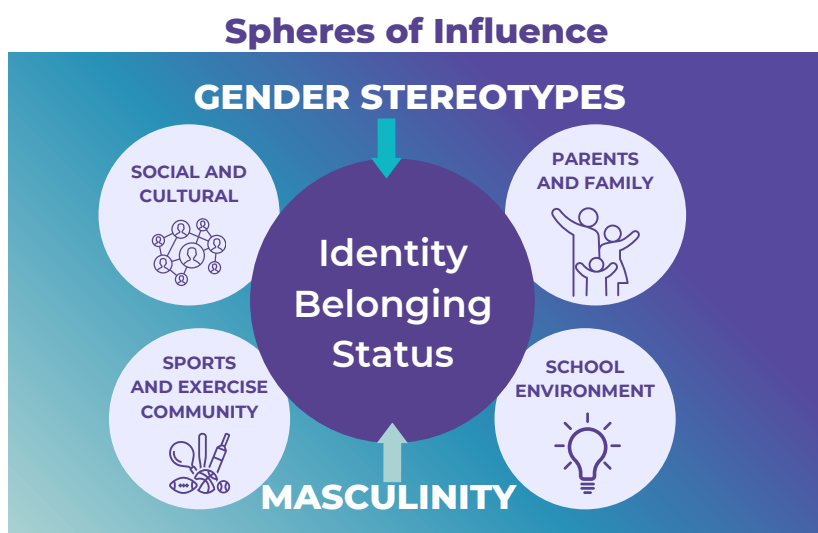
Historically, sport has been viewed by many as a predominantly male domain that values and celebrates traditional notions of masculinity. As gender equality increases in wider society sport is also regarded by some as a last bastion of male dominance. This thinking has, and continues to, exclude girls and women from sport. Although the profile of women's sport has increased recently, our research shows gender stereotypes are still permeating the lives of young boys and setting them on a negative path that continues to exclude girls in sport. Sport can and should unite boys and girls, men and women. It could be a powerful vehicle to challenge gender stereotypes but all too often it reinforces them to the detriment of girls. It is also damaging to those boys who don't conform to the 'masculine' ideals that sport has long symbolised.

Boys are heavily influenced by the expectations around them as they grow up, the narrative they hear at home, in school, from peers, media and wider society. It is important to remember that just like girls, not all boys are the same and we should be mindful of the different socio-cultural factors that shape boys' experiences and attitudes to girls in wider life, as well as sport.

There are several factors across the spheres of influence that inform the way boys feel about themselves and girls in sport, which are underpinned by gender stereotyping and masculine ideals in sport.

1. The gender stereotype of a 'typical boy' is reinforced by parents

Parents have the biggest influence on children's early attitudes in sport and behaviours towards each other. Through an online ethnography and in-depth interviews, we explored the wider lives of boys and their families to gain insight into what shapes boys' perceptions of girls at this young age. It is evident that deeply ingrained gender stereotyping in parents influences their perceptions of their sons' and daughters' preferences, traits and strengths, and the activities they choose for them or steer them towards. At home boys are learning what is 'acceptable' and expected of them if they are to be a 'typical boy'. If they learn that sport is part of being a 'typical boy' it is logical to conclude that girls don't belong in sport so they often devalue girls in sport rather than respecting or appreciating them.



Parents, often unconsciously, treat boys and girls differently and have gendered expectations that reinforce limiting stereotypes

Rigid stereotypes create assumptions and expectations around boys' and girls' preferences, strengths and behaviours. We heard parents describe boys as strong, physical, good at knowing the rules of sport and playing team sports, whereas girls were described as kind, caring, emotional and good at drawing, schoolwork and housework – not sport. When traits and strengths are narrowly associated with boys, they are also not associated with girls. These limiting stereotypes feed boys' perceptions that girls don't like sport and aren't good at it.

37% of parents describe their son as sporty, compared to 27% of parents of girls.


Parents believe...

A typical boy is...



Strong Messy Sporty
 Good at sport Confident
 Boisterous Active Brave
 Likes cars Silly Plays football
 Climbing trees Experimental
 Knows the rules of sport Gets dirty

A typical girl is...



Kind Helpful Chatty
 Creative Emotional
 Likes singing Sensitive
 Likes dancing Likes dolls
 Good at drawing Likes shopping
 Good at housework Likes make-up and being pretty

As a result of parental language and expectations and of the traditional gender roles that may be modelled in day-to day family life boys unconsciously follow a set of rules around what they feel is 'acceptable' for boys (and girls). This narrative is often reinforced by cultural or religious expectations, peer pressure or the media. The rules the boys are learning are those of gender stereotyping and they position boys as superior to and having more value than girls in life, and in sport. To be an acceptable 'typical boy', some boys act and behave, often unconsciously, in ways that are dominant and oppressive to conform to traditional masculinity. Inevitably, this can lead to negative attitudes and behaviours towards girls.

Sport is seen as integral to a boys' identity, success and sense of belonging

All parents want their children to have a healthy and happy life. Our research found that while most say they have the same aspirations for their sons and daughters, in practice parents prioritise success for their sons, whereas the priority for their daughters is to have good relationships. As a male domain, sport was seen as a route to, and symbol of, achievement and success. Boys who are good at sport are perceived as strong, masculine, desirable and popular. Sport is almost viewed as the preserve of men and boys, something they own.

“When boys are grown up, they work and exercise. When girls grow up, they have to stay at home and make food.”
(Primary aged boy)

“My uncle said that I have to be ten times better than girls.”
(Primary aged boy)

“He’s a sporty boy, loves his football and can’t keep still. He’s a boy full of energy!”
(Mum of a primary aged boy)

The parents we spoke to placed a great deal of importance on encouraging their sons to be sporty, channelling them towards sport from a very young age. Parents valued sport for their sons' physical and mental health, to learn new skills, build confidence, and most importantly, to make friends and belong to something. Parents steer their sons towards traditional masculine norms such as team sports, especially football, to protect them from bullying, peer pressure and not feeling accepted. Parents felt so strongly about this it made them reluctant to break free from the mould. The result is that stereotypes and masculine norms are perpetuated, rather than challenged.

Being 'sporty' and notions of 'sportiness' become deeply ingrained in a boy's identity from an early age, and they feel expectations and pressure to live up to this. The strong link between sport and masculinity means girls get left out and less sporty boys often feel ashamed and embarrassed, and struggle to admit that they're not sporty.

Sports/activities parents most prefer their child to take part in	Top 3 sports/activities children take part in	
	GIRLS	BOYS
Teamsport	23%	50%
Creative/artistic sport	35%	9%
Individual sport	22%	22%

Top 3 sports/activities children take part in	
GIRLS	BOYS
Swimming (45%)	Football (66%)
Dance (36%)	Swimming (37%)
Gymnastics (34%)	Other (16%)

Football dominates most boys' lives and this starts early at home

Football is the gauge boys use to define whether they are sporty or not, even when they do other sports. It dominates sport watched at home, the gaming they engage with, the role models they admire, as well as physical space and time in the playground at school. As our national sport, football is popular and accessible for boys and their parents. Football tends to be viewed by many parents as a boy's birthright and is highly associated with traditional notions of masculinity. But this can create a pack mentality and its own 'in or out' culture amongst young boys and can fuel aggressive behaviours that can exclude girls, and less sporty boys.

“Girls don’t know the rules of football so they’re not as good.” (Primary aged boy)

“He’s seen his friends and peers around him that don’t dance. There’s not many people of his kind of ethnicity that go and do dancing.” (Mum of primary aged boy)

“I’d quite like to do dance but none of my friends do it so I play football with them instead.” (Primary aged boy)

“Boys are better than girls. They know how to play and are better at tackling the ball.” (Primary aged boy)

2. Sport is wrapped up with masculinity and status

Our research uncovered that boys are aware of the importance society now attaches to gender equality in sport and beyond and how this can create a better world for everyone. But while many boys knew the right things to say about gender equality, in reality their attitudes and behaviours towards girls in sport often contradicted this. Pressure to conform to “masculine” sporty stereotypes and a lack of constructive challenge and support from adults all contribute to a gap between what boys say and what they do, and to the negative attitudes and behaviours of boys that exclude girls.

Boys see sport as status and think they are better at it

Boys’ views on what girls were good at in sport contrasted with what they felt boys’ strengths were. Informed by stereotypes and school sport, they saw sporty girls as having strengths in helping others, team skills and playing fair, whereas they saw sporty boys’ strengths in their physicality, skills and results. Given these perceptions that girls don’t have the skills to win and that boys view winning as key to their status, they can be overly critical of girls and actively sideline them.

Boys also believed that there were not as many sporty girls as there were sporty boys. These views were particularly evident in male dominated sports and activities (especially football) where boys believed they are physically better, know how to play better than girls and felt girls are encroaching into their space. Boys had more positive perceptions of girls’ strengths when girls took part in traditionally female sports such as netball, gymnastics, and dance.

“The boys would win because they are faster and better at tackling and scoring.”
(Primary aged boy)

Boys tell us that...

Sporty boys are good at...

1. **Scoring shots**
2. **Being fast**
3. **Being strong**
4. **Skill**
5. **Winning**
6. Passing the ball
7. Teamwork
8. Being rough/aggressive
9. Helping others
10. Playing fair



Sporty girls are good at...

1. **Helping others**
2. **Teamwork**
3. **Playing fair**
4. **Balancing**
5. **Skill**
6. Scoring shots
7. Being flexible
8. Passing the ball
9. Being fast
10. Being able to stretch



An unhealthy focus on winning at an early age creates pressure for boys

Research consistently shows that having fun and being with friends are the key motivators for young boys and girls to take part in sport. But the gender stereotyping that boys, and especially sporty boys, are exposed to can create internal and external pressure for them to value winning above all else. Many of the boys' proudest moments in their lives were tied to winning in sport. Winning (and scoring in particular) is a badge of honour that gives boys confidence and social currency. Boys feel great expectation to perform and not make mistakes, and their competitiveness is driven by a desire to be the best and be recognised and acknowledged. The pressure to win can be reinforced by parents, peers, coaches, spectators and role models in the media.

Boys' feelings about winning and losing



"Amazing, everyone congratulating me."

"I got high-fives from the rest of the team."

"Felt very proud."

"Happy, we cheered and talked about the win."



"I just wanted to go home."

"I felt silly."

"I felt really sad."

"My friends got angry."

"Frustrated and annoyed."

"I didn't enjoy the game."

"I felt grumpy and disappointed."



"If he loses a match, it affects us all. Kids need to be taught how to lose, it's tough love and they have to roll with it, it makes them more robust." (Mum of primary aged boy)

Boys aren't supported to lose well, causing aggressive behaviours that impact everyone

When boys don't perform well or lose, they can feel hurt and pain and that they've let themselves, their parents and their team mates down. This is a natural response but boys are stereotyped to 'man up' in life and sport rather than express their real emotions. The adults in their lives can fall into the trap of reinforcing this by teaching boys to 'put up' with their pain rather than teaching them how to recognise and express their emotions in a helpful way. This can result in boys feeling frustrated, angry and upset which highly sporty boys in particular, are ill-equipped to deal with, and can project on to others, especially girls. This in turn can create an aggressive and toxic environment which crushes girls' confidence and enjoyment and excludes them. Parents felt this was particularly evident in sports clubs, where there is greater emphasis on skills, competition and winning. We also observed that these negative behaviours are often excused by parents, teachers and coaches as being those of a 'typical boy' and left unchallenged.

There is no doubt that healthy competition and winning is important in sport as it can teach children valuable life skills and gives positive memories that last a lifetime. But boys need more support from parents, teachers and coaches to learn how to lose well, manage their emotions and understand the wider value of sport. They need to learn that being a good sportsman goes beyond winning.

**"I've witnessed boys being told to 'man up' and 'get a grip' when showing emotion in relation to being physically active."
(Expert Practitioner)**

**"I have seen a girl in a team make a mistake and the boys being critical of her rather than supportive, which they would not necessarily do if another boy had made the error."
(Female PE Teacher)**

What does good sportspersonship look like?

- Playing fairly and showing self-control in difficult situations
- Valuing peers, teammates and teamwork over individual glory
- Respecting and appreciating everyone, irrespective of their skills and abilities
- Dealing with losses, mistakes and lows openly and constructively together
- Learning to win graciously

3. Sporting environments reinforce stereotypes and inequality

The sense that sport is really a male activity is perpetuated through the spaces, places and facilities where sport is played. Sporting environments, whether a school playground or a sports club, and the cultures that are prevalent within them can reinforce gender stereotypes and send the wrong messages to boys about girls in sport.

Boys dominate the playground

At the start of school boys and girls are happier to participate in imaginary free-play and games together. However, as they grow older, stereotypes become more ingrained. To conform to the expectations around them, the interests of boys and girls begin to diverge and the sexes become more segregated. Our research found that boys increasingly dominate the playground with football and we observed both verbal and physical aggression. Staff told us that this was a regular occurrence within boys' football games. Whilst some girls did want to join in, boys were reluctant to let girls into 'their' space, and the overly aggressive nature of games meant girls were also fearful of being hurt. As the playground has minimal adult supervision boys are led to feel they "own" the playground for sport, with girls relegated to the edges, sinking into the background and missing out on being active. Our research found that facilitated playtimes that provide a wide variety of equipment and activities and rotate use of space, create more gender equal use of the environment which can lead to greater mutual respect and appreciation.

**"I've heard boys call girls 'fatty' or 'slow coach'. The girls will get upset, lose confidence and will then not want to play with the boys."
(Playground Assistant)**



Boys will often dominate mixed-sex PE and sport

Timetabling and resource limitations in schools, and relatively low numbers of girls in community sport often make mixed-sex sport the default option. However, due to stereotyping and lack of experience and opportunity a skills deficit exists between girls and boys, which means girls do not always thrive in mixed-sex lessons, sessions, teams or competition. We observed this in some schools and community sport settings where boys were more actively engaged and would dominate game play and exclude girls. Before puberty, boys and girls are not physically different enough to require separation for safety reasons, especially in non-contact sport. But stereotyping sets the sexes apart and slight physical differences that do exist mean that the fastest boy will beat the fastest girl in linear races so direct competition is rarely fair. This is why mixed-sex sport needs to be actively managed.

Teachers and coaches can inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes

Gender stereotyping is deeply embedded in us all, and some teachers and coaches we spoke to were unaware of boys' behaviours and the impact it was having on girls. Some even unknowingly reinforced the stereotypes, for example by assigning boys the most sought-after positions in games, and using gendered language that devalued the girls. They also gave more recognition and praise to the boys than the girls for their efforts and achievements. All this leads the boys to think that they matter more than girls in sport. When teachers and coaches became aware of these issues, there was a strong desire to change and create positive equal environments for girls in sport.



**“I didn’t even realise this was happening until this research and now I can see it all the time in our sessions.”
(Male coach)**

“Until we started this research I didn’t really think that the boys were behaving any differently towards girls. Then I started to notice it and since then I’ve started to change the way I coach to make it more equal for girls.” (Mixed children’s team coach)

Staff feel ill-equipped to facilitate equal and fair play

It was clear that not all staff knew how to prevent boys from dominating whether in the playground or in mixed-sex sport. In primary school settings teachers may not have much experience of sport at all, and if they do it is normally of mainstream sports. They told us that their lack of confidence and knowledge in teaching a variety of sports was limiting children's options and opportunities as well as their ability to facilitate equal and fair play. Coaches, teachers and playground assistants felt they would all benefit from training and support to help them recognise the signs of boys dominating or excluding girls and how to change sessions and engage boys in more positive behaviours.



A male-dominated culture in sports clubs reinforces girls and women don't belong

Traditional sports clubs can be male-orientated with a strong cohort of male players and members. From those we visited, it was evident that men occupied most coaching and leadership roles, with women in support roles. Some men viewed the clubhouse as an exclusive social space for them, and were resistant to change. Where clubs attracted more women and girls, they were rarely well integrated into the club. Female teams were often being relegated to poorer pitches and less social playing times, and facilities did not always meet their needs. Additionally, women had less opportunities, investment and support and their achievements were less well celebrated. This all combines to create an unwelcoming environment to navigate for women and girls, making it exhausting to continue. Boys are not immune to this culture and its message that sport is a male domain where women and girls don't belong.

“I have been trained and have the knowledge of different sporting skills, but my knowledge of different sports is not as strong.”
(Female PE Teacher)

“You often see the children fall out. It's usually to do with football. It is difficult and I think we do need more training on how to deal with these conflicts.”
(Playground Assistant)

“The women's team is really strong and have grown a lot in the last few years but there are still some of the older players who feel a bit weird about seeing women's team photos up in the club house.”
(Mixed children's team coach)

4. Role models and visibility

The relative invisibility of girls and women playing sport both in the community and in the media reinforces the view that sport is not for girls. More visibility is vital if boys' attitudes and behaviours towards girls in sport are to improve, as are positive male role models who make it clear that they value women's sport. Seeing girls and women play and work in sport doesn't just inspire girls, but it gives boys greater appreciation for girls in sport by helping to normalise female participation.

Role models close to home...

Dad is a boy's hero and has the strongest influence on their relationship with sport

We found that dads were the main source of inspiration and encouragement for boys to take part in sport, followed by other male role models such as brothers, teachers and coaches. Dads were often the more experienced and sporty member of the family and wanted to pass this love of sport down to their sons. They played sport with them from a very young age, watched sport on TV and attended live events together, and some also helped coach their sons' teams. Dads do not escape gender stereotyping and tend not to place as much value on sport for their daughters and nor do they feel they are expected to help their daughter with sport. This hinders dads' ability and confidence to engage in physical activity with their daughters in the same way as their sons. Their sons take their dad's lead and assume that sport doesn't matter for their sisters. Given that boys can idolise their dads, dads could play a powerful role in tackling stereotypes, resetting expectations when it comes to sport and teaching boys to respect and appreciate girls in sport and wider life.



“My dad is my hero. He’s really sporty, good at timing and he’s raised me to be sporty.” (Primary aged boy)

“Dad takes me to training and encourages me the most.” (Primary aged boy)

“My daddy teaches me to play rugby and also other sports. He buys me goalkeeper kits and also bought me a strategy board, so we can work out my moves on the pitch.” (Primary aged boy)

Active and sporty mums and sisters are also vital

Our research found that mums play an important role in facilitating and supporting their sons' sporting activities. However, mum was less likely to be sporty herself and more likely to have had negative experiences, so her capacity to influence her son's attitudes and behaviours in sport was limited compared to dad's. That said, those boys who had sporty mums, and sporty sisters especially, had more positive attitudes to girls playing sport. Sporty mums were more actively involved in watching sport with boys, practising at home with them, and ensuring sport was a family activity for all, rather than just for dads and sons. Active females within the family help to dispel the stereotypes around girls and women in sport and normalise female participation for boys, encouraging more positive attitudes towards girls.

The vicious circle – boys don't see girls playing sport so assume they don't belong

Outside of the family, some of the negativity towards girls in sport comes from the fact that boys don't see enough girls taking part, leading to perceptions that girls just don't like sport, and aren't good at it. Although girls take part in mandatory PE in school, boys see few girls playing sport in the playground, or taking part in afterschool sports clubs or community sport. Young boys aren't aware that this is often not due to choice, but due to stereotyping, lack of opportunities and their own behaviours towards girls. As a result, boys' belief that sport is not for girls is bolstered and their negative attitudes around girls in sport continue. A further layer is added by the relatively few female coaches in community sport. Boys need to be surrounded by more girls and women in sport to break down these negative perceptions.

**“There are not enough female role models in school whether this be teachers who participate in sport/run clubs or coaches delivering what might be considered a boy's sport like football.”
(Expert Practitioner)**



The factors above are reinforced further by the coverage of women's sport in the media...

Men's sport dominates mainstream media and reinforces sport is for men

Almost all the boys watched sport weekly but this was overwhelmingly men's sport, influenced largely by dads. Football dominated their screens with some also watching rugby, cricket, boxing, basketball and formula one, which are all male dominated. Some boys had watched women's sport, mainly the women's Euros and tennis, which was encouraged by their mum rather than dad. Although the visibility of women's sport is slowly improving, it is still very difficult for most families to access women's sport on TV or online. Boys have very little exposure to it or to female athlete role models who can inspire and disrupt the stereotype that sport is only for men. Very few boys could recognise or knew of any female athletes, they don't feel relevant enough to boys currently as they don't see them enough.

“It was amazing [women's Euro's] and inspired the girls I know at school but whilst I think my son enjoyed watching it, it didn't have as much impact as if the men had won.” -(Mum of primary aged boy)



“I see it (Lionesses success) as very positive - boys will be more exposed to females in sport and see it as more normal and aspirational.” (Expert Practitioner)

Boys from diverse communities lack exposure to relatable sportswomen

In addition to the lack of female role models in general, sportswomen from diverse ethnic backgrounds are particularly invisible in the media. Boys from some ethnic backgrounds particularly struggled to view girls and women as sporty or entertain the possibility of them being any good at sport because so few girls and women from their communities were playing sport.

Boys are not seeing enough positive male role models in sport

Footballers were the dominant role models for boys however sporty they were. Boys grow up wanting to emulate their talent, fame and fortune. Footballers are very high profile and visible and any negative behaviours they show on and off the pitch are often given great attention in the mainstream media. Boys become normalised to these behaviours and mirror them when playing sport, believing they are an acceptable part of being a sportsman. This is made worse by the boys' exposure to an increasing number of social media influencers and online trolls who show contempt for women and actively disparage them and women's sport.

While there are positive male role models in sport and they can be powerful for boys, they are often not given as much profile or recognition as those showing negative behaviours. One exception is Marcus Rashford who was the most recognised and admired sportsman. Boys were not only inspired by Marcus' ability and success, but by his charity and advocacy work. Positive sportsmen who champion women's sport need to be more visible and celebrated to positively influence boys.

**“We do all we can in school to promote equality but boys are being exposed to male football celebrities, mouthing off to referees, spitting etc. and seeing that as acceptable behaviour.”
(Male PE Teacher)**



Recommendations: Creating a new generation of male allies for girls in sport

Boys, and the men they will become, can be agents of change for girls and women in sport, and in life. To realise this, we must create equitable and mutually supportive environments for boys and girls in sport by challenging limiting gender stereotypes and breaking down the traditional masculine culture in sport that nurtures negative attitudes and behaviours to girls and women. Our girls' futures depend on it.

Recommendations

1

Recognise and challenge limiting stereotypes

We all need to recognise that we have been stereotyped. Our own life experiences will significantly affect the expectations we have of the children around us. We need to acknowledge and respect the genuine differences between boys and girls but disrupt limiting stereotypes that hold girls away from sport. We need to separate fact from fiction.

2

Redefine the value of sport for boys and girls

We need to recognise the value sport holds in terms of building sporting and life skills and qualities like resilience, determination, respect and teamwork. Focusing only on absolutes like strength, speed, dominance and winning is what fuels the link between sport and macho masculinity. This link needs to be broken if girls are to feel they have an equal place in sport.

3

Help boys to become allies not opponents

Boys need support to understand the value of sport for girls as well as boys. Challenging negative behaviours constructively and educating boys on good behaviours and sportspersonship combined with positive male role models will help boys to learn how to become allies to girls. Being an ally means avoiding negative masculinity, treating girls in sport as equals, and having the confidence to challenge anyone who doesn't.

4

Create gender-equal sporting environments

Many sporting environments have been designed exclusively around the needs of men and boys and this needs to change if girls are to feel they belong in school and community sport. Coaches and teachers need to lead cultural change by re-setting expectations, giving equal opportunities and recognition to girls and helping boys to understand why girls do belong in sport.

5

Increase the visibility of girls and women in sport

At home, in schools and in the community we need to celebrate our women and girls at all levels of sport and physical activity and recognise our male allies. We also need sports media coverage to be more gender-equal if we are to normalise female participation. We know that seeing great sportswomen inspires both girls and boys and it also enhances boys' perceptions of girls and women in sport.

What next?

We have created resources, informed by our research with primary girls and boys. These aim to guide and support parents and carers, primary school teachers and coaches to bust the myths and stereotypes around girls and boys in sport, tackle the gender play gap and champion the value of sport for all children. These can be accessed by clicking the tiles below.



We are continuing to build our insight with girls and boys through further research and to develop solutions through our policy, campaigning and programme work. We welcome potential collaborations and partnerships to help us drive positive change for all girls in sport by engaging boys and men as allies. Check out our website if you want to get involved in future work in this area. We would love to hear from you: www.womeninsport.org.

Thank you to...

- All the amazing boys and their families for sharing their lives and experiences with us during this research.
- The schools, community clubs and staff who supported the fieldwork.
- The stakeholders who generously gave their insights and time throughout this work.
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