

GSA Research Association Student Report

The Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls & The Bedford Girls School

“What factors attribute to young youth team female players in their decision to not continuing playing amateur football?”

School(s): EWS / BGS

EWS: Sarai Akwa Gordon, Bahara Saberi, Keira Everett, Izabela Musialowicz, Jannah Hashem

BGS: Ayla Akhtar, Joelle Hall, Abhinaya Sivakumar, Zoe Vadher, Harriet Muchmore, Beatrice Burchmore

Section 1: Introduction

Our research project is centered on the question “What factors attribute to young youth team female players in their decision to not continuing playing amateur football?” The reason for choosing this question was born out of our personal interest in the topic of male and female equality in sports and our own passion for sport.

By targeting young female football players and exploring reasons as to why they decide to drop out of playing amateur football at a young age, we hoped to expand our knowledge on equality in sports and the influential factors impacting young sportswomen.

Section 2: Literature Review

The start of the project began with examining existing research into female youth amateur football. The process led to the identification of the term ‘Grassroots’ football”. Grassroots refers to a local, amateur sport played for enjoyment not money. It is open to all ages and abilities and promotes health, teamwork and inclusion.

In England, over 10,300 teenage girls play grassroots football. According to *womenandsport.ca*, girls aged 6-8 are 3% more active than boys, but interest declines from age 9. A *theguardian.com* report states that over 1 million girls lose interest during secondary school. A *womeninsport.org* survey links this to a fear of judgement (68%), low confidence (61%), and academic pressure (47%).

A 16-year girl old told the BBC, “If you tell a boy you wish to play, football, they’ll give you a quiz.” This highlights boys often challenge girls’ knowledge or ability to play football, as if they need to prove themselves. These micro-aggressions can make girls feel unwelcome and discourage them from continuing the sport.

Section 3: Methodology

Our research methodology consisted of a mix of both quantitative and qualitative data, in the form of two sets of questionnaires (see Appendix 1 and 2).

Our identified sample group were girls between the ages of 11 to 13. These students, we hoped, would provide an insight into why students stop playing football in their teens. Both EWS and BGS provided a short questionnaire to all Year 7 to Year 9 students (see Appendix 1) to identify girls who had, or were still, playing football. Collecting data across both locations provided a wider range of responses, therefore increasing the accuracy of our findings. Consent was gained through asking participants to agree to their data being used and where a participant had not given consent, their data results were removed from our findings.

From the first questionnaire, 584 responses were received. The responses identified 105 students who had dropped out of playing regular amateur football. This became our target focus group and a follow-up, more detailed survey was conducted. (Appendix 2).

Section 4: Data Analysis

We organised our data (Appendix 3) by using responses from the student surveys and tallying the results. We found that 15.5% of female individuals stopped playing grassroots football because they had negative experiences and social pressures (10.75%), lack of facilities (23.3%), health/injuries (21.4%) and lack of time (28.6%) Another key finding was that not many female players always felt equally treated as the male players during football games.

Section 5: Interpretation and Discussion

In relation to our research question the data suggests that there are many factors that contribute to girls dropping out of playing football from a young age. However, it was of interest to note that girls mostly stopped playing football in Year 7(37.1%), which might suggest that secondary school pressure and commitments may also be an additional factor. This would require further study.

If we were able to extend the project, we would survey junior school girls aged 6-10 to explore further why students in Year 7 no longer play the game. Was it social, economic, cultural factors, school pressures or greater choice in other sporting opportunities?

Section 6: Evaluation

An element that worked well in the undertaking of this project was the creation of questionnaires and the gathering of data. The surveys were carried out effectively and participants found the questionnaire easy to follow. This ensured we received accurate data. Our findings have identified issues in girls' desire or ability to continue playing football at a level seen in the under 11's. If girls' football is to flourish further, research into inequality within grassroots football is needed.

A major challenge faced was communicating with our partner school due to technical and data security issues. We would strongly recommend, if this pilot was to be rolled out, schools worked independently, thus avoiding school time table clashes and data protection issues. As a result of communication problems, the project required more time to complete as it seemed rushed at the end, and we could not chase responses for our data from all participants.

If the GSA did feel the project should involve the pairing of school's we would recommend it provides an in-person research event, where the schools participants meet, and whilst attending workshops agree a topic, create a research question and create a survey, something that took several weeks to do in zoom calls.

Section 7: Conclusion

By participating in the GSA pilot research project, we have gained invaluable experience in carrying out a piece of primary research. A skill that will be beneficial in our future studies. We have learned how to host and chair meetings, take minutes and overcome technical issues using a variety of alternative communication tools. In addition, we have widened our knowledge of issues related to inequality in women's football and allowed other girls in our schools to reflect on their own time playing football.

The findings from our research suggest that many different factors contribute to girls leaving grassroots football such as lack of time, social pressure and negative

experiences. It confirms that there is a need to support, encourage and engage young women who wish to pursue a career in football.

Section 8: References

“All Girls Can Play”. 2024. The Rally Report <https://womenandsport.ca/en-ca/the-rally-report-2024>

“Gender Sports England – Encouraging more Women into Sports”

<https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sportengland.org%2Fresearch-and-data%2Fresearch%2Fgender&data=05%7C02%7Csarah.rogers%40bedfordgirlsschool.co.uk%7Cb8ad32e065fb4d3c845708ddba6d5f8f%7C457356f2b97a4791a55aaa6418b6e5e9%7C0%7C0%7C638871701104503003%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUslYiOilwLjAuMDAwMCIsIAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbClslldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C60000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=sSBhIMmdSLzdpqJ2ukMskV2IPDfblRnhmu9BJYMgUxA%3D&reserved=0>

“Girl footballers told ‘get back in the kitchen’”. BBC News. 6th June 2024. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cv227g4v5kjo>

“Girls three times more likely to quit football than boys”. Starling Bank.

<https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.starlingbank.com%2Fnews%2Fgirls-three-times-more-likely-to-quit-football-than-boys%2F&data=05%7C02%7Csarah.rogers%40bedfordgirlsschool.co.uk%7Ca9fd93f053784ed1032808ddba6d192d%7C457356f2b97a4791a55aaa6418b6e5e9%7C0%7C0%7C638871699918144033%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUslYiOilwLjAuMDAwMCIsIAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbClslldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C60000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=qrnj7WagzHyg66Fb8ZIZmf7g6H0aReNj%2FmeHRDyddPY%3D&reserved=0>

“Health Barriers for Girls and Women in Sports” UK Parliament. March 2024.

<https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fpublications.parliament.uk%2Fpa%2Fcm5804%2Fcmselect%2Fcmwomeq%2F130%2Freport.html&data=05%7C02%7Csarah.rogers%40bedfordgirlsschool.co.uk%7C98b816dd9901492af7df08ddba6d492b%7C457356f2b97a4791a55aaa6418b6e5e9%7C0%7C0%7C638871700745443775%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUslYiOilwLjAuMDAwMCIsIAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbClslldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C40000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=YHjAl7ao7HHt%2FwixyGzaQ%2BtVzbb%2BP37jSUXpSiAXwqs%3D&reserved=0>

“Kick It Out” <https://www.kickitout.org/>

Kick It Out 2023-24 Report

<https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bbc.com%2Fsport%2Ffootball%2Farticles%2Fc80xwlgpwxjo&data=05%7C02%7Csarah.rogers%40bedfordgirlsschool.co.uk%7C9335bb0f971d4556037308ddba6bd988%7C457356f2b97a4791a55aaa6418b6e5e9%7C0%7C0%7C638871694568038642%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUslYiOilwLjAuMDAwMCIsIAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbClslldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C40000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=MeO7tI0lxKpRSCNUdQnqbhpJiYvzGeUXng8U1wRkNqA%3D&reserved=0>

"More than one million teenage girls fall out of love with sports". Women in Sports. 7th March 2022. <https://womeninsport.org/news/more-than-1-million-teenage-girls-fall-out-of-love-with-sport/> (women in sports)

Radio 1 <https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/clips/21849486j/> (Short podcast)

Record High Reports on discrimination in the 2022/23 Football Season

<https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thepinknews.com%2F2023%2F07%2F18%2Ffootball-discrimination-reports-kick-it-out%2F&data=05%7C02%7Csarah.rogers%40bedfordgirlsschool.co.uk%7C78feb17514f84b40409608ddba6cefc%7C457356f2b97a4791a55aaa6418b6e5e9%7C0%7C0%7C638871699352063400%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOilwLjAuMDAwMCIslIAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbCIsIldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C60000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=blbkVPe3Ek6GSD3loqllLwghPWJ%2F1B8R%2BEL6HwYnonY%3D&reserved=0>

"Sport England: Why are children from Black, Asian and ethnic minorities less active? 29th January 2020. BBC Bite-Size <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51281976>

Tackling Inequities and the Gender Equality Gap in Football

<https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sportengland.org%2Fblogs%2Ftackling-inequities-and-gender-activity-gap-through-football&data=05%7C02%7Csarah.rogers%40bedfordgirlsschool.co.uk%7C00c830b729df4fbcdbde208ddba6caa6b%7C457356f2b97a4791a55aaa6418b6e5e9%7C0%7C0%7C638871698075344591%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOilwLjAuMDAwMCIslIAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbCIsIldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C60000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=DiDe6fOWGG5Xfmo4MICPyGZWGqFNRil1ochZakgHpMM%3D&reserved=0>

Tackling Sexism in Football Coaching

<https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fblog.equalityanddiversity.co.uk%2Findex.php%2F2024%2F06%2F03%2Ftackling-sexism-in-football-coaching-insights-and-solutions%2F&data=05%7C02%7Csarah.rogers%40bedfordgirlsschool.co.uk%7C1ab9723bf4bd4b6487bc08ddba6c79e8%7C457356f2b97a4791a55aaa6418b6e5e9%7C0%7C0%7C638871697388283951%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOilwLjAuMDAwMCIslIAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbCIsIldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C60000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=15GSBJGcW9F5o3xXpl7NYuhinJKTmcWcaTmCH4IDAA%3D&reserved=0>

UK Attitudes Towards Women in Sports 2023

<https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.insure4sport.co.uk%2Fblog%2Fuk-attitudes-towards-women-in-sport%2F&data=05%7C02%7Csarah.rogers%40bedfordgirlsschool.co.uk%7Cb5a2757c0ad641fdc8df08ddba6c1c70%7C457356f2b97a4791a55aaa6418b6e5e9%7C0%7C0%7C638871695691815011%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOilwLjAuMDAwMCIslIAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbCIsIldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C40000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=5jcwkdQqWkNlplO2Mk7dlHarjWXEWu9HFQslAUiMoMI%3D&reserved=0>

“UK girls lose interest in sport as teenagers”. The Guardian. 7th March 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/mar/07/uk-girls-lose-interest-in-sport-as-teenagers-women-in-sport-survey>

“Why do girls stop playing sports? Let’s ask them”. RTE. 6th January 2022. <https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2021/1209/1240373-why-teenage-girls-quit-sport/>

Women and Girls Football Reports Recent Growth

<https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.englandfootball.com%2Farticles%2F2024%2FFeb%2F09%2Fwomens-girls-football-increased-numbers-reported-by-county-fas-20240902&data=05%7C02%7Csarah.rogers%40bedfordgirlsschool.co.uk%7Cd262b99b6d53467137fc08ddba6c46e9%7C457356f2b97a4791a55aaa6418b6e5e9%7C0%7C0%7C638871696520447089%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbCIsIldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C80000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=8m8QOW24G4GIJ%2FJ3c%2BVNmmtWhdFDPI8v63RAyD0YRP4%3D&resend=0>

Section 9: Appendices

Appendix 1 – First Questionnaire	Page 9
Appendix 2 – Follow-up Questionnaire	Page 10
Appendix 3 – EWS Data	Page 11-14
BGS Data	Page 15-24

Appendix 1: First questionnaire

Please complete ALL areas

Name _____ Form _____ Form tutor _____ Room _____

You are being invited to participate in a questionnaire conducted by a group of year 8 students as part of a research project by the Girls School Association. This questionnaire aims to identify pupils who have stopped playing amateur football.

Please tick yes or no to give consent for your data to be used

I give consent for my data to be used

I do not give consent for my data to be used

Questionnaire to identify who has stopped playing amateur (an activity done for enjoyment) football

Please circle Yes or No for each question

1. Have you ever participated in girl's football? Yes No
2. Do you still participate? Yes No

If you have selected **NO**, I **no-longer participate in girls football** would you be willing to take part in a quick school questionnaire survey looking at why girls drop football?

I am willing to take part in a short survey

I am not willing to take part in a short survey

Appendix 2: Follow up – questionnaire

Appendix 3: Data

Data from EWS

Research question - "What factors attribute to young youth team female players in their decision to not continuing playing amateur football?"

Follow up questionnaire: Why Do Young Female Players Stop Playing Amateur Football?
You are being invited to participate in a questionnaire conducted by a group of year 8 students as part of a research project by the Girls School Association. This questionnaire aims to identify pupils who have stopped playing amateur football.

Please tick yes or no to give consent for your data to be used

I give consent for my data to be used

I do not give consent for my data to be used

Please answer ALL questions

Section 1: Background Information

1. What year group are you in?

- Year 7
- Year 8
- Year 9

2. How long did you play football before stopping?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- More than 5 years

3. At what age (or year group) did you stop playing football?

- Year 7 (age 11-12)
- Year 8 (age 12-13)
- Year 9 (age 13-14)
- Before Year 7

4. How often did you play when you were active?

- Once a week
- 2-3 times a week
- More than 3 times a week

5. Did you play in an all-girls team or a mixed team?

- Mixed team
- All - girls team

Section 2: Experience in Football

6. What motivated you to start playing football? (Select all that apply)

- Friends were playing
- Family encouraged me
- Enjoyed the sport
- Wanted to stay fit/healthy
- Inspired by professional players
- Other (please specify): _____

7. How did playing football make you feel?

- Very positive (confident, happy, motivated)
- Somewhat positive
- Neutral
- Somewhat negative
- Very negative

8. Did you feel supported while playing? Please tick one box for each

a) Supported by coach

- Yes, fully supported
- Somewhat supported
- Not really supported
- Not supported at all

b) Supported by family

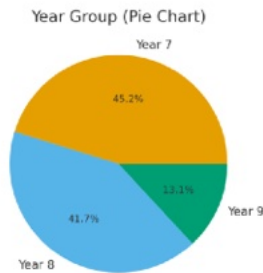
- Yes, fully supported
- Somewhat supported
- Not really supported
- Not supported at all

b) Supported by friends

- Yes, fully supported

Questionnaire Data with Matched Responses and Charts

Year Group	Count
Year 7	38
Year 8	35
Year 9	11



Duration of Play

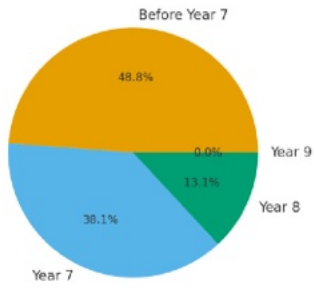
Response	Count
<1 year	27
1-2 years	35
3-5 years	18
>5 years	4



Stopped Playing

Response	Count
Before Year 7	41
Year 7	32
Year 8	11
Year 9	0

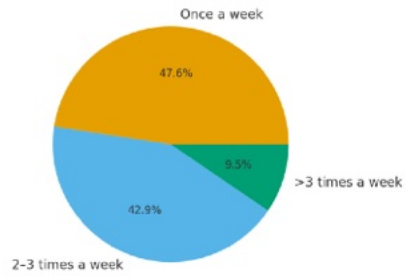
Stopped Playing (Pie Chart)



Frequency of Play

Response	Count
Once a week	40
2-3 times a week	36
>3 times a week	8

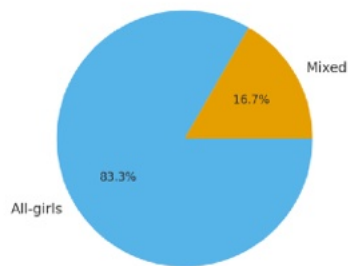
Frequency of Play (Pie Chart)



Team Type

Response	Count
Mixed	14
All-girls	70

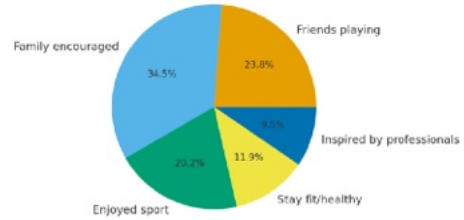
Team Type (Pie Chart)



Motivation

Response	Count
Friends playing	20
Family encouraged	29
Enjoyed sport	17
Stay fit/healthy	10
Inspired by professionals	8

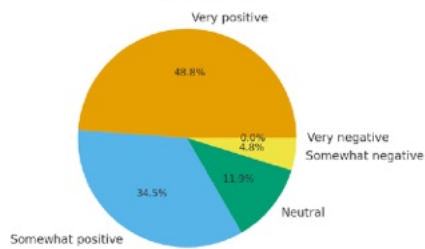
Motivation (Pie Chart)



Feeling

Response	Count
Very positive	41
Somewhat positive	29
Neutral	10
Somewhat negative	4
Very negative	0

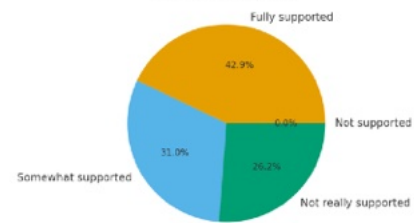
Feeling (Pie Chart)



Support

Response	Count
Fully supported	36
Somewhat supported	26
Not really supported	22
Not supported	0

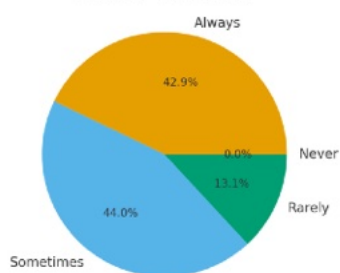
Support (Pie Chart)



Felt that female players treated equality to male players

Response	Count
Always	36
Sometimes	37
Rarely	11
Never	0

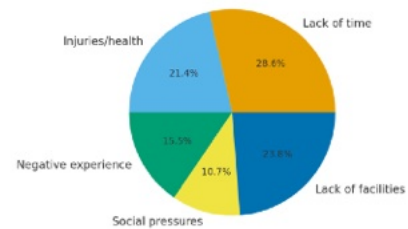
Equality (Pie Chart)



Reasons for Stopping

Response	Count
Lack of time	24
Injuries/health	18
Negative experience	13
Social pressures	9
Lack of facilities	20

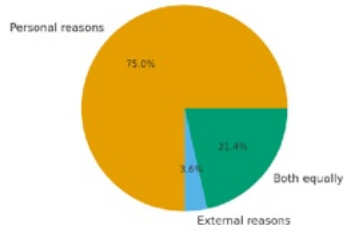
Reasons for Stopping (Pie Chart)



Decision Influenced by...

Response	Count
Personal reasons	63
External reasons	3
Both equally	18

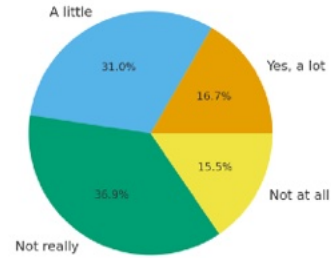
Decision Influence (Pie Chart)



Regret Leaving

Response	Count
Yes, a lot	14
A little	26
Not really	31
Not at all	13

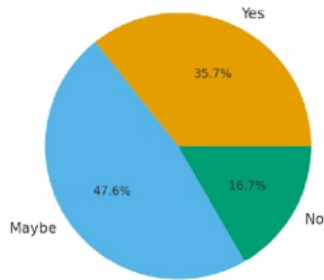
Regret Leaving (Pie Chart)



Return to Football

Response	Count
Yes	30
Maybe	40
No	14

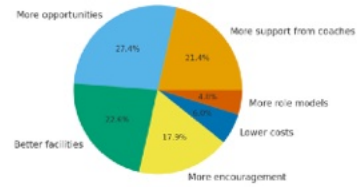
Return to Football (Pie Chart)



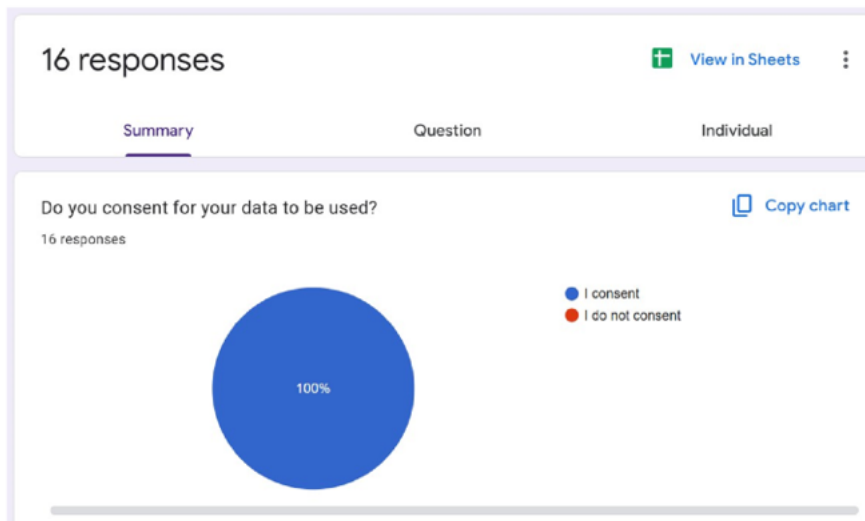
Encouragement

Response	Count
More support from coaches	18
More opportunities	23
Better facilities	19
More encouragement	15
Lower costs	5
More role models	4

Encouragement (Pie Chart)

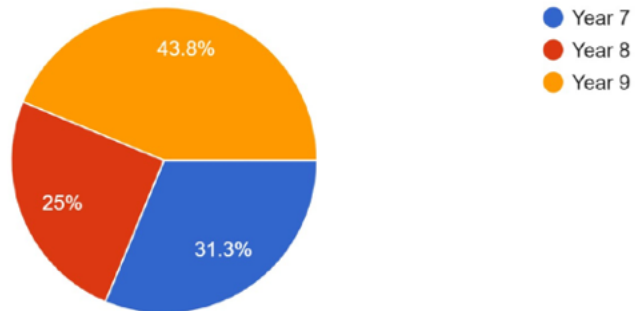


Data from BGS



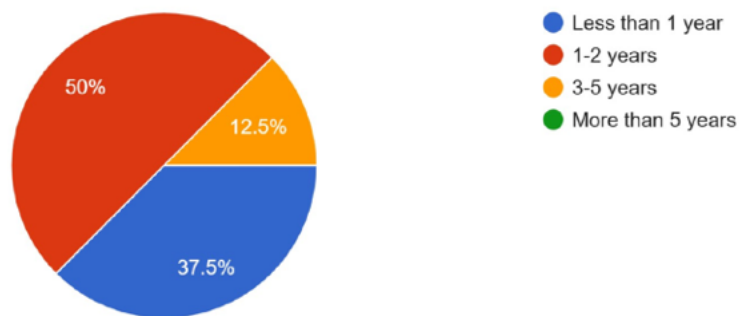
What year group are you in?

16 responses



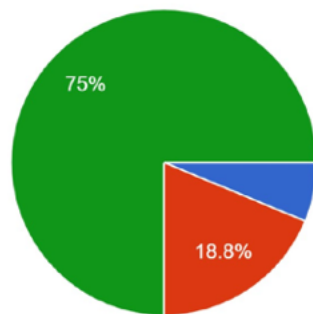
How long did you play football before stopping?

16 responses



At what age (year group) did you stop playing football?

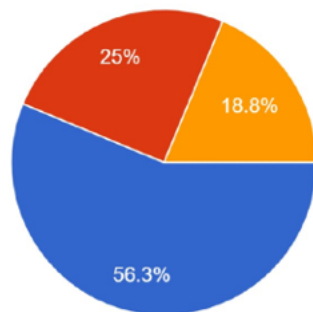
16 responses



- Year 7 (age 11-12)
- Year 8 (age 12-13)
- Year 9 (age 13-14)
- Before year 7

How often did you play when you were active?

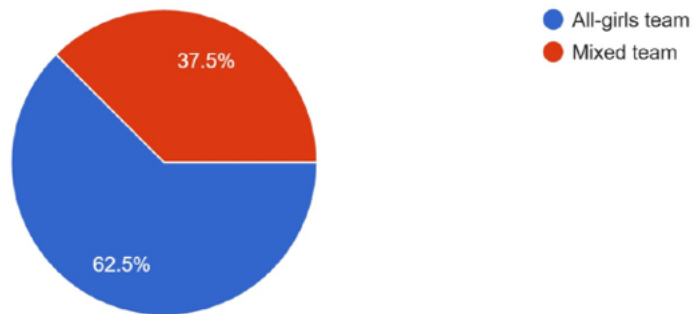
16 responses



- Once a week
- 2-3 times a week
- More than 3 times a week

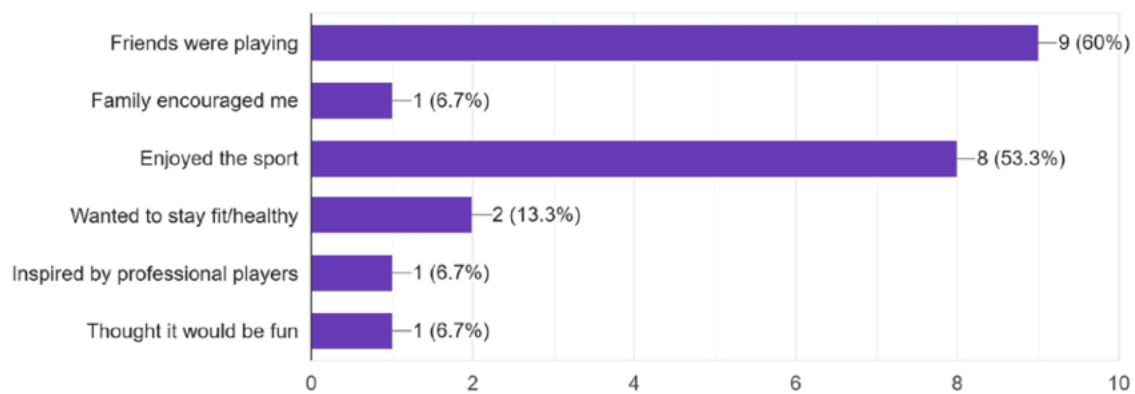
Did you play in an all-girls team or a mixed team?

16 responses



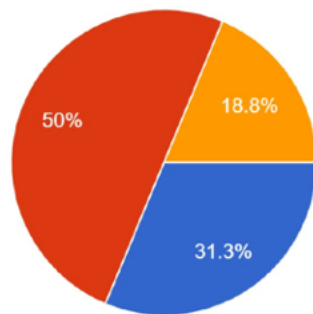
What motivated you to start playing football? (select all that apply)

15 responses



How did playing football make you feel?

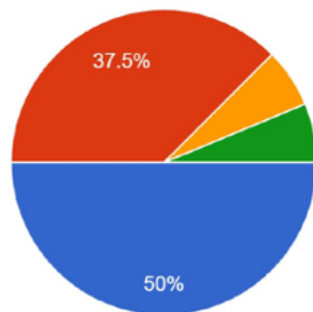
16 responses



- Very positive (confident, happy, motivated)
- Somewhat positive
- Neutral
- Somewhat negative
- Very negative

Did you feel supported while playing? Please tick one box for each. A: Supported by coach

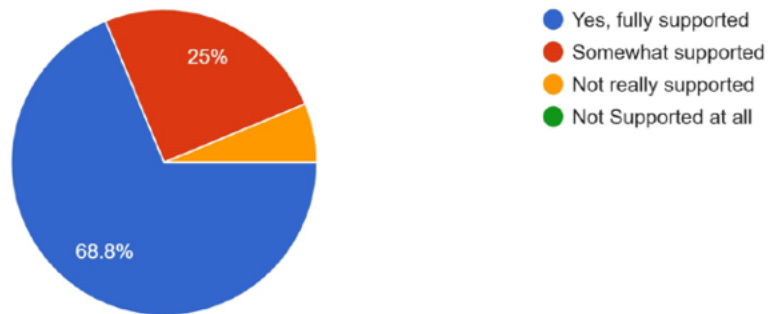
16 responses



- Yes, fully supported
- Somewhat supported
- Not really supported
- Not Supported at all

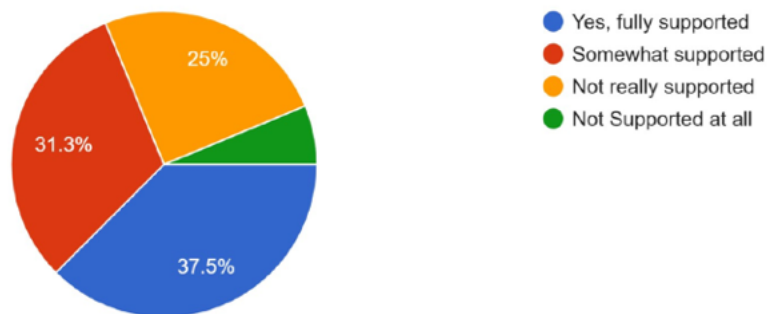
Did you feel supported while playing? B: Supported by family

16 responses



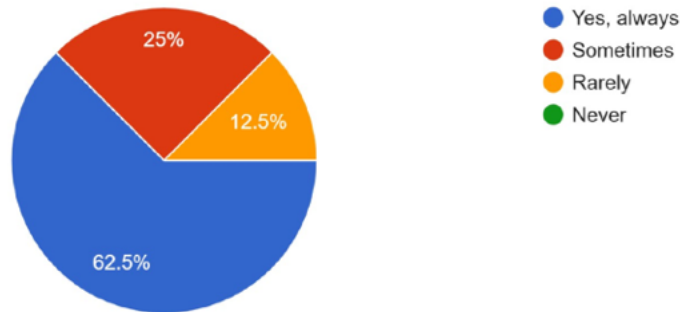
Did you feel supported while playing? D: Supported by team club players

16 responses



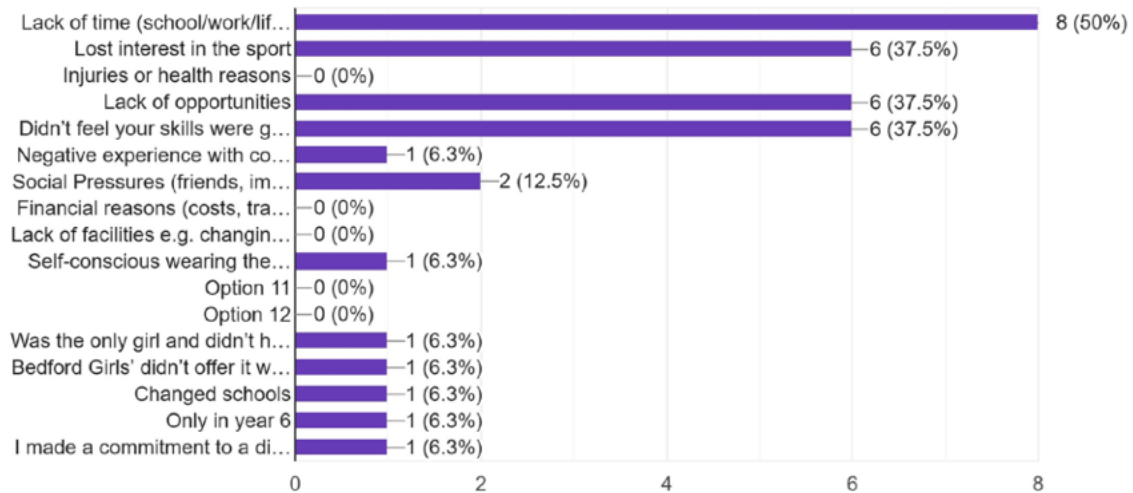
Did you feel that your team/club treated female players equally to male players:

16 responses

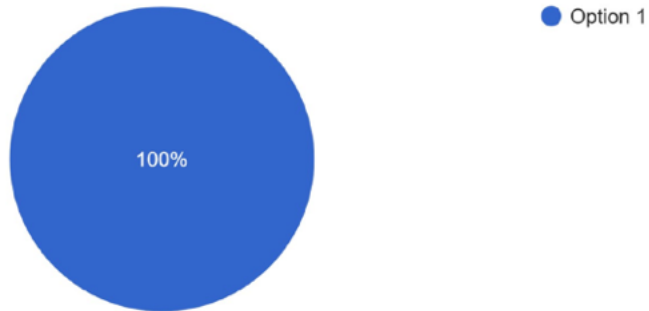


Why did you stop playing football? (Select all that apply)

16 responses

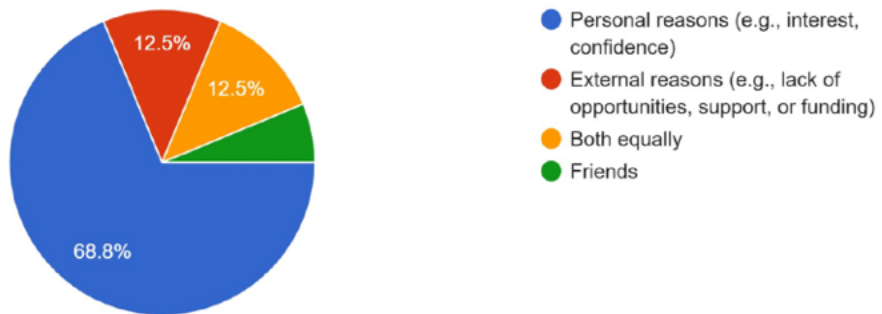


6 responses



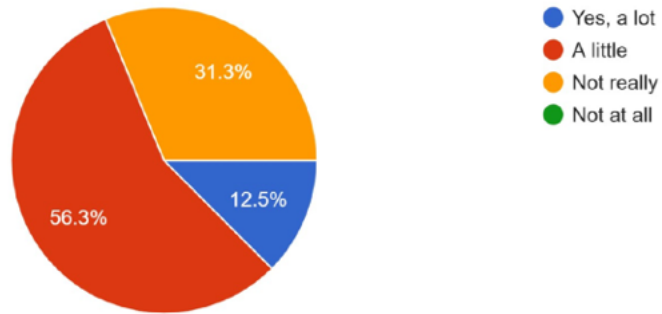
Was your decision mostly influenced by:

16 responses



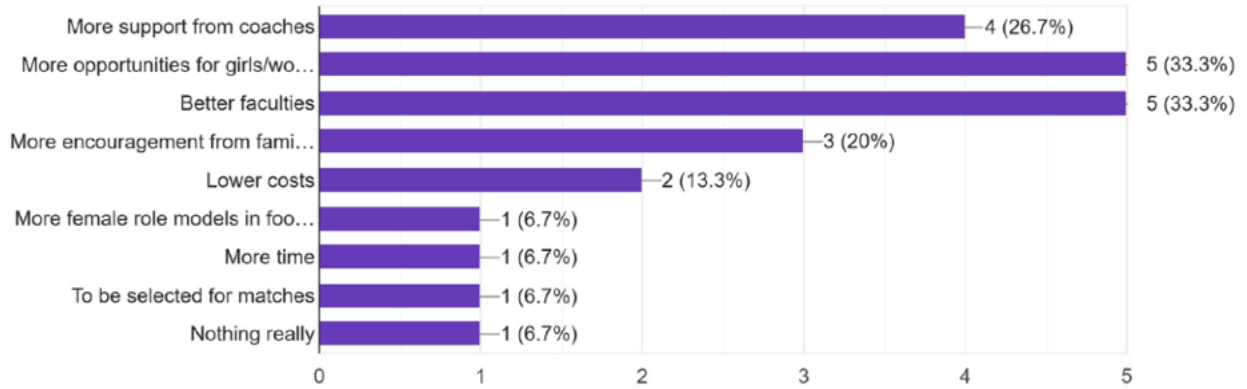
Do you regret leaving football?

16 responses



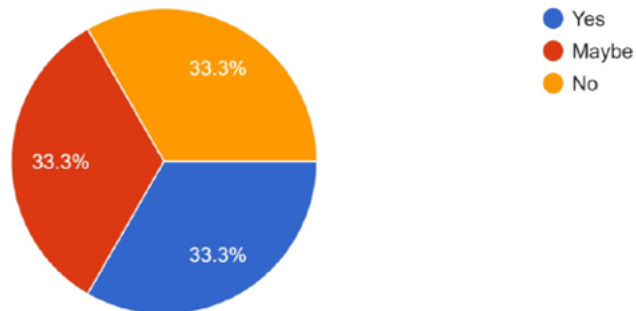
What would have encouraged you to continue playing? (select all that apply)

15 responses



Would you consider returning to football in the future?

15 responses



What advice would you give to clubs to help young girls continue playing football?

8 responses

To always support them and to never judge each other

Play, play, play

How good you are depends on your practise and hard work, not your gender

Don't stop playing!!

Don't give up because your not good enough

Never give up and always do what's best for you don't worry about anyone else

Make sure to plan your timetable so nothing doesn't crash

No coment