

“Studies show girls are more likely to drop out of sports compared to boys due to numerous barriers”.

Sports are a key element in growing up. Almost every child in Australia plays a sport in their lifetime, whether it's at club level, school or just purely for enjoyment.

While sports can boost confidence, improve physical health, and create social interactions, sports can also cause someone to lose interest through an unwavering number of barriers.

Lack of facilities, safety, physical literacy, such as lack of confidence, socio-cultural and religious factors, are some barriers that many people face every day. Girls also face these issues when deciding to quit playing sports altogether.

Conversely, not all genders experience the same. In some cases, men are known to have it all. The finest facilities including change rooms and training areas, the best days, and times to train, role models to look up to and an overwhelming number of uniforms and funding.

On the flip side, women live in fear of convenient facilities that at times, are in isolated areas that contain bathrooms with no locks and training facilities that are second best to what the men use.

A [study](#) has found that “four in 10 (42%) of women have experienced some form of sexual harassment or intimidation” over their overall safety whilst playing or training for their sport.

Learning support officer and former athlete Bernadette Clancey said “safety was nothing that occurred” to her and her teammates. But as times change the level of safety has decreased.

Safety and transportation issues are easy excuses for parents to take their children out of sports. Travelling to games and training on public transport through unsafe areas makes a parent's decision that much easier.

Newport Lakes Primary School teacher Erin Meade said Primary school “Girls are more inclined to colouring or reading as a break compared to boys who want to get out and play sport”.

“I believe girls drop out far more than boys do”, said Meade as girls tend to opt out and do other activities such as walking rather than organised sport.

The lack of role models seems to play a huge role in whether girls continue to play sport or not. At the primary school level, role models depend hugely on the media and what they perceive. Male role models compared to the shortage of female role models, continue to happen. However, as teacher Erin Meade says, “You can't be what you can't see”.

Building confidence and learning how to motivate yourself is a key life skill most people strive for. For many young girls facing reality is another main reason girls drop out of sport

when being compared to boys. Women and girls have a fear of being judged or made fun of for trying too hard when they may not be the best at a certain sport.

According to the [American Psychological Association](#), socioeconomic “relates to the social standing or class of an individual”. Whilst there are many social and economic factors that can affect how long and well a person lives or what class they are in, many of these aspects such as income, cultural barriers, religion, and the influence of friendships affect why girls tend to stop sport at such young ages, mainly at the average age of 15.

Income is another key factor why parents take their children out of team sports. Former athlete Bernadette Clancey who grew up in the 1960's, said a reason why she stopped playing sports was because of a lack of money as she said, “We didn't have much growing up.” According to [The Conversation](#), it costs around \$1,500 per person per season to play a team sport.

Hayden Galea, Senior Athletic Performance Coach at Gym 639 said, “Girls stop participating in club sports because of their surroundings”. Girls want to do what their friends do and are influenced by the people around them.

A person's environment influences the way people choose to behave. By the age of 15, a typical girl starts to struggle with body image issues and eating disorders. They battle with social development regarding building new connections and struggle to find who they are. They grapple with emotional development by trying to obtain independence and start to show romantic interest in significant others. Sports and education tend to be pushed to the side, as girls try to understand what they want in life.

Data from the [AFL North Coast](#) suggests at the age of 15, most girls will stop playing club-level sports.

While the data may show the lack of participation girls have in sports, girls are just as active as men are but are exercising elsewhere rather than participating in team sports.

In 2016, 37.7% of females participated in physical activity at the gym, whilst there were only 29.7% of men using the gym, according to [AusPlay Data](#).

However, at 639 Elite Performance Gym, coach Galea says there is a massive difference between male and female athletes. 30% of athletes are female compared to 70% who are male.

Although there may be a huge difference, coach Galea said the girls at 639 “take their training more seriously as they know what they are training for, and they have more of a drive compared to male athletes at the gym.”

By the age of 18, most girls finish school. By this age, they can do more social activities such as picking sports back up again. In recent times a huge percentage of girls have been influenced by social media through social media influencers and TikTok. Social media has

changed the way the world views exercise and fitness. According to [The New York Times](#), there are over 50,000 fitness Instagram influencers.

It's time for a change. Girls should be playing sports until they want to quit, based on their own merit. Through sports, girls will learn specific and important life skills such as teamwork and confidence which they could take with them in their future lives and careers.

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