Football factsheet
Football is the most popular team sport for women
October 2012

- Just 5.6% of all club members are women
- 64% of female footballers are satisfied with their experience
- There are 12 men for every 1 woman taking part
- 1 in 7 female footballers come from a BME community
- 91,800 women would like to do more
- The number of women who take part at least once a month: 252,000
- % of women who take part at least once a month: 1.2%
**Women who play football**

**Number of men and women participating in top team sports at least once a month**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>2,931,000</td>
<td>252,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>357,000</td>
<td>271,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby Union</td>
<td>252,000</td>
<td>215,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netball</td>
<td>86,000</td>
<td>67,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents

**Proportion of people who play football by gender**

- **Women**: 9.8% (played at least once a week) 14.0% (played at least once in the last four weeks)
- **Men**: 0.6% (played at least once a week) 1.2% (played at least once in the last four weeks)

Base: All respondents

**Trends in women’s football participation**

- APS2 (2007-08): 1.32%
- APS4 (2009-10): 1.19%
- APS6q2 (2011-12): 1.16%

Base: All female respondents

**Proportion of people who play football by age group (weekly)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
<th>Men (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents

**Top ten sports and activities for women – at least once a month**

1. Keepfit and gym (20.8%)
2. Swimming (13.9%)
3. Cycling (5.4%)
4. Athletics (5.1%)
5. Movement and dance (5.1%)
6. Badminton (1.6%)
7. Equestrian (1.6%)
8. Tennis (1.3%)
9. Football (1.2%)
10. Netball (0.9%)

Base: All female respondents

**Participation in football**

- Football is the most popular team sport for women and 9th most popular activity that they do monthly.
- Around 252,000 women play football every month and almost half of these (123,000) play each week.
- Apart from one year of growth in 2008-09, there has been mostly a decline in the number of women who play football on a monthly basis since 2007-08. The weekly trend is similar.
Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation

**Women’s latent demand for football**

**Latent demand: what sports would women like to do more of?**

- **Swimming (1)**: 12.07%
- **Cycling (2)**: 5.03%
- **Athletics (3)**: 4.24%
- **Tennis (4)**: 1.45%
- **Badminton (5)**: 1.31%
- **Mountaineering (6)**: 1.24%
- **Equestrian (7)**: 0.84%
- **Netball (8)**: 0.73%
- **Dance-exercise (9)**: 0.70%
- **Football (10)**: 0.42%
- **Hockey-field (13)**: 0.20%

Base: All female respondents

**Focus on drop off: proportion of young people who play football by age (weekly)**

- **16**: Women 33.8%, Men 32.7%
- **17**: Women 36.9%, Men 31.9%
- **18**: Women 28.6%, Men 30.3%
- **19**: Women 21.6%, Men 16%
- **20**: Women 16%, Men 16%
- **21**: Women 2.1%, Men 2.1%

Base: All respondents. *Beware small sample sizes from age 19 for women

**Proportion of women who play football weekly by Sport England region (numbers in brackets)**

- East Midlands: 26,000 (0.70%)
- East: 31,000 (0.65%)
- North East: 13,000 (0.62%)
- Yorkshire: 27,000 (0.62%)
- South East: 42,000 (0.61%)
- West Midlands: 24,000 (0.53%)
- North West: 30,000 (0.53%)
- South West: 21,000 (0.49%)
- London: 28,000 (0.42%)

Base: All respondents

**Proportion of women who play football weekly by ethnicity**

- **White**: 0.5%
- **BME**: 0.8%

Base: All female respondents. *BME = Black and Minority Ethnic

**Profile of footballers by ethnicity (weekly)**

- **Women**: 84.8%
- **BME**: 15.2%

**Profile of footballers by Sport England region (numbers in brackets)**

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- South West: 21,000 (0.49%)
- London: 28,000 (0.42%)

Base: All respondents

- Twice as many 16 as 18 year-olds play football; three in ten footballers are aged 19 and under
- Football is more popular with BME women as White women. 0.8% of all BME women play football every week, compared with 0.5% of White women. 15.2% footballers are from a BME community which is above that of the proportion in the general population
- Students make up over a third of all female footballers. But for every female student playing football there are 13 male students playing football.
- Football among women is most popular in East Midlands, where 0.70% of women play every week. In contrast just 0.42% play football weekly in London.

Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation

**Latent demand**

- Football is the 10th in demand sport
- Around 91,800 women would like to do more
Organised participation

Club membership

- Women constitute just 5.6% of total club members – mostly due to the high number of male players compared with female players.
- That said, there is an obvious challenge to convert women footballers from informal to formal participants – at present just 13.4% of women players are members of a club, compared with 19.5% of men.
- While BME women are more likely than White women to play football they are not as likely to join a club.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>16-34</th>
<th>35-54</th>
<th>55+</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>BME</th>
<th>Working</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
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<td>20.9%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>21.9%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Base: All respondents who played football at least once in the last four weeks. See Note 2

Taken part in organised competition

- This informal participation has a knock on effect on opportunity and interest in competition. Just 14.7% of female footballers play in a competition – which is half the proportion of male footballers.
- Men are much more likely to continue with competitive footballer into their later years than women.

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<td>31.8%</td>
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Base: All respondents who played football at least once in the last four weeks. See Note 2

Received tuition or coaching

- One in ten football players receiving coaching is a woman.
- That said, of those women who do play football, they are slightly more likely than male football players to receive tuition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>16-34</th>
<th>35-54</th>
<th>55+</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Non-White</th>
<th>Working</th>
<th>Students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>3.4%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents who played football at least once in the last four weeks. See Note 3. Too few female respondents aged 35+.
Satisfaction with experience of playing football

**Satisfaction of female footballers**

- Women footballers are almost as satisfied with their sport as men (64% and 66% respectively)
- In particular, women are satisfied with the social aspects of the sport, the release and diversion and coaching
- They are less satisfied with the facilities, own performance and people and staff
- 32% of footballers are playing more than last year, and 38% expect to play more next year than they currently are

**Satisfaction v's Importance**

- The most important aspects of football for female footballers is the exertion and fitness and release and diversion that the sport gives them, and for the most part both these areas score quite highly in terms of women’s overall satisfaction
- The greatest discrepancy between importance and how satisfied female footballers are with their sport comes from ability to improve their overall performance, officials, ease of participating and value for money

Source: Sport England’s Satisfaction with the quality of the sporting experience survey (2010). Base: Female respondents (16+). Percentage figure is for those who rated their satisfaction as 8-10 on a 1 to 10 scale. See Note 4.
Notes
1 Club membership is based on those who have been a member of a sports club to participate in football in the past four weeks.

2 Organised competition is defined as ‘having taken part in any organised competition in football in the last 12 months’.

3 Received tuition is defined as ‘having received tuition from an instructor or coach to improve your performance in football in the last 12 months’.

4 Survey respondents were asked to rate their perceived satisfaction for 75 questions across ten themes.

To convert overall percentages to population numbers use the following figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Male 16+</th>
<th>Female 16+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APS 2</td>
<td>20,170,100</td>
<td>21,266,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS 3</td>
<td>20,368,300</td>
<td>21,408,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS 4</td>
<td>20,548,100</td>
<td>21,557,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS 5</td>
<td>20,759,100</td>
<td>21,708,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS 6q2</td>
<td>20,949,100</td>
<td>21,859,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>