

# Girls In Sports

A Case Study on Women  
Participation in High School Sports

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# ABSTRACT

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This case study investigates the factors that might contribute toward a higher level of participation among female students in high school sports. Specifically, it will consider and explore the ways that access to a variety of athletes, facilities, and opportunities can lead to an improvement in gender equity.

The research aims to identify habits, patterns and practices that should be encouraged so that female student athletes feel welcomed and included in sports activities.

With proper attention paid to their needs and interests, these young women will be able to build confidence, find a healthy display environment for their athleticism, socialize with others while they are engaged in sport activities, as well as acquire skills such as teamwork, self-discipline, strategy building and physical fitness.

All these benefits contribute to overall well-being for the students involved.

In US High School, Women are Participating  
2.55\* Times Less Than Men in Sports.



\* Based on (640) participants response to our high school survey and school data.

# INTRODUCTION

Title IX was a landmark rule that changed the landscape of sports for generations of Americans, especially women. Passed in 1972, Title IX opened up countless opportunities for physical exercise and competition to women in high school, who had long been denied such basic rights.

Prior to this legislation, female athletes were often overlooked, treating as unequal participants in many level of sport competitions and even oppressed at the most basic levels.

Before 1870, women typically engaged in more recreational activities than sport-specific ones; these activities were often noncompetitive, mostly informal, rule-less and lacked the intensity that many of us associate with modern sports.

In the late 1800's and early 1900's, women began to form clubs that were athletic in nature. But before the introduction of Title IX opportunities for women to engage in competitive physical activity were severely limited and unequal across the nation.

Title IX, revolutionized the way women engage in sports and greatly expanded athletic opportunities for them.

Despite these monumental advancements, the playing field is still far from level. Regrettably, girls are twice as likely as boys to be inactive and not engaged in any sport.

The gap is large: there is a disproportionate lack of infrastructure and resources dedicated to female athletics across all levels of competition. This needs to change in order to nurture talented female leaders who will lead us into a more balanced world where equality reigns supreme!





# WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

Women have long been deprived of equal participation and opportunity, but recently there's been a shift towards a society that is more conscious of gender inequality. Unfortunately, Title IX is often ignored in many public high-schools, wherein nearly 4,500 establishments have large gender disparity. This goes against the goal which we must continue to promote – equal opportunity regardless of gender identity. We can start closing this gap by instituting laws enforcing Title IX standards, creating better access for female athletes and making sure that these are further emphasized at all levels of sport participation.

## CHALLENGE

**01**

**institutional bias:** Despite decades of progress on the issue, many schools and athletic departments around the country still have a lingering disposition towards male-dominated sports.

**02**

Lack of support they receive from their educational institutions. This could involve access to resources such as uniforms, equipment, and practice facilities.

**03**

**Not enough Attention:** Female athlete often not get their due attention, unequal media attention means that high achieving female athletes are sometimes undervalued or overlooked.

**04**

Society's perception of relating sports with masculinity and stereotypes keeps some young women out of the game for fear of being judged negatively by their peers.



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# RESEARCH APPROACH

## THE AWESOME PEOPLE BEHIND THIS PROJECT



**AMIT ABHISHEK**  
DATA ANALYSIS, ONLINE  
RESEARCH, TEAM LEAD



**NOAH MACKENZIE**  
DESIGNER, EDITOR, ONLINE  
SURVEY & DATA COLLECTION



**MARCOS ROBAINA**  
FREELANCER, LOCAL  
STUDENT, SURVEY, DATA  
COLLECTION

Investigating women's participation in high school sports was a complex process. We had to go beyond the traditional online research and surveys to gather data from all the different stakeholders involved. To get the local context, we worked with freelance employees who had in-depth knowledge about the situation and were able to provide feedback about it. We also conducted several focus groups to gain a comprehensive understanding of how women's participation in high school sports could be improved and what were some of the major challenges associated with that cause.

To conduct our case study on women's participation in high school sports, we gathered a wealth of information from across the United States. Using carefully crafted surveys and interview guides, as well as a detailed research protocol, we compiled a list of US high schools that offer sports activities and have active websites. By doing so, we were able to access recent information regarding their sports events and the level of participation for both young men and women. Our efforts provided an invaluable source of data for our case study that enabled us to better understand the situation at hand.

# Data Collection

IN TOTAL, 2,536 RESPONDENTS COMPLETED THE SURVEY.



For this case study, data was collected in 4 stage. Initial survey ( help from on site freelancer ), data collection from list of US high schools website, online survey ( girls only ) and feedback from women interest groups.

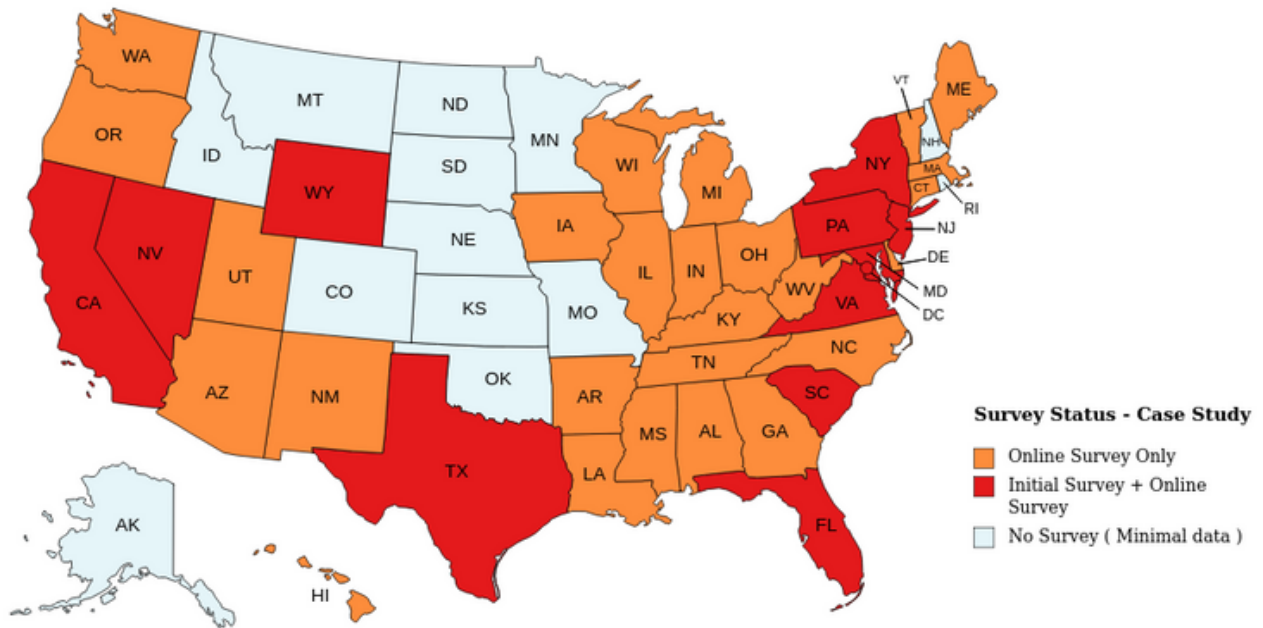
In order to gain a better understanding of women participation in high school sports, we included online survey methods to add to our initial survey of 640 students. With this research approach, 1,896 women and girls were able to provide their opinions regarding sports in high school by answering the 15-minute survey. The sampling for the survey was taken from various sources, such as social media platforms, female sports groups, and Facebook survey boosted by ads. This data collection technique offered a broad range of feedback for the researchers to consider when determining how to increase participation of women in high school sports.

"The survey included questions about sports opportunities, institutional support, frequency of events, number of students in class, female students in sports, aspirations, Barriers , Awards, fear and recognition etc. "



# Distribution of the Survey Sample

## A Case Study on Women Participation in High School Sports



The survey data played a pivotal role in the case study on Female Participation in High School Sports, with it taking up 60% of the weight when reaching conclusions. This was further strengthened by the school sports data, which came from official high school websites.

Of the 2,536 survey respondents, 80% were female – to increase accuracy within this statistic, those over 21 years old were excluded and only female respondents were taken into account for the online survey. The final data set contained a total of 2,468 participants with 863 usable survey.

With diligent accuracy gained through surveys and school sports results, the research proved fruitful in its findings about Female Participation in High School Sports.

### INITIAL SURVEY

**640 Response**

68.7% were female

### ONLINE SURVEY

**1,896 Response**

100% were female

### USABLE SURVEY

**863 Response**

With Completed Survey



# RESULTS:



## INITIAL SURVEY

Our initial survey focusing on women's participation in high school sports found that girls aged 14 to 16 are 1.8 times more likely to drop out of sports than boys due to anxieties surrounding judgement from peers, coaches and society.

When asked why women are not usually as successful at sports as men, 29% attributed it to lack of interest, 44% believed it stemmed from a lack of support or concern, 13% thought it was linked to physical strength, and the rest said "don't know / can't say".

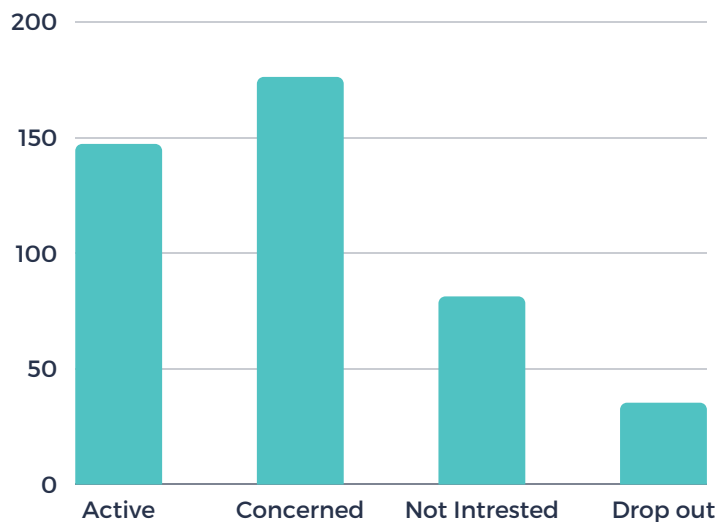
Additionally, there was a perception amongst girls who expressed an interest in sport but chose against participation saying "it's not for people like me". These results highlight the challenges facing young women interested in pursuing competitive sports and demonstrate the need for greater understanding and sustained encouragement.





# Initial Survey Report

## CASE STUDY ON HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS



### IMPACT OF TITLE IX

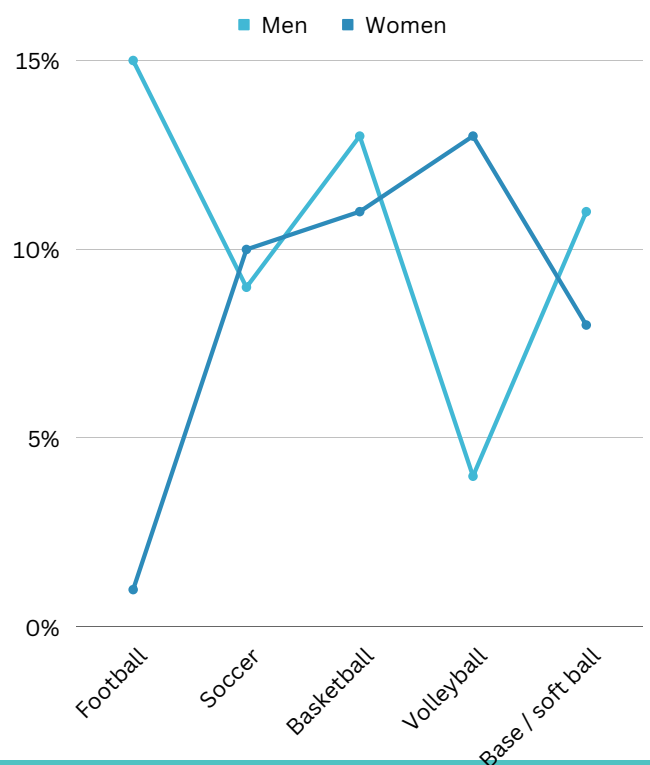
Title IX has made great progress in increasing the participation of women in sports, with millions of girls across the USA now involved in a variety of athletics. Unfortunately, recent surveys indicate high school girls are 1.8 times more likely than men to drop out of sports due to lack of support and encouragement.

### PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS

The survey showed that there was a significant gender gap in participation, with 39% of female students taking part in sports compared to 54% of male students.

### MORE WOMEN ARE INTERESTED IN SPORTS BUT CONCERNED

Out of 640 response in our initial survey 439 response were from girls between 14 and 16 age. High School in Midwest perform poorly in women participation in sports. When asked about their participation in sports 147 responded "Active in sports", 176 girls were interested but concerned, 35 dropped out of sports and 81 were simply not interested. We find that more girls can join sports if given encouragement and support.



# 1.8 X

girls aged 14 to 16 are 1.8 times more likely to drop out of sports than boys.

# #02

volleyball is second-most popular sport among high school girls behind outdoor track and field.

# 39%

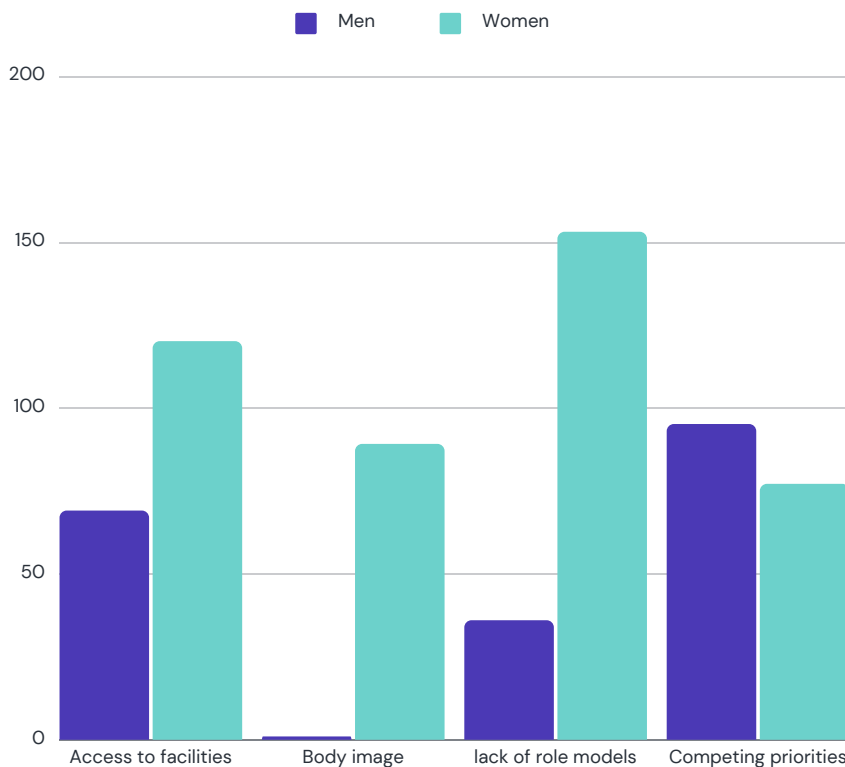
female students taking part in sports compared to 54% of male students.

Participating in sports can be a great way to promote physical and mental health, socialize with peers, practice teamwork, and build confidence. However, the results of the survey suggests in US High School, Women are Participating 2.55 Times Less Than Men in Sports.

Unfortunately this gender gap may prevent them from experiencing the positive effects which accompany involvement in athletics. Hopefully school administrators will recognize this and strive to even out participation levels between genders.

## Barriers to Girls Participation in sport?

We asked 640 high school students on barrier to Girls Participation in sport? Here is how they respond.



94%

Boys believe in equal opportunities in sports.

40%

Believes that men make better athletes.

62%

Says women gets same facility as men in high school sports.

Women and girls face a unique set of barriers when it comes to access and participation in sport and active recreation. These barriers can be divided into several elements:

- Access to facilities, lack of role models, competing priorities and lack of self-confidence.
- Male-dominated culture of sport, parental support and influence and body image are also significantly contributing to the issue.
- In our survey of 640 high school students 120 girls choose "Lack of Access to Facilities" as the primary barrier to participation of girls in sports.
- While a whopping 153 girls believe improper media representations and lack of role models in sport as the primary cause for low female participation.
- More men than women believe in competing priorities to be the primary reason less women actively participates in high school sports and beyond.
- The study shows that women are often more self-conscious than men when taking part in physical activity, and that this has a direct effect on the amount of activity they engage in. The more self-conscious they feel about their bodies, the less likely they are to take part in sport.

*Barriers to*

# WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SPORT

For young female athletes, there are several barriers to their participation in high school sports. Many feel that having to play alongside boys in PE classes as well as outside of school can hinder their willingness to engage, as they perceive boys' attitudes as too competitive and unsupported (often discouraging).

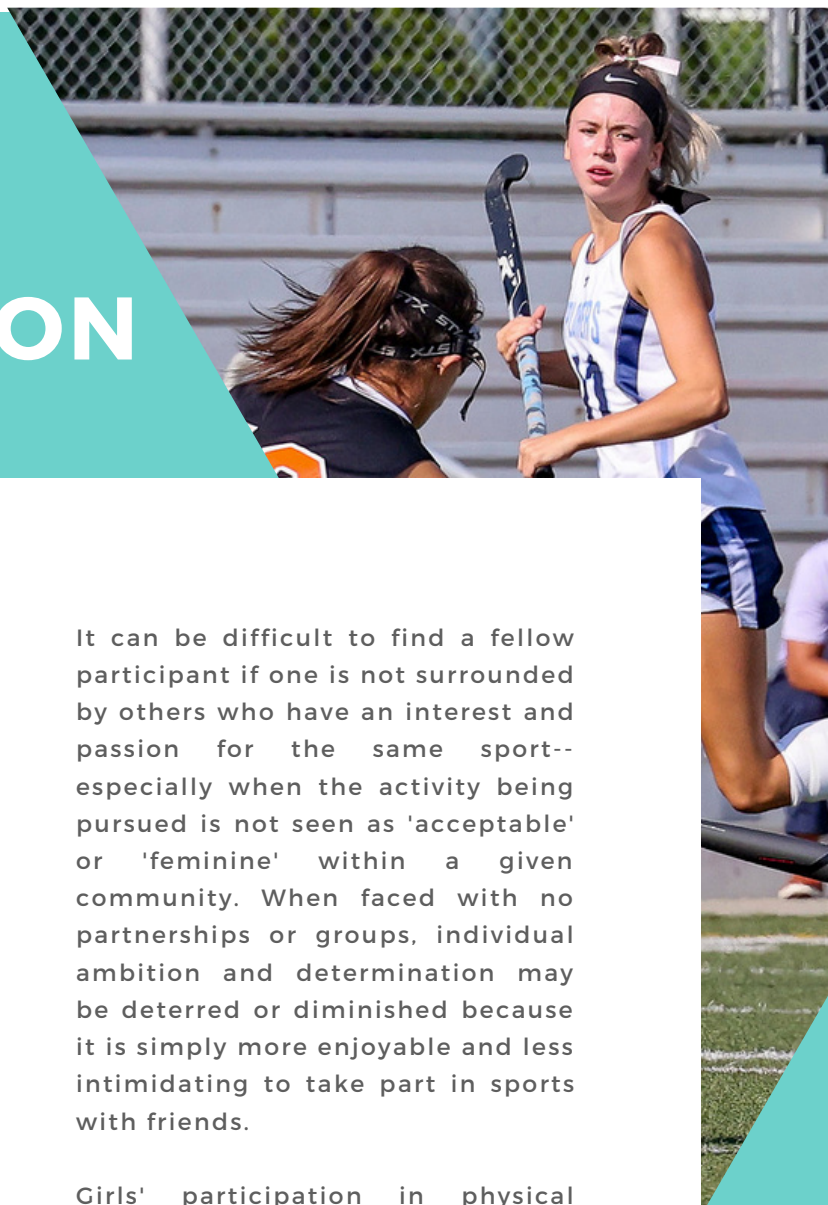
This limits the level of confidence that girls have and can make them wary of participating at all. Furthermore, safety is a major factor for female athletes; numerous participants have experienced injury which have required extensive recovery processes after often lengthy periods of time. As a result, many females have continued pursuing athletics but push themselves less, out of fear they could sustain additional damage if injured again and be unable to adequately recover.

Many women are deterred from participating in sporting activities at a high school level due to issues such as the lack of companionship.

It can be difficult to find a fellow participant if one is not surrounded by others who have an interest and passion for the same sport--especially when the activity being pursued is not seen as 'acceptable' or 'feminine' within a given community. When faced with no partnerships or groups, individual ambition and determination may be deterred or diminished because it is simply more enjoyable and less intimidating to take part in sports with friends.

Girls' participation in physical activities can be hindered by lack of parental support. When parents actively discourage physical activity and prioritize areas such as school works, jobs and other non-athletic educational subjects over outdoor recreation and athletics, girls end up taking less initiative to take part in high school sports.

Ultimately, supporting access to adequate physical activity is vital to creating an equitable society where girls are able to enjoy improved physical, emotional and mental health outcomes.







## Final REPORT

# Girls in High School Sports



## Initial + Online Survey Results

### What We Found in Our Survey

The results of survey regarding girls participation in high school sports show some concerning trends. The survey revealed that there is often a double standard for performance expectations, with girls' achievements not being celebrated as much.

Girls also reported feeling more pressure than boys to prove themselves on and off the field due to gender stereotypes that surround sports in general.

Additionally, girls were more likely to report mental health issues from outside pressures, including body shaming.

The survey also find positive sign that conversations around these topics are happening, but much progress still needs to be made to ensure girls feel safe and empowered taking part in sports activities both in high school and beyond.

## Final Snapshot

**40%** Women Believes in Sports Stereotype.

**28%** Women can play sports if motivated.

**03%** Believe women have better opportunities.

**14%** Drop out of sports due to Negative experience.

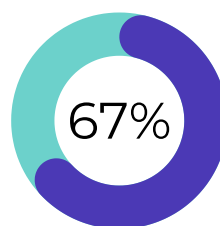


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## MOST RESPONDENTS REPORTED THEY EITHER PLAY OR WANT TO ACTIVELY PLAY SPORTS.

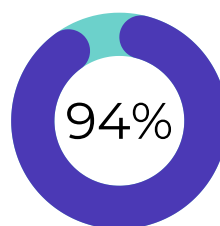
Responding to attitude questions on a 1-5 scale, where 1 is “not at all” and 5 is “very much”, nearly all participants felt strongly that there should be equal opportunity for men and women in sports. But on the question of gender equality in sports, Larger shares of women than men say gender equality is very important in sports.

Participating in a high school sport can be an incredibly rewarding experience, both in terms of physical benefits and personal development. But when asked about their reason our respondents take part in their school sports to improve fitness, developing greater self-esteem, or simply having fun with friends in order of frequency. While some also connect team sports with life lessons like communication skill, cooperation, time management, and compromise.



**Don't Watch  
Women Sports**

Most respondents are familiar with Kobe Bryant, Lionel Messi, LeBron James, Tom Brady and Cristiano Ronaldo but not Kelli Masters, Tyler Tumminia, Serena Williams & Hope Solo.



**Believes in role of  
Parents / coach**

When asked who plays a key role in their participation in high school sports? 94% respond with parents, teacher or coach.

**Girls are twice as likely to drop from sports than boys during their transition from junior to senior high school.**

## Case Study on High School Sports.

By [GoingFitUnfit.com](http://GoingFitUnfit.com)

# Our Recommendations

## 1

### Ensure Access to facilities.

Access to facilities is essential for women and girls who want to play sport, yet too often sports halls prioritize male sport when it comes to pitch time. As a positive step forward, it would be beneficial to review the allocation of facilities and pitch times while also reserving some pitches during peak times especially for women's sports and teams. Provision of the necessary information should also be made in various formats so that all groups have equal access and opportunities.

## 2

### If you can see it, you can be it!

Providing role models for girls is essential in reminding them that they are capable of succeeding in traditionally male-dominated fields. Seeing female athletes physically embodying the message that "you can be anything you want to be" offers healthy discourse and an antidote to harmful societal pressures. It instills pride and confidence, encourages resilience amidst challenges and struggles, provides clarity on how to set their own goals and realise their dreams.

## 3

### All they need is a little support and assurance.

Creating a good impact on girls either through encouragement or support is vital to make them pursue sports. In our survey more high school girls are **interested** but not active than ones who are active in sports or who are not **interested** at all. They can be easily **motivated** to start playing by shorting their concerns like safety, opportunities, injuries, social stigma and any other **personal concern** they might have.

## 4

### Parents should act as positive role models for children.

It is essential that parents take an active role in encouraging their children to be involved in physical activity and sport. In order to build up a supportive culture organise Parent and Daughter sessions around sports and sports performance – this allows them to support each other in developing their interest around exercise and sport while also providing the opportunity to create constructive communication within the family setting.





# 5

## Manage competing priorities.

When managing competing priorities in early and late adolescence, it is important that girls give each priority a fair amount of attention. While school work can seem like the most pressing issue during early and late adolescence, it is essential that girls not neglect physical activity and leisure time. To ensure they can continue to benefit from sporting activities, make tactical decisions regarding time allocated to each activity and focus on maintaining enthusiasm for all pursuits.

# 6

## Celebrate being strong.

Participating in a sport can have tremendous benefits for developing a positive body image. Unfortunately, many girls cited poor body image as one reason that they stopped participating in sporting events. To help support these athletes and promote the improvement of their self-image, it is important to create an environment that encourages active participation, including ensuring adequate privacy in changing rooms and other facilities.

# 7

## Boost self-confidence

It is essential to boost self-confidence in girls, who rate their performance or ability more negatively. Low confidence can manifest as body image issues which can then lead to difficulty engaging in sports. To combat this, it is important that all women and girls are given the chance to get involved with activities and teams regardless of skill level. Furthermore, these activities should be organized in an open yet non-competitive manner so they can be enjoyed by all participants.

# 8

## Challenge sexist assumptions

It is important to challenge sexist assumptions in sports. Women and girls tend to be more receptive to ideas about health and wellbeing than they are toward sport, so combining the two areas with one another can be an excellent way to encourage participation. Given that sports is culturally considered male dominated it is essential to actively dispel the notion that being "sporty" conflicts with femininity so all genders can equally enjoy physical activity.



# 54%

of U.S. high school  
students were involved  
with sports.

Public Schools with High Levels  
of Poverty Are Twice Less  
Likely To Provide  
Interscholastic Sports.



We thank you for your  
continued support in  
our efforts to  
contribute to gender  
equality in sports.



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