

RESEARCH REPORT

FACTORS RELATING TO WOMEN AND GIRLS' PARTICIPATION (RETENTION AND DROPOUT) IN SPORT

PROF ROCHELLE EIME, MS MELANIE CHARITY,
DR AURELIE PANKOWIAK, DR JACK HARVEY,
PROF HANS WESTERBEEK

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides the results of the survey of women and girls participation, retention in, and dropout of sport. Women and girls who were registered to play soccer/football (herein 'football') (in 2019, 2020 or 2021) or participate in gymnastics (in 2020, 2020 or 2021) in Australia were invited to participate in the survey.

The survey was completed by current participants as well as participants who had dropped out of the sport. The survey for gymnastics participants included ages 0-100 and for football players aged 5-100.

The survey was completed by women and girls who played football or participated in gymnastics. The survey covered the following:

- Demographics
- Motivations to participate
- What makes playing fun
- Reasons for dropout
- Social support to play sport
- Health profiles

Comparisons are made between the retained participants group and the dropout group.





KEY INSIGHTS

Survey respondents' demographics

- The survey was completed by 5,055 women and girls including 2,016 who played football and 3,039 who participated in gymnastics.
- Girls aged 5-12 years was the most represented group (52%).
- Overall, 67% of survey respondents were girls (0-17 years), and 33% were women (18 years and over).
- Most participants (69%) lived in metropolitan regions of Australia.

Age and retention profiles

The proportion of women and girls who had dropped out (48%) was slightly lower than those who were still participating in football/gymnastics (52%).

The proportion of retained women and girls according to age group included: 52% of young girls (0-12 years), 56% of adolescent girls (13-17 years) and 50% of women (18+).

Women's reasons for playing and enjoyment

Women who dropped out of sport and those who continued participating had very similar motivations. However, retained women were more motivated by social reasons and to be outdoors (for football players), whereas those who had dropped out were more motivated by learning a new skill and because sport gave them a sense of achievement.

Women's motivations

Retained

- 96% Fun/enjoyment
- 88% Physical health/fitness
- 75% Social reasons
- 60% To be outdoors
- 53% To be with friends
- 52% Mental health

Dropout

- 91% Fun/enjoyment
- 73% Physical health/fitness
- 44% Learn a new skill
- 41% Social reasons
- 36% Sense of achievement
- 33% To be with friends & Performance/competition

Women in both the retained and dropout group had fun participating in sport mainly through socialising, being challenged to improve, and keeping fit.

What makes sport fun for women

Retained

- 79% Socialising
- 77% Keeping fit
- 76% Being challenged to improve
- 75% Playing with friends
- 51% Having a friendly coach

Dropout

- 61% Socialising
- 58% Being challenged to improve
- 57% Playing with friends
- 55% Keeping fit
- 50% Having a friendly coach



Girls' reasons for playing and enjoyment

The motivations rankings of girls who had dropped out were very similar to those who were retained in football/gymnastics. However, the top motivations were more frequently reported by girls who were retained.

Girls' motivations

Retained		Dropout	
96%	Fun/enjoyment	94%	Fun/enjoyment
74%	Physical health/fitness	72%	Learn a new skill
68%	Learn a new skill	66%	Physical health/fitness
51%	Sense of achievement	32%	Sense of achievement
42%	Social reasons	30%	Social reasons
36%	To be with friends	23%	To be with friends

For girls in both the retained and dropout group, having fun participating in gymnastics was driven by being challenged to improve, having a friendly coach and trying their best.

What makes sport fun for girls

Retained		Dropout	
79%	Being challenged to improve	61%	Being challenged to improve
70%	Friendly coach	54%	Friendly coach
64%	Trying your best	45%	Trying your best
57%	Playing with friends	43%	Playing with friends
51%	Teamwork	35%	Getting playing time

Social support

Women in the retention group were significantly more likely to have friends encourage them to play sport (88% - retained versus 77% - dropped out) and encourage other family members to play sport (82% - retained versus 64% - dropped out) compared to women in the dropout group.

Girls in the retention group had significantly more support to participate than girls in the dropout group for the following factors:

	Retained	Dropout
My friends encourage(d) me to participate	67%	54%
I participate(d) to be with friends	59%	42%
My parents encourage(d) me to participate	93%	88%
I encourage(d) other members of my family to participate	64%	42%
I enjoy(ed) participating with other family members	79%	47%

Reasons for dropping out

- Overall, the main reasons for dropping out were COVID-19 (26%), cost (25%), lost interest (25%), not having fun (22%), playing other sports or activities (16%), and unfriendly coach or official (16%).
- For young girls (0-12) group, the main reasons for dropout were cost (27%), followed by lost interest (26%), COVID-19 (26%), not having fun (21%), and playing other sports and activities (17%).
- For adolescent girls (13-17 years), the main reasons for dropout were not having fun (34%), lost interest (32%), unfriendly coach or official (27%), injuries (27%) and increasing age/too old (27%).
- For women, the main reasons for dropping out were COVID-19 (33%), cost (28%), not enough time (23%), not having fun (18%), and other lifestyle priorities (15%).



Dropout due to COVID-19

Participants who dropped out of sport due to COVID-19 did so primarily because of government restrictions (77%) followed by personal health concerns (28%) and family finances (17%).

Players' health profiles

Women in the dropout group were more likely to report excellent overall health and physical health whereas those in the retention group were more likely to report very good health.

Girls retained in sport were more likely to report excellent overall health and physical health compared to those who had dropped out.



SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following provides a summary and recommendations of key survey findings combined with key sport participation insights from peer-reviewed literature.

1. Fun, enjoyment and a social and inclusive environment

Women and girls who were retained in the sport and those who had dropped out of had very similar sport participation motivations. Motivations to play differed somewhat according to age. Overwhelmingly, women and girls are motivated to participate in sport for fun/enjoyment, and socialising. Girls are especially motivated to participate with their friends and as part of a team.

Fun and enjoyment are consistently common reasons why people participate in community sport, and it has been advocated that fun and enjoyment should be central to decision making across sport (Eime and Harvey 2018). A focus on maximising fun and enjoyment of women and girls when participating in sport will lead to greater retention. Two of the main reasons girls dropped out of sport was because they had lost interest and they did not have fun.

Social support from friends and family to play and continue to play sport is essential and was significantly associated with those women and girls retained in the sport, especially for the young and adolescent girls. Social support is very important for participation and retention in sport across the lifespan and includes encouragement and support from friends, peers, family, coaches and officials (Eime, Harvey, Charity et al. 2020, Jenkin, Eime et al. 2021).

It is important that clubs offer welcoming and inclusive environments for all participants regardless of skill, age, gender etc. One of the main factors contributing to fun was having a friendly coach, and this was particularly true for young and adolescent girls. Coaches and officials as well as club personnel play an important role in setting the club culture in terms of a friendly and inclusive environment. If women and girls have a positive and enjoyable experience, they are more likely to come back, and keep participating (Eime and Harvey 2018).

**Recommendation 1**

The reasons most individuals participate in sport is to have fun, play with friends and socialise. High performance or winning are lesser priorities, and having a friendly coach is important. It is recommended that sports develop and implement strategies that focus on the delivery of programs as a fun and enjoyable way to be physically active and carefully consider to not overly concentrate on competition, commitment and winning the game.

Recommendation 2

Sporting clubs should consider the importance of creating opportunities to connect socially when delivering sport programs and competitions and utilise friendship groups, families and other social groupings as platforms to increase the number of participants and club members and to retain them.

2. Skill development and competency

Being challenged to improve their sporting ability was important for women and girls of all ages. The development of sport specific skills and competencies and more broadly developing their physical literacy, which includes the motivation to play, are strong determinants of participation and retention in sport (Eime, Charity, et al., 2022; Westerbeek & Eime, 2021). If people do not have adequate skills to play sport or if their skill levels are significantly inferior to their peers, they are less likely to enjoy playing and are more likely to drop-out.

Recommendation 3

In regard to developing and delivering participation programs, training sessions and competitions, include methodologies (delivered by qualified coaches) to allow for all women and girls to improve their skills (across skill-levels) and for all to be challenged. This requires a differentiated offering, rather than a one-solution-serves-all approach.

3. Changing priorities and motivations

Over recent decades, there have been substantial changes to the way that people want to participate in sport and physical activity. There have been shifts away from the traditional club-based competitive sport model, to still organised, but more recreational activities with more flexibility (Eime et al., 2020; Eime et al., 2016). There have also been changes in activity priorities and motivations across demographic variables such as age and gender. For adolescents in particular there are high rates of dropout, which correspond to many life changes including priorities related to education, friendships, work etc (Eime et al., 2010). Also, the level of (time and financial) commitment required



for competitive sport is often greater, with increased levels of training and increased frequency of competition (Eime et al., 2010). During adolescence the skill divide amongst participants increases, and although many may wish to continue to play the sport, this is only attractive in a more social, recreational manner and without too much of a competitive focus (Westerbeek & Eime, 2021).

The traditional delivery of club-based sport, which includes structured training and competition, still meets the needs of many who are more motivated by performance and competition, although it remains important to do this in a social setting with friends. Players who are retained have also 'grown up' in a more traditional format of the sport. However, players who are driven by social play and more motivated by learning new skills than by performing and winning, do not necessarily have their needs met, and many dropout.

Recommendation 4

It is important to consider that sport participation preferences are developing along a two-track approach. One approach is towards performance development, which inherently has an increased training and competition load. Within this more traditional approach to organising sport programs, the coaching and club environment need to continue to focus on safety and welfare of women and girls, but also on providing highly qualified coaching services.

Development of another participant development pathway that more aligns with those women and girls' who are motivated to participate in more flexible, inclusive, equitable sporting opportunities. Here the focus should be on friends, skill development and having fun, with a lesser emphasis on rigid training and competition, that in turn comes with pressure to perform. This alternative mode of sport participation in clubs would complement the traditional competitive club-based model and affords participants more choice whilst fostering an environment that promotes lifelong involvement in sport.

4. COVID-19

Not surprisingly COVID-19 was one of the main reasons why many dropped out of sport and this was mainly due to the government restrictions in regard to training and playing



in competitions. During COVID-19 restrictions many individuals became quite sedentary or turned towards individual physical activities such as bike riding, walking and cycling (Eime, Harvey, et al., 2022). These individuals may become motivated to return to participating in sport, however it is likely that some will not return.

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that sport organisations continue to communicate with current and past participants – acknowledging the difficulties that the pandemic forced upon everyone and that sport is ready for them to return – to keep them connected and notify them of ongoing and new opportunities for participation. This should occur at a national or state level as well as at a local sports club level.

5. Cost

Cost was a main barrier reported by women and girls and this may have been exacerbated by COVID-19, as many reported that their family finances declined as a result of the pandemic.

Recommendation 6

It is recommended that sports consider a range of cost measures to ensure that participating in the sport is available to individuals and families of low socio-economic households/communities. Such measures can include repurposing uniforms and equipment that is still in good condition or providing financial discounts to individuals and families in return for volunteering time.

6. Health

Many women and girls participate in sport for physical health and fitness reasons. Girls retained in sport were more likely to report excellent overall health and physical health compared to those who had dropped out.

Recommendation 7

It is recommended that sport organisations more overtly communicate the research evidence that is increasingly available promoting the specific health benefits of sport participation.



RESULTS

1. Survey respondents' demographic characteristics

The survey was completed by a total of 5,055 women and girls (Table 1). Half of all the respondents were aged between 5-12 years (52%). In total 67% of respondents were girls and 33% women (18 years or older).

Table 1. Respondent profile: by age

Age (years)	n	%
0-4	239	4.7
5-12	2,627	52.0
13-17	498	9.9
18-25	366	7.2
26-39	560	11.1
40-49	430	8.5
50-59	233	4.6
60+	102	2.0
Total	5,055	100.0

Table 2 provides the breakdowns of various demographic characteristics by age. The counts for each of these characteristics is smaller than the total number of survey respondents, because some questions were not asked of young and adolescent girls, and some respondents chose not to answer certain questions.

- The majority of all participants lived within Metropolitan regions of Australia (69%).
- Nearly half (46%) of women were never married and 30% were married. Most parents of girls were married (75%).
- Almost half (48%) of women had a university degree, and over half of women had children who had a university degree (65%). Most adolescent girls (13-17 years) were currently attending school (89%).
- A quarter of women lived in a household composed of a couple with children, and 21% had a household composed of women with adult children. Most young girls, those 12 years and under (78%) and most adolescent girls, those 13-17 years (70%) lived in a household composed of a couple with child(ren).
- Nearly half of all women (48%) were employed fulltime, 25% of adolescent girls were employed casually, and 44% of young girls had a parent who worked fulltime.
- Most respondents' (69%) household income did not change due to COVID-19, however 18% reported a decline in household income.
- 3% of participants reported being an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- 17% of participants reported speaking a language other than English at home.
- 7% of participants reported having a disability.



Table 2. Demographic profile: by age

	Age (years)		0-12		13-17		18+		All	
			n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Demographics										
Residence										
	Metropolitan regions		1,938	68.0	319	64.7	1,214	72.3	3,471	69.1
	Country regions		913	32.0	174	35.3	465	27.7	1,552	30.9
	Total		2,851	100.0	493	100.0	1,679	100.0	5,023	100.0
Marital status¹										
	Never married		115	5.1	0	0.0	372	46.4	487	16.0
	Married		1,678	74.5	0	0.0	236	29.5	1,914	62.7
	De facto		235	10.4	0	0.0	152	19.0	387	12.7
	Separated		113	5.0	0	0.0	13	1.6	126	4.1
	Divorced		95	4.2	0	0.0	23	2.9	118	3.9
	Widowed		16	0.7	0	0.0	5	0.6	21	0.7
	Total		2,252	100.0	0	0.0	801	100.0	3,053	100.0
Education level¹										
	University degree or higher (including postgraduate diploma)		1,454	64.7	2	0.6	389	48.4	1,845	54.2
	Undergraduate diploma or associate diploma		248	11.0	2	0.6	70	8.7	320	9.4
	Certificate, trade qualification or apprenticeship		357	15.9	6	1.7	130	16.2	493	14.5
	Highest level of secondary school		124	5.5	21	5.9	165	20.5	310	9.1
	Did not complete highest level of secondary school		47	2.1	4	1.1	14	1.7	65	1.9
	Never went to school		0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1	1	0.0
	Attending school		11	0.5	316	88.8	32	4.0	359	10.5
	Other		4	0.2	2	0.6	1	0.1	7	0.2
	Attending secondary school		0	0.0	3	0.8	1	0.1	4	0.1
	Preschool		3	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	0.1
	Total		2,248	100.0	356	100.0	803	100.0	3,407	100.0
Household										
	One adult		21	0.9	6	1.7	76	9.5	103	3.0
	Couple		63	2.8	5	1.4	135	16.8	203	6.0
	One adult with child(ren)		261	11.6	31	8.7	39	4.9	331	9.7
	Couple with child(ren)		1,746	77.6	250	70.0	204	25.4	2,200	64.5
	Adult(s) with adult child(ren)		88	3.9	33	9.2	165	20.5	286	8.4
	Adult(s) with parents		12	0.5	5	1.4	74	9.2	91	2.7
	Group household		28	1.2	13	3.6	91	11.3	132	3.9
	Other		8	0.4	3	0.8	9	1.1	20	0.6
	Couple with children under 18 & adult children		22	1.0	11	3.1	11	1.4	44	1.3
	Total		2,249	100.0	357	100.0	804	100.0	3,410	100.0
Employment¹										
	Full time employment		977	43.5	4	1.1	386	48.0	1,367	40.1
	Part time employment		711	31.6	26	7.3	132	16.4	869	25.5



Casual employment	143	6.4	90	25.4	146	18.1	379	11.1
Working reduced hours because of COVID-19	15	0.7	0	0.0	16	2.0	31	0.9
Not employed because of COVID-19	3	0.1	1	0.3	19	2.4	23	0.7
Not employed	43	1.9	20	5.6	11	1.4	74	2.2
Home duties	231	10.3	1	0.3	20	2.5	252	7.4
Full time student	32	1.4	208	58.6	46	5.7	286	8.4
Part time student	24	1.1	3	0.8	3	0.4	30	0.9
Retired	20	0.9	0	0.0	15	1.9	35	1.0
Other	20	0.9	2	0.6	7	0.9	29	0.9
Self-employed	29	1.3	0	0.0	4	0.5	33	1.0
Total	2,248	100.0	355	100.0	805	100.0	3,408	100.0
Income change since COVID-19*¹								
Increased a lot	15	0.7	0	0.0	3	0.4	18	0.6
Increased somewhat	69	3.1	0	0.0	22	2.7	91	3.0
Decreased somewhat	361	16.1	0	0.0	184	23.0	545	17.9
Decreased a lot	143	6.4	0	0.0	79	9.9	222	7.3
Unsure	33	1.5	0	0.0	25	3.1	58	1.9
About the same	1,622	72.3	0	0.0	488	60.9	2,110	69.3
Total	2,243	100.0	0	0.0	801	100.0	3,044	100.0
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander								
Yes, Aboriginal	58	2.6	13	3.7	24	3.0	95	2.8
Yes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	4	0.2	1	0.3	2	0.2	7	0.2
No	2,174	97.2	342	96.1	776	96.8	3,292	97.0
Total	2,236	100.0	356	100.0	802	100.0	3,394	100.0
Languages other than English								
Yes	391	17.5	74	20.7	128	15.9	593	17.4
No	1,847	82.5	284	79.3	675	84.1	2,806	82.6
Total	2,238	100.0	358	100.0	803	100.0	3,399	100.0
Disability								
Yes	128	5.7	24	6.7	70	8.8	222	6.5
No	2,115	94.3	333	93.3	730	91.3	3,178	93.5
Total	2,243	100.0	357	100.0	800	100.0	3,400	100.0

* The variables "Marital Status" and "Income change since COVID-19" were not asked of teenagers.

¹ For the age group 0 to 12 years, the variables "Marital status", "Education level", "Employment" and "Income change since COVID-19" were asked to the parents of the children. Therefore, the shaded figures do not represent the socio-economic status of the children but that of the parents who filled-in the survey for their children.



2. Profiles of retention and dropout groups

2.1 Overall retention and dropout frequency

Of the 5,055 survey respondents 2,636 (52%) were retained and 2,419 (48%) dropped out.

Table 2. Registration in the last three years: by retention status

Registration	Retention group		Dropout group	
	n	%	n	%
Year 1				
Registered	1,644	62.4	1,152	47.6
Not registered	992	37.6	1,267	52.4
Total	2,636	100.0	2,419	100.0
Year 2				
Registered	2,020	76.6	756	31.3
Not registered	616	23.4	1,663	68.7
Total	2,636	100.0	2,419	100.0
Year 3				
Registered	2,636	100.0	0	0.0
Not registered	0	0.0	2,419	100.0
Total	2,636	100.0	2,419	100.0

2.2 Age and retention profile

Table 4 shows that there was a higher proportion of young/adolescent girls in the retention group than in the dropout group. In contrast, there was a higher proportion of women and older women in the dropout group than in the retention group ($p < 0.001$).

The largest age group (5–12 years) represented 52% of each of the retention and dropout group.

Table 3. Age categories: by retention status

Age (years)	Retention group		Dropout group		p-value
	n	%	n	%	
Adult (18+)	850	32.2	841	34.8	0.052
Adolescent (13-17)	280	10.6	218	9.0	
Child (0-12)	1,506	57.1	1,360	56.2	
Total	2,636	100.0	2,419	100.0	



Just over half of the participants in the following age groups were retained: 52% of young girls (0-12 years), 56% of adolescent girls (13-17 years) and 50% of women (18+) (Table 5).

Table 4. Age profile: by retention status

Age (years)	Retention group		Dropout group	
	n	%	n	%
0-4	135	5.1	104	4.3
5-12	1,371	52.0	1,256	51.9
13-17	280	10.6	218	9.0
18-25	266	10.1	100	4.1
26-39	302	11.5	258	10.7
40-49	176	6.7	254	10.5
50-59	86	3.3	147	6.1
60+	20	0.8	82	3.4
Total	2,636	100.0	2,419	100.0
p-value				<0.001

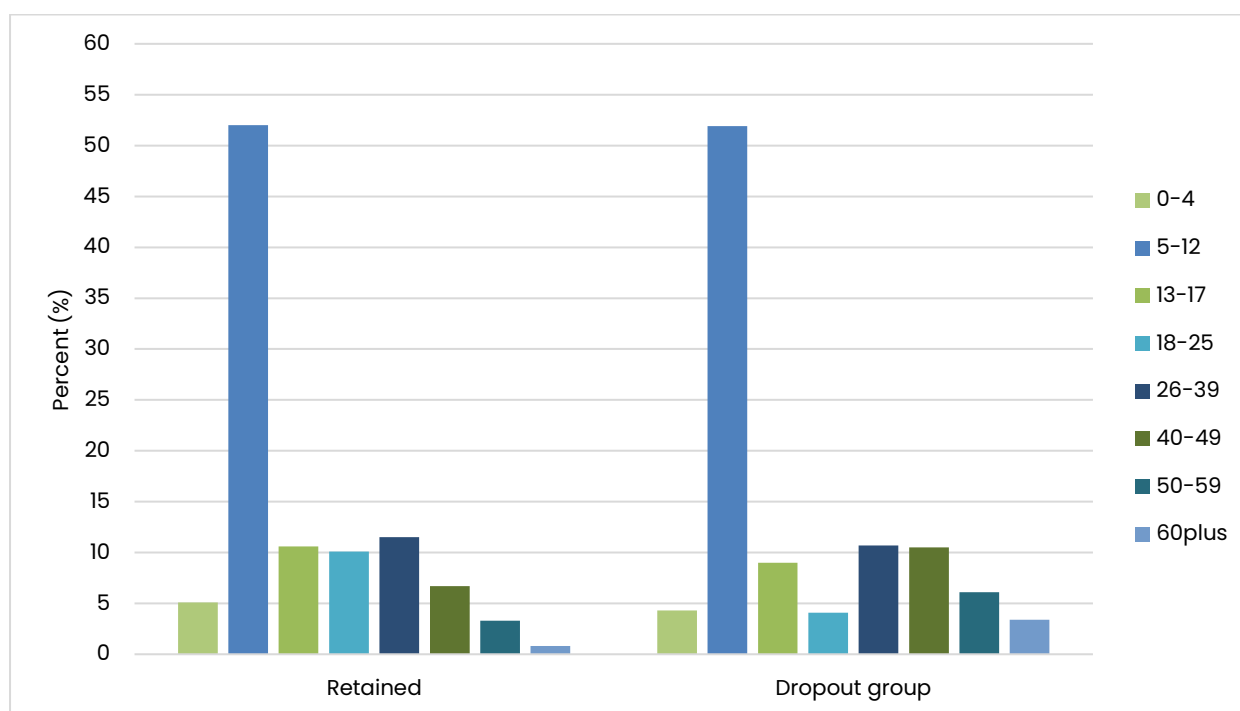


Figure 1. Age Profile: by retention status



2.3 Demographic and retention profile

2.3.1 All respondents

There were some significant differences between the dropout and retention groups with regards to demographic characteristics (Table 6).

Women in the retention group were more likely to be never married and those in the dropout group were more likely to be married ($p < 0.001$).

Participants in the retention group were more likely to be attending school or to have achieved secondary school as the highest level of education, and those in the dropout group were more likely to have a university degree ($p = 0.011$).

Participants in the dropout group were more likely to live in a household composed of a couple with child(ren) compared to the retention group ($p < 0.001$).

The retention group had a higher proportion of participants employed fulltime compared to the dropout group ($p < 0.001$).

Participants in the retention group were more likely than those in the dropout group to report that since COVID-19 their household income had somewhat decreased.

Table 6. Demographic profile of all respondents: by retention status

Demographics	Retention group		Dropout group		p-value
	n	%	n	%	
Residence					
Metropolitan regions	1,844	70.3	1,627	67.8	0.058
Country regions	779	29.7	773	32.2	
Total	2,623	100.0	2,400	100.0	
Marital status*1					
Never married	379	18.9	108	10.3	<0.001
Married	1,198	59.9	716	68.0	
De facto	280	14.0	107	10.2	
Separated	72	3.6	54	5.1	
Divorced	62	3.1	56	5.3	
Widowed	9	0.4	12	1.1	
Total	2,000	100.0	1,053	100.0	
Education level¹					
University degree or higher (including postgraduate diploma)	1,187	53.1	658	56.2	0.011
Undergraduate diploma or associate diploma	209	9.3	111	9.5	
Certificate, trade qualification or apprenticeship	320	14.3	173	14.8	
Highest level of secondary school	229	10.2	81	6.9	
Did not complete highest level of secondary school	37	1.7	28	2.4	
Never went to school	0	0.0	1	0.1	
Attending school	248	11.1	111	9.5	
Other	3	0.1	4	0.3	



Attending secondary school	1	0.0	3	0.3
Preschool	2	0.1	1	0.1
Total	2,236	100.0	1,171	100.0

Household

One adult	78	3.5	25	2.1	<0.001
Couple	161	7.2	42	3.6	
One adult with child(ren)	180	8.0	151	12.9	
Couple with child(ren)	1,374	61.4	826	70.4	
Adult(s) with adult child(ren)	215	9.6	71	6.1	
Adult(s) with parents	75	3.4	16	1.4	
Group household	109	4.9	23	2.0	
Other	14	0.6	6	0.5	
Couple with children under 18 & adult children	31	1.4	13	1.1	
Total	2,237	100.0	1,173	100.0	

Employment¹

Full time employment	947	42.4	420	35.8	<0.001
Part time employment	527	23.6	342	29.2	
Casual employment	252	11.3	127	10.8	
Working reduced hours because of COVID-19	26	1.2	5	0.4	
Not employed	20	0.9	3	0.3	
Home duties	42	1.9	32	2.7	
Full time student	140	6.3	112	9.5	
Part time student	210	9.4	76	6.5	
Retired	16	0.7	14	1.2	
Other	23	1.0	12	1.0	
Self-employed	16	0.7	13	1.1	
Total	16	0.7	17	1.4	

Income change since COVID-19*¹

Increased a lot	11	0.6	7	0.7	0.030
Increased somewhat	58	2.9	33	3.1	
Decreased somewhat	390	19.6	155	14.7	
Decreased a lot	142	7.1	80	7.6	
Unsure	41	2.1	17	1.6	
About the same	1,351	67.8	759	72.2	
Total	1,993	100.0	1,051	100.0	

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders

Yes, Aboriginal	62	2.8	33	2.8	1.000
Yes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	5	0.2	2	0.2	
No	2,161	97.0	1,131	97.0	
Total	2,228	100.0	1,166	100.0	

Languages other than English

Yes	401	18.0	192	16.5	0.295
No	1,832	82.0	974	83.5	
Total	2,233	100.0	1,166	100.0	



Disability						
	Yes	136	6.1	86	7.4	0.165
	No	2,096	93.9	1,082	92.6	
	Total	2,232	100.0	1,168	100.0	

* The variables "Marital Status" and "Income change since COVID-19" were not asked of teenagers.

¹ For the age group 0 to 12 years, the variables "Marital status", "Education level", "Employment" and "Income change since COVID-19" were asked to the parents of the children. Therefore, the N for these variables represent the socio-economic demographics of the parents who filled-in the survey for their children, and of teenagers and adults who filled-in the survey for themselves.

2.3.2 Women

For women, the only significant difference in demographic characteristics between the retention and dropout groups were for employment and education.

Those in the retention group were more likely to have a university degree ($p=0.02$) and be employed full time ($p=0.012$).

Table 7. Demographic profile of women (18+ years): by retention status

Demographics	Retention group		Dropout group		p-value
	n	%	n	%	
Residence					
Metropolitan regions	622	73.8	592	70.8	0.191
Country regions	221	26.2	244	29.2	
Total	843	100.0	836	100.0	
Marital status					
Never married	316	46.8	56	44.4	0.207
Married	196	29.0	40	31.7	
De facto	130	19.3	22	17.5	
Separated	12	1.8	1	0.8	
Divorced	19	2.8	4	3.2	
Widowed	2	0.3	3	2.4	
Total	675	100.0	126	100.0	
Education level					
University degree or higher (including postgraduate diploma)	333	49.3	56	43.4	0.02
Undergraduate diploma or associate diploma	57	8.4	13	10.1	
Certificate, trade qualification or apprenticeship	111	16.4	19	14.7	
Highest level of secondary school	137	20.3	28	21.7	
Did not complete highest level of secondary school	10	1.5	4	3.1	
Never went to school	0	0.0	1	0.8	
Attending school	27	4.0	5	3.9	
Other	0	0.0	1	0.8	
Attending secondary school	0	0.0	1	0.8	
Total	675	100.0	129	100.0	



Demographics	Retention group		Dropout group		p-value	
	n	%	n	%		
Household						
One adult	63	9.3	13	10.0	0.617	
Couple	115	17.1	20	15.4		
One adult with child(ren)	29	4.3	10	7.7		
Couple with child(ren)	165	24.5	39	30.0		
Adult(s) with adult child(ren)	143	21.2	22	16.9		
Adult(s) with parents	62	9.2	12	9.2		
Group household	79	11.7	12	9.2		
Other	8	1.2	1	0.8		
Couple with children under 18 & adult children	10	1.5	1	0.8		
Total	674	100.0	130	100.0		
Employment						
Full time employment	332	49.1	54	41.9	0.012	
Part time employment	109	16.1	23	17.8		
Casual employment	124	18.3	22	17.1		
Working reduced hours because of COVID-19	15	2.2	1	0.8		
Not employed because of COVID	16	2.4	3	2.3		
Not employed	7	1.0	4	3.1		
Home duties	15	2.2	5	3.9		
Full time student	38	5.6	8	6.2		
Part time student	3	0.4	0	0.0		
Retired	12	1.8	3	2.3		
Other	2	0.3	5	3.9		
Self-employed	3	0.4	1	0.8		
Total	676	100.0	129	100.0		
Income change since COVID-19						
Increased a lot	3	0.4	0	0.0		0.583
Increased somewhat	18	2.7	4	3.1		
Decreased somewhat	160	23.8	24	18.6		
Decreased a lot	67	10.0	12	9.3		
Unsure	23	3.4	2	1.6		
About the same	401	59.7	87	67.4		
Total	672	100.0	129	100.0		
Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders						
Yes, Aboriginal	21	3.1	3	2.3	0.403	
Yes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	1	0.1	1	0.8		
No	652	96.7	124	96.9		
Total	674	100.0	128	100.0		
Languages other than English						
Yes	110	16.3	18	14.1	0.599	
No	565	83.7	110	85.9		
Total	675	100.0	128	100.0		
Disability						
Yes	59	8.8	11	8.6	1.000	



Demographics	Retention group		Dropout group		p-value
	n	%	n	%	
No	613	91.2	117	91.4	
Total	672	100.0	128	100.0	



2.3.3 Girls

For young/adolescent girls, there were some significant differences between the dropout and retention groups with regards to demographic characteristics (Table 6).

Girls in the retention group were more likely to have parents who were married or De facto ($p=0.016$).

Girls in the retention group were more likely to be living in a household composed of a couple with (a) child(ren), and those in the dropout group were more likely to live in a single parent household ($p=0.047$).

Girls within the retention group were more likely to have parent(s) working fulltime ($p<0.001$).

Girls in the dropout group were more likely to report having a disability compared to those in the retention group ($p=0.017$).

Table 8. Demographic profile of young girls (0–12 years) and adolescent girls (13–17 years): by retention status

	Retention group		Dropout group		p-value
	n	%	n	%	
Residence					
Metropolitan regions	1,222	68.7	1,035	66.2	0.129
Country regions	558	31.3	529	33.8	
Total	1,780	100.0	1,564	100.0	
Marital status*1					
Never married	63	4.8	52	5.6	0.016
Married	1,002	75.6	676	72.9	
De facto	150	11.3	85	9.2	
Separated	60	4.5	53	5.7	
Divorced	43	3.2	52	5.6	
Widowed	7	0.5	9	1.0	
Total	1,325	100.0	927	100.0	
Education level¹					
University degree or higher (including postgraduate diploma)	854	54.7	602	57.7	0.117
Undergraduate diploma or associate diploma	152	9.7	98	9.4	
Certificate, trade qualification or apprenticeship	209	13.4	154	14.8	
Highest level of secondary school	92	5.9	53	5.1	
Did not complete highest level of secondary school	27	1.7	24	2.3	
Attending school	221	14.2	106	10.2	
Other	3	0.2	3	0.3	
Attending secondary school	1	0.1	2	0.2	
Preschool	2	0.1	1	0.1	



	Retention group		Dropout group		p-value	
	n	%	n	%		
Total	1,561	100.0	1,043	100.0		
Household						
One adult	15	1.0	12	1.2	0.047	
Couple	46	2.9	22	2.1		
One adult with child(ren)	151	9.7	141	13.5		
Couple with child(ren)	1,209	77.4	787	75.5		
Adult(s) with adult child(ren)	72	4.6	49	4.7		
Adult(s) with parents	13	0.8	4	0.4		
Group household	30	1.9	11	1.1		
Other	6	0.4	5	0.5		
Couple with children under 18 & adult children	21	1.3	12	1.2		
Total	1,563	100.0	1,043	100.0		
Employment¹						
Full time employment	615	39.4	366	35.1	<0.001	
Part time employment	418	26.8	319	30.6		
Casual employment	128	8.2	105	10.1		
Working reduced hours because of COVID-19	11	0.7	4	0.4		
Not employed because of COVID	4	0.3	0	0.0		
Not employed	35	2.2	28	2.7		
Home duties	125	8.0	107	10.2		
Full time student	172	11.0	68	6.5		
Part time student	13	0.8	14	1.3		
Retired	11	0.7	9	0.9		
Other	14	0.9	8	0.8		
Self-employed	13	0.8	16	1.5		
Total	1,559	100.0	1,044	100.0		
Income change since COVID-19^{*1}						
Increased a lot	8	0.6	7	0.8		0.252
Increased somewhat	40	3.0	29	3.1		
Decreased somewhat	230	17.4	131	14.2		
Decreased a lot	75	5.7	68	7.4		
Unsure	18	1.4	15	1.6		
About the same	950	71.9	672	72.9		
Total	1,321	100.0	922	100.0		
Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders						
Yes, Aboriginal	41	2.6	30	2.9	0.716	
Yes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	4	0.3	1	0.1		
No	1,509	97.1	1,007	97.0		
Total	1,554	100.0	1,038	100.0		
Languages other than English						
Yes	291	18.7	174	16.8	0.230	
No	1,267	81.3	864	83.2		
Total	1,558	100.0	1,038	100.0		



	Retention group		Dropout group		p-value
	n	%	n	%	
Disability					
Yes	77	4.9	75	7.2	0.017
No	1,483	95.1	965	92.8	
Total	1,560	100.0	1,040	100.0	

* The variables "Marital Status" and "Income change since COVID-19" were not asked of teenagers.

¹ For the age group 0 to 12 years, the questions about "Marital status", "Education level", "Employment" and "Income change since COVID-19" were asked to the parents of the children. Therefore, the N for these variables represent the socio-economic demographics of the parents who filled-in the survey for their children, and of teenagers who filled-in the survey for themselves.

3. Sport participation profile

3.1 Age of commencement

Women and girls in the retention group started participating in sport at an older age (mean age 9.6 years) compared to those within the dropout group, who started when they were much younger (mean age 6.4 years) ($p < 0.001$).

3.2 Reasons for playing sport and having fun playing

3.2.1 Women

Women were motivated to participate in sport mainly for fun and enjoyment with 96% of respondents in the retention group indicating this motivation and 91% within the dropout group (Table 9).

After fun and enjoyment, the main motivations for participating in sport for women in the retention group were: physical health/fitness (88%), social reasons (75%), to be outdoors (60%), to be with friends (53%) and psychological/mental health (52%).

For women in the dropout group, the main motivations to participate in sport, after fun and enjoyment, were: physical health/fitness (73%), to learn a new skill (44%), social reasons (41%), a sense of achievement (36%), to be with friends (33%) and performance or competition (33%).

Table 9. Women's motivation (18+ years) to participate by retention status

Motivations to participate	Retention group (n ¹ =697)			Dropout group (n ¹ =138)		
	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents
Fun/Enjoyment	667	15.5	95.7	125	20.5	90.6
Performance or competition	341	7.9	48.9	46	7.6	33.3
Physical health or fitness (strength/ conditioning/ flexibility)	614	14.3	88.1	100	16.4	72.5
Professional/ part of my job	16	0.4	2.3	9	1.5	6.5
Psychological/ mental health/ therapy	359	8.3	51.5	38	6.2	27.5
Sense of achievement	304	7.1	43.6	50	8.2	36.2
Social reasons	521	12.1	74.7	56	9.2	40.6
To be with friends	367	8.5	52.7	46	7.6	33.3
To be a good role model/ to encourage others to participate	189	4.4	27.1	25	4.1	18.1
To learn a new skill	233	5.4	33.4	60	9.9	43.5



To lose weight/ keep weight off/ tone*	264	6.1	37.9	24	3.9	17.4
To be outdoors*	419	9.7	60.1	27	4.4	19.6
Other	4	0.1	0.6	2	0.3	1.4
To be with family	1	0.0	0.1	0	0.0	0.0
Lifestyle/Identity	4	0.1	0.6	0	0.0	0.0
Love and passion for the game	4	0.1	0.6	1	0.2	0.7
To coach	1	0.0	0.1	0	0.0	0.0
Total²	4,308	100.0	618.1	609	100.0	441.3

1 N = number of respondents in each group. n = number of responses for each item in the list.

2 Respondents could select more than one item, and so the total numbers of responses in each group are greater than the total number of respondents in each group.

The number of responses for each item can be expressed as a percentage of either all responses (as a percentage of n) or all respondents (as a percentage of N). The first of these add up to 100%, the second add up to more than 100% as each respondent could select more than one item. In the second case, a Total % of Respondents figure of 250% indicates that on average respondents from that group chose 2.5 different responses.

* These options were only available to football respondents.

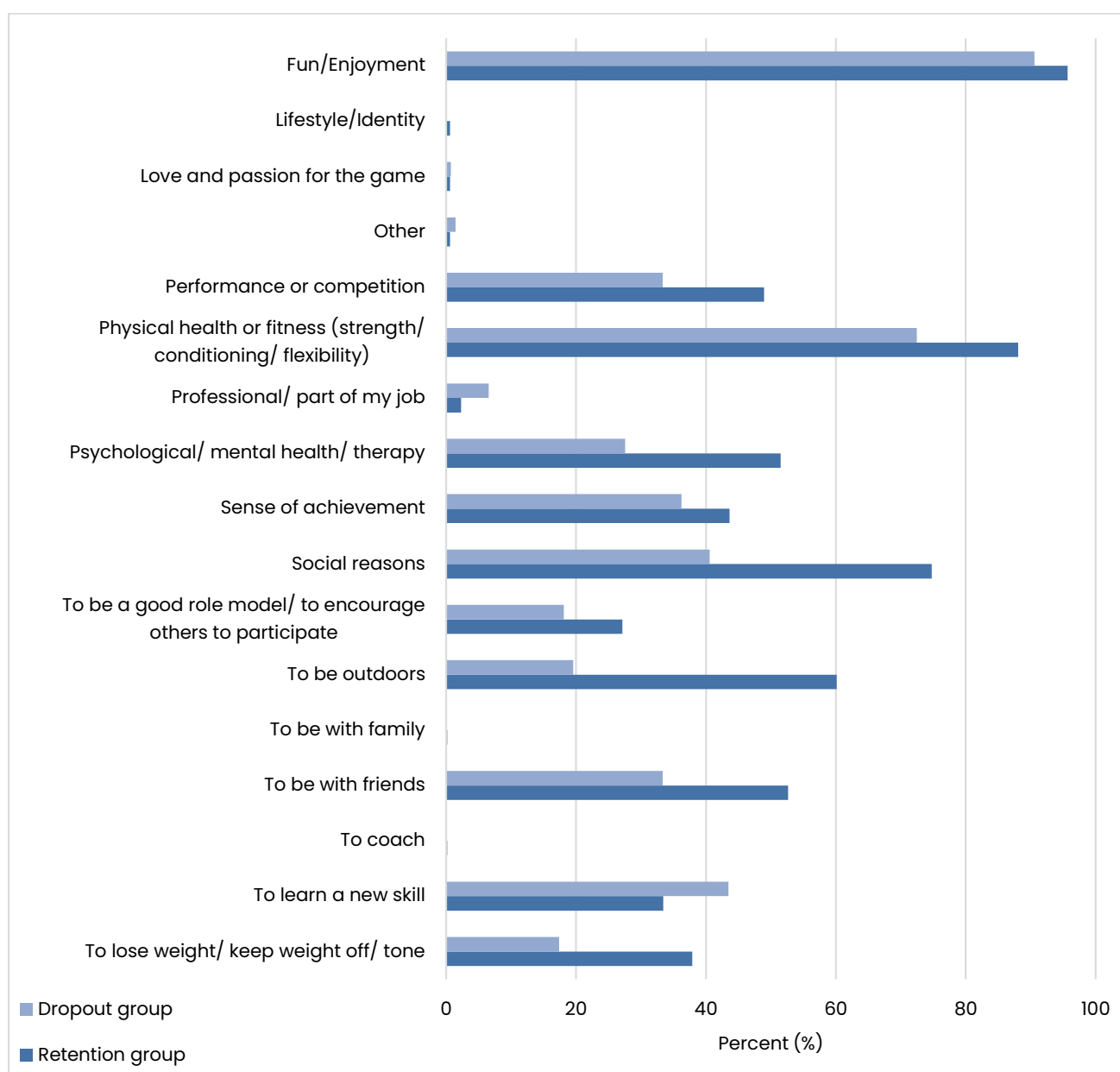


Figure 2. Women's motivation (18+ years) to participate: by retention status



Women had fun participating in sport mainly through socialising (Table 10).

The women in the retention group reported having fun when socialising (79%), followed by keeping fit (77%), being challenged to improve and get better at playing the sport (both 76%), playing with friends (75%) and having a friendly coach (51%).

The women in the dropout group reported having fun when socialising (61%), being challenged to improve/getting better at playing sport (58%), playing with friends (57%), keeping fit (55%) and having a friendly coach (50%).



Table 10. What makes participating fun for women (18+ years): by retention status

What makes participating fun	Retention group (n ¹ =694)			Dropout group (n38% playing ¹ =137)		
	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents
Being challenged to improve and get better at your sport	527	18.9	75.9	79	18.2	57.7
Earning medals and trophies	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.2	0.7
Getting playing time	2	0.1	0.3	0	0.0	0.0
Having a friendly coach	353	12.7	50.9	69	15.9	50.4
Having well-organised practices	2	0.1	0.3	0	0.0	0.0
High-fiving, fist-bumping and hugging	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.2	0.7
Teamwork/Being part of a team	4	0.1	0.6	1	0.2	0.7
Keeping fit	534	19.2	76.9	75	17.3	54.7
Playing with friends	518	18.6	74.6	78	18.0	56.9
Trying your best	2	0.1	0.3	1	0.2	0.7
Socialising	550	19.8	79.3	84	19.4	61.3
When parents show good sportsmanship (encouraging not yelling)	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.2	0.7
Winning	272	9.8	39.2	43	9.9	31.4
Other	4	0.1	0.6	0	0.0	0.0
Being a role model	3	0.1	0.4	0	0.0	0.0
Being able to be match male skills levels (for females)	1	0.0	0.1	0	0.0	0.0
Enjoyment	2	0.1	0.3	0	0.0	0.0
Fair play	1	0.0	0.1	0	0.0	0.0
Mental aspects (mental health, away from worries)	3	0.1	0.4	0	0.0	0.0
Being active/ fit	1	0.0	0.1	0	0.0	0.0
Strategy	1	0.0	0.1	0	0.0	0.0
Belonging/ Sense of community	2	0.1	0.3	0	0.0	0.0
Being competitive/ Scoring	2	0.1	0.3	0	0.0	0.0
Total²	2,784	100.0	401.2	433	100.0	316.1

1 N = number of respondents in each group. n = number of responses for each item in the list.

2 Respondents could select more than one item, and so the total numbers of responses in each group are greater than the total number of respondents in each group. The number of responses for each item can be expressed as a percentage of either all responses (as a percentage of n) or all respondents (as a percentage of N). The first of these add up to 100%, the second add up to more than 100% as each respondent could select more than one item. In the second case, a Total % of Respondents figure of 250% indicates that on average respondents from that group chose 2.5 different responses.

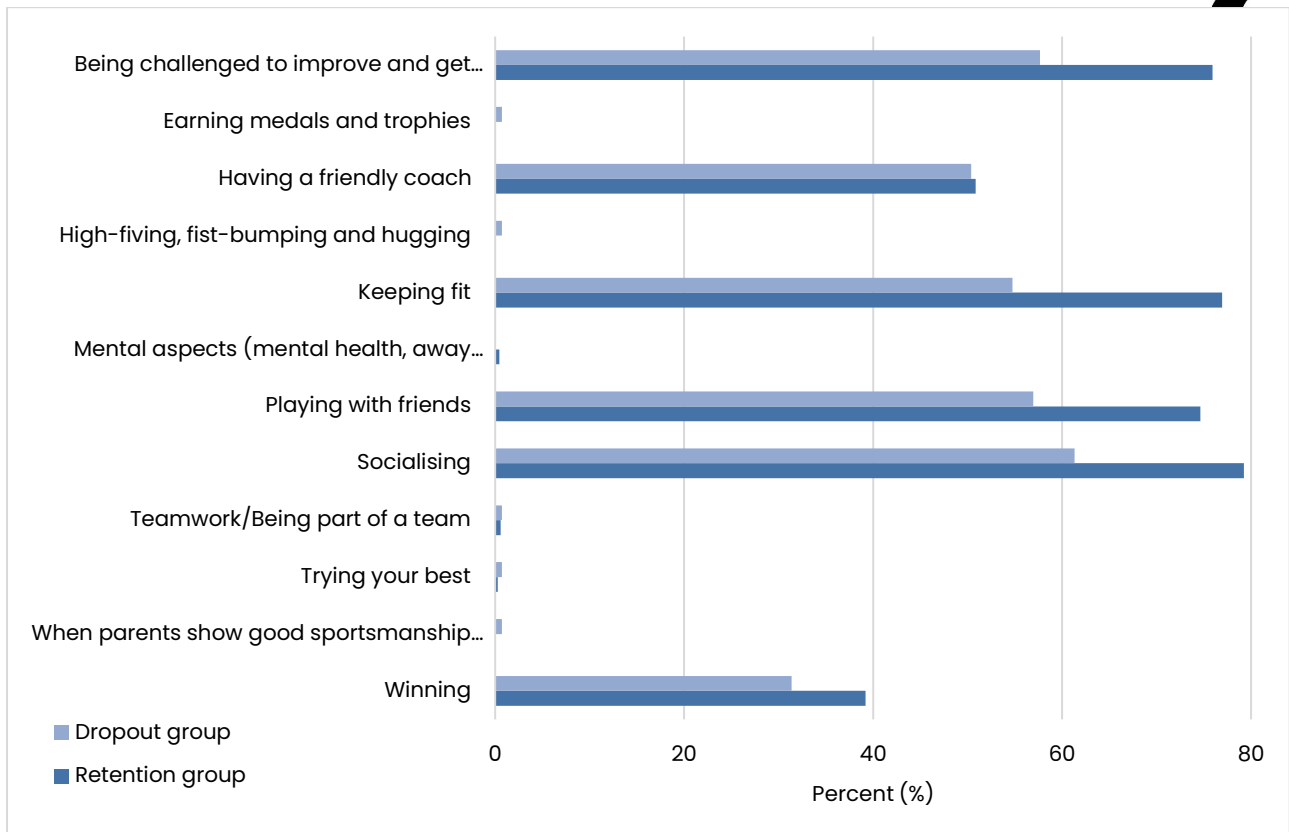


Figure 3. What makes participating fun for women (18+ years): by retention status

3.2.2 Girls

For young/adolescent girls, the main motivation to participate was also fun/enjoyment (Table 11), with 96% in the retention group and 94% in the dropout group reporting this.

The other main motivations for girls in the retention group were physical health/fitness (74%), to learn a new skill (68%), a sense of achievement (51%), social reasons (42%) and to be with friends (36%). For the dropout group, the other main motivations to participate were to learn a new skill (72%), physical health/fitness (66%), a sense of achievement (32%), social reasons (30%), and to be with friends (23%).



Table 11. Motivation of young girls (0-12 years) and adolescent girls (13-17 years) to participate: by retention status

Motivations to participate	Retention group (n ¹ =1,612)			Dropout group (n ¹ =1,108)		
	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents
Fun/Enjoyment	1,558	20.8	96.2	1,048	27.0	94.3
Performance or competition	553	7.4	34.2	162	4.2	14.6
Physical health or fitness (strength/ conditioning/ flexibility)	1,197	16.0	73.9	728	18.7	65.5
Professional/ part of my job	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.0	0.1
Psychological/ mental health/ therapy	404	5.4	25.0	148	3.8	13.3
Sense of achievement	819	10.9	50.6	359	9.2	32.3
Social reasons	685	9.1	42.3	328	8.4	29.5
To be with friends	587	7.8	36.3	255	6.6	23.0
To be a good role model/ to encourage others to participate	179	2.4	11.1	34	0.9	3.1
To learn a new skill	1,094	14.6	67.6	796	20.5	71.6
To lose weight/ keep weight off/ tone*	68	0.9	4.2	2	0.1	0.2
To be outdoors*	326	4.3	20.1	8	0.2	0.7
Other	9	0.1	0.6	4	0.1	0.4
To be with family	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.0	0.1
To give back	1	0.0	0.1	0	0.0	0.0
Lifestyle/Identity	1	0.0	0.1	0	0.0	0.0
Family support/ influence (e.g. dad is a coach, siblings play)	7	0.1	0.4	5	0.1	0.5
High-performance/ Professional athlete career aspiration	5	0.1	0.3	2	0.1	0.2
Love and passion for the game	1	0.0	0.1	4	0.1	0.4
Teamwork	3	0.0	0.2	1	0.0	0.1
Fundamental Movement Skills**	3	0.0	0.2	1	0.0	0.1
Talented**	3	0.0	0.2	1	0.0	0.1
Total²	7,503	100.0	463.4	3,888	100.0	350.0

1 N = number of respondents in each group. n = number of responses for each item in the list.

2 Respondents could select more than one item, and so the total numbers of responses in each group are greater than the total number of respondents in each group. The number of responses for each item can be expressed as a percentage of either all responses (as a percentage of n) or all respondents (as a percentage of N). The first of these add up to 100%, the second add up to more than 100% as each respondent could select more than one item. In the second case, a Total % of Respondents figure of 250% indicates that on average respondents from that group chose 2.5 different responses.

*These categories were only available to soccer respondents

** These categories were generated from gymnastics free text responses

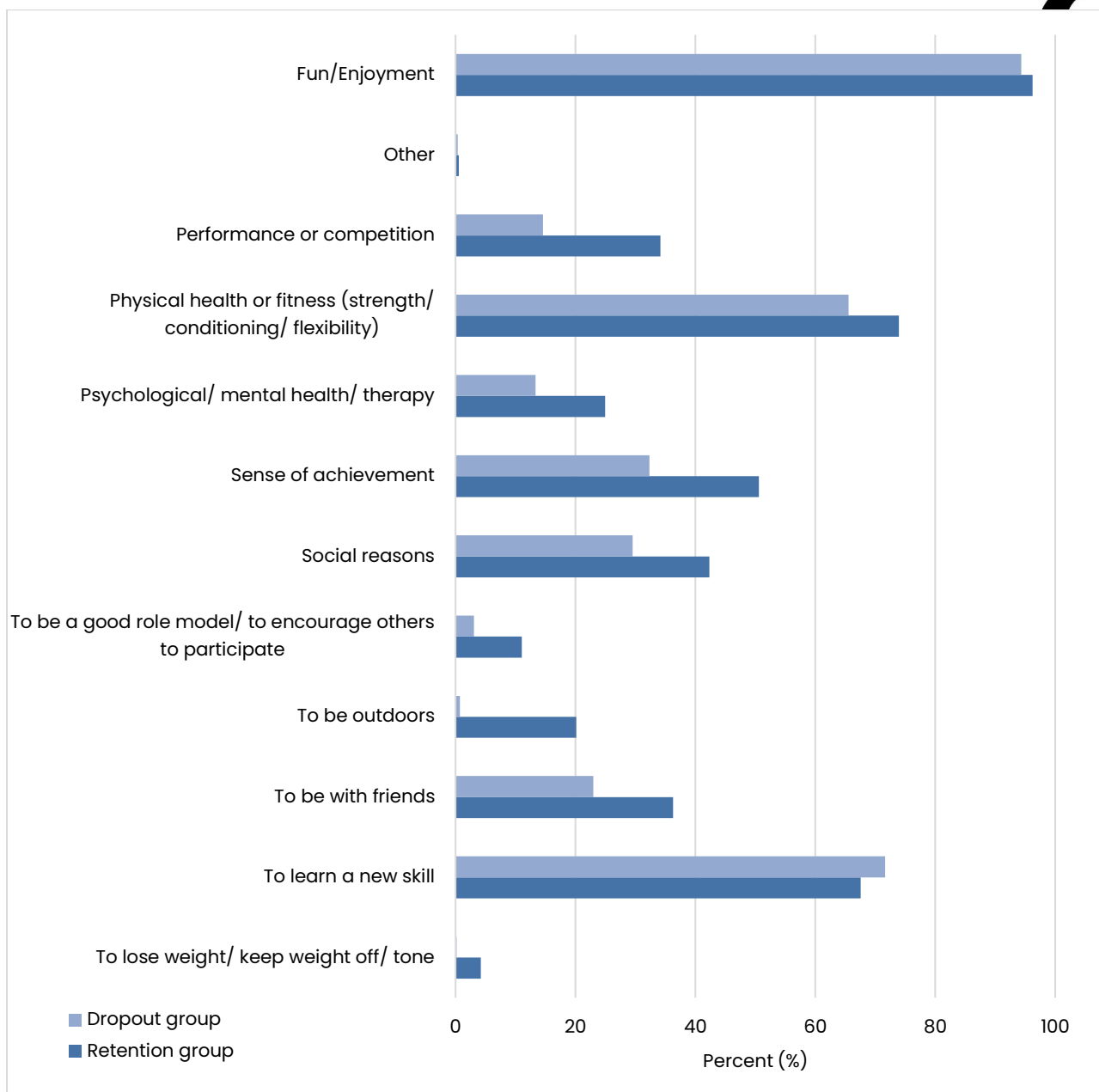


Figure 4. Motivation of young girls (0-12 years) and adolescent girls (13-17 years) to participate: by retention status

For girls, sport was fun mainly when they were challenged to improve/ got better at their sport (retention group 79%, dropout group 61%) (Table 12). For the retention group, the other main factors that made sport fun were: having a friendly coach (70%), trying their best (64%), playing with friends (57%), and teamwork/being part of a team (51%). For the dropout group, the other main factors that made playing sport fun were: having a friendly coach (54%), trying their best (45%), playing with friends (43%), and getting playing time (36%).



Table 12. What makes participating fun for young girls (0-12 years) and adolescent girls (13-17 years): by retention status

What makes participating fun	Retention group (n ¹ =1,035)			Dropout group (n ¹ =1,077)		
	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents
Being challenged to improve and get better at your sport	1,271	15.3	79.3	662	18.3	60.7
Earning medals and trophies	484	5.8	30.2	180	5.0	16.5
Getting playing time	741	8.9	46.2	395	10.9	36.2
Having a friendly coach	1,123	13.5	70.1	592	16.4	54.3
Having well-organised practices	766	9.2	47.8	321	8.9	29.4
High-fiving, fist-bumping and hugging	307	3.7	19.2	85	2.4	7.8
Teamwork/Being part of a team	813	9.8	50.7	201	5.6	18.4
Keeping fit	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.0	0.1
Playing with friends	912	11.0	56.9	466	12.9	42.8
Trying your best	1,024	12.3	63.9	489	13.5	44.9
Socialising	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.0	0.1
When parents show good sportsmanship (encouraging not yelling)	469	5.6	29.3	124	3.4	11.4
Winning	375	4.5	23.4	78	2.2	7.2
Other	13	0.2	0.8	7	0.2	0.6
Coaching	2	0.0	0.1	1	0.0	0.1
Inclusive, safe and supportive environment (team/ club)	3	0.0	0.2	2	0.1	0.2
Enjoyment	1	0.0	0.1	4	0.1	0.4
Fair play	1	0.0	0.1	0	0.0	0.0
Being active/ fit	4	0.0	0.2	3	0.1	0.3
Being competitive/ Scoring	1	0.0	0.1	0	0.0	0.0
Learning new skills	11	0.2	1.1	11	0.3	1.0
Total ²	8,310	100.0	518.4	3,612	100.0	331.4

1 N = number of respondents in each group. n = number of responses for each item in the list.

2 Respondents could select more than one item, and so the total numbers of responses in each group are greater than the total number of respondents in each group. The number of responses for each item can be expressed as a percentage of either all responses (as a percentage of n) or all respondents (as a percentage of N). The first of these add up to 100%, the second add up to more than 100% as each respondent could select more than one item. In the second case, a Total % of Respondents figure of 250% indicates that on average respondents from that group chose 2.5 different responses.

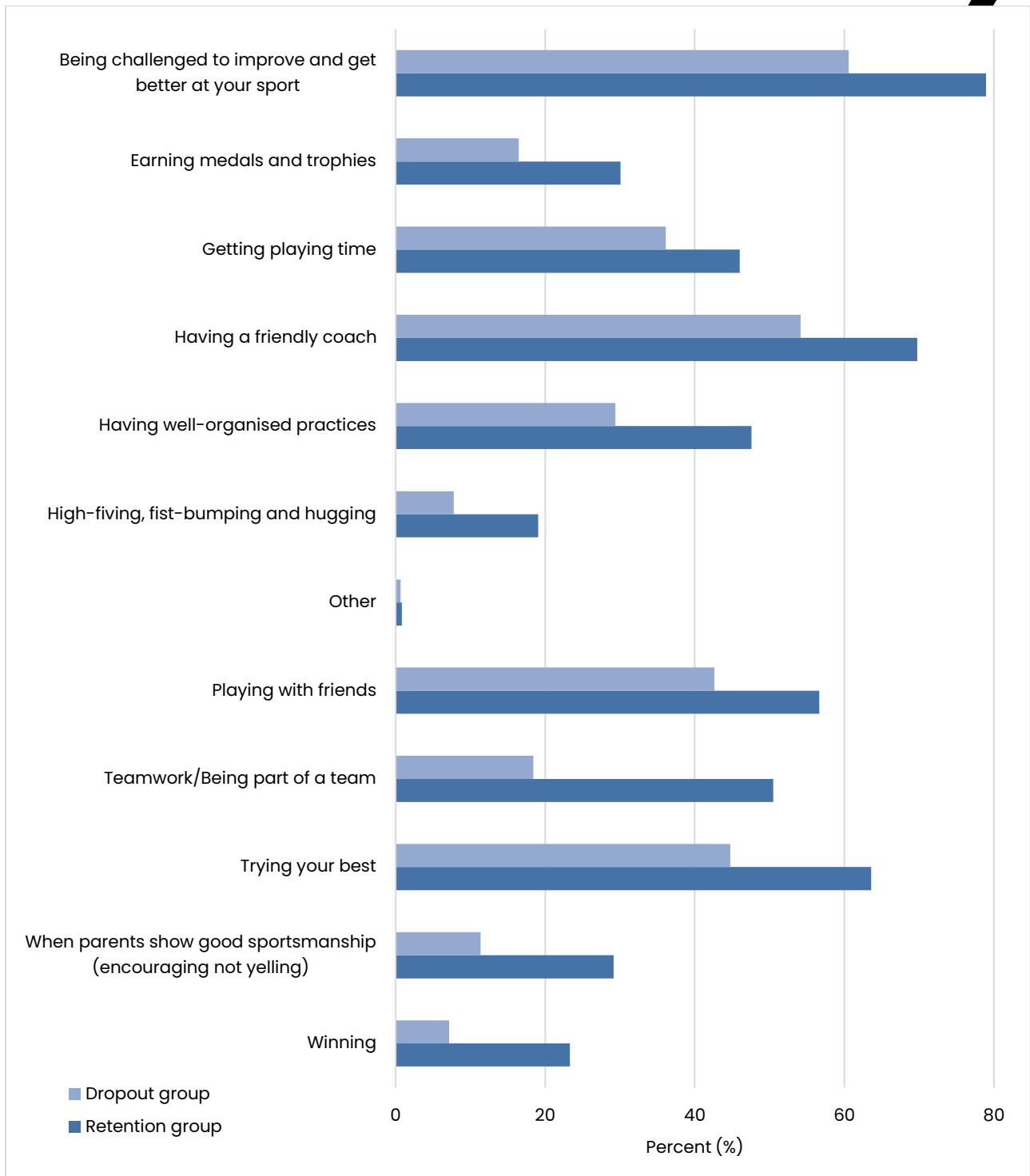


Figure 5. What makes participating fun for young girls (0-12 years) and adolescent girls (13-17 years): by retention status



3.3 Reasons for dropping out

The main reasons for dropping out overall were COVID-19 (26%), cost (25%), loss of interest (25%), not having fun (22%), playing other sports or activities (16%), and unfriendly coach or official (16%) (Table 13).

For young girls (12 and under), the main reasons for dropout were cost (27%), followed by loss of interest (26%), COVID-19 (26%), not having fun (21%) and playing other sports and activities (17%).

For adolescent girls (13-17 years), the main reasons for dropout were: not having fun (34%), loss of interest (32%), unfriendly coach or official (27%), injuries (27%), and increasing age/to old (27%).

For women, the main reasons for dropping out were COVID-19 (33%), cost (28%), injuries (24%), not enough time (23%), and other lifestyle priorities (15%).



Table 13. Reasons for dropping out: by age

	Age (years)											
	0-12 (n ¹ =978)			13-17 (n ¹ =124)			18+ (n ¹ =138)			ALL (n ¹ =1,240)		
	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents
Reasons for dropping out												
Abusive spectator/team mate/coach/environment***	8	0.4	0.8	2	0.5	1.6	3	0.9	2.2	13	0.4	1.0
Anxiety**	4	0.2	0.4	2	0.5	1.6	0	0.0	0.0	6	0.2	0.5
Became a coach/ referee	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.2	0.8	1	0.3	0.7	2	0.1	0.2
Burnout	24	1.1	2.5	32	7.6	25.8	12	3.5	8.7	68	2.3	5.5
COVID-19	249	11.3	25.5	30	7.1	24.2	45	13.0	32.6	324	10.9	26.1
Classes too big**	16	0.7	1.6	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	16	0.5	1.3
Cost - too expensive	262	11.8	26.8	12	2.8	9.7	38	11.0	27.5	312	10.5	25.2
Didn't have enough time	112	5.1	11.5	25	5.9	20.2	32	9.2	23.2	169	5.7	13.6
Health problems	15	0.7	1.5	4	0.9	3.2	4	1.2	2.9	23	0.8	1.9
Increasing age/ too old	28	1.3	2.9	33	7.8	26.6	18	5.2	13.0	79	2.6	6.4
Injuries	40	1.8	4.1	33	7.8	26.6	33	9.5	23.9	106	3.6	8.5
Lack of competition**	2	0.1	0.2	3	0.7	2.4	0	0.0	0.0	5	0.2	0.4
Lost interest	255	11.5	26.1	40	9.5	32.3	12	3.5	8.7	307	10.3	24.8
Moved location	14	0.6	1.4	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.3	0.7	15	0.5	1.2
No class/ centre closed**	16	0.7	1.6	0	0.0	0.0	2	0.6	1.4	18	0.6	1.5
No friends to play with	73	3.3	7.5	19	4.5	15.3	9	2.6	6.5	101	3.4	8.1
No opportunities/ facilities/ clubs in my areas	81	3.7	8.3	8	1.9	6.5	15	4.3	10.9	104	3.5	8.4
No transport/ couldn't get there	31	1.4	3.2	5	1.2	4.0	5	1.4	3.6	41	1.4	3.3
Non-inclusive environment	83	3.8	8.5	17	4.0	13.7	10	2.9	7.2	110	3.7	8.9
Not challenged**	12	0.5	1.2	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	12	0.4	1.0
Other	58	2.6	5.9	7	1.7	5.6	7	2.0	5.1	72	2.4	5.8
Other lifestyle priorities	72	3.3	7.4	20	4.7	16.1	21	6.1	15.2	113	3.8	9.1
Playing other sports or physical activities	164	7.4	16.8	18	4.3	14.5	15	4.3	10.9	197	6.6	15.9



	Age (years)											
	0-12 (n ¹ =978)			13-17 (n ¹ =124)			18+ (n ¹ =138)			ALL (n ¹ =1,240)		
	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents	n ¹	% Responses	% Respondents
Reasons for dropping out												
Poor club management/poor health and safety environment***	18	0.8	1.8	2	0.5	1.6	5	1.4	3.6	25	0.8	2.0
Poor coaching**	72	3.3	7.4	0	0.0	0.0	2	0.6	1.4	74	2.5	6.0
Pregnancy/ became a mum	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	2	0.6	1.4	2	0.1	0.2
Time clashes**	14	0.6	1.4	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.3	0.7	15	0.5	1.2
Too competitive/pressure to perform, commit***	62	2.8	6.3	13	3.1	10.5	10	2.9	7.2	85	2.9	6.9
Training timing	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.2	0.8	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.0	0.1
Unfriendly coach/ officials	146	6.6	14.9	34	8.1	27.4	16	4.6	11.6	196	6.6	15.8
Wanted to try different gym activities**	4	0.2	0.4	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	4	0.1	0.3
Wasn't good enough	55	2.5	5.6	17	4.0	13.7	10	2.9	7.2	82	2.7	6.6
Wasn't having fun	207	9.4	21.2	42	10.0	33.9	17	4.9	12.3	266	8.9	21.5
Wasn't learning**	16	0.7	1.6	2	0.5	1.6	1	0.3	0.7	19	0.6	1.5
Total²	2,213	100	226.3	422	100	340.3	347	100	251.4	2,982	100	240.5

1 N = number of respondents in each group. n = number of responses for each item in the list.

2 Respondents could select more than one item, and so the total numbers of responses in each group are greater than the total number of respondents in each group. The number of responses for each item can be expressed as a percentage of either all responses (as a percentage of n) or all respondents (as a percentage of N). The first of these add up to 100%, the second add up to more than 100% as each respondent could select more than one item. In the second case, a Total % of Respondents figure of 250% indicates that on average respondents from that group chose 2.5 different responses.

** These categories were generated from gymnastics free text responses

*** The wording of these categories were slightly different for the two surveys

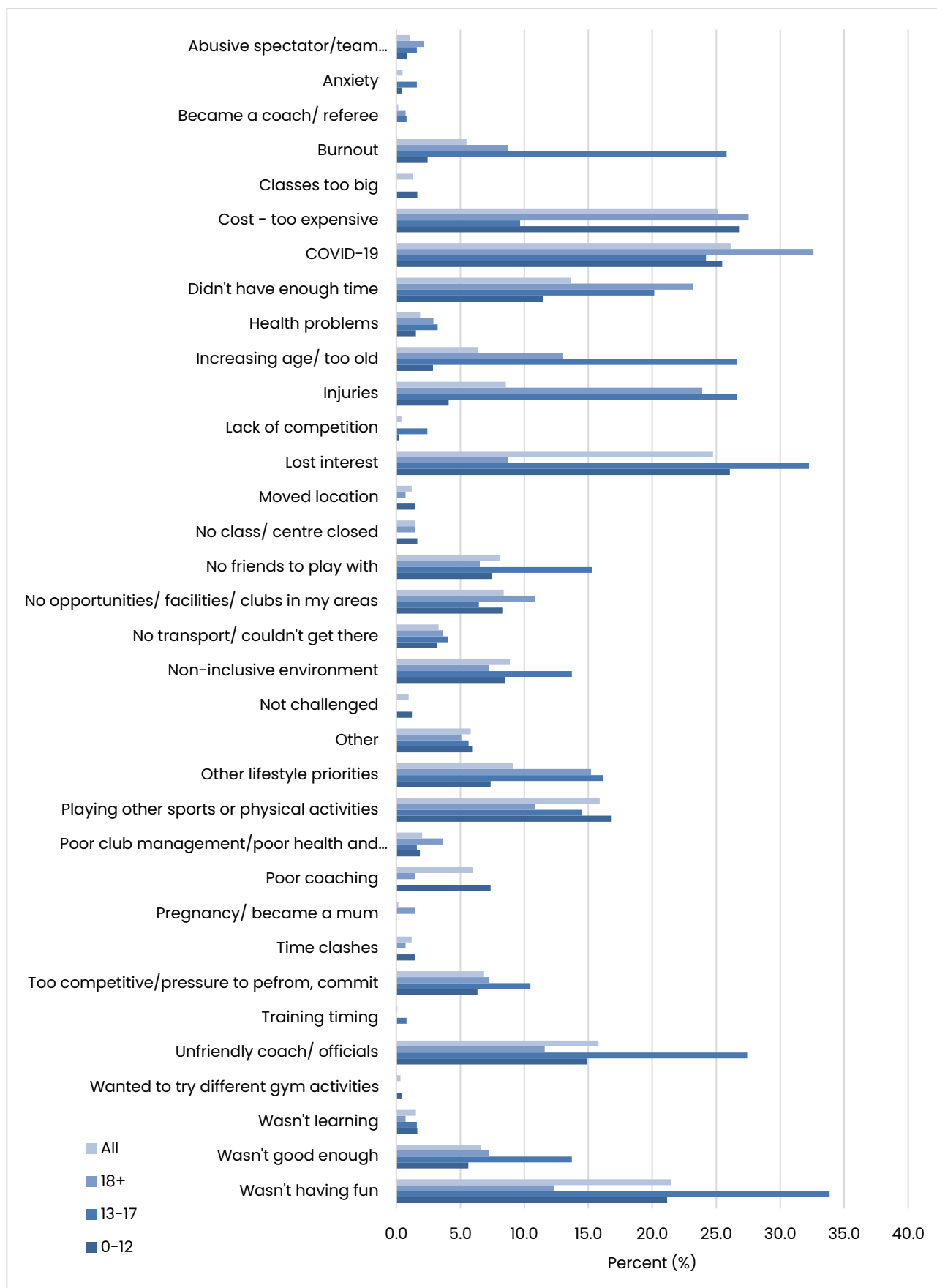


Figure 6. Reasons for dropping out: by age



The COVID-19 related reasons for dropping out of playing sport was mainly due to government restrictions (77%) followed by personal health concerns (28%) and due to family finances (17%) (Table 14).

Table 14. COVID-related reasons for dropping out: by age

	Age (years)											
	0-12 (n ¹ =241)			13-17 (n ¹ =30)			18+ (n ¹ =44)			ALL (n ¹ =315)		
	n ¹	% <i>Responses</i>	% <i>Respondents</i>	n ¹	% <i>Responses</i>	% <i>Respondents</i>	n ¹	% <i>Responses</i>	% <i>Respondents</i>	n ¹	% <i>Responses</i>	% <i>Respondents</i>
Reasons for dropping out												
Government restrictions	185	54.1	76.4	25	71.4	83.3	34	57.6	77.3	244	56.0	77.2
Personal health concerns	78	22.8	32.2	3	8.6	10.0	7	11.9	15.9	88	20.2	27.8
Family finances	46	13.5	19.0	1	2.9	3.3	6	10.2	13.6	53	12.2	16.8
Other	15	4.4	6.2	1	2.9	3.3	2	3.4	4.5	18	4.1	5.7
Fear for season to be cancelled and paying same membership cost	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	2	3.4	4.5	2	0.5	0.6
Moved	1	0.3	0.4	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	1	0.2	0.3
Stopped work which was near club	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	1	1.7	2.3	1	0.2	0.3
Lack of skills due to lack of training**	0	0.0	0.0	3	8.6	10.0	0	0.0	0.0	3	0.7	0.9
Competitions/training cancelled**	6	1.8	2.5	0	0.0	0.0	5	8.5	11.4	11	2.5	3.5
Lack of fitness**	1	0.3	0.4	0	0.0	0.0	1	1.7	2.3	2	0.5	0.6
Lack of motivation due to time away**	5	1.5	2.1	2	5.7	6.7	1	1.7	2.3	8	1.8	2.5
Ongoing COVID situations at clubs**	5	1.5	2.1	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	5	1.1	1.6
Ongoing COVID situations at clubs	5	1.5	2.1	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	5	1.2	1.7
Total²	342	100.0	141.3	35	100.0	116.7	59	100.0	134.1	436	100.0	138.0

1 N = number of respondents in each group. n = number of responses for each item in the list.

2 Respondents could select more than one item, and so the total numbers of responses in each group are greater than the total number of respondents in each group. The number of responses for each item can be expressed as a percentage of either all responses (as a percentage of n) or all respondents (as a percentage of N). The first of these add up to 100%, the second add up to more than 100% as each respondent could select more than one item. In the second case, a Total % of Respondents figure of 250% indicates that on average respondents from that group chose 2.5 different responses.

** These categories were generated from gymnastics free text responses



3.4 Social support

Most participants had strong family and friend support to play sport (Table 15).

Most had friends that encouraged them to play sport (68%), and this was highest for women (87%). Half of all respondents (52%) participated in sport to be with friends, and this was highest for adolescent girls (13-17 years) (67%).

Most women (86%) had family that encouraged them to participate in sport, and most adolescent girls (87%) and young girls (92%) had parents that encouraged them to participate in sport. Nearly all young girls (99.5%) and adolescent girls (99%) had parents that supported (materially) them to play sport. Most young girls (75%) and adolescent girls (65%) reported that their parents were influential in them starting to participate in sport.

Over half of adolescent girls (57%) and most women (80%) encouraged other family members to participate in sport.

Most adolescent girls (71%) and women (81%) enjoyed participating in sport with other family members.

Table 15. Social support: by age group

Type of social support	Age (years)		0-12		13-17		18+		All	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
My friends encourage(d) me to participate										
Agree	1,280	59.0	291	80.6	695	86.6	2,266	68.0		
Neither agree or disagree	480	22.1	42	11.6	54	6.7	576	17.3		
Disagree	408	18.8	28	7.8	54	6.7	490	14.7		
Total	2,168	100.0	361	100.0	803	100.0	3,332	100.0		
I participate to be with my friends										
Agree	1,116	49.8	241	67.1	NA	NA	1,358	52.2		
Neither agree or disagree	204	9.1	35	9.7	NA	NA	240	9.2		
Disagree	921	41.1	83	23.1	NA	NA	1,005	38.6		
Total	2,241	100.0	359	100.0	NA	NA	2,603	100.0		
My family encourages/d me to participate										
Agree	NA	NA	NA	NA	681	85.8	681	85.8		
Neither agree or disagree	NA	NA	NA	NA	45	5.7	45	5.7		
Disagree	NA	NA	NA	NA	68	8.6	68	8.6		
Total	NA	NA	NA	NA	794	100.0	794	100.0		
My parents encourage/d me to participate										
Agree	2,131	91.7	323	87.1	NA	NA	2,456	91.0		
Neither agree or disagree	70	3.0	29	7.8	NA	NA	100	3.7		
Disagree	123	5.3	19	5.1	NA	NA	142	5.3		
Total	2,324	100.0	371	100.0	NA	NA	2,698	100.0		
My parents support me e.g. transport, financially to participate										
Agree	2,319	99.5	366	98.7	NA	NA	2,688	99.4		
Neither agree or disagree	5	0.2	1	0.3	NA	NA	6	0.2		
Disagree	7	0.3	4	1.1	NA	NA	11	0.4		
Total	2,331	100.0	371	100.0	NA	NA	2,705	100.0		



Type of social support	Age (years)		0-12		13-17		18+		All	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
My parents were influential in me starting the sport										
Agree	1,738	75.1	240	65.2	1	33.3	1,979	73.7		
Neither agree or disagree	161	7.0	49	13.3	0	0.0	210	7.8		
Disagree	415	17.9	79	21.5	2	66.7	496	18.5		
Total	2,314	100.0	368	100.0	3	100.0	2,685	100.0		
I encourage(d) other members of my family to participate										
Agree	NA	NA	199	56.9	612	79.5	811	72.4		
Neither agree or disagree	NA	NA	48	13.7	61	7.9	109	9.7		
Disagree	NA	NA	103	29.4	97	12.6	200	17.9		
Total	NA	NA	350	100.0	770	100.0	1,120	100.0		
I enjoy(ed) participating with other family members										
Agree	NA	NA	209	70.6	529	80.8	738	77.6		
Neither agree or disagree	NA	NA	38	12.8	79	12.1	117	12.3		
Disagree	NA	NA	49	16.6	47	7.2	96	10.1		
Total	NA	NA	296	100.0	655	100.0	951	100.0		

Note: "NA" (Not applicable) represents the age group for which the question was not asked.

Tables 16 and 17, and Figures 7 and 8, show social support according to retention status.

Women in the retention group were significantly more likely to have friends that encourage them to participate in sport and to encourage other family members to participate in sport, compared to the dropout group (Table 16, Figure 7).

Girls in the retention group had significantly more support to play than those in the dropout group for the following factors:

- Friends' encouragement
- Participation with friends
- Parents' encouragement
- Encourage other members of family to participate
- Enjoy participating with other family members



Table 16. Women's' social support for participation (18+ years): by retention status

Type of social support	Retention group		Dropout group		p-value
	n	%	n	%	
My friends encourage(d) me to participate					
Agree	600	88.4	95	76.6	0.001
Neither agree or disagree	42	6.2	12	9.7	
Disagree	37	5.4	17	13.7	
Total	679	100.0	124	100.0	
My family encourage(d) me to participate					
Agree	584	86.8	97	80.2	0.134
Neither agree or disagree	36	5.3	9	7.4	
Disagree	53	7.9	15	12.4	
Total	673	100.0	121	100.0	
I encourage(d) other members of my family to participate					
Agree	535	82.3	77	64.2	<0.001
Neither agree or disagree	51	7.8	10	8.3	
Disagree	64	9.8	33	27.5	
Total	650	100.0	120	100.0	
I enjoy(ed) participating with other family members					
Agree	464	81.5	65	75.6	0.301
Neither agree or disagree	67	11.8	12	14.0	
Disagree	38	6.7	9	10.5	
Total	569	100.0	86	100.0	

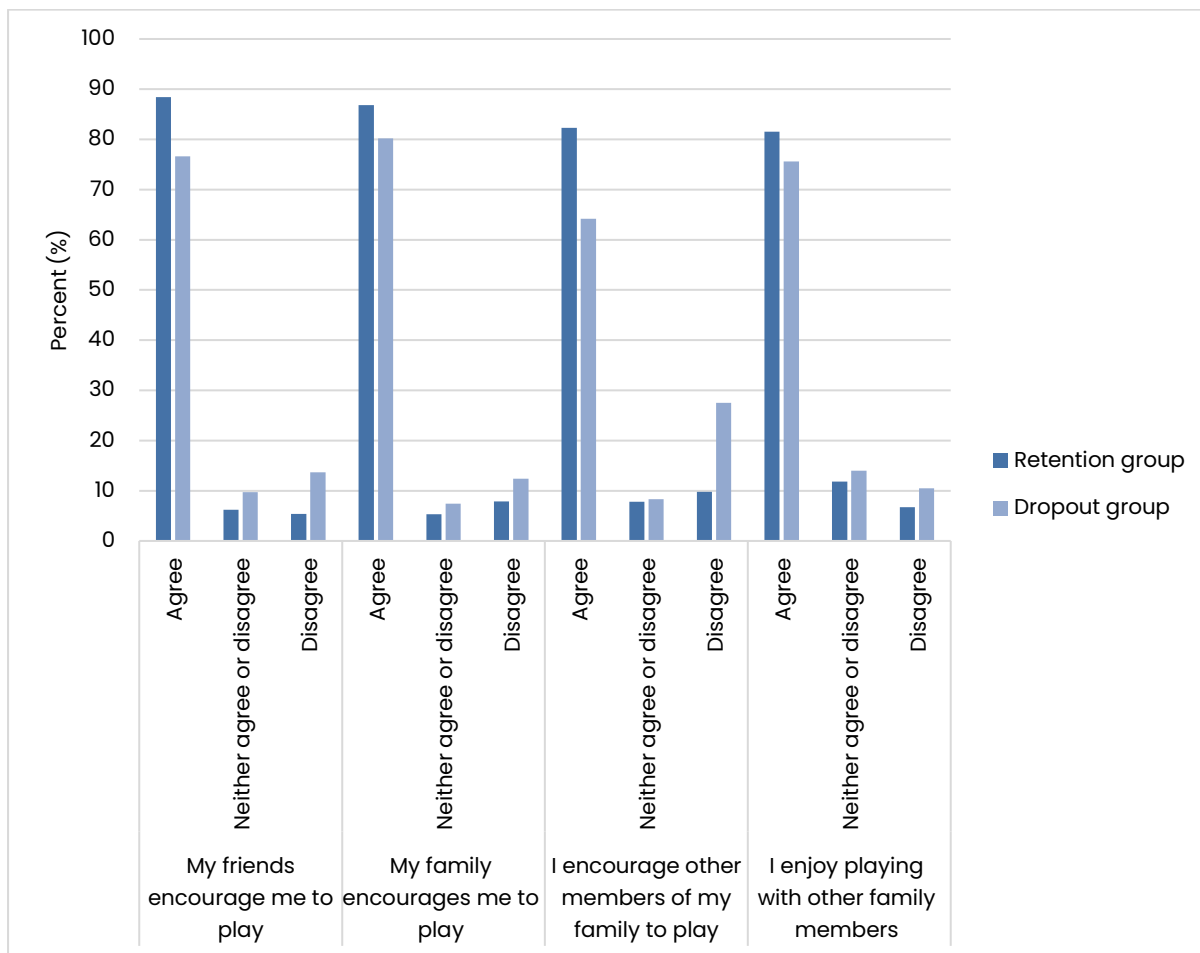


Figure 7. Women's social support (18+ years): by age group



Table 17. Young girls' (0-12 years) and adolescents' (13-17 years) social support in sport: by retention status

Type of social support	Retention group		Dropout group		p-value
	n	%	n	%	
My friends encourage(d) me to participate					
Agree	1,075	67.1	496	53.6	<0.001
Neither agree or disagree	354	22.1	168	18.1	
Disagree	174	10.9	262	28.3	
Total	1,603	100.0	926	100.0	
I participate(ed) to be with friends					
Agree	938	58.7	419	41.9	<0.001
Neither agree or disagree	164	10.3	75	7.5	
Disagree	497	31.1	507	50.6	
Total	1,599	100.0	1,001	100.0	
My parents encourage(d) me to participate					
Agree	1,496	92.9	958	88.3	<0.001
Neither agree or disagree	56	3.5	43	4.0	
Disagree	58	3.6	84	7.7	
Total	1,610	100.0	1,085	100.0	
My parents support(ed) me (e.g. transport, financially) to participate					
Agree	1,595	99.4	1,090	99.3	0.793
Neither agree or disagree	3	0.2	3	0.3	
Disagree	6	0.4	5	0.5	
Total	1,604	100.0	1,098	100.0	
My parents were influential in me starting the sport					
Agree	1,184	73.7	794	73.8	0.495
Neither agree or disagree	133	8.3	77	7.2	
Disagree	289	18.0	205	19.1	
Total	1,606	100.0	1,076	100.0	
I encourage(d) other members of my family to participate					
Agree	152	64.1	47	41.6	<0.001
Neither agree or disagree	32	13.5	16	14.2	
Disagree	53	22.4	50	44.2	
Total	237	100.0	113	100.0	
I enjoy(ed) participating with other family members					
Agree	173	78.6	36	47.4	<0.001
Neither agree or disagree	20	9.1	18	23.7	
Disagree	27	12.3	22	28.9	
Total	220	100.0	76	100.0	

Note: All questions were asked to the parents of children aged 0-12 years (the parents filled-in the survey on behalf of their child). Unshaded rows represent questions that were asked of both children and adolescents. Grey shaded rows represent the questions that were not asked of children (hence sample size is smaller).

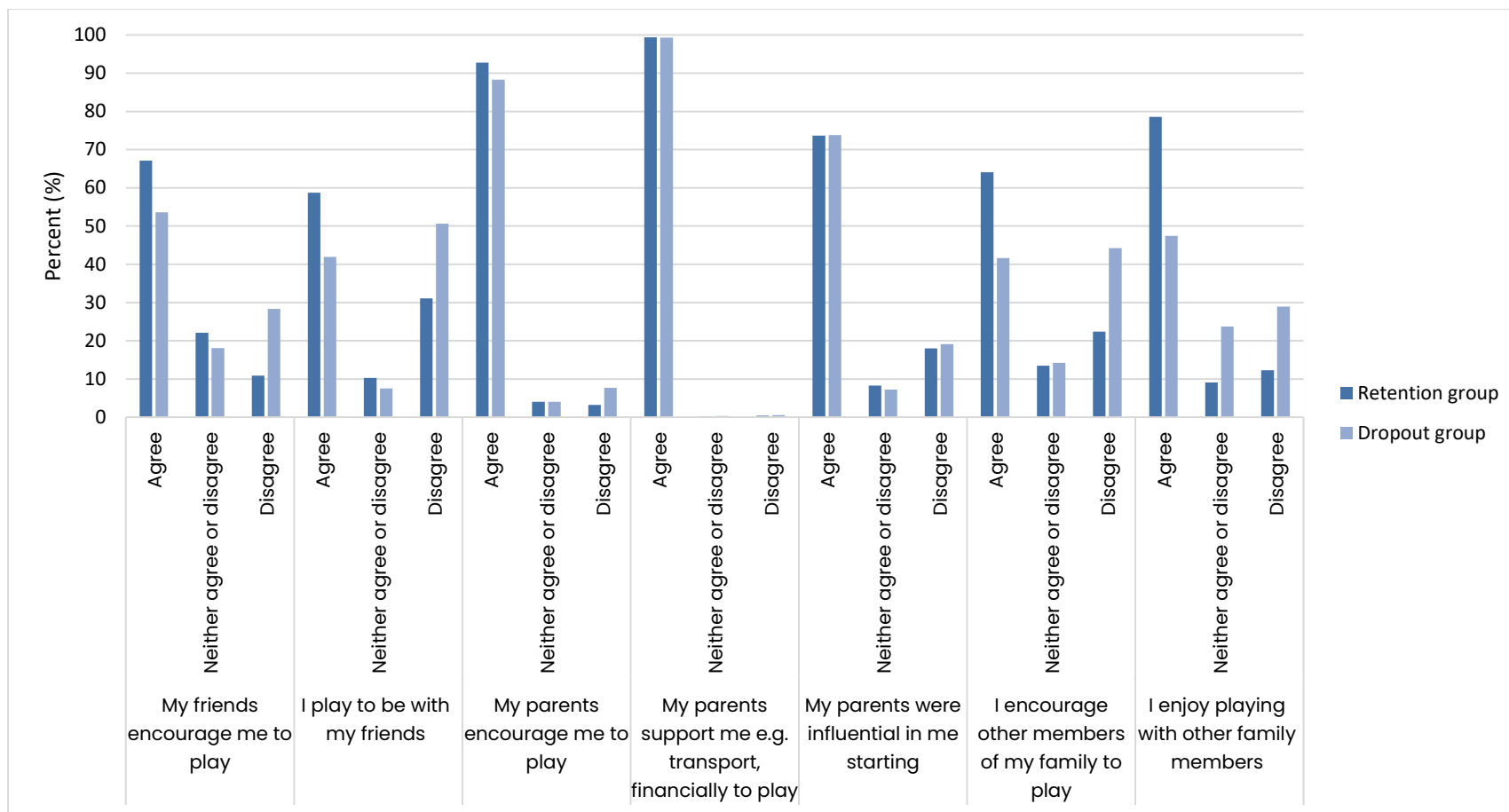


Figure 8. Social support of young girls (0-12 years) and adolescent girls (13-17 years): by retention status



4. Women and girls' health profiles

4.1 Health profile according to age

Most women and girls reported very good or excellent overall health (78%), and this was highest for young girls (0-12 years) (86%) (Table 18).

Most women and girls reported very good or excellent physical health (73%) and this was highest for young girls (82%) and lowest for women (49%).

Just over half of all participants reported very good or excellent mental health (62%), and this was highest for young girls (73%) and lowest for women (40%).

Table 18. Health profile: by age

Age (years)	0-12		13-17		18+		All	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Overall health								
Excellent	1,006	44.3	119	33.0	121	14.8	1,246	36.1
Very good	958	42.2	156	43.2	337	41.2	1,451	42.1
Good	264	11.6	73	20.2	278	34.0	615	17.8
Fair	36	1.6	11	3.0	75	9.2	122	3.5
Poor	5	0.2	2	0.6	6	0.7	13	0.4
Total	2,269	100.0	361	100.0	817	100.0	3,447	100.0
Physical health								
Excellent	1,001	44.2	103	28.5	104	12.7	1,208	35.1
Very good	868	38.3	166	46.0	296	36.2	1,330	38.6
Good	331	14.6	70	19.4	299	36.6	700	20.3
Fair	57	2.5	18	5.0	108	13.2	183	5.3
Poor	10	0.4	4	1.1	10	1.2	24	0.7
Total	2,267	100.0	361	100.0	817	100.0	3,445	100.0
Mental health								
Excellent	686	30.3	56	15.6	86	10.5	828	24.0
Very good	982	43.3	111	30.8	240	29.4	1,333	38.7
Good	482	21.3	109	30.3	280	34.3	871	25.3
Fair	95	4.2	55	15.3	168	20.6	318	9.2
Poor	22	1.0	29	8.1	42	5.1	93	2.7
Total	2,267	100.0	360	100.0	816	100.0	3,443	100.0



4.2 Health profile and retention status

There was no significant self-reported health difference between the retention and dropout group for overall health or mental health, however there was a significant difference for physical health profiles, but this was not a consistent trend.

The main difference is at the high end of the scale. Excellent health was reported by a lower proportion of the retention group (34%) than the dropout group (38%), while very good health was reported by a higher proportion of the retention group (40%) than the retention group (37%). When these two categories are combined, there is little difference between the two groups (retention group 73% compared to dropout group 75%). (Table 19).

Table 19. Health profile of all respondents: by retention status

	Retention group		Dropout group		p-value
	n	%	n	%	
Overall health¹					
Excellent	796	35.3	450	37.8	0.058
Very good	951	42.2	500	42.0	
Good	416	18.4	199	16.7	
Fair	88	3.9	34	2.9	
Poor	5	0.2	8	0.7	
Total	2,256	100.0	1,191	100.0	
Physical health¹					
Excellent	759	33.7	449	37.7	0.001
Very good	890	39.5	440	37.0	
Good	468	20.8	232	19.5	
Fair	130	5.8	53	4.5	
Poor	8	0.4	16	1.3	
Total	2,255	100.0	1,190	100.0	
Mental health¹					
Excellent	517	22.9	311	26.2	0.167
Very good	881	39.1	452	38.0	
Good	585	26.0	286	24.1	
Fair	215	9.5	103	8.7	
Poor	56	2.5	37	3.1	
Total	2,254	100.0	1,189	100.0	

¹ For the age group 0 to 12 years, the variables "Overall health", "Physical health" and "Mental health" were asked to the parents of the children.

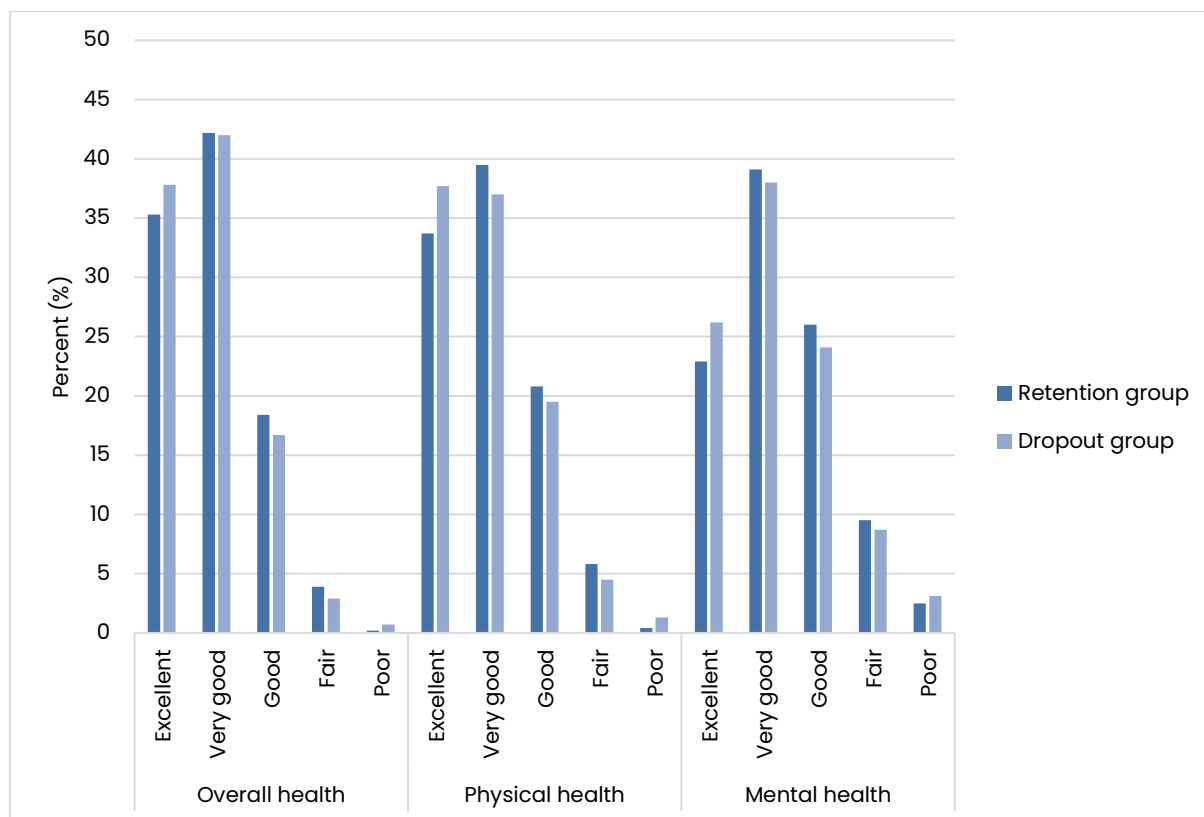


Figure 9. Health profile of all respondents: by retention status

Women in the dropout group were also more likely to report excellent overall health and physical health whereas those in the retention group were more correspondingly more likely to report very good health (Table 20).



Table 20. Women's health profile (18+ years): by retention status

	Retention group		Dropout group		p-value
	n	%	n	%	
Overall health					
Excellent	91	13.3	30	22.4	0.006
Very good	294	43.0	43	32.1	
Good	230	33.7	48	35.8	
Fair	65	9.5	10	7.5	
Poor	3	0.4	3	2.2	
Total	683	100.0	134	100.0	
Physical health					
Excellent	75	11.0	29	21.6	0.001
Very good	259	37.9	37	27.6	
Good	252	36.9	47	35.1	
Fair	92	13.5	16	11.9	
Poor	5	0.7	5	3.7	
Total	683	100.0	134	100.0	
Mental health					
Excellent	67	9.8	19	14.2	0.053
Very good	208	30.5	32	23.9	
Good	242	35.5	38	28.4	
Fair	132	19.4	36	26.9	
Poor	33	4.8	9	6.7	
Total	682	100.0	134	100.0	

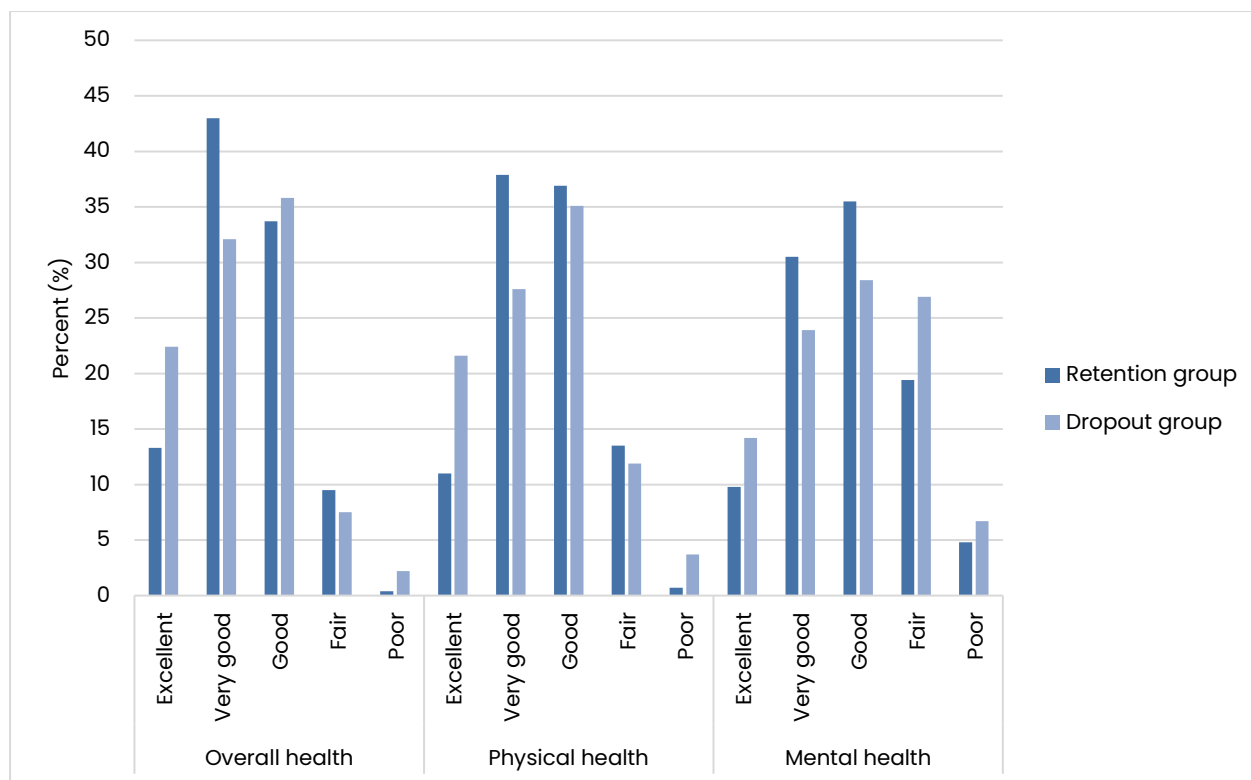


Figure 10. Women's health profile (18+ years): by retention status



Girls retained in sport were more likely to report excellent overall health and physical health compared to those who had dropped out (Table 21).

Table 21. Health profile of young girls (0–12 years) and adolescent girls (13–17 years): by retention status

	Retention group		Dropout group		p-value
	n	%	n	%	
Overall health¹					
Excellent	705	44.8	420	39.7	0.014
Very good	657	41.8	457	43.2	
Good	186	11.8	151	14.3	
Fair	23	1.5	24	2.3	
Poor	2	0.1	5	0.5	
Total	1,573	100.0	1,057	100.0	
Physical health¹					
Excellent	684	43.5	420	39.8	0.001
Very good	631	40.1	403	38.2	
Good	216	13.7	185	17.5	
Fair	38	2.4	37	3.5	
Poor	3	0.2	11	1.0	
Total	1,572	100.0	1,056	100.0	
Mental health¹					
Excellent	450	28.6	292	27.7	0.084
Very good	673	42.8	420	39.8	
Good	343	21.8	248	23.5	
Fair	83	5.3	67	6.4	
Poor	23	1.5	28	2.7	
Total	1,572	100.0	1,055	100.0	

¹ For the age group 0 to 12 years, the variables “Overall health”, “Physical health” and “Mental health” were asked to the parents of the children.

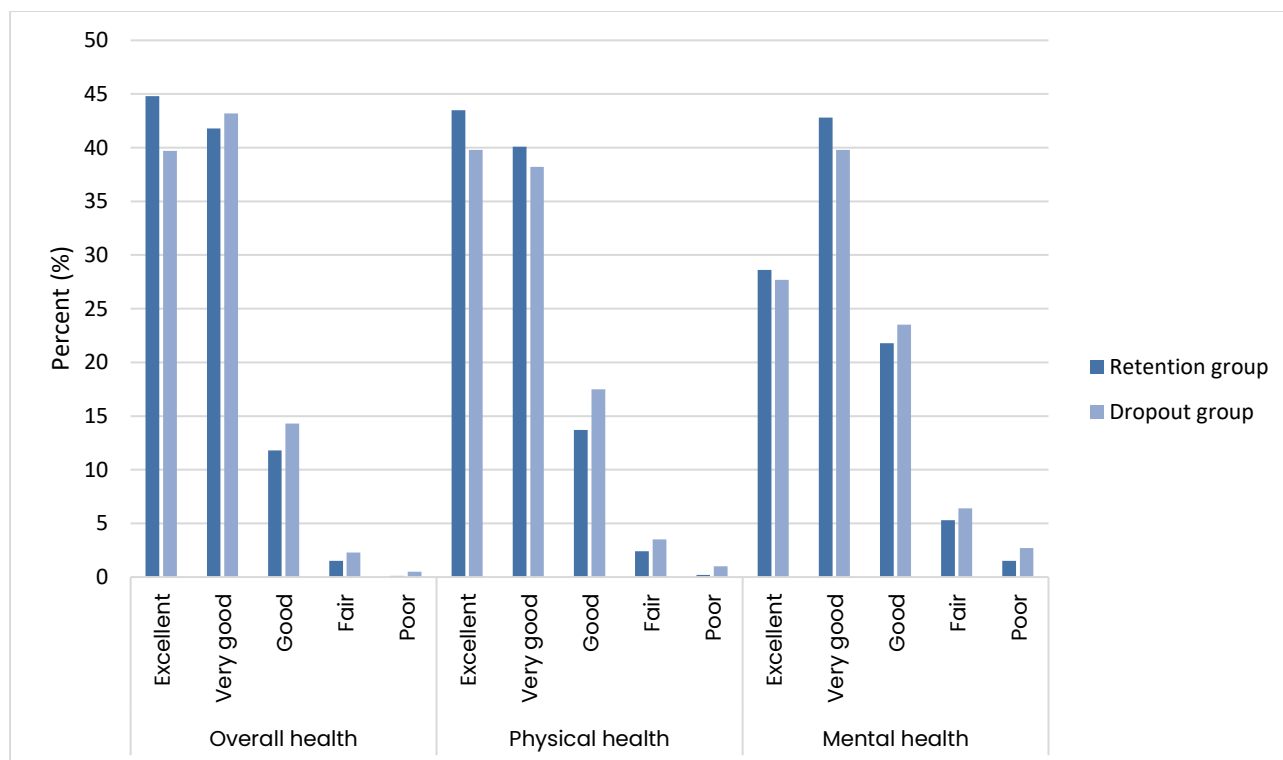


Figure 11. Health profile of young girls (0-12 years) and adolescent girls (13-17 years): by retention status



A note about the statistical analyses

As with any survey sample, there is no guarantee that the survey respondents are representative of the population of interest. Many of the analyses were conducted separately for different age cohorts.

Some questions such as marital status and sexual preference were asked only of adults. Children were instructed to complete the survey with a parent or carer, and some demographic questions were directed to the parent or carer rather than the child. Explanatory footnotes accompany tables affected by this.

Most of the measures of statistical significance (p-values) in this report are from chi-square tests of association in crosstabulations of two categorical variables. Many of the crosstabulations have cells with small counts; in such cases Fisher's exact tests were used rather than chi-square tests.

When comparing means of quantitative measures in the retained and dropped out groups, the data distributions in the two groups were generally skewed and/or had unequal spread, and so Wilcoxon rank sum tests were used rather than t-tests.

A p-value represents the probability that the result observed (in this report generally a difference between retained and dropout groups) is only a chance result in our particular data from our particular sample of survey respondents and would not apply to the whole population (of football players). In accordance with usual research practice, p-values $<.05$ are regarded indicating a statistically significant (usually abbreviated as just 'significant') result - one that would only occur by chance 5% of the time (one time in 20) or less.

It follows that when, as in this report, many statistical tests are performed and many p-values are reported, it is to be expected that around 5% (one in 20) of the significant results are due to chance in our particular sample data. These 'false positive' results cannot be identified, but it is important to realise that they are there, and that we can never be certain about a particular significant result.

Furthermore, a non-significant result does not mean there is no difference in the population, only that there is insufficient evidence of a difference. Sample size also effects this. With small samples (e.g. participants in particular programs), differences have to be very pronounced in order to be statistical significant.



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Contact:
Professor Rochelle Eime
Email: r.eime@federation.edu.au
PASIglobal.com

