



Playing With Pride: Experiences of LGBTQ+ people in women's sport in Australia



Foreword

From the authors

PwC Australia (PwC) was engaged by Pride Cup Limited to assist with research in relation to experience of LGBTQ+ people who play women's sport. This research was developed through a collaboration between PwC Australia, Pride Cup and Pride in Sport, bringing together analytical capability with deep LGBTQ+ and sporting community expertise. PwC Australia supported the research through survey design, analysis and reporting, drawing on PwC Australia's experience in inclusion, culture and evidence-based insight. Pride Cup and Pride in Sport (part of ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs) contributed their strong connections to LGBTQ+ communities and women's sporting teams and played a key role in shaping the research focus, maintaining community safety, distributing the survey through their national networks, and informing the recommendations. Together, this collaboration supports stronger understanding of LGBTQ+ experiences in women's sport and helps inform practical actions to strengthen inclusion across clubs, leagues and sporting organisations.

Thank you
PwC Australia



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In collaboration with

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Preface

As women's sport has experienced explosive growth in investment, visibility, and participation, there has been a parallel rise in sexism, homophobia, racism, and transphobia that threatens the very culture that makes women's sport a powerful force for belonging.

While most discussions of homophobia in sport focus on the experiences and challenges faced in men's sport, this Playing With Pride report seeks to understand the experiences of LGBTQ+ people playing women's sport.

Inspired by the 2018 [Where are all the women?](#)¹ study undertaken by Pride in Diversity in partnership with PwC Australia, these insights will hopefully be used to shape the approaches and interventions for sports around the country, from individual grassroots clubs to national sport organisations. Each and every one of us has a role to play in creating cultures and structures that centre and celebrate inclusion for all.

Acknowledgements

A special thanks goes to all of those who supported the development of this research. Current and former respondents at elite and grassroots levels, with identities across the LGBTQ+ rainbow, also provided their time and expertise in crafting and sharing the survey. Without them, this work would not be possible.

Finally, a huge thank you to the 500+ people who participated in this survey. There is such richness and complexity within our communities, and it is a privilege to shine a light on these experiences. May your participation protect the powerful culture of belonging that has made women's sport a home for us all.

¹ Pride In Diversity and PwC Australia. [Where are all the women?](#) (2018).

Executive summary

Anecdotally, Women’s sport plays a critical role in supporting LGBTQ+ people to be fully comfortable as themselves. However, despite the large and positive profiles of LGBTQ+ people in elite women’s sport, significant challenges around inclusion and acceptance persist at all levels of sport in Australia.

In light of this, Pride Cup together with PwC Australia and Pride in Sport completed this research to better understand the experiences of LGBTQ+ people participating in women’s sport. The research considers two key questions:

- Does the participation of LGBTQ+ people playing women’s sport support them to be more comfortable to be out both in sport and other aspects of life?
- Is the experience of LGBTQ+ people playing women’s sport varied? And what are the causes of this variation in their experience?

This research generated insights into the participation and experiences of



This research is based on a survey that was launched in July of 2025. **~500 people responded** to parts of the survey most relevant to their lived experience, while 271 people completed at least 66% of the survey. Refer to the Appendix for more detail.

Of the survey respondents:

271

respondents identified as LGBTQ+ participants in women’s sport.

215

postcodes from across Australia were represented, including every state and territory. 75% of respondents lived in urban areas, while 25% were from regional or remote areas.

43

sports were represented in the findings, with the largest single number of respondents coming from Aussie Rules (AFL). 86% of respondents played a team sport, while 14% of respondents participated in non-team sports. 18% of all respondents classified themselves as professional athletes.

LGBTQ+ people playing women's sport in Australia, including:

Sport as a Source of Belonging and Comfort

- Participation in women's sport significantly supports LGBTQ+ people to feel more comfortable with their sexuality and gender. Over 50% of respondents reported increased comfort with their sexuality due to sport, with team sports like Aussie Rules, Hockey, and Soccer having the most positive impact. A similar experience was felt for those with diverse gender identities, with 45% of respondents feeling more comfortable with their gender because of their participation in women's sport.
- Pride Rounds and visible LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives are making a tangible difference, especially at the club level, fostering a sense of acceptance and affirmation.

Progress and Challenges

- While inclusion is improving, experiences remain varied. Bullying and harassment exists, with 31% of respondents reporting such experiences. The most frequent forms are jokes, innuendo, and inappropriate language.
- There is a lower level of comfort with sexuality and gender diversity from LGBTQ+ people playing women's sport in regional and remote areas compared with those who live in urban areas. Only 30% of respondents in rural and remote areas reported feeling very comfortable being out about their diverse sexuality to their club or team.
- Respondents also highlighted that their feeling of belonging at a sports club was impacted more by their participation in women's sport than by their sexuality or gender. Some clubs did not yet have a women's team, while others did not provide their women's teams with equal support or focus compared to their men's teams.
- Trans inclusion is a sensitive issue in women's sport. Support for trans people varies widely between clubs and sports, with individual clubs often being more inclusive than leagues overall.

Drivers of Inclusion

- The most important factors for inclusion are supportive and inclusive leadership practices, visible LGBTQ+ role models, active allyship from teammates and staff, and policies that promote equality and respect.
- Belonging is also driven by the culture and experiences within an individual club. Many respondents noted a feeling of belonging to their own club, but not to the clubs they played against, nor to the league within which their club participated.
- One driver of trans inclusion is the visibility and support of other trans people within a club or league, indicating that tailored support may be needed for different cohorts within the LGBTQ+ community.



Recommendations for Clubs and Sporting Bodies



Create a platform for awareness by focusing on storytelling, including spotlighting and celebrating leaders, allyship, and visible role models. Further, giving individuals an opportunity to play a more active role in raising the visibility and support for LGBTQ+ people playing women’s sport by, for example, creating an Inclusion Committee to support those in leadership roles to guide events and initiatives.



Foster inclusive leadership practices and allyship at all levels by setting clear expectations, modelling inclusive behaviour, and ensuring that policies on bullying and harassment are consistently enforced.



Introduce, maintain, and grow Pride Rounds and similar inclusion initiatives. This signals an organisation’s expectations around culture and behaviour year-round, while also providing greater visibility of LGBTQ+ people, especially in regional and remote areas.



Focus on league-wide inclusion initiatives so that inclusion is experienced and understood across all teams in a league. To foster collaboration, consider sharing programs, initiatives, and lessons from individual clubs that are leading in this area.



Strengthen trans inclusion at club and league levels through clarity of policies, education opportunities for club leadership, officials and administrators, and visible signals of leadership and support that reinforce expectations of respect and inclusion.

Overall, this research highlights both achievements in LGBTQ+ inclusion in women’s sport, as well as the ongoing challenges. By capturing this data, this report provides a roadmap for further action that can be used by clubs, leagues, and governing bodies. Sustained and collaborative effort is needed to ensure all sports are truly inclusive.

Insights

Insight 1 – Sport helps people feel more comfortable with who they are and therefore plays a critical role in our society

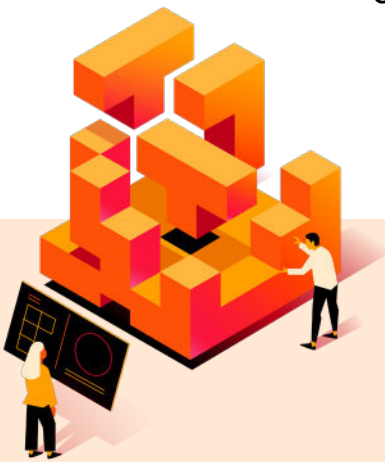
Insight 2 – There are strong signs of inclusion, however experiences are varied

Insight 3 – Although there have been achievements in inclusion, bullying and harassment still exist

Insight 4 – Pride Rounds are making a difference

Insight 5 – Trans inclusion is a sensitive issue

Insight 6 – Leadership, visibility and allyship are the key drivers of inclusion in sport



43

No. of Sports

215

No. of Postcodes

18%

have or do play professionally

We asked

271

respondents about their gender diversity and **25%** identified as gender diverse meaning their identified gender may differ from their sex at birth

Demographics (n=271)

Figure 1: Gender

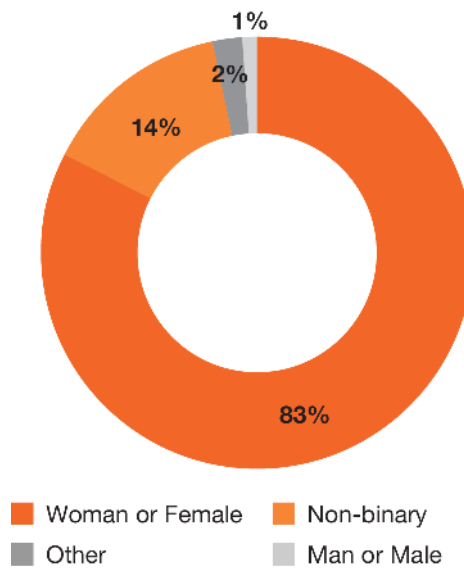
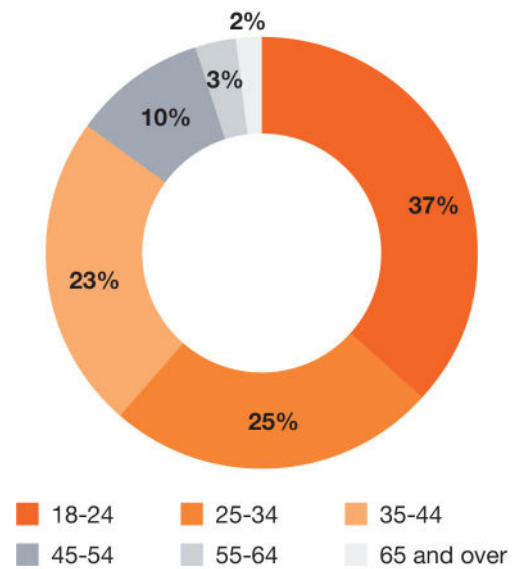


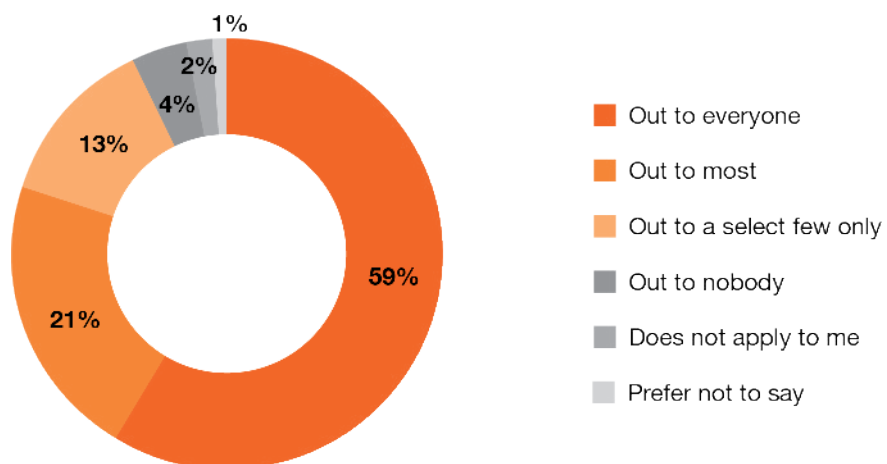
Figure 2: Age



80%

of respondents are out to most people about their sexuality

Figure 3: Degree of Outness of Sexuality



28%

of respondents have played sport for over 15 years

Figure 4: Sexual Orientation

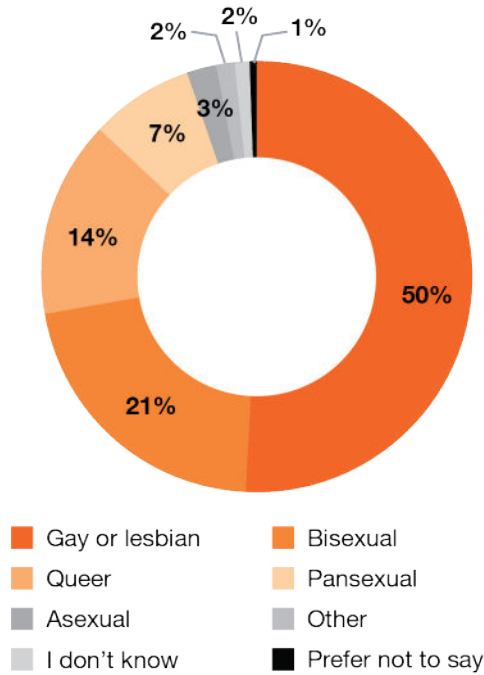
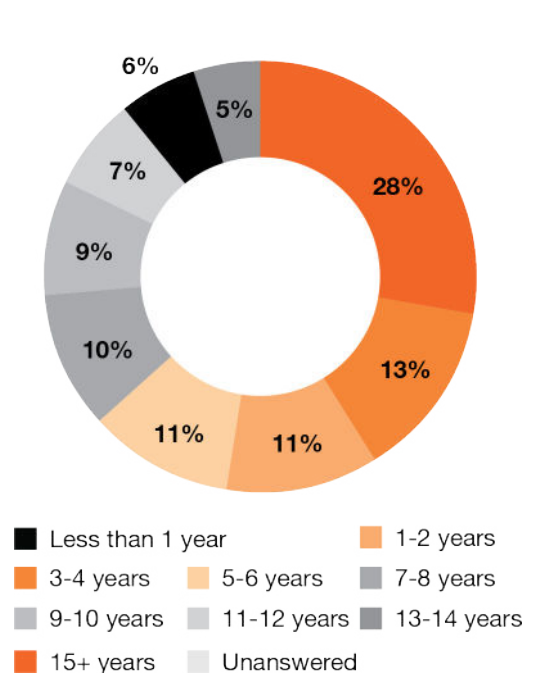


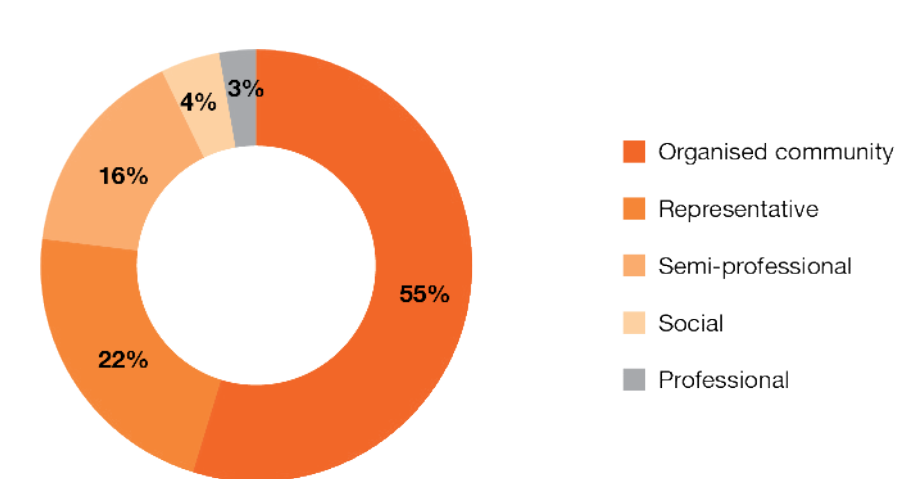
Figure 5: Time in chosen sport



55%

of respondents are most commonly involved at a community level

Figure 6: Highest level of participation



77%

of respondents live near capital cities

Figure 7: Location

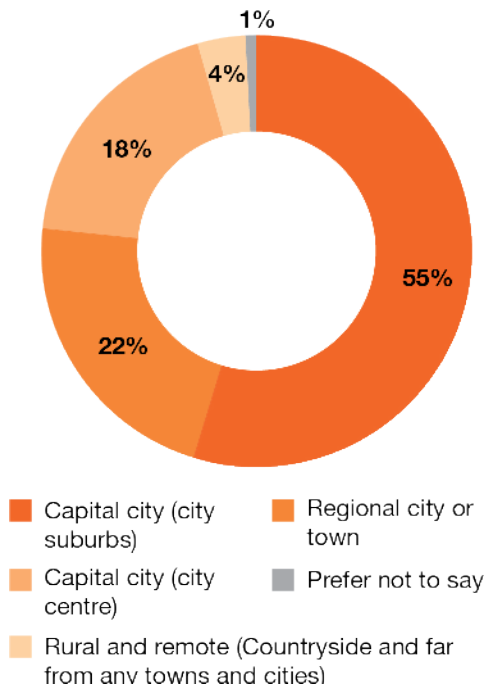


Figure 8: Chosen Sport

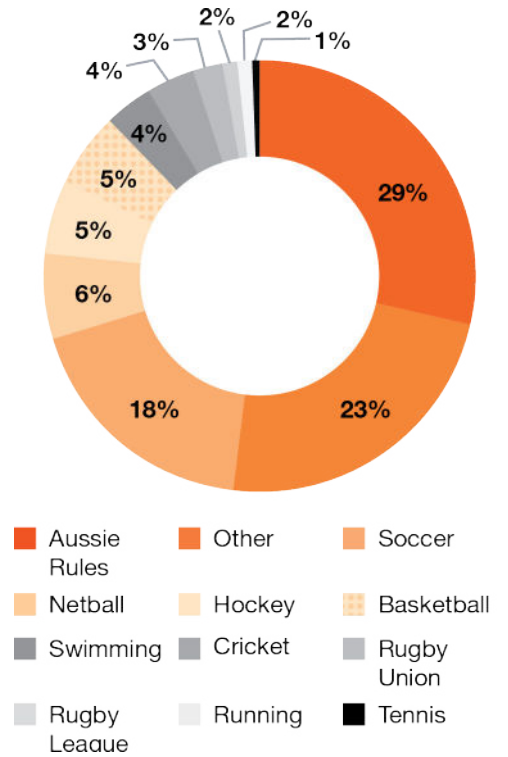
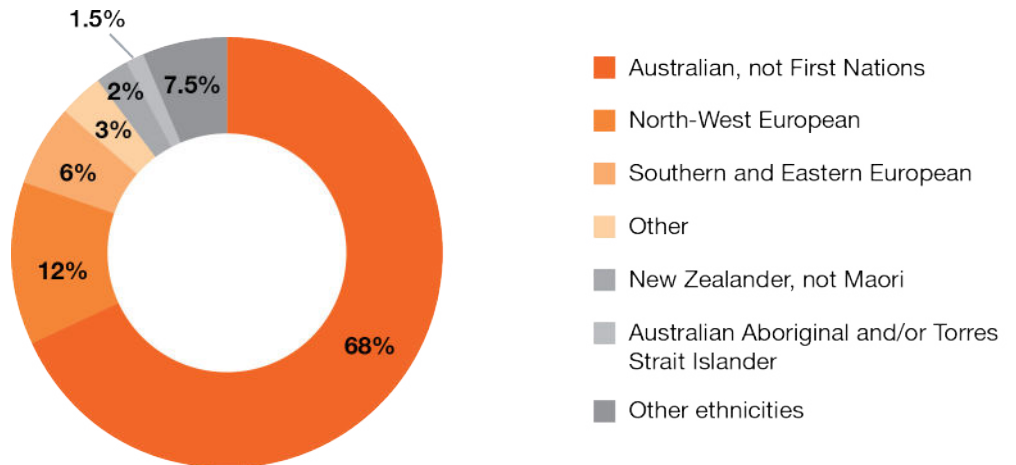


Figure 9: Ancestry



Insight 1

Sport helps people feel more comfortable with who they are and therefore plays a critical role in our society





Observations

- Respondents were comfortable with their sexuality as a result of their participation in sport.
- Respondents were more comfortable with their gender as a result of their participation in sport.
- Team and non-team respondents experienced similar levels of supportiveness for their diverse sexuality.
- Comfort is higher in clubs where there is greater visibility of LGBTQ+ players and people in leadership roles.
- Many respondents noted a greater feeling of belonging to their own club, but not to the clubs they played against, nor to the league within which their club participated.



Recommendation

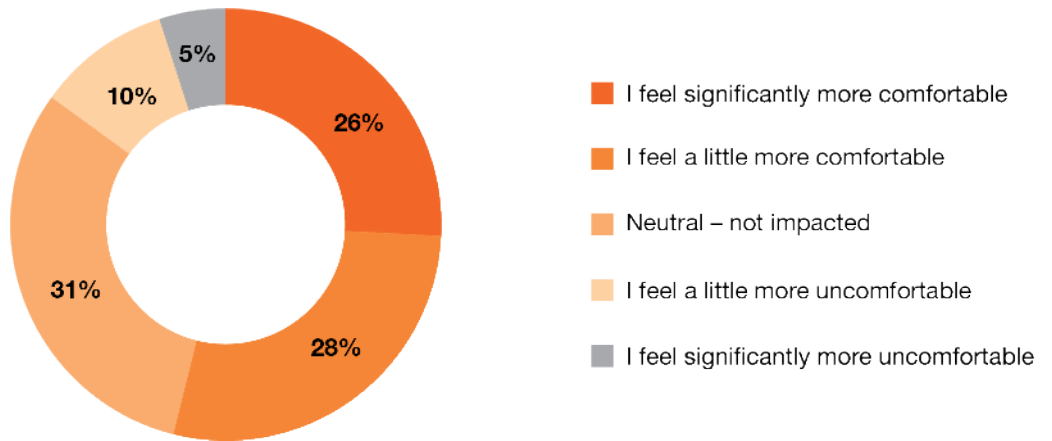
Focus on league-wide inclusion initiatives so that inclusion is experienced and understood across all teams in a league. To foster collaboration, consider sharing programs, initiatives, and lessons from individual clubs that are leading in this area.

Over

50%

of total respondents said participating in their chosen sport has made them feel **more comfortable with their sexuality**, either significantly or a little.

Figure 10: Has participating in your sport made you feel more or less comfortable with your **sexuality**? (n=271)

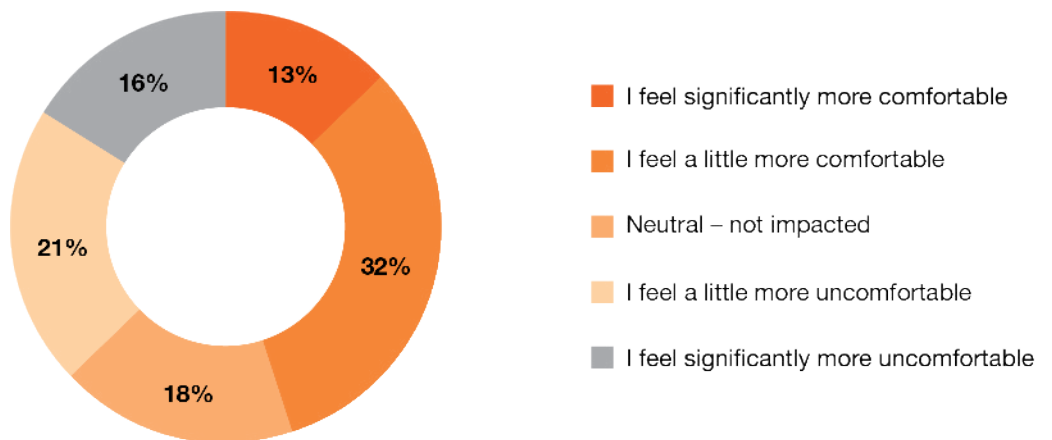


For respondents who told us they have a diverse gender identity,

45%

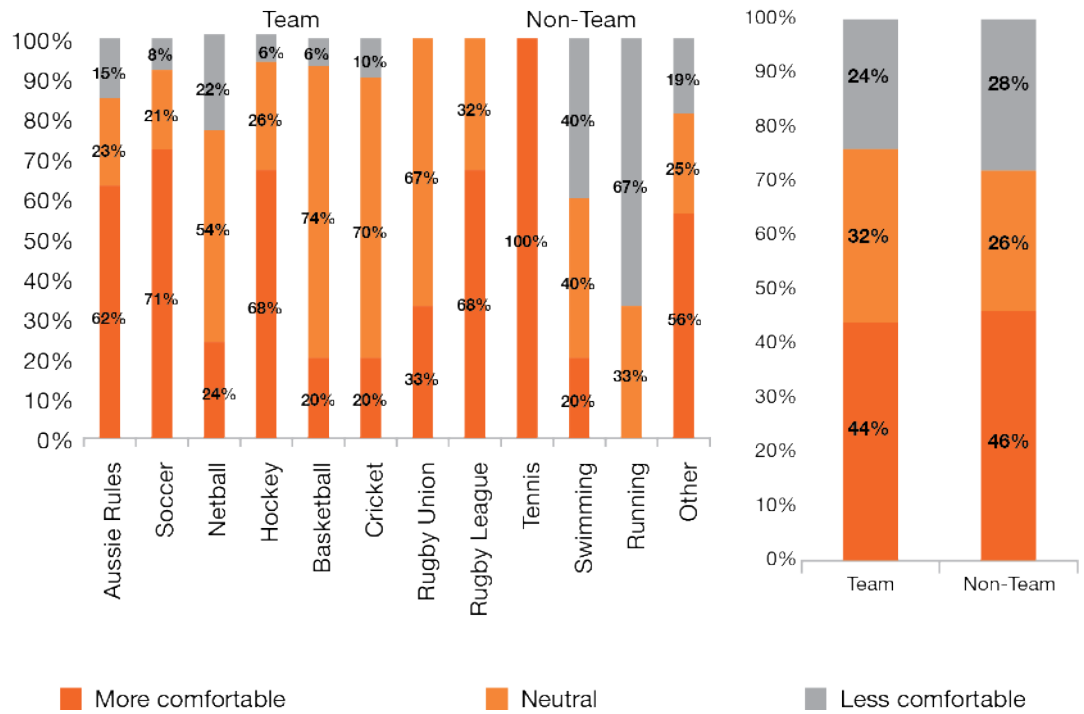
said participating in their **sport has made them feel more comfortable with their gender**, with the remainder split almost evenly between feeling less comfortable and not being impacted.

Figure 11: Has participating in your sport made you feel more or less comfortable with your **gender**? (n=68, gender diverse respondents)



There are degrees of comfort felt across different sports, with **Aussie Rules (AFL), Hockey, and Soccer** participants having the most positive experience.

Figure 12: Has participating in your sport made you feel more or less comfortable with your **sexuality**? (n=271)



Many respondents noted a **feeling of belonging within their club**; however, this feeling did **not extend to the leagues** in which they play, suggesting further investment is required to enhance the experience of LGBTQ+ people in sport beyond their own clubs.

“

...I am alive today because of my sports club and their acceptance. There is not a doubt in my mind. They saved my life...

(Aussie Rules, 45-54)

“

Teammates and vibe at the club make me feel welcome and in lots of ways my sexuality has been affirmed.

(Soccer, 18-24)

Insight 2

**There are strong signs of inclusion,
however experiences are varied**





Observations

- 72% of respondents said they were “very” or “somewhat” comfortable being out about their sexuality to their club and team-mates, while 69% of respondents answered similarly regarding their diverse gender.
- This is a great foundation, but it is not a consistent experience across respondents
 - There is a lower level of comfort in regional and remote areas.
 - Comfort varies significantly across age groups.
 - Comfort to be out also varies between sports, with the lowest being in Netball, Basketball, and Rugby League.
 - Further, the part of the community you identify with also has an impact on your level of comfort.
- Respondents noted that leadership behaviours and allyship are defining factors in their personal level of comfort to be out to their clubs and team-mates.



Recommendation

Create a platform for awareness by focusing on storytelling, including spotlighting and celebrating leaders, allyship, and visible role models. Further, giving individuals an opportunity to play a more active role in raising the visibility and support for LGBTQ+ people playing women’s sport by, for example, creating an Inclusion Committee to support those in leadership roles to guide events and initiatives.

Respondents were mostly “very” or “somewhat” comfortable being out to their club or team-mates about their sexuality (72%) and/or gender (69%).

Figure 13: How comfortable are you being out about your **sexuality** to your club/team? (n=271)

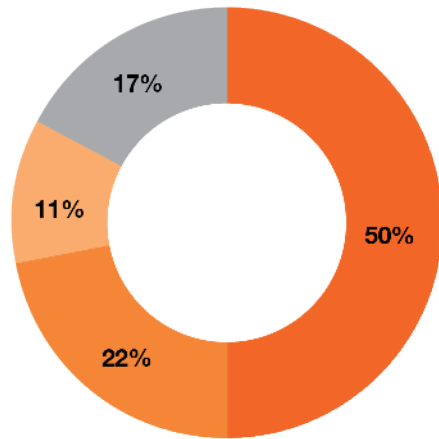
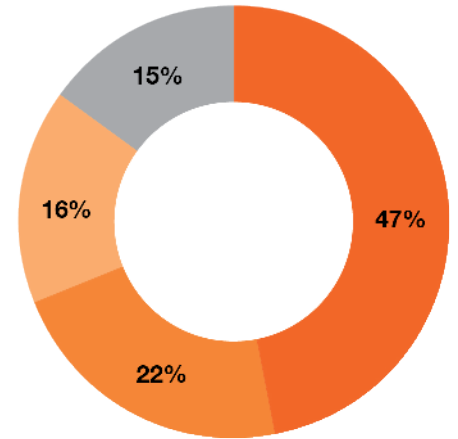


Figure 14: How comfortable are you being out about your **gender** identity to your club/team? (n=68)

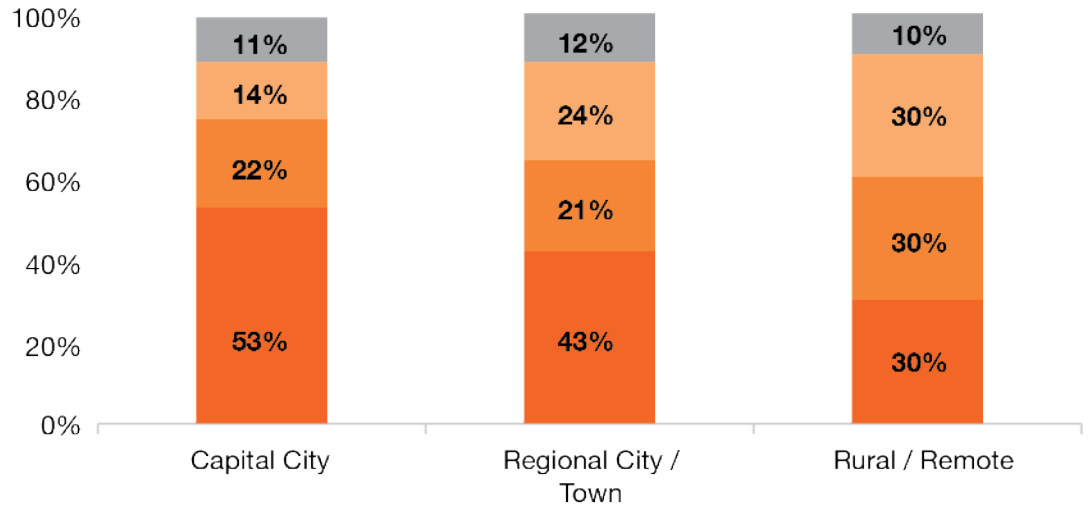


Very comfortable Somewhat comfortable Somewhat uncomfortable Very uncomfortable

The level of **comfort** tends to decline for respondents who live further from capital cities.

Figure 15: How comfortable are you being out about your **sexuality** to your club/team? (n=266)

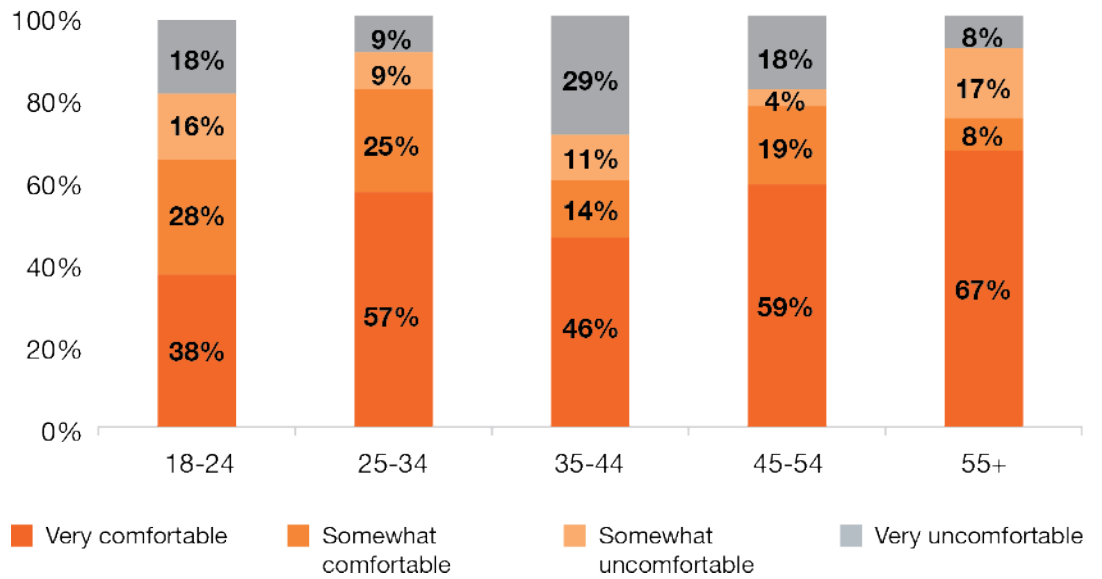
Excl. does not apply (n=12) and region=Other (n=2)



Very comfortable Somewhat comfortable Very uncomfortable Somewhat uncomfortable

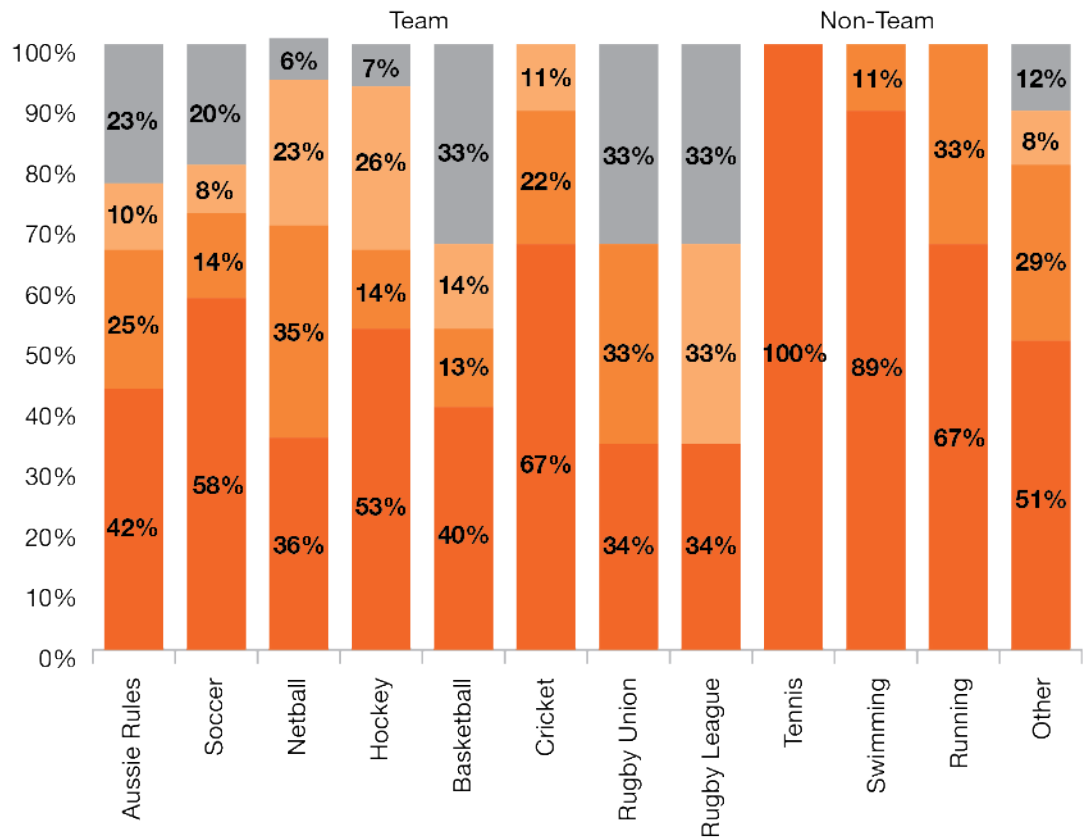
Although there is a general level of comfort (~70%), the **experience is not consistent across age cohorts.**

Figure 16: How comfortable are you being out about your **sexuality** to your club/team? (n=268)

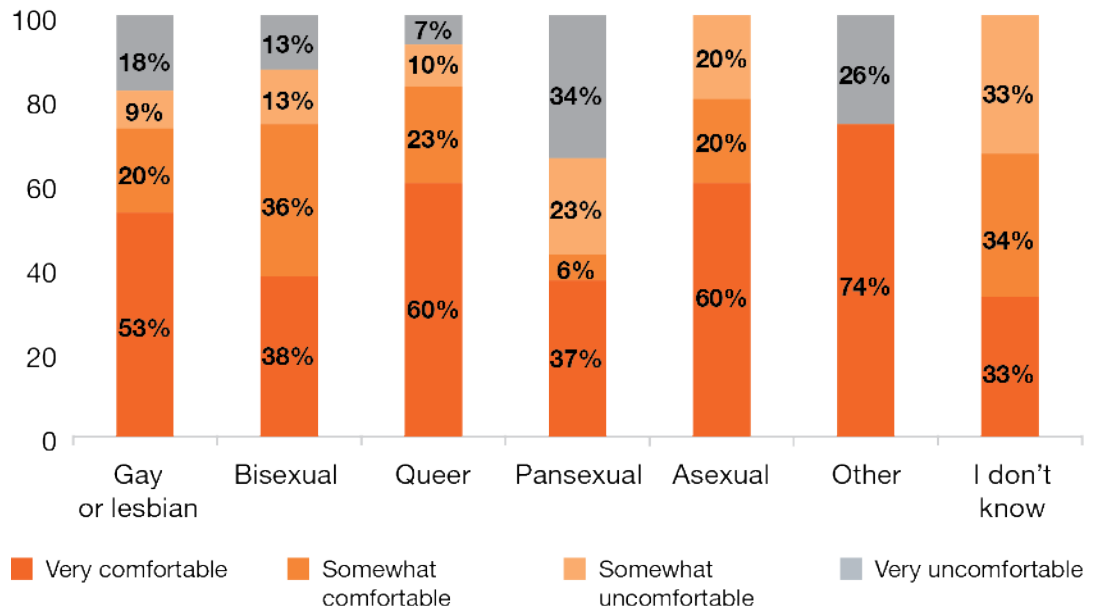


Comfort to be out also varies between sports.

Figure 17a-17b: How comfortable are you being out about your **sexuality** to your club/team? (n=268)



Respondents’ sexuality also appears to have an impact on their level of comfort, with more inclusion support needed for people identifying as pansexual.



Respondents noted that **leadership and allyship are defining factors in the level of comfort** to be out to clubs and team members.

“

seeing role models, having conversations and also being looked up to by juniors who see me as a positive role model being proud of my gender identity.

(Roller Derby, 35-44)

“

This is still a male dominated field, the presence of queer community in the leadership of the sport is desperately needed.

(Cricket, 25-34)

“

I feel as though female and gender diverse athletes are leading the way in terms of pride and inclusion. But I think the governing bodies have more work to do in this space.

(Aussie Rules, 35-44)

“

I think that being around more queer athletes has helped me to embrace who I am and be comfortable and I am grateful for that.

(Power Lifting, 35-44)

Insight 3

Although there have been achievements in inclusion, bullying and harassment still exist





Observations

- While most participants have not personally experienced bullying or harassment related to their sexuality or gender, close to a third reported that such behaviours remain a feature of women’s sport.
- When bullying and harassment occur, they are most frequently experienced through everyday behaviours rather than overt physical acts.
- A proportion of participants reported leaving a team or club as a direct result of these experiences.
- Team sports, particularly some high-participation codes, show a higher proportion of participants leaving clubs due to negative experiences.



Recommendation

Foster inclusive leadership practices and allyship at all levels by setting clear expectations, modelling inclusive behaviour, and ensuring that policies on bullying and harassment are consistently enforced.

67%

of total respondents **have not experienced bullying or harassment** because of their sexuality or gender.

Among the **31% of respondents** who did experience bullying, harassment, or incivility, that behaviour most commonly took the form of jokes and innuendo, insults or rude comments, and inappropriate language.

Figure 18: Have you experienced **bullying, harassment, or incivility** in your chosen sport **as a result of your sexuality or gender identity**? (n=271)

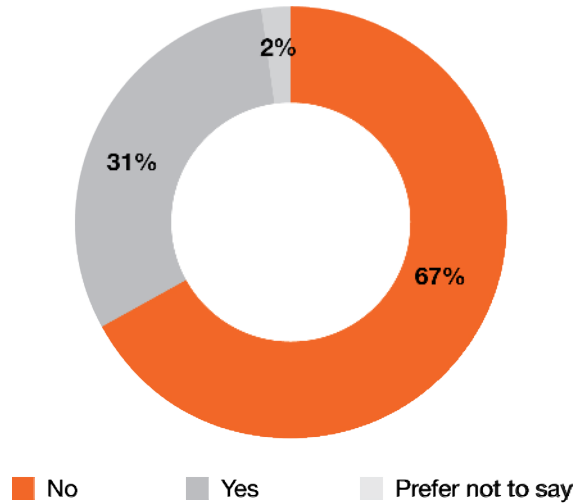
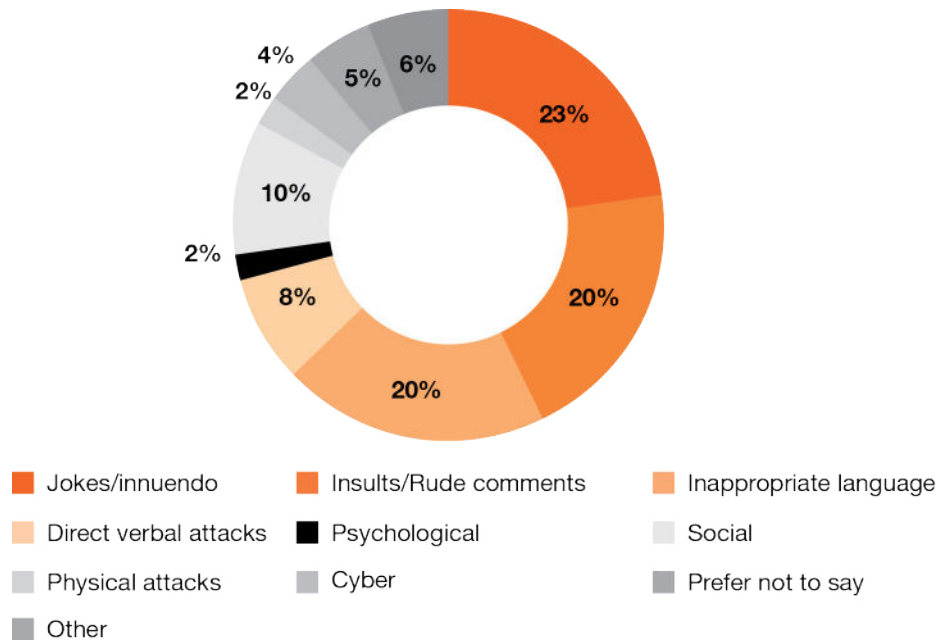


Figure 19: What form did the negative behaviours take? (n=84)

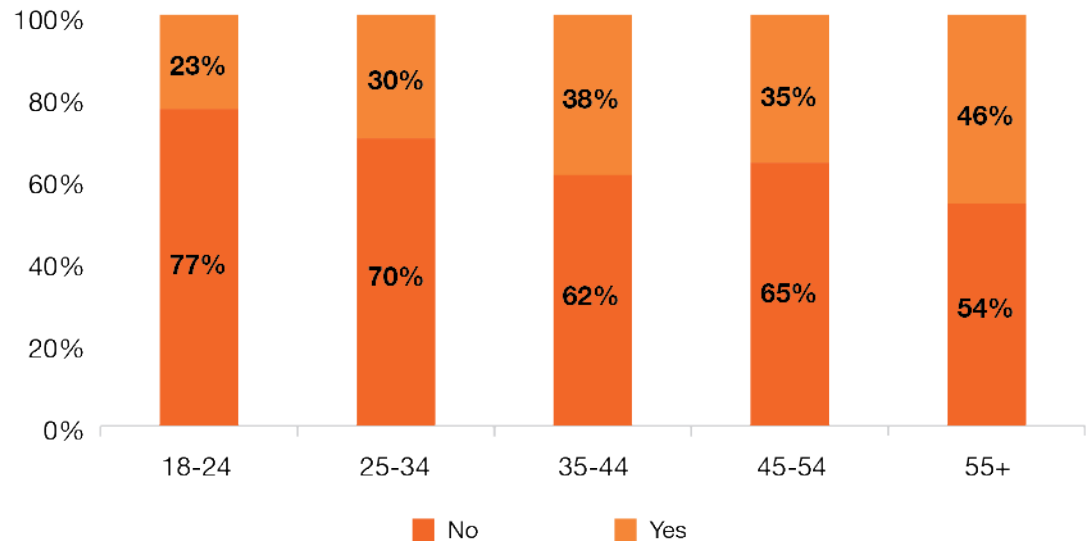


For those aged 35+, around

~40%

of respondents had left a team or club as a result of bullying, harassment, or incivility.

Figure 20: Have you ever left a sporting team or club because you experienced bullying, harassment or incivility? **By Age Group** (n=271)



“

I think we are okay to be a conservative version of ourselves, but **anything outside of that norm would be seen as extreme.**

(Aussie Rules, 35-44)

Those who play team sports were slightly more likely to have left a team or club because they experienced bullying, harassment, or incivility.

“

When I was registrar, a member of the men's team emailed the club...and signed off as they/them as a joke. When I responded asking if he would like his pronouns changed in the system he said it was meant to be some light hearted fun.

(Soccer, 25-34)

“

Hearing about leaders on the committee talking badly about our Pride rounds at the time, ripping our rainbow stickers off the doors. General apprehension in supporting Pride.

(Aussie Rules, 35-44)



Insight 4

Pride Rounds are making a difference





Observations

- Respondents who participated in Pride Rounds reported feeling more comfortable being out about their sexuality compared to those who had not participated in Pride Rounds.
- The positive impact of Pride Rounds was more pronounced for athletes from non-team sports compared to those from team sports.
- Those who identified as gender-diverse also felt more comfortable about their gender when their team or club participated in Pride Rounds.
- Pride Rounds are described as an important signal of expected behaviour and club values, even where they do not “change the game” on their own.



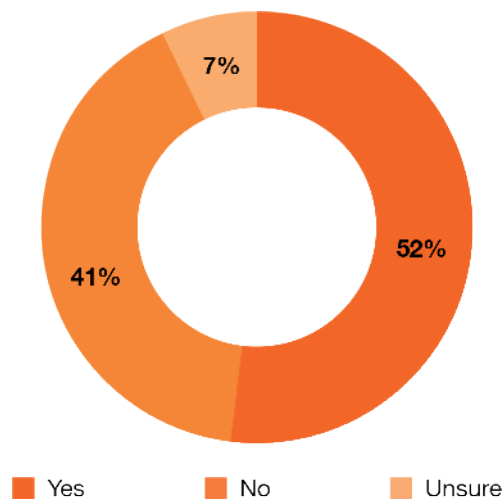
Recommendation

Introduce, maintain, and grow Pride Rounds and similar inclusion initiatives. This signals an organisation’s expectations around culture and behaviour year-round, while also providing greater visibility of LGBTQ+ people, especially in regional and remote areas.

52%

of respondents' clubs are involved with Pride Rounds.

Figure 21: Does your club get involved in **Pride Games/Rounds**? (n=271)



“

[Pride Rounds] do not ‘change the game’ but they send a signal reinforcing our culture. That way people coming into the club learn what is expected. It is also fun for many of the queer people to show pride in who they are. It is honestly a fantastic initiative. Wish it were done well at higher levels but seems above community level its tokenistic.

(Aussie Rules, 45-54)

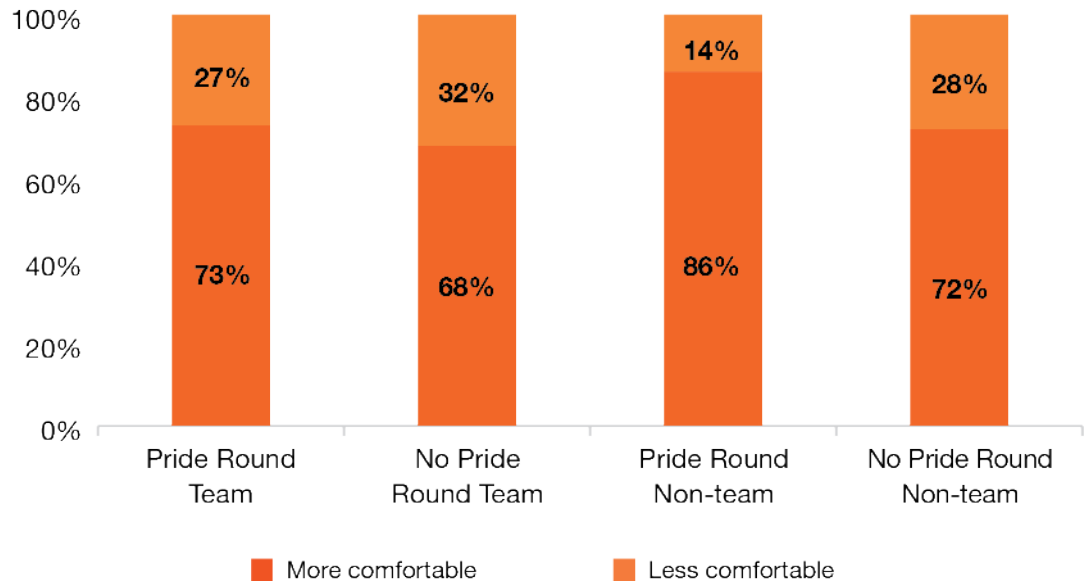
“

Pride Rounds are great for visibility. I already play for a queer club, so we have openly queer and trans visibility every game – but I think Pride Rounds are particularly important for the broader league where being queer and trans is perhaps less visible or celebrated.

(Soccer, 35-44)

Respondents whose team or club participated in Pride Rounds tended to be more comfortable about their sexuality.

Figure 22: How comfortable are you being out about your sexuality to your club/team? ^(iv)



(iv) All respondents (n=248) – excluding “Does not apply to me” (n=3) and “Unsure” about Pride Rounds (n=20)

Insight 5

Trans inclusion is a sensitive issue





Observations

Our data suggests there is currently some variation within the LGBTQ+ community regarding trans inclusion in women’s sport.

In an open-text question asking “If you had the power to change one thing to create a better experience for LGBTQ+ people, what would it be?” several respondents wrote about trans inclusion.

- These comments were overwhelming positive and focused on the important of improving the experience and policies related to trans people in women’s sport.
- There was a noticeable difference amongst responses between how individuals perceive trans inclusion within their club compared with how they perceive trans inclusion within their wider sport.
- Understandably, trans people appear to be self-selecting more inclusive clubs to join. 53% of gender-diverse respondents say their club is “completely supportive” of trans inclusion, compared with 32% of all respondents.

This suggests that individual clubs make a significant difference on an individual’s experience of inclusion, while also highlighting that there is further effort required to make their wider leagues and sports more inclusive.



Recommendation

Strengthen trans inclusion at club and league levels through clarity of policies, education opportunities for club leadership, officials and administrators, and visible signals of leadership and support that reinforce expectations of respect and inclusion.

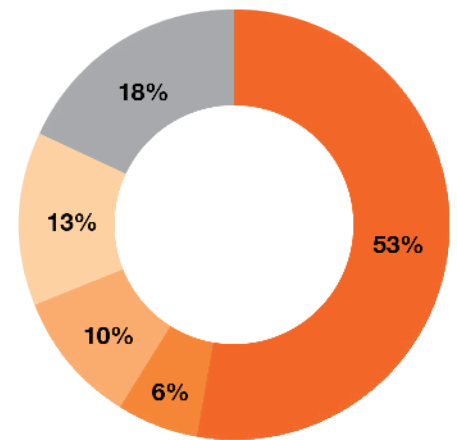
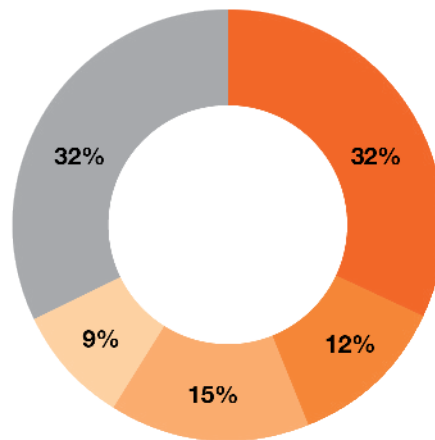
53%

of gender-diverse respondents say their club is ‘completely supportive’ of trans inclusion, compared with 32% of all other respondents.

Figure 23: How would you describe your club’s level of support for trans people participating at your level?

All respondents (n=271)

Gender diverse (n=68)



■ Completely supportive
 ■ Somewhat supportive
 ■ Somewhat unsupportive
 ■ Completely unsupportive
 ■ Neutral

The level of perceived support for the inclusion of trans people is lower for leagues than the individual clubs that LGBTQ+ individuals are part of.

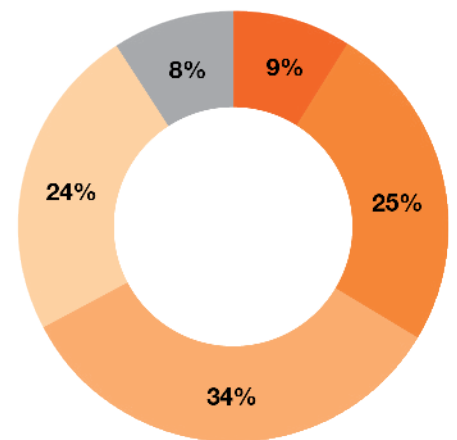
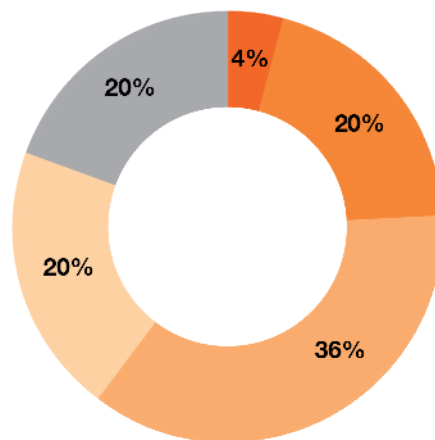
4%

of respondents felt their club was ‘**completely supportive**’ of trans people’s participation compared to **20% at the broader sport-level.**

Figure 24: How would you describe the level of support and resources available for ensuring the inclusion of trans people in your sport more broadly?

All respondents (n=271)

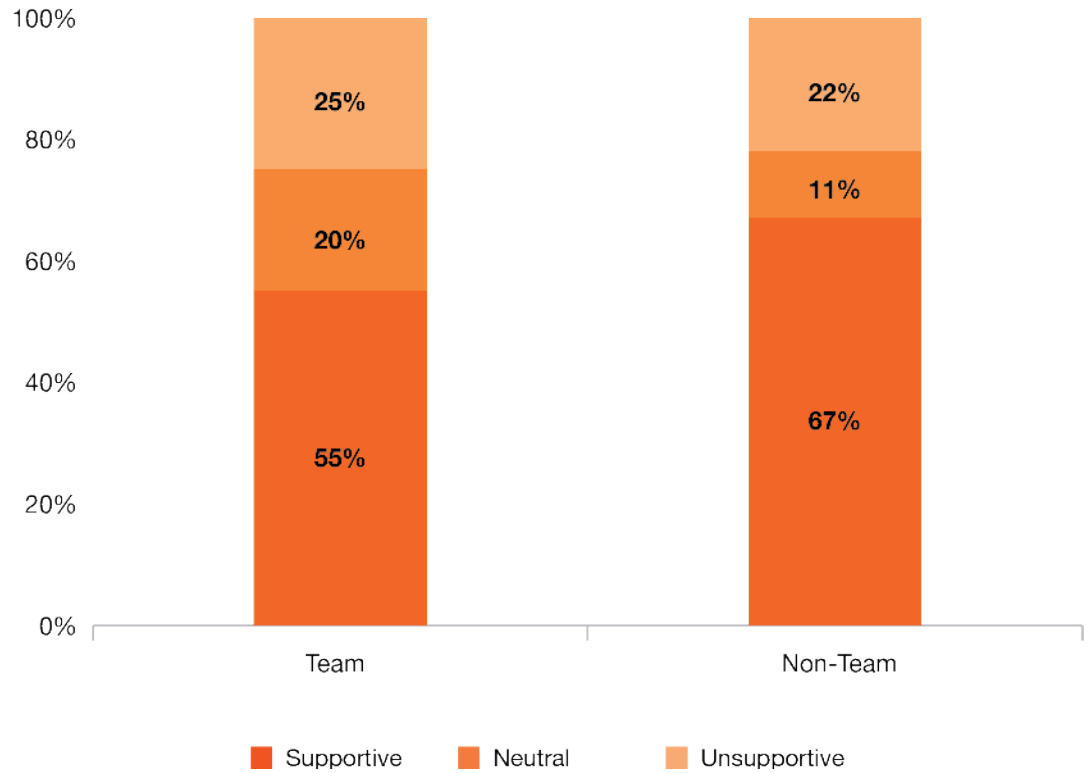
Gender diverse (n=68)



■ Completely supportive
 ■ Somewhat supportive
 ■ Somewhat unsupportive
 ■ Completely unsupportive
 ■ Neutral

The level of support for trans people’s participation varies at a club level where respondents tend to feel more supporting in non-team environments as compared to team respondents.

Figure 25: To what extent is your **club** supportive of trans people’s participation?



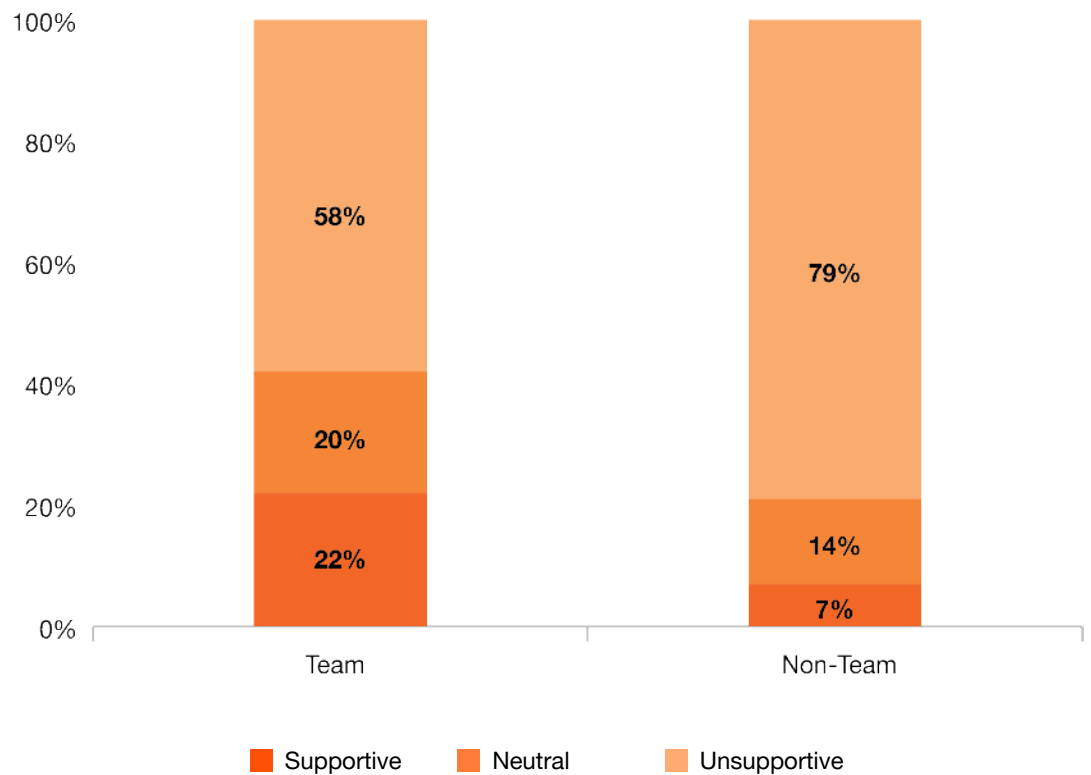
“

“Theres zero visibility or support for non binary trans masc players in local comps.”

(Aussie Rules, 35-44)

The level of support for inclusion of trans people at a sport-wide level was materially lower than at a club level.

Figure 26: How would you describe the level of support and resources available for ensuring the inclusion of trans people in your **sport more broadly?**



“

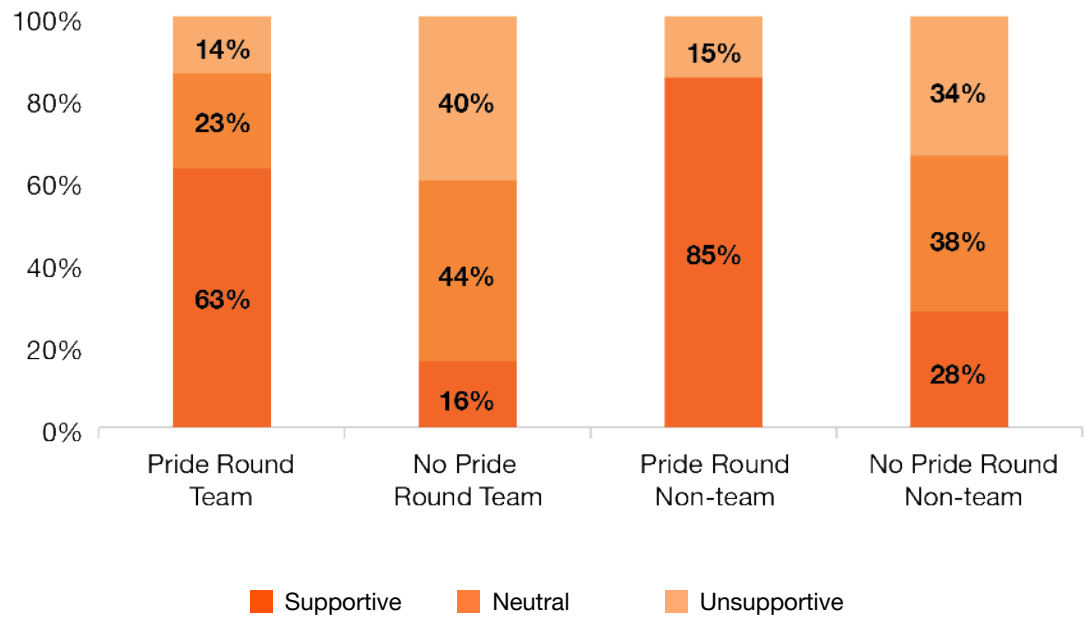
As a transgender woman **being included in a women’s team is incredibly important** for me. If I was forced to participate with men, I simply wouldn’t play.

(Roller Derby, 55-64)

Clubs that participated in Pride Rounds showed ~3-4 times the level of support for trans inclusion compared to clubs that did not participate in Pride Rounds.

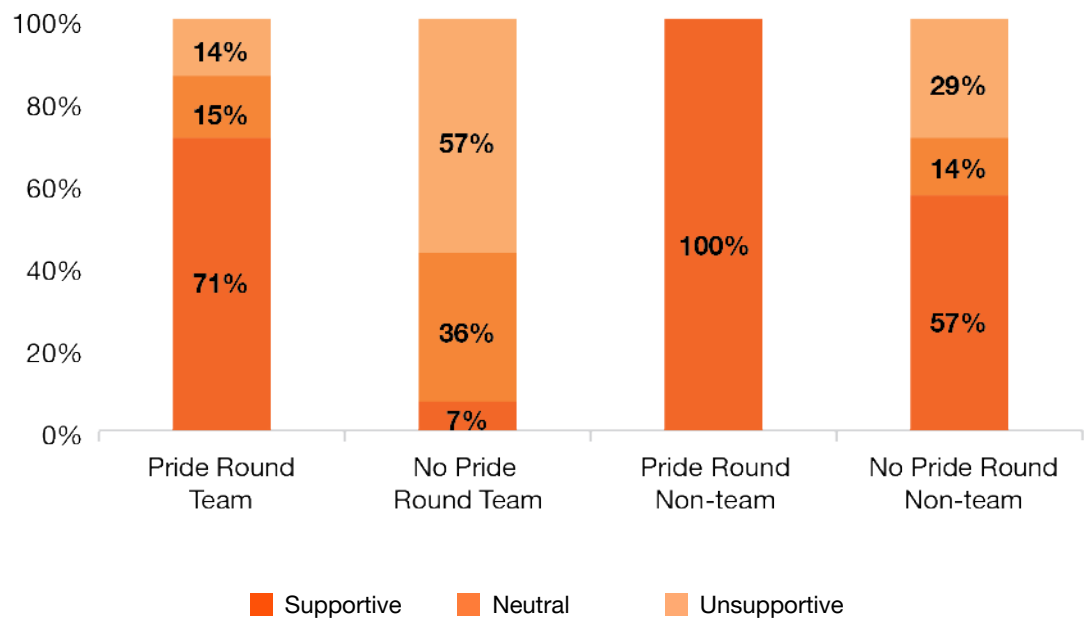
Figure 27: **How would you describe your club’s level of support for trans people participating at your level?**

All respondents (n=251)



For gender-diverse respondents, Pride Rounds appeared to have an even greater impact. Respondents whose clubs participated in Pride Rounds reported a level of comfort ~10 times higher than respondents whose clubs did not participate in Pride Rounds.

Figure 28: Gender Diverse Respondents (n=64)



“

Being **specifically recognised and treated as a woman, rather than just tolerated**, has made such a **positive impact on my life and mental health**. I am more comfortable in my gender because the people in my sport treat me with comfort.

(Hockey, 25-34)

“

As a gay female i believe there should be a trans category for any sport that is not just a social sport.

(Basketball, 45-54)

“

As a **non binary but more masc presenting** person, I **feel like I don't belong/shouldn't be playing women's sport** but I definitely **don't feel comfortable in men's sport**. My team is really supportive and the local football organisation has allowed me to play but I feel out of place especially when being misgendered all the time.

(Soccer, 25-34)

Insight 6

Leadership practices, visibility and allyship are the key drivers of inclusion in sport





Observations

- When asked to identify the top factors that make a club inclusive, leadership practices ranked highest overall, consistently selected across age groups, sports, and participation levels.
- Active allyship from team-mates and staff is also critical. A significant proportion of respondents identified allyship as a top-three inclusion driver, reinforcing the impact of day-to-day behaviours such as calling out inappropriate language and showing visible support. These shape lived experience more than formal statements alone.
- Visible and positive LGBTQ+ role models were frequently cited as a key driver of belonging, particularly for younger participants and gender diverse respondents, where visibility reduces isolation and normalises inclusion.
- Policies are only effective if they are enforced.
- Clubs that participate in Pride Rounds show stronger alignment across leadership practices, visibility and allyship.



Key drivers of inclusion

Respondents view ‘supportive and inclusive leadership’, ‘visible and positive LGBTQ+ role models’, ‘active allyship from team-mates and staff’, and ‘policies that promote equality and respect’ as the most important drivers of inclusion.

01

**Supportive
and inclusive
leadership**

02

**Visible and
positive LGBTQ+
role models**

03

**Active allyship
from teammate
and staff**

Other drivers of inclusion

Identified in the commentary of the survey revolved around gender inclusion

Misogyny and gender inequality are key issues facing LGBTQ+ people playing women's sport; unequal treatment compared to men remains a major challenge regardless of an individual's sexuality or diverse gender, even at the semi-professional and professional levels.

“

Less misogyny. The biggest issues I've faced in sports have to do with misogyny not my sexuality.

(Aussie Rules, 18-24)

“

I think people don't realise that queer issues in sport are intrinsically linked to women's issues in sport.

(Dance, 18-24)

“

We are treated as if we are invading the men's space. We get less respect and less support from the club.

(Aussie Rules, 35-44)

“

Sport still feels like women and diverse people come second to men. Doesn't matter what sport or how good they are women are compromised consistently and in big ways add queerness and it's even worse.

(Soccer, 25-34)

Survey participation skews toward organised community levels with a smaller middle (representative/semi-pro) and a narrow professional apex; most have not played semi-pro/pro recently or at all. For those who have:

- Higher-level respondents reported that their roadblocks were mostly injuries and personal performance, with some citing **access to resources, recognition, and policy gaps across women’s sport**.
- Inclusion with increased professionalisation was mixed: many said ‘not applicable’ (their experience didn’t change).
- Sponsorship exposure was limited: **sexuality and diverse gender were largely not applicable or non-influential**. However, the degree of self-expression in sponsorship ranged from neutral to cautious self-presentation, with some **citing gender-based disadvantages** and trans-specific risks, contrasted by instances where diversity enhanced sponsor appeal.



LGBTQ+ representation and acceptance in men's sport is still far lower than that in women's sport, even in clubs that embrace inclusion in their women's teams.

“

Our women's side is very open but there's currently no out male players (out of 50+) so I'd love for them to feel as comfortable as we do.

(Cricket, 18-24)

“

The women's senior team participates [in Pride Rounds], when the senior men's team were asked to participate they laughed in our faces.

(Aussie Rules, 25-34)

“

I don't think there's any openly queer men at my club and we are one of Victoria's largest senior clubs.

(Hockey, 25-34)

“

A heavier focus on the men that are involved in our sport, and ensuring they understand the importance of their support and allyship.

(Aussie Rules, 18-24)

Conclusion

Our first research question was: does participation in women’s sport help LGBTQ+ people to be more comfortable to be out both in sport and other aspects of life?

We found that sport helps LGBTQ+ people feel comfortable with who they are, and therefore plays a role in driving inclusion in our society.

In particular, Pride Rounds make a significant difference to the level of comfort and belonging for LGBTQ+ people playing women’s sport.

Our second research question was: is the experience of LGBTQ+ people who play women’s sport varied? If so, what are the causes of this variation?

We found that there have been achievements in inclusion in sport, however, experience is varied in a range of areas.

Further, bullying and harassment still exists and trans inclusion is a sensitive issue.

Drivers of inclusion largely centre around leadership behaviours and allyship, although different cohorts require tailored support.



Based on the themes identified by this research, there are five clear recommendations that clubs and sporting bodies can take to improve the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in women's sport.

- 1. Create a platform for awareness** by focusing on storytelling, including spotlighting and celebrating leaders, allyship, and visible role models. Further, giving individuals an opportunity to play a more active role in raising the visibility and support for LGBTQ+ people playing women's sport; by, for example, creating an Inclusion Committee to support those in leadership roles to guide events and initiatives.
- 2. Foster leadership and allyship at all levels** by setting clear expectations, modelling inclusive behaviour, and ensuring that policies on bullying and harassment are consistently enforced.
- 3. Introduce, maintain, and grow Pride Rounds** and similar inclusion initiatives. This signals an organisation's expectations around culture and behaviour year-round, while also providing greater visibility of LGBTQ+ people, especially in regional and remote areas.
- 4. Focus on league-wide inclusion initiatives** so that inclusion is experienced and understood across all teams in a league. To foster collaboration, consider sharing programs, initiatives, and lessons from individual clubs that are leading in this area.
- 5. Strengthen trans inclusion at club and league levels** through clarity of policies, education opportunities for club leadership, officials and administrators, and visible signals of leadership and support that reinforce expectations of respect and inclusion.

This report recognises that much of women's sport is delivered by volunteers and community-led organisations, often working with limited time and resources. While LGBTQ+ inclusion is improving, challenges remain. Clubs, leagues and sporting bodies are encouraged to reach out to Pride Cup and/or Pride in Sport for practical resources, guidance and support to help navigate this work and sustain positive change.

Methodology

Research Methodology

Rationale

The objective of this research was to understand in greater detail the answers to two research questions:

1. Does participation in women's sport help LGBTQ+ people to be more comfortable to be out both in sport and other aspects of life?
2. Is the experience of LGBTQ+ people who play women's sport varied? If so, what are the causes of this variation?

The research and associated actions can help clubs and sporting bodies to address these issues and provide inclusive support to their team members.

Audience

There are 3 key audiences for this research:

1. LGBTQ+ and heterosexual athletes and sporting club members.
2. Sporting club leadership.
3. Sporting body administrators as well as national and state-based policy makers.

Method

This research is based on a survey of LGBTQ+ people who play women's sport, which collected quantitative and qualitative information on their level of comfort and experiences. The research was completed through a survey tool called Remesh, and the questions were subject to ACON's ethics review. The questions were tested with a small sample cohort before the full survey was released.

Only those people who completed more than 66% of the survey were included in the research analysis. Further, other exclusions from the total dataset were factored in to maximise the integrity of the dataset for the purpose of this research (see Appendix A). A total survey sample of 271 responses was used for the analysis in this report.

Limitations

Although a statistically significant sample overall, the sample size for sub-groups in the population was too small for a statistically robust analysis.

In this case, inferences from the dataset were highlighted and limitations transparently outlined.

For example, this applied to analyses of those living in regional and remote areas, and those who identify as transgender.

The length of the survey was also a limitation of the research. Although the length limited the sample size, the intention was to get a depth of understanding from survey respondents to inform a broad range of topics in the analysis and report.

Quotes from the survey included in this report have been abbreviated and spelling corrected where required – the intent of the quote remains unchanged.



Appendix



Data Integrity

To support data integrity and quality, survey responses were collected using consistent procedures and checked for completeness, plausibility, and duplicates. While these steps reduce error, the survey was fully anonymous by design and results may still reflect self-report bias, sampling limitations, and nonresponse effects.

The analysis presented in this report focuses on the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in women's sport. Respondents that did not fit this criteria were excluded from the analysed data.

The assumptions and classifications applied were:

- Only responses from respondents who completed 66% or more of the survey are used in this analysis.
- Cisgender males were excluded (Gender and Sex assigned at birth: Male).
- Straight, cisgender females were excluded (Gender and Sex assigned at birth: Female; Sexuality: Straight (heterosexual)).
- The segmenting of gender diverse respondents was based on the following question and responses:
 - Gender: Man or Male, Sex assigned at birth: Female.
 - Gender: Woman or Female, Sex assigned at birth: Male.
 - Gender: Other, Sex assigned at birth: Any.
 - Gender: Non-binary, Sex assigned at birth: Any.
- The classification of Team vs. Non-team sports can be ambiguous; sports were assigned based on analyst judgment to the best-fit category.
- Some data points have been rounded to the nearest whole number for presentation purposes and do not change the insight or observation



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