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Team sports help vast majority of young girls feel more confident, says report A generation of young girls growing up believing in themselves. Here for Every Goal analysed impact of elite women's football

Theme:
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 Team sports help vast majority of young girls feel more confident, says report

Co-authored by Report by Dr Ali Bowes, Individual Contributor, Dr Hanya Pielichaty, Individual Contributor. Article written by Suzanne Wrack, the Guardian

Eighty per cent of young girls feel more confident because of playing team sports and almost half of them feel more confident than other girls their age, according to a new study.

The [Here for Every Goal report](#) analysed the impact of the [growth of elite women's football](#) and the impact it can have on society more widely. Through academic review, the report found that “playing football is meaningful, with girls who play gaining life skills that go beyond participation in sport, directly contributing to personal growth and identity formation”.

Dr Ali Bowes, a senior lecturer at Nottingham Trent University, who was a contributor to the report, said: “The report highlights the significance of football in the lives of young girls. As the game has grown in popularity, it's clear that having visible role models is central to encouraging girls to participate in the sport, which can bring a range of benefits, such as increasing self-confidence, developing social skills, and providing a sense of community among girls.”

The report, published by Women's Super League title sponsors Barclays, found that 94% of women at senior executive level had previously played sport and 72% of those believe sport can help accelerate a woman's career.

It also highlighted a report from Ireland which found team sports had a similarly impressive impact, with 90% of female chief executive officers having participated in sport and 88% believing that the skills learned in sport were beneficial in the world of business.

“Compared to 20 years ago, the progress seen in the sport should be celebrated – especially when we consider that a 13-year-old girl has only ever lived in a time where professional women's football exists,” said Bowes. “However, there is still work to be done to normalise girls involvement in the game and make football truly accessible for women and girls.”

Women's football is booming among girls. The number of schools that are part of the Barclays Girls' Football Schools Partnership has grown from 3,000 in 2019 to 19,992 in 2024.

Meanwhile, the [BBC 500 Words report](#), which analyses the language used in close to 44,000 creative writing stories by children from across the UK for the BBC 500 Words competition, saw an increase in the use of “Lioness” and “Mary”.

“Following the success of the England women's football team, Lioness was used over a third more than in 2020,” said the report. “Whilst almost all instances of Lioness(es) in 2020 were references to the animal, over half of the mentions in 2023 were in reference to football. The name ‘Mary’ also appears more often in 2023 (+23%), which could be attributed to the popularity of England goalkeeper and BBC Sports Personality of the Year winner, Mary Earps.”

[Read the full report here.](#)



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