

# SPORT, STEREOTYPES AND STOLEN DREAMS

LISA WEST





WE EXIST BECAUSE WE  
BELIEVE **WOMEN**  
**AND GIRLS**  
**BELONG IN**  
**SPORT**



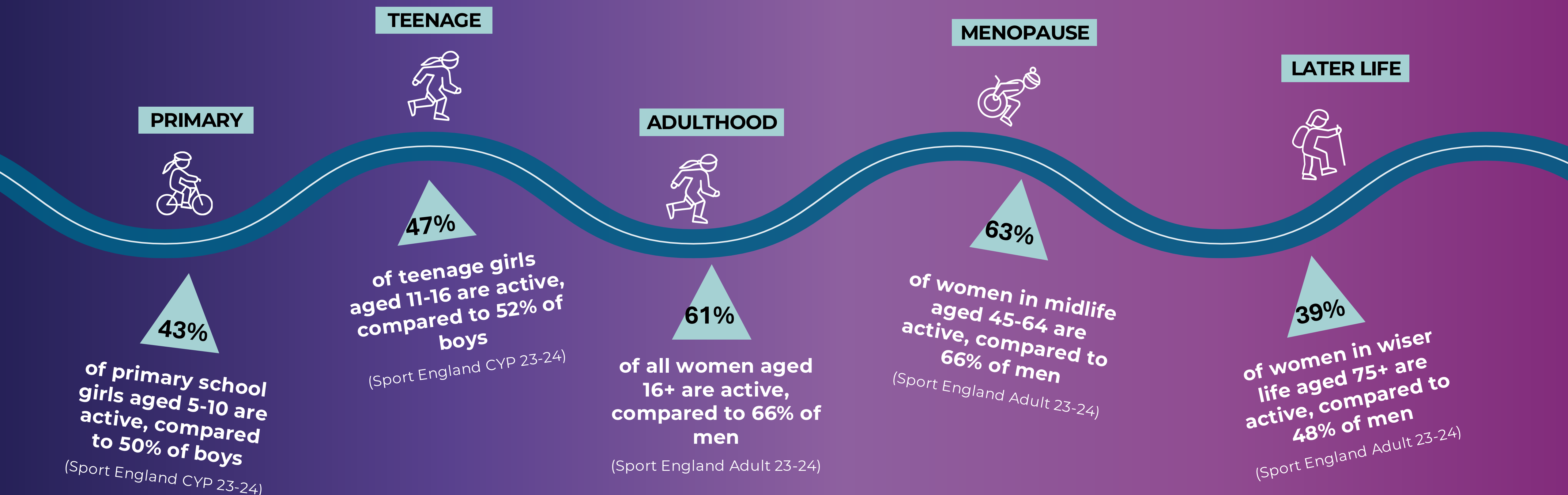
OUR PURPOSE IS TO  
**CREATE LASTING POSITIVE**  
**CHANGE** FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS  
**IN SPORT AND SOCIETY.**

# The Game of Life – Physical Activity Levels of Women & Girls

(updated June 2025)



At every stage in a woman's life there are different challenges for being active from early years and throughout her life.



Those who are considered active are those who meet recommended physical activity levels: the Chief Medical Officer recommends that children and young people take part in an average of 60 minutes or more of sport and physical activity a day, and that adults take part in 150 minutes or more of moderate intensity equivalent activity a week.



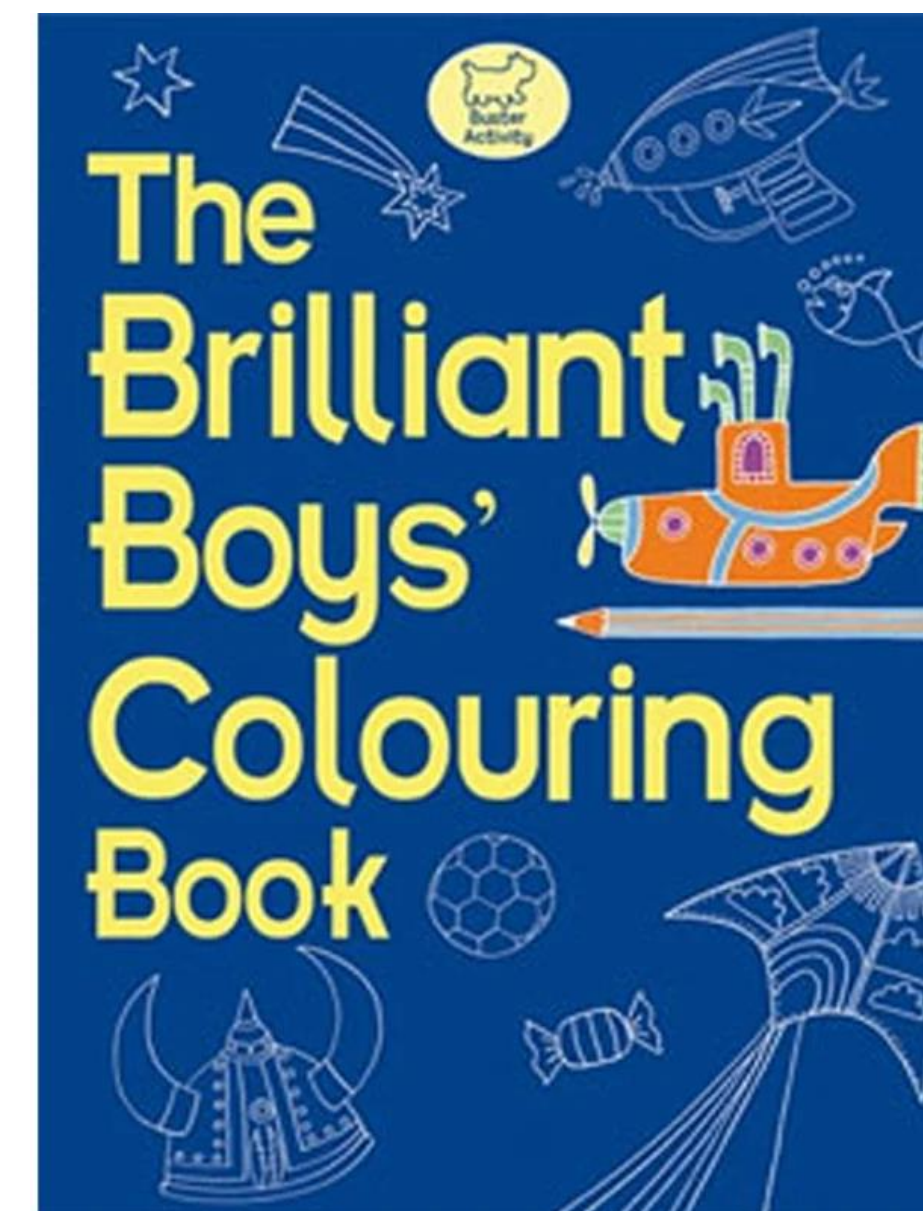
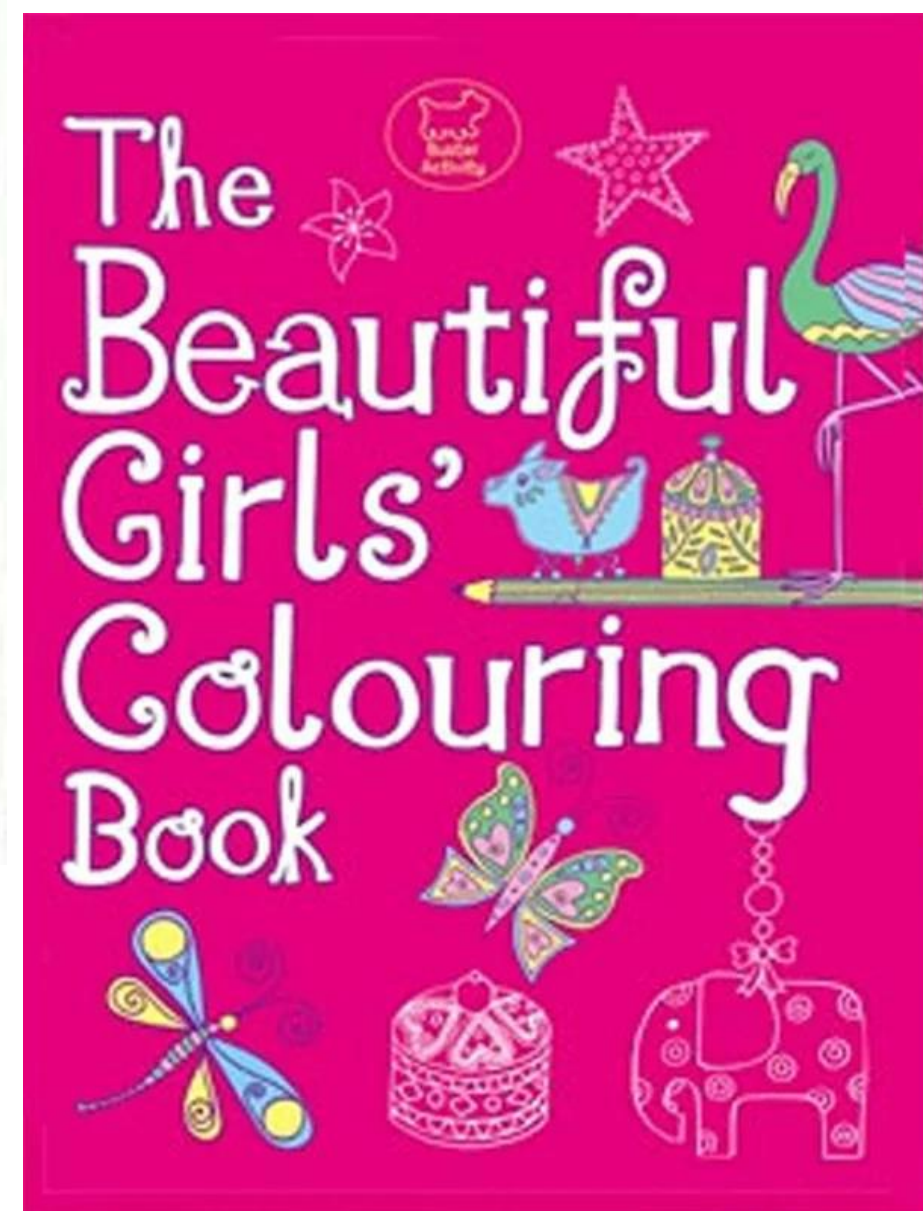
# GIRLS AS YOUNG AS 5 FEEL THEY DON'T BELONG IN SPORT

The **underlying narrative** from parents, coaches, teachers, peers and wider society implies that:

- girls are not 'designed' for sport
- girls are not as competitive
- girls will never be as good at it compared to boys
- sport can be at odds with 'femininity' and a girl's identity
- sport is not as important for girls as it is for boys



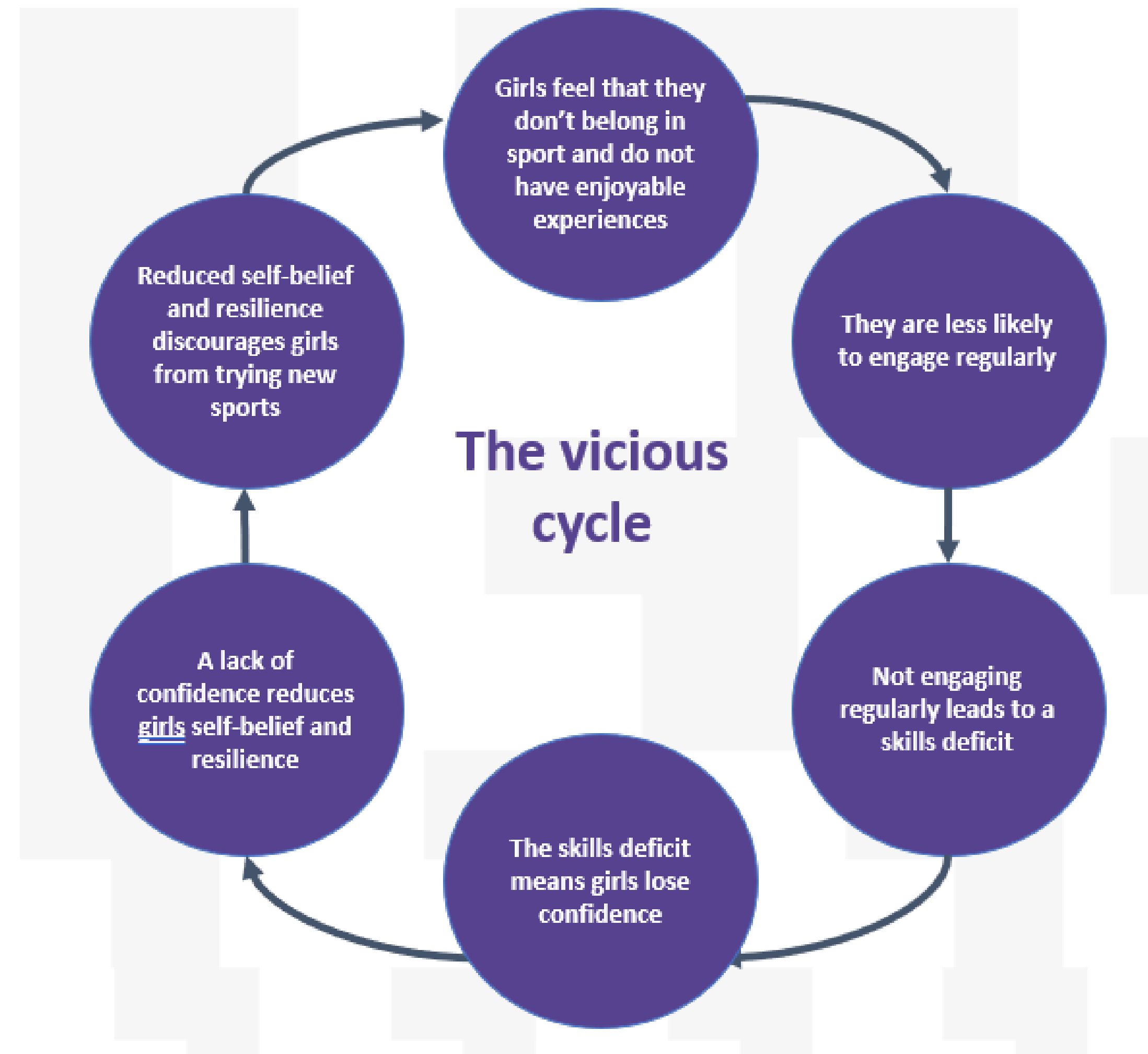
**GIRLS RULES**  
no boys allowed  
dance like a ballerina  
**SING SONGS**  
**PLAY DRESS UPS**  
PAINT Believe in Fairies  
YOUR NAILS bake cupcakes  
DREAM BIG  
**PLAY PRETEND**  
Read Fairy Tales **HAVE TEA**  
LAUGH OFTEN **PARTIES**

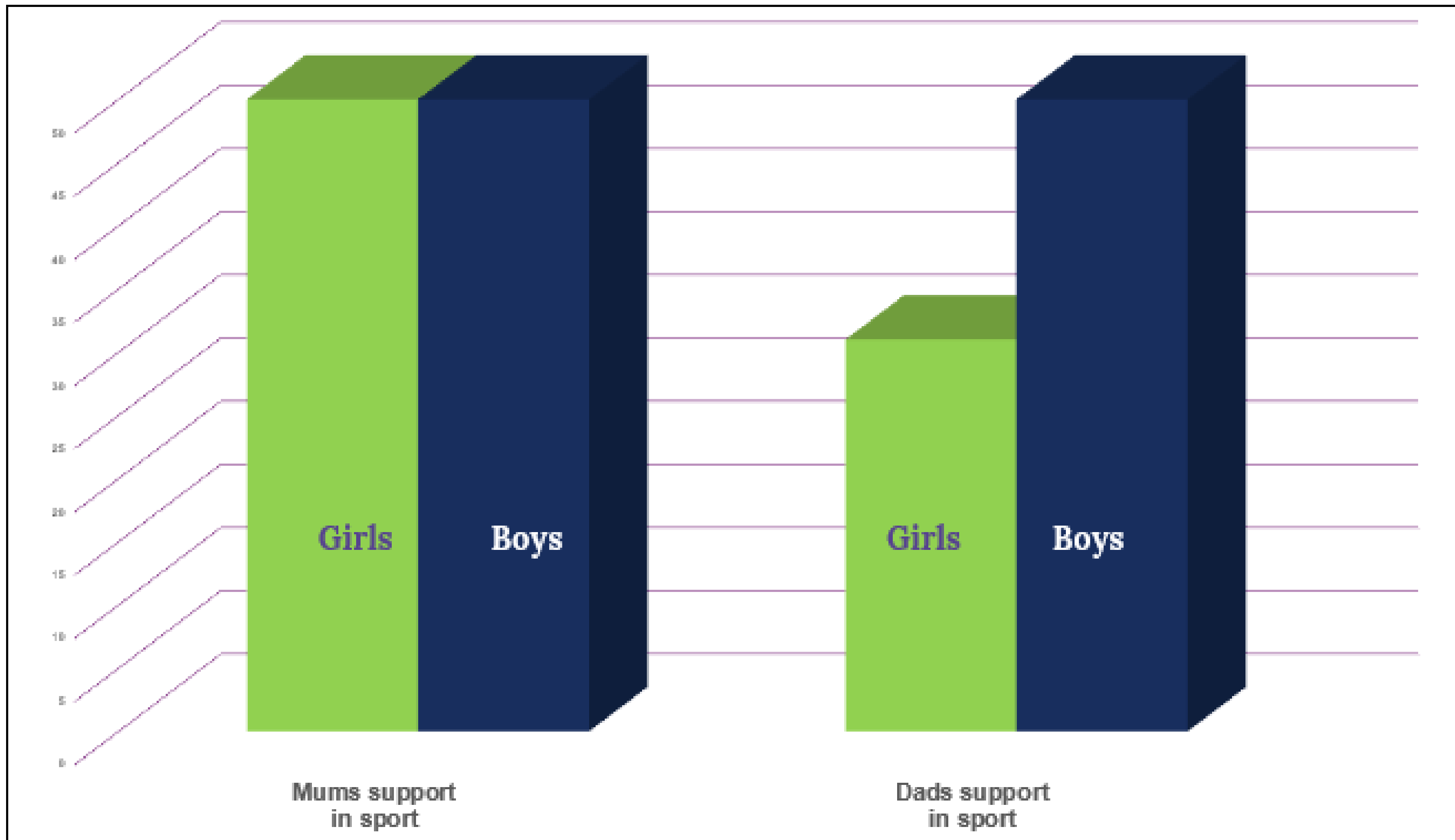


**BOYS RULES**  
NO GIRLS ALLOWED  
**PLAY GAMES**  
use your imagination  
**CLIMB BE LOUD**  
**TREES** BUILD A FORT  
USE YOUR OUTSIDE VOICE INSIDE  
**TELL JOKES** **HAVE**  
**GET DIRTY** **FUN**  
HAVE ADVENTURES

# SPORT, STEREOTYPES AND STOLEN DREAMS

“Only 30% of parents think playing sport is very important for their daughters compared to 41% of parents for their son”

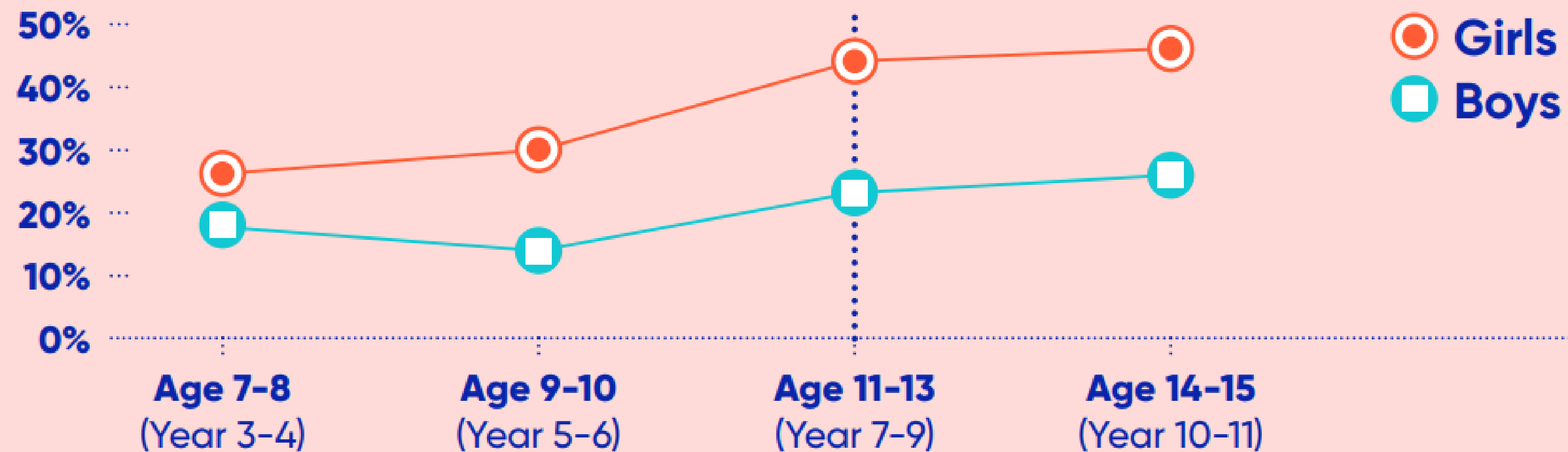




**31% OF GIRLS ARE ENCOURAGED AND SUPPORTED BY THEIR DADS TO BE ACTIVE IN COMPARISON TO 50% OF BOYS**

## Confidence stops girls being more active at school

**46% of girls aged 14-15 report a lack of confidence stops them being more active at school compared with 26% of girls aged 7-8**



# “BOYS WILL BE BOYS”

- Boys, like girls believe the stereotyping
- Being good at sport is inherent with identity

Sports/activities parents most prefer their child to take part in		
	GIRLS	BOYS
Teamsport	23%	50%
Creative/artistic sport	35%	9%
Individual sport	22%	22%

Top 3 sports/activities children take part in	
GIRLS	BOYS
Swimming (45%)	Football (66%)
Dance (36%)	Swimming (37%)
Gymnastics (34%)	Other (16%)

“I've witnessed boys being told to 'man up' and 'get a grip' when showing emotion in relation to being physically active.” (Expert Practitioner)

# THE TEAM SPORT GAP

860,000 fewer girls than boys take part in team sport



# “BOYS WILL BE BOYS”

## Boys tell us that...

### Sporty boys are good at...

1. **Scoring shots**
2. **Being fast**
3. **Being strong**
4. **Skill**
5. **Winning**
6. Passing the ball
7. Teamwork
8. Being rough/aggressive
9. Helping others
10. Playing fair



### Sporty girls are good at...

1. **Helping others**
2. **Teamwork**
3. **Playing fair**
4. **Balancing**
5. **Skill**
6. Scoring shots
7. Being flexible
8. Passing the ball
9. Being fast
10. Being able to stretch





**QUIET?**

# TAKING A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO GENDER EQUAL IN SPORT AND ACTIVITY

Tackling Gender Stereotypes



# TAKING A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO GENDER EQUAL IN SPORT AND ACTIVITY

Busting the Myths

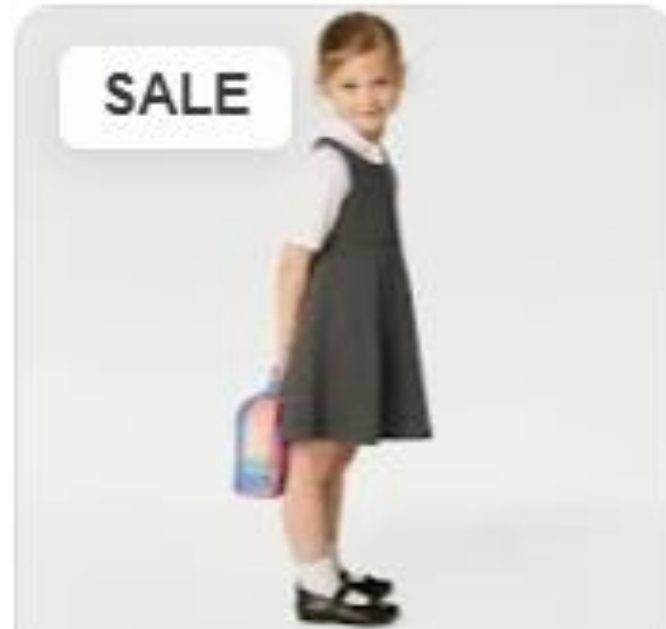


# TAKING A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORT AND ACTIVITY

Take Action



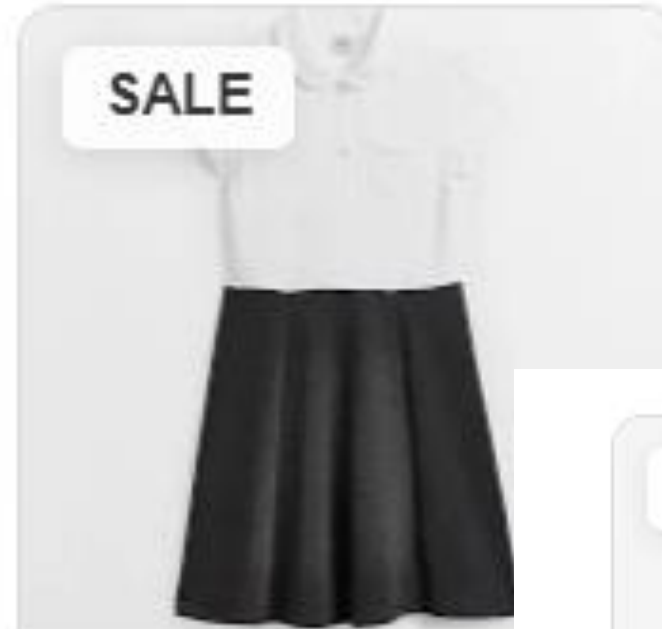
# School Uniform and shoes



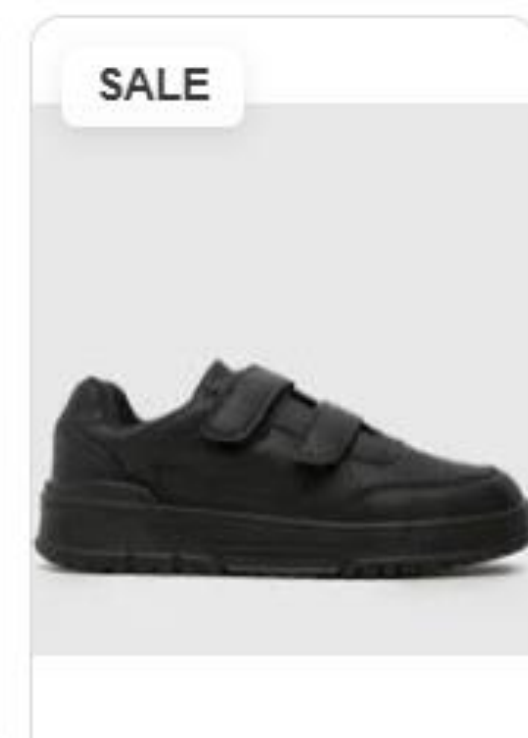
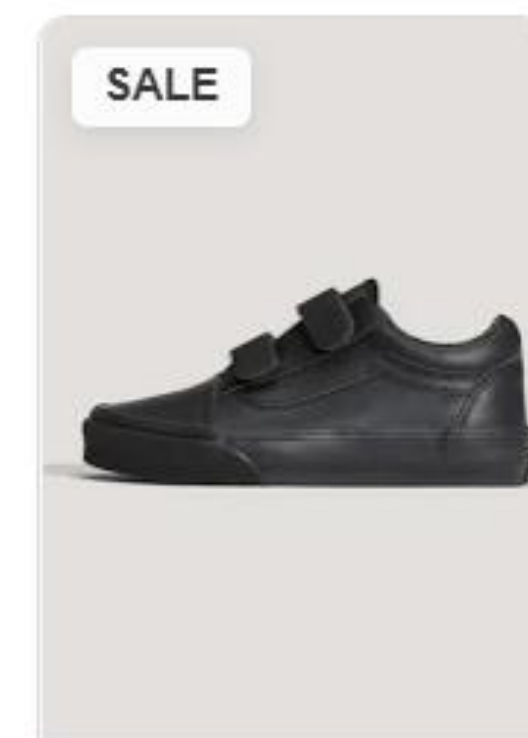
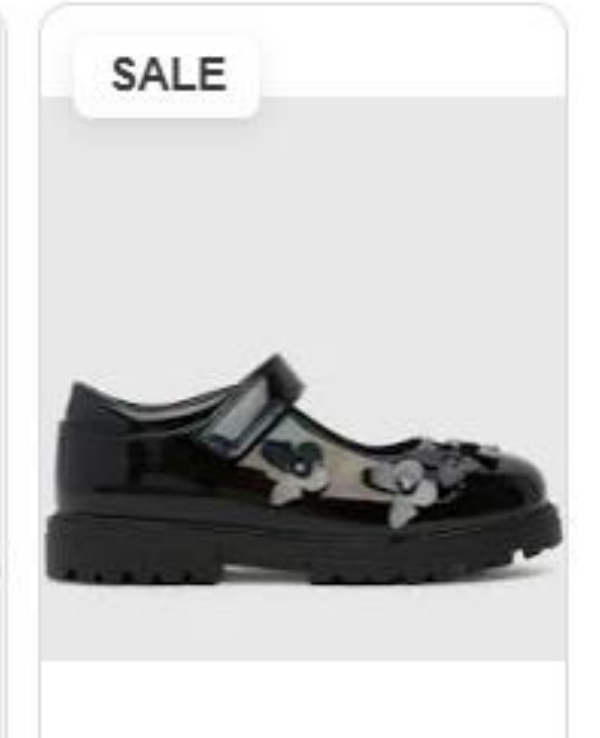
M&S Girls 2 Pack  
Jersey School



Grey Jersey Girls'  
School Dress



Grey Twofer D  
(5 Years) T



Banbury

# PE UNIFORM



Only

**36%**

Of teenage girls wear a sports bra for PE or school sport

# THE LANDSCAPE FOR TEENAGE GIRLS

- ❖ Only 14% of teenage girls feel very happy, compared to 38% in 2009 (Girlguiding UK, 2023)
- ❖ Almost a quarter (22%) of teenage girls have a probable mental health disorder rising to 32% of girls aged 17-19 (NHS, 2022)
- ❖ 67% of teenage girls worry about not looking good enough (Girlguiding UK, 2023)

## 29%

of girls dream of reaching the top in sport, compared to over half of boys.

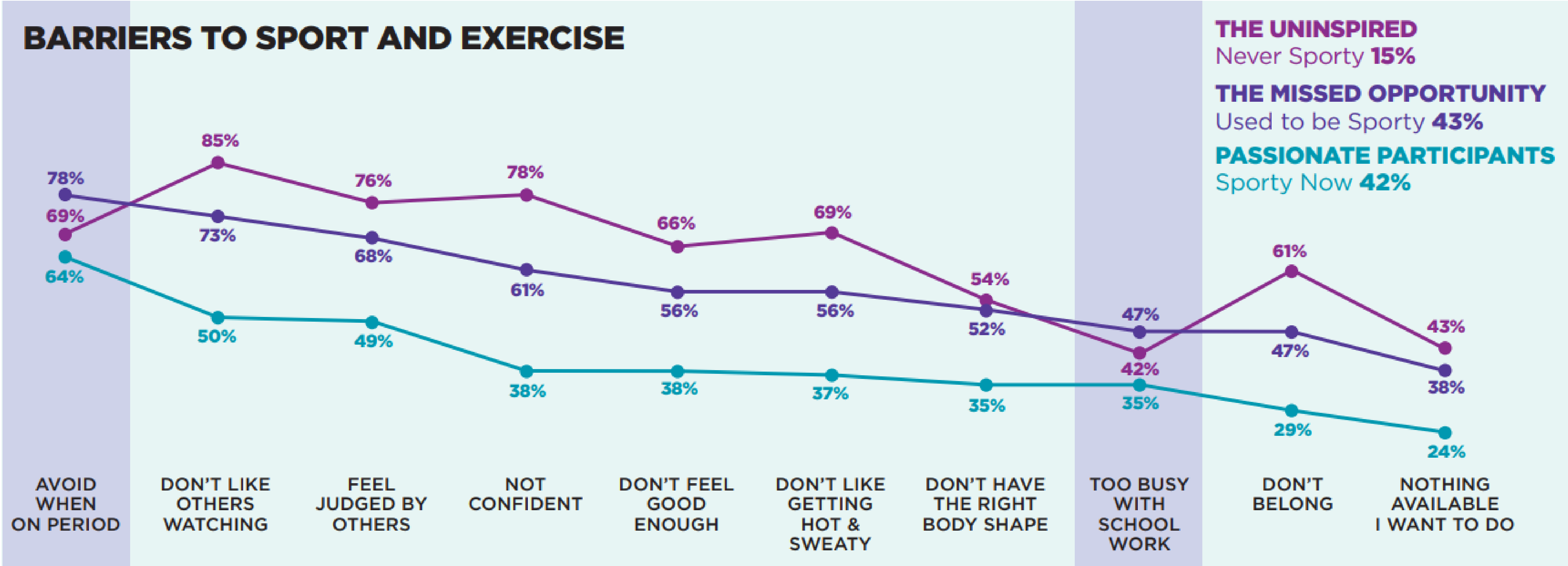
## 1.3m

girls who once loved sport disengage during their teenage years

# BARRIERS



## BARRIERS TO SPORT AND EXERCISE



### THE UNINSPIRED

Never Sporty **15%**

### THE MISSED OPPORTUNITY

Used to be Sporty **43%**

### PASSIONATE PARTICIPANTS

Sporty Now **42%**

# BLACK TEENAGE GIRLS



**WOMEN  
N  
SPORT**