



# What Girls Want in Sport Uniforms

*to make them feel  
comfortable and confident  
to participate in sport:*

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## A National Study



**INSTITUTE FOR  
HEALTH AND SPORT**



The research team acknowledge the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, Victorian State Government for allowing the same survey conducted in the Victorian study to be applied nationally.

# The Study

Participation in sport is low for girls and has been for decades. Young males (15-17 years) are three times more likely than young females to engage in 60 minutes of exercise each day.<sup>1</sup>

Qualitative research suggests that feeling self-conscious in sport uniforms may be one reason why adolescent girls drop out of sport.<sup>2</sup> This is the first national study to adopt quantitative methods to determine girls' preferences for sports uniforms. We found that girls need to be provided with flexible options of uniform styles that are made from comfortable material and designed for girls. Findings from this study could enhance school and sport club uniform policies for girls when playing sport or being physically active to assist with their confidence, feeling comfortable and and readiness to participate.



<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2019. "National Health Survey: First Results 2017-2018." <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.001~2017-18~Main%20Features~Physical%20activity~115>.

<sup>2</sup> Slater, A., and M Tiggemann. 2010. "'Uncool to do sport': A focus group study of adolescent girls' reasons for withdrawing from physical activity." *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* 11 (6):619-626. doi: [10.1016/j.psychsport.2010.07.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2010.07.006).

# Our Respondents

727 Australian girls completed a survey to share their thoughts and beliefs about sport uniforms. Findings reveal of these girls:



**82%** participate in extra-curricular school sport,  
**94%** in club sport



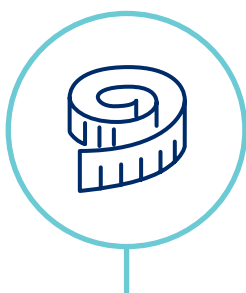
**63%** live in capital cities in Australia



**82%** are active on at least four days per week



**77%** attend a mixed-gender school



**56%** believe their body size is within normal range



**3%** represent Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander,  
**5%** speak second language at home,  
**9%** identify as LBTIQ+



Outside of school, Netball (**41%**), Swimming (**32%**), and Australian Rules Football (**24%**) are the most commonly played sports

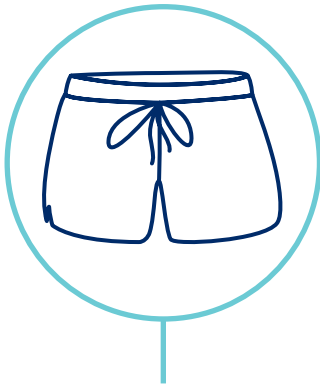


Outside of school, Walking for exercise (**68%**), Jogging (**44%**) and Gym/Weight training (**33%**) are the most commonly performed active recreation



# Girls WANT to wear

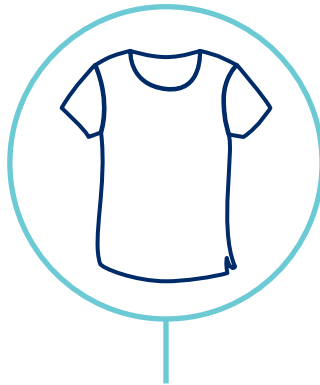
The following preferences are identified for sports uniforms:



## Shorts

**88% prefer** to wear shorts during school sport

**85% prefer** to wear shorts during sport outside of school



## T-shirts

**90% prefer** to wear t-shirts during school sport

**85% prefer** to wear t-shirts during sport outside of school



## Dark colours

**61% prefer** to wear dark coloured bottoms during school sport

**64% prefer** to wear dark coloured bottoms during sport outside of school

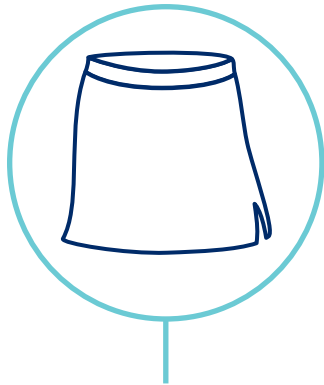


“I would prefer to wear dark blue or black shorts.

I have white shorts now and every month I get really concerned about leaking and that people can see too much”

# Girls DO NOT want to wear

The majority of girls prefer not to wear skirts

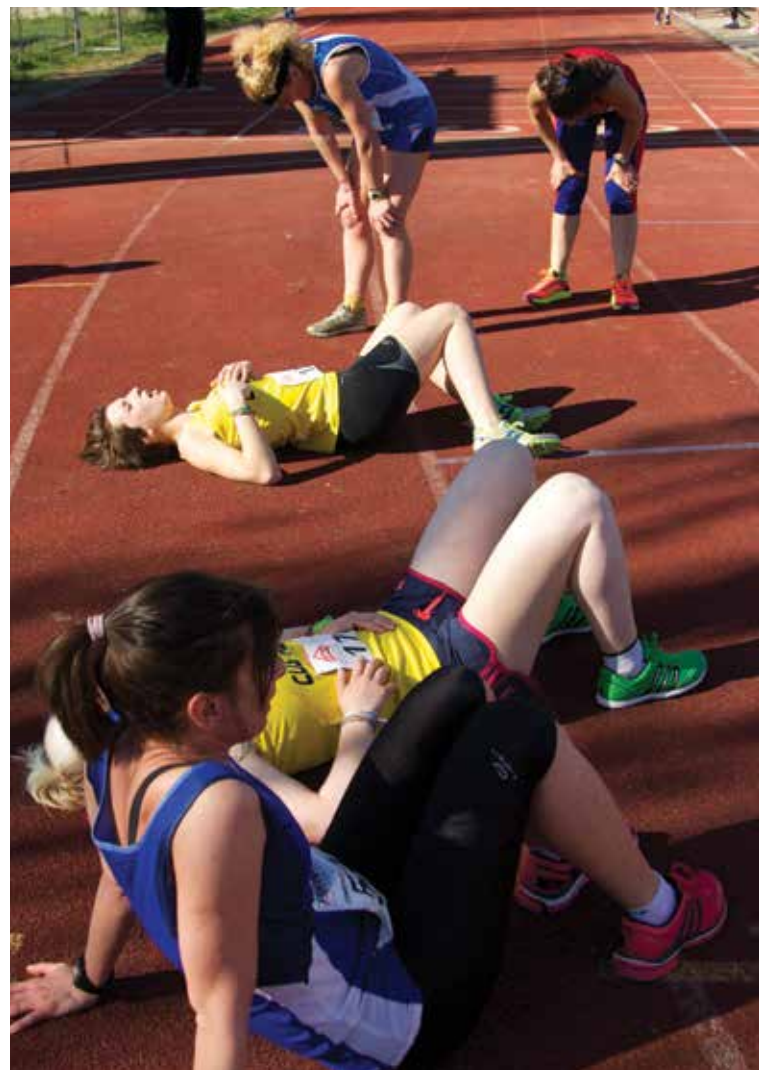


## No Skirts

**65% do not want** to wear skirts during school sport

**58% do not want** to wear skirts during sport outside of school

“The skirt is short and makes me feel self conscious when jumping and moving”



# States & Territories

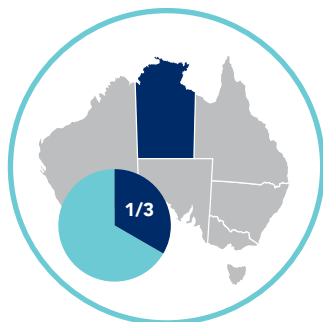
Across Australia, views are similar about sport uniforms, however statistically significant differences are evident:



**Girls from NT (16%)** are less likely to prefer to wear tracksuit pants or leggings than girls from other states and territories, and are conscious of suitable fabrics

“Our sport uniform keeps the sweat in the material so it smells really bad. Because we live in Darwin you sweat a lot more and the fabric is way too thick”

**Girls from WA (53%)** are less likely to prefer wearing singlets for sport outside of school, compared with the higher percentage of girls from **VIC (63%)** and **NSW (72%)**



**From NT (40%)** are happy to wear sport uniforms that are similar to boys' uniforms, compared with girls from **TAS (13%)**





# Age

Girls of different ages feel differently about their body image.

“I need something that is comfortable and doesn't show off my body”

Older girls (15-18 years) had **7% lower satisfaction** with the appearance of their body than younger girls (12-14 years)



# Social Identity

Includes girls who identified themselves as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, LQBTIQ+, have a physical disability, speak a second language at home, or have recently arrived as a refugee or immigrant.\*

Girls from social identity groups **enjoy sport 7% less** than girls who do not identify themselves in these groups

Girls from social identity groups are **12% less pleased with how their body looks and 14% less pleased with how their body performs** than girls who do not identify themselves in these groups

“Sport uniforms are too school focused and not equal for females and LQBTIQ+ people. Boys get to wear looser clothing and girls are wearing tight things that basically show off curves and the female body. LQBTIQ+ people may not identify as any gender so what do they wear? It's all very stupid for me. Let people wear what they want to wear”

\* The number of girls from each social identity group was too low to facilitate individual analysis.

# Recommendations for sport uniform policies<sup>3</sup>

**76%** of girls want their sport uniform to make them feel ready to play,

**26%** of girls report feeling fashionable is the least important feeling that they seek from sport uniforms.



Supply uniforms with material consisting of three main features:



**Hides sweat**  
(90%)



**Stretchy**  
(81%)



**Dark coloured**  
(64%)

“I would like to wear a shirt that doesn’t always get soaked in sweat and shorts that don’t stick to your butt when being active”

“I am so sick of having to wear “unisex” sports shorts that we all know are designed for boys, not girls. They are totally unsuitable for girls who have hips (which in high school, is nearly all girls), they are tight on my buttocks so people can see my undie line, and are extremely uncomfortable to move in”

Girls want a range of sport uniform options - not one type of clothing suits all girls.

Allow the freedom to choose from a range of sport uniform designs (**65%**). Sport uniform options enable girls to feel empowered, to have a choice on what they want to wear.



Provide uniforms designed for girls and are not unisex designs (**61%**)

“Shorts that fit our body (hips and thighs) and singlets that fit our top half (breasts and stomach)”

<sup>3</sup> Percentages represent girls’ agreement with descriptor statements