

UNDERSTANDING WOMEN AS VOLUNTEERS IN SPORT

15 MARCH 2017



WE ARE WOMEN IN SPORT
The UK's leading women's sport charity



OUR VISION

To transform sport for the benefit of every woman and girl in the UK



BACKGROUND

- Growing recognition of the importance of volunteers in sport
- But, little research into women volunteers in sport
- Therefore a need for research to understand their experiences



OBJECTIVES

- To bring together existing research on women as volunteers
- Understand the difference between general volunteering and sports volunteering and why women are less likely to choose sport
- To understand the range of volunteering roles that women currently participate in – both formal and informal – and how this compares with men
- To understand what motivates women to volunteer in sport and how motivations change over time and within different life stages
- Understand the experience for women volunteering in sport, including any barriers



METHODS

- Literature review
- 24 interviews with men and women volunteering in traditional sports
- 11 interviews with women volunteering in parkrun
- 6 interviews with people working in CSPs
- 13 interviews with men and women volunteering in non-sports sector



FINDINGS



NON-SPORT VOLUNTEERING




- 41% men vs 43% of women have volunteered formally
- But, differences in gender with informal volunteering
- 62% of women compared with 56% of men
- Women more likely to do caring roles, men more likely to give advice and represent others

Source: NCVO 2016

STATISTICS –SPORT VOLUNTEERING



- Volunteers reflect the profile of sports participants
- 30% of men volunteer in sport compared with 14% of women
- 73% of volunteers also participate in sport
- Men are more likely to occupy decision making roles and coaching roles than women




Source: Sport England

MOTIVATIONS



- Intrinsic value the main hook for women to volunteer
- parkrun volunteers motivated by their passion for running and giving back
- Traditional sport volunteers more motivated by child's involvement than their own participation
- Younger women interested in skills and professional development



DISCRIMINATION AND STEREOTYPING

"People take one look at me and say, 'Never in a million years is she a boxer or a boxing coach' I think the whole judging a book by its cover can be a barrier sometimes."
 (Female volunteer in boxing).



CONFIDENCE



- Fear of judgement
- Lack of specific sports skills
- Women less willing to put themselves forward
- Behaviour of parents at matches can have a negative impact on confidence

I have a lot more confidence and I can deal with situations better.

I'm just one of these people that stayed at home, had the five kids... and never really experienced things but since being with Breeze, it's now made me feel, right, I can do this.

FAMILY



- Family can be both a motivator and a barrier
- For traditional sport, volunteers have got involved because of their family, rather than participation
- But, women need to juggle commitments
- Support networks required



FLEXIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY



- Flexibility in volunteering is valued by women
- This is something which parkrun does really well
- Flexible in terms of how often you volunteer, what role you do, whether you bring your family or not



SUMMARY



Key issues raised in this research in relation to women include:

- Differences in motivations between men and women
- Discrimination and stereotyping
- Issues around confidence
- Importance of family
- Need for flexibility

