



Women in Football Australia Inc.

Play. Watch. Do.

Research into women's attitudes to sport

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Introduction

This report entitled 'Play. Watch. Do.' is based on research conducted by Core Data in February 2021 on behalf of Women in Football Australia Inc (Women in Football).

We partnered with Core Data as we wished to have a rigorous evidence base about women's attitudes to and involvement in sport, with a focus on football, to assist us in contributing to the advancement of the role of women in football. We specifically looked at women's involvement as:

- players and parents of players
- consumers of professional sport, and
- volunteers in the sport.

The report is being shared with football's stakeholders to enable them to take on board the findings and consider ways in which football organisations, entities and individuals can improve the experience of women involved in football as players, parents, consumers and volunteers.



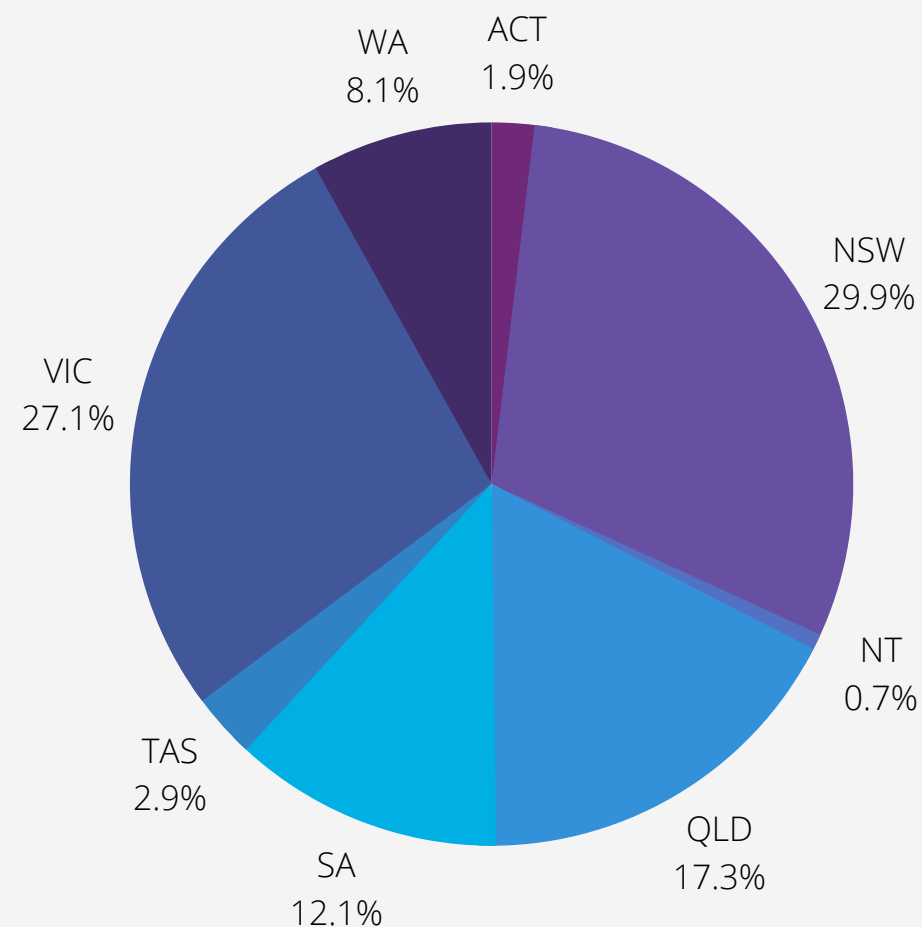
Women in Football is a member-based charity registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission which aims to encourage and help girls and women to contribute effectively and confidently to the advancement of football at the level they wish to do so, either voluntarily or professionally.

Demographics

The research was conducted by Core Data of 840 women from a general female population aged 18-60 years in Australia in February 2021.

Age groups:

- 18-30 years: 29%
- 31-40 years: 24.8%
- 41-50 years: 23.8%
- 51-60 years: 22.4%



	OVERALL	INVOLVED WITH FOOTBALL
Married or living with partner	53.1%	59%
Employed full time, part time or self-employed	68.4%	84%
Average annual household income	Below \$75,000: 62.2% Above \$150,000: 9.5%	Below \$75,000: 49% Above \$150,000: 24%
At least one child 5-17 years	54.2%	51.5%

What sports do women play?

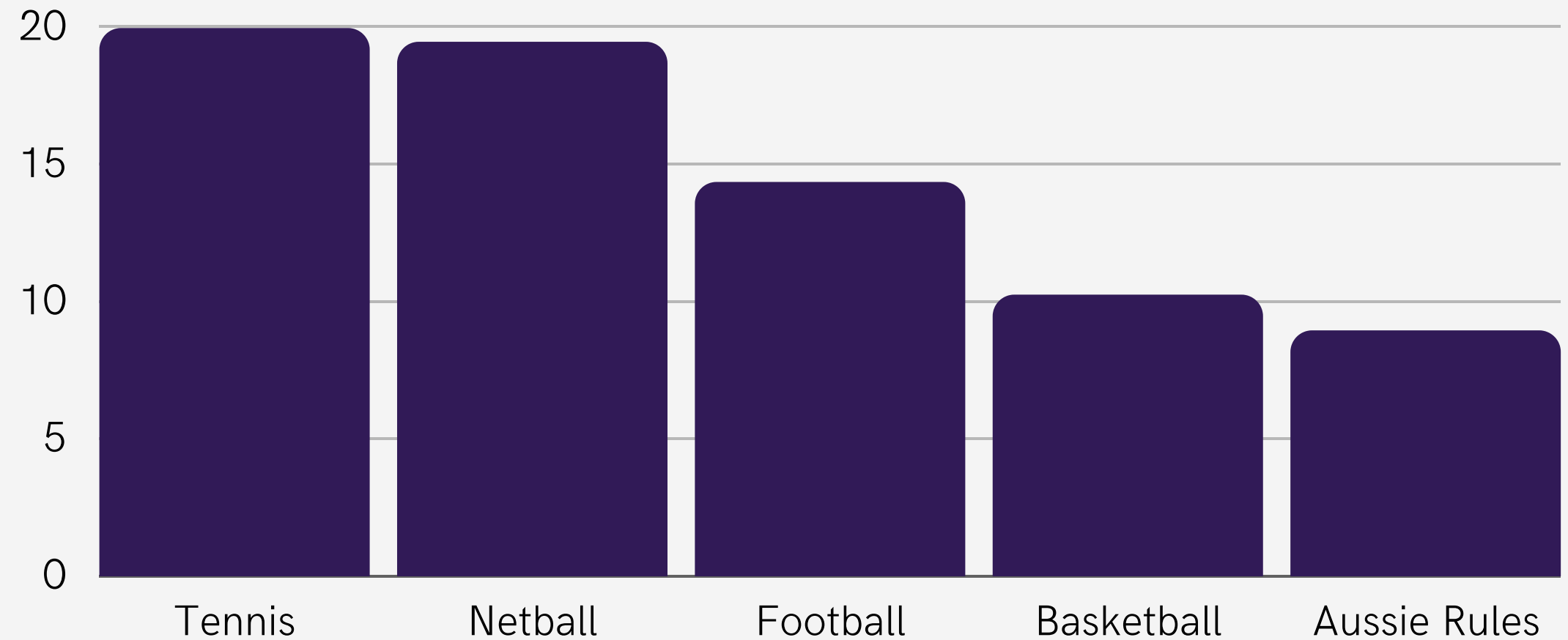
Just under three in 10 women (29.2%) play organised community sport; 70.8% play none.

The top five sports played are Tennis, Netball, Football, Basketball and Aussie Rules, with Football being the second most popular team sport.

The women most likely to play football are aged 18-30 years.

29.2%
of women play a sport

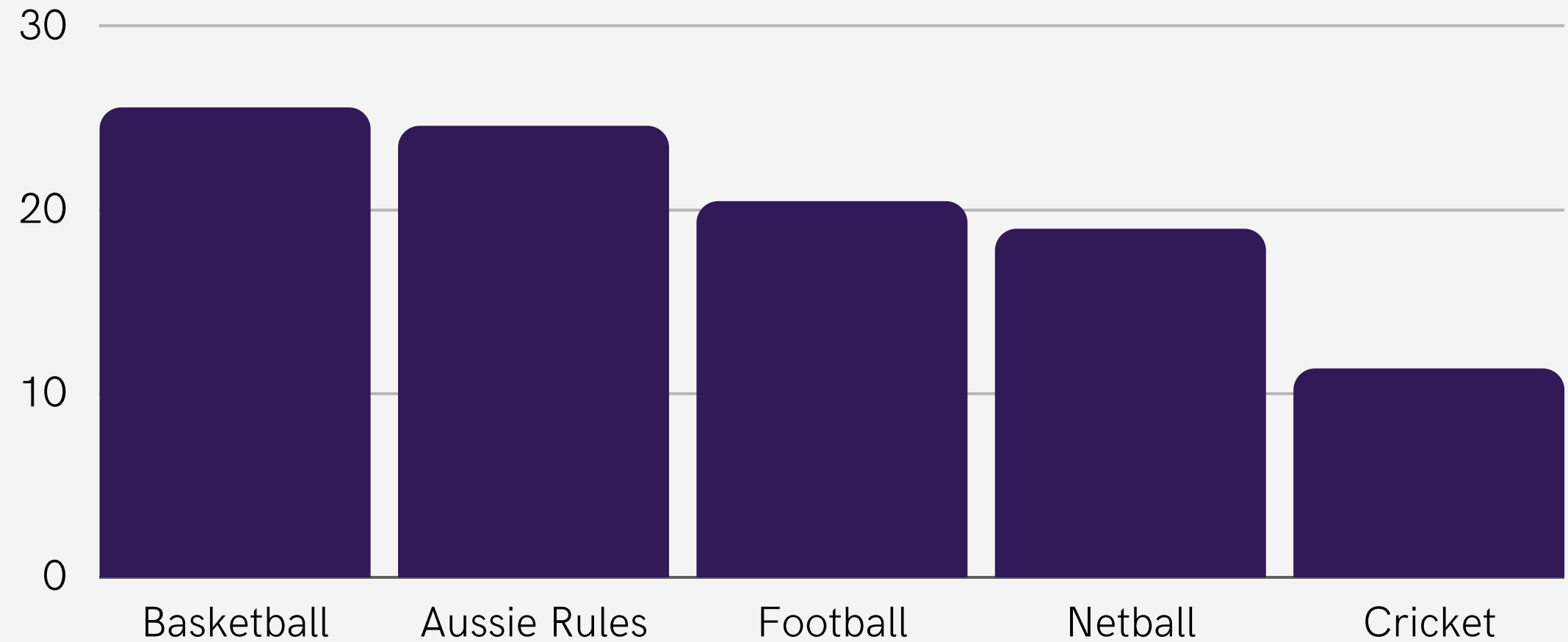
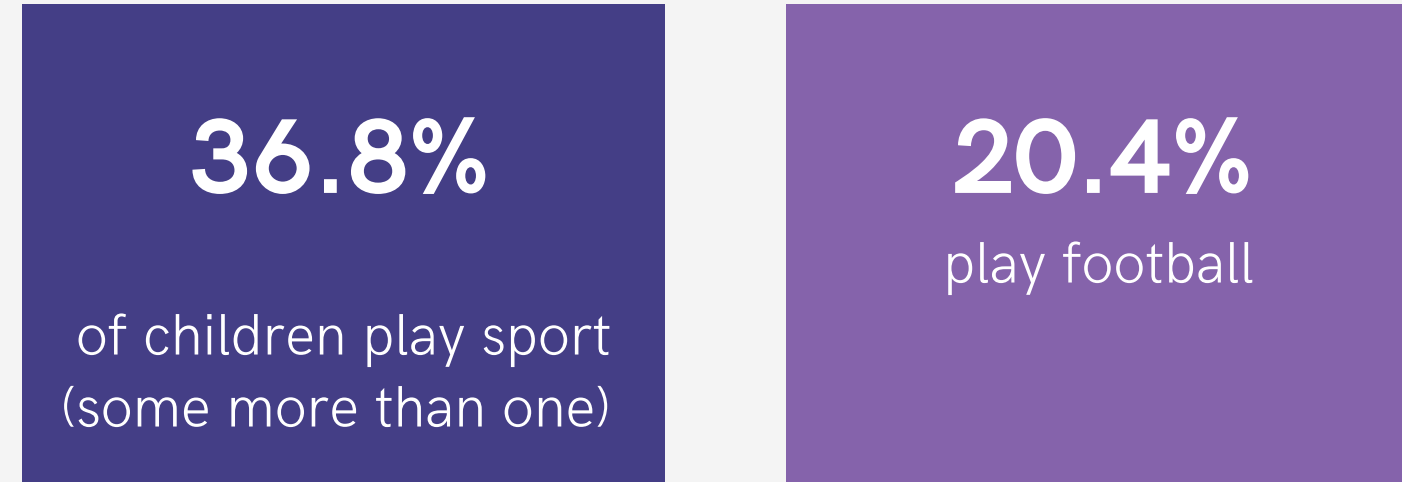
14.3%
of women who play sport play football



What sports do their children play?

Nearly four in 10 women (36.8%) who has at least one child (5-17 years) says their child plays organised sport. The top five sports are Basketball, Aussie Rules, Football, Netball and Cricket.

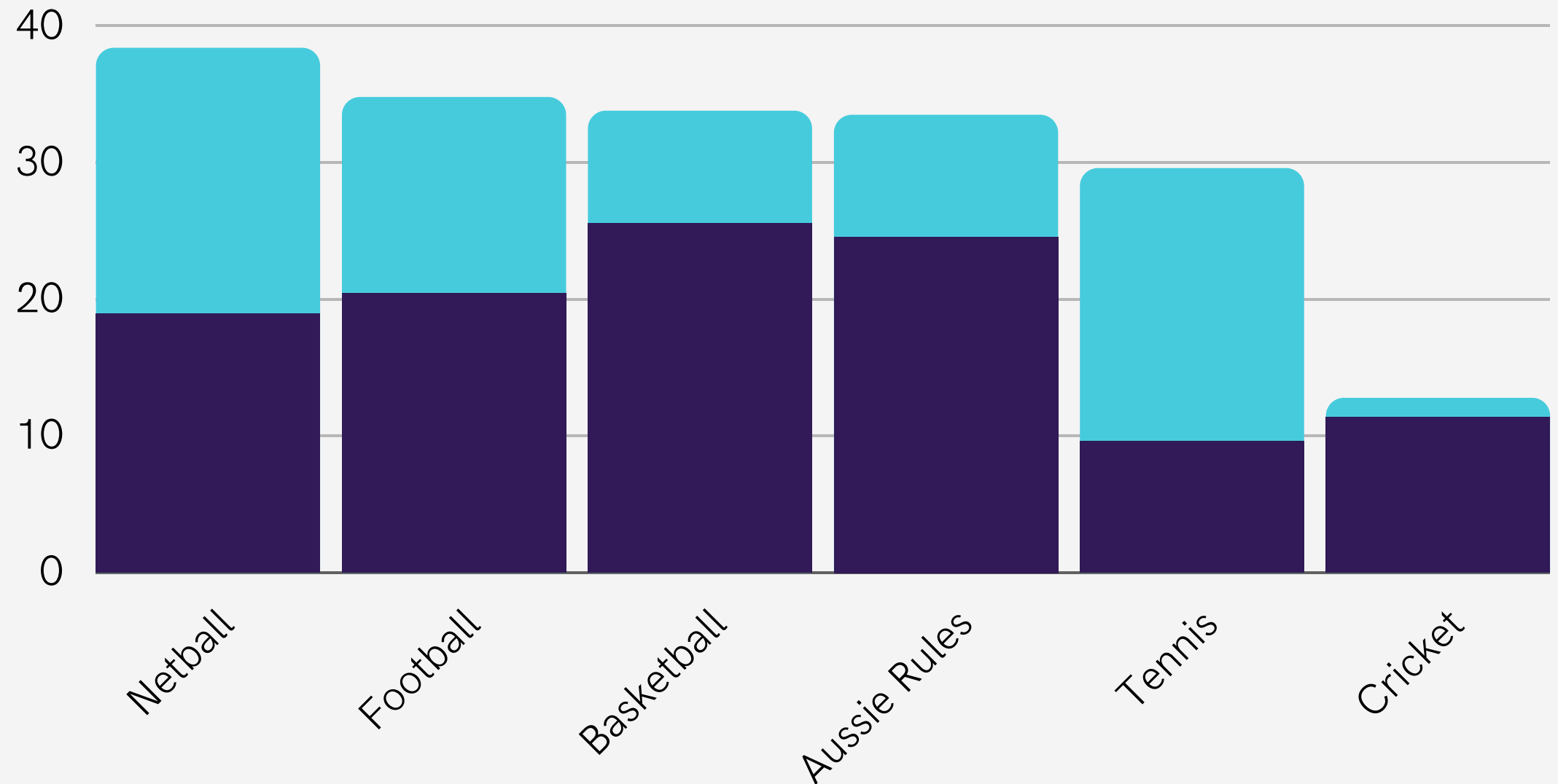
The women with children most likely to play football are aged 31-40 years.



The top 5 sports combined

When the top 5 sports for both women and children are combined, the potential overall value of the sport shifts. The top six sports are in order: Netball, Football, Basketball, Aussie Rules, Tennis and Cricket.

It is noteworthy that the proportion of women and children playing Netball is almost equal; and Football increases its total overall value because of the number of adult women who play.



Children who play = purple; women who play = teal.

The mums whose children play football

AGE

18-30 years: 14.1%

31-40 years: 28.3%

41-50 years: 19.1%

51-60 years: 17.8%

PLAY

Play football themselves: 13.9%

WATCH

Watch professional football: 11.6%

DO

Volunteer in football: 25.7%

EARN

Annual household income exceeds
\$150,000: 62%

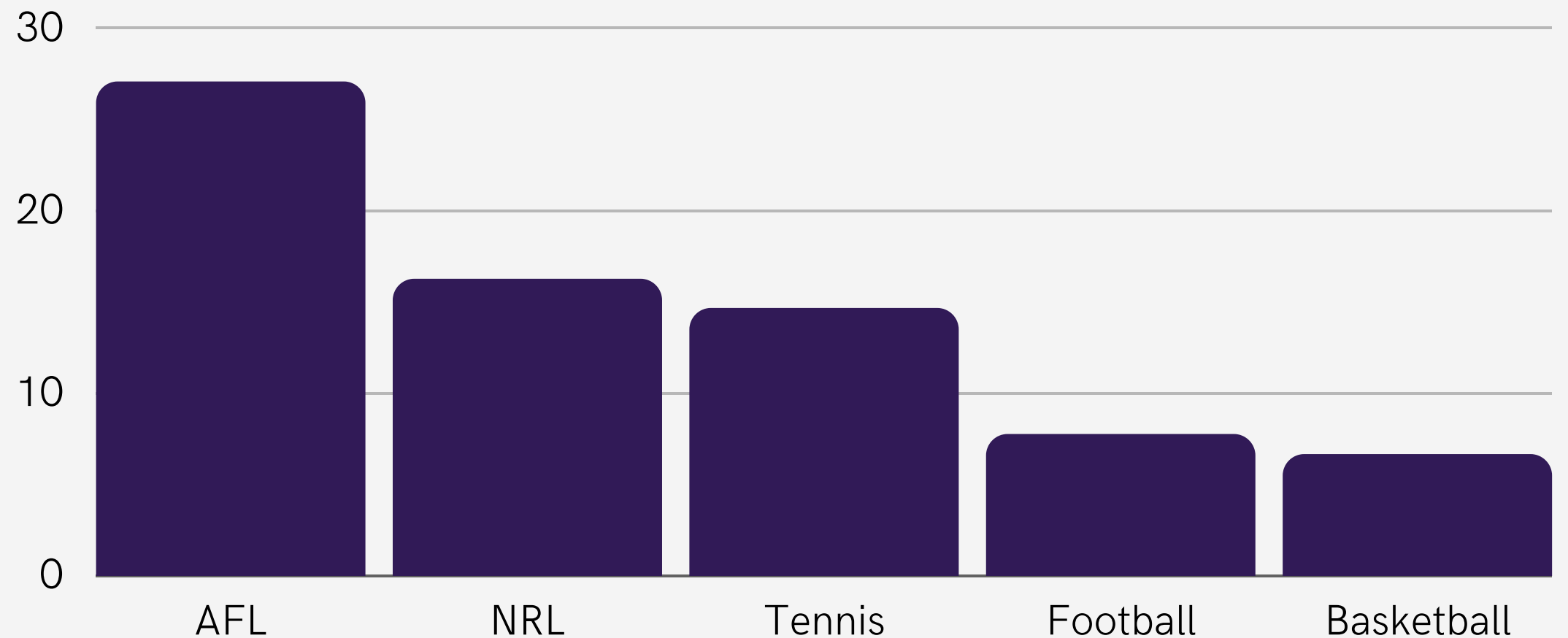
What sports do women watch?

The most popular professional sport for women to watch is Australian Rules Football.

It is 1.6 times more popular than the number two sport (NRL), and 3.5 times more popular than football.

18-30 year olds watch football the most (12.3%) and 31-40 year olds the least (3.7%).

Those living in NSW watch football the most (10.3%) followed by SA (8.8%).



What is their favourite women's sports team?

The Matildas are the most popular women's sports team with 10.8% of women rating them the highest.

They are rated the highest in every age group other than 41-50 years.

The W-League was rated highest by 1.8% of women.

Note that 21% gave an 'undecided' response to this question.

Women in Football Australia Inc.



The next most popular women's sports team after the Matildas is the national women's cricket team (6.6%), followed by the Australian Diamonds (4.7%) and Collingwood AFL team (4.5%).

No other club team in any sport rated above 2.5%, although some individual athletes rated well (e.g. Ash Barty at 6.2%).

2023

Four in 10 women (39.3%) are aware that Australia is to co-host the 2023 World Cup. Awareness is even across all age groups but differs significantly by geography.

Note that this data pre-dates announcement of host cities.

AWARENESS BY GEOGRAPHY

Women in the ACT (52.4%) and Victoria (48.8%) are most aware of the 2023 World Cup, with women in SA (19.8%) least aware.

INTEREST

Almost 3-in-10 (29.2%) said they would "definitely" be interested in attending a World Cup match.

A further third (34.5%) said they would "possibly" be interested, making a total of 64.2% who are interested.

AWARENESS BY ENGAGEMENT

Awareness amongst those involved in grassroots football is almost double (77.9%) that of other women

BY AGE GROUP

More than half of all women in every age group are interested in attending the 2023 World Cup.

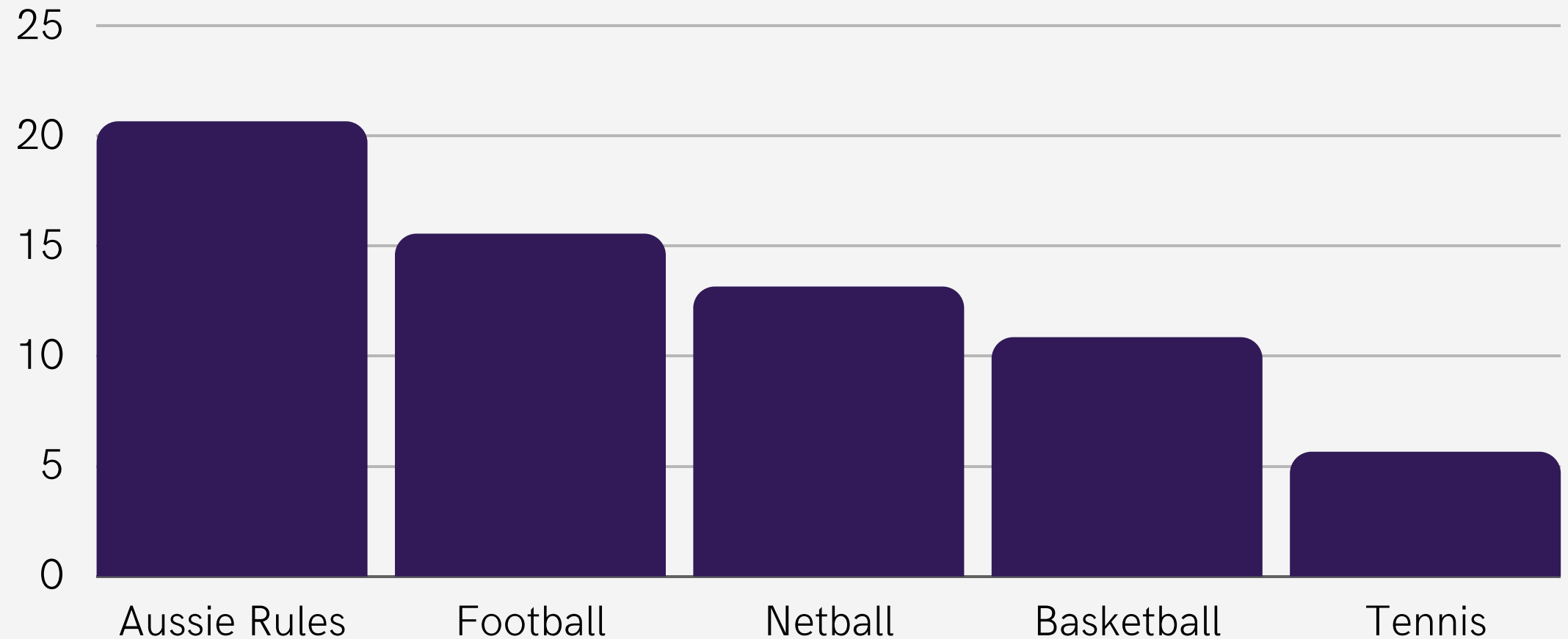
Interest is highest in the 18-30 years age group (71.6%).

Amongst the other age groups, interest in attending ranges from 56% to 66% (older to younger)

In what sports are women volunteers?

More than one-quarter of women (26.9%) are involved in sport at a community (grassroots) level as a volunteer.

The top five sports are Aussie Rules, Football, Netball, Basketball and Tennis.



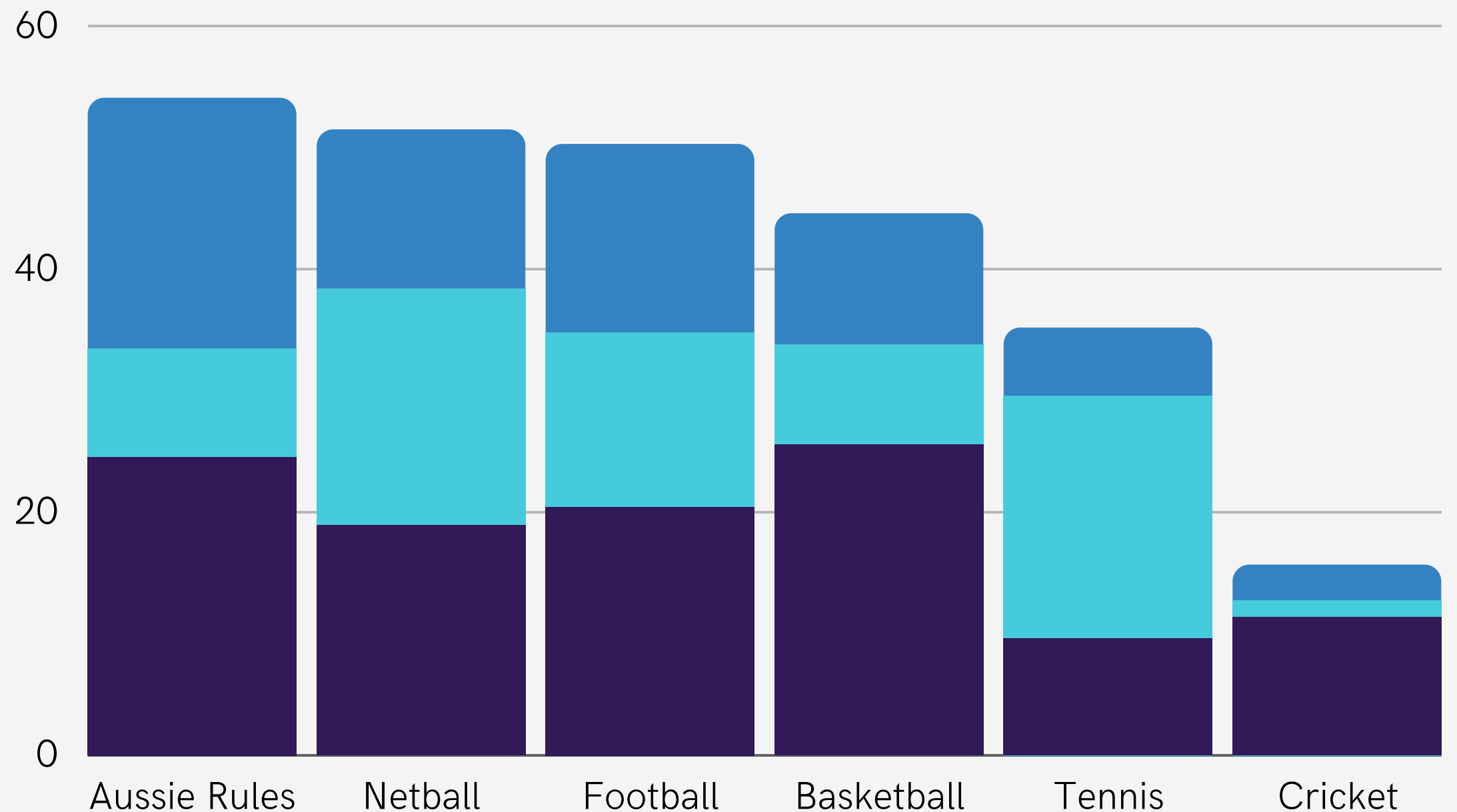
- Women aged 41-50 years are the most active volunteers (38.1%)
- The ACT (49.5%) and WA (40.5%) have the most women volunteers (although the ACT is a small sample and should not be relied upon)
- Queensland (17.1%) has the least women volunteers.

Playing + Volunteering

When the top 5 sports for women and children are combined with the proportion of volunteers, the reach of the sports again shift. They are in order: Aussie Rules, Netball, Football, Basketball, Tennis and Cricket.

It is noteworthy that Football has the most even proportion of type of involvement, with the proportion of women playing, volunteers and children playing within a six percentage point gap.

The data also shows the relationship between the proportion of children playing and women as volunteers, most notably (in order) in Aussie Rules, Netball and Football.



. Children who play = purple; women who play = teal; women who are volunteers = blue.

Sexism in sport

More than half of the women (55.1%) with an involvement in sport reported experiencing sexism, sexist attitudes or discriminatory behaviour at least once in the past two years. Amongst 18-30 year olds, it is more prevalent with three-quarters (76.6%) of young women experiencing this.

In Football, those who experienced sexism, sexist attitudes or discriminatory behaviour:

- Play the game themselves: 89.4%
- Children play: 42%
- Involved as a volunteer: 74.8%.

The major forms of this behaviour were identified as:

- suggestive comments
- inappropriate behaviour
- bypassed for higher level roles (as a volunteer).

'SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS'

Overall: 66.1%

Most prevalent amongst 31-40 years: 78.7%

'INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR'

Overall: 63.4%

Most prevalent amongst 51-60 years: 73.3%

'BYPASSED FOR HIGHER LEVEL ROLES'

Overall: 29.9%

Most prevalent amongst 18-30 years: 36.9%

Note: The research was conducted in February 2021 prior to the high profile revelations in February and March concerning the Federal Parliament.

Verbatim

Women involved in Football were specifically asked to categorise and comment on priority issues to be addressed in the game. The top three revolved around:

- Access
- Cost
- Safety.

A representative selection of the commentary is highlighted.

1. ACCESS

75.4%

"Women with children are actively discouraged from being involved. A massive change is needed."

"More women's sport on TV and streaming networks."

"A creche! I can't go to any sport as I don't have childcare options."

"Get a greater diversity of women into the game."

2. COST

48.9%

"We need more opportunities outside of school that don't cost an arm and a leg."

"The cost of playing and all the add-ons are making it almost impossible for my family."

"The game needs to be cheaper."

3. SAFETY

48.1%

"Less gender discrimination in society as a whole. Sport is a reflection of society and football is no different."

"There needs to be a change in attitude in society about girls and women in sport, both on and off-the-field for women to feel safe and empowered."

"My observation is that women with an opinion in soccer are treated appallingly by the men in the sport, by high-level officials and unofficially on social media."

Comment

The value that women bring to football is evident in their layers of involvement.

- As players, football is #3.
- As mums of players, football is #3.
- In terms of playing power, women as players and as mums are #2.
- As grassroots volunteers, football is #2.
- Taken together, playing and volunteer value, football is #3 (closely behind netball at #2).

As identified both by the data and the selection of comments made by respondents, the sport appears to be failing women in terms of access, cost and safety.

The fact that women involved in football are more likely to be employed and more likely to be in household income ranges that are considered 'core affluent' (>\$150k pa) and 'high net worth' (>\$250k pa) has both a positive and negative perspective.

On the one hand, from the perspective of women as consumers of professional football, it is encouraging and gives scope to develop what might be attractive and marketable for these women.

On the other hand, cost and access are identified as inhibiting factors for participation as players (adults and children) and as consumers. This has an impact both on the gender composition of those participating in the sport as well as the cultural and linguistic diversity of those participating.

The cost issue is further underscored by the fact that the proportion of women with children in households earning more than \$150,000 rises to 62% for football compared with 24% of all women with an involvement in football.

The proportion of women whose children play who are volunteers (25.7%) is more than ten percentage points more than the proportion of women volunteers in the game overall, which suggests a strong correlation between levels and value of engagement for women with children.

Comment

This is one of the reasons why Women in Football has introduced the Women in Football awards which includes an annual award for Volunteer of the Year, as well as Media and Emerging Leader awards.

Anecdotally, many clubs report increasing difficulty in finding volunteers, including women volunteers. Indeed, one male committee member of a club commented to us in writing that "most women only want to drop off their kids for child minding and have nothing to do with us."

Because of the correlation between the types of involvement in the game as demonstrated by this research, football might be best served if football organisations examined the impact of its operational requirements and personnel practices on attracting and retaining volunteers, and potentially look at different models of volunteerism and what works best.

The findings in terms of safety and the prevalence of discriminatory behaviour aligns with what is becoming increasingly apparent in the broader community and should also be independently examined and assessed.

One important means of addressing this is to boost women's participation on and off-the-field and ensuring that more women have leadership positions in the game from grassroots clubs upwards, which is one of the key strategic goals of Women in Football. It is also one of the reasons why we established 'Trixie's List', an online database - readily available to all - of women who wish to have a greater involvement in the game.

While the 2018 revised FA Constitution embedded quotas in the top levels of football in this country via the 40/40/20 rule this does not fundamentally address the underlying structural imbalance in grassroots, or the issues identified in this research. Instead, we would advocate for incentives for grassroots to improve their engagement with women as players, parents and volunteers and for successes to be shared amongst the broader football community.

We are strongly of the view that professional sport cannot survive and prosper without strong grassroots, as it increases opportunities for inclusivity and growth; it is the source of future players, coaches and officials; and it also helps enhance credibility and reputation.