



What type of uniforms do women want to wear when they referee or umpire sport?

National research insights from current officials and non-officials

Conducted by



In collaboration with

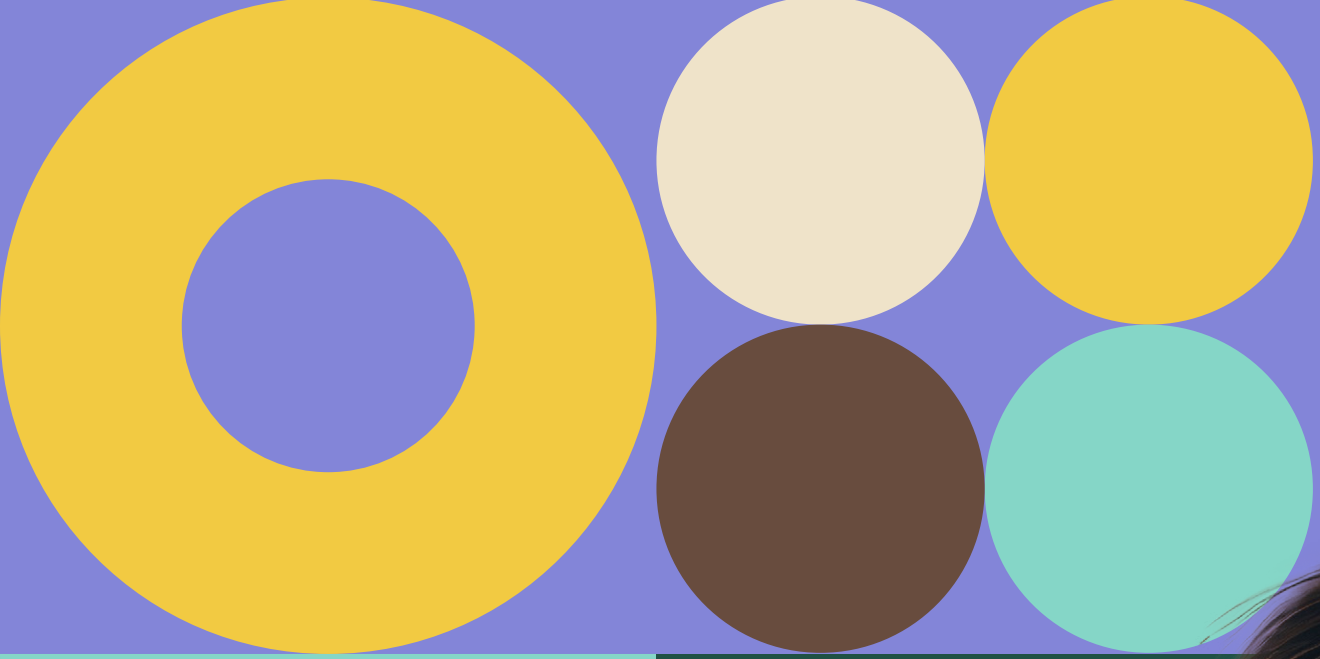


WOMEN PARTICIPATING AND LEADING IN SPORT

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Introduction

Why the Need?

In Australia, women are under-represented in leadership roles, which includes umpires and referees. To assist the growth of sport, there is a need to identify barriers and disrupt norms to encourage women to be involved in these important roles. During the time research was conducted by our team at Victoria University, on what girls and women want for uniforms to play sport, we were contacted by women in officiating roles, who wanted their uniform needs to also be heard. Comments included the notion that women umpire and referee uniforms tend to be male-centric and uncomfortable. These uniforms may make it difficult for women to feel confident and ready to officiate.

Now is the time for

change



Objective

To understand what type of uniforms girls (aged 15+) and women want to wear when they officiate in sport.



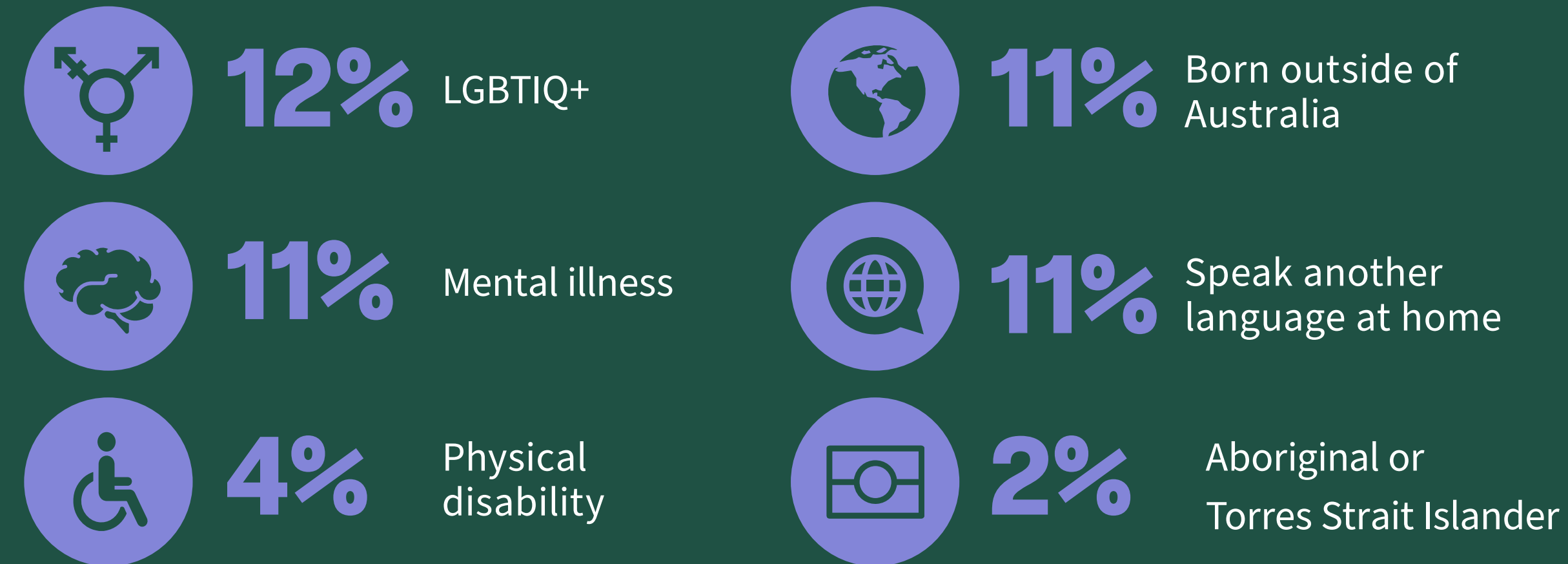
15+



Our Sample

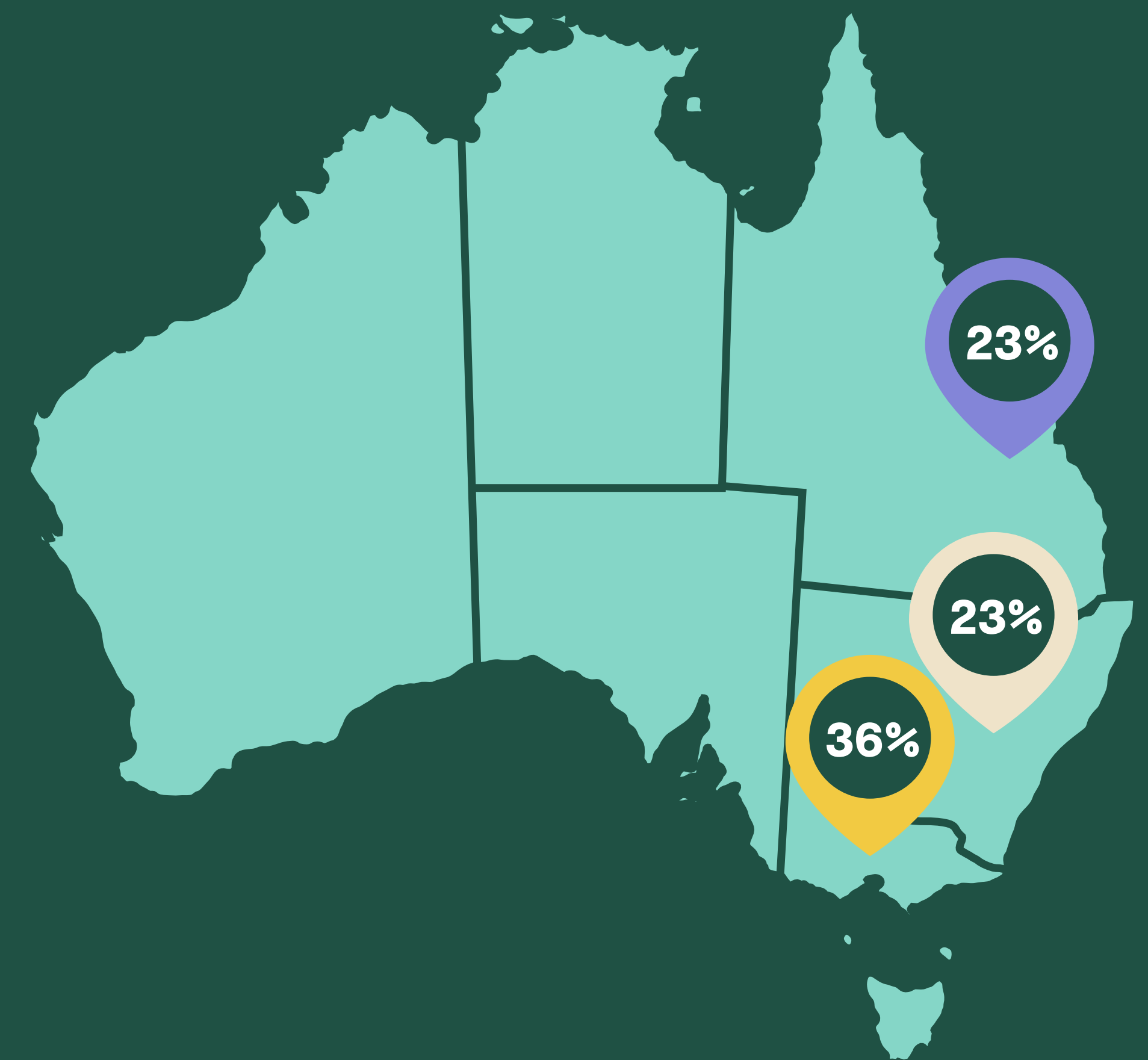
Insights were gained from **286 survey respondents** (250 current officials and 36 non-officials) comprising girls and women aged 15 – 80 years (avg age 33 years). Each group answered approximately 20-items that were carefully curated to gain insights into sport officiating uniforms. Responses were gained from each state and territory in Australia, predominately these were from Victoria (36%), New South Wales (23%) and Queensland (23%). Intersectional identities included LGBTIQ+ (12%), born outside of Australia (11%), a mental illness (11%), speaks another language at home (5%), a physical disability (4%) and/or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (2%).

Intersectional identities



 **286** Survey Respondents

Girls and women aged 15 – 80 years (avg age 33 years)

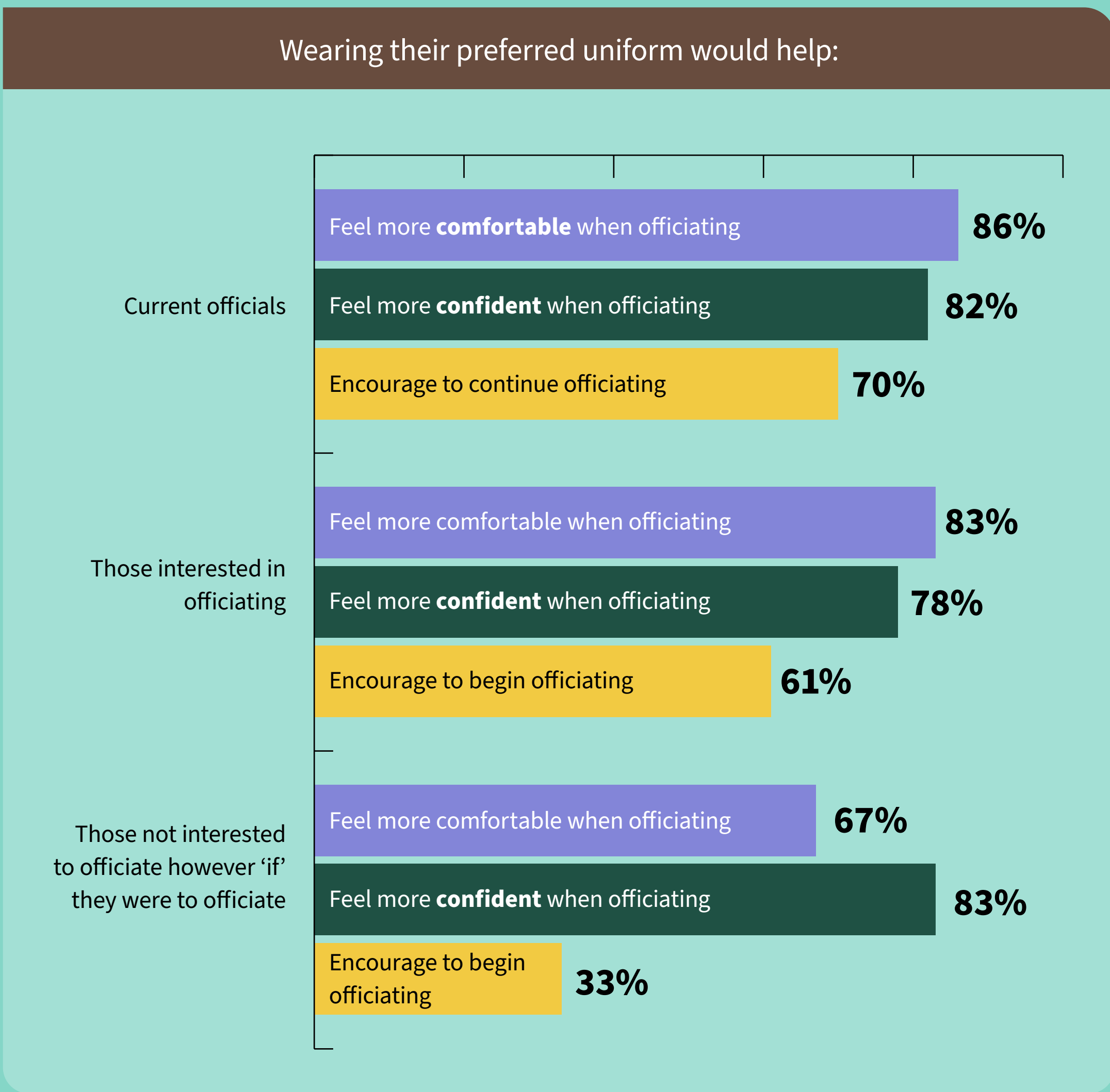




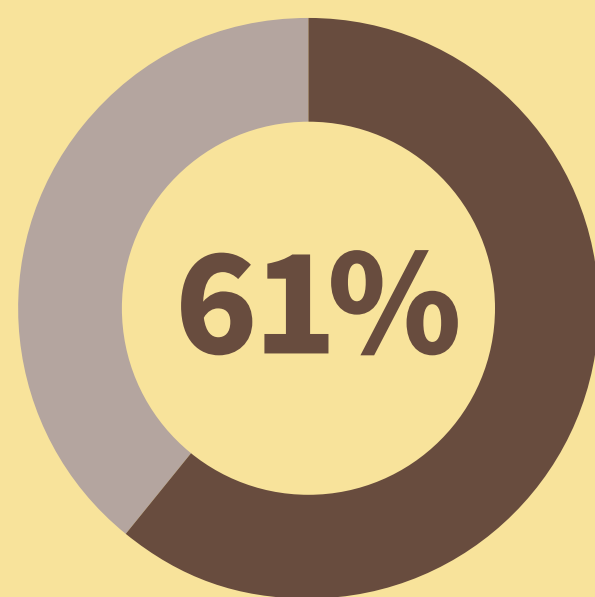
Summation of Key Findings

Uniforms affect how girls and women feel when they officiate. Wearing their preferred uniform would help girls and women to continue, or even begin, to officiate sport.

“ I am happy to wear the uniform that is set by the competition in which I am officiating provided the uniform is of a fit that I am comfortable wearing, especially when I have to pay for my uniform. In the past, I have had to purchase a uniform sized for men - these are too big for me”
CURRENT OFFICIAL



Current Officials



of referees and umpires feel **uncomfortable** wearing their current uniform

- ▶ Their ideal uniform comprises comfort and fit, enables choice and flexibility, looks professional and identifiable, and has practical features
- ▶ Negative aspects of their current uniform include lack of comfort, fit, style (appearance) and availability, not being gender-specific or inclusive, and the high cost

Ideal Uniform



Comfort and Fit



Professional and Identifiable



Choice and Flexibility



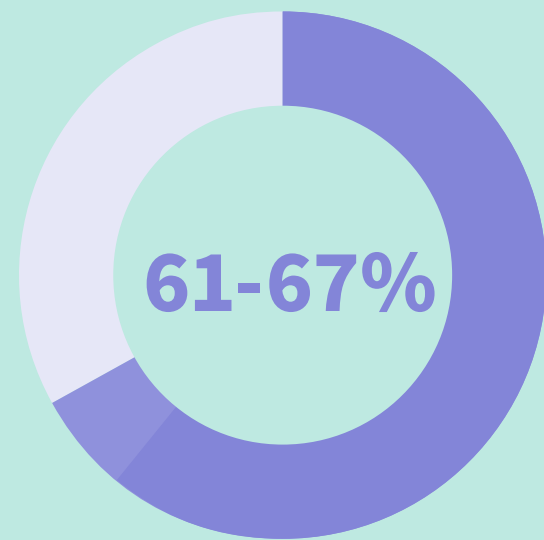
Practical Features

“

Sometimes there is not a different style for men and women just unisex. Women's body shapes are different...it feels discriminating”

*It's important for associations to be **more flexible and less conservative** regarding our options for wearing shorts in summer. We are told we must wear “mid-thigh length” shorts which is extremely outdated. **Most girls feel comfortable wearing shorter running shorts**, as they're not only more common to wear in general, but more comfortable to move around in”*

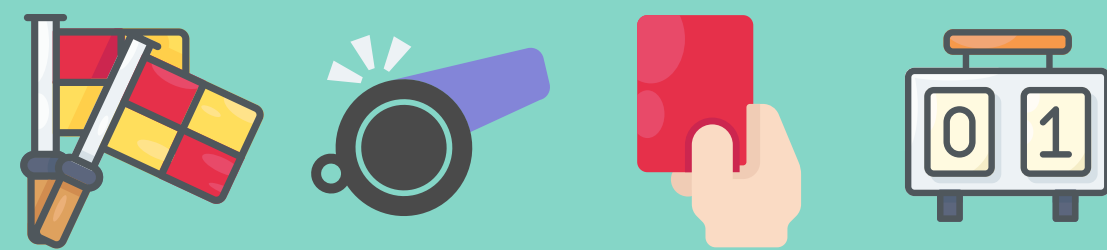
Non-Officials



nearly two-thirds identified uniforms as a **barrier to officiating**¹

- ▶ Over two-thirds (67%), if they were to officiate, want a choice of uniform options
- ▶ Officiating uniforms need to look professional, are distinct from players, and are suitable to wear
- ▶ Negative aspects about officiating uniforms include poor fit (lack of female specific options, inadequate sizing, and cut), white colour standards, and lack of flexibility/choice

¹ It is important to note that harassment/discrimination, lack of flexibility, inadequate training, and gender stereotypes were also recognised as barriers to officiating



“

*There was **no winter option**, I was always cold.*

The uniform does not suit my body type, I am plus size. Current umpiring uniforms are predominantly white, this does not help with my confidence when menstruating.

An Opportunity for Sports and Apparel Suppliers

An opportunity exists for sports and apparel suppliers to take the lead

Evidence from our study provides insights to assist the sports and apparel supplier industries to embrace inclusive uniform policies that show the 'care' factor for girls and women in what they wear when they umpire and/or referee in their sport. It is important to note 'not one style suits all' and preferred uniform styles vary among individuals.

Four key components can be embraced within officiating uniform policies to assist with the comfort and confidence of girls and women when umpiring and/or refereeing, and that may assist to attract and retain them in these sport leadership roles. These include:

- ▶ enabling comfort and a good fit
- ▶ allowing choice and flexibility
- ▶ being professional and identifiable, and
- ▶ having practical features.



Embracing uniform components



Comfort and Fit

- ▶ Uniforms that are comfortable and well-fitting
- ▶ Uniforms tailored to fit the female body shape and have options that are not too tight or revealing
- ▶ Shorts that do not 'ride up' or cause discomfort
- ▶ Gender-specific sizing and cuts
- ▶ Comfortable waistbands
- ▶ Stretchy material



Choice and Flexibility

- ▶ **Upper body:** Choices, including the option to wear T-shirts, lightweight jackets, long-sleeve shirts, and polo shirts, depending on personal preference and weather conditions
- ▶ **Lower body:** Choices, including the option to wear shorts, pants, and tights/leggings, depending on personal preference and weather conditions
- ▶ A second layer for additional warmth and/or for additional coverage
- ▶ Weatherproof lower and upper body garments



Embracing uniform components



Professional and Identifiable

- ▶ Uniforms that look professional
- ▶ Uniforms that provide a consistent look across the league, making referees and officials easily identifiable



Practical Features

- ▶ Pockets
- ▶ Breathable, moisture-wicking fabric that hides sweat marks
- ▶ Peaked hats (baseball caps)
- ▶ Sun protection for outdoor sports
- ▶ Darker-coloured bottoms
- ▶ No all-white uniforms





Acknowledgement

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