

WOMEN'S SPORTING JOURNEYS:

How to keep women engaged in sport throughout their lives



WHAT'S COMING UP

The opportunity to keep 8.3m women engaged in sport

Sporting journey stories

Findings from our research

Three main insights to take away

Two key life stages to be aware of

Actions for change

The situation:

13.9 million women are not active enough*.

Women are less active than men*.

Women's activity levels decrease with age*.

The opportunity:

48% of women take a break from their sport.

8.3 million women are likely to take a break.



**“I wish I’d
returned
sooner!”**

**“I came back
as soon as I
was ready!”**

Meet Karen





Karen's journey

I was introduced to orienteering by a teacher who took a minibus load of us out after school one day. I can't even remember why I agreed to go or how it was sold to me. A great decision though.

I used to be really competitive in the sport and results were important to me.

I took part at Uni, but did less of it. I actually started to enjoy it more. I'm still competitive, but I don't take it as seriously anymore. Instead, I'm doing it for fun.

I have always thoroughly enjoyed the sport even when I haven't been fit enough to be competitive. Pure escape from the cares of every day life.

I've lately tried to give back a bit to the sport. So I'm trying to help juniors or beginners in training sessions.

In the last 3 years I've moved to a new area and by joining the orienteering club I've gotten so many more friends in the area.

Key findings



A third of women have taken a break from orienteering

36%

women took a break from orienteering

Average

48%

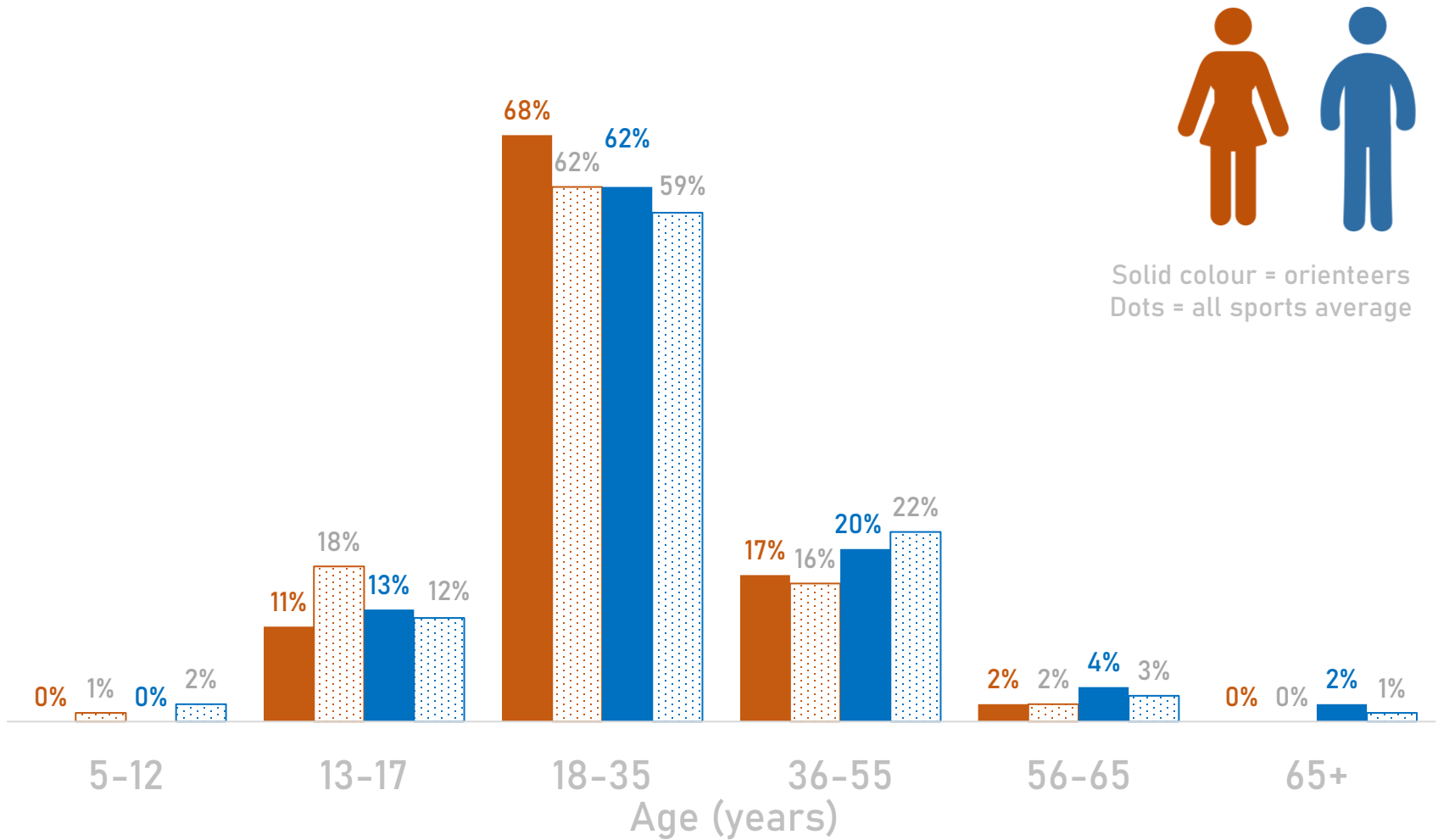
44%

men took a break from orienteering

42%

Base: Orienteers (F 145, M 127)

Early adulthood was a very common life stage for taking a break from orienteering



Base: Orienteers (F 53, M 55), All sports (F 1214, M 918)

Reasons for taking a break from orienteering



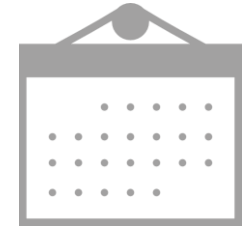
38% | **36%**

Lack of time



34% | **18%**

Access to facilities/sessions



30% | **16%**

Other leisure interests



19% | **13%**

Maternity/paternity



17% | **13%**

Injury



4% | **22%**

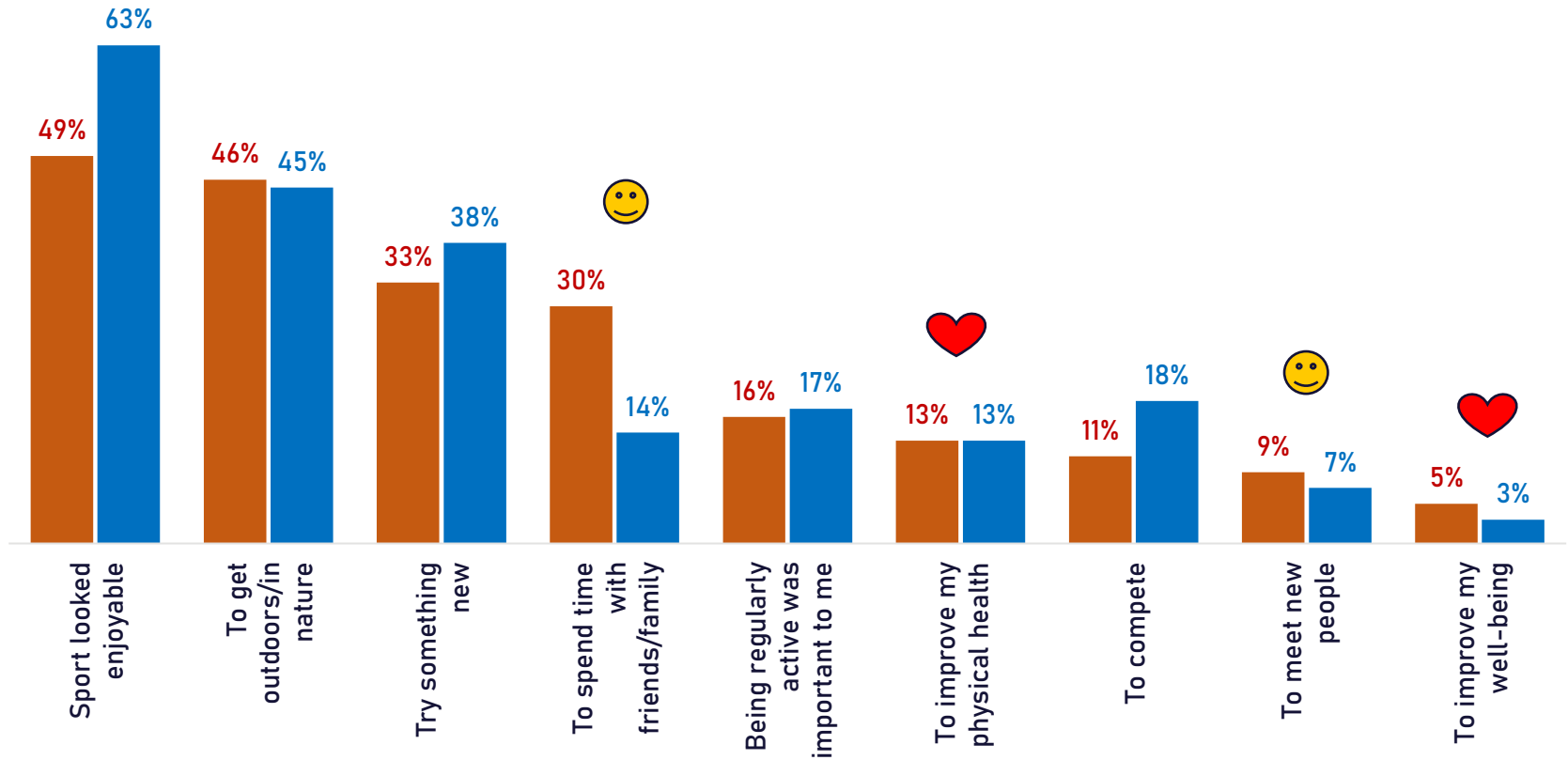
Desire to take part on other sports

Barriers women experienced when starting orienteering



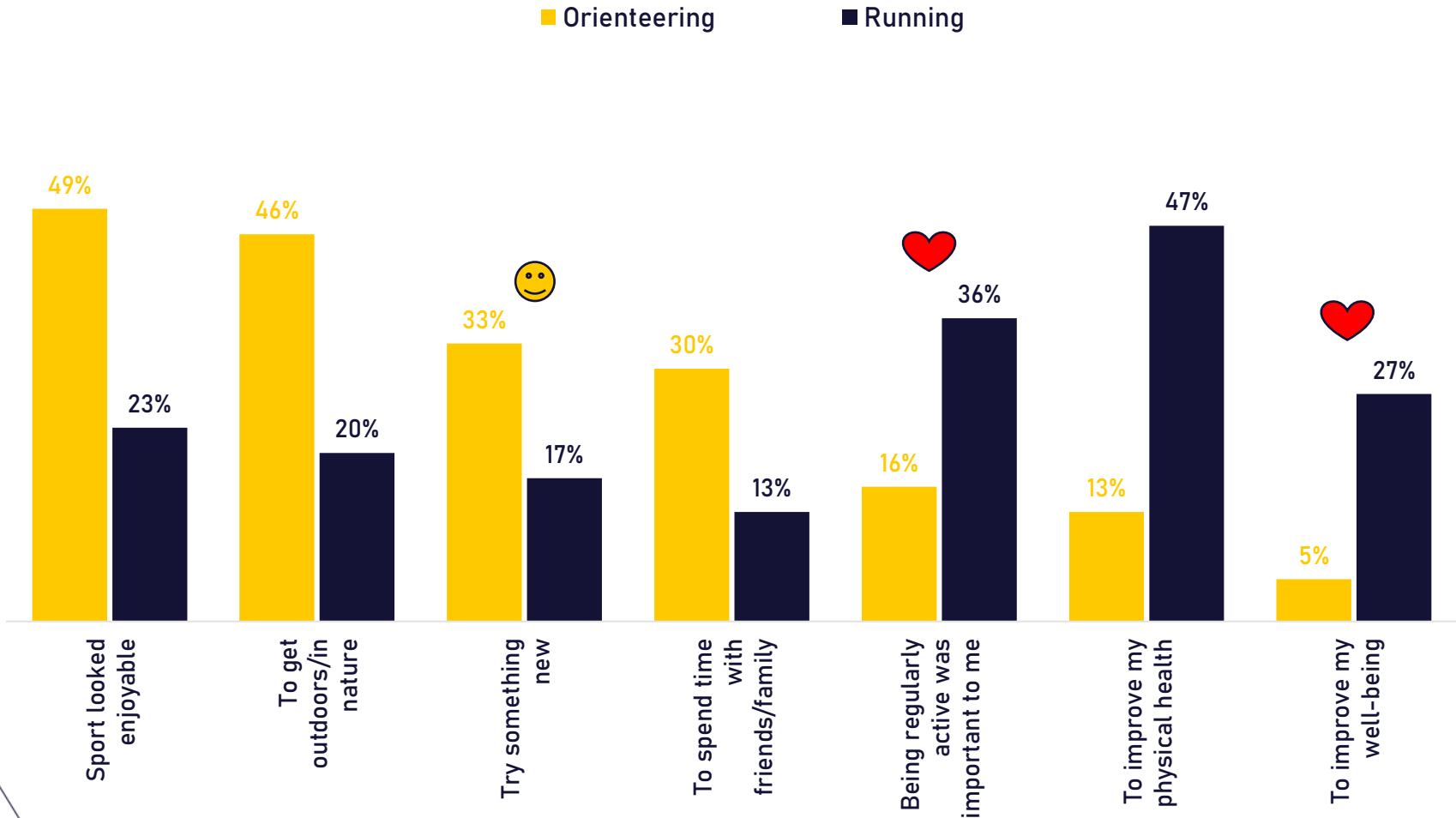
Base: Orienteers (F 128)

Reasons women and men started orienteering



Base: Orienteers (F 150, M 131)

Reasons women started orienteering v running



Base: Orienteers (F 150) Runners (F201)

Key take-aways



1

Normalise and embrace squiggly sporting journeys.

More than a quarter of women predicted that their participation will decrease after age 35.



2

Frame sport as a valuable, life-enhancing tool for wellbeing.

6 in 10 women who were motivated to start their sport to improve their wellbeing and to meet new people, continuously participated in their sport.

3

Understand and reflect the changing motivations across life stages

*A third of women aged 13-55yrs
experienced confidence barriers
in sport.*

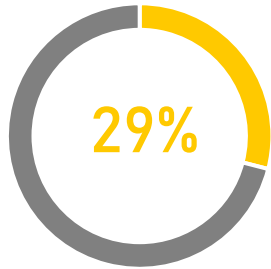


Key life stages

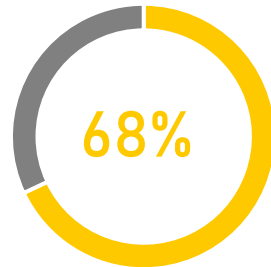


Young Adulthood (18-35yrs)

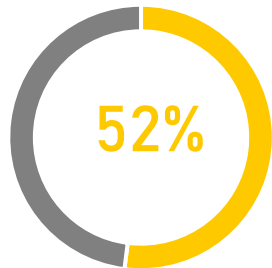
Orienteers



Of women started their sport aged 18-35yrs

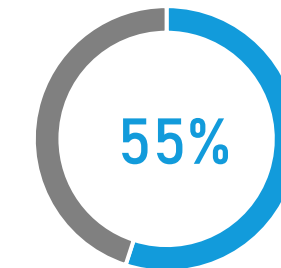
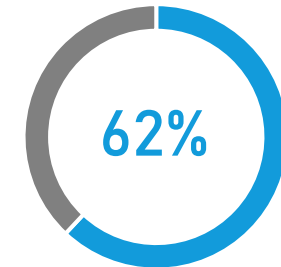
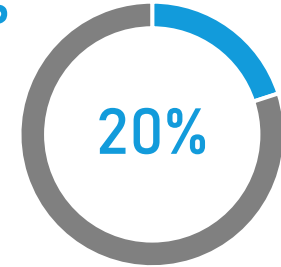


Of women who took a break from their sport started their break aged 18-35yrs



Of women who took a break returned to their sport aged 18-35yrs

All sports





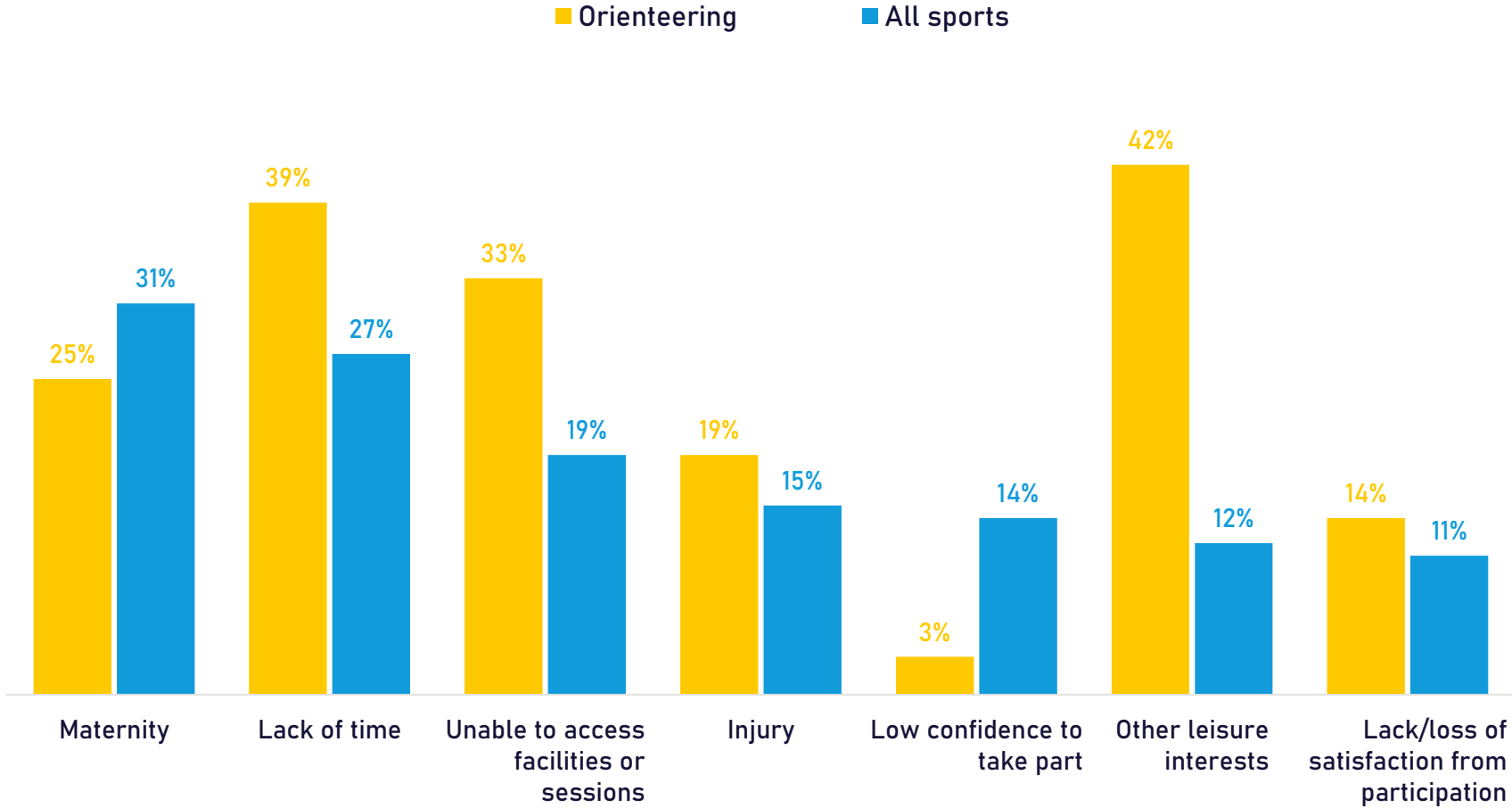
Jess' journey

When I was at university, the transport was very good, I could get lifts with peers.

Since uni, I've moved house which took me away from a club where I had longer-established friendships. It was harder to get lifts to events.

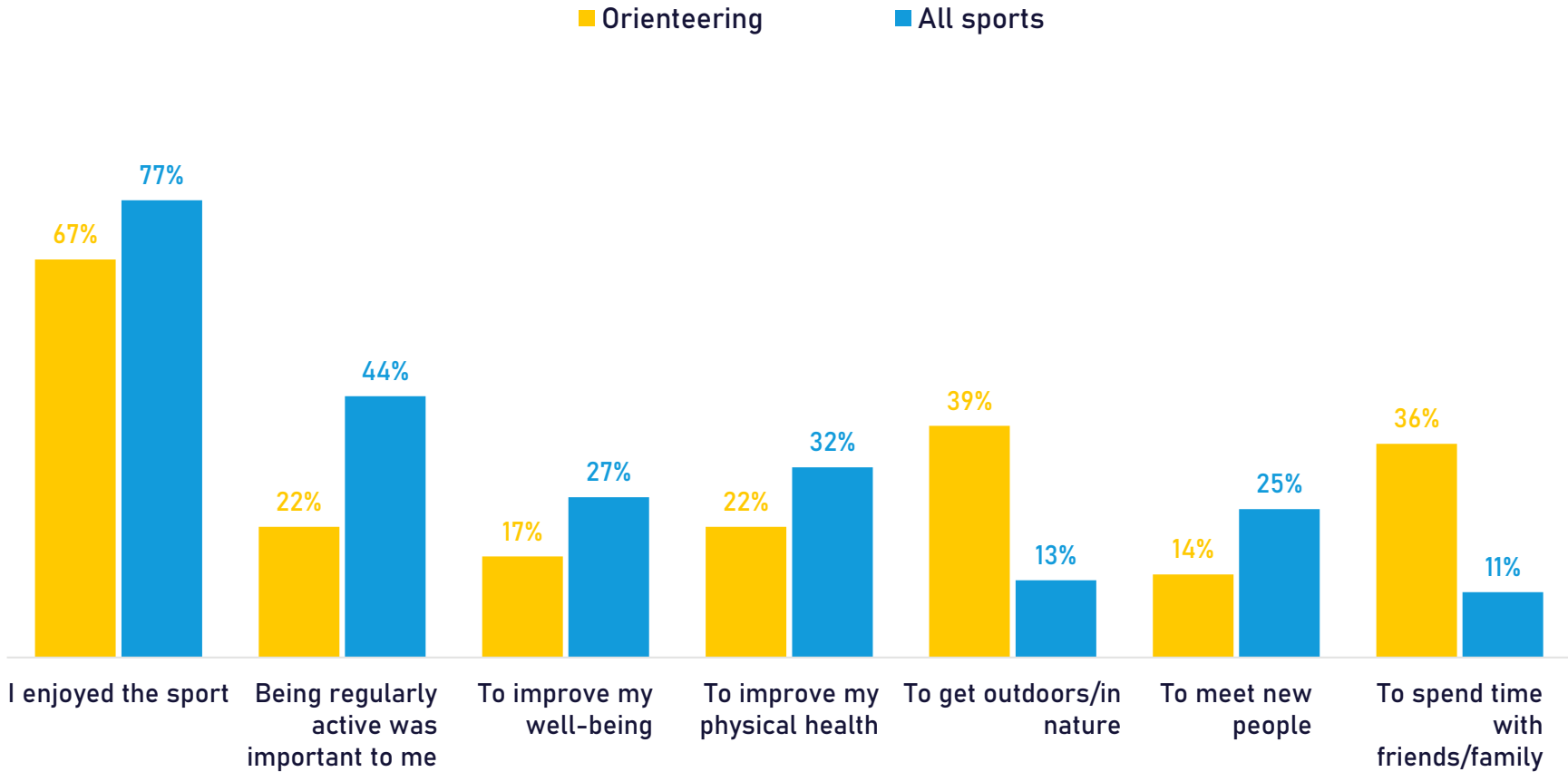
Now I am a mother, I'm less likely to travel far with my daughter. And if I can find childcare, going far takes up family time at weekends.

Reasons women took at break aged 18-35yrs



Base: Orienteers (F 36), All sports (F 752)

Reasons women returned aged 18-35yrs

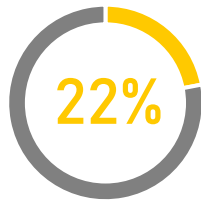


Base: Orienteers (F 36), All sports (F 741)

Middle-Aged Adulthood (36-55yrs)

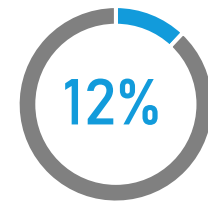
Orienteers

All sports

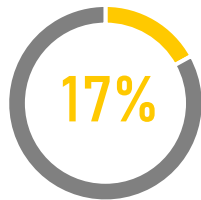


22%

Of women started their sport aged 36-55yrs

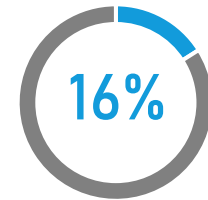


12%

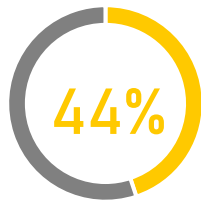


17%

Of women who took a break from their sport started their break aged 36-55yrs

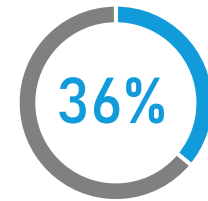


16%



44%

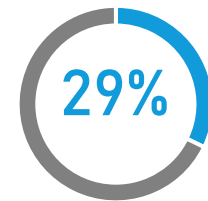
Of women who took a break returned to their sport aged 35-55yrs



36%

Insufficient sample size

Of women who stopped their sport dropped out aged 36-55yrs



29%

Actions for change

Do the groundwork early to reduce break length

- Celebrate women who return
- Create a supportive environment
- Plan to stay in connected

Innovatively re-engage lapsed women

- (Re-)ignite women's passion for sport
- Showcase sport is for people like them
- Marketing is deliberately focused

Nurture long-lasting sporting journeys

- Support all women to maintain their ability to continue participating
- Keep it enjoyable and inclusive
- A sport for life

Any thoughts or
questions?



To download the full report visit our
Research Store:
www.sportsmarketingsurveys.com

For more information

If you wish to find out more about this research or to request a bespoke deep-dive into the data please contact:

Hannah Sprake

Senior Sports Development Insights Manager

hannah.sprake@smsinc.co.uk

Sports Marketing Surveys



The Courtyard, Wisley, Surrey, GU23 6QL
www.sportsmarketingsurveys.com
+44 (0)1932 345539

© 2021 Sports Marketing Surveys

No part of this report may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, without the written permission of Sports Marketing Surveys, any application for which should be addressed to Sports Marketing Surveys. Written permission must also be obtained before any part of the report is stored in a retrieval system of any nature.

Disclaimers

Whilst proper due care and diligence has been taken in the preparation of this document, Sports Marketing Surveys cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information contained and does not accept any liability for any loss or damage caused as a result of using information or recommendations contained within this document.

Images used in this report are for illustration purposes and are not actual respondents from the survey.

Icons created by Freepik from www.flaticon.com. Images from Wendy Carlyle.

