

Leadership

Women in Sports



Research consistently shows that the skills developed through competitive sports establish a strong basis for successful leaders. When girls and women play sports, they learn valuable skills like teamwork, problem-solving, goal-setting, and handling pressure. Participating in sports also helps girls and women build confidence, persistence, and resilience. These skills and qualities are applicable to professional leadership roles, and can set girls and women up for success in both their careers and personal lives.

According to a 2024 Women's Sports Foundation survey of women who played sports in their youth and adolescence:

- 67% believe they have transferred the skills and lessons they gained from sports into adulthood.
- 69% hold at least one formal leadership role outside of the family.
- Among those with formal leadership roles, 71% hold titles such as Manager, Director, President, or C-Suite executive
- The longer girls and women play sports, the more likely they are to hold leadership titles, but girls are twice as likely as boys to drop out of sports by age 14.

"Play to Lead: The Generational Impact of Sports on Women's Leadership." Women's Sports Foundation, 2024.

A 2023 report by Deloitte found that women who played competitive sports when they were young are more likely to hold leadership or management roles.

- 85% of surveyed women who played sports say the skills they developed playing sports were important to their success in their professional careers.
- 91% of those in leadership roles and 93% of those who earn \$100K+ annually say the skills they developed playing sports were important to success in their professional careers.

"Impact of Sports on Women's Professional Success." Deloitte, 2023.

A 2017 EY/espnW global study of senior women executives found that playing sports contributes to improved leadership and achievement. Of those surveyed,

- 61% said they believe their participation in sports contributed to their career success.
- 74% said a background in sports was helpful to career advancement.
- 94% of women in the C-suite played sports, 52% at the university level.

"Where will you find your next leader?" Ernst & Young & espnW, 2017.

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