

Playing football boosts girls' confidence, study finds

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Girls who play football have higher levels of self-confidence than those who play other sports, or who play no sport at all. Credit: University of Birmingham

A study by scientists from the University of Birmingham has found that teenage girls who play football have higher levels of self-confidence than those who play other sports.

The study, which is the largest of its kind to date, was led by the University of Birmingham with colleagues from five other countries for the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). The study investigated the effect football has on the psychological and emotional state of [girls](#) and young women in Europe.

As well as analysing existing research literature concerning the links between football and self-confidence, self-esteem, life skills and wellbeing, the study used questionnaire data from more than 4000 girls and [young women](#) aged 13 and over from across England, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Poland and Turkey.

Key findings include:

- 80 percent of [teenage girls](#) exhibited more confident behaviour thanks to playing with a football team/club, compared with 74 percent of those who played other sports popular with girls.
- 54 percent of young footballers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I am less concerned what others think about me as a result of playing my sport" compared with 41 percent of those who played other sports.
- 58 percent of the 13–17 year-old female footballers questioned said they had overcome a lack of self-confidence as a result of playing football, compared with 51 percent of girls who play other sports.
- 48 percent said they are less self-conscious as a result of playing football, compared with 40 percent of those who play other sports.

These findings were consistent across the six countries studied, suggesting that although women's football is at different stages of development across Europe, there are many similarities when it comes to the impact on the game on [self-confidence](#).

Lead researcher Dr Paul Appleton from the University of Birmingham says:

'Our findings suggest a link between football and confidence, self-esteem and the development of important life skills.

'We found that regardless of who the girls are and where they are from, they are welcomed and integrated into their sport and their team, developing friendships that last into adulthood.

'Many of the girls we interviewed spoke about how playing for their team had allowed them to have a 'second family' and to be involved in a community with other girls, which ultimately contributed to their feelings of confidence, self-esteem and well-being.

'Based on project's findings, it seems girls across Europe are likely to feel stronger when they are together with other girls playing football.'

Since UEFA launched its Women's Football Development Programme in 2010, the game has expanded at all levels across Europe. With many of the 55 UEFA member associations investing more energy and resources into the game, elite women's [football](#) has improved significantly. This summer the UEFA Women's EURO final tournament in the Netherlands will involve 16 teams for the first time.

More information: The Psychological and Emotional Benefits of Playing Football on Girls and Women in Europe.

[www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/D ... 2470427_DOWNLOAD.pdf](http://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/D...2470427_DOWNLOAD.pdf)

Provided by University of Birmingham

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