

A GUIDE FOR ACTION

To encourage
women from
culturally diverse
backgrounds as
leaders in sport



**VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**

MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

WHO WE HEARD FROM

The Guide For Action is a resource for sport organisations to assist attract and retain women from culturally diverse backgrounds as leaders in sport.* It was developed based on insights gained from women from culturally diverse backgrounds in Australia.†

To our knowledge, the analysis is the first in Australia to gain insights from women from culturally diverse backgrounds who are current or aspire to be leaders in sport. An understanding has also been gained on why other women from culturally diverse backgrounds are not interested to lead in sport. Based on the findings, five strategies are recommended for sport organisations including:

1 EVEN THE 'PLAYING FIELD'

2 STRENGTHEN WORKPLACE CULTURE

3 BUILD SUPPORT AND OPPORTUNITY

4 INCREASE VISIBILITY OF WOMEN FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

5 WELCOME WOMEN FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

Cultural diversity is defined as “having a mix of people from different cultural backgrounds – it can include differences in cultural/ethnic identity (how we identify ourselves and how others identify us), language, country of birth, religion, heritage/ancestry, national origin, and/or race”¹. Gender equity and cultural diversity within the leadership team has significant benefits for an organisation, its employees and the community. These organisations report higher employee satisfaction, reduced turnover and enhanced performance and innovation^{2,3,4}. Diverse genders and cultures can positively influence organisational inclusion, improve stakeholder relationships, and build organisational reputation and consumer interest⁵.

The Australian Human Rights Commission has identified that cultural diversity is significantly underrepresented in leadership across Australian businesses, politics, government, and civil society⁶. Additionally, data from the business sector shows only two percent of Directors of ASX listed companies are women of culturally diverse backgrounds⁷.

As reflected in other sectors, it is anticipated that few women from culturally diverse backgrounds hold leadership positions⁸ in the sport sector. Statistics are not available in Australia however in England for example, only 5% of newly qualified coaches are from culturally diverse backgrounds and it is not clear how many of these are women⁹.

* Leadership positions in sport include Directors, CEOs, senior administrators, team managers, coaches and officials.

† This Guide has been developed by the following research team at the Institute of Health and Sport, Victoria University: Professor Clare Hanlon, Dr Kara Dadswell & Dr Elliott Flowers. Feedback was gained from Diversity Council Australia, women from culturally diverse backgrounds who are leaders internal and external to sport, and senior managers in sport organisations. The dataset allowed for the report of statistically significant results.

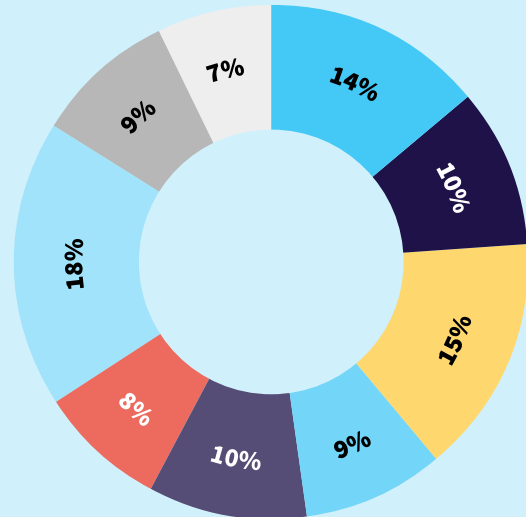
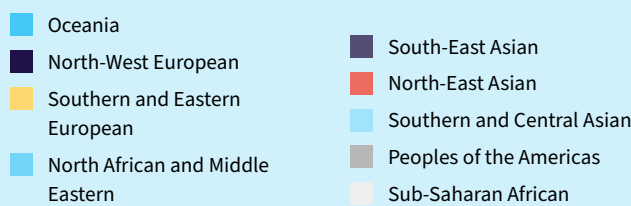


WHO WE HEARD FROM

Insights were gained from 221 women from culturally diverse backgrounds.

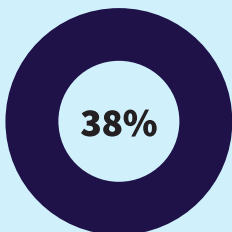
These women collectively represented **110 specific cultural and ethnic groups** other than Australian.

Over one-third identified with two or more diverse cultures.

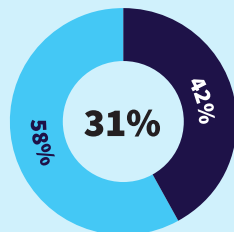


221 WOMEN WERE SURVEYED ABOUT SPORT LEADERSHIP

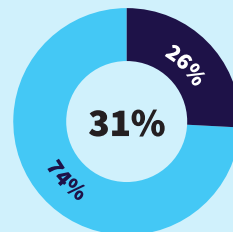
CURRENT LEADERS



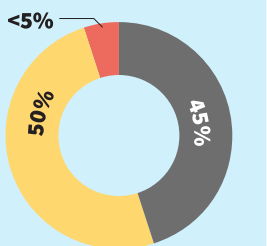
ASPIRING LEADERS



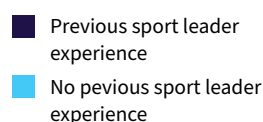
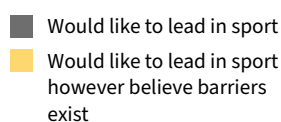
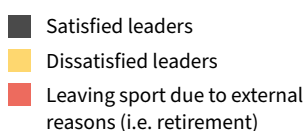
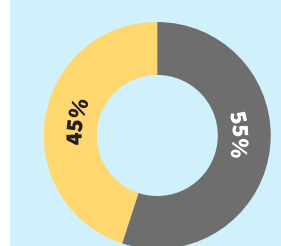
NO INTEREST TO LEAD



SATISFACTION



PERCEIVED BARRIERS



106 (48%) respondents are **bilingual/multilingual**

The **majority** of women who currently lead in sport are **dissatisfied**

The **majority** of women who **aspire to lead** in sport have **had no previous sport leader experience**

The **majority** of women **with no interest** in sport have **had no previous sport leader experience**

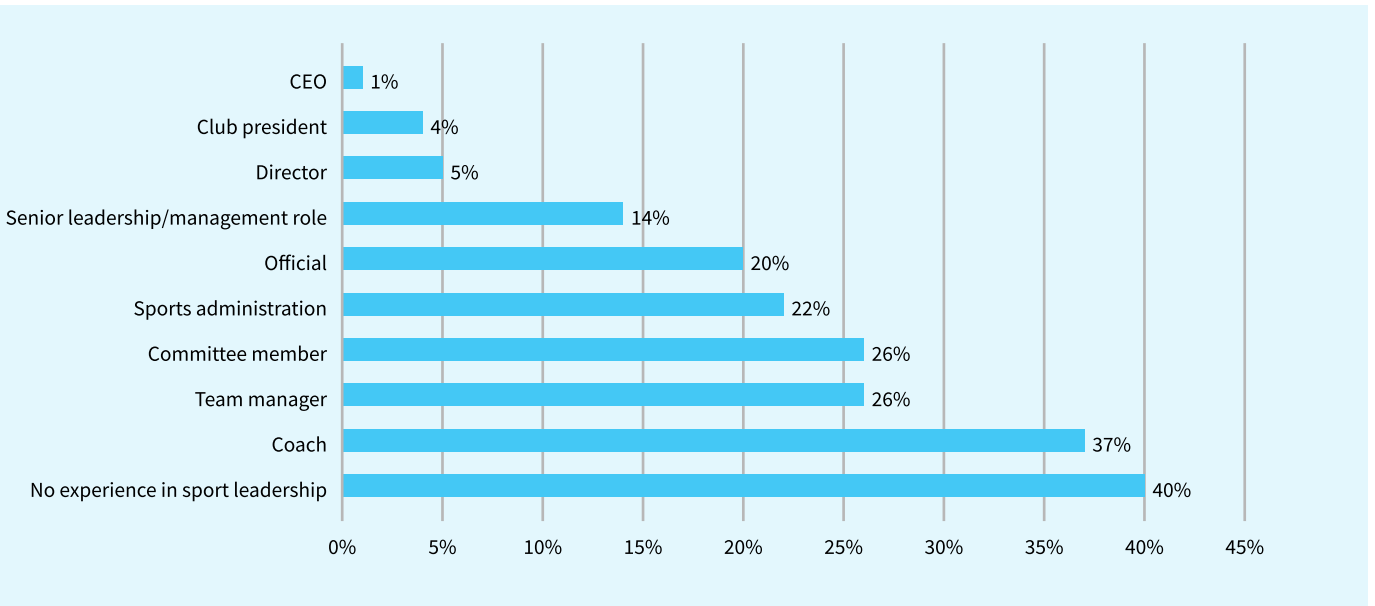
LEADERSHIP ROLES

Only 25% of women who were previous sport leaders were paid (fully or partially), compared to 64% of current leaders.

The most common leadership roles (current and/or previous) were coach (37%), team manager (26%) and committee member (26%) in a voluntary capacity (50%) at local community sport (41%).



COMMON LEADERSHIP ROLES

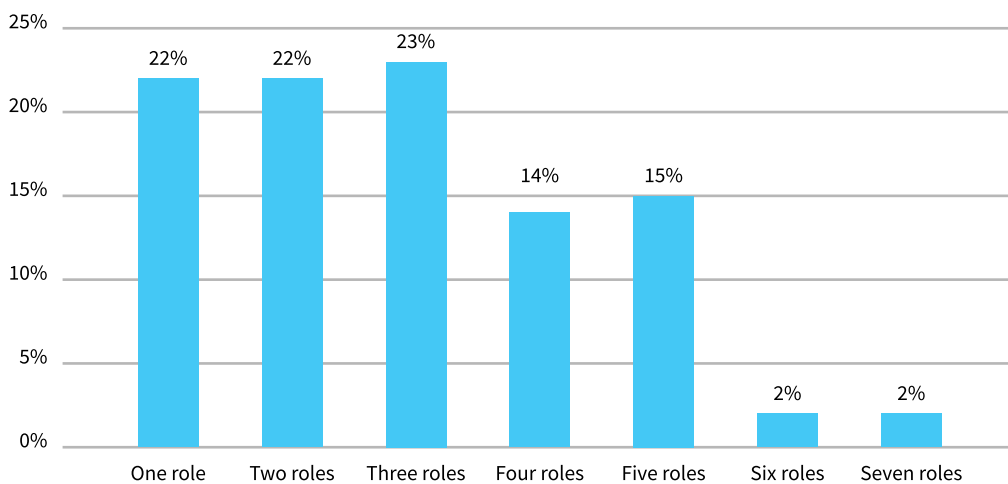


Note: Percentages do not total 100% because many women reported experience in multiple roles. Percentages reflect amount of women who reported experience in each role.

Women currently or previously involved as leaders in sport have been active contributors. Nearly 80% have been involved in multiple leadership roles. As a result, responses from these women on leadership relate to their multiple roles rather than one specific role.

78%

NUMBER OF LEADERSHIP ROLES



OF CURRENT OR PREVIOUS LEADERS HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN MULTIPLE LEADERSHIP ROLES



“

AT TIMES, I BELIEVE MY CULTURAL BACKGROUND IS INTERPRETED AS SOMETHING POSITIVE RATHER THAN NEGATIVE, BASED ON THE HISTORIES OF THE COUNTRIES I REPRESENT RELATED TO SPORT

”

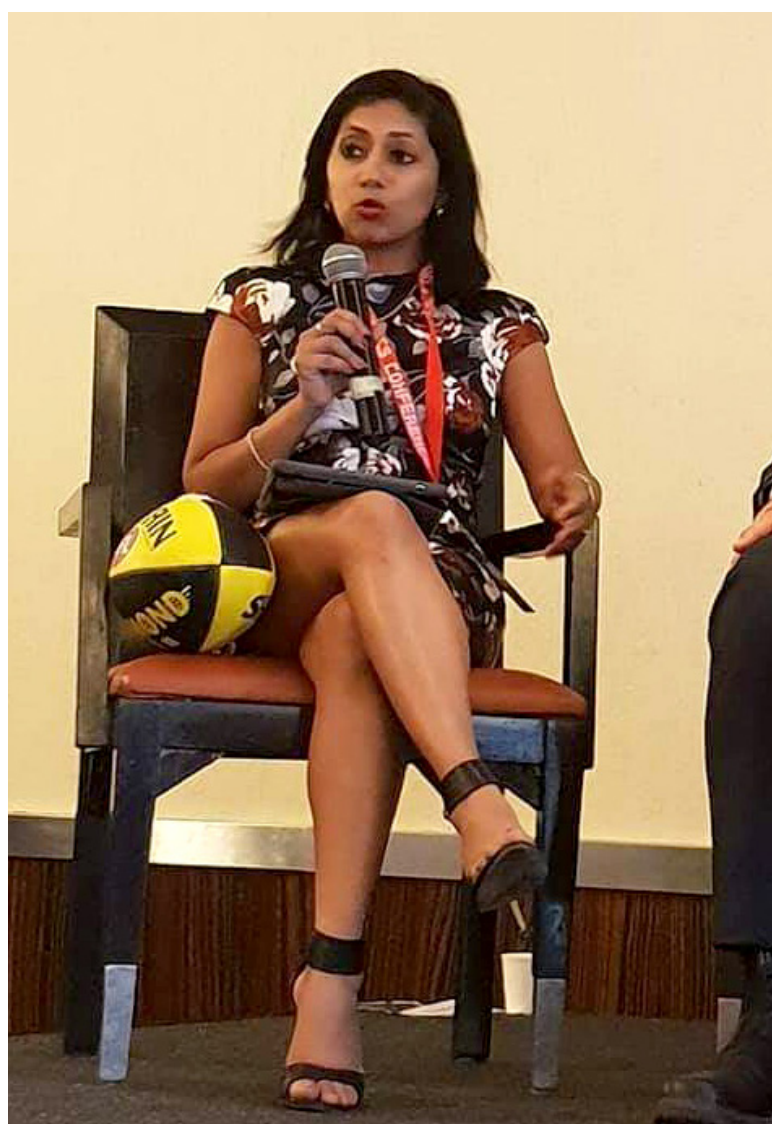
SATISFIED LEADER

KEY LEARNINGS TO CONSIDER TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN WOMEN FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS AS LEADERS IN SPORT

Five factors emerged related to current leaders, aspiring leaders and women not interested in sport leadership. These have been translated into strategies to assist sport organisations further attract and retain women from culturally diverse backgrounds as leaders in sport:

- 1 EVEN THE 'PLAYING FIELD'
- 2 STRENGTHEN WORKPLACE CULTURE
- 3 BUILD SUPPORT AND OPPORTUNITY
- 4 INCREASE VISIBILITY OF WOMEN FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS
- 5 WELCOME WOMEN FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

Workplace barriers and enablers were aligned to each strategy and are supported by qualitative survey responses. Aspiring leaders had significantly more negative perceptions about being a leader in sport than current leaders. Statistical differences existed in experiences between satisfied and dissatisfied current leaders in sport. Analysis of qualitative responses revealed reasons specific to the sport environment as to why women were not interested in a sport leadership role.



1

EVEN THE 'PLAYING FIELD'

BARRIER: INEQUALITY

"In terms of output, for the same outcome, women of colour are expected to work and prove their worth a lot more"

ASPIRING LEADER

"An Anglo person has the advantage to start from a place of trust, where a non-Anglo person has to earn that trust, which means we start from a less advantageous position"

ASPIRING LEADER

"The implicit bias, misconceptions and judgements imply that I am somehow inherently beneath in intelligence/ability, even if my proven results and achievements are much better than my Anglo colleagues"

DISSATISFIED LEADER

ENABLER: EQUALITY

"Diversity and gender policies to encourage culturally diverse women to be involved in sport"

SATISFIED LEADER



FINDINGS

Aspiring leaders believed:

- ◆ their job performance would be scrutinised more closely than their colleagues
- ◆ they would work harder than their culturally diverse male and Anglo-Celtic female colleagues in sport leadership

Dissatisfied leaders believed:

- ◆ their job performance is scrutinised more closely than their colleagues

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO ADDRESS INEQUALITY

- ◆ Develop organisational understanding on perceived cultural diversity and gender barriers created by inappropriate actions in the workplace
- ◆ Create cultural diversity and gender policies to assist build organisational commitment to attract and retain culturally diverse women to lead in sport
- ◆ Promote open, transparent and measurable performance indicators across each leadership role focused on cultural diversity and gender equality
- ◆ Showcase organisational understanding of cultural diversity and gender equality

2

STRENGTHEN WORKPLACE CULTURE

BARRIER: CHALLENGING CULTURE

“The broad push for gender equality silences equality for ethnic minority women. Too many Anglo-Celtic men exist in authority positions”

ASPIRING LEADER

“Sometime I feel that people don’t fully engage in listening to me when talking because of my accent”

DISSATISFIED LEADER

“Lack of diversity in leadership makeup does not attract me I feel that I will not fit in”

NOT INTERESTED IN SPORT LEADERSHIP

ENABLER: POSITIVE CULTURE

“I do somewhat feel I may be successful because I am a woman and also from a (culturally) different background - essentially, I was hired for non-traditional, innovative and creative ideas to break the stereotype and traditional thinking within a male-dominated sport”

SATISFIED LEADER



FINDINGS

Aspiring leaders believed:

- ◆ a ‘boys club’ mentality would exist in the workplace
- ◆ pressure exists to conform to gender leadership stereotypes

A common reason why women were not interested in sport leadership was the negative perception these women had of the sporting culture

Dissatisfied leaders believed:

- ◆ freedom to be themselves in a sports leadership role is difficult
- ◆ behaviour of colleagues makes them feel uncomfortable

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO ADDRESS CHALLENGING ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

- ◆ Listen, learn and act on the leadership needs of women from minority groups
- ◆ Promote a culture of authenticity for all, and environments where ‘difference’ is welcome
- ◆ Welcome and reward the ‘Call out’ of inappropriate behaviour from colleagues in particular related to cultural diversity
- ◆ Strengthen cross-sector industry links including media and community groups to showcase culturally diverse sport environments

3

BUILD SUPPORT AND OPPORTUNITY

BARRIER: LACK OF SUPPORT AND PERCEIVED OPPORTUNITY

“Minimal opportunities to develop or be mentored by high achieving leaders (both male/female)... Opportunities for professional development are frequently only passed on to members of senior staff”

ASPIRING LEADER

“I’ve faced “mean girl” behaviour from women who have been in sport long before me, who talk the talk of diversity and inclusion and have iconic status within the sporting world. It’s a huge shame and something I didn’t experience at a senior level outside sport”

DISSATISFIED LEADER

“You have to be socially accepted into the club before you are provided with this opportunity to even interview for a role”

NOT INTERESTED IN SPORT LEADERSHIP

ENABLER: SUPPORT AND OPPORTUNITY

“Men and women who have ‘tapped me on the shoulder’ and told me to go for it”

SATISFIED LEADER

“Still leading thanks to overwhelming support from the organisation I volunteered with, they pushed and supported me, as much as I did for myself”

SATISFIED LEADER

FINDINGS

Aspiring leaders were negative about:

- ◆ being recommended for advancement in a sports leadership role
- ◆ women in higher positions making their jobs more difficult
- ◆ being held responsible for organisational problems outside of their control in sports leadership

Aspiring leaders were significantly more positive about receiving mentoring in sports leadership

A common reason why women were not interested in sport leadership was feasibility issues (time/cost) and limited opportunities

Dissatisfied leaders were negative about:

- ◆ being sponsored by another leader for advancement
- ◆ the need to lead on their own
- ◆ senior level women protecting their roles
- ◆ being asked to complete a job that everyone knows they are likely to fail
- ◆ being held responsible for organisational problems outside of their control

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO CREATE PATHWAYS FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT

- ◆ Actively identify women from culturally diverse backgrounds with leadership potential and collaboratively develop personalised professional development plans to help achieve their goals
- ◆ Activate a mentor/sponsor program targeted to women from culturally diverse backgrounds who are interested or currently in leadership positions (mentees) and women and men in senior/aspirational positions (mentors)
- ◆ Recraft communication strategies to showcase women from culturally diverse backgrounds in a range of leadership roles across the organisation and the success they have achieved
- ◆ Develop tailored support for women from culturally diverse backgrounds in senior leadership positions to mitigate ‘territorial’ behaviour

4

INCREASE VISIBILITY OF WOMEN FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

BARRIER: LACK OF VISIBILITY

“My cultural background makes it harder for me to be recognised or acknowledged for my contributions”

DISSATISFIED LEADER

“Breaking barriers in stereotype portrays that leadership needs to be powerful, loud and aggressive. Instead promote the power of quietly confident, strong and collaborative leaders”

ASPIRING LEADER

ENABLER: VISIBLE LEADERSHIP ROLES

“Having another woman from a culturally diverse background who is already well-established as a sport leader”

SATISFIED LEADER

“Seeing more leaders that look like me”

SATISFIED LEADER



FINDINGS

Dissatisfied leaders:

- ◆ feel like a “token” woman from a culturally diverse background
- ◆ do not believe women from culturally diverse backgrounds are suitably represented in leadership positions
- ◆ do not believe their opinions are valued and respected when strategic input is required
- ◆ find it difficult to gain support for their ideas

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO INCREASE VISIBILITY

- ◆ Include women from culturally diverse backgrounds in strategic decision-making
- ◆ Promote and set targets for leadership roles for women from culturally diverse backgrounds outside of ‘community’, ‘inclusion’ and ‘social cohesion’ roles to avoid perceptions around ‘tokenism’
- ◆ Showcase women from culturally diverse backgrounds as role models and at every event ensure these women in key leadership positions are acknowledged based on their skill set and achievements
- ◆ Showcase and promote the leadership achievements made by women from culturally diverse backgrounds through their success in being quietly confident, strong and collaborative leaders

5

WELCOME WOMEN FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

BARRIER: EXCLUSION AND LIMITED INTEREST

“The way I was brought up involved no sporting (or minimal) activities. Sport was only thought and played at school as a mandatory subject and not anywhere else”

NOT INTERESTED IN SPORT LEADERSHIP

“Sport does not rate high on my agenda. While I am happy to watch or go to a game here and there, it is a social activity to connect with friends and relatives”

NOT INTERESTED IN SPORT LEADERSHIP

ENABLER: RAISE AWARENESS AND INTEREST

“Growing up in the sport meant that I had already established relationships with other leaders, and they would then support me through my own journey”

SATISFIED LEADER

“Playing sport myself and being a leader on and off the court from a young age allowed me to find my voice early. Being surrounded by adults that always supported me and told me I could do anything helped shape my view of myself”

SATISFIED LEADER



FINDINGS

Common reasons why women were not interested in sport leadership were:

- ◆ sport is only for entertainment purposes
- ◆ sport was not part of upbringing
- ◆ lack of interest in sport

Dissatisfied leaders had negative perceptions about:

- ◆ feeling welcome while attending social events

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO RAISE AWARENESS

- ◆ Listen, learn and act on how to create a welcoming environment for women from culturally diverse backgrounds in each type of leadership role
- ◆ DEisrupt perception of “old white men” or “white women” as leaders in sport
- ◆ Showcase why women from culturally diverse backgrounds are interested to lead in sport and the benefits it provides personally and to those around them
- ◆ Consciously act on the perceived discomfort women from culturally diverse backgrounds may experience when attending social events where they may be a minority

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9. ibid

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