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# WALNUT'S TAKE ON **Women's Equality Day 2022**

August 2022 | [WalnutUnlimited.com](https://WalnutUnlimited.com)



The human understanding agency.

# The Purpose of Women's Equality Day



Women's Equality Day is celebrated yearly on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August. Despite predominantly being a US event, we see no reason why it shouldn't and can't be a day we celebrate more publicly in the UK due to it being a day that strives for equality.

Gender inequality is an issue that women have struggled with, as far as history goes. The disparity between women and men in all facets of life remains with us today despite many advances. While significantly more girls than boys graduate from UK universities and the prospect of a female prime minister becomes a normality rather than a rarity, there are still less women in senior positions and the gender pay gap remains wide.

What Women's Equality Day offers is a beacon of hope. It's meant to be a day of joy where we celebrate the progress that has been made in the battle for gender equality. Despite the goal of gender equality being far from achieved, this day signifies a tremendous leap towards a more inclusive society where men and women can stand as equals, as we were meant to be.

Women's Equality Day is a day which can truly empower the younger generation and honour the women who fought for equality throughout history. Women's Equality Day aims to help:

- **Encourage** other women – whether it is between classmates, colleagues, family and friends.
- **Share** stories with others - *“it's especially important for the younger generation to grow up hearing stories from powerful women and understand that discrimination in any way against women won't be tolerated and isn't okay”* – [Home for Students](#)
- To make every voice **heard** – some may not be able to speak up, so it's up to the rest of us to stand up for those that can't!



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.  
Photograph: Stephane Cardinale/Corbis via Getty Images

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My own definition of a feminist is a man or a woman who says, yes, there's a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better. All of us, women and men, must do better.”

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie,  
Writer

# Walnut's approach to Women's Equality Day 2022

This year, Walnut decided to look at the event from the perspective of the world of sport. We have seen recent efforts from brands attempting to encourage women and girls to take up more sport to help break down the **harmful stereotypes** that continue to make women and girls less likely to participate in sport and physical activity.

There has also been an increase in the promotion of women's advancement as professional athletes and leaders in the sport sector. For example, [Strava](#) created a 'Strive for More' campaign which promotes and supports **equality** in professional sports. Strava committed to contributing \$1 million (£850million) to work with respected athletes, advocates and non-profit organisations to change the status quo for professional women athletes globally and across sport types. This is a testament to what companies can achieve but also highlights what is yet to be done.

From a **Behavioural Science** perspective, the rising cost-of-living means engagement with sports generally becomes more challenging. Women generally feel more guilt around focusing on themselves or taking time to commit to sports, so this could make it even harder for women to access this industry.



THE PUBLIC'S OPINION ON EQUALITY IN SPORT.

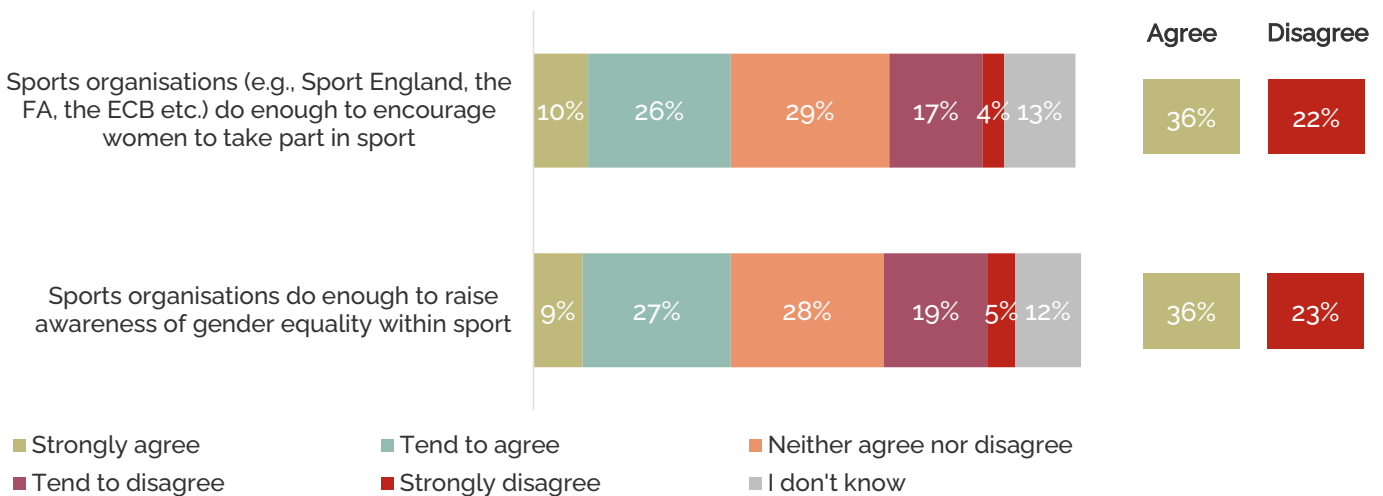
# Sports organisations need to do more.

In recent years, there has been a big push to level the playing field in sport – an often male dominated arena. Campaigns like *This Girl Can* and increased coverage of female sport across many media channels have played a large role but, has this helped shift public views? Using our online omnibus, Walnut asked a nationally representative sample of the general population to unearth how much progress is still needed to be made in the industry.\*

If we look firstly at participation, it's clear that Sport England's *This Girl Can* campaign and similar targeted work by sports bodies is cutting through. However, there is work still to be done. Just over a third (36%) of people feel **sports organisations are doing enough to encourage women to take part in sport**. Encouragingly younger people are more likely to think enough is being done – with nearly half (45%) agreeing with this statement.

And it is a similar picture when we consider whether **sports organisations are doing enough to raise awareness for gender equality in sport** – a third (36%) of people think they are, rising to half (49%) among 18-34 year olds. Whilst there are headline campaigns and interventions aimed specifically at women and girls, it is this audience who need more convincing. Women are less likely to feel that sports organisations are doing enough to encourage them to take part in sport (33% of women vs 39% of men) and to raise awareness of gender equality (33% vs 40%).

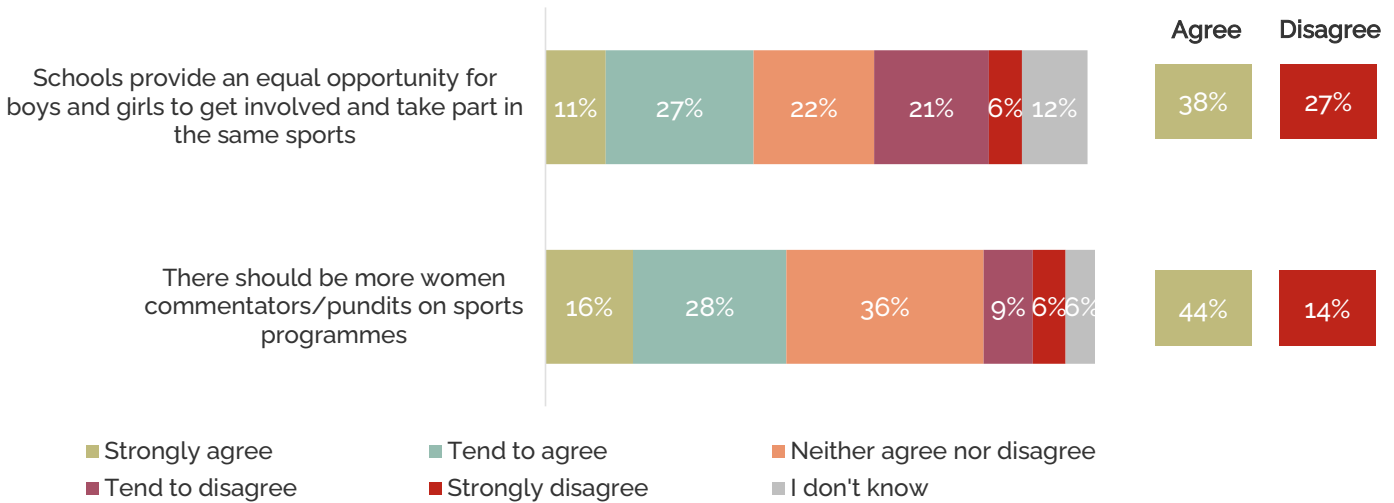
Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?



THE PUBLIC'S OPINION ON EQUALITY IN SPORT.

# Schools play a key role in driving equality.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?



Schools and educational settings play a vital role in introducing young people to sport and providing opportunities to play. However, these opportunities to get involved and take part are not always seen as being equal for boys and girls. Our research suggests that just two in five (38%) people feel that **schools provide an equal opportunity for boys and girls to get involved and take part in the same sports**. This is a sentiment held equally between men and women (39% and 38% respectively).

Clearly, improving visibility of women in sport remains a hot topic – fueled most recently by the success of the Lionesses. We are seeing more female sport than ever across all types of media, but does this extend to other types of female representation in sport? Our research suggests there is an appetite for more, with over two in five (44%) people – including 46% of women - **wanting to see more female commentators and pundits on sports programmes**.

From these findings we are able to see that there is a lot to be positive about for the younger generation of women and girls when it comes to sport. What this does highlight is the need for sports organisations to really think about their strategy when it comes to the older demographic and the way in which they market equal sporting opportunities for women.



# The Lionesses inspiring a nation

Thanks to their recent victory, the Lionesses have shown women everywhere that their place in sport is at the very top.

England's win last month is the country's first major tournament success since the 1966 men's football world cup. A whopping 574,875 people attended the Women's Euros this year making it the best attended Women's Euros in history, doubling the previous record set in 2017. The captain of the Portsmouth Women's team has said that the impact of the Lionesses' win has been "instant", with the first game of the women's football season on Sunday attracting record crowds.

We asked Walnut Academy Executive, Amy Rayland to share her experience of playing football in this male dominated field.



*"I started playing football when I was 10 years old. At that time, very few people had watched a professional women's football game, and even fewer could name any players. The media paid no attention. When we tried to play football with the boys at school, they would tell us no. They wouldn't pass us the ball or tackle us. I have been told "girls shouldn't play football". I have been through an education system that wouldn't allow girls to play football in PE. But, we never gave up.*

*Fast forward 13 years and I am standing in a sell-out crowd of 90,000 people at Wembley watching the lionesses win the European championship. I am overcome with emotion as I watch a new chapter for women's football begin. I am so excited for young girls all around the country who now have role-models to watch week-in week-out and to aspire to be, and more opportunities to play the sport that they love. Women's football finally has the visibility it deserves. And I hope it doesn't just stop at football - I hope every girl and every woman is inspired to do something they never thought they could, despite the odds.*

Chloe Kelly scored the winning goal and celebrated her win by taking off her shirt, a nod to the 1999 United States Women's World Cup winner Brandi Chastain.



Leah Williamson, the captain of the England women's football team, was the first England captain to lift a major trophy since Bobby Moore in 1966.

*"For every success we make, for every change of judgment or perception or the opening of the eyes of somebody who will now view women as somebody with the potential to be the equal of her male counterpart, that can create change in society".*

\*Walnut Unlimited interviewed a nationally representative sample of 2,110 adults aged 18+ across Great Britain between 19-21 August 2022. The data have been weighted to the population profile.

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