



Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up for Success

September 2024

It is a pivotal time for women in America.

From **Swiftonomics** to **Beyonce** to **Barbie**...

The ROI of women as headliners and as an audience is finally getting attention

More women in the workforce than ever before (but still make 80¢ on the dollar)

Record-breaking year in women's sports – a tipping point defined by events like:

- ✓ NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament
- ✓ Women's World Cup
- ✓ Launch of Professional Women's Hockey League
- ✓ Gender parity at the Olympics



It's been more than 50 years since Title IX mandated equal funding for male and female students in higher education.



But consider this...

Up until 1992, there were more dogs and horses on TV than women's sports

Today, it's still only 15% of sports media coverage

*But attendance suggests otherwise...
The Indiana Fever vs. LA Sparks game in May set an attendance record for the Crypto.com Arena, exceeding the highest Lakers' attendance ever*



NOW LET'S TALK ABOUT THE OLYMPICS

In the beginning,
women weren't even
allowed to watch

They couldn't compete
until 1900 (and that
was only in 5 sports)

It wasn't until 2012 that
women were allowed to
compete in all events

And the 2024 Olympics was the first
time an equal number of women and
men competed

**Women won more medals than men
and if the U.S. women were a country,
they would have placed 3rd overall**





**In 1995, NO Fortune 500
companies had a female CEO**

Today, it's only 10%

**Women hold <12% of C-suite roles
at publicly traded companies**

Decreased last year for the first time
in 20 years



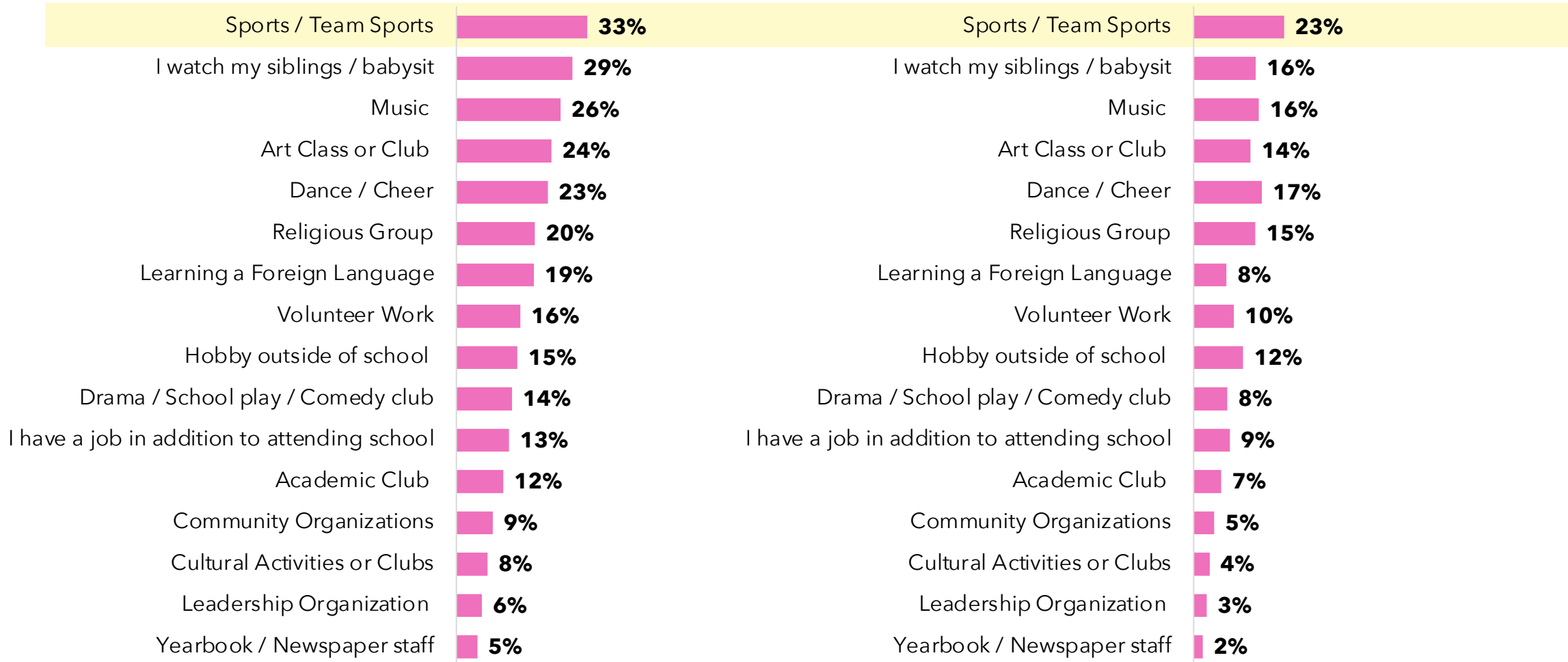
We designed the **largest** and **most inclusive** multi-generational, cross-sectional study on the impact of **playing, watching, and attending live sports** on girls and women in America.

The only truly foundational study
Nationally representative sample of 4,848
girls and women ranging in age from 9 to 75
Fielded in July 2024

One in three girls 9-17 participates in sports today - more than any other activity. Data reveals it is also the most important activity.

PARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

% WHO SAY ACTIVITY IS VERY IMPORTANT



N=1,605 Girls aged 9-17

Source: "Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up For Success", Prodege & Section Z, July 2024

Girls who play sports are significantly more likely to describe themselves as...

Active - **38%** (vs. 30%)

Hardworking - **35%** (vs. 30%)

Team player - **32%** (vs. 11%)

Outgoing - **31%** (vs. 22%)

Determined - **27%** (vs. 21%)

Competitive - **25%** (vs. 13%)

Disciplined - **11%** (vs. 5%)



N=1,605 Girls aged 9-17

Data among those who played team sports (n=861) vs. those haven't (n=744)

*Source: "Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up For Success",
Prodege & Section Z, July 2024*



Girls who play sports are more optimistic and empowered than girls who don't.

If I work very hard, I can accomplish anything - **95%** (vs. 93%)

I can be anything when I grow up - **93%** (vs. 88%)

I feel like I can make a difference in the world - **92%** (vs. 83%)

I am good at trying again when I fail - **86%** (vs. 77%)

And have significantly higher self-perceptions:

I am healthy - **95%** (vs. 92%)

I believe I am smart - **94%** (vs. 92%)

I am proud of myself - **94%** (vs. 92%)

I believe I am talented - **93%** (vs. 88%)

I am happy with my body type/weight - **78%** (vs. 73%)

N=1,605 Girls aged 9-17

Data among those who played team sports (n=861) vs. those haven't (n=744)

Source: "Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up For Success", Prodege & Section Z, July 2024

Data indicate improved socialization and acceptance among girls who play team sports as well.

I have friends who care about me - **95%** (vs. 90%)

I work well with others - **94%** (vs. 87%)

I feel like I fit in - **78%** (vs. 64%)

I am a leader - **74%** (vs. 57%)



N=1,605 Girls aged 9-17

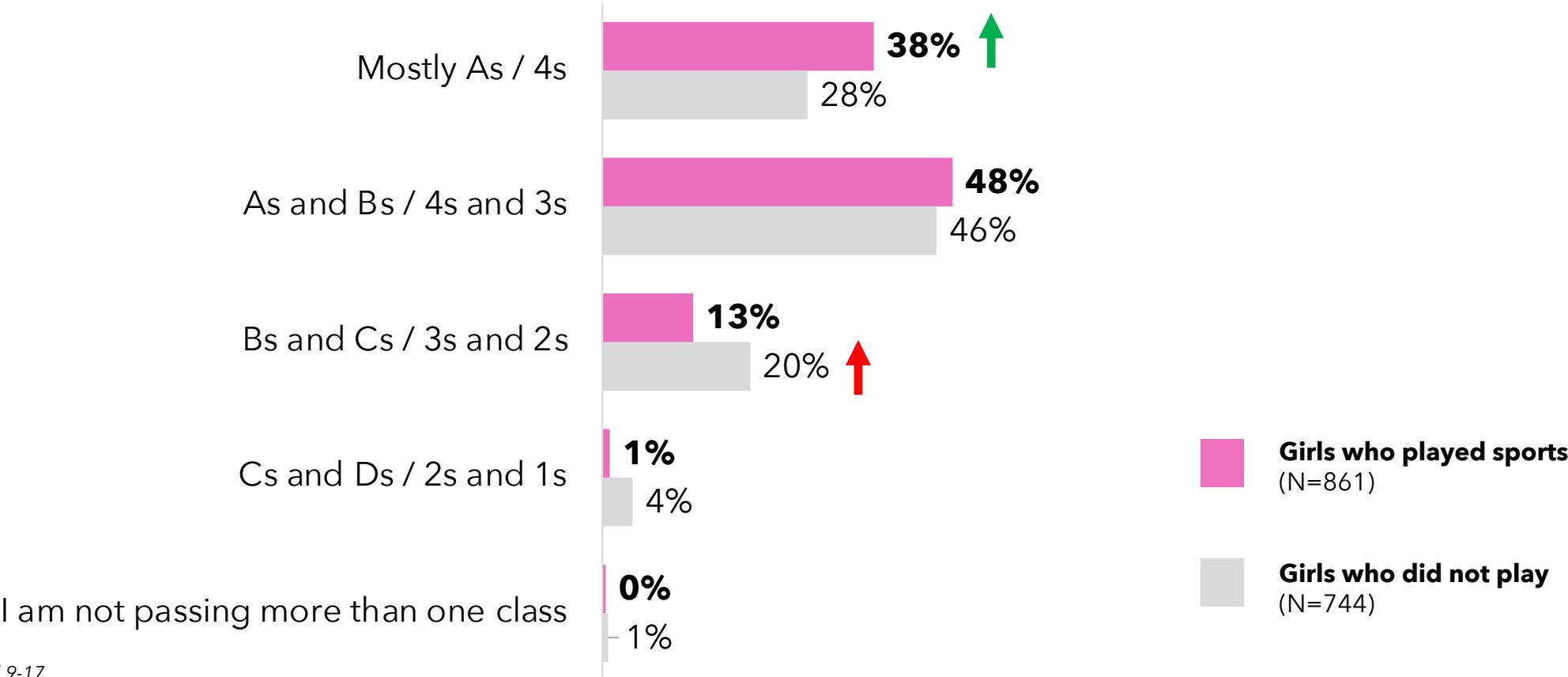
Data among those who played team sports (n=861) vs. those haven't (n=744)

Source: "Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up For Success", Prodege & Section Z, July 2024

They self-report getting better grades and are significantly more likely to say they like school.

“Which of the following best describes your grades?”

Among girls 9-17



N=1,605 Girls aged 9-17
Data among those who played team sports (n=861) vs. those haven't (n=744)
Source: "Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up For Success", Prodege & Section Z, July 2024



And, importantly, nearly 9 in 10 girls agree that playing sports teaches them it's okay to lose.

We see mental health benefits in girls who play as well.

Girls who play team sports are significantly less likely to report negative feelings...

- Shy - **21%** (vs. 38%)
- Self-conscious - **18%** (vs. 27%)
- Anxious - **17%** (vs. 28%)
- Nervous - **12%** (vs. 23%)
- Worried - **8%** (vs. 15%)
- Depressed - **4%** (vs. 9%)
- Lonely - **4%** (vs. 11%)

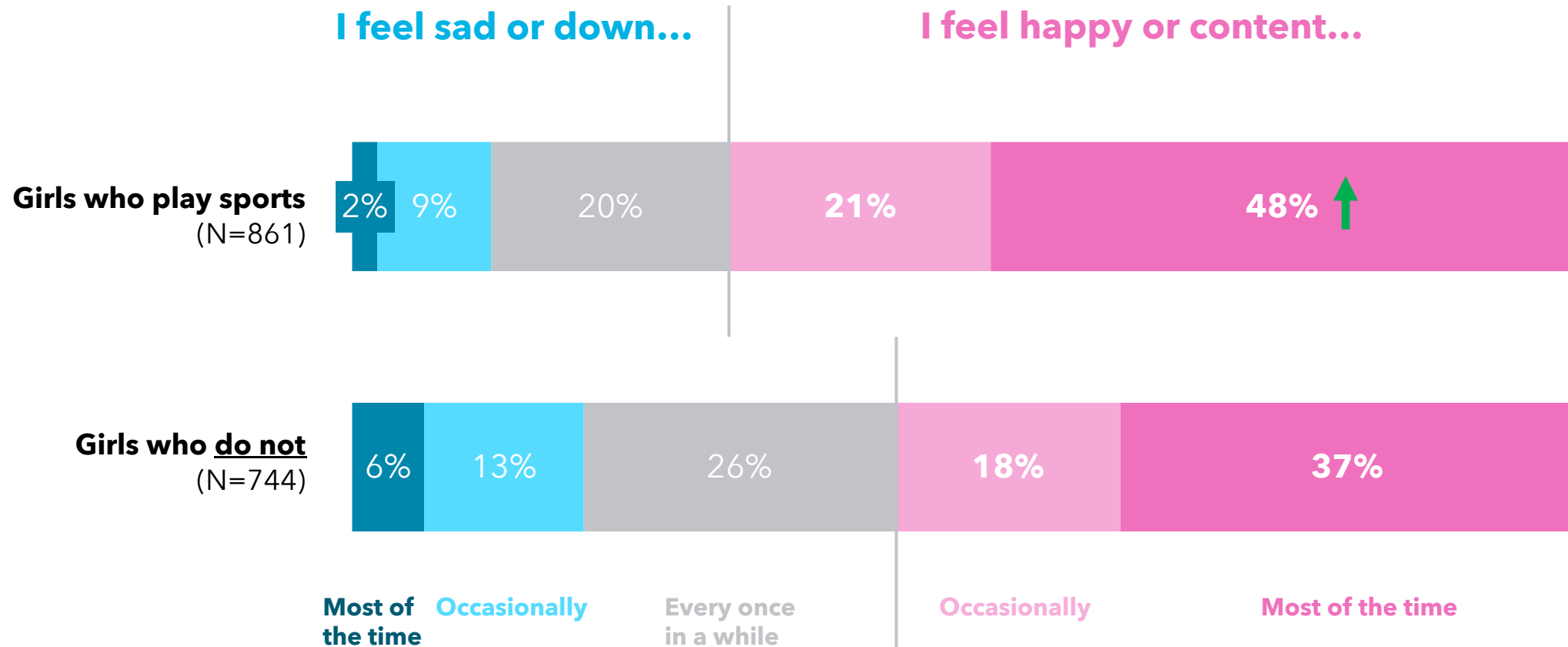


N=1,605 Girls aged 9-17

Data among those who played team sports (n=861) vs. those haven't (n=744)

Source: "Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up For Success", Prodege & Section Z, July 2024

Girls who play sports are more likely to say they feel happy or content.



N=1,605 Girls aged 9-17

Data among those who played team sports (n=861) vs. those haven't (n=744)

Source: "Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up For Success", Prodege & Section Z, July 2024

Girls who play sports are also significantly less likely to say...

I spend a lot of time online / on screens -
77% (vs. 84%)

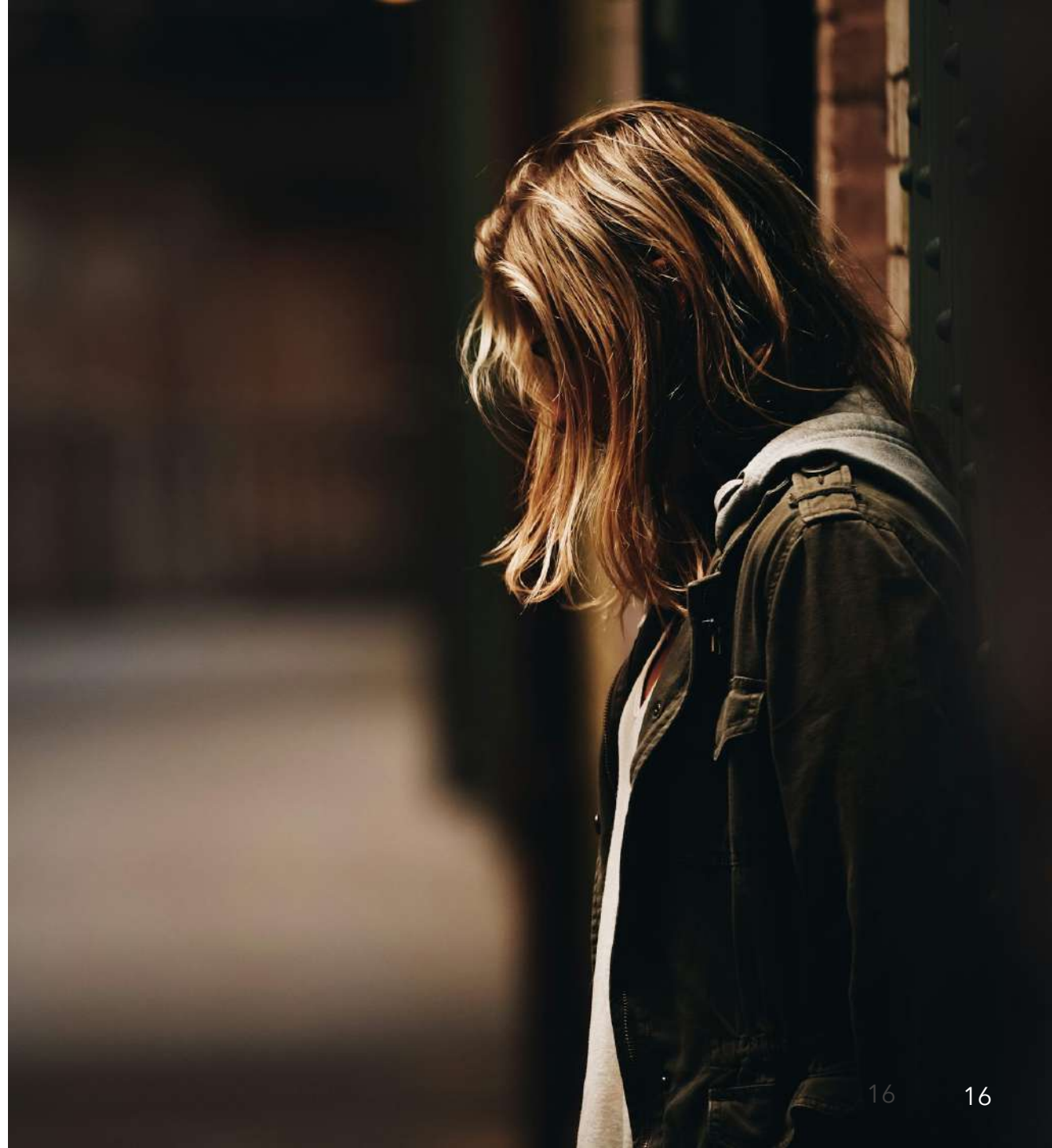
I worry a lot - **52%** (vs. 61%)

My life is stressful - **44%** (vs. 52%)

N=1,605 Girls aged 9-17

Data among those who played team sports (n=861) vs. those haven't (n=744)

Source: "Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up For Success", Prodege & Section Z, July 2024



**But do the benefits persist?
What did we learn about adult women?**



The benefits of sport do persist throughout life.

Women who played sports as girls are significantly **MORE** likely to describe themselves as...

Hardworking - **55%** (vs. 51%)

Smart - **46%** (vs. 42%)

Strong - **30%** (vs. 27%)

Fun - **30%** (vs. 27%)

Team player - **25%** (vs. 19%)

Well-rounded - **22%** (vs. 17%)

Active - **19%** (vs. 14%)

A leader - **19%** (vs. 13%)

Adventurous - **18%** (vs. 11%)

Competitive - **17%** (vs. 7%)



N=3,243 Women aged 18-75

Data among those who ever played team sports (n=2,272) vs. those didn't (n=971)

Source: "Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up For Success", Prodege & Section Z, July 2024



Women 18-75 who played team sports as girls are still significantly **MORE** likely to say:

I believe I am smart - **93%** (vs. 89%)

If I work very hard, I can accomplish anything - **90%** (vs. 87%)

I am proud of myself - **83%** (vs. 77%)

I believe I am talented - **82%** (vs. 74%)

I am healthy - **76%** (vs. 70%)

I feel like I make a difference in the world - **68%** (vs. 63%)

I am happy with my body type and weight - **46%** (vs. 42%)

N=3,243 Women aged 18-75

Data among those who ever played team sports (n=2,272) vs. those didn't (n=971)

Source: "Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up For Success", Prodege & Section Z, July 2024

There are clear and lasting social benefits as well. Women who played team sports are significantly more likely to agree...

I feel like I fit in – **64%** (vs. 59%)

I have friends who care about me – **87%** (vs. 84%)

Throughout my life I have been a leader – **63%** (vs. 47%)

Playing sports helped me make friends – **79%** (vs. 38%)

I felt accepted playing sports – **75%** (vs. 33%)

Sports made me more confident – **76%** (vs. 36%)

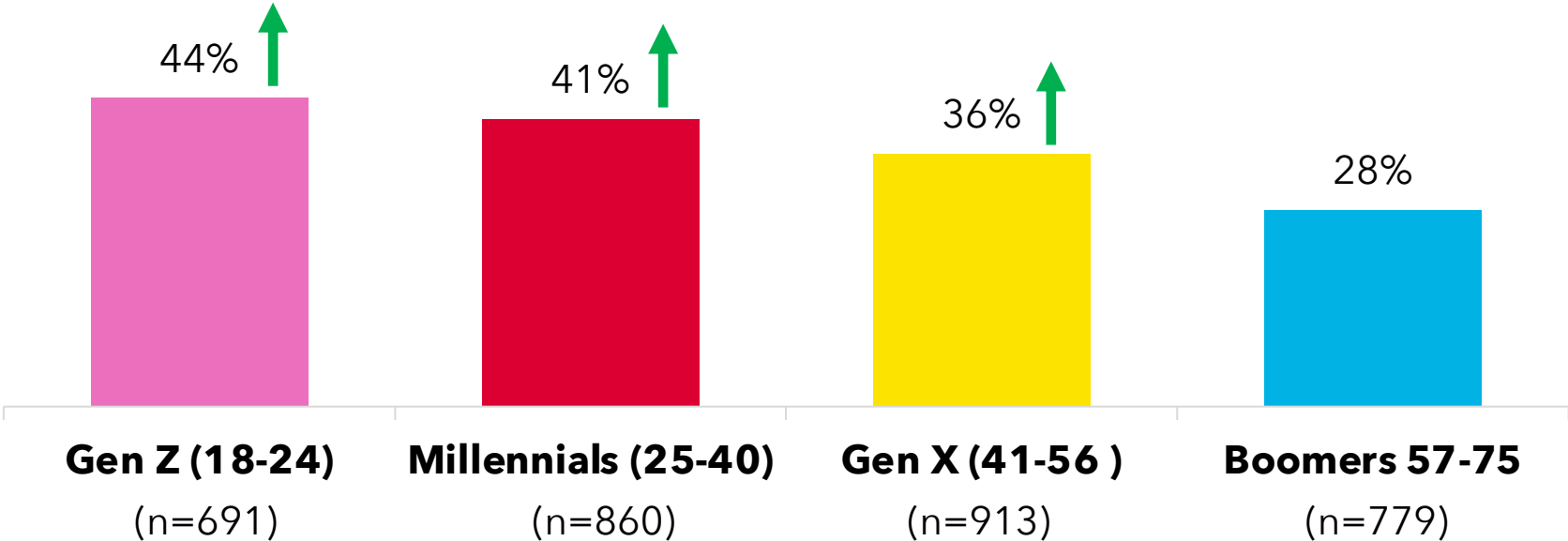
I am still friends with people I met playing sports – **50%** (vs. 21%)

And less likely to feel...

- Shy – **18%** (vs. 26%)
- Worried – **12%** (vs. 16%)
- Nervous – **10%** (vs. 23%)
- Lonely – **9%** (vs. 14%)

Participation in sports among girls has increased since Title IX was enacted.

“Did You Participate in Sports Growing Up?”



Guess what half of girls of all generations did in addition to clubs and sports?



One in three women who played a team sport says it played a **BIG ROLE in whom they are today.**

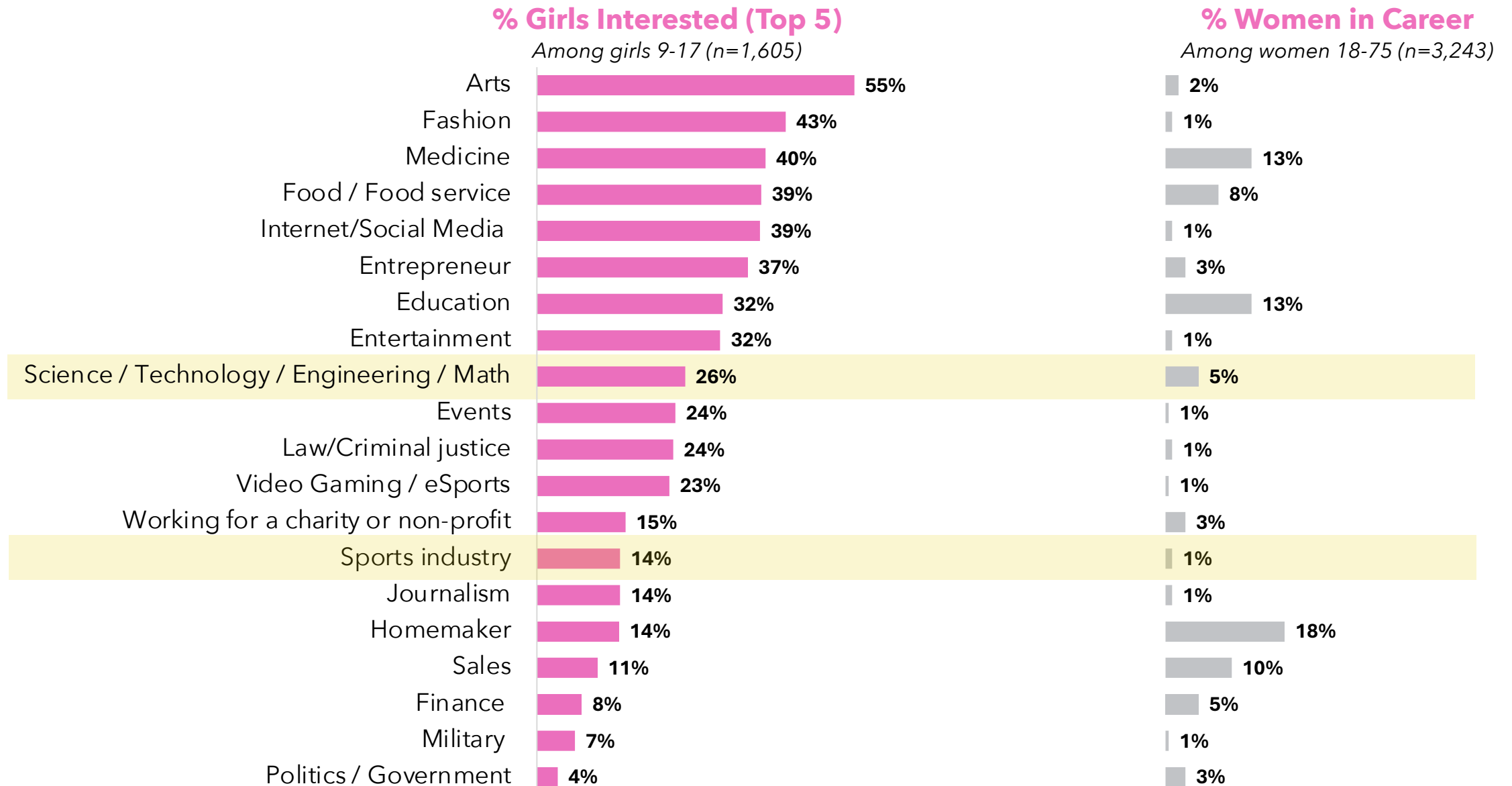
Furthermore, **81%** agree that playing sports prepares girls for life.

More than half of all women agree that sports taught them critical career skills.

And **68%** agree that participating in sports taught them skills that helped them to be successful in their careers

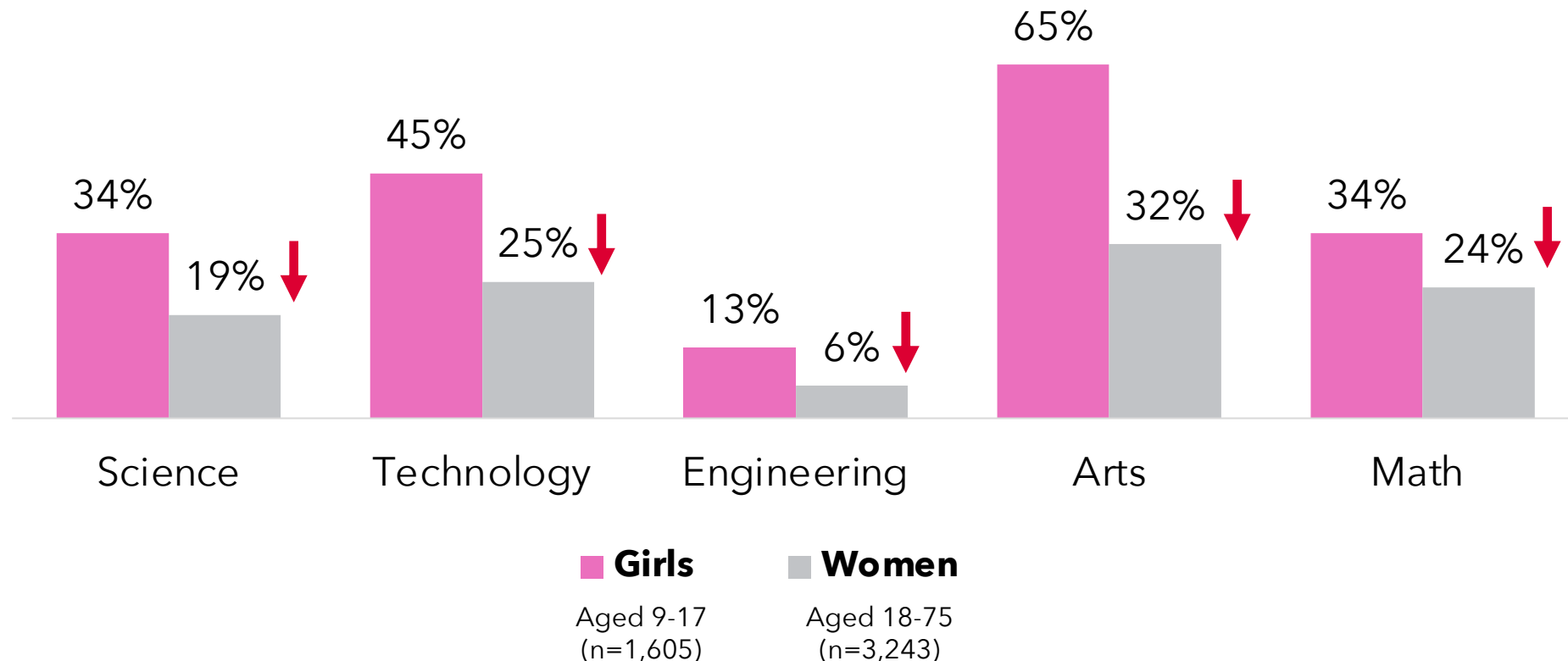


However, there is an opportunity gap between aspiration and career.



When girls are young, they are significantly more likely to believe they have talent in each of the subjects shown below. This is not the case with writing and social sciences.

“Which of the following subjects is a strength for you?”



Research tells us that girls quit sports around age 13.

According to the Women's Sports Foundation, by age 14 girls drop out of sports at **TWO TIMES** the rate of boys.



43% of girls

who once considered themselves 'sporty' drop out of sport after primary school

Women in Sport

68% of girls

say a fear of feeling judged by others is a barrier to doing sport

Women in Sport



Nike says based on their research the highest rate of drop-off among girls globally is between the ages of 11 to 17



We know exposure to live sports events makes girls want to play longer.

Most agree:

There is a level of excitement going to a game in person that you can't get anywhere else - **73%**

Seeing athletes play in person inspires me - **67%**

Two in 3 agree that seeing a game in person makes them want to play more

Section Z post-event survey data indicates that number jumps up to **over 90%** after taking them to a game to see women play

**And our research proves
that more girls would go
if they had access.**





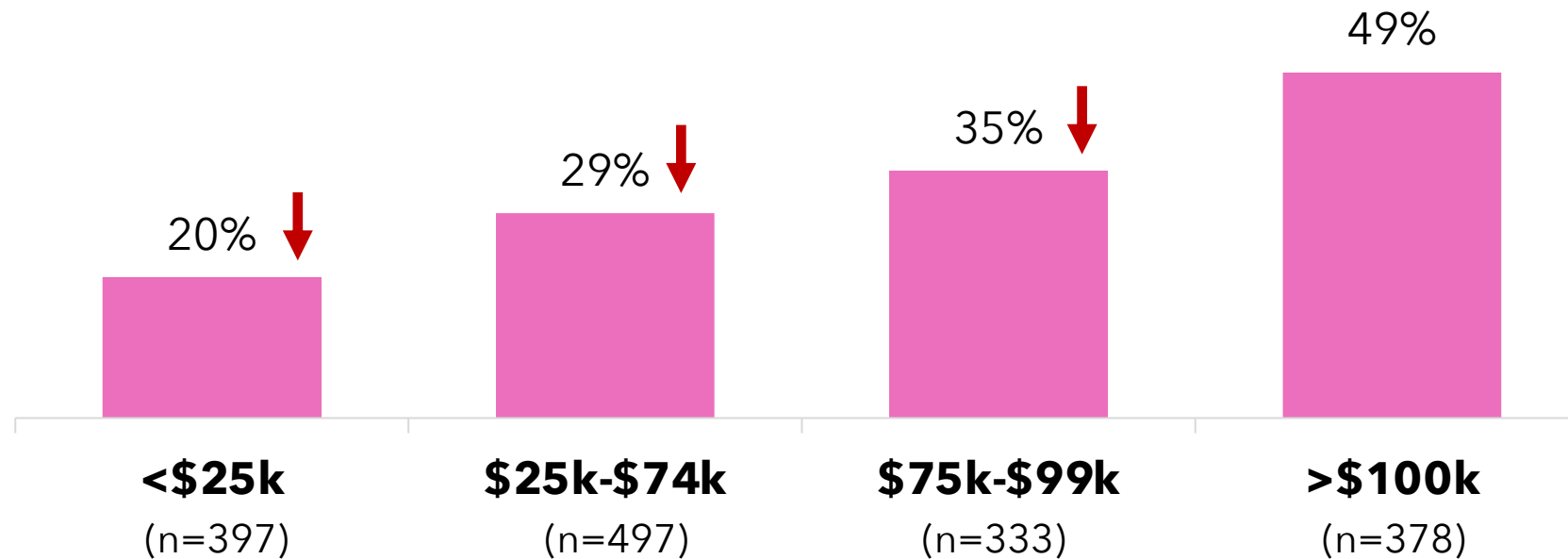
But access STILL isn't equal.

More than 8 in 10 girls have barriers that prevent them from participating.



Girls from low-income households participate at significantly lower levels.

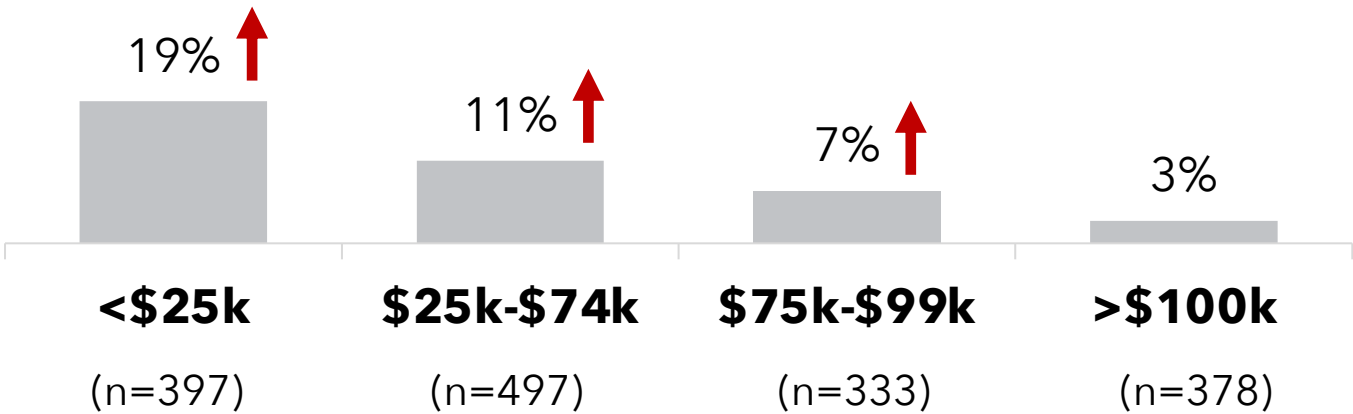
"Do You Participate in Any Team Sports?"
Among Girls 9-17





One in five is unable to participate in any extracurriculars at all.

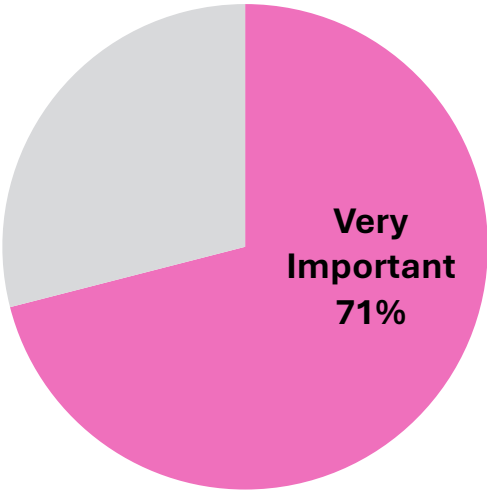
% Who Participate in NO Extracurricular Activities
Among Girls 9-17



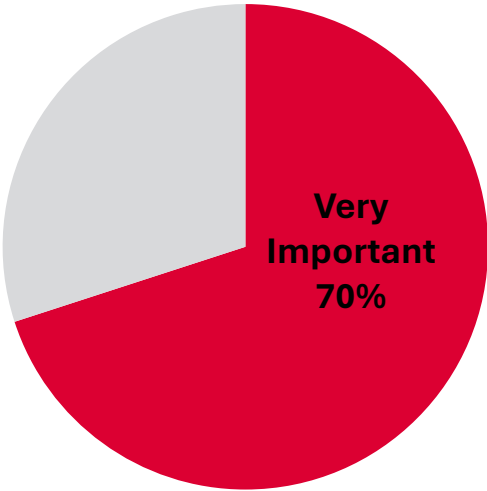
N=1,605 Girls aged 9-17 cut by household income as defined below based on U.S. Census data
Low <\$25k (n=397), Low/mid \$25-\$74k (n=497), Mid/High \$75-99K (n=333), High \$100k+ (n=378)
Source: "Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up For Success", Prodege & Section Z, July 2024

But when they can participate, it is just as important to them.

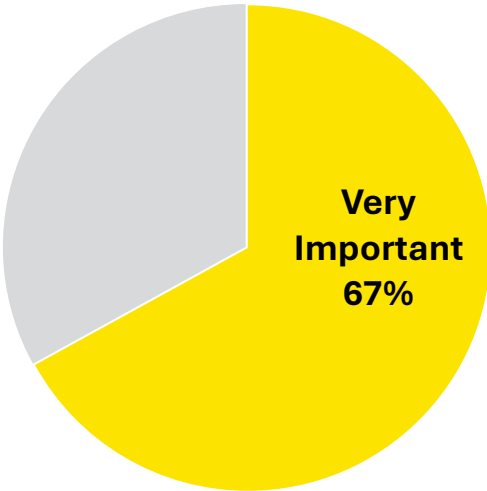
“How important is your team sport to you?”
Among Girls 9-17



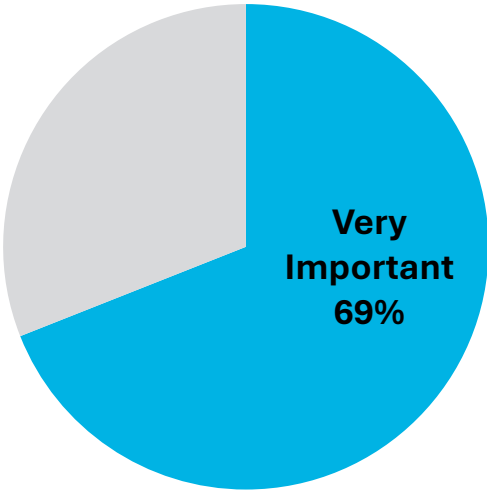
<math>< \\$25k</math>
(N=78)



$\\$25k - \\$74k$
(N=144)



$\\$75k - \\$99k$
(N=118)



$> \\$100k$
(N=186)

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Source: "Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up For Success", Prodege & Section Z, July 2024*

What are the barriers?

Leading barriers for girls from low-income households include:

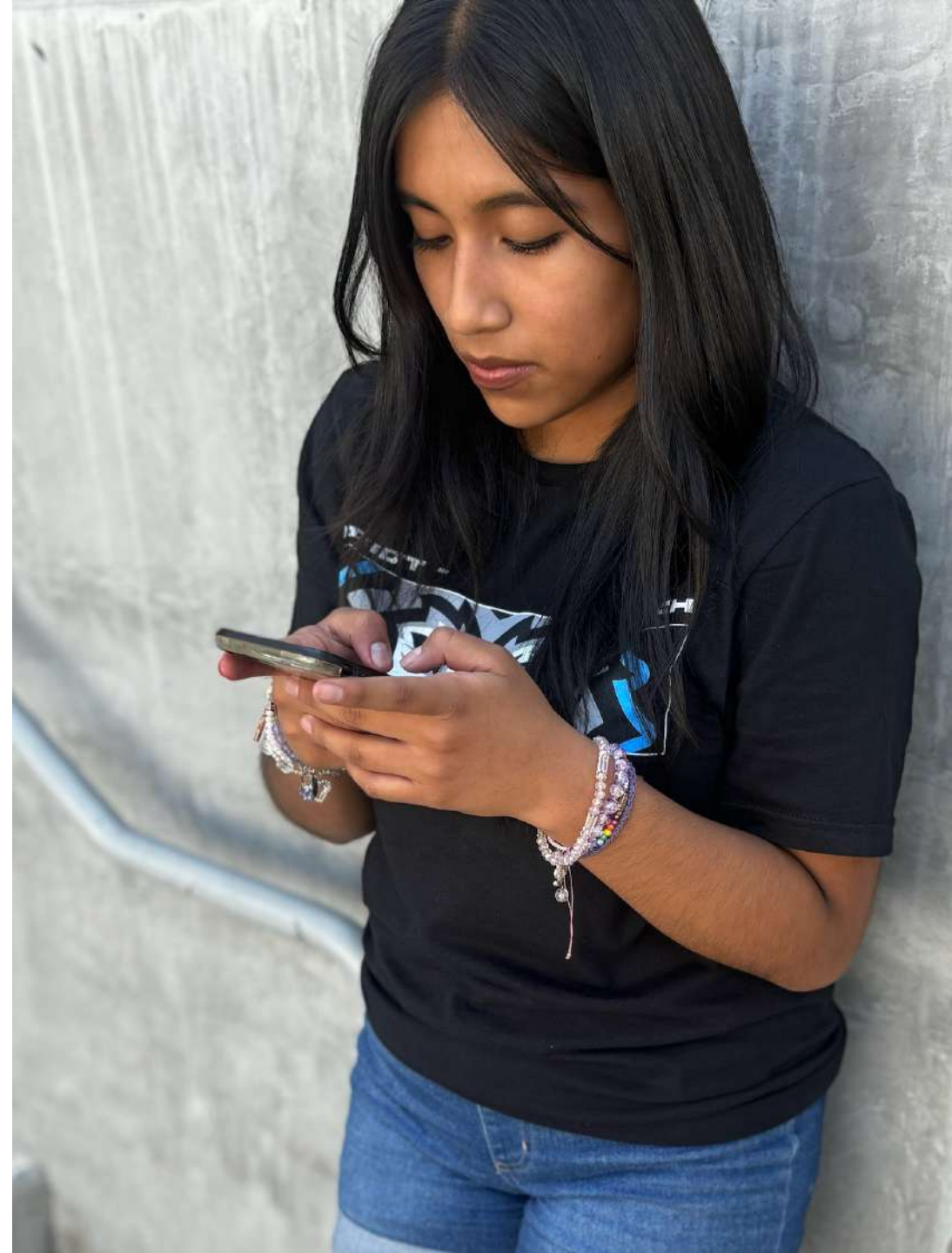
Can't afford it/don't have equipment - **41%**

Transportation/No one to take me/pick up - **31%**

Afraid they won't like me - **19%**

My parents are afraid of me getting injured - **11%**

No one on the team looks like me - **4%**

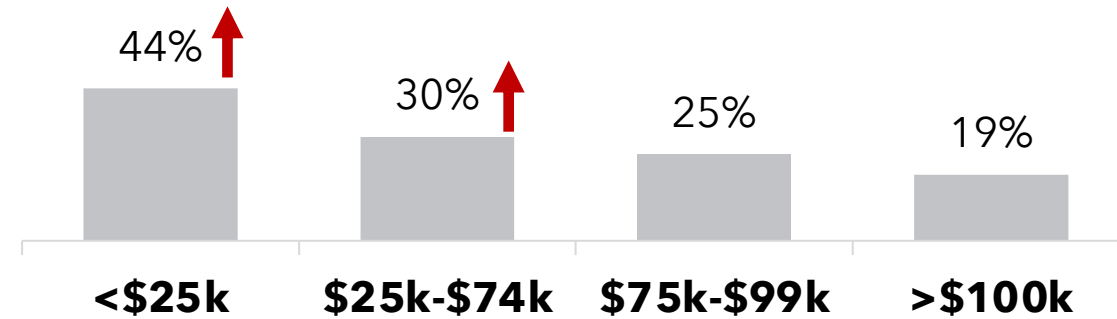


They are also significantly less likely to experience fanship.

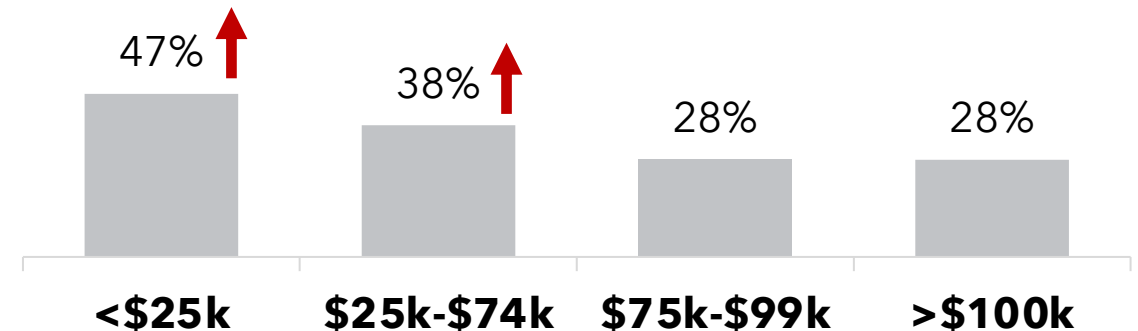
Girls from low-income households are significantly less likely to have ever attended a live sporting event.

They are also significantly less likely to have ever watched or streamed sports
And significantly less likely to co-view sports with a parent.

% NEVER Attended Live Sporting Event
Among Girls 9-17



% NEVER Watched or Streamed Sports Game
Among Girls 9-17



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Source: "Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up For Success", Prodege & Section Z, July 2024

There is growing evidence from around the world that watching and attending sports has positive psychological effects.

Research conducted in March 2024 in Japan found that **watching sports is positively associated with well-being, increased brain activity, and structural volume in parts of the brain associated with well-being**

Another study done in the **UK** found that **people who attended a live sporting event in the past year are more satisfied with their lives, feel their lives are more worthwhile, are less lonely, and display fewer depressive symptoms**



We need to give all girls access to the benefits of sports, including fanship.





The impact extends beyond sports.

We've all heard this stat...

According to our research, 4% of women are in c-suite or owner roles.

Women. Fast forward



94%

of women in the C-suite played sports; 52% played at the university level⁴

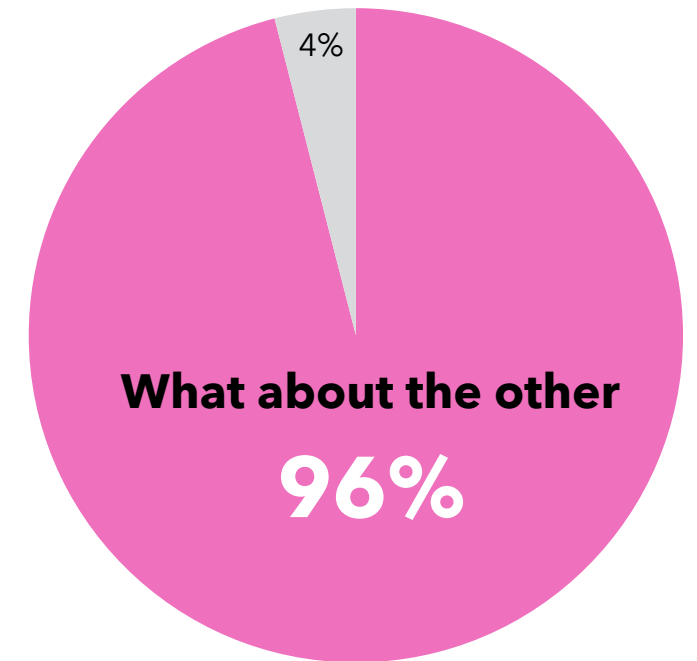
4. "Where will you find your next leader?"; EY and ESPNW report

Setting her up for **Success**
Why sports matter to your daughter
ey.com/womenathletesnetwork

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WOMEN'S SUMMIT
In the Huddle


EY
Building a better working world



Sports inspires and empowers girls and women.

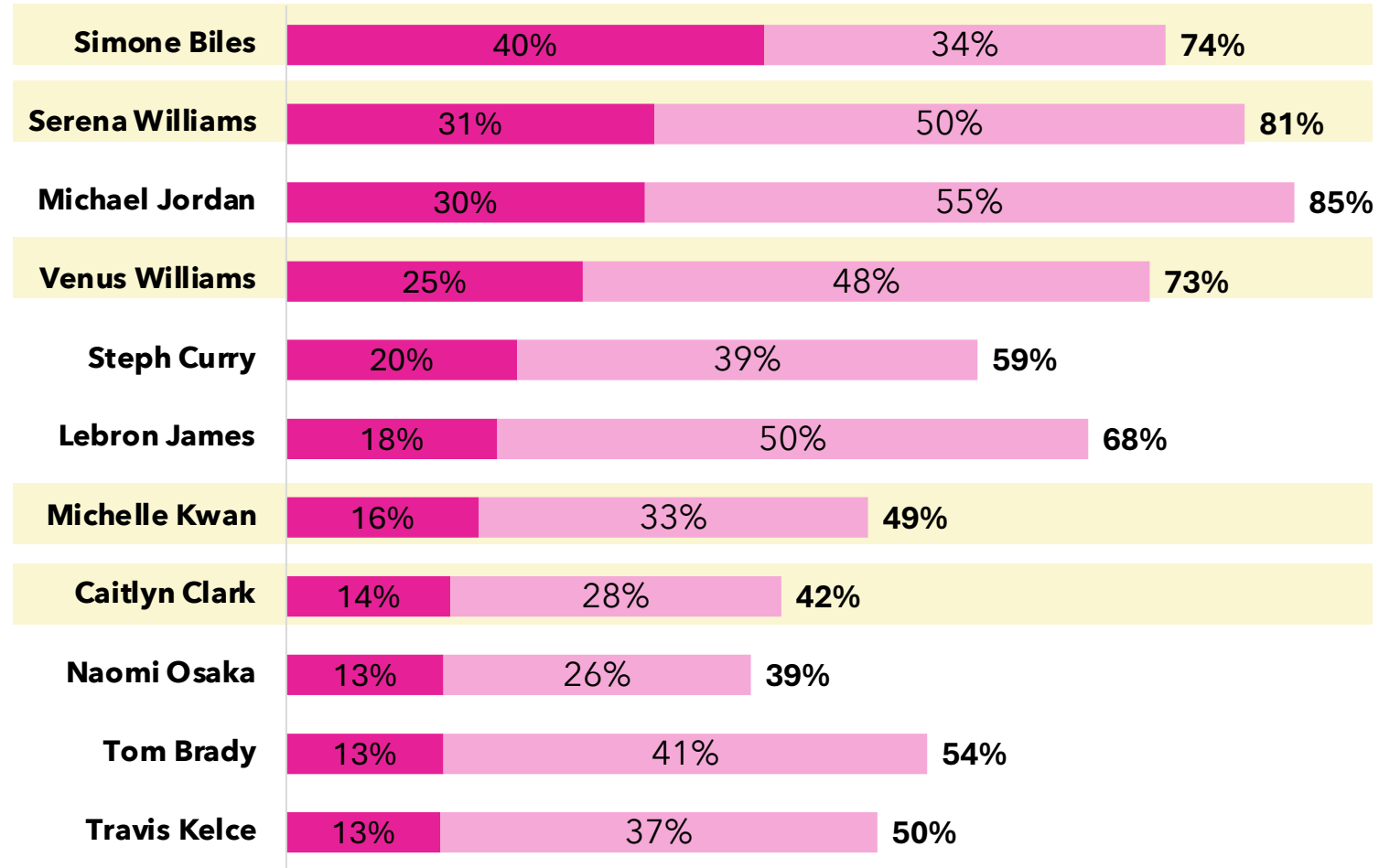


We asked nearly 5,000 girls and women how much they like a series of male and female athletes...

Total
(N=4,848)

■ % love

■ % like



N=4,848 Girls and women aged 9-75

Scale: Love, Like, Don't like, Don't know

Source: "Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up For Success", Prodege & Section Z, July 2024



**There is significant ROI here for brands.
This is a highly engaged audience.**

Of all the girls and women in our study...

46% talk with their friends about sports

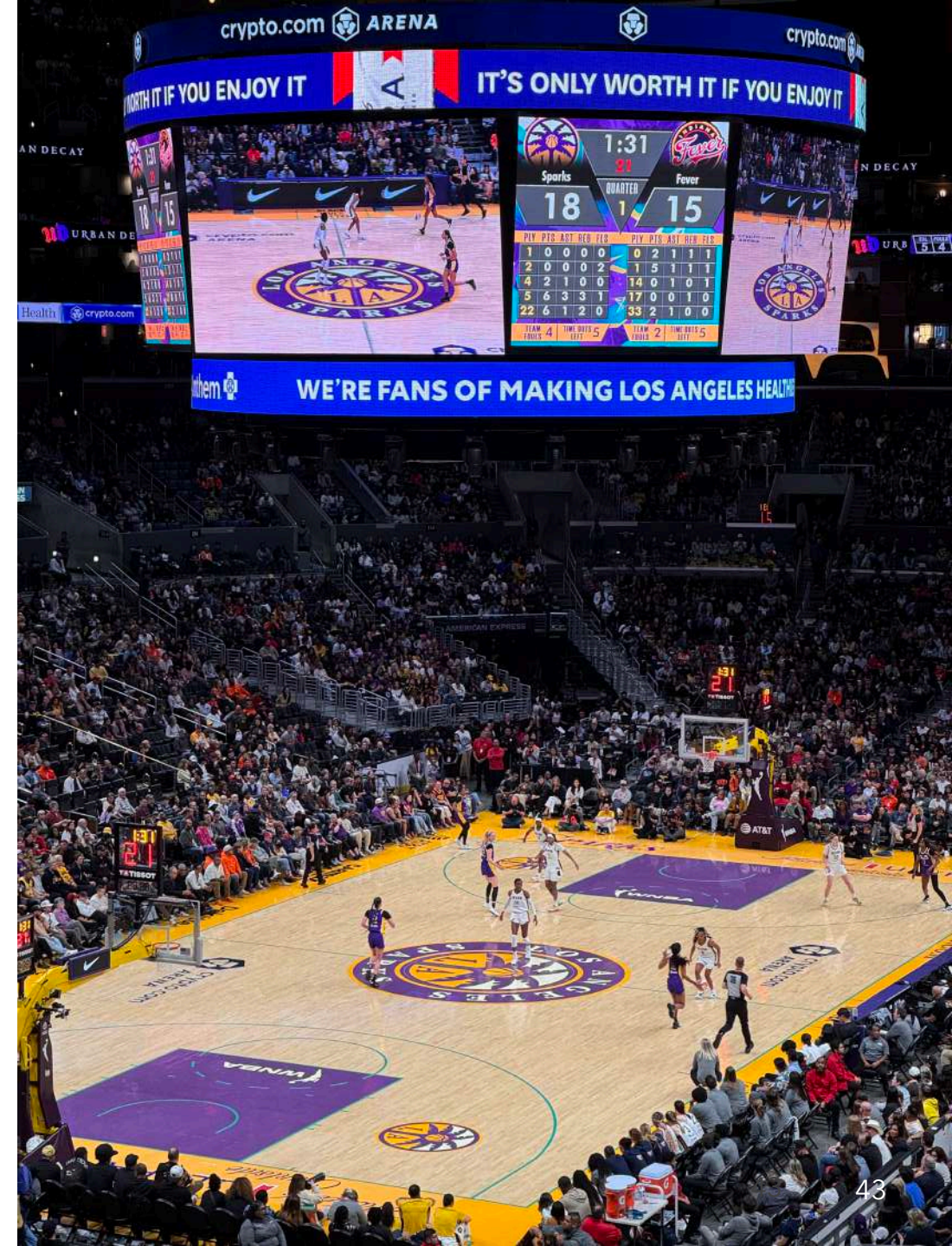
34% buy team merchandise

30% engage with social media content (i.e., "like" posts)

26% follow a sports team on social media

18% follow a female athlete on social media

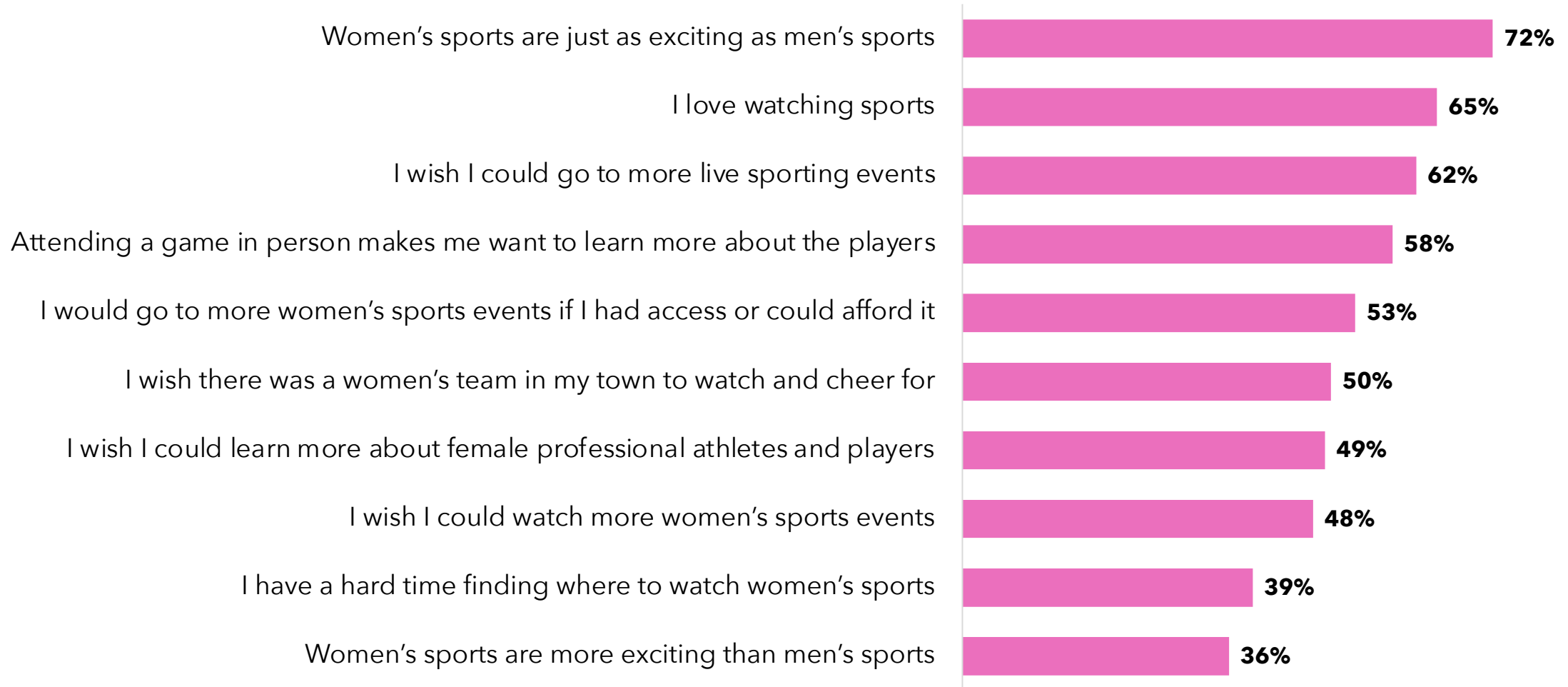
According to Deloitte, women's sports will generate over **\$1B** in revenue this year, a 300% increase over 2021.



There is significant unmet demand in women's sports.

"How much do you agree?"

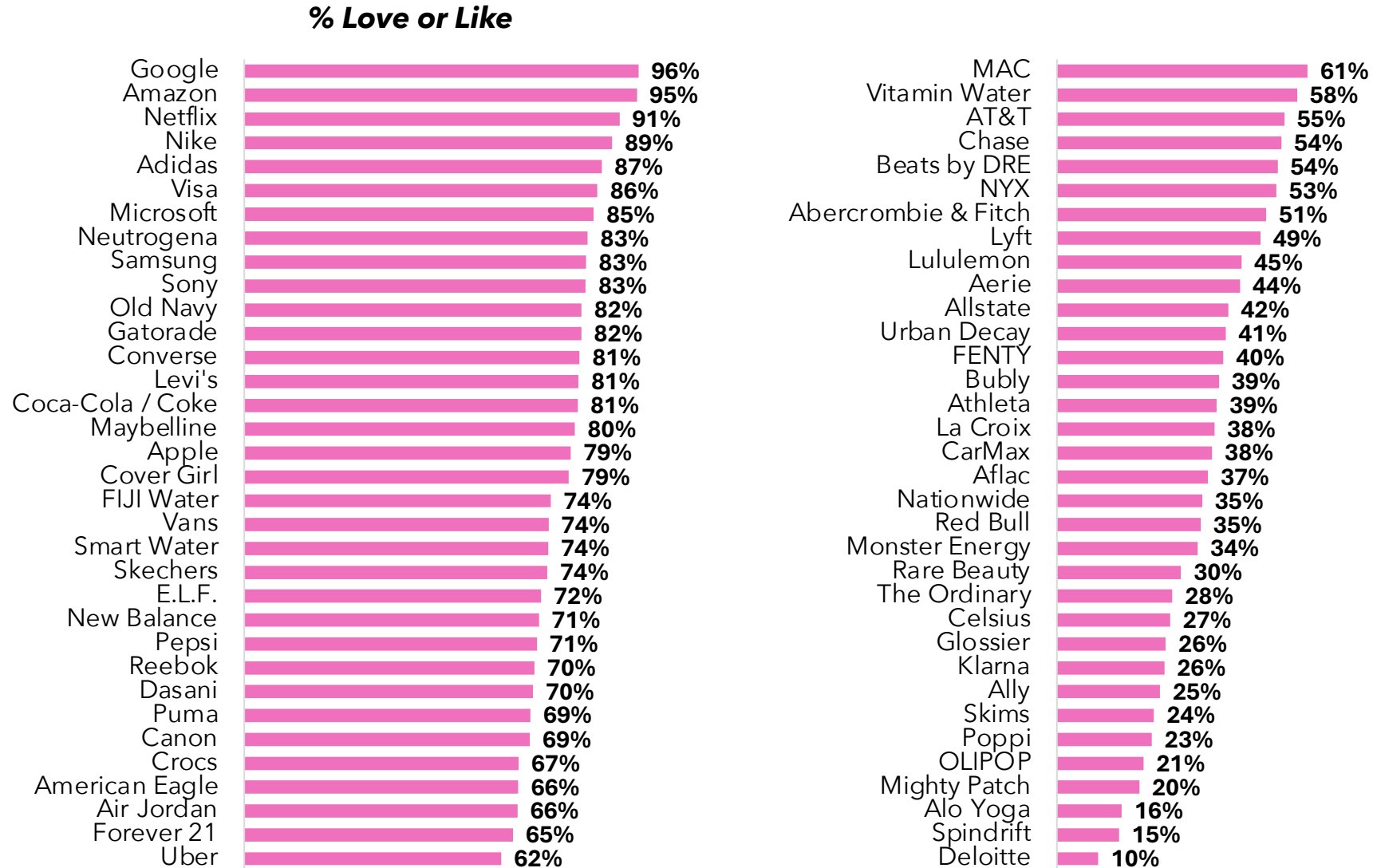
% Agree among all girls and women



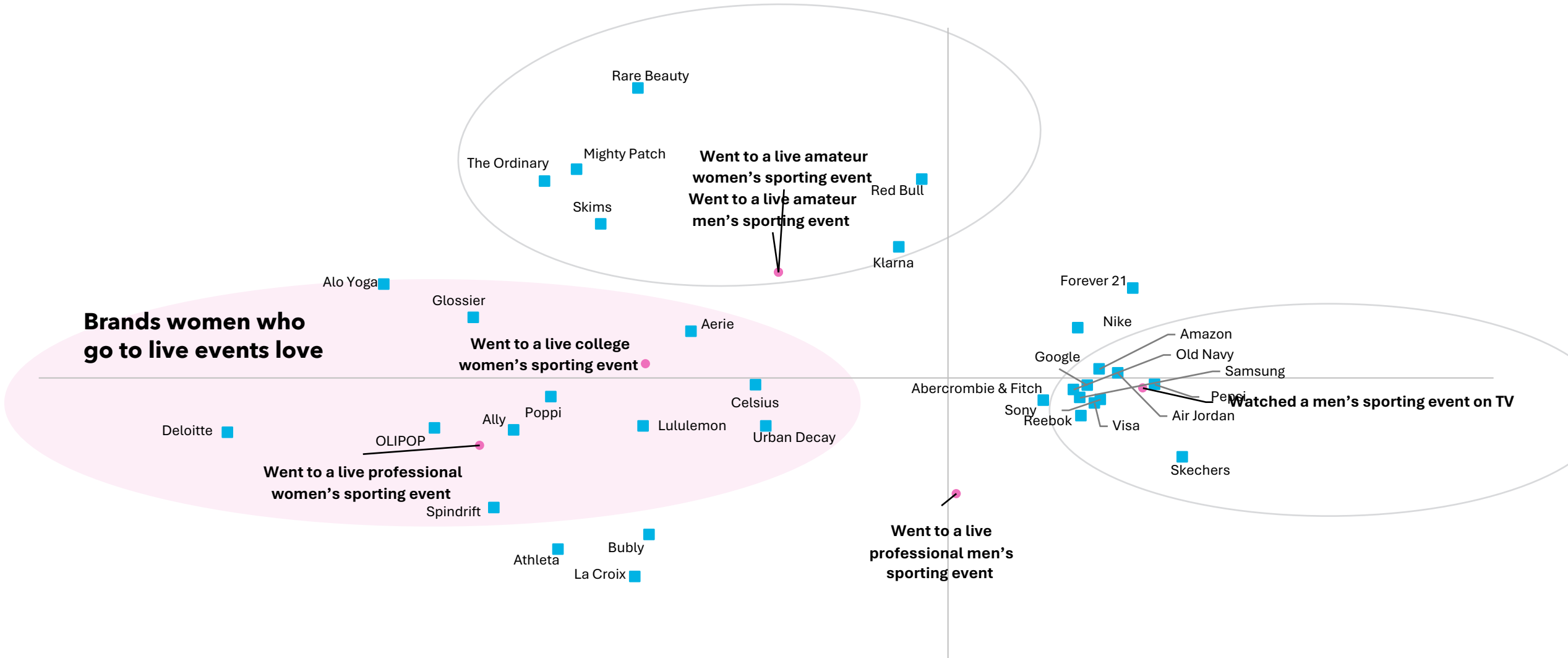


Nearly half of all girls and women say they like to buy brands that sponsor women's sports.

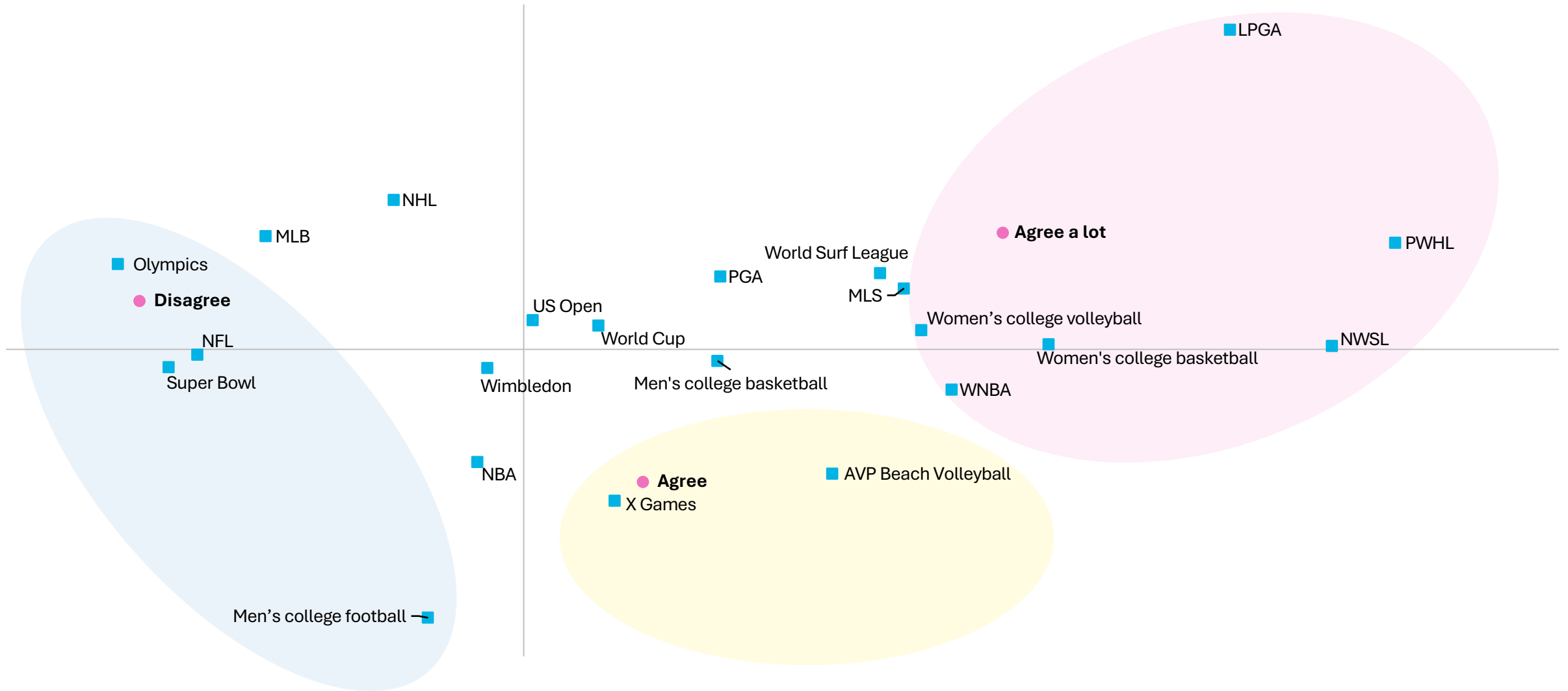
We know how girls and women feel about dozens of leading brands.



We identified brands favored by women who go to women's sports events.

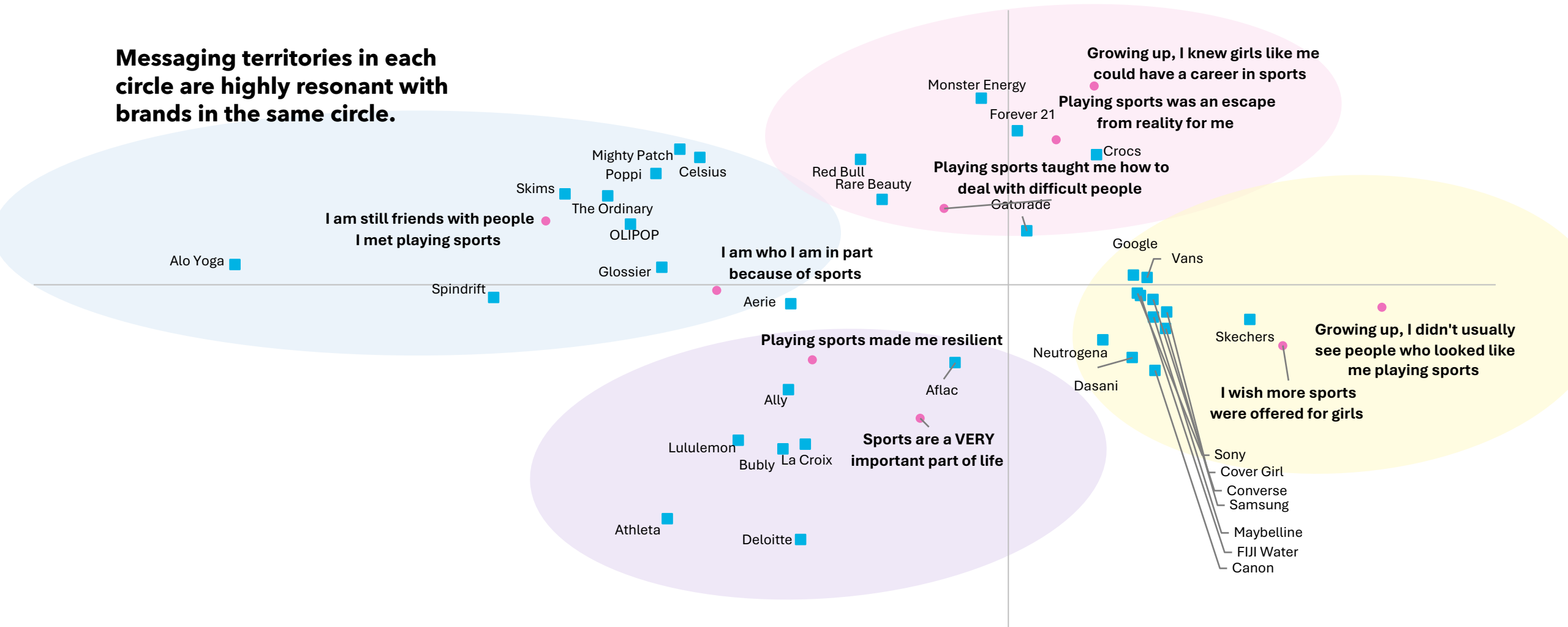


Women who love women's leagues are also highly likely to say they prefer to buy brands that sponsor women's sports.

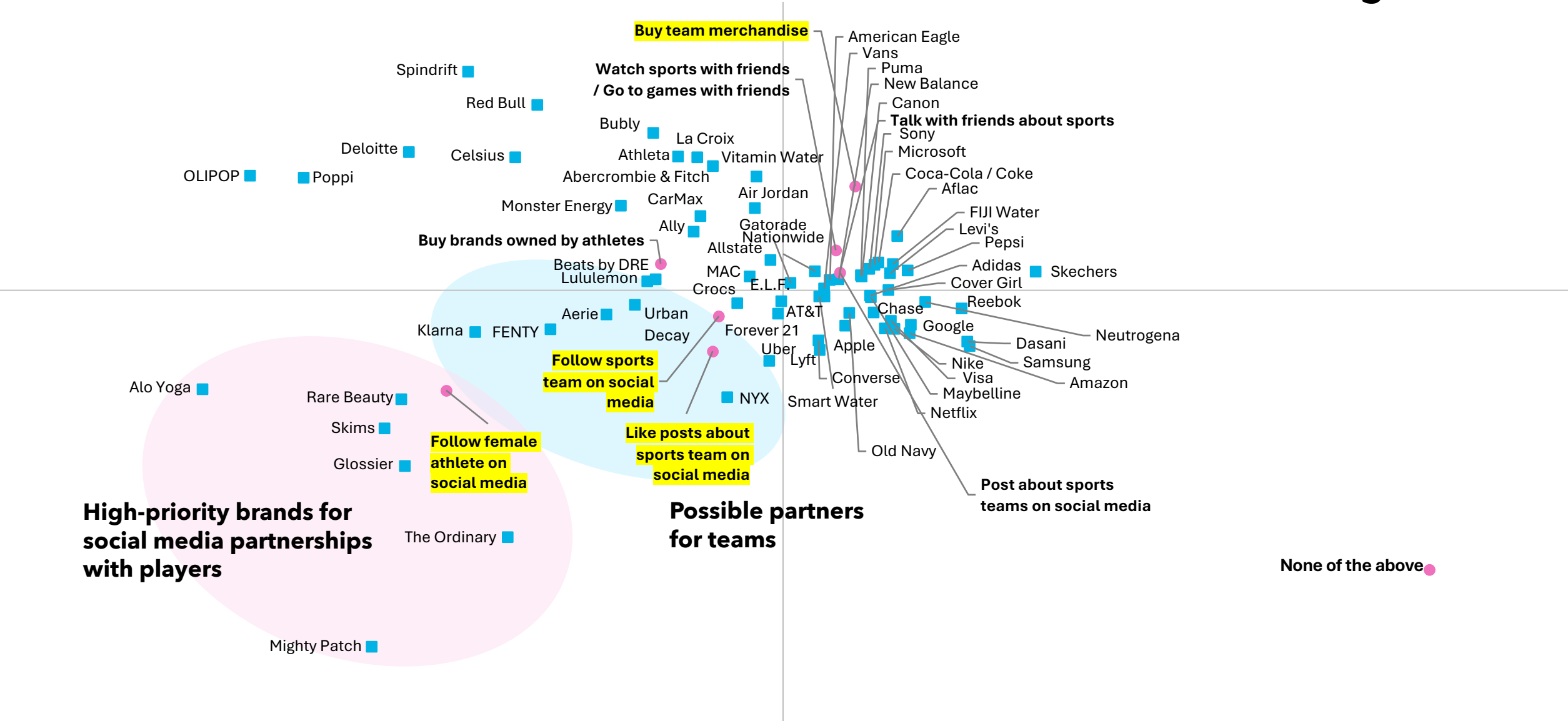


We identified potential messaging territories that would likely resonate.

Messaging territories in each circle are highly resonant with brands in the same circle.



Brands can use this data to inform social media and branded merch strategies.



N=1,376 Adult women aged 18-75 who prefer to buy brands that support women's sports
 Source: "Breaking Barriers: How Sports Set Women Up For Success", Prodege & Section Z, July 2024

We can use this data to help brands optimize ROI in women's sports.

Strategic Targets for Female Athlete Partnerships

alo

SKIMS

Glossier.

Rare Beauty

Mighty Patch

The Ordinary.

Strategic Targets for Team Partnerships

FENTY

Klarna

aerie

NYX
PROFESSIONAL MAKEUP

lululemon

URBAN DECAY

Section Z's goal is to reach as many girls as possible.

Since June 2023...

We've taken over **1,500 girls**

To see **44 live sports events**

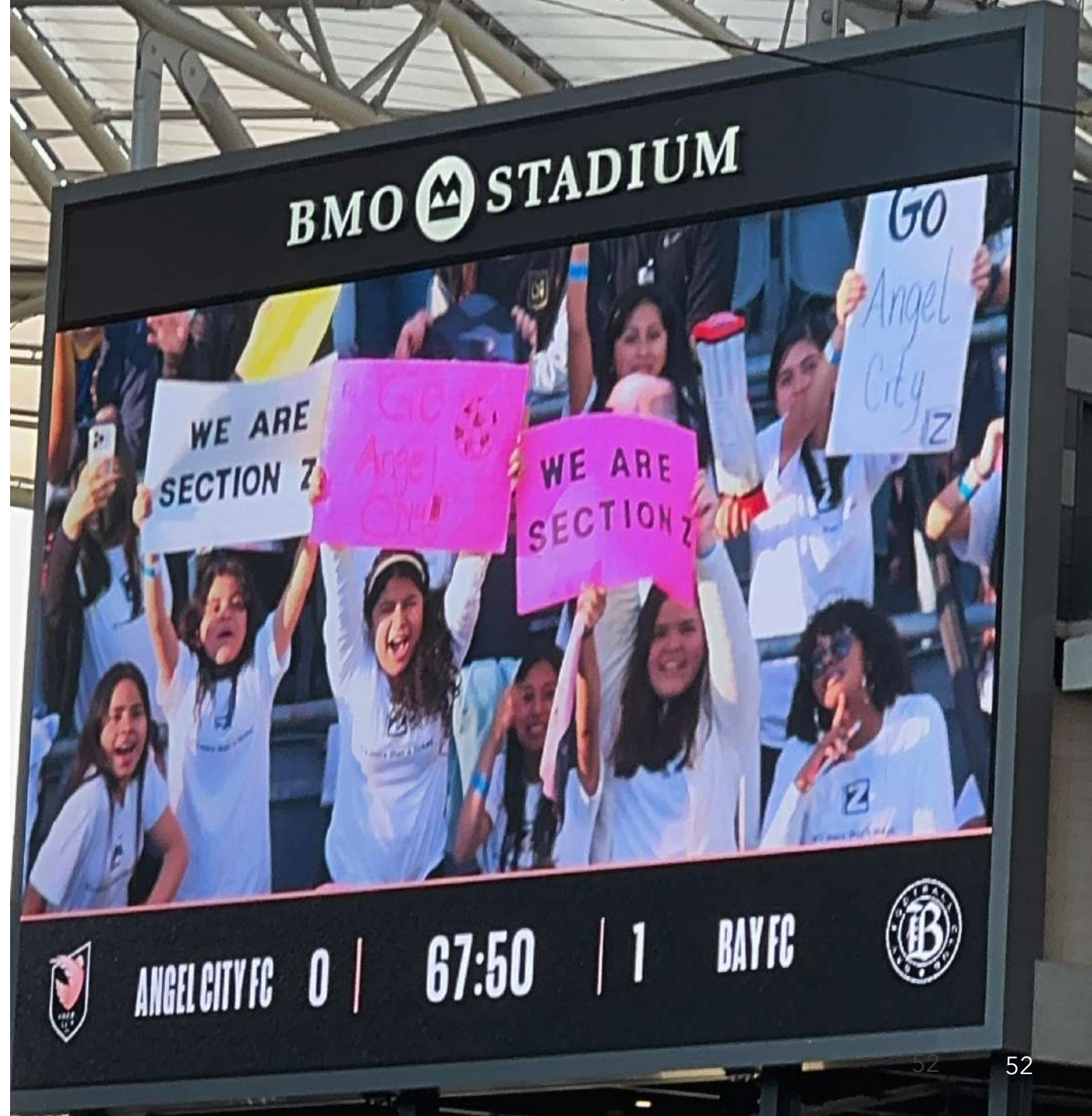
Built relationships within **4 leagues**, including NWSL, WNBA, LOVB, X Games

Served over **30 schools**, including multiple charter schools and Compton Unified School District

Held **workshops** and **panel discussions**

Designed **custom curricula**

...and we even have a waiting list of schools that want to attend our events





**It's up to us to prevent
the loss of future leaders.**

You may be wondering how you can get involved.



ECO ATHLETES ALLIANCE



We are actively building relationships with brands that believe in the power of women's sports.

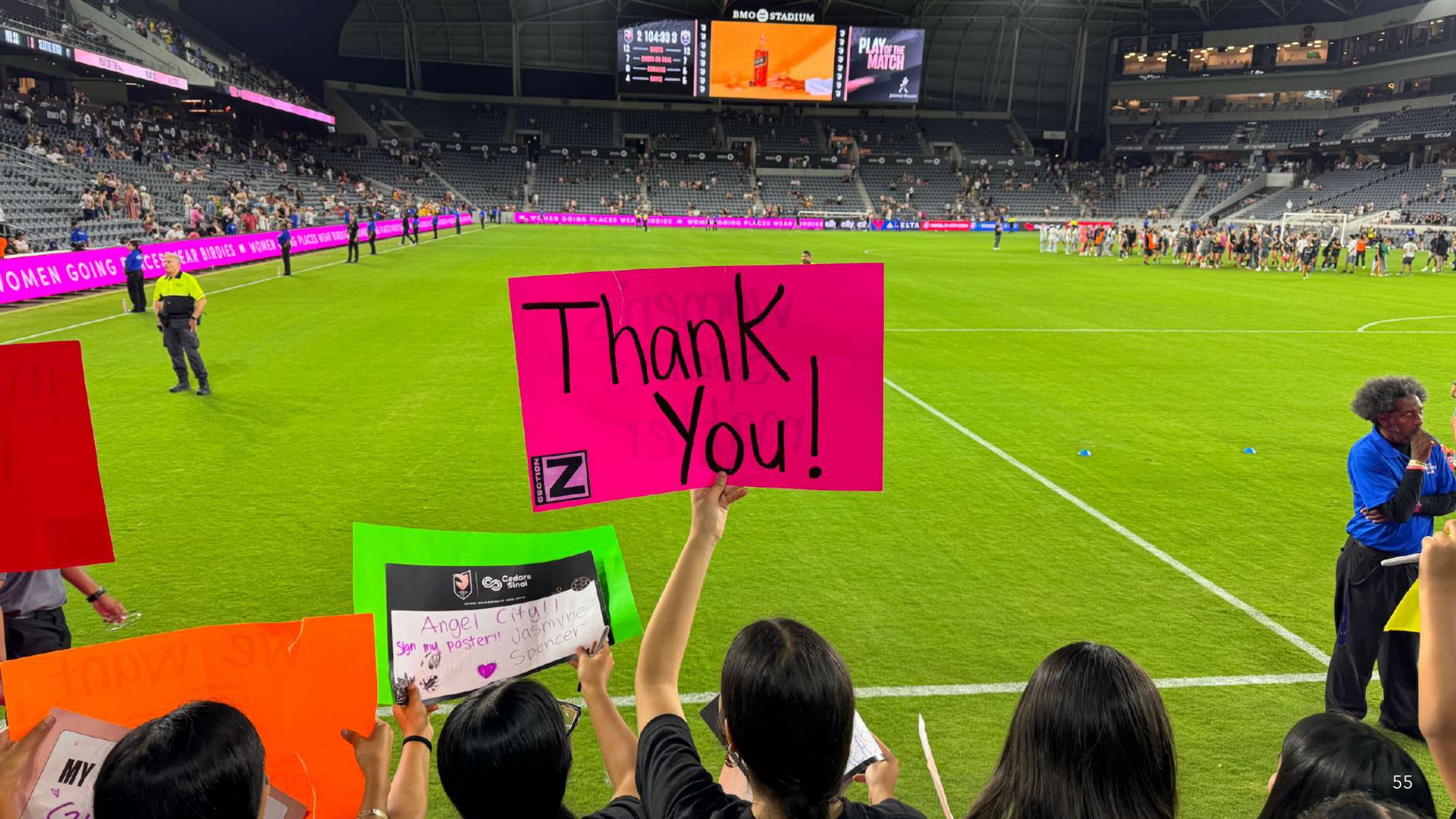
✓ Marketing

✓ CSR

✓ Donations

✓ In-kind Donations

✓ Company Matching



Thank You!

SECTION Z

Angel City!!
Sign my poster!! Jasmine Spencer
♥

MY
♥
(2)

Additional Themes & Topics covered in the survey:

Sports participation past 65+ years
Participation vs. other extracurriculars
Psychographic impact
Self-perception impact
Mental health
Body image
Resilience
Leadership
Self-confidence
Screen time
Grades
Socialization/Acceptance/Fitting in
Unmet demand for women's sports
Impact on life outcomes
Impact on career outcomes
Fanship
Engagement

Watching/Co-viewing
Live sporting event attendance
Subject matter strengths
STEM
Career interests
Barriers
Perceptions of women's sports
Demand for content
Impact of brand sponsorship
ROI
Resonant messaging territories
Brand awareness and love
Brand/League alignment
Most admired women
League awareness/likeability
Celebrity awareness/likeability
Athlete awareness/likeability



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