SPÓRT ÉIREANN
SPORT IRELAND

Rowing Ireland
Club Culture Research Project

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Prepared by Leading Sport
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Executive Summary

Rowing Ireland (RI) has focused on improving the gender equality of our sport in recent years. Our Women in Sport Strategy defines the long-term goal to achieve gender balance in all aspects of the sport – participation, officiating, coaching, leadership and visibility. In the last two years, RI have run numerous programmes and increased numbers in each of these areas – the low hanging fruit and quantifiable measures have been targeted. Yet there remains a persistent issue of intangible barriers to progress for women at club level. These issues are less quantifiable and for that reason have not yet been addressed. It was decided to undertake this research, funded by Sport Ireland, to understand exactly how culture at club level may hinder or support progress of women at club level, and based on the findings of the research to develop a toolkit to support clubs in achieving optimum club culture.

The research aimed to define club culture in the context of this research and our organisation; **to understand the factors which influence club culture and the hindrance or assistance it plays in achieving gender equality in rowing clubs around Ireland**.

The research method included a member wide survey, followed by a number of club focus groups (selected based on the findings of the survey). A wide and varying demographic was targeted to understand the influence of the club culture on all members and whether it has a direct or indirect impact on gender equality within our clubs. 1115 participants began the survey – 855 were analysed, after insufficiently completed surveys and respondent's under-16 years of age, were cleaned from the data set.

Findings

The overall finding of the research found that majority of rowing club members experience a positive club culture. When asked to describe your club's culture, the most common words were *inclusive, friendly, welcoming, positive and competitive*. Yet, close to 10% of overall respondents did report fewer positive terms such as *cliquey, toxic, exclusive*.

There is considerable agreement from respondents that club culture is usually set by those at the top and the committees (556 out of 862 who responded to this question either agree or somewhat agree). Across the survey and focus groups it was noted that in many rowing clubs a 'performance culture' can dominate.

The research focused on club culture with respect to gender equality. With that in mind, the responses were split into male and female responses across different roles – junior, senior rowers, committee members and coaches.

Leadership and Coaching

The greatest discrepancy of perceptions between male and female respondents was across the coaching cohort. 23% of female coaches report to witness gender bias in their club as opposed to 7% of male coaches. 41% of female coaches feel unacceptable behaviour is tackled in their club as opposed to 61% of male coaches. With regards to whether the presence of women was marginalised or undervalued within the club, 67% of male coaches disagreed with this versus 43% of women. These findings were underpinned by the feedback gathered within the focus groups. The idea of a 'legacy culture' - culture from the past - may go part way to explaining the discrepancy between male and female perceptions. It was also discussed within the focus groups that the experience is far less positive as a female coach than as a female rower. The research highlighted that female coaches often feel marginalised and are not experiencing the same club culture as their male counterparts.

There was less of a discrepancy between male and female perception with regards leadership. Generally, both male and females reported that their club has females in leadership roles such as committee and coaching. Although twice as females to males agreed that their club is more likely to have females in support roles – shop, coffee morning etc. More males (54%) to females (39%) perceive that their club has a good balance of genders in leadership roles.

When the leadership questions are distilled to responses from committee members only, the difference between male and female responses is less significant.

The perception of how comfortable one feels to give feedback to leadership varied across roles and genders. A higher proportion of male committee members reported to always feel more comfortable to give feedback to club leadership than female committee members (63% to 43%), whereas this gender gap increased with the coaching cohort (70% to 45%). For junior rowers, the gap was considerable between males and females when reporting on the how comfortable they feel to give feedback to club leadership with 51% of males reporting always, against 28% of female junior rowers. Similar results with senior rowers 58% of males and 32% of female always comfortable to give feedback.

Respect

Culture is related to the level of respect one experiences within their environment, be it from their peers or from leadership. The research found significant differences in the level of respect experienced by males and females across all roles within the club.

A higher proportion of males report to always feel respected by their peers in the club than females (48% to 35%) and this gap becomes greater when looked at from the coaching cohort only – where males are significantly more likely to report they always feel respected by their peers (51% to 33%). There is little difference between male and female rowers within the club with regards to the level of respect they perceive from their peers (54% to 48%).

Depending on whether they are male or female, both committee members and coaches report different experiences of the level of respect they feel from the opposite gender. Male committee members are more likely to report as always feeling respected by the opposite genders as female committee members (52% to 30%). Whilst male coaches are more than twice as likely to reports as always feeling respected by the opposite genders as female coaches (55% to 24%)

The same gap exists among junior and senior rowers, with male juniors nearly twice as likely to report always being respected by the opposite gender as female juniors (58% to 33%) and for senior rowers (60% to 33%).

When asked if you feel a valued member of your club – committee members, coaches and senior rowers reported positively across male and female respondents.

Equipment

In terms of the allocation of equipment within clubs, majority of respondents agreed that male and female members get equal access to equipment. The greatest gender disparity of responses was among the committee members, with 74% of male agreeing and 58% of female committee members agreeing.

Recommendations, Limitations and Future Research

This research has informed a toolkit for action, that will allow clubs to assess their own club culture and provide recommendations on how to positively influence it and ensure greatest lifelong participation with the sport.

One research limitation is participation bias - only those who desired and had an interest to complete the survey, did so. For that reason, a recommendation of the research is that clubs conduct their own survey or focus group regarding their individual club culture, across all roles and demographics. This would go some way to give deeper insight into the unique experiences of your club members and support targeted interventions.

There is a vast amount of information within the survey responses, with potential for further and deeper analysis. With respect to the resources and timeline of this project, this report presents the top-level findings. Rowing Ireland would be willing to share the anonymised data for further research in this area, under the appropriate conditions.

Key Findings

The key findings from the research are as follows:

1. There remains a gap between the genders in terms of perceptions and attitudes. With the exception of female senior rowers in some categories only, there is consistently a gap between how comfortable females from different cohorts feel in the club environment, with how the male cohorts feel.

2. The biggest gender gap is with female coaches, and the greatest issue emerging from the report would appear to be the supports perceived by female coaches and how they perceive are treated by peers and leadership in the club. 44% of female coaches feel they have witnessed gender bias in their club, vs 15% of male coaches - the phenomenon of legacy culture, or culture from the past, may go part way to explaining the discrepancy between male and female perceptions. Female coaches are less than half as likely to always feel respected by the opposite gender - 24% of the females within the coach cohort agreed with this vs 55% of the male coach cohort.

3. It is perceived that club culture is influenced by those at the top, in leadership positions. Leadership in rowing clubs is seen to be set by committees and coaches. Some clubs perceive the Club Captain as the most prominent leadership role.

4. Of all the female cohorts, female senior rowers are most respected by leadership and others in the club or perceive themselves to be so. This may be reflective of the success of senior female crews in competitive environments or confidence gained by time in the sport.

5. There continues to be a perception gap between the genders at junior level – so whilst older cohorts such as female committee members and coaches have this perception gap, one might assume this is age-related and thus a legacy issue that may change in time. However the fact there continues to be an issue at junior level would suggest that this is not the case, and proactive interventions, such as the toolkit, are necessary.

6. There is a statistically significant difference between men and women, across all roles and ages, in their perceptions and experiences of their club from a gender bias perspective. 1 in 3 women are not comfortable giving feedback to the club leadership, compared to 1 in 5 men. This should be a consideration for leadership, in how they gather feedback and respond to it when received. Creating an environment where there is psychological safety in sharing feedback and challenging conversations can be had in a respectful and constructive manner.

7. Large numbers of the overall cohort agreed with the statement that *'male and female members get equal access to the best equipment',* but proportionately more males than females did so. 57% of the females within the overall cohort agreed with this vs 72% of the male respondents within the overall cohort. 58% of the females within the committee member cohort agreed with this statement vs 74% of the male committee member cohort, only marginally bigger numbers.

8. The other strong cultural dynamic in Irish rowing clubs is between the 'performance/competitive' and 'recreational/fun' rowing. This dynamic impacts the culture in the club and also impacts the gender dynamic, and indeed may be a stronger cultural force in some clubs than any gender bias – so for example in a strongly performance-oriented club a winning senior female crew will gain a dominant cultural force within that club.

Project Development and Timelines

This project is funded by Sport Ireland under the Research Grant Scheme 2021/2022 – funding for the project was applied for in October 2021, and was approved at the end of 2021, for the project to be conducted in 2022.

Leading Sport Agency Ltd (led by Maeve Buckley) joined Rowing Ireland (led by Claire Lambe and Ceara O'Connor) in developing and delivering this project. A Steering Group was formed, further composed of:

- Nora Stapleton, Women in Sport Lead, Sport Ireland
- Eamon Colclough, former President Rowing Ireland
- Niamh Tallon, Hersport.ie and senior club rower
- Vivian Kelleher, club coach, former club captain

This group has met at regular intervals thus far in the project, providing guidance and support in shaping the project.

A timeline was developed for the project as follows:

Funded schemes kick off meeting with SI Research topic defined and project plan and milestones finalised Project launched and communicated with Rowing Ireland clubs Steering group for research work agreed – small group of internal and external stakeholders	January 2022
Survey designed and finalised Small sample of clubs for qualitative work identified	February 2022
Funded schemes interim report 1 Survey live – communications around survey	March 2022
Analysis of survey results and refinement of topics to interrogate further in qualitative research	April 2022
1-1 interviews and focus groups with clubs and club members	May 2022
Funded schemes mid-year report	June 2022
Presentation of body of evidence to Steering Group	June 2022
Development of toolkit for culture change	June/July 2022
Funded schemes interim report 2	September 2022

Testing of toolkit amongst target groups	September 2022
Presentation of final project and toolkit to Steering Group	September/October 2022
Communications campaign around toolkit	October/November 2022
Funding scheme concludes (12 months)	December 16 2022
Funded schemes final report	January/February 2023
Funded schemes conference/project presentation event	March 2023

This document forms the 'body of evidence', that is the summation of findings from the research phase. This document in turn will go on to inform the toolkit that will be used to support clubs in developing the optimum club culture.

Purpose of the project

It is understood that culture holds various definitions across different contexts, and to date a limited amount of research has been done into the area of club culture and how it impacts the sporting experience.

The Sport Ireland *Women in Coaching Research*[7] surveyed experiences of female coaches across a multitude of sports. That research informed a high-level assessment of culture in the Irish sporting landscape, through the experiences of female coaches, across a number of different sports.

This (Rowing Ireland) research enabled a deeper-dive into the experiences of men and women within the club environments, across roles in rowing. The purpose was not only to bring the concept of club culture to the fore, but to investigate how it can be improved within club settings. Our intended output was a body of evidence, matched with a toolkit for action, that will support Rowing Ireland clubs to develop their culture to ensure greatest lifelong participation with the sport.

The intention is that the research and toolkit can act as a template for NGBs to assess and improve club culture across sports. This research has the potential to further showcase Ireland as a leader in gender equality, diversity and inclusion (GEDI) and acknowledges that to achieve our GEDI goals, a multifaceted approach is needed.

Furthermore, Rowing Ireland's recent World and Olympic success, as well as increased prominence in Irish sport, makes it well placed to showcase this research and the sport's commitment towards gender equality in all aspects of the sport.

Project Context

Rowing in Ireland was historically a male-only sport, with women's involvement starting in the late 70's. Whilst female participation has grown to make up 50% of registered members, many clubs still retain the legacy of predominantly males in coaching (72%) and administration roles (53%) (Rowing Ireland, 2021)[1].

Gender Reporting 2022 – Affiliation Forms and Rowing Ireland Registration. [2]

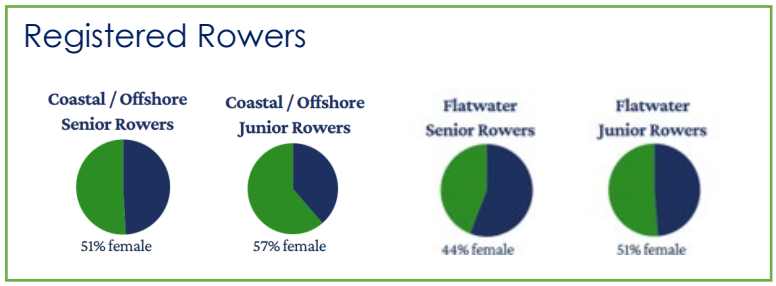

Figure 1 Registered members by gender

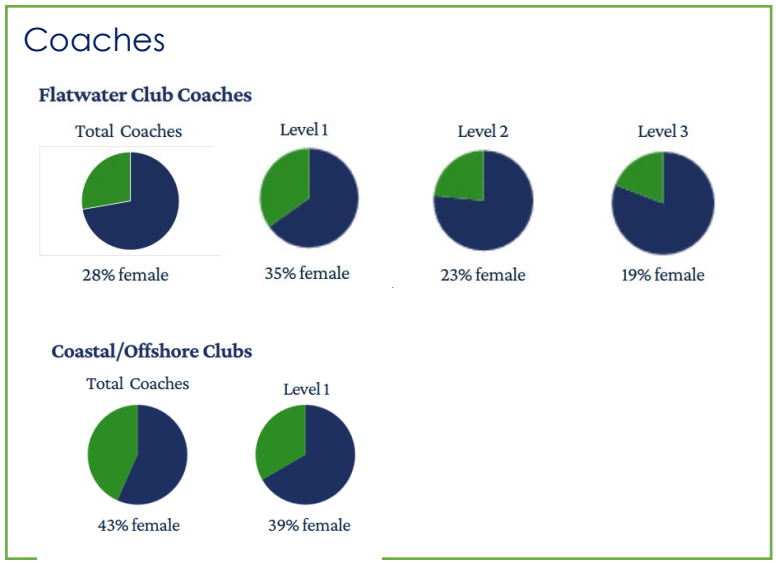

Figure 2: Gender breakdown of coaches, through self-reporting in club affiliation forms

Figure 3: Gender breakdown of Club Committees

[1] Rowing Ireland Club Affiliation 2021.

[2] WiS Strategy Review 2022 - publication (rowingireland.ie)

Rowing Ireland (RI) has become increasingly aware of the importance of club culture and its direct impact on a person's lifelong involvement and enjoyment of rowing. To date, our interventions in the club environment have been indirect and discreet.

RI has 9 regional Women in Coaching Networks. Anecdotally, issues of sexism and unsupportive club environments have been raised by coaches and club committee members. These conversations highlighted the need to understand whether these experiences are common within our club culture and if so, how they can be influenced to ensure a more gender equitable experience for all members and whether they are holding back lifelong participation. In parallel, we wanted to understand what practices define positive culture and disseminate best practice.

Sport Ireland's *Women in Coaching Research* (Sport Ireland, 2021), highlighted sexism and gender related issues, as well as lack of NGB and club support, as barriers to progression for female coaches. There is a need to understand if these experiences exist within our sport and whether the issues are experienced beyond coaching.

The barriers to achieving gender equality in sport have been well documented in recent years and are understood to be both tangible and intangible (Dutove & LaVoi, 2012). It has been acknowledged that addressing only the tangible barriers, with interventions primarily focused on the minority themselves, will not achieve the goal of equality. Inherent culture issues must be understood and addressed. "We need to examine how we really get things done: the values, rituals, shared assumptions, the traditions, the perceptions, the unwritten rules, the stories that circulate within our NGB. These create our organisational cultures." (Norman, 2017).

The methodology of the research built on previous assessments (Jeanes, Spaaij, & Farquharson, 2020), (Fitzgerald, Stride, & Drury, 2021)and guidelines (Maroondah City Council, 2017) for club culture/environments and its role in gender relations and gender equity.

This research was built on the mission, values, objectives and actions of the following policies:

1. National Sport Policy [3]
2. SI Statement of Strategy [4]

[3] *National Sport Policy.*
Values: "Promotes Inclusion, Sport must be welcoming and inclusive, offering appropriate opportunities for participation and improvement to all. We will promote inclusion to deliver our desired outcomes with a focus on addressing social, disability, gender, ethnic and other gradients." and "Emphasises excellent ethical standards." Actions: 6, 9, 14, 27, 32.

[4] *SI Statement of Strategy.*
Mission of 'Promoting an inclusive and fair culture', 'building strong sports organisations' and 'realising the concept of 'sport for life for everyone''.

3. Women in Sport Policy [5]

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[5] *Women in Sport Policy:*
Objectives

- Broaden the coaching base to include more women from grassroots to high performance
- Significantly reduce the active sport participation gradient between men and women
- Reduce the drop-out from physical activity and sport in young girls
- Provide a pathway for women aspiring to become leaders of funded bodies

Research Aims

Research aims:
This research aims to define club culture in the context of Irish rowing clubs, understand its impact on club members with respect to gender equality and develop a toolkit for clubs to assess and positively influence their culture towards greater gender equality and positive lifelong participation with the sport.

Objectives:

- To define the term 'club culture', for the purpose of the research
- To understand what aspects of a club, define its culture.
- To understand how club culture influences gender inclusivity and equality in rowing clubs in Ireland.
- To understand how club culture can be influenced to create a positive inclusive environment for all members.
- Develop an evidence informed toolkit for clubs to positively influence culture for greater gender equality and better member experience.
- To positively influence longer term outcomes for gender equality in rowing, subsequently impacting lifelong participation in sport
- Communicate and disseminate the findings and recommendations nationally and internationally and promote Ireland's role in developing best practice in this area.
- Provide a template and toolkit that could be used or replicated by other NGBs.

Central Research Question:

What is the role of club culture in the achievement of gender equality in Irish rowing clubs and how can it be positively influenced?

Project Methodology

Our methodology followed a three-step process as follows:

Literature Review

We undertook a review of existing national and international research in this area to identify indicators of a club culture, focusing on patterns of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours associated or correlated with gender balanced clubs, whilst taking care around assumptions around culture, and comparing sets of research of this type.

Our literature review covered several sources:

- National governing bodies of rowing in other jurisdictions and their work in this or similar areas
- Academic Papers
- Grey Literature

The main findings are synthesised in a paper contained in Appendix 1.This first part of this project, that is the literature review, allowed us to understand what may have been some of the challenges in addressing club culture in a gender context in different sports and jurisdictions. It assisted us in defining the questions used in our survey as well as helping us to define what is 'club culture' in the context of this research and Rowing Ireland.

Member-wide survey

A member-wide survey was designed which aimed for 1000 respondents, from across a broad spectrum of respondent type. This was the first-of-its-kind for RI with the goal of providing insight into the club culture within our sport and how it directly impacts participants.

The survey ran from 2nd March 2022 to 23rd March 2022, and had 1115 respondents, above our target. It was advertised to potential respondents and all clubs via email, social media, RI website, QR code, and word of mouth at clubs, regattas and events during the month of March.

The survey was a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions, 42 questions in total, with respondents taking an average of 10m 25s to complete, and a completion rate of 61%.

Respondents replied from 32 counties and 86 different clubs.

75.49% of these were river clubs, with 7.84% from coastal clubs, 7.84% from offshore clubs, and 8.82% from university clubs.

91.12% were current members, with 9.17% former members.

Respondents were asked in what way did or do you participate in the sport. Respondents were allowed to choose multiple options (e.g. committee member and parent) and the breakdown of answers was as follows:

Table 1: Survey Respondents Breakdown by Role

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	0.10%	1
Committee member	31.70%	310
Volunteer at club	33.03%	323
Coach	28.63%	280
Umpire	7.46%	73
Junior rower	30.67%	300
Senior rower	30.47%	298
Master rower	23.62%	231
Recreational rower	18.10%	177
Parent	22.09%	216
Other (please specify)	6.24%	61
TOTAL		2270

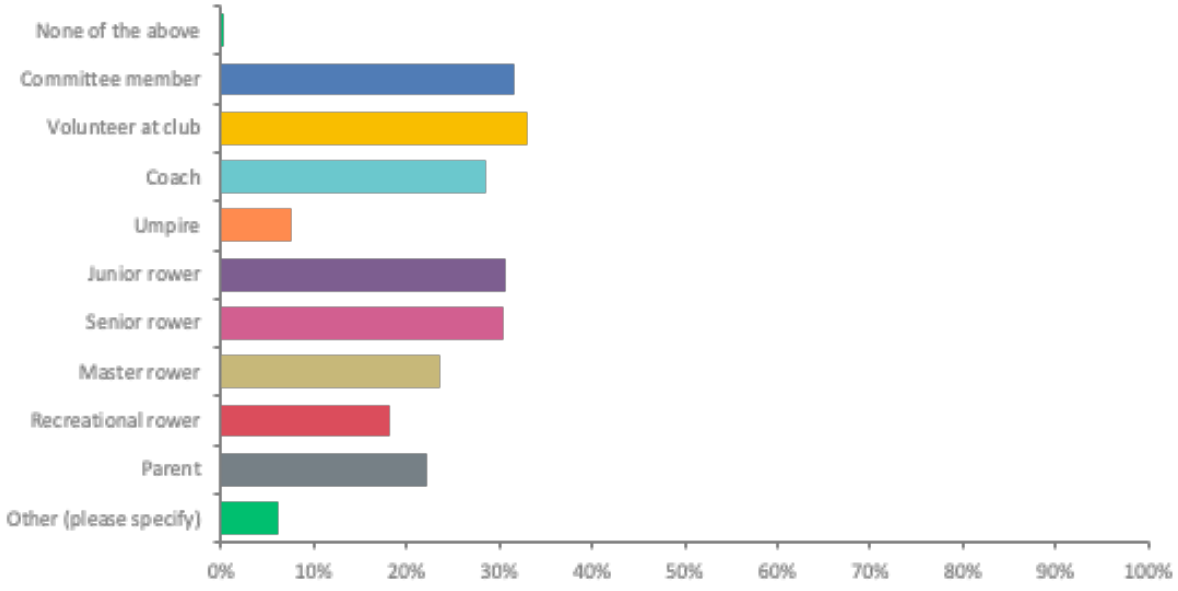

Figure 4: Survey Respondents Breakdown by Role

Respondents were asked how many years they were involved in rowing, with the answers as follows:

Table 2: Survey respondents' breakdown by years involved in rowing

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-2 years	14.64%	143
2-5 years	27.33%	267
5-10 years	26.41%	258
10-15 years	11.05%	108
15-20 years	4.40%	43
20-30 years	4.81%	47
30+ years	11.36%	111
TOTAL		977

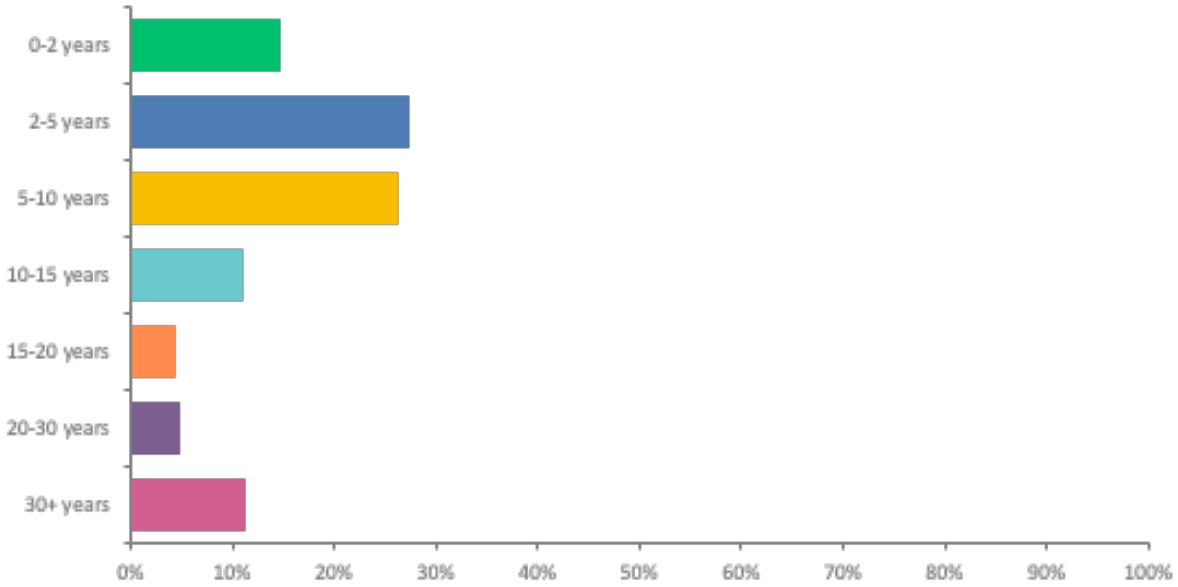

Figure 5: Survey respondents' breakdown by years involved in rowing

We then cleaned that dataset to remove incomplete surveys, as well as remove anyone who self-identified as underage, to adhere to child protection best practice. We were then left with a data set of 855 respondents, on which this analysis is based.

Focus groups

Within the survey we asked respondents to self-identify if they were interested in participating in a focus group to develop further insight and to examine the results of the survey and understand which interventions may have the greatest impact.

The focus groups specifically sought to examine:

- Policies and programmes within clubs that impact the club culture
- Behaviours, attitudes and challenges within clubs
- Physical facilities/resources, their presentation and allocation
- Gaps in relation to participation created by the culture
- Potential enablers to generate a 'positive' club culture and what that might mean
- Effective strategies and solutions to refresh a club culture.

We asked respondents to volunteer if they were interested in being part of a further focus group and 342 people volunteered their names to be involved.

We contacted all of those people by email and invited those who were still interested and available to attend specific focus groups, according to how they described themselves (e.g., coach) or to a general 'town-hall' focus group. Those focus groups took place as follows:

- Committee members – May 5th, 2022
- Female coaches – May 5th, 2022
- Athletes (junior/senior rowers) – May 10th, 2022
- Volunteers – May 10th 2022
- Townhall – May 11th, 2022

The focus groups took place on-line, via Zoom, and were of 1 hour duration each.

The conversation was focused around 4 main questions, those being:

- How would you define or describe club culture?
- How are decisions made at club level?
- Are there challenges in executing your role (*whether athlete/coach/committee member/volunteer*) from a culture perspective?
- What is your view on club communications (with regards to culture?)

In total 34 people took part. The conversations were audio recorded and the transcripts later written up. The quotes contained within this research document are actual quotes from those focus groups.

Definition of Club Culture

One of our project aims was to define club culture in the context of rowing clubs in Ireland. Our definition is as follows:

- Culture is the expression of the club's values, actions and attitudes.
- Culture is how things are done in the club and how the values of the club are espoused in its actions.
- Culture is how the members of the club interact with each other.
- Culture is the attitudes of the club members to each other and to those outside the club.
- Culture is grounded in a shared vision and a set of identified actions/goals.
- Culture develops organically or actively – culture has the greatest chance of being a positive culture when it is built actively in a collaborative way.

Research Findings

Rowing Ireland has approximately 3000 registered members, so the cleaned data set of 855 represents 29% of the membership, so a percentage that can be considered statistically significant.

Of this overall cleaned data set 55% were female, 44% male, and 1% binary/non-gender and 1% preferring not to say.

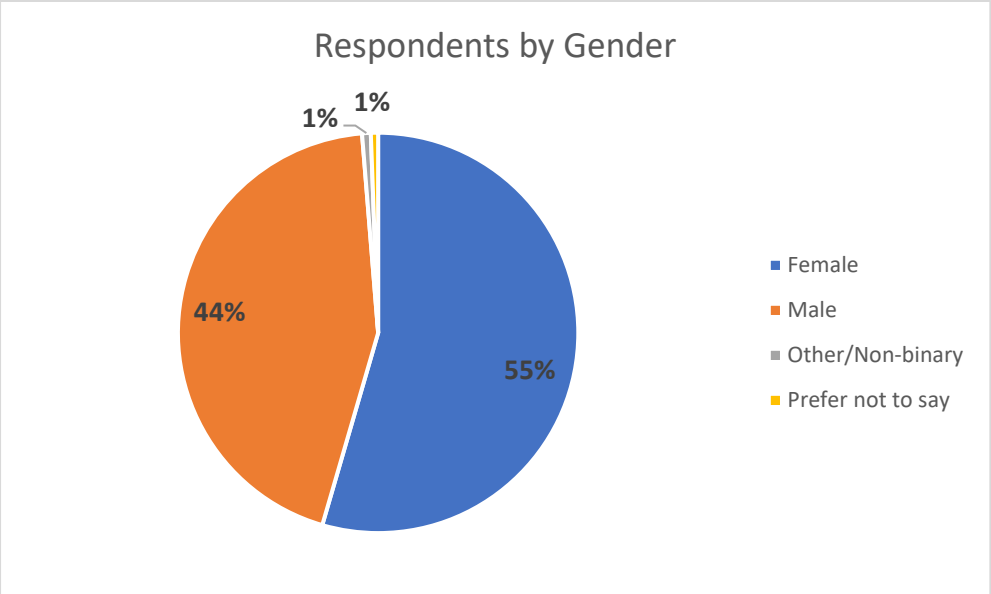

Figure 6: Respondents by Gender

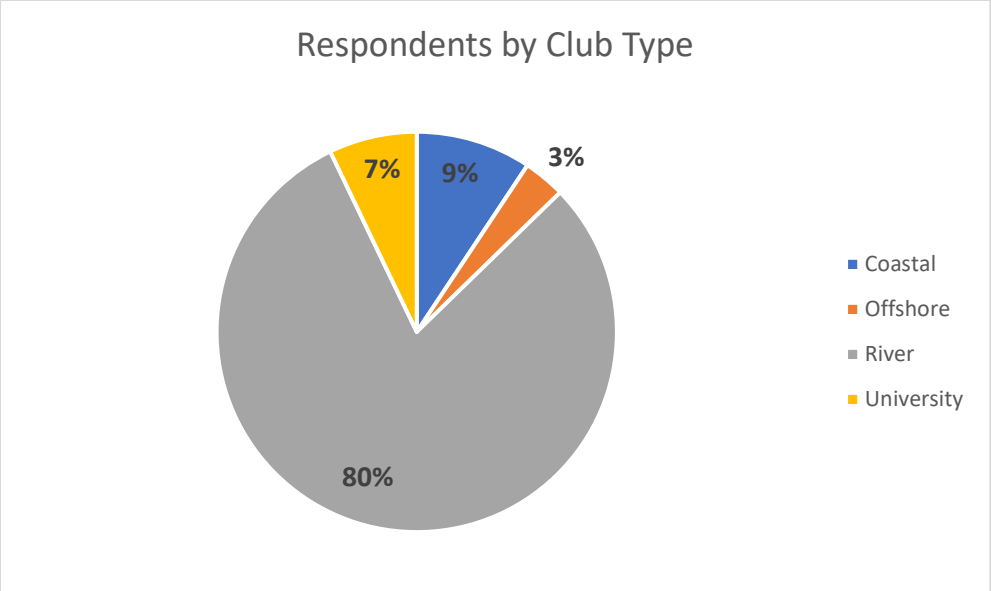

Figure 7: Respondents by Club Type

Culture

Participants were first asked how they would describe the culture in their club. The word cloud below represents the frequency with which certain words were repeated.

Figure 8: Club Culture Word Cloud

This was echoed further by the participants in the focus group, who said that culture is – '*this is the way we do things around here*'.

The overall cohort were asked whether club culture is usually set by those at the top and the committees. 45% of females agreed with this vs 36% of males. (So 186 females out of a total of 414 females, vs 124 males from a total of 339, with 764 people having replied to this question).

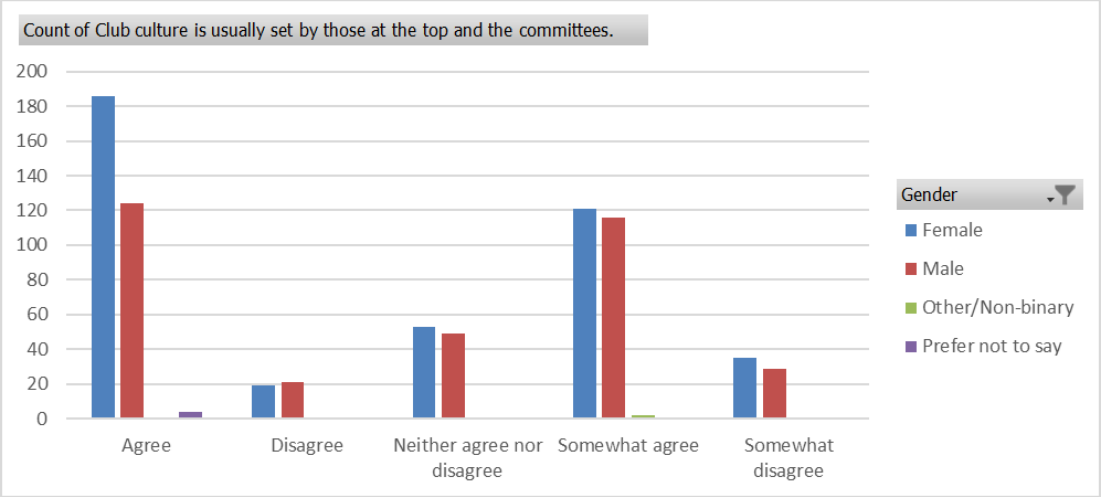

Figure 9: Count of survey responses to 'Club Culture is usually set by those at the top and the committees'.

Within the committee member cohort, there was still a greater count of females rather than males who agreed with the statement, but the gap between male and female perception is narrower, 23% for females, vs 19% for males.

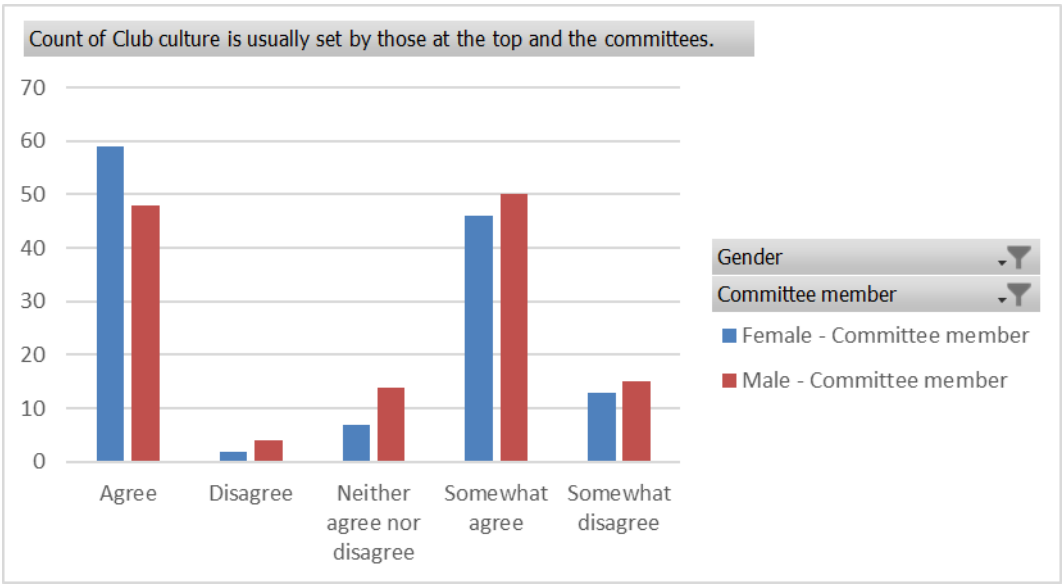

Figure 10: Count of Committee Member responses to 'Club Culture is usually set by those at the top and the committees'.

Within the focus groups, further thoughts on culture included that '*culture is how you perceive being supported*' and that the '*culture is different as coach rather than athlete*'. Other stated that ''*club culture is shaped by the power people have*', but in contrast to that it was also stated that '*the athletes generate the culture in the club*'.

It was also noted that in many rowing clubs a '*performance culture*' can dominate and that in general '*rowing rewards hard work*'.

Coaching

The figure below represents the total number of coaches, per age cohort, who responded to the survey.

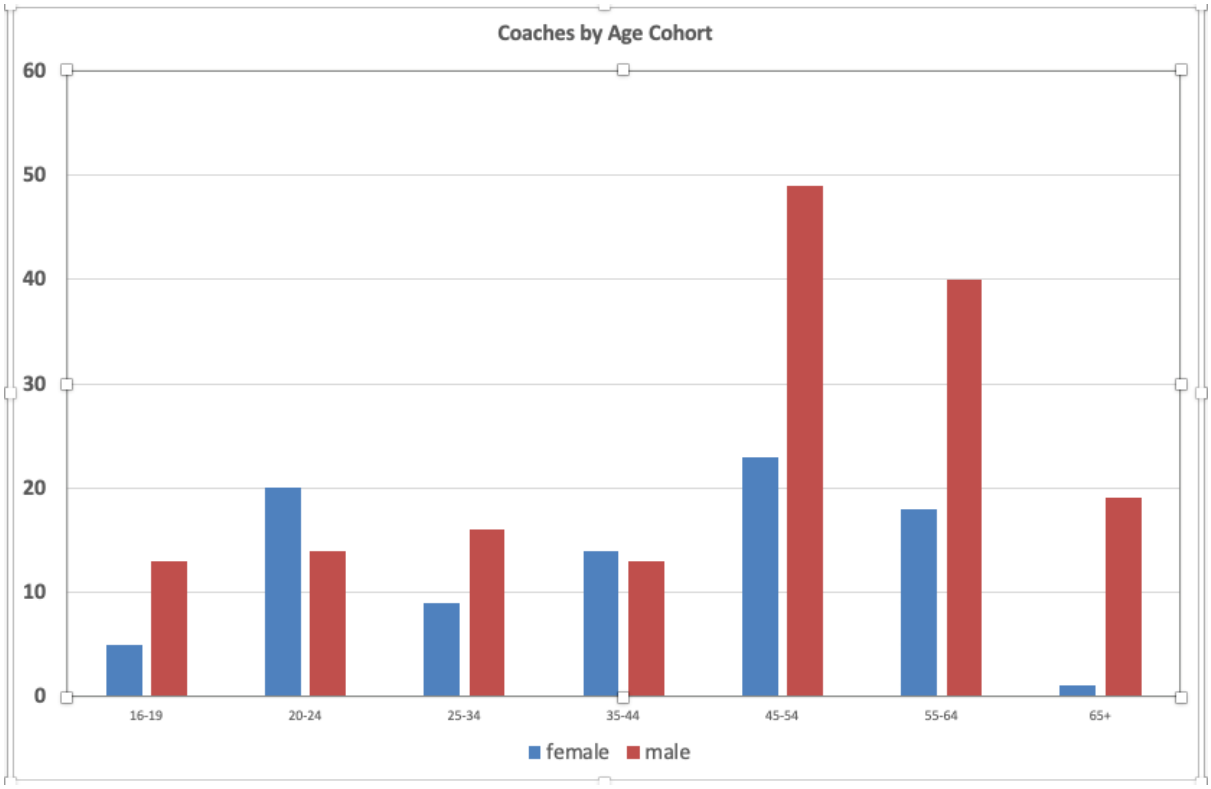

Figure 11: Breakdown of Coach Respondents by Age

There were 90 females and 166 males in total. Within the female coaching cohort, 76% were from river clubs, 9% from university clubs, and 8% each from coastal and offshore clubs. We did not observe significant statistical differences in female coaching responses between club types.

Of those 90 female coaches, 59 had a female mentor. Of those 59, 3 found that experience to be negative – the balance found it positive or strongly positive, or did not specify.

Of those 166 male coaches, 74 had a female mentor. Of those 74, 3 found that experience to be negative or strongly negative – the balance found it positive or strongly positive or did not specify.

It was noted in the focus groups that '*Coaches set the tone for the club*' and that things can be '*male-dominated in coaching sphere*'. Female coaches spoke of '*not being taken seriously*' and having a '*challenge as female coach*'. Female coaches spoke of '*having to do posturing for position*' to '*make sure [their] voice is heard*'. They spoke of it being a '*constant challenge, *' and '*have found it extremely difficult at times as female coach*'. Another spoke of '*constantly having to stick up for yourself*'. The challenge for female

coaches would appear to be epitomised in the statement '*There is a different attitude towards women who come down to coach. It isn't that usual*'.

Behaviours

We asked the respondents specific questions around behaviours they may have witnessed in their club. Within the overall cohort, more women than men believed they had witnessed gender bias in their club.

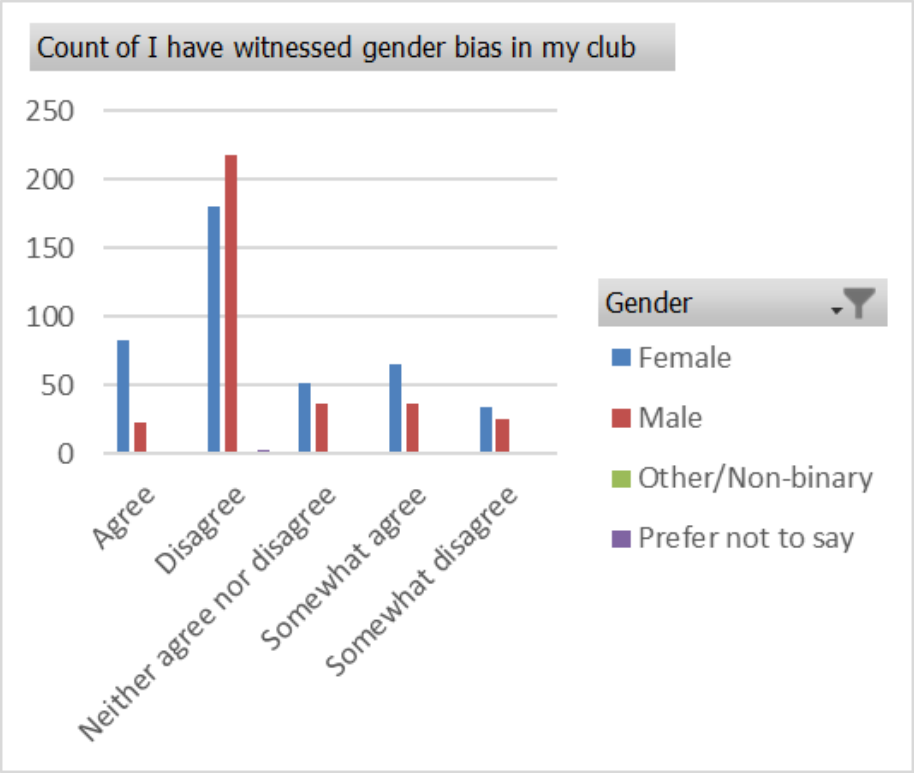

Figure 12: Count of responses to 'I have witnessed gender bias in my club'

23% of female coaches believe they have witnessed gender bias in the club, vs. 7% of male coaches.

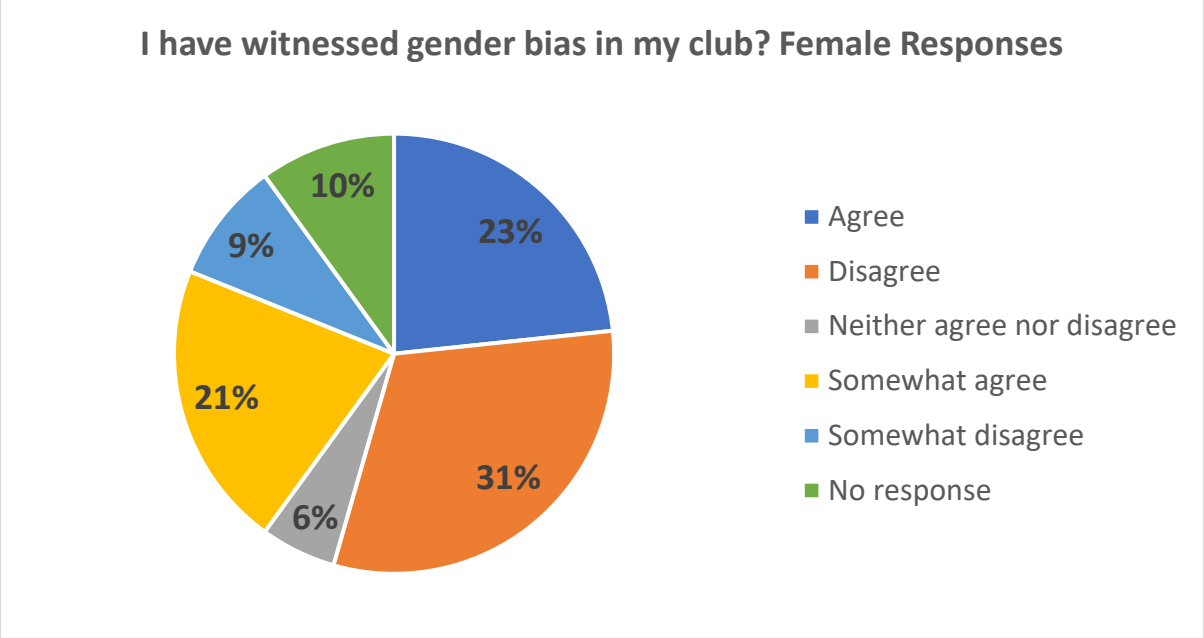

Figure 13: Breakdown of female responses to 'I have witnessed gender bias in my club'.

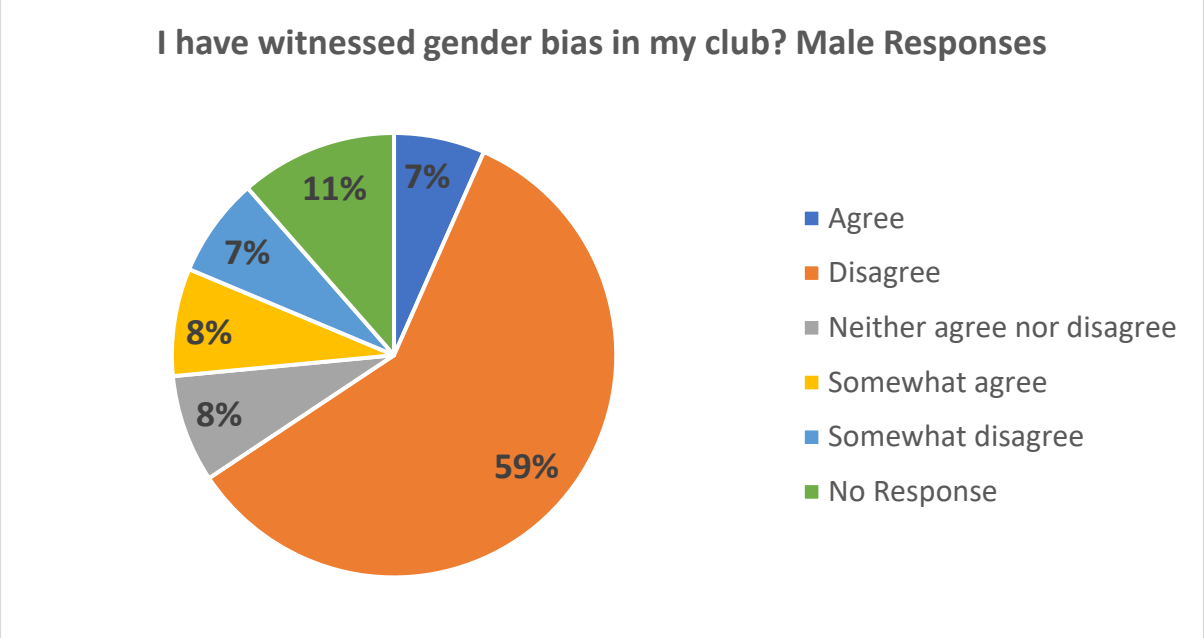

Figure 14: Breakdown of male responses to 'I have witnessed gender bias in my club'.

When asked with regards to behaviours specifically within the coaching cohort, only 44% of female coaches felt unacceptable behaviour was tackled in the club, vs 61% of male coaches.

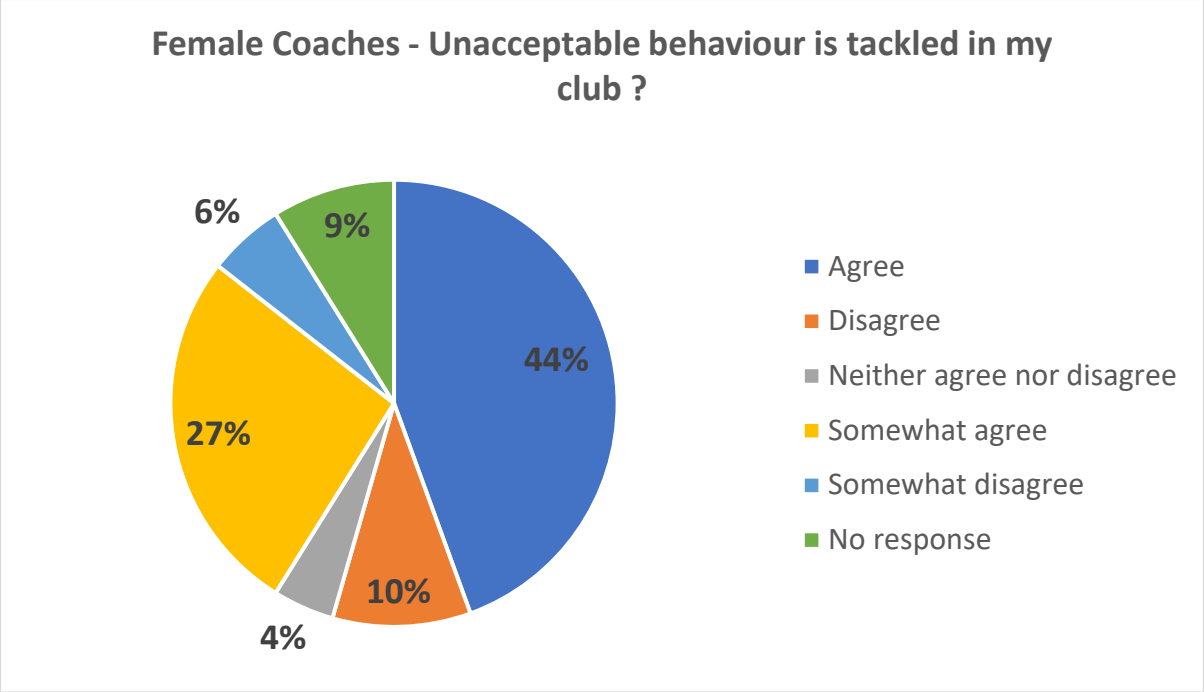

Figure 15: Breakdown of female coaches' responses to 'Unacceptable behaviour is tackled in my club?

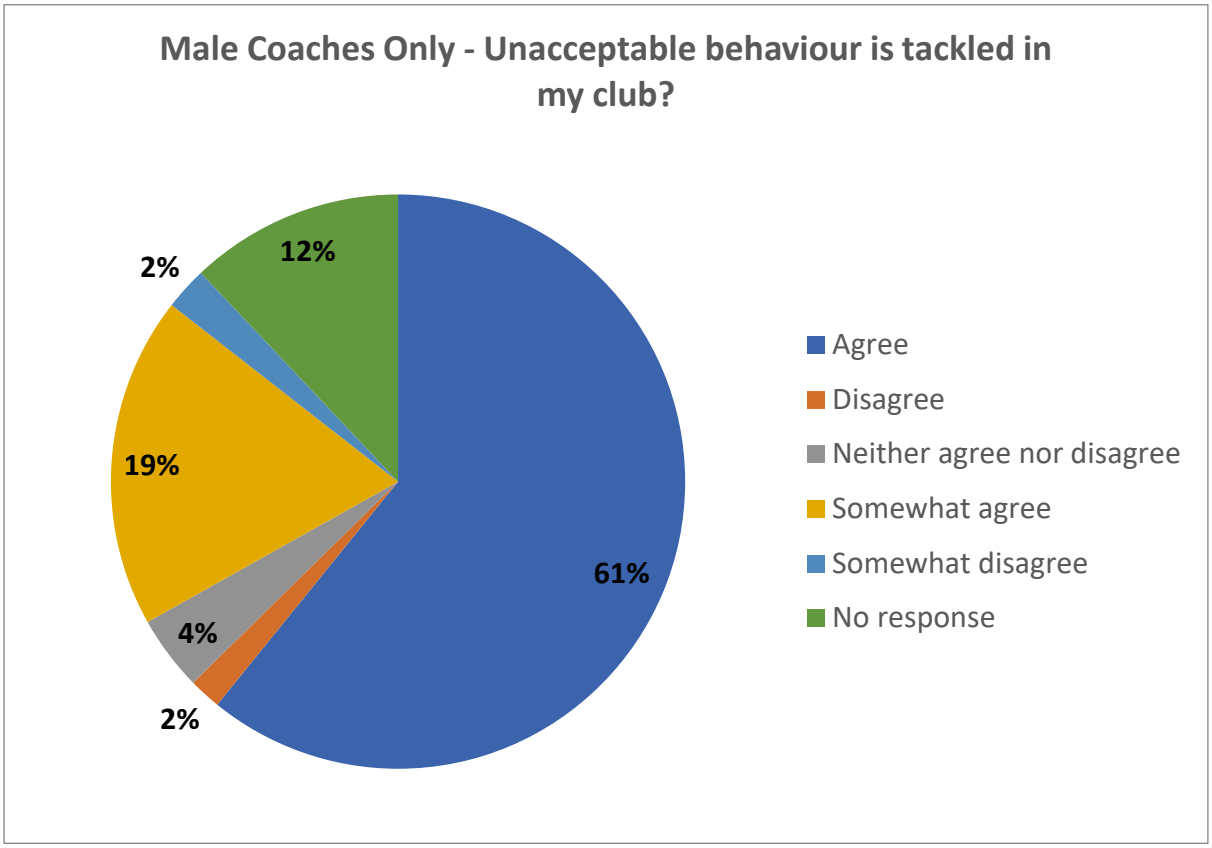

Figure 16: Breakdown of female coaches' responses to 'Unacceptable behaviour is tackled in my club?

With regards to whether the presence of women was marginalised or undervalued within the club, 67% of male coaches disagreed with this vs only 43% of women. Within the focus groups there was mention of '*legacy culture*' – this phenomenon of legacy culture, or culture from the past, may go part way to explaining the discrepancy between male and female perceptions. It was also discussed within the focus groups that '*If I walk down into the same club and maybe into the same people as a coach and there to go out in a launch and not in a rowing boat, it's like the culture changes straight away*' – the point being that the experience is far less positive as a female coach than as a female rower. This was contextualised further by the 'legacy culture' and the fact that '*they're just so used to just being the guys coaching altogether and they know each other because they were rowing together*' – but to the exclusion of the female coaches.

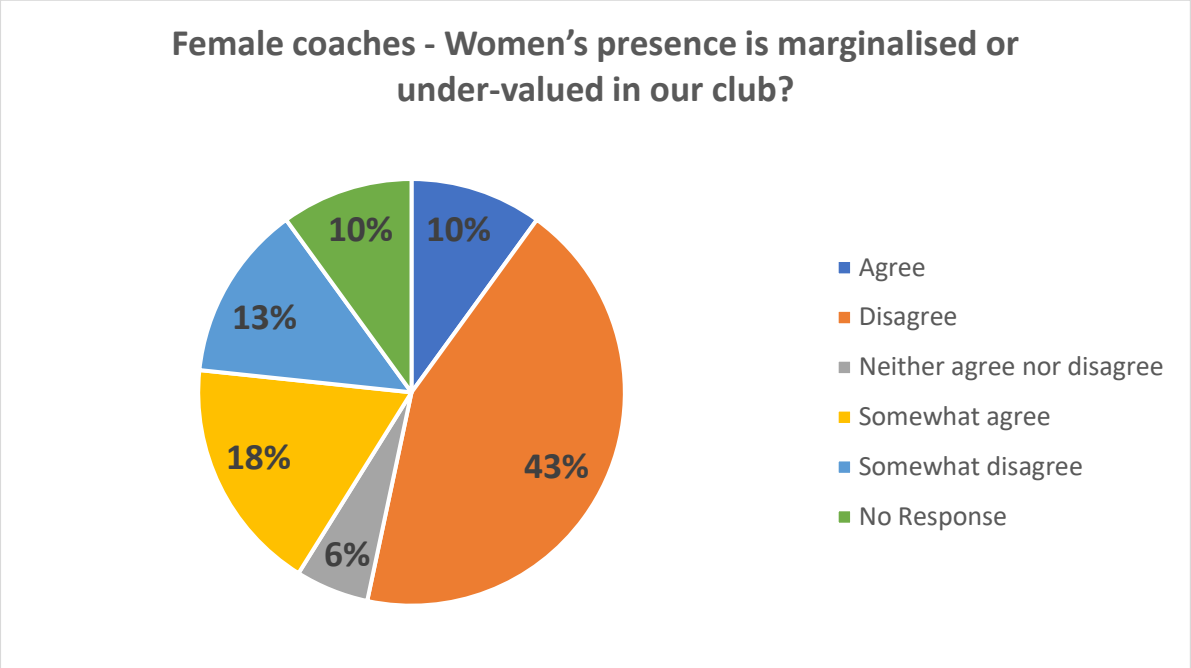

Figure 17: Female Responses to 'Women's presence is marginalised or under-valued in our club?

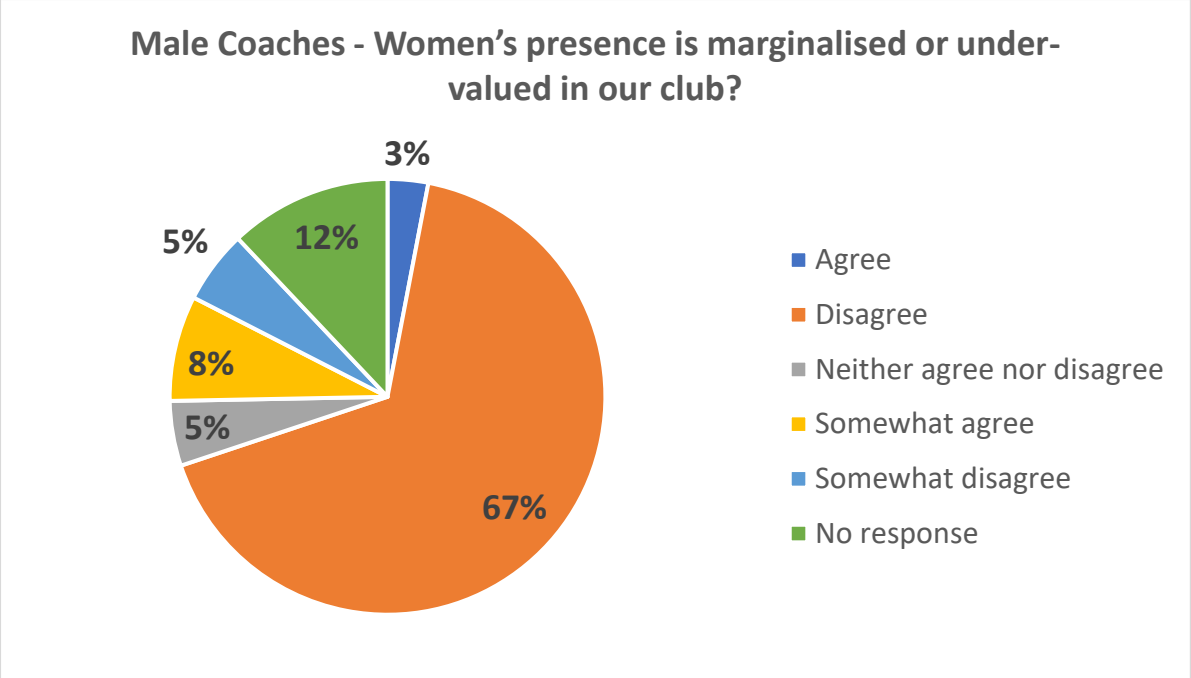

Figure 18: Male Responses to 'Women's presence is marginalised or under-valued in our club?

It was noted in the focus groups that '*there's still a lot of work to do in terms of women's coaching*'. '*If we had more confident female coaches, I think we could achieve a lot more than what we're achieving at the moment*'.

Leadership

With regards to leadership values, we asked respondents how much they would agree or disagree with a number of statements. Respondents were asked whether '*My club has females in leadership roles – committee, coaching, etc*', with 70% of the females within the overall cohort agreed with this vs 75% of the male respondents within the overall cohort. (So 290 females out of a total of 414 females, vs 254 males from a total of 339, with 764 people having replied to this question, the balance identifying as non-binary or preferring not to say).

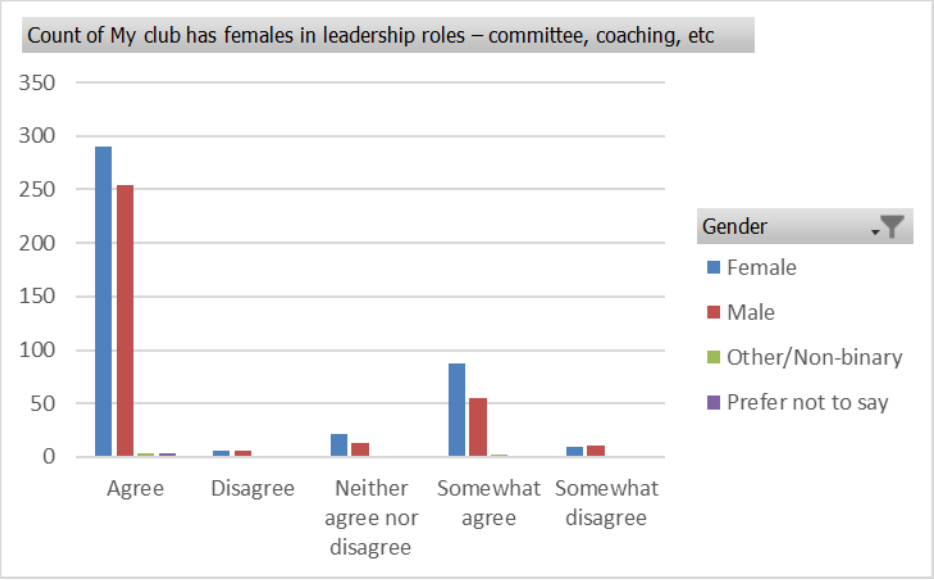

Figure 19: Count of responses to 'My club has females in leadership roles - committee, coaching etc.

Respondents were asked whether '*My club is inclusive of women in leadership roles*', with 65% of the females within the overall cohort agreed with this vs 76% of the male respondents within the overall cohort. (So 269 females out of a total of 414 females, vs 260 males from a total of 339, with 762 people having replied to this question, the balance identifying as non-binary or preferring not to say).

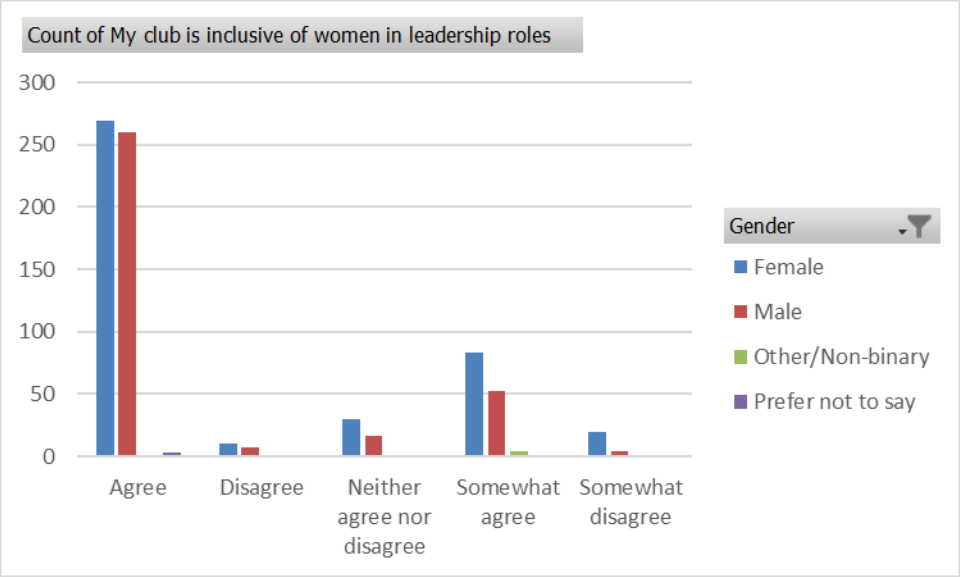

Figure 20: Count of responses to 'My club is inclusive of women in leadership roles.'

Respondents were further asked whether '*My club is more likely to have females in support roles - shop, coffee morning, etc'* – see figure below. The count now becomes imbalanced, with more than twice the number of female respondents than male agreeing with that statement. 30% of the females within the overall cohort agreed with this vs 18% of the male respondents within the overall cohort. (So 127 females out of a total of 413 females, vs 61 males from a total of 339, with 763 people having replied to this question, the balance identifying as non-binary or preferring not to say).

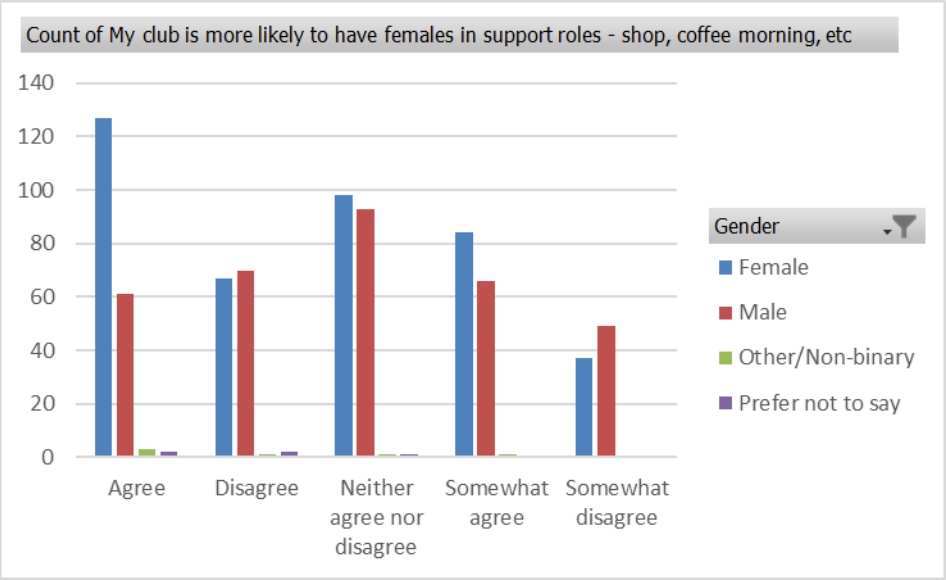

Figure 21: Count of 'My club is more likely to have females in support roles - shop, coffee morning, etc.

When respondents were asked whether '*My club has a good balance of genders in leadership roles'*, more males than females agreed with that statement, 39% of the females within the overall cohort agreed with this vs 54% of the male respondents within the overall cohort. (So 160 females out of a total of 413 females, vs 182males from a total of 339, with 763 people having

replied to this question, the balance identifying as non-binary or preferring not to say).

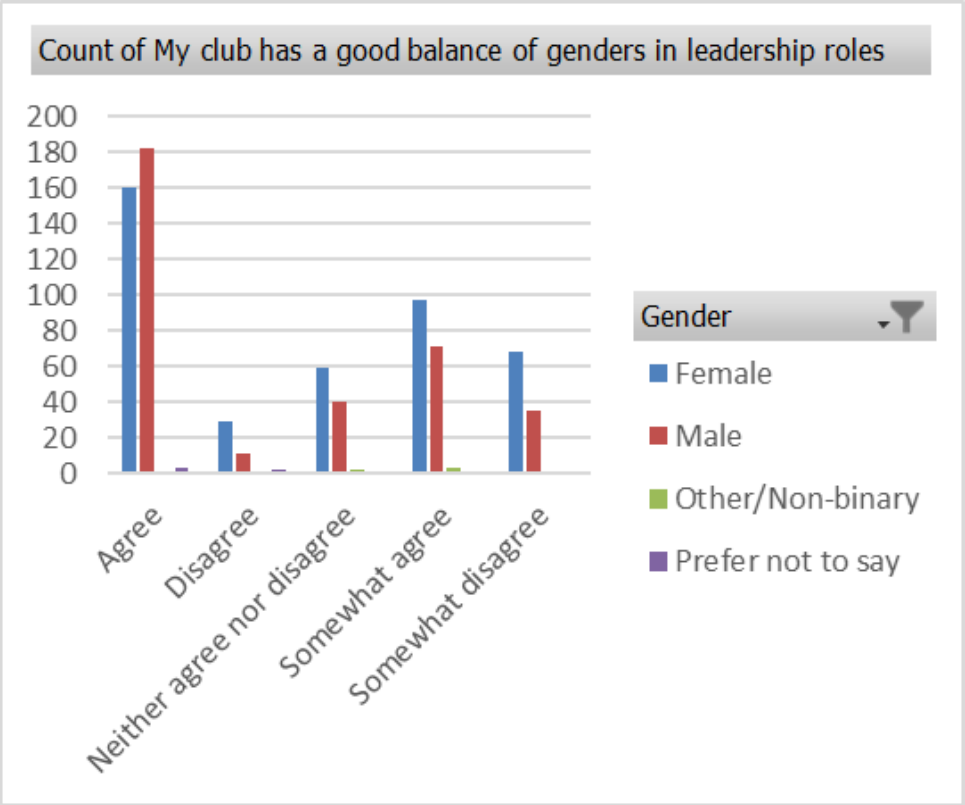

Figure 22: Count of responses to 'My club has a good balance of genders in leadership roles.'

Leadership - Committee members

Within the focus groups, there was discussion around the fact that the '*committee structure is power base*'. This was further underpinned by comments such as '*as long as committee members are open there shouldn't be a problem*' and discussion around how much the leadership of the club can influence the culture of the club. To that end we looked at the committee member cohort alone and their views on leadership.

Male and female committee members were broadly equal in their agreement with the statement that '*my club has females in leadership roles – committee, coaching, etc*'. 76% of the females within the committee member cohort agreed with this vs 77% of the male committee member cohort. (So 97 females out of a total of 127 females, vs 101 males from a total of 131, with 258 people having replied to this question).

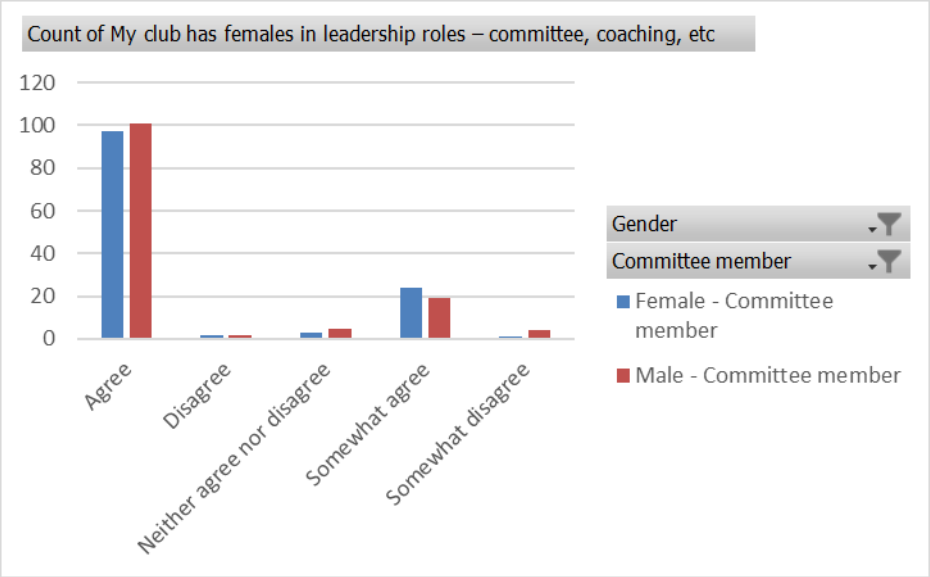

Figure 23: Committee Member responses to 'My club has females in leadership roles - committee, coaching etc'.

More male committee members than female agreed with the statement that '*my club is inclusive of women in leadership roles*', with 69% of the females within the committee member cohort agreed with this vs 80% of the male committee member cohort. (So 87 females out of a total of 126 females, vs 105 males from a total of 131, with 257 people having replied to this question).

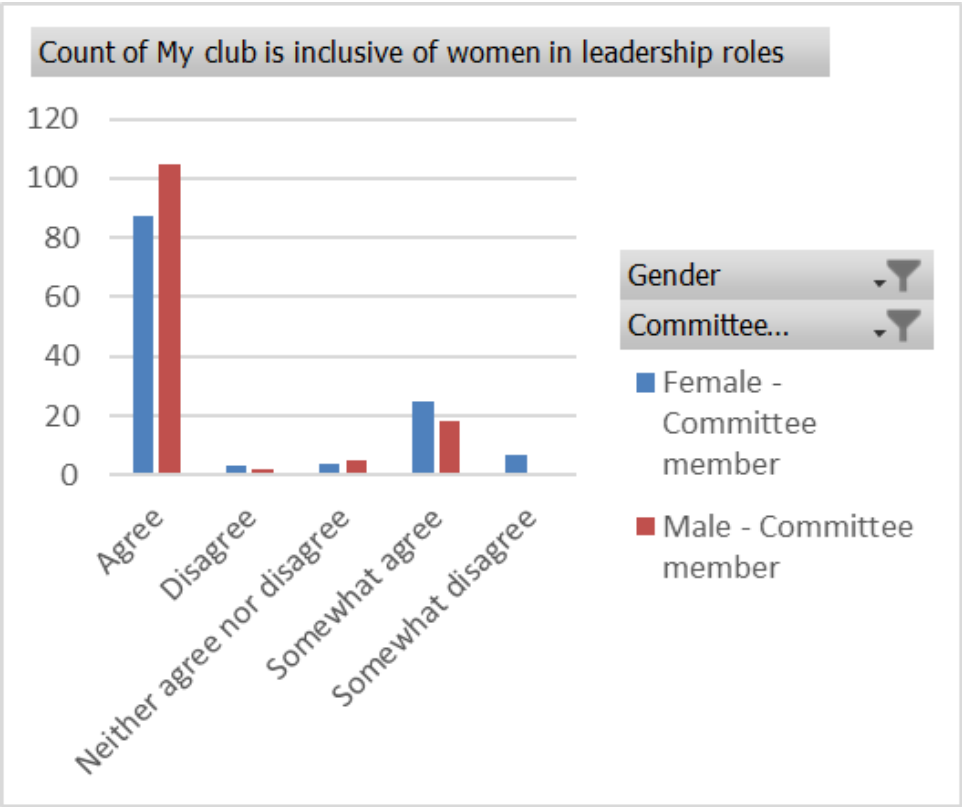

Figure 24: Committee Member responses to 'My club is inclusive of women in leadership roles.'

Almost twice the amount of female committee members than male agreed with the statement that 'my club is more likely to have females in support roles – shop, coffee morning, *etc*'. – 27% of the females within the committee member cohort agreed with this vs 15% of the male committee member cohort. (So 35 females out of a total of 127 females, vs 20 males from a total of 131, with 258 people having replied to this question).

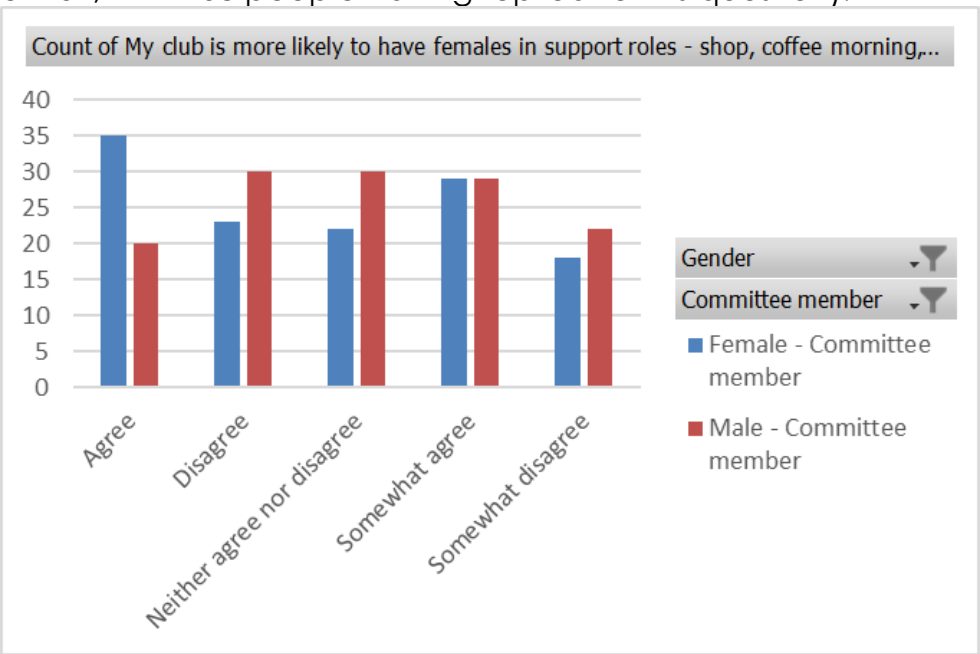

Figure 25: Committee Member responses to 'My club is more likely to have females in support roles - shop, coffee morning...'.

With regards to gender balance in leadership roles, more male committee members than female committee members agreed with that statement, 46% of the females within the committee member cohort agreed with this vs 53% of the male committee member cohort. (So 58 females out of a total of 127 females, vs 70 males from a total of 131, with 258 people having replied to this question).

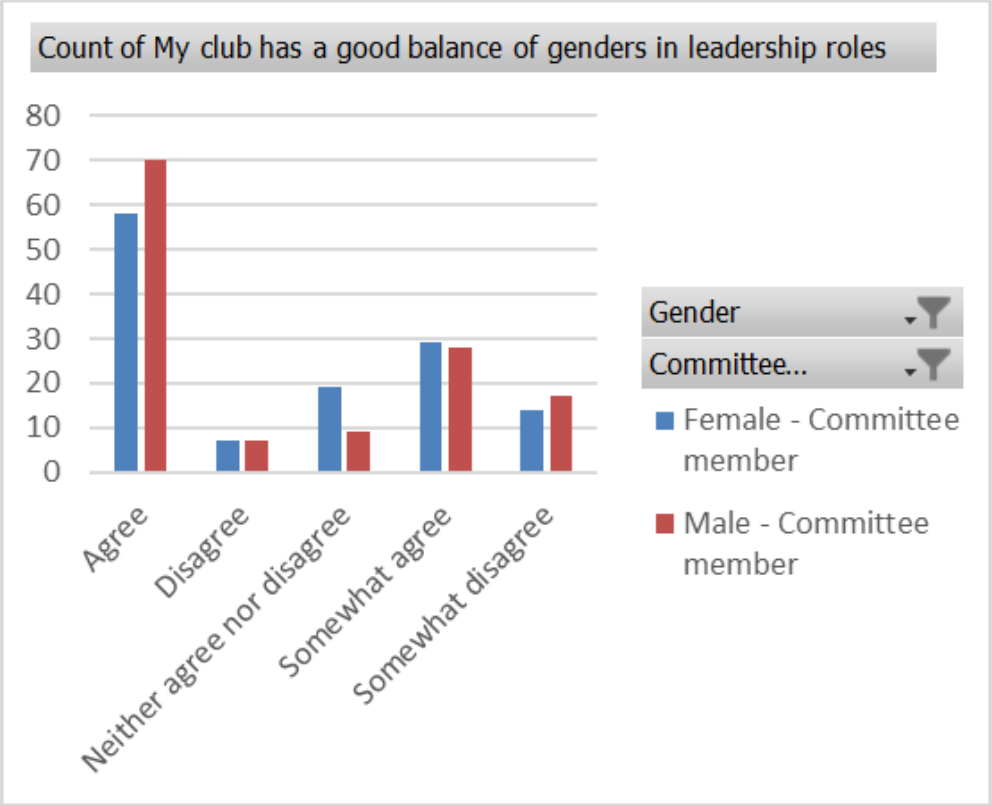

Figure 26: Committee Member responses to 'My club has a good balance of genders in leadership roles'

Respect

We asked respondents a series of questions around respect asking them to rank their response as never, rarely, sometimes, usually and always.

We first asked respondents if they felt respected by their peers in the club and broke it down by category. Significantly more male committee members than females felt 'always respected by my peers in the club', 35% of the females within the committee member cohort agreed with this vs 48% of the male committee member cohort. (So 44 females out of a total of 127 females, vs 63 males from a total of 131, with 258 people having replied to this question).

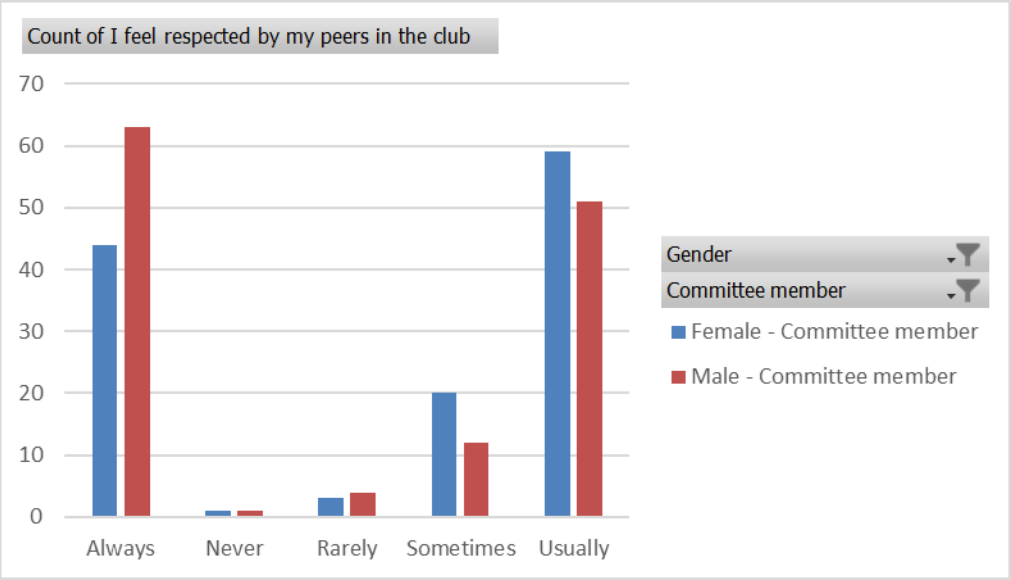

Figure 27: Count of responses to 'I feel respected by my peers in the club'

When the same question is examined amongst the coaching cohort only, the gap becomes more significant, with male coaches significantly more likely than female coaches to always feel respected by their peers. 33% of the females within the coach cohort agreed with this vs 51% of the male coach cohort. (So 27 females out of a total of 82 females, vs 75 males from a total of 127, with 230 people having replied to this question).

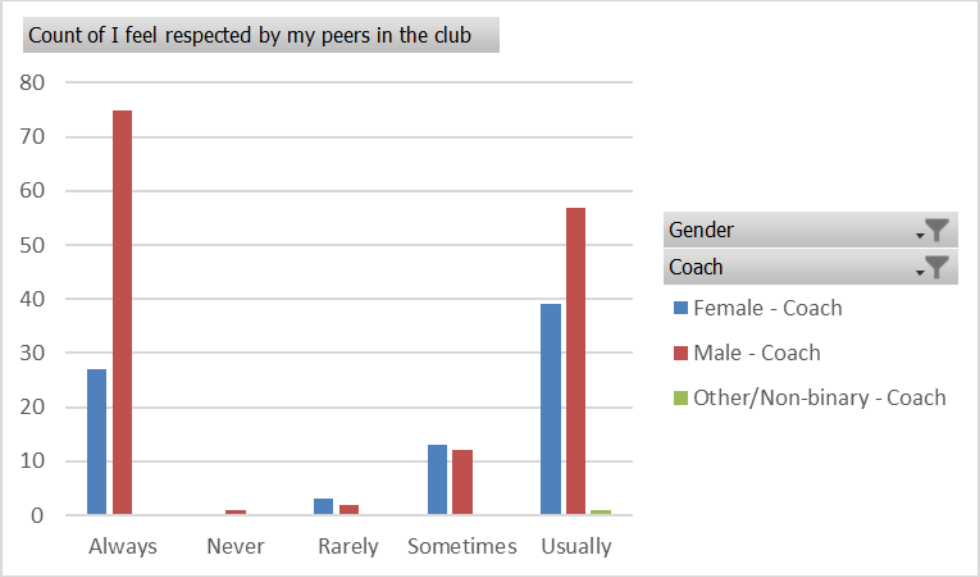

Figure 28: Coaches responses to 'I feel respected by my peers in the club'

However, when it comes to the rowers, the difference between the male and female cohorts narrow, with somewhat more male than female junior rowers feeling always respected by their peers. 48% of the females within the junior rower cohort agreed with this vs 54% of the male junior rower cohort. (So 51 females out of a total of 105 females, vs 63 males from a total of 117, with 227 people having replied to this question. Note that the balance of 5 identify as non-binary).

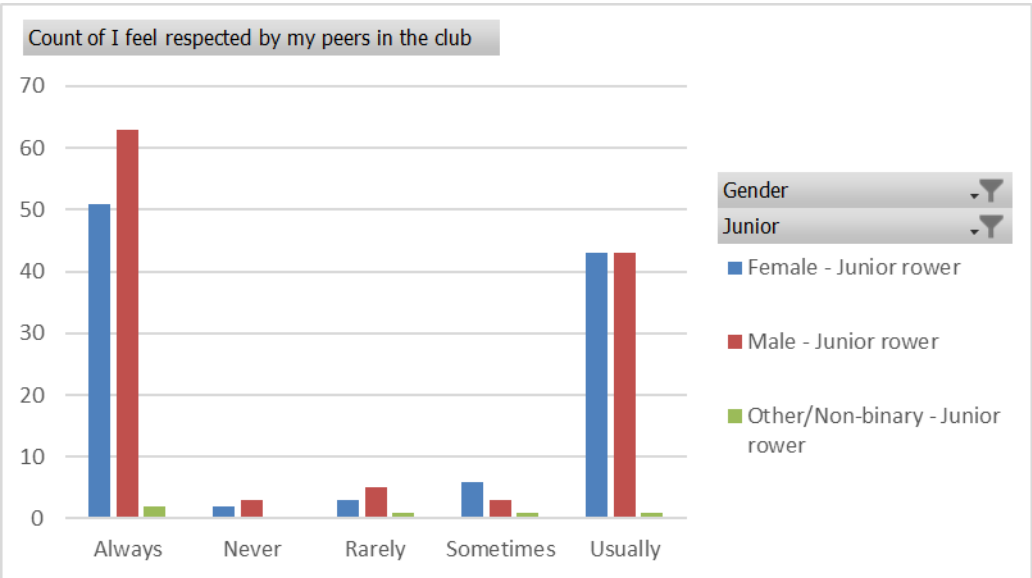

Figure 29: Rowers responses to 'I feel respected by my peers in the club'

This was also contextualised in the focus groups as '*I don't think there's an issue in terms of gender balance or the whole gender issue in terms of the junior athletes necessarily because they're younger and they've less mud that stuck to them because they're so young. I think competitive is definitely a word that*

springs to mind when I think about rowing and I think about perhaps one of the barriers to people getting involved'.

When it comes to senior rowers, there is parity between the male and female rowers on the total count of 'always' feeling respected by their peers, but proportionately it is imbalanced in favour of the males. 37% of the females within the senior rower cohort agreed with this vs 47% of the male senior rower cohort. (So 48 females out of a total of 127 females, vs 48 males from a total of 102, with 230 people having replied to this question.)

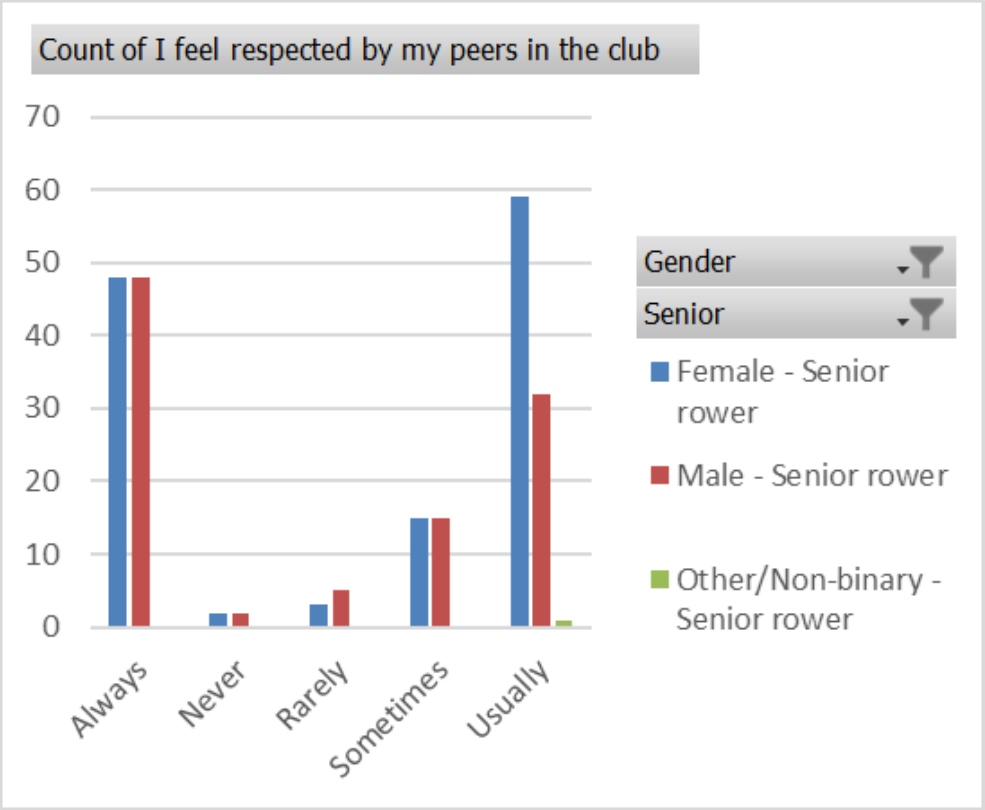

Figure 30: Senior Rowers responses to 'I feel respected by my peers in the club'

With regards to respect by the opposite gender, it follows similar trends as follows, with male committee members almost twice as likely as female committee members to always feel respected by the opposite gender, with 30% of the females within the committee member cohort agreed with this vs 52% of the male committee member cohort. (So 38 females out of a total of 125 females, vs 68 males from a total of 131, with 257 people having replied to this question.)

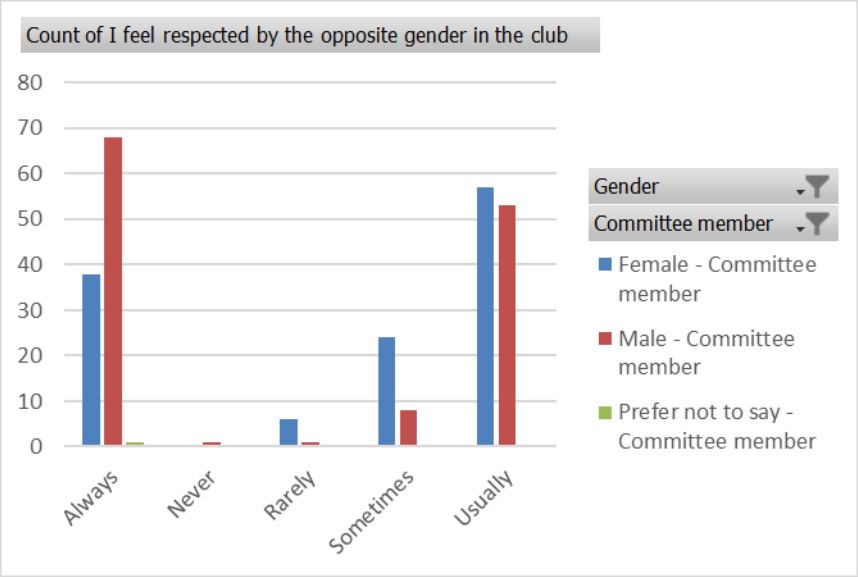

Figure 31: Committee Member responses to 'I feel respected by the opposite gender in the club'

Male coaches are more than twice as likely to always feel respected by the opposite gender - 24% of the females within the coach cohort agreed with this vs 55% of the male coach cohort. (So 20 females out of a total of 82 females, vs 81 males from a total of 147, with 230 people having replied to this question.)

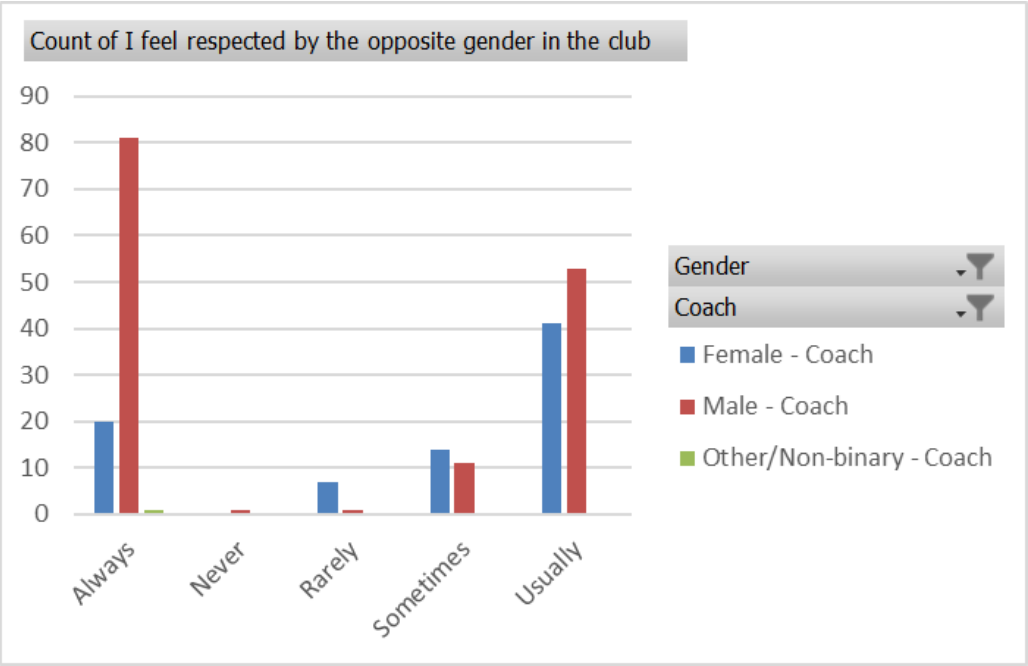

Figure 32: Coaches responses to 'I feel respected by the opposite gender in the club'

A significant gap remains with the junior rowers in terms of feeling always respected by the opposite gender, with 33% of the females within the junior rower agreeing with this vs 58% of the male junior rower cohort. (So 35 females out of a total of 105 females, vs 68 males from a total of 107, with 227 people having replied to this question. The balance of 5 identifying as other/non-binary).

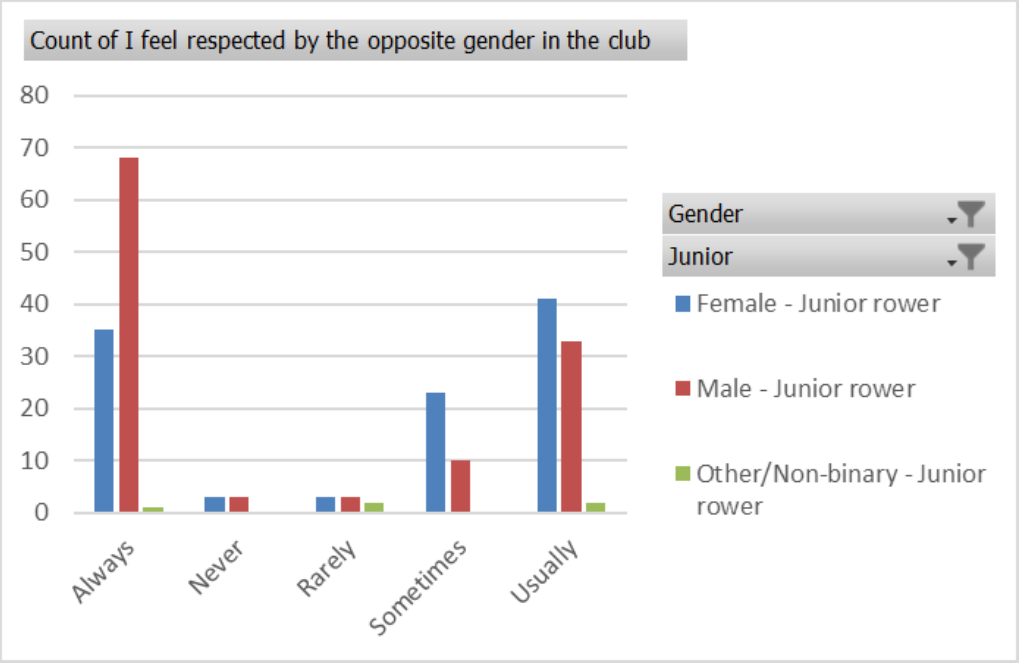

Figure 33: Junior Rowers responses to 'I feel respected by the opposite gender in the club'

This gap remains in perception between the male and female senior rowers in terms of whether they always feel respected by the opposite gender, with 33% of the females within the senior rower cohort agreeing with this vs 60% of the male senior rower cohort. (So 42 females out of a total of 125 females, vs 61 males from a total of 102, with 228 people having replied to this question).

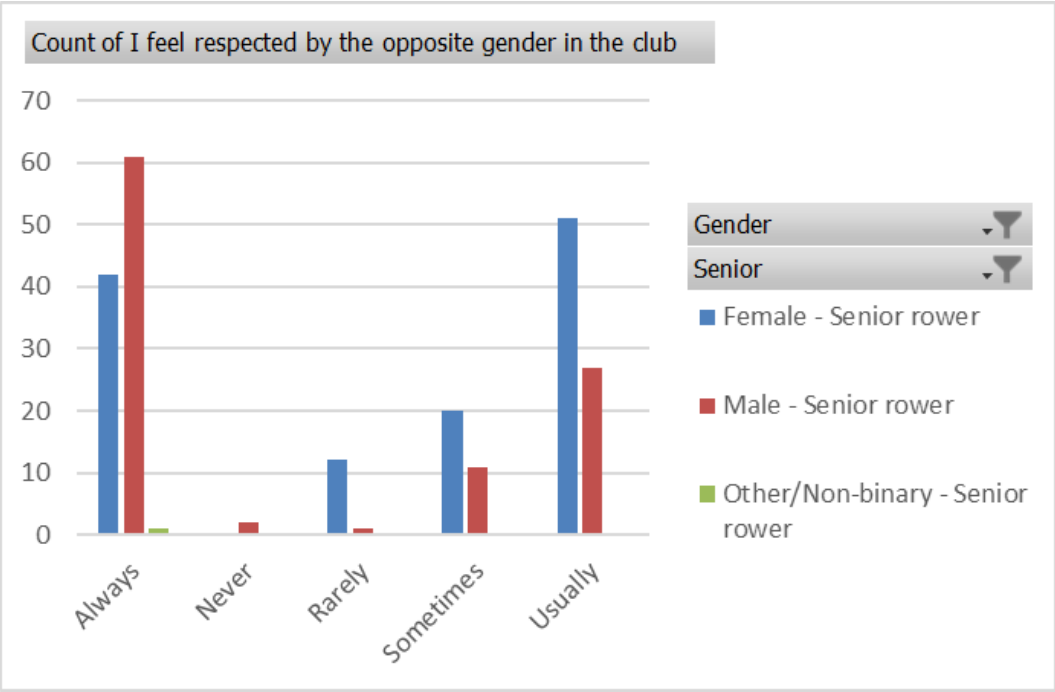

Figure 34: Senior rowers responses to 'I feel respected by the opposite gender in the club'

With regards to the question of 'I feel respected by the leadership in the club', males across all four of the categories (committee member, coach, junior rower, senior rower) were higher within the 'always' count than their female counterpart.

35% of the females within the committee member cohort agreed with this vs 47% of the male committee member cohort. (So 44 females out of a total of 127 females, vs 61 males from a total of 131, with 258 people having replied to this question.)

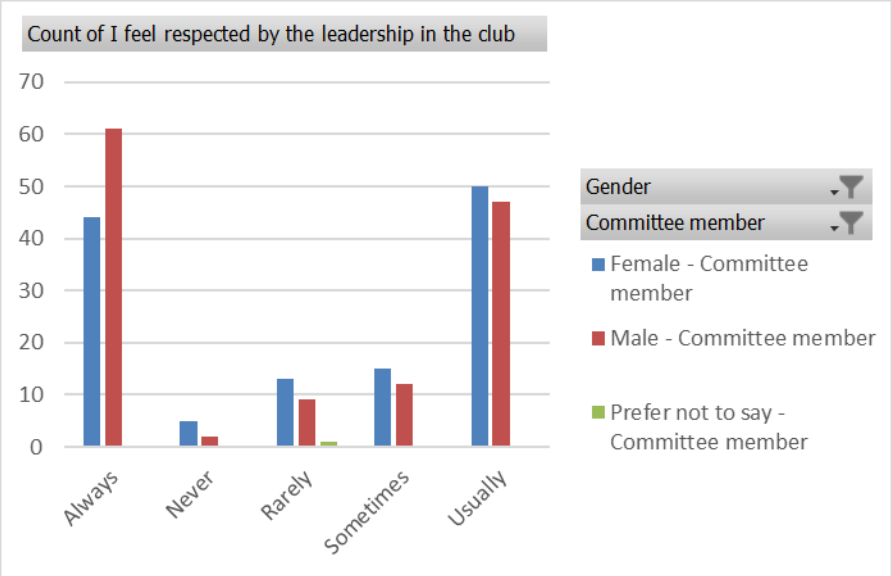

Figure 35: Committee Members responses to 'I feel respected by the leadership in the club'

33% of the females within the coach cohort agreed with this vs 48% of the male coach cohort. (So 27 females out of a total of 82 females, vs 71 males from a total of 147, with 230 people having replied to this question.)

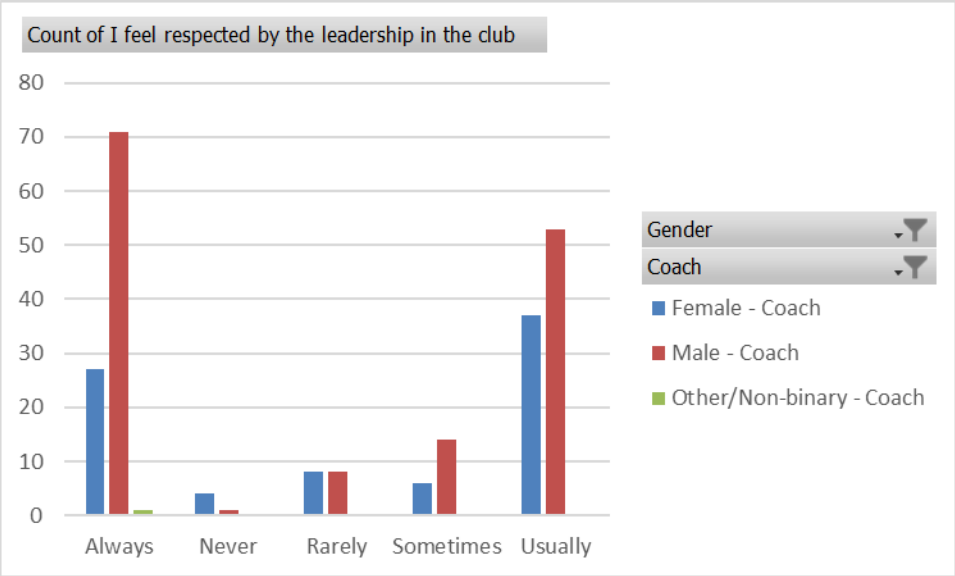

Figure 36: Committee Members responses to 'I feel respected by the leadership'

46% of the females within the junior rower cohort agreed with feeling always respected by the leadership in the club vs 50% of the male junior rower cohort. (So 49 females out of a total of 105 females, vs 59 males from a total of 107, with 227 people having replied to this question. The balance of 5 identified as other/non-binary).

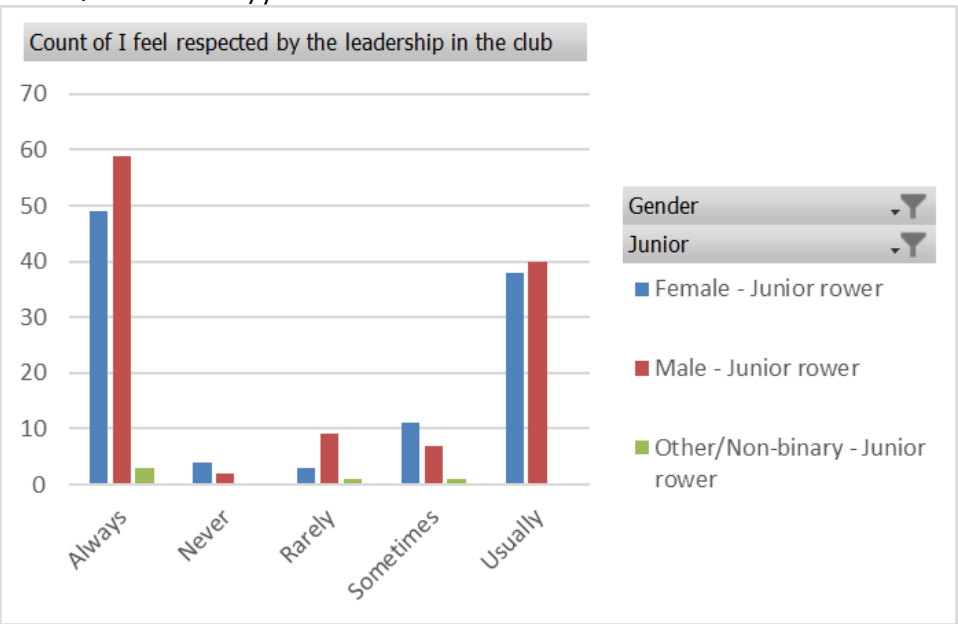

Figure 37: Junior Rowers responses to 'I feel respected by the leadership'

40% of the females within the senior rower cohort agreed with feeling always respected by the leadership in the club vs 43% of the male senior rower cohort. (So 51 females out of a total of 127 females, vs 44 males from a total of 102, with 230 people having replied to this question.)

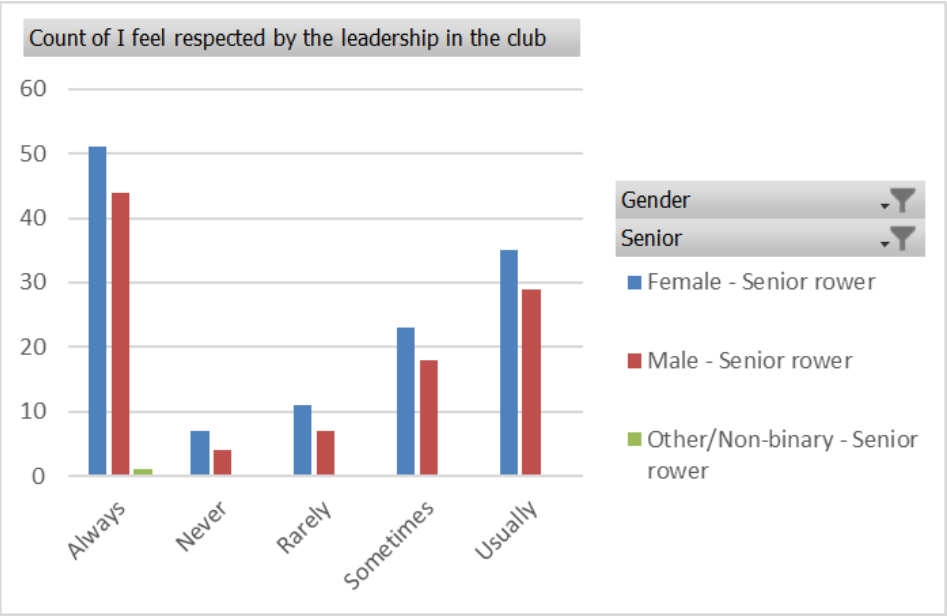

Figure 38: Senior Rowers responses to 'I feel respected by the leadership

With regards to the question of 'I feel I am a valued member of the club' (always) the variances were not as great between the genders in the committee member cohort:

47% of the females within the committee member cohort agreed with this vs 47% of the male committee member cohort. (So 58 females out of a total of 127 females, vs 62 males from a total of 131, with 258 people having replied to this question.)

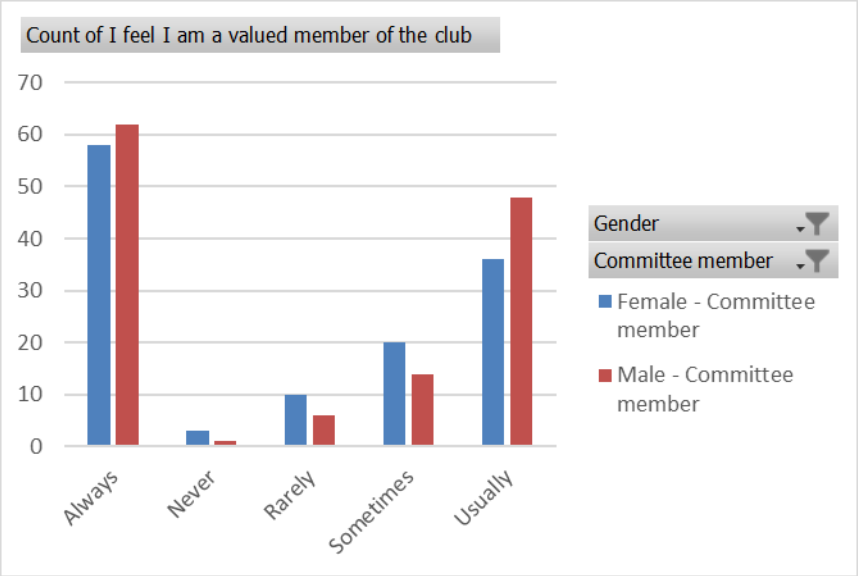

Figure 39: Committee Members responses to 'I feel a valued member of the club'

Within the senior rowers, the female cohort were only 1% more likely to feel 'always' a valued member of the club than the males, with 42% of the females within the senior rower cohort vs 41% of the male senior rower cohort. (So 53 females out of a total of 127 females, vs 42 males from a total of 102, with 230 people having replied to this question

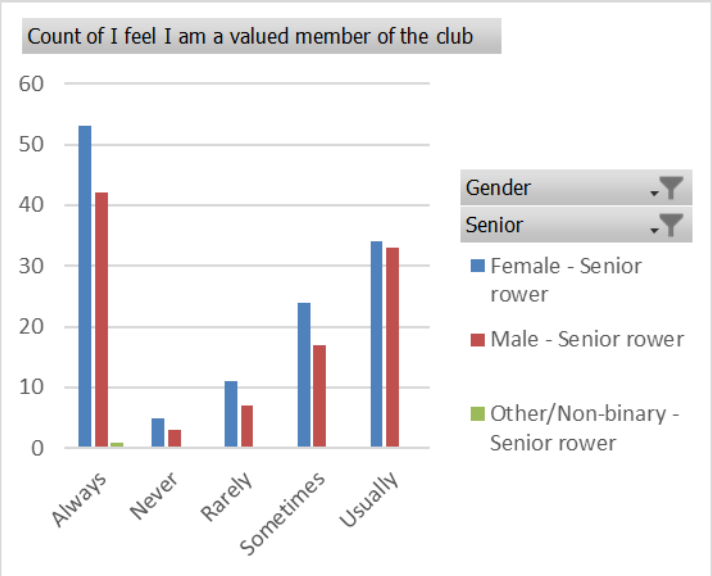

Figure 40: Senior Rowers responses to 'I feel a valued member of the club'

There was a greater disparity with the coaches, where the male coaches were more likely than the females to feel to be 'a valued member of the club'. 44% of the females within the coach cohort agreed with this vs 49% of the male coach cohort. (So, 36 females out of a total of 82 females, vs 72 males from a total of 147, with 230 people having replied to this question.)

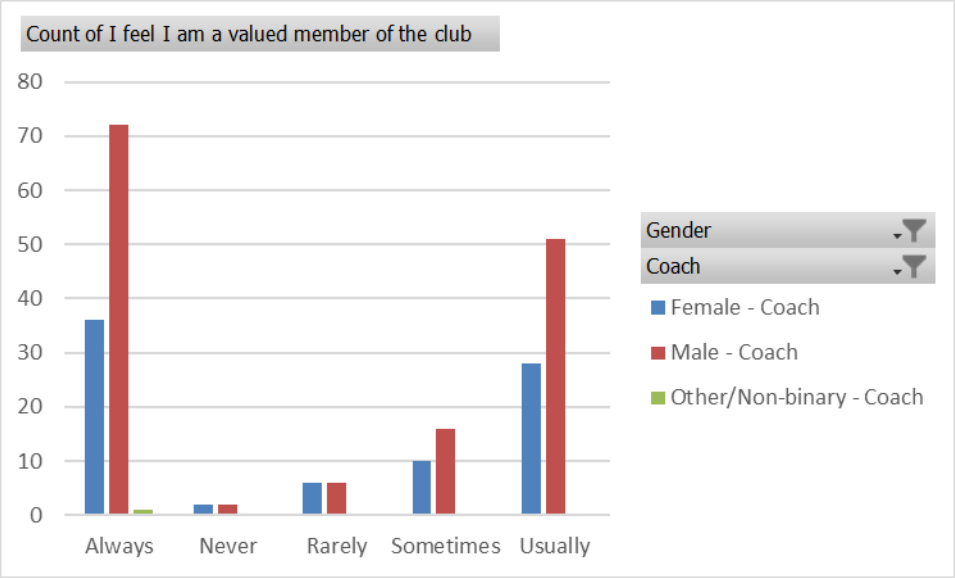

Figure 41: Coaches responses to 'I feel a valued member of the club'

With regards to the question of 'I feel comfortable to give feedback to the club leadership, males across all four of the categories (committee member, coach, junior rower) were higher within the 'always' count than their female counterpart, especially so within the coach cohort and senior rower cohort.

47% of the females within the committee member cohort agreed with this vs 63% of the male committee member cohort. (So 60 females out of a total of

127 females, vs 83 males from a total of 131, with 258 people having replied to this question.)

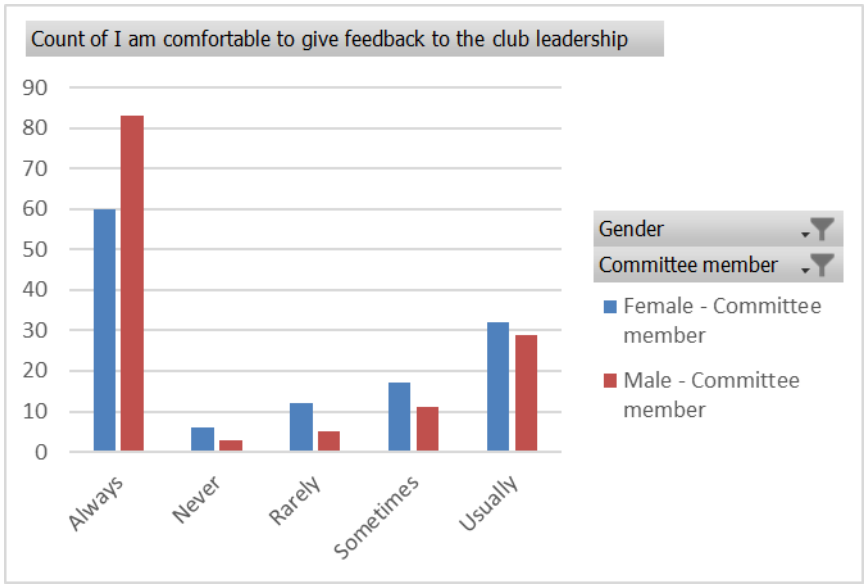

Figure 42: Committee Member responses to 'I am comfortable to give feedback to the club leadership'

45% of the females within the coach cohort felt comfortable always giving feedback to the club leadership vs 70% of the male coach cohort. (So, 37 females out of a total of 82 females, vs 104 males from a total of 147, with 230 people having replied to this question.)

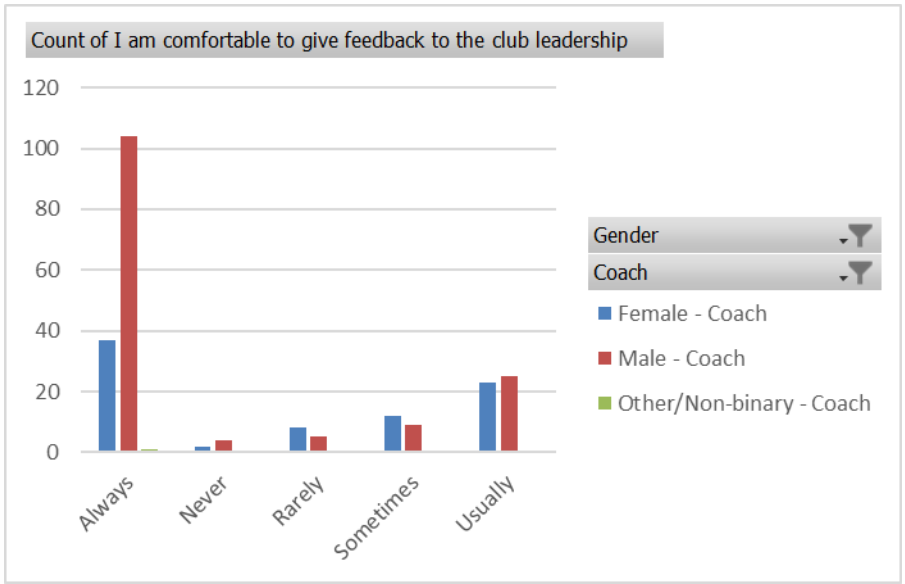

Figure 43: Coaches responses to 'I am comfortable to give feedback to the club leadership'

28% of the females within the junior rower cohort felt comfortable always giving feedback to the club leadership vs 51% of the male junior rower cohort. (So, 29 females out of a total of 105 females, vs 59 males from a total of 116, with 226 people having replied to this question. The balance of 5 people identified as other/non-binary)

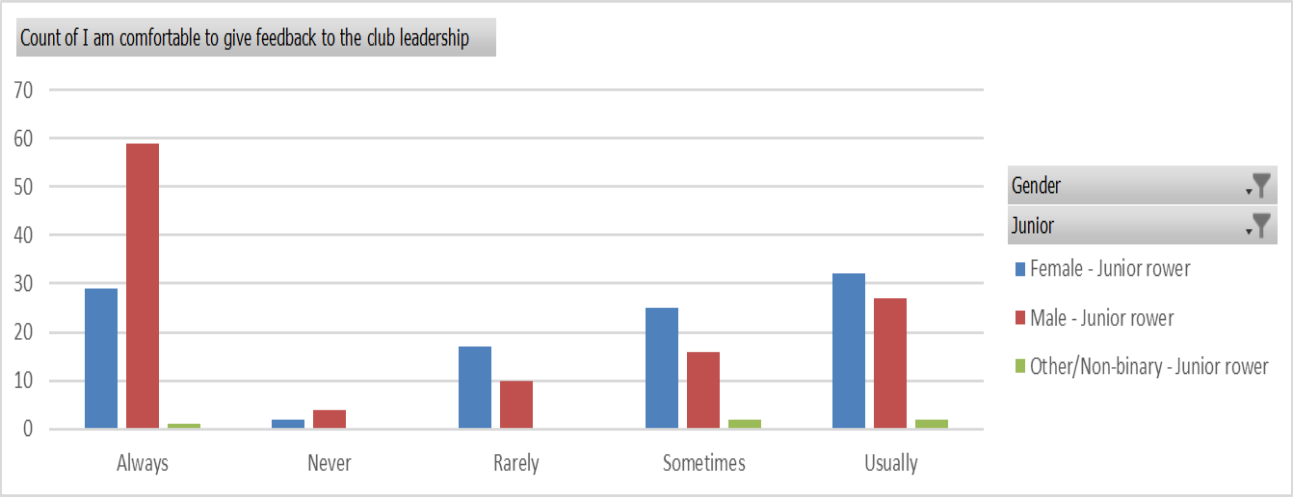

Figure 44: Junior Rowers responses to 'I am comfortable to give feedback to the club leadership'

32% of the females within the senior rower cohort felt comfortable always giving feedback to the club leadership vs 58% of the male senior rower cohort. (So, 41 females out of a total of 127 females, vs 59 males from a total of 102, with 230 people having replied to this question, with the balance identifying as other/non-binary).

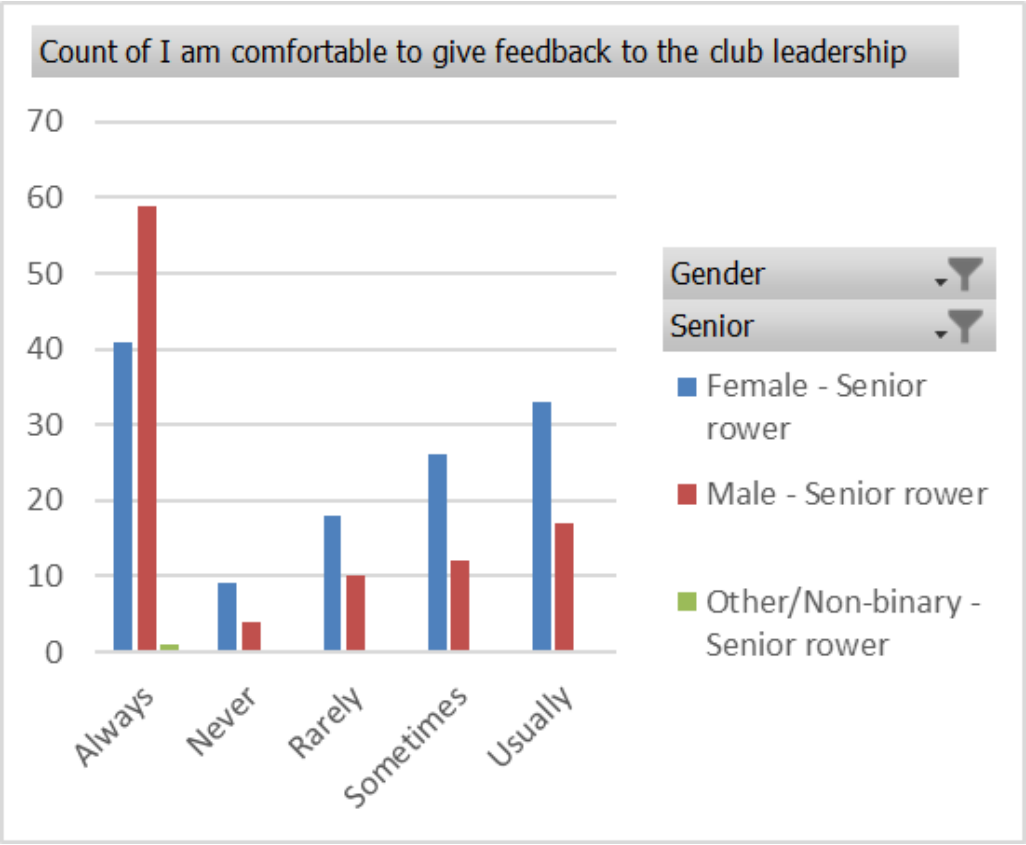

Figure 45: Senior Rowers responses to 'I am comfortable to give feedback to the club leadership'

Within the focus groups, there was discussion about not knowing how decisions were made - '*don't know how decisions are made*' – and that '*criteria are not fair and transparent*'. There would appear to be issues around transparency and the willingness of people to challenge the leadership. Further points were raised around the fact that if the committees get on well, it can be easier to feedback to the leadership and build an open culture - '*the Chair, Sec and Treasurer need to respect each other*'.

Equipment

We asked a number of questions around tangible elements within the club, such as access to the best equipment. Large numbers of the overall cohort agreed with the statement that '*male and female members get equal access to the best equipment*', but proportionately more males than females did so. 57% of the females within the overall cohort agreed with this vs 72% of the male respondents within the overall cohort. (So 225 females out of a total of 398, vs 238 males from a total of 331, with 735 people having replied to this question. The balance identified as other/non-binary).

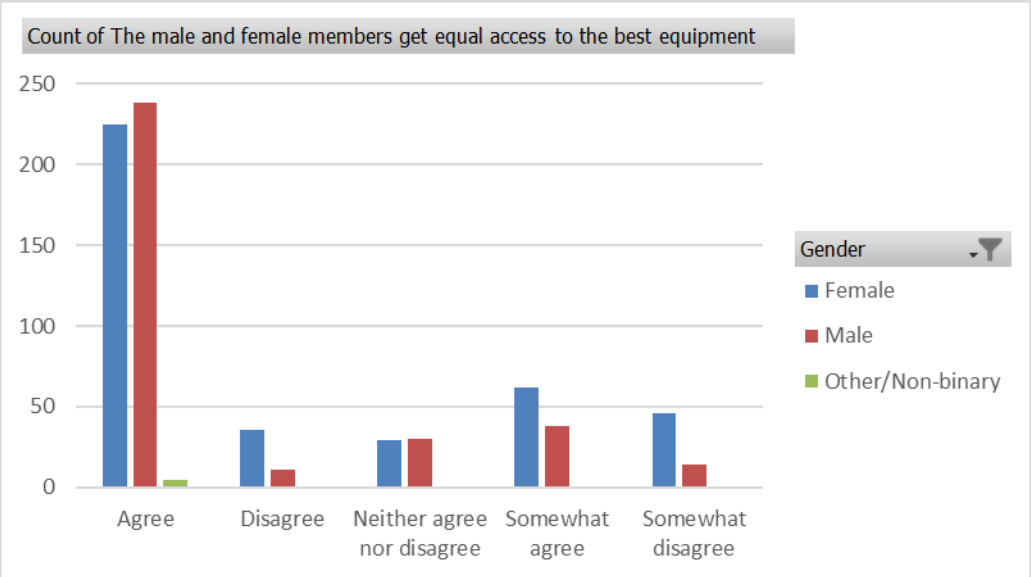

Figure 46: Responses to 'Male and female members get equal access to the best equipment'

With regards to the statement that '*male crews are prioritised when purchasing new equipment*', 14% of the females within the overall cohort agreed with this vs 6% of the male respondents within the overall cohort. (So 55 females out of a total of 395, vs 19 males from a total of 330, with 737 people having replied to this question. The balance identified as other/non-binary).

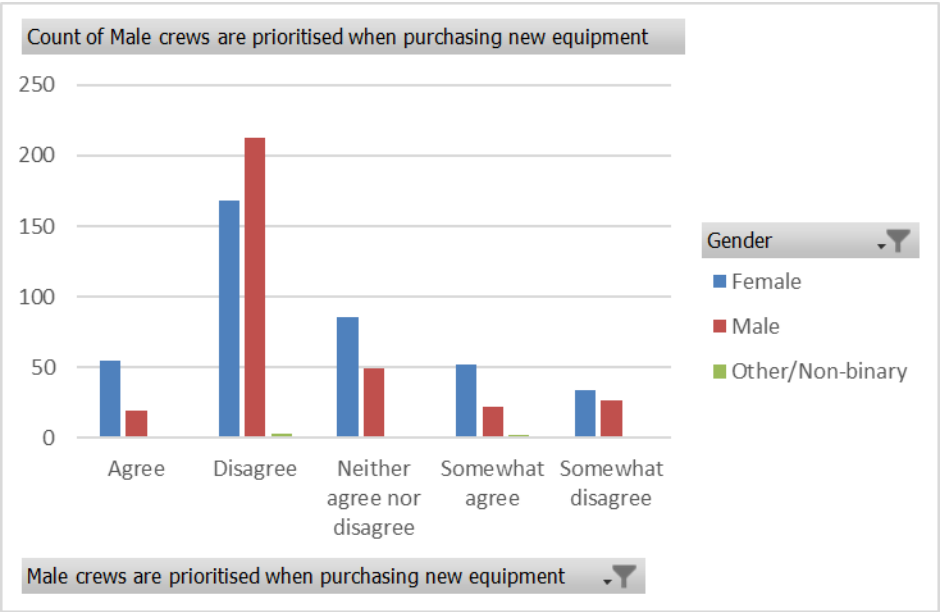

Figure 47: Responses to 'Male crews are prioritised when purchasing new equipment'

With regards to the statement that '*females can have difficulties gaining access to facilities/boats*', 11% of the females within the overall cohort agreed with this vs 2% of the male respondents within the overall cohort. (So 45 females out of a total of 395, vs 7 males from a total of 331, with 738 people having replied to this question. The balance identified as other/non-binary).

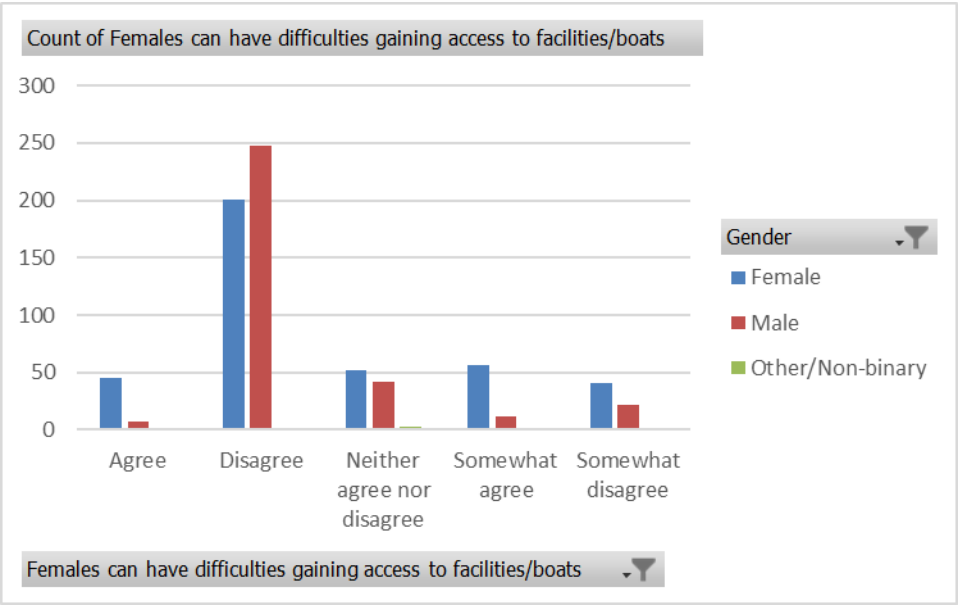

Figure 48: Responses to 'Females can have difficulties gaining access to facilities/boats'.

With regards to the statement that '*females have poorer training times*', 4% of the females within the overall cohort agreed with this vs 1% of the male respondents within the overall cohort. (So 17 females out of a total of 395, vs 3

males from a total of 330, with 737 people having replied to this question. The balance identified as other/non-binary).

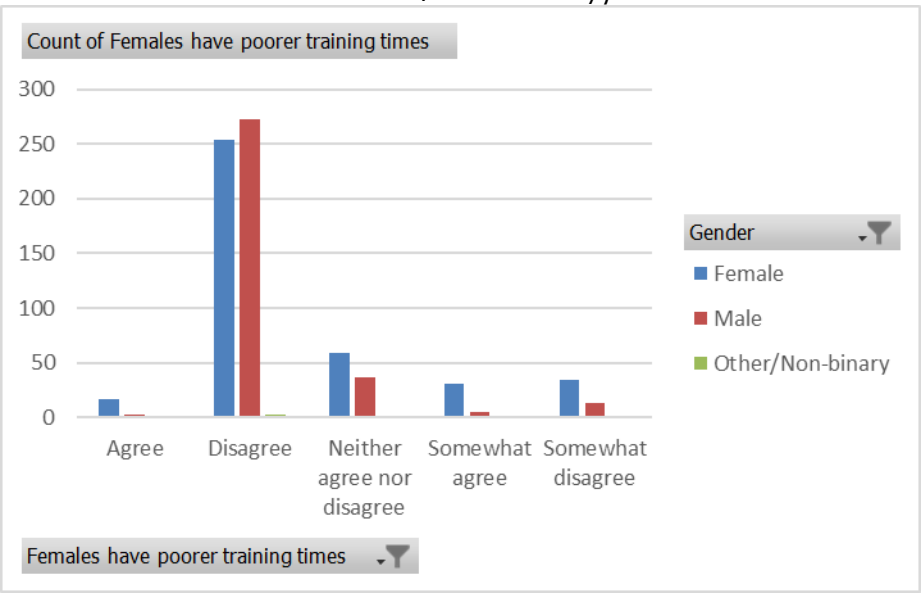

Figure 49: Responses to 'Females have poorer training times.'

With regards to the statement that '*males have poorer training times*', 71% of the females within the overall cohort **dis**agreed with this vs 79% of the male respondents within the overall cohort. (So 282 females out of a total of 395, vs 263 males from a total of 331, with 738 people having replied to this question. The balance identified as other/non-binary or preferring not to say).

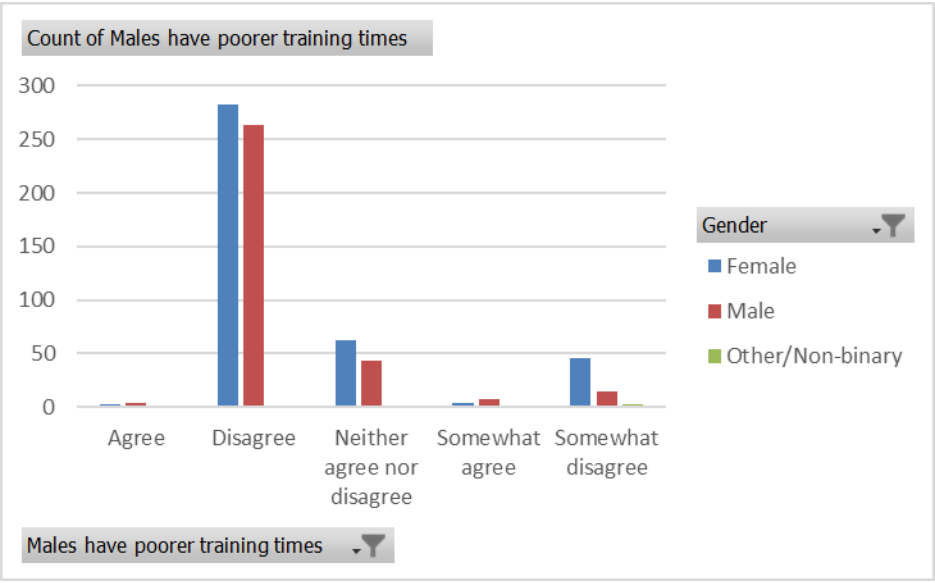

Figure 50: Responses to 'Males have poorer training times.'

With regards to committee members and the statement that male and female members get equal access to the best equipment, 58% of the females within the committee member cohort agreed with this vs 74% of the male committee

member cohort. (So 70 females out of a total of 120 females, vs 96 males from a total of 130, with 250 people having replied to this question).

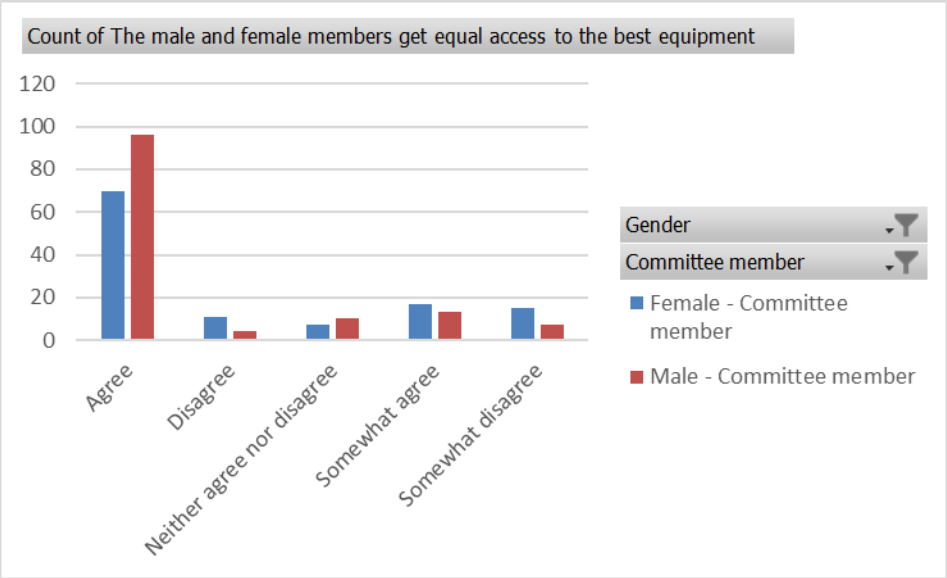

Figure 51: Responses to 'The male and female members get equal access to the best equipment.'

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Appendix 1: Literature Review

Rowing Ireland Club Culture Literature Review

British Rowing – December 2021
https://www.britishrowing.org/2021/12/its-whats-happening-in-the-clubs-thats-going-to-make-the-biggest-difference/

MB – note that this work was around diversity and inclusion, not gender as such, however there are some parallels

British Rowing's survey - 1,904 people from rowing community for their experiences and thoughts around **diversity and inclusion**. These included British Rowing members, non-members and 500 people from outside the sport. Also 25 in-depth interviews with people from the rowing community.

Key findings

- Areas such as membership retention and *a lack of female coaches and female leaders were also part of the findings,*
- *Club culture varies from one club to another, and is usually set by those at the top and the committees.*

- There is a group of approx. 5-10% within the sport who do not see the need for D&I which could lead to resistance to change, especially if these individuals hold influential positions.

- We need to tackle the unacceptable behaviour around inclusion which is being witnessed and experienced by a sizeable group within the sport. 48% have witnessed some form of bias within the sport.

- The research suggests that culture and lack of inclusion has played a part, for some at least, in their decision to leave the sport. D&I plays a critical role in recruitment and retention.
- Umpires and Coaches are the most male sub groups of the rowing community whilst the Talent and University/School Rowers are the most female
- 74% of the rowing community agreed that rowing was inclusive for women. However, only 65% of women within the rowing community agreed. This indicates that men are less aware of exclusion issues for women in rowing.
- **Club culture hugely variable with tone set by senior committees**
- **Real issue around lack of female coaches/leaders in the sport**
- 44% of members are female and 56% male. Over 45 years old this changes to 32% female and 68% male

Victoria University - GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORT NEEDS TO START AT THE CLUBHOUSE

November 2020

https://www.vu.edu.au/about-vu/news-events/news/gender-equality-in-sport-needs-to-start-at-the-clubhouse

Full report here - https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0193723520962955

MB – note that this work was around football and netball clubs. Note that the research was conducted over a 6 month period in 1 club (each) so a deep dive into one club.

Key findings

- Increasing participation alone isn't enough to shift traditional gender relations in sports that have traditionally privileged men
- The study found women and girls felt devalued within sports clubs through ongoing micro-practices including difficulties gaining access to quality facilities, poorer training times, less recognition on club's social media, and lower recognition of their achievements and successes.
- participation in sport is changing through the involvement of more women and girls, ideologies surrounding what is valued and prioritised within community sport remain fairly traditional, with the male senior teams still considered to be the most important element of the club.
- **MB – note disparity between male and female committee member perceptions - I**nterviews with male committee members suggested 'historical ideologies' had been removed and the club was now a place for everyone. However, women members disagreed, saying the club revered the dominant performance of masculinity and relegated the importance of women.
- Overtly negative and abusive practices towards women and girls can be removed from sporting contexts through strong leadership, policies and zero tolerance to negative behaviour.
- "If culture change towards full gender equity is to be achieved in community sport, more attention needs to be paid to the subtle ways in which women's presence is marginalised or under-valued. Our study particularly shows how the allocation, use and representation of space (playing fields, clubrooms, social media) play an important role in this.

"We want more diversity but…": Resisting diversity in recreational sports clubs – Sports Management Review June 2020
RamónSpaaij[ab]AnneliesKnoppers[c]RuthJeanes[d]

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1441352318305813

MB – Note the sports studied, over a 5 year period, were Aussie rules, soccer, netball, basketball and rugby

Key findings

- **Resistance to diversity by those in positions of leadership is one reason why change has been slow in coming.**
- **Resistance emerges from a confluence of discourses that enable noncompliance.**
- **those in positions of leadership in sports clubs (i.e., decision makers, coaches, managers, and directors) maintain the status quo and, in doing so, are able to resist efforts towards greater demographic diversity in their club and sport in general.**
- **Resistance to diversity relates to power and privilege.**
- **Women and minorities engage in discursive practices that resist the status quo. Those occupying positions of leadership however, may engage in rhetoric that endorses the value of institutional diversity while also engaging in resistance to the actual implementation of diversity.**

Table 1. Discourses and discursive practices of resistance used by club leaders.

Discursive practice	Underpinning discourses	Description	Examples
Speech acts	Discourses of colour-blindness and gender-blindness	Linguistic resistance that arises in the gap between speech acts and how they are taken up (Raby, 2005), through "non-performative speech acts" (Ahmed, 2007) or "happy talk" (Bell & Hartmann, 2007)	Appropriating language of diversity without altering ideologies, values or practices: "we are inclusive", "there are equal opportunities here", "everyone is welcome"
Moral boundary work	Neoliberal discourses such as meritocracy	Creating moral boundaries between dominant and non-dominant groups, while masking who defines qualifications	Emphasizing self-reliance, moral character, and competitive success as key indicators of moral worth Drawing boundaries against those perceived to be "in deficit", ill adjusted, unqualified, lazy, uninterested, or lacking experience
In-group essentialism	Discourse of essentialism	Advancing in-group identity in a simplified, collectivized way that essentializes its self-image and/or public image, and that downplays complexity and fluidity	Using an essentializing, homogenizing discourse to justify the status quo: "how things are done here", "we've always done it this way" "tradition", "core business", "norm(al)"
Denial/silencing	Discourse of denial (of privilege)	Marginalizing, ridiculing, or rendering (politicized) difference and discrimination invisible	Accusing members of playing the discrimination card Punishing "disloyal" members (e.g., "whistle-blowers") Masking and not penalizing misogyny, racism, or ableism Use of sexist/racist jokes and expecting women and minorities to laugh
Self-victimization	Discourses of victimhood	Countering diversity claims and change efforts through playing the victim card	Pointing out the barriers and challenges that the organization faces and hence their inability to promote diversity, e.g. lack of capacity and resources Self-pity: cannot make jokes anymore
Bodily inscription	Discourse of difference/Other	Inscribing on women and minorities' bodies a sense of otherness, or in dominant groups a fear of the other	Using discourse of how Black players are naturally gifted and hence welcome at the club; their inclusion is

			contingent upon their bodily capital, not upon their worth as human beings Using discourse of how athletes with a disability are “non-competitive” and purely recreational Degrading women who do not perform heteronormativity, emphasizing women’s frailty

Toolkit ideas

British Rowing Inclusive Club Guide 2018

https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/British-Rowing-Inclusive-Club-Guide-2018.pdf

British Rowing Committed to Inclusion 2022

https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/2110-CommittedToInclusion.pdf

Sport England
https://www.sportenglandclubmatters.com/club-matters-workshops/a-club-for-everyone/

Workshop overview

All the data shows us that stubborn inequalities exist in sport, and certain groups of people face more barriers than others to participate.
We know that the huge disruption of 2020 has further reinforced or exacerbated these inequalities, particularly for people with disabilities or long term health conditions, people from lower socio economic groups and people from ethnically diverse communities.
This workshop is a great starting point and we hope it helps clubs to take away actions that will help them to become more welcoming, friendly, accessible and inclusive which will benefit everyone. This approach not only helps groups of people who find it hard to engage with sports clubs, but also helps clubs generally to attract and retain more participants and volunteers.

Workshop outcomes
By the end of this online workshop, delegates will be able to:

- Identify the barriers people face in accessing club opportunities as participants and volunteers.
- Understand the need for positive action.
- Outline the building blocks of an inclusive club.
- Identify how your club can create a more positive environment that would enable a diverse range of people to be engaged and retained as participants and volunteers.

Paper: Leanne Norman, Alexandra J. Rankin-Write and Wayne Allison (2018) '"It's a Concrete Ceiling; It's Not Even Glass": Understanding Tenets of Organizational Culture That Supports the Progression of Women as Coaches and Coach Developers' Journal of Sport and Social Issues 2018. Vol.42(5) 393-414

Key Findings:

- Study explores the particular areas of organizational cultures which facilitate the progression of women as football coaches and coach developers.
- 26 coaches and coach developers interviewed
- Analysed using Schein's theory of organizational culture
    - Artifacts (tangible; facilities or resources)
    - Espoused Values (organization's articulated principles and values that the group claims to be striving toward, such as strategies, mission statements, visions, or philosophies)
    - Basic Assumptions (the "mental map," which guides individual perceptions, feelings, and actions)
- Three key tenets of organizational culture were found to be most influential on the career development of the participants:
    - journeys and crossroads (the establishment of a learning culture),
    - inclusive leadership
    - vertical and horizontal relationships.
- The purpose of collecting women's experiences was to evaluate the existing culture, as well as to understand what the desired culture was; to bridge a gap between how the coaches and tutors **experienced their organizations** and to what they need from their environment to feel developed and nurtured.
- Ogbonna and Harris (2002) organizational culture as "the collective sum of beliefs, values, meanings and assumptions that are shared by a social group and that help to shape the ways in which they respond to each other and to their external environment"