



Miller Lite Report on

Sports & Fitness

in the Lives of

Working Women

March 8, 1993

In cooperation with

The Women's Sports Foundation
& Working Woman Magazine



WORKING WOMAN
MAGAZINE

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Acknowledgements

The Women's Sports Foundation

The Women's Sports Foundation, established in 1974, is a national, non-profit educational organization that promotes and enhances sports and fitness opportunities for all girls and women. The Foundation provides leadership, educational resources, recognition and advocacy programs and financial support for the purpose of improving the physical, mental and emotional well-being of all females through sports and fitness participation.

Working Woman Magazine

Working Woman is a business magazine for women that provides strategies to enhance the achievements of successful women who are in the vanguard of the business community. The successful lives these women lead provide them with a great sense of well-being; and their accomplishments and balanced lives position them as role models for their generation.

Miller Brewing Company

This comprehensive report is funded by Miller Brewing Company. The continued support of Miller Brewing Company has opened new issues for discussion and added significantly to the body of sports knowledge in the United States.

The first benchmark study, the *Miller Lite Report on American Attitudes Toward Sports*, published in 1983, clearly shows that most Americans have embraced sports as an essential component of their daily lives. A 1985 follow-up study, the *Miller Lite Report on Women in Sports*, developed in cooperation with the Women's Sports Foundation, reveals that a generational shift in attitudes may be occurring as an increasing number of athletic women choose to engage in athletic competition with men. We are grateful to Miller Brewing Company for funding this study.

Special Thanks

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Executive Summary

Until now, how and why working women integrate sports and fitness activities into their personal and professional lives has been the subject of speculation and not much research. This study is the first to explore the role of sports and exercise in the lives of women who work outside the home.

The *Miller Lite Report on Sports and Fitness in the Lives of Working Women* is based on a national random sample of 1,577 American women working in white-collar occupations and professions. These range from executives, professionals, administrators and managers to technicians, sales and clerical personnel. About two-thirds of American working women are employed in these fields.¹

Among the more significant findings of the research is that most working women participate in some kind of sports or fitness activity. And they believe that these activities have positive effects that help them on the job. The primary findings of the study include:

- **Working women work out.** Despite demands on their time from relationships, child-rearing and housework, nearly 58% of the women surveyed said that they participate regularly in a variety of sports and fitness activities. They perceived these activities to have physical, mental, personal/social and business-related benefits. Women of color (about one-fifth of respondents) participated less frequently than Caucasians but were more likely to see their participation as a career advantage.
 - **Exercise is a health builder, stress buster.** Working women place the greatest importance on the physical benefits of exercise, and secondly, on the mental benefits, such as reduced stress.
 - **Fitness benefits spill over into job performance.** A majority of the women suggested that the physical and emotional well-being garnered from their participation in sports and fitness activities spilled over into their work activities, augmenting their job performance. And fully four in ten women in executive and middle management positions believed that sports and fitness activities help them tap into the business network. Women of color were more likely to believe that sports and fitness help to advance careers and to tap into business networks.
- **Title IX babies played more sports.** The research shows evidence of the impact of Title IX. This landmark legislation, which marked its 20th anniversary last year, forbids sex discrimination in schools receiving federal funds. Working women who were young enough to reap the benefits from the passage of Title IX participated in high school sports at a significantly higher rate than their “pre-Title IX” counterparts (55% versus 36%). Both of these rates appear to be higher than the general population.
- **Working women are team players.** More than half (51%) of the women surveyed had participated in youth sports; well over one-third (38%) had played high school sports and nearly one in ten (9%) had played college sports.
- **Women are self-propelled.** Most women (52%) push themselves to exercise, relying primarily on self-motivation to get themselves going. Encouragement from spouses, mates, friends and children played a lesser role.
- **Second shift duties create a time crunch.** Two-thirds (68%) of working women felt that working men have more time to devote to exercise than women. The findings suggest that married men find more time for sports and exercise by doing less housework and child care while women have less time because they do more of the domestic and parenting chores. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of working women, single and married, felt strongly that they do not have enough time for sports and exercise. Married women with children are most likely to experience the sports and fitness time crunch.

- **How do men act to help or hinder?** Men play contrasting roles in helping or hindering a woman's sports or fitness participation. Many respondents described spouses who shared few housework or child rearing responsibilities, making it difficult for the women to find time for fitness or sports activities. Other women described men who played an active role in facilitating their sports and fitness involvement by taking on a larger share of housework and/or child care responsibilities.

The survey was developed by the Women's Sports Foundation and Working Woman Magazine. It was sponsored by Miller Lite, which has played an integral role in the development of two related published reports: *Miller Lite Report on American Attitudes Toward Sports* (1983) and *Miller Lite Report on Women in Sports* (1985). The survey was conducted by Beta Research Corporation, Syosset, N.Y. Don Sabo, Ph.D., and Marjorie Snyder, Ph.D., guided all phases of project development and co-authored this report.

Introduction

In recent decades, women's lives have undergone remarkable changes in the realms of work, marriage, and family. The number of women in the labor force has nearly doubled in 40 years, moving from 30% in 1950 to nearly 60% today. The number of married women working outside the home has increased at a staggering rate, jumping from 41% in 1970 to 59% in 1990. Today about 75% of married women with children between six and 17 are working outside the home, compared to 55% in 1970, and 28% in 1950. Unable to navigate the economic waters of the '80's and '90's, the "Leave It To Beaver" family, where dad works and mom stays at home, has become the exception rather than the rule. Despite their increased involvement in the workplace, women also continue to bear the major responsibilities for childcare. Indeed, the number of female-headed families with children increased by 168% between 1959 and 1984 (Rodgers, 1986). Today, nearly one in every four American children under the age of 10 are being raised in female-headed households!

A great deal has been written about the interlocking changes in women's work, marital, and family lives. Yet, another significant realm of change in women's lives has escaped scrutiny and commentary - sports and fitness. American women have left the sidelines and the grandstands behind them. Spurred by the passage of Title IX in 1972 and the advocacy efforts of the women's sports movement, women's participation rates have climbed. Today, 37% of high school athletes and 31% of NCAA Division I athletes are women. In addition, women have become the primary force within the fitness revolution. A 1991 National Sporting Goods Association survey of 10,000 households found that 28% of women were frequent participants in the seven leading fitness activities compared to 23% of men.²

This study was undertaken in order to better understand how American white-collar working women are weaving sports and fitness activities into the larger fabric of their lives. The study focuses on a survey of a nationwide, random sample of 1,577 American white-collar working women. About seven out of ten women in the American labor force are engaged in white-collar work as executives, professionals, administrators, managers, technicians, and sales or clerical personnel.

An eight-page questionnaire was mailed to four subgroups of white-collar working women (N = 3,163) that were selected randomly from lists supplied by Best Mailing Lists Incorporated. See Appendix A for a breakdown of the sample by occupation. The response rate was 50%. This mail survey, which was developed by the Women's Sports Foundation and Working Woman Magazine, was conducted in 1992 by Beta Research Corporation. In addition, Right Arm Associates conducted telephone interviews with 40 randomly selected survey respondents who had volunteered their names and telephone numbers at the time of the survey (N = 143). Only six of the actual phone contacts refused to be interviewed (response rate = 87%). These interviews were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively in order to allow women to explain in their own words the questions covered on the survey.

Basic descriptive statistics were generated in order to identify patterns and to examine subgroup comparisons. Statistical tests, i.e., t-tests and Chi squares, were used to determine whether significant differences existed between various subgroups, e.g., married versus single, young versus old. The results of the statistical tests reported throughout this report are significant at $p < .05$ level, i.e., the probability is less than 5 in 100 that a finding is due to chance. For specific information regarding research design and statistical analyses, contact the authors.

Working women are no strangers to sports. Our findings show that they took part in organized sports as youngsters to a surprising degree.

Early Participation in Sports

For many women, sports were an integral part of their lives from childhood to young adulthood. Seventy-two percent (N = 1,013) reported having been involved in organized athletics at some point in their lives. More than half (51%, N = 714) of the sample participated in youth sports, 38% (N = 537) played high school sports, and 9% (N = 121) competed in intercollegiate sports. See Table 1 below. Many women in the sample also had sports leadership experience as either captains and co-captains (23%, N = 326) or coaches (9%, N = 122). In addition, respondents were asked about previous participation, that is, to "indicate which of the following sports and fitness activities you have participated in more than one year ago, either as a team member or individual". Responses showed that many white-collar women had a solid history of involvement with team sports such as volleyball (33%, N = 269), softball/baseball (32.5%, N = 268), and basketball (21%, N = 175).

Table 1

The Percentage of White Collar Women Previously Involved with Organized Athletics

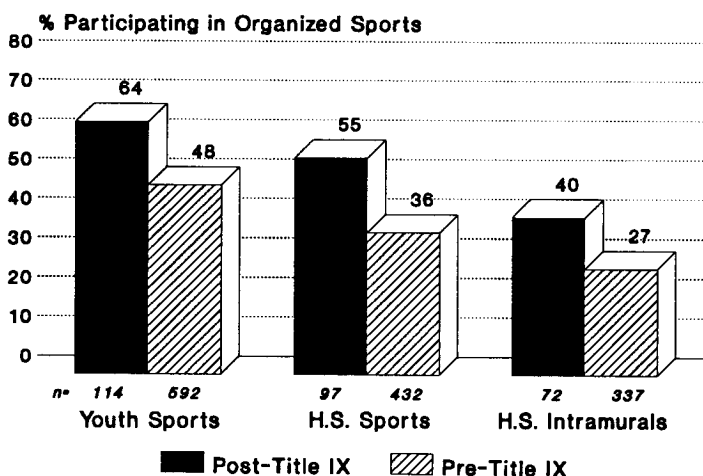
Level of Play	Percent Involved
Youth Sports	51% (n=714)
High School Sports	38% (n=537)
Intramural Sports	29% (n=403)
College Sports	9% (n=121)
Post-College Amateur	12% (n=167)

The athletic histories of women of color and Caucasian women were basically identical except for involvement in high school intramural sports. Women of color were less likely to participate in intramural sports than their Caucasian counterparts; 19% (N = 47) and 31% (N = 348) respectively. The discrepancy may be due to the fact that more than half of the women of color reported living in urban areas (compared to 32% of Caucasian women) where intramural programs are often nonexistent or underfunded.

The Title IX Legacy

The level of school-sponsored athletic experience is remarkable considering the lack of opportunities

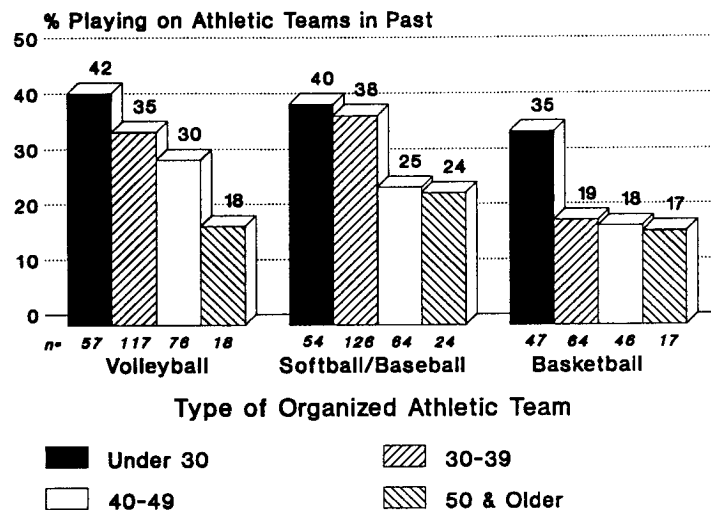
Table 2: *Post- and Pre-Title IX Comparison: Former Participation in Organized Sports*



The post-Title IX generation consists of women 29 years old and younger; pre-Title IX women are 30 and older. $p < .05$

available to many of these women at the time they were attending high school and college. It was only after the enactment of Title IX in 1972 that avenues of sports opportunity broadened. We estimated that in order to glean benefits from the passage of Title IX, women needed to be about 10 years old or younger in 1972. These women were young enough during the 1970's and 1980's to have taken advantage of the increased opportunities for girls in organized sports that Title IX provided. (This would make her 30 years old or younger in 1992.) Table 2 compares the participation rates of post-Title IX and pre-Title IX generations of women in youth and high school

**Table 3: Post-Title IX Trend in Team Sports:
Former Participation in Organized Team Sports by Age**



The post-Title IX generation consists of women 29 years old and younger; pre-Title IX women are 30 and older.

athletics. Women under 30 years old were significantly more likely than their pre-Title IX counterparts to participate in organized athletics prior to and during high school.

These participation figures for both pre-Title IX and post-Title IX working women appear to be higher than in the general population. The Women's Sports Foundation reports that less than 1% of the girls who were in high school in 1971 took part in interscholastic sports. That figure was up to 26.7% of high school girls in the 1977-78 school year, the compliance deadline for Title IX, and rose to 30.5% in 1990-91.³

The post-Title IX generation also was more likely to have participated in team sports than pre-Title IX generations. Table 3 depicts the trend toward lower rates of past participation among older women.

These findings suggest that Title IX served as a historical watershed for women's involvement in athletics. Given the opportunities, girls poured out of the bleachers onto the playing fields in increased numbers.

Sources of Encouragement

Respondents were asked to identify those who encouraged them to participate in sports and exercise. A review of Table 4 shows that patterns of encouragement varied by marital status.

- Both married and single women see themselves as primarily self-motivated athletes and fitness enthusiasts; 68% (N = 644) and 75% (N = 156) respectively.
- Single women rely on friends/peers as the second most important current source of encouragement, whereas married women cite "spouse/mate" as the second greatest source of encouragement, followed by children and parents.
- Parents rank as the third greatest source of encouragement for single women, perhaps due to their younger age.

Only about one-fifth (19%) of both single (N = 40) and married (N = 181) women cite fellow workers as a source of encouragement. It may be that few organizational supports for women's sports and exercise exist in the workplace. We know that only 22% (N = 321) of the respondents indicated that their companies provided any sports/fitness programs or facilities.

Respondents were asked to specify the "most important source of encouragement for their past and current participation in sports and fitness activities". The comparison in Table 5 illustrates the shift in sources of encouragement over time.

- Self-motivation is important for both past and current participation; 37% (N = 469) and 52% (N = 619) respectively.
- Earlier involvement with sports and fitness activity is spurred mainly by friends/peers (23%, N = 285) and parents (15%, N = 186).
- Current participation is fostered by spouses/mates (23%, N = 279) followed by friends/peers (11%, N = 136).

Table 4: Main Sources of Encouragement to Participate in Sports & Fitness Activities by Marital Status

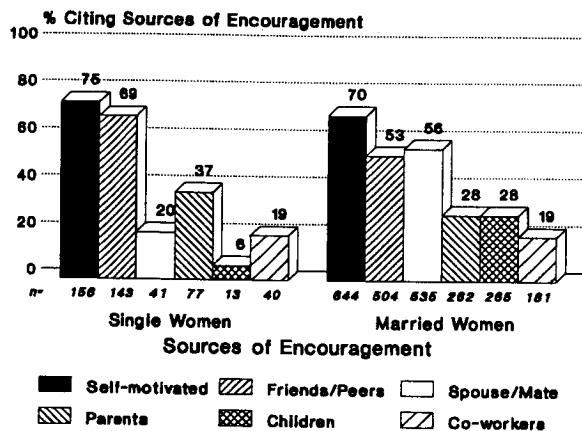
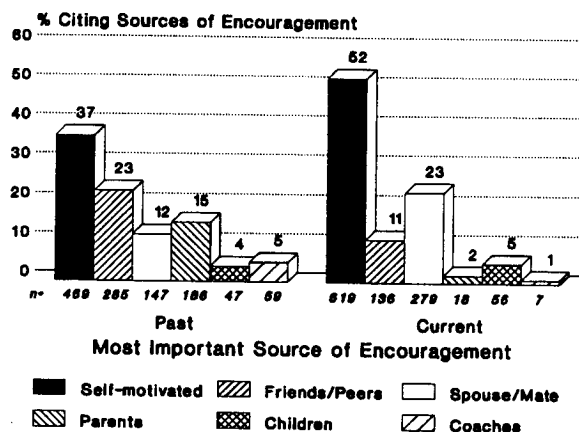


Table 5: Comparison of the Most Important Sources of Encouragement for Past & Current Participation in Sports/Fitness



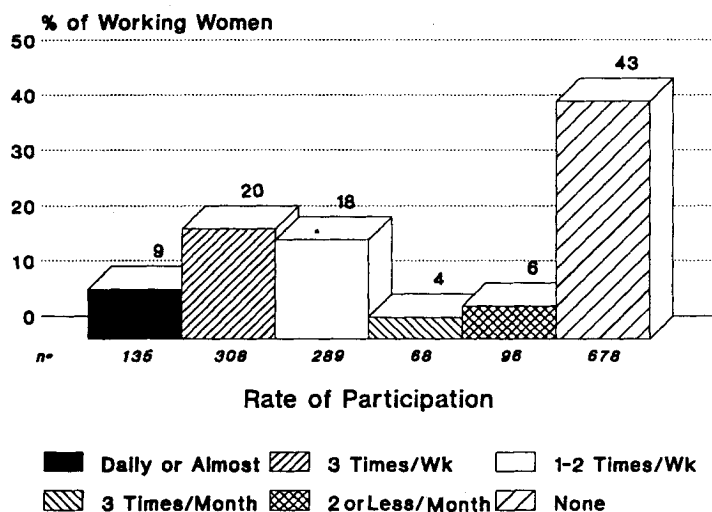
We also found that, for women of color, spouses were less apt to be cited as a source of current encouragement. Whereas 39% (N = 96) of women of color label spouses as a source of encouragement for their current athletic and fitness involvement, 47% (N = 531) of Caucasian women do so. In addition, women of color are significantly less likely than their Caucasian counterparts to identify parents as a source of past encouragement for athletic and fitness activity; 11% (N = 23) and 16% (N = 163) respectively.

Finally, the fact that working women rely so much on themselves as the source of encouragement in both past and current contexts may be a commentary on their strength of purpose in the face of a lack of widespread institutional supports for participation. Historically, sport has been a province of male privilege, and women have had to struggle for equal access, social support, and athletic excellence.

Rates of Participation

The findings showed that most working women regularly participate in sports and fitness activities. Fifty-seven percent of the sample report participating in a sports or fitness activity during the past year. Scrutiny of Table 6 shows that 47% of working women can be described as “regular participants”, i.e., 9% participate daily or almost daily, 20% at least three times per week, and 18% one to two times per week.

Table 6: Frequency of Participation in Sports or Fitness Activities During Past 12 Months



The percentages represent participation rates for the entire sample, n=1,577.

Table 7 below presents the top five athletic and fitness activities ranked by the rate of participation.

Table 8 presents the ranking of participation rates in the most popular sports and fitness activities by marital status and the presence of children.

Table 7: A Rank Ordering of the Top Five Athletic and Fitness Activities Among American Working Women during the Past Twelve Months

Athletic Activities	Fitness Activities
1. Bowling (33%)	1. Walking (85%)
2. Tennis/racquet sports (20%)	2. Bicycling (63%)
3. Golf (17%)	3. Aerobics/Jazzercise (61%)
4. Volleyball (17%)	4. Swimming (50%)
5. Softball/Baseball (16%)	5. Jogging/running (33%)

* The percentages refer to the percent of the total number of working women who participated in any athletic or fitness activity during the past 12 months, N = 908.

Athletes or Fitness Enthusiasts?

As Tables 7 and 8 (see following page) show, working women are mainly involved in fitness activities and secondarily engaged in athletic activities. Indeed, few respondents see themselves as “athletes”. When asked, “Do you consider yourself an athlete?”, the majority (85%, N = 1,195) of working women answered “no”. Both Caucasian women and women of color feel this way.

Why are working women primarily involved in and identified with fitness and not athletics? Compared to females, males have traditionally had plenty of opportunities to participate in organized sports and to take on an athletic identity. In the past, boys typically played sports in their youth and adolescence, followed by a tapering off or ending of formal athletic competition in adulthood and middle age. Many adult men cling to their youthful identity as “athlete,” while others come to define themselves mainly as “fitness buffs” or “former athletes”.

Table 8: A Rank Ordering of Participation Rates in Individual Sports and Fitness Activities by Marital and Parental Role*

All	Single With No Children	Single With Children	Married With No Children	Married With Children
1. walking (85%)	walking (81%)	walking (87%)	walking (86%)	walking (85%)
2. bicycling (63%)	aerobics (62%)	bicycling (68%)	aerobics (67%)	bicycling (62%)
3. aerobics (61%)	bicycling (60%)	aerobics (64%)	bicycling (63%)	aerobics (56%)
4. swimming (50%)	swimming (50%)	swimming (56%)	swimming (46%)	swimming (50%)
5. bowling (33%)	bowling (35%)	bowling (55%)	calisthenics (31%)	bowling (36%)
6. jog/run (30%)	jog/run (34%)	jog/run (36%)	jog/run (27%)	jog/run (28%)
7. calisthenics (30%)	calisthenics (31%)	calisthenics (28%)	hiking-backpacking (28%)	calisthenics (27%)
8. hiking/ backpacking (26%)	hiking/ backpacking (28%)	softball/ baseball (28%)	bowling (24%)	hiking- backpacking (24%)
9. boating (22%)	boating (28%)	volleyball (27%)	boating (23%)	racquet (23%)
10. weight- lifting (22%)	weight- lifting (27%)	hiking- backpacking (25%)	weight- lifting (19%)	boating (19%)
11. racquet (20%)	racquet (23%)	weight-lifting (23%)	golf (10%)	golf (18%)
12. golf (19%)	volleyball (22%)	boating (21%)	racquet (15%)	softball/baseball (17%)

* The rankings are based on reported participation rates in each individual or team activity during the past 12 months.

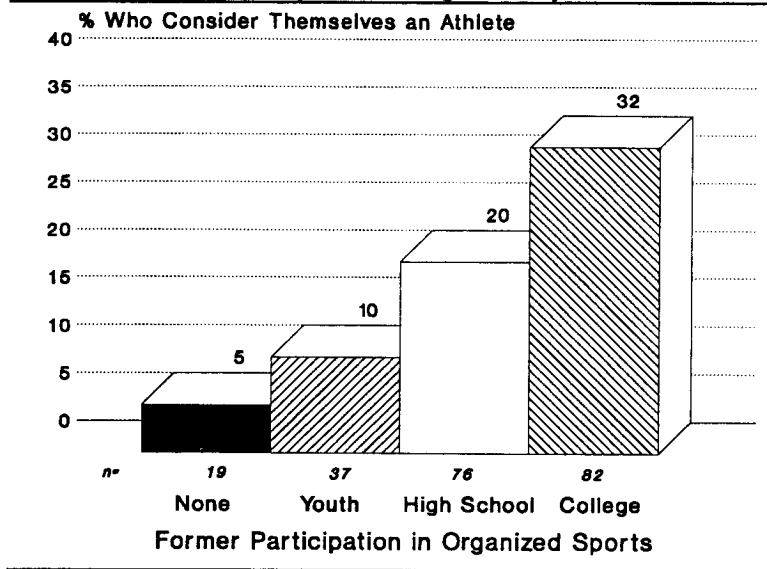
The historical pattern has been different for women. Widespread opportunities for girls to participate in youth and high school sports before the 1970's did not exist because of sex discrimination and cultural biases. Hence, the pathways for developing athletic identity were minimal or absent. The early 1970's saw the passage of Title IX, the growth of the modern women's movement, and the outbreak of the "fitness revolution". Increasingly freed from the cultural constraints of traditional femininity, girls began to participate in organized sports and older women began to explore the fitness realm. And so, while men's historical and cultural gateway to fitness activity has traditionally been through sport, for those women not young enough to take advantage of Title IX, fitness activity has been the main port of entry to more formal athletic activity and identity.

That more women gravitate toward fitness activities than athletics also makes sense within the contexts of their busy lives. It is usually easier to find time for a walk, jog, or Nautilus session than it is to organize a team athletic event. Discriminatory barriers also block women's access to prime-time racquetball courts or golf courses.

What about those working women who do define themselves as athletes? Did they follow the traditional male pattern, acquiring their athletic identity through participation in organized athletics? The data suggest this is the case.

The results depicted in Table 9 indicate that the greater the degree of former participation in organized sports, the more likely individuals are to define themselves as athletes.

Table 9: Working Women who Consider Themselves an Athlete by Former Participation in Organized Sports



n=214

Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity influenced some patterns of participation. Women of color were less likely to participate in sports and fitness activities than Caucasian women. The findings show that:

- Caucasians are almost twice as likely as women of color to participate “every-day” or “almost every day”; 16% (N = 118) and 9% (N = 12) respectively, $p < .05$.
- Forty percent (N = 61) of women of color do not devote any time for participation in sports and fitness activities, compared to 29% (N = 233) of Caucasian women ($p < .05$).
- While 61% (N = 759) of Caucasian women say they participated in a sport or fitness activity during the last year, only 46% (N = 137) of women of color did so ($p < .05$).
- Women of color are more likely than Caucasian women to report a decrease in their participation in sports and fitness activities during the previous five years; 59% (N = 147) and 50% (N = 573) respectively ($p < .05$).

The above discrepancies might be explained partly by structured inequalities that exist between Caucasian women and women of color. Access to participation in athletics and fitness takes time and money. The economic disadvantages and discrimination faced by many women of color may limit their access to fitness facilities or organized athletics.

In summary, working women primarily consider themselves fitness enthusiasts rather than athletes. Participation in athletic and fitness activities also varied by race and ethnicity. There are no overarching patterns of participation, however, that are significantly related to job title, education, age, and employment status. Several factors related to marriage and family life do influence working women’s participation in sports and fitness activities, and these are discussed later in this report.

Perceived Benefits of Sports and Fitness

Most working women (81%, N = 1,250) say they enjoy sports and exercise. Younger women are apt to register higher levels of enjoyment than older women. While 91% (N = 169) of women under 30 say they enjoy sports and exercise, 83% (N = 475) of those age 30-39 did so, and 77% (N = 589) of those 40 and older say so ($p < .05$).

We wanted to understand why so many women enjoy sports and exercise. Why do they include it in their busy lives? What benefits do they derive? In order to answer these questions, we asked respondents to think about their current and past participation and to indicate how important a variety of physical, mental, personal/social, and business-related benefits were to them.

General Benefits

Most working women believe they derive physical, mental, and personal/social benefits from sports and fitness activities.

More than one-third of the women (36% to 41%) feel that involvement in sports and exercise helps them in the workplace as well.

11

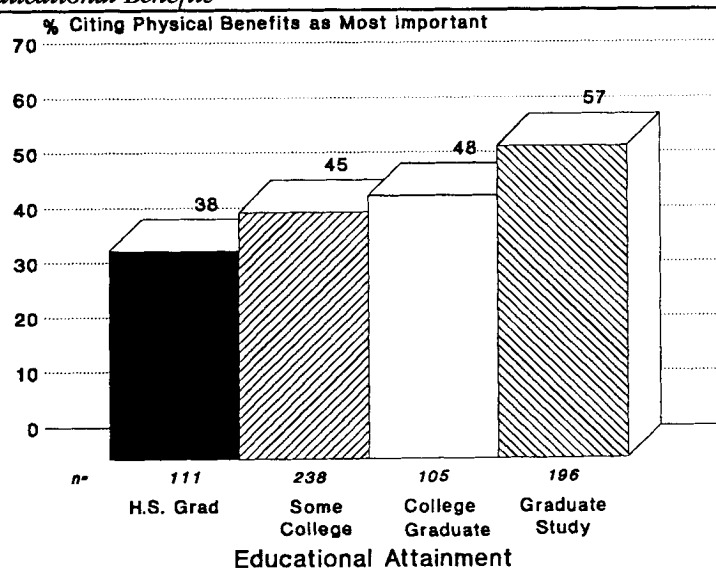
The Perceived Importance of Benefits

Respondents were asked to identify the most important benefit they derived from participation in athletic and fitness activities. Most working women consider physical benefits as most important (71%, N = 998), followed by mental benefits (18%, N = 256), personal and social benefits (10%, N = 143), and finally, business-related benefits (1%, N = 18).

These findings are basically the same across professional and occupational subgroups. In other words, executives, professionals, middle managers, and nonmanagerial/nonprofessional women have similar views of the benefits they derive from athletic/fitness activity. Similarly, their feelings do not vary by marital status or whether children were present. We did find, however, that better educated women are more likely than lesser-educated women to cite physical benefits (such as good health and increased energy level) as the “most important reason” they participate in sports and fitness activities. See Table 10.

Finally, there appears to be a pattern of positive, mutual feedback or a “carrot on a stick” relationship between perceived physical benefits and increased participation in sports and exercise. Respondents were asked to specify the “most important reason you have participated in sports or fitness activities in the past

Table 10: Emphasis on Importance of Physical Benefits by Educational Benefits



Differences between subgroups are significant at the $p < .05$ level.

12 months". The stronger the belief that physical benefits accrue from sports and exercise, the higher the participation rate.

- Eighty-five percent (N = 111) of those who participate in sports and fitness activities every day or almost every day cite physical benefits as most important. Only 63% (N = 59) of those who participate two times/month or less do so.

It may be, therefore, that the physical advantages that active working women derive from sports and exercise help them maintain a high level of self-motivation. The positive bodily feedback may be an important source of motivation to engage in more activities. In addition, the physical and emotional benefits gleaned from participation in sports and fitness, as we see below, may foster increased vitality and achievement in the workplace.

Connections Between Sports, Job and Career

Virtually nothing is known about how women's involvement in sports and fitness activity spills over into their jobs and careers. Our initial findings in this regard appeared to be inconsistent. On one hand, in light of women's historically recent entry into sports, upper-level management, and the professions, it was impressive to find that 36% to 41% of all working women cited business-related benefits from sports and fitness. On the other hand, only a few working women considered these benefits to be the "most important". Further analysis, however, revealed four connections between athletic and fitness involvement and the workplace.

First, the endorsement of sports and fitness activity as a business-related asset was strongest among the executive women and weakest among the professional women.

- While 41% (N = 76) of executives and 43% (N = 122) of middle managers agree that sports and fitness activities help them "tap into the business network", only 33% (N = 141) of the professionals do so ($p < .05$).
- Executives were more likely than professionals to agree that sports and fitness activities advance their career; 41% (N = 69) and 31% (N = 129) respectively ($p < .05$).
- Executives believed that sports and fitness activities help them to access decision-making outside the office more than professionals; 43% (N = 70) and 34% (N = 138) respectively ($p < .05$).

Although the above differences were statistically significant, the reasons behind them are unclear. Is the belief that sports leads to success more prominent in the business world than in professional circles? Could it be that women executives interact with larger numbers of males in their work settings than do professional women and, therefore, have greater occasion to use sport-talk as a business tool? Discussions about sport are also very common in the business world, but not as dominant a feature in professional life.

Second, women of color are significantly more likely than Caucasian women to believe that involvement in sports and fitness activities helps them in the workplace. See Table 11.

Table 11: Belief that Involvement with Sports and Fitness is an Asset in the Business World

Attitude that Sports & Fitness Participation Helps to:	Women of Color		Caucasian Women	
	% =	N =	% =	N =
1. Access decision-making outside the office.	52%	(124)	37%	(409)
2. Be accepted by co-workers.	51%	(125)	39%	(439)
3. Advance your career.	51%	(126)	33%	(371)
4. Tap into business networks.	49%	(122)	37%	(415)

Each of the above differences are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Third, we learned from the telephone interviews that the majority of women do not perceive direct connections between sports and fitness activities and success on the job. Rather, they explained that job-related benefits from sports and fitness involvement are likely to take place through the physical and emotional aspects of their lives. The following comments represent many of their views.

"There is a snowball effect operating here. I feel better about myself and do a better job as a result." (An accountant, married with one child, age 42; does aerobics, runs, swims, and hikes.)

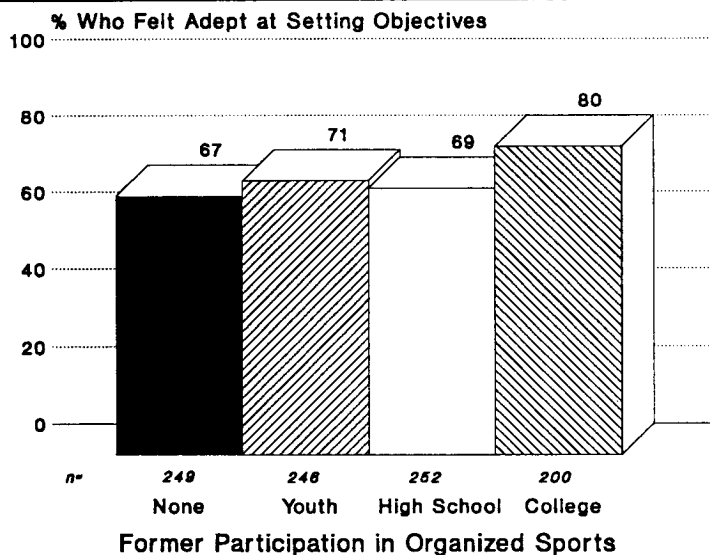
"The only connection that I can see is a personal one. I mean the way you feel about yourself influences the way you are on the job. Exercise makes you feel better, less stressed, and more self-confident. It can spill over into some parts of your job, but it's no guarantee for success." (*A sales representative, married with two children, age 42; plays volleyball, walks and jogs.*)

"Yes, you look and feel better, and this gets reflected in your work product. Managers and bosses look for that, the more energetic and less sick you are, the better worker you will be." (*A daycare provider, married with two children, age 46; walks and bowls.*)

Fourth, we found consistent associations between athletic history and an array of traits that have been commonly believed to foster success in the workplace. Respondents were asked to evaluate their overall performance on the job along key parameters. The greater the level of women's past involvement in organized athletics, the more likely they are to positively evaluate themselves in regard to setting objectives (Table 12), leading a group (Table 13), motivating others (Table 14), sharing credit (Table 15), and feeling comfortable in a competitive environment (Table 16).

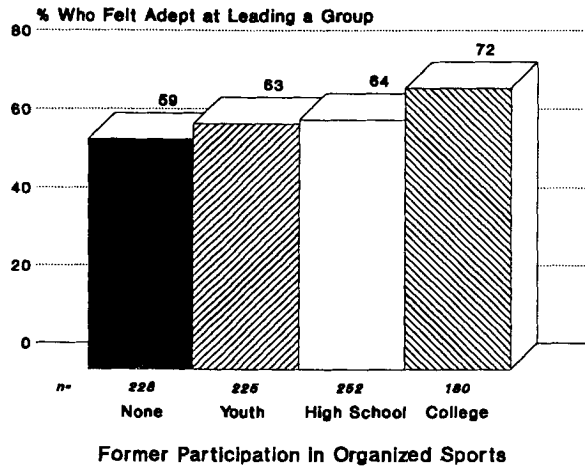
The overall results suggest that business-related benefits derived from sports and fitness activities vary from one occupational setting and occupational/professional group to another. Many white-collar women are experiencing an indirect "spillover effect" through which the physical and emotional well-being garnered from athletic and fitness activities enhances aspects of job performance and career success. And finally, it appears that involvement in organized athletics earlier in life may help to build those characteristics or predispositions that are claimed to contribute to job and career success.

Table 12: Ability to Set Objectives in the Workplace, by Former Participation in Organized Sports



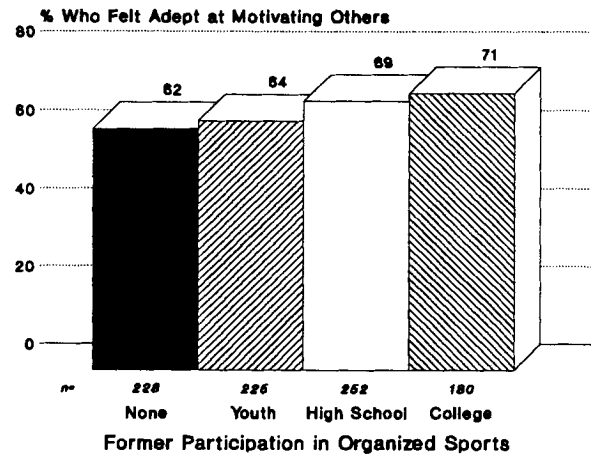
Percent rating themselves "Good" and "Superior"; $n=947$, $p<.05$.

Table 13: Ability to Lead a Group in the Workplace, by Former Participation in Organized Sports



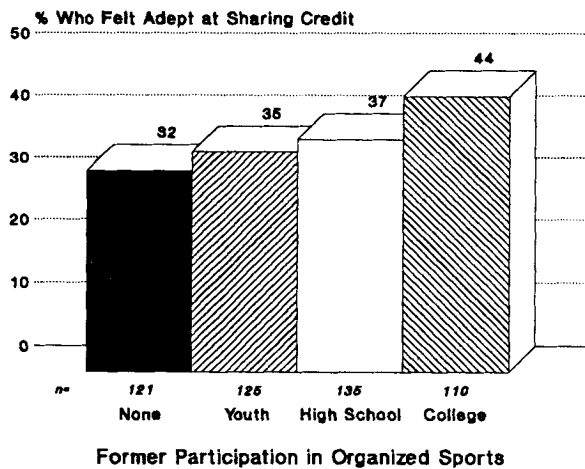
Percent rating themselves "Good" and "Superior"; $n=855$, $p<.05$.

Table 14: Ability to Motivate Others in the Workplace, by Former Participation in Organized Sports



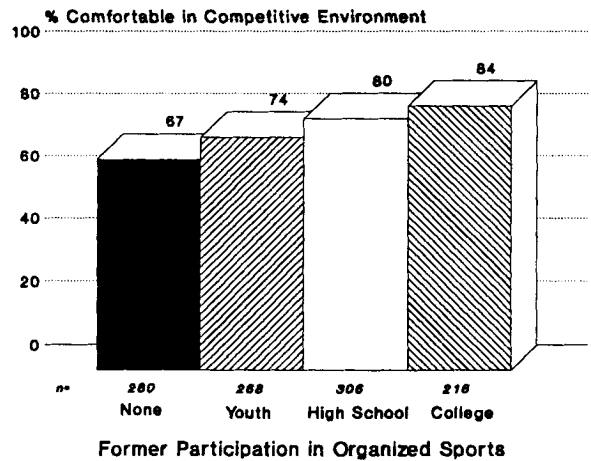
Percent rating themselves "Good" and "Superior"; $n=855$, $p<.05$.

Table 15: Ability to Share Credit with Others in the Workplace, By Former Participation in Organized Sports



Percent rating themselves "Good" and "Superior"; $n=491$, $p<.05$.

Table 16: Feeling Comfortable in a Competitive Workplace Environment, by Former Participation in Organized Sports



Percent rating themselves "Good" and "Superior"; $n=1,050$, $p<.05$.

Battling The Time Crunch

The 1970's saw the birth of the "supermom", the woman who combines the toil and aspirations of career, marriage, and motherhood. Married or single, working women of the 1990's lead diverse and hectic lives. Our findings show that women want more sports and exercise in their lives, but they are also grappling with some very real time constraints that keep them from the gym, jogging path, or fitness center. For many women, it is a struggle to cram athletics and exercise into an already jammed agenda.

What Do Working Women Want?

Working women want sports and fitness activities in their lives! Their endorsement is evidenced by the following findings.

- Both married women (81%, N = 849) and single women (86%, N = 185) say they enjoy sports and fitness activities.
- Three-quarters (77%, N = 1,143) want to be more knowledgeable about sports and fitness. This desire is significantly more pronounced among women of color (78%, N = 229) than among their Caucasian counterparts (72%, N = 893).
- Sixty-four percent (N = 992) feel that sports and fitness activity "is just as important to me now as it was five years ago".
- Ninety-one percent (N = 1,421) believe that it is important for girls to participate in organized sports while growing up.
- More than three-quarters (77%, N = 1,209) feel that sports help enhance their self-image.

16

The Time Crunch

If many working women want more sports and exercise in their lives, they also feel strongly about not having enough time to invest in these activities. Most working women (72%, N = 1,129) agree with the statement, "I don't have enough time to devote to sports and fitness activities". Women of color and Caucasian women feel similarly in this regard. Married women with children, however, are more likely than those without children to say they lack time for sports and fitness activities; 75% (N = 453) and 68% (N = 310) respectively ($p < .05$).

The following comments made during telephone interviews express women's concerns about the sports/fitness time crunch.

"I'm either too tired or can't find enough hours in the day to fit exercise in." (A clerk, married with two children, age 34; softball and volleyball player.)

"I own my own business. I'm a doctor and a single mom. This adds up to not enough time as I'd like." (A chiropractor, single with three children, age 38; works out at a gym and does aerobics.)

"I don't have enough time after work, family, school, and the dog." (A court reporter, single mother of one, age 30; plays softball, does aerobics and free weights.)

Many women indicate that, given more time, they would pursue sports and fitness activities more often. Indeed, the perceived time crunch is clearly associated with the rate of participation in sports and fitness activities. As Table 17 shows, those who see fewer time constraints in their lives participate most often. Conversely, the infrequent exercisers and athletes are more likely to believe that time constraints hold them back.

Table 17: Perceived Time Constraints and the Rate of Participation in Sports and Fitness Activities

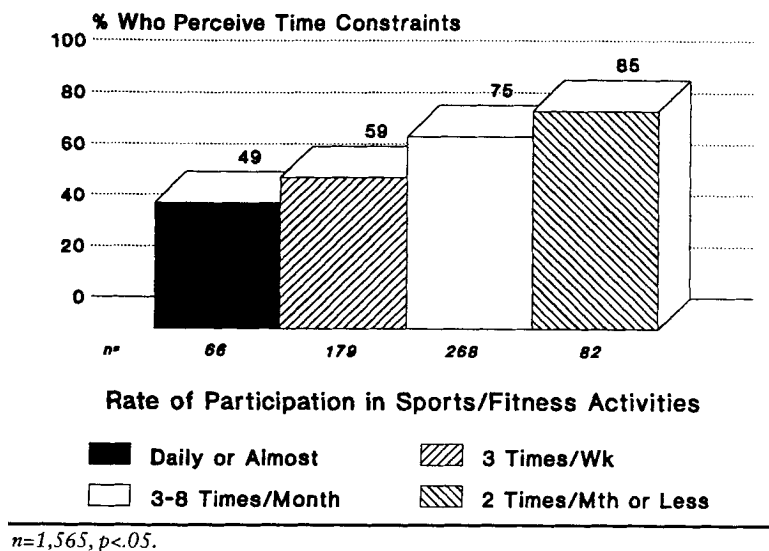
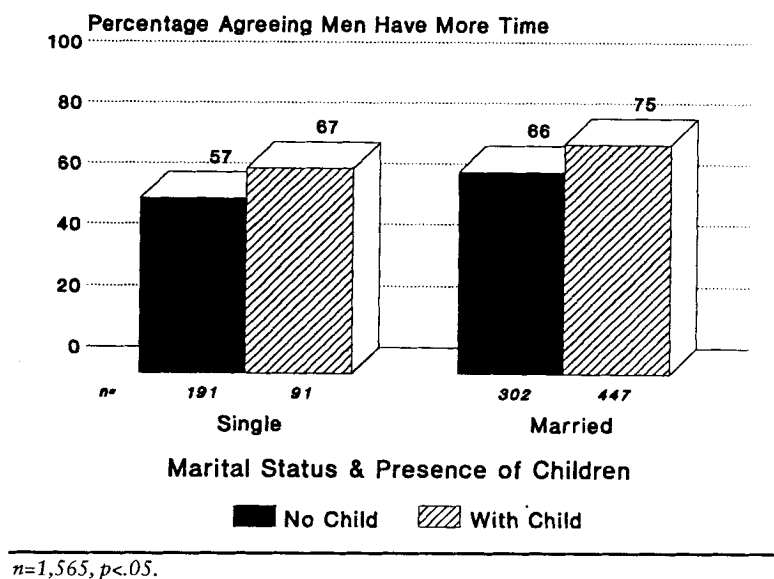


Table 18: Belief that Working Men Have More Time for Sport/Exercise than Working Women, By Marital Status and Presence of Children



Working women also believe that their male counterparts are not as hemmed in by the sports/fitness time crunch. Two-thirds (68%, N = 1,057) of those surveyed agree that "Working women have less time to devote to sports/exercise than working men". Married women are more likely than single women to endorse this viewpoint. Also, the presence of children intensifies the belief that working men have more time than working women. See Table 18.

Seventy-eight percent (N = 31) of the telephone interviewees agree that working men have more time than working women for sports and exercise. They discussed their impressions at length, sometimes angrily.

"Men definitely have more time for sports and exercise. They leave the wife on her own to take care of the house and any related chores. It's the women who make the time for men's exercise and social activities. Men just don't feel responsible for helping out at home. It's a stereotype, an accepted social norm, and men and women are acting it out. Women are putting up with it and men are getting away with it!" (A phlebotomist, divorced with two children, age 40; does aerobics.)

"Men have more time because the responsibility for the children goes to mom. It's OK for him to go out and exercise or do sports. With the mother it's different because, if she goes out to exercise, she is seen as leaving the children." (A post office worker, married with three children, age 35; a walker.)

"Men probably make more time for themselves. They are less concerned about the family and house than women are. Men also seem to socialize around sports and exercise more than women do. They use sports to get together with one another. Women need to be more seriously devoted to working out because it's easier for them to let the house cleaning and childcare get in the way." (An office manager, married with two children, age 41; runs, walks, goes to a gym.)

The time crunch is a pressing reality for many working women, especially those who are married with children. Indeed, women's pursuits of athletic and fitness activities unfold within the complex web of commitments and constraints they experience in their households and the workplace.

Blending Sports and Fitness with Work, Marriage and Family

Sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1989) has documented that, on average, married working women are putting in a “second shift”, that is, returning from jobs outside the home only to do most of housework and childcare activities inside the home. After adding together the amount of time spent on doing a paid job, housework, and childcare, Hochschild found that women work about 15 hours longer each week than men. Over the span of a year, this means that women worked an extra month of 24-hour days per year.

This “second shift” is taking a toll on the time and energy working women might devote to sports and exercise. Our findings suggest that the division of labor in many households is putting many white-collar women at a disadvantage in the realm of sports and exercise. We asked these women to estimate the number of hours they and, if applicable, their husbands, devoted each week to a range of activities including: job/career, housework, and family responsibilities, leisure, and sports/exercise. A review of Table 19 reveals that:

- Though married men devote between three and eight more hours per week to job and career than women do, married women put in between nine and 19 more hours labor into housework and family responsibilities than they reported their husbands do.
- The average married woman with children devotes 77 hours per week to job, housework, and family. This comprises 65% of her available wakeful hours each week (allowing for seven hours sleep per night). The figures for male spouses are 66 hours or 55% of total wakeful hours per week.
- Spouses devote slightly more time to leisure than their working wives, but men and women (whether married or single) devoted the same amount of time on average to sports and fitness activities.
- Single mothers work more hours at job and career than their married counterparts and carry almost as heavy a load of housework and family responsibilities.
- Single women without children devote more time to leisure than do the husbands of married women with children.

Given these commitments and constraints, working women are often challenged to build bridges between work, relationships, and the softball game or swimming pool. For some, the bridges span minor inconveniences, while for others, the obstacles are quite overwhelming. Several factors shaped working women’s access to sports and fitness activities. Indeed, the fact that we found no differences in the average number of hours married women and their spouses devote to sports and fitness should not be misleading. The time working women devote to sports and fitness activities does vary according to factors directly related to marital and domestic life.

Table 19: The Number of Hours Per Week Devoted to Various Areas of Life by Marital Status and the Presence of Children*

Area of Life	Average # of Hours by Presence of Children & Marital Status			
$\bar{X} =$	Single No Kids	Single with Kids	Married No Kids	Married with Kids
Job/Career	45 (--)	42 (--)	41 (44)	38 (46)
Housework	7 (--)	11 (--)	10 (3)	14 (4)
Family Responsibility	7 (--)	22 (--)	11 (9)	25 (16)
Leisure	14 (--)	10 (--)	12 (14)	10 (12)
Sports & Exercise	4 (--)	4 (--)	4 (4)	4 (4)

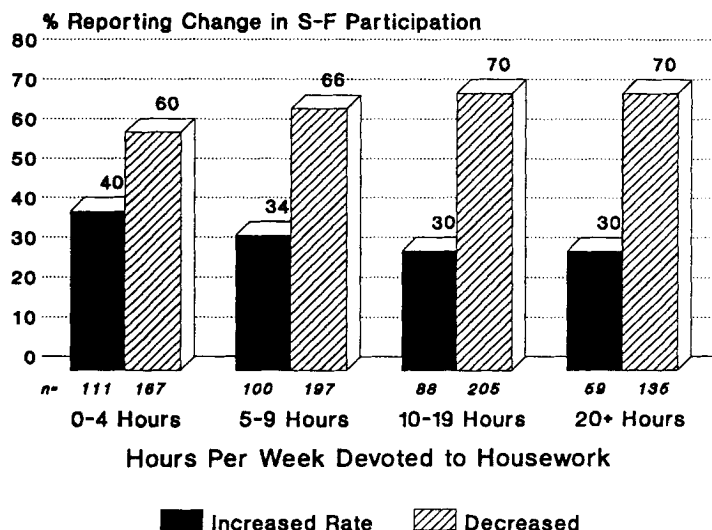
* Note that the figures in parentheses indicate the number of hours that respondents reported that their spouses devoted to each respective area of life. No figures appear in the cases where working women are single.

The Housework Factor

Generally, the fewer hours working women devote to housework, the greater their involvement in sports and fitness activities. Specific survey findings include:

- Working women who invest more hours in housework are more likely to report that their participation in sports and fitness activities decreased during the past five years. See Table 20.
- The more hours spent on housework, the fewer hours devoted to sports and fitness activities each week. See Table 21.

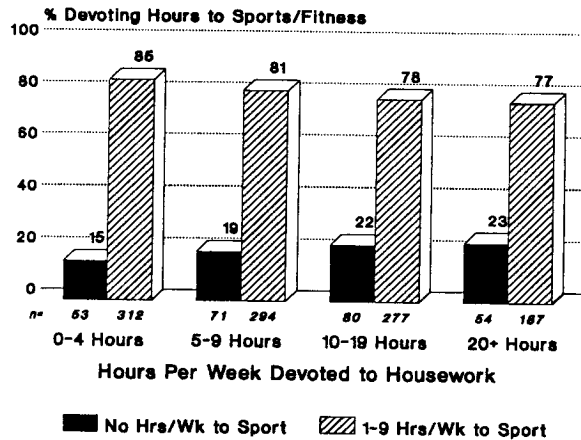
Table 20: Participation in Sports & Fitness Activities Currently and 5 Years ago, by Hours per Week Devoted to Housework



The investment of time in housework also influences who working women selected to participate with in sports and fitness activities. As Table 22 shows, women least involved with housework are more apt to participate with female friends, male friends, and coworkers than women who devoted more time to housework. Women with a greater housework burden, in contrast, are more likely to participate with children than those with lighter housework loads. In addition, some of this variation is linked to whether or not the working woman is married or single, and if she has children.

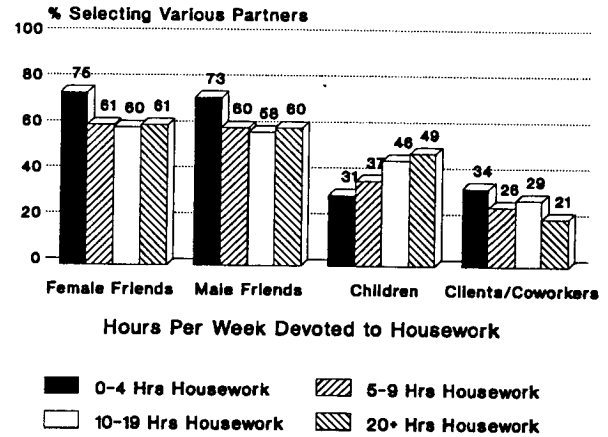
Significant differences ($p < .05$) were evident in relation to decreased participation; $n=1,062$.

Table 21: Number of Hours Devoted to Housework by Number of Hours Devoted to Sports and Fitness



Significant differences ($p < .05$) exist between the two subgroups; $n = 1,342$.

Table 22: Number of Hours Devoted to Housework and Selection of Sports/Fitness Partners During the Past 12 Months



Significant differences ($p < .05$) exist between the 0-4 hr/wk housework group and the other subgroups; $n = 900$.

Family Responsibilities

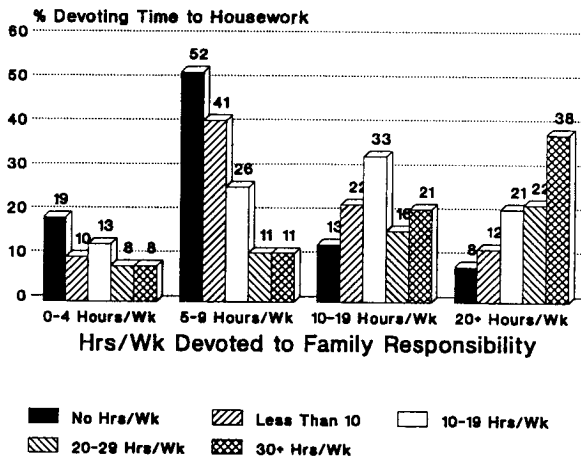
Housework and family responsibilities go hand-in-hand. As one set of responsibilities increases, so does the other. See Table 23.

The time white-collar women devote to family responsibilities is also associated with their participation in sports and fitness activities.

- Greater time investment in family responsibilities is associated with decreased levels of participation in sports and fitness activities during the last five years. See Table 24.
- Married women with children are significantly more likely than those with no children to report a decrease in athletic and fitness participation during the past five years; 56% and 47% respectively ($p < .05$).

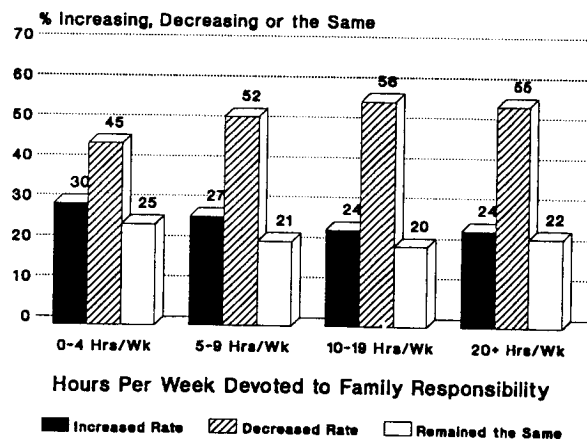
Family responsibilities are not as crucial an influence on white-collar women's participation in sports and fitness activities as housework. This may be because, as previous research shows, men typically devote more time to childcare than they do to housework. A more plausible explanation, therefore, is that the

Table 23: Hours Devoted to Family Responsibility and Hours Devoted to Housework



Differences were significant ($p < .05$); $n = 1,402$.

Table 24: Participation in Sports and Fitness Activities Currently and 5 Years Ago, by Hours Given to Family Responsibility



Significant differences ($p < .05$) were found in relation to decreased participation; $n = 1,272$.

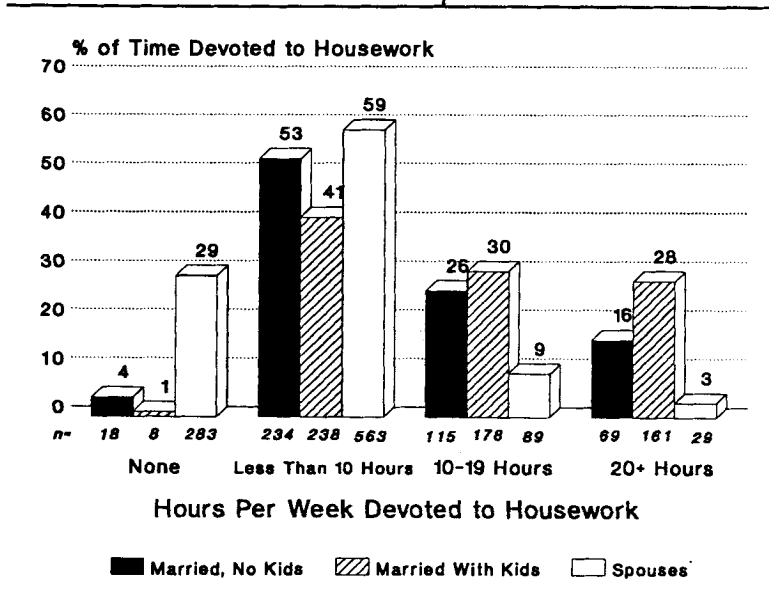
presence of children (especially in marriage) enlarges the housework load for many women which, in turn, erodes the time available for sports and fitness activity.

What About the Men?

While women's participation in the workplace has expanded by leaps and bounds in recent decades, men's contributions to housework and childcare have only inched forward. Men's share of the housework increased from 20% to 30% between 1965 and 1981. Yet women still did 80% of the cooking and cleaning in all households in 1985 (Robinson, 1988). And so, while many men are devoting more time to household chores and parenting, women still bear the brunt of responsibility for these tasks.

In the context of marital and family change, therefore, we suggest that men are playing two different roles in relation to women's access to sport and fitness activity: "facilitator" or "frustrator". Our study reveals that the frustrators probably outnumber the facilitators. As Table 25 shows, 29% (N= 283) of husbands reportedly do no housework at all, and only 12% (N = 116) contribute 10 or more hours to housework each week. The figures for men married to women of color were 31% (N = 44) and 19% (N = 231) respectively.

Table 25: Comparison of Hours Per Week Devoted to Housework Between Married Women and Their Spouses



We suggest that the facilitators indirectly give their mates more time to devote to sports and fitness by doing more cooking, cleaning, and childcare. As a 26-year-old sales specialist, softball player, and walker with two children explains, "My husband and I share all the household chores and responsibilities equally. We both have the same amount of time for recreation and exercise. It works out well because we rarely have a conflict or problem with wanting more time to do our own thing. We're equally burdened and equally free to pursue personal activities."

In contrast, the frustrators block their mates' access to athletics and fitness activities by refusing to help out more on the home front. Many women we interviewed feel they are in a bind. As a married, 44-year-old personnel specialist, cyclist, and walker with one child states,

"My husband plays tennis while I am doing chores, shopping, or working. He owns his own business and thinks this gives him the right to walk away from housework. I tried countless times to get him to do work around the house, but he doesn't. He always got away with it and, after a while, I got fed up with asking him time and time again to help out, so I just do it myself. I guess I'm the one giving him the time to exercise, but sometimes it's easier just to do the work myself."

In summary, men's influence on their working wives' participation in sports and fitness activities is indirect yet apparent. The small number of men who worked extra hours on the domestic "second shift" helped their working wives to find the time and energy to devote to sports and fitness. In contrast, the failure of men to provide a more equitable division of labor at home frustrated the attempts of their wives to bridge the gaps between work, marriage, and family in order to enter the fitness realm.

Conclusion

This is the first study to investigate the dynamic interplay between the realms of work, marriage and family, and sports and fitness in the lives of American working women. Many working women are using sports and fitness activities to take possession of their bodies, nurture their self-esteem, and maximize their potential on the job. Sports and fitness activities influence how women care for themselves, see themselves, and how they approach their work.

Working women want more time for sports and fitness in their lives. For most of them, finding time and energy for sports and fitness activities is not simply a matter of better integrating these activities with the demands of job and career. Rather, women are trying to construct a healthy interplay between three rapidly changing realms in their lives: work, marriage and family, and athletics and fitness.

While most working women heartily endorse the physical and personal benefits derived from athletic and fitness activity, they are less apt to emphasize the potential applications of sports and fitness in the business and social aspects of their lives. We speculate that, as greater numbers of women combine career and family relationships with a more active sports and fitness agenda, their understanding of how to apply the athletic experience in these other areas of their lives will deepen.

The “spillover effect” between involvement in the sports and fitness realm and performance in the workplace suggested by our data requires more systematic and longitudinal research. Both women of color and Caucasian women feel strongly that working women glean physical and emotional benefits from athletic and fitness activities. Women of color are more likely than Caucasians to believe that sports and fitness activities are related to career advantage. And yet, ironically, women of color actually participate in sports and fitness activities less often than Caucasian women. Future research should examine the nature of the synergy between work, sports, and fitness, especially among women of color. Researchers might also investigate in which occupational settings involvement in sports and fitness activities do heighten job performance or career mobility. (Additional areas for future research appear in Appendix B.)

The reciprocity of women’s and men’s roles in marriage and family were evident in our findings. Marital status, the presence of children, and the time and energy devoted to housework shaped women’s perceptions of the time available for sports and fitness activities. Indeed, the “time crunch” spawned by the interacting demands of work and household made getting to the swimming pool or fitness class problematic for many women.

In many marriages, men played the role of “frustrators”; that is, their failure to devote more time to housework and childcare limited the amount of time that wives had to devote to sports and fitness activities. Some husbands played the role of “facilitators” by devoting more time to household tasks and childrearing, thereby, helping their wives cope with the sports/fitness “time crunch” more effectively. Men also facilitated women’s involvement in sports and fitness activities by being supportive fathers of women athletes, husbands who actively promote their spouse’s participation, and friends of single women who took part in coed athletic and fitness activities. In the future, women and men will need to work together more closely to develop relationships that help one another to more fully integrate sports and fitness into their lives.

An important implication can be drawn from our overall research findings. When understood in the context of long-range demographic trends in American marital and family life, our findings suggest that working women’s participation in sports and fitness activities is likely to expand in the future. First, the decline in the proportion of households that contain married couples is being accompanied by a decrease in the amount of time women devote to housework (Robinson, 1988). This means that more working women will be freed from the sports-fitness time crunch. Secondly, the decline in the number of households with children is reducing the childcare load which, in turn, will give working women more time for sports and exercise. Third, the slow but steady increase in men’s contributions to housework and childcare will enable more women to make it to gyms, playing fields, and bike paths. And finally, recent gains in athletic equity brought about by a revitalized Title IX⁴ are providing increased athletic opportunities for younger women which will, in turn, hike women’s participation in sports and fitness activities throughout their life spans.

Athletic and fitness activities are playing a significant role in working women’s lives now more than ever before in American history. Working women are yearning for sports and fitness to play an even more integral role in their lives. Many are seeking to create a healthful and productive balance between the household, work, and fitness realms. Social planners, public health advocates, educators, and political leaders would be wise to facilitate their efforts.

Footnotes

¹Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Earnings, January 1987, Table 21. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

²The leading fitness activities included aerobic exercise, bicycling, calisthenics, exercising with equipment, exercise walking, running, and swimming. The survey also found that only 37% of women 25 years of age or older were “non-participants” in seven leading fitness activities, compared to 48% of male counterparts. See *Fitness in America-1991* (August, 1992). National Sporting Goods Association, International Headquarters, 1699 Wall Street, Mt. Prospect, IL 60056-5780.

³These percentages were derived by using Department of Education approximate totals of public and private high school students, which estimated a 50/50 ratio of boys and girls. The total number of interscholastic sports participants used were supplied by the National Federation of State High School Associations. Before 1980, numbers included junior high school and some Canadian athletes.

⁴Passage of the Civil Rights Restoration Act in March, 1988, reaffirmed Title IX's institution-wide protection against discrimination. As a result, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) has devoted greater resources to investigating Title IX complaints. Findings of Title IX violations by the OCR as well as favorable court decisions have forced schools to examine their compliance status.

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Appendix A: Demographic Profile

We constructed the following demographic profile of the white-collar women in this sample.

Job and Career:

Seventy percent of the sample defined their work as “a career” while 30% viewed it as “just a job”. Most women worked full-time (79%). Fourteen percent of the sample were Executives, 32% were Professionals, 22% were Middle Managers, and 31% were Non-managerial/Non-professionals. Typical job titles in these classifications appear below.

1. **Executives:** chairman, president, vice president, owner/partner, general manager.
2. **Professionals:** health service, teacher, accountant, attorney, librarian, other professional.
3. **Middle Managers:** financial manager, department manager, purchasing manager/agent, supervisor, other manager.
4. **Non-managerial/Non-professionals:** sales agent/broker, secretary, administrative support/assistant, stock clerk, stenographer/typist, information clerk, personal services, technician, adjustor/investigator.

Race and Ethnicity:

The sample was divided into African-Americans (7%), Asians (3%), Caucasians (81%), Hispanics (3%), and Others (6%) for analytical purposes. It should be noted that, compared to Caucasians, women of color are less likely to be employed in white collar positions. While about 70% of Caucasian women are white-collar workers, 55% of African-American women are white-collar workers.

Education and Income:

Sixteen percent of the sample held four-year college degrees, and 24% either were pursuing or held post-graduate degrees. Twenty-three percent graduated from high school. Caucasian women generally had greater educational achievement than women of color. Almost half (49%) of the women had an individual annual income of less than \$25,000. Forty-three percent earned between \$25,000 and \$49,999 annually. Twelve percent had a total household income of \$25,000 or less, 33% earned between \$25,000 and \$49,000, and 29% earned between \$50,000 and \$74,999. No significant differences in individual income were evident between Caucasians and women of color. However, the household incomes of Caucasians were significantly higher than those of women of color.

Marriage and Children:

The majority of women were married with children. Sixty-nine percent were married and 17% were separated, divorced, or widowed. Fourteen percent were single and never married. Forty-eight percent of all women had at least one child living at home. While 57% of married women were mothers with at least one child at home, 40% of the formerly married women and 16% of the single (never married) women had at least one child in the home.

Residence:

While 52% of the working women in our sample lived in suburbs, 36% lived in cities and 12% lived in rural areas.

Age:

The average age was 40 years old (median = 40).

Table 1: Age Distribution

	Under 30	30-39	40-49	50+
% =	13%	38%	35%	16%
N =	185	587	523	257

Appendix B: Key Areas for Future Research

The Women's Sports Foundation seeks to educate the American public in matters pertaining to girls' and women's involvement in athletics and fitness activities. While this report answers several long-ignored questions, it also points out a need for additional research.

- More needs to be learned about young women's initial socialization into sports and fitness activities. What kinds of early experiences are apt to help women to stay involved later in adult life?
- Though white-collar women want more sports and fitness activity in their lives, many experience difficulty fitting these pursuits into their busy schedules. It would be useful to learn more about how working women successfully manage their time in order to better integrate a fitness agenda into their lives.
- We found that some men facilitate working women's involvement in sports and fitness. More needs to be learned about what men actually do that is viewed by women as encouraging or helpful. What benefits do couples or families accrue from mutually supportive involvement in sports and fitness activities?
- How are children's attitudes toward health, fitness, and sports influenced by the athletic and fitness involvements of the significant women in their lives; e.g., mothers, sisters, aunts, teachers?
- This study sheds some initial light on how family factors positively and negatively influence white-collar women's participation in sports and fitness activities. Public health officials, health care professionals, and epidemiologists need to learn more about the links between sports/fitness involvement and physical and emotional health.
- Does participation in athletics help women to compete more effectively in the business world? Do athletic experiences such as playing with a team, learning to be an aggressive competitor, or sticking with a game plan, help women break through the "glass ceiling" and achieve promotions in corporate hierarchies?
- In response to growing global competition, political and corporate leaders are taking steps to enhance the productivity of the American work force. More research is needed that investigate the extent to which the benefits derived from athletic and fitness activities are associated with job satisfaction, productivity, absenteeism, or career aspirations.

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