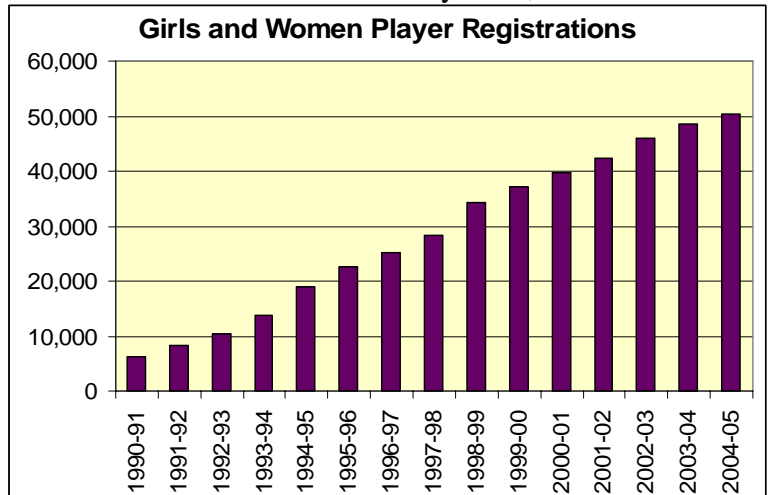


The 2005 Girls' Hockey Survey

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Girls' hockey has been growing at a rapid pace over the past 15 years, from 6,000 girls in 1990 to more than 50,000 in 2005. The success of the US Women's Hockey team, and the growth in college womens' hockey have helped draw more attention to girls' hockey. And yet girls still represent a fraction- about 10%- of all youth hockey players. Hockey is still dominated by men, and even girls' hockey is typically run by coaches – mostly men- whose main experience has been with boys' hockey.



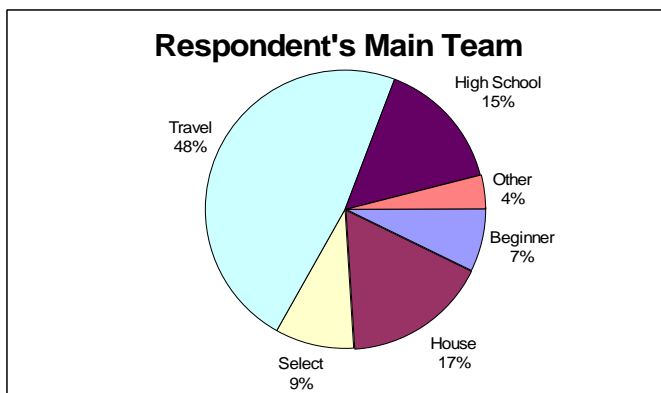
We all have opinions on what would improve girls' hockey, opinions based on our personal experiences. There are coaches, parents, program

administrators as well as girls themselves who have tried different ways of participating in hockey. What could we learn if we put all of these individual experiences together, and looked for what works consistently?

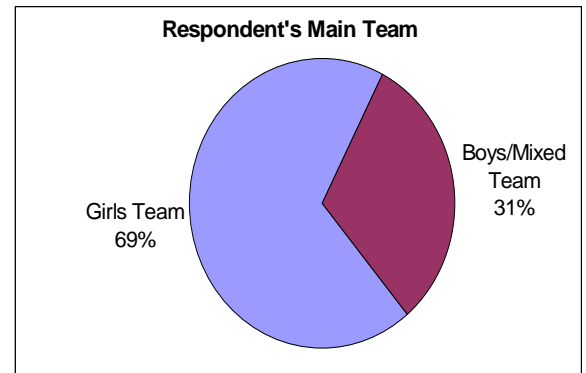
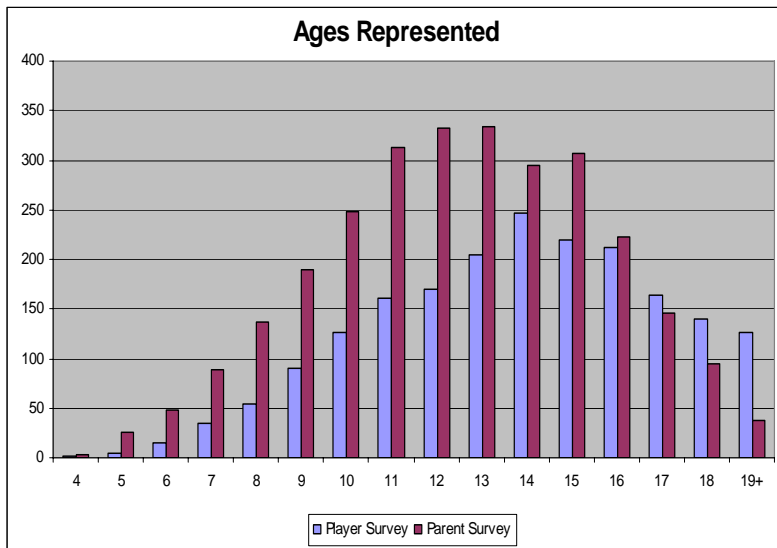
The 2005 USA Hockey Girls' Survey was distributed via email to all girls registered with USAH for the 2004-2005 season, as well as to girls' program administrators. The email linked respondents to the USAH website, where they could choose the survey appropriate to their role (Player, parent, coach, administrator). A total of over 6,200 responses were completed representing all regions of the country.

2005 Survey Responses

	Players	Parents	Coaches	Administrators	TOTAL
TOTAL	2,051	2,897	978	299	6,225
Northeast	818	1029	364	94	2,305
Midwest	766	1269	416	134	2,585
South	177	233	68	19	497
West	298	350	100	48	796
Unspecified	-	16	30	4	42



Responses represented girls aged 4-19, and included girls in beginners programs, house, travel, high school programs and girls that play on girls' teams and boys' teams.



The age at which girls start playing hockey varies greatly. The median age for girls to start playing hockey was 7, however more than 20% of girls started playing after the age of 10, and 7% started at age 14 or older.

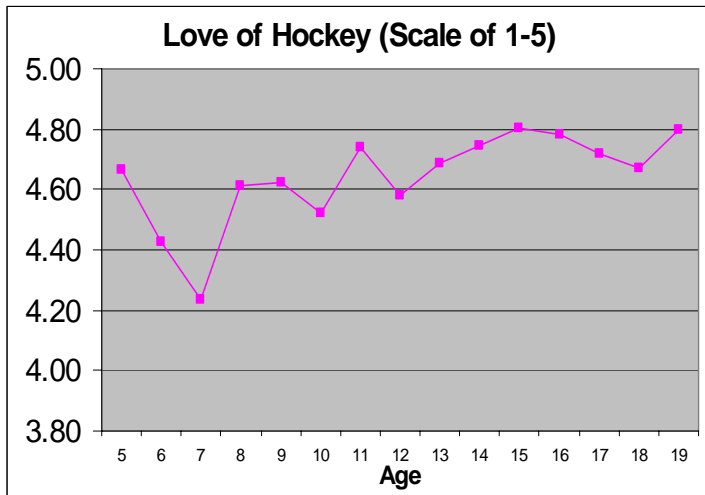
Why did you start playing hockey?

Choose all that apply	Count	%
My brother/father/mother/sister played.	1213	58.07%
My parents encouraged me to play.	453	21.69%
I watched NHL/AHL/College hockey and thought it looked fun.	417	19.96%
I watched the Olympics and thought it looked fun.	164	7.85%
I tried it in school and liked it.	37	1.77%
I went to a "try hockey" program and liked it.	196	9.38%
A friend told me how fun it is.	231	11.06%
Other	389	18.62%

Girls gave many reasons for playing hockey. The most common reason was a family member who played. Parental encouragement was the next most common reason.

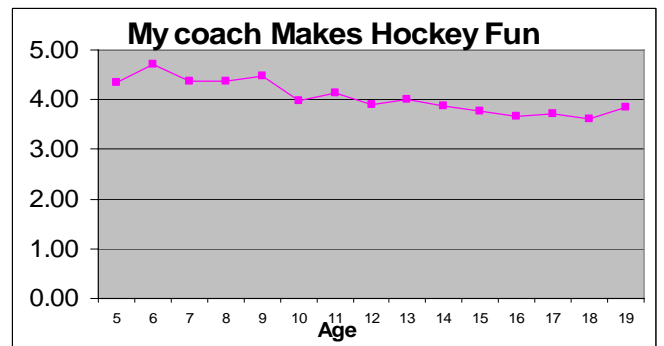
Almost 20% for girls cites watching professional or college hockey, and 8% mentioned the Olympics as incentive to start playing.

What Girls Think About Their Hockey Experience



When asked to rate their love of hockey on a scale of 1-5, girls rated hockey a 4.79 across all respondents. As girls get older, they seem to enjoy hockey more.

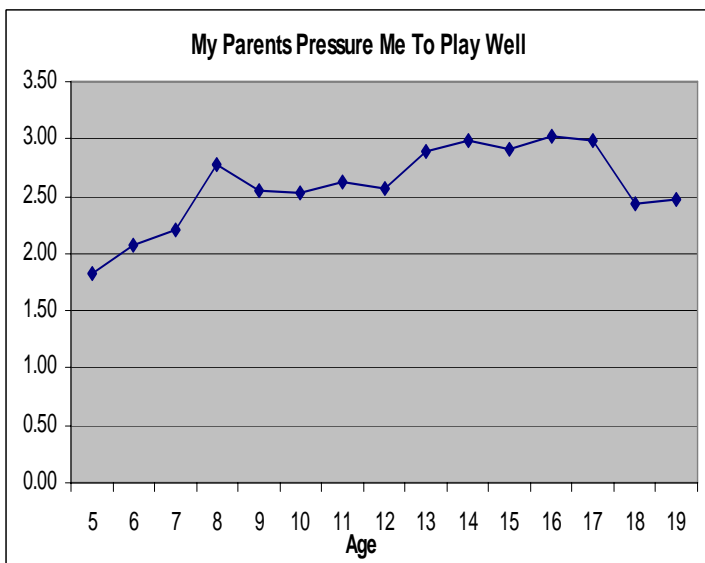
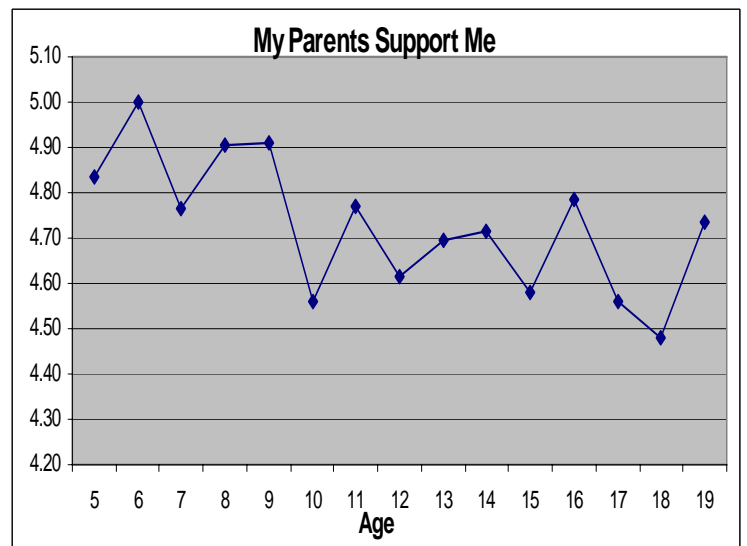
Although girls say that their coach makes hockey fun, that seems to decline in the older age groups.



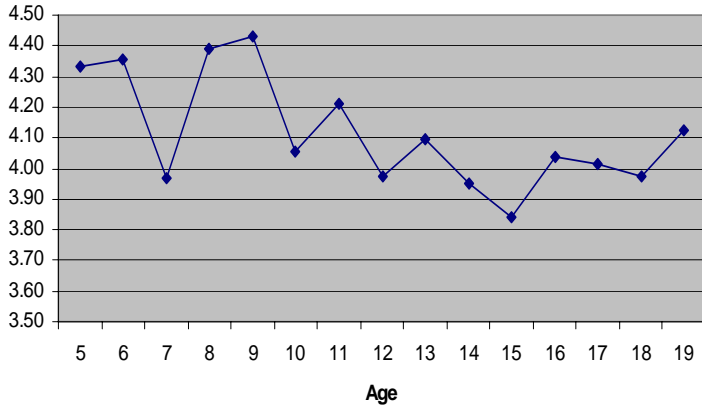
Over all age groups, girls felt respected by their teammates.



Girls did report less support from their parents at the older age groups, and also increased pressure to do well.



My Team Stresses Good Sportsmanship

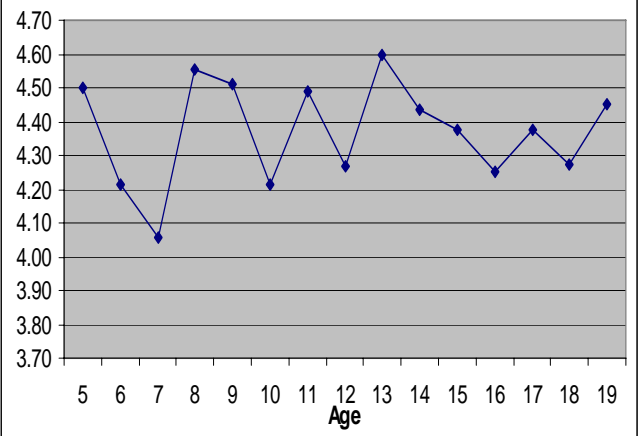


Girls felt that their team stressed good sportsmanship, but that feeling declined markedly across the older age groups.

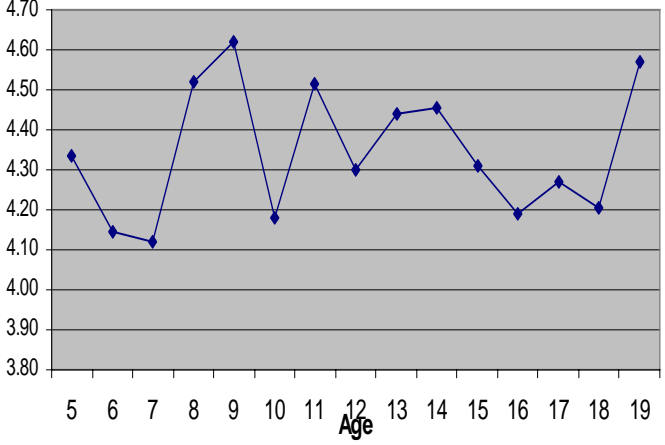
Overall girls felt they got a fair amount of playing time, but there was considerable variation in responses across different age groups.

Similarly, the responses varied when asked if they felt like part of the team.

I Got a Fair Amount of Playing Time



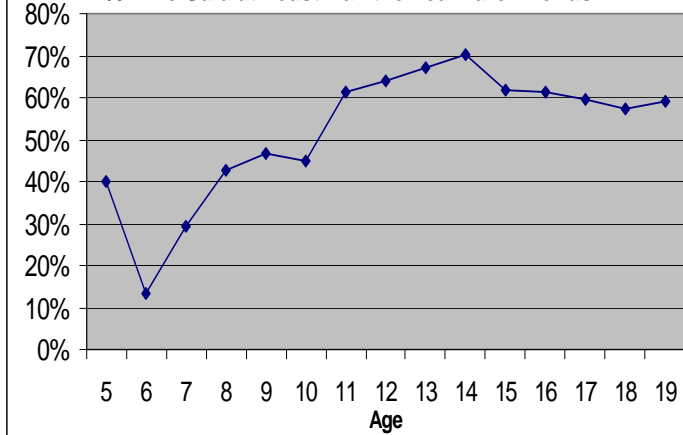
I Felt Like Part of the Team



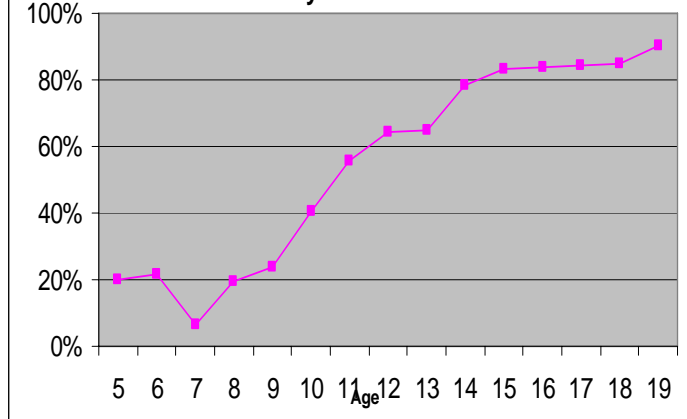
The percent of respondents who reported that at least half the team are friends increased steadily across the age groups. This trend mirrored extremely closely the trend in percentage of girls playing on a girls' team, as well as the trend in the love of hockey question indicating that

playing on a girls' team was related to having more friends among teammates, and also to enjoying hockey more.

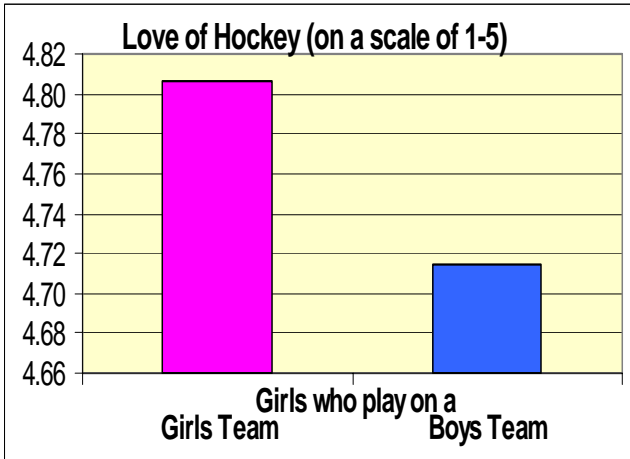
% Who Said at Least Half the Team are Friends



% Who Played on Girls Team

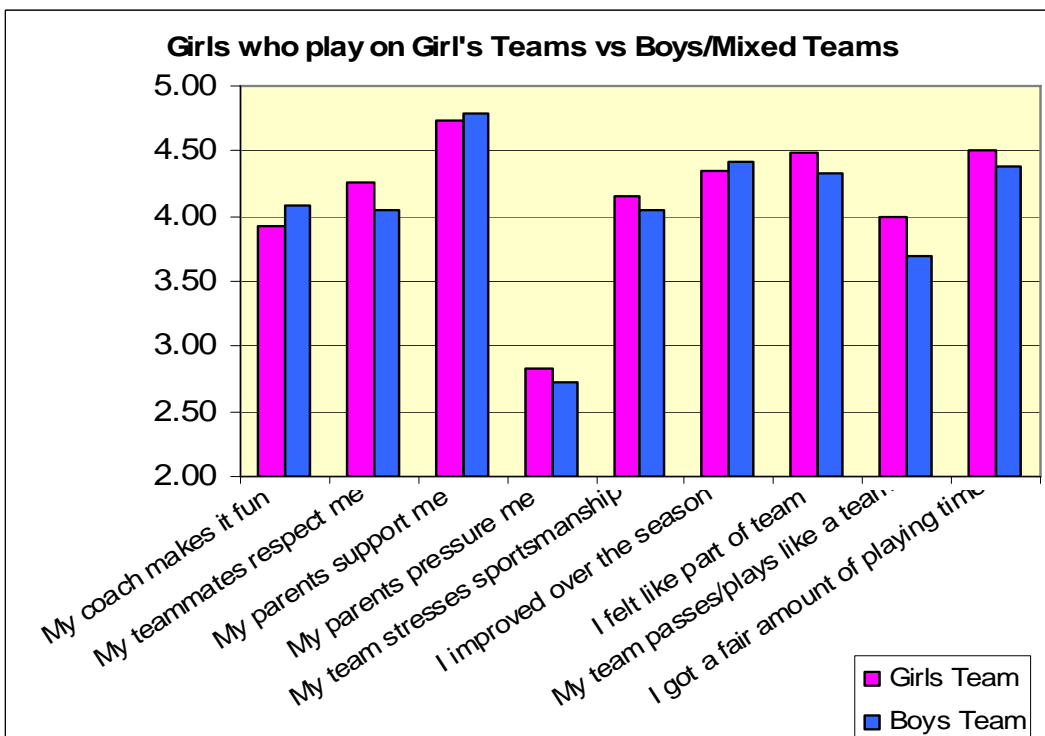
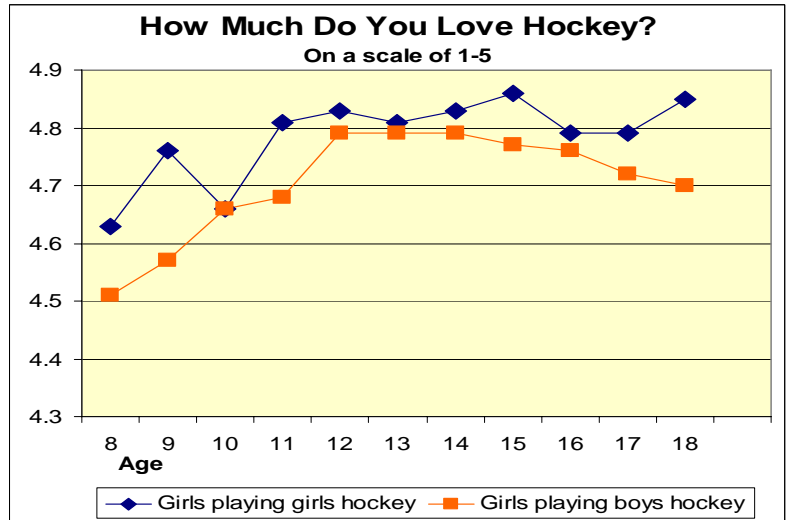


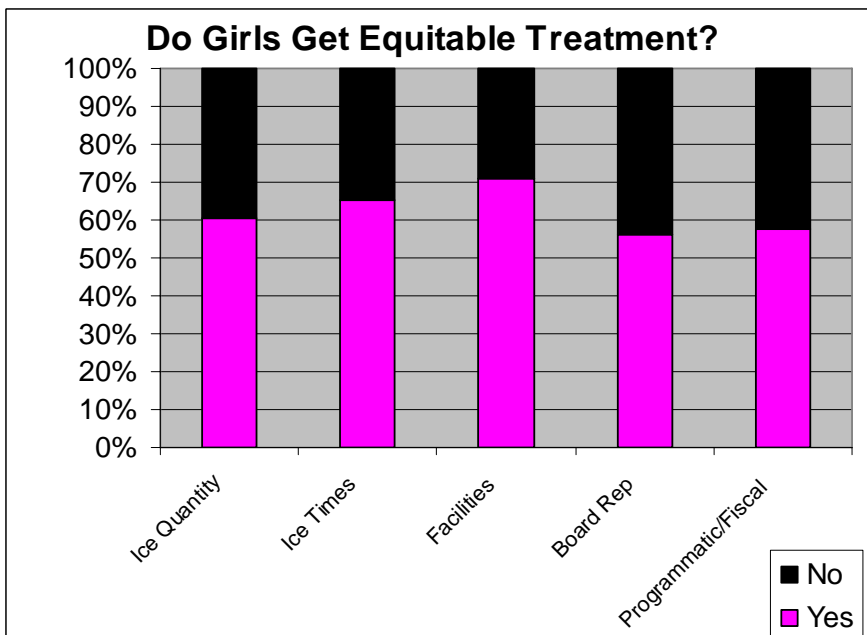
Girls' Teams vs Boys/ Mixed Teams



Consistently, girls who play on a girls' team, rated hockey higher than those playing on boys' teams, and this was true across the age groups.

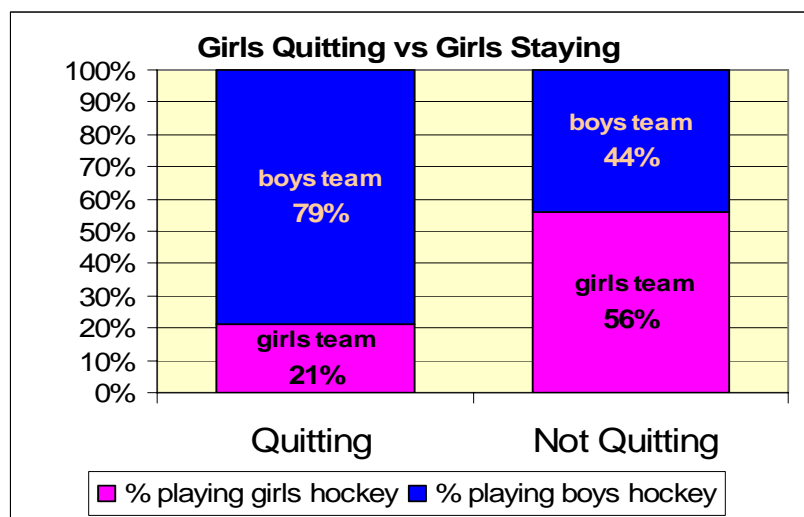
How do girls' responses differ between girls whose main team was a girls-only team (Girls' Team) and those whose main team was a boys' or mixed youth team (Boys' Team)? The responses showed a significant difference between the two groups.





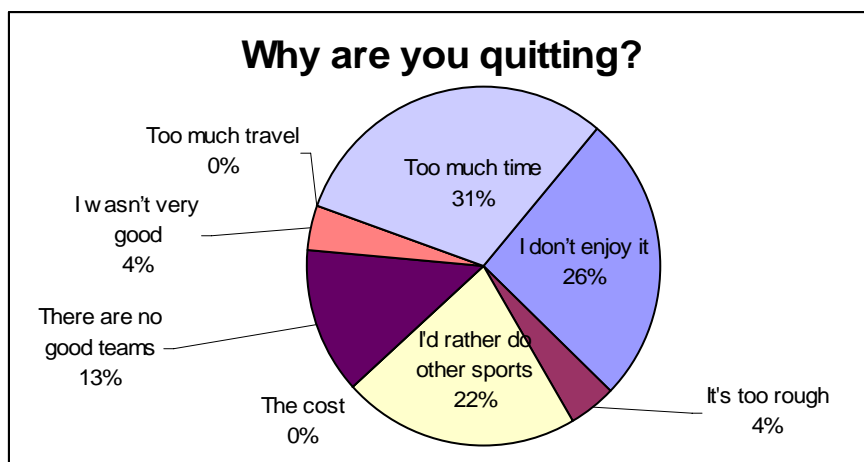
Program Directors, managers, and other administrators involved in hockey were asked if girls are treated fairly compared with boys in their organization. At least half said they were treated fairly on several measures, however almost half said they were not treated fairly in terms of representation on the Board and Programmatic/ financial assistance. Across all measures, over 40% of administrators reported inequitable treatment of girls and girls' programs.

Girls who play on a boys' team were also more likely to quit. Of the girls who said they did not plan on playing hockey next year, 79% were playing on a boys' team, compared with just 44% of girls not quitting.

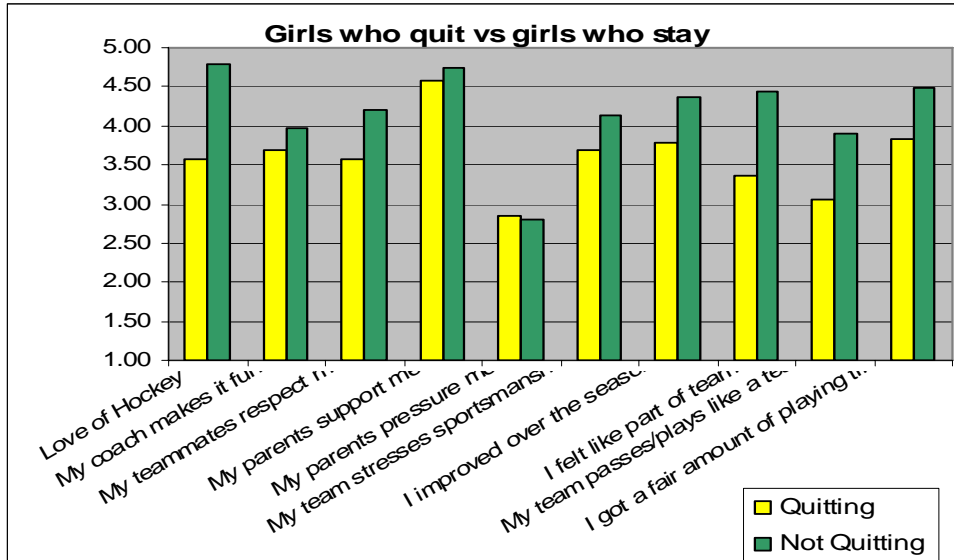


Why do Girls Quit?

We asked girls who indicated that they planned to quit after the season to say why. The most frequent reason was the time commitment. Next was that they don't enjoy it anymore, and that they prefer other sports or activities. Very few reported that it was too tough, and cost and travel were not reasons any players cited.



Also, we looked at differences between the girls who quit and girls who keep playing. Girls who were quitting loved hockey less than those who keep playing, but surprisingly, they still ranked hockey at over 3.5 on a scale of 1-5. But they did report consistently



lower ratings on many things. On questions such as “my teammates respect me” and “I feel like part of the team” and “I got a fair amount of playing time” the difference was most striking.

Coaching

We asked girls, as well as parents, administrators and coaches themselves what they thought was most important in a hockey coach.

What are the Most Important Traits in a Coach?

Players say		Parents say		Administrators say		Coaches say	
Getting players to play as a team	4.76	Getting players to play as a team	4.58	Getting players to play as a team	4.61	Making hockey fun	4.65
Hockey Knowledge	4.70	Winning	4.56	Winning	4.60	Player improvement	4.64
Enthusiasm	4.68	Making hockey fun	4.5	Enthusiasm	4.60	Enthusiasm	4.55
Fairness	4.53	Enthusiasm	4.51	Making hockey fun	4.51	Getting players to play as a team	4.53
Winning	3.62	Hockey Knowledge	4.43	Fairness	4.37	Fairness	4.34
		Fairness	4.35	Hockey Knowledge	4.30	Hockey Knowledge	4.08
		Player improvement	3.0	Player improvement	2.88	Winning	2.71

The most important trait in a coach, according to players, parents and administrator is the ability to get the players to play as a team. For coaches, the most important trait cited was

making hockey fun. Winning was the least important for players and coaches, but was the second most important thing for Administrators and Parents!.

Cost and Travel

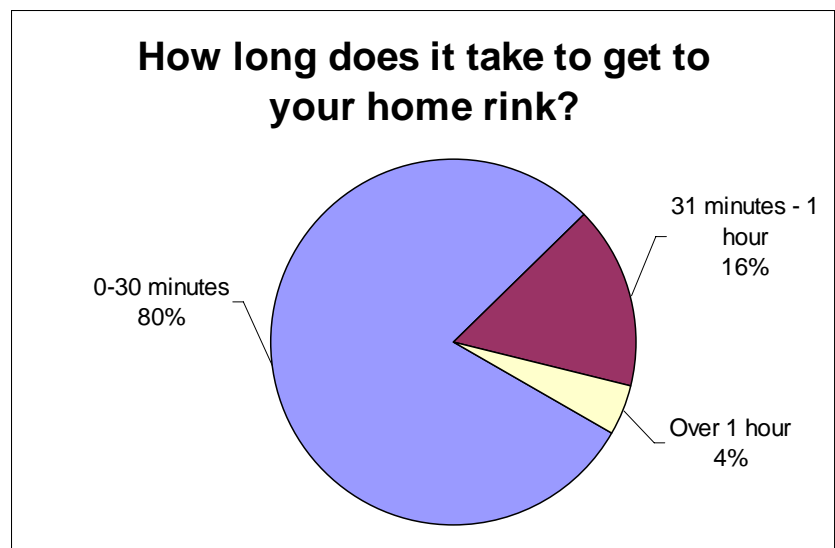
Parents reported the costs they incurred last season (per child). Registration fees averaged \$ 686, and additional team fees added another \$618. Including travel, equipment, lessons, etc total costs averaged more than \$4,000.

Average Cost for the Season*

Registration fee	\$ 686.07
Team fees	\$ 618.38
Travel	\$ 1,141.46
Clinics/lessons	\$ 635.52
Equipment	\$ 386.40
Other	\$ 703.35
TOTAL	\$ 4,171.18

* Per Child

Most girls live less than 30 minutes from their home rink, but 16% need to drive between 30 minutes and an hour to get to the rink, and 4% said it takes them over an hour.



Conclusions

This survey is the first attempt to collect information at a national level from female hockey players and their parents, coaches and administrators. It illustrates a number of important things about what girls want and need in a coach, team and program, and points to some changes that would benefit girls and perhaps prevent some from leaving the sport and attract more into it. Some of these points contradict some people's long-held beliefs and support others. At the same time, the survey also raises questions beyond what can be answered with this one survey.

- **Girls love hockey!** One very clear message that came in loud and clear is that girls have a great deal of passion for hockey. Their enthusiasm seems to grow as they move into the older age groups.
- **Girls start playing hockey for lots of reasons.** There was no one clear reason, although family members playing and family support were at the top of the list. Over 70% cited reasons other than family as at least part of the reason they started. This means that programs designed to draw girls into the program should focus broadly- more visibility (including TV) of college and national women's teams, school or other programs to try hockey, and getting current players to talk about how much fun it is.
- **Girls seem to enjoy hockey more when they play on a girl's team.** Although girls playing on boys' teams also rated hockey pretty high, those playing on girl's team rated it higher, and this was true at every age group. There was high correlation between enjoyment of hockey and having friends on the team. Girls playing for girls' teams were less likely to quit hockey. Although many people believe that up until checking comes into the game girls should play boys' hockey, this survey suggests that the social aspects of hockey are important to girls, and perhaps more girls would stay in the sport if they were encouraged to try a girl's team.
- **Girls feel parental pressure.** As the age of the girls go up, parental pressure also seems to go up, and parental support goes down. Parents also saw winning as more important than players or coaches do.
- **There is little agreement on what traits are important in a hockey coach.** Players, parents, and administrators said that the ability to get players to play as a team was most important. Coaches rated that 4th. Winning was the least important thing to players and coaches, but parents and administrators ranked it 2nd! Perhaps this is a reason for conflict between parents and coaches, and for the pressure kids feel from their parents.
- **Girls quit hockey for many reasons.** Girls said the reason they were quitting most often was that it takes up too much time and that they don't enjoy it anymore. But beyond the reasons they stated, there was also a striking difference

between those quitting and those not quitting. Those quitting also ranked lower on questions “I felt like part of the team” “my team plays like a team” and “I got a fair amount of playing time.” These things suggest again that the social aspects to hockey are important for girls and that these things contribute to girls wanting to quit.

Strengths, Limitations, Unanswered Questions, and Suggested Next Steps

This survey collected responses from more than 6,000 players, parents, coaches and administrators. This is more than a sufficient rate of response to give confidence that the patterns we are seeing are valid, and not just random variation. The responses have a wealth of important information that should be considered even when it challenges our own thinking or experience.

However, this survey is a point in time, and things are changing in the hockey world. The 15 year olds playing hockey today were undoubtedly different when they were 5 than the 5 year olds of today. Their options were different, and the culture in the hockey world were different. And in another 10 years it will be different as well.

There are a number of questions raised by this survey that may be worth asking at some point down the line.

- A survey of girls who quit hockey may help flesh out things that could and should be changed. This survey asked girls if they were planning to quit, we don't know if they really did quit, or if there were others who quit.

- How would results change over time? Repeating this survey in future years would be a way to monitor how changes affect girls' hockey.

- It would be nice to ask girls who have never played hockey directly why they haven't. A survey of several hundred girls would be easy to do and provide a good check to what everyone thinks are the reasons more girls don't play hockey.

- Given the evidence this survey provides that girls enjoy hockey more if they play on a girls' team, it would be interesting to evaluate objectively the difference in skill development for girls playing on girls' vs boys' teams to see if there are offsetting benefits to girls playing on boys' teams or not.

Next Steps

The survey data contains a wealth of useful information that can be looked at from a variety of perspectives. Additional analysis needs to be on why girls chose the type of team they did, and comparison with their parents perspectives. How do female coaches

differ from male coaches? A more detailed comparison of girls' vs boys' hockey would also possibly yield additional information that might be useful.

Overall, this survey showed that girls love hockey, and that it should be relatively easy to make changes that would draw more girls into the sport and keep them playing.