



Nottingham Trent
University

WOMEN IN SPORT RESEARCH THEME

Pavilion



Welcome to the **Women in Sport** Research theme at NTU, part of the SHAPE research centre. The thriving research theme contributes to the growing body of critical and sport science research areas focusing on specifically on women's sport. Led by Dr. Ali Bowes and Dr. Jessica Piasecki, research in the theme focuses on female athlete development, the professionalisation of women's sport, women's sport fandom, equality and equity of access to sport and physical activity, and female health across the lifespan, specifically focusing on the menstrual cycle and through the menopause transition.

Dr. Ali Bowes & Dr. Jessica Piasecki
Theme Co-Leads



Key Research Areas

The multidisciplinary approach of the research spans across wide areas and methods with a particular focus on current issues and real-world application:

1. Female Athlete Development

This research focus centres on a burgeoning body of sport science related work to support the development of female athletes. This includes work spanning biomechanics (including stopping performance in netballers, technique in female fast bowlers), physiology, sport psychology, nutrition and immunology.



**Read our Cricket
Bowling Research here**

2. Professional Women's Sport



**Read Motherhood
and Coaching
Research here**

The research theme has a significant focus on professional and/or high performance women's sport. As the co-editor of two leading texts on the topic, Dr. Bowes provides research expertise connected to the professionalisation of women's sport. Research in this area has covered the development of professional women's sport and critical issues in the processes of professionalisation, such as maternity and equal pay.

3. Women in the Sport Ecosystem

This research focus encompasses women's involvement in sport beyond their role as athletes. As women's sport continues to grow, so do the opportunities for women to be involved in sport in a variety of capacities, such as sport journalism, coaching and as fans.

Read our Football Fandom Research here



4. Access, Opportunity and Participation



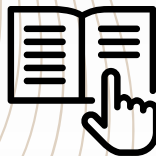
Read our Women in American Football Research here

A key strand of research for the theme is focus on equality of access and opportunity for women and girls' participation in sport. This work covers girls' participation in schools and grassroots community sport, the histories of women's involvement in sport, and seeks to consider intersectional experiences.

5. The Female Health-Lifespan Paradox: The Menstrual Cycle and the Menopause

This work investigates the implications of the dramatic changes in female sex hormones during menopause on neuromuscular deconditioning and associated lived experiences. We're also interested in examining how fluctuations across the menstrual cycle influence physical performance, how menstrual stigma impacts participation in sport and exercise, and the provision of menstrual cycle education within school settings.

Read our Sex Hormones and Ageing Research here



6. Women-Centred Clothing and Equipment Design

A key focus of this theme is optimising sports apparel and equipment for women across the lifespan. This work focuses on enhancing performance, comfort and support in garments and equipment—including sports bras—during pregnancy, breastfeeding, postpartum recovery, menopause, and throughout the menstrual cycle. Using research-informed, evidence-based methods, the needs of female users are prioritised, recognising that clothing and equipment should be purposefully designed rather than adapted from male-based design models.



Read our Sports Bras and Pregnancy Research here

7. Injury and Illness and Strategies for Wellness



Read our Injury in Women's Football Research here

For research into injury and illness, world-leading Professor Ian Varley, contributes his expertise on women's football. Work in the theme is also interested in health and wellness, with new work investigating the role dietary biotics and the gut microbiome to support the health and performance of athlete and non-athlete females across the lifespan.



Research In Action

FEMALE ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The **Female Athlete Development Program** is the Women in Sport Theme's flagship bespoke athlete support package, led by Dr. Piasecki. The FADP aims to support female athletes on their trajectory towards high performance sport, whilst emphasising health and consistency to ensure longevity in their sporting endeavours. Through this initiative selected athletes, along with their coaches and support networks will receive educational workshops from our in-house research experts.

THE UNSTOPPABLE RISE OF WOMEN'S SPORT

The Women in Sport theme was represented by Dr. Bowes in the **Fearless Women** produced Netflix and Sky Sports documentary **Game On: The Unstoppable Rise of Women's Sport**. In this powerful documentary filmed at Clifton Campus, Dr. Bowes provides key insights from her research on how female sport has changed over time.



THE FEMALE ATHLETE POD

Dr. Piasecki hosts a successful podcast (100k+ downloads) sharing key research from the SHAPE research centre called **The Female Athlete Pod**. The podcast plays a key role in disseminating our research to a wider audience, to help promote female specific science and support in sport.

PERIOD EDUCATION

The Women in Sport theme is also involved in education programmes. Dr. Piasecki is part of a wider team known as **Period Education**, that has researched the impact of varied education received across schools on menstrual and reproductive health. The work has provided interventions that are readily accessible for all schools and should help to improve the knowledge and ultimately future research on females and female athletes.

WOMEN'S SPORT REPORTS

Women in Sport academics have used their research expertise to contribute to public discussions about the growth of women's sport. Dr. Leslie-Walker has played a key role in engaging with football organisations on women's football. This included her work for the **Football Supporters Association Women's Game Supporters Survey 2024** and with Dr. Taylor in the **Fans for Diversity x Women's Game** report. Dr. Bowes co-authored the **Barclay's Here for Every Goal** Report in 2024.



Our Members

The Children and Young People research theme is led by Professor Simon Cooper, and comprises academic staff, postdoctoral research associates and fellows, and a vibrant community of PhD students.



Ali Bowes



Jessica Piasecki



Ian Varley



Anika Leslie-Walker



Karah Dring



Neil Williams



Paul Felton



Christopher Matthews



Katy Griggs



Philippa Jobling



Katie Taylor



Seth Kirby



Athalie Redwood Brown



**To see more details of
our research team,
please see our website.**

Our Partners

Organisations we work with, and have received funding from, include charities and associations, sports clubs, and national governing bodies and federations:



The Olympic
Studies Centre

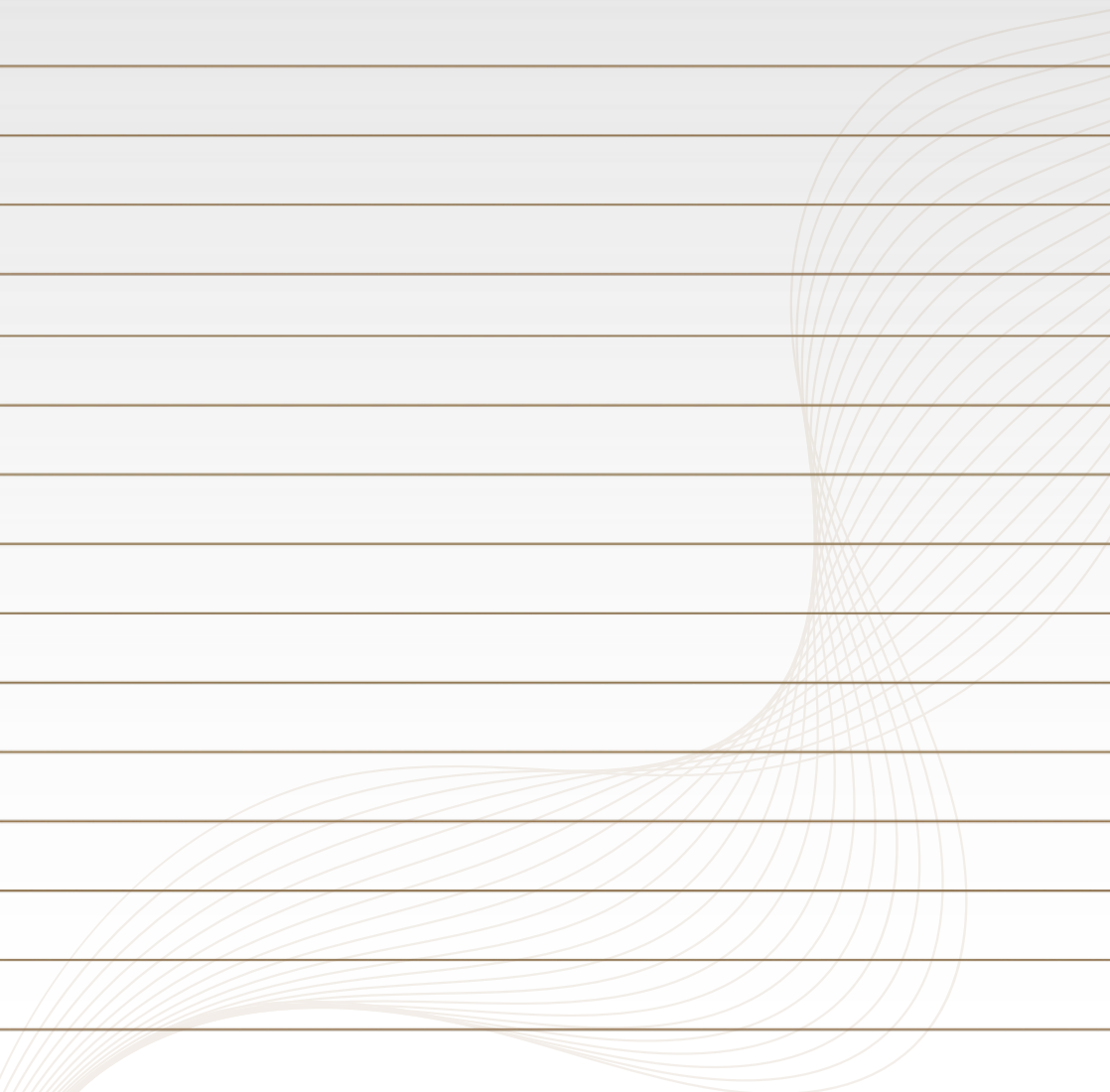


Biotechnology and
Biological Sciences
Research Council



Economic
and Social
Research Council

Notes:



Contact us

We would love to hear from:

- Participants who would like to take part in our research
- Academics who are interested in collaborating with us
- Organisations, charities and partners who would like to find out more and work with us
- Funding bodies who would like to support us
- Organisations using our research to underpin and inform their activities
- Students interested in undertaking postgraduate study

If you would like to know more about our work in Women In Sport, please contact our Theme Co-Leads, Dr Ali Bowes and Dr Jessica Piasecki:

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