



# Empowering Women in Bowls 2021 Survey Analysis

## Introduction

Bowls Scotland launched the 2019-2023 corporate strategy with Empowering Women in Bowls referenced throughout, but what does Empowering Women in Bowls mean? Put really simply there are more men bowling than there are women and the gender imbalance that exists within the sport needs to be addressed. Bowls Scotland want to encourage more women to take up bowls, and support the development of female friendly, welcoming, supportive, and inclusive environments that enable women and girls to get to achieve their potential, whatever that might be.

In 2021, Bowls Scotland surveyed female bowlers and females who do not participate in bowls to help understand what would encourage more women into the sport. 177 females who do not participate in sport completed the survey with 546 females completing the survey who currently play the game.

This report outlines the key findings and common themes as well as recommendations for Bowls Scotland and affiliated clubs and is split into four sections:

1. Current Landscape
2. Key findings gathered from Females who do not participate in bowls
3. Key findings gathered from females who currently participate in bowls
4. Common Themes
5. Key Recommendations

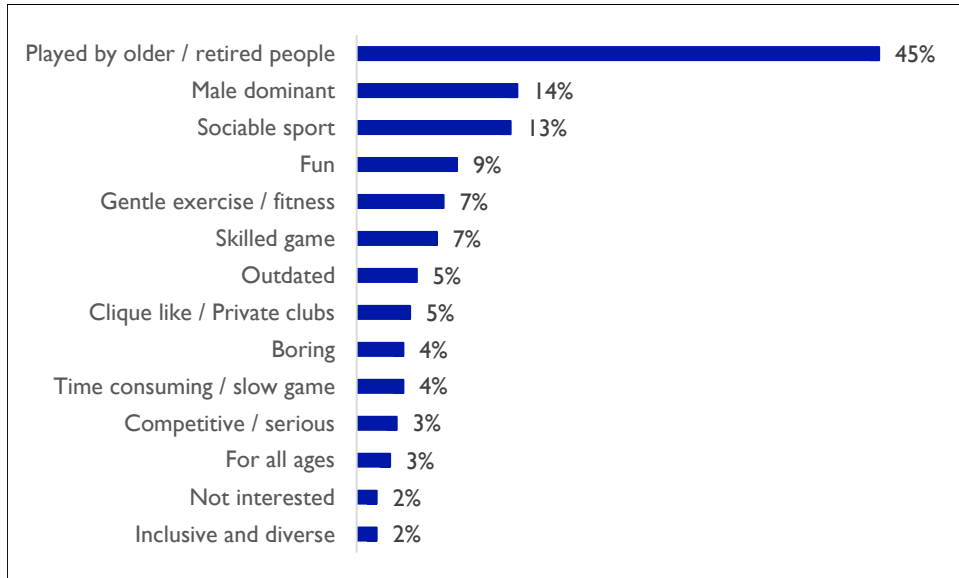
## Current Landscape



## Key Findings – Females Who Do Not Participate in Bowls

### Current Perception of Bowls

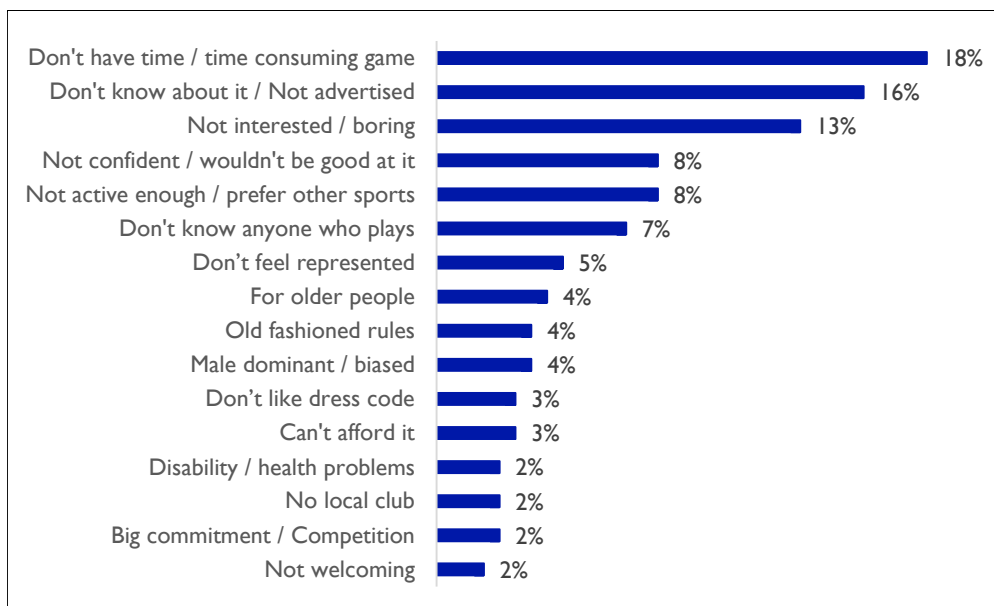
The most common perception reported was that bowls is played by older or retired people and that it is a male dominated sport.



### Barriers to Participation

Just under half of all respondents reported the belief that participation is generally restricted to older people is a barrier to taking part in bowls, as well as the feeling that it is an old-fashioned sport and that visible role models would encourage them to try the sport. In addition, respondents gave the following reasons why they either do not play or have not considered playing bowls:

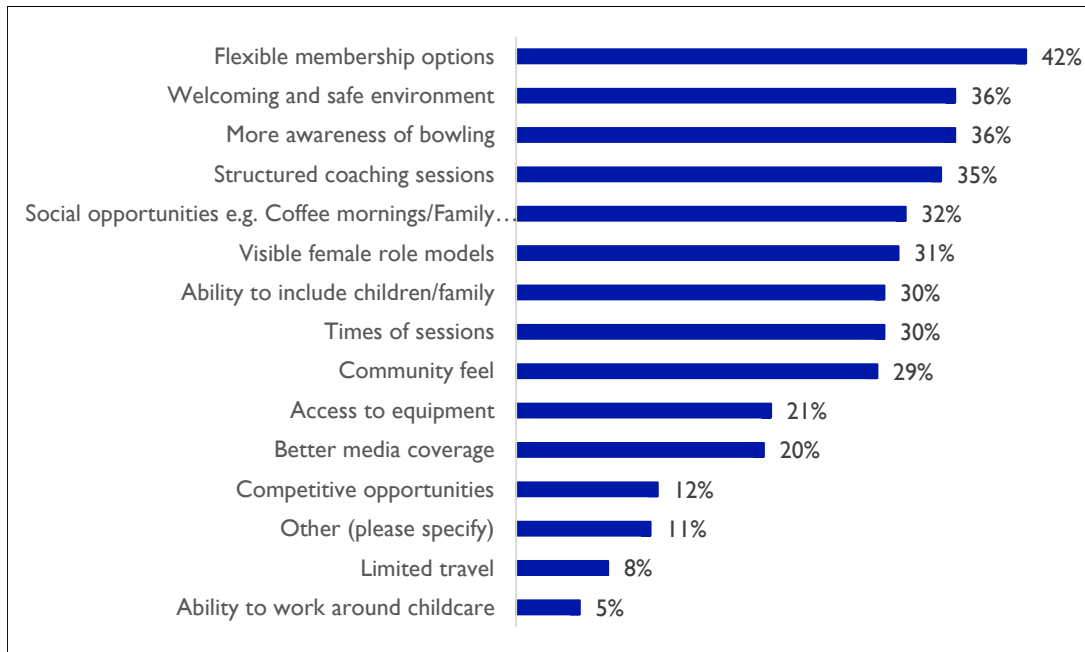
- Don't have time / a time-consuming game
- Don't know about the sport and haven't seen bowls advertised
- Not interested in participating in bowls and/or believe it to be boring



## Increasing Participation

Flexible membership options, a welcoming and safe environment and more awareness of bowling were the top three responses given that would encourage women to participate in Bowls.

- 42% of respondents stated that flexible membership options would encourage them to participate in Bowls
- 36% of respondents stated that a welcoming and safe environment would encourage them to participate in Bowls
- 36% of respondents stated that more awareness of bowling would encourage them to participate in Bowls



The top three responses for respondents **Aged Under 35** were:

- More awareness of bowling (61%)
- Visible female role models (49%)
- Better media coverage (46%) & Flexible membership options (46%)

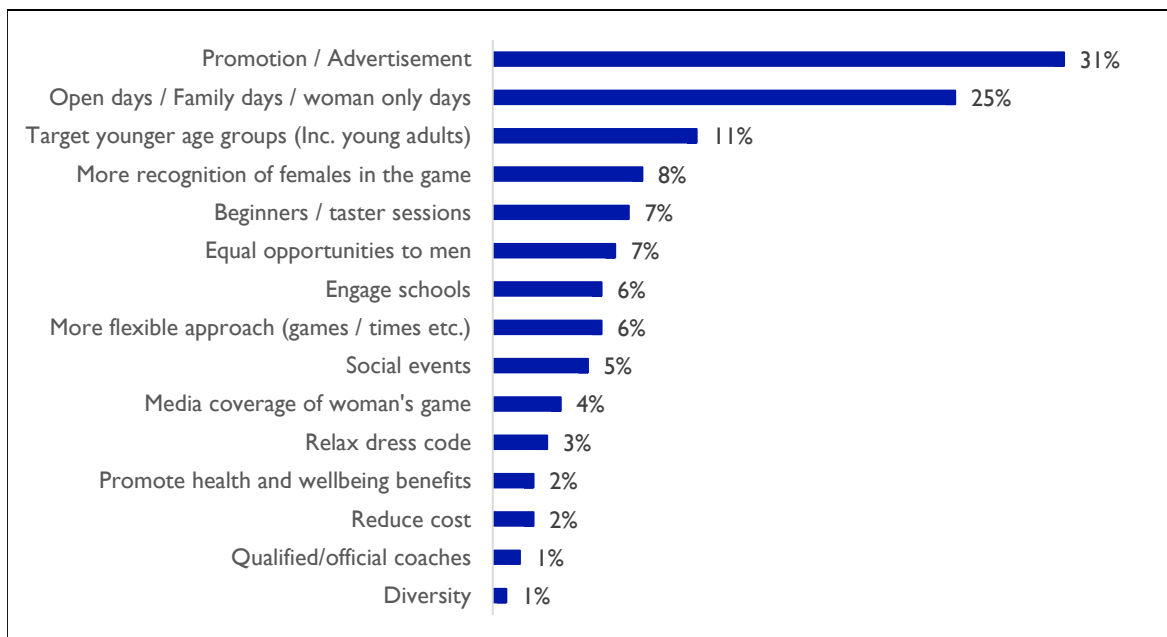
The top three responses for respondents **Aged 55 and over** were:

- Flexible membership options (49%)
- Welcoming and safe environment (45%)
- Times of sessions (43%)

## Engagement

When asked if they had any other thoughts on what Bowls Scotland could do to engage more women to participate in Bowls just under a third (31%) of respondents suggested greater promotion and advertisement of the sport. Overall, most responses related to increasing awareness however a small number of responses stated the importance of using female role models within promotional materials.

A quarter of respondents suggested clubs should offer open days, including female only and family specific days where non-participants could come and try bowls. Most respondents that suggested open days were aged 35-44; just over a quarter (27%) of all respondents in this age group suggested open days.



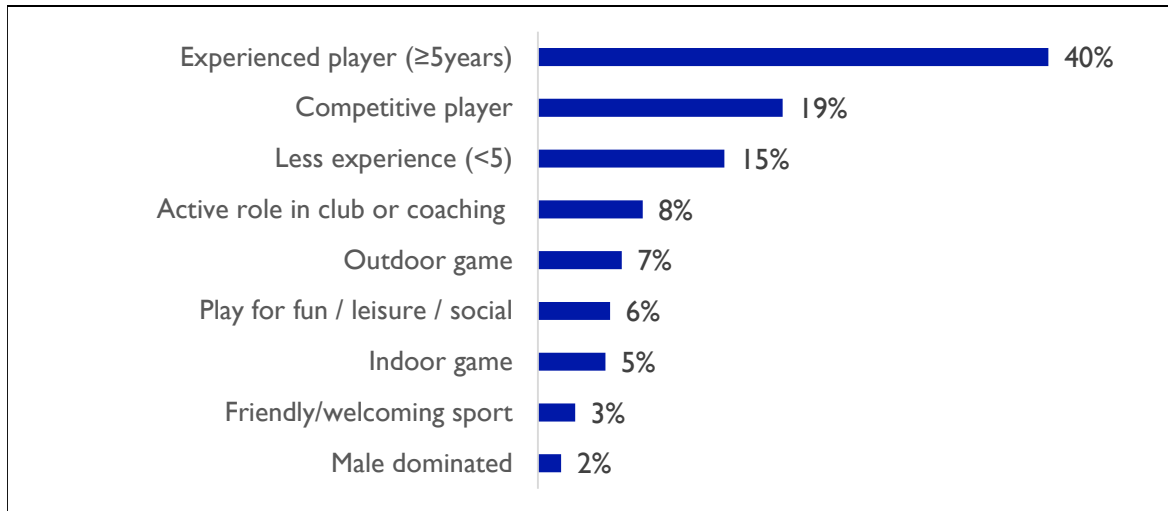
*'Good social media campaign, get some female ambassadors on board to talk about how they started, encourage secondary schools to send pupils, family events, ladies' evenings where new recruits can come for a try-out session'*

*'Open for family days and have female representation of various ages. Be more encouraging as clubs to make environment more welcoming and less like walking into the past.'*

## Key Findings – Females Who Currently Participate in Bowls

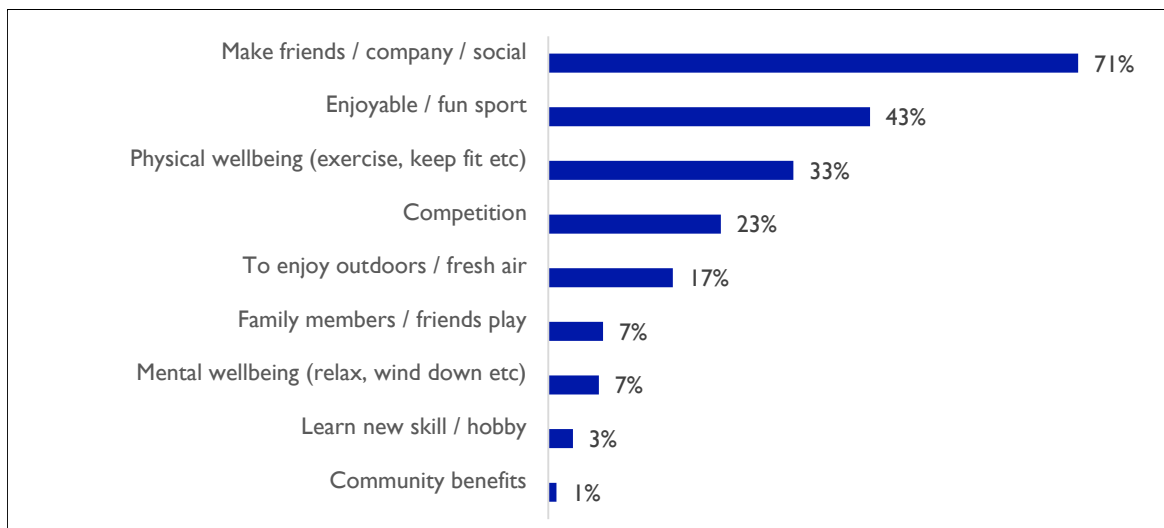
### Experience of Bowls

40% of respondents referred to themselves as experienced bowls players or stated they had been playing the sport five or more years



Respondents were asked why they play bowls, with most respondents noting multiple reasons why they play the sport. The most reported responses were:

- Make friends / company / social reasons
- Enjoyable / fun sport
- Physical wellbeing (exercise, keep fit etc.)



*'I play bowls because I enjoy the social/ friendship aspect. It is also a way to enjoy the outdoors. I enjoy the competitive aspect but also find it's a good way to relax after work etc.'*

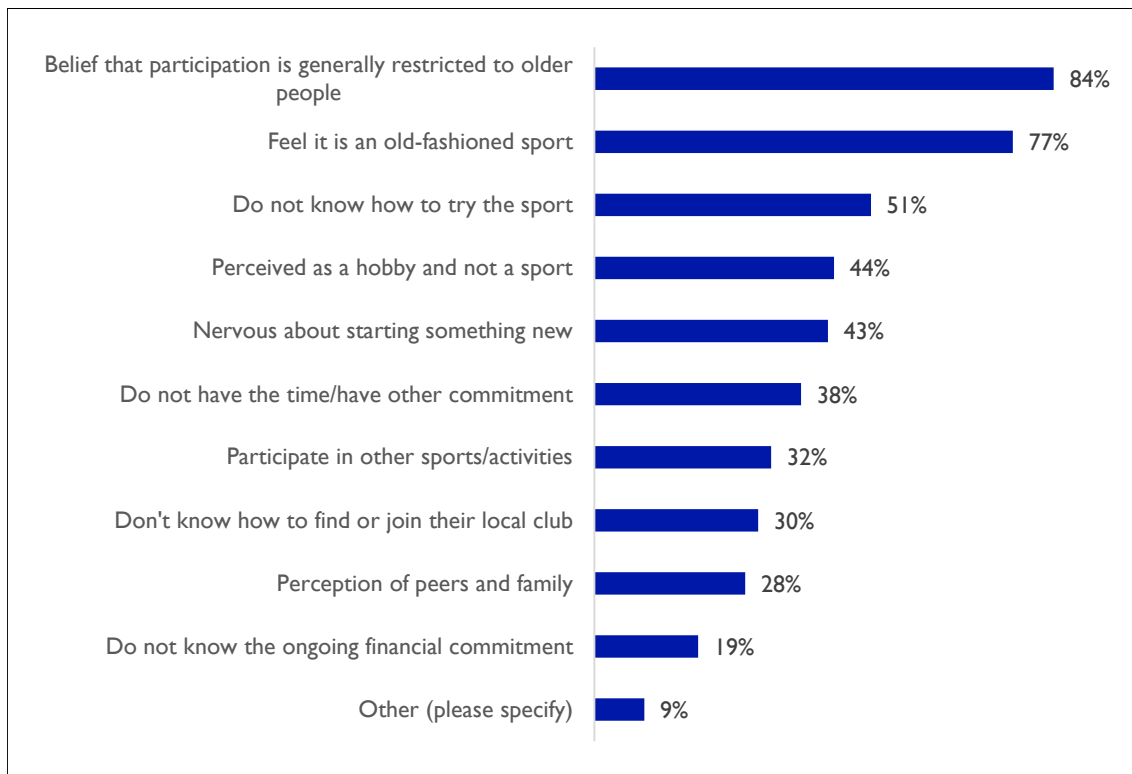
*'I love it and as I improve it has been even more rewarding. Meeting up with people, a healthy competitive spirit, all round great fun.'*

*'Started as a family sport. Enjoy the competitive side to bowls but have made many friends too. Have also gained lots of skills that have helped me through life.'*

### Barriers to Participation

Respondents were asked to select what they thought were potential barriers for females participating in bowls. The top three responses were:

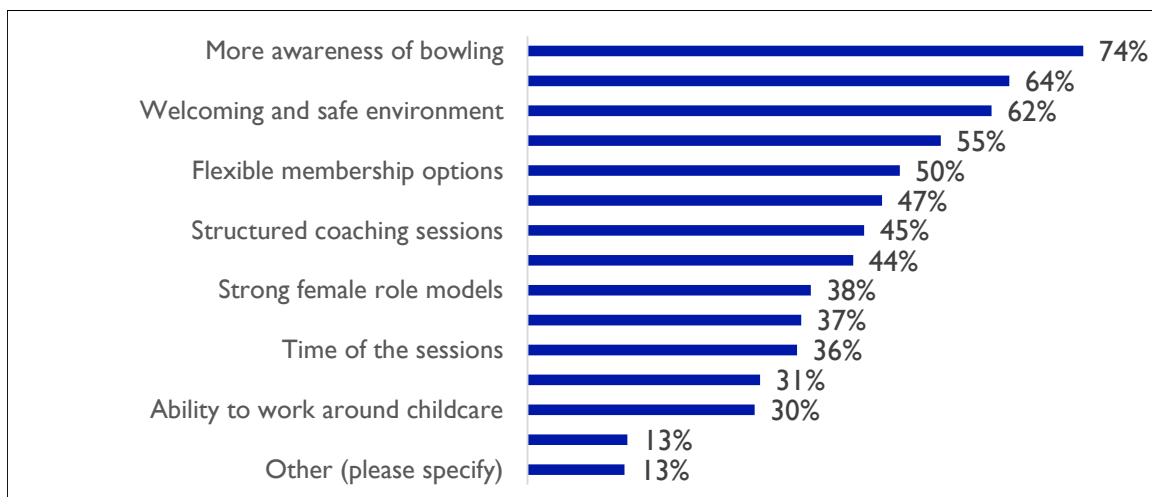
- Belief that participation is generally restricted to older people
- Feel it is an old-fashioned sport
- Do not know how to try the sport



### Engagement and Increasing Participation

Respondents were asked to select what they believed would encourage more females to participate in bowls. The top three responses were:

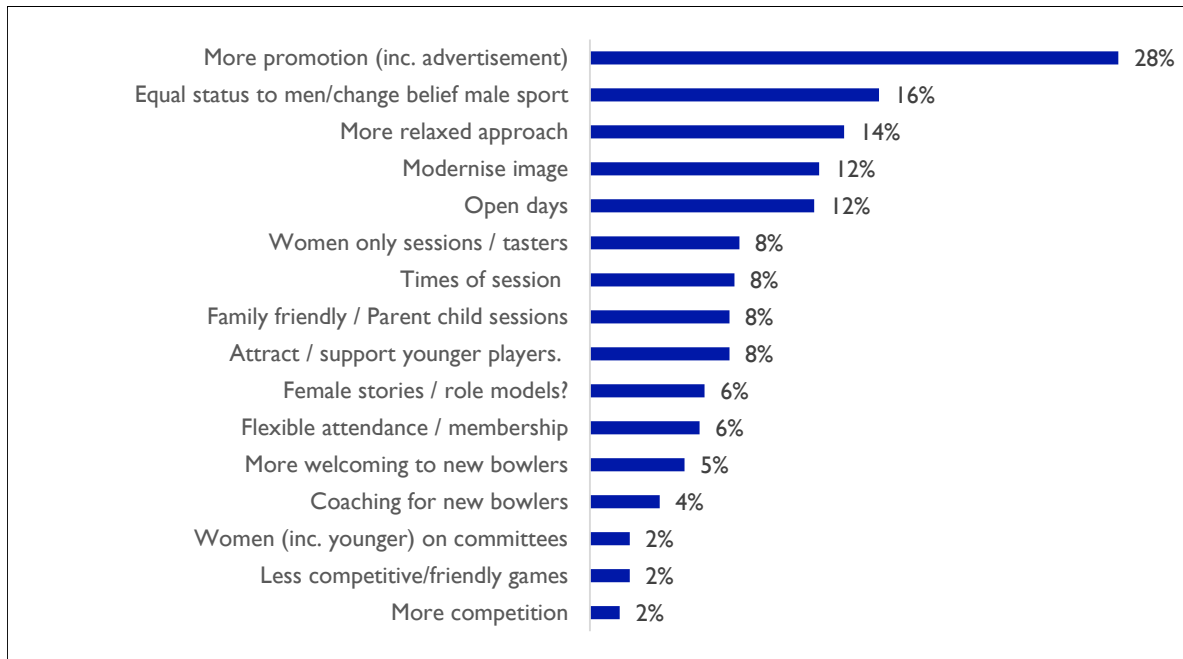
- More awareness of bowling
- Social opportunities e.g., Coffee mornings/Family fun days
- Welcoming and safe environment





Most additional comments on how to engage more woman to participate in bowls related to raising awareness through promotional activities (28%).

Other thoughts related to making the sport more inclusive for woman and challenging the belief it is a male sport (16%) and having a more relaxed approach including rules, etiquette, and dress code (14%)



## Common Themes

### Bowls is a sport for older people

The belief that participation is generally restricted to older people was a common theme in both surveys. Just under half (48%) of non-bowlers and 84% of respondents who bowl identified this as a barrier to participation.

### More awareness of bowling is needed

Current bowlers and females who did not participate in the sport both identified that there needed to be greater awareness of bowling to increase participation (Bowlers 74%; Non bowlers 36%).

Respondents who bowl suggested that raising awareness using new promotional materials that will refresh and modernise the image of bowls while non bowlers, especially the younger demographic, suggested using female role models to appeal to younger participants.

### Welcoming and safe environment

Respondents in both surveys identified a welcoming and safe environment as an important factor to engaging more female participants (Bowlers 62%; Non bowlers 36%). Working on and promoting these aspects of the club environment to engage new female participants.

### Time commitment

The most common reason for not participating in the sport by non-bowlers was the belief that they do not have time, or it is a time-consuming game (18%). This was reflected in the responses of female bowlers who also suggested flexible sessions times and memberships could help engage more female participants.

## Key Recommendations

### Bowls Scotland

- Develop and deliver an Empowering Women in Bowls Action Plan
- Ensure a more gender balanced marketing and promotion of the sport is in place
- Identify female target markets and develop a marketing strategy to promote the sport and address the barriers that exist – whether real or perceived
- Work in partnership to encourage male and female associations to unify at association level
- Support clubs to create environments whereby females are supported to progress as players, coaches, and leaders.
- Identify female role models to help promote the sport to a younger demographic

### Clubs

- Develop and promote flexible membership opportunities, game formats and green time
- Create and promote a welcoming and safe environment for female participants
- Offer female only come and try events (on and off green), using modern female images to promote a positive image of the game
- Promote and encourage females to take on leadership and coaching roles within the club
- Review governance, including club constitution, to ensure female membership rights are equal to male