

Inclusion of Women

FALL 2022 SURVEY REPORT
AYSO REGION 122

267

Total Responses

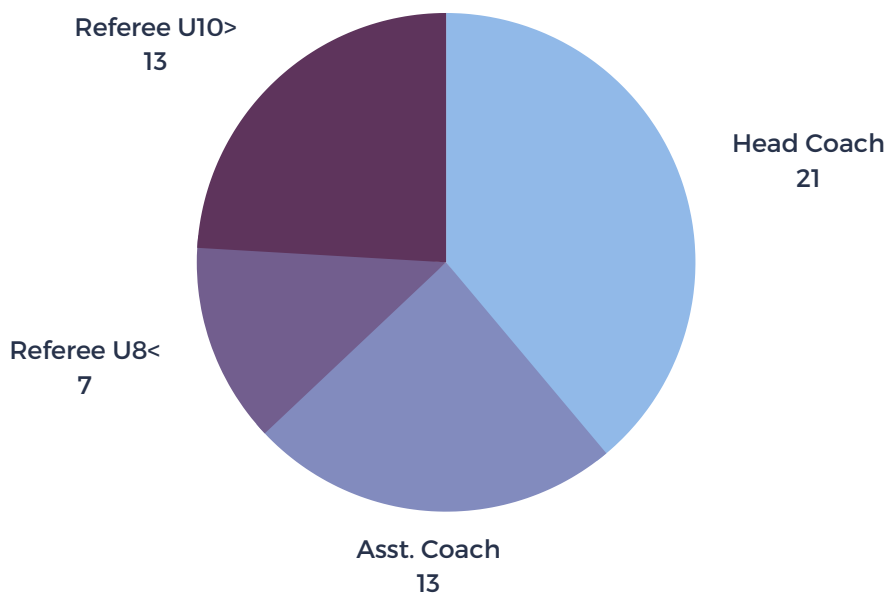
18%

Coach or referee
Fall 2022 (46)

33.3%

EVER coached or refereed (89)

FALL 22 VOLUNTEER ROLES (46)



BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR FEMALE COACHES

- Primary caregiver for family/challenge to balance commitments
- Time required for training
- Lack of respect from male coaches
- Fathers not listening/ trying to take over
- Needing more soccer knowledge for older age groups

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR FEMALE REFEREES

- Time required for training
- Coaches not listening
- Kids left unattended while refereeing
- Ill-fitting referee shirts
- Confrontational coaches and parents

YEARS VOLUNTEERED (46)



"It is hard to be female in AYSO - it is definitely a boys' club... and I always feel that way at some point in the day when I am involved with AYSO."

"Too many coaches and parents are too confrontational to referees; youth refs see this and it discourages them."

"Refereeing is very difficult because I have the two kids with me much of the time so they are left unattended in the sidelines while I ref a game. And with coaching one team and refereeing to get points for another team, it makes for very busy days. And this season with games also on Sunday it left no time to do normal weekend chores"

"Male coaches from the other teams would assume I wasn't coaching. I had to make the effort to go up to them every single time and make myself known."

"I've sensed there's a bit of a network already in place among coaches (mostly men) that affects things like team roster selection. It's uncomfortable to be around coaches that are aggressively engaged in winning over other important team-building goals."

"Being a mom, you are everything, so adding another leadership position is not easy. I work full time and adding this with my busy schedule is tough. It was a bit of a learning curve too. But I felt like it was important to show the girls that women belong in sport too. It was definitely jarring to see the ratio of men to women. I played soccer for a long time so I'm used to playing/working with men, but I can definitely see how it would be intimidating. I have also had to learn to be confident and how to be "head coach" and not ask for lots of opinions."

"I had to work with a sexist coach this year and he disrespected my knowledge of the game at my daughter's practice and at games several times this year. He...basically shut me out from being able to run any drills or really contribute to any part of the practice...I basically was relegated to collecting soccer balls for him."



WHAT KEEPS VOLUNTEERS COMING BACK

- Spending time with kids/child asks
- Pressured due to need for volunteers/no one else would do it
- To be a role model as a female coach
- Love of soccer
- Experienced soccer player



"I am raising young girls and I want them to see a female coach at least when they are young."

RESOURCES/SUPPORT THAT VOLUNTEERS FOUND MOST HELPFUL

- Mentor coaches
- Volunteers at the tent
- YouTube videos
- Age group coordinator
- Practice plan downloads
- Flexibility in referee scheduling
- Having an assistant coach/male assistant coach
- Referee supervisors
- In-person coach training
- Parents who are supportive/encouraging
- Ability to bring my other kids to practices

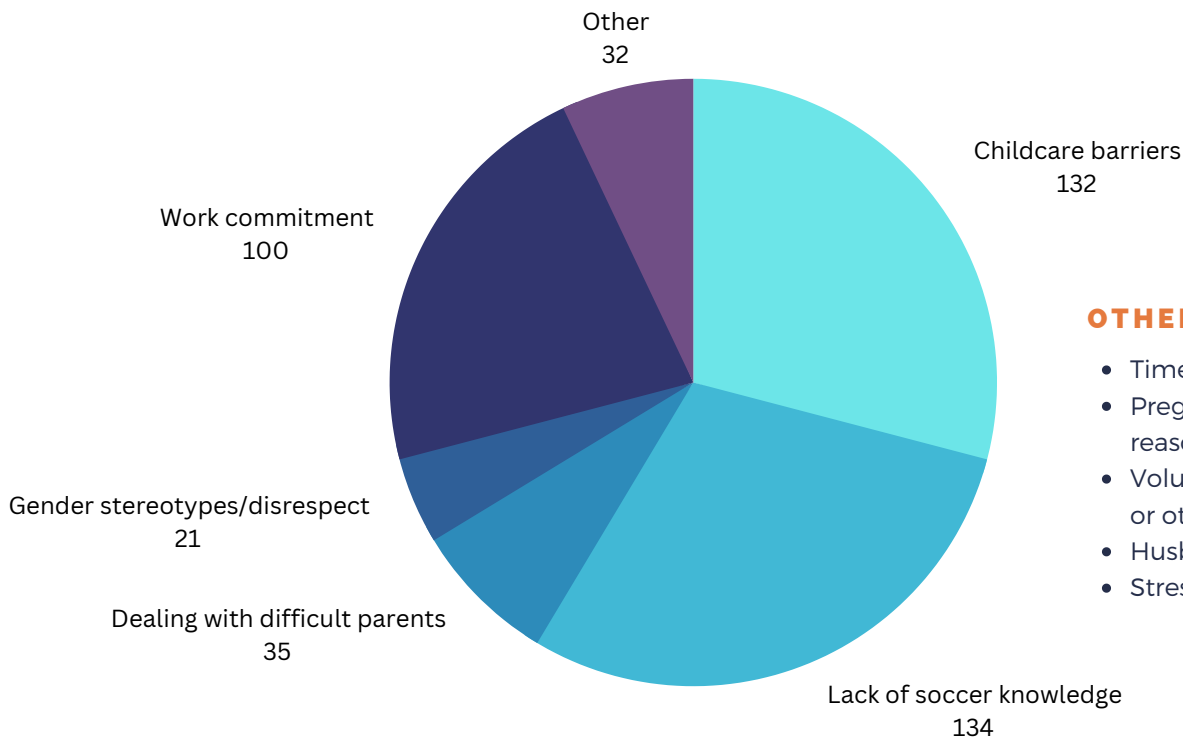
"My kids want me to coach their teams and they are young enough where I still feel comfortable with my skill level to do it."

"I feel AYSO needs good coaches and I know how to play and be a good role model/coach"

14

Respondents willing to be coach or referee mentors

BARRIERS KEEPING WOMEN FROM BECOMING VOLUNTEERS (219)



OTHER BARRIERS

- Time required for training
- Pregnancy or other health reasons
- Volunteering at kids' school or other places
- Husband volunteered
- Stress of refereeing

43

Women who have coached or refereed in the past but did not return this season

"I didn't enjoy being a referee. I didn't feel appreciated and also got yelled at by parents."

"I was unable to concentrate on coaching with two kids."

REASONS PAST VOLUNTEERS DID NOT RETURN

- Time commitment was too much
- Not seen as equal to male coaches/referees
- Not enough knowledge to coach older kids
- Lack of support from other parents
- Yelling/scolding from coaches or parents
- Other parental or work responsibilities
- Volunteering somewhere else

"I felt like I had no help from other parents on the team."

WHAT SUPPORT/RESOURCES WOULD GIVE YOU THE ABILITY OR DESIRE TO COACH OR REFEREE IN THE FUTURE?

AWARENESS/INCENTIVES

- Better explanation of different roles - expectations and time commitment (before registration)
- Being able to talk to people who have done it first
- "Soccer 101" crash course for parents
- Free/discounted registration for coaches' kids
- Seeing more women in leadership roles and coach instruction

TRAINING/MENTORING

- Help with online training
- Pair with a more experienced coach
- More training on coaching older kids
- Mentoring at practices
- Trainings just for women/run by women
- Female coach meeting run by a female coach
- Detailed practice plan examples
- Mentors shadowing referees as they learn

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

- Require parents to stay at practices
- Childcare for siblings on gameday so that parents can coach/referee
- Help with online training/more user-friendly process
- Training classes earlier to reduce last-minute pressure
- Provide email templates for coaches to use to communicate with parents - help set expectations, ask for help/other volunteers, explain rules, etc



OTHER IDEAS FOR RECRUITING/SUPPORTING WOMEN

Volunteer info session to explain what is required

Advertise more to high schools to get referees

Reach out to women in soccer (high school, college, etc.), even if they don't have kids in AYSO. Offer volunteer hours, pay them, or other incentives

Get women coaching at the early divisions so they are more likely to return for the older divisions

Allow referees to ref their own kids' games and trust them to have integrity

Don't make it mandatory to wear a ref uniform to be a sideline ref

Make the request for women volunteers more explicit during registration - emphasize that you are seeking them and state why

Set a goal and share it widely

Feature more women coaches and refs on the website/social media

A zero tolerance policy for dissent; empower refs to yellow card any dissent towards refs

Training courses earlier so there's not so much pressure right before the season starts

Approach women who play adult soccer in the community

"Your approach in identifying mentors [through this survey] for the young girls is great. I think continuing to give this information to moms will help, especially if you highlight all the social and mental health benefits for girls in sport through adolescence."



"I think even just hearing that you're working on this and see it as a problem gave me pause to think about it. I would think making this an actual mission would encourage women to step up to help change the culture."

"Refereeing is very difficult because I have the two kids with me much of the time so they are left unattended in the sidelines while I ref a game. And with coaching one team and refereeing to get points for another team, it makes for very busy days. And this season with games also on Sunday it left no time to do normal weekend chores"



"In tech job searches they say that a job description can really affect whether an applicant even applies. perhaps running email language or recruitment language by a woman to sound a bit softer and like it's ok to have never done it before could help. Maybe a womens only coaching clinic. Or a email group for women coaches. A lot of the email language is punitive, "if you don't coach, there will be no teams. If you don't ref, we will cancel games." I don't know how you do it, but I know that technique doesn't work well with women broadly."

"I grew up playing youth sports and at that time, it was mostly men in leadership. Women as coaches/refs was not modeled to us. While I absolutely LOVE seeing women out on the fields these days, the reality is that women still carry the majority of work at home even in double working households. If more men would join school site councils, PTA boards, church childcare roles, field trip chaperones, etc. then women might be more willing to volunteer."



"I think asking parents if they've played, reminding women of their soccer experience, and sharing articles on the importance of female coaches could help women and their partners consider this (there was a recent Washington post article on the importance of boys having women as coaches). The moms I know in this town shoulder more of the burden for cooking dinner and childcare on weeknights when kids have practice - we should be asking ourselves what partners could do to help women not increase their family workload so they can volunteer without burnout. It might help if having siblings participate in practice was the norm and if parents watching helped organize things like supervised playground time for younger kids. Childcare is often a problem for refs so supervised play time for refs kids during games could help too. I'd also like to find a way to help more Latino parents feel welcomed/comfortable taking official roles."

