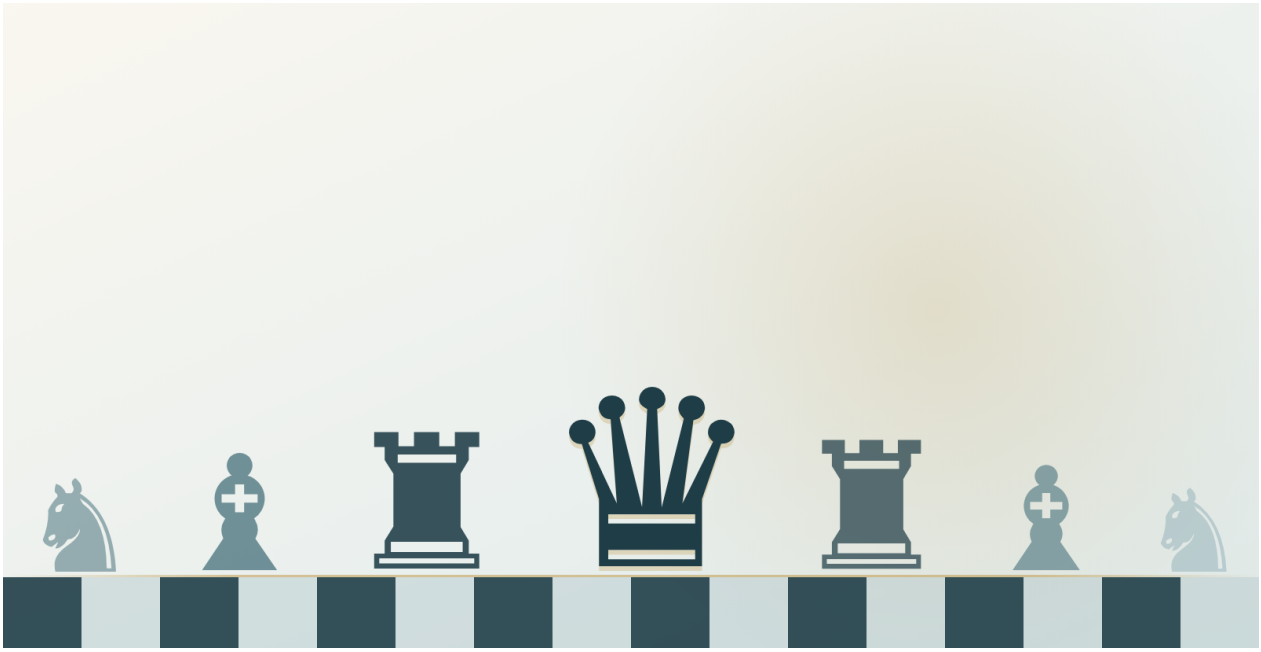

Report: 2026 FIDE Women in Chess Representation, Participation and Development Survey

FIDE Women in Chess Commission

September 2026

This survey, *The FIDE Women in Chess Representation, Participation and Development Survey*, was commissioned by FIDE's Women in Chess Commission (WOM) and this report is published by FIDE. It sets out what women and girls across the chess community told the Commission about how they came into the game, what has helped and hindered them, what they have experienced in chess settings, and what they think would improve women's participation. The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of FIDE, nor does the publisher guarantee the accuracy or completeness of the data used in this work. Fieldwork for the survey closed on 14 September 2026.

Acknowledgements

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The Commission thanks the women, girls and guardians who gave their time to complete the survey, and the federations, clubs, organisers and media partners who circulated it.

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Survey responses are confidential. Results are reported in aggregate only, and no cell with fewer than five respondents is reported.

1. Executive Summary

Between 3 August and 14 September 2026 the FIDE Women in Chess Commission ran its first global survey of women and girls in chess. After duplicate submissions were removed, 672 responses from 127 federations were analysed. Respondents range from junior players to Woman Grandmasters, and include arbiters, trainers, organisers and federation officials from every continent.

Six things stand out from what they told us.

1. **Chess starts early and at home.** More than half of respondents (55%) were introduced to chess before the age of ten, and 55% came to the game through family or community. Only 36% had regular coaching while growing up. Coaching access varies sharply by region: 37% of respondents competing in Africa had no coaching at all, against 24% in Europe.
2. **The main barriers are cost and time.** Financial cost (66%) and time (48%) top the list of barriers, and 84% describe the barriers they faced as major or moderate. Chess remains extremely or very important to 72% of respondents.
3. **Discrimination and harassment are common.** Sixty-three per cent have experienced gender bias in chess settings and 38% sexual harassment or inappropriate behaviour. Among adults these rise to 70% and 46%, and among FIDE-titled women to 81% and 55%. Three-quarters (76%) report at least one form of discrimination or harassment. Reported gender bias peaks among women aged 18 to 34 and is highest among those competing in the Americas and Europe.
4. **Those who have experienced bias are the ones thinking of leaving.** Forty-four per cent have considered stepping away from chess. Taking everything else into account, having experienced gender bias triples the odds of considering leaving, being aged 18 to 24 more than doubles them, and holding a FIDE title doubles them. Cost and time, once these are allowed for, make no difference.
5. **Role models are scarce.** Fewer than half (44%) have ever had a female role model or mentor in chess, and only a third (33%) feel adequately represented in their regional chess community.
6. **Women already run much of the game.** Nearly half of respondents (47%) coach, arbitrate, organise or administer, and half (51%) hold more than one role. What they ask for is concrete: financial support (65%), more local tournaments (60%), better coaching access (52%) and more women in leadership (46%).

The recommendations at the end of this report follow directly from those requests: lower the cost of taking part, close the regional coaching gap, open a route from operational roles into leadership, and make tournament halls and online spaces safe enough that a woman who has given the game a decade does not walk away from it at twenty-two.

2. Introduction

2.1 Why this survey

Roughly one in six active FIDE-registered players is female, and the share falls further among titled players, arbiters, trainers and federation officials. Research on the gap has shown that most of the difference in top-level results follows from the much smaller number of women who play (Bilalić, Smallbone, McLeod and Gobet, 2009), that the environment women play in can affect how they perform (Maass, D'Ettole and Cadinu, 2008), and that small repeated disadvantages raise the chance of quitting altogether (de Sousa and Hollard, 2023). Studies of workplaces and of women's sport point the same way: harassment leads to withdrawal (Willness, Steel and Lee, 2007), women are well represented in support roles but not on boards (Burton, 2015), and structured mentoring by other women improves retention (Dennehy and Dasgupta, 2017).

What has been missing is the view of women in chess themselves. The Commission's Gender Equality in Chess Index (Smerdon, Boyd, Reizniece-Ozola and Sorokina, 2026) measures gender equality at the level of federations. This survey asks women directly: how they came into chess, what supported or obstructed them, what they have experienced, and what they think would help.

2.2 What the survey set out to do

FIDE has made important strides in increasing women's participation across all levels of the game. However, there remains limited global data on the developmental pathways, experiences, participation patterns and representation of women involved in chess. This survey seeks to help address that gap by collecting voluntary, self-identified information from women across the global chess community. Specifically, it set out to:

- describe who participates, in what roles, and how actively;
- map the pathways by which women enter chess and the coaching, resources and support available to them;
- identify the barriers that most affect development and the factors that most support it;
- measure the prevalence of discrimination, harassment and exclusion in chess settings;
- understand retention, and the circumstances under which women consider leaving the game; and
- record what women themselves believe would most improve participation in their region.

3. About the Survey

3.1 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed by the Commission and had 28 substantive items in five sections: chess profile, demographic and geographic information, development pathways and experiences, additional context, and a grid of experiences of discrimination and harassment. Most items were single-choice or multiple-choice, with a limit of three selections for the barrier and support items; the experiences grid asked how often each of nine things had happened. Only three items were required (consent, FIDE ID or "none", and title or role), so respondents could skip anything they preferred not to answer. Completion took two to five minutes. The full item list is in Appendix A.

3.2 Who was invited and how the survey was distributed

The survey was open to women and girls involved in chess in any capacity: active and titled players, junior girls, coaches, arbiters, trainers, organisers, and women in leadership or administrative roles. Participation was voluntary and self-identified. Girls under 18 completed it with the consent of a parent or guardian; 31% of responses came in that way. The survey ran on Google Forms and was circulated through the Commission's channels, national federations, chess media and a QR-coded poster for events. Fieldwork ran from 3 August to 14 September 2026.

3.3 Responses and how they were analysed

Where the same FIDE ID appeared more than once (18 IDs, 37 rows), only the most recent submission was kept, leaving 672 responses. Free-text federation names were standardised, and 654 responses could be assigned to one of 127 federations. Free-text "other" answers were coded into existing categories where they clearly matched.

Percentages in this report are calculated on the respondents who answered each item; item-level non-response is shown in Appendix B. For multiple-choice items, percentages add to more than 100. Where the text says one group differs from another, the difference was checked with a chi-square test and is significant at $p < 0.01$ unless stated otherwise. Cells with fewer than five respondents are not reported.

Sections 4.10 and 4.11 go one step further than simple comparisons. Because age, title, region and experience overlap (titled women are older, older women have been in chess longer, and so on), we fitted two logistic regressions that look at all of these at once: one for who has considered stepping away from chess, and one for who reports having experienced gender bias. Each is explained in plain terms where it appears. Section 4.12 uses clustering to sort respondents into four profiles. Full results are in Appendix B.

3.4 What the survey can and cannot tell us

The usual cautions apply, and a few particular ones. The sample is self-selected and was reached through chess networks, so it over-represents active players, titled players and federations that circulated the survey energetically, and it says nothing about women who have already left the game. Everything is self-reported and, for early experiences, recalled. The data are a snapshot: they show that women who report bias are more likely to have thought about leaving, not that the one caused the other, and "considered stepping away" is an intention rather than an observed exit. The discrimination items depend on what respondents recognise as bias and are willing to disclose, and both vary across regions, so regional comparisons should be read with care and not as a ranking of federations. Responses for under-18s were completed under guardian consent and may in some cases reflect a parent's view rather than the girl's. Finally, the four profiles in Section 4.12 are a convenient summary of a continuous pattern, not a discovery of distinct types.

4. What Respondents Told Us

4.1 Who responded

Respondents came from every continent, with Africa (27%), Asia (26%) and Europe (23%) each contributing roughly a quarter and the Americas and Caribbean a further 20%. The twelve largest contributing federations were India (69), South Africa (53), Kenya (42), the United States (24), Nigeria (19), England (16), Sweden (16), Sri Lanka (13), Japan (13), Guyana (12), Bangladesh (11) and Uganda (11). The sample is young: 28% are under 18 and a further 41% are aged 18 to 34. Respondents self-identified as White or European (28%), Black or African (22%), South Asian (15%), Latin American or Hispanic (11%) and a range of other backgrounds (Appendix C).

Involvement is deep rather than casual. Sixty per cent had played three or more rated events in the previous twelve months and only 13% were inactive; 16% had been in competitive chess for more than twenty years, though the largest single group (24%) had one to three years' experience. One hundred and thirty-three respondents (20%) hold a FIDE playing title (10 WGMs, 27 WIMs, 49 WFMs, 43 WCMs and 4 open titles) and a further 83 hold arbiter, trainer or organiser titles. Chess is extremely or very important in the lives of 72%.

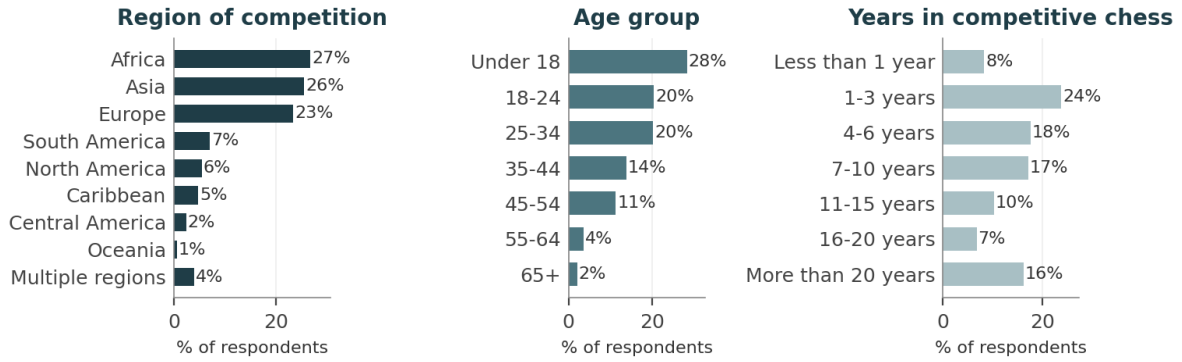

Figure 1. Who responded: region of competition, age group and years in competitive chess (N = 672).

4.2 Roles and representation

Women in the sample are not only players. While 60% describe themselves as competitive players and 28% as recreational players, a third (34%) coach or train, a quarter (25%) arbitrate, a fifth (21%) organise events, 10% create chess content and 7% administer a federation. Nearly half (47%) hold at least one non-playing role and half (51%) hold more than one role at once. These roles sit with adults: 10% of respondents under 18 hold a coaching, arbiting, organising or administrative role, rising to 46% at 18 to 24 and to around 70% from age 25 onwards. Much of the day-to-day running of chess in their federations is already being done by women.

Even so, only a third (33%) feel adequately represented within the chess community in their region; 35% feel somewhat represented, 25% do not, and 8% are unsure. The share answering "no" is highest in Africa (32%), North America (32%) and the Caribbean (31%), and lowest in Asia (16%).

4.3 How women come into chess, and the coaching they get

Chess begins early. More than half of respondents (55%) were introduced to the game by age nine, and 82% by age seventeen; only 18% came to chess as adults. The usual route is the family: 55% were introduced through family or community, 17% through a school programme, 12% through a club or coach, and 7% online. Schools, clubs and coaches together account for under a third of first contact, so a girl whose family does not play is much less likely to meet the game at all.

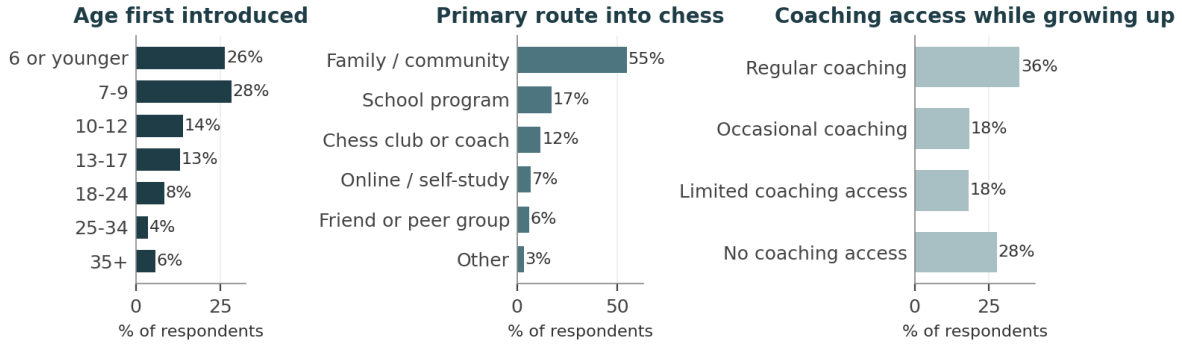

Figure 2. Age of first introduction, primary route into chess, and access to coaching while growing up.

Coaching while growing up was uneven. Just over a third (36%) had regular coaching, 18% occasional coaching, 18% limited access and 28% none at all. The regional picture is stark (Figure 3): 37% of respondents competing in Africa and 32% in the Caribbean had no coaching, compared with 24% in Europe and 19% in Asia, while regular coaching was reported by 47% in Europe and 62% in Central America but only 19% in Africa.

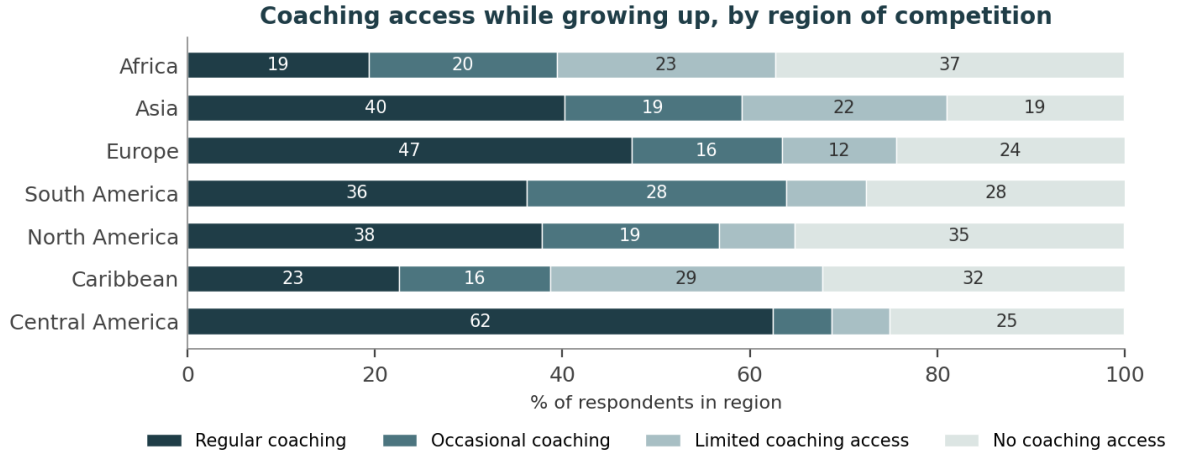

Figure 3. Coaching access while growing up, by region of competition (regions with 15 or more respondents).

Education levels among adult respondents are high (40% hold a bachelor's degree, 26% a master's and 4% a doctorate) and 23% of adults are still students. Only 12% of respondents cite women-focused initiatives among the factors that most supported their development, and only 7% cite scholarships or sponsorships, against 68% who cite family support. The things federations control, namely federation support (13%), school and club programmes (35%) and mentors and coaches (34%), are cited far less than the family.

4.4 Barriers

Asked to pick up to three barriers that most affected their development, respondents pointed overwhelmingly to practical ones. Financial cost (travel, coaching and entry fees) was chosen by two-thirds (66%) and time constraints from school, work or family by nearly half (48%). Next come limited tournaments (29%), limited coaching opportunities (28%) and limited federation support (18%). Lack of role models (12%), gender bias (11%), safety or harassment concerns (6%) and cultural or family discouragement (6%) were chosen less often.

Gender bias is not the barrier respondents rank first, but as Section 4.6 shows it is the experience they report most, and Section 4.10 shows it is the one that matters most for whether they stay.

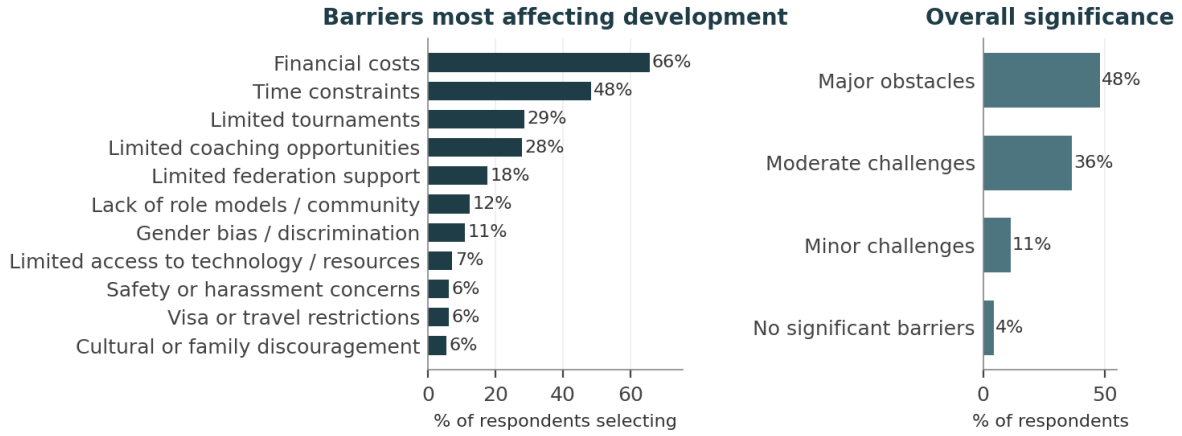

Figure 4. Barriers most affecting chess development or participation (up to three selections), and how significant respondents say those barriers were.

The barriers are not minor. Forty-eight per cent call them major obstacles and a further 36% moderate challenges; only 4% report no significant barriers. Cost is universal but weighs most heavily in Africa (chosen by 83%) and South America (78%), against 48% in Europe and 43% in North America. Time constraints are chosen at almost the same rate by respondents with and without children (49% and 47%), so the time pressure on women's chess comes from school and work as much as from caregiving.

4.5 What has helped, and what would help

Asked what supported them, respondents give almost the mirror image of the barriers. Family support comes first by a wide margin (68%), followed at some distance by online platforms and resources (35%), school and club programmes (35%) and mentors and coaches (34%). Peer and community support (15%), federation support (13%), women-focused initiatives (12%) and scholarships (7%) trail well behind.

Online resources are now where most training happens. Eighty-four per cent use online playing platforms most often, and engines and databases (42%), video lessons (38%) and social-media chess content (30%) are all used more widely than live coaching (30%) or training groups (26%). Online provision has lowered the cost of practice, but it has not replaced coaching where coaching is absent: respondents in the regions with least coaching access still put better coaching access among their top priorities.

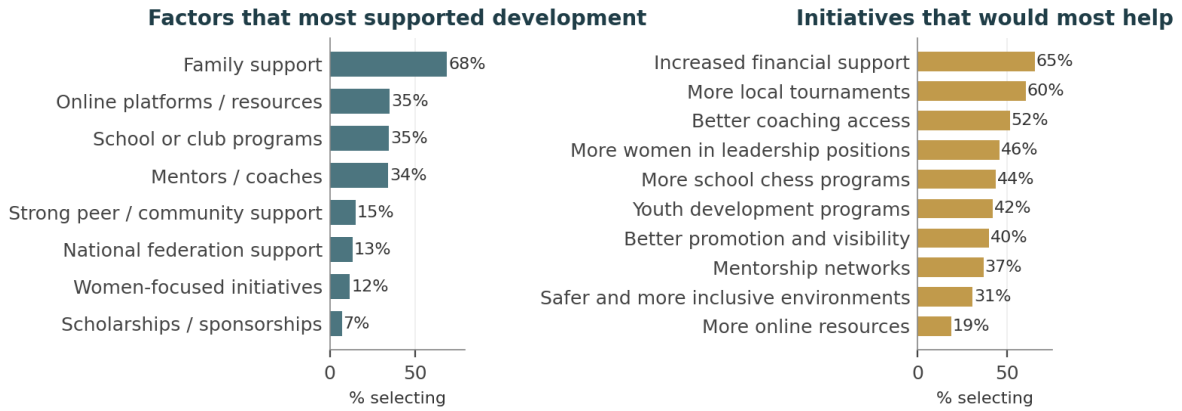

Figure 5. Factors that most supported respondents' development (up to three selections), and initiatives respondents believe would most improve women's participation in their region.

Asked what would most improve women's participation in their region, respondents gave a clear and practical list: increased financial support (65%), more local tournaments (60%), better coaching access (52%), more women in leadership positions (46%), more school chess programmes (44%), youth development

programmes (42%), better promotion and visibility (40%) and mentorship networks (37%). Safer and more inclusive environments were chosen by 31% overall, but by 41% of those who have experienced gender bias against 15% of those who have not. More women in leadership was a priority for half or more of respondents in Europe (50%), North America (54%), the Caribbean (52%) and South America (57%).

4.6 Discrimination and harassment

The survey asked whether respondents had personally experienced eight forms of discrimination or harassment in chess settings, and how often. These are the hardest numbers in the report (Figure 6). Sixty-three per cent have experienced gender bias or sexism, and for 16% it happens often. Just under four in ten have experienced online abuse or harassment (38%), sexual harassment or inappropriate behaviour (38%) and exclusion from coaching, teams, tournaments or leadership opportunities (37%). A quarter have experienced racial or ethnic discrimination (25%) and 23% discrimination on the basis of nationality, language or accent; caste or class discrimination (17%) and religious discrimination (10%) are less common but far from rare. Three-quarters of respondents (76%) report at least one of the eight, and 44% report three or more.

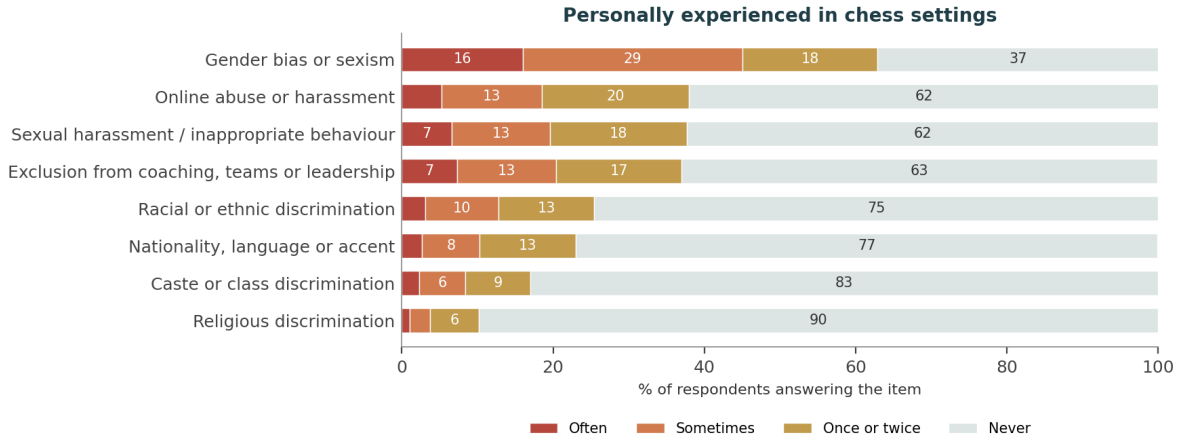

Figure 6. How often respondents have personally experienced each form of discrimination or harassment in chess settings (percentages of those answering each item).

Two things need saying about these figures. First, they are higher among adults and among the most accomplished. Among respondents under 18, 47% have experienced gender bias and 17% sexual harassment; among adults these figures are 70% and 46%, and among FIDE-titled women 81% and 55%. The 25 to 34 age group reports the highest rates of both (73% and 53%). Second, the geography of reported gender bias runs opposite to the geography of coaching access (Figure 7): it is highest among respondents competing in North America (83%), South America (78%), Europe (74%) and Central America (73%), and lowest in Asia (53%) and Africa (50%). Differences in what counts as bias, and in willingness to report it, are likely to be part of this, and the survey cannot separate them from differences in what actually happens. Section 4.11 looks at which of these patterns hold once age, region, title and time in chess are considered together.

4.7 Who is thinking of leaving

Forty-four per cent of respondents who answered the question have considered stepping away from chess. The risk is concentrated where two things coincide: young adulthood, and adverse experience. The share peaks at 64% among 18 to 24 year olds, the years in which school-age structures fall away and university, work and relocation compete for time. It is 56% among those who have experienced gender bias against 23% among those who have not; 58% among those who have experienced sexual harassment against 34%; and 48% among those who call their barriers major against 29% among those who call them minor or absent. Titled women, who have invested most in the game, are the most likely to have considered leaving it (65%).

Respondents with children are less likely to have considered stepping away (35%) than those without (49%), the reverse of what a caregiving explanation would predict and consistent with the age pattern: the women most at risk are in their late teens and early twenties, not mothers. Having had a female role model makes little difference on its own (43% against 46%), which suggests that visibility alone does not protect anyone if the environment does not change. That matches the finding from engineering that what keeps women in the

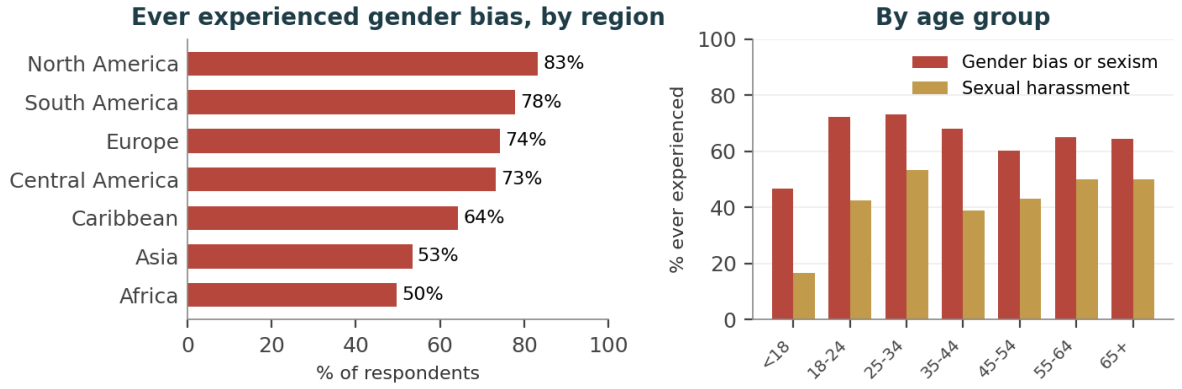

Figure 7. Share of respondents who have ever experienced gender bias, by region; and gender bias and sexual harassment by age group.

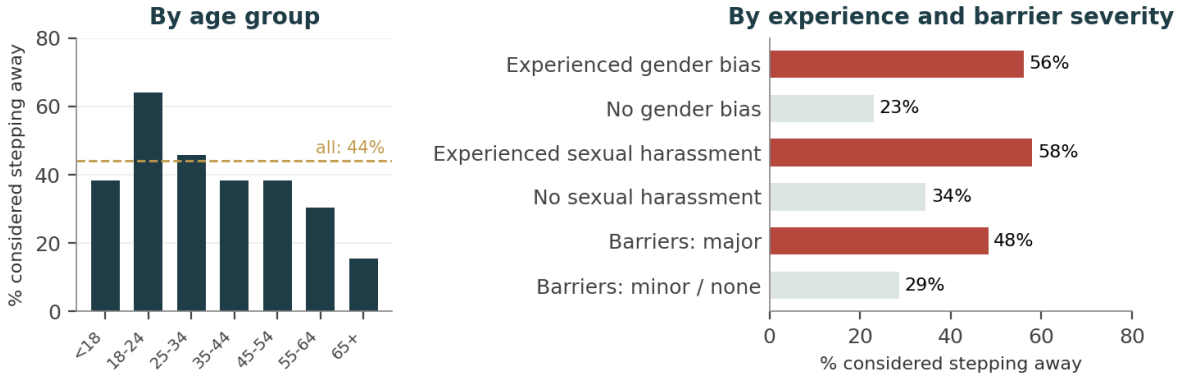

Figure 8. Share of respondents who have considered stepping away from chess, by age group and by experience of gender bias, sexual harassment and barrier severity.

field is structured mentoring, not merely seeing other women succeed (Dennehy and Dasgupta, 2017).

4.8 Role models and leadership

More than half of respondents (54%) have never had a female chess role model or mentor. A quarter (25%) have had one from a similar background or community and 18% from a different background. The gap is widest in Europe (37% have had a role model), South America (39%) and the Caribbean (37%), and narrowest in Asia (50%) and Africa (49%). In the regions with the longest chess traditions, most women have never been mentored by a woman.

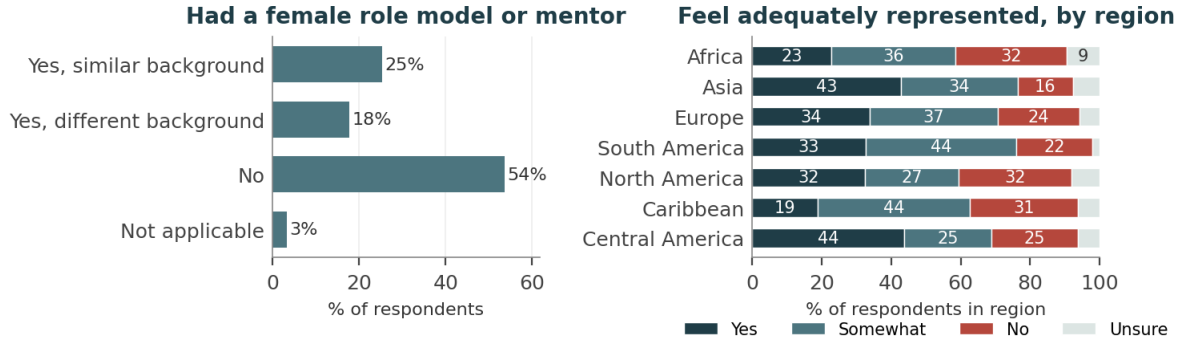

Figure 9. Whether respondents have had a female role model or mentor; and whether they feel adequately represented within the chess community in their region.

There is no shortage of women to draw on. A third of respondents coach, a quarter arbitrate and a fifth organise events, yet only 7% sit in federation administration. The narrowing happens at the step from

doing the work to deciding how it is done, the same pattern seen across sport more generally (Burton, 2015). Respondents see this themselves: "more women in leadership positions" was the fourth most-cited priority for improving participation (46%).

4.9 Making a living from chess

Few respondents earn their living from chess. Among adults, 20% coach or train and 3% play professionally, so roughly one in four has chess as her primary income; 35% work outside chess, 23% are students, 10% are self-employed and 4% unemployed. That a fifth of adult respondents earn their living by coaching, when only 7% cite scholarships or sponsorships as having supported their own development, suggests women put more into the coaching economy than they have had out of it. Financial cost tops the barriers (66%) and financial support tops the priorities (65%): for most respondents the constraint on staying in the game is the cost of travelling to and entering events, not a lack of interest or ability.

4.10 A closer look: what predicts thinking of leaving

The comparisons so far look at one thing at a time, and the things overlap. Titled women are older, older women have seen more, and active players travel to more events, so a difference that looks like the effect of bias might really be the effect of age or activity. To sort this out we fitted a logistic regression that takes 25 things we know about each respondent (her experiences, barriers, coaching history, roles, region and demographics) and works out how much each one changes the chance that she has considered leaving, with all the others held steady. The results come as odds ratios: a ratio of 3 means a woman with that characteristic has three times the odds of having considered leaving compared with an otherwise similar woman without it, a ratio of 1 means no difference, and a ratio below 1 means she is less likely to have considered it. The model uses the 583 respondents who answered the relevant items.

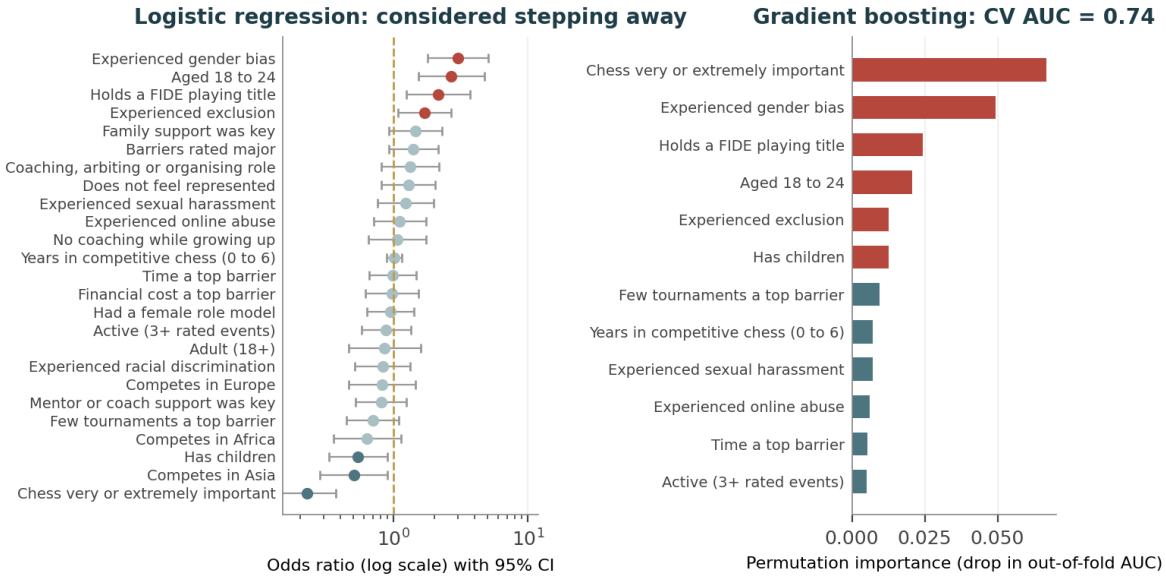

Figure 10. Left: odds ratios for having considered stepping away, from a logistic regression on 25 respondent characteristics (n = 583; red markers show a 95% confidence interval above 1, dark blue below 1). Right: the characteristics a prediction model relies on most.

Four things independently raise the odds of having considered stepping away (Figure 10 and Table B3). Having experienced gender bias triples them (odds ratio 3.0, 95% confidence interval 1.8 to 5.1); being aged 18 to 24 multiplies them by 2.7 (1.5 to 4.8); holding a FIDE playing title doubles them (2.2, 1.2 to 3.7); and having been excluded from coaching, teams, tournaments or leadership raises them by 70% (1.7, 1.1 to 2.7). Three things lower them: regarding chess as very or extremely important (0.23, 0.14 to 0.37), having children (0.54, 0.33 to 0.89) and competing in Asia (0.50, 0.28 to 0.90). Once these are taken into account, financial cost, time constraints, coaching history, years in chess, activity level and having had a role model make no difference. Sexual harassment drops out too, because it goes so closely with gender bias: 92% of those

reporting sexual harassment also report gender bias.

We also checked how well such a model predicts. Trained on four-fifths of the respondents and tested on the fifth it had not seen, it ranks a woman who has considered leaving above one who has not about three times in four (AUC 0.76, where 0.5 is chance). The characteristics it leans on most are the same ones the regression picks out: how important chess is to her, gender bias, title, age 18 to 24, exclusion and children. A model given only the discrimination and harassment items predicts less well (0.69) but better than one given everything except them, which is another way of saying that what a woman has experienced tells us more about whether she will stay than anything about her circumstances or her chess career.

4.11 A closer look: who reports gender bias

Section 4.6 showed that reported gender bias is higher among adults, titled players and respondents in the Americas and Europe. Those groups overlap, so we fitted a second regression, this time with having experienced gender bias as the outcome and age group, region, FIDE title, years in competitive chess, activity, non-playing roles and coaching history as the characteristics. It uses the 640 respondents who answered the gender-bias item and gave their age and region. Figure 11 shows the share reporting gender bias in each age group and region twice: as it appears in the raw data, and as the model estimates it once the other characteristics are held at the same level in every group. Table B4 gives the full results.

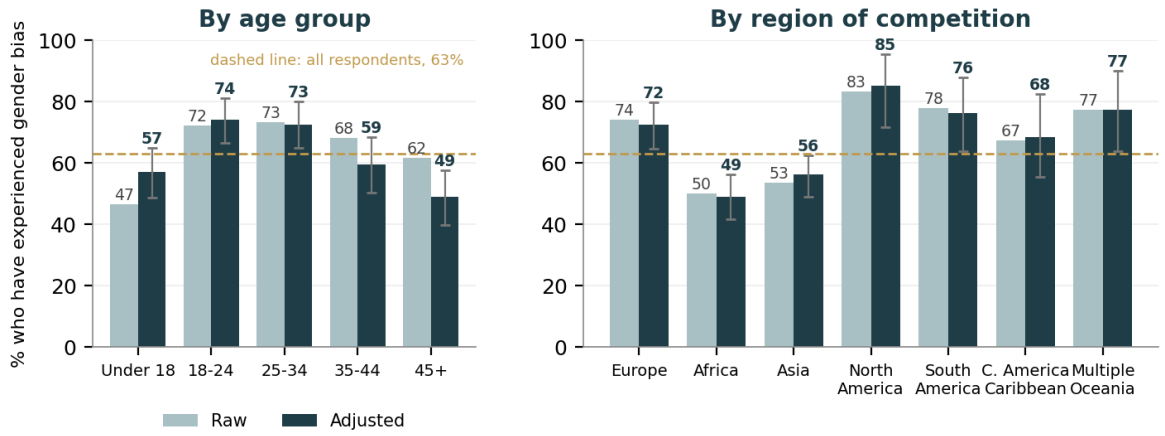

Figure 11. Share of respondents who have experienced gender bias, raw and adjusted for the other characteristics in the model, by age group and by region of competition (n = 640; bars on the adjusted estimates are 95% confidence intervals).

Three findings come out. First, gender bias peaks in early adulthood rather than rising steadily with age. Compared with girls under 18, women aged 18 to 24 have 2.4 times the odds of having experienced it (1.4 to 4.1) and women aged 25 to 34 have 2.2 times (1.2 to 4.0); those aged 35 and over cannot be distinguished from juniors, and adjusted for everything else the share falls from 74% at 18 to 24 to 49% at 45 and over. Second, region matters more than anything else in the model. Respondents competing in Africa (odds ratio 0.33, 0.19 to 0.55) and Asia (0.45, 0.27 to 0.76) are much less likely to report gender bias than those competing in Europe: adjusted shares of 49% and 56% against 72%. The North American figure (85%) rests on 36 respondents and is imprecise. As noted in Section 3.4, this mixes real differences in tournament environments with differences in what respondents recognise and report, and it should not be read as a ranking. Third, what looked like an effect of holding a title is mostly an effect of time in the game. Each additional band of years in competitive chess raises the odds by 17% (1.17, 1.04 to 1.33), and the share reporting gender bias climbs from 52% among those in their first three years to 83% among those with more than twenty. With years in chess allowed for, the title itself is no longer statistically significant (1.59, 0.92 to 2.78). Women who had no coaching while growing up are also more likely to report bias (1.77, 1.14 to 2.75), a result we cannot explain and treat as exploratory.

Put together with the previous section, both models point at the same women. Reported bias is highest between 18 and 34, and having experienced bias and being 18 to 24 each independently raise the chance of thinking about leaving. Young adult women are both the most exposed and the most at risk of going.

4.12 Four kinds of respondent

Finally, we let the data sort respondents into groups by putting together women who answered sixteen questions in similar ways, without deciding in advance what the groups should look like. Four profiles come out (Figure 12). Profile A (n = 217) is mostly juniors: 73% are under 18, 63% had regular coaching, three-quarters are active, and exposure to bias or harassment is low (30% and 3%). Profile B (n = 169) is adults with limited access and lower engagement: 62% had no coaching growing up, only 24% are active, and chess is very important to just half. Profile C (n = 173) is adult players and officials with high exposure: 96% have experienced gender bias, 79% sexual harassment, 63% exclusion and 64% online abuse; two-thirds coach, arbitrate or organise, and a third feel unrepresented. Profile D (n = 113) is entirely titled players and shares Profile C's exposure (84% and 59%) with the highest rate of coaching and organising roles (69%).

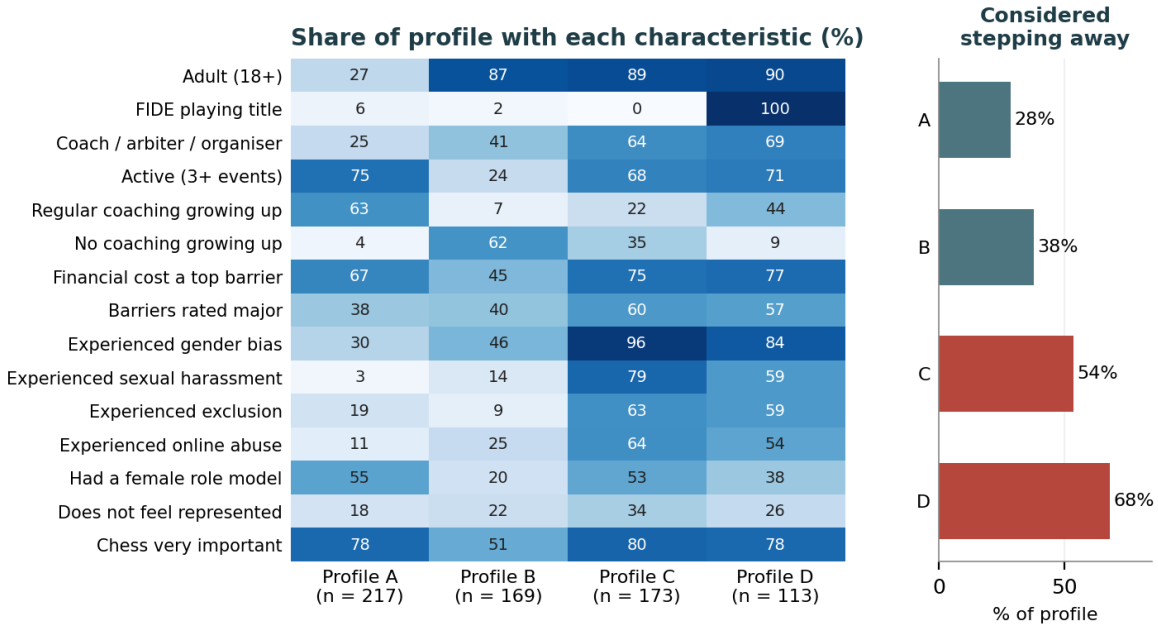

Figure 12. Four respondent profiles (A: coached juniors with low exposure; B: adults with limited access and lower engagement; C: adult players and officials with high exposure; D: titled players with high exposure), and the share of each profile who have considered stepping away.

The share who have considered stepping away rises steadily across the profiles, from 28% in A to 38% in B, 54% in C and 68% in D. The two high-exposure profiles together are 43% of the sample and contain almost every titled player and most of the coaches, arbiters and organisers. The women most likely to leave are not those at the margins of the game but those most invested in it, and what separates them from the low-risk profiles is not access or ambition but what has happened to them. The separation between profiles is modest, as is usual for survey data of this kind, and they should be read as a summary rather than as distinct populations.

5. Key Findings and Challenges Identified

Five challenges run through what respondents told us.

- **Cost and access.** Financial cost and time are the barriers respondents cite most, and they weigh most in Africa and South America. Coaching access is patterned by region, with more than a third of African respondents having had no coaching at all.
- **A pathway that depends on the family.** Most women enter chess through family or community rather than through schools, clubs or federations, and most cite family support as the main factor in their development. Institutional pathways reach a minority.
- **Widespread bias and harassment.** Three-quarters of respondents have experienced discrimination or harassment in chess settings; two-thirds have experienced gender bias and nearly two in five sexual

harassment. Reported gender bias peaks at ages 18 to 34, rises with years in the game, and varies sharply by region.

- **Attrition in early adulthood, linked to climate.** Nearly two-thirds of 18 to 24 year olds have considered stepping away. Gender bias, exclusion, title and age predict thinking of leaving after everything else is taken into account; cost and time do not.
- **Thin representation and mentoring.** Most respondents have never had a female role model or mentor, only a third feel adequately represented, and women's substantial presence in coaching, arbiting and organising does not carry through to federation decision-making.

6. Recommendations

These recommendations are addressed to FIDE, its continental bodies and national federations. They are drawn from what respondents asked for and from what the analysis shows actually predicts whether a woman stays, and they are listed in the order respondents ranked them.

1. **Reduce the cost of participation.** Establish or expand targeted travel and entry-fee support for girls and women, prioritising federations in Africa, South America and the Caribbean where cost is cited by three-quarters or more of respondents. Fee waivers for women's sections and for female arbiters' and trainers' certification would be cheap and visible first steps.
2. **Bring competition closer to home.** Support federations to run more frequent local and regional rated events, including women's and girls' sections, so that rated play does not depend on international travel. Sixty per cent of respondents asked for more local tournaments.
3. **Close the coaching gap.** Fund regional coaching programmes and female-trainer certification where face-to-face coaching is scarce, and complement them with structured online coaching that reaches respondents already training online. Prioritise the federations where no-coaching rates exceed a third.
4. **Build the pipeline to leadership.** Women already hold operational roles at scale. Federations should set targets for women on boards and commissions, create shadowing and mentoring schemes that connect female arbiters, coaches and organisers with decision-making roles, and report progress annually.
5. **Make environments safe, and be seen to.** Adopt and publicise a clear code of conduct covering tournament halls, coaching relationships and online spaces; establish confidential reporting channels with independent handling; and train arbiters and organisers in recognising and responding to harassment. The analysis in Section 4.10 identifies climate, not cost, as the strongest predictor of leaving, so this is the recommendation with the largest expected effect on retention.
6. **Target retention at 18 to 24.** Create transition support for women leaving junior structures: university chess partnerships, flexible event scheduling, and small grants tied to continued rated activity. This is the age at which the survey finds the risk of leaving highest, and the age at which reported bias peaks.
7. **Extend chess into schools.** School programmes were the first route into chess for only 17% of respondents. Girls whose families do not play depend on school and club provision; investment here broadens the base from which future players, coaches and leaders are drawn.
8. **Make mentoring structured, not symbolic.** Profile female coaches, arbiters, organisers and administrators, not only elite players, in federation and FIDE communications, and pair visibility with structured mentoring. The survey finds that having had a role model made no difference to thinking of leaving on its own; the evidence from other fields is that sustained mentoring does.
9. **Measure again.** Repeat this survey on a regular cycle, with a stable core questionnaire, to track whether the prevalence of harassment, coaching access, intentions to leave and perceived representation change in response to policy.

7. Conclusion

The women who answered this survey are not drifting away from chess for lack of interest. Most play actively, many coach, arbitrate and organise, and seven in ten say the game is very or extremely important to them. Most of what holds them back is practical: it costs too much to compete, there is no coach nearby, the rated events are somewhere else. But alongside that sit experiences no federation should be willing to accept. Two in three have met gender bias in chess settings, nearly two in five sexual harassment, and the women who have reached the highest levels are the ones most exposed to it. The effect on whether they stay is plain in the raw numbers and does not go away when everything else is taken into account. Chess loses a large share of its women in their early twenties, and it loses, disproportionately, the ones who have experienced bias.

None of this is out of reach. The things respondents asked for, financial support, local tournaments, coaching, women in leadership, school programmes and safe environments, are all things federations can do, and the experience of other fields is that they work. We offer this report as a baseline, so that in a few years' time it will be possible to say whether they did.

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A. Survey Questionnaire

Items are listed in the order they appeared. Response options are shown in brackets; (R) marks required items; (M) marks multiple-selection items.

1. Consent (R) [I am 18 or older and voluntarily consent / I am the parent or legal guardian of a participant under 18 and consent to their participation]
2. FIDE ID (R) [free text; NONE if not applicable]
3. Current chess title or role (R) [None / WCM / WFM / WIM / WGM / CM / FM / IM / GM / FI / FT / FA / IO / Other]
4. Federation represented [free text]
5. How long have you been involved in competitive chess? [<1 / 1–3 / 4–6 / 7–10 / 11–15 / 16–20 / >20 years]
6. Chess activity during the past 12 months [Active, 3+ rated events / Occasional, 1–2 / Inactive, 0]
7. What best describes your current involvement in chess? (M) [Competitive player / Recreational player / Coach / Arbiter / Organizer / Federation administrator / Content creator / Parent or supporter / Other]
8. Which background groups best describe you? (M) [14 self-identification categories / Prefer not to say]
9. Age group [Under 18 / 18–24 / 25–34 / 35–44 / 45–54 / 55–64 / 65+ / Prefer not to say]
10. Which region do you primarily compete in? [Africa / Asia / Europe / North America / Caribbean / Central America / South America / Oceania / Multiple regions]
11. At what age were you first introduced to chess? [6 or younger / 7–9 / 10–12 / 13–17 / 18–24 / 25–34 / 35+]
12. How were you primarily introduced to chess? [Family or community / School program / Chess club or coach / Online or self-study / Friend or peer group / Other]
13. What level of access did you have to chess coaching while growing up? [Regular / Occasional / Limited / None]
14. Which barriers have most affected your chess development or participation? (M, up to 3) [11 options / Other]
15. Overall, how significant were these barriers? [Major obstacles / Moderate challenges / Minor challenges / No significant barriers]
16. Which factors most supported your development in chess? (M, up to 3) [8 options / Other]
17. Which chess resources do you currently use most often? (M) [7 options / None of the above]
18. What initiatives would most improve women's participation in your region? (M) [10 options / Other]
19. Have you had a female chess role model or mentor? [Yes, similar background / Yes, different background / No / Not applicable]
20. Have you ever considered stepping away from chess? [Yes / No / Prefer not to say]
21. Highest level of education completed [Secondary / Bachelor's / Master's / Doctoral / Prefer not to say]
22. Current primary occupation [Student / Professional player / Chess coach or trainer / Employed outside chess / Self-employed / Retired / Unemployed / Prefer not to say]
23. Do you have children? [Yes / No / Prefer not to say]
24. How important is chess in your life currently? [Extremely / Very / Moderately / Slightly / Not very important]
25. Have you personally experienced any of the following in chess settings? Nine-row grid: gender bias or sexism; racial or ethnic discrimination; nationality, language or accent discrimination; religious discrimination; caste or class discrimination; sexual harassment or inappropriate behaviour; online abuse or harassment; exclusion from coaching, teams, tournaments or leadership; other. [Never / Once or twice / Sometimes / Often / Prefer not to say]
26. If you selected "Other" above, please briefly describe [free text]
27. Do you feel adequately represented within the chess community in your region? [Yes / Somewhat / No / Unsure]

B. Additional Data Tables

Table B1. Experiences of discrimination and harassment in chess settings, all respondents and adults (% of those answering each item).

Item	n	Never	Once or twice	Sometimes	Often	Ever (all)	Ever (adults)
Gender bias or sexism	642	37.1	17.9	29.0	16.0	62.9	70.1
Online abuse or harassment	622	62.1	19.5	13.2	5.3	37.9	41.6
Sexual harassment or inappropriate behaviour	624	62.3	18.1	13.0	6.6	37.7	46.2
Exclusion from coaching, teams, tournaments or leadership	626	62.9	16.6	13.1	7.3	37.1	41.3
Racial or ethnic discrimination	619	74.6	12.6	9.7	3.1	25.4	25.8
Nationality, language or accent discrimination	620	76.9	12.7	7.6	2.7	23.1	23.3
Caste or class discrimination	619	83.0	8.6	6.1	2.3	17.0	20.4
Religious discrimination	620	89.8	6.5	2.7	1.0	10.2	10.6

Table B2. Considered stepping away from chess, by respondent characteristics (% answering Yes among those answering Yes or No).

Group	% considered stepping away
All respondents	44.2
Under 18	38.3
18–24	64.0
25–34	45.7
35–44	38.4
45–54	38.4
55–64	30.4
Has experienced gender bias	56.1
Has not experienced gender bias	23.0
Has experienced sexual harassment	58.0
Has not experienced sexual harassment	34.5
Barriers: major obstacles	48.3
Barriers: moderate challenges	45.8
Barriers: minor or none	28.6
Has children	34.8
No children	48.9
Has had a female role model	42.5
No female role model	45.8
FIDE-titled (WGM/WIM/WFM/WCM)	64.8

Table B3. Logistic regression of having considered stepping away on 25 respondent characteristics (n = 583): odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals for the characteristics significant at $p < 0.05$. Model pseudo R-squared 0.21; cross-validated AUC 0.76.

Characteristic	Odds ratio	95% CI	p
Experienced gender bias	3.01	1.80 to 5.06	< 0.001
Aged 18 to 24	2.69	1.52 to 4.75	0.001
Holds a FIDE playing title	2.15	1.24 to 3.73	0.006
Experienced exclusion	1.71	1.08 to 2.69	0.021
Has children	0.54	0.33 to 0.89	0.017
Competes in Asia	0.50	0.28 to 0.90	0.019
Chess very or extremely important	0.23	0.14 to 0.37	< 0.001

Table B4. Logistic regression of having experienced gender bias in chess settings on respondent characteristics (n = 640; 403 with the outcome): odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals. Reference categories are under 18 for age and Europe for region. Model pseudo R-squared 0.13.

Characteristic	Odds ratio	95% CI	p
Aged 18 to 24	2.40	1.39 to 4.14	0.002
Aged 25 to 34	2.21	1.21 to 4.04	0.010
Aged 35 to 44	1.13	0.58 to 2.17	0.722
Aged 45 or over	0.69	0.36 to 1.32	0.259
Competes in Africa	0.33	0.19 to 0.55	< 0.001
Competes in Asia	0.45	0.27 to 0.76	0.003
Competes in North America	2.32	0.87 to 6.16	0.092
Competes in South America	1.26	0.55 to 2.90	0.588
Competes in Central America or Caribbean	0.82	0.37 to 1.81	0.617
Multiple regions or Oceania	1.33	0.51 to 3.46	0.555
Holds a FIDE playing title	1.59	0.92 to 2.78	0.100
Years in competitive chess (per band, 0 to 6)	1.17	1.04 to 1.33	0.011
Active (3+ rated events)	1.30	0.90 to 1.87	0.168
Coaching, arbiting, organising or admin role	1.43	0.93 to 2.20	0.099
No coaching while growing up	1.77	1.14 to 2.75	0.011

Table B5. Item non-response (number of respondents not answering, N = 672).

Item	Non-response
Title or role	412 (free text; blank treated as no title)
Highest education	23
Experiences grid, per item	30 to 53
Coaching access	5
Barriers / supports	5
Barrier significance	7
Federation (unassignable)	18
All other items	0 to 4

C. Demographic Breakdown

Table C1. Respondents by region of competition and age group (counts; cells below five are shown as <5).

Region	Under 18	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+
Africa	44	43	55	22	12	<5	<5
Asia	71	33	31	15	13	9	0
Europe	27	33	25	28	28	7	8
South America	11	12	9	6	9	0	0
North America	13	<5	<5	6	7	<5	<5
Caribbean	11	6	<5	7	<5	<5	0
Central America	5	<5	<5	<5	0	<5	0
Multiple regions	8	<5	6	6	<5	0	<5
Oceania	0	<5	<5	<5	0	<5	0

Table C2. Self-identified background, role and title (% of all respondents; multiple roles and backgrounds permitted).

Characteristic	%	Characteristic	%
Background: White / European	27.5	Role: Competitive player	60.1
Background: Black / African	21.7	Role: Coach / trainer	33.8
Background: South Asian	15.2	Role: Recreational player	27.8
Background: Latin American / Hispanic	11.0	Role: Arbiter	24.7
Background: Mixed / Multicultural	6.4	Role: Organizer / event staff	21.1
Background: Southeast Asian	5.5	Role: Parent / supporter	18.3
Background: East Asian	4.3	Role: Content creator / media	9.5
Background: Middle Eastern / North African	3.6	Role: Federation administrator	7.1
Background: Prefer not to say	3.0	Title: WFM	7.3
Background: Central Asian	2.5	Title: WCM	6.4
Background: Afro-Caribbean	2.2	Title: WIM	4.0
Background: Indigenous / First Nations	0.9	Title: WGM	1.5
Education (adults): Bachelor's	40.1	Title: Arbiter (IA/FA/NA)	8.9
Education (adults): Master's	26.1	Title: Trainer (FI/FT/NI/SI)	2.5
Education (adults): Doctoral	4.4	Occupation (adults): chess coach or player	23.4