

Korfball International Gender Relations Survey, 2016

The desire to improve gender relations is a strong international issue and korfball may be seen to play a part in this. We are conducting research relevant to this and the first part of that current research initiative follows. The Survey attracted responses from 240 korfball people in 25 countries. The quantitative analysis of survey questions that related to evidence of improvement in gender relations through playing korfball follows and personal comments made by respondents. Further research is being conducted and this will be made available to the international community. I would like to thank very much all the Survey respondents and to IKF for their support through Albert Vidanya and Korfball Australia.

Mr Roy Kirkby (Honorary Member, International Korfball Federation)

Survey Quantitative Analysis

Observed changes in gender relationships while playing korfball	Boys –	Girls –	Men –	Women –	Total Respondents –
They became more accepting of the other gender's point of view	74.56% 170	66.23% 151	62.72% 143	53.07% 121	228
– They became more cooperative in joint gender activities	77.87% 183	71.06% 167	67.66% 159	60.43% 142	235
– They became more accepting of the other gender in a leadership role	57.46% 131	50.88% 116	69.74% 159	51.32% 117	228
– They promote the involvement of the other gender	58.41% 132	62.39% 141	73.45% 166	72.57% 164	226
– None of the above have been witnessed	18.18% 12	16.67% 11	15.15% 10	16.67% 11	6

What respondents felt was the influence of korfball on particular groups.						
–	Very negative effect –	Somewhat negative effect –	No noticeable effect –	Somewhat positive effect –	Very positive effect –	Total –
– Parents	0.42% 1	1.69% 4	34.75% 82	43.64% 103	19.49% 46	236
– Students	0.00% 0	2.99% 7	28.63% 67	41.45% 97	26.92% 63	234
– Community	0.00% 0	4.74% 11	40.95% 95	39.66% 92	14.66% 34	232
– Educators	0.00% 0	2.55% 6	37.87% 89	38.30% 90	21.28% 50	235
– Cultural groups	0.88% 2	3.07% 7	54.82% 125	29.39% 67	11.84% 27	228
– Governments	1.32% 3	2.63% 6	70.18% 160	21.05% 48	4.82% 11	228
– Other groups	0.97% 2	2.91% 6	76.21% 157	16.99% 35	2.91% 6	206

Survey Personal Comments

A few alterations have been made to English language to clarify understanding. The responses are organised under headings for convenience of use in further analysis and research with a short summary. Pre-comment indicators are included to identify nature of respondent thus:

Survey response number / Male or F / approximate age / years playing korfball / country / main korfball activity (Player, Coach, Referee, Administrator, PE Teacher)

In our research we are using the following definition (based on those used by the United nations agencies)

Gender relations are the ways in which a society defines rights, responsibilities and the identities of male and female in relation to one another.

Gender roles are those behaviours, tasks and responsibilities that a society considers appropriate for male and female.

Gender equality is when female and male enjoy equal rights, opportunities and entitlements.

Gender equity means fairness and impartiality in the treatment of females and males in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities

Gender balance is the equal and active participation of females and males in all areas of decision-making, and in access to and control over resources and services

Gender discrimination is any exclusion or restriction made on the basis of gender roles and relations that prevents a person from enjoying full rights, benefits, obligations or opportunities.

Positive comments related to gender relationships through korfball

Most Dutch respondents felt that there was no gender issue and that both genders were treated as one with equality and equity in playing roles and arrangements. They felt that respect was an important outcome of playing together and there was greater ease in interaction and communications. From other cultures a number felt that people coming from single sex sports of both genders were happier and developed greater respect and understanding of the opposite gender in korfball. They appreciate being without the negative social issues of the single sex sports culture they had often experienced.

14/F/20/1/Aus/P Part of the reason I stayed on when I tried it out 12 months ago was because it is truly evenly distributed. Each player has a role relative to their strengths and weaknesses, and it has nothing to do with gender or whether or not you're part of the clique or not. I never enjoyed women's basketball because of that, and played netball for several years purely because I enjoyed the game - the culture of it I didn't so much. Korfball to me is about you as an individual playing as part of a team and how the team can both use your strengths and weaknesses. That's really important to me.

60/F/20/2/Aus/P It's good playing and everyone has to rely on each other whatever gender you are. It's cool when you can be accepted as equal and everyone treated the same.

67/F/20/30/Neth/P I think that korfball helps to develop more respect between genders. If children learn this at an early age, I'm convinced that this will help in equality treatment. In former years there was a difference between gender in korfball. The female gender was serving the male. In modern korfball gender equality is evident. In the Netherlands it is natural now to play in a mixed team with equal responsibilities for players regardless of their gender. It is not an issue to be discussed. It simply is as it is.

70/F/20/10/Neth/P Boys and girls in korfball are very nice to each other at korfball.

78/F/40/20/Neth/P *In former years there was a difference between gender in korfball. The female gender was serving the male. In modern korfball gender equality is evident. In the Netherlands it is natural now to play in a mixed team with equal responsibilities for players regardless of their gender. It is not an issue to be discussed. It simply is as it is.*

79/M/30/30/Neth/P Especially the young kids are learning and accepting faster that there is no difference and no shame to play with the other gender.

82/F/20/15/Neth/P The team spirit of korfball is perfect. One of the reasons that I love the sport is because you'll do it together. Boys and girls together, I love it. You only can play our beautiful sport well if you play it together. And it gives me so many friendships!

84/M/40/40/Neth/Ad Sporting together empowers girls and women.

98/M/20/13/Neth/P There is almost no difference in roles and acceptance in group behaviour between men and woman who have played the game for a long while. We see each other as equal human beings. Talking with a man is just as normal as talking to a woman for example. Both parties feel this way in our community.

110/M/25/10/Neth/P I think the most important thing about the behavioural changes is that they accept that anyone can take the lead not only a man.

112/F/40/40/Neth/P There is a less aggressive game and there is less a situation of being teased in the group.

113/F/30/30/Neth/P I think I can better communicate with men, and earlier with boys, than other women. Certainly when I was studying most girls found it too exciting to talk with boys. I never have found that.

126/F/20/9/Neth/P I, as a woman, feel that I am respected by other men on the field and those players also respect me off the field. I feel comfortable in the presence of men and Korfball made me more outspoken to other men because it is natural. I don't feel like I am any less than a man, of or on the field. I have witnessed several friendships and even love between the different players. Men and women view each other as equals and accepted each others roles in the team. The team I play in have been mostly together from a young age and we, women and men, are good friends of the field. You participate easier with the other gender because you have been experiencing that in a high pressure environment.

128/F/20/9/Neth/P I think it is logical that everyone accepts each other

129/M/39/16//Aus/A I feel that Korfball breaks down the barriers between genders while still recognising the physical differences the intellectual abilities are allowed to be exposed. The greatest changes that I have seen has been the understanding of how each gender can best contribute on court. i.e. girls are no longer overlooked as a real threat on court in higher grades. There is a greater understanding of the physical differences that allow each other to work better together to achieve success. understanding the limitations of the people around you allows you to accommodate and get the best out of each other.

135/M/30/13/UK/P Especially in my younger days I saw a number of students come from male dominated sports into Korfball. Little respect was shown to female players as they were not used to playing with them. Once they learnt they could not achieve their goals without those players and realised that they were as important to the team their attitudes changed.

137 M/40/40/Neth/R It is not only gender equality, but also equality no matter race, religion, colour of your skin and even age. It is the only sport in which gender equality is officially regulated.

174/M/40/24/UK/C Having played physical collision male only sports predominantly I find the atmosphere much more comfortable and accepting than male only with more tolerance. Many women also comment that there is less spitefulness in korfball than female only sports.

184/M/29/20/Neth/P Each gender does have less preconceptions towards the other gender, simply because they cooperate a lot and see each other's behaviour in many ways. Relaxing/fun outside the game field, but also the effort, disappointment, mentality and coping with different (sport related) situations.

202 M/40/16/Aus/Admin In early days men tended to dominate coming from football or basketball backgrounds. After time they come to realize that the women play a vital role in attack strategies as well as setting up opportunities for the men. Often the teams with strong women players had an advantage as the men tend to negate each other. Unfortunately our competition has recently folded through diminished participation. Personally I have always thought Korfball to be an ideal sport for encouraging bi-gender participation. Our family has been involved since our children have been in their teens. I had no qualms about having my children play in even senior teams because of the Sportsmanship ideals in Korfball

204/M/30/17/Aus/Referee I have always found Korfball in my region to be very gender inclusive. I have never noticed gender being an issue. Since I began there have always been females in leadership roles within clubs and admin as well as female referees and coaches. In short, for me, gender doesn't come into it at all. While some people who are new to the sport don't fully understand how gender mixing works in a sport it has always been the part i like to most. Society is mixed - it makes sense that we can all compete together. I see it as a major strength to our sport. I hope that people in charge of promoting and administrating the game see this and use it to our advantage. Especially as women in sport is a huge media issue at present. I believe that korfball can continue to improve how it deals with gender relations. It is ahead of many other sports in this area but can still continue to improve and become a leader.

225/M/40/4/Aus/P I have not witnessed any changes in korfball, I feel they are already inclusive across the board

235/M/40/9/Aus/grandparent I have not been closely involved, but have noticed greater cooperation between the sexes on the court. A great idea to have both sexes playing on the same team.

Change needed to ensure better gender relationships are met through korfball

Criticism focuses especially on the decision making roles in the sport such as coaches, referees and administrators. The general feeling was that all seemed to be dominated by males. However, reasoning behind this was not just related to the traditional leadership and commanding roles men expected to occupy but also to the lack of opportunities and appropriate changes required to encourage more females in the roles. It was seen as something we need all to be more conscious of and do more about to develop gender equality and gender equity.

11/F/40/6/Aus/P In Australia Korfball does promote gender equality in our community. However on the court stereotypical roles are still allotted to each gender. This is changing in the higher grades and a little more slowly in the lower grades. Off the court there is no bias or harassment, everyone is equal and provided opportunities on merit.

17/f/40/40/Aus/P In the past government has recognised the unique position of korfbal as a mixed team sport and supported it and should do so again. It is a pity that gender equality is not reflected in other aspects, such as the organisation of the sport, e.g. administration management which in this country is still run on traditional gender lines and male-dominated.

24/M/40/30/UK/P Society's overall attitude to gender has changed in a positive way over the last 30 years and korfbal players have become even more inclusive. We have still got a lot of work to do especially in the representation of females in refereeing, coaching and administration especially at the higher levels. There is no excuse for us not to have more women in positions of power in the sport. Good luck with your work!

27/M/40/20/Hun/C I believe that also the official bodies of korfbal should reflect gender equality more. Also, we should emphasize this fact more, and also in those small details like jury clothing. Please don't make female jury members wear ugly men's clothes.

38/F/20/13/P/ Some changes depend on the personalities

51/F/30/21/Aus/P Still an expectation on females to provide a greater assisting role in game play. Be good to see some more female A grade / National Coaches. It's fantastic to have high level international referees of both genders e.g. Luke and Megan.

58/M/30/15/Aus/A Don't think we do enough to promote korfbal in other than competitive game success ways.

78/F/40/20/Neth/P It makes a difference how much the group is involved with korfbal. How closely do they experience the game and the players. In essence a girl or boy korfbal player behaves as an independent person that knows that working together will help you best to reach a common goal. As he or she does not feel a difference between gender he or she will not propagate gender inequality

58/M/30/15/Aus/A Often females accept males leading and don't make an effort to change so males continue in "traditional" roles.

103/F/20/16/Neth/P I have not seen any large 'changes', since I am involved with korfbal starting at the age of 4.

121/F/40/4/N/P_I think korfbal when played is a team sport, but it does not contribute more than any other sport in gender equality. Let's face it: men are the team leader, men have the most to say and do not accept women raising their voices, and men are ruling the korfbal union. Indeed, both genders become more cooperative in joint gender activities, as long as women keep their traditional roles. Korfbal is not changing those perceptions nor awareness. It is a 50-50% sports. Let's set gender targets for leadership roles to be 50% as well. For team captains, club managers, federation managers, national team coaches.

135/M/30/13/UK/P Whilst Korfbal is and will remain an equality sport in many ways at its core it leans more towards males. In nearly all teams the Males take up the dominant role and females the submissive support roles, this has a lot to do with physicality and skill, but when this skill level is equal it is usually down to poor leadership either through the coach or captain, people then revert to type and our cultural instinct takes over whereby the Males take over and dominate. It will take a strong coach at an international level for this to change to filter down to club level and make it normal. There aren't nearly enough female leaders in Korfbal and this really needs to change, partly I believe this to be cultural. It requires a strong personality to coach and captain a team and requires that person to be objective and hold no prejudice. I think there is a strong fear in females to hold power of Males and this is why many turn down these opportunities.

139 F/40/6/Sp/P We must continue to work for equality between both sexes and I think the goals will be achieved. pity it is much more difficult to extrapolate to different areas of our society.

141/M/39/30/Neth/Ref Unless the differences between genders, in the sport korfbal they are equal. There are no privileges for male or female players over the other gender. This means that playing or in any other way getting involved in korfbal will contribute to more equal and co-operative relations between genders

163/M/20/29/UK/C Some people in the community look down on the sport and believe it does not have the same credibility a non-mixed gender sport.

216/F/u20/10/Neth/P I think men have accepted women. Because first women were always under the korf and now it's equal or more man

227/F/40/35/Aus/P In the younger years, and about 20 years ago, there seemed a general acceptance that girls and boys could and should perform equally. In the later years, as I became a teenager, there was more of a definition in the roles that players would take on the court, but it seemed to be about ability and body type (e.g. tall/ fast) which dictated this. In the Netherlands I played at the top of the Juniors (18 year olds) and by this stage the leadership was more dominated by male coaches but there seemed to be little issue with this. My sense now as I reflect is that throughout the lower ranks (both in terms of age or ability of adults) , of which there are very many, women are represented well in the coaching and leading roles so that there may be less "concern" that they have not been well represented in the total playing period even if it is dominated by male coaches and leaders at the higher levels.

232/M/40/30/B/C in Belgium, male and female are equal on the field. The acceptance of female referees has grown in the last 10 years. What is still not common is a female coach.

Comments from new korfbal countries

The new korfbal countries see gender relations with equality and equity as being very important for their developments as they see korfbal being more a sport for social development than just as a competitive sport. They would like to see this recognised in the developed countries too.

22/M/30/7/Zam/A In Zambia we see behaviour change through korfbal as very very equal in all areas especially that it's a game most of the young and old people have come to like and appreciate how it integrates both genders.

We are encouraged to work with the Government but we have really seen little support from the Government point of view. We have been linked with the Ministry of Child, Youth and Sport for possible partnership as Korfbal will be used as an example of Sport and a tool which will bring both gender in one single game/sport code hence we are still working very hard so that we can get there key interest and we are therefore awaiting to hear from them on how we will cooperate and partner. Otherwise, Korfbal is really a new game but it needs support from IKF and other partners as we wait for our Government to further support our development actions in our Country, Zambia.

Well, Korfbal is a unique game which will develop to its highest levels in Zambia and we will always appreciate how this game was developed but we need more support and materials so as to reach out to all gender involved in this game.

197M/40/40/Neth/A Equal gender must have more and permanent attention especially on Board level, with referees, with coaches. Further it drives equal gender respect development in less developed countries

237/M/40/2/SL/C Korfball is a new game for Sri Lanka. I think it is very important game for mix gender relationships. Sri Lanka is a multi cultural, multi religions country. We can develop not only for mixed gender relationships but also for other religions and cultures so they can cope with each other

238/M/40/1/SL/C It's good that both genders are playing together with ability to improve the respect toward the other gender and helps to improve the equity.

240/M/40/10/Zim/A in Zimbabwe the committee has more women and that has supported the game and improved gender participation and equality through korfball

Teacher comments

Teachers see improvements in gender relations in areas such as valuing the opposite gender, cooperation, and developing better behaved young people as being important attributes developed through korfball.

12/F/30/25/A/PET I've had not only 10 years of korfball experience playing for clubs in the Netherlands but I have also seen the direct impact of teaching korfball in co-ed schools over the last 17 years. Korfball simply cannot be played without good sportsmanship and encourages being physically active as well due to the nature of the rules. Korfball also has the advantage over all other team sports with regards to the defending shot rule as it rewards good defence of either gender.

Korfball in the community encouraged parents to take up korfball due to the kids playing and vice versa. Generally more than one person in a family will play korfball is my experience. Organised events from korfball clubs attract not only men and women, boys and girls but also various cultural groups as everyone becomes quite naturally involved. As a PE teacher myself I see the benefits straight away as korfball is a very inclusive sport with simply no room for selfish behaviour on court.

174/M/40/24/UK/C Particularly coaching in primary schools I witness an awakening in many boys that the girls on their team are both valuable and essential in achieving success. Early on boys sometimes ignore girls but soon catch on. Girls also become more assertive in their relationships with boys when playing with boys. Korfball helps engender equality.

194/F/29/20/Neth/C From my experience being a coach of kids ranging from 5 till 15 I think the main behavioral changes happen when people are younger (kids). But that is more of a culture thing in the Netherlands.

I've seen kids who play korfball bring their behavioural change to their school, or class they are in. I know I did when I was younger.

In the Netherlands you see such a big difference between the (young) boys who play football and the boys who play Korfball, where on average korfball boys behave better and deal with girls / parents / teachers / coaches better than football boys do.

236/M/40/30/Neth/C (teacher) Korfball for Boys and Girls in "basic school" (and other) is good for their education as a person. The relation between Korfball boys and girls is very good for the rest of their lives. As a sport teacher I know that this is the sport that makes you a better person: physical and in communication. Hopefully this is a start for countries to bring boys and girl together on the same level:

Some other interesting comments

40/M/20/3/UK/P I am a transgender male, so being able to participate first as a girl and then as a man has been really eye opening. In general everyone's reaction to the gender aspect that I've seen has been great, it is really incredibly equal. Korfball being a 'controlled contact' sport makes the application of the rules in transgender based sports law quite tricky. It would be nice for the IKF to have a blanket agreement about what stage in a MtF or FtM transition you need to be in order to play as the gender you identify as. Other than that, everything has been super accepting

67/F/30/20/Neth/P Hopefully the results (of the gender relations survey) will be widely spread around the world.

87/M/40/Neth/Parent Special are the activities after the matches which are positive for the natural contacts with the boys. 2 out of 3 of my daughters meet there husband at the korfbalclub.

94/F/40/Neth/C There are a lot of marriages in korfbal world Korfball is a family sport

95/M/40/40/Neth/parent+ Playing together results in accepting and living together

152 M/30/30/Neth/P On 6c (question in Survey); "more accepting"; Girls and women are prone to accepting men in leadership roles, so I didn't experience them becoming 'more' accepting. That's why I didn't tick those boxes. Is a hard topic to answer questions on as I've been a korfballer all my life (since age 6), so I have nothing to compare it to. Maybe set up a list like this (about gender equality) where no sport is mentioned, distribute them among Korfballers, footballers or rugby players and compare those results? (at the end let them fill in which sport they do of course) All the best with your research.