

Expanding Rugby in Minnesota and Beyond

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Main Research Questions

- Why is it that rugby is not a bigger sport than it is in the U.S.?
- What are the current obstacles rugby is facing as it looks to expand? (Both in Minnesota and in the U.S)
- How best can rugby be grown given the current obstacles of underfunding, lack of publicity, and lack of participants faced by the sport within the United States?

Methods

Mixed Methods approach:

- Comparative historical analysis of rugby, soccer and football within the U.S.
 - 3 sports chosen because of shared history, different outcomes, comparability of variables, opportunity to compare models of growth, and representative samples of world and U.S. sports.
 - A detailed timeline of the three sports was constructed, causal variables identified, and key factors of the U.S. sporting market were found.
- Statistical analysis of new comprehensive survey data
 - Snowball sampling was used to administer an anonymous online survey via Qualtrics.
 - Data from 1263 current U.S. and International players, coaches, officials, parents and administrators was collected and analyzed.



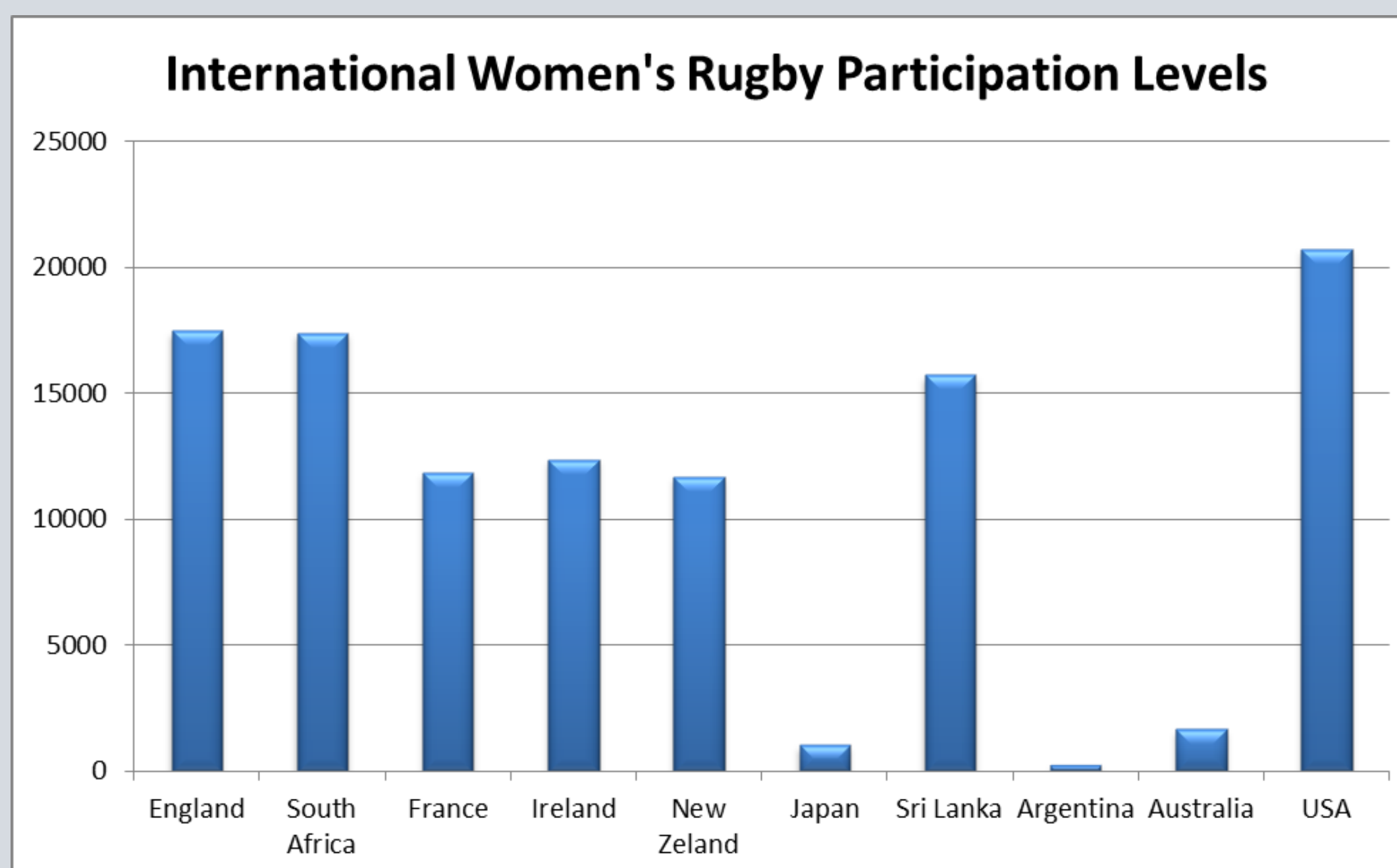
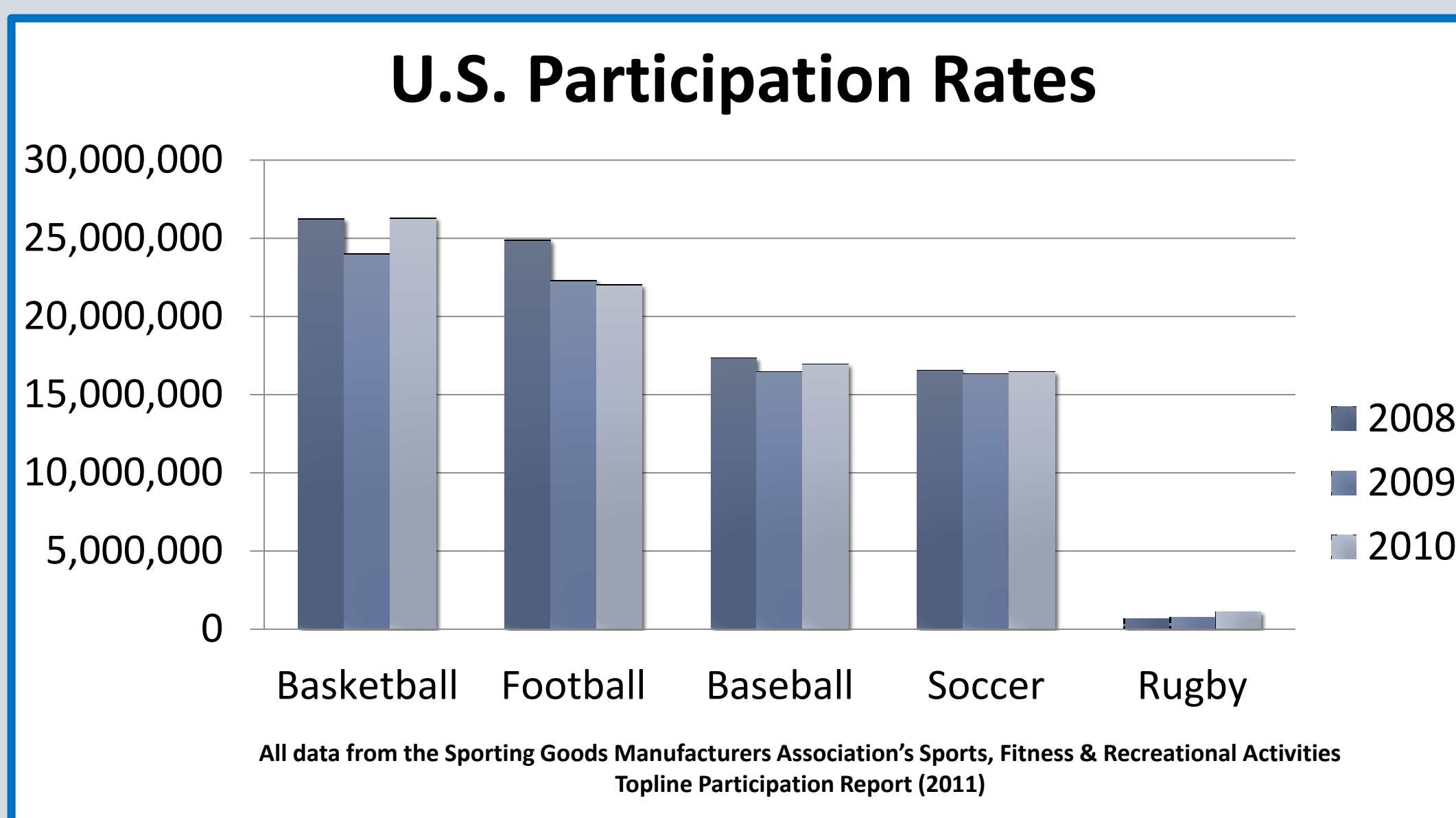
Results and Analysis

Comparative Historical Analysis:

- Rugby has rich U.S. tradition with innovations in scoring as well as past Olympic success but has been overtaken by Soccer, Football and numerous other sports over the last century
- Return of rugby to 2016 Olympics provides opportunities which could mirror the growth of U.S. soccer over the last 30 years
- Current concerns over safety and concussions mirror the events of initial U.S. rugby growth in the early 1900's (when safety concerns over football pushed colleges to rugby) and provide opportunity to capitalize at the youth level.
- Culture of camaraderie in rugby fits with US sporting ideals and will appeal to players and parents.

Statistical Survey Analysis:

- International players in the sample started playing almost a full level earlier than U.S. players, who are most likely to start playing in college
- Female players, on average, start about a quarter-level later than male players, however International Female players start 0.37 levels later than U.S. women
- Female players are 65% less likely to be introduced to the sport through the media and 42% less likely to be introduced through school than male players.
- Lack of local teams and commitments to other sports continue to be hindrances to youth rugby development



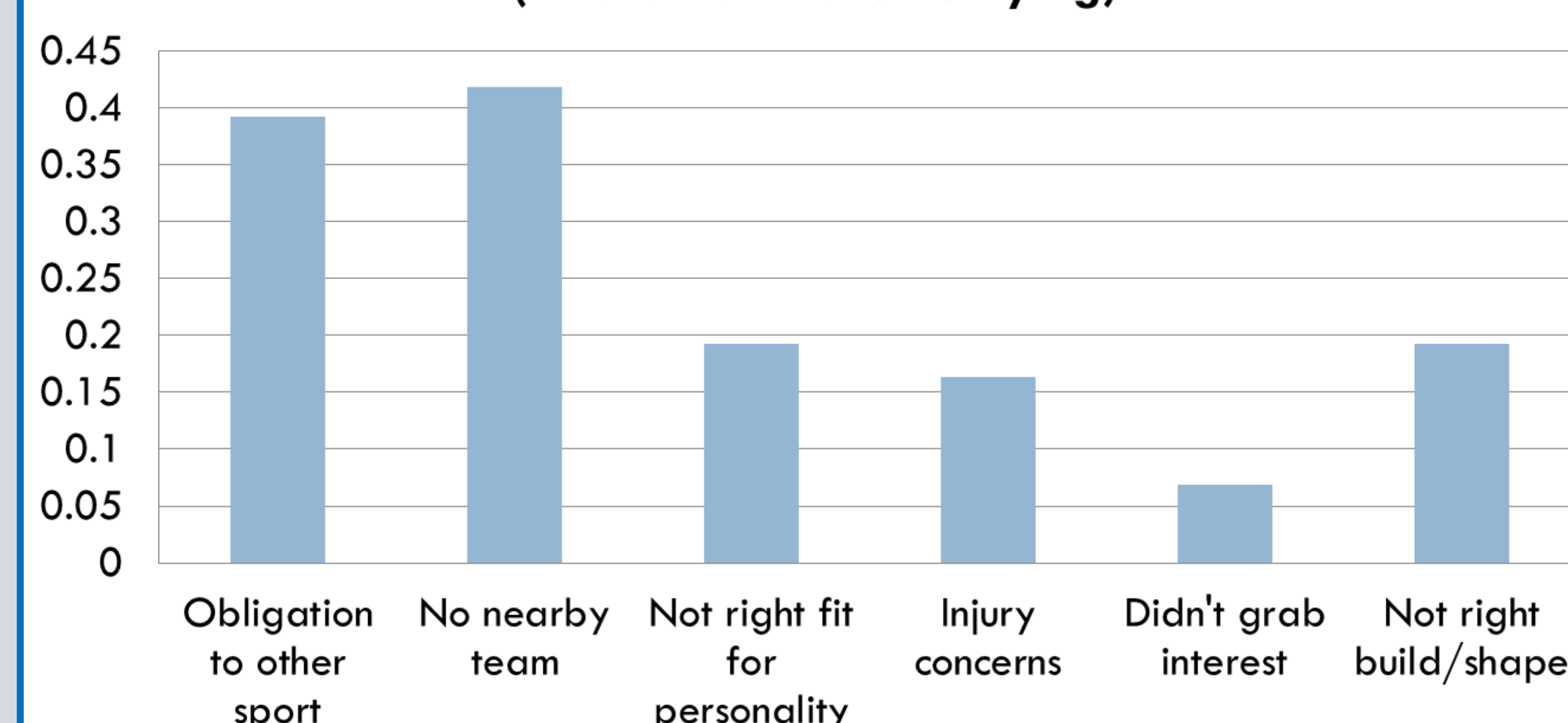
Regression Results (Dependent Variable: Level Started Playing)

Independent Variables	Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	
(Constant)	2.254	.075	.000***
Age	.168	.014	.000***
International	-.896	.089	.000***
Female	.253	.043	.000***
Wisc-sotta	-.053	.041	.198
Intro via 'School'	-.816	.101	.000***
Intro via 'Watched'	.188	.075	.013**
Intro via 'Friend'	-.110	.051	.033**
Female x Int'l	.369	.211	.083*

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

- Emphasis should be put on youth programs and safety (especially up to and including high school)
- Emphasis on national team, US rugby history, media exposure is needed
- Increased funding for women's programs where US has comparative advantage in numbers and exposure, and is the only legitimate contact sport for women
- Continue NCAA initiative, college can be the backbone, needs varsity status

Reasons for Delaying Initial Start Playing (fraction of those delaying)



The project was conducted in conjunction with **Minnesota Youth Rugby**, and with the co-operation of many rugby organizations, players, coaches and officials.

