



Female focus

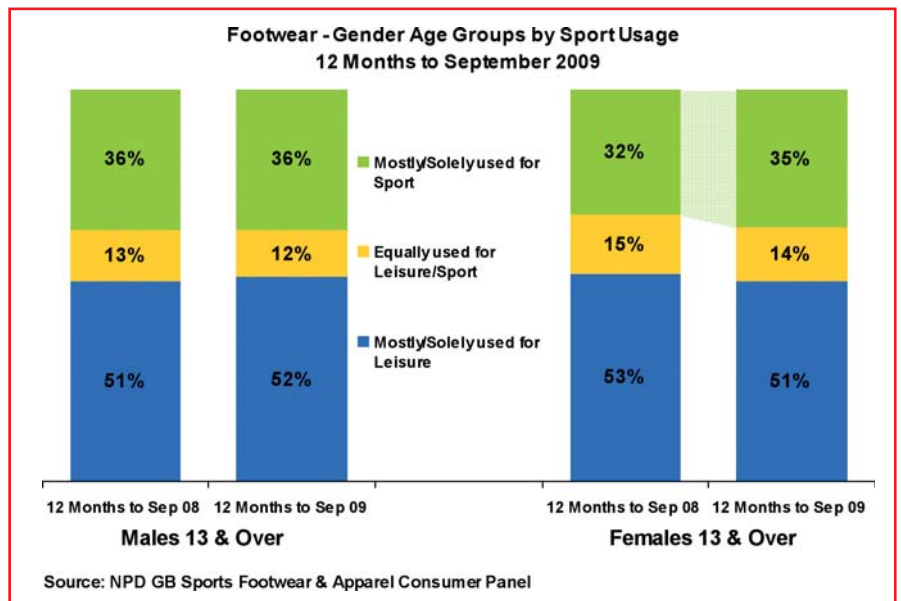
While male purchases have fallen dramatically, the women's sports sector is enjoying continued growth, says *The NPD Group*

The high street had a hard time in 2009, but not all consumer groups performed equally. Women, in many areas, performed stronger than men.

It's only natural to see more female buyers than men - mothers frequently shop for and with their children, plus, according to national statistics, there are just over one million more females than males in Great Britain.

Volume

However the volume of purchases has increased





amongst females aged 13 and over by four per cent in the 12 months to September 2009, compared to the same period in the previous year. Male purchases for the same age group, on the other hand, have dropped by 12 per cent over the same period.

NPD's Online Consumer Panel has seen an upsurge in the number of pairs of sports footwear sold to females. The panel tracks what the footwear is used for - females registered an increase in sports usage, while males have seen a gradual decline. This growth is in line with the increased emphasis brands, retailers and associations are placing on women in sport.

The Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation runs a campaign designed to encourage females to become more active and take an interest in sport, while there seems to be more female sporting role models, including Jessica Ennis, who won gold at the 2009 World Championships, and Rebecca Romero and Victoria Pendleton of the GB cycling team.

Sports brands are keen to ensure they have products for these sport-conscious females. Reebok has gone back to basics with its EasyTone footwear range, which tones your legs while you walk, and has also introduced a global

campaign in collaboration with Cirque du Soleil to promote an alternative way of exercising.

Another brand pushing the level of performance apparel on offer is Shock Absorber, via its range of sports bras. The company's message emphasises the need for the right support, and it seems that people are listening. These aren't just one-size-fits-all products, as research has concluded that different sports need different types of support - as a result, Shock Absorber's bras are tailored accordingly.

Participation

When we look at the sports that NPD's Online Panel tracks, we see that running and fitness/training are growth sports in footwear. The average price per pair is highest for shoes worn for sport than those worn for leisure, and it seems that women are knowledgeable when it comes to purchasing decisions - results show that fit, product quality and sales person recommendations are key reasons for the purchase. **31**

The NPD Group monitors the sales of sports footwear and sports apparel in many countries around the world. For more information contact The NPD Group sports team on 01932 355580.

