

Women's Development Survey



In April 2010, Australian Mountain Biking Clinics initiated their Women's Development Program. With the main objective of increasing the numbers and level of female participation in mountain biking, it was important that we obtained a clear picture of the reasons for riding, obstacles to prevent riding and women's perception of the sport.

A survey was sent out to all females in AMBC's mailing list as well as promoted to the AMBC Facebook page. The survey was also picked up by other people through other mailing lists, club contacts and personal websites of AMBC staff. Although the survey was targeted at females, men were also invited to answer the survey to provide another perspective.

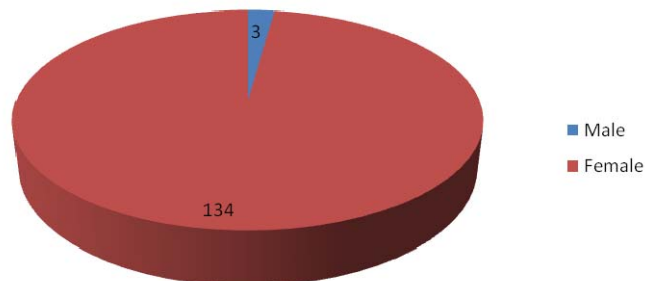
Nine questions were asked in this survey, four providing a profile on respondents, four gathering perspectives on the reasons for riding and barriers to women in the sport, and the last question was to gather contact information for the prize draw incentive.

In total, 143 people responded to this survey which represents over 25% of people invited.

Survey Analysis

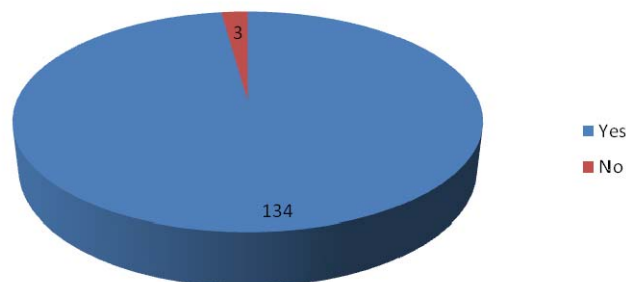
Of 143 respondents, 140 (97.9%) were women and 3 (2.1%) men.

Gender



Of 143 respondents, 140 (97.9%) currently ride a mountain bike while 3 (2.1%) don't.

Currently ride a MTB

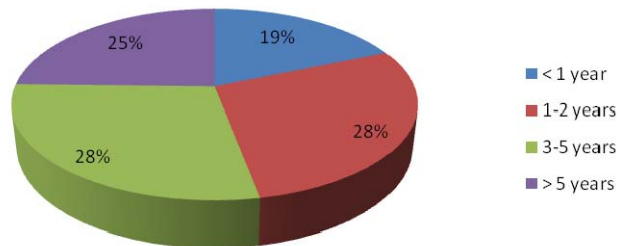


Of the 143 respondents, number of years experience riding a MTB are given as:

- Less than 1 year: 28 (20%)
- 1-2 years: 40 (28.6%)
- 3-5 years: 39 (27.9%)
- More than 5 years: 33 (23.6%)

This shows that the survey group is fairly evenly spread in regard to riding experience. All male respondents have been riding for more than 5 years.

How long have you been mountain bike riding for?

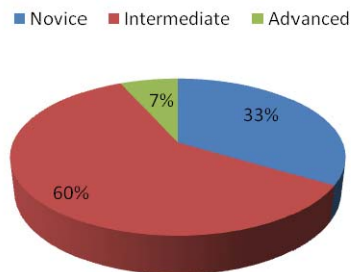


Those respondents who do or have ridden a mountain bike classify themselves as the following level of rider:

- Novice: 47 (33.6%)
- Intermediate: 84 (60%)
- Advanced: 9 (6.4%)

Of the male respondents, 1 classified himself as an advanced rider while the other 2 nominated their skill level as intermediate. These figures show a surprising high cross-section of intermediate level female riders.

What level of rider do you consider yourself?

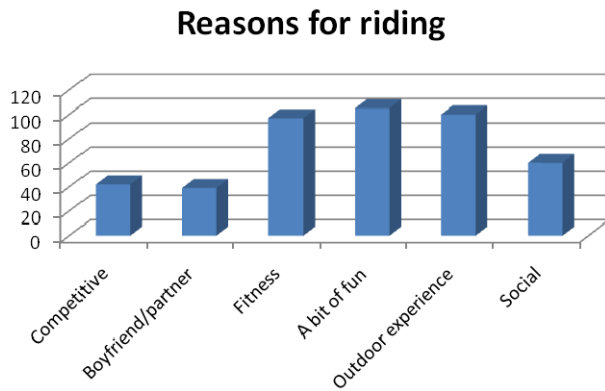


The predominant reasons for riding are given as:

- Fitness
- A bit of fun

- Outdoor experience

The least popular reason to ride was due to the boyfriend/partner. The reasons for this maybe linked to the obstacles highlighted in the following question.



The respondents surveyed saw a number of issues which were seen as obstacles to women getting involved in mountain bike riding (and cycling in general). The most commonly nominated obstacle was seen as lack of confidence which when read with other issues named by respondents, can be seen as a subjective factor and relates more to an individual’s perception. Factors that can directly link to this perception include:

- Skills
- Lack of social groups to learn with; and
- ‘The male dominated’ stigma of the sport.

The second most listed obstacle was lack of time related to family, child, work and general life commitments.

Comments that provide insight into these survey results:

“The sport seems to be conceptualised from a male perspective as it's male dominated.”

“Often its too technically demanding and the female throws in the towel before even beginning...”

“because other females might think that there is no room for feminity in this sport or that they are too "girly" for it. I'm "girly" sometimes, but I also like to push myself and to be out in nature, so I think that there is a misconception about what the sport involves and about the type of person/character that does it.”

“Its my perception that it is an activity dominated by young men, therefore, does not have the same level of support and training for females.”

What do you think are barriers to women getting involved in mountain bike riding (or cycling in general)?	
Lack of confidence	70
Lack of time around family/children/life commitments to ride/practice/gain fitness	49
Skills/education	28
Not knowing riders at the same level (or groups to ride with)	26

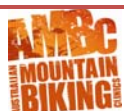


Not wanting to (or embarrassed by) slowing down or being left behind by partner/riding companion	22
Intimidated by races/rides (or male domination) - includes 'track rage'	21
Lack of other female riders (or female involvement/community)	20
Stigma of 'male dominated', competitive, grungy or dirty sport	19
Fear of getting hurt/falling	17
Lack of support from cycling community	15
Lack of suitable (non-technical) trails around Sydney	15
Safety/feeling safe/fear	12
Money/cost	11
Lack of knowledge on bike maintenance, mechanics and/or setup	11
Difficulty in finding accurate information about a 'good or right bike/equipment' from bike shops	10
Lack of knowledge/awareness/media coverage of sport	10
Lack/level of fitness	9
Issues with being taught/taken out by partner - inappropriate trails/skills transferral	9
Travelling distance	8
Road rage/fear of roads	7
Experience	7
Don't know where to go riding	7
Women specific equipment & information (saddles, body armour, overshirts, resources)	7
Not knowing where to start/confusing or overwhelming when starting	6
"Danger" or "extreme" tag associated with sport	6
Intimidated by sport	5
Isolation from friends (who are non-riders)	5
Access to suitable bikes/not owning a bike	5
Women specific bikes being lower spec'd/attitude that women don't need a good bike	3
Fear of failure	2
Bad experience in past	2
Frustration/embarrassment when accidents happen	2
Lack of nice riding clothes for women	2
Macho attitudes	1
No way to travel to MTB trails	1
Lack of services/facilities	1
Age barrier	1

Some interesting solutions were raised by respondents to the survey. The more popular solutions pertained to women-specific events including:

- Training programs
- Social rides
- Networks/clubs
- Events

Other solutions raised included “family-friendly” events, focused presence of women riding (at both elite and everyday levels) in the media and heightened awareness of the sport in general, childcare availability (be it crèches or pooling groups) and ‘Come and Try It” sessions.



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Other suggestions of interest include creation of 'novice trails', hire/trial bike availability, partner education, starter programs, 'female friendly' bikeshops and availability of information on bike buying, gear, equipment, where to ride, etc.

Key comments and ideas of interest include:

"..having more social rides at not so technical locations - i think gradually weening people into the sport is the way to go. alot of women didnt ride BMX or dirt bikes as a kid like many guys did and so technical riding can be over whelming. i find taking my female friends on an easy trail like Royal National Park is a good intro and once the confidence builds up move onto the next."

"To concentrate on the fun of MTB, fitness, independence, "sisters are doing it for themselves" rather than trying to keep up with their hubby, beau or whatever - because mostly, we cant. There are the fabulous female exceptions but in general, competition riding is not the main goal of the gals."

"I think a lot of girls jump on a MTB and expect to ride like the boys which is hard when we don't have the same confidence and also often not much of an idea about basic skills such as braking etc"

"Girls tend to get into the sport with encouragement from others, either with other girls, partners...so you have to cater for group events where they can enjoy it first in numbers, which will give them confidence to go it alone/ develop skills without the pressure of being the only girl in the group of men / among strangers."

"I think there needs to be some events like "fun runs" but for mountain bikers - not competitive, just "all girls" out on the trail days see Gear Up girl. That was a fun easy day for women, so they are not threatened by men screaming around on bikes and being aggressive and dangerous."

Many of these solutions are in AMBC's scope and are nominated by respondents in the next question as ways that AMBC can help support female riders. These should be discussed and considered further.

If barriers exist, how can they be overcome?	
Women specific training/programs	18
Women specific networking & clubs	16
Organised women-only trail/social rides targeted at specific levels	14
Women specific events	11
Organised trail/social rides targeted at specific levels	11
Media presence of women riding (elite and everyday women)	11
Family orientated events/activities (maybe Mother's Day family sessions)	9
Women specific skills days	8
Creation of novice-level trails	8
Come & Try It Sessions with bikes provided (can link in with International Women's Day, etc)	8
Childcare linked to events/training/days/	7
More support from the riding community	7
Awareness of sport (also relates to awareness of women in this sport)	7
Hire and/or trial bikes and/or equipment for beginners	6
Partnership with bike shops so that female customers are provided with info on services, support & trails, etc	6
Bike buying, riding & skills guide/factsheets/online resource for publication	6

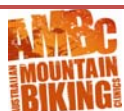


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Women Specific Programs by Clubs	6
Starter programs (possibly free or discounted) days for women - advertise in road & mtb clubs	6
Women specific skills weekends	5
Educating/encouraging partners to go for rides targeted at female's skills/fitness/confidence level	5
Promote the 'fun, fitness & independence' factors of mtbing .. Not the extreme or competitive/racing aspect	5
Women specific novice events	4
Childcare pools associated with groups/rides	4
Development of better trail network in Sydney	4
Educating/encouraging partners to give female partners time to ride	3
Media advertising - skills clinics	3
Education women on what to expect & to not expect too much from themselves when starting	3
Advertising in bike parks, shops, etc	3
School Development Programs	3
Short (half day) courses	2
Media advertising - women's magazines	2
Presence in social forums	2
Reduce cost of skills clinics	2
Educating men on how to get their partner riding	2
Educating male riders to respect women riders	2
Social ride board in bike stores or parks	2
Availability and/or reduce cost of women specific equipment, gear & bikes (lower than male price point)	2
Communication of trail networks (Where to Ride)	2
Role modelling by female MTBers	2
Bike maintenance & mechanics workshops	2
More flattering/appropriate female-specific riding clothes	2
Private lessons	1
Weekly training sessions	1
Startup riding sessions - 1 to 1	1
Bike buying & setup consulting/service	1
Women's action group	1
Children's mtb clinics running simultaneously with women's clinics	1
Organised night rides	1
Family orientated marketing	1
Marketing to the singles market	1
Collaboration with clubs to put on skills days (which are cheaper)	1
MTBing holidays	1
Female orientated bike shops	1
Email notification of clinics	1
More introductions into the sport by other female riders	1
Interschool Female Competition	1
Race numbers on back of bikes to encourage courteous passing - rogue trail ragers will be identified	1
Pre-event skills sessions on course	1



Social groups entering races	1
Introduction to the men in the sport	1
Female staff in bike shops	1

Many responses provided by respondents on how AMBC can support them better directly relate to the social, networking and women-specific programs raised in the previous question. Specific initiatives include graded co-ed and women-only social rides, regional programs, childcare availability, bike maintenance/mechanical workshops, school development and club programs, and women-specific events, clubs, website, networks, skills programs, skills weekends, etc. Other comments include better advertising/promotion of AMBC and its events, a national awareness campaign and 'prettifying' up the sport to remove the 'grunge' image.

Comments of interest:

"I love riding for fun and training but really love racing. Would like to race women only as well as mixed. Not many events (non-elite) where women race together without the boys!"

"That way any female interested in the sport, can be told of the website which will detail - areas to go riding, beginners section, a link to events, video footage of picturesque rides (naff I know but girls like this stuff), forum section."

"..run a series on MTBing for chix - from start up to, fitness, womens gear, with answers to some of those questions that we are too embarrassed to ask, stories from riders....e.g talking to an elite rider bout when they started and how long it took them to get where they are. "

How can AMBC support you better?	
Organised women's social rides (differing levels & areas)	31
Women's Only Events/Races (short & fun as well as competitive)	16
Women's Skills Weekends (regionally)	14
Women's Social Groups/Networks/Forum	13
More phased women's skills lessons - advanced as well as the others	11
Women's Skills Courses/Days (covering different venues/terrain)	9
Regional Women's Skills Days/Programs	9
Maintenance/mechanical workshops (bring your bike & do it with us)	7
Childcare linked to events	6
Development of better trail system/mtb park - skill level labelled	6
School Clinics/Development Programs	5
Organised social rides (differing levels & areas)	5
Trial /hire bike availability	5
Cheaper clinics	5
Trail Guides (reviews, grading, fitness & experience)	5
Family-friendly rides or events	4
Email sendouts to advertising clinic/skills days dates	4
Social/Skills rides with skills tips along the way	4
Advertising of AMBC & women's skills program	4
Specific Development Program - participants progress novice to advanced	4
MTB Tours	4
National awareness campaign	3
Fundraising/Charity links with women's events	3
Family-friendly skills weekends (aimed at partners with children)	3



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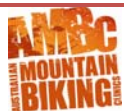
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More visuals on website to show what to expect/pre-requisite skills	3
CATI Days with bikes provided	3
Social Nights	3
Promotion of girls in sport - sexy not blokey/grungey	3
Mass group riding events	2
Women's Website - advertised in women's magazines, etc	2
AMBC & clubs collaborating to put on women's skills days	2
Events/Clinics in City centre	2
Bike buying & setup consulting/service	2
Bike buying & setup information	2
Racelines clinics	2
Women's Race Teams	2
Women's Kit - prettier/feminine/attractive	2
Factsheets on specifics (gearing, braking, bike setup, mechanics, etc)	2
Targeted Squad - like a swim squad & targeted at specific levels	2
Community Groups	1
Demonstrations at festivals	1
Media coverage of women riding/doing great things on bikes	1
Pre-race skills packages (couple of weekends or all day)	1
Age Group Days/Rides	1
Childcare pooling - via a website/forum/etc	1
Intro Days on different styles, ie. BMX, 4X, DH	1
Group entry to races/events	1
Novice level (or family friendly) trails	1
Café/Food facilities associated with MTB parks	1
Mtbing Holidays	1
AMBC Graduate Incentive Program (for women who go onto races/events	1
Branded freebies - t-shirts, jerseys, equipment	1
Race mentoring	1
Mentoring Program	1
Chix Development Series	1
Free/discounted entry to events for women	1
Monthly 1-2 hour Skills Sessions	1
Day trips with bikes provided	1
Women-orientated advertising of sport - ie. girly posters, women on posters	1
Promotion of novice level trails	1
Admittance of kids/teenages in women's courses	1
AMBC giving away free entry to women's clinics to supporters at races	1
Advertising of women's networks in magazines	1
Novice camps	1
Gym linkages	1
Sisters Doing it For Themselves" mentality - women thinking of themselves	1
Other Skills Lessons (navigation, MTBO, adventure racing, etc)	1
Women Specific Gear - range & availability	1
Presence at races to encourage women to CATI	1
Linkage with outdoor training groups - ie. Step Into Life	1
Women specific articles	1
Open Day - bring your bike, come & meet everyone	1



Encouraging males to encourage their women	1
Sponsorship	1
Private skills sessions (for groups)	1



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