

# STATS PACK FOR MEDIA

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# ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document is intended to provide headline statistics on women's sport for use by the media. New versions will be made available whenever new research is published at [www.womeninsport.org](http://www.womeninsport.org). Full versions of the reports listed below (except Sport England Active People and Active Lives Survey) are also available from [www.womeninsport.org](http://www.womeninsport.org).

The Women in Sport media team is available 24/7 to verify data. Contact details are available at the end of this document.

# ABOUT WOMEN IN SPORT

Women in Sport (formerly The Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation) is the leading charity dedicated to transforming sport for the benefit of every woman and girl in the UK.

With over 30 years' experience of working in the sport sector, Women in Sport draws on its unique insight to champion the right of every woman and girl in the UK to take part in, and benefit from, sport: from the field of play to the boardroom, from early years and throughout her life.

# PARTICIPATION

## Active Lives Adult Survey

The Active Lives survey measures participation levels in a wider range of sport and physical activity including, but not limited to: walking, cycling for travel/leisure, and creative dance. Active Lives excludes participants under the age of 16 years, who are part of the Active Lives Children and Young People Survey.

The latest statistics are taken from the [Active Lives Report \(May 19 to May 20\)](#), which was published in October 2020. The statistics should be viewed within the context of the broader range of physical activities included.

The levels of men and women who were active was growing before the Covid-19 pandemic hit England. Between mid-March and mid-May 2020, both men and women's activity levels declined. From May 2019 to May 2020:

- 26% of women are inactive (less than 30 minutes of physical activity each week) compared to 25% of men.
- 13% of women are fairly active (30-149 minutes of physical activity each week).
- 61% of women are active (doing 150+ minutes of physical activity each week) compared to 65% of men.

While the participation gap between men and women has shrunk, this is not because the number of active women has increased. This change is entirely driven by fewer men being active than in the previous survey.

Both men and women's inactivity levels have increased since the last survey. [There are 516,600 more inactive women than men in England.](#)

## **Active Lives Children and Young People Survey**

In September 2019, the Chief Medical Officer updated the guidelines on physical activity. Instead of the measure of children and young people doing 60+ minutes of moderate activity every day, this has now changed to 60+ minutes/day equivalent across the week. This effectively means they need to do 420 moderate minutes or more a week to meet the guidelines.

The full report is available [online](#).

The following statistics are taken from the third [Active Lives Children and Young People Survey](#), which surveyed children aged 5-16 in the academic year 2019-20. Data was collected during the Covid-19 pandemic up until the end of the summer months in 2020.

Activity levels for children aged 5-16 have dropped by 2%. Children in low affluence families saw a decrease in activity levels in the past year and the affluence gap has widened to 14%.

## **Participation**

### **Girls are still less active than boys**

- Girls continue to be significantly less active than boys, with a gap of 213,000 (47% of boys are active compared to 43% of girls).
- Girls' participation in team sports dropped by 7% to only 41%, vs boys 63%.
- Black British girls saw the biggest decrease in activity levels: 28% were active, down 8% from the previous year.
- There was a 6% increase in activity levels for girls in school years 9-11, driven largely by more walking and fitness activities during the pandemic.

## **Attitudes**

Sport England measures five attitudes toward sport and physical activity: enjoyment, confidence, competence, understanding and knowledge.

**Girls continue to have lower physical literacy than boys throughout every age group, and especially in relation to enjoyment, confidence and competence. The largest gender differences can be seen in school years 9-11.**

- Just over a third of girls (34%) in years 9-11 enjoy taking part in sport and exercise, compared to more than half of boys (55%).
- Twice as many boys (39%) in years 9-11 feel confident when exercising or playing sport compared to just 19% of girls.
- Only 12% of girls in years 9-11 find sport and exercise 'easy' compared to 23% of boys.

## TEENAGE GIRLS

Over the last few years, we have been collecting deeper insight on teenage girls wider lives and released three key reports: [Reframing Sport for Teenage Girls](#) (April 2019); [Puberty and Sport: An Invisible Stage](#) (August 2018); and the [Girls Active Survey](#) (produced in partnership with Youth Sport Trust in November 2017).

### Statistics from Women in Sport and Youth Sport Trust's Girls Active Survey

Girls aged 12-14 years:

- Only 41% feel happy they are doing enough exercise
- 36% are unhappy with their body
- 42% avoid exercise when they have their period
- Only 42% say exercise is important to their lives
- 28% do no other exercise except PE at school
- Only 23% really enjoy PE

Girls aged 14-16 years:

- 35% don't take part because they are not confident
- 34% don't take part because they don't like being watched

### Reframing Sport for Teenage Girls

Our latest insight puts the spotlight on the wider world of teenage girls. We have put them at the heart of this research, through online ethnographic work, co-creation sessions and discussions, letting them lead our understanding. We also reviewed over 30 reports, shared knowledge and developed thinking together with 25 other organisations both from inside and outside the sports sector. This has helped us to start the journey of reframing how sport and physical activity can have both relevance and appeal during this time.

### Key Findings

We uncovered [five important anchors](#) which reflect what girls value most in their lives and these build the foundations of who they will become.

We need to reframe sport and physical activity as something that girls' value and perceive to enhance their lives. We have developed [8 Principles of Success to support organisations](#) to bridge the 'relevance gap' in sport for girls and ensure it has a more meaningful place in their lives.

## MENOPAUSE

Menopause is a taboo subject in our society and women going through the menopause are missing out on the benefits of being physically active. Women in Sport wanted to find out more. In 2018, we published our first report on menopause and physical activity. [Menopause, Me and Physical Activity](#) provides insights from the research and recommendations for sport deliverers to support women to maintain and re-engage with physical activity during menopause.

### Statistics from Menopause, Me and Physical Activity

In our survey of 427 women:

- 84% of women who do not meet physical activity guidelines would like to be more active
- 90% would consider physical activity if recommended by a GP or health professional
- 82% experienced menopause symptoms
- 70% felt their symptoms had a moderate-severe impact on quality of life
- 55% had symptoms for 2 years or more (27% for 5+ year)
- 30% of women were less active since menopause

## COVID-19's IMPACT ON PARTICIPATION

In June 2020, [we published a Comic Relief-funded research on the impact of lockdown on women across different life stages](#), from young women without children to those in later life (age 70+). The research comprised of a representative survey of 100 women as well as an in-depth look at how a group of women's lives were affected by the pandemic. Considered alongside each other, the research indicated that there were several shifts and changes in what women valued in life, and how they wanted to behave in the future post-lockdown.

The research showed that women had been disproportionately impacted by the lockdown, especially those women with children juggling home-life, work, and schooling, and women aged 70 plus who suffered the greatest isolation.

- 39% of women said that losing their fitness would have a long-term impact

- 25% of women were worried that getting back into the habit of exercise post lockdown would be hard
- 32% of women couldn't prioritise doing exercise during lockdown as they had too much to do for others

The research also showed that lockdown resulted in a resetting of priorities and an increased motivation to exercise post-lockdown with 61% of women surveyed stating that they will put more effort into being fit and active after lockdown is over.

## LEADERSHIP & WORKFORCE

We have been campaigning for many years for greater representation of women in leadership roles in the sports sector. We have previously carried out an annual audit into the gender make-up of the boards of the National Governing Bodies of sport in England and researched the barriers to women achieving senior leadership roles in sport. Our seventh audit, [Beyond 30%](#), was released in February 2017.

Our latest work in this area is Beyond 30%- Workplace Culture in Sport Report. This insight was co-funded by Comic Relief and Sport Wales and was released in June 2018. The full report is available for download [here](#).

### Key findings:

#### 1. Women working in sport feel less valued than men

40% or 4 in 10 of the women working in sport feel they are valued less than men in the workplace because of their gender.

#### 2. Gender discrimination is still evident in the sports workplace

38% or nearly 4 in 10 women working in sport report having experienced discrimination in the workplace because they are female.

30% or 3 in 10 women working in sport have experienced inappropriate behaviour from the opposite sex.

#### 3. Sporting competence can have a disproportionate impact on professional credibility and limit the pool of women

34% of women have seen their professional performance judged by their sporting ability.

29% of women believe there are fewer women in senior roles because they lack connections in sport.

#### 4. It's recognised that women face more challenges to progress in the sports sector

40% of men and 61% of women believe women face more challenges to become senior leaders.

Only 9% of men and 3% of women believe it's easier for women to progress but in contrast, 23% of men and 53% of women believe it's easier for men to progress.

# MEDIA COVERAGE

In October 2018, Women in Sport released a new report on media coverage and visibility of women's sport across Europe. The research was funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ project. The full report can be viewed [here](#).

The project was delivered in partnership with institutions from four countries: Girls in Sport (Sweden); FOPSIM (Malta); West University of Timisoara (Romania); and the European Institute for Local Development (Greece).

## Key Findings

- In four of the five countries, women's sport coverage failed to achieve above 10% of all sport's coverage in any single monitoring period.
- It is at its lowest in Malta and Greece, where it failed to achieve more than 2% of the total coverage in either period.
- In Sweden and the UK, the picture was marginally better, but still variable and only achieved between 3%- 6% (Sweden) and 4%-10% (UK).
- Men's sport in three of the countries, UK, Sweden and Malta, accounted for over 80% of the total sports coverage during the monitoring periods, with football a significant driver of this.

To access the best practice recommendations and toolkit click [here](#).

# KEY INSIGHT

Women in Sport deliver an extensive research programme to unlock new insights to help transform sport for the benefit of every woman and girl in the UK. All research reports can be found on our [resources page](#) and more detailed information can be found below on reports we are applying in the sector:

## [1. Reframing Sport for Teenage Girls, 2019](#)

This Sport England-funded piece of insight puts the spotlight on the wider world of teenage girls. It puts them at the heart of the research, through online ethnographic work, co-creation sessions and discussions, letting them lead our understanding. We also reviewed over 30 reports, shared knowledge and developed thinking together with 25 other organisations both from inside and outside the sports sector. This helped us to start the journey of reframing how sport and physical activity can have both relevance and appeal during this time.

## [2. Puberty & Sport: An Invisible Stage, 2018](#)

In 2017-18, Women in Sport conducted qualitative research to explore whether coming to terms with puberty is having a long-term impact on how girls engage with sport and to identify the key barriers and issues girls face during this time. We conducted focus groups in triads and friendship pairs with 24 girls, both active and inactive and from a mix of ethnicities.

### [3. Menopause, Me and Physical Activity, 2018](#)

Our Sport England-funded research used a mixed method approach of a national survey (427 women) and focus groups (28 women) to explore active and inactive women's (aged 45-60) relationship with sport and physical activity during menopause.

### [2. Beyond 30%- Workplace Culture in Sport Report, 2018](#)

This research, which was co-funded by Comic Relief and Sport Wales, comprised in-depth discussions with 42 career-minded women and men in the sports sector and surveys from 1152 men and women working in the sector (NGBs, leisure organisations, Active Partnerships, sports charities etc). The report marked the first time that our leadership study had included men and women.

### [3. What Sways Women to Play Sport? Using Influencers to Unlock Opportunities that Positively Impact Women's Sporting Behaviours, 2015](#)

This landmark research report, which was funded by Sport England, uses behavior change model to identify opportunities for sport to make better use of influencing figures.

### [4. Understanding Women's Lives: Re-designing and Re-positioning Sport and Physical Activity to Engage Women, 2013](#)

A ground-breaking Sport England funded-study, Understanding Women's Lives used an innovative semi-ethnographic approach to unlock new insight around:

- Women's lives in modern Britain and what's important to them.
- Women's perceptions of sport versus fitness and how we need to re-position sport to women.
- How we can tap into women's values to activate behaviour change towards increased levels of physical activity.

## **SPOKESPEOPLE**

Stephanie Hilborne OBE - Chief Executive

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## **CONTACTING THE WOMEN IN SPORT MEDIA OFFICE**

To arrange interview or comment from Women in Sport, to acquire statistics not contained within this document, or for any further queries:

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