**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01, TUESDAY 14 JANUARY 2020**

**Millions of women say seeing ‘unrelatable’ fitness images on social media has a negative impact on them**

**This Girl Can launches powerful new ad campaign showing the raw unfiltered reality of women exercising**

New insights from Sport England reveal that 63% of women who see slim, toned bodies on social media sites say this has a negative impact on them, while nearly a quarter (24%) who follow fitness influencers, say they make them feel bad about themselves

* This Girl Can is calling for influencers, media and brands to feature more realistic and diverse imagery of women to promote sport and physical activity
* The poll coincides with the launch of a new campaign and TV advert from This Girl Can, featuring relatable women and focussing not on the way they look, but the way exercise makes them feel

New findings from Sport England have revealed that almost two-thirds (63%) of women who see ‘slim-toned bodies’ on social media say it has a negative impact on them. Nearly a quarter (24%), who follow fitness influencers, say they make them feel bad about themselves, and less than a fifth (18%) of these women find fitness influencers relatable.

There is a clear appetite for more relatable content with nearly a third of women reporting they would feel positive about seeing women on social media posting about exercising without make up (31%), sweating (20%) and discussing how they overcame challenges to keeping active, including not being very good (42%), lack of time (30%), menopause symptoms (26%) and periods (18%).

At the same time, the survey also confirmed just how powerful a tool social media can be in changing behaviour, with more than half of the women who follow fitness influencers saying they find them motivating (53%) and informative (52%).

While 89% of women don’t post about the exercise they do on social media, the This Girl Can campaign is encouraging women to share their own experiences of what its looks like to get active with nearly a third (32%) of those who don’t post saying this is because they don’t think it would interest other people.

The new research comes ahead of the award-winning This Girl Can campaign’s returns to TV screens on January 17th to help close the stubborn gender gap in sport and physical activity.

Currently nearly two fifths (39%) of women aren’t active.[[1]](#footnote-2) The new advert aims to tackle this by showing the raw and unfiltered reality of women exercising and shining a light on issues and barriers rarely seen in sports imagery, such as dealing with menstruation, continuing This Girl Can’s ground-breaking formula which has already inspired almost four million women to act since it launched in 2015. The campaign also features out of home and social media advertising.

**Lisa O’Keefe, Director of Insight at Sport England, said:** *"This Girl Can is about helping women feel confident, so they can overcome the fears about being judged that our research showed was stopping many from getting active.  Since we launched five years ago, we're seeing more relatable images in advertising and social media, but there's a long way to go until women's lives are being shown in a realistic way. We've designed the new adverts to show things we're still not seeing - women using exercise to manage period symptoms or juggling motherhood - all while celebrating women of all shapes, sizes, abilities and backgrounds.*

*"We all have a role to play and This Girl Can cannot do it alone. Sport England is calling on all advertisers, the fitness industry, influencers, and brands to think about how they can support women to be active and using more relatable imagery is an important start."*

**Tally Rye, Personal Trainer and author of ‘Train Happy’ comments:** *“As a PT and fitness influencer, I’m really excited by the power of social media to support, inspire and motivate women. However, I’m highly conscious that this position also comes with responsibility not to alienate women. As a fitness community we have a huge opportunity to create content that makes women feel good about themselves. I try to ensure that I show a real reflection of the sweaty reality of being active on my Instagram feed. I’m a firm believer that every little counts and the importance of enjoying it without worrying what you look like.”*

This January, This Girl Can also begins a new partnership with women’s deodorant brand Sure to reach even more women and inspire them to become active. A brand-new limited-edition ‘This Girl Can’ Sure Advanced Protection anti-perspirant– designed with the This Girl Can team is available to buy in major retailers across the UK. The This Girl Can website also features a new and improved activity finder, supported by Sure, which will help women find accessible ways of getting active in areas close to them– so they can find something that fits with their lives.

Sport England are also launching a new This Girl Can fund – supported by Sure – to help local communities to fund projects that encourage women to get active. Backed by funding from The National Lottery, local organisations and community groups can bid for grants from between £300 to up to £10,000.

For more information about This Girl Can, please visit: [www.thisgirlcan.co.uk](http://www.thisgirlcan.co.uk)

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

For further information about the This Girl Can campaign, please contact:

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Interviews available upon request with Sport England spokespeople and case studies.

Support This Girl Can on Twitter using the hashtag #ThisGirlCan

Assets, including the new TV advert, for the campaign can be found via this Dropbox link: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/k3m6ps5b223hu8c/AABsGIbXQbTmdUWi30Uz8KQAa?dl=0>

The new This Girl Can TV advert can also be viewed via the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BKwk8q4H0Y&feature=youtu.be>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ThisGirlCanUK>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/thisgirlcanuk/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ThisGirlCanUK/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/thisgirlcanuk>

**About the This Girl Can advert**

The new This Girl Can advert introduces new cast members and stories while bringing back some of the women who’ve prominently featured in past This Girl Can ads. Moving beyond covering the emotional and practical barriers that might stop women from being active – This Girl Can is now also tackling head on the societal barriers that can prevent women from feeling like they can join in.

Cast member Hannah is seen using yoga to ease heavy menstrual cramps; mum-of-three Kirsti is shown breastfeeding before handing her baby over to her partner to play netball; Glynnis is rediscovering her love of swimming and building up her self-confidence in the pool; Farrah has been introduced to new friends through climbing, while gym-going mother and daughter Patrice and Yvonne are using exercise to combat their symptoms of menopause and Polycystic ovary syndrome.

Directed by Ali Kurr, it features the distinctive vocals of British Rapper, Little Simz’s Offence track to reinforce that it really is time women stopped having to feel judged, defined by society, and told what to do.  It airs on 17th January and is supported by out of home, digital and social push including a series of content films that deep dive into the stories of the women and girls featured.

**Additional quotes**

**Clare Balding, broadcaster and author comments:** “*Social media has many benefits but, as these results highlight, it can also encourage insecurity. This Girl Can helps show that women of all shapes and sizes, women with loud voices and women with quiet voices, women who are aggressive on the pitch and the women who are quieter can all gain huge benefits from exercise and activity. I think more women would have the confidence to join teams or take part in active events if they could see images that they can relate to. It’s important for all of us to try to promote a wider range of body shapes in the images we share to help more women feel the buzz and joy of sport and show that This Girl really Can”*

**Ama Agbeze, England Netball Team player and captain, comments:** *“Despite being a professional athlete, I don’t always feel comfortable in the gym and very much relate to the body-confidence issues that many women face. I want to encourage all women to exercise and embrace your body shape whether skinny, large, tall or round. The PA gallery from This Girl Can is an incredible way to build women’s confidence so everyone can say ‘she looks like me.”*

**Ben Beevers, Everyone Active’s Associate Director, said:** *“As an operator that offers a wide range of different activities for local communities, we need to create welcoming and motivational environments for everyone. With that, comes a responsibility to ensure our marketing and communications remain relatable and inclusive. Social media is a powerful tool and, if used in the right way, can play a huge role in educating and inspiring more people to be active.*

*“Everyone Active carried out a project to refresh our brand two years ago, which included ensuring our messaging and imagery remains representative of our communities. We are always looking for ways we can continue to improve and there’s a real opportunity for us as operators to make an impact and showcase being active in a more positive and engaging way.”*

**Joanna Allen, Global VP, Unilever said:**

*“It’s in the Sure brand DNA to encourage women to get moving, and with the collective power of Sport England and This Girl Can we can reach more women and girls to help them overcome the barriers often associated with sport and being active.  We know that one of the barriers for many women is finding activities that fit in with their lives, which is why Sure is supporting the Community Fund and Activity Finder which helps them do just this.”*

**About the Survey**

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1962 women in England aged 16+. Fieldwork was undertaken between 18th - 20th December 2019. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 16+).

**About Sport England**

Sport England is a public body and invests up to £300 million National Lottery and government money each year in projects and programmes that help people get active and play sport. It wants everyone in England, regardless of age, background, or level of ability, to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity. That’s why a lot of its work is specifically focused on helping people who do no, or very little, physical activity and groups who are typically less active - like women, disabled people and people on lower incomes.

**About This Girl Can**

Since 2015, Sport England has been working to address the significant gender gap found in sports and exercise, to build women’s confidence around being active, and help them meet the Chief Medical Officers’ guidance. The campaign was based on the insight that 75% of women say they want to do more sporting activities or exercise, but one of the unifying barriers found to be holding them back is a fear of judgement. This Girl Can’s objective is to encourage women to engage in physical activity regardless of shape, size, age or ability.

**This Girl Can Community Fund**

This Girl Can are launching a fund for great ideas – supported by Sure - within local communities that encourage women to get active. We are asking for local organisations and community groups to submit their ideas through a simple online form available at [https://www.thisgirlcan.co.uk/community-fund/](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/5AaCCy20u6pV6GtZca-M) . Funds from as little as £300 to up to £10,000 are available.

1. Sport England Active Lives survey May 18/May 19 shows that 61% of women (or 14.1m) are active, compared to 65% of men (or 14.4m). Being active is defined as doing 150 minutes or more of physical activity each week, according to the Chief Medical Officer’s guidelines. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)