

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01, MONDAY 17th JUNE 2019

Busy mothers feel guilty taking time to exercise despite having a greater influence on their children's activity levels

- Six in ten (61%) mums reveal they would feel guilty about taking time to exercise according to a new survey by Sport England¹
- Mothers have a greater influence on their children's activity levels compared to fathers² and seven in ten (69%) mums think it is important for their children to see them exercising¹
- Lack of time is the top reason mums stated for not being physically active, with almost a third (30%) reporting having less than an hour free time to themselves a day¹
- To support time poor women, This Girl Can releases a new series of tips, advice and home work out ideas to help mums fit exercise into their hectic schedules.

Monday 17th June: New research released today by Sport England reveals that six in ten (61%) mums would feel guilty taking time to exercise^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}, rather than spending time with their family. However, mothers who are active shouldn't worry as they can play a key role in encouraging children to develop healthy attitudes towards physical activity.

The results of the new survey of over 1,000 mothers of children aged 0-6 years old, marks the latest phase of the This Girl Can campaign to encourage women to engage in physical activity regardless of shape, size, age or ability.

When asked to name their top priorities outside of work, mothers were most likely to prioritise tasks revolving around family such as spending time with them (56%), housework (53%), or cooking (28%)¹. The research highlighted that mothers were keen to set a good example for their children. However, the realities of juggling work and family life meant that physical activity was near the bottom of their list, with only one in five (17%) mothers prioritising their own exercise¹.

Whilst over three quarters of mums (77%) want to do more exercise, lack of time was cited as the top reason why mothers are not more physically active, with almost a third (30%) reporting having less than an hour of free time to themselves a day¹. A further fifth (21%) of mums who would like to be more active said the cost of keeping fit was a key inhibitor to staying active¹.

It's clear that all parents and guardians play a crucial role in influencing a child's attitude towards physical activity, however mothers are shown to have a greater influence on their children's activity levels compared to fathers. Sport England research shows that young people aged 11-15 with an active mother are more likely to be active, compared with young people with an inactive mother. ^{Error! Bookmark not defined.} By being active themselves, parents, particularly mothers, can have a positive influence on their children's activity levels. By simply normalising exercise as part of everyday life, this helps children develop positive feelings and attitudes towards physical activity, even if they are not or taking part themselves.

In a bid to celebrate the creative and often unconventional ways many women are fitting exercise into their busy lives, and support those with limited free time, This Girl Can has released a series of new tips, advice and home workout ideas on social media. To help break down women's barriers to fitness, This Girl Can has also partnered with LES MILLS On Demand to provide a free 21 day trial to this online platform, which contains a wide variety of home workouts as well as a tailored introductory This Girl Can workout programme for those women who are new or returning to exercise.

Psychologist, Emma Kenny comments: *"This research gives mums a really powerful message about the importance of self-care. As a mum, you may believe that looking after everyone else's needs is your main priority, but the truth is that you need to take care of yourself first and foremost, because that ensures you have the energy to look after those you love. The best thing about being a healthy and active mum is how it translates to your children. Research shows that active mums have more active kids, and that makes for a healthier family, and a fitter future, something every parent wants for their children"*

Mum Natalie Lee, aka online influencer Style Me Sunday, comments: *"Feeling guilty and motherhood are undoubtedly synonymous. Exercise is another thing on the long list of stuff to feel guilty about. However I'm a very big believer in not being able to pour from an empty cup. Exercise makes me a better person, it improves my mental health and helps to alleviate my stress. So, it's important for me to prioritise my fitness which in turn benefits everyone, especially my family. This has been a long learning curve for me, because there's was always an excuse not to exercise - feeling guilty about not being with them or not doing what they wanted to do is a great one. Only in the past couple of years or so have I fully understood how important exercise is for all of us."*

Lisa O’Keefe, Insight Director, Sport England comments: *“Our insights show that children with active parents – particularly mothers - are more likely to be active themselves. And children who have positive experiences of sport and physical activity early on are also more likely to prioritise being active in later life. This Girl Can’s social media community is a fantastic place to find tips, support and advice for mums looking for ideas to fit exercise into their busy lives because we know with school runs, children’s parties and home life, time is short, and many women tell us they feel guilty spending it exercising. All of us have a role to play in making mums feel okay about prioritising getting active as they would other things in their lives. Whether that’s dads, partners, friends and family, with words of encouragement or a helping hand, we are all in this together ”*

Having already inspired almost four million women to take action since launching in 2015³, whether that’s trying a new sport, restarting an activity or talking to friends about the campaign, This Girl Can’s latest campaign is designed to appeal to an even wider range of women by showing images and telling stories of the realities of getting active for many women and mothers.

The latest phase of the This Girl Can campaign includes a new advert across TV, radio and OOH in addition to a partnership with LES MILLS On Demand to help women get active at home.

For more information about This Girl Can, please visit: 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.

About the Survey

Representative Survey of 1,006 with children aged 0-6 years living in England. Carried out by Opinium for Sport England between 29th April and 2nd May 2019.

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 'Fit Got Real' campaign has launched in response to women feeling that conventional exercise doesn't represent them or their lives.

About Les Mills On Demand

The partnership offers a 21 day free trial and can be accessed via:

<https://partners.lesmillsdemand.com/thisgirlcan>

¹ Opinion Poll of 1006 mums of children aged 0-6 years in England, April 2019

² Taking Part Survey Year 8 (Apr 12-Mar 13)

³ 44% of women aged 14-60 that recognised the campaign (equivalent to 3.9 million women) said that they have taken action as a result - TGC Tracker Survey (Nov 2017)