**MONDAY 8 MARCH**

***This Girl Can* launches representative image library to combat the unrealistic stereotypes portrayed in imagery of women getting active**

* This International Women’s Day, the *This Girl Can* campaign launches a free image library that is reflective and inclusive for journalists, bloggers, national media picture desks and the creative marketing industries to use.
* Images show all shapes, sizes, backgrounds and ages as research shows that women find ‘unrelatable’ images of slim, toned bodies of women exercising on social sites has a negative impact on them.
* Building women’s confidence is more important than ever as women remain less active than men with the gender gap prevalent throughout the pandemic. [[1]](#footnote-2)

*This Girl Can*, Sport England’s campaign funded by the National Lottery, to help women get active, has today launched a dedicated image library of 400+ representative and inclusive photographs, showcasing the highly diverse and myriad of ways women choose to get active, play sports and exercise.

Timed for International Women’s Day 2021 to help address the misrepresentation of imagery frequently being used, the *This Girl Can* image library features a diverse range of women, across a range of ages, ethnicities, body types and abilities, participating in a variety of sports and activities in authentic and unfiltered ways.

While brands have come a long way in the past six years since the *This Girl Can* campaign was launched, with many using more diverse imagery of women and girls, it is still too common to see images of slim, toned women that aren’t sweating and have perfect hair and make-up in media and advertising.

*This Girl Can’s* research revealed that misrepresentative imagery could potentially be harmful to women’s confidence – with 63% of women saying seeing slim, toned bodies on social media sites has a negative impact on them. The launch of the free-to-use library is part of *This Girl Can’s* wider efforts to build women’s confidence to get active by showing the realities of how women exercise.

Research by the *This Girl Can* team shows that the first 100 images returned by a Google search term ‘women exercising’ found that less than one third of imagery featured women from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, groups who are less likely to be active, and 85% of the images only showed slim, toned, women perceived to be a size 10 or smaller. In contrast only 14% of women were perceived to be size 12-16 with only 5% imagery showing women size 18 or above. Just 2% of imagery showed women as being sweaty, red faced or visibly out of breath, and in only 9% of imagery did women appear to be finding their activity challenging.

65% of imagery returned by this search term also appeared to show women under 35 years of age, with only 20% perceived to be between 35-50 and 15% considered to be 50+, not

reflecting this huge section of women who regularly exercise or who need to start to become more active for their long term physical and mental health.

Activity levels have suffered significantly over the past year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with Sport England research showing that in the first weeks of lockdown, mid-March to mid-May 2020, women’s activity levels dropped to just 58% compared to 63% in the same period in 2019, representative of 1.2m women being less active.

Some women were able to adapt to the disruption caused by the pandemic, with the number of women exercising at home doubling across this period compared to 2019. However the gender gap continues to exist with men continuing to be more active than women throughout the pandemic.

**Kate Dale, Campaign Lead for *This Girl Can* said:**

“Our aim is to inspire women to become more active and showcase the many fantastic ways they can do so. We know there are barriers women have to exercise, fears of judgment and feeling that they will fail. We are encouraging behavioural change, which can be difficult if women’s misconceptions are often reinforced on a daily basis by the imagery they view in media, advertising and online.

“We welcome and support women of all sizes, ages and abilities, we never judge. Our objective is to create some balance within the imagery currently being access and available.

“Many brands have already made positive moves in this area, but it is still alarming to see what a simple search on Google revealed.

“We would like to see more diverse and representative imagery used throughout marketing and the media and have made our image library rights free for that very purpose.”

The *This Girl Can* image library is available by heading to <https://www.sportengland.org/press-pack/image-library> and filtering by ‘This Girl Can’ via the Refine Search dropdown. It contains authentic images of women exercising across a range of ages, ethnicities, body types and abilities, participating in a variety of sports and activities. All photography is available rights free to use by journalists, bloggers, national media picture desks and the creative marketing industries.

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

Visit the *This Girl Can* Activity finder: <https://www.thisgirlcan.co.uk/activity-finder/>

**ENDS**

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Image Database research**

This Girl Can assessed the first 100 images returned for the Google search term ‘women exercising’ against a set-criteria of 32 visual assessment points for each image. The criteria focused on assessing each image to evaluate the physical appearance, estimated age, activity type and ethnicity, applied to every individual woman in the imagery assessed.

**Contact**

For additional information or to book an interview with any of the below spokespeople and case studies, please email [ThisGirlCan@redconsultancy.com](mailto:ThisGirlCan@redconsultancy.com)

Support *This Girl Can* on Twitter using the hashtag #ThisGirlCan

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**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.

1. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Sport England has been monitoring physical activity attitudes and behaviours with an ongoing research tracker carried out by Savanta ComRes. Data: <https://indd.adobe.com/view/793b48d5-bbcd-4de3-a50f-11d241a506b3> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)