

Hearts & Minds Data on Inactivity Among UK Adults

One in three feel they don't get enough exercise and would like to take more

Hearts & Minds from Sport MR and MyCustomerLens today reveals that among UK adults:

- 58% feel that they take enough exercise at present
- 8% feel that they don't take enough exercise, but have no desire to take more

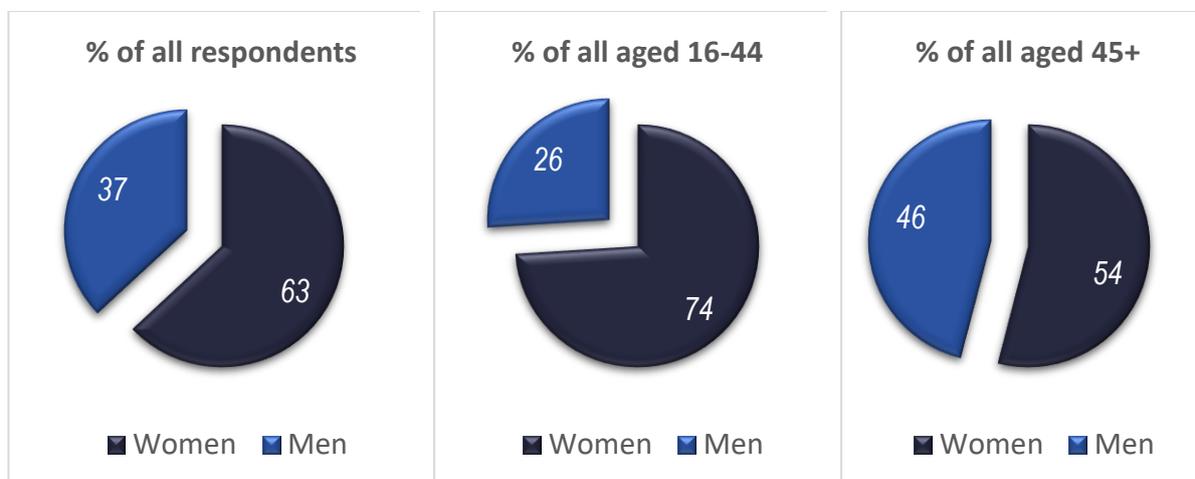
and crucially

- 33% feel that they don't currently take enough exercise and would like to take more

Physical inactivity is a major threat to the future health of our nation, and a major focus of public sector bodies like **Sport England**. The Hearts & Minds finding that 33% of the adult population, translating to more than **17 million people**, would like to take more exercise, challenges the belief that the key barrier to leading a more active lifestyle is a lack of understanding of the benefits.

Profile of those who would like to take more exercise

The gender split among those indicating their belief that they take insufficient exercise **and** that they would like to change this is very revealing. Women outnumber men almost two to one among those telling us that they would like to take more exercise. Among younger people, women in this group outnumber men by three to one.



Barriers to a more active lifestyle

A commonly assumed barrier to a more active lifestyle is also somewhat dispelled by the survey findings:

- 69% of those who would like to be more active tell us that they do not see lack of available time to exercise as a significant barrier. This figure is identical among men and women.

So, what does Hearts & Minds tell us about barriers to participation in sport and physical activity among those who feel that it would benefit them to undertake more than they currently do?

- Almost half (45%) tell us that they would feel self-conscious being seen to take exercise. This is true of 50% of women who don't exercise as much as they would like and 35% of their male counterparts. Among those aged 16-44, these percentages rise to 56% and 49% respectively.

This finding is consistent with our qualitative research which has consistently shown that key barriers to participation in sport and physical activity include:

- Concerns about body image *'I won't look good in a track suit', 'I fear being laughed at'* etc. These fears are most prevalent among younger women, but concern a significant proportion of younger men also.
- Concerns about lack of athletic/sporting prowess *'I could never catch a ball at school, why would I be able to catch one now', 'I'd be out of breath before everybody else'*.
- Discomfort at the idea of turning up alone to take part in an organised physical activity with an established group, where a higher standard of ability among existing attendees is assumed.

So, what can be done to break down some of these barriers? Perhaps:

- Creating environments in which beginners (or those returning to physical activity) feel comfortable.
- Reaching out to **groups** of people who are currently inactive rather than to individuals.
- Promoting non-competitive forms of exercise or forms of exercise where individuals are competing against their own past achievements – walking, cycling etc.
- Promoting competitive activity that is not over-reliant on speed or stamina.

Assessed against these criteria, the objectives with which **Sport England** is working in its newly announced 12 key pilot areas look eminently sensible.

"By focusing intensely in 12 areas, we want to identify better ways to address inequalities and break down the barriers that stop people getting active, such as poor transport, safety, cost and confidence."

England Golf, a major partner in Hearts & Minds, is already working to break down barriers and to welcome new people to the game. Their Get into Golf initiative seeks to challenge *'the seven myths of golf'* including the belief that *'golf won't keep you fit'*. Actually, it will, and it will provide a relatively gentle, safe (re)introduction to exercise that does not require the donning of a tracksuit and the need to run. <https://www.getintogolf.org/>

Summary

- There are millions of adults in the UK who feel that they don't take enough exercise and would like to take more.
- Women are twice as likely as men, and younger women three times as likely as younger men, to say this.
- Most of those who would like to be more active feel that they could find time to take more exercise.
- We need to create opportunities and environments in which people feel comfortable, welcome and feel that they are in the company of other people like them.
- An environment more conducive to encouraging physical activity for the currently inactive will have significant benefits on both mental and physical wellbeing. This in turn has an economic benefit through reduced healthcare spend and lower rates of absenteeism in the workplace.

Hearts & Minds is a syndicated study which has been developed by Sport MR and MyCustomerLens to meet the evolving insight needs of the sport and fitness industry. Research is conducted monthly among a nationally representative sample of the population. Unlike many other surveys, it employs interlocking quotas to ensure the representativeness of sub-groups. Hearts & Minds contains a treasure trove of data on sport and physical activity and the barriers to participation in the UK and offers a cost-effective multi-partner approach to data gathering.

For enquiries, please contact: Michael Stone michael@sportmr.co.uk Tel: 07903 352075