

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON TEENAGE GIRLS' LIVES AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Theme: Social Change

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Women in Sport – The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Teenage Girls' Lives and Physical Activity

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COVID-19 irreversibly changed the ways in which we all seek out and value physical activity, but has also underscored the barriers keeping girls and women out of sport and exercise opportunities. Women in Sport publishes original research as well as collates valuable insights from organisations across the UK on various topics relating to girls and women in sport. Recently, the OSS highlighted important developments found by the UK's Women in Sport Charity, with funding from Comic Relief and the Sweaty Betty Foundation, on COVID-19's impact on the participation of girls in sport.

While COVID-19 undoubtedly brought immense barriers to girls' athletic participation, the study, which surveyed 1500 girls aged 13-16 from a diverse range of backgrounds over two months, discovered that COVID-19 has contributed to a rising awareness of the value of activity and exercise on healthy lifestyles among girls. According to the study, more than 80% of girls surveyed stated that they will put more effort into exercising and physical activity once pandemic restrictions eased and over 50% agreed that activity is important for mental and physical well-being, relieves stress, and improves perceived happiness levels.

Despite these positive developments, the survey revealed alarming challenges that girls face in accessing and participating in physical activity as a result of COVID-19. Over half of respondents are worried they lost their fitness in the midst of COVID-19 and around 40% have lost confidence in their athletic abilities, are concerned about exercising in large groups, and are worried about how difficult it will be to get back into an active routine after the pandemic. Although girls' may better understand that activity is beneficial for mental and physical health as a result of COVID-19, the pandemic has amplified concerns around confidence and access to athletic activities.

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