



Top 10 barriers to being active at school

39%	I am not confident	39%	I don't like other people watching me
36%	When it's outside and it's not nice weather	35%	I worry about how I look
34%	When I have my period*	34%	I don't like getting hot and sweaty
31%	I don't like taking part with boys	31%	I can't be bothered
30%	I don't like getting changed in front of other people	29%	I'm not good at it



Preferred group for sport, physical activity and PE

In terms of gender:

66%	Girls only	20%	Don't mind	14%	Mixed (all young people together)
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In terms of motivations:

78%	With friends	10%	With students of similar ability	3%	With students with similar motivations
2%	With students wanting to take similar curriculum pathways	6%	Don't mind	0%	Something else



Top 3 worries for girls in PE during their period

73%	I am in pain/uncomfortable	61%	I worry about leaking	58%	My mood is low
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Top 3 suggested improvements to PE/sports kit

58%

I would like to have more options to choose from

29%

Extra-curricular kit could be flexible / own choice

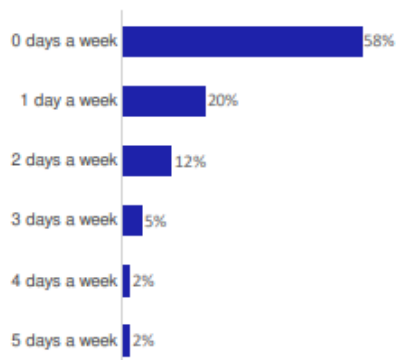
29%

I don't like the look of our PE/sports kit

Pupils were asked how often they took part in physical activity at school, excluding PE lessons. The chart below (left) shows that girls were most likely to take part in physical activity outside of PE lessons on *0 days a week* (58%). On average, girls took part on 0.8 days per week.

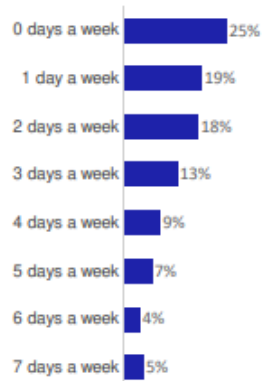
They were also asked how often they took part in sport or physical activity outside of school, and were most likely to do so on *0 days a week* (25%). On average, girls took part on 2.2 days per week.

Days of physical activity at school, excluding PE lessons



Base: All respondents

Days of physical activity outside of school

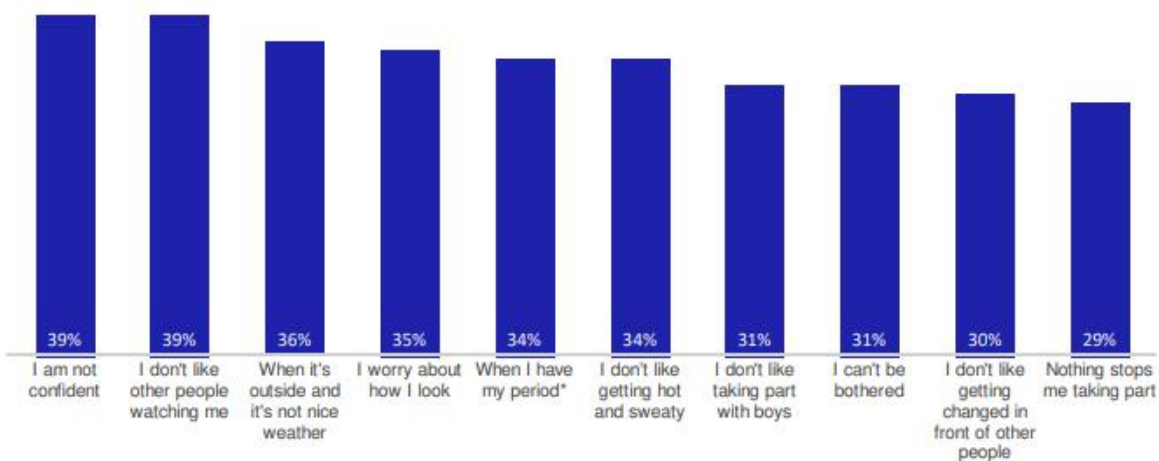


Base: All respondents

What stops you?

The top 3 barriers that stopped girls from being more active were; *I am not confident* (39%), *I don't like other people watching me* (39%), and *When it's outside and it's not nice weather* (36%). However 29% of girls said that none of these barriers stopped them.

Top 10 barriers to sport, physical activity and PE at school



Base: All respondents

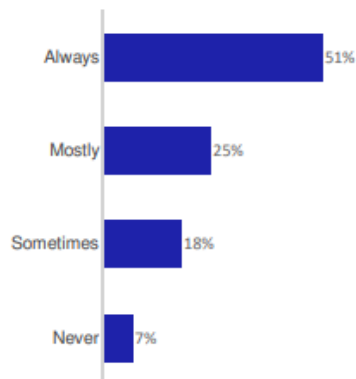
* these options were only available to girls in year 7 and above.

PE and periods

From our previous survey responses, we know that having your period is a significant barrier to participating in PE for many girls. The following questions were asked to help us understand more and consider how we can help make improvements for all girls in PE at this time.

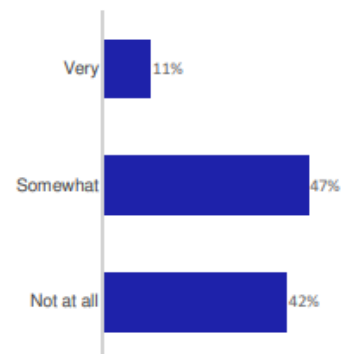
These questions were only available for those in year 7 and above, were optional, and were answered by 4242 girls. Those selecting *No* or *Not applicable* are not included in the charts below.

Do you take part in PE when you have your period?



Base: All respondents in Yr 7 & above (excl. No/Not applicable)

In your PE lesson, how comfortable would you feel talking to your teacher about periods?



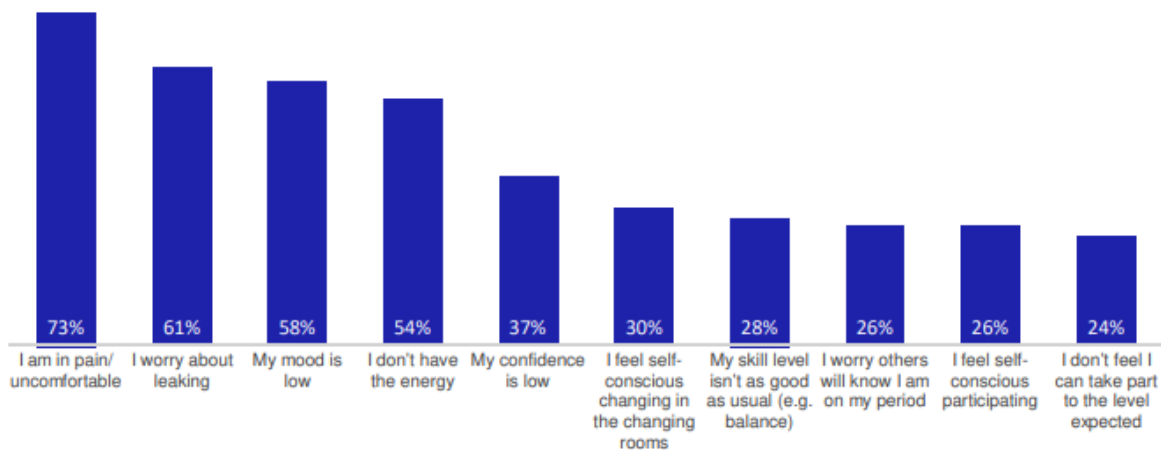
Base: All respondents in Yr 7 & above (excl. No/Not applicable)

51% of girls said that they *Always* take part in PE when they have their period, and at the other end of the scale, 7% *Never* take part in PE when they have their period.

58% of pupils said that they were *Very* or *Somewhat* comfortable talking to their teacher about periods.

When asked what worries them about participating in PE or school sport when they have their period, girls were most likely to say *I am in pain/ uncomfortable* (73%), *I worry about leaking* (61%), or *My mood is low* (58%). 7% said that they weren't concerned by any of these issues.

When you have your period which of the following things concern you about participating in PE or school sport?



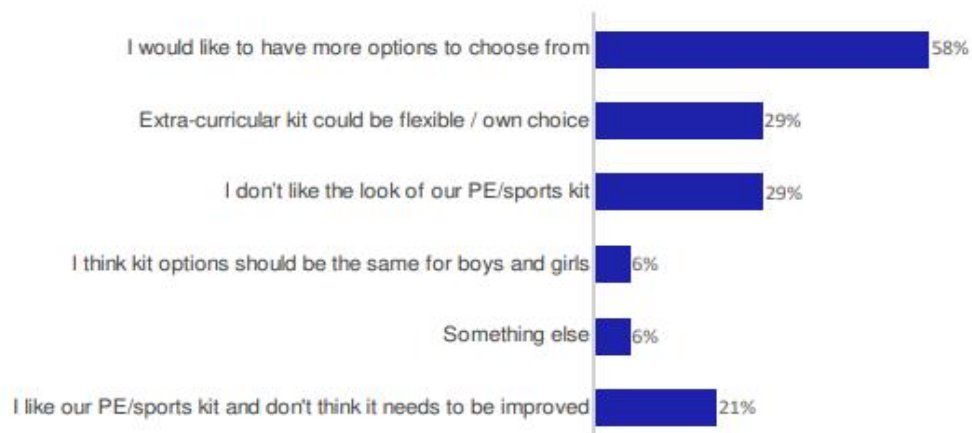
Base: All respondents in Yr 7 & above (excl. No/Not applicable)

Girls were also asked what the school could do to help them in PE when they have their period. The most common answers were *Greater flexibility to participate to my ability at this time* (43%), *Greater understanding / empathy shown by teachers* (42%), or *Better options for PE kit to help me feel more comfortable* (34%). 15% said *Nothing, what they already do is good*.

When given the opportunity to suggest improvements to their PE kit, girls were most likely to say '*I would like to have more options to choose from*' (58%), '*Extra-curricular kit could be flexible / own choice*' (29%), and '*I don't like the look of our PE/sports kit*' (29%).

21% said that they like the current PE kit or didn't think it needed to be changed.

How could your PE/sports kit be improved?



Base: All respondents

What, if anything, currently stops you being active / more active at school?

Break % Respondents	National data		Key Stage			SEND		Ethnicity		Physical activity level	
	Total	Lower KS2 (yr 3&4)	Upper KS2 (yr 5&6)	KS3	KS4	SEND	Non- SEND	White British	EDC	Less active	More active
I am not confident	39%	26%	30%	44%	46%	43%	38%	38%	41%	45%	34%
I don't like other people watching me	39%	27%	32%	45%	44%	40%	37%	36%	42%	45%	34%
When it's outside and it's not nice weather	36%	25%	28%	42%	43%	35%	37%	33%	43%	38%	33%
I worry about how I look	35%	22%	28%	41%	43%	42%	34%	35%	38%	37%	33%
When I have my period	34%	-	-	47%	52%	37%	34%	35%	39%	40%	27%
I don't like getting hot and sweaty	34%	27%	27%	38%	41%	34%	34%	33%	37%	37%	30%
I don't like taking part with boys	31%	27%	29%	37%	33%	30%	30%	26%	37%	36%	28%
I can't be bothered	31%	16%	19%	38%	40%	28%	31%	27%	38%	40%	25%
I don't like getting changed in front of other people	30%	25%	26%	34%	32%	32%	29%	26%	34%	34%	28%
Nothing stops me taking part	29%	41%	34%	29%	28%	22%	32%	26%	33%	27%	32%
I'm not good at it	29%	22%	26%	34%	33%	32%	28%	25%	34%	35%	25%
I don't feel I can be myself in PE	28%	21%	22%	31%	33%	30%	27%	25%	33%	32%	24%
I don't like the PE kit	28%	20%	18%	35%	34%	28%	28%	24%	34%	33%	25%
I don't enjoy it	27%	18%	19%	33%	31%	29%	26%	24%	31%	36%	21%
There isn't enough time to get changed	25%	16%	16%	33%	29%	24%	26%	24%	29%	30%	23%
My friends don't want to do it	25%	16%	17%	28%	32%	22%	26%	23%	29%	27%	23%
I have an injury	24%	18%	18%	31%	30%	27%	24%	22%	29%	26%	24%
Other people make fun of me	24%	19%	21%	28%	29%	30%	24%	21%	29%	26%	23%
I don't like the activities on offer	23%	15%	16%	27%	31%	21%	24%	20%	28%	25%	21%
I don't know how to get involved	22%	18%	20%	26%	24%	21%	22%	17%	28%	24%	19%
I don't have time because I already do a lot of physical activity outside of school	21%	16%	15%	25%	25%	20%	22%	19%	25%	19%	23%
I can't get home if I stay after school	20%	15%	14%	25%	24%	19%	20%	16%	25%	22%	17%
I don't feel encouraged to take part by the teachers	20%	16%	15%	24%	23%	18%	20%	16%	25%	24%	17%
I don't feel I can be myself in extra-curricular activities	20%	15%	14%	24%	24%	22%	20%	16%	25%	23%	18%
I'm not able to do it because the activities are not suitable for me	19%	15%	13%	23%	24%	20%	19%	15%	25%	22%	18%
Something else	19%	15%	16%	22%	22%	15%	19%	15%	24%	21%	17%
I don't like how the person delivers the activities	19%	14%	14%	22%	23%	20%	19%	15%	23%	21%	16%
My breasts feel uncomfortable when I exercise	17%	-	-	26%	27%	21%	17%	16%	22%	21%	13%
I don't feel encouraged to take part by my family	17%	14%	13%	21%	20%	14%	17%	13%	22%	20%	15%

When you have your period which of the following things concern you about participating in PE or school sport?

Break % Respondents	National data	Key Stage		SEND		Ethnicity		Physical activity level	
	Total	KS3	KS4	SEND	Non- SEND	White British	EDC	Less active	More active
I am in pain/ uncomfortable	73%	68%	77%	75%	72%	74%	74%	72%	72%
I worry about leaking	61%	59%	63%	65%	61%	62%	62%	63%	59%
My mood is low	58%	56%	62%	63%	56%	59%	59%	58%	60%
I don't have the energy	54%	51%	58%	62%	52%	52%	59%	62%	51%
My confidence is low	37%	35%	39%	49%	33%	39%	34%	37%	39%
I feel self-conscious changing in the changing rooms	30%	30%	28%	39%	28%	32%	28%	31%	29%
My skill level isn't as good as usual (e.g. balance)	28%	27%	29%	38%	25%	26%	30%	22%	31%
I worry others will know I am on my period	26%	29%	25%	37%	24%	27%	24%	25%	27%
I feel self-conscious participating	26%	27%	25%	33%	23%	29%	22%	29%	24%
I don't feel I can take part to the level expected	24%	24%	26%	28%	22%	23%	26%	25%	25%
I don't feel supported/understood by my teachers	20%	20%	19%	29%	17%	18%	23%	20%	19%
I have had a bad experience before	12%	12%	12%	20%	10%	11%	13%	12%	13%
I don't feel supported/understood by other girls	8%	9%	9%	18%	6%	9%	7%	8%	8%
Something else	1%	2%	1%	4%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
None of the above	7%	8%	7%	6%	8%	7%	7%	6%	10%

What, if anything, can your school do to help you in PE when you have your period?

Break % Respondents	National data	Key Stage		SEND		Ethnicity		Physical activity level	
	Total	KS3	KS4	SEND	Non- SEND	White British	EDC	Less active	More active
Greater flexibility to participate to my ability at this time	43%	36%	47%	46%	42%	41%	46%	45%	43%
Greater understanding / empathy shown by teachers	42%	41%	41%	42%	41%	41%	45%	41%	43%
Better options for PE kit to help me feel more comfortable	34%	37%	30%	36%	33%	33%	36%	34%	34%
Access to sanitary products in PE	30%	31%	27%	42%	27%	28%	33%	26%	33%
More support to help me cope in PE with how I feel at this time	21%	23%	19%	31%	19%	19%	24%	22%	18%
Offering girls only PE lessons	18%	19%	17%	22%	17%	16%	21%	17%	19%
More support to help me understand about periods and exercise	9%	11%	9%	13%	8%	9%	10%	9%	10%
Something else	5%	6%	4%	6%	4%	4%	6%	9%	3%
Information to my parents about PE and periods	4%	6%	3%	7%	4%	4%	5%	4%	4%
Nothing, what they already do is good	15%	16%	17%	12%	16%	18%	12%	12%	17%

In your PE lesson, how comfortable would you feel talking to your teacher about periods?

Break % Respondents	National data	Key Stage		SEND		Ethnicity		Physical activity level	
	Total	KS3	KS4	SEND	Non- SEND	White British	EDC	Less active	More active
Very	11%	7%	15%	17%	10%	11%	11%	9%	11%
Somewhat	47%	43%	52%	39%	49%	44%	52%	47%	47%
Not at all	42%	50%	33%	45%	41%	46%	37%	44%	41%

Participation of girls of sport during their period research

Research released today by Nuffield Health reveals the significant impact of **period** stigma on young **girls** in the **UK**, as one in three (33%) aged 11-16 are uncomfortable taking **part** in physical activity whilst menstruating. More than four in five (84%) teenage **girls** say their interest in **sport** and fitness diminished after starting their **period** and almost one in four (23%) say they feel embarrassed to **take part** in physical activity during their **menstrual** cycle

participation of girls taking part in sport during their period

Research released today by Nuffield Health reveals the significant impact of period stigma on young girls in the UK, as one in three (33%) aged 11-16 are uncomfortable taking part in physical activity whilst menstruating.

More than four in five (84%) teenage girls say their interest in sport and fitness diminished after starting their period and almost one in four (23%) say they feel embarrassed to take part in physical activity during their menstrual cycle.

Despite this, the girls surveyed have a clear understanding of the benefits of sport and fitness, with 40% saying they have fun when taking part in activities and almost one-third (32%) know it has a positive impact on their mental health. Girls also have a desire to be good at sport and fitness and 16% admit to being jealous of peers who excel in the area.

The new research by Nuffield Health is based on a sample of 2,002 11-16-year-old girls and their parents and highlights how girls are more likely to report barriers to exercise than boys, which is putting them at a huge disadvantage when it comes to their health, with a particularly concerning dropout rate due to periods.

In response to this data, Nuffield Health, the UK's largest healthcare charity, has launched **Move Together** to get 11–16-year-old girls across the nation moving and more physically active. The free

programme is available in communities across the UK all year round and will tackle the barriers that young girls face when it comes to exercise and fitness.

Whilst 40% of girls say that health and fitness is important to them to look and feel good, almost one in five (17%) say they don't like P.E in school. A further 44% of parents have also admitted to making an excuse to get their daughters out of P.E lessons.

There is evidence to show that this dropout from teenage girls can be seen in adulthood. Recent research from Nuffield Health's Healthier Nation Index, reveals a quarter of all women (23%) claim that the menstrual cycle (including periods and symptoms of the menopause) is a barrier to undertaking more physical activity.

In addition to this, many women (45%) find gyms intimidating, over two-thirds (64%) think lack of motivation is a contributing factor and over a third (37%) surveyed believe that a general dislike of exercise is a barrier to them being more active.

Nuffield Health's latest research also reveals one in three (30%) parents are not very active and a further 4% say they are completely inactive. Only 36% felt their level of physicality encouraged their daughters to exercise more than them.

TV Personality and Personal Trainer Chloe Madeley is supporting the Nuffield Health Move Together initiative this year and comments: *"Being a personal trainer and a woman myself, I know the huge benefits exercise can have on girls' lives, both now and continuously as they age. It's critical that we start removing the barriers that so many young girls face in this country when it comes to being active and try to encourage them to move more, which can dramatically improve both their physical and mental health.*

We also need to start working to remove the stigma that surrounds talking openly and honestly about the menstrual cycle, not least because periods have been identified as one of the biggest barriers preventing girls from becoming more physically active. The sport and exercise landscape is still heavily skewed towards boys and men, and while it is changing, certainly from a sporting perspective, basic exercise should be far more encouraged than it is amongst young women. I want to ensure that when my daughter grows up, she and girls like her feel encouraged and inspired to move, use and appreciate their bodies.

Move Together is an incredibly important initiative that will encourage and inspire young girls to be more active, especially as it's completely free to access, which is so important at a time when so many families are struggling financially."

Hannah Maxwell, Group Exercise Manager and Personal Trainer at Nuffield Health, said; *“Our aim is to get young girls from all backgrounds moving and loving exercise in safe and confidence-boosting environments outside of the school curriculum. If we don’t start knocking down the barriers faced by so many young girls now, we run the risk of this continuing into their adult lives, which will have a negative impact on both their physical and mental health and their relationship with exercise.*

“Being active throughout the menstrual cycle can be challenging for many young girls, especially as their body responds differently at varying points in the cycle. I was never taught this as a young girl, or as PT, and it’s time we helped girls understand what’s happening to their bodies, so it’s easier for them to manage and be more active. We’re working hard to encourage and inspire young girls with a full range of activities they can do with their friends for free, in convenient, safe spaces that will encourage participation over the summer and beyond boosting overall wellbeing”.

Hosted in local parks and community venues and run by Nuffield Health fitness instructors in the local community, the specially designed free classes will build girls’ strength, confidence and get them moving. It’s also the perfect opportunity to have fun and make new friends in a safe and secure environment.

Get moving and sign up your 11-16yr old girl to Move Together with Nuffield Health today to join a FREE class visit www.nuffieldhealth.com/movetogether

Tags from the story

Health, Health & Beauty, Nuffield Health

[Girls Active National Reports - Youth Sport Trust](#)

Girls Active National Reports 2024

These reports summarise responses to the Girls Active Survey that pupils aged from 7 to 18 completed between October 2023 and June 2024.

The Youth Sport Trust has been conducting a Girls Active Survey since 2016, finding out what the barriers, motivations and perceptions are for girls in PE, physical activity and sport, both in and outside of school and how these differ to boys.

In 2024 over 15,000 young people took part in the survey. Some of this year’s key results are shown below.

Barriers

Nearly two thirds of girls (62%) want to be more active in school but there are barriers that stop them taking part such as not being confident, having their period and being watched by others.

The number of girls enjoying PE drops notably throughout school life:

- 86% of girls aged 7 to 8 enjoy PE, compared to 56% of girls aged 14 to 15
- 46% of girls aged 14-15 report a lack of confidence stops them being more active at school compared with 26% of girls aged 7-8
- Since 2017 the proportion of girls reporting a lack of confidence stopping them doing more physical activity at school has risen by 11%
- Periods remain the biggest barrier to girls' participation age 11-13 (47%) and age 14-15 (52%)
- ONLY 1 in 4 girls aged 11-13 feel confident in their PE kit, a drop from 65% aged 7-8
- 58% of girls want more PE kit options compared to just 29% of boys.

Fun and friendship

Having fun, being with friends and getting fit and healthy are the top three motivations for all girls to take part in sport, physical activity and PE at school regardless of age/year group.