



THIS
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CAN



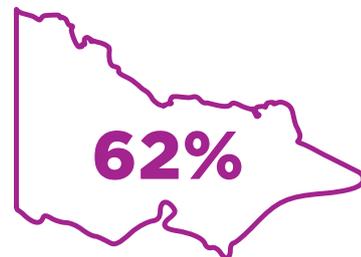
Helping women and girls get active guide

This Girl Can – Victoria Campaign 2019

VicHealth's *This Girl Can – Victoria* campaign is a state-wide, mass media campaign that empowers and inspires women to become more physically active, regardless of their background, age, ability or body shape. Now in its second year, over 285,000 women have been inspired to get more active as a result of seeing the campaign.

This Girl Can – Victoria was based on Sport England's viral hit *This Girl Can*. It's proven to be a winning formula, with the Australian version achieving the equivalent level of success as its English counterpart in its first year.

We know that the campaign has inspired women from right across the state, from a range of diverse communities and levels of ability. Let's keep up the momentum in creating environments within our sports clubs and facilities that are welcoming and inclusive and that build confidence for women to get active.



62% of women in Victoria say they want to become more physically active.

We can help them by making sure that when they're ready, we're ready. By working together we can support and encourage them on their journey.

#ThisGirlCanVIC
thisgirlcan.com.au

We're glad you're with us on this

This information is to get you thinking about your environment and your approach to helping women get more physically active. We've listened to women who are less active throughout the first year of the campaign. The tips included in this guide are low-cost changes you can make to your programs or facilities to ensure women have a positive experience when getting into, or returning to, exercise.

Thinking about less active women can help you understand that these women are **nervous**, **scared** and **vulnerable** when attending your facility for the first time. Making even a few small changes suggested throughout this guide will help women feel more welcome.

The most important thing to keep in mind is the **lack of confidence** and **fear of judgement** that less active women can feel when they think about getting involved in physical activity. You can address this by creating an environment that is as welcoming as possible and tailoring your program or experience to suit them.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for you, if you're part of:

- **a physical activity or sport provider** that delivers activities directly in the community. Maybe you're from a sport and recreation facility, gym, swim centre, sporting club, school or university, local council, group fitness provider or private provider.
- **an industry body** that designs programs or provides support and guidance to those who deliver an activity – for example State Sporting Associations, Regional Sports Assemblies or Vicsport.



LOOKING THROUGH THEIR EYES

When designing programs for inactive or less active women and girls, seeing things from their perspective helps to identify and address some of their barriers to getting involved.

Here are **four strategies** that can have a big impact on participation for women, and some ways you can start – or keep doing – each one. Most can be actioned quickly, easily and with little cost.

1 PROMOTE YOUR ACTIVITY

- Explain the process, the venue and the activity in your promotional material or on your website so people know what to expect.
- Use photos that show women like them participating – ‘fitspo’ images full of hot pants and six packs only alienate women further.
- Promote within your local community – word of mouth and paid social media often work best.
- Create partnerships that can reach new people and audiences, such as mothers’ groups, schools and community groups.
- Consider introducing a welcome offer, welcome pack or promotion for new members.

3 MAKE IT FUN, MAKE IT SOCIAL

Focus your activities on being interesting and fun instead of competitive.

- Be encouraging – say hello, use their name, be friendly and encourage other participants to be friendly as well.
- Make it social – introduce people to each other, and encourage them to bring along friends.
- Encourage questions throughout.
- Personalise the contact – an encouraging phone call to someone who has dropped off can do wonders for their confidence to return.
- Offer a mentor or a buddy system to help people feel more comfortable.

2 DESIGN YOUR ACTIVITY TO SUIT

- Be flexible – try shorter session times or game lengths, or introduce a low-commitment way for people to join or try your activity.
- Think about making changes to timetabling to suit more women in your community.
- Consider smaller group sizes so women can connect better with the instructor.
- Think about the equipment on offer and how you are explaining it so nothing seems intimidating.
- Offer paired activities where possible.
- Provide activities that allow for skill progression.
- Have a chat with less active women and ask them to help you design a program.

4 GUIDE YOUR STAFF

- Talk with your frontline staff, instructors and coaches to be more inclusive by:
 - showing empathy, compassion and awareness of intimidation
 - discussing fears and concerns about getting active in an open positive manner.
- Be mindful about helping women prevent injury by being flexible and adjust activities to suit participant ability.
- Use positive, encouraging language instead of intimidating phrases like ‘go hard or go home!’ – often less active women will do just that – go home!
- Reward achievements, even the small ones, and celebrate that they have shown up rather than demanding full exertion.
- Encourage social activities outside of sessions, like a coffee after the activity.
- Regularly ask for feedback from new participants.

About This Girl Can - Victoria

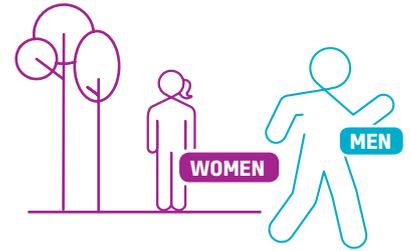
Here's what we know about women and physical activity...



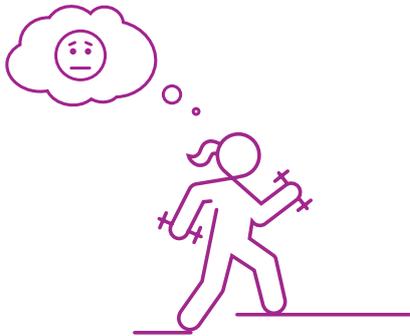
Most Victorians aren't getting enough physical activity to benefit their health.



Only two in five Victorian adults participate in physical activity for half an hour, four or more days per week.



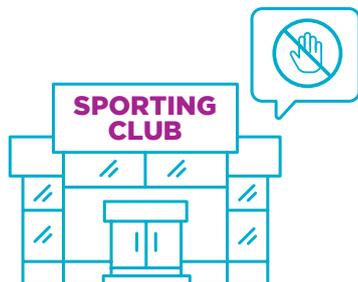
Women in Victoria are less likely to be hitting this target than men¹.



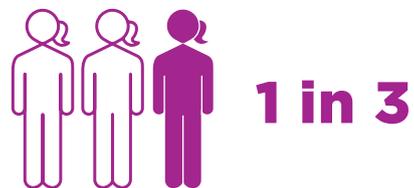
Nearly half of Victorian women aged 25 and over feel intimidated by gyms.



Two in five women feel embarrassed exercising in public².



Nearly half of all Victorian women aged 25 and over believe that sporting clubs are intimidating.



Around one in three believe that sporting clubs are not welcoming to people like them³.

¹ VicHealth 2016, *VicHealth Indicators Survey 2015 - Selected Findings*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

² VicHealth 2017, *VicHealth physical activity across lifestages - Adult (25+) with no children*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

³ *ibid.*

Ready to help us change this?

Research has told us that women have a fear of judgement that stops them from feeling comfortable with physical activity. This Girl Can - Victoria addresses this by representing a range of real women being physically active, including women from all backgrounds, all levels of ability, fitness, body shape and size.

Small changes can make a big difference, and we've seen some fantastic changes already by creating encouraging, non-intimidating

environments. By working together, we know we can create environments that are more welcoming to women helping them take the inspiration from the campaign into action.

This is just the beginning of a long-term journey. We still have a long way to go until every woman across Victoria is motivated and confident to be active. With your help, we will inspire even more women to join the movement.



Looking for more resources?

The information you've read so far can make a significant difference in women's experience in getting and staying active with just a few 'quick wins' – but it's by no means exhaustive. Check out some of these other resources – we'll also share more information and resources throughout the campaign to help you help women even further.

[Change Our Game](#)

Showcases best-practice promotion and development of female sport in Victoria. It includes stories of change, role models, case studies and links to major media stories. Developed by Sport and Recreation Victoria.

[Physical Activity Across Life Stages](#)

Explores the attitudes and barriers to physical activity for Victorians at key life stages, and considers motivations for changing existing behaviours. This is useful in getting to know and understand the inactive female audience.

[Female Participation in Sport and Physical Activity](#)

Shows a quick snapshot of the evidence behind trends in activity levels for Victorian women, health benefits of physical activity for women, motivations for females to get active and physical activity across life stages.

[Female Friendly Sport Infrastructure Guidelines](#)

Provides information and advice on how to deliver more gender-equitable facilities. Developed by Sport and Recreation Victoria.

[Vicsport – Welcoming Sport](#)

Outlines how sporting organisations can become more inclusive. It includes practical actions, resources (fact sheets, templates, guidelines, websites) and best-practice examples in the areas of leadership, policies and practices, facilities and access, participation, and maintaining your changes in the long-term.

[Clearinghouse for Sport – Women's Sport](#)

Provides an extensive range of links, research articles and case studies related to the topic of women's sport.

[Active Moreland Women and Girls](#)

Offers a great example of council-led information including fact sheets and checklists developed by the council to support inclusion of women and girls in sport and physical activity.

[Sportsview](#)

Sign up to Vicsport's fortnightly newsletter to receive information and updates from across the sport industry.

Have some great tips or resources you'd like to share? Get in touch with our team: thisgirlcan@vichealth.vic.gov.au



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