

# CASE STUDY

WOMEN  
**N**  
SPORT

Measuring impact: 'This Girl Can Run'  
for England Athletics



# WHAT DID WE WANT TO KNOW?

**England Athletics is committed to increasing the number of women who haven't started thinking about running to putting on their trainers and running for the first time. They are also keen to see women returning to the sport and encouraging existing runners to do so more often.**

A digital campaign was created to activate Sport England's 'This Girl Can' campaign around running, to include content that would inspire, inform and engage women aged 14 to 40 (aligned to the parent campaign).

Women in Sport worked in partnership with England Athletics on a research project to further understand the highly engaged online community and the impact the campaign was having on their running behaviour.

As well as supporting this work to measure impact, Women in Sport was able to align new and existing insights to the digital channels to deepen understanding of the audience to help develop new relevant content.



# WHO DID WE TALK TO?

We wanted to hear from women accessing the 'This Girl Can Run' social media channels to find out about their relationship with running and whether the campaign had influenced their participation.

Women in Sport worked with England Athletics to develop two online surveys promoted via social media channels five months apart – the first in October 2015 and the second in March 2016.

Following insight-led activity resulting in the digital community doubling in size between 1 - 31 January 2016, England Athletics wanted to evaluate the impact of the campaign on running behaviour amongst both new and existing community members.

The second survey was completed by more than 2,500 unique users of the 'This Girl Can Run' digital channels, giving us 99% confidence in the results.



# WHAT DID WE FIND OUT?

The findings from the surveys showed that the campaign was having a positive impact on women's running behaviours and clarified the audience:

**95%**

are now running at least once per week.

**51%**

of those who engaged with the campaign are running more often than they were before.

**28,000+**

women reported being influenced by the campaign to either start running, return to running or run more frequently.

**9,650**

women who have been heavily influenced by 'This Girl Can Run' are either new to running or have returned to running since engaging with the campaign.



Those who have been engaged in the campaign the longest express greater levels of influence, suggesting that the chosen content strategy helps to sustain participation.

# ALIGNING INSIGHTS

Women in Sport champions an insight-led approach and alongside the surveys, we undertook a review of the digital channels by applying new and existing insights to better understand their impact.

## UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S LIVES, 2013

We know from our Understanding Women's Lives (2013) research that women's decision-making is driven by a complex values system that drives women's decision-making and can influence their relationship with sport and physical activity.

From the surveys we found out that the dominant values of those women in the campaign audience are:

- **FEELING GOOD**
- **ACHIEVING GOALS**

By understanding why these women were making the decision to run, England Athletics was able to tailor copy, imagery and messaging to be more appealing and aligned to what women want. It is important to regularly review women's values for campaign content as we know values can change over time and with different life stage changes.

## WHAT SWAYS WOMEN TO PLAY SPORT IN 2015?

We recognise from our research that women can benefit from seeing other women running who they can identify with, acting as positive role models or influencers.

Our report 'What Sways Women to Play Sport' (2015) found that those people who women see on a regular basis and are close to can have the biggest impact on behaviour change. Looking at the spheres of influence, the 'This Girl Can Run' campaign in its entirety acts as a digital influencer, encouraging running participation through four key spheres that are important for this target audience:

### **Possibilities**

Opening women's eyes to the fact they can run to feel good and achieve their goals.

### **Togetherness**

Creating a network to be stronger together.

### **Belonging**

Making women feel like part of a running community.

### **Support**

Ensuring women are offered advice and guidance for getting into or returning to running.

## SEASONAL DROP OFF AND PERSONAL SAFETY, 2016

In early 2016, Women in Sport shared new insights exploring why women's participation in running drops off in the autumn and winter months. At this initial stage, we applied findings from this research to digital content, with the aim of increasing engagement levels around this period to allow for a sense of belonging and achievement. Following this initial activation, there is scope to further explore how this research can be used effectively in this campaign.

# WHAT ARE OUR RECOMMENDATIONS?

Women in Sport has worked with England Athletics to apply many of the findings and plan for the campaign's future.



## CHANGE OF FOCUS

Changes have been made to the focus of the digital channels, moving away from lengthy articles and content towards prioritising audience growth in order to widen impact.



## CREATION OF DIGITAL CONTENT

Content for Twitter, Facebook and Instagram is now created with audiences' dominant values in mind, as well as knowledge of how different 'spheres of influence' can be applied.



## MEASURING IMPACT

England Athletics have put plans in place for regular impact measurement to retain understanding of these audiences and how they use the digital content.

# WHAT DOES ENGLAND ATHLETICS THINK?



“Understanding our audiences and measuring the impact of our work is at the heart of everything we do. Combining Women in Sport’s insight pieces with our own has helped us to deliver a highly effective and cost efficient digital campaign”.

**Marketing & Campaign Manager,  
England Athletics Running Participation Team**

Experience ‘This Girl Can Run’ first hand at:

[www.facebook.com/ThisGirlCanRunning](https://www.facebook.com/ThisGirlCanRunning)

[www.twitter.com/TGCRunning](https://www.twitter.com/TGCRunning)

[www.instagram.com/thisgirlcanrunning](https://www.instagram.com/thisgirlcanrunning)

# WANT TO WORK WITH US?

Are you interested in working with Women in Sport on a similar project or would like to support the development of women's running?

If so, email [info@womeninsport.org](mailto:info@womeninsport.org)

