



BUILT TO MOVE:

**THE POWERFUL IMPACT OF PHYSICAL
ACTIVITY AND SPORT FOR WOMEN**

DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

flamingo



GOTHAM FC





WHY THIS MATTERS

34%

of Women Report Fair or Poor Body Appreciation

For many women, the relationship with their bodies is shaped by pressure, comparison, self-criticism, and a persistent focus on appearance.

Movement offers an opportunity to experience our bodies differently, not as something to evaluate, but as something to appreciate for what it allows us to do.

Importantly, movement does not have to look a certain way. Whether it is running, hiking, dancing in your kitchen, gardening, walking the dog, or playing a sport, **all movement counts.**

For more than 50 years, the Women's Sports Foundation® (WSF®) has championed the power of sport and physical activity to transform girls' and women's lives and prepare them to lead on and off the playing field.

Developed in partnership with **Flamingo** and **Gotham FC**, this research builds on that legacy by exploring how movement impacts body appreciation and the ways that relationship can influence women's health, resilience, and self-perception.

Drawing on responses from more than 1,500 women **ages 22–35**, the findings reveal that physical activity is associated with greater body appreciation, improved mental and physical health, and increased feelings of strength, power, and pride in what their bodies can do.

Our hope is that women see themselves in these findings and feel encouraged to embrace movement in ways that bring them joy and connection. We also hope these insights inspire communities, organizations, and leaders to expand access to movement opportunities and create environments where every woman has the chance to experience the physical, emotional, and social benefits of movement through sport and beyond.

BUILT TO BEGIN

EVEN ONE HOUR MATTERS.

Women who are physically active just 1–2 hours per week are 83% more likely to report positive body appreciation than women who are inactive or active less than one hour per week.

WOMEN ACTIVE 1–2 HOURS WEEKLY WERE ALSO:

25%

more likely to report good physical health.

30%

more likely to report good mental health.

Movement doesn't have to be extreme to make a difference. Even consistent weekly physical activity is associated with meaningful benefits.



BUILT TO THRIVE

MORE MOVEMENT. MORE BENEFITS.

Women who are physically active 2–4 hours per week are nearly 2x as likely to report positive body appreciation compared with women who are inactive or active less than one hour per week.

WOMEN ACTIVE 2-4 HOURS WEEKLY WERE ALSO:

54%

more likely to report good physical health.

46%

more likely to report good mental health.



The findings suggest that body appreciation may strengthen progressively as women engage in more regular movement.

BUILT TO FEEL STRONG

MOVEMENT SHIFTS THE FOCUS FROM HOW OUR BODIES LOOK TO WHAT OUR BODIES CAN DO.



COMPARED WITH WOMEN WHO ARE INACTIVE,
**WOMEN ACTIVE 1–4
HOURS WEEKLY WERE:**

3x more likely to feel
STRONG

2–3x more likely to feel
POWERFUL

2x more likely to feel **PROUD OF
WHAT THEIR BODY CAN DO**

Strength is not only physical. Feeling capable, powerful, and proud of our bodies can influence how women show up in every aspect of their lives.

"During a long hike at sunrise, I felt strong and capable. Each step reminded me that my body could endure challenges, breathe deeply, and carry me forward."

— Research participant

BUILT FOR LIFE

WOMEN ARE REDEFINING WHY THEY MOVE.

When women describe why they participate in physical activity and sport, the reasons are clear. They are investing in their health, managing stress, building strength, and caring for their future selves.



TOP REASONS WOMEN PARTICIPATE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:

67% Improve physical health

58% Improve mental health

49% Build strength

55% Relieve stress

45% Support long-term health

One morning, I danced alone in my room with no mirror, no pressure. Just movement and music. For a few minutes, I forgot insecurities and felt fully present, alive, and grateful for my body.

— Research participant

BUILT TOGETHER

CONNECTION CAN AMPLIFY THE BENEFITS OF MOVEMENT.



76%

of women who move with others report positive body appreciation.

While women may not always begin moving for social reasons, the findings suggest that moving with others can strengthen the experience. Participating alongside others can foster encouragement, belonging, and opportunities to celebrate what our bodies can do.

Whether it is joining a recreational league, taking a fitness class, walking with friends, dancing with family, or simply moving alongside others, connection can make movement more enjoyable, sustainable, and meaningful.

"In my aerobic class, I lose my self-consciousness in the sea of synchronized arms and legs. It reminds me that my body is a powerful engine and connects me to a wonderful community of strong women."

— Research participant

BUILT FOR MORE

THE PATH FORWARD



Every woman deserves the opportunity to experience the benefits of movement, not because of how it might change her body, but because of how it can support her health, deepen her connections, and unlock the strength and power that already exist within her.

WHAT WE CAN DO?

For women

- Start where you are. Even small increases in movement can make a meaningful difference.
- Move in ways you enjoy and embrace opportunities to move with others.
- Notice and appreciate what your body allows you to do.

For fitness leaders and coaches

- Emphasize capability over appearance.
- Foster belonging and community.
- Celebrate all forms of movement.

For organizations

- Invest in inclusive and accessible programming.
- Reduce barriers to participation.
- Showcase diverse bodies in motion.

Because women are not built to fit a single standard.

They are built to move.