



LOUGHBOROUGH
SPORT

EmpowerHER IMPACT SUMMARY

LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

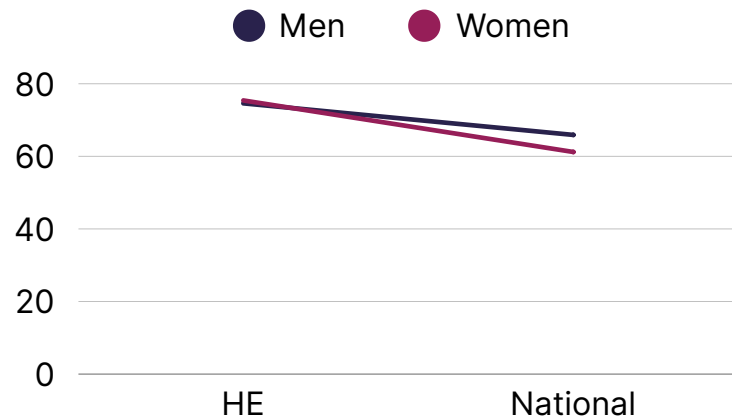
PREPARED BY:
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Background

Nationally, women in higher education are slightly more active than men, but not significantly so, with 75.4% of women in higher education considered to be 'active' compared to 74.6% of men in higher education.

It's pleasing to see that women and men are almost on par in terms of their participation in higher education, but the need for our EmpowerHER campaign is still present. Despite higher activity levels, women in higher education still face gendered barriers to sport and physical activity. These include confidence issues, lack of role models, concerns about safety, and gendered expectations about sport and physical activity participation. We also understand that empowerment extends beyond participation, and getting women engaged in activity is a small part of what we strive to achieve with our EmpowerHER. We aim to create environments where women feel comfortable and confident in wellbeing, leadership, officiating, coaching, and social spaces in sport.

Activity Levels - % of Those Considered 'Active' (Active Lives Survey, Nov 22/23)



While national participation rates in higher education may be slightly higher than men, that doesn't necessarily mean women feel empowered in sport. The fact that only 61.2% of women nationally are considered 'active', suggests that sustaining participation beyond university is a challenge, and so it is our responsibility as an institution that prides itself on its sport and physical activity offer to empower women to sustain their participation after they leave Loughborough.

Understanding the national picture regarding the experience of young girls in sport and PE is also important to us as there may be significant parallels between school PE experiences and university sport. Many women may enter university carrying the impact of negative school PE experiences, where they may have felt excluded, self-conscious, or disengaged. These insecurities don't disappear at university.



The well-known phenomenon of post-16 drop-out, where girls reduce or stop participation in sport and physical activity once it's no longer compulsory in school is something we're conscious of. University is a critical point to re-engage with these women on their own terms, which shows why EmpowerHER is so important.

University sport and physical activity is a chance to rewrite the narrative, offering a fresh start for women to redefine their relationship with sport and physical activity in a way that is empowering rather than pressuring or limiting. EmpowerHER creates an environment that counteracts past negative experiences and helps women find joy, confidence, and belonging in sport and physical activity.

The Week 2025

Monday

Rise & Shine Yoga

Cardio Tennis

AU Cricket - Come & Try

Tuesday

Sunday Service Run Club

Officiating Network Session

Wednesday

UV Zumba

W&NB Ultimate Frisbee

Korfball Bring a Friend

Coffee & Cake

Hyrox

Thursday

Girls Night In

W&NB Volleyball

W&NB Basketball

Soul Sisters Padel

Friday

Staff UV Zumba

Rugby League Bring a Friend

W&NB Football

Saturday

Pilates

Sunday

Women's Hockey Come and Try

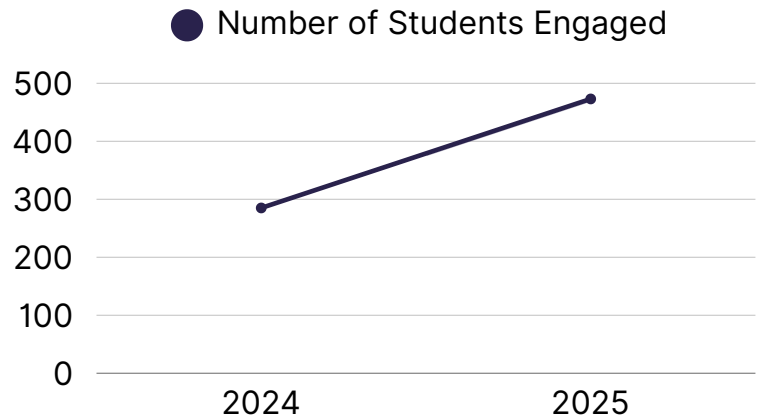


Key Impact Highlights

We have successfully engaged more students in EmpowerHER in 2025 than we did in 2024 by diversifying our offer and ensuring it is not just a participation-focused campaign. While increasing women's involvement in sport and physical activity remains a key goal, we recognised the importance of broadening our impact beyond traditional participation opportunities.

The inclusion of events such as the Women's Officiating Network and Girls Night In has allowed students to connect with their personal interests and experiences.

The introduction of the EmpowerHER Strava Club has offered alternative ways in which students can engage with the campaign, once more extending the impact of EmpowerHER beyond traditional participation while ensuring a lasting legacy of community.



We have also taken onboard several key learnings from our 2024 campaign, including our 'Bring a Friend' sessions.

Last year, our 'Bring a Friend' sessions were very successful, and so we decided to replicate more of those sessions across different sports in 2025. We firmly believe this contributed to us being able to reach a wider audience and engage more women in the campaign.

Average Experience Rating



"I gave my T-shirt to my daughter to help inspire her as well."

"EmpowerHER encouraged me to find new ways to be active."

"We run a Hyrox session for the first time this year. Six women attended the session and had never been in the Powerbase gym before due to being too intimidated. I feel proud that EmpowerHER offered them an opportunity to get in the gym for the first time."

Key Impact Highlights

Strongly Agree

Somewhat Agree

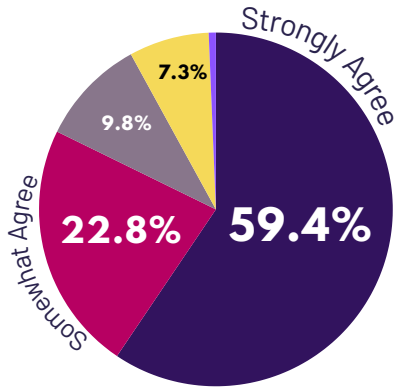
Neither

Somewhat Disagree

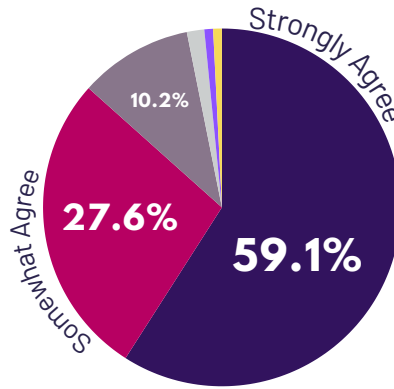
Strongly Disagree

N/A

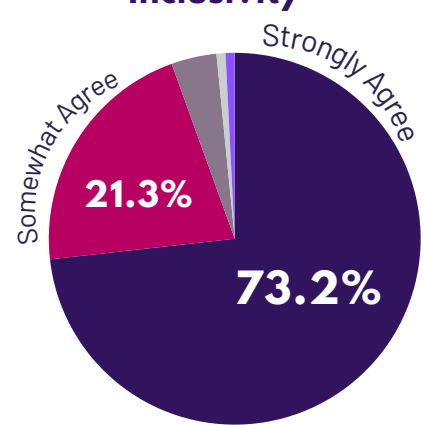
Increased Confidence in S&PA



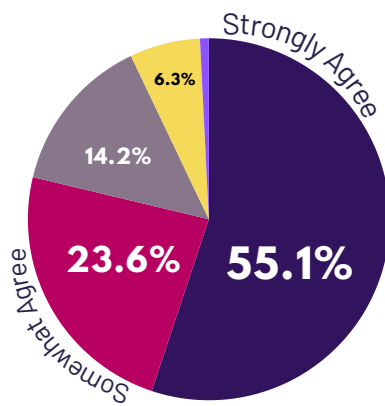
Connected to a Lboro Community



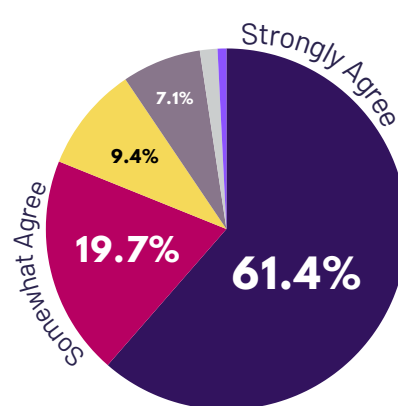
Encouragement & Inclusivity



Advocacy



Motivation



Full Likert Scale Statements:

- This session increased my confidence in taking part in sport and physical activity.
- This session has helped me feel more connected to a community of women at Loughborough.
- This session gave me a strong sense of encouragement and inclusivity.
- This session has inspired me to support and advocate for women in sport and physical activity.
- This session has motivated me to engage in sport and physical activity more regularly.



Insight Gathering & Key Findings

To ensure EmpowerHER was insight-led and evidence-based, we conducted a series of focus groups exploring the following themes:



Women and their Experience with Male Allies



Men and their Experience being Male Allies



Women and Role Models



Women and Leadership

Several key themes emerged from these discussions – insight we may not have gained through quantitative data alone. We found that:



While many men want to be allies, they often do not fully understand the subtle and systemic barriers that women face in sport and physical activity.



Women shared how their school PE experiences significantly shaped their sport and physical activity habits into adulthood, with negative experiences – such as feeling judged, lacking confidence, and feeling vulnerable at a time where their bodies are changing – acting as long-term barriers.



We also heard about how the visibility of women in sport and physical activity environments is crucial for making spaces feel more welcoming and less intimidating. When women don't see others like them participating, leading, coaching, officiating, etc., it can reinforce the feeling that they don't belong.



Women in leadership roles like AU committee and Execs expressed that there are not enough opportunities to connect with and support other women in similar positions, leaving them to feel isolated in their roles.

Embedding EmpowerHER into our Structures

One of the most significant outcomes of the EmpowerHER campaign in 2025 is its transition from a project supported by the BUCS Active Wellbeing Fund into a core, budgeted programme within Loughborough Sport. This ensures the sustainability of the work and allows us to continue developing opportunities for women year after year.



Dedicated Budget Secured: EmpowerHER now has long-term financial backing to support events, leadership development, and visibility initiatives.



EmpowerHER Legacy: A digital community that extends beyond Loughborough, allowing women to stay active and connected wherever they go on Strava.

A mural design competition to showcase the legacy of EmpowerHER and what empowerment means to our students on campus.



Building Stronger Networks: One of the strongest themes from our insight work was that women in leadership roles often felt isolated. We are working to embed a stronger network for women in leadership roles to ensure peer support.



“As a male member of staff, I feel I’ve gained a lot of knowledge and tools to better equip our workforce to facilitate and grow female participation.”

“Working on this campaign allowed me to have dedicated time and space to think about the challenges faced by women.”

What's Next?

We are committed to ensuring that EmpowerHER continues to grow and evolve. Our key next steps include:



Expanding Leadership Development: Increasing opportunities for women to develop coaching, officiating, and leadership skills.



Education and Awareness: Focus on equipping our student community with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to better understand the barriers women face and how we can all play a role in creating more inclusive environments.



Enhancing Data Collection & Insight Work: Working with the University to explore ethical ways to better track demographic data while continuing qualitative insight gathering.



Strengthening External Collaborations: Partnering with other universities and organisations to share best practices and expand EmpowerHER's impact beyond Loughborough.

"It was a wonderful opportunity to contribute to this year's EmpowerHER campaign planning group."

"There were some really outstanding events as part of the week, along with lots of learnings and scope to make EmpowerHER bigger and better in the future."





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THANK YOU

Thank you for taking the time to read the EmpowerHER impact report. Your interest and support are invaluable in helping us continue to drive positive change through sport and physical activity. We hoped this report has provided meaningful insights into the progress we've made and the collective impact we've achieved.

We would also like to extend a special thank you to BUCS for their generous funding, which has been crucial in making this initiative possible.

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