

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE



Mental Wellbeing Survey - 2017/18 Report

Published March 2019

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Introduction

ABOUT THIS REPORT

In 2017 Women in Adventure launched a survey to investigate the association between the outdoors and mental wellbeing in women. As a community, instinctively we know that being outside is good for the soul – it makes us feel alive. However, at the time the survey launched, Women in Adventure felt that there was a lack of accessible information explaining how and to what extent the outdoors impacts the lives of women who participate in adventure sports.

The survey was launched in October 2017 and ran until January 2018. In this time it received over 2,700 responses and hundreds of personal stories. Before going any further, I would like to personally thank everyone who took the time to complete or share the survey - I was both inspired and humbled by your responses.

The following report provides an overview of the initial findings and outlines the project's next steps. For more information on Women in Adventure, please visit our [website](#), or for further insight into the contents of this report, please [get in touch](#) directly.

Hetty Key

Lead Researcher & Founder

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Contents

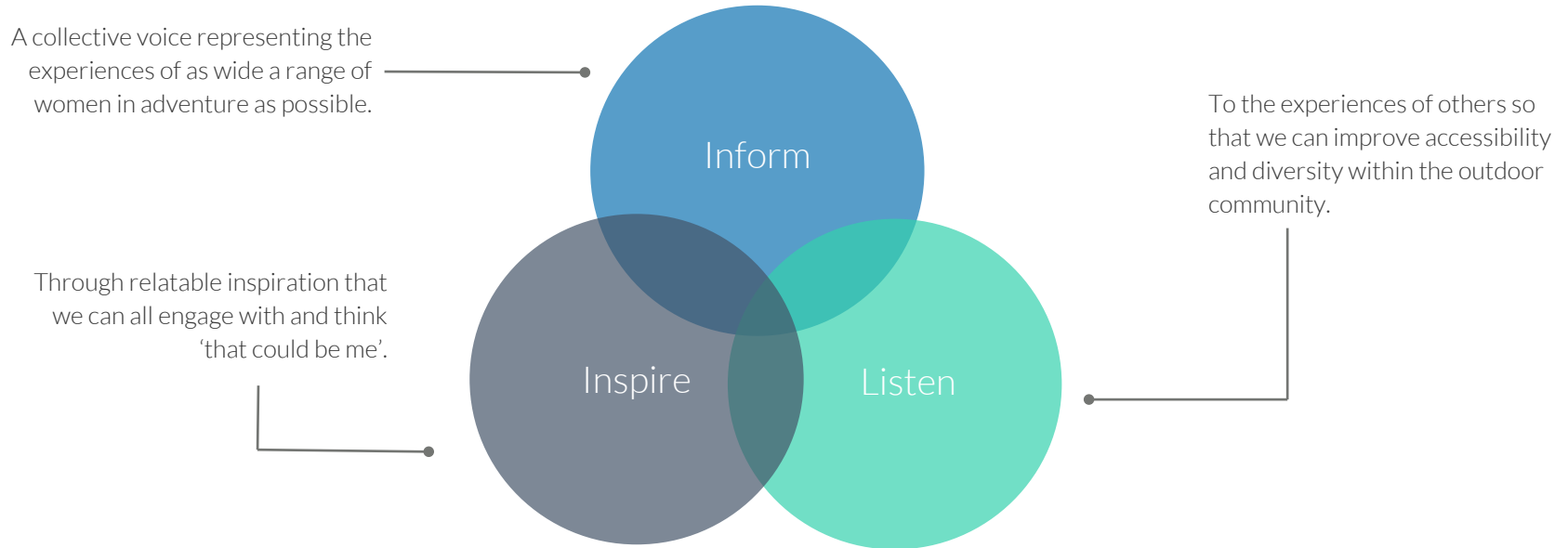
Click a page or heading to navigate to this point.

INTRODUCTION	THE RESULTS	THE FUTURE
02 - Background	09 - Respondents - age, gender & location	27 - Actions & outcomes
03 - Contents	11 - Adventure sports	28 - Contact details
04 - About Women in Adventure	12 - Participation	29 - Acknowledgements
05 - About this survey	14 - Measuring mental wellbeing	
06 - Co-created with Shextreme	15 - Life Satisfaction	
07 - Survey overview	16 - Worthwhile	
	17 - Happiness	
	18 - Anxiety	
	20 - Age & mental wellbeing	
	21 - Participation & mental wellbeing	
	22 - Sports & mental wellbeing	
	24 - Effect of the outdoors on mental wellbeing	
	25 - State of mind	

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

About this project

Women in Adventure is an independent research-based project focused on empowering women through the sharing of information, inspiration and advice.



WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

About this survey

WHAT IS THE AIM OF THIS SURVEY?

To provide accessible information showing how and to what extent the outdoors impacts the lives of women in adventure, investigating the association between the outdoors and mental wellbeing.

WHY?

- To educate and inform individuals about the benefits of the outdoors.
- To help businesses and individuals gain funding for existing and future initiatives related to mental wellbeing.
- To help steer the industry and brands towards positive change, promoting and encouraging better mental wellbeing.
- To open and encourage conversation surrounding mental wellbeing and the outdoors.

The survey was released in October 2017 and ran until January 2018.

What is 'Wellbeing'?

The Oxford English Dictionary describes wellbeing as *"the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy"*.

It's important to realise this is a broad definition. This survey looks explicitly at **mental wellbeing**.

Mental wellbeing goes beyond immediate moment-to-moment happiness. As well as looking at a person's positive and negative emotions at a certain point in time, it also takes into consideration how satisfied they are with their life as a whole, and whether they feel their life has meaning and a sense of purpose.

To ascertain mental wellbeing this survey uses the Office for National Statistics measures of personal wellbeing. You can read more about this on their [website](#).

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Shextreme



CO-CREATED WITH SHEXTREME:

This survey has been co-created with Dr. Ruth Farrar: Director of Shextreme Film Festival: a cinematic celebration of women in adventure. Ruth is also a Senior Lecturer in Creative Media & Enterprise at Bath Spa University and founding Director of Shextreme Alliance: the world's first international network providing support and training for female adventure filmmakers, photographers and media makers.

Upon realising there was limited data examining the mental wellbeing of women who participate in adventure sports, Ruth and Hetty Key (Women in Adventure) co-created the survey, which was officially launched at Shextreme Film Festival in 2017.

Within the survey, Dr. Ruth Farrar is focused on sharing more stories on screen to promote further understanding of this important subject. She is particularly interested in examining the positive role female-led adventure films may play in inspiring and encouraging more women to spend time outdoors.

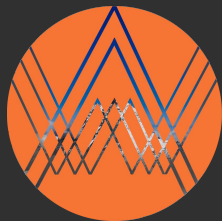
WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Survey overview

An overview of what this survey asked respondents:



WOMEN IN ADVENTURE



SURVEY RESULTS

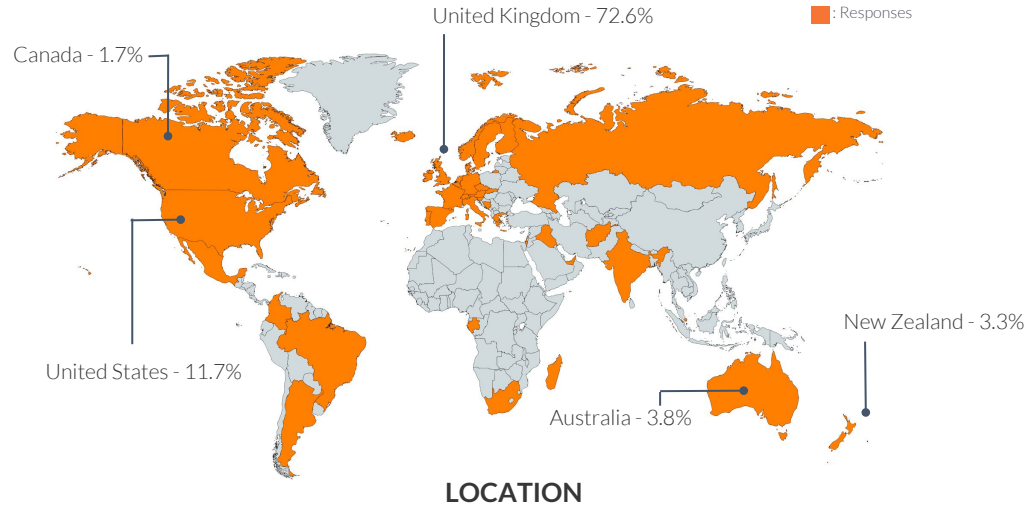
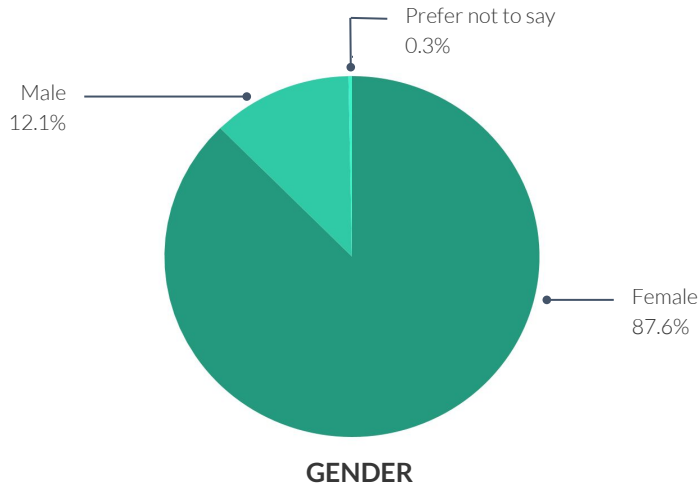
WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Who took the survey?

2,718 SUBMISSIONS:

The survey received 2,718 valid responses. Of these 87.6% were female, 12.1% were male, and 0.3% chose not to disclose their gender. As the focus of this project is to investigate female wellbeing and a women's experience of the outdoors, only female responses have been included in the analysis referenced in this report.

In total, the survey received responses from 44 countries - these are shown on the map below. The largest response came from the United Kingdom, making up 72.6% of submissions. This was to be expected given the targeting and marketing of the survey. After this, the second largest response came from the United States, then followed by Australia and New Zealand respectively.



WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Who took the survey?

AGE OF RESPONDENTS:

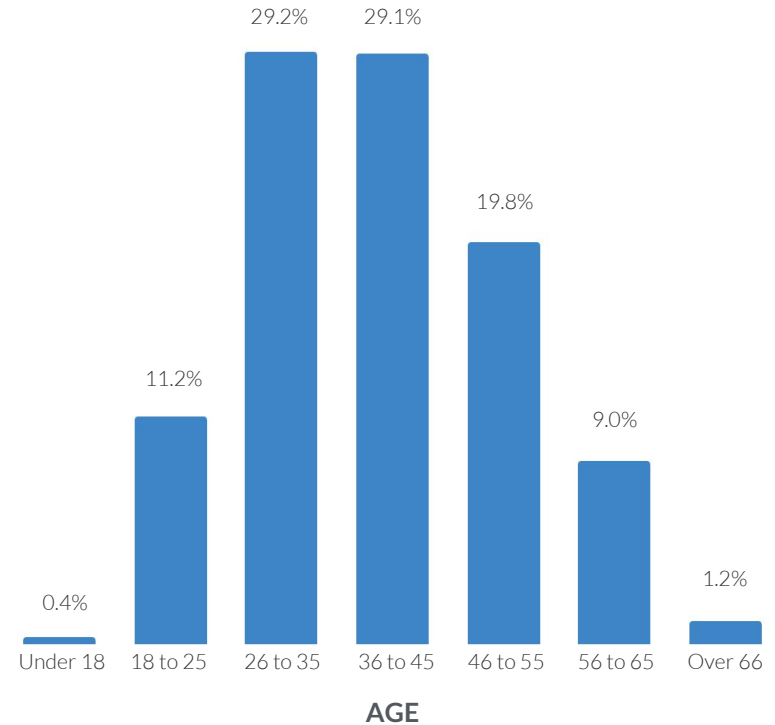
The largest demographic group represented in this survey were women aged '26 to 35', very closely followed by those aged '36 to 45'. After this, the third largest demographic was '46 to 55'.

The two age groups 'Under 18' and 'Over 66' were not as well represented in this survey with only 10 and 29 respondents respectively.

FURTHER DISCUSSION:

Why is it that 'Under 18' and 'Over 66' were not represented? Is it because they are not participating in adventure sports? Or that this particular survey did not target them?

Further research will be carried out to identify this.



WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Participation

HOW DO WOMEN SPEND TIME OUTDOORS?

In this survey, women were asked to select the three adventure sports they participated in the most. These could either be selected from a list of sports or added separately. Although a large number of women chose 3 sports - over 1,000 women selected more than this.

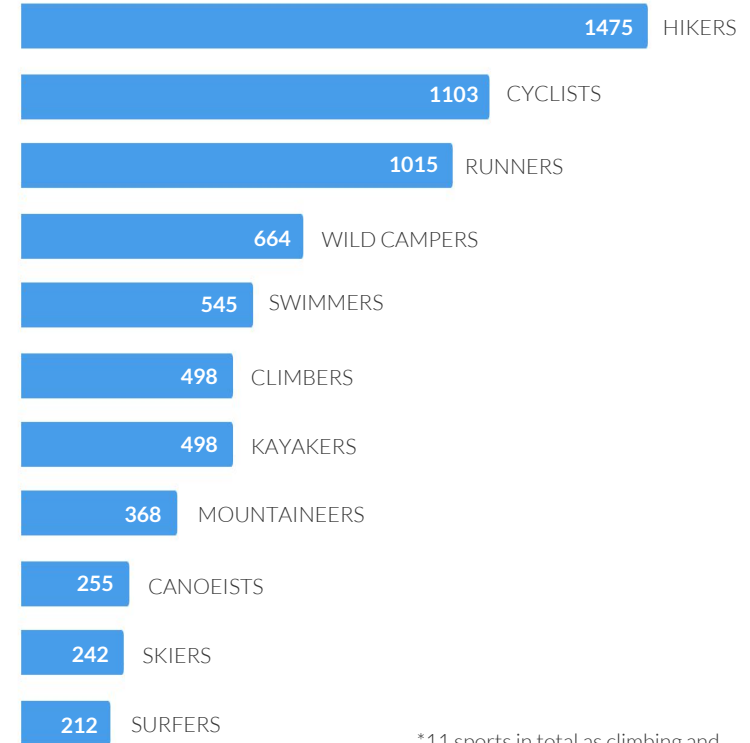
For the purpose of analysis, selected sports have been assigned to an overall category. For example, both **'trail running'** and **'mountain running'** have been categorised under **'running'**.

Amongst the well-established adventure sports, there was a diverse mix of lesser-known activities. It was fantastic to see these represented. Examples include orchid hunting, kloofing, fossil digging and dragon boat paddling.

There is potential for further sub-category analysis if requested. For example, comparing road biking to mountain biking, or sport climbing to bouldering. For more information, please [get in touch](#).



TOP 10 ADVENTURE SPORTS*:



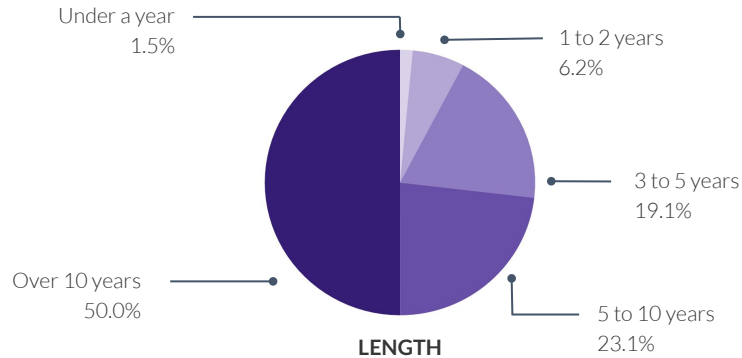
*11 sports in total as climbing and kayaking were equal in number.

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Participation

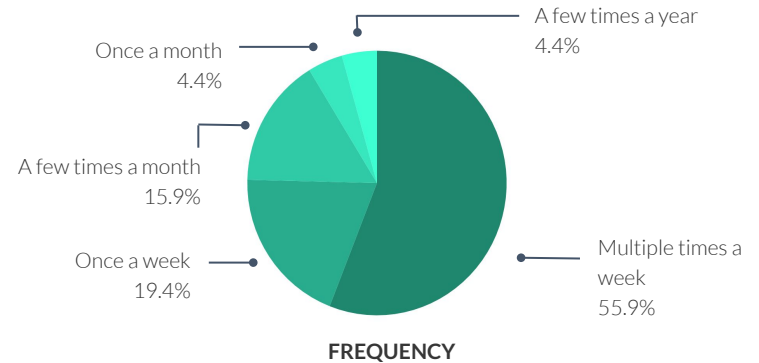
HOW LONG HAVE WOMEN PARTICIPATED?

Half of the respondents to this survey have participated in adventure sports for more than 10 years. 23.1% have been participating for 5 to 10 years, and 19.1% have been participating for 3 to 5 years. 1.5% of respondents had taken up their sport in the past year.



HOW FREQUENTLY DO WOMEN PARTICIPATE?

As this survey investigates the benefit of outdoor activity on mental wellbeing, not physical wellbeing, participation was measured in frequency not hours. As seen below, the majority of women who responded participated multiple times a week.



FURTHER DISCUSSION:

Why did those newer to the sport make up such a small percentage? Is this representative of the community? Do women within this specific group ('Under a year') not yet identify as 'climbers', 'hikers' etc.? Or have they not yet found the relevant communities for their sport? Future research will be carried out to identify this.

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

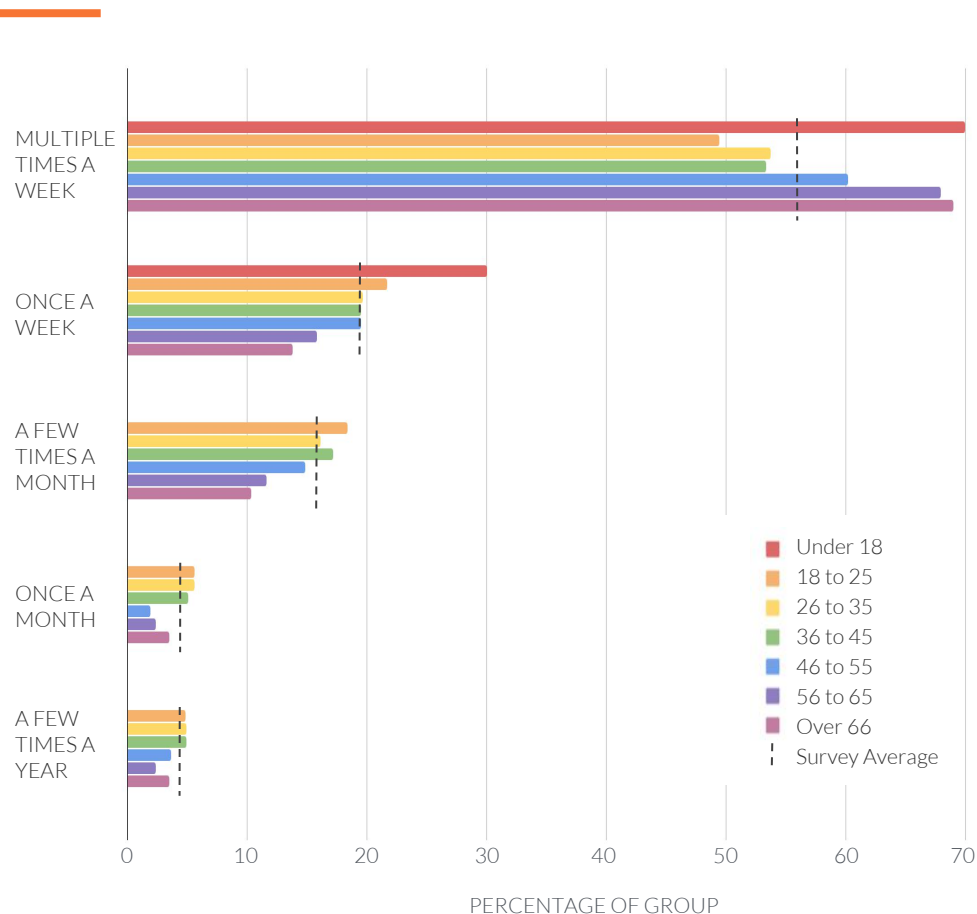
Participation

HOW DOES PARTICIPATION VARY WITH AGE?

- Those over the age of 55 participated more frequently than the [survey average](#) seen on the previous page, with approximately 68% taking part multiple times a week.
- The '46 to 55' age group were closer to the [survey average](#). However, within this demographic, 4% more participated multiple times a week.
- Both '36 to 45' and '26 to 35' were similar to the [survey average](#). However, fewer (2% and 3% respectively) participated multiple times a week.
- The opposite was apparent in the '18 to 25' age groups with only 49% participating more than once a week.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Excluding those under 18, these results suggest the older women in adventure are, the more frequently they participate. Further research is needed to attribute reasons to this accurately.



WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Mental wellbeing

COMPARING WOMEN IN ADVENTURE TO THE UK FEMALE POPULATION:

To be able to understand and compare the mental wellbeing of women in adventure, this survey uses the [Office for National Statistics](#) (ONS) [Measuring National Wellbeing \(MNW\) Programme's](#) measure personal wellbeing. This is an accepted method used to calculate the personal wellbeing of the UK population.

Personal wellbeing can be assessed using the following four measures. These are graded on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “not at all”, and 10 is “completely”.

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
2. Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
3. Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
4. Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

The ONS data referenced in this report was conducted at a similar time to the survey. The ONS data has also been broken down by gender to allow this report to compare female statistics directly.



WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Life satisfaction

EXPLAINING THE RESULTS:

This survey expresses the results for each measure as a mean and also within four thresholds.

Thresholds indicate the percentage in the following response categories for Life Satisfaction, Worthwhile and Happiness*:

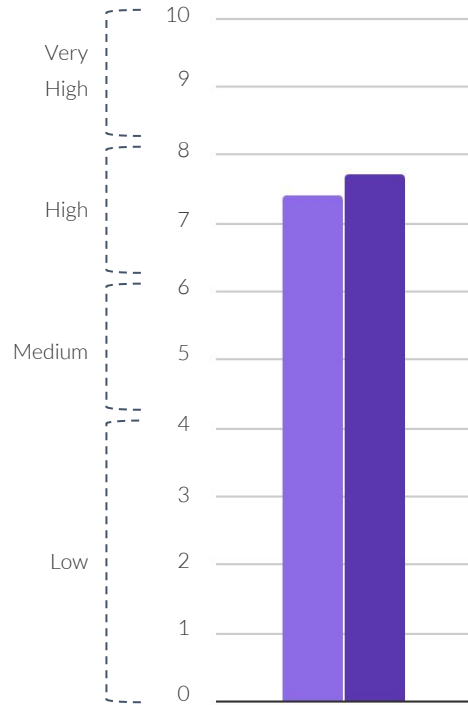
Very High: Scored 9 or 10

High: Scored 7 or 8

Medium: Scored 5 or 6

Low: Scored between 0 and 4

*Anxiety has different thresholds.



WIA SURVEY AVERAGE: 7.39

ONS UK FEMALE AVERAGE: 7.72

LIFE SATISFACTION:

Overall the Women in Adventure survey average for Life Satisfaction was 7.39. This was 0.33 less than the [ONS UK](#) average for women's Life Satisfaction, which was 7.72.

Comparing the thresholds of women within this survey:

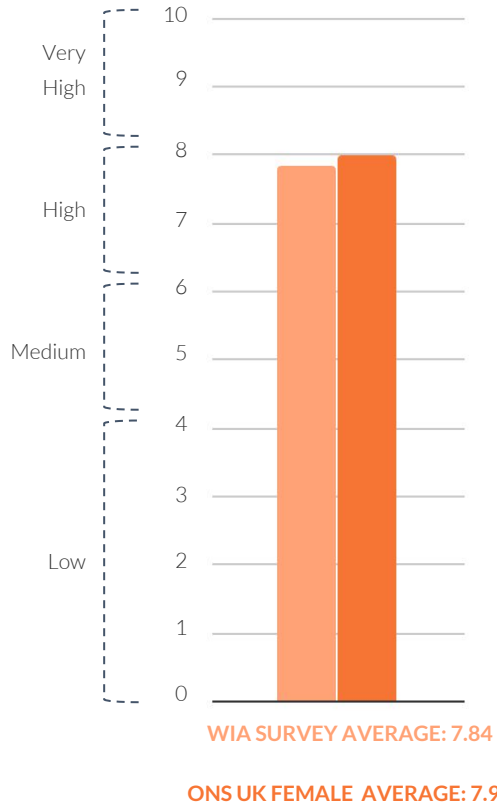
- 21.0 % of respondents were in 'Very High'.
- 58.2 % of respondents were in 'High'.
- 16.0 % of respondents were in 'Medium'.
- 4.8 % of respondents were in 'Low'.

What does this mean?

As a group, women who participate in adventure sports are most likely to say they have a 'High' level of satisfaction with their lives. Only one in 20 women in adventure would describe their life satisfaction 'Low'.

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Worthwhile



WORTHWHILE:

Overall the Women in Adventure survey average for Worthwhile was 7.84. This was 0.15 less than the [ONS](#) UK average for women's Worthwhile, which was 7.99.

Comparing the thresholds of women within this survey:

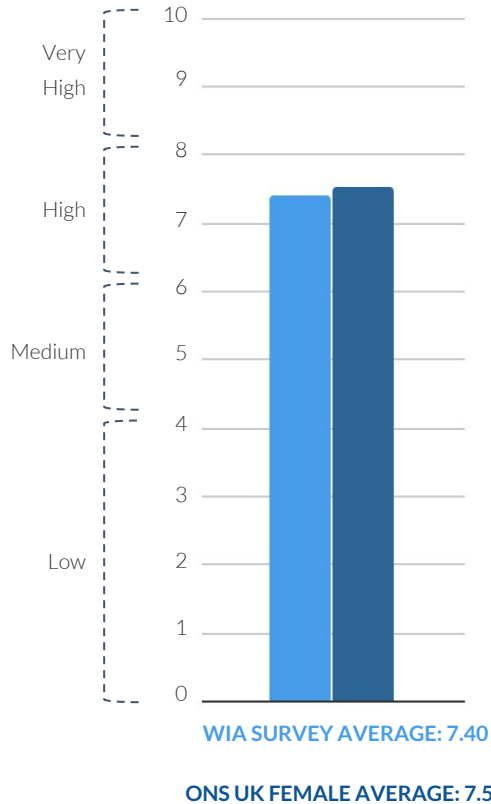
- 34.9 % of respondents were in 'Very High'.
- 48.5 % of respondents were in 'High'.
- 13.2 % of respondents were in 'Medium'.
- 3.4 % of respondents were in 'Low'.

What does this mean?

Approximately one in every two women who participate in adventure sports ranks 'High' for Worthwhile. After this, the second highest threshold is 'Very High'. This means that, generally, women in adventure consider the things they do in their lives to be worthwhile, or very worthwhile. Only three in 100 women consider the things they do in life not to be worthwhile.

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Happiness



HAPPINESS:

Overall the Women in Adventure survey average for Happiness was 7.54. This was 0.14 less than the [ONS](#) UK average for women's Happiness, which was 7.54.

Comparing the thresholds of women within this survey:

- 30.5 % of respondents were in 'Very High'.
- 44.5 % of respondents were in 'High'.
- 17.0 % of respondents were in 'Medium'.
- 8.1 % of respondents were in 'Low'.

What does this mean?

Women in adventure are most likely to rank in the 'High' threshold for Happiness. After this, the second highest is 'Very High'. This means that the majority of women in adventure who took this survey are either happy or very happy. Only 8.1% of women describe themselves as unhappy.

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Anxiety

EXPLAINING THE RESULTS:

Anxiety is measured in the [same way](#) as Life Satisfaction, Worthwhile and Happiness; however, the scale is reversed, i.e. a lower score indicates better mental wellbeing and lower anxiety.

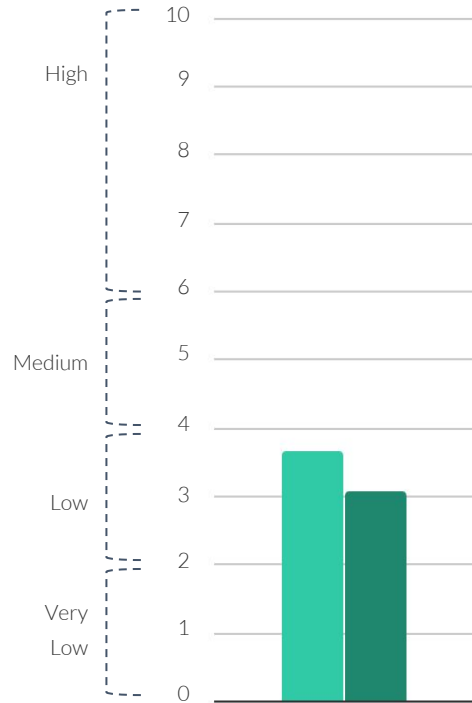
The thresholds for Anxiety are listed below:

High: Scored between 6 and 10

Medium: Scored 4 or 5

Low: Scored 2 or 3

Very Low: Scored 0 or 1



WIA SURVEY AVERAGE: 3.67

ONS UK FEMALE AVERAGE: 3.07

ANXIETY:

Overall the Women in Adventure survey average for Anxiety was 3.67. This was 0.6 higher than the [ONS](#) UK average for women's Anxiety, which was 3.07.

Comparing the thresholds of women within this survey:

- 24.8 % of respondents were in 'Very Low'.
- 28.9 % of respondents were in 'Low'.
- 18.3 % of respondents were in 'Medium'.
- 27.9 % of respondents were in 'High'.

What does this mean?

Overall, women who participate in adventure sports are more likely to describe their anxiety as either 'Low' or 'Very Low'. However, nearly three in ten would describe their anxiety as 'High'.

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Overall mental wellbeing

WHAT DO THESE RESULTS INDICATE?

Looking at all the measures together, the results indicate that women who participate in adventure sports have a similar measure of [Worthwhile](#) and [Happiness](#) to the ONS UK female average. However, they have lower [Life Satisfaction](#) and higher [Anxiety](#) than the ONS UK female average.

Before drawing to any conclusions, it is important to look more closely at the results, in particular, two key factors - [participation](#) and [age](#), breaking wellbeing down for each. This is discussed in the subsequent pages.

This observation is supported by the results of the [2018 Active Lives Survey](#) which also indicated lower wellbeing for female respondents. Life Satisfaction, Worthwhile and Happiness all scored below the ONS UK female average with Anxiety scoring higher than the ONS UK female average within their survey.

FURTHER DISCUSSION:

Why is the mental wellbeing of women who took this survey, below the UK female average? There are many potential reasons for this worthy of investigation. It should be acknowledged that a survey such as this is self-selecting. It is likely those who have chosen to participate in this survey feel a greater affiliation with mental health and wellbeing issues. Likewise, there are numerous other factors not investigated by this survey, such as geography and socioeconomic status of respondents.

Further research will be carried out to identify this.

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Age & mental wellbeing

HOW DOES AGE INFLUENCE MENTAL WELLBEING?

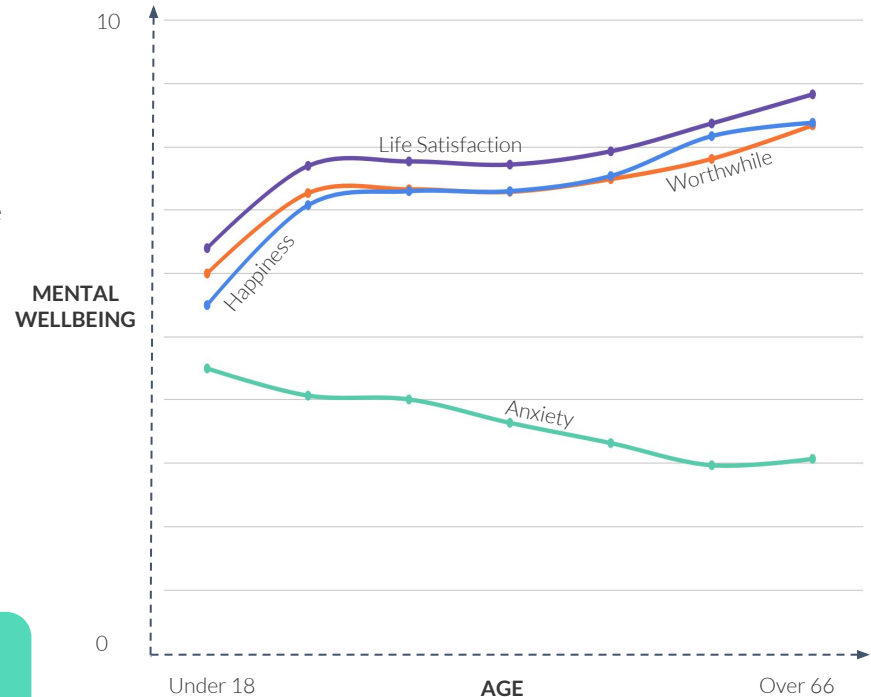
Life Satisfaction - there is a general trend that as age increases, so does Life Satisfaction. All age groups, except for '36 to 45', show a small increase in value. Groups '46 to 55' and older are above the [ONS UK female average](#) for Life Satisfaction.

Worthwhile - there is a trend that as age increases, so does how worthwhile respondents feel their life is. All age groups except '36 to 45' show a small increase in value. Groups '56 to 65' and older are above the [ONS UK female average](#), while '46 to 55' sits very close to average.

Happiness - there is a trend that as age increases, so does Happiness. This applies to all age groups except '36 to 45' which shows no increase from '26 to 35'. Groups '56 to 65' and older are above the [ONS UK female average](#), while '46 to 55' is identical to the ONS average.

Anxiety - overall as age increases there is a decrease in levels of anxiety. All age groups except for 'Over 66' show a small decrease. Groups '56 to 65' and older are above the [ONS UK female average](#).

OVERALL - When looking at these results as a whole, it appears that for this survey, mental wellbeing improves with age.



WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Participation & mental wellbeing

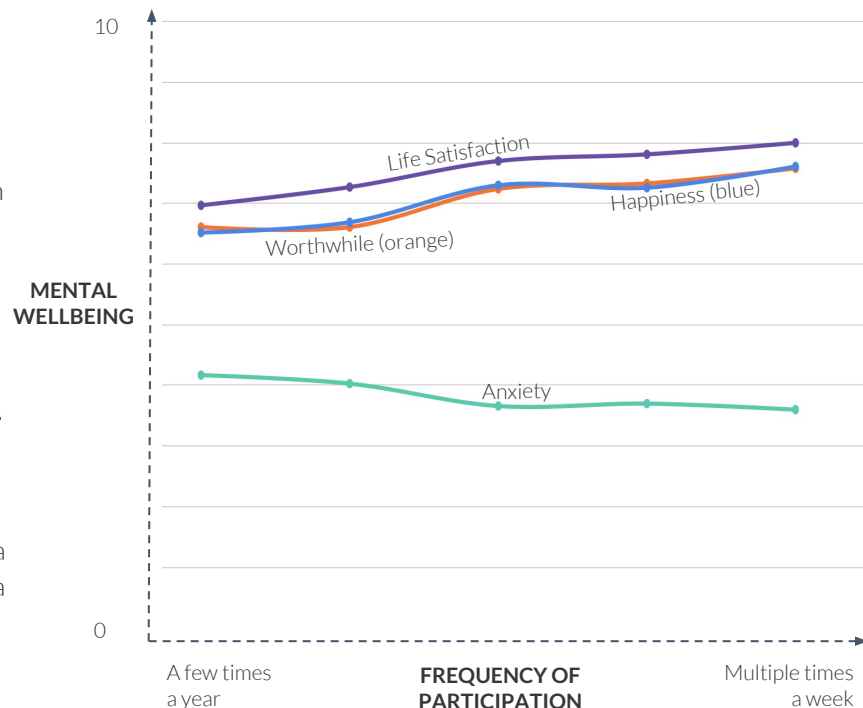
HOW DOES FREQUENCY OF PARTICIPATION INFLUENCE MENTAL WELLBEING?

Life Satisfaction - there is a trend that as participation increases, so does Life Satisfaction. There is one exception to this - there is no increase in Life Satisfaction between those that participate once a month and those that participate a few times a year. No groups are above the [ONS UK female average](#) for Life Satisfaction.

Worthwhile - there is a trend that as participation increases, so do how worthwhile respondents feel their life is; this is seen across all groups. Only those that participate multiple times a week are above the [ONS UK female average](#).

Happiness - there is a general trend that as participation increases, so does Happiness. The exception to this is between those that participate a few times a month and those that participate once a week, which shows a slight decrease. Only those that participate multiple times a week are above the [ONS UK female average](#).

Anxiety - the data shows a general decrease in Anxiety with increased participation. The exception to this is between those that participate a few times a month and those that participate once a week, which shows a slight increase. No groups are below the [ONS UK female average](#).



OVERALL - When looking at these results as a whole, it appears that for this survey, mental wellbeing improves with increased participation.

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Sports & mental wellbeing

ARE SOME SPORTS BETTER FOR MENTAL WELLBEING THAN OTHERS?

It is important to establish that sport is not mutually exclusive and women can participate in multiple sports. The context of each sport when mentioned should be thought of as 'women who cycle' not 'women who only cycle' as these women may also participate in other sports.

The following results examine the top 10 sports within the survey, all of which have a group size of over 200.

Life Satisfaction: Highest = Kayakers / Lowest = Surfers



Kayakers were the most satisfied with life, followed by canoeists then skiers. None of the top sports were above the ONS UK female average, however, the majority sat above the [survey average](#). Only hiking, camping, climbing and surfing sat below survey average (in this order), with surfers the least satisfied.



Worthwhile: Highest = Kayakers & Skiers / Lowest = Surfers



Skiers and kayakers shared the top of the results scoring the same value as the ONS UK female average. Swimmers and mountaineers sat closely behind this in second place. Only hikers, climbers and surfers dropped below the [survey average](#) with surfing scoring the lowest of the top sports.



Happiness: Highest = Skiers / Lowest = Climbers



Skiers were the happiest by a considerable margin, followed by the kayakers - these were the only two sports that sat above the ONS UK female average. Beneath this were swimmers and surfers respectively. Only mountaineers, canoeists and climbers sat below the [survey average](#) with climbers scoring lowest.



Anxiety: Lowest = Surfers / Highest = Climbers



Surfers had the lowest levels of anxiety followed by kayakers. No group scored the same or lower than the ONS UK female average. All sports except for running and climbing sat above the [survey average](#). Climbers had the highest levels of anxiety in the top ten sports.



WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Sports & mental wellbeing

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OVERALL MENTAL WELLBEING OF INDIVIDUAL SPORTS?

If each sport is ranked in order for [Life Satisfaction](#), [Worthwhile](#), [Happiness](#) and [Anxiety](#), the sport's average position can be assigned. It is important to note that this assumes each measure is a quarter of the value of an individual's mental wellbeing and equal.

When doing this, those that kayak have the best mental wellbeing of the top ten sports in this survey, followed by those that ski. After this, those that canoe and swim are joint third, closely followed by cycling. The subsequent order is camping, mountaineering then surfing. These all are similar, with running and hiking following on. Those that climb have the lowest mental wellbeing of the selected sports by a considerable margin, however, this still falls within the same thresholds as the survey average.

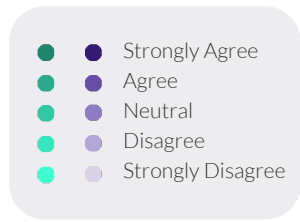


FURTHER DISCUSSION:

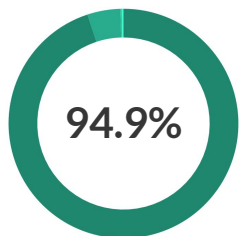
Why do the sports rank in the order above? What are the confounding factors influencing this? Possible influences may be linked to how sociable a sport is, the level of risk or danger associated with the sport, the cost associated with the sport, the ease of access to it, and the lifestyle surrounding it. Further research will be carried out to identify this.

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Impact of the outdoors

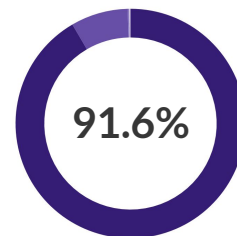


WHAT IMPACT DOES THE OUTDOORS HAVE ON WOMEN IN ADVENTURE?



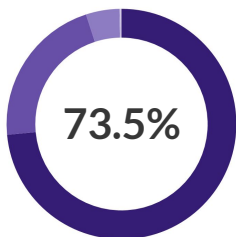
Strongly agree that the outdoors has a positive impact on their **MENTAL WELLBEING**.

Agree: 4.7% Neutral: 0.2%
Disagree: 0.0% Strongly Disagree: 0.2%



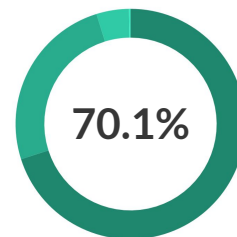
Strongly agree that the outdoors has a positive impact on their **PHYSICAL WELLBEING**.

Agree: 8.1% Neutral: 0.2%
Disagree: 0.0% Strongly Disagree: 0.2%



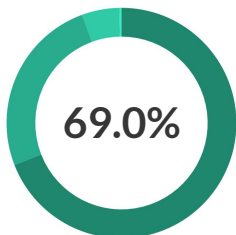
Strongly agree that the outdoors has a positive impact on their **SELF-ESTEEM**.

Agree: 21.5% Neutral: 4.7%
Disagree: 0.1% Strongly Disagree: 0.2%



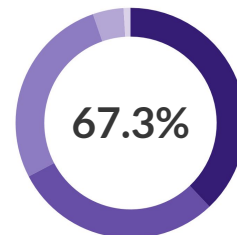
Strongly agree that the outdoors has a positive impact on the way they look at **LIFE & FUTURE PROSPECTS**.

Agree: 25.2% Neutral: 4.6%
Disagree: 0.1% Strongly Disagree: 0.1%



Strongly agree that the outdoors has increased their **RESILIENCE** and ability to cope.

Agree: 25.4% Neutral: 5.3%
Disagree: 0.2% Strongly Disagree: 0.1%



Strongly agree or agree that **FEMALE-LED ADVENTURE FILMS** encourage and inspire them to go outdoors.

Agree: 29.4% Neutral: 27.4%
Disagree: 4.3% Strongly Disagree: 1.0%

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

State of mind

When women in adventure were asked to describe their state of mind outdoors in 3 words, the most commonly occurring word was 'happy', followed by 'free' then 'focused'. Looking at the list of words used as a whole, 91% of words had a positive meaning. As well as individual words, participants also used three-word phrases, such as 'in the moment' or 'focused on nature'. They also commented that state of mind varied depending on activity, circumstance and type (e.g. teaching a sport compared to competing).



FREE was the **2nd** most frequently used word - chosen by **24.1%** of respondents.

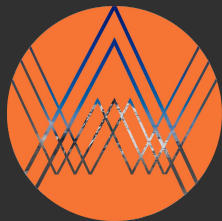
CALM was the **5th** most frequently used word - chosen by **15.7%** of respondents.

FOCUSED was the **3rd** most frequently used word - chosen by **20.5%** of respondents.

RELAXED was the **4th** most frequently used word - chosen by **16.3%** of respondents.

HAPPY was the most frequently used word (**1st**) - chosen by **33.3%** of respondents.

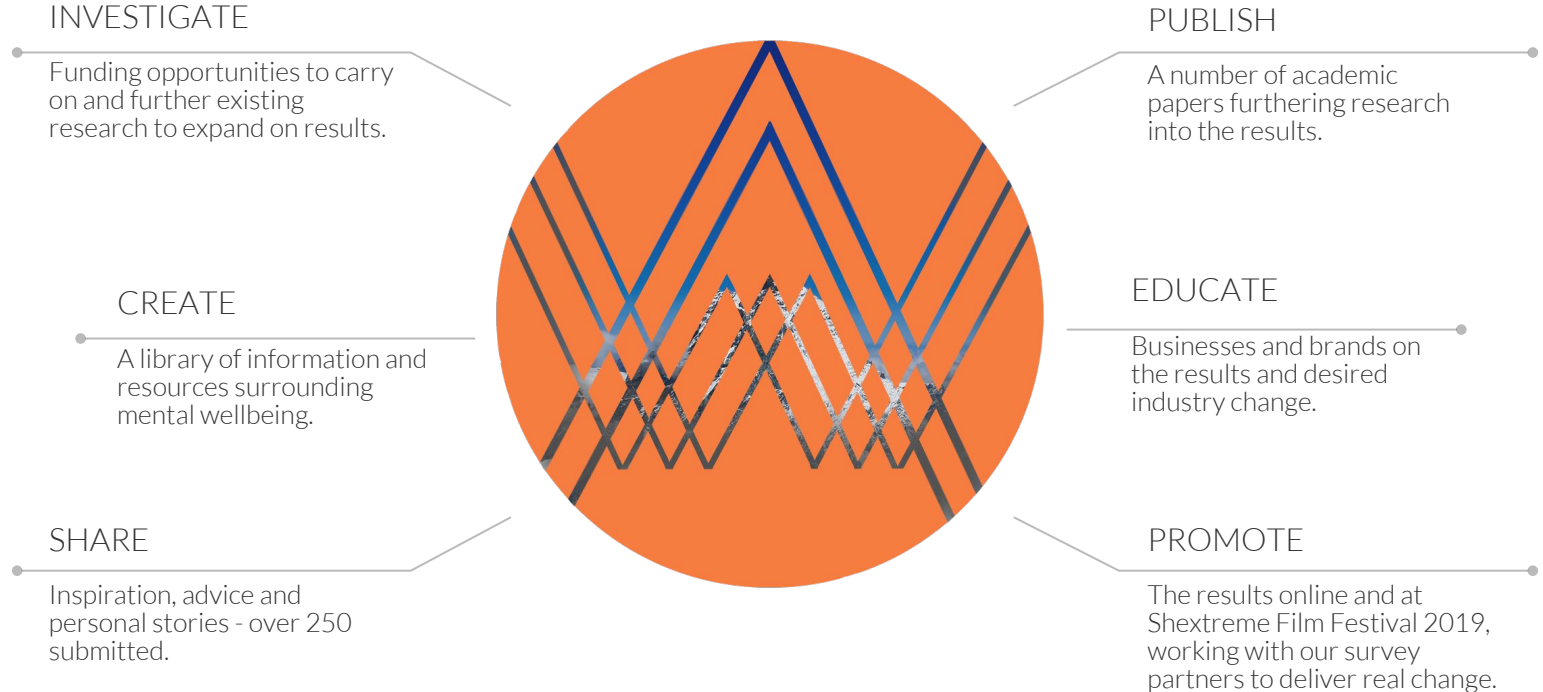
WOMEN IN ADVENTURE



NEXT STEPS

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Next steps



WOMEN IN ADVENTURE



WORK WITH US



hetty@womeninadventure.com



www.womeninadventure.com



[Join the network](#)

WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to our survey partners for helping share and distribute this study.



In addition to this, Women in Adventure would like to say a special thanks to everyone who has helped or supported this survey - in particular: Ruth Farrar, Jenny Brown, Matt Bird, Nigel Callender, Tom Kingston and Rosie Gloyns.



WOMEN IN ADVENTURE

www.womeninadventure.com