

Does social media influence your physical activity levels?

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As concerns are being raised about how social media influences young people's perceptions of their body image, sports scientists at Bangor University are asking whether and how social media affects our

participation in physical exercise, and who and what are the motivators?

Surprisingly little research has been published on how social media affects participation in exercise, and yet there are numerous influencers, coaches and participants sharing their tips and triumphs to be found on various social media platforms. Could social media also be acting as a positive influencer, encouraging some to participate in physical exercise or to have a healthier [body image](#)?

The researchers at the School of Sport Health & Exercise Sciences are appealing for physically active people of all ages and from any location, who also engage with social media, to respond to their questionnaire. The questionnaire is available online at https://bangorsport.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eKGWEchyAVWfYVf

This was an ideal research topic for Sports Science Masters research student, Sara Denny. Sara and lecturer Eleri Jones were both interested to explore the impact of social media on exercising and so devised the Masters Research topic together. Sara is now gathering data and hopes to complete her course in the next few months.

The questionnaire that Sara has created is asking people about their use of social media. She's aiming find answers to how social media might be influencing people's exercise habits, their motivations, and how they feel about exercise and their bodies.

Sara said: "This is a vast area, and there are several threads that we're trying to tease out. It would be interesting to find out whether social media does encourage us to exercise more or harder, or whether it's 'preaching to the converted.'" It would be good to know what kinds of accounts or platforms have the greatest influence, and how these accounts can affect people's image of themselves for better or worse: do these people take part in [exercise](#) to feel better, to improve their fitness

or improve their perception of how their body looks?"

Sara's Masters supervisor and Sport Psychology Lecturer Eleri Jones added:

"We know that the 'Millennial' generation have grown up with social media, so another question is whether there is a difference in the way different age groups use or are influenced by these social media accounts and influencers. Are Millennials more in tune with social media more influenced than older users?"

"This is a relatively unexplored area of research so, with recent reports that teenagers are spending too much time on social [media](#) and not enough time exercising, it would be good to establish whether [social media](#) is an effective tool to encourage greater levels of [physical exercise](#), and if so, how best to target that information to different age and interest groups in the future."

Provided by Bangor University

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