

**WOMEN ACROSS EUROPE UNAWARE OF HEART HEALTH RISK**  
***Physical activity key to tackle heart disease and stroke - number one killer of women***  
***Majority want to be more active: cost, image and time holding them back***  
**#MatchFitWoman Challenge launched for UEFA Women's EURO 2017**

**Two thirds** of women in the UK are unaware that heart disease and stroke are the number one cause of female death, affecting one in three women in Europe, according to new research released today.

Only one third (34%) of British women know that cardiovascular disease (CVD) posed the highest risk, nearly half of women questioned (49%) wrongly feel that cancer is the biggest threat. Others cite respiratory diseases, diseases of the nervous system or traffic accidents as the most likely cause.

Compared to their European counterparts, German women had the highest level of awareness of the issue (54%), with British women the least aware (34%), according to a survey amongst British, French, German and Swedish women, conducted on behalf of the World Heart Federation (WHF).

Awareness is lowest amongst the younger generation of European women, with only 1 in 3 (33%) 18-24 year olds across the four countries naming CVD as the biggest killer, compared to 54% of 45-54 year olds.

Whilst awareness is important, taking action on heart health is vital. Physical activity is a key way of helping to keep your heart healthy, but the research found that **three quarters** of women in the four countries are doing less than the World Health Organization's recommended levels of activity<sup>1</sup>. One in ten of those questioned admitted that they do not spend any time at all doing moderate exercise (brisk walking, gardening, dancing etc.) in an average week.

To help reverse this trend, in the run up to this summer's UEFA Women's EURO in The Netherlands, women across Europe are being encouraged to join the **#MatchFitWoman** 28 day challenge: improving their heart health by setting goals to get active for 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.

The challenge and research are part of *A Healthy Heart Your Goal*, a joint campaign by WHF, UEFA, The Dutch Heart Foundation, the Royal Dutch Football Association (KNVB) and the Healthy Stadia network, which aims to raise awareness of heart health and encourage women and children to be more physically active.

Sangeeta Bhagat, World Heart Federation said: *"Every woman can be match fit. Being a #MatchFitWoman is not about being 'Beach Body Ready'. It's about recognising that even with our busy lives, we can all make a healthy heart our goal and make small changes that will keep us fit and healthy, there for our loved ones - for the long term."*

It's clear women want to do more exercise - 72% of women questioned across the four countries would like to be more active, rising to 81% when it comes to 18-24 year olds. But what's holding them back? Key barriers to exercise for the women questioned include: embarrassment about their lack of fitness (31%), being too busy (42%) and worries about the cost of exercise (36%).

Peter Gilliéron, Chairman of the UEFA Fair Play and Social Responsibility Committee said: *"We can all look after our hearts by making exercise a part of our daily life. Playing football is a fun way of getting together with friends or meeting new people, and importantly, you don't need an*

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization's Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health are: adults between 18 – 64 should do 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous physical exercise per week.

*expensive venue or kit – having a kick about in the local park is looking after your heart just as much as playing in an European final.”*

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**Notes to Editors:**

**About the research:**

Conducted by Censuswide amongst 4159 women in Europe aged 18-64 (UK: 1144, 1005 in each of France, Germany and Sweden). **Detailed results of the survey, including barriers to exercise, can be accessed on:** <http://releasd.com/4901>

**About 'A Healthy Heart Your Goal' and the #MatchFitWoman challenge**

Starting on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2017, the 'A Healthy Heart Your Goal' **#MatchFitWoman** challenge is a 28 day pledge to get active and improve heart health in the run up to the UEFA Women's EURO tournament. By sharing activity goals on Facebook and Twitter, entrants will have a chance of winning fantastic football prizes including VIP tickets to the Women's EURO 2017 final in The Netherlands.

For more information and to join the challenge search #MatchFitWoman,

Twitter @worldheartfed

[www.facebook.com/worldheartfederation](http://www.facebook.com/worldheartfederation)

[www.worldheart.org/womenseuro](http://www.worldheart.org/womenseuro).

**About the World Heart Federation**

The World Heart Federation is dedicated to leading the global fight against cardiovascular disease (CVD), including heart disease and stroke. Working with more than 200 member organizations in over 100 countries, we strive for a 25% reduction by 2025 in premature deaths from CVD around the world.

**WORD COUNT: 800**