

The Social Value of Group Exercise

Executive Summary





FOREWORD

Gill Cummings-Bell

Everyone who participates in group exercise will undoubtedly value the benefits group exercise brings to health, well being and communities. Whether its a Pilates, Aerobics, Yoga, Aqua or outdoor fitness, coming together to take part in your favourite exercise creates a fun and friendly community to enable all individuals to get active, improve their health and wellness and build strong thriving communities.

In 2024 EMD UK, The National Governing Body for Group Exercise commissioned the first ever Social Value of Group Exercise report with the Sport and Recreation Alliance. It is with great pride that EMD UK are the advocates and voice of the group exercise workforce. EMD UK never doubted and always supported the value that group exercise teachers bring to the communities they build through their continued passion and commitment to teaching their classes week in week out and the health and social benefits afforded to their classes participants. What EMD UK's report does is deliver to all the evidence that group exercise should always be at the forefront of any investment in health, wellness and building strong communities.

The evidence is remarkable. 10.6 million adults engaged in group exercise, 500,000 children and young people contributing £5.3 billion in social value. Group exercise saves our Healthcare systems 1.6 million GP appointments per year and prevents 26k cases of diabetes saving £511 million in costs. The evidence is huge and undeniable.

EMD UK are committed to the group exercise workforce and growing group exercise participation with a key strategic focus on making group exercise accessible to all. One of the most notable findings of the report is how group exercise can tackle inequalities with 4.1 million people with characteristics of inequality, 7.1 million women and 1.6 million people aged over 65 taking part. The group exercise workforce have the unique ability to address many of the health and social challenges communities face, bring communities together with purpose and from all backgrounds.

Thank you for taking time to read this report and understand the work undertaken by EMD UK and the group exercise workforce and the pride that EMD UK hold in supporting the group exercise workforce who without doubt work as the solution to the nations health and wellbeing. I look forward to working with everyone involved in group exercise and continue creating a positive impact on all communities by building on this research.

Gill Cummings-Bell
Chief executive officer - EMD UK



ABOUT EMD UK

Exercise Movement and Dance UK (EMD UK) is the **national governing body for group exercise**. We support **over 11,000 members** comprised of instructors delivering group exercise classes to their communities.

INTRODUCTION

Group Exercise spans a broad range of activities, from high energy Zumba, to meditative yoga, and seated classes accessible to all. This profile means group exercise's collective value is complex to calculate and as a result its contribution to society and to the objectives of strategic bodies underestimated. Until now.

Sport England's 2024 calculation of the Social Value of Sport and Physical Activity identified £107bn of value produced by participation and volunteering across all types of movement and exercise. Using this methodology, our report estimates the unique market share contribution of group exercise toward this figure.

The research demonstrates the immense contribution of the collective value of group exercise and highlights its ability to attract and retain people other activities struggle to engage; in particular, women and girls, older people, and people living with disability. Further, through detailed case-studies we tell the stories, familiar to many within the group exercise community, to bring the true human impact of our members' work to life, to provide meaning behind the numbers.

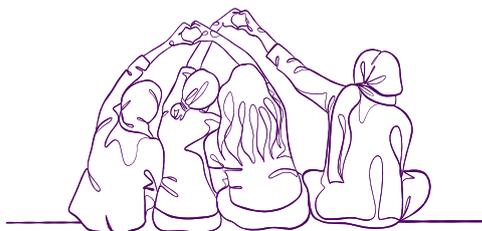
IN SUMMARY



Over **10.6 million adults** (around a quarter of the adult population of England) use group exercise as part of their blend of activities.



More adults use group exercise than cycling, swimming or football to get active.



Over **4 million people** with characteristics of inequality indicating lower levels of activity engage in group exercise - meaning this form of activity is highly accessible and contributes significantly to tackling inequalities in participation in physical activity.



This activity produces a **social value of over £5.3 billion** to society per year.

Why Group Exercise Matters

OUR IMPACT IS HUGE

10.6m

Adults engaged

500K

Children and young people

£5.3bn

in social value

60,000

Group Exercise instructors

WE SAVE OUR HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS

1.6m

saved GP appointments

26K

cases of Type II Diabetes

£511m

saved costs

6,891

cases of coronary heart diseases prevented

WE TACKLE INEQUALITIES

7.1m

women moving

1.6m

people aged 65+

4.1m

people with characteristics of inequality

1.3m

people living with a disability or long term health condition

Our Asks of Government

Healthy Group Exercise Workforce = A Healthy Economy

As many as 55% of group exercise instructors are being forced to consider leaving the sector, with many struggling due to associated costs, such as the rising cost of facilities, equipment and music licensing fees.

Our ASK:

Investing and supporting the workforce through the national governing body, EMD UK, will help to protect the £5.3 billion instructors continue to deliver in social value, whilst also attracting more people to the sector and increasing economic productivity.

Investing in Group Exercise = Investing in Our Healthcare System

Group exercise plays a vital role in addressing inactivity amongst all communities. By being especially effective in attracting and retaining women and older people to exercise, group exercise plays an important role in preventing conditions that disproportionately effect these groups.

Our ASK:

The power of group exercise activity and its enormous health benefits must be recognised and play a fundamental role in the long-term future of our healthcare systems, putting it on an equal footing with other activities that form part of social prescribing.

Strengthening Access to Group Exercise for All = Strengthening Communities

Group exercise programmes have been proven to be a vast health and wellness hub within communities which is vital to create a thriving economy, building an improved sense of community, enhancing individual wellbeing, and a better quality of life.

Our ASK:

The Government must support greater access to group exercise programmes in all communities, with a view to enabling more people from all backgrounds across the country to engage in and benefit from group exercise.

Primary Value - Mental Wellbeing

'Primary Value' of Group Exercise refers to the enhanced mental wellbeing generated through participation and volunteering in physical activity. This link is backed by robust evidence and research. Uplifts in wellbeing (measured in WELLBY) are converted, using HM Treasury's guidance, to calculate its monetary value (see full report).

Many things can impact mental wellbeing, from body image to loneliness, happiness and self efficacy. A defining feature of group exercise is its shared nature, meaning it carries all the benefits inherent in exercise and being active, enhanced by socialisation and human connection.

The 2024 Sport England Social Value model considers the more people with characteristics of inequality supported into activity, the greater the primary value generated. The characteristics under consideration are disability or long-term health condition, age 65+, lower socioeconomic status (NS SEC 6-8), Asian ethnic background, and pregnancy/parenting a child under one year. The impact of this sensitivity is presented below, where 1 or more characteristic of inequality equates to 39% of the population share and 50% of the value. **Group exercise supports over 4.1 million people with at least 1 characteristic of inequality to engage in physical activity.**

	Multiplier			
	GEx Popn (% Share)	Active	Fairly Active	GEx Value (% Share)
0 Characteristics	6.5m (61%)	£2,300	£800	£2.1bn (50%)
1 Characteristics	3.5m (33%)	£2,500	£1,100	£1.5bn (36%)
2+ Characteristics	0.68m (6%)	£3,800	£2,800	£565m (13%)

Limitations - Volunteering and CYP Primary Value

Volunteering activity, and participation are also considered under the primary value of group exercise. The number of volunteers support group exercise is estimated at 150,000 due to limitations in the available data. CYP figures are based on 'dance' (see full report).



£4.84 billion of primary value per year.



10.6 million adult participants = £4.25 billion



Estimated 150,000 adult volunteers = £245 million



500k Children and young people's participation = £336 million

CASE STUDY

‘Let’s Get Active’ to Combat Isolation and Loneliness - Peter and Reg



Nicola Kidney and Brad Storey run a Let’s Get Active class which is targeted at elderly residents with multiple comorbidities, but older adults generally attend. Most participants were either referred to the class by their GP or came along on the advice of another class member.

Peter (mid-70’s) – double cancer diagnosis and heart attack survivor:

“Following the death of my wife I was in a very dark place. I got in the car four times and each time I couldn’t bring myself to go out. I became a recluse and started to develop anxiety around leaving the house. I had therapy for 18 months to cope with the grief and have been on anti-depressants ever since...I lost so much impetus, structure and energy.”

“I have tried training in the gym, but it just wasn’t giving me the social interaction I needed. I could feel myself getting lonelier and more isolated as the years ticked by – then I found these classes.”

Reg (mid-70’s) – widower following his wife’s 7-year battle with Alzheimer’s:

“There’s no beating around the bush, when you lose your lifelong partner, you are on your Jack Jones. And that hurts.”

“Getting a break from that isolation and loneliness is a real benefit and being active in the process is doubly good.”

“You can’t beat being in a group of like-minded people. They motivate you. They encourage you. They support you. And they are the reason why I enjoy being active.”



Secondary Value - Health

'Secondary Value' refers to the physical and mental health related savings to the NHS associated with the unique market share of physical activity undertaken via group exercise.

The values are calculated by determining the number of cases prevented attributable to the unique market share of participation in group exercise across 17 different conditions / costs.

The cost of treating one case is then multiplied by the number of cases prevented to calculate a value per condition (see the report for a detailed summary of the methodology).

CASE STUDY

'Keeping Active Post Pregnancy' - Hafsa Begum



Hafsa Begum attends classes delivered by Laura Williams, a Pilates and Yoga Group Exercise instructor for over 20 years. Laura delivers a number of tailored classes to women and receives attendees from diverse backgrounds.

"A credit to the instructor for creating a space where those who may not usually be comfortable in group situations can confidently take part in a group exercise class" – Anonymous Attendee

Hafsa is a regular attendee of the weekly class. Hafsa was very active prior to her pregnancy but now feels restricted in the activities she can do...

"The group dynamic to the class gives it 'an extra edge' and Laura makes me give 100%! If you see people around you give their best effort, you feel like you should give your best effort too. It is almost like you want to compete and keep up with them – so it really helps physically and has helped my core recover from my pregnancy".

"Group exercise helps maintain oneself, giving you time for you whilst enabling you to interact with others. You meet different people of all different cultures. Everyone at my class has had to come out of their comfort zone and start working on themselves".

"If people knew how easy it is to just give it a go, then I think more people would do it".

Health Savings for Women and Older People

The participant profile of group exercise over indexes for women (71%) and for older people (15%) compared to other activities.

This means that group exercise contributes a greater amount in savings in conditions that specifically affect these groups than its overall participation figures might initially indicate.

This does not infer that group exercise is more beneficial for these groups than other forms of physical activity. Prior to the modelling being undertaken a literature review of research and evidence relating to group exercise was carried out and no evidence met the confidence thresholds required to adjust the general model (see full report).

However, it does reflect the fact that group exercise is more successful in engaging and retaining women and older people than most / many other activities.

£511 million of secondary value per year.

58,991 cases of clinical depression prevented = **£133m**

26,161 cases of Type II Diabetes prevented = **£114m**

3,724 cases of dementia delayed = **£50m**

6,891 cases of coronary heart disease prevented = **£42m**

1,649,511 reduced psychotherapy services appointments = **£39m**

4,938 strokes prevented = **£38m**

1,653 hip fractures prevented = **£32m**

41,851 instances of back pain prevented = **£27m**

1,587,120 reduced GP visits = **£27m**

752 instances of Cancer (7 types) prevented = **£16m**

1,135 injuries attributable to participation in group exercise = **-£6.7m**

SOCIAL VALUE OF GROUP EXERCISE

Primary Value of Group Exercise

ADULTS (16+)

Wellbeing Values of Participation (Adults)

'ACTIVES'	Population	Activity Share	Multiplier	Impact (£ mil)
0 Characteristics	5,978,971	14.59%	£2,300	£2,006
1 Characteristics	3,099,361	17.10%	£2,500	£1,325
2+ Characteristics	552,098	19.12%	£3,800	£401
'Actives' subtotal				£3,732
'FAIRLY ACTIVES'	Population	Activity Share	Multiplier	Impact (£ mil)
0 Characteristics	509,126	34.59%	£800	£141
1 Characteristics	417,201	47.91%	£1,100	£220
2+ Characteristics	124,290	47.08%	£2,800	£164
'Fairly Actives' subtotal				£525
Wellbeing Values of Participation (Adults)				£4,257

Wellbeing Values of Volunteering (Adults)

'FREQUENCY'	Population	Activity Share	Multiplier	Impact (£ mil)
Weekly	86,463		£2,100	£182
Monthly	62,933		£1,000	£63
Wellbeing Values of Volunteering (Adults)				£245

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (11-16YR)

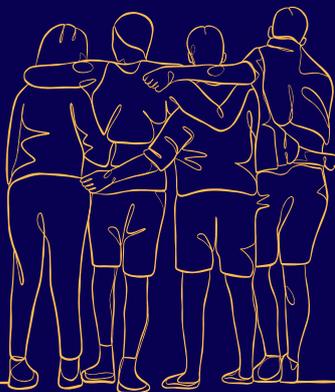
Wellbeing Values of Participation (CYP)

'FREQUENCY'	Population	Activity Share	Multiplier	Impact (£ mil)
'ACTIVES'	368,947	15.51%	£4,100	£235
'FAIRLY ACTIVES'	126,949	25.79%	£3,100	£101
Wellbeing Values of Participation (CYP)				£336

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Secondary Value of Group Exercise

ADULTS (16+)			
Condition/Area	Cases	Multiplier	Impact (£ mil)
Coronary heart disease (CHD)	6,891	£5,513	£41.73
Stroke	4,938	£7,234	£38.34
Type 2 Diabetes	26,161	£4,013	£114.04
Breast Cancer	316	£19,634	£6.65
Colon Cancer	191	£16,317	£3.34
Bladder Cancer	37	£24,126	£0.95
Endometrium Cancer	96	£24,126	£2.49
Oesophagus Cancer	46	£24,126	£1.20
Gastric Cancer	32	£24,126	£0.82
Renal Cancer	35	£24,126	£0.90
Dementia	3,724	£11,939	£49.61
Clinical Depression	58,991	£2,002	£132.62
Hip Fractures	1,653	£17,934	£31.84
Back Pain	41,851	£592	£26.60
Reduced GP Visits	1,587,120	£16	£27.27
Reduced Psychotherapy Services	1,649,511	£22	£38.97
Increased Risk of Injury	1,135	£5,488	-£6.69
Total Secondary Value of Group Exercise			£511 million



TOTAL SOCIAL VALUE OF GROUP EXERCISE:

£5.35 billion

With thanks to:

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emd-uk



ExerciseMoveDanceUK



emduk.ngb

For the full report please visit: www.emduk.org/socialvalue



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