

# International Women's Day



March 2021

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# About International Women's Day

International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. It has happened every year since 1911

Every year across the globe people come together to celebrate women's achievements, or rally for women's equality. International Women's Day should act as a reminder for all of us to commit to elevating and empowering all women, every day.

The campaign theme for International Women's Day 2021 is #ChooseToChallenge and more information can be found here: <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/About>

Sustrans Midlands & East is proud to be playing its part in championing these objectives as an employer and as a walking and cycling champion. So we will be running a series of activities from 5-8 March to encourage and empower women of ALL backgrounds to think about cycling as an option for them. We will acknowledge women of African, Caribbean, Middle Eastern and South Asian heritage who are currently the least represented in the cycling world.



# So what is the problem?

Participation in cycling is not equal across demographic groups.

Message 1: Many women of African, Caribbean, South Asian and Middle Eastern heritage, face barriers to cycling every day which other demographic groups do not. This results in fewer of them cycling which must change if we are to make cycling accessible to everyone.

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## Key facts

- It is well documented that women cycle less than men; that there is a particularly high drop off in cycling between Primary and Secondary school for girls; that people who experience racism, are less likely to cycle and are less well catered for by cycling infrastructure and organisations. Sustrans has a stated commitment to addressing these inequities. <sup>1,2</sup>
- The 'This Girl Can' campaign has also carried out research and found that appearance is an important issue for women when it comes to cycling.<sup>3</sup>
- Hair styling is often a key part of the coming of age story for young people. It represents identities, social bonds and involves navigating societal pressures. For many reasons, including historical and persistent racism, Black young women and those who wear hijabs, may have specific experiences of hair and hijab styling which might then impact wearing a cycle helmet.<sup>4</sup>

1. Arup and Sustrans, *Cycling for Everyone*, 2020:14

2. <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/opinion/2013/may/why-dont-more-women-cycle/>

3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-41737483>

4. <https://halocollective.co.uk/halo-background/>

# OK, what is our campaign then?

Our campaign this year is about recognising the barriers to cycling faced by young women every day.

Key objective: The project aims to ensure that young women from backgrounds that are least represented in the cycling world, know that they are welcome and included. This includes young women of African, Caribbean, Middle Eastern and South Asian heritage.

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## What is #HelmetsHijabsandHair then?

- #HelmetHijabsandHair is a competition that aims to address some of the barriers to cycling. Its purpose is to encourage women of ALL backgrounds to think about cycling as an option for them. The aim is to increase the confidence and esteem, especially of young women, to cycle with a helmet if they want to, including cycling to school.
- The idea for the project sprang from a conversation with a participant in a Young Women's group run by After 18, which supports young refugees. This young woman enjoys cycling; loves styling her hair in many different styles; understands and agrees with her foster Mum's view that she should always wear a helmet when cycling. Yet, she could not envisage travelling to sixth-form College on her bike because she likes to look stylish when attending college and is shy to wear the hairstyle at college that she usually wears with her cycle helmet.
- The Project fits in perfectly with this year's IWD theme and will be listed on the International Women's Day website. International Women's Day weekend will provide the launch setting for the campaign. Some of the young people and other partners involved in the project have been involved in the design of specific promotional materials and communications.

# What are our objectives?

To engage school-aged young people, especially young women, in a fun, cycle related campaign. To increase the profile and image of cycling, particularly amongst school-aged young women of African, Caribbean, South Asian and Middle Eastern heritage and amplify voices for change.

- Key objective: We don't just want to break down the barriers faced by young women, we want to create real, lasting change so that everybody has the same opportunity to enjoy active travel.

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## What do we hope to achieve?

- We want to help to increase the confidence and esteem, especially of young women, to cycle with a helmet if they want to, including cycling to school. In the context of the recent surge in interest in voices for change within the Black Lives Matter movement and beyond, there is an opportunity to foster increased pride and confidence in young Black women pushing beyond stereotypes.
- We want to increase the confidence of school-aged young people, especially young women of African, Caribbean, South Asian and Middle Eastern heritage, to choose to cycle more and more often, including journeys to school and college.
- The purpose of our activities is to encourage women of ALL backgrounds to think about cycling as an option for them.

# What will we be doing?

Key objective: People are encouraged to strike the #ChooseToChallenge pose with a hand held high and show their commitment to choosing to challenge inequality, pledging to call out bias, and actively question stereotypes.

We will run a social media campaign, host a webinar and take part in a 'newsroom' event.

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## Our activities

- Participants are invited to send in photos of themselves and/or pictures that they have drawn with suggested hairstyles or hijab styles that will work especially well with cycle helmets. The pictures should show the style with a helmet on and after a helmet has been removed with the hashtag #HelmetHijabsAndHair. This will be done through a social media campaign as well as through direct engagement with schools and colleges. A panel of judges, including some of our partners, will choose winners, from the entries.
- Short videos of women from the cycling world, including Sustrans staff and partners, will also be released on social media over the weekend and we will be running a webinar on 5th March at 4.30pm, titled, '**Spotlight on Cycling: Identities, Barriers and Freedoms**'. (<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/international-womens-day-cycling-spotlight-tickets-142882103217>). The webinar will be chaired by women representing the Sustrans Midlands & East region. The panel will be made up of six women who will each give a short introduction, outlining how their identities influence their experiences of cycling.
- We will participate in Leicester Documentary Media Centre's International Women's Day newsroom on Monday 8th March with a mix of pre-recorded and live interviews.

# How can our partners help?

We are already working with partners across the region including local councils, secondary schools, and youth organisations. But we need everyone to help because we can't do this on our own!

Key objective: We need your help to inspire and give confidence to more women who want to cycle! A challenged world is an alert world and from challenge comes change. So let's all choose to challenge

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## What do we need you to do?

- Share our social media posts with your friends, partners, share our instructional video showing how to get involved. See below.
- Encourage people to get involved in the campaign by posting to Twitter, and other social media, with the #HelmetHijabsAndHair hashtag
- Encourage others to stand proud and tell us their story

# Are there assets to share?



Please share this You-Tube video on your social media channels explaining how to get involved in #HelmetHijabsAndHair.

A suggested post to accompany the video is:

Follow this link to the #HelmetHijabsAndHair video, for easy to follow instructions on how to take part in our prize giving competition. To win, design a hair or Hijab style which can be worn with a bike helmet. We are really looking forward to seeing your entries. Good luck!

<https://youtu.be/s9Mf-hMJ7fU>



# What channels and hashtags should I use?

## Sustrans social media channels



@SustransEMids  
@SustransWMids



/sustransEmids/  
/sustransWestMidlands/



@sustrans

## Recommended hashtags

#ChooseToChallenge

#womenwhocycle  
#barrierstocycling  
#whyicycle  
#cyclingidentity

#HelmetHijabsAndHair  
#HelmetStyle

## Other accounts

@Sustrans

@womensday  
@Leicester\_News

# More social media posts to share

Simply copy and paste or create your own

**Check out this webinar** on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> March at 4.30pm, hosted by Sustrans Midlands & East:

International Women's Day  
Cycling Spotlight: Identities,  
Barriers & Freedoms

Get your ticket here:

<https://tinyurl.com/dmh4frs5>

**There's an amazing panel of speakers lined up for #IWD.** In the need of freedom? Ever wondered what it's like to cycle the world? ...or is there a #barrier that stops you from cycling? The panel members will talk about overcoming their own barriers to inspire others to get involved. Join us at 4:30pm on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> March

## How will you wear yours?

Win some hairstyling or cycling vouchers in Sustrans Midlands & East's creative competition.

Click on this link to find out how:

<https://youtu.be/s9Mf-hMJ7fU>

OR

## Calling all budding hairstylists!

## Calling all budding fashion designers!

Win some hairstyling or cycling vouchers in Sustrans Midlands & East's creative competition.

Click on this link to find out how:

<https://youtu.be/s9Mf-hMJ7fU>

## Join Sustrans Midlands & East and #choosetochallenge.

Celebrate inspiring women and join the conversation about identities, barriers and the freedom of riding a bike.

Check out social media channels @sustransEMids @sustranWMids @sustrans and join Leicester Documentary Media Centre's **International Women's Day newsroom** through SustransEMids facebook page on International Women's Day - Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March at lunch time

# Who are the Key people?

Name	Position	Contact
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