

# 1 in 4 Brits More Scared of Gyms Than Spiders

Submitted by: Puregym

Thursday, 12 September 2019

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- One in four non-gym goers would rather have an injection, or be in a room with a spider, than go to the gym
- Fear expert Dr. Margee Kerr says the social element of the gym is to blame for such high anxiety but is a fear we can all overcome
- PureGym has launched a wide range of advice, guides and workouts for people new to the gym, to help them through their first few sessions

New findings from PureGym reveal that 50% of non-gym goers in the UK admit to feeling scared of the gym, with some stating their gym phobia is worse than more commonly recognised fears such as heights, spiders or injections.

The scale of our gym-phobia:

The study (full report here (<https://www.puregym.com/blog/gym-fear-intimidation-report/>)) compared gym anxiety to other common fears and helped to show that some people are so spooked by gym that one in four would rather choose to have an injection, or be alone in a room with a spider than go to the gym.

30% of millennials said they'd rather give up their phone for a day instead of going to the gym alone, and 1 in 4 (25%) women said they'd rather go on a rollercoaster than head to the gym. Almost 1 in 5 non gym-goers also said they currently would rather stand atop a skyscraper than visit the gym alone.

What scares some most about the gym?

The study also revealed the things that worry non-gym goers the most about visiting the gym, helping to uncover why some may be avoiding a pastime shown to result in multiple benefits for both physical and mental health.

The top five sources of gym nerves:

1. Looking stupid in front of other people
2. Feeling self-conscious next to other people
3. People judging my body shape
4. Not knowing how to set up the machines/equipment
5. Not being strong enough or fit enough to use the machines properly

How to overcome gym phobia:

Stephen Rowe, Chief Marketing Officer at PureGym says:

“Our research revealed two principal causes of fear for people new to the world of gyms. The first is a general fear of the unknown and secondly, people worry that others may judge them as they don't know what they're doing which can lead to social anxiety. To help first timers with their first visit,

we've created a behind-the-scenes gym video tour (<https://www.puregym.com/blog/video-tour-of-a-gym/>) which shows what a PureGym looks like from the inside, so they can get used to the gym before they even leave the house. There is also an online treadmill guide (<https://www.puregym.com/blog/gym-machine-set-up/>) on how to set-up a machine and three new workouts specifically for beginners (<https://www.puregym.com/blog/beginner-gym-workout-routines/>) to help a nervous member on their first visit. By arming new starters with a little more knowledge before they step into the gym, we hope to give them a bit more confidence and remove some of those anxiety barriers."

In addition to launching a host of new guides and advice to aid new members, the gym provider has also worked with fear expert Dr. Margee Kerr, to provide further insight into gym phobia and how everyone can overcome it.

Dr. Margee Kerr teaches and researches everything 'fear' related at the University of Pittsburgh and has even consulted on deliberately fear-inducing theme park attractions. Dr. Kerr explains the reason why the gym is different to other healthy activities in our minds is because "Going to the gym is a social experience, meaning it carries all the potential gains that come with socialising, but also all of the fears and anxieties too".

"We, as humans, are constantly comparing ourselves to our peers, analysing how we're similar, better, or worse. We also compare ourselves to our own expectations of what we think we should be capable of, our internal representation of our 'best' self".

"Where we might be able to hide some of our vulnerabilities in the workplace or school, our weaknesses feel on full display in the gym, inciting intense feelings of vulnerability, of self-doubt, of fear."

Dr. Kerr suggests the following tips for recognising and over-coming your gym anxieties:

1. Remind yourself that you are in control. Studies show a sense of control makes scary social events easier to tolerate and overcome. So, acknowledge, and frequently remind yourself, that you are the one choosing to take on this fear inducing situation. Your doctor, spouse, family member, coach, etc. didn't make you go to the gym, YOU did. Knowing it's your choice will empower you to embrace the challenge ahead.
2. Don't ignore that you feel scared. Denying, or attempting to suppress your fears doesn't work, in fact studies show it does the exact opposite. The more we try to NOT think of something the more importance we give it in our minds! Give yourself permission to feel scared, acknowledge the fear when it creeps in, welcome it and know that it's OK to feel this way. And applaud yourself for feeling the fear but doing it anyway!
3. Educate yourself. Fear is all about the unknown, so you can do yourself a BIG favour and reduce a ton of anxiety by learning more about the gym before your first workout. Either research online, or book an induction to learn where the locker rooms, water fountains, and exits are located, and learn any important gym protocol like proper equipment use and class etiquette. Thinking strategically will help you manage your fears, you have to know your territory before you make a move.

Read more of Dr. Kerr's tips on coping with gym anxiety at  
[www.puregym.com/blog/how-to-get-over-gym-anxiety/](http://www.puregym.com/blog/how-to-get-over-gym-anxiety/)  
(<https://www.puregym.com/blog/how-to-get-over-gym-anxiety/>)

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Notes to editors:

PureGym is the UK's leading gym operator providing low-cost and high-quality fitness facilities for over one million members spread across 235+ sites. PureGym was launched in 2009 and pioneered the model for affordable, flexible, high-quality fitness clubs in the UK.

Members pay monthly and have no contract commitment. Most of its 235+ gyms are open 24 hours a day across the UK and offer a full range of top of the line equipment including cardiovascular equipment, fixed-resistance and free weights. Each gym typically offers over 220 pieces of fitness equipment and up to 80 group exercise classes each week delivered by around 2,500 personal trainers.

Survey conducted in August 2019 by Censuswide on behalf of PureGym to 1,000 UK non-gym member adults aged 16 and above.