

Six Times More Scottish Women Want to Learn DIY than Baking

Helicopter flying, free-running, body piercing and fire eating on their skills hit-list

A survey by the Scottish Women's Institutes (SWI) of 1000 Scottish women of all ages shows that six times more women want to learn DIY than baking. More women want to learn car maintenance, how to fly, how to dance, how to drive or how to crochet than how to bake cakes. Less than half of one percent (0.42%) of women want to learn traditional sewing stitch crafts like embroidery and cross stitch while most women (aged from 18 to 95 plus) want to learn a foreign language (11.06%). Pursuits synonymous with the SWI (affectionately known by generations as 'The Rural') such as sewing skills involving making garments, knitting and crocheting make the top ten at numbers 6, 7 and 10 respectively; but today's Scottish women also want to learn how to play a musical instrument, sports, IT skills and professional skills. The survey also shows some daredevil women want to learn fire eating, contortion, survival skills, free running, unicycling, helicopter flying and body piercing with one woman wanting to learn the skills to become a witch.

The survey is published ahead of the SWI national conference which takes place in Edinburgh tomorrow (Saturday, September 12). It was commissioned as part of a rebranding project which has seen the SWI drop the word 'Rural' from its name, change its logo and develop a series of pilot meetings across Scotland including several in cities. These meetings, which are still being trialled, are less formally structured, held with varying frequencies and in a variety of locations from coffee shops to pubs. The pilots run in parallel to the more traditional monthly style of meeting. The organisation's membership has dropped from close to 50,000 in 1980 to 17,700 in 2014. The changes are designed to show today's Scottish Women that the SWI is relevant to their lifestyle and is a place for learning skills as well as for fun and friendship.

"There is no doubt that we are an organisation which is in peril," says Christine Hutton Chairman of the SWI. "Our membership has been declining for more than three decades by at least 1000 members a year. This survey shows two key things for our organisation. Firstly, that Institutes across Scotland are already delivering what many women want – but not everyone is aware of the scope of our activities. Women who join us can learn to cook, bake, sew and artistic skills as well as joining our choirs, poetry competitions, drama groups, gardening activities and photography classes. But more importantly, as we approach our centenary, we need to be offering skills and activities relevant to what today's women want and this independent survey gives us the evidence to show that we need to explore foreign languages, musical instruments, practical DIY and car maintenance, IT skills and professional skills such as leadership and presentation skills. Some of our Institutes such as Leith are already offering a much broader range of activities including group Ukulele lessons which can be viewed on our Facebook page."

The top twenty skills most Scottish woman would like to learn are:

- 1 Learning a foreign language
- 2 Learn to play a musical instrument
- 3 Arts and crafts including painting and drawing
- 4 DIY – including building, carpentry, carpet fitting, wallpapering and plastering
- 5 Sports – including diving, golf, martial arts, surfing and snowboarding
- 6 Sewing – dressmaking
- 7 Knitting
- 8 IT skills including how to use social media
- 9 Cooking
- 10 Crochet
- 11 Professional skills including leadership, finance and public speaking
- 12 Driving
- 13 Singing
- 14 Dancing
- 15 Flying
- 16 Car/bike maintenance
- 17 Baking including cake decoration
- 18 Gardening
- 19 Photography
- 20 Writing – including poetry

The survey also shows that older women are more experienced in traditional ‘hands-on’ skills, with all respondents in the 75-84 age group having sewn a button onto a garment, made an item of clothing and baked a biscuit, cake or scone, the only age bracket recording 100% for these skills.

Women aged between 45-54 are the most likely to want to learn how to use Skype and Facetime to keep in touch with friends and family (20%) followed by women in the 53-64 year age bracket (17%).

The survey highlights regional variations. All respondents in East Dunbartonshire, Argyll and Bute, Falkirk, Perth and Kinross and the Western Isles are familiar with using social media. This contrasts with their counterparts living in Orkney and Shetland where 20% and 25% respectively admit they have never used social media – and wouldn’t know how to.

Only 40% of 25 – 34 year olds have ever sewn a garment against 100% of 75-84 year olds. The 45 – 54 year olds find themselves sandwiched by better IT skills at both ends of the age spectrum. 98% of 18 – 24 year olds have shared photos online and 100% of those aged 95 plus have too but only 66% of 55 – 64 year olds have done this. One respondent aged 95 plus recorded 100% scores for each skill/experience in the survey (sewing on a button; baking a cake; sharing photos online, using social media and skype) expect for making a garment.

“The survey shows that there is still an appetite to learn what might be considered to be traditional SWI pursuits,” adds Christine. “More than 46% of 18 – 24 year olds want to learn how to sew a garment. Where better to learn this than with SWI members?”

For more details of how to find your nearest institute, or advice on how to set up a new one, visit www.theswi.org or go to its Facebook pages at <https://www.facebook.com/ScottishWomensInstitutes>

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Notes to editors:

The independent survey was carried out by OnePoll between 28th August and 4th September 2015 when 1,000 women living across Scotland aged between 18-95 plus were surveyed.