

Active Lives Children and Young People Survey

Academic year 2019/20

Published January 2021

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Key information

This report presents data from the Active Lives Children and Young People Survey for the academic year 2019/20. Data is presented for children and young people in school Years 1-11 (ages 5-16) in England.

This report should be read in conjunction with our Coronavirus (Covid-19) Report, which can be accessed [here](#).

Release dates

This release: 14 January 2021
Next release: 9 December 2021

Find out more

For more information on the data presented in this report, please visit the [Active Lives section](#) of our website.

Welcome



Welcome to the third annual Active Lives Children and Young People Survey report, summarising the activity levels of 5 to 16-year olds in England from September 2019 to July 2020.

The period covered includes the disruptive storms last February, which resulted in school closures and the cancellation of many outdoor activities, and the unprecedented disruption caused by the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, which primarily impacted the summer term.

The disruption also impacted the collection of data. We were unable to collect any data during the last two weeks of the spring term (late March) when schools were closed, while we also had to switch from school to at home completion for the summer term.

As a result, we don't have data covering the first full lockdown. Our summer term data starts from mid-May, when restrictions began to be eased. In this report, we reveal the impact of these disruptions, the children and young people most affected, and the extent to which children and young people switched into alternative or adapted activities over the year.

As with our most recent adult survey, we've taken the decision to publish two reports.

This main report covers the full 2019/20 academic year, and highlights some of the changes that occurred during the pandemic. This report should be read in conjunction with the standalone Coronavirus Report, which focuses solely upon the picture during the summer term.

As ever, I'd like to thank the schools, children, parents and teachers who took the time to complete the survey, and the network of Active Partnerships who've once again played a key role in working with the schools, particularly during the hugely disrupted summer term.

Lisa O'Keefe Insight Director

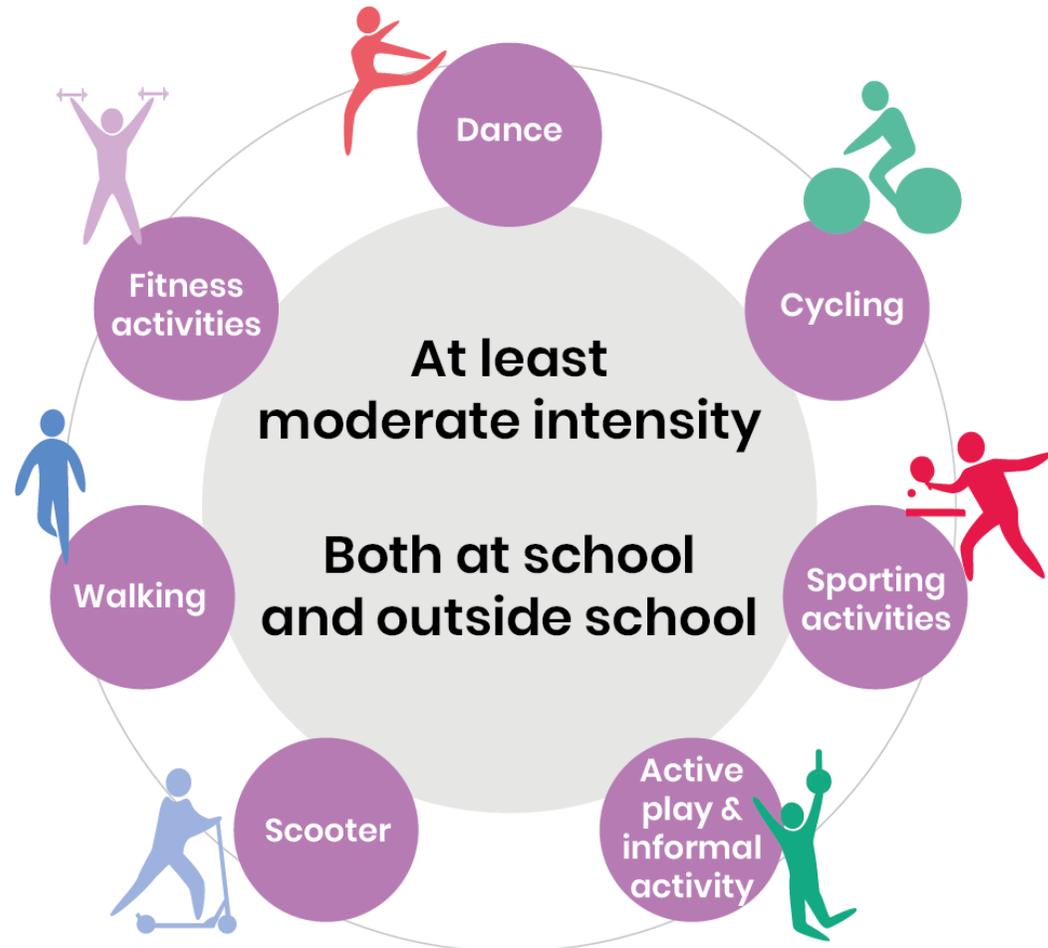
Levels of activity

Definition

This chapter presents information on three levels of activity:

- Active (an average of at least 60 minutes a day)
- Fairly active (an average of 30-59 minutes a day)
- Less active (less than an average of 30 minutes a day).

What do we mean by sport and physical activity?

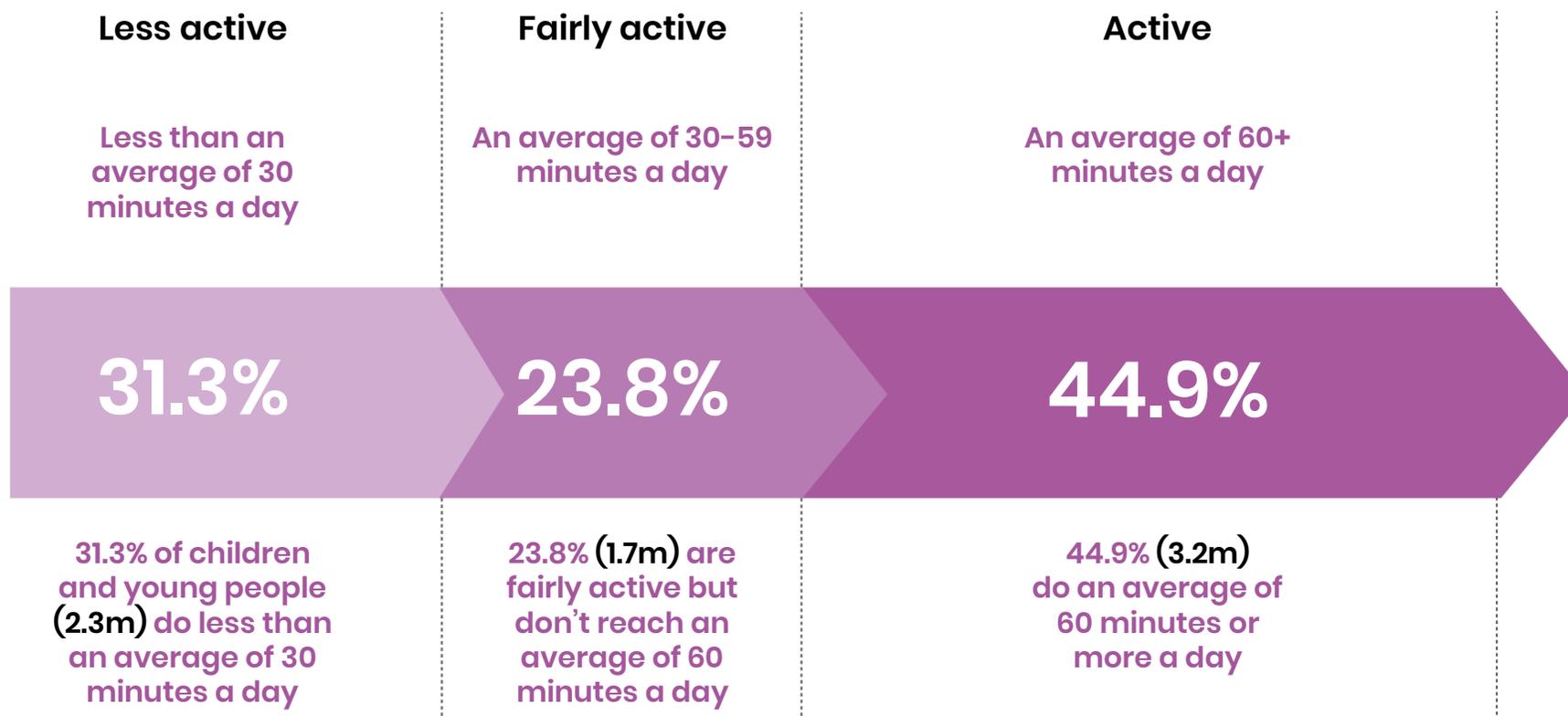


Levels of activity



Headlines

Our data shows that 44.9% of children and young people (3.2 million) are meeting the Chief Medical Officer guidelines of taking part in sport and physical activity for an average of 60 minutes or more every day. Meanwhile 31.3% (2.3m) do less than an average of 30 minutes a day.



[Link to data tables](#)



Levels of activity

 Arrows show the percentage point change on 12 months ago. No arrows indicate no change



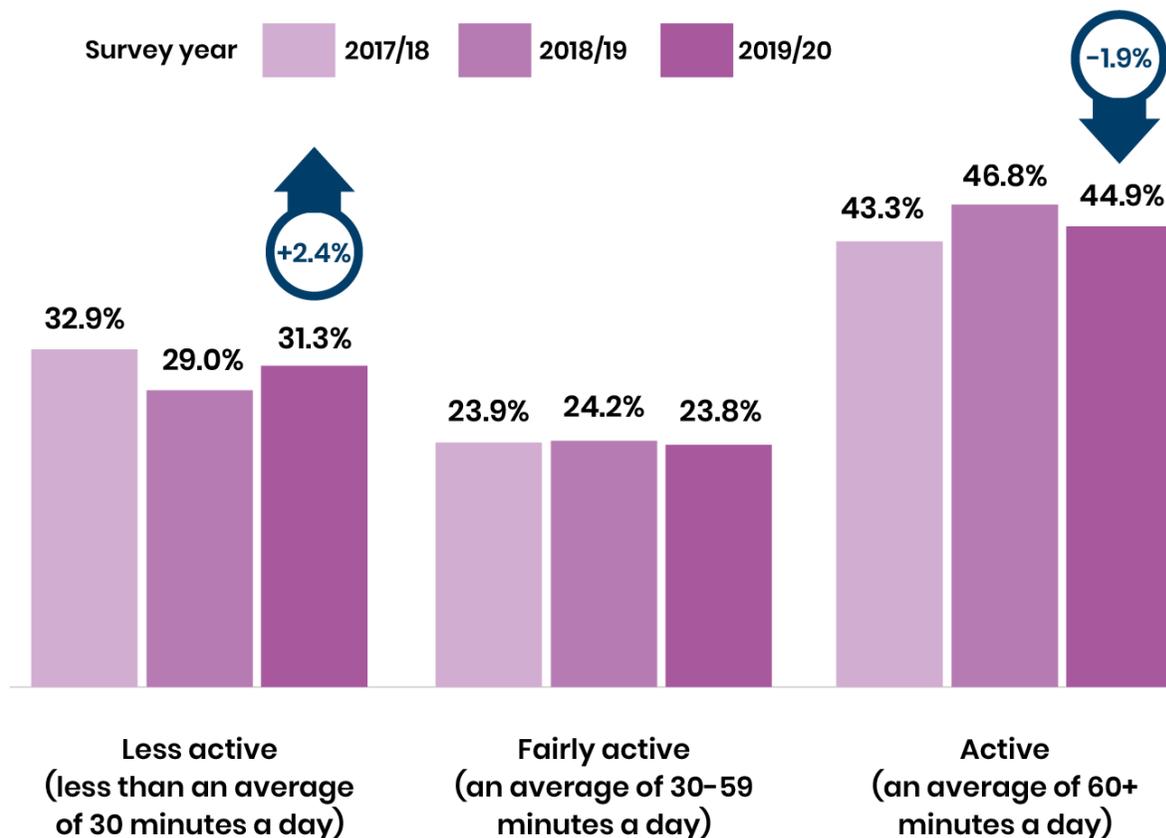
Summary of change

The proportion of children and young people in England who are active has decreased by 1.9% over the past 12 months (a drop of 86,500). Activity levels remain up compared to 2017/18.

There's been an increase of 2.4% (201,400) in the proportion who are less active over the last year. Levels remain down compared to 2017/18.

The autumn term saw growth in activity levels, but reductions came across the spring and summer terms (between January and late-July):

- The spring term saw multiple storms in February which caused widespread disruption (of a scale last experienced in January 2018).
- The summer term (covering the period of easing restrictions) saw unprecedented disruption due to the coronavirus pandemic, with school sites closed to most pupils and many activities either severely restricted or delivered in a different way. See our Coronavirus Report for further analysis.



Note: Due to the dates of the school terms, the first phase of full lockdown (mid-March to mid-May) is not covered in this data. The summer term (mid-May to late-July) covers the period of easing restrictions. See our Coronavirus Report for further details.

[Link to data tables](#) 

Levels of activity

Note: All data relates to young people in Years 1-11 (ages 5-16)



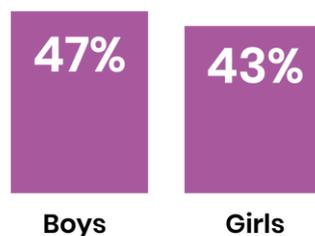
Summary of demographic differences

Our data shows there are significant inequalities:

Active

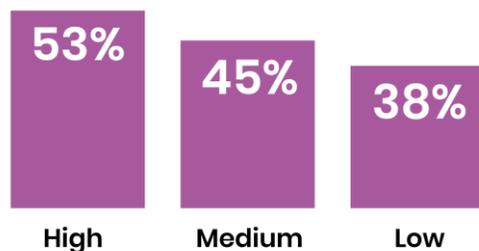
1 Gender

Boys (47% or 1.7m) are more likely to be active than girls (43% or 1.5m), with a gap of 213,000 between them.



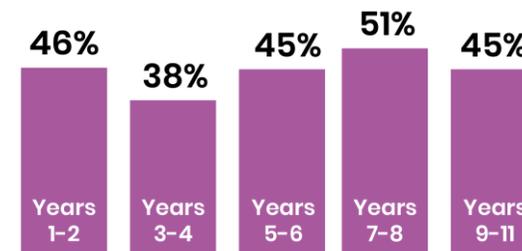
2 Family affluence

Those from low affluence families are the least likely to be active (38%).



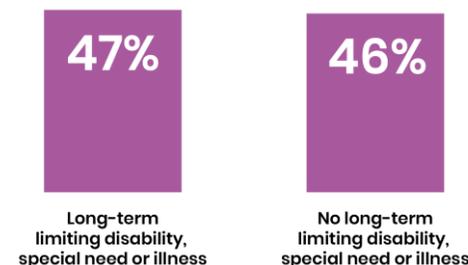
3 Year group

Activity levels are lowest for school Years 3-4 (ages 7-9, 38%) and highest for those in Years 7-8 (ages 11-13, 51%).



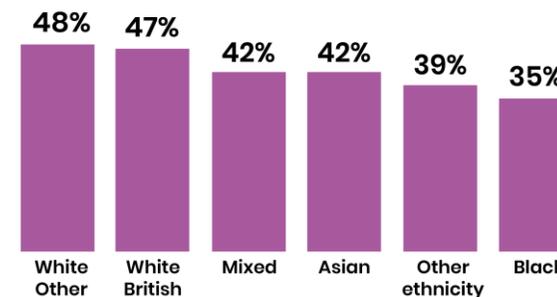
4 Disability and long-term health conditions

Activity levels amongst children and young people with a disability or long-term health condition are the same as for those without one.



5 Ethnicity

Black children and young people are the least likely to be active (35%).



[Link to data tables](#)

* See our [definitions](#) page for the full definition of each demographic group.

Levels of activity

 Arrows show the percentage point change on 12 months ago. No arrows indicate no change



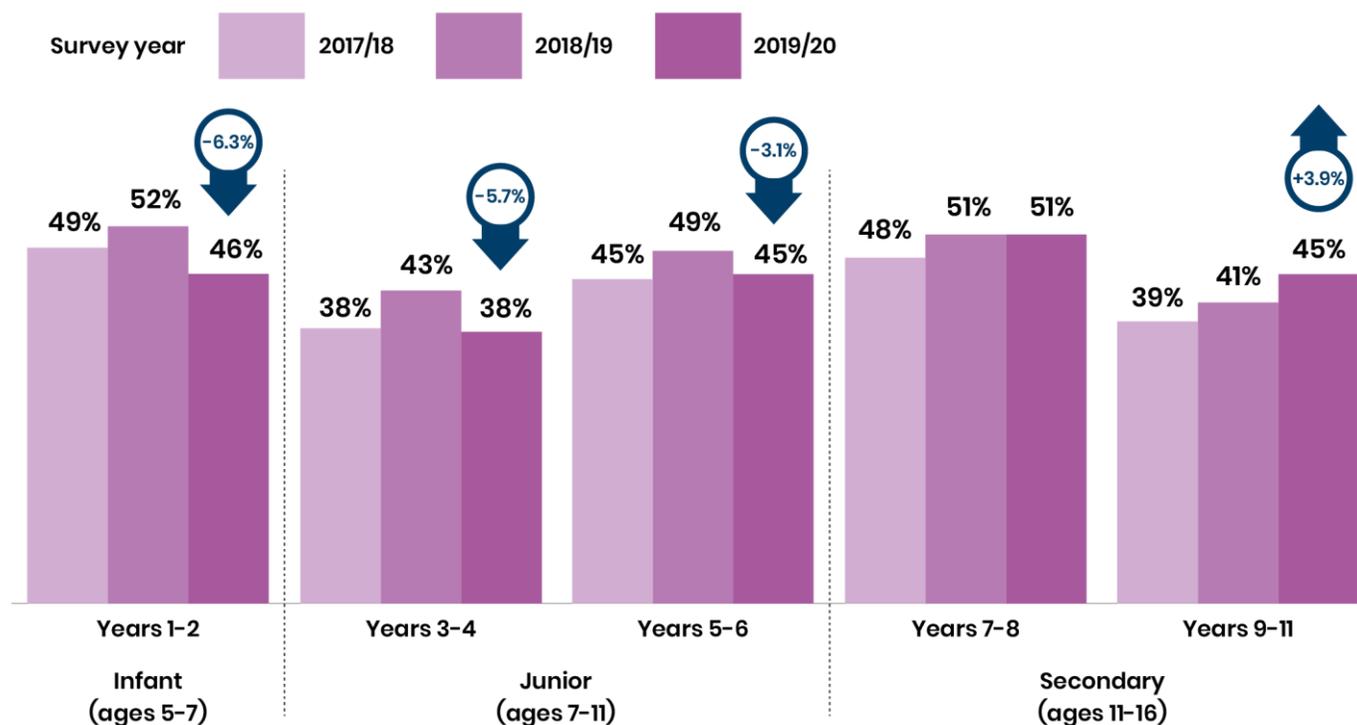
School year group

Activity levels have fallen back for Years 1-2 (ages 5-7) and Years 3-6 (ages 7-11). In contrast, activity levels remain up compared to 2017/18 for those in Years 7-8 (ages 11-13), whilst we've continued to see increases amongst those in Years 9-11 (ages 13-16).

During the spring term, activity levels of younger children decreased whilst young people in years 9-11 (ages 13-16) saw an increase. Given the poor weather and storms, this reflects the fact that a lot of younger children's activity takes place outdoors, whereas older young people tend to have more choice, with gym or fitness activity more important for this group.

During the summer term, coronavirus restrictions had the greatest negative impact on activity levels for boys in Years 5-6 and upwards (ages 9+). See our Coronavirus Report for further details on the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's activity levels.

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)



[Link to data tables](#) 

Levels of activity

 Arrows show the percentage point change on 12 months ago. No arrows indicate no change

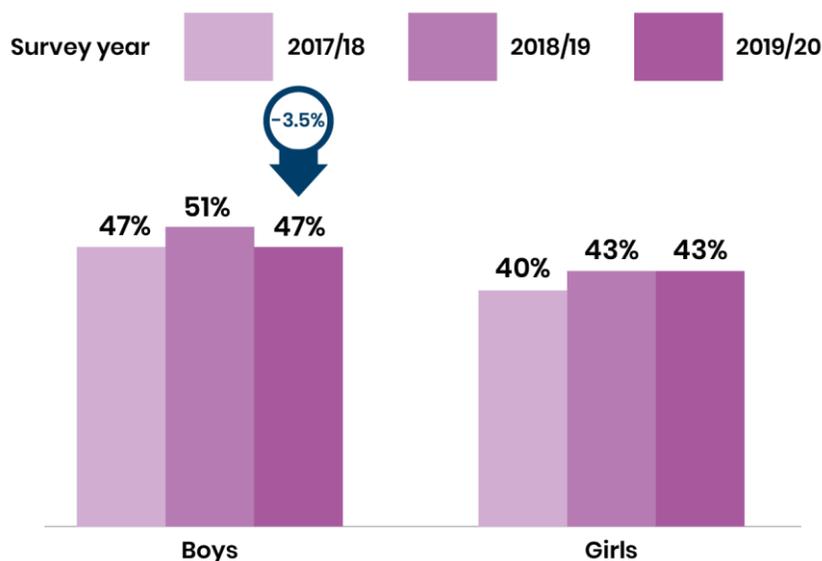


Gender

Despite a fall in activity levels compared to 12 months ago, boys (47%) remain more likely to be active than girls (43%). The decreases over time in activity levels for boys have been driven by the younger age groups.

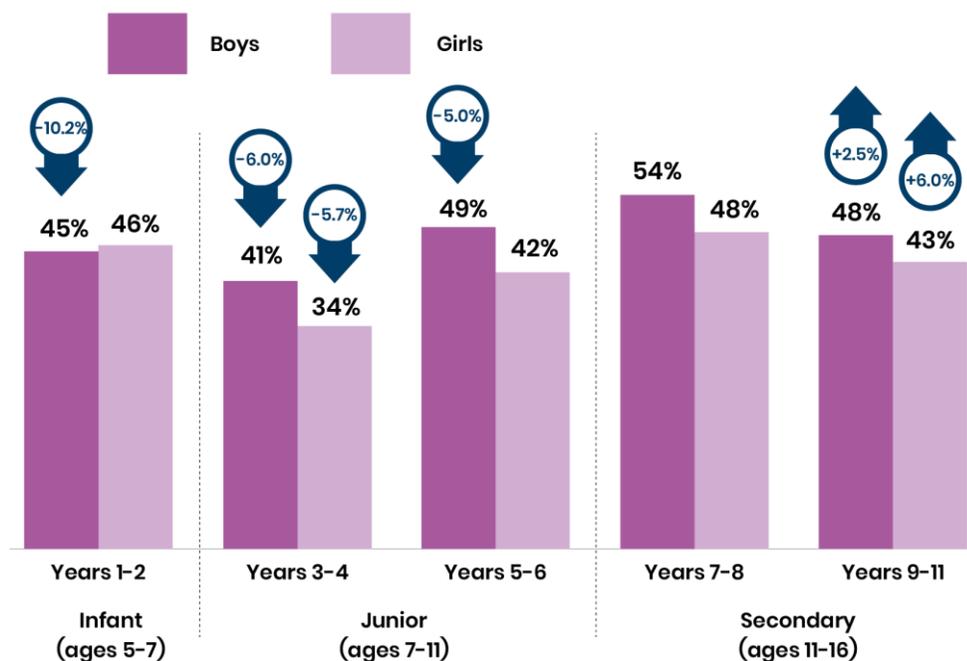
Our Coronavirus Report shows that, whilst boys saw a decrease in activity levels during the summer term compared to 12 months ago, girls were generally able to maintain activity levels.

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)



[Link to data tables](#) 

With the exception of Years 1-2 (ages 5-7) where there's no reportable gender gap, the gap between boys and girls who are active narrows as children get older.



Levels of activity

 Arrows show the percentage point change on 12 months ago. No arrows indicate no change

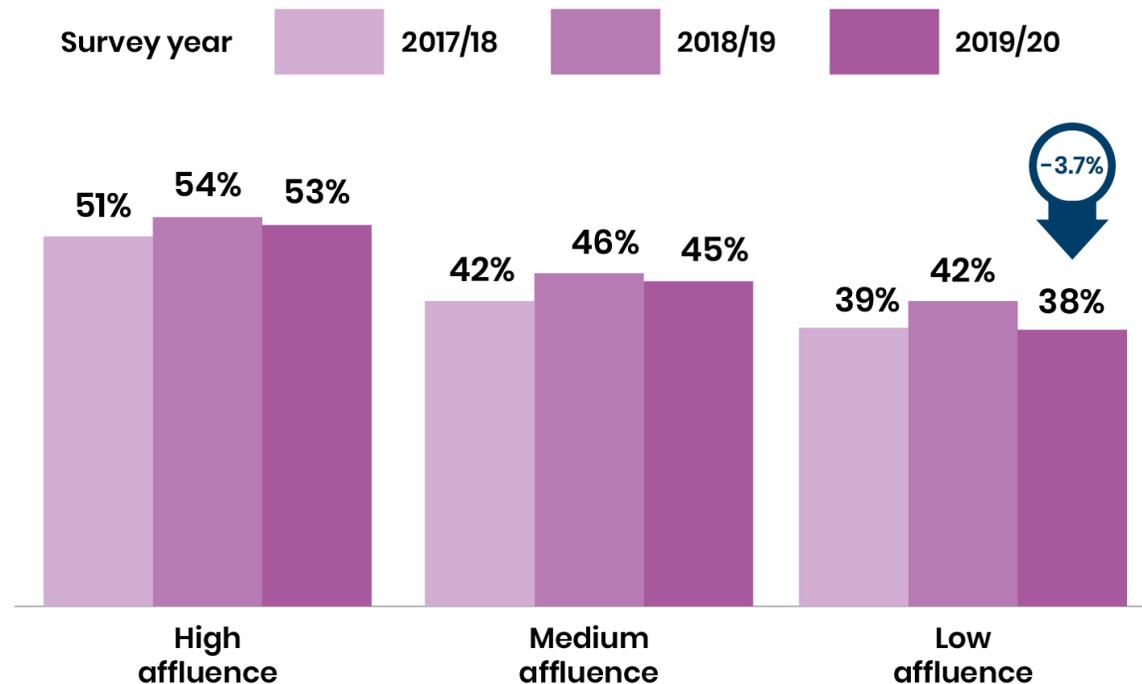


Family affluence

Children and young people from the most affluent families are generally more active than those from medium affluence families, who in turn are generally more active than those from the least affluent families.

Activity levels have decreased for children and young people from low affluence groups, whilst they remain unchanged compared to 12 months ago for the two other groups. This has been driven by a decrease during the spring term, which coincided with multiple storms and floods across the country, indicating the important role school plays in providing opportunities for children and young people from the least affluent families.

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)



Note: See our [definitions](#) page for more details on family affluence.

[Link to data tables](#) 

Levels of activity

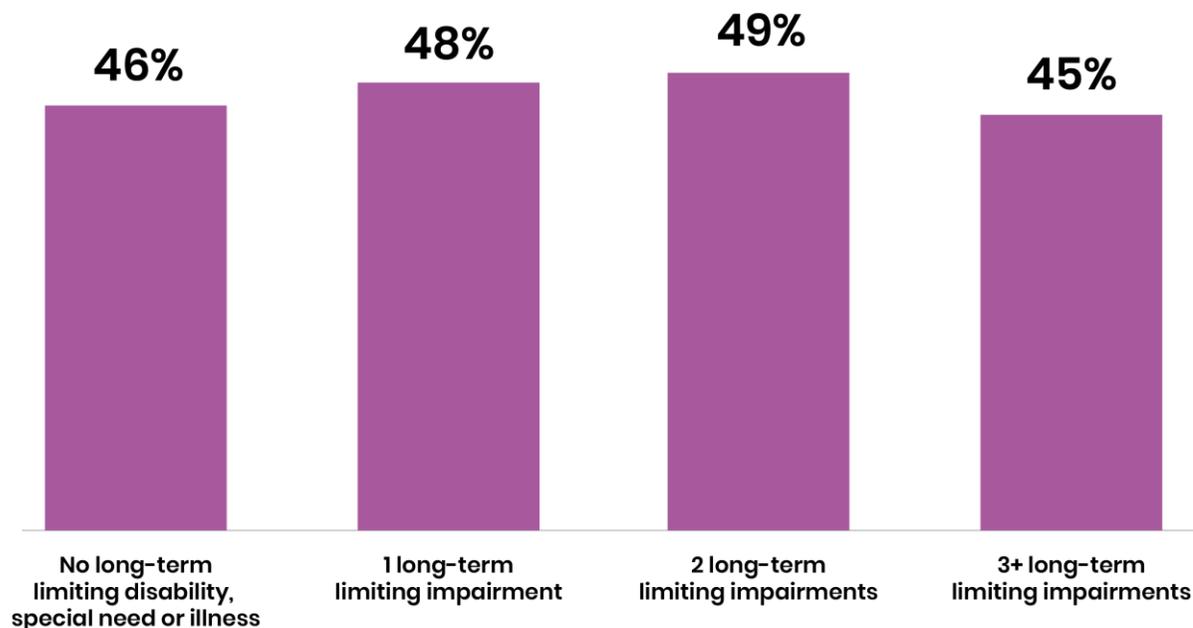


Disability and long-term health conditions

Around 6%, or just over 440,000, children and young people have a disability or long-term health condition.

There's little difference in activity levels between those with and without a disability or long-term health condition. Furthermore, there are no reportable differences regardless of the number of impairments a child has.

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)



Note: A new question was introduced for 2019/20 to capture consistent disability and long-term health condition data across all year groups. As such, data is not comparable with earlier years. See the [notes](#) page for more detail.

[Link to data tables](#)



Levels of activity

 Arrows show the percentage point change on 12 months ago. No arrows indicate no change



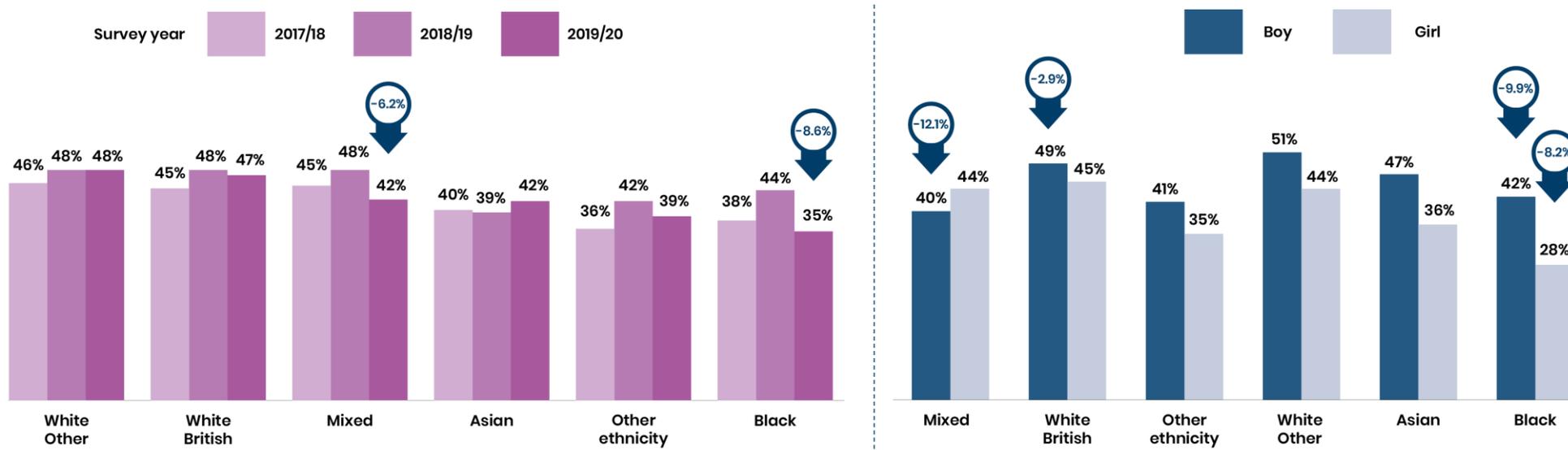
Ethnicity

Children and young people from White British backgrounds are more likely to be active than all other ethnic groups, except for White Other.

Decreases in activity levels compared to 12 months ago have been driven by children and young people of Mixed and Black ethnicities.

The gender gap in activity levels is widest amongst Asian and Black children and young people, with boys being more likely to be active than girls.

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)



Note: After White British, the largest ethnic groups within the child population are Asian (9%) and Mixed (7%). White Other (5%), Black (5%) and other ethnic groups (4%) then follow, so caution should therefore be applied when looking at change for these groups.

[Link to data tables](#)

Types of activity

Definition

This chapter presents data broken down by activity group and looks at those who've participated at least once in the last week.

Data is also provided for swimming confidence and capability within this section.

Looking at participation at least once in the last week provides:

- An entry level view of participation overall
- An understanding of which activities contribute to the make-up of an active day.



We measure sport and physical activity if it's done...

- In the last week
- At least moderate intensity
- Either at school or outside school

[Link to data tables](#)



Types of activity

Arrows show the percentage point change on 12 months ago. No arrows indicate no change



Most activities have seen drops in those taking part

Some activities were unavailable in the summer term, either due to the majority of children not being in school or because facilities were closed.

This is reflected in the drops in swimming, team sports and gymnastics, trampolining and cheerleading compared to 12 months ago.

Active play and running, athletics or multi-sports also saw a decline in participation.

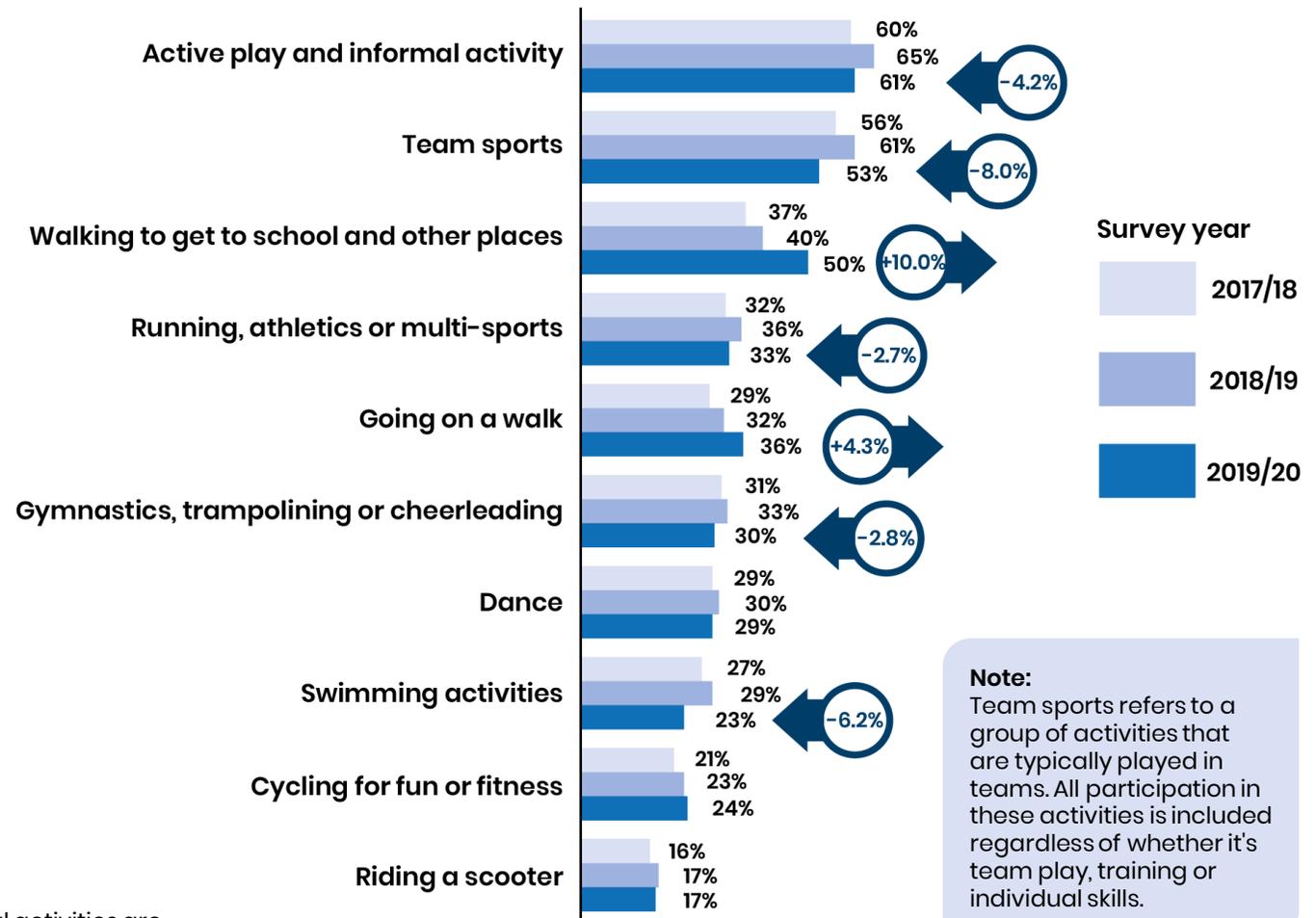
Conversely, more children and young people have been walking, with an increase of 4.3% going for a walk (up by more than 340,000) and an increase of 10.0% walking to get to places (up by more than three-quarters of a million).

Additionally, amongst young people in Years 7-11 (ages 11-16) we've seen increases in gym or fitness and cycling for fun or fitness.

[Link to data tables](#)

Note: Individual activities are reported in the data table.

Ten most prevalent activity groups for Years 1-11 (ages 5-16)



Swimming confidence and capability

Among Year 7 children, 77% can swim 25 metres unaided

Guidelines indicate that children should be able to swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25m by the time they leave primary school. The data shows that 77% of children in Year 7 (first year of secondary school, ages 11-12) can do this. There's been no change in this compared to 12 months ago.

Generally, swimming proficiency increase with age and an average of 64% of all children and young people in Years 1-11 (ages 5-16) can swim 25m unaided. This remains the same as 12 months ago.

However, this differs greatly depending on affluence, with 84% of children and young people from the most affluent families being able to swim 25m unaided, compared to 41% of those from the least affluent families.

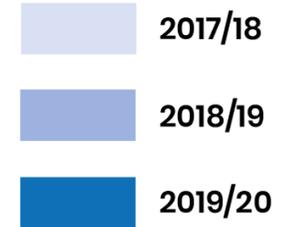
[Link to data tables](#)



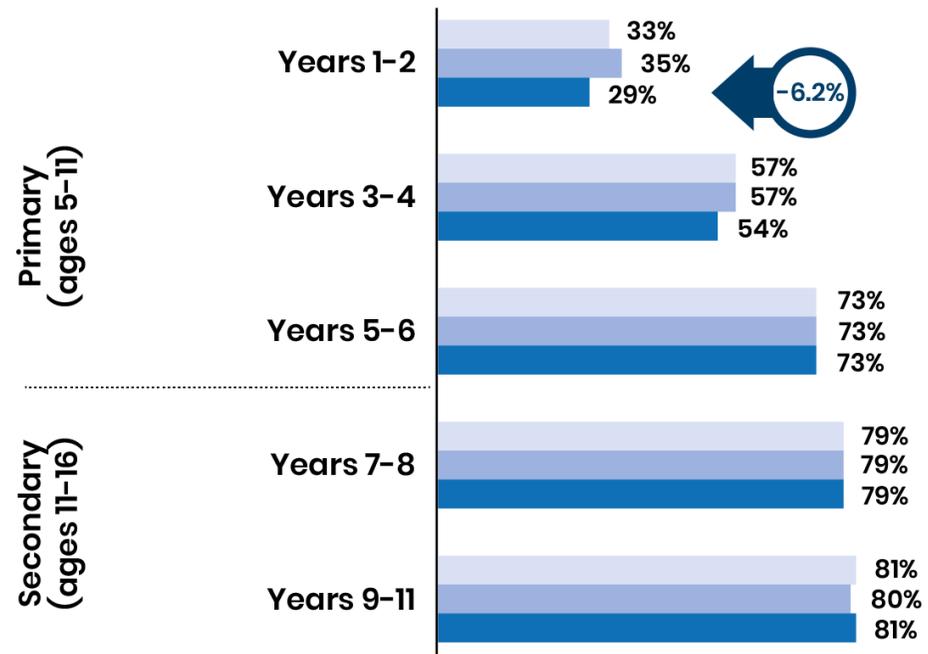
Arrows show the percentage point change on 12 months ago. No arrows indicate no change



Survey year



Can swim 25m unaided



Volunteering

At least twice in the last 12 months

Definition

Giving your time helping others to be active is amazing, no matter what age you are. Not only are they benefitting, but you benefit too; gaining experience, making friends and learning new skills.

And evidence suggests that those who give their time when they're young are more likely to continue to volunteer in later life.

We count a child or young person as having volunteered if:

They've taken part in a volunteering role to support sport/physical activity

(A full list of roles can be found in our [definitions](#) at the end of this report).



A person has volunteered at least twice in the last twelve months



Volunteering

Arrows show the percentage point change on 12 months ago. No arrows indicate no change



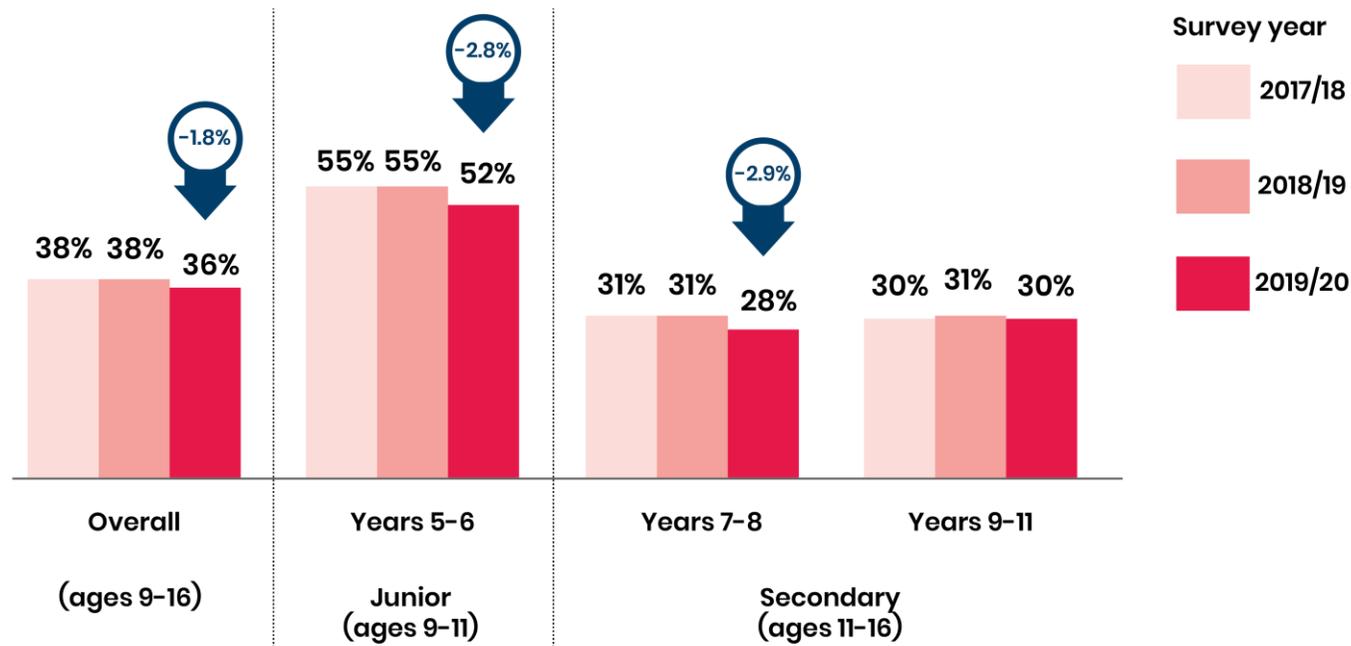
1.6 million (36%) children and young people volunteered to support sport and physical activity

Volunteering levels have decreased by 1.8% or 36,300 children and young people over the last 12 months. This has been driven by a drop in the summer term which coincided with school sites being closed to most pupils due to the coronavirus pandemic and opportunities to volunteer may have been more limited.

Decreases in volunteering levels have been seen across both Years 5-6 (ages 9-11) and Years 7-8 (ages 11-13). Volunteering levels remain unchanged for Years 9-11 (ages 13-16) with 30% volunteering to support sport and physical activity.

Volunteered at least twice in the last year

Note: Volunteering is only asked of children and young people in Years 5-11 (ages 9-16), with Years 5-6 (ages 9-11) having a slightly different question to Years 7-11 (ages 11-16), to ensure the volunteering roles asked about are relevant.



[Link to data tables](#)

Volunteering

 Arrows show the percentage point change on 12 months ago. No arrows indicate no change

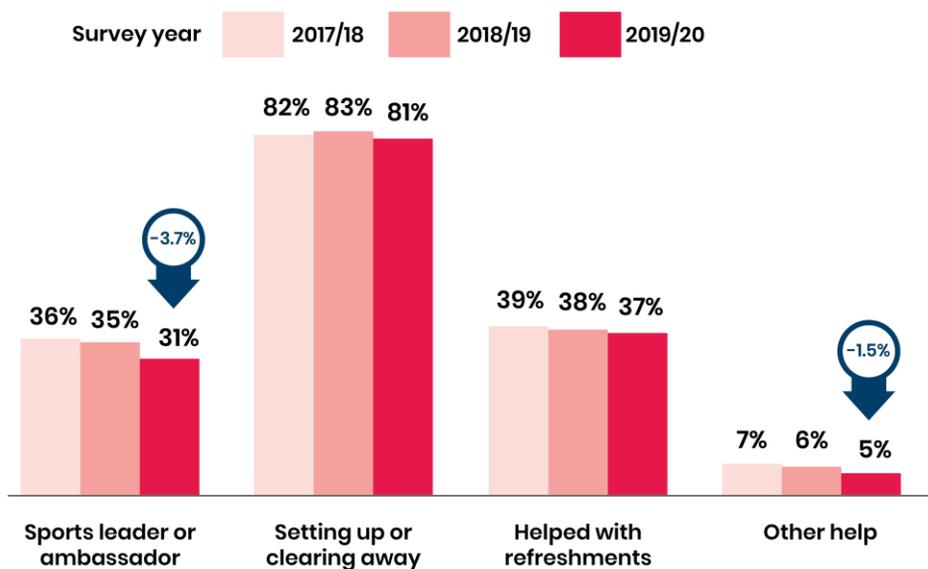


Volunteer roles vary by age

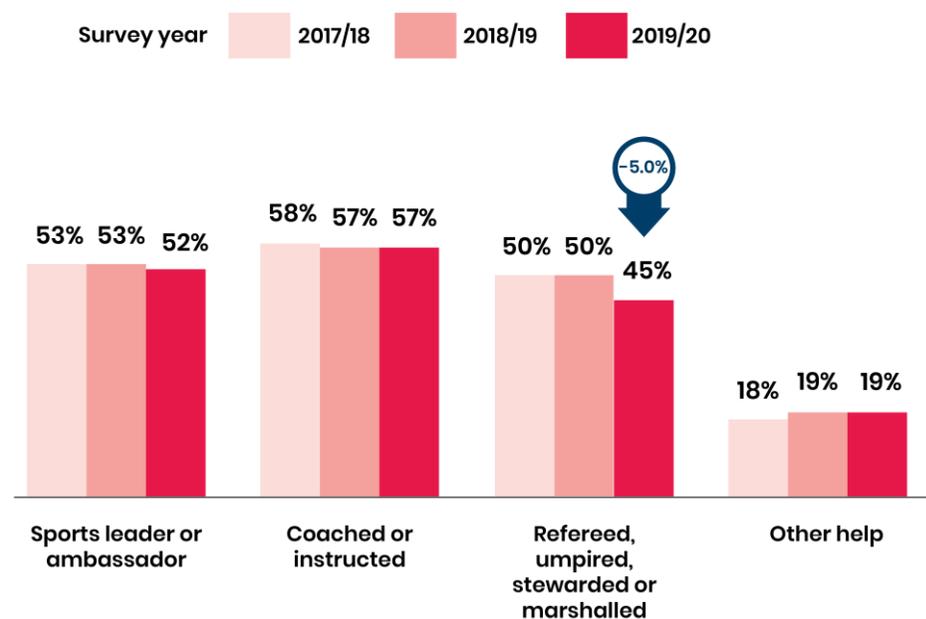
Children in Years 5-6 (ages 9-11) who volunteer are most likely to undertake supporting roles such as setting up and clearing away. Decreases have been driven by drops in the numbers who are a sports leader or ambassador and those undertaking other help.

Conversely, half of young people in Years 7-11 (ages 11-16) who volunteer do so in more formal roles like coaching, being a sports ambassador or refereeing/being an official. Decreases have come amongst those who refereed, umpired, stewarded or marshalled.

Years 5-6 (ages 9-11) roles undertaken by those who have volunteered at least twice in the last year



Years 7-11 (ages 11-16) roles undertaken by those who have volunteered at least twice in the last year



[Link to data tables](#)



Volunteering

Note: All data relates to young people in Years 5-11 (ages 9-16)

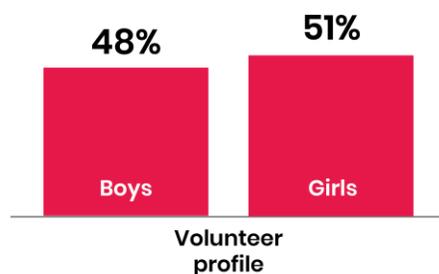


Summary of demographic profile

1

Gender

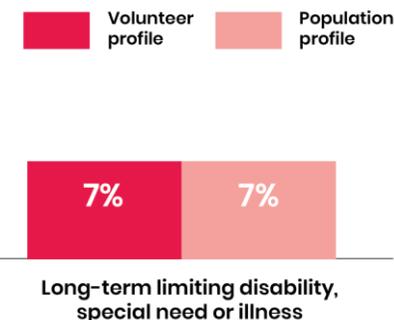
Boys and girls are fairly equally represented amongst volunteers.



3

Disability and long-term health conditions

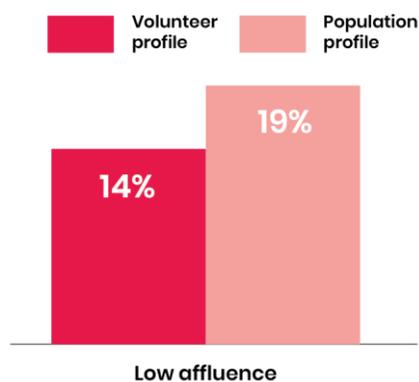
The profile of children and young people with a limiting disability or long-term health condition who volunteer is roughly representative of the population.



2

Family affluence

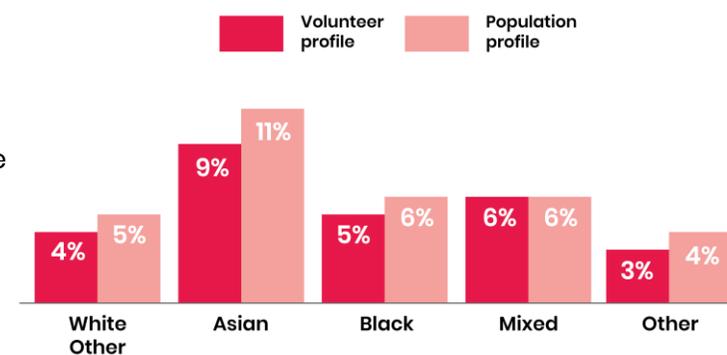
Children and young people from the least affluent families are under-represented. They make up 19% of those in Years 5-11 (ages 9 to 16), but only 14% of volunteers.



4

Ethnicity

The volunteer profile generally reflects the ethnicity of the population, with the exception that Asian children are under-represented as they make up 11% of the population but only 9% of volunteers.



[Link to data tables](#)





Physical wellbeing



Mental wellbeing



Individual development



Social & community development



Economic development

This section presents data looking at the wider outcomes for children and young people, both overall and linked to their levels of engagement in sport and physical activity.

Measures covered are:

- Mental wellbeing
- Individual development
- Social and community development.

Sport and physical activity can...

- Help improve and maintain fitness, strength and balance
- Help prevent and manage medical conditions.

- Contribute to happiness and improved self-esteem
- Reduce stress, anxiety and depression.

- Help develop soft/social skills and increase persistence and perseverance
- Impact positively on employment opportunities.

- Bring people together
- Build trust and reduce isolation.

- Promote economic growth
- Create jobs.

Measured by...

Proportion of children and young people who:

- Undertake an average of **60+ minutes** a day of sport and physical activity.

See the first section for more details.

On a selection of 'happy', 'neutral', or 'sad':

- How do you **feel today**? (Years 1-2)

Score out of 10 for:

- How **happy** did you feel yesterday? (Years 3-11)
- How **satisfied** are you with your life nowadays? (Years 7-11)
- Do you feel that the things you do in your life are **worthwhile**? (Years 7-11)

Strongly agree to:

- If I find something difficult, **I keep trying** until I can do it. (Years 3-11)

Agreement to:

- How much do you feel you can **trust people** who are a similar age to you? (Years 3-11)

The economic value of sport, as reported in:

- DCMS's [Sports Satellite Accounts](#)
- Further details can be found in Sheffield Hallam University's [report on the social and economic value of community sport and physical activity in England](#).



Mental wellbeing

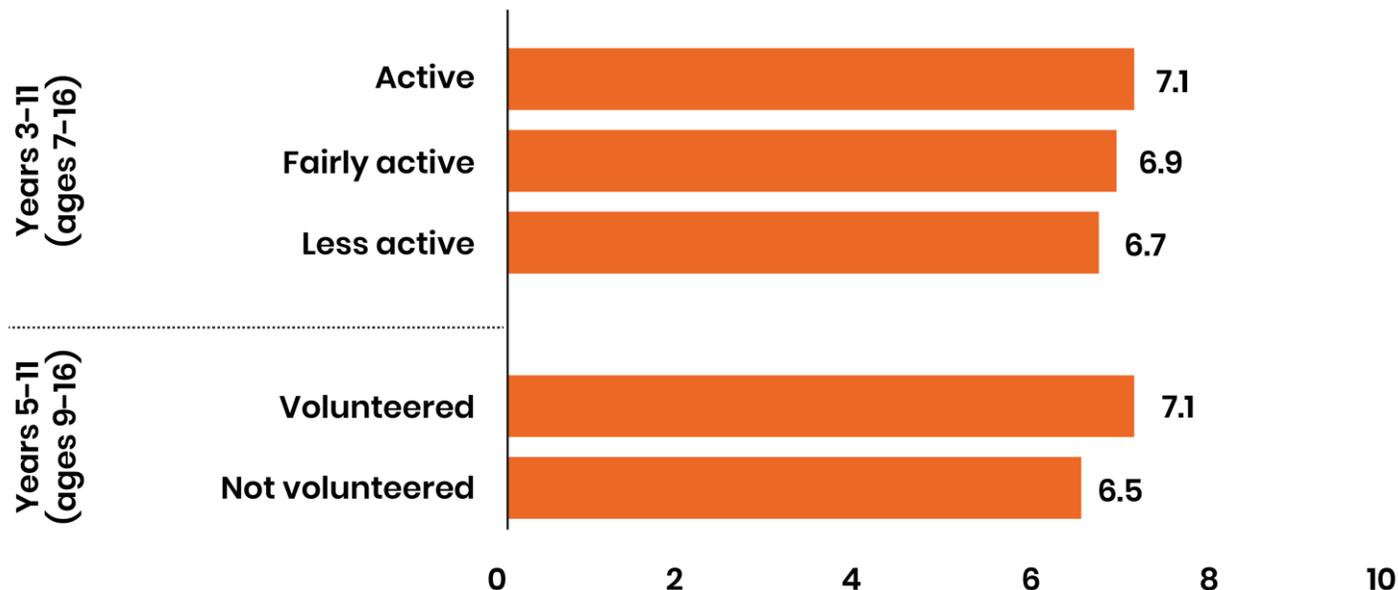


There's a positive association between levels of engagement in sport and physical activity and levels of mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing (shown here as happiness) scores are higher for those who are active than those who are fairly active, which in turn are higher than for those who are less active.

There's also a positive association between all mental wellbeing measures and volunteering to support sport and physical activity.

How happy did you feel yesterday? Years 3-11 (ages 7-16)
(mean score out of 10, where 10 is very happy and 0 is not happy at all)



[Link to data tables](#)



Individual development

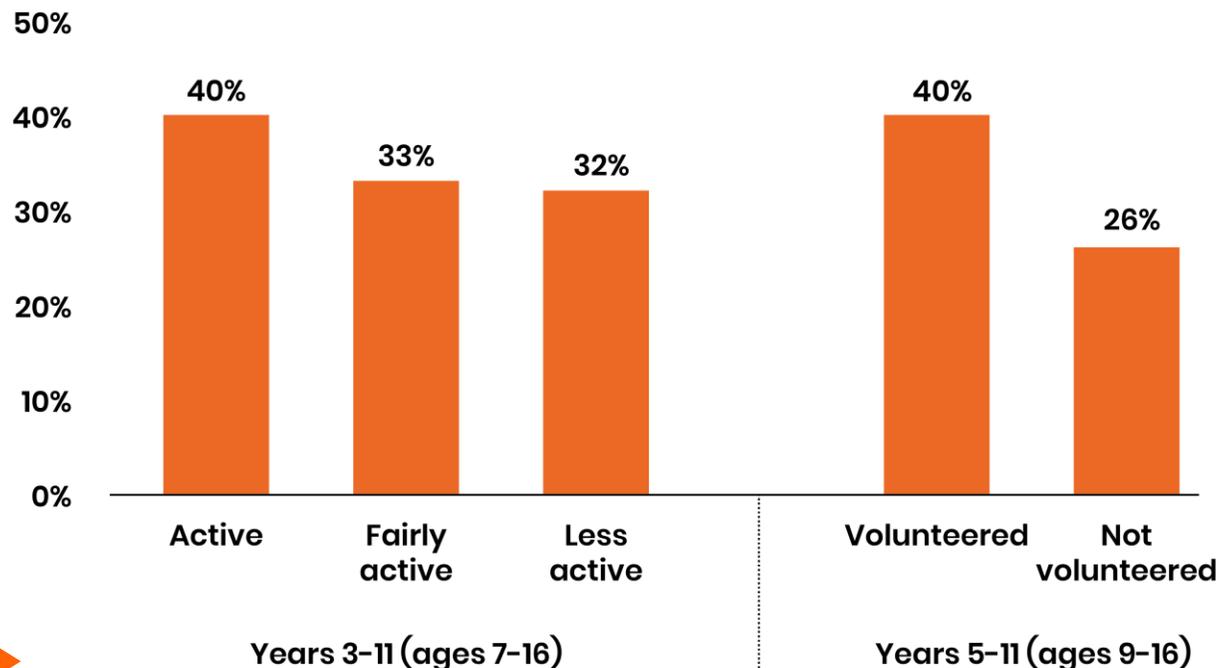


There's a positive association between levels of sport and physical activity and levels of individual development

The proportion strongly agreeing with the statement 'if I find something difficult I keep trying until I can do it' is higher for those who are active than those who are fairly active or less active.

There's also a positive association between individual development and volunteering to support sport and physical activity.

If I find something difficult, I keep trying until I can do it: Years 3-11 (ages 7-16)
(proportion who strongly agree)



[Link to data tables](#)

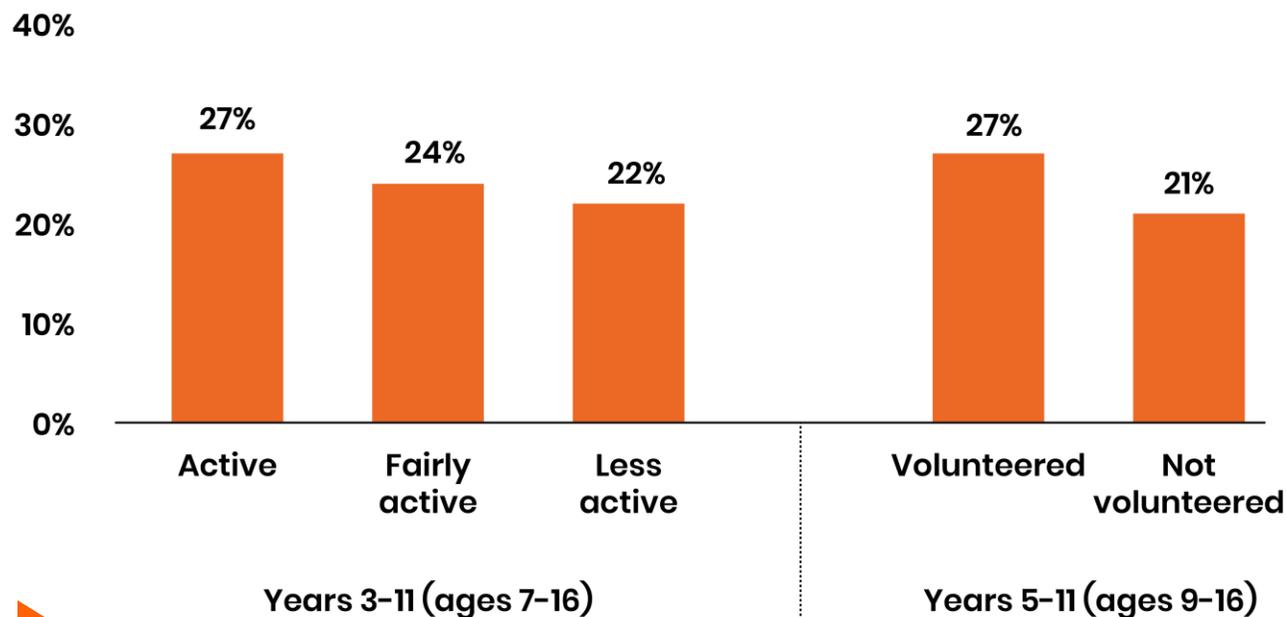


There's a positive association between levels of sport and physical activity and levels of community development

Active children and young people are more likely to strongly agree that they can trust people of a similar age to themselves than fairly active children and young people, who in turn are more likely to strongly agree than those who are less active.

There's a clear positive association between community development and volunteering to support sport and physical activity.

How much do you feel you can trust people of a similar age to you? Years 3-11 (ages 7-16)
(proportion who say 'a lot' when given the choice of 'a lot', 'a bit', 'not very much' or 'not at all')



[Link to data tables](#)



Loneliness

Definition



Tackling loneliness is a key government objective.

In October 2018, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport published '[A Connected Society](#)', its first strategy for tackling loneliness in England.

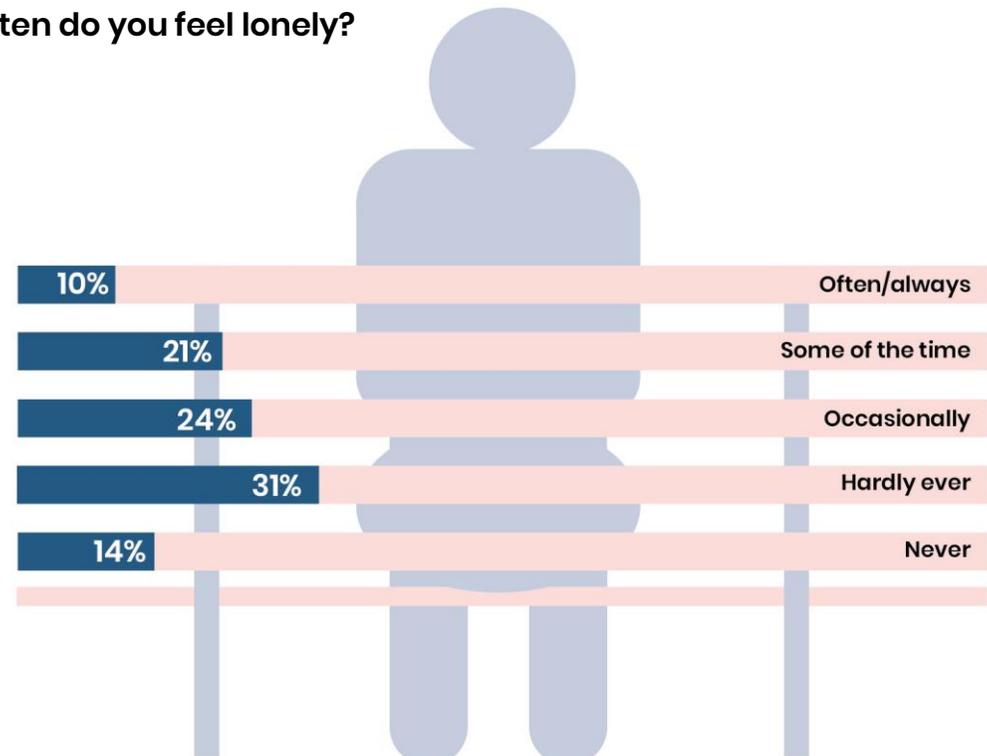
This chapter sets out the role sport and physical activity – and volunteering to support it – has in this.

Note this question is only asked of children and young people in Years 7–11 (ages 11–16).

Supporting children and young people to have meaningful social relationships is not just crucial to their physical and mental health. It also affects their engagement in their school and wider community cohesion.

We've focused on those who are often/always lonely, as policy is centred around this group.

How often do you feel lonely?



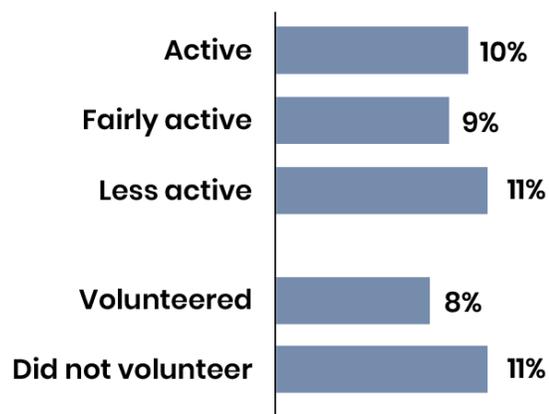
Loneliness



Young people who engage in sport and physical activity are less likely to feel lonely

- Those who are fairly active are less likely to feel lonely than those who are less active.
- Those who volunteered are less likely to feel lonely than those who didn't volunteer.

Often/always feel lonely (Years 7-11, ages 11-16)



This association holds across demographic groups for both participation and volunteering, with the exception that for girls there's no difference in loneliness by activity level.

[Link to data tables](#)

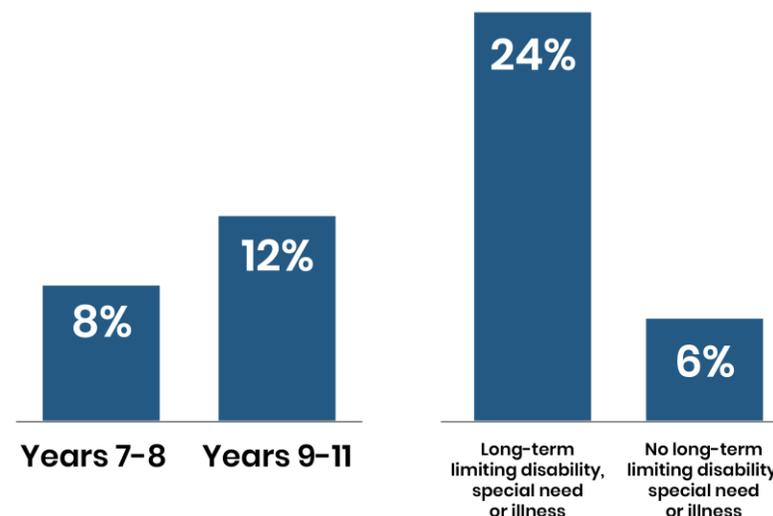


Loneliness is particularly prevalent amongst certain groups

Loneliness is highest for:

- Teenagers (Years 9-11, ages 13-16, 12%)
- Girls 12% (vs boys 7%)
- Those with a disability or long-term health condition (24%)
- Those from the least affluent families (13%).

Often/always feel lonely (all activity levels)



Positive attitudes

Definition

The International Physical Literacy Association’s definition of physical literacy has four elements: motivation, confidence, competence and knowledge and understanding. The organisation says these help an individual “value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life”.

Source: [The International Physical Literacy Association](#)

We used this definition to develop statements covering each of the five attitudes that we added to the survey.

When talking about individual attitude statements, we report where a child strongly agrees¹ with a statement as evidence of positive feelings towards it. For example, when a child strongly agrees that they enjoy taking part in sport, we describe that child as enjoying sport and physical activity. These statements were developed by an expert advisory group commissioned by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Sport England.



¹By looking specifically at those who “strongly agree”, we both mitigate the tendency of children and young people to “agree” to socially desirable statements, and focus on how the firmest attitudes relate to activity and health and social outcomes.

Positive attitudes



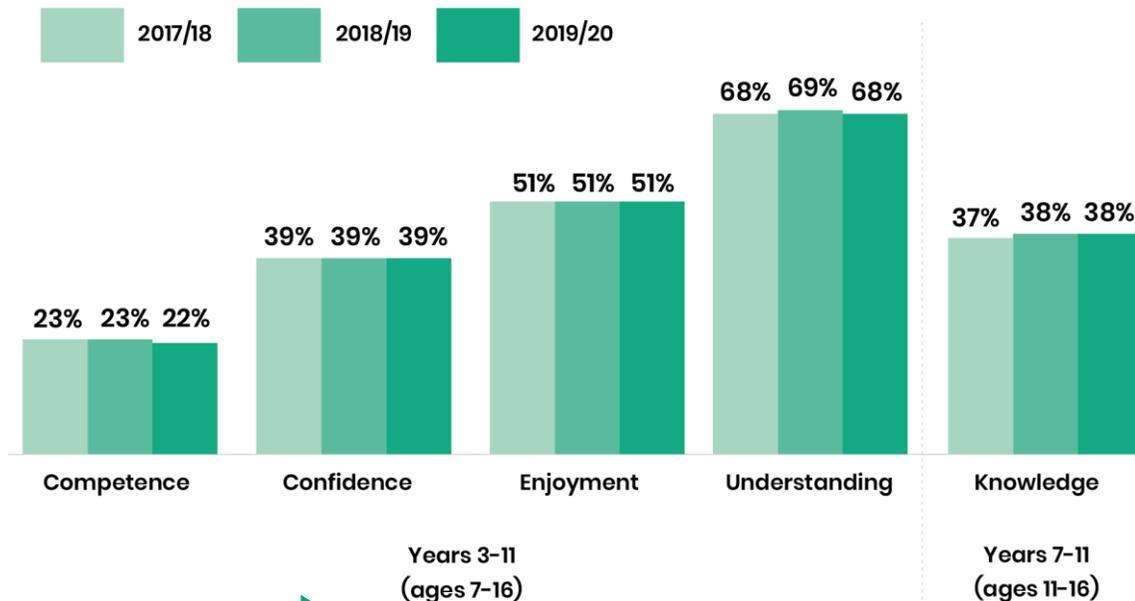
Attitudes remain unchanged over the last two years

Just over half of all children and young people strongly agree that they enjoy taking part, but this means 49% aren't likely to receive the full benefits of doing so.

More than two-thirds of children and young people feel they understand why exercise and sport is good for them, whilst levels of feeling confident when taking part or finding sport easy (competence) are lower.

There have been no changes compared to 12 months ago across any of the attitudes, although changes were observed during the summer term. Given the unprecedented scale of these changes they're summarised on the next page, as well as being explored in more detail in our Coronavirus Report.

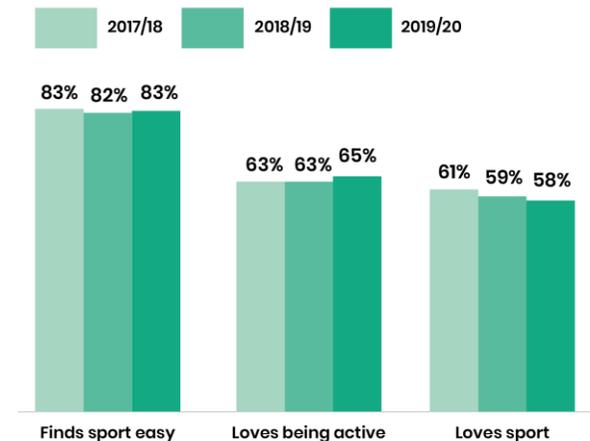
Attitudes towards sport and physical activity (proportion who strongly agree)



[Link to data tables](#)

Years 1-2 (ages 5-7) children

The majority of children found sport easy whilst nearly two-thirds loved being active and 58% loved playing sport. None of these have changed compared to 12 months ago.



Positive attitudes

Summary of summer term (mid-May to late-July) changes

1 **Positive attitudes towards sport and physical activity have decreased**

compared to the same period 12 months earlier, with fewer children and young people strongly agreeing that they felt confident when taking part and that they found it easy (competence).

2 **Physical literacy changes with age**

As children and young people grow older, they report lower levels of enjoyment, confidence, competence and understanding. However, in the summer term younger children, specifically those in Years 5-6 (ages 9-11), reported lower levels of both enjoying taking part and understanding why it's good for them.

3 **There are important inequalities that must be tackled**

Those from the least affluent families are less likely to report positive attitudes to sport and exercise. Furthermore, they saw notable decreases in enjoyment, confidence and competence widening the gap to those from the most affluent families who only saw a small drop in competence alongside a small increase in understanding.



Positive attitudes

%
Arrows show the percentage point change on 12 months ago. No arrows indicate no change



The number of positive attitudes

We can also look at the data by the number of positive attitudes a child reports.

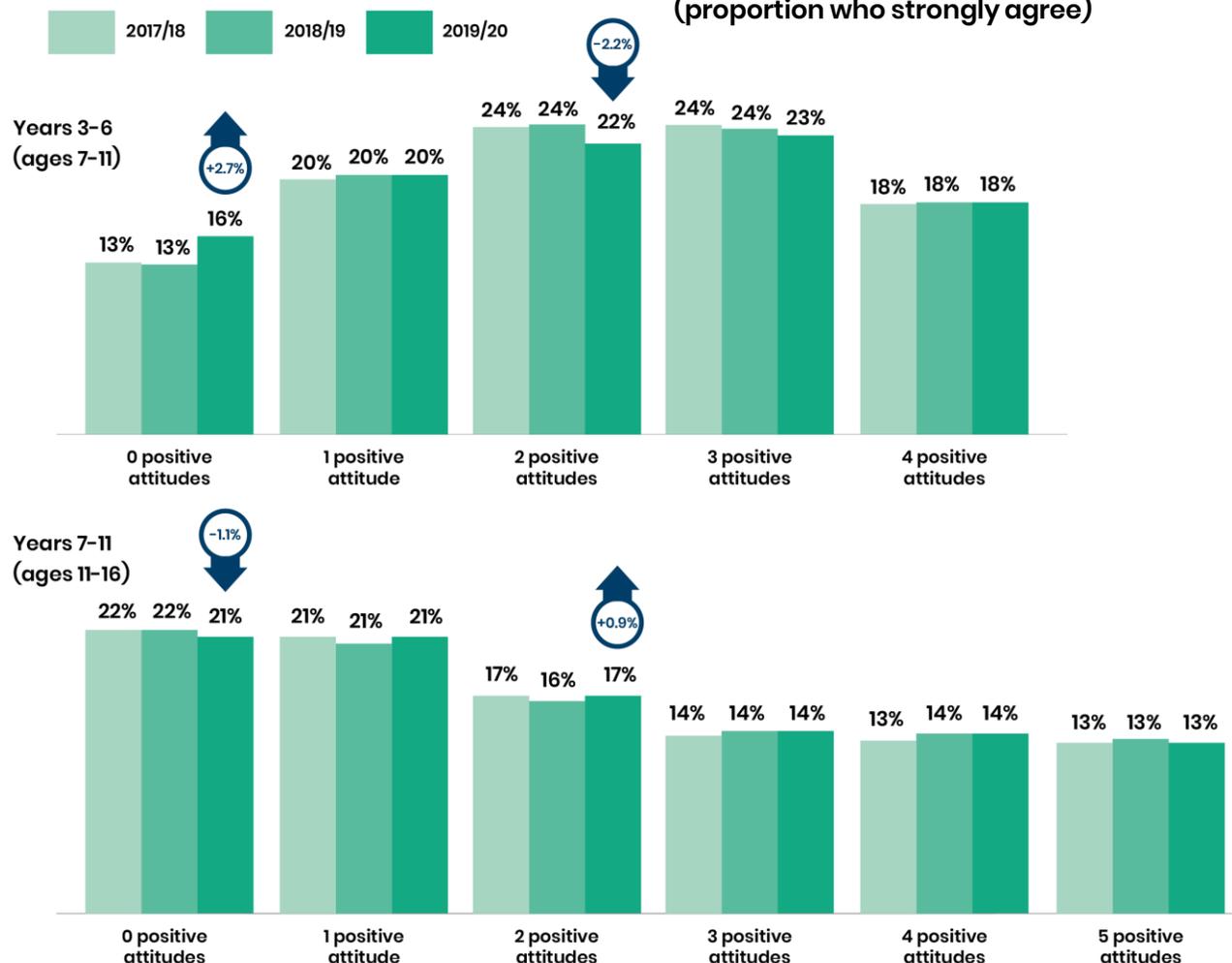
There has been an increase of children in Years 3-6 (ages 7-11) reporting zero positive attitudes and a decrease in those reporting two.

There's a fairly even spread across the numbers of positive attitudes with children slightly more likely to report one, two or three positive attitudes than zero or four.

On the other hand, young people in Years 7-11 (ages 11-16) have seen a small decrease in those reporting zero positive attitudes and a small increase in those reporting two.

Young people in Years 7-11 are still most likely to report zero or one positive attitude.

The presence of positive attitudes (proportion who strongly agree)



[Link to data tables](#)



Positive attitudes and activity levels

Physically literate children and young people are more likely to be active

There's a strong positive association between activity levels and the number of positive attitudes children and young people report:

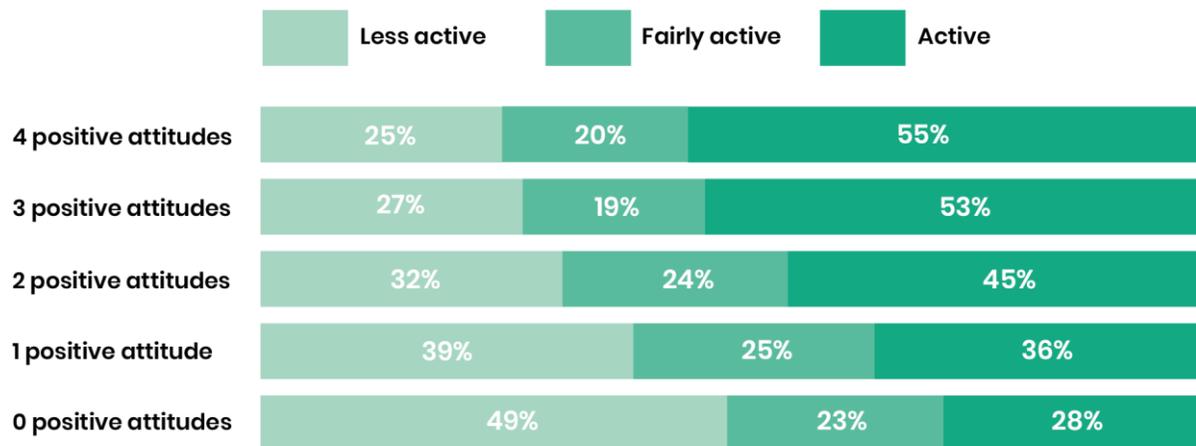
- 55% of children in Years 3-6 (ages 7-11) are active when they report four positive attitudes, compared to just 28% when they report no positive attitudes.
- 67% of young people in Years 7-11 (ages 11-16) are active when they report five positive attitudes, compared to just 34% when they report no positive attitudes.

[Link to data tables](#)

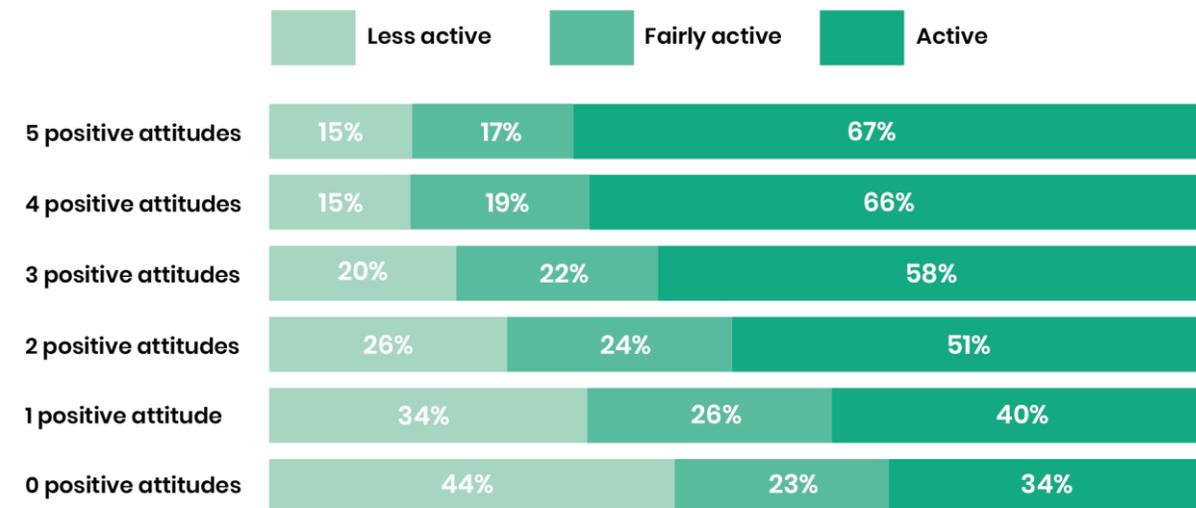


Activity levels across the week

Years 3-6 (ages 7-11)



Years 7-11 (ages 11-16)



Positive attitudes and happiness



Physically literate children and young people are happier

Children in Years 3-6 (ages 7-11) who report four positive attitudes score on average 8.0 out of 10 on happiness. This falls to 7.2 for those who report no positive attitudes.

There's a clearer positive association between the number of positive attitudes reported and high levels of happiness for young people in Years 7-11 (ages 11-16).

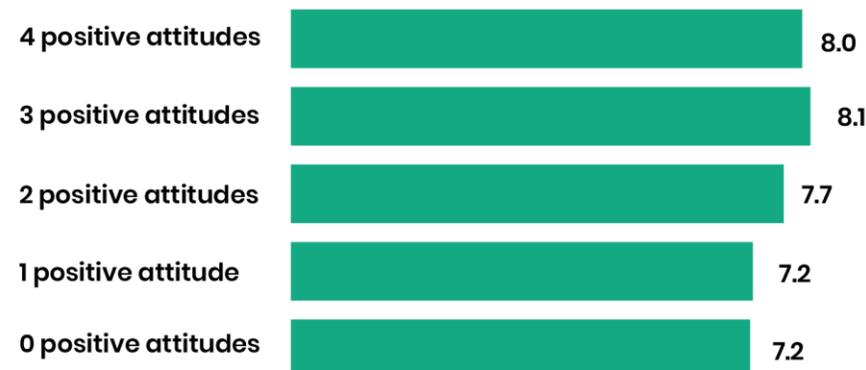
Those who report five positive attitudes score on average 7.5 out of 10 on happiness. This falls to 5.6 for those who report no positive attitudes.

[Link to data tables](#)

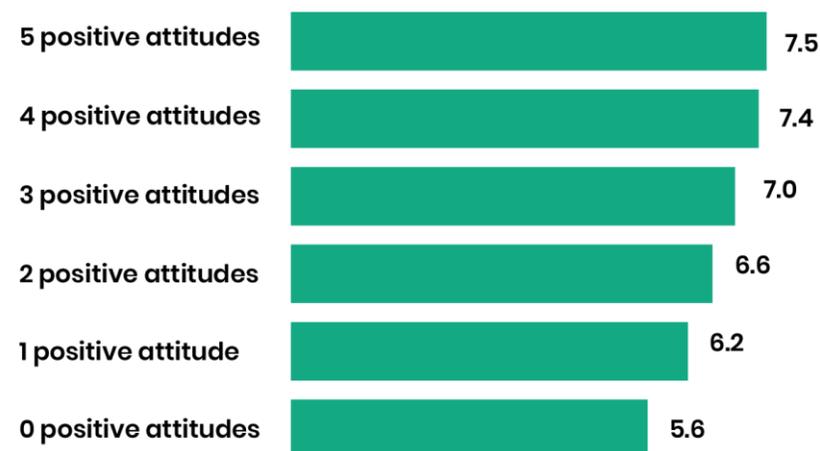


How happy did you feel yesterday (mean score out of 10)

Years 3-6 (ages 7-11)



Years 7-11 (ages 11-16)



Positive attitudes and individual development



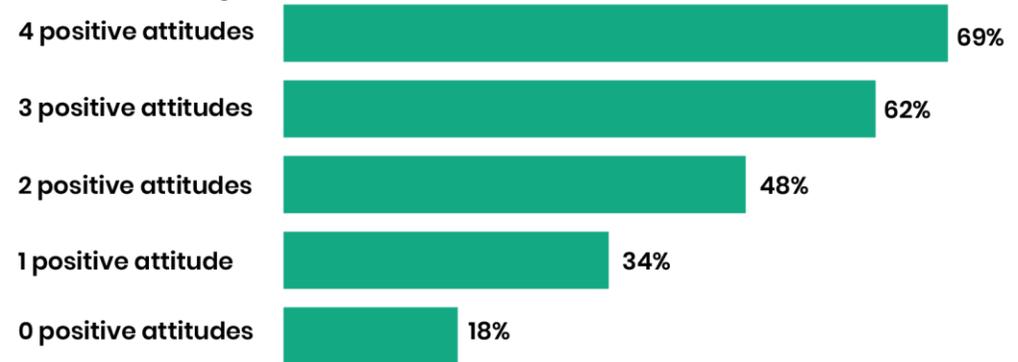
Physically literate children and young people have higher levels of individual development

Of children in Years 3-6 (ages 7-11) who report four positive attitudes, 69% strongly agree to the statement 'if I find something difficult I keep trying until I can do it'. This falls to 18% for those who report no positive attitudes.

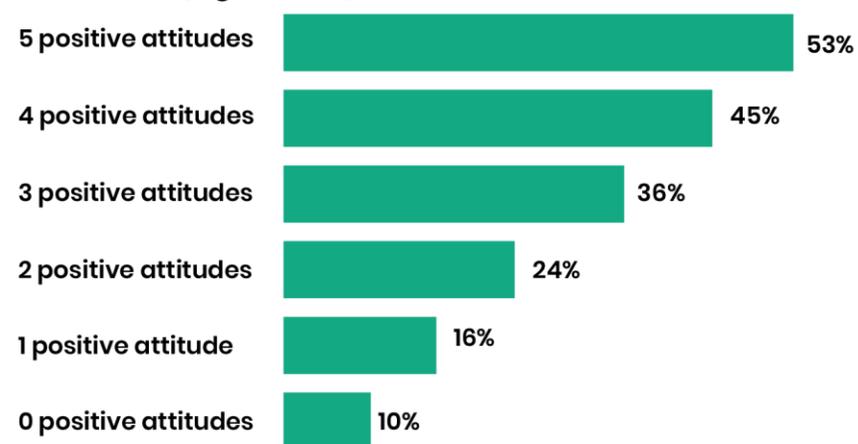
Of young people in Years 7-11 (ages 11-16) who report five positive attitudes, 53% strongly agree to the statement 'if I find something difficult I keep trying until I can do it'. This falls to 10% for those who report no positive attitudes.

If I find something difficult, I keep trying until I can do it
(proportion who strongly agreed)

Years 3-6 (ages 7-11)



Years 7-11 (ages 11-16)



[Link to data tables](#)



Positive attitudes and community development

Physically literate children and young people have higher levels of community development

Of children in Years 3-6 (ages 7-11) who have a positive attitude to all four statements, 41% strongly agree that they can trust people of a similar age to themselves. This falls to 27% for those who report no positive attitudes.

There's a clearer positive association between the number of positive attitudes reported and high levels of community development for young people in Years 7-11 (ages 11-16).

Of those who report five positive attitudes, 35% strongly agree that they can trust people of a similar age to themselves compared to 16% of those who report no positive attitudes.

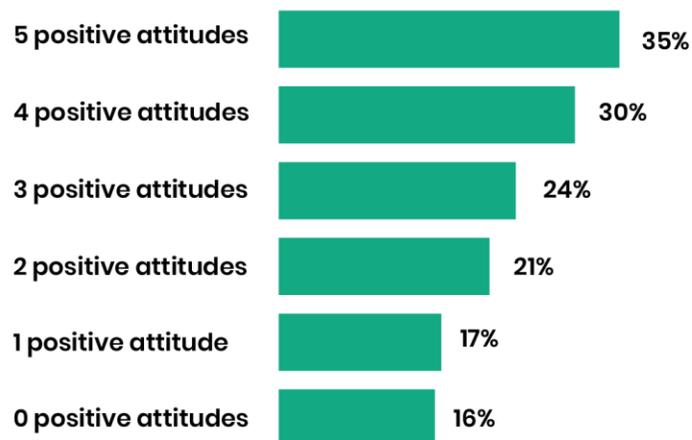


How much do you feel you can trust people of a similar age to you? (proportion who said 'a lot')

Years 3-6 (ages 7-11)



Years 7-11 (ages 11-16)



[Link to data tables](#)



Local level data



Data for local areas (regions and Active Partnerships) are available for the following measures:

- Levels of activity
- Volunteering at least twice in the last 12 months.

[Link to data tables](#)

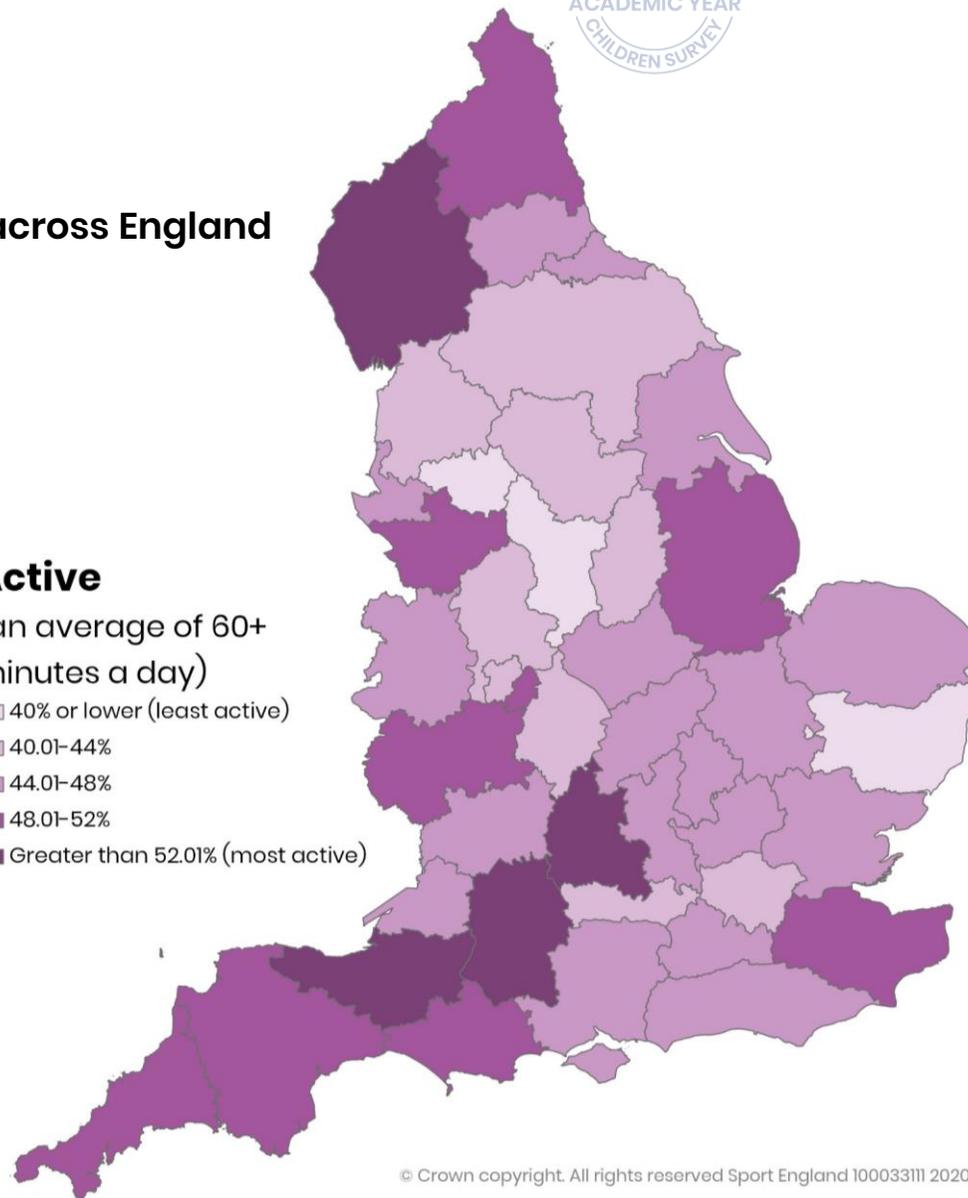


The picture across England

Active

(an average of 60+ minutes a day)

- 40% or lower (least active)
- 40.01-44%
- 44.01-48%
- 48.01-52%
- Greater than 52.01% (most active)



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Definitions

The Chief Medical Officer recommends that children and young people do an average of 60-plus minutes of at least moderate activity a day across the week. This effectively means they need to do 420 moderate minutes or more a week to meet the guidelines, which you can read [here](#).

[Link to more information on measures and demographics](#) 

Moderate activity is defined as activity where you raise your heart rate and feel a little out of breath (in 2018/19 this was updated to ask whether the activity made them breathe faster than sitting down reading).

Vigorous activity is defined as activity which makes you hot or tired.

Volunteering roles are defined as:

- Been a 'sports leader' or 'sports ambassador'
- Helped with setting up or clearing away (Years 5-6 only)
- Helped with refreshments: food or drink (Years 5-6 only)
- Coached or instructed an individual or team(s) in a sport, dance or fitness activity: other than solely for family members (Years 7-11 only)
- Refereed or umpired at a sports match, competition or event (Years 7-11 only)
- Acted as a steward or marshal at a sports or dance activity or event (Years 7-11 only)
- Given any other help (Years 5-6 only)
- Provided any other help for a sport, dance or fitness activity, e.g. helping with refreshments, setting up sports kit or equipment, scoring matches, first aid (Years 7-11 only).

Positive attitudes

This refers to strongly agreeing to the statements on enjoyment, confidence, competence, understanding and knowledge. If a child or young person strongly agrees, they're reported as having a positive attitude towards that element.

Associations

Where associations between wellbeing, individual and community development and engagement in sport and physical activity are referenced, this doesn't tell us about causality. We don't know the direction of the association or whether we're seeing a direct or indirect link.

Standard demographic questions are not always applicable for children of all ages, therefore simpler questions were often used.

[Link to more information on measures and demographics](#) 

Age

The survey is undertaken in schools, therefore we've used school year as the main age variable. This is split into three groups:

- Infant, Years 1-2 (ages 5-7)
- Junior, Years 3-6 (ages 7-11)
- Secondary, Years 7-11 (ages 11-16).

Gender

Children and young people were given the option to select 'boy', 'girl', 'other' or 'prefer not to say'. Responses to 'other' are included in the data tables but not presented in this report due to low sample sizes. As a result, the volunteering profile of responses by gender does not sum to 100%.

Family affluence scale

The Family Affluence Scale gives an indication of the social status of children and young people's families. The scale is derived from a series of questions about their home and family such as car ownership, computers, and foreign holidays. Care should be taken when looking across year groups as the age of the child is likely to impact on certain elements of the scale (e.g. families with older children may be more likely to own digital devices and travel abroad).

Disability

Disability or long-term health conditions refer to children and young people who report they have a disability, special need or illness which has a big effect on their life (is limiting) and expected to last for a year or more (is long term). Children then select from a list of impairments which we use to create the number of impairments metric. The data presented refers to long-term limiting impairments.

The question used is designed to align as closely as possible to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) harmonised disability question with the language adapted to be more appropriate to children. This is an updated question for 2019/20 and unlike previous years, the same question is asked to all age groups. As such, data is not comparable with previous years and only the latest data is presented in this report.

Ethnicity

Children and young people in Years 3-11 were asked a simplified question about ethnicity, while parents of Years 1-2 children were asked the full ONS standard question. For the purposes of analysis, Chinese has been grouped with 'Other' from the parent responses.

The Active Lives Children and Young People Survey is an online survey. Carried out by Ipsos MORI, it involves online questionnaires being completed in school during lesson time (at home during the summer term). Parents of Years 1-2 children are asked to complete a separate online questionnaire providing behavioural data for these children – the children themselves answer basic questions about their attitudes only.

More information on the survey can be found [here](#).

[Link to more information on measures and demographics](#) 

The achieved sample

Behavioural responses:

- Pupils in Years 3-11 and parents of pupils in Years 1-2: 109,503 in 2017/18 and 113,728 in 2018/19 and 89,303 in 2019/20

Attitudinal responses:

- Pupils in Years 3-11: 104,263 in 2017/18 and 109,248 in 2018/19 and 86,222 in 2019/20
- Pupils in Years 1-2: 25,927 in 2017/18, 23,587 in 2018/19 and 14,576 in 2019/20

Data have been weighted to Department for Education (DfE) pupil population estimates from 'Get Information about Schools' (2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19) for geography and key demographics.

Population totals are estimated values and have been calculated using 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 DfE pupil population estimates. Confidence intervals also apply to these. More detail can be found [here](#).

Population profile

Throughout the volunteering section, to show the representativeness of volunteers, the demographic profile of volunteers has been compared to the population profile.

Given the limited availability of demographic population data by school year, the weighted profile of the survey has been used to generate these proportions as the survey is weighted to be nationally representative.

Confidence intervals can be found in the linked tables. These indicate that if repeated samples were taken and confidence intervals computed for each sample, 95% of the intervals would contain the true value. Only significant differences are reported within the commentary. Where results are reported as being the same for two groups, any differences fall within the margin of error.

Significance tests can be found in the linked tables. The tests indicate that if repeated samples were taken, 95% of the time we would get similar findings, i.e. we can be confident that the differences seen in our sampled respondents are reflective of the population. When sample sizes are smaller, confidence intervals are larger, meaning differences between estimates need to be greater to be considered statistically significant.

Sport spectating

While not covered in this report, data tables showing the number of people attending live sports events form part of this release.

[Link to data tables](#)



How we measure change

Figures reported are based on the responses of the children and young people (and parents of Years 1-2) sampled, which we then scale up to provide an England-wide picture. That means there will naturally be small fluctuations when we compare the figures we have now with 12 months ago.

In accordance with Government Statistical Service good practice guidance, we highlight changes within the report where we're confident that they're genuine differences. If the data is showing only small differences which are within the margin of error, they're noted as "no change".

All changes reported are percentage point changes. We've used '%' as shorthand to represent this throughout.

Data collection during the coronavirus pandemic

Fieldwork ended two weeks early in the spring term 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic hit and started slightly later (mid-May) in the summer term.

During the summer term, most pupils completed the survey at home rather than at school as is usually the case. As a result, at and outside school breakdowns are not presented in this report.

Small questionnaire changes were made to ensure the survey remained relevant in the summer term. More details of these can be found in the technical note.

[Link to more information on measures and demographics](#)

