



Press Release

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## **Landmark report reveals children's activity levels for the first time**

- Around 3 million children (43.3%) lead active lives, doing an average of 60 or more minutes of physical activity a day.
- Among active children, only the most active 1.2m (17.5% of total) are meeting the CMO guideline of 60+ minutes of activity a day, every day of the week.
- Just over 2.3 million children and young people (32.9%) are less active which means they do less than 30 minutes of physical activity a day.
- A further 1.7m (23.9%) are fairly active, doing 30-59 minutes of physical activity a day.
- Sport England CEO Tim Hollingsworth calls for a focus on the health and wellbeing of young people with system-wide change.

New research published by Sport England today, carried out independently by Ipsos MORI, reveals the scale of the challenge to help the nation's children be more active, and the benefits that sport and physical activity can bring.

Active Lives Children and Young People is the largest ever survey of its kind, and provides comprehensive insight into how children in England are taking part in sport and physical activity both in and out of school. It shows that around 3 million children (43.3%) lead active lives, doing an average of 60 or more minutes of physical activity a day. However just over 2.3 million children and young people (32.9%) are less active which means they do less than 30 minutes of physical activity a day.

The report is based on responses from over 130,000 children aged 5-16 in England during the academic year 2017 to 2018. It also reveals that there are significant inequalities based on family income.

It shows that children from the most affluent families are more active than those in the least affluent families.

- 39% of children in the least affluent families do less than 30 minutes of activity a day compared with 26% of children from the most affluent families.
- 77% of children can swim 25 metres unaided by the time they leave primary school. However, 86% of children from the most affluent families can swim 25m unaided compared to only 42% from the least affluent families.

Other findings include:

- There is not a lot of difference in the amount of sport and physical activity that takes place inside school, compared to activity levels outside of school, so both have a critical role to play. 28% of children are active in school for at least 30 minutes per day while 22% of children are active outside of school.
- Activity levels peak at the end of primary school to the beginning of secondary school, but no age group reaches a majority of children doing the recommended levels of 60 minutes per day, every day.
- The type of activity preferred changes as children get older. 'Active play' such as tag or climbing in a playground are the most popular forms of activity for younger age groups, with team sports growing in popularity as children get older. By school years 7-8 team sports are the most popular and remaining so through to age 16.
- There is a gender divide between activity levels of boys and girls. Boys are more likely to be active every day than girls - 20% (boys) versus 14% (girls). This rift increases as girls get older, with a large gap opening from the end of primary school (years 5-6).

The survey also covers the 'outcomes' of sport and activity and helps to show the links between being active and the mental wellbeing of children as well as their personal development and that of their community. The opportunity to see more of these benefits by helping more children to be active enough is clear.

**Commenting, Tim Hollingsworth, Chief Executive at Sport England said:**

"Parents, schools, the sport and leisure industry and government all have a role to play in addressing and increasing childhood activity. This research is the first of its kind anywhere in the world and is a

big wake-up call for all of us. We all care about the health and wellbeing of our children. These results tell us that what is currently being done to support them is not enough and change is required.

“We know that lots of factors affect behaviour and there is no single answer to the problem but listening to young people and what they want is the best starting point. In March we will publish the first results of our research on the attitudes of children to sport and activity, showing what they like about being active.

“I am calling for a national focus on the health and wellbeing of our nation’s children and for the whole system to be united in delivering change. Our children deserve better and Sport England is determined to play its part.”

**Sports Minister Mims Davies said:**

“While it is encouraging that 3 million children do at least an average of 60 minutes of sport or physical activity every day, the number of young people who are not doing enough is simply unacceptable. We know that an active child is a happier child and efforts must be stepped up to encourage young people to live healthy, active lives and I know that Sport England are committed to making progress in this area.

"Our School Sport and Activity Action Plan will also ensure that all children have access to quality PE, sport sessions and clubs. Together with the sport sector, parents and our local communities, we must build a comprehensive and cross Government offer to create a truly active nation."

**Dr Alison Tedstone, Public Health England Head of Diet, Obesity and Physical Activity said:**

“Physical activity is crucial for good physical and mental health of children and young people - this work is a timely reminder for everyone to do more to help them be more active.”

Understanding the barriers, motivations and attitude of young people towards sport and physical activity is a key part of providing solutions that meet their needs. Sport England will be releasing a second report due in March 2019, highlighting children’s attitudes to sport and physical activity.

To find out more about Active Lives Children and Young People and see the full results in full, go to [www.sportengland.org/activeliveschildren](http://www.sportengland.org/activeliveschildren) from 09:30 on 6 December 2018 #activeliveschildren

[#activeliveschildren from 09:30 on 6 December 2018](#)

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## **Notes for Editors**

**For further information and interview opportunities please contact:**

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The full report can be downloaded here: [www.sportengland.org/activeliveschildren](http://www.sportengland.org/activeliveschildren)

## **The following spokespeople are available**

- Tim Hollingsworth, Sport England CEO
- Mike Diaper, Executive Director of Children and Young People
- Jayne Molyneux, Director of Children and Young People
- Lisa O'Keefe, Director of Insight

## **About Sport England**

Sport England is a public body and invests up to £300 million National Lottery and government money each year in projects and programmes that help people get active and play sport.

It wants everyone in England, regardless of age, background, or level of ability, to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity. That's why a lot of its work is specifically focused on helping people who do no, or very little, physical activity and groups who are typically less active - like women, disabled people and people on lower incomes.

## **About Active Lives Children and Young People**

The Active Lives Children and Young People Survey was conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Sport England. The data presented here were collected between September 2017 and July 2018 (2017/18 academic year) in England. The data were collected using CAWI online questionnaires administered in schools. Questionnaires were completed by pupils in year 1-2 and their parents, pupils in year 3-11, and one teacher in each school.

A sample of schools was drawn from the Department for Education list of schools (Edubase 2016/17) and up to three classes in each school selected. Pupil and parent responses were received from 2,011 schools. There were 130,190 pupil responses and 5,240 parent responses. The sample includes state primary, state secondary and independent schools and each school was allocated to a term. The published pupil level data are weighted to make the weighted achieved sample match the population as closely as possible.

Confidence intervals apply to the percentages and population estimates presented in the report and report tables. Confidence intervals for the measures presented in the report can be found in the linked report tables. Confidence intervals indicate that if repeated samples were taken and confidence intervals computed for each sample, 95% of the intervals would contain the true value.

Family affluence was measured using a standard set of questions about household items from the 'Family Affluence Scale'. For details see the published technical note.