Contents

Welcome 03
Levels of activity 05
Muscle strength 16
Types of activity 18
Attitudes 21
Volunteering 25
Outcomes 33
Loneliness 38
Further breakdowns 40
Definitions 41
Notes 42

Key information

This report presents data from the Active Lives Adult Survey for the period mid-November 2020 to mid-November 2021. Data is presented for adults aged 16+ in England.

This report contains a full year of coronavirus (Covid-19) restrictions, including comparisons to both the first easing of restrictions in summer 2020 and to pre-pandemic.

Release dates

This release: 28 April 2022
Next release: 20 April 2023

Find out more

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

Interpreting this report

We only highlight increases/decreases within this report where we’re confident there are genuine differences. If the data is showing small differences which are within the margin of error, they’re noted as ‘no change’.
Covering the period from mid-November 2020 to mid-November 2021, this report provides an update on the sport and physical activity behaviours of adults (aged 16+) in England. The period includes five months of lockdown, or significant restrictions, and seven months of easing or limited restrictions.

While activity levels have stabilised following the height of the pandemic and, in many instances, are starting to show signs of recovery – including a welcome return to team sports since July 2021 – this masks a concerning underlying picture.

Some groups, such as our youngest adults, continue to see activity levels fall at a worrying rate while our physical spaces, such as gyms and leisure centres, are seeing slow recovery in numbers – with those taking part in fitness activities remaining notably below pre-pandemic levels.

There are also widening inequalities, with the least affluent being the most impacted. And the data shows a large drop in volunteering numbers – people who are fundamental to the sport and physical activity ecosystem.

The data presented in this report, and our wider insight, suggests the sector may take some time to return to previous activity levels. However, it also presents an ongoing opportunity for the sector to make critical changes, in response to rapidly changing demands from the public, that will enable more adults than ever before to be active in ways they choose.

This report provides the headlines, with the opportunity to dig deeper into the results via links to the more detailed data tables.

Alternatively, check out Active Lives Online, which is updated shortly after each release, where you can explore trends over time, audiences not covered in this report and more specific activities and places.

Nick Pontefract, Chief Strategy Officer
Coronavirus timeline and data reference periods

The latest 12 months of data cover the period from mid-November 2020 to mid-November 2021. This includes five months of notable restrictions (two-and-a-half months of full national lockdowns and two-and-a-half months of significant restrictions) and seven months of limited restrictions (three months of easing restrictions and four months with no legal restrictions).

### Mid-November 2020 to mid-November 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Restrictions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National lockdown November</td>
<td>(0.5 months)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notable restrictions December</td>
<td>(1 month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National lockdown January to February</td>
<td>(2 months)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notable restrictions March to mid-April</td>
<td>(1.5 months)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easing restrictions Mid-Apr to mid-July</td>
<td>(3 months)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No legal restrictions Mid-Jul to end-Nov</td>
<td>(4 months)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Key Dates

- **Mid-Mar:** National lockdown.
- **Mid-May to end-July:** Notable restrictions remained in place.
- **November:** National restrictions return. Restrictions applied to all indoor activity and organised outdoor activity.
- **December:** New tiered system of restrictions based on location.
- **January:** Activity choice restricted – mainly to walking, cycling, running, local solo outdoor activity and informal activities.
- **August to mid-Sept:** Restrictions started to ease.
- **March:** Schools reopened (8) and outdoor activity resumed with the rule of six in place (29).
- **12 April:** Gyms, pools, leisure centres and retail reopened.
- **17 May:** Organised sport resumed and indoor gatherings reintroduced with the rule of six applied.
- **19 July:** All legal restrictions removed.
- **28 January:** All temporary restrictions removed.
- **8 Dec:** Temporary restrictions introduced to counter the Omicron variant.
This chapter presents information on three levels of activity:

- **Active** (at least 150 minutes a week)
- **Fairly active** (an average of 30-149 minutes a week)
- **Inactive** (less than 30 minutes a week).

**What do we mean by physical activity?**

- At least moderate intensity *
- Bouts of 10 minutes or more that add up to one of the three levels of activity

* Vigorous intensity counts as double

Note: we count most sport and physical activity, but exclude gardening. However, the Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (OHID) does include gardening in its local level physical activity data. You can view the OHID data here.
Levels of activity

Headlines

Our data shows that between mid-November 2020 and mid-November 2021, just over six in 10 adults (28.0 million) achieved 150+ minutes of activity a week.

- **Inactive**: Less than an average of 30 minutes a week (27.2% or 12.4m)
- **Fairly active**: An average of 30-149 minutes a week (11.5% or 5.2m)
- **Active**: An average of 150+ minutes a week (61.4% or 28.0m)

27.2% of people (12.4m) did less than an average of 30 minutes a week.

11.5% (5.2m) were fairly active but didn’t reach an average of 150 minutes a week.

61.4% (28.0m) did an average of 150 minutes or more a week.

Link to data tables
Summary of change

The coronavirus pandemic, which saw unprecedented restrictions applied to everyday life, has resulted in a clear drop in activity levels since the last full pre-pandemic reference point (Nov 18-19). However as the pandemic has progressed, activity levels have stabilised and no further annual changes have been recorded, compared to 12 months ago.

Compared to pre-pandemic (Nov 18-19) we see:
- 0.6m (-1.9%) fewer active adults
- 1.3m (+2.6%) more inactive adults.

For details on how we measure change, see the notes pages.
Changes through the year

The drop in activity levels during the pandemic continues to reflect the level of restrictions in place at the time.

Early 2021 saw significant restrictions, as the country found itself in a national lockdown across January and February. This is reflected in a notable drop across mid-January to mid-March 2021, compared to 12 months earlier.

However, as restrictions eased activity levels began to recover, with increases seen across the summer compared to 12 months earlier. Despite this, with the exception of mid-September to mid-November where there’s no reportable difference, activity levels remain below pre-pandemic levels (2019).

Link to data tables
Levels of activity

Summary of demographic differences

Our data shows there are significant inequalities:

1. Gender
   Men (63% or 14.0m) are more likely to be active than women (60% or 13.9m).

2. Socio-economic groups
   Those in routine/semi-routine jobs and those who are long-term unemployed or have never worked (NS-SEC 6-8*) are the least likely to be active (52%).

3. Age
   Activity levels generally decrease with age, with the sharpest decrease coming at age 75+ (to 39%).

4. Disability and long-term health conditions
   Activity is less common for disabled people or those with a long-term health condition* (45%) than those without (66%).

5. Ethnicity
   There are differences in activity levels based on ethnic background.

*See our definitions page for the full definition of each demographic group.

Additional demographic breakdowns for sexual orientation, faith, working status and education stage can be found in the data tables.
Both men and women have seen activity levels negatively impacted

Both men and women have seen a clear drop in activity levels compared to pre-pandemic (Nov 18-19), with levels stabilising over the last 12 months. The drops were slightly greater for men (down 2.2% or 376,000) than women (down 1.7% or 266,000).

Within this, men saw larger drops during periods when more restrictions were in place but have recovered more quickly since the easing of restrictions in March 2021. In contrast, women’s activity levels saw smaller drops and no reportable recovery across the same periods.

Across mid-November 2020 to mid-November 2021:
- 63.1% or 14.0m of men were active
- 59.8% or 13.9m of women were active.

Note: Data on gender identification was collected on male, female and ‘in another way’. Results for ‘in another way’ can be found in the data tables.

Link to data tables
The least affluent have seen a larger drop in activity levels

Activity levels among both the most (NS-SEC 1–2) and least (NS-SEC 6–8) affluent groups have seen a clear drop since the start of the pandemic, in line with the national picture. However, this drop is greater among the least affluent (down 1.7% compared to Nov 18–19). The most affluent record a drop of 0.8%.

Within this, similar patterns to the overall population were generally seen across the year for all groups (see page eight). However, since July 2021 the least affluent groups didn’t record any further recovery, whereas the most affluent groups saw activity levels return to pre-pandemic levels (2019).

Note: NS-SEC classifications refer to ages 16–74 only. Full details of what the NS-SEC categories mean can be found on the definitions page.

Link to data tables
Activity levels continue to fall among young adults

Activity levels were falling before the pandemic hit among young people aged 16-34. The pandemic has accelerated this, with a further drop of 3.7%, or 607,000, fewer active young people compared to Nov 18-19. Over the last five years, this represents nearly a million (5.7%) fewer active young people as other priorities increasingly fill their lives—be that technology or busy lifestyles.

Among the 35-54 age group, activity levels have followed a similar pattern to the population overall, seeing a drop in those who are active (down 1.4% or 235,000) compared to pre-pandemic (Nov 18-19) but no further change compared to 12 months ago.

Active: 150+ minutes a week
Annual picture

Arrows show change from 12 months ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change
Activity levels are recovering among older adults

Activity levels fell among those aged 75+ at the start of the pandemic, however this drop has been recovered over the last 12 months. This may be related to guidance around shielding ending and a possible increased confidence among this group in going out.

The 55-74 age group were generally more resilient, in terms of activity levels, to the pandemic and the small drop seen has been recovered.

Growth in walking for leisure has been key to the recovery for both these age groups.

### Active: 150+ minutes a week

#### Annual picture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nov 15 to Nov 16</th>
<th>Nov 16 to Nov 17</th>
<th>Nov 17 to Nov 18</th>
<th>Nov 18 to Nov 19</th>
<th>Nov 19 to Nov 20</th>
<th>Nov 20 to Nov 21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75+</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-74</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adults with a disability or long-term health condition have seen activity levels drop compared to pre-pandemic.

Both those with and without a disability or long-term health condition have followed the overall picture, with a clear drop in activity levels compared to pre-pandemic (Nov 18-19) and levels stabilising over the last 12 months. The drops in those active were, proportionately, slightly greater for those with a disability or long-term health condition (down 2.1%) than those without (down 1.4%).

Within this, recovery has been more limited among adults with a disability or long-term health condition, with drops during the height of the initial restrictions in 2020 being retained. This indicates that any recovery might be slower for this group.

Active: 150+ minutes a week
Annual picture

Arrows show change from 12 months ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change.

Nov 20-21 ADULT SURVEY

Levels of activity
Disability and long-term health conditions

Link to data tables
Significant inequalities continue to exist in activity levels for some minority ethnic groups

Among White British, Asian (excluding Chinese) and adults from other ethnic groups, we continue to see a drop in activity compared to pre-pandemic (Nov 18-19), as we see for all adults. However, the drops are larger for Asian (excluding Chinese) and adults from other ethnic groups and, as such, the inequalities have widened. We can’t report any change for Black or Chinese adults within our margin of error.

Mixed and White Other adults see activity levels unchanged to pre-pandemic levels.

Active: 150+ minutes a week
Annual picture

- **Nov 18-19**: 68% 68% 68%
- **Nov 19-20**: 65% 63% 63%
- **Nov 20-21**: 61% 57% 58%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Nov 18-19</th>
<th>Nov 19-20</th>
<th>Nov 20-21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Other</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic group</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (excluding Chinese)</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian (excluding Chinese)</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Link to data tables
Alongside doing at least 150 minutes of physical activity a week, the Chief Medical Officer also recommends adults should do muscle strengthening activities on at least two days a week.

Data has been collected to measure muscle strength since November 2019.

Data has previously been, and continues to be, captured through the Health Survey for England (HSE). The HSE includes housework, manual gardening and DIY within their estimates but doesn’t include walking. As such, the estimates across the two surveys are not comparable. HSE data can be viewed here.

**What do we mean by muscle strengthening exercises?**

- Muscles feel some tension, shake or feel warm
- At least two sessions a week

---

**Activities**

- Cycling for sport and leisure or travel
- Dance
- Sporting activities
- Walking for leisure or travel
Muscle strengthening activity has fallen

There’s been a small drop in those doing two or more sessions of muscle strengthening activity a week with 434,000, or 1.2%, fewer adults meeting the guideline compared to 12 month ago - 19.6m, or 43%, met the guideline across Nov 20-21.

- This drop has been driven by women (-1.7%) with men seeing no change, so widening the gap between them.
- In contrast, there’s been no change for those with a disability or long-term health condition and, as such, the gap to those without has narrowed slightly.
- Similarly, while those meeting the guideline declines sharply at age 75+, it’s those with the highest levels, the 16-54-year-olds, that have driven the drop.
- Additionally the least affluent groups (NS-SEC 6-8) haven’t seen a drop, whereas the most and mid-affluent groups have. The gap between them, however, remains wide, with the least affluent less likely to meet the guideline.
- There are no changes among any ethnic group, except a small drop for White British. Those from Black (38%), Asian (excluding Chinese) (35%) and other (36%) ethnic groups continue to be the least likely to meet the guidelines.

2+ sessions a week of muscle strengthening physical activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Nov 19-20</th>
<th>Nov 20-21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All adults</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-34</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-54</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-74</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75+</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This chapter presents data broken down by different types of activity and looks at those who’ve participated at least twice in the last 28 days.

Looking at participation at least twice in the last 28 days provides:

- a useful measure of engagement in different sports and physical activities
- an understanding of the contribution of activities to achieving 150+ minutes a week.

We count sport and physical activity if it’s done...

at least twice in the last 28 days
Types of activity

Trends for some activities have been altered compared to pre-pandemic

Of those activities showing growth before the pandemic, only walking for leisure has continued to see numbers rise. Active Travel (walking or cycling to get to a specific place) and fitness activities have both been notably impacted and seen large drops in participant numbers.

Cycling for leisure and sport, and running (includes treadmill), have both seen numbers fall back since restrictions were eased in March 2021, following an initial rise. For running, numbers are now below pre-pandemic (Nov 18-19) levels.

Swimming and team sports have seen their slight downward trends in numbers exacerbated by the pandemic, with large drops since Nov 18-19.

Taken part at least twice in the last 28 days (age 16+) for selected activity groups

- Walking for leisure
- Active travel
- Fitness activities
- Running
- Cycling for leisure and sport
- Swimming
- Team sports

Link to data tables
**Types of activity**

**The scale of recovery**
As the level of restrictions in place impacted activities in different ways, the scale of recovery has also differed by activity. All comparisons are to pre-pandemic (Nov 18-19).

**No or limited recovery**
Fitness activity numbers remain notably below pre-pandemic levels across the whole year. Although the drops are slightly smaller from mid-May onwards, recovery is limited at best.

**Partial recovery**
Active travel numbers have seen a partial recovery from mid-March 2021 onwards, while swimming numbers have started to recover since mid-May 2021.

**Full recovery**
Despite no annual recovery, since mid-July (when all legal restrictions were lifted) team sport numbers have, largely, returned to pre-pandemic levels (2019).

**Link to data tables**
We ask the following attitude questions:

**Capability**
- I feel I have the ability to be physically active. Ability includes physical ability and confidence.

**Opportunity**
- I feel I have the opportunity to be physically active. Opportunity includes things such as having somewhere to do it, being able to afford it, having the right kit, support from family, someone to take part with etc.

**Motivation**
- I find sport enjoyable and satisfying. Four questions covering motivation are included within the survey, however just enjoyment is included in this report.

Results are presented for those saying 'strongly agree' to each question.

Someone’s capability, opportunity and motivation to be active combine to drive their behaviour. The absence of just one of these can lead to someone becoming inactive. Data on these attitudes helps us to better understand people’s activity levels.
Perceived capability remains unchanged

Throughout most of the year there have been no reportable differences in those strongly agreeing they have the ability to be active, compared to pre-pandemic levels (2019). With perceived capability increasing during the early stages of the pandemic, this apparent lack of change is due to decreases in the last 12 months – meaning levels have returned to those seen pre-pandemic. Mid-March to mid-May 2021 was the exception, where we recorded a significant decrease to pre-pandemic, but this appears to have been a short-term drop.

I feel I have the ability to be physically active (proportion who strongly agree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Nov 18-19</th>
<th>Nov 20-21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Nov to mid-Jan</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Jan to mid-Mar</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Mar to mid-May</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-May to mid-Jul</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Jul to mid-Sept</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Sept to mid-Nov</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arrows show change from 2 years ago (pre-pandemic). No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change.

Link to data tables
Opportunity has rallied

While those strongly agreeing they had the opportunity to be active fell from the start of the pandemic, the most recent set of restrictions and national lockdown across November 2020 to February 2021 led to an even greater decrease – likely linked to the seemingly ongoing cycle of restrictions. However, restrictions easing was coupled with a bounce back in people feeling they had the opportunity to be active, and while levels remain below pre-pandemic (2019), there have been no further drops since May 2021.

I feel I have the **opportunity** to be physically active (proportion who strongly agree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Nov 18–19</th>
<th>Nov 20–21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Nov to mid-Jan</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Jan to mid-Mar</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Mar to mid-May</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-May to mid-Jul</td>
<td>-5.8%</td>
<td>-2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Jul to mid-Sept</td>
<td>-1.3%</td>
<td>-1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Sept to mid-Nov</td>
<td>-7.8%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arrows show change from 2 years ago (pre-pandemic). No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change.

Link to data tables
**Enjoyment dropped**

The proportion strongly agreeing that they enjoy taking part in sport and physical activity fell at the start of 2021, as the country entered a new lockdown, having been unchanged to this point. It’s likely that resilience had waned by this time.

However, mid-September to mid-November saw no reportable differences. This is an encouraging sign that enjoyment levels might recover quickly, which is positive longer-term for activity levels.

---

**I find sport enjoyable and satisfying (proportion who strongly agree)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Nov 18–19</th>
<th>Nov 20–21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Nov to mid-Jan</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Jan to mid-Mar</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Mar to mid-May</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-May to mid-Jul</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Jul to mid-Sept</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Sept to mid-Nov</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arrows show change from 2 years ago (pre-pandemic). No arrows indicate no statistically reportable change.
Volunteering

A volunteer makes all the difference. Volunteering benefits both the volunteer and the person receiving the support. Whether it’s serving refreshments, coaching a player or assisting disabled people to take part, the sport and activity sector needs people to give their time.

A person counts as having volunteered if:
They’ve taken part in a volunteering role to support sport/physical activity in the past 12 months. (A full list of roles can be found in our definitions at the end of this report, on page 41).

Volunteering is captured across four levels of frequency (in the past 12 months):
• Volunteered once/one-off in the past year
• Volunteered a few times in the past year
• Volunteered at least once a month, but not once a week, throughout the year
• Volunteered at least once a week throughout the year.

And at six different lengths of time (per usual session):
• Less than half an hour
• Around half an hour
• Around 45 minutes to an hour
• Around two hours
• Three or four hours
• More than four hours.
Volunteer numbers fell sharply compared to 12 months ago

Those volunteering once a week throughout the year saw a smaller drop, compared to 12 months ago, than less regular forms of volunteering. This indicates volunteering among those doing so regularly was the most resilient during the pandemic.

In total more than 6.6m, or 14%, adults have given up their time to support sport and physical activity at some point across the latest 12-month period (Nov 20–21) – a drop of 3.1m adults, or 6.9%, compared to 12 months ago.

Volunteered to support sport and physical activity in the last 12 months

Note: Data is only available since November 2019–20 and this reference period includes eight months of coronavirus restrictions. As such it’s not possible to make comparisons to pre-pandemic or establish whether there’s been any recovery.
Volunteering

Regular (weekly) volunteers do so for between 45 minutes and two hours a session

The majority of regular volunteers complete either 45 minutes to an hour (29%), or two hours (35%) per session.

The same pattern is seen for monthly volunteers and those volunteering a few times in the last year, but with a more even split between 45 minutes to an hour, and two hours per session.

Infrequent volunteers are more likely to do very long sessions

While those volunteering once/as a one-off during the year are still most likely to undertake sessions of between 45 minutes and two hours, these proportions are notably smaller than for regular volunteers.

Of this group, 14% reported doing sessions in excess of four hours, with 27% doing 3+ hour sessions. This could be linked to event volunteering and similar activities.

Volunteered once/one-off in the last year

Volunteered at least once a week throughout the year

Link to data tables
A variety of different roles are performed by volunteers

Across all adults who reported doing any volunteering over the past 12 months, organising fundraising for a sports club, organisation or event, remains the most common role despite seeing a fall in the share doing it. There have also been disproportionately greater drops in those volunteers providing transport which helps people take part in sport (other than for family members), providing any other help, and stewarding or marshalling.

There continued to be similar proportions of volunteers undertaking the more formal roles.

Proportion of those doing any volunteering to support sport and physical activity in the past 12 months

Arrows show change from 12 months ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change.

Link to data tables
Volunteering

**Summary of demographic profile**

Our data shows there are significant inequalities:

1. **Gender**
   - Men are more likely to regularly volunteer to support sport and physical activity than women, comprising 63% of all weekly volunteers.

2. **Socio-economic groups**
   - People from lower socio-economic backgrounds (NS-SEC 6-8) are under-represented in volunteering, comprising just 11% of all weekly sport volunteers but 31% of the adult population (aged 16-74).

3. **Age**
   - The greatest shares of regular volunteers come from the 16-24, 35-44 and 45-54 age groups.

4. **Disability and long-term health conditions**
   - Disabled people or those with a long-term health condition* account for 16% of regular volunteers, despite accounting for 21% of the population as a whole.

5. **Ethnicity**
   - Black adults are slightly under-represented among regular volunteers.

*See our definitions page for the full definition of each demographic group.

Additional demographic breakdowns for sexual orientation, faith, working status and education stage can be found in the data tables.
Volunteering

Gender and age

Gender

Both men and women follow the same overall pattern, with regular (weekly) volunteering falling by a smaller amount compared to less regular forms of volunteering.

Men have driven the drops among all volunteers, with the exception of once/one-off volunteers where the drop is greater among women.

Women continue to comprise a smaller share of volunteers as the regularity of volunteering increases.

Age

All age groups follow the same pattern, with regular (weekly) volunteering falling by a smaller amount compared to less regular forms of volunteering. The exception is for age 75+, where once/one-off volunteers haven’t recorded a change.

The youngest age groups have driven the decrease among once/one-off volunteers, while the 35–54 age group has driven the decrease in regular (weekly) volunteers – in both instances the age groups most likely to volunteer.

Volunteering frequency

**Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nov 19–20</th>
<th>Nov 20–21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nov 19–20</th>
<th>Nov 20–21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16–34</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35–54</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55–74</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75+</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arrows show change from 12 months ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change.

Note: Data on gender identification was collected on male, female and ‘in another way’. Results for ‘in another way’ can be found in the data tables.
Volunteering

Socio-economic group

All socio-economic groups follow the same overall pattern, with regular (weekly) volunteering falling by a smaller amount compared to less regular forms of volunteering.

It remains that the most affluent (NS-SEC 1-2) are more likely to volunteer at all frequencies, when compared to the least affluent (NS-SEC 6-8).

Volunteering frequency

Disability and long-term health conditions

While there’s been no reportable change in regular (weekly) volunteering among adults with a disability or long-term health condition, drops have been recorded consistently across less regular forms of volunteering.

Adults with a disability or long-term health condition remain less likely overall to volunteer to support sport and physical activity (12%), compared to those without (15%).

Volunteering frequency

Link to data tables
Asian and White Other adults are less likely to volunteer

Drops in volunteering overall across the year have been greatest among White British, Mixed, Black and Chinese adults. Despite this, Asian and White Other adults continue to be the least likely to volunteer to support sport and physical activity.

There are only small detectable differences by ethnic group when breaking volunteering down by frequency.

Any volunteering in the last 12 months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Nov 19–20</th>
<th>Nov 20–21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic group</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian (excl. Chinese)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Other</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arrows show change from 12 months ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change.
Mental wellbeing and individual and community development

**Definition**

Sport and physical activity – and volunteering to support it – has the power to improve lives. In addition to capturing the behaviour of adults when it comes to sport and physical activity, Active Lives also captures data designed to better understand impact against four of the five social outcomes identified within the government’s sport and physical activity strategy – Sporting Future.

Chapter one of this report covered the first of those outcomes – physical wellbeing. This chapter will focus on mental wellbeing, individual development and social and community development.

For further details on the outcomes, see our evidence review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical wellbeing</th>
<th>Mental wellbeing</th>
<th>Individual development</th>
<th>Social &amp; community development</th>
<th>Economic development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help improve and maintain fitness, strength and balance</td>
<td>Contribute to happiness and improved self-esteem</td>
<td>Help develop soft/social skills and increase persistence and perseverance</td>
<td>Bring people together</td>
<td>Promote economic growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Agreement to:</th>
<th>Agreement to:</th>
<th>Agreement to:</th>
<th>The economic value of sport, as reported in:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of adults who: Undertake an average of 150+ minutes a day of sport and physical activity.</td>
<td>How happy did you feel yesterday?</td>
<td>I can achieve most of the goals I set myself</td>
<td>Most people in our local area can be trusted.</td>
<td>DCMS’s Sports Satellite Accounts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake two or more sessions of muscle strengthening activity a week.</td>
<td>How satisfied are you with your life nowadays?</td>
<td>If I find something difficult, I keep trying until I can do it.</td>
<td>My local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.</td>
<td>Our report on the social and economic value of community sport and physical activity in England.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement to:</td>
<td>How anxious did you feel yesterday?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

The economic value of sport, as reported in:
DCMS’s Sports Satellite Accounts
Our report on the social and economic value of community sport and physical activity in England.
Mental wellbeing

There’s a positive association between activity levels and mental wellbeing – some activity is good, more is better

This relationship also holds across feeling your life is worthwhile and levels of anxiety.

![Bar chart showing mean scores out of 10 for different activity levels: Inactive (<30 minutes a week), Fairly active (30-149 minutes a week), Active (150+ minutes a week).]

How satisfied are you with your life nowadays? How happy did you feel yesterday?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Level</th>
<th>How Satisfied</th>
<th>How Happy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inactive (&lt;30 minutes)</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly active (30-149</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active (150+ minutes)</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There’s a positive association between frequency of volunteering and mental wellbeing

Regular volunteers generally have higher wellbeing scores than those who volunteer as a one-off or not at all.

![Bar chart showing mean scores out of 10 for different volunteering frequencies: Not volunteered, Volunteered 1x (one-off), Volunteered a few times, Volunteered monthly.]

How satisfied are you with your life nowadays? How happy did you feel yesterday?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteering Frequency</th>
<th>How Satisfied</th>
<th>How Happy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not volunteered</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered 1x (one-off)</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered a few times</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered monthly</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Link to data tables
Summary of change

Collective wellbeing scores typically change very little over time and we need to look at a 5-10-year time frame to see any trends. However, disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented and, as such, we’ve seen a much shorter-term change.

Anxiety and happiness are generally considered immediate measures of wellbeing and these have both declined, with happiness down by 0.2 points and anxiety up by 0.2 points since pre-pandemic (Nov 18–19). Life satisfaction, the medium-term marker, has seen the largest drop – down 0.3 points since Nov 18–19 while the longer-term marker (feeling that your life is worthwhile) is also down by 0.2 points over the same period. While many factors will have impacted these scores, as shown, activity levels and wellbeing have a clear positive association between them, thus we can infer that the decline in both over the same period are linked.

Arrows show change from 2 years ago (pre-pandemic). No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change.

Link to data tables
### Individual development

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

Those who are active have higher scores than those who are fairly active or inactive.

- Inactive (<30 minutes a week)
- Fairly active (30−149 minutes a week)
- Active (150+ minutes a week)

(mean score out of 5, where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Level</th>
<th>I can achieve most of the goals I set myself</th>
<th>If I find something difficult, I keep trying until I can do it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### There’s a positive association between frequency of volunteering and individual development

Those who volunteer regularly generally have higher scores than those who volunteer as a one-off or not at all.

- Not volunteered
- Volunteered monthly
- Volunteered 1x (one-off)
- Volunteered weekly
- Volunteered a few times

(mean score out of 5, where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteering Frequency</th>
<th>I can achieve most of the goals I set myself</th>
<th>If I find something difficult, I keep trying until I can do it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Link to data tables
### Individual development

#### There’s a positive association between activity levels and social and community development

Those who are active have higher social trust and community integration scores than those who are inactive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Level</th>
<th>Most people in our area can be trusted</th>
<th>My local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inactive (&lt;30 minutes a week)</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly active (30–149 minutes a week)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active (150+ minutes a week)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(\(\text{mean score out of 5}, \text{ where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree}\))

#### There’s a positive association between activity levels and social and community development

There’s a small positive association between volunteering and both social trust and community integration overall, but not between the different frequencies of volunteering.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteering Frequency</th>
<th>Most people in our area can be trusted</th>
<th>My local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not volunteered</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered 1x (one-off)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered a few times</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered monthly</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered weekly</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(\(\text{mean score out of 5}, \text{ where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree}\))

---

**Link to data tables**
Supporting people to have meaningful social relationships isn’t just crucial to people’s physical and mental health, it also affects their engagement in the workplace and wider community cohesion.

We ask a single question which has five response options:

**How often do you feel lonely?**

- Often/always
- Some of the time
- Occasionally
- Hardly ever
- Never

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.
People who engage in sport and physical activity are less likely to feel lonely

Those who are active are less likely to feel lonely than those who are fairly active, who in turn are less likely to feel lonely than those who are inactive. Many forms of sport and physical activity include a social element, so this is perhaps not surprising.

**Often/always feel lonely**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Nov 19–20</th>
<th>Nov 20–21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly active</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of change**

There’s been an increase in those feeling lonely often/always compared to 12 months ago, which may reflect ongoing reduced social contact during the pandemic. Furthermore lonely some of the time has seen a slightly larger increase. The largest shift has come from those never feeling lonely.

Those with the highest levels of loneliness are the groups that have seen the greatest increases (younger, women, least affluent, have a disability or long-term health condition).

Link to data tables
Further breakdowns

Local level data
Data for local areas are available for the following measures:
- Levels of activity (regions, Active Partnerships and local authorities)
- Volunteering (regions and Active Partnerships)
- Loneliness (regions and Active Partnerships).

Additional demographic groups
Data for additional demographic groups are available in the accompanying data tables, covering:
- sexual orientation
- faith
- working status
- stage of education.

Exploring the data
Please use the Active Lives Online Tool to run your own analysis of the data. Active Lives Online Tool – this will be updated with the latest data shortly after its publication.

Activity across England

Link to data tables
Definitions

**Moderate activity** is defined as activity where you raise your heart rate.

**Vigorous activity** is where you're out of breath or are sweating (you may not be able to say more than a few words without pausing for breath).

**Muscle tension** is where the effort of the activity was usually enough to make your muscles feel some tension, shake or feel warm.

**NS-SEC** groups are defined as:
- Most affluent (NS-SEC 1-2): Managerial, administrative and professional occupations (e.g. chief executive, doctor, actor, journalist).
- Mid-affluent (NS-SEC 3-5): Intermediate, lower supervisory and technical occupations; self-employed and small employers (e.g. auxiliary nurse, secretary, plumber, gardener, train driver).
- Least affluent (NS-SEC 6-8): Semi-routine and routine occupations; long-term unemployed or never worked (e.g. post man, shop assistant, bus driver).
- Students and other (NS-SEC 9).

**Limiting disability and long-term health condition** is defined as an individual reporting they have a physical or mental health condition or illness that’s lasted, or is expected to last, 12 months or more, and that this has a substantial effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.

**Impairment types** cover matters that limit day-to-day life, including chronic health conditions (e.g. diabetes and cancer), physical disability (e.g. mobility and dexterity), mental health (e.g. depression and anxiety) and sensory impairments (e.g. hearing and vision).

The White British group within **ethnicity** includes those who say they are White-Irish.

**Volunteering roles** are all in relation to supporting sport or physical activity and/or a sports organisation or event. They’re defined as:
- Organising fundraising for a sports club, organisation or event. Doesn’t include general fundraising through taking part in a sports event or activity
- Provided transport to help people other than family members take part
- Coached or instructed an individual or team(s) other than solely for family members
- Refereed, umpired, or officiated at a match, competition or event
- Administrative or committee role e.g. chairman, treasurer, social secretary, first aider, welfare officer
- Stewarded or marshalled
- Provided any other help e.g. helping with refreshments, sports kit or equipment.
Sample and weighting
The achieved sample was 177,273 (16+).

Data have been weighted to Office for National Statistics (ONS) population measures for geography and key demographics.

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’d 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.

Population totals are estimated values and have been calculated using ONS mid-2015, mid-2016, mid-2017, mid-2018, mid-2019 and mid-2020 estimates. Confidence intervals also apply to these. More detail can be found here.
Sport spectating
While not covered in this report, data tables showing the number of people attending live sports events form part of this release.

Loneliness
Data collection was extended to the full sample for Nov 19-20, however this uncovered an ordering effect with the questions following the outcomes data. This has been rectified for Nov 20-21. Only data not impacted is presented.

Data considerations
How we measure change
Active Lives figures are based on the response of 177,273 adults, which we then scale up to provide an England-wide picture. That means there’ll 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 there are genuine differences. If the data is showing only small differences which are within the margin of error, they’re noted as “no change”.

Where we comment on change, this refers to a percentage point (absolute) change.

Suppressed data
During the first six months of surveying, a number of respondents were double counting a gym session and the individual activities they did within the gym. We resolved this problem by rewording the question from May 2016. Due to exercise bike being counted within cycling for leisure and sport, this means we can’t report November 15-16 data for either fitness activities or cycling for leisure and sport.

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.

Link to data tables