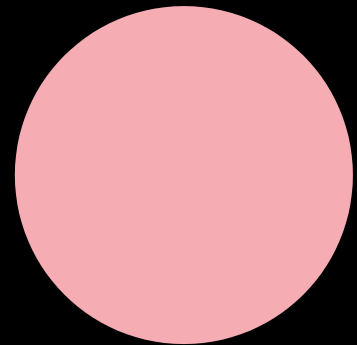
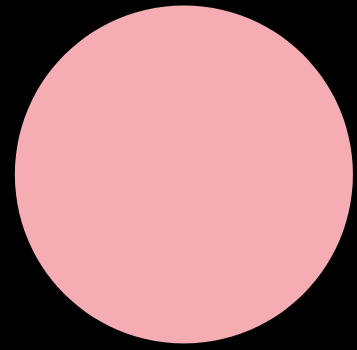


May 2022

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# Sport England Activity Check In



Classified: Private

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## Wave 1 Quant Findings Report

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# Executive Summary

## Key findings

- 1 in 5 adults say that they do less physical activity now than before the Covid-19 pandemic
- “Not feeling fit enough” is a barrier to doing more a physical activity for 1 in 10 adults
- Those who increased negative behaviours such as drinking alcohol and eating unhealthy food during the pandemic are more likely to have reduced their frequency of activity post pandemic whilst maintaining these negative behaviours
- Around half of adults have less disposable income than a year ago, with over a third saying that cost-of-living has negatively impacted their ability to be active
- Whilst overall children & young people feel encouraged and supported in their physical activity, over 1 in 10 have concerns about being judged

## Summary of key findings

Now that pandemic restrictions have been fully lifted, we turn our attention to understanding the degree to which the pandemic has affected attitudes and behaviours towards sport and physical activity.

Disruption to habits and routines during the pandemic has impacted some negatively, with 1 in 5 adults saying that they do less physical activity now than in the 12 months leading up to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Those aged 55+, females and those with a disability or long-term health condition are most likely to report doing less now than pre-pandemic. In addition, almost a third of adults say that their level of general fitness today is lower than before the pandemic, with females and people with a disability or long-term health condition being most likely to say that their level of fitness is “much lower today” (than in the 12 months leading up to March 2020).

Not feeling fit enough has been consistently highlighted as a key challenge to sport and physical behaviours post pandemic. Over 1 in 10 adults list “not feeling fit enough” as a reason for not being able to do the amount of activity they wanted to in the previous week. This figure jumps to almost 1 in 3 for adults who do less physical activity now than in the 12 months leading up to the pandemic. Those who do less activity now than before the pandemic are also more likely than those who have not changed their activity levels (or have increased them) to cite a lack of motivation as a barrier to doing more. They are also significantly more likely to say that their general level of fitness is lower

now than before the pandemic, suggesting a relationship between lower post pandemic fitness levels and a lack of motivation now that restrictions have been lifted.

We also find a subsection of adults who reduced their levels of physical activity during the pandemic whilst increasing negative behaviours such as drinking alcohol and eating unhealthy food, along with sedentary behaviours such as watching TV/content online. Many of these individuals report that they have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels of activity whilst maintaining the negative behaviours they adopted. They are also significantly more likely to say that they do not feel fit enough and cite lack of motivation as a barrier to doing the amount of activity they want to.

Of those who say that they “do not feel fit enough” to take part in physical activity, 44% say that they do not feel fit enough to take part in the activities they use to be able to do pre-pandemic.

Whilst this feeling is largely consistent across all demographic groups, it is most prominent amongst those aged 35-54. A further 41% of adults who say they “do not feel fit enough” claim that they currently do not feel fit enough to take part in any activity, a figure which includes 48% of those aged 55+ who identified not feeling fit enough as a barrier to doing more.

For others the story is more positive, with over a third of adults agreeing that during the pandemic period of January 2021 to July 2021 they were able to increase their levels of physical activity compared to the 12 months leading up to the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020. 16–34-year-olds and those without children were more likely to have increased their levels of activity during this time period. Encouragingly, the majority of these people have maintained increased levels of physical activity today.

During this first wave of the Activity Check In, we have explored the rising cost of living in relation to sport and physical activity behaviour. For context, almost half of adults say that they have less disposable income today compared to a year ago, with females, those with children and those from lower socioeconomic groups (C2DE) most likely to agree that they have a ‘lot less’. There is also a correlation between levels of disposable income and the ability to be active, with half of those who have less disposable income today saying that the cost-of-living increase has had a negative impact on their ability to be physically active.

Overall, almost half of adults state that they have less disposable income now than compared to a year ago, and 1 in 3 say that the cost-of-living increase has had a negative impact on their ability to be active. Those with decreased disposable income are more likely to be making sacrifices in ways such as cutting down on socialising, entertainment, food and soft drinks and alcohol, whilst over 1 in 10 (14%) are spending less on physical activity.

Looking to the future, almost half of adults believe that the increased cost of living will negatively impact their ability to be active, with those aged 16-34, females, those with children and those with a mental disability demonstrating particular concern.

Therefore, we are likely to see further reductions in the amount people spend on sport and physical activity in the future if cost of living rises persists. Specifically, it is likely that groups of people who often find it harder to be active such as women, people with long-term health conditions/illnesses and people from lower socioeconomic groups (DE) will be most adversely impacted. In addition, this may further add to the downward trend in activity levels for adults aged between 16-34.

The Activity Check-in also provides a focused look at Children and Young people (CYP) and found that nearly half of children and young people would like to participate in more forms of sport or exercise in the future. The overwhelming majority (99%) of CYP said that they had done some form of physical activity in the week before the March survey period.

2 in 5 (42%) CYP strongly agree that they enjoy taking part in some form of exercise and sport, however, around half say that they only exercise because someone tells them to, and a similar proportion of secondary school aged children (years 7 to 11) find exercise/sports too competitive.

Overall parents/carers appear to be supportive of young people's physical activity, with 40% of secondary school children strongly agreeing that their parents support and/or encourage them to do the activities they want to. However, CYP report barriers around being unwell/injured, with just under 1 in 10 (9%) of those in school year 3 and above strongly agreeing that this has prevented them from doing as much sport and activity as they would have liked. Of the secondary school aged children who said that they would like to do more activity than they currently do over 1 in 3 (38%) said that fitting it around school/studying is a barrier.

When looking into concerns about being judged when taking part in sports, it was found that 15% of secondary school children strongly agree that they feel this is happening.

Encouragingly, over 1 in 3 (32%) of secondary school children strongly agree that they have the opportunity to be active and there appears to be an appetite to increase levels of activity going forwards, with just under half (49%) of CYP saying that they would like to do even more activity than they currently do in the future.

## Methodology & notes on analysis

This research, known as the first wave of the “Activity Check-In”, was conducted via an online survey completed by n=2188 adults (aged 16+) and n=377 children and young people (CYP) in school years 1 to 11. All participants were from England and data has been weighted to be representative of the English population by age, gender, region and socio-economic status.

Data was collected between 25<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022. This time period is referenced as “the survey period” or “the March survey period” throughout the report.

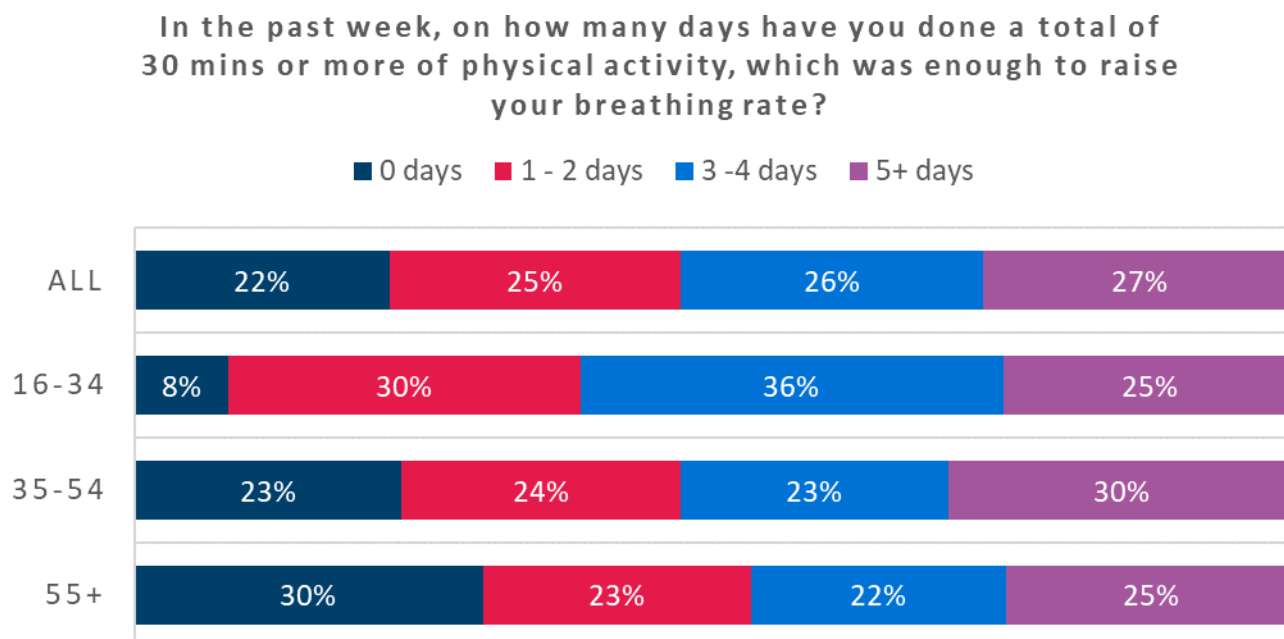
Significance testing had been conducted to a 95% confidence interval (CI) with upper and lower CIs considered. Unless stated otherwise, statistical analysis has been conducted between comparative sub-groups (for example, males compared to females, or 16–34-year-olds compared to 35-54 and 55 or older). In instances where a sub-group has been compared to all sample (e.g. females compared to all adults) this is clearly indicated in the analysis. For example, the finding “Exercise & fitness at home (34%) and going to the gym (24%) is more popular with those aged 16-34” indicates that these types of exercise are significantly more popular than those aged 35-54 and those aged 55 or above. Analysis excludes those who answer, “don’t know”, “can’t remember” or “not applicable” when those options were available.

Throughout the report, where “physical activity” is mentioned, this is defined as 30 minutes or more of physical activity, which was enough to raise your breathing rate. This may include sport, exercise and brisk walking or cycling for recreation or to get to and from places but should not include housework or physical activity that is part a job.

Across the report where we refer to motivation and attitudes towards sport and exercise, for adults we are referring to the proportion who agree or strongly agree unless stated otherwise. For CYP, we are referring to those who strongly agree (unless stated otherwise).

## Chapter 1 – Setting the context

### During the March survey period, 1 in 5 English adults did no physical activity



Source: Q1 In the past week, on how many days have you done a total of 30 mins or more of physical activity, which was enough to raise your breathing rate? This may include sport, exercise and brisk walking or cycling for recreation or to get to and from places but should not include housework or physical activity that is part of your job

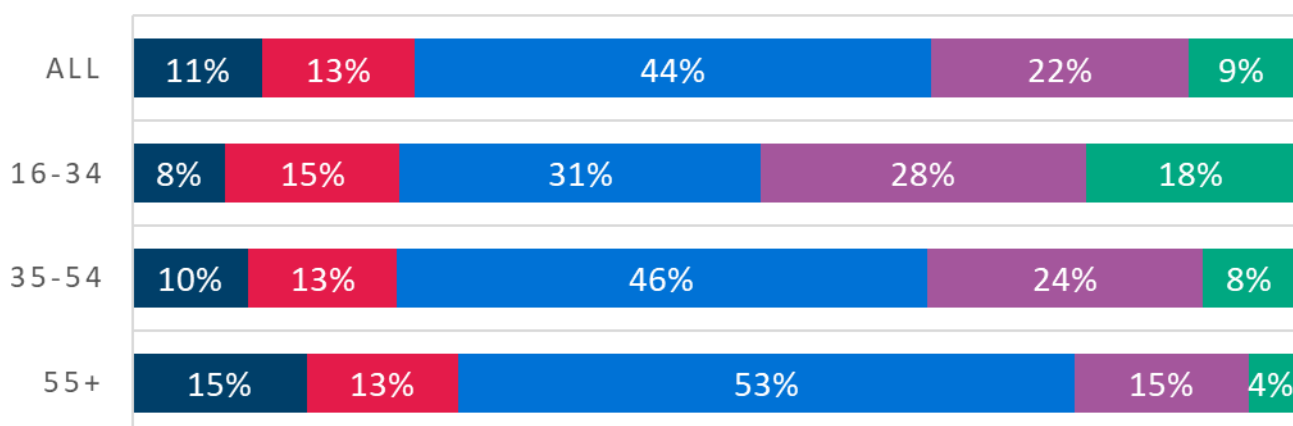
Base: All (n=2188), 16-34 (n=639), 25-54 (n=709), 55+ (n=839)

Whilst over half (53%) of English adults took part in some form of physical activity (see definition in methodology & analysis section), increasing to 62% amongst those aged 16-34, 1 in 5 adults did no physical activity during the March survey period. Those more likely to be doing no exercise include those aged 55+ (30%), those with a disability or long-term health condition (27%), and those in the lowest social economic group of DE (28%). Contrastingly, those most likely to be active (physical activity at least 5 times a week) are males (31%) and those without any physical or mental disabilities (31%).

# 1 in 5 English adults said that they did less physical activity during the survey period in March, than in the 12 months leading up to the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020

And how frequently do you exercise, play sport or do any physical activity now compared to the 12 months leading up to the outbreak of the Covid 19 Pandemic (up to March 2020)?

■ A lot less ■ A bit less ■ About the same ■ A little more ■ A lot more



Source: QW1L And how frequently do you do the following now compared to the 12 months leading up to the outbreak of the Covid 19 Pandemic (up to March 2020)? [Exercised, played sports and/or did physical activity]

Base: All (n=1979), 16-34 (n=603), 25-54 (n=655), 55+ (n=721)

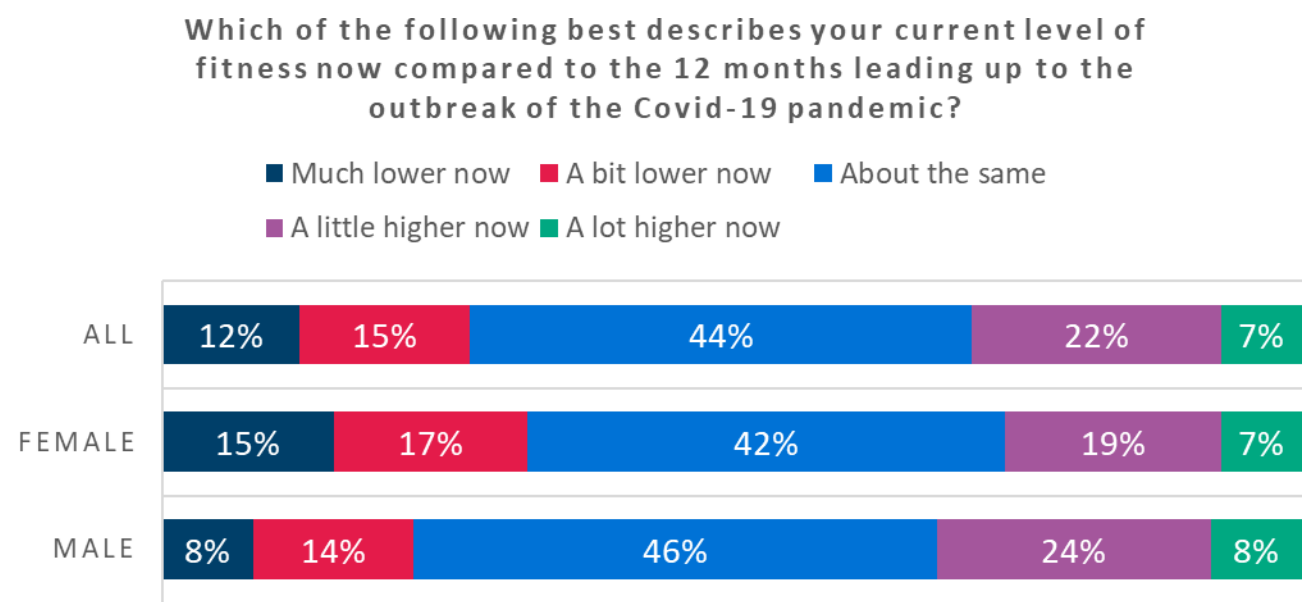
Whilst over 1 in 3 (35%) of adults said that overall, they take part in more physical activity during the March survey period than pre-pandemic, 1 in 5 (21%) said that they were doing less. Females (26%) and those with a disability or long-term health condition (26%) were more likely to say that they have decreased the amount of physical activity during the survey period than compared to the 12 months prior to the outbreak of the pandemic (March 2020).

## Activities

Overall, the most popular physical activity amongst English adults was walking, either for fitness/wellbeing (47%) or for a purpose such as to get to the shops, work or school (40%). Other popular physical activities included exercise/fitness at home (22%), running or jogging (14%) and going to the gym or an exercise/fitness class (13%). 16-34-year-olds are more likely to be doing exercise or fitness at home (34%), running/jogging (29%) or going to the gym/an exercise class (24%).



**Almost a third of English adults said that their level of general fitness has been negatively impacted and is now lower than before the pandemic**



Source: QW1G. And which of the following best describes your current level of general fitness now compared to the 12 months leading up to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic (March 2020)?

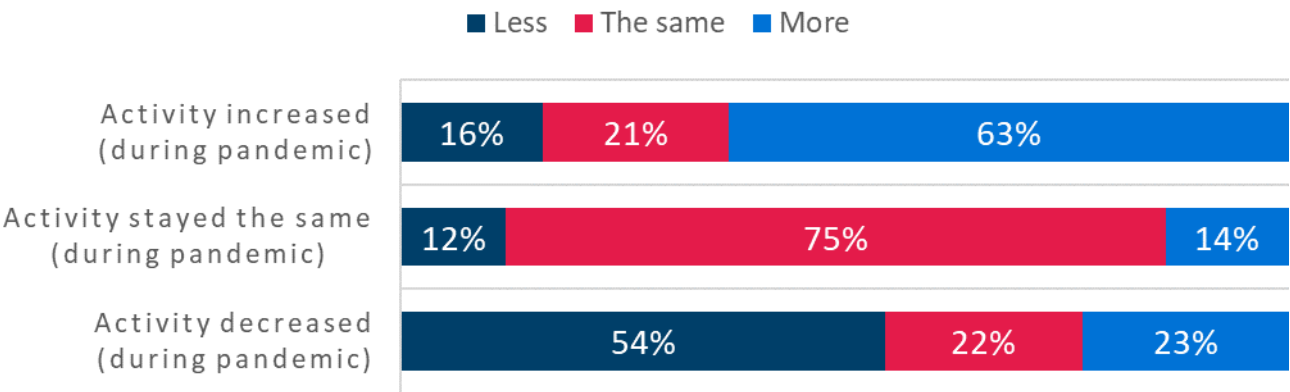
Base: All (n=2150), Male (n=1040), Female (n=1103)

Almost a third (29%) said that their general fitness today is higher than in the 12 months leading up to the outbreak of the pandemic (Mar 2020). With those more likely to claim that including 16–34-year-olds (46%), males (32%) and those with children (38%).

Meanwhile, almost another third (27%) of English adults said that their level of general fitness today is lower than before the pandemic. Females (32%) and those with a disability or long-term health condition (36%) are more likely to say that their level of fitness is lower today, than in the 12 months leading up to March 2020.

# Those who decreased their levels of activity during the pandemic are more likely to continue to do less than before the pandemic

And how frequently do you exercise, play sport or do any physical activity now compared to the 12 months leading up to the outbreak of the Covid 19 Pandemic (up to March 2020)?



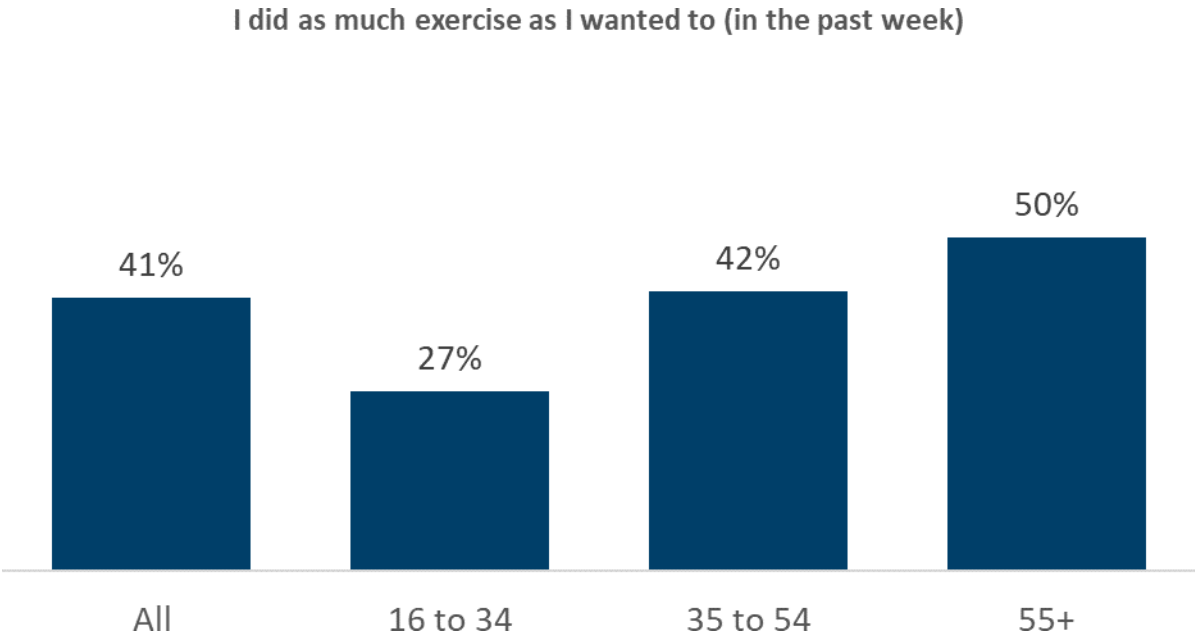
Source: QW1I And how frequently do you do the following now compared to the 12 months leading up to the outbreak of the Covid 19 Pandemic (up to March 2020)? [Exercised, played sports and/or did physical activity]

Base: Increased activity during pandemic (n=620), Activity stayed the same during pandemic (n=792) Decreased activity during the pandemic (n=489)

Of those doing less frequent exercise and physical activity today than before the pandemic, two thirds (66%) say that their level of fitness is lower today than before the pandemic, similarly of those who decreased their frequency of activity during the pandemic, over half (54%) said that their frequency of activity was lower during the survey period than before the pandemic.

However, for some the pandemic appears to have had a positive impact on physical activity with the routines and behaviours they picked up during the pandemic continuing as restrictions have eased. 63% of those who said that their frequency of physical activity increased during Jan to Jul 2021 compared to the 12 months leading up to the outbreak of the pandemic (Mar 2020) say that they continue to do activity more frequently today than before the pandemic, whilst 21% say that their frequency of activity levelled out to the same as before. Just 16% of those who increased their frequency of activity during the pandemic say that they now do less than before the outbreak.

**Those aged 16 to 34 are least likely to agree that they did as much physical activity as they wanted to during the March survey period**



Source: Q7. Still thinking about the last 7 days, what if anything, stopped you from doing the amount of physical activity that you would have liked to?

Base: All (n=2131), 16 to 34 (n=625), 35-54 (n=684), 55+ (n=822)

16–34-year-olds are also more likely to cite work/study (18%) and weather not being suitable (11%) as barriers to doing the amount of activity they wanted to do. Additionally, females (of all ages) are more likely to name a lack of motivation (20%) and not feeling fit enough (16%) as barriers.

## Those who increased their frequency of negative health behaviours during the pandemic appear to have continued these behaviours as restrictions have been lifted

Behaviour	During pandemic	Higher now (than before the pandemic)
Drinking alcohol	Increased	60%
	The same	8%
	Decreased	10%
Smoking	Increased	63%
	The same	13%
	Decreased	14%
Eating unhealthy foods	Increased	60%
	The same	9%
	Decreased	10%
Playing video games	Increased	60%
	The same	14%
	Decreased	19%
Watching TV	Increased	65%
	The same	13%
	Decreased	23%

Source: QW1I And how frequently do you do the following now compared to the 12 months leading up to the outbreak of the Covid 19 Pandemic (up to March 2020)?

Base: Alcohol (n=1656), Smoking (n=852), Unhealthy foods (n=2023), Video games (n=1244), TV (n=2059)

Similarly, those who reported an increase in sedentary activities including watching TV and playing videos during Jan to Jul 2021 appear to have carried those behaviours into the present day, suggesting that negative habits are proving hard to shift to those who picked them up.

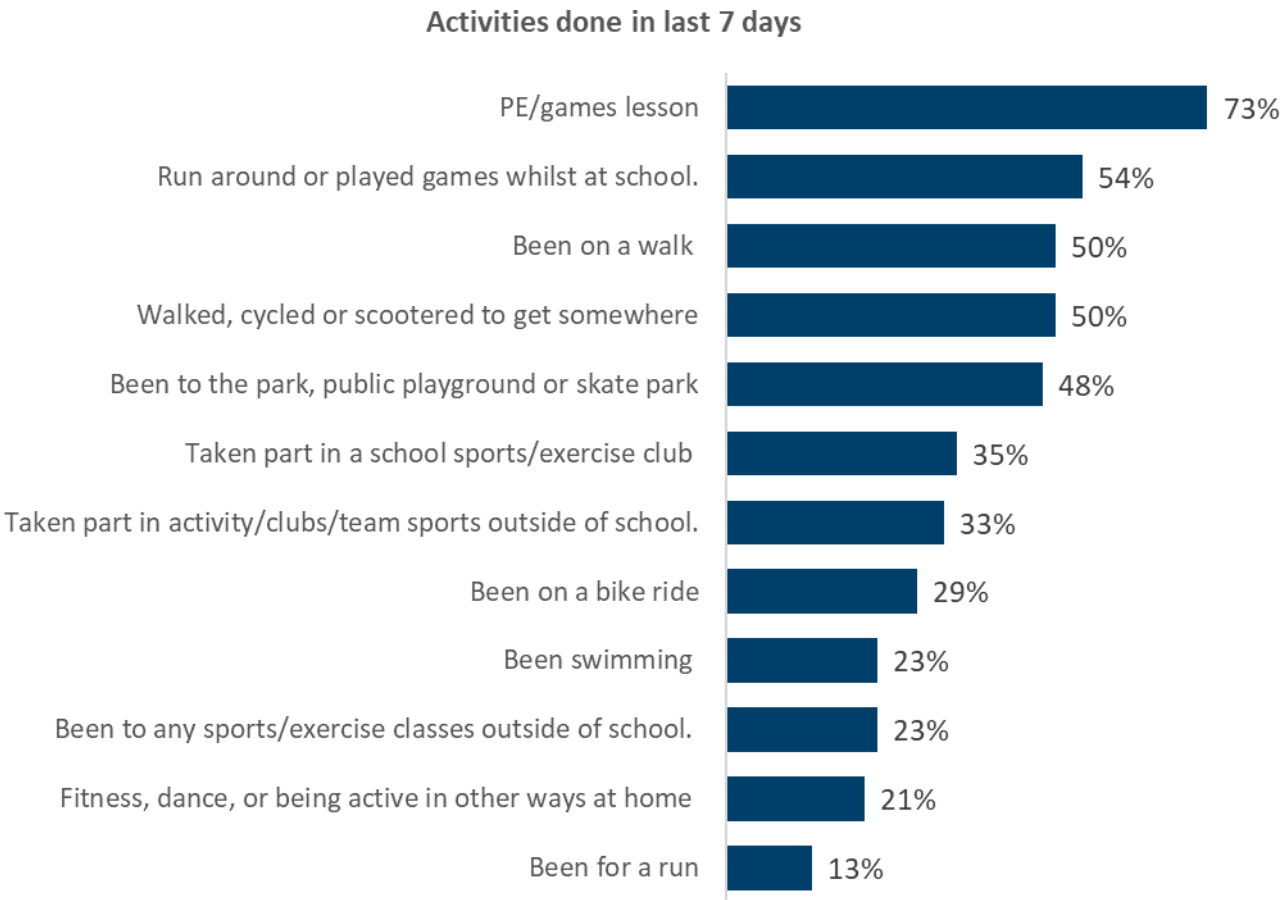
During the pandemic, 34% of adults said that they ate more unhealthy foods (e.g. fast foods), with 60% of these individuals saying that they continue to eat more unhealthy food now than before the pandemic. Similarly, 26% drank more alcohol, of which 60% of those who increased continue to do so compared to pre-pandemic levels. These negative behaviours adopted during the pandemic are more prominent amongst the younger age groups, with 41% of 16-34s saying that they now eat more unhealthy foods, and 37% drinking more alcohol than the period leading up to the pandemic.

A similar pattern has emerged with sedentary activities, as 46% said that they watched more TV during Jan to Jul 2021 and 36% said that they spent more time playing video games. 38% said that they watch more TV today than before the pandemic and 31% now spend more time playing video games. Like the health behaviours, these negative sedentary behaviours are more prominent amongst the younger 16-34 age groups, with 52% saying they watch more TV than previously and 44% play more video games.

### Setting the context: CYP findings

Outside of activities which take place in school, such as PE/Games lessons, going for a walk (for leisure), walking, cycling or scootering to get somewhere and going to the local playground or park are the most popular activities for CYP

Whilst the range of activities undertaken by CYP during the March survey period was varied, only 1% of CYP said that they had done no exercise or sports at all.



Source: CYPQ4 Which of these, if any, have you done in the last 7 days?  
Base: All CYP (n=379)

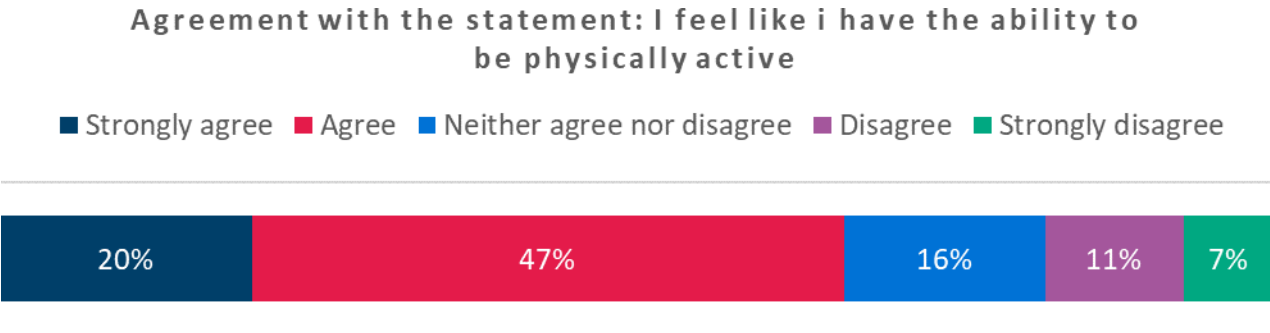
Taking part in PE classes (73%) or playing games at lunchtime (54%) were the activities most participated in by CYP during the survey period. This was followed by out of school activities, such as going for a walk (50%) or going to the local park or playground (48%). Self-organised, activities such as going for a walk or bike ride for fun are enjoyed most frequently. For example, 41% of those who went for a bike ride for fun and 39% of those who went for a walk with family/friends said that they did it more than twice in the week before the survey period. 64% of those who walked, cycled or scootered to get somewhere (e.g. school) did it more than twice in the previous week.

**Nearly half of CYP would like to participate in more forms of sport or exercise in the future**

When asked how much sport and exercise they would like to do in the future, almost half of CYP (49%) said that they'd like to do more than they currently do, a proportion which was consistent across year groups and gender. Additionally, almost 1 in 3 (26%) of secondary school children strongly agreed that they knew how to get involved and improve their skills in lots of different types of exercise and sports. This demonstrates a willingness, and perceived knowledge amongst older children, to do more activity than they currently are doing.

# Chapter 2 – Perceived ability to be active

## Almost 1 in 5 (18%) adults said that they did not feel that they had the ability to be physically active during the March survey period



Source: Q10\_1 Before we move on, how much do you agree or disagree with these statements I feel that I have the ability to be physically active

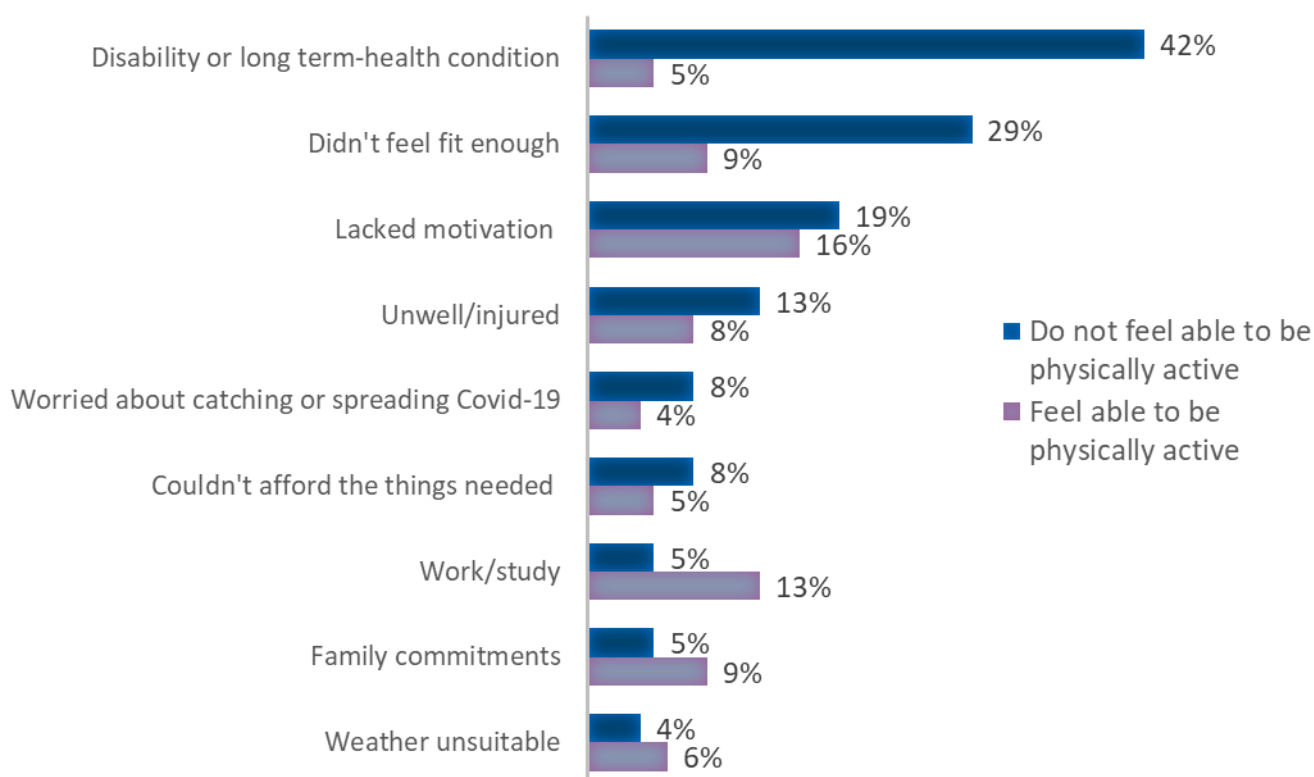
Base: All adult respondents aged 16+ excluding don't know (n=2162)

Over 2 in 3 (66%) English adults agree that they currently have the ability to be physically active, with age and gender linked to feelings of capability, as 76% of those aged 16 to 24 are more likely to agree compared to the older age groups 45-54 (66%), 55 to 64 (56%) and 65+ (60%), whilst 71% of males agree, compared to 63% of females. Additionally, 28% of those with a disability or long-term health condition feel that they do not have the ability to be active.

There is also a strong link between socio-economic status and perceptions of ability as those in socio-economic group A (e.g. those in managerial, administrative or professional job roles) are significantly more likely to agree that they have the ability to be physically active, with over 1 in 3 (34%) strongly agreeing, compared to the average of 20%.

Those who do not feel that they have the capability to be physically active are significantly more likely to list disability or a long-term health condition (42%) and not feeling fit enough (29%) as barriers to doing the amount of physical activity that they would have wanted to in the past week. They are also significantly more likely to disagree that they see people like them in places of exercise (54%) and that they find them inclusive and welcoming (46%). However, they are no more likely than those who do feel capable to be physically active to state that they feel judged by others when they exercise (29% those who do not feel capable compared to 31% who do feel capable).

**Still thinking about the last 7 days, what if anything, stopped you from doing the amount of physical activity that you would have liked to?**



Source: Q7. Still thinking about the last 7 days, what if anything, stopped you from doing the amount of physical activity that you would have liked to?

Base: All (n=2131), Feel able to be physical active (n=1404), Do not feel able to be physical active (n=371)

## Feeling judged by others when exercising was said to be a concern for 1 in 3 adults

**Agreement with the statement: I feel judged when i exercise**

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree



Source: Q10\_4 Before we move on, how much do you agree or disagree with these statements I feel judged by others when I exercise

Base: All adult respondents aged 16+ excluding don't know (n=2118)



Those particularly conscious of feeling judged are younger (49% 16–34-year-olds), females (33%), those with children under 15 (41%), and those with a mental disability (46%). Although a significantly lower proportion than females, 27% of males do agree with the statement “I feel judged by others when I exercise”.

**Those who said that they had dropped their frequency of activity since the pandemic are less likely to agree that they have the ability to be physically active compared those whose frequency of activity has been consistently low**

Activity group	Definition	Adult population (England)	Agree/strongly agree that they have the ability to be physical active	Disagree/strongly disagree that they have the ability to be physical active
Low frequency pre and post pandemic	2 or less days activity in past week (during survey period) Frequency of activity during survey period the SAME as before pandemic	18%	<b>54%</b>	23%
Low frequency post pandemic, higher frequency pre pandemic	2 or less days activity in past week (during survey period) Frequency of activity during survey period the LOWER than before pandemic	16%	45%	<b>37%</b>

Bold indicates statistically significant higher score than comparative sub-group.

Source: Q1 In the past week, on how many days have you done a total of 30 mins or more of physical activity, which was enough to raise your breathing rate? QW1I And how frequently do you do the following now compared to the 12 months leading up to the outbreak of the Covid 19 Pandemic (up to March 2020)? [Exercised, played sports and/or did physical activity].

Base: All (n=2188) Low pre and post pandemic (n=362), Higher pre, lower post pandemic (n=312)

When looking at the impact of the pandemic on activity, we find that just under half of all adults (47%) have done 2 or less days of physical activity in the past week. Just over 1 in 3 of these adults (43%) say that their frequency of activity is the same today as it was in the 12 months leading up to the pandemic (i.e. they were low activity before, and remain so today). These adults make up 18% of the total adult population. However, another 1 in 3 (37%) in this low activity group doing 2 or less days of activity state that their current frequency of activity is lower now than it was before the pandemic. This group of adults who low frequency of activity post pandemic, and were higher before the pandemic, make up 16% of the adult population.

**Those who have decreased their frequency of physical activity since the pandemic started , and who now do 2 or less days of activity per, were more likely to have increased negative and sedentary behaviours during the period of January to July 2021**

Of those who have decreased their frequency of activity since the pandemic, and did 2 or less days of activity during the survey period, 59% said that they increased the amount of TV/online content they watched during the pandemic, 44% said that they ate unhealthy foods more regularly, and 1 in 3 stated that their level alcohol intake increased. This group of adults are significantly more likely than those who did a low frequency of exercise pre and post pandemic to say that they have continued these negative behaviours today. Over half (51%) say that they watch more TV/online content post pandemic, 39% say that they eat more unhealthy foods and 22% say that they drink more alcohol today.

These changes in behaviour could be linked to changes in perceptions of physical capability, with half of this post pandemic decreased activity group agreeing with the statement “I do not feel fit enough to take part in exercise”. 1 in 3 also specifically mention not feeling fit enough as a reason for not doing the amount of activity they would have wanted to in the past week, along with 33% identifying lack of motivation as a barrier.

However, they are significantly less likely than the low pre and post pandemic activity group to say that they do feel that they have the ability to be physically active (37% disagree) and they are no more likely than the low pre and post pandemic activity group to say that they fear being judged by others when they exercise. These findings suggest that this group are struggling with decreased levels of fitness, resulting from an increase in negative health behaviours during the pandemic which persist today.

## Perceived ability to be active: CYP findings

### Over 3 in 4 CYP said that they find exercise and sports easy, however those who are not encouraged to do sport are more likely to struggle

76% of CYP agree that they find exercise and sports easy, whilst just under 1 in 4 (24%) disagree with this sentiment. Finding exercise and sports easy is across most demographics, including year group and gender.

### Nearly 1 in 3 children (school years 3 to 11) claim that feeling unwell or being injured is a barrier to doing more exercise

Agreement with the statement: I've been unwell or injured so not able to exercise or play sport as much as usual/i'd like to do

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree



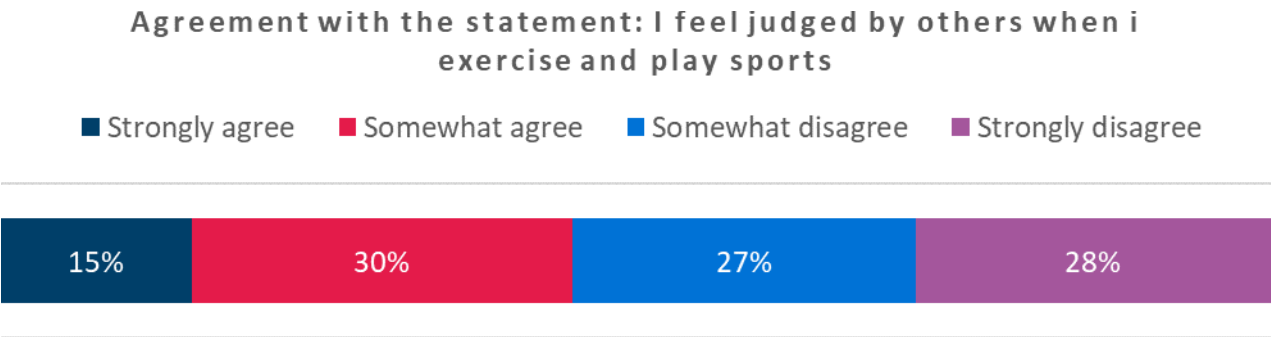
Source: CYPQ10\_5 And how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

I've been unwell or injured so not able to exercise or play sport as much as usual/I'd like to

Base: All CYP years 3 to 11 excluding don't know (n=286)

Whilst 1 in 5 (22%) of those in school years 5 to 11 cite being unwell or injured as a barrier to doing the amount of physical activity they would have liked to have done, 15% say that they are not good enough/feel self-conscious when taking part. Feelings of self-consciousness as a barrier to physical activity is significantly more common amongst those with a disability or long-term health condition, with 1 in 4 stating that this prevents them from doing the amount of activity they would have wanted to.

**Over 2 in 5 secondary school aged children (years 7 to 11) have concerns about feeling judged by others when doing exercise or sports**

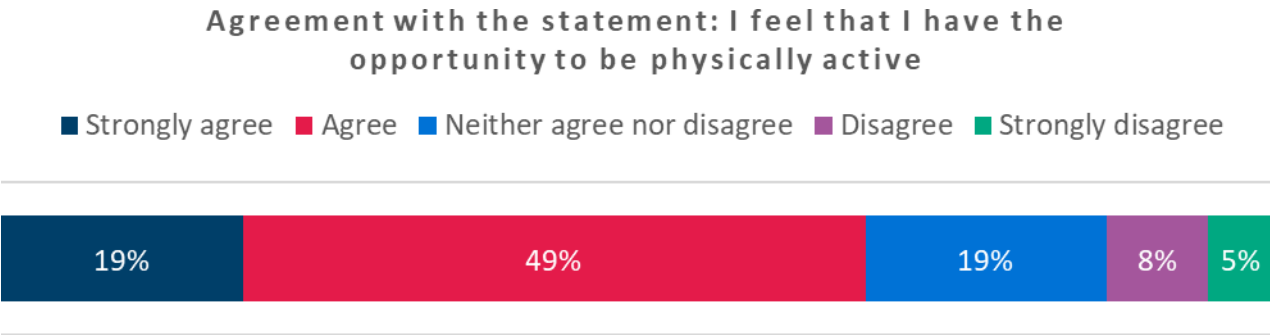


Source: CYPQ10\_4 And how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I feel judged by others when I exercise and play sports  
Base: All CYP years 7 to 11 excluding don't know (n=163)

This feeling is equal amongst boys and girls and more prevalent amongst those with a disability or long-term health condition (57%). 37% of secondary school children claim that they lack the energy or fitness to take part in exercise and sports, a barrier which is significantly higher amongst those with a disability or long-term health condition (55%).

# Chapter 3 – Opportunity to be active

**Just over 1 in 10 adults (13%) do not currently feel that they have the opportunity to be physically active.**



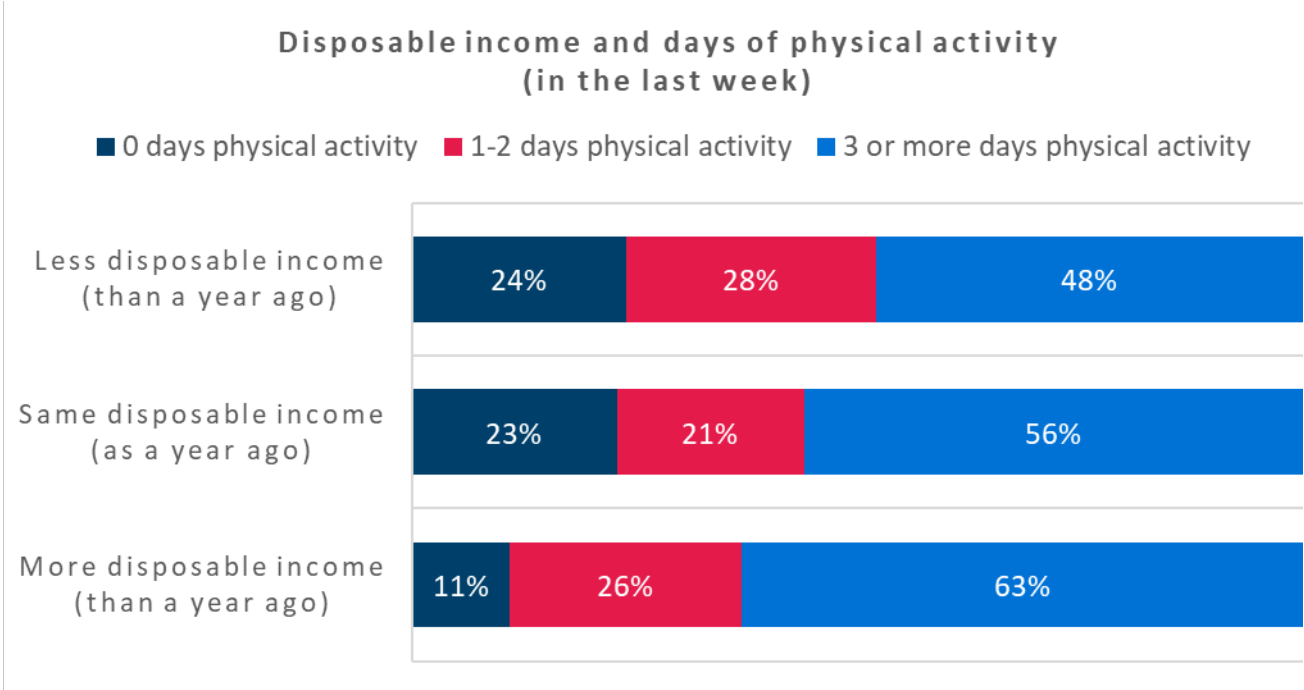
Source: Q10\_2 Before we move on, how much do you agree or disagree with these statements? I feel that I have the opportunity to be physically active  
Base: All adult respondents aged 16+ excluding don't know (n=2151)

Those most likely to disagree that they have the opportunity to be active are female (15%) and those with a disability or long-term health condition. (20%). They are significantly more likely to cite not feeling fit enough (24%) as a reason for not doing as much exercise as they wanted to, and also more likely to mention a disability or long-term health condition (38%) as being a barrier to doing more.

Males (73%), those without a disability or long-term health condition (74%), and those of socio-economic grade A (77%) are most likely to agree that they do have the opportunity to be physically active.

Those who do not feel that they have the opportunity to be active are also more likely to disagree with statements about finding exercise enjoyable (55% disagree) and that exercising regularly is important to them (42% disagree). They are also less likely to feel guilty about not exercising (50% disagree) and are less likely to say that they find exercise relaxing (56% disagree).

# When looking at financial barriers to taking part in physical, activity a clear relationship between cost of living and opportunity to be active emerges



Source: Q1 In the past week, on how many days have you done a total of 30 mins or more of physical activity, which was enough to raise your breathing rate? This may include sport, exercise and brisk walking or cycling for recreation or to get to and from places but should not include housework or physical activity that is part of your job.

Base: All adult respondents aged 16+(n=2188)

Currently, half (50%) of adults say that they have less disposable income now than compared with a year ago, with 22% reporting that they have a lot less. Those most likely to report lower levels of disposable income are female (55%) and those with a disability or long-term health condition (54%).

Females (27%), those with children (26%) and those from lower socioeconomic groups (C2DE) (25%) have been impacted the most by the increase in cost of living as they are most likely to agree that they have a ‘lot less’ disposable income than compared to a year ago.

There is a clear correlation between disposable income and frequency of physical activity. Whilst 63% of adults with more disposable income than a year ago reported doing 3+ days of activity across the last 7 days, this falls to 48% for those with less disposable income.

In total, over 1 in 3 adults (35%) claim that the cost of living increase has already had a negative impact on their ability to be active, whilst over half (54%) think that it will eventually have a negative impact going forwards.

Those more likely to have already experienced a negative impact on their ability to be active include those females (38%), those with children under 15 (33%), and those with a disability or long-term health condition (40%).

Those who are most likely to believe that cost of living will eventually impact their ability to be active are younger (69% of 16-34-year-olds), female (57%), those without children (68%) and those with a disability or longer term health condition (60%).

Those with less disposable income than last year are significantly more likely than those with the same or more disposable income to name barriers such as lack of motivation (21%), not feeling fit enough (16%), disability or long term health condition (17%), and not being able to afford the things (e.g. equipment, coaching, clubs etc.) to be active (9%) as reasons for not doing as much physical activity as they would have wanted to in the past week.

When it comes to changes in spending behaviours, over 1 in 10 adults (14%) who have less disposable income than a year ago say that they have cut down on spending on physical activity. However, sacrifices such as spending less on socialising (44%), travel (44%), entertainment (43%) and consumable goods (43%) are all more common amongst those who have seen their disposable income decrease. 1 in 4 (24%) also say that they have cut down on spending on alcohol. Those most likely to have cut down on their exercise spend due to decreased disposable income are females (17%).

There is also a strong relationship between finance and physical activity for the 19% of adults who state that they have more disposable income today than a year ago. These individuals are significantly more likely to agree with statements about finding exercise environments welcoming (62%), seeing people “like me” in the places they exercise (64%) and feeling safe exercising in public places (68%). Interestingly, those with increased disposable income are not more likely than those with decreased disposable income to agree that they have the opportunity to be active. Overall, 74% of those with increased disposable income agree with the statement “I have the opportunity to be physically active”, whilst 69% of those with decreased income also agree. However, a higher proportion (15%) of those with lower disposable income disagree with this statement, compared to those with higher levels of disposable income (10%).

### **The majority (88%) of English adults have access to facilities or spaces to be physically active**

72% have a park or open space within easy reach of their home or place of work (e.g. up to a 15 minute walk away), whilst 39% are close to a gym and 29% are near a leisure centre.

However, 1 in 10 say that they are not within easy reach of any facilities or spaces, a figure which increases to almost 1 in 3 (28%) of those who also state that they do not have the opportunity to be

physically active. Those most likely to not have access to facilities or spaces to be active are older (22% of those who are retired), and those with a physical disability (17%).

## **Opportunity to be active: CYP findings**

Generally, secondary school (years 7 to 11) children feel that they have the opportunity to be physically active

89% of secondary school children agree with the statement “I feel that I have the opportunity to be physically active”. 89% also agree that their parents/carers support and encourage them to do the activities that they want to do, whilst 90% of primary school (years 3 to 6) agree that their parents/carers take them to the activities they want to do.

The vast majority (93%) of parents with school aged children say that the amount of time provided for PE/Sports lessons at school is about the same or more now than during the 12 months leading up to the Covid pandemic (March 2020).

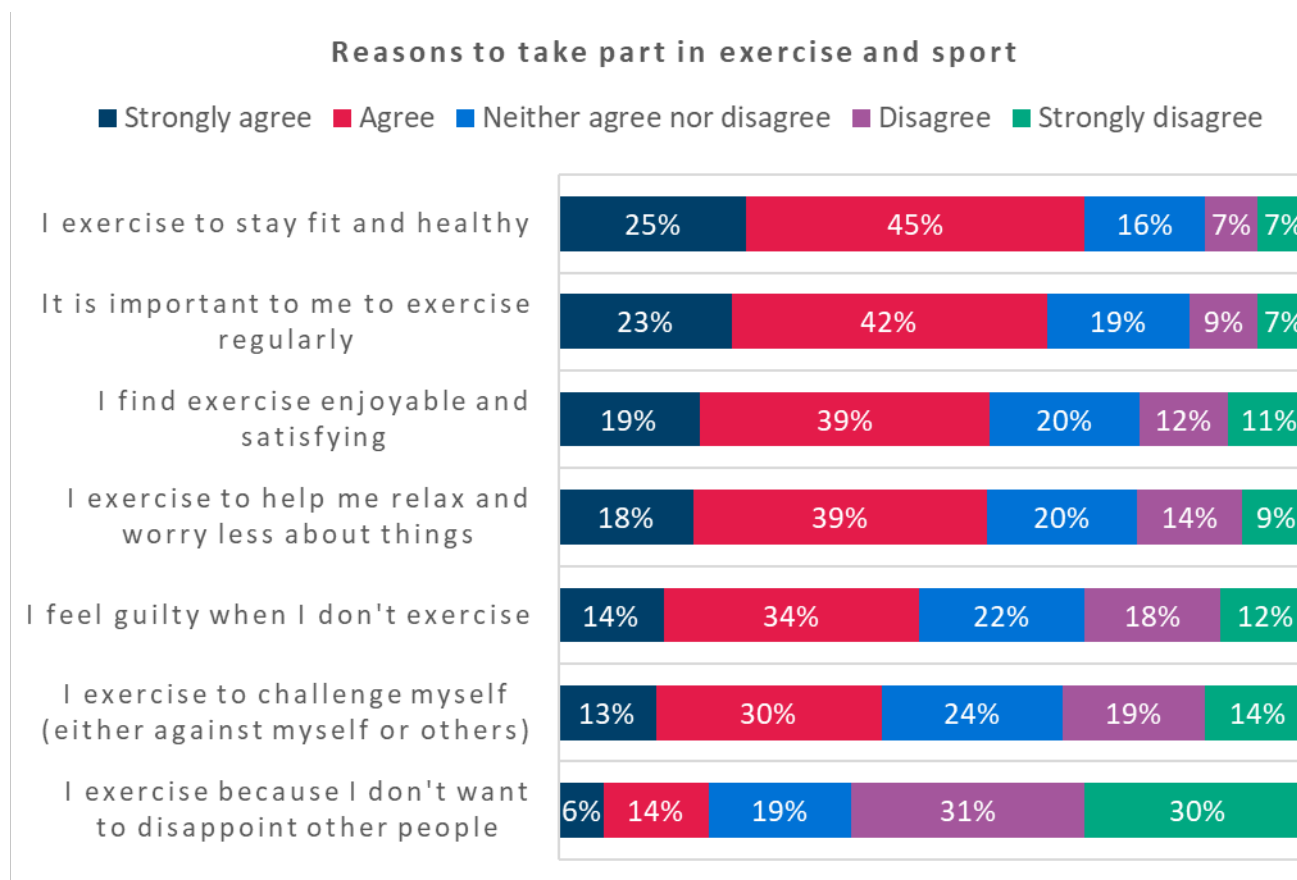
Equally, 88% of parents say that the amount of time provided for their children to be active during break times/lunch time is the same or more than before the pandemic. The amount of choice for sports/physical activities also remains on par, or better, than before the pandemic with 87% of parents agreeing that the amount on offer is the same or higher. Almost 3 in 4 (73%) school aged children took part in a P.E/games lesson in the past week, although those with a disability or long-term health condition were significantly less likely to have done so (58%).

Just under half (46%) of parents with school age children say that their child’s school currently offers before or after school physical activity clubs without major limitations to the numbers/activities offered, whilst 38% say that clubs are offered, but with limitations. 35% of school aged children say that they attended a school sports/exercise club in the past week, with primary school children (years 1 to 6) significantly more likely to have attended (41%) than those in secondary school.



## Chapter 4 – Motivation for being active

### Seven in ten English adults said that their motivation to exercise comes from understanding the importance of staying fit and healthy



Source: Q8. Thinking about exercise and sport in general, below are some reasons why you may choose to take part. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements?

Base: All adults (n=2188)

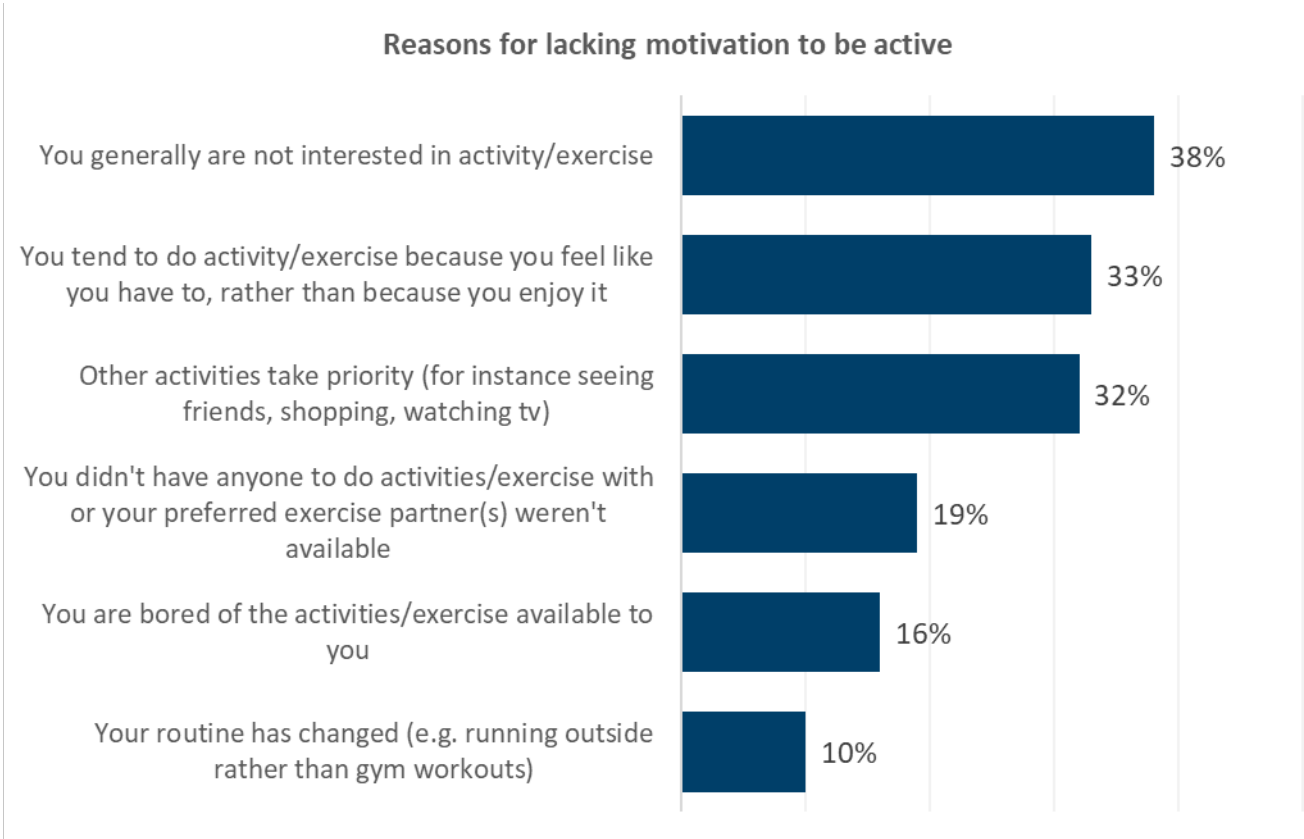
Acknowledging the importance of regularly exercising and feeling motivated to get involved is felt by many, with 57% of English adults agreeing that they find exercise to be enjoyable and satisfying, 65% agreeing that it's important to exercise regularly, 70% saying they exercise to stay fit and healthy, and 57% doing exercise to help them relax and worry less.

Whilst more than two in five take part in exercise as a personal challenge, almost half (48%) feel guilty if they don't exercise.

Those most likely to feel a sense of guilt if they don't exercise are 16–34-year-olds (57%) and those who have children (53%). These same groups are more likely to agree that they exercise because they don't want to disappoint others at 35% and 28% respectively, compared to the average of 20%.

**The biggest barrier for English adults not doing as much activity as they would like is a lack of motivation**

Almost one in five (17%) English adults said that a lack of motivation is the biggest barrier for not doing as much activity as they would like. Those lacking motivation are mainly driven by a general lack of interest in physical activity (39%) or a feeling of obligation (33%) rather than because they enjoy it, although one in five stated (20%) that their lack of motivation is the result of not having anyone to exercise with. 32% felt that other activities take priority (e.g. seeing friends/watching TV) and 16% are simply bored of the activities available to them.



Source: QW1E. You mentioned that you lacked motivation or interest in being physically active, is this because...

Base: All who lacked motivation excluding don't know (n=346)

Unsurprisingly, those with 0 days of activity in the last 7 days are most likely to cite a lack of motivation as their reason for not doing the amount of physical activity they would have liked to – particularly in comparison to those who did 3-4 or 5+ days (25% vs. 15% and 8%).

Around one in ten English adults cited other priorities as stopping them from doing the amount of physical activity they would have liked to – namely being unable to fit exercise in around work/study (11%) or family commitments (8%).

A common link can be drawn back to those young adults lacking motivation, as those citing work/study are also more likely to be aged 16-34 (18%), with those citing family commitments also more likely to be aged 16-34 (12%) or 35-54 (10%).

**Over half of English adults say they recognise the benefit exercise can have on their overall health and wellbeing**

Despite the barriers cited above, more than half of English adults (57%) said they recognised the benefit that exercise can have in helping them to relax and worry less, especially younger people aged 16-34 (66%).

**English adults who report low activity levels are significantly more likely to report low life satisfaction**

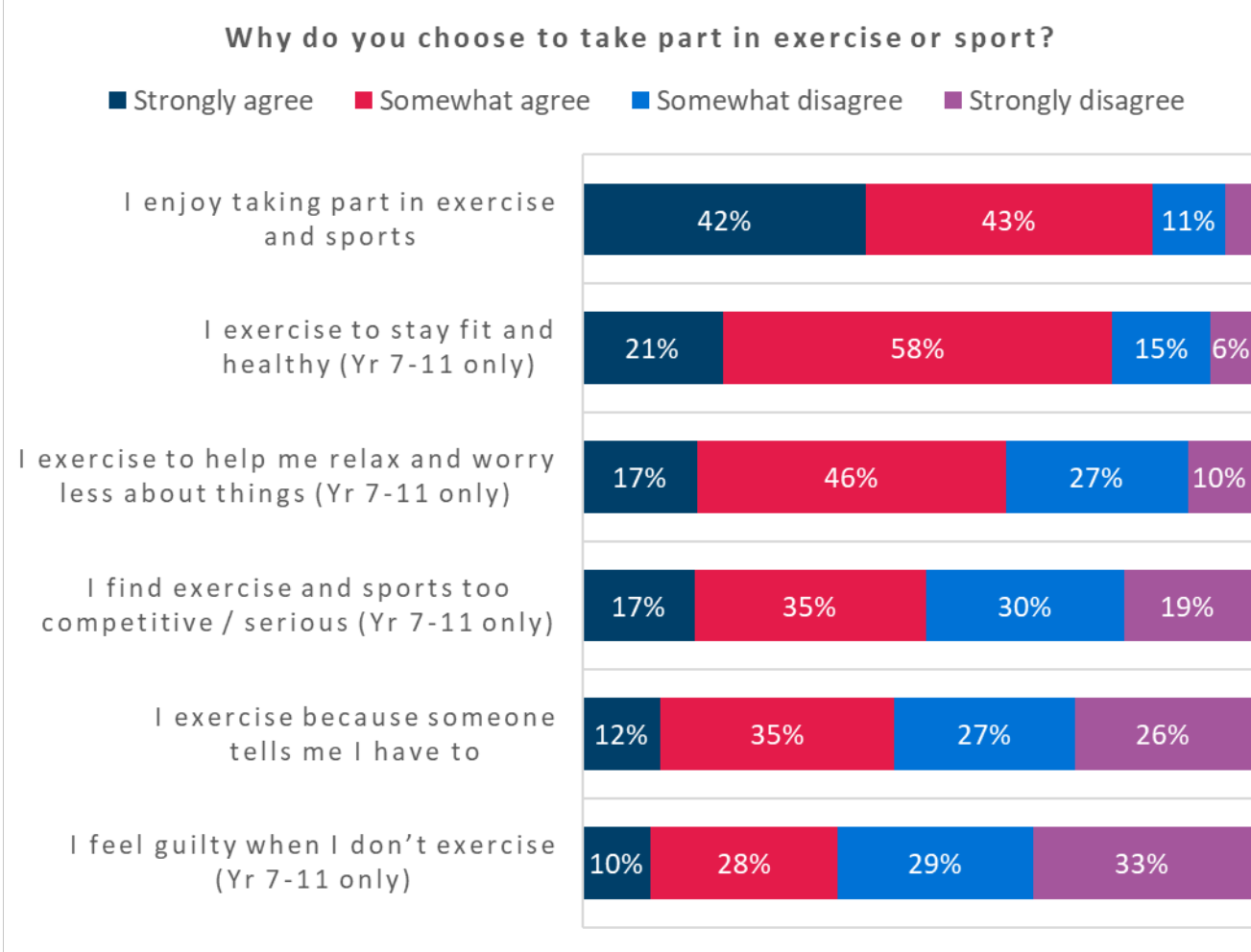
Almost a fifth of adults (19%) report low satisfaction with their life nowadays, compared to 42% who report high satisfaction and 14% who report very high satisfaction. Those who did no days of activity in the last week (34%) were more likely to report low life satisfaction than those who reported 3+ days of activity in the last week (13%).

Low life satisfaction is also higher amongst females than males (38%), adults with a disability or long-term health condition (28%), living in the North (24%) and those from socio-economic group DE (27%)

When considering the impact that COVID-19 has had on those using exercise as a means to improve their wellbeing, 76% of those looking to exercise as a form of relaxation say they did more exercise during the pandemic and are continuing to do more post pandemic.

# Motivation for being active: CYP findings

## More than 1 in 3 CYP strongly agree that they enjoy taking part in some form of exercise and sport



Source: CYPQ8 – We would now like you to think about all types of exercise and sport. Below are some reasons why you may choose to take part, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
Base – All CYP excluding don't know (n=372), School Years 7-11 excluding don't know (n=161)

Encouragingly, 42% of CYP strongly agreed that taking part in exercise or sport is something they enjoyed, and 21% did so to stay fit and healthy. Similar to participation levels, primary school aged children are more likely to have agreed strongly that they enjoyed sports and exercise – 50% for school years 1-6 (ages 5-11).

### The motivation or willingness to take part in sport is likely to appeal less than the opportunity to spend time with their friends or doing other things apart from exercise

Whilst 31% of all CYP strongly agreed that taking part in exercise as a nice way to spend time with family, this feeling was most likely felt amongst those in primary school years 1-6 (38%). 23% of

secondary school children (years 7 to 11) felt strongly that they saw exercise as an opportunity to socialise and have fun with their friends.

**Just under half of CYP say that they only exercise because someone tells them to, and a similar proportion find exercise/sports too competitive or serious for them to enjoy**

Four in five (83%) report having other hobbies that they would rather do than exercise or sport, with almost two thirds (62%) saying they would rather spend time with friends doing other things.

While 51% feel that they find exercise and sports too competitive or serious for them to enjoy, 47% also say that they exercise because someone tells them they have to.

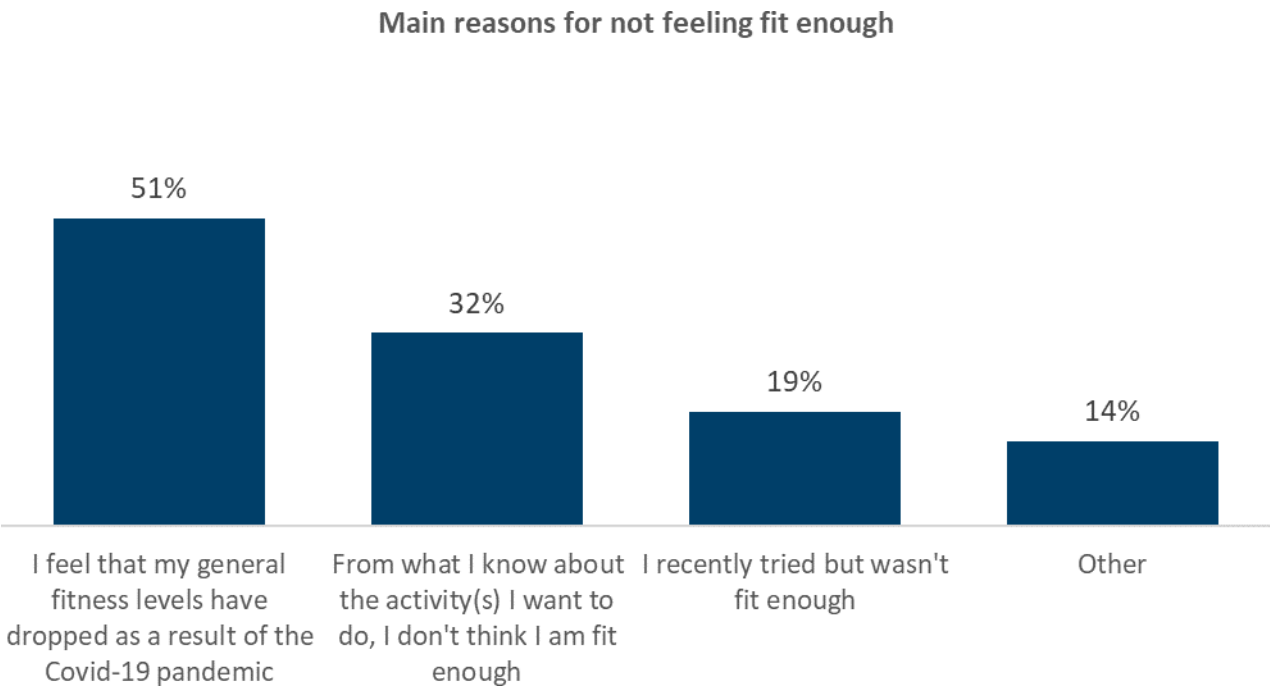
Overall, the opportunity to spend time with their friends is seen as more appealing than exercising for 62% of older children, and 81% of young children agree that they have other hobbies that they want to do instead.

# Chapter 5 – A detailed look into those not feeling fit enough to be active

## Just over 1 in 10 English adults didn't feel fit enough to take part in the sports and activities they would like to during the March survey period

13% of English adults said that they didn't feel fit enough to take part in the amount of physical activity they would like to with those most likely to say this being females (16%), and those with a disability or long-term health condition (20%).

Whilst overall nearly one in three (27%) said that their fitness levels have dropped, this increases to one in two who say they don't feel fit enough, leaving them likely to feel frustrated and lacking in motivation to be active. Of these, 41% don't feel fit enough to participate in any activity, and the periods of restrictive access during the pandemic has possibly resulted in 51% feeling that their fitness levels have dropped as a result, and whilst interested, from what they know about the activity they want to do, 32% don't feel fit enough to participate.



Source: QW1B And what were the main reason(s) you did not feel fit enough?

Base: All adult respondents who did not feel fit enough excluding don't know (n=265)

**The feeling of not being fit enough has resulted in a range of emotions from depression and anxiety to frustration and disappointment in themselves, that they are lacking the motivation or feel physically or mentally able to get involved**

annoyed anxious ashamed awful bad demotivated  
**depressed** disappointed exhausted fat  
fed up frustrated horrid lazy  
lethargic low mood miserable  
rubbish sad scared sluggish subdued **tired**  
unhappy unhealthy unmotivated unwanted  
unwell upset worthless

*How has not feeling fit enough made you feel generally?*

“Horrible and disappointed that I am not fit enough because I do like doing physical things, but I’m just not fit enough”

“Despondent, I know I need to be fitter to be healthier and lose weight, but pain stops me. I used to be active.”

“It has made me feel hopeless and helpless and that I am never going to get back to be doing any kind of physical activity. “

“Demotivated and low, generally not liking myself, like I’ve lost my drive to push myself or set myself a challenge which makes me feel down and even more depressed, being stuck in a vicious cycle”

““It has made me feel kind of worthless, ashamed, and embarrassed.”

“It’s made me feel even more depressed and anxious”

“Totally disenchanted. I have always been very fit and active and played competitive sport. Due to recent health problems I cannot walk very far before my knees become weak and seize up.”

**The personal perception that they are not fit enough has left many unmotivated to take part in any activity, and likely to be coupled with a feeling of judgement from others when they have exercised**

Of those who didn’t feel fit enough, 30%, took part in no days of activity in the last week, whilst 47% said that they were exercising less over physical activity than they did before the pandemic.

Worryingly, this lack of activity and personal positivity is associated with an increase in negative health behaviours and sedentary activities, with 41% stating they eat unhealthy foods more frequently than before the pandemic and 46% are watching TV frequently.

Whilst this feeling of not being fit enough is all encompassing for some, many are frustrated in themselves that whilst they once felt the confidence and ability to participate in a sport or physical activity, the long periods of restrictions have reduced their fitness levels, making them now feeling ashamed, embarrassed, or disappointed in themselves.

Although these negative thoughts may be currently creating a barrier, 43% do find exercise enjoyable and satisfying, 58% agree that it's important to them to exercise and as such 59% felt guilty when they didn't exercise. However, as 47% agreed that they felt judged by others when they exercised this may have potentially created a barrier and fundamentally affecting their personal self-confidence to do something they enjoy and is important for their mental and physical health.