

# Activity Check-In

Impact of summer holidays  
on sport and physical activity



**The Activity Check-In tracks behaviours and attitudes from both adults, children and young people towards sport and physical activity, revealing the impacts of a rapidly changing world.**

**Each wave captures views on a specific topic of current relevance – in this publication we focus on how activity levels and choice of activities differ between term-time and the school holidays.**

**Full data sets are available on our website.**

This document is for partners and organisations who deliver sport and physical activity for children and young people. In it, we explore the latest insight from the Activity Check-in on how activity levels and choice of activities differ between term-time and the school holidays. This will help us to understand the impact of school holidays on the physical activity levels of children and young people.

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# Context

**We know that school holidays are a time when some groups of children may become less active, for example:**

- The Millenium Cohort Study looked at teens' free time after school and weekends and found they become more sedentary<sup>1</sup>.
- Our research during the Covid-19 pandemic found the lack of school provision meant that boys, Black and Mixed, and less affluent children were disproportionately affected<sup>2</sup>.
- The Active Lives Children and Young People Survey<sup>3</sup> reveals behaviour and attitudes during the academic school year, it also shows that Black and Asian, teen girls and less affluent children are more likely to depend on school activity provision.

**This report explores the impact of school holidays on physical activity levels and reveals how attitudes and behaviours during the school summer holidays compare and contrast with term time, including:**

- What are the barriers and motivations to being active during the school holidays?
- How do attitudes towards physical activity differ between term time and summer holidays?

1. The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), known as 'Child of the New Century' to cohort members and their families, is following the lives of around 19,000 young people born across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2000-02.

2. Sport England - Savant Comres: Covid Tracker 2020/21.

3. Sport England - Active Lives Children and Young People Survey.



# Activity levels and choice of activities

- Children and young people participate in fewer sessions of activity per week during the summer holidays compared to term time.
- However, 73% perceive they are doing the same or more.
- Informal types of physical activity become more prevalent while organised formats take a back seat.
- Just under a third of parents indicated that their child had done or would be doing no organised activity during the school holidays.

Wave 3 of the Activity Check-In was conducted via an online survey completed by n=2,039 adults (aged 16+) and n=592 children and young people (CYP) in school years 1 to 11. Within this total there was a boost of 121 children and young people (CYP) to the standard sample size. The sample was boosted for wave three due to the focus on the topic of school holidays, it is important to ensure robust bases of parents and children to ensure there is sufficient base for sub-group analysis, particularly age.

All participants were from England and data has been weighted to be representative of the English population by age, gender, region, disability and socio-economic status. By socio-economic status we mean social grade, classified as follows; Upper (A), Middle (B/C1/C2), Lower (D/E).

Data was collected between 26th August and 1st September 2022. This time period is referenced as "the survey period", "the August survey period" or "Summer holidays". Wave 2 data was collected between 15th and 18th July 2022. This time period is referenced as "the survey period", "the July survey period" or "term time".





# Barriers and motivations

- Children and young people like the social aspect of sport and exercise during the summer holidays but some feel it is too competitive.
- There are no reportable differences in the motivation for children and young people to take part in physical activity in the school holidays compared to term time. However, the data does suggest that children and young people may enjoy taking part less in the school holidays.
- Being able to socialise with friends is a key motivator for physical activity during the school holidays amongst secondary school age young people whilst parents of primary age children are motivated by it being fun for their child and affordable.
- Linked to this, there is little difference in the perceptions of children and young people between term time and the summer holidays in terms of their ability to be physically active.



# Attitudes towards physical activity

- Children and young people feel that they have the same understanding and knowledge during the summer holidays, whilst there are indications that they may feel they have less opportunity to be active.
- There is a vast array of alternative activities that are competing for children and young people's time during the summer holidays.
- A large proportion of children and young people feel that they have more time to be physically active during the summer holidays.
- However, a quarter have other hobbies that they prioritise over being active during the summer holidays.
- In future school holidays, over two-fifths of children and young people would like to do more activity than they currently do.
- Price, the weather, and competing activities are key barriers cited as preventing those that would like to do more from actually doing it.





# Challenges in tackling inequalities

As explained further in the 'next steps' section, the sample size within different groups of children and young people needs to increase in order to better understand the challenges faced.

- Children and young people from the lowest socio-economic group (DE) might be slightly more negatively impacted during the school holidays.
- They are also the least likely to do organised activities, so the inequalities widen with organised participation.



## Next steps

This report has highlighted the need for a larger sample size within under-represented groups, to ensure that the sample is considered representative and can be explored with confidence.

**Therefore, we plan to repeat this survey in August 2023 and will pool the new data with those from August 2022 – to increase the sample size and better understand how school holidays affect under-represented groups.**