

Active Lives Q&A

What is the Active Lives Survey?

Q: Why did we create the Active Lives Survey?

A: Active Lives was developed in response to the new Government strategy – ‘Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation’; and Sport England’s new strategy – ‘Towards an Active Nation’. We have designed Active Lives to give us and anyone working in this field detailed and reliable insight into the physical activity habits of the nation.

The survey provides data about adults aged 16 and over across England about the sport and physical activities they take part in and their attitudes to physical activity. In addition to sporting and fitness activities, the new survey measures levels of walking, cycling for travel and dance.

Q: Who runs the survey?

A: The Active Lives Survey is administered and managed by leading market research company IPSOS-MORI.

Q: How is the survey undertaken?

A: Active Lives is a postal to web survey. Addresses are selected at random to ensure a representative sample of people are invited to take part. A letter is written to each address selected inviting up to two adults per household to take part in the survey. People can choose to complete the survey online or on paper. More information about the survey methodology can be found on our website:

<https://www.sportengland.org/research/active-lives-survey/method-behind-active-lives/>

Q: What period does the data cover?

A: The first publication of Active Lives (released January 2017) covers the period Mid-November 2015 to Mid-November 2016.

Q: What questions are asked in the survey?

A: An overview of the Active Lives questionnaire can be found on the Sport England website:

<https://www.sportengland.org/media/10905/the-active-lives-survey-questionnaire-overview-with-phase-2.pdf>

Q: How often will the data be published?

A: Active Lives results will be published every 6 months.

Q: Where can I find the information from the survey when published?

A: The information will be published on the Sport England website. It can be accessed via this link:

<https://www.sportengland.org/research/active-lives-survey/>

Q: Is the data in Active Lives an Official Statistic?

A: Yes, the data in Active Lives is an Official Statistic.

What are the key measures?

A: The main results published in January 2017 cover:

- Inactivity (people doing less than 30 minutes of physical activity each week)

Link to data table: https://www.sportengland.org/media/11495/tables-1-5_levels-of-activity.xls

- Physical activity (people doing at least 150 minutes of physical activity each week)

Link to data table https://www.sportengland.org/media/11495/tables-1-5_levels-of-activity.xls

- Sport and physical activity at least twice in the last 28 days

Link to data table: https://www.sportengland.org/media/11497/tables-6-10_twice-in-the-last-28-days.xls

- Attendance at live sports events

Link to data table: https://www.sportengland.org/media/11496/tables-11-13_sports-spectating.xls

Q: What is the definition of 'inactivity'?

A: The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) in England recommends that adults should be physically active for 150 minutes a week. In Active Lives, we provide information on the following three levels of activity:

- Inactivity: Less than 30 minutes a week
- Fairly Active: 30-149 minutes a week
- Active: At least 150 minutes a week

Physical activity must be of at least moderate intensity, in bouts of 10 minutes or more, and can be spread over several days. The number of minutes of physical activity is calculated based on 'moderate intensity equivalent' minutes, which means vigorous intensity exercise counts as double (see explanation below).

Q: Please can you explain what is meant by 'moderate intensity equivalent'?

A: The 'moderate intensity equivalent' method for calculating total minutes of activity is a way of giving additional credit for the health benefits of vigorous activity. When calculating the amount of 'moderate intensity equivalent' minutes done, every moderate minute (activity that raises your breathing rate) counts as one, but every minute of vigorous activity (activity that gets you out of breath / makes you sweat) counts double – so 30 minutes of vigorous activity counts as 60 'moderate intensity equivalent' (MIE) minutes.

Q: What is the definition of 'twice in the last 28 days'?

A: The measure for 'twice in the last 28 days' shows how many adults have taken part at least twice in the last 28 days – at moderate or higher intensity – in any of the broad grouping of activities that make up sport and physical activity. Taken together, the sessions must have lasted for the equivalent of at least two lots of 30 minutes.

Q: How do you define sport and physical activity?

A: We have aligned the definition of sport and physical activity in Active Lives to cover the activities that fall within Sport England's remit. This includes:

- Sporting activities (team sports, racquet sports, swimming, bowls, fencing etc.)
- Fitness activities (gym session, fitness class, weights etc.)

- Cycling for sport and leisure
- Cycling or walking for travel
- Walking for leisure
- Dance

A full list of all sports and physical activities can be found on p.6-7 of the Active Lives Technical Summary: <https://www.sportengland.org/media/11494/20170126-technical-summary-year-1-report-final.pdf>

Q: Will Active Lives measure progress towards the outcomes set out in the Government's sport strategy: physical wellbeing; mental wellbeing; individual development; and social and community development?

A: Yes. We have developed a range of questions that will enable us to measure progress over time against the strategic outcomes set out in the Government's new strategy 'Sporting Future: a New Strategy for an Active Nation'. These questions were added in May 2016, therefore we have not reported on these specific measures in our first Active Lives release (January 2017). These measures will be included in the next Active Lives release (late summer / early autumn 2017), once we have 12 months of data for these questions.

Q: How does the 'levels of activity' data differ from Public Health England's 'Public Health Outcomes Framework' (PHOF) data?

A: Public Health England (PHE) include gardening within their definition of physical activity. As gardening is not part of Sport England's remit, it is not included in the headline measures reported within Active Lives, unless otherwise stated. Where Active Lives data does include gardening, this is clearly stated within the relevant report or data table. These can be accessed via this link:

https://www.sportengland.org/media/11495/tables-1-5_levels-of-activity.xls

Please note, the current published version of the Public Health Outcomes Framework is based on Active People Survey (APS) data.

[Who and what is included in the survey?](#)

Q: What age range does it cover?

A: The sample for the Active People Survey currently includes people aged 14 years and over in England. However, Active Lives will only report on people aged 16 years and over in England.

In line with Sport England's new remit, we are currently working on ways to extend our measurement and reporting to include the younger age group of 5-15 year olds. We plan to report on the activity levels of 14-15 year olds as part of this wider picture of young people's engagement in sport and physical activity.

Q: Does the data break down into demographic groups?

A: Yes. In addition to reporting on population level data, the data can also be used to show results for a number of demographic breakdowns, including:

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Socioeconomic group (social status)
- Disability (by number of limiting impairments)

Q: Does the disability data break down to specific disabilities

A: Yes. As well as questions about long term limiting illness / disability we also capture details of the specific impairments people have. Reporting will also give more emphasis to how the number of impairments impacts on levels of engagement in sport and physical activity.

Q: Are any questions asked in Active Lives around attitudes to physical activity?

A: A number of questions within the Active Lives Survey cover attitudes to physical activity – these include readiness to participate, motivations (reasons why), strength and resilience of habit. However, these questions were only added in May 2016, therefore they will not be reported within the first release of Active Lives in January 2017.

Q: When will the new information on attitudes (and other new information) be included in reporting?

A: Data relating to Attitudes, Settings, Wider Circumstances and Mental Wellbeing will be available once we have 12 months of data for these questions in late summer / early autumn 2017.

Local Results

Q: What was the basic sample size for each Local Authority area?

A: 500 people (14+) for each Local Authority area – except where samples have been boosted (see below).

Q: How can an area get a boosted sample and what does it cost?

A: Local Authorities will have the opportunity to boost the sample in their area from year 3 of the survey. Details on how to do this will be issued in the summer of 2017. Costs are yet to be confirmed but an additional 500 respondents will cost approximately £9,000.

Active Lives and APS

Q: Can the new statistics in Active Lives be compared to the old Active People Survey data?

A: Active Lives has been developed to support the measures in Sport England's new strategy and will therefore report on different measures to the Active People Survey.

Active Lives will report some measures of physical activity using the same definition as Active People. However, because the surveys have quite different designs, they will report different results. We would therefore advise against attempting to make comparisons between the two datasets.

Q: Are you still capturing the '1 x 30' and '3 x 30' measures that APS reported on?

A: Active Lives captures the data required to provide equivalent data for the old '1x30' and '3x30' activity measures (one/three sessions of 30 minutes moderate equivalent activity per week).

However, experience has shown that reporting data against old measures can lead to confusion and distract focus from the new strategic measures. In addition, the surveys have quite different designs, so even where they report data on equivalent measures, the results will be different and time series trends will be broken. For these reasons, we will not be publishing results for these measures.

Q: Will there still be access to APS data?

A: We have made appropriate arrangements for people to be able to continue to access the Active People data in the future. Information on the Active People Survey can continue to be found on the Sport England website by following this link: <https://www.sportengland.org/research/about-our-research/active-people-survey/>

Accessing the data

Q: Will the anonymised datasets be released in due course?

A: Yes, the first annual Active Lives dataset will be made available in late spring / early summer 2017.

Q: How can I access more information about my local area or specific sport?

A: The recent Active Lives release (January 2017) reports on our key measures at a total population level and by a series of key demographic characteristics and geographical breakdowns. Further work is ongoing to provide more detailed analysis for specific local areas and sports/activities. We plan to make this data available via interactive diagnostic tools similar to those that were developed for the Active People Survey.

Q: Will the tools that currently enable access to APS data be updated for Active Lives?

A: We won't be able to do this immediately but are already thinking about which tools should be updated first. We have already started work on developing a successor to Active People Interactive and producing new small area estimates.

Q: Will the small area estimates be participation focused again, or include estimates of the new, wider measures?

A: The small area estimates will focus on the new measures of physical activity and engagement (inactivity, 150 minutes of physical activity, at least twice in the last 28 days).

Q: Will the MSOA data be released on a yearly basis?

A: It is our intention to update the MSOA estimates each year following the publication of the November – November data.

Q: Will Active Lives be used to feed into the local sports profiles (which currently use APS data)?

A: Yes, we are currently working with colleagues to decide on the best order and timing of updating tools (including local sports profiles) that currently utilise APS data.

Other Data

Q: What plans are in place to measure figures for Children and Young People (CYP)?

A: We are working with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Department for Education and the Department of Health on a survey to measure 5-15 year olds. We should be in a position to announce more details of this by the end of February 2017.