

Active Lives Adult Survey November 2020–21 Report

Published April 2022

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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'.

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.

Welcome



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.

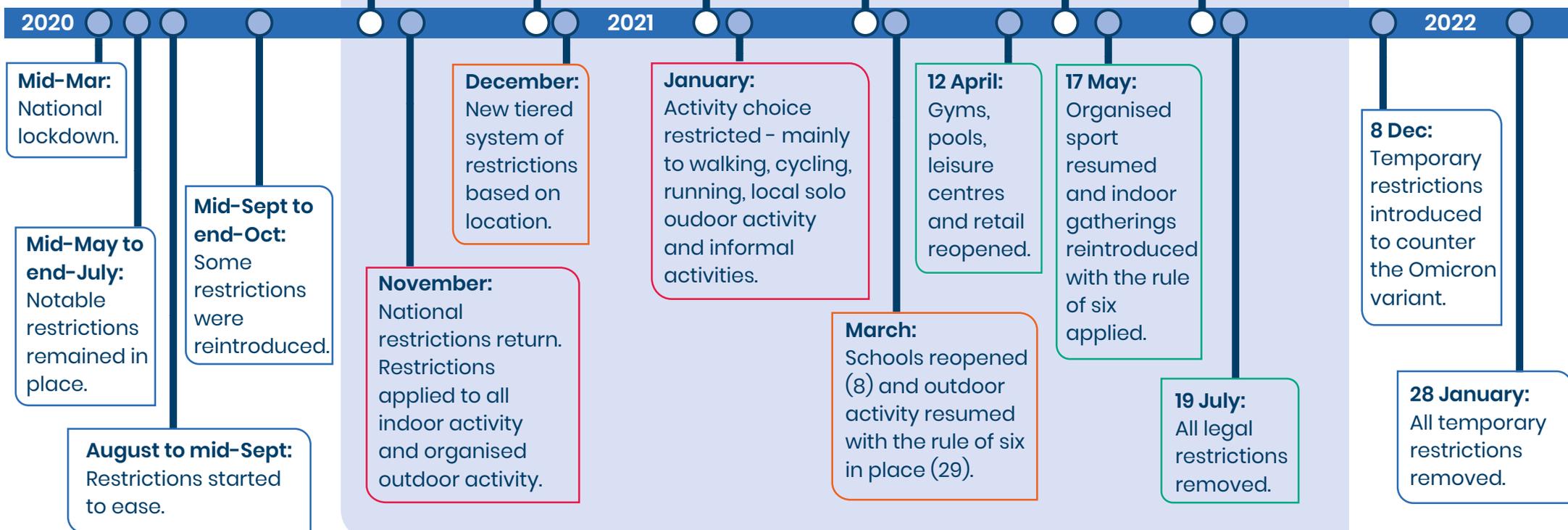
Nick Pontefract, Chief Strategy Officer

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

National lockdown November (0.5 months)	Notable restrictions December (1 month)	National lockdown January to February (2 months)	Notable restrictions March to mid-April (1.5 months)	Easing restrictions Mid-Apr to mid-July (3 months)	No legal restrictions Mid-Jul to end-Nov (4 months)
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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.

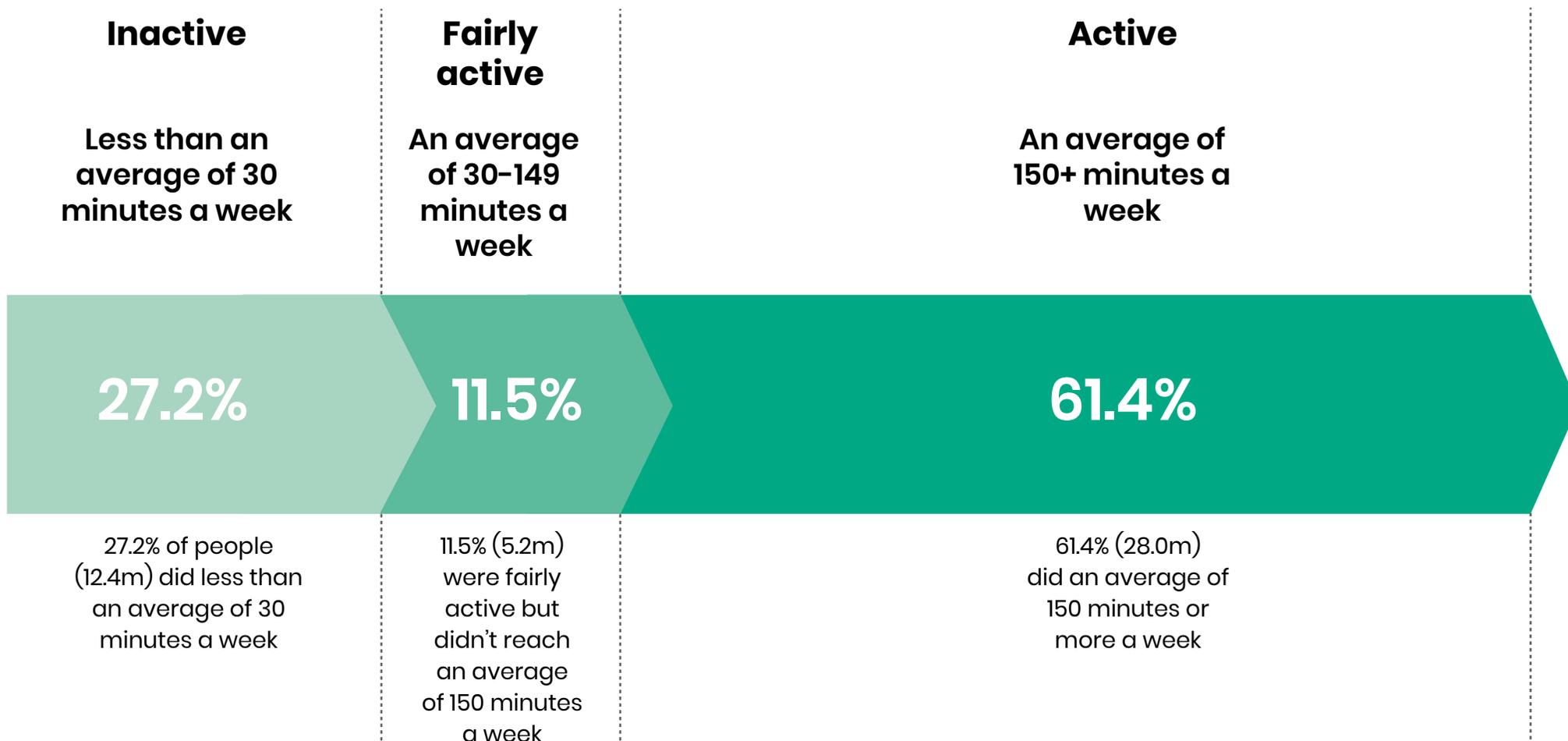
You can [view the OHID data here](#).

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.



[Link to data tables](#)



Levels of activity



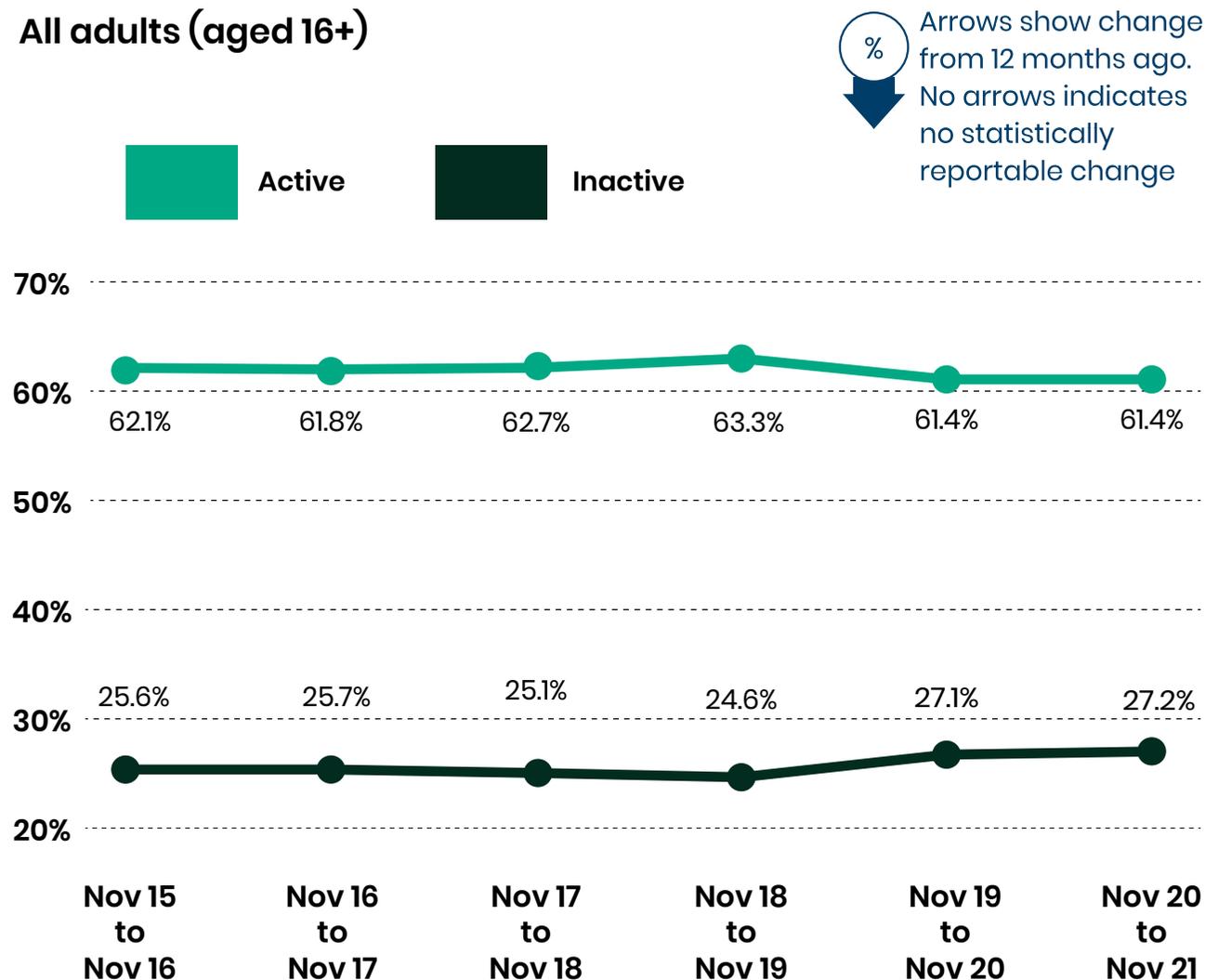
Summary of change

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.

All adults (aged 16+)



[Link to data tables](#)



For details on how we measure change, see the [notes](#) pages.

Levels of activity



Changes through the year

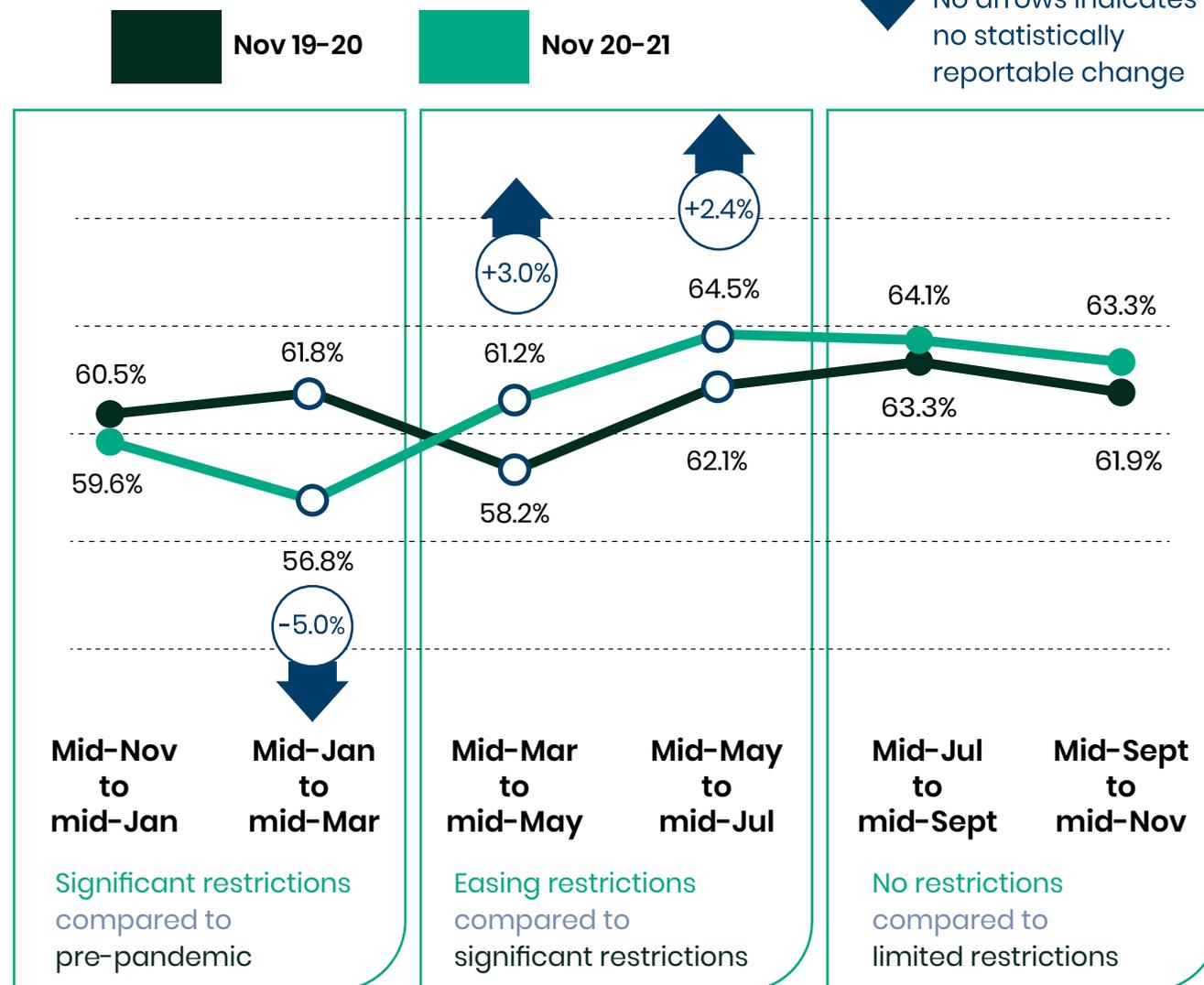
The drop in activity levels during the pandemic continues to reflect the level of restrictions in place at the time.

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).

Active: 150+ minutes a week All adults (aged 16+)

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



[Link to data tables](#)



Levels of activity



Active

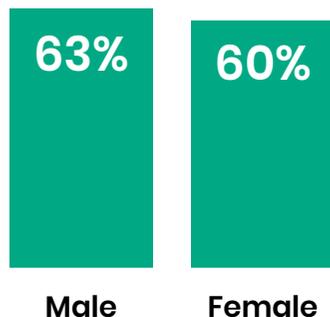


Summary of demographic differences

Our data shows there are significant inequalities:

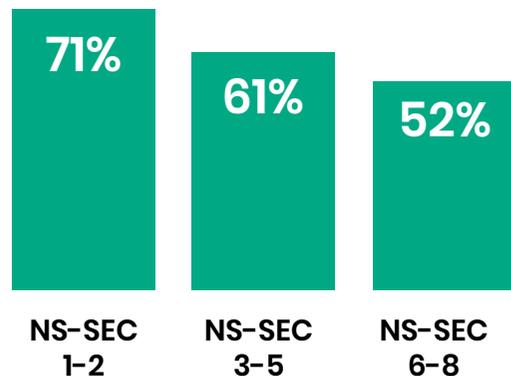
1 Gender

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%).



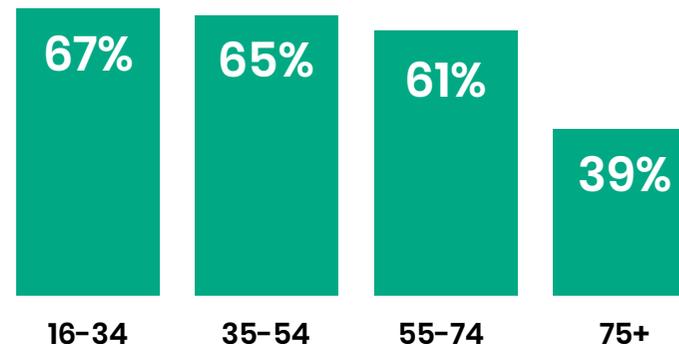
[Link to data tables](#)



*See our [definitions](#) page for the full definition of each demographic group.

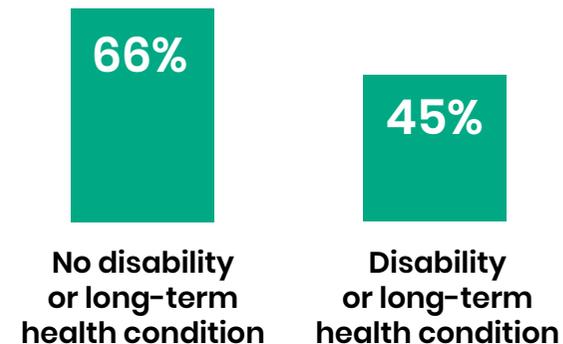
3 Age

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



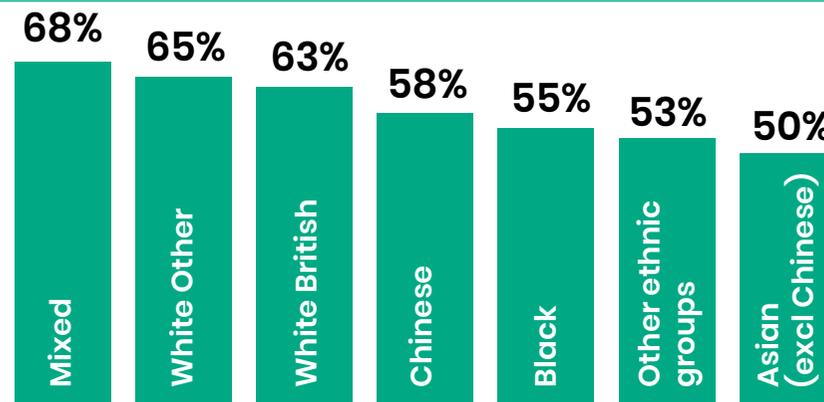
4 Disability and long-term health conditions

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.



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.

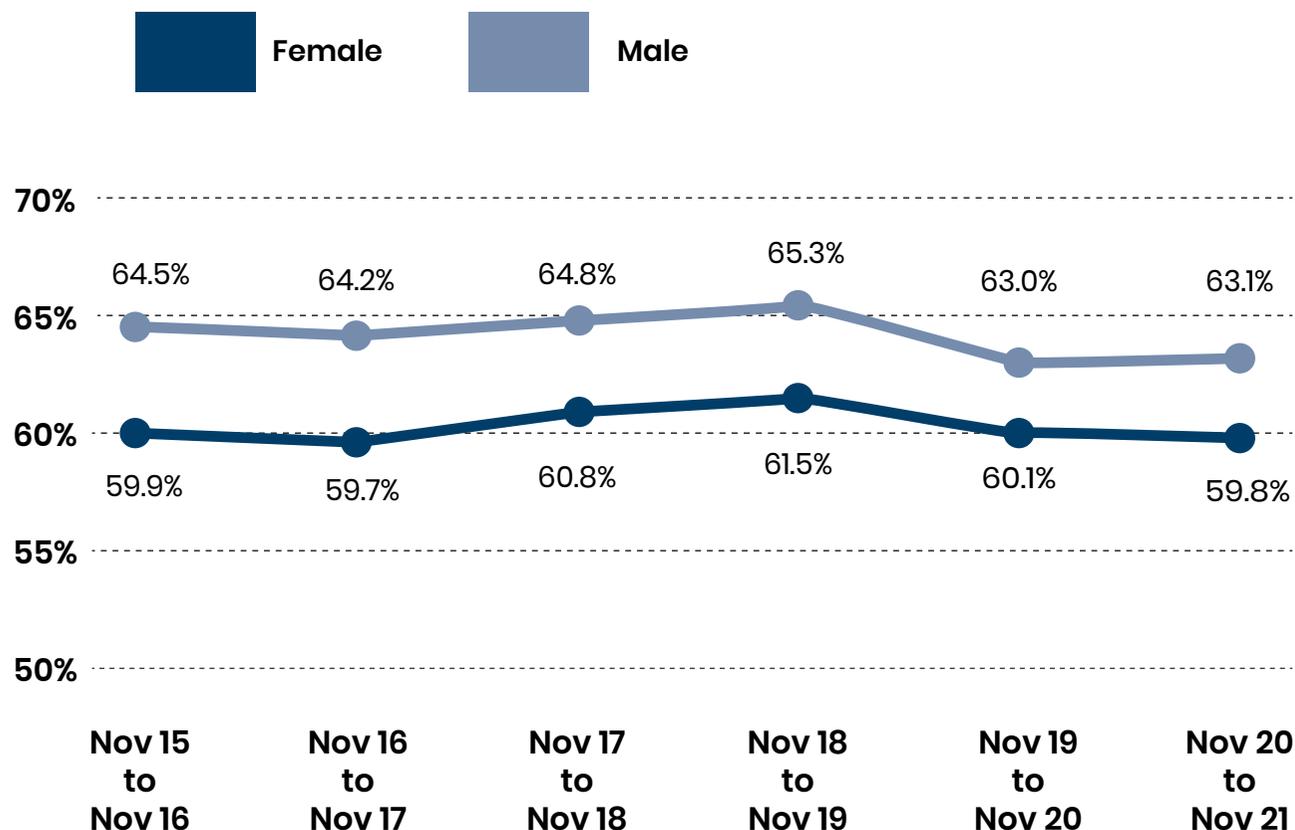
Note: Data on gender identification was collected on male, female and 'in another way'. Results for 'in another way' can be found in the data tables.

[Link to data tables](#)



Active: 150+ minutes a week Annual picture

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





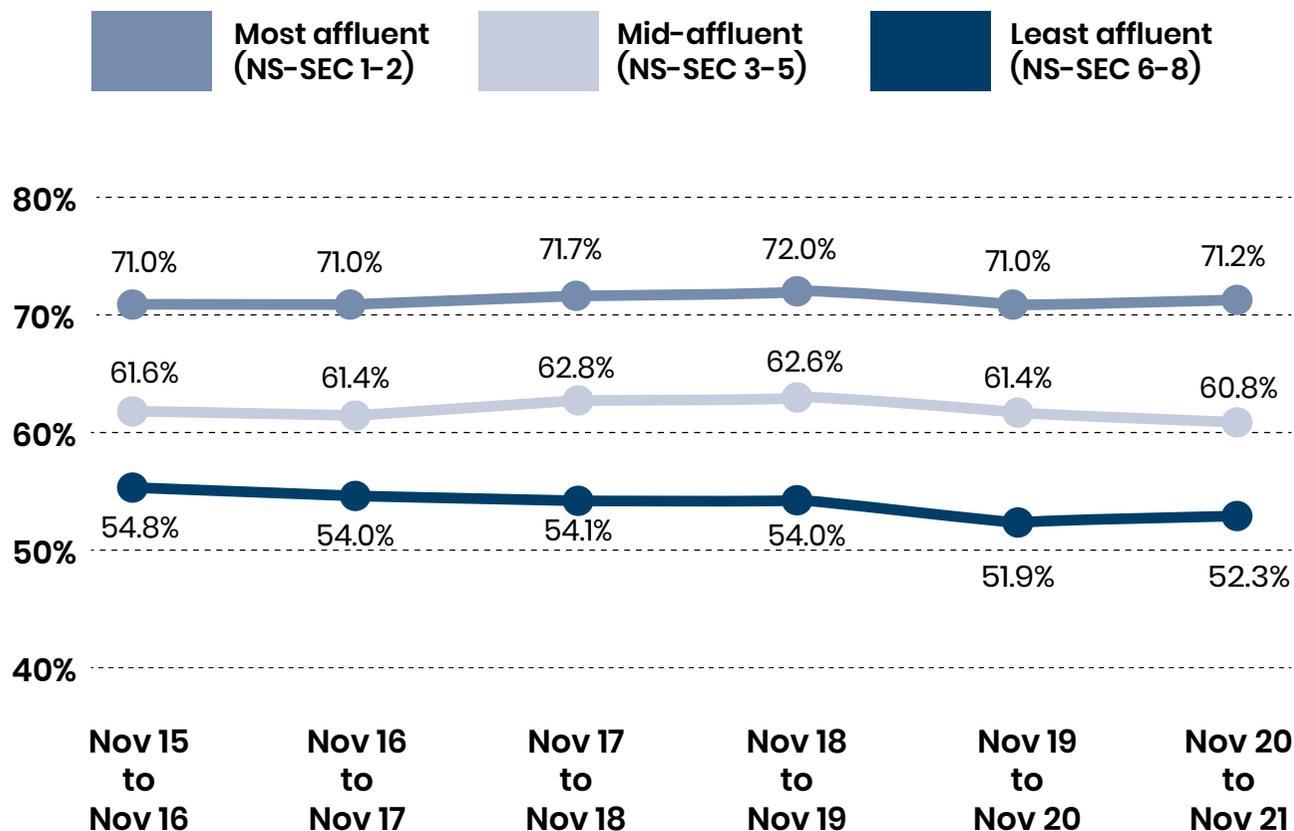
The least affluent have seen a larger drop in activity levels

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).

Active: 150+ minutes a week Annual picture

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



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](#)



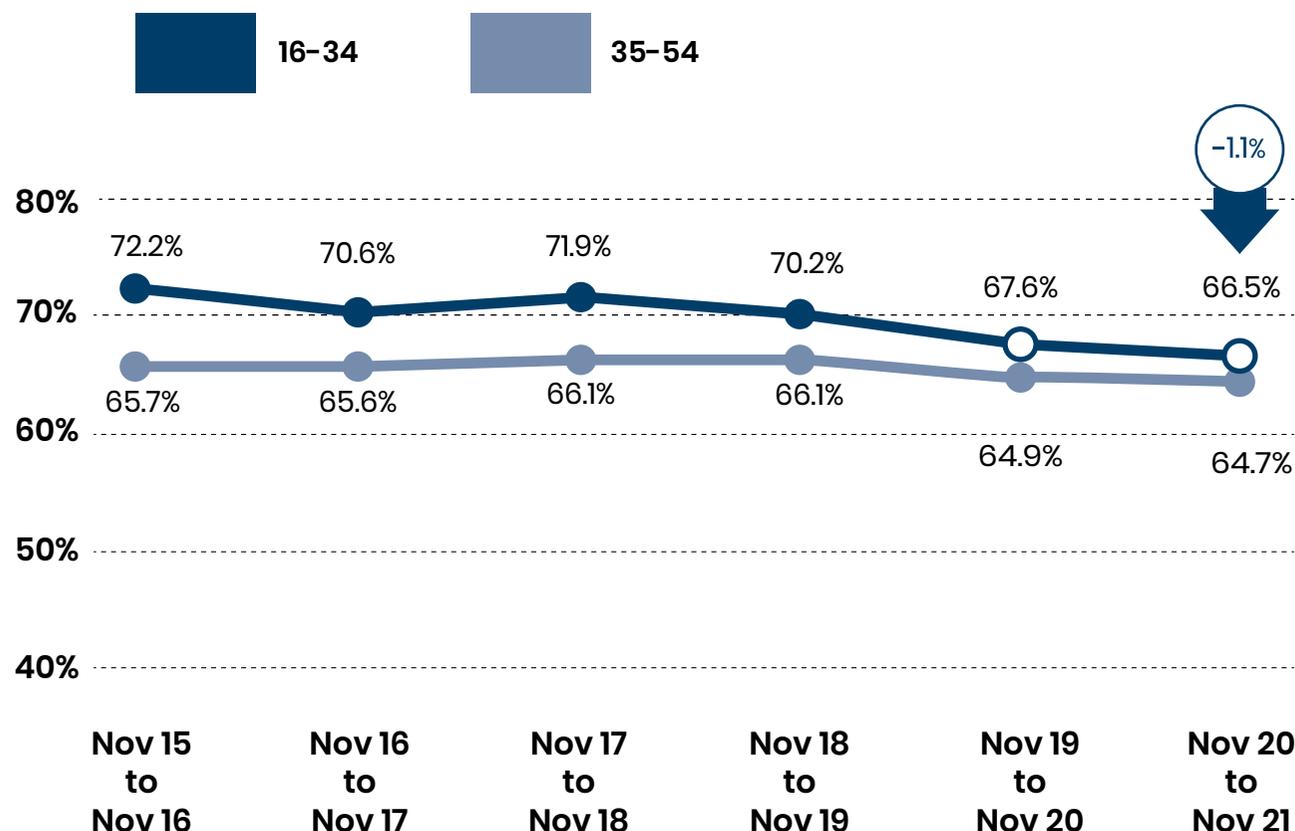
Activity levels continue to fall among young adults

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



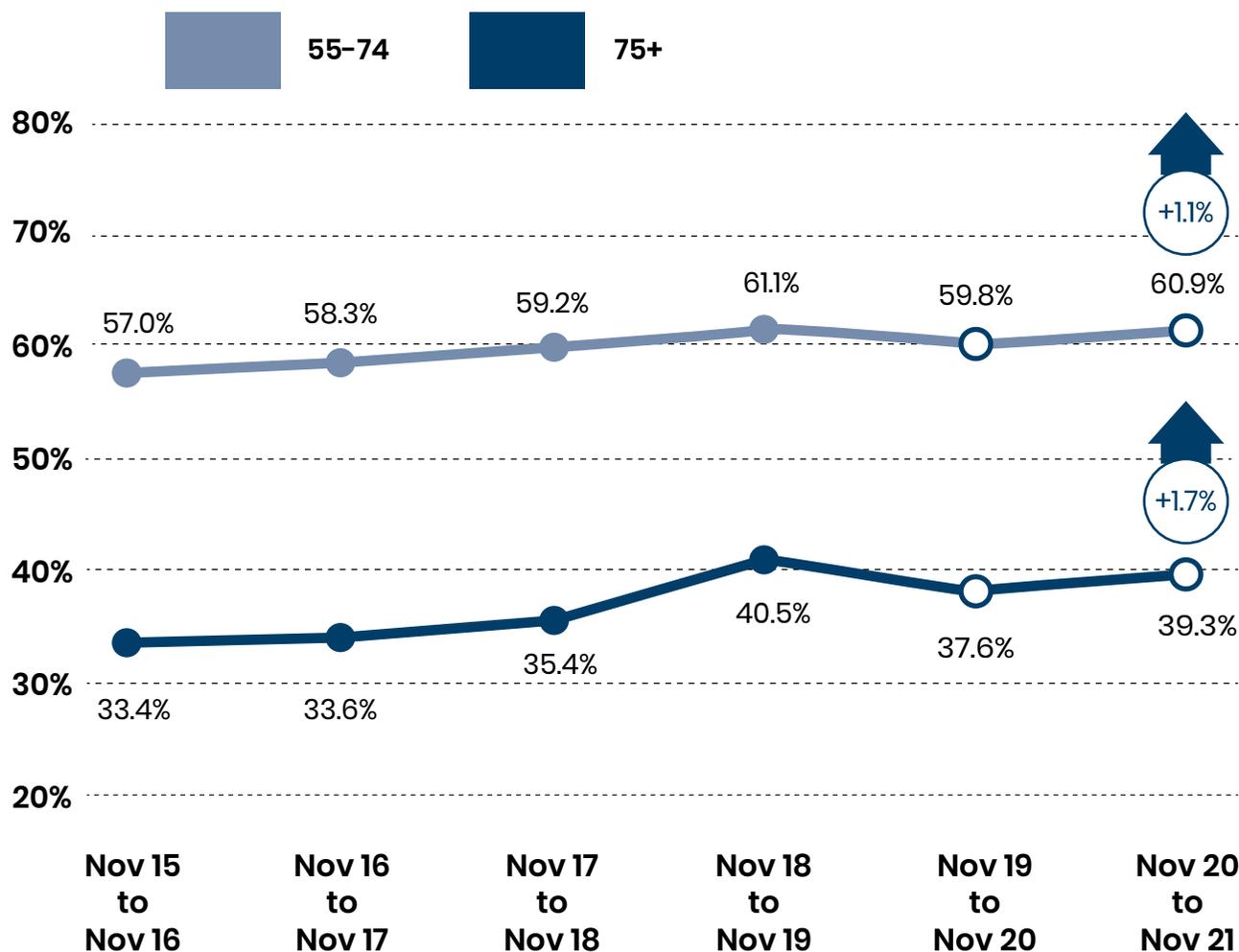
Activity levels are recovering among older adults

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



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



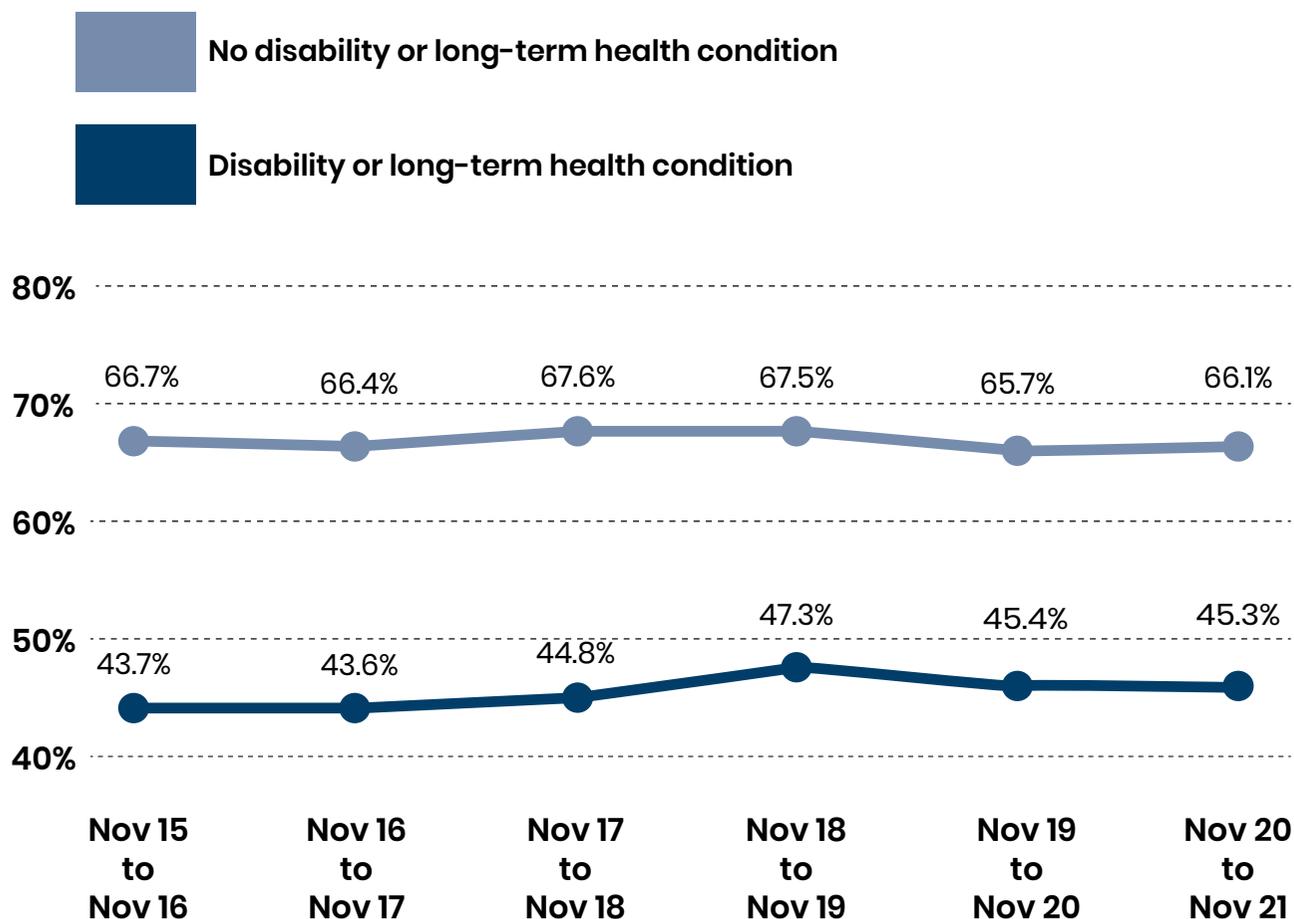
Adults with a disability or long-term health condition have seen activity levels drop compared to pre-pandemic

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



[Link to data tables](#)





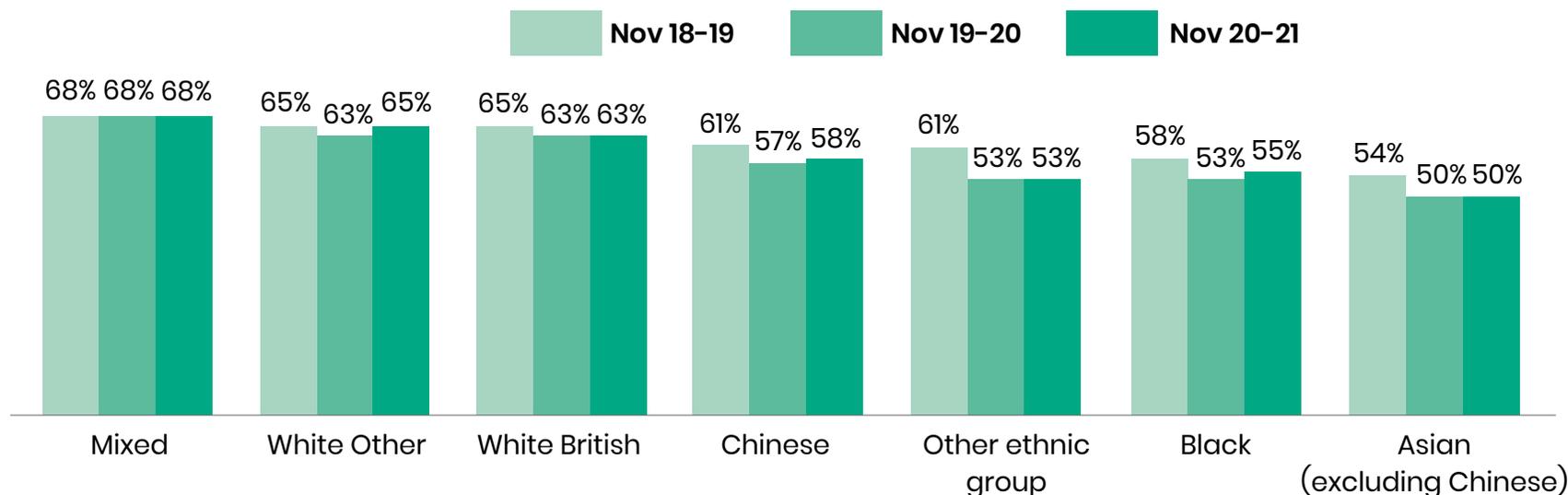
Arrows show change from 12 months ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

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



[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

Muscle strength



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

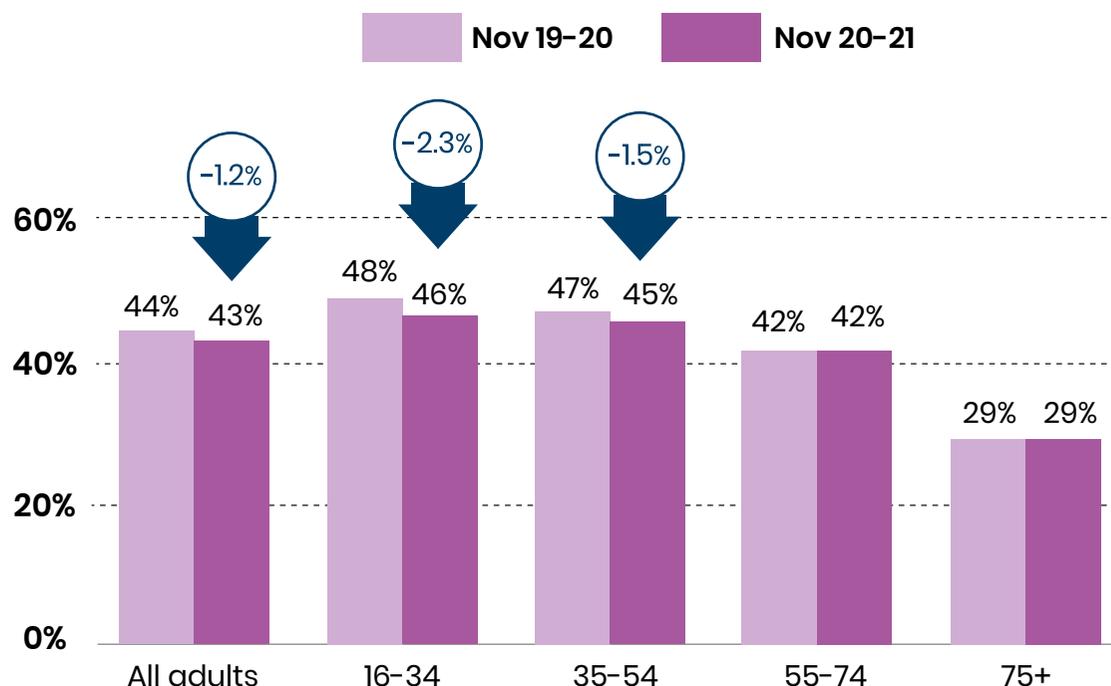


Muscle strengthening activity has fallen

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 months 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



[Link to data tables](#)



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**

At least moderate intensity



Types of activity

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



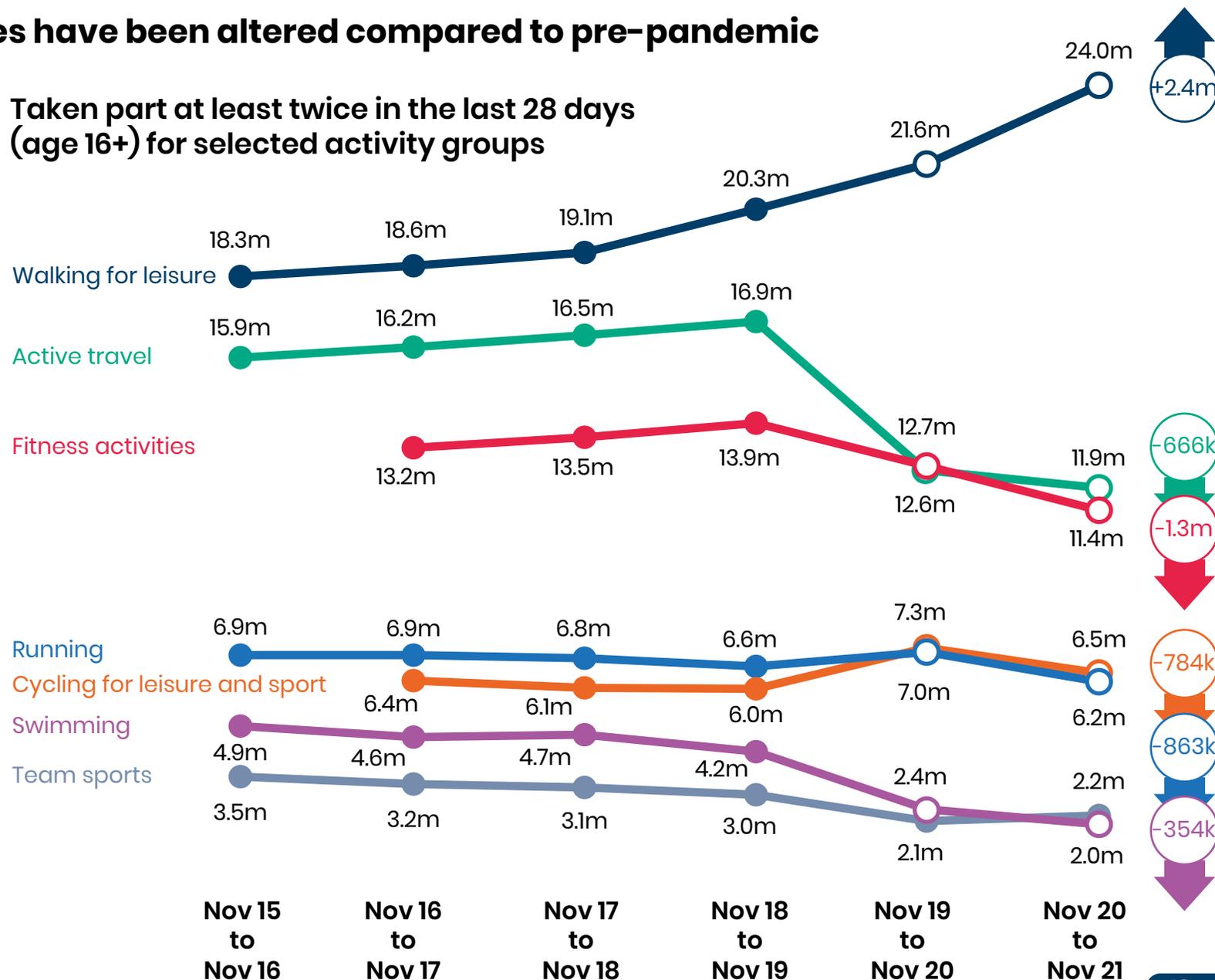
Trends for some activities have been altered compared to pre-pandemic

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



[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).

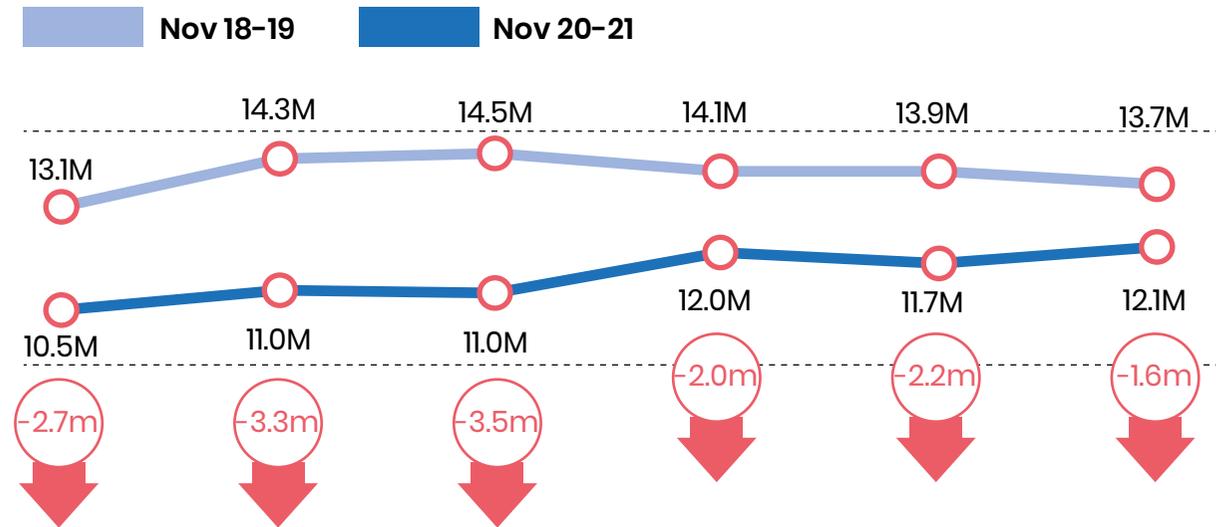
[Link to data tables](#)



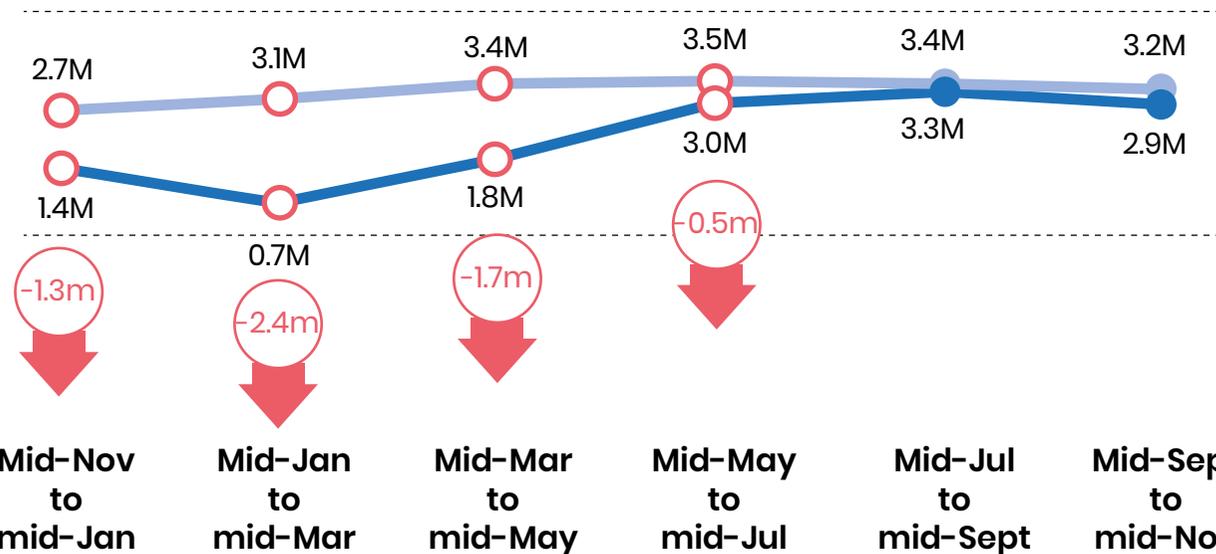
Arrows show change from 2 years ago (pre-pandemic). No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change



Fitness Activities



Team Sports



We ask the following attitude questions:

Capability

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

Opportunity

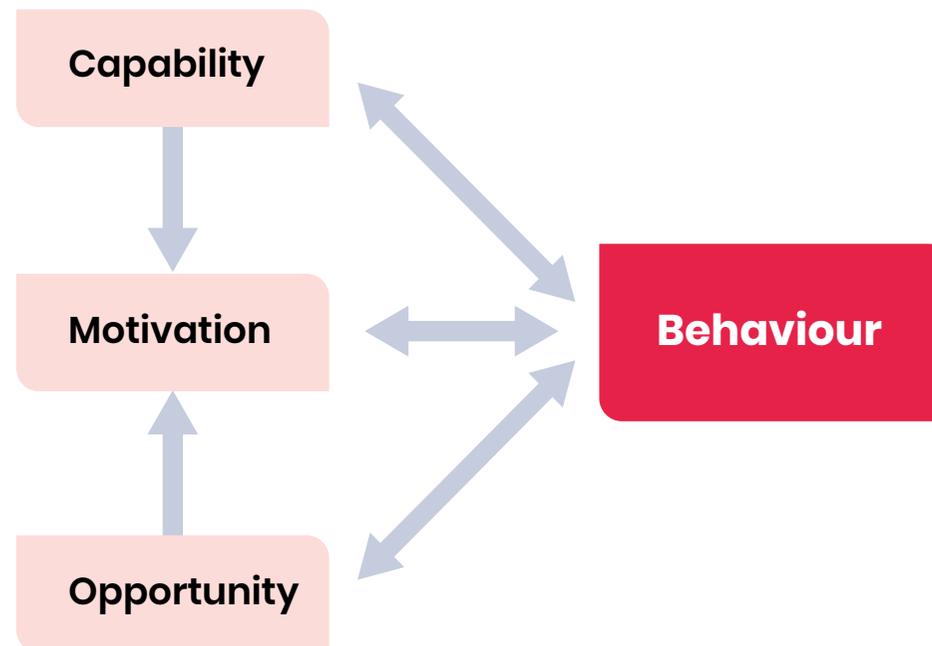
- I feel I have the opportunity to be physically active.
Opportunity includes things such as having somewhere to do it, being able to afford it, having the right kit, support from family, someone to take part with etc.

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.

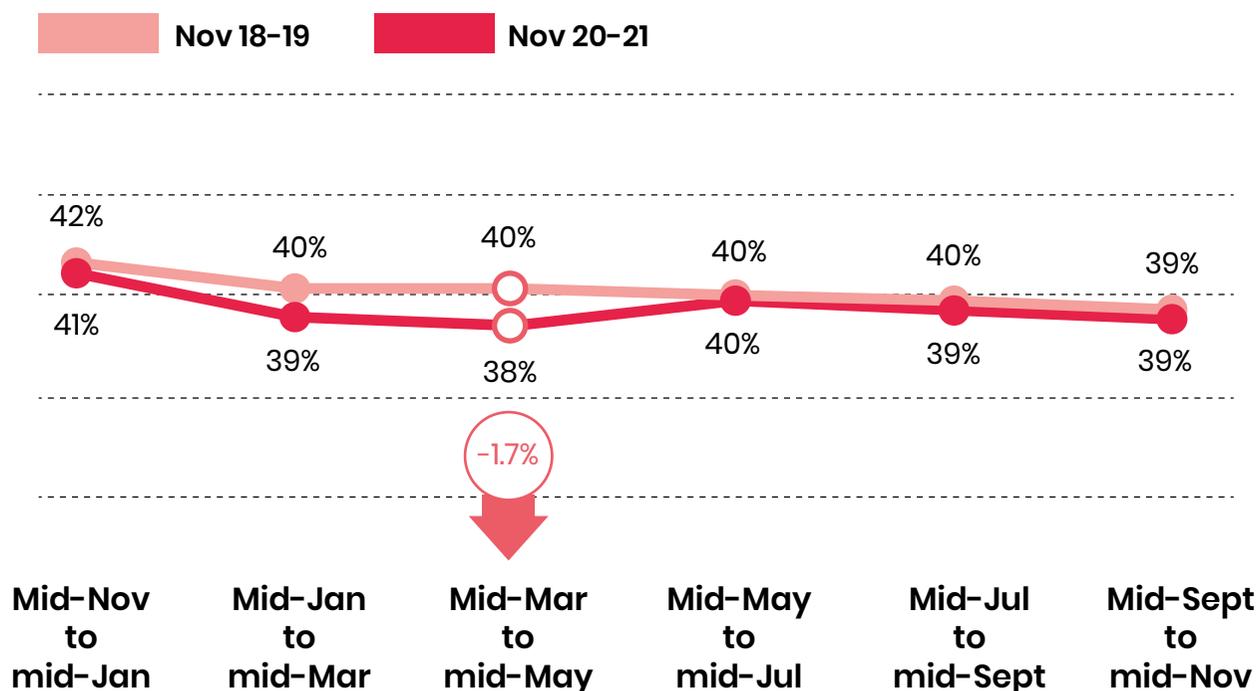


Perceived capability remains unchanged

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.

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

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



[Link to data tables](#)

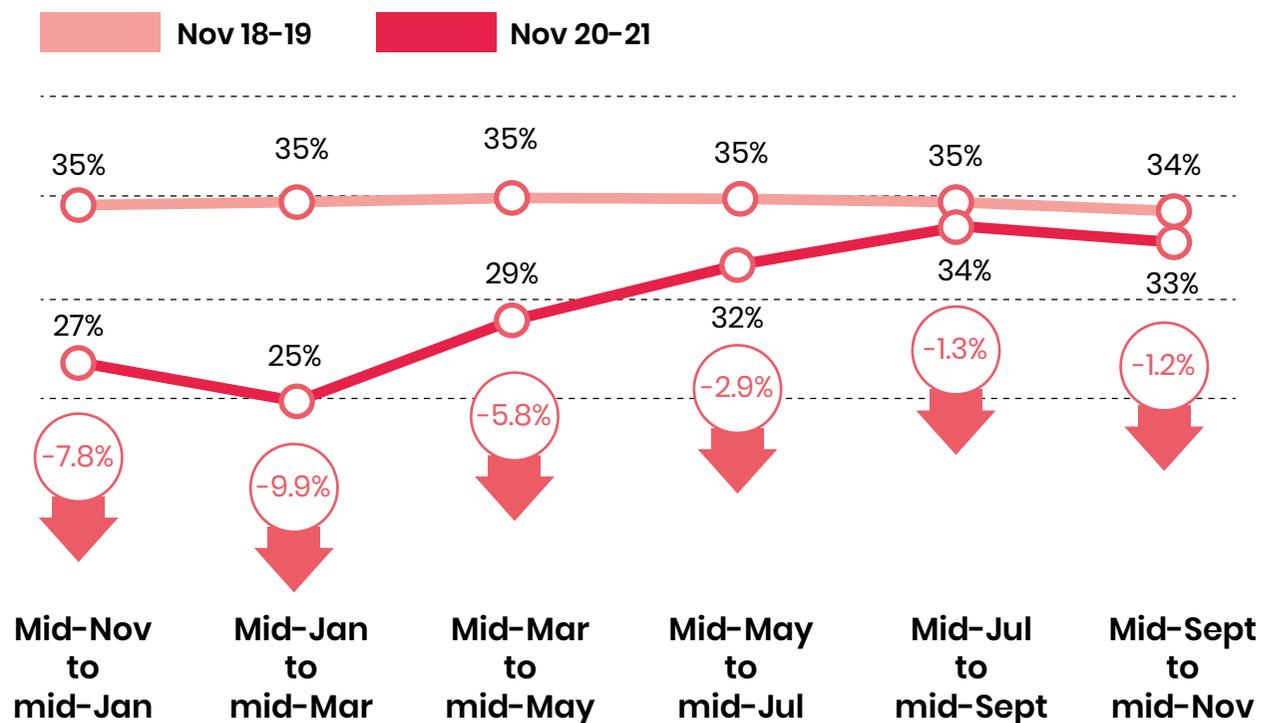


Opportunity has rallied

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.

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

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



[Link to data tables](#)



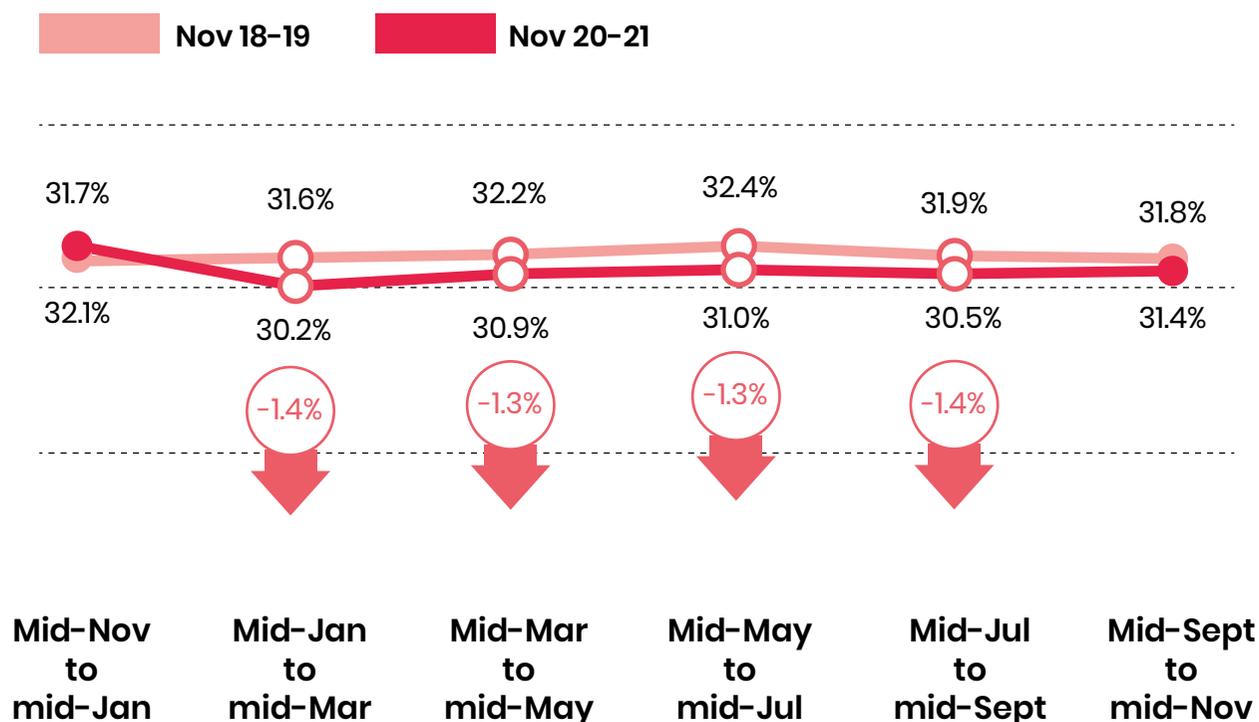
Enjoyment dropped

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.

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

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



[Link to data tables](#)

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.



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

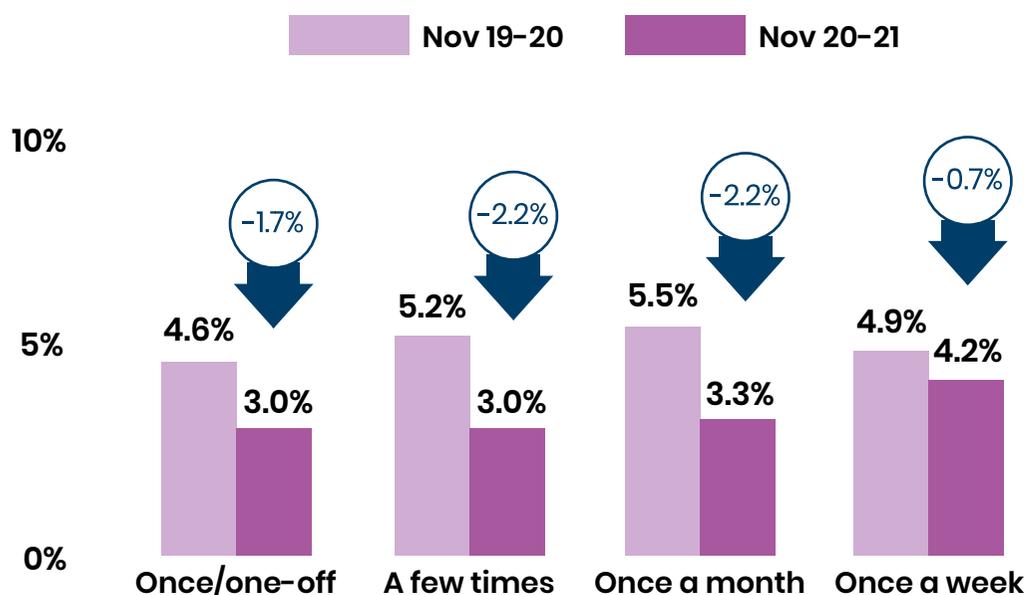


Volunteer numbers fell sharply compared to 12 months ago

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.

[Link to data tables](#)



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

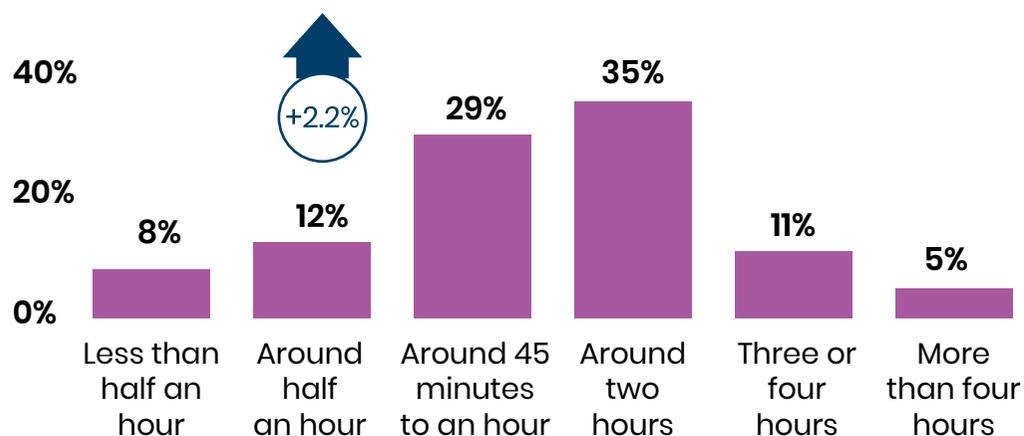


Regular (weekly) volunteers do so for between 45 minutes and two hours a session

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.

Volunteered at least once a week throughout the year

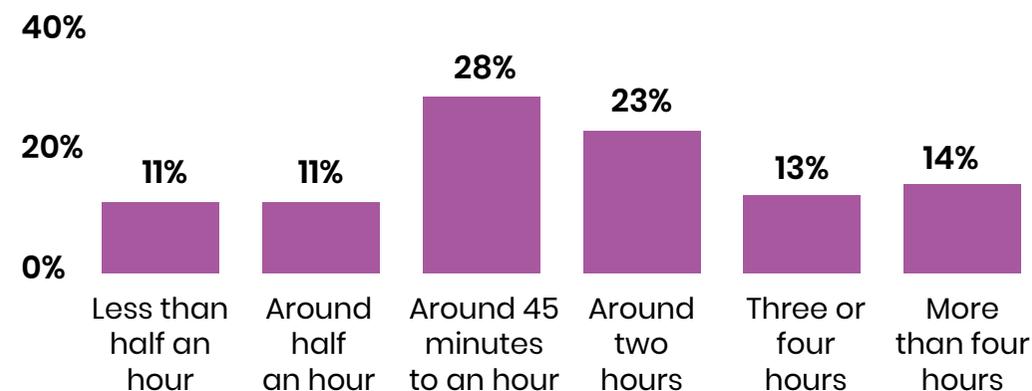


Infrequent volunteers are more likely to do very long sessions

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



[Link to data tables](#)



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



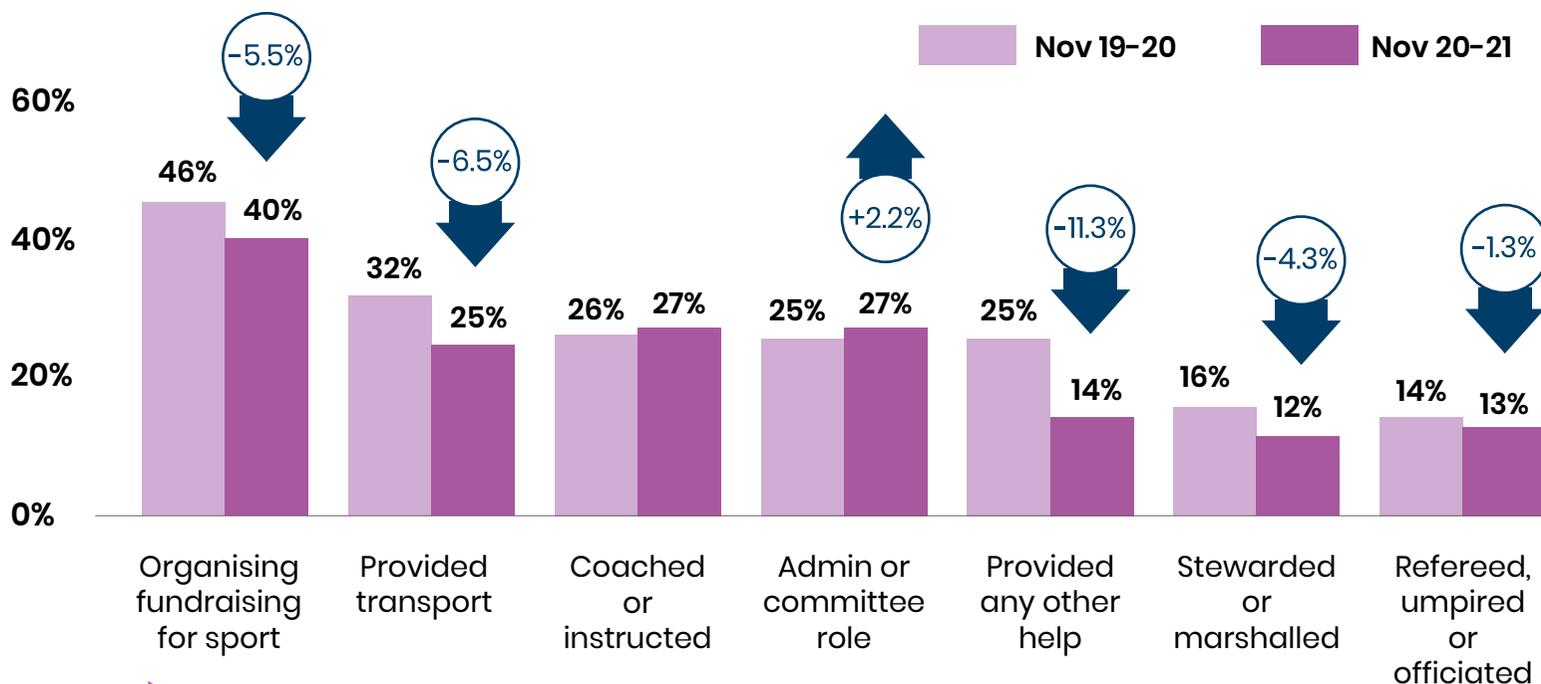
A variety of different roles are performed by volunteers

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



[Link to data tables](#)

Volunteering



Volunteered at least once a week throughout the year

Population

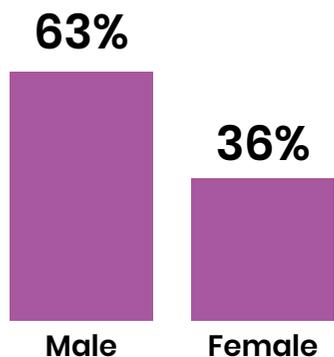


Summary of demographic profile

Our data shows there are significant inequalities:

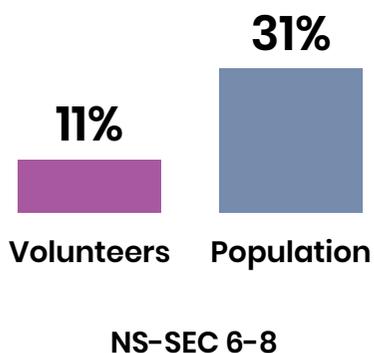
1 Gender

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).

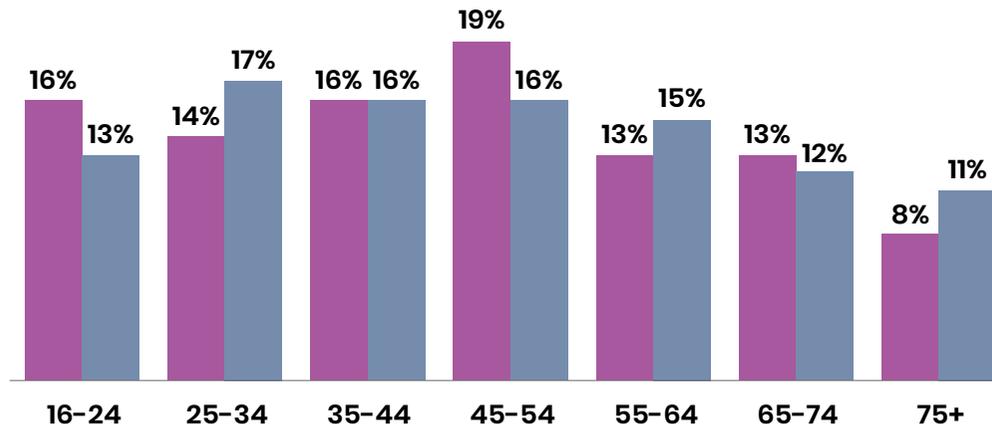


[Link to data tables](#)

*See our [definitions](#) page for the full definition of each demographic group.

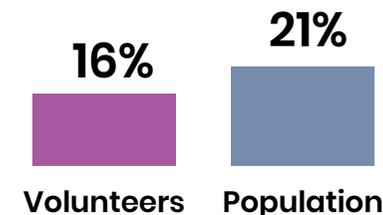
3 Age

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



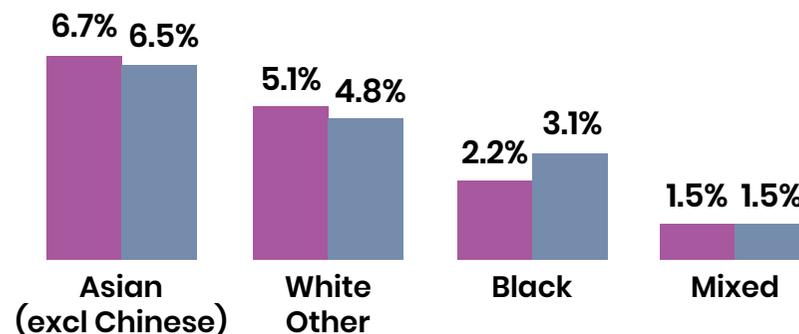
4 Disability and long-term health conditions

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.



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

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



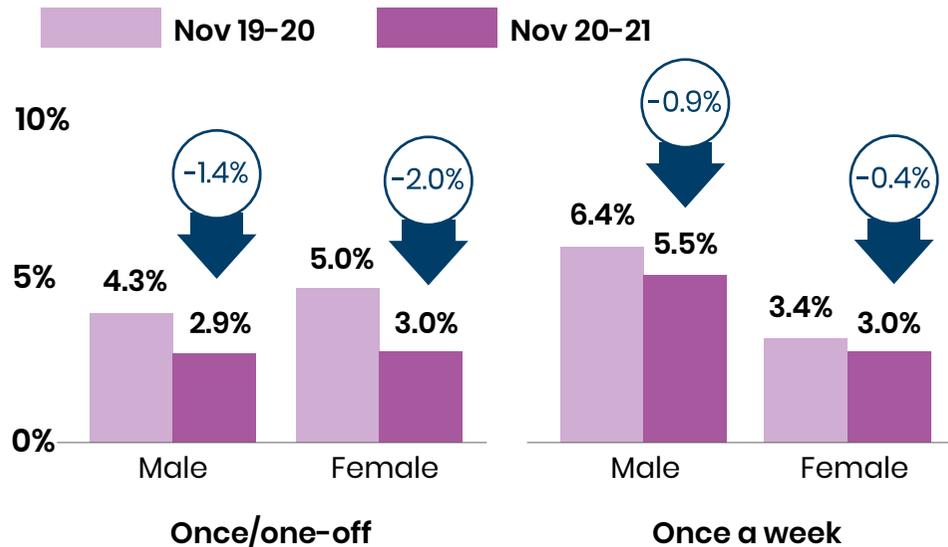
Gender

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.

Volunteering frequency



[Link to data tables](#) 

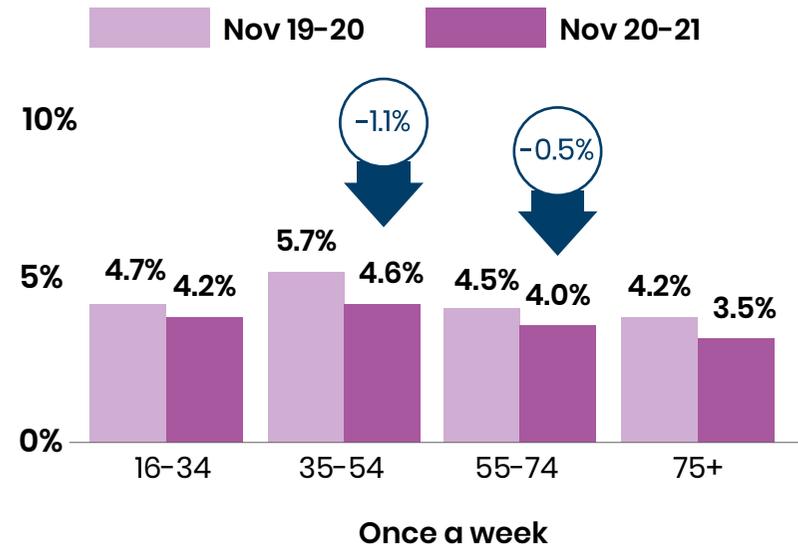
Note: Data on gender identification was collected on male, female and 'in another way'. Results for 'in another way' can be found in the data tables.

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



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

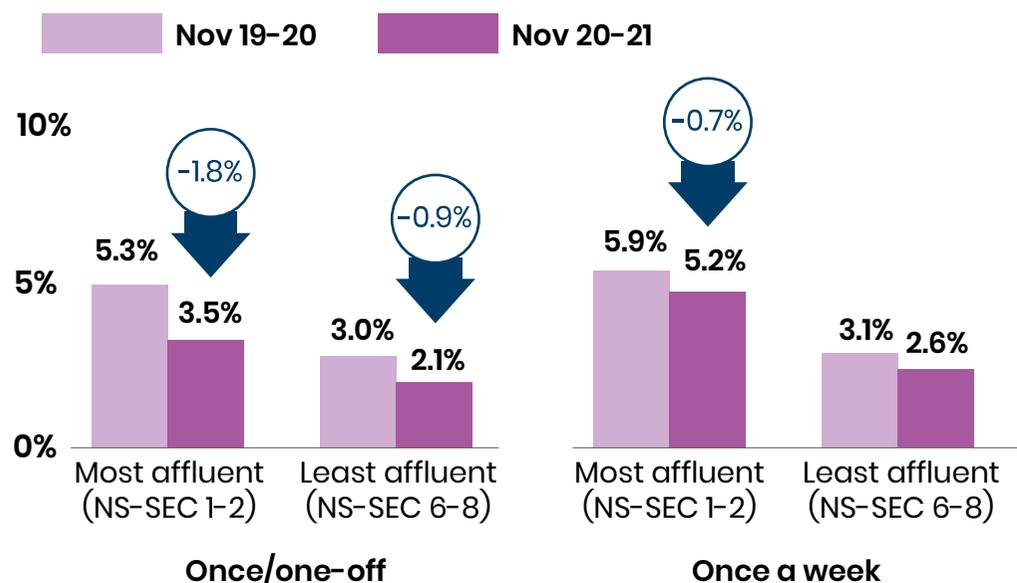


Socio-economic group

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

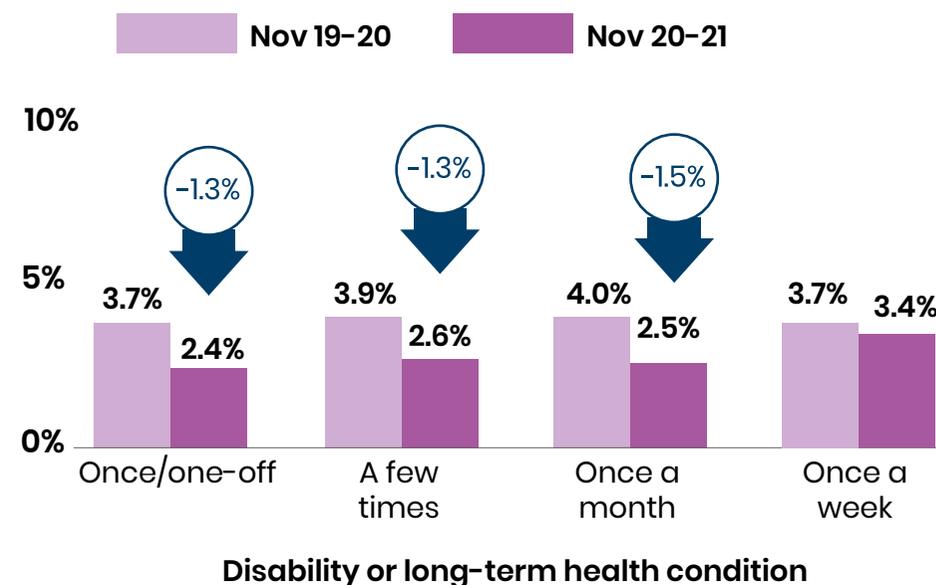


Disability and long-term health conditions

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



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

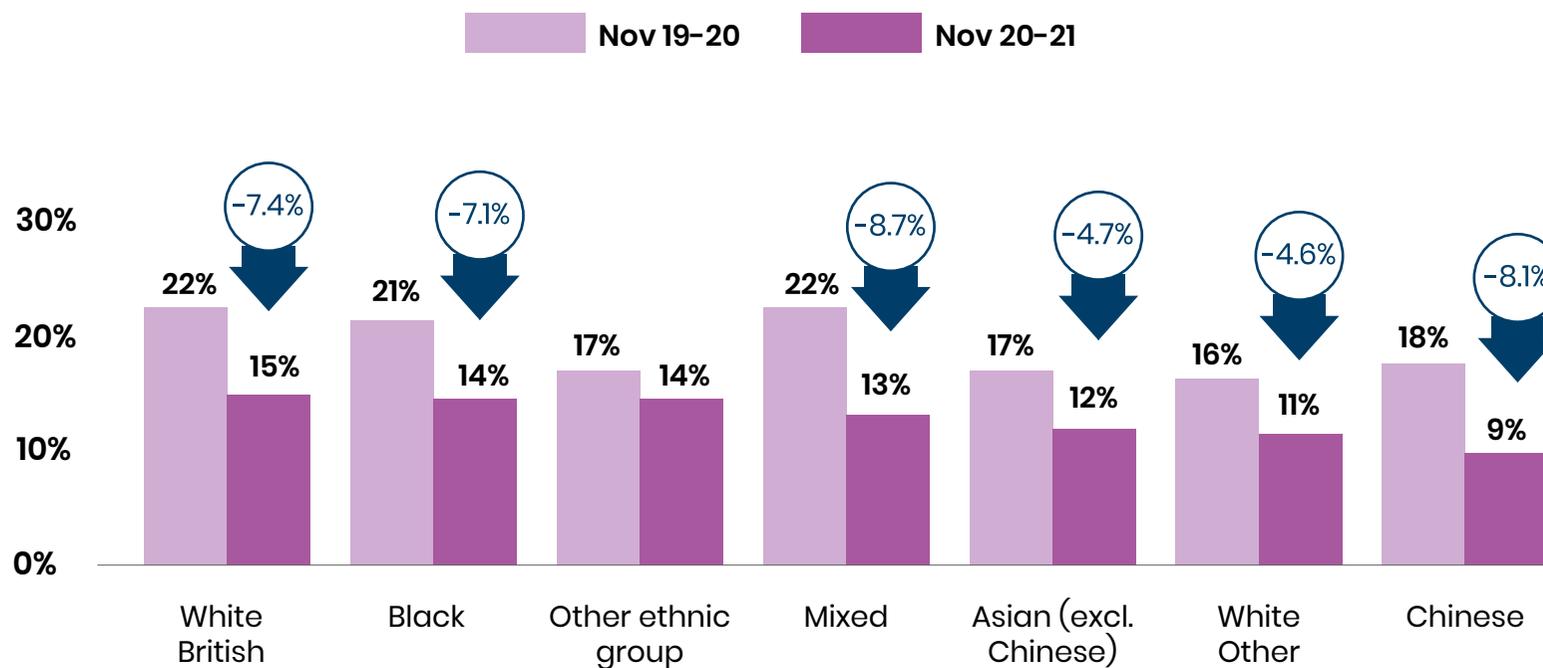


Asian and White Other adults are less likely to volunteer

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



[Link to data tables](#)





Physical wellbeing



Mental wellbeing



Individual development



Social & community development



Economic development

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](#).

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...

- Proportion of adults who:
- Undertake an average of **150+ minutes** a day of sport and physical activity.
 - Undertake two or more sessions of **muscle strengthening** activity a week.

- Agreement to:
- How **happy** did you feel yesterday?
 - How **satisfied** are you with your life nowadays?
 - To what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are **worthwhile**?
 - How **anxious** did you feel yesterday?

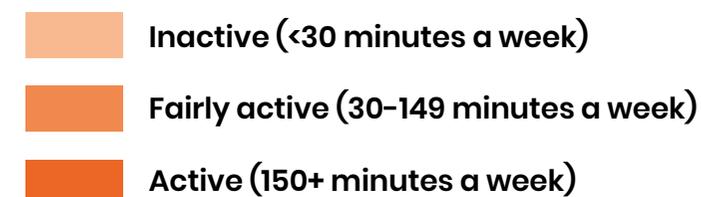
- Agreement to:
- I can **achieve** most of the goals I set myself
 - If I find something difficult, I **keep trying** until I can do it.

- Agreement to:
- Most people in our local area can be **trusted**.
 - My local area is a place where people from **different backgrounds** get on well together.

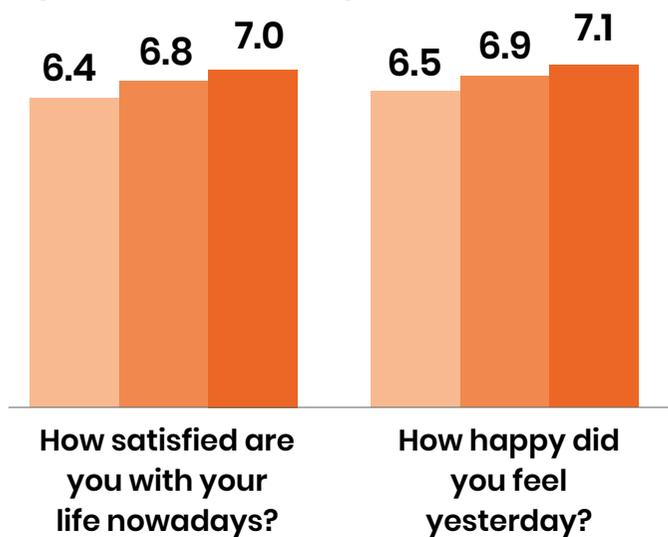
- The economic value of sport, as reported in:
- DCMS’s [Sports Satellite Accounts](#)
 - Our [report on the social and economic value of community sport and physical activity in England](#).

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.

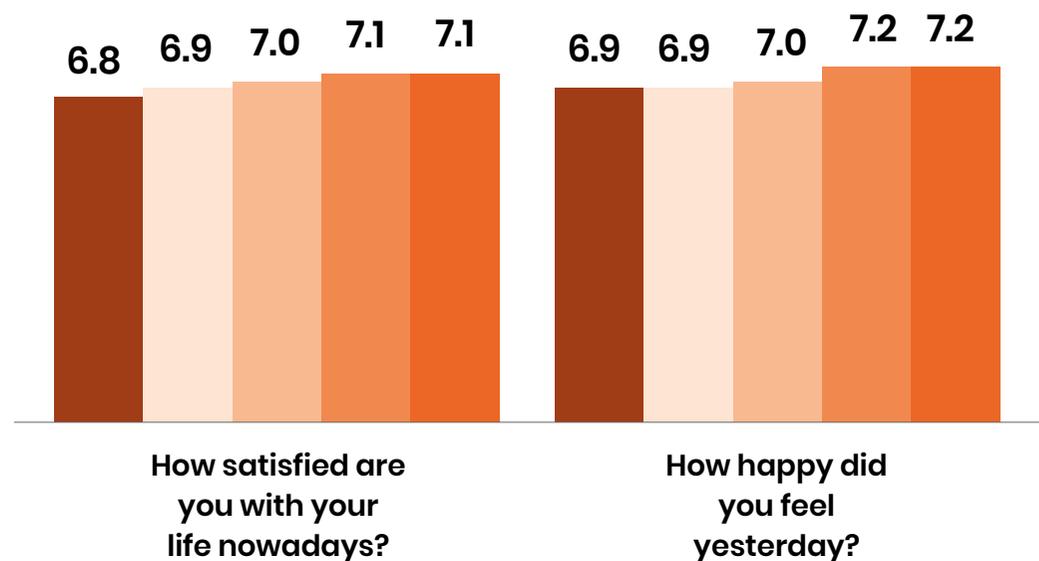


(mean score out of 10)



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.



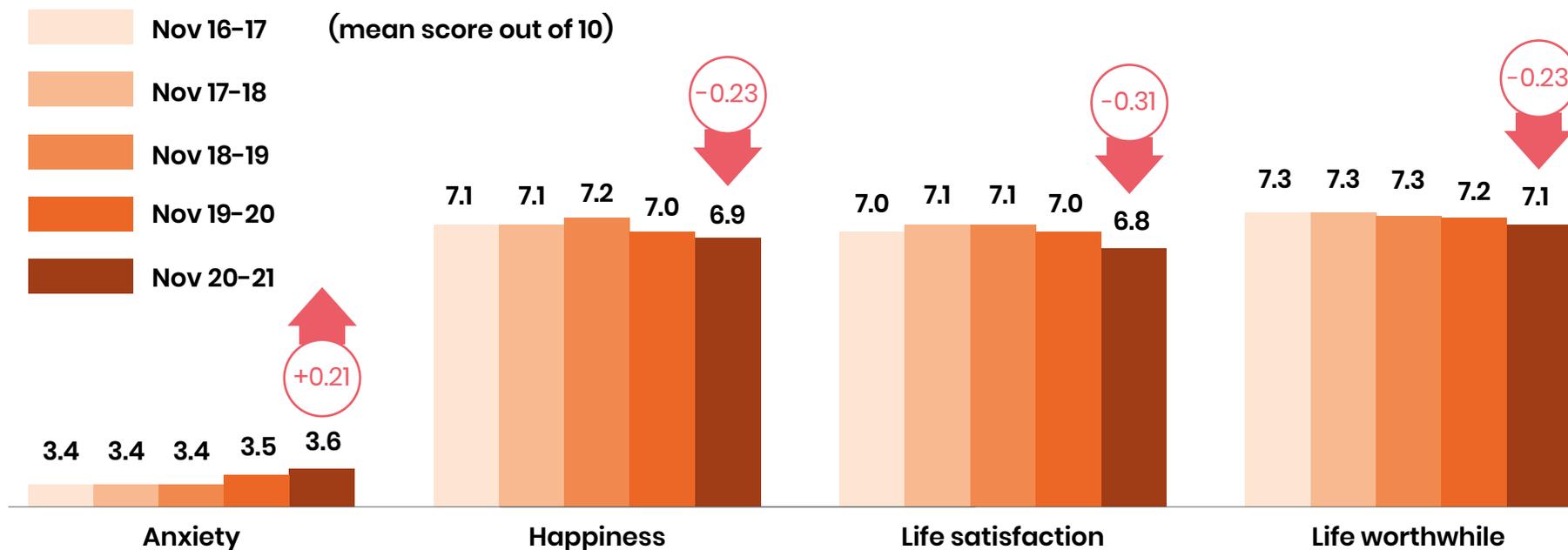
Arrows show change from 2 years ago (pre-pandemic). No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change



Summary of change

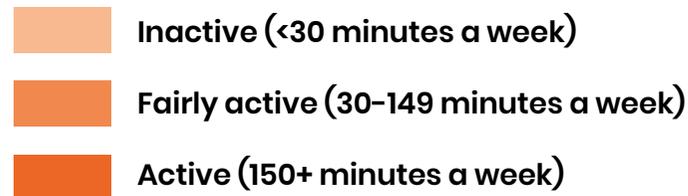
Collective wellbeing scores typically change very little over time and we need to look at a 5-10-year time frame to see any trends. However, disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented and, as such, we've seen a much shorter-term change.

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.

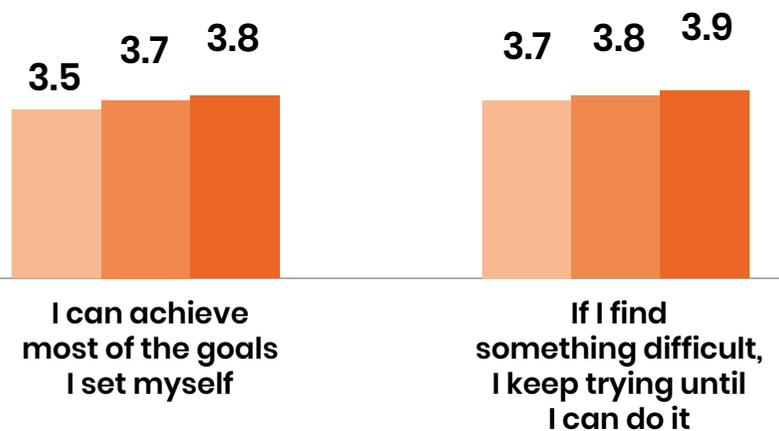


There's a positive association between activity levels and individual development

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



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

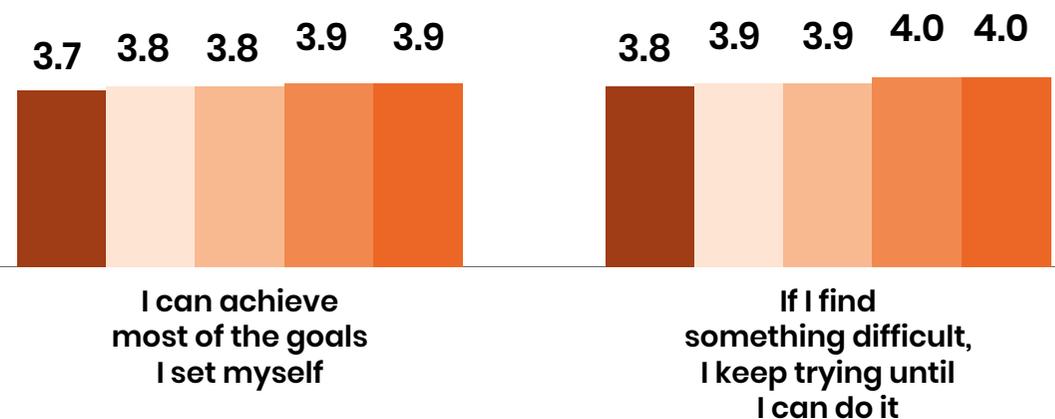


There's a positive association between frequency of volunteering and individual development

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

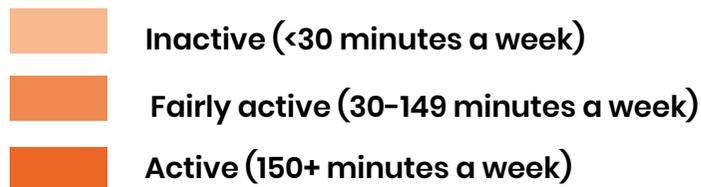


(mean score out of 5, where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree)

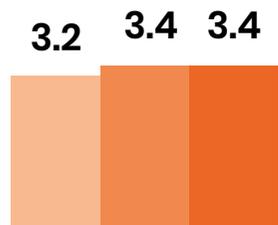


There's a positive association between activity levels and social and community development

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

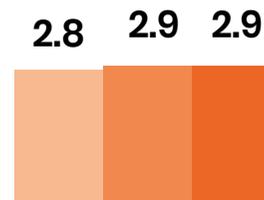


(mean score out of 5, where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree)



Most people in our area can be trusted

(mean score out of 4, where 4 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree)



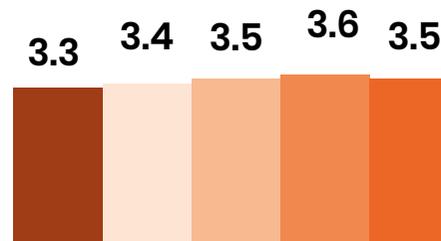
My local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together

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.

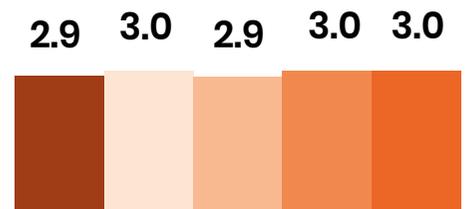


(mean score out of 5, where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree)



Most people in our area can be trusted

(mean score out of 4, where 4 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree)



My local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together

In October 2018, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport published 'A Connected Society', its first strategy for tackling loneliness in England.

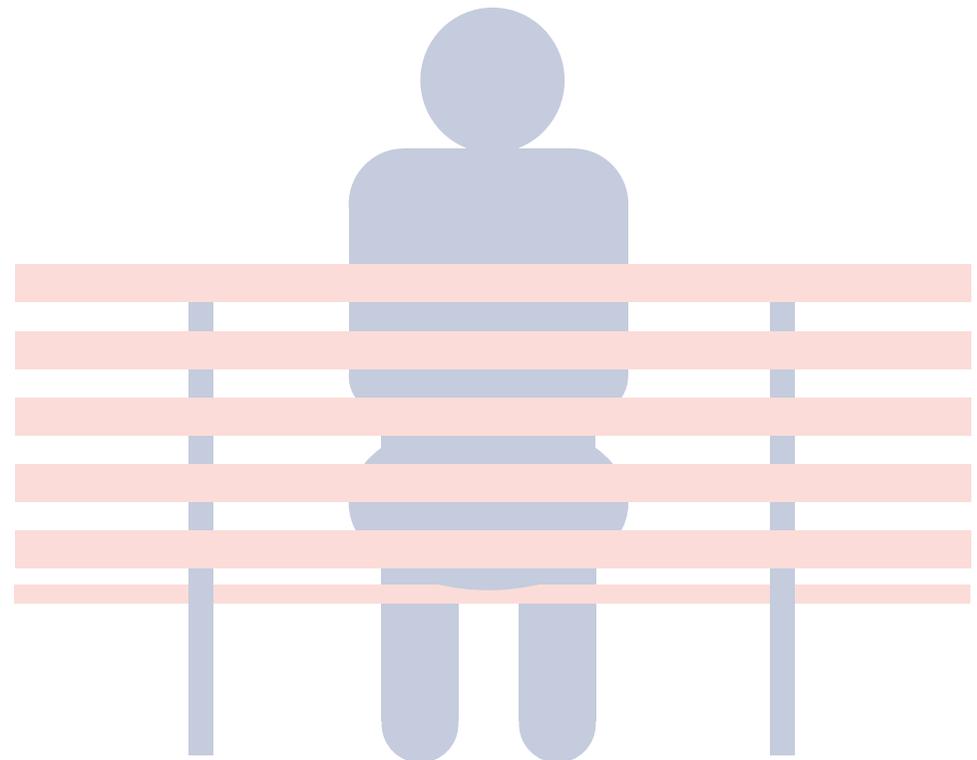
This chapter sets out the role sport and physical activity – and volunteering to support it – has in this.

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



Loneliness

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



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

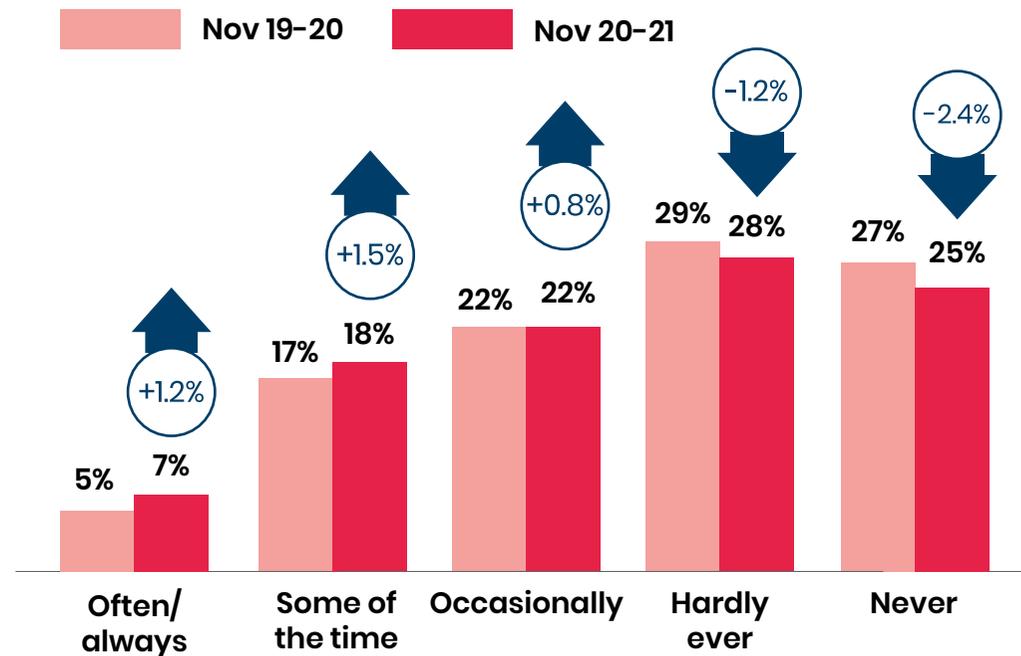


[Link to data tables](#) 

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).



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

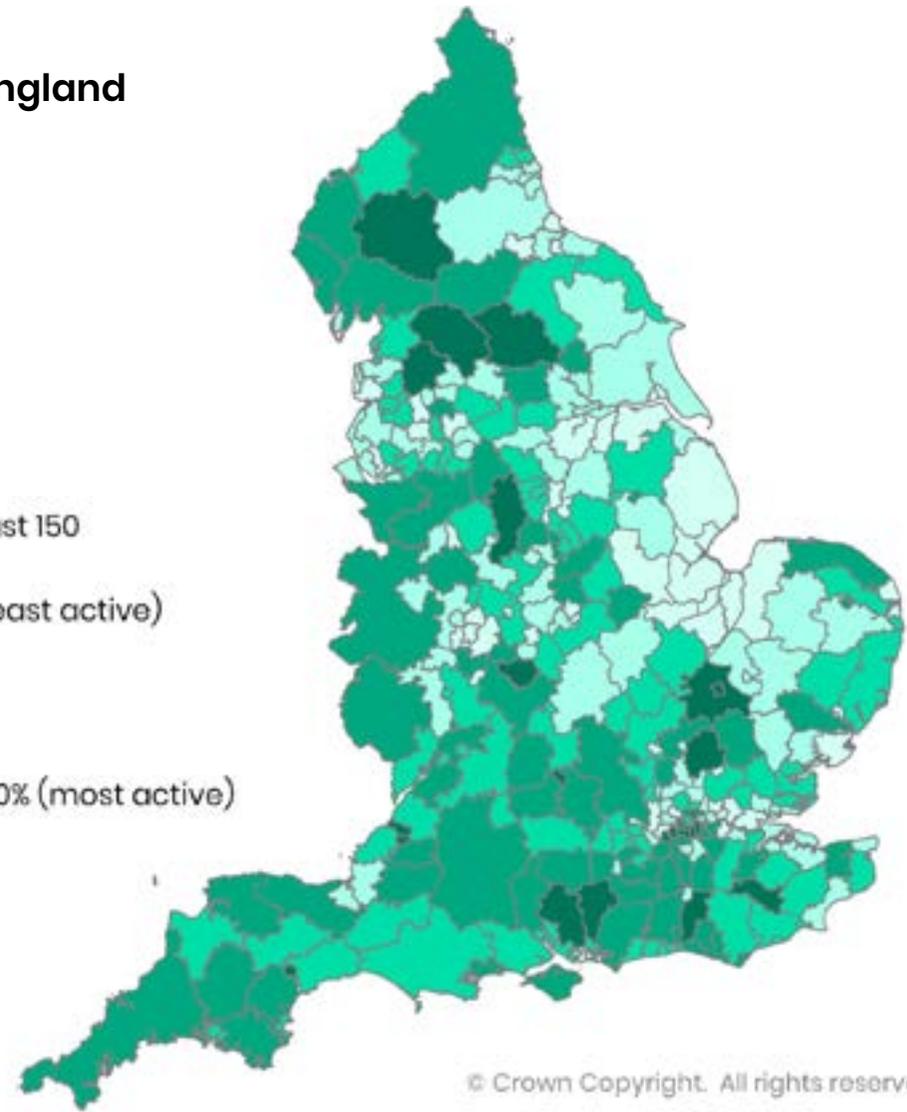
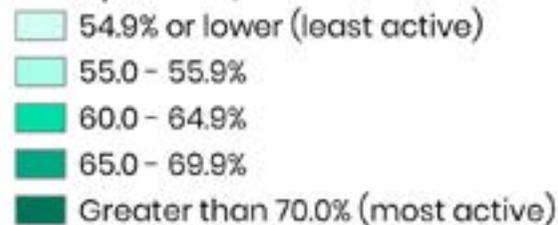
Please use the Active Lives Online Tool to run your own analysis of the data.

[Active Lives Online Tool](#) – this will be updated with the latest data shortly after its publication.

Activity across England

Active

(an average of at least 150 mins per week)



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Sport England 100033111 2022

[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.

[Link to more information on measures and demographics](#)



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.

The Active Lives Adult Survey is a push-to-web survey.

Carried out by Ipsos, it involves postal mailouts inviting participants to complete the survey online.

The survey can be completed on mobile or desktop devices. A paper questionnaire is also sent out to maximise response rates. [More information on the survey can be found here.](#)

[Link to more information on measures and demographics](#)



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.

[Link to more information on measures and demographics](#)



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.

[Link to data tables](#)



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.