



Active Lives Children and Young People Survey

Academic year 2022–23

Published December 2023

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Key information

This report presents data from the Active Lives Children and Young People Survey for the academic year 2022–23. Data is presented for children and young people in school Years 1–11 (ages 5–16) in England.

Release dates

This release: 7 December 2023
Next release: 5 December 2024

Find out more

For more information on the data presented in this report, please visit the [Active Lives section](#) of our website or refer to the [technical note](#).

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Welcome



Nick Pontefract,
Chief Strategy Officer

This report summarises the sport and physical activity behaviours of 5-16-year-olds in England over the 2022-23 academic year (September 2022-July 2023).

While we are pleased that the recovery seen after the Covid-19 pandemic has been retained, and that the overall number of active children (those doing at least 60 minutes of activity a day, on average) has increased by 424,000 over five years - our ambition is to work together to ensure that every child has the opportunity to be active.

In its new strategy, Get Active, the government has set a target of one million more active children than in 2021-22, by 2030. We will only achieve this by working collaboratively as a sector to improve access to, and the experience of, sport and physical activity for children and young people.

This report demonstrates lots of positives. We have seen the continued importance of informal play, significant increases in children and young people playing football and continued growth in active travel, with more children walking to school than at any point since this survey began.

Investments made by Sport England, whether they be supporting the School Games and the

School Games Organisers, developing tools like Studio You, campaigns like Play Their Way, or a physical literacy consensus statement, are all important and valuable contributions. But only by working collectively will we be able to really shift the dial on young people's participation in sport and physical literacy.

The report also shows areas for concern and collective action. Overall rates of activity and inactivity are not changing by as much, or as quickly, as we would want to see. Participation levels for important life skills, like swimming, may be showing signs of recovering but levels are still significantly lower than when the survey began. And children are also reporting significantly lower wellbeing scores than five years ago.

As ever, it's only possible to provide a summary within this report. Readers should use the links within it to access the detailed data tables. Alternatively, check out the [Active Lives Online tool](#), which is updated shortly after each release, where you can explore trends over time, audiences not covered in this report and more specific activities.

Finally, I'd like to thank the schools, children, parents and teachers who took the time to complete the survey, and the network of Active Partnerships who've, once again, played a key role in working with the schools.

Executive summary

1



Activity levels remain unchanged compared to 12 months ago, although they're up compared to five years ago.

2



Physical literacy (as measured by positive attitudes) continues to recover but remains down compared to five years ago.

3



We continue to see a positive association between activity levels and mental wellbeing.

This chapter presents information on three levels of activity:

- **Active**
(an average of at least 60 minutes a day)
- **Fairly active**
(an average of 30–59 minutes a day)
- **Less active**
(less than an average of 30 minutes a day).

What do we mean by physical activity?

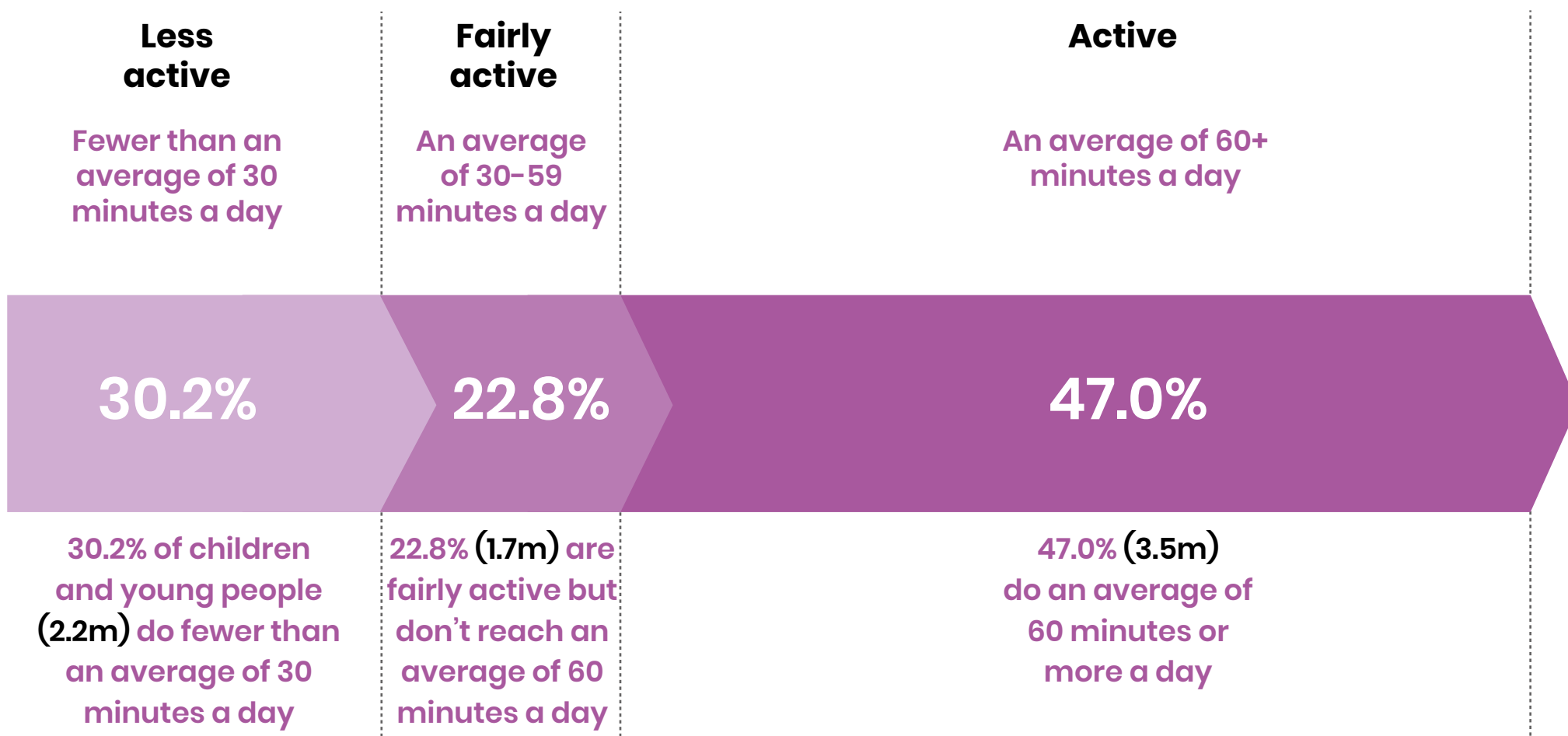


Levels of activity



Headlines

Our data shows that 47.0% of children and young people (3.5 million) are meeting the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines of taking part in sport and physical activity for an average of 60 minutes or more every day. Meanwhile, 30.2% (2.2m) do fewer than an average of 30 minutes a day.



[Link to data tables](#)

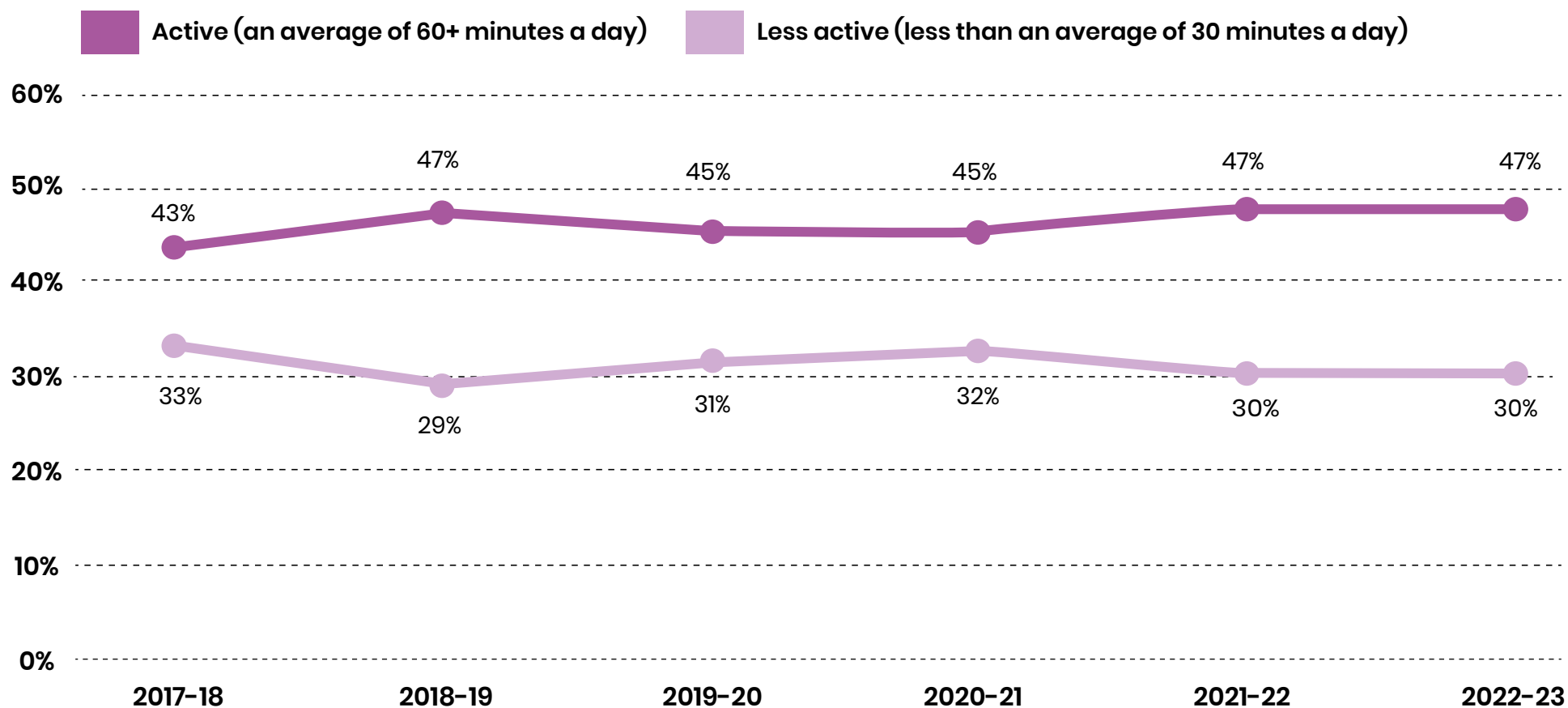
Levels of activity

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



Activity levels have remained stable over the last 12 months

The dips across 2019-20 and 2020-21 coincide with the restrictions imposed during the coronavirus pandemic. There remains growth over the longer term, compared to academic year 2017-18, with the proportion who are active having increased by 3.8%, meaning there are 424,000 more active children and young people compared to five years ago, while the proportion who are less active has decreased by 2.7%, or 85,000 fewer less active children and young people.



[Link to data tables](#)



*Activity can be either during or outside of school hours. For details on how we measure change, see the [notes](#) pages.

Levels of activity

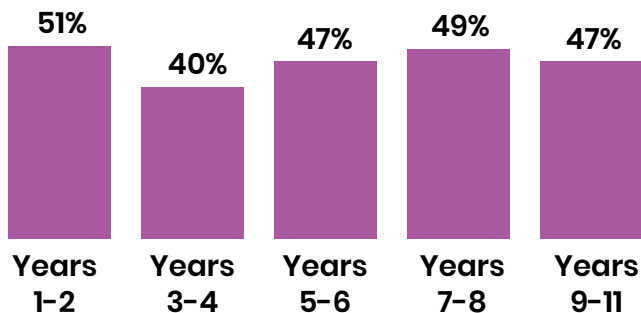


Summary of demographic differences

Active

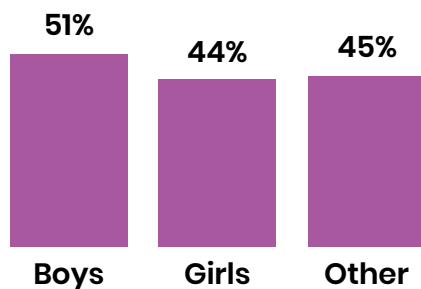
1 Year group

Activity levels are lowest for those in school Years 3-4 (ages 7-9, 40%).



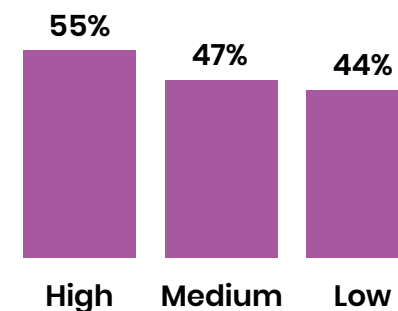
2 Gender

Boys (51%) are more likely to be active than girls (44%).



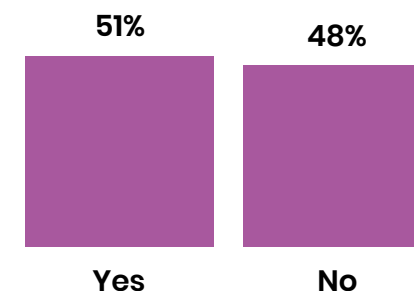
3 Family affluence

Those from the least affluence families are the least likely to be active (44%).



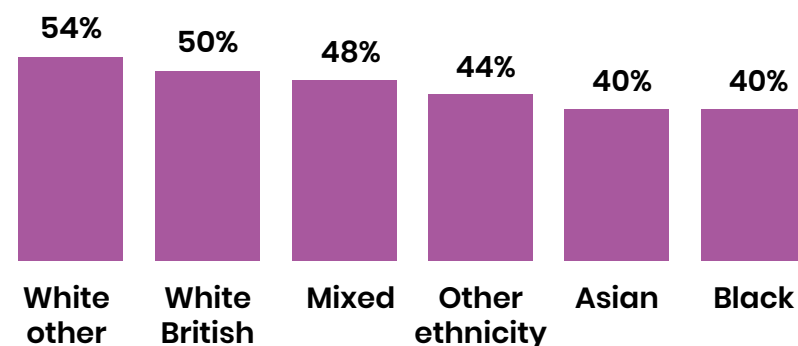
4 Disability and long-term health conditions

Children and young people with a disability or long-term health condition (51%) are slightly more likely to be active than those without one (48%).



5 Ethnicity

Children and young people of Black, Asian and Other ethnicities are the least likely to be active.



[Link to data tables](#)



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



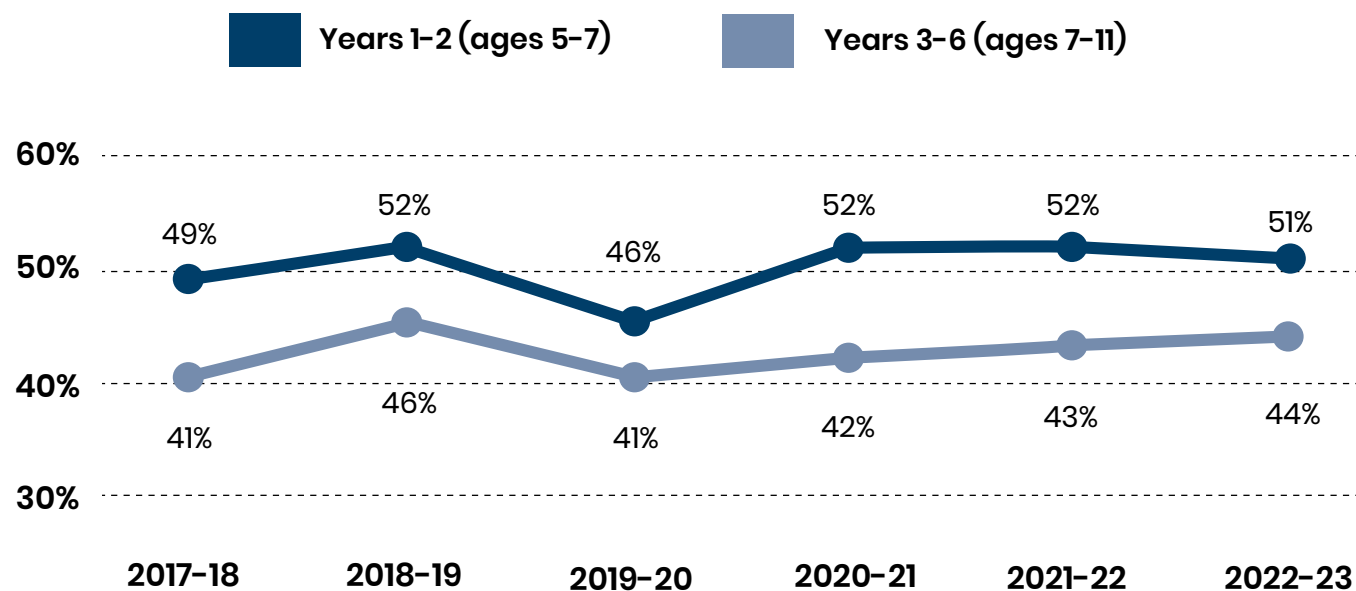
Activity levels have increased by less among primary age children

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

Activity levels among infant age children (school Years 1-2, ages 5-6) have been fairly stable over time, barring a drop during the height of the coronavirus pandemic restrictions in 2019-20. There's no reportable long-term change.

The proportion of children classified as active is up slightly over the longer term for those in school Years 3-6 (ages 7-11). This means there are 2.6%, or 126,000 more active Years 3-6 children compared to five years ago (academic year 2017-18).

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)





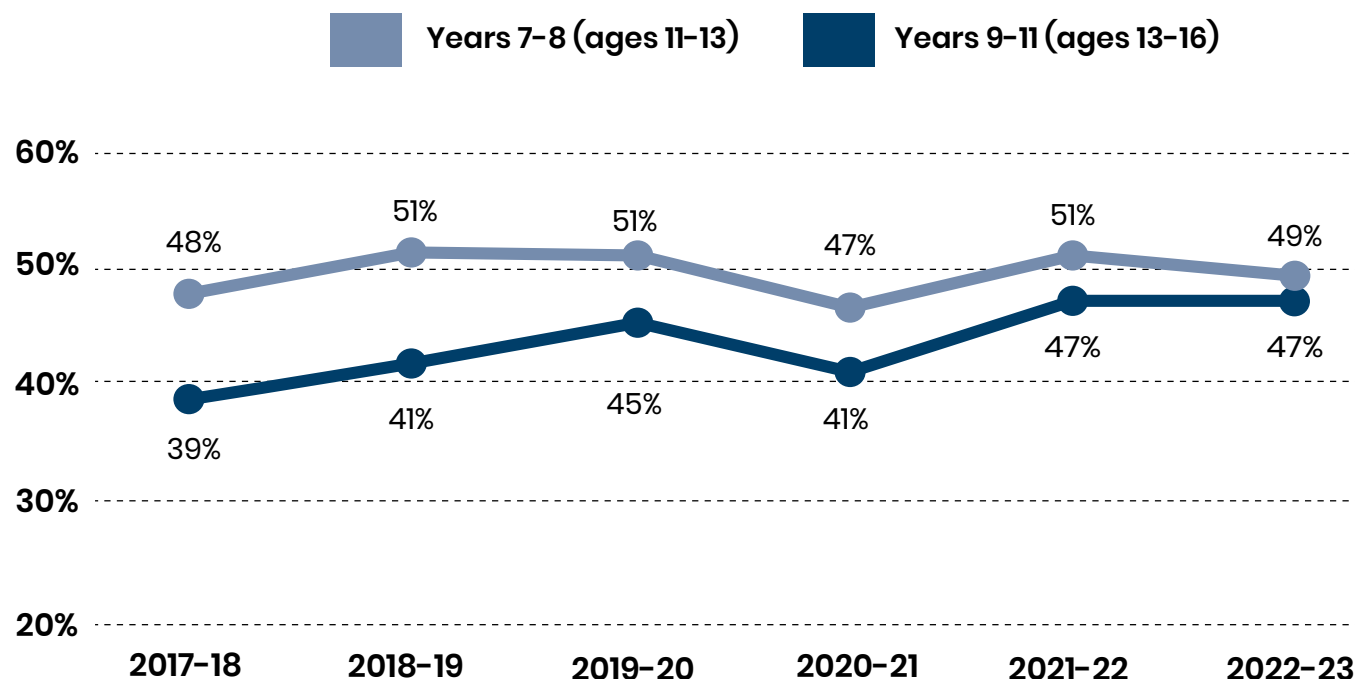
There's an upward trend in activity levels among teenagers

The proportion of children and young people classified as active has remained fairly stable over the longer term among young people in school Years 7-8 (ages 11-13).

In contrast, there's been steady growth in activity levels among young people in school Years 9-11 (ages 13-16), despite no reportable change compared to 12 months ago. Over the last five years (since academic year 2017-18) we've seen activity levels increase by 8.6%, or 220,000 more active young people.

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

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)



[Link to data tables](#)



Both boys and girls have seen activity levels increase over the last five years

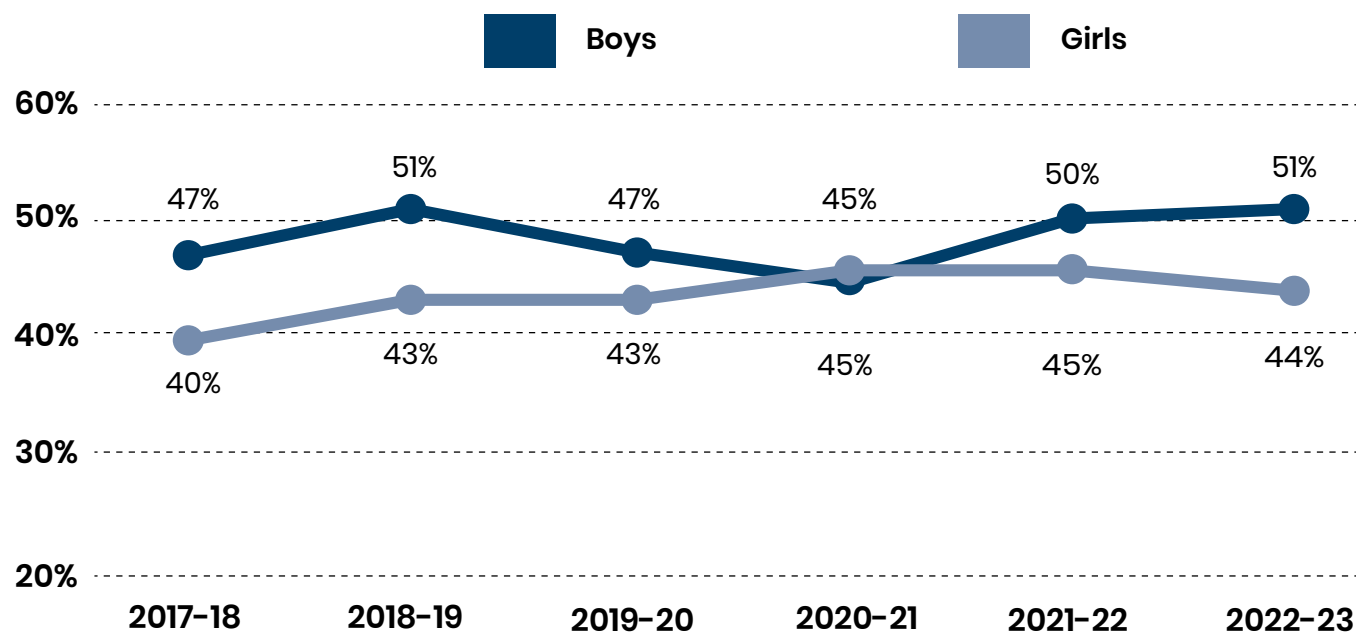
Activity levels have been stable over the last 12 months for boys and girls with growth over the longer term at a similar rate for both. As a result, the gender gap between boys and girls currently stands at 6.8%, the same as the gap recorded in 2017-18.

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

There are two notable gender differences when considering specific age groups:

- Infant age (school Years 1-2, ages 5-7) girls have seen no long-term growth in activity levels, whereas boys have seen an increase of 3.5% compared to academic year 2017-18. As a result the gender gap for this age group has widened to 9.2% (from 6.3% in 2017-18).
- Teenage girls (school Years 9-11, ages 13-16) are seeing slightly stronger growth in activity levels over the longer term compared to teenage boys (10.9% vs 8.7%). Despite this, the gender gap for this age group remains wide at 7.3%.

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)



Activity levels have increased by more for children and young people with a disability or long-term health condition than for those without

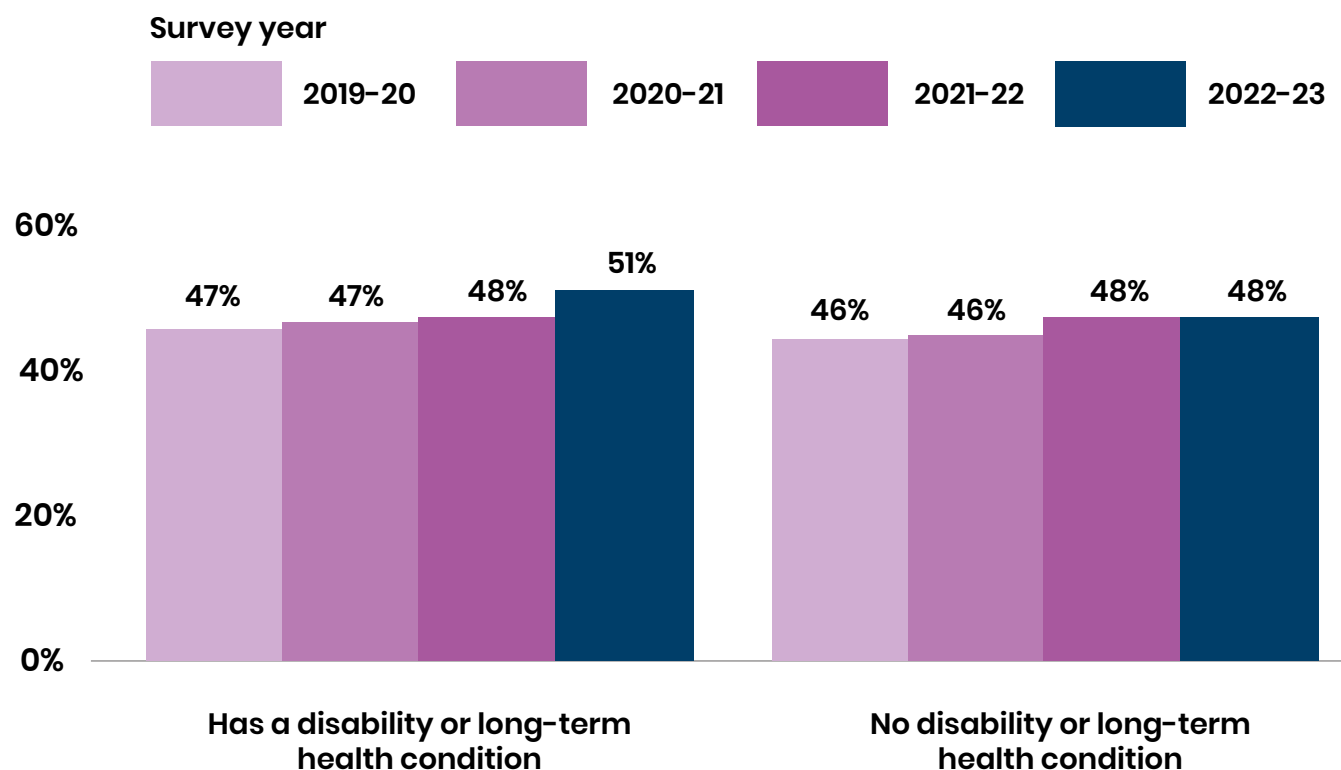
Arrows show change from 12 months ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

The proportion of active children and young people, both with and without a disability or long-term health condition, has remained unchanged compared to 12 months ago. Both groups have seen growth over the last three years, but this has been slightly greater for those with a disability or long-term health condition (up 4.5% vs 2.3% for those without).

As a result, activity levels are currently slightly higher for those with, as compared to those without, a disability or long-term health condition.

Note: A new question was introduced for 2019-20 to capture consistent disability and long-term health condition data across all year groups. See the [definitions page for more detail.](#)

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)

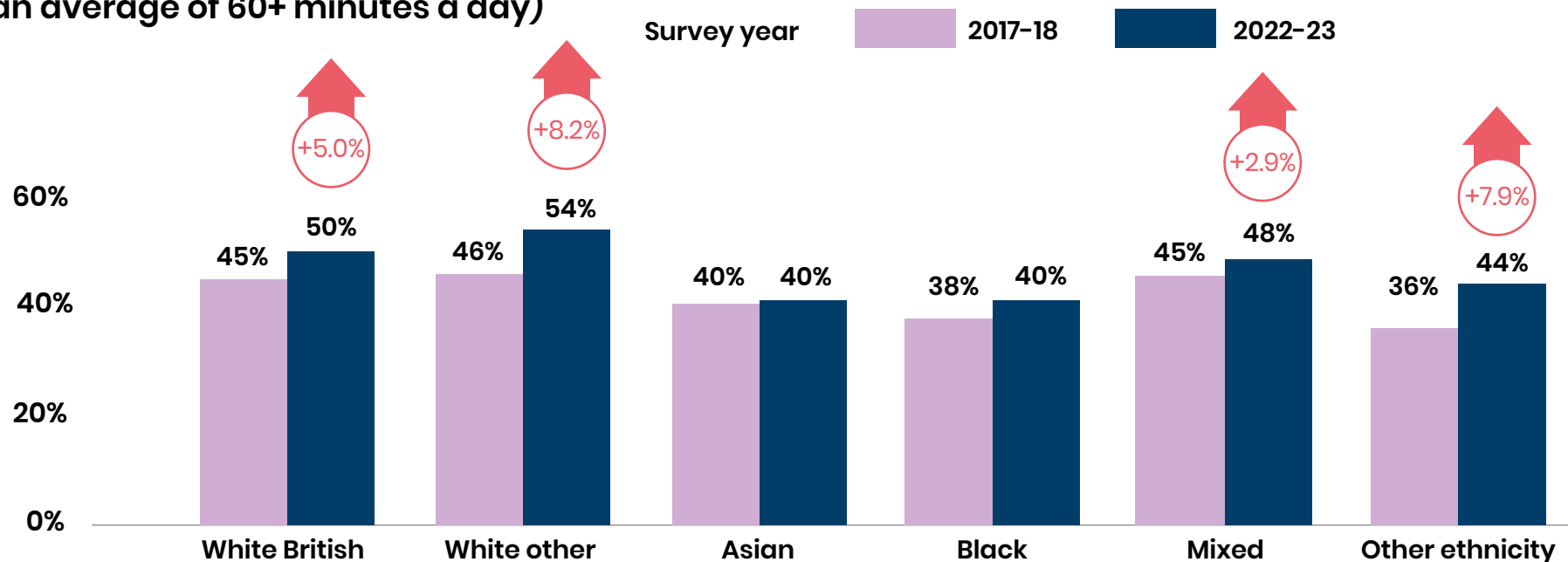


Asian and Black children and young people have seen no long-term growth in activity levels

Arrows show change from 5 years ago
 No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

The gap between activity levels among Asian and Black children and young people, and those of all other backgrounds, has widened over the last five years (since academic year 2017-18). Children and young people of White other ethnicity are now the most active group, having seen the largest increases, while those of Mixed ethnicities remain equally as likely to be active as those who are White British. The gender gap remains widest between Asian girls and boys (11%), followed by Black (9%) and Other (9%) children and young people.

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)



Note: After White British, the largest ethnic groups within the child population are Asian (11%) and Mixed (7%), with White other (5%), Black (5%) and Other ethnic groups (4%) making up the remainder. As such, caution should be applied when looking at change for these groups due to smaller sample sizes and therefore wider confidence intervals.

[Link to data tables](#)

All affluence groups have seen activity levels increase over the longer-term

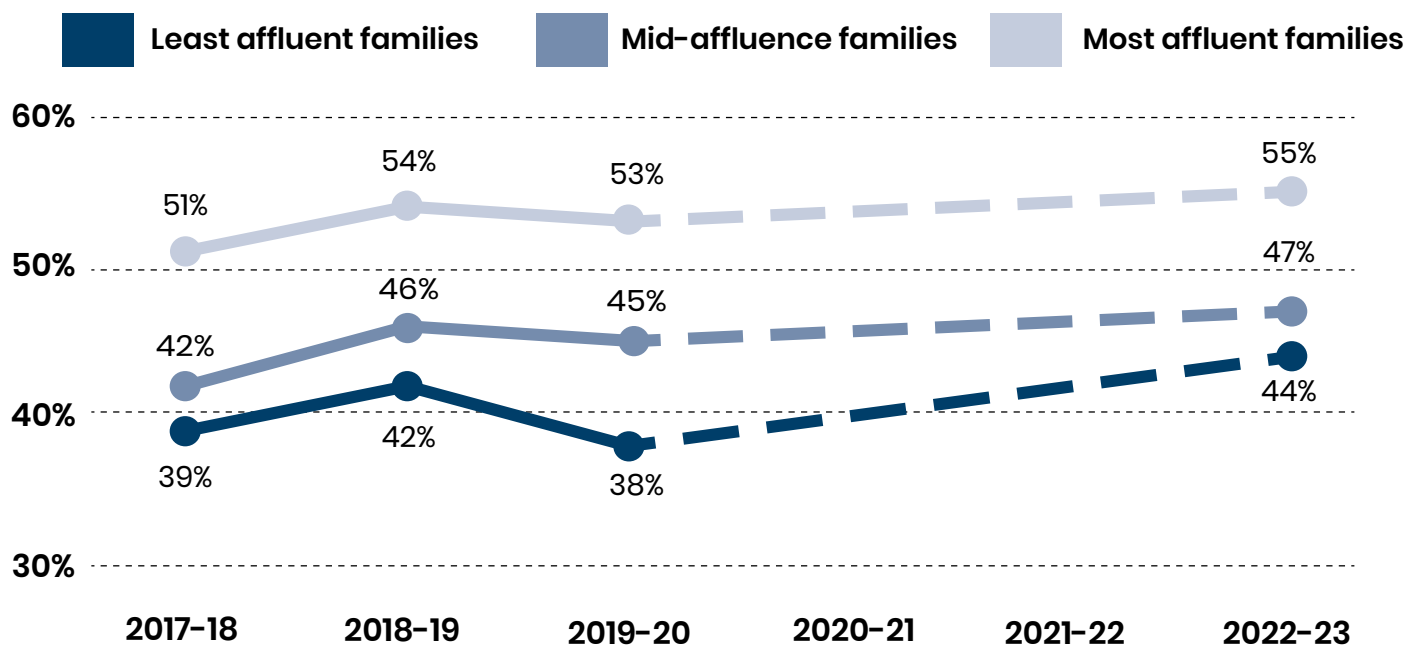
Children and young people from the least affluent families are the least likely to be active, with only 44% meeting the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines - compared to 55% of those from the most affluent families.

However, while all groups have seen growth over the last five years (compared to academic year 2017-18), this has been slightly greater among those from the least affluent families (up 5.5% vs 3.5% for most affluent), so the gap in activity levels between those from the most and least affluent families has narrowed slightly.

Note: During the coronavirus pandemic, one of the components of the family affluence scale wasn't applicable. As such, comparable data is not available for that period. See the [definitions](#) page for more details.

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

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)



Volunteering at least twice in the last 12 months

Definition



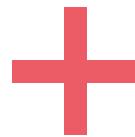
Giving up time to help others to be active is amazing, no matter your age. Not only are they benefitting, but the volunteer benefits too; gaining experience, making friends and learning new skills.

And evidence suggests those who give their time when young are more likely to continue to volunteer in later life.

We count a child or young person as having volunteered if:

They've taken part in a volunteering role to support sport/physical activity

(A full list of roles can be found in our [definitions](#) at the end of this report.)



A person has volunteered at least twice in the last 12 months



[Link to data tables](#)



Note: The volunteering questions were only asked of children in Years 5-11.

Volunteering

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



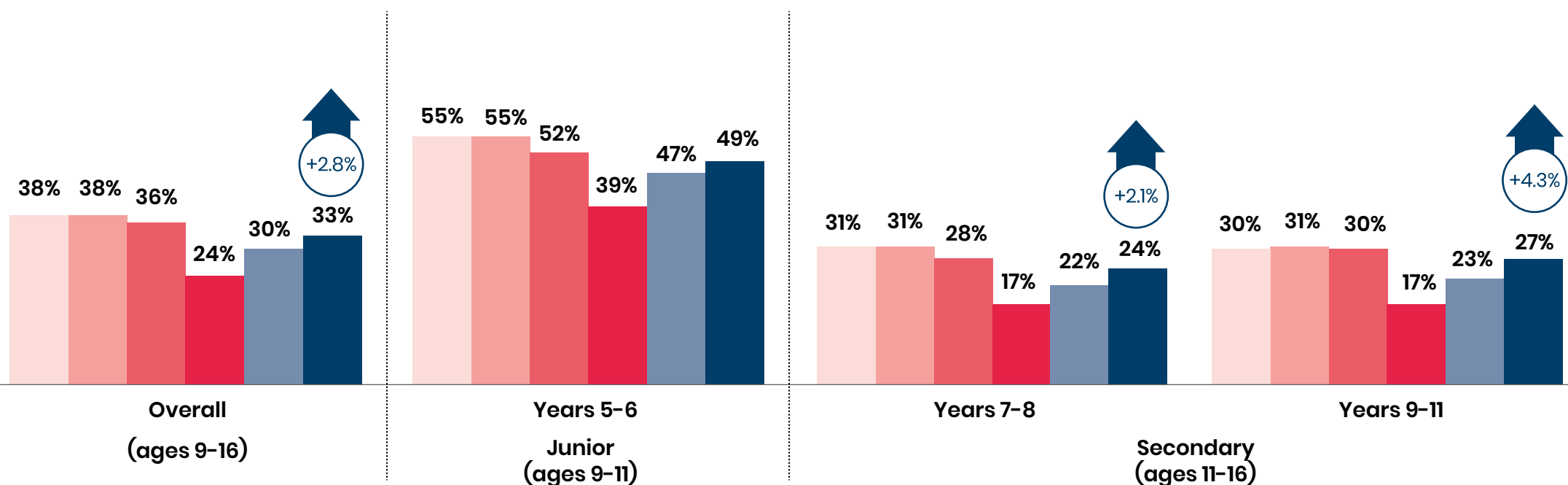
1.5 million (33%) children and young people volunteered to support sport and physical activity

Volunteering rates continue to recover following drops seen due to the restrictions in place during the coronavirus pandemic, but they remain 5.0%, or 76,000 children and young people down compared to five years ago (academic year 2017-18). Those in school Years 9-11 (ages 13-16) have a smaller long-term drop than the other age groups.

The recovery in volunteering levels has been seen across all year groups and all demographics, but all remain down over the longer term.

Volunteered at least twice in the last year

Survey year: 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23



[Link to data tables](#)

Volunteering is only asked of children and young people in Years 5-11 (ages 9-16). Years 5-6 (ages 9-11) have a slightly different question to Years 7-11 (ages 11-16), to ensure the volunteering roles asked about are relevant. A breakdown of roles undertaken can be found in the data tables.

Volunteering



Note: All data relates to young people in Years 5-11 (ages 9-16).



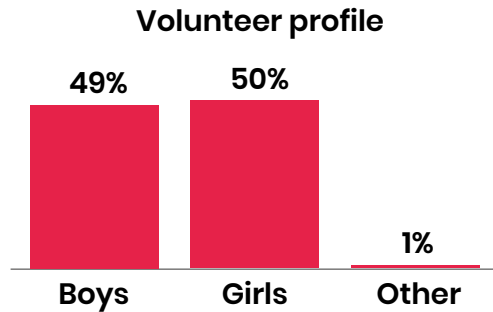
Summary of demographic profile

Our data shows there are some inequalities:

1 Gender

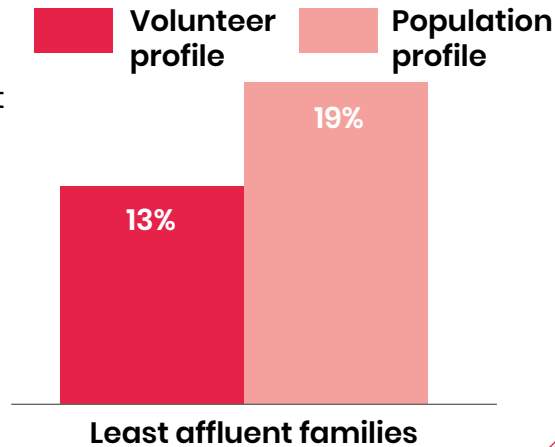
Boys and girls are fairly equally represented among volunteers.

*Other comprises 1.4% of the population



2 Least affluent families

Children and young people from the least affluent families are under-represented. They make up 19% of those in Years 5-11 (ages 9-16), but only 13% of volunteers.



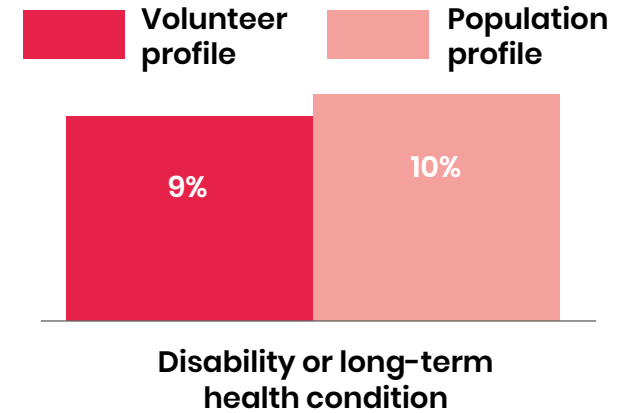
[Link to data tables](#)



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

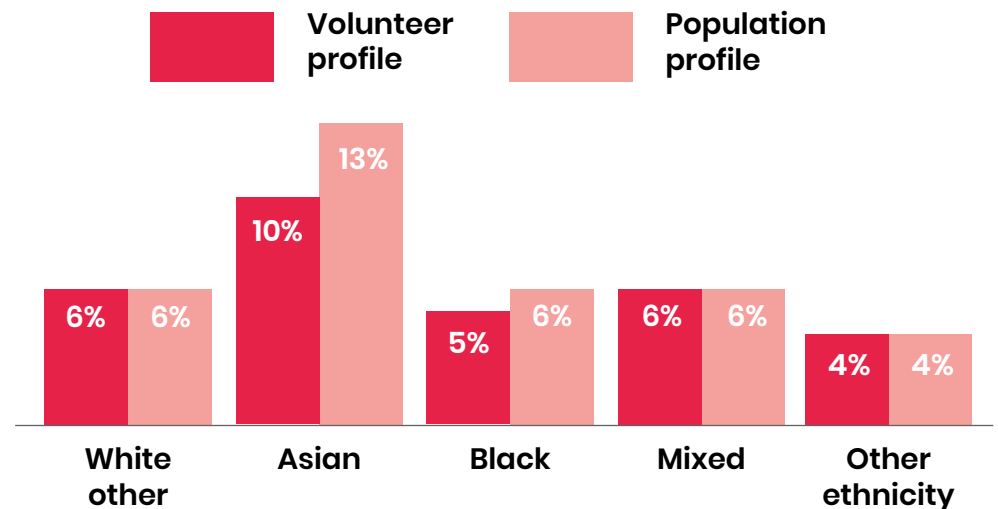
3 Disability and long-term health conditions

The profile of children and young people with a limiting disability, or long-term health condition, who volunteer is representative of the population.



4 Ethnicity

The volunteer profile generally reflects the ethnicity of the population, with the exception that Asian children are under-represented as they make up 13% of the population but only 10% of volunteers.



Outcomes definition



Physical wellbeing



Mental wellbeing



Individual development



Social & community development



Economic development

This section presents data looking at the wider outcomes for children and young people, both overall and linked to their levels of engagement in sport and physical activity.

Measures covered are:

- Mental wellbeing
- Individual development
- Social and community development.

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

[Link to data tables](#)

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 children and young people who:

- Undertake an average of **60+ minutes** a day of sport and physical activity.

See the first section for more details.

On a selection of 'happy', 'neutral', or 'sad':

- How do you **feel today**? (Years 1-2)
- Score out of 10 for:
- How **happy** did you feel yesterday? (Years 3-11)
- How **satisfied** are you with your life nowadays? (Years 7-11)
- Do you feel that the things you do in your life are **worthwhile**? (Years 7-11)

Strongly agree to:

- If I find something difficult, I **keep trying** until I can do it. (Years 3-11)

Agreement to:

- How much do you feel you can **trust people** who are a similar age to you? (Years 3-11)

The economic value of sport, as reported in:

- DCMS's [Sports Satellite Accounts](#)
- Further details can be found in Sheffield Hallam University's [report on the social and economic value of community sport and physical activity in England](#).

Mental wellbeing

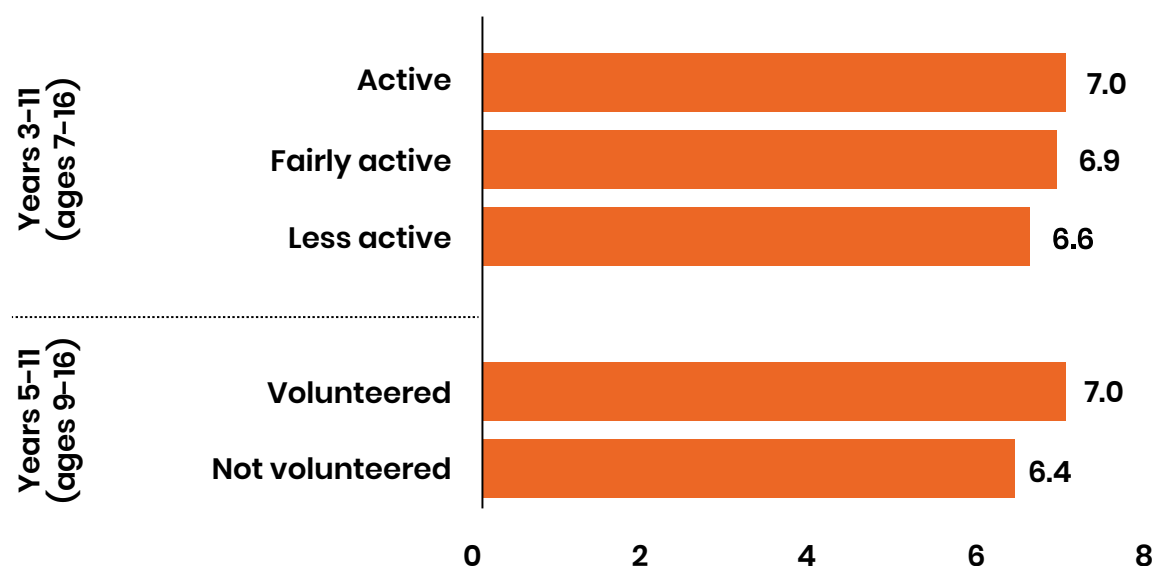
Arrows show change from 5 years ago
No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change



There's a positive association between levels of engagement in sport and physical activity and levels of mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing (happiness measure shown here) scores are higher for those who are active than those who are less active. There's also a positive association between all mental wellbeing measures and volunteering to support sport and physical activity.

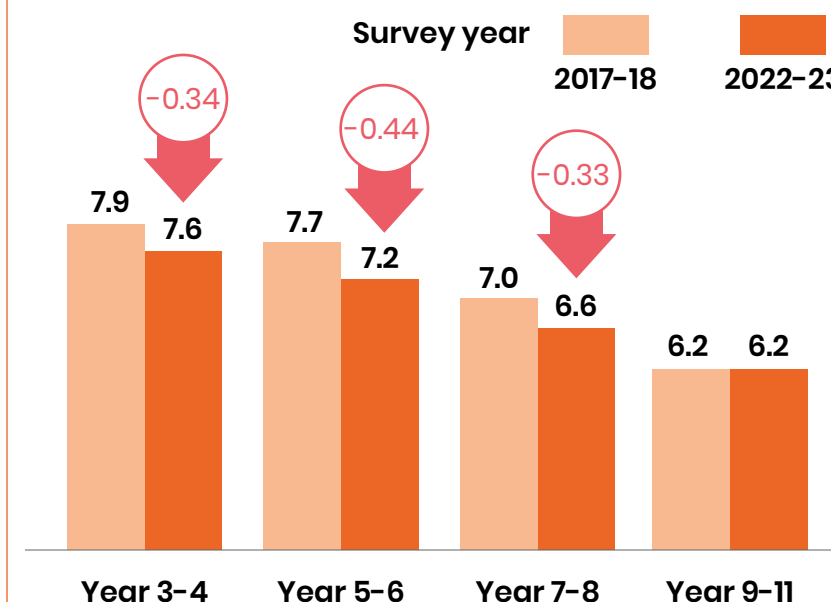
How happy did you feel yesterday?
(mean score out of 10, where 10 is very happy and 0 is not happy at all)



Summary of change

Happiness scores have fallen by 0.26 points compared to five years ago (academic year 2017-18).

- Girls (down 0.38) have seen a greater drop than boys (down 0.16).
- Young people in school Years 9-11 (ages 13-16) have not seen a drop.
- Asian and Black children and young people have not seen a reportable drop.



[Link to data tables](#)



Individual development

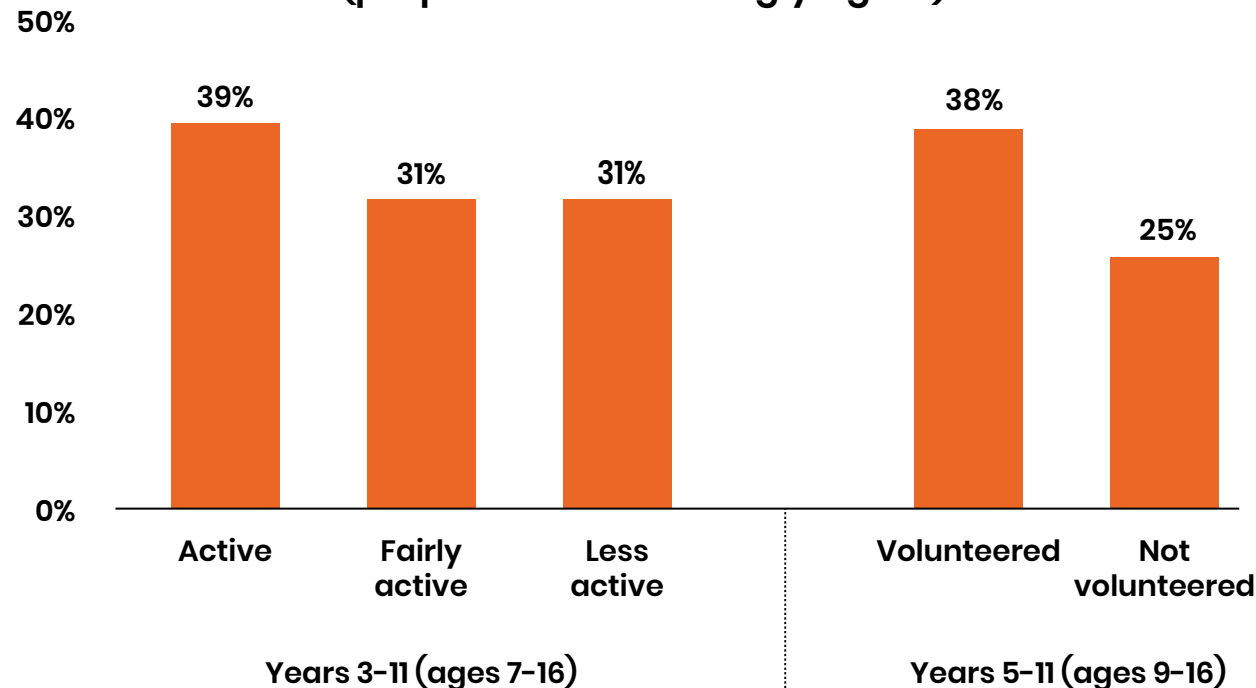
Arrows show change from 5 years ago
No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change



There's a positive association between levels of sport and physical activity, and levels of individual development

The proportion strongly agreeing with the statement 'if I find something difficult I keep trying until I can do it' is higher for those who are active than those who are fairly or less active. There's also a positive association between individual development and volunteering to support sport and physical activity.

If I find something difficult, I keep trying until I can do it (proportion who strongly agree)



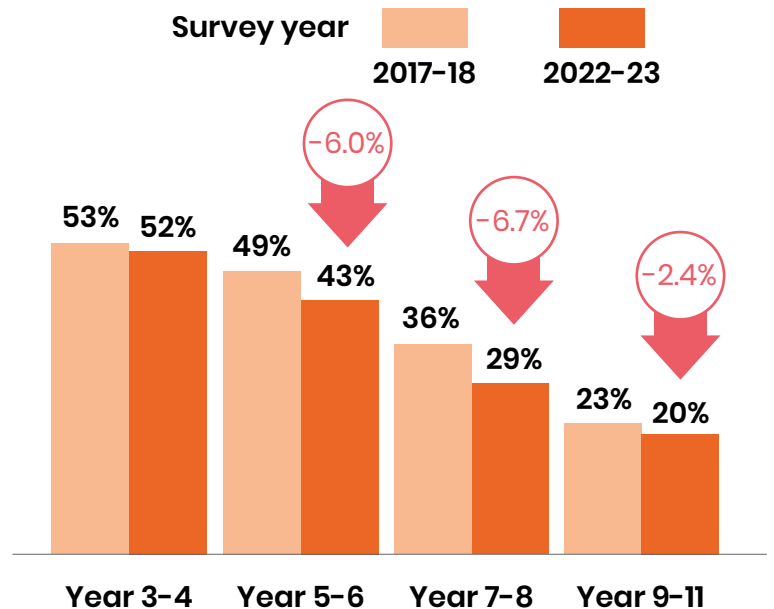
[Link to data tables](#)



Summary of change

Levels of individual development have fallen by 3.9% compared to five years ago (academic year 2017-18).

- Children in school Years 5-6 and 7-8 (ages 9-13) have seen larger drops.
- Girls (down 5.8%) have seen a greater drop than boys (down 1.9%).
- Children and young people of Black (down 6.1%) and Other ethnicities (down 6.9%) have seen the largest drops.



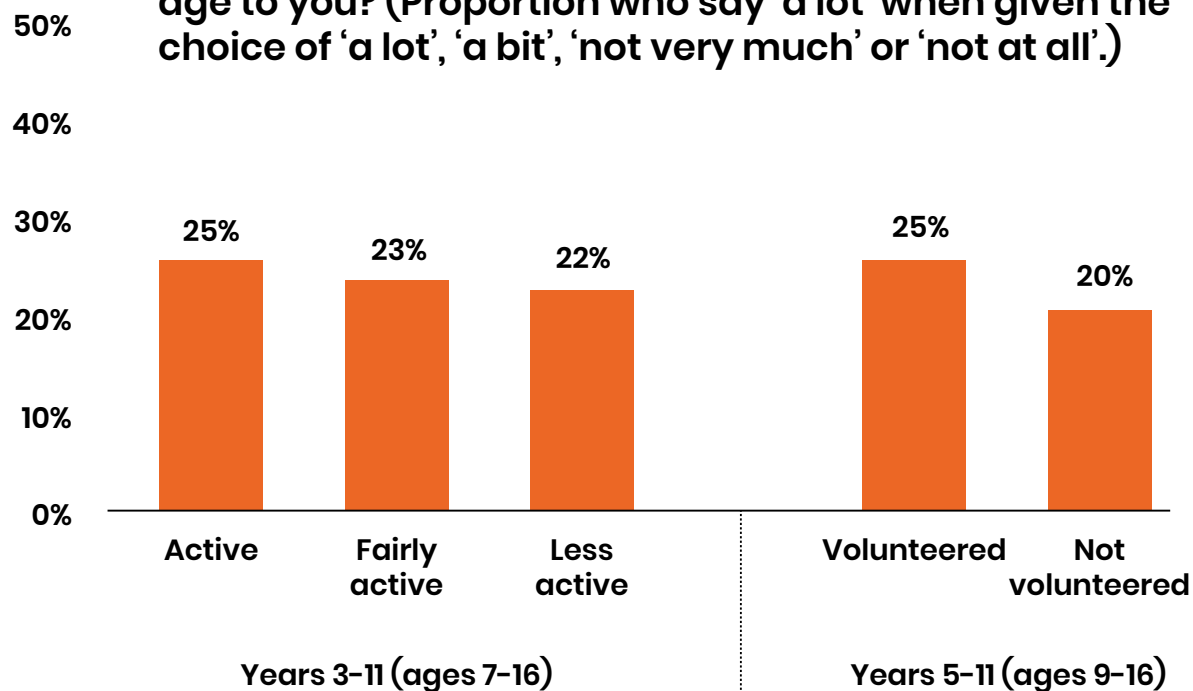
Arrows show change from 5 years ago
No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change



There's a positive association between levels of sport and physical activity and levels of community development

Active children and young people are more likely to strongly agree they can trust people of a similar age to themselves, than those who are less active. There's a clear positive association between community development and volunteering to support sport and physical activity.

How much do you feel you can trust people of a similar age to you? (Proportion who say 'a lot' when given the choice of 'a lot', 'a bit', 'not very much' or 'not at all'.)



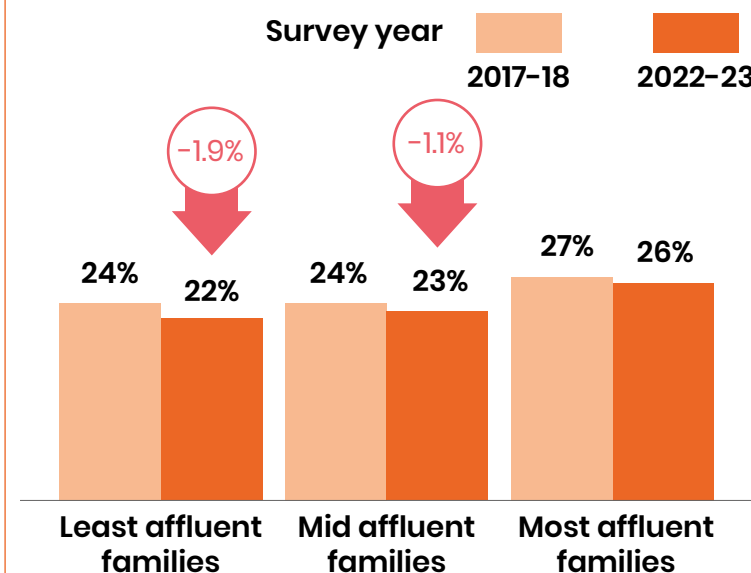
[Link to data tables](#)



Summary of change

Levels of social trust have seen a small dip over the last five years (down 1.2%). However these drops aren't universal, being recorded only among:

- Children in school Years 5-6 and 7-8 (ages 7-13), down 1.9% and 3.0% respectively.
- Girls (down 2.3%).
- Those from the least and mid-affluent families.
- Black (down 2.6%) and Asian (down 2.4%) children and young people, alongside a small drop for those who are White British (down 0.8%).



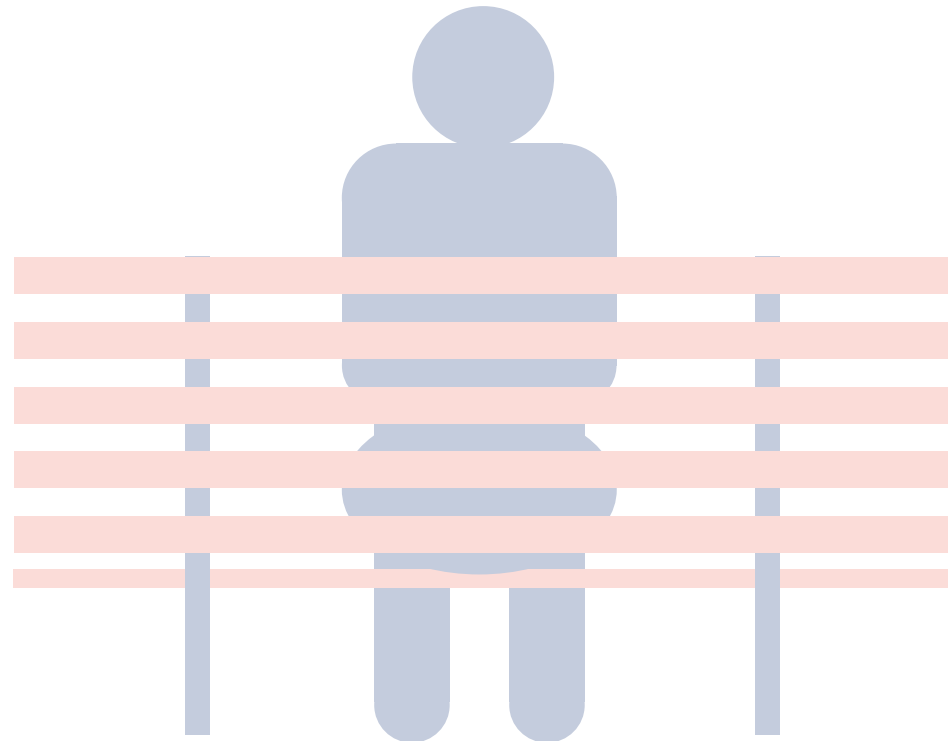
Tackling loneliness is a key government objective. In October 2018 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published ‘[A Connected Society](#)’, its first strategy for tackling loneliness in England.

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

This question was added for academic year 2019–20 onwards and is only asked of young people in Years 7–11 (ages 11–16).

Supporting children and young people to have meaningful social relationships isn't just crucial to their physical and mental health, it also affects their engagement in their school and wider community cohesion.

We've focused on those who are often/always lonely, as policy is centred around this group.



Loneliness



Arrows show change from 3 years ago (academic year 2019-20)
No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

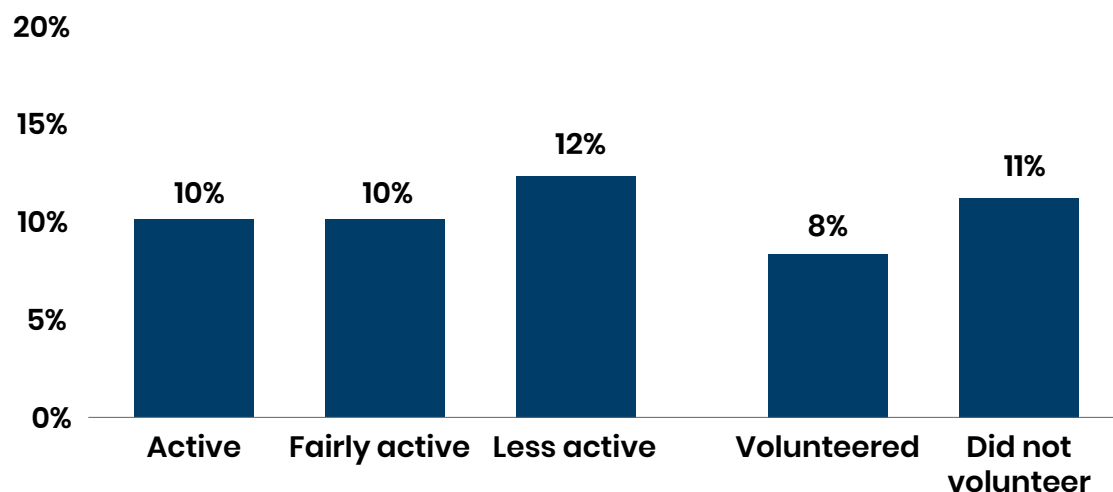


There's a positive association between levels of sport and physical activity and levels of loneliness

Active children and young people are less likely to often or always feel lonely, than those who are less active.

There's a clear positive association between loneliness and volunteering to support sport and physical activity. This is perhaps not surprising, as giving your time helping others to be active provides benefit to the volunteer themselves through things like making new friends and interaction with others.

Often/always feel lonely (Years 7-11, ages 11-16)



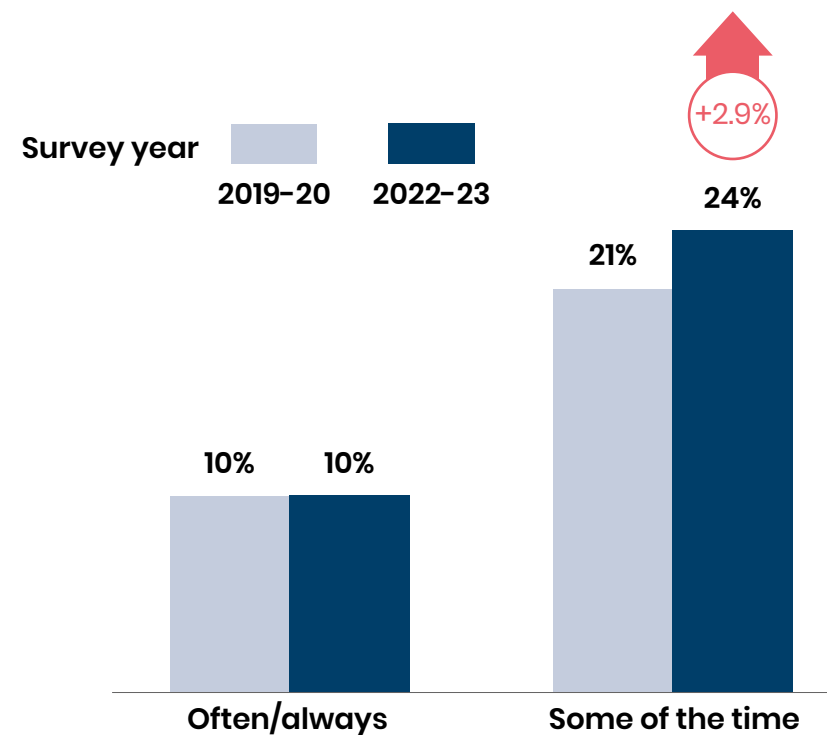
[Link to data tables](#)



Summary of change

There's been no change in the proportion of young people who feel lonely often or always compared to three years ago, but there's been an increase in those feeling lonely some of the time, up 2.9%. While most groups have seen this increase, it's larger for Asian (up 4.5%) and Black (up 4.4%) young people.

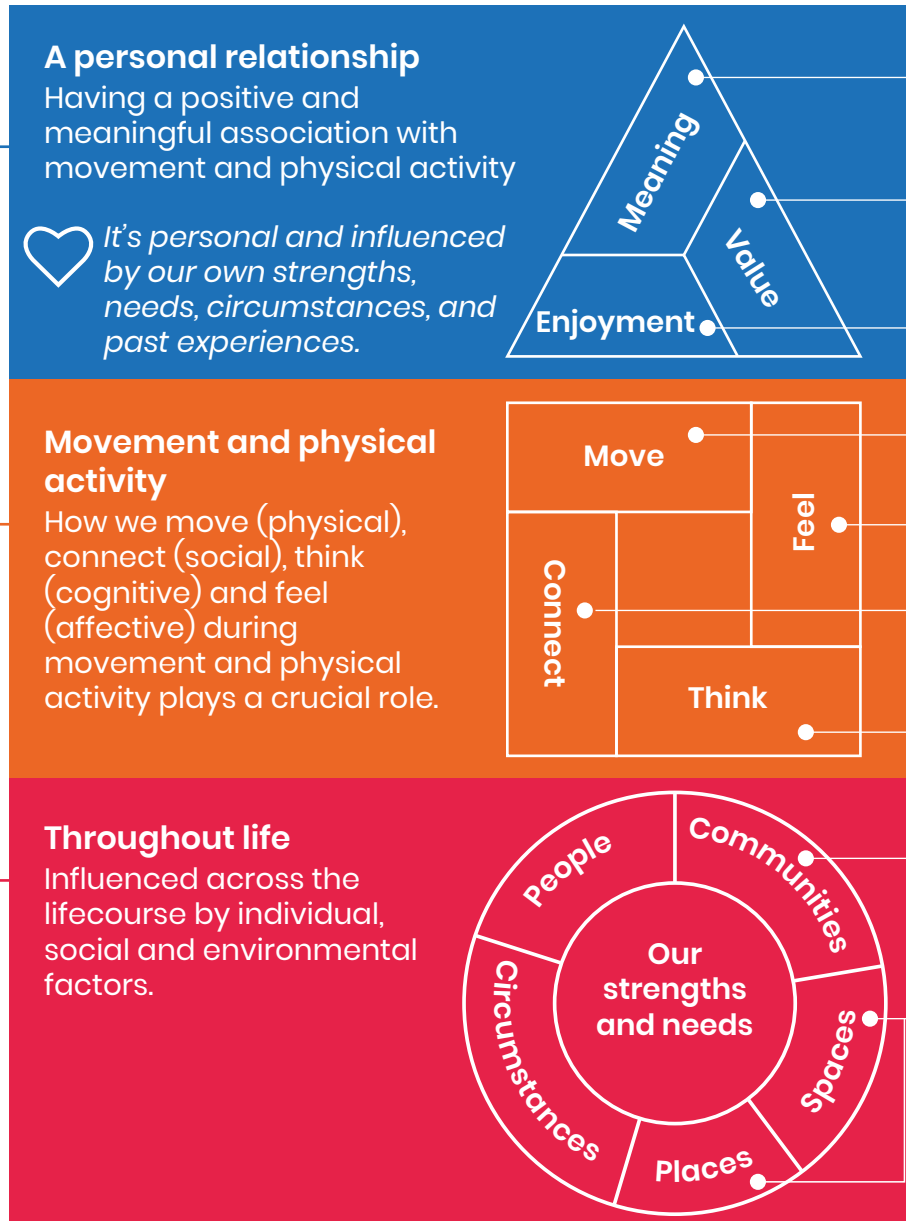
Additionally, boys have seen an increase of 1.1% in those feeling lonely often or always, while those from the most affluent backgrounds have seen this drop (by 1.4%).



Physical literacy is our relationship with movement and physical activity throughout life.

Physical Literacy is personal, and the nature of a person's relationship with movement is complex. As such there can be no one measure of physical literacy, however we capture a variety of data on positive attitudes and opportunities to be active, as set out in this chapter, that combine to create a good indicator of feelings towards sport and physical activity.

Note: The [physical literacy consensus statement for England](#) was published in September 2023 and, in the coming months, we'll be looking further into how our data can support the understanding of various elements of this.



The number of positive attitudes a child or young person has is a good indicator of *meaning*

Understanding that exercise and sports is good for them is a good indicator of *value*

Enjoying taking part in exercise and sports is a clear indicator of *enjoyment*

Perceived competence (finding sport easy) is a good indicator for *move*

Enjoyment and confidence are good indicators for *feel*

We hope to use data around exercising socially for fun with friends to get an indicator for *connect* in the future

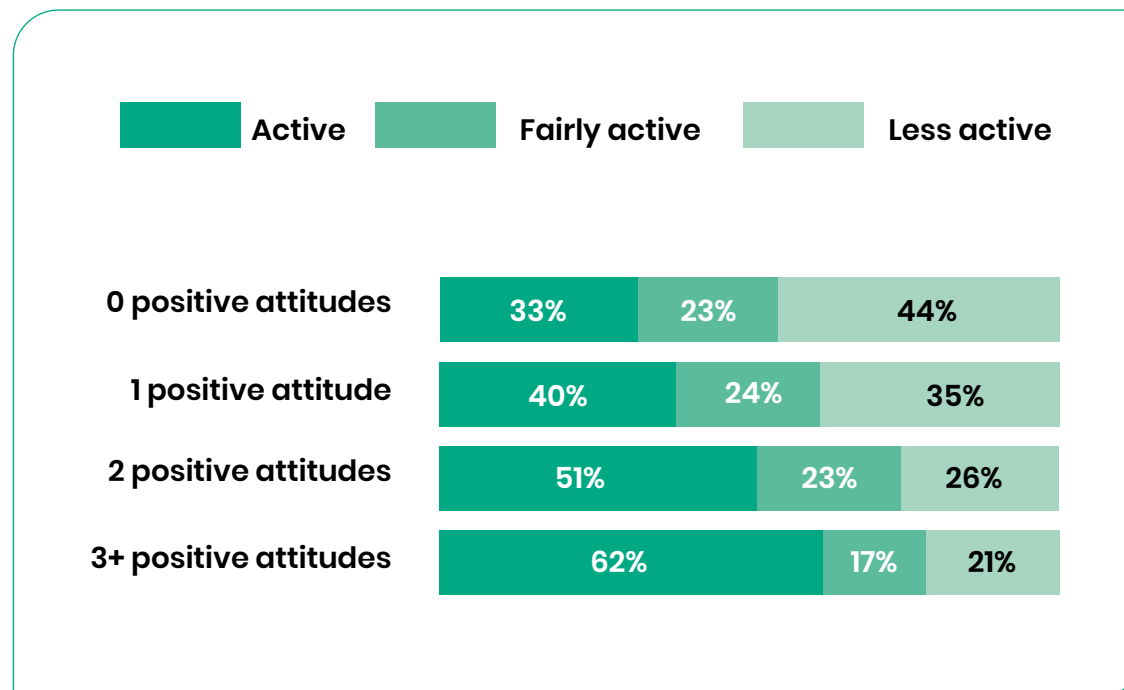
Knowledge and understanding are good indicators for *think*

Opportunity (perceived) as well as understanding inequalities across positive attitudes are good indicators for *communities*

Opportunity (physical) is a good indicator for *spaces and places*

The presence of positive attitudes is a strong indicator of activity levels, a greater number of positive attitudes being associated with being more active

Of the children and young people who report three or more positive attitudes (have a meaningful relationship with activity), 62% are active, compared to just 33% of those who report no positive attitudes. Gaining just one additional positive attitude could have a positive impact on activity levels (just as being more active could lead to more positive attitudes) and as such reinforces the importance of supporting all children and young people to have the best possible experience of being active.



Note: A positive attitude towards sport and physical activity is defined as strongly agreeing to one of the attitude statements. See the [definitions](#) page for more detail.



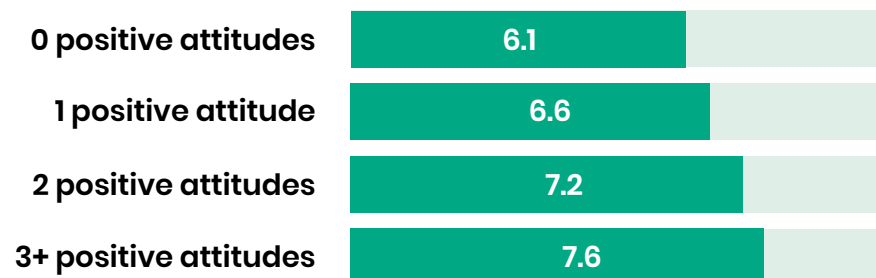
Physically literate children and young people are happier, more likely to keep trying until they can do something and more likely to trust others of a similar age to themselves

The positive association between positive attitudes (having a meaningful relationship with activity) and each of the wider outcome measures reinforces the importance of supporting all children and young people to have the best possible experience of being active.

- Children and young people who report three or more positive attitudes score, on average, 7.6 out of 10 on happiness (the measure used for mental wellbeing). This falls to 6.1 for those who report no positive attitudes.
- Of children and young people who report three or more positive attitudes, 56% strongly agree with the statement 'if I find something difficult I keep trying until I can do it' (the measure used for individual development). This falls to 13% for those who report no positive attitudes.
- Of children and young people who have a positive attitude to three or more statements, 32% strongly agree they can trust people of a similar age to themselves (the measure used for community development, not charted). This compares with 18% for those who report no positive attitudes.

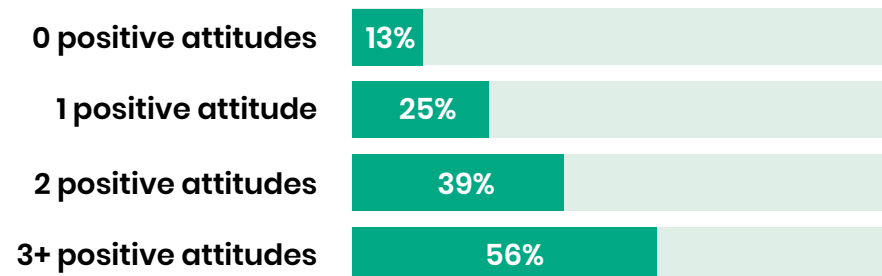
How happy did you feel yesterday?

(where 10 is very happy and 0 is not happy at all)



If I find something difficult I keep trying until I can do it

(proportion who strongly agree)





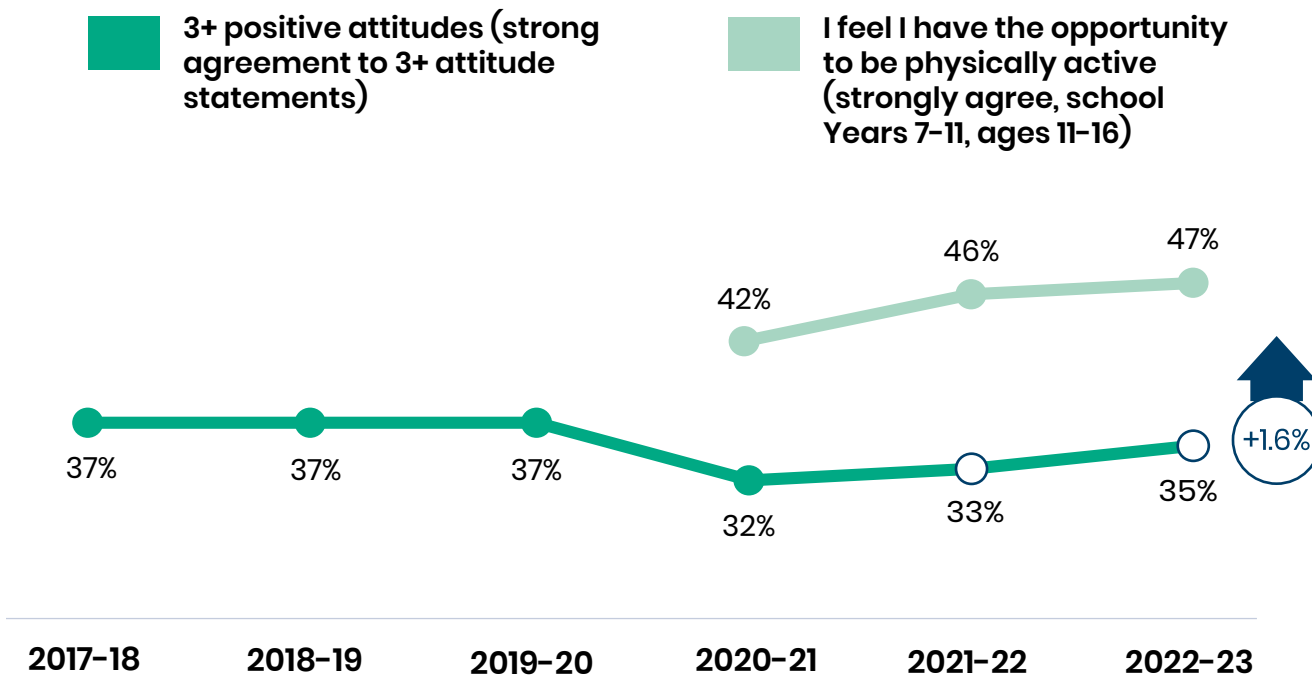
Just over a third of children and young people are reporting three or more positive attitudes; nearly half of secondary age young people feel they have the opportunity to be active

We're seeing a gradual recovery in those children and young people strongly agreeing to three or more attitude statements (enjoyment, competence, confidence and knowledge or understanding), however this remains down over the longer term (by 2.3%)

Understanding why it's good for them (64%) and enjoying taking part (49%) remain the attitudes they are most likely to strongly agree to, while perceived competence (finding sport easy, 22%) remains the attitude the fewest children and young people report strong agreement to.

The proportion of secondary age young people (school Years 7-11, ages 11-16) strongly agreeing that they feel they have the opportunity to be physically active has increased by 4.5% over the last two years, since data collection for this metric started. This is likely to reflect recovery from the restrictions imposed during the coronavirus pandemic which reduced opportunities to take part in some activities.

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



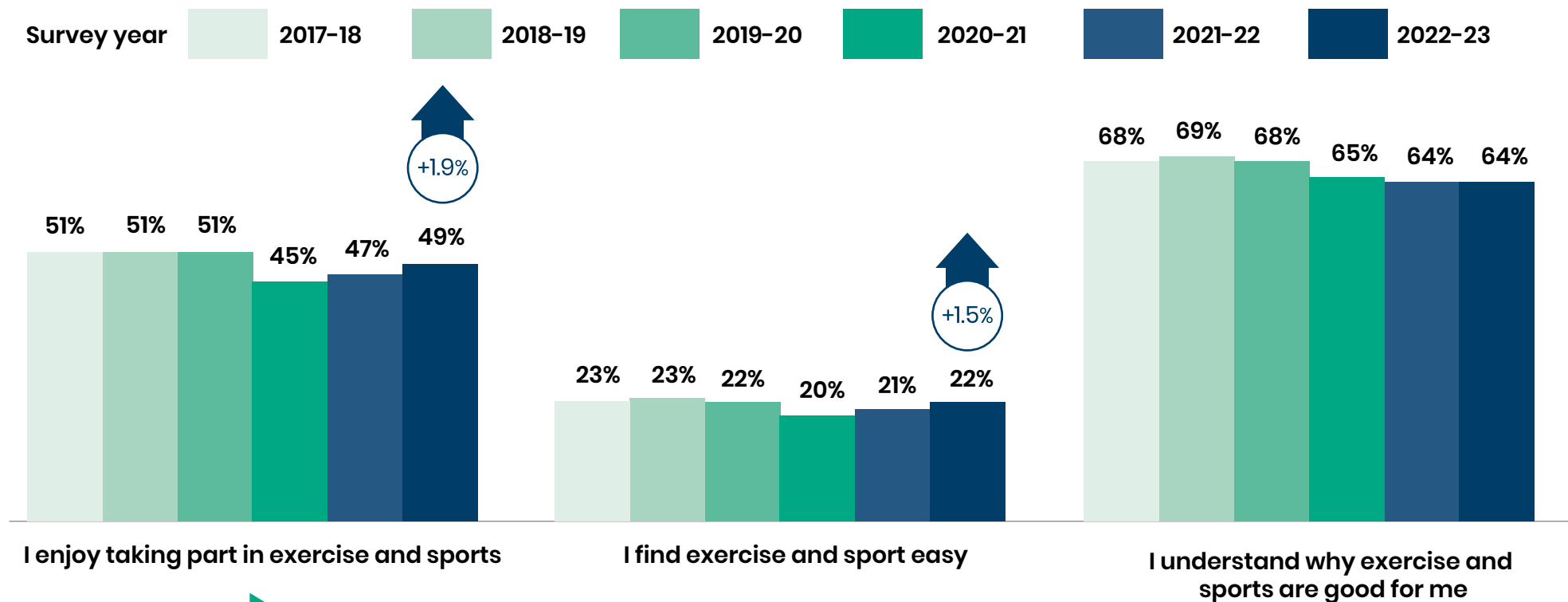
[Link to data tables](#)

We continue to see fewer children reporting each of the positive attitudes

The proportion of children and young people reporting that they know how to get involved in sport and physical activity and understand why it's good for them (how they think about and value activity) remains stubbornly lower over the longer term, with no increases compared to 12 months ago. In contrast, perceived competence (finding sport easy, how they move) is back in line with levels seen five years ago (academic year 2017-18). Enjoying taking part and feeling confident when doing so (how they feel) have both seen small increases compared to 12 months ago but remain down over the longer term.

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

Selected attitudes towards sport and physical activity (proportion who strongly agree)



[Link to data tables](#)

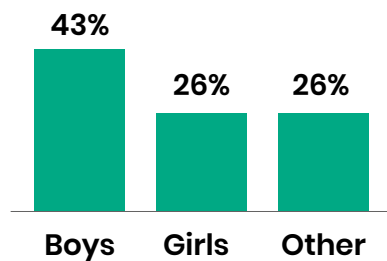
Positive attitudes

3+ positive attitudes
(Years 3-11, ages 7-16)



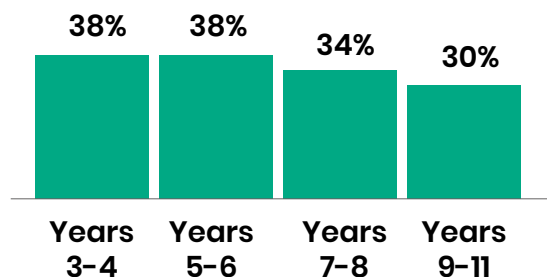
1 Gender

Boys are more likely than girls to have three or more positive attitudes.



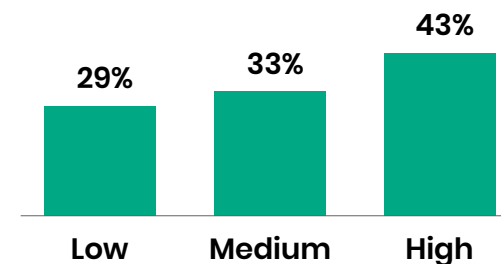
2 Year group

The likelihood of having three or more positive attitudes decreases with age.



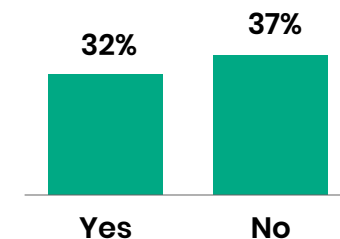
3 Family affluence

The likelihood of having three or more positive attitudes increases with affluence.



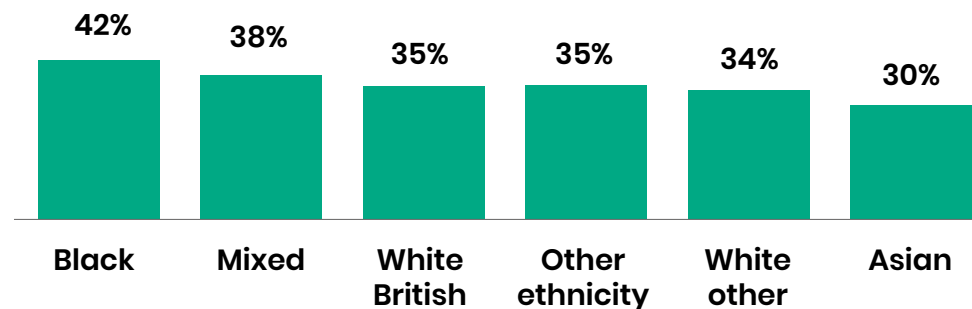
4 Disability and long-term health conditions

Children and young people with a disability or long-term health condition are less likely to have three or more positive attitudes, compared to those without.



5 Ethnicity

Black children and young people are the most likely to have three or more positive attitudes, while Asian children and young people are the least likely to.



[Link to data tables](#)



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

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



Junior age children have seen the largest drops in the number of reported positive attitudes

Junior age children (school Years 3-6, ages 7-11) are driving the overall trend with the largest drop in 3+ positive attitudes compared to five years ago (down 4.6% since academic year 2017-18). Young people in school Years 7-8 (ages 11-13) follow a similar trend but with smaller changes over time (down 2.5%). For teenagers (school Years 9-11, ages 13-16), however, there's a relatively flat trend over time.

Feeling they have the opportunity to be physically active is up by a similar amount compared to academic year 2020-21 for both young people in school Years 7-8 and 9-11.

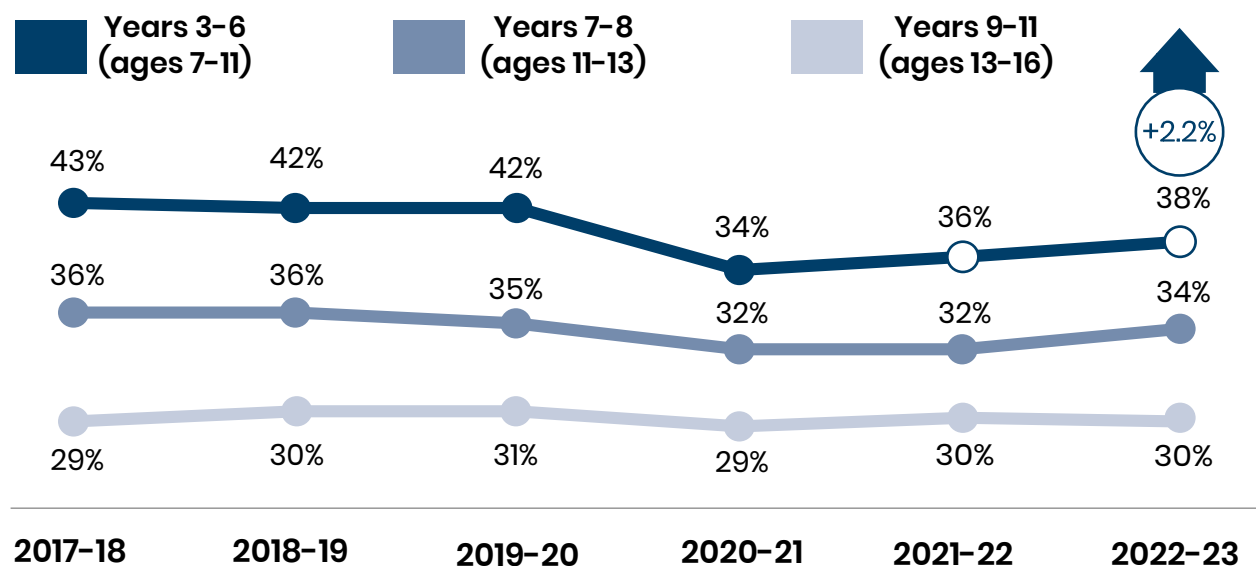
We also note the following differences for individual attitude statements that they strongly agreed to:

- Perceived competence (finding sport easy) remains down (-1.7%) over the longer term among junior age children.
- Enjoying taking part (+2.0%) and finding it easy (+1.5%) are both up over the longer-term among young people in school Years 9-11 (ages 13-16).

[Link to data tables](#)



Three or more positive attitudes (attitudes they strongly agreed to)



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



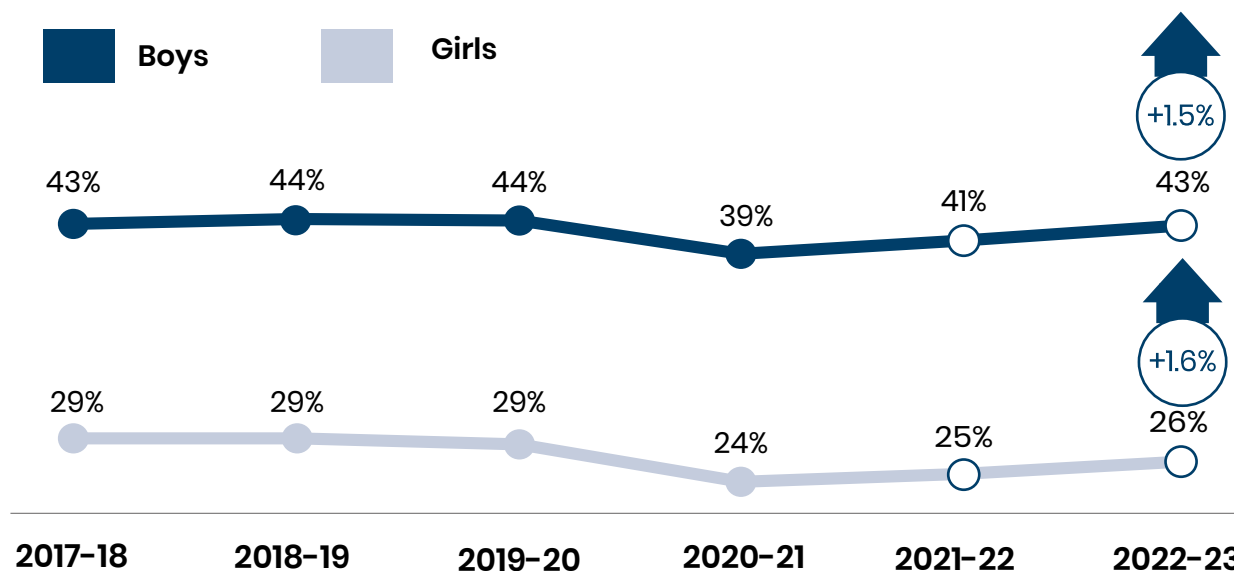
Positive attitudes remain down for girls overall but unchanged over the longer term for boys

Girls are following the overall trend in 3+ positive attitudes, with a small long-term drop despite the small increase compared to 12 months ago. In contrast, boys have seen levels back in line with five years ago (academic year 2017-18). This has been driven primarily by the youngest boys (in school Years 3-4, ages 7-9), whereas long-term drops are still present for boys in school Years 5-6 and 7-8 (ages 9-13).

Within this, enjoying taking part and knowing how to get involved are both back in line with academic year 2017-18 levels among boys. Boys have also seen smaller long-term drops in feeling confident when taking part and understanding why it's good for them, compared to girls.

Boys have driven the increase in the proportion strongly agreeing that they have the opportunity to be physically active over the last two years, with an increase of 7.7% compared to academic year 2020-21, whereas girls are showing a much smaller increase of 1.8%.

Three or more positive attitudes (attitudes they strongly agreed to)



The proportion of children and young people with a disability or long-term health condition with 3+ positive attitudes has returned to 2019-20 levels

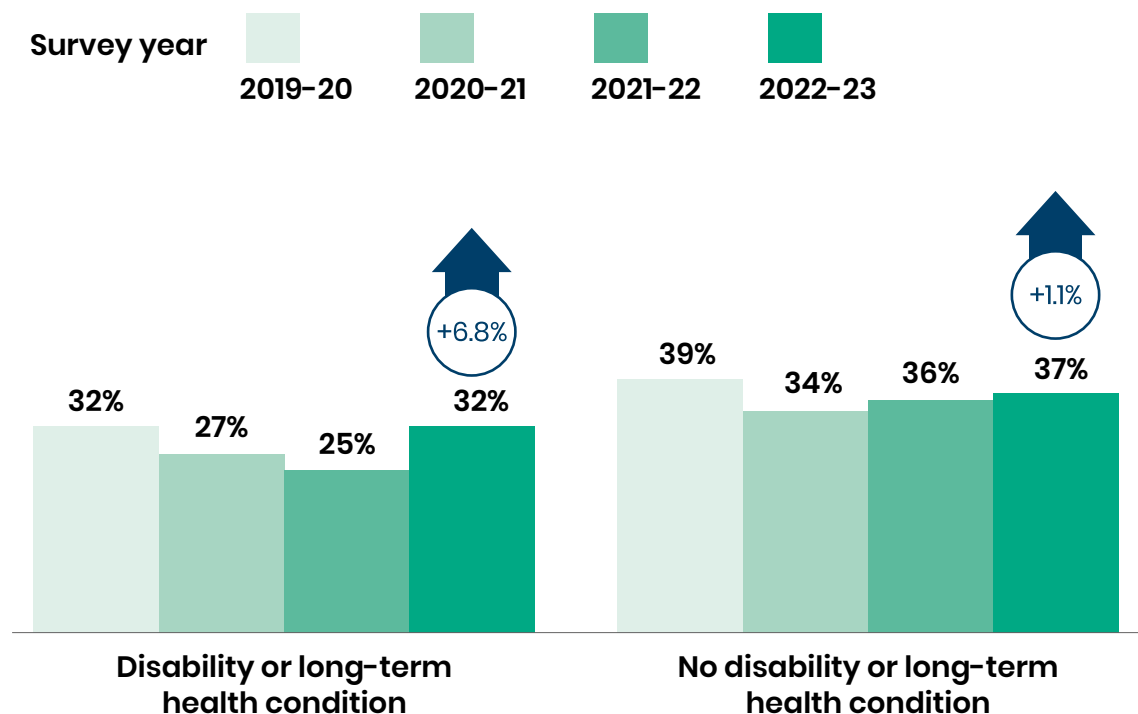
While drops in those reporting 3+ positive attitudes were greater for children and young people with a disability or long-term health condition between academic years 2019-20 and 2021-22 compared to those without, it's these children that have seen levels return to those seen three years ago (academic year 2019-20). This has been driven by an increase in perceived competence (finding sport easy). Children and young people without a disability or long-term health condition see levels remain slightly down, in line with children and young people overall (down 2.1%).

The proportion strongly agreeing they have the opportunity to be physically active is lower for those with a disability or long-term health condition (42%) than for those without (51%). However, it's those with a disability or long-term health condition that have seen the strongest increases in reported opportunity over the last two years (compared to 2020-21) - it may be they saw greater drops in opportunity during the coronavirus pandemic but we don't have data before 2020-21 to compare this to (as the question wasn't asked before this point).

[Link to data tables](#)

Three or more positive attitudes (attitudes they strongly agreed to)

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



Black and Asian children and young people continue to see a notable long-term drop in those reporting 3+ positive attitudes

The drops seen in 3+ positive attitudes are greater for Asian boys and Black girls, while girls of Mixed ethnicity also see 3+ positive attitudes down over the longer term.

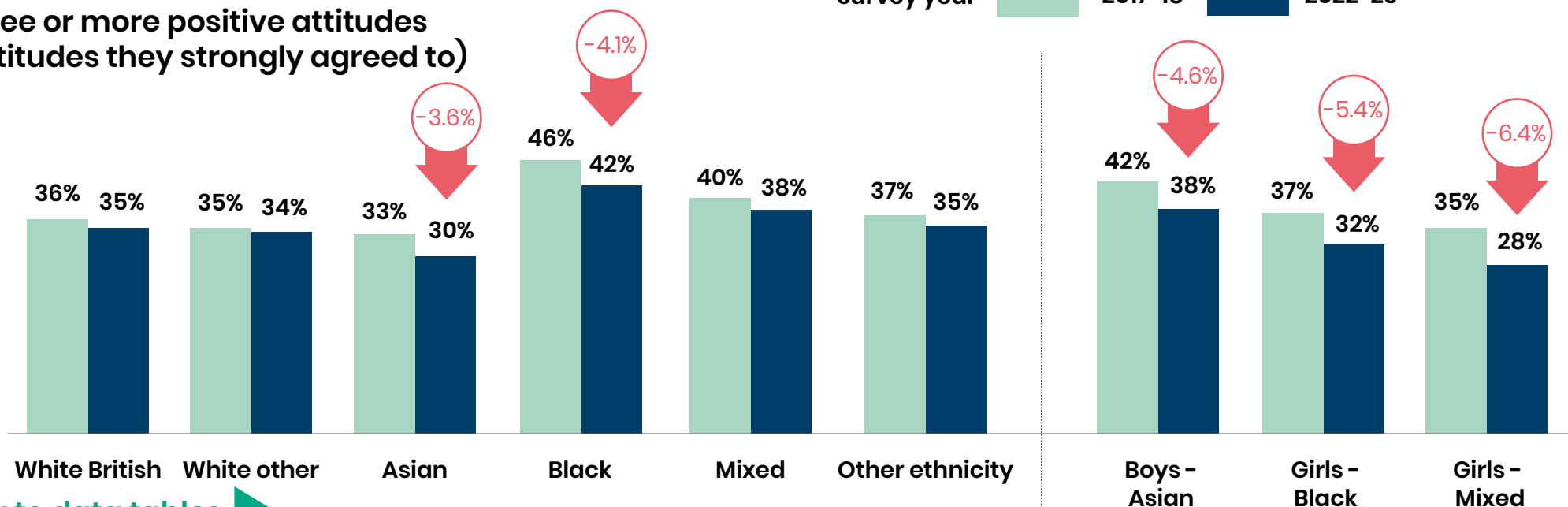
- Feeling confident when taking part is down by a greater amount over the longer term for Asian boys (down 4.7%).
- Drops are larger for enjoying taking part, feeling confident when doing so and understanding why it's good for them, among both Black and Mixed ethnicity girls. There's also a large drop in knowing how to get involved and improve for Black girls.

There's no reported increase in girls of Asian and Mixed ethnicities who feel they have the opportunity to be physically active compared to two years ago (academic year 2020-21), as seen for young people (school Years 7-11) overall.

↑ Arrows show change from 5 years ago (academic year 2017-18).
% No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

Three or more positive attitudes (attitudes they strongly agreed to)

Survey year 2017-18 2022-23



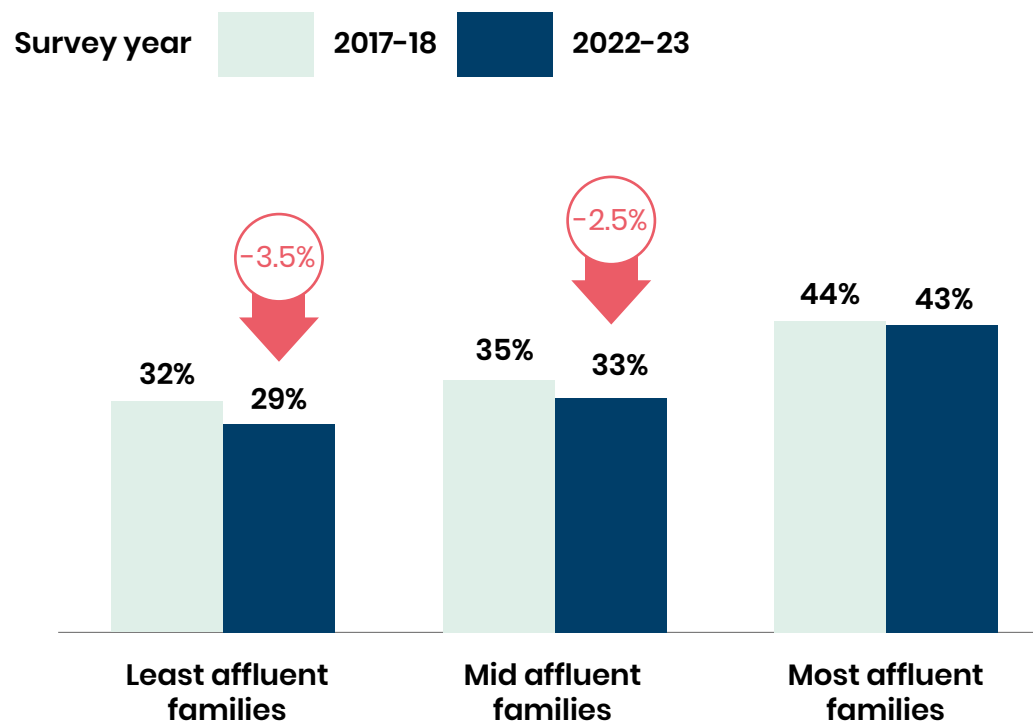
[Link to data tables](#)



Positive attitudes remain down from the least and mid affluent families

The proportion with three or more positive attitudes remains down for those from the least and mid affluent families, however there's no long-term change for those from the most affluent families. Further, those from the most affluent families see no drops over the longer term (compared to academic year 2017-18), in strong agreement to any of the individual attitude statements.

Three or more positive attitudes (attitudes they strongly agreed to)



Arrows show change from 5 years ago (academic year 2017-18). No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change



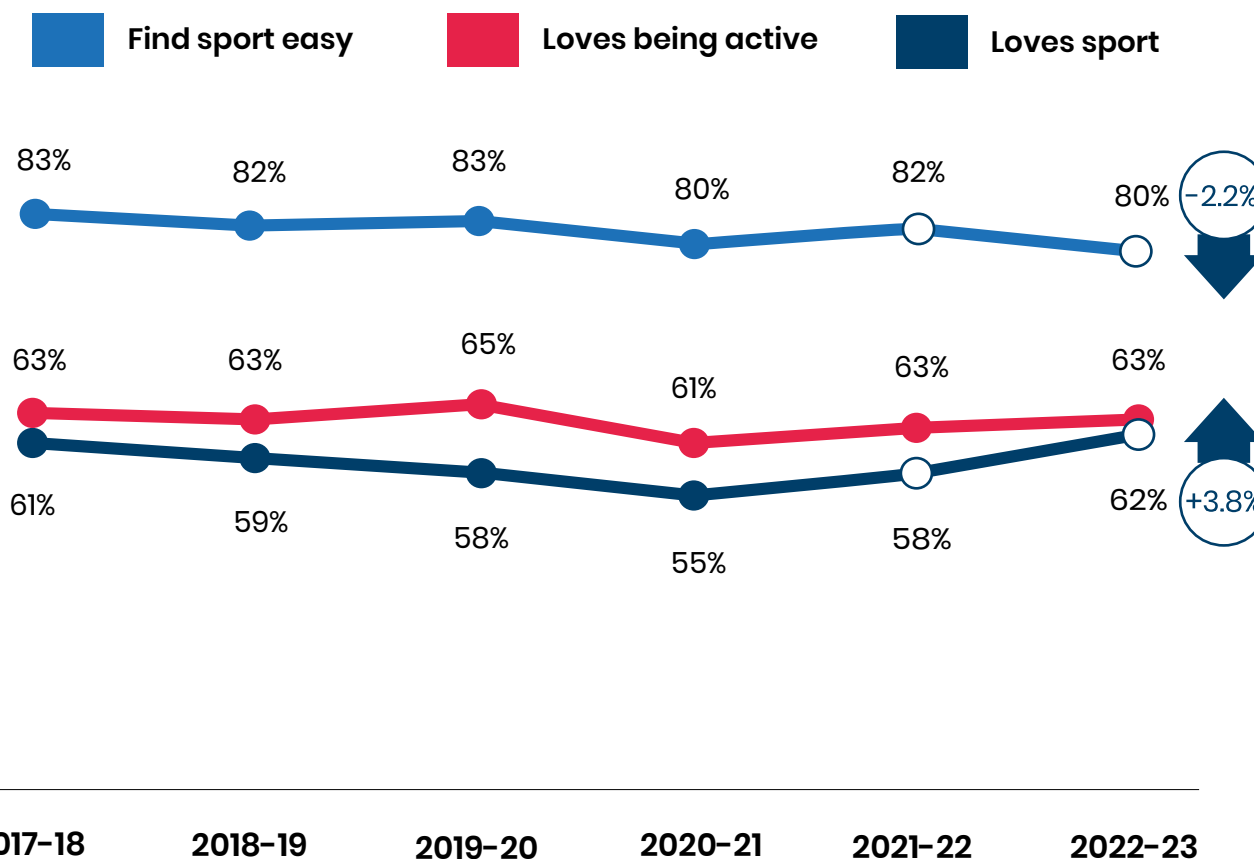


Perceived competence is down among the youngest children

Perceived competence (finds sport easy) has fallen compared to five years ago (academic year 2017-18) for children in school Years 1-2 (ages 5-7).

In contrast, enjoyment (loves sport and loves being active) levels remain unchanged over the longer term, having dipped during the coronavirus pandemic years but then recovered.

Attitudes towards sport and physical activity



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

Note: For this question, data for children in school Years 1-2 is collected directly from the children.

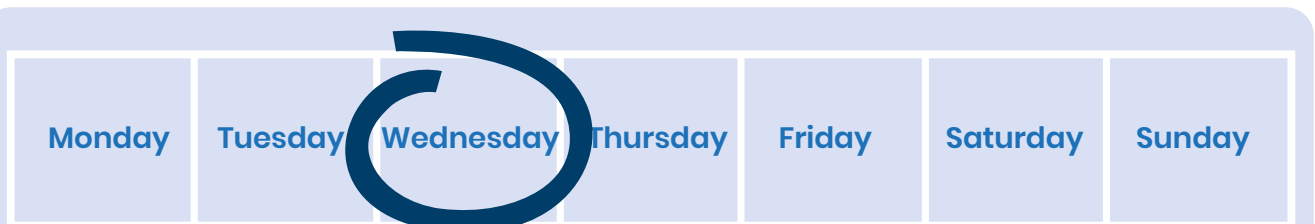
[Link to data tables](#)

This chapter presents data broken down by activity group and looks at those who've participated at least once in the last week.

Within this section, data is also provided for swimming confidence and capability, swimming lessons offered by schools, mode of travel to school and the extent to which schools monitor and promote active travel to school.

Looking at participation at least once in the last week provides:

- an entry level view of participation overall
- an understanding of which activities contribute to the make-up of an active day.



We measure sport and physical activity if it's done...

- in the last week
- at least moderate intensity
- either at school or outside school.



As children and young people get older, the activities participated in change

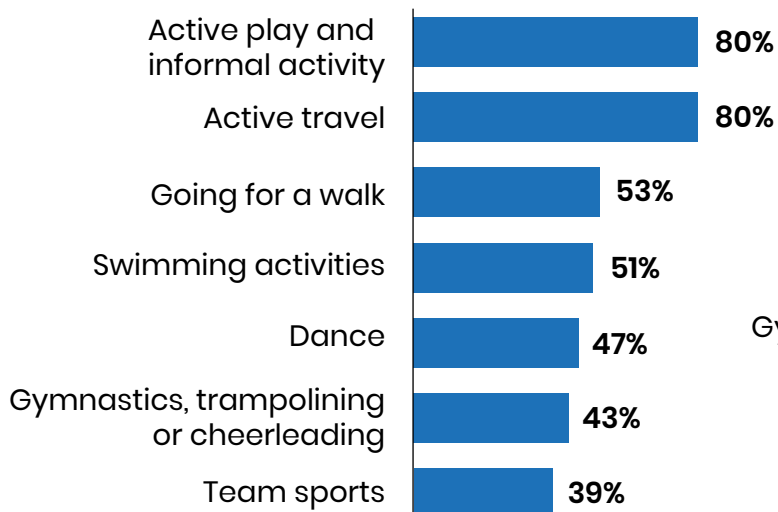
Active play (63%), team sports (58%) and active travel (58%) are the most common activities done in the last week across all children and young people.

Team sports are less common among infant age children (school Years 1-2, ages 5-7) but gain in relative importance with age. Similarly, gym or fitness becomes more common as children get older. Conversely, going for a walk, dance, or swim are all more prevalent among the youngest children (school Years 1-2, ages 5-7).

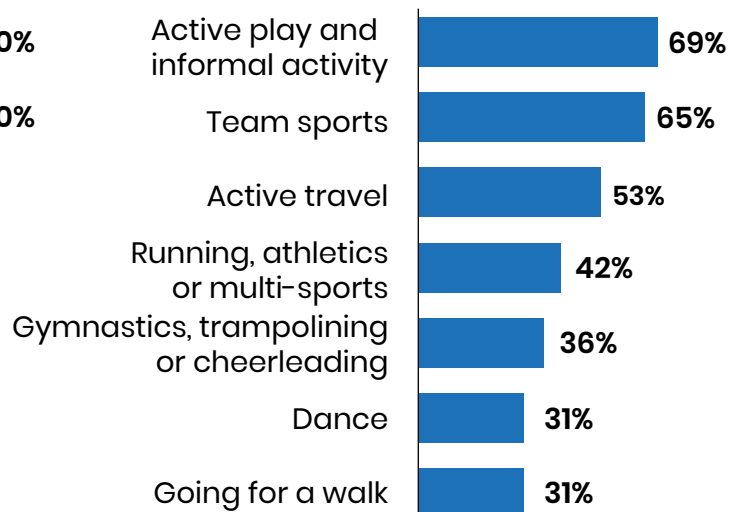
Running, athletics or multi-sports (including the active mile) are most prevalent among junior age children (school Years 3-6, ages 7-11).

Most prevalent activity groups (at least once in the last week)

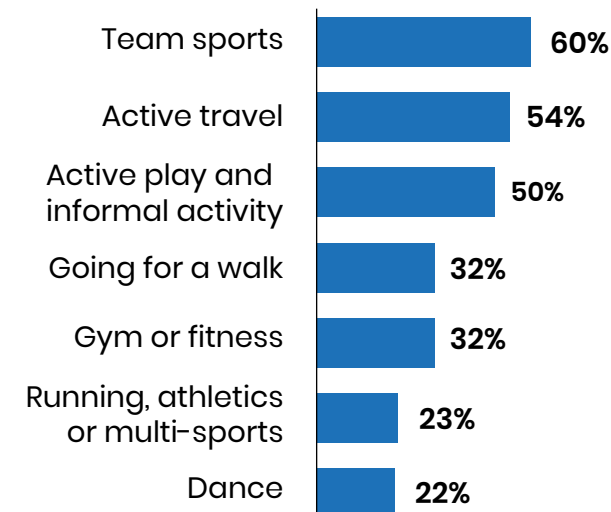
Years 1-2 (ages 5-7)



Years 3-6 (ages 7-11)



Years 7-11 (ages 11-16)



[Link to data tables](#)

Notes: Individual activities are reported in the data tables.

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



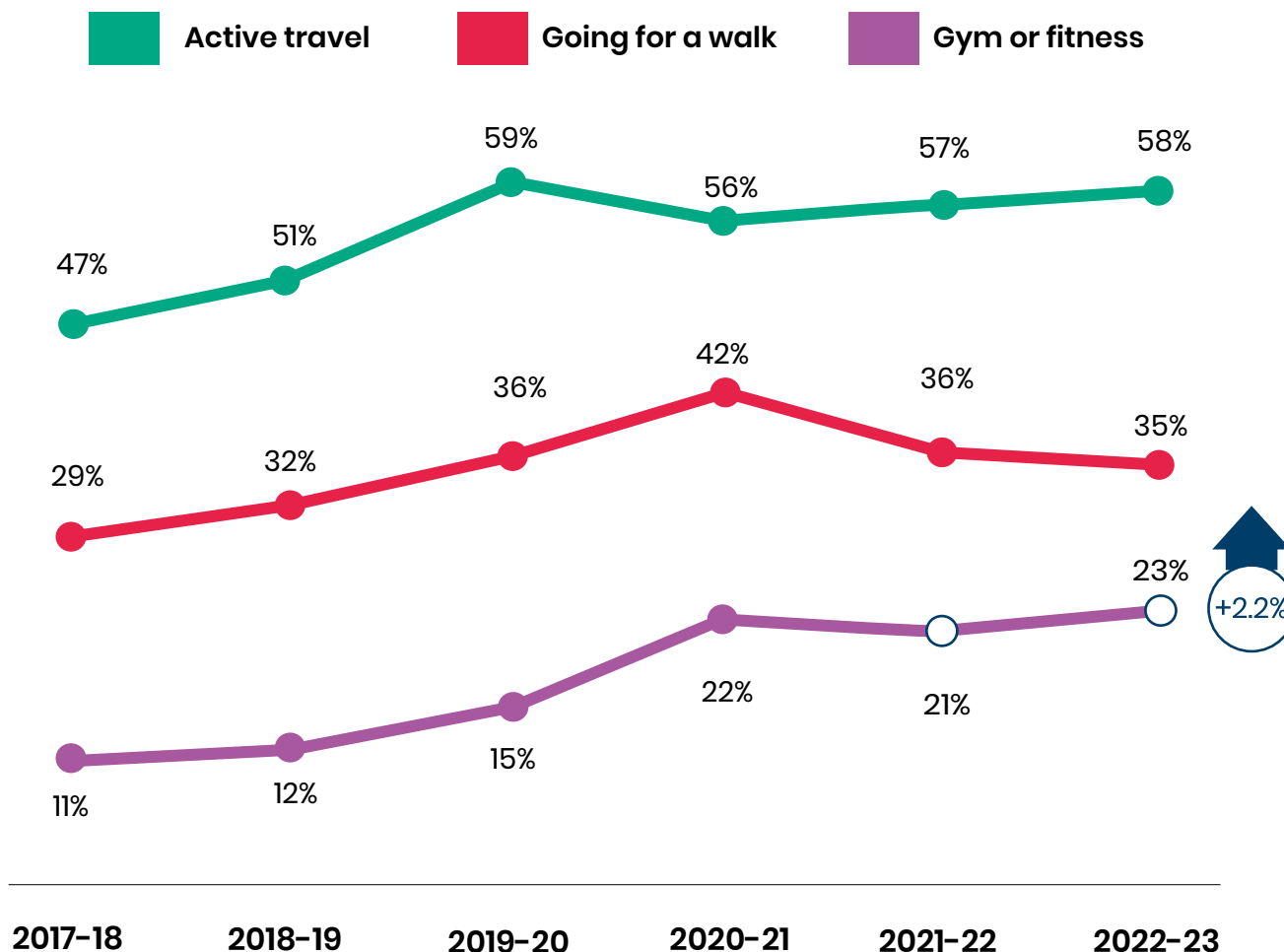
Active travel, going for a walk and gym and fitness have all contributed to overall growth in activity levels

The proportion of children and young people walking, cycling or scootering to get to places (active travel) is up over the longer term following growth before the pandemic, which was accelerated during it. All gains have been consolidated and as such there are now 11.5% or 1.0m more children and young people travelling by active means than five years ago (academic year 2017-18).

We see a similar picture for children and young people going for walks with current levels up compared to academic year 2017-18 despite being below the peak of the coronavirus pandemic seen in academic year 2020-21. There are 6.7% or 592,000 more children and young people going for a walk than five years ago.

During the pandemic there was a large increase in gym and fitness activity driven by younger children (school Years 1-6, ages 5-11). Additionally, older children (school Years 7-11, ages 11-16) are following a steady upward trend in those doing gym and fitness over the longer term. As a result we're seeing 11.8% or 908,000 more children and young people taking part in gym and fitness compared to five years ago.

Activities done in the last week (Years 1-11, ages 5-16)



[Link to data tables](#)

Types of activity

Trends: flat

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

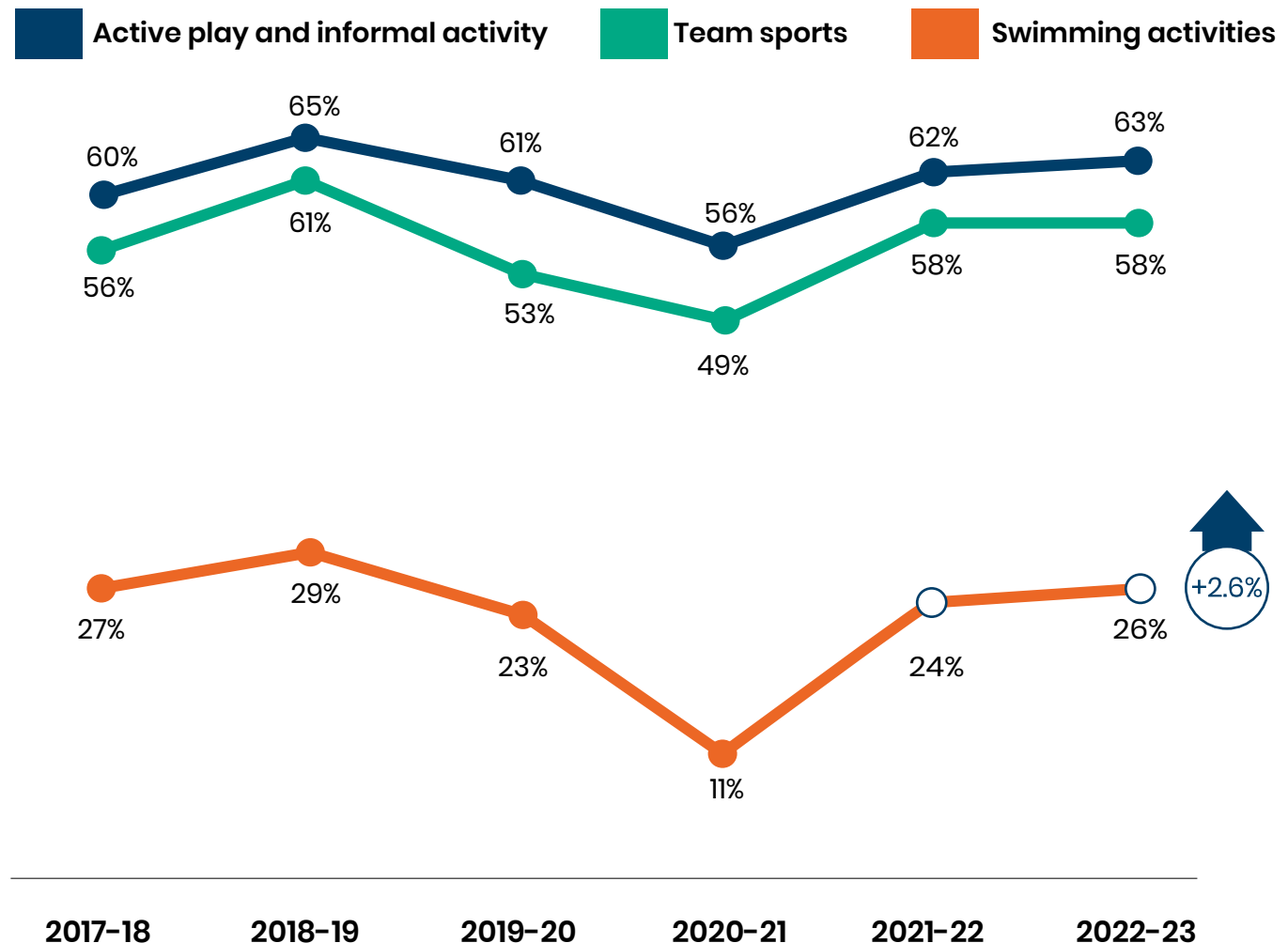


Active play, team sports and swimming all have underlying flat trends over the longer term

Some activities such as active play, team sport and swimming were more notably hit during the pandemic than others. While all have slightly fewer children and young people taking part than just before the pandemic (academic year 2018-19), all are level with or slightly above the earliest data we hold (academic year 2017-18), indicating a longer-term flat trend.

*Team sports refers to a group of activities that are typically played in teams. All participation in these activities is included, regardless of whether it's team play, training or individual skills.

Activities done in the last week (Years 1-11, ages 5-16)



[Link to data tables](#)

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



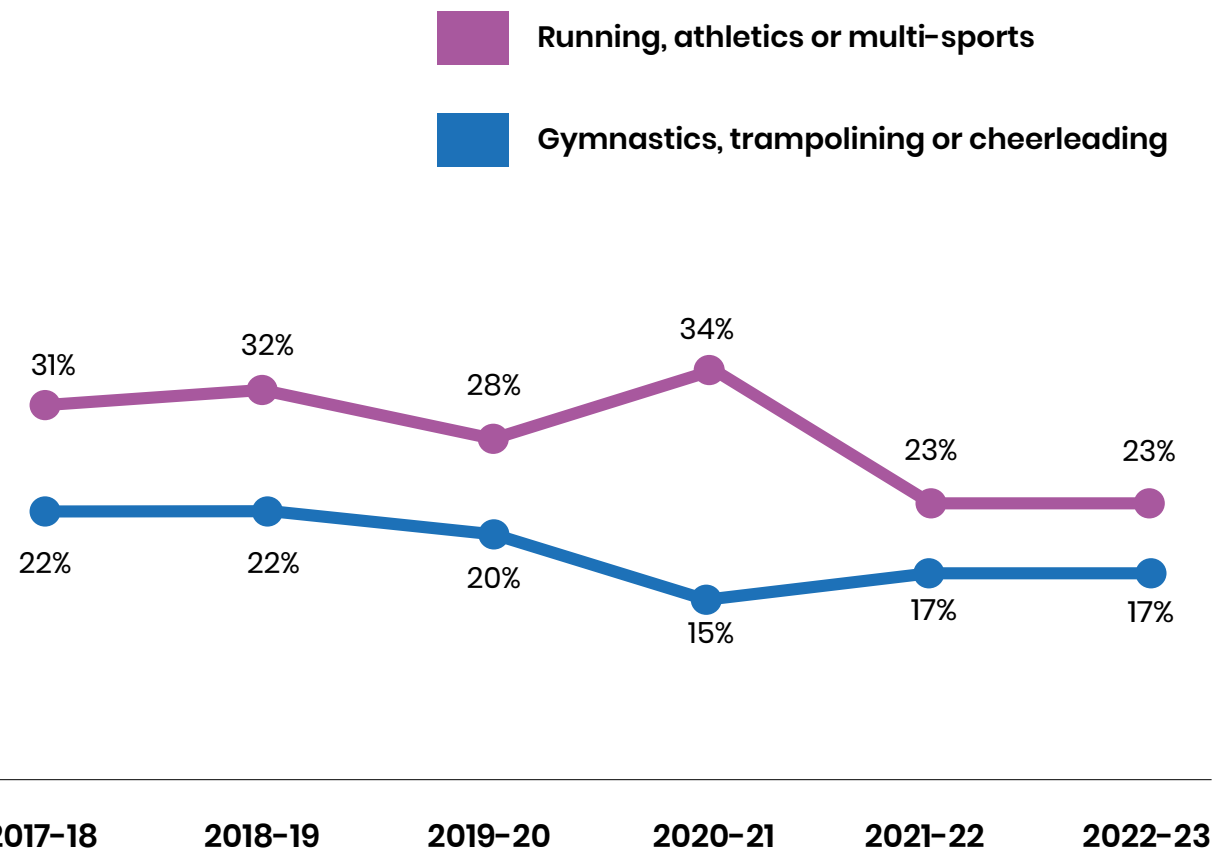
Running and gymnastics numbers have dropped notably among secondary-age young people

Running, athletics and multi-sports levels for secondary-age young people (school Years 7-11, ages 11-16) remain down following a sharp drop in 2021-22. This represents 7.9%, or 176,000 fewer young people taking part compared to five years ago (academic year 2017-18). In contrast, there's an underlying flat trend among primary-age children (school Years 1-6, ages 5-11).

Similarly, gymnastics, trampolining or cheerleading has dropped and remained down for secondary-age young people. As such 4.5% or 88,000 fewer young people (in school Years 7-11, ages 11-16) are taking part compared to academic year 2017-18.

Going on a bike ride (not charted) has seen gradual drops continue over the last 2-3 years among all age groups. As such, there are now 5.2%, or 313,000 fewer children and young people going on a bike ride compared to five years ago (academic year 2017-18).

Activities done in the last week (Years 7-11, ages 11-16)



Swimming confidence and capability

71% can swim 25 metres unaided by the time they leave primary school

Just 71% of children in school Year 7 (first year of secondary school, ages 11-12) meet the guidelines that children should be able to swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25m by the time they leave primary school. This represents 6.3% fewer school Year 7 children able to do so compared to five years ago (academic year 2017-18).

An average of 59% of all children and young people in school Years 1-11 (ages 5-16) can swim 25m unaided, with proficiency increasing with age. We're starting to see some recovery in swimming ability among the youngest children, however levels for all age groups remain down.

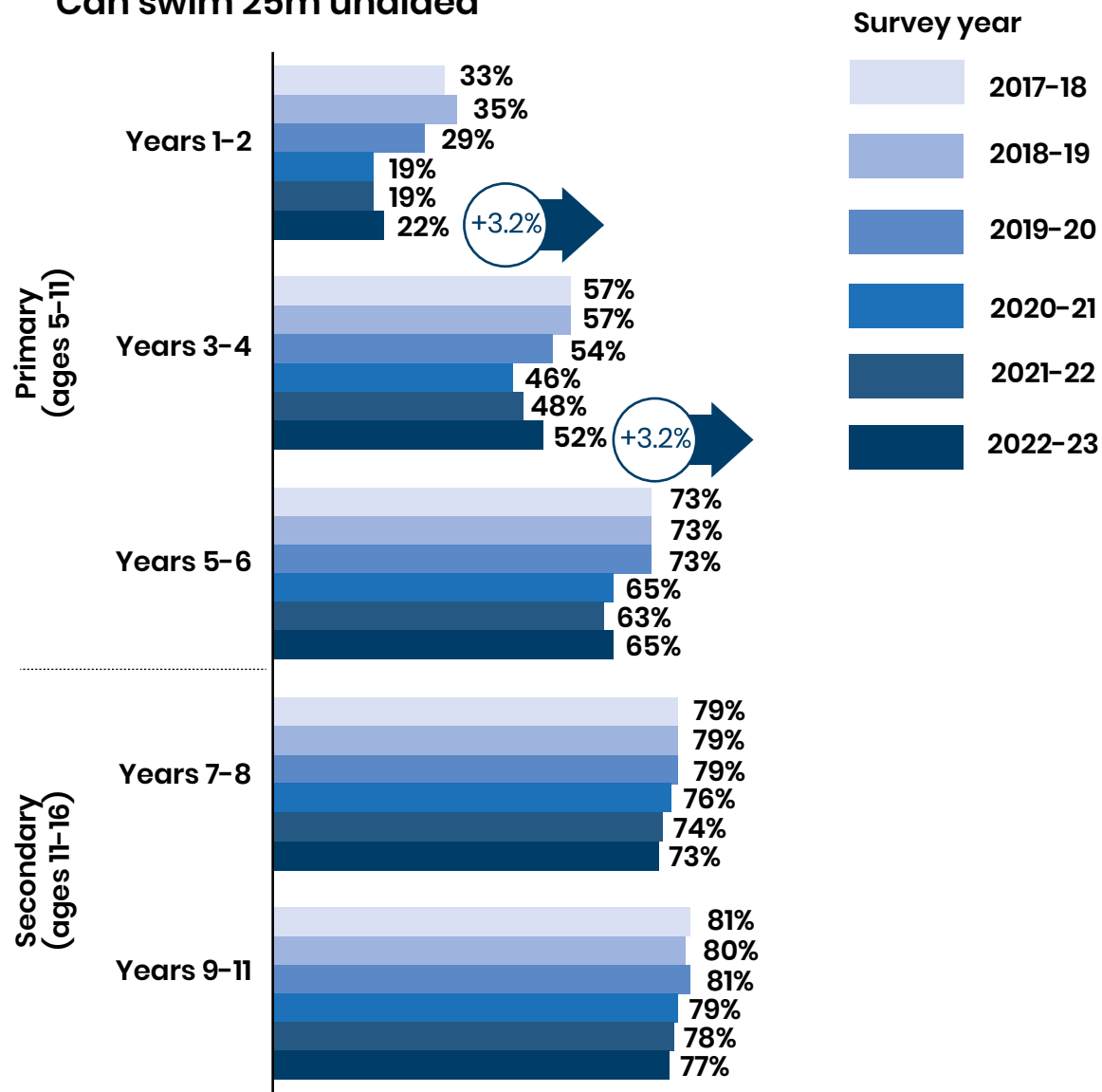
Pupils are being offered fewer swimming lessons at school. Teachers in 36% of state primary schools told us they offered either none or fewer than 10 lessons per pupil across academic year 2022-23 (the equivalent of weekly sessions for half a term - the lowest category possible). This is up 8.2% compared to five years ago (academic year 2017-18).

[Link to data tables](#)

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



Can swim 25m unaided



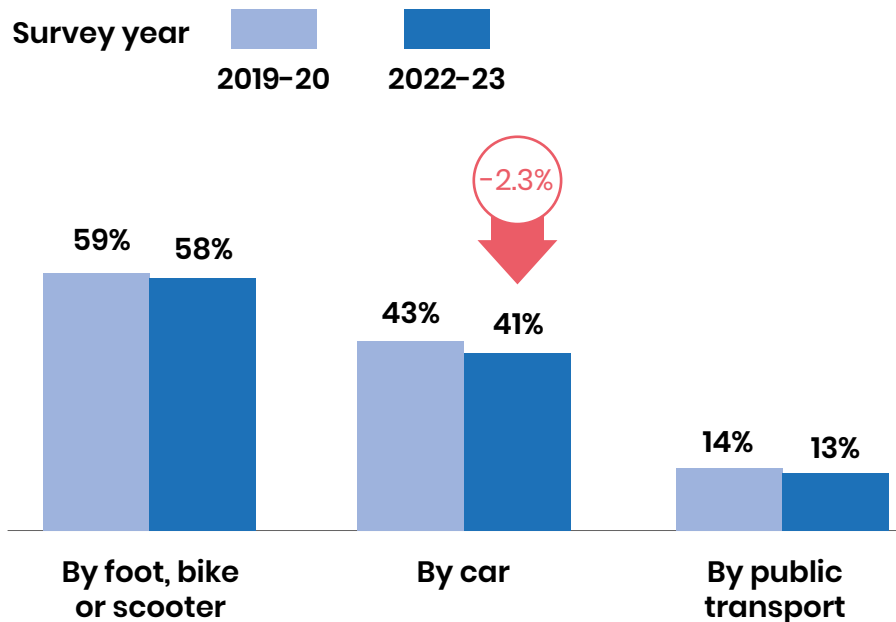
Active travel is the most common mode of transport for getting to school

Over half of all children and young people use active travel (walk, ride, scooter) to get to school, however two-fifths of journeys are taken by car. Junior age children (school Years 3-6, ages 7-11) are the most likely to be taken by car (49%), while secondary age young people (school Years 7-11, ages 11-16) are the most likely to use public transport (24%).

There's been a small drop in car usage (down 2.3%) but no changes in the other modes of travel to school compared to three years ago (academic year 2019-20).

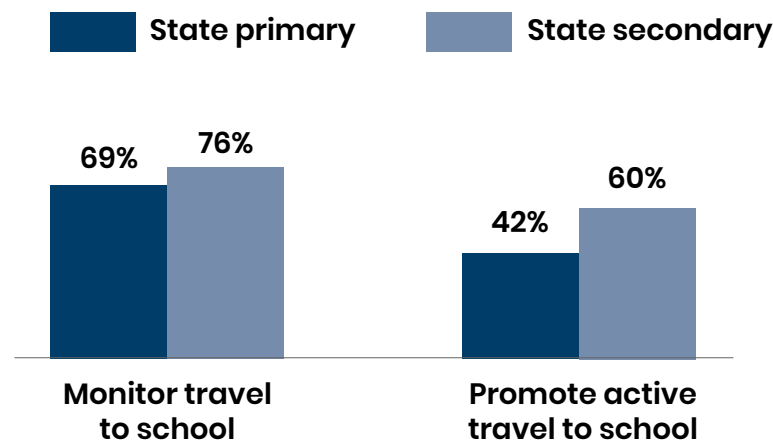
Arrows show change from 3 years ago (academic year 2019-20)
 %
 No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

How did you get to school today?



Teachers in 70% of schools told us their school monitors how their pupils travel to school, while just under half (46%) said they promote active travel to school.

In both instances this is higher for state secondary than state primary schools.



Further breakdowns



Local level data

Data for local areas (regions, Active Partnerships and local authorities) are available for the following measures:

- Levels of activity
- Volunteering at least twice in the last 12 months.

Exploring the data

Please use the [Active Lives Online Tool](#) to run your own analysis of the data – the tool will be updated with the latest data shortly after its publication.

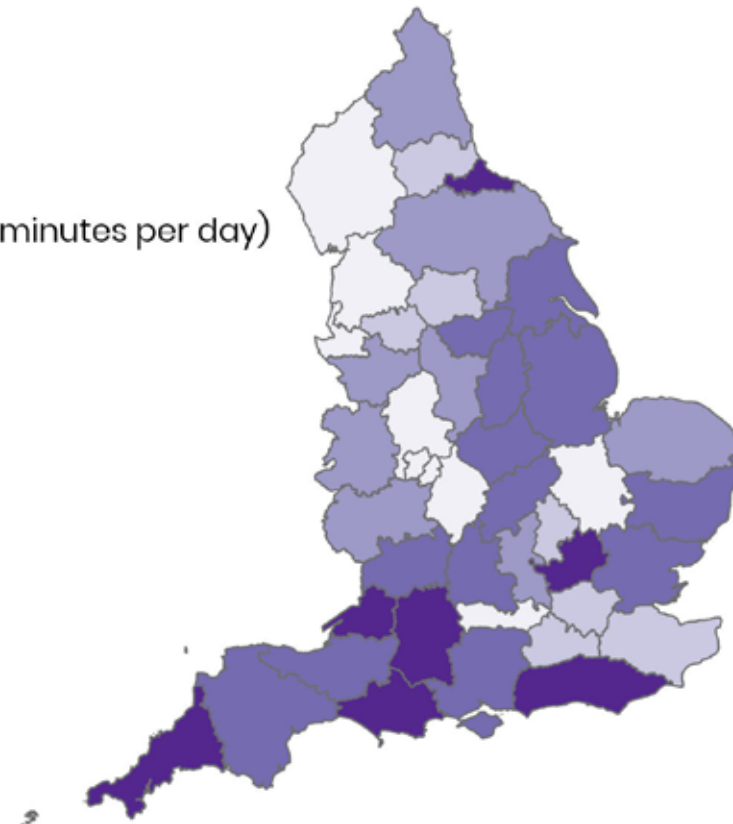
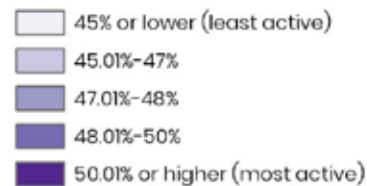
[Link to data tables](#)



The picture across England

Active (an average of 60+ minutes per day)

Rate (%)



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Sport England 100033111 2023

Activity guidelines

The Chief Medical Officers recommend, across the week, children and young people do an average of 60-plus minutes of at least moderate intensity activity a day. This effectively means they need to do at least 420 moderate minutes a week to meet the guidelines, [which you can read here](#).

Link to more information on measures and demographics



Moderate activity is defined as activity where you raise your heart rate and feel a little out of breath (in 2018-19 this was updated to ask people whether the activity made them breathe faster than sitting down reading).

Vigorous activity is defined as activity which makes you hot or tired.

Volunteering roles are defined as:

- Been a 'sports leader' or 'sports ambassador'
- Helped with setting up or clearing away (Years 5-6 only)
- Helped with refreshments: food or drink (Years 5-6 only)
- Coached or instructed an individual or team(s) in a sport, dance or fitness activity - other than solely for family members (Years 7-11 only)
- Refereed or umpired at a sports match, competition or event (Years 7-11 only)
- Acted as a steward or marshal at a sports or dance activity or event (Years 7-11 only)
- Given any other help (Years 5-6 only)
- Provided any other help for a sport, dance or fitness activity, e.g. helping with refreshments, setting up sports kit or equipment, scoring matches, first aid (Years 7-11 only).

Positive attitudes

This refers to strongly agreeing to the statements on enjoyment, confidence, competence and either knowledge or understanding. If a child or young person strongly agrees, they're reported as having a positive attitude towards that element.

Associations

Where associations between positive attitudes, 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.

Schools data

Where references are made with regards to schools' delivery, this data is collected from the teacher questionnaire - one teacher per school is invited to complete a response providing contextual school data. This data is included in the linked tables.

Standard demographic questions aren't always applicable for children of all ages, therefore simpler questions were often used.

Link to more information on measures and demographics 

Age

The survey is undertaken in schools, therefore we've used school year as the main age variable. This is split into three groups:

- Infant, Years 1-2 (ages 5-7)
- Junior, Years 3-6 (ages 7-11)
- Secondary, Years 7-11 (ages 11-16).

Gender

Children and young people in Years 3-11 were given the option to select 'boy', 'girl', 'other' or 'prefer not to say'. Children in Years 1-2 were only given the options of 'boy' and 'girl'.

Family Affluence Scale

The Family Affluence Scale gives an indication of the social status of children and young people's families. The scale is derived from a series of questions about their home and family, such as car ownership, computers and foreign holidays. During the pandemic, given foreign holidays weren't as likely, an adjusted scale was used and that data is not comparable with data taken from the full definition as used in this report – [please see the technical note for further details](#). Care should be taken when looking across year groups as the age of the child is likely to impact on certain elements of the scale (e.g. families with older children may be more likely to own digital devices).

Disability or long-term health condition

Disability or long-term health condition refers to children and young people who report they have a disability, special need or illness which has a big effect on their life (is limiting) and expected to last for a year or more (is long term).

The question used is designed to align as closely as possible to the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) harmonised disability question, with the language adapted to be more appropriate to children. This is an updated question for academic year 2019-20 onwards.

Special schools don't form part of the sample. While more than 90% of those with a disability or long-term health condition attend mainstream schools, some children and young people with the most complex needs aren't covered by the survey design.

Ethnicity

Children and young people in Years 3-11 were asked a simplified question about ethnicity, while parents of Years 1-2 children were asked the full ONS standard question. For the purposes of analysis, Chinese has been grouped with 'Other' from the parent responses.

About the Survey

The Active Lives Children and Young People Survey is an online survey. Carried out by Ipsos, it involves online questionnaires being completed during school lesson time, with secondary schools being given the option to complete it at as homework.

Parents of Years 1-2 children are asked to complete a separate online questionnaire providing behavioural data for these children – the children themselves answer basic questions about their attitudes only. The survey covers both state and independent schools.

More information on the survey [can be found here](#).

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



The achieved sample

Behavioural responses:

- Pupils in Years 3-11 and parents of pupils in Years 1-2: 109,503 in 2017-18, 113,728 in 2018-19, 89,303 in 2019-20, 86,828 in 2020-21, 104,404 in 2021-22 and 122,347 in 2022-23.

Attitudinal responses:

- Pupils in Years 3-11: 104,263 in 2017-18, 109,248 in 2018-19, 86,222 in 2019-20, 79,689 in 2020-21, 98,729 in 2021-22 and 116,623 in 2022-23.
- Pupils in Years 1-2: 25,927 in 2017-18, 23,587 in 2018-19, 14,576 in 2019-20, 13,886 in 2020-21, 17,304 in 2021-22 and 17,361 in 2022-23.

Data have been weighted to Department for Education (DfE) pupil population estimates from 'Get Information about Schools' (2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22) for geography and key demographics. Data from teachers has now also been weighted using the same source information on the schools.

Population totals are estimated values and have been calculated using 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 DfE pupil population estimates. Confidence intervals also apply to these. [More detail can be found here](#).

Population profile

Throughout the volunteering section, to show the representativeness of volunteers, the demographic profile of volunteers has been compared to the population profile.

Given the limited availability of demographic population data by school year, the weighted profile of the survey has been used to generate these proportions as the survey is weighted to be nationally representative.

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 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.

Sport spectating

While not covered in this report, data tables showing the number of children and young people attending live sports events form part of this release.

[Link to data tables](#) 

How we measure change

Figures reported are based on the responses of the children and young people (and parents of Years 1-2) sampled, 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 they're genuine differences. If the data is showing only small differences which are within the margin of error, they're noted as "no change".

All changes reported are percentage point changes. We've used '%' as shorthand to represent this throughout.

Data collection during the coronavirus pandemic

Fieldwork continued throughout the pandemic, however a few small changes should be noted:

- In academic year 2019-20, fieldwork ended two weeks early in the Spring term of 2020 and started slightly later (mid-May) in the Summer term.
- In periods during which schools were closed to most pupils, significant numbers of children and young people completed the survey at home rather than, as is usually the case, at school.
- Small questionnaire changes were made to ensure the survey remained relevant in the summer term 2020 and were retained throughout the academic years 2020-21 and 2021-22.

[Details of these can be found in the technical note.](#)

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