

# Active Lives Children and Young People Survey

## Academic year 2021-22

Published December 2022

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## Key information

This report presents data from the Active Lives Children and Young People Survey for the academic year 2021-22. Data is presented for children and young people in school Years 1-11 (ages 5-16) in England.

This report contains a full year's data following the removal of most legal restrictions related to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, however it does contain the period where the Omicron variant was of concern.

## Release dates

This release: 8 December 2022  
Next release: 7 December 2023

## 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](#).

# Welcome



This report summarises the sport and physical activity behaviours of 5-16-year-olds in England over the 2021-22 academic year (September 2021-July 2022). This period represents relative normality following the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, however, individual- and class-level disruption through self-isolation and sickness absence was still present.

At a headline level the findings paint a promising picture, with a return to levels seen pre-pandemic in the proportion of children and young people meeting the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines of taking part in an average of 60 minutes or more of sport and physical activity a day.

There are also positive signs of longer-term growth in activity levels among secondary aged girls (ages 11-16). However, some groups are being left behind, with primary aged children, specifically those in school Years 3-4 (ages 7-9), and Black boys, not seeing the same recovery - while Black girls are reporting significantly fewer positive attitudes towards sport and physical activity than before the pandemic.

The survey provides more evidence as to the positive impact of physical activity on mental health - with an increase in the proportion of children exercising to relax and worry less, and socially for fun with friends.

However, physical literacy levels - which are linked to higher levels of activity and wellbeing - haven't recovered to pre-pandemic levels. It's therefore vital there's a focus on providing positive experiences of physical activity, with children and young people involved in decisions around their design and delivery. And while activity levels are recovering, there are warning signs that more needs to be done - with the ongoing challenges of the cost of living posing a risk to continued recovery and growth.

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.

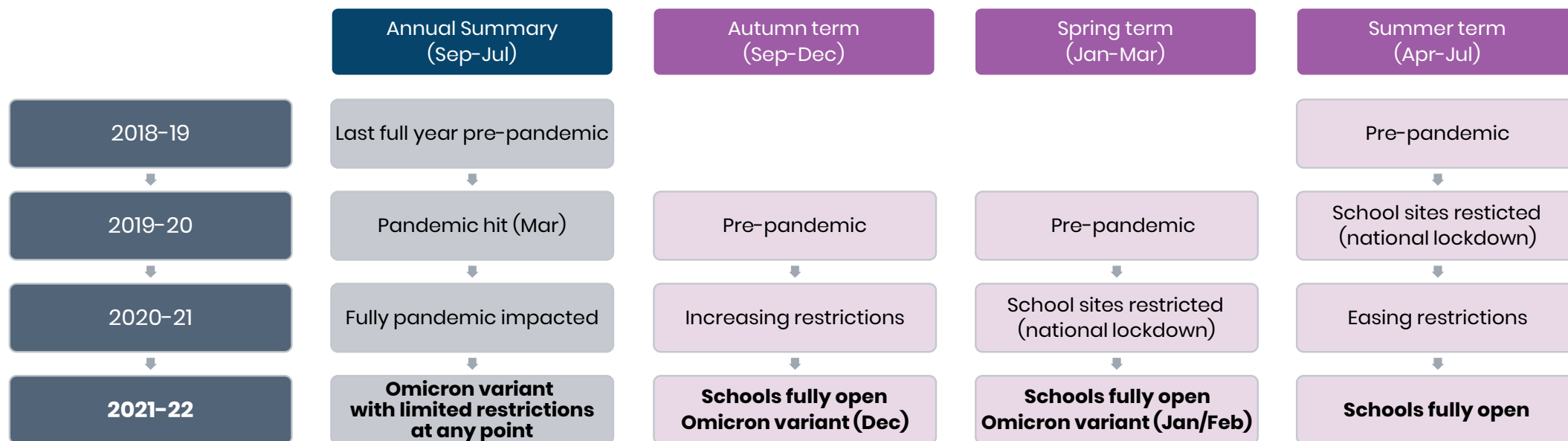
**Nick Pontefract**, Chief Strategy Officer

# Coronavirus timeline and data reference periods

This report covers the academic year 2021-22. While no legal restrictions were in place across most of the period, concerns over the Omicron variant led to a small number of restrictions being implemented from December to February. While schools remained open, disruption continued at an individual pupil and class level due to isolation requirements.

Comparisons throughout the report are generally made with academic year 2020-21 (12 months ago), where some form of disruption was seen throughout the year with restrictions and school closures occurring, and to academic year 2018-19 as the last full year's data pre-pandemic.

Full details of lockdowns and measures between March 2020 and December 2021 [can be found here](#).



# Executive Summary

1



**Activity levels have generally recovered following the pandemic, but this isn't universal.**

2



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

3

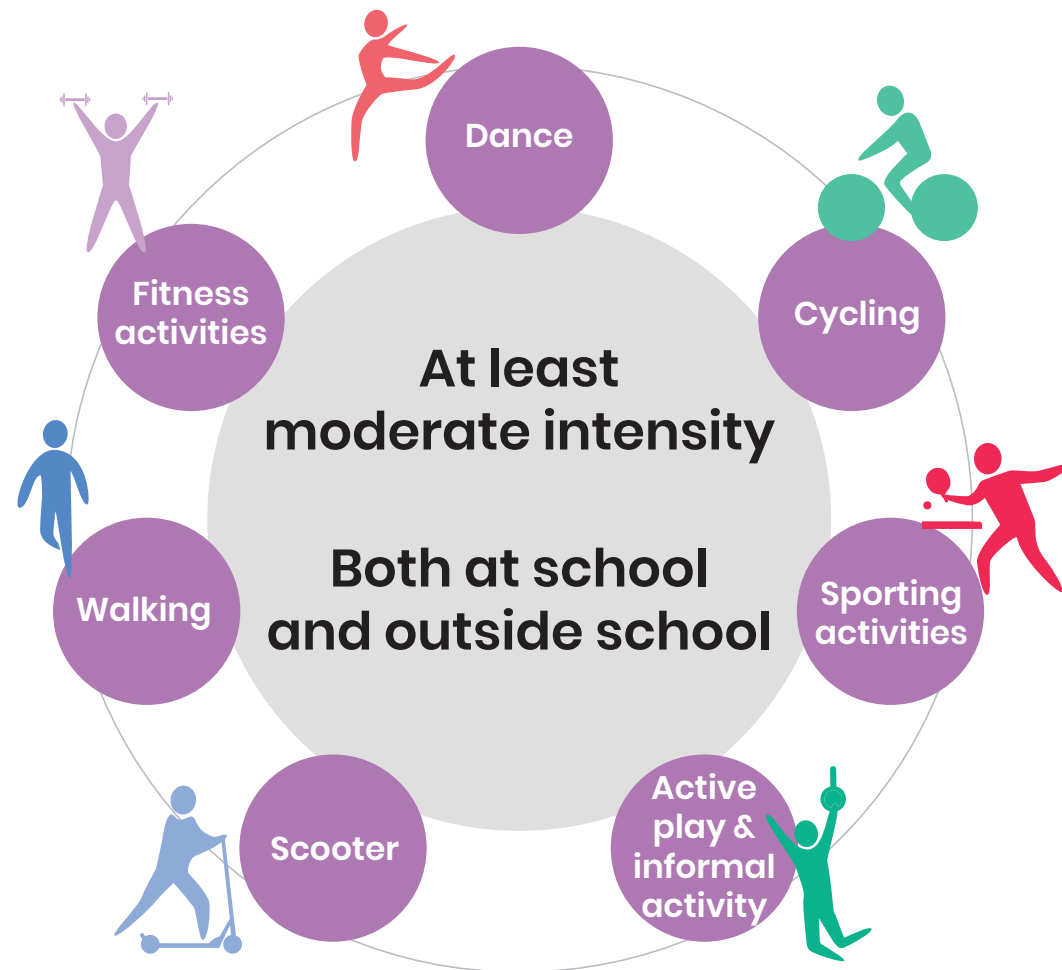


**Physical literacy levels (as measured by positive attitudes) haven't recovered since the pandemic.**

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?

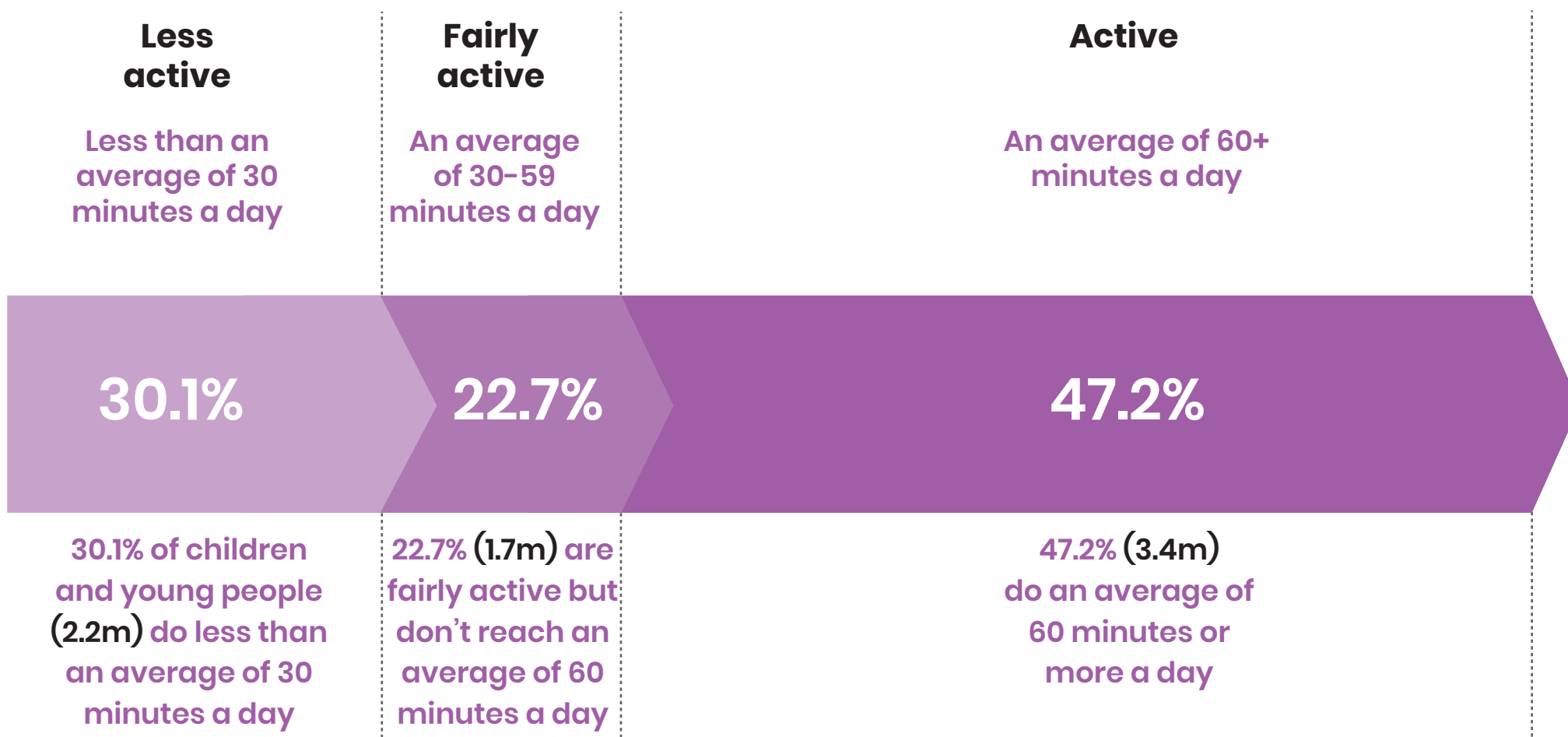


# Levels of activity



## Headlines

Our data shows that 47.2% of children and young people (3.4 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, 30.1% (2.2m) do less than an average of 30 minutes a day.

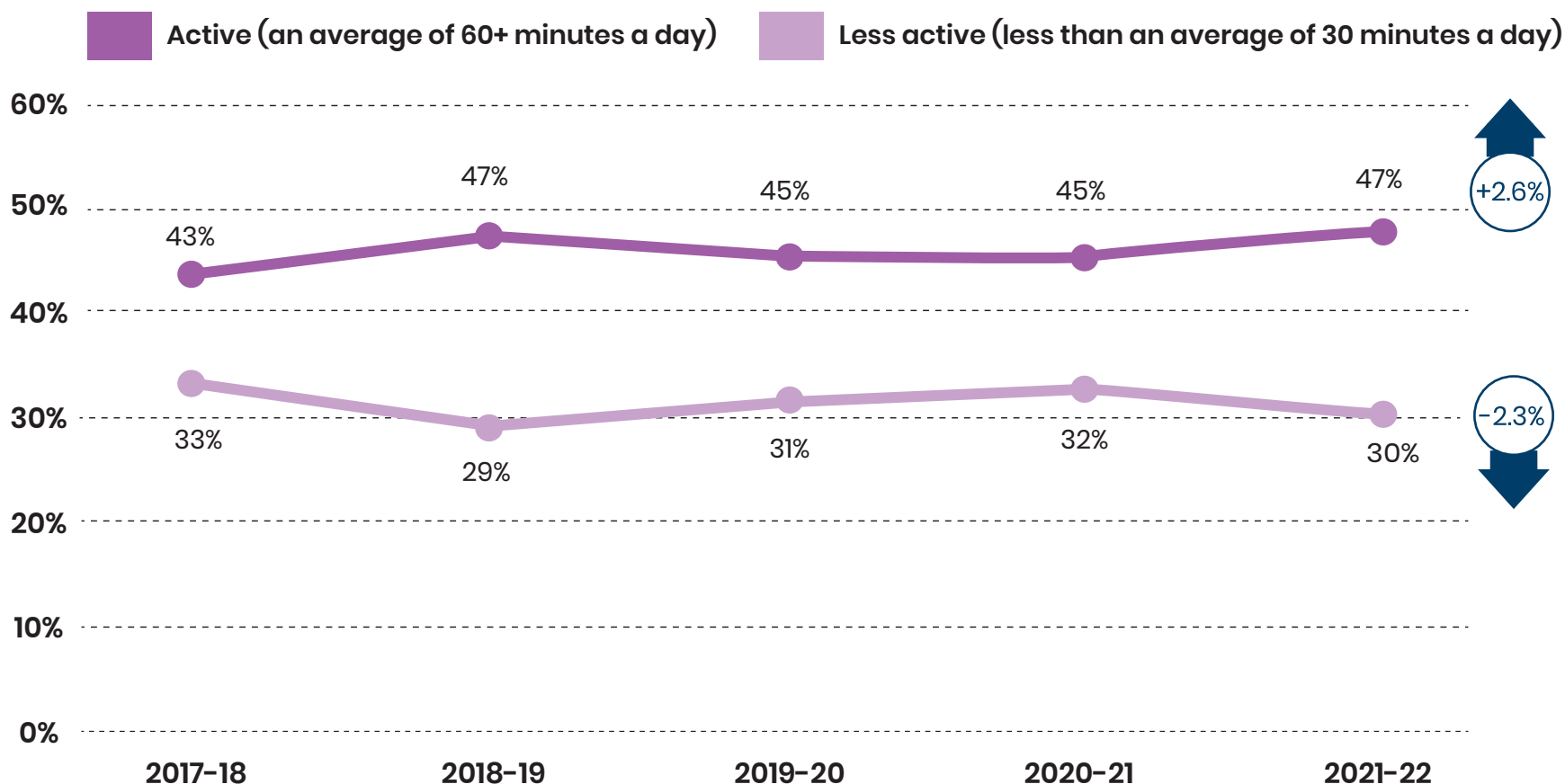


[Link to data tables](#)

## Activity levels have returned to those seen pre-pandemic

Activity levels are back in line with those seen pre-pandemic (academic year 2018-19), following increases compared to 12 months ago. The proportion who are active has increased by 2.6%, meaning there are 219,000 more active children and young people compared to 12 months earlier, while the proportion who are less active has decreased by 2.3%, or 143,000 fewer less active children and young people.

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



[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.

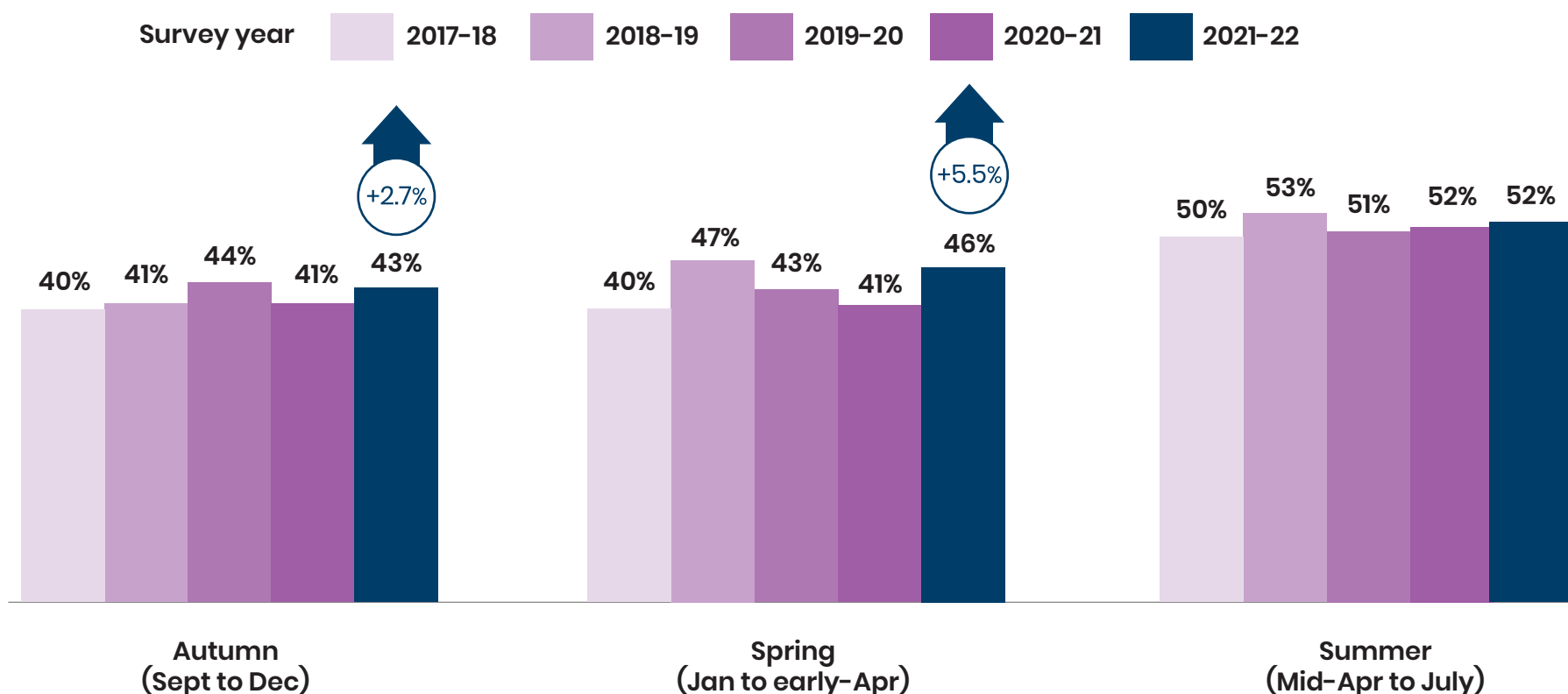


## Activity levels have recovered across the year

Despite concerns about the Omicron variant during the end of the autumn term and first half of the spring term, we've seen activity levels in the autumn term return to, and in the spring term exceed, pre-pandemic levels (academic year 2019-20). In the summer term there was no reportable difference to pre-pandemic (academic year 2018-19) levels.

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](#)

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

# Levels of activity



Note: All data relates to young people in Years 1-11 (ages 5-16).

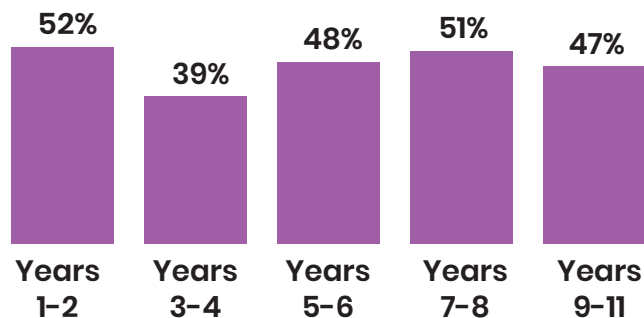


## Summary of demographic differences

Active

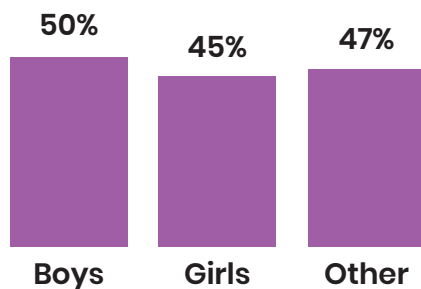
### 1 Year group

Activity levels are lowest for those in school Years 3-4 (ages 7-9, 39%).



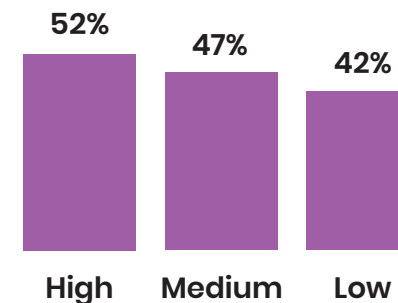
### 2 Gender

Boys (50% or 1.8m) are more likely to be active than girls (45% or 1.6m).



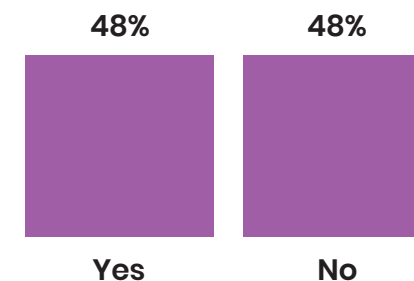
### 3 Family affluence

Those from low affluence families are the least likely to be active (42%).



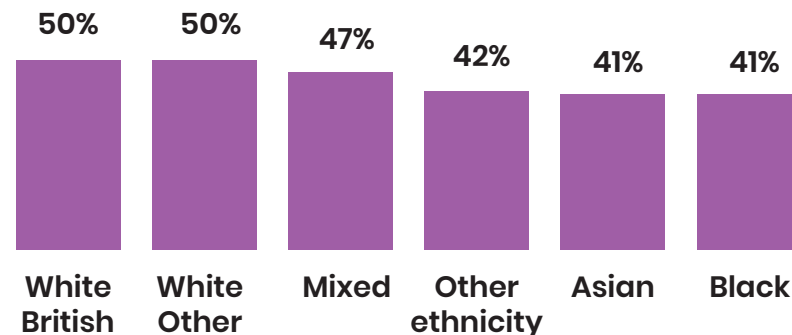
### 4 Disability and long-term health conditions

Activity levels among children and young people with a disability or long-term health condition are the same as for those without one.



### 5 Ethnicity

Children and young people with 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.



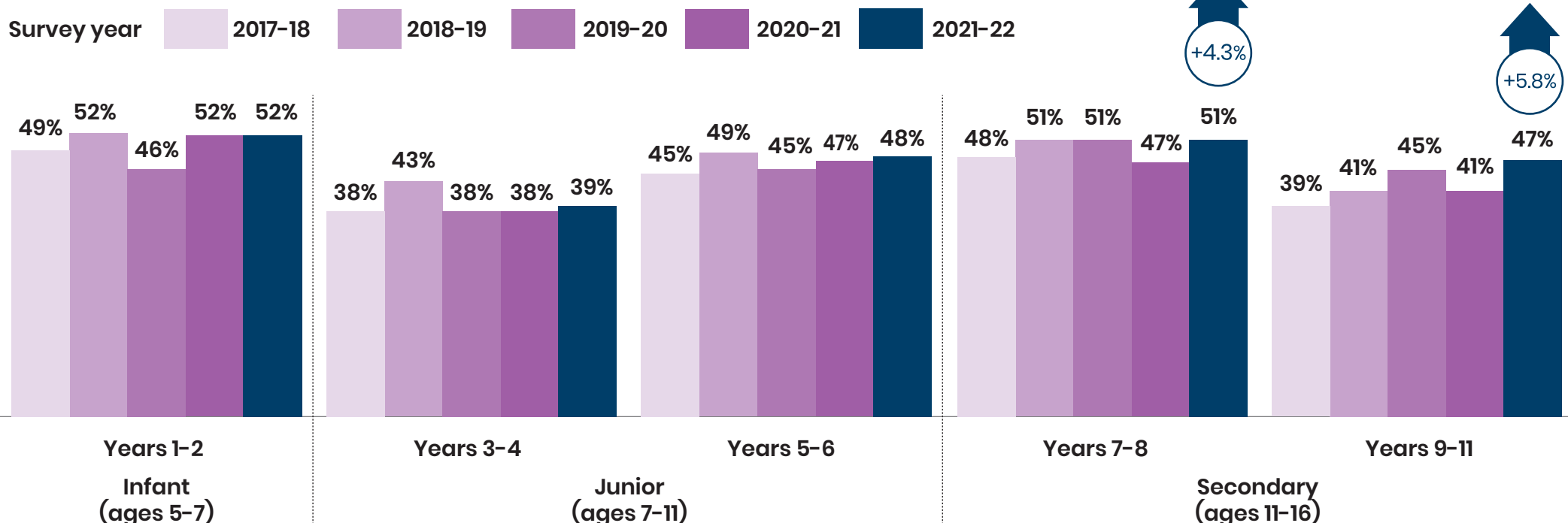
## Not all children and young people have seen activity levels recover

The proportion of children and young people classified as active has returned to pre-pandemic levels across most age groups, however this isn't the case for those in school Years 3-4 (ages 7-9) where activity remains 4.5%, or 53,000 children, down on pre-pandemic (academic year 2018-19), with no change compared to 12 months ago.

In contrast, young people in school Years 9-11 (ages 13-16) have seen activity levels increase above pre-pandemic levels (up 5.7%/145,000 young people) and in line with the highs seen two years ago.

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](#)

## Boys are driving the recovery in activity levels, but girls' activity levels remain up on pre-pandemic

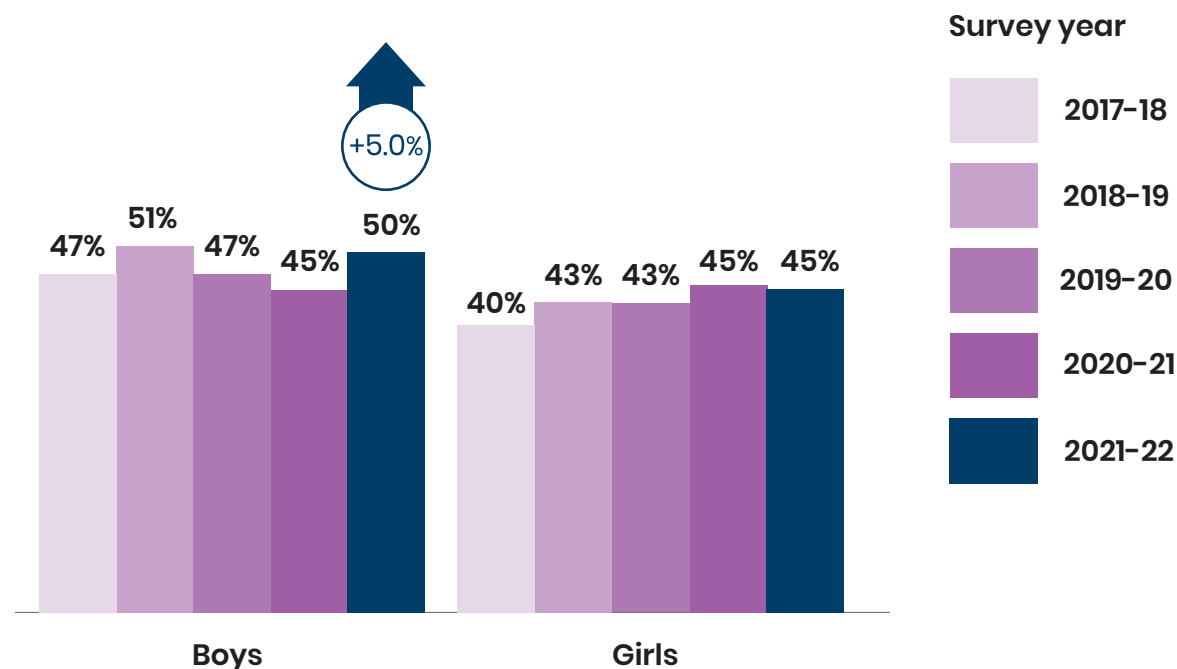
Boys have driven the recovery in activity levels, with the proportion active now back in line with pre-pandemic (academic year 2018-19). Girls continue to see limited change overall, although levels are slightly above pre-pandemic (up 1.9%, or 98,000 more active girls). As a result, the gender gap between boys and girls has re-emerged - with a gap of 5% between them in the proportion active.

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

This overall picture masks some clear and important differences between age groups:

- The lack of recovery seen across children in Years 3-4 (ages 5-7) is seen for both boys and girls, but boys in school Years 5-6 (ages 7-9) have seen limited recovery.
- While secondary age boys are following the pattern seen here for boys overall, secondary age girls are showing some growth in activity levels, this is detailed further on the next page.
- There's a much smaller gender gap among secondary age young people (school Years 7-11, ages 11-16), with just 2% between them.

### Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)





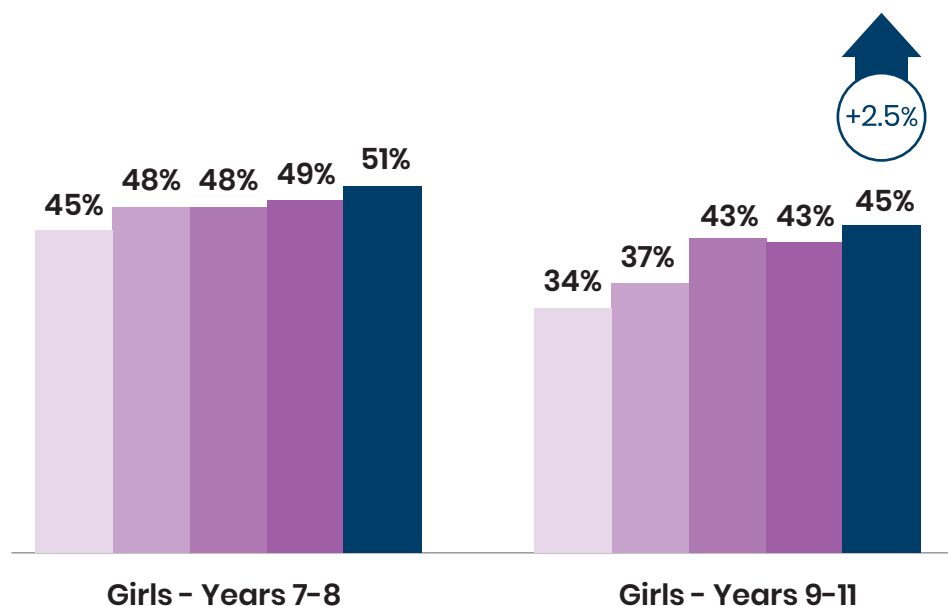
## Activity levels among secondary age girls have increased over time

There's an emerging upward trend in activity levels among girls in school Years 7-8 (ages 11-13), with an increase of 5.7%, or more than 50,000, more active young people since academic year 2017-18. Additionally, girls in school Years 9-11 (ages 13-16) saw an increase in academic year 2019-20, which has been consolidated giving them a net overall increase of 11.5%, or more than 100,000, more active young people compared to pre-pandemic.

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

### Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)

Survey year



[Link to data tables](#)



## Activity levels are consistent between children and young people with and without a disability or long-term health condition

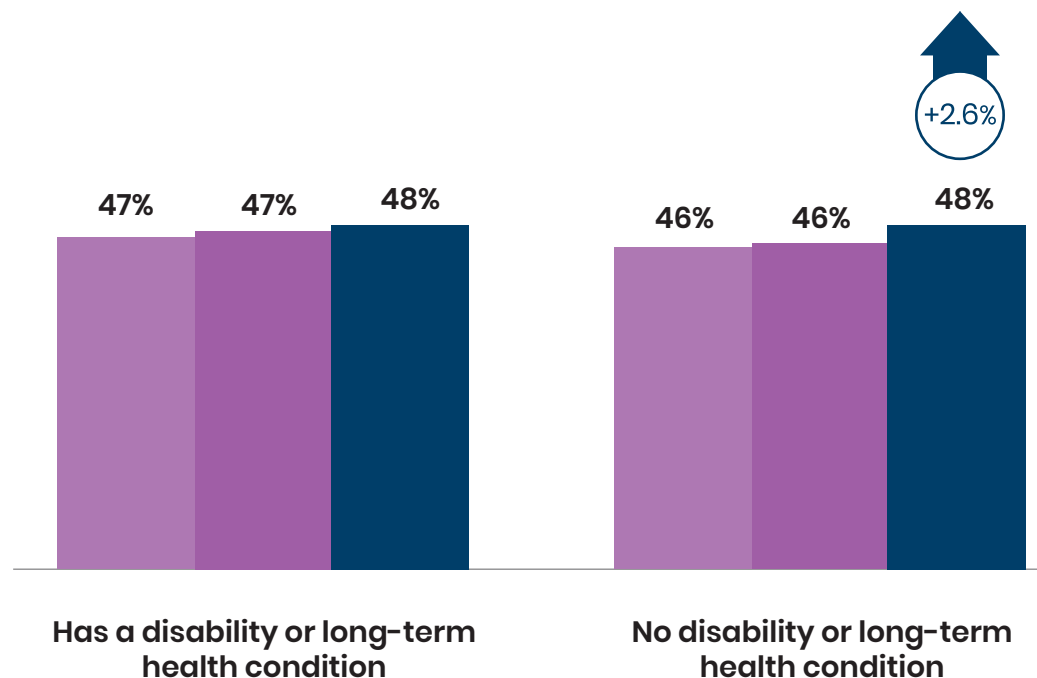
The proportion of children and young people without a disability or long-term health condition, who are active, has increased compared to 12 months ago. This is in line with the overall change in children and young people's activity levels. While we can't detect a change for those with a disability or long-term health condition, activity levels overall remain consistent between the two groups.

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

### Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)

Survey year  2019-20  2020-21  2021-22

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.

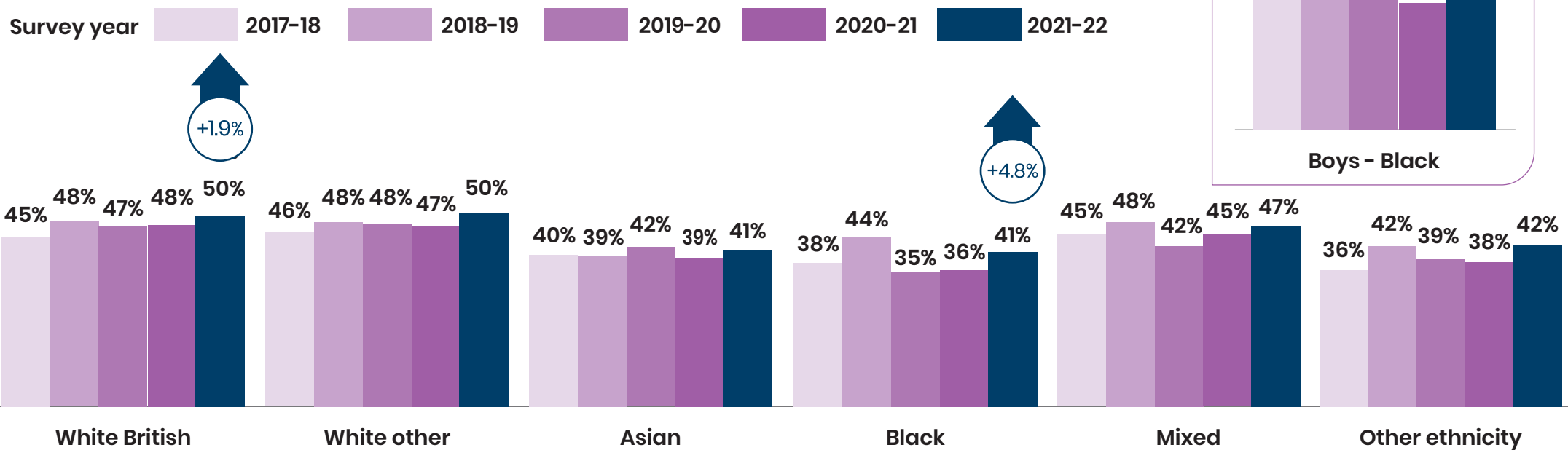


Arrows show change from 12 months ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

## Only Black boys see activity levels remain down compared to pre-pandemic

Activity levels are back in line with those seen pre-pandemic (academic year 2018-19) for all ethnic groups, with the exception of Black children and young people. This is specifically among Black boys where, despite a notable increase compared to 12 months ago, the proportion active remains 7.7% lower than pre-pandemic. The gender gap remains widest between Asian girls and boys (10%), followed by Black (8%) and Other (8%) 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 recovery to pre-pandemic levels

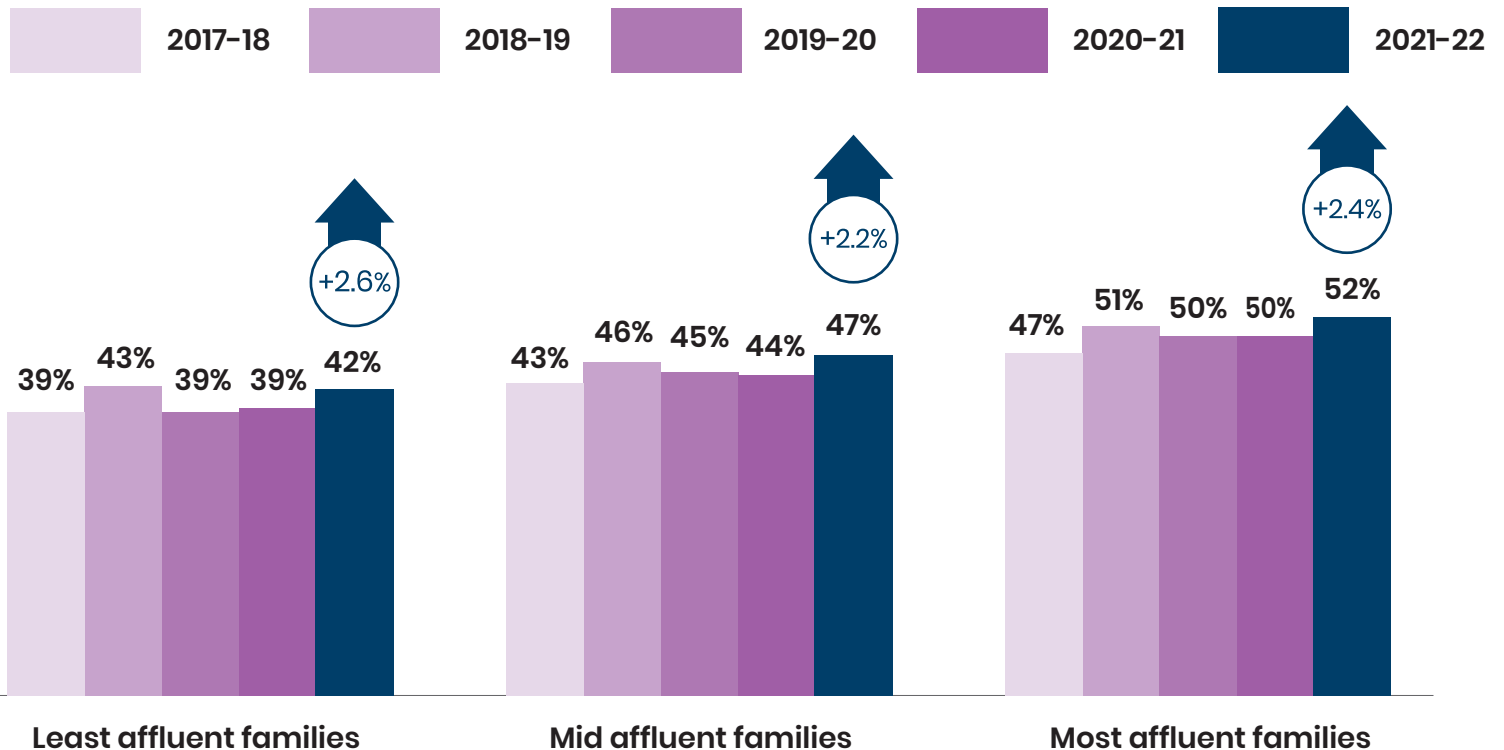
Children and young people from the least affluent families are the least likely to be active, with only 42% meeting the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines - compared to 52% of those from the most affluent families.

The overall impact of the pandemic on activity levels was similar across groups and all have similarly recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

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

### Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)

Survey year



Note: Due to the coronavirus pandemic, one of the components used to generate the family affluence scale isn't currently applicable. As such, the data presented here uses an adjusted definition. See the [definitions](#) page for more details.

[Link to data tables](#)



## Activity levels haven't recovered to pre-pandemic levels for children and young people going to school in the most deprived places in the country

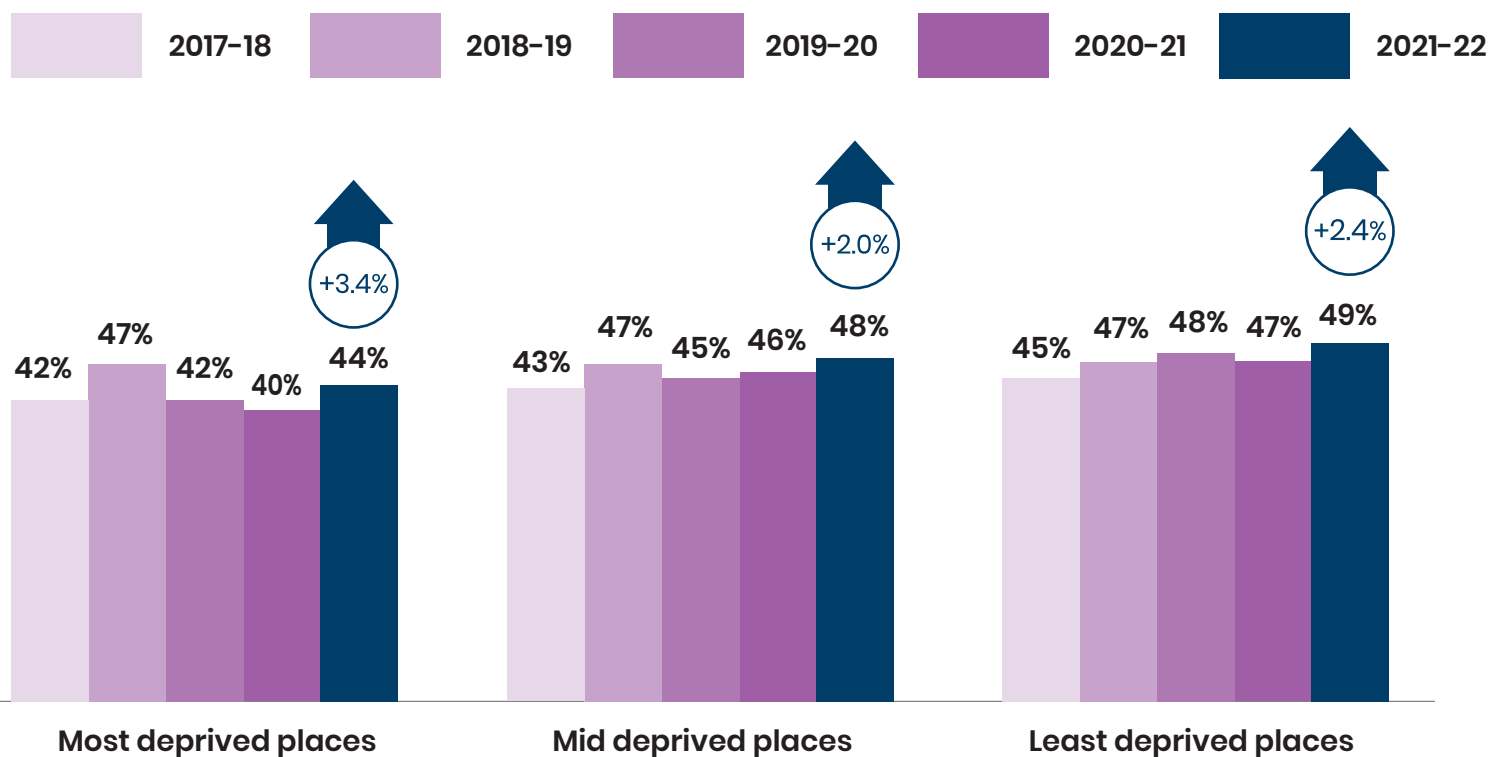
Arrows show change from 12 months ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

### Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)

Activity levels are lowest among those going to school in the most deprived places in the country.

Despite an increase compared to 12 months ago, those going to school in the most deprived places haven't seen activity recover to pre-pandemic (academic year 2018-19) levels, with the proportion active remaining down by 2.8%. As such, the gap in activity levels between those going to school in the least and most deprived places has widened.

Survey year



Note: The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACi) is used to capture deprivation of place for children and young people. See the [definitions](#) page for more detail.

[Link to data tables](#)

# Volunteering at least twice in the last 12 months

## Definition



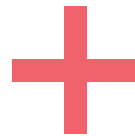
Giving your time helping others to be active is amazing, no matter what age you are. Not only are they benefitting, but you benefit too; gaining experience, making friends and learning new skills.

And evidence suggests those who give their time when they're 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

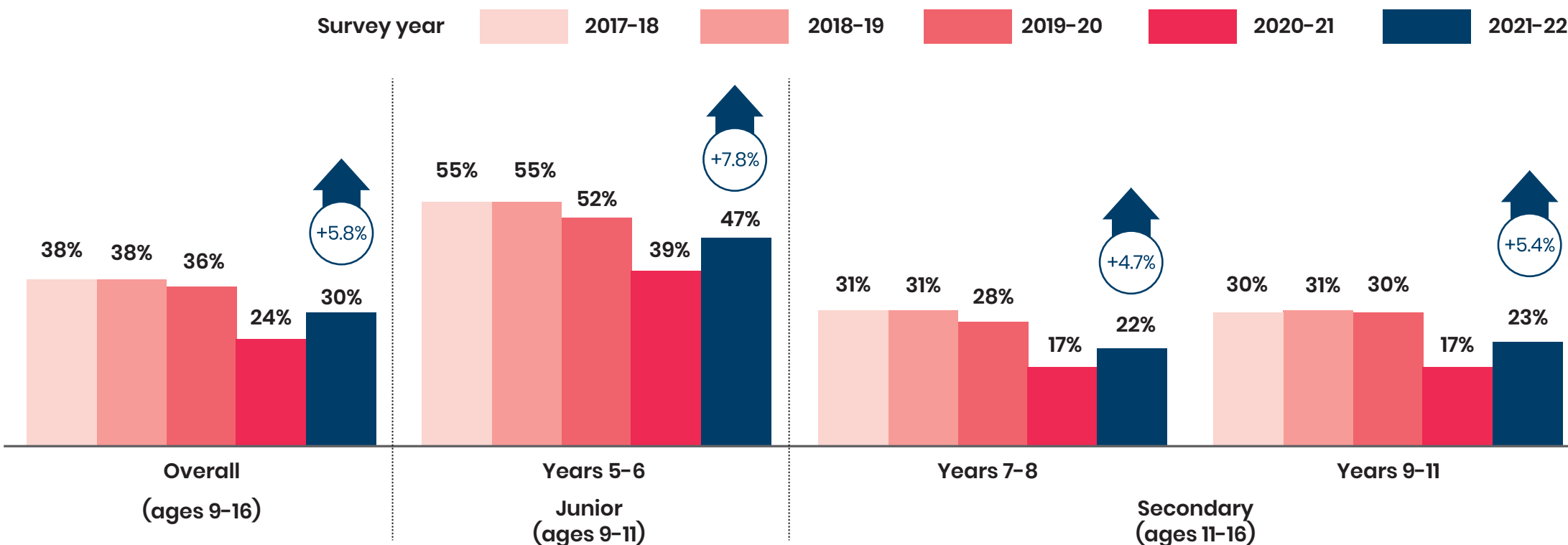


## 1.4 million (30%) children and young people volunteered to support sport and physical activity

Volunteering rates have recovered compared to 12 months ago but remain 8.1%, or 271,000 children and young people, below pre-pandemic levels. The volunteer roles driving the recovery are those that saw the greatest drops – sports leader and ambassador roles (Years 5-6, ages 9-11), and refereeing, umpiring, stewarding and marshalling (Years 7-11, ages 11-16).

The recovery in volunteering levels has been seen across all year groups and all demographics, but all remain below pre-pandemic levels.

### Volunteered at least twice in the last year



[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).



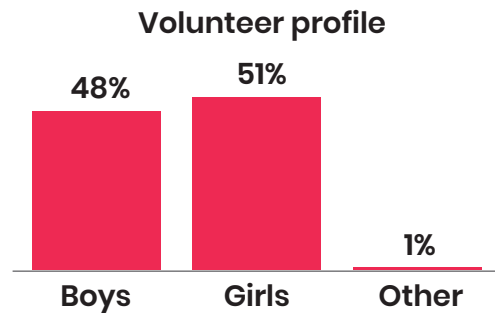
## Summary of demographic profile

Our data shows there are some inequalities:

### 1 Gender

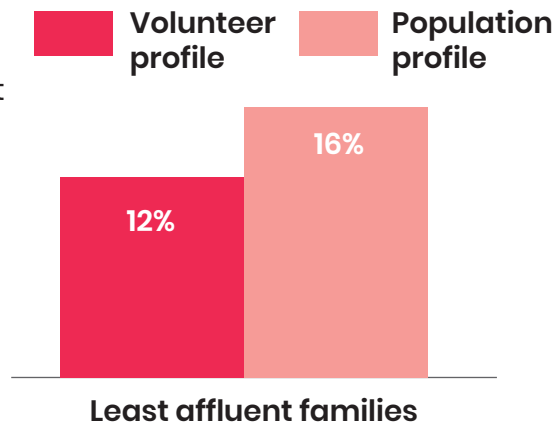
Boys and girls are fairly equally represented among volunteers.

\*Other comprises 2% of the population



### 2 Least affluent families

Children and young people from the least affluent families are under-represented. They make up 16% of those in Years 5-11 (ages 9 to 16), but only 12% of volunteers.



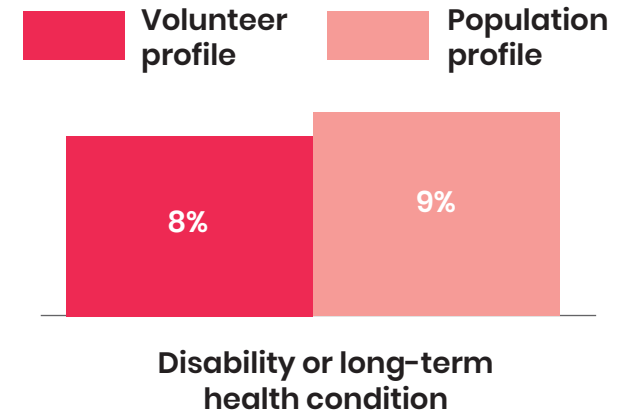
[Link to data tables](#)



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

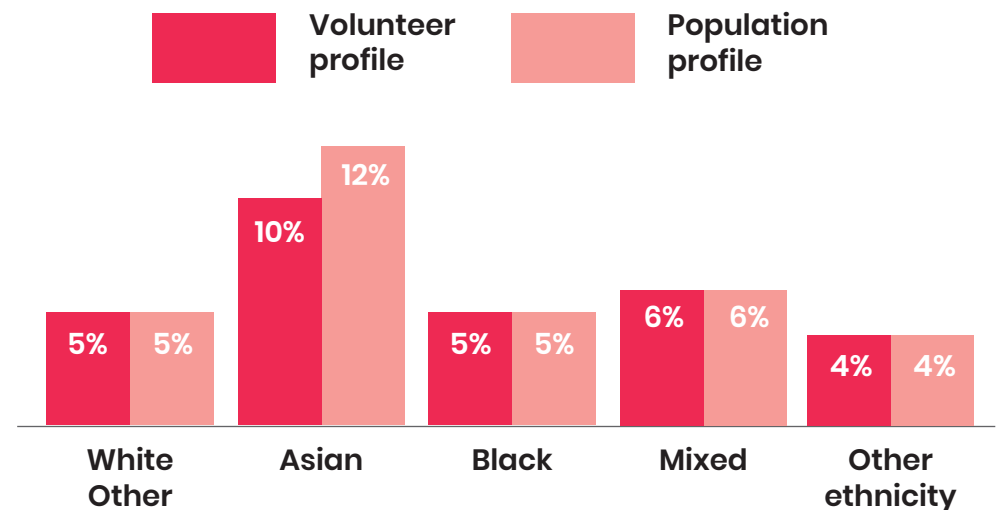
### 3 Disability and long-term health conditions

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 12% 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.

### 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 12 months ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

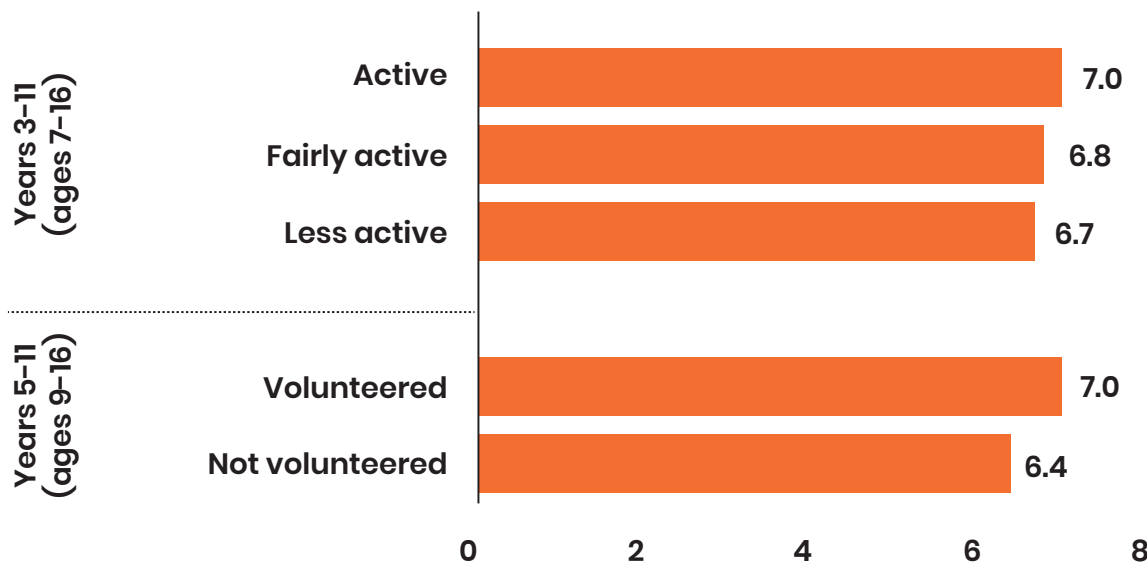


## There's a positive association between levels of engagement in sport and physical activity and levels of mental wellbeing

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.

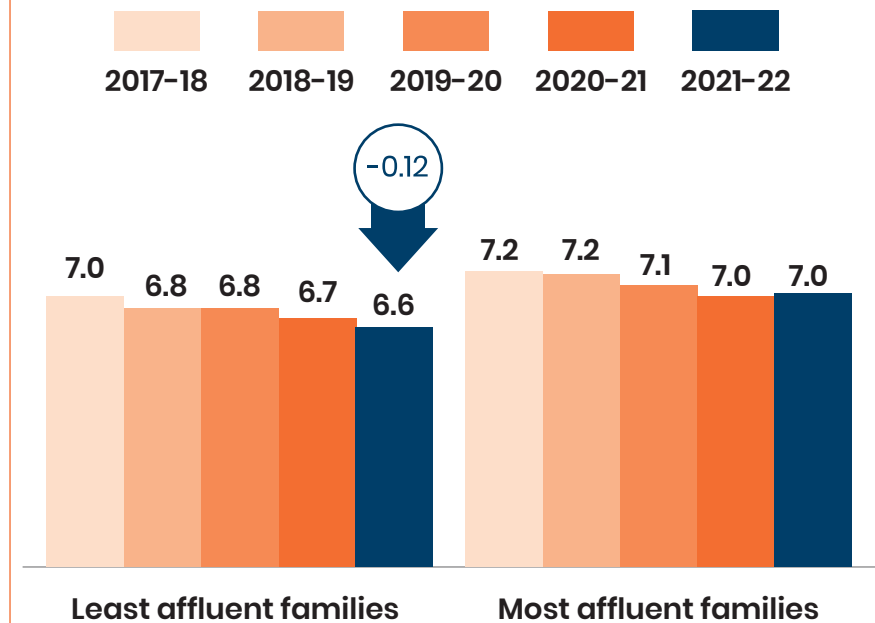
### How happy did you feel yesterday? (mean score out of 10, where 10 is very happy and 0 is not happy at all)



## Summary of change

Happiness scores have been gradually falling since the academic year 2017-18 (down 0.3 points) with this trend driven by junior age children (Years 3-6, ages 7-11) and those from the least affluent families.

Children and young people from the least affluent families have lower happiness levels than those from the most affluent families. The gap between the two has widened.



[Link to data tables](#)



# Individual development

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

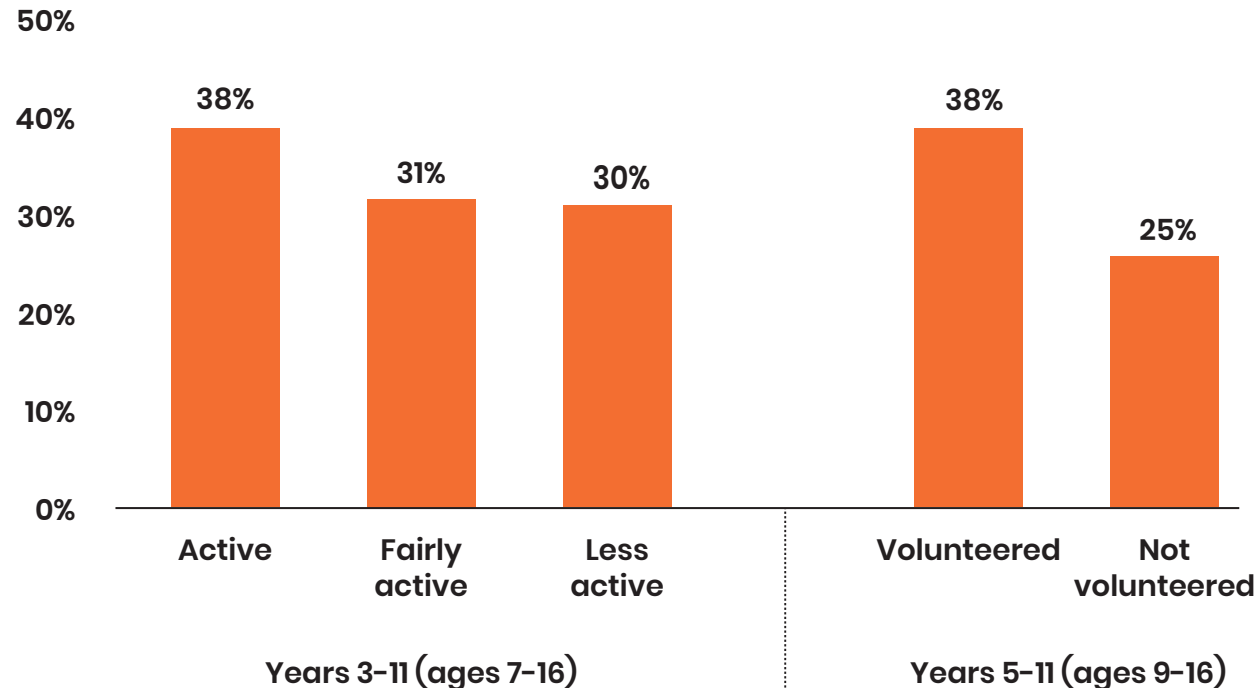


## There's a positive association between levels of sport and physical activity, and levels of individual development

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)

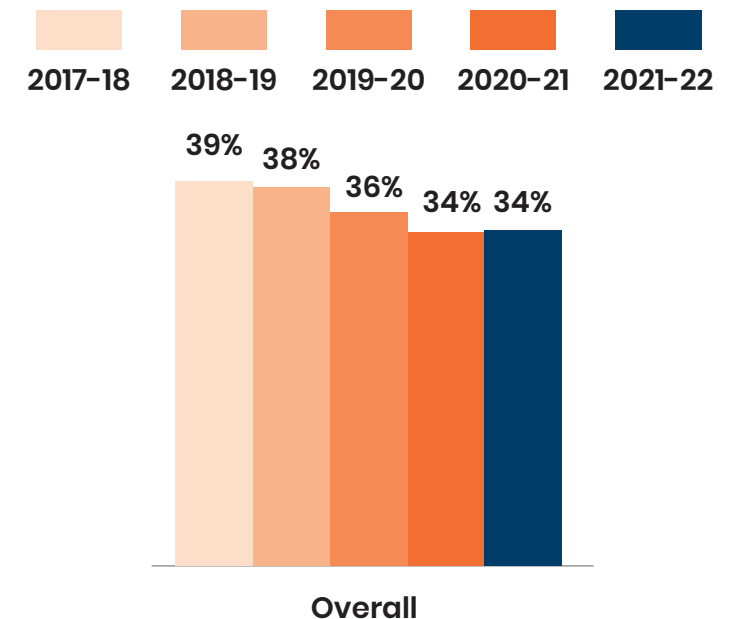



[Link to data tables](#)

## Summary of change

Levels of individual development fell during the pandemic and, despite stabilising, they've not yet recovered (down 4.3% compared to academic year 2018-19). These drops have been driven by girls and those of Black ethnicities.

While still down compared to pre-pandemic, junior age children (Years 3-6, ages 7-11) and those of Mixed ethnicity have seen a small increase compared to 12 months ago.



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

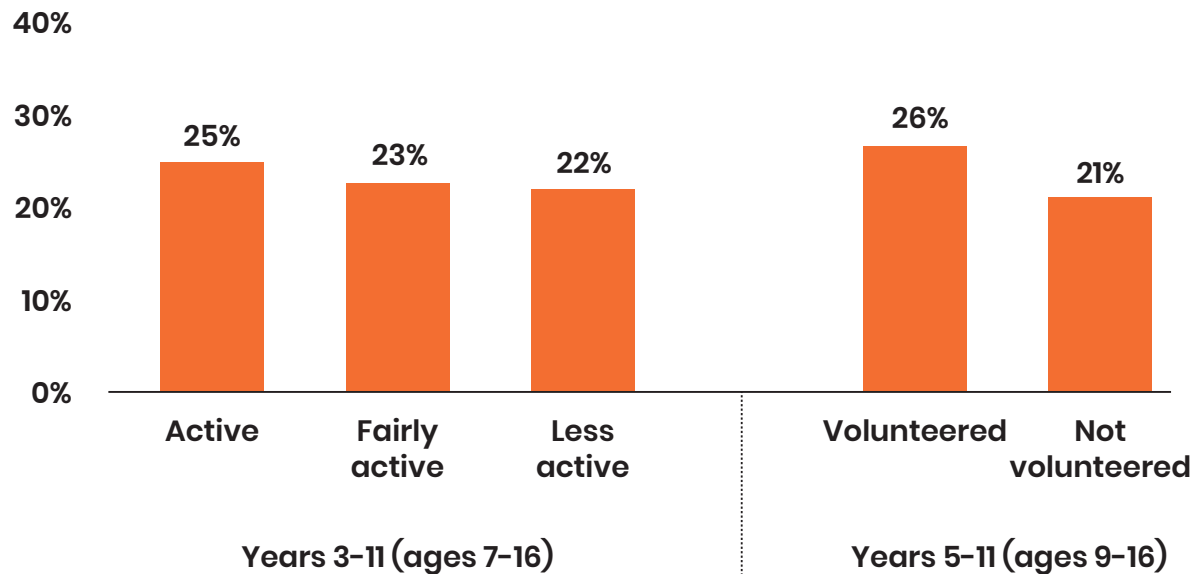


## There's a positive association between levels of sport and physical activity and levels of community development

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.

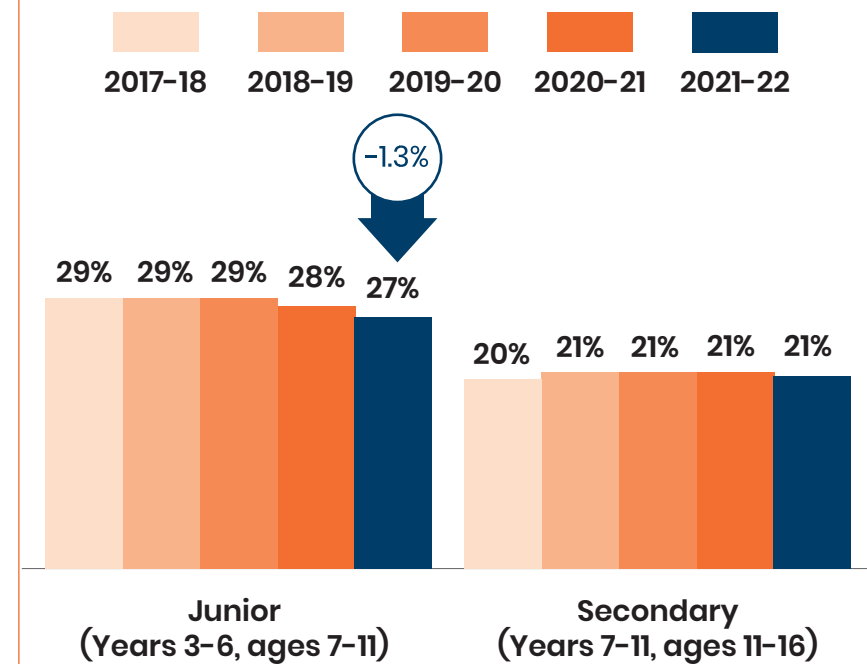
There's a clear positive association between community development and volunteering to support sport and physical activity.

**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'.)**



## Summary of change

Levels of social trust have been fairly stable across time, with just a small dip over the last 12 months (down 0.9%). This has been driven by junior age children (Years 3-6, ages 7-11) and girls.





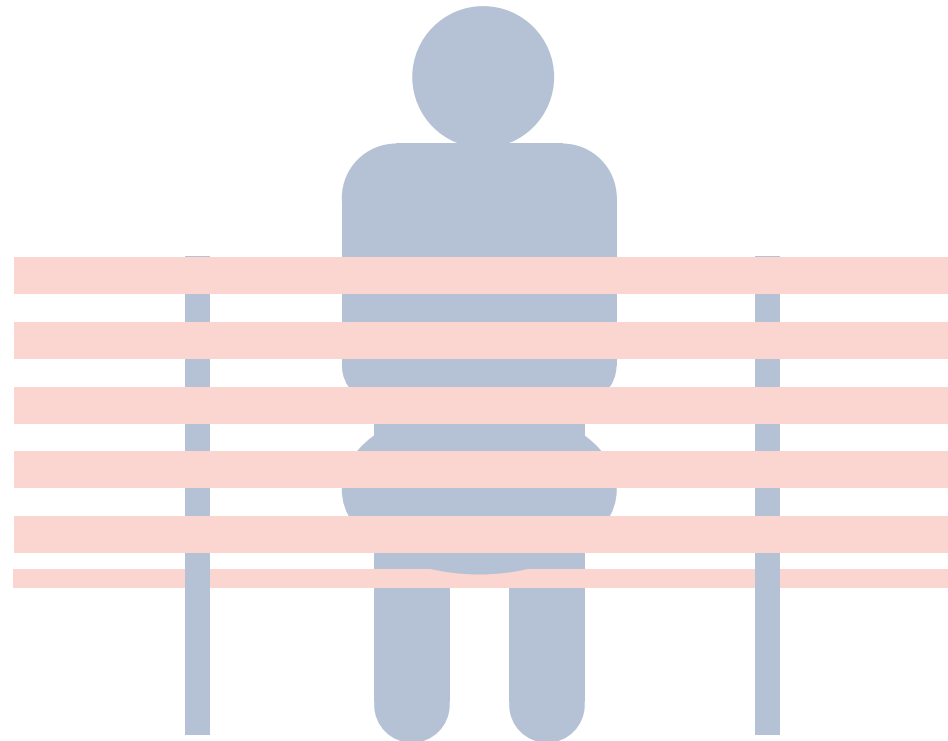
**Tackling loneliness is a key government objective. In October 2018 the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport published [‘A Connected Society’](#), its first strategy for tackling loneliness in England.**

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


**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 12 months ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

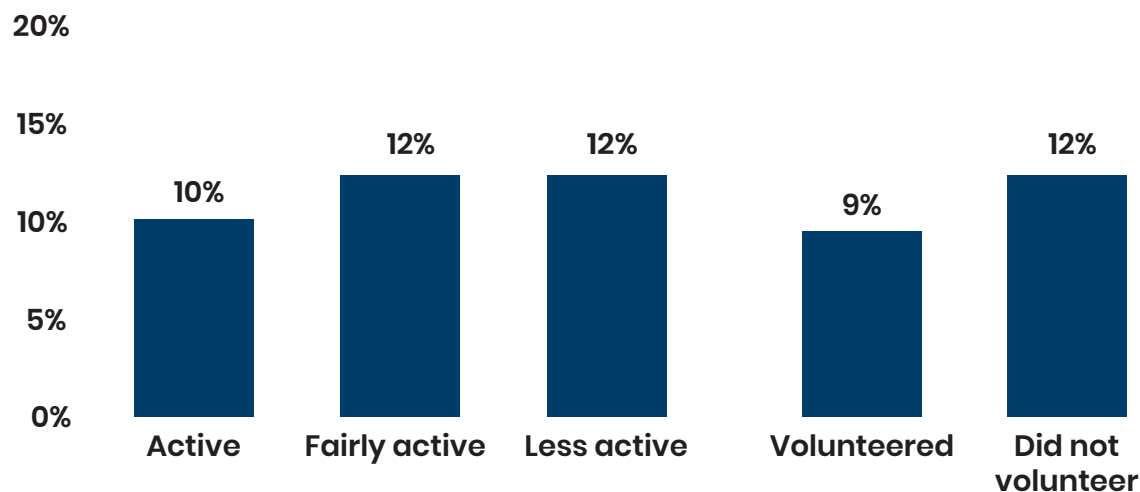


## There's a positive association between levels of sport and physical activity and levels of loneliness

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

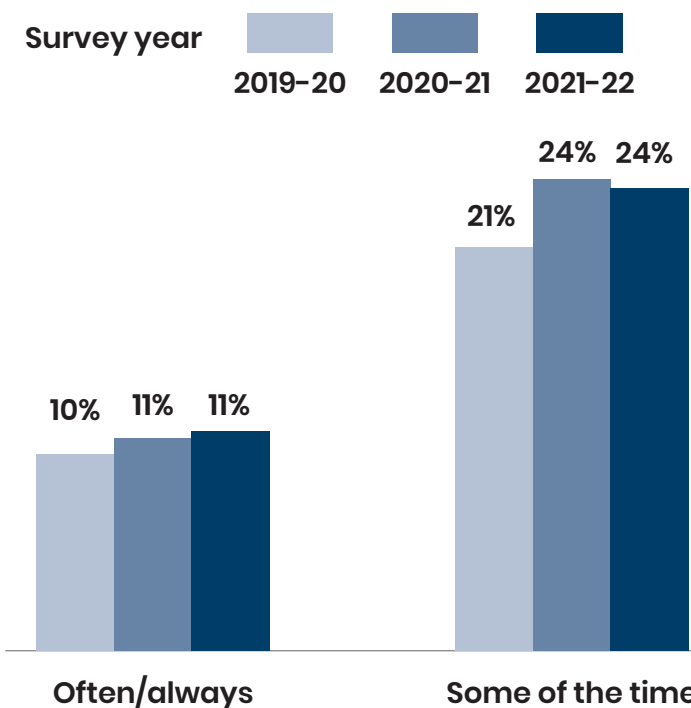
There's a clear positive association between loneliness and volunteering to support sport and physical activity. This is perhaps not surprising, as giving your time helping others to be active provides benefit to the volunteer themselves through things like making new friends and interaction with others.

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



### Summary of change

While they haven't changed compared to 12 months ago, loneliness levels remain higher than academic year 2019-20. Increases have been seen across all sub-groups.



[Link to data tables](#)



When talking about individual attitude statements, we report where a child strongly agrees<sup>1</sup> with a statement as evidence of positive feelings towards it. For example, when a child strongly agrees they enjoy taking part in sport, we describe that child as enjoying sport and physical activity. These statements were developed by an expert advisory group commissioned by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and Sport England.

The International Physical Literacy Association's definition of physical literacy has four elements: motivation, confidence, competence, and knowledge and understanding. The organisation says these help an individual "value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life".

Source: [The International Physical Literacy Association](#)

We used this definition to develop statements covering each of the five attitudes we added to the survey.

[Link to data tables](#)



<sup>1</sup> By looking specifically at those who "strongly agree", we both mitigate the tendency of children and young people to "agree" to socially desirable statements, and focus on how the firmest attitudes relate to activity and health and social outcomes.

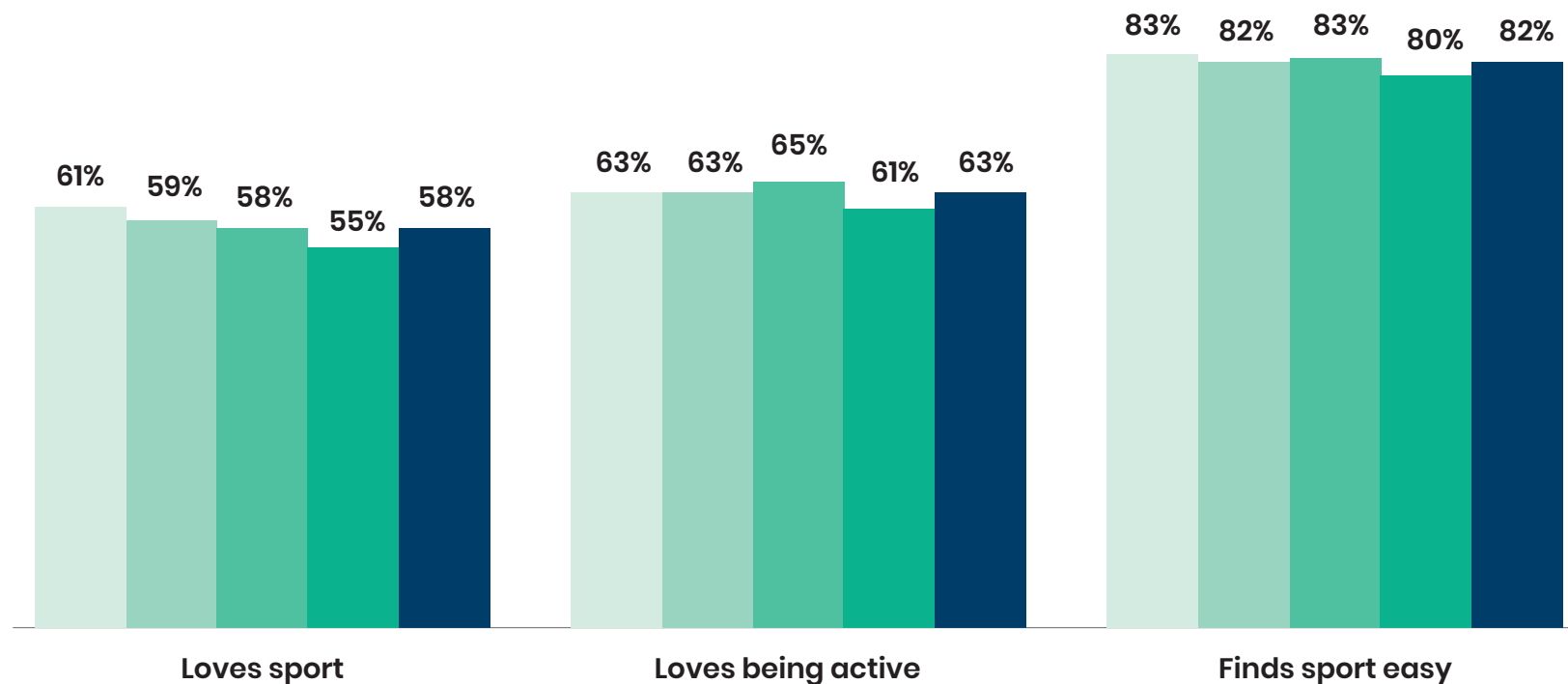


### Attitudes have recovered among the youngest children

Both enjoyment (loves sport and loves being active) and competence (finds sport easy) have recovered to pre-pandemic (academic year 2018-19) levels for children in Years 1-2 (ages 5-7).

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

### Attitudes towards sport and physical activity



Note: For this question, data for children in Years 1-2 is collected directly. Only questions deemed appropriate for 5-7-year-olds are used.

[Link to data tables](#)

# Positive attitudes

## Years 3-11 (ages 7-16)



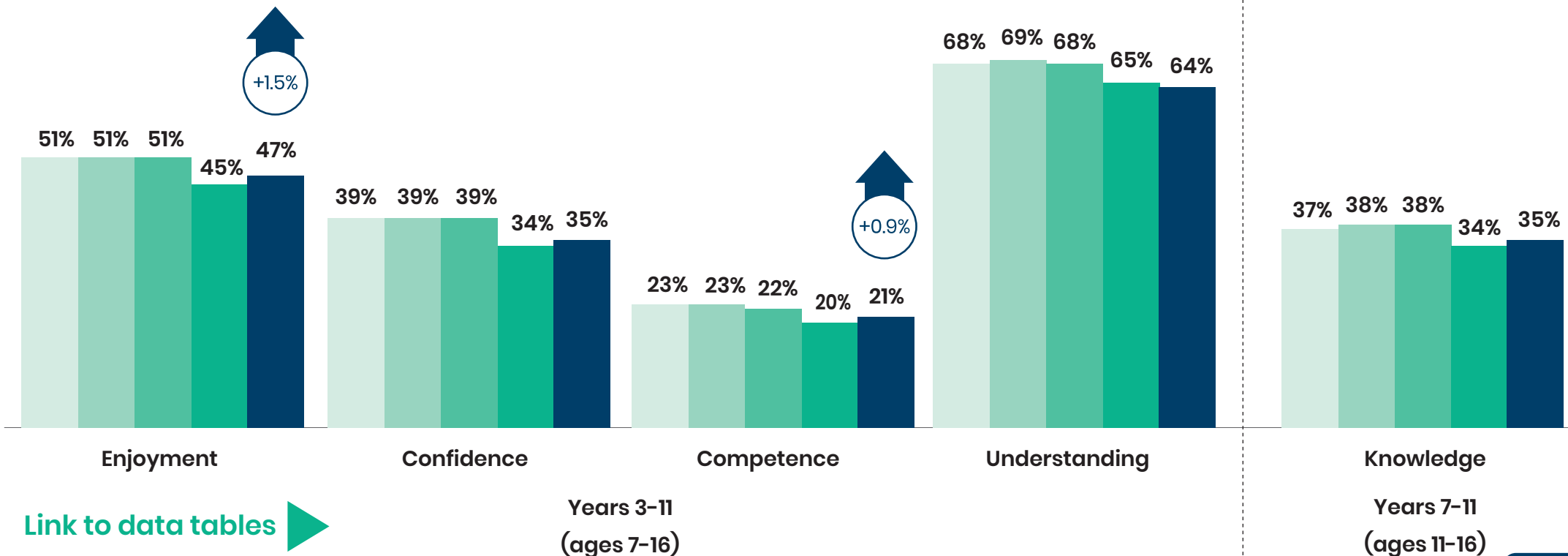
### We continue to see fewer children reporting each of the positive attitudes

Despite small increases compared to 12 months ago in both enjoyment and competence, fewer children and young people strongly agreed to each of the attitudes compared to pre-pandemic (academic year 2018-19).

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

### Attitudes towards sport and physical activity (proportion who strongly agree)

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



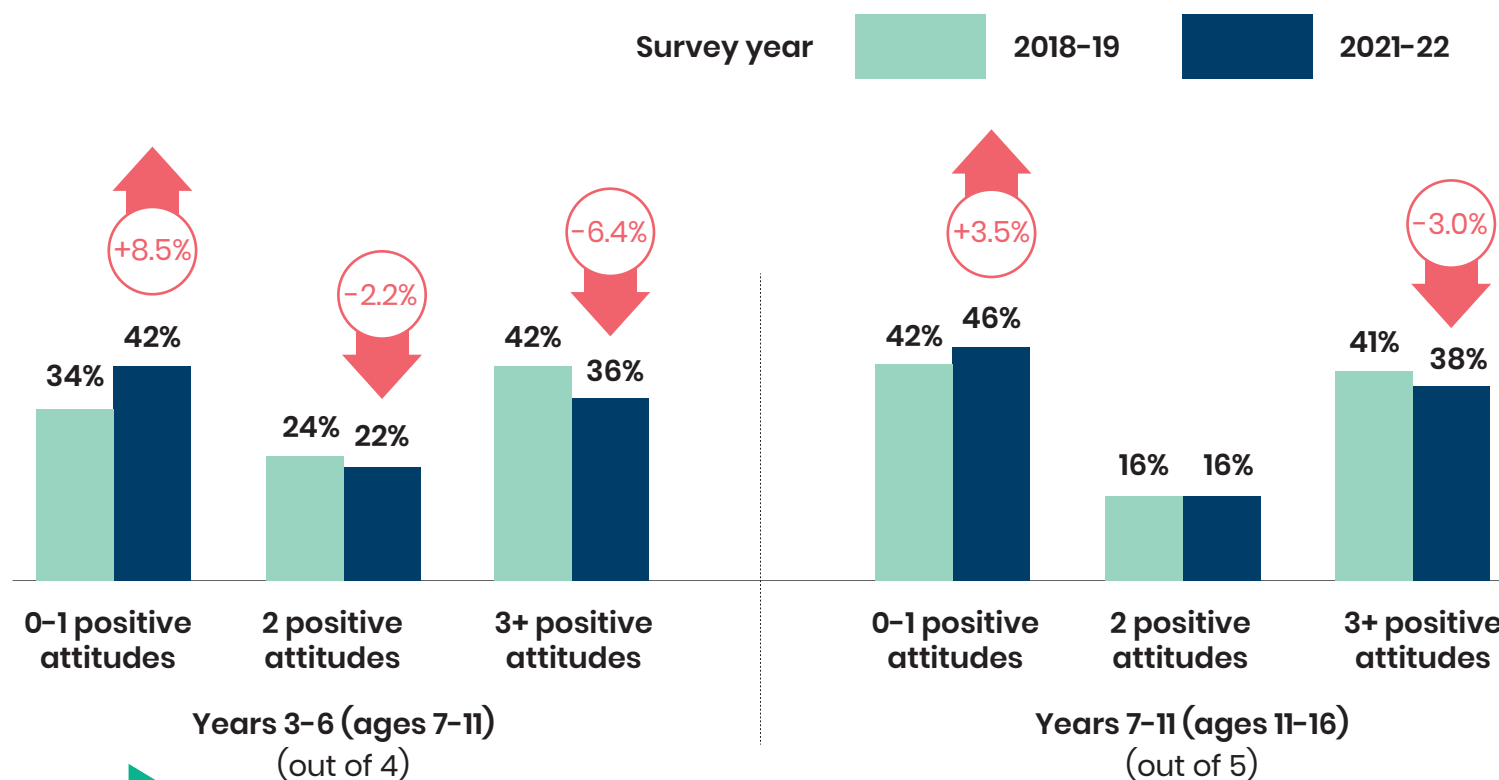
[Link to data tables](#)

## Children and young people are reporting fewer positive attitudes

Unsurprisingly, given fewer children and young people strongly agreed to each individual attitude, we see the proportion strongly agreeing to zero or one attitude is higher than pre-pandemic (academic year 2018-19) and those with three or more positive attitudes is lower. As we'll see in the next pages, this is a concern as there are clear links between positive attitudes and both the amount of activity they do and the benefits they get from doing so.

Arrows show change from 3 years ago (pre-pandemic).  
%  
No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

### Number of positive attitudes (how many attitudes they strongly agreed to)



[Link to data tables](#)



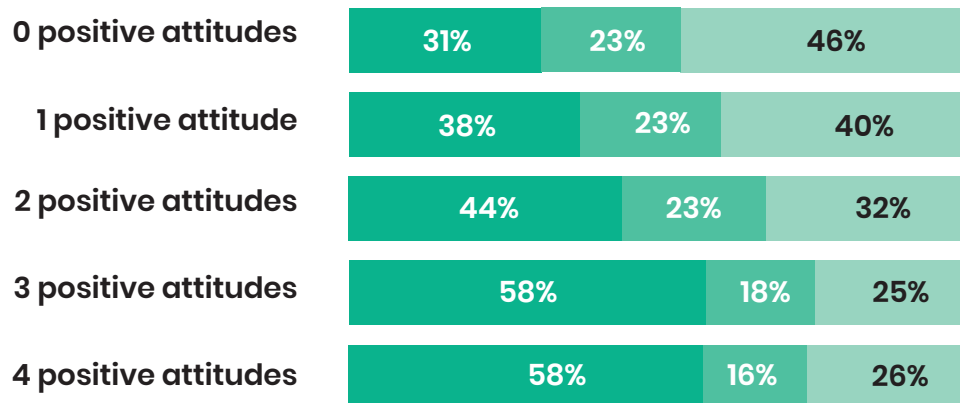
## There's a strong positive association between physical literacy and activity levels

The association between positive attitudes (as an indicator of physical literacy) and activity levels reinforces the importance of supporting all children and young people to have the best possible experience of being active.



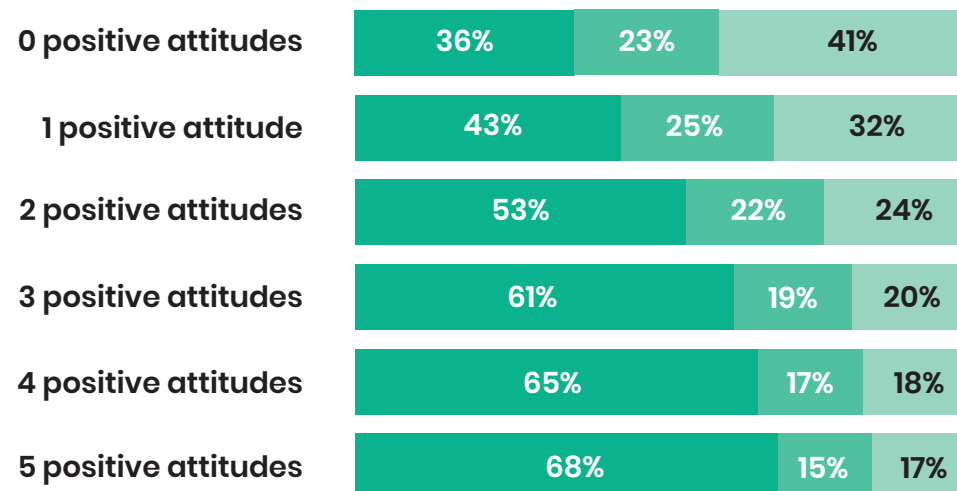
### Years 3-6 (ages 7-11)

58% of children who report four positive attitudes are active, compared to just 31% who report no positive attitudes.



### Years 7-11 (ages 11-16)

68% of young people who report five positive attitudes are active, compared to just 36% who report no positive attitudes.

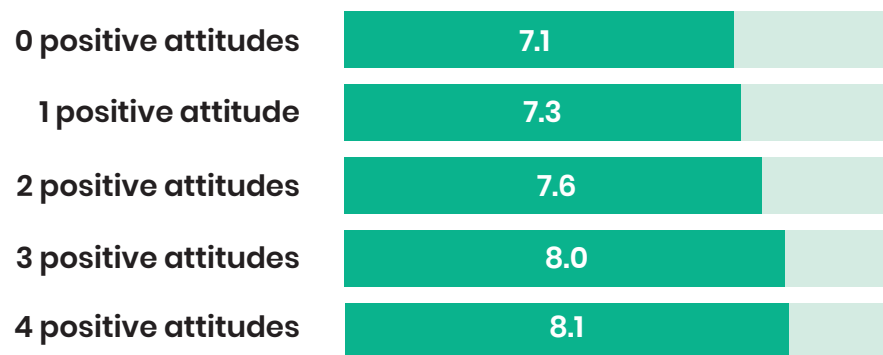


## Physically literate children and young people are happier

The positive association between positive attitudes (as an indicator of physical literacy) and mental wellbeing, measured here through happiness, reinforces the importance of supporting all children and young people to have the best possible experience of being active.

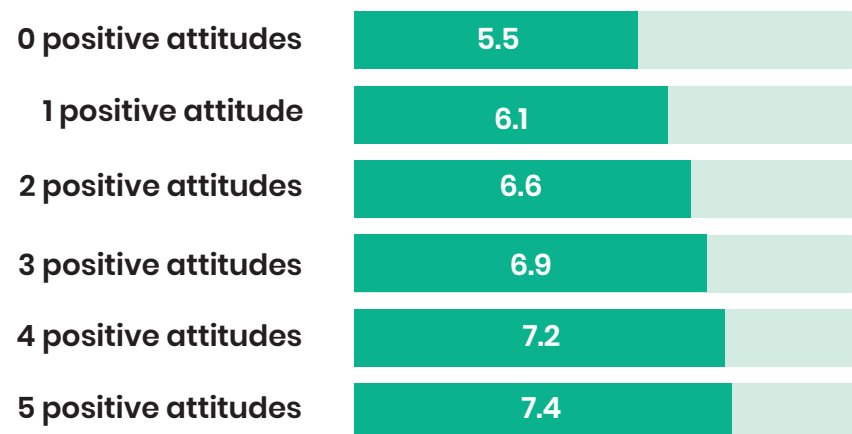
### Years 3-6 (ages 7-11)

Children who report four positive attitudes score, on average, 8.1 out of 10 on happiness (where 10 is very happy and 0 is not happy at all). This falls to 7.1 for those who report no positive attitudes.



### Years 7-11 (ages 11-16)

Those who report five positive attitudes score, on average, 7.4 out of 10 on happiness (where 10 is very happy and 0 is not happy at all). This falls to 5.5 for those who report no positive attitudes.



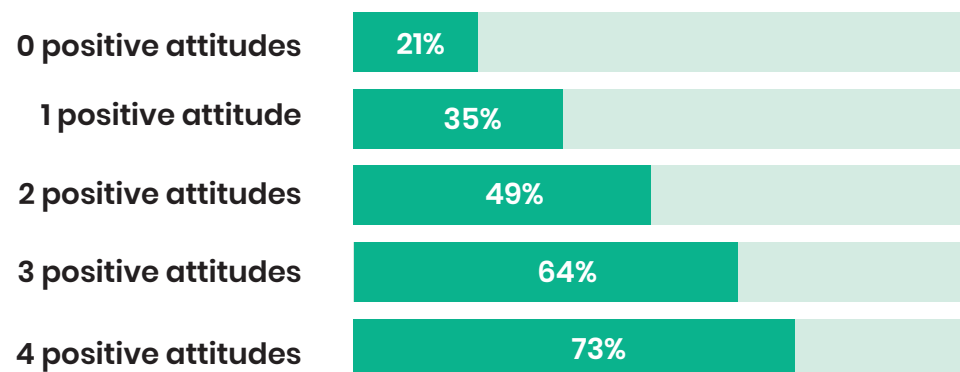


## When they find something difficult, physically literate children and young people are more likely to keep trying until they can do it

The positive association between positive attitudes (as an indicator of physical literacy) and levels of individual development, measured here through 'keep trying', reinforces the importance of supporting all children and young people to have the best possible experience of being active.

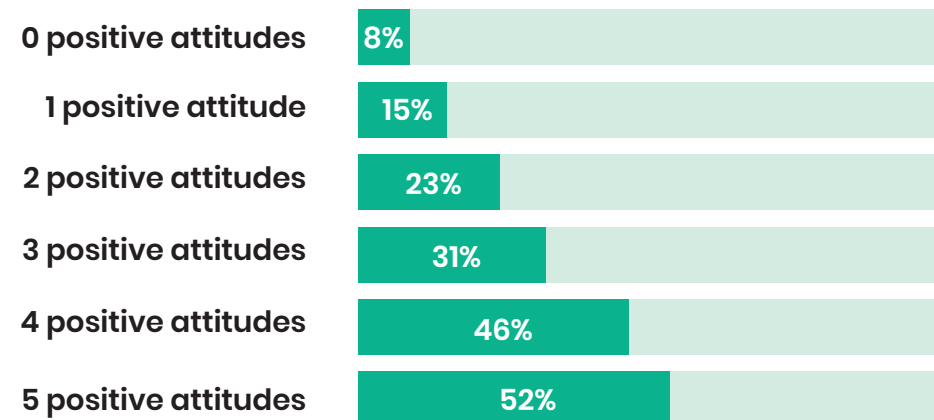
### Years 3-6 (ages 7-11)

Of children who report four positive attitudes, 73% strongly agree to the statement 'if I find something difficult I keep trying until I can do it'. This falls to 21% for those who report no positive attitudes.



### Years 7-11 (ages 11-16)

Of young people who report five positive attitudes, 52% strongly agree with the statement 'if I find something difficult I keep trying until I can do it'. This falls to 8% for those who report no positive attitudes.

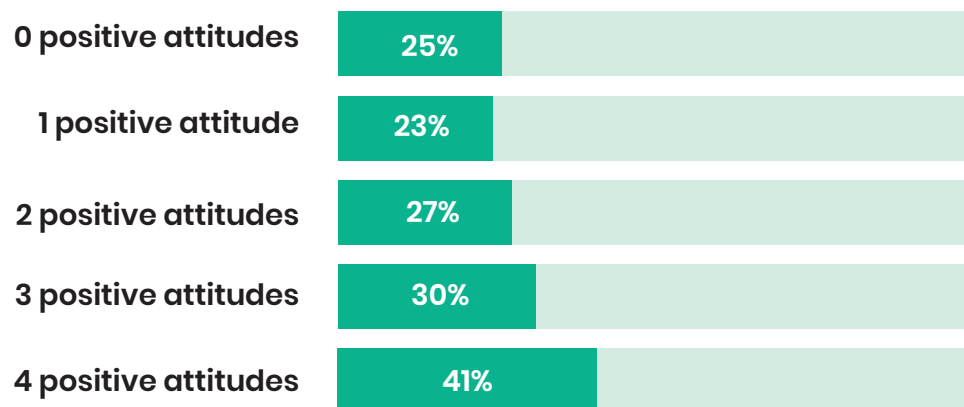


## Physically literate children and young people are more likely to trust others of a similar age to themselves

The positive association between positive attitudes (as an indicator of physical literacy) and levels of community development, measured here through 'trust', reinforces the importance of supporting all children and young people to have the best possible experience of being active.

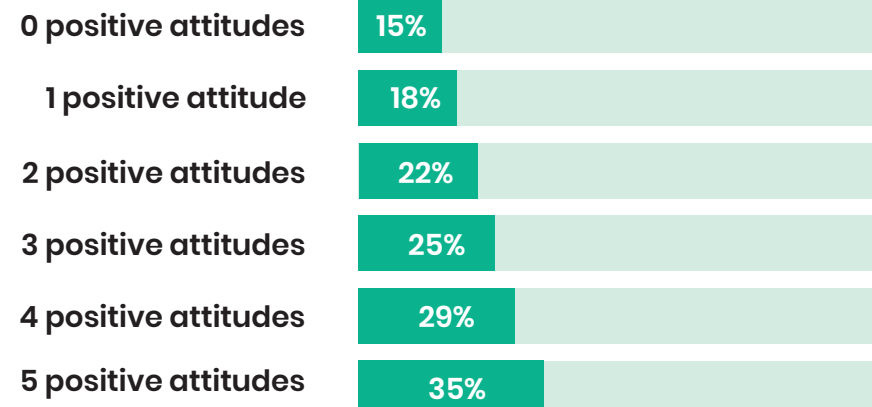
### Years 3-6 (ages 7-11)

Of children who have a positive attitude to all four statements, 41% strongly agree they can trust people of a similar age to themselves. This compares with 25% for those who report no positive attitudes.

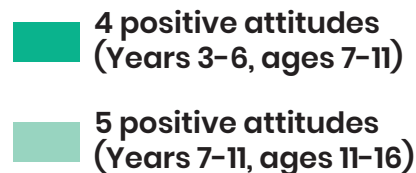


### Years 7-11 (ages 11-16)

Of those who report five positive attitudes, 35% strongly agree that they can trust people of a similar age to themselves, compared to 15% of those who report no positive attitudes.

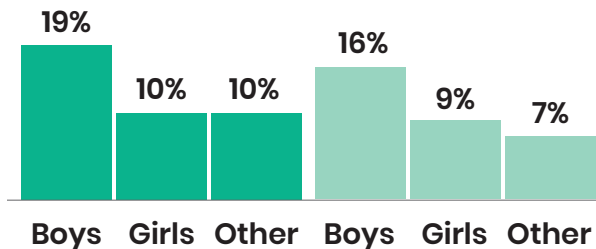


# Positive attitudes



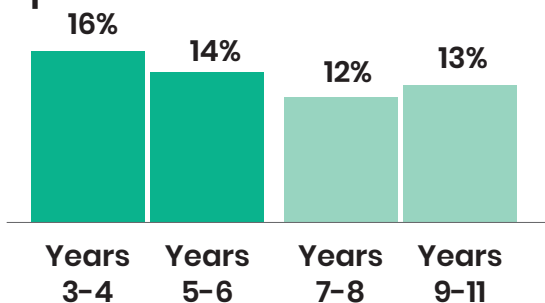
## 1 Gender

Boys are most likely to have four or five positive attitudes.



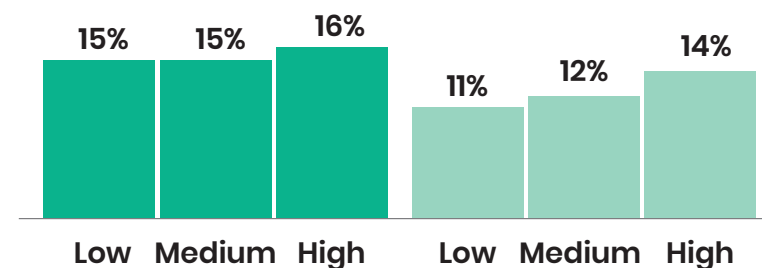
## 2 Year group

Those in Years 3-4 (ages 7-9) are most likely to have four positive attitudes.



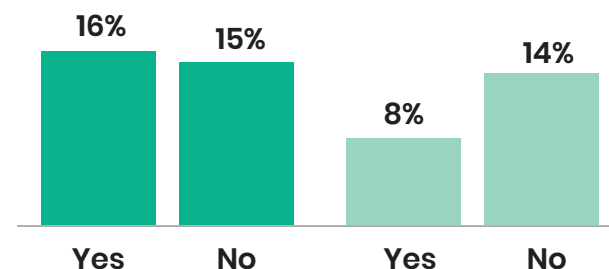
## 3 Family affluence

The likelihood of having five positive attitudes increases with affluence for young people in Years 7-11 (ages 11-16). There are no differences by affluence for children in Years 3-6 (ages 7-11).



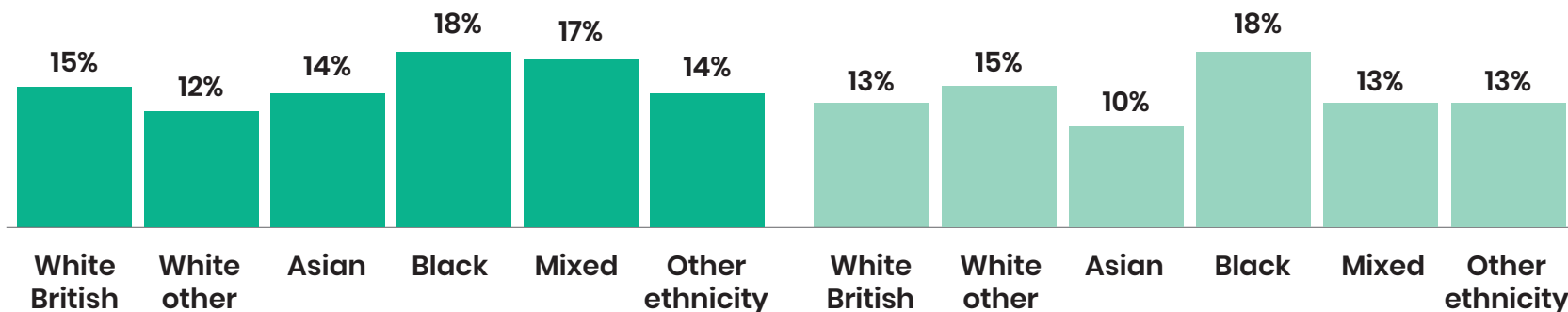
## 4 Disability and long-term health conditions

Young people with a disability or long-term health condition in Years 7-11 (aged 11-16) are less likely to have five positive attitudes, compared to those without.



## 5 Ethnicity

Black young people in Years 7-11 (ages 11-16) are more likely to have five positive attitudes than young people overall.



[Link to data tables](#)

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

### Survey year



Arrows show change from 3 years ago (pre-pandemic). No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

## Secondary age boys are most likely to have seen attitudes recover compared to pre-pandemic

Secondary age boys (Years 7-11, ages 11-16) have seen the proportion with three or more positive attitudes return to pre-pandemic (academic year 2018-19) levels, whereas this remains lower for junior age boys (Years 3-6, ages 7-11) and all girls.

### Enjoyment

Girls have seen no recovery in enjoyment and levels remain below pre-pandemic (academic year 2018-19). Among boys, despite a small increase compared to 12 months ago, those in Years 3-6 (ages 7-11) see enjoyment remain below pre-pandemic levels, whereas those in Years 7-11 (ages 11-16) see it return to pre-pandemic levels.

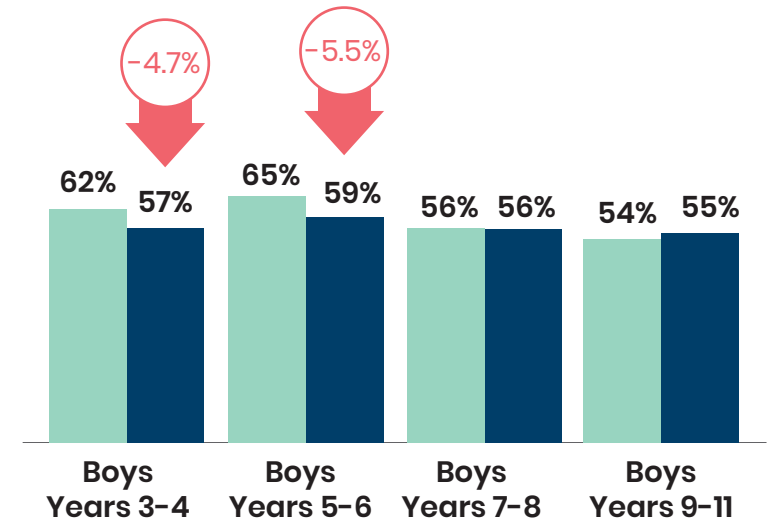
### Competence

Compared to 12 months ago, there's been a small increase in the proportion strongly agreeing they find exercise and sport easy. This was driven by boys overall and those in Years 9-11 (ages 13-16), the latter seeing levels return to those seen pre-pandemic. Girls in Years 9-11 (ages 13-16) see competence levels increase above pre-pandemic levels.

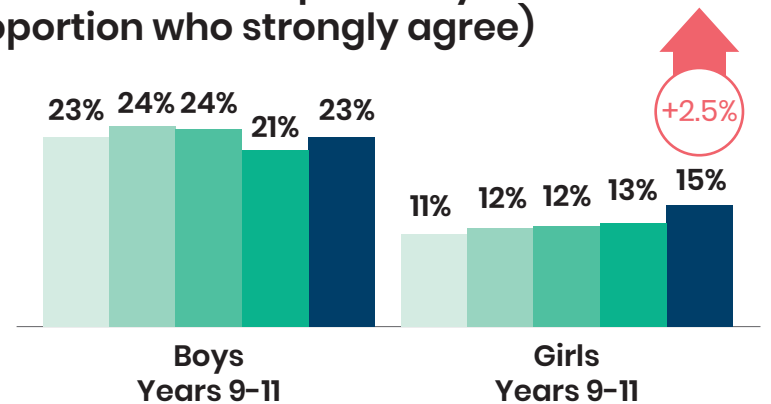
### Understanding

Secondary age girls (Years 7-11, ages 11-16) have seen a further drop in the proportion strongly agreeing they understand why exercise and sports are good for them. In contrast, boys in Years 9-11 (ages 13-16) have seen understanding recover to pre-pandemic (academic year 2018-19) levels.

## I enjoy taking part in exercise and sports (proportion who strongly agree)



## I find exercise and sport easy (proportion who strongly agree)





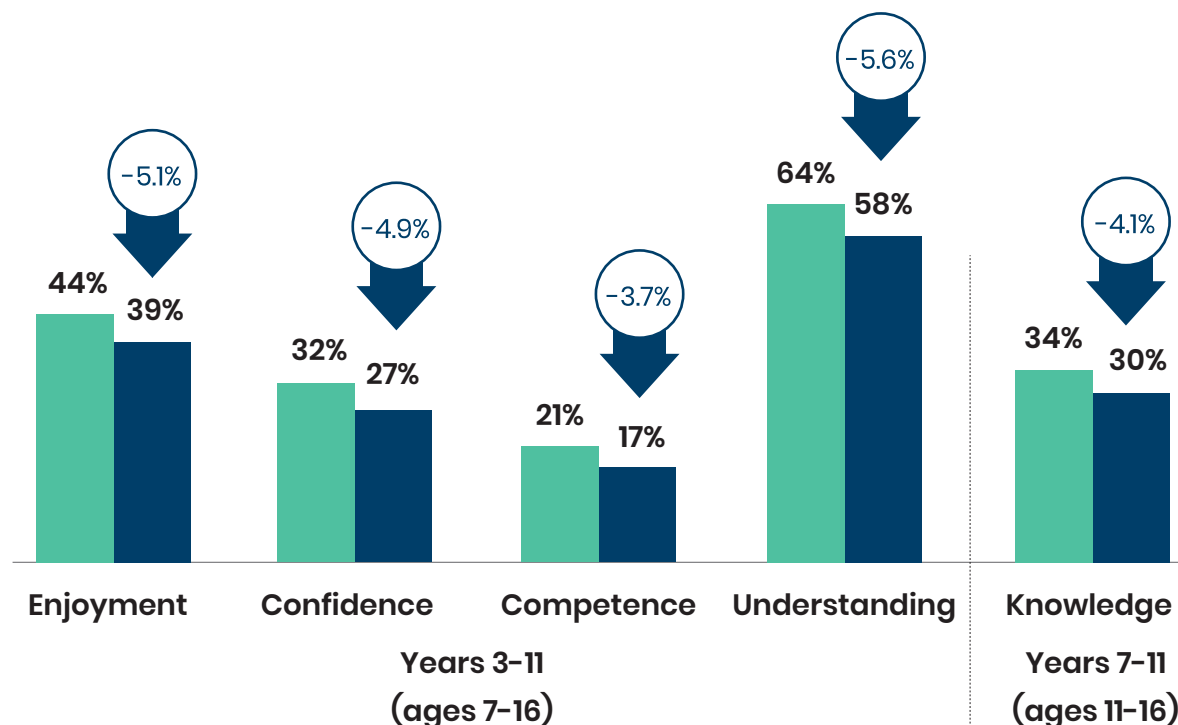
## Positive attitudes have fallen more for those with a disability or long-term health condition than those without

For children and young people with a disability or long-term health condition, drops have been seen in those strongly agreeing to all attitudes, compared to 24 months ago - the earliest point at which data is available. In all cases, the drops are greater than those for children and young people without a disability or long-term health condition.

Arrows show change from 24 months ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

### Children and young people with a disability or long-term health condition (proportion who strongly agree)

Survey year 2019-20 2021-22



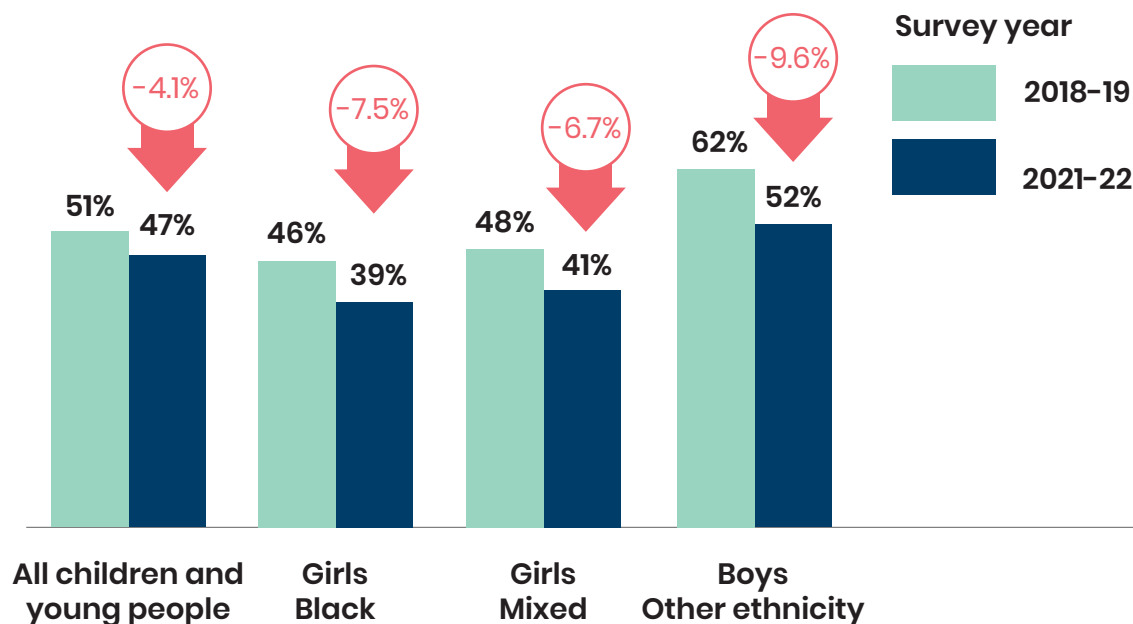
Note: A new question was introduced for 2019-20 to capture consistent disability and long-term health condition data across all year groups. See the [definitions](#) page for more detail.

## Children and young people of Black, Mixed and Other ethnicities are driving the drops in positive attitudes

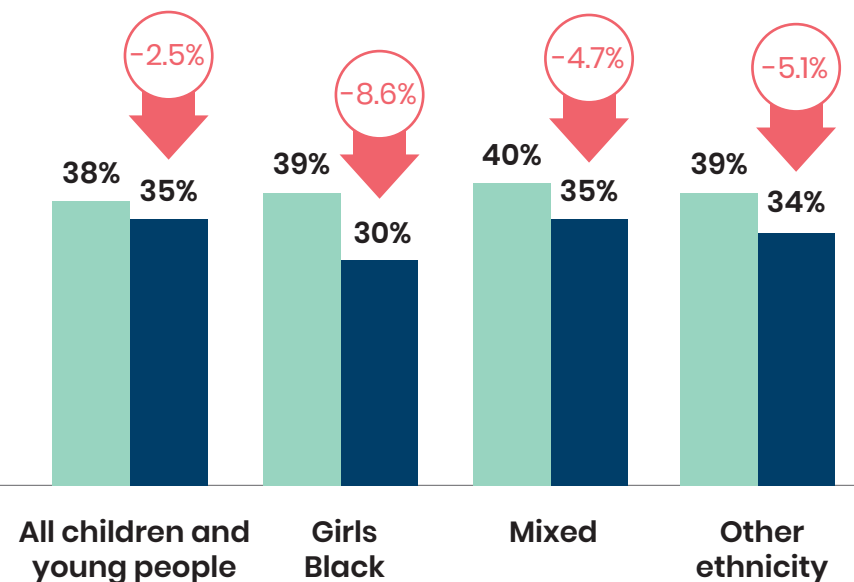
- Black girls have seen notable drops in both enjoyment and knowledge compared to pre-pandemic (academic year 2018-19).
- Girls of Mixed ethnicity have seen a large drop in enjoyment and confidence, whereas boys have a large drop in competence. Knowledge is down for all children and young people of Mixed ethnicity.
- Competence and knowledge are both down for children and young people of Other ethnicity, while boys also see a drop in enjoyment.

↑ %  
Arrows show change from 3 years ago (pre-pandemic). No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

### I enjoy taking part in exercise and sports (proportion who strongly agree)



### I know how to get involved and improve my skills in lots of different types of exercise and sports (proportion who strongly agree)



[Link to data tables](#)

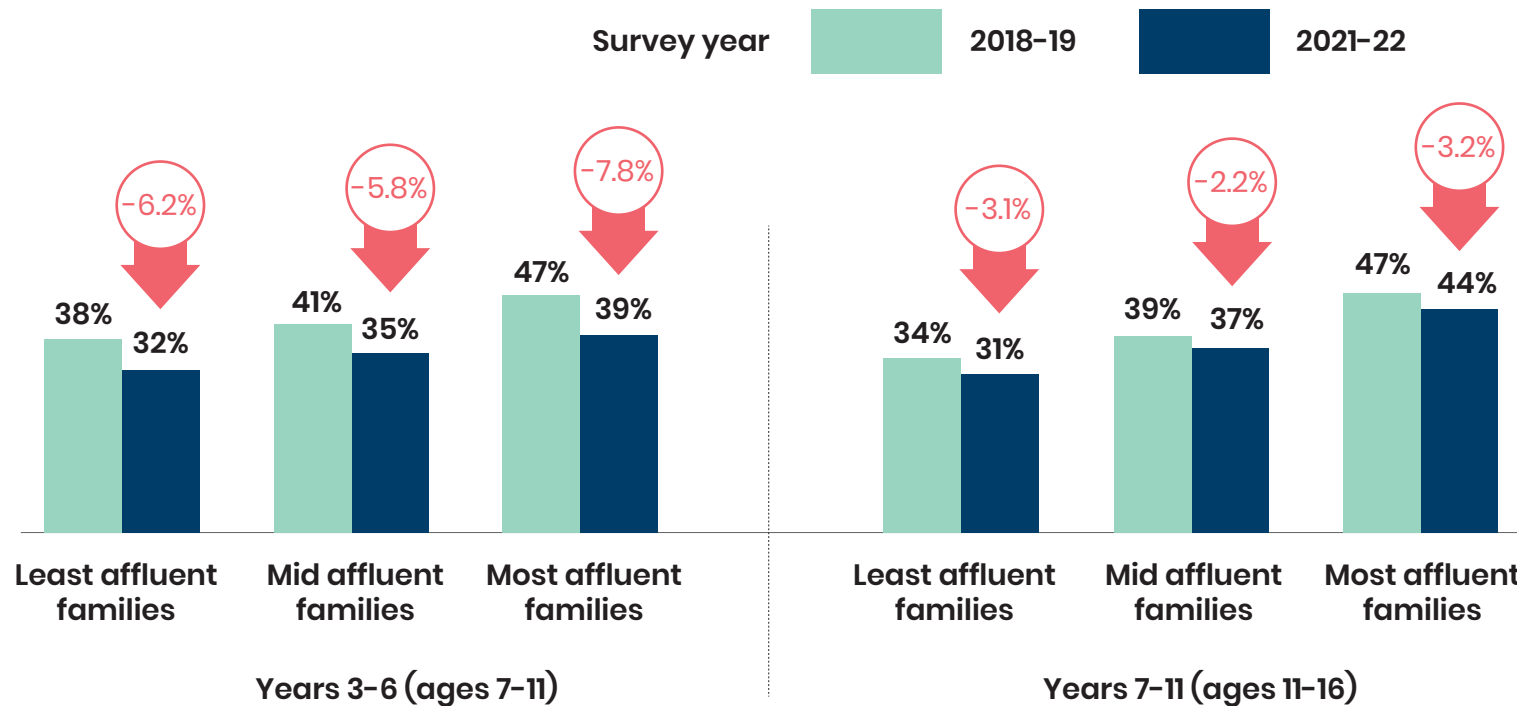


## Positive attitudes remain down for all affluence groups

Despite small increases for enjoyment, competence and knowledge, compared to 12 months ago, among those from the most affluent families, all attitudes remain down compared to pre-pandemic across all affluence groups - meaning the proportion with three or more positive attitudes is also down for all groups. The only exception is knowledge, among those from the least affluent families where there's no reportable change.

Arrows show change from 3 years ago (pre-pandemic). No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

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



Notes: Due to the coronavirus pandemic, one of the components used to generate the family affluence scale isn't currently applicable. As such, the data presented here uses an adjusted definition. See our [definitions](#) page for more details.

[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

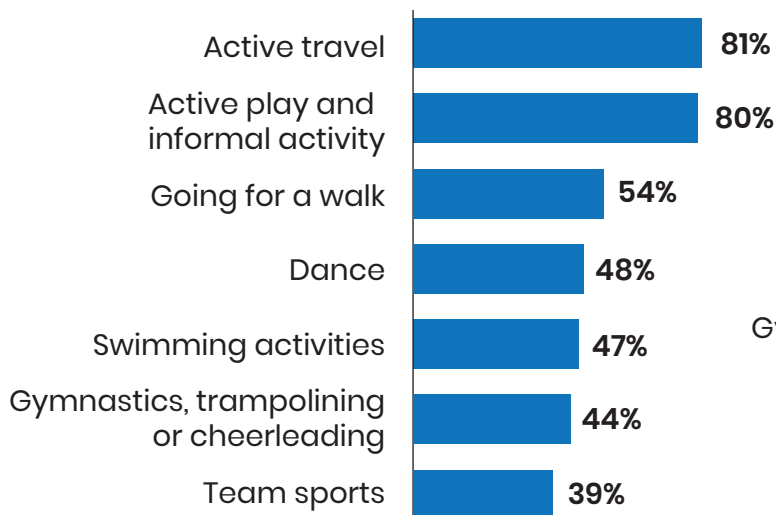
Active play (62%), team sports (58%) and active travel (57%) are the most common activities done in the last week across all children and young people.

Team sports are less common among infant age children (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 (Years 1-2, ages 5-7).

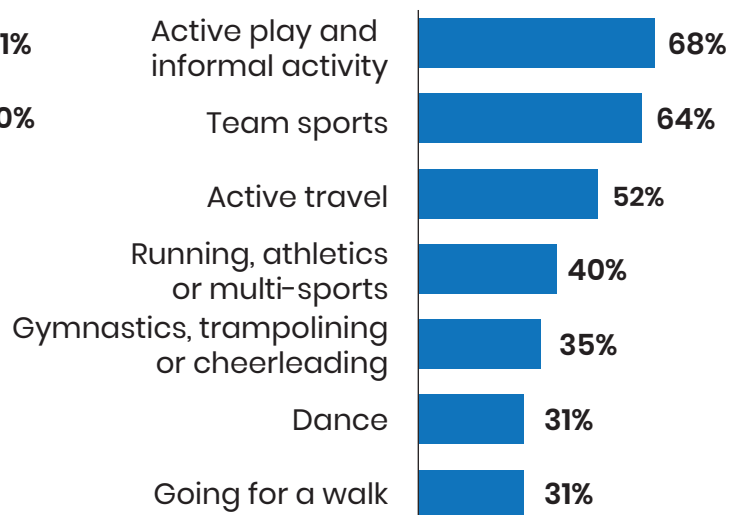
Running, athletics or multi-sports (including the active mile) are most prevalent among junior age children (Years 3-6, ages 7-11).

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

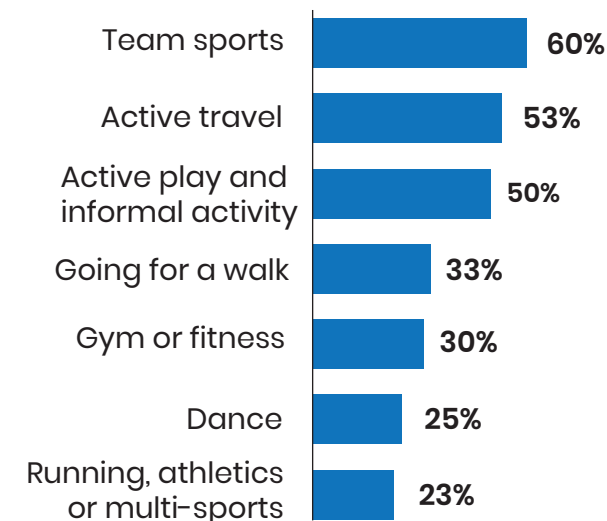
Years 1-2 (ages 5-7)



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



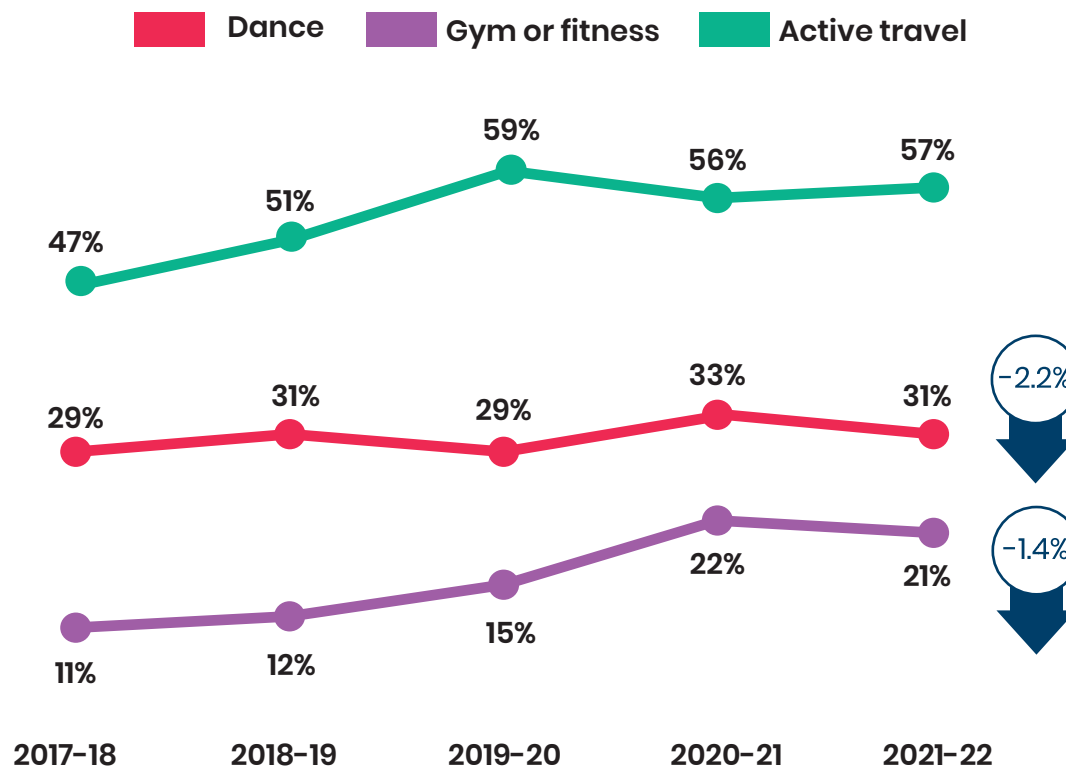
### Increases in active travel and gym and fitness, seen during the pandemic, have been largely retained

The proportion of children and young people walking, cycling or scootering to get to places (active travel) increased across academic year 2019-20, despite school settings being closed at points, indicating the importance of non-school active travel. These increases have been maintained over the last 12 months.

While there was a small increase in dance during academic year 2020-21, the proportion taking part once a week is broadly flat over the longer term. This, however, masks increases for both the youngest (Years 1-2, ages 5-7) and oldest (Years 7-11, ages 11-16) children, who both see dance levels remain up compared to pre-pandemic.

During the pandemic there was a large increase in gym and fitness activity driven by younger children (Years 1-6, ages 5-11). This age group has seen levels fall back, although they do remain substantial and above pre-pandemic levels. In contrast, older children (Years 7-11, ages 11-16) are following a steady upward trend in those doing gym and fitness.

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



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

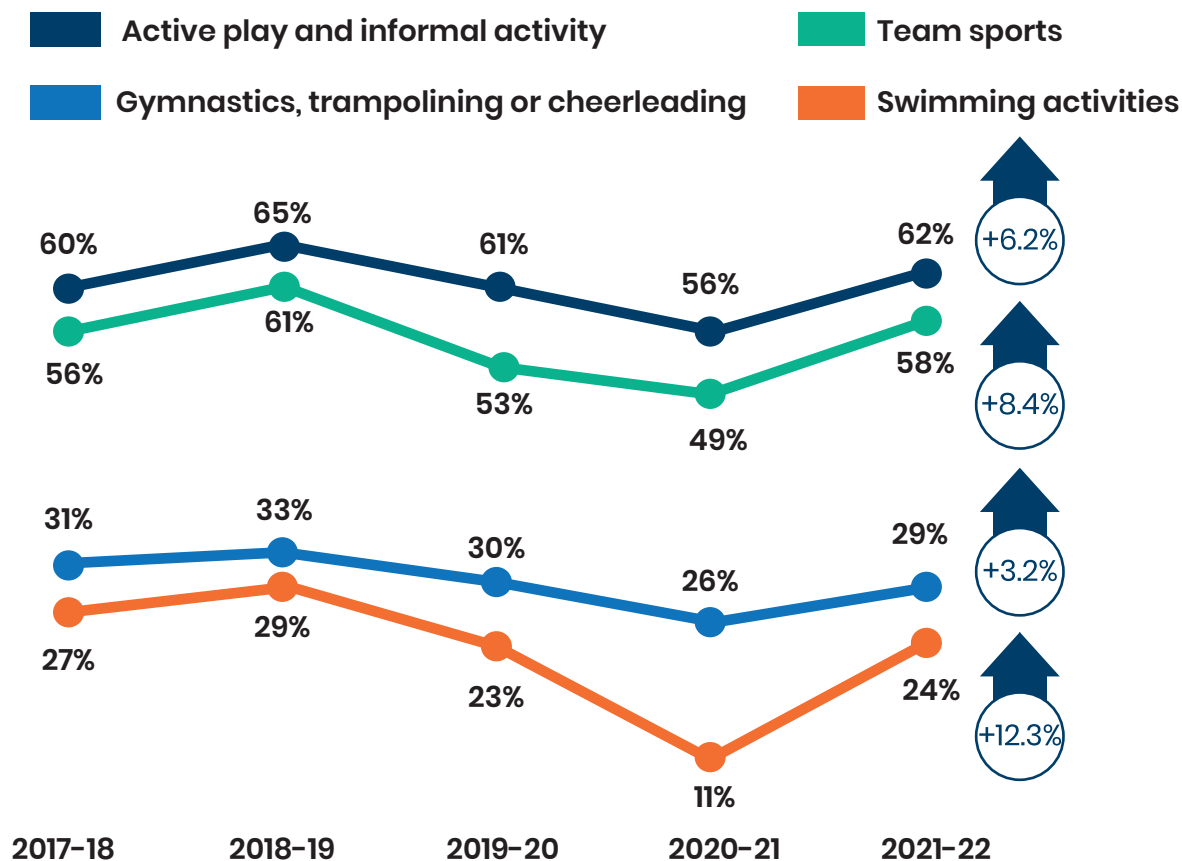


### We've seen notable recovery in some key activities but the proportions taking part all remain below pre-pandemic levels

Some activities were more notably hit during the pandemic than others and, while there are clear signs of recovery, none are yet seeing the proportion of children and young people taking part return fully to pre-pandemic levels.

- The proportion taking part in active play and informal activities remains 2.8% below pre-pandemic levels, however within this we've seen levels for secondary age children (Years 7-11, ages 11-16) return to pre-pandemic levels.
- Team sports participation remains 3.3% below pre-pandemic levels.
- The proportion taking part in gymnastics, trampolining or cheerleading remains 3.9% below pre-pandemic levels.
- Swimming levels, while seeing a significant increase compared to 12 months ago due to the scale of the drops during the pandemic, remain 5.6% below pre-pandemic.

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



\*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.

[Link to data tables](#)



# Types of activity

## Trends: drop back

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



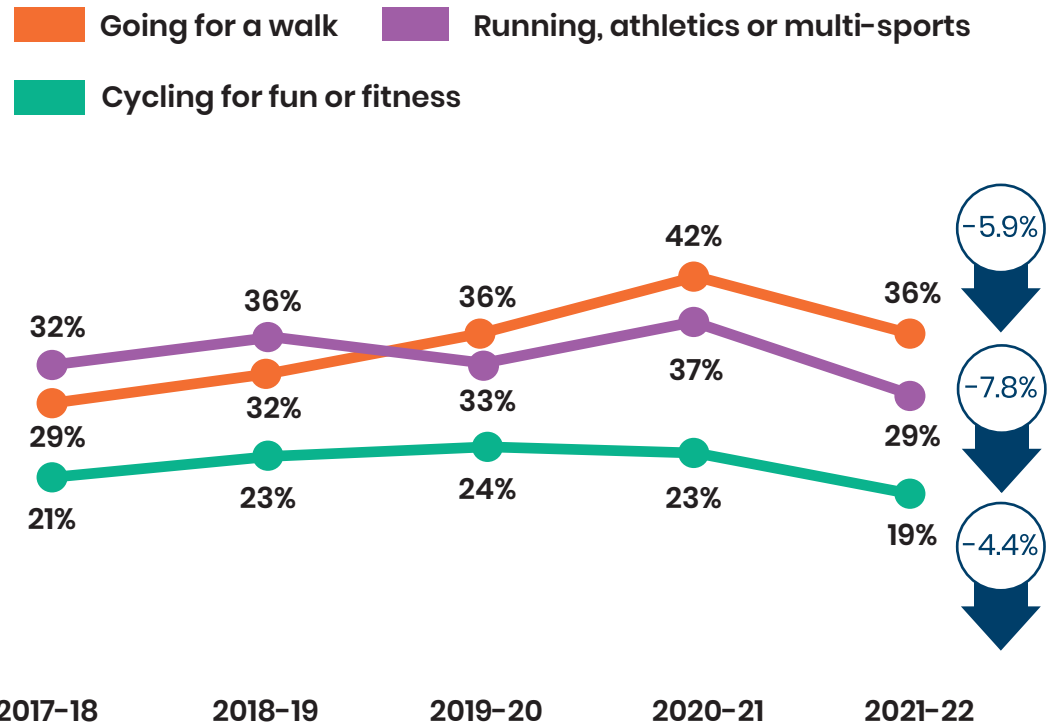
### While going for a walk remains above pre-pandemic levels, running and going for a bike ride have fallen below pre-pandemic

The proportion of children and young people going for a walk increased substantially during the pandemic, so it's unsurprising this has fallen back. Levels do, however, remain above pre-pandemic (academic year 2018-19) by 3.9%.

Running, athletics and multi-sports levels have fallen back sharply compared to 12 months ago and, as such, are now 6.2% below pre-pandemic. This drop has been seen across both junior (Years 3-6, ages 7-11) and secondary (Years 7-11, ages 11-16) age children and young people.

Going on a bike ride stayed fairly stable across the period of the pandemic, however we've now seen a drop, across all age groups.

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



[Link to data tables](#)



# Swimming confidence and capability

## 72% can swim 25 metres unaided

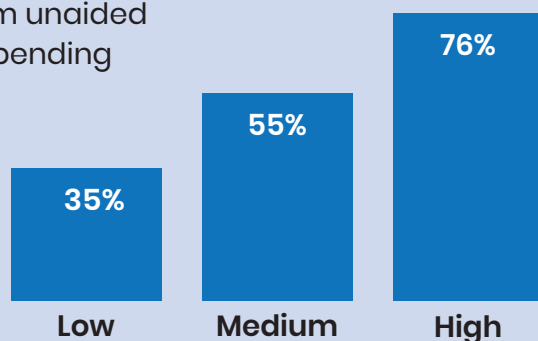
Just 72% of children in Year 7 (first year of secondary school, ages 11-12) meet the guidelines that children should be able to swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25m by the time they leave primary school. This is a further drop of 4.0% compared to 12 months ago and now sits 6.3% below pre-pandemic.

Generally, swimming proficiency increases with age and an average of 58% of all children and young people in Years 1-11 (ages 5-16) can swim 25m unaided. Only young people in Years 9-11 (ages 13-16) haven't seen their ability to swim 25m fall below pre-pandemic levels.

Pupils are being offered fewer swimming lessons at school. Teachers in 30% of state primary schools told us they offered fewer than 10 lessons per pupil across academic year 2021-22 (the equivalent of weekly sessions for half a term), up 8.2% compared to academic year 2017-18 - while those offering 10+ sessions fell by 9.6% over the same period.

### Impact of family affluence

Ability to swim 25m unaided differs greatly, depending on affluence.



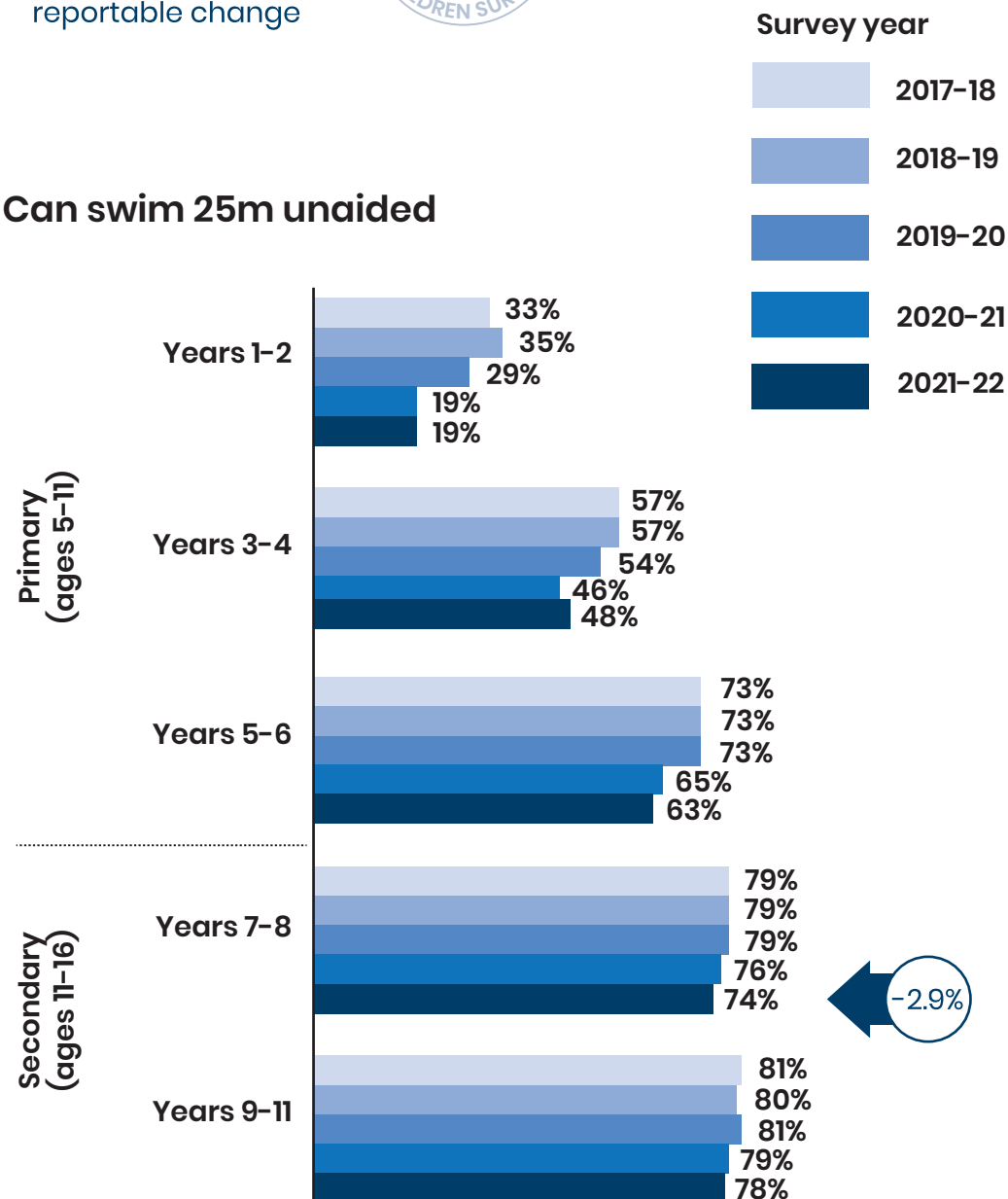
[Link to data tables](#)



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



## Can swim 25m unaided



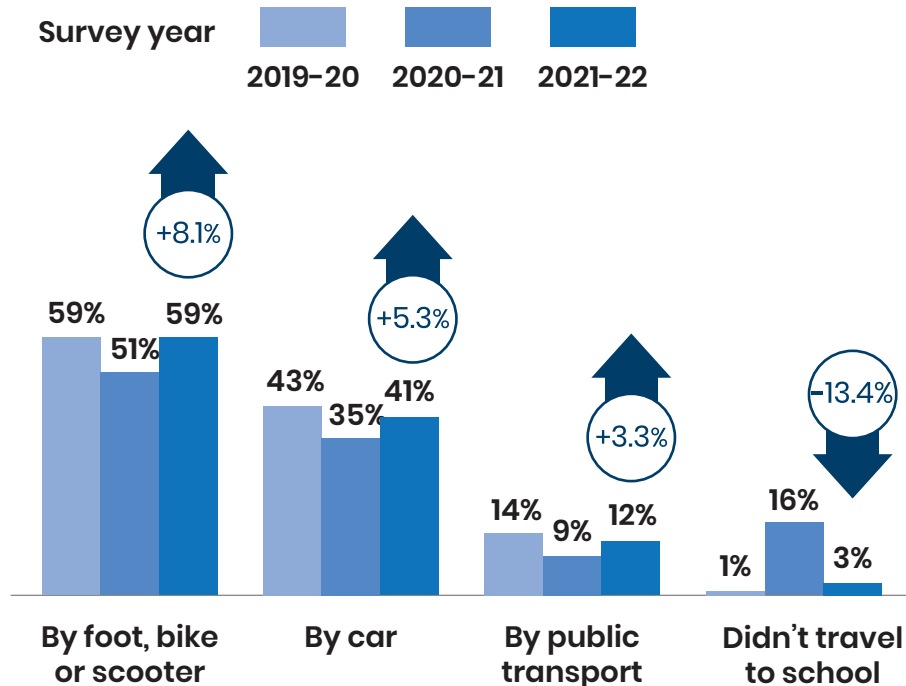
## Active travel is the most common mode of transport for getting to school

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 (Years 3-6, ages 7-11) are the most likely to be taken by car (49%), while secondary age young people (Years 7-11, ages 11-16) are the most likely to use public transport (23%).

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

During the height of the pandemic (academic year 2020-21) we saw a spike in those not travelling to school - this was due to remote learning - however all travel modes have returned to 2019-20 levels, with less disruption seen across the most recent academic year.

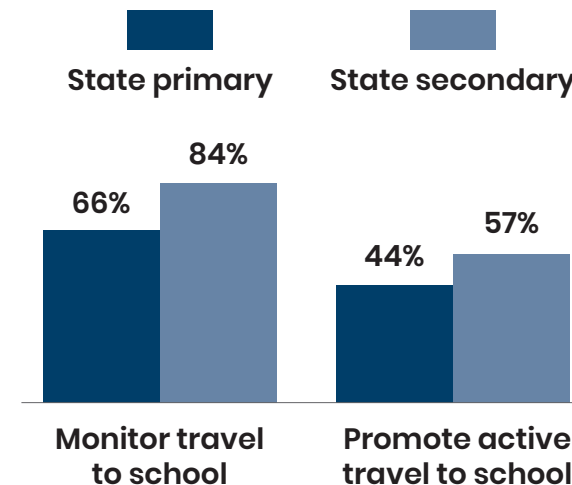
### How did you get to school today?



[Link to data tables](#)

Teachers in just under three-quarters of schools told us their school monitors how their pupils travel to school, while just over half said they promote active travel to school - the latter increasing slightly since 2017-18 (up 6%).

In both instances this is notably 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

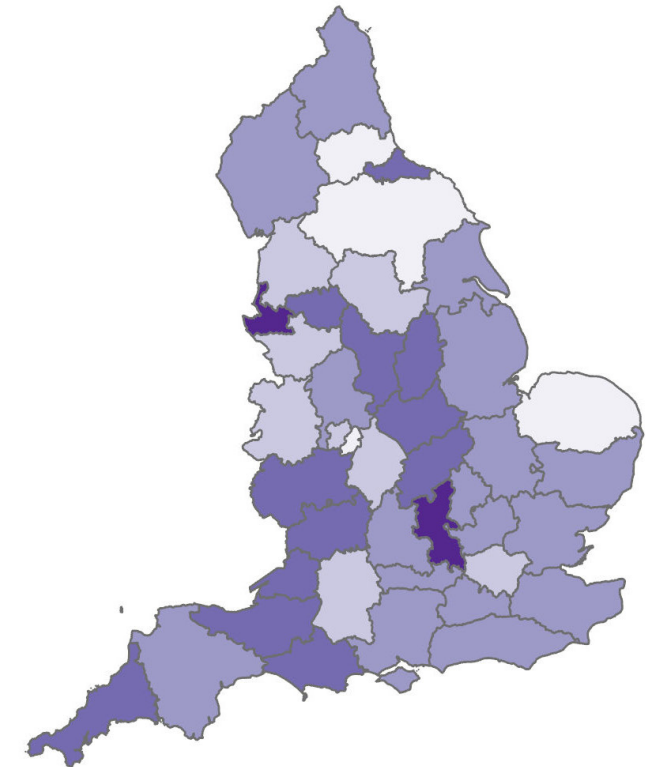
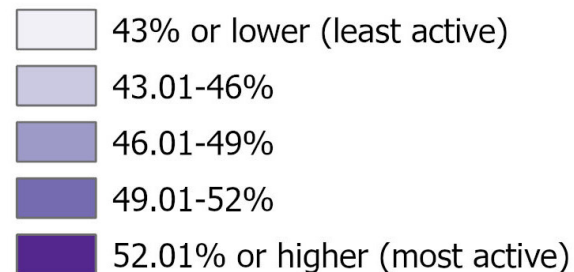
Please use the [Active Lives Online Tool](#) to run your own analysis of the data – the tool will be updated with the latest data shortly after its publication.

[Link to data tables](#)



## The picture across England

Active  
(an average of 60+ minutes per day)



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Sport England 100033111 2022.

## Activity Guidelines

The Chief Medical Officers recommends, 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, understanding and knowledge. 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. As a result of the pandemic and foreign holidays not being as likely, an adjusted scale is presented 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.

## Deprivation of place

The postcode of the school the child or young person attends is used to establish the deprivation level of the place in which they're based. We use the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), which measures the proportion of all children aged 0-15 living in income-deprived families and is therefore specifically relevant to children and young people.

## 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 (including at home when school sites were closed to most pupils), 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 and 104,404 in 2021-22.

### 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 and 98,729 in 2021-22
- 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 and 17,304 in 2021-22.

**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 and 2020-21) for geography and key demographics.

**Population totals** are estimated values and have been calculated using 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 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 would 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.

## 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.

### Term dates

Due to differing school term dates across years, academic year 2021-22 reference dates have been used.

### Data collection during the coronavirus pandemic

Fieldwork has 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 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 at school, as is usually the case.
- 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.

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

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