Measuring activity levels in England

An introduction to the Active Lives surveys of adults and children and young people

June 2023
The Active Lives surveys give a unique and comprehensive view of levels of activity and sports participation in England

- The survey of **adults** was commissioned by Sport England in 2015 as the successor of the Active People survey (2006-2016)
  - Moved to push-to-web methodology
- The survey of **children and young people** (aged 5-15/16) was launched in 2017 as the first study of its kind to collect activity data from children at a large scale
Both surveys are designed to provide a robust picture of activity year-round

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Annual responses</th>
<th>Data collection</th>
<th>Sampling approach</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
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</thead>
</table>
|                              | c. 180,000       |                 | Random selection from Royal Mail Postcode Address File (PAF), stratified by Local Authority | • Push-to-web survey  
• Up to two responses permitted per household                                |
|                              |                  |                 | • Random selection of schools within local authorities in England  
• Sample of years/ classes within schools | • Online survey administered in-school  
• Age-appropriate questionnaires  
• Additional surveys of teachers (1 per school) and parents of children in years 1 and 2 |
| Data collection              | Monthly          | Termly          |                                                        |                                                                             |
| Sampling approach            |                  |                 |                                                        |                                                                             |
| Methodology                  |                  |                 |                                                        |                                                                             |
The surveys capture data across a wide range of measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type and amount of physical activity (for children including at school, outside school and travel to school)</th>
<th>Attendance at live sporting events</th>
<th>Attitudes towards physical activity</th>
<th>Swimming proficiency and water safety</th>
<th>Physical literacy and school physical education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering to support sport</td>
<td>Mental wellbeing, loneliness and social trust</td>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>Diet</td>
<td>Height, weight, and BMI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<th>Both surveys</th>
<th>Child survey only</th>
<th>Adult survey only</th>
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The questionnaire captures activity data at a very granular level

- The adult survey includes around 200 different activities and sporting disciplines
- Shown by group and discipline
- A range of activity metrics are created:
  - Moderate-equivalent minutes
  - Twice monthly participation
  - Settings
Both surveys are designed to allow analysis at local authority level

Data is published for key measures by:
- Regions
- Active partnerships
- Local authorities
- Local area statistics, e.g. rurality, deprivation (IMD)
Both surveys also contain a range of demographic questions and local area statistics:

- Gender
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Ethnicity
- Disability and health
- NSSEC
- IMD
- Working status
- Educational attainment
- Pregnancy
Data is available for both surveys for multiple years, including pre-, during, and post- the COVID-19 lockdown periods.

For example, data has shown that while overall adult activity levels are almost back to pre-pandemic highs, the scale of the recovery differs by deprivation level.
Upcoming plans to test feasibility of collecting device-based measurement with a sub-sample of respondents
How do I find out more?

- Data files
- Technical reports
- Code books
- User guides

- Annual reports
- Data tables
- ‘Spotlight’ reports

- Analysis tool at [https://activelives.sportengland.org/](https://activelives.sportengland.org/)
THANK YOU.

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