

# ACTIVE LIVES ADULT SURVEY

## MAY 17/18 REPORT

Published October 2018

# WELCOME

This is the fourth Active Lives report, providing a unique and comprehensive overview of adult (aged 16+) sport and physical activity in England in the 12 months from May 2017 to May 2018.

It provides a national 'big picture' perspective of sport and physical activity in England. For the first time, we have been able to bring together in one report:

- How people across demographics and locations are choosing to get active
- The picture of volunteering to support sport and physical activity
- The link between engaging in sport and physical activity and the social outcomes identified in the government sport and physical activity strategy, *Sporting Future*.

Once again, we have sought to provide a lot of information in an easily digestible format. This report provides the headlines, with the opportunity to dig deeper via links to more in depth data tables. For those that would like to carry out their own analysis of the data, our interactive Active Lives Analysis Tool is available at [activelives.sportengland.org](http://activelives.sportengland.org).

Finally, the next Active Lives Adult Survey will be published in March/April 2019, while on 6 December this year we will be publishing the first Active Lives Children Report (Academic Year 2017/18). Following the analysis of responses from over 130,000 children, parents and teachers, the survey will provide a comprehensive picture of behaviour and attitude towards sport and physical activity of children aged 5-16 in England.

**Lisa O'Keefe**  
Insight Director

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## KEY INFORMATION

This report presents data from the Active Lives Adult Survey for the period mid-May 2017 to mid-May 2018. Data is presented for adults aged 16+ in England.

## RELEASE DATES

This release: 11 October 2018  
Next release: Mar/Apr 2019 (TBC)

## FIND OUT MORE

For further information on the data presented in this report, please visit the [Active Lives area](#) of our website.

# LEVELS OF ACTIVITY

THIS CHAPTER PRESENTS INFORMATION ON THREE LEVELS OF ACTIVITY:

- **INACTIVE** (LESS THAN 30 MINUTES A WEEK)
- **FAIRLY ACTIVE** (30-149 MINUTES A WEEK)
- **ACTIVE** (AT LEAST 150 MINUTES A WEEK)

LINK TO DATA TABLES



## DEFINITION

### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

THE GRAPHIC BELOW SHOWS THE ACTIVITIES WE INCLUDE – AND WHEN THEY COUNT (FOR ADULTS AGED 16+):



AT LEAST MODERATE INTENSITY \*

BOUTS OF 10 MINS OR MORE THAT ADD UP TO ONE OF THE THREE LEVELS OF ACTIVITY

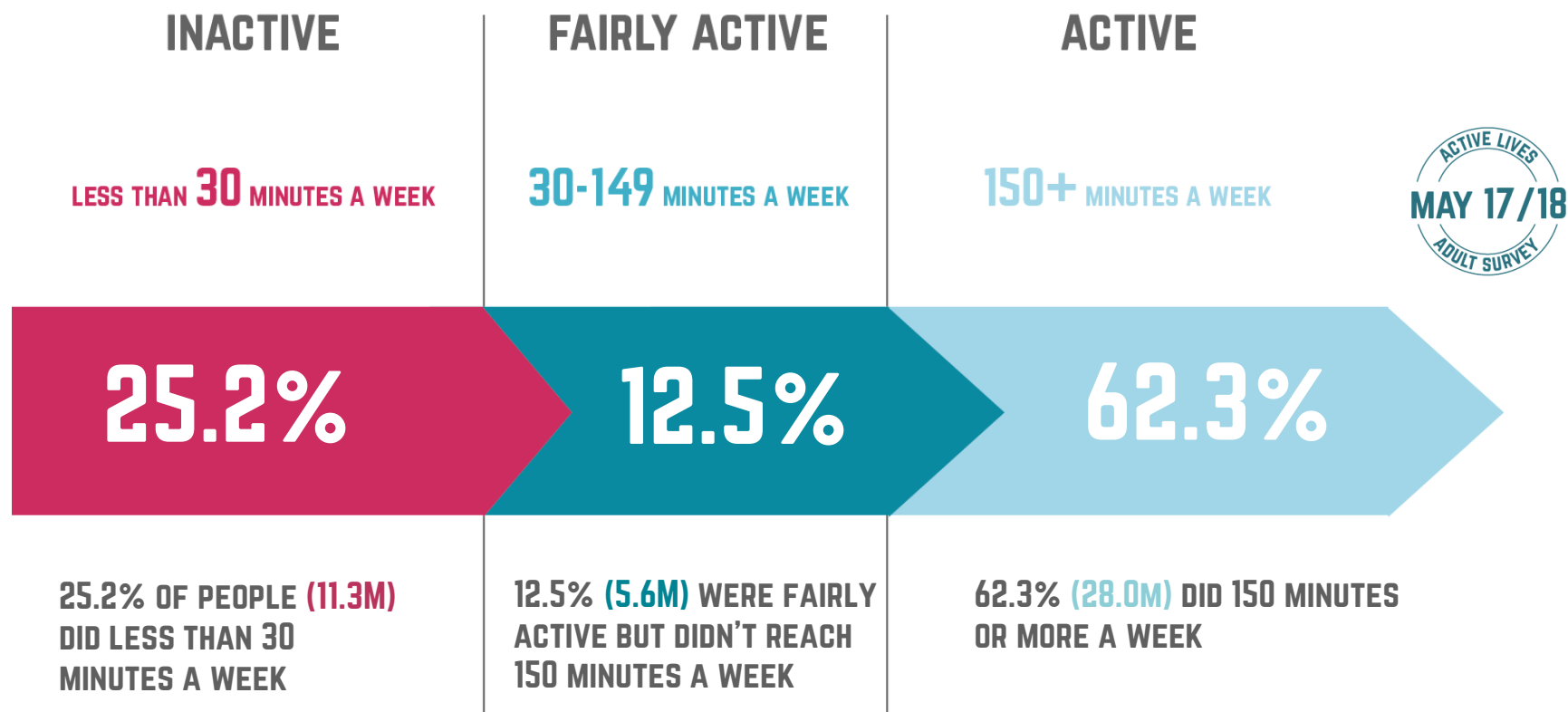
\* **VIGOROUS INTENSITY COUNTS AS DOUBLE**

**Note:** We count most sport and physical activity, but exclude gardening. However, Public Health England does include gardening in its local level physical activity data. You can view the PHE data [here](#).

# LEVELS OF ACTIVITY

## HEADLINES

Our data shows that just over 6 in 10 adults (28.0m) gained the health benefits from achieving 150+ minutes of activity a week.



[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)



# LEVELS OF ACTIVITY

## SUMMARY OF CHANGE

Inactivity has decreased by 0.4% over the last 12 months (a reduction of 116,400 inactive people in England).

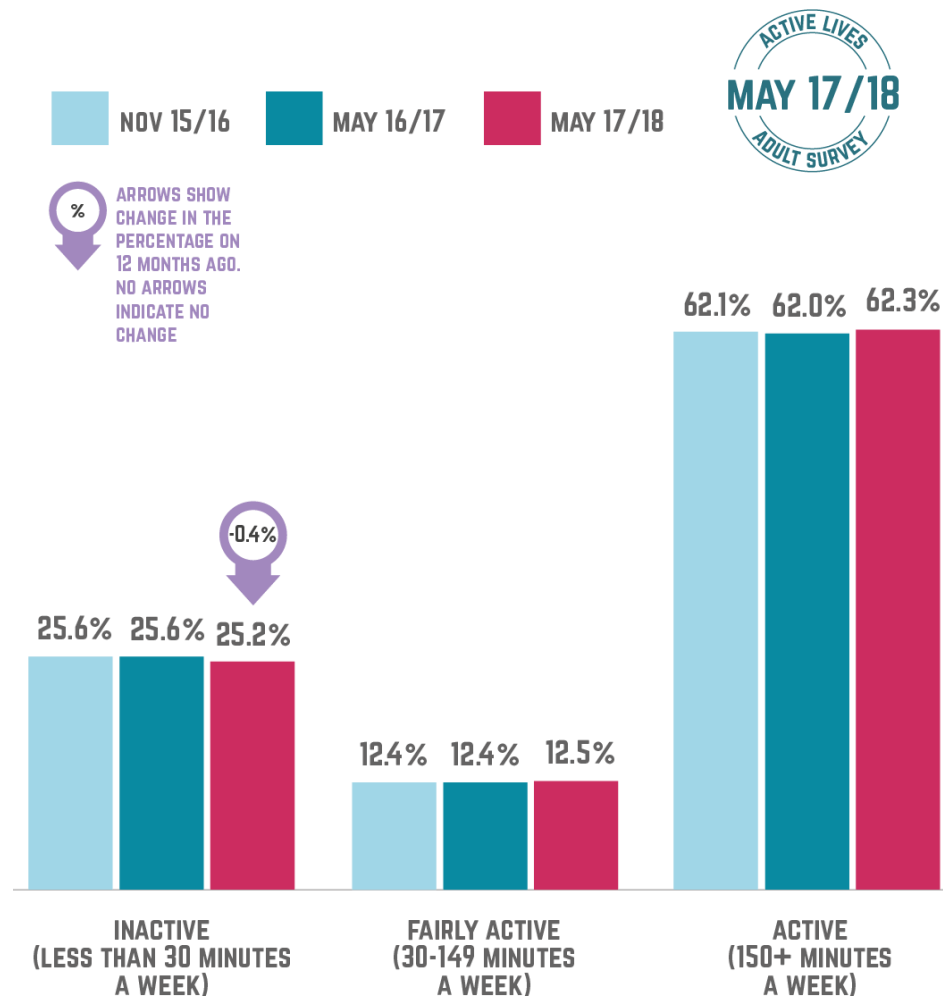
This has been driven by a decrease in the proportion of 55-74 year olds who are inactive, down from 29.0% to 27.5%.

### HOW WE MEASURE CHANGE

Active Lives figures are based on the response of 185,000 adults, which we then scale up to provide an England-wide picture. That means there will 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 are confident that there are genuine differences. If the data is showing only small differences which are within the margin of error, they are noted as “no change”.

[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)



# LEVELS OF ACTIVITY

ACTIVE INACTIVE

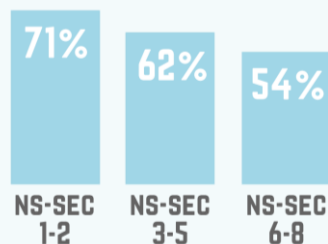


## SUMMARY OF DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

Our data shows there are significant **inequalities**:

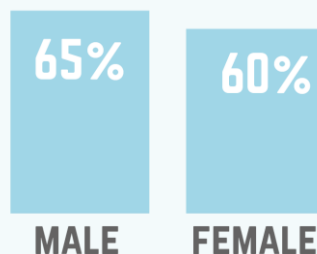
### 1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS

People in lower socio-economic groups – those in routine/semi-routine jobs and those who are long term unemployed or have never worked (NS-SEC 6-8) – are the most likely to be inactive (33%) and the least likely to be active (54%).



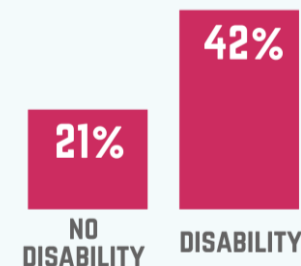
### 2 GENDER

Men (65% or 14.2m) are more likely to be active than women (60% or 13.8m), with a gap of 317,000 between them.



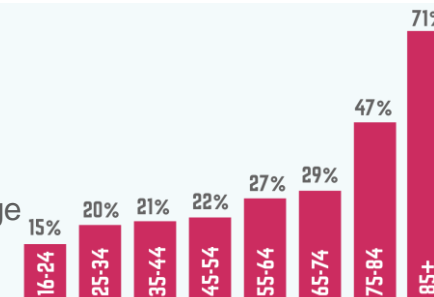
### 3 DISABILITY

Inactivity is more common for those with a disability or health condition\* (42%) than those without (21%). Furthermore, it increases sharply as the number of impairments an individual has increases – 50% of those with three or more impairments are inactive.



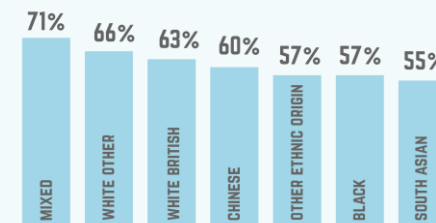
### 4 AGE

Inactivity levels generally increase with age, but the sharpest increase comes at ages 75-84 (to 47%) and age 85+ (to 71%).



### 5 ETHNICITY

Activity levels are highest for people from mixed (71%), white other (66%) and white British (63%) backgrounds and lowest for those from South Asian (55%), black (57%) and other (57%) backgrounds.



[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)



\* See our [definitions](#) page for the full definition of disability.



# TYPES OF ACTIVITY

THIS CHAPTER PRESENTS  
DATA BROKEN DOWN BY  
ACTIVITY GROUP AND LOOKS  
AT THOSE WHO HAVE  
PARTICIPATED AT LEAST  
TWICE IN THE LAST 28 DAYS.

[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)



## PARTICIPATION – OUR DEFINITION

LOOKING AT PARTICIPATION AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST 28 DAYS PROVIDES:

- AN ENTRY LEVEL VIEW OF PARTICIPATION OVERALL
- A USEFUL MEASURE OF ENGAGEMENT IN DIFFERENT SPORTS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES
- AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF ACTIVITIES TO ACHIEVING 150+ MINUTES A WEEK



# TYPES OF ACTIVITY

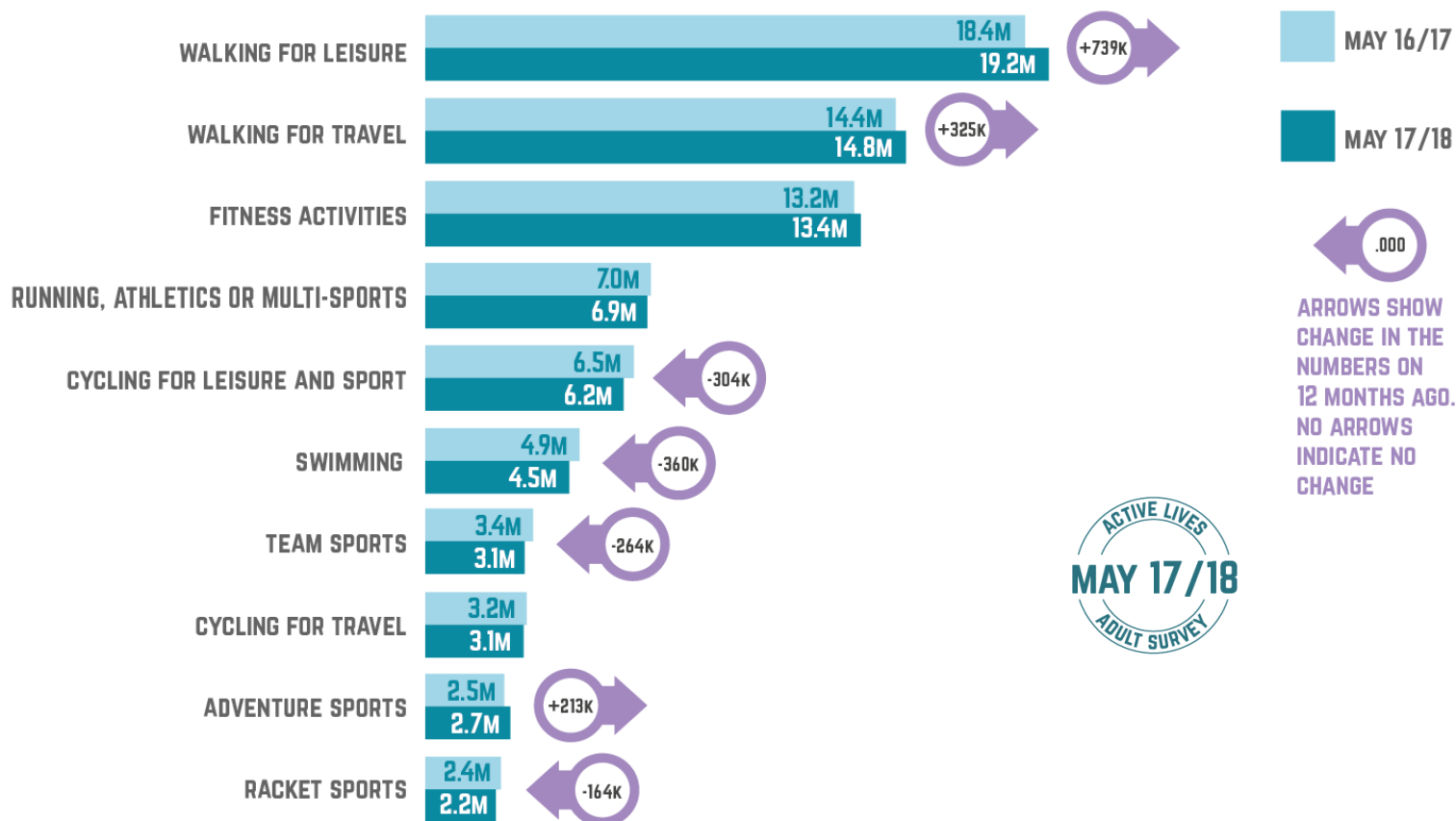
## ADULTS ACHIEVING 150+ MINUTES OF ACTIVITY A WEEK DO SO THROUGH A BLEND OF ACTIVITIES

Analysis of the number of people engaging in activities at least twice in the last 28 days helps us understand the contribution of different activities.

While overall activity levels remain stable, we have seen changes in the number of people taking part in some of these activities.

For example, 739,000 additional people are walking for leisure, but 360,000 fewer people are swimming compared to 12 months ago.

TAKEN PART AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST 28 DAYS (AGE 16+) FOR SELECTED ACTIVITY GROUPS



[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)



# VOLUNTEERING

AT LEAST TWICE IN THE  
LAST 12 MONTHS

.....

A volunteer makes all the difference. And volunteering benefits both the volunteer and the person receiving the support. Whether it's serving refreshments, coaching a player or assisting people with disabilities to take part, the sport and activity sector needs people to give their time.

## DEFINITION

### WE COUNT A PERSON AS HAVING VOLUNTEERED IF:



**THEY HAVE 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 on page 23).



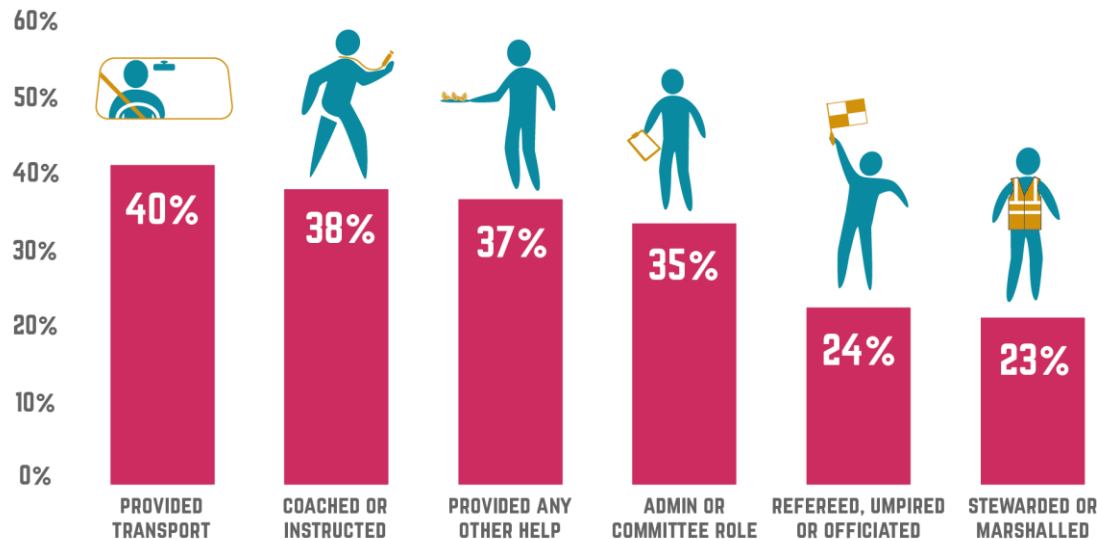
**A PERSON HAS VOLUNTEERED AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS**



## HEADLINES

Our data shows that 14% of adults (6.3m) are giving their time to support sport and physical activity. Many undertake more than one role, with providing transport being the most common.

### ROLES UNDERTAKEN AMONG ADULTS (AGED 16+) WHO VOLUNTEERED AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST YEAR (MAY 17/18)



14%  
6.3M ADULTS  
VOLUNTEERED

AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST  
YEAR TO SUPPORT SPORT AND  
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)

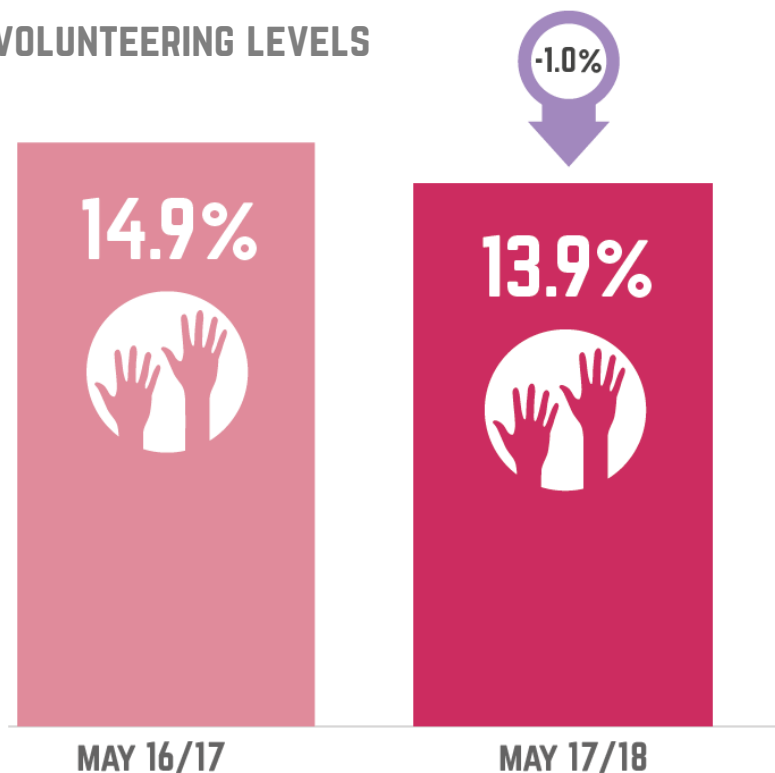


## SUMMARY OF CHANGE

Volunteering levels have decreased in the last 12 months by 1.0% (400,000 people).

There have been no changes in the proportion of volunteers undertaking each role.

### VOLUNTEERING LEVELS



ARROWS SHOW CHANGE IN THE PERCENTAGE ON 12 MONTHS AGO. NO ARROWS INDICATE NO CHANGE

[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)



# VOLUNTEERING

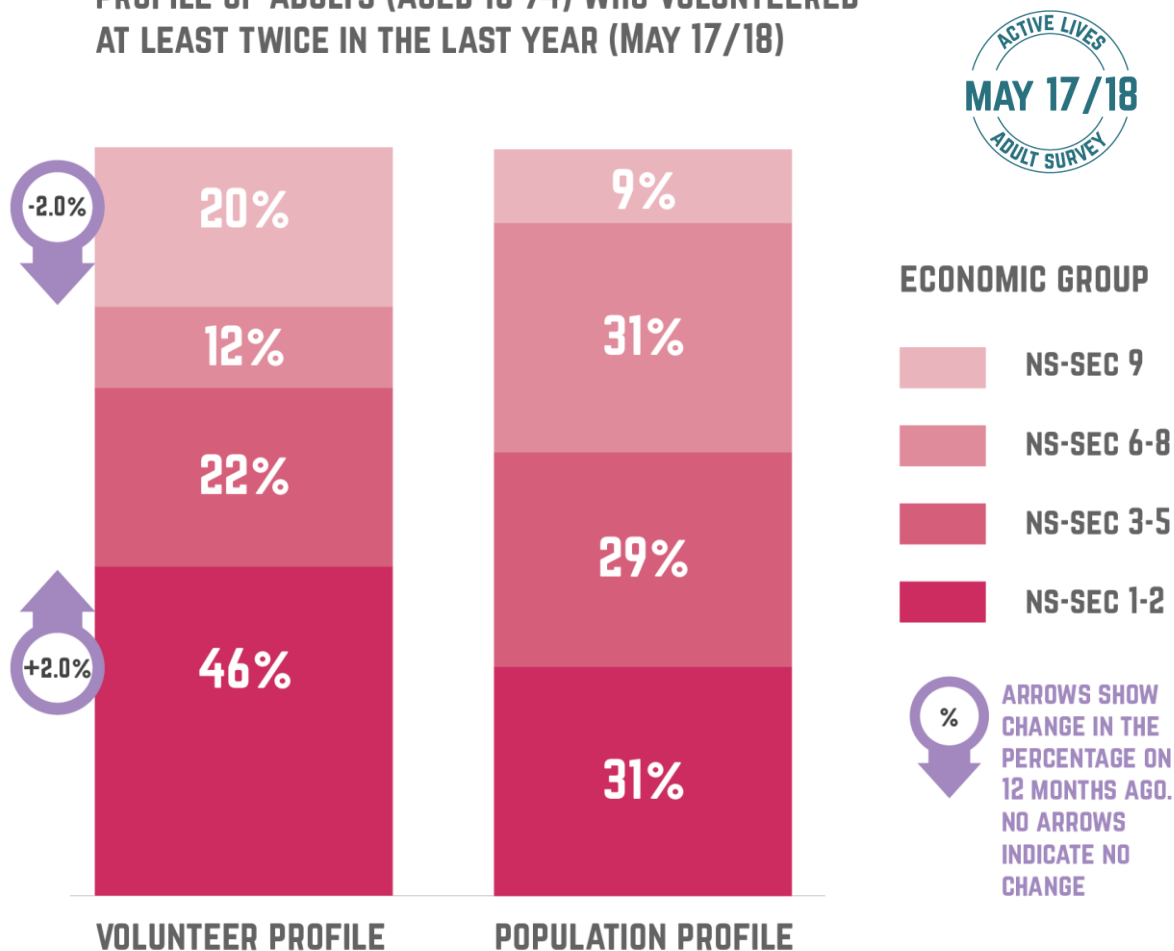
## SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

Volunteering is significantly skewed toward those in managerial and professional occupations (referred to as NS-SEC 1-2). The share of volunteers from these groups has increased compared to 12 months ago (from 44% to 46%).

People from lower socio-economic backgrounds (NS-SEC 6-8) remain under-represented in volunteering – comprising just 12% of all sport volunteers but 31% of the adult population.

While also over-represented amongst volunteers, there has been a drop in the share of students and other (NS-SEC 9) from 22% to 20%.

## PROFILE OF ADULTS (AGED 16-74) WHO VOLUNTEERED AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST YEAR (MAY 17/18)



[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)

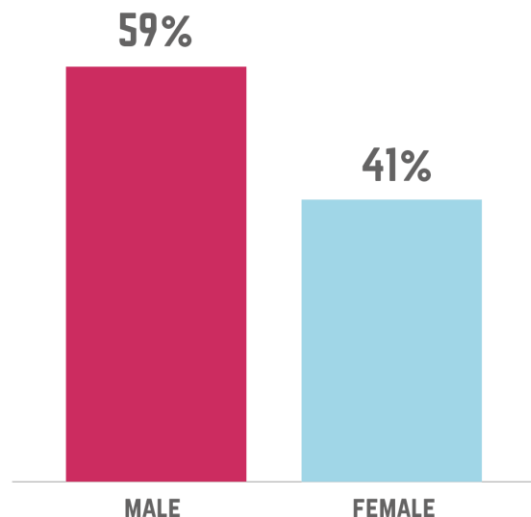
Note: Details of the NS-SEC categories can be found on the [definitions](#) page.

## GENDER PROFILE

Men are more likely to volunteer to support sport than women, comprising 59% of all volunteers.

The profile of volunteering by gender remains unchanged compared to 12 months ago.

PROFILE OF ADULTS (AGED 16+) WHO VOLUNTEERED AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST YEAR (MAY 17/18)



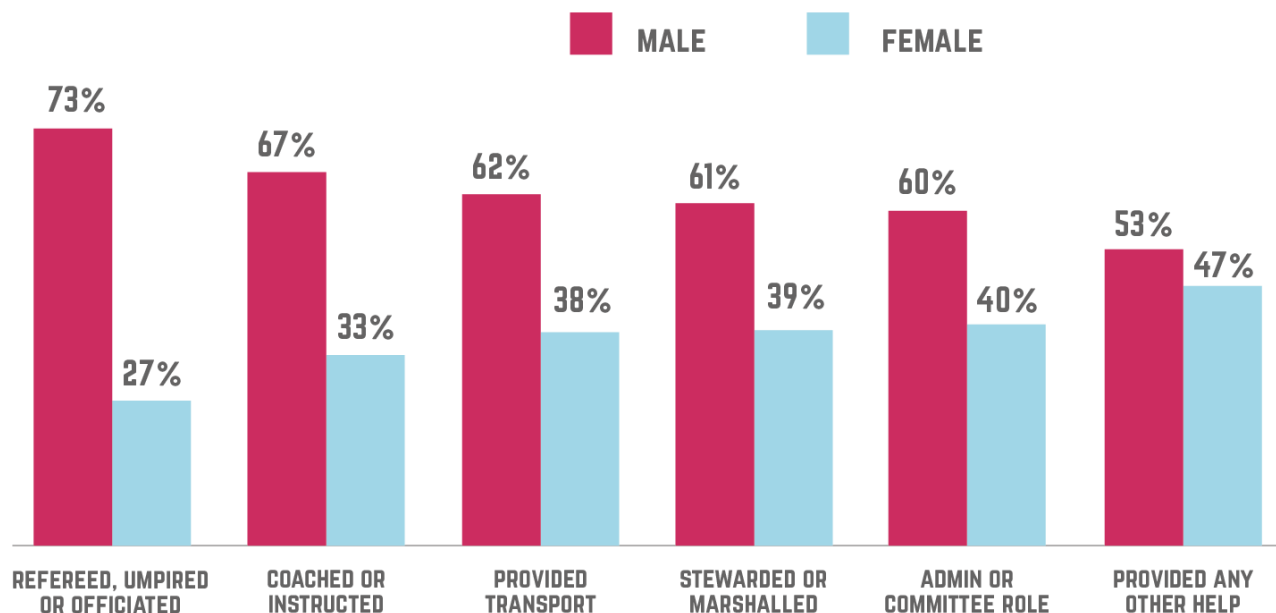
[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)



Differences between men and women are particularly pronounced in certain volunteering roles, such as referees, officials, umpires and coaches.

This is unchanged compared to 12 months ago.

PROFILE OF ROLES UNDERTAKEN AMONGST ADULTS (AGED 16+) WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST YEAR (MAY 17/18)



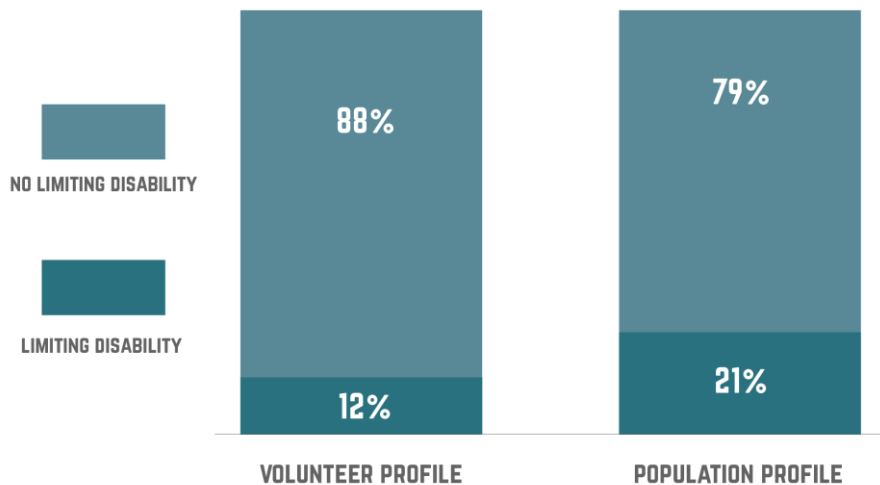
## DISABILITY PROFILE

People with a disability or health condition\* account for 12% of volunteers, despite accounting for 21% of the population as a whole (see graph 1). This is unchanged compared to 12 months ago.

Of these volunteers, 41 have three or more impairments, compared to over half of all people with a disability (see graph 2), so those with multiple impairments are even less likely to be volunteers.

With 10% of volunteer coaches and referees having a disability, some volunteer roles are even more under-represented by people with a disability (see graph 3).

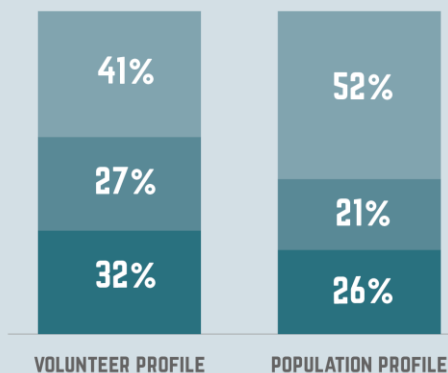
### 1 PROFILE OF ADULTS (AGED 16+) WHO VOLUNTEERED AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST YEAR (NOV 17/18)



[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)

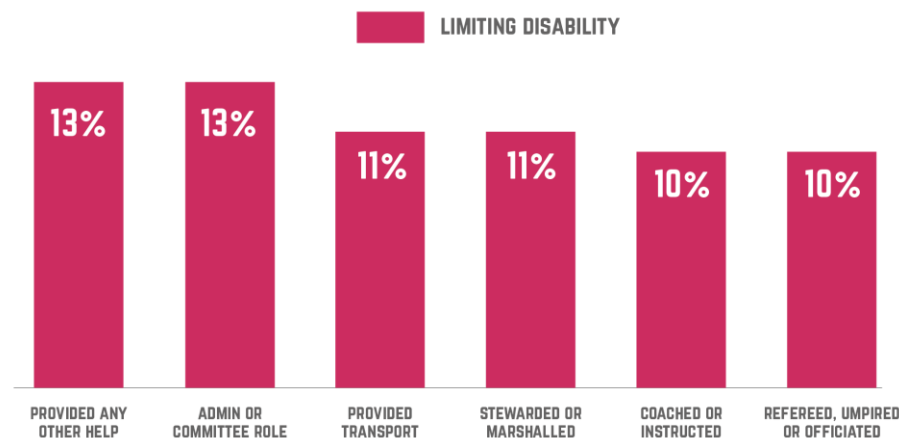
### 2

#### BREAKDOWN OF DISABLED VOLUNTEERS AND THE DISABLED POPULATION BY NUMBER OF IMPAIRMENTS



### 3

#### PROPORTION OF VOLUNTEERS IN EACH ROLE WHO HAVE A DISABILITY



\* See our [definitions](#) page for the full definition of disability.

## AGE PROFILE

Volunteering is more popular among two key age groups: those aged 16-24 and those in the 45-54 bracket. Combined, these groups account for 41% of all volunteers (but only 30% of the population).

The younger age group is more likely to referee or coach, whereas the 45-54 group are the most likely to provide transport or act as a steward or marshal.

The profile has slightly changed, with increases in the share of 55-64 and 75-84 year olds.

### PROFILE OF ADULTS (AGED 16+) WHO VOLUNTEERED AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST YEAR (MAY 17/18)

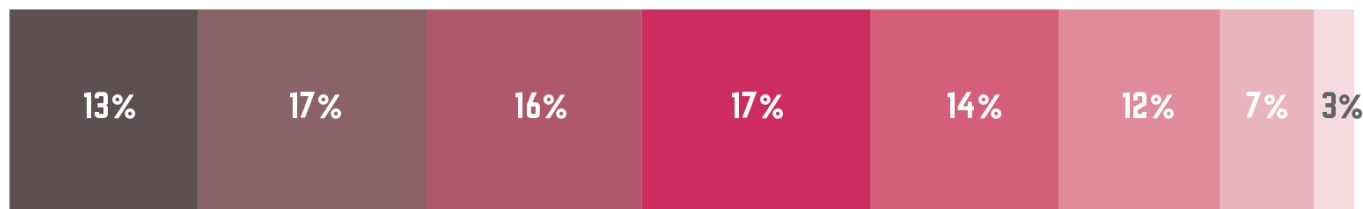


#### VOLUNTEERING BY AGE

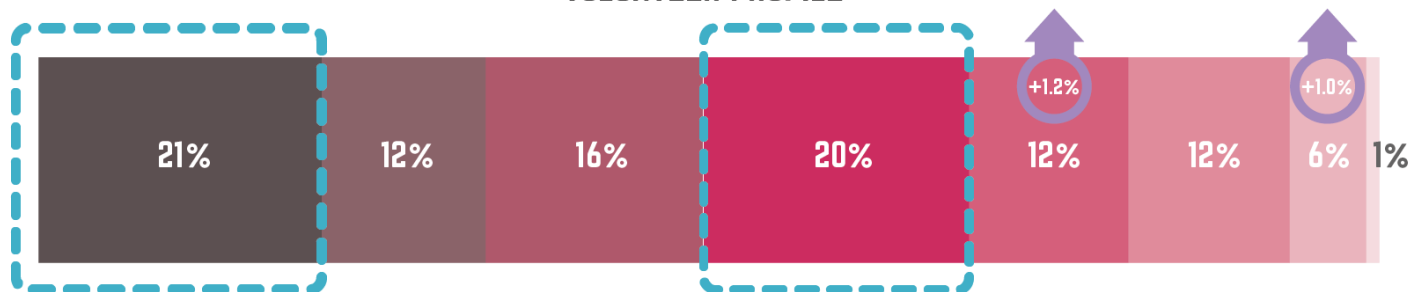


ARROWS SHOW CHANGE IN THE PERCENTAGE ON 12 MONTHS AGO. NO ARROWS INDICATE NO CHANGE

#### POPULATION PROFILE



#### VOLUNTEER PROFILE



[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)

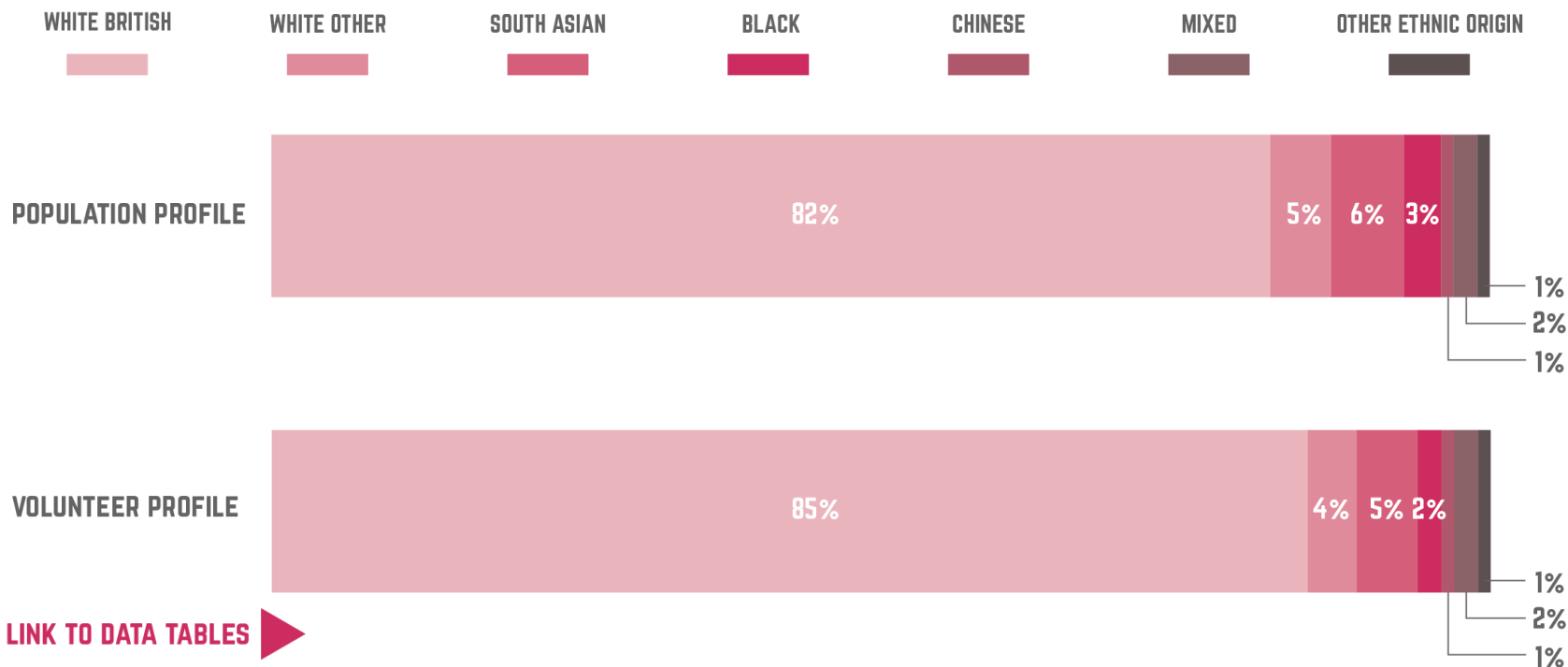


## ETHNICITY PROFILE

The volunteer profile across ethnic groups is generally reflective of the wider population, with only a slight over-representation amongst people from white British backgrounds. This is unchanged compared to 12 months ago.

However, there are inequalities within sub-groups. For instance, females from South Asian backgrounds are under-represented, accounting for 6% of the female population but just 3% of female volunteers.

## PROFILE OF ADULTS (AGED 16+) WHO VOLUNTEERED AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST YEAR (MAY 17/18)



[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)

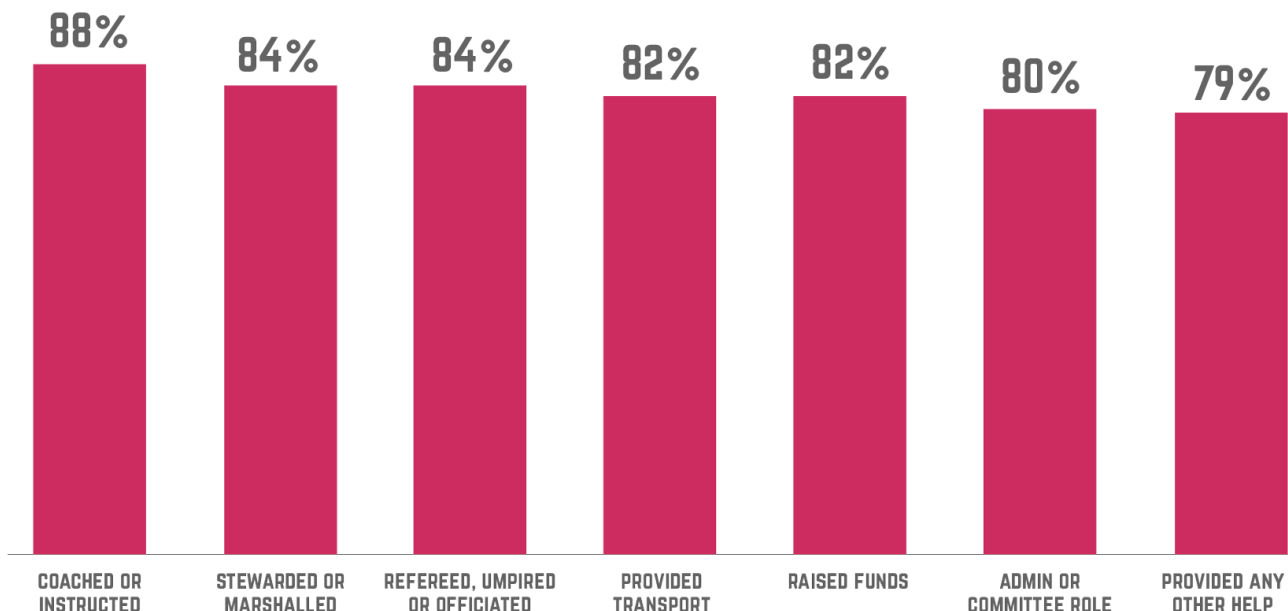
## VOLUNTEERS ARE ALSO ACTIVE

The majority (80%) of volunteers also take part in sport and physical activity, meeting the recommended level of 150 minutes a week or more. This is unchanged compared to 12 months ago.

Some roles lend themselves more to those who are active, with those who coach or instruct most likely to be active. Volunteers who referee or steward are also more likely to be active.

As the next chapter shows, the benefits of the *Sporting Future* outcomes – such as mental wellbeing – have a stronger association with those who are both active and volunteer compared to those who just do one or the other. This indicates the high number of volunteers who are active also gain wider health and social benefits.

### VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE ACTIVE (MAY 17/18)



# SPORTING FUTURE OUTCOMES

Sport and physical activity – and volunteering to support it – has the power to improve lives.

In addition to capturing the behaviour of adults when it comes to sport and physical activity, Active Lives also captures data designed to better understand impact against four of the five social outcomes identified within the government’s sport and physical activity strategy – [Sporting Future](#).

Chapter one of this report covered the first of those outcomes – physical wellbeing. This chapter will focus on mental wellbeing, individual development and social & community development.

For further details on the outcomes, see our [evidence review](#).

[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)



## UNDERSTANDING THE OUTCOMES



### Sport and physical activity can...

- |  |  |   |  |   |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Help improve and maintain fitness, strength and balance</li> <li>● Help prevent and manage medical conditions.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Contribute to happiness and improved self-esteem</li> <li>● Reduce stress, anxiety and depression.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Help develop soft/social skills and increase persistence and perseverance</li> <li>● Impact positively on employment opportunities.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bring people together</li> <li>● Build trust and reduce isolation.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote economic growth</li> <li>● Create jobs.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|---|--|---|

### Measured by...

- |   |   |  |   |  |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| <p>Proportion of adults who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Undertake <b>150+ minutes</b> a week of sport and physical activity.</li> </ul> | <p>Agreement to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How <b>happy</b> did you feel yesterday?</li> <li>● How <b>satisfied</b> are you with your life nowadays?</li> <li>● To what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are <b>worthwhile</b>?</li> <li>● How <b>anxious</b> did you feel yesterday?</li> </ul> | <p>Agreement to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I can <b>achieve</b> most of the goals I set myself</li> <li>● If I find something difficult, I <b>keep trying</b> until I can do it.</li> </ul> | <p>Agreement to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Most people in our local area can be <b>trusted</b>.</li> </ul> | <p>The economic value of sport, as reported in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● DCMS’s <a href="#">Sport Satellite Accounts</a>.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|--|---|--|

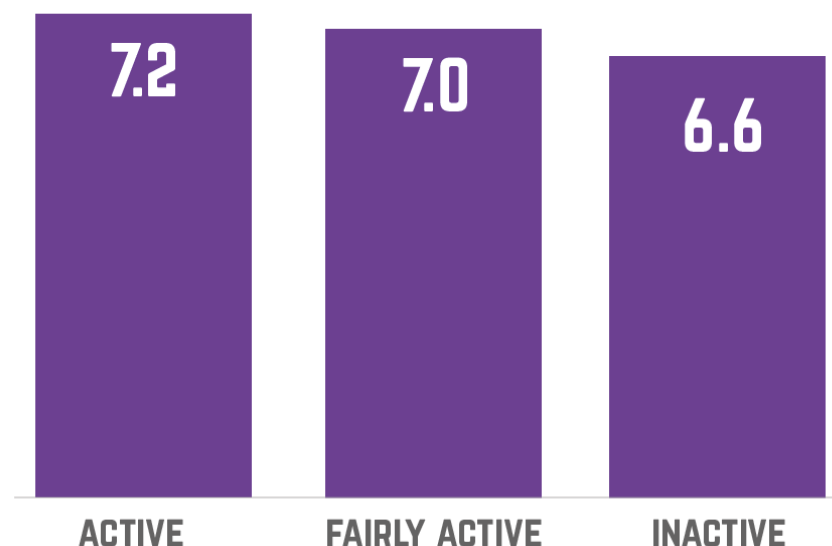


## SOME ACTIVITY IS GOOD, MORE IS BETTER

When looking at activity levels amongst adults, we can see that those who are active have a better life satisfaction score than those who are fairly active, who in turn have a better score relative to those who are inactive. This shows a positive link between being more active and mental wellbeing, and holds across all four wellbeing measures.

Similarly, we see that those who are active report higher levels of individual and community development than those who are fairly active, who in turn have better scores than those who are inactive. This holds across both individual development measures and the community development measure.

### AVERAGE LEVELS OF AGREEMENT TO 'HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH LIFE NOWADAYS?' (OUT OF 10) BY CURRENT LEVEL OF ACTIVITY





## VOLUNTEERING IS POSITIVELY LINKED WITH MENTAL WELLBEING

Across all four measures of mental wellbeing, those who volunteered at least twice in the last 12 months reported better outcomes than those who did not.

## VOLUNTEERING IS POSITIVELY LINKED WITH INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

People who volunteered reported higher levels (compared to those who did not volunteer) of:

- Being able to meet the goals they set themselves
- Continuing to try when they find things difficult
- Feeling that people in their local area can be trusted.

**AVERAGE LEVELS OF AGREEMENT TO 'MOST PEOPLE IN YOUR LOCAL AREA CAN BE TRUSTED' (OUT OF 5) BY WHETHER THEY HAVE VOLUNTEERED**



## PEOPLE WHO TAKE PART AND VOLUNTEER HAVE EVEN HIGHER SCORES ACROSS ALL OUTCOME MEASURES

The combination of both being active and volunteering is associated with higher scores across the **mental wellbeing** measures.

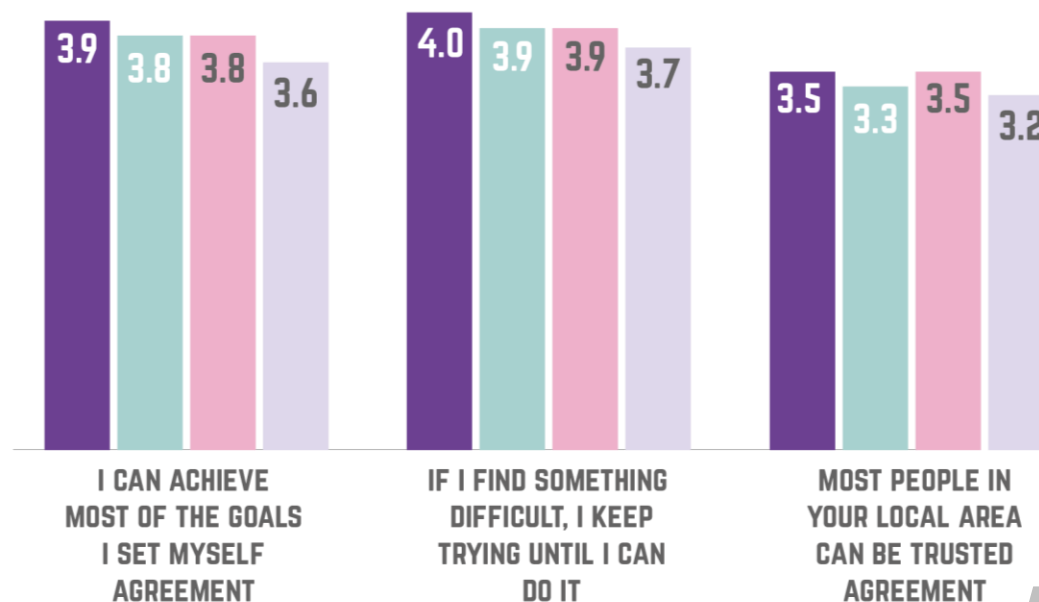
- It should be noted that volunteering is particularly associated with higher levels of feeling worthwhile.

For the **individual development** measures, those who were active and volunteered reported they were more likely to meet the goals they set themselves and to keep trying when they find things difficult, compared to those who did one and not the other.

As with feeling worthwhile, it is volunteering that is particularly associated with higher levels of **social trust**. Those who volunteered reported an average score of 3.5 out of 5 for trusting people in their local area, which is the same as people who both volunteered and were active and higher than those who were active but not volunteering.



AVERAGE LEVELS OF AGREEMENT TO INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL TRUST QUESTIONS (OUT OF 5) BY WHETHER THEY ARE ACTIVE AND/OR HAVE VOLUNTEERED



# LOCAL LEVEL DATA

Data for local areas, including, nine regions, 44 County Sports Partnerships, and 353 local authorities are available for the following measures:

- **LEVELS OF ACTIVITY**

[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)

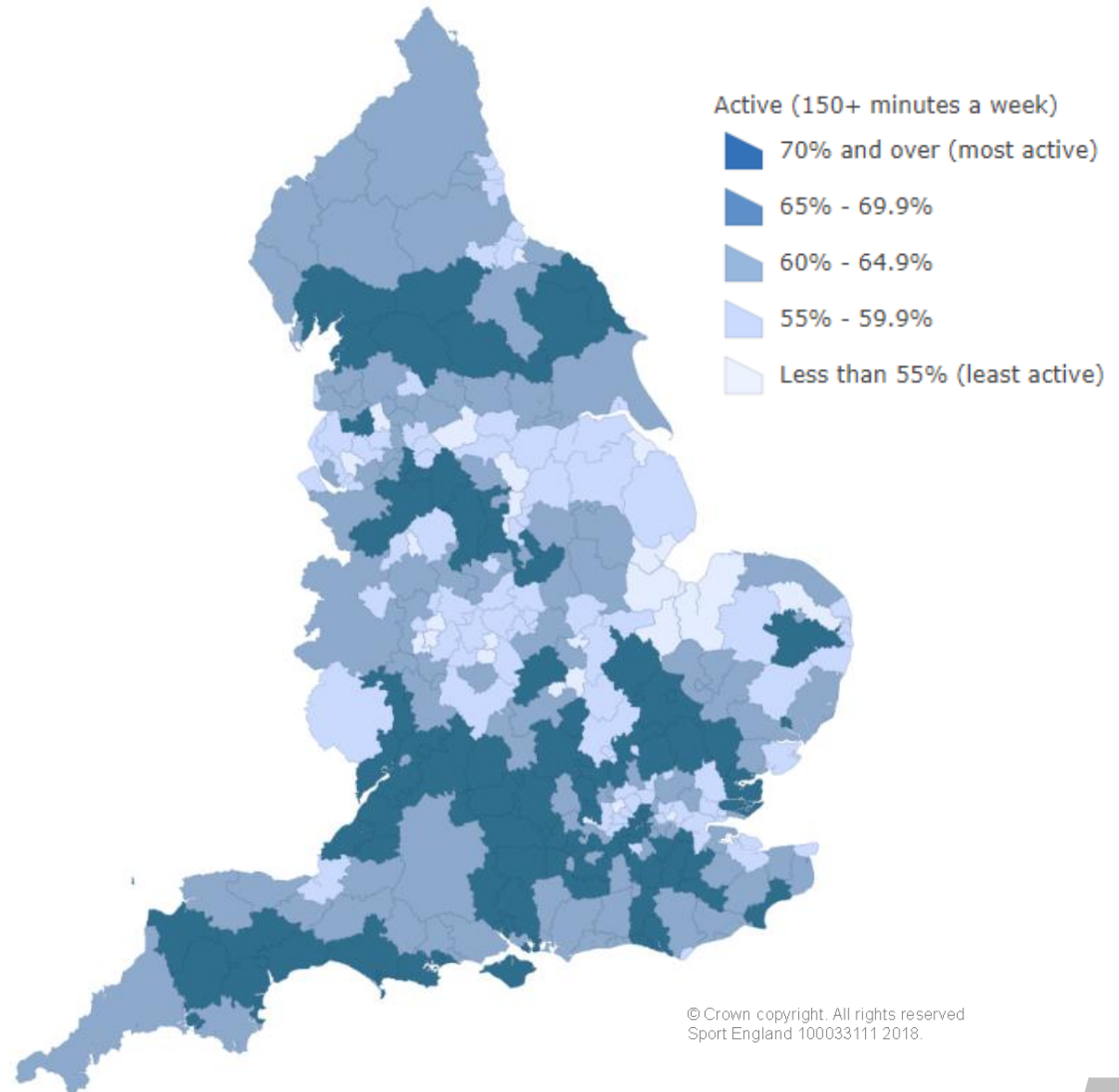
- **PARTICIPATING AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST 28 DAYS**

[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)

- **VOLUNTEERING AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS**

[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)

## ACTIVITY ACROSS ENGLAND



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# DEFINITIONS

**MODERATE ACTIVITY** is defined as activity where you raise your heart rate.

**VIGOROUS ACTIVITY** is where you're out of breath or are sweating (you may not be able to say more than a few words without pausing for breath).

**NS-SEC** groups are defined as:

- NS-SEC 1-2: Managerial, administrative and professional occupations (e.g. chief executive, doctor, actor, journalist)
- NS-SEC 3: Intermediate occupations (e.g. auxiliary nurse, secretary)
- NS-SEC 4: Self employed and small employers
- NS-SEC 5: Lower supervisory and technical occupations (e.g. plumber, gardener, train driver)
- NS-SEC 6-7: Semi-routine and routine occupations (e.g. postman, shop assistant, bus driver)
- NS-SEC 8: Long term unemployed or never worked
- NS-SEC 9: Students and other.

**LIMITING DISABILITY** is defined as an individual reporting they have a physical or mental health condition or illness that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more, and that this has a substantial effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.

**VOLUNTEERING ROLES** are defined as:

- Provided transport: To help people other than family members take part in sport
- Coached or instructed: For an individual or team(s) in a sport or recreational physical activity (other than solely for family members)
- Refereed, umpired, or officiated: At a sports match, competition or event
- Administrative or committee role: For a sports organisation, activity or event (e.g. chairman, treasurer, social secretary, first aider, welfare officer)
- Stewarded or marshalled: At a sports activity or event
- Provided any other help: For a sport or recreational physical activity (e.g. helping with refreshments, sports kit or equipment).

[LINK TO MORE INFORMATION ON MEASURES AND DEMOGRAPHICS](#)



# NOTES

## THE ACTIVE LIVES ADULT SURVEY IS A PUSH-TO-WEB SURVEY

Carried out by Ipsos MORI, it involves postal mailouts inviting participants to complete the survey online. The survey can be completed on mobile or desktop devices. A paper questionnaire is also sent out to maximise response rates. More information on the survey can be found [here](#).

[LINK TO MORE INFORMATION ON MEASURES AND DEMOGRAPHICS](#)



## SAMPLE AND WEIGHTING

**THE ACHIEVED SAMPLE** was 185,845 (16+).

**DATA HAVE BEEN WEIGHTED** to Office for National Statistics (ONS) population measures for geography and key demographics.

**CONFIDENCE INTERVALS** can be found in the linked tables. These indicate that if repeated samples were taken and confidence intervals computed for each sample, 95% of the intervals would contain the true value. Only significant differences are reported within the commentary. Where results are reported as being the same for two groups, any differences fall within the margin of error.

**SIGNIFICANCE TESTS** can be found in the linked tables. The tests indicate that if repeated samples were taken, 95% of the time we 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.

**POPULATION TOTALS** are estimated values and have been calculated using ONS mid-2016 and mid-2017 estimates. Confidence intervals also apply to these. More detail can be found [here](#).

## SPORT SPECTATING

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

[LINK TO DATA TABLES](#)

