Active Lives Children and Young People Survey

Academic year 2024-25

Published December 2025

sportengland.org

Contents

Key information

This report presents data from the Active Lives Children and Young People Survey for the academic year 2024-25. Data are presented for children and young people in school Years 1-11 (ages 5-16) in England.

Release dates

This release: 4 December 2025
Next release: 3 December 2026

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.

Lead statistician

Helen Price - activelives@sportengland.org

Welcome

This report summarises the sport and physical activity behaviours of 5-16-year-olds in England over the 2024-25 academic year (September 2024-July 2025).

It once again gives a detailed insight into how often children and young people are getting active, what they do and how they feel about it. This is vital for government, sporting bodies, schools, parents and carers, and helps build a deep understanding of young people's activity habits.

The good news is that activity levels are the highest they have been since we started the survey back in 2017, and we are seeing gains within that beyond just a recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. Similarly, the proportion of children and young people who are less active is lower than we've seen before.

However, this needs to be seen in context. Only 49% of children are meeting the Chief Medical Officers' guideline of an average of an hour of exercise per day and, while this is higher than it's been before, no-one could think our job is done when more than half of young people aren't active enough.

We understand more than ever the power of sport and physical activity for young people. In our recent social value report, we highlighted research showing that being active increases wellbeing by £3,100 for those aged 7-11 and by £4,300 for those aged 11-16. However, this also illustrates the wellbeing value that is being missed out on, unless we get more children active.

The results show continued long-term growth in active travel, gym and fitness, reflecting ongoing changes in activity since the pandemic. They also indicate a fairly static position for team sports and swimming, following a recovery in participation levels post-pandemic.

Unfortunately, as we have highlighted in previous years, stubborn inequalities remain. Black and Asian children's activity rates are growing less quickly than their white counterparts, those with two or more characteristics of inequality (as defined by our Inequalities Metric) are much less likely to be active than those with none, and the gap between children from the most and least affluent families is getting bigger.

The report also presents trends in volunteering and physical literacy levels, as well as offering answers to broader wellbeing questions.

As ever, it's only possible to provide a summary in this report. You can use the links in it to access the detailed data tables, or visit the Active Lives Online tool, updated shortly after each release, to explore trends over time, audiences not covered in this report and more specific activities.

Finally, I'd like to thank the schools, parents, carers and teachers who've taken the time to complete the survey, the network of Active Partnerships who've, once again, played a key role in working with the schools, and, most importantly, the children who've provided such thoughtful insight into how, and how often, they get active.

Nick Pontefract, Chief Strategy Officer

Executive summary

1

There are signs of activity levels increasing further following recovery from the pandemic.

2

Inequalities in sport and physical activity engagement remain. Children and young people with two or more characteristics of inequality are the least active, least likely to volunteer and have the lowest levels of physical literacy and wider outcomes.

3

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

Levels of activity

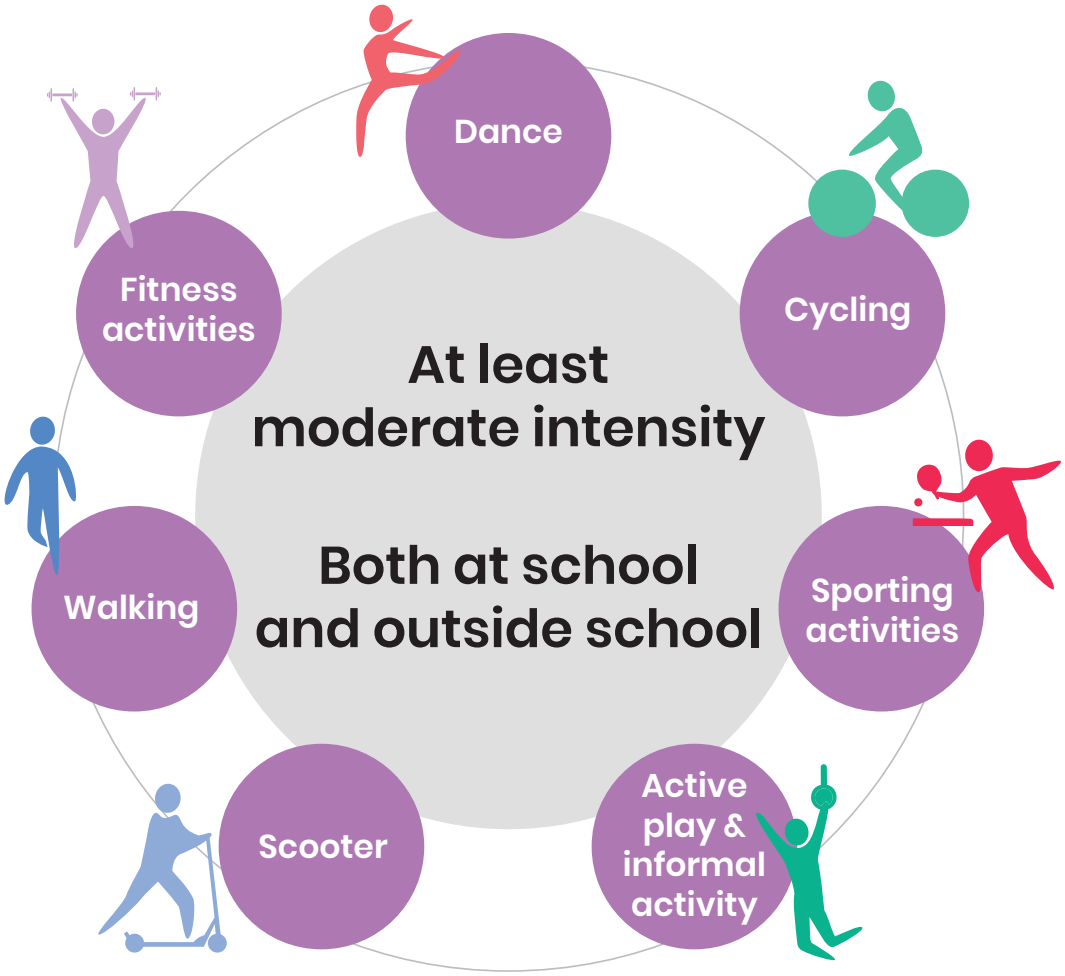
Definition

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).

See our definitions page for how we define moderate intensity.

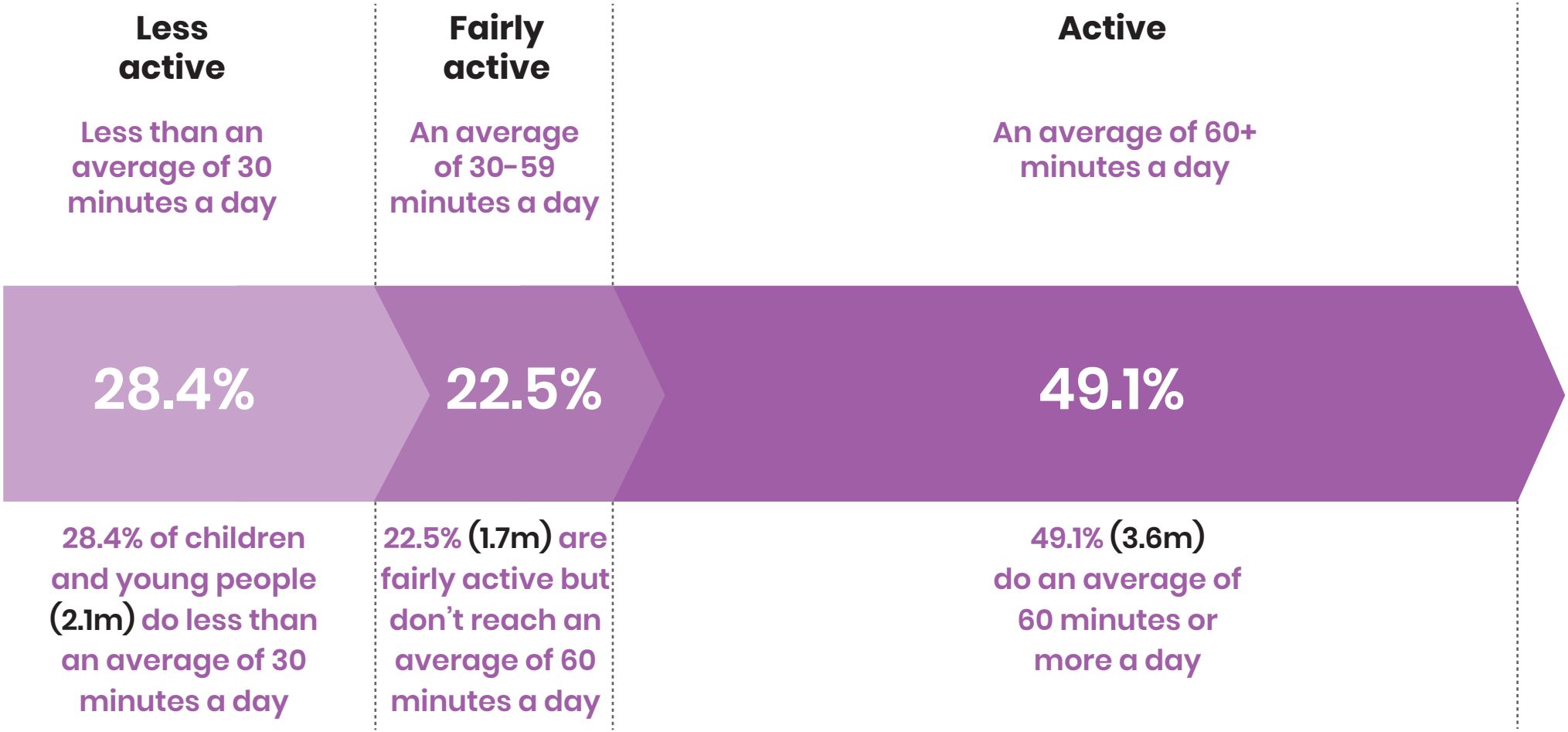
What do we mean by physical activity?



Levels of activity

Headlines

Our data show that 49.1% of children and young people (3.6 million) are meeting the Chief Medical Officers' guideline of taking part in sport and physical activity for an average of 60 minutes or more every day. Meanwhile, 28.4% (2.1m) do less than an average of 30 minutes a day.



Link to data tables

Levels of activity

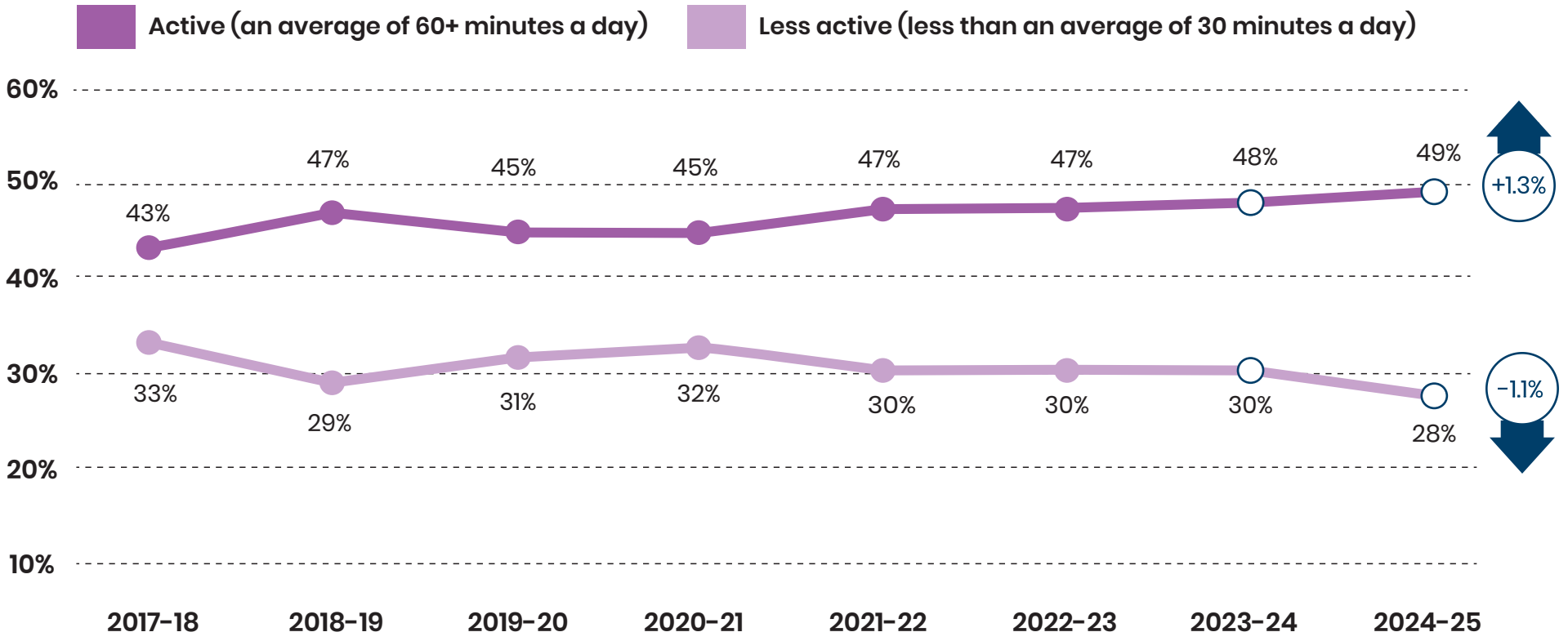
Arrows show change from 12 months ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

Activity levels have increased

Activity levels have increased compared to 12 months ago, with 72,000 or 1.3% more active children and young people than there were in academic year 2023-24. This represents the first sign of growth following the impact of the coronavirus pandemic (academic years 2019-21). Over the longer term, compared to academic year 2017-18, the proportion who are active has increased by 5.8%, meaning there are 580,000 more active children and young people compared to seven years ago, while the proportion who are less active has decreased by 4.4%, or 213,000 fewer less active children and young people.



Link to data tables

Note: Activity can be either during or outside of school hours. For details on how we measure change, see the notes pages.

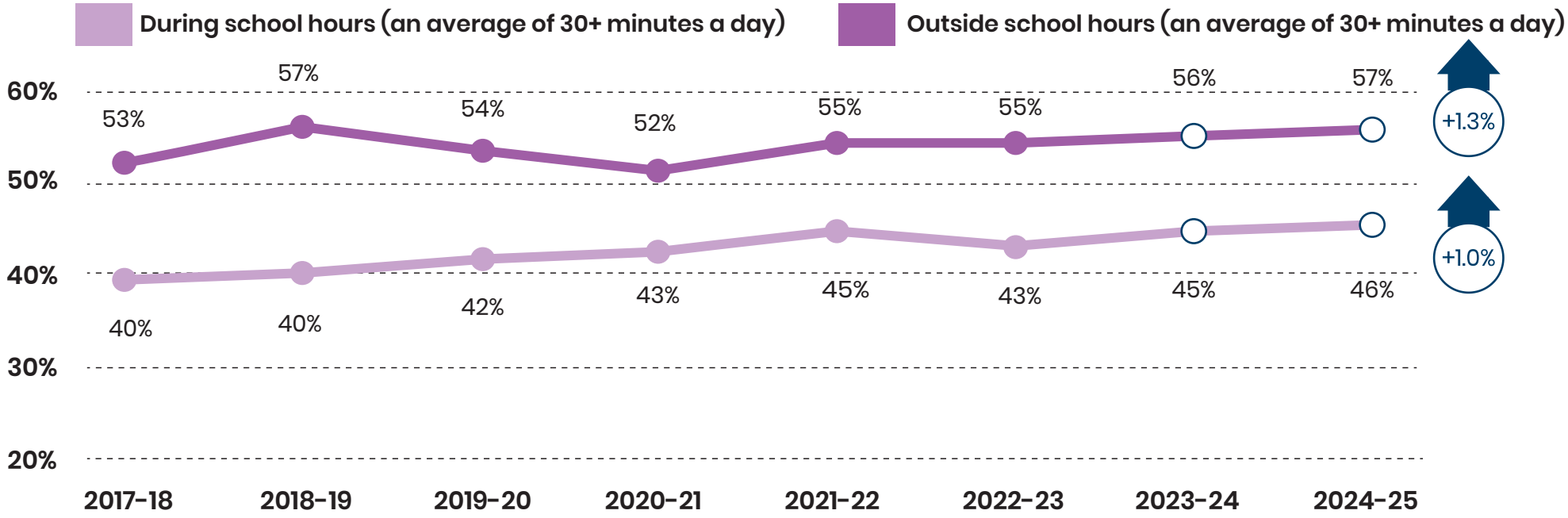
Levels of activity

During vs outside of school hours

Government guidelines recommend that children and young people do 30 minutes of their daily activity through the school day and 30 minutes outside of school. Our data show that 46% meet this requirement during school hours, while 57% meet it outside of school hours; some will fall in both these groups.

Activity outside of school hours has broadly followed the same patterns as activity overall, with an increase of 1.3%, or 67,000 more active children and young people, compared to 12 months ago (academic year 2023-24) and an increase of 4.6%, or 517,000, compared to seven years ago (academic year 2017-18). In contrast, activity during school hours saw steady increases between academic years 2017-18 and 2021-22 and again between academic years 2022-23 and 2024-25. As a result, the proportion who are active during school hours has increased by 6.1%, or 585,000 more active children and young people, compared to seven years ago (academic year 2017-18).

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



Link to data tables

Note: During school hours refers to between the morning and afternoon school bells or equivalent; all other time is counted as outside of school hours.

Levels of activity

ACTIVE LIVES CHILDREN SURVEY 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR

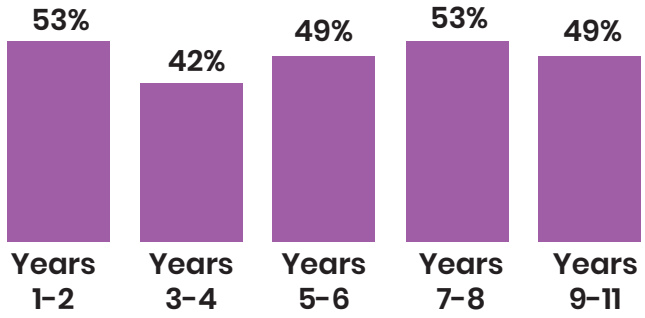
SPORT ENGLAND

Summary of demographic differences

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)

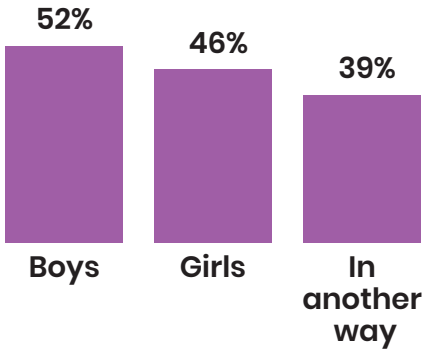
1 Year group

Activity levels are lowest for those in school Years 3-4 (ages 7-9, 42%).



2 Gender identity

Boys (52%) are more likely to be active than girls (46%).

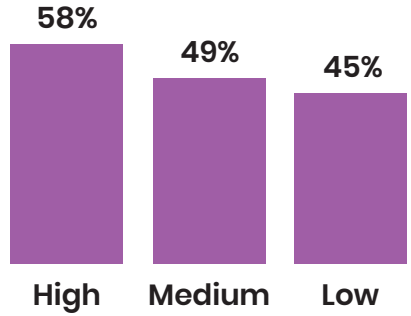


Link to data tables

See our definitions page for the full definition of each demographic group.

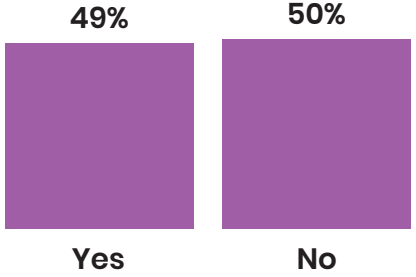
3 Family affluence

Those from the least affluent families are the least likely to be active (45%).



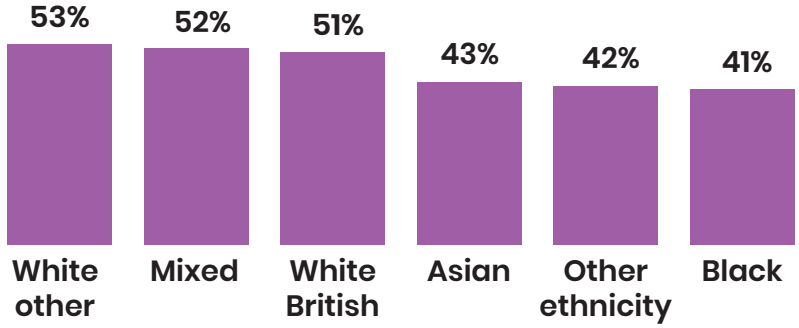
4 Disability and long-term health conditions

Children and young people with a disability or long-term health condition are equally likely to be active as those without one.



5 Ethnicity

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



ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

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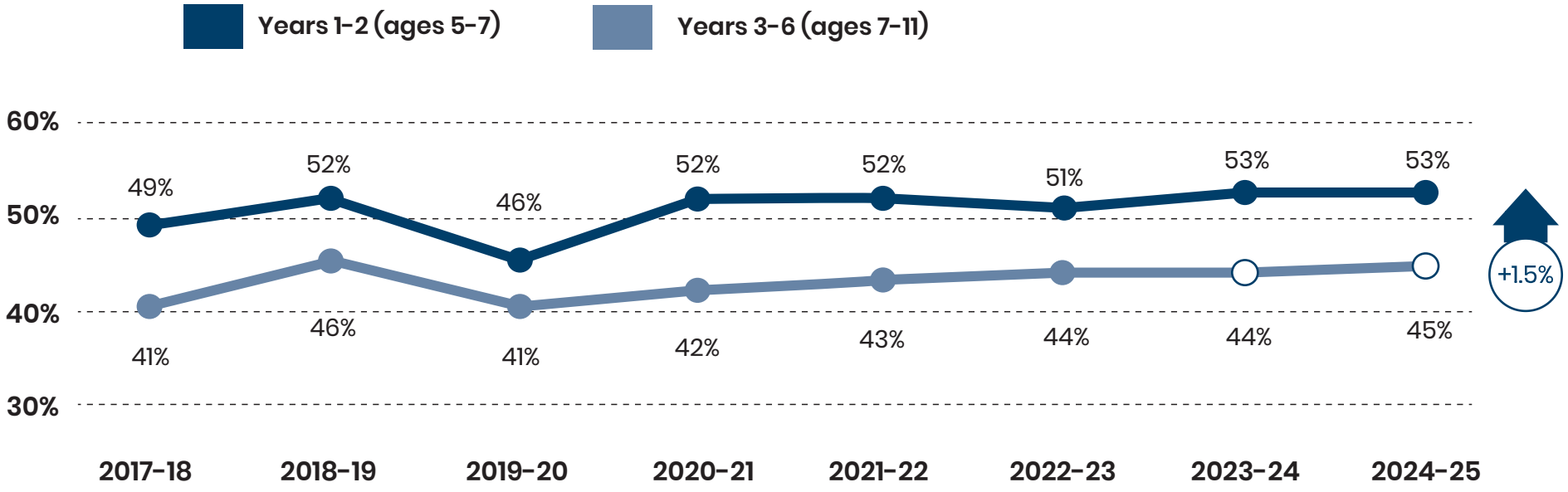
Activity levels among junior-age children continue to recover slowly

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

Activity levels among infant-age children (school Years 1-2, ages 5-6) have been fairly stable since academic year 2018-19, barring a drop during the height of the coronavirus pandemic restrictions in 2019-20. Compared to academic year 2017-18, we are recording a 4.3% increase, or 23,000 more active Year 1-2 children.

Among junior-age children (school Years 3-6, ages 7-11), the proportion of children classified as active has increased compared to 12 months ago (academic year 2023-24) by 1.5%, or 19,000 more active children. This continues a slow but steady trend of recovery since the coronavirus pandemic. Over the longer term, there are 4.1%, or 140,000, more active Years 3-6 children than seven years ago (academic year 2017-18).

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)



Link to data tables

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

SPORT ENGLAND

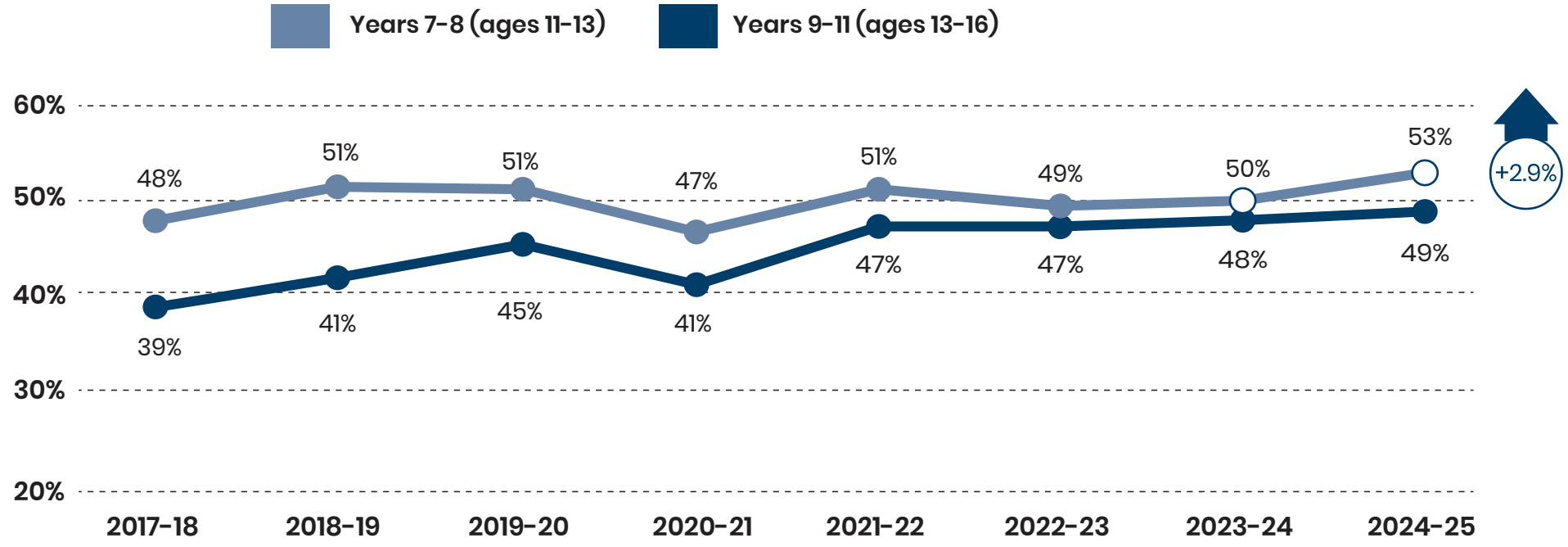
ACTIVE LIVES CHILDREN SURVEY 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR

Activity levels have increased among early secondary-age young people

The proportion of those in school Years 7-8 (ages 11-13) who are active has increased by 2.9%, or 44,000 more active young people compared to 12 months ago (academic year 2023-24). This increase breaks a fairly stable long-term trend. As a result, we are now seeing 5.2%, or 137,000, more active young people in this age group than seven years ago (academic year 2017-18).

Despite activity levels remaining unchanged from 12 months ago among young people in school Years 9-11 (ages 13-16), there is a gradual upward trend over the last three years, following an earlier period of growth before the pandemic. As such, over the last seven years (since academic year 2017-18), we've seen activity levels increase by 10.2%, or 280,000 more active young people.

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)



Link to data tables

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

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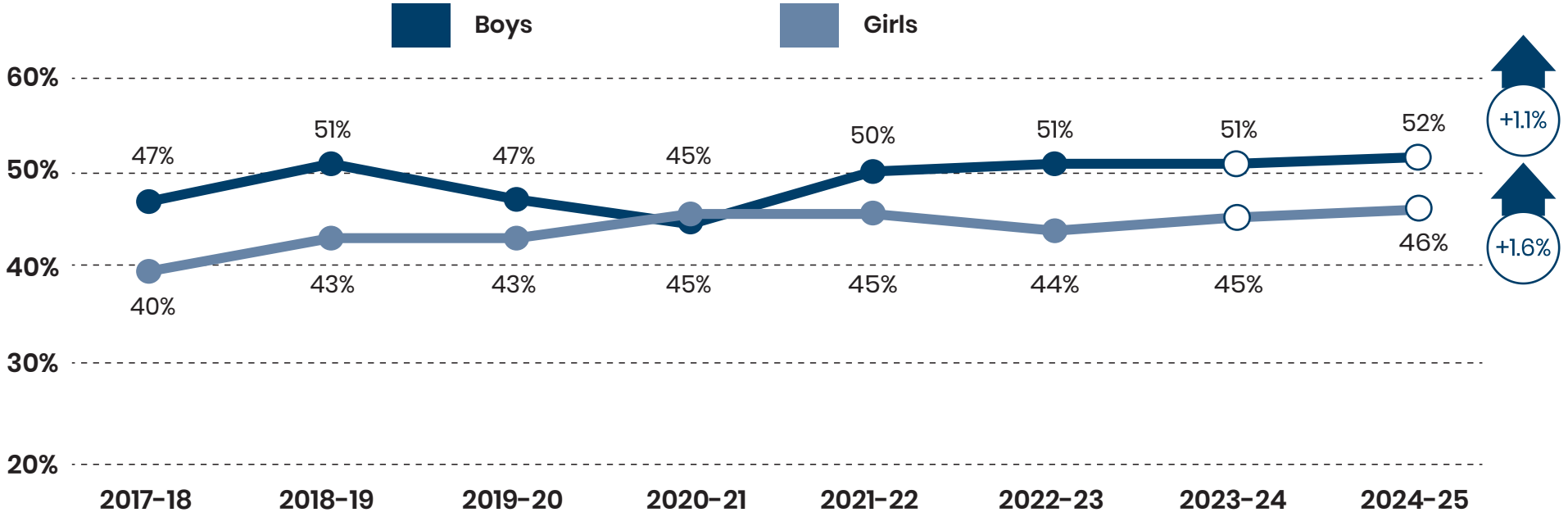
Both boys and girls have seen activity levels increase over the last 12 months

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

We've seen a small increase in activity levels for both boys and girls over the last year, building on the longer-term increases already apparent. Both more recently and over the longer term, the increases are slightly greater for girls than boys. As a result, the gender gap between boys and girls currently stands at 5.9%, slightly narrower than the gap recorded in both 2023-24 (6.4%) and 2017-18 (7.1%).

The gender gap remains the widest among teenagers (school Years 9-11, ages 13-16) at 7.9%, despite long-term growth being greater among teenage girls. The gap has narrowed from 9.5% in academic year 2017-18.

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)



Link to data tables

Disability and long-term health conditions

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

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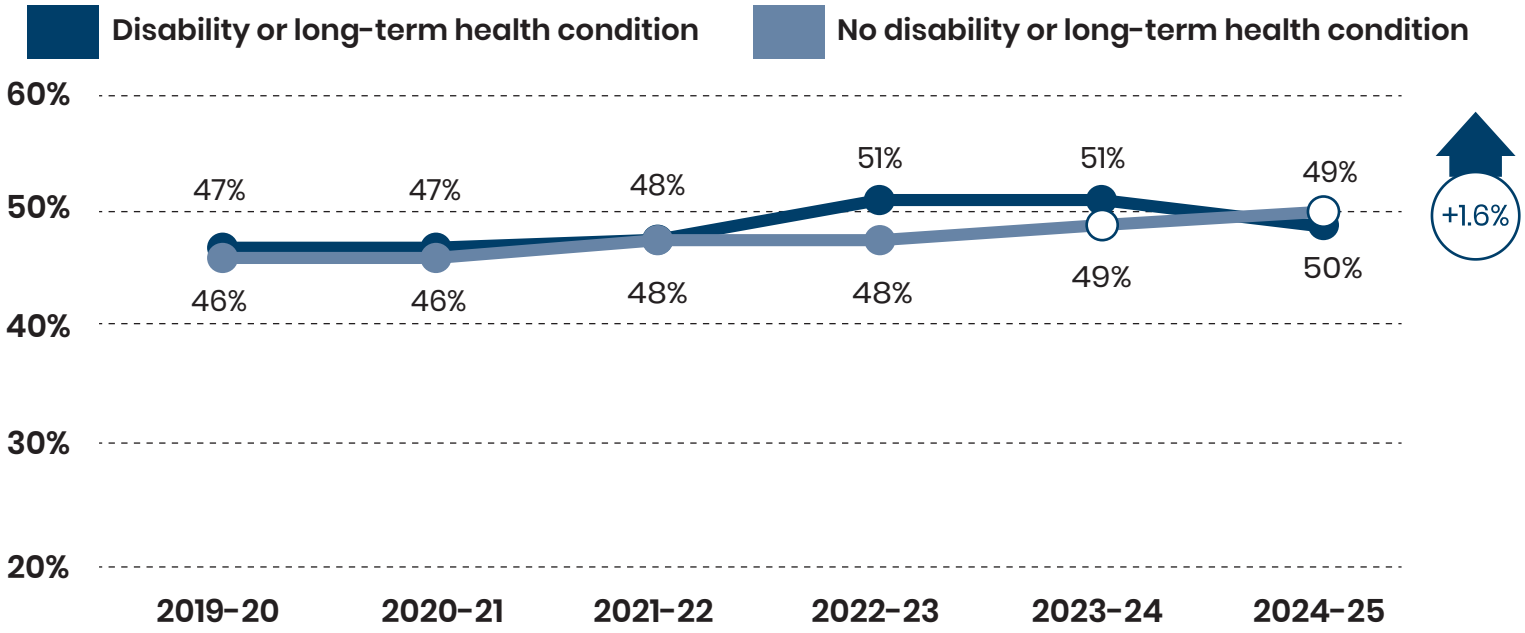
There is little difference in activity levels between children and young people with and without a disability or long-term health condition

Just under half (49%) of children and young people with a disability or long-term health condition, who are in mainstream education, are active. Allowing for fluctuations, this has remained unchanged over the last five years (since academic year 2019-20). Over the same time period, we have seen a small increase among those without a disability or long-term health condition (up 4.9%), resulting in no reportable difference in activity levels between the two groups at the present time.

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

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)



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.

Link to data tables

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

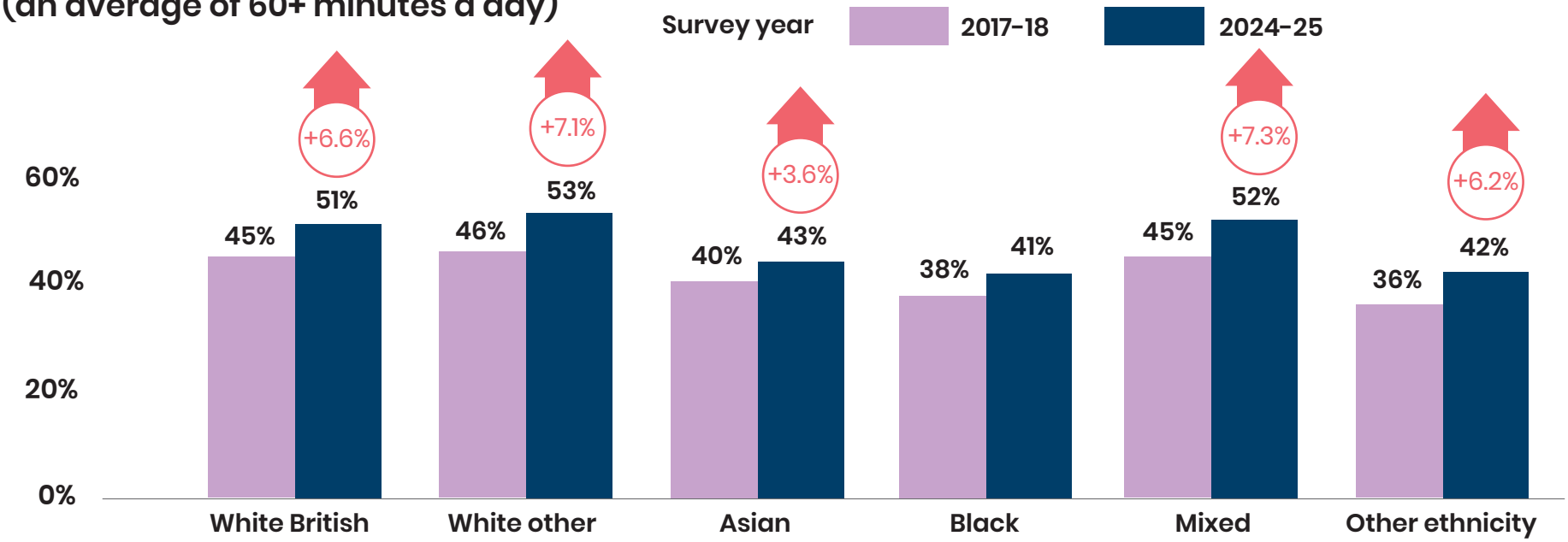
Arrows show change from seven years ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

The gap in activity levels by ethnic group has widened

Increases in activity levels compared to 12 months ago (academic year 2023-24) have been driven by those from White British, White other and Mixed backgrounds, with all other ethnic groups recording no change. These groups, alongside those of other ethnicity, have seen the largest long-term increases (compared to academic year 2017-18), while there was no long-term change for Black children and young people, and boys specifically. Children and young people from Asian, Black and other ethnic backgrounds remain the least likely to be active.

The gender gap is widest between boys and girls from Asian (11.2%), Black (10.6%) and other (12.5%) ethnic groups.

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)



Link to data tables

Note: After White British, the largest ethnic groups within the child population are Asian (11%) and Mixed (7%), with White other (7%), Black (6%) and Other ethnic groups (1%) 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.

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

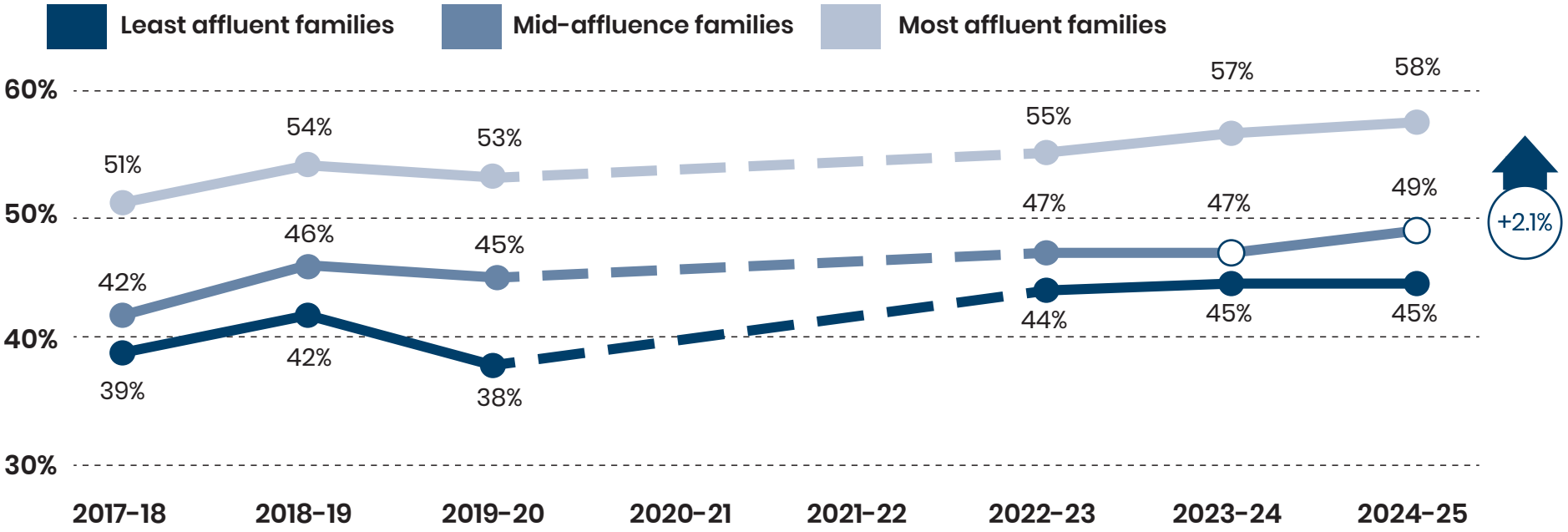
All affluence groups have seen activity levels increase over the longer term

Children and young people from the least affluent families are the least likely to be active, with only 45% meeting the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines — compared to 58% of those from the most affluent families.

While those from the most and mid-affluence families have seen increases over the last two years, those from the least affluent families have not, indicating inequalities have widened in the short term. Activity levels have increased by a similar amount across all three groups over the longer term.

% 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

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

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

Activity levels are lowest for those with two or more characteristics of inequality

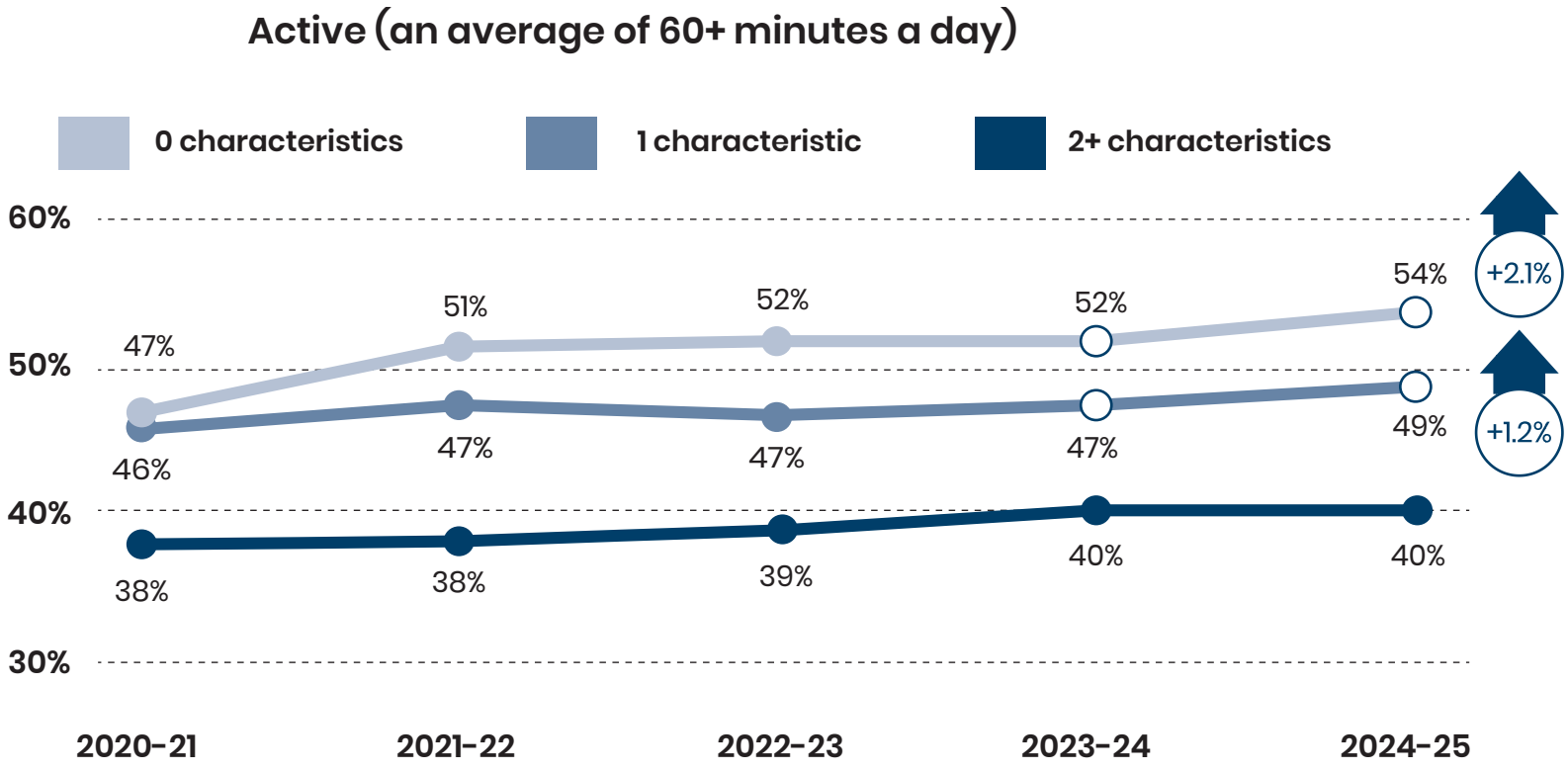
Children and young people with two or more characteristics of inequality are the least likely to be active, with only 40% meeting the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines — compared to 49% of those with one characteristic and 54% with no characteristics of inequality.

Compared to 12 months ago (academic year 2023-24), inequalities have widened, with increases in the proportion of those with zero or one characteristic of inequality who are active, compared to no increase for those with two or more. Additonally, the increases are greater among those with zero characteristics.

The changes between academic years 2020-21 and 2021-22 are likely to be a post-pandemic adjustment.

Link to data tables

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



Note: Some of the data used to compile the Inequalities Metric were not introduced into the survey until academic year 2020-21 and, as such, data for the metric cannot be reported before that date. See the definitions page for more details on how the metric is comprised.

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

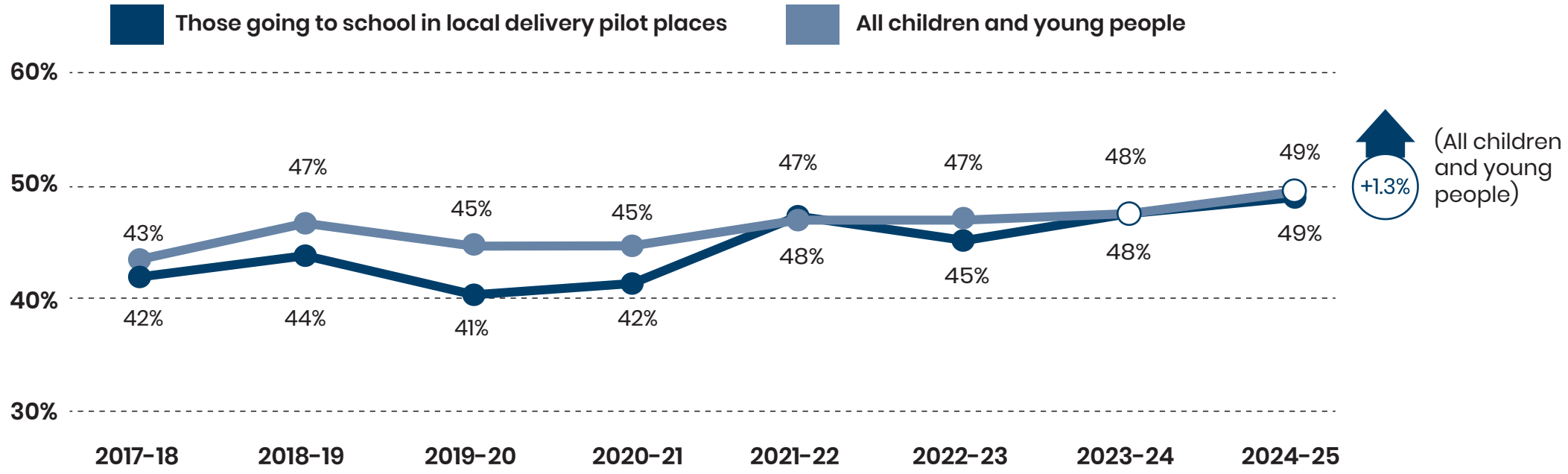
Activity levels in our priority places mirror those of England as a whole

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

Children and young people who go to school in Place Partnership areas are equally likely to be active as those who go to school in other places.

Local delivery pilots (LDPs) were the first tranche of Place Partnerships – 49% of children and young people living in these places are active, the same proportion as across all Place Partnership areas and across all children and young people. Activity levels in LDPs have broadly followed the same patterns as those for England as a whole.

Active (an average of 60+ minutes a day)



Link to data tables

Note: For more information on Place Partnership areas and local delivery pilots, please see our website.

Variety of activity

Definition

This chapter presents information in two formats:

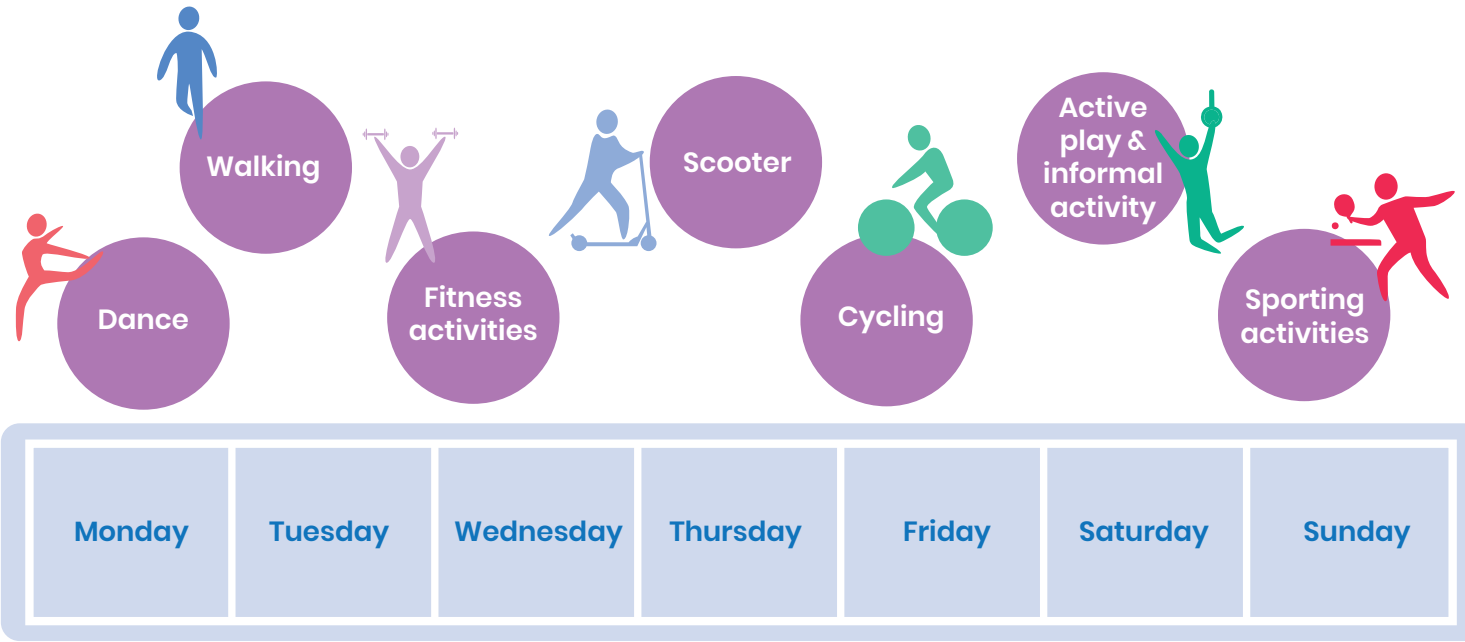
- **Mean number of days** (average number of days a week)
- **Distribution of days** (number of days a week grouped by 0, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7 days).

The Chief Medical Officers' guidelines recommend that children and young people should engage in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity across the week to develop movement skills, muscular fitness and bone strength.

This is measured as the number of days on which a child takes part in two or more activities at any intensity for any duration.

We measure the variety of sport and physical activity done in...

- Mean number of days per week undertaking **two or more activities**
- Distribution of days per week undertaking **two or more activities**



Variety of activity

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

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

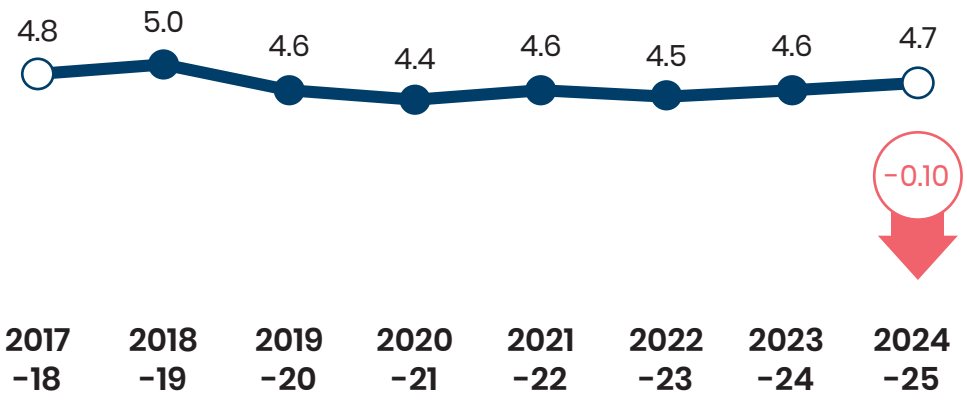
SPORT ENGLAND

Most children and young people take part in two or more activities on five or more days across the week

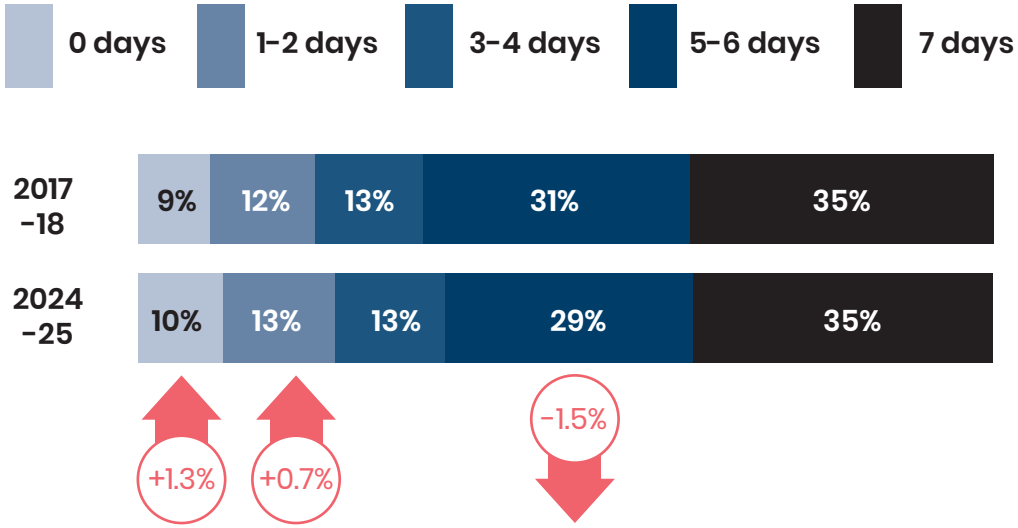
On average, children and young people in school Years 1-11 (aged 5-16) take part in two or more activities on 4.7 days a week. This is relatively unchanged over the longer term, recording a drop of just 0.1 days since academic year 2017-18.

This average is pulled down by the 23% of children and young people who do so on two or fewer days, which has increased from 21% to 23% (+2.0%) compared to academic year 2017-18. A tenth of children and young people do not meet this guideline on a single day. In contrast, there has been an increase, compared to 12 months ago, in the proportion of children and young people undertaking two or more activities on all seven days of the week (up 1.9% compared to academic year 2023-24), bringing it back in line with the proportion seen seven years ago.

Mean number of days undertaking 2+ activities



Distribution of days undertaking 2+ activities



Link to data tables

Volunteering

Definition

Giving up time to help other people to be active is amazing, no matter your age. Not only do those people benefit, but the volunteer benefits too — gaining experience, making friends and learning new skills.

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

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

They've taken part in a volunteering role to support sport/physical activity in the last 12 months.

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

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

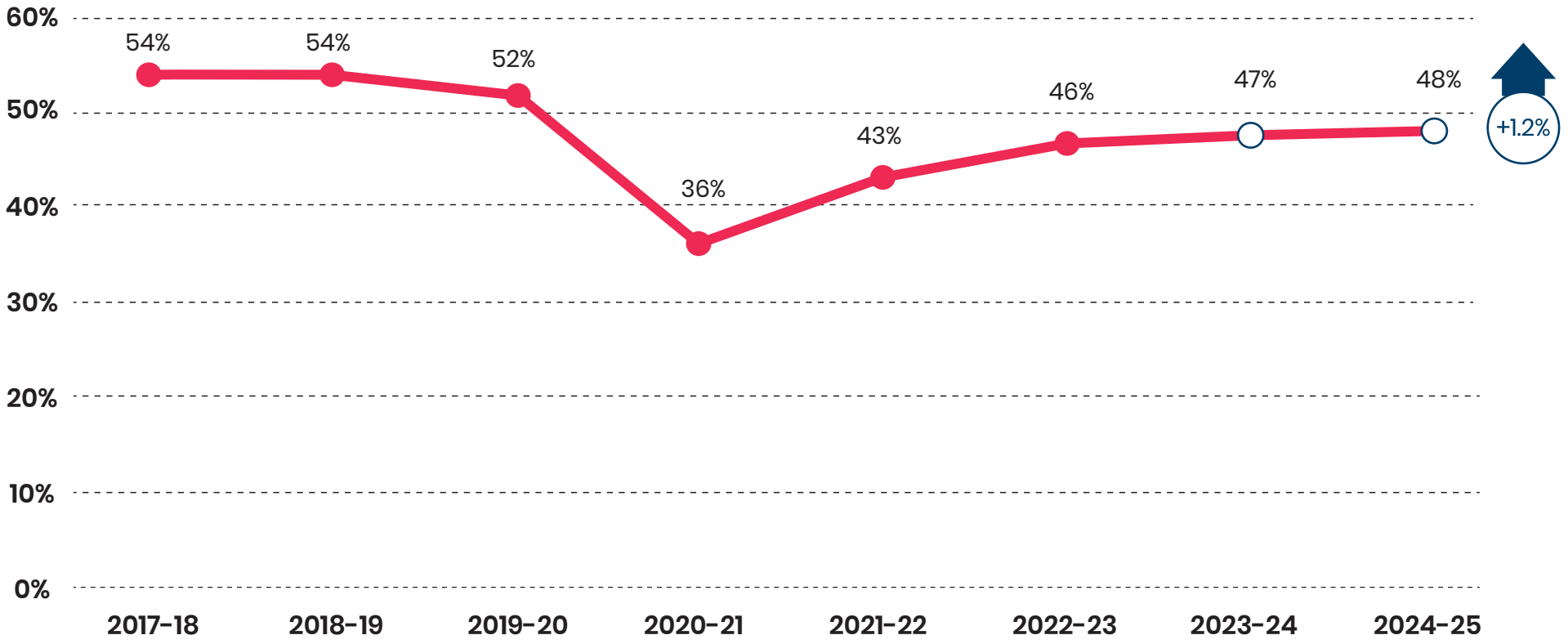
ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

2.3 million (48%) children and young people volunteered to support sport and physical activity in the last 12 months

Despite a small increase compared to 12 months ago, volunteering rates appear to have settled at a lower level than pre-pandemic. There are 5.6%, or 18,000, fewer children and young people volunteering compared to seven years ago (academic year 2017-18).

Volunteered in the last year



Link to data tables

Note: Volunteering is only asked of children and young people in Years 5-11 (ages 9-16).

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

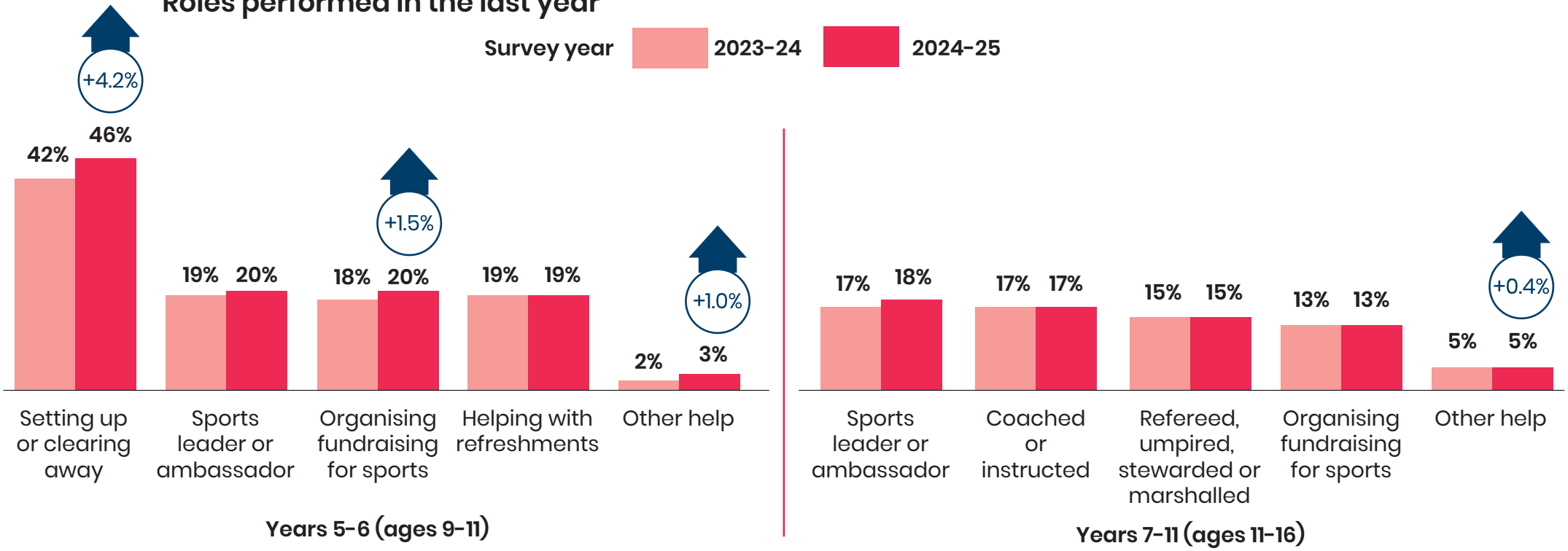
Setting up and clearing away has contributed to the small year-on-year increase in volunteering overall

Setting up and clearing away among Year 5-6 children (ages 9-11) is the most common way to help out. This role has seen the largest increase compared to 12 months ago of 4.2%, or 53,000, more children doing so. However, levels remain down over the longer term by 2.8%, or 22,000 fewer children compared to academic year 2017-18.

The largest long-term drops continue to be seen in organising fundraising, with 6.1%, or 74,000, fewer Year 5-6 children (ages 9-11) and 7.8%, or 176,000, fewer Year 7-11 (ages 11-16) young people doing so compared to academic year 2017-18.

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

Roles performed in the last year



Link to data tables

Note: 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.

Volunteering

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

Volunteer profile

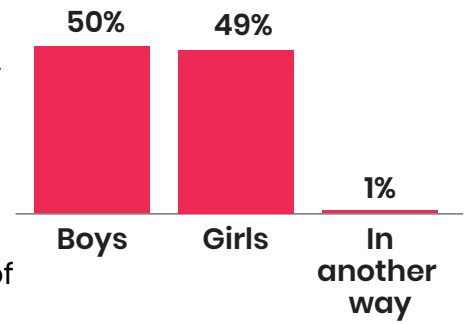
Population profile

Summary of demographic profile

Our data show there are some inequalities:

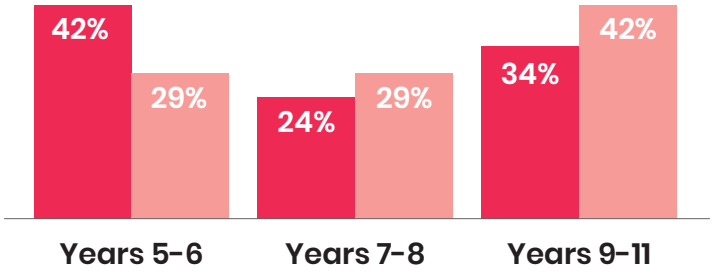
1 Gender identity

Boys and girls are fairly equally represented among volunteers. 'In another way' comprises 0.7% of the population.



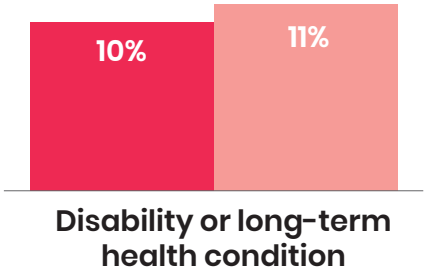
2 School year

Older children are under-represented among volunteers.



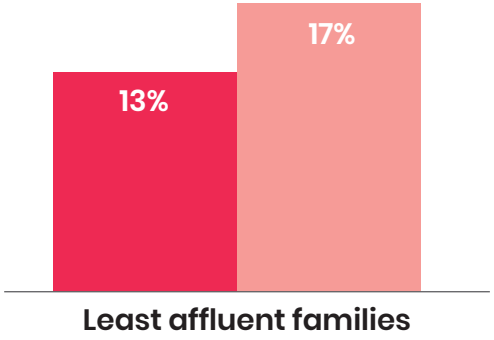
3 Disability and long-term health conditions

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



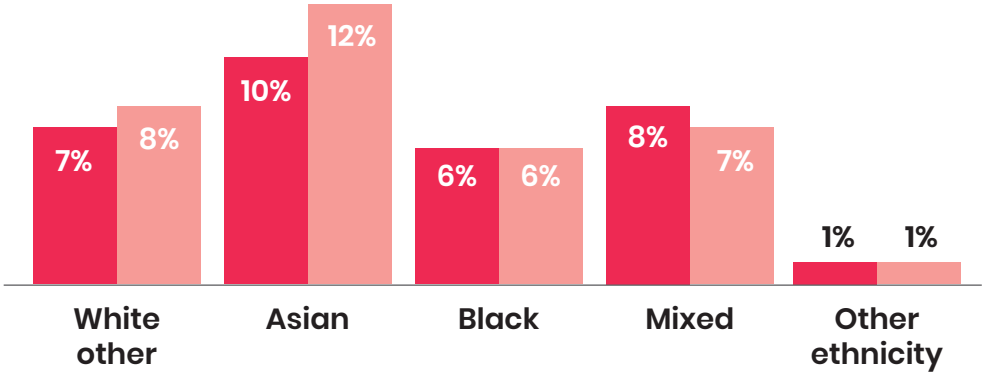
4 Least affluent families

Children and young people from the least affluent families are under-represented. They make up 17% of those in Years 5-11 (ages 9-16), but only 13% of volunteers.



5 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.



Link to data tables

See our definitions page for the full definition of each demographic group.

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

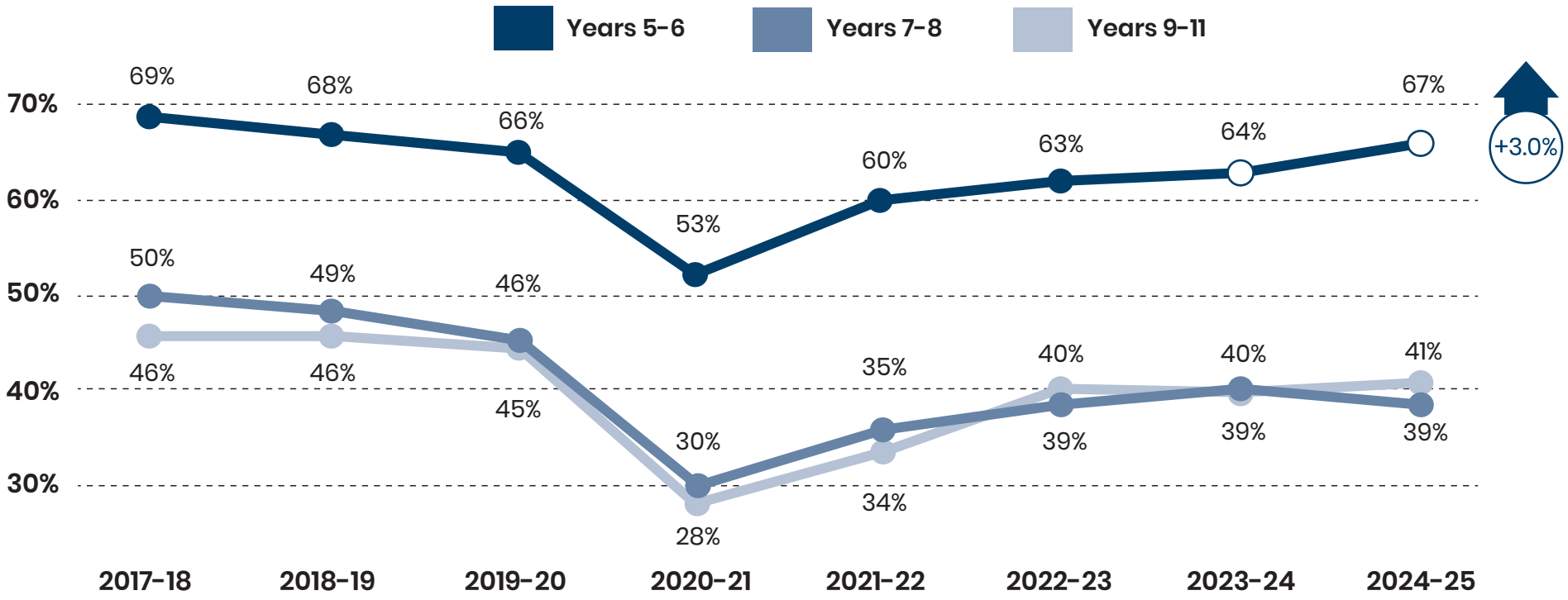
Primary-age children have driven the recent increase in volunteering

Volunteering rates are higher for children in school Years 5-6 (ages 9-11) than those in Years 7-8 (ages 11-13) and Years 9-11 (ages 13-16), with little difference between the latter two age groups. Setting up and clearing away appears to be the key role driving this difference and it is also behind the increase seen in volunteering overall among the youngest age group. Despite this, volunteering levels remain down by 2.3%, or 65,000 fewer children in school Years 5-6 (ages 9-11), compared to academic year 2017-18.

Long-term drops are greater among older children, with 8.3%, or 49,000, fewer in school Years 7-8 and 6.2%, or 33,000, fewer in school Years 9-11 giving up their time.

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

Volunteered in the last year



Link to data tables

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

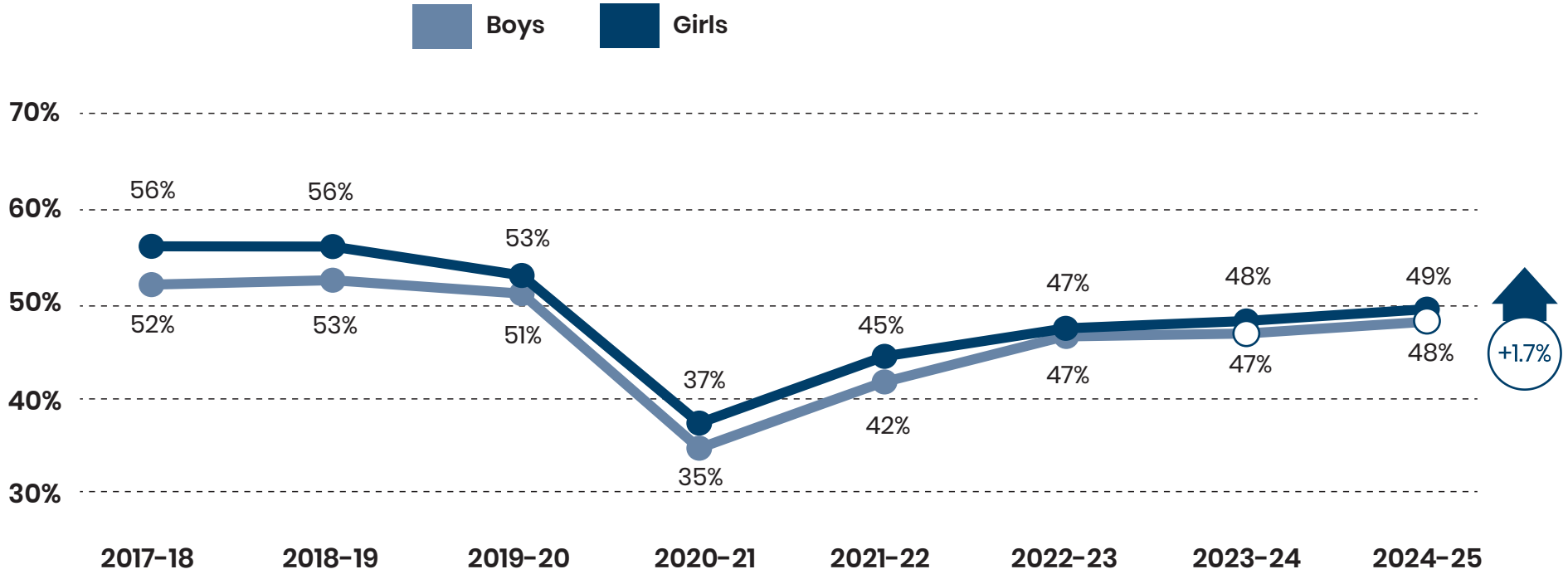
SPORT ENGLAND

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

Volunteering rates are similar between boys and girls

There has been a small increase in volunteering levels among boys overall compared to 12 months ago (academic year 2023-24). Within this, both boys and girls in school Years 5-6 have seen increases, but neither boys nor girls in school Years 7-11 have seen a change. Among the younger age group, girls remain more likely to volunteer than boys, with no gender difference for the older age group.

Volunteered in the last year



Link to data tables

Disability and long-term health conditions

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

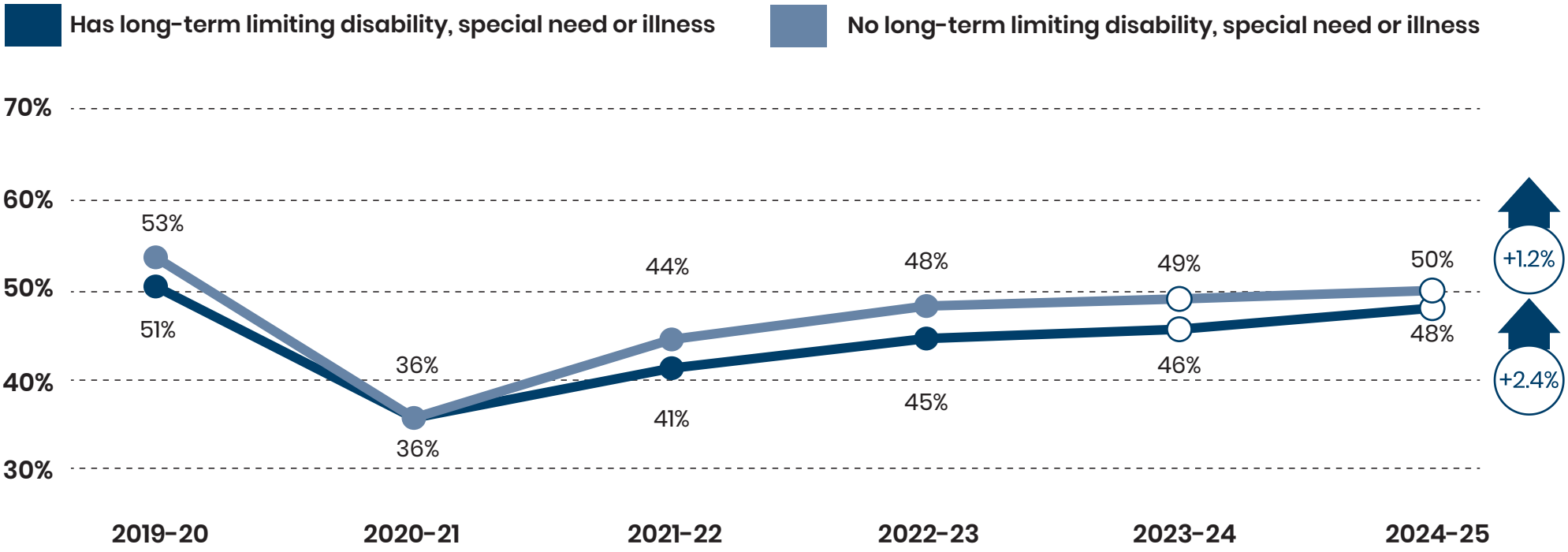
SPORT ENGLAND

Just under half (48%) of children and young people with a disability or long-term health condition give up their time to help others

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

There is no reportable difference in volunteering rates for children and young people with a disability or long-term health condition compared to those without, and changes over time are similar between the two groups.

Volunteered in the last year



Link to data tables

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

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

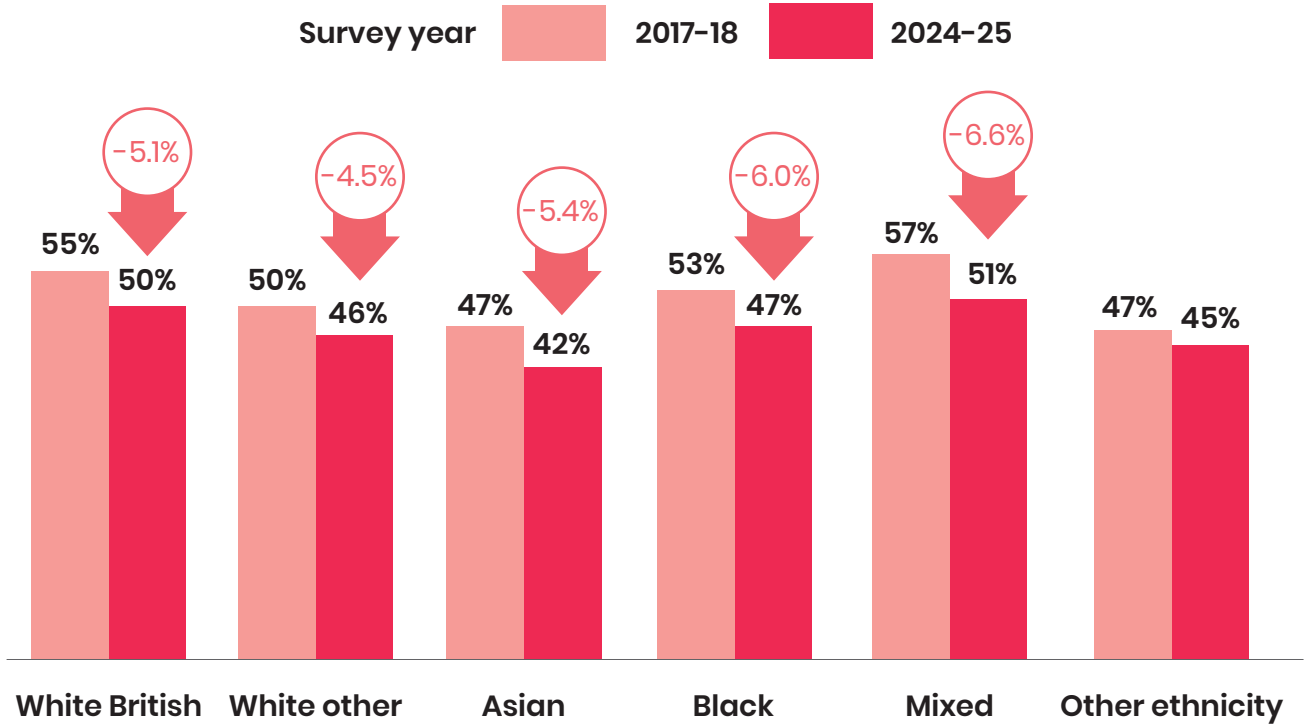
SPORT ENGLAND

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

Asian and White other children and young people have driven the small increases

Children and young people of Asian, White other and other ethnic backgrounds are the least likely to volunteer to support sport and physical activity. It is, however, Asian (up 2.6%) and White other (up 3.6%) children and young people, especially boys, who have driven the small increase since 12 months ago. Despite this, long-term drops remain among most groups and are particularly notable among girls from Black and Mixed backgrounds, with drops of 9.2% and 9.5% respectively, compared to academic year 2017-18.

Volunteered in the last year



Note: After White British, the largest ethnic group within the Year 5-11 child population is Asian (12%), with White other (8%), Mixed (7%), Black (6%) and Other ethnic groups (1%) 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

Family affluence

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

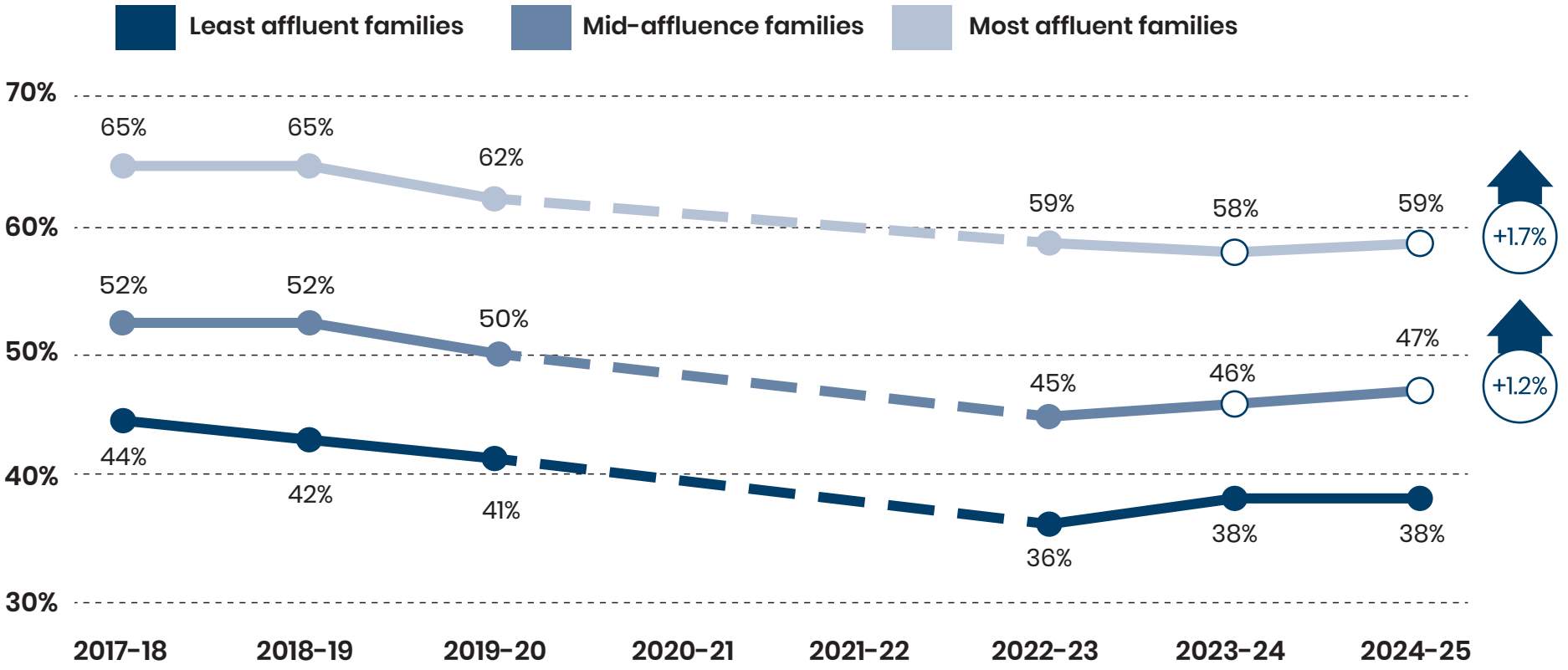
SPORT ENGLAND

Just under two in five children and young people from the least affluent families volunteer to support sport and physical activity

Children and young people from the least affluent families are less likely to volunteer to support sport and physical activity, compared to those from the most affluent families. This gap has widened in the last 12 months, with the small recovery in volunteering being seen only among children and young people from the most and mid-affluent families.

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

Volunteered in the last year



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

Link to data tables

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

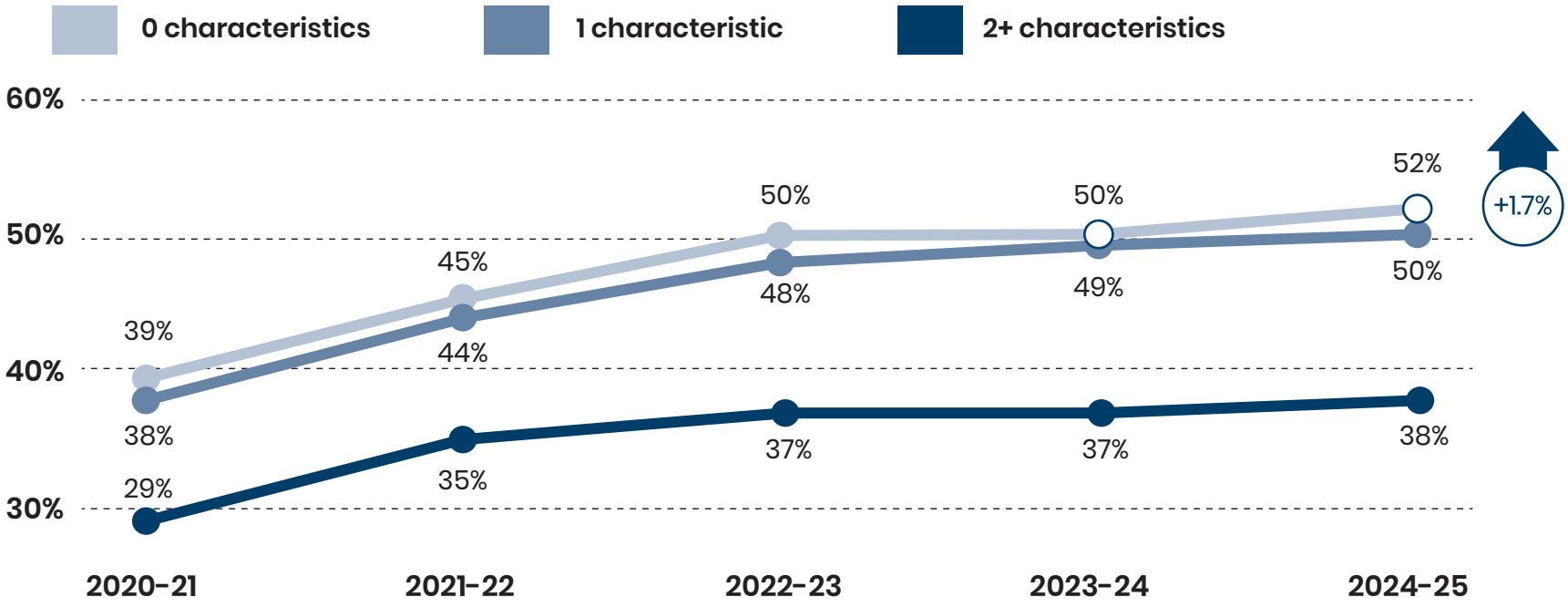
Fewer than 40% of children and young people with two or more characteristics of inequality volunteer to support sport and physical activity

Children and young people with two or more characteristics of inequality are notably less likely to volunteer; however, there is no difference in levels between those with zero or one characteristic. The small increase in volunteering compared to 12 months ago has only been seen among those with no characteristics of inequality, those with one or more characteristics seeing no change.

This difference in volunteering levels is most pronounced among secondary-age young people (Years 7-11, ages 11-16), where we see fewer young people with two or more characteristics of inequality volunteering across all roles. In contrast, for children in school Years 5-6 (ages 9-11), it is only in organising fundraising for sport and being a sports leader or ambassador where levels are lower among those with two or more characteristics of inequality.

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

Volunteered in the last year



Link to data tables

Note: Some of the data used to compile the Inequalities Metric were not introduced into the survey until academic year 2020-21 and, as such, data for the metric cannot be reported before that date. See the definitions page for more details on how the metric is comprised.

Wellbeing, individual and community development

Outcomes definition

SPORT ENGLAND

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

Measures covered are:

- mental wellbeing
- individual development
- social and community development.

Link to more information on measures and demographics

Link to data tables

	Physical wellbeing	Mental wellbeing	Individual development	Social & community development	Economic 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 yester-day? (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 with: • If I find something difficult, I keep trying until I can do it. (Years 3-11)	Agreement with: • 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 • Our estimated social value of sport and physical activity

Mental wellbeing

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

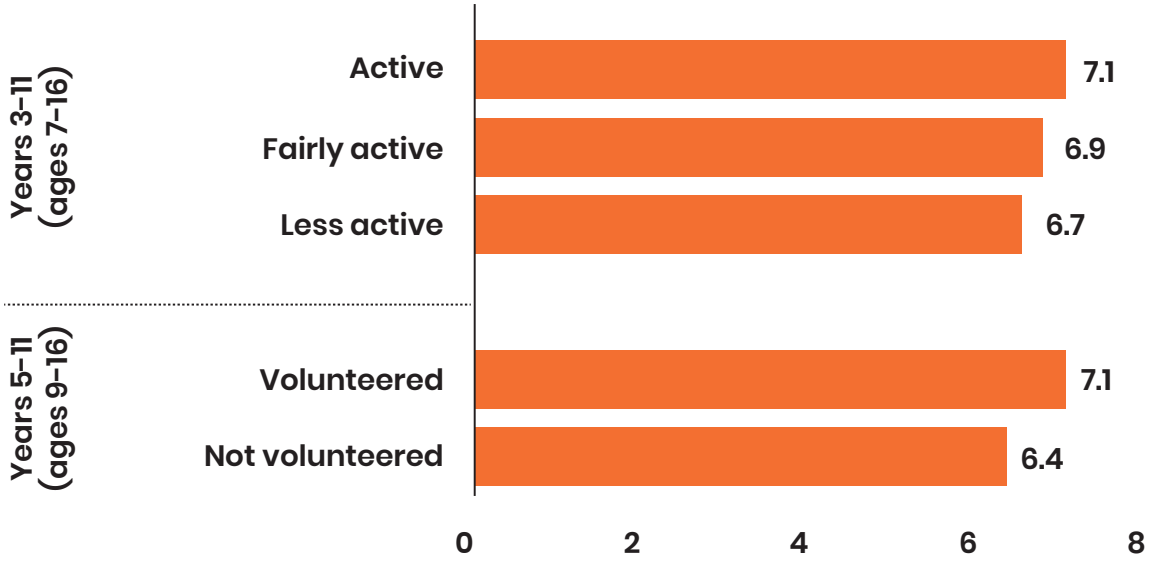
ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

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 fairly active, which in turn are higher than for 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'.)

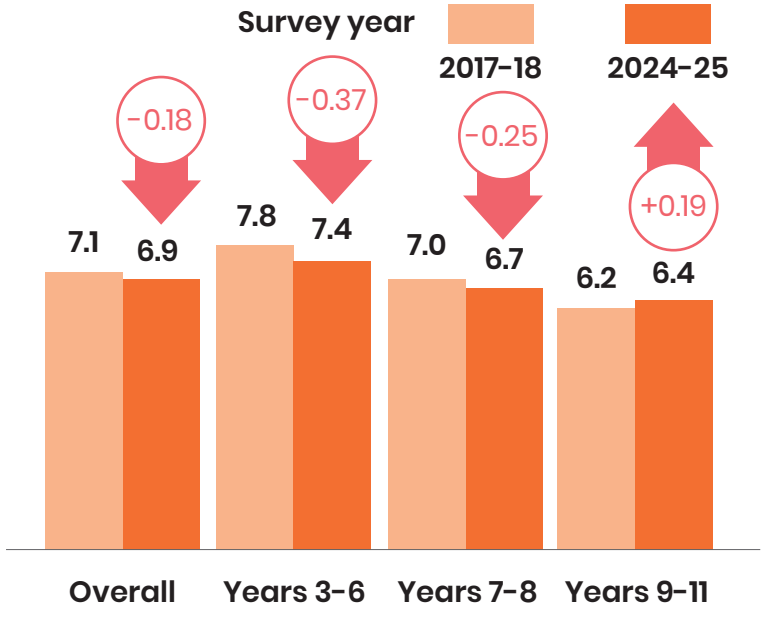


Link to data tables

Summary of change

Happiness scores have increased by 0.08 points compared to 12 months ago, now averaging 6.9 out of 10. They remain 0.18 points down compared to academic year 2017-18.

- Young people in school Years 9-11 (ages 13-16) are now showing a long-term increase of 0.19 points (compared to academic year 2017-18).
- Boys have driven the 12-month increase (+0.11 points to 7.3), widening the gap with girls (6.7), who have seen no change.



Individual development

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

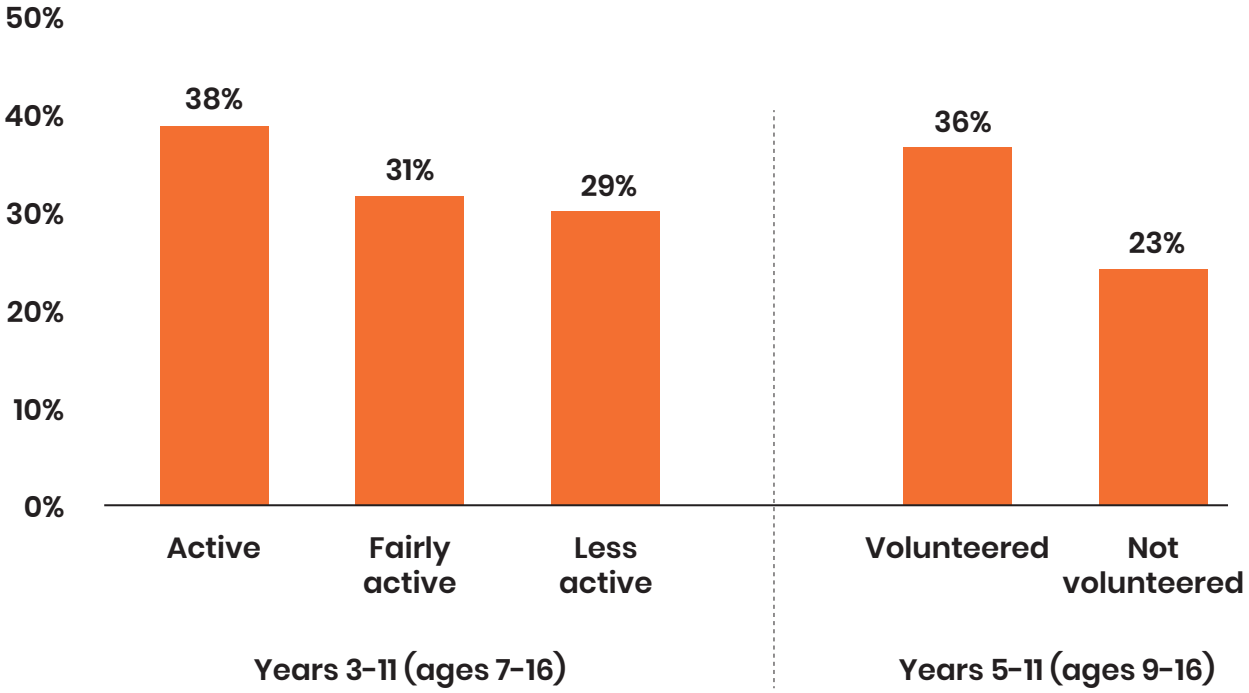
ACTIVE LIVES CHILDREN SURVEY 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR

SPORT ENGLAND

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.)

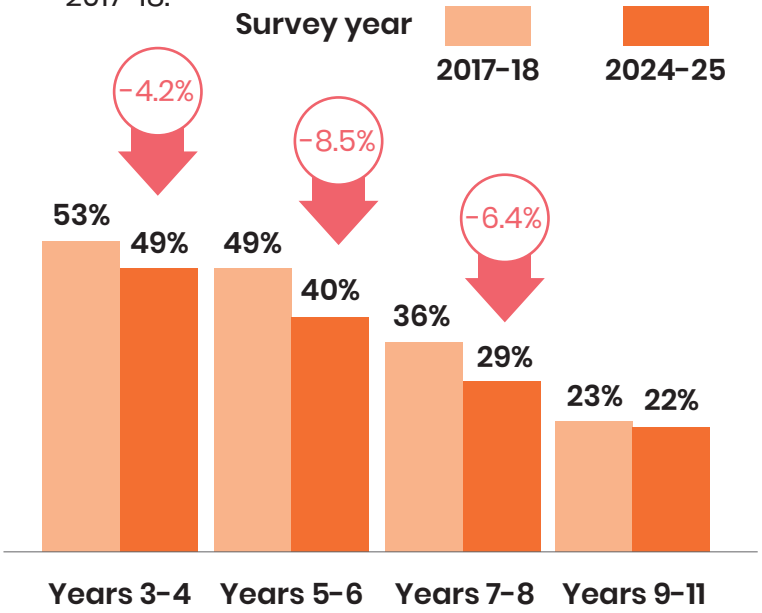


Link to data tables

Summary of change

Levels of individual development remain unchanged at 34% over the last four years, having fallen by 4.9% compared to seven years ago (academic year 2017-18).

- Following a small increase compared to 12 months ago (+1.1%), levels for young people in school Years 9-11 (ages 13-16) are back in line with seven years ago (academic year 2017-18).
- Girls (down 7.4%) have seen a greater drop than boys (down 2.4%) compared to academic year 2017-18.



Community development

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

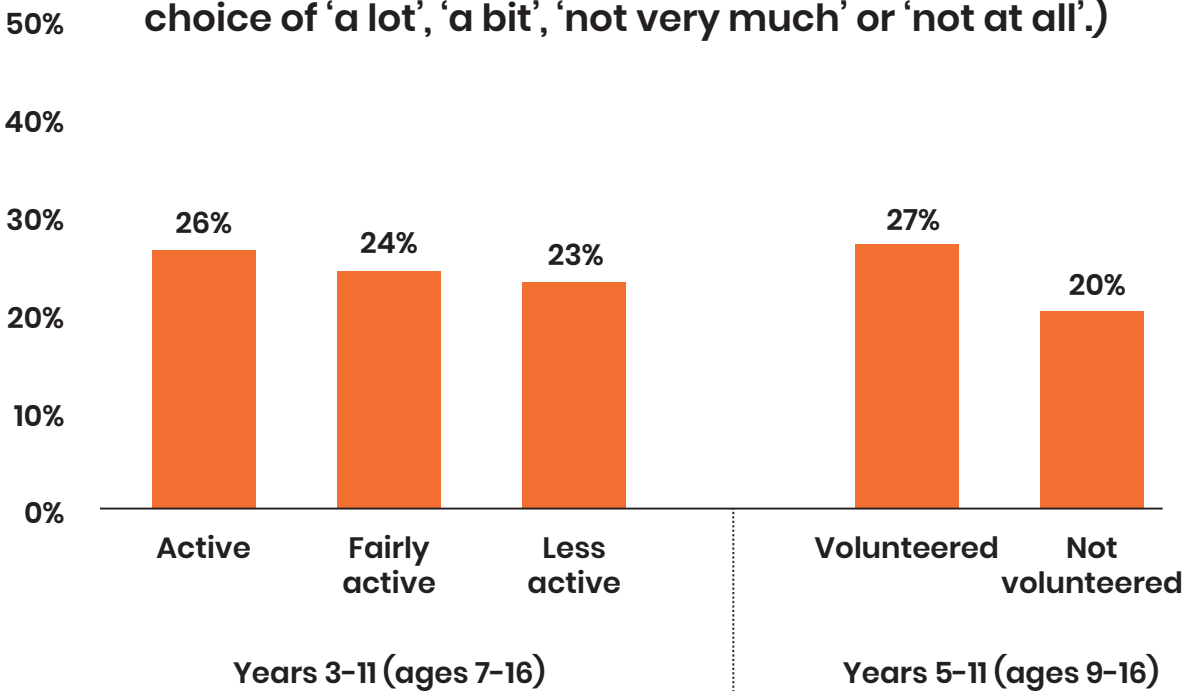
ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

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

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

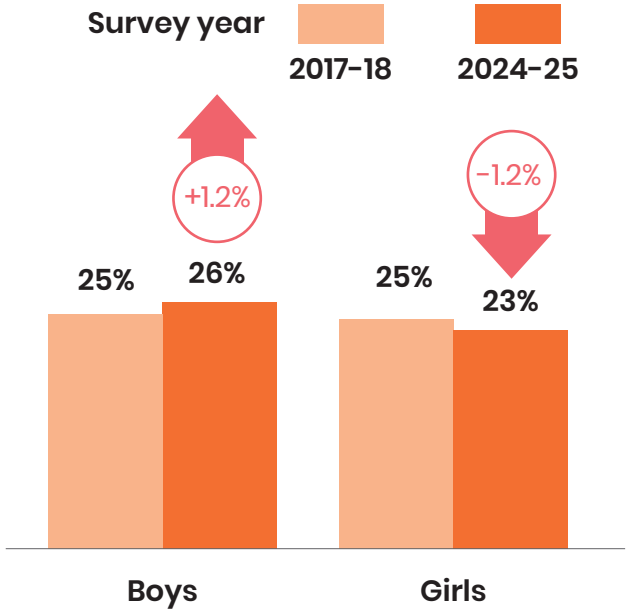


Link to data tables

Summary of change

Levels of social trust, at 25%, are up compared to 12 months ago (+1.4%) and back in line with levels seen seven years ago (academic year 2017-18).

- Junior-age children (Years 3-6, ages 7-11) have driven the increase (+2.5%) and levels are up over the longer term (+1.0%).
- While levels for both boys and girls have increased, for girls they remain down over the longer term, whereas for boys they are up.



Physical literacy

Definition

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

The Physical Literacy Consensus Statement for England was published in September 2023. The list of attitude statements set out in this chapter is not exhaustive but rather provides a top-level indicator for each domain, split by the three themes illustrated on this page.

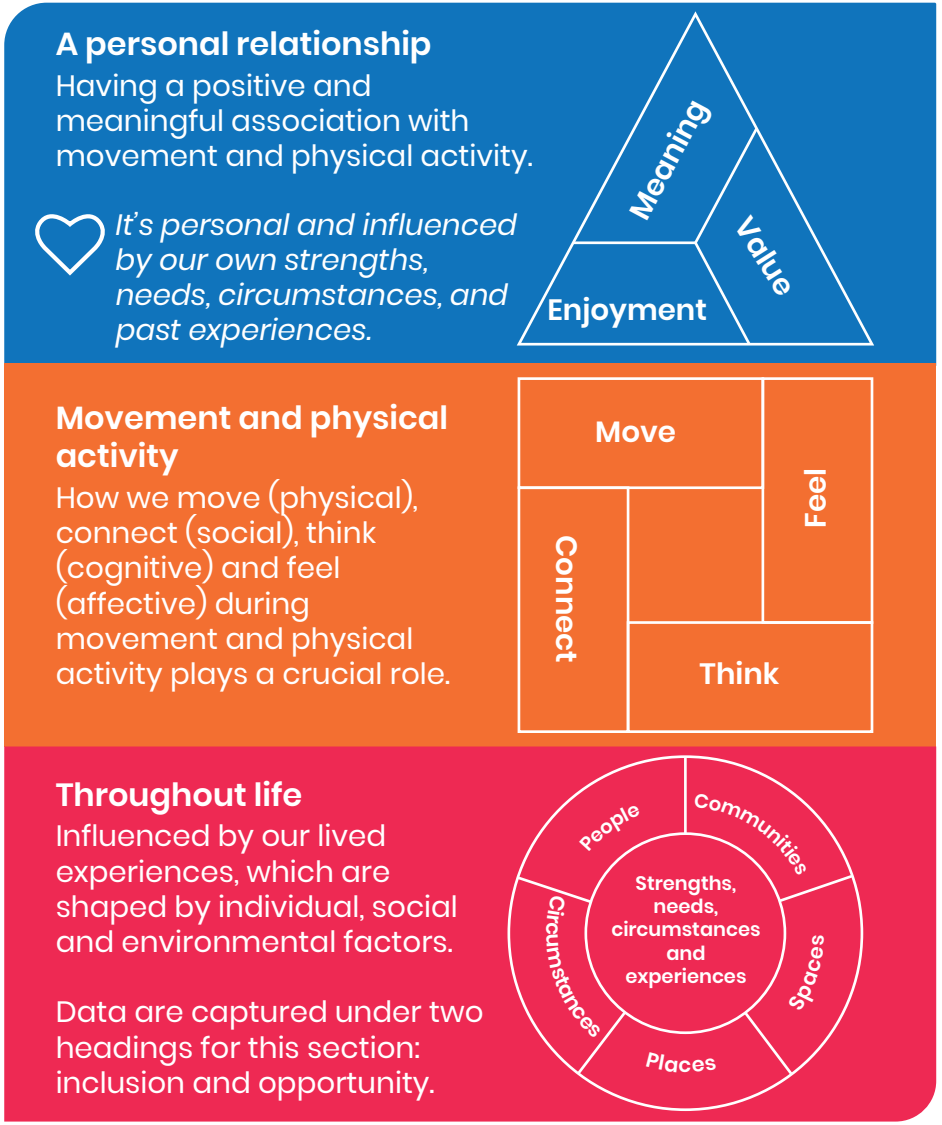
Most data in this chapter relate to children and young people in school Years 3-11 (ages 7-16). A simpler set of attitude questions are asked to Year 1-2 (age 5-7) children, and data showing these results are included at the end of the chapter. Please see the definitions page for a list of the statements asked and which year groups each apply to.

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

Positive and meaningful relationship

Learning and development

Positive experiences



Physical literacy summary

Years 3-11 (ages 7-16)

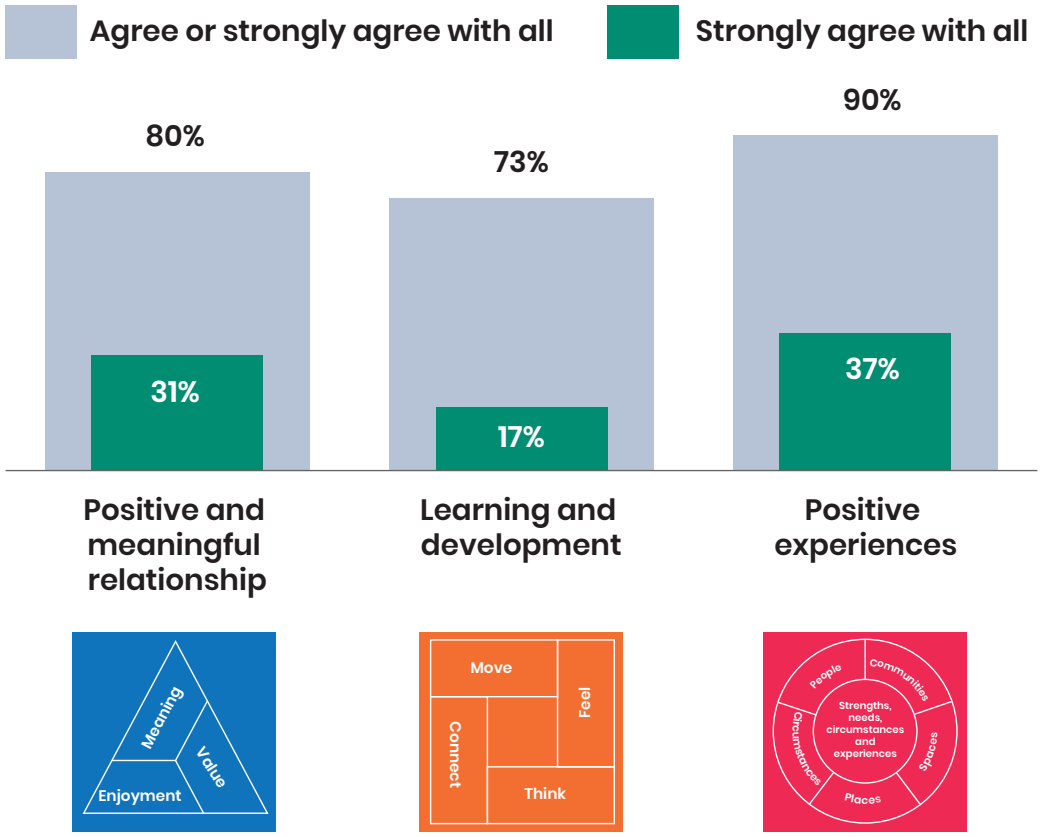
ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

To demonstrate a positive relationship within a theme of physical literacy, we aspire that children and young people should agree or strongly agree with every domain within that theme and strongly agree with as many as possible

Most (90%) children and young people agree with all domains of positive experiences (inclusion and opportunity), 80% agree with all domains of positive and meaningful relationship (meaning, value and enjoyment) and 73% for learning and development (move, connect, think and feel).

Notably fewer strongly agree with all domains within a theme, from 37% for positive experiences to 17% for learning and development.



Why does it matter?

Those who have a positive relationship in each of these themes are more likely to be active than those who don't – the more domains they strongly agree with, the better.

Note: There are three themes that comprise physical literacy, as presented in the chart above. Within each, there are a series of domains that capture the essence of the theme (two to four, depending on the section). See the definitions page for the specific questions asked in relation to those domains.

Link to data tables

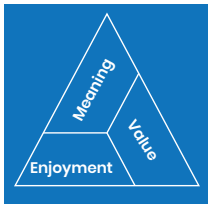
Positive and meaningful relationship

Years 3-11 (ages 7-16)

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

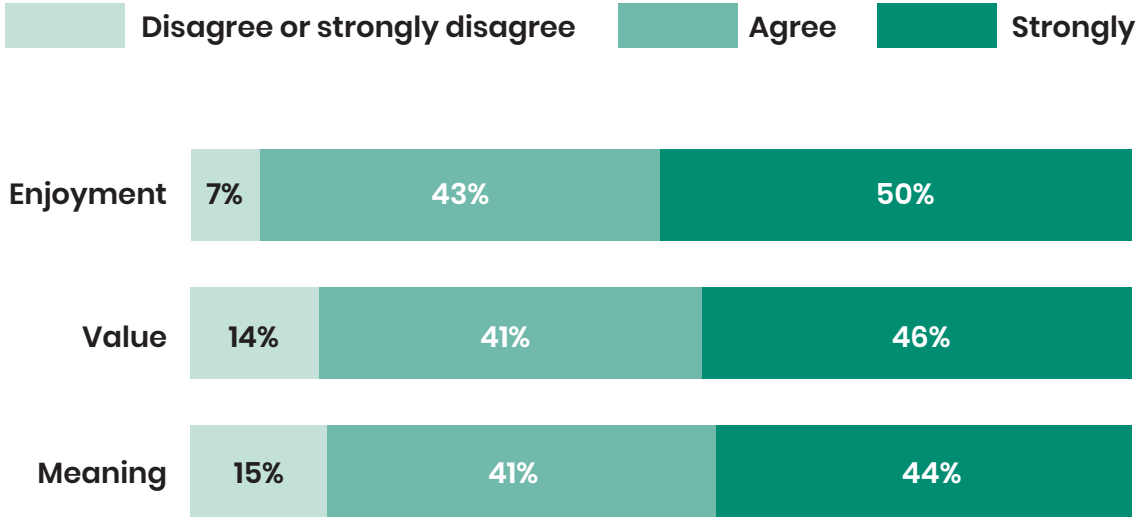
Having a positive and meaningful relationship with movement and physical activity is captured through the three domains of meaning, value and enjoyment



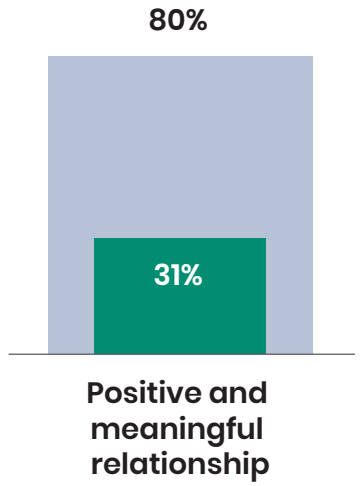
While 80% of children and young people agree with all three domains within this theme of physical literacy, only 31% strongly agree with all three. Strong agreement is an important gauge of strength of attitude, especially given the tendency of children to 'agree' with things.

Children and young people are most likely to strongly agree that they enjoy taking part, with slightly fewer saying that it makes them feel better about themselves and/or relax and worry less (value) or that it matters to them (meaning).

Agreement level across statements within each domain

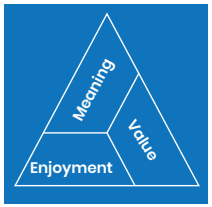


Agreement with all domains



Link to data tables

Differences by age are driven by girls



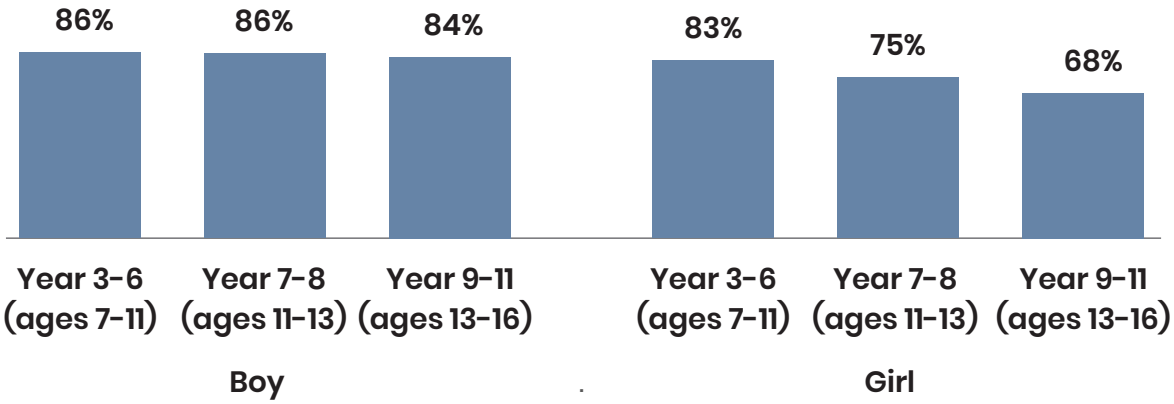
Boys, on average, are more likely than girls to agree with all three domains within the positive and meaningful relationship theme of physical literacy, with the largest gap being for enjoyment, where 60% boys strongly agree they enjoy taking part, compared to just 41% of girls.

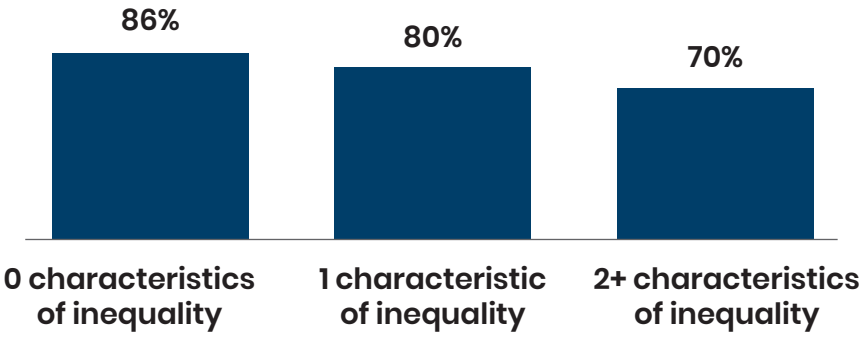
The proportion agreeing decreases with age, but these differences are only observed for girls, with boys equally likely to agree with all three domains regardless of age. The gap by age is greatest for those strongly agreeing that taking part matters to them (meaning), falling from 51% among junior-age children (Years 3-6, ages 7-11) to 39% among secondary-age young people (Years 7-11, ages 11-16).

The proportion agreeing with all three domains increases with affluence and is lower for those with a disability or long-term health condition than those without. There are no differences by ethnic group.

Overall, the proportion agreeing with all domains decreases as inequality increases: 86% with no characteristics of inequality agree with all three domains, compared to just 70% among those with two or more characteristics.

Agree or strongly agree with all of meaning, value and enjoyment





Link to data tables

Note: See the definitions page for more details on how the Inequalities Metric is comprised.

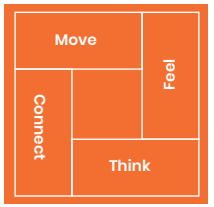
Learning and development

Years 3-11 (ages 7-16)

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

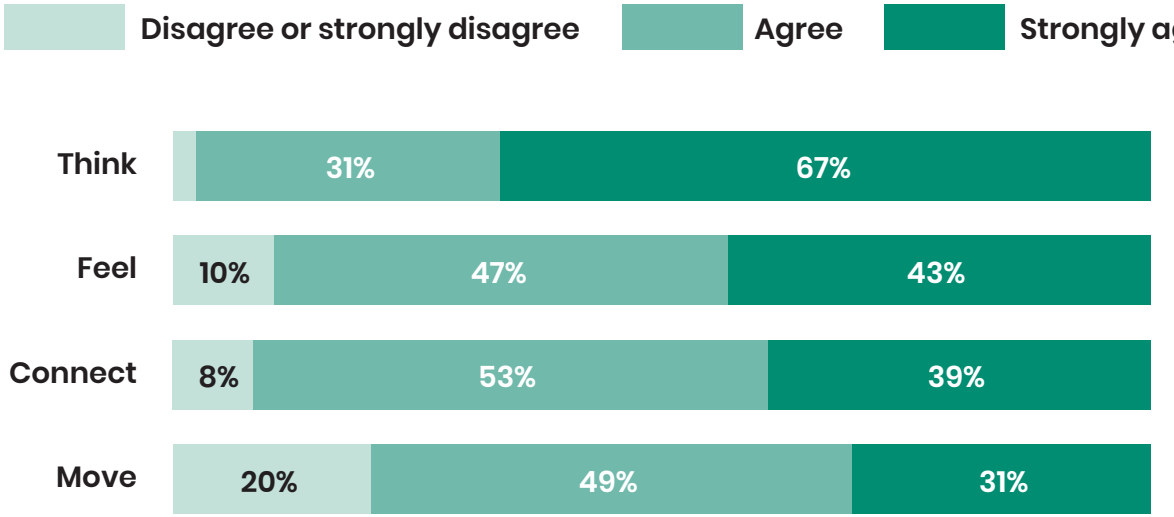
Learning and development represents the skills, competencies and capabilities that underpin physical literacy and is captured through the four domains of move, connect, think and feel



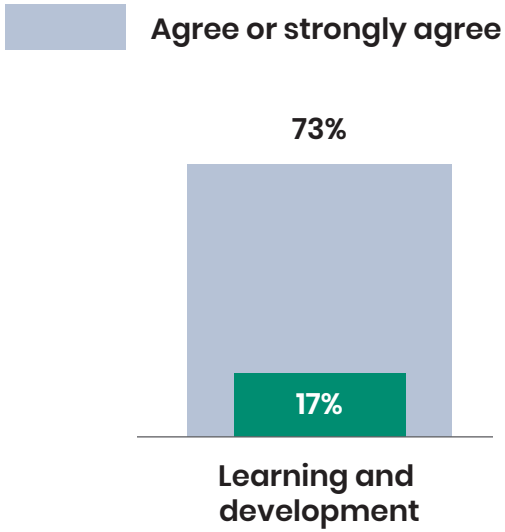
While 73% of children and young people agree with all four domains within this theme of physical literacy, only 17% strongly agree with all four. Strong agreement is an important gauge of strength of attitude, especially given the tendency of children to 'agree' with things.

Strong agreement varies considerably across domains, with 67% strongly agreeing they understand why exercise and sport is good for them and/or that they know where and how to get involved (think), and 43% strongly agreeing they feel confident when they exercise or play sports and/or keep taking part when it is challenging (feel). We see 39% strongly agree they work well with other children and/or are kind when playing and being active with others (connect), and just 31% strongly agree they find exercise and sports easy and/or are good at them (move).

Agreement level across statements within each domain

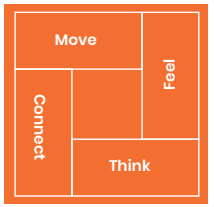


Agreement with all domains



Link to data tables

The gender gap widens with age

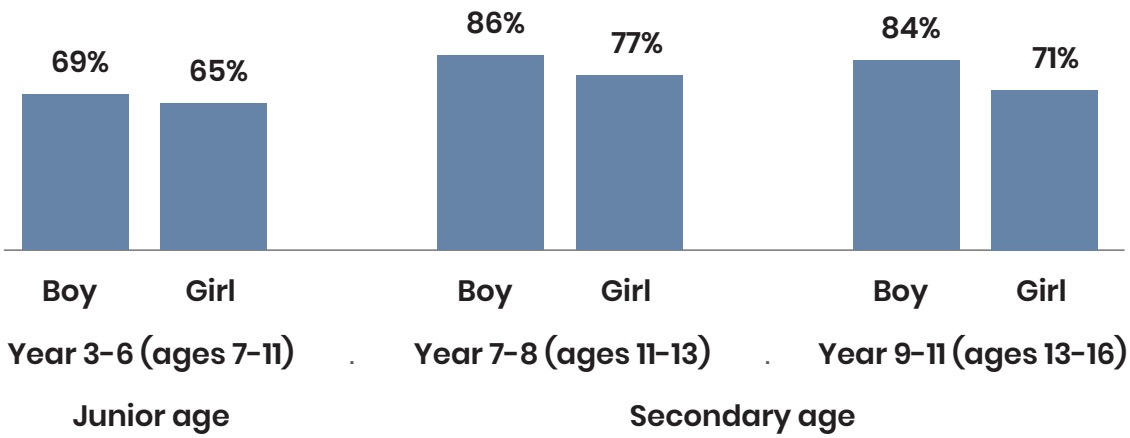


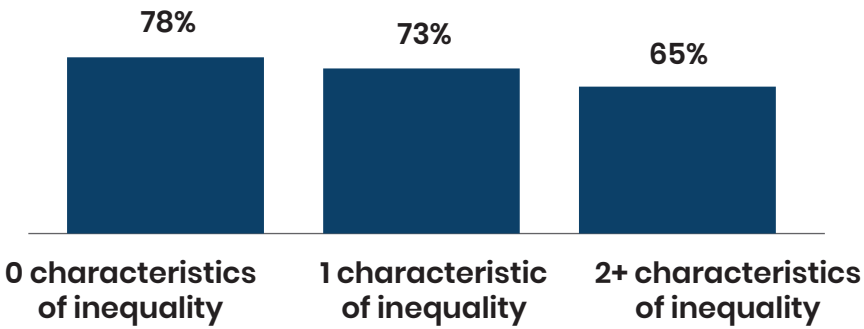
Boys, on average, are more likely than girls to agree with all four domains within the learning and development theme of physical literacy, with the gap between them being larger among the eldest young people (Years 9-11, ages 13-16).

The proportion agreeing with all four domains increases with affluence and is lower for those with a disability or long-term health condition than those without. There are no reportable differences by ethnicity, with the exception that Asian girls (66%) are less likely to agree with all four domains.

Overall, the proportion agreeing with all domains decreases as inequality increases: 78% with no characteristics of inequality agree with all, compared to just 65% among those with two or more characteristics.

Agree or strongly agree with all of move, connect, think and feel





Link to data tables

Note: See the definitions page for more details on how the Inequalities Metric is comprised.

Positive experiences

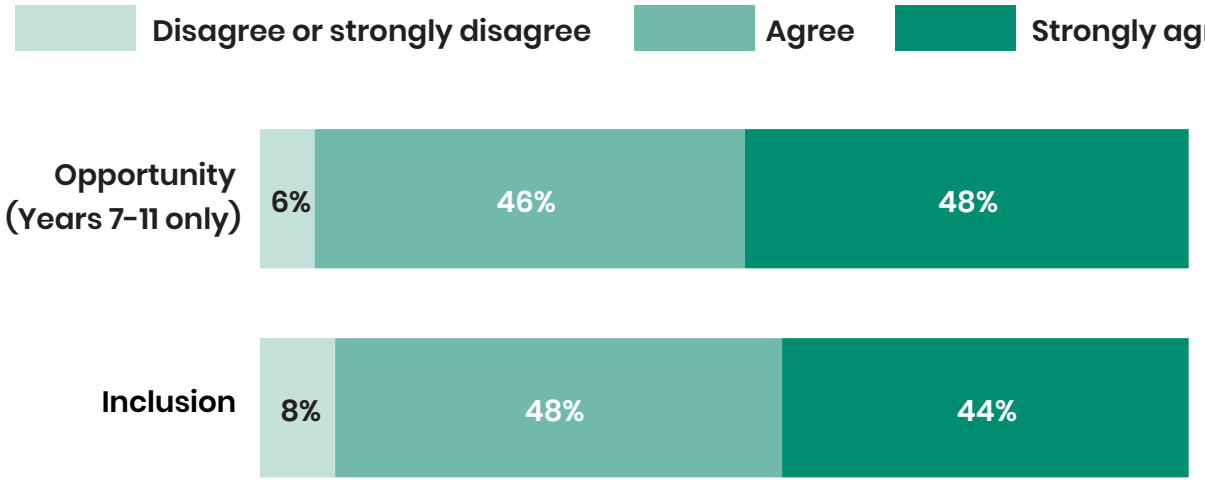
Years 3-11 (ages 7-16)

Having positive experiences of sport and physical activity is captured through the two domains of inclusion and opportunity

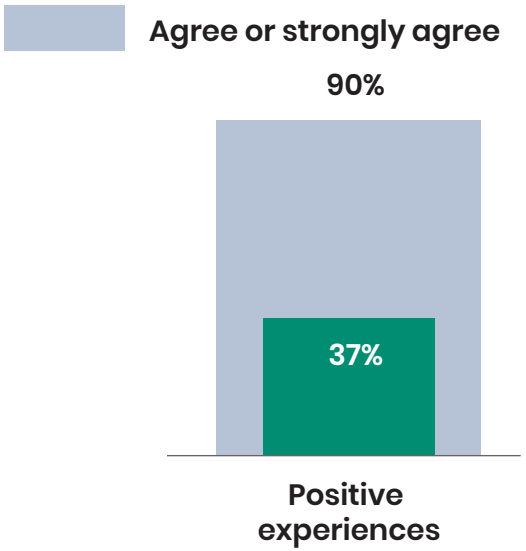
While 90% of children and young people agree with all relevant domains, only 37% strongly agree across all those relevant to them. Strong agreement is an important gauge of strength of attitude, especially given the tendency of children to 'agree' with things.

Just under half of young people (Years 7-11, ages 11-16) strongly agree that they have the opportunity to be active. Slightly fewer, 44% of all children and young people, strongly agree that their ideas are listened to/opinions are valid and/or that sport and exercise is inclusive (inclusion).

Agreement level across statements within each domain



Agreement with all domains



Link to data tables

Note: All children and young people are asked about inclusion, whereas only secondary-age young people are asked about opportunities to be active. As such, only one domain is relevant for Years 3-6, whereas both are relevant for Years 7-11.

Secondary-age girls are less likely to agree with all relevant domains of positive experiences than secondary-age boys

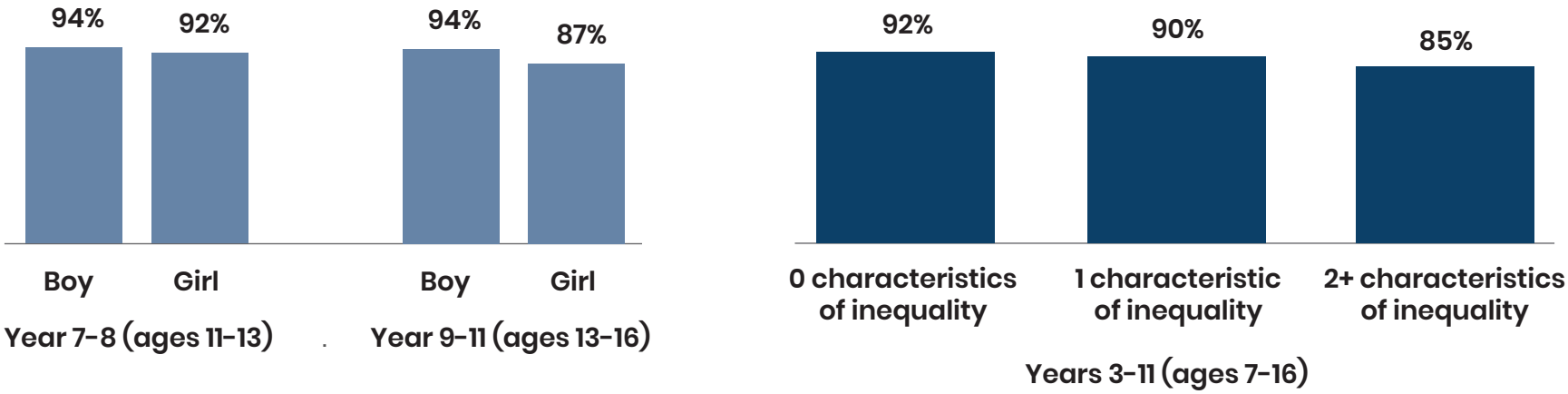
Boys, on average, are more likely than girls to agree with all applicable domains within the positive experiences theme of physical literacy. This gender difference is only seen among secondary-age young people (Years 7-11, ages 11-16), with no reportable difference between junior-age boys and girls (Years 3-6, ages 7-11). The gap is widest among teenagers (Years 9-11, ages 13-16).

White British children and young people are the most likely to agree with all applicable domains (91%), notably driven by White British girls, who have similar agreement levels to White British boys.

The proportion agreeing with all relevant domains increases with affluence and is lower for those with a disability or long-term health condition than those without.

Overall, the proportion agreeing with all relevant domains decreases as inequality increases: 92% with no characteristics of inequality agree with all relevant domains, compared to just 85% among those with two or more characteristics.

Agree or strongly agree with inclusion (Years 3-6) or both inclusion and opportunity (Years 7-11)



Link to data tables

Note: See the definitions page for more details on how the Inequalities Metric is comprised.

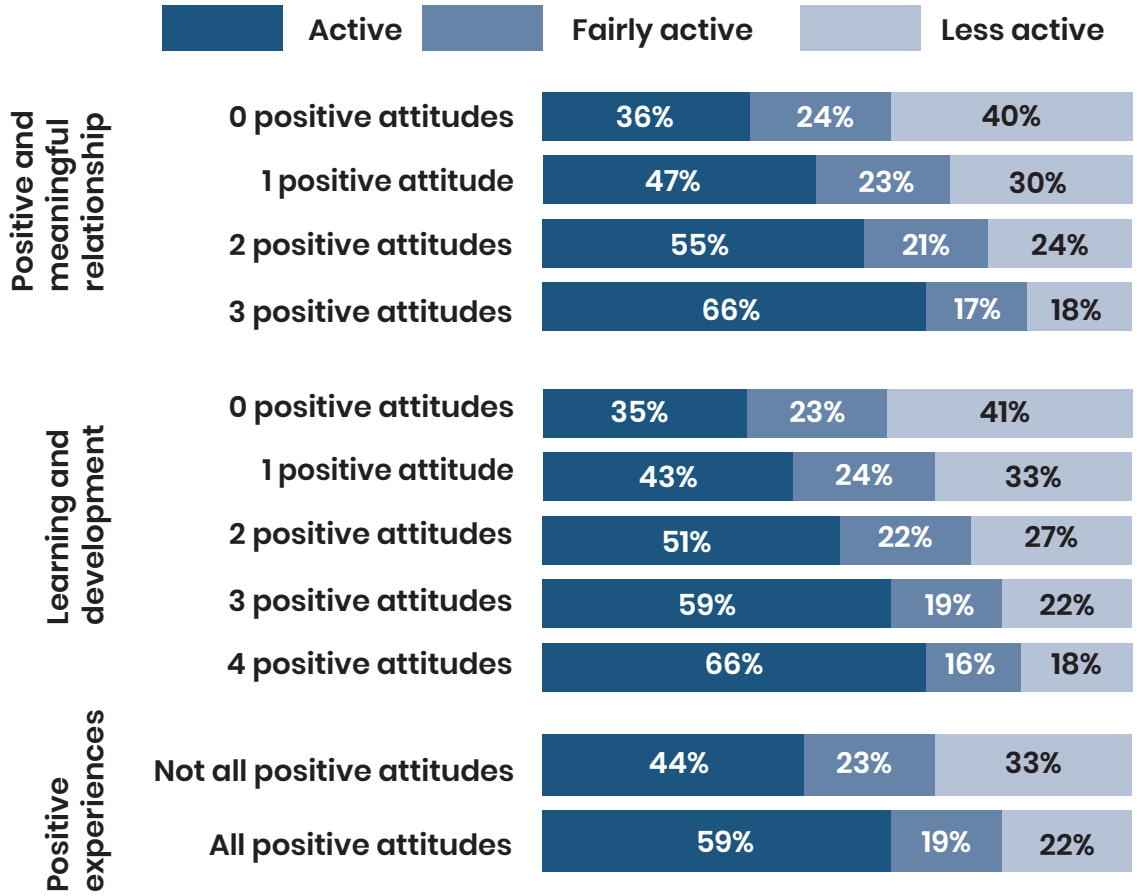
Associations with activity levels

Years 3-11 (ages 7-16)

There is a positive association between physical literacy and activity levels

Children and young people with no positive attitudes are less likely to be active than those with one positive attitude. Those with three or four positive attitudes are the most likely to be active.

- Within positive and meaningful relationship, 66% who strongly agree with all three domains (have three positive attitudes) are active, compared to 36% of those who do not strongly agree with any of the domains.
- Within learning and development, 66% who strongly agree with all four domains (have four positive attitudes) are active, compared to 35% of those who do not strongly agree with any of the domains.
- Within positive experiences, 59% who strongly agree with all relevant domains (have all positive attitudes, one for Years 3-6 and two for Years 7-11) are active, compared to 44% of those who do not strongly agree with all relevant domains.



Note: A positive attitude towards sport and physical activity is defined as strongly agreeing with one of the attitude statements within a domain of physical literacy. As such, two positive attitudes indicates strong agreement with two domains. See the definitions page for more detail.

Link to data tables

Associations with mental wellbeing

Years 3-11 (ages 7-16)

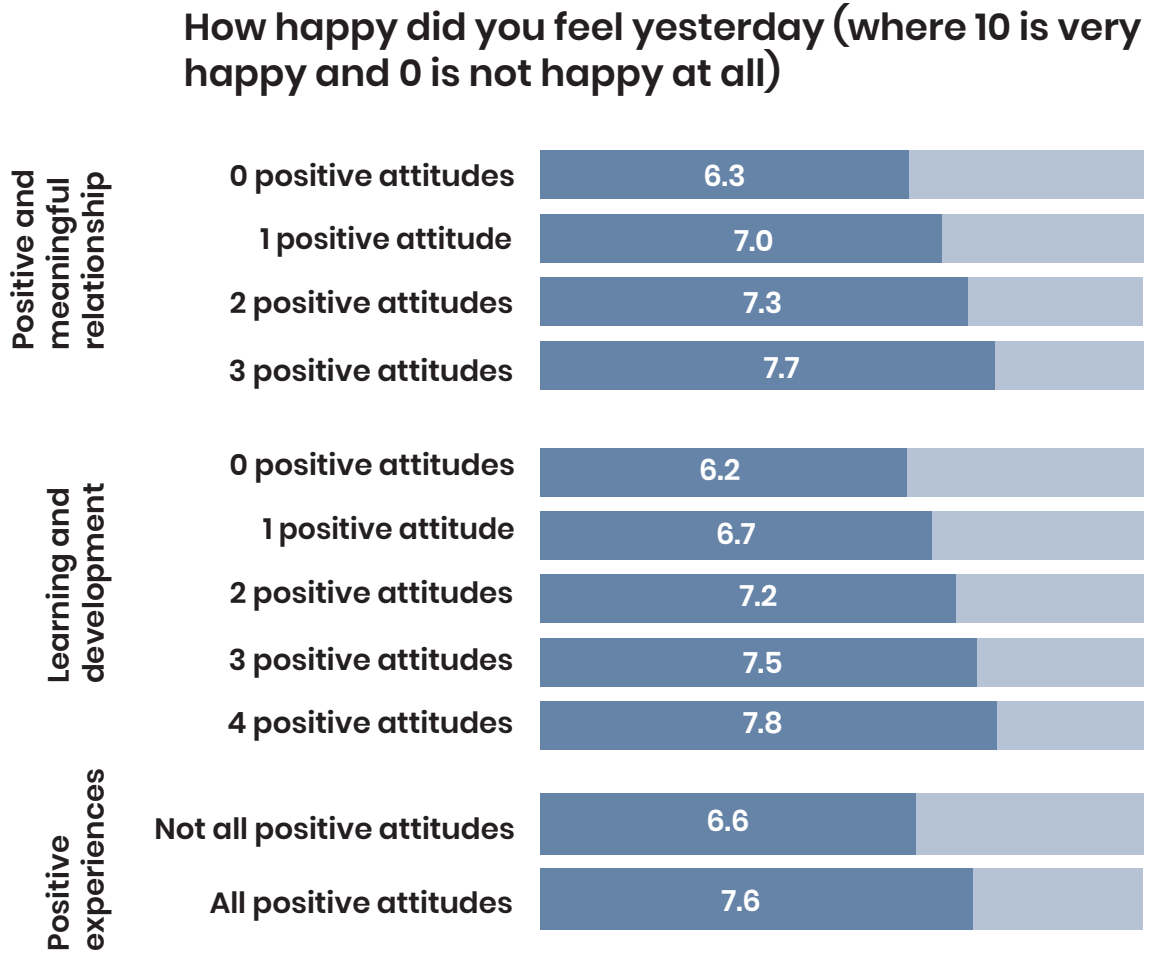
ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

There is a positive association between physical literacy and mental wellbeing

Children and young people with no positive attitudes are less likely to be happy than those with one positive attitude. Those with three or four positive attitudes are the most likely to be happy.

- Within positive and meaningful relationship, those who strongly agree with all three domains (have three positive attitudes) have a happiness score of 7.7 out of 10, compared to 6.3 for those who do not strongly agree with any of the domains.
- Within learning and development, those who strongly agree with all four domains (have four positive attitudes) have a happiness score of 7.8 out of 10, compared to 6.2 for those who do not strongly agree with any of the domains.
- Within positive experiences, those who strongly agree with all relevant domains (have all positive attitudes, one for Years 3-6 and two for Years 7-11) have a happiness score of 7.6 out of 10, compared to 6.6 for those who do not strongly agree with all relevant domains.



Link to data tables

Note: A positive attitude towards sport and physical activity is defined as strongly agreeing with one of the attitude statements within a domain of physical literacy. As such, two positive attitudes indicates strong agreement with two domains. See the definitions page for more detail.

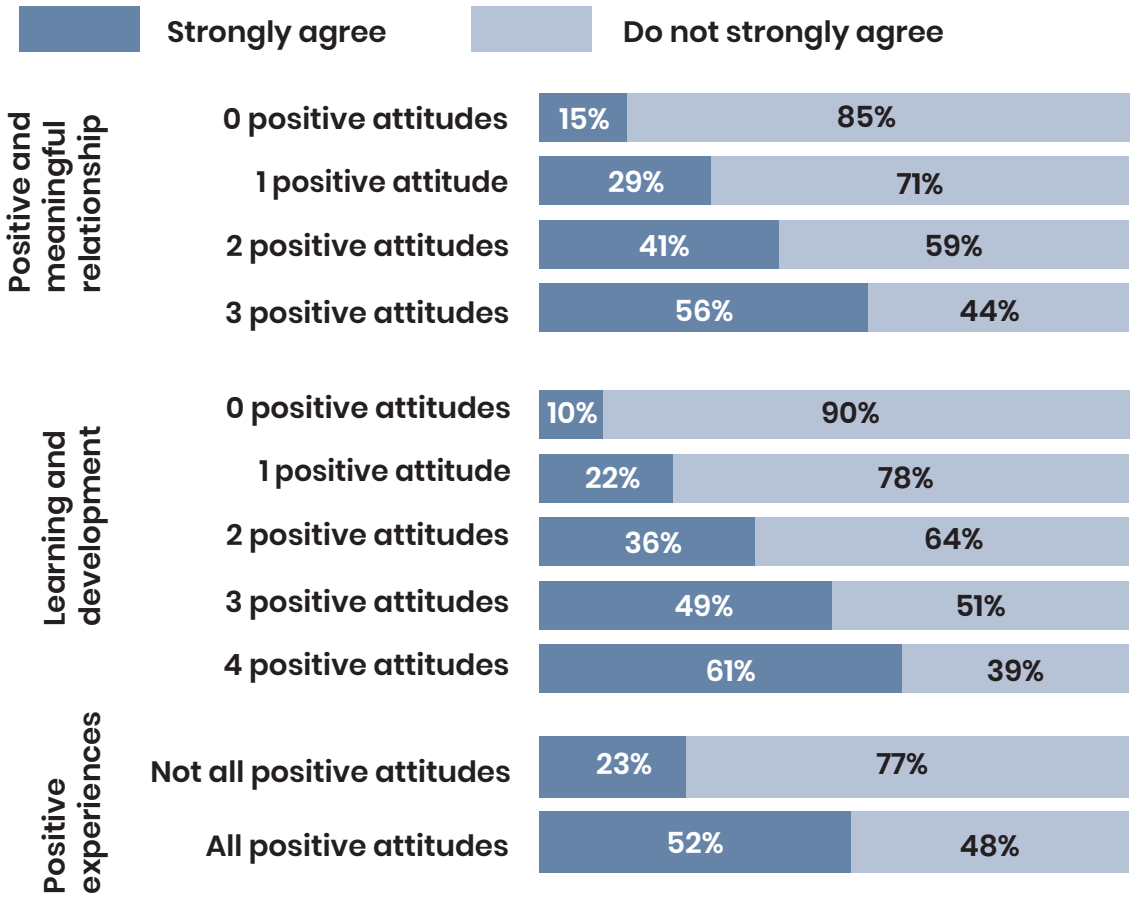
Associations with individual development

Years 3-11 (ages 7-16)

There is a positive association between physical literacy and levels of individual development

Children and young people with no positive attitudes are less likely to strongly agree with the statement 'if I find something difficult, I keep trying until I can do it' than those with one positive attitude. Those with three or four positive attitudes are the most likely to strongly agree.

- Within positive and meaningful relationship, 56% who strongly agree with all three domains (have three positive attitudes) keep trying when something is difficult, compared to 15% of those who do not strongly agree with any of the domains.
- Within learning and development, 61% who strongly agree with all four domains (have four positive attitudes) keep trying when something is difficult, compared to 10% of those who do not strongly agree with any of the domains.
- Within positive experiences, 52% who strongly agree with all relevant domains (have all positive attitudes, one for Years 3-6 and two for Years 7-11) keep trying when something is difficult, compared to 23% of those who do not strongly agree with all relevant domains.



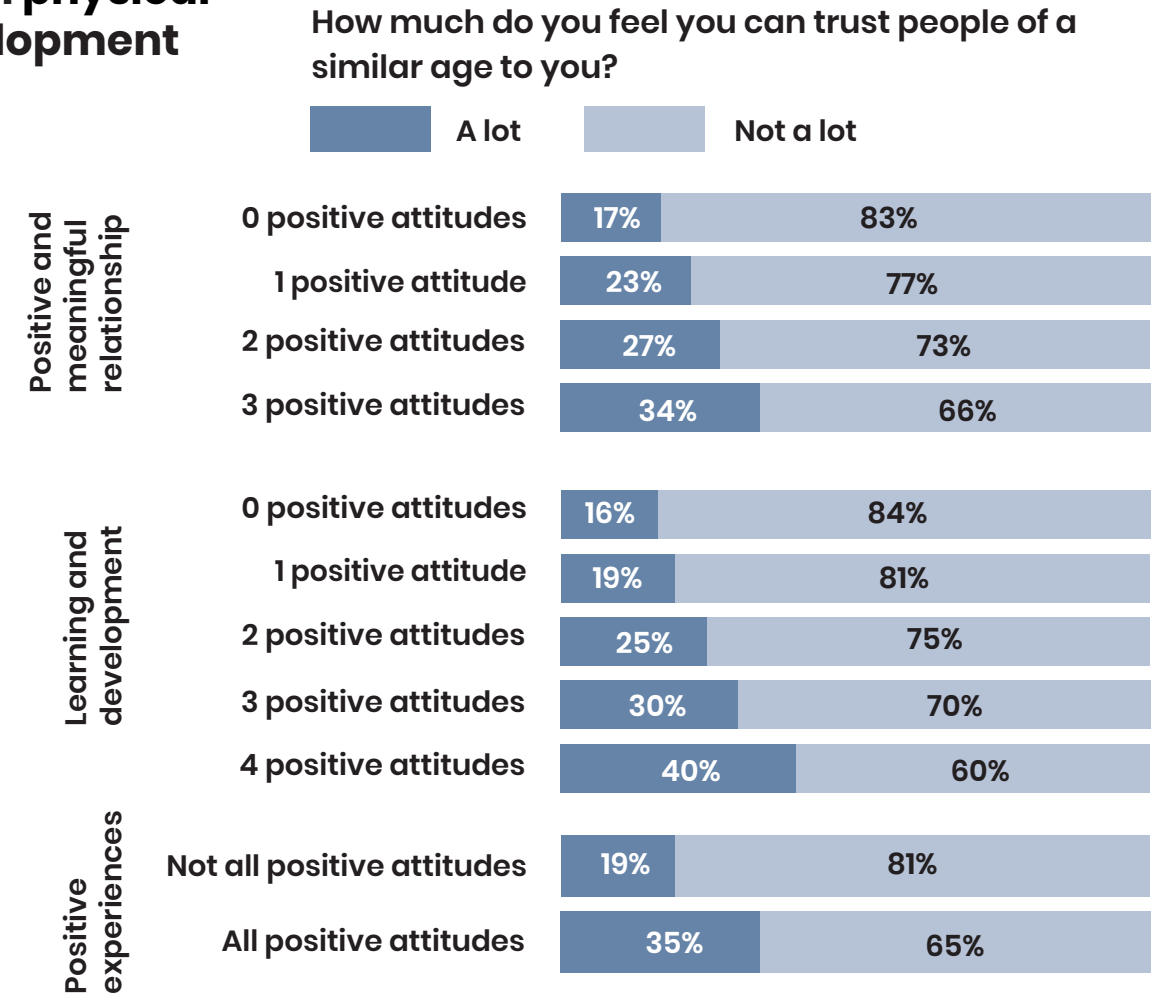
Link to data tables

Note: A positive attitude towards sport and physical activity is defined as strongly agreeing with one of the attitude statements within a domain of physical literacy. As such, two positive attitudes indicates strong agreement with two domains. See the definitions page for more detail.

There is a positive association between physical literacy and levels of community development

Children and young people with no positive attitudes are less likely to say 'a lot' to the question 'how much do you feel you can trust people of a similar age to you?' than those with one positive attitude. Those with three or four positive attitudes are the most likely to say 'a lot'.

- Within positive and meaningful relationship, 34% who strongly agree with all three domains (have three positive attitudes) trust others a lot, compared to just 17% who do not strongly agree with any of the domains.
- Within learning and development, 40% who strongly agree with all four domains (have four positive attitudes) trust others a lot, compared to just 16% who do not strongly agree with any of the domains.
- Within positive experiences, 35% who strongly agree with all relevant domains (have all positive attitudes, one for Years 3-6 and two for Years 7-11) trust others a lot, compared to 19% who do not strongly agree with all relevant domains.



Link to data tables

Note: A positive attitude towards sport and physical activity is defined as strongly agreeing with one of the attitude statements within a domain of physical literacy. As such, two positive attitudes indicates strong agreement with two domains. See the definitions page for more detail.

Positive attitudes

Years 1-2 (ages 5-7)

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

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

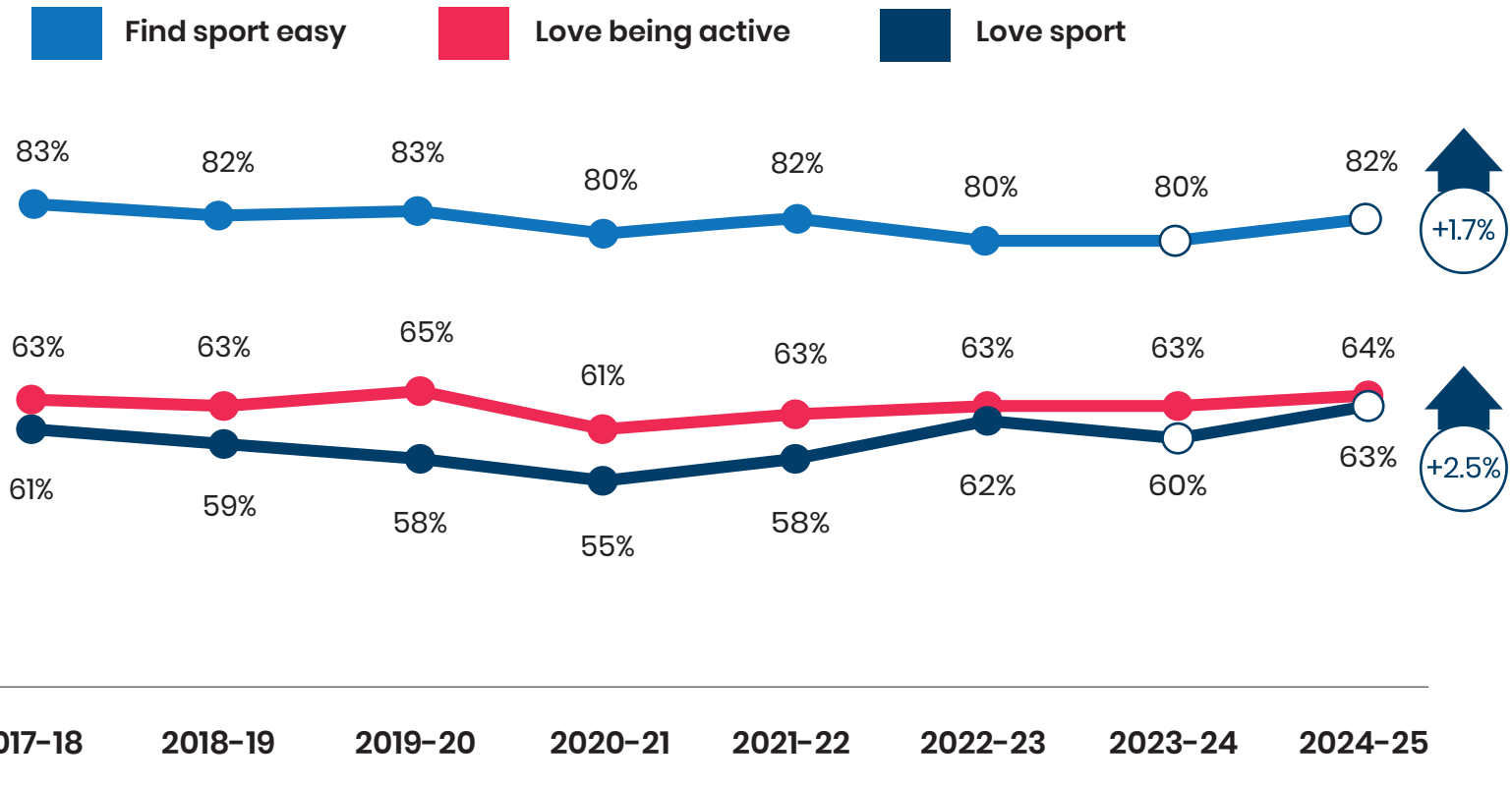
Attitudes are unchanged among the youngest children

There has been a small increase in the proportion of infant-age children (Years 1-2, ages 5-7) saying they find sport easy, but levels remain 1.6% down compared to seven years ago (academic year 2017-18).

There has also been a small increase in the proportion saying they love playing sport, but both this and those who love being active remain unchanged over the longer term.

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

Attitudes towards sport and physical activity



Link to data tables

Types of activity

Definition

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 are 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.

Link to data tables

Types of activity

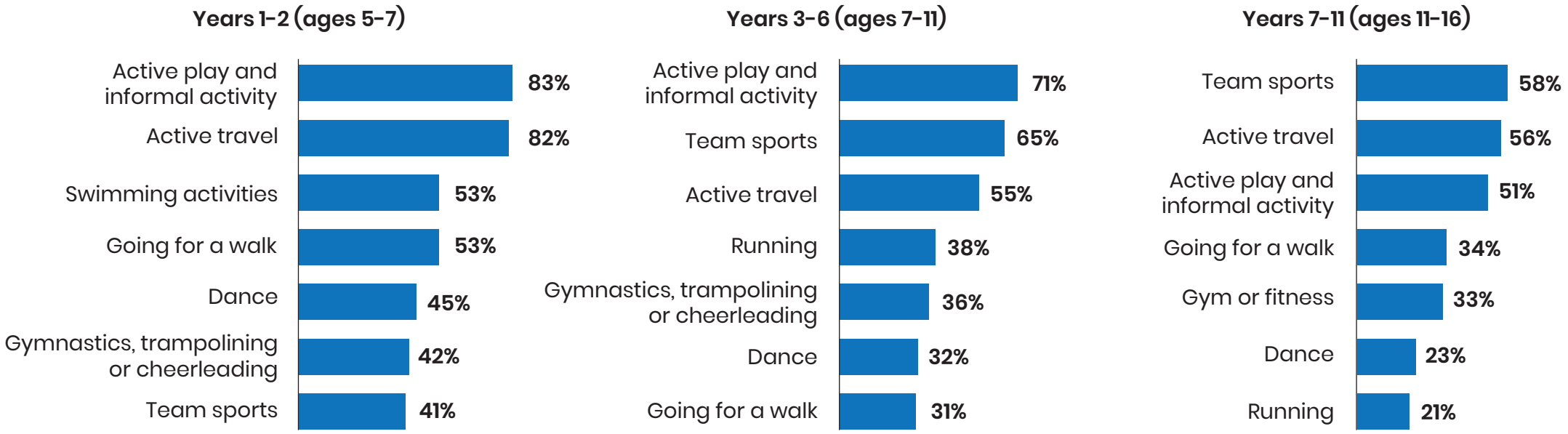
As children and young people get older, the activities they participate in change

Active play (64%), active travel (61%) and team sports (58%) are the most common activities done in the last week across all children and young people.

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

Running (including the active mile) is most prevalent among junior-age children (school Years 3-6, ages 7-11).

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



Link to data tables

Note: Individual activities are reported in the data tables.

Trends: long-term growth

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

SPORT ENGLAND

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

Active travel and gym or fitness are both showing small short-term upward trends, while going for a walk remains flat post-pandemic

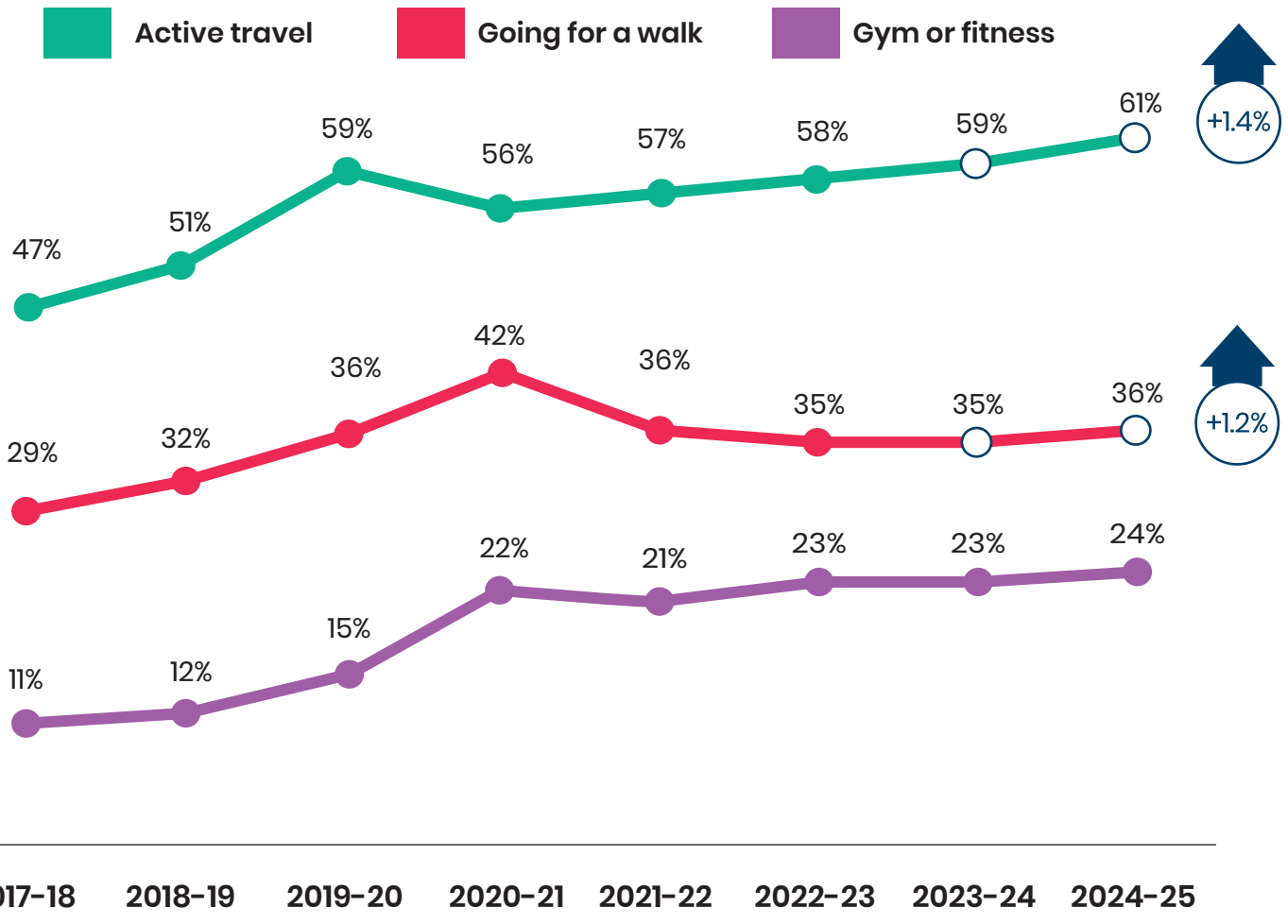
The proportion of children and young people walking, cycling or scootering to get to places (active travel) has increased compared to 12 months ago, suggesting a small upward trend post-pandemic. There are now 13.7%, or 1.2 million, more children and young people travelling by active means than seven years ago (academic year 2017-18).

The proportion of children and young people going for walks remains around 35-36%, seeing little change post-pandemic. There are 7.5%, or 651,000, more children and young people going for a walk than seven years ago.

While unchanged compared to 12 months ago, gym and fitness levels have followed a small but gradual upward trend since academic year 2020-21, building on the step up in levels during the pandemic. As a result, we're seeing 12.7%, or 976,000, more children and young people taking part in gym and fitness compared to seven years ago.

Link to data tables

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



Types of activity

Trends: flat

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

SPORT ENGLAND

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

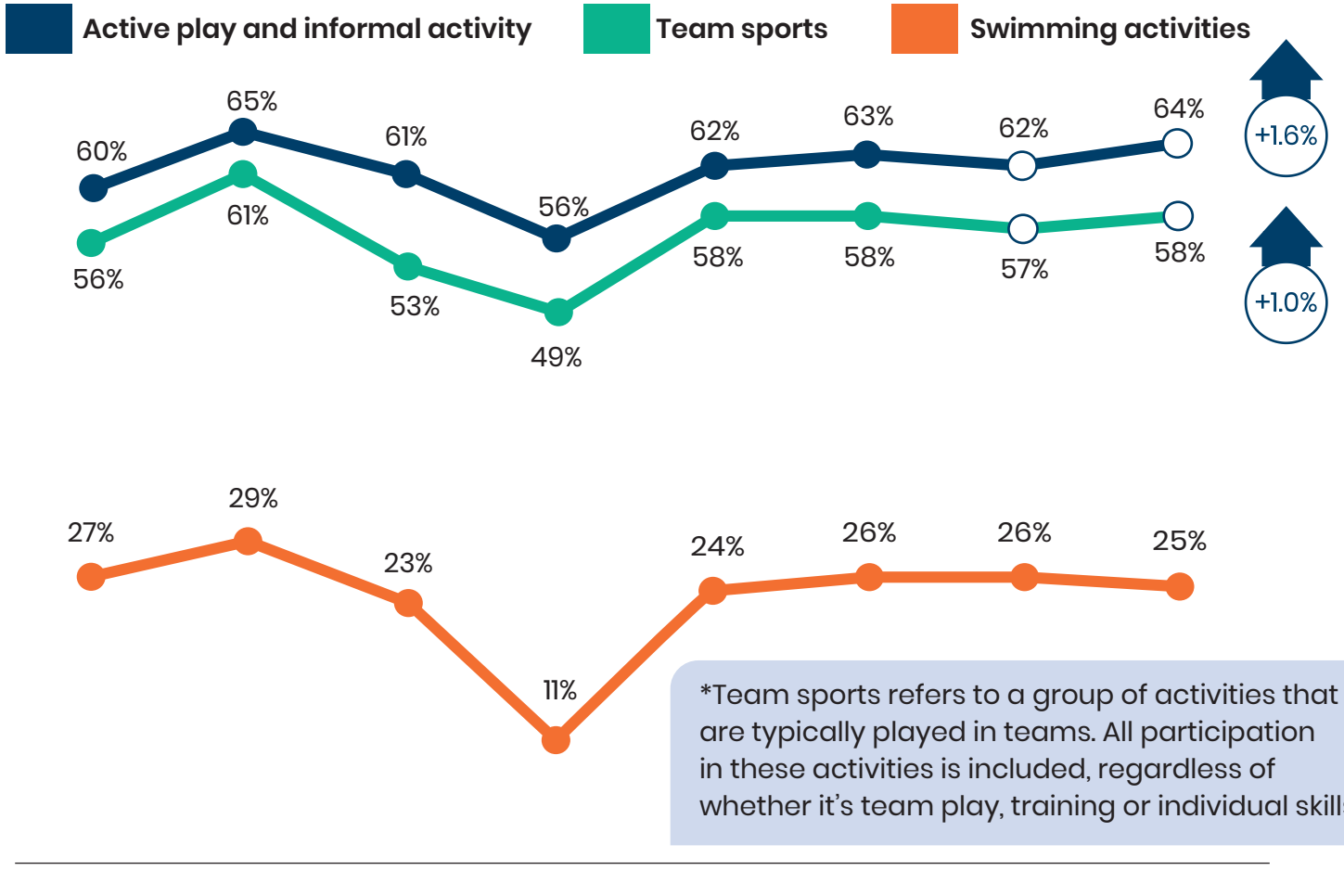
Levels are unchanged in team sports and swimming across the last three years

A small increase in active play and informal activities compared to 12 months ago means levels are now back in line with pre-pandemic levels (academic year 2018-19). They remain slightly up, by 4.2%, or 517,000 more children and young people compared to seven years ago (academic year 2017-18).

Team sport levels are relatively unchanged over the last three years, following an increase coinciding with the end of the pandemic. There are 1.5%, or 304,000, more children and young people taking part compared to seven years ago (academic year 2017-18).

Similarly, swimming levels are relatively unchanged over last three years but remain slightly down, by 1.5%, or 19,000 fewer children and young people, compared to seven years ago (acedemic year 2017-18).

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

Trends: drop back

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

SPORT ENGLAND

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

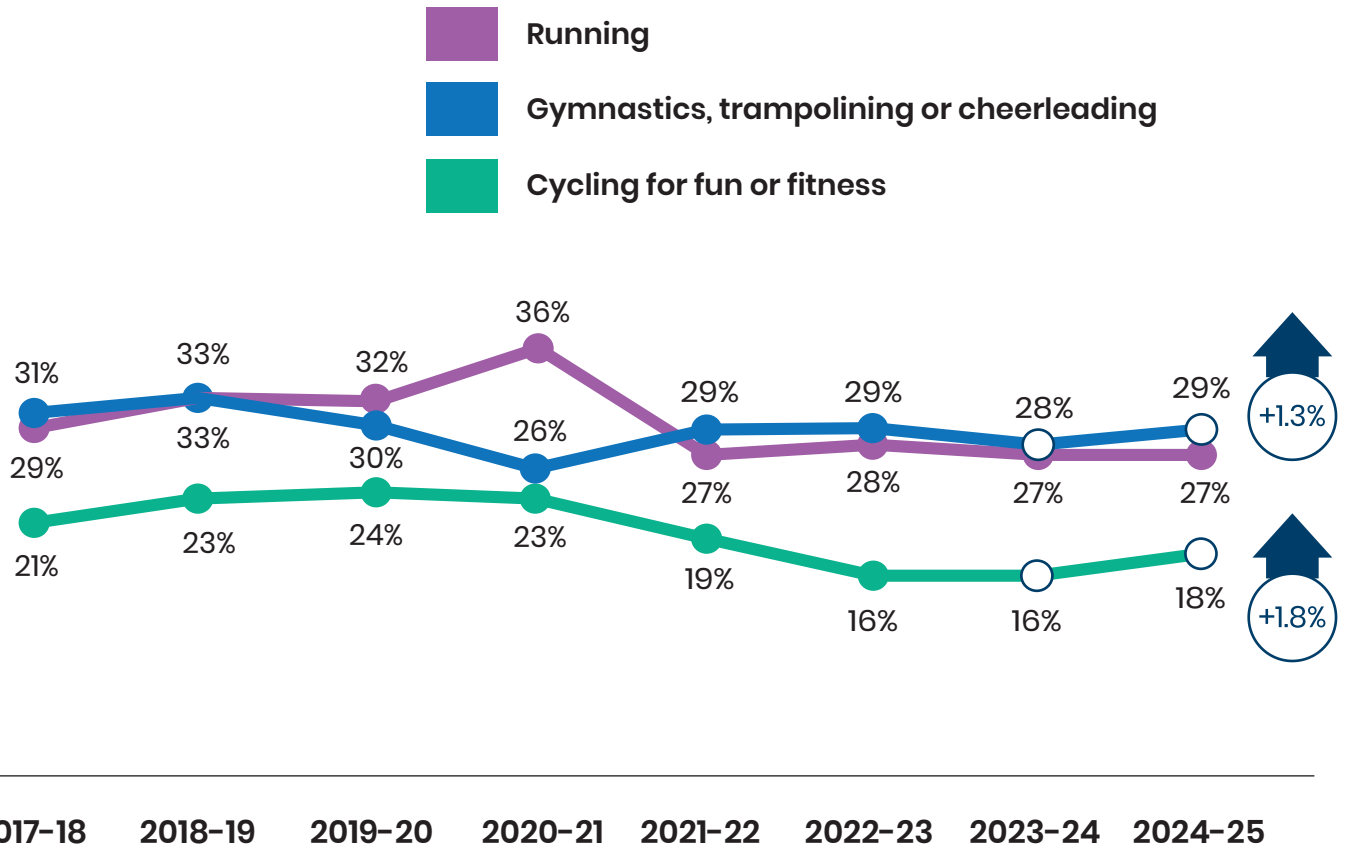
Levels are unchanged in all three activities across the last three years following earlier drops

Running levels are relatively unchanged over last three years, following a drop coinciding with the end of the pandemic. As such, there are 2.5%, or 81,000, fewer children and young people taking part compared to seven years ago (academic year 2017-18).

Despite a small increase compared to 12 months ago, gymnastics, trampolining or cheerleading levels remain stable over the last three years and down over the longer term, with 2.5%, or 72,000, fewer children and young people taking part compared to academic year 2017-18.

While the small increase in going on a bike ride is encouraging, there remains a flat underlying trend since academic year 2021-22. Levels remain down compared to seven years ago, with 3.2%, or 166,000, fewer children and young people going on a bike ride than in academic year 2017-18.

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



Link to data tables

Swimming confidence and capability

73% can swim 25 metres unaided by the time they leave primary school

Just 73% of children in school Year 7 (first year of secondary school, ages 11-12) meet the guidelines that children should be able to swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25m by the time they leave primary school.

An average of 61% of all children and young people in school Years 1-11 (ages 5-16) can swim 25m unaided, with proficiency increasing with age. This is 3.5%, or 30,000, fewer than in academic year 2017-18.

Within this headline picture there are notable different pictures by school phase.

- Years 1-2 children (ages 5-7): 6.5% fewer can swim 25m unaided compared to academic year 2017-18, with no further recovery seen in the last 12 months.
- Years 3-6 children (ages 7-11): 2.2% fewer can swim 25m unaided compared to academic year 2017-18; however, recovery continues.
- Years 7-11 young people (ages 11-16): 5.0% fewer can swim 25m unaided compared to academic year 2017-18; however, this appears to have stabilised.

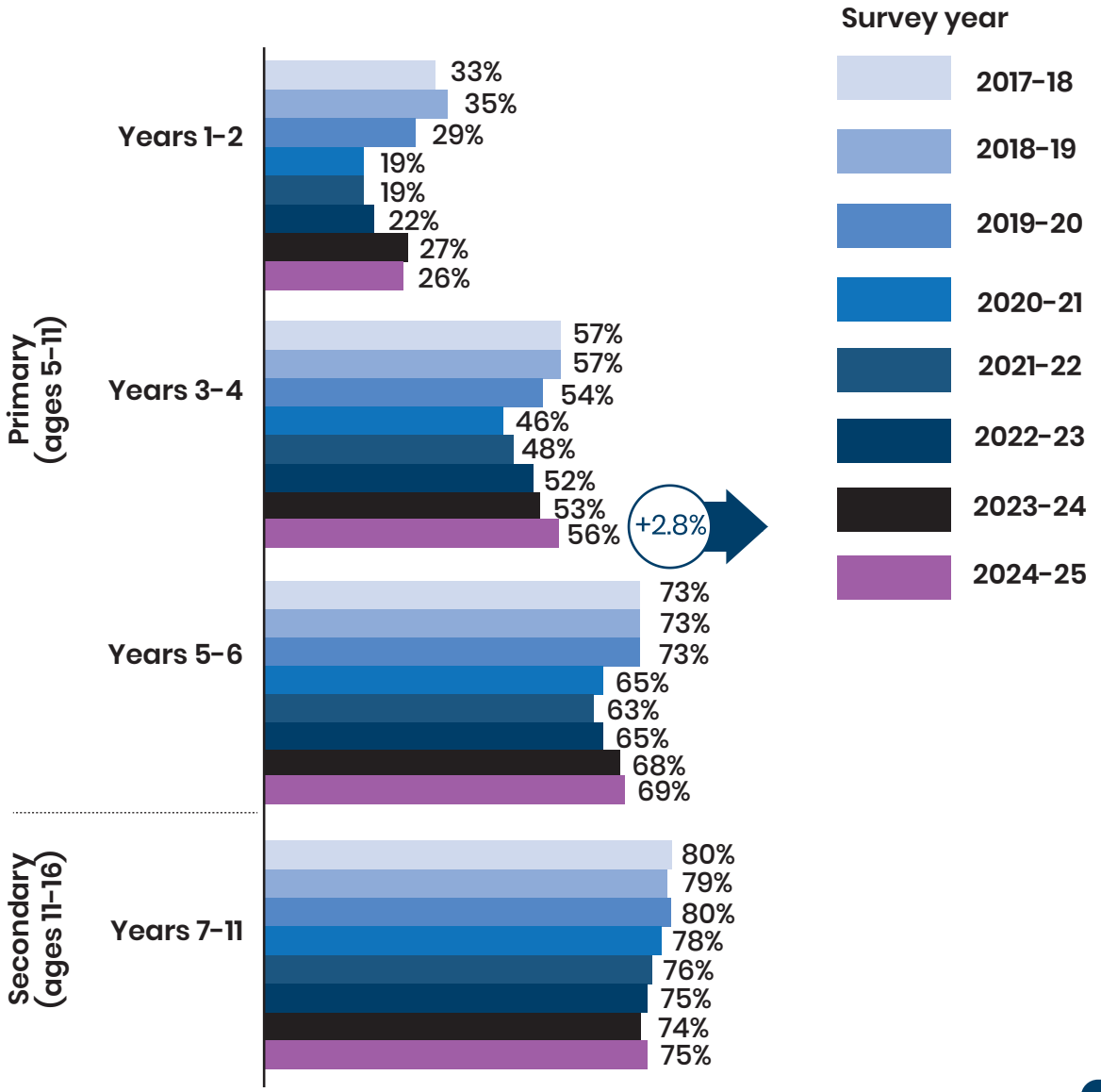
Link to data tables

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

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

Can swim 25m unaided



Travel to school

ACTIVE LIVES 24-25 ACADEMIC YEAR CHILDREN SURVEY

SPORT ENGLAND

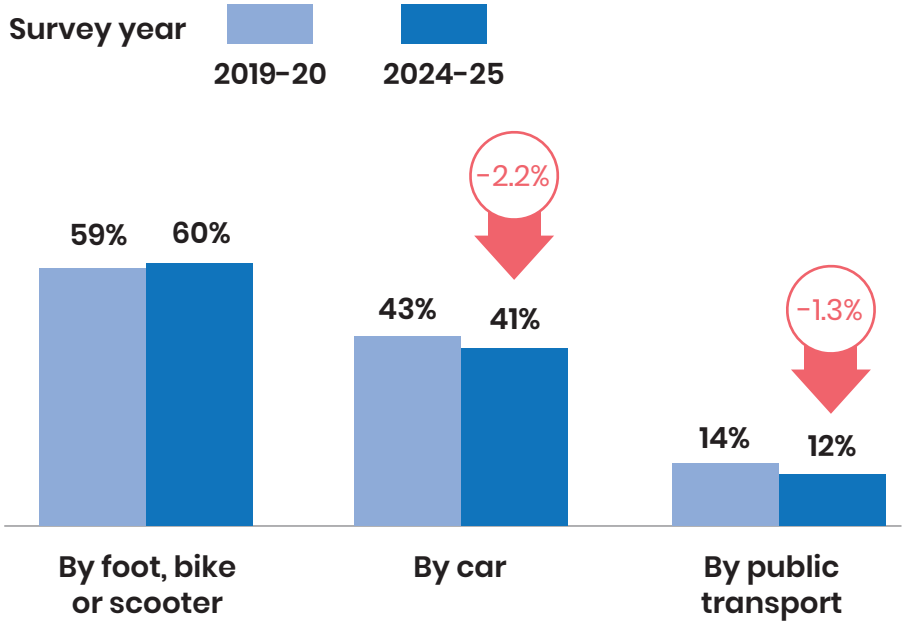
Active travel is the most common mode of transport for getting to school

A total of 60% of all children and young people use active travel (walk, ride, scooter) to get to school; however, two-fifths reported being taken by car. Junior-age children (school Years 3-6, ages 7-11) are the most likely to be taken by car (50%), while secondary-age young people (school Years 7-11, ages 11-16) are the most likely to use public transport (23%).

There have been small drops in car (down 2.2%) and public transport (down 1.3%) usage compared to five years ago (academic year 2019-20).

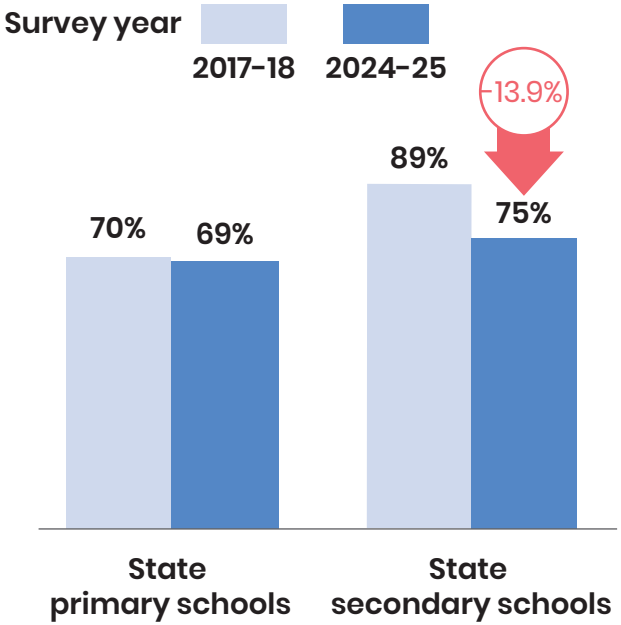
% Arrows show change from five/seven years ago. No arrows indicates no statistically reportable change

How did you get to school today?



Teachers in 70% of schools told us their school monitors how their pupils travel to school, while half (46%) said they promote active travel to school. Monitoring how their pupils travel to school has increased by 5.7% for state primary schools compared to 12 months ago and is now back in line with academic year 2017-18. In state secondary schools, this is down 13.9% compared to academic year 2017-18. State secondary schools (61%) continue to be more likely than state primary schools (37%) to promote active travel to school.

Monitor travel to school



Link to data tables

Note: The question on how they got to school was not introduced into the survey until academic year 2019-20 and, as such, data for the metric cannot be reported before that date.

Further breakdowns

Local level data

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

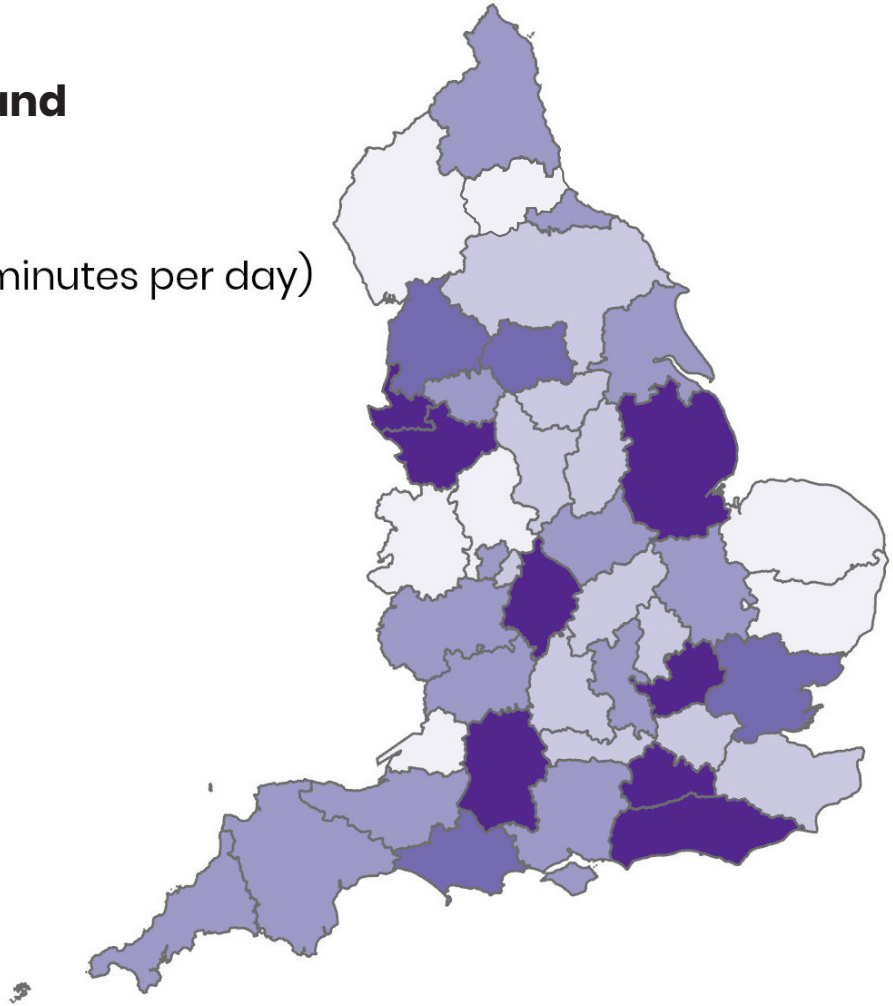
- Levels of activity
- Volunteering in the last 12 months.

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



Definitions

Activity guidelines

The Chief Medical Officers recommend:

- children and young people should engage in moderate-to-vigorous-intensity activity for an average of at least 60 minutes a day across the week. This effectively means they need to do at least 420 moderate minutes a week to meet the guidelines.
- children and young people should engage in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity across the week to develop movement skills, muscular fitness and bone strength.

You can read the guidelines 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 children whether the activity made them breathe faster than sitting down reading).

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

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 to schools data, these data are collected from the teacher questionnaire – one teacher per school is invited to complete a response providing contextual school data. These data are included in the linked tables.

Volunteering roles are defined as:

- raised money for a sports club, organisation or event, only including fundraising for sport, not fundraising by taking part in a sports event or activity
- 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).

Definitions

Physical literacy

The Physical Literacy Consensus Statement for England was published in September 2023. We have added new statements to the survey and, for the first time, our data more fully support the understanding of various elements of this.

Each theme of physical literacy has a number of domains. The Active Lives Survey collects data across a series of statements detailed here that relate to each domain, typically one for junior-age children and two for secondary-age young people. Where two statements are included, we present data for that domain as the most positive response across the two. Where we report the number of positive attitudes within a section, this relates to strong agreement with domains, not individual statements.

Link to more information on measures and demographics

Positive and meaningful relationship

Meaning

- Taking part in exercise and sports matters to me.

Value

- Exercising and doing sports makes me feel better about myself.
- I exercise and play sports to help me relax and worry less about things (Years 7-11 only).

Enjoyment

- I enjoy taking part in exercise and sports.

Learning and development

Move

- I find exercise and sports easy.
- I am good at exercise and sports (Years 7-11 only).

Connect

- I work well with other children when doing exercise and sports.
- I am kind when playing and being active with other children when doing exercise and sports (Years 7-11 only).

Think

- I understand why exercise and sports are good for me.
- I know where and how to get involved in exercise and sports (Years 7-11 only).

Feel

- I feel confident when I exercise and play sports.
- I keep taking part in exercise and sports when it is challenging (Years 7-11 only).

Positive experiences

Inclusion

- The adults who run my exercise and sports activities listen to me when I have an idea (Years 3-6 only).
- I feel my opinions are valued by the adults who organise my exercise and sport activities (Years 7-11 only).
- Outside of school there are places I can exercise that are inclusive and welcoming (Years 7-11 only).
- I see people who are similar to me if I exercise outside of school (Years 7-11 only).

Opportunity

- I feel that I have the opportunity to exercise and play sports (Years 7-11).

Definitions

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.

Gender identity
The question used in the Active Lives Survey relates to gender identity. Young people in Years 7-11 were given the option to select 'boy', 'girl', 'prefer to type in' or 'prefer not to say'. Children in Years 3-6 were given the options of 'boy', 'girl', 'other' or 'prefer not to say', while children in Years 1-2 were only given the options of 'boy' and 'girl'.

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 is 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.

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

Inequalities
In 2024, we launched the Inequalities Metric, which recognises the intersectionality of individuals' characteristics and aims to create a comprehensive measure of inequalities. Please see our website to find out more.

Notes

About the survey

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

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.

More information on the survey can be found here.

Link to more information on measures and demographics

The achieved sample

Behavioural responses:

- Pupils in Years 3-11 and parents of pupils in Years 1-2: 109,503 in 2017-18, 113,728 in 2018-19, 89,303 in 2019-20, 86,828 in 2020-21, 104,404 in 2021-22, 122,347 in 2022-23, 122,480 in 2023-24 and 130,448 in 2024-25.

Attitudinal responses:

- Pupils in Years 3-11: 104,263 in 2017-18, 109,248 in 2018-19, 86,222 in 2019-20, 79,689 in 2020-21, 98,729 in 2021-22, 116,623 in 2022-23, 115,952 in 2023-24 and 123,306 in 2024-25.
- Pupils in Years 1-2: 25,927 in 2017-18, 23,587 in 2018-19, 14,576 in 2019-20, 13,886 in 2020-21, 17,304 in 2021-22, 17,361 in 2022-23, 18,361 in 2023-24 and 19,962 in 2024-25.

Schools data:

- Teachers: 1,623 in 2017-18, 1,523 in 2018-19, 1,186 in 2019-20, 1,166 in 2020-21, 1,289 in 2021-22, 1,380 in 2022-23, 1,326 in 2023-24 and 1,438 in 2024-25.

Data have been weighted to Department for Education (DfE) pupil population estimates from 'Get Information about Schools' (2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24) for geography and key demographics. Data from teachers have also been weighted using the same source information on the schools.

Population totals are estimated values and have been calculated using 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 DfE pupil population estimates. Confidence intervals also apply to these. More detail can be found here. Year-on-year change, when looking at numbers of children and young people, is a combined result of changes in the percentage and changing population numbers and this should be considered when reviewing the results.

Population profile

Within 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.

Notes

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

Significance tests can be found in the linked tables. The tests indicate that if repeated samples were taken, 95% of the time we'd get similar findings, i.e. we can be confident the differences seen in our sampled respondents are reflective of the population. When sample sizes are smaller, confidence intervals are larger, meaning differences between estimates need to be greater to be considered statistically significant.

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 are showing only small differences which are within the margin of error, they're noted as 'no change'.

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

Data collection during the coronavirus pandemic

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

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

Details of these can be found in the technical note.

Link to more information on measures and demographics