

Dumfries and Galloway Physical Activity Survey

Inequalities – Those most in need face the greatest barriers

Findings from the Dumfries and Galloway Schools Physical Activity Survey (DGSPAS) 2026



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**Why this briefing matters**

These briefings use local evidence from the Dumfries and Galloway Schools Physical Activity Survey (2026) to support delivery of the Physical Activity Strategy 2025–2030.

They are designed to:

- provide clear evidence to support decision-making
- highlight where change is needed
- guide action across schools, health and communities

The findings show:

- activity levels are not improving in line with targets
- some groups are less active than others

About this briefing

- Based on DGSPAS 2026 (P4–S6 pupils)
- Focuses on differences in activity levels between groups
- Supports delivery of:
 - Physical Activity Strategy 2025–2030
 - Dumfries and Galloway Best Investments (2025)

What do we mean by inequalities?

Inequalities refer to differences in activity levels and participation between groups, including gender and disability.

1. Why this matters

- Physical activity is not evenly distributed
- Those who are least active:
 - face the greatest health risks
 - are more likely to experience barriers



Progress towards targets depends on improving activity in these groups



Reducing these differences is key to improving overall activity levels



2. What the data shows

Values shown as the **percentage of pupils (%)**

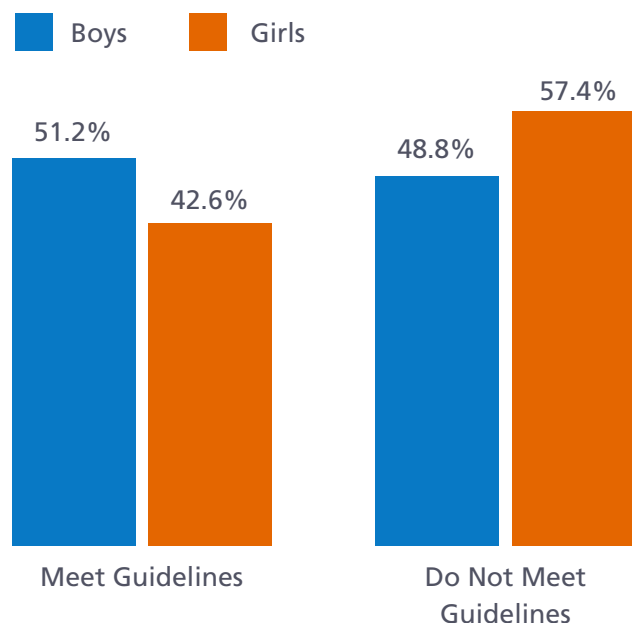


Figure 2.1. Physical activity levels by gender (%)

Key findings

- **47.6% meet physical activity guidelines**
- **52% do not meet physical activity guidelines**
- **23.5% are in the very low activity group (<30 minutes per day)**
- Girls are less likely to meet physical activity guidelines than boys
- Boys are more likely to be in the active group

Pupils with disabilities:

- some disability groups report lower activity levels
- Some pupils with disabilities report lower activity levels, lower confidence and competence, and more barriers to participation.



Activity levels vary considerably between population groups.



Key insight

Those who are least active are also more likely to face multiple barriers to taking part

3. What this means for Dumfries and Galloway

Physical activity levels vary across groups, with some experiencing greater barriers and lower participation than others.

Patterns show:

- gender differences
- lower activity among pupils with disabilities
- higher levels of very low activity in some groups

Pupils who are less active are more likely to report:

- lower confidence and competence
- access challenges
- competing demands



These differences are consistent and suggest that some groups face greater barriers to participation than others.

Improving overall activity levels requires targeted action — universal approaches alone are unlikely to reach those most in need.



4. Alignment with local policy and practice

Dumfries and Galloway Physical Activity Strategy 2025–2030

Outcome: Reduce inequalities in participation

Action: Target least active and underserved groups

Evidence from DGSPAS 2026:

- Clear gender differences in activity levels
- Lower activity levels and lower confidence in some disability groups
- High proportion of very low active pupils (23.5%)



Confirms need for targeted and inclusive delivery

Dumfries and Galloway Best Investments (2025)

Supports priorities to:

- prioritise high-need populations
- focus on least active groups
- deliver targeted, inclusive interventions

5. Implications for policy and practice

Prioritise least active groups across all physical activity delivery

Provide:

- inclusive opportunities that meet different needs and abilities
- opportunities that build confidence and support participation

Address key barriers:

- confidence
- access
- opportunity

Develop:

- joined-up pathways that support less active pupils to become and remain active.

Align action across:

- schools
- health
- community services

6. Key messages

- Physical activity levels vary across population groups.
- Least active pupils are more likely to experience multiple barriers to participation.
- Gender and disability inequalities remain.
- Improving overall activity levels will require both universal and targeted approaches, particularly for groups facing the greatest barriers.

References

Sportscotland (2024) Equality and Sport Research.

Scottish Government (2023) Active Scotland Outcomes Equality Analysis.

Scottish Government (2024) Physical Activity for Health Framework.

World Health Organization (2018) Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018–2030: More active people for a healthier world.

Dumfries and Galloway Community Planning Partnership (2026) Physical Activity Strategy 2025–2030.