

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

School Physical Activity Survey 2026



Results



For Pupils in Primary 4 to Secondary 6



SWesttrans.org.uk
South West of Scotland Transgender Partnership
With thanks to SWesttrans for funding
analysis of results

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Published: September 2026

Authors: Chris Topping, Stuart Loudon, Mel Henry and Louise Coupar

Acknowledgements: Lindsay Greene, Databirth

Suggested citation: Dumfries and Galloway Council and Dumfries and Galloway Health and Social Care Partnership (2026). Dumfries and Galloway Schools Physical Activity Survey 2026.

This survey was funded with support from SWestrans and Dumfries and Galloway Council's Active Travel Team.

How to use this report

This report provides local information on how physically active children and young people are, the factors that influence participation, and the groups most at risk of inactivity.

Results are presented by age, gender, disability and activity level to help identify inequalities and opportunities for action.

Six accompanying briefing papers will be published alongside this report to support partners in translating the findings into policy, planning and practice. These briefings will be available on the [DG Doing More](#) website within the Physical Activity Strategy section.

Executive Summary

Physical activity levels among children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway remain below the ambitions set out in the Physical Activity Strategy 2025–2030. Consistent monitoring of physical activity levels has been possible since 2022 and shows that fewer than half of pupils currently meet physical activity guidelines¹.

To better understand the factors contributing to this trend and identify priorities for action, the 2026 Dumfries and Galloway Schools Physical Activity Survey gathered responses from 3,706 pupils (Primary 4 to Secondary 6), providing a comprehensive picture of activity levels, participation, inequalities and opportunities for improvement across Dumfries and Galloway.

Headline findings

- **Physical activity levels vary across the school years: Activity levels generally increase through primary and early secondary school before declining through the senior secondary years, with the lowest levels observed in Secondary 6.**
- **Very low activity remains a significant challenge:** Almost one in four pupils (23.5%) are in the very low activity group (less than 30 minutes of physical activity per day). This group experiences the greatest barriers to participation and remains a priority for action.
- **Persistent inequalities remain:**
 - *Girls are consistently less active than boys.*
 - *Some disability groups are less likely to meet physical activity guidelines.*
 - *Pupils in the very low activity group experience multiple and reinforcing barriers to participation.*

¹ Dumfries and Galloway Community Planning Partnership. 2025. Dumfries and Galloway Physical Activity Strategy 2025–2030

Participation and behaviour

- **Most pupils participate in organised activity:** Four in five pupils (81%) took part in at least one physical activity, fitness, dance or sports club session in the previous week.
- **School-based activity plays a central role in participation:** More than half of pupils (55%) took part in activity through school, either exclusively or alongside activity outside school.
- **Participation in organised activity declines with age:** The proportion taking part in organised activity both in and outside school falls from 52% in P6 to 25% in S6, while non-participation rises from 11% to 37%.
- **Participation is linked to overall activity levels:** Active pupils were more than twice as likely as pupils in the very low activity group to participate in organised activity both in and outside school (56% vs 24%).

Demand and preferences

- **Pupils express interest in a wide range of opportunities to be active:** Preferences extend beyond organised sport and include:
 - swimming
 - active travel
 - outdoor activity
 - informal and flexible opportunities
- **Preferences change with age:** Younger pupils show stronger preferences for structured, school-based activity, while older pupils show greater interest in outdoor, leisure and community-based opportunities.
- **Pupils in the very low activity group face multiple barriers to participation:** They are more likely to report confidence, motivation and access-related barriers and are less likely to identify specific opportunities that would encourage participation.

Drivers of activity

- **Physical literacy is generally positive:** Most pupils understand the benefits of physical activity and enjoy being active, although confidence and competence are lower among pupils in the very low activity group.
- **Time and weather are the most commonly reported barriers:** Lack of time (18%) and poor weather (11%) were the barriers most frequently reported by pupils.
- **Pupils in the very low activity group experience more barriers to participation:** Pupils with very low activity are more likely to report barriers relating to confidence, interest, body image and access to opportunities.

Everyday behaviours and system influences

- **Enjoyment of and perceived safety for active travel are generally positive:** Pupils report positive enjoyment of, and perceived safety when, walking, wheeling, cycling and scooting, although enjoyment of cycling and scooting is lower in secondary school than in primary school.

- **Access to a working bike is not universal:** Access varies by age, activity level and across some population groups.
- **Screen time exceeds recommended levels for many pupils:** Most pupils report levels of screen use above recommended guidelines.
- **Sleep patterns vary across the school years:** Sleep duration is generally lower in early secondary school and during the school week.

These findings highlight the importance of everyday routines and environments in shaping physical activity behaviours.

What the data tells us

Physical activity among children and young people is strongly influenced by school-based opportunities, particularly physical education and activity during the school day.

While many pupils are active at certain points in the day, participation:

- declines from early secondary school through to the senior phase
- is lower among girls and some disability groups
- is lower among pupils who report lower confidence and fewer opportunities to be active

Pupils in the very low activity group are less likely to participate in organised activity and more likely to report confidence, motivational and practical barriers to participation.

What needs to happen next?

Findings suggest opportunities to strengthen the physical activity system by building on school-based provision while increasing opportunities across communities, active travel and everyday environments.

This includes:

- **Prioritising those least active:** Targeted approaches are needed to reduce very low activity levels and narrow inequalities.
- **Focus on key stages of the school journey:** Support participation throughout the school years, with particular attention to the groups and stages where activity levels are lowest.
- **Expand opportunities beyond the school day, including:**
 - active travel
 - community-based opportunities
 - outdoor environments
 - everyday movement.
- **Improve confidence, competence and inclusion:** Opportunities should support positive experiences of being active for all pupils.
- **Strengthen partnership working across the physical activity system:** Coordinated action across education, health, communities, transport and leisure services will be required.

At a Glance: Findings and Priorities

The findings show that many pupils in Dumfries and Galloway are active and recognise the benefits of physical activity. However, participation declines through the secondary school years, inequalities persist for some groups, and very low activity remains a significant challenge, with the proportion of pupils in the least active group increasing since 2018 (the Physical Activity Strategy baseline) and remaining above the 2030 ambition. Addressing these challenges will require a stronger whole-system approach that supports active lifestyles throughout the school years and beyond.

Figure 1 provides an at-a-glance summary of the survey findings, highlighting the key strengths, challenges and priorities for action identified across the report.

Conclusion

Physical activity is working for many pupils in Dumfries and Galloway, with positive perceptions of physical activity, active travel and wellbeing providing strong foundations for future progress. However, participation declines through the secondary school years, inequalities persist for some groups, and the proportion of pupils in the least active group has increased since 2018 (the Physical Activity Strategy baseline) and remains above the 2030 ambition.

Continued action will be needed to reduce very low activity and ensure all pupils have the confidence, opportunities and support to be active. Strengthening opportunities for those least active, alongside a more connected whole-system approach, will be critical to creating a more active, inclusive and healthier future for children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway.

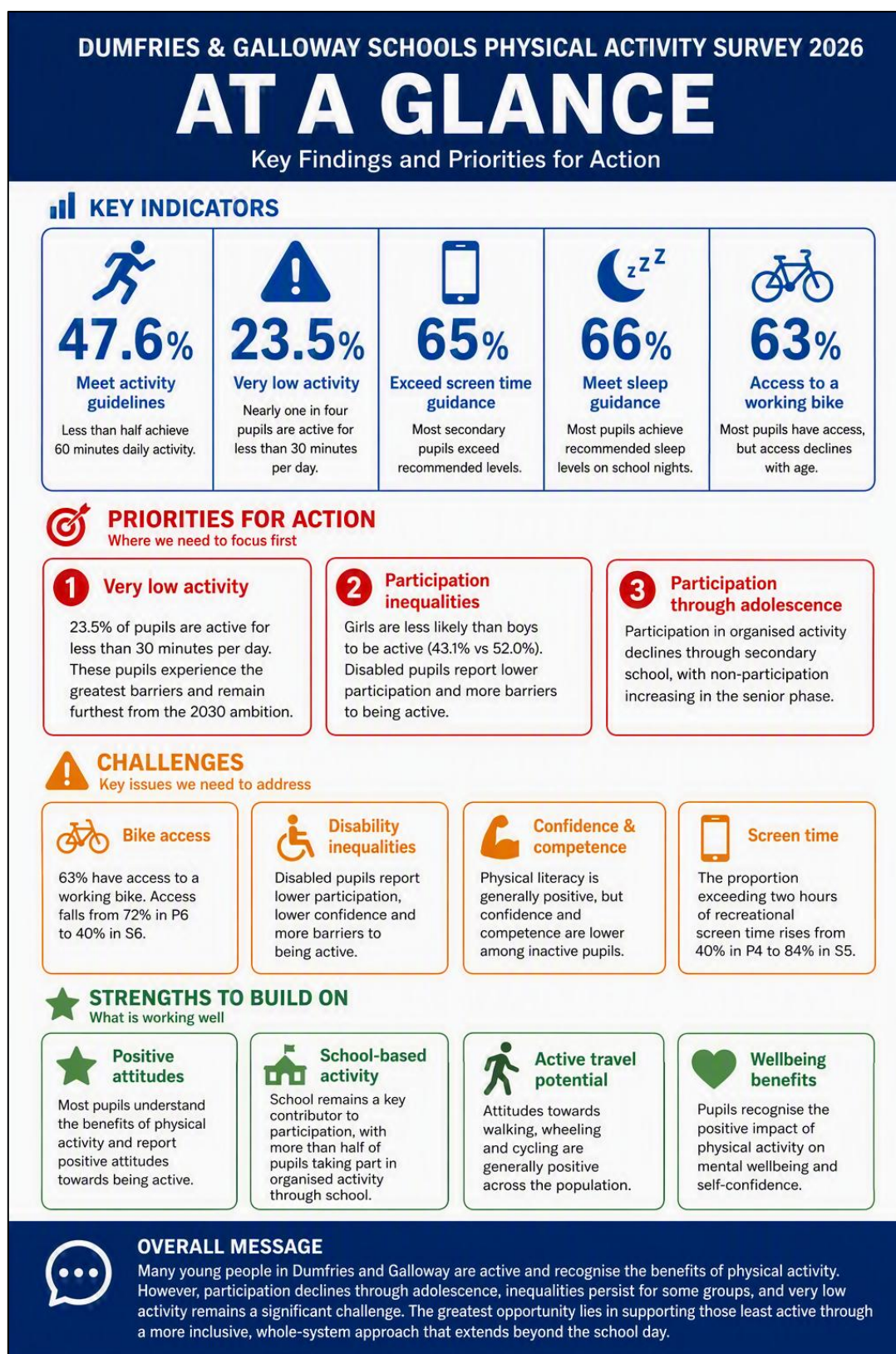


Figure 1: At a Glance Summary of Key Findings and Priorities for Action

Chapter 1: Purpose and Approach

1.1 Purpose of this chapter

This chapter explains the purpose and context of the Dumfries and Galloway Schools Physical Activity Survey (DGSPAS)¹, and how the findings in this report should be understood.

It sets out:

- why the survey matters
- how the data is used
- how it supports a whole system approach to increasing physical activity among children and young people

1.2 Background

The DGSPAS provides long-term local data to help understand:

- how active children and young people are
- what encourages them to be active
- what prevents or limits participation

The survey is embedded in local policy and planning. It supports evidence-based decision making across education, health, transport, community services and the third sector.

It is used to:

- track change over time
- identify inequalities in participation
- inform targeted action at school, cluster and system level

The survey has been recognised within the Dumfries and Galloway Best Investments 2025² Update as an important monitoring and evaluation indicator for physical activity across the region.

The survey was first carried out in 2013 by Dumfries and Galloway Council. The 2026 survey is the ninth round, providing a consistent dataset over more than a decade.

1.3 Aim

The aim of the DGSPAS is to provide a consistent source of local evidence to inform policy, planning and practice.

It supports this by:

- tracking changes in physical activity levels, attitudes and behaviours
- reflecting the lived experience of children and young people
- supporting better use of resources by focusing on those who are least active

² Kelly, P. 2025. Dumfries and Galloway A E Best Investments H 2025 Update. University of Edinburgh

1.4 Why physical activity matters

Physical activity includes all movement of the body, from everyday activity to sport and exercise.

This includes:

- **Everyday activity:** walking, cycling, wheeling and daily movement
- **Active recreation:** play, dance, and informal activity
- **Sport and exercise:** organised sport, swimming and structured activity

Regular physical activity supports:

- physical health (including heart health and strength)
- mental health and wellbeing
- learning and cognitive function
- healthy development and weight

While all movement is beneficial, activities that raise the heart rate and breathing rate on a regular basis provide the greatest health benefits and form the basis of UK physical activity guidelines³.

1.5 National and local context

National evidence shows that physical activity levels decline during adolescence and that inequalities widen by age and gender. These patterns are consistently reported across Scotland and the UK⁴.

The 2026 DGSPAS shows a similar picture locally:

- 47.6% of pupils meet physical activity guidelines
- 23.5% of pupils are in the very low activity group (less than 30 minutes of activity per day)
- The 2026 DGSPAS shows variation across the school years, with activity levels increasing through primary and early secondary school before declining in the senior secondary phase

The current physical activity measure has been collected consistently since 2022, allowing trends to be monitored over time. Where appropriate, findings are considered alongside longer-term ambitions established through the Physical Activity Strategy.

The DGSPAS is a key local indicator within the Dumfries and Galloway Council Plan⁵ and supports delivery of the Physical Activity Strategy 2025-2030¹. The survey has also been recognised in the Dumfries and Galloway Best Investments 2025² Update as an important monitoring and evaluation indicator for physical activity across the region.

It also aligns with national frameworks, including:

- UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines³
- World Health Organization Global Action Plan on Physical Activity⁶

³ Department of Health and Social Care (2026) UK Chief Medical Officers' physical activity guidelines

⁴ Scottish Government (2026) Sport and Physical Activity: State of the Nation. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/sport-physical-activity-state-nation>

⁵ Dumfries and Galloway Council. Council Plan 2023 to 2028

⁶ World Health Organization (2018) *Global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030: more active people for a healthier world*

- Scottish Government Physical Activity for Health Framework⁷

1.6 A system-based approach

Increasing physical activity requires a system-based approach, recognising that behaviour is shaped by multiple, interconnected influences including individuals, communities, environments, organisations and policies. The Dumfries and Galloway physical activity system is informed by international, national and local evidence, including work led by the World Health Organization⁶, the International Society for Physical Activity and Health⁸, Public Health Scotland⁹ and the Scottish Government¹⁰, all of which emphasise coordinated action across multiple sectors and settings to support active lives

In Dumfries and Galloway, this is reflected in the Physical Activity System¹, which focuses on improving activity across all parts of daily life, with a clear priority on those who are least active.

The DGSPAS¹ supports understanding and action across the following system areas (see Figure 1.1):

- **Active Systems** – coordinated, system-wide action
- **Active Travel** – safe, accessible everyday movement
- **Active Places of Learning** – schools supporting activity across the day
- **Active Places and Spaces** – accessible environments and facilities
- **Active Workplace** – supporting workforce wellbeing
- **Sport and Active Recreation** – inclusive and relevant opportunities
- **Active Health and Social Care** – pathways from services into activity
- **Communications and Public Education** – awareness, motivation and engagement

By capturing behaviours, attitudes, barriers and experiences, the survey helps identify where change is needed across the system, supporting coordinated rather than isolated action.

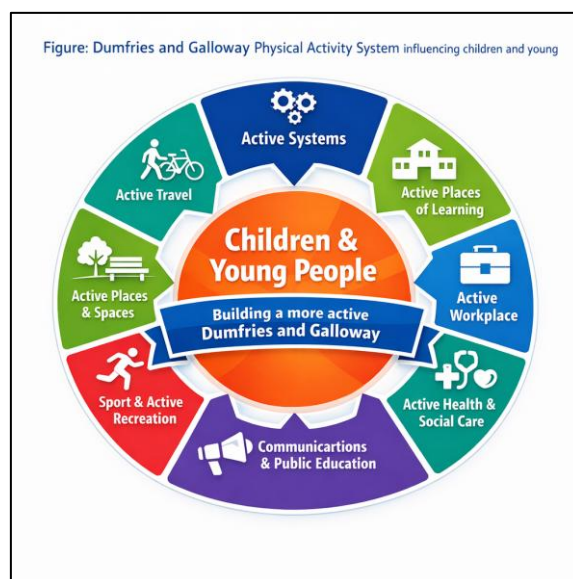


Figure 1.1: Whole system influences on children and young people's physical activity

⁷ Scottish Government (2024) *Physical activity for health: framework*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

⁸ International Society for Physical Activity and Health (2020) *ISPAH's Eight Investments That Work for Physical Activity*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

⁹ Public Health Scotland (2023) *A Whole System Approach to Physical Activity*. Edinburgh: Public Health Scotland.

¹⁰ Scottish Government (2026) *Sport and Physical Activity: State of the Nation*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

1.7 Structure of this report

This report is structured to move from understanding how active children and young people are, to exploring the factors that influence participation, and finally to considering the implications for policy and practice.

- **Chapters 1-3:** Provides background information, describe the survey methodology and profile the respondents.
- **Chapter 4:** Presents physical activity levels and progress against local strategy ambitions.
- **Chapters 5-8:** Explores participation, activity preferences and the settings in which children and young people are active.
- **Chapters 9-10:** Examines key influences on behaviour, including physical literacy, barriers and enablers.
- **Chapters 11-14:** Considers wider factors associated with physical activity, including active travel, bike access, screen time, sleep, wellbeing and confidence.
- **Chapter 15:** Summarises the key findings and highlights implications for policy, planning and practice.

Together, these chapters provide a whole-system picture of physical activity among children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway, helping partners understand current behaviours, identify inequalities and inform action (see Figure 1.2).

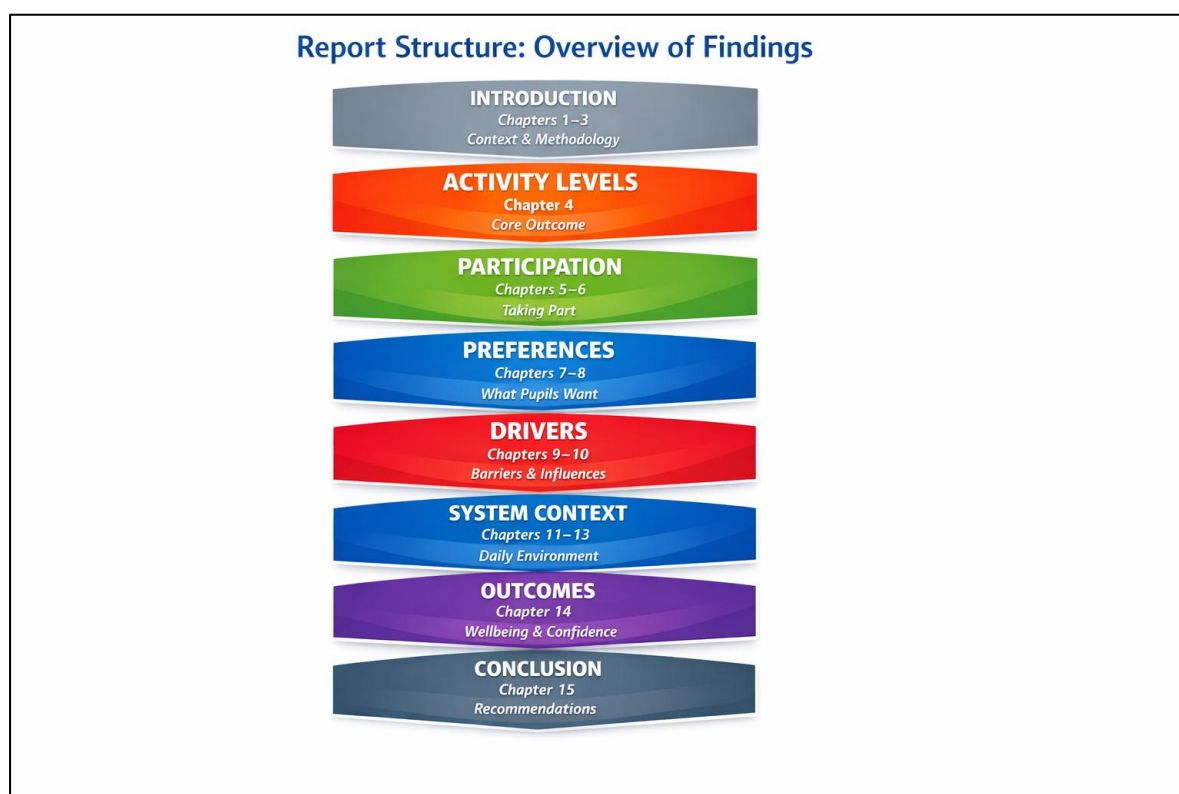


Figure 1.2: How the Report is Structured: From Activity Levels to Action

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Overview

The 2026 DGSPAS was conducted online between April and May 2026.

A total of 3,706 pupils, from Primary 4 to Secondary 6, completed the survey.

The DGSPAS follows a consistent approach used since 2013, providing a robust basis for monitoring trends in physical activity and identifying inequalities between population groups over time. The findings support evidence-informed policy, planning and service development.

2.2 Approach

The survey is designed to provide insight into physical activity behaviour among children and young people.

It captures:

- activity levels (classified as Active, Some Activity or Very Low Activity; see Figure 1.3)
- participation in different settings
- attitudes and preferences
- barriers and enablers
- wider behaviours, including screen time and sleep

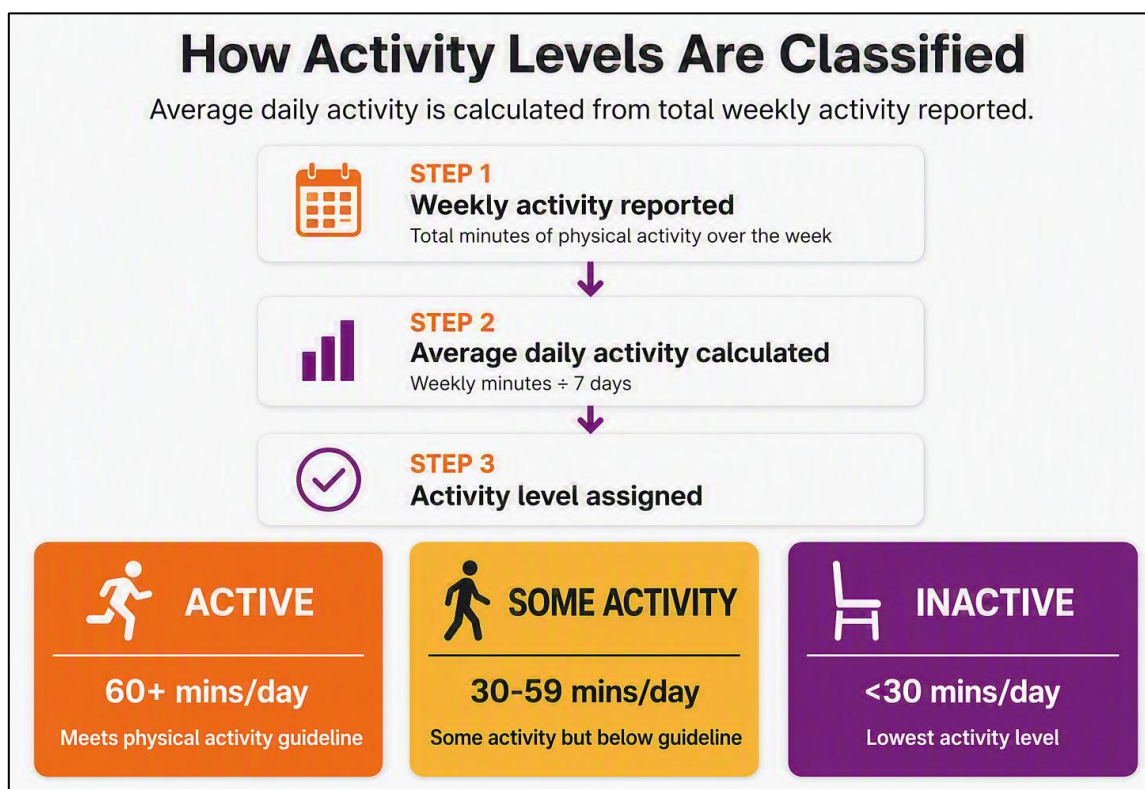


Figure 1.3: How Physical Activity Levels were classified

These categories were used throughout the report to identify differences in physical activity levels, participation patterns and barriers to being active across different population groups.

Data are analysed using:

- analysis of overall patterns, trends and changes over time
- comparison of findings across different groups, including:
 - gender
 - year group
 - disability
 - activity level

This approach helps identify how activity levels vary between groups and the factors associated with participation.

In addition to summarising patterns and trends, statistical modelling was used to examine associations between activity level, gender, year group and survey year. Results are reported where they help explain the findings.

2.3 Consistency and comparability

The DGSPAS has been delivered regularly since 2013, with a consistent core set of questions.

This allows:

- comparison across survey years
- tracking of long-term trends
- assessment of progress over time

Where methodological changes have been introduced, including the expansion of the survey to Primary 4-Primary 6 pupils and the transition from paper-based to online delivery, efforts have been made to maintain comparability with earlier survey rounds wherever possible.

2.4 Survey administration and sample

The survey has evolved over time to improve coverage, accessibility and the ability to monitor physical activity across a wider range of school-age children and young people. Table 2.1 details the administration and response rate from previous versions of the DGSPAS.

The DGSPAS is designed to support both regional monitoring and local improvement, providing evidence to inform strategic planning while enabling schools and partners to better understand the experiences and needs of their pupils.

Table 2.1: Survey administration and sample size (2013–2026)

Year	Administration period	Year groups	Method	Sample size
2013	April 2013	P7, S1, S3, S5	Paper	3,803
2015	September 2015	P7, S1, S3, S5	Paper	2,575
2017	November 2017	P7, S1, S3, S5	Paper	2,979
2018	November 2018	P7, S1, S3, S5	Paper	3,269
2019	Nov 2019 – Mar 2020	P7, S1, S3, S5	Online	1,872
2022	June 2022	P4–S6	Online	2,263
2024	June 2024	P4–S6	Online	3,330
2025	May–July 2025	P4–S6	Online	2,850
2026	April–May 2026	P4–S6	Online	3,706

Chapter 3: Who Responded?

3.1 Overview of respondents

A total of **3,706 pupils** completed the 2026 DGSPAS.

Responses were collected from pupils in Primary 4 to Secondary 6, providing insight into physical activity behaviours across both childhood and adolescence.

The size and coverage of the sample allow meaningful analysis of differences by age, gender and disability.

3.2 Gender profile

The gender profile of respondents provides confidence that findings can be explored meaningfully across both boys and girls (see Figure 3.1).

Overall:

- 49% of respondents identified as girls.
- 47% identified as boys.
- 1% identified as another gender.
- 2% preferred not to say.

This broadly balanced gender profile supports analysis of:

- differences in activity levels
- variations in participation
- inequalities in experience and access

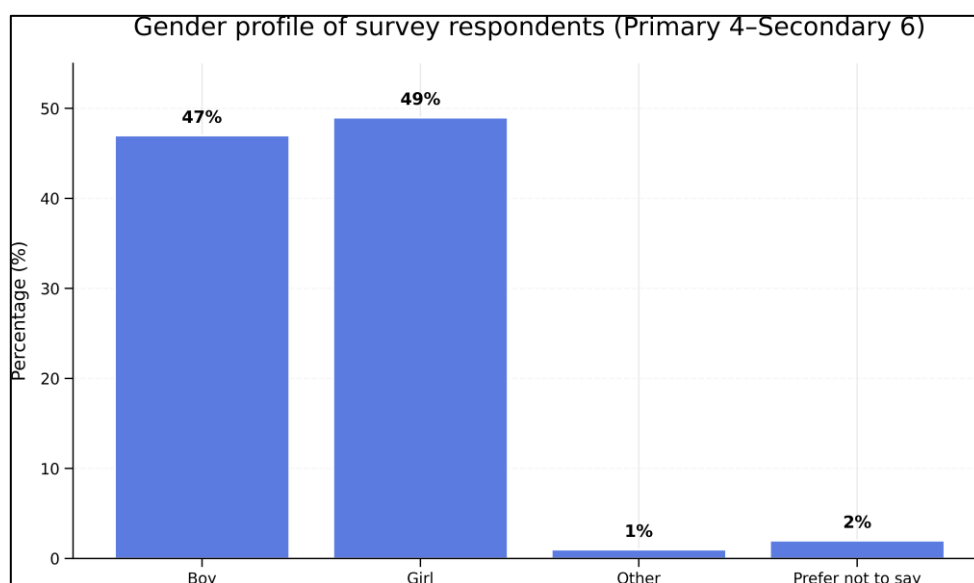


Figure 3.1: Survey respondents by gender (2026)

Note: Nine respondents (<1%) did not provide a gender response and have been excluded from Figure 3.1.

Key insight: The survey achieved a broadly balanced representation of boys and girls, providing a strong basis for exploring gender differences in physical activity and participation across the report.

3.3 Distribution by year group

Respondents were drawn from across all year groups, enabling analysis of physical activity behaviours and experiences among children and young people throughout the school years (see Figure 3.2).

The distribution of respondents allows exploration of patterns at key stages of the school journey, including:

- late primary
- transition into secondary school
- the senior phase (S4-S6)

These stages are important because they are often associated with changes in physical activity, participation and wider health behaviours

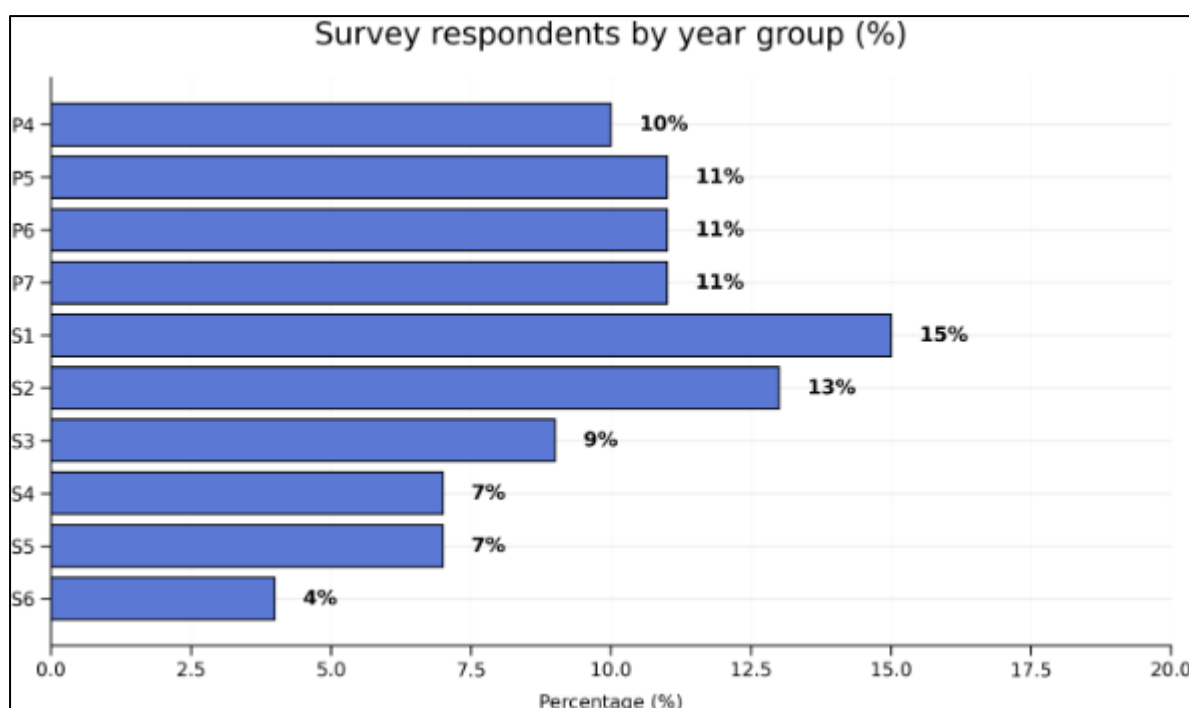


Figure 3.2: Survey respondents by year group (2026)

**Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Twenty-three respondents (1%) did not report a year group and have been excluded from the chart.*

The broad distribution of respondents across year groups supports analysis of how behaviours, attitudes and participation vary throughout the school years.

3.4 Disability profile of respondents

Information on disability was collected across a range of categories, including physical disability, learning difficulty, sensory disability, long-term illness or medical condition, and other disabilities or difficulties.

Overall:

- 58% of pupils reported no disability or difficulty.
- 12% reported a learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia).
- 19% reported that they did not know their disability status.
- 4% reported a long-term illness or medical condition.
- 4% reported another disability or difficulty.
- 3% reported multiple types of disability or difficulty.
- 3% reported a physical disability.
- 3% preferred not to say.
- 2% reported a sensory disability.

Figure 3.3 shows the proportion of pupils who reported a disability, difficulty or additional support need. Examining responses by disability status helps identify where some pupils may face greater barriers to being active and where additional support may be required.

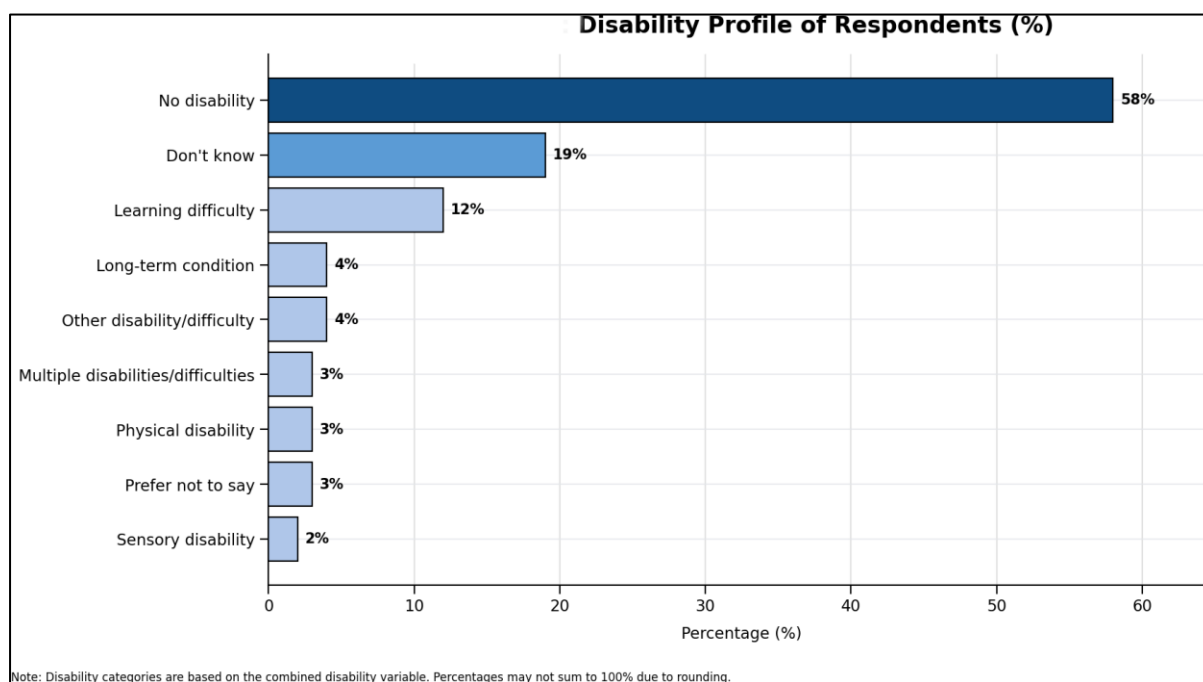


Figure 3.3: Disability profile of respondents (%)

Key insight: Responses from pupils with a range of disabilities and additional support needs enable meaningful analysis of inequalities in physical activity and participation across different groups.

3.5 Strength of the dataset

The 2026 survey includes responses from 3,706 pupils across all school stages from Primary 4 to Secondary 6.

This provides a strong basis for examining:

- physical activity levels
- participation patterns
- differences by age, gender, disability and activity level
- trends over time

3.6 Interpreting the findings

Results presented in this report are based on completed survey responses.

- Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
- Findings describe the survey sample.
- Responses are based on pupils' own reporting and may be influenced by how questions are interpreted.
- Findings are based on the pupils who completed the survey and may not fully reflect the experiences of all children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway.

The size and breadth of the dataset provide valuable local insight into physical activity, participation and inequalities among children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway.

Chapter 4: Physical Activity Levels (Meeting Guidelines)

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents physical activity levels among children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway and assesses progress against the Physical Activity Strategy 2025–2030. Activity is measured against the national guideline of an average of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day, based on activity reported over the previous week. Pupils were classified into three physical activity categories: Active, Some Activity and Very Low Activity (see Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1: Pupil Physical Activity Classification

4.2 Headline findings

Physical activity levels among children and young people in Dumfries and Galloway have declined compared with the baseline used in the Physical Activity Strategy¹ (see Figure 4.2):

- 47.6% of pupils meet the daily physical activity guideline
- 52% do not meet the guideline
- 23.5% of pupils are in the very low activity group (less than 30 minutes per day on average)

These findings indicate that:

- fewer than half of pupils meet recommended activity levels.
- activity levels vary across the school years, with the lowest levels observed in Primary 4 and Secondary 6
- almost one in four pupils are in the very low activity group
- more than half of pupils do not meet recommended activity levels
- compared with 2025, fewer pupils met physical activity guidelines in 2026 and this reduction was statistically significant

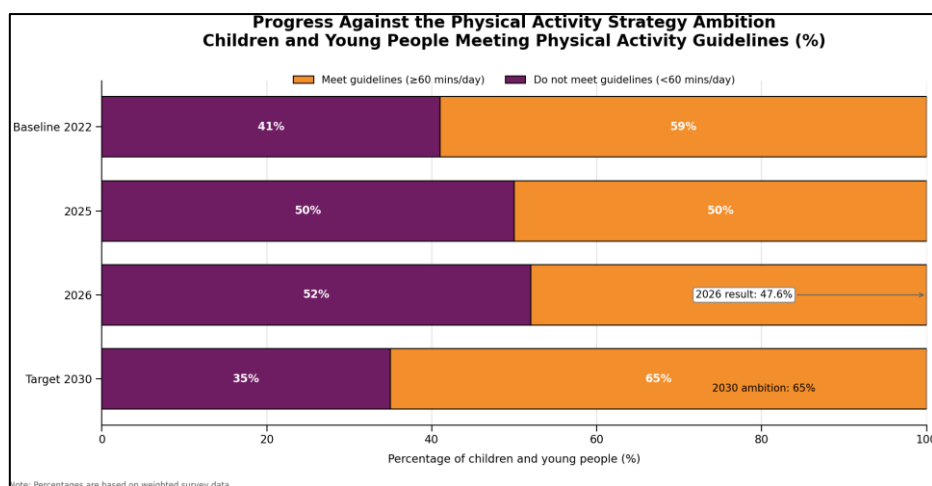


Figure 4.2: Progress towards Physical Activity Strategy 2025-2030 ambitions

Key insight: Very low physical activity has increased since baseline and remains above the 2030 ambition.

4.3 Progress against Strategy ambitions

Current activity levels remain below the ambitions set out in the Dumfries and Galloway Physical Activity Strategy 2025–2030¹. Trends from 2022 onwards indicate that fewer than half of pupils consistently meet physical activity guidelines, while very low activity remains a significant challenge.

The Strategy aims to:

- increase the proportion of pupils meeting physical activity guidelines to 65%
- reduce the proportion of pupils in the very low activity group to 15.1%

Current data indicates movement away from these ambitions:

- the proportion of pupils meeting physical activity guidelines has fallen from 59% at baseline to 47.6% in 2026
- the proportion of pupils in the very low activity group has increased from 17.8% at baseline to 23.5% in 2026.
- Compared with 2025, the proportion of pupils meeting physical activity guidelines was significantly lower in 2026 ($p < 0.05$).
- The proportion of pupils in the very low activity group was significantly higher in 2026 than in 2025 ($p < 0.05$). However, this finding was not replicated when analysis was restricted to year groups that participated in both survey years and should therefore be interpreted with some caution.
- Statistical analysis also identified a significant change in the overall distribution of activity levels between 2025 and 2026 ($p < 0.05$).

Key insight: Current activity levels remain below Physical Activity Strategy¹ ambitions and highlight the need for continued action, particularly among those who are least active. Compared with 2025, fewer pupils met recommended physical activity guidelines in 2026, while levels of very low activity also increased.

Figure 4.3 illustrates the change in very low activity levels since the strategy baseline and highlights the gap between current performance and the ambition for 2030.

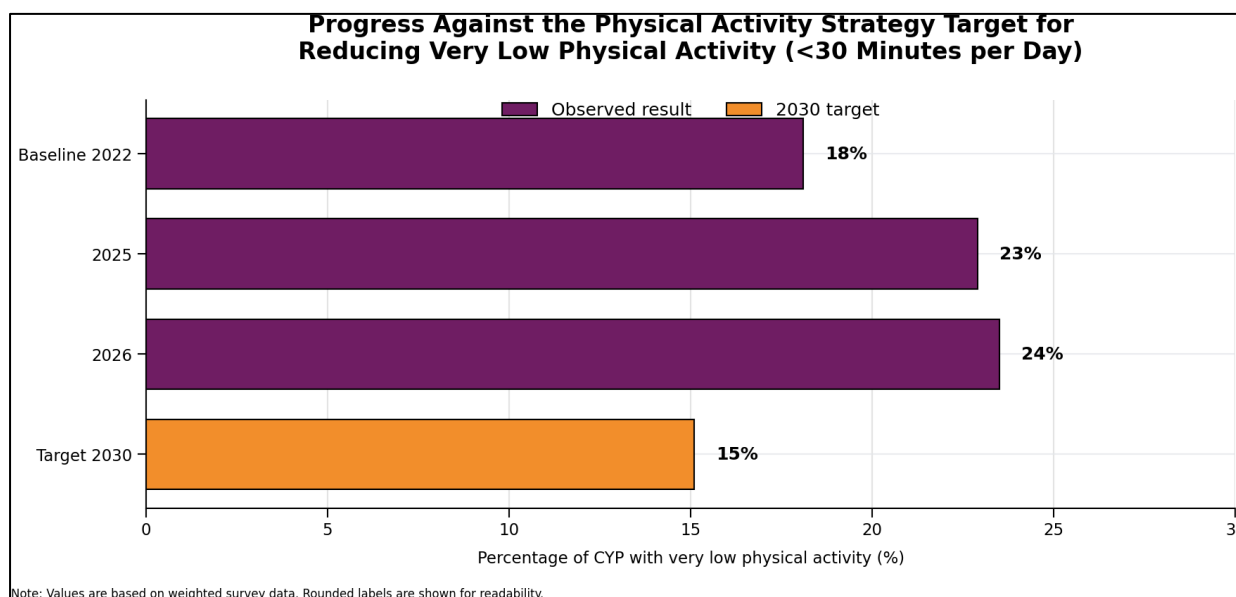


Figure 4.3: Very low activity (<30 minutes/day) compared with Strategy ambition

Key insight: The proportion of pupils in the very low activity group has increased since baseline and remains above the 2030 ambition

4.3 Activity levels by gender

There is a clear and persistent gender gap in physical activity:

- Boys are more likely to meet activity guidelines
- Statistical modelling identified a significant association between gender and activity level, with girls less likely than boys to meet physical activity guidelines ($p < 0.001$).
- This pattern is consistent across survey years.

Figure 4.4 shows the distribution of pupils across activity categories by gender, highlighting a higher proportion of boys in the active group and a higher proportion of girls in the less active categories.

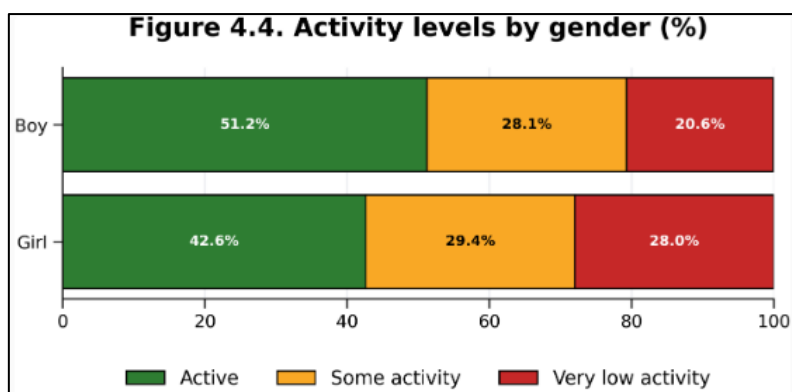


Figure 4.4: Activity levels by gender (active / some activity / very low activity)

Key insight: Girls are consistently less likely than boys to meet physical activity guidelines and are more likely to be in the lower activity categories.

4.4 Activity levels by year group

Activity levels change significantly across the school years.

- Activity levels increase from Primary 4 to Primary 6.
- A reduction is observed in Primary 7.
- Activity levels increase again during the early secondary years, peaking in Secondary 3.
- Activity levels decline throughout the senior secondary years, with the lowest levels observed in Secondary 6.

By Secondary 6, fewer than four in ten pupils meet the physical activity guideline.

Figure 4.5 shows substantial variation in activity levels across the school years, with lower levels evident at both the beginning and end of the school journey.

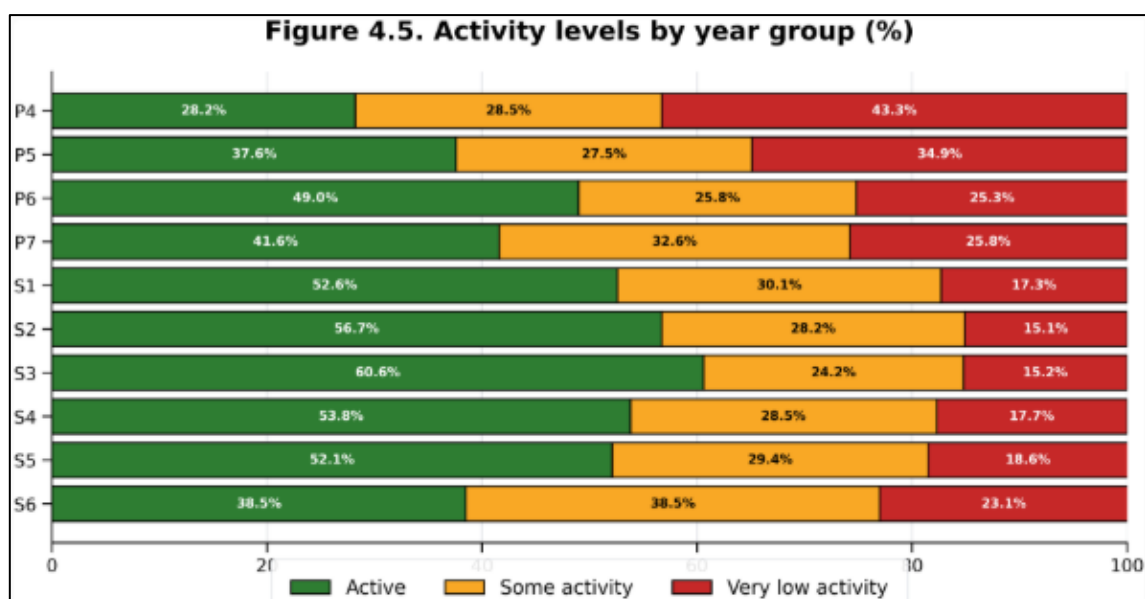


Figure 4.5: Activity levels by year group (P4–S6)

Key insight: Activity levels vary considerably across the school years, with activity increasing through the early years before declining during the senior secondary phase.

4.5 Activity levels by Disability

Clear inequalities are evident between some disability groups and pupils reporting no disability:

- Pupils reporting physical disabilities, learning difficulties and other disabilities or difficulties are less likely to meet physical activity guidelines.
- These groups are also more likely to be in the very low activity category.

Figure 4.6 shows variation in activity levels across disability groups, with the largest differences evident among pupils reporting physical disabilities and learning difficulties.

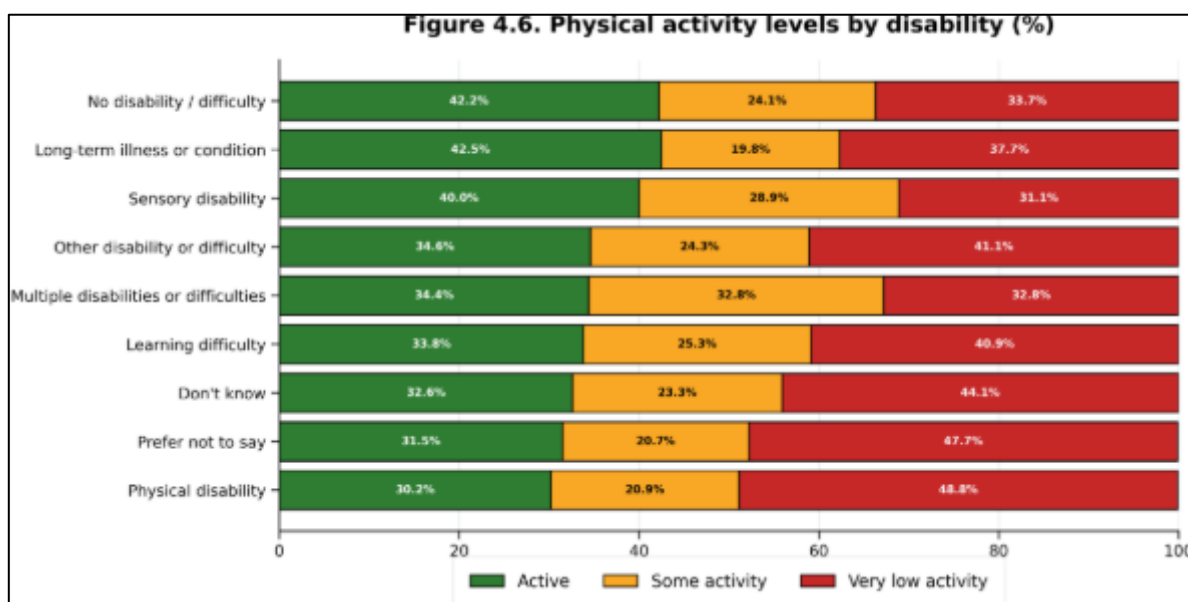


Figure 4.6: Activity levels by disability group

Key insight: Activity levels vary across disability groups, with lower levels of activity evident among pupils reporting physical disabilities, learning difficulties and other disabilities or difficulties.

4.6 Activity level segmentation

Activity levels are presented using three groups:

- **Active** – meeting the daily guideline
- **Some activity** – 30 to 59 minutes per day
- **Very low activity** – less than 30 minutes per day

Pupils in both the Some Activity and Very Low Activity groups do not meet the physical activity guideline. However, this report places particular emphasis on the Very Low Activity group because they are the least active, experience the greatest barriers to participation, and are likely to experience the greatest health gains from becoming more active.

Particular focus is therefore placed on the Very Low Activity group throughout the report.

This segmentation is used across later chapters to understand how activity levels relate to:

- participation
- preferences
- barriers and enablers

4.7 What this means for action

- Prioritise support for pupils who are least active, particularly those reporting less than 30 minutes of physical activity per day.
- Target action towards groups experiencing lower activity levels, including girls and disabled pupils.
- Sustain participation through the secondary school years, where activity levels and participation in organised activity decline.
- Ensure opportunities are inclusive, accessible and responsive to differing needs and circumstances.
- Expand opportunities beyond organised sport and school-based provision, including active travel, informal activity and community-based opportunities.
- Align delivery across the Physical Activity System to support coordinated action and reduce inequalities.

Chapter 5: Participation in Clubs and Organised Activity

5.1 Overview

This chapter examines participation in organised physical activity, including activities delivered through schools, community settings, or both.

Participation in organised activity is an important part of overall physical activity, but does not capture all forms of movement. It provides insight into how well structured opportunities are reaching different groups.

5.2 Headline findings

Most pupils report some engagement in organised activity, but participation is uneven (see Figure 5.1).

- 44% participate in both school and community settings
- 27% participate in community settings only
- 11% participate in school settings only
- 19% do not participate in organised activity
-

Nearly one in five pupils are not currently engaged in organised physical activity in either school or community settings.

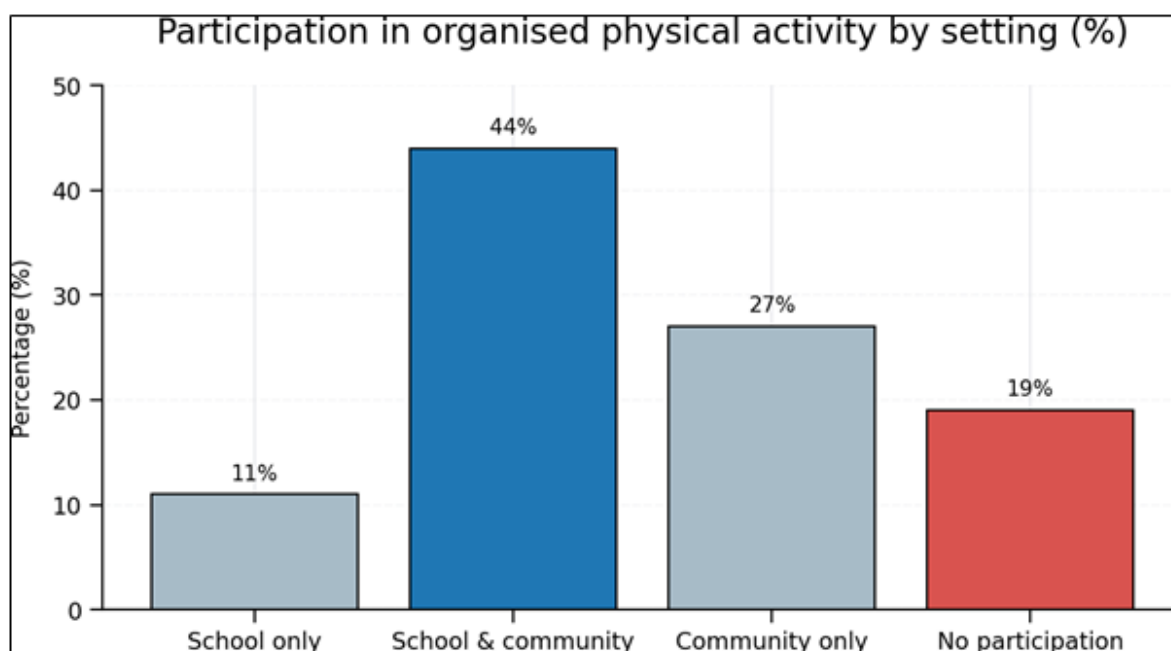


Figure 5.1: Participation in Organised Physical Activity by Setting (%)

5.3 Participation by year group

Participation varies with by year group (see Figure 5.2).

- Highest participation is seen in upper primary and early secondary (P5–S1)
- Around half of pupils in these years participate in both school and community settings.
- From S2 onwards, participation declines steadily
- Non-participation rises to:
 - 29% in S5
 - 37% in S6

☞ Participation in organised activity declines through secondary school, particularly in the senior phase.

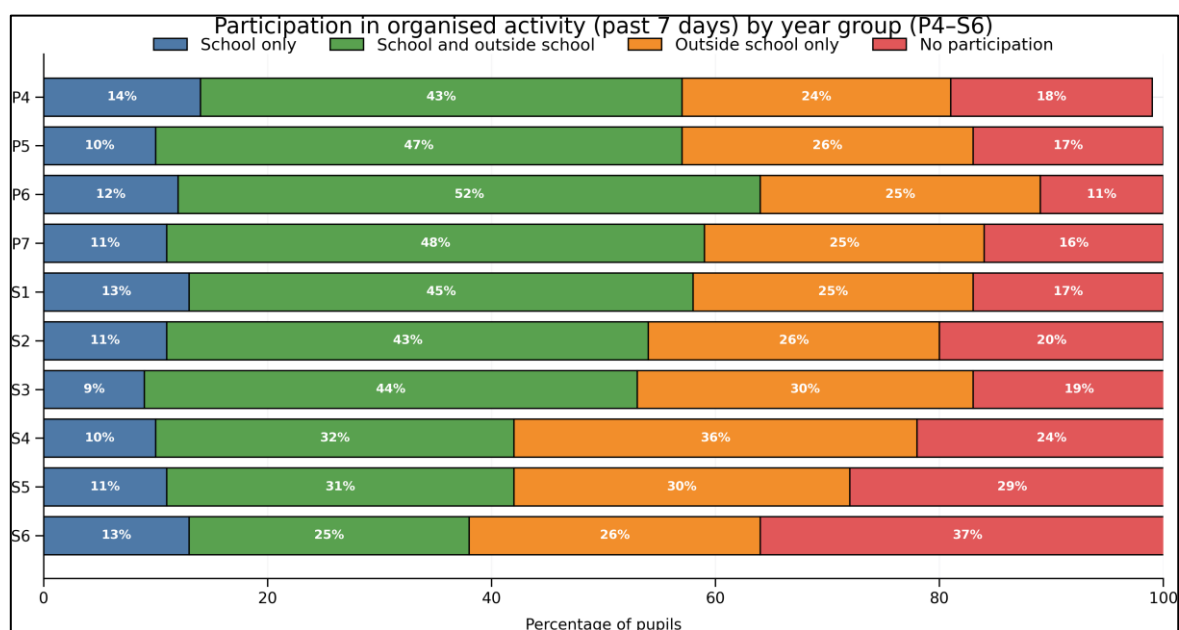


Figure 5.2: Patterns of participation in organised activity across year groups

Key insight: Participation declines through secondary school, with higher levels of non-participation in the senior phase.

5.4 Participation by activity level

Participation patterns vary by activity level (see Figure 5.3).

- Among active pupils, 56% participate in organised physical activity both in school and in the community.
- 11% of active pupils report no participation in organised physical activity.
- Among somewhat active pupils, 39% participate across both settings, while 19% report no participation.
- Among very low activity pupils, participation is lower overall.
- Around one-third (34%) of very low activity pupils report no participation in organised physical activity.

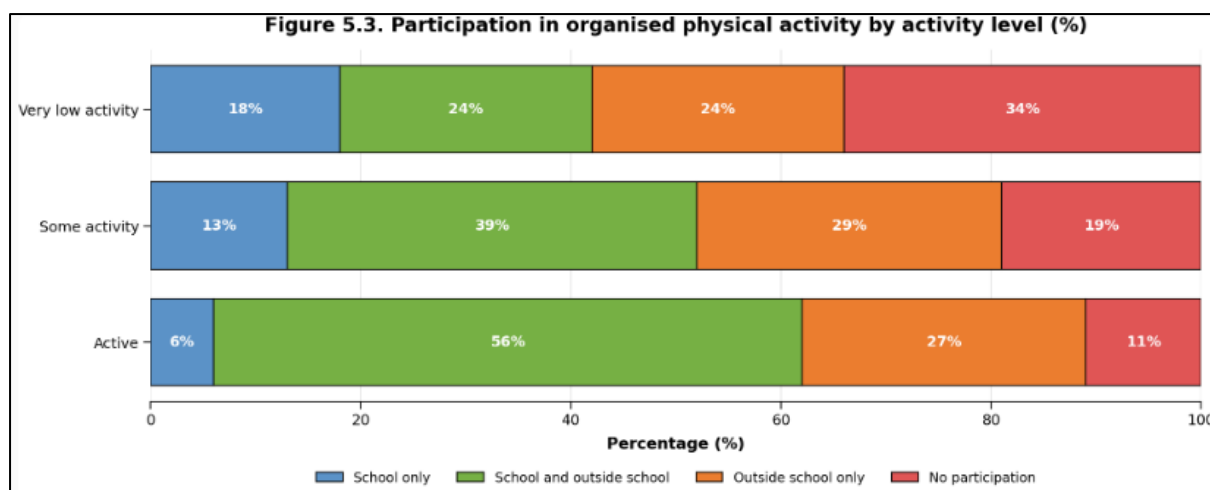


Figure 5.3: Participation in organised activity-by-activity level

☞ *Non-participation increases across activity groups, rising from 11% among active pupils to 34% among very low activity pupils.*

Key insight: Participation in organised physical activity is lowest among pupils in the very low activity group, with one-third reporting no participation in either school or community activities.

5.5 Interpretation

Organised physical activity is an important way for many pupils to be active, but participation varies across different groups.

- Participation declines with age, particularly during secondary school.
- A substantial proportion of pupils do not take part in organised physical activity.
- Pupils in the very low activity group are least likely to take part in organised physical activity.

Together, these findings suggest that organised physical activity is not attracting all pupils equally, particularly those who are least active.

5.7 What this means for action

- Focus on pupils who do not currently take part in organised physical activity, particularly those in the very low activity group.
- Support young people to continue participating through secondary school, especially in the senior phase (S4-S6).
- Strengthen links between school and community activities.
- Make sure opportunities are accessible, relevant and welcoming to all pupils.
- Recognise that organised physical activity can help many pupils to be more active, but it will not be the right approach for everyone.

Chapter 6: Current Activities – Outside of School

6.1 Overview

This chapter examines the types of physical activity pupils take part in outside of school, based on activity reported over the previous two weeks.

It provides insight into:

- which activities are most common
- how participation varies across groups
- how activity changes with age

6.2 Headline findings (all pupils)

Participation is concentrated in a small number of activities (see Figure 6.1):

- Football is the most commonly reported activity (25%).
- Swimming is the second most common (16%).
- 13% of pupils reported no participation in activities or clubs outside school during the previous two weeks.

A smaller group of activities shows moderate participation, including:

- fitness (11%)
- gymnastics (9%)
- golf, darts and dance and movement (8%)

☞ Participation is spread across a wide range of activities, although football and swimming attract the highest levels of participation. Most individual activities are undertaken by fewer than one in ten pupils.

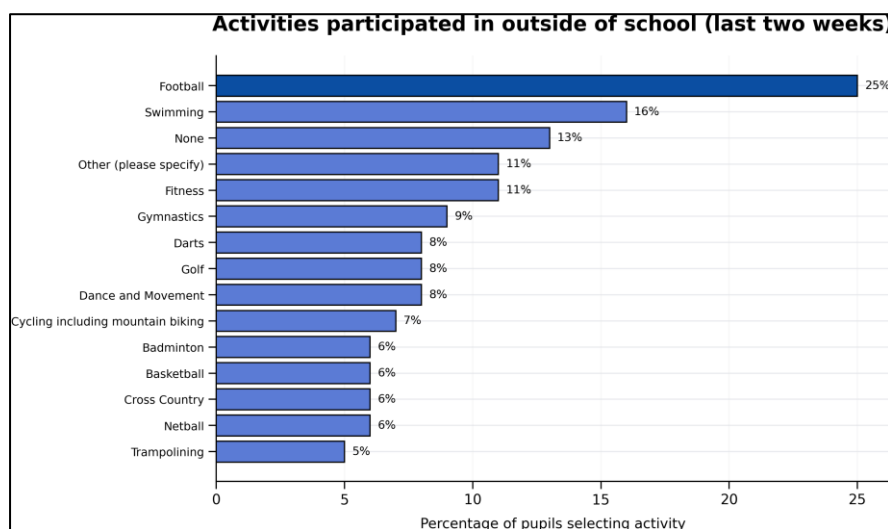


Figure 6.1: Activities participated in outside of school (last two weeks)

(Note: Chart shows the most commonly reported activities and clubs participated in outside school during the previous two weeks. "None" indicates pupils who reported no participation in any activities or clubs outside school during that period).

Key insight: Football and swimming are the most popular activities, but overall participation is varied, with pupils taking part in a wide range of different sports and activities.

6.3 Participation by gender

Patterns of participation differ between boys and girls (Figure 6.2).

- Boys' participation is more concentrated around football, which is reported by 39% of boys.
- Girls' participation is spread more evenly across a range of activities, including swimming, gymnastics, dance and movement, netball and fitness.

Boys are more likely to participate in:

- football
- darts
- golf
- fishing

Girls are more likely to participate in:

- swimming
- gymnastics
- dance and movement
- equestrian and similar activities

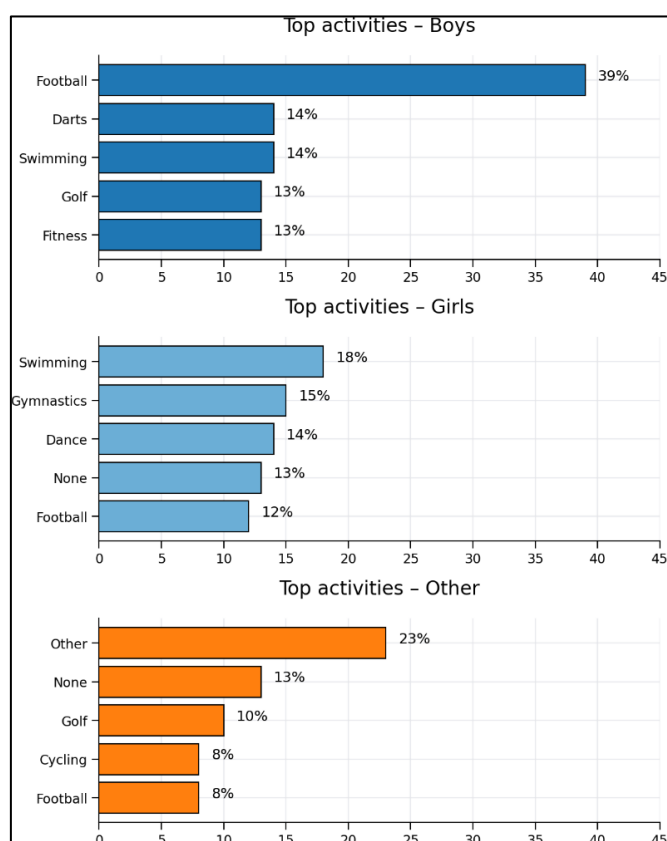


Figure 6.2: Activities participated in outside of school by gender

☞ While football dominates participation among boys, girls' participation is distributed across a broader mix of activities.

Key insight: Participation patterns differ by gender. Boys' participation is heavily concentrated around football, while girls are more likely to participate across a range of activities including swimming, gymnastics, dance and movement, netball and fitness.

6.4 Participation by year group

Patterns of participation change considerably as pupils move through the school years (Figure 6.3).

◆ P4–P5 (middle primary)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Football and swimming are the most commonly reported activities. Gymnastics has relatively high participation compared with older year groups. Participation is spread across a wide range of activities. Around one in eight pupils report no participation outside school during the previous two weeks. 	Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Football: 30-34% Swimming: 27-31% Gymnastics: 14-19% No participation: 12-15%
<p>☞ Participation is spread across a broad range of activities in middle primary school, with football, swimming and gymnastics particularly popular. Levels of non-participation remain relatively low.</p>	

◆ P6–P7 (later primary)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Football participation increases further. Swimming remains popular but begins to decline. Fitness and cross-country become more prominent. Participation continues across a diverse range of activities. 	Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Football: 35-36% Swimming: 17-26% Fitness: 12-13% No participation: 12%
<p>☞ Football reaches its highest levels of participation in later primary school, while pupils continue to engage in a diverse range of activities. Swimming remains popular, although participation begins to decline.</p>	

◆ S1–S2 (early secondary transition)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Football remains the most commonly reported activity. Swimming participation declines further. Fitness remains among the most popular activities. Levels reporting no participation remain relatively stable. 	Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Football: 19-23% Fitness: 10-11% Swimming: 9-13% No participation: 12-13%
<p>☞ The transition to secondary school is associated with a noticeable shift in participation patterns. While football remains the most common activity, participation in swimming declines and fitness emerges as one of the most popular activities.</p>	

◆ S3–S4 (middle secondary)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Football participation continues to decline. Fitness becomes one of the most commonly reported activities. Participation in many activities falls to low levels. More pupils report no participation outside school. 	Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Football: 17% (S3), 13% (S4) Fitness: 8% (S3), 14% (S4) Swimming: 6% (S3-S4) No participation: 12% (S3), 16% (S4)
<p>☞ <i>Activity preferences continue to change during secondary school, with fitness becoming increasingly prominent while participation in swimming and several other activities declines.</i></p>	

◆ S5–S6 (senior phase)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Football and fitness remain the most commonly reported activities. Participation in most other activities is low. The highest levels of non-participation are observed in the senior phase. 	Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Football: 17% (S5), 10% (S6) Fitness: 12% (S5), 10% (S6) Swimming: 6% (S5), 5% (S6) No participation: 18% (S5), 19% (S6)
<p>☞ <i>In the senior phase, participation levels fall across most activities and non-participation increases. Fitness remains one of the most commonly reported activities, suggesting a shift towards more individual forms of physical activity as pupils get older.</i></p>	

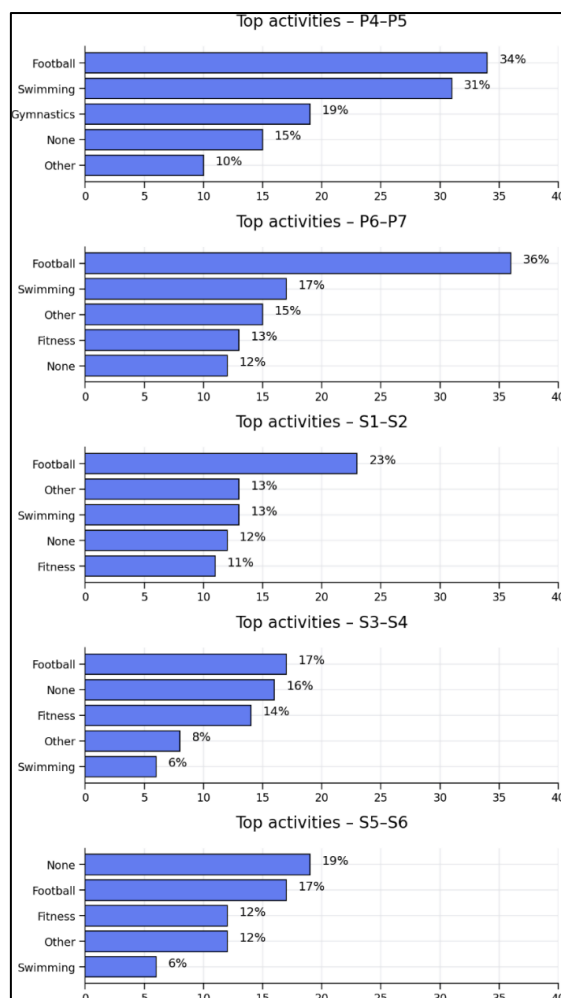


Figure 6.3: Participation outside school by year group

Key insight: Participation patterns change considerably with age. Football remains the most popular activity across all age groups, while swimming and gymnastics are most popular in primary school and decline through secondary school. Fitness becomes increasingly prominent in secondary school, and non-participation rises in the senior phase.

6.5 Participation by disability

- Participation varies across disability groups (see Figure 6.4).
- Football is the most commonly reported activity across most disability groups.
- Swimming is consistently reported across disability groups.
- Levels of non-participation differ between groups.
- The highest levels of non-participation are reported by pupils with:
 - sensory disabilities (27%)
 - physical disabilities (19%)
 - multiple disabilities or difficulties (16%)

While football and swimming are popular across most disability groups, levels of participation vary. Pupils reporting sensory disabilities, physical disabilities and multiple disabilities or difficulties report the highest levels of non-participation outside school.

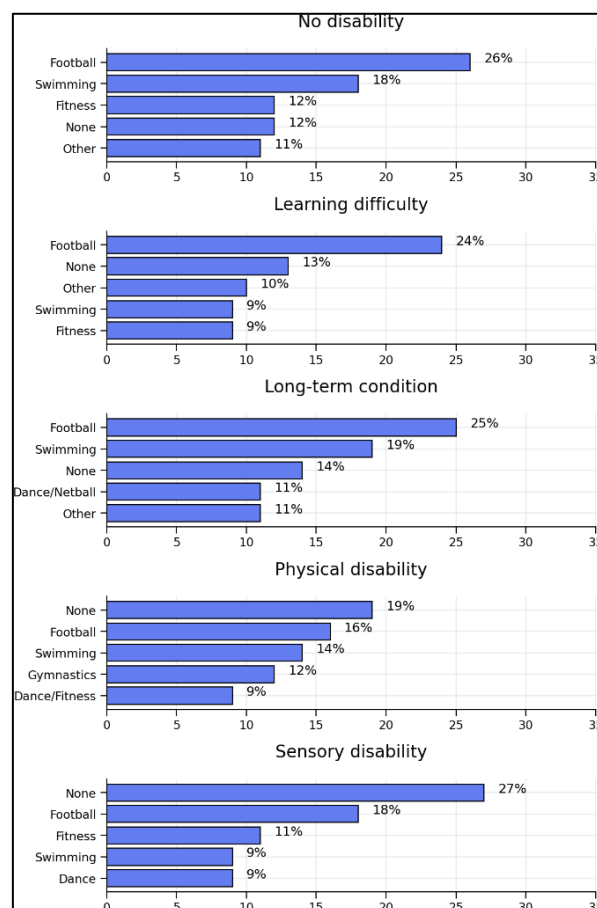


Figure 6.4: Activities participated in outside school by disability group

Key insight: Pupils reporting sensory disabilities, physical disabilities and multiple disabilities or difficulties are more likely to report no participation in activities or clubs outside school during the previous two weeks.

6.6 Participation by activity level

There are clear differences in participation between activity groups (see Figure 6.5).

- Pupils in the very low activity group are substantially more likely to report no participation in activities or clubs outside school during the previous two weeks (31%) than pupils in the Some Activity (16%) and Active (8%) groups.
- Participation rates across most activities increase as activity levels increase.
- Football and swimming remain among the most commonly reported activities across all activity groups.

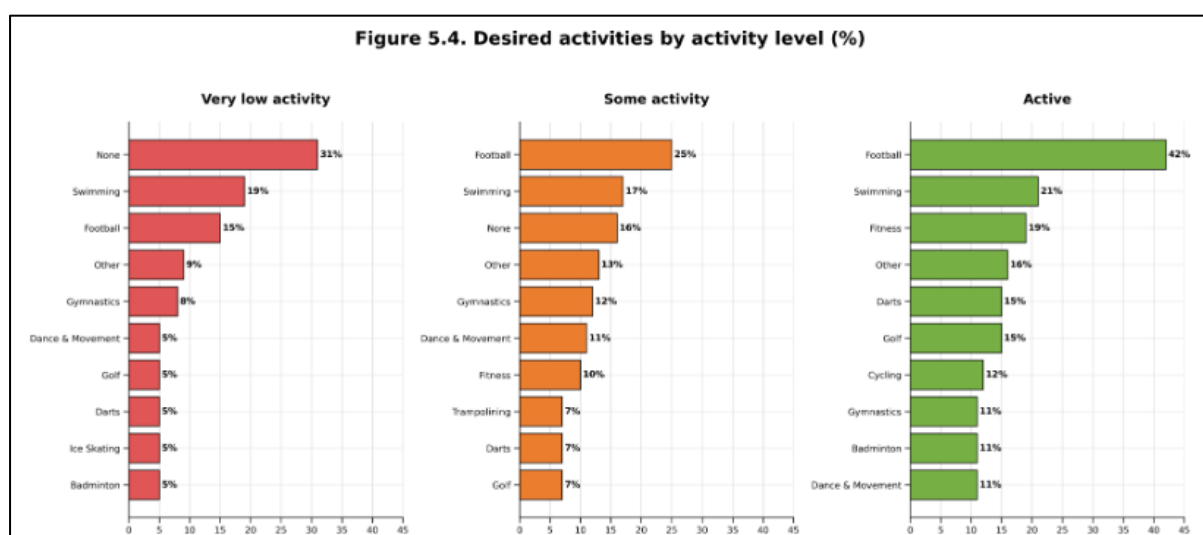


Figure 6.5 Activities participated in outside school by activity level (% pupils)

☞ Participation outside school is strongly associated with overall activity levels. Pupils in the very low activity group are much more likely to report no participation, while active pupils report higher participation across a wider range of activities.

Key insight: Participation outside school is strongly associated with overall activity levels. Nearly one-third of pupils in the very low activity group report no participation in activities or clubs outside school, compared with fewer than one in ten active pupils. Participation across most activities is higher among active pupils.

6.7 Interpretation

Participation outside school varies considerably between groups and changes across the school years.

- **Football and swimming dominate participation**
 - Football and swimming are the most commonly reported activities, although pupils participate in a wide range of sports and recreational activities.
- **Participation patterns vary between groups**
 - Participation patterns differ by age, gender and disability (e.g. football is more common among boys, while swimming, gymnastics and dance are more common among girls).
- **Participation changes through the school years**
 - Swimming and gymnastics are particularly popular in primary school, while fitness becomes more prominent during secondary school.
 - Participation across many activities declines during adolescence.
- **Some groups are at greater risk of non-participation**
 - Levels of non-participation are higher among some groups, particularly older pupils and pupils reporting sensory or physical disabilities

The findings suggest that maintaining participation through the secondary school years may be challenging. Participation across many activities is lower among older pupils, and increasing numbers report no participation in activities or clubs outside school.

6.8 What this means for action

- **Maintain popular opportunities**
 - Maintain strong provision for popular activities such as football and swimming.
- **Broaden the offer**
 - Develop and promote a wider range of opportunities that reflect different interests and preferences, including fitness, cycling, dance and outdoor activities.
- **Focus on adolescence and key transitions**
 - Prioritise retention of participation through adolescence, particularly during the transition from primary to secondary school.
 - Support the growing interest in fitness among secondary-aged pupils.
- **Target groups at greatest risk of non-participation**
 - Target support towards older pupils, less active pupils and some disabled pupils.
- **Strengthen community and informal opportunities**
 - Strengthen community-based and informal opportunities to be active, including local activity sessions, recreational activities and youth programmes.
- **Improve inclusivity and accessibility**
 - Ensure opportunities are inclusive, accessible and responsive to different needs, preferences and abilities.

Chapter 7: Current Opportunities for Physical Activity

7.1 Overview

Pupils were asked which settings they currently use to stay active. This chapter examines where physical activity currently takes place across the school day, within communities and through everyday environments.

7.2 Current participation (all pupils)

Pupils' activity is primarily supported through school-based opportunities and everyday movement (see Figure 7.1).

- PE is the most commonly reported opportunity for physical activity (60%).
- A second cluster of school day and routine activity includes:
 - lunchtime activity (31%)
 - active travel to/from school (30%)
 - active travel for fun (25%)
 - breaktime activity (24%)
- Beyond the school day, pupils also use a mix of informal and community settings, including:
 - after-school activity (23%)
 - public parks (22%)
 - outdoor spaces (18%)
 - home (including garden) (18%)

Physical activity most commonly takes place through opportunities embedded within everyday life, particularly PE, school-day activity and active travel.

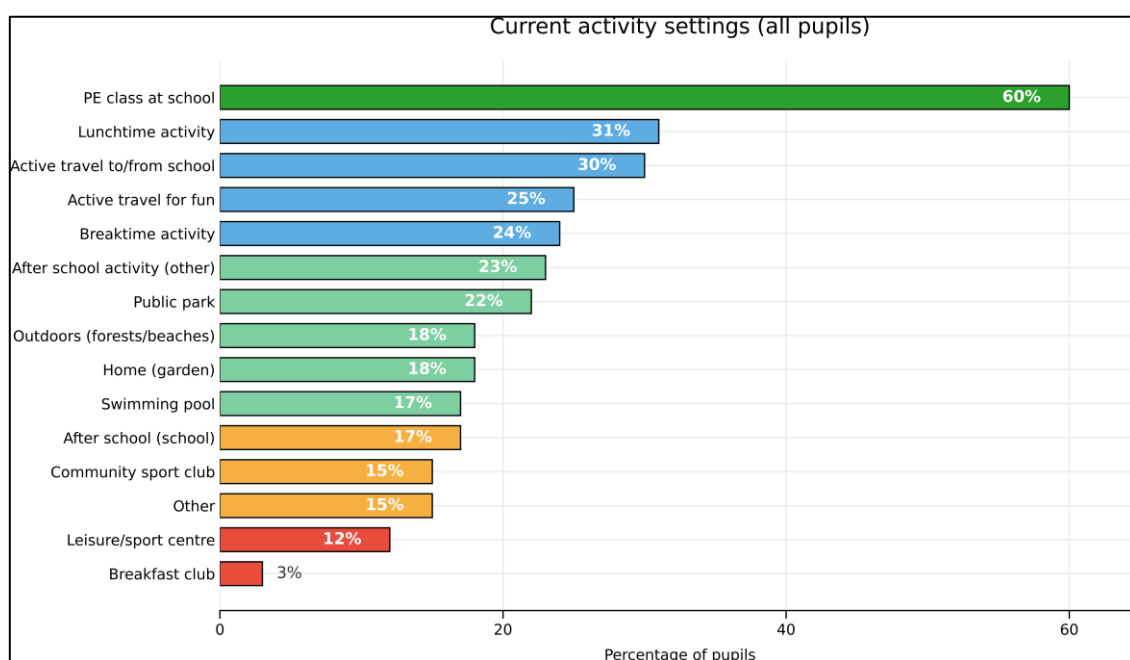


Figure 7.1: Participation in physical activity by setting (all pupils)

7.3 By gender

- PE is the most commonly reported opportunity for both boys (62%) and girls (60%).
- Boys are somewhat more likely to report lunchtime activity and breaktime activity.
- Girls are more likely to report using swimming pools, public parks and outdoor environments.
- Active travel is commonly reported by both groups.

Gender differences appear to relate more to the settings used than to overall access to opportunities for physical activity.

Key insight: Participation patterns are broadly similar for boys and girls, although boys are more likely to report school-day activity while girls make greater use of swimming pools, parks and outdoor environments.

7.4 By year group

Patterns of participation change considerably across the school years.

◆ P4–P5 (early primary)

- PE is the most commonly reported opportunity for physical activity (65-73%).
- Lunchtime activity (36-59%) and breaktime activity (38-53%) are widely used.
- Active travel is already an important source of activity (29-33%).
- Swimming pools are used by around one-third of pupils.

**Throughout this report, the symbol "~" is used to indicate an approximate value.*

Physical activity in early primary is strongly embedded within the school day, with PE, lunchtime activity and breaktime activity providing important opportunities to be active.

Key insight: School-based opportunities play a central role in supporting physical activity in early primary school.

P6–P7 (later primary)

- PE remains the most commonly reported opportunity (71-74%).
- More than half of pupils report lunchtime activity (54-59%) and breaktime activity (50-56%).
- Active travel becomes increasingly important, particularly in P7 (38%).
- Pupils report activity across a broader range of settings beyond school, including parks, outdoor environments and after-school activities.

School-day opportunities remain highly important in later primary school, while activity also extends into a wider range of community and recreational settings.

Key insight: Later primary pupils benefit from a combination of school-day activity and opportunities beyond school.

S1–S2 (early secondary transition)

- PE remains the most commonly reported opportunity (54-63%).
- Participation in lunchtime activity falls sharply compared with primary school (18-21%).
- Breaktime activity becomes uncommon (6-8%).
- Active travel remains relatively stable (22-24%).
- After-school activities become one of the most commonly reported opportunities outside PE.

☞ The transition to secondary school is associated with a substantial reduction in opportunities for activity during the school day outside timetabled PE.

Key insight: While PE remains important, participation in lunchtime and breaktime activity falls sharply during the transition to secondary school.

S3–S4 (middle secondary)

- PE participation continues to decline (45-53%).
- Very few pupils report activity at lunchtime (8%) or breaktime (4%).
- Active travel remains one of the most commonly reported opportunities outside PE (25-28%).
- Leisure, outdoor and community settings account for a growing share of reported activity.

☞ School-day activity becomes increasingly limited during middle secondary school, with pupils relying more on opportunities beyond the formal school day.

Key insight: Opportunities for activity during the school day are reported by very few pupils in middle secondary school.

S5–S6 (senior phase)

- PE participation is substantially lower than in earlier years (30-46%).
- Lunchtime (3-9%) and breaktime activity (1-3%) are rarely reported.
- Active travel remains one of the most commonly reported forms of activity (24-33%).
- Outdoor, park and leisure settings represent a greater proportion of reported activity opportunities.

☞ Older pupils rely less on opportunities provided through the school day and more on activity that takes place beyond the school environment.

Key insight: Participation in the senior phase is less centred on the school day, with active travel and community-based opportunities becoming increasingly important.

Patterns of participation change considerably across the school years. PE remains important throughout, but opportunities for activity during breaktimes and lunchtimes decline sharply during the transition to secondary school and remain low thereafter. As pupils get older, physical activity becomes increasingly dependent on active travel and opportunities beyond the school day.

7.5 By disability

Patterns are broadly similar across disability groups, although some differences are evident.

- PE is the most commonly reported opportunity across all disability groups (56-67%).
- Active travel plays an important role across most groups, ranging from 27% to 44%.
- Lunchtime activity remains an important source of physical activity for many pupils.
- Participation in parks, outdoor environments and swimming pools is reported across all groups.
- Differences between disability groups are generally smaller than the similarities in the opportunities pupils use to stay active.

PE, active travel and school-day opportunities remain important sources of physical activity across all disability groups.

Key insight: Participation patterns are broadly similar across disability groups, with PE, active travel and school-day opportunities commonly reported across all groups. However, the balance of settings used varies between disability groups.

7.6 By activity level

Clear differences exist between activity groups (Figure 7.3).

Pupils in the very low activity group

- PE remains the most commonly reported opportunity (65%).
- Activity is concentrated within school-day opportunities and active travel.
- Participation in community clubs, leisure centres and outdoor environments is relatively low.

Active pupils

- PE remains widely used (78%).
- Participation is spread across a much broader range of opportunities.
- Active pupils are substantially more likely to report:
 - after-school activities (36%)
 - community sport clubs (26%)
 - leisure centres (21%)
 - outdoor environments (30%)

PE is common across all activity groups. However, active pupils participate across a much broader range of settings, particularly after-school activities, community clubs, leisure centres and outdoor environments.

Key insight: School-based opportunities alone do not distinguish active pupils from less active pupils. Active pupils are more likely to access a wider range of opportunities beyond the school day.

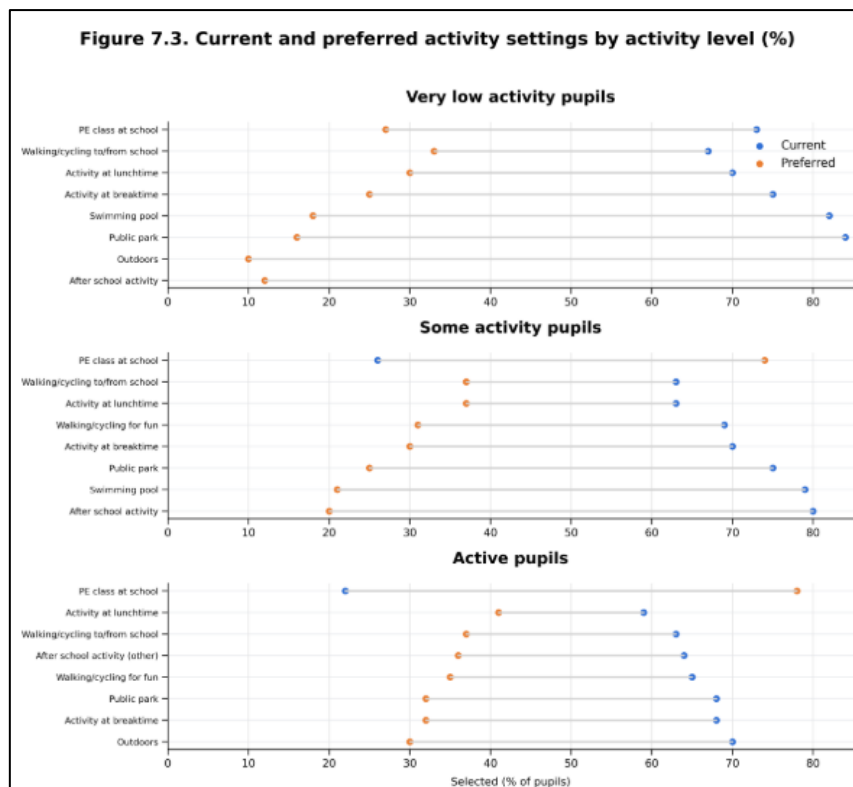


Figure 7.3. Current activity settings by activity level (%)

7.7 What this means

- Continue to support PE as a key opportunity for physical activity.
- Strengthen opportunities for movement throughout the school day, including breaktimes and lunchtimes, particularly in secondary school.
- Support active travel as an important source of everyday physical activity.
- Increase access to community, leisure and outdoor opportunities alongside school-based activity.
- Focus on sustaining opportunities for physical activity through adolescence.
- Ensure opportunities are inclusive and accessible for all pupils.

7.8 Key Learning

- PE is the most commonly reported opportunity for physical activity across all age groups.
- Schools play a central role in supporting physical activity through PE, active travel and opportunities during the school day.
- Participation in lunchtime and breaktime activity declines sharply during secondary school.
- As pupils get older, physical activity becomes less centred on opportunities provided during the school day.
- Active pupils use a wider range of community, leisure and outdoor opportunities than less active pupils.
- Participation patterns are broadly similar across disability groups, although the mix of opportunities used varies.
- Community and outdoor environments provide an important complement to school-based activity.

8 Preferred Opportunities for Physical Activity

8.1 Overview

Pupils were asked which settings they would like opportunities to use to help them be active. This chapter examines preferences for activity opportunities across the school day, communities and everyday environments.

8.2 Preferences (All pupils)

Pupils identified a range of opportunities they would like to take part in to help them be active (Figure 8.1).

- PE (24%) and swimming pools (21%) are the most commonly selected opportunities.
- Active travel to and from school is selected by 17% of pupils.
- Outdoor environments (14%), lunchtime activity (14%) and active travel for fun (14%) also attract interest.
- No single opportunity is selected by a large proportion of pupils, suggesting interest is spread across a range of settings.

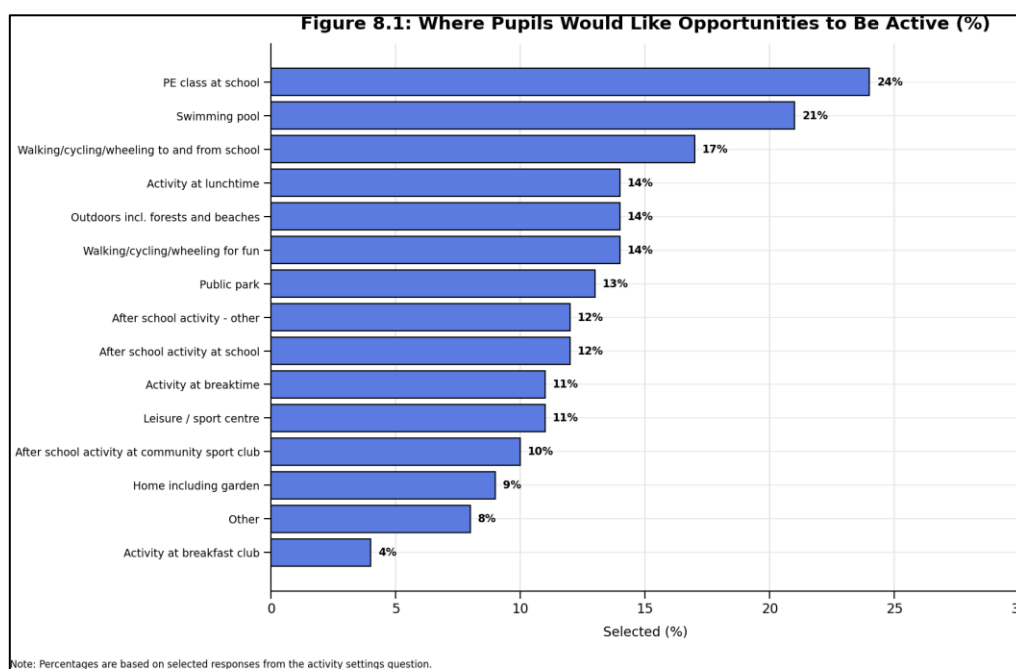


Figure 8.1: Where pupils would like opportunities to be active (%)

Preferences are distributed across a broad range of opportunities, with no single opportunity attracting interest from more than one-quarter of pupils.

Key insight: Pupils express interest in a mix of school, community and everyday opportunities rather than any single dominant setting.

8.3 Preferences by gender

Preferences are broadly similar for boys and girls, although some differences are evident in the opportunities pupils would like to take part in.

- PE and swimming are among the most commonly selected opportunities for both boys and girls.
- Boys are more likely to select PE (28% vs 21%), lunchtime activity (18% vs 11%) and active travel to and from school (20% vs 14%).
- Girls are more likely to select swimming pools (23% vs 19%), outdoor environments (15% vs 13%) and public parks (14% vs 11%).
- Differences are modest, with substantial overlap in the opportunities selected by both groups.

☞ Preferences are broadly similar for boys and girls. Boys show somewhat greater interest in PE, lunchtime activity and active travel, while girls are slightly more likely to select swimming pools, parks and outdoor environments.

Key insight: Preferences are broadly similar across genders, with PE and swimming emerging as the most commonly selected opportunities.

8.4 Preferences by year group

Preferences vary across the school years, with notable changes in the opportunities pupils would like to take part in.

- Interest in PE declines steadily across the school years.
- Interest in lunchtime and breaktime activity falls sharply after primary school.
- Swimming remains one of the most consistently selected opportunities across most age groups.
- Outdoor environments and leisure facilities become relatively more prominent in the senior phase.

☞ Preferences shift with age, but there is no clear move towards any single alternative opportunity. Instead, interest becomes more dispersed across a range of leisure, outdoor and community settings.

Key insight: Interest in PE and other school-day opportunities declines with age, while preferences become more evenly distributed across a broader range of opportunities.

8.5 Preferences by Disability

Preferences are broadly similar across disability groups, although the relative popularity of specific opportunities varies:

- PE, swimming and active travel are among the most commonly selected opportunities across most disability groups.
- Pupils reporting sensory disabilities show relatively high interest in PE (27%), active travel (24%) and leisure facilities (20%).
- Pupils reporting multiple disabilities or difficulties show strong interest in active travel (26%), PE (25%) and swimming pools (24%).
- Pupils reporting other disabilities or difficulties are more likely to select swimming pools (27%) and outdoor environments (20%).
- No disability group shows a fundamentally different pattern of preferred opportunities.

Common themes emerge across disability groups, with PE, swimming, active travel and outdoor opportunities consistently attracting interest.

Key insight: Preferred opportunities are broadly similar across disability groups, suggesting that differences in participation may not simply reflect differences in what pupils would like to do.

8.6 Preferences by Activity Level

Preferences are broadly similar across activity levels:

- PE is the most commonly selected opportunity among inactive, somewhat active and active pupils (27-32%).
- Swimming pools are consistently popular across all activity groups (24-26%).
- Active travel is selected by around one in five pupils regardless of activity level.
- Outdoor environments, lunchtime activity and opportunities beyond school are selected across all activity groups.
- Differences between groups are generally modest, although active pupils show slightly greater interest in outdoor environments, community settings and leisure facilities.

Inactive and active pupils express interest in many of the same opportunities, particularly PE, swimming and active travel.

Key insight: Differences in activity levels cannot be explained simply by differences in preferences. Pupils with low activity levels report interest in many of the same opportunities as active pupils.

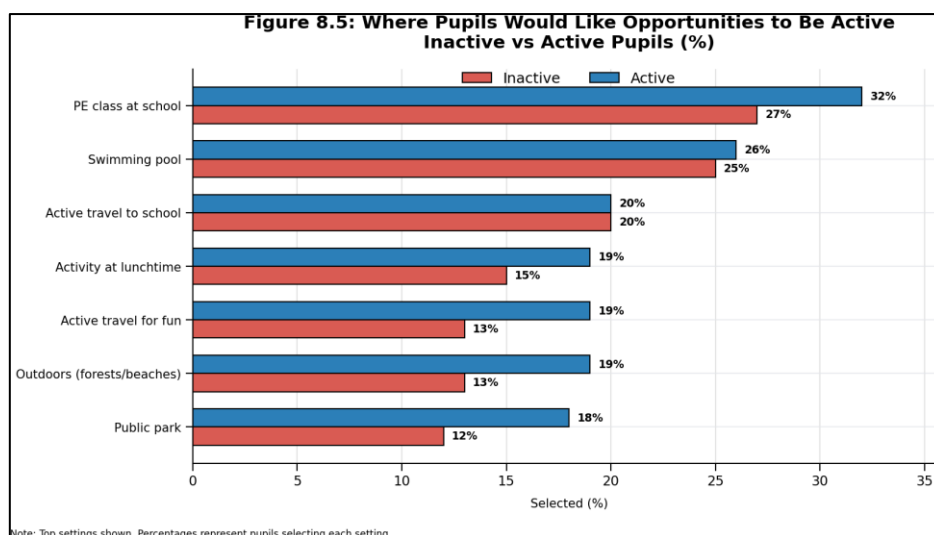


Figure 8.2: Where pupils would like opportunities to be active by activity level (%)

8.7 What this means for action

- Maintain access to popular opportunities such as PE, swimming and active travel.
- Strengthen opportunities for activity throughout the school day, including breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Provide a range of opportunities beyond organised sport, including outdoor, leisure and community-based activities.
- Ensure opportunities remain inclusive and accessible for pupils with different needs and abilities.
- Recognise that preferences are broadly similar across activity levels, suggesting barriers to participation may extend beyond the types of activities available.
- Consider how factors such as confidence, access, cost, transport and social support may influence participation.

8.8 Key learning

- PE and swimming pools are the most commonly selected opportunities pupils would like to use.
- Preferences are spread across a broad range of school, community and everyday settings.
- Interest in PE and other school-day opportunities declines with age.
- Swimming remains a consistently popular opportunity across the school years.
- Preferences are broadly similar across disability groups.
- Active and less active pupils express interest in many of the same opportunities.
- Differences in participation levels may not simply reflect differences in preferred opportunities

Pupils want a wide range of opportunities to be active, with PE and swimming the most popular. Preferences are similar across most groups, including active and less active pupils, suggesting that lower participation may be driven more by barriers to taking part than by a lack of interest.

Chapter 9: Physical Literacy - Motivation, Confidence, Competence and Knowledge and Understanding

9.1 Overview

Pupils were asked about confidence, competence, motivation, enjoyment, and knowledge and understanding in relation to physical activity.

Participation is shaped not only by access to opportunities but also by factors that influence whether people want to take part and feel able to do so. These factors are often described as physical literacy^{11/12}.

Physical literacy includes motivation, confidence, physical competence, and knowledge and understanding, which together help people value and take part in physical activity throughout life^{11/12}. While the survey does not measure physical literacy as a whole, it provides insight into several important components associated with physical literacy.

While physical literacy is influenced by the wider environment and life experiences¹³, this chapter focuses on the individual factors measured in the survey: motivation, confidence, competence, enjoyment, and knowledge and understanding. Figure 9.1 illustrates the four core domains of physical literacy: motivation, confidence, physical competence, and knowledge and understanding. For reporting purposes, survey findings are presented separately for motivation, confidence, competence, and knowledge and understanding.

Understanding these factors may help explain differences in activity levels and provide insight into why some pupils are more active than others. The findings may also help identify opportunities to support participation and help young people develop positive and lasting relationships with physical activity.

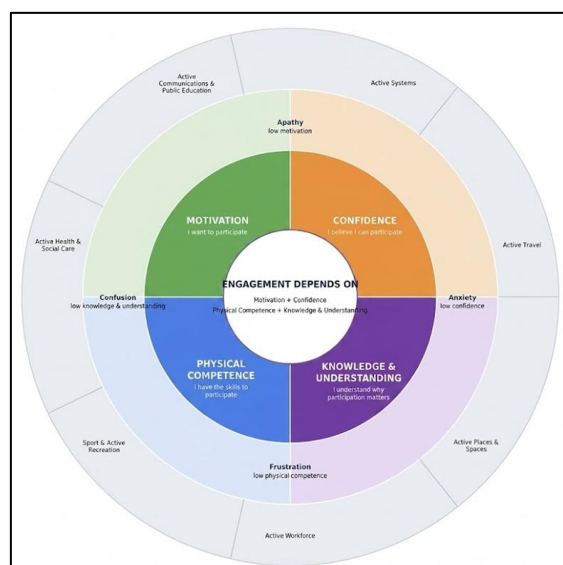


Figure 9.1: Physical literacy across domains^{14/15}

¹¹ Whitehead, M. (2010) Physical Literacy: Throughout the Lifecourse. London: Routledge.

¹² International Physical Literacy Association (2017) Physical literacy can be described as the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life

¹³ Edwards, L.C., Bryant, A.S., Keegan, R.J., Morgan, K. and Jones, A.M. (2017) Definitions, Foundations and Associations of Physical Literacy: A Systematic Review. Sports Medicine, 47(1), pp.113-126.

¹⁴ Topping, C., Kopela, J., Gibson, I. and Whitelaw, S. (2019). A holistic approach to public health in Scotland. In: M. Whitehead (ed.) Physical Literacy across the World. 1st ed. London: Routledge

¹⁵ Myers, E., 2017. Physical Literacy and Human Flourishing. International Physical Literacy Conference, Toronto, Canada April, 2017 13 Topping, C et al., 2019. IN: Whitehead, M. ed., 2019. Physical literacy across the world. London, UK:: Routledge

9.2 Physical literacy (all pupils)

Participants were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about physical activity using a four-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree.

Overall, pupils report positive attitudes towards physical activity, with average scores above 3 ("agree") across all domains (see Figure 9.2).

- Knowledge is the highest-scoring area (around 3.5), although scores are positive across all domains.
- Motivation is also high (around 3.4), suggesting that many pupils report positive attitudes towards being active.
- Confidence, competence and understanding are marginally lower (around 3.2), but still sit above the "agree" threshold.

☞ Pupils report positive scores across all domains. Knowledge and motivation score slightly higher than confidence, competence and understanding.

Key insight: Knowledge and motivation score highest, while confidence, competence and understanding score consistently lower.

The figure below shows average physical literacy scores across key domains.

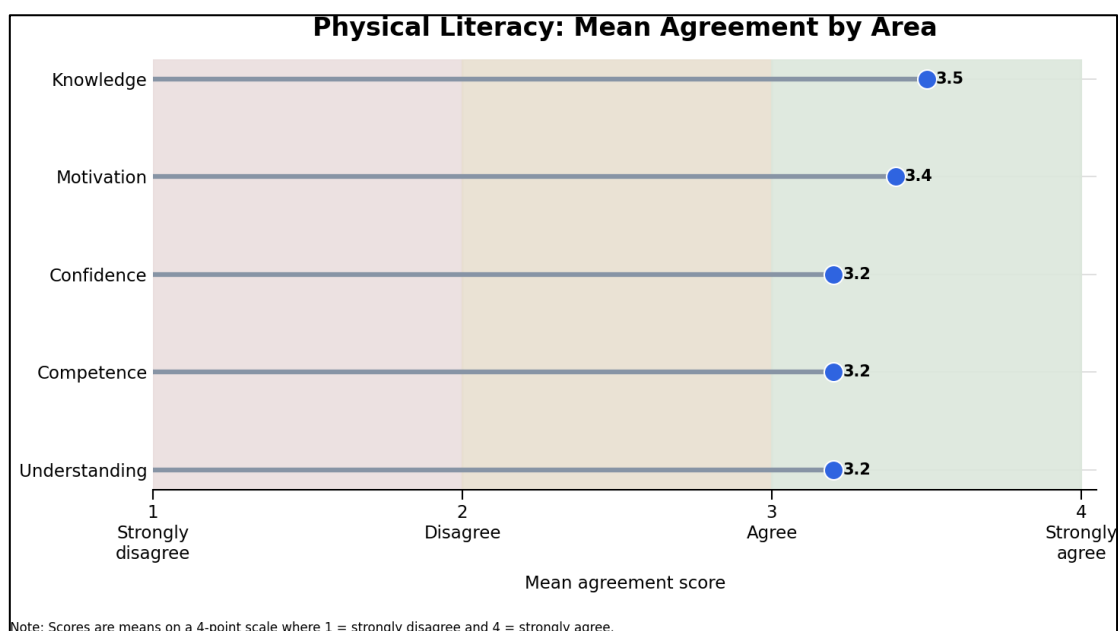


Figure 9.2: Physical literacy scores by domain (all pupils)

9.3 Physical literacy by gender

Physical literacy scores are positive across all gender groups, with relatively small differences between boys and girls (see Figure 9.3).

- Knowledge scores are identical for boys and girls (3.5).
- Motivation is high for both boys (3.4) and girls (3.3).
- Confidence and competence scores are slightly higher among boys (3.3) than girls (3.1).
- Understanding of how to get involved in physical activity is similar for boys (3.3) and girls (3.2).

☞ Boys and girls report similar physical literacy scores across most domains. The largest differences are in confidence and competence, where girls report slightly lower scores than boys.

Key insight: Physical literacy scores are broadly similar for boys and girls, with only small differences across domains.

9.4 Physical Literacy by Disability

Physical literacy scores are generally positive across disability groups, although some differences are evident (see Figure 9.3).

- Knowledge remains the strongest domain (3.4-3.6) across all groups.
- Pupils with no disability report consistently positive scores across all domains.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and long-term conditions report similar patterns to the overall population.
- Confidence and competence show greater variation between groups than knowledge and motivation.

Some differences are evident between disability groups, particularly for confidence and competence.:

- Physical disability → lower confidence (~2.8)
- Sensory disability → lower confidence (~2.8) and understanding (~2.9)
- Other disabilities → lower confidence and competence (~2.9)
- Multiple disabilities or difficulties → lower confidence and competence (~3.0)

☞ Knowledge remains relatively consistent across disability groups, while confidence and competence show greater variation than other domains.

Key insight: Knowledge remains relatively consistent across disability groups, while confidence and competence show the greatest variation.

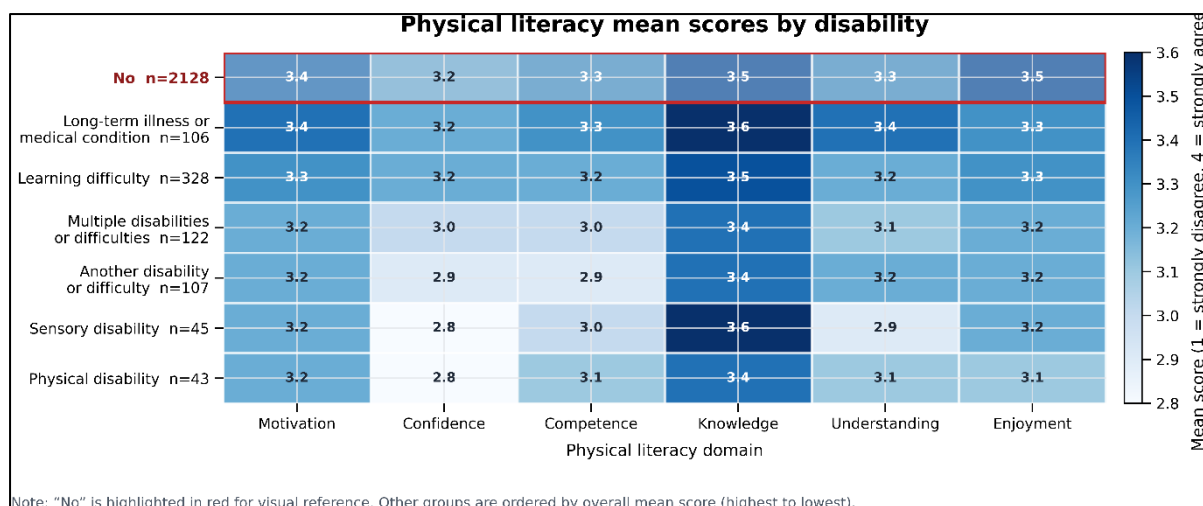


Figure 9.3: Physical literacy across domains by disability group

9.5 Physical Literacy by Year Group

Scores remain positive across all year groups. However, confidence and competence decline gradually between primary school and the senior phase, while knowledge remains relatively stable.

- Knowledge remains consistently strong across all year groups (3.3-3.6).
- Motivation remains positive throughout the school years (3.3-3.5).
- Confidence and competence remain positive throughout secondary school but show a consistent decline compared with primary years.
- Understanding of how to get involved in physical activity remains positive across all year groups (3.1-3.3).

The largest reductions are seen in:

- Confidence (3.3 in P4-P6 to 3.0 in S6)
- Competence (3.4 in P6 to 3.0 in S4-S6)

Key insight: Knowledge remains consistently strong across the school years, while confidence and competence decline gradually with age.

9.6 Physical Literacy by Activity Level

Physical literacy varies clearly by activity level, with a consistent gradient across all domains (see Figure 9.4). Differences by activity level are larger than those observed by gender, year group or disability status.

- Active pupils report the highest scores across all areas (3.4-3.6).
- Pupils reporting some activity show consistently positive scores (3.1-3.4).
- Pupils in the very low activity group report the lowest scores overall (2.9-3.3).
- Knowledge remains positive across all activity groups (3.3-3.6).

The largest differences are seen in:

- Confidence (2.9 very low activity to 3.4 active)
- Motivation (3.1 very low activity to 3.6 active)
- Competence (3.0 very low activity to 3.4 active)

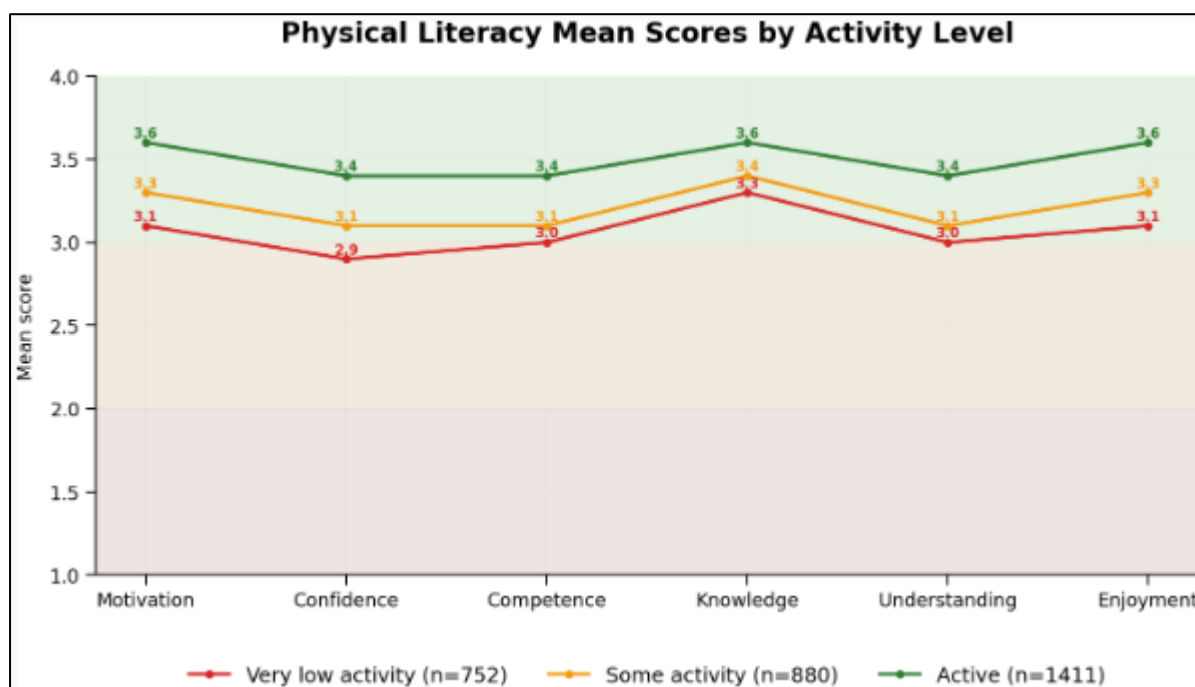


Figure 9.4: Physical literacy across domains by activity group

☞ Differences by activity level are larger than those observed by gender, year group or disability status. Confidence, competence and motivation show the clearest differences between activity groups.

Key insight: Confidence, competence and motivation show the strongest relationship with activity levels, while knowledge remains relatively consistent across activity groups.

9.7 Interpretation

Findings show that:

- Knowledge remains consistently strong across age groups, disability groups and activity levels.
- Motivation is generally positive across all groups.
- Confidence and competence show greater variation than other domains.

- Lower confidence and competence scores are most evident among less active pupils, some older pupils and some disability groups.
- Differences by activity level are larger than differences by gender, age or disability status.

☞ Most pupils understand the importance of being active. However, confidence and competence show greater variation between groups than knowledge and appear more closely related to activity levels.

Key insight: Knowledge remains consistently strong across groups, while confidence and competence show greater variation and a stronger relationship with activity levels.

9.8 What this means

- Build confidence and competence, not just awareness of the benefits of physical activity.
- Provide positive experiences that help pupils feel capable of taking part.
- Prioritise support for groups reporting lower confidence and competence scores.
- Recognise that improving participation may depend as much on building confidence and competence as increasing knowledge and understanding.

Chapter 10: Barriers and Enablers to Physical Activity

10.1 Overview

This chapter summarises what pupils report as the main barriers preventing them from being active, and what would help or encourage them to participate.

Barriers and enablers are not evenly distributed. Barriers increase with age, are more common among pupils in the very low activity group, and are reported more frequently for some groups experiencing inequality.

10A. Barriers

10.1 Barriers (all pupils)

Most pupils (65%) do not identify any of the barriers included in the survey, although this does not necessarily mean they experience no barriers to participation. However, 35% report at least one barrier to participation (see Figure 10.1).

Time and everyday pressures

- Lack of time is the most commonly reported barrier (18%)
- Caring responsibilities affect a smaller proportion (3%)

Environment, access and opportunity

- Weather is a common barrier (11%)
- Smaller but important access barriers include:
 - difficulty getting to places to be active (5%)
 - limited availability of preferred activities (4%)
- Safety, facilities and transport are reported by smaller groups

Confidence, motivation and affordability-related barriers

A smaller proportion of pupils report personal barriers:

- body image or embarrassment (6%)
- lack of interest (5%)
- perceived lack of skills (3%)

Financial barriers are reported less frequently:

- financial barriers (3%)
- lack of equipment (2%)

Key insight: Most pupils do not report any of the barriers included in the survey. Among those who do, lack of time and poor weather are the most commonly reported barriers, although each affects fewer than one in five pupils.

10.2 Barriers by gender

Barriers are broadly similar for boys and girls, although some differences are evident.

- Boys are more likely than girls to report no barriers to participation (38% vs 33%).
- Lack of time and poor weather are the most commonly reported barriers for both boys and girls.
- Girls are more likely to report body image or embarrassment as a barrier (8% vs 4%).
- Girls are also more likely to report a perceived lack of skills or confidence to be physically active (4% vs 2%).
- Access- and opportunity-related barriers are reported at similar levels by boys and girls.

☞ *Most pupils report no barriers to participation. Girls are more likely to report some personal and confidence-related barriers than boys*

Key insight: While most pupils report no barriers to participation, girls are more likely than boys to report personal and confidence-related barriers, particularly body image or embarrassment (8% vs 4%).

10.3 Barriers by year group

Barriers vary across the school years, with older pupils generally more likely to report barriers to participation.

- Primary pupils are more likely to report no barriers to participation than secondary pupils, with 45% of P5 pupils reporting no barriers compared with 27-31% of pupils in S3-S5.
- Lack of time and poor weather are the most commonly reported barriers across all year groups.
- Time pressures become more commonly reported with age, increasing from 17-21% in primary school to 27% in S5.
- Older pupils are more likely to report barriers related to body image or embarrassment and access to opportunities.
- Issues relating to the availability of preferred activities are reported across all year groups, but are more commonly reported by older pupils.

☞ *While many pupils report no barriers to participation, barriers become more common as pupils progress through secondary school.*

Key insight: Barriers become more prevalent with age, particularly during secondary school, with time pressures, confidence-related barriers and access issues becoming more commonly reported.

10.4 Barriers by disability

Barriers are reported more frequently among pupils reporting disabilities or difficulties than among pupils reporting no disability.

- Lack of time and poor weather are common barriers across most disability groups.
- Difficulty getting to places to be active is reported more frequently by some disability groups.
- Some disability groups are more likely to report a perceived lack of skills or confidence, body image concerns, or uncertainty about their ability to take part.
- Cost, access and the availability of suitable opportunities are reported more frequently by some disability groups.
- Pupils reporting no disability are more likely to report no barriers to participation.

☞ Pupils reporting disabilities or difficulties are more likely to report barriers to participation, particularly barriers relating to perceived confidence, access and suitable opportunities.

Key insight: Barriers are more commonly reported among pupils reporting disabilities or difficulties, particularly barriers relating to confidence, access and participation opportunities.

10.5 Barriers by activity level

- Barriers vary substantially by activity level. Active pupils are most likely to report no barriers to participation.
- Pupils in the very low activity group are least likely to report no barriers and are more likely to report a wider range of barriers.
- Lack of time is a common barrier across all activity groups, but is reported most frequently by pupils with very low activity.
- Pupils in the very low activity group are more likely to report a lack of interest in physical activity.
- Pupils in the very low activity group are more likely to report body image or embarrassment as a barrier.
- Pupils in the very low activity group are more likely to report difficulties accessing places to be active and finding suitable opportunities.
- Perceived lack of skills is more commonly reported among pupils in the very low activity group than among active pupils.

☞ *Pupils in the very low activity group are more likely to report a range of practical and personal barriers to participation, while active pupils are more likely to report no barriers.*

Key insight: Pupils in the very low activity group are more likely to report practical and personal barriers to participation, while active pupils are more likely to report no barriers.

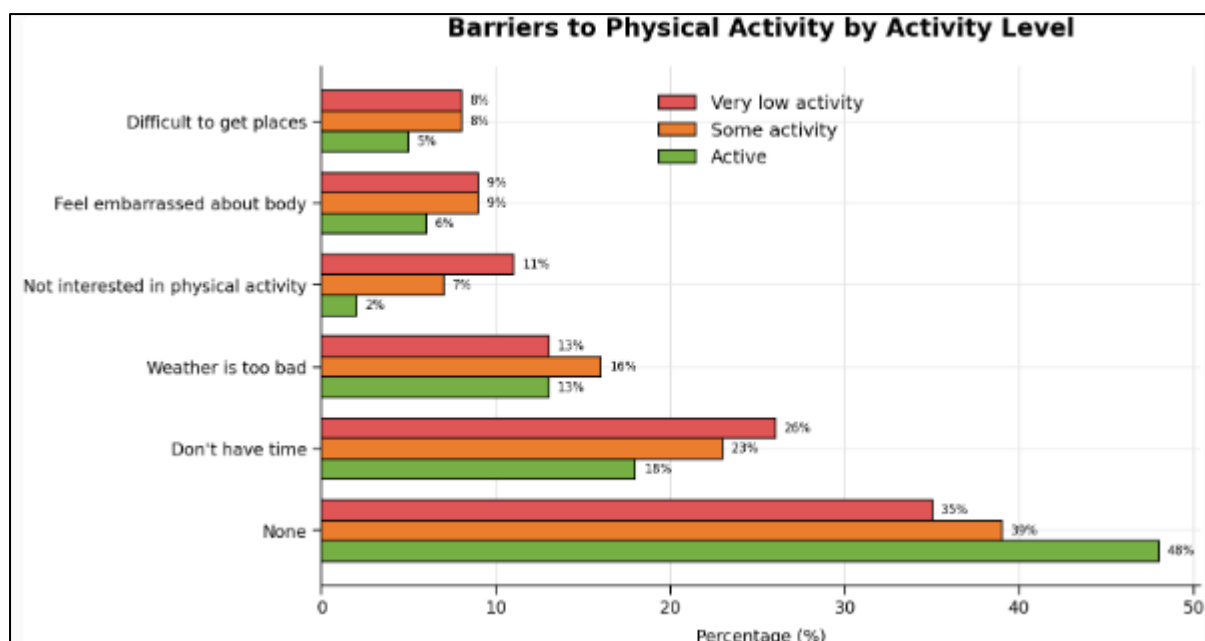


Figure 10.1: Reported barriers to physical activity by activity level (%)

10B. Enablers

10.6 Enablers (all pupils)

Pupils were asked what would encourage them to take part in physical activity.

- Sport-specific sessions are the most commonly selected option (24%).
- Single-sex sessions (16%), non-competitive activities (15%), one-to-one support (15%) and nature-based activities (15%) are also commonly selected.
- Around one in five pupils (21%) do not select any of the options presented, suggesting that none of these approaches would encourage them to be more active.
- Smaller-group sessions (13%) and jogging or running clubs (14%) appeal to a smaller but still meaningful proportion of pupils.

☞ Pupils identify a range of approaches that could encourage participation, with no single option appealing to a majority of pupils, suggesting that no single approach is likely to meet the needs of all pupils

Key insight: Pupils identify a range of approaches that could encourage participation, although no single option appeals to a majority of pupils. Around one in five pupils do not identify any of the options presented as something that would encourage them to be more active.

10.7 Enablers by Gender

Pupils identify a range of approaches that would encourage them to be more physically active, although preferences differ between boys and girls.

- Sport-specific sessions are the most commonly selected option among boys (28%) and remain popular among girls (20%).
- Girls are more likely than boys to select single-sex sessions (23% vs 9%).
- Girls are more likely to favour non-competitive activities (17% vs 13%), small-group sessions (15% vs 10%) and activities in nature (16% vs 14%).
- Interest in one-to-one support is evident among both boys (17%) and girls (13%).
- Around one in four boys (23%) and one in five girls (19%) do not select any of the options presented.

☞ Preferences show some differences by gender, particularly in relation to the format and environment of activities.

Key insight: Girls are more likely to select single-sex, non-competitive and small-group activity formats, while boys are more likely to select sport-specific sessions or report that none of the options would encourage them to be more active.

10.8 Enablers by year group

Preferences for support vary across the school years.

- Sport-specific sessions are most popular in upper primary school (26–32%) and remain one of the most commonly selected options across most year groups.
- Interest in single-sex sessions is highest in primary school and declines steadily through secondary school (28% in P5 compared with 6–9% in S4–S6).
- Around one in five pupils in most year groups do not identify any of the options presented as something that would encourage them to be more active.
- No single approach appeals to a large proportion of secondary pupils and preferences become more varied across a wider range of options.

☞ Preferences for support differ across the school years, suggesting that a range of approaches is likely to be needed rather than a single offer.

Key insight: Preferences for support vary with age. No single approach appeals to a large proportion of pupils across all year groups, while around one in five pupils do not identify any of the options presented as something that would encourage them to be more active.

10.9 Enablers by activity level

Clear differences exist between activity groups, with variation in the types of support preferred by active and pupils in the very low activity group (see Figure 10.2).

- Pupils in the very low activity group are the most likely to report that none of the options presented would encourage them to be more active (33%).

- Active pupils are more likely to identify specific opportunities that would encourage participation, while one-third of pupils in the very low activity group do not identify any of the options presented.
- Sport-specific sessions are particularly popular among active pupils (38%), compared with 18% of pupils with very low activity.
- Interest in one-to-one support, nature-based activities and non-competitive formats is evident across all activity groups.

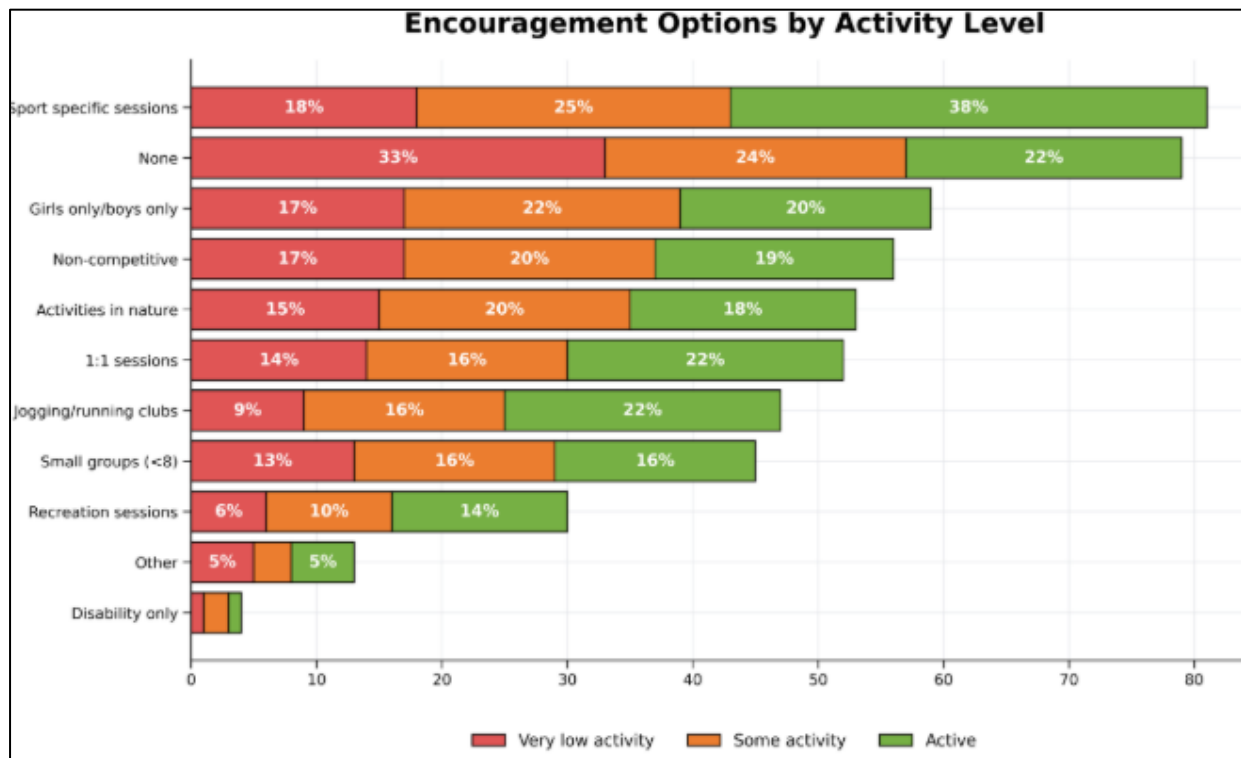


Figure 10.2: Encouragement options by activity level (Active, Some Activity and Very Low Activity)

☞ Active pupils are more likely to identify specific opportunities that would encourage participation, while pupils with very low activity are more likely to report that none of the options presented would encourage them to be more active.

Key insight: Pupils in the very low activity group are substantially more likely to report that none of the options presented would encourage them to be more active (33%). In contrast, active pupils are more likely to identify specific opportunities that would encourage participation, particularly sport-specific activities.

10.10 What this means

The findings suggest that increasing physical activity may require more than simply providing opportunities. Pupils report a range of practical, social and confidence-related barriers that vary by age, activity level and individual circumstances. Effective approaches should therefore address both access and perceived confidence, while providing flexible and inclusive opportunities that reflect different needs and preferences.

- Address both practical and confidence-related barriers.
- Focus on early intervention before secondary drop-off.
- Strengthen accessible opportunities for physical activity across school, community and everyday settings.
- Improve access to transport, affordable opportunities and suitable activities.
- Provide flexible support and opportunities that meet different needs:
 - make it easier for less active pupils to take part
 - involve less active pupils in shaping opportunities around their needs and interests
 - maintain opportunities for pupils who are already active, including sport-specific activities
 - ensure opportunities are inclusive and adaptable

10.11 Key learning

- Barriers become more prevalent with age, particularly during secondary school.
- Time and weather are the most consistent barriers.
- Perceived confidence-related barriers are more commonly reported by pupils with very low activity, some older pupils and some disability groups.
- Access and cost affect smaller, but potentially important, populations.
- No single barrier dominates for all pupils.
- Effective responses require flexible, inclusive and targeted approaches.

Chapter 11: Enjoyment and perceived safety of active travel

11.1 Overview

This chapter examines pupils' enjoyment of, and perceived safety when, walking, wheeling, cycling and scooting, alongside access to bikes.

Enjoyment of and perceived safety for active travel are generally positive, with only small differences between walking/wheeling and cycling/scooting, highlighting the importance of positive perceptions in supporting active travel.

11.2 Active travel attitudes (all pupils)

Pupils report positive levels of enjoyment and perceived safety for active travel, with mean scores in the agreement range across all measures (3.2-3.3) (see Figure 11.1).

- Pupils report positive attitudes towards both walking/wheeling and cycling/scooting.
- Perceived safety is rated similarly for walking/wheeling and cycling/scooting (both 3.3).
- Enjoyment of and perceived safety for active travel are generally positive, with only small differences between walking/wheeling and cycling/scooting (3.3 vs 3.2).
- Differences between walking/wheeling and cycling/scooting are small overall.

☞ Pupils report positive levels of enjoyment and perceived safety for active travel across all measures.

Key insight: Pupils report positive perceptions of active travel overall. Differences between walking/wheeling and cycling/scooting are small, with average scores remaining within the agreement range across all measures.

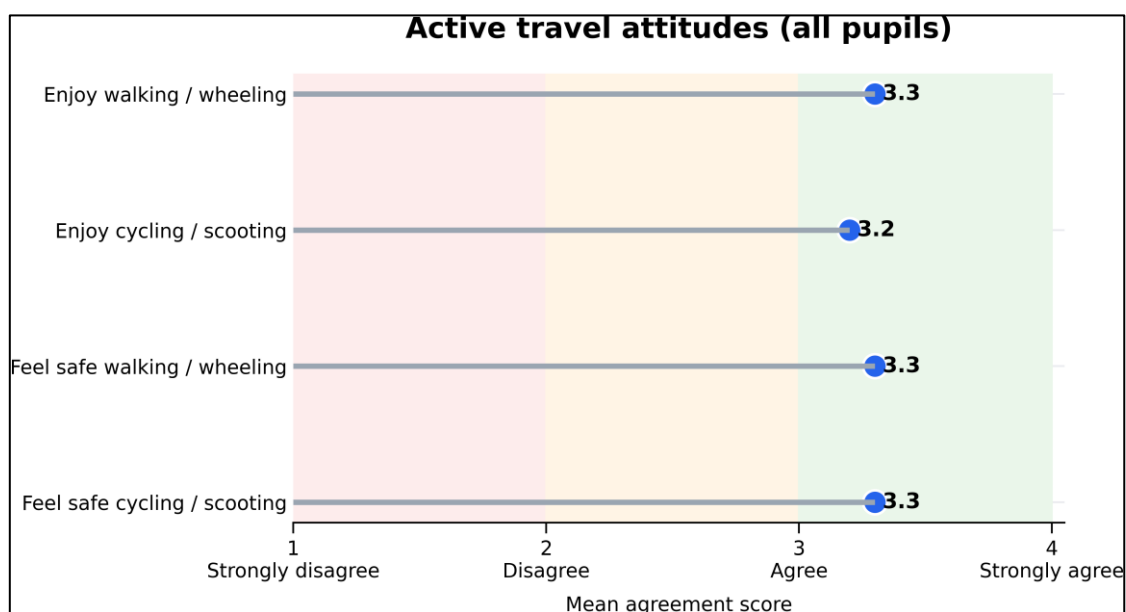


Figure 11.1: Active travel attitudes (mean scores) by type

11.3 Active travel by gender

Enjoyment of and perceived safety for active travel are positive across gender groups.

- Boys report slightly higher enjoyment of cycling and scooting than girls.
- Boys report slightly higher perceptions of cycling and scooting safety than girls.
- Differences between boys and girls are modest overall.
- Results for pupils recorded as "other" should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents.

☞ Enjoyment of and perceived safety for active travel are positive across gender groups, with only modest differences between boys and girls.

Key insight: Gender differences are modest overall, although boys report slightly more positive perceptions of cycling and scooting than girls.

11.4 Active travel by year group

Enjoyment of and perceived safety for active travel vary across the school years (see Figure 11.2).

- Positive perceptions of walking and wheeling remain relatively stable across year groups.
- Enjoyment of cycling and scooting is generally higher in primary school and somewhat lower in secondary school.
- Perceptions of cycling and scooting safety remain positive across all year groups, although some secondary year groups report lower scores than primary pupils.
- Differences between year groups are more apparent for cycling and scooting than for walking and wheeling.

☞ Enjoyment of and perceived safety for walking and wheeling remain relatively stable, while perceptions of cycling and scooting are generally less positive in secondary school than in primary school.

Key insight: Enjoyment of cycling and scooting is generally lower in secondary school than in primary school, while perceptions of walking and wheeling remain relatively stable across the school years.

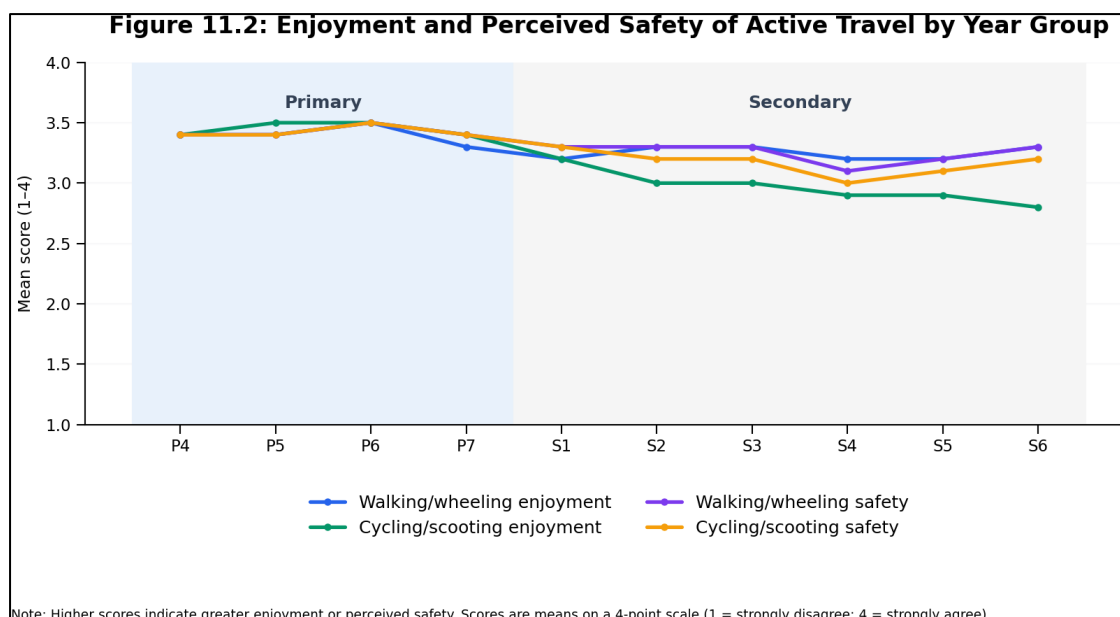


Figure 11.2: Enjoyment and Perceived Safety of Active Travel by Year Group

11.5 Active travel by disability

Enjoyment of and perceived safety for active travel are generally positive across disability groups.

- Positive perceptions of walking and wheeling are reported across all disability groups (around 3.2-3.4).
- Enjoyment of cycling and scooting is also broadly positive across groups (around 3.1-3.2).
- Differences are most evident for perceptions of cycling and scooting safety, where some groups report lower scores than pupils reporting no disability.
- Overall, differences between disability groups are modest.

Enjoyment of and perceived safety for active travel are positive across disability groups, although some groups report slightly lower perceptions of cycling and scooting safety.

Key insight: Enjoyment of and perceived safety for active travel are broadly positive across disability groups, with only modest differences between groups.

11.6 Active travel by activity level

More active pupils report slightly more positive perceptions of active travel (see Figure 11.3).

- Active pupils report the most positive perceptions of active travel, with scores typically around 3.3-3.4.
- pupils in the very low activity group report lower scores, typically around 3.1-3.2.
- Pupils reporting some activity generally sit between these groups.
- Differences are evident across both enjoyment and perceived safety measures.

More active pupils tend to report slightly more positive perceptions of active travel.

Key insight: Enjoyment of and perceived safety for active travel are consistently higher among more active pupils, with activity level showing the clearest pattern of variation across active travel attitudes.

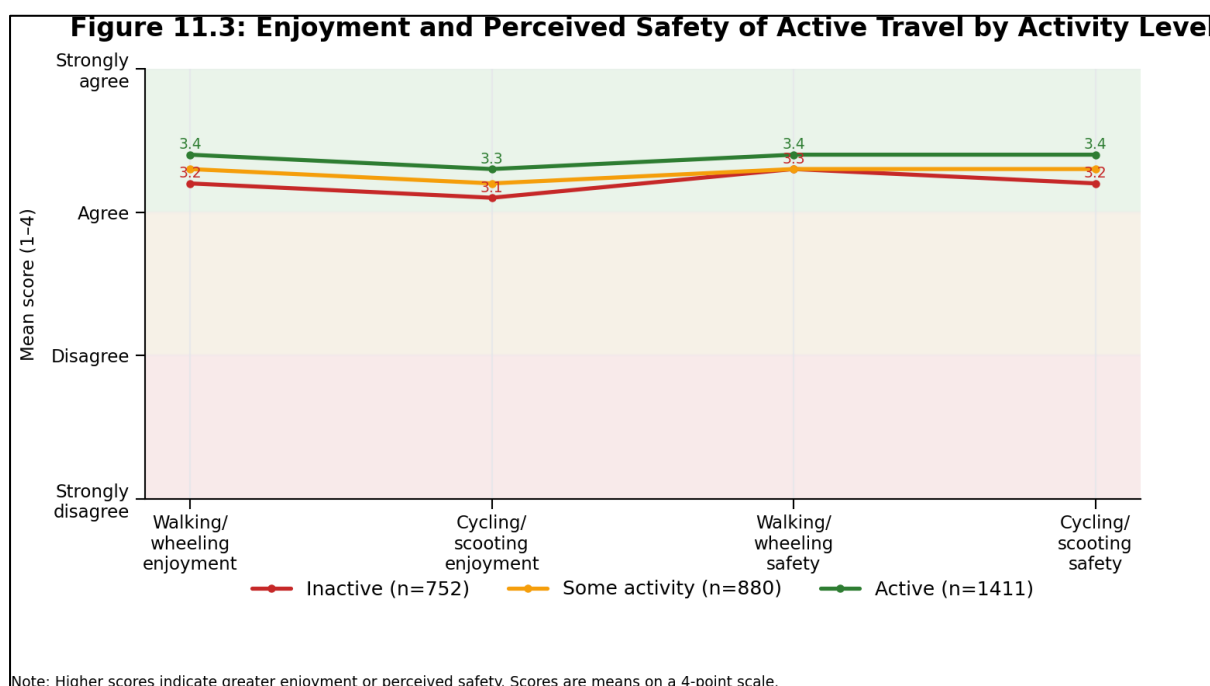


Figure 11.3: Active travel attitudes by activity level

Bike Access

11.7 Bike access (all pupils)

Most pupils report access to a bike, although some barriers to access remain (see Figure 11.4).

- Around 63% of pupils report having access to a bike.
- A further 17% report having a bike that needs repair.
- Around 7% report that they do not have a bike but would like one.
- Around 10% report that they do not have a bike and do not want one.

☞ While access to a bike is common, repair needs and limited access remain potential barriers to cycling participation.

Key insight: Most pupils report access to a bike, but almost one in four either have a bike that needs repair or would like access to one.

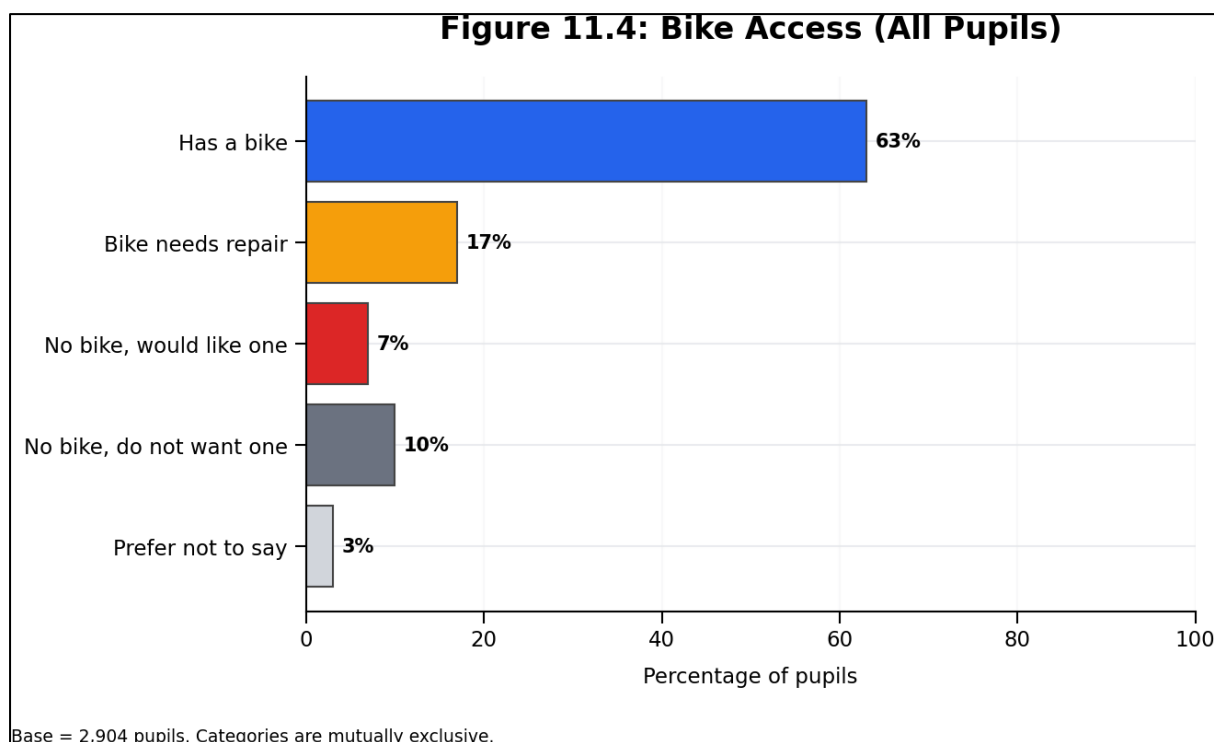


Figure 11.4: Bike access among pupils (%)

11.8 Bike access by gender

Bike access varies between boys and girls.

- Boys are more likely than girls to report having access to a bike (67% vs 59%).
- Girls are slightly more likely to report having a bike that needs repair (19% vs 15%).
- Girls are also slightly more likely to report that they would like a bike but do not currently have one (8% vs 6%).
- Results for pupils recorded as “other” should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents.

While most boys and girls report access to a bike, girls are somewhat less likely to have access and slightly more likely to report issues relating to bike availability or condition.

Key insight: Bike access is lower among girls than boys, while girls are also slightly more likely to report having a bike that needs repair or reporting that they would like a bike but do not currently have one.

11.9 Bike access by year group

Bike access varies across the school years (see Figure 11.5).

- Bike access is highest in primary school, ranging from 67-72% across P4-P7.
- Access declines during secondary school, falling to 40% in S6.
- The proportion of pupils reporting that they do not want a bike increases with age, reaching 27% in S4 and S6.

- The proportion reporting a bike that needs repair remains relatively consistent across year groups (around 15-21%).

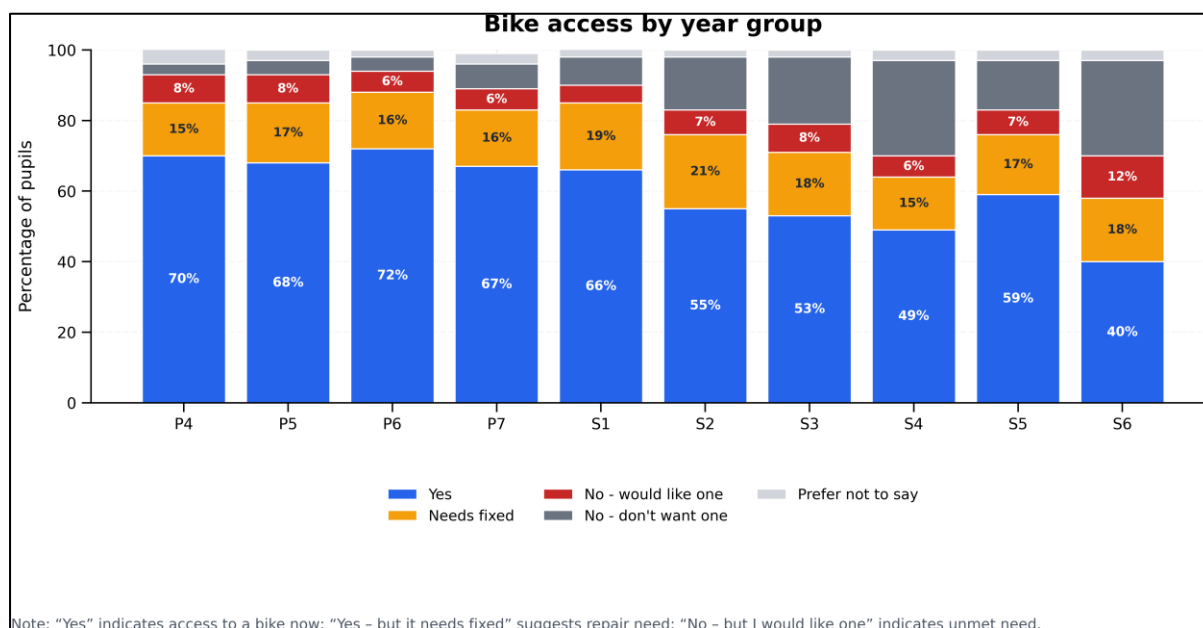


Figure 11.5: Bike access by year group (P4–S6)

☞ Bike access becomes less common across the secondary years, while the proportion of pupils reporting that they do not want a bike increases.

Key insight: Bike access is highest in primary school and lower in secondary school, particularly in the senior phase, alongside an increase in pupils reporting that they do not want a bike.

11.10 Bike access by disability

Bike access varies across disability groups.

- Around two-thirds of pupils reporting no disability report access to a bike (66%).
- Lower levels of access are reported by some groups, particularly pupils reporting sensory disabilities (42%) and pupils reporting other or multiple disabilities (50-52%).
- Some disability groups are also more likely to report that they would like a bike but do not currently have one.
- Repair needs are reported across all groups and vary relatively little between disability groups.

☞ While bike access is common across most groups, some disability groups report lower levels of access and are more likely to report that they would like a bike but do not currently have one.

Key insight: Some disability groups report lower bike access and are more likely to report that they would like a bike but do not currently have one, although access remains common across most groups, although notable differences are evident between disability groups.

11.11 Bike access by activity level

Bike access varies by activity level (see Figure 11.6).

- Active pupils are more likely to report having access to a bike (69%) than pupils with very low activity levels (56%).
- Pupils with very low activity were more likely to report that they do not have a bike but would like one (10% vs 5% of active pupils).
- The proportion reporting a bike that needs repair is similar across activity groups (16-19%).
- The proportion reporting that they do not want a bike is higher among pupils in the very low activity group (14%) than active pupils (7%).

☞ Bike access is higher among more active pupils, while pupils with very low activity are more likely to report that they do not currently have a bike but would like one.

Key insight: Bike access is more common among active pupils, while pupils with very low activity are more likely to report not having a bike despite wanting one.

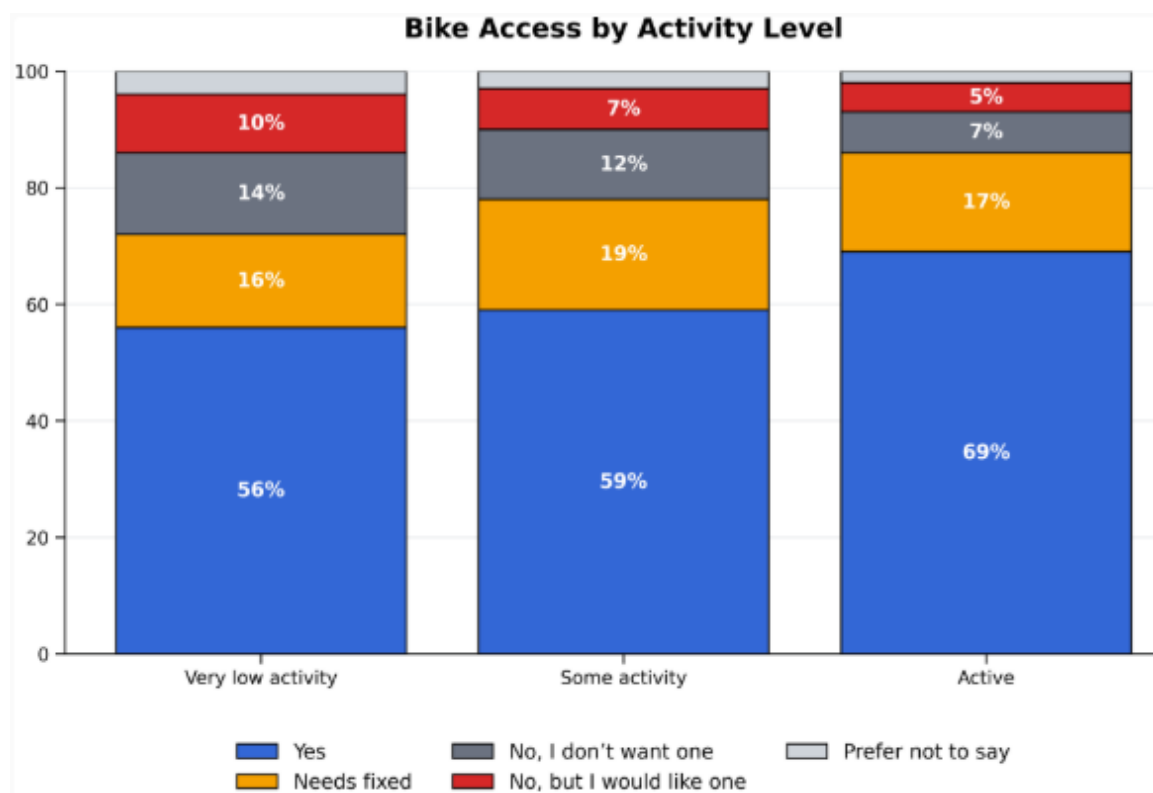


Figure 11.6: Bike access by activity level

11.12 Bike access by screen time

Bike access varies by reported screen time (see Figure 11.7).

- Bike access is highest among pupils reporting lower levels of screen time, with around 69–71% reporting access to a bike.
- Access is lower among pupils reporting higher levels of screen time, falling to 49–57% in the highest screen time groups.
- Pupils reporting higher levels of screen time are more likely to report that they do not want a bike.
- The proportion reporting a bike that needs repair is relatively consistent across screen time groups (around 13–20%).
- The proportion reporting that they would like a bike but do not currently have one remains evident across all screen time groups.

Lower levels of bike access are observed among pupils reporting higher levels of screen time.

Key insight: Pupils reporting higher levels of screen time are less likely to report access to a bike and more likely to report that they do not want one.

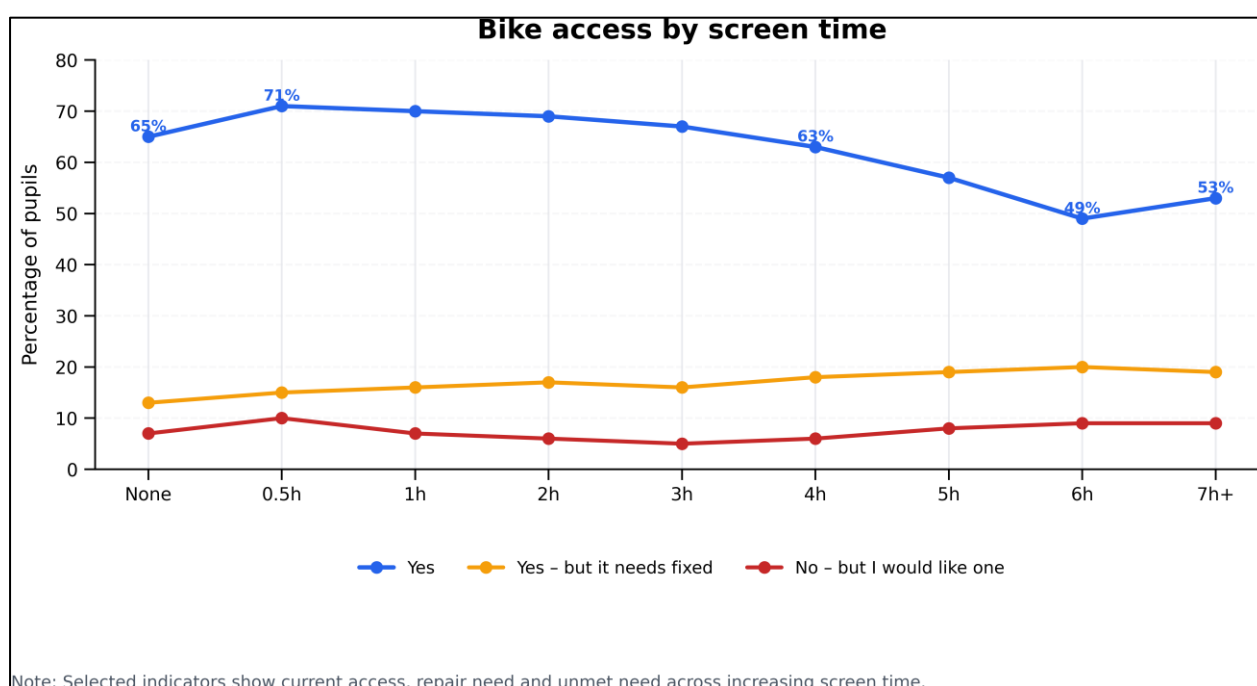


Figure 11.7: Bike access by screen time

11.13 What this means

- Maintain positive perceptions of active travel throughout the school years.
- Support enjoyment of cycling and scooting during secondary school, where perceptions are somewhat less positive than in primary school.
- Address practical barriers to cycling, including bike repair and maintenance.

- Improve access to bikes for groups reporting lower levels of access or who report that they would like a bike but do not currently have one.
- Ensure opportunities for active travel are inclusive and accessible.

11.14 Key learning

Active travel attitudes

- Enjoyment of and perceived safety for active travel are positive overall.
- Differences between walking/wheeling and cycling/scooting are small overall.
- Enjoyment of cycling and scooting is generally lower in secondary school than in primary school.
- More active pupils report more positive perceptions of active travel.

Overall

- Positive attitudes towards active travel are widespread, but access to a bike is not universal.

Bike access

- Most pupils report access to a bike.
- Bike access declines across the secondary school years.
- Repair needs are a consistent issue across groups.
- Some groups report lower bike access and are more likely to report that they would like a bike but do not currently have one.
- Higher levels of bike access are observed among more active pupils and among pupils reporting lower screen time.

Chapter 12: Screen Time

12.1 Overview

This chapter explores recreational screen use among pupils and how it varies across different population groups.

Screen-based behaviour is considered alongside physical activity within the 24-hour movement framework, which emphasises balance between movement, sedentary behaviour and sleep¹⁶.

Screen use is measured in hours per day and is also presented using thresholds (e.g. the proportion exceeding 2 hours per day) to illustrate the distribution and intensity of use across the population.

12.2 Screen Time (All Pupils)

Screen-based sedentary behaviour is a prominent part of daily life for pupils (see Figure 12.1).

- The average screen time is 3.6 hours per day.
- Around 65% of pupils report more than 2 hours of screen time per day.
- Almost half (48%) report 4 hours or more per day.
- The most commonly reported screen time category is 2-4 hours per day.
- Only 2% report no screen use.

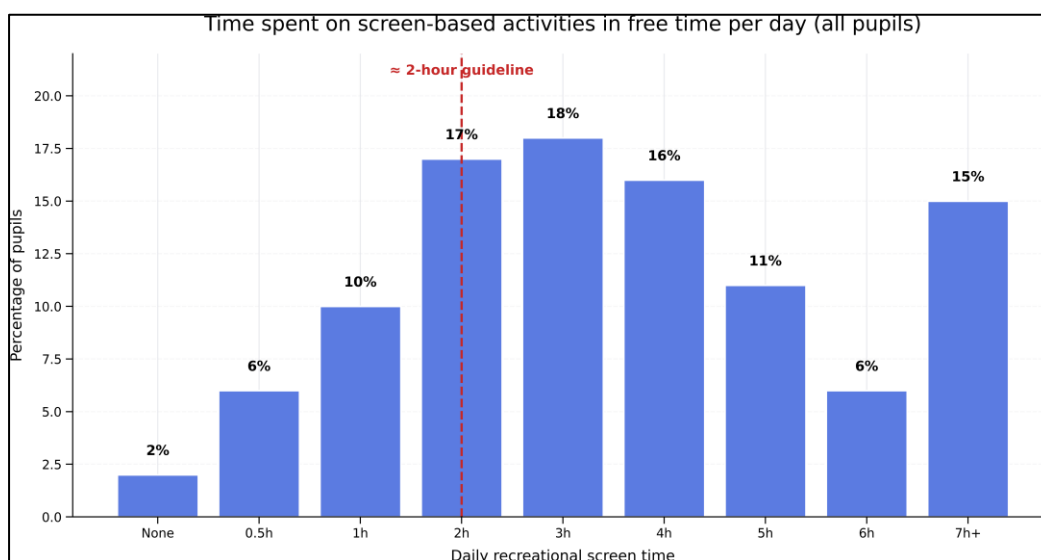


Figure 12.1: Recreational screen time (hours per day, all pupils)

¹⁶ Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2019) *The health impacts of screen time – a guide for clinicians and parents*. London: RCPCH.

☞ These findings show that both average use (hours per day) and high use (thresholds) are important for understanding screen-based behaviour.

Key insight: Screen use is common among pupils, with most reporting more than two hours per day and almost half reporting four or more hours.

12.3 Screen time by gender

Screen use above 2 hours per day is common across all gender groups (see Figure 12.2).

- A slightly higher proportion of boys than girls report more than 2 hours of screen time per day (68% vs 63%).
- Average screen time is similar for boys and girls (3.7 vs 3.5 hours per day).
- Patterns of screen use are broadly similar across genders, although boys are somewhat more likely to report longer durations of screen use.
- Results for pupils recorded as "other" or "prefer not to say" should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents.

☞ Screen use is common across all gender groups, with only modest differences between boys and girls.

Key insight: Gender differences in screen use are modest overall, although boys are slightly more likely than girls to exceed two hours of recreational screen time per day.

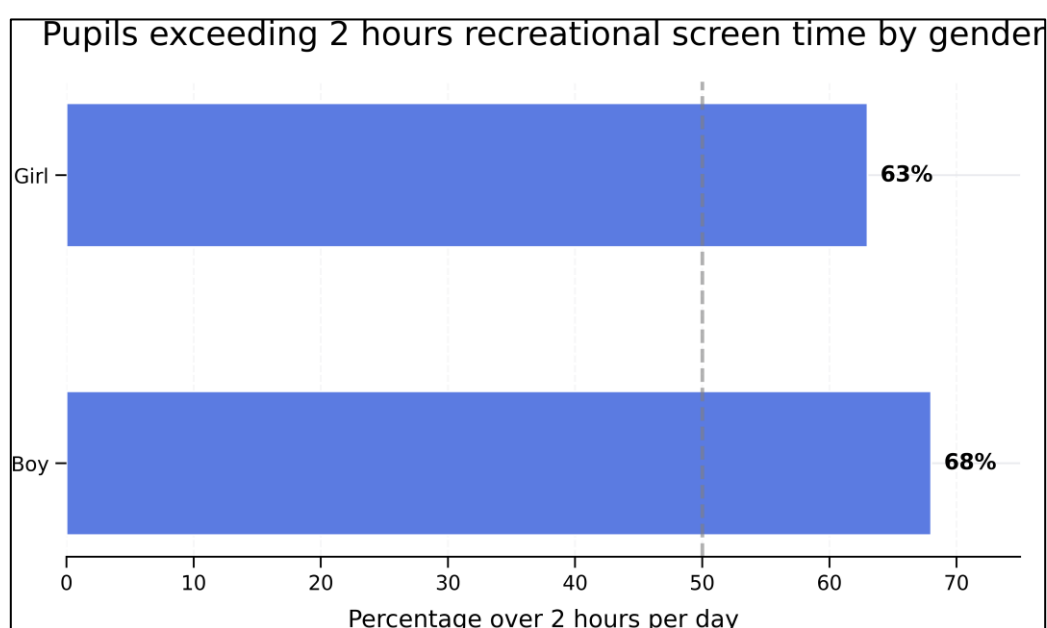


Figure 12.2: Pupils exceeding 2 hours of recreational screen time by gender

12.4 Screen time by year group

Screen time increases with age, particularly during the transition from primary to secondary school.

- Around 40% of pupils in P4 report more than 2 hours of screen time per day, rising to 75% by P7.
- Screen time remains high throughout secondary school, reaching 84% in S5.
- Older pupils are more likely to report higher levels of screen use, including 5 or more hours per day.
- Average screen time increases from 2.7 hours per day in P4 to around 4 hours per day in most secondary year groups.

Screen use increases across the school years, with higher levels of use becoming more common, particularly during the transition from primary to secondary school.

Key insight: Screen time increases steadily with age, with the largest changes occurring between upper primary and secondary school.

12.5 Screen time by disability

Screen use above 2 hours per day is common across all disability groups.

- Around two-thirds of pupils in most disability groups report more than 2 hours of screen time per day.
- Higher proportions are observed among pupils reporting sensory disabilities (75%) and multiple disabilities (75%).
- Average screen time is broadly similar across groups, although some disability groups report slightly higher levels of screen use, particularly at the highest duration categories.
- Pupils reporting multiple disabilities record the highest average screen time (4.3 hours per day).

Screen use is common across all groups, although some disability groups report higher levels of screen use, particularly at the highest duration categories.

Key insight: Differences between disability groups are generally modest, although some groups report higher levels of screen use than pupils reporting no disability.

12.6 Screen time by activity level

Screen use above 2 hours per day is common across all activity groups and varies little between them. Differences emerge primarily at the highest levels of screen use rather than at the 2-hour threshold.

- Around two-thirds of pupils report more than 2 hours of screen time per day, regardless of activity level (65–66%).
- Average screen time is slightly higher among pupils in the very low activity group (3.8 hours per day) than active pupils (3.5 hours per day).
- The clearest differences are seen at the highest levels of use, with 21% of pupils in the very low activity group reporting 7 or more hours of screen time per day compared with 12% of active pupils.

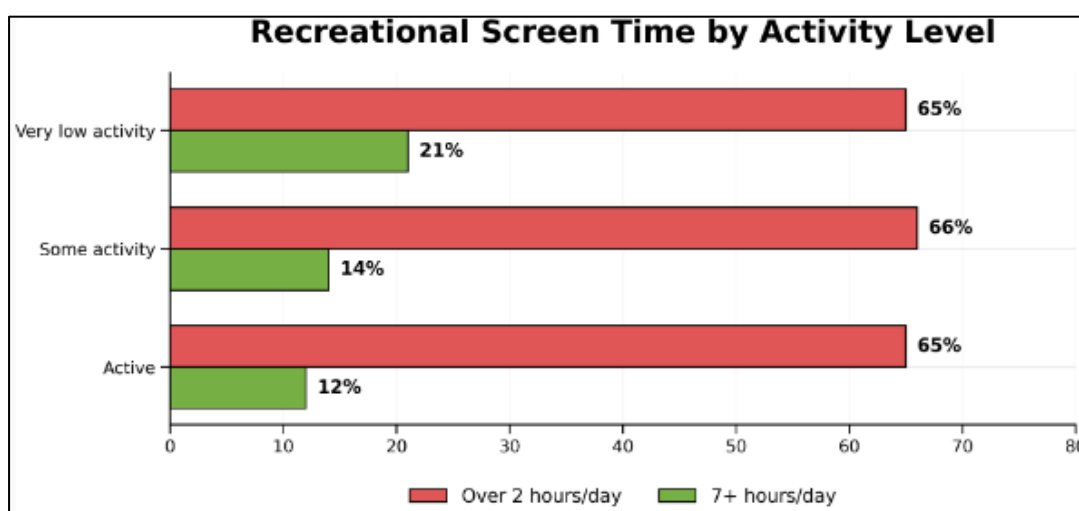


Figure 12.3: Percentage Reporting 7 or More Hours of Recreational Screen Time per Day by Activity Level

Screen use is similarly common across activity groups, although very high levels of use are more frequently reported by pupils with very low activity.

Key insight: Around two-thirds of pupils report more than 2 hours of screen time per day regardless of activity level. Differences emerge primarily at the highest levels of use, with very high screen use (7+ hours per day) more common among pupils with very low activity.

12.7 What this means

- Focus on balance across the day, rather than reducing screen time in isolation
- Prioritise older pupils, who report the highest levels of screen use.
- Address very high screen use (7+ hours per day), particularly among pupils with very low activity.
- Promote a balanced approach to screen time, physical activity and sleep across the day.
- Monitor both average screen time and very high levels of use, recognising that patterns differ across groups.

12.8 Key learning

- High screen use is widespread across all groups.
- Similar proportions of pupils exceed 2 hours of screen time per day, but differences are more apparent at the highest levels of use.
- Age is a stronger differentiator of screen use than activity level.
- Screen time increases steadily with age.
- Pupils in the very low activity group are no more likely than active pupils to exceed 2 hours of screen time per day, but are more likely to report 7 or more hours per day.
- Supporting balanced movement behaviours requires consideration of screen time alongside physical activity and sleep.

Chapter 13: Sleep Patterns and Attainment of Guidelines

13.1 Overview

This chapter explores sleep duration among pupils and how it varies across groups.

Sleep is assessed against age-related sleep recommendations for children and young people. For analysis purposes, meeting guidelines was defined as:

- at least 9 hours per night for pupils up to S2
- at least 8 hours per night for pupils in S3 and above

This reflects age-related differences in recommended sleep duration for children and adolescents.

13.2 Sleep (all pupils)

Most pupils meet sleep guidelines, although a substantial minority do not (see Figure 13.1).

- 66% meet guidelines on school nights
- This increases to 75% at weekends
- Average sleep (see Figure 13.1):
 - 8.8 hours on school nights
 - 9.5 hours at weekends
- Median sleep:
 - 9 hours (weekday)
 - 9.5 hours (weekend)

Key insight: Most pupils meet sleep guidelines, but sleep duration is lower during the school week than at weekends.

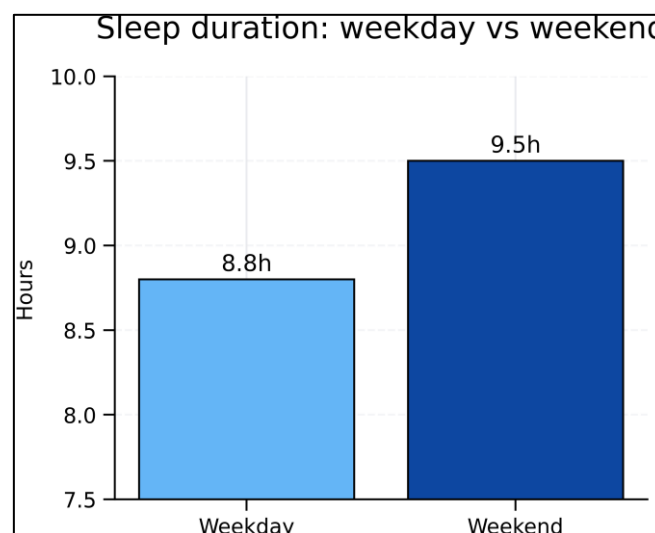


Figure 13.1: Sleep duration (hours) and attainment of guidelines (%)

13.3 Sleep by Gender

Sleep patterns are broadly similar for boys and girls.

- Around two-thirds of boys and girls meet sleep guidelines on school nights (66-67%).
- Girls are slightly more likely than boys to meet sleep guidelines at weekends (78% vs 72%).
- Average sleep duration is similar during the school week (8.8 hours for both boys and girls).
- Girls report slightly longer average sleep duration at weekends (9.6 vs 9.4 hours).

☞ Sleep patterns are generally similar across genders, although girls are slightly more likely to meet recommended sleep levels at weekends.

Key insight: Gender differences in sleep are modest overall, with girls reporting slightly higher levels of weekend sleep than boys.

13.4 Sleep by Year Group

Sleep patterns vary across the school years, with a marked decline in weekday sleep during the transition from primary to secondary school (see Figure 13.2).

- Most primary pupils meet sleep guidelines on school nights, with around 78–79% doing so in P4–P6.
- The transition to secondary school is associated with a substantial reduction in sleep, particularly on school nights.
- The lowest attainment of sleep guidelines is observed in S1 (48%) and S2 (38%).
- Sleep improves from S3 onwards, with around 69–75% meeting guidelines, although average weekday sleep remains lower than in primary school.
- Across all year groups, sleep duration is higher at weekends than during the school week.

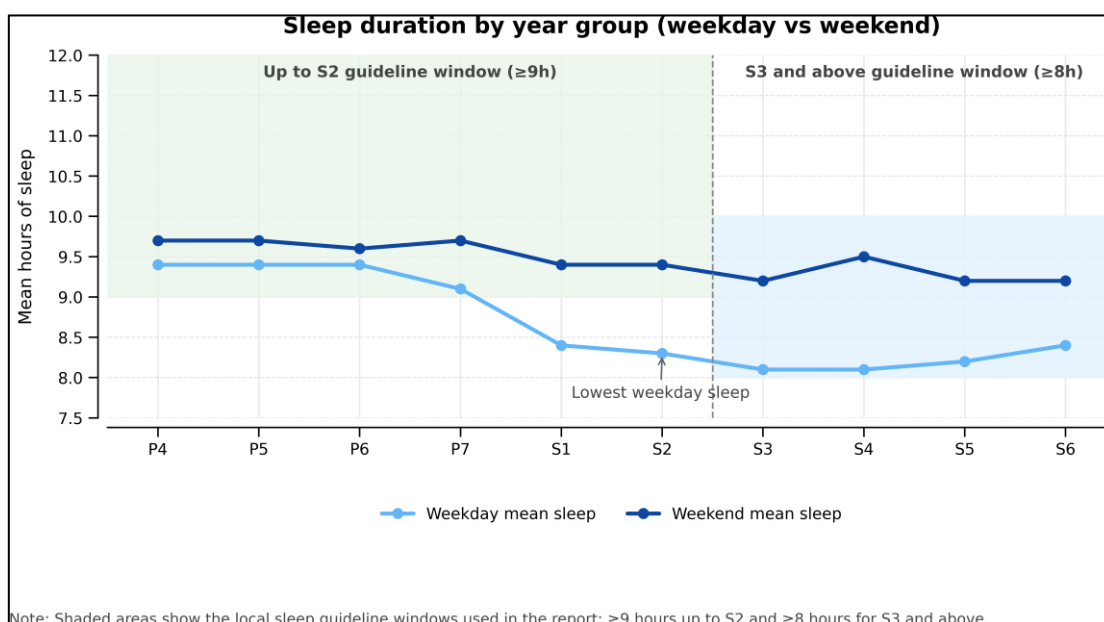


Figure 13.2: Sleep duration by year group compared with recommended guidelines

☞ The transition to secondary school is associated with a substantial reduction in the proportion meeting sleep guidelines, particularly on school nights.

Key insight: Sleep is highest during primary school, falls sharply during the transition to secondary school, and partially recovers in later secondary years, although weekday sleep remains lower than in primary school.

13.5 Sleep by disability

- Sleep patterns are broadly similar across disability groups, with some variation.
- Pupils reporting no disability are slightly more likely to meet sleep guidelines on school nights (69%) than some other groups.
- Most disability groups report similar average sleep duration on weekdays (around 8.5-9.0 hours) and weekends (around 9.0-9.8 hours).
- Pupils reporting long-term health conditions are among the most likely to meet sleep guidelines on school nights (72%).
- Some groups report lower attainment of sleep guidelines despite similar average reported sleep duration.
- Weekend sleep remains higher than weekday sleep across most groups.

☞ Differences between disability groups are generally modest, and most groups report similar overall sleep duration.

Key insight: Sleep patterns are broadly similar across disability groups, although some variation is evident in the proportion meeting sleep guidelines.

13.6 Sleep by activity level

Sleep duration is broadly similar across activity levels (see Figure 13.3). Differences by activity level are smaller than those observed across year groups.

- Around two-thirds of pupils meet sleep guidelines on school nights, regardless of activity level (64–68%).
- Weekend attainment is also similar across groups (74–76%).
- Average sleep duration varies little between activity groups, ranging from 8.7–8.9 hours on school nights and 9.4–9.7 hours at weekends.
- Weekend sleep remains higher than weekday sleep across all activity levels.

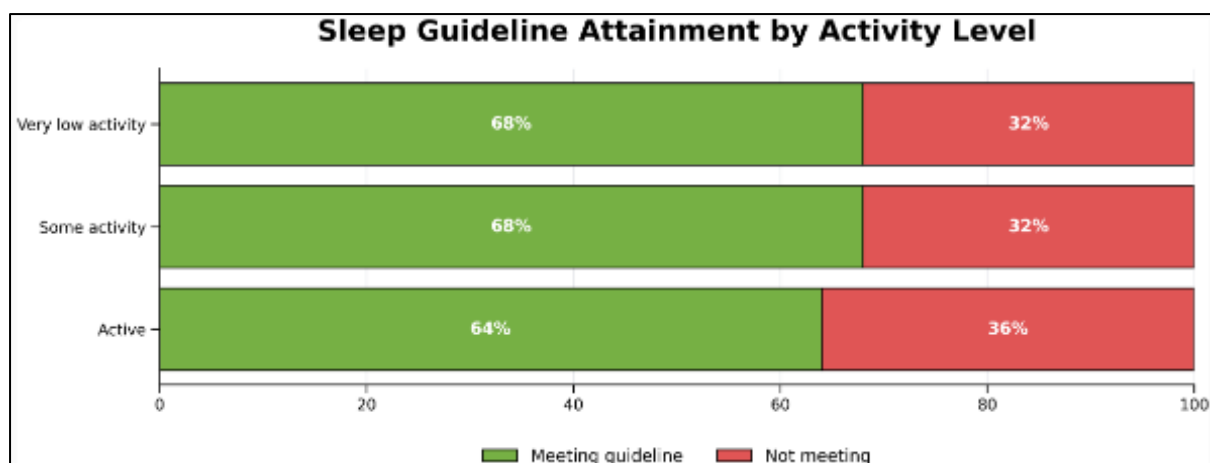


Figure 13.3: Sleep duration by activity level (weekday and weekend)

☞ Differences in sleep patterns by activity level are relatively small.

Key insight: There is no strong relationship between activity level and sleep duration in this dataset.

13.7 Sleep by Screen Time

Although screen time is not a measure of physical activity, it forms part of the wider 24-hour movement behaviour profile alongside sleep and physical activity.

Figure 13.4 shows a clear association between screen time and sleep on school nights. Pupils reporting lower levels of screen time are more likely to meet sleep guidelines, while attainment declines as screen time increases.

- Around 81% of pupils reporting one hour of screen time per day meet sleep guidelines on school nights, compared with 45% of those reporting seven or more hours.
- Average weekday sleep decreases from around 9.2 hours among pupils reporting one hour of screen time to 8.2 hours among those reporting seven or more hours.
- Weekend sleep duration varies less across screen time groups, remaining between 9.3 and 9.7 hours.

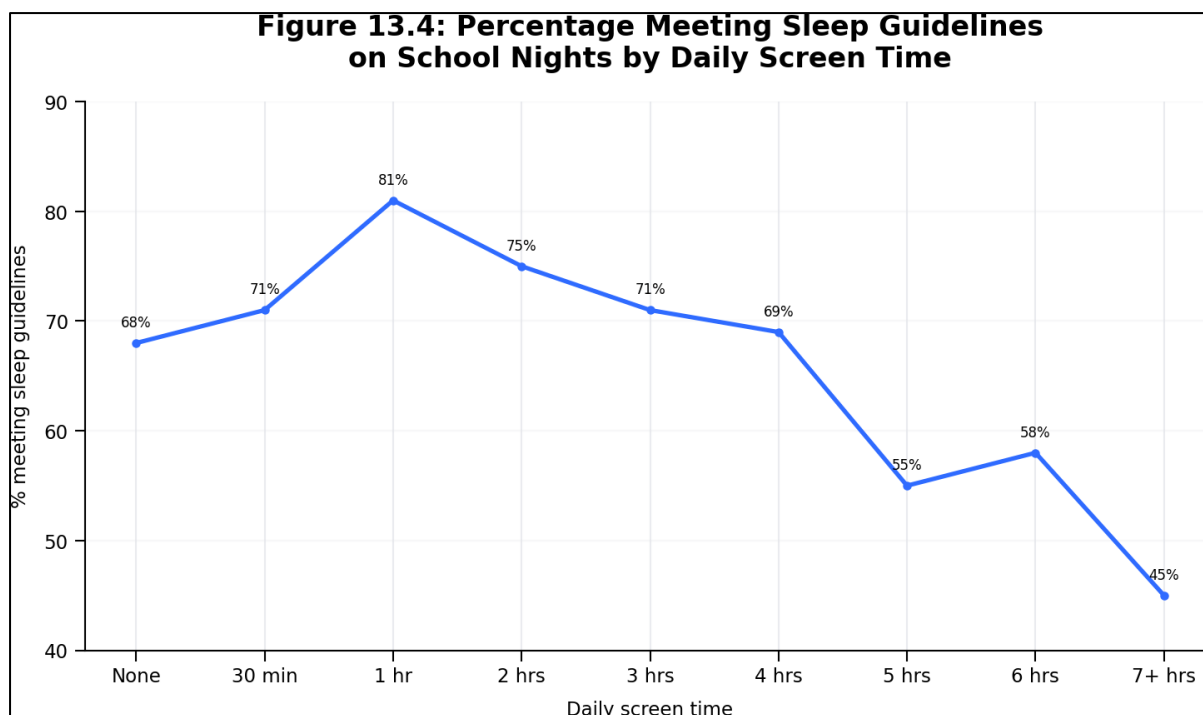


Figure 13.4: Percentage of Pupils Meeting Sleep Guidelines on School Nights by Daily Screen Time

☞ Higher screen time is associated with shorter weekday sleep duration and lower attainment of sleep guidelines.

Key insight: Higher screen time is associated with shorter weekday sleep duration and lower attainment of sleep guidelines.

13.8 What this means

- Focus on improving weekday sleep routines, particularly in secondary school.
- Target early secondary pupils (S1–S2), where the greatest decline in sleep guideline attainment occurs.
- Promote consistent sleep patterns across the week, recognising that sleep duration is higher at weekends than on school nights.
- Position sleep as part of overall wellbeing alongside physical activity and screen time.
- Encourage balanced use of screens, particularly during the school week, as higher screen time is associated with lower attainment of sleep guidelines.
- Support pupils to develop balanced daily routines across the 24-hour day.

13.9 Key learning

- Most pupils meet sleep guidelines, but a substantial minority do not.
- There is a clear weekday-weekend gap, with higher sleep duration at weekends.
- The most significant decline occurs at the transition from primary to secondary school (S1-S2).
- Sleep improves in later secondary years, although weekday sleep duration remains lower than in primary school.
- Age is a stronger differentiator of sleep patterns than activity level.
- Gender differences are modest overall.
- Activity level shows limited association with sleep duration.
- Variation by disability is modest but present.
- Higher levels of screen time are associated with shorter weekday sleep duration and lower attainment of sleep guidelines.
- Weekend sleep duration is consistently higher than weekday sleep across most groups.

Chapter 14: Wellbeing and Confidence in Relation to Physical Activity

14.1 Overview

This chapter explores how pupils perceive the impact of physical activity on their wellbeing, confidence and sense of inclusion.

These factors are associated with sustained participation and positive experiences of being active.

14.2 Wellbeing and confidence (all pupils)

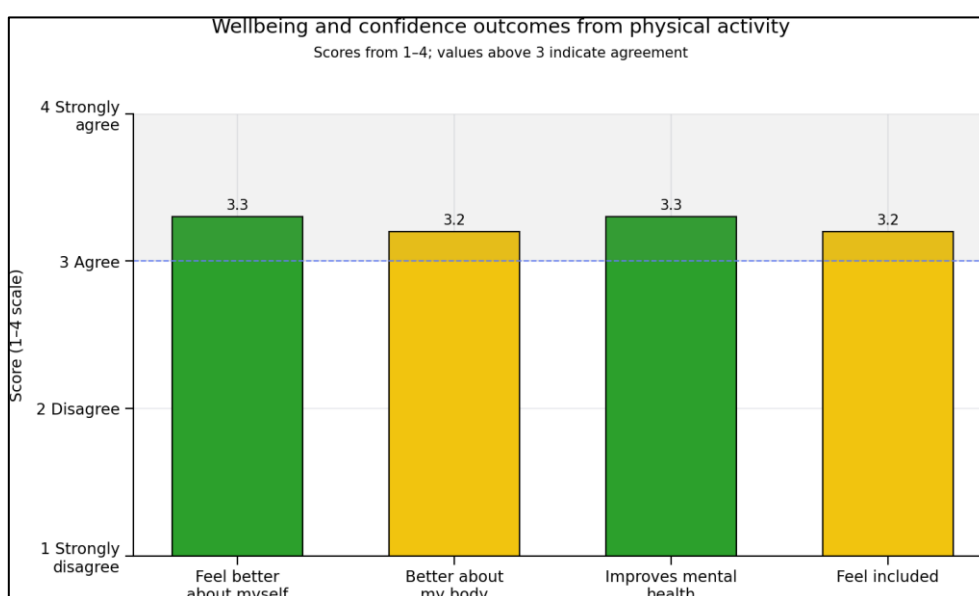
Pupils were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about the impact of physical activity using a four-point scale:

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = agree
- 4 = strongly agree

Average scores therefore range from 1 to 4, with values above 3 indicating overall agreement.

Overall, responses are positive, with mean scores between approximately 3.2 and 3.3 across all domains (see Figure 14.1).

- Highest scores:
 - physical activity helps me feel better about myself (~3.3)
 - physical activity improves my mental health (~3.3)
- Slightly lower scores:
 - body confidence (~3.2)
 - feeling included (~3.2)



14.1: Wellbeing and confidence scores from physical activity

Key insight: Pupils report positive wellbeing, confidence and inclusion outcomes associated with physical activity, body confidence and inclusion are the lowest-scoring areas, although scores remain positive..

14.3 Wellbeing and confidence by gender

- Scores are positive across all gender groups
- Boys report slightly higher scores across most domains, including:
 - mental health (~3.4 vs 3.2)
 - body confidence (~3.3 vs 3.1)
- Girls report consistently positive but slightly lower scores

Key insight: Differences are modest overall, although girls report slightly lower average confidence and wellbeing scores than boys across several domains.

14.4 Wellbeing and confidence by disability

Scores are positive across most groups, although some differences are evident.

- Pupils with no disability report the highest scores (~3.3–3.5)
- Slightly lower scores are evident in some groups:
 - body confidence and mental wellbeing (~2.9 in some groups)
- Some groups report lower scores across several domains:
 - feeling included
 - feeling better about themselves

Key insight: Wellbeing, confidence and inclusion scores are generally positive across disability groups, although some groups report lower scores across several domains.

14.5 Wellbeing and confidence by activity level

A clear gradient exists by activity level (see Figure 14.2). Differences by activity level are more pronounced than those observed by gender or disability group.

- Active pupils
 - reported highest scores across all domains (~3.4–3.6)
- Some activity pupils
 - reported moderate scores
- Pupils in the very low activity group
 - reported the lowest scores lowest scores (~3.0–3.1)

The largest differences are seen in:

- confidence (self and body)
- enjoyment
- mental wellbeing

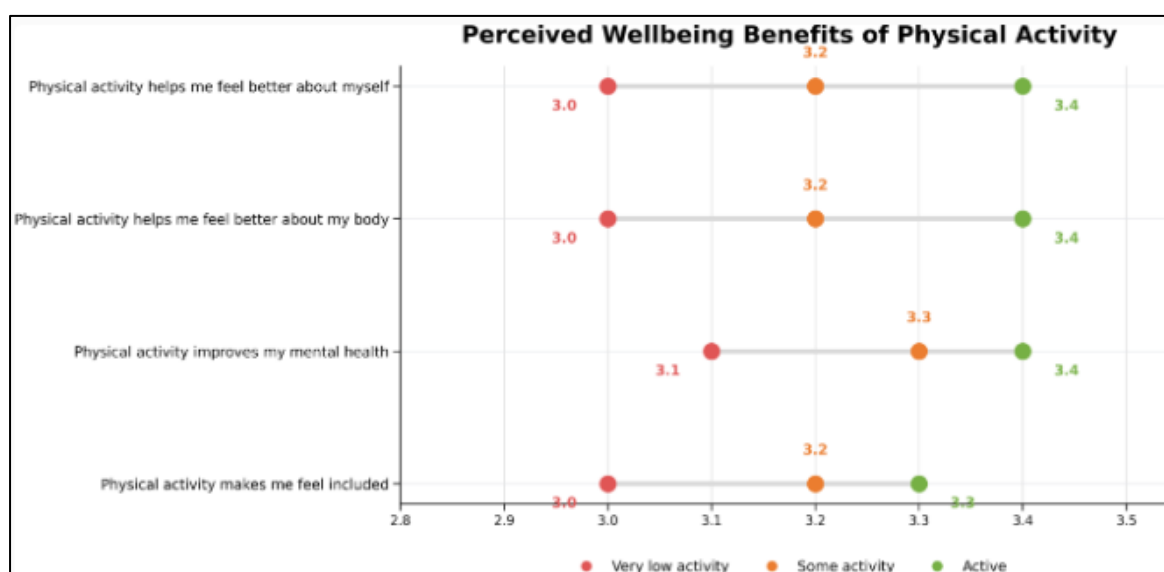


Figure 14.2: Wellbeing and confidence outcomes by activity level

Key insight: Wellbeing, confidence and inclusion scores are consistently higher among more active pupils, with activity level showing the clearest pattern of variation across the measures examined.

14.6 What this means

- Strengthen focus on confidence and inclusion, not just participation.
- Support groups reporting relatively lower confidence, wellbeing and inclusion, including girls, pupils in the very low activity group and some disability groups.
- Develop environments that improve body confidence and social inclusion.
- Recognise physical activity as an important contributor to mental wellbeing as well as physical health.
- Promote positive experiences of physical activity across the school years.

14.7 Key learning

- Pupils report positive wellbeing, confidence and inclusion outcomes associated with physical activity.
- Mental health and self-perception record the highest scores.
- Body confidence and inclusion are weaker areas
- Differences by year group are modest, although some wellbeing and confidence measures are lower among older pupils.
- Gender differences are modest but consistent
- Some groups experience lower confidence and inclusion
- Pupils who are more active consistently report higher confidence, wellbeing and inclusion scores.
- Activity level shows the strongest and most consistent pattern of variation across wellbeing, confidence and inclusion measures.

Chapter 15: Conclusion, Recommendations and Next Steps

15.1 What the data tells us

The findings present a clear but mixed picture.

Many pupils are active through school-based opportunities, particularly physical education and structured activity during the school day. However, participation declines as pupils move through secondary school.

Participation is also uneven across population groups. Girls, pupils who are less active, and some pupils with additional needs are more likely to report barriers related to perceived confidence, access and inclusion.

The findings also show that many pupils report positive motivation, knowledge and perceptions of physical activity and active travel. However, participation and activity levels remain below desired levels. This suggests that improving physical activity is not simply a matter of awareness or attitudes, but also of access, opportunity, inclusion and everyday environments.

Activity is most commonly reported in settings that are part of everyday routines, including physical education, school-day activity and active travel.

Key insight: Participation declines through adolescence, while differences between population groups become increasingly evident.

15.2 Why the data matters

This survey provides robust local evidence based on a large and representative sample of pupils across Dumfries and Galloway.

The findings:

- support targeted planning
- identify inequalities
- inform system design
- enable monitoring of progress over time

Key insight: High-quality local data enables more targeted and evidence-based action.

15.3 Policy context

The findings align with national and local priorities, including:

- the Scottish Government Physical Activity Strategy
- Public Health Scotland guidance
- Dumfries and Galloway's approach to prevention and wellbeing

They reinforce the importance of a whole-system approach to physical activity, with opportunities supported across schools, communities and everyday environments.

Key insight: A whole-system approach is required to sustain participation and address inequalities in physical activity.

15.4 Role of physical literacy

Physical literacy is an important factor associated with participation.

While most pupils report positive knowledge and understanding of physical activity, confidence, competence and inclusion scores are relatively lower among some groups.

Key insight: Confidence and competence are most consistently associated with participation, while inclusion also appears important.

Figure 15.1 below illustrates the shift required from the current system to a more effective and inclusive model of physical activity.

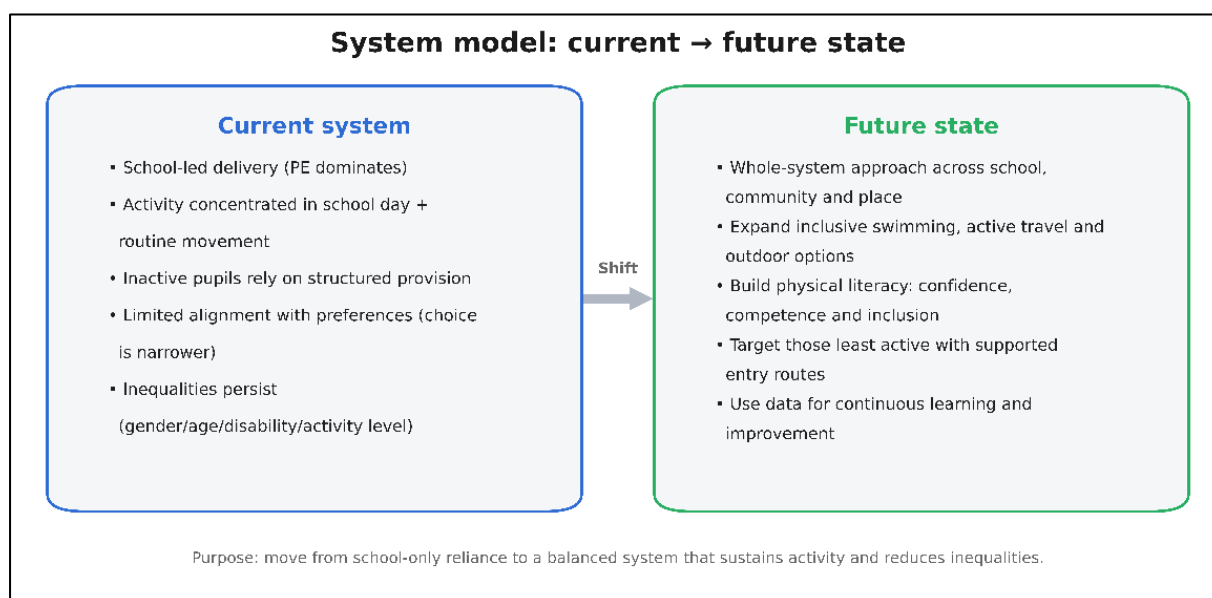


Figure 15.1: System Model: Current versus Future State

15.5 Recommendations for policy and practice

The findings point to a clear set of priorities.

The findings suggest that improving physical activity is not simply a matter of increasing awareness or motivation. Many pupils report positive knowledge, motivation, wellbeing and perceptions of active travel, yet overall activity levels remain below ambition. This highlights the importance of a whole-system approach that addresses access, opportunity, inclusion and everyday environments alongside individual factors.

System design

- Strengthen opportunities beyond school-based delivery.
- Develop a more balanced system across:
 - school
 - community
- everyday environments, including opportunities for everyday movement and active travel.

Strengthen connections between sectors to support a more coordinated approach

Provision and access

- Expand access to:
 - swimming
 - active travel
 - outdoor environments

Outdoor environments represent both a current and preferred setting for physical activity. Creating opportunities within natural and outdoor settings may provide an additional route into activity for some children and young people who are not reached through traditional sport pathways.

- Ensure provision is:
 - flexible
 - inclusive
 - responsive to age and need

Targeted approaches

- Focus on pupils who are least active, including:
 - girls
 - pupils in the very low activity group
 - some pupils with additional needs
 - those experiencing barriers related to confidence or access

- Provide supportive environments that:
 - build confidence
 - enable participation

Workforce development

- Support staff to:
 - deliver inclusive and confidence-building activity
 - engage less active pupils
 - work across sectors to support system change

Key insight: A combination of system change, targeted support and inclusive practice is required to increase and sustain participation.

15.6 Final note

The findings highlight the importance of coordinated action across the whole system to improve participation and reduce inequalities. Participating schools will also receive individual school-level reports, providing a detailed breakdown of local findings. These reports will be used alongside Active Schools and partners to support local planning, targeted provision and action based on the views and experiences of pupils within each school.

Thank you to all schools, staff and pupils who contributed to this survey.

The message from DGSPAS 2026 is clear: many children and young people are active, but participation remains uneven across age groups and population groups. Activity levels remain below ambition, inequalities persist, and participation declines through adolescence. The findings provide a strong evidence base for coordinated action across the whole system.

Many young people are active, but participation declines through adolescence and inequalities persist across gender, disability, confidence and activity level. Sustained progress will require coordinated action that strengthens confidence, competence, inclusion and access.

Appendix 1

Appendix 1: DGSPAS 2026 Survey Questionnaire

Introduction

Dumfries and Galloway Council conducted this survey to understand how children and young people take part in physical activity and what supports or prevents participation.

Physical activity includes any activity that increases heart rate and causes heavier breathing, such as sport, walking, cycling and active play.

Participation was voluntary and responses are anonymous.

Section 1: Consent

1. Do you agree to take part in this survey?

- Yes
 - No
-

Section 2: About You

2. Gender

- Boy
- Girl
- Prefer not to say
- Other

3. Year Group

- Primary 4–7
- Secondary 1–6

4–5. School Attended

- Primary school (full list)
- Secondary school (full list)

6. Do any of the following apply to you? (Select all that apply)

- Physical disability
- Learning difficulty
- Sensory disability

- Long-term condition
- Other disability
- None
- Prefer not to say

Section 3: Physical Activity Levels

7. Number of days active for 60+ minutes (past 7 days)

- 0–7 days

8. Time spent being active each day (typical week)

- Monday to Sunday (time selection grid)

9. Participation in sport/activity sessions (past 7 days)

- School only
- Outside school only
- Both
- None

Section 4: Activity Participation

10. Activities currently taken part in (select all that apply)

- Active travel (to/from school or for fun)
- School-based activity (PE, break, lunch, after school)
- Community sport
- Home and informal activity
- Leisure/sports centres
- Outdoor environments (parks, beaches, forests)
- Swimming
- Other

11. Activities you would like to take part in (select all that apply)

(Same categories as above)

Section 5: Encouragement and Opportunities

12. What would encourage you to be more active?

- 1:1 support
- Activities in nature
- Disability-specific sessions

- Single-sex sessions
- Non-competitive sessions
- Small group sessions
- Sport-specific sessions
- Recreational sessions
- None

Section 6: Activity and Sport Participation

13. Activities taken part in (past 2 weeks)

Grouped for readability:

- **Team sports:** football, rugby, netball, basketball
- **Individual sports:** athletics, swimming, gymnastics, cycling
- **Racket sports:** tennis, badminton, squash
- **Fitness and wellbeing:** yoga, fitness, dance
- **Outdoor activities:** climbing, sailing, orienteering
- **Other:** (full list retained as needed)

Section 7: Barriers to Physical Activity

14. What prevents you from taking part? (Select all that apply)

- Time constraints
- Caring responsibilities
- Transport or access issues
- Lack of facilities (indoor/outdoor)
- Cost
- Weather
- Equipment/clothing
- Lack of confidence or skills
- Safety concerns
- Body confidence
- Lack of interest
- Language barriers
- Other

Section 8: Physical Literacy and Attitudes

15. Agreement with the following statements

(Scale: Strongly agree → Strongly disagree)

- I want to be active
- I feel confident taking part

- I am good at physical activity
 - I know why activity is important
 - I know how to get involved
 - I enjoy physical activity
 - Activity improves my wellbeing
 - I feel included
 - I enjoy walking and cycling
 - I feel safe walking and cycling
-

Section 9: Screen Time

16. Daily screen time (free time use)

- Gaming
- Social media
- TV and videos
- Internet use

Options:

- None
 - 30 mins
 - 1–7+ hours
-

Section 10: Sleep

17. Usual bedtime

- Weekdays
- Weekends

18. Wake-up time (school days)

19. Wake-up time (weekends/holidays)

Section 11: Access to Equipment

20. Do you have access to a bike?

- Yes
- Yes (needs repair)
- No (do not want one)
- No (would like one)
- Prefer not to say