



COVID-19 Briefing

Exploring attitudes and behaviours in
England during the COVID-19 pandemic

Welcome

COVID-19 Briefing

To supplement our Active Lives (Adult and Children & Young People) Surveys, Sport England is publishing a series of briefings providing a regular picture of physical activity behaviours and attitudes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report summarises the results from a weekly survey being carried out for Sport England by Savanta ComRes.

The survey explores the amount and type of activity being undertaken, how activity is changing over time, who people are being active with, and what they are thinking and feeling about being active.

These results come from interviews with c. 2,000 adults (16+) in England for each wave of the survey. Data has been weighted to be representative of adults in England by age, gender, region and social grade, including those with children aged under 16 in their household.

Release date

3-6 April 2020

10-14 April 2020

17-20 April 2020

Headlines

3-6 April 2020

There has been a massive disruption in the physical activity behaviours of adults and children in England.

31% of adults did more and 41% did less physical activity in the last week compared to before the restrictions. In the same period 30% of children did more and 38% did less compared to pre-restriction levels.

There is a recognition of the importance of physical activity in response to the pandemic.

62% of adults think it is more important to be active during the outbreak compared to other times.

The majority of adults are using physical activity to help them manage their health.

69% of adults agree that exercise is helping them manage their physical health, whilst 65% agree it is helping them manage their mental health.

Headlines

3-6 April 2020

The Government's messages about exercise may be having a positive impact.

53% of adults in England agree that they have been encouraged to exercise by the Government's guidance.

59% of adults walked in the last week

44% did online fitness, offline fitness or informal activity in the home

18% went jogging

8% cycled

There are differences in levels of activity between different demographic groups.

Older people, people on low incomes and people in urban areas are finding it harder to be active during the outbreak.

Tables

3-6 April 2020

Physical Activity Behaviour – Adults

Days done 30 minutes or more physical activity in last week (SIM):

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		2-4 days	5+ days
22%	10%	12%	14%	8%	11%	4%	18%		35%	33%

Is this more or less than usual?

A lot more	A bit more	Neither more or less	A bit less	A lot less		MORE	LESS
10%	21%	28%	17%	24%		31%	41%

Types of physical activity, participation in last week

Type	% who did activity in last week	More, Same or Less than usual			Who with: on Own, Adult(s), Child(ren)		
		M	S	L	O	A	C
Walking	59%	34%	28%	38%	52%	41%	14%
Cycling	8%	43%	30%	27%	60%	28%	18%
Running or jogging	18%	54%	24%	23%	73%	19%	12%
Home activity / fitness – ONLINE	23%	72%	15%	12%	60%	28%	20%
Home activity / fitness – OFFLINE	24%	59%	26%	14%	71%	20%	14%
Informal play or games at home	14%	59%	20%	21%	29%	34%	51%
Other	5%	52%	34%	14%	67%	28%	8%
ANY HOME-BASED ACTIVITY	44%						

Physical activity attitudes and behaviours: findings from a panel survey of 2,034 adults

Week 1 survey carried out by ComRes from 3rd to 6th April 2020. Data is weighted to be representative of adults in England by age, gender, region and social grade. Data was reweighted on 16th April to account for the proportion of respondents with children in the household.

Tables

3-6 April 2020

Physical Activity Attitudes – Adults

Agreement with COM-B statements: before COVID-19 and today

Statement	% Strongly Agree / Agree	
	Prior to COVID-19	Now
Had/have ability to be physically active	75%	68%
Had/have opportunity to be physically active	75%	65%
Was/is important to me to exercise regularly	70%	70%
Found/find exercise enjoyable and satisfying	62%	61%
Felt/feel guilty when I don't exercise	53%	56%

Current feelings about physical activity and the coronavirus

Statement	Agree	Disagree
I exercise to help manage my physical health during the outbreak	69%	28%
I have more time now to be physically active	65%	32%
I exercise to help manage my mental health during the outbreak	65%	32%
I miss the types of physical activity I was able to do before the outbreak	63%	35%
I worry about leaving my home to exercise or be active	60%	37%
I have been encouraged to exercise by the Government's guidance	53%	42%
I feel guilty about not exercising more during the outbreak	50%	47%
Since the outbreak I have found new ways to be active	49%	49%
The current situation has not impacted my current exercise regime	42%	55%
I do not find exercising on my own enjoyable	40%	56%
I feel guilty about wanting to exercise during the outbreak	27%	70%

Tables

3-6 April 2020

Do people feel it is more or less important to be active at the moment?

Much more important	Somewhat more important	No more or less important	Somewhat less important	Much less important	Don't know	MORE	LESS
22%	40%	29%	3%	1%	3%	62%	5%

How else has coronavirus changed feelings about physical activity? (Open response)

Top reasons (>5%) given from 596 responses:

Increased awareness of need to exercise / desire to do more	52%
Scared or worried to go out	16%
Important for improving mental health	10%
Can't go out / stuck at home	7%
Less motivation to do exercise / exercising less	5%

Physical Activity Behaviour - Children

Average daily time spent doing physical activity (average per child in household)

Nothing	12%
Some, but less than half an hour	36%
Between half an hour and an hour	38%
More than an hour	14%
SOME	88%

Is this more or less than usual?

A lot more	A bit more	Neither more or less	A bit less	A lot less		MORE	LESS
7%	23%	31%	20%	18%		30%	38%

Tables

3-6 April 2020

Adults Physical Activity Levels - Demographics

	% doing 30 mins on 5+ days
ALL	33%
Male	32%
Female	35%
16-34	34%
35-54	34%
55+	32%
ABC1	35%
C2DE	32%
Children in house	36%
No children in house	31%
Other caring responsibilities at home	32%
Longstanding condition or illness	26%
No longstanding condition or illness	36%

NE	38%
NW	37%
Y+H	40%
WM	34%
EM	28%
E	35%
L	26%
SE	33%
SW	32%
Urban	32%
Rural	39%

Headlines

10–14 April 2020

Adults are reporting similar levels of physical activity to the previous week.

There is little change in the amount and type of activity that adults are reporting in the last week compared to the previous week.

According to adults, children have been slightly more active than they were the previous week.

18% of children are doing an hour or more of daily physical activity compared with 14% the previous week. A higher proportion of children (35%) are doing more physical activity than before the outbreak (as reported by adults).

There are still differences in levels of activity between different demographic groups.

Older people, people on low incomes, people living alone and people who are self-isolating because they are at increased risk due to their age or health condition, are all finding it harder than normal to be active during the outbreak.

We have also seen a dip in women's activity levels with fewer women than men achieving 30 mins activity on 5+ days and more women than men doing no activity.

People's current feelings about physical activity are mostly similar to the previous week, with a few exceptions indicating that physical activity might be slightly less of a focus for people this week.

We've seen a slight fall in the proportion of people agreeing that it's more important to be active at the moment and that they have been encouraged to exercise by the Government's guidance.

More people are agreeing that they don't find exercising on their own enjoyable, and that they feel guilty about wanting to exercise during the outbreak.

Tables

10-14 April 2020

Physical Activity Behaviour – Adults

Days done 30 minutes or more physical activity in last week (SIM):

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		2-4 days	5+ days
Week 1	22%	10%	12%	14%	8%	11%	4%	18%		35%	33%
Week 2	20%	9%	13%	16%	9%	10%	4%	19%		39%	32%
Sig diff	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No		Yes	No

Is this more or less physical activity than usual?

	A lot more	A bit more	Neither more or less	A bit less	A lot less		MORE	LESS
Week 1	10%	21%	28%	17%	24%		31%	41%
Week 2	9%	24%	26%	18%	22%		33%	40%
Sig diff	No	Yes	No	No	Yes		No	No

Types of physical activity, participation in last week

Type	% who did activity – week 1	% who did activity – week 2	Sig diff
Walking	59%	59%	No
Cycling	8%	10%	No
Running or jogging	18%	16%	No
Home activity / fitness – ONLINE	23%	21%	No
Home activity / fitness – OFFLINE	24%	22%	No
Informal play or games at home	14%	15%	No
Other	5%	6%	No
ANY HOME-BASED ACTIVITY	44%	45%	No

Week 2 Survey carried out by Savanta ComRes over the Easter weekend from 10th to 14th April 2020. Data is weighted to be representative of adults in England by age, gender, region, social grade and the estimated households with children under 16.

Tables

10-14 April 2020

Physical Activity Attitudes - Adults

Agreement with COM-B statements

Statement	% Strongly Agree / Agree		Sig diff
	Week 1	Week 2	
It is important to me to exercise regularly	70%	69%	No
I feel that I have the ability to be physically active	68%	66%	No
I feel that I have the opportunity to be physically active	65%	65%	No
I find exercise enjoyable and satisfying	61%	61%	No
I feel guilty when I don't exercise	56%	51%	Yes

Current feelings about physical activity and the coronavirus

Statement	Agree - week 2	Agree - week 1	Sig diff
I exercise to help manage my physical health during the outbreak	69%	70%	No
I have more time now to be physically active	65%	64%	No
I exercise to help manage my mental health during the outbreak	65%	64%	No
I miss the types of physical activity I was able to do before the outbreak	63%	62%	No
I worry about leaving my home to exercise or be active	60%	60%	No
Since the outbreak I have found new ways to be active	49%	51%	No
I have been encouraged to exercise by the Government's guidance	53%	48%	Yes
I feel guilty about not exercising more during the outbreak	50%	48%	No
The current situation has not impacted my current exercise regime	42%	43%	No
I do not find exercising on my own enjoyable	40%	43%	Yes
I feel guilty about wanting to exercise during the outbreak	27%	31%	Yes

Tables

10-14 April 2020

Do people feel it is more or less important to be active at the moment?

	Much more important	Some-what more important	No more or less important	Some-what less important	Much less important	Don't know		MORE	LESS
Week 1	22%	40%	29%	3%	1%	3%		62%	5%
Week 2	21%	37%	32%	3%	2%	4%		59%	5%
Sig diff	No	Yes	No	No	No	No		Yes	No

How else has coronavirus changed feelings about physical activity? (Open response)

Top reasons (>5%) given from 585 responses:

	Week 1	Week 2	Sig diff
Increased awareness of need to exercise / desire to do more	52%	56%	No
Scared or worried to go out	16%	14%	No
Important for improving mental health	10%	9%	No
Less motivation to do exercise / exercising less	5%	7%	Yes
Can't go out / stuck at home	7%	6%	No

Tables

10-14 April 2020

Physical Activity Behaviour - Children

Average daily time spent doing physical activity
(average per child in household)

	Week 1	Week 2	Sig diff
Nothing	12%	8%	Yes
Some, but less than half an hour	36%	35%	No
Between half an hour and an hour	38%	38%	No
More than an hour	14%	18%	Yes
SOME	88%	92%	Yes

Physical Activity Behaviour - Children

Is this more or less than usual?

	A lot more	A bit more	Neither more or less	A bit less	A lot less		MORE	LESS
Week 1	7%	23%	31%	20%	18%		30%	38%
Week 2	8%	27%	29%	17%	18%		35%	35%
Sig diff	No	No	No	No	No		Yes	No

Tables

10-14 April 2020

Adults Physical Activity Levels - Demographics

	% doing 30 mins on 5+ days – week 1	% doing 30 mins on 5+ days – week 2	Sig diff
ALL	33%	32%	No
Male	32%	35%	No
Female	35%	29%	Yes
16-34	34%	31%	No
35-54	34%	31%	No
55+	32%	33%	No
ABC1	35%	35%	No
C2DE	32%	29%	No
Children in house	36%	30%	Yes
No children in house	31%	33%	No
Other caring responsibilities at home	32%	32%	No
Longstanding condition or illness	26%	25%	No
No longstanding condition or illness	36%	35%	No

	% doing 30 mins on 5+ days – week 1	% doing 30 mins on 5+ days – week 2
NE	38%	34%
NW	37%	34%
Y+H	40%	30%
WM	34%	35%
EM	28%	32%
E	35%	33%
L	26%	31%
SE	33%	33%
SW	32%	29%
Urban	32%	32%
Rural	39%	33%

Headlines

17–20 April 2020

Adults are reporting similar levels of physical activity to the previous week, but the 'more/less' gap has narrowed.

Compared to wave 1 more people say they are doing more than usual and fewer say they are doing less than usual:

Wave 1: 31% more / 41% less
Wave 3: 34% more / 38% less

There is an emerging gender gap as males are more likely to be exercising more.

This wave more males report doing more (37%) than less (35%) physical activity compared to usual – a significant change from wave 1 where 29% said more and 43% said less.

Female activity levels have not changed (currently 32% more, 41% less), where participation in 30 minutes of physical activity on at least five days in the last week has fallen from wave 1 (35% to 29%).

Decline in online exercise as people adjust to exercising out of the home

Participation in online/digital exercise has declined from 23% in wave 1 to 19% in wave 3.

We have seen a significant increase in cycling compared to waves 1 and 2 from 8% to 12%.

Running/jogging has also significantly increased from wave 2 from 16% to 19%.

Fewer people this wave report worrying about leaving their home to exercise (56% compared to 60% in waves 1 and 2), suggesting people may be feeling more comfortable about exercising out of the home. However, informal play or games at home has also seen an increase from wave 1 from 14% to 16%.

A quarter of people exercising online cited Joe Wicks as the most useful instructor or influencer (26%).

Headlines

17–20 April 2020

Guilt was less of a motivator to exercise over the Easter weekend

Over the Easter weekend (wave 2) fewer people felt guilty about not exercising (COM-B statement), and more people felt guilty about wanting to exercise, compared to waves 1 and 3. Other attitudes are largely unchanged this wave.

No change in children’s physical activity levels

As reported by adults, children’s physical activity levels showed no significant change this week, although there was a non-significant decrease from waves 2 to 3 in the number achieving an hour or more a day (18% to 14%).

The gap between those saying this was more or less than usual has also widened compared to wave 2 (now 32% more / 38% less) but again this was not statistically significant.

Some demographic groups are finding it much harder to be active

As in previous waves, older people, people on low incomes, people living alone and people who are self-isolating because they are at increased risk due to their age or health condition, are all finding it harder than normal to be active during the outbreak.

This wave women, people without children in the household, and people in urban areas are also finding it harder to be active.

Access to private open space

A new question this wave asked if people have access to a garden or other private outdoor open space in which they can exercise. Although physical activity rates were lower among those without access than those with, this was not statistically significant.

Tables

17–20 April 2020

Physical Activity Behaviour – Adults

Days done 30 minutes or more physical activity in last week (SIM):

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		2-4 days	5+ days
Week 1	22%	10%	12%	14%	8%	11%	4%	18%		35%	33%
Week 2	20%	9%	13%	16%	9%	10%	4%	19%		39%	32%
Week 3	20%	9%	13%	15%	11%	10%	5%	17%		39%	32%
Sig diff	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No		Yes (w1)	No

Is this more or less physical activity than usual?

	A lot more	A bit more	Neither more or less	A bit less	A lot less		MORE	LESS
Week 1	10%	21%	28%	17%	24%		31%	41%
Week 2	9%	24%	26%	18%	22%		33%	40%
Week 3	11%	23%	26%	17%	21%		34%	38%
Sig diff	Yes (w2)	No	No	No	No		Yes (w1)	Yes (w1)

Types of physical activity, participation in last week

Type	% who did activity – week 1	% who did activity – week 2	% who did activity – week 3	Sig diff
Walking	59%	59%	60%	No
Cycling	8%	10%	12%	Yes (w2, w1)
Running or jogging	18%	16%	19%	Yes (w2)
Home activity / fitness – ONLINE	23%	21%	19%	Yes (w1)
Home activity / fitness – OFFLINE	24%	22%	22%	No
Informal play or games at home	14%	15%	16%	Yes (w1)
Other	5%	6%	6%	No
ANY HOME-BASED ACTIVITY	44%	45%	45%	No

Sig diff: Indicates whether changes this wave are statistically significant compared to previous waves.

Tables

17-20 April 2020

Physical Activity Attitudes – Adults

Agreement with COM-B statements

Statement	% Strongly Agree / Agree			Sig diff
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	
I feel that I have the ability to be physically active	68%	66%	67%	No
I feel that I have the opportunity to be physically active	65%	65%	65%	No
I find exercise enjoyable and satisfying	61%	61%	61%	No
It is important to me to exercise regularly	70%	69%	70%	No
I feel guilty when I don't exercise	56%	51%	56%	Yes (w2)

Current feelings about physical activity and the coronavirus

Statement	Agree – week 1	Agree – week 2	Agree – week 3	Sig diff
I exercise to help manage my physical health during the outbreak	69%	70%	70%	No
I have more time now to be physically active	65%	64%	66%	No
I exercise to help manage my mental health during the outbreak	65%	64%	63%	No
I miss the types of physical activity I was able to do before the outbreak	63%	62%	61%	No
I worry about leaving my home to exercise or be active	60%	60%	56%	Yes (w2, w1)
I have been encouraged to exercise by the Government's guidance	53%	48%	51%	No
I feel guilty about not exercising more during the outbreak	50%	48%	50%	No
Since the outbreak I have found new ways to be active	49%	51%	50%	No
I do not find exercising on my own enjoyable	40%	43%	43%	No
The current situation has not impacted my current exercise regime	42%	43%	42%	No
I feel guilty about wanting to exercise during the outbreak	27%	31%	28%	Yes (w2)

Tables

17-20 April 2020

Do people feel it is more or less important to be active at the moment?

	Much more important	Some-what more important	No more or less important	Some-what less important	Much less important	Don't know		MORE	LESS
Week 1	22%	40%	29%	3%	1%	3%		62%	5%
Week 2	21%	37%	32%	3%	2%	4%		59%	5%
Week 3	23%	40%	29%	4%	1%	3%		63%	5%
Sig diff	No	No	No	No	Yes (w2)	No		Yes (w2)	No

How else has coronavirus changed feelings about physical activity? (Open response)

Top reasons (>5%) given from 585 responses:

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Increased awareness of need to exercise / desire to do more	52%	56%	n/a
Scared or worried to go out	16%	14%	n/a
Important for improving mental health	10%	9%	n/a
Less motivation to do exercise / exercising less	5%	7%	n/a
Can't go out / stuck at home	7%	6%	n/a

Week 3 Survey carried out by Savanta ComRes over 17th to 20th April 2020. Data is weighted to be representative of adults in England by age, gender, region, social grade and the estimated households with children under 16.

Tables

17-20 April 2020

Physical Activity Behaviour – Children

Average daily time spent doing physical activity
(average per child in household)

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Sig diff
Nothing	12%	8%	10%	No
Some, but less than half an hour	36%	35%	36%	No
Between half an hour and an hour	38%	38%	39%	No
More than an hour	14%	18%	14%	No
SOME	88%	92%	90%	No

Physical Activity Behaviour – Children

Is this more or less than usual?

	A lot more	A bit more	Neither more or less	A bit less	A lot less		MORE	LESS
Week 1	7%	23%	31%	20%	18%		30%	38%
Week 2	8%	27%	29%	17%	18%		35%	35%
Week 3	7%	25%	29%	18%	20%		32%	38%
Sig diff	No	No	No	No	No		No	No

Sig diff: Indicates whether changes this wave are statistically significant compared to previous waves.

Tables

17-20 April 2020

Adults Physical Activity Levels - Demographics

	% doing 30 mins on 5+ days - week 1	% doing 30 mins on 5+ days - week 2	% doing 30 mins on 5+ days - week 3	Sig diff
ALL	33%	32%	32%	No
Male	32%	35%	35%	No
Female	35%	29%	29%	Yes (wI)
16-34	34%	31%	33%	No
35-54	34%	31%	29%	Yes (wI)
55+	32%	33%	34%	No
ABC1	35%	35%	34%	No
C2DE	32%	29%	29%	No
Children in house	36%	30%	31%	Yes (wI)
No children in house	31%	33%	33%	No
Other caring responsibilities at home	32%	32%	30%	
Longstanding condition or illness	26%	25%	23%	No
No longstanding condition or illness	36%	35%	36%	No
NEW: Access to private outdoor space	n/a	n/a	33%	
NEW: No access to private outdoor space	n/a	n/a	28%	
NE	38%	34%	43%	
NW	37%	34%	33%	
Y+H	40%	30%	32%	
WM	34%	35%	33%	
EM	28%	32%	34%	
E	35%	33%	33%	
L	26%	31%	23%	
SE	33%	33%	33%	
SW	32%	29%	34%	
Urban	32%	32%	30%	
Rural	39%	33%	40%	

Learn more

COVID-19 Briefing

If you are interested in any of the data included in this briefing, or if you have questions regarding the survey, please email: insight@sportengland.org

You can access the full tables for the survey on the link below:

<http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/sport-england-survey-into-adult-physical-activity-attitudes-and-behaviour/>

