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**Record one million more people active in England with evidence showing mental health benefits of activity**

* **Survey shows highest number of active people ever recorded and lowest ever level of people doing less than 30 minutes of activity a week.**
* **Improvements driven by women and older adults.**
* **Active people report higher levels of mental wellbeing and are more likely to be satisfied with their life, feel happier and less anxious.**
* **Those benefits are still less likely to be accessed by less affluent people, where lower activity and higher inactivity rates remain.**

Sport England has today published the latest official statistics from the Active Lives Survey, the most comprehensive snapshot of the nation’s sport and physical activity habits, based on a sample of almost 180,000 respondents.

The results show the highest level of activity ever recorded – 1,015,700 more people are active now, compared to when the survey started in 2015. Active means meeting the Chief Medical Officer’s recommended amount of 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a week.

The report also makes clear the mental health benefits of being active. When asked to rate their mental health on a scale of 0-10, active people reported feeling:

* More satisfied with their lives.
* Happier.
* More likely to feel the things they do in life are worthwhile.
* Less anxious.

Spanning the period May 2018 – May 2019, today’s survey also shows that the number of adults doing less than 30 minutes of physical activity a week has decreased by 131,700 since 2015.

The decreasing inactivity levels are driven by women and adults aged 55 and over, groups Sport England has focussed on in its strategy Towards an Active Nation with campaigns such as This Girl Can, a £10 million fund for projects that support people 55 and over to get active and by supporting opportunities for running such as its £3 million investment into parkrun.

**Tim Hollingsworth, Chief Executive at Sport England said:** “It’s really excellent news that a record number of people are now active every week and that we’re also seeing a significant decrease in the amount of inactive people.

“It shows us that efforts to help more people get active are starting to make a real difference, particularly for older adults, women and those with a disability or long-term health condition.

“But we can’t be complacent. Within the overall positive picture of these figures is a sobering reality – if you are well-off you are far more likely to be active than if you’re on a low income or less affluent.

“While there are complex barriers that stop less well-off people from getting active, this is an unacceptable inequality and one we’re starting to address in the work we are doing across the country – including piloting programmes in 12 local areas to tackle inequality.

“Being active has positive benefits for mental and physical wellbeing, strengthens communities and helps build confidence and resilience. We urge anyone working towards helping people live healthier lives – whether that’s government policy makers or health professionals – to consider physical activity as a vehicle to help drive positive outcomes, so that everyone can benefit.”

**The Active Lives Survey shows:**

**Women:**

* Weights, interval and gym sessions have seen significant increases in popularity for women.
* There are 142,000 fewer inactive women over the last twelve months (5,948,100 women are currently inactive), and an additional 254,200 more active women in the last twelve months (14,103,900 women are currently active).
* The gender gap remains, with men more active than women, however the gap is narrowing.

**Older adults:**

* Running, weight sessions and gym sessions have grown in popularity for this age group.
* There are 100,700 fewer inactive adults aged 55+ (5,592,400 older people are currently inactive), and an additional 506,700 more active over 55s in the last twelve months (9,137,800 currently active).

**Disability / long-term health conditions:**

There has been an increase in activity levels (216,300 more) and a decrease in inactivity levels (107,800 fewer) amongst people with a disability or long-term health condition, showing efforts to support these groups are working. However, they are still twice as likely to be inactive than people without a condition or disability, so work continues to support and inspire people into physical activity such as the new campaign We Are Undefeatable, led by 15 of the leading health and social care charities and backed with National Lottery funding and expertise by Sport England.

**People in lower socio-economic groups are still less likely to be active.**

* People who are less affluent are the most likely to be inactive (33%) and the least likely to be active (54%) compared to those who are the most well-off (who are 16% inactive and 72% active).
* A complex backdrop of economic and health inequalities magnifies the impact of barriers to getting active felt by all, such as confidence or knowing where to go, through to cost, lack of time and appropriate opportunity.

**Fitness and activity trends were also revealed in the survey:**

* Walking for leisure or travel remains the most popular activity, with 477,800 more people walking for travel (15,247,600 people walk for travel) and 514,000 more walking for leisure (19,162,200 people walk for leisure).
* Fitness activities are becoming even more popular, especially for women and those in older groups, with 398,000 more people taking part (13,766,300 people do fitness activities). Weight sessions are increasingly popular, with this type of fitness being easily adapted for different groups, e.g. strength and balance for older people.
* Yoga and Pilates continue to grow in popularity.
* Racket sports continues to decrease in popularity (111,400 fewer people taking part), including a significant drop in people playing tennis (85,300 fewer people taking part).
* Netball enjoyed a growth in popularity with 50,200 more people taking part (319,400 people play netball), with a diverse audience of younger and older women attracted through grassroots programmes like Back to Netball.

**Nigel Adams, Minister for Sport and Civil Society, said:** "Every single person in this country should have the opportunity to take part in sport and activity. It is not only good for our physical health but it also boosts our mental wellbeing and makes people happier.

"Sport England is rightly focusing on further increasing participation so that people from all backgrounds can get, and enjoy being active."

***Notes for Editors***

***About the Active Lives survey***

*Results are published twice a year. The Active Lives survey was launched in 2015 and measures activity in its broadest sense and includes activities such as walking, cycling for travel and dance, rather than just sport alone to reflect the Government’s Strategy Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation.*

*177,876 people aged 16+ completed the survey between May 2018 and May 2019. Active Lives is a national survey conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Sport England. It also offers a vast amount of local data which can be used to develop local projects and policies.*

*The Active Lives Adult Survey is a push-to-web survey sent out to a randomly selected sample of households across England.*

*Confidence intervals apply to the percentages and population estimates presented in the report and report tables. Confidence intervals for the measures presented in the report can be found in the linked report tables. Confidence intervals indicate that if repeated samples were taken and confidence intervals computed for each sample, 95% of the intervals would contain the value.*

*To find out more about Active Lives and see the full results in full, go to* [www.sportengland.org/activelivesoct19](http://www.sportengland.org/activelivesoct19)

***About Sport England***

*Sport England is a public body and invests up to £300 million National Lottery and government money each year in projects and programmes that help people get active and play sport.*

*It wants everyone in England, regardless of age, background, or level of ability, to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity. That’s why a lot of its work is specifically focused on helping people who do no, or very little, physical activity and groups who are typically less active - like women, disabled people and people on lower incomes.*

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