



Physical activity data tool: September 2017 update

Main findings

- Nearly two-thirds of adults report being physically active in 2015/16
- More than a fifth of adults report being physically inactive in 2015/16
- Men are more likely to report being physically active than women
- The proportion of adults that report being physically active decreases with age.

This statistical commentary presents baseline data for two new physical activity indicators available in Public Health England's (PHE) [Physical Activity tool](#) and [Public Health Outcomes Framework](#) (PHOF). The indicators present estimates of the percentage of adults that are physically active and inactive in England in 2015/16. These new indicators provide an update, in terms of data source and definition, to the historical physical activity indicators previously available.

Summary

This statistical release presents baseline data for two new physical activity indicators (2.13i - Percentage of physically active adults - current method and 2.13ii - Percentage of physically inactive adults - current method). These indicators are a replacement for the previous **Physical Activity tool / PHOF** indicators (2.13i - Percentage of physically active adults - historical method and 2.13ii - Percentage of physically inactive adults - historical method).

New indicators were required as the source data for the historical physical activity indicators, Sport England's Active People Survey, has been discontinued and replaced with **Active Lives**, which uses a completely different survey methodology. Due to the change of source data and the decision by PHE to align the new indicators with the **UK Chief Medical Officer (CMO) guidelines** and classify adults as aged 19+ rather than 16+, the new physical activity estimates should not be directly compared with the historical indicators.

Percentage of physically active adults – current method

Physically active adults are those who report doing at least 150 moderate intensity equivalent (MIE) minutes of physical activity per week.

- In 2015/16 it is estimated that 64.9% of adults in England are physically active.
- Men are more likely to report being physically active than women (67.8% and 62.2% respectively).
- The percentage of adults that report being physically active decreases with age, from 76.6% amongst 19-24 year olds and 24.7% amongst 85+ year olds.

Percentage of physically inactive adults – current method

Physically inactive adults are those who report doing less than 30 moderate intensity equivalent (MIE) minutes of physical activity per week.

- In 2015/16 it is estimated that 22.3% of adults in England are physically inactive.
- Women are more likely to report being physically inactive than men (23.9% and 20.6% respectively).
- The percentage of adults that report being physically inactive increases with age, from 14.2% amongst 19-24 year olds and 63.5% amongst 85+ year olds.

Inequalities

Data for both indicators is available for England at national, regional, county and district geographies. Additional data is also available at England level for ethnicity, disability, working status, socioeconomic class and IMD 2015 deprivation deciles. Full details are available from the Inequalities tab within each indicator.

Government strategy

The government is committed to reducing physical inactivity and the 2015 [Sporting Future](#) strategy document reiterated the government's aim to increase the number of people meeting the CMO guidelines on physical activity* and reduce the number of people deemed to be inactive by being active for less than 30 minutes a week.

Public Health England has produced new physical activity indicators to support local monitoring of performance against the government Sport Strategy and [CMO guidelines](#).

This statistical release presents baseline data for new physical activity indicators and should not be compared with trend data from the historical indicators available within the [Physical Activity tool](#) and [PHOF](#).

*The CMO recommends that adults (aged 19+) undertake 150 minutes (2.5hrs) of moderate activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more.

New source data and definition

In November 2015, Sport England replaced the Active People Survey with Active Lives to measure participation in sport and physical activity across England. Public Health England has previously used data from the Active People Survey to report on two physical activity indicators in the [PHOF](#). These indicators have been updated and replaced with Active Lives as the data source.

The Active Lives survey was conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Sport England which commissioned the survey with additional funding from Public Health England, Arts Council England and the Department of Transport.

The data presented in this document was collected between 16th November 2015 and 15th November 2016, using either an online or paper self-report questionnaire. The analysis presented is for adults aged 19 and over, resulting in a total sample size of 192,158. Further details on the sampling methodology can be found in the [Technical Summary year 1 report](#).

Due to changes in survey methodology (e.g. questionnaire mode / design / question ordering) and indicator definition (i.e. adults classified as 19+ years), the new physical activity estimates should not be directly compared with the historical indicators.

Background

The **Physical Activity tool** brings together data on physical activity at local level for England. It includes physical activity data; including walking and cycling, as well as information on related risk factors and conditions such as obesity and diabetes. The aim of the tool is to help local areas monitor the health of their local population, support needs assessment, local planning, and commissioning of infrastructure and services that encourage and support people to be physically active.

Further details of how the indicators have been calculated are available from the Definitions tab within the **Physical Activity tool**.

Similar estimates for physical activity and inactivity have been published by Sport England. Sport England released their Year 1 estimates of physical activity from Active Lives in January, with their main measure reporting physical activity estimates for those aged 16+ years and excluding gardening activity. The new indicators for physical activity presented here classify adults as 19+ years and include gardening activity in accordance with recommendations from the CMO. Therefore these two sets of indicators are not comparable.

Further details of the Sport England Active Lives Year 1 report are available here:

<https://www.sportengland.org/media/11498/active-lives-survey-yr-1-report.pdf>

Further details of the Active Lives methodology are available here:

<https://www.sportengland.org/research/active-lives-survey/method-behind-active-lives/>

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