

# Research into young people's participation in youth activities

## The short version

Some young people are more likely than others to get involved in youth activities like youth clubs, sports, art groups and volunteering.

We wanted to understand how to encourage more young people to get involved in youth activities – so we asked lots of young people! They told us they wanted or needed six things:

1. The chance to have more of a say and control over the types of youth activities
2. More information on what is available to them locally
3. To make it easier and less scary to try new things
4. High quality, varied activities so there is something for everyone
5. Making sure practical things like costs or travel don't get in the way
6. Everyone to feel welcome, included and supported.

That's the quick version. But read on if you also want to know more about who is more or less likely to take part in youth activities, why that is, and how we figured this out. Or find the full report here : <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/barriers-and-enablers-to-participation-in-youth-activities-research>.

## About this research – and who we spoke with

We looked at what 2,000 young people who answered an online survey said about youth activities. Then we spoke to 74 young people to hear more. All the young people were carefully chosen so we had a mix of different backgrounds – different ages, genders, ethnicities and sexualities, living in different places, from poorer and richer households, and young people with disabilities and health conditions.



That means there's a good chance we spoke to someone pretty similar to you, as well as lots of people who will be very different to you. The findings from the research are based on what all these young people told us.

This research was done for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. They are the part of the government in charge of activities you and other young people have access to outside of school. They wanted to understand ways to get more young people involved in these activities.

## Who is more or less likely to take part in youth activities?

We explored if different types of young people are more or less likely to take part in different types of youth activities. You can see the findings on the next page.

**How to read the table:** The symbols show if a certain type of young person is more or less likely to participate. If we look at ‘younger’ groups in the age category we can see they are more likely to take part in groups or clubs than older groups. But younger groups are less likely to be involved in volunteering. Young and older groups are just as likely to be involved in social action (things like signing a petition or joining a protest).

### Table symbol meanings

Less likely ✖

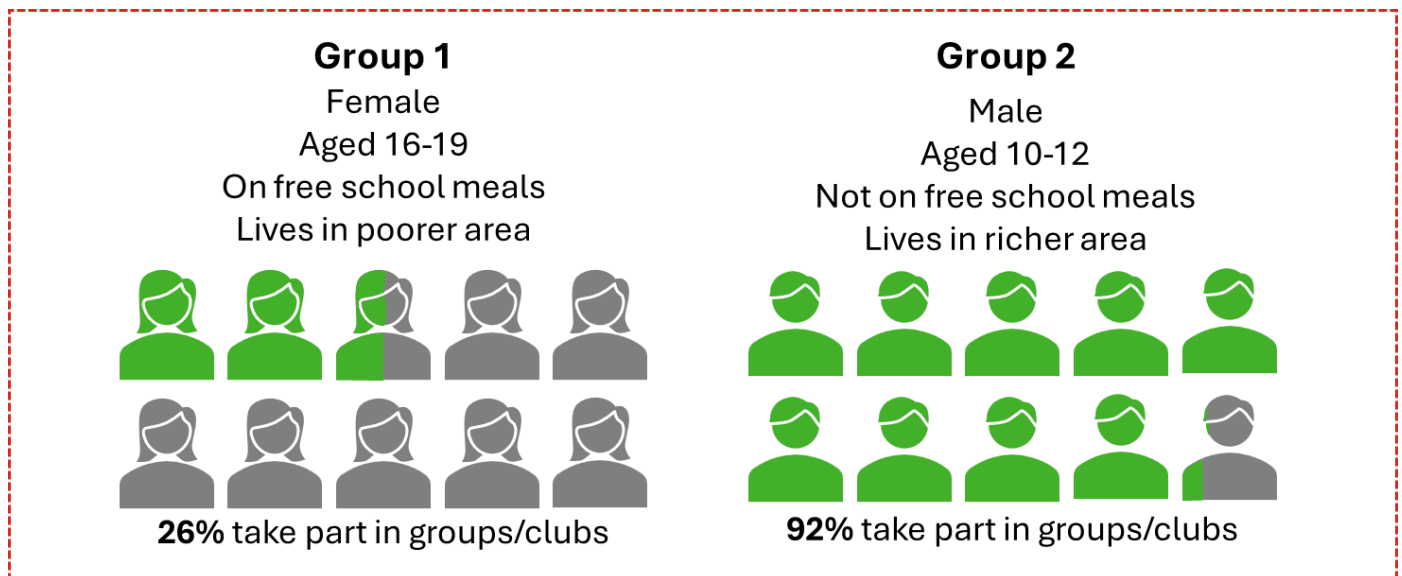
More likely 👍

No difference =

	Groups/ clubs	Volunt- eering	Social action	Sports	Art/music	Youth clubs
<b>Age</b>						
Younger	👍	✖	=	👍	👍	=
Older	✖	👍	=	✖	✖	=
<b>Gender</b>						
Female	✖	👍	👍	✖	👍	=
Male	👍	✖	✖	👍	✖	=
<b>Free school meals</b>						
Yes	✖	=	✖	✖	=	👍
No	👍	=	👍	👍	=	✖
<b>Richer/poorer areas</b>						
Poorer	✖	✖	=	✖	✖	=
Richer	👍	👍	=	👍	👍	=
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
White	=	=	✖	=	=	=
Ethnic minority	=	=	👍	=	=	=
<b>Disability</b>						
With a disability	=	=	=	✖	=	=
No disability	=	=	=	👍	=	=
<b>LGBTQ+</b>						
Yes	=	=	=	✖	=	=
No	=	=	=	👍	=	=

Plus we looked at what happens if we consider multiple characteristics together. How likely is a young person to participate based on a combination of their age, gender, whether they get free school meals, and where they live? On the next page you can see we found a really big difference between some groups!

Loads of people in Group 1 aren't taking part at all but almost all of Group 2 are. So how might we encourage more people in Group 1 to take part? The rest of this summary covers useful information for coming up with ideas.



## Why do young people get involved? And why don't they?







The survey asked young people why they do or don't take part in activities. The images below show what they said about groups and clubs. The bigger the text, the more young people gave that answer.

We can see that "I enjoy it" was the most common reason for taking part. Young people gave lots other reasons too. The most common reason for not taking part was "not interested" but we can see lots of other things stop young people taking part too – like being too busy, too shy, costs and struggling to get there.



## So, how can we improve things?

A big focus of the research was on how to get more young people taking part in activities – and how to make sure they are happier with them. We found six key ways to help make that happen.

What young people want or need	Some ways to do this
 <b>The chance to have more of a say and control over youth activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collecting and listening to feedback</li><li>• Letting young people shape what happens in their area through things like youth councils and surveys</li></ul>
 <b>More information on what is available to them</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Share lots of information in lots of ways</li><li>• Schools and colleges should help with this</li><li>• Open days to discover new things</li></ul>
 <b>To make it easier and less scary to try new things</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chances to meet activity staff before</li><li>• Running activities in places they know</li><li>• Tasters and trials to try new things</li><li>• Beginner-friendly activities</li></ul>
 <b>High quality, varied activities so there is something for everyone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Activities that suit different interests</li><li>• Activities that appeal to older groups</li><li>• Good quality staff, spaces and equipment matter too</li></ul>
 <b>Making sure practical things like costs or travel don't get in the way</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Free or cheap activities</li><li>• Sensible locations and good transport options</li><li>• Physically accessible for those with disabilities</li><li>• Help with money and travel for those who need it</li></ul>
 <b>Everyone to feel welcome, included and supported</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make sure it's a nice environment</li><li>• Make sure all young people know the activities are for people like them</li><li>• Targeted activities for different groups of young people to help them feel comfortable</li><li>• Support around mental health and any other problems</li></ul>

## What happens next?

The government will be publishing a new National Youth Strategy later in 2025. A big focus in the strategy will be getting more young people involved in youth activities and happy with what is available to them. These findings give them lots to think about!

If you want to help improve things in your area then hopefully these findings are useful to you too. You now know why young people like to take part in activities, some of the reasons they don't, who is more or less likely to get involved, and some things that could help.

**Thank you for reading this summary.**

**We hope you found it interesting!**