

Activity Alliance Annual Disability and Activity Survey

2022-23

Research briefing





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Introduction

Now in its fourth year, our Annual Disability and Activity Survey continues to track disabled people's perceptions and experiences of sport and activity. This evidence helps us, and our partners, achieve fairness for disabled people.

Our survey complements Sport England's Active Lives Adult Survey. It provides greater detail on issues of importance to disabled people. Active Lives is the authoritative source of data on activity levels and participation and can be found at sportengland.org

The survey was conducted by IFF Research from October to December 2022. 1,974 disabled and non-disabled adults aged 16+ took part. In this study, we defined a disabled person as anyone who has a long-term health condition, impairment or illness that has a substantial effect on normal daily activities. 28 disabled people took part in a series of online workshops to discuss the findings and ideas for future action. We thank our participants for their time and expertise.

The report's findings are split into seven themes. These were developed from conversations with disabled people, and feedback from organisations that deliver and promote activity.

The themes are:

1. Participation and experience.
2. Physical health and healthcare professionals.
3. The rising cost-of-living.
4. Mental health and wellbeing.
5. Representation.
6. Co-production and influence.
7. Outdoor spaces and active travel.

This document is a summary of the report's key findings and actions.

The full report is available on our website. It includes additional findings and data to support our messages. Visit activityalliance.org.uk/annual-survey to view our Annual Disability and Activity Survey 2022-23 full report.



Further information

Please contact our research team to discuss how to access, interpret and use the data:



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1. Participation and experience



We are not seeing enough positive trends in disabled people's perceptions and experiences of being active.

Sport England Active Lives data from April 2023 showed that 41% (5.1 million) disabled people were inactive, compared to 20.9% of non-disabled people. This is a decrease for disabled people from 42.4% in 2020-21, but a slight increase from 39.8% in 2018-19 before the pandemic.

The table below shows that for disabled people, measures for experience, participation, and for some attitudes, have not improved since 2019, or since last year. Non-disabled people have seen more positive changes.

 Positive change  Negative change  No change	Disabled people			Non-disabled people		
	2022-23	Change since 2019	Change since 2021	2022-23	Change since 2019	Change since 2021
Participation						
Participation in organised activities	22%			36%		
Opportunity to be active	41%			70%		
Experience						
Enjoyment of activities	66%			78%		
Agreeing activity leader met needs	71%			83%		
Being able to find all the information I needed before taking part	73%			83%		
Advertising reassured me I'd be welcome	68%			58%		
The activity was suitable for my level of ability	83%			92%		
Attitudes						
Agreeing sport is for 'someone like me'	30%			65%		
Agreeing physical activity and exercise is for 'someone like me'	50%			82%		
Agreeing sport is 'for disabled people'	65%			65%		
Agreeing physical activity and exercise is 'for disabled people'	66%			68%		
Wanting to be more active	77%			54%		



Activity Alliance's commitment:

We will collaborate with others to ensure inclusion principles drive physical activity planning and delivery, effectively targeting and engaging people who are not as active as they would like to be. As the leading voice for disabled people in sport and activity, we will push for greater investment and policy change.



Our ask to sport and physical activity organisations:

Support us in changing attitudes and embedding inclusive practices so disabled people have more opportunities to play, work and thrive in your organisation. Increase availability and awareness of accessible and inclusive opportunities providing better, more meaningful experiences.



Further reading and useful resources

- Use [Activity Alliance's ten principles and inclusive communications guidance](#) to advertise sessions and activities.
- Promote the [Inclusive Activity Programme eLearning module](#) for deliverers to provide more inclusive experiences.
- Share inclusive opportunities through the [Every Body Moves website](#), developed by ParalympicsGB in partnership with Toyota.



2. Physical health and healthcare professionals



Healthcare professionals have a key role to play in supporting disabled people improve physical health and overcome fears about risk.

- Disabled people are twice as likely to feel less able to be active because of changes to their physical health during the pandemic (75% vs 30% of non-disabled people).
- Improving or maintaining physical health (64%) is the top motivation to be active.
- GPs, doctors, or nurses are the top preferred source of advice.



Activity Alliance's commitment:

We will work with key partners in the health sector to influence healthcare professionals to have greater impact on disabled people, activity levels and physical health and wellbeing. We will steer this work through lived experiences, insight, and understanding the barriers in health more.



Our ask to sport and physical activity organisations:

Promote positive and consistent messages that activity is welcoming and safe for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions. Provide greater reassurance on being active for people whose physical health was affected by the pandemic.

“ I have anxiety around being active and hurting myself, because I haven't had the input from my physios that I usually would. I had them for years until 2020. I'd say I'm thinking about doing this and they'd tell me how I can adapt it. But now, I'm just on my own.

Disabled person

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Further reading and useful resources

- **Moving Medicine's risk assessment** helps address concerns around risk. It is a consensus statement to help us understand what safety advice healthcare professionals should give to people in clinical practice.
- **Guidance from the Chief Medical Officers in the UK** on the amount and type of physical activity people should be doing to improve their health.
- **We Are Undeatable** is a movement supporting people with a range of long-term health conditions, developed by 15 leading health and social care charities.
- **Chartered Society of Physiotherapists Stronger My Way training and resources** are useful, and there is a forum to share information and experiences.

3. The rising cost-of-living



Disabled people continue to be hit harder by the rising cost-of-living and extra costs.

- 37% of disabled people say the cost-of-living crisis has affected how active they are, vs 32% of non-disabled people.
- Only 19% of disabled people said cost did not make a difference to how active they are.
- Memberships and concessions and having more disposable income would have the most impact for disabled and non-disabled people.
- Disabled people were more likely to say low-cost ways to be active, help with transport or assistance costs, and social and healthcare budgets would have an impact.



Activity Alliance's commitment:

We will increase awareness of the financial challenges some disabled people are facing and promote ideas for low-cost accessible activities.



Our ask to sport and physical activity organisations:

Recognise the challenges disabled people face and be creative with initiatives that support low-cost participation. Share your resources and approaches and be flexible with costs or fees.

“ The cost-of-living crisis unfortunately means that everything we considered fundamental, or a foundation is now a luxury. It's more difficult to access because of our disability - there's a lot of cost to having a disability.

Disabled person

”



Further reading and useful resources

- [Get Out Get Active resources](#) help with ways to reach and engage the very least active disabled people and non-disabled people in your communities.
- [Sport England's cost of living guidance and insight](#) advises on how to get people active at a low cost, and how facilities and organisations can adapt to keep energy costs down.



4. Mental health and wellbeing



For many disabled people, mental wellbeing is worse than ever.

- Disabled people were nearly three times more likely than non-disabled people to feel lonely always or often (23% vs 8% of non-disabled people).
- Two-thirds of disabled people who felt lonely agreed that being active could help them feel less lonely (65%).
- Disabled people were more likely to say the rising cost-of-living has reduced how much they socialise (60% vs 48% of non-disabled people).
- 78% and 90% of disabled and non-disabled people who take part in activities with others prefer to take part with a mix of disabled and non-disabled people, showing support for inclusive activities.



Activity Alliance's commitment:

We will engage with wellbeing experts to inform the support we offer to partners. We will promote how activity can help to improve disabled people's wellbeing and reduce loneliness.



Our ask to sport and physical activity organisations:

Review the activities you offer to ensure you prioritise mental wellbeing throughout. Improve knowledge and skills on inclusive activity as a way to tackle loneliness.



Further reading and useful resources

- Learn from **Get Out Get Active resources** on providing inclusive activities.
- Use Mind's resources including **Mental health and physical activity toolkit**, **Mental Health Awareness in Sport eLearning course**, and **supporting young people's wellbeing during physical activity handbook**.



5. Representation

Disabled people are half as likely to see ‘people like me’ both playing and working in sport and activity.



- Only a third of disabled people agree that they see ‘people like me’ playing sport and being active (32% vs 65% of non-disabled people).
- One in five agree that they see ‘people like me’ working in sport and physical activity (22% vs 44% of non-disabled people).
- 12% of disabled people wanted the opportunity to become a coach or have a role in delivering physical activity. This increases to 26% of disabled people who were taking part in organised activities, and to 31% of young disabled people.



Activity Alliance’s commitment:

We will support organisations to measure and improve their workforce’s representation. We will improve the diversity of our own spokespeople and ambassadors.



Our ask to sport and physical activity organisations:

Ensure your workforce and workplaces become more inclusive and accessible. Increase the number of disabled people involved in your sport, whether taking part, volunteering, or working in paid roles.



Further reading and useful resources

- Use the [Get Out Get Active Volunteer Management Toolkit](#) and [Inclusive workforce practices resource](#) to make your workforce more inclusive.
- [Disability Inclusion Club Hub](#) supports clubs and groups to improve opportunities for disabled people.



6. Co-production and influence



Disabled people want more influence on the policies that affect them and the activities they are involved in.

- Eight in ten agree that disabled people should have more of a say in policies that affect them (81% vs 73% of non-disabled people).
- Only one in ten disabled people have been given the opportunity to influence or design the activities they are involved in (10% vs 14% of non-disabled people).
- Almost half of disabled people (48%) who are taking part in organised activities and half of young disabled people (49%) want to be involved in influencing the types of activities they could take part in.



Activity Alliance's commitment:

We will increase our own co-design and co-production understanding and embed it more often. We will champion effective engagement with disabled people in sport and policy and share good practice for others to use.



Our ask to sport and physical activity organisations:

Learn about and grow your co-design and co-production activities, so disabled people can influence the activities and spaces they want to access.

“ If you are developing an inclusive programme, getting the voices of lived experience should become common practice and second nature. It's a real opportunity for disabled people to showcase their knowledge.

Disabled person

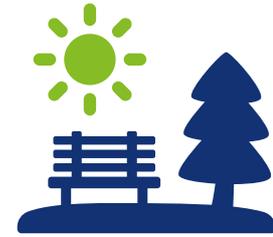
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Further reading and useful resources

- Use [Disability Rights UK's co-production page](#) and [Mind's 'Involving people with lived experience in the design and delivery of your work' resource](#).
- Use [Activity Alliance's effective engagement factsheets](#) to improve your connections with disabled people.

7. Outdoor spaces and active travel



Disabled people must have greater access to travel to and be active in more places and spaces, especially outdoors.

- Disabled people are less likely to be active almost everywhere compared to non-disabled people, apart from at home. For outdoor spaces like parks, countryside, and woodland, 43% said this was a place they were usually active, vs 57% of non-disabled people.
- Disabled people were most likely to say that they prefer being active in outdoor spaces, indoors at leisure centres, or at home without online or digital tools.
- Improving outdoor spaces like parks and neighbourhoods is a key area where disabled people want to see improvements.



Activity Alliance's commitment:

We will increase our influencing work to support commissioning, policy, and planning so that outdoor spaces and active travel investments are inclusive and accessible.



Our ask to sport and physical activity organisations:

Local commissioning and investments must improve active environments and active travel. They need to work for people with the most barriers to accessing outdoor spaces.



Further reading and useful resources

- Use [Sport England's Active Design Guidance](#) to make outdoor spaces more inclusive.
- Read the [Disabled Citizens' Inquiry report and recommendations](#), giving disabled people a voice in walking and wheeling policy and practice.
- View the [Sustrans and Arup guide on cycling for everyone](#), and learn about the challenges with access to outdoor spaces with [Groundwork UK Out of Bounds report](#).



Visit [activityalliance.org.uk/
annual-survey](https://activityalliance.org.uk/annual-survey) to view our
Annual Disability and Activity
Survey 2022-23 full report.

The full report provides more data and insight
on the topics presented in this summary.



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**This document is also available in Word format. Please contact
us if you need more support. Report published in June 2023.**

Photo credit: British Blind Sport, CP Sport, Dwarf Sports Association UK.

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