



Physical activity patterns – Adults in England

General Trends

The 2008 Health Survey for England¹ (HSE) focused on physical activity and fitness. Adults were asked to recall their physical activity over recent weeks and objective measures of physical activity (accelerometers) were used for the first time in a national general population survey based in people's homes. Using self-report data the HSE found:

- In 2008, 39% of men and 29% of women aged 16 and over met the Government's 2004 recommendations for physical activity².
 - 52% men and 34% women aged 16-24 years
 - 43% men and 34% women aged 35-44 years
 - 31% men and 27% women aged 55-64 years
 - 8% men and 5% women aged 75+ years.

Based on the results of the accelerometer study:

- 6% of men and 4% of women achieved the Government's recommended physical activity level
- on average, men spent 31 minutes in moderate or vigorous activity in total per day
- women spent an average of 24 minutes in moderate or vigorous physical activity
- only about a third of activity time was accrued in bouts of ten minutes or longer - which count towards the Government's recommendations

- men and women aged 16 to 34 were most likely to reach the recommended physical activity level (11% and 8% respectively)
- the proportion of both men and women meeting the recommendations fell in the older age groups.

2011 UK physical activity guidelines

In July 2011, the Chief Medical Officers from the four home countries in the UK published new guidelines for physical activity participation³. Data is now emerging reporting the proportion of adults in England meeting these new guidelines. Note: these data should **not** be compared to previously reported results due to changes in the way in which physical activity has been measured and analysed to assess the proportion of adults meeting the latest physical activity guidelines.

Health Survey for England results

Initial results from the 2012 Health Survey for England have been released⁴. Full results will be available in December 2013. The latest results showed:

- in 2012, 61% of adults (66% of men and 56% of women) met the 2011 UK guidelines for physical activity.

The 2012 and 2008 HSE data were also analysed in such a way (excluding new occupational activity questions which were only



BHF National Centre
physical activity+health

Funded by



asked in 2012) which enables a comparison to be made of the proportion of adults meeting the 2011 physical activity guidelines across the two survey years. Based on this there appears to be little change in population levels of physical activity:

- the proportion of HSE 2012 participants aged 19 and over who met the 2011 guidelines is 59% (65% of men and 54% of women)
- the proportion of HSE 2008 participants aged 19 and over who met the 2011 guidelines is 59% (65% of men and 53% of women).

Active People Survey results

Data collected in the Active People Survey 2012/13⁵ has also been analysed to assess the proportion of adults meeting the 2011 physical activity guidelines. Using this data, during the period of January 2012 to January 2013:

- 56% of adults (61% of men and 51% of women) met the 2011 UK guidelines for physical activity.
 - 72% of adults aged 16-18 years
 - 66% of adults aged 19-34 years
 - 59% of adults aged 35-54 years
 - 52% of adults aged 55-64 years
 - 37% of adults aged 65+ years.

Participation in sport

The Active People Survey 2012/13⁵, measured the number of adults aged 16 and over in England who participated in at least 30 minutes of sport at moderate intensity at least once a week. It found that:

- during the period April 2012 to April 2013, 15.3 million people participated in sport at least once a week
- 1.4 million more people were participating in sport at least once a week compared to 2005/6 when 13.9 million adults played sport at least once a week
- 35.2% of adults reported doing 30 minutes of sport at least once a week - 40.1% of men and 30.5% of women
- 54.7% of adults aged 16-25 years took part in at least one sport session a week, compared to 31.4% of older adults
- more disabled people were taking part in sport - latest results show 18.2% are playing sport regularly, up from 15.1% in 2005/6.

Note: surveys may differ in the inclusion of activities to meet their definition of sport and physical activity. For a list of sports included in the Active People Survey 7 visit the Sport England website.

Travel

The 2012 National Travel Survey (NTS)⁶ presents information on personal travel in Great Britain collected from nearly 8,000 households, covering over 18,000 individuals.

Key findings

- In 2012, the average number of walking trips was 212 trips per person per year compared with 292 trips in 1995/97, a decrease of 27% and the lowest trip rate over this time period.
- Of all trips less than one mile in length 77% were walking trips.
- 22% of all trips were made on foot.
- There has been a small drop in the number of bicycle trips per person per year from 18 trips in 1995/97 to 16 trips in 2012.
- The average bicycle trip length increasing from 2.3 miles in 1995/97 to 3.2 miles in 2012.

Sedentary behaviour

Sedentary behaviour is not simply defined as a lack of physical activity. It is a group of behaviours that occur whilst sitting or lying down and that require very low energy expenditure. Using accelerometer data, the 2008 Health Survey for England found that:

- between the ages of 16-64, sedentary time remains relatively stable with both men and women averaging about 9.5 hours of sedentary time per day
- between the ages of 65-74, sedentary time in both men and women increased to 10 hours per day or more
- by age 75+ years, individuals were sedentary for 11 hours per day
- on average, adults watched 2.8 hours of TV on weekdays and 3.2 (men) and 3.0 (women) hours per day at the weekend
- daily TV viewing increased with age in both men and women.

References

1. Joint Health Surveys Unit (2010). Health Survey for England 2008: Physical activity and fitness. The Information Centre: Leeds
2. Department of Health (2004) At least five a week: Evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health. A report from the Chief Medical Officer.
3. The Department of Health. Start active, stay active: A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries' chief medical officers. London, England: The Department of Health; 2011.
4. Joint Health Surveys Unit (2013). Health Survey for England 2012: Is the adult population in England active enough? Initial results. The Health and Social Care Information Centre: London.
5. Sport England (2013). Active People Survey 7, Quarter 2. Sport England: London.
6. Department for Transport (2013). National Travel Survey 2012. Department for Transport: London.

Last updated September 2013

Published by
British Heart Foundation National Centre (BHFNC)
for Physical Activity and Health, Loughborough University

T: 01509 226421 F: 01509 226420

www.bhfactive.org.uk



@BHFactive



The British Heart Foundation is a registered charity in England and Wales (225971) and Scotland (SC039426).