

Children and Young People Active Outside Survey

August 2021

Antrim Ballymena Children and Young People's
Strategic Partnership Locality Planning Group

In August 2021 the Antrim Ballymena Children and Young People Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) Locality Planning Group (LPG) conducted a Children and Young Peoples and Parents survey, to ascertain children, young people and parent's views on being active outside

Background

In children and young people (CYP), regular physical activity contributes to brain development, learning and attainment, better mental health, a healthy weight, develops muscle strength and builds healthy bones, reduces the risk of disease, manages existing conditions, builds relationships and social skills, improves sleep, builds confidence, encourages movement and co-ordination, improves concentration and improves health and fitness. Therefore, ensuring that all children are as active as possible is important for current and future population health.

However, many children do not achieve the minimum recommended level of physical activity. In children and young people the average level of physical activity reaches a lifetime peak around 5 years old and declines thereafter. Boys are more active than girls at all ages. Achieving higher levels of physical activity in the early years helps maintain higher levels later in childhood, adolescence and into adulthood.

Doing physical activity outside has additional advantages. When children and young people play outdoors, they have fun and benefit from running and chasing which can develop good physical fitness, agility and stamina, jumping and running which can develop bone density, large muscle groups and stability, climbing which can develop coordination, balance and strength, freedom to make noise and let off steam, connection with nature, increased Vitamin D uptake and reduced short sightedness. When children are used to playing outdoors, they are more likely to try new activities, engage with others, solve problems, explore the natural environment, make friends and show resilience.

Northern Area Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) Locality Planning Groups (LPGs) carried out a needs survey with children and young people and parents (CYP) in 2020. Physical activity was identified as a top need by children and young people (CYP) and parents.

During action planning the group decided to focus on encouraging children and young people to get physically active outside.

A sub group was set up to develop actions. One of the actions the sub group decided on was running a survey to ask children, young people and parents about what physical activity they do outside, would they like to do more physical activity outside, what the barriers to doing more are and how these could be overcome.

CYPSP Outcomes

This aligned with CYPSP Outcomes, in particular:

- Children and young people are physically and mentally healthy
- Enjoyment of play and leisure

Methodology

The survey was conducted in partnership with Antrim Ballymena Children & Young Peoples Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) Locality Planning Group (LPG) members and circulated widely, via Survey Monkey, throughout the Northern area to parents of children aged 0-25 and to children and young people 0-25 years. It was promoted through Locality Planning Group member organisations. Parents and children and young people were asked the same questions to identify views around physical activity outside.

Results

- 47 parents completed the survey with a range of ages of children. 30 children and young people completed the survey all within the 11-17 age range. Children of parents completing the survey were evenly split across gender lines. Amongst CYP over double the number of girls completed the survey with 1 non-binary YP completing.
- Most of the CYP and parents lived in Antrim and Newtownabbey council area with some living in Mid & East Antrim and other areas. Approximately 14% of CYP had a disability.
- Most CYP were active between 2 and 16 hours a week. Some CYP were only active between 0-1 hours per week.
- Most CYP were active outside between 2-16 hours per week.
- However, the vast majority of children said they wanted to be more active outside at 87% which tallies with parents at 85%.
- When asked “What physical activities would your child(ren) / you like to do more of outside?” tennis, football, cycling and walking came up as top results for parents and CYP themselves. Parents also highlighted rugby and netball as interests with CYP highlighting swimming and water sports.
- When asked about barriers to doing more physical activity outside the top answers weather, lack of facilities/activities, and safety concerns like safe walking areas, lack of lighting, anti-social behaviour were emphasised by parents and CYP. Parents also additionally emphasised cost, lack of time or poor timings and transport as barriers.
- In overcoming barriers CYP suggested something to help them be more motivated, better weather/ shelter from the weather, doing things with their friends or in a group, and better/more facilities as things that would help. Parents also highlighted better/more facilities in their local area, particularly skate parks, also cycle lanes and tennis courts, along with better timings, cheaper or free facilities/activities and safer facilities i.e. traffic slowing measures especially for cycling and better lighting.
- When asked for other comments CYP wanted more areas to play safely. Parents stressed alternative physical activity to organised sports, the importance of physical activity and need to invest in it, the difficulty of motivating CYP to be active outside and a desire for more local facilities/activities including water sports.

Parents

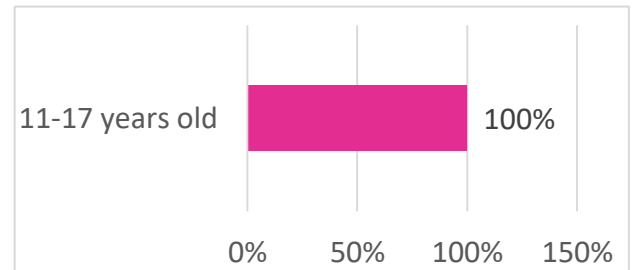
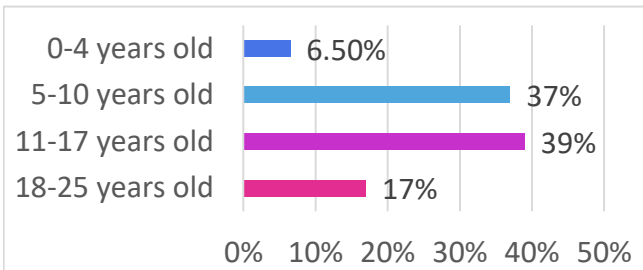
Children & Young People

Number of participants

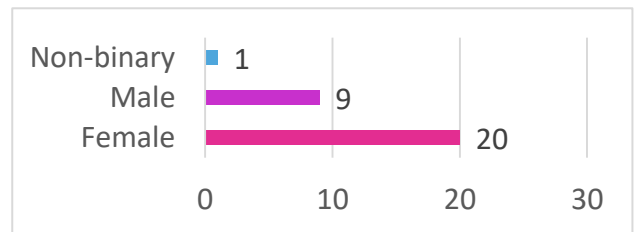
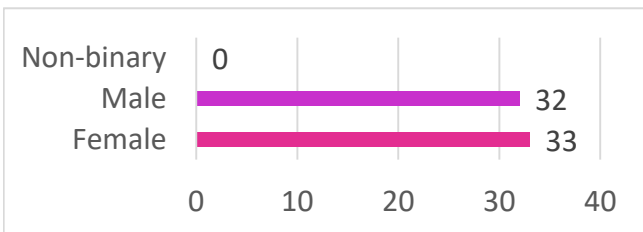
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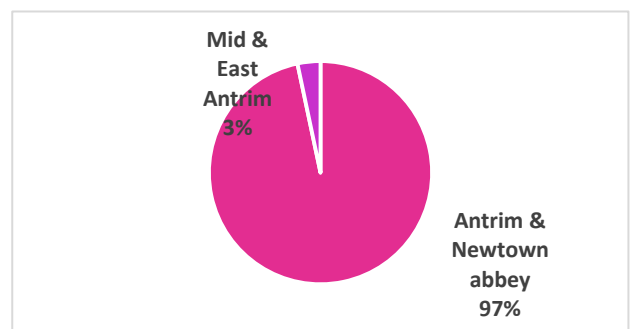
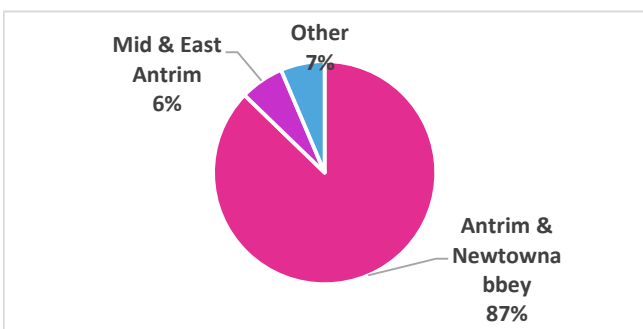
What age is/are your child(ren)? / What age are you?



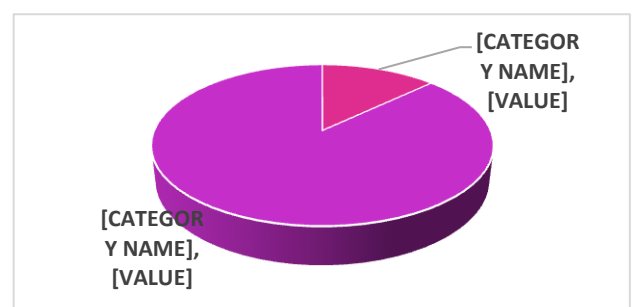
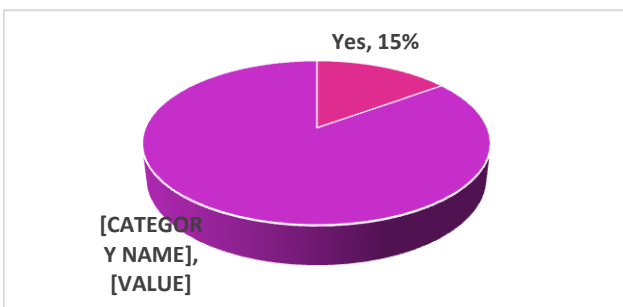
What gender are your children / what gender are you?



Where do your children live / where do you live?



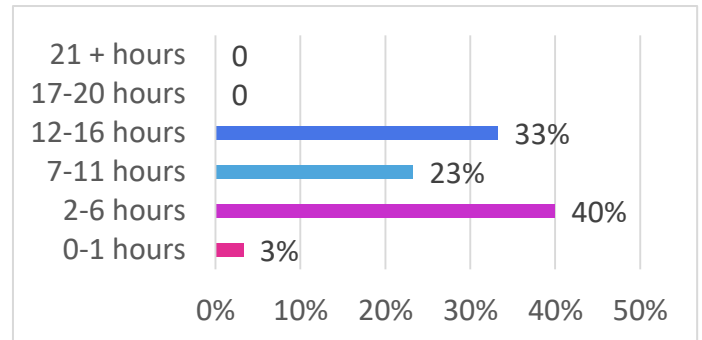
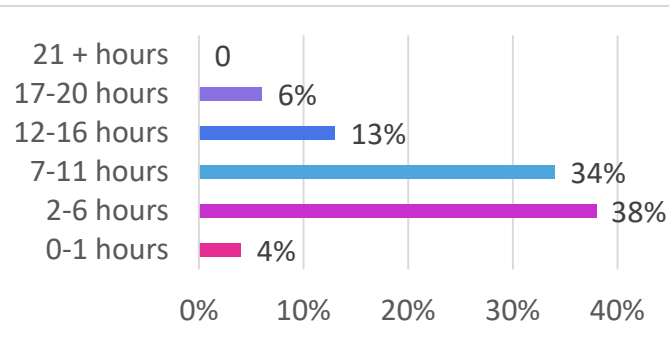
Does your child(ren) have a disability / Do you have a disability?



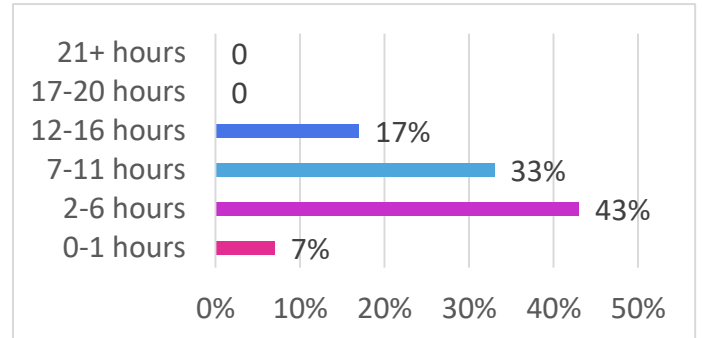
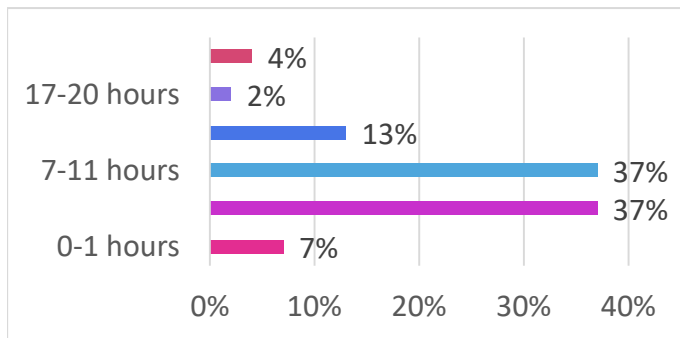
Parents

Children & Young People

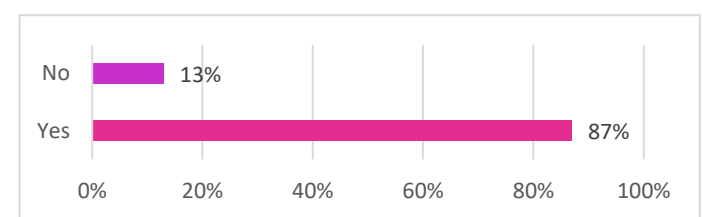
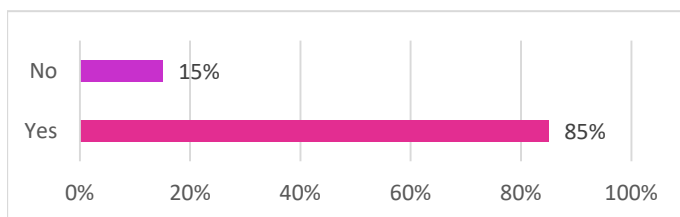
How many hours in an ordinary week do your child(ren)/ your spend being physically active per week?



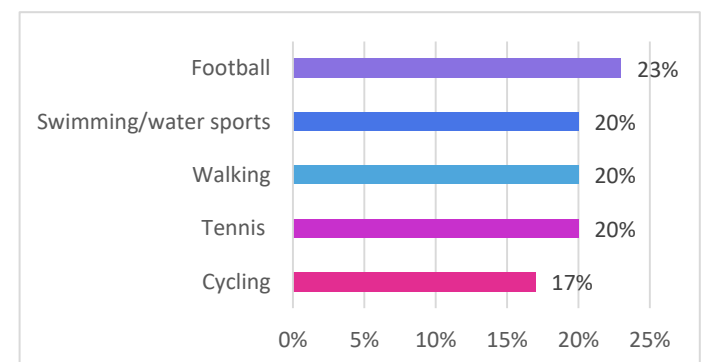
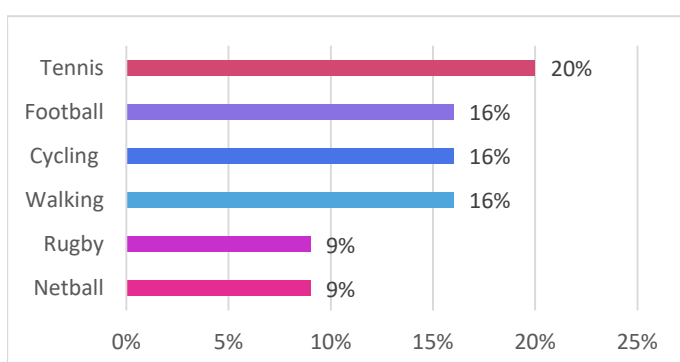
How many hours in an ordinary week do your child(ren) / you spend being physically active outside?



Would your child(ren) / you like to be more physically active outside?



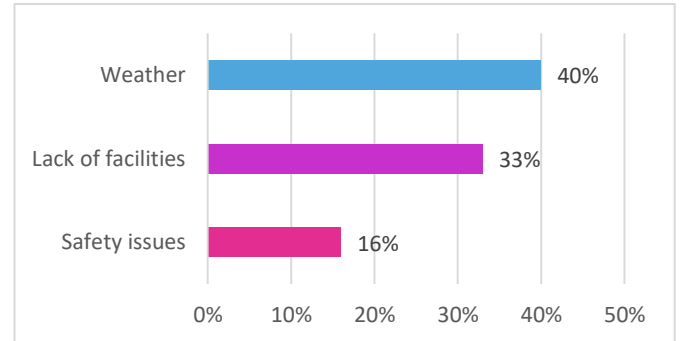
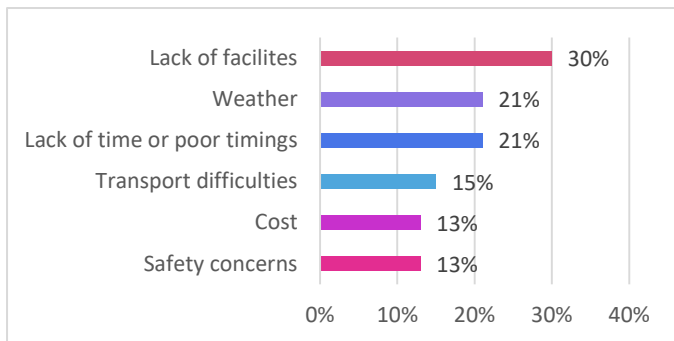
What physical activities would your child(ren) / you like to do more of outside?



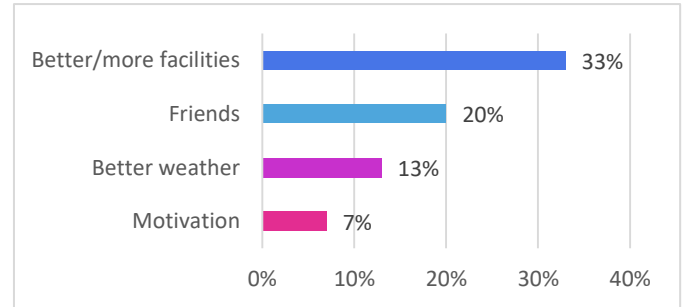
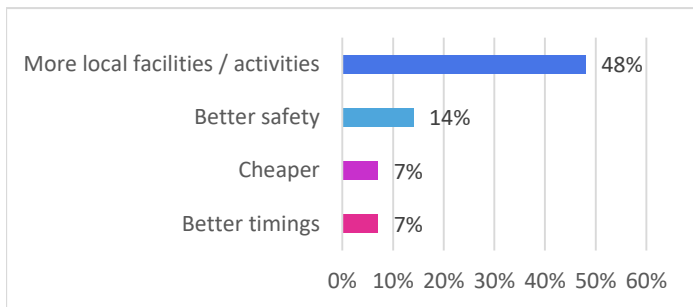
Parents

Children & Young People

What makes it harder for you / your child(ren) to be physically active outside?



What would help your child(ren) / you to be more physically active outside?



Is there anything else you wish to say?

Next Steps

It is clear from the survey children, young people and parents value physical activity outside and have a desire to do more, however, they feel there are barriers to doing more like time constraints, weather, safety concerns and lack of local facilities and activities. With this in mind suggestions on how to overcome some of these challenges and next steps are:

- Share survey results with CYPSP partners and wider relevant partners including councils, Sports NI and NHSCT Physical Activity Lead to highlight needs
- Share with CYPSP members to inform actions
- Provide shelters to do physical activity as a half way point between indoor and outdoor activity, providing some shelter but still having the benefits of being outside
- Highlight benefits of physical activity outside across social media and other platforms through CYPSP members
- Highlight safety concerns to relevant parties, e.g. safe cycle paths, walking paths, increased lighting, addressing anti-social behaviour
- Promote opportunities for CYP to come together as a group or with their friends
- Promote organised sports but also more unusual “fun” activities
- Fully utilising and promoting existing facilities across CYPSP partners
- Linking with CYPSP partners to promote activities, clubs and facilities to reach wider audience

This survey was carried out in August 2021, during the pandemic. As we come out of the Covid-19 pandemic, physical activity needs and wants of CYP may change and it is worth keeping this in mind.

Finally thank you to all children, young people and parents who completed the survey and to all the Antrim Ballymena CYPSP LPG members that promoted it.