



Families Active, Sporting Together

FAST's Physical Activity Lockdown Survey



Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Background of survey

During lockdown the FAST team wanted to learn more about the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on our participants' physical activity levels and behaviours. We also set out to understand current barriers to practising physical activity and preferences in terms of attending sessions under social distancing guidelines. These findings can help FAST better support families in adjusting to being active under our current difficult circumstances.


Surveying families during lockdown also proved valuable as we had the opportunity to compare the physical activity levels of members of the FAST programme with survey responses filled out by the general population in a survey administered by Sport England. Our survey contained questions also collected by Sport England between April and July 2020. More information on this survey can be found [here](#).

153 families who've signed up for the FAST programme responded to the online survey. Below is a summary of findings.

Physical activity levels of adults

Our survey indicates that **adults who took part in the FAST programme are a little less active during lockdown than adults in the general population surveyed by Sport England**. Among FAST adults, nearly 43% reported being active 2-4 times (doing 30 minutes or more of physical activity) in the week prior to the survey. While approximately 20% reported not being active at all, 12% reported being active once a week and 26% were active 5+ days. In comparison, Sport England findings show that on average 32% of respondents were active 5+ days a week, 40% were active 2-4 times a week, 10% once a week and 19% not active at all.

In our survey 35% of adult participants reported exercising less during lockdown than before. This is slightly higher than in data collected by Sport England in the period between April and May (first six weeks in which the survey was administered) where 32% of adults reported exercising less during lockdown than they did prior to it. Similarly, only 25% of adult members of FAST said they are exercising more now, compared to 32% of the Sport England survey respondents.



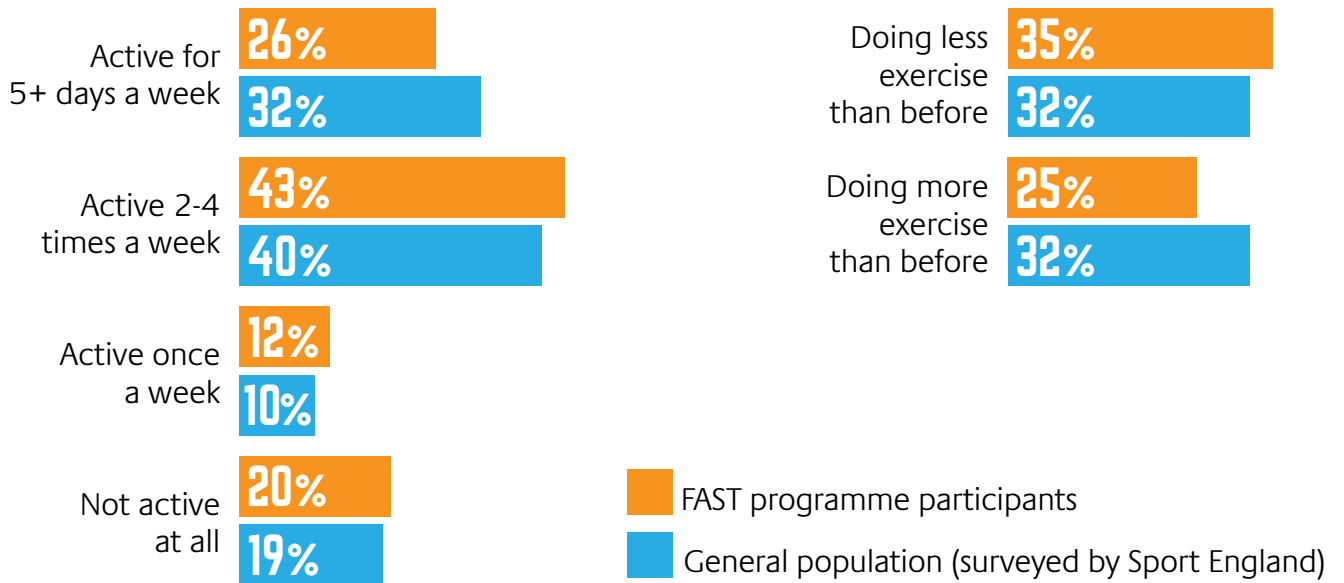
“FAST has rolled out many offers this summer to help address this issue!”



Many aspects need to be taken into consideration when analysing these results, including the fact that the FAST programme works with populations experiencing a number of vulnerabilities which may influence their ability to practice physical activity, this is especially true under lockdown. Furthermore, **prior to lockdown many of these communities already experienced lower physical activity levels than overall numbers in England - an issue that FAST is hoping to address through its offers.**



Adult physical activity levels



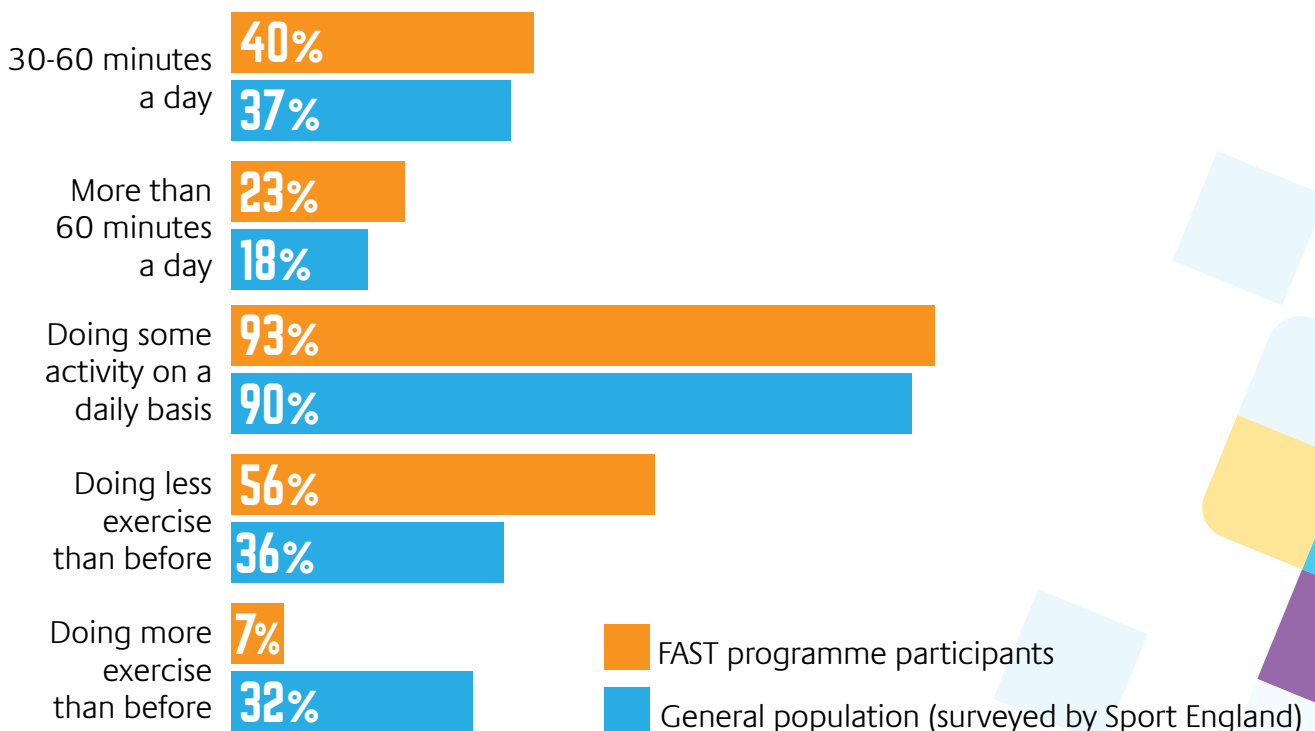


Physical activity levels of children

In contrast to the findings for adults, it appears that **physical activity levels are higher among children who've participated in FAST when compared to children in families surveyed by Sport England**. This is true in terms of the proportion of children in our own survey doing 30-60 min of physical activity on a daily basis (40%) as well as those doing more than 60 min a day (23%). The Sport England survey shows 37% of children were practicing 30-60 minutes of physical activity in a typical day and 18% being active for more than 60 minutes a day. Averages for the first 10 weeks in which the Sport England survey was administered also show that **90% of children were doing some physical activity on a daily basis compared to 93% of FAST children**. Both surveys rely on parental reports of children's activity levels.

Moreover, although our survey indicates that FAST children are more active than their counterparts in the Sport England survey, their current physical activity level is still considered to be a lot lower than usual. Only 7% of survey respondents in our survey reported that their children were more active than usual during lockdown while 56% said they are less active. Sport England data from the period between April and May (first six weeks in which the survey was administered) showed that 32% of respondents reported that children were more active than usual while 36% reported that they were less active. **These findings suggest that children within the FAST programme were very active prior to lockdown. Moreover, even though physical activity levels for the majority have dropped following lockdown, the amount of time spent by FAST children in physical activity during lockdown is still higher than for children in the general population as reported by Sport England.**

Child physical activity levels



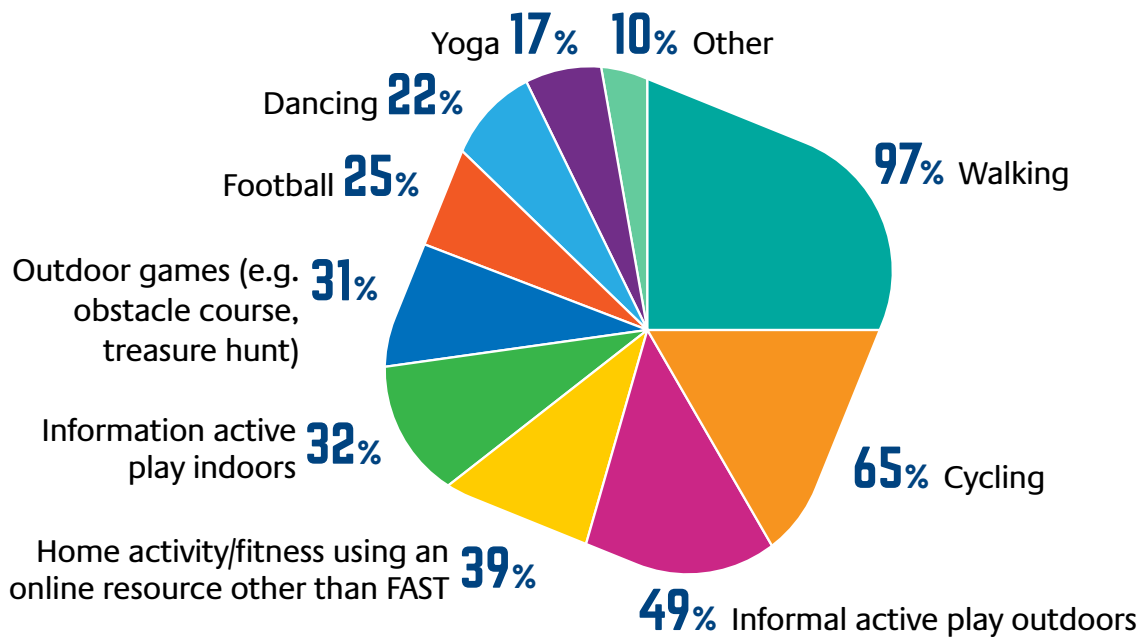


Physical activity levels of family units

Overall, lockdown appears to have had a negative effect on the ability of families in the FAST programme to be physically active as a family. Among our survey respondents 83% reported doing some physical activity as a family in the week prior to lockdown, with 26% reporting being active as a family once, 44% on 2-4 days and 13% on five or more days. For 15% of families their current physical activity level during lockdown was more than usual while 48% of families reported being less active in this period.

Popular activities

From our selection list, the top ten activities adults reported having done as a family during lockdown were:



Qualitative responses collected using a free text field revealed that during lockdown a number of families have clearly missed swimming and have still taken part by using rivers and open water, as well as martial arts such as karate and taekwondo.

Although the survey collected by Sport England only investigates which types of physical activities are being performed by adults, data shows that many of the activities that have proved popular among FAST families have also been popular for adults in the general population. These include walking, cycling and home-based activities online as well as offline.



Barriers to being active as a family

For 39% of families lack of ideas on how to be active as a family has prevented them from being active together.

“We have done less and have struggled with ideas.”

The survey also showed that 32% of families see lack of space within their house as a barrier while an additional 12% of families do not have enough garden space.

“A barrier has been that we are shielding and we have a small house and small garden.”

Other barriers families have experienced include shielding, the closing of facilities, overcrowding of outdoor spaces, lack of motivation, anxiety and other commitments such as work, schooling and childcare.

“Homeworking and home-schooling make it difficult to find time to exercise as a family.”

“Loss of motivation to exercise, fear of people getting too close outside.”

How families would like sessions to be offered

Our survey explored the options for offering sessions that would meet social distancing requirements to assess which of these the families would find acceptable. The great majority of families said they would be comfortable with attending sessions at outdoor venues (76%). Families would also like to be able to pre-book slots (71%). A large proportion of families would like access to shorter sessions (69%) and activities with a maximum of five other families (45%).

Families also reported a desire to be able to access activities which can be attended with younger children.





How has lockdown influenced the physical activity level and behaviours of families?

We wanted to learn more about the experiences of FAST families during lockdown. Toward this, in our survey we invited participants to share more on how this period has influenced their behaviours and physical activity levels as a family. For many families, lockdown has opened up different opportunities for being active together doing things such as walking and cycling. **Although families have also missed being able to access FAST sessions:**

“We have slightly more time as a family to go for more walks and bike rides.”

“We have walked a lot more and found new places to wander. We miss swimming though A LOT!”

“We have walked more often and created more games to play outside. We miss swimming and soft play for toddler exercise.”

On the other hand, for some families it has been difficult to find the time to be active together. New schedules and additional commitments during lockdown are current barriers, as described by a parent:

“The children have been more active with a lot of time for play, but the parents less active from having less time available due to home schooling requirements”.

Moreover, a number of adults also reported that lack of motivation has had a negative impact on their family's ability to be active during lockdown. Inadequate access to open spaces also contributed to this issue:

“It's been harder to do, to motivate the family to be active, we've missed our sporting clubs to energise ourselves to do more.”





“Lack of space and shielding have prevented us from doing much together. We have had to do activities alone which is not very motivating”

“Due to being a key worker it has become more stressful and has stopped my motivation”

“Physical activity has been minimal due to shielding. Our house/garden isn't big enough for proper exercise. A few walks since advice changed but still limited with our options.”

What we are doing to support families

In response to our participants' feedback and while following current social distancing guidelines, **FAST has rolled out a number of activities this summer.** We've worked with our partner organisations to safely introduce offers such as family swimming, table tennis, gym, clip 'n climb, canoeing and kayaking. With the FAST card families can access these offers at greatly reduced prices. Family swimming for example, is available to FAST members for £3 instead of £13.

Many FAST families have found activities such as walking and cycling enjoyable and accessible during lockdown while others have said they'd like more resources to help them go on fun walks and family-friendly cycling routes. Toward this, this summer we are launching the Streettag app. With this resource families will be able to explore different walking and cycling routes, collect points and win prizes. We are also working with local partners to introduce a new cycling resource with information on local trails and guided rides.

Moreover, recognizing the importance of our Youth Activator led sessions, FAST has taken steps to make them available to families this summer. To keep everyone safe and having fun, Youth Activator sessions are now being offered exclusively at outdoor venues with limited numbers and pre-booked slots. During sessions families can compete with each other from within their own bubble. All equipment is cleaned before and after each session.

