

ANNUAL WELLBEING VALUE OF SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TAKING PLACE ON PLAYING FIELDS & PITCHES IN ENGLAND

Adults (16+) Wellbeing Values

£780m

'ACTIVES'	Population	Activity Share	Multiplier	Impact (£ mil)
0 Characteristics	1,958,722	11.20%	£2,300	£504
1 Characteristics	573,855	13.44%	£2,500	£193
2+ Characteristics	63,641	17.77%	£3,800	£43
	2,596,218			£740

'FAIRLY ACTIVES'	Population	Activity Share	Multiplier	Impact (£ mil)
0 Characteristics	158,558	17.34%	£800	£22
1 Characteristics	55,754	17.99%	£1,100	£11
2+ Characteristics	8,431	27.51%	£2,800	£6.5
	222,743			£40

Children & Young People (11-16 Yr) Wellbeing Values

£1.13bn

FREQUENCY	Population	Activity Share	Multiplier	Impact (£ mil)
'Actives'	751,056	27.50%	£4,100	£847
'Fairly Actives'	235,385	39.41%	£3,100	£288
	986,441			£1,134

Total Number of People Participating in Activities Using 'Playing Fields and Pitches' as Part of Their 'Activity Blend'

3.8 million

Total Annual Value of Wellbeing Uplift Due To Participation in Activity Using 'Playing Fields and Pitches'

£1.9 billion

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1.1 'At a Glance' Summary

- 1.1.1 The Sport and Recreation Alliance has used the 2024 Sport England Social Value of Sport and Physical Activity 'General Model' to estimate **the 'wellbeing uplift value' (primary value) of participation in activities using 'Playing Fields and Pitches' in England is at least £1.9 billion per year**, based on the engagement with **one or more of 15 activities** that primarily take place on 'Playing Fields and Pitches' as part of the 'activity blend' of over **3.8 million people**, including almost 1 million children and young people and over 700,000 adults with one or more characteristics of inequality.
- 1.1.2 This value is a **deliberately conservative estimate**. Not included in this figure are areas of value such as: the wellbeing uplift of children aged 10 years old and younger; the wellbeing uplift of the huge levels of volunteering associated with 'playing pitch sports'; the savings generated to the healthcare system through participation; the value of informal activity that often takes place on playing fields (e.g. dog walking, and unstructured play); the benefits associated with access to green and open space; and, the primary and secondary value of training activity associated with participation in 'playing pitch sports' (e.g. running or gym sessions).
- 1.1.3 As such, this figure should be thought of as the **'tip of the iceberg'** when the full social value of 'Playing Fields and Pitches' is considered and the evidence supports the belief that the **protection of, and investment into, 'Playing Fields and Pitches' as a national asset should be prioritised by all stakeholders across society**.

1.2 Defining 'Social Value'

- 1.2.1 The UK government defines 'social or public value' as "all significant costs and benefits that affect the welfare and wellbeing of the population" (H.M. Treasury 'Green Book', 2022).
- 1.2.2 In 2024, [Sport England](#) estimated the total primary (wellbeing) value of participation and volunteering in sport and physical activity at £96.7 billion per year.
- 1.2.3 This figure is derived using a wellbeing-based model, WELLBY, which assigns a monetary value in changes in life satisfaction, following HM Treasury guidance. Key components of the model are:
1. The WELLBY (wellbeing adjusted life-year) model was used to estimate changes in life satisfaction associated with different levels of physical activity and frequencies of sport volunteering
 2. WELLBY values are based on changes in responses to the question: "Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?" (0-10 scale)
 3. A one-point increase over 12 months = 1 WELLBY, valued at £15,300 (2023 prices)
 4. Estimates of average wellbeing gains by activity level was derived using data from Sport England's Active Lives Survey
- 1.2.4 For an adult, being 'active' is worth £2,500 a year in wellbeing value, while being 'fairly active' is worth £1,200. The average wellbeing value of participation is greater for young people aged 11-16, with being 'active' valued at £4,100 a year, and 'fairly active' at £3,100 a year.
- 1.2.5 The average values per adult masks differences as certain key groups derive significantly more social value from being physically active. For example, people with disabilities or long-term health conditions who are 'active' derive £5,100 of value. As a result, Sport England developed an 'inequalities metric' of the following characteristics that most influence physical activity levels:
- Disability or long-term health condition
 - Aged 65+
 - Asian ethnic background
 - Pregnant or parent of a child under 1 year old
 - Lower socioeconomic status (NS-SEC 6)

- 1.2.6 The population is then grouped by how many characteristics they hold (0, 1, or 2+) as activity levels decrease as inequality characteristics increase:
- 73.8% of those with 0 characteristics are active
 - 60% with 1 characteristic are active
 - 41.6% with 2+ characteristics are active
- 1.2.7 Subsequently, the wellbeing value of being active also increases with more characteristics:
- £2,300 for 0 characteristics
 - £2,500 for 1 characteristic
 - £3,800 for 2+ characteristics
- 1.2.8 This approach was also conducted for ‘fairly actives’. Notably, for those with 2+ characteristics of inequality, the value of being ‘fairly active’ (£2,800) exceeds the value of being active for those with fewer or no inequality factors.

1.3 Defining ‘Playing Fields and Pitches’ and ‘playing pitch sports’

- 1.3.1 ‘Playing Fields and Pitches’ refers to the whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch as defined by [The Town and Country Planning \(General Development Procedure\) \(Amendment\) Order 1996, Paragraph 3b\(i\)](#).
- 1.3.2 A ‘Playing Field / Pitch’ is a delineated area, including any additional runoff space, used for sports such as football, rugby, cricket. Essentially, it's not just the area where the game is played, but the entire space associated with the playing field. This definition also **includes artificial grass pitches** and therefore sports such as hockey are included.
- 1.3.3 The following categories from Active Lives data were identified as activities that primarily take place on ‘Playing Fields and Pitches’ and therefore included as ‘playing pitch sports’.
- 1.3.4 Adults:
- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. 11 a-side football | 9. 13 a-side rugby league |
| 2. Small sided football | 10. Touch rugby league |
| 3. Long form cricket match | 11. Tag or other rugby league |
| 4. Short form cricket match | 12. Hockey |
| 5. 15 a-side rugby union | 13. Rounders |
| 6. Touch rugby union | 14. Baseball or softball |
| 7. Rugby sevens | 15. Lacrosse |
| 8. Tag or other rugby union | |
- 1.3.5 Other primarily ‘playing pitch sports’ such as Gaelic Athletic Association sports, American Football, Australian Rules Football, Ultimate Frisbee and others are not included in the scope of this work due to being omitted from the list of distinct sports, activities and disciplines in the Active Lives Survey¹
- 1.3.6 Metrics for children and young people (CYP) differ to those in the adult survey, so the most similar categories were used for consistency. For CYP, the data can be delineated as to whether the activity took place indoors or outdoors so for this calculation **only outdoor data** was used for the following activities:
- | | |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Football | 5. Baseball or softball |
| 2. Hockey | 6. Rounders |
| 3. Cricket | 7. Lacrosse |
| 4. Rugby | |

¹ <https://activelives.sportengland.org/Content/Documents/Active%20Lives%20Tool%20-%20Activities%20available%20-%20Adult.xlsx?v=3.0.6.22457>

1.4 Calculating Populations and ‘Unique Market Share’

- 1.4.1 Data from Active Lives Survey 2022/23 was used and scaled to national level using ONS data to reflect the whole population.
- 1.4.2 Participants were categorised as:
- *Active (Adults: at least 150 mins/week; CYP: at least 60 mins/day)*
 - *Fairly Active (Adults: 30–149 mins/week; CYP: 30–59 mins/day)*
- 1.4.3 To understand the role of ‘Playing Fields and Pitches’ within overall physical activity, a ‘unique market share’ (UMS) was calculated. This was done by determining the average proportion of time an individual spends engaged in ‘playing pitch sports’ (or in other words on ‘Playing Fields and Pitches’ for physical activity) relative to the total weekly physical activity of a ‘playing pitch sport’ participant.
- 1.4.4 By taking the average activity share of ‘playing pitch sports’ by each population cohort, the ‘net population’ attributable to ‘Playing Fields and Pitches’ for each outcome area can be calculated. This was used to estimate how much of total activity value can be attributed to ‘Playing Fields and Pitches’.

1.5 Calculating Primary Value - Adults

- 1.5.1 For each group of inequality, the national population of ‘active’ and ‘fairly active’ participants using ‘Playing Fields and Pitches’ was estimated using Active Lives data, which categorises an adult as being aged 16 and over.
- 1.5.2 These figures were then multiplied by:
- Value per person (e.g., £2,500 or £1,200)
 - Average % of total activity time on ‘Playing Fields and Pitches’ (UMS)

1.6 Calculating Primary Value – Children and Young People

- 1.6.1 The Primary Value was similarly calculated for Children and Young People.
- 1.6.2 It should be noted that currently in Sport England’s valuation model, only those aged 11 to 16 years old are included. This is because it is not suitable to ask younger children the life satisfaction question and so it is not possible to assign value using the WELLBY methodology. An economic measure of child wellbeing years ([C-WELLBY](#)) is under development which will hopefully allow children aged 10 and younger to be included in monetary valuation modelling in the future.
- ‘Playing pitch sports’ participants were segmented into ‘actives’ and ‘fairly actives’
 - The population in each category was multiplied by the relevant value per person
 - The UMS was calculated as the average percentage of weekly physical activity that is spent engaging in ‘playing pitch sport’ activities

1.7 Limitations and Assumptions

- 1.7.1 Conservative assumptions were applied throughout to ensure the estimates are credible and defensible. Several additional sources of value associated with 'Playing Fields and Pitches' were not included in the modelling. As a result, the reported figure should be considered a minimum estimate. Excluded areas of potential value include:
- Wellbeing uplift (primary value) of **children aged 10 and younger** as it is currently not possible to assign monetary valuations to this age group
 - Wellbeing uplift (primary value) of **volunteering associated with 'playing pitch activities'** (aka volunteering to support the clubs associated with 'playing pitch sports')
 - The **savings generated** (secondary value) **to the healthcare system** through the reduced likelihood of developing conditions associated with regular sport and physical activity
 - Inclusion of the **informal activity** that often takes place on playing fields (e.g. dog walking, and unstructured play)
 - **Benefits associated with access to green and open space.**
 - The primary and secondary **value of physical activity undertaken to support participation in 'playing pitch sports'** (e.g. gym sessions, running, or any other 'training' activity undertaken to maintain or enhance performance in a 'playing pitch sport').
- 1.7.2 To ensure accuracy and reduce the influence of outliers, the maximum weekly duration of 'Playing Fields and Pitches' activity for adults was capped at 1,680 minutes. For children and young people (CYP), weekly activity duration was capped at 12 hours on weekdays and 9 hours on weekends to avoid outliers and ensure realistic estimates of engagement. Additionally, active travel minutes were excluded from calculations for adults and CYP.
- 1.7.3 The categories 'cricket nets or practice' and 'walking football' were excluded from the adult data. These activities are frequently performed indoors, especially in winter, and therefore were excluded to avoid overstating the use of 'Playing Fields and Pitches'.

1.8 Summary of Results

- 1.8.1 The total estimated primary social value (improved wellbeing) generated annually through participation in activities taking place on 'Playing Fields and Pitches' in England is **£1.92 billion, generated by activity from over 3.8 million people**. This value is derived from wellbeing benefits linked to physical activity among both adults and children, based on Sport England's valuation model.

Adults (16+): Total wellbeing value: **£780 million** from **2.8 million participants**

- 1.8.2 'Playing Fields and Pitches' support over 700,000 adults who face one or more characteristics of inequality, and therefore are the less likely to be active, engage in physical activity. Thus, 'Playing Fields and Pitches' are vital in supporting the activity levels of those who face a number of barriers to participation.

Children and Young People (11–16): Total wellbeing value: **£1.13 billion** from **1 million participants**

- 1.8.3 This includes £847 million from 'active' children and £288 million from 'fairly active' children. 'Playing Fields and Pitches' are vital areas for supporting children to be more physically active, as the activity share of these activities as a proportion of a child's total activity is high at 28% for Actives and 40% for 'fairly actives'.

1.9 Conclusion

- 1.9.1 The 'narrow' lens of this report, focusing only on the primary value of participation in 'playing pitch sports', means the totality of the value of 'Playing Fields and Pitches' is undoubtedly significantly greater than the £1.9 billion stated here, and will affect more than the 3.8 million participants identified. **This evidence supports the belief that the protection of, and investment into, playing fields and pitches as a national asset should be prioritised by all stakeholders across society.**