

Engagement through research and insight

Research and insight is vital to every organisation. It ensures that programmes, support and services meet the needs of the audience and promote the organisation's aims effectively.

Activity Alliance's focus on research and insight enables us to have a comprehensive understanding of disabled people and activity. This includes disabled people's lifestyles, barriers and motivations, as well as their influencers.

We have created a series of engagement resources that encourage you to think about the ways you include disabled people. This factsheet provides top tips on how to be more effective in research and insight. In turn, this will help you meet your organisational objectives.





Why do we need research and insight?

Research and insight helps us to understand which sport and physical activities disabled people currently enjoy, which they do not and what they would like to take part in if given the opportunity.

If research and insight is not carried out, or not carried out effectively, there is a substantial risk your offers may not meet the needs of your service-users and therefore may not be as successful as they could be.

What research already exists that can help you understand what disabled people want?

There is a lot of research conducted by others (secondary research) around effective delivery for disabled people. This could answer many of your main questions, an important step before undertaking your own studies. Existing research includes insight around which sport and activities disabled people enjoy doing and how you can provide something better which appeals to them.

The Research section on the Activity Alliance website includes all studies commissioned, published and released by the charity or in partnership.

Are disabled people interested in being active? How does it fit into their lives?

Activity Alliance's 2022-23 Annual Disability and Activity survey showed that 77%, almost eight in 10, disabled people want to be more active. Activity Alliance's annual survey has taken place every year since 2019. It provides data and evidence on a range of topics relating to disabled people's participation in, and experience of, sport and physical activities, motivations, barriers and sources of advice about being active, as well as various thematic topics such as cost of living, representation, health and well-being.

What prevents disabled people from being active?

Activity Alliance's 2022 Inclusive Recovery report, expanded the three main barriers identified in Activity Alliance's 2012 Understanding the Barriers to Participation in Sport report, into four categories of barriers preventing disabled people from being more active. These are physical, psychological, financial and structural barriers. The financial and structural barriers are new developments, alongside the prevalence of physical and psychological barriers experienced by disabled people.

The psychological barriers refer to disabled and non-disabled people's perceptions and opinions. They include perceptions around disabled people's capability to take part in activities and the suitability of activities for disabled people.

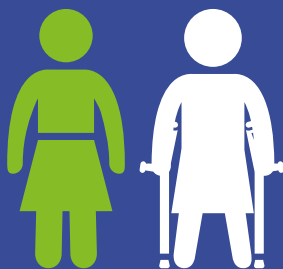


How many disabled people currently take part in sport or physical activity?

Sport England's Active Lives Survey provides comprehensive, nationally representative data every year around participation levels. According to 2022-23 data:

Disabled people (41%) are almost **twice as likely** as non-disabled people (21%) to be inactive.

x2



Inactive means that they do less than 30 minutes of moderate physical activity per week.

You can analyse the data yourself using Sport England's online interactive tool. We also provide guidance on how best to use the tool. Sport England's Mapping Disability: The Facts gives greater detail on the disabled population, including on specific impairment types and health conditions. The Department for Work and Pensions' Family Resources Survey provides an annual estimate of the overall disabled population.

How do we encourage disabled people to try our sport?

Feedback from disabled people has shown that to offer activities that are most likely to appeal, it is important to focus on them as an individual, not their impairment. Try to link your activity to their values – things that they hold important in life.

Activity Alliance's Talk to Me report outlines 10 Principles that providers can follow to make their activity more attractive to disabled people. Our Principles in Action resource gives examples of how other providers have applied the principles successfully. Videos explaining the 10 Principles further can be found on Activity Alliance's YouTube channel.

What successful opportunities have other people delivered?

There are a number of case studies for all the reports mentioned above. They give examples of how providers are already successfully offering activities to disabled people. Activity Alliance's 2014 Active Together report offers more examples of inclusive provision – disabled and non-disabled people taking part together.

The Get Out Get Active (GOGA) programme is built on Activity Alliance's research and insight. Read news, resources and stories about successful inclusive activity on the GOGA website.

The news page on the Activity Alliance website includes blogs and other stories about disabled people's experiences of sport and physical activity.



Do you know what disabled people think about what you currently provide?

- Think about conducting some monitoring and evaluation of your activities. Look at our [Insight into Action and Performance Measurement and Learning resources](#) for further advice.
- [Sport England has a comprehensive research guide](#) that covers the basics of undertaking and using research. Also see [Sport England's Evaluation Framework](#) for in-depth guidance on evaluation and monitoring.
- Make sure that your evaluation methods are accessible by using [Activity Alliance's Inclusive Communications Guide](#) for support. Your information and communications should be accessible for disabled people. This includes providing alternative formats, for example, large print, electronic (accessible PDF and plain Word document), easy read and British Sign Language.
- Provide participants with an opportunity to feedback about the activity to understand what you are doing well and areas where you could improve.

- Use membership forms to capture whether people consider themselves to be disabled and their impairment types. If you would like guidance on formulating your disability and impairment questions, you can view a [suggestion question within the appendix](#) or please contact research@activityalliance.org.uk

Do you know how to make your offer more appealing?

Sport England and Activity Alliance released [Mapping Disability – Engaging disabled people: the research](#). This provides evidence-based tips on effective communication and design of a first session.

However, you need to ask disabled people what they think about new ideas and how they could be more appealing.

- Consult with disabled people in your local area. Talk to people who are already taking part or approach local disability groups or charities. Share your ideas and ask for their feedback and what they would like to see.
- Think about asking other relevant stakeholders (such as coaches, teachers or supporters) for their opinions too.
- As people change, over their lifetime, their likes and dislikes change too. Remember to review your insight regularly to assess trends or changes among different groups, for example age or impairment.

Appendix

Suggested disability question

This question reflects the Active Lives format with a more inclusive definition of disability. It allows for a quick calculation of disabled participants based on those who answer 'Yes' to Question 2.

Question 1: Do you have any long-term health conditions, impairments or illnesses? This could include, for example, physical, sensory, learning, social, behavioural or mental health conditions or impairments. Long-term means that they have lasted, or are expected to last, 12 months or more.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know
4. Prefer not to say

[If Yes to Q1]

Question 2: Do these health conditions, impairments or illnesses have a substantial effect on your ability to do normal daily activities?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know
4. Prefer not to say

[If Yes to Q1]

Question 3: Do these health conditions, impairments or illnesses affect you in any of the following areas? Please select all that apply.

1. Breathing or stamina
2. Chronic health condition (for example, but not limited to, diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, epilepsy and hypertension)
3. Dexterity (for example lifting and carrying objects, using a keyboard)

4. Hearing (for example deafness or partial hearing)
5. Learning or understanding or concentrating
6. Long term pain
7. Memory
8. Mental health
9. Mobility (for example walking short distances or climbing stairs)
10. Social or behavioural (for example, but not limited to, associated with autism, attention deficit disorder or neurodiversity)
11. Speech or making yourself understood
12. Vision (for example blindness or partial sight)
13. Other (please specify)
14. Don't know
15. Prefer not to say

This factsheet is part of a series of [Activity Alliance engagement resources](#) available on our website.

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This document is available in Word format. Please contact us if you need support. Activity Alliance is the operating name for the English Federation of Disability Sport. Registered Charity no. 1075180