



Pandemic leads to drop in activity levels

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The pandemic has led to a big drop in activity levels, including table tennis, according to the latest Active Lives survey by Sport England.

Data from mid-November 2019 to mid-November 2020 shows that there were 710,000 fewer active adults meeting the guidelines of taking part in 150-plus minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a week, compared with the same period in 2018-19.

There were also 1.2 million more inactive adults – taking part in less than 30 minutes a week.

Activity levels were hardest hit in the first national lockdown between mid-March and mid-May, when there were 3 million fewer active adults.

Over the full year, the number of adults rated as active was 27.9 million (61.4% of the population in England) and the number rated as inactive was 12.3 million (27.1%).

Sport England also reported that the pandemic disproportionately impacted women, 16-24 year-olds, over-75s, Disabled People and people with long-term health conditions, those of Asian and Black backgrounds and those from lower-socio economic groups.

Almost all sports declined although, not surprisingly, walking, running and cycling saw increases.

Figures show that 289,200 people aged 16 and over played table tennis at least twice a month during the period of the report – down from 439,800 people in the previous 12-month period.

Of the other racket sports, squash and badminton also saw a significant decrease in the number of adults aged 16+ who participate at least twice a month, while tennis remained unchanged.

Table Tennis England's Head of Development and Volunteering, Greg Yarnall, said the figures were not a surprise given the pandemic restrictions, but said our participation surveys during the pandemic had shown that only 1%

of respondents said they were “not at all likely” to return to the sport after restrictions are lifted.

He added: “We have been working hard to maximise opportunities for people to play table tennis through the lockdowns, in clubs where possible but also at home and in the community – particularly those communities which have been disproportionately affected.

“Resources such as the Bat and Chat programme, which engages older age groups, and play-at-home packs have helped us try to keep people active through table tennis. Our Diversity Action Plan is also helping us to better understand the lived experiences of ethnically diverse communities in table tennis to better support the return to play, where activity levels for those from Asian and Black backgrounds in particular have been disproportionately affected.

“We have also supported clubs to access funding – more than 50 table tennis clubs have received Sport England funding and more than 70 have had funding support directly from Table Tennis England.”

If any clubs would like further support with working towards reopening, then please get in touch with us via help@tabletennisengland.co.uk

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