

Under the skin

Understanding youth personalities
to help young people get active

SPORT ENGLAND

Contents

Click through to sections

Introduction 03

Age of expectation 04
Life through the digital lens 05
A look back 06
A broader offer 07
A wider lens 08
A deeper understanding 09
A new perspective 10

Meet the personalities 11
The six personalites 12
Discovering the personalities 13

Sports Enthusiasts
Overview 14
A closer look: life 15
A closer look: sport and exercise 16
A fresh approach 17

Confident Intellectuals
Overview 20
A closer look: life 21
A closer look: sport and exercise 22
A fresh approach 23

Ambitious Self-starters
Overview 26
A closer look: life 27
A closer look: sport and exercise 28
A fresh approach 29

Cautious Introverts
Overview 32
A closer look: life 33
A closer look: sport and exercise 34
A fresh approach 35

Thoughtful Improvers
Overview 38
A closer look: life 39
A closer look: sport and exercise 40
A fresh approach 41

Everyday Youth
Overview 44
A closer look: life 45
A closer look: sport and exercise 46
A fresh approach 47

Introduction

We all think we know young people. Full of energy. Glued to their phones. Devoted to their friends. But sweeping statements don't tell the full story.

Back in 2014, our Youth Insight Pack revealed key ideas to help our partners around the country get more young people active. We were thrilled to see those findings being applied in clubs, facilities and at events throughout the country. But we knew there was more to learn. How would we get to grips with the complex range of needs, experiences and personalities of young people?

To get to the bottom of this, we're working with research agency YouthSight to understand the differences between young people – their mindsets, lifestyles, their quirks and concerns. As a result we've developed a thorough understanding of different types of young people – in more detail than ever before.

That knowledge is contained in this pack. It's a guide to help our partners really understand the attitudes, behaviours and preferences of young people – and it's a perfect starting point to consult when designing programmes to get this group active.

I really hope that you find our new resources informative and inspiring in equal measure.



Lisa O'Keefe,
Director of Insight, Sport England

Age of expectation

Understanding today's young people

Just like previous generations, young people today are eager to shape their experiences. They're developing their own identities and becoming aware of how they're perceived by others. They want to challenge themselves, but they're also cautious of looking silly or failing.

Today's young people may feel like global citizens, but at this age* they're still reliant on their family home. They're also likely care about their local community. And they're anxious to be seen as 'cool' by their peers.

Growing up in a time of austerity and cutbacks, this generation feels more pressure to achieve than any before it. Finding a good job is a struggle, even with a degree. But technology plays a huge part in young people's lives – and is their huge advantage.

As digital natives, this generation believes they have the skills above and beyond older generations and feels like they can change the world. Although they'll happily accept it, young people no longer expect support, and are relying more and more on digital technology to build on their talents, seek career opportunities and create a platform to launch their future.

As with all age groups, young people won't enjoy an activity just because you've told them it's fun. If only it was that simple. They rely heavily on the advice and recommendations of friends and messengers they see as expert and trustworthy. Although they still value real-life experiences and face-to-face conversations, their connection to the wider world via social media (Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and especially Facebook) has become innate and they feel uncomfortable ever going 'offline'. Distinctions between virtual and real are irrelevant.

*All insight in this pack relates to young people aged 14 to 25.

Life through the digital lens

How technology has changed expectations

Improvements in technology are altering how young people experience the world. They want experiences which are interactive, social, rewarding and tailored to them. Sport and activity is no exception.

Despite living in a rapidly changing world – and frequently going through milestones such as leaving education and moving house – sport is still high on the agenda for young people. Nearly 60 per cent of 14- to 25-year-olds take part in sport and exercise at least once a week. This high rate means that there are no easy 'wins' when it comes to getting even more young people active.

What we do know is this – often the way sport is provided is at odds with young people's expectations.

Activity becomes more serious and places greater demands on young people's time just as life, particularly education, gets more serious too. Then, leaving education is a point where the tailored offer for young people peters out, just as they are required to make a more proactive choice to keep taking part.

Young people's perceptions of sport are varied and nuanced. These impact on their expectations. While some associate sport with fun and social camaraderie, for others the connotations are of pressure, insecurity and fear of judgement. Fitness and exercise may be easier to take up, but continued motivation is a real issue for many. With this in mind, it's so important to find out what young people think and feel – and what they want from sport or activity. We can all give even more young people better opportunities to take part by continuing to talk to them.

Interactive

Through the use of technology and/or gaming

Social

Allowing them to maintain their social lives and connect with like-minded people

Rewarding

Give them something back, including financially

Personalised

Tailored or able to make their own and fitting with their lives

Inspiring

Unique, different, something they can be proud of or help them stand out

Creative

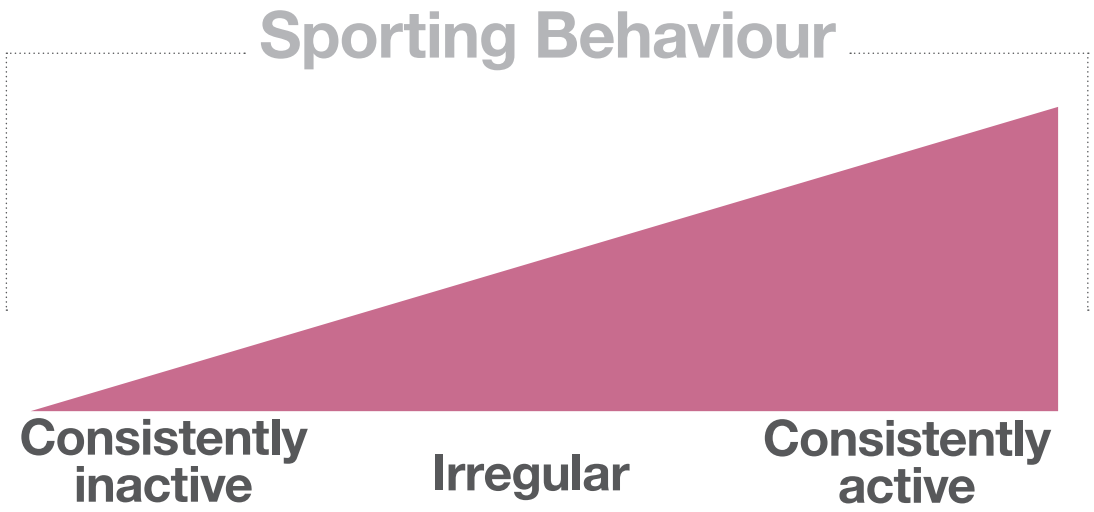
Video and visual content which is shareable is more engaging. Young people see themselves as creators and curators of online content, not just consumers.

A look back

Key messages from the 2014 Youth Insight pack

Our goal is to get more young people active. So a key focus of our youth insight work was on the relationship between young people's attitude to sport and their behaviour. In a nutshell: do people who have a positive attitude to sport tend to be more active, more often?

Young people who love sport take part, right? Not quite. During our youth insight work we identified three distinct attitudes towards sport: **positive, functional** and **uninterested**. But these attitudes didn't necessarily correspond to young people's behaviour. Not all young people who feel positive about sport actually play regularly. Some don't even actively look to get involved. And some young people who take part more regularly feel that sport is mainly a means to an end, delivering functional benefits – from socialising to staying in shape. So to get more young people active, we decided to focus on changing their behaviours. Once we've encouraged young people to become more consistently active, we can help them establish a stronger personal connection to sport and physical activity.



A broader offer

Key messages from the 2014 Youth Insight pack

Much of what already exists reaches the most engaged. Whether it's the social side of playing sport or a desire to keep fit, we need to understand what matters to the young people we want to reach, and adapt our offer to better meet their needs.

Our research reminded us that all young people are individuals. Their thoughts, feelings and interests evolve over time. Their motivation for taking part in sport is often shaped by their unique experiences and personalities, so when we make an effort to understand what's important to a specific young person we're trying to reach, we're much more likely to help them become active in a way that's just right for them.

We know by now that young people tend to have complicated, emotional relationships with sport. The typical language, places and kit get some young people excited but fill others with dread. So we need to think carefully about how we talk to young people about sport, as well as the experiences we provide. We need to keep asking them what's going on in their lives and what they want from the experience.

Examples of different reasons for taking part



A wider lens

2015 research approach

Our Youth Insight work was valuable, but we knew we could do more. We felt sure connecting our understanding of young people's lifestyles with their relationship with sport would help our partners get even more young people active.

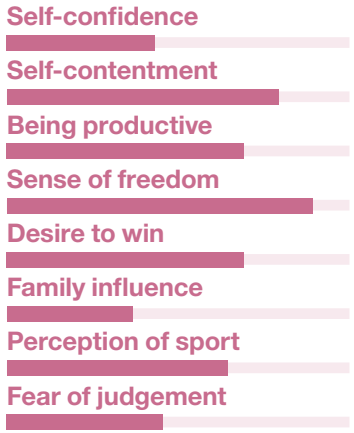
So in 2015 we delved deeper into the lives of 1,997 young people aged between 14 and 25. We explored their hobbies and habits, friends and families, beliefs, ambitions and fears. We also built up a picture of their physical activity – how active they are, the sports and exercise they do and their attitudes to being active.

Going beyond the lens of sport gave us a much clearer understanding of the different personality types of young people in England today. When we analysed the data we'd collected, we were able to define six broad groups of young people. These groups are primarily based on life motivations and attitudes, but were also influenced by how engaged they are in sport and basic demographics (age, gender and education).

As with any categorisation, these groups are unlikely to represent a single young person exactly. While each young person will fit one category best, some might display characteristics which overlap several different groups. It's important to see each group as a broad overview of a personality type.

The differences in levels of these motivations and attitudes amongst different young people were key to identifying the personality types

Attitudes



Motivations



For more information about definitions and data click **here** (look for 'accompanying information')
Or email research@sportengland.org

A deeper understanding

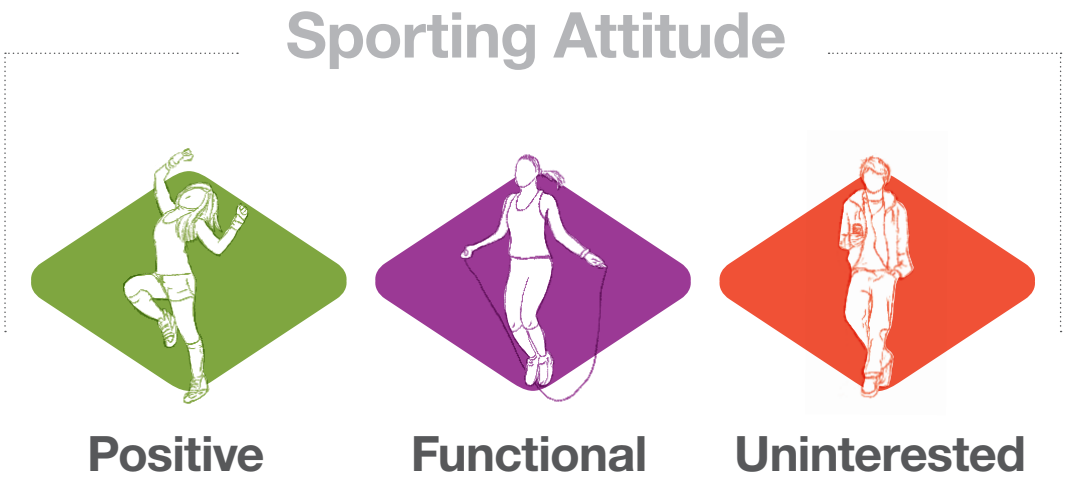
Exploring attitudes to sport and exercise

From our 2014 Youth Insight work, we identified three prevailing attitudes to sport amongst young people: positive, functional and uninterested.

To build on our Youth Insight Pack, we needed to spend more time understanding these attitudes. It's useful to think of positive and functional attitudes on a more human level. Young people who feel positive towards sport are responding emotionally to it. They might identify as a sporty or active person, and they probably talk about sport with friends. They're likely to feel sport is part of who they are.

When young people have a functional attitude to sport, they're responding in a more rational way. They have consciously considered the benefits of sport – they recognise that it's good for them and can help them achieve their goals.

As we explored our interviewees' attitudes to sport alongside their lifestyles, we realised that the young people who were positive about sport tended to see the benefits, and vice versa. They responded both emotionally and rationally. Those who were the most uninterested didn't feel positive towards sport or see the benefits.



A new perspective

Exploring attitudes to sport and exercise

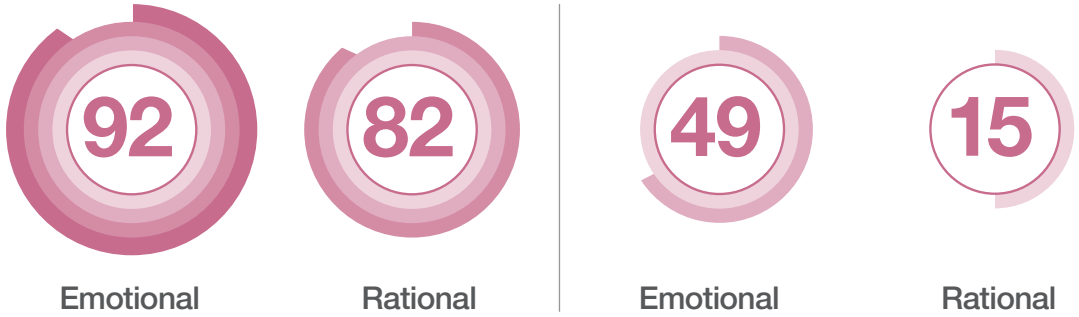
So we now have a better understanding of attitudes. Young people have different emotional and rational responses to sport and exercise.

It makes sense that the way young people think and feel about sport connects to how active they are. Someone who loves playing sport is likely to recognise how they can benefit from being active, and equally someone who feels the benefit from being active regularly is likely to feel more positive towards sport and exercise in general. Although, for many, one attitude tends to be higher than the other, young people's emotional, rational and behavioural relationship with sport and physical activity is all connected.

So to help more young people be active, we need to understand how different groups think and feel about physical activity. Our six personality types are based on attitudes and life motivations, with each also having their own emotional, rational and behavioural relationship with sport and physical activity.

Attitude to sport and exercise

Each personality thinks and feels differently about sport and exercise. Higher numbers and more rings reflect a stronger emotional / rational connection to sport and exercise.



“I think one of the most important parts of sport is the positive energy you get from it”
Cian, 19



Meet the personalities

Our youth personalities can help you understand the young people you’re trying to reach. What are the defining traits of each personality group? What’s their relationship with sport? How do they spend their time? The size of the groups can help with decisions on resource allocation, and the ‘fresh approach’ provides practical guidance to help you engage with the different personalities in the way that’s right for them.

The six youth personalities

Key traits and group size

10%
Sport Enthusiasts
Self-assured / Sociable / Image-conscious





12%
Confident Intellectuals
Driven / Educated / Focused

15%
Ambitious Self-starters
Achievers / Proactive / On the go





17%
Cautious Introverts
Loyal / Careful / Self-reliant

19%
Thoughtful Improvers
Mature / Non-competitive / Self-development





27%
Everyday Youths
Mainstream / Easy-going / Content

The group size shows the proportion of young people aged 14 to 25 in England in each personality

Discovering the personalities

Content section overview

01

Overview of personality

Including defining traits, group size, overview of how they think and feel about sport and exercise and how much they take part.

02

A closer look: life

Data on who they are, their lives and what's important to them.

03

A closer look: sport and exercise

Data to give greater understanding of their attitudes and behaviour when it comes to sport and exercise.

04

A fresh approach

Practical guidance on attracting the attention of each personality to support marketing and communications.

05

A fresh approach

Principles for delivering the right environment and type of experience for the personality.

06

A fresh approach

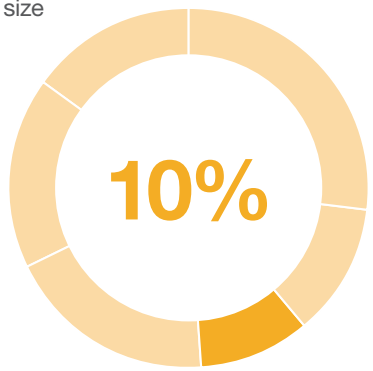
Tips to encourage the personality to stay involved and take part more often.

Behaviour change is challenging: there is no 'magic bullet'. Things are constantly changing and we are all still learning. However, applying this insight can be an important starting point in getting the right principles in place to support young people to become more active.

Sport Enthusiasts

Self-assured / Sociable / Image-conscious

Group size



Attitude to sport and exercise



Emotional Rational

Compared to other groups:

1st 2nd

Taking part in sport and exercise



High 61% Medium 36% Low 3%

Compared to other groups: 1st

Sport Enthusiasts are mad about sport. Their friends and family are sporty. Their heroes are sports stars. Sport is part of who they are. These confident, optimistic young people have a strong network of friends and rely on their parents for support and guidance.

Sport Enthusiasts are the smallest of the six personalities. They're image-conscious, so clothes and their social media profiles are particularly important to them. They value their freedom and independence, but like to maintain a fixed daily routine.

Sport is the main feature in these young people's daily lives. Sport Enthusiasts tend to come from wealthier backgrounds than some other groups, so they might have had more access to sports facilities and sporting opportunities growing up. They're confident in their sporting abilities, and tend to be much more competitive than other groups. For these young people, it's all about winning.

Sport Enthusiasts value the benefits of sport, but are more emotional than rational – they care about sport and love being involved. They're already happy with themselves and their bodies, so they take part in sport because they enjoy it, rather than to develop themselves.

"Confident, chatty, always up for a laugh. I'm proud to be the captain of my university rugby team"

Izzy, 20

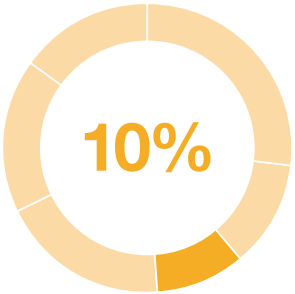


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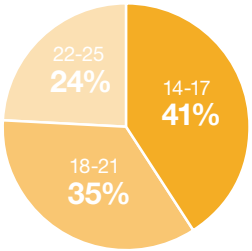
A closer look: life

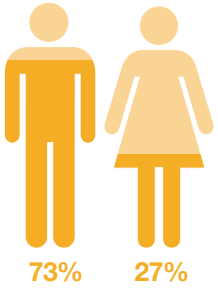
Sport Enthusiasts

Group size



Who they are





More likely to be **Younger**

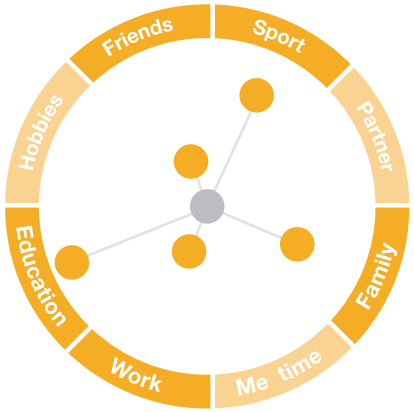
More likely to be **Male**

More likely to be in **Education** **(particularly school)**

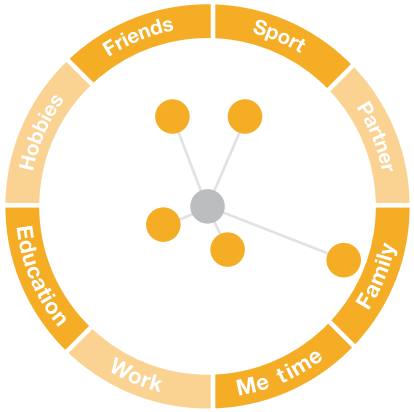
One of the **Wealthiest** groups

6% Report a limiting disability (vs. **8%** average)

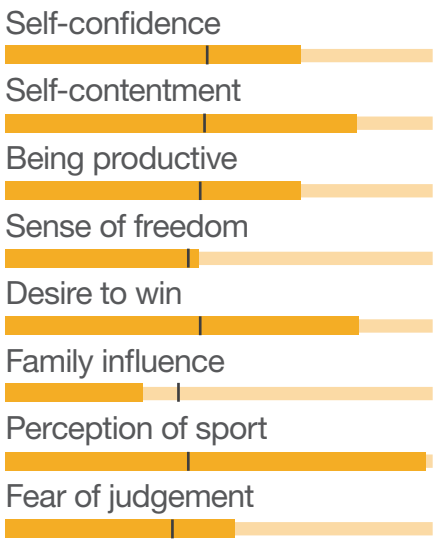
Their time is spent on



What they care about



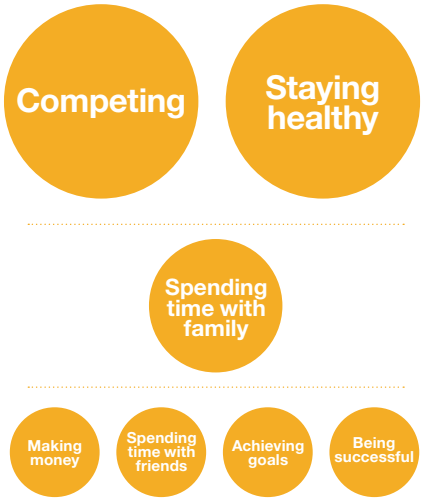
Their attitudes



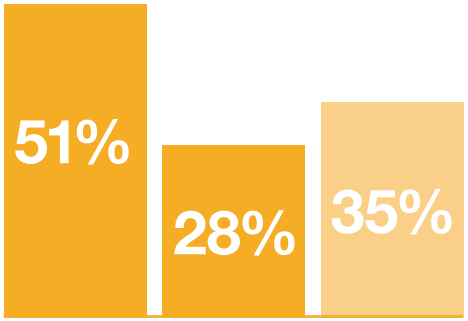
Black line represents average

Their motivations in life

Having fun and **feeling good** are top motivations for all personalities



Friends



I have lots of different groups of friends (average 36%)

I have a big circle of friends (average 21%)

I have a few very close friends (average 53%)

What they do in their free time

Listening to music is popular amongst all young people



Some context for their life

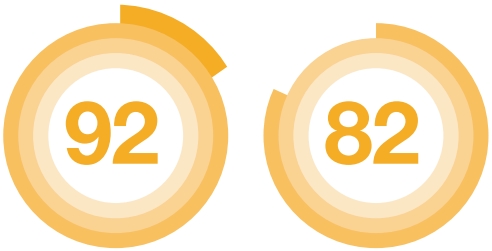
19% Went to a fee-paying secondary school (vs. **14%** average)

66% Agree they dress a certain way to say something about themselves (vs. **40%** average)

A closer look: sport and exercise

Sport Enthusiasts

Attitude to sport and exercise



Emotional Rational

Compared to other groups:

1st 2nd

Taking part in sport and exercise



High 61% Medium 36% Low 3%

Compared to other groups: 1st

How they normally take part

- More likely to take part as part of a club or organised group
- More likely to be committed to turn up regularly

Top reasons to take part for all young people are:

- To stay fit
- To have fun
- To stay healthy

Why Sport Enthusiasts take part

More important

- To improve their performance
- To compete
- To develop themselves
- To achieve goals

Less important

- To improve their appearance

Most common barriers for all young people are:

"I haven't got round to looking yet" (43%)

"I couldn't find anywhere convenient to take part" (43%)

What stops Sport Enthusiasts taking part



"I contacted someone but didn't hear back"

Average 3%

"It didn't look very competitive"

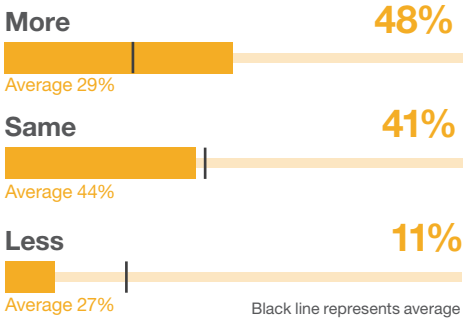
Average 2%

Dotted line represents average

Sport at school

82% like(d)/love(d) PE at school (vs. **45 %** average)

Participation in sport now vs. a year ago



How sporty and physically active their friends and family are

87% have sporty friends (Average 54%)

58% have a sporty family (Average 35%)

Top sports currently played



Football	Running	Badminton
42%	15%	10%

Sports they **want** to play include American football, football and boxing.

A fresh approach:
Attracting their attention

Sport Enthusiasts

What will stand out and be noticed by this personality?
What appeals to them and encourages them to start something?

Show them they can compete and achieve their potential

Sport Enthusiasts want to **be the best sports person they can be**. Highlight opportunities to **train, improve and compete**.

Tap into their desire to be fit and their willingness to work hard

Being **fit and in shape** is a core characteristic of this personality. Let them know that they can push themselves, will get a good workout and feel the **physical benefits** at the end.

Promote the fun, challenge and energy on offer

This group are really enthusiastic about sport. Present them with opportunities that feel **energetic, exciting and dynamic**. Remind them of the emotional high they get from sport.

"I want to do an activity that will keep me in good shape and ensure that I am in good health"

Shivani, 17



A fresh approach:
Deliver against their expectations

Sport Enthusiasts

What type of experience and environment suits this group?

Create a sociable environment...

Don't underestimate how important the social side of sport is for Sport Enthusiasts. It's where their friends are and the social aspect encourages commitment.

With this in mind, focus on **camaraderie** and **team bonding**. Support opportunities to **socialise beyond sessions, talk about sport and share achievements**.

...with a work hard – play hard atmosphere

This group are driven by **hard work**, **competition**, and importantly, **winning**. They actively enjoy being in this sort of environment alongside their friends. **Laidback activities don't cut it** with this personality type.

Regularity and **commitment** are also key drivers, so make sure these are visibly rewarded.

"Training sessions or classes must be interesting but hard so that you can push yourself"
Rosa, 14

"[My ideal sports activity] is a competitive sport that motivates all to try and win"
Gianni, 14

A fresh approach:
Keep them coming back

Sport Enthusiasts

How can this personality be encouraged to take part more regularly?
How can their connection with sport and exercise be strengthened?

Support them to continuously improve

Support a **constant learning curve** – highlight the **skills and knowledge** they need in order to **improve**.

Sports Enthusiasts are **not immune to low confidence**. They experience ups and downs throughout their sporting careers. They need **encouraging** and **non-judgemental** people around them to stay committed long-term.

Help them achieve emotional highs

Sport Enthusiasts have a strong **emotional connection** to sport. The **adrenaline high** they get from it is something they look forward to. Sport is often a welcome break from everyday life and stresses.

Winning is particularly important to them, so make sure the level they're competing at is **challenging** but they can still achieve some wins.

Recognise progress with **rewards** and opportunities to **celebrate their achievements**.

Don't forget about the girls

Although proportionally it's made up of more males, there are still **plenty of females** in this group. Think about **gender specific needs** and make sure opportunities for **progression** are readily available.

"I tend to score and achieve my target goals if people around me support and encourage me. This will boost my confidence and determination for that event"

Peter, 20

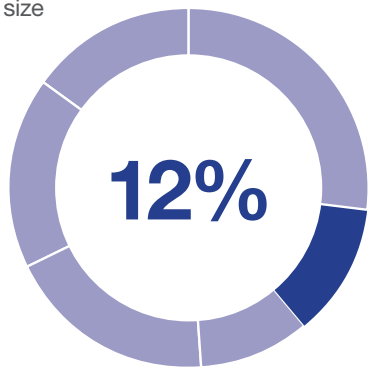


Confident Intellectuals

Driven / Educated / Focused

Confident Intellectuals are driven, focused and highly motivated. They lead busy lives filled with hobbies they care deeply about. They are much more enthusiastic about music, gaming or computing than getting active.

Group size



Attitude to sport and exercise



Emotional **Rational**

Compared to other groups:



Taking part in sport and exercise



High	Medium	Low	None
10%	37%	36%	17%

Compared to other groups:



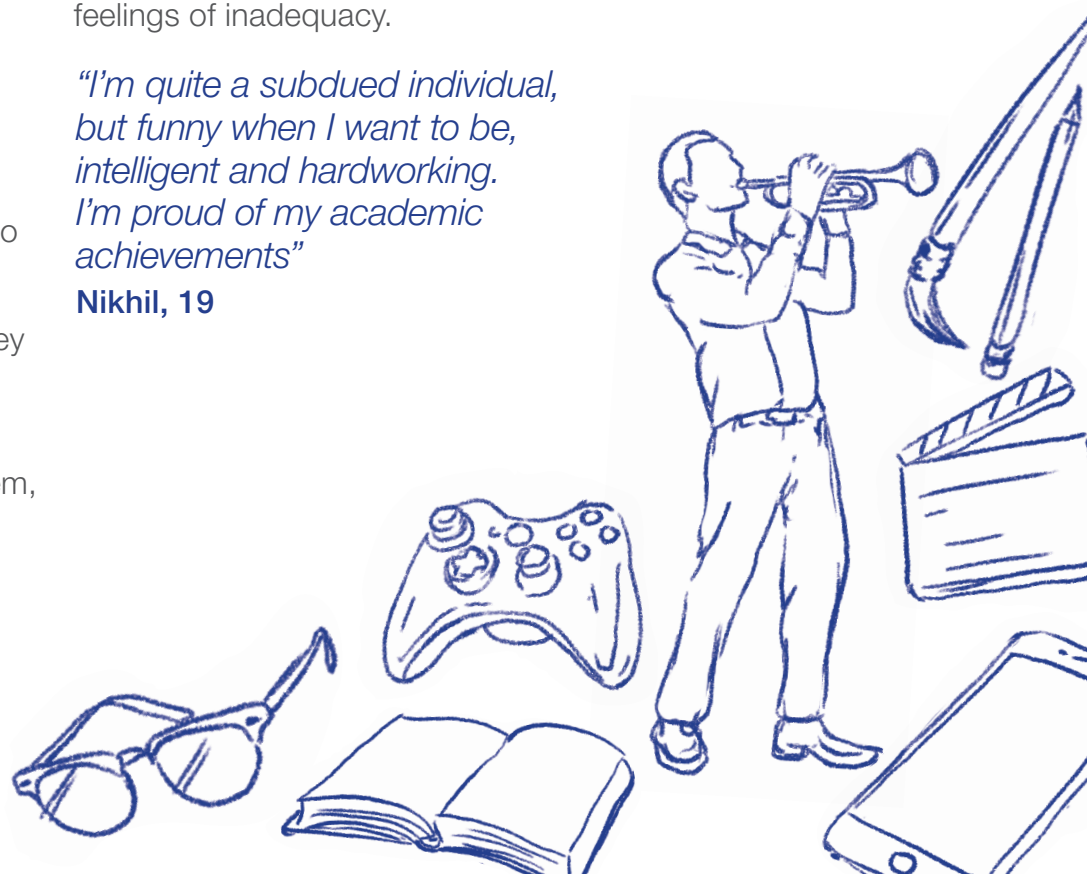
Confident Intellectuals have an open minded, optimistic view of the world and are comfortable in their own skin.

They value their freedom and believe in themselves. However, sport and exercise often make them feel embarrassed and leads to negative feelings around sport and their peers that take part.

The young people in this group aren't competitive and, compared to other personalities, improving their appearance or staying healthy are less important parts of their life. They prioritise success, achieving goals and doing something worthwhile. Even though they do occasionally recognise that sport is good for them, it certainly isn't high on the to-do list for these young people. They need a friendly, familiar environment to play in, so they're more likely to take part in sports that their friends are interested in too. They like to play sports with people of a similar ability to them to avoid any feelings of inadequacy.

"I'm quite a subdued individual, but funny when I want to be, intelligent and hardworking. I'm proud of my academic achievements"

Nikhil, 19

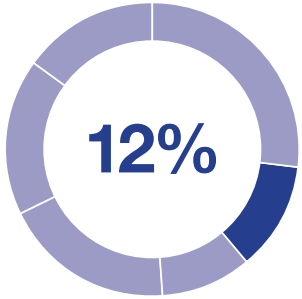


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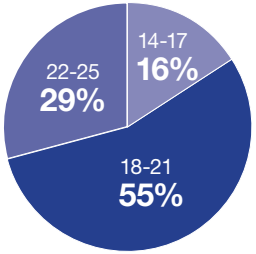
A closer look: life

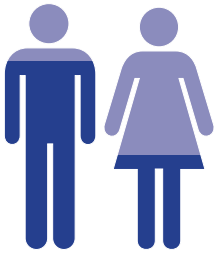
Confident Intellectuals

Group size



Who they are





More likely to be
18-21

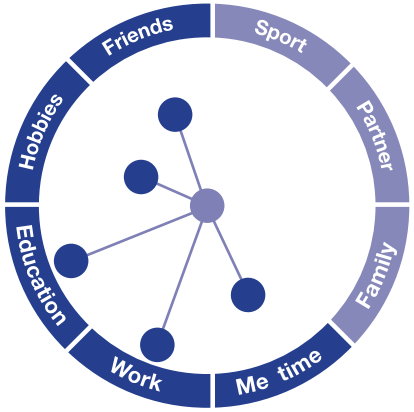
More likely to be
Male

More likely to be in
Education
(particularly higher education)

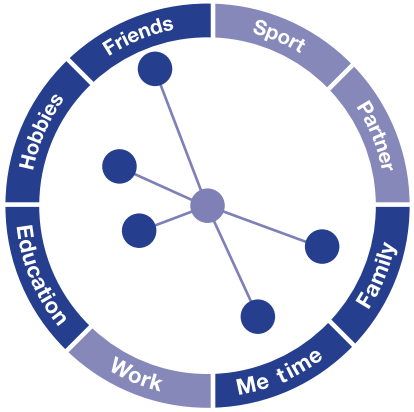
Slightly higher family wealth but more
Moderate
incomes for those who are working

9% Report a limiting disability (vs. **8%** average)

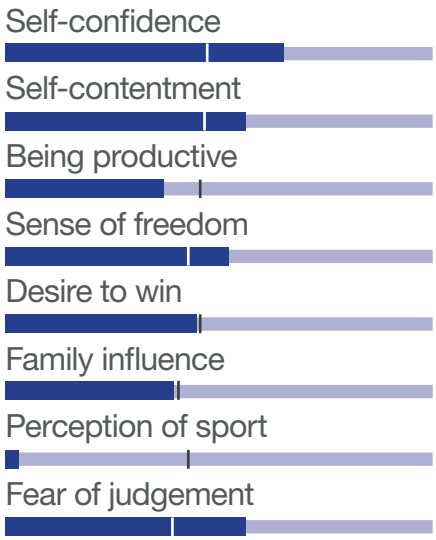
Their time is spent on



What they care about



Their attitudes



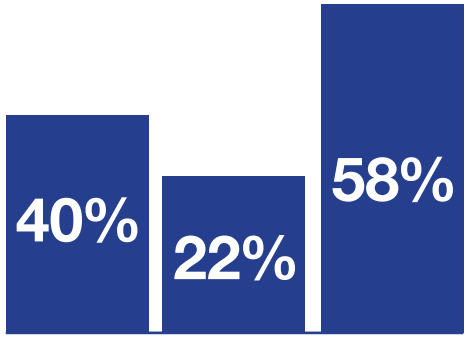
Black/white line represents average

Their motivations in life

Having fun and **feeling good** are top motivations for all personalities



Friends



I have lots of different groups of friends (average 36%)

I have a big circle of friends (average 21%)

I have a few very close friends (average 53%)

What they do in their free time

Listening to music is popular amongst all young people



Gaming | **Computers** | **Cinema**

Some context for their life

11% Have or are working towards a postgraduate qualification (vs. **6%** average)

65% Drink alcohol monthly or more often (vs. **56%** average)

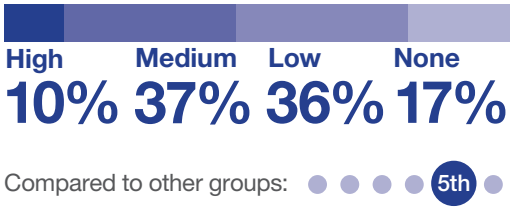
A closer look: sport and exercise

Confident Intellectuals

Attitude to sport and exercise



Taking part in sport and exercise



How they normally take part

- More likely to take part when they can fit it in
- Less likely to take part with strangers

Top reasons to take part for all young people are:

- To stay fit
- To have fun
- To stay healthy

Why Confident Intellectuals take part

More important

- To improve their appearance

Less important

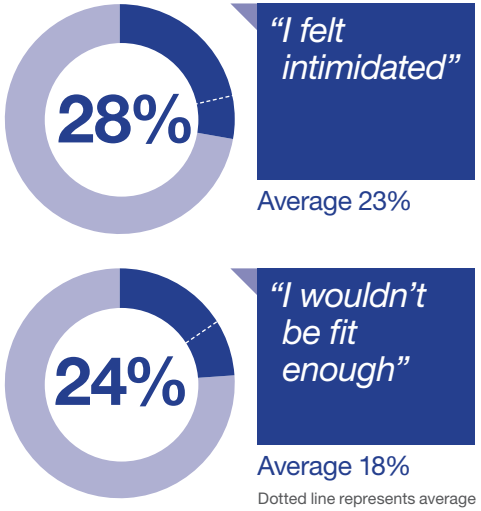
- To feel good
- To improve their performance
- To achieve goals

Most common barriers for all young people are:

"I haven't got round to looking yet" (43%)

"I couldn't find anywhere convenient to take part" (43%)

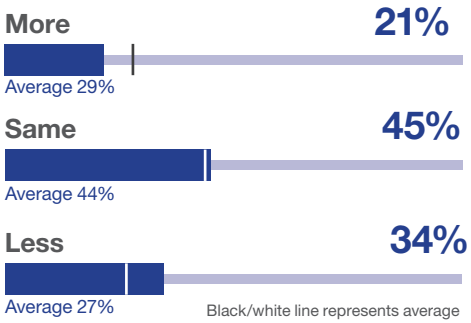
What stops Confident Intellectuals taking part



Sport at school

21% like(d)/love(d) PE at school (vs. **45 %** average)

Participation in sport now vs. a year ago

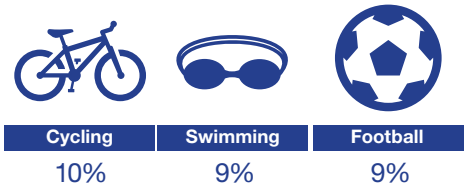


How sporty and physically active their friends and family are

38% have sporty friends (Average 54%)

24% have a sporty family (Average 35%)

Top sports currently played



Sports they **want** to play include tennis, badminton and swimming.

A fresh approach:
Attracting their attention

Confident Intellectuals

What will stand out and be noticed by this personality?
What appeals to them and encourages them to start something?

Highlight opportunities where focus, dedication and creativity win out

Confident Intellectuals commit themselves to activities. They want to become **long-term enthusiasts**. Their ability to focus and commit needs to be presented as more important and valuable than sporting abilities, athleticism, talent or competitiveness.

Pick out specific **skills** that can be developed over time. Highlight mental skills such as **tactical awareness** or the **development of technical expertise**.

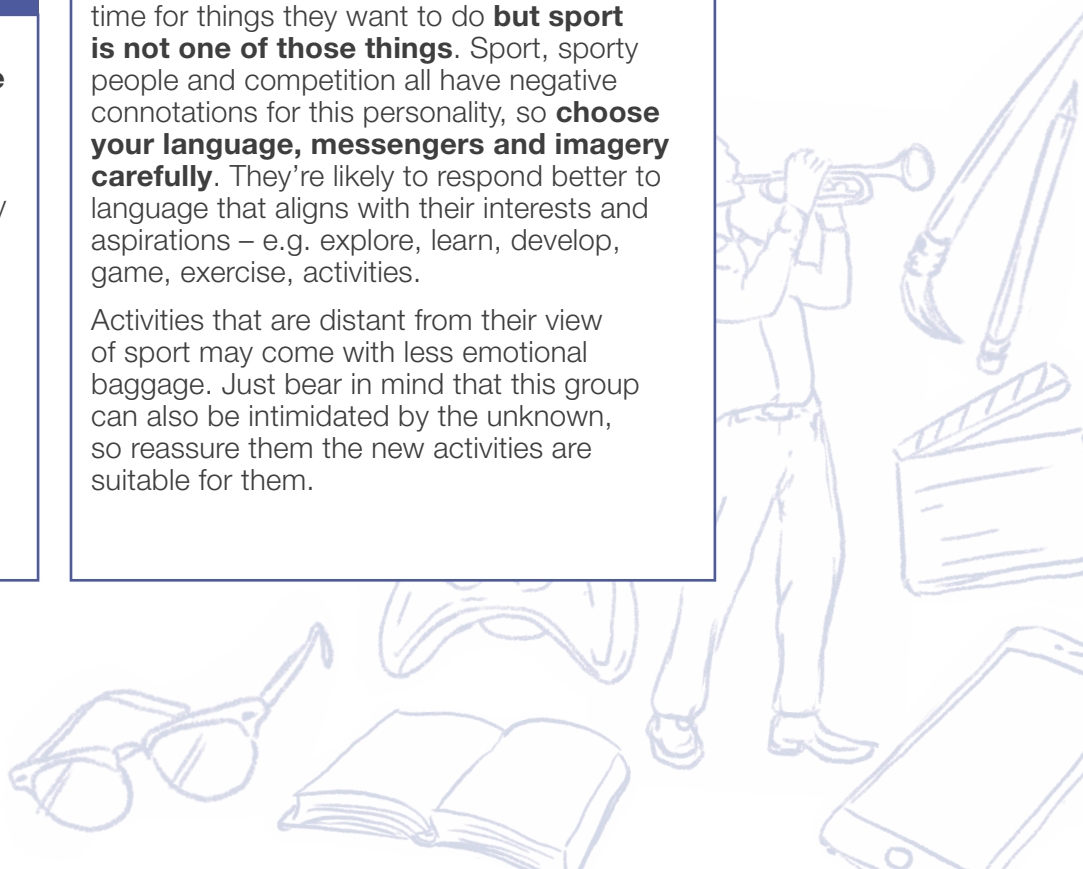
Reassure them they don't need experience to take part

This group are **used to being good at things**, but they **lack confidence** and **tend to feel embarrassed when they get involved** in physical activities. Reassure them that activities are entry level and genuinely **for beginners**, and don't expect people to have existing skills or talent. **Less mainstream activities** where they don't feel there's an existing skill base to overcome might appeal more.

Don't bring 'sport' into it

Like anyone, Confident Intellectuals make time for things they want to do **but sport is not one of those things**. Sport, sporty people and competition all have negative connotations for this personality, so **choose your language, messengers and imagery carefully**. They're likely to respond better to language that aligns with their interests and aspirations – e.g. explore, learn, develop, game, exercise, activities.

Activities that are distant from their view of sport may come with less emotional baggage. Just bear in mind that this group can also be intimidated by the unknown, so reassure them the new activities are suitable for them.



A fresh approach:
Deliver against their expectations

Confident Intellectuals

What type of experience and environment suits this group?

Create a familiar, structured environment to help them feel supported

New activities can push Confident Intellectuals outside their comfort zone. Put them at ease by making the rest of the experience feel **supportive** and **familiar**. For example, you could hold activities for groups of trusted friends in an environment they're already comfortable with.

It's important that coaches/leaders provide structure and direction to **prevent anyone standing out** as not knowing what to do.

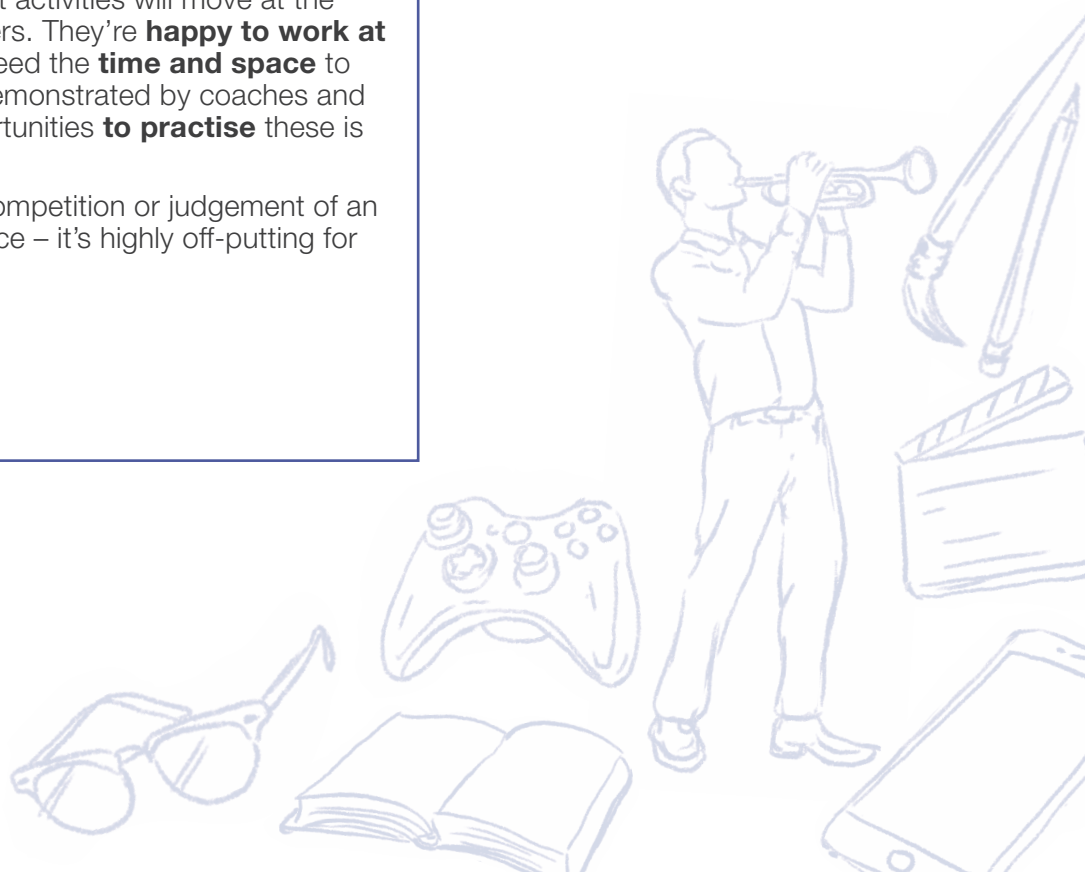
Help them develop their skills and keep the playing field level

This group are concerned about falling behind, so they're concerned that activities will move at the pace of the best players. They're **happy to work at getting better**, but need the **time and space** to do so. Seeing skills demonstrated by coaches and having plenty of opportunities **to practise** these is reassuring.

Avoid any form of competition or judgement of an individual's performance – it's highly off-putting for this group.

"An invitation to get involved in team sports would cause me to recoil and aggressively decline. However, I enjoy things I can take part in at my own leisure or with a friend"

Ajay, 20



A fresh approach:
Keep them coming back

Confident Intellectuals

How can this personality be encouraged to take part more regularly?
How can their connection with sport and exercise be strengthened?

Recognise and reward improvement and perseverance

This group happily commit and dedicate themselves to activities. They enjoy getting better, so while setting specific goals is less important, **a sense of improvement** is key.

Offer them a **visible long-term development pathway, and support them** to access it on their own terms. Recognise and reward **dedication** as well as **incremental improvements**.

Highlight how they can enhance their CV

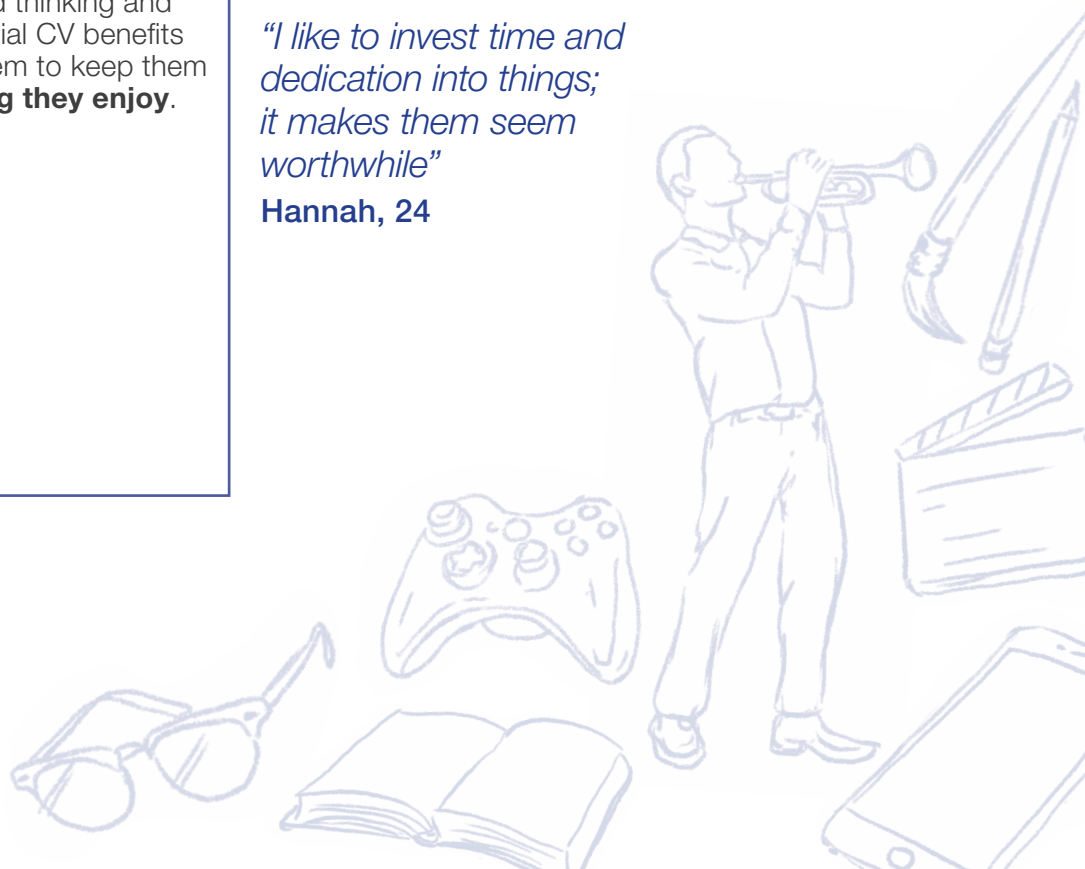
This group are forward thinking and career minded; potential CV benefits can really motivate them to keep them going **with something they enjoy**.

"...because I like to see progress, and realising that I am slowly getting better at something makes me feel motivated and happy"

Kerry, 20

"I like to invest time and dedication into things; it makes them seem worthwhile"

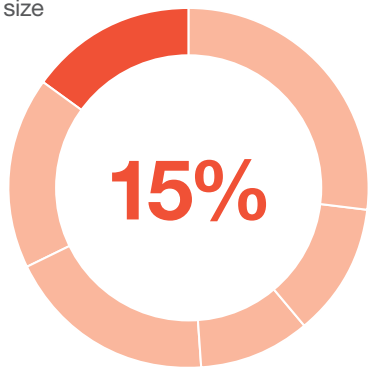
Hannah, 24



Ambitious Self-starters

Achievers / Proactive / On the go

Group size



Attitude to sport and exercise



Emotional **Rational**

Compared to other groups:

2nd 1st

Taking part in sport and exercise



High	Medium	Low
50%	47%	3%

Compared to other groups: 2nd

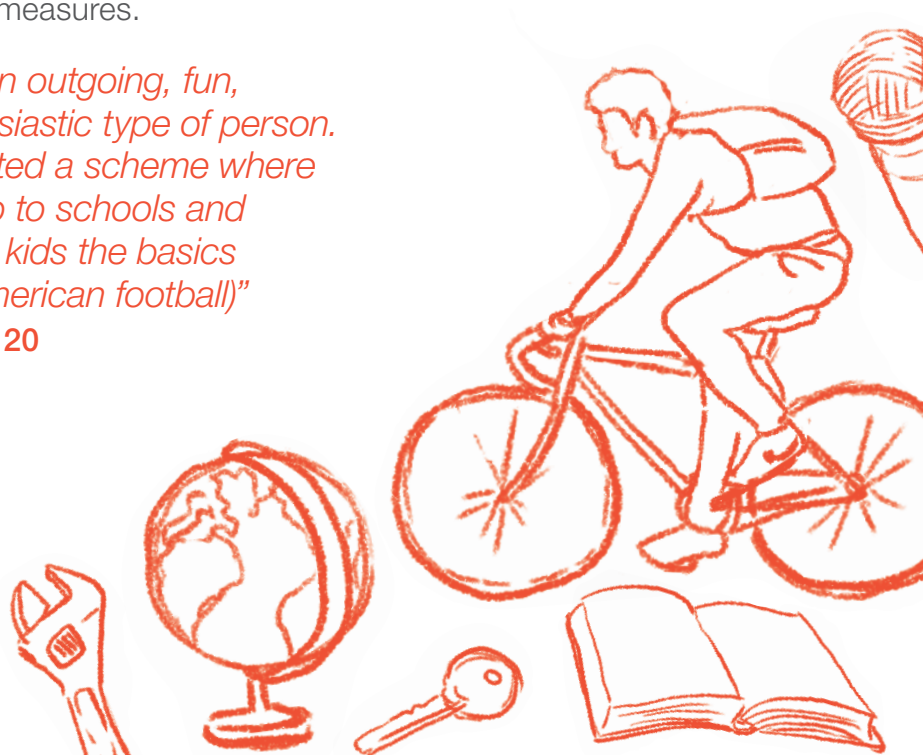
Ambitious Self-starters aren't just active because they enjoy it. They see sport as another means to achieving their goals. Typically well educated and from wealthier backgrounds than other groups, these young people want to have it all. They are continually striving to improve and succeed at every activity or challenge they take on.

Ambitious Self-starters like to use their time productively. They have lots of hobbies compared to other groups; music, gaming and the cinema all feature strongly. Sport and exercise ranks highly amongst their hobbies and they both watch sport and take part in a wide range of physical activities. They are confident and enjoy meeting new people. They enjoy strong family relationships and support networks. Their parents are their main role models and friendships and education are amongst their priorities.

Ambitious Self-starters are conscious of their health and fitness and want to test their competitive nature, all while having fun. Positive about sport and on board with the benefits, both head and heart drive them to get active in equal measures.

"I'm an outgoing, fun, enthusiastic type of person. I created a scheme where we go to schools and teach kids the basics (of American football)"

Rhys, 20

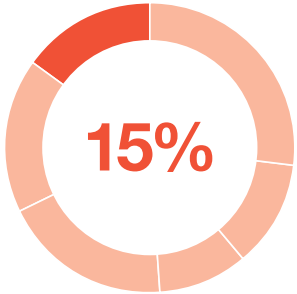


For more information about definitions and data click **here** (look for 'accompanying information')
Or email research@sportengland.org

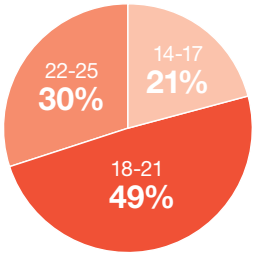
A closer look: life

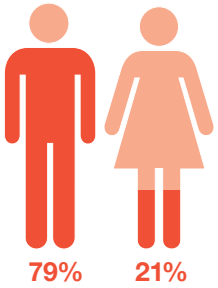
Ambitious Self-starters

Group size



Who they are





More likely to be
18-21

More likely to be
Male



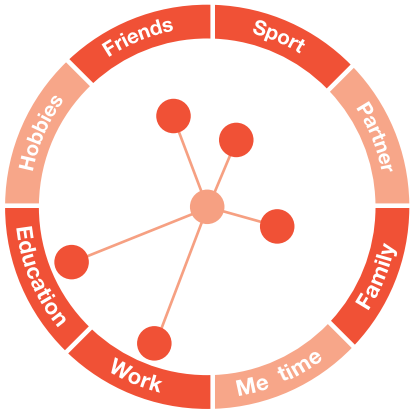
More likely to be in
Education
(particularly higher education)



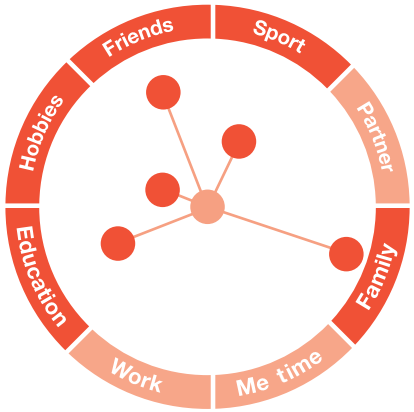
One of the
Wealthiest
groups

3% Report a limiting disability (vs. **8%** average)

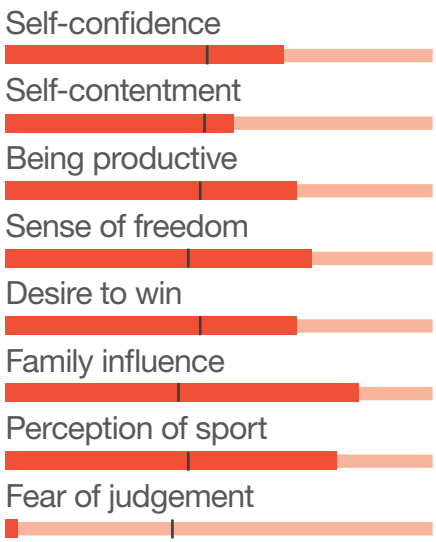
Their time is spent on



What they care about



Their attitudes



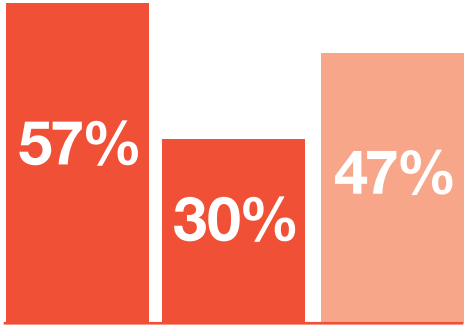
Black line represents average

Their motivations in life

Having fun and **feeling good** are top motivations for all personalities



Friends



I have lots of different groups of friends (average 36%)

I have a big circle of friends (average 21%)

I have a few very close friends (average 53%)

What they do in their free time

Listening to music is popular amongst all young people



Sport | Watch sport | Gaming

Some context for their life

32% Live in a shared house/flat or alone (vs. **24%** average)

40% Are undergraduates at university (vs. **27%** average)

A closer look: sport and exercise

Ambitious Self-starters

Attitude to sport and exercise

86 Emotional

84 Rational

Compared to other groups:

2nd 1st

Taking part in sport and exercise

High	Medium	Low
50%	47%	3%

Compared to other groups: 2nd

How they normally take part

- More likely to be committed to turning up regularly
- More likely to be taking part in more different sports

Top reasons to take part for all young people are:

- To stay fit
- To have fun
- To stay healthy

Why Ambitious Self-starters take part

More important

- To improve their performance
- To have fun
- To compete

Less important

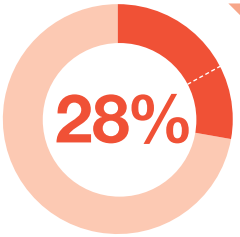
- To improve their appearance
- To lose weight

Most common barriers for all young people are:

"I haven't got round to looking yet" (43%)

"I couldn't find anywhere convenient to take part" (43%)

What stops Ambitious Self-starters taking part



"I'd have to stop doing something else to fit it in"

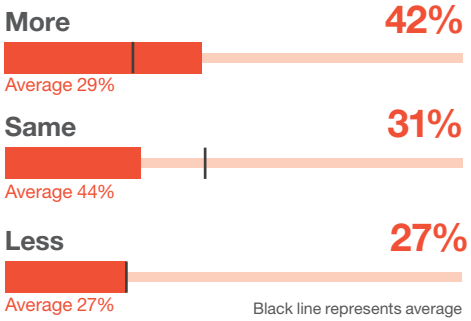
Average 15%

Dotted line represents average

Sport at school

77% like(d)/love(d) PE at school (vs. **45 %** average)

Participation in sport now vs. a year ago



How sporty and physically active their friends and family are

80% have sporty friends (Average 54%)

48% have a sporty family (Average 35%)

Top sports currently played



Football	Gym	Running
42%	26%	22%

Sports they **want** to play include tennis, football and American football.

A fresh approach:
Attracting their attention

Ambitious Self-starters

What will stand out and be noticed by this personality?
What appeals to them and encourages them to start something?

Offer them a challenge

Ambitious Self-starters are **always up for a challenge**, whether it's mental, physical or technical. They enjoy the **buzz of new achievements** so keep this front and centre when you promote your activity.

They see sport and exercise as a chance to "**blow off steam**" and **escape from work or study**, so they are looking for options they feel are demanding.

Present them with opportunities to develop new skills

They're motivated to start new activities by the opportunity to develop new **sport** or **life skills** as well as meeting specific fitness goals.

However, they don't want to be seen as show-offs, **and won't be persuaded to take part just as a way to maximise their CV.**

"A challenge is something I thrive on. The fastest way to get me to do something is to tell me it's impossible or too difficult for me - I'll take it as a personal insult and make sure I succeed just to spite them"

Prasheen, 18



A fresh approach:
Deliver against their expectations

Ambitious Self-starters

What type of experience and environment suits this group?

Help them prioritise activities they're good at

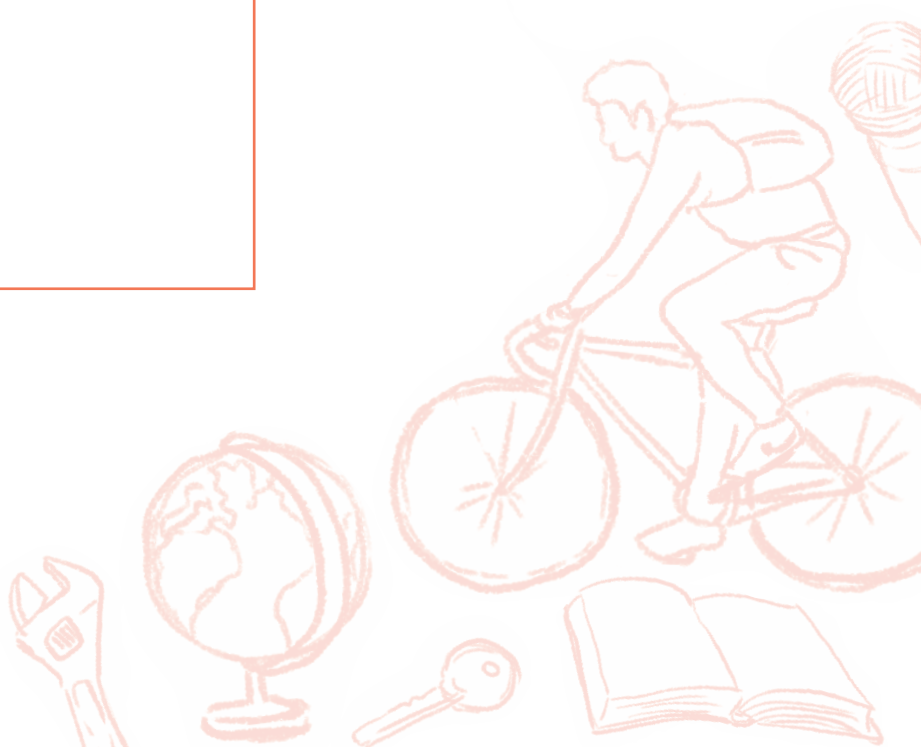
Ambitious Self-starters are busy, but they'll **make time for things they enjoy** and can be successful in. They are self-motivated to take up activities so **don't shoehorn them into something that doesn't fit**. Instead, support them to find **opportunities that are right for them**.

Encourage them to compete and progress – against themselves or others

This group are driven – they love seeing progress, whether it **comes from direct competition** or **pushing themselves** to beat their own previous performance.

"When I am part of anything, my first goal is can I better whoever did it before me. Then can I better myself"

James, 20



A fresh approach:
Keep them coming back

Ambitious Self-starters

How can this personality be encouraged to take part more regularly?
How can their connection with sport and exercise be strengthened?

Continue to challenge them

Ambitious Self-starters believe in **working hard** and **strive to become experts in whatever they do**. Make them feel they are doing something worthwhile by offering **regular, challenging activities that they can commit to**.

Being able to select their own challenges, aiming high and having their achievements recognised helps to keep them motivated.

Ambitious Self-starters can **lose interest when an activity becomes less intense**. Avoid this by keeping the **session tempo high** and matching skill levels.

Keep it flexible

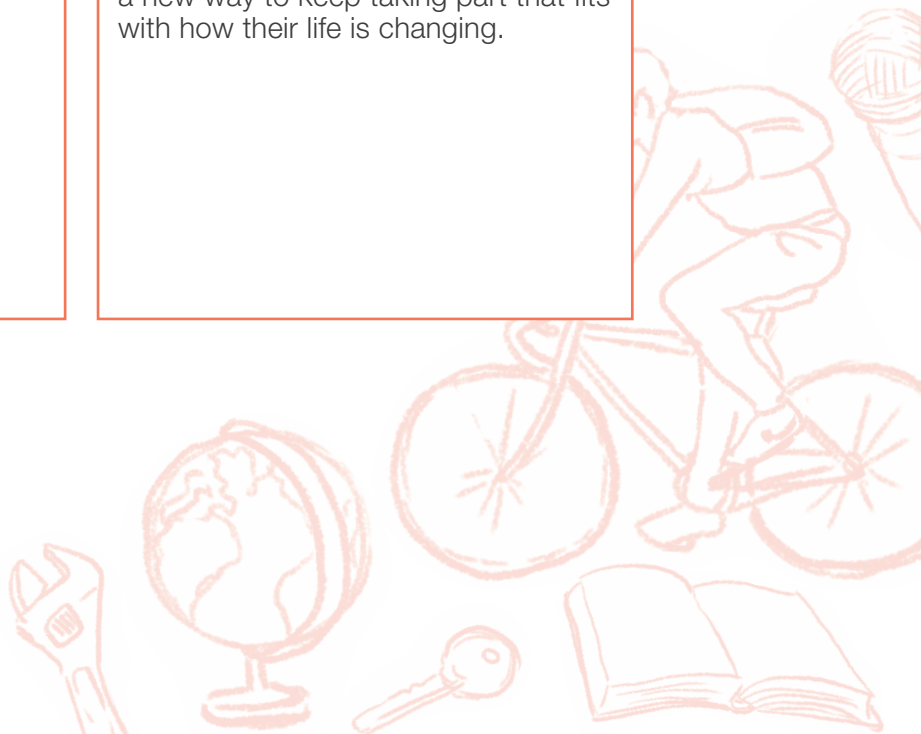
Ambitious Self-starters keep a **busy schedule** so they're likely to have other activities going on. Remove as many practical barriers as possible, and allow them to **take breaks if they need to** without feeling like they will be judged or penalised later.

Help them stay committed when life changes

This personality can **find it difficult to juggle new and existing commitments** during major life changes. Help them find a balance or a new way to keep taking part that fits with how their life is changing.

"Because I do quite a lot of things, it's important that I can juggle stuff. I wouldn't want to have to commit to being somewhere every week if I'd let people down by missing a session"

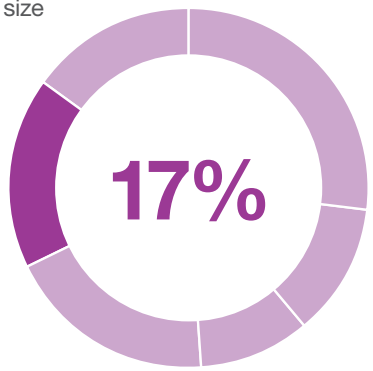
Danni, 21



Cautious Introverts

Loyal / Careful / Self-reliant

Group size



Attitude to sport and exercise



Emotional **Rational**

Compared to other groups:



Taking part in sport and exercise



High	Medium	Low	None
7%	33%	27%	33%

Compared to other groups:



Cautious Introverts are happiest spending time with their intimate group of close-knit friends, or alone. Loyal to friends and family, these shy youths tend to live their lives closer to home.

Life isn't always a smooth ride for these young people. They tend to face more challenges than other groups; they might struggle financially and lack freedom and support from those around them. As a result, they're careful decision- makers and thrifty consumers.

Cautious Introverts don't tend to have many hobbies or interests, preferring to relax in their free time. They're not comfortable with trying new things for fear of being exposed – they usually choose to stick with the familiar.

They sometimes describe themselves as lazy, and tend to have a low opinion of their looks and abilities. Perhaps this is why they're less likely to participate in sport or recognise its benefits. They don't consider themselves sporty in any way and are rarely encouraged to take part by their family. Unless they're forced to, they'd prefer to opt out of sport and exercise altogether.

"I'm loyal and stubborn. I tend to go out with my friends, but I don't make many plans for the weekend"

Milly, 19

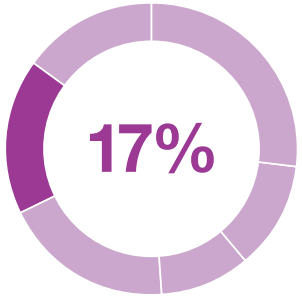


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Or email research@sportengland.org

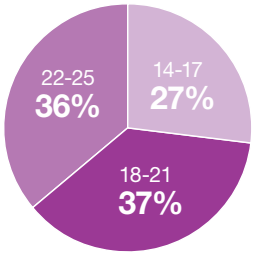
A closer look: life

Cautious Introverts

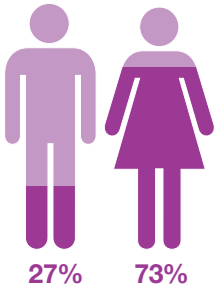
Group size



Who they are



More likely to be spread across the age range



More likely to be **Female**



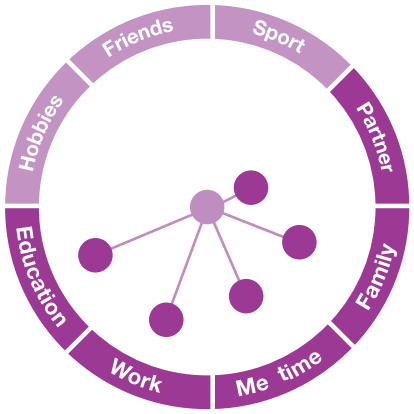
Likely to have left **Education**



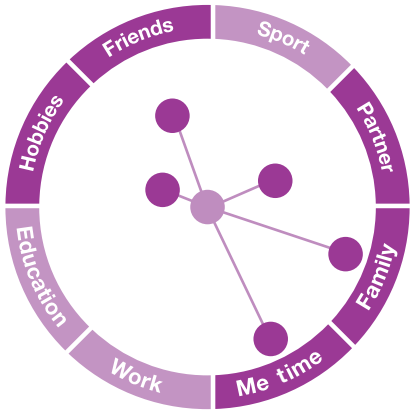
One of the poorest groups with **Lowest** average income and family wealth

15% Report a limiting disability (vs. **8%** average)

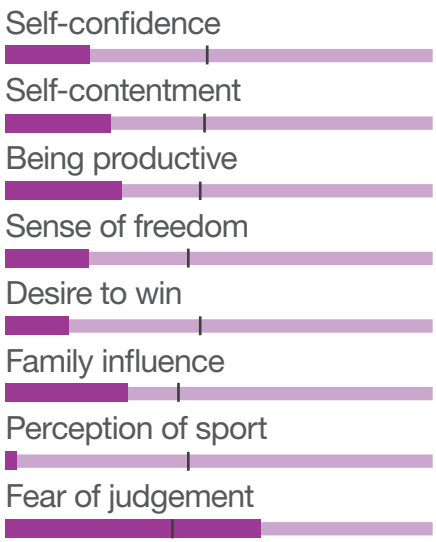
Their time is spent on



What they care about



Their attitudes



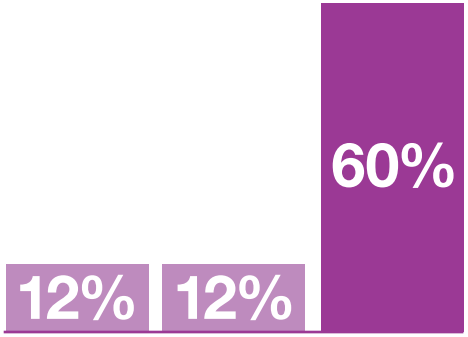
Black line represents average

Their motivations in life

Having fun and **feeling good** are top motivations for all personalities



Friends



I have lots of different groups of friends (average 36%)

I have a big circle of friends (average 21%)

I have a few very close friends (average 53%)

What they do in their free time

Listening to music is popular amongst all young people



Some context for their life

14% Unemployed and looking for a job (vs. **7%** average)

13% Have children (vs. **8%** average)

A closer look: sport and exercise

Cautious Introverts

Attitude to sport and exercise

13 Emotional

15 Rational

Compared to other groups:

6th 6th

Taking part in sport and exercise

High	Medium	Low	None
7%	33%	27%	33%

Compared to other groups: 6th

How they normally take part

- More likely to take part on the spur of the moment
- More likely to take part with family

Top reasons to take part for all young people are:

- To stay fit
- To have fun
- To stay healthy

Why Cautious Introverts take part

More important

- Because they have to
- To lose weight

Less important

- To feel good
- To improve their performance
- To relax/unwind

Most common barriers for all young people are:

"I haven't got round to looking yet" (43%)

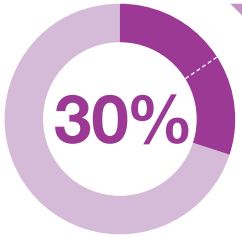
"I couldn't find anywhere convenient to take part" (43%)

What stops Cautious Introverts taking part



"I didn't want to go on my own"

Average 34%



"I wouldn't be fit enough"

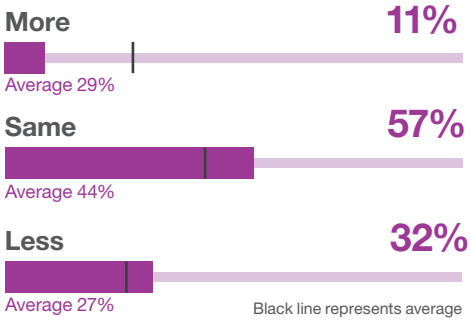
Average 18%

Dotted line represents average

Sport at school

9% like(d)/love(d) PE at school (vs. **45 %** average)

Participation in sport now vs. a year ago



How sporty and physically active their friends and family are

27% have sporty friends
Average 54%

20% have a sporty family
Average 35%

Top sports currently played



Swimming	Running	Cycling
9%	7%	5%

Sports they **want** to play include swimming, badminton, archery and tennis.

A fresh approach:
Attracting their attention

Cautious Introverts

What will stand out and be noticed by this personality?
What appeals to them and encourages them to start something?

Connect keeping fit to feeling good

This group want to keep fit, and feel they should do more of it. They recognise that being active makes them feel better, and they also know they'll feel good about having made the effort to take part. Tap into these feelings.

Don't bring 'sport' into it

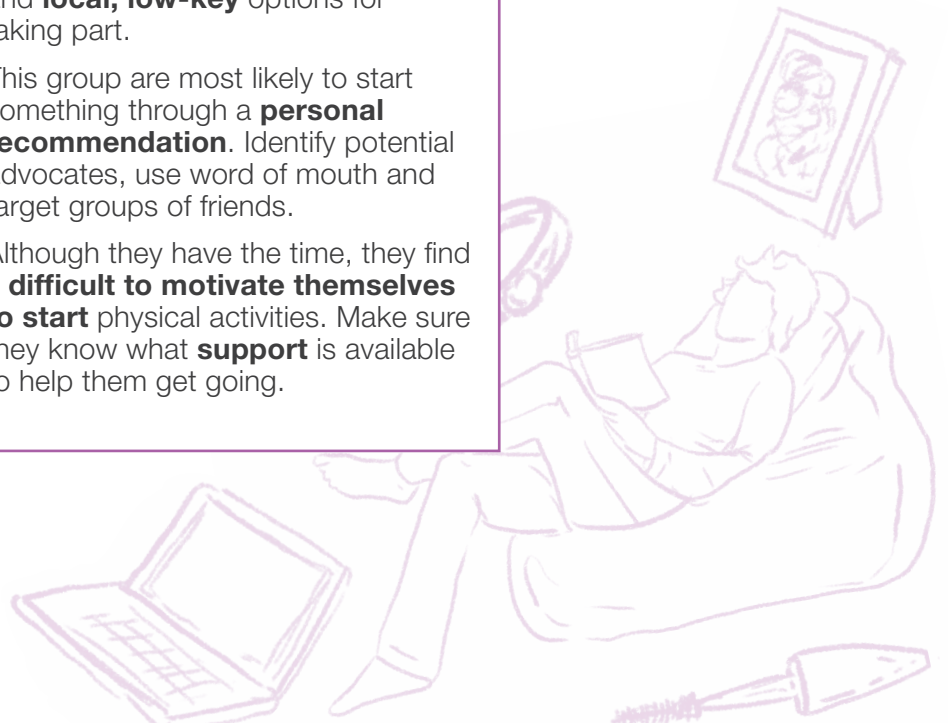
Cautious Introverts have **negative associations of both sport and exercise**, and **competition is particularly off-putting**. It's important to avoid using sporting language, messengers and imagery. They're likely to respond better to clear descriptions of casual activities and environments with minimal commitment, no fitness/skill requirements and no pressure. Try using language like explore, relax, unwind and leisure.

Keep it small and supportive

This group prefer taking part on their own, at home or in a familiar place with a small number of trusted friends who can support each other. Communicate a sense of **familiarity** and **local, low-key** options for taking part.

This group are most likely to start something through a **personal recommendation**. Identify potential advocates, use word of mouth and target groups of friends.

Although they have the time, they find it **difficult to motivate themselves to start** physical activities. Make sure they know what **support** is available to help them get going.



A fresh approach:
Deliver against their expectations

Cautious Introverts

What type of experience and environment suits this group?

Reassure them and build their confidence

Lack of confidence and **embarrassment** are the main reasons for avoiding or stopping activities amongst this group, and new activities push them well outside of their comfort zone. Cautious Introverts are really worried about **being seen to fail** or **feeling inadequate**.

Reassure and encourage them at every step. Try to make the experience feel **supportive** and **familiar** by providing a **relaxed, casual environment** with no hint of pressure. Any group activities should involve other **like-minded beginners** who can offer moral support.

This group want to stay in control and have a level of autonomy in what they do. Let them **go at their own pace** and assure them that they can **take part on their own terms**.

Avoid any implication of judgement or being compared to others. Any form of competition or situations which could **leave them feeling overly scrutinised are particularly off-putting to Cautious Introverts**.

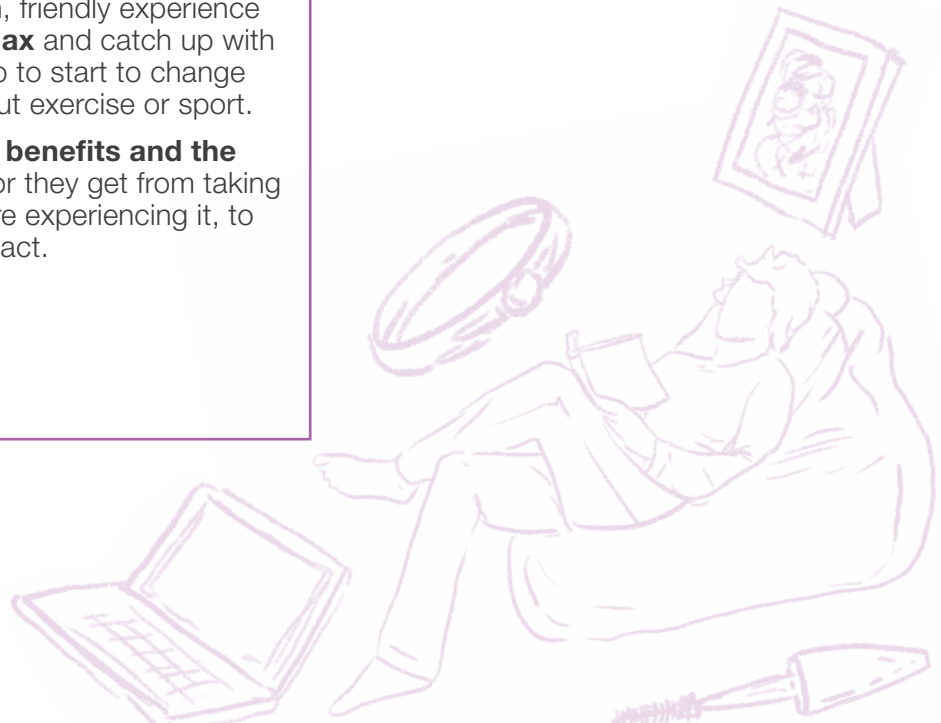
Help them to enjoy and feel good about themselves

They don't expect to enjoy sport or exercise – they're more likely to turn up based on rational reasons like keeping healthy or getting fit. But **they want to spend time on things they enjoy** and a fun, friendly experience with **time to relax** and catch up with friends may help to start to change their minds about exercise or sport.

Talk about the benefits and the feel-good factor they get from taking part while they're experiencing it, to reinforce its impact.

"I would [take part] alone somewhere private so that I wouldn't have to worry about people thinking I wasn't very good, even though they're probably not thinking that anyway"

Stella, 21



A fresh approach:
Keep them coming back

Cautious Introverts

How can this personality be encouraged to take part more regularly?
How can their connection with sport and exercise be strengthened?

Recognise and reward taking part

This group aren't aspiring to achieve specific milestones, so **setting goals is less important** for them. **Recognise commitment**, perseverance and their continued involvement as an achievement in itself and something they can take pride in.

This group need continued support to **build their confidence** and appreciate encouragement from instructors, coaches, buddies, mentors, family, friends or peers. Encourage group members to keep supporting each other when taking part in group activities.

Don't penalise them for taking breaks. This group want to feel in control and don't like being forced to be involved, but they're concerned about **being left behind** if they take a break. Reassure them they can dip in and out.

Open up new opportunities as they develop long-term

Cautious Introverts don't yet see sport and exercise as a way to develop themselves or open up wider opportunities in life. However, **self-improvement is an area of interest to them generally**. Over time, if their confidence develops, try keeping them involved by introducing opportunities like volunteering, qualifications or committee roles.

"Also, by having people to encourage you, I probably wouldn't give up or stop doing the activity as when it got boring or hard, you'd have people to encourage you and get you through"

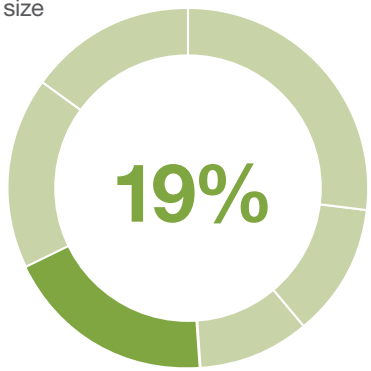
Nisha, 19



Thoughtful Improvers

Mature / Non-competitive / Self-development

Group size



Attitude to sport and exercise



Emotional Rational

Compared to other groups:

4th 3rd

Taking part in sport and exercise



High	Medium	Low	None
25%	50%	19%	6%

Compared to other groups: 3rd

Thoughtful Improvers are motivated, mature and independent. You might bump into them at the cinema or out shopping, and when they're at home they'll probably be listening to music, reading or enjoying good food. Relaxing doesn't mean sitting around to Thoughtful Improvers; they like to use their free time productively.

This group of young people worry a lot about how other people think and feel, and tend to be less contented than others. Success and achieving goals are important to them, but developing and improving themselves is their main driver in life. This is reflected in their relationship with physical activity. Although they often feel embarrassed taking part in sport, they exercise because they're often unhappy with their bodies and tend to feel guilty for skipping a workout.

Thoughtful Improvers aren't competitive and don't usually count sport as a hobby or interest, but they do recognise its benefits. In addition to staying in shape, it helps them cope with stress, and they're motivated to take part because it can make them feel good.

"My friends describe me as friendly, jokey, mature and dependable when I need to be. I step up when my friends need me. I've been accepted to do a 12 month placement, a proper office role with a lot of responsibility, which will be interesting"

Erik, 20



For more information about definitions and data click **here** (look for 'accompanying information')
Or email research@sportengland.org

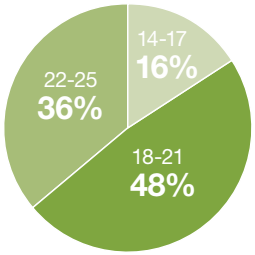
A closer look: life

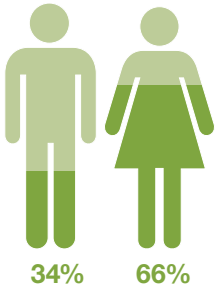
Thoughtful Improvers

Group size



Who they are





More likely to be **18-21**

More likely to be **Female**



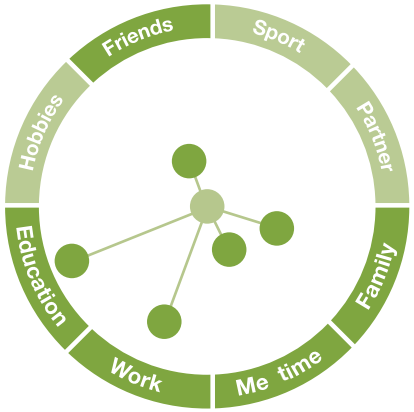


A good spread across **Employment & Education**

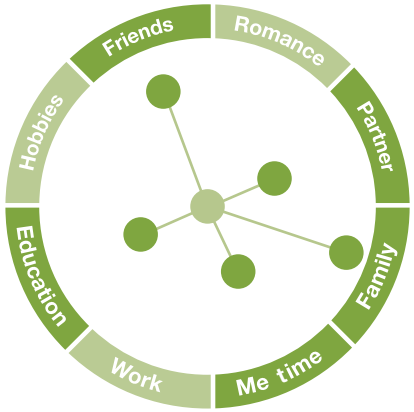
Average family wealth but have **Lower** incomes for those who are working

9% Report a limiting disability (vs. **8%** average)

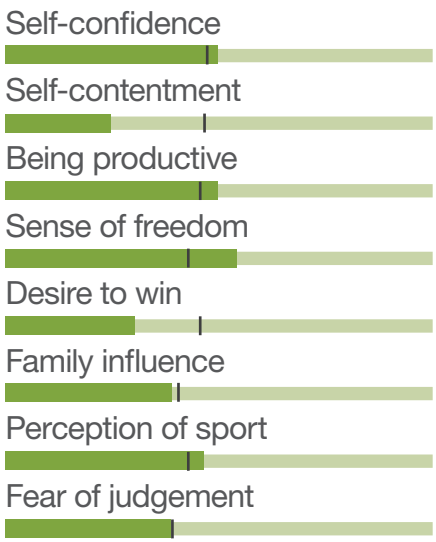
Their time is spent on



What they care about



Their attitudes



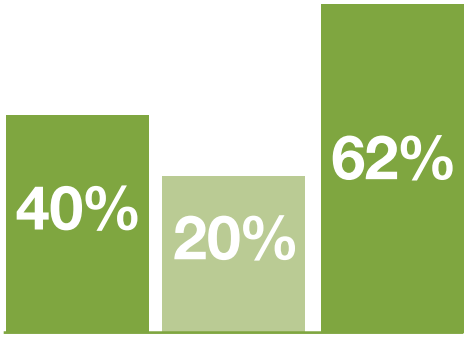
Black line represents average

Their motivations in life

Having fun and **feeling good** are top motivations for all personalities



Friends



I have lots of different groups of friends (average 36%)

I have a big circle of friends (average 21%)

I have a few very close friends (average 53%)

What they do in their free time

Listening to music is popular amongst all young people



Some context for their life

18% Volunteer as a hobby (vs. **11%** average)

20% Have a part-time or weekend job (vs. **16%** average)

A closer look: sport and exercise

Thoughtful Improvers

Attitude to sport and exercise



Emotional Rational

Compared to other groups:

4th 3rd

Taking part in sport and exercise



High	Medium	Low	None
25%	50%	19%	6%

Compared to other groups: 3rd

How they normally take part

- More likely to take part when they can fit it in
- More likely to take part alone

Top reasons to take part for all young people are:

- To stay fit
- To have fun
- To stay healthy

Why Thoughtful Improvers take part

More important

- To improve their appearance
- To lose weight
- To feel good

Less important

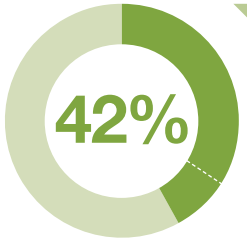
- To have fun

Most common barriers for all young people are:

"I haven't got round to looking yet" (43%)

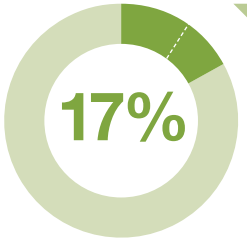
"I couldn't find anywhere convenient to take part" (43%)

What stops Thoughtful Improvers taking part



"I didn't want to go on my own"

Average 34%



"It looked too competitive"

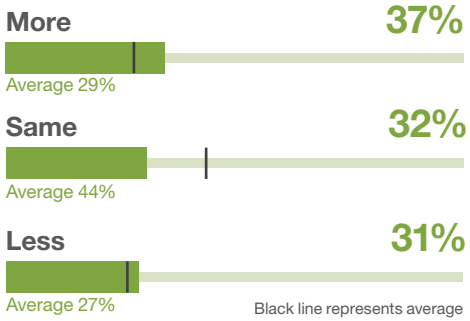
Average 12%

Dotted line represents average

Sport at school

37% like(d)/love(d) PE at school (vs. **45 %** average)

Participation in sport now vs. a year ago



How sporty and physically active are their friends and family

48% have sporty friends (Average 54%)

33% have a sporty family (Average 35%)

Top sports currently played



Running	Gym	Swimming
21%	19%	14%

Sports they **want** to play include swimming, badminton and tennis.

A fresh approach:
Attracting their attention

Thoughtful Improvers

What will stand out and be noticed by this personality?
What appeals to them and encourages them to start something?

Highlight opportunities to reach personal goals

Thoughtful Improvers like to achieve goals and want to be well-rounded individuals. Prioritise this in communications to encourage them to start new activities.

They also recognise it can be difficult to motivate themselves in the longer term, so **offer support to set and reach attainable goals**.

Tap into their fitness and weight-loss aspirations

Thoughtful Improvers **often have fitness and health goals (including losing weight)**. They want to look good and feel good, so language like "keep in shape" is appealing.

This group lack confidence in how they look – both in terms of body image and when taking part in sport and exercise. They worry about looking and feeling out of place and out of their depth. Let them know what to expect and reassure them they don't need to be in shape or know what they're doing.

"I always tend to like doing things that I feel a sense of achievement from, as I've gained a new skill and it gives me more confidence in myself"

Yasmin, 23



A fresh approach:
Deliver against their expectations

Thoughtful Improvers

What type of experience and environment suits this group?

Keep it safe and supportive to reduce fear of judgement

Thoughtful Improvers' lower confidence means **they don't want to feel closely watched, judged or scrutinised**. They won't be palmed off with "it doesn't matter" or "we all look bad together".

Tackle their worries head on. Set the activity up in a less public or a familiar place where they feel more at ease. Coaches and leaders should provide **reassurance and encouragement, and recognise progress** towards goals rather than giving extensive direction.

Entering a new environment or starting a new activity is particularly tough for Thoughtful Improvers. Let them **hide** in a crowd of friends or fellow beginners to **reduce the pressure**.

Create a fun, friendly and relaxed environment

While Thoughtful Improvers are goal oriented, they want to **enjoy activities with their friends** too. Make sure their experiences are enjoyable and sociable, and encourage peer-to-peer support.

Keep activities casual and **informal**. Allow them to set their **own pace** and don't ask too much of them.

Avoid competition until they feel they're ready.

"It would be great to start up this club where everyone was new to the activity, as there would be no pressure to be good straight away. It would make it a challenge for me and my friends to improve our skills at our own pace"

Zac, 18



A fresh approach:
Keep them coming back

Thoughtful Improvers

How can this personality be encouraged to take part more regularly?
How can their connection with sport and exercise be strengthened?

Give them something to be proud of

To make a habit stick, this group need to feel a sense of progress, improvement and achievement. Keep supporting them to regularly set **aspirational but achievable** goals.

Highlight their improvement and progress to them (but not publicly). Offer rewards and recognition when they **reach targets** to help them feel pride in their achievement and build confidence.

Make them feel part of something

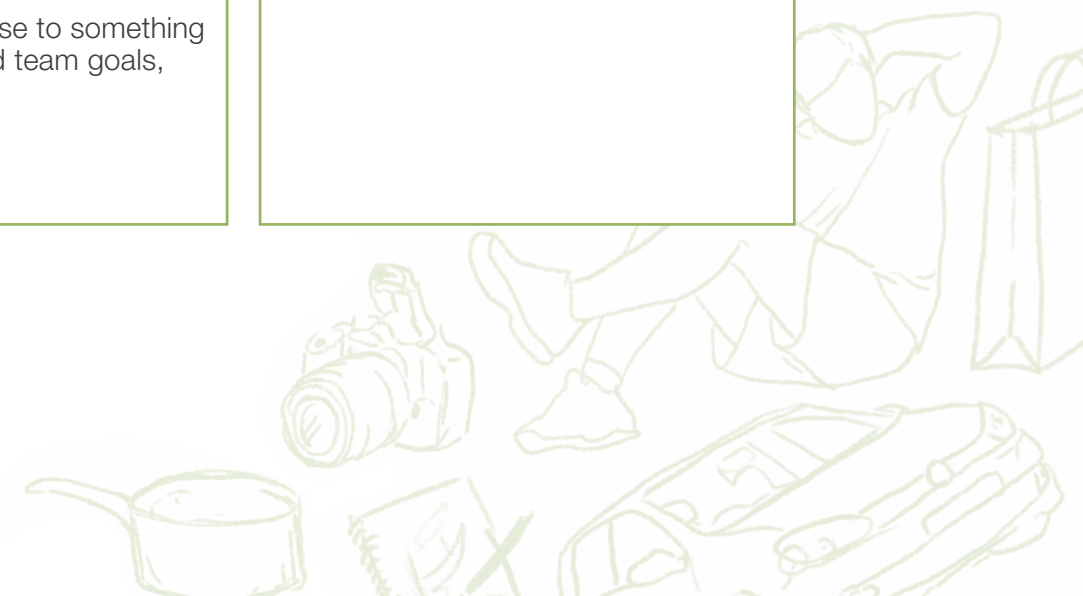
Although many Thoughtful Improvers like the idea of sport in principle, they tend to migrate towards exercise instead, because they see it as a less pressured environment. However, exercise can be hard to maintain and they feel guilty for a lack of self-motivation and not doing enough. **Let them know they're not alone – others feel the same way**.

Group activities can seem more fun and feeling part of an informal, sociable group is a great motivation to keep going.

Connect individual activities or exercise to something bigger e.g. charity challenges, shared team goals, buddy/mentor systems.

Make competition fun

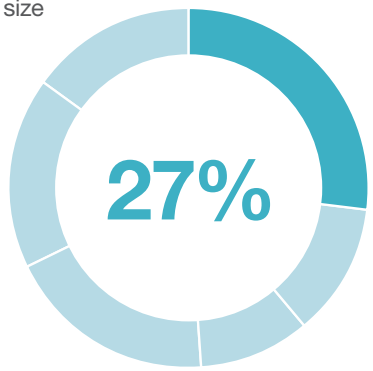
As they progress in an activity, Thoughtful Improvers may become interested in putting their skills into practice, in a contest or game scenario. Just **make sure the focus remains on having a go**, self-development and taking part, rather than traditional forms of competition.



Everyday Youths

Mainstream / Easy-going / Content

Group size



Attitude to sport and exercise



Emotional Rational

Compared to other groups:



Taking part in sport and exercise



High	Medium	Low	None
19%	54%	20%	7%

Compared to other groups:



Easy-going and relaxed, young people who fit into this group tend to be happy in their own skin. They're generally satisfied with their achievements and appearance and so can seem less driven than other groups. These young people aren't interested in filling up their diaries – they prefer to go with the flow.

Young people in this group aren't competitive. Winning doesn't mean much to them. Instead, they're happier to stick to activities that are comfortable and familiar. They are laid back realists who aren't continuously setting themselves new goals to achieve or seeking to develop themselves. Compared to other groups, they don't have as many hobbies. They prefer to prioritise friends and family and relaxing by themselves as well as with the people they love.

Everyday Youths is the biggest group and there's a broader spread of how often they take part in sport and exercise. These young people tend to feel quite positive about sport, and don't have the same level of emotional barriers as some of the other groups. However, similar to their approach to life generally, they can lack motivation and are less likely to make the time to take part.

"I'm quite a friendly, outgoing person. Just generally happy really, and happy with what I'm doing"

Ben, 19

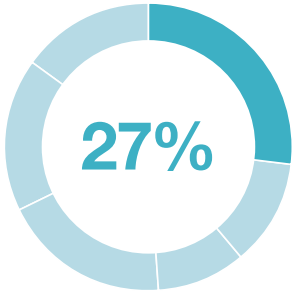


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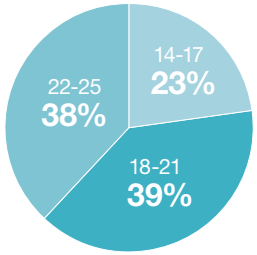
A closer look: life

Everyday Youths

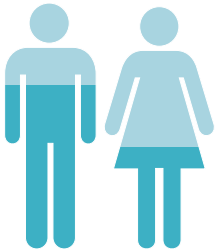
Group size



Who they are



More likely to be
18-21



More likely to be
Male



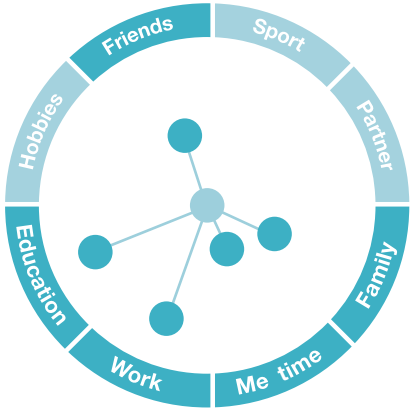
A good spread across
Employment & Education



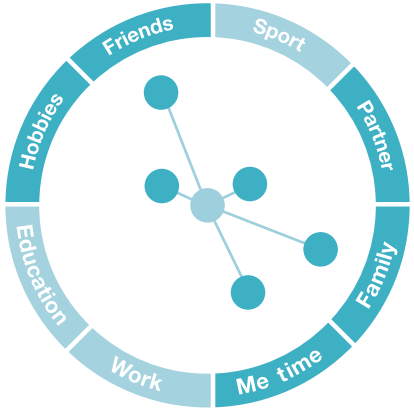
Below Average
family wealth and average income for those who are working

7% Report a limiting disability (vs. **8%** average)

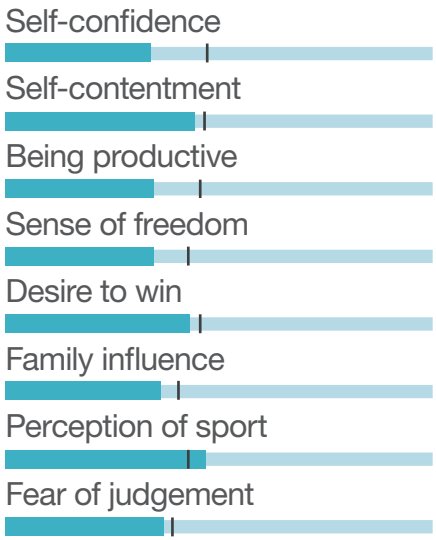
Their time is spent on



What they care about



Their attitudes



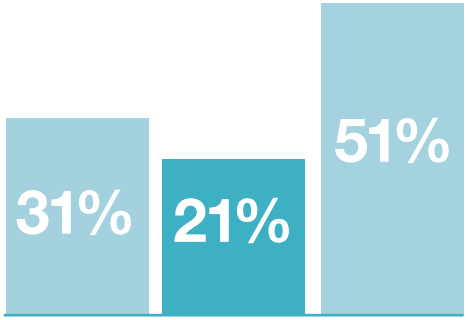
Black line represents average

Their motivations in life

Having fun and **feeling good** are top motivations for all personalities



Friends



I have lots of different groups of friends (average 36%)

I have a big circle of friends (average 21%)

I have a few very close friends (average 53%)

What they do in their free time

Listening to music is popular amongst all young people



Gaming	Cinema	Computers

31% Smoke occasionally or more often (vs. **26%** average)

25% In full time employment (vs. **21%** average)

A closer look: sport and exercise

Everyday Youths

Attitude to sport and exercise



Emotional | Rational

Compared to other groups:

3rd | 4th

Taking part in sport and exercise



High	Medium	Low	None
19%	54%	20%	7%

Compared to other groups: 4th

How they normally take part

- More likely to take part in only one sport
- More likely to take part when it's on at a regular time and place but they can choose whether or not to turn up

Top reasons to take part for all young people are:

- To stay fit
- To have fun
- To stay healthy

Why Everyday Youths take part

More important

- To spend time with friends
- To have fun
- To make new friends

Less important

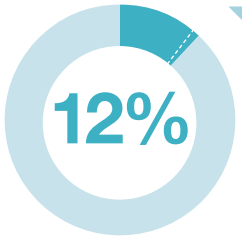
- To improve their appearance

Most common barriers for all young people are:

"I haven't got round to looking yet" (43%)

"I couldn't find anywhere convenient to take part" (43%)

What stops Everyday Youths taking part



"I found somewhere but haven't got round to going"

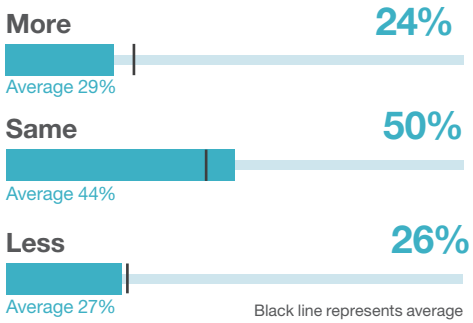
Average 11%

Dotted line represents average

Sport at school

53% like(d)/love(d) PE at school (vs. **45 %** average)

Participation in sport now vs. a year ago



How sporty and physically active their friends and family are

56% have sporty friends (Average 54%)

36% have a sporty family (Average 35%)

Top sports currently played



Football	Running	Cycling
24%	12%	12%

Sports they **want** to play include football, badminton and swimming.

A fresh approach:
Attracting their attention

Everyday Youths

What will stand out and be noticed by this personality?
What appeals to them and encourages them to start something?

Put the spotlight on fun and friends

Everyday Youths want to have **fun, socialise and be with their friends**. Keep these at the heart of what's on offer. Tap into existing friendship groups and **appeal to the group**, rather than to individuals.

Throw in 'keeping in shape' as an added bonus

This personality type **aren't interested in serious fitness goals**, but they like the idea of keeping in shape while enjoying themselves.

Use the power of social networks

This group are most likely to take on something new if it has been suggested by a friend. Use **social media and encourage word of mouth** to promote opportunities.

Although they don't want to be seen as followers or 'doing what everyone else does', their easy-going nature means this group are more likely to follow the crowd or take the easiest option. FOMO (fear of missing out) is your friend here – creating excitement amongst peer groups can encourage Everyday Youths to take part in new activities.

Encourage them to give it a go by addressing barriers up front

This group are open to trying new things, including sport and exercise. However, they're not the most proactive, and often expect there to be practical or fitness/skill level barriers. They assume activities will be too expensive, too time consuming, too difficult or too inconvenient to get to.

Consider the whole customer journey and **remove practical barriers wherever possible**. Address concerns head on, **highlighting the lack of hassle** and **ease of access**, particularly in terms of location, cost, time, skill and fitness requirements.

A fresh approach:
Deliver against their expectations

Everyday Youths

What type of experience and environment suits this group?

Keep it fun, friendly and relaxed

Everyday Youths need their experiences to be fun and offer opportunities to spend time with their friends. Make sure the activity feels **informal** and **relaxed**.

Ask them what they find fun and plan sessions with this is mind, paying particular attention to how the session 'peaks' and 'ends'. The 'peak-end rule' tells us that people remember and judge an experience based on its most memorable point and how it finishes.

Make sure sessions stay focused on their existing friendship groups and other **people 'like them'**. If more talented sports people (e.g. from the Sport Enthusiast or Ambitious Self-starter groups) are allowed to dominate the group and reshape it into a competitive environment, they may well push out Everyday Youths.

Don't ask too much of them

This group like the idea of a challenge, particularly one they can do with friends, but it needs to remain enjoyable. They don't want to worry about being good at the activity. Make sure challenges are **realistic and achievable** to prevent any setbacks in self-confidence.

This group **don't like the idea of too much responsibility**. Don't ask them to take the lead or to get involved in planning or organising activities.

"I love doing things with my friends, so having the opportunity to take on a challenge with them would be really good"

Ramila, 18



A fresh approach:
Keep them coming back

Everyday Youths

How can this personality be encouraged to take part more regularly?
How can their connection with sport and exercise be strengthened?

Let them drop in and out

Everyday Youths are **wary of making commitments**. Keep their involvement flexible and allow them to come in and out. Focus on the immediate future rather than anything longer term they feel they have to commit to, but try to make ongoing involvement the 'norm'.

However, they worry about not keeping up, and sessions no longer being appropriate if they've dropped out for a time. **Reassure them they can come back at any time**, create a **supportive environment** and avoid putting them on a pathway of skill development which might get in the way of an enjoyable return.

Encourage friendship amongst the whole group

Create opportunities for **wider friendship groups** to develop across the group to avoid an individual's attendance depending on one or two other people.

Offer incentives and CV enhancing opportunities

This group are **interested in rewards and additional benefits** but don't associate these with sport and exercise, particularly with their preferred lower commitment/more informal way of taking part. Help them see the connection and realise these benefits.

"Too much commitment is always a hassle"
Roy, 24





Thank you



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