



## MOVING COMMUNITIES IN FOCUS

### WEEKS ANALYSED

Weeks 1 to 7 (12<sup>th</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> May 2021)

# PARTICIPANTS FROM DEPRIVED AREAS SHOW STRONG RETURN

**M**oving Communities data from the first 7 weeks since reopening shows the strong return of participants from more deprived areas, illustrated by a shift towards a more balanced distribution across deprivation groups. Participation in leisure centres among less deprived areas remains higher nationally, however there are encouraging trends that this may be changing.

Data from the first 7 weeks of Moving Communities shows that a greater proportion of participation in leisure centres has come from participants in more deprived areas, compared to the same time period in 2019. While there is still higher total participation by participants from less deprived areas, the distribution across the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) deciles, is more balanced than before the pandemic.

Understanding how different people are returning to leisure facilities is a critical part of Moving Communities, as it helps the sector understand whether services and facilities are meeting the needs of people from all parts of society. Evidence from Sport England shows that **people in lower socio-economic groups have lower activity levels** than people who are better off, and they are also twice as likely to be inactive. We know that local

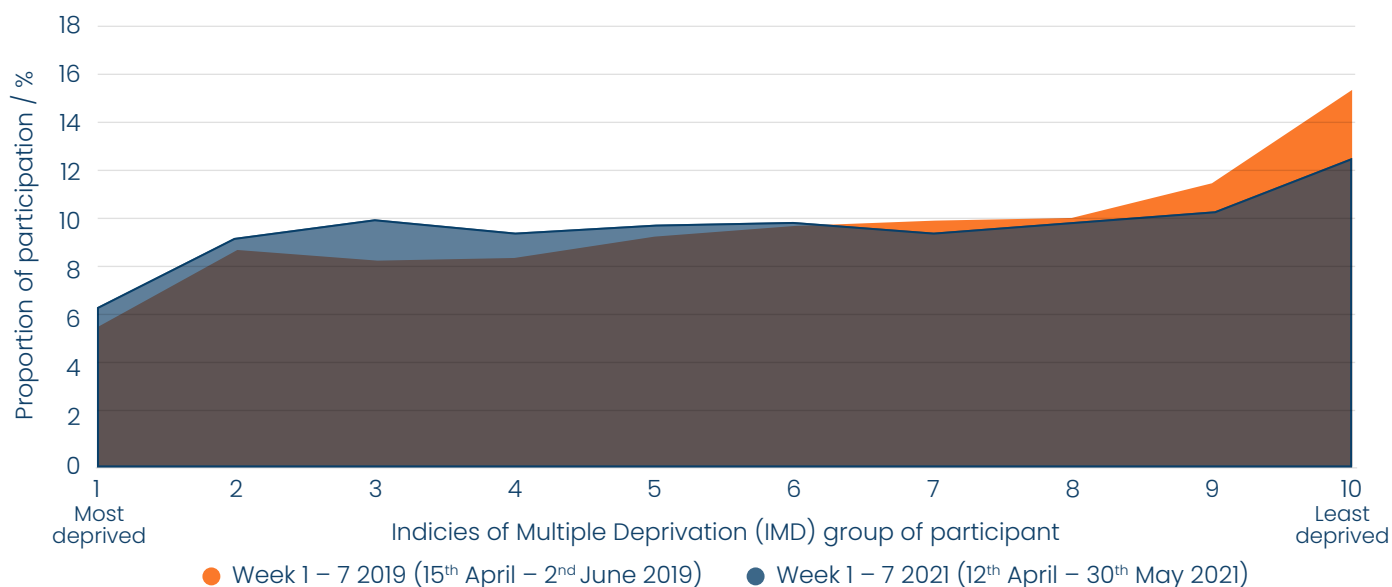
leisure provision offers a vital service to improve the health of less well-off people within our communities, with early insight from Moving Communities suggesting that the least active people in our communities rely on this local leisure provision to be active.

The data from the first 7 weeks, which aligns with the most recent Sport England research into behaviours and motivations, represents an encouraging early trend, especially given fears that the pandemic could accelerate the 'activity inequality' between societal groups.

The graphic below shows how the distribution of participants at leisure centres has changed, when comparing the first 7 weeks after re-opening with the same period in 2019. The graphic illustrates a number of key points:

- **The proportion of participants living in more deprived areas (IMD deciles 1 – 3) is higher in weeks 1 – 7 2021, compared to the same period in 2019.**
- **Overall, the blue line shows a flatter distribution across all IMD deciles, indicating a more balanced picture of 2021 participation, compared with the 2019 orange section.**

**LEISURE CENTRE THROUGHPUT BY IMD GROUP  
FIRST 7 WEEKS AFTER REOPENING (2021) VS SAME PERIOD IN 2019**



- **The increased proportion of participation in less deprived areas (IMD deciles 9 and 10) for 2019 (orange shading), has flattened in 2021, however there is still noticeably higher participation than in other IMD deciles.**

Lower participation remains an issue among participants from more deprived areas, especially IMD group 1, with a greater total proportion of participation still coming from participants living in less deprived areas.

## ALIGNING WITH WIDER RESEARCH

Data from Moving Communities can be supplemented by research undertaken by Savanta Comres, on behalf of Sport England, which explores how activity is changing over time and what participants have been thinking and feeling about being active, during the pandemic.

Insight from Wave 18 of the research (21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021) shows some consistent trends with Moving Communities data, as the percentage of National Social Grade ABC1<sup>1</sup> adults doing at least 30 mins physical activity on 5 or more days of the week is lower (25%) in 2021 than it was in May 2020 (34%) – although it should be noted that 32% of those surveyed suggested bad weather in that week had limited their activity levels. For participation by this measure of National Social Grade, C2DE participants have also seen a reduction over the last year, from 33% in May 2020 to 26% in May 2021. When comparing ABC1 rates to C2DE, it is notable **that the proportion of C2DE hitting the 5 or more threshold is marginally higher than the same measure for ABC1 participants, although the difference is not statistically significant.**

The research goes into further depth with specific questions. Results show that a greater proportion (57%) of ABC1 respondents agreed with the statement *“since the outbreak I have found new ways to be active”*, compared to 45% of C2DE respondents. Future research will provide further clarity, however the data currently indicates that higher return rates to leisure centres by participants from deprived areas may be in part driven by fewer alternative options and opportunities to be active, outside of traditional facilities.

It is important to note that given the short 7-week analysis period for Moving Communities, trends may continue to change as social distancing restrictions are relaxed. For instance, in Wave 17 of the survey (23<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021), 51% of ABC1 respondents stated that *“the closure of sports facilities has reduced the amount of physical activity I do”* compared to 35% of C2DE respondents, indicating that there may be significant latent demand for sports facilities within the ABC1 participants.

## USING THESE RESULTS TO DRIVE CHANGE

The data and insight provided so far by Moving Communities is highly encouraging, especially when analysing the return of participants from deprived areas. It is key to note, however, that the data is from a short 7-week period and is therefore subject to change, especially as wider behavioural trends develop across society and restrictions associated with the pandemic are gradually lifted. As further data becomes available, it is vital that **greater focus is placed on using qualitative and behavioural research to understand quantitative data in more detail**, as well as informing how the sector invests into and engages with local facilities and communities.

## ABOUT MOVING COMMUNITIES

Moving Communities tracks participation at public leisure facilities and provides new evidence of the sector’s performance, sustainability and social value. Driven by live data from across England, Moving Communities is a programme that enables local authorities, leisure providers and policy makers to support the recovery of public gyms and leisure centres. For information, visit [www.movingcommunities.org](http://www.movingcommunities.org) or see the regular infographics published by Sport England and Moving Communities.

### DEFINITIONS

<sup>1</sup>National Social Grade – a classification system based on occupation.

- ABC1: (A) Higher managerial, administrative and professional; (B) Intermediate managerial, administrative and professional; (C) Supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative and professional
- C2DE: (C2) Skilled manual workers; (D) Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers; (E) State pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only.

### DATA SOURCES

Sport England (2021): Moving Communities Platform – Weeks 1 to 7 (12<sup>th</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> May 2021)

Savanta: ComRes (2021), Sport England: Survey into adult physical activity attitudes and behaviour (Wave 17) – 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2019), English indices of deprivation 2019

### MOVING COMMUNITIES PARTNERS:

