

Sports & Activity in the COVID-19 Era: Participant Survey

ann craft trust
acting against abuse

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The results of a survey of sport and activity participants and the effect of COVID-19 on their activity levels and how they've responded to the crisis.

Sports & Activity Surveys

During April and May 2020, the Ann Craft Trust ran two surveys to assess the impact the coronavirus outbreak was having on activity levels and sports clubs in the UK. The first survey was focused on **sport and activity participants**, while the second was for **sport and activity organisations**.

The aims of the surveys were to gain information on how to help sports and activity organisations respond to the outbreak effectively and identify potential gaps in safeguarding information and resources.

This report explores the results of the sport and activity participant survey.

Executive Summary

Some of the key findings of this report include:

- **Over half (56%) of respondents are exercising less** as a result of the coronavirus outbreak and just 18% are exercising more.
- The **vast majority think their clubs had responded well or very well** to the coronavirus outbreak.
- **72% of respondents had received communication** from their sports and activity group about the coronavirus outbreak.
- Participants thought the best ways clubs had performed well in response to COVID-19 were: **shutting down, fast communication, online classes, providing guides** and **halting fees**.
- Participants most commonly thought the worst ways clubs had responded included: **poor communication, taking too long to react** and **flouting the rules**.
- To improve, participants want clubs to host **online classes, communicate better, provide video guides, tips and ideas** and are looking at them to help **encourage activity** at this time.
- **25%** of participants have been asked to give out unnecessary personal details while joining online sessions, and **16%** have been prompted for payment.

Participant survey

The first of two surveys, the participant survey focused on sports and activity participants and how the coronavirus outbreak has affected them.

Survey aim: The aim was to gain information which can help sports and activity organisations respond to the outbreak effectively by learning how it is affecting participants.

How was it run: This survey was run through the Google Surveys platform. It had 504 completed responses from a proportional representation of the UK population.

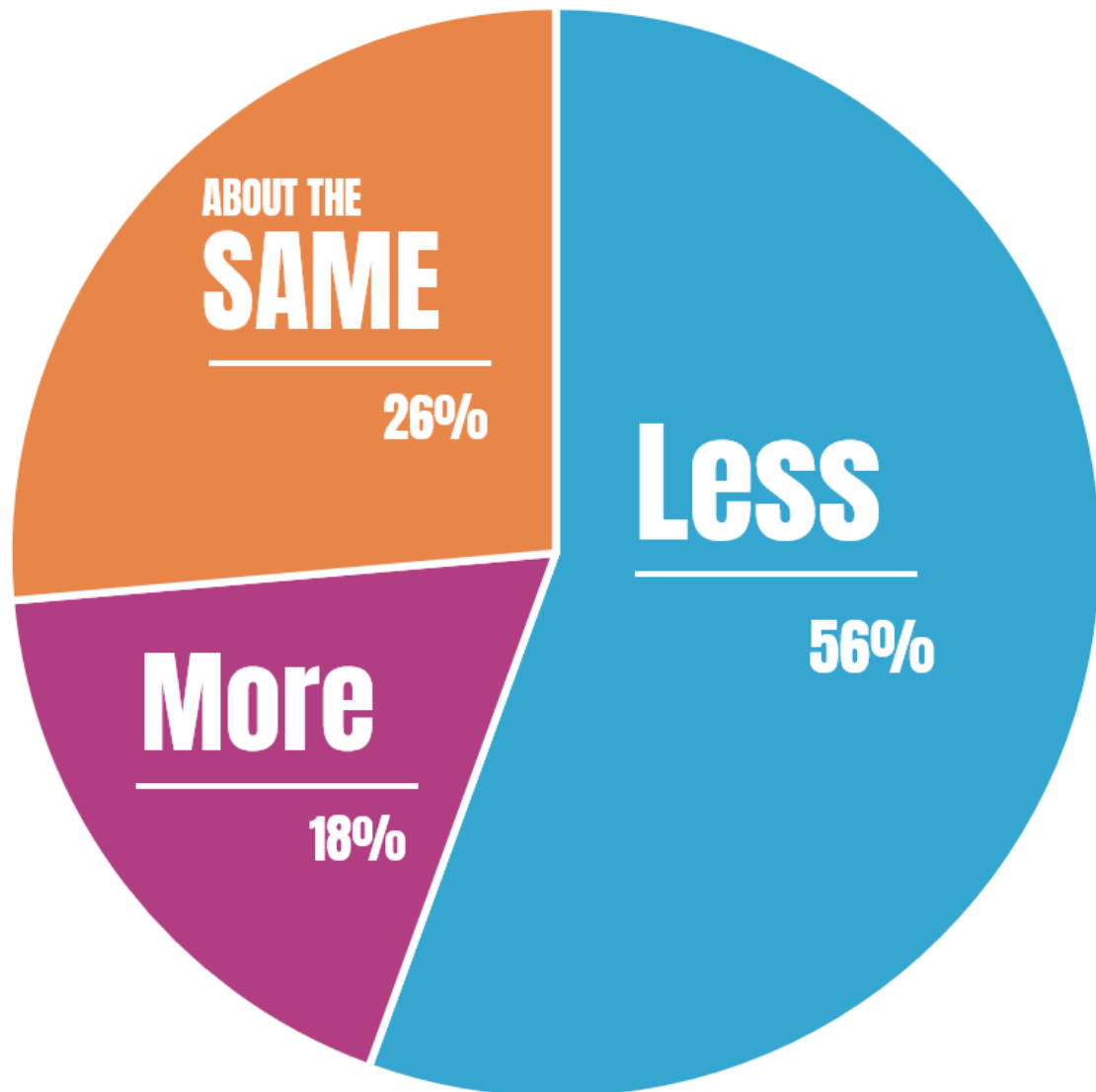
Survey questions: The questions for participants focused mainly on how the coronavirus outbreak has affected their activity levels, how they feel any sports or activity organisations they're involved with have handled the outbreak, what more they could do and what they need from them at this time.

In this report, we'll be looking in more detail at the responses regarding:

- How has COVID-19 affected activity levels?
- How are clubs and organisations doing?
- Are clubs communicating with participants?
- What have clubs and organisations done well in response to the COVID-19 outbreak?
- What have clubs done badly in response to the outbreak?
- What could sports and activity organisations do better?
- Are online activities exposing personal information and costing participants?

How has COVID-19 affected activity levels?

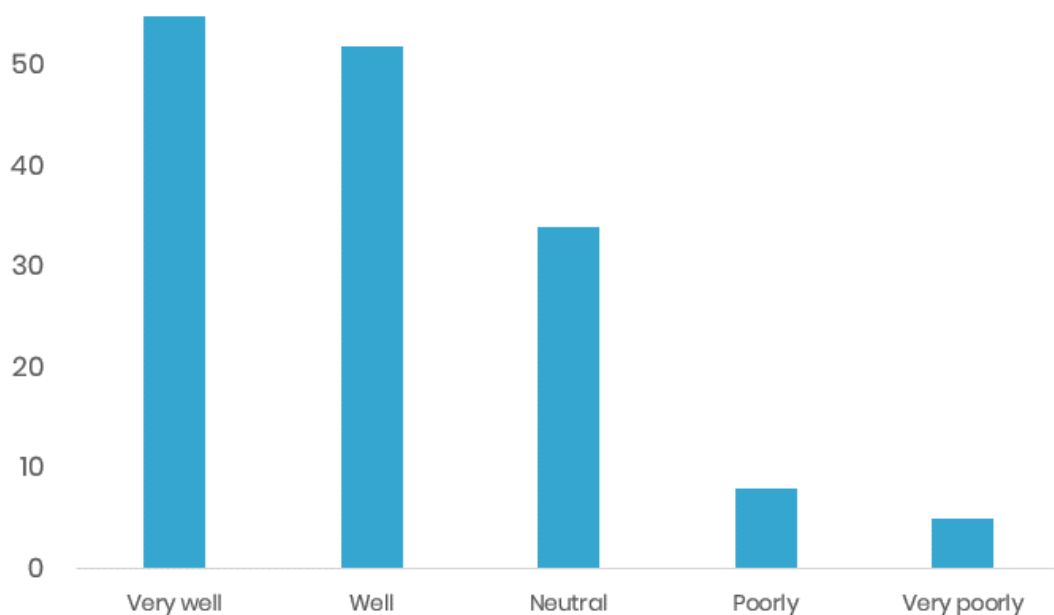
Do you exercise...



With the most extreme lockdown measures during the outbreak only allowing individuals to leave their house for food, medicine and one daily exercise, we asked respondents how coronavirus has affected their activity levels.

In total, over half of respondents said they were exercising less, around a quarter at the same level and just under a 5th were actually exercising more. We found that **moderately active** respondents (who exercise between 30 minutes and 2.5 hours a week) have seen the most dramatic change in their exercise regimes, with 67% exercising less. We also found that the **inactive** respondents (who exercise less than 30 minutes a week) have seen the least change, with 36% exercising at the same level, and a larger proportion of the most **active participants** (who exercise more than 2 hours a week) have used lockdown as an opportunity to exercise at higher levels with 25% exercising more.

How is your club or group responding to the crisis?



the crisis?

We asked how participants had felt their club or group had responded to the crisis.

The responses from those who identified as part of a group were overwhelmingly positive, with the vast majority judging their

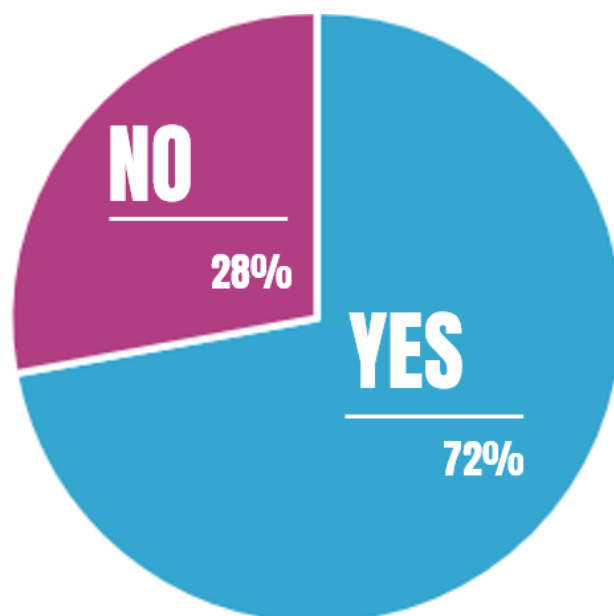
club or sports and activity group to have responded well or very well to the outbreak.

As we'll see later on in the report, sports and activity organisations have managed to mainly satisfy their participants with their handling of the crisis, despite over half of people in clubs (57%) not joining any online activities or training sessions..

Have you received communication from your club?

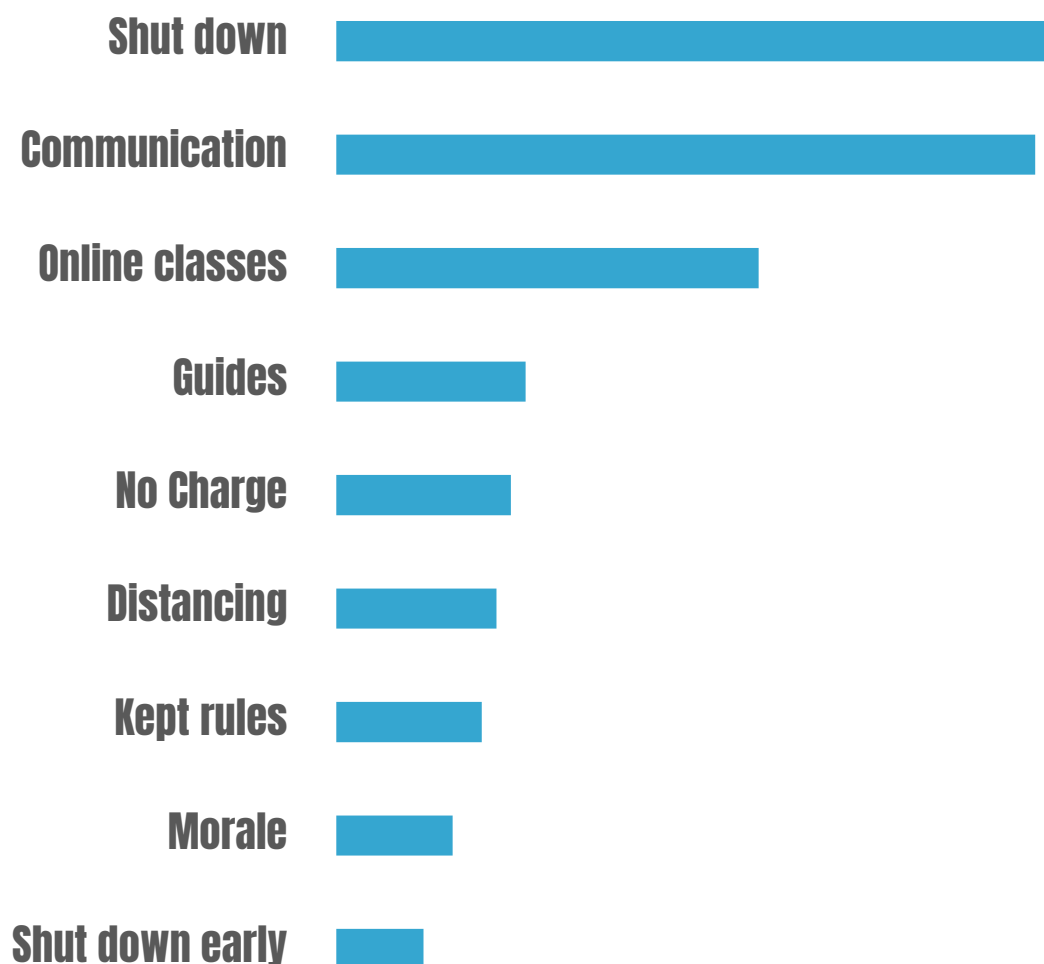
Of the participants in the survey who identified as part of a sports and activity club or group, over a quarter told us that they hadn't had any communication from their club during the coronavirus outbreak.

As we've already seen, sports and activity organisations have been largely considered to be responding well to the outbreak, despite many not being able to run online training sessions or activities. However, as we're about to see, the judgement of how an organisation has responded seems to have been mostly focused on their ability to communicate quickly and effectively.



What have clubs done well?

We asked participants of sport and activities what the clubs, groups or organisations they're involved with have done well during the coronavirus outbreak. We have selected the most commonly mentioned themes to compare.

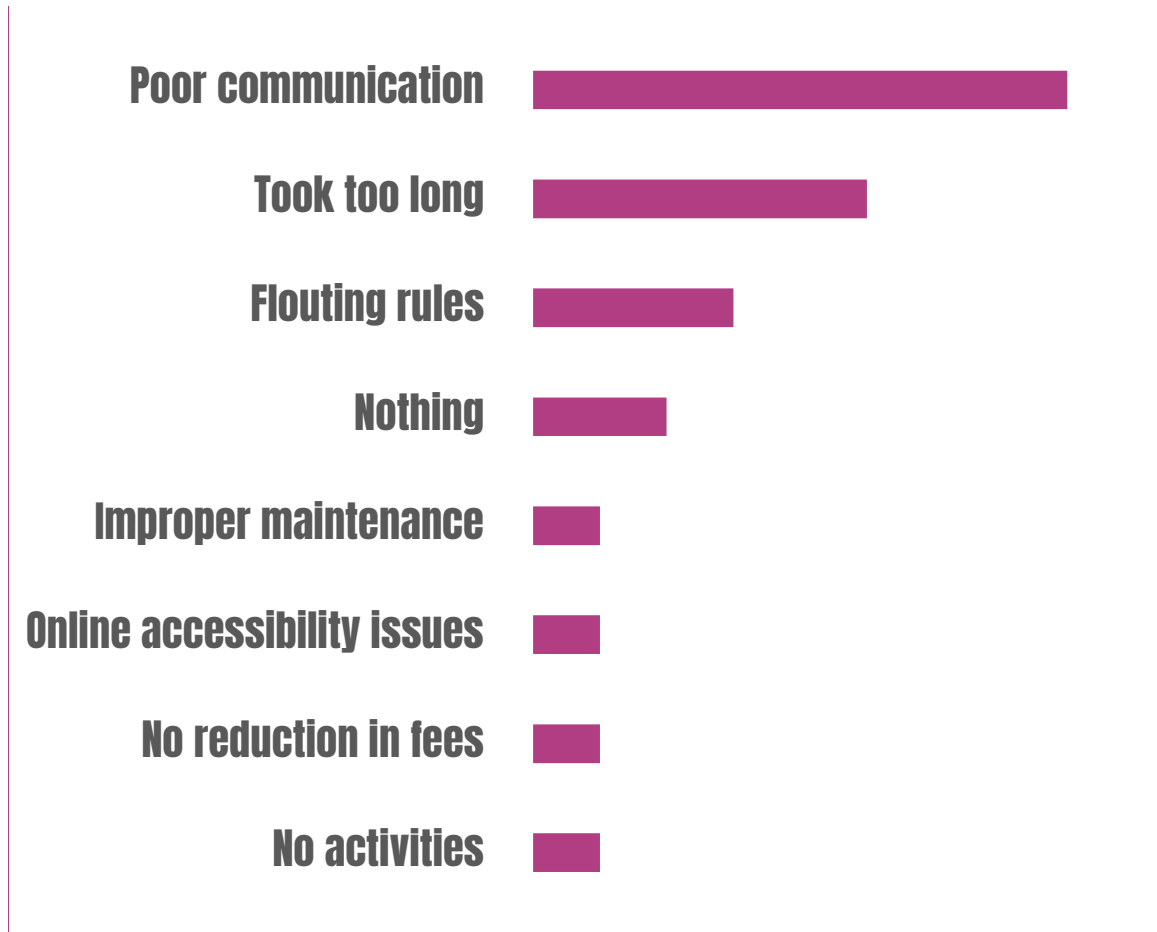


Shutting down was mentioned most often as a positive response by clubs (with some specifically mentioning how impressed they were that they shut down early). Closely followed by **communication**, which was mentioned in all forms including via telephone, emails and social media. The faster the communication, the more impressed respondents seemed to be – with some specifically enjoying motivational messages, relevant updates depending on the sport (e.g. how horses were doing for horse riders, new socially distant routes for runners) and fitness challenges. Boosting **morale** was also commonly mentioned as a positive by respondents.

Online classes and **guides** (especially videos which can be watched at a later date) were often touted as a popular move by clubs. **Halting fees**, refunds or some communication around the use of fees at this time were also top of our respondents' minds. As well as, **keeping to the rules** and **social distancing**, which is likely to continue to be a concern for the foreseeable future.

What have clubs done poorly?

As well as what sports and activity organisations had done well, we also asked how they had performed poorly. The aim being to identify areas of weakness and where clubs have areas to improve.



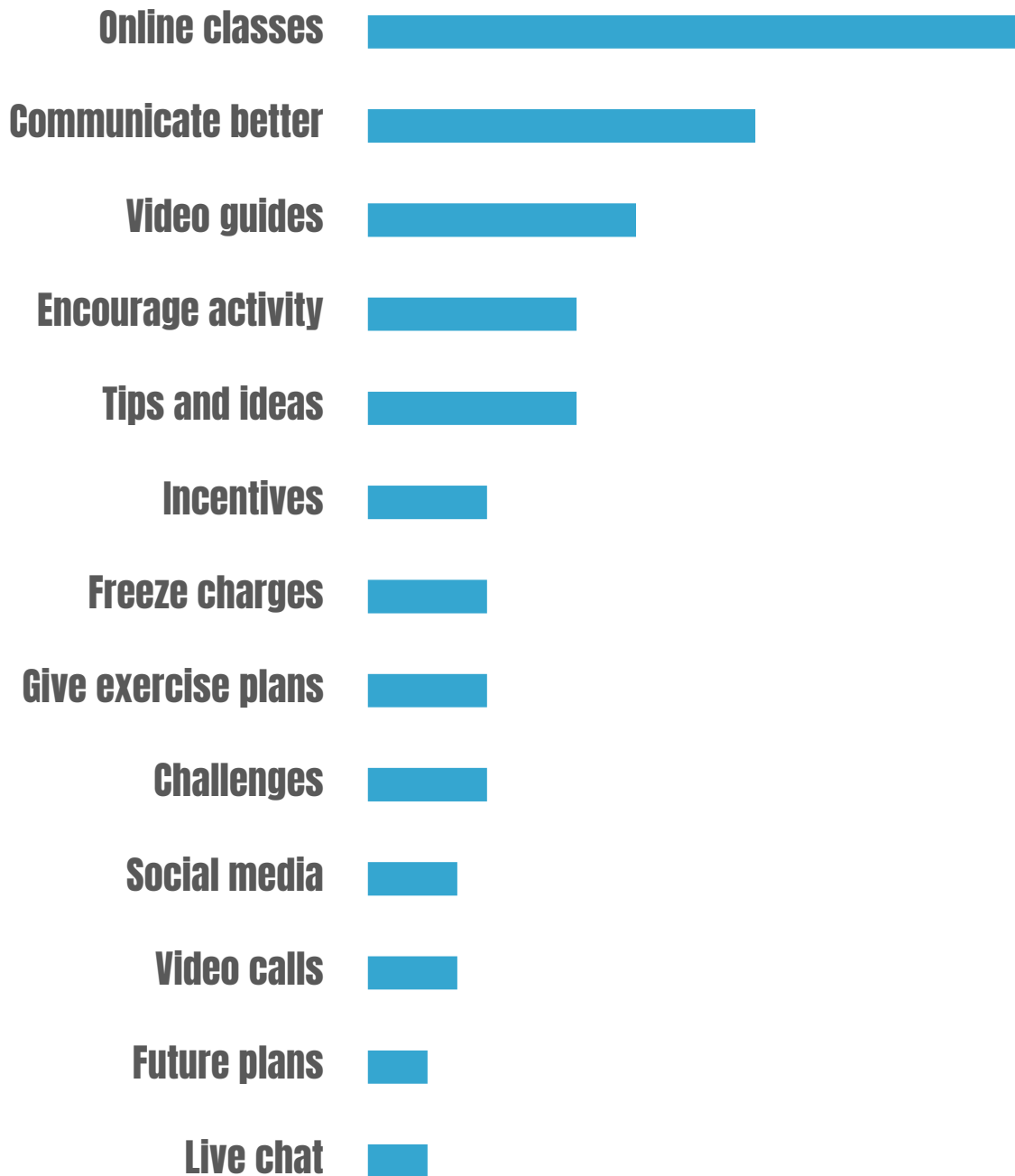
As before, **communication** plays a leading role here. Poor communication including no updates on future plans, no advice or tips for keeping active at home and a lack of social communication were all specifically mentioned by survey respondents. Some felt that the outbreak had exacerbated existing communication issues and others went as far as to say that it felt as if friendships had ended as a failure to continue the social aspect.

Taking too long to respond, flouting the rules and **doing nothing** at all, were next on the list of what sports and activity organisations had not done well in response to the outbreak. It may seem surprising to some that respondents seem to be more disappointed by clubs failing to react quick enough than they are that activities have had to be halted. It goes to show how putting the safety of your participants first is greatly appreciated, perhaps more than some would expect.

Accessibility and availability of online activities were also important to respondents but, notably, significantly less so than communication and the speed of reaction. Lastly, **no reductions** in fees and **improper maintenance** of equipment and grounds concerned respondents as they look to the future and participating again.

How could clubs improve?

Learning what clubs have done well and not so well can encourage sports and activity organisations to improve and keep their participants satisfied. To help clubs and organisations fully engage their participants, we also asked what else they could do to improve.



With **online classes** and **communication** being the most commonly mentioned way clubs can improve – there are lots of ideas and specific activities participants have recommended.

In all, it's clear that participants want to stay active and look to their clubs for encouragement, advice and motivation to keep going.

We've summarised some of the tips sports and activity organisations can take away from the responses above.

Communicate better

- Be honest and don't over-promise. Follow through on any promises – e.g. to set up online activities.
- Consider motivational quotes and messages of encouragement.
- Keep participants up to date with your potential future plans.
- Don't forget the social aspect – live chat, video calls and social activities are often appreciated even where activity isn't possible.

Online sessions and encouraging activity

- Keep online slots and classes regular.
- Try to make online sessions available later so people can take part in their own time and at their own pace.
- Video guides can give your participants a flexible option to take part.

Tips, ideas and challenges

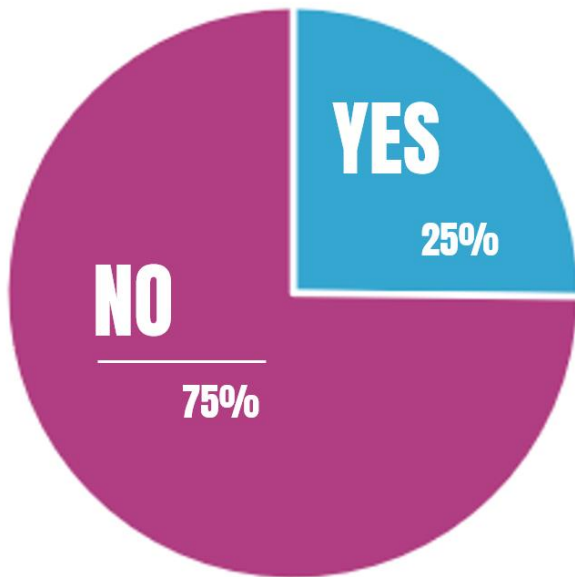
- Provide inspiration and ideas for at-home and individual work outs.
- Set up regular home challenges – with incentives!
- Recommend or even provide equipment if it's not being used.

Advice and guidance

- Distribute clear advice on what is permissible in the current rules.
- Provide specific training and exercise plans to help keep up fitness.

Safety of Online Activities

Have you given unnecessary personal details?



With more people being exposed to online activities and online communication such as video calling and social media, concerns about security and risk have been growing. In response, we asked our respondents whether they have had to give out any personal details other than their name when joining online activities.

Only 25% of respondents indicated that they'd been asked to provide personal details beyond their name, which is positive to see. However, with a quarter of respondents indicating that they'd been asked to provide extra personal details, it is important to stay vigilant and ensure your

participants aren't required to provide an unnecessary level of detail about themselves to take part in any online activities.

Have you been asked to pay during online activities?

We were conscious that the rise in online activities, and the increase in people who aren't familiar with this method of communication, could lead to individuals paying for services they might not need.

While an overwhelming majority were not asked to pay during their online sessions or videocalls, 16% had been.

There are plenty of free video conferencing services available to groups, with most paid-for services only requiring payment from the organiser. If you are running online sessions, be sure to use a system which will not require your participants to sign up to a payment plan or encourage them to do so, which could leave them either out of pocket or at future financial risk.

