



An insight into adult physical activity in Hertfordshire **September 2025**

Active Lives Adults Survey 2023-24



The current landscape for physical activity in our area



This data pack analyses physical activity over a one-year period (November 2023 to November 2024), but the findings must be interpreted within the broader context of societal changes during this timeframe.

Keep these things in mind when looking at the key messages:

- Demographic shifts are ongoing
- Economic pressures have intensified inequality gaps



What do we mean by 'demographic shifts'?

Generally, our populations are growing, ageing and becoming more diverse.

This shift towards an ageing population in particular is moving **more people into age groups we know are more likely to be inactive.**

Data is for: Hertfordshire

The **adult population** (16+) is estimated at
991,000

Continuing a steady upward trend 



22% are estimated to be **aged 65 or older** and showing sustained growth over time

That's **216,000** people

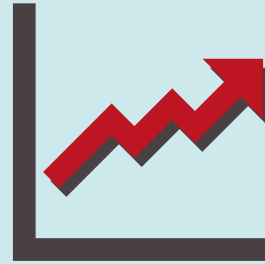


Sources: ONS Mid Year Population estimates for England and Wales: 2024 (16+)

What 'economic pressures' are intensifying inequality gaps?

Income disparities continue to widen, with lower-income individuals and households experiencing disproportionate impacts from rising living costs, employment instability, and wages that haven't kept pace with inflation. This economic squeeze is pushing **more people into lower income brackets – who we know are more likely to be inactive.**

Almost 95,000 people are now claiming **universal credit**



An increase of almost **12,000** this year that continues the rising trend

Economic inactivity among working age adults stands at almost 17%, with more than **3% classified as long-term sick** (around 23,300)



The number of children (aged under 16) living in **relative low-income families** has increased this year as



part of a continuing trend, now exceeding **28,700** children.

An estimated 23,700 people are unemployed

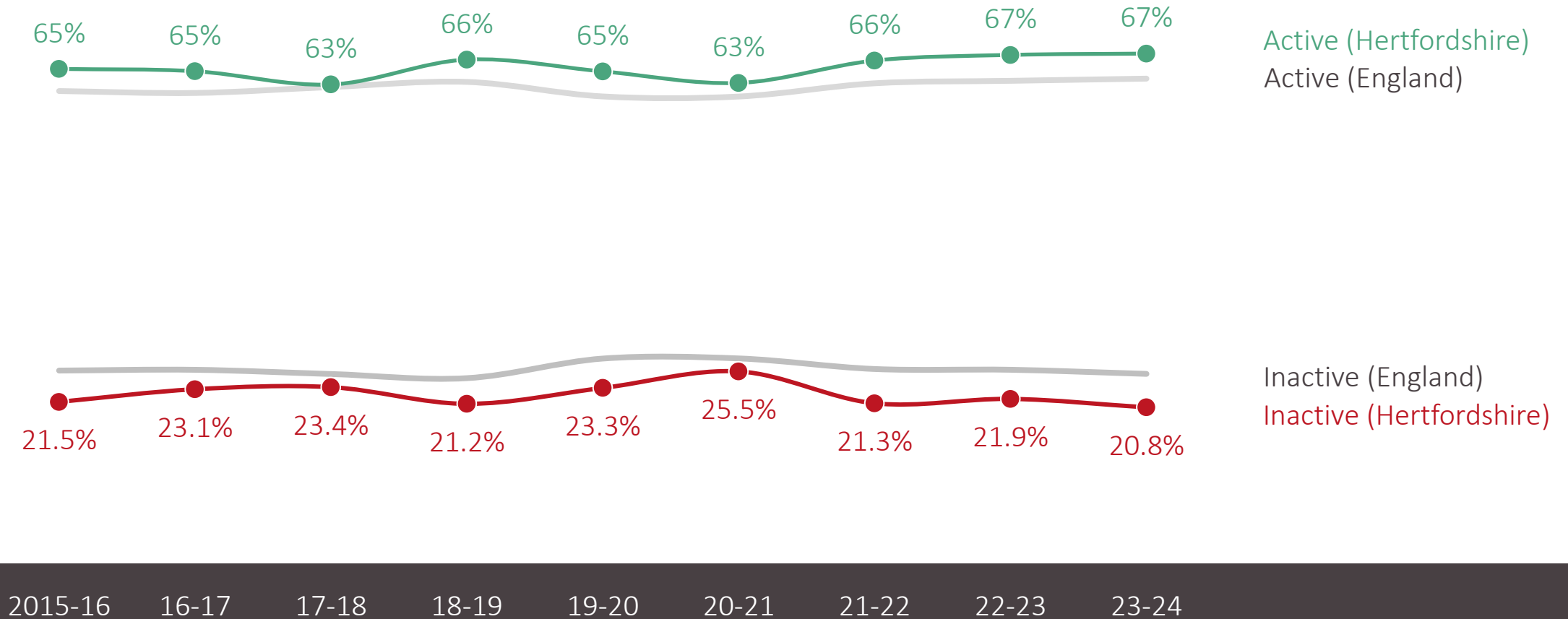


An in-year rise of around **300 people**

Physical activity



Physical inactivity in Hertfordshire is at an all time low



Currently, 21%
of adults are inactive



That's
206,000
people



123,000 adults
do no activity at all
(12%)

But not all inactive
adults do nothing



There are **67,000**
people missing the
intensity
(7%)



There are **16,000**
people not active
for long enough
(2%)



Some communities experience inactivity more than others

Limiting illness

Inactivity in our adults with a limiting illness or disability remains high



Ethnicity & faith

Our Asian and Muslim communities experience higher levels of inactivity

Gender

The gender inequality gap has been closing in recent years



Social status

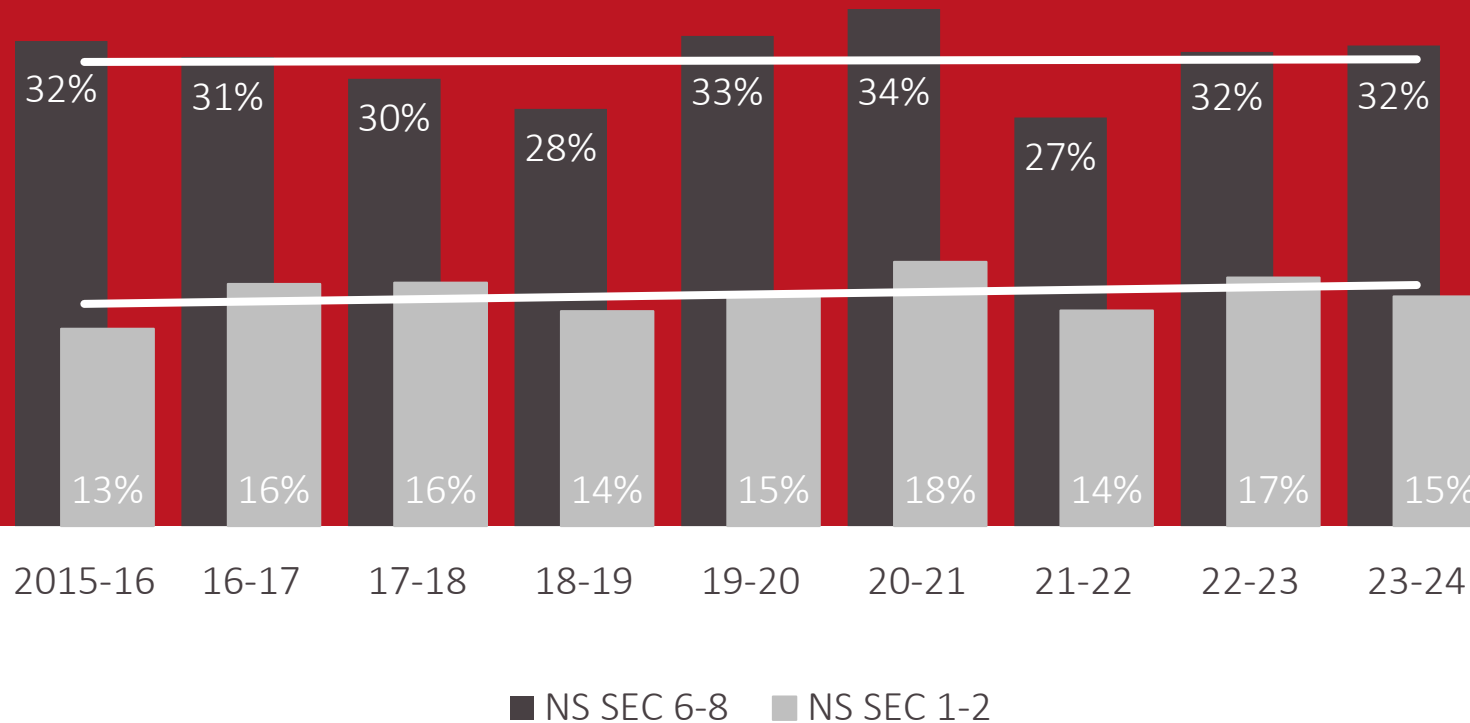
Our least affluent households are twice as likely to be inactive (NS SeC 6-8)



Our **least affluent** households
are twice as likely to be inactive
(NS SeC 6-8)

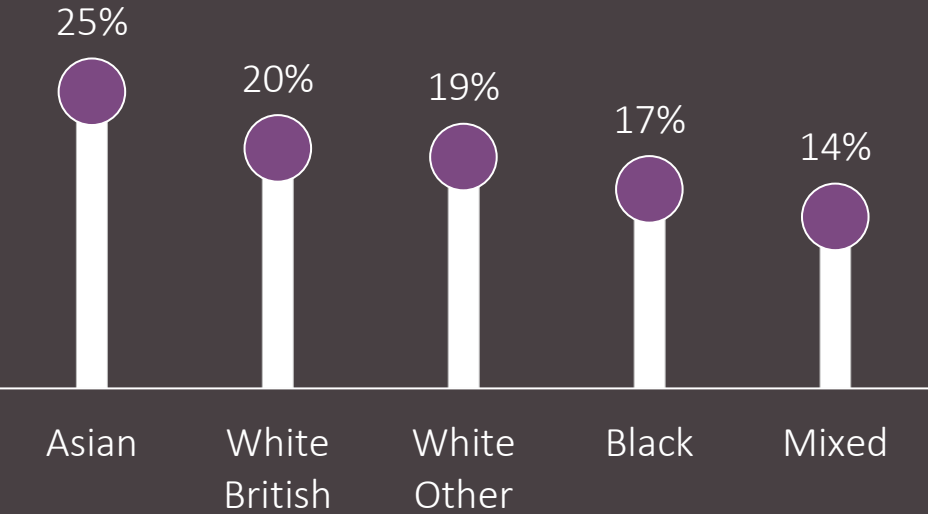


There is a clear
inequality gap between
our least and most
affluent households

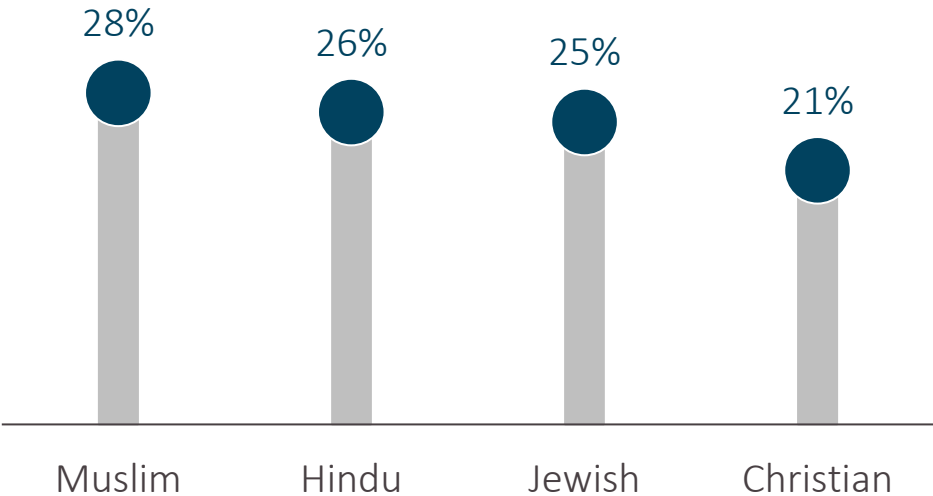




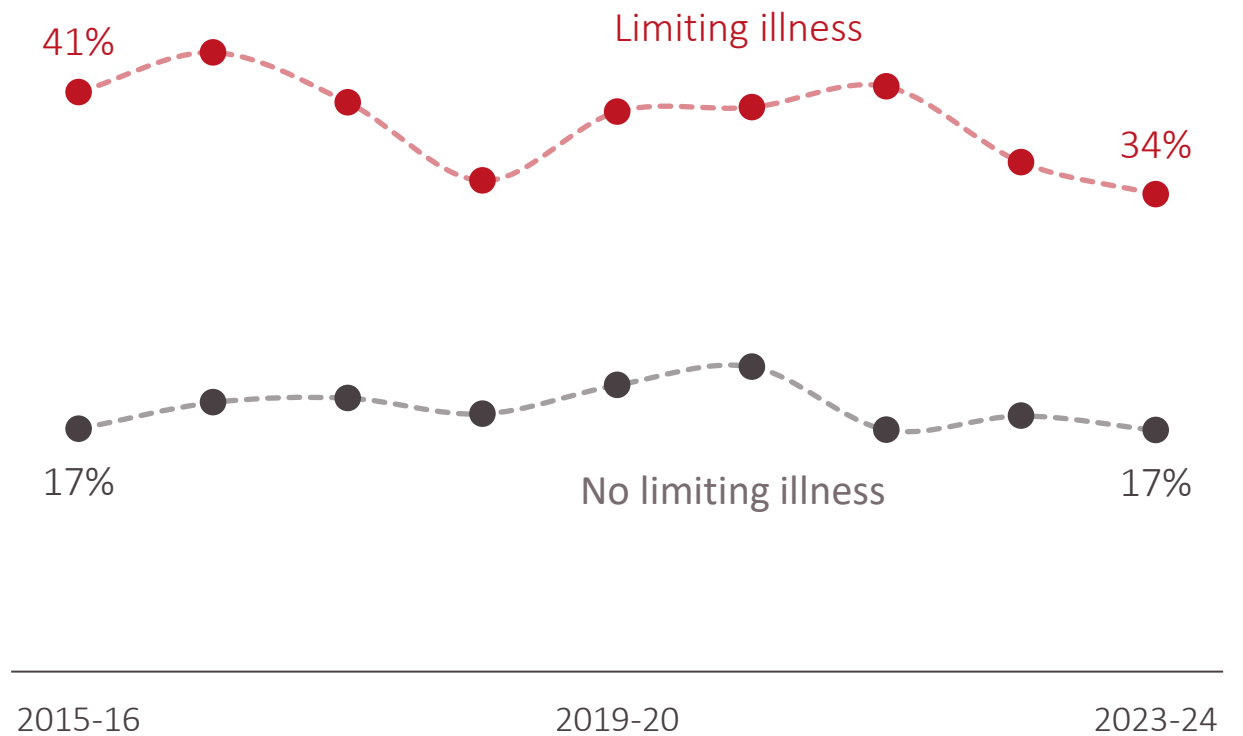
Our Asian community experience higher levels of inactivity



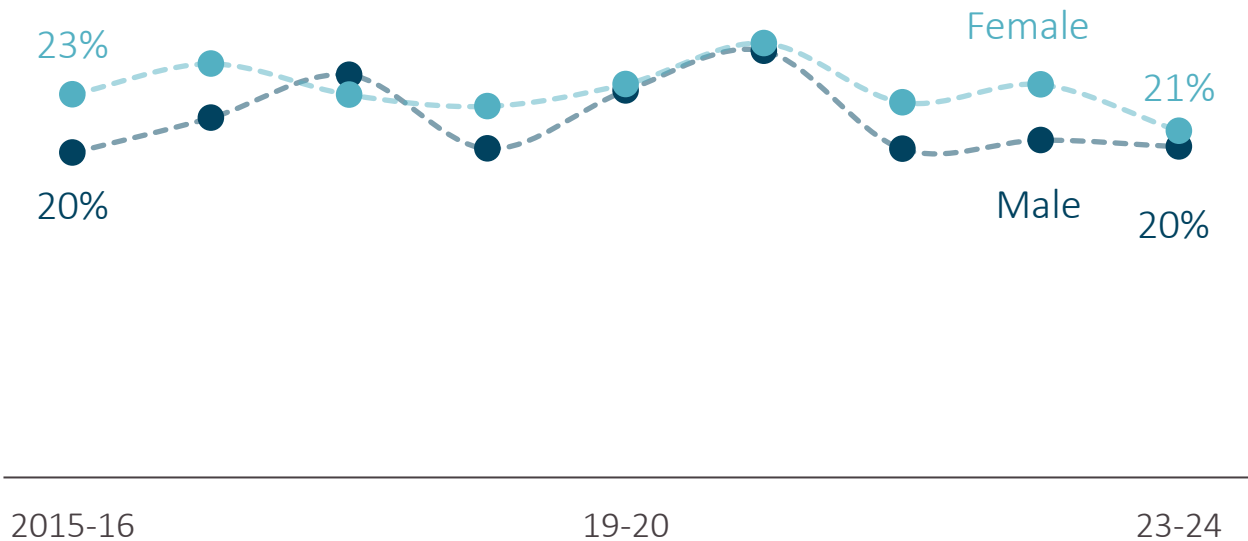
Our Muslim community experience higher levels of inactivity



There is a persistent gap in **inactivity levels** between adults with a limiting illness and those without



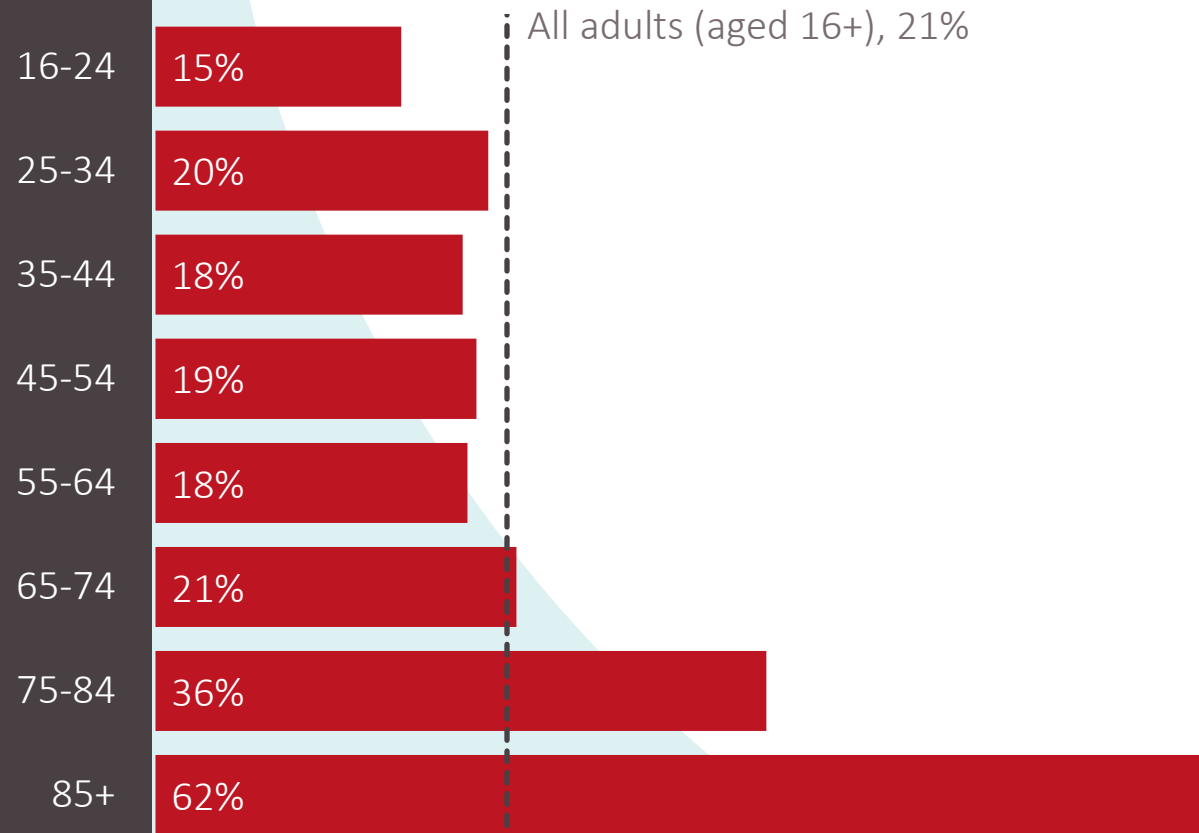
The gender inequality gap has been closing between men and women in recent years



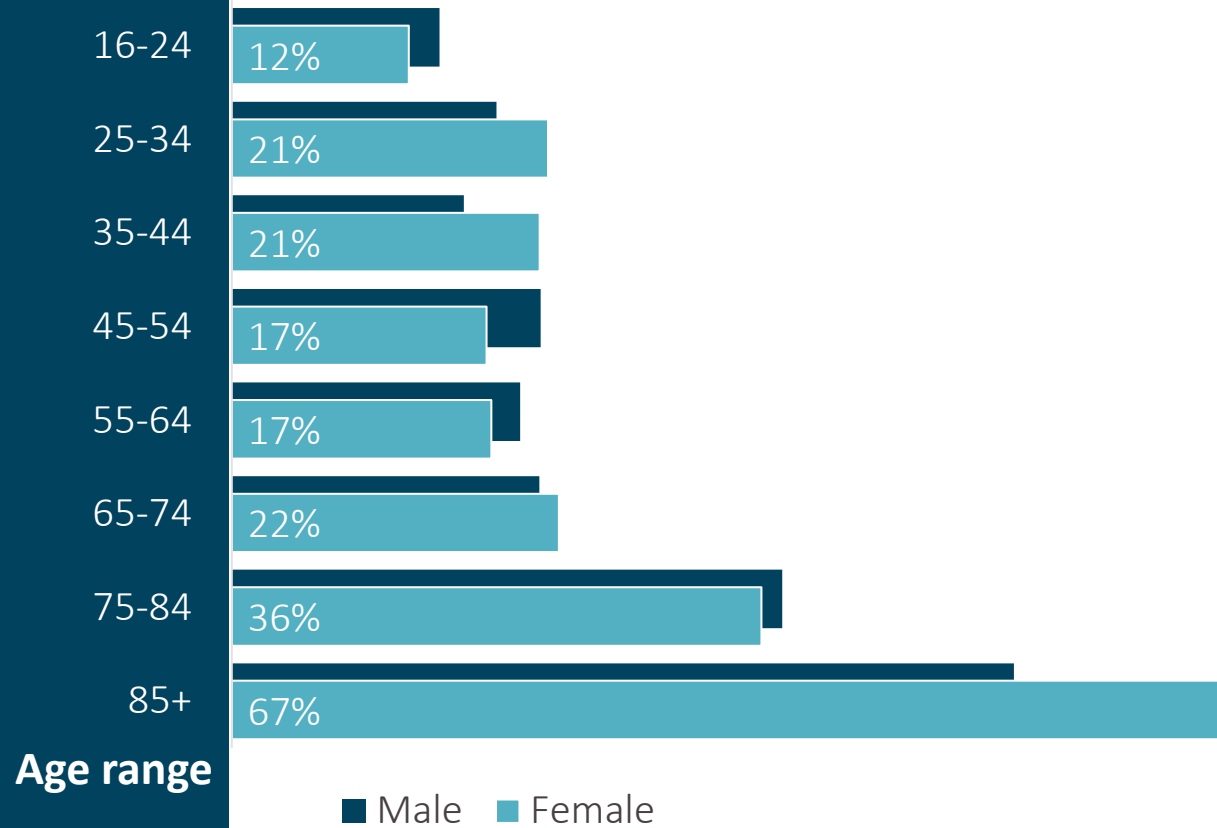
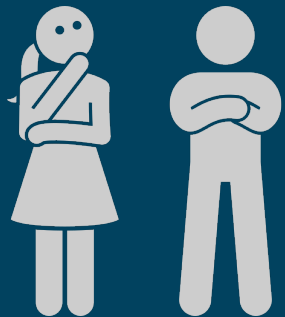
There is little
variation in
inactivity levels
between the ages
of 25 and 74



Age range



Women have
higher inactivity
levels than men
aged 25-44



Where we live makes a difference



Inactivity is twice as high in our more deprived communities...



41%

Most deprived quartile



27%

Second most deprived quartile



20%

Second least deprived quartile



17%

Least deprived quartile

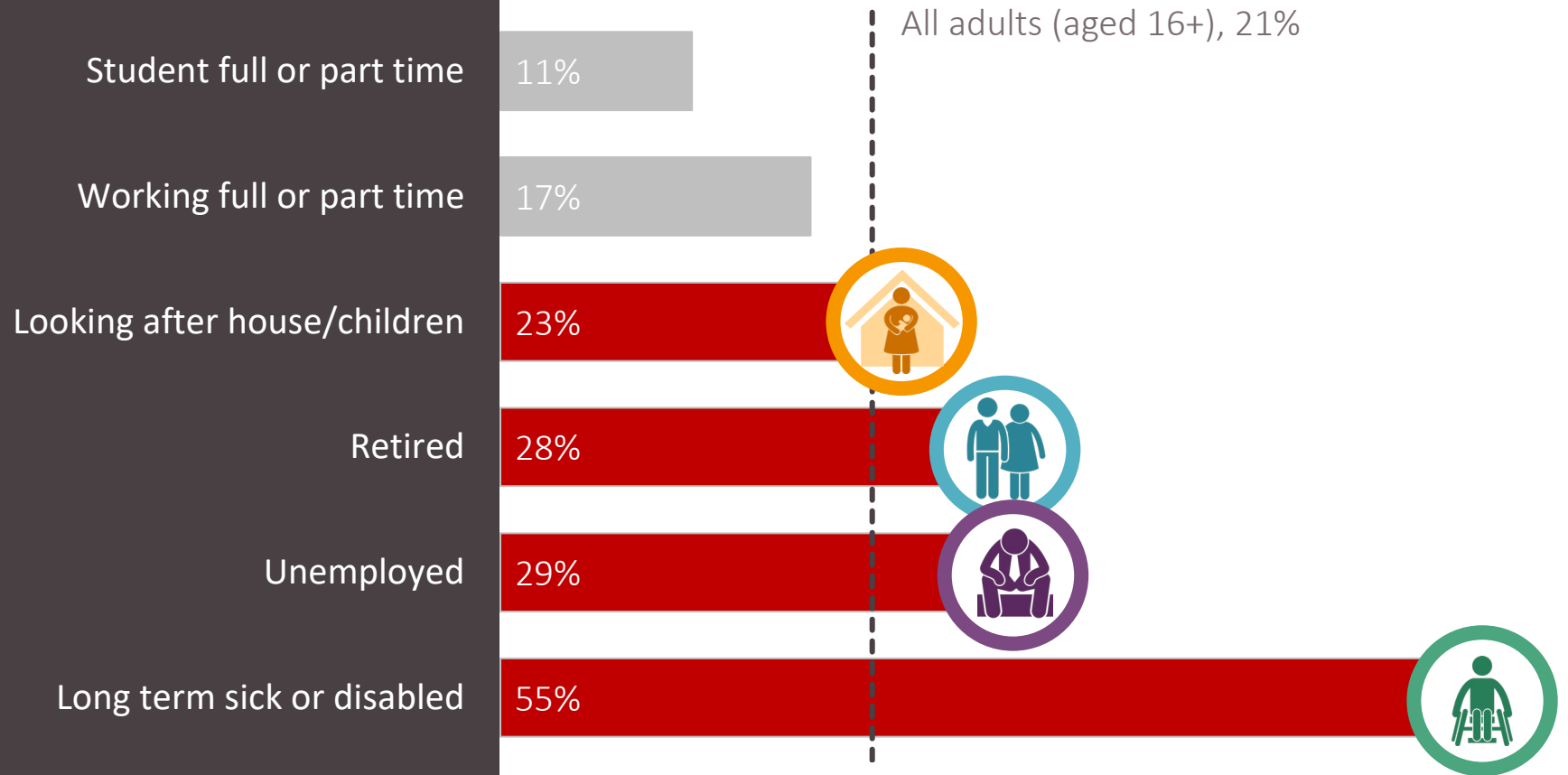
...compared to our least deprived communities



Data is for: Hertfordshire

Source: Sport England Active Lives Survey 2023-24 (16+)
Measure: Physical activity levels (excluding gardening)

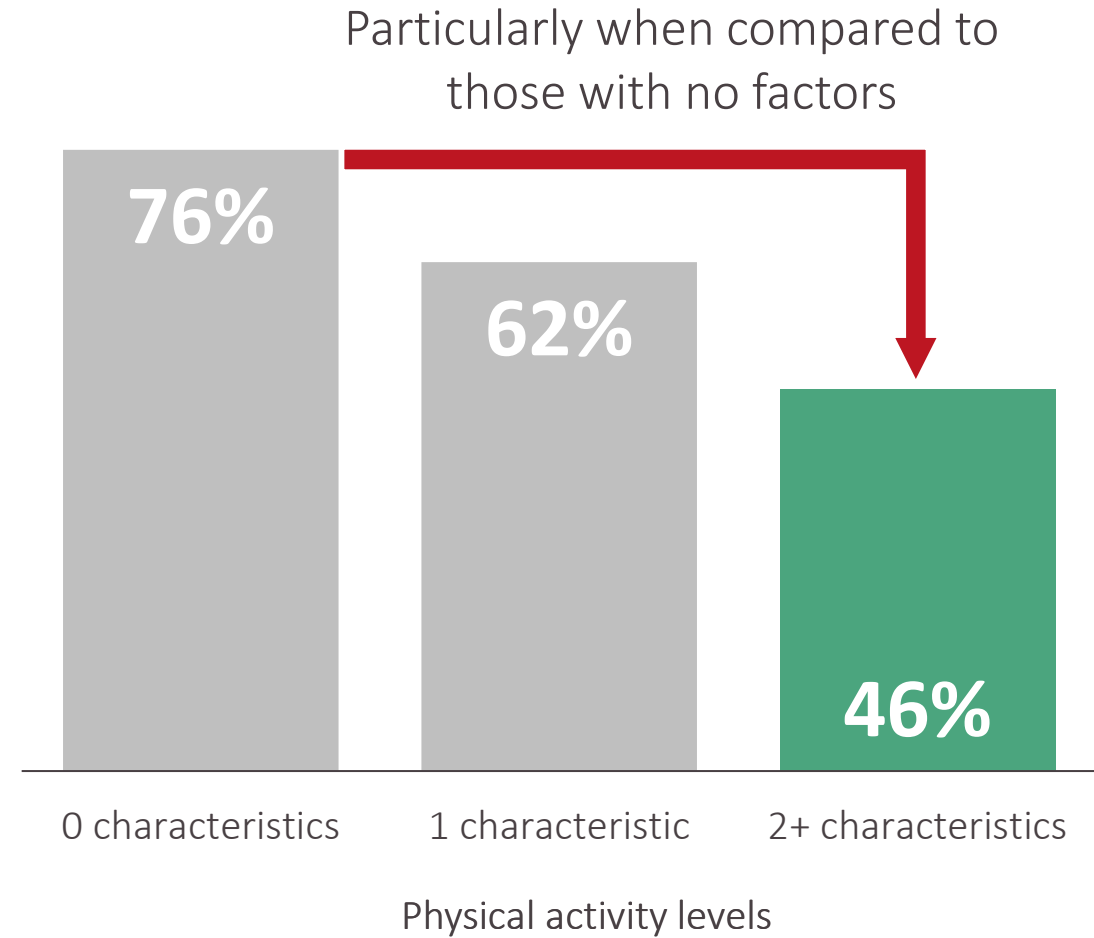
Inactive rates are higher for those outside of the workforce (economically inactive)



Inequalities metric



When we look at **activity levels**, we can see how having 2 or more factors can dramatically reduce our ability to be active



Active minutes



How do we measure activity?

We report on the number of **moderate intensity minutes** completed in the last week, based on activity type



Light

Light intensity minutes are excluded



Moderate

Moderate intensity equivalent (MIE) minutes means each 'moderate' minute counts as one minute



Vigorous

Any vigorous activity counts for double, so each vigorous minute counts as two moderate minutes

Please note: For some activities, intensity was assumed and not asked. Activities done by those aged 65 and over were assumed to be at least moderate



What activities do we measure?*



Gardening

Gardening is included in this section

*Only activity of at least 10 continuous minutes are counted



Walking for travel

Includes walking as a way to get from one place to another, such as the shops work or visiting friends*



Walking for leisure

Includes all other types of walking, dog walking, rambling and Nordic walking or just going for a stroll*



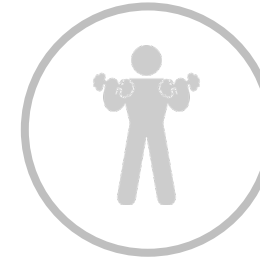
Cycling

Includes leisure and travel, track, road and mountain biking or racing, exercise bike or cycle class



Traditional sport

Includes team, water, combat and winter sports, swimming, athletics, golf, horse riding and gymnastics



Fitness activities

Includes gym activities (fitness machines and classes), weights, boxing and interval sessions



Dance

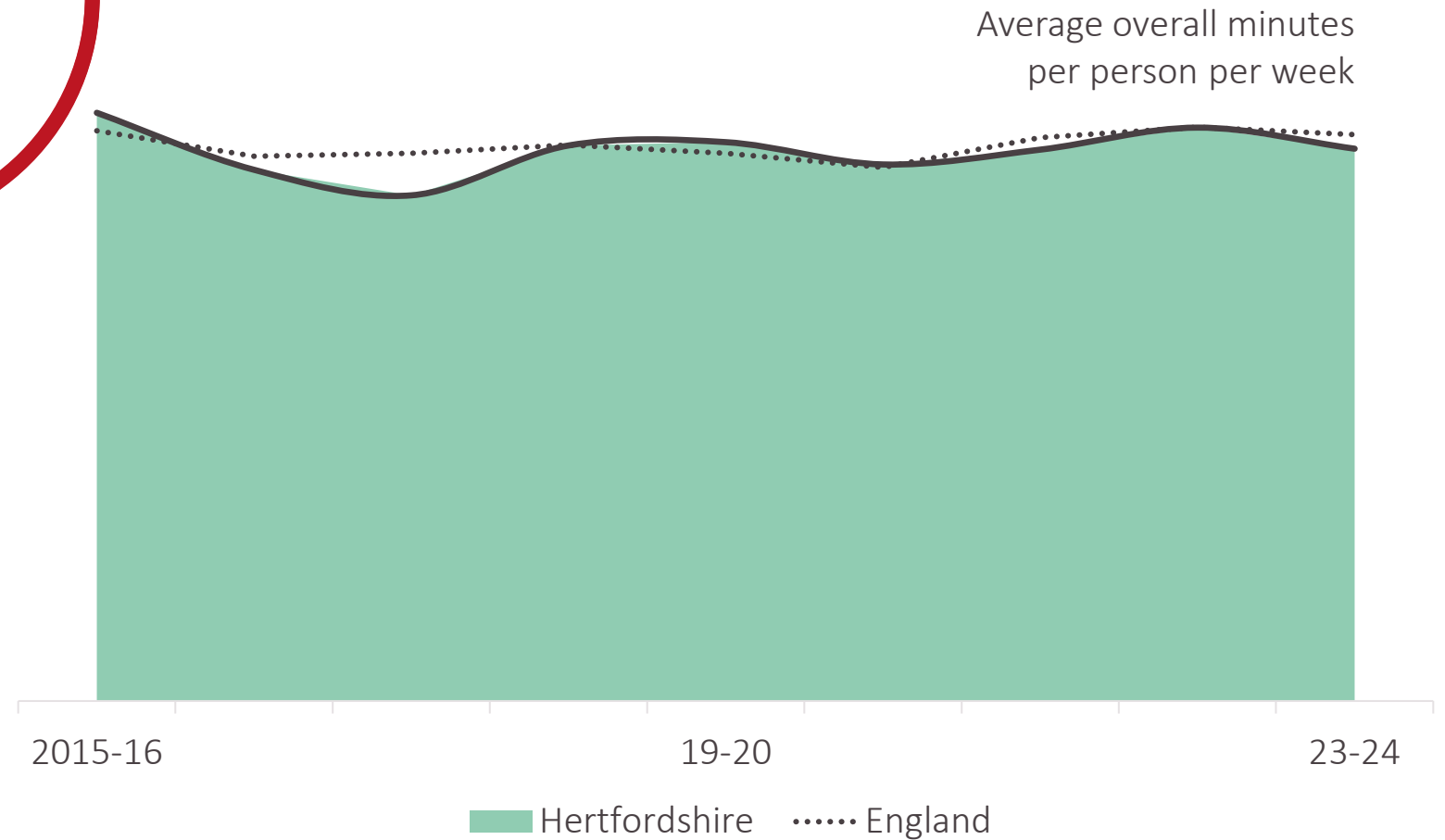
Covers all types of dance including artistic and creative dance (ballroom, ballet, contemporary etc)

*walking around shops is excluded



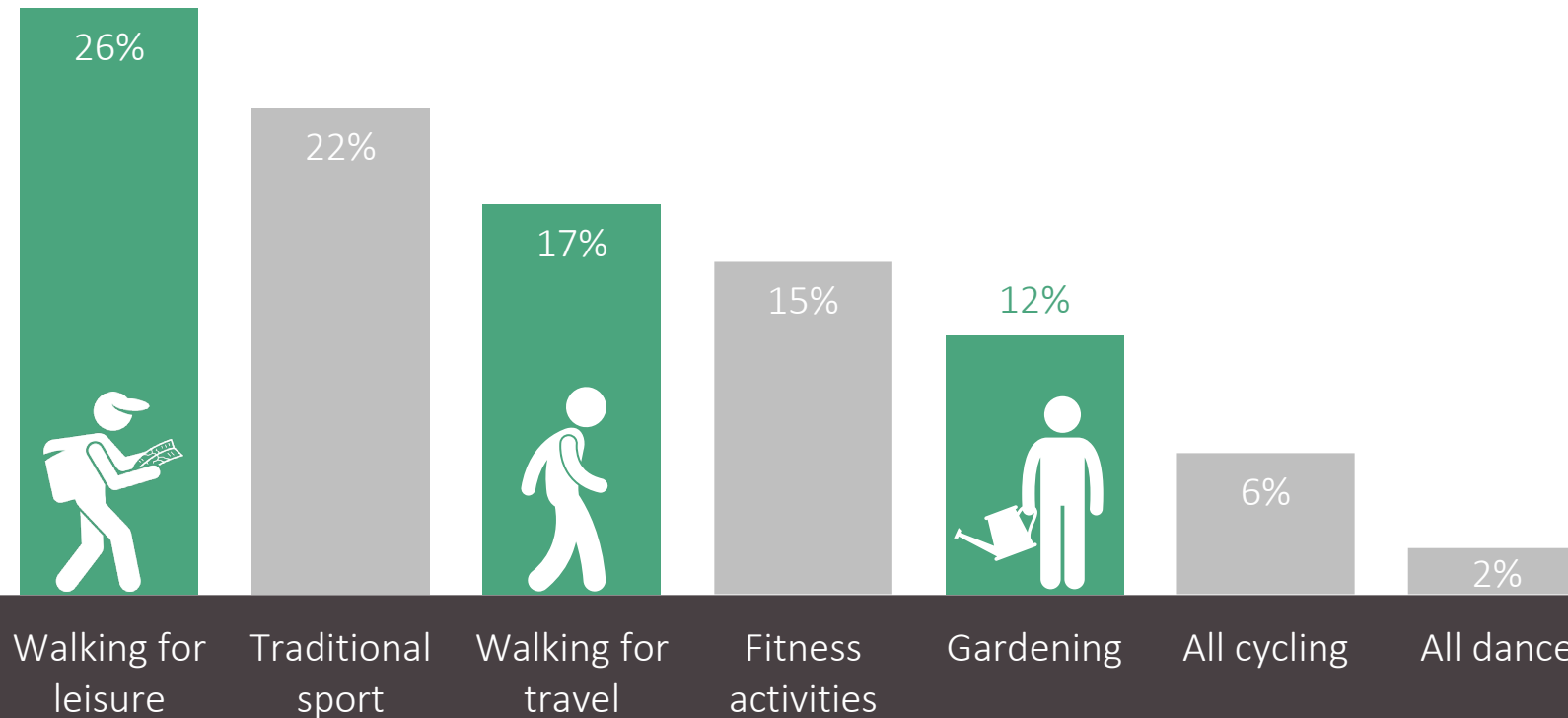


Time spent being active has mirrored the national picture in recent years





We spend over half our active time
walking or **gardening**



70% of our active minutes are outside



Compared to **75%** in England



Inactive Overall (Adults)

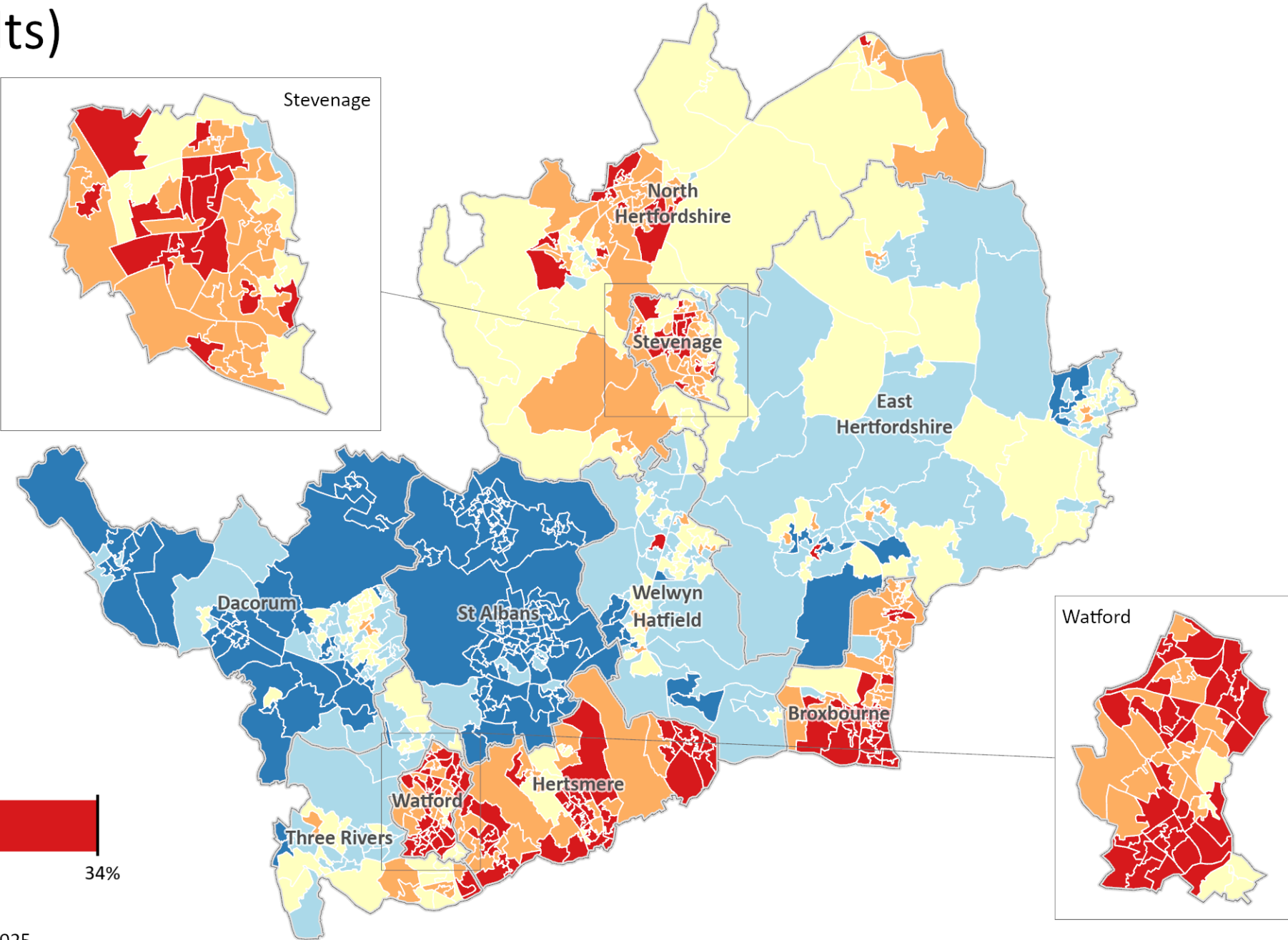
Small Area Estimates

Nov 22/23

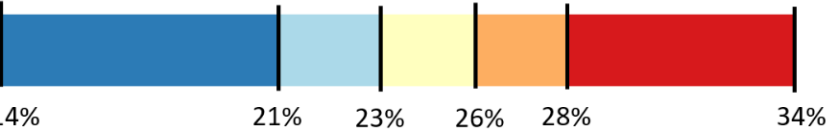
by Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)

Source: Sport England

Hertfordshire



Adult inactive overall



Appendix

Physical activity over the years



Adult population breakdown

Census provides an insight into the demographic makeup in our area compared to England

	Hertfordshire	England
No limiting illness	83%	80%
Limiting illness	17%	20%
16-34 years	28%	30%
35-54 years	35%	32%
55-74 years	27%	27%
75+ years	10%	11%
NS SeC 1-2	40%	33%
NS SeC 3-5	29%	27%
NS SeC 6-8	24%	32%
Asian	8%	9%
Black	4%	4%
Mixed	2%	2%
White British	73%	75%
White Other	11%	8%
Working full or part time	65%	61%
Unemployed	3%	3%
Not working	32%	36%



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