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Get into Summer 2021 evaluation: parents omnibus survey



CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS



Contents

Contents	2
Key findings	3
Overview of participation	3
Motivations and barriers to participation	3
Benefits for children	4
Benefits for parents.....	4
1. Introduction.....	5
Background.....	5
Aims and objectives.....	6
Methods	7
2. Participation in summer activities	8
Overview of participation	8
Time spent on activities	8
Types of activities offered.....	10
3. Drivers and barriers for attending activities	11
Reasons for participation	11
Barriers to participation.....	12
4. Impacts of summer activities	14
Benefits for children and young people	14
Benefits for parents.....	16

Key findings

This report presents findings on children's participation in free or low-cost organised summer activities during 2021 in Scotland. The Scottish Parents Omnibus survey asked parents a range of questions about motivations and barriers to taking part in summer activities and the benefits experienced by both parents and children.

The survey took place over the phone with a nationally representative sample of 1,004 parents across Scotland between 1 November and 28 November 2021.

Overview of participation

- Overall, a third of families (32%) reported having at least one child who took part in free or low-cost summer activities.
- Participation was higher amongst families with 3+ children, families with younger children and those with higher incomes.
- Amongst children who had participated in activities, the majority spent 1 to 2 weeks doing so (33%). One in five (20%) parents said their child(ren) spent longer, two or more weeks.
- The most common type of activities involved sport or exercise (87%). The least commonly reported activity was music and theatre, which were part of 18% of activities parents in the survey reported.
- Food was provided in almost a third (28%) of free and low-cost activities children took part in.
- Children from families living in more deprived areas (by SIMD quintile) and children from families in no paid work, were more likely to have participated in activities that provided food.

Motivations and barriers to participation

- The most common reasons given by parents for their children taking part in free or low-cost organised activities were that they thought it would be good for their wellbeing (77%), because they thought they'd enjoy it (75%), because they wanted to go (74%) and because they wanted them to spend time with other children (73%).
- Those in the top and middle income brackets were most likely to have been motivated to use organised summer activities to allow them or their partner to work.

- In terms of reasons children had not taken part in any activities, the main barriers reported by parents were that they were not aware of any suitable activities in their area (33%) and their child/children not being interested in any activities available near them (24%).
- Around one in five (18%) of parents said that concern around transmission of Covid-19 had stopped their child participating in activities.
- Some parents also reported barriers around accessibility with 13% saying the timings did not suit, 12% stating that activities were not accessible for their child's needs and a small number (5%) feeling that activities were too expensive.
- The main barriers for those on lower income or living in more deprived areas (by SIMD quintile) were lack of awareness of activities in their area, or activities not being accessible for their child's needs.

Benefits for children

- Parents were generally positive about the benefits that taking part in free or low-cost summer activities had for their children. Main benefits reported were: more opportunities to play with other children their children's age (87%), more time doing physical activity (81%), being outdoors (73%) and improvements in how their child was feeling generally (72%). Over half of parents (55%) said that summer activities enabled their child to be able to try out new activities and over two in five (43%) said that it had helped their child to feel more ready for school.
- While children enjoying eating food as part of activities was the least commonly reported benefit, around one in five (21%) parents still reported this as a benefit of their child attending activities.

Benefits for parents

- The most commonly reported benefits for parents whose child/children had taken part in activities were: that it had improved their own mental wellbeing (49%) and that the activities had helped them improve their own relationship with their child (41%).
- Other benefits mentioned, albeit at lower levels included: being made aware of other services that might be useful to them or their child (27%), allowing them or their partner to work or study more (27%), saving money (24%), giving them the change to do other things (22%).

1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of findings from a survey of parents' experiences of low-cost or free organised summer activities for children. The aim of the research was to better understand how and for how long families are engaging with holiday activities, why families are engaging with activities and barriers to participation.

This forms part of a wider evaluation, which also involves a qualitative review of progress reports and in-depth conversations with parents and children. This report is being published alongside the qualitative evaluation of the Get into Summer¹ offer to provide a quantitative analysis of the reach of and participation in low-cost activities by children in Scotland offered through the funding.

Background

Get into Summer is a package of support offered by the Scottish Government to support children and young people to socialise, play and reconnect. In March 2021, £20 million of funding was announced to support an enhanced summer activity offer for children and young people.² Of the total amount, £15 million was made available to local authorities and £5 million to national organisations directly.

The fund recognised the 'holiday experience gap' where children and young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are disadvantaged during the school holidays. Children from low income families are less likely to participate in organised out-of-school activities, more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health and to experience social isolation. The programme came at a time when evidence was highlighting the continuing and persisting effects of the pandemic on anxiety and stress among children and young people, and lower levels of mental wellbeing among parents with young children.³

The main aim of the Get into Summer programme was to mitigate the negative social and mental health impacts of the pandemic on children and young people through providing opportunities to socialise, play and reconnect. The programme also aimed to support children and young people in their transitions back to the classroom post-holidays. Local authorities and delivery partners were given freedom to organise and provide activities best suited to their areas but it was expected that the scheme would fund a very wide range of activities, including sports, arts, cultural activities, and spending time in nature.

¹ [Key findings combining results from the qualitative and quantitative evaluation](#) are available separately as well as the [full qualitative evaluation report](#)

² [Get into Summer - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

³ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): children, young people and families - evidence summary - June 2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

The funding was primarily intended to support key target groups, including those identified in the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan⁴ as most at risk of poverty. It also enabled universal opportunities which were open to and able to benefit all children and young people. Key priority groups for the targeted provision included:

- Children from low-income households
- Families with a disabled child or adult, or child with Additional Support Needs (ASN)
- Children from families who had been shielding during the pandemic
- Minority ethnic families
- Children and young people with care experience
- Young carers
- Larger families (with three or more children)
- Young mothers (aged under 25)
- Families with children under one
- Children in need of protection
- Children supported by a child's plan

Aims and objectives

The aim of the quantitative element of the evaluation research was to provide information on:

- The reach and levels of participation in free or low-cost organised summer activities by children in Scotland
- Motivations and barriers to participation
- Benefits experienced by children from participating in free or low-cost organised summer activities and
- Benefits experienced by parents from their child participating in free or low-cost organised summer activities

The research considered these objectives for parents across Scotland as a whole but also where possible aimed to consider and draw out variations in the reach and experiences of summer activities by sub-groups of Scottish parents and children. For example, differences that arose between respondents of different income levels, household type, employment status and Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).⁵

⁴ [Every child, every chance: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2018-2022 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2018/06/Every-child-every-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-2022.pdf)

⁵ The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) shows where Scotland's most deprived areas are, It is a relative measure of deprivation across small areas in Scotland. It looks at multiple deprivation, which takes account of people who have fewer resources and opportunities, for example in health and education rather than just low income. More information can be found here: [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016: introductory booklet - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2016/06/Scottish-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation-2016-introductory-booklet.pdf)

Methods

The Scottish Parents Omnibus survey, run by Ipsos MORI, interviews over the phone a representative sample of parents of children in Scotland aged 0-18. Fieldwork was carried out between 1 November and 2 December 2021, around 3 months after the Get into Summer programme was delivered. A total sample of 1,004 responses was achieved. The data was weighted by age of parent, working status, SIMD classification and age of child to match the Scottish population profile.

As the survey was going out to a sample of parents taking part in the omnibus, it was not possible to focus questions specifically on free or low-cost organised summer activities which had taken place directly as a result of Get into Summer funding. Therefore, while the qualitative evaluation involved parents and children who were direct participants of activities funded by Get into Summer, the analysis included in this report is focused on **any** free or low-cost organised summer activities more generally. Given that the survey questions were asked about summer 2021 however, it can be expected that many of the activities included in responses were in fact part of the fund, and where they are not they still provide useful learning on experiences across the types of activities the programme offered.

2. Participation in summer activities

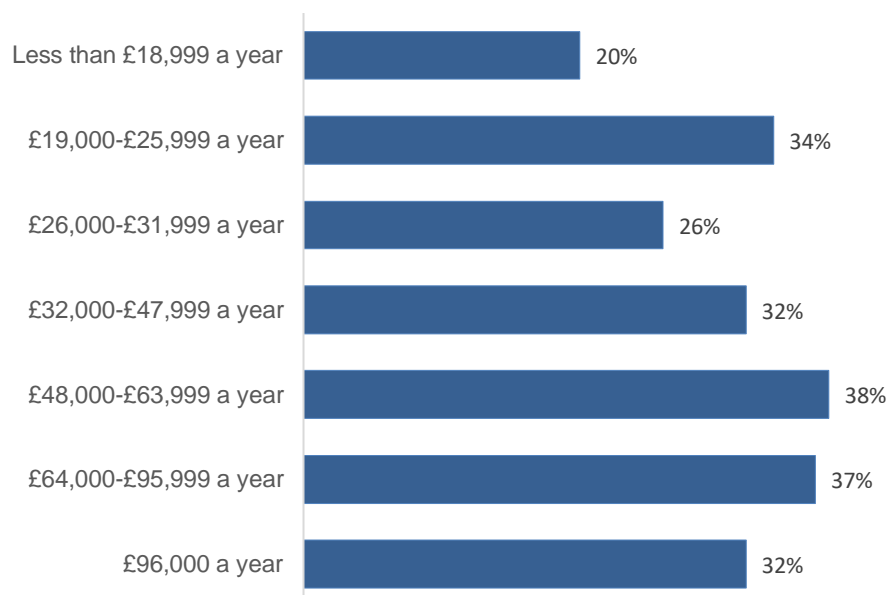
Overview of participation

Overall, a third of families (32%) reported having at least one child who took part in free or low-cost summer activities.

Participation was higher amongst families with:

- three or more children (47% vs 35% of 2 child households and 23% of 1 child households)
- those with younger children (46% of where child was aged from 0-4 vs 38% aged 5-11 and 21% aged 12-17)
- those from the highest income households (32% compared to 20% amongst children from lowest income households).

Figure 2.1: Participation in free or low-cost organised summer activities by household income



QSummer1. Which, if any of your children participated in any free or low-cost organised activities over the summer? This could be one-off activities, or activities lasting several days or weeks, like holiday clubs. Base: all participants with children aged 4+ (871)

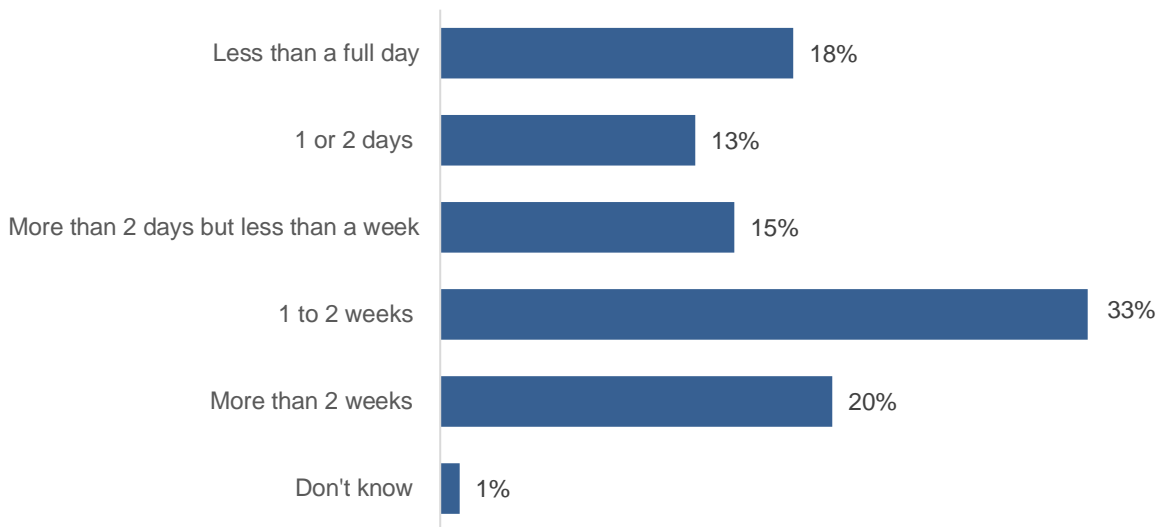
Participation was evenly distributed in terms of areas, with no marked difference in participation in terms of where people live. Similar participation rates were recorded by urban or rural areas or by area of deprivation (SIMD).

Time spent on activities

Those who participated in activities, were asked about the length of time their children had spent doing them. Most commonly children participated for one to two weeks (33%) or longer than that (20%). For a sizeable proportion of parents (31%), engagement in activities was limited to under two days. There did not appear to be a relationship between time spent on activities by children and benefits reported.

Details of time spent in summer activities can be seen in figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Time spent by children doing free or low-cost activities or holiday clubs over summer



QSummer2. In total, how long did your child spend doing free or low-cost organised activities or holiday clubs this summer?

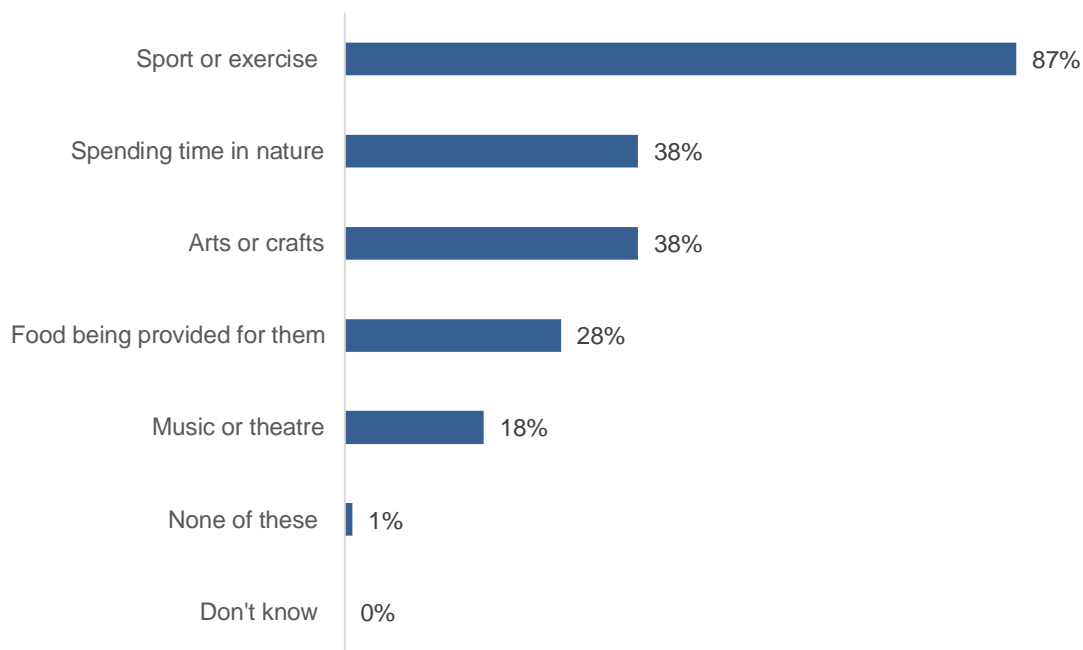
Base (all participants with at least one child who took part in organised summer activities): 282

Generally the time spent on activities was consistent across sub-groups. The most notable difference is between families who live in urban and rural areas. Children living in urban areas tended to spend longer in activities compared to those in rural areas. 38% of children in urban areas spent between 1 and 2 weeks taking part in organised summer activities. In rural areas 25% of children spent 1 to 2 weeks. Similarly, 20% of children in urban areas spent more than 2 weeks taking part in activities compared to 16% in rural areas.

Types of activities offered

Parents were asked about the types of activities their children took part in over summer. The most common type of activities involved sport or exercise (87%). The least commonly reported activity was music and theatre, which were part of 18% of activities parents in the survey reported.

Figure 2.3: types of activities offered to children



QSummer2b. Did the free or low-cost activities they took part in involve any of the following

Base (all participants with at least one child who took part in organised summer activities): 282

The types of activities children took part in during activities was relatively consistent across sub groups. There were, however, differences in take-up of activities involving food reported by deprivation and employment status:

- 47% of those in the most and second most deprived areas by SIMD quintile reported attending activities which involved food, compared to 15% and 17% in the second and least deprived areas respectively.
- Almost half (45%) of children who attended activities from non-working families went to activities providing food, compared to 24% from full-time working families and 26% of part-time working families.

3. Drivers and barriers for attending activities

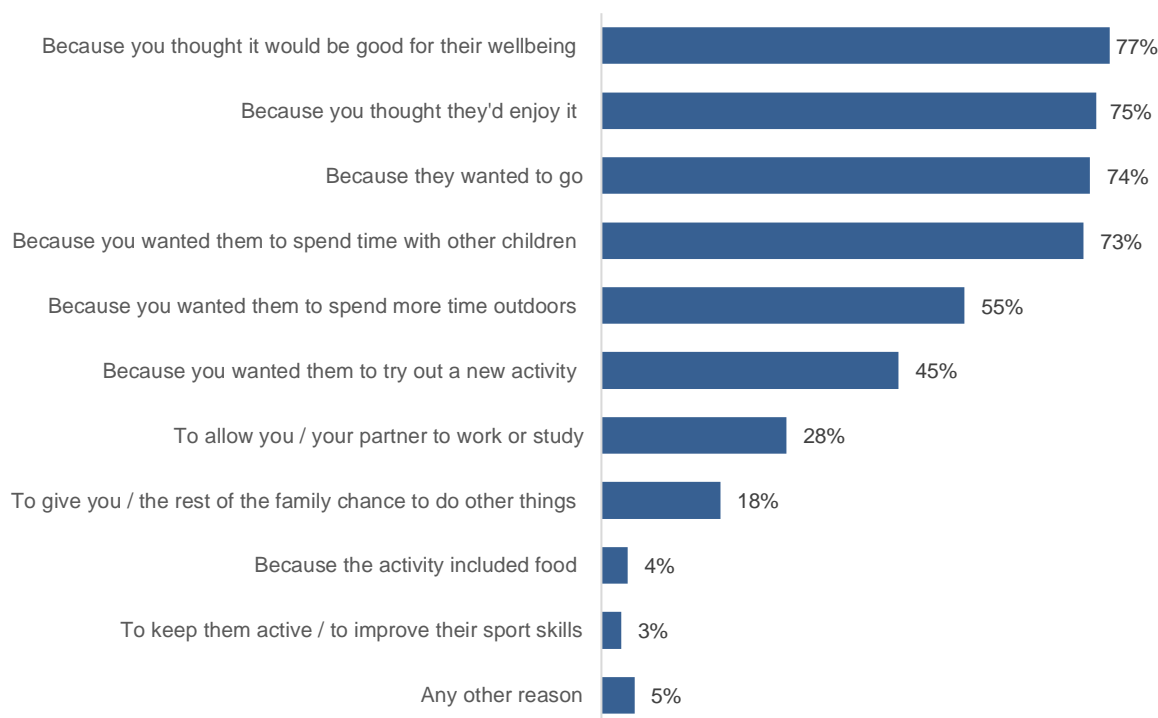
In order to improve future holiday provision, the research aimed to understand why parents used the organised activities for children and what were the potential barriers for participation.

Reasons for participation

Parents were asked about the motivations for their children attending the organised activities they went to over the summer. The most common reasons given by parents were because:

- they thought it would be good for their wellbeing (77%)
- they thought the child/children would enjoy it (75%)
- the child/children wanted to go (74%) and;
- they wanted their child/children to spend time with other children (73%).

Figure 3.1: Reasons for attending organised activities or holiday clubs over summer



QSummer3. Which, if any, of the following were reasons why your child attended the organised activities or holiday clubs they went to this summer?

Base (all participants with at least one child who took part in organised summer activities): 282

The reasons given for attending activities were relatively consistent across subgroups. There was, however, some variation in motivations relating to the family's income. Those in the top and middle income brackets were most likely to

have been motivated to use organised summer activities to allow them or their partner to work (14% of households with an income up to £25,999 a year reported allowing them to work/study was a motivating factor, compared to 44% of those earning £26,000-£47,999).

Families with up to two dependent children were more likely to use activities to allow parents to work when compared to larger families (33% of parents with 1-2 children reported work/study as a reason for attendance compared to 14% of families with 3+ children).

Barriers to participation

When children had not participated in free or low-cost summer activities, parents were asked about the main reasons for not taking part.

The most common barriers reported were around lack of awareness (33%) and child/children not being interested in activities (24%).

Concerns about Covid-19 transmission was also a commonly reported barrier with just under one in five (18%) parents whose child/children had not participated in any activities reporting that this was one of the main reasons.

Some parents also reported barriers around timings and accessibility:

- 13% stated that the timings did not suit
- 12% stated that activities were not accessible for their child's needs
- A small number (5%) stated that activities were too expensive

Levels of people reporting their or their child's physical or mental health or disability preventing them from participating was low with 3% of respondents giving this as one of the main reasons their child did not take part.

Lack of awareness was particularly an issue for:

- Larger families (44% of parents with three or more dependent children reported being unaware of any activities compared to 34% of parents with up to two dependent children)
- Those in the most deprived areas (41% of those in the lowest SIMD quintile compared to 32% of those in the least deprived)

Those on lower incomes and living in more deprived areas by SIMD quintile reported more issues around activities not being accessible.

- 20% of those in the most deprived areas compared to 7% of those in the least deprived
- A quarter (24%) of those earning up to £25,999 a year felt that activities were not accessible for their child's needs compared to 14% of those earning £26,000-£47,999 a year, 8% of those earning £48,000-£95,999 a year and 6% of those earning over £96,000 a year.

There was little variation in awareness of activities by rurality, working status and age of children.

Table 3.1: Barriers to taking part in holiday activities over summer

	%
Not aware of any suitable organised activities in the area	33%
Child wasn't interested in the activities/holiday clubs available near me	24%
Child didn't want to attend any organised activities	22%
Concerned about transmission of COVID	18%
Timings don't suit	13%
Activities were not accessible for my child's needs	12%
No spaces available	7%
No need / parent was at home / we did activities as a family	7%
Too expensive	6%
Child had their own activities / hobbies	6%
Child's age / too old	5%
Child did attend activities but they were not low cost	4%
I / parent was working	4%
Child's / my health / mental health / disability	3%
Child was away / on holiday	3%
Activities were closed due to COVID	2%
Other reason	5%
Don't know	1%

QSUMMER7. What were the main reasons your [child/children] did not participate in organised activities or holiday clubs this summer?

Base (all participants with children 4+ where no children who took part in summer activities): 583

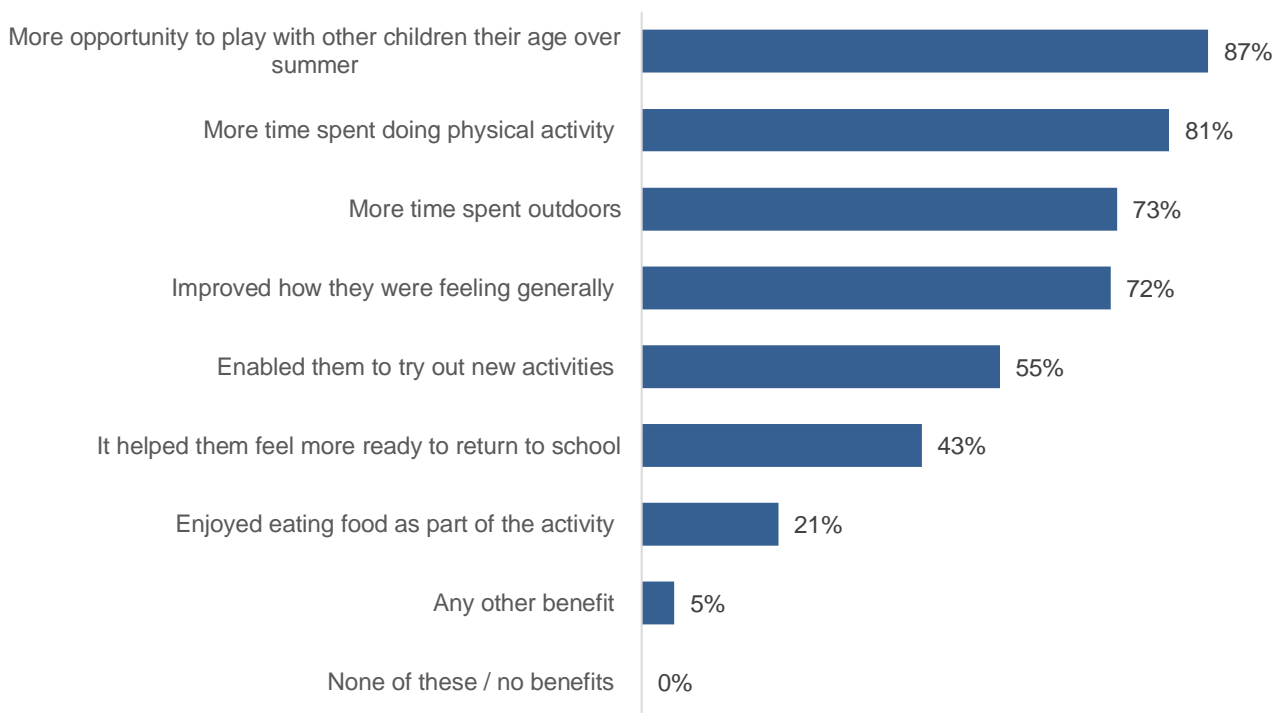
4. Impacts of summer activities

Benefits for children and young people

Parents whose child/children had taken part in organised summer activities were firstly asked about the benefits they felt their children had experienced as a result.

The main benefits reported were: more opportunities to play with other children their children's age (87%), more time doing physical activity (81%), being outdoors (73%) and improvements in how their child was feeling generally (72%). Over half of parents (55%) said that summer activities enabled their child to be able to try out new activities and over two in five (43%) said that it had helped their child to feel more ready for school. More detail is in figure 4.1. below.

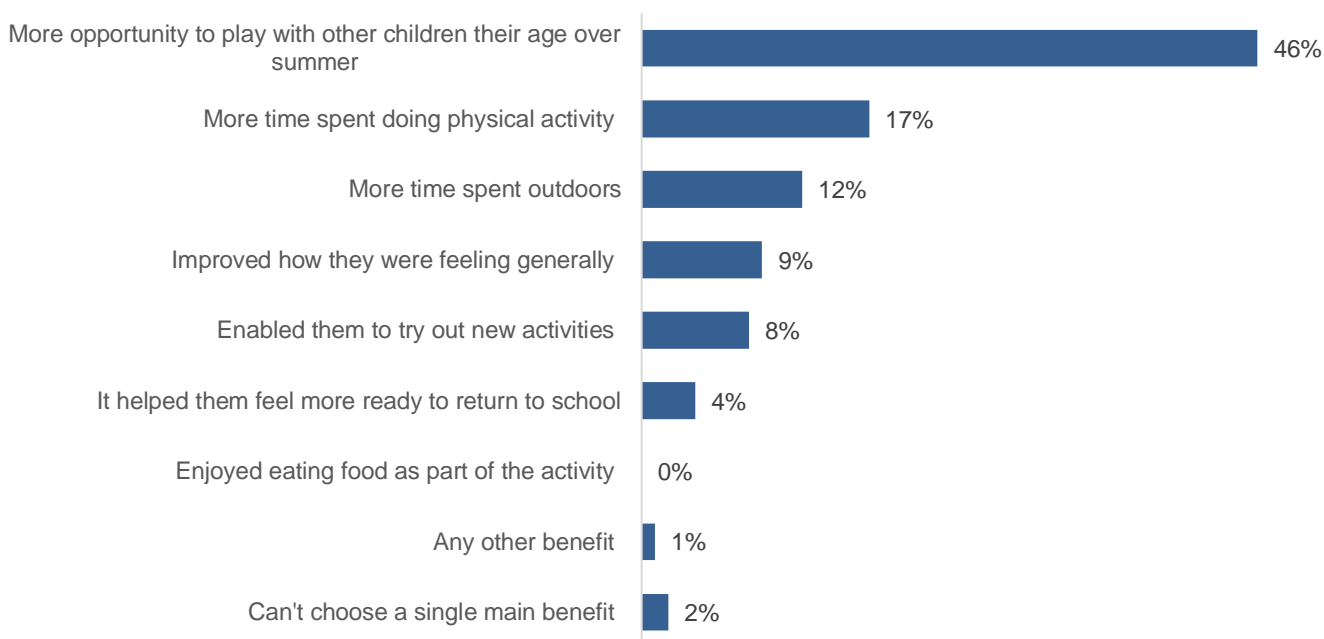
Figure 4.1: Benefits for children from taking part in organised activities or holiday clubs over this summer



QSUMMER5.. Which of the following benefits, if any, did taking part in organised activities or holiday clubs this summer have for your child?

Base (all participants with at least one child who took part in organised summer activities): 282

Figure 4.2: Main benefit for children from taking part in organised activities or holiday clubs over this summer



QSUMMER5b..And which of these would you say was the main benefit to your child of taking part in organised activities or holiday clubs this summer?

Base (all participants who answered SUMMER5): 282

Some differences in benefits experienced by children were present between various sub-groups.

Parents on lower incomes were more likely to report their children enjoying eating food as part of the activity as being one of the benefits of taking part. (34% of parents in households earning up to £25,999 a year compared to 24% of parents in households earning £26,000-£47,999 a year and 19% in households earning £48,000-£95,999 a year).

The benefits of participation varied by the child's age group. Key differences are:

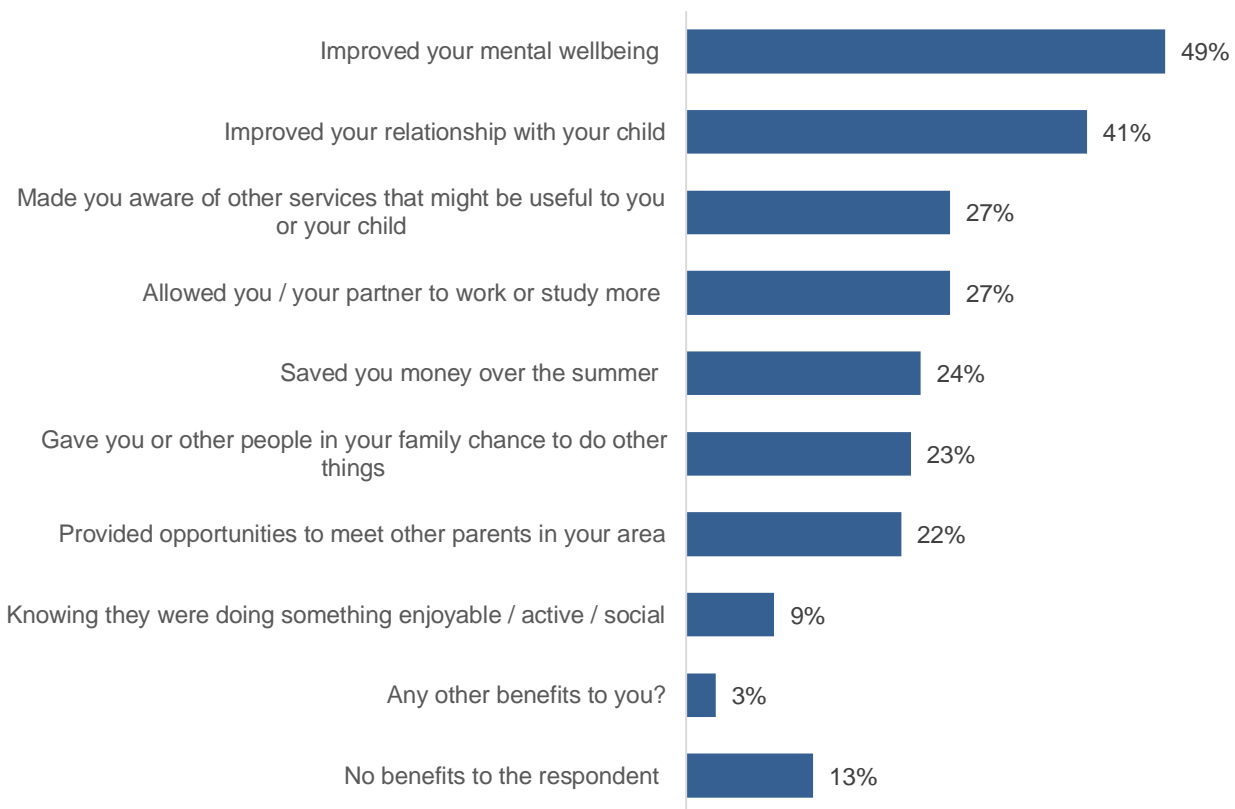
- Younger children benefitted from spending more time with other children their age (reported for 95% of children aged 0-8 compared to 82% of 9-11 year olds, 83% of 12-14 year olds and 71% of 15-17 year olds).
- Children aged 12-14 were more likely to have taken part in activities where parents felt they benefitted from spending more time outdoors (84% compared to 67% of parents of children aged up to 4).
- Children aged 12-14 were more likely to have benefitted from enjoying eating food as part of the activity according to parents (36% of 12-14 year olds compared to 13% of 9-11s and 9% of 15-17s).

Benefits for parents

Parents were asked about the benefits they had experienced personally from their child/children taking part in organised activities or holiday clubs over the summer. The majority of parents identified a benefit for themselves (87%).

The most commonly reported benefits for the parents was that their child participating in activities improved their own mental wellbeing (49% of parents reported this) and that it improved the relationship with the child (41%).

Figure 4.3: Benefits for parents of children taking part in organised activities or holiday clubs over this summer



QSUMMER5b..And which of the following benefits, if any, did your year-old child taking part in organised activities or holiday clubs this summer have for you?

Base (all participants with at least one child who took part in organised summer activities): 282

While at lower levels, still a considerable proportion of parents reported other benefits, including:

- 27% felt they had made them aware of other services that might be useful to them or their child;
- 27% felt they had allowed them or their partner to work / study more;
- 24% felt they had helped them save money over the summer, and

- 22% felt they had given them or other people in the family the chance to do other things

There were some marked benefits for parents living in the most deprived areas who were more likely to say that:

- their child taking part in activities improved their mental wellbeing (64% compared to 8% of those in the least deprived)
- they feel their relationship with their child had improved (50% compared to 38% in the least deprived)

The benefit of allowing parents to work or study was most commonly mentioned by parents in middle and high income households (20% of parents from households earning up to £25,999 a year reported this as a benefit compared to 34% of those earning £26,000-£47,999 a year and 26% of those earning £48,000-£95,999 a year).

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this social research publication:

are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics

are available via:

[Data tables of survey results](#)

[Qualitative evaluation of Summer of Play programme](#)

[Combined report summarising evaluation findings](#)

may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact <email address> for further information.

cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.



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