

# Cawr

Centre for Health, Activity  
& Wellbeing Research

## Adolescent organised activity participation for supporting health and wellbeing outcomes: opportunities and challenges

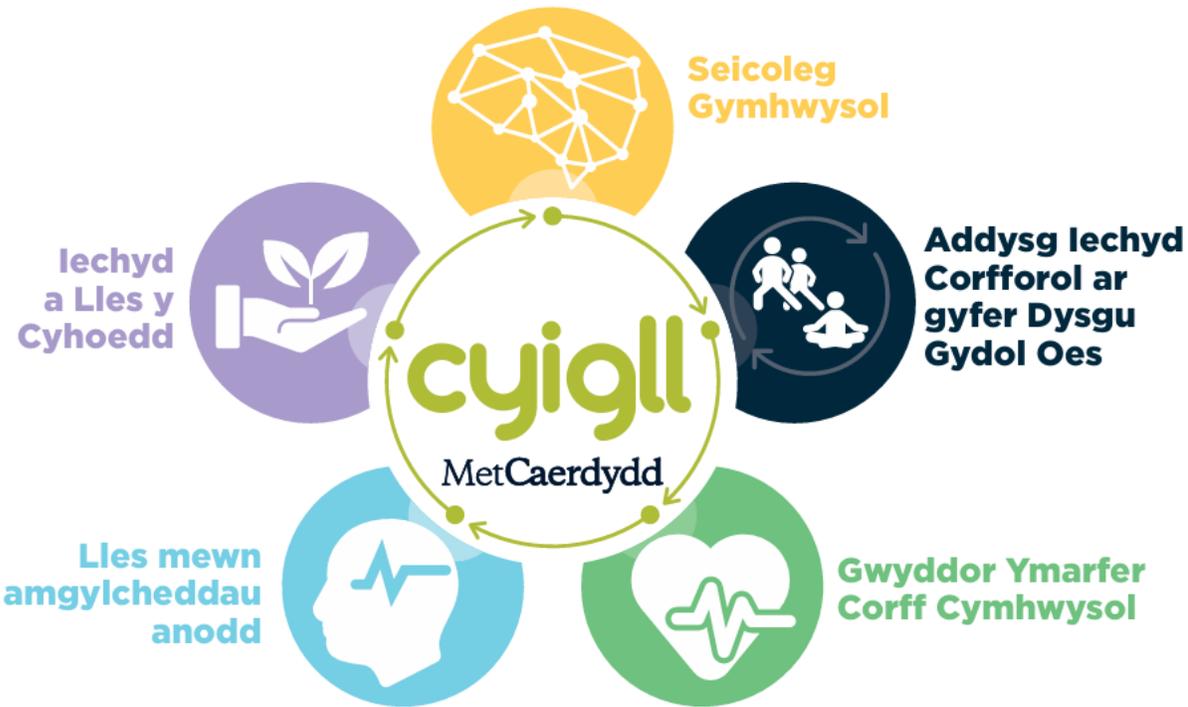
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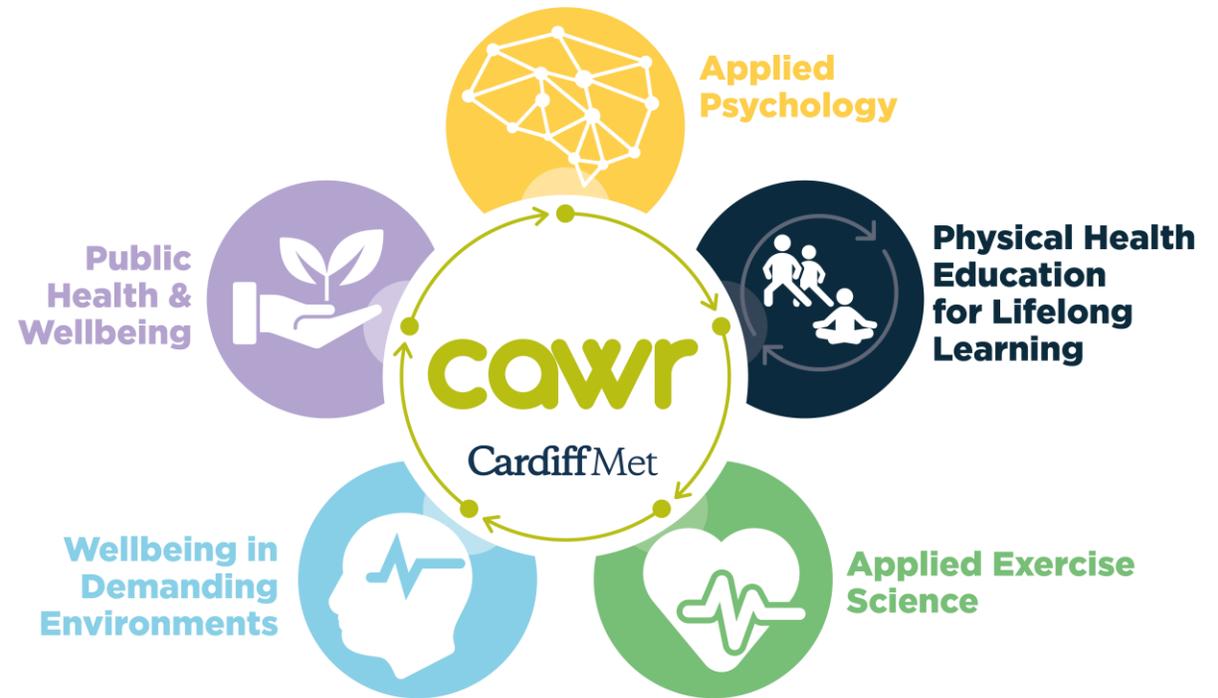


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**Canolfan Ymchwil Iechyd, Gweithgarwch a Lles**



**Centre for Health, Activity & Wellbeing Research**

# United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

## Article 31

1. Right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts
2. Right to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

**CAWR**



# Adolescence

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A comparatively health stage of life, but of great public health importance

# Why is adolescence important?

- 1. Causes of morbidity and mortality during adolescence shift from infectious disease towards 'risky' behaviours**
- 2. Behaviours and mental health challenges that emerge during adolescence track into adulthood**
- 3. Unique time of development = opportunities for intervention**

# Leisure provides opportunities to explore

Svacina et al., 2022

Engagement in activities are shaped by:

International motivation

- Enjoyment

External motivation

- Parental praise
- Friendships
- Certificates



Leisure provides opportunities to support wellbeing:  
Is adolescence a critical stage for this?

Self-determination theory  
(Ryan & Deci, 2000)

Competence

Relatedness

Autonomy

Adolescence

Skill development

Peer influence

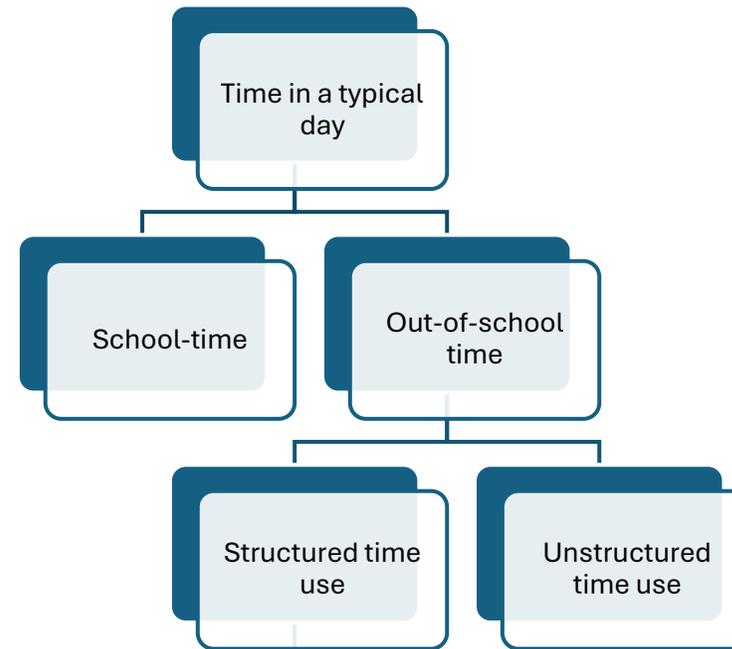
Exploratory behaviour

A young girl with braided hair, wearing a white tennis shirt, is the central focus. She is holding a tennis racket in her right hand and a tennis ball in her left, both raised. In the background, other children are visible, some also holding tennis rackets and balls, suggesting a group activity or lesson on a tennis court. The scene is outdoors with trees and a brick wall in the background.

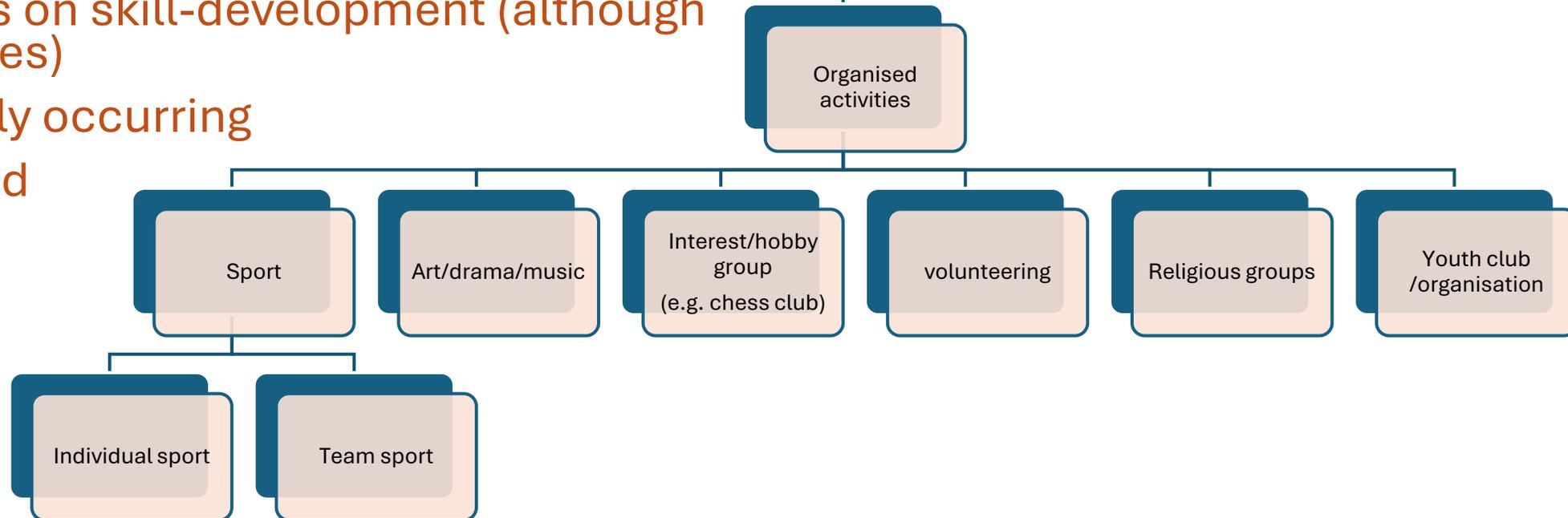
# Organised activities

Settings to support youth development,  
health and wellbeing

# General categories of young people's leisure time use



- Focuses on skill-development (although this varies)
- Regularly occurring
- Adult-led



# Associated benefits from organised activities

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Better psychological wellbeing (Badura et al., 2023)



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Fewer physiological complaints (Badura et al., 2023)



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Higher academic and educational achievement  
(Badura et al., 2018; Barber et al., 2009; Vandell & Simpkins, 2024)



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Less contact with police (Vandell et al., 2021)



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Fewer risk behaviours (Badura et al., 2018; Vandell et al., 2021)



# Organised activities

## Childhood

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Initial engagement

Focus is on enjoyment, less on competition

More community-based opportunities?

Parental influence and motives?



# Organised activities

## Early adolescence

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Further skill development

Progression and competition

Activity breadth peaks

Role of identity, peer affiliation and group belonging beginning to emerge?



## Organised activities

### Mid-Late adolescence

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Breadth of activities narrow

Challenges present in managing time

Increases in 'no participation'

'Make or break' point?

Opportunities for scholarships



# International observations of organised activity participation (Badura et al., 2021)

Early OA participation predicts later participation (sports)

Participation in any OA declines with age

More boys participate in sports

Girls participate in a greater variety of OAs

Inequalities in participation by income, ethnicity and migrant background





## Organised activities In and outside of school

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Out-of-school organised activity participation differs depending on levels of family affluence.

# Study of students in America by Bennett, Lutz & Jayaram (2012).

## School Activities:

C = cultural

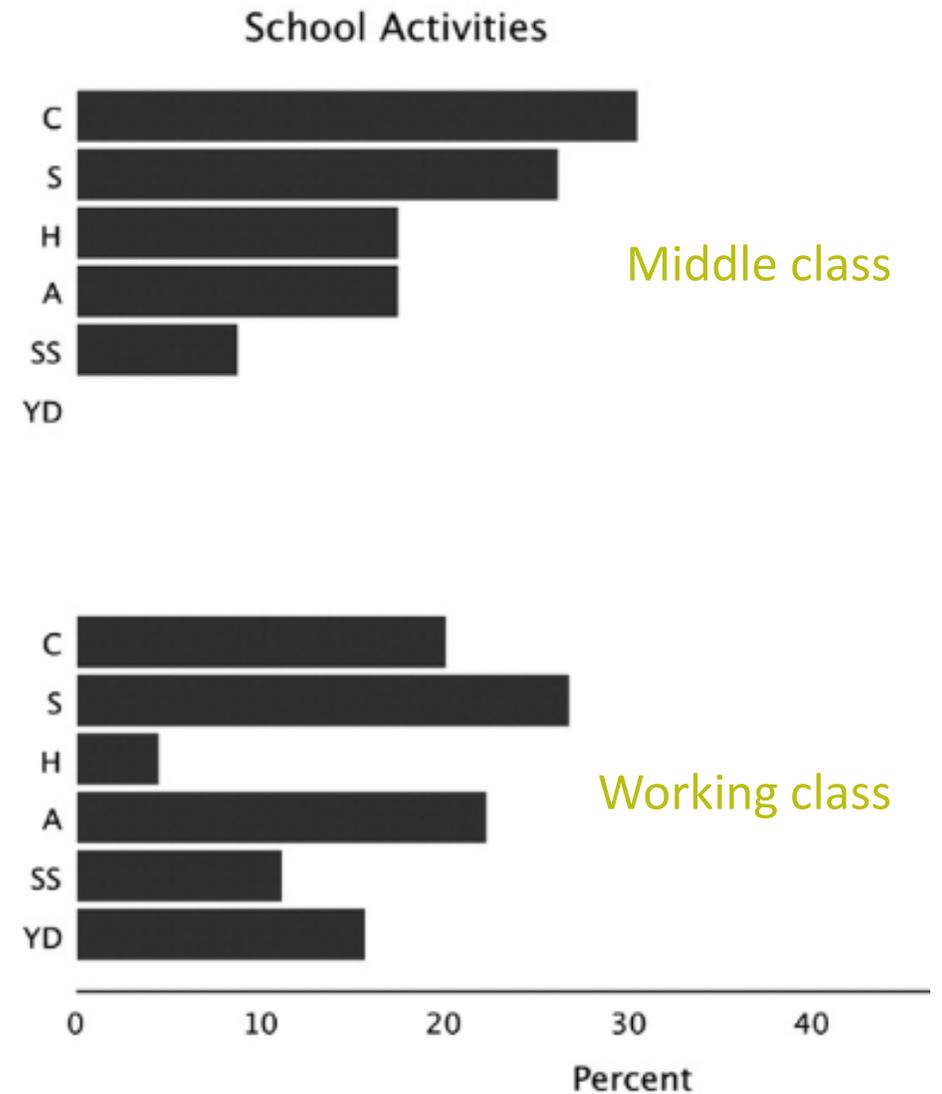
S = sports

H = hobby

A = academic

SS = school service

YD = Youth Development



# Study of students in America by Bennett, Lutz & Jayaram (2012).

## Non-School Activities:

C = cultural

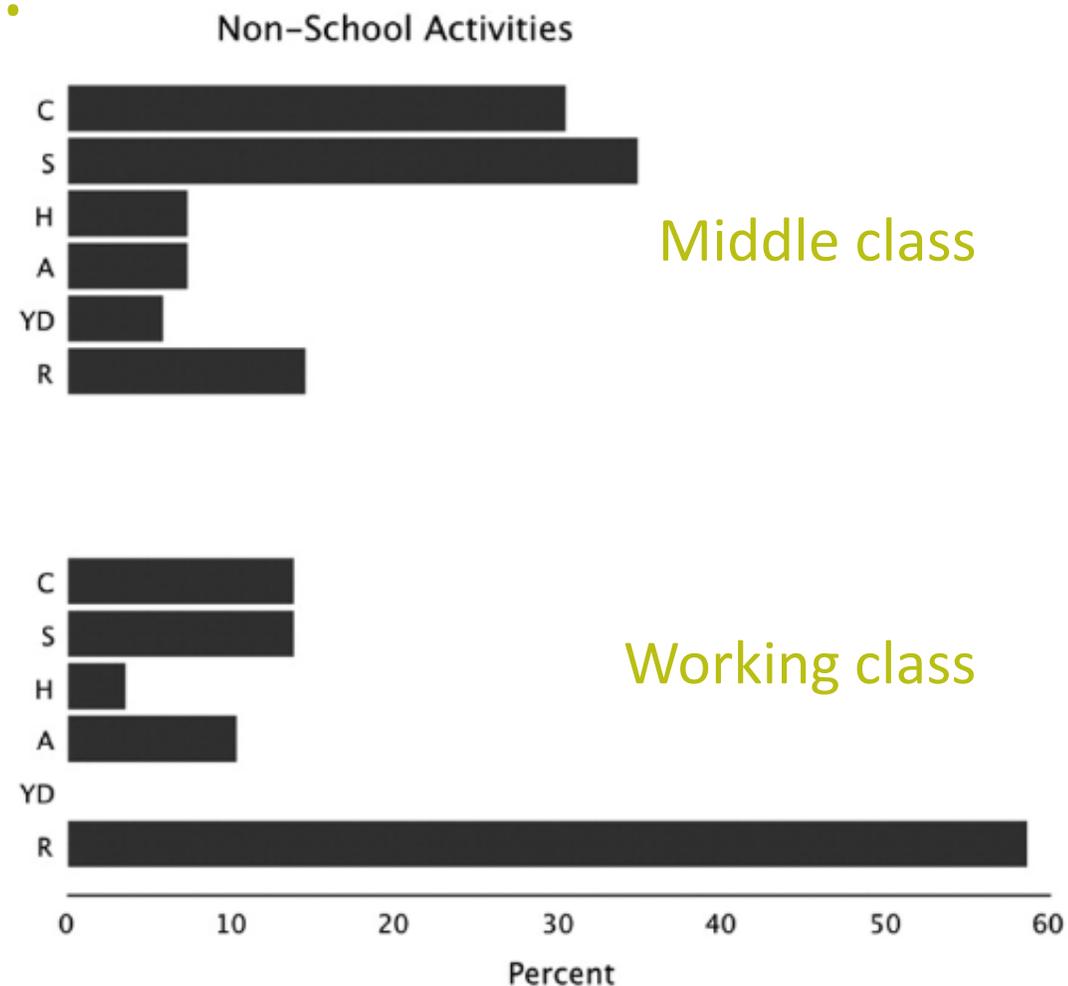
S = sports

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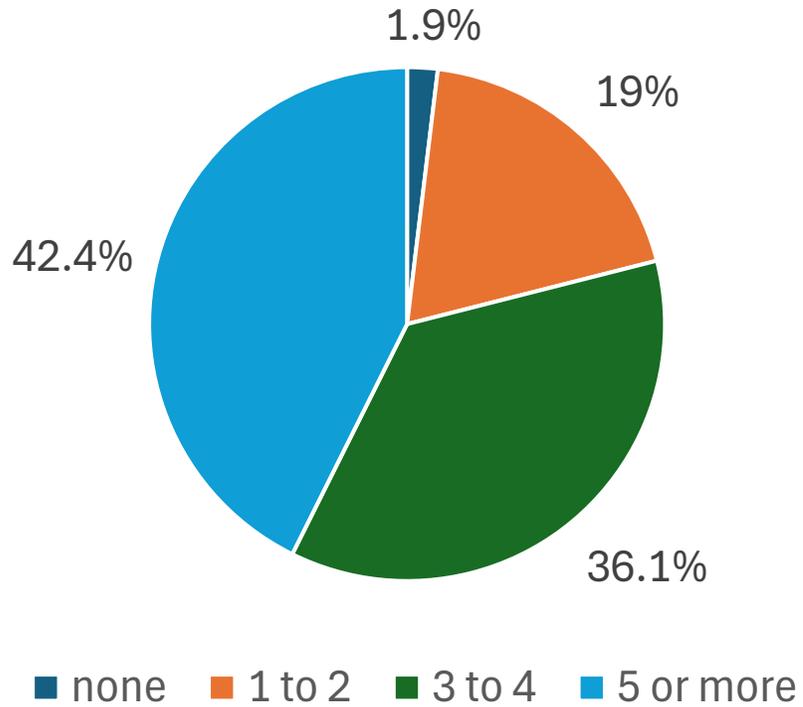
YD = Youth Development

R = Religion

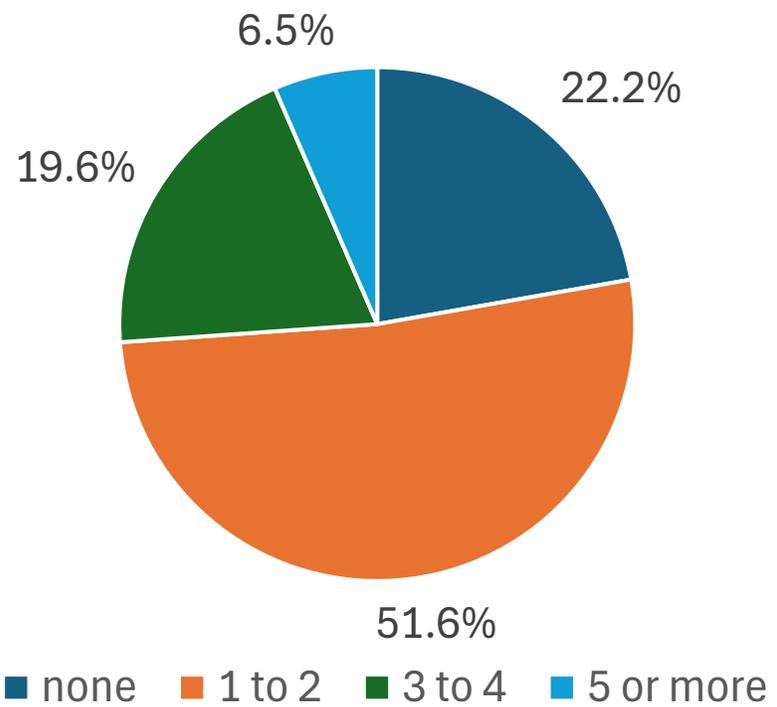


# Study of students in England by Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson (2014)

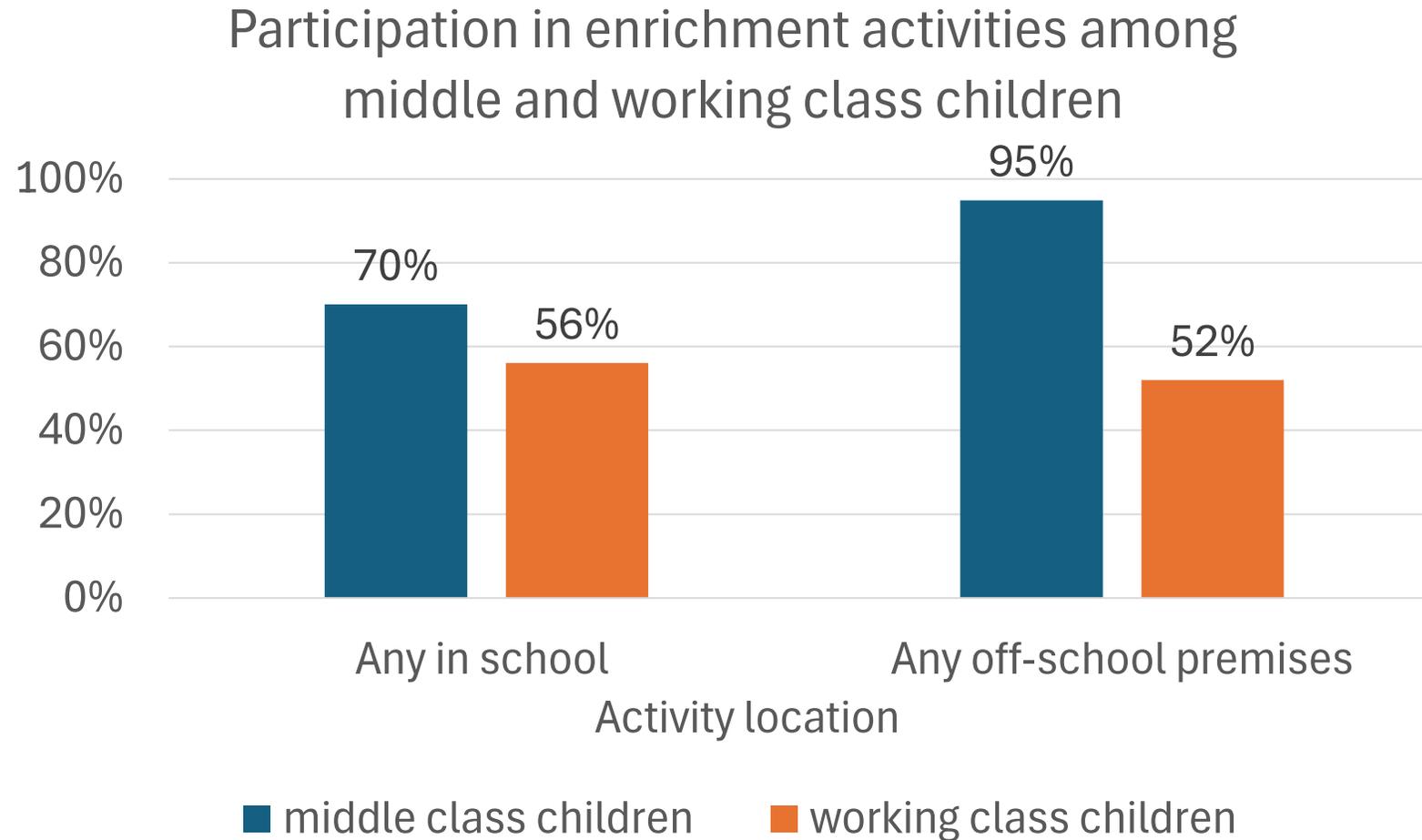
Middle class children: Number of activities



Working class children: Number of activities



# Study of students in England by Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson (2014)



# Why are there inequalities in organised activity participation?

Fewer programmes available for low-income groups and limited high quality activity options

transportation issues

parents' job schedules

adolescents need to contribute to the family (working or watching siblings) in order to make ends meet

greater pressures of schoolwork

increasing demands of the activity itself

lack of interest and motivation to participate

Vandell & Simpkins, in press; Belošević & Ferric, 2022

# Partnerships



## Opportunities for alleviating barriers to engagement?

- Challenge: Reliance on community opportunities
- In the US, more activities are offered within schools (addresses some barriers).
- In other countries, offered in the community, or by third-sector organisations and volunteers
- Organisations in less affluent areas that are more reliant on government grants and public funding are more vulnerable to reductions in government funding (Clifford, 2021)
- Partnership working may offer opportunities for sustainable delivery. **Does Wales have an advantage here?**



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WELL-BEING OF  
FUTURE GENERATIONS**

- Community Focused Schools
- HAPUS campaign
- National Framework for Social Prescribing

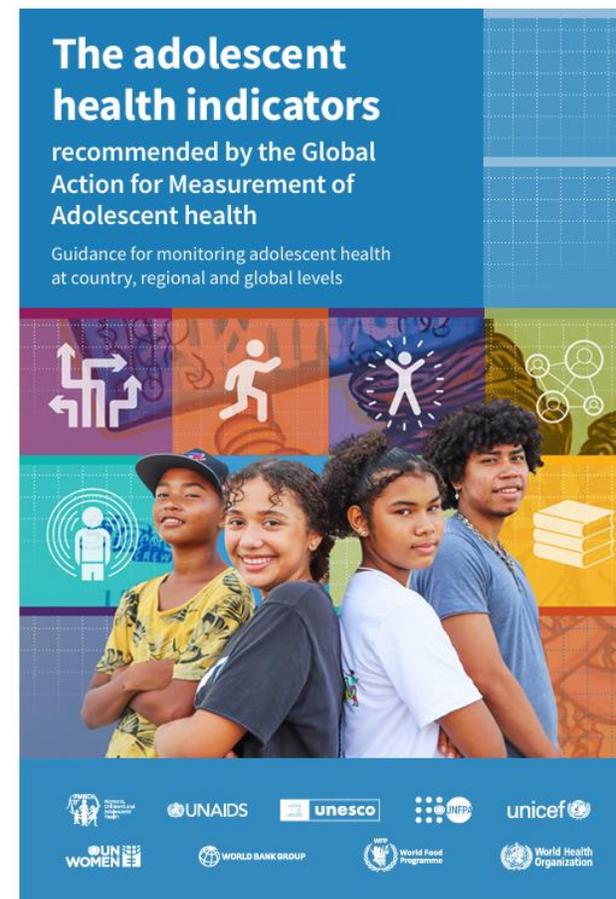
# WHO adolescent health indicators

Guidance for monitoring adolescent health at country, regional and global level By WHO and United Nations partners

Subjective wellbeing is a (small) focus

Core measure: **Proportion of adolescents with someone to talk to when they have a worry or problem**

[9789240092198-eng.pdf](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240092198-eng.pdf)



# Supporting young people through organised activities

Enjoyment is key (Badura et al., 2024).

How we support young people in communities is important for subjective wellbeing, which in turn impacts other domains of life.

- Active Balancing (Juneja, Hansen & Lemon, 2024)
- Relational Capability approach to playing and being well (Russell, Barclay & Tawil, 2023)

Such a supportive relationship in anyone's life is important for navigating those experiences and the transition of adolescence.

*“When conditions are right, children can create their own wellbeing.”*

Russell, Barclay & Tawil, 2023



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Thank you  
*Diolch*



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