



Resident Survey Report (2021)





Playing Out - Resident Survey Report 2021

About Playing Out

The 'Playing Out' model of resident-led, temporary road closures for play originated on one street in Bristol in 2009. To date, over 1300 street communities across the UK have followed this model, supported by their local councils.

Today the resident-led play streets idea has spread around the UK and internationally as a temporary way to give children safe space to play on their doorstep. Playing Out is a national organisation and movement for longer term change, supporting children's right to play outside for their health, happiness and sense of belonging.

About this report

This report is the result of the *Playing Out Resident Survey (2021)* which builds upon the learning of previous surveys (2017, 2019) in understanding the impacts of play streets, where they happen and who is involved. The report also aims to explore the barriers to play streets and how Playing Out can work alongside residents and allies in tackling them.

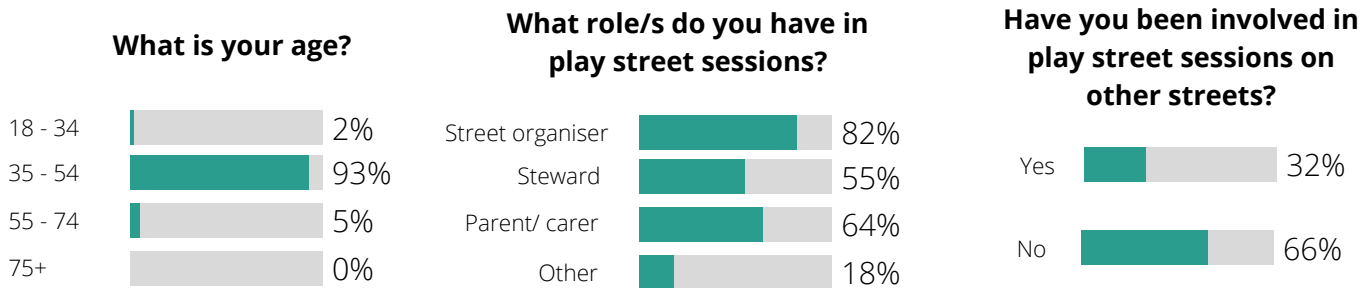
The survey received 58 responses from play street organisers across the UK (including residents in Bristol, Leeds, Newcastle, Norwich, St. Albans, London and others).

The survey was sent out in late November 2021 and the impacts of the COVID19 pandemic can be seen both in a reduction of numbers of active play streets but also in the increased resident demand for play streets as a form of community regeneration.

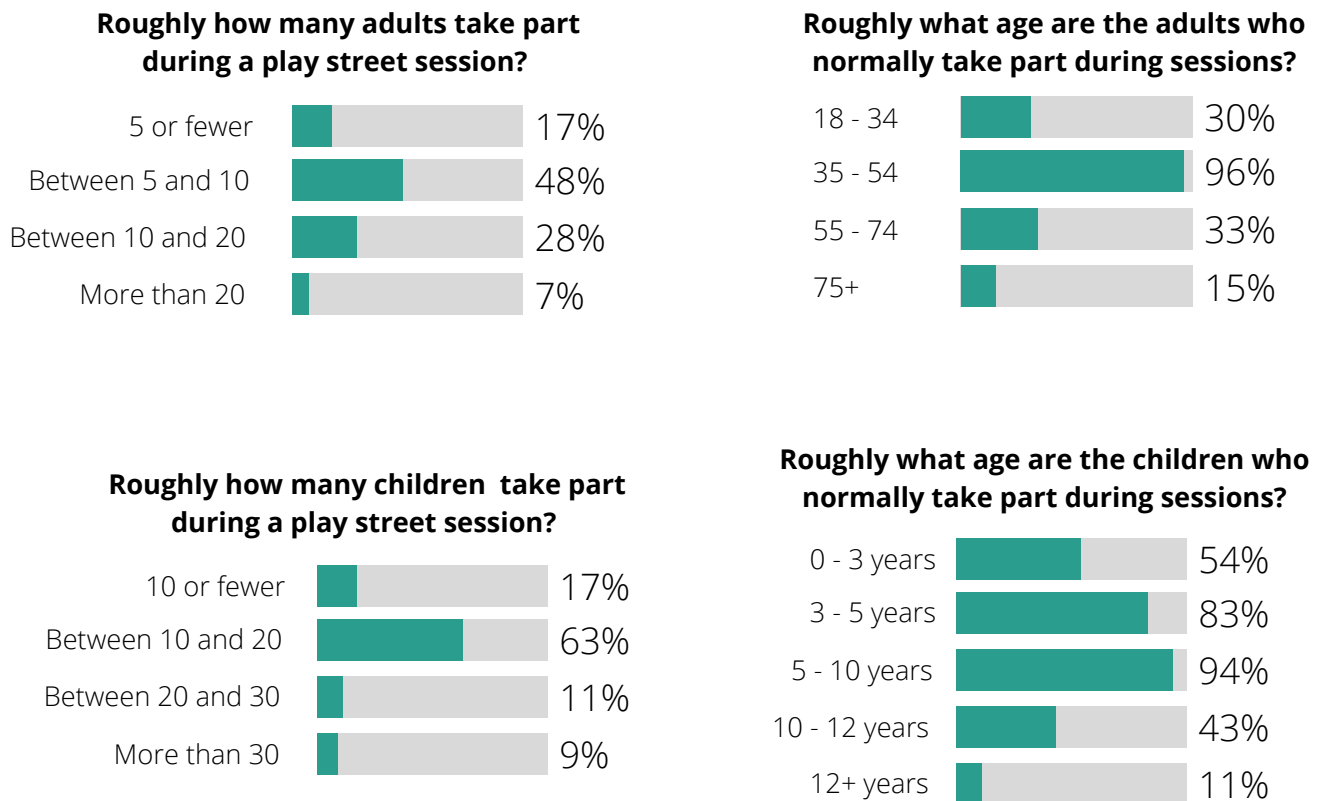


Play streets - background data

Survey respondent



Who is involved in play streets?



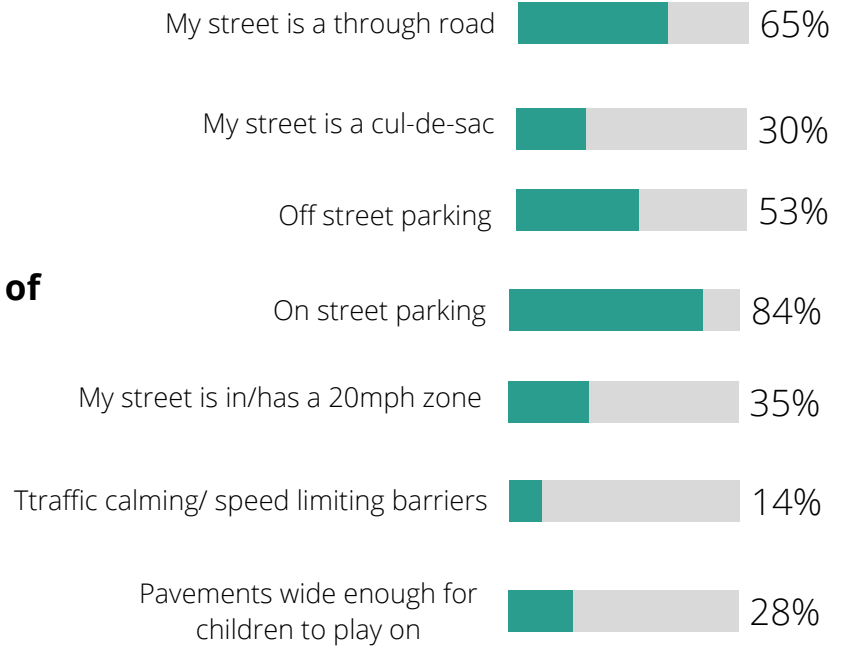
The vast majority (93%) of the survey respondents were aged between 35-54 years old, recording themselves as 'street organisers' (82%) and 'parent/carer' (64%). Here we see that play streets are primarily organised by residents with children, however **48% of streets report adults aged 55-75+ years old engaging in the sessions themselves**. This data is supported by previous surveys and showcases **that play streets engage the whole street and not simply residents with young children**.

A **good spread of ages is seen** in relation to children engaging with the play street sessions, with a large majority reporting 3-5 year olds and 5-10 year olds (83%, 94%). This engagement is then seen to continue for older children, as over half (**54%**) of respondents reported children **aged 10+** taking part in sessions.

Play streets - background data

Housing and street type

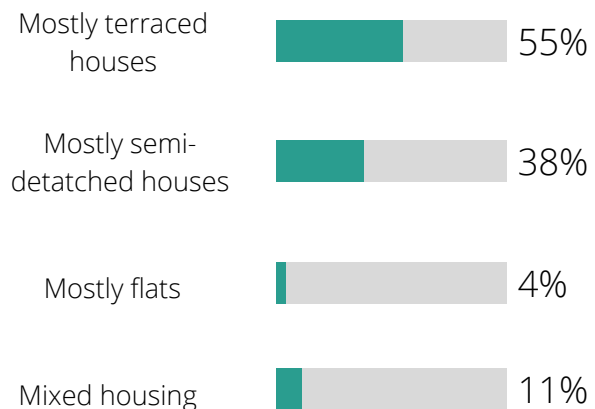
Does your street have any of the following?



The majority of streets (65%) reported are 'through roads' and over **70% of streets didn't provide enough space on the pavements for children to play.**

Interestingly, **30% of reported streets were cul-de-sacs.** This shows that despite not being open to through traffic, residents on cul-de-sacs still recognised a need to close their street to traffic in order for children to safely play - **highlighting that even on quiet roads, traffic is a safety concern.**

What is housing like where you live?



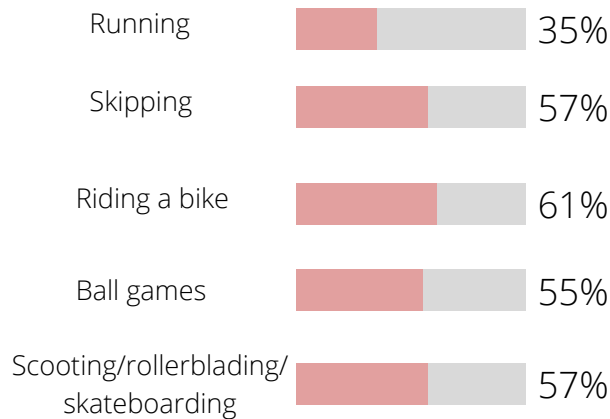
Children's health

Play streets give children **space and freedom** to get much-needed exercise, **play freely, gain independence and skills**, and make friends close to home. Play streets are not the long-term solution but are a simple, low-cost step in the right direction, starting to change things for children (streets, spaces, community, behaviour, culture, driver awareness, and a sense of what is possible..).

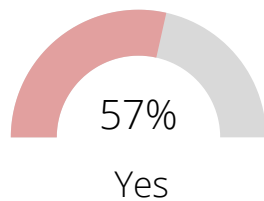
The data below (which is supportive of previous survey responses) shows how **play streets increase physical literacy** and levels of physical activity, whilst allowing children to feel that they belong more in their communities and increase social confidence.

Physical activity and physical literacy

My child(ren) have learnt or improved practical skills during play streets



Do you feel your child(ren) are more physically active as a result of play streets?



Kerby and balanceability. Badminton, football and table-tennis. Swing-ball, football, cricket, trampolining, hopscotch, dodgeball, tug of war, pogo stick, stilts.

Things that happen on a play street

Play streets offer a low pressure environment in which children can be active, developing skills like learning to **ride a bike**, and increasing their enjoyment and confidence levels. Both of these help towards children pursuing more active lifestyles later in life. The **majority of people** reported children developing **physical literacy skills** through play streets sessions, including **riding a bike (61%)**, ball games (55%) and scooting/rollerblading/skateboarding (57%).

Over half (57%) of people reported that play streets directly increased their child's level of physical activity.



Children's health

Mental wellbeing and impact of lockdown

Children have **suffered enormously during the pandemic** through spending so much time indoors, inactive and isolated. Some children barely left home at all during lockdowns and many have been seriously impacted by **reduced physical activity and social interaction**.

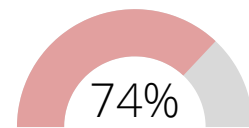
This has all taken a huge toll on children's mental and physical health. Even before the pandemic, children's physical activity levels in the UK were **shamefully low** - largely because everyday activity such as walking, cycling and play have been built out of children's lives and levels dropped even further over lockdown.

The following sections of this report highlight that **play streets allow children the safe space** to begin to rebuild their social confidence, physical activity and sense of belonging in their communities.

Post lockdown play street sessions have positively impacted my child's:



Due to play street sessions :



Children on my street have made new friends

"[Play streets provide] a connected and supportive community of families and friends for our children. Kids learning more each other's differences and building respect for one another."

Parent (Bristol)



Play streets and COVID 19

The importance of play streets for community resilience and rebuilding as we move out of lockdowns can be seen through the data. The majority of respondents (53%) had not run play streets prior to the pandemic, **highlighting an increasing demand** for play streets as a means for community rebuilding post-lockdowns.

Did you run play street sessions prior to the COVID19 pandemic?



Have you run play street sessions since lockdown restrictions have eased?



Impact of play streets and lockdown

"Play in the street kept kids active and social. Adults social - Friday Driveway drinks when restrictions eased a bit - now become standard."

Resident (Bristol)

"We knew some of the older people who needed or might need extra support [during lockdowns] because they had come out to playing out sessions."

Organiser (St Albans)

If you held play street sessions prior to the pandemic, do you feel this positively impacted how your street experienced lockdown?



"At one playing out session we decided to have a collection point for our local food bank, and when we went into lockdown, we decided to do doorstep food bank collections even during the most severe lockdowns as the need was so high in our city. "

Parent (St Albans)

"We wouldn't have known our neighbours during lockdown if it wasn't for play street. We talked to each other and helped each other and the kids through it because of play street."

Steward (Bristol)



Play streets and community

An **overwhelming majority** of people responded that play streets have positively impacted the strength of their local community. Almost **90%** of people reported that play streets resulted in them **'knowing more people on their street'** and **'feeling that they belong more in their neighbourhood'**.

63% of people reported that 'play streets supported their street's community in rebuilding post lockdown', further demonstrating the importance of **play streets are a tool for community resilience**.

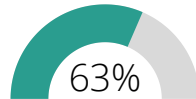
Due to play street sessions :



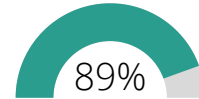
My street feels like a safer, friendlier place to live



I feel like I belong more in my neighbourhood



My street's community has been supported in rebuilding post-lockdowns



I know more people on my street

Building resilient communities

"Community cohesion, a sense of belonging, intergenerational friendships forming, getting to know neighbours, making memories."

Steward (Newcastle)

"It has welcomed us into the community and we've become part of a support group that I've only ever witnessed as a military family on a patch."

Organiser (Stockport)

Play street sessions have led to neighbours doing other social activities

Yes  67%



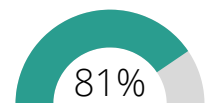
Play street sessions result in children:



Interacting with other children of different ages



Interacting with adults on their street



Having increased confidence in street play

Play street sessions have led to neighbours getting involved in other community activities or groups

Yes  67%

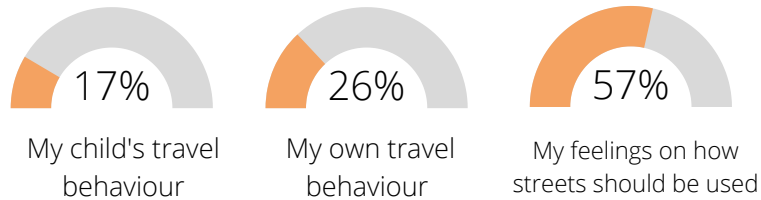
"Simply knowing many more people. Finding out about things in common - eg allotments, baking, DIY. Mixing ages of both kids and adults eg adults in 70s chatting more with young parents. WhatsApp is all very well but if you know people's faces and who they are, it takes it that step further and that's what playing out does."

Activator (St Albans)

Play streets and street use

The data below showcases the longer term effects of play streets, reflected through behavioural and attitude change. These changes demonstrate that play streets are a spring board for greater, long term change.

Being involved in play streets has made a difference to:



"[Play streets] have transformed our street, my and my daughter's relationship to our street, my understanding of residential streets in general."

Organiser (North Tyneside)

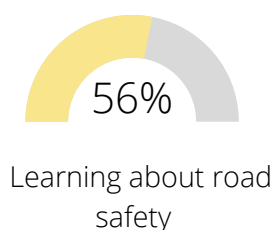
"The events are so uplifting and gave me a sense of 'there is another way!' For so long, I think I took it as read that the status quo was too difficult to change and that it was futile to even try to fight against car dominance."

Activator (Bristol)





The examples of actions taken by residents as a direct result of being involved with play streets show the depth and range of cultural impacts play streets can have. Residents have gone on to campaign for **permanent changes** to the spaces in which they live (**parklets, zebra crossings** etc).

The above data also demonstrates the impact temporary road closures for play can have on **wider societal issues**, ranging from children's rights to active travel and the perceptions of 'who owns the road'. Through engaging with play streets residents have gone on to **feel more empowered** to lobby for more long term changes.

Play street sessions result in children:



Being involved with play streets has led residents to:

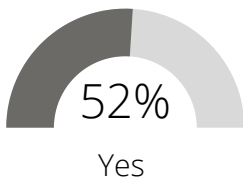
-  campaign for local zebra crossings
-  create parklets on their street
-  change their own driver behaviour
-  campaign for local 20 mph zones

Barriers

Barriers to play streets from the resident perspective can be split into two distinct categories: **practicalities of running the play street** and **lack of local authority support**.

Survey respondents noted lack of stewards, 'grumpy' neighbours who both formally and informally object to the events and dealing with uncooperative drivers as the main practical barriers they have to overcome.

Did you encounter any barriers in organising play streets?



Local Authorities and barriers to play streets

As a result of the pandemic there have been significant restructures within council departments and **reassignment of staff resource and funding**. This has led to **reduced promotion** of play streets and the **introduction of significant barriers within the application process**.



"Funding for street closure applications and lack of Council initiative to run more trials or encourage other streets to run sessions."

(Steward, Gloucester)

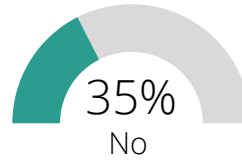
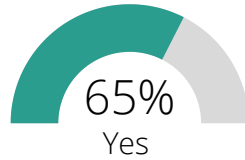
"City Council were slow to respond to request for play street permit meaning I didn't actually know if we had been granted a permit until a few days before, making organising the day stressful "

(Organiser, Norwich)



The value of support

Did you receive any support (organisations or individuals) from outside your street?



The **super helpful PO team** here in Bristol helped me to chase the council on our permission to close the road, and also provided the kit.

Sustainable St Albans.
They have been fantastic.

Mostly using the **brilliant resources** from playing out to help with the risk assessment etc. Also support from the council with signage, cones etc.

We received lots of help from Kate at Playing Out, which was **absolutely critical** to getting our play street started. She provided lots of advice, spoke to neighbours, and even lent us all the kit we needed.

"Neighbourhood organiser who was fantastic giving support and advice."

Playing Out CIC and The Active Wellbeing Society, and **the West Midlands Combined Authority** for two of our sessions (they gave us funding for food, equipment and decorations)

Local councillors supported process, attended and funded starter pack.

My questions about the scheme were answered at a Public information session run by Nicola Wyeth and Lesley Flowers from the **Herts Playing Out Team**. The local **Playing Out facebook** group was regularly updated. There were emails sent to me about what to do when and any questions I had were answered by Nicola. The Playing Out kit was hand delivered by Nicola.

What do play streets mean to residents?

The **freedom** for my children to play out safely and to bring the community together

A brilliant way of building community and **showing the value of a road** not just being a mechanism for transport

They are a great way to meet and get to know my neighbours properly. There aren't many opportunities for this in our day-to-day lives as we're often too busy to stop and chat. It will also be an opportunity for my son to meet other local children when he is older.

Childhood freedom away from screens - proper childhood!

Great sense of community for all ages, **intergenerational bonds** and the profound impact it has on children's sense of their community. Rather than seeing any other house/ person other than their family and immediate neighbours as a 'stranger', my children know who lives in almost every house on our street and **I know that in a crisis they would have so many people they could go to**, and even when they are up at the local park, or down the shops, I know there's likely to be someone around who they recognise- and who keeps an eye on them!

For **adult connections** too, I often see neighbours on my walk/ cycle/ rail journey who may only live 5 or 6 houses up but I would have never known they lived on our street until we played out. Now, I frequently recognise people out and about. Finally, **it's about inclusion**. Everyone feels part of our playing out sessions.

A bit of fun, a cup of tea and a chat with neighbours

I **love** them. They make me really **happy**.

Fun social time, building our little community for the **benefit of all** who live here

I think they have been great - it's really helped us get to know our neighbours and **bring us together even though we are all really different**

All the effort was paid back in gains for my kids and our family. We **normalised street play** by running sessions fortnightly or monthly for 4 years, now we can just let the kids get on with it. Our street is a well connected mini community. My kids got to be part of a movement that **championed their right to play** in the street where they live. Long lasting positive ripple effects for sure

What do residents feel should be the focus of Playing Out CIC in the future ?

Lobbying for children's rights and active travel

Supporting residents to put on play streets.

Helping **roads** like our - rat runs which might not be obvious play streets - can **help residents** and locals to **see them differently**.

Always making the link to bigger questions of **children's right to play/space**, active travel, streets etc.

Continuing to build play streets nationally and **supporting local groups** to do so

Active travel and **lobbying at parliamentary level**. Currently there's a big variation in how much individual councils support this - it needs to be something they are **obliged to do** and support. It was hard work with Newcastle City Council - took a lot of persistence and it was mainly because I'd worked for the council and organised road closures for public events that I was able to navigate their system. If this could be simplified because **councils are obliged to have someone promoting this**, it would remove a considerable barrier.

Education of the general public on the **enormous benefits to playing outside** for children. Not just on play streets, but parks and open spaces.

Playing out implies it's for children but I think it could be **advertised as more inclusive**. I don't think it has to have any focus other than having fun and meeting people. Broadening the appeal to residents who don't have young children playing out, to **broaden the benefit** to more residents.

Lobbying to make it an accepted, easy and promoted thing to do in all **local authorities**

Community, build the **evidence base**



Playing Out CIC is registered in England and Wales. Company
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For more information on the survey, play
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