

What do people get out of Beat the Street?

Feedback from Reading



July 2015

Key messages

Beat the Street aims to inspire people to walk more. People scan a card or key fob onto 'Beat Box' scanners located around the community to show they have walked to the boxes. The goal is to reach a target number of miles, and earn points that add up to win prizes for local groups.

Between 29 April and 24 June 2015, 24,036 people from Reading, Burghfield, Mortimer, Pangbourne and Theale took part, walking a total of 306,640 miles.

All 6,515 people who provided an email address when they registered were invited to provide feedback at the end of Beat the Street and 887 people did so (14%).

The main findings from the survey were:

- The most commonly reported **benefits of Beat the Street feeling more healthy, getting fit, exploring the local area, having fun, spending time with friends and family and feeling part of the community.**
- **Eight out of ten people thought that Beat the Street helped them be more active (84%),** walk more than usual (78%) and feel healthier (78%).
- Two fifths said Beat the Street helped them take the car less (42%).
- Seven out of ten people said Beat the Street encouraged them to get out more (72%) and six out of ten said they went to different places during the competition (61%).
- Six out of ten people said they felt more involved in the community because of Beat the Street (63%).
- People with long-term conditions were just as likely as others to report benefits from Beat the Street. Two fifths of these people said Beat the Street helped with their conditions (39%).
- **The proportion of people meeting the Department of Health's physical activity target increased from 40% at the beginning of Beat the Street to 48% at the end.** This change was statistically significant, meaning it is likely to be the result of Beat the Street rather than chance. The number of days per week that people reported walking also increased. Two thirds of the people who were least active at the beginning of Beat the Street had increased activity by the end.
- Eight out of ten people said they would try to continue changes they had made (78%).
- **Nine out of ten people said they would recommend Beat the Street to friends and family (91%).**

The survey suggests that people were positive about Beat the Street. They thought improving technical issues could make the initiative even better, and said it was an excellent idea and should be continued.

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Beat the Street: Reading

Beat the Street is an innovative way of encouraging people to walk more. 'Beat Box' scanners are located around the community. People can earn points by scanning their Beat the Street card of key fob on scanners to show that they have walked between the boxes. Individuals and teams compete to see whether they can reach a target number of miles, achieve the most points and win prizes for their community group or school.

Between 29 April and 24 June 2015, 24,036 people living in Reading, Burghfield, Mortimer, Pangbourne and Theale took part, aiming to travel 300,000 miles into 'space'. Over the eight week period 84 teams logged 306,740 miles.

In total, 8,758 people registered online to participate and the rest (15,278) were children who were took part through participating schools.

Of those who registered online, 6,515 provided an email address so they could be followed up later. These people were invited to provide feedback at the end of Beat the Street.

This report summarises registered participants' feedback about the impacts of Beat the Street based on the survey responses.

Collecting feedback

Inviting people to provide feedback

When they first registered online, people were asked for some background information and about their walking habits. This acted as a 'baseline' about activity before Beat the Street.

To test any changes over time, an online survey with seven questions plus demographic questions was developed with the support of an independent evaluation team. The survey explored what people thought they got out of Beat the Street and any reported changes in their physical activity levels. All 6,515 people who provided an email address were emailed a link to the online survey immediately after Beat the Street ended. They were given two weeks to respond. A prize draw was offered as an incentive. In total, 887 people shared their views, giving a response rate of 14% of the total with valid email addresses.

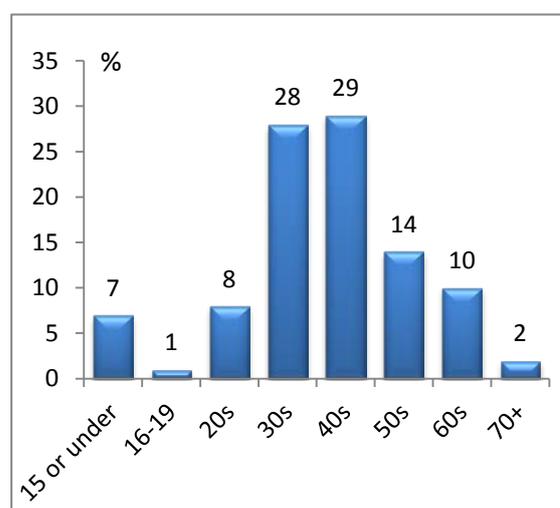
Response rates for online surveys are typically in the region of 10% to 15%, so the response rate for Reading Beat the Street is about average.

All of the feedback was analysed by an independent team.

People who provided feedback

A good mix of people of different ages provided feedback (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Age groups of people surveyed



Note: 887 people provided feedback.

Most people who provided feedback were women (74%). Four out of ten people that registered for Beat the Street were men (39%). This shows that men were well represented in the initiative, but were less likely to provide feedback.

At registration, 12% (1,038 people) said that they had a long-term medical condition. At the end of Beat the Street, 200 people with a long-term condition provided feedback (23% of responses). This included 32 people with diabetes, 17 people with heart disease, 4 people with COPD and 147 with other long-term conditions.

Benefits of Beat the Street

What did people gain?

People were asked to reflect about anything they gained from taking part in Beat the Street. Eight out of ten people said that Beat the Street helped them in some way (81%).

In total, 689 people gave examples of how Beat the Street helped them or what they did differently as a result. The most common feedback was:

- walking more often
- walking, running or cycling longer distances
- walking instead of taking the car
- exploring different parts of Wiltshire
- spending time together as a family
- engaging socially with others
- increased fitness or weight loss

“It made us go on our bikes on lovely evenings and weekends. We met new friends who have similar aged kids to ours.”

“Encouraged me to walk, rather than jump in the car. I enjoyed collecting the points that went towards something useful.”

Box 1 provides further examples of people’s verbatim feedback.

In a closed-ended question, the most commonly reported ‘main benefits’ of Beat the Street were:

- feeling more healthy (mentioned by 55% of participants)
- getting fit (54%)
- exploring the local area (51%)
- having fun (48%)
- spending time with friends or family (44%)
- feeling part of the community (42%)

About half people who provided feedback mentioned these benefits (see Figure 2). Men and women and people from different age groups all selected the same top benefits of Beat the Street. Two fifths of people who had long-term conditions said Beat the Street helped with these conditions (77 out of 200 people, 39%). There was no difference amongst people with various types of conditions.

Delving further into the perceived benefits of Beat the Street, **eight out of ten people agreed that Beat the Street helped them be more active (84%)**, feel healthier (78%) and walk more than usual (78%). Seven out of ten said Beat the Street encouraged them to get out more (72%) and six out of ten felt more involved in the community (63%, see Figure 3). Women and men, people from different age groups and people with a long-term condition all said they gained similar benefits.

Box 1: Examples of people's descriptions of the benefits of Beat the Street

Examples of increased activity

"Focused the whole family on more walking less driving, got the whole family and school members acting as a community and working together."

"I've not walked anywhere since my children were small! During Beat the Street I've walked over 170 miles and feel so proud of myself."

"Beat the Street encouraged me to be more active by walking to school rather than being driven and contributing to global warming."

"Did loads more walking than I have ever done. I intend to continue even though the scheme has ended."

"It surprisingly made us more punctual as we often gave ourselves more time to get somewhere to get a few extra Beat Boxes and then turned up early for events (not our normal habit with three boys to get out of the house!). It made us consider more whether it was worth getting the car out for local journeys."

Examples of health benefits

"Both my wife and I did the walk together and we both have lost weight. Now my wife walks all the time instead of catching the bus. I have bad knees but walking over a mile everyday has helped the knees. "

"It helped me get motivated to do a lot more walking and feeling so much fitter than I have for a very long time. This has also really helped me by lifting my mood, and I have also lost some weight which is another bonus!"

"I have been trying to lose weight and have lost over a stone since this started."

Examples of social benefits

"During the competition I thought it was really fun as me and my mum where both doing exercise and spending more time together."

"Friends set up a weekly walking group which we will continue after Beat the Street ends."

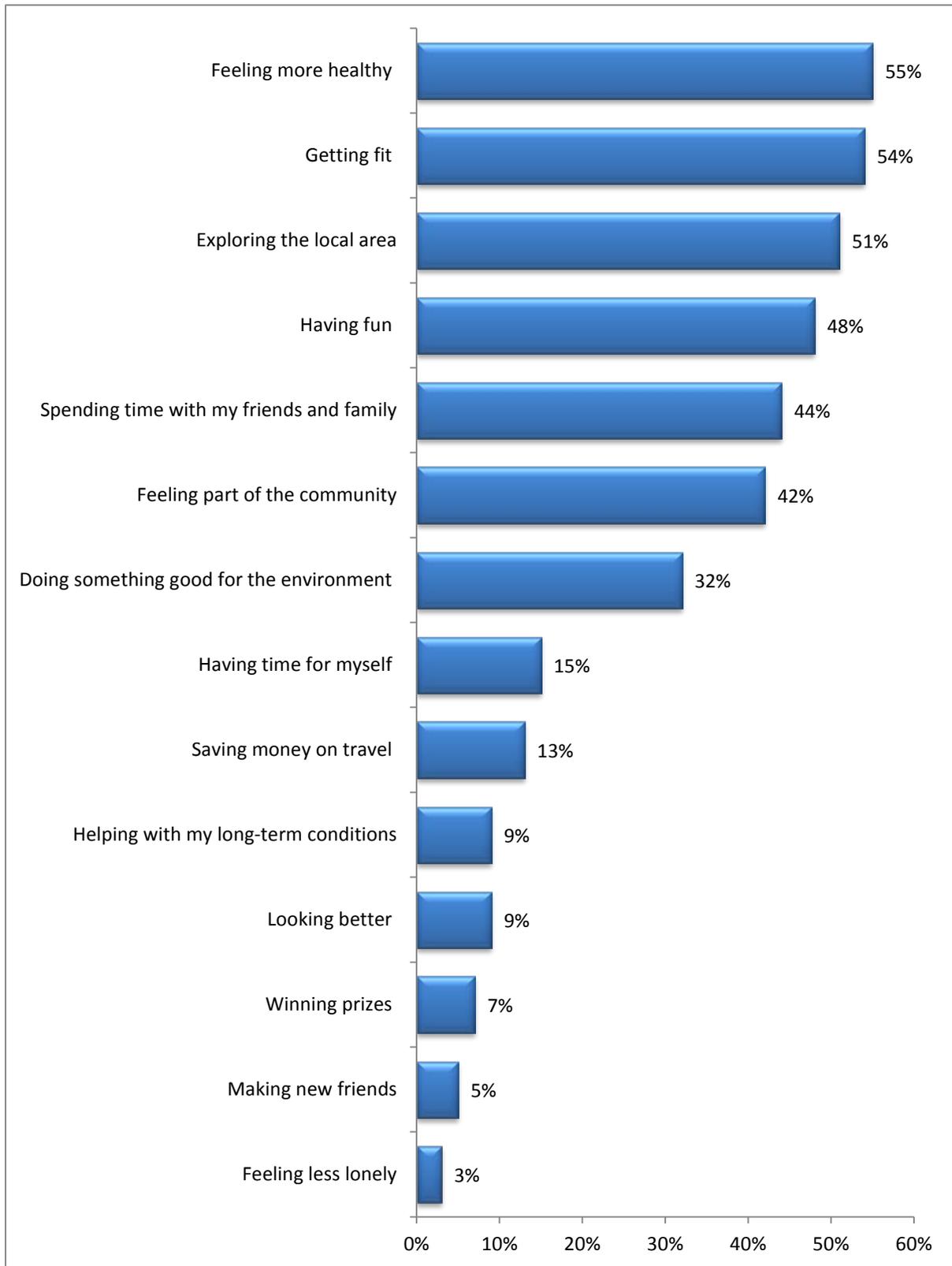
"I regularly went walking around Reading with my colleagues, which was a great way to know both my colleagues and Reading a bit better!"

Examples of exploring the area

"Extra activities involved spending a couple of free afternoons exploring other areas of town (not usually on our radar) and of course tapping the Beat Boxes on the way."

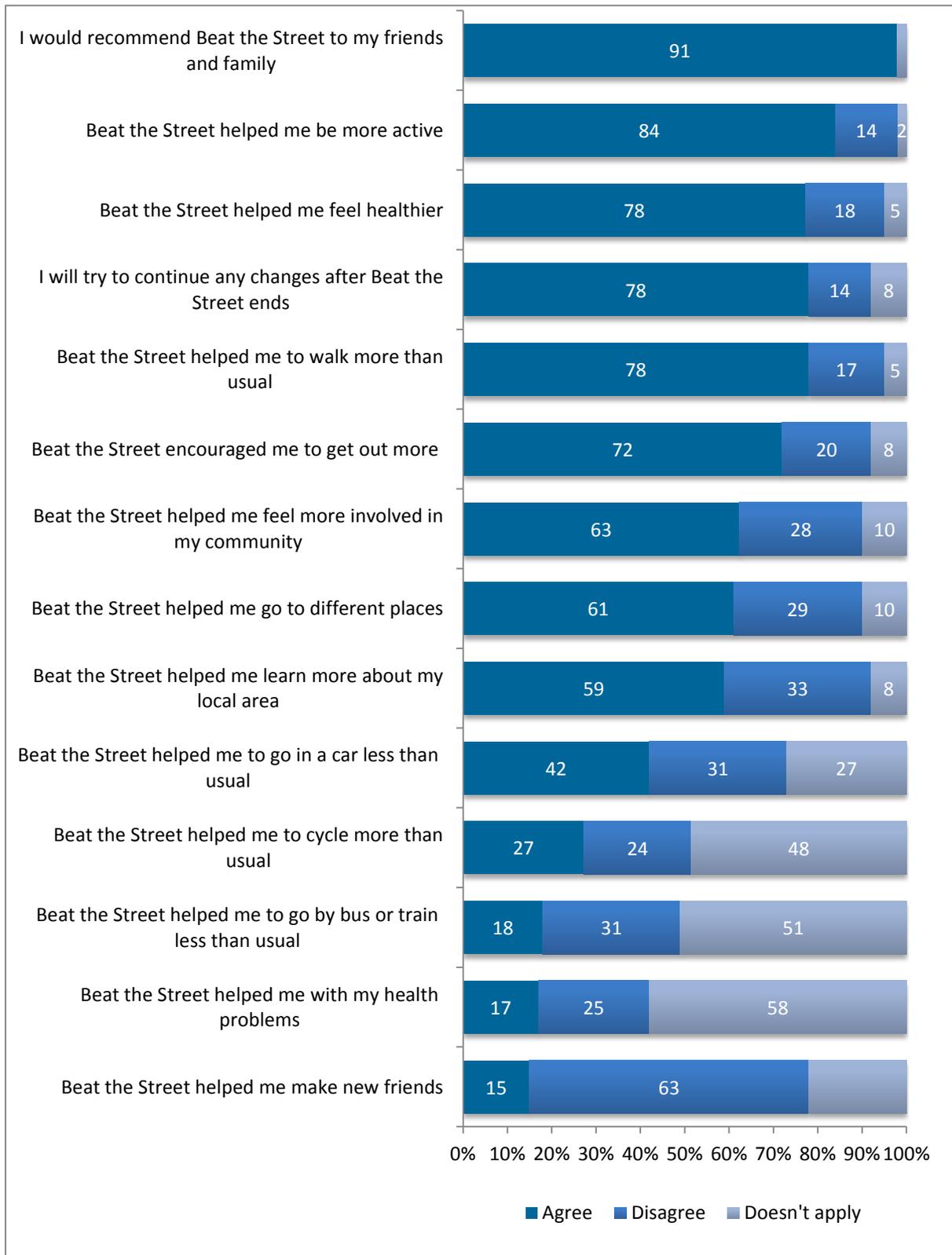
"I explored new areas of Reading that I had not been to before, and had a lot of fun."

Figure 2: What are the main things you got out of Beat the Street?



Note: 887 people provided feedback about the things they gained from taking part in Beat the Street. They were asked to choose benefits from a list supplied. Percentages add to more than 100% because people could select as many options as they wished.

Figure 3: Extent to which people agreed or disagreed that Beat the Street had benefits



Note: 887 people provided feedback.

Did people's activity levels change?

People were also asked whether they had made tangible changes to how much they walked.

Immediately after Beat the Street ended, **eight out of ten people said Beat the Street had helped them to walk more than usual (78%)** and one quarter said Beat the Street had encouraged them to cycle more (27%). **Two fifths said Beat the Street had helped them travel less by car (42%)** and one fifth said they had taken the bus or train less than usual (18%). Bearing in mind that taking the bus, train and car were not applicable for all people, these proportions were even higher when recalculated only for those for whom it was relevant.

At the beginning of Beat the Street, people said that they walked an average of almost four days per week. By the end of the competition this had increased, with people walking an average of five days per week (see Table 1 and Figure 4). One third of people said they were walking seven days per week.

The Department of Health recommends that adults should aim to be active daily and that over a week, activity should add up to at least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of moderate intensity activity. This averages 30 minutes of physical activity at least five days per week for adults. The target is 60 minutes a day for those under 16.

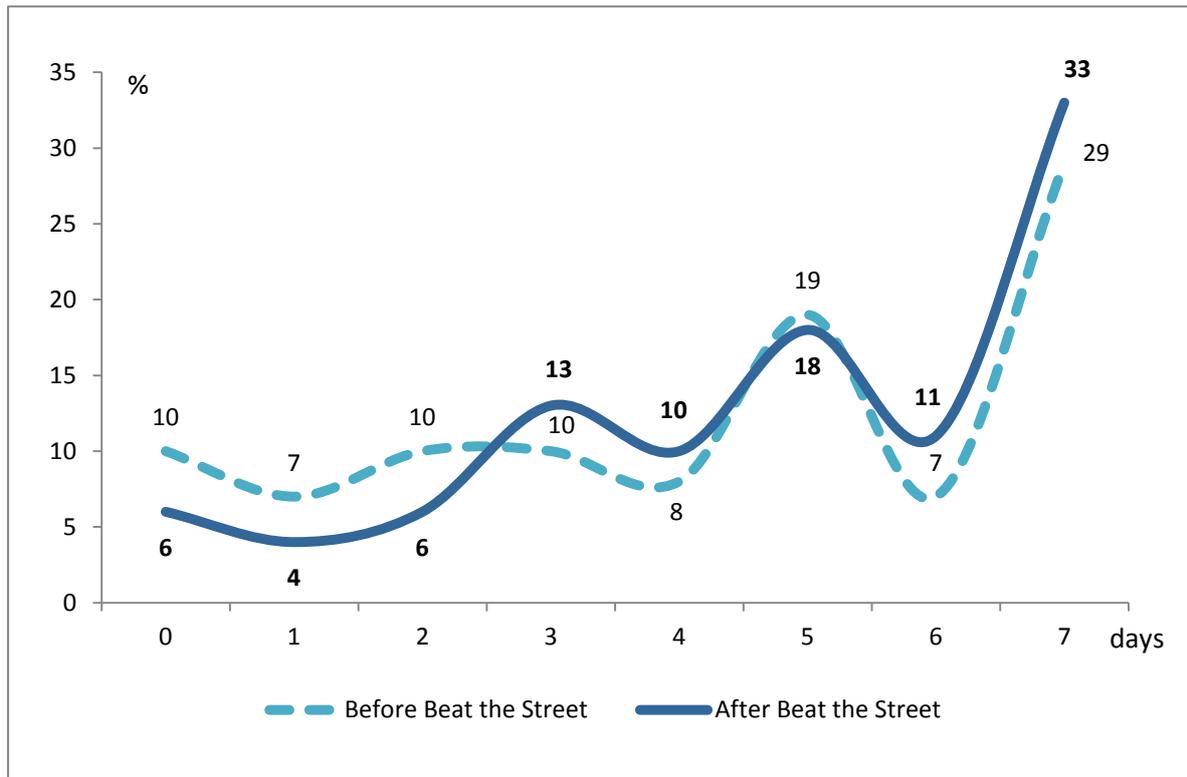
Figure 5 illustrates how many days per week adults reported undertaking 30 minutes or more of physical activity (or 60 minutes for under 16s). On average, people reported undertaking this level of physical activity on four days per week at the beginning of Beat the Street and this remained the same at the end.

However, there were changes in the proportion of people who met physical activity targets. **Four out of ten people were reportedly achieving the Department of Health's activity level targets when they registered for Beat the Street and this increased to five out of ten by the end of the initiative (from 40% to 48%).** This is a statistically significant difference, meaning it is not likely to have happened by chance.

Eight out of ten people said they would try to continue the changes they had made after Beat the Street ended (78%).

There were no major differences in these trends according to whether participants were women or men or their age groups. People with long-term conditions were just as likely as others to report increased walking. There was no difference in benefits amongst people with different types of long-term conditions.

Figure 4: Number of days people walked for 15 minutes or more in the past week



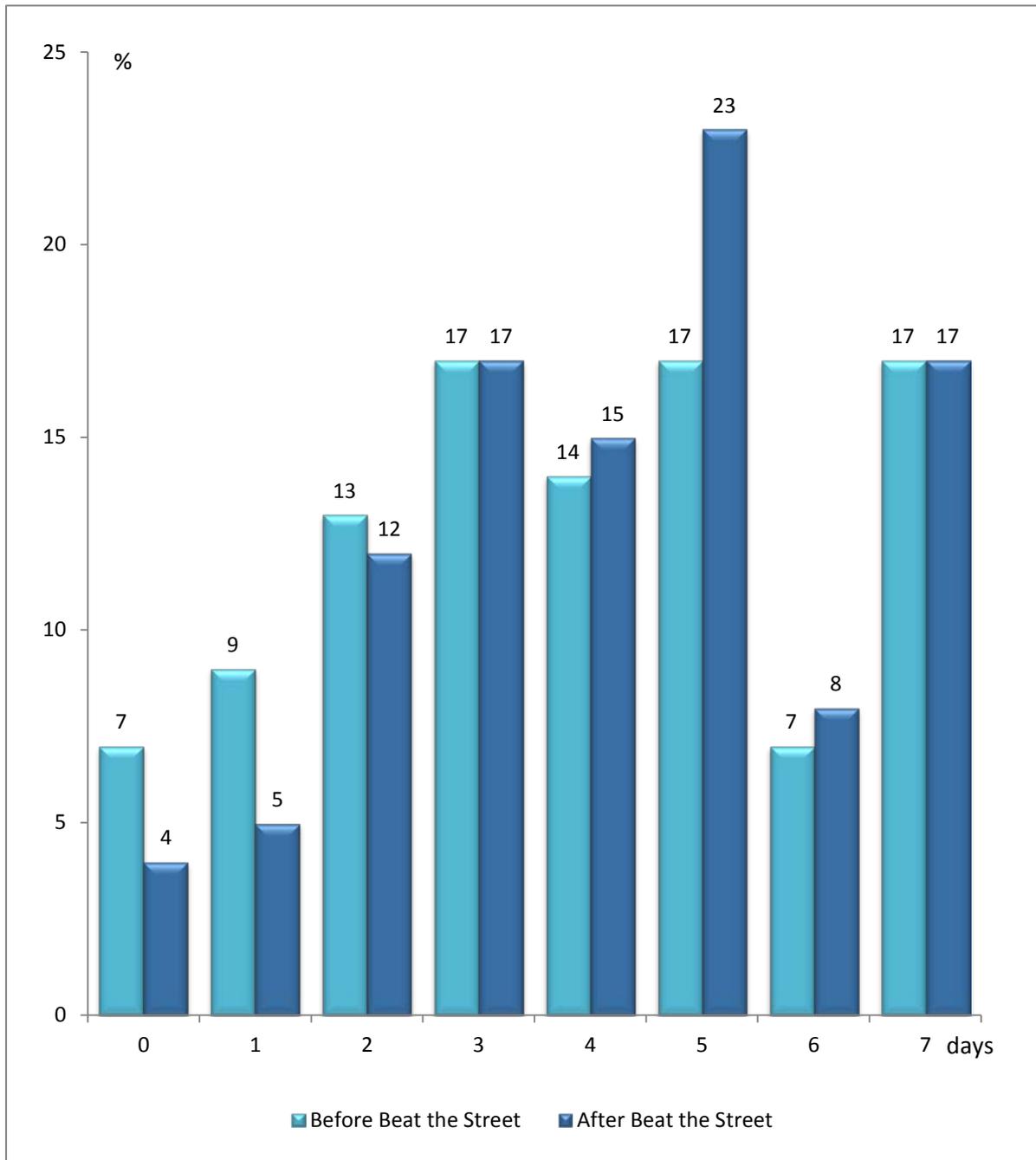
Note: Participants were asked ‘In the last week, how many days did you walk for 15 minutes or more? The 15 minutes does not have to be all at once.’ 8,758 people provided ‘before’ information at registration and 887 people provided ‘after’ data at the end of Beat the Street.

Table 1: Days per week where people used various modes of transport

| | Time period | 0 days | 1 day | 2 days | 3 days | 4 days | 5 days | 6 days | 7 days |
|--------------------------------|-------------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Walking, scooter or skateboard | Before | 10% | 7% | 10% | 10% | 8% | 19% | 7% | 29% |
| | After | 6% | 4% | 6% | 13% | 10% | 18% | 11% | 33% |
| Bicycle | Before | 64% | 12% | 8% | 4% | 3% | 4% | 1% | 5% |
| | After | 57% | 12% | 7% | 7% | 5% | 6% | 3% | 4% |
| Bus or train | Before | 62% | 14% | 7% | 4% | 2% | 6% | 1% | 3% |
| | After | 52% | 18% | 10% | 6% | 2% | 9% | 1% | 2% |
| Car or other vehicle | Before | 20% | 11% | 15% | 11% | 8% | 13% | 5% | 18% |
| | After | 13% | 14% | 18% | 14% | 8% | 12% | 7% | 14% |

Note: Participants were asked ‘In the last week, how many days did you walk, cycle or use these other types of transport for 15 minutes or more? It is ok if you did more than one thing each day. The 15 minutes does not have to be all at once.’ 8,758 people provided ‘before’ information at registration and 887 people provided ‘after’ data at the end of Beat the Street.

Figure 5: Days in the past week where people did 30 minutes or more of physical activity



Note: People were asked 'If you are 16 or older: in the last week, how many days have you done 30 minutes or more of activity that got your heart pumping? You might have walked fast, danced, cycled, played sport, exercised or done other things. The 30 minutes does not have to be done all at once.'

If you are under 16, in the last week, how many days have you done 60 minutes or more of activity that got your heart pumping? You might have walked fast, danced, cycled, played sport, exercised or done other things. The 60 minutes does not have to be done all at once.'

'Before' data were collected from 8,758 people at registration. 'After' data were collected from 887 people at the end of Beat the Street.

Making detailed comparisons

Comparing averages and proportions before and after Beat the Street gives an overall picture of trends, but it is also important to look at what happened with individuals. Of the 887 people who completed a follow-up survey, 425 provided a valid Beat the Street card number that could be matched with their individual registration data (48%). This allowed us to compare the information these people provided before and after Beat the Street. This is a more robust type of analysis, but had a smaller number of people to work with.

This analysis reinforced the positive findings from the general trends. People for whom we could match data walked for 15 minutes or more an average of four days per week at the beginning of Beat the Street. This had increased to five days per week at the end of Beat the Street (see Figure 6).

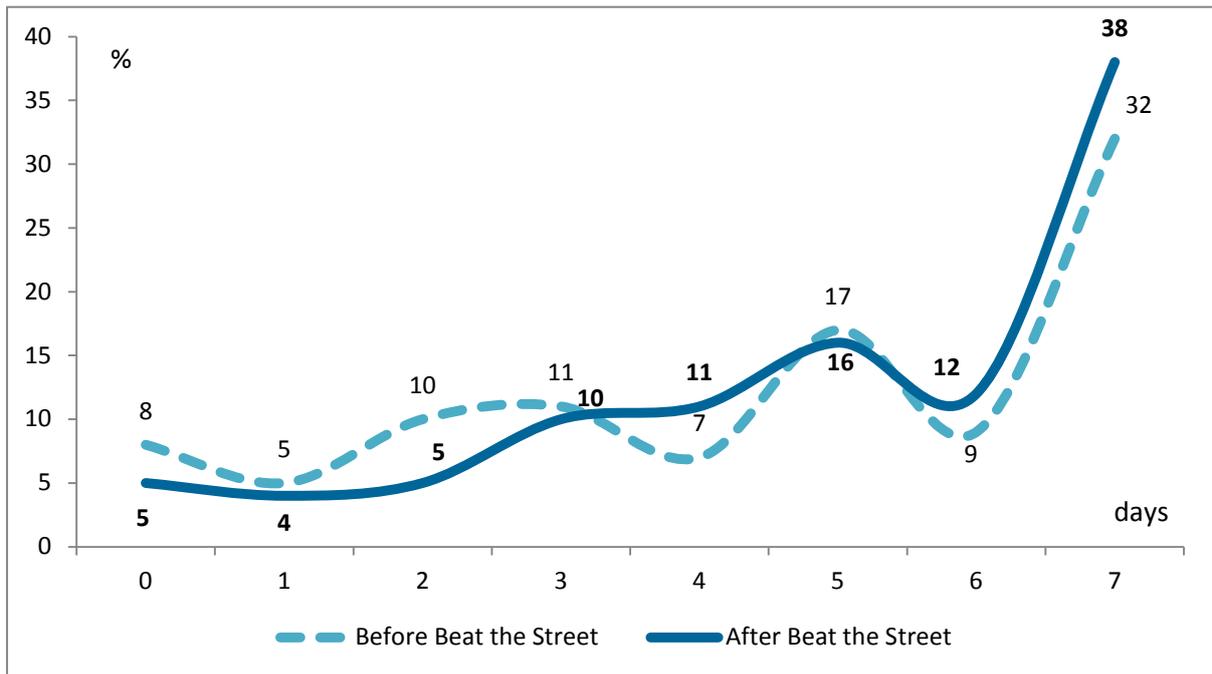
There was an important change in those who walked least at the beginning of Beat the Street. Looking at those who said they walked zero to two days per week at registration shows that this group walked a lot more by the end of Beat the Street (see Figure 7). These people changed from walking an average of one day per week to an average of four days per week at the end of Beat the Street. Two thirds of people in this group said they walked on three or more days per week by the end of the initiative (66%). This suggests that **Beat the Street may have encouraged those who were most inactive to walk more.**

People with 'matched' before and after data had similar trends to the entire dataset regarding how many days they were active for 30 minutes or more. People reported an average of just under four days per week with activity at the beginning of Beat the Street and just over four days per week at the end. The proportion of these people meeting the Department of Health's physical activity target of at least five days per week increased from 41% at the beginning to 52% at the end (see Figure 8). This is a statistically significant difference, which means it is not likely to have happened by chance.

Once again there were positive changes when considering those who reported the lowest levels of overall activity at the outset. Half of the people who said they were physically active on zero to two days per week at the start of Beat the Street had increased their levels of activity by the end of Beat the Street (54%). The average increased from one day per week at the start to three days per week at the end of Beat the Street (see Figure 9). This suggests that Beat the Street had a positive impact on those who were least active.

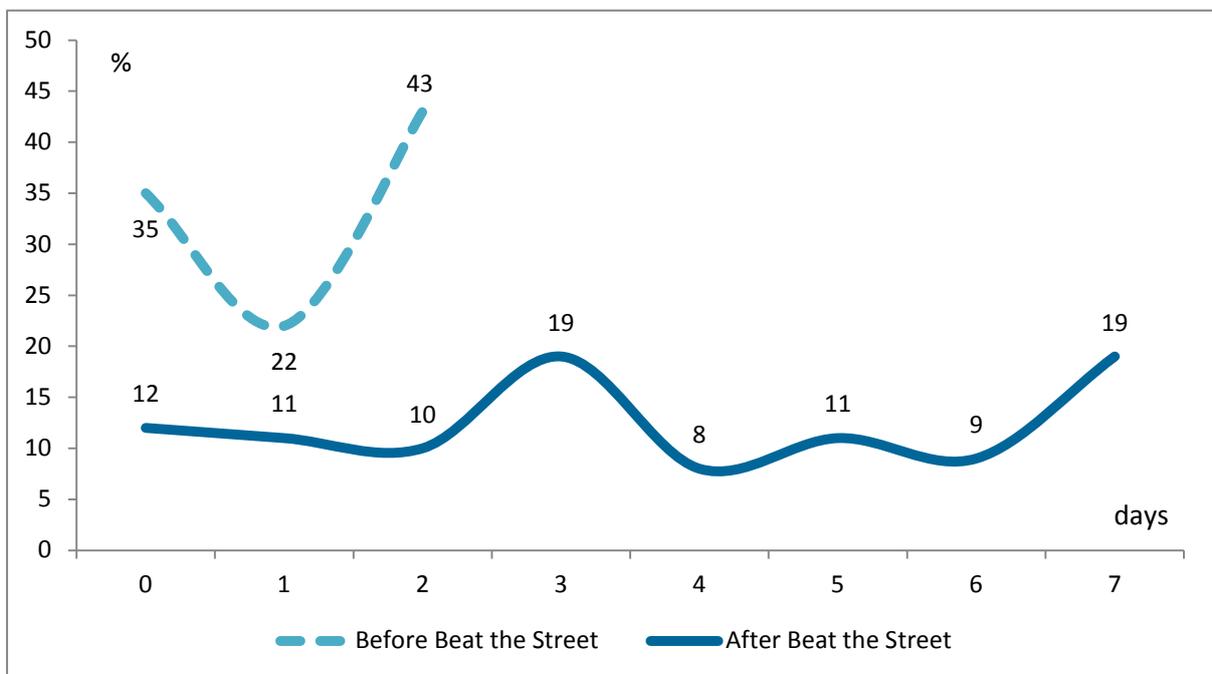
The benefits were equally evident amongst people with long-term conditions. There was no variation in outcomes amongst people with different types of long-term conditions.

Figure 6: Days people walked for 15 minutes or more in the past week (matched pairs)



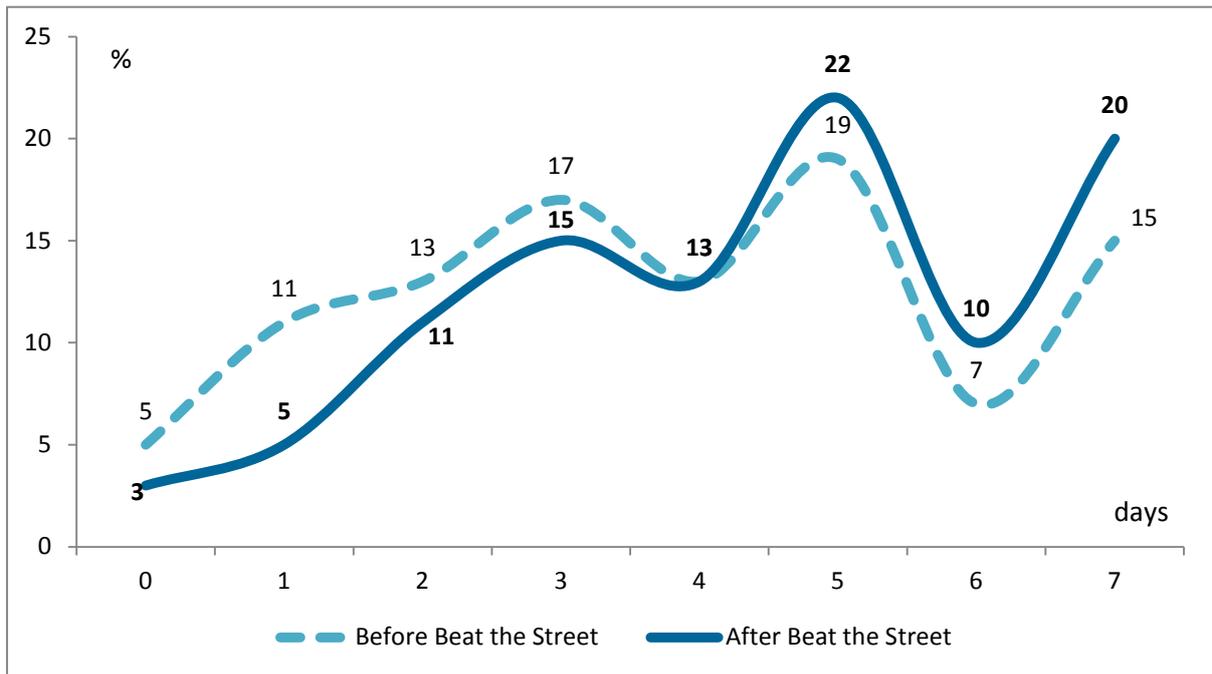
Note: Data are based on 425 people who provided their Beat the Street card numbers so we could match their information before and after Beat the Street.

Figure 7: Days walked for 15 minutes or more in past week amongst those walking 0-2 days at start



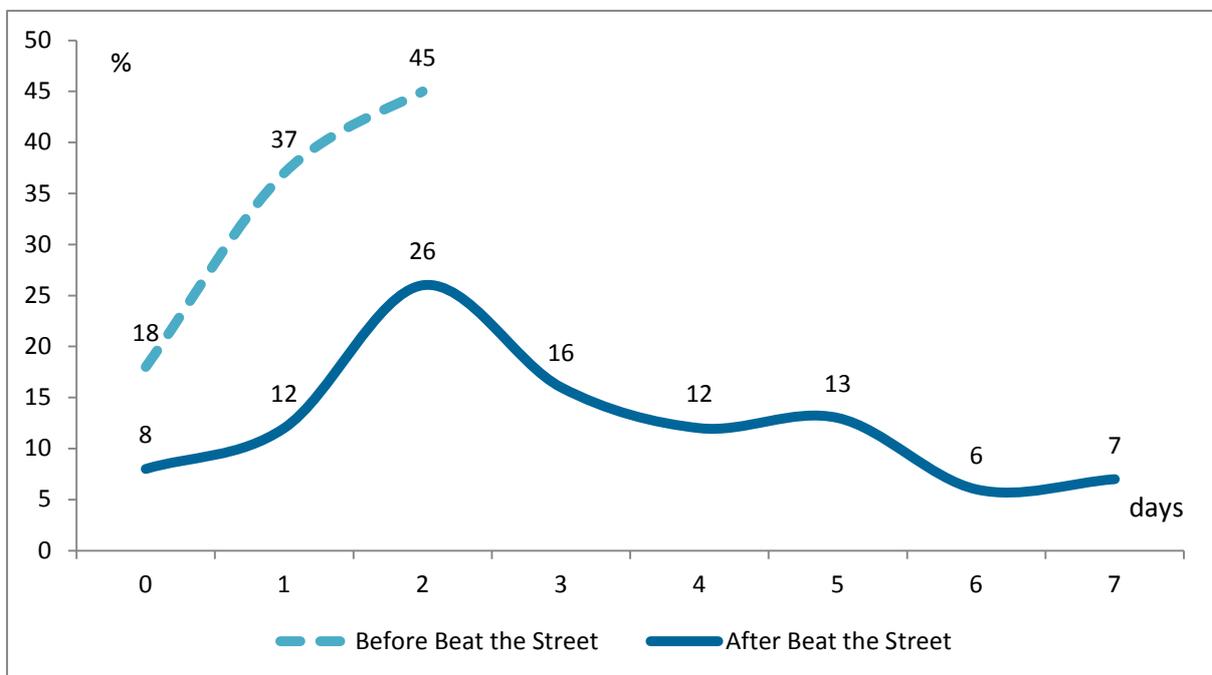
Note: Data are based on the 100 people whose information we could match before and after Beat the Street and who had walked 0-2 days per week at the beginning of Beat the Street.

Figure 8: Days per week people did 30+ minutes of physical activity (matched pairs)



Note: The question wording is listed under Figure 5. This is based on 425 people who provided their Beat the Street card numbers so we could match their data before and after Beat the Street.

Figure 9: Days per week of 30+ minutes of physical activity amongst those active 0-2 days at start



Note: Data are based on the 124 people whose information we could match before and after Beat the Street and who did 0-2 days per week of physical activity at the beginning of Beat the Street.

Do changes last?

In about six months the Beat the Street team will follow up participants to see whether the changes people reported at the end of the initiative were sustained over time.

Some important data are already available about whether people continue to report increased physical activity because Beat the Street ran in Reading in 2014. A total of 3,748 people registered online at the beginning of Beat the Street in 2014 (with many more taking part through schools). Of those who registered in 2014, 2,563 (68%) registered again in 2015. This is based on matching people's email addresses. Other people may have also registered again, but for the purposes of this analysis email addresses were used to match data from 2014 and 2015. Where an email address was used more than once per year (for instance in the case of an organisational email address), secondary matching was undertaken based on name and other identifiers.

The fact that two thirds of people who registered in 2014 did so again in 2015 suggests that people enjoyed the programme or felt it was worthwhile because they wanted to continue to participate.

In 2014, three out of ten people reported achieving the Department of Health's physical activity target when they registered. By the end of Beat the Street in 2014, this had risen to almost five out of ten people.

We wanted to see whether this change was sustained so we looked at activity at the start of Beat the Street in 2015. We compared people who had taken part in Beat the Street 12 months ago to those who had not.

At the beginning of Beat the Street in 2015, 46% of those who had taken part before reported meeting the physical activity target compared to 40% of people who had not taken part before. This may seem like a small difference, but it is statistically significant. This means it is not likely to have happened by chance. We can be relatively confident of the results because data were available from almost 9,000 people completing the 2015 registration form. The results suggest that people who took part in Beat the Street in 2015 seemed to have maintained the gains they made in 2014.

At the end of Beat the Street in 2015, the trends were even more positive. Both people participating for the first-time and those who had taken part before were more likely to be meeting the physical activity target at the end of Beat the Street – but past participants had even greater gains than first-timers.

Figure 10 illustrates the trends clearly. It shows:

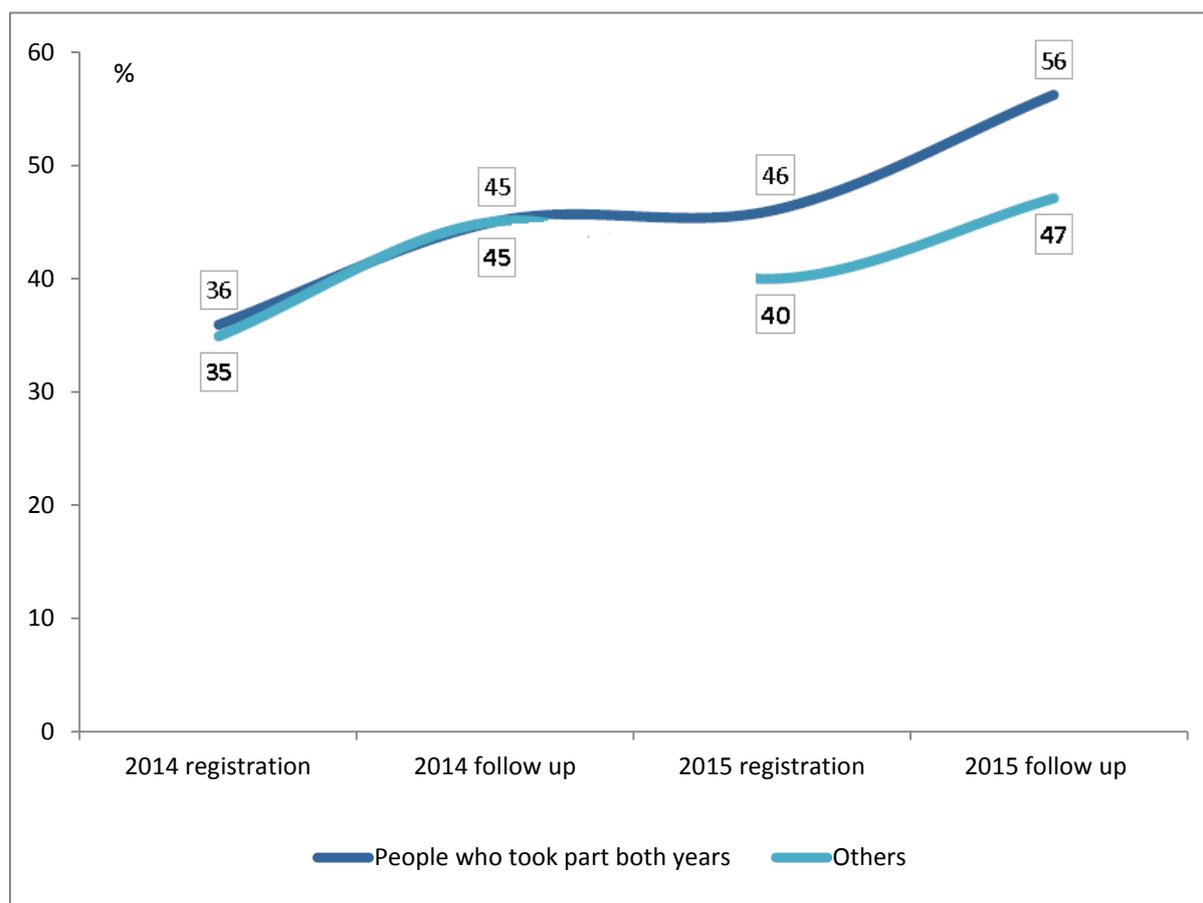
- Beat the Street may help people make some immediate changes to their physical activity levels [improvements seen in 2014]
- These changes may be sustained one year later [higher 'baseline' score in 2015 if people took part before]
- With repeated participation in Beat the Street, activity levels may increase even further [past participants continued to increase activity in 2015]

The implication is that **running Beat the Street over the course of several years may help people to embed new physical activity habits**. People who have taken part in the past continue to increase their reported levels of physical activity year on year.

Table 2: Examining the sustainability of changes in physical activity after Beat the Street

| | At start of Beat the Street in 2014 (n = 3,748) | | At end of Beat the Street in 2014 (n = 1,048) | | At start of Beat the Street in 2015 (n = 8,758) | | At end of Beat the Street in 2015 (n = 887) | |
|---|---|------------------------|---|------------------------|---|------------------------|---|------------------------|
| | Took part both years | Took part only in 2014 | Took part both years | Took part only in 2014 | Took part both years | Took part only in 2015 | Took part both years | Took part only in 2015 |
| Data available (n) | 2,563 | 1,185 | 755 | 293 | 2,563 | 6,195 | 146 | 741 |
| Average days per week with 30+ minutes of activity | 3.5 | 3.4 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 3.8 | 4.6 | 4.1 |
| Proportion meeting Department of Health target of five days activity or more | 36% | 35% | 45% | 45% | 46% | 40% | 56% | 47% |

Figure 10: Proportion of people meeting Department of Health’s physical activity target



Note: The number in the dataset at each time period is listed in Table 2 above.

Suggestions

The overall impression from the survey is that people enjoyed Beat the Street and thought they got a lot out of it.

Almost everyone said they found it easy to get a Beat the Street card (96%) and said they would recommend Beat the Street to friends or family (91%). There was much positive feedback.

“Beat the Street was really fun and I managed to get over one hundred miles! I hope that Beat the Street comes back next year! Also, I think that there were SO MANY beat boxes that I managed to get around town more!”

“I liked the competitive element. The fact that the points accrued were immediately visible online was great... It did get people talking in the workplace and it was a fun incentive to be involved in.”

The Beat the Street team are always eager to hear suggestions for development. In total, 558 people responded to an open-ended question about this (see Box 2).

The most common suggestions related to:

- having more Beat Boxes or distributing them in a wider range of locations
- increasing publicity so more people know about the competition
- providing more regular communication by email to keep people engaged, including ‘congratulations’ messages when people reach a certain score
- running the competition for longer or repeating, including during the school holidays
- thinking of ways to avoid ‘cheating’ such as people driving to Beat Boxes or using multiple cards
- providing a clearer map online and allowing co-ordinates to be downloaded
- using an app so phones could be used to scan on boxes as well as cards
- using key fobs as well as cards
- responding to queries promptly, particularly about boxes not working or points not being recorded
- having Beat Boxes a different colour from lamp posts
- having Beat Boxes lower on lamp posts for younger children to reach
- improving the website so people can see their score and how they rank easily

Box 2: Examples of people's suggestions for ongoing development

Suggestions about publicity and communication

"Beat the Street could be much better advertised a few weeks before it commences. When the cards are given out a map could be given out with the card."

"I found I had to e-mail quite a few times about boxes that were out of order so maybe keep checking so that doesn't occur. Also the maps you gave out weren't very clear. Maybe next year print a list of where the boxes are to make them easier to find."

"I would have liked a certificate with my points and distance on it."

"It would be nice to get a 'congratulations' when you reach a certain score! (Maybe incorporate into the web app.) Or maybe have more incentives for children eg different scores relate to different levels - bronze, silver, gold, (or further subdivisions)."

Suggestions about Beat Box placement

"Boxes were in many locations placed too high on lamp posts for children to reach also many occasions boxes were not working."

"I found that sometimes we were taking busier routes than we normally would, in order to be able to tap the boxes. Sometimes we had to cross busy roads in less ideal positions as well. I understand why the boxes are located mainly on busy routes, but for very small children I'd be happier if some quieter, more back street routes, could be included."

"I think encouraging e-mail updates showing how far you've travelled with a table which shows how far you've travelled alongside those who have travelled the top 10 distances and also information showing the most different routes walked/ridden. Suggested walks/rides including information on points of interest, where the boxes are and how far the route would be."

Other suggestions

"The previous fobs were better as attachable to school bags / keys / key rings etc."

"Whilst I appreciate that they are designed to be a bit of fun and incentivise physical activity, I feel the way the competitions and prizes work is really unfair. This has the effect of disenfranchising and demotivating large numbers of competitors. The vast majority of teams don't have a chance with the total points competition."

"Found it unfair that some schools were taking children out of school to do beat the street and some were not! Would be fairer if points for school children were only allocated out of school hours!"

"Maybe we should all be given targets for our own school, like aiming for small planets towards the big moon. It would be good to get some small treat if the school aimed for their own targets instead of against each other."

Summary

Feedback from over 800 people who provided email addresses when they registered for Beat the Street suggests that people got a lot out of taking part. The most frequently reported benefits were having fun, feeling healthier and getting fit, exploring the local area, feeling part of the community and spending time with friends and family. These benefits were mentioned by half of people who provided feedback at the end of the competition.

Eight out of ten people said that Beat the Street helped them be more active and walk more. It is acknowledged that people who did not respond to the survey may have had a different experience. However, the positive feedback from those surveyed provides a strong case that many people gained a considerable amount from Beat the Street.

The proportion of people meeting the Department of Health's physical activity target for adults increased from 40% at the beginning of Beat the Street to 48% at the end. This change was statistically significant, meaning it is likely to be the result of Beat the Street rather than happening by chance. The average number of days that people reported walking per week also increased.

People who were least active at the beginning of Beat the Street reported changes by the end of the initiative.

Importantly, improvements may continue over time. Those who took part in 2014 and again in 2015 were more likely to be meeting the Department of Health's physical activity target than those who participated for the first time in 2015.

The overall message is that people taking part in Beat the Street thought it was worthwhile. People were eager for Beat the Street to run again. It helped to increase the amount of walking that people reported doing and helped people feel more part of their community. Those with long-term conditions were just as likely to report these benefits as others. People with diabetes, heart failure, COPD and other long-term conditions all reported being more active as a result of Beat the Street. Two fifths of these people said that Beat the Street helped them with their conditions.

Eight out of ten people said that they **planned to continue any changes** they had made after Beat the Street ended. The Beat the Street team will follow up in about six months to see whether any changes are sustained.