

1 TOOL 2: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Some projects are working intensively with individuals to improve their levels of physical activity (and diet) and can therefore take physiological measurements, such as: BMI and resting heart rates, and / or use other forms of measurement, such as physical activity diaries. Where these types of measurement are practical, we have recommended their use.

However, for the majority of projects there is a need to be more pragmatic: there is limited capacity for measuring and recording outcomes within many projects; and we need to consider the practical implications and costs of measuring outcomes in proportion to the level of the intervention.

1.1 Core Indicators

In order to respond to these issues, we have decided upon the use of a self-reporting method and have defined some common outcome measures. The two Core Indicators we are using with projects working to promote improvements in people's levels of physical activity are:

1. **No. of beneficiaries increasing their levels of physical activity.**
2. **No. of beneficiaries now taking recommended levels of exercise.**

1.2 Tool Used

We are using the same question¹ for both indicators:

“In the past week, on how many days have you been physically active to a moderate intensity for a total of at least 30 minutes?”

Activities include things such as: brisk walking, cycling, sport, table tennis, golf, social dancing and exercises, heavy DIY activities (e.g. mixing cement), heavy gardening (e.g. digging) or heavy housework (e.g. spring cleaning). Please do not include physical activity that may be part of your job.

‘Moderate intensity’ means that it was enough to cause you to breathe more deeply, but not to make you out of breath or sweat.

0 days 1 day 2 days 3 days 4 days 5 days 6 days 7 days

¹ This question is adapted from the Outdoor Health Questionnaire from the ‘Walking the Way to Health’ programme. A similar question is also contained on the draft tool developed by New Economics Foundation for the national evaluation of the Well-being programme.

1.3 Administration and Scoring

The question should be administered 'before and after': as beneficiaries enter the project (the baseline) and as near as possible to them leaving it, or after a suitable (and standardised) period decided upon by project staff.

The first indicator - '**No. of beneficiaries increasing their levels of physical activity**' - would be measured by the number of respondents whose answer indicates that they are undertaking more exercise (by whatever margin) when re-assessed than they were at their original measurement. So if 250 people are assessed and 170 show an increase in their levels of activity from their baseline, the figure given should be 170.

The second indicator - '**No. of beneficiaries now taking recommended levels of exercise**'² - should be measured by the number of respondents who at the first measurement (baseline) answered less than 5 days, but then go on to answer 5 or more days at subsequent measurement. So if 100 people answered less than 5 days at the baseline measurement and 35 of these people then go on to answer 5 or more days at re-test, then the figure given should be 35.

² The recommended levels of exercise are: at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity 5 times a week, or 20 minutes of vigorous activity 3 times a week. We have chosen the former measure as it seemed most appropriate to projects in the Portfolio.