

What do people get out of Beat the Street?

Feedback from Reading

August 2014

Key messages

Beat the Street is a community initiative designed to inspire people to walk more. People scan a card or key fob onto 'Beat Box' scanners located around the community in order to indicate that they have walked between the boxes, thus earning points that add up to win prizes for their team or school.

In May 2014, 3,748 adults completed a survey when they registered online for Beat the Street in Reading and 3,708 of these scanned their card on at least one journey. Many more people took part but did not register, including school children. At the end of the competition, everyone who registered was invited to provide follow-up feedback and 1,051 did so (28% of registered adult participants).

The main findings from the survey were:

- People were very positive about Beat the Street and the benefits they had gained.
 - 94% of people said they would recommend Beat the Street to friends and family.
 - The most commonly reported benefits from Beat the Street were having fun, feeling more healthy, getting fit and spending time with family or friends.
 - **78% of people said Beat the Street helped them to walk more than usual.**
- At the beginning of the competition, 35% of people reported meeting the Department of Health's guidelines for levels of activity (30 minutes of physical activity for five or more days per week). By the end of the competition, this had increased to 45%. This change is statistically significant, meaning that it is not likely to have happened by chance. The changes remained when data from individuals was matched up rather than only looking at averages.
 - **76% of people said they would try to continue the changes** after the competition ended.
 - People with high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, emphysema / COPD or a long-term mental health condition were just as likely as everyone else to say that they benefited from Beat the Street and that it helped them walk more and be more active. 78% of these people said Beat the Street helped them walk more than usual, 77% said Beat the Street helped them feel healthier and 41% said Beat the Street helped them with their health problems.
 - The most common suggestions for development were having more Beat Boxes in different locations and advertising more widely.

The survey suggests that Beat the Street is feasible and worthwhile. It reached a large number of people, motivating them to increase their physical activity.

Contents

Beat the Street in Reading	4
Collecting feedback	5
<i>Surveying participants</i>	5
<i>Characteristics of people surveyed</i>	5
Benefits of Beat the Street	7
<i>Joining Beat the Street</i>	7
<i>What did people get out of Beat the Street?</i>	8
<i>Did Beat the Street influence people's activity levels?</i>	11
<i>Did people with long-term conditions experience the same benefits?</i>	13
Suggestions	15
Summary	18

Beat the Street in Reading

Beat the Street is an innovative community initiative designed to inspire people to walk more. 'Beat Box' scanners are located around the community and people can earn points by scanning their Beat the Street card or key fob on scanners to indicate that they have walked between the boxes. Individuals, schools and villages compete to see who can achieve the most points, achieve targets and win prizes. In Reading the competition ran mainly from 1 May to 4 June 2014, with three villages taking part between 26 June and 22 July.

3,748 adults registered online to take part in the competition. Many other people took part but did not register. For example, schools took part but children did not register online. 3,708 of those registered undertook at least one valid journey during the competition, meaning that 99% of those who registered to take part did so to some extent.

During registration and again at the end of the competition, adults were asked to provide brief feedback online. This report summarises people's feedback about the impacts of Beat the Street. Feedback was not collected in this way from school children as they were not asked to register in the same manner.

Collecting feedback

Surveying participants

An online survey with seven questions plus demographic questions was developed with the support of an independent evaluator. This ensured that the survey could be tailored to the needs of Reading Beat the Street, whilst building on good practice. The survey explored what people thought they got out of Beat the Street and any changes in their physical activity levels or walking behaviour.

All 3,748 people who had registered online (thus completing 'baseline' questions) were emailed a link to the online survey immediately after the competition ended. They were given one to three weeks to respond. A prize draw was offered as an incentive.

1,051 people shared their views, giving a response rate of 28%. Response rates for online surveys are typically in the region of 10-15%, so **the response rate for Reading Beat the Street was good**. Having feedback from more than 1,000 people is a good basis to draw conclusions about what people who took part thought of the initiative.

The analysis was undertaken by an independent team.

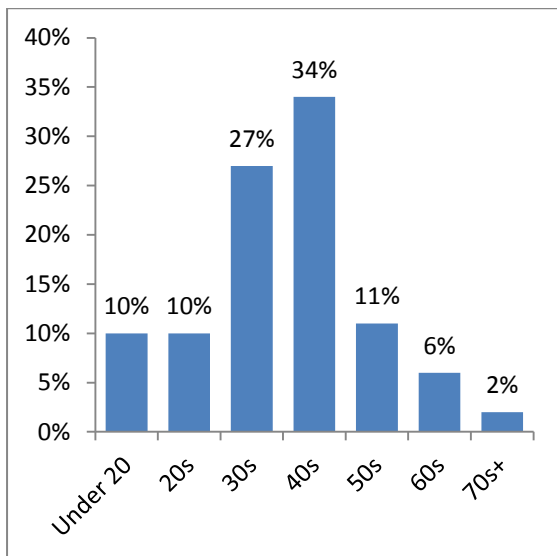
Characteristics of people surveyed

The people who responded to the survey were similar to those who registered to take part in Beat the Street as a whole in terms of their age, gender and the wards in which they lived. This information was collected by comparing the follow-up survey data to the baseline questions everyone completed when they registered. This is important because it demonstrates that feedback was collected from a wide range of people and that those who chose not to respond to the survey did not have markedly different demographic characteristics.

Seven out of ten of those who provided follow-up feedback were women (72%) and three out of ten were men (28%).

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

Figure 1: Age groups of people surveyed



Note: 1,051 people provided feedback.

12% of people reported that they had one of the following long-term conditions: high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, emphysema / COPD or a long-term mental health condition (126 people). These are referred to as 'selected long-term conditions' throughout the report.

There were no major differences in people's feedback according to their demographic characteristics. Where there were some differences, these are noted in the text.

Benefits of Beat the Street

Joining Beat the Street

Most people said they received their Beat the Street card from either their local library or their child's school (see Figure 2). However, a quarter of people said that they had received their card from a wide range of other sources such as local charities, the Council, hospital, gym, swimming pool, shopping centre, university or workplace (28%). 11% of people said they received a card from the reception at their GP clinic. Only 1% of people said that their GP or another healthcare worker gave them a card.

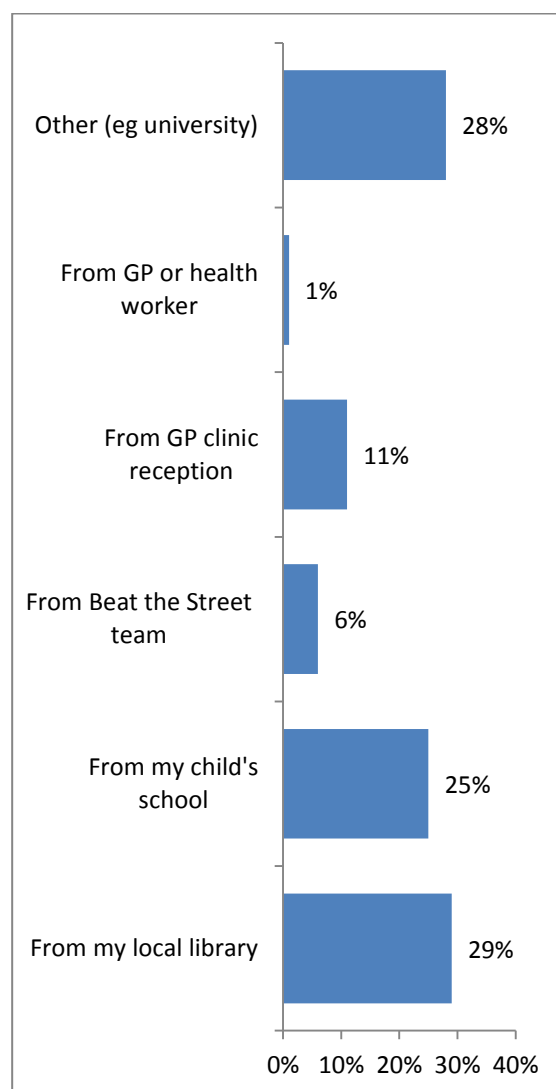
People aged 60 years and over were more likely to have received their card from a local library whereas younger people were more likely to have received their card from their child's school.

Women and men were equally likely to get their Beat the Street card from the same places.

People with selected long-term medical conditions were more likely than others to have received their card from the reception at their GP clinic (17% of people with selected long-term conditions versus 9% of people without long-term conditions).

95% of people said it was easy to get a Beat the Street card.

Figure 2: Where did you get your Beat the Street card?



Note: 999 respondents answered this question (95%).

What did people get out of Beat the Street?

Once the competition was over, people were asked to reflect about anything they got out of taking part. They were invited to provide open-ended comments as well as selecting as many options as they wished from a pre-specified list.

The open-ended feedback asked people to answer the question: 'If Beat the Street helped you or you did anything differently during the competition, please tell us what.' 75% of 1,051 people provided an answer (785 people). The most common feedback was:

- increased walking or cycling
- doing things as a family
- changing usual walking, running or cycling routes
- exploring new places in the local area
- interacting with other people taking part in the competition
- promoted team spirit as schools, families and communities worked together
- motivated to start other healthy activities such as training for fun runs or long distance walks

People said that they sometimes got up earlier to walk to school with their children, took different routes to find Beat Boxes or walked more on weekends as a family. Adults talked about the benefits for themselves as well as their children and other family members.

Box 1 provides examples of people's verbatim feedback.

Box 1: Quotes from people talking about what they did due to Beat the Street

"As a family we definitely walked further - eg by taking detours to find beat boxes and also by going on family Beat Box walks. It was a fantastic way of incentivising the kids to walk and scoot further."

"Beat the Street helped me massively as it got me outdoors with my kids and allowed me to lose an amazing amount of weight!"

"Encouraged my child to walk to school and into town (versus car), and also go on a few cycling trips."

"Got out walking and running with the children made us feel good contributing to our community and also helping the school."

"Got the whole family moving, we had a competition between family members about who could get the most points. Husband stopped driving to work so he could tap on the way to the train station and back."

"As a family, we went out together more. We cycled, practised cycling skills and talked about road safety."

"This scheme helped incentivise me to visit parts of Reading I haven't been to before just to find more Beat Boxes."

"I had to walk further than usual to get the boxes. My 9 year old nephew LOVED it and went out with his friends to do boxes (he's never been interested in going out playing with his friends before). Beat boxes changed his life!"

In the closed-ended feedback, the most commonly reported benefits of Beat the Street were having fun (mentioned by 62%), getting fit (46%) and feeling more healthy (46%), spending time with family and friends (44%) and doing something good for the environment (34%). Figure 3 illustrates the broad range of perceived benefits.

Men and women, people from different age groups and people with and without long-term conditions all selected the same four top benefits of Beat the Street.

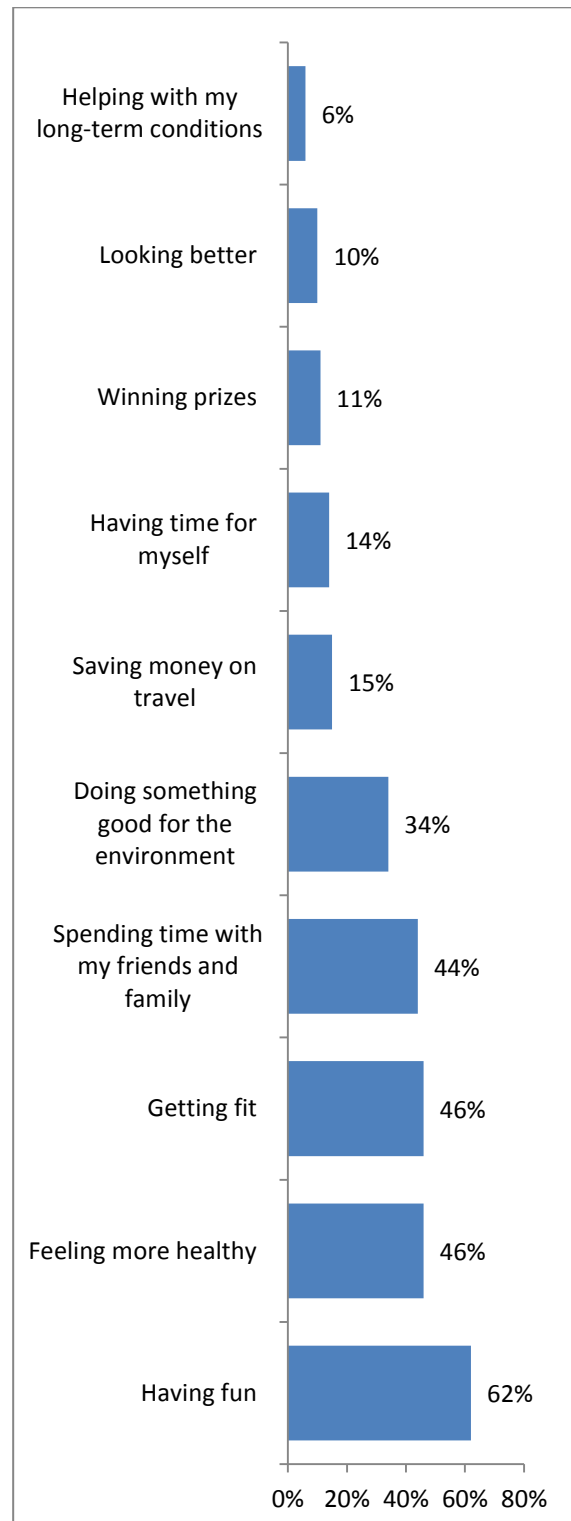
Overall, 82% said that Beat the Street helped them feel more active and 73% said they had already felt the knock-on effects of this, saying Beat the Street had helped them feel healthier (see Figure 4).

14% of people said that Beat the Street helped them with their health problems, but 64% said this question was not relevant to them (due to not having health problems). Of those who specified that they had one of the long-term conditions of particular interest, 41% said that Beat the Street had helped them with their health problems.

Three quarters of people said they would continue any changes they had made after Beat the Street ended. The Beat the Street team plans to follow up people in three to six months to see whether they did continue to walk more.

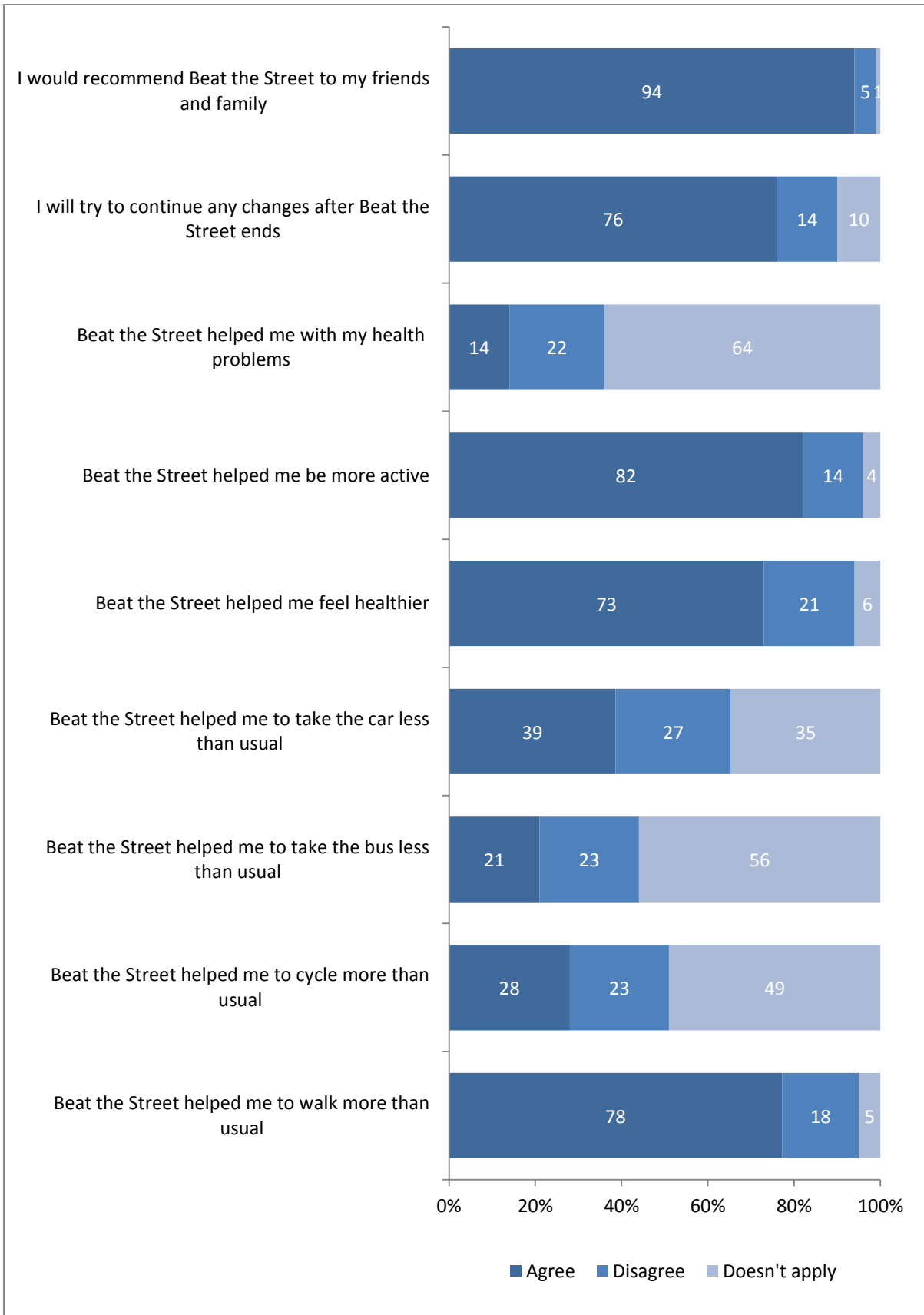
There were no major differences in these trends according to whether participants were women or men, their age groups and whether or not they had a long-term condition.

Figure 3: What are the main things you got out of Beat the Street?



Note: 1,051 respondents provided feedback about the things they got out of taking part (100%). Percentages add to more than 100% because people could select as many options as they wished.

Figure 4: Extent to which people agreed or disagreed with various statements



Did Beat the Street influence people's activity levels?

As well as feeling that Beat the Street had positive health, environmental, social and community benefits, the people surveyed reported tangible changes to their walking behaviours.

Three quarters of people said Beat the Street had helped them to walk more than usual (78%) and one quarter said Beat the Street had helped them to cycle more (28%).

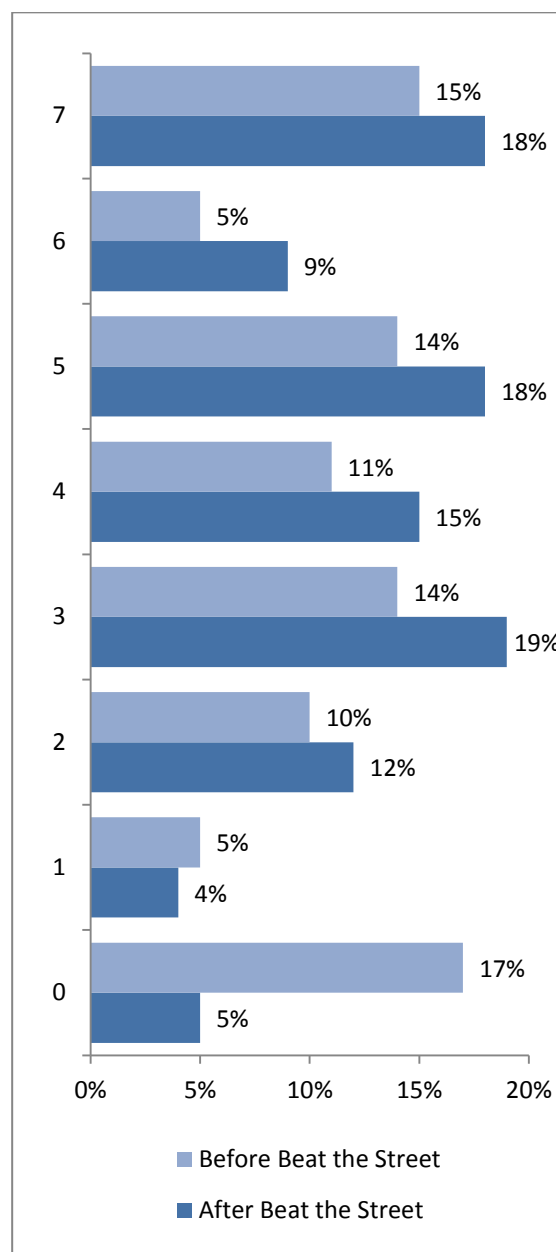
One fifth said that Beat the Street had helped them take the bus less than usual (21%) and two fifths said Beat the Street had helped them travel less by car (39%).

Importantly, **eight out of ten people said they would try to continue the changes they had made** after Beat the Street ended (76%).

There were no major differences in these trends according to whether participants were women or men and whether or not they had a selected long-term condition. However, people under the age of 20 were more likely than all other age groups to say Beat the Street had encouraged them to cycle more and travel by car less often.

This feedback was reinforced by reports about how frequently people walked or took part in other physical activity. Figure 5 illustrates how many days per week people reported undertaking 30 minutes or more of physical activity, comparing the beginning of the competition to after Beat the Street ended. On average, people were undertaking 30 minutes or more of physical activity three days per week at the beginning and four days per week at the end of Beat the Street.

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



Note: Participants were asked 'In the past week, how many days have you done 30 minutes or more of physical activity, which was enough to raise your heart rate? This may include sport, exercise and brisk walking or cycling, but not things that are part of your job.' 'Before' data were collected from 3,748 people at registration and 'after' data were collected from 1,048 people completing the follow-up survey.

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. 35% of people said they were achieving this target when they registered for Beat the Street, and this had risen to 45% by the end of the competition. This is a statistically significant increase, which means it is unlikely that this change happened by chance (probability of seeing this result by chance: <5%).

At the end of Beat the Street, men were more likely than women to say that they were active five or more days (53% of men versus 43% of women).

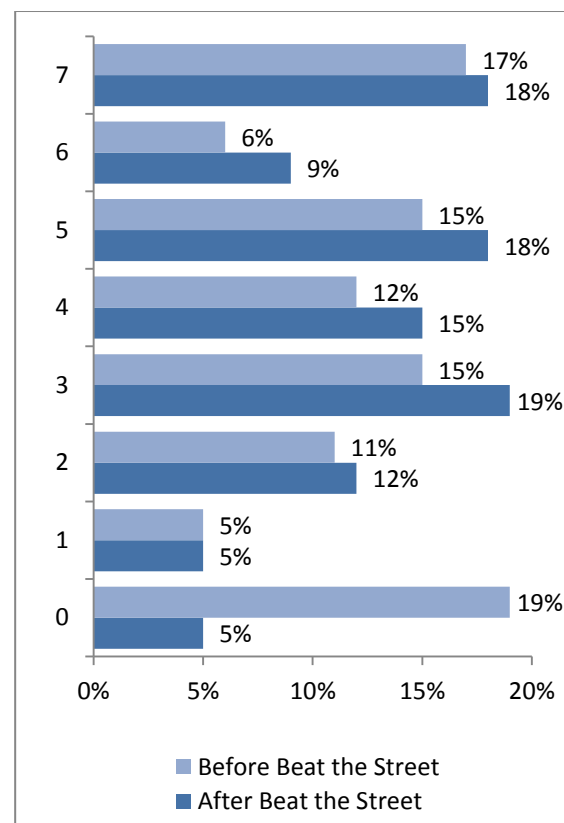
People under the age of 20 were more likely than all other age groups to say they were active five or more days (64% versus 46% of all others).

People who completed the follow-up survey may have been most active and engaged during Beat the Street. Comparing the data from all people who registered with the follow-up feedback from potentially the most engaged participants may therefore give a skewed result. To check this, the analysis team compared the data available from people who completed both the registration survey and the follow-up survey. People's individual data were matched by their Beat the Street card number. This allowed a comparison of activity levels of individual people before and after Beat the Street.

This 'matched pair' analysis revealed positive findings. Individual before and after data were able to be matched for 616 people based on their Beat the Street card number. Of these, **38% of people said they were achieving the Department of Health physical activity level target when they registered for Beat the Street, and this had risen to 45% by the end of the competition.** This is a statistically significant increase, which means it is unlikely that this change happened by chance (probability of seeing this result by chance: <5%).

Importantly, **the proportion of people who were doing no days per week of recommended physical activity significantly decreased** (from 19% to 5%).

Figure 6: Days in the past week of 30 minutes or more physical activity from 616 people with before and after data



Did people with long-term conditions experience the same benefits?

About one out of ten people who completed the follow-up survey said they had high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, emphysema / COPD or a long-term mental health condition (12%). The analysis explored whether these people reported the same benefits from Beat the Street.

People with the selected long-term conditions reported the same key benefits as everyone else: having fun, improving health and fitness and spending time with friends and family (see Figure 7).

These people were just as likely as others to report that Beat the Street helped them walk more and feel more healthy. They were more likely than others to say that Beat the Street helped them with their health problems (41% versus 14% of the total sample, see Figure 8).

Matching up the data from individuals before and after the competition using Beat the Street card numbers found that people with long-term conditions were more likely to report being physically active for five or more days per week after Beat the Street than they were beforehand (53% vs 41% before, see Figure 9, probability of seeing this result by chance: <5%).

These results suggest that Beat the Street can be feasible and effective for people with selected long-term conditions.

Figure 7: Main things people with selected long-term conditions got out of Beat the Street

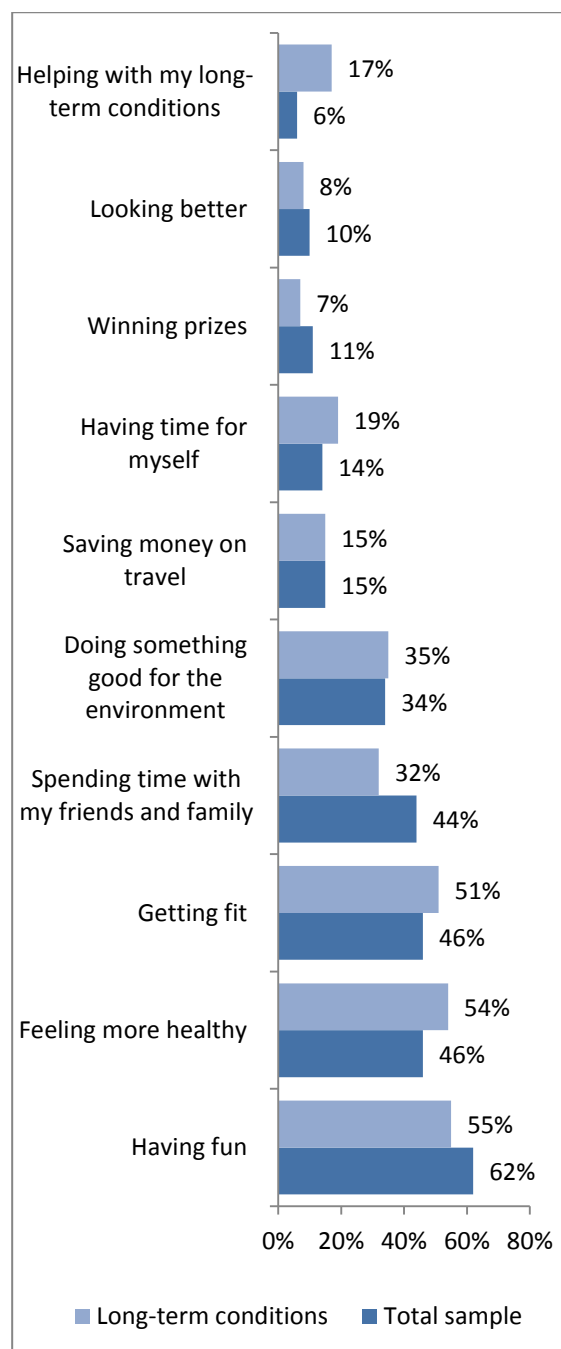


Figure 8: Extent to which people with selected long-term conditions agreed with various statements

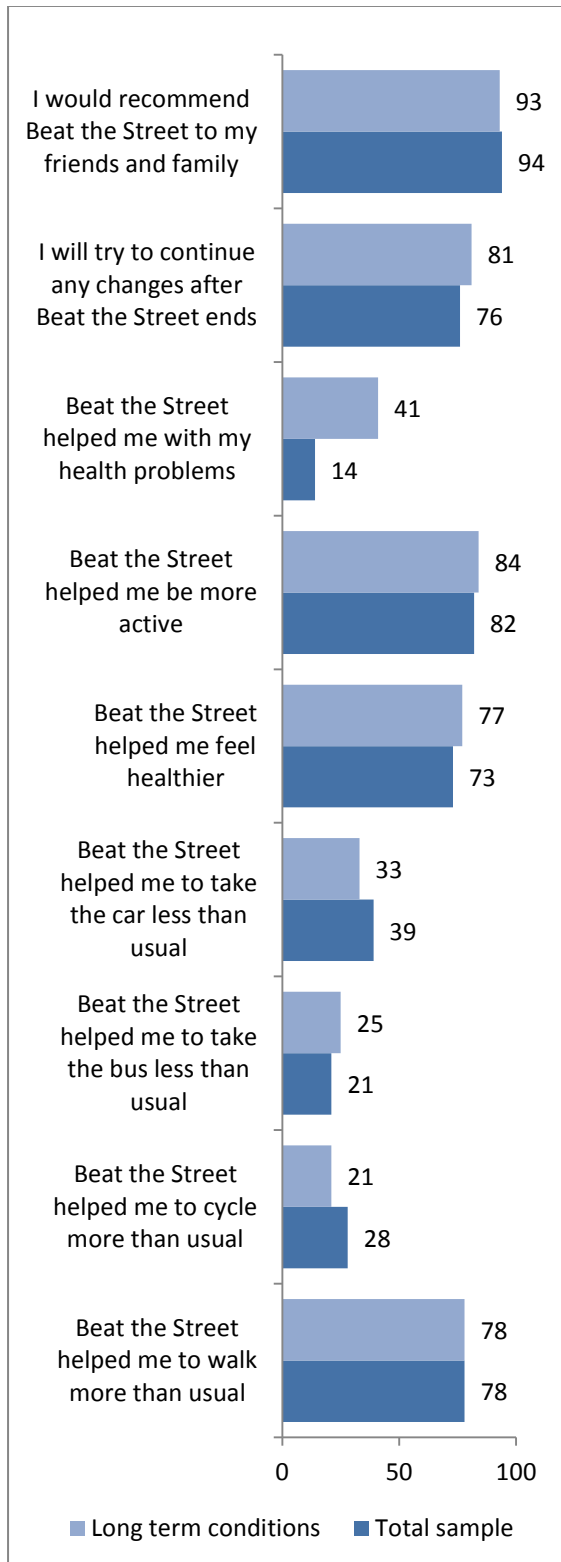
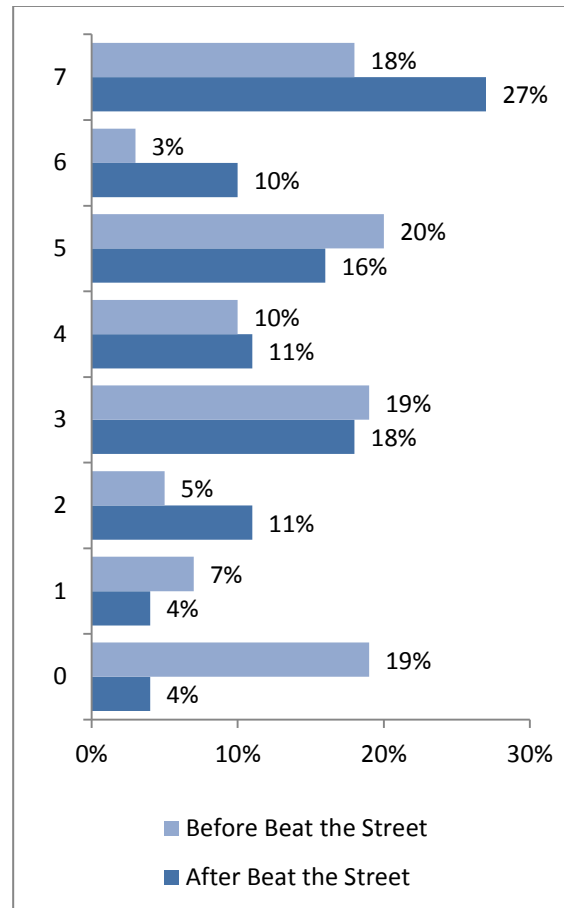


Figure 9: Number of days in the past week of 30 minutes or more physical activity before and after Beat the Street among people with selected long-term conditions



Note: This figure is based on matched before and after data from 74 people.

Suggestions

The overall impression from the follow-up survey was that people enjoyed Beat the Street and thought they got a lot out of it. Almost everyone said they would recommend Beat the Street to friends or family (94%).

The Beat the Street team are constantly seeking to develop further and are always eager to hear suggestions. People were asked how Beat the Street could be made even better, using an open-ended question. 784 people provided suggestions (75%). The most common suggestions related to:

- 1) expanding the competition
- 2) promotion and communication
- 3) practical and technological issues

Box 2 provides examples of verbatim feedback from participants.

Potential for expansion

People believed that there was much scope to make the competition even bigger and better. They suggested:

- adding more Beat Boxes and having them in different locations
- running the competition more regularly or for longer
- having more types of competitions, such as between age groups
- providing more ways to keep people interested such as receiving additional bonus points
- having prizes for individual schools, such as sports equipment for the school after a certain number of points are amassed

Promotion and communication

In terms of promotion and communication, people suggested:

- wider promotion of Beat the Street by the NHS and Council so that people who do not have links with schools hear about it and know they can also take part. This included the suggestion for more active promotion by GP clinics
- being more precise about the location of Beat Boxes
- communicating more regularly with participants using updates by email
- providing more information printed on the Beat Boxes themselves so people know what they are for and where to sign up
- clarifying the rules of the competition, including on the website
- providing more rapid responses to email and online queries

Practical issues

Suggestions about other practical issues included:

- making sure Beat Boxes were in place from the beginning of the competition, before maps are given out
- checking on the equipment to make sure it was working (and including a telephone number or email address on boxes so people could report if they weren't working)
- making it possible to see the total points that individuals had amassed to foster competition and encourage people to beat their friends – or giving schools access to this information so they could create their own leader boards

People provided these helpful suggestions because they were specifically asked for them, but overall respondents were very positive about the concept of Beat the Street and what it achieved.

Box 2: Quotes from people talking about suggestions for ongoing development

Examples related to expansion

“Beat the Street is a great incentive to get fit, get kids and families active and outside. Perhaps schools would drive it more internally if there was a reward for their actual school? For example new sports kits, balls, skipping ropes, playground equipment etc, publicity? Our generation of kids do need to be more active and Beat the Street encourages parents and children to do just that. The joining in then allows them to feel the benefit of being active physically, psychologically, financially and allows the new attitude and behaviour to continue beyond the end date of Beat the Street.”

“It was fun, it engaged the children. Probably better over a longer term to let them build up points and encourage others to join.”

“Maybe have a few more boxes, spread out a little more, as there seemed to be groups of boxes together, then big gaps between some of the groups.”

Examples related to promotion

“As a family - and also as a school community - this has been a fabulous activity and we're sad that it's finished. We have really pulled together to walk further and get points for the team! It's been very sociable as we've bumped in to other families on our walks. The kids have loved being part of a collective activity and have been encouraged to walk further which means we as adults have been able to walk further too... One suggestion - as we went round I was asked what the Beat Boxes were for - they generated a lot of interest. So wider community involvement would be great eg perhaps community centres, pubs, streets, health centres etc could be encouraged to form teams and get involved. Perhaps Beat the Streets ambassadors could volunteer to drum up participation in their neighbourhood. It's a great way of building community spirit.”

“Great idea, my children and other children at school really enjoyed it... The local GPs could have been a little bit more active at handing out cards, maybe actually giving cards to people at reception, rather than having a passive poster on wall. There could have been posters / banners outside GPs. There could have been a bit more advertising of the scheme on the Beat the Street boxes, as some people asked me what the beeping was! I would say more active giving out of the cards would have got more people involved.”

Example related to practicalities

“Put QR codes on the boxes so people can find out about it using their mobiles, amazing the number of people who looked at a box after I tagged it... Could make the boxes a bit brighter to attract attention. Have a bonus box per day, a random box posted on Facebook as the "bonus box" extra 50 points. Send the user a daily/weekly email to promote interaction and maintain involvement. Individual score board, high score per day/week.”

Summary

The follow-up survey of 1,051 people who participated in Beat the Street in Reading suggests that people got a lot out of taking part. **The three most frequently reported benefits were having fun, feeling fit and healthy and spending time with friends and family.**

People said that they had walked more and used their cars less during Beat the Street.

There was a statistically significant **increase in the number of people meeting the Department of Health's physical activity target for adults.**

Importantly, eight out of ten people said that they **planned to continue any changes** they had made after the competition ended.

People with one of the long-term conditions of particular interest (high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, emphysema / COPD or a long-term mental health condition) were as likely as everyone else to say that Beat the Street was worthwhile and that it had helped them to increase their levels of walking and physical activity. Two fifths of these people also thought that Beat the Street had helped them with their health problems.

People who took the time to complete the survey might be more likely to be engaged with the initiative and view it positively, however there was feedback from people from a broad range of age groups and wards within Reading as well as many suggestions for future development.

The overall message is that Beat the Street is a feasible initiative that is able to generate community support, change people's immediate modes of transport and encourage people to want to keep walking more in future. People with long-term conditions can take part and are just as likely as others to find the competition useful and motivating for increasing their physical activity.

In a few months the Beat the Street team plans to follow up people to see whether the reported changes in walking and physical activity were maintained after the competition ended.