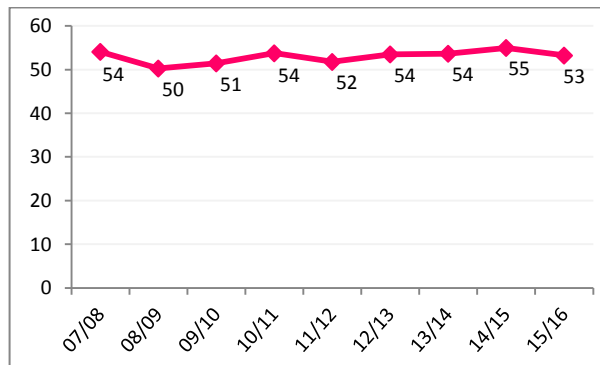


Main stories

- Overall, there was no change in sport participation compared with the previous year's figure which was generally consistent with the longer term trend.
- Swimming / Diving, Keepfit / Aerobics / Yoga / Dance exercise, Jogging and 'Cycling for recreation' remain the most popular sports amongst adults for the last five years.

Sport participation

No change from previous year's figures



The proportion of adults who had taken part in sport within the previous year was similar to the previous year's figure and consistent with the longer term trend.

Most popular sports

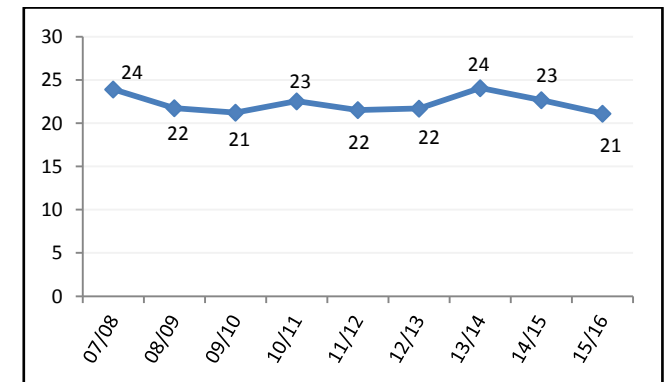
Most popular sports remain the same



Swimming / diving remained the most popular sport amongst adults with almost one in five adults (19%) participating at least once over the previous year. Keepfit / Aerobics / Yoga / Dance exercise (15%), Jogging (13%) and Cycling for recreation (11%) remained the next most popular sports amongst adults for the fifth year in a row.

Sports club membership

No change from previous year's figures



The proportion of adults who were members of a sports club within the previous year was similar to the previous year's figure but at the lower end of the longer term trend.

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Published 30 November 2016

Introduction

The Department for Communities (DfC) has responsibility for the development of sport and physical recreation in Northern Ireland. DfC provides funding for sport, develops sport policy and supports sports initiatives.

DfC promotes sport in the context of the strategy for sport, 'Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2009-2019'. Sport Matters was developed by the former Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in partnership with Sport Northern Ireland and approved by the Northern Ireland Executive in December 2009. Critical to the fabric of the strategy is the inherent vision of 'a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport' and this vision is underpinned by actions and key steps that will demonstrate what success looks like.

Sport Matters also contains a number of high level targets designed to improve levels and frequency of participation in sport and physical recreation across the Northern Ireland population. The targets which are aimed at adults and particular groups of people who are currently known to have lower participation rates in sport and physical recreation are set out below:

- To have stopped the decline of adult participation rates in sport and physical recreation by 2013.

By 2019, from the 2011 baseline, the following will be targeted.

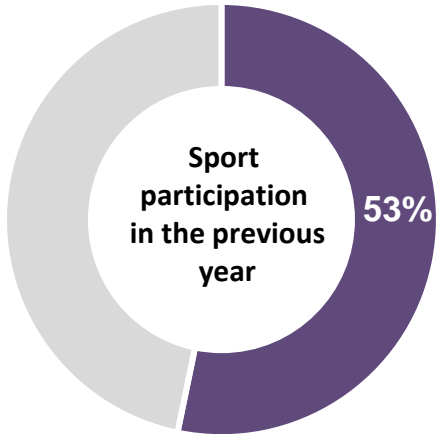
- A minimum increase of 3 percentage points in adult participation rates in sport and physical recreation.
- A minimum increase of 6 percentage points in the participation rates of women, socio-economically disadvantaged groups, people with a disability and with older people in sport and physical recreation.

Sport NI have also developed an action plan to improve health and wellbeing through participation in sport and active recreation for people with a disability in Northern Ireland. The vision of 'Active Living: No Limits 2021' is to afford everyone with a disability an equal opportunity to access sport and active recreation. The vision will be delivered through encouraging and facilitating a collaborative approach to increasing participation in sport and active recreation by people with a disability leading to healthier and more active lifestyles.

Continuous Household Survey

The report presents data from the 2015/16 Continuous Household Survey (CHS) in relation to sport participation by the adult population in Northern Ireland. This information will be used in the monitoring of targets in Sport Matters. More information relating to the CHS methodology and the interpretation of the figures can be found in the [definitions and technical notes section](#). Data tables are available in [Excel](#) and [ODS format](#). The sport participation questions which were asked in the CHS 2015/16 are available [here](#).

Overall sport participation and sport club membership 2015/16



19%

Swimming or diving



15%

Keepfit, aerobics, yoga, dance exercise



13%

Jogging



11%

Cycling for recreation



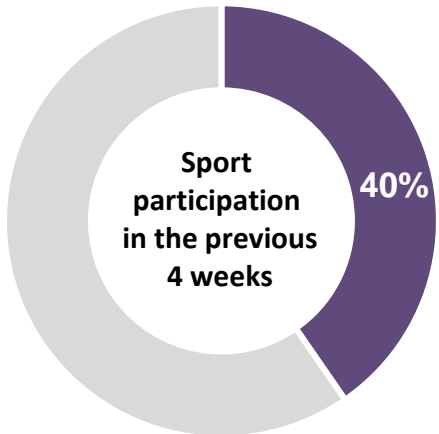
10%

Weightlifting / Body building



9%

Snooker / pool / billiards



10%



9%



8%



8%

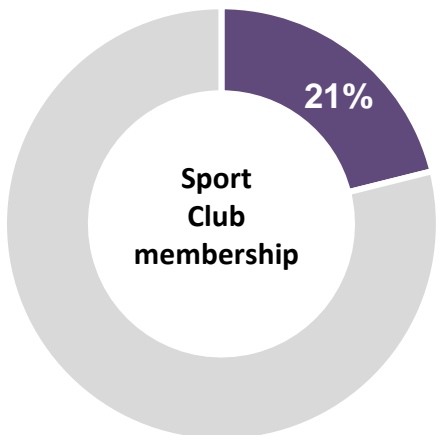


6%



6%

Football



4%



4%



2%

Golf



2%



2%



2%

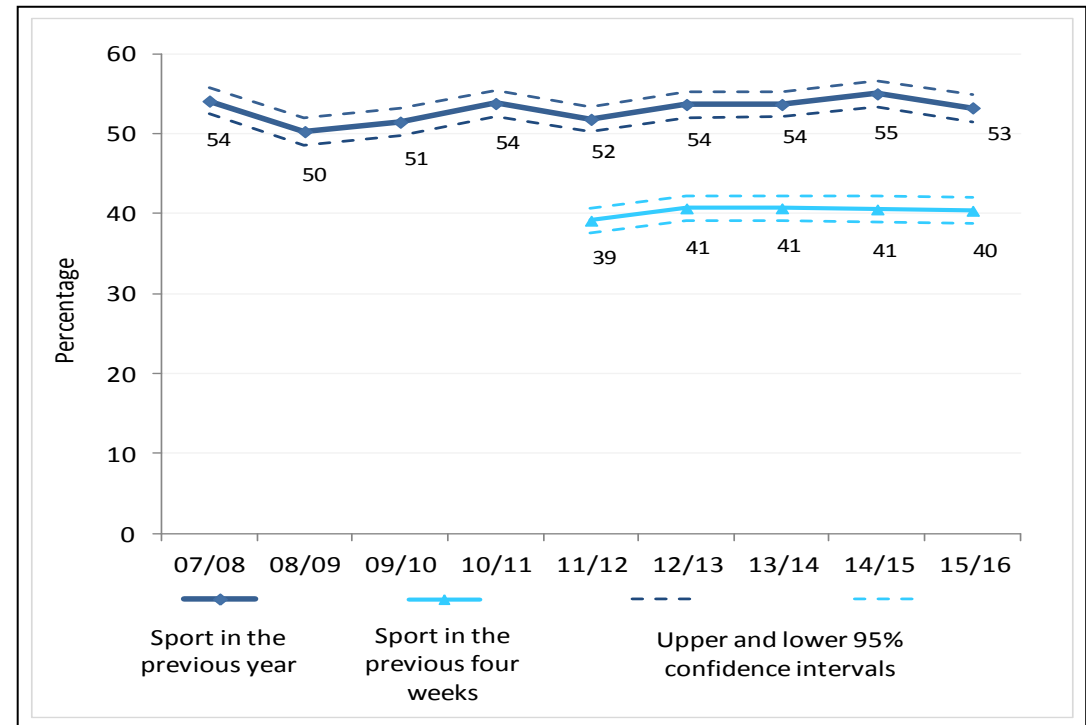
Gaelic football

Sport participation through membership of a sports club / organisation

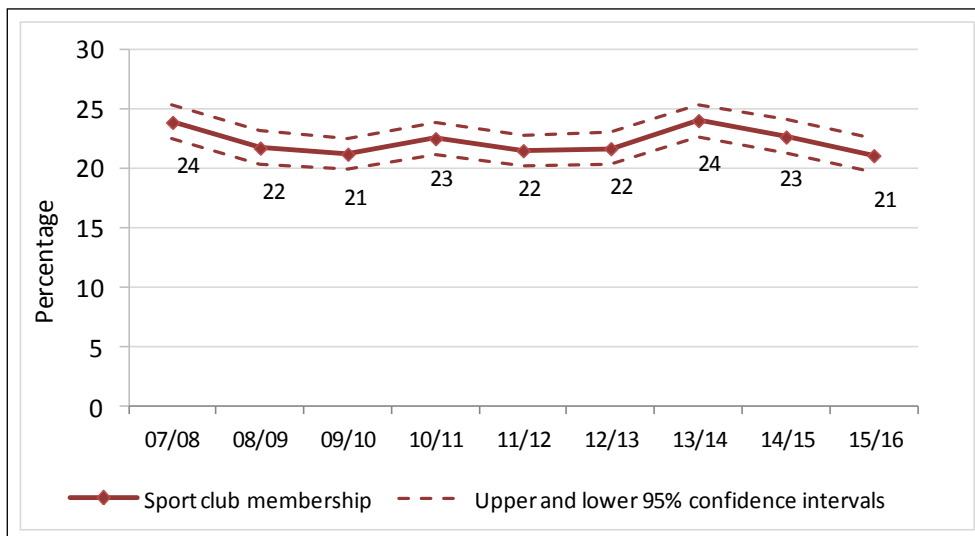
Sport trends

Sport participation within the year and within the previous four weeks remain stable

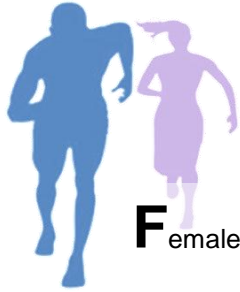
More than half of adults participated in sport at least once within the last year. This proportion has remained fairly stable over the last six years, following a decline between 2007/08 and 2008/09 with a subsequent recovery over the two years to 2010/11. Similarly, since first recorded in the 2011/12 Continuous Household Survey (CHS), the proportion of adults taking part in a sport at least once within the previous four weeks has remained stable at around 40%.



Sport club membership



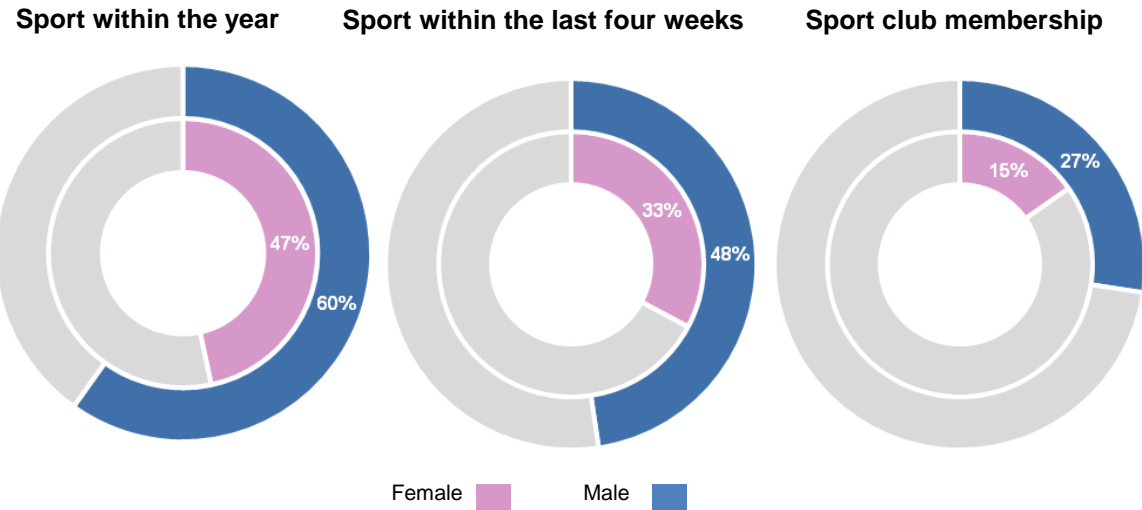
Just over a fifth of adults (21%) were a member of a sports club or organisation within the previous year. Although this is a decrease on the 24% reported two years ago in 2013/14, the longer term trend suggests that the most recent figure is still within normal range with no obvious upward or downward trend overall.



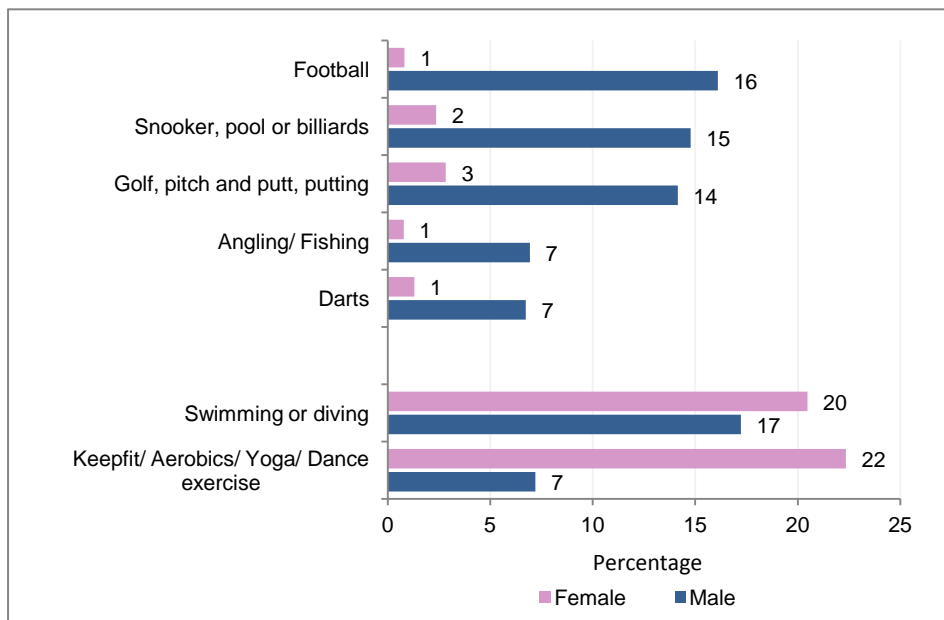
Gender and sport participation

Women less likely to participate in sport

Females aged 16 and over were less likely to have taken part in sport at least once within the last year (47%) than males (60%). This was also the case when participation in sport within the last four weeks was considered, with a third of females (33%) stating they had taken part compared to nearly half of males (48%). Males were also more likely to be a member of a sports club (27%) than females (15%). Since 2007/08 there has been no statistically significant change in the gap between adult male and female sport participation rates.



Sport preferences amongst males and females



There were differences in the types of sport males and females participated in within the last year. Males were more likely than females to have taken part in 22 of the 39 sports listed in the survey. Some of the most notable differences where males participated in higher proportions include football, snooker, golf, fishing and darts. Women were more likely to have participated in four of the 39 listed sports. In addition to ‘Keepfit / Aerobics / Yoga / Dance exercise’ and ‘Swimming or diving’ these also included horse-riding and netball. Badminton, tenpin bowling, boxing, gymnastics and hockey were some of the sports where there was no difference found in the proportion of males and females taking part.



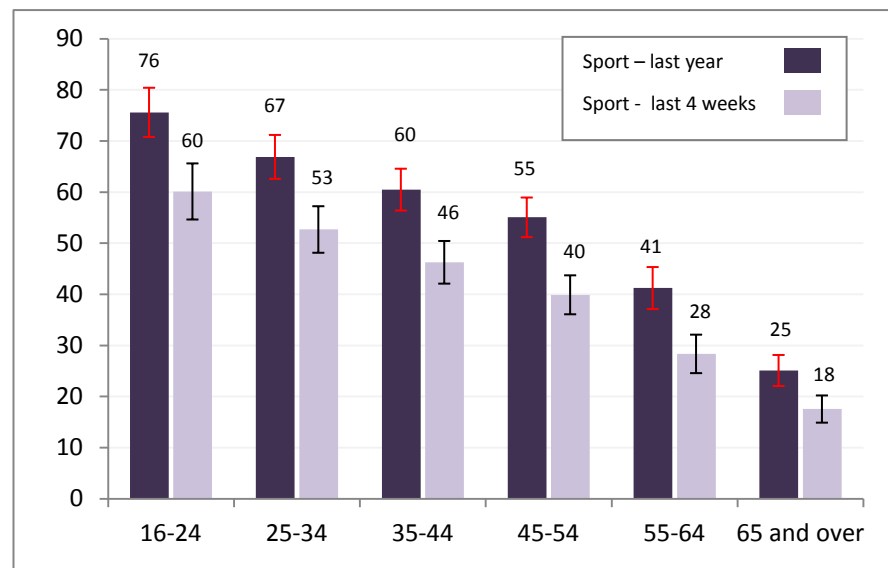
Age and sport participation

Older people less likely to participate in sport

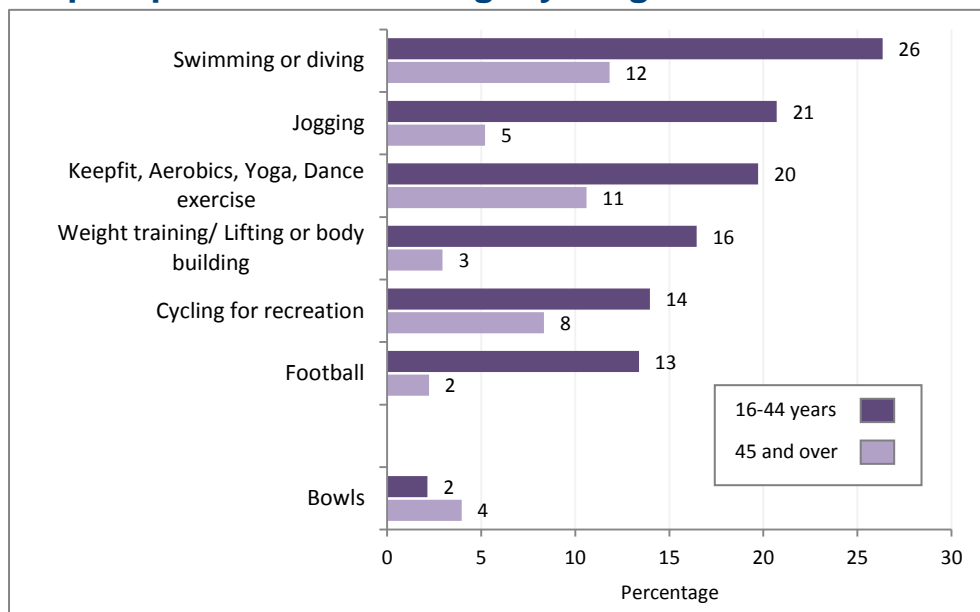
Sport participation declines steadily with age among adults.

Those aged 45 and over were much less likely to have participated in any sport within the last year (39%) or within the last 4 weeks (28%) compared to younger adults aged 16-44 years (66% and 52%, respectively). Participation figures for sport within the last 12 months were seen to decline among the age groups examined from three-quarters (76%) of those aged 16-24 years compared to a quarter (25%) of those aged 65 years and over.

Similarly, for sport participation within the last 4 weeks, the three-fifths (60%) of those aged 16-24 fell to less than one in five (18%) of those aged 65 and over.



Sport preferences amongst younger and older adults



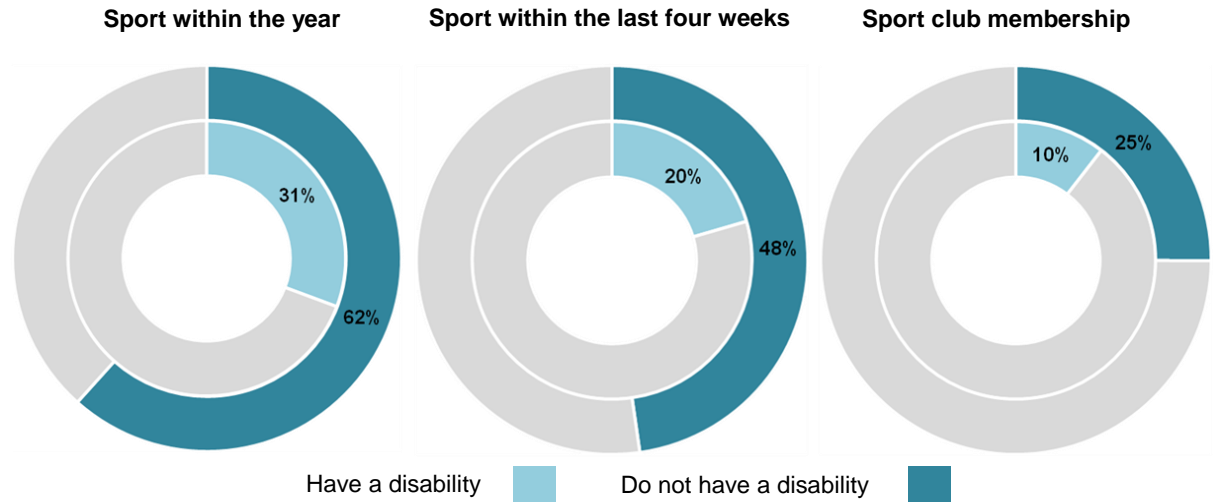
The top five sports for those aged under 45 and those aged 45 and over were the same, although ranked slightly differently in terms of popularity for each group and with adults in the latter category less likely to have participated in the majority of sports listed. Indeed, bowls was the only sport where there was a higher proportion of those aged 45 and over participating within the last year. There was no difference found between the proportions of either group participating in fishing (16-44 years: 4%; 45 and over: 3%) as was also the case with some of the less popular sports activities such as 'yachting or dinghy sailing' (both 1%) or skiing (both 1%). When the types of sport participated in over the last 4 weeks was considered there was a similar story. However, along with bowls, there was a statistically higher proportion of the 45 and over category who had participated in golf (4%) than with the 16-44 age group (3%).



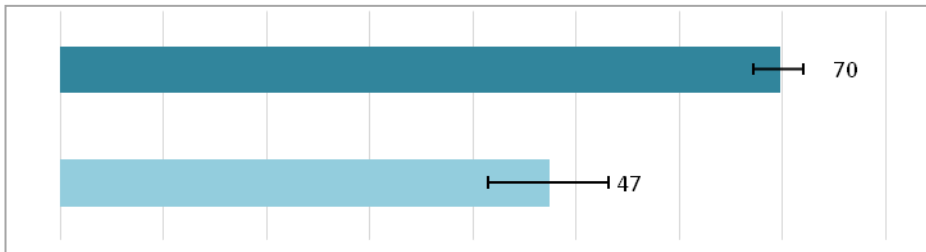
Disability and sport participation

Those who have a disability less likely to participate in sport

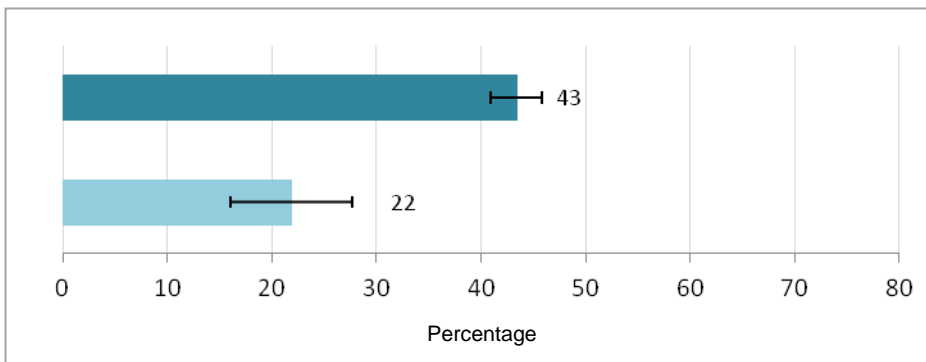
Those aged 16 and over who have a disability were half as likely to have taken part in sport at least once within the last year (31%) than those who do not have a disability (62%). This was also the case when participation in sport within the last four weeks was considered with a fifth of those who have a disability (20%) taken part compared to nearly half of those who do not have a disability (48%). Only one in ten adults who have a disability were members of a sports club, much less than the one in four (25%) of those who do not have a disability.



Sport participation aged 16 - 49



Sport participation aged 50 +



Have a disability ■ Do not have a disability ■

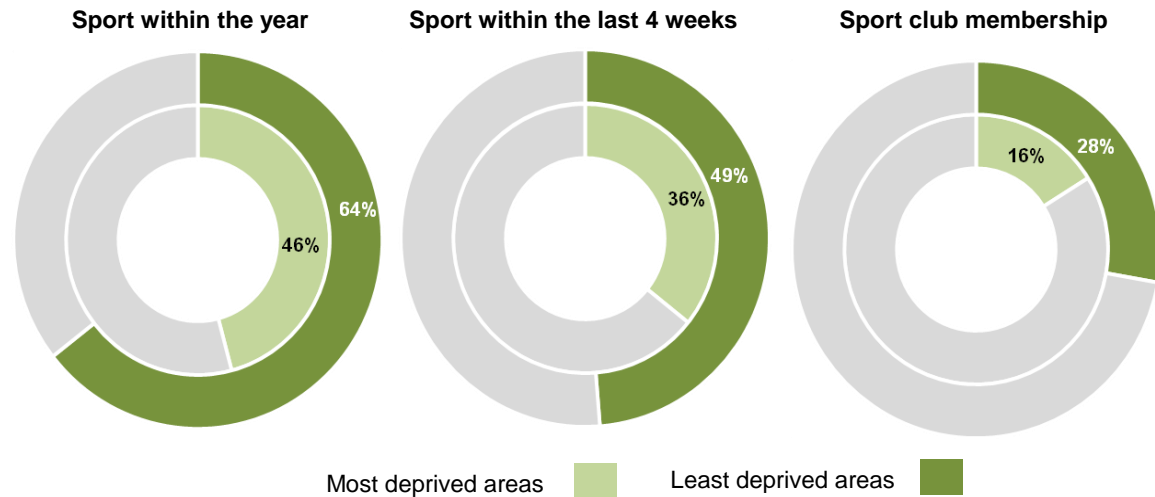
Disability and age are closely related. Generally speaking, the older we become the more likely we are to have a disability. We also know that age and sport participation are negatively correlated, as the older we become, the less likely we are to participate in sport. Considering age and disability in broad terms, analysis was conducted for younger and older adults who have a disability. Results show that both younger and older adults who have a disability were much less likely to participate in sport within the previous year than their peers who do not have a disability. This suggests that on its own, disability negatively affects the likelihood of adults participating in sport.



Deprivation and sport participation

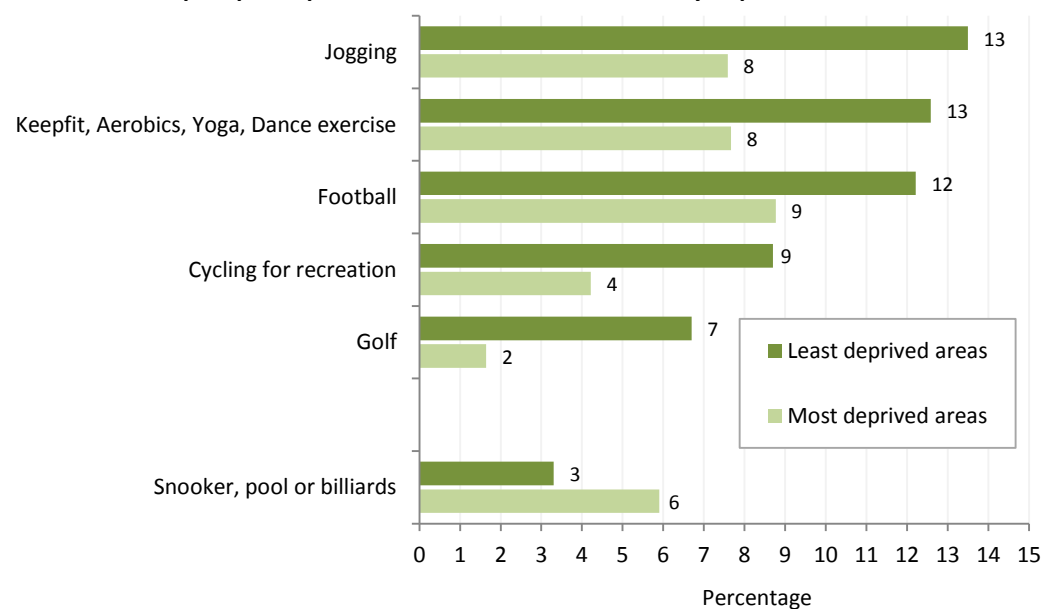
Adults living in the most deprived areas less likely to participate in sport

Adults living in the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland were less likely to have participated in sport within the previous year (46%) or within the last 4 weeks (36%) than those adults living in the least deprived areas (64% and 49%, respectively). Similarly, those living in the most deprived areas were less likely to be a member of a sports club (16%) than those living in the least deprived areas (28%).



Differences in sport preferences by deprivation

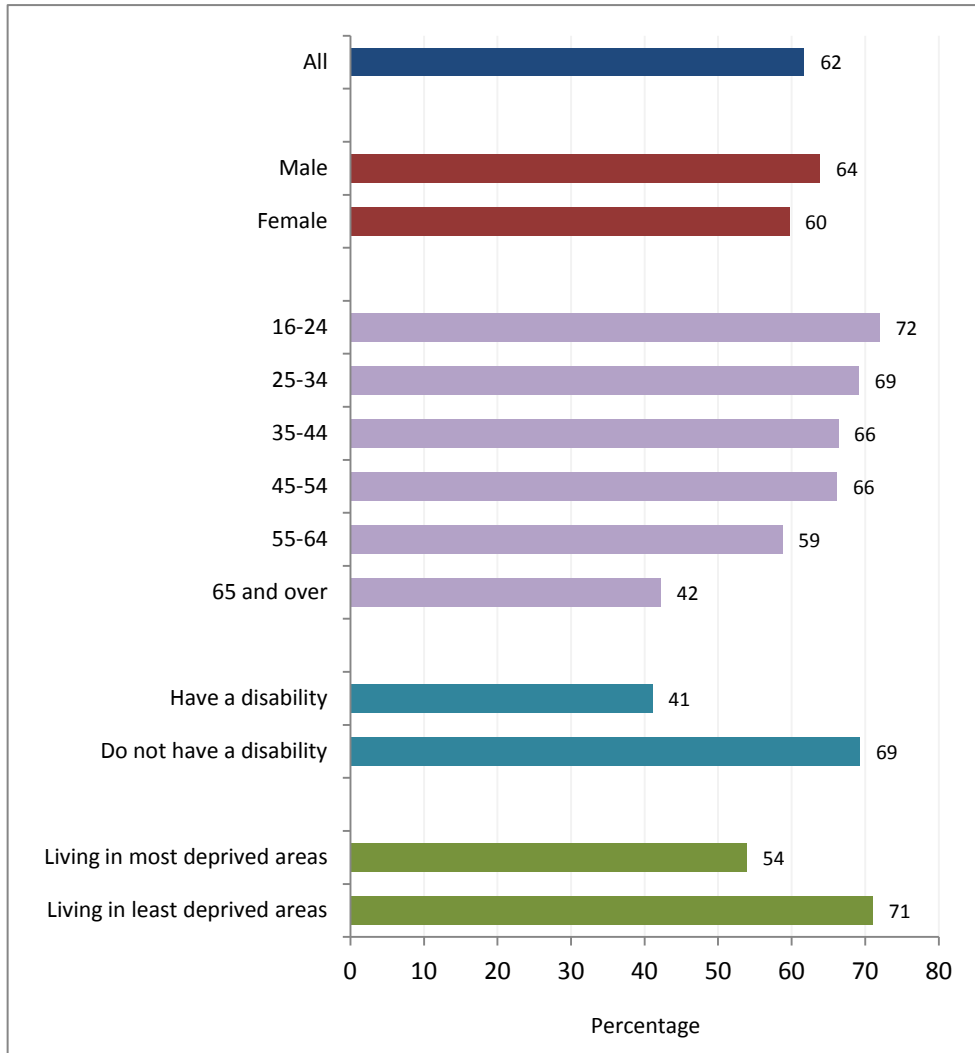
Differences in sport participation within the last four weeks by deprivation



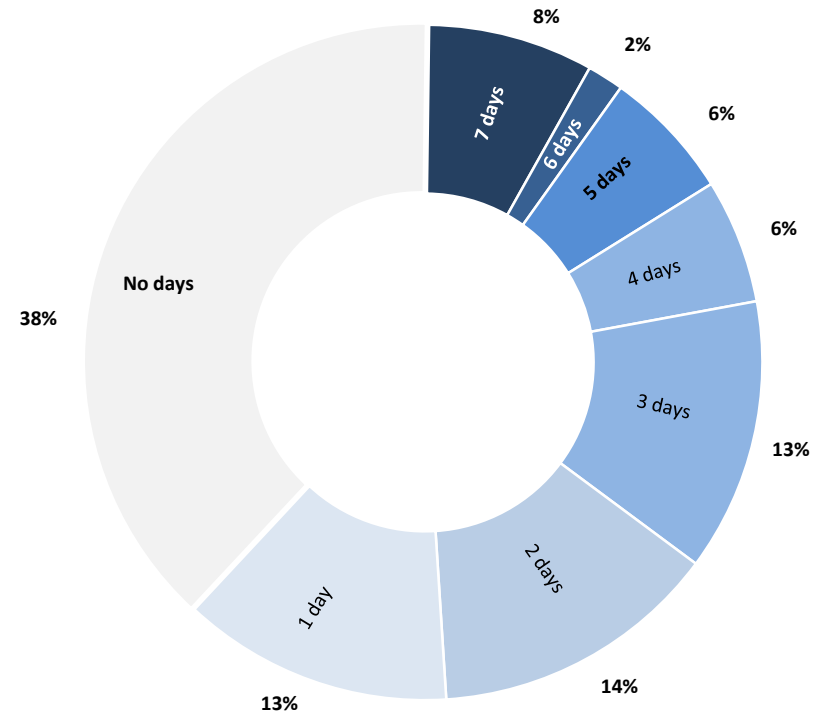
Differences in sport preferences were examined amongst those living in the most and least deprived areas in Northern Ireland. Those living in the least deprived areas participated in higher proportions in 18 of the 39 sports listed. In contrast, adults living in the most deprived areas did not participate in higher proportions within the previous year in any of the listed sports. Some of the sports showing the biggest differences between the two groups were golf (13% v 4%), 'Cycling for recreation' (15% v 7%), Jogging (18% v 12%), 'Swimming or diving' (23% v 18%) and 'Keepfit, Aerobics, Yoga, Dance Exercise' (18% v 12%). Exploring sport type preferences within the previous 4 weeks amongst the two groups shows that those adults living in the least deprived areas participated in higher proportions than those living in the most deprived areas in 9 of the 39 sports listed. The only sport in which adults living in the most deprived areas participated in higher proportions than those living in the least deprived areas within the previous 4 weeks was 'Snooker / Pool / Billiards' (6% v 3%).

Days normally participate in sport or physical activity per week

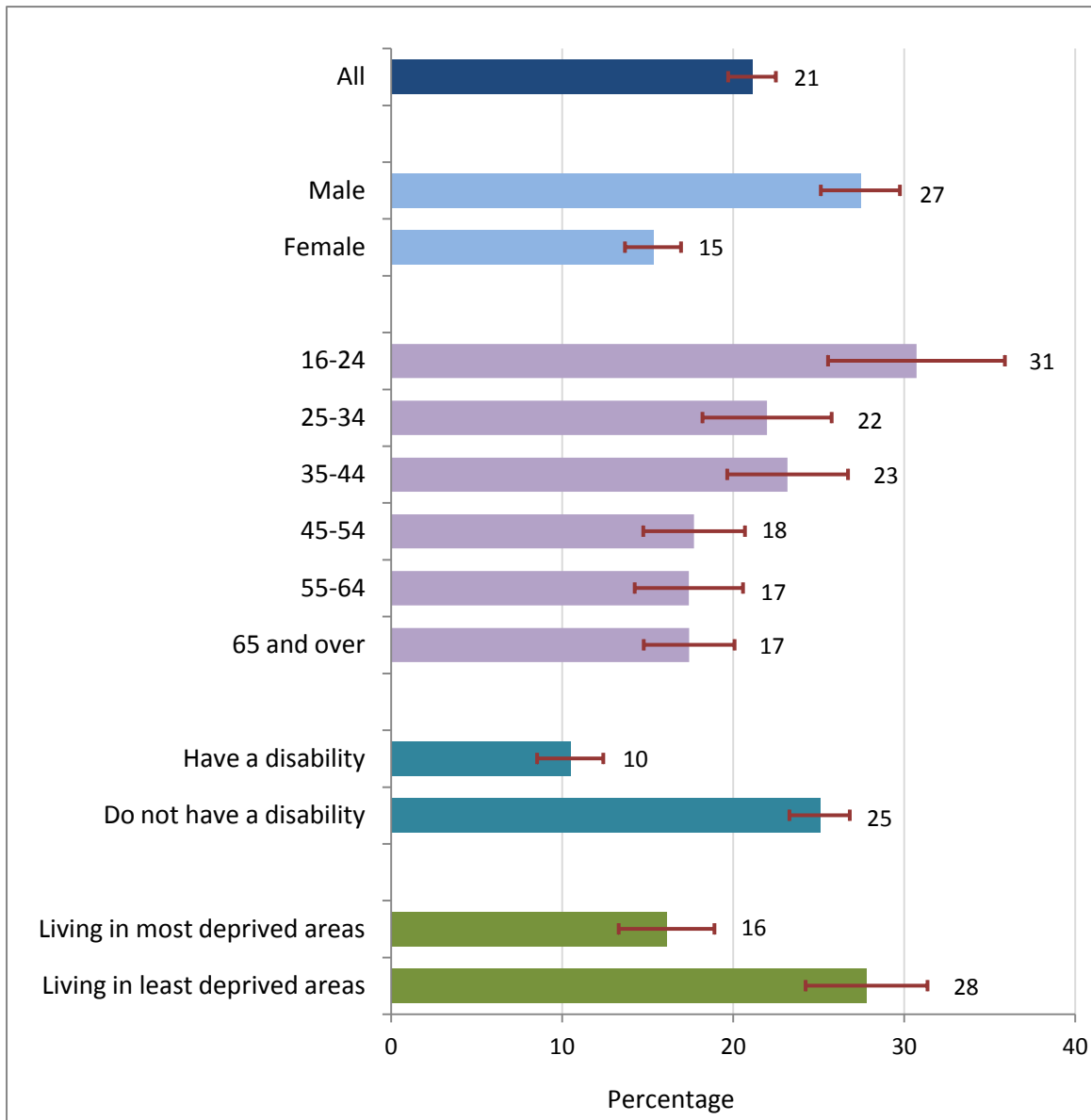
One or more days per week sport or physical activity



Adults were asked how many days per week do they normally take part in sport and physical activity. Whilst over half of adults (53%) had participated in a sport within the previous year, just over three in every five adults (62%) normally participated in sport or physical activity on one or more days per week, with just one in every five (21%) normally participating on 4 or more days per week. There are similar differences by gender, age, disability and deprivation as for other indicators of sport participation i.e. normally participating on one or more days per weeks was lower for women, older adults, adult with a disability and adults living in the most deprived areas.



Sports club membership



Adults were asked if they were a member of a sports club or organisation within the previous year.

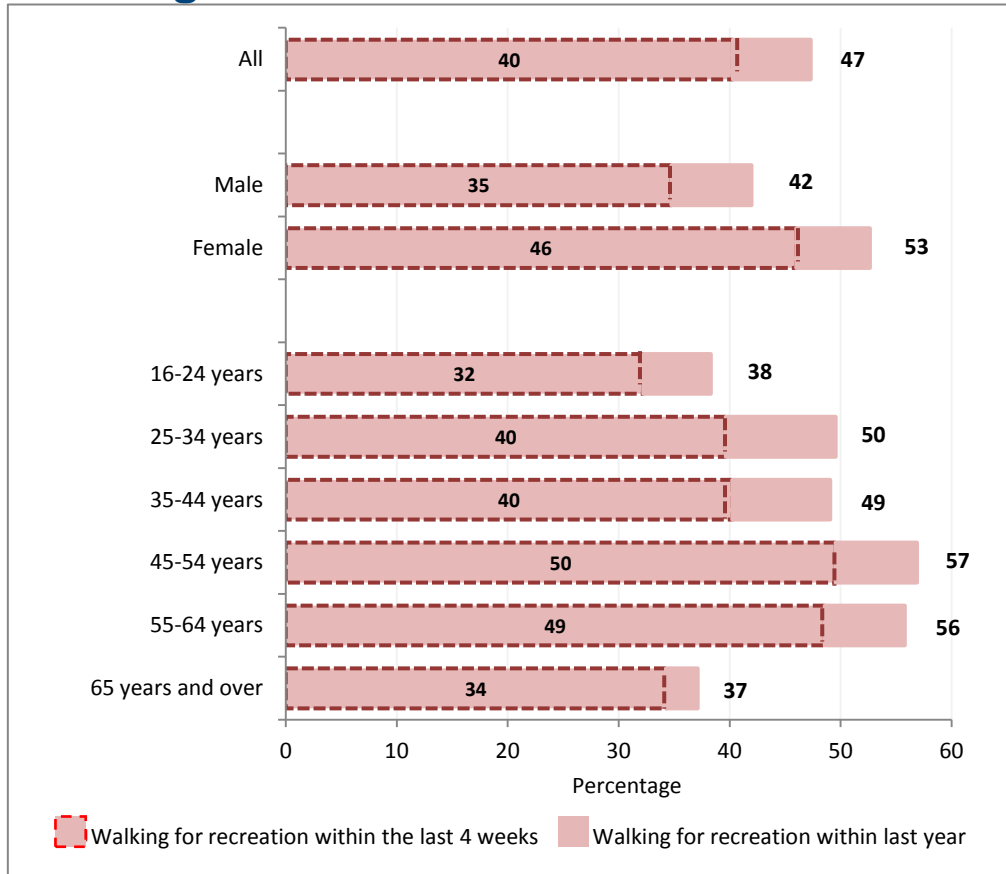
Just over a fifth of adults (21%) stated that they were with males (27%) more likely to have been a member of a sports club or organisation than females (15%).

Adults were also asked which, if any, sports they participated in at these sports clubs or organisations. Considering all adults, the most popular sports participated in through sports club membership were 'Keep-fit, Aerobics, Yoga, Dance exercise' (4%), 'Weight training / Lifting or body building' (4%) and Golf (2%).

Amongst men, Golf was the most popular sport played through their membership of a sports club (5%) followed by 'Weight training / Lifting or body building' (4%) and Football (4%).

For women, 'Keep-fit, Aerobics, Yoga, Dance exercise' (7%) 'Weight training / Lifting or body building' (3%) and 'Swimming or diving' (2%) were the sports most participated in through membership of a sports club.

Walking for recreation



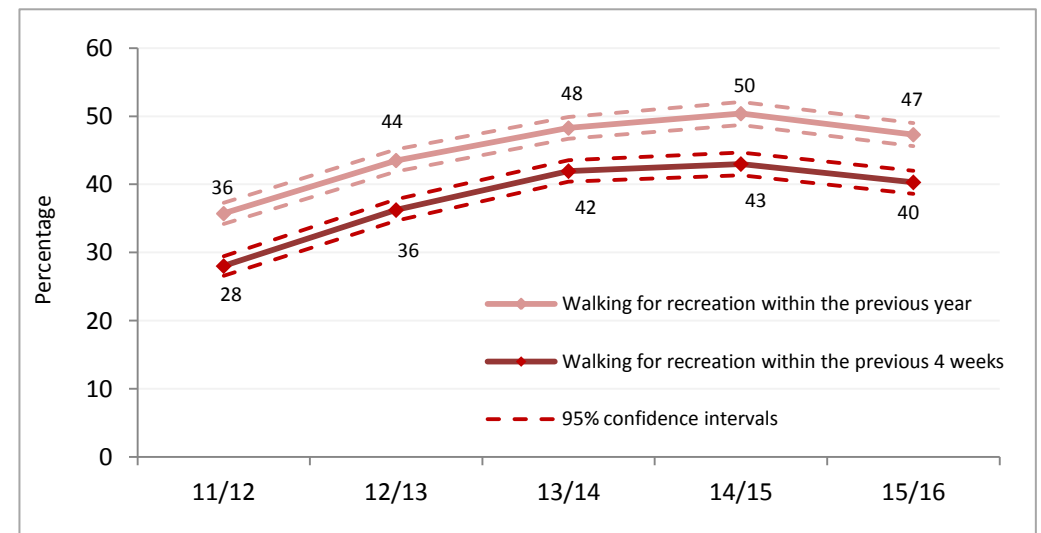
Walking for recreation on the increase?

Over the last five years, the proportion of adults participating in 'walking for recreation' within the previous year has increased from 34% in 2011/12, when it was first measured, to 47% of adults in 2015/16, following a peak of 50% of adults in 2014/15. Similarly, within the same time frame, the proportion of adults who had walked for recreation within the previous four weeks increased from 28% in 2011/12 to 40% in 2015/16 following a high of 43% recorded in the 2014/15 CHS.

Walking for recreation

'Walking for recreation' is not included in the overall sport participation figures. Nearly half of adults (47%) had walked for recreation within the previous year and contrary to the demographic pattern seen with the overall sport participation statistics, a higher proportion of females (53%) than males (42%) had done so. About one in six adults (17%) had not participated in a sport but had walked for recreation within the previous year, a statistic which was again higher for females (22%) than males (12%). Among the various age groups examined, the pattern is also dissimilar to that seen with the overall sport participation statistics with walking for recreation peaking among the 45-54 year old group (57%) and the 55-64 year old group (56%). However, analysis by disability and deprivation show that relatively fewer adults with a disability and adults living in the most deprived areas walk for recreation.

Four in every ten adults (40%) had walked for recreation within the previous 4 weeks. More than eight in every ten adults who had walked for recreation within the previous year had also done so within the previous 4 weeks. Walking for recreation within the previous 4 weeks follows the same pattern amongst the demographic groups as with walking for recreation within the previous year.



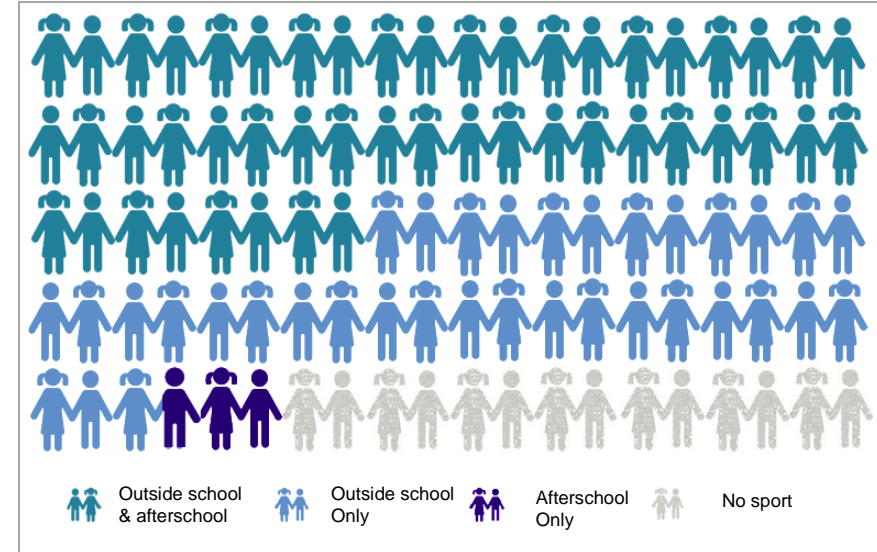


Children's sport participation outside of school and afterschool

For the first time in the Continuous Household Survey parents of children aged 4 to 15 were asked about their children's sport participation outside of school and afterschool. According to parents, 86% of children had participated in at least one sport within the previous year outside of school or afterschool with 84% participating outside of school and 51% in afterschool sport.

Nearly half of children (48%) participated in both sport outside of school and afterschool within the previous year with only 3% participating in afterschool sport alone.

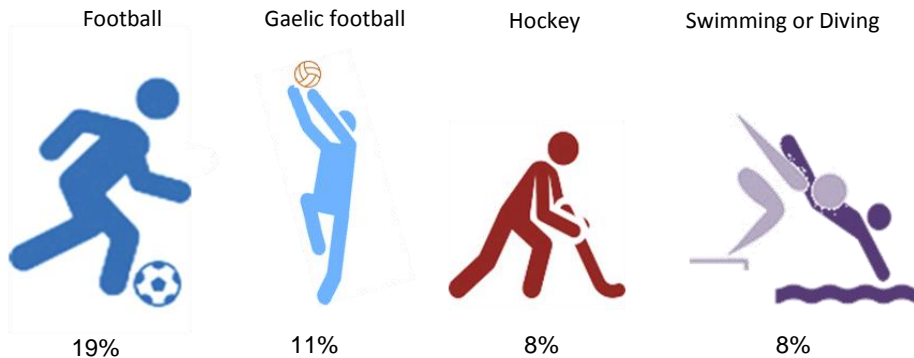
Parents were also asked about their children's sport participation outside of school within the previous 4 weeks. Responses indicate that almost all who had participated within the previous year had also done so within the previous 4 weeks (both 84%) and these figures were similar for both boys (85%) and girls (83%) across each time frame.



Sports outside of school

The most popular sports to take part in outside of school within the previous year were 'Swimming or diving' (38%), football (33%) and cycling (26%). These were the top three sports for boys also (36%, 51% and 26%, respectively). For girls the top sports outside of school within the previous year were 'Swimming or diving' (41%), cycling (25%) and 'Keep-fit, Aerobics, Yoga, Dance exercise' (24%). Looking at the types of sports outside of school within the previous 4 weeks, the most popular were Football (29%), 'Swimming or diving' (28%) and cycling (18%). These were the top three sports outside of school for boys within the previous 4 weeks also (46%, 26% and 16%, respectively) whereas for girls, the top three sports outside of school were 'Swimming or diving' (31%), cycling (19%) and 'Keep-fit, Aerobics, Yoga, Dance exercise' (18%).

Afterschool's sports



Parents were also asked about their children's afterschool sport participation within the last year. Just over half of 4 to 15 year olds (51%) had participated in afterschool sport at least once within the previous year with a higher proportion of boys (54%) than girls (48%) doing so. The most popular afterschool sports were Football (19%), Gaelic football (11%), Hockey (8%) and 'Swimming or diving' (8%). Most popular by far amongst boys was Football (28%) followed by Gaelic football (13%). For girls, Hockey (11%), Football (10%) and 'Keep-fit, Aerobics, Yoga, Dance exercise' (10%) were the most popular afterschool sports.

Definitions and technical notes

Sport participation (Adults) – Participated in at least one of the following activities within the 12 months, or 4 weeks prior to the CHS. Does not include ‘walking for recreation’.

- Rugby union or league
- Tenpin bowling
- American football
- Swimming or diving
- Football indoors (Inc. 5-a-side)
- Angling / fishing
- Football outdoors (Inc. 5-a-side)
- Yachting or dinghy sailing
- Gaelic football
- Canoeing
- Camogie
- Windsurfing / boardsailing
- Hurling
- Keepfit / Aerobics / Yoga / Dance exercise
- Cricket
- Martial Arts (Include self defence)
- Hockey (Exc. ice, roller or street hockey)
- Weight training / lifting / body building
- Netball
- Gymnastics
- Tennis
- Snooker, pool, billiards
- Badminton
- Ice skating (Exc. roller skating)
- Squash
- Darts
- Basketball
- Golf, pitch and putt, putting (Exc. crazy / miniature golf)
- Table tennis
- Skiing
- Track and field athletics
- Horse riding (Exc. polo)
- Jogging
- Motor sports
- Cycling for recreation
- Shooting
- Indoor bowls
- Boxing
- Outdoor (lawn) bowls
- Ice hockey
- Other

Sport participation (Children) – Participated in at least one of the following activities within the 12 months, or 4 weeks prior to the CHS.

- Active games (e.g. skipping, rounders, Wildcats, etc.)
- American football
- Angling/fishing
- Athletics/cross country
- Basketball/netball/volleyball
- Boxing
- Canoeing/kayaking
- Cricket
- Cycling for recreation
- Darts
- Football
- Gaelic Football
- Golf, pitch and putt, putting
- Gymnastics
- Hockey
- Ice hockey
- Horse riding
- Hurling / camogie
- Ice skating
- Indoor/outdoor bowls
- Jogging
- Keep fit, aerobics, yoga, dance exercise
- Martial Arts
- Motor sports
- Rugby union or league
- Shooting
- Skateboarding/rollerblading
- Skiing
- Snooker, pool, billiards
- Swimming or diving
- Table tennis
- Tennis/badminton/squash
- Tenpin bowling
- Trampolining
- Walking for Exercise/hill walking
- Weight training/lifting/body building
- Windsurfing/boardsailing
- Yachting or dinghy sailing
- Any other sports (specify)
- None of these

Member of a sports club – Member of a sports club or organisation.

Disability – The questions used to ascertain whether or not a person has a disability are harmonised with the definition of disability in the Equality Act 2010. This states that a disabled population is classified on the basis of having a long-lasting physical or mental health condition or illness which restricts day-to-day activities. The disabled population in this report are those who have answered yes to both the questions below:

- Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?
- Does your condition or illness / do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day to day activities?

Dependants – A person is defined as having dependants if they have responsibility for either the care of a child, a person with a disability or an elderly person.

Deprivation – The data have been analysed by whether respondents are living in the 20% most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs) or in the 20% least deprived SOAs. This is estimated using the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2010¹ which is a weighted combination of seven domains of deprivation. Rank 1 indicates the most deprived SOA, while rank 890 denotes the least deprived SOA.

Urban / rural – The data have also been analysed by whether respondents are living in SOAs that have been categorised as either urban or rural as set out in the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements report (2015)². This report classified each settlement in Northern Ireland into one of eight bands (A-H) and recommended that Government and other users should consider defining ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ areas in ways which are appropriate for different programmes and projects. In the absence of a programme-specific definition, Bands A-E can be defined as urban and Bands F-H as rural. This definition was applied in the analysis in this bulletin.

¹ [Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Report 2010](#)

² [Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements 2015 Report](#)

Statistical significance in this report

Any statements in this report regarding differences between groups such as males and females, different age groups, religion, etc., are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. This means that we can be 95% confident that the differences between groups are actual differences and have not just arisen by chance. Both the base numbers and the sizes of the percentages have an effect on statistical significance. Therefore on occasion, a difference between two groups may be statistically significant while the same difference in percentage points between two other groups may not be statistically significant. The reason for this is because the larger the base numbers or the closer the percentages are to 0 or 100, the smaller the standard errors. This leads to increased precision of the estimates which increases the likelihood that the difference between the proportions is actually significant and did not just arise by chance.

Other notes

The following should be noted when interpreting figures and tables:

- Percentages less than 0.5% are denoted by '0' and where there are no responses, they are denoted by '-'.
- Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.
- Percentages may not add to 100% for questions where multiple responses are allowed.
- Detailed tabulations are not provided where the number of respondents is too small to allow meaningful analysis.
- The base number of responses to each question, which is shown in each table, is the unweighted count. The base may vary due to some respondents not answering certain questions.