

Annual publication

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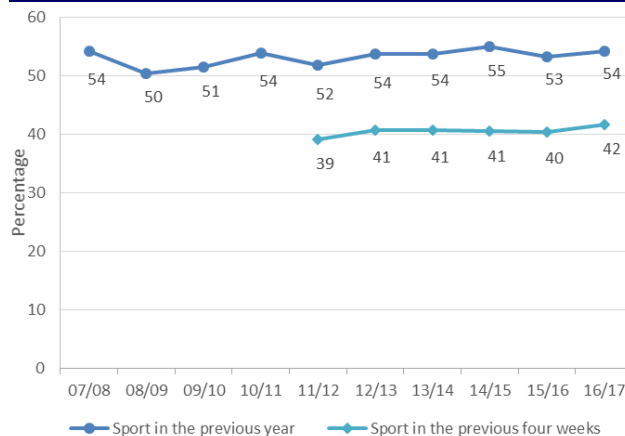
Coverage: Northern Ireland

Main stories

- In 2016/17, the proportion of adults who had participated in sport in the last 12 months was similar to the previous year's figure (54% and 53% respectively). This is also consistent with the longer term trend.
- Swimming or diving, 'Keepfit, Aerobics, Yoga, Dance exercise', jogging and cycling for recreation continue to be the most popular sports amongst adults.
- Six out of every ten adults (60%) who had participated in sport cited "Improved health" as a benefit of participating. Other benefits of participating that were stated by respondents include "Have fun" (56%), "Improved my feeling of wellbeing" (54%) and "Lose weight" (41%).

Sport participation

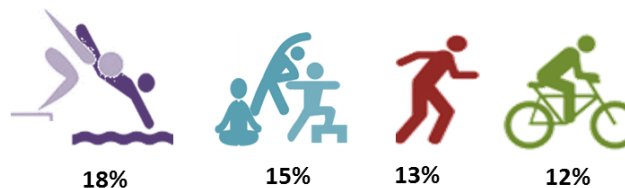
No change from previous year's figures



The proportion of adults who had taken part in sport within the previous year and the previous 4 weeks was similar to the previous year's results and consistent with the longer term trend.

Most popular sports

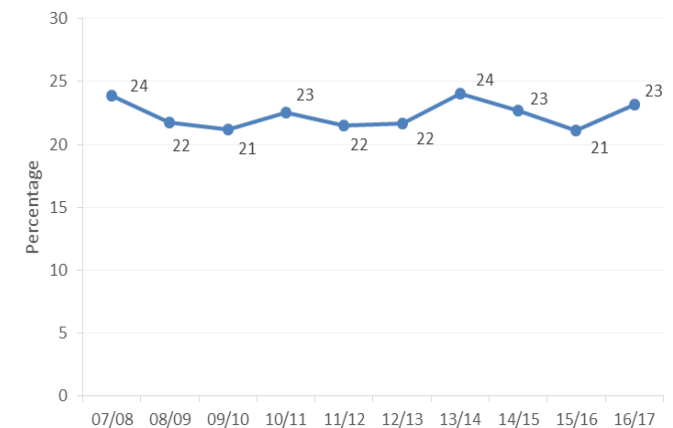
Most popular sports remain the same



Swimming / diving remained the most popular sport amongst adults with almost one in five adults (18%) participating at least once within the previous year. Keepfit / Aerobics / Yoga / Dance exercise (15%), Jogging (13%) and Cycling for recreation (12%) remain the next most popular sports amongst adults.

Sports club membership

No change from previous year's figures



Around one quarter of adults were members of a sports club within the previous year. This was greater than the previous year's figures but still in keeping with the longer term trend.

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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

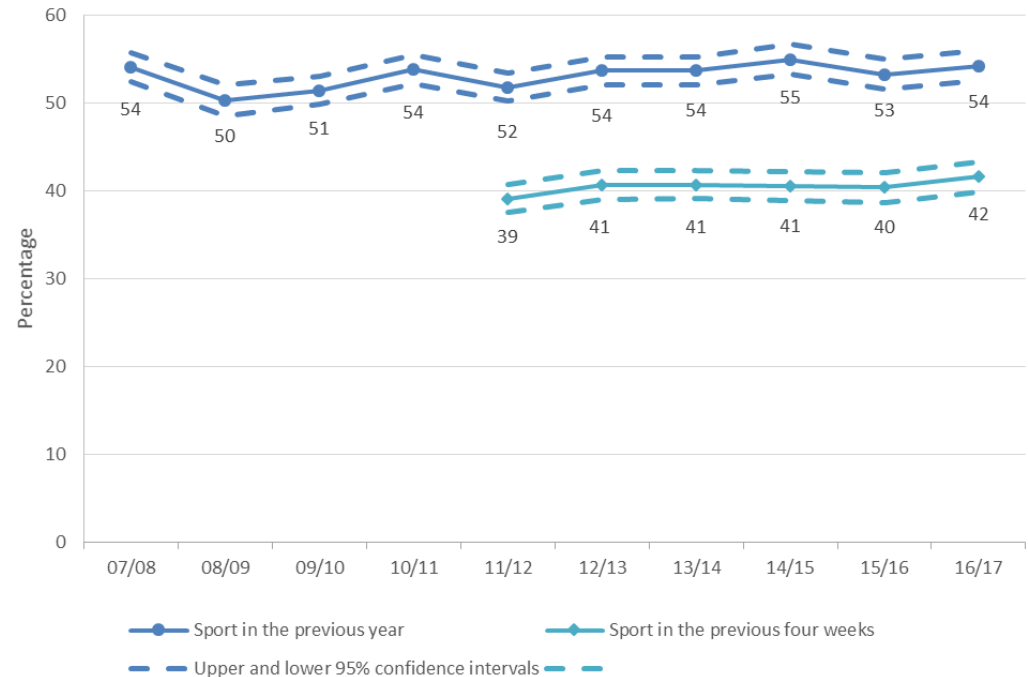
This report presents the findings from the 2016/17 Continuous Household Survey (CHS) in relation to sport participation by the adult population in Northern Ireland. This information will be used in the monitoring of targets in Sport Matters. More information relating to the CHS methodology and the interpretation 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 2016/17 are available [here](#).

Sport trends

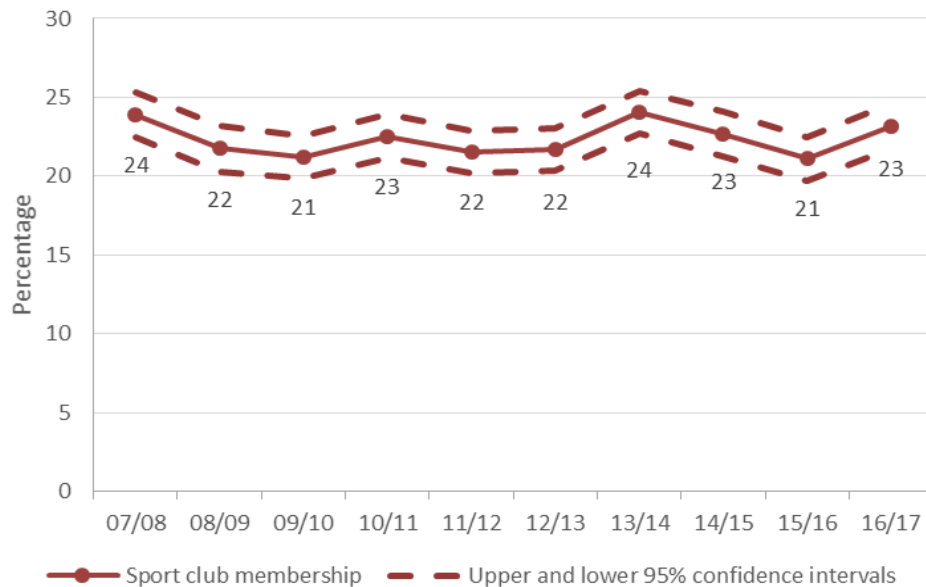
Sport participation within the last year and previous four weeks remains stable

More than half of adults (54%) participated in sport at least once within the last year. This proportion has remained fairly stable over the last seven years, following an initial decline between 2007/08 and 2008/09.

Similarly, since first recorded in the 2011/12 Continuous Household Survey (CHS), around four out of every ten adults have taken part in sport at least once within the previous four weeks, with 42% in 2016/17.



Sport club membership



Around one quarter (23%) of adults were a member of a sports club or organisation within the previous year. This is an increase on the 21% reported in the previous years' CHS, however similar to the 2014/15 figure.

The longer term trend shows that sports club membership has remained fairly consistent between one fifth and one quarter of the adult population during the past ten years.

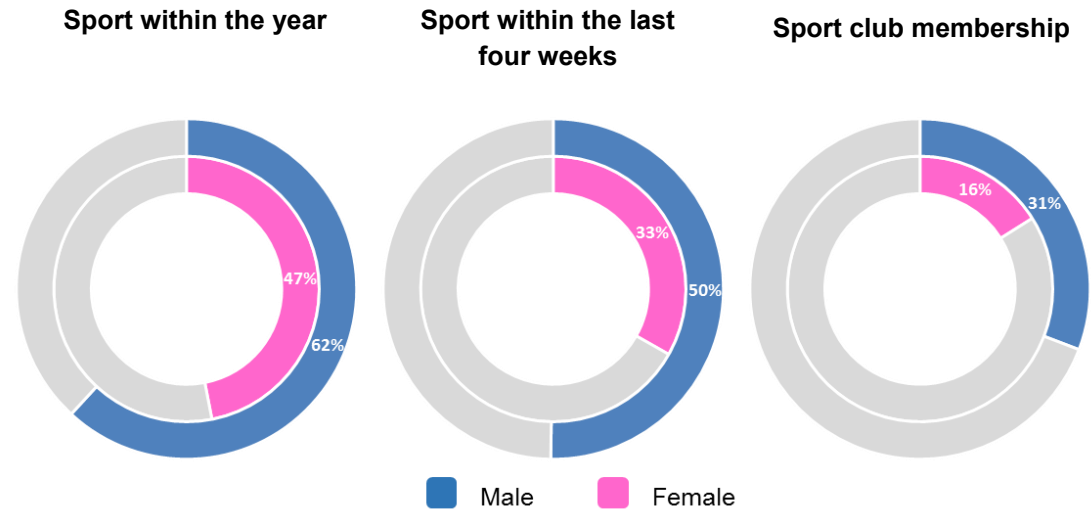
Gender and sport participation

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 (62%). Similarly when looking at participation rates over the previous four weeks, a third of females (33%) stated that they had taken part in sport compared to half of males (50%).

Males were also more likely to be a member of a sports club (31%) than females (16%).

Since 2007/08 the gap between adult male and female participation rates has remained broadly consistent.

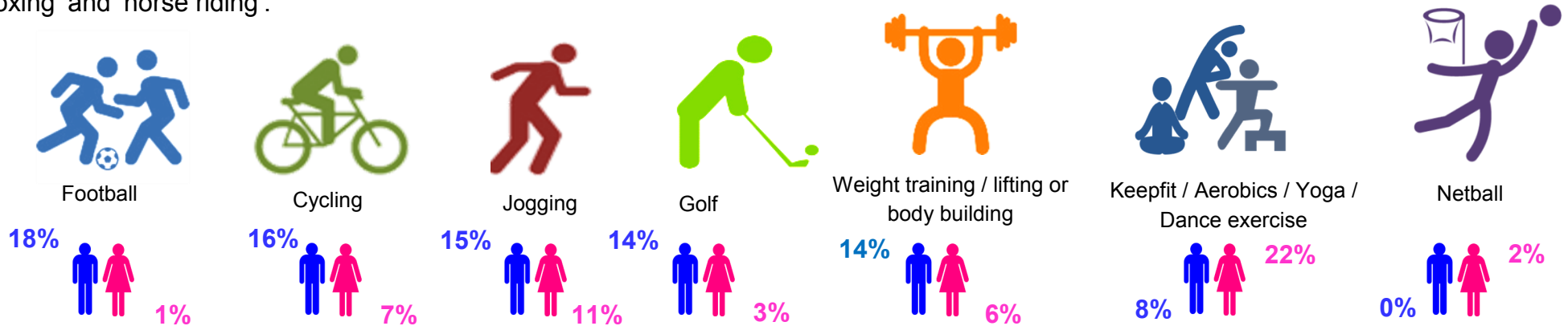


Sport preferences amongst males and females

There were differences in the types of sports males and females participated in within the last year. Compared with females, a higher proportion of males participated in 27 of the 36 sports listed in the survey. Some of the most notable differences where a higher proportion of males participated include 'football', 'cycling for recreation', 'jogging', 'golf', 'weight training / lifting or bodybuilding' and 'snooker'.

Women were more likely than men to have participated in just two of the 36 sports listed. These were 'Keepfit / Aerobics / Yoga / Dance exercise' and 'netball'.

Some of the sports where no differences between males and females were observed include; 'swimming or diving', 'badminton', 'ice skating', 'boxing' and 'horse riding'.



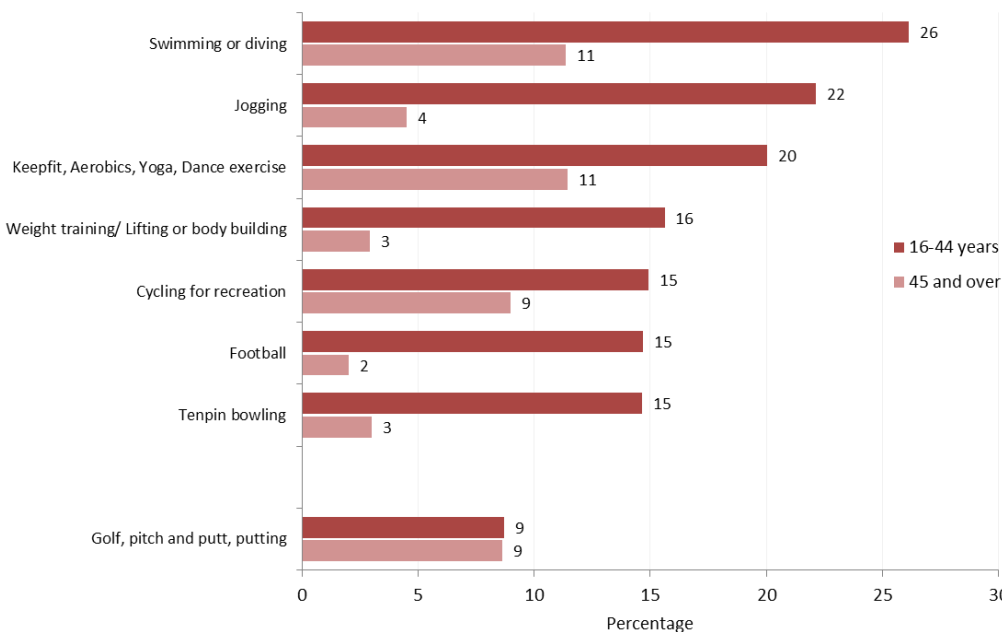
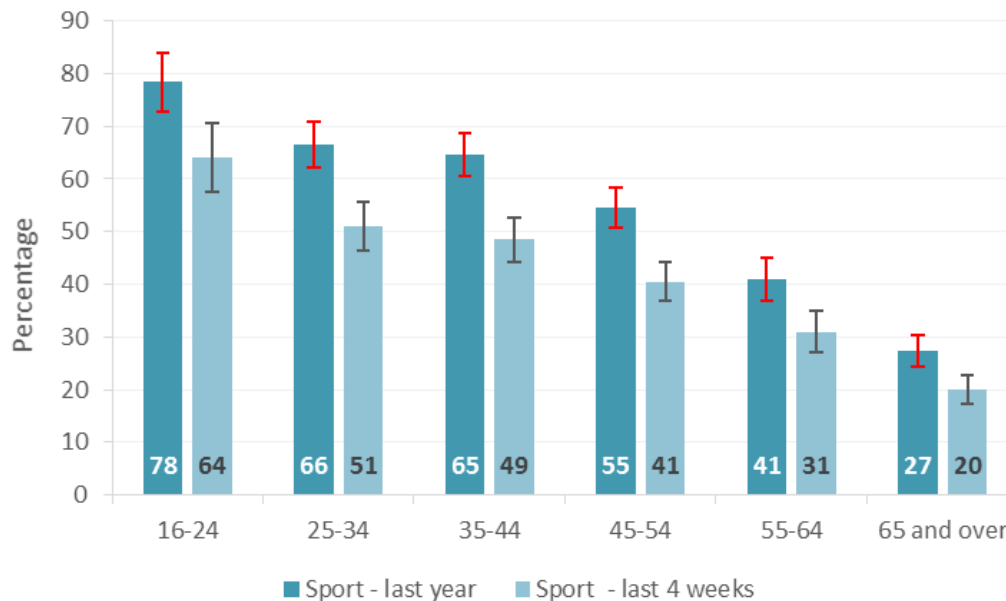
Age and sport participation

Older people less likely to participate in sport

Sport participation declines with age among adults. Those aged 45 and over were much less likely to have participated in any sport within the last year (40%) or within the last 4 weeks (29%) compared to younger adults aged 16-44 years (68% and 52% respectively).

More detailed analysis of sport participation in the last year by age group shows that after an initial drop from 78% of those aged 16-24 years to 66% of those aged 25-34 years, the rate remained steady at 65% of those aged 35-44 years. The decreasing participation rate then accelerates with each subsequent age group to only 27% of those aged 65 and over.

Similarly, when looking at participation rates over the last 4 weeks, nearly two-thirds of young adults aged 16-24 (64%) had taken part in sport compared to just one fifth of adults aged 65 and over (20%).



Sport preferences amongst younger and older adults

Comparison of participation in particular sports by those aged under 45 and those aged 45 and over shows that adults in the latter age category were less likely to have participated in the majority of sports in the last year. There was no difference found between the proportions of either age group participating in 'golf, pitch and putt, putting' (both 9%) or 'bowls' (both 3%) as was also the case with some of the less popular sport activities such as horse riding (both 1%) or skiing (both 1%).

When looking at participation in sport over the last 4 weeks, the results were similar. However there was a statistically higher proportion of adults aged 45 and over who had participated in 'golf, pitch and putt, putting' in the last 4 weeks compared to those aged under 45 (6% and 3% respectively).

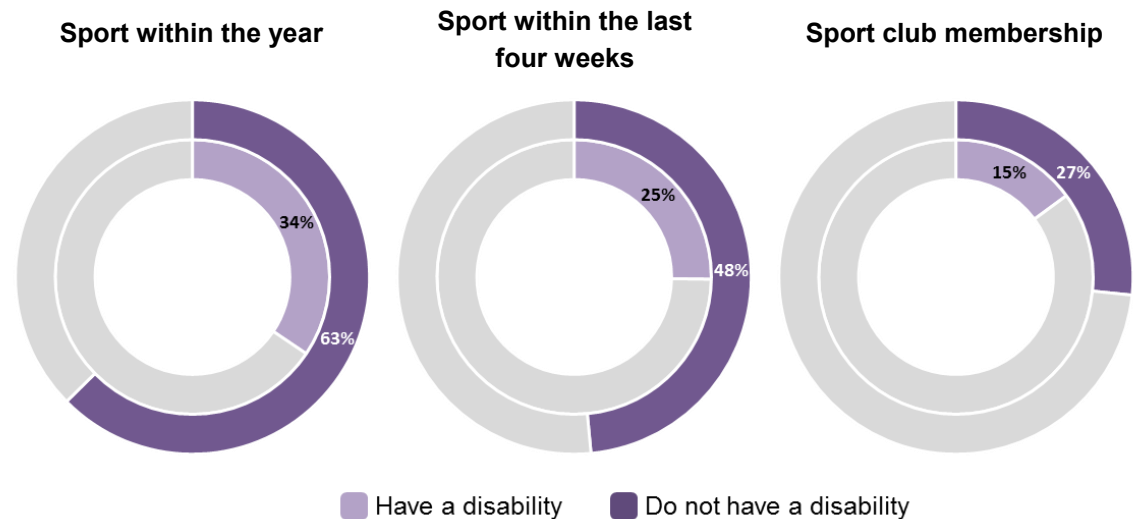
Disability and sport participation

Those who have a disability less likely to participate in sport

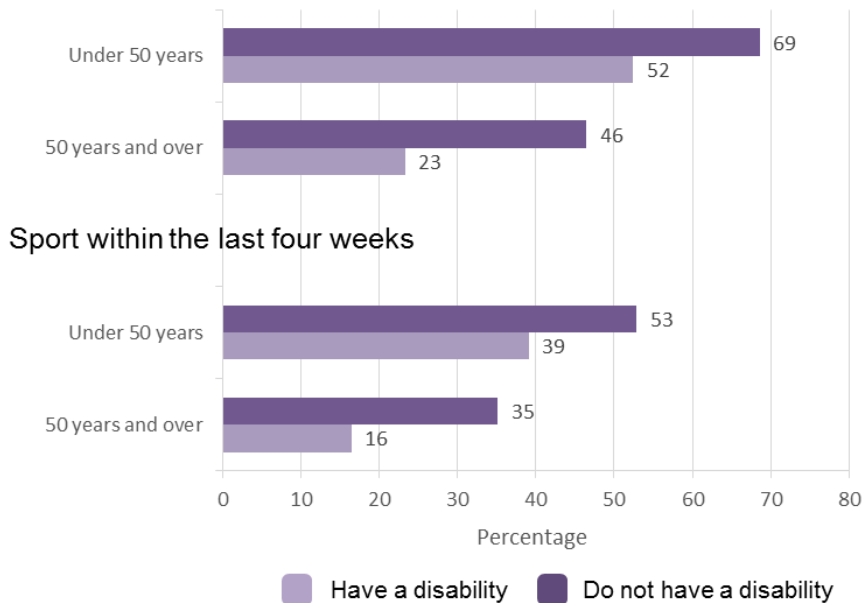
Those aged 16 and over who have a disability were less likely to have taken part in sport at least once within the last year (34%) compared to those who do not have a disability (63%).

A similar disparity was found when participation rates over the last 4 weeks were considered, a quarter of those with a disability (25%) were found to have taken part in sport compared to almost half of adults who do not have a disability (48%).

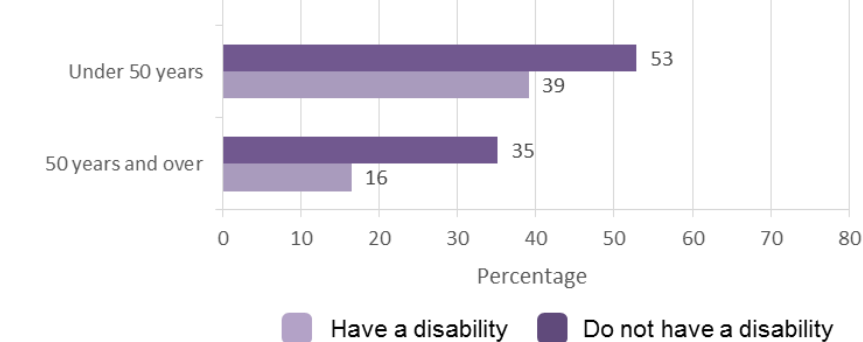
Fifteen per cent of adults with a disability were members of a sports club, a lower proportion than the 27% of those who do not have a disability.



Sport within the year



Sport within the last four weeks



Disability and age

Disability and age are closely related. On balance, the older we become the more likely we are to have a disability. Results have also shown that age and sport participation are negatively correlated, as we get older, the less likely we are to participate in sport.

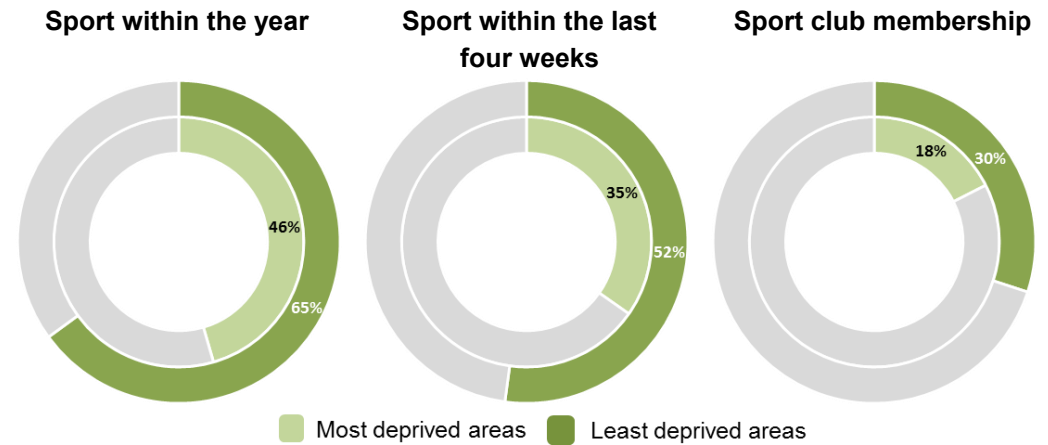
Considering age and disability, analysis was conducted on broad age groups under 50 years and 50 years and over. The results show that both younger and older adults who have a disability were less likely to participate in sport within the previous year than those who do not have a disability. This suggests that irrespective of age, disability negatively affects the likelihood of adults participating in sport, although there is a bigger differential among older adults.

When participation rates over the last four weeks were considered the results were similar.

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 (35%) than those adults living in the least deprived areas (65% and 52%, respectively). Similarly, those living in the most deprived areas were less likely to be a member of a sports club (18%) than those living in the least deprived areas (30%).

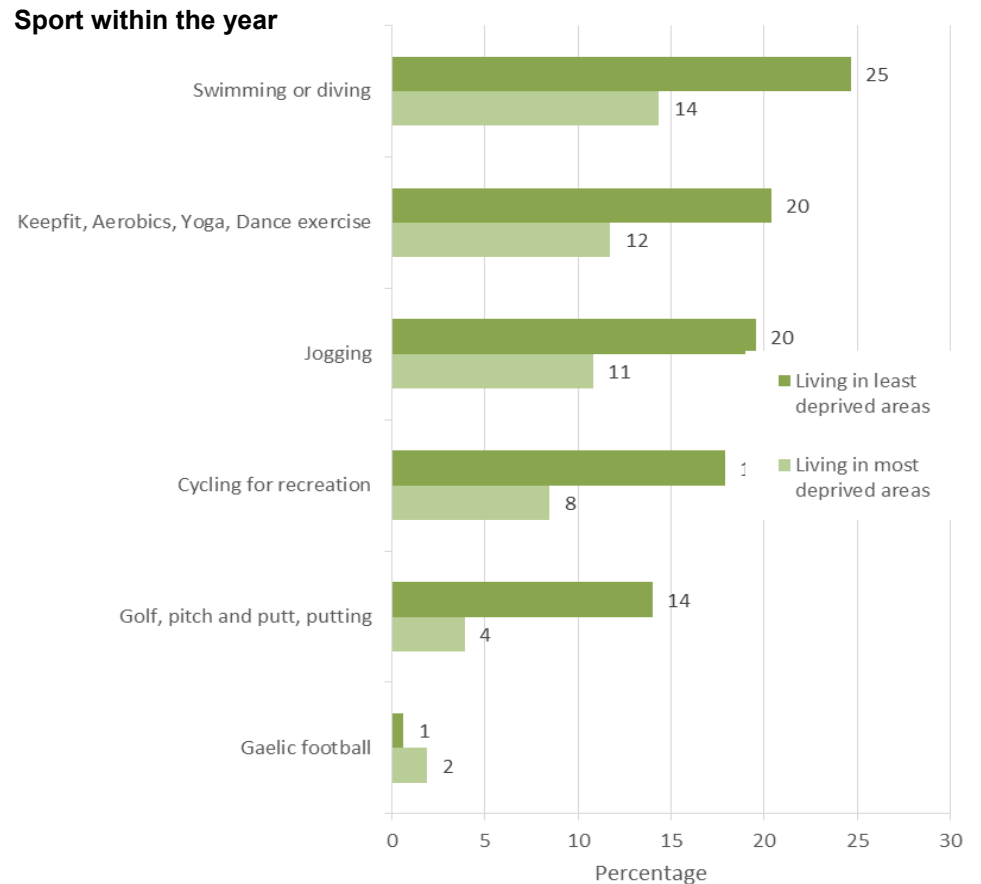


Differences in sport preferences by deprivation

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 were more likely to have participated in 17 of the 36 sports listed within the previous year, in contrast, adults living in the most deprived areas were more likely to have taken part in just one of the sports listed; Gaelic football.

Some of the sports showing significant differences between the two groups were 'Swimming or diving' (25% v 14%), 'Keepfit, Aerobics, Yoga, Dance Exercise' (20% v 12%), Jogging (20% v 11%) and 'Cycling for recreation' (18% v 8%).

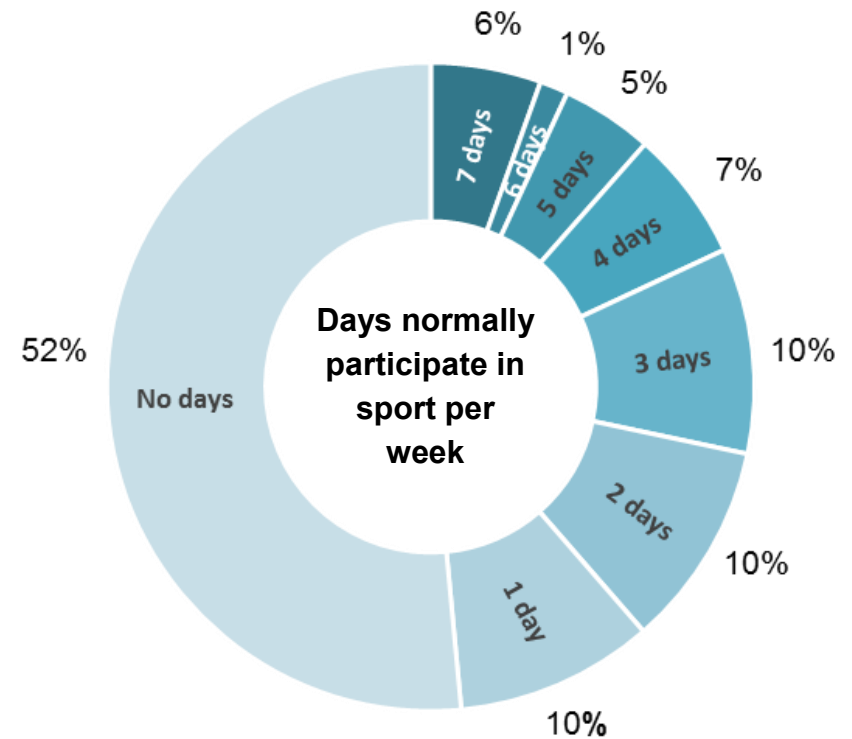
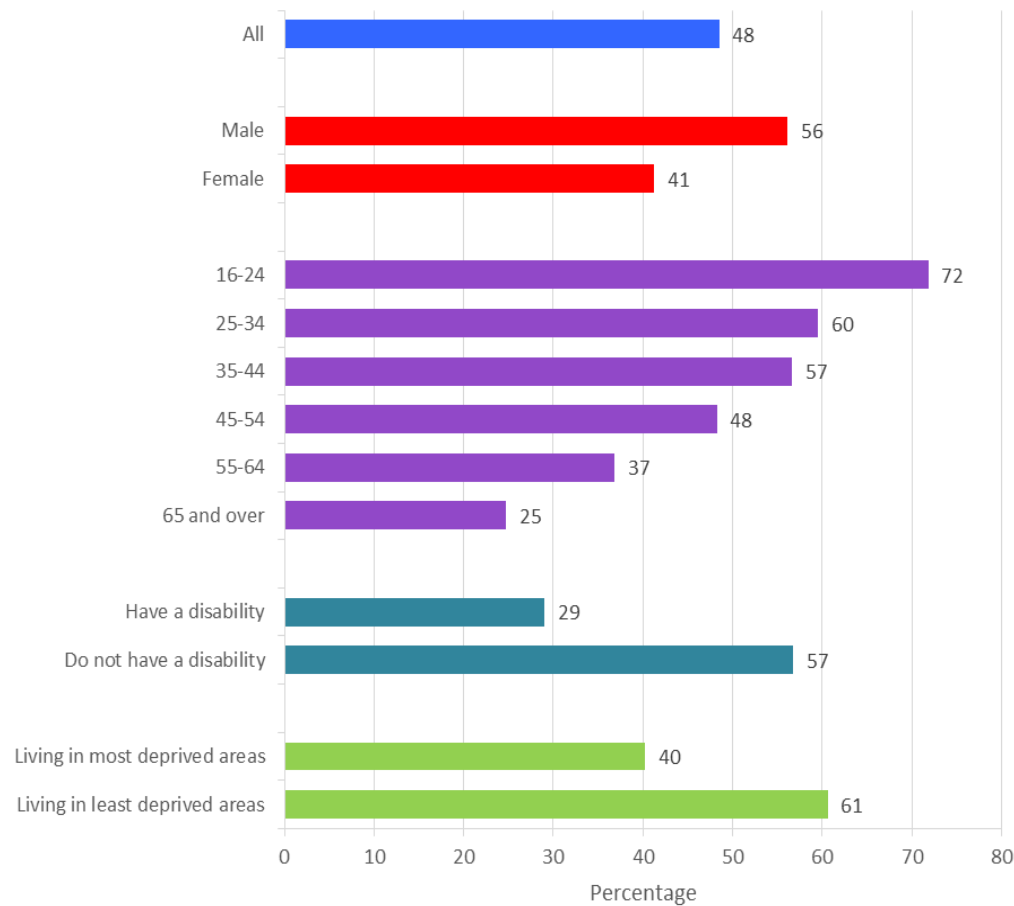
Considering participation rates over the previous 4 weeks shows that adults living in the least deprived areas were more likely to have taken part in 9 of the sports listed compared to those who lived in the most deprived areas. Similar to the previous analysis, the only sport in which adults who lived in the most deprived areas were more likely than those in the least deprived areas to have taken part in the last 4 weeks was Gaelic football.



Regular participation in sport

Adults in Northern Ireland were asked how many days per week do they normally take part in sport. Whilst over half of all adults (54%) had participated in sport at least once within the previous year, 48% normally participated in sport at least one day per week, with just under a fifth (18%) normally participating on 4 or more days per week.

Participating in sport at least one day per week



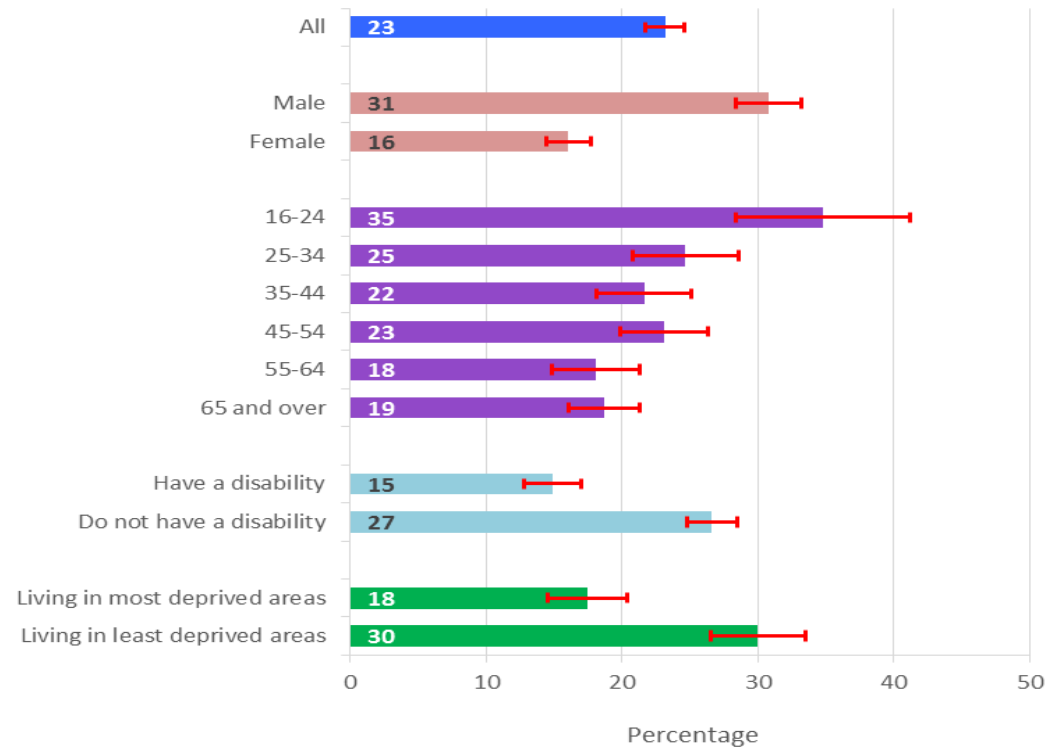
There are similar differences by gender, age, disability and deprivation as for other indicators of sport participation i.e. normally participating on one or more days per week was lower for women, older adults, adults with a disability and adults living in the most deprived areas.

Note: This analysis is not directly comparable with 2015/16 as it excludes adults who only walk for recreation.

Sports club membership

Adults were asked if they were a member of a sports club or organisation within the previous year. Almost a quarter (23%) of adults stated that they were, with males (31%) more likely to have been a member of a sports club or organisation than females (16%).

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' (5%), 'Weight training / Lifting or body building' (4%), 'golf' and 'football' (both 3%).

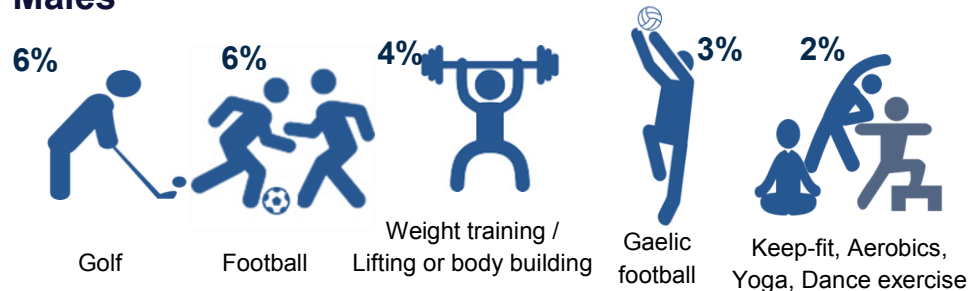


Sport preferences amongst males and females

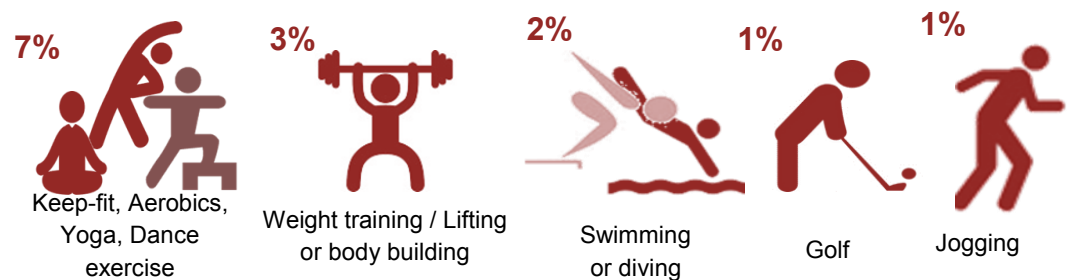
Amongst men, 'golf' and 'football' were the most popular sports played through their membership of a sports club (both 6%) followed by 'Weight training / Lifting or body building' (4%).

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.

Males



Females

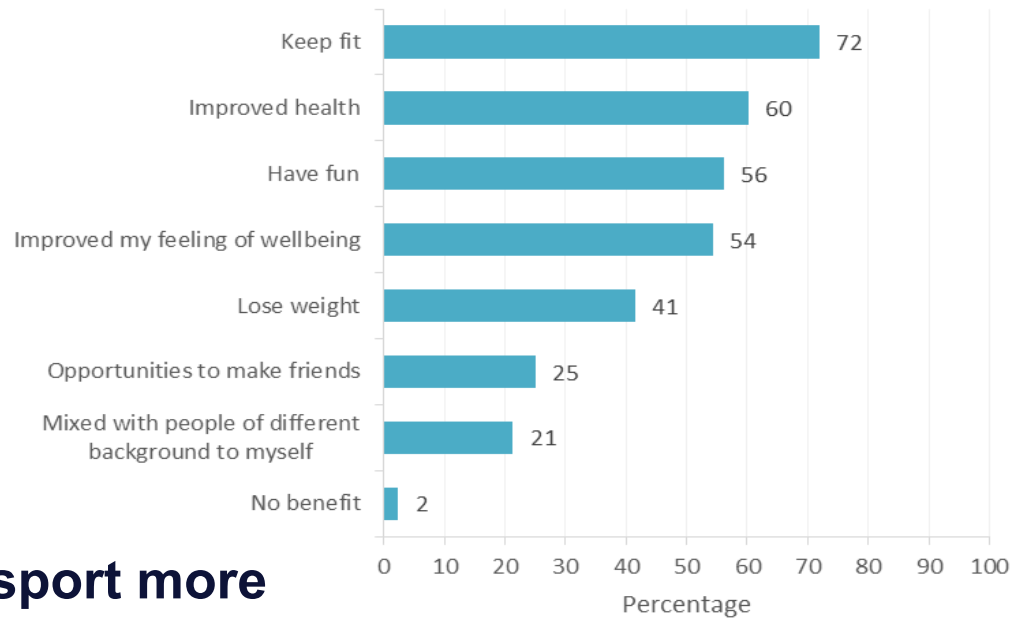


Benefits of participating in sport

Just over seven out of every ten (72%) adults in Northern Ireland who had participated in sport over the last year cited “Keep fit” as a benefit.

Six out of every ten adults (60%) who had participated in sport cited “Improved health” as a benefit of participating. Other benefits of participating that were stated by respondents include “Have fun” (56%), “Improved my feeling of wellbeing” (54%) and “Lose weight” (41%).

Only two per cent of all adults who had participated stated that they had experienced no benefits as a result of participating in sport over the past year.

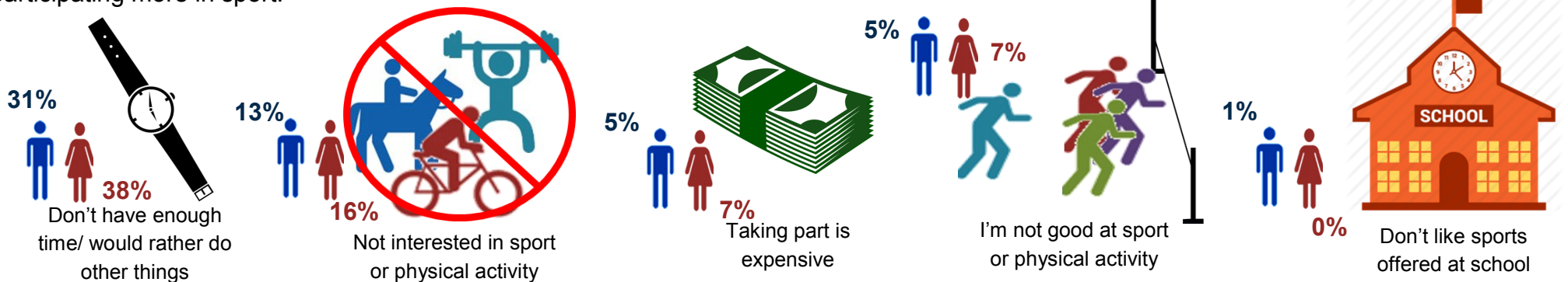


Factors that put you off participating in sport more

Just over a fifth of adults (22%) stated that nothing puts them off participating more in sport. However just over a third (34%) stated that they didn't have enough time to participate more or would rather do other things with their time.

Other reasons cited by respondents that put them off participating more include “I have a medical condition/disability” (19%), “I'm not fit / I get tired easily” (15%), “I'm not interested in sport or physical activity” (14%) and “The weather is bad” (13%).

Women were more likely than men to have stated ‘I don't have enough time / I would rather do other things with my time’, ‘I'm not interested in sport or physical activity’, ‘Taking part is expensive’ and ‘I'm not good at sport or physical activity’ as reasons for not taking part more in sport. In contrast, males were slightly more likely to have stated that they don't like the sports offered at school as reasons that put them off from participating more in sport.



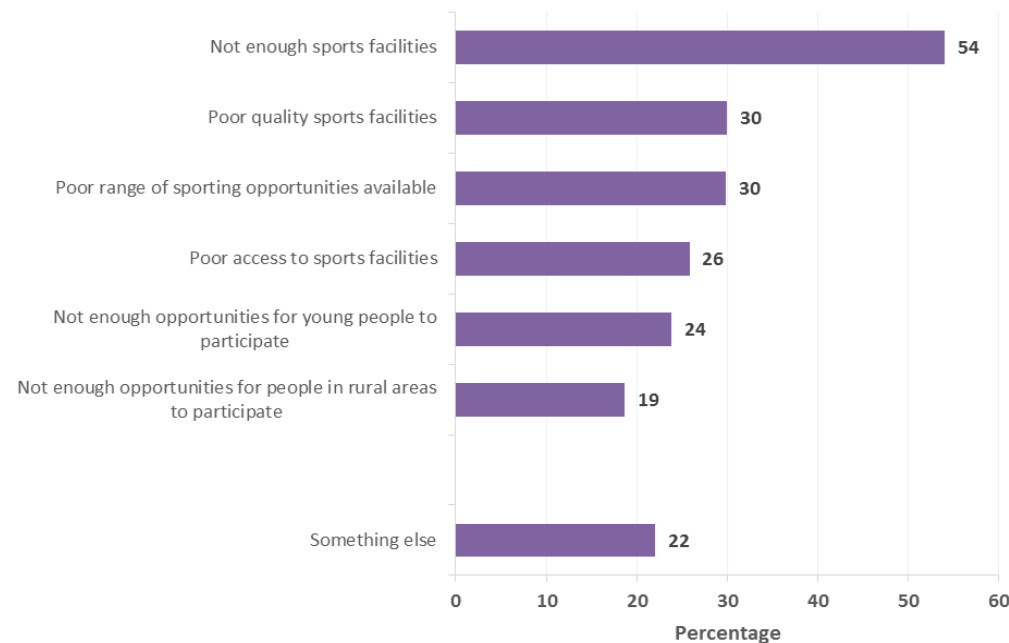
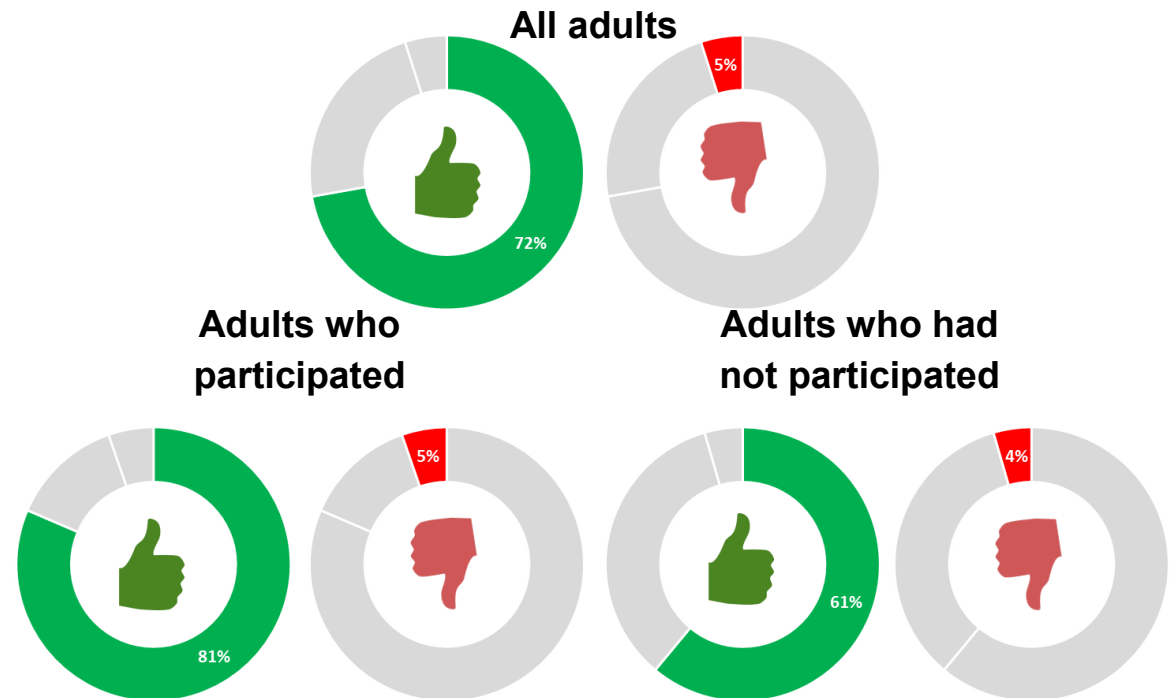
Satisfaction with sports provision

Just over seven out of every ten adults (72%) indicated that they were satisfied with sports provision in Northern Ireland. Just over a fifth stated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (23%) and just 5% stated that they were dissatisfied.

Adults who had not participated were no more likely to express dissatisfaction with sports provision than those who had participated (4% and 5% respectively).

However a greater proportion of those who had participated were satisfied than those who had not participated in sport

Reasons dissatisfied with sports provision



Those who had indicated that they were dissatisfied with sports provision in Northern Ireland were asked for reasons why they felt this way.

Just over half (54%) stated that there were not enough sports facilities, while just under a third stated that the sports facilities were of poor quality and that there was a poor range of sporting opportunities available (both 30%).

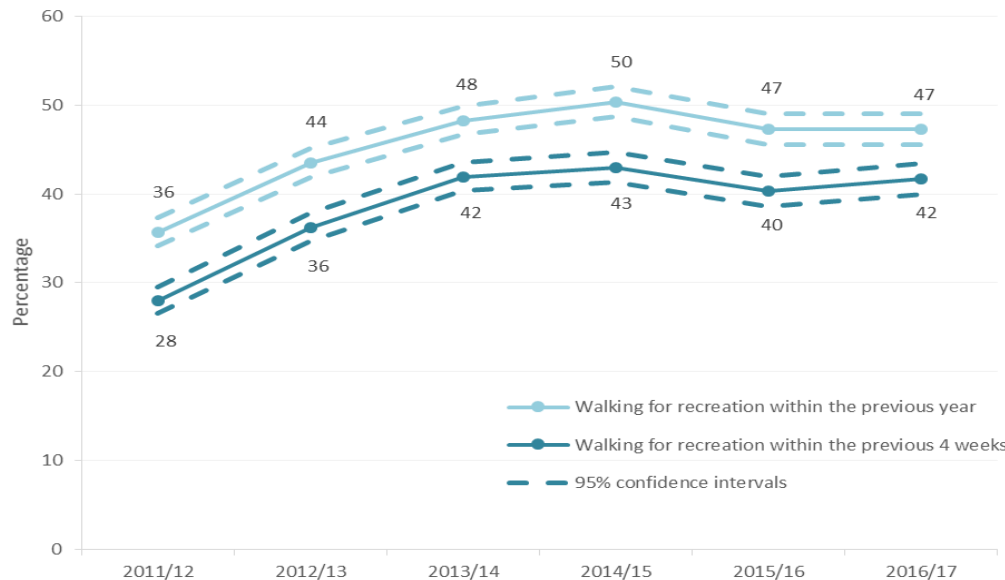
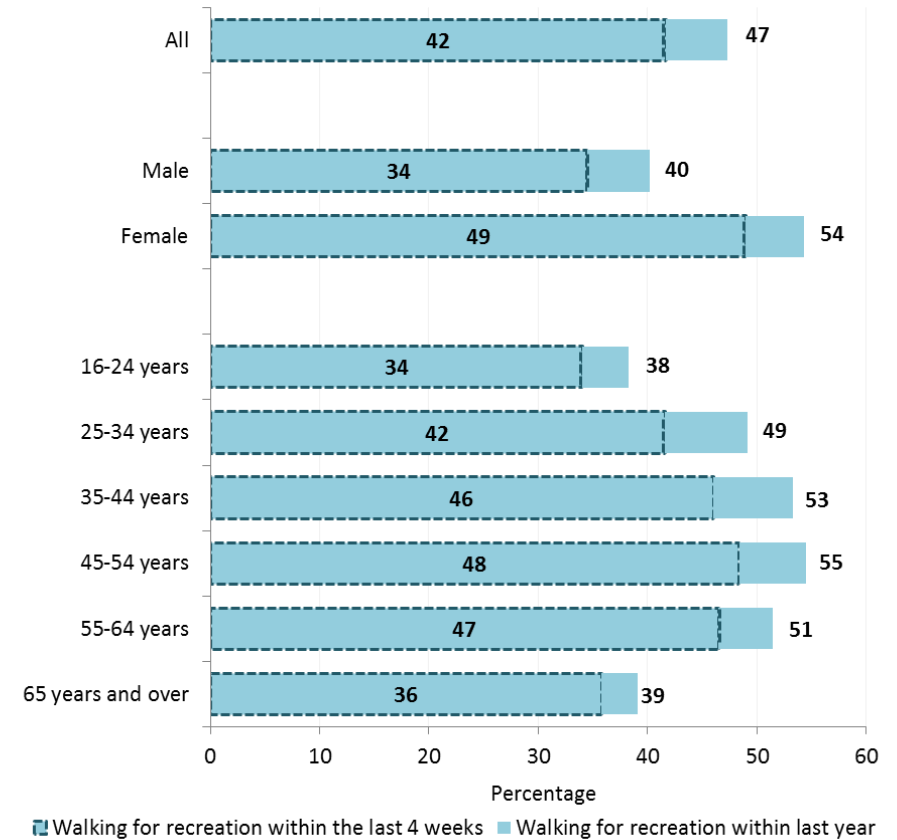
Other most frequently cited reasons included; "Poor access to sports facilities" (26%), "Not enough opportunities for young people to participate" (24%) and "Not enough opportunities for people in rural areas to participate" (19%).

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. In contrast to the demographic pattern seen with the overall sport participation rates, a higher proportion of females (54%) than males (40%) had walked for recreation.

Around one sixth of adults (16%) had not participated in sport but had walked for recreation within the previous year, as with the previous results a higher proportion of non-sport participating females (23%) had walked for recreation than non-sport participating males (10%). When considering age groups, the pattern is also somewhat different than that seen when analysing sport participation. Walking for recreation rates peak among the 45-54 year age group (55%), whilst rates for 65 years and over are similar to those for the youngest adult age group 16-24 years..

However, analysis by disability and deprivation shows that relatively fewer adults with a disability and adults living in the most deprived areas walk for recreation.



Longer term trend

Over the last six years, the proportion of adults who indicated that they walked for recreation within the previous year has increased from 36% in 2011/12 to a peak of 50% of adults in 2014/15. The 2016/17 figure (47%) has seen the proportion remain constant when compared with the 2015/16 figure.

Similarly, within the same time frame, the proportion of adults who had walked for recreation within the previous 4 weeks increased from 28% in 2011/12 to a peak of 43% in 2014/15. The 2016/17 results show a similar proportion at 42%.

Definitions and technical notes

Continuous Household Survey

The Continuous Household Survey (CHS) is a Northern Ireland wide household survey administered by Central Survey Unit, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. The sample for this survey consists of a systematic random sample of 4,500 addresses selected from the Land and Property Service's list of private addresses. The findings reported for 2016/17 are based on 3,262 respondents, aged 16 and over, who answered the culture, arts and leisure modules of the survey.

Weighting the Continuous Household Survey

Analysis of the culture, arts and leisure modules of the CHS have been weighted for non-response. A chi square goodness-of-fit test showed that the CHS sample was not representative of the population by age and sex when compared with the Population and Migration Estimates Northern Ireland 2015 (NISRA). As a result, three separate weights were produced for age, sex and age and sex combined.

Non-response weighting sometimes increases standard errors, although the impact tends to be fairly small, i.e. the adjustment may be less or greater than 1, but will generally be reasonably close to 1. In the case of the culture, arts and leisure modules of CHS, the values of the adjustment for all three weighting systems are so close to one, it is not necessary to take account of this in the calculation of standard error and confidence intervals.

While weighting for non-response (also called post-stratification) should reduce bias, it must be acknowledged that it will not eliminate bias. The reasons individuals choose to take part in surveys are complex and depend on lots of factors specific to the individual. As a result, the non-response biases in surveys are likely to be complex. Post-stratification works on the assumption that, by aligning the survey to the population along a small number of dimensions such as age and gender, many of these complex biases will reduce. However, it would be misleading to suggest that they will be eliminated.

Sport participation (Adults) - Participated in at least one of the following activities within the 12 months prior, 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

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

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 2010 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.

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

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.

