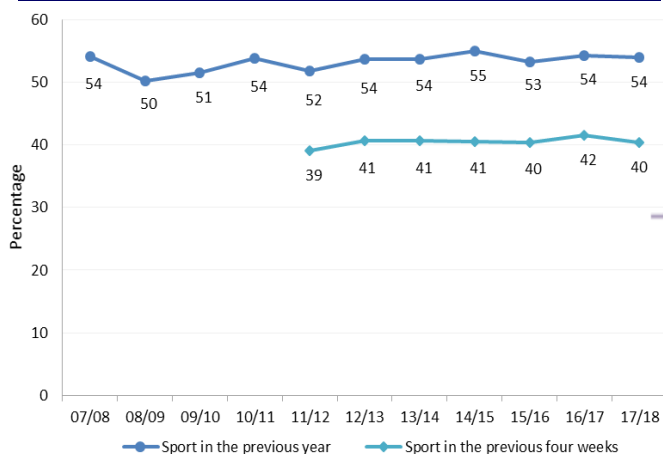


## Main stories

- In 2017/18, the proportion of adults who had participated in sport in the last 12 months showed no change on the previous year's figure (54%). This is also consistent with the longer term trend.
- The proportion of children who had participated in sport outside of school was also similar to the previous year (83% and 86% respectively).
- Seven out of every ten adults (70%) who had participated in sport cited "Keep fit" as a benefit of participating, while six out of every ten (60%) cited "Improved health". Other benefits of participating that were stated by respondents include "Have fun" (58%) and "Improved my feeling of wellbeing" (53%).

### Sport participation

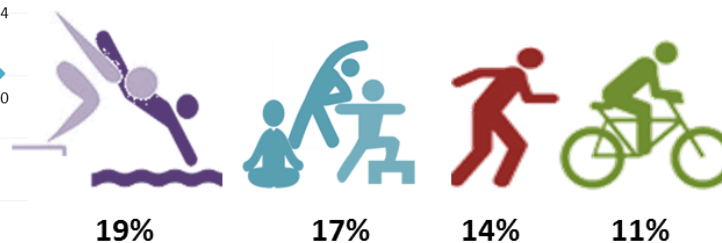
No change from previous year's figures



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

### Most popular sports

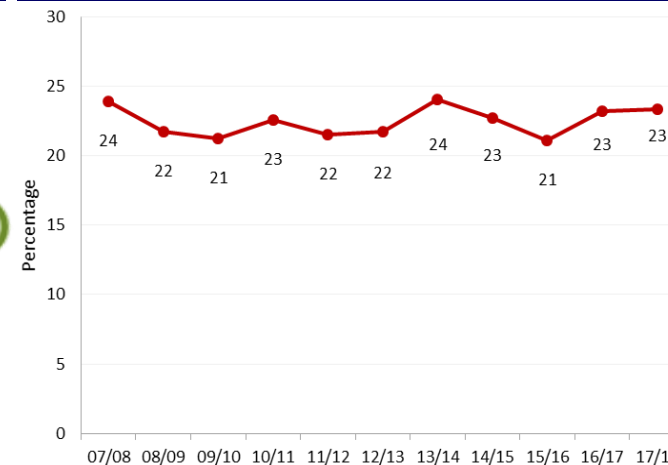
Most popular sports remain the same



Swimming or diving remained the most popular sport amongst adults with almost one in five adults (19%) participating at least once within the previous year. Keepfit, Aerobics, Yoga, Dance exercise (17%), Jogging (14%) and Cycling for recreation (11%) 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 similar to the previous year's figures and in keeping with the longer term trend.

## Contents

## Page

Sport trends	3
Gender and sport participation	4
Age and sport participation	5
Disability and sport participation	6
Deprivation and sport participation	7
Regular participation in sport	8
Sport club membership	9
Walking for recreation	10
Participation in sporting competitions / Attendance at live sports events	11
Popular live sports events	12
Live sports events - Rate your experience	13
Why watch live sports events / Encourage watch (more) events	14
Children's sport participation outside of school	16
Definitions and technical notes	17

Lead Statistician: Jennifer O'Donnell

[jennifer.o'donnell@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:jennifer.o'donnell@communities-ni.gov.uk)

DfC Press Office: 028 9082 3516

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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.

An action plan has also been developed 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

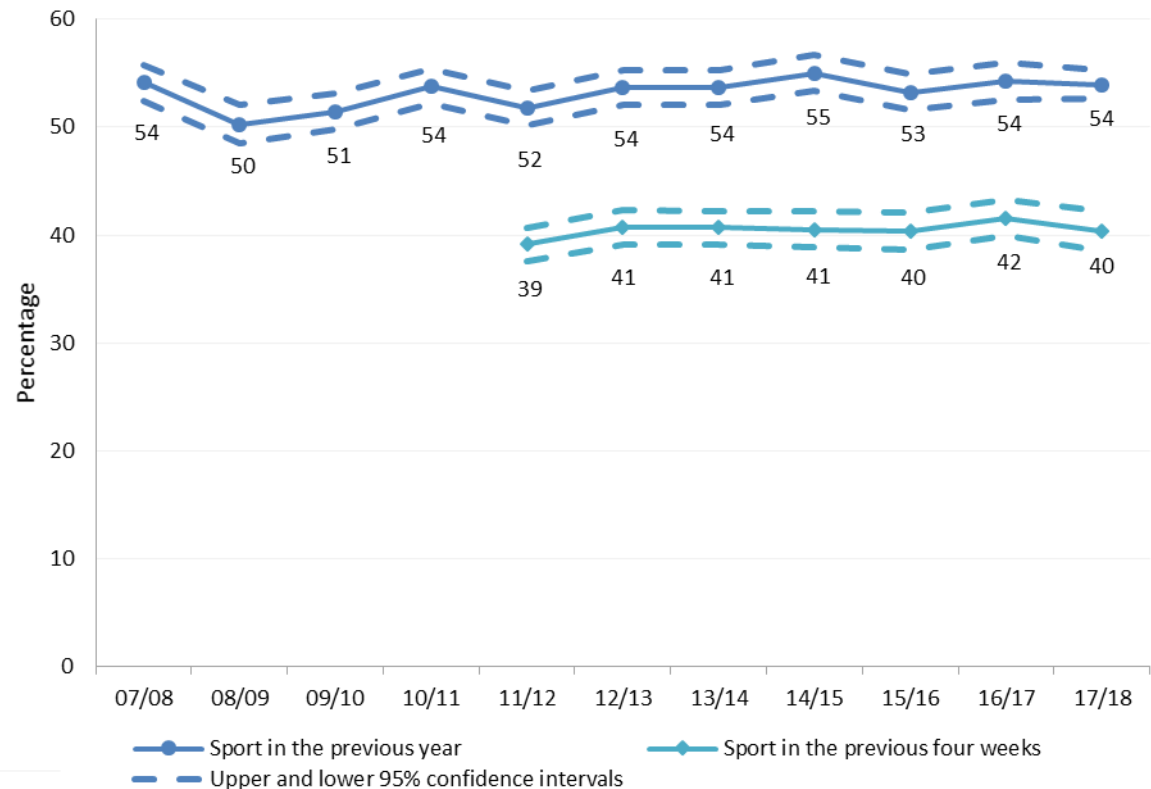
This report presents the findings from the 2017/18 Continuous Household Survey (CHS) in relation to sport participation by the adult population in Northern Ireland. This information will be used in the monitoring of targets in Sport Matters. More information relating to the CHS methodology and the interpretation 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 2017/18 are available [here](#).

# Sport trends

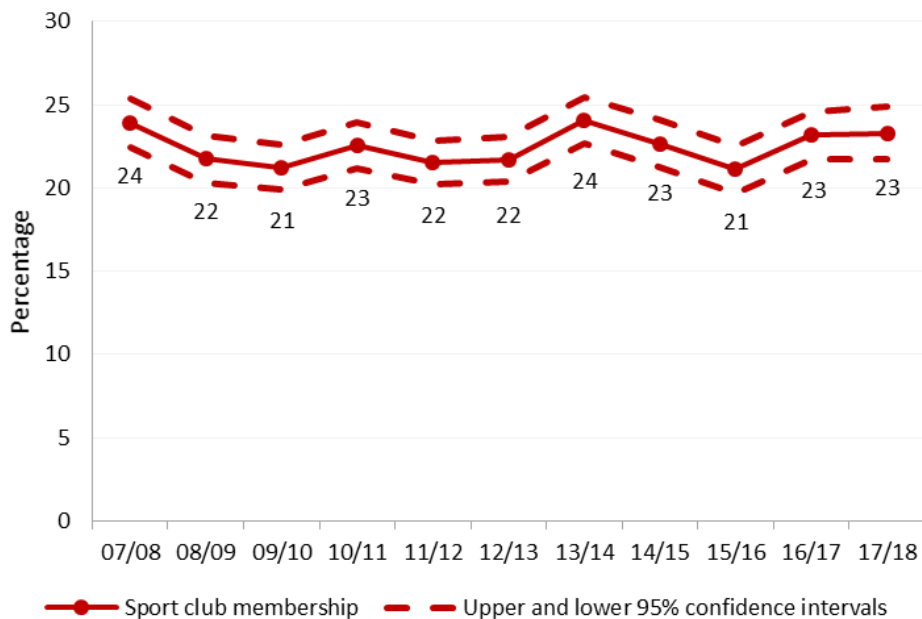
## Sport participation within the last year and previous four weeks remains stable

More than half of adults (54%) participated in sport at least once within the last year, showing no change on the proportion in 2016/17. The sport participation rate has remained fairly stable over the last eight 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 40% in 2017/18.



## Sport club membership



Around one quarter (23%) of adults were a member of a sports club or organisation within the previous year. As with the sport participation rate, this proportion is unchanged when compared with the 2016/17 figure and is in keeping with the longer term trend.

Since 2007/08 sports club membership has remained fairly consistent between one fifth and one quarter of the adult population.

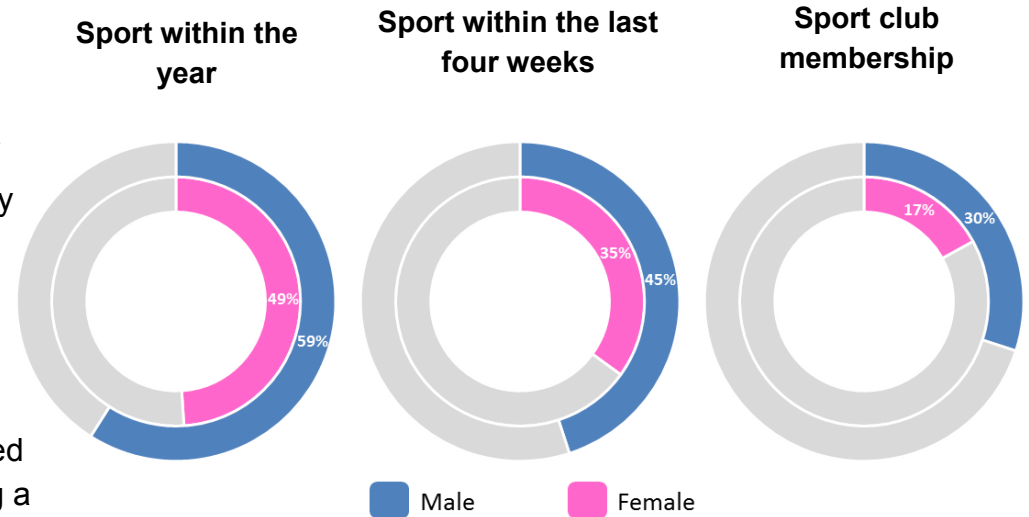
# Gender and sport participation

## 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 (49%) than males (59%). Similarly when looking at participation rates over the previous four weeks, over a third of females (35%) stated that they had taken part in sport compared to nearly half of all males (45%).

Males were also more likely to be a member of a sports club (30%) than females (17%). Since 2007/08 the gap between adult male and female participation rates has remained broadly consistent.

Since 2011/12 (45%), the proportion of females participating has remained fairly consistent at just under a half of all female adults, although showing a slight increase over the period to a peak of 49% in 2017/18

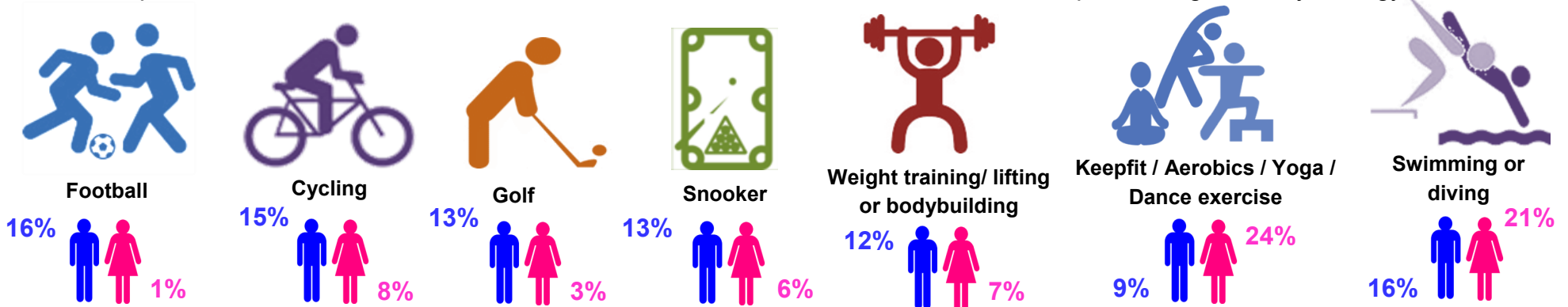


## Sport preferences amongst males and females

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', 'golf', 'snooker' and 'weight training / lifting or bodybuilding'.

Women were more likely than men to have participated in five of the 36 sports listed. These were 'Keepfit / Aerobics / Yoga / Dance exercise', 'swimming or diving', 'ice skating', 'horse riding' and 'netball'.

Some of the sports where no differences between males and females were observed include; 'tenpin bowling', 'hockey' and 'gymnastics'.



# Age and sport participation

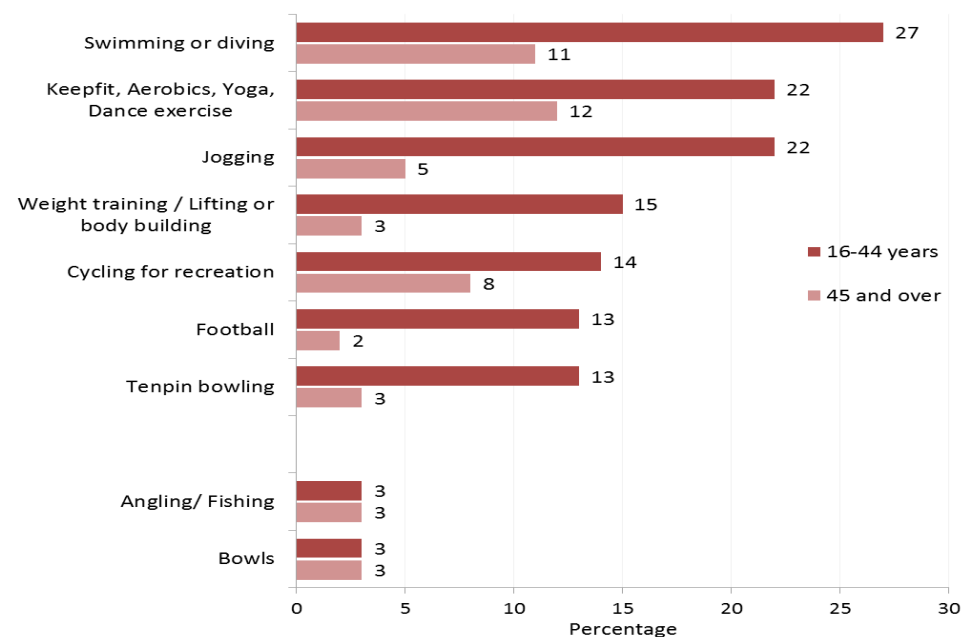
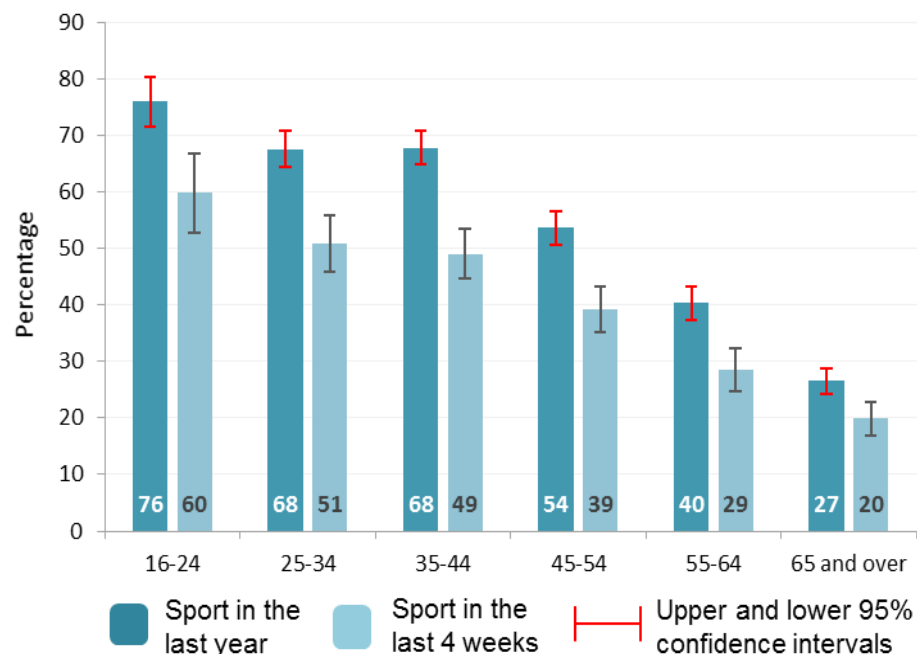
## Older people less likely to participate in sport

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 (38%) or within the last 4 weeks (28%) compared to younger adults aged 16-44 years (69% and 52% respectively).

More detailed analysis of sport participation in the last year by age group shows that after an initial drop from 76% of those aged 16-24 years to 68% of those aged 25-34 years, the rate remained steady at 68% 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, three out of every five adults aged 16-24 (60%) had taken part in sport compared to just one in every five adults aged 65 and over (20%).

From 2011/12 participation rates for adults aged 65 and over have steadily increased from 22% reaching a peak of 28% in 2012/13. This proportion has remained fairly consistent since, aside from a slight decline in 2014/15 to 23%.



## 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 'angling, fishing' (each 3%), 'bowls' (each 3%) or 'yachting or dinghy sailing' (each 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 'bowls' in the last 4 weeks (2%) and in 'shooting' (1%) compared to those aged under 45 (1% and 0% respectively), although participation rates for both sports are low.

# Disability and sport participation

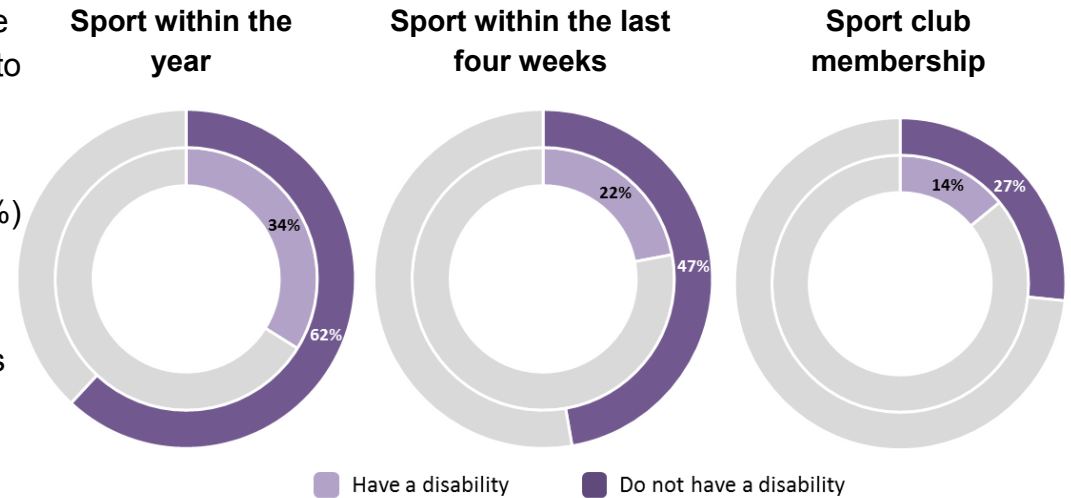
## Those who have a disability less likely to participate in sport

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 (62%).

A similar disparity was found when participation rates over the last 4 weeks were considered, just over a fifth of those with a disability (22%) were found to have taken part in sport compared to almost half of adults who do not have a disability (47%).

Fourteen 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.

Rates of participation in sport for adults who have a disability have remained fairly consistent at around a third of adults since 2011/12 (32%), aside from a slight decrease to 26% in 2012/13.



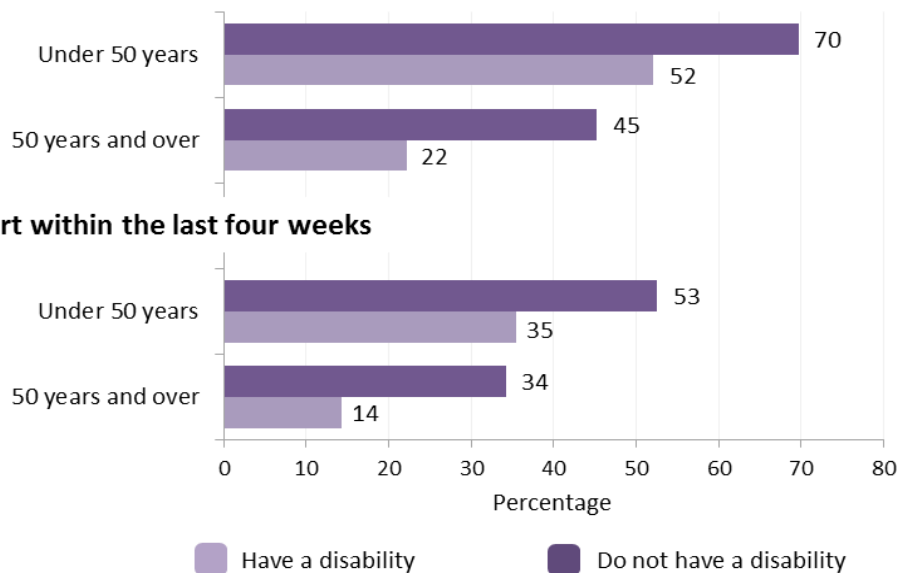
## Disability and age

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.

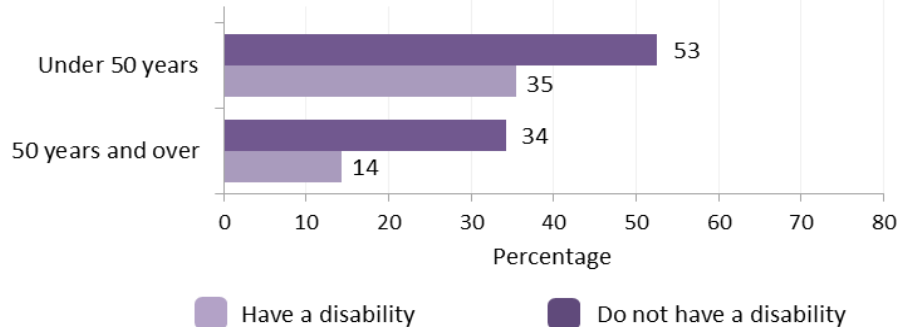
Considering age and disability, analysis was conducted on broad age groups under 50 years and 50 years and over. The results show that both younger and older adults who have a disability were less likely to participate in sport within the previous year than those who do not have a disability. This suggests 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, with a bigger gap for older adults with a disability.

### Sport within the year



### Sport within the last four weeks



# 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 (41%) or within the last 4 weeks (36%) than those adults living in the least deprived areas (66% and 49%, respectively). Similarly, those living in the most deprived areas were less likely to be a member of a sports club (19%) than those living in the least deprived areas (25%).

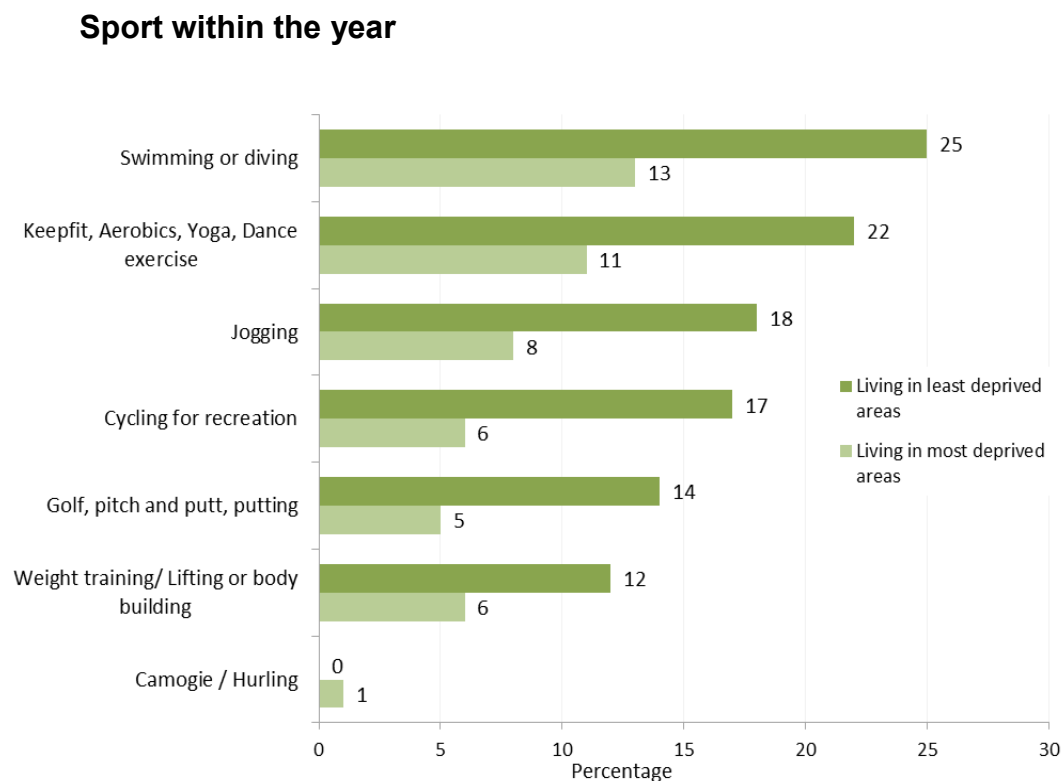
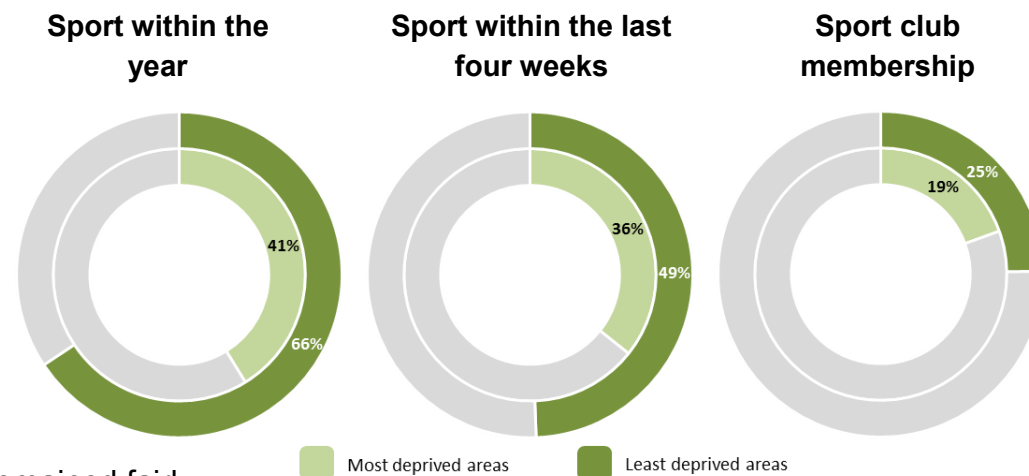
Participation rates for adults who live in the most deprived areas have remained fairly consistent at around four of every ten adults over the period 2011/12 (44%) to 2017/18 (41%).

## 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 22 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 'hurling' or 'camogie'.

Some of the sports showing significant differences between the two groups were 'Swimming or diving' (25% v 13%), 'Keepfit, Aerobics, Yoga, Dance Exercise' (22% v 11%), 'Jogging' (18% v 8%) and 'Cycling for recreation' (17% v 6%).

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 five of the sports listed compared to those who lived in the most deprived areas. Adults who lived in the most deprived areas were more likely to have participated in 'snooker', 'darts', 'Gaelic football' or 'boxing' than those in the least deprived areas over the previous 4 weeks.

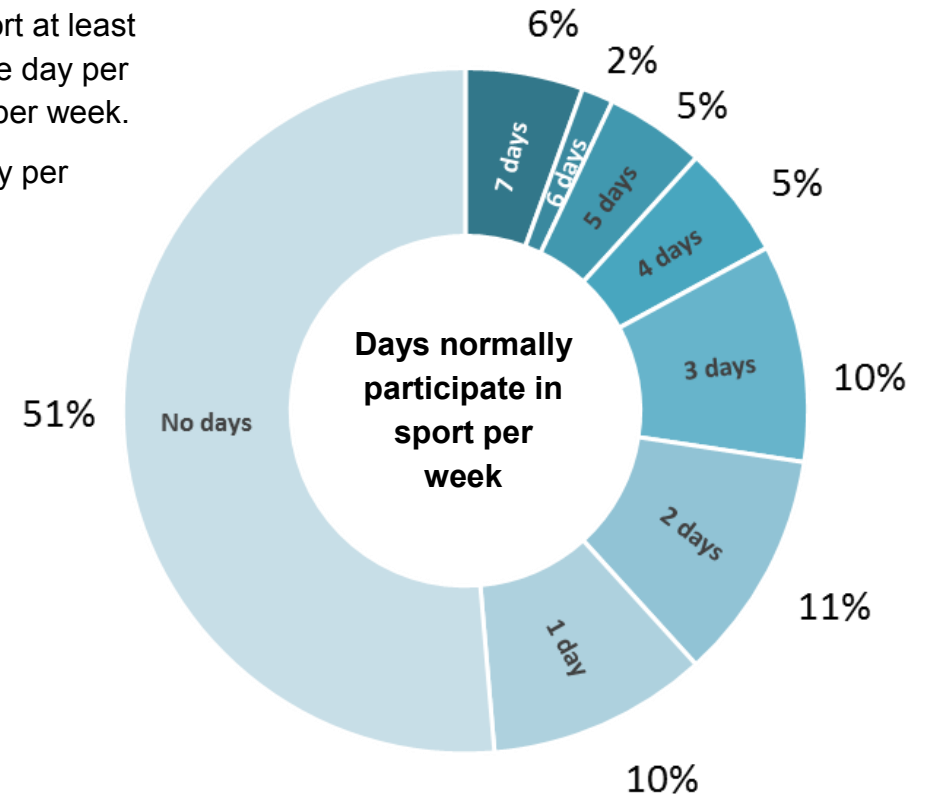
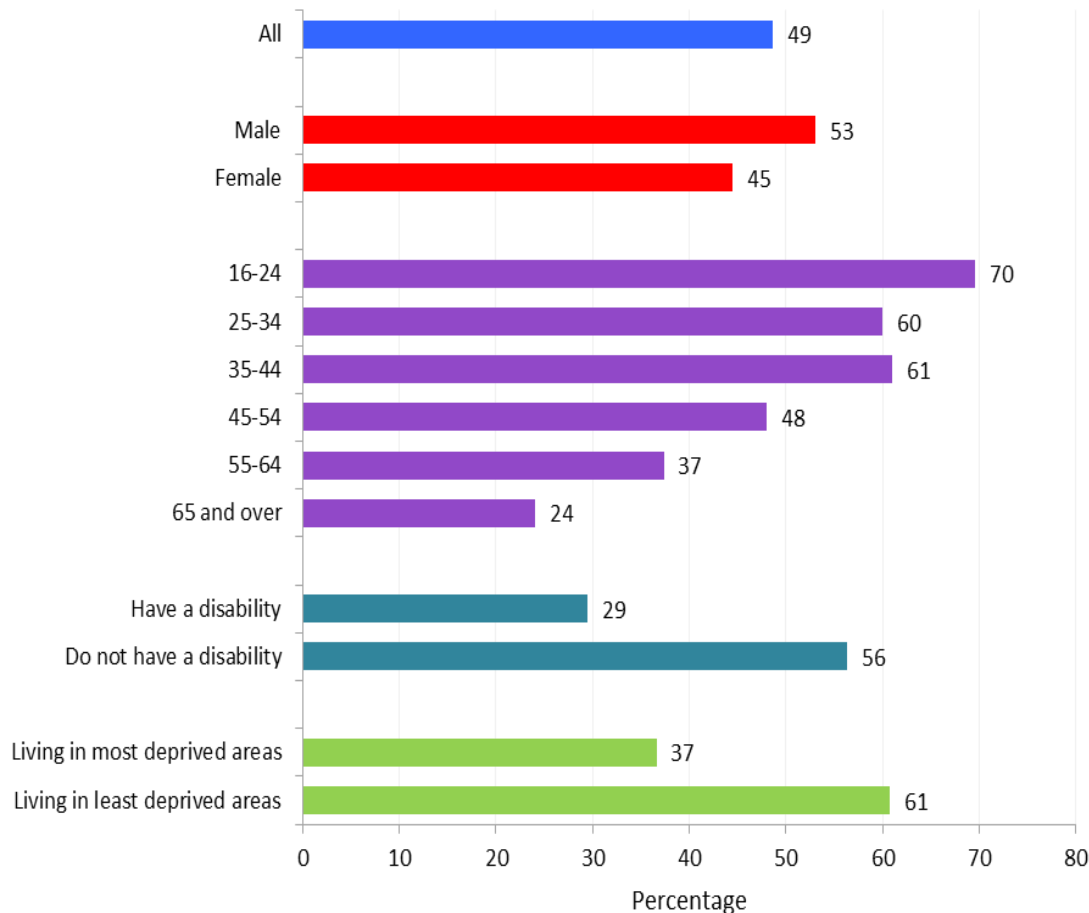


# Regular participation in sport

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, 49% 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.

This is similar to the proportion who had participated in sport at least one day per week in 2016/17 (48%).

## Participating in sport at least one day per week

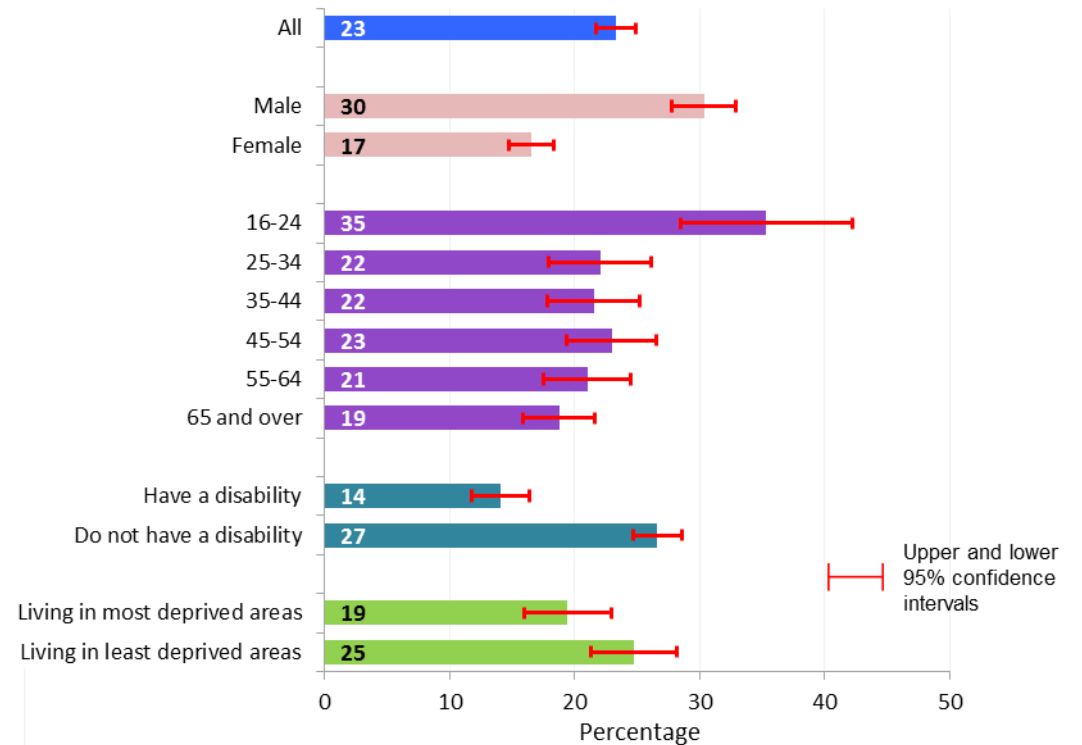


There are similar differences by gender, age, disability and deprivation as for other indicators of sport participation i.e. normally participating on one or more days per week was lower for women, older adults, adults with a disability and adults living in the most deprived areas.

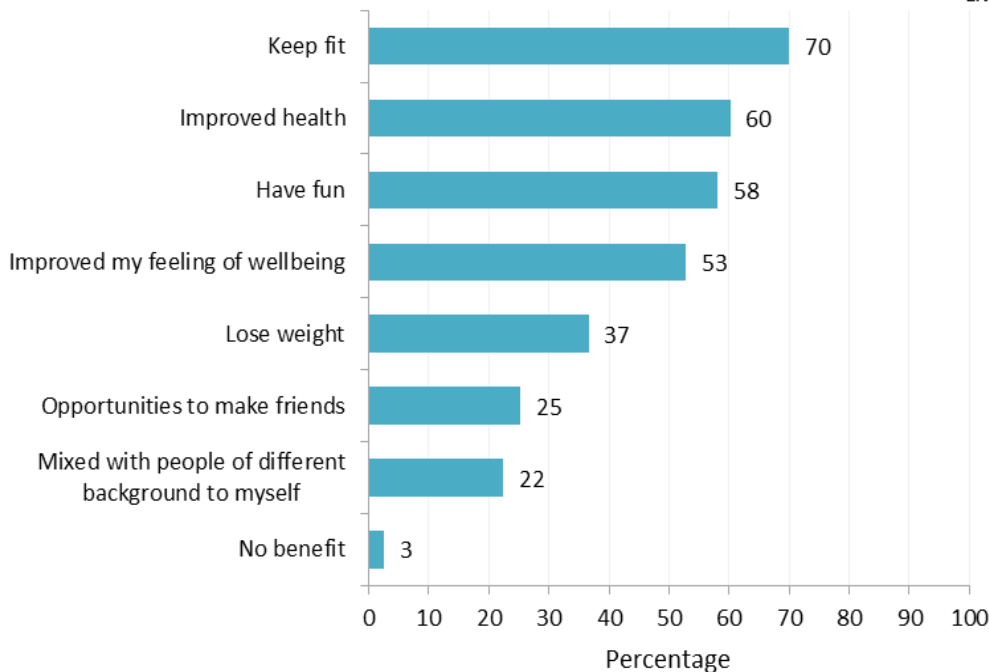


# Sports club membership

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. As with sport participation rates, males (30%) were more likely to have been a member of a sports club or organisation than females (17%), showing no change on the 2016/17 figure.



# Benefits of sport participation



# Benefits of participating in sport

Seven out of every ten (70%) 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” (58%), “Improved my feeling of wellbeing” (53%) and “Lose weight” (37%).

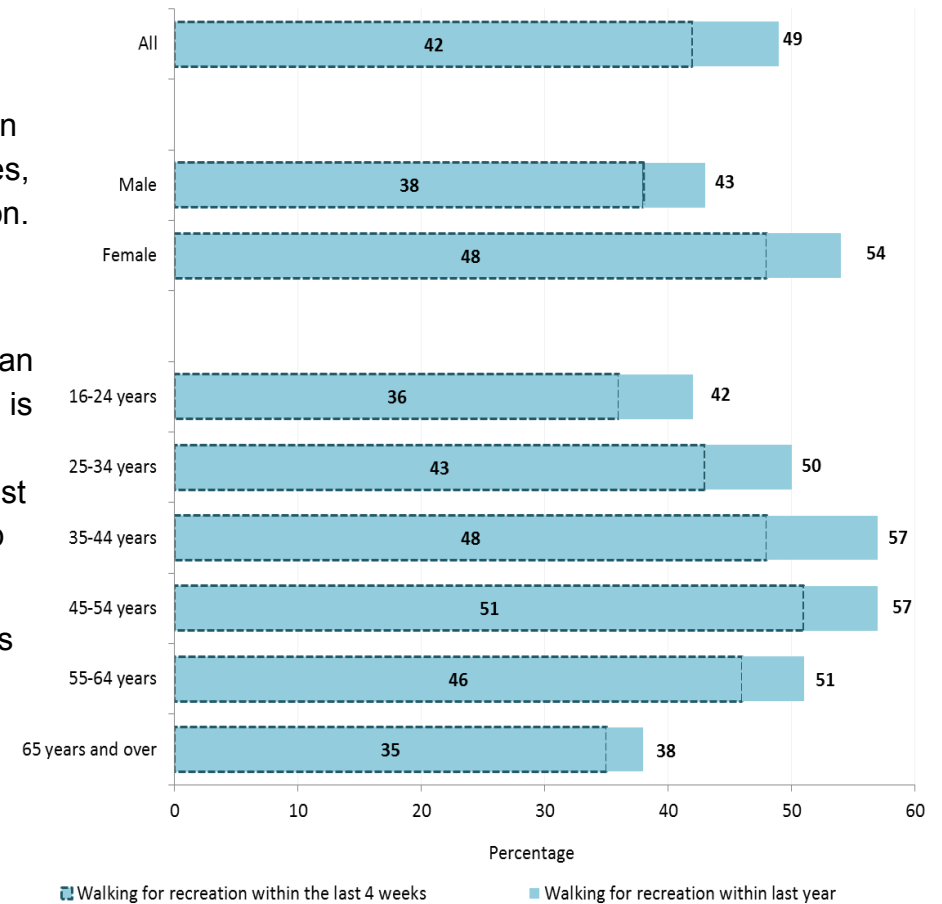
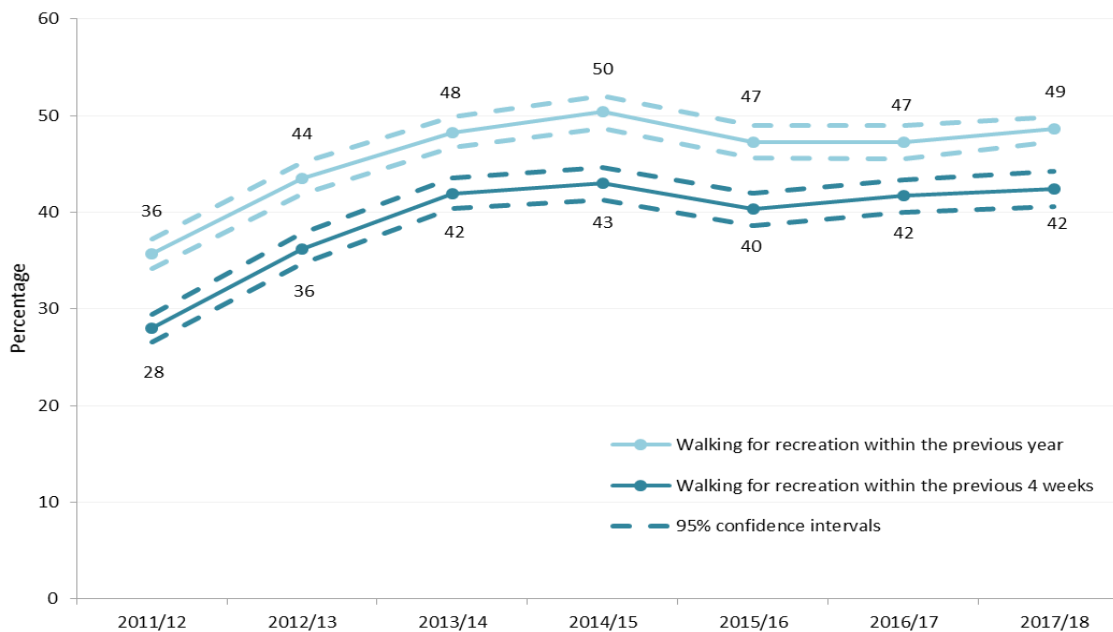
Only three per cent of all adults who had participated stated that they had experienced no benefits as a result of participating in sport over the past year.

# Walking for recreation

'Walking for recreation' is not included in the overall sport participation figures. Nearly half of adults (49%) 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 (43%) had walked for recreation.

Almost a fifth of adults (18%) 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 (21%) had walked for recreation than non-sport participating males (14%). When considering age groups, the pattern is also somewhat different than that seen when analysing sport participation. Walking for recreation rates peak among the 35-54 year age groups (57%), 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 2017/18 figure (49%) has seen the proportion return to a similar level as that peak.

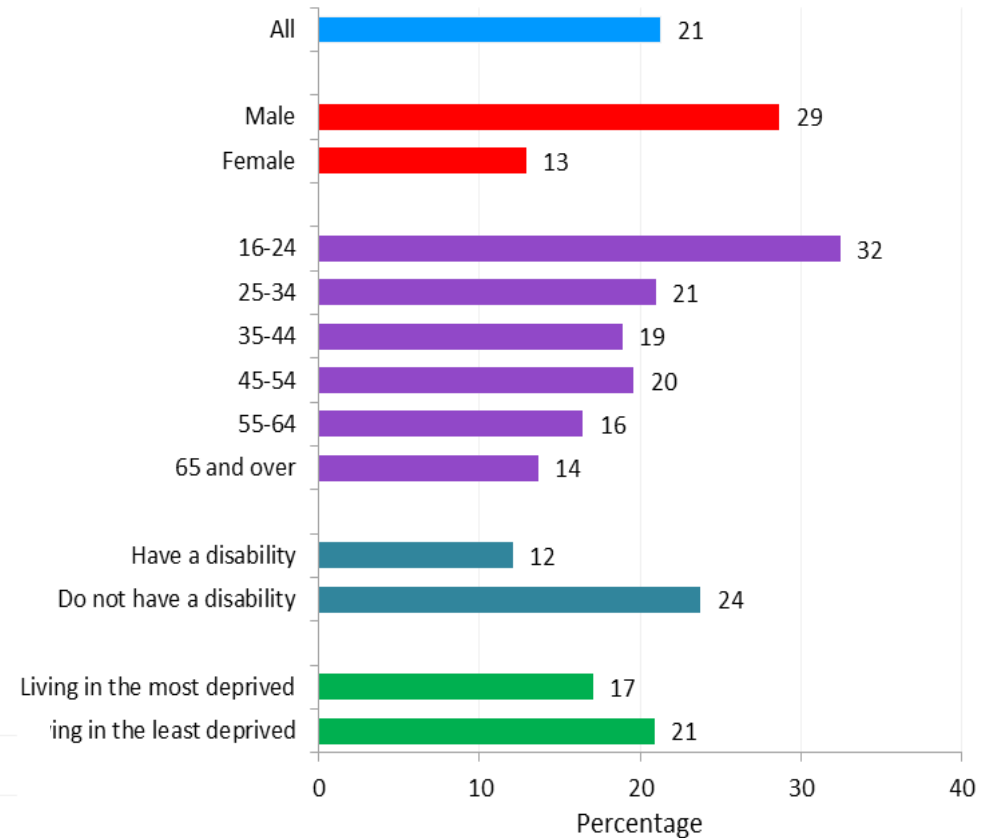
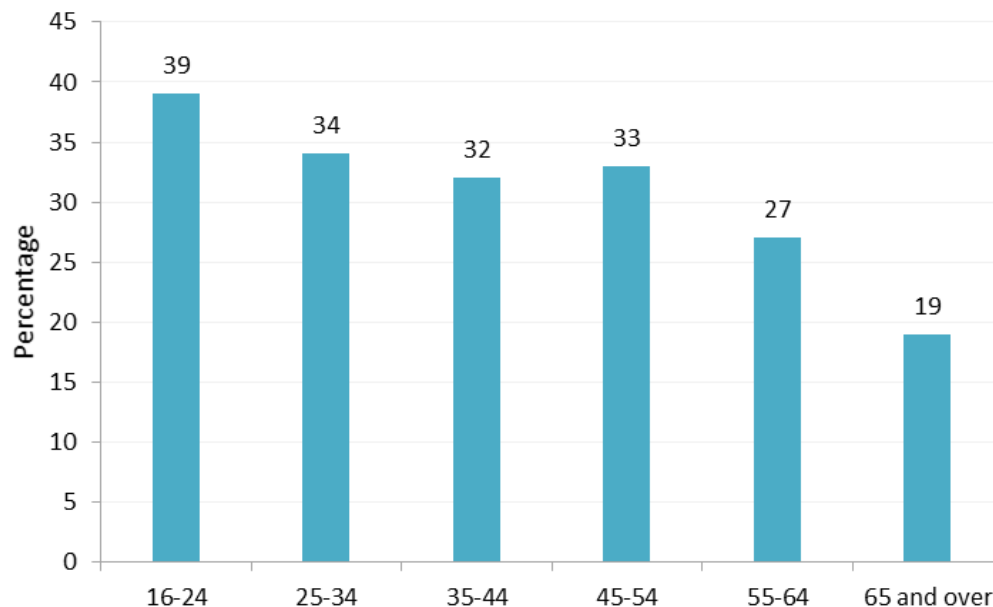
Similarly, within the same time frame, the proportion of adults who had walked for recreation within the previous 4 weeks increased from 28% in 2011/12 to a peak of 43% in 2014/15. The 2017/18 results show a similar proportion at 42%.

## Participation in a sporting competition

Just over a fifth of adults (21%) in Northern Ireland stated that they had taken part in a sporting competition or organised activity event in the last 12 months. Around three out of every ten males (29%) had stated that they had taken part in a sporting competition compared to 13% of females.

Younger adults aged 16-24 years were more likely to have taken part in a sporting competition or organised activity event than those aged 65 and over (32% and 14% respectively). Also adults who did not have a disability (24%) were more likely to have taken part in a sporting competition than those who have a disability (12%).

### Attendance at live sports events by age



## Attendance at live sports events

Three out of every ten adults (30%) had been to a live sporting event, at any level, in Northern Ireland, as spectator in the past year. Males were more likely than females to have spectated at a live sporting event within the last year (38% and 23% respectively).

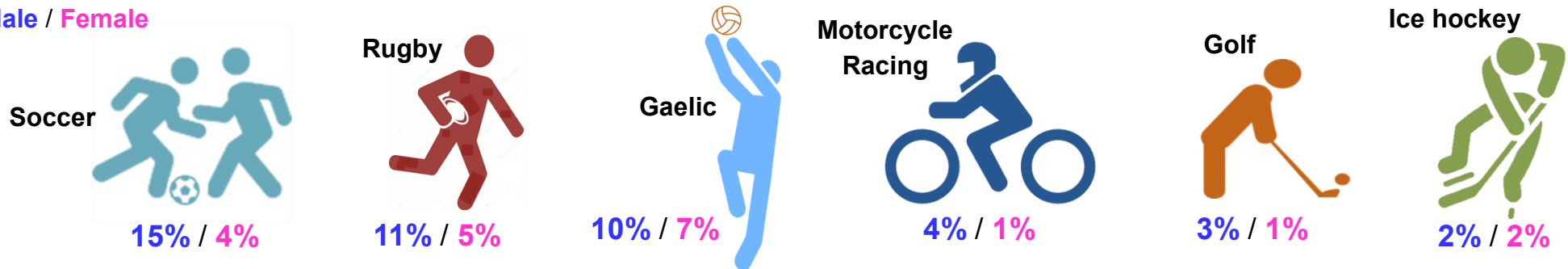
Analysis by age shows that as age increases the proportion of adults who spectate at a live sporting event generally decreases particularly from age 45 onwards.

## Popular live sports events

Adults who indicated that they had attended a live sporting event, at any level, in Northern Ireland as a spectator were then asked which sports they had watched as live events. The most popular sports were 'soccer' (10%), 'Gaelic' and 'rugby' (each 8%), followed by 'motorcycle racing', 'golf', 'ice hockey' and 'hurling' (each 2%).

When analysed by gender the most popular sports watched live were:

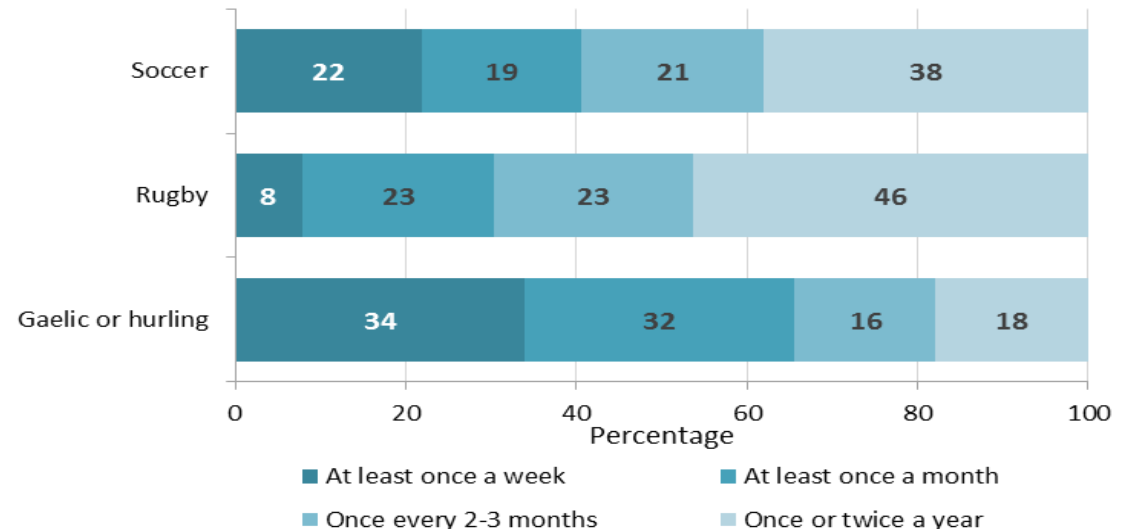
Male / Female



## Frequency attended live sporting events

Those adults who had indicated that they had attended a live sporting event in Northern Ireland in the last year and had indicated that they had watched 'Gaelic or hurling', 'rugby' or 'soccer' were asked how often they watched these sports.

Adults who had spectated at Gaelic or hurling events were more likely to have attended more frequently with over a third having done so at least once a week (34%). In contrast adults who had spectated at a rugby event were more likely to have done so once or twice a year (46%).



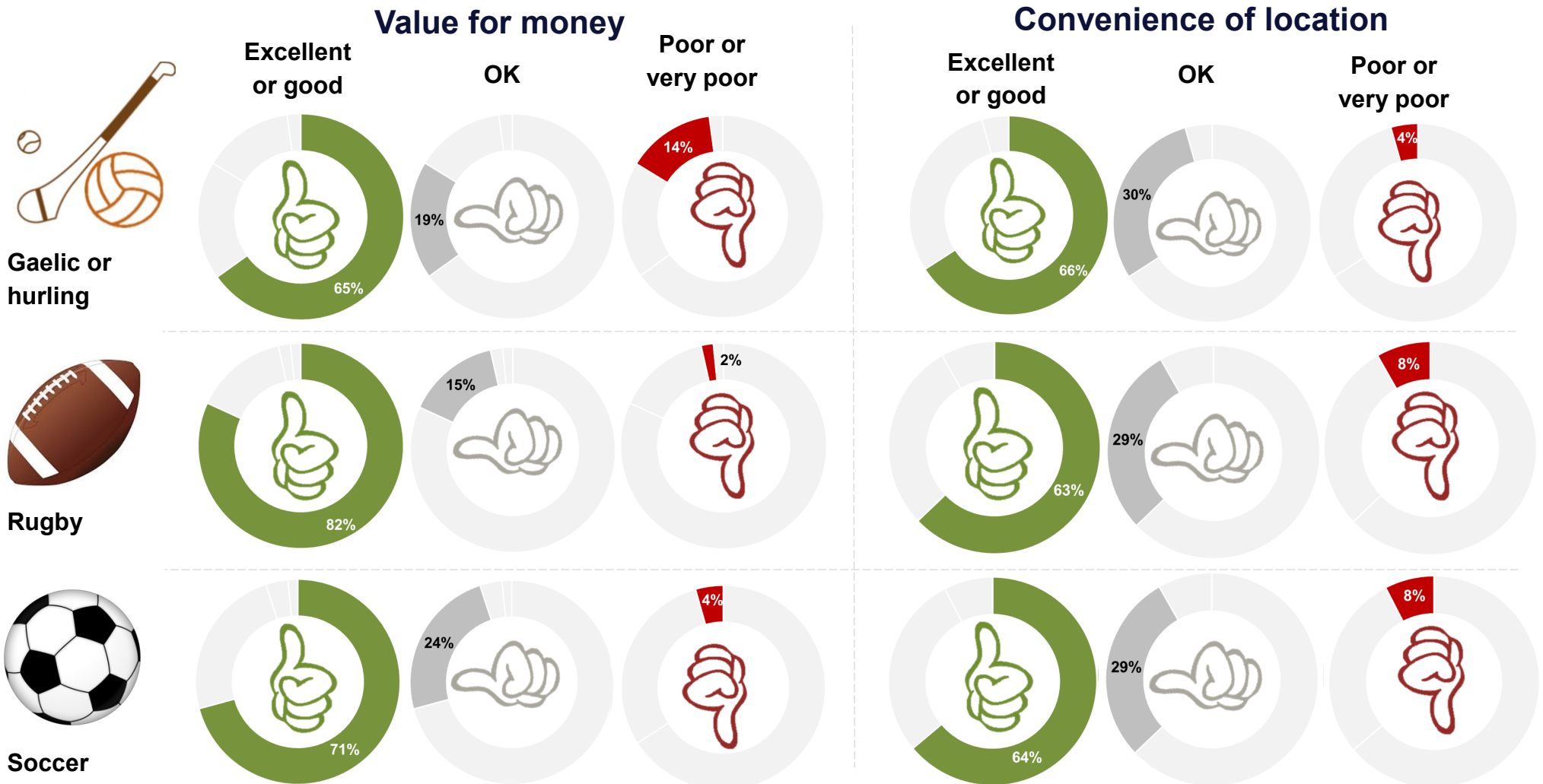
## Where attended live sporting event

Adults who had watched either 'Gaelic or hurling', 'rugby' or 'soccer' were asked whether they had watched the live sporting event in a stadium or sports ground or a playing field. Those who had watched Gaelic or hurling live were more likely to have watched it in a playing field compared to a stadium or dedicated outdoor sports venue (69% v 55%). Those who watched rugby or soccer were more likely to have done so in stadium or sports ground (92% and 73% respectively) than a playing field (22% and 39% respectively).

# Live sports events - Rate your experience

Adults who indicated that they had watched 'Gaelic or hurling', 'rugby' or 'soccer' at a sports ground or stadium were asked how they rated their experience in terms of 'value for money', 'convenience to get to', 'quality of spectating facilities' and 'spectator safety at the venue'.

In terms of value for money, the majority of adults who had watched any of the above sports rated them as excellent or good. However 14% of those who had attended Gaelic football or hurling rated the experience as poor or very poor in terms of value for money. Regarding convenience of the location of the sports ground or stadium, around two-thirds of spectators rated each of the sports as excellent or good, whilst around three in every ten felt that the convenience rated as OK.



# Live sports events - Rate your experience (continued)

In terms of venue safety and quality of facilities of the sports ground or stadium, the majority of adults who had attended any of the above sports rated them as excellent or good. However for both aspects, a greater proportion of adults rated rugby as excellent or good than either 'Gaelic or hurling' or soccer.



## Why go to watch live sports events

Adults who indicated that they had attended a live sporting event, at any level, in Northern Ireland as a spectator were asked why they go to watch sport events.

Two thirds of adults (67%) who answered the question stated that they attended live sporting events in order “to enjoy the sport”. Just over half of adults (54%) stated that they watched a live sports event to support a particular team and to enjoy the atmosphere (52%). Other popular reasons for watching live sports event included ‘social reasons - to go with/ meet up with others’ or ‘to watch a friend/ relative play’ (47% and 43% respectively).

Men were more likely to have stated that they watch live sports to enjoy the sport (77% v 49%) or to support a particular team (60% v 42%) than women. In contrast, women were more likely than men to have watched a live sports event in order to watch a friend or relative play (55% v 36%).

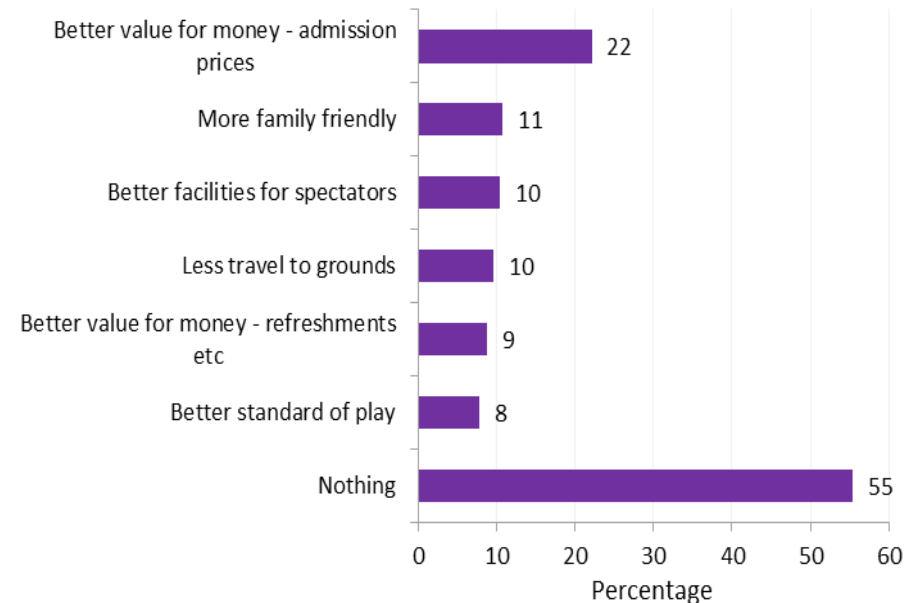
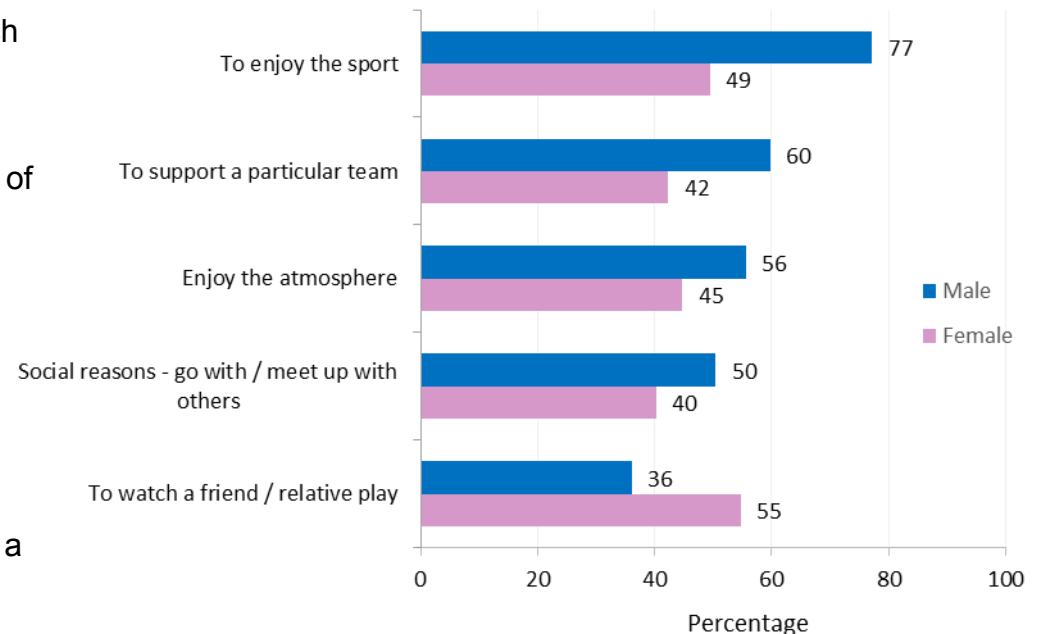
## Encourage watch (more) sports events

A fifth of all adults (22%) in Northern Ireland stated that they would go to watch more live sporting events if they were better value for money in terms of admission prices.

A tenth of adults stated they would be encouraged to go to watch more sports events if they were more family friendly (11%), if there were better facilities for spectators or there was less travel to the grounds (each 10%). Other reasons that would encourage adults to watch more sports events include better value for money, in terms of refreshment etc. (9%) and a better standard of play (8%).

Men were more likely to have stated better facilities for spectators and better standard of play (each 13%) as reasons to encourage them to watch more sports than women (8% and 3% respectively). Women (62%) were more likely than men (49%) to have stated that nothing would encourage them to watch more live sports events.

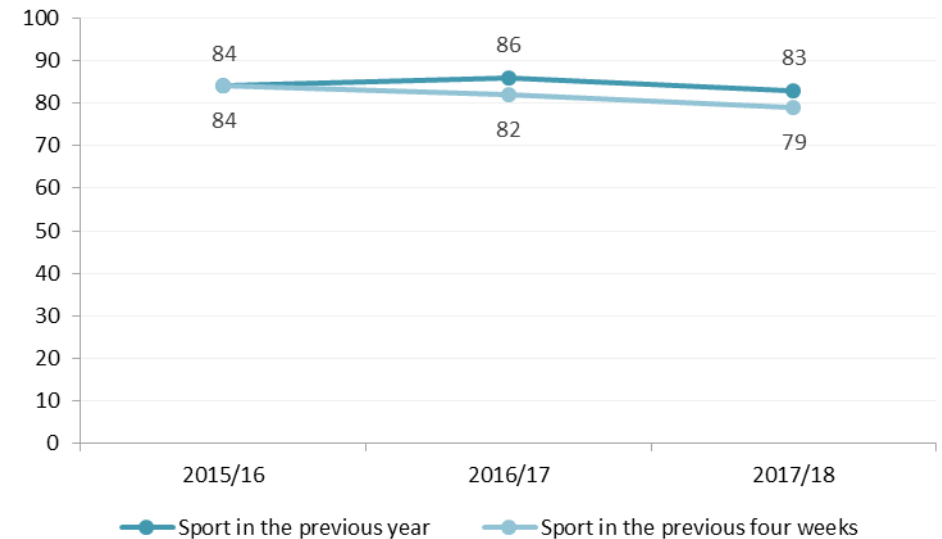
Reasons for watching live sporting events by gender



# Children's sport participation outside of school

Parents of children aged 4 to 15 were asked about their children's sport participation outside of school. According to parents, 83% of children had participated in at least one sport within the previous year outside of school. This is similar to the proportion who had participated in sport outside of school in 2016/17 (86%).

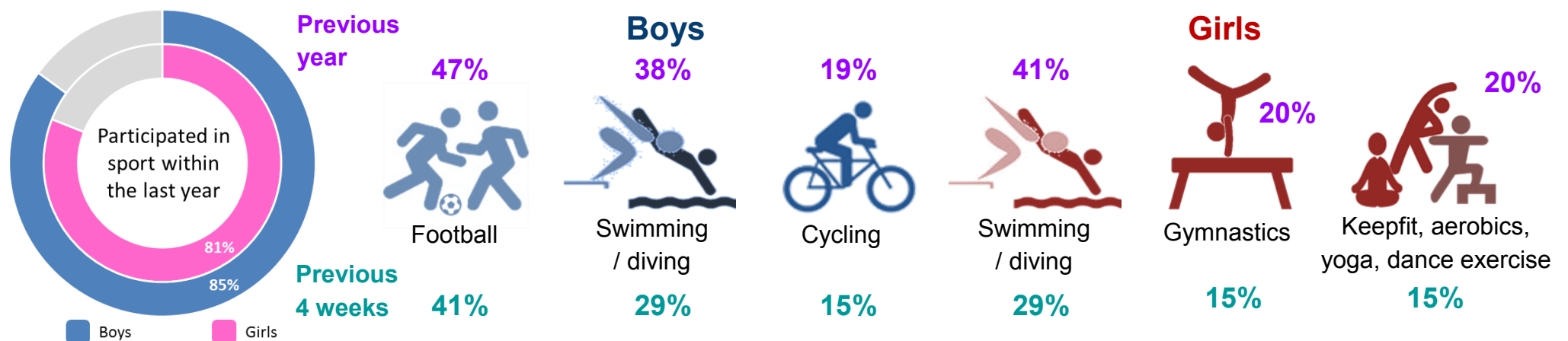
Parents were also asked about their children's sport participation outside of school within the previous 4 weeks. Almost four-fifths of children (79%) had participated in sport within the previous 4 weeks, similar to the 82% who had done so in 2016/17.



## Sport preferences amongst boys and girls

The most popular sports for children to take part in outside of school within the previous year were 'Swimming or diving' (39%), football (31%) and cycling (19%). These were the top three sports for boys. For girls, the top sports were 'Swimming or diving', 'gymnastics' and 'Keepfit, aerobics, yoga, dance exercise'.

Considering sport participation over the previous 4 weeks, the results were similar with the most popular sports being 'Swimming or diving' (29%), 'football' (25%) and 'cycling' (14%). Again when looking at gender the results over 4 weeks were similar to those seen previously.





## **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 9,000 addresses selected from the Land and Property Service's list of private addresses. The findings reported for 2017/18 are based on 5,677 respondents, aged 16 and over, who answered the key questions required to measure progress against the draft Programme for Government indicator (arts, libraries, museums and PRONI questions) as well as the sport participation question on the survey. For the remaining questions (volunteering and places of historic interest as well as questions on the experience of engagement), the findings are based on 2,824 respondents.

### **Weighting the Continuous Household Survey**

Analysis of the culture, arts and sport modules of the CHS have been weighted for non-response. A chi square goodness-of-fit test showed that neither the larger CHS sample (5,677) nor the smaller sample (2,824) were representative of the population by age and sex when compared with the Population and Migration Estimates Northern Ireland 2016 (NISRA). As a result, six separate weights were produced for age, sex and age and sex combined, three for each sample size.

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 sport 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, kayaking or rowing
- 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.

**Sport participation (children)** - Participated in at least one of the following activities within the 12 months prior, 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/ rowing
- Cricket
- Cycling
- 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
- Other

**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.

<sup>1</sup> [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.