

Sport and Physical Activity among those aged over 16 in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown



June 2015

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Main Findings

Active Participation in Sport

- 55.3% of respondents play sport at least once a week equivalent to 92,000 regular participants taking part in Dun Laoghaire/ Rathdown (DLR).
- Men (62.3%) are more likely to take part in sport than women (49.1%) however both men and women in DLR are more likely to take part than their national counterparts.
- Participation in exercise, running and golf higher than the national average.
- The relatively high levels of participation in yoga, tennis and rugby in the region is also notable.

Broader Physical Activity

- 68.7% take part in recreational walking in the region.
- Women (71.9%) are more likely to take part than men (65%).
- On average, recreational walkers spend three hours a week walking with the average walk lasting 50 minutes.
- Walking and cycling for transport is more popular among students.

Social Participation

- Over 53% of respondents in DLR take part in some form of social participation either, belonging to a sports club, volunteering for sport or attending a sporting event.
- Membership among gyms and golf clubs is higher in Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown than nationally.
- Club members are more likely to play individual sports while team sports dominate volunteering and sporting events.
- Membership to running and cycling clubs is relatively low given their popularity among weekly participants.

Sport and Health

- 31.8% of DLR adults are highly active i.e. meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines through sport and recreational walking while 7.7% are sedentary i.e. play no sport, don't walk for recreation, and don't walk or cycle for transport.
- There is a high level of fairly active participants engaging in 2 to 4 bouts of activity who could be encouraged to increase their activity and achieve the guidelines.

- Over 57% are interested in doing more sport however not having enough time is the main barrier among both current participants and non-participants.
- Women would like to take part in more swimming while men would prefer to play more soccer.

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Physical Activity Guidelines¹ recommend at least 30 minutes of moderately intense activity on 5 or more days a week for adults. The 30 minutes can be accumulated in bouts of 10 minutes or more over the course of a day. Being active confers significant health and related benefits² and participation in sport and active leisure plays an increasingly important role in adult physical activity levels worldwide³. The benefits from activity can be gained at any age. The English Longitudinal Study of Ageing⁴ tracked participants whose average age was over 65 for 8 years. Participants who took up activity in those 8 years also saw health benefits despite being previously inactive. Physical activity contributes to healthy ageing regardless of current age.

This report provides evidence on sport and recreational exercise activity of adults (aged 16 and over) in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown (DLR). The analysis aims to be of interest and assistance to those involved in the promotion of sport in DLR, particularly the Local Sports Partnership, Local Authority, sports clubs and volunteers.

Scope and Error Margin

The figures in this report are based on the results of the 2011 and 2013 Irish Sports Monitor (ISM) surveys. The data from both years were combined into one dataset of 1,141 respondents to try to reduce the error margin within the results. Based on this sample size the error margin around key high level results is about 2.9%. So if we report a participation rate of 55.3% in the report we would expect that the true participation rate for DLR lies somewhere between 55.3 – 2.9% and 55.3 + 2.9% i.e. between 52.4% and 58.2%⁵. Where the sample has been divided into further sub-samples by gender or age, the error margin is increased. **So, the results provide a reasonable indication of sports participation in DLR even though some caution is suggested in interpreting the results.**

The ISM asks interviewees about their active and social participation in sport in the previous 7 days. Further details of the aims and methodology of the ISM can be found in ISM Annual Reports

¹ <http://www.getirelandactive.ie/guidelines-resources/how-much-physical-activity-is-required/>

² <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1402378/pdf/20060314s00023p801.pdf>

<http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/chapter2.aspx>

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs385/en/>

³ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3401184/pdf/nihms389131.pdf>

⁴ Regular physical activity in later life boosts likelihood of 'healthy aging' up to sevenfold, November 5th 2013, <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/11/131125185600.htm>

⁵ This is known as a 95% confidence interval for the statistic in question. We would expect this interval to contain the true proportion 95% of the times that the survey was undertaken.

(available at http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Research/The_Irish_Sports_Monitor/). The ISM is designed to be representative of Ireland's population as a whole rather than the population of any individual county. Therefore it was necessary to re-weight the data for this report so that the sample more closely represented DLR's current demographic profile. Gender and age, age overall and employment status were considered in this re-weighting exercise. The Appendix compares the demographic profile of the dataset used for the report with the profile of DLR recorded by the Central Statistics Office in the 2011 Census of Population. Some comfort can be garnered from the relatively close alignment between the profile of the DLR sample and the population recorded by the Census.

Results are only reported for the two years combined and no results have been included for the individual years. This is intended to reduce the potential for error as mentioned above. Given that the samples for the two years have significantly different profiles by age, gender, etc. this approach also minimises the re-weighting exercise required. A cursory look at the results by year suggests that there were no significant changes between 2011 and 2013.

A feature of the ISM is the inclusion of periodic flexible modules on particular topical policy issues. These modules are administered over a number of months and therefore only include a sub-sample of the annual survey respondents. For this reason it is not always possible to carry out a meaningful analysis beyond the national situation. During 2011 and 2013 flexible modules were included on topics such as gender issues in Irish sport, interest in playing more sport, motivations for participating in sport, barriers to participation, perceptions of health and wellness and engagement in other behaviours (smoking, drinking alcohol, dieting, watching TV, etc.) which might influence health and wellness, and knowledge of the sports policy environment nationally and locally. These issues are reported on in the relevant annual report to which the reader is referred for such analysis. However, where respondent numbers allowed and where findings of local interest emerged these issues are explored in this current report. Readers are reminded of the statistical limitations within such analysis and to regard such references as indicative only.

Statistical Analysis

In this report, the charts and tables generally show percentage participation rates in a given activity by a particular group (e.g. the percentage of women who play team sport). Where this is not the case the report highlights the basis for the participation rates. The report includes certain national

figures for comparison purposes. In the main such national figures are composite averages from 2011 and 2013. Exceptions to this approach are noted.

ISM Definition of Sport and Physical Activity

The primary justification for public investment in sport is to increase physical activity and hence to improve health⁶. Consistent with this aim (and with the *Irish Sports Council Act, 1999*), the report defines “sport” broadly, to include recreational exercise (e.g. swimming, gym, dance classes, yoga, etc.), as well as field games (e.g. soccer, Gaelic football). The ISM also records recreational walking, walking and cycling for transport, allowing sport to be set in the context of more general physical activity.

Limitations

All statistical surveys are approximate. In the case of the ISM, measurement error may be caused by people recalling activity inaccurately, respondents wishing to paint themselves in a good light (social desirability bias), failure to survey hard-to-reach groups, mistakes made by interviewers, and so on. For example foreign nationals are underrepresented in the overall ISM and in the DLR sample⁷. Previous research has suggested that their participation rates are lower than Irish nationals. All participation rates have margin of errors and small differences should not be over-interpreted as meaningful particularly where the sample size is relatively small. So, when looking at the figures below it is important to remember that they are at best an approximation.

⁶ <http://www.dttas.ie/corporate> - High Level Goal for sport “To contribute to a healthier and more active society by promoting sports participation and by supporting high performance and the provision of facilities.”

⁷ In the DLR ISM sample 5.6% of respondents describe themselves as “non-Irish”. In the 2011 Census the equivalent figure is 11.5%.

2. RESULTS

2.1 Overall Physical Activity

Table 1 compares physical activity participation in DLR with the national average. It captures regular⁸ participation activity through sport, recreational walking and active travel i.e. walking and cycling for transport. In the tables below, the “highly active” are those who meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines⁹ while those who are “sedentary” take no part in sport or recreational walking, and don’t walk or cycle for transport. Based on the 2011 Census data the 55.3% participating in sport is equivalent to just less than 92,000 adults aged 16 and over taking part in regular sporting activity in DLR.

Table 1: Summary of Physical Activity – DLR vs. National

	DLR	National
Sporting Participation	55.3%	46.0%
Recreational Walking	68.7%	64.3%
Walk for Transport	48.7%	40.0%
Cycle for Transport	15.1%	10.1%
Highly Active	31.8%	30.3%
Sedentary	7.7%	13.2%

Participation levels across all activities are significantly higher in DLR than nationally. While we can only speculate as to the reasons for this, one important factor at play is likely to be the socio-economic profile of the DLR population which contains greater numbers of highly educated higher income earners than are present in the country as a whole.¹⁰ The highly urbanised nature of the county helps to explain the levels of active commuting in the results. For example we know from the overall ISM that urban dwellers are significantly more likely to walk for transport than their rural counterparts. While the numbers of highly active in DLR are not significantly different from the national figures, there are significantly fewer sedentary adults in the county than nationally as might be expected given the generally higher level of participation in all activities already noted.

⁸ The ISM asks respondent about their participation in the previous 7 days so “regular” can be regarded here as being equivalent to participation at least once a week in each type of activity

⁹ For adults to be highly active requires that they take part in at least 5 sessions of physical activity per week of at least 30 minutes duration at a moderate intensity or greater. Moderate intensity is considered sufficient to raise the person’s breathing rate.

¹⁰ See the “Fair Play” report for an examination into the social gradients around sports participation – at http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Research/Sport_Social_Disadvantage_2007/

In **Table 2** below we look at these by gender in DLR and compare to the national situation.

Table 2: Summary of Physical Activity by gender – DLR vs. National

	DLR		National	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sporting Participation	62.3%	49.1%	51.5%	40.9%
Recreational Walking	65.0%	71.9%	58.0%	70.3%
Walk for Transport	48.5%	48.8%	39.1%	40.9%
Cycle for Transport	22.5%	8.7%	14.6%	5.7%
Highly Active	34.7%	29.3%	29.9%	30.7%
Sedentary	6.6%	8.7%	13.3%	13.0%

Given what we have already seen in the overall figures most of the content of **Table 2** will come as no surprise. Gender patterns of activity within the county are similar to those exhibited nationally with men being more likely to play sport and cycle for transport while women are more likely to walk for recreation. Compared to the country as a whole, participation among men and women in DLR across most activities is significantly higher, the exceptions being recreational walking and cycling for transport among women. In the case of recreational walking among women that the difference is relatively small might be explained by the fact that participation levels are already very high in the county and nationally, topping 70% in both cases. As regards cycling for transport the difference, while not quite reaching statistical significance, is still substantial.

It is slightly surprising that there are a smaller proportion of highly active women in DLR than nationally even though the difference is small. This suggests that, while there are large numbers of women engaging in some form of activity in DLR, they are not doing so often enough, for long enough or with sufficient intensity to reach the National Physical Activity Guidelines. On the other hand, there are significantly more highly active men in the county than nationally suggesting that this is not as much an issue for men living in DLR. We will come back to this later on in the report.

2.2 Most Popular Sporting Activities

Figures 2.2 and 2.3a and b show the most popular sports in DLR overall and by gender. Only sports with participation levels of 2% or greater¹¹ in DLR are shown in all figures, except gaelic games which

¹¹ Participation levels in pilates, sailing and boxing in DLR are between 1% and 2% and in all cases are notably higher than equivalent national figures.

are included in all figures because of their national significance and because of the notably different patterns of participation in DLR compared to the rest of the country.

Individual sports dominate, accounting for 9 of the 13 activities shown including the top 5 of exercise, running, swimming, golf and cycling. This is also reflected at a combined level where over 50% of adults in DLR take part in some individual sporting activity compared to 12% in team sports. This means that the proportion of adults participating in individual sports only in DLR is greater than the proportion of participants in all sports nationally (46%). The higher levels of participation in exercise, running and golf in the county are particularly noteworthy. DLR also boasts relatively impressive numbers participating in yoga, tennis and rugby, pilates, sailing and boxing while gaelic games are noticeably less popular sources of participation in the county than nationally.

Figure 2.2: Top Participation Sports in DLR and Nationally - Overall

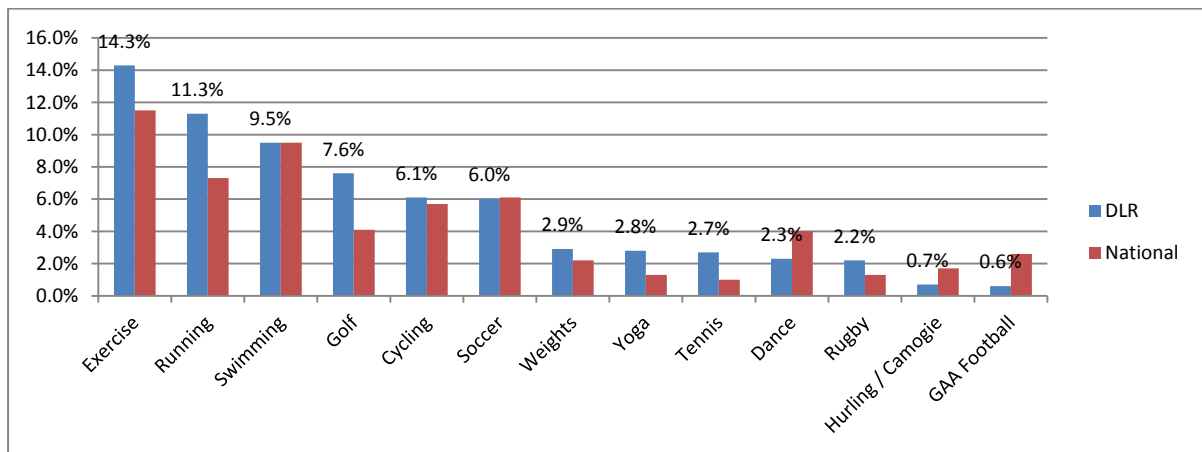


Figure 2.3a: Top Participation Sports in DLR and Nationally – Men

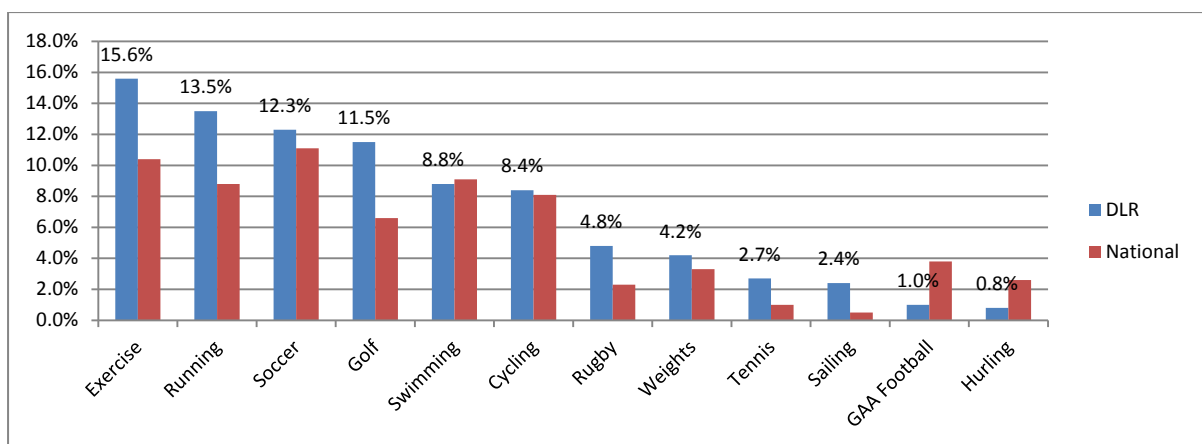
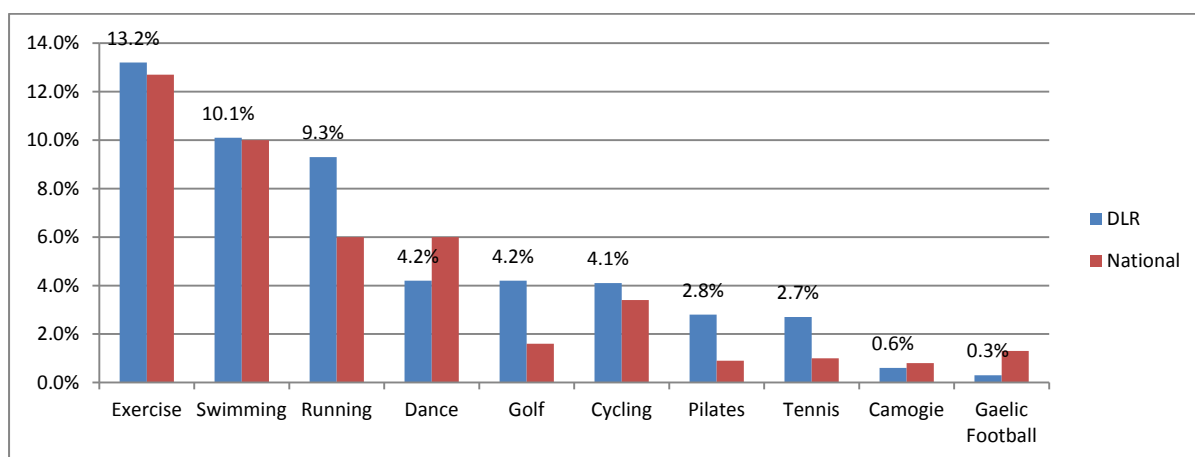


Figure 2.3b: Top Participation Sports in DLR and Nationally - Women



The most popular sports for men and women in DLR are similar to the most popular sports nationally although participation levels are generally higher in the county. Compared to nationally exercise, running, golf and tennis are particularly popular among men and women in the county. Among the sports with slightly lower levels of participation, rugby and sailing are popular among men while pilates is relatively popular among women in the county.

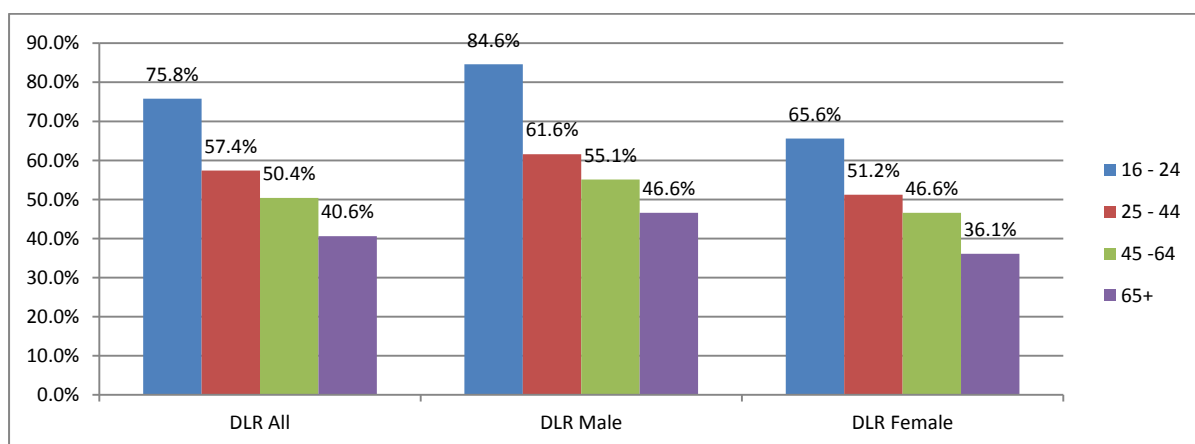
While gaelic sports are notably less popular participation activities among men and women in DLR than in the rest of the country, this does not materially affect overall levels of participation in team sports in the county. In fact, participation levels in team sports are higher among men (21.5% vs. 18%) and similar among women (4.1% vs. 4.6%) in the county compared to the national figures. There are more than 5 times as many men participating in team sports than women in DLR. It is also particularly noteworthy that there are 11 times as many women participating in individual activities than in team sports (46.4% vs. 4.1%) in the county.

2.3 Sports Participation and Demographics

Previous research¹² has identified various demographic factors as being of critical importance in influencing participation in sport. These include gender, age, educational attainment, income and presence / absence of a disability. These are analysed below to the extent permitted by the ISM sample size for DLR and its demographic profile beginning with the issues of age and gender which are looked at in **Figure 2.4**.

¹² The reader is referred to “Ballpark Figures” as a distillation of some previous research in this regard - http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Research/Ballpark_Figures_2008_/Ballpark_Figures.pdf

Figure 2.4: Participation in sport by age and gender in DLR¹³



Participation declines among men and women with age with the drop off being steeper for men than for women during early adulthood reflecting the extent of drop out by men from team sport during this period of their lives¹⁴. While the rate of drop off in participation in DLR is similar to the national picture in early adulthood, in middle age the rate of drop off is substantially lower in DLR among both genders (comparison not shown). This reflects the strength of individual sports within the county, participation in which tends to sustain more strongly and endure transitions across the life course for both men and women.

While the ISM has shown a narrowing gender gap over the years, social gradients continue to strongly impact on all aspects of active and social participation with higher income earners and those with higher educational attainment being significantly more likely to play sport, be club members, volunteer for sport and attend sporting events. Social gradients have been a consistent feature of sports participation research in Ireland for over a decade and have been relatively resilient to policy efforts which have sought to address them in the intervening period. In **Figures 2.5 and 2.6** we look at sports participation in DLR by level of educational attainment. In **Figure 2.5** we see that the educational profile of DLR residents is substantially different from the national sample. DLR residents are much more highly educated than their national counterparts. Here, it must be acknowledged that the ISM sample for DLR is slightly more educated than the DLR population as recorded in the 2011 Census of Population as seen in the Appendix. However, the differences here are relatively small in this regard.

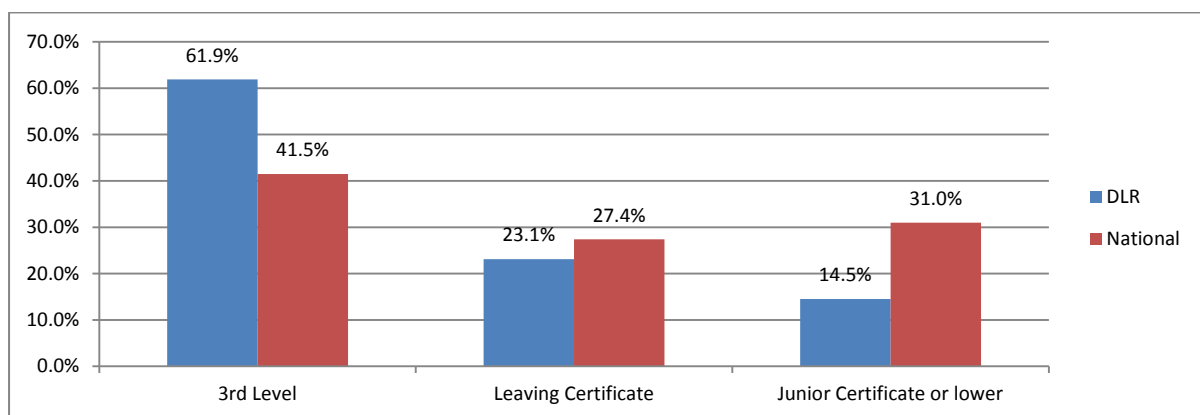
¹³ Sample sizes less than 100 for 16 – 24 male and female categories.

¹⁴ See <http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Research/Keeping-Them-in-the-Game-2013-/> for detailed analysis of transitions into and out of sport over the life course

In **Figure 2.6** we see a strong educational gradient in sports participation in DLR, similar if slightly less steep than nationally. While the drop in participation levels from those with a 3rd level education to those with a Leaving Certificate is similar in the county to the country as a whole, participation levels in DLR for those with lower levels of educational attainment are higher than we might expect from looking at the national picture. While this could be partly due to the small numbers of individuals with the lowest level of education attainment (primary school or none) in the DLR sample it might also be that the overall popularity of sports participation in DLR creates a strong social norm around participation which carries through to some extent to all groups. It seems that the higher levels of participation in DLR are in no small part due to the demographics of the county’s population, at least in so far as their educational levels are concerned, and may also reflect some cultural / normative influences around participation.

One final point to note here is that the effect of educational disadvantage on sports participation appears to have its roots during the school years. Over 80% of those with a 3rd level education reported playing sport (outside of PE) in school compared to 69% of those with a junior cert or lower level of educational attainment. This echoes the findings of “Keeping Them in the Game”¹⁵ which found that the socio-economic gradient in participation emerges most strongly during the post primary school years in respect of extra-school sport¹⁶ and that the influence of attending a third level institution only serves to widen the gradient for a variety of reasons.

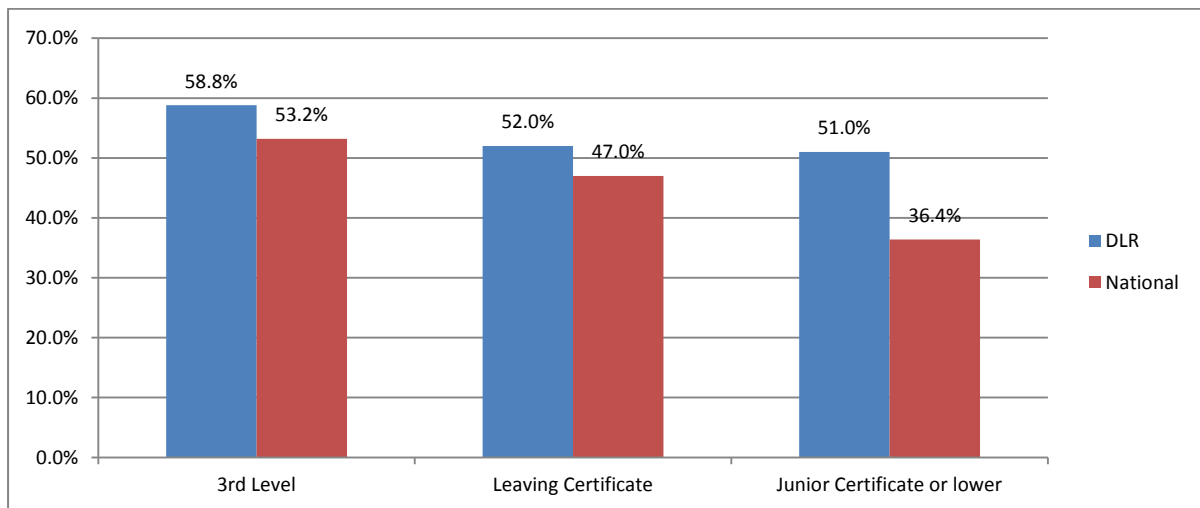
Figure 2.5: Population Profile by Level of Educational Attainment in the ISM: DLR vs. National



¹⁵ <http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Research/Keeping-Them-in-the-Game-2013-/>

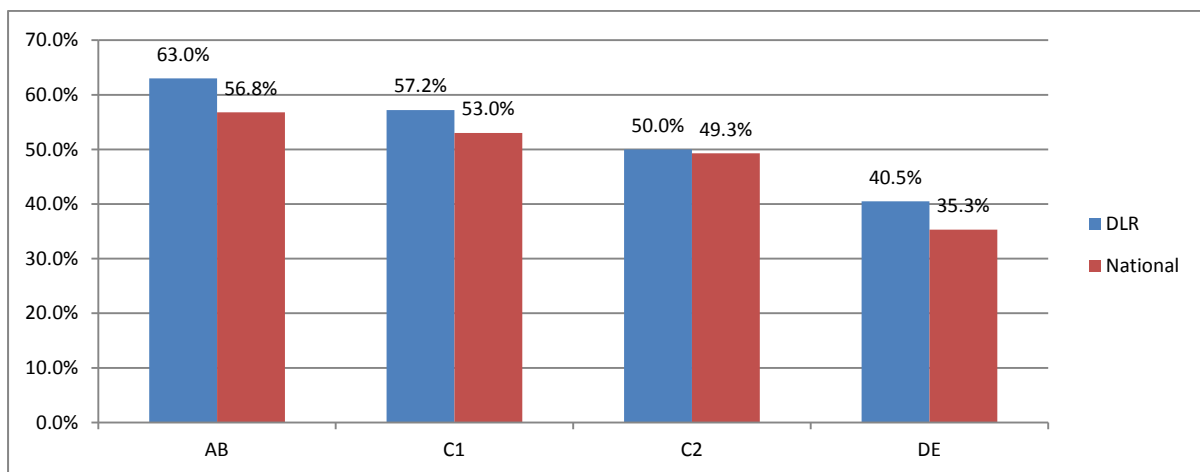
¹⁶ As its name suggests extra school sport (as distinct from Physical Education or Extra Curricular Sport) takes place outside of the school environment and is likely to be associated with the greatest degree of conscious decision making around whether or not to participate. Thus it might be regarded as being the closest form of participation in terms of decision-making to adult sport.

Figure 2.6: Participation in sport by Highest Level of Educational Attainment: DLR vs. National



The effect of socio-economic status is further reflected in **Figure 2.7** which shows participation by social class.

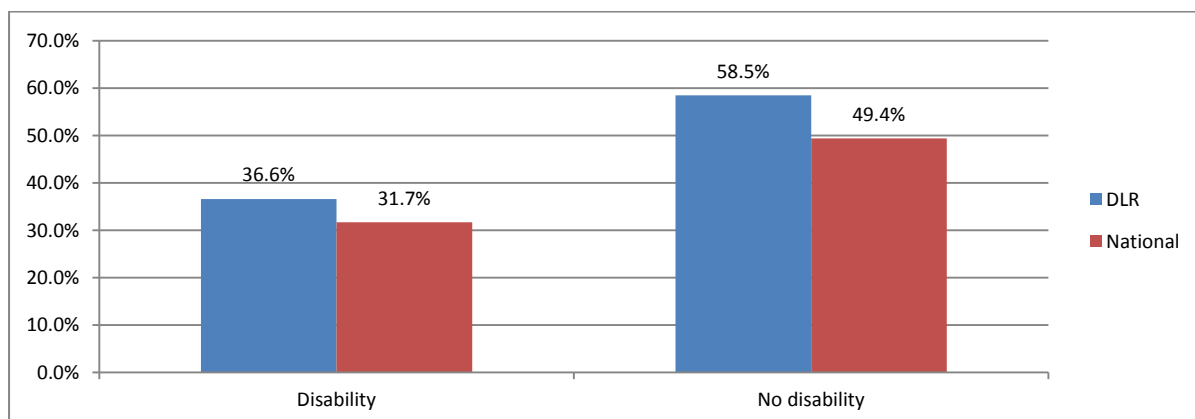
Figure 2.7: Participation in sport by Social Class: DLR vs. National



The ISM asks respondents whether they have any long-term illness, health problem or disability that limits their daily activities. Those who answer “yes” to this question are also asked whether this problem prevents their participation in sport or exercise. 14.7% of DLR based respondents answered yes to the first question with just over 10% answering yes to the second question. These figures are lower than the national figures¹⁷. In **Figure 2.8** we see that the influence of having a disability on levels of participation is of a similar order in DLR to nationally. As might be expected, the effect is even greater for those who have a disability which prevents participation.

¹⁷ Nationally the ISM reported that 18.3% had an illness/disability with 13.7% of the population indicating that this prevented participation.

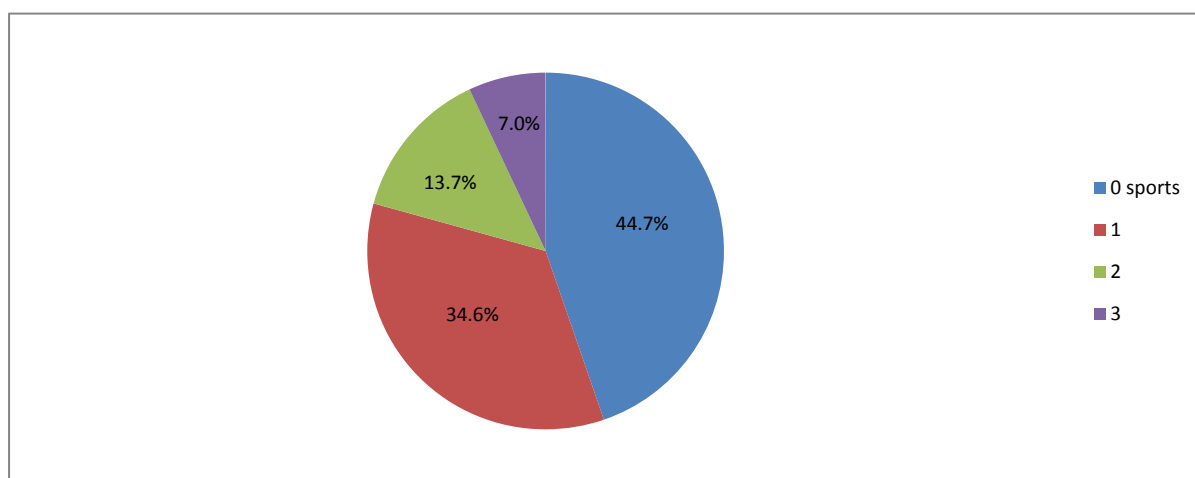
Figure 2.8: Participation in sport by presence of disability: DLR vs. National



2.4 FITT Analysis

The ISM asks respondents questions about how often they play sport, for how long, at what intensity and in what context. This allows us to conduct an F (Frequency), I (Intensity), T (Time) and T (Type) analysis on participation patterns. Before looking at this aspect of participation we briefly look at the distribution of participants by number of sports played, in **Figure 2.9** below. We can see that almost 21% of adults played two or more sports in the previous 7 days with over twice as many men as women playing this often (28.7% vs. 13.5%). While the number of men playing multiple sports in DLR is significantly greater than nationally there is no difference in this respect when it comes to women playing multiple sports. This factor might help explain the differences reported earlier in the report around the proportion of men and women meeting the National Physical Activity Guidelines in DLR compared to nationally.

Figure 2.9: Proportion playing none, one, two and three sports



In **Figures 2.10 – 2.13** we look at the FITT of participation. **Figure 2.10** shows that almost 3 in every 4 participants played sport more than once in the previous week. The average number of sporting sessions a week is just less than 3.4, with a significant difference between men (3.7) and women (3.0) in this regard. From Figure 2.10 it is not hard to see how this might be the case given that there are significantly more women than men engaging in one session a week while the opposite is the case for those taking part in six and seven or more sessions. Also, given the differences seen in the previous figure between men and women in terms of the number of sports played the results in Figure 2.10 are not all that surprising.

Figure 2.10: Proportion of sporting sessions by number of participant sessions in previous 7 days – by gender

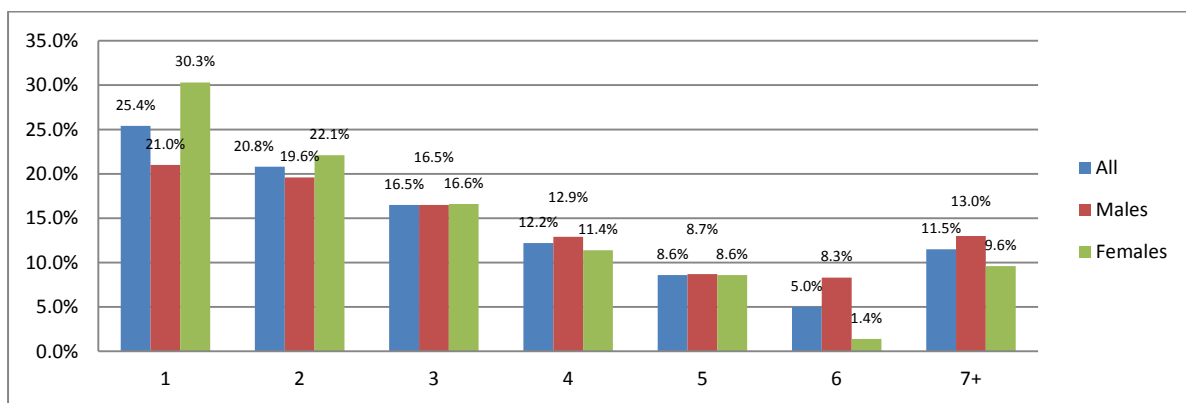
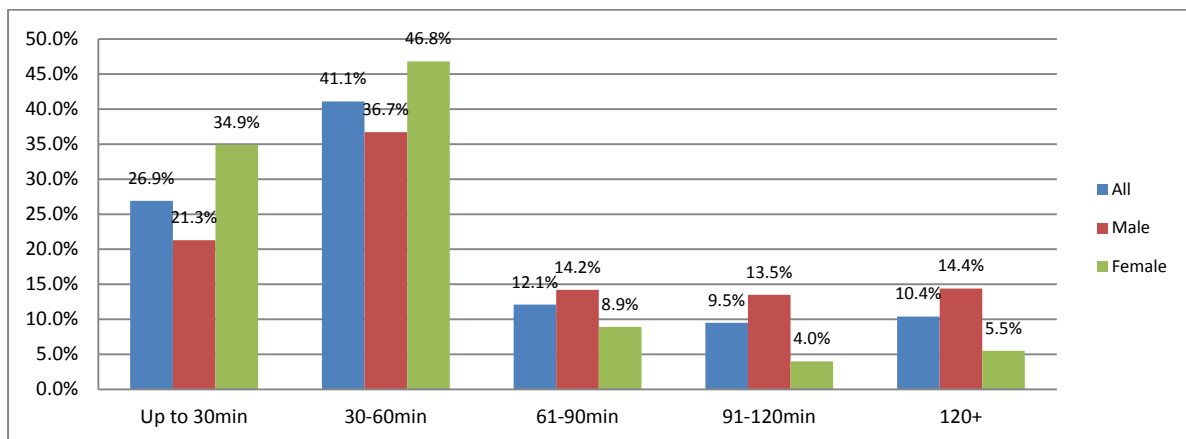


Figure 2.11: Proportion of sporting sessions by duration of session – by gender



In **Figure 2.11** we see that nearly ¼ of all sporting sessions last 30 minutes or more with the mean session lasting almost 74 minutes. Men are significantly more likely to engage in longer sporting sessions than women (89 minutes vs. 56 minutes) influenced strongly by their greater participation in golf.

Looking next at the intensity of sporting sessions in **Figure 2.12** below, we can see that the majority of sessions undertaken by men and women were of sufficient intensity to get them out of breath or sweating. Furthermore only 1 in 7 sporting sessions were reported as being of light intensity. However, as with the previous figures, we see a significant difference between the genders with men much more likely to engage in vigorous sporting sessions than women.

Figure 2.12: Proportion of sporting sessions by intensity of effort in previous 7 days – by gender¹⁸

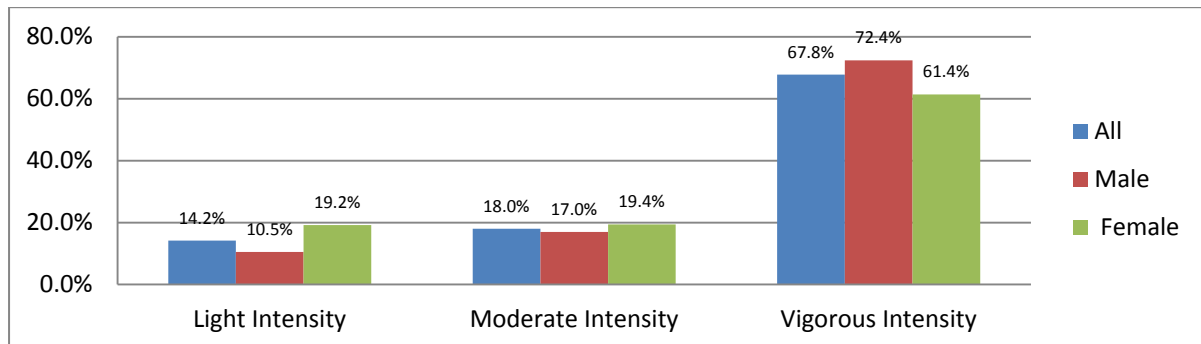


Figure 2.13: Proportion of sporting sessions by context of participation – by gender

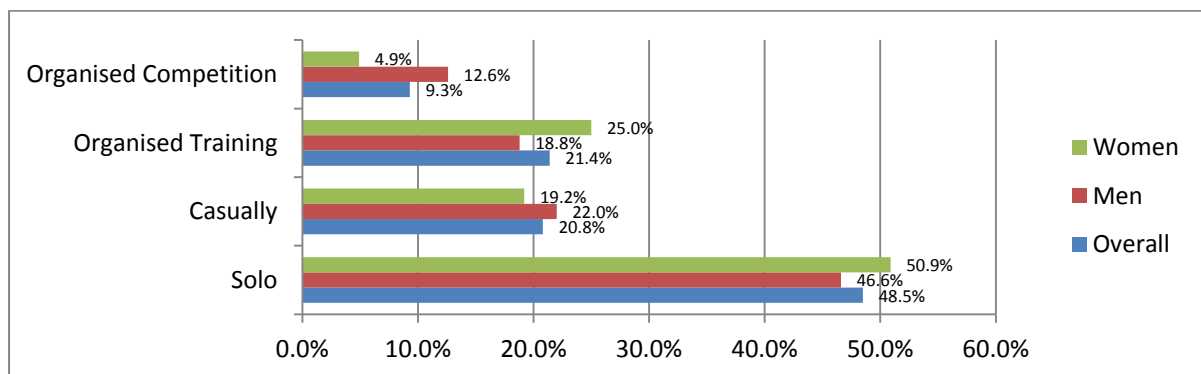


Figure 2.13 shows that nearly 70% of all sporting sessions in DLR were undertaken in an informal context (i.e. either casually with family or friends or solo) while 30% of sessions involved some organised element, either training / coaching or competition. There is very little difference between men and women in terms of their engagement in informal sport, the majority of which is undertaken by the participant on their own. This reflects the prominence of sports such as running, cycling, exercise and swimming among adults.

The majority of organised sport consists of organised training / coaching sessions. For every one competitive session there were about 2.5 training / coaching sessions in DLR. Men and women

¹⁸ Moderate intensity is equivalent to the participant raising their breathing rate while vigorous intensity meant that the participant reported being out of breath or sweating

engage differently with organised sport, with men being significantly more likely to compete than women while the reverse is the case in respect of organised training / coaching sessions. Organised competition is the least popular context for adult participation. In a flexible module conducted as part of the 2013 ISM, clubs being overly associated with competitive participation was among the main reasons for people not wanting to join clubs.

Research has shown that the biggest disparity in health status is between those who participate in no sport or physical activity and those who are active to any extent, rather than between those who are active to differing degrees (Fahey et al., 2004; Lunn and Layte, 2008). In keeping with this, it is a primary focus of national policy to concentrate on getting people, who do not actively participate in sport and exercise, to take up some form of activity. The analysis presented above supports this as an appropriate goal for policy. It shows that once an individual is engaged in a sport or exercise activity, there is a good chance they will participate more than once a week, for longer than half-an-hour and that they will do so sufficiently to get out of breath or sweat. Thus, most participants are likely to be getting some degree of health benefit from their participation. The key issue remains whether they are an active participant in the first place.

Nevertheless, the findings with respect to the context of participation are also noteworthy as regards policy that aims to increase participation. The majority of sporting activity is occurring outside of formal sporting structures suggesting that policy mechanisms that rely on pre-existing sporting bodies are less likely to be successful unless those bodies can reach out beyond the existing sporting and social networks with which they currently engage.

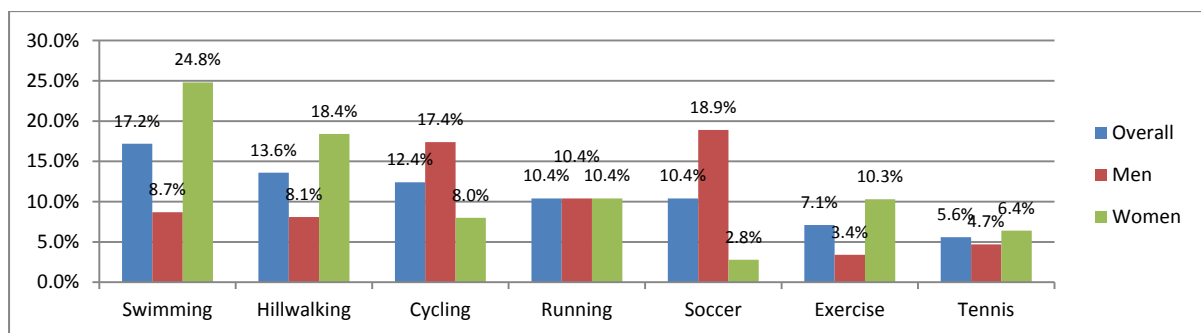
As regards the social benefits of sport, the fact that over one half of all adult sporting sessions involve participation by people on their own is striking. Previous research has also identified that the primary reason cited by non-participants for not playing sport is lack of time (Fahey et al., 2004; CSO, 2007). The solo activities identified are highly efficient forms of exercise, which take up relatively little time and do not require much in the way of coordination between people. There may therefore be a trade off between the health benefits that such solo exercise activities bring and the social benefits that accompany other types of participation.

2.5 Interest in doing more sports

In 2011 ISM respondents were asked whether or not they were interested in doing more sport or exercise, if so which sport they would like to do more of and, if not, what were the reasons

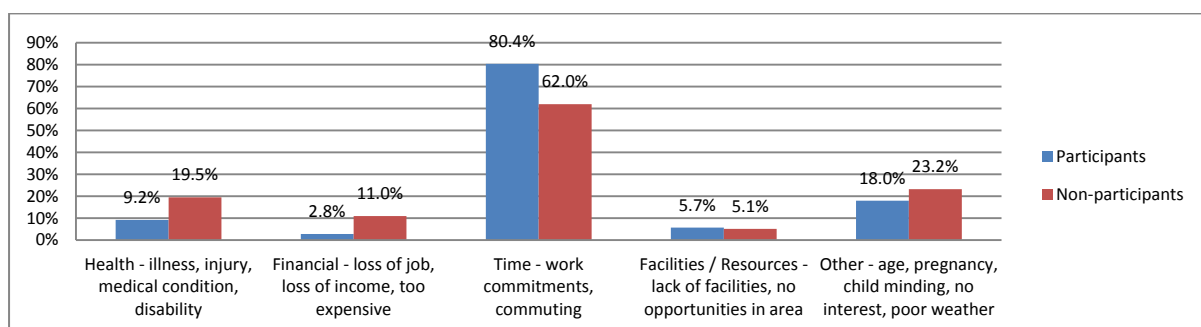
preventing them from engaging in more activity. Encouragingly over half (57.7%) of the DLR sample were interested in increasing their sporting activity with non-participants more likely to agree with this than participants (65.7% and 52.5%). Those in the 25 – 44 year old age group appear particularly keen to increase their sports participation with over 75% of this group expressing such a wish while those aged 65 and over show limited interest in raising their levels of participation. **Figure 2.14** displays the preferred sports in DLR which are broadly similar to those reported at national level. While men would like to play soccer, cycle and run more, women are more attracted to swimming, hill-walking, running and exercise. Preferences of current non-participants tend to gravitate towards low intensity, low load bearing activities like swimming and hill-walking.

Figure 2.14 Interest in doing more sport – by sport (Base: All interested in doing more sport)



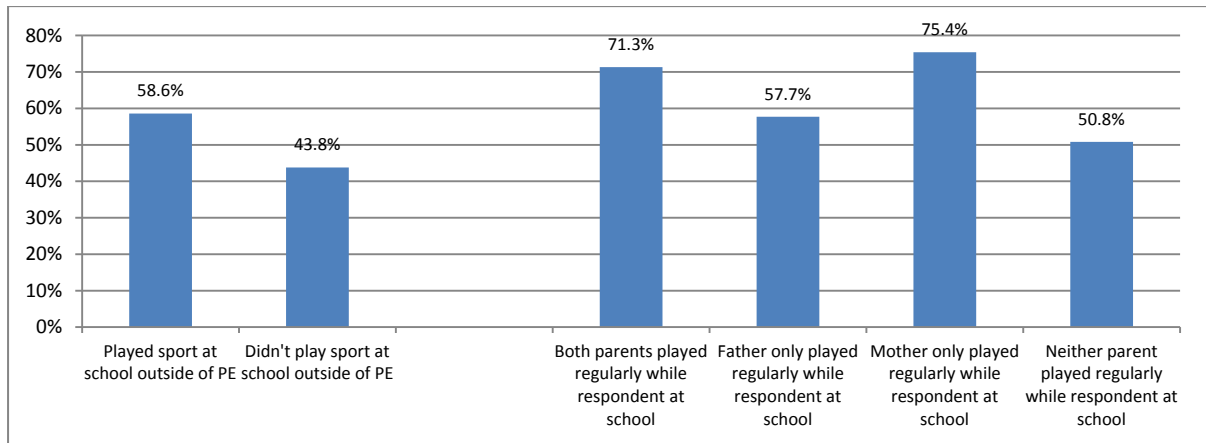
Time is overwhelmingly the most commonly cited barrier to participation while for those with an illness or disability, health becomes an important barrier. Neither financial issues nor lack of facilities feature particularly strongly, although the former are seen as more important for non-participants as seen in **Figure 2.15** below. Among the “other” category, pregnancy and child minding responsibilities feature prominently. Overall, the analysis suggests that the major factors limiting people’s ability to participate in (more) sport may be capable of being influenced by the provision of more convenient, accessible offerings which they can fit into their otherwise time-pressed lives.

Figure 2.15: Barriers to increasing participation – participants vs. non-participants (Base: Respondents not interested in increasing their participation)



Finally in this section we look briefly at the relationship between current sports participation and the sporting history of the respondent. All respondents were asked whether or not they played sport at school (outside of PE) as well as whether their parents played sport regularly while the respondent attended school. Thus it is possible to look at current sports participation against these two variables as in **Figure 2.16** below. The influences of participation in school sport and regular parental participation in sport while the individual was at school are very clear from this figure.

Figure 2.16: Proportion currently participating in sport in DLR vs. their own historic sports participation and that of their parents while the respondent was at school



3 Broader Physical Activity

3.1 Introduction

As well as looking at participation in sport and exercise, the ISM also looks at participation in broader physical activity including recreational walking, and walking and cycling for transport. This section looks at these issues and at the extent to which through a combination of sport and these physical activities respondents meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines.

3.2 Recreational Walking

Recreational walking is an important source of physical activity for the majority of the adult population. It can be particularly beneficial in providing health and other benefits to older age groups who do not play sport. As a low load-bearing activity that can be undertaken at various intensities, it overcomes one of the disadvantages identified by older people to physical activity, namely that it is easier to injure yourself.¹⁹ The ISM records information about the walking habits of Irish adults including the number of walks, the duration of each walk and the usual walking pace.

Recreational walking is the most popular activity with 68.7% of DLR adults taking part in at least one walk in the past 7 days (**Figure 3.1 overleaf**). This is significantly higher than the national figure of 64.3%. Walking is significantly more popular among women (71.9%) than men (65%). Unlike most other sporting activities, recreational walking is highly popular among older age groups. In DLR it is particularly so among 45 – 64 year olds with upwards of 3 in every 4 of this group walking at least once a week.

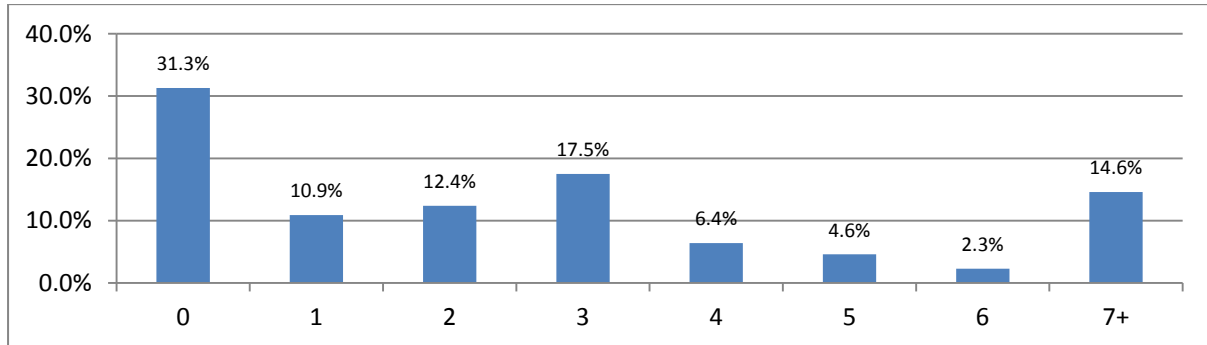
The social gradients around walking are not nearly as strong as they are for participation in other sports. While the prevalence of walking in DLR is highest among those educated to 3rd Level standard, even among those with a Junior Cert / equivalent or lower education level, over 65% reported walking, a figure higher than the national average. Of those with a disability in DLR, over 63% reported walking for recreation at least once in the previous 7 days. As above, this compares reasonably well with the national population average even though it is significantly lower than the almost 70% of those without a disability who walk for recreation in DLR.

The majority of recreational walkers in DLR take part in more than one walk per week with about 1 in 7 respondents taking part in 7 or more walks. The mean number of walks taken in DLR at 3.9 is

¹⁹ Physical Activity and Sport: Participation and Attitudes of Older People in Ireland, Ipsos MORI September 2009

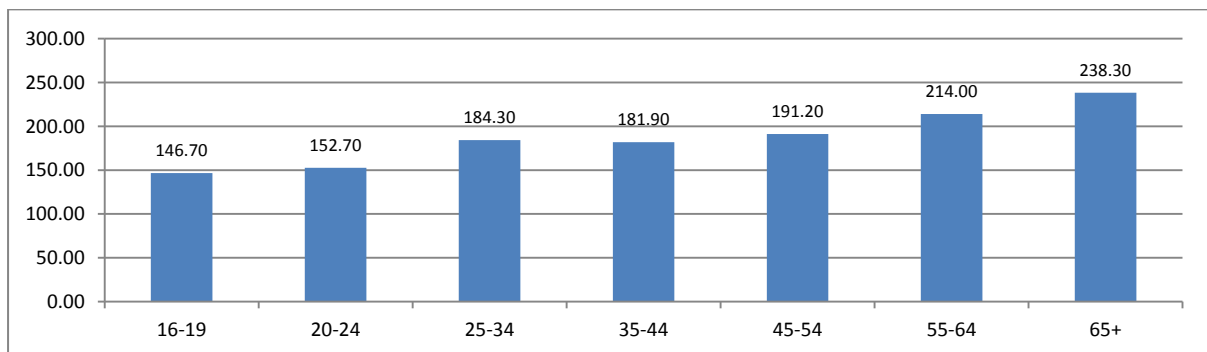
significantly lower than the national average of 4.3. So while more adults are walking in DLR than nationally, they are doing so less often. This is particularly so for men.

Figure 3.1: Recreational walking in DLR by number of walks in the previous 7 days



The average time spent walking per week is just over 3 hours with individual sessions lasting about 50 minutes. While there is no difference between the genders in respect of duration of walking session, women tend to walk slightly more often with the result that they spend about 20 minutes longer on average walking during the week (204 minutes vs. 185 minutes). Weekly walking duration increases with age as seen in **Figure 3.2** below. This is primarily a function of older people taking more recreational walks than the younger cohorts.

Figure 3.2: Average weekly walking duration (minutes per week) in DLR by age range



Most walkers walk at a steady pace or higher with 55% walking at a brisk or fast pace. Women walk at a faster pace than men while younger groups are quicker walkers than their elders.

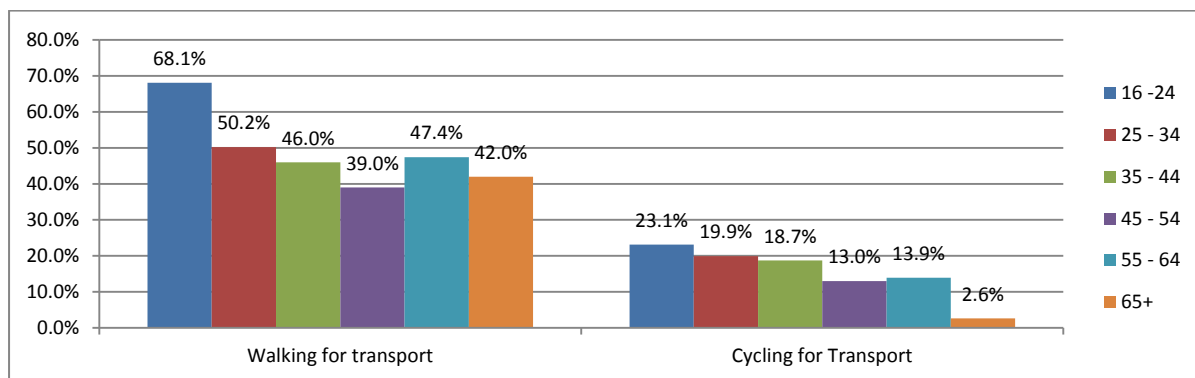
3.3 Walking and Cycling for Transport

The ISM asks respondents if they have engaged in any walking or cycling for transport in the previous 7 days. We have already seen in Section 2.1 that men and women in DLR are significantly more likely to engage in both activities than their national counterparts. We also saw that while

walking for transport is equally appealing to men and women in DLR, significantly more men cycle for transport than women in DLR. The highly urbanised nature of DLR helps to explain the higher levels of walking and cycling for transport.

In **Figure 3.3** below we see that both activities tend to decline with age although in the case of walking for transport the pattern is not straightforward or easy to interpret. The two features that are particularly noticeable are the decline in walking for transport from the mid-20s and the decline in cycling for transport among over 65 year olds. Given these features it is no surprise to find that walking for transport and cycling for transport are both particularly popular among students (71.5% and 26.5% participants respectively) while cycling for transport is not popular among retired individuals (3.4% participants).

Figure 3.3: Walking and cycling for transport in DLR by age range



Walking for transport is more popular among those with lower levels of educational attainment while cycling for transport is more popular among those educated to 3rd level standard. The presence of a disability is a limiting factor to engaging in both activities. However, as with other activities, the proportions engaging in active transport is greater across all socio-economic groups and classes in DLR than among the equivalent groups in the rest of the country.

3.4 Overall Activity Levels

The ISM allows an approximate²⁰ analysis of adult activity levels against the National Physical Activity Guidelines²¹ based on a four-category classification system shown in **Figure 3.4** overleaf.

²⁰ This analysis can only be regarded as approximate as it does not take account of physical activity undertaken in the workplace or in the home.

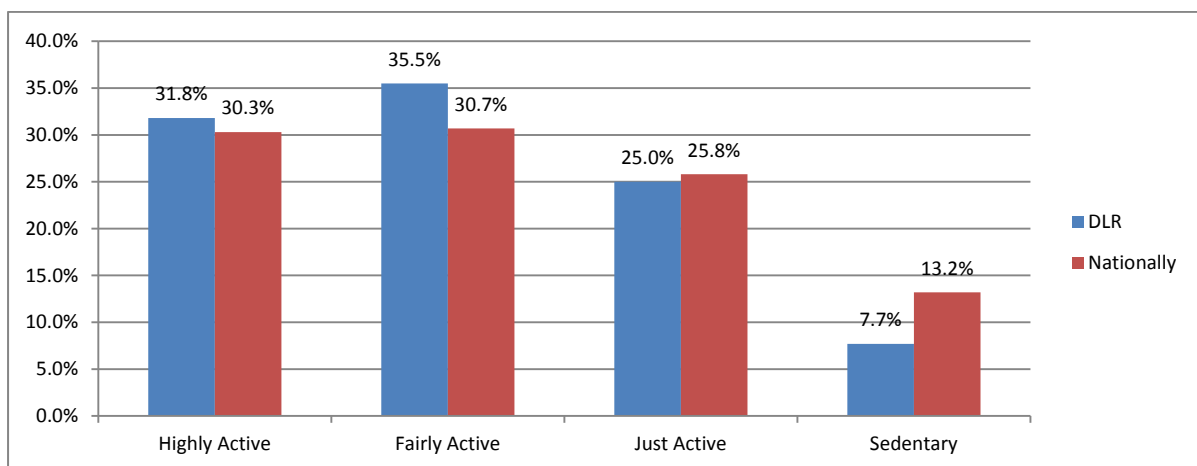
²¹ For adults to meet the Guidelines requires that they take part in at least 5 sessions of physical activity per week of at least 30 minutes duration at a moderate intensity or greater. Moderate intensity is considered sufficient to raise the person's breathing rate. In the case of the ISM these sessions can be through sport, recreational walking or a combination of both.

Figure 3.4: Activity Spectrum Categories and Definitions

Highly active	Participate in 30 minutes moderate ¹ physical activity at least five times during the previous seven days (i.e. meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines)
Fairly Active	Participated in 30 minutes physical activity at least twice during the previous seven days
Just active	Participated in a sporting activity or recreational walking for 20 minutes at least once during the previous seven days, or regularly walks or cycles for transport (at least once a week)
Sedentary	Did not participate (20 minutes) in sporting activity or recreational walking during the previous seven days and does not cycle or walk regularly for transport.

Given the high levels of activity in sport, recreational walking and active commuting that we have already seen in DLR, it is no surprise that the county’s population is more skewed towards the more active end of the spectrum and that the prevalence of sedentarism is significantly lower than is the case nationally as shown in **Figure 3.5**. The only surprise is that there are not more “highly active” individuals given the overall numbers of those who are active in the first place (92.3%). This is explained to some extent by the very high prevalence of those who are “fairly active” in DLR compared to nationally. There represent a group which are engaging in 2 to 4 bouts of activity a week which is not quite sufficient for them to get into the highly active category. Some strategic messaging on the part of the local sport and physical activity policy system might help to get this group to go the extra step as it were and increase the number of highly active adults within the county.

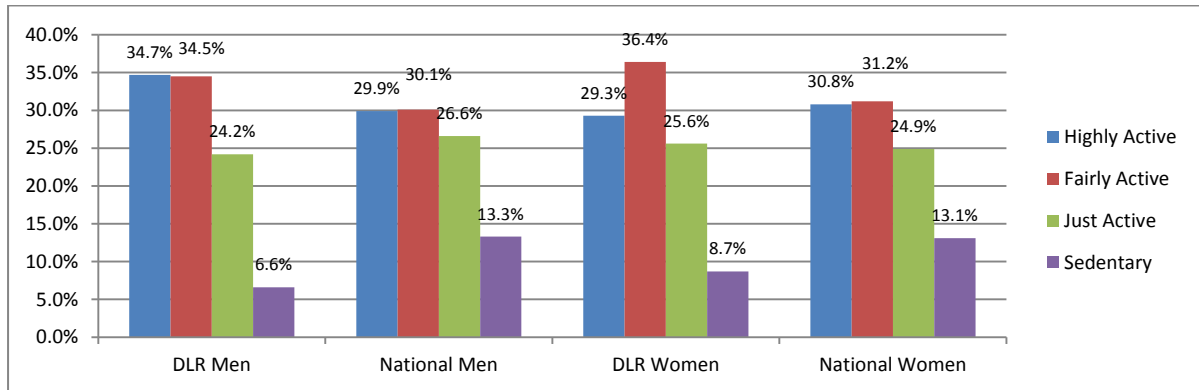
Figure 3.5 Population by activity category in DLR and Nationally



When we look at the activity categories by gender in **Figure 3.6** below we see that such messaging could usefully be directed at men and women given the high levels of those who are “fairly active” among both genders in DLR.

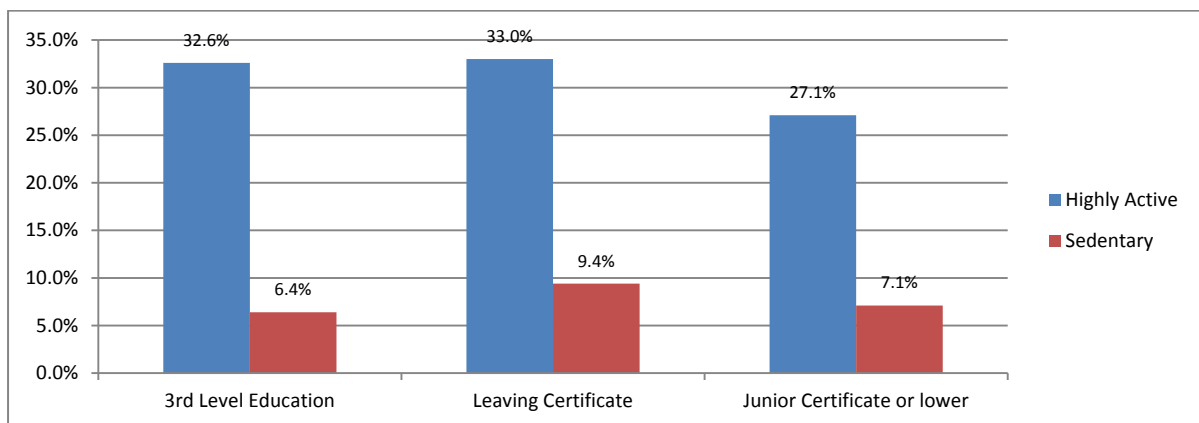
While levels of sedentarism are significantly lower among men and women in DLR compared to the rest of the country as a whole, it should not be forgotten that the greatest health gains are to be had from getting sedentary individuals to engage in some form of activity. In this context, the 1 in 13 individuals who are sedentary in DLR is still a challenge worthy of policy attention.

Figure 3.6: Activity Categories in DLR and Nationally by Gender



We have already seen that participation in sport and recreational walking are not as socially graded in DLR as in the rest of the country. When we look at overall activity categories by highest level of educational attainment in **Figure 3.7** we see the above reflected to some extent in the lack of variation by educational attainment in levels of sedentarism. On the other hand, there is a significant difference in the prevalence of being highly active between those who have been educated to a Junior Certificate or lower and groups with higher levels of educational attainment.

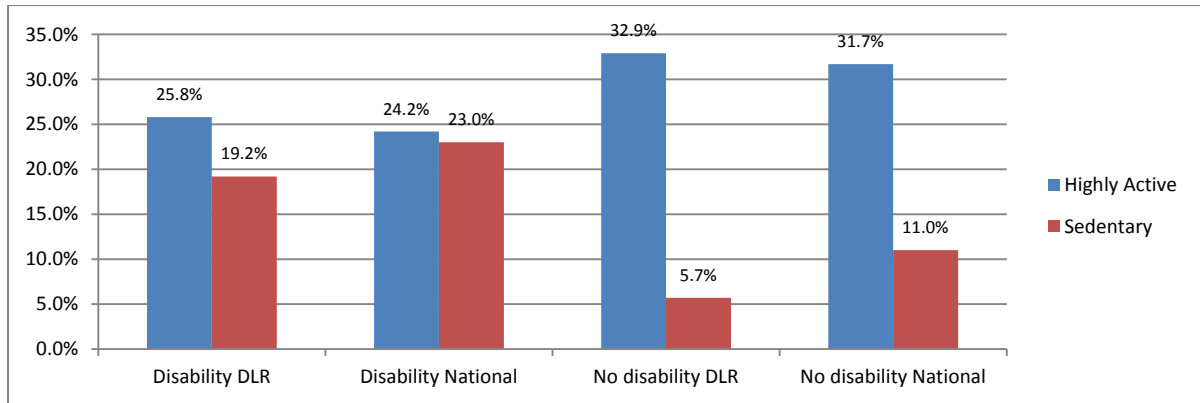
Figure 3.7: Highly Active and Sedentary in DLR by Highest Level of Educational Attainment



Finally in this section we look in **Figure 3.8** at the proportions of those who are highly active and sedentary by presence / absence of a disability. Compared to nationally, the largest differences are among those who are sedentary irrespective of the presence or absence of a disability. Groups with

and without a disability within DLR are significantly less likely to be sedentary than their national counterparts.

Figure 3.8: Highly Active and Sedentary in DLR and Nationally by Presence / Absence of a Disability



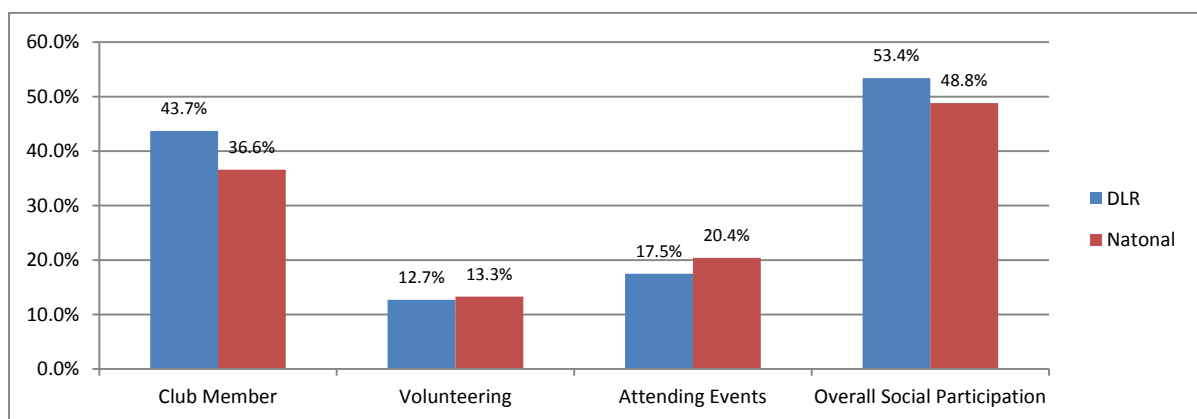
4. Social Participation

4.1 Overall

The ISM looks at social participation in sport through club membership, volunteering and attendance at sports events. In 2013 it also looked at perceptions around gender and sports administration locally and nationally as well as the reasons for participating in sport outside the club environment. These issues are examined in depth in the 2013 ISM Annual Report to which the reader is referred for further detail. That report also examines the demographics of social participation in some detail. This chapter therefore concentrates on the main headlines around social participation in DLR.

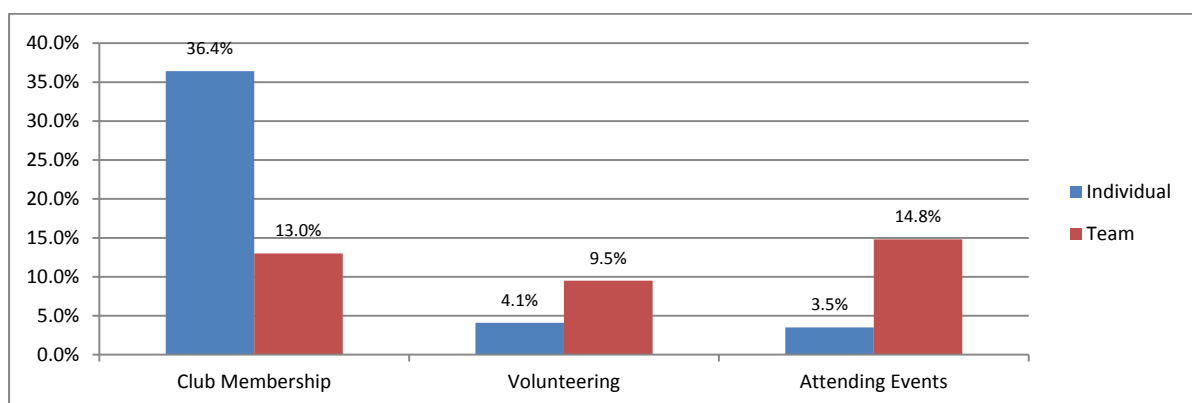
Before looking at each of the different forms of social participation in turn we compare the overall levels of social participation in DLR with the national situation in **Figure 4.1** below. Overall, levels of social participation in DLR are higher than the national figures driven primarily by club membership. Over 53% of DLR adults report their involvement in some form of regular social participation in sport underscoring the importance of sport in contributing to the social capital within the county. The most notable difference in social participation between DLR and nationally is in respect of club membership where the gap is over 7% in favour of DLR. We will look at membership in more detail below. Differences in the proportions volunteering and attending events between the county and country are small.

Figure 4.1: Levels of Social Participation DLR and nationally



While active participation is dominated by individual sporting activities the situation is more mixed when it comes to social participation as we can see from **Figure 4.2** overleaf. The overwhelming majority of volunteering and attendance at sporting events is associated with team sports, in all likelihood most of this being connected with children's participation. On the other hand, club membership hugely favours individual sports.

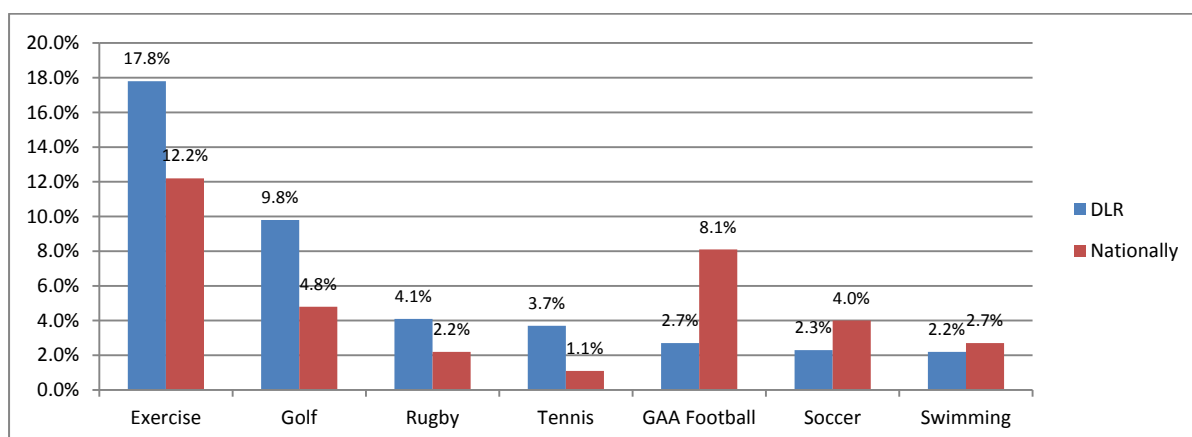
Figure 4.2: Social Participation by type of sport



4.2 Club Membership

The top sports for membership are shown in **Figure 4.3**²² below. The profile of membership by sport is quite different in DLR than nationally with significant differences in exercise, golf, tennis and gaelic games being apparent. Exercise, golf and tennis are sports which can involve significant expenditure and, given the socio-economic profile of the county, it is perhaps no accident that these sports have very high levels of membership in DLR compared to the rest of the country. Rugby is the most popular team sport for membership which is also most unusual. The relatively low levels of popularity in gaelic games, already seen in the levels of active participation, are repeated here. Two notable absences from Figure 4.3 are running and cycling, which despite the very high levels of active participation, still record membership levels of less than 1% in DLR suggesting that there might be a significant untapped demand for membership which local clubs might seek to attract.

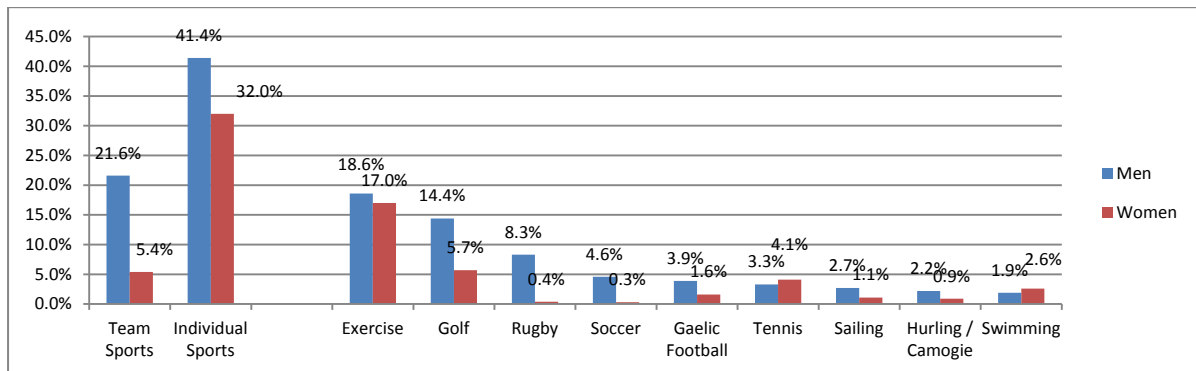
Figure 4.3: Club Membership by sport – DLR vs. Nationally



²² Only sports with membership of 2% or more in DLR are shown. Sports with membership of 1% - 2% in DLR are sailing (1.8%), hurling / camogie (1.5%), hockey (1.3%), hill walking (1.2%) and weights (1%)

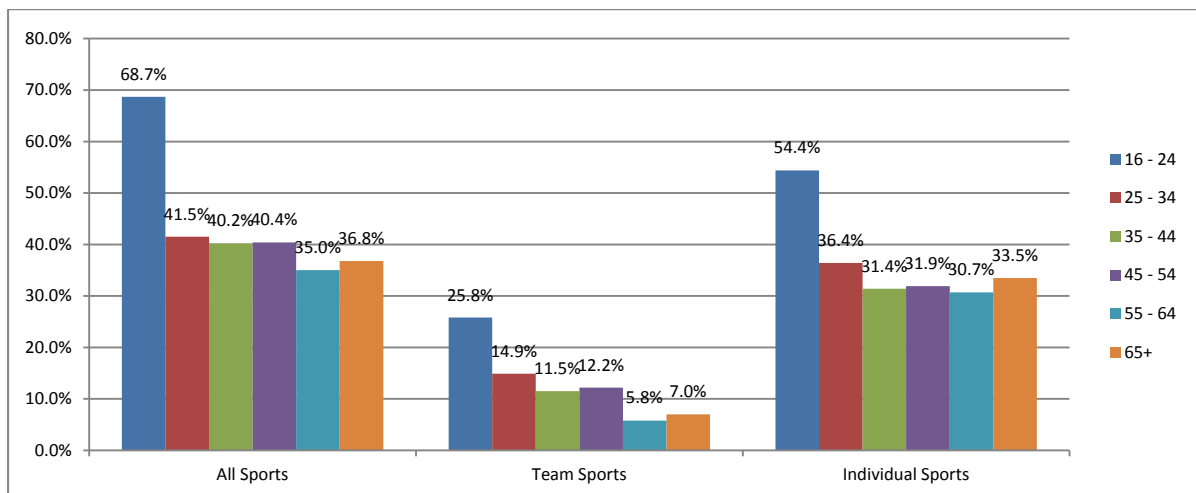
There is a large gender gap in favour of men when it comes to club membership (53.3% vs. 35.2% respectively). It is clear from **Figure 4.4** below that the greatest disparity here relates to membership of team sports clubs where men are four times as likely to be members as women. The gender difference in individual sports is driven almost entirely by golf where men are 2.5 times more likely to be club members.

Figure 4.4: Club Membership in DLR by sport by gender



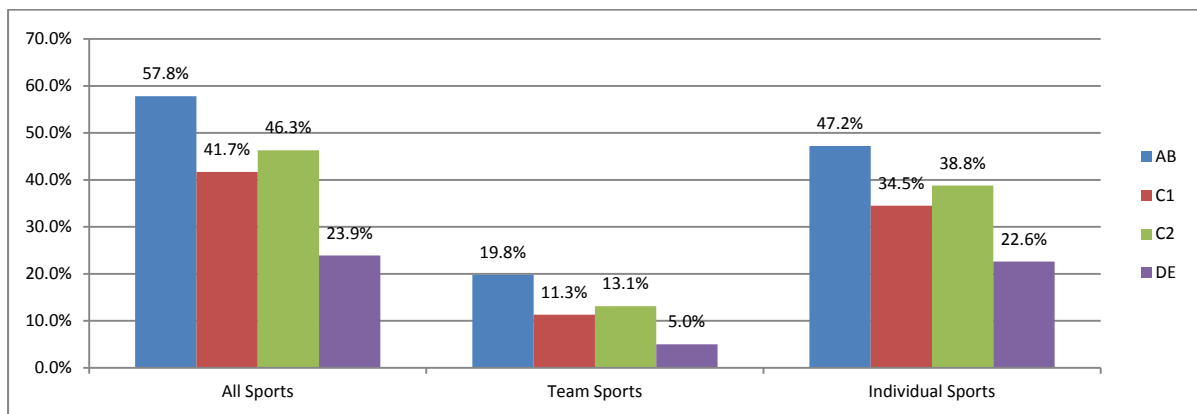
Apart from the influence of gender, younger people are also more likely to belong to a club as we see in **Figure 4.5** below. What is interesting here is that the decline in membership of both types of sports club is most pronounced among adults in their mid 20s and early 30s. Thereafter membership is relatively stable across the ages with the exception of another notable decline in membership of team sports clubs among adults in their 50s. What this suggests is that club membership among young adults is more influenced by life changes than by sports-specific concerns. The challenge for sports clubs may be about trying to adapt their membership package for individuals during this period of volatility in their lives.

Figure 4.5: Club Membership in DLR by sport type and age range



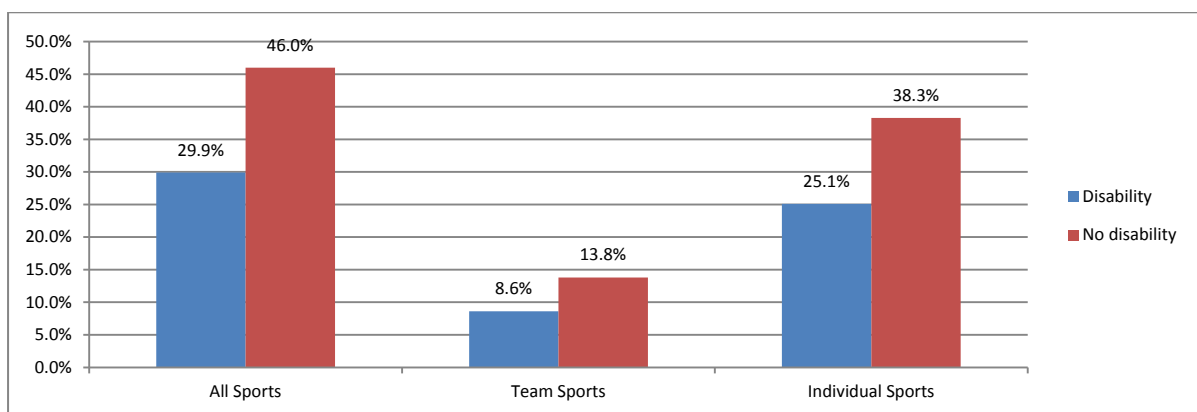
Club membership in DLR is strongly influenced by socio-economic characteristics as seen below in **Figure 4.6** which looks at the issue by social class. A similar profile is also evident when membership is looked at by educational attainment. The decline in membership across social classes equally affects team and individual sports suggesting that it is not just an issue of cost but also of social connectedness as well. One other related feature here is that where households have a car, respondents were 3 times more likely to be club members than those which didn't. This disparity applied to team and individual sports clubs.

Figure 4.6: Club Membership in DLR by sport type and social class



Having a disability is a significant barrier to being a club member as can be seen from **Figure 4.7**. In line with the rest of the analysis here this barrier applies to both team and individual sports.

Figure 4.7: Club Membership in DLR by sport type and presence / absence of a disability



4.3 Volunteering

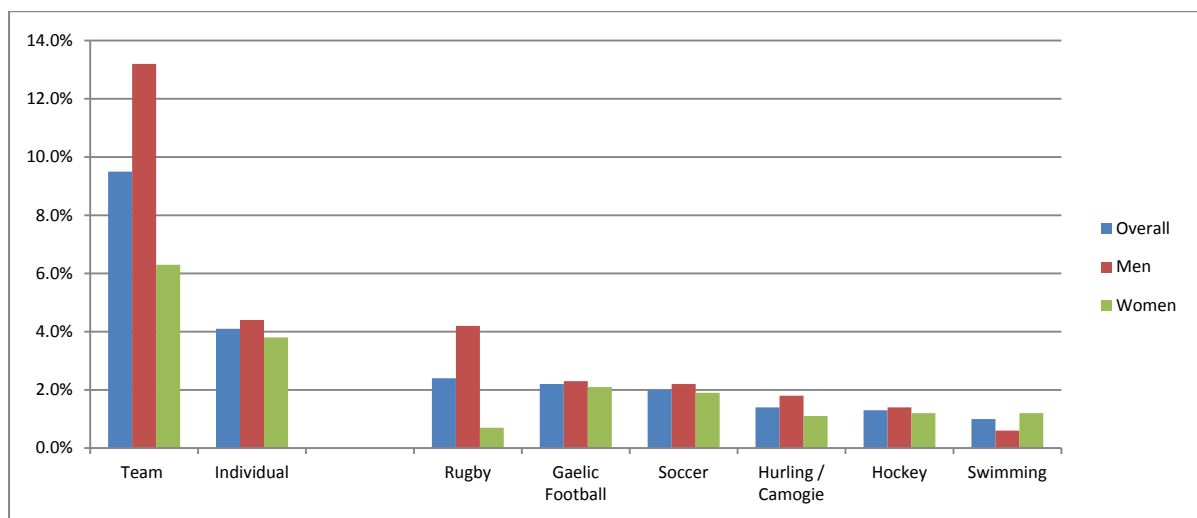
Volunteering is regarded by many as the lifeblood of sport, without which much of sporting activity, particularly that involving children, would simply not occur. It is a key component of organised sport in Ireland and, according to official sources sport features as the single activity involving the greatest

amount of volunteering. The 2006 Census of Population²³ identified that 33% of all volunteers were involved in sport only slightly behind the much broader category of “social / charity” at 35%.

The picture for volunteering in DLR is similar to that nationally with one notable exception. Just over one in eight adults in DLR volunteered at least once in the previous 7 days during 2011 – 2013 with men being more likely to volunteer than women. Team sports dominate the volunteering landscape as seen in **Figure 4.8** below. Only sports with an overall volunteering rate of 1% or more are shown.

Volunteering is strongly associated with children’s participation in sport and this is also true in DLR with almost 17% of respondents with children volunteering compared to 7% without. This is also reflected in the volunteer age profile which greatest levels of volunteering occurring among 35 – 44 year olds. Volunteering exhibits strong social and economic gradients being associated with social class, car ownership, level of educational attainment and presence / absence of a disability.

Figure 4.8: Volunteering by sport by gender

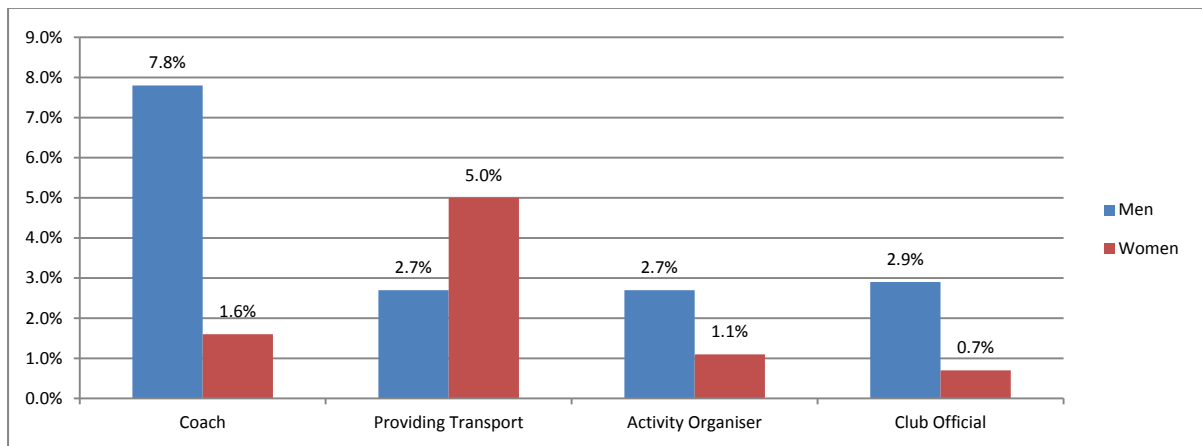


Unlike most other parts of the country where gaelic games are the main source of volunteering, rugby is the main volunteering sport in DLR. It is also the sport with the strongest gender difference in terms of volunteering with men being far more likely to volunteer than women. One other point to note is the presence of hockey which features more strongly across all aspects of active and social participation in DLR than elsewhere in the country.

²³ <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/saveselections.asp>

Those who volunteer spend on average over 3.5 hours per week volunteering with men spending more time than women (3.9 vs. 3 hours). This may be due to the type of roles men and women perform, which can be seen in **Figure 4.9** below. Men are more likely to coach, organise events and administer clubs while the dominant role for women is providing transport. The nature of these roles tends to reinforce the highly gendered nature in the administration of Irish sport as perceived by the ISM respondents during 2013; the reader is referred to the 2013 ISM Annual Report in this regard.

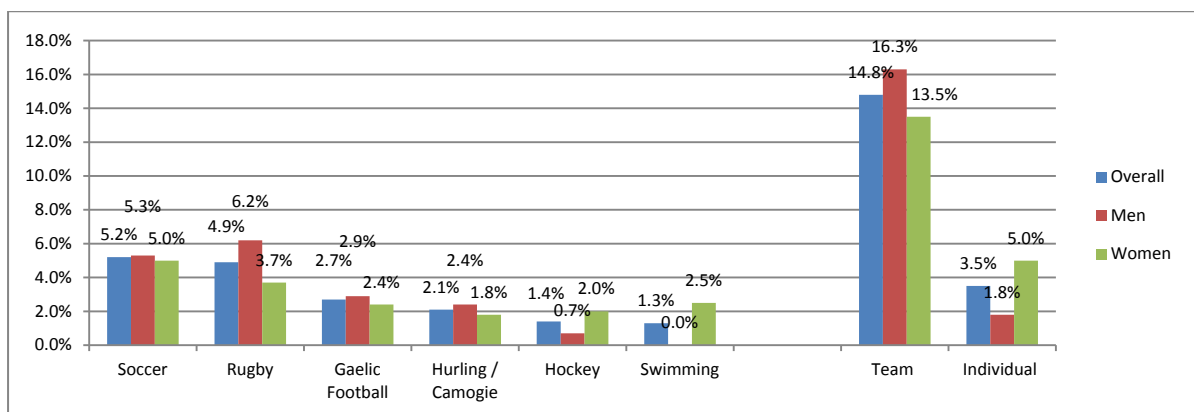
Figure 4.9: Main volunteering Roles by gender



4.4 Attendance at Sporting Events

Just less than 18% of adults in the DLR region regularly attend some form of sporting event whether involving adults or children which is slightly lower than the national average of 20%. Attendance is dominated by team sports with over 4 times as many adults in DLR attending such events as attend those involving individual activities. Nearly 22% of respondents with children attended sporting events in DLR compared to less than 12% of those without. **Figure 4.10** below shows attendance by sport by gender during 2011 – 2013 in DLR.

Figure 4.10: Attendance at sporting events by sport in DLR by gender



Other than the effect of gender, attendance is more popular among 35 – 54 year olds (reflecting the influence of children’s sporting activities on patterns of attendance), those with a 3rd Level educational qualification and those in social class AB. Unlike other forms of participation, attendance is not notably affected by the presence or absence of a disability.

5. Policy Implications

This briefing report provides descriptive information on participation in sport and physical activity in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown (DLR). Age, socio-economic status and the presence or absence of a disability all play important roles in whether or not individuals within the counties are likely to be active through sport and physical activity. Policy responses to these issues have been looked at in the context of previously commissioned ISC research such as the Sporting Lives, Fair Play?, Keeping Them in the Game and Irish Sports Monitor reports; all available at www.irishsportsCouncil.ie. The reader is referred to these reports for further exposition on these issues and some suggestions on how to deal with them. This section focuses on a number of issues highlighted within the report where DLR might be slightly different to the rest of the country or which have not necessarily been covered in depth in the previous research reports. In putting forward these implications it must be acknowledged at the outset that this report reflects very positively on participation in DLR.

Achieving the National Physical Activity Guidelines

We have seen that participation in all forms of physical activity is generally significantly higher in DLR than in the rest of the country, both overall and across all groups. This may in no small part be a function of factors such as the socio-economic profile of the county, the development of strongly positive social norms around participation and the county's highly urbanised nature. However, despite the very high numbers of individuals who are engaging in some form of activity in the county²⁴ it is clear that large numbers of these are not participating often enough, for long enough or with sufficient intensity to meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines. There is significant scope therefore for policy makers to seek to promote messages and opportunities for increased participation to seek to have greater numbers of "highly active" adults in the county. Messages around increasing the frequency of recreational walking as well as around the benefits of combining walking and sports sessions would appear to be appropriate in this regard.

Addressing Sedentary Behaviour

While DLR has one of the most active adults populations in Ireland with only 7.7% being sedentary this relatively small proportion still represents almost 13,000 residents of the county who are at an

²⁴ Over 92% are taking part in some form of activity at least once a week with less than 8% being completely sedentary

increased risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other health problems. While Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown is unique in terms of its relatively high levels of participation, overall and among both men and women, certain trends remain predictable. As with national trends, residents from lower socio-economic groups as well as those with a disability are more likely to be sedentary. Given that sedentary individuals stand to gain the most health benefits from initiating some form of participation it is clear that policy makers in the county must not lose sight of the need for a consistent and sustained focus on these disadvantaged groups. In this respect it is noted that there is a high interest among non-sports participants in taking part in activities such as hill walking and swimming.

Increasing Club Membership in Certain Sports

Overall, levels of club membership are very high in DLR compared to the rest of the country. In this context and given the high levels of active participation in running and cycling in the county it is somewhat surprising that club membership in both these sports is very low in the county. This may represent something of an untapped demand for membership which the relevant clubs might seek to exploit.

Appendix

	2011 Census	2011+2013 ISM combined
Gender	16 years plus	16 years plus
Male	49.3%	49.2%
Female	50.7%	50.8%
Age		
16-19	6.4%	6.4%
20-24	7.2%	7.2%
25-34	17.1%	17.0%
35-44	17.5%	17.6%
45-54	17.3%	17.2%
55-64	14.9%	14.9%
65+	19.7%	19.7%
Education		
Third Level / Other 2 nd Level	59.9%	61.9%
Leaving Cert	18.9%	23.1%
Lower Secondary	9.9%	10.5%
Primary / Lower	8.1%	4.0%
Not Stated	3.3%	-
Working Status (Census 2011 includes those under 16)		
Employee/Self Employed	47.7%	47.8%
Unemployed	10.2%	10.2%
Retired	17.0%	16.9%
Homemaker	9.3%	9.3%
Student	10.6%	10.7%
Unemployed-illness/disabled	5.1%	5.1%



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