

**Sport and Physical Activity among those aged over 16  
in Cork**

**By**

**Peter Smyth and Elizabeth Doyle  
Sport Ireland**

**October 2015**

## Executive Summary

### Active Participation in Sport

- 48% of Cork residents take part in sport, this is the equivalent of 145,200 adults aged 16 and over taking part in regular sporting activity in Cork.
- Men (53.2%) are more likely to take part in sport than women (42.9%).
- Swimming and Gym/exercise activities are the most popular activities.
- On average participants take part in 3.5 sporting sessions per week with the average session lasting 70 minutes.
- Taking part in solo activities was the most popular sporting context among participants.

### Broader Physical Activity

- 66.6% of Cork residents take part in recreational walking with women more likely to take part than men (73.9% compared to 59.4%)
- On average people take 4 walks per week with the average walk lasting less than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour.
- 38.7% walk for transport while 7.5% cycle for transport.

### Social Participation

- 40.6% are club members, 15.9% volunteer for sport and 23.6% attended a sporting event.
- Gyms are the most popular club, Gaelic Football and Hurling/Camogie are the most popular sports to volunteer for while Hurling/Camogie is the most popular sport among spectators.

### Sport and Health

- 32.3% are highly active i.e. meeting the activity guidelines of 150 minutes of moderate/vigorous activity per week.
- 12.5% are inactive, rural residents, particularly men in rural regions, are more likely to be inactive than urban residents.
- 63% of Cork residents are interested in taking part in more sport however not having enough time was cited as the main barrier.
- Swimming, Cycling and Hillwalking were cited as the main sports people would like to do more of.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The National Physical Activity Guidelines<sup>1</sup> 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 benefits<sup>2</sup> and participation in sport and active leisure plays an increasingly important role in adult physical activity levels worldwide<sup>3</sup>. The benefits from activity can be gained at any age. The English Longitudinal Study of Ageing<sup>4</sup> 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 Cork. The analysis aims to be of interest and assistance to those involved in the promotion of sport in Cork, particularly Local Authorities, LSPs, clubs and volunteers.

### 1.2 Scope

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<sup>5</sup> were combined into one dataset of 2003 respondents to reduce the error margin within the results. Based on this sample size the error margin around key high level results is about 2.19%. So if we report a participation rate of 48% in the report we would expect the true participation rate for Cork to lie somewhere between 48% -2.19% and 48% + 2.19% i.e. between 45.81% and 50.19%<sup>6</sup>. Where the sample has been divided into further sub-samples by gender or age, the error margin is increased. **So, the results are only an indication of sports participation in Cork and should be treated with caution.**

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 (available

---

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

<sup>2</sup> <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/>

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

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

<sup>5</sup> The high level statistics for the two years are included in Appendix 1 for information. None of the differences reported are statistically significant

<sup>6</sup> 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.

at [http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Research/The\\_Irish\\_Sports\\_Monitor/](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 Cork's current demographic profile. Gender and age, age overall, employment status and year were considered in this re-weighting exercise. Appendix 2 compares the demographic profile of the dataset used for the report with the profile of Cork recorded by the Central Statistics Office in the 2011 Census of Population.

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 only and therefore 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 picture. During 2011 and 2013 flexible modules were included on topics such as gender issues in Irish sport, respondent 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 more detail. 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.

### **1.3 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.

### **1.4 ISM Definition of Sport and Physical Activity**

The primary justification for public investment in sport is to increase physical activity and hence to improve health<sup>7</sup>. Consistent with this aim (and with the *Irish Sports Council Act, 1999*), the report

---

<sup>7</sup> <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."

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.

### **1.5 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 Cork sample. 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.

---

## 2. RESULTS

### 2.1 Overall Physical Activity

**Table 1** compares physical activity participation in Cork with the national average. It captures regular<sup>8</sup> 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 Guidelines<sup>9</sup> while those who are “sedentary” play no sport, are not recreational walkers and don’t walk or cycle for transport. Based on the 2011 Census data the 48% participating in sport is equivalent to approximately 145,200 adults aged 16 and over taking part in regular sporting activity in Cork.

**Table 1: Summary of Physical Activity – Cork vs. National**

	<b>Cork</b>	<b>National</b>
Sporting Participation	48.0%	46.0%
Recreational Walking	66.6%	64.3%
Walk for Transport	38.7%	40.0%
Cycle for Transport	7.5%	10.1%
Highly Active	32.3%	30.3%
Sedentary	12.3%	13.2%

Participation rates are broadly similar to the national figures with participation in recreational activity (sport and recreational walking) slightly higher in Cork while active commuting levels (walking and cycling for transport) are slightly lower in Cork. In **Table 2** overleaf we look at these behaviours by gender within Cork. While we again see similar participation rates between Cork and nationally, some of the differences are significant, namely recreational walking among women (greater participation in Cork) and cycling for transport among men (lesser participation in Cork). Within the county men are more likely to play sport and cycle for transport while women are more likely to take recreational walks. There is little difference in the prevalence of those who are highly active or sedentary either within the county or between the county and nationally.

---

<sup>8</sup> 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

<sup>9</sup> 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.

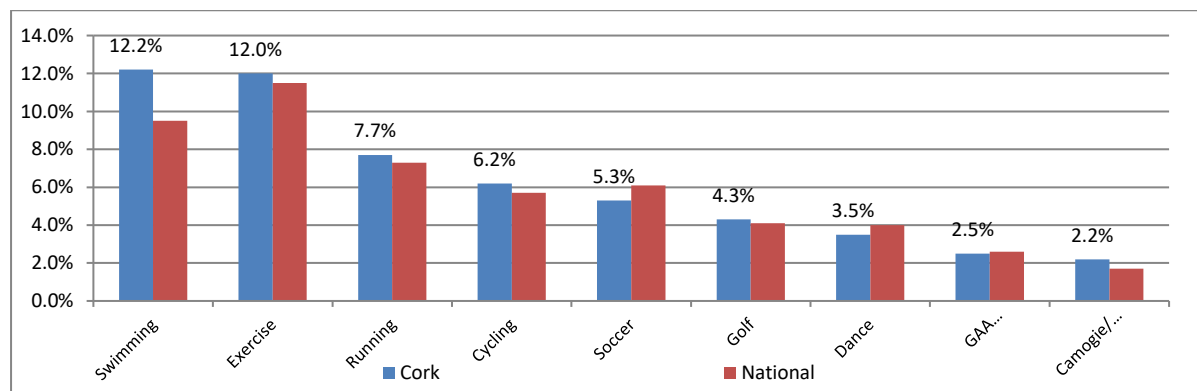
**Table 2: Summary of Physical Activity by gender – Cork vs. National**

	Cork		National	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sporting Participation	53.2%	42.9%	51.5%	40.9%
Recreational Walking	59.4%	73.6%	58.0%	70.3%
Walk for Transport	38.1%	39.3%	39.1%	40.9%
Cycle for Transport	10.8%	4.4%	14.6%	5.7%
Highly Active	31.7%	32.9%	29.9%	30.7%
Sedentary	11.9%	12.8%	13.3%	13.0%

## 2.2 Most Popular Sporting Activities

Figures 2.2 and 2.3a and b show the most popular sports in Cork overall and by gender. Only sports with participation levels of 2%<sup>1011</sup> or greater in the county are shown. Individual sports dominate, accounting for 6 of the 9 most popular activities. This is reflected at a combined level where the proportion playing individual sports (43.3%) is almost 4 times higher than for team sports (10.7%). The participation rate in swimming is higher than the national average.

**Figure 2.2: Top Participation Sports in Cork and Nationally - Overall**



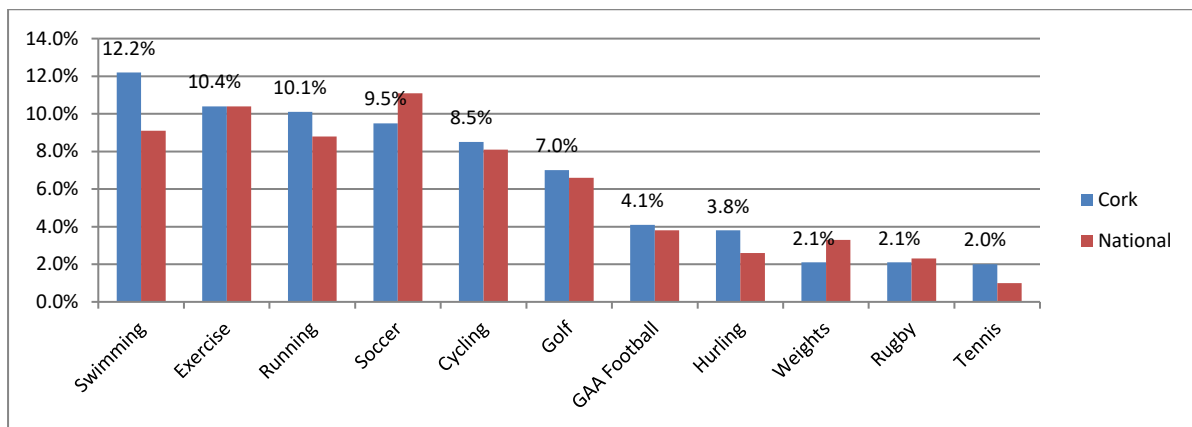
In the county, men are over four times more likely to take part in team sports than women (17.4% and 4.3% respectively). They are also significantly more likely to play individual sports although the difference here is much smaller (45.9% vs. 40.9%). Swimming, hurling and tennis are more popular

<sup>10</sup> The national figures for overall, male and female participation are based on the composite average of the 2011 and 2013 ISM figures.

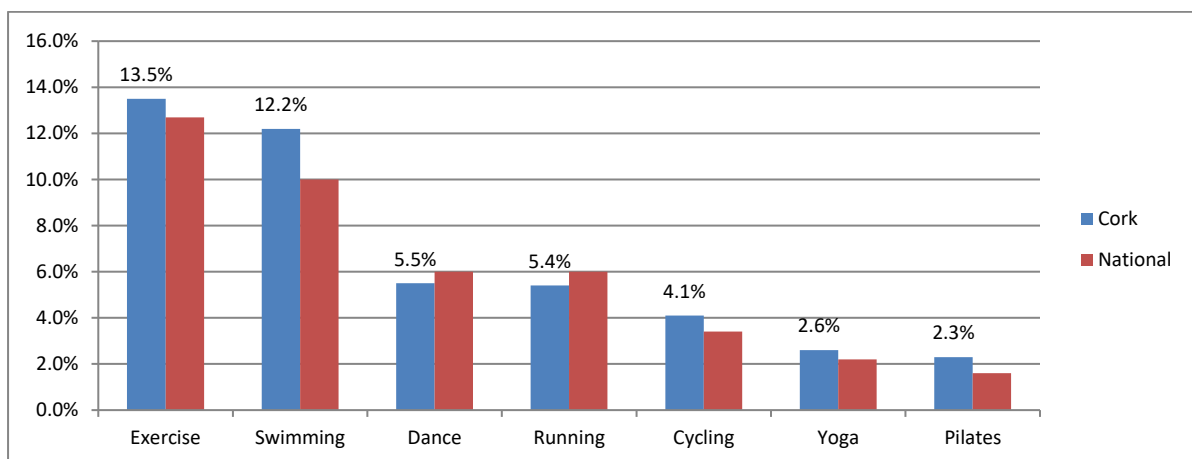
<sup>11</sup> Sports with participation levels of between 1% and 2% overall are basketball, hill walking, horse riding, pilates, rugby, tennis, weightlifting and yoga

among men in the county compared to their national counterparts while swimming is the only activity where participation among women is significantly higher in Cork.

**Figure 2.3a: Top Participation Sports in Cork and Nationally – Men<sup>12</sup>**



**Figure 2.3b: Top Participation Sports in Cork and Nationally- Women<sup>13</sup>**



### 2.3 Participation and Age

Participation declines among men and women with age as can be seen in **Figure 2.4** overleaf. However the patterns are different between the genders. While men are significantly more likely to play sport in the late teens and early 20s than women, the drop off in participation is steeper for men than for women during the 20s and 30s reflecting the extent of drop out by men from team sport during this period of their lives. Drop off is also significantly steeper for men in middle age so much so that by the

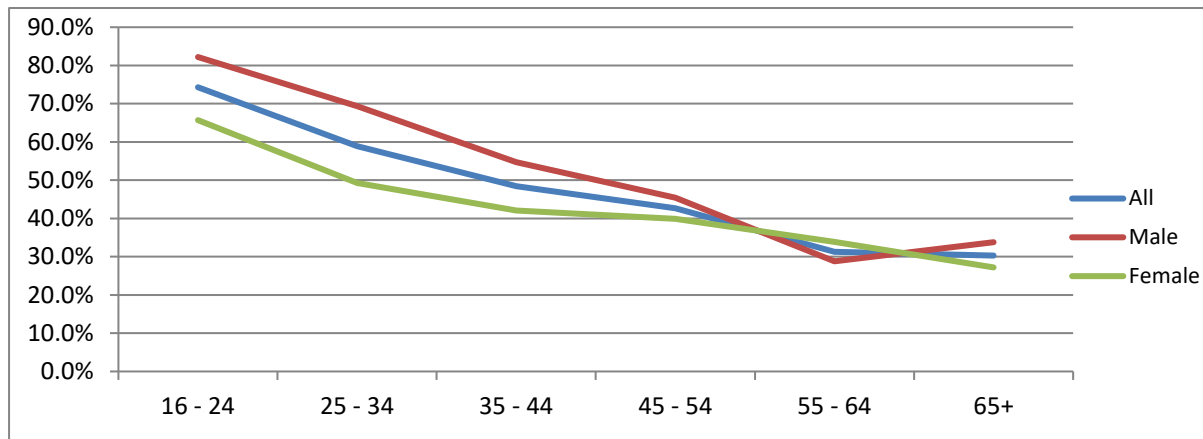
<sup>12</sup> Sports where men’s participation is between 1-2% are basketball, boxing, dance and yoga.

<sup>13</sup> Sports where women’s participation is between 1-2% are golf, hill walking, horse riding, soccer and tennis.



mid 50s women’s participation levels surpass those of men. In retirement there appears to be a bounce back in men’s participation which again exceeds that of women during in the later years<sup>14</sup>.

**Figure 2.4: Participation by Gender and Age**



## 2.4 Participation and socio-economic status

While the ISM has reported on a narrowing gender gap in participation over the years, strong social gradients have been a consistent feature of sports participation research for over a decade. Cork proves to be no exception in this regard. **Figure 2.5** overleaf shows the significance of the social gradient in participation across each type of sport by weekly income. Participation rates in team sports among those earning more than €1250 / week are 4 times greater than those earning less than €500 / week while for individual sports the respective ratio is about 1.75:1 in favour of the higher-earning group. Given the much greater relative levels of participation in individual than team sports among all groups, closing the gap in respect of these individual activities would have a greater influence in lessening the overall social gradient in participation.

A similar picture emerges when we look at participation by level of educational attainment. 53.4% of those with a third level education participate in sport compared to 41.6% whose highest education attainment is the junior certificate<sup>15</sup>.

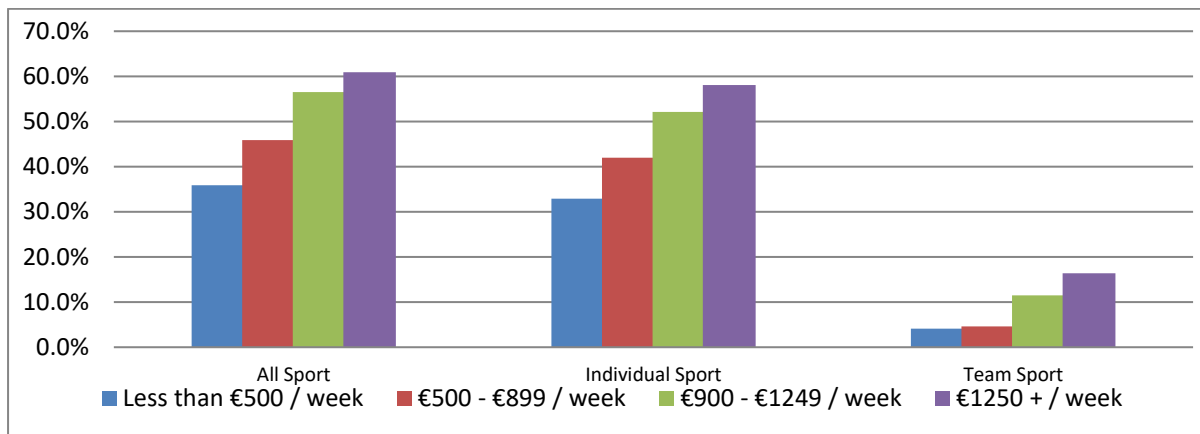
In the context of the above, it is unsurprising perhaps that most sports show these social gradients. However, they are particularly strong in respect of sports which have seen the largest growth in

<sup>14</sup> 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

<sup>15</sup> This also includes people with no formal education or primary school education.

participation in recent years, namely exercise, running, swimming and cycling. This helps to explain why the gradients remain so resilient.

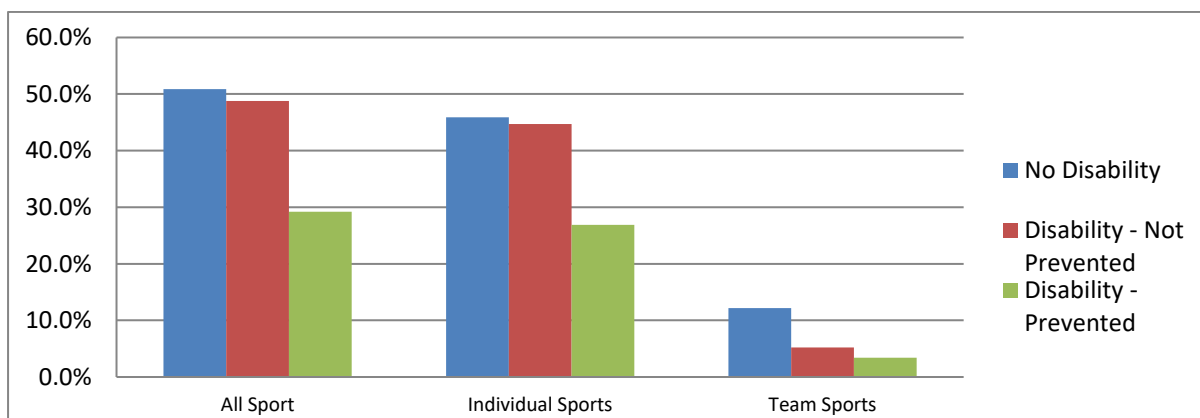
**Figure 2.5: Participation in sport, individual sport and team sport by weekly income**



## 2.5 Participation and disability

Illness and disability also have an obvious impact on participation. The ISM asks respondents whether they have any long-term illness, health problems 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. 17% of Cork based respondents answered yes to the first question with 13% of these (78% of overall sample) also answering yes to the second question. These figures are on par with the national figures<sup>16</sup>. **Figure 2.6** shows the scale of the effect on the participation levels among those reporting having an illness/disability which prevented them from participating.

**Figure 2.6 Participation and illness/disability<sup>17</sup>**



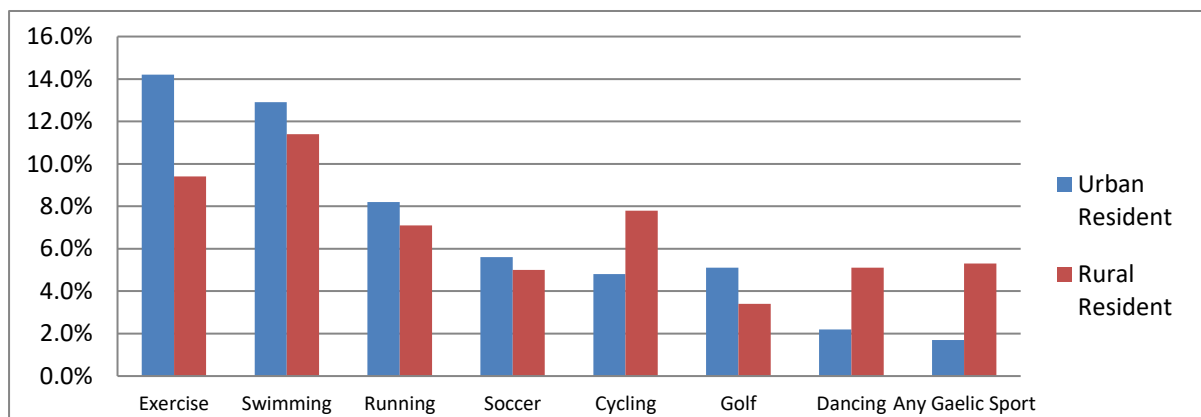
<sup>16</sup> Nationally the ISM reported that 18.3% had an illness/disability with 13.7% of the population indicating that this prevented participation.

<sup>17</sup> The sample for those with and without an illness/disability preventing participation in sport is less than 100.

## 2.6 Participation and Living Location

The ISM asks respondents to specify their living location into one of four categories viz. city, large town, village or isolated location. For the purposes of comparing participation by living location, respondents were classified as either urban (living in a city or town) or rural (living in a village or isolated location) residents. While there is no difference in overall participation rates between respondents in these two categories some interesting differences emerge in respect of different sports as can be seen in **Figure 2.7** below. Rural residents are significantly more likely to take part in cycling, gaelic sports and dance while urban residents are more likely to take part in exercise and golf. The differences in respect of gaelic sports apply to both gaelic football and hurling / camogie. The differences in respect of the other main popular sports (swimming, running and soccer) are not statistically significant in Figure 2.7. It is beyond the scope of this report to assess the factors underlying these differences but a combination of culture / tradition and facilities appear likely candidates as key factors here.

**Figure 2.7 Participation in selected sports by living location**



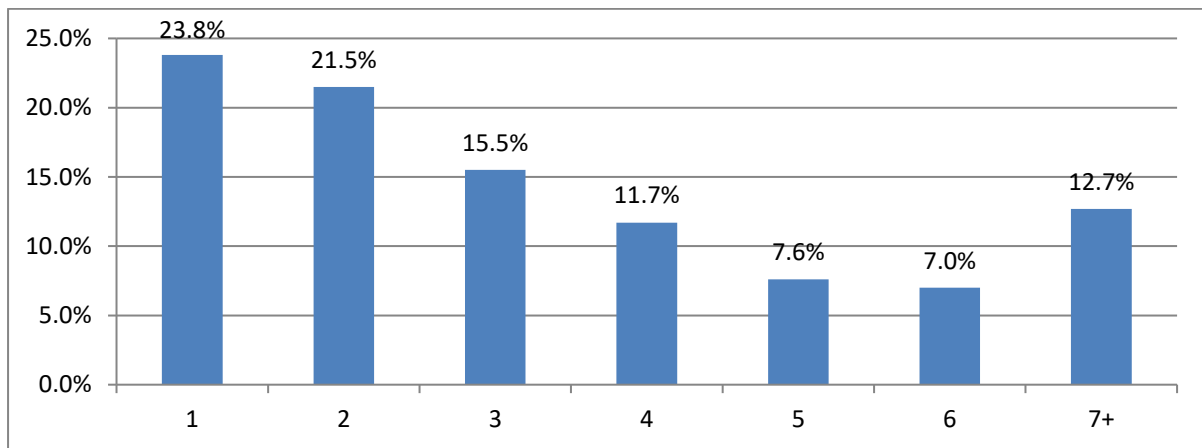
## 2.7 FITT Analysis

The ISM asks respondents to report on the frequency, intensity, duration and context of their participation in up to 3 sports<sup>18</sup>. From their responses it is possible to construct a FITT<sup>19</sup> analysis of participation which we do here. **Figure 2.8** overleaf looks at the number of sporting sessions undertaken by participants in the previous 7 days. The average number of sporting sessions is 3.5 per week with men spending participating in more sessions than women (3.7 vs. 3.3). Encouragingly figure 2.8 shows that over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of participants take part in more than one sporting session per week. It would appear that once an individual participates they are likely to participate reasonably regularly.

<sup>18</sup> Over 40% of those who play sport participate in at least two sports with men more likely to take part in more sports than women.

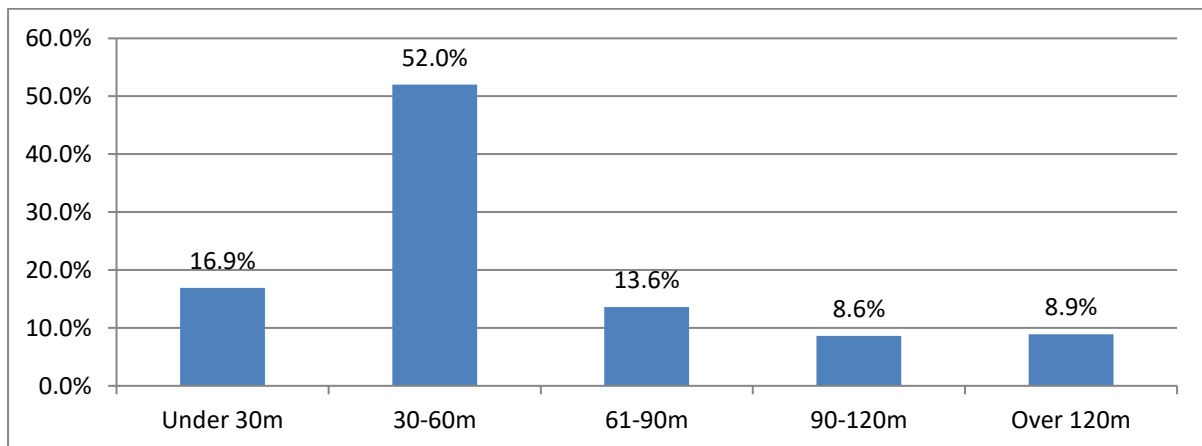
<sup>19</sup> Frequency, Intensity, Time and Type

**Figure 2.8: Number of sporting sessions of participants in previous 7 days**



In **Figure 2.9** below we see that over 83% of participants take part in sessions of 30 minutes or more with the average session lasting approximately 70 minutes. Men are more likely to take part in longer sporting sessions than women (81 minutes vs. 58 minutes). While younger adults are more likely to take part in more sporting sessions per week, older adults take part in longer sessions on average reflecting the importance of golf as a sport of choice among this cohort.

**Figure 2.9: Duration of sporting sessions in previous 7 days**



In **Figure 2.10** overleaf we see that almost nine out of every ten participants (89%) plays at a moderate or greater intensity with men at all ages being more likely to take part at this intensity than women. Adults aged under-44 are more likely to take part than older adults.

**Figure 2.10: Intensity of sporting sessions of participants in previous 7 days**

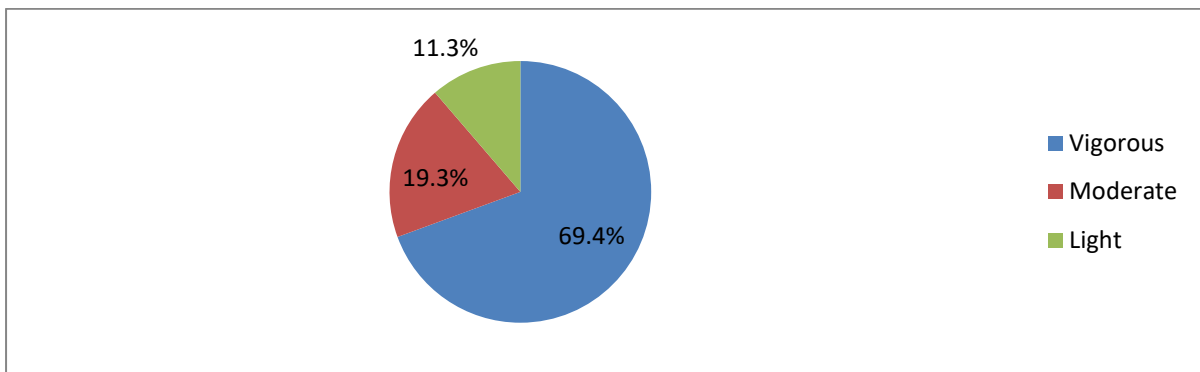
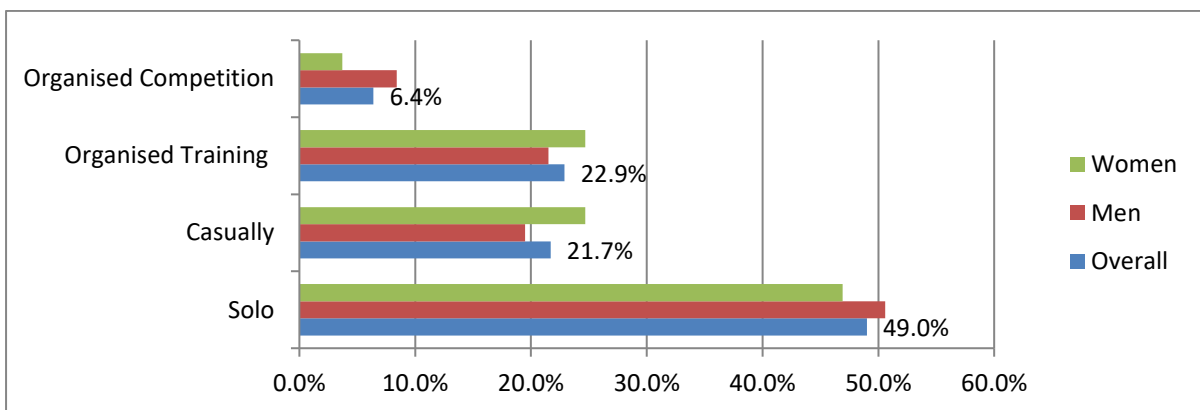


Figure 2.11 shows that the majority of adult sport in Cork took place in an informal context (solo or casually with family and friends). Only 29% of all sporting sessions were played in an organised context with the majority of those involving training sessions and classes rather than organised competition. Almost half of adult sporting sessions occur in a solo context reflecting the dominance of activities such as running, cycling, swimming and exercise in adult participation. Men and women have a strong preference for unstructured sport while organised competition is the least popular context for adult participation particularly women. Related to this, the 2013 ISM found that clubs being associated with competitive participation was cited as one reason for people not wanting to join them.

**Figure 2.11: Percentage of all sporting sessions by context of participation**



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<sup>20</sup>; Lunn and Layte, 2008<sup>21</sup>). 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

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Research/Sports Participation Health Among Adults 2004 /Sports Participation Health.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Research/Sporting Lives An Analysis of a Lifetime of Irish 2008 /Sporting Lives.pdf>

appropriate goal for policy. What it shows is 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 nearly half of all adult sporting activity is undertaken 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)<sup>22</sup>. 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.

## **2.8 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 almost two-thirds (62.9%) of respondents in Cork are interested in increasing their sporting activity and even more so in that current non-participants are significantly more likely to be of this view than participants (66.5% vs. 58.8%).

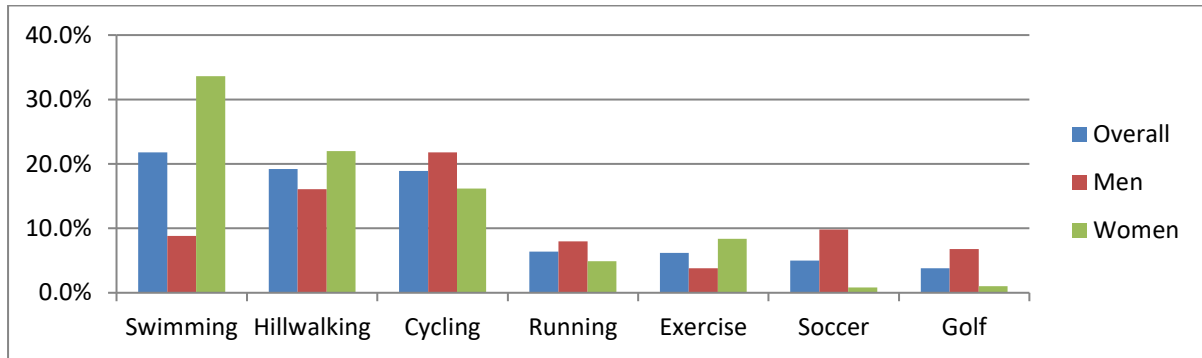
There is little difference among men and women or between urban and rural residents with regards to wishing to do more sport. Interest in doing more sport varies with age, peaking among those aged in their 30s and early 40s and declining thereafter, gradually at first and then sharply from the mid 50s onwards.

---

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/labourmarket/current/gnhssports.pdf>

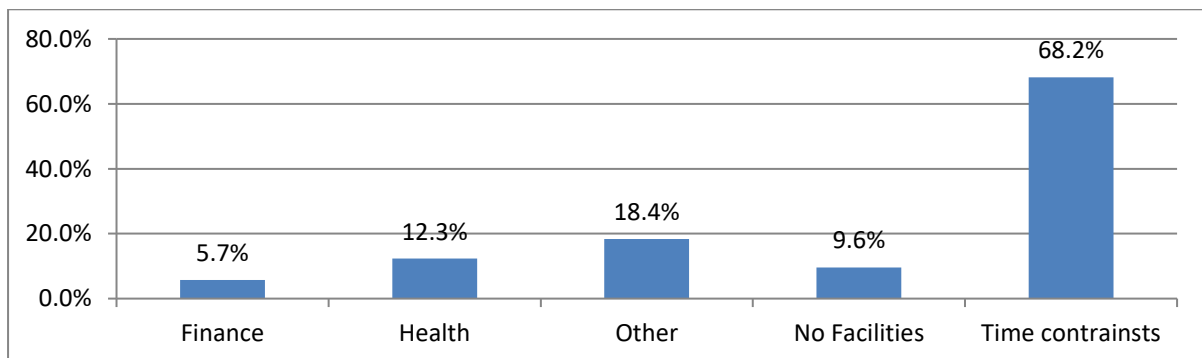
**Figure 2.12** shows the sports preferred by Cork residents. These are broadly similar to those reported nationally and are shared by urban and rural residents. However, some notable differences between men and women are apparent from **Figure 2.12** below. While men would like to cycle, play soccer, golf and run more, women are particularly attracted to swimming, hill walking and exercise.

**Figure 2.12 Interest in doing more sport – by sport (Base: All interested in doing more sport)**



Time is overwhelmingly the most commonly cited barrier to participation overall while for those with an illness or disability health is the most common barrier. Neither financial issues nor lack of facilities feature particularly strongly as barriers to increasing participation. This echoes previous research findings (Fahey et al 2004, CSO 2007). Among the “other” category in **Figure 2.13** below, pregnancy and child minding responsibilities feature prominently. Overall, the analysis suggests that the major factors limiting people’s ability to participate in (more) sport lie outside their immediate control but 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 2.13: Barriers to increasing participation (Base: Respondents not interested in increasing their participation)**





### 3. Broader Physical Activity

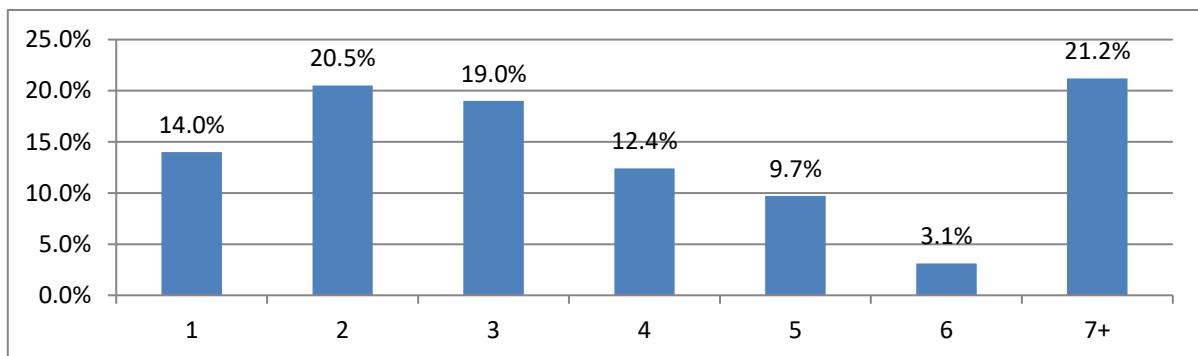
#### 3.1 Introduction

Apart from looking at sports participation, the ISM also looks at participation in broader physical activity including recreational walking, and walking and cycling for transport. Here we look at these issues and at the extent to which respondents meet the National PA Guidelines or are sedentary.

#### 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 main disadvantages for older people to physical activity, namely that it is easier to injure yourself.<sup>23</sup> The ISM records the walking habits of Irish adults including the number of walks, the duration of each walk and the usual walking pace. Two in every three Cork adults (67%) walked at least once in the past 7 days with one in five taking seven or more walks (**Figure 3.1**). The average walker took about 4 walks per week each lasting just less than ¾ hour. Over 50% of walkers reported walking at a fairly brisk or fast pace with most of the remainder walking at a steady / average pace – very few walkers reported walking slowly.

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



In **Table 3.1** overleaf we show the variation in walking habits in Cork by various demographic characteristics. The overall picture that emerges is one suggesting that recreational walking sustains its popularity across age, gender, social class and levels of disability to a far greater extent than sport and therefore merits considerable attention as a potential policy mechanism for increasing physical activity levels throughout the population.

<sup>23</sup> Physical Activity and Sport: Participation and Attitudes of Older People in Ireland, Ipsos MORI September 2009.



**Table 3.1 Variation in aspects of recreational walking by demographic characteristics**

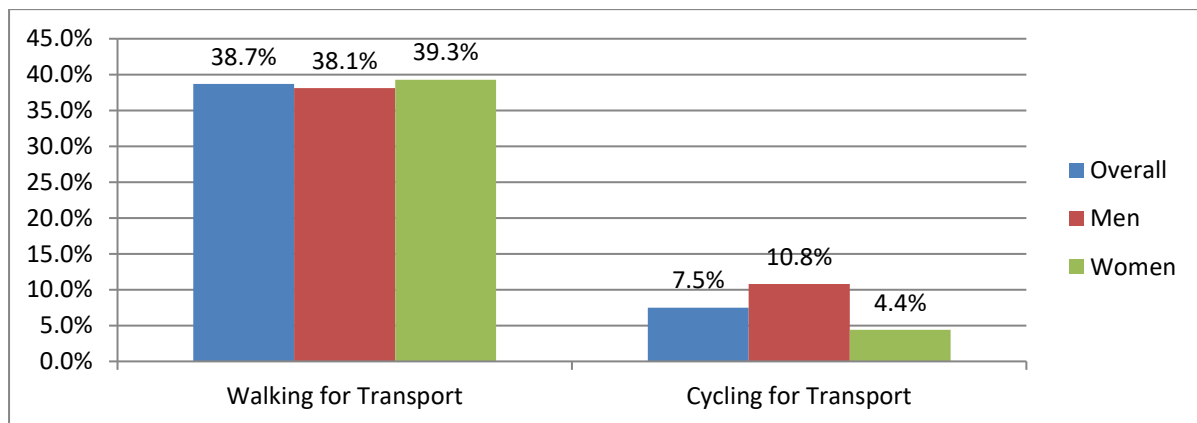
	<b>Levels of Walking (%)</b>	<b>Average Number of Weekly Walks (No.)</b>	<b>Average Weekly Walking Duration (minutes)</b>	<b>Average Walking Duration (minutes)</b>	<b>Proportion Walking at brisk or faster pace (Perceived Speed)</b>
Age	Increases with age – peaks among 55 -64 year olds (75%)	Increases with age – peaks among 55 – 64 year olds (4.6)	Increases with age – peaks among 55 – 64 year olds (205 minutes)	Relatively consistent across lifespan between 40 and 45 minutes. Adults aged 16 – 19 report shorter walks (36 minutes) on average.	Proportion greater than 50% up to mid 50s with sharp decline in perceived walking speed among oldest age groups
Gender	Significantly more women walk than men (74% vs. 59%)	No difference	No difference	No difference	No difference
Living Location	No difference. However, significant difference among men – 63% of urban males walk against 56% of rural males	No difference	Urban residents accumulate more minutes on average (179 vs. 161)	No difference	No difference

	<b>Levels of Walking (%)</b>	<b>Average Number of Weekly Walks (No.)</b>	<b>Average Weekly Walking Duration (minutes)</b>	<b>Average Walking Duration (minutes)</b>	<b>Proportion Walking at brisk or faster pace (Perceived Speed)</b>
Disability	No difference	No difference	No difference	No difference	Proportion walking at brisk or faster pace greater than 55% among respondents without disability; proportion significantly less among either group with disability (33% & 39%)
Educational Attainment	No difference	Those with Leaving Cert education likely to take more walks (4.5) than those educated to 3 <sup>rd</sup> level (3.7).	No difference	No difference	More 3 <sup>rd</sup> level educated respondents (56%) walk briskly or faster than respondents with lower levels of educational attainment (47% and 40% for leaving cert and lower levels respectively)
Household Income	No difference	No difference	No difference	No difference	Highest earning group on greater than €1250 / week more likely to walk briskly or faster (60%) than lowest earning group on less than €500 / week (44%)

### 3.3 Walking and Cycling for Transport

The ISM asks respondents if they engaged in any walking or cycling for transport in the previous 7 days. While walking for transport is equally appealing to men and women over twice as many men than women cycle for transport as seen in **Figure 3.2**. While urban residents are significantly more likely than rural residents to walk for transport (44.5% vs. 32%) it is somewhat surprising that cycling for transport proportions are similar irrespective of living location. We saw earlier that cycling for sport was more popular among rural residents and it may be that when seen in combination these two findings are suggestive of a strong cycling tradition among rural residents in Cork. However, we are not in a position to explore this further in the current report.

**Figure 3.2 Walking and Cycling for Transport**



Younger age groups are much more likely to walk or cycle for transport. So, while two in every three 16 – 19 year olds walk for transport the decline in this proportion is so steep that by the mid 30s, this has fallen to one in three, a proportion sustained through middle and older-age. Echoing this, students, those who do not own cars, single people and those without children are more likely to walk and cycle for transport.

### 3.4 Overall Physical Activity

The ISM allows an approximate<sup>24</sup> analysis of adult activity levels against the National Physical Activity Guidelines based on a four-category classification system shown in **Figure 3.3**. The system is bookended by “sedentary” and “highly active” categories which are the main focus of this section.

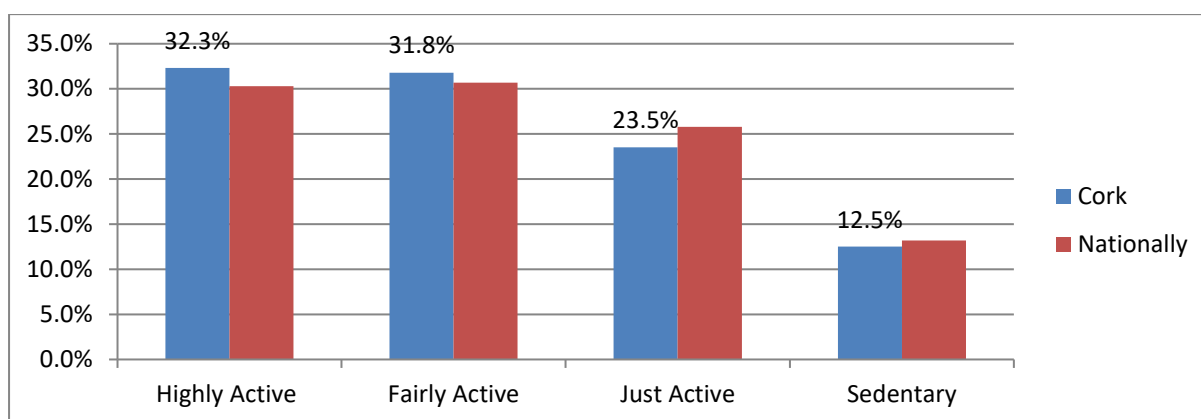
<sup>24</sup> This analysis can only be regarded as approximate as it does not take account of physical activity undertaken in the workplace or in the home.

**Figure 3.3: Activity Spectrum Categories and Definitions**

<b>Highly active</b>	Participate in 30 minutes moderate <sup>1</sup> physical activity at least five times during the previous seven days (i.e. meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines)
<b>Fairly Active</b>	Participated in 30 minutes physical activity at least twice during the previous seven days
<b>Just active</b>	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)
<b>Sedentary</b>	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.

Activity levels are fairly well in line with the national picture as shown in **Figure 3.4**. Nearly a third of respondents in Cork are highly active while about one in eight are sedentary. There are no differences between men and women in either regard. Those living in urban locations are less likely to be sedentary than their rural counterparts (10.6% vs. 14.3% respectively).

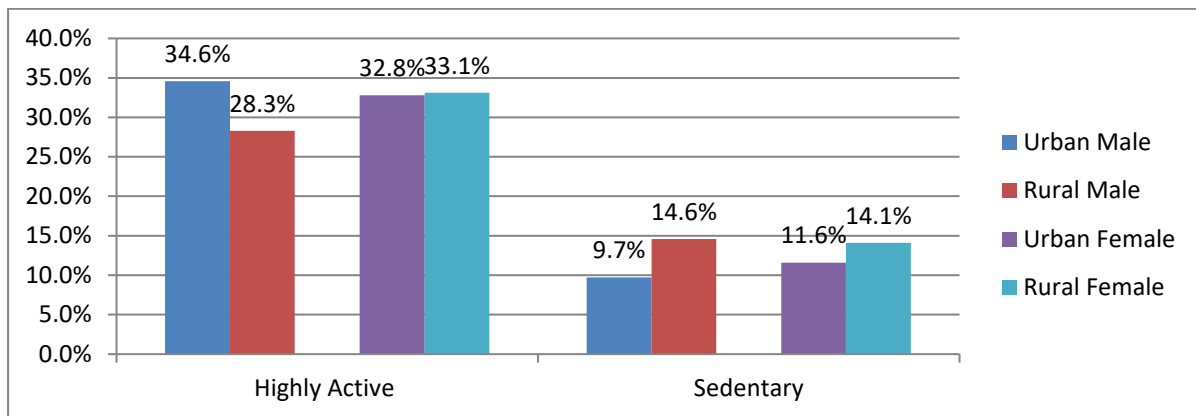
**Figure 3.4 Activity Levels in Cork and Nationally**



When gender and living location are combined as in **Figure 3.5** overleaf a different picture emerges. Urban men are more likely to meet the activity guidelines and less likely to be sedentary due to their participation in recreational walking (63% vs. 56%) and walking for transport (41% vs. 34%). There is no statistical effect of gender for women living in urban or rural regions<sup>25</sup> in respect of being either highly active or sedentary.

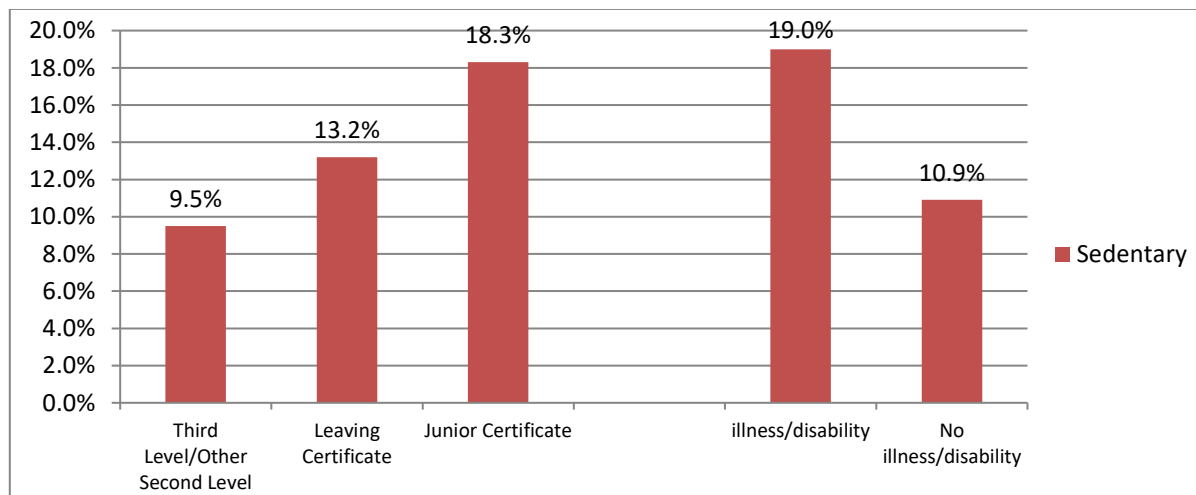
<sup>25</sup> The difference in sedentarism between urban females and rural females seen in Figure 3.5 is not statistically significant.

**Figure 3.5 Proportions of highly active and sedentary in Cork by gender and living location**



In **Figure 3.6** we see the effects of education and illness / disability on sedentarism which, as we've already seen in both cases, are primarily due to the different levels of participation in sport among the groups in question. Nearly one in five individuals are sedentary among the least active group in both cases. Given that the greatest health benefits accrue from getting individuals participating at all it is clear that these represent obvious targets for policy systems seeking to encourage greater levels of activity throughout the population.

**Figure 3.6 Levels of sedentarism by educational attainment and presence of illness/disability**



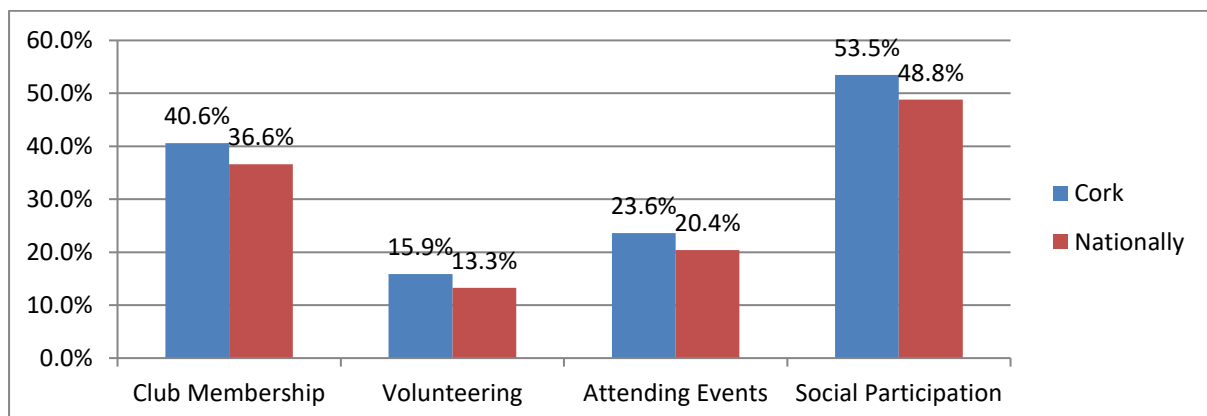
## 4. Social Participation

### 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 of gender issues and sports administration locally and nationally as well as the reasons for participating in sport outside of the club environment. These issues are examined in depth in the 2013 ISM Annual Report<sup>26</sup> to which the reader is referred. That report also examines the demographics of social participation in some detail. This chapter therefore concentrates on the main headlines around social participation in Cork.

Before looking at each of the different forms of social participation in turn we compare the overall levels of social participation in Cork with the national situation in **Figure 4.1** below. Levels of social participation in Cork are significantly above the national average across the board. Well over half of Cork adults report their involvement in some form of regular social participation in sport underscoring its importance in contributing to social capital in Cork.

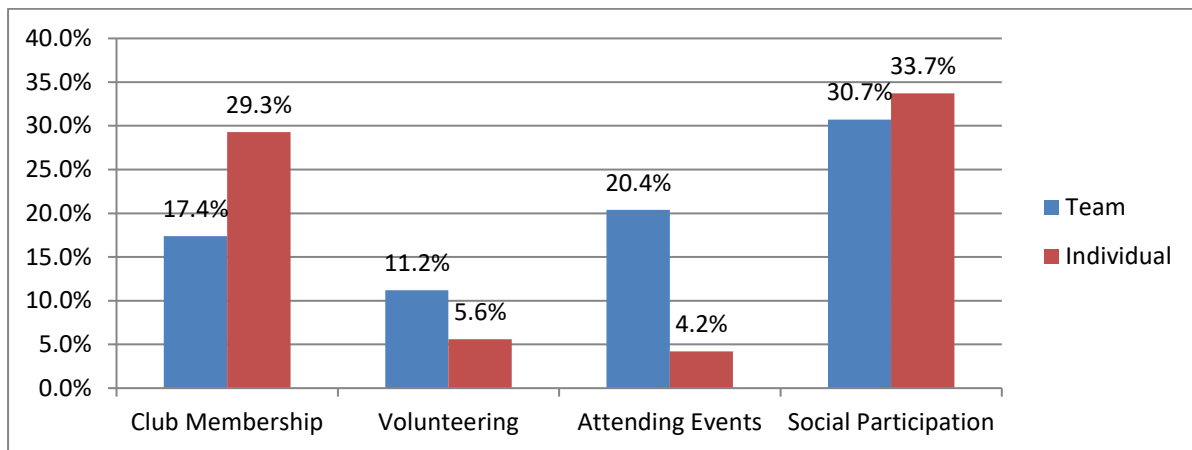
**Figure 4.1: Levels of Social Participation Cork and nationally**



While individual sports dominate active participation the situation is much more mixed in respect of social participation as can be seen in **Figure 4.2** overleaf. While individual sports strongly feature in terms of club membership, volunteering and attendance are dominated by team sports almost certainly reflecting the importance of children's sport in both regards. In terms of overall social participation both types of sport feature to a similar extent.



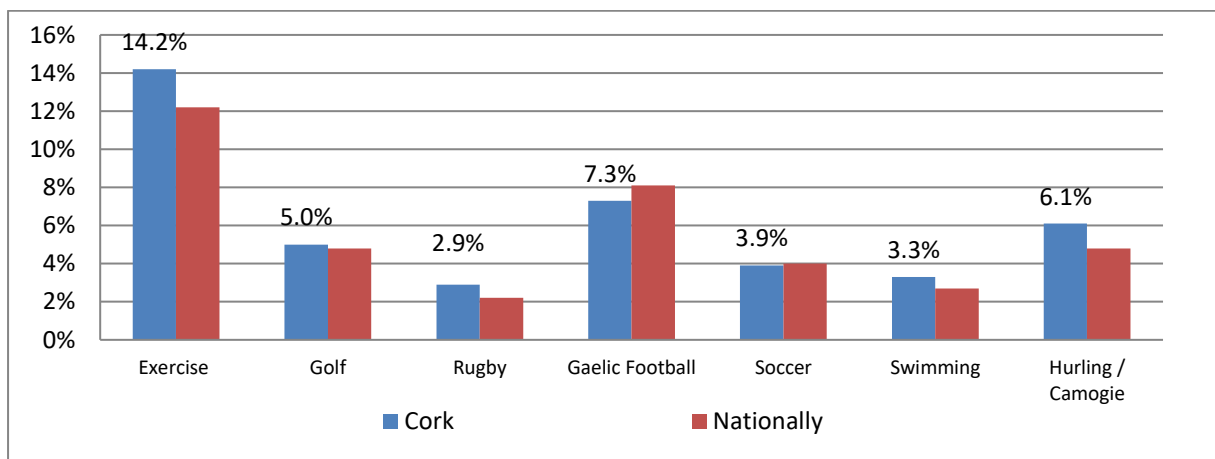
**Figure 4.2: Social Participation by type of sport**



#### 4.2 Club Membership

While overall club membership favours individual sport, a good mixture of individual and team sports feature in terms of the most popular clubs to belong to as seen in **Figure 4.3** below. Compared to the country as a whole, gyms and hurling / camogie clubs are very popular in Cork while for the rest membership is on a par with the national situation.

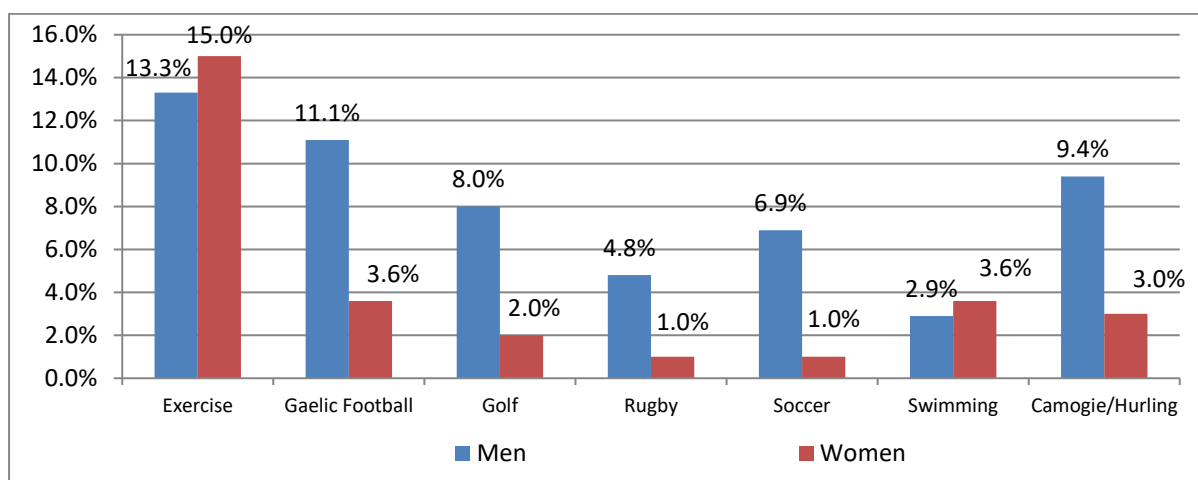
**Figure 4.3: Club Membership by sport<sup>27</sup>**



In **Figure 4.4** overleaf we see that gyms are the most popular type of club for men and women. Overall, men are significantly more likely to belong to a sports club than women (50% vs. 31.6%) and outnumber women in every type of club except gyms and swimming clubs. Both men and women prefer individual sporting clubs, however the difference is more severe among women with nearly three times as many women belonging to an individual sports club.

<sup>27</sup> Only sports with membership of 2% or more are shown, all other sports had a club membership percentage of below 1%.

**Figure 4.4: Club Membership by sport and gender <sup>28</sup>**



Younger age groups, those with higher levels of education and individuals without a disability / illness are more likely to be club members.

### 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 Population<sup>29</sup> identified that 33% of all volunteers were involved in sport.

The picture for volunteering in Cork is similar to that nationally even if volunteering levels are higher in the county. Almost one in 6 adults in the Cork region volunteered at least once in the previous 7 days during 2011 – 2013 with little difference between men / women and urban / rural residents in this regard. Team sports dominate the volunteering landscape attracting nearly twice as many volunteers as individual activities.

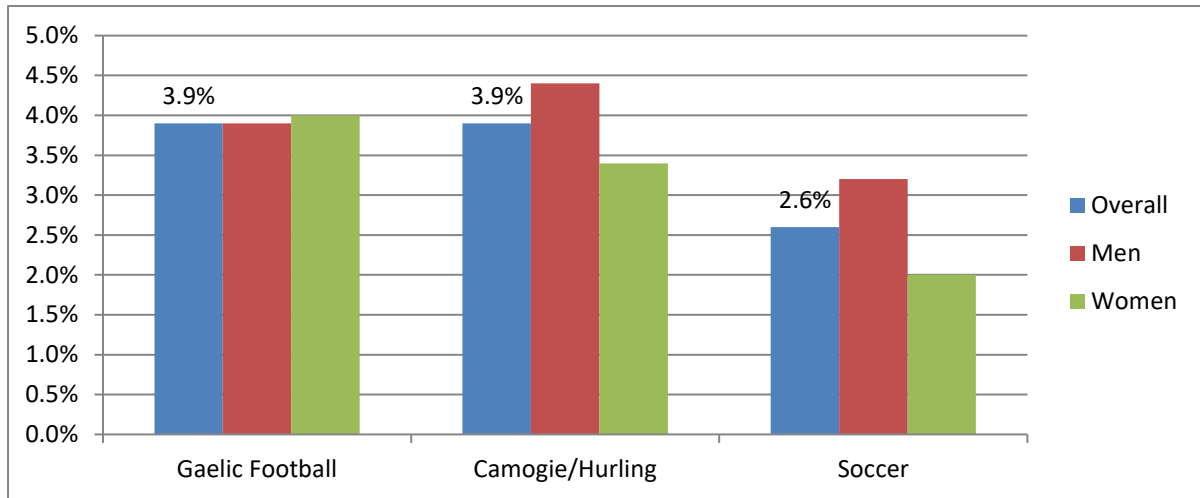
Volunteering is strongly associated with children’s participation in sport and this is also true in Cork with 19.5% of those with children volunteering compared to 9.9% without. Perhaps as a reflection of this, those aged between 35-54 years are also more likely to volunteer. As with other forms of participation, volunteering demonstrates strong social gradients with those with a third level

<sup>28</sup> Only sports with membership of 2% or more are shown

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/saveselections.asp>

education, those employed and those without an illness/disability more likely to volunteer. Gaelic football and camogie/hurling are the top sports for volunteering as seen in **Figure 4.5** below.

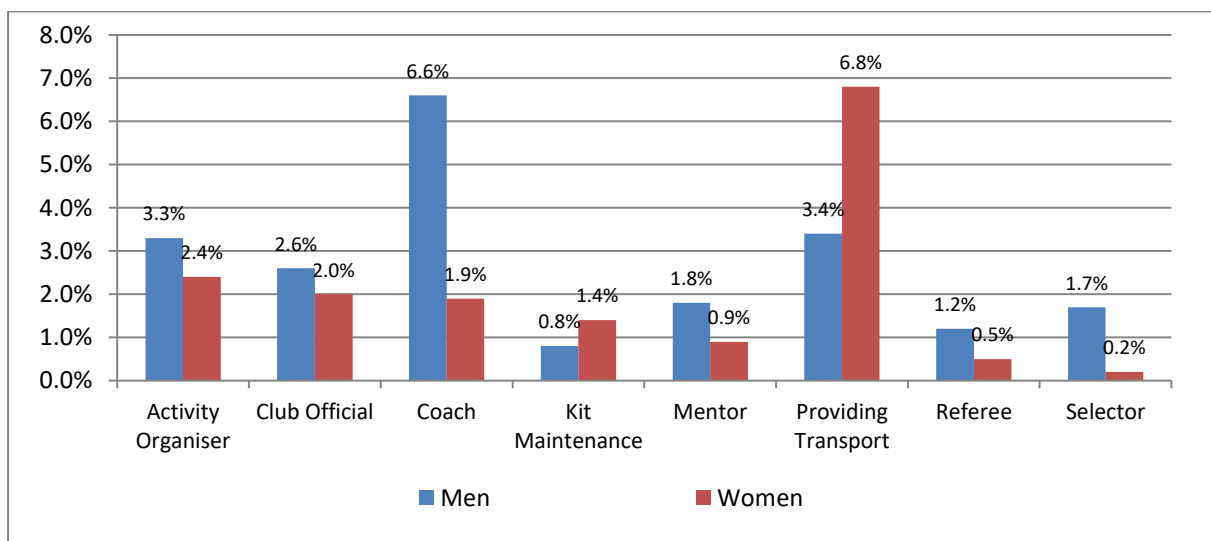
**Figure 4.5: Volunteering by sport**



Volunteers spend nearly 4 hours per week volunteering with men spending more time in this regard (4.4 hours vs. 3.5 hours). Rural residents spend significantly more time volunteering than urban residents (4.7 hours vs. 3.4 hours). No obvious explanation for either difference exists within the data.

**Figure 4.6** shows the difference in roles that men and women carry out with men typically volunteering for more high profile roles and women providing what could be perceived as support roles.

**Figure 4.6: Volunteering role by gender**

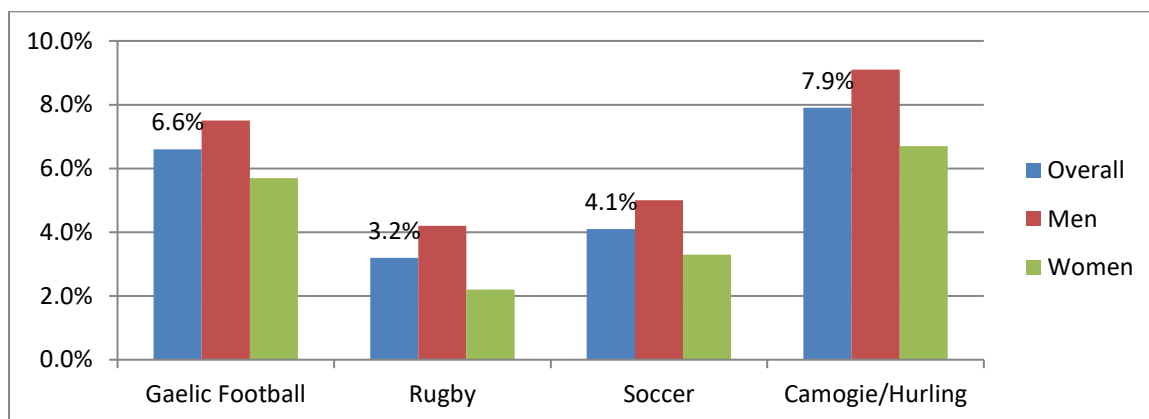


#### 4.4 Attendance at Sporting Events

Nearly one in four adults in Cork regularly attends some form of sporting event whether involving adults or children. Men are more likely to attend a sporting event than women (26.7% vs. 20.6% respectively). Even more than volunteering, attendance is dominated by team sports with 5 times as many adults attending such events as those involving individual activities. As with volunteering those aged 35-54 are also more likely to attend a sporting event. This reflects the importance of children's activities to attendance patterns with 26.8% of those with children attending events compared to 18.1% without.

**Figure 4.7** below shows attendance by sport by gender during 2011 – 2013 in Cork. As with volunteering, the strength of gaelic football and camogie/hurling is again apparent.

**Figure 4.7: Attendance at sporting events by sport in Cork by gender**



## **5. Policy Implications**

This briefing report has provided descriptive information on participation in sport and physical activity in Cork. Cork has much in common with the rest of the country in terms of participation patterns but some notable differences have also emerged as a result of our analysis. Age, socio-economic status and the presence or absence of a disability all play important roles in whether or not individuals within the county 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 Sport Ireland research such as the Sporting Lives, Fair Play?, Keeping Them in the Game and Irish Sports Monitor reports; all available at [www.sportireland.ie](http://www.sportireland.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 therefore focuses on issues where Cork might be slightly different to the rest of the country or those which have not necessarily been covered in depth in the previous research reports.

### **Sedentarism and the role of walking**

Sedentarism is broadly in line with the national picture in Cork. However the 12.3% of residents in Cork represents 37,200 residents who are inactive and who are at risk of heart disease, diabetes and other illnesses. Rates of sedentarism are highest among older adults, those with an illness/disability, those earning lower incomes, those whose highest educational attainment is the Junior Certificate or lower and rural men. Recreational walking can offer an easy way to stay active at a pace and intensity that is suitable to individual participants. While being active at a moderate/vigorous intensity can accrue multiple health benefits even light activity can contribute to a healthy lifestyle. As we have seen, recreational walking is popular among groups who are more likely to be sedentary and we recommend that policy makers promote greater engagement in recreational walking among these groups to address this challenge.

### **Social Gradients and Participation**

Those with higher educational attainments and higher incomes are more likely to play sport, meet the activity guidelines and less likely to be sedentary. This also impacts social participation such as club membership and volunteering. Even small increments in income increase the likelihood of playing sport. Cycling, running and swimming have large differences in participation between those with the highest and lowest educational attainment despite both groups being interested in taking part in more of these activities. We recommend policy makers seek to develop initiatives to promote cycling, running and swimming among disadvantaged groups in the region.

### Appendix 1

	<b>2011 ISM (%)</b>	<b>2013 ISM (%)</b>
Recreational Walking	65.4	67.6
Sports Participation	46.5	49.2
Volunteering	15.9	15.9
Club Membership	38.6	42.2
Attendance at sporting event	24.0	23.2
Walking for transport	38.8	38.6
Cycling for transport	7.7	7.4
Any Social Participation	52.6	54.3
Highly Active	30.8	33.5
Sedentary	12.3	12.4

## Appendix 2

	<b>2011 Census</b>	<b>2011+2013 ISM combined</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>16 years plus</b>	<b>16 years plus</b>
Male	49.2%	49.2%
Female	50.8%	50.8%
<b>Age</b>		
16-19	6.3%	6.3%
20-24	7.1%	7.1%
25-34	20.2%	20.1%
35-44	21.2%	21.1%
45-54	17.2%	17.3%
55-64	13.4%	13.4%
65+	14.6%	14.7%
<b>Working Status (Census 2011 includes those under 16)</b>		
Employee/Self Employed	54.0%	53.5%
Unemployed	8.7%	8.6%
Retired	12.3%	10.4%
Homemaker	10.2%	10.2%
Student	10.7%	13.2%
Unemployed-illness/disabled	4.1%	4.1%