

**Sport and Physical Activity among those aged over 16  
in Counties Kerry and Limerick**

**By**

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## Executive Summary

### Active Participation in Sport

- 44% of those aged 16 and over take part in sport across KL. This is the equivalent of 96,100 regular participants.
- Men (50.1%) are more likely to take part in sport than women (38%).
- Individual activities have three times as many participants as team sports.
- Swimming is the most popular sport among men while women prefer gym/exercise activities.
- Those with lower levels of educational attainment are less likely to take part in sport.
- Two thirds of sport is played casually however organised training is quite popular.

### Broader Physical Activity

- 66.7% of adults are recreational walkers.
- Women (72.6%) are more likely to walk for recreation than men (60.7%).
- Walking for transport in the region is lower than the national average.
- Walking for transport is popular in more densely populated areas.

### Social Participation

- Social participation consisting of club membership, volunteering and attending events, is in line with the national picture.
- Men are twice as likely to be club members.
- As with participation, the majority of club members play individual sports while volunteering and attending events are dominated by team activities.
- Gyms are the most popular form of sports club.
- Gaelic Football and Hurling/Camogie are the most popular sports for volunteering and attending events.
- On average, participants spend 4 hours a week volunteering in sport.

### Sport and Health

- 31.4% of residents in KL are highly active while 14.7% are sedentary.
- Urban residents are more likely to be highly active than their rural counterparts.
- 55.5% of respondents would like to take part in more sport and exercise however not having enough time was cited as the main barrier.
- Most respondents cited swimming as an activity they would like to do more of.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The National Physical Activity Guidelines<sup>1</sup> recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity 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 the sport and recreational exercise activity of adults (aged 16 and over) in counties Kerry and Limerick (KL). The analysis aims to be of interest and assistance to those involved in the promotion of sport in KL, particularly Local Sports Partnerships, Local Authorities, sports clubs and volunteers.

### 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 were combined into one dataset of 1,255 respondents to try to reduce the error margin within the results. Just less than 2/3 of the respondents are resident in Limerick while less than 1/3 live in Kerry. There is little difference between the counties in terms of all key high level results which are included in **Appendix 2** at the end of this report.

Based on the above sample size the error margin around key high level results is about 2.8%. So if we report a participation rate of 44% in the report we would expect that the true participation rate for KL lies somewhere between -2.8% and + 2.8% i.e. between 41.2% and 46.8%<sup>5</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 KL and should be treated as such.**

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<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> 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.

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 at [http://www.irishsports council.ie/Research/The\\_Irish\\_Sports\\_Monitor/](http://www.irishsports council.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 KL's current demographic profile. Gender, age and employment status were considered in this re-weighting exercise. **Appendix 1** compares the demographic profile of the dataset used for the report with the profile of KL recorded by the CSO in the 2011 Census.

A feature of the ISM is the inclusion of periodic flexible modules on particular topical policy issues. These modules are included over a number of months and therefore include only 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 issues 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. Such national figures are composite averages from 2011 and 2013.

### **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>6</sup>. Consistent with this aim (and with the *Irish Sports Council Act, 1999*), the report

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<sup>6</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 broader 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 sample. Previous research has suggested that their participation rates are lower than Irish nationals this suggests that participation rates are likely to be over-stated in this respect. 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.

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## 2. RESULTS

### 2.1 Overall Physical Activity

**Table 1** compares physical activity participation in KL with the national average. It captures regular<sup>7</sup> participation 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>8</sup> while the “sedentary” don’t take part in sport, do no recreational walking and don’t walk or cycle for transport. Based on the 2011 Census data the 44% participating in sport is equivalent to approximately 96,100 adults aged 16 and over taking part in regular sporting activity in KL.

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

	KL	National
Sporting Participation	44.0%	46.0%
Recreational Walking	66.7%	64.3%
Walk for Transport	31.6%	40.0%
Cycle for Transport	9.4%	10.1%
Highly Active	31.4%	30.3%
Sedentary	14.7%	13.2%

In the above table, the only notable difference in participation rates is in the proportion of adults walking for transport which in KL is significantly below the national average. Walking for transport is generally much more popular in more densely populated areas. KL turns out to be no exception in this regard with 37.9% of urban residents walking for transport compared to 27.3% of their rural counterparts. There is little difference between urban and rural residents in terms of their participation in sport, recreational walking or cycling for transport. However urban residents are significantly more likely to be highly active which we will look at more closely later in the report.

In **Table 2** overleaf we look at these behaviours by gender. Once again the only notable difference is with regards to walking for transport with both men and women in the region less likely to engage in this activity than their national counterparts. All other patterns of behaviour in KL are similar to the national profile. Men are more likely to take part in sport and cycle for transport while women are

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<sup>7</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>8</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.

more likely to take part in recreational walking. The proportions meeting the activity guidelines are similar among men and women as are the proportions which are sedentary.

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

	KL		National	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sporting Participation	50.1%	38.0%	51.5%	40.9%
Recreational Walking	60.7%	72.6%	58.0%	70.3%
Walk for Transport	32.8%	30.5%	39.1%	40.9%
Cycle for Transport	13.1%	5.7%	14.6%	5.7%
Highly Active	32.6%	30.2%	29.9%	30.7%
Sedentary	14.0%	15.3%	13.3%	13.0%

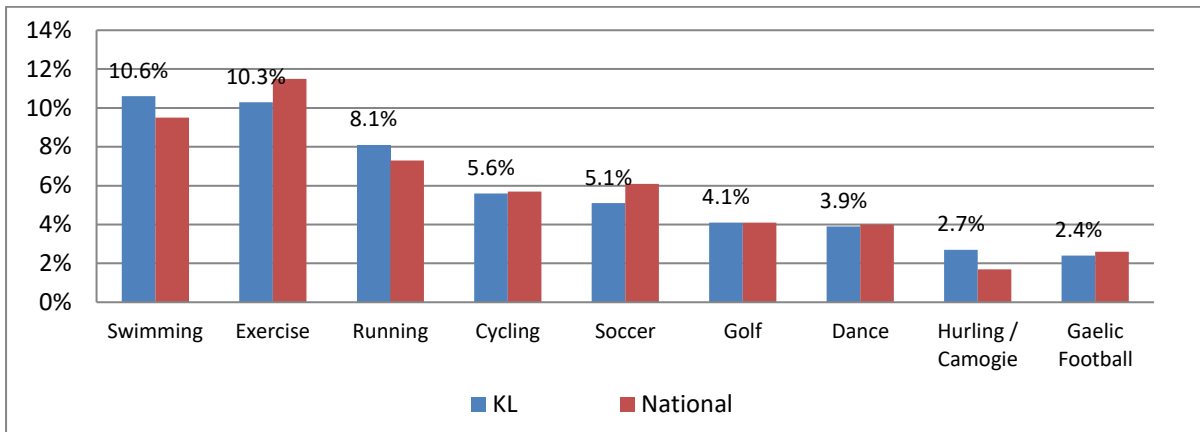
## 2.2 Most Popular Sporting Activities

Figures 2.2 and 2.3a and b shows the most popular sports in KL overall and by gender. Only sports with a participation level of 2% or greater in KL are shown. Overall, there is little difference in the preferred sports nationally and within the region. Individual sports dominate accounting for six of the nine most popular activities. This is also reflected at a combined level where over three times as many adults take part in individual sports compared to team sports (37.9% and 10.9% respectively).

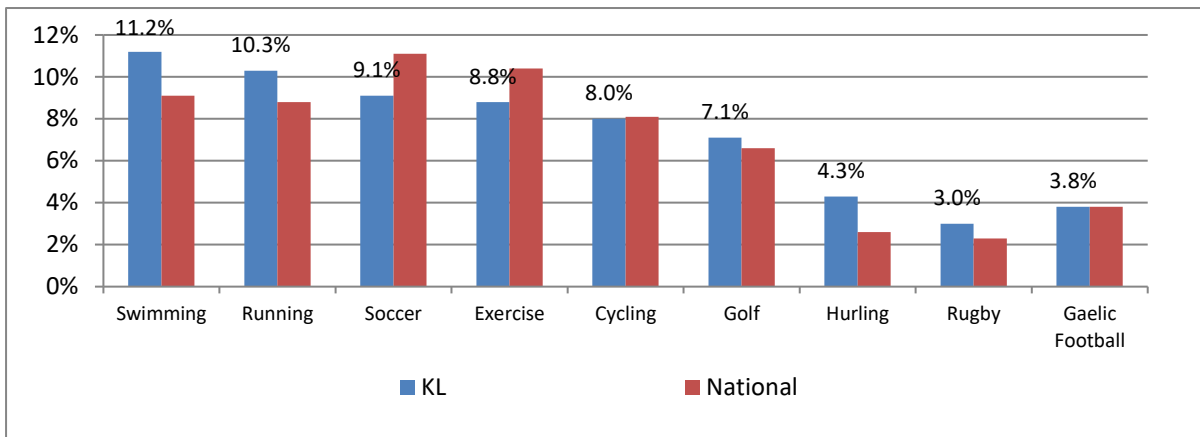
Among men, swimming and running have slightly higher levels of participation than nationally while soccer and exercise have slightly lower levels. Among women the participation rates across all the popular sports are very similar within the region and nationally.

Looking within the region only, there are significant differences in participation rates between men and women across many sports. Men are significantly more likely to take part in cycling, golf, rugby, running and soccer while women are more likely to participate in exercise and dancing than men. Overall men are more likely than women to take part in individual and team sports. The gap in respect of team sports is substantial; nearly four times as many men as women participate in team sports.

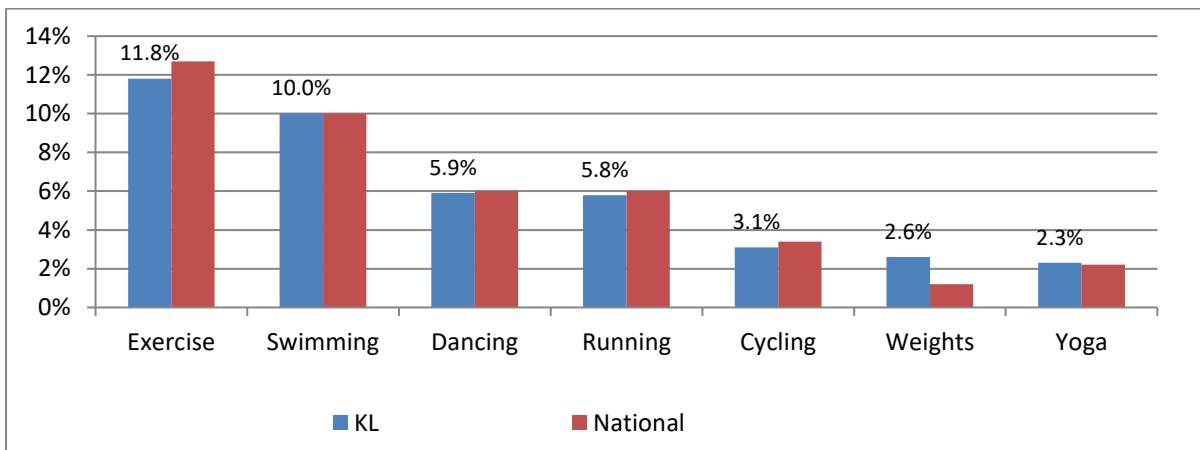
**Figure 2.2: Top Participation Sports in KL and nationally - Overall<sup>9</sup>**



**Figure 2.3a: Top Participation Sports in KL and nationally – Men<sup>10</sup>**



**Figure 2.3b: Top Participation Sports in KL and nationally - Women<sup>11</sup>**



<sup>9</sup> Overall the only sports with participation of between 1-2% are rugby and yoga.

<sup>10</sup> The only sport among men with participation of between 1-2% is dancing

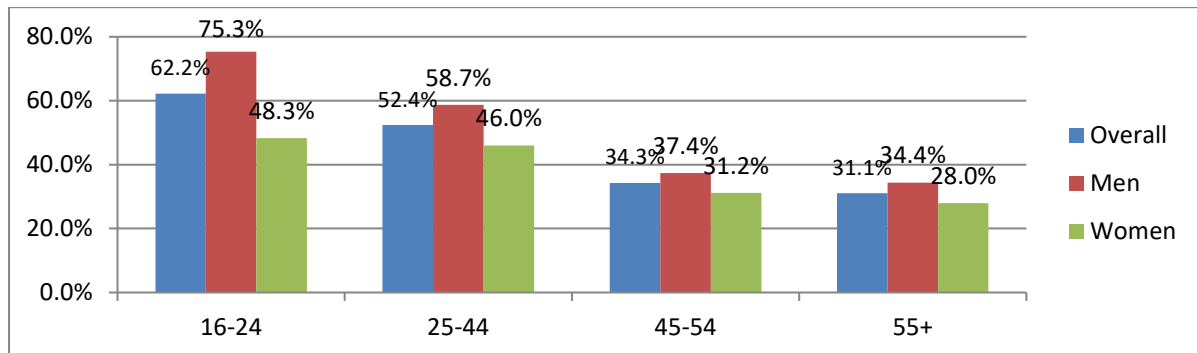
<sup>11</sup> Sports among women with participation between 1-2% are golf, hill walking, pilates, gaelic football, hurling / camogie and soccer.



### 2.3 Sports Participation and Age

Participation declines among men and women with age. The gender gap decreases with age reflecting the greater drop off in men's participation during early adulthood particularly from team sports<sup>12</sup>. The drop off rate is similar among men and women in middle and older age. Participation in individual sports tends to sustain more strongly across the life course for both genders.

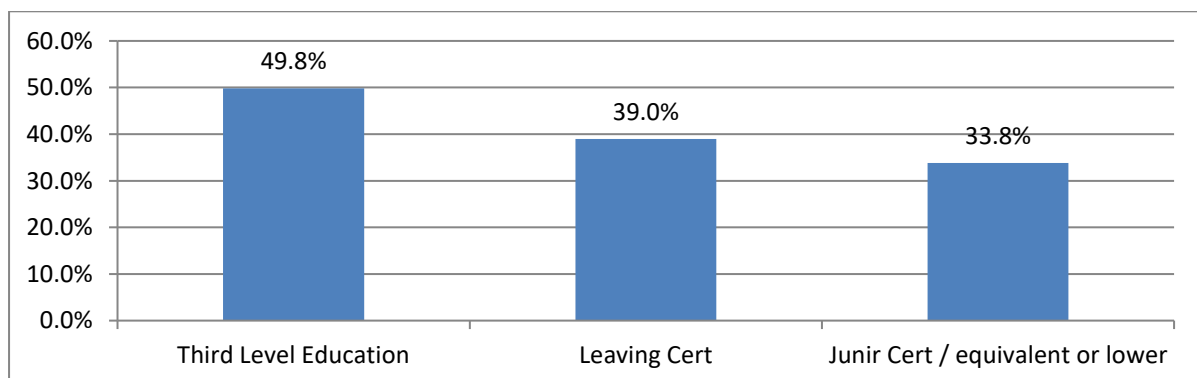
**Figure 2.4: Participation in sport by gender and age groups<sup>13</sup>**



### 2.4 Sports Participation and Social Class

Social gradients continue to strongly impact on all aspects of active and social participation with higher income earners and those with a higher educational attainment significantly more likely to play sport, be club members, volunteer for sport and attend sporting events. While income and education are closely correlated they have also been shown to be strong influences on participation separately. KL turns out to be very similar in this regard to the rest of the country with the effects of income and education being felt right across all aspects of participation. For example we see very clear gradients in sports participation by level of educational attainment in **Figure 2.5** below.

**Figure 2.5: Active participation in sport in KL by level of educational attainment**

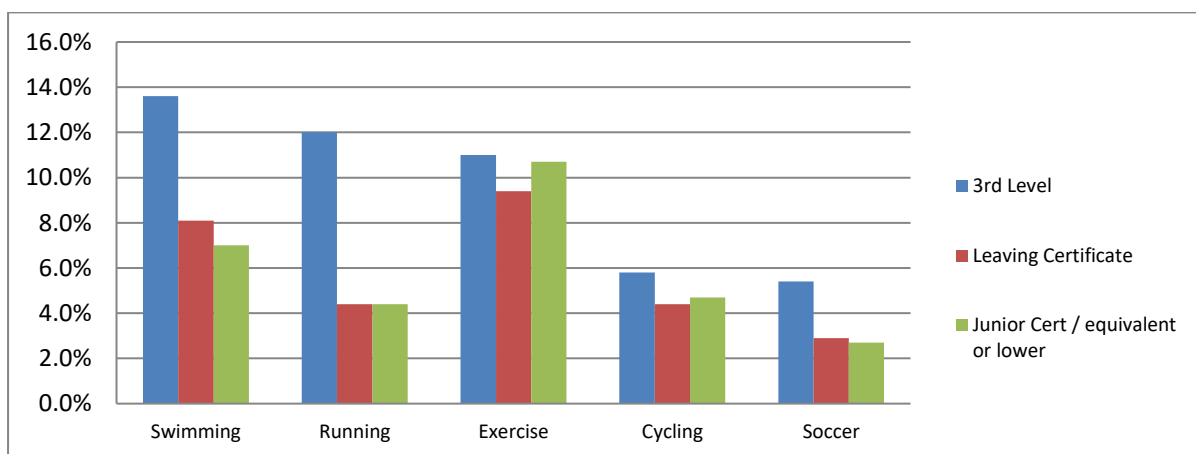


<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Research/Keeping-Them-in-the-Game-2013-/> for detailed analysis of transitions into and out of sport over the life course

<sup>13</sup> The sample size for the age group 16-24 is less than 100 for both men and women.

While the picture presented in Figure 2.5 is somewhat confounded by the influence of age (those with lower levels of educational attainment are older on average which also makes them less likely to play sport) the differences are still significant even after controlling for age. One question that arises from this figure is whether or not the differences exist across all sports or are they specific to certain sports. The answer is that two sports, running and swimming, are responsible for the lion's share of the difference as we can see in **Figure 2.6** below. That this is the case suggests that there may be opportunities for local policy makers and programmers to develop initiatives around these sports targeted at raising participation levels among socially disadvantaged groups.

**Figure 2.6: Active participation in certain sports in KL by level of educational attainment**



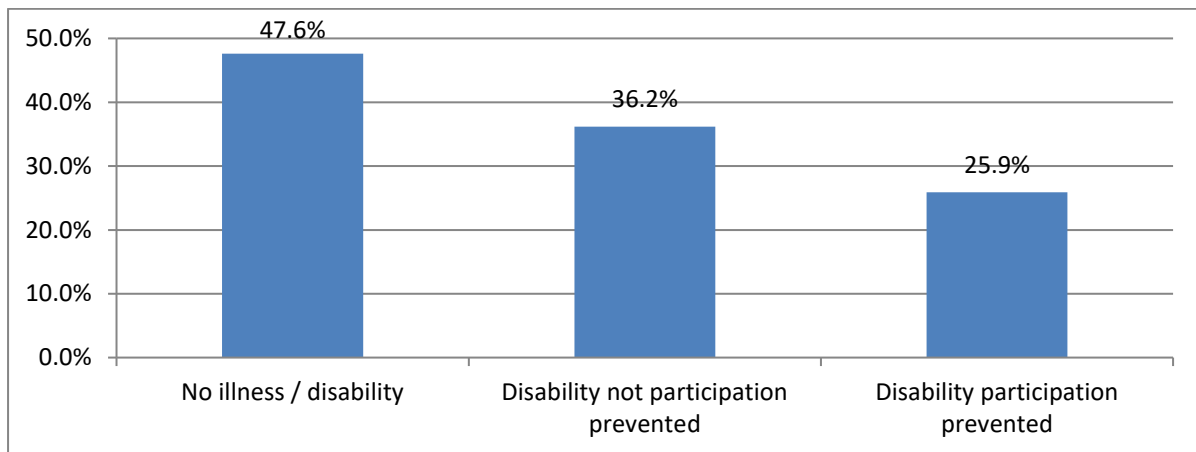
## 2.6 Sports Participation and Disability

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. 19.1% of KL based respondents answered yes to the first question with 13.6% (70.9% of those with an illness/disability) of these also answering yes to the second question<sup>14</sup>. In **Figure 2.7** overleaf we see that there are significant differences in the proportions participating in sport between those with and without a disability. The differences are most noticeable in respect of team sports and running. It is encouraging to note however that over half of those with an illness/disability want to take part in more sport (51.8%<sup>15</sup>).

<sup>14</sup> Nationally the ISM reported that 18.3% had an illness/disability with 13.7% of the population indicating that this prevented participation.

<sup>15</sup> The sample size for this figure is less than 100.

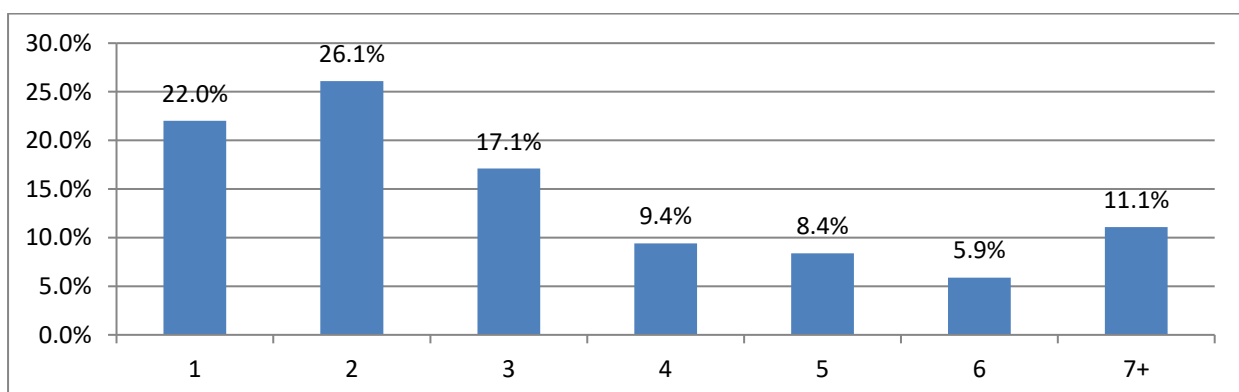
**Figure 2.7: Sports Participation by illness/disability**



## 2.7 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 which we do in Figures 2.8 – 2.12 below. **Figure 2.8** shows that nearly 80% of all players took part more than once in the previous week with over one third taking part at least every other day. On average men take part in 3.7 sessions a week and women take part in 2.9. This difference is significant. Urban residents take part in 3.8 days on average while rural residents take part in 3.1 days. This difference is also significant and helps to explain the gap between urban and rural residents in terms of meeting the National PA Guidelines which we will see in Section 3 below.

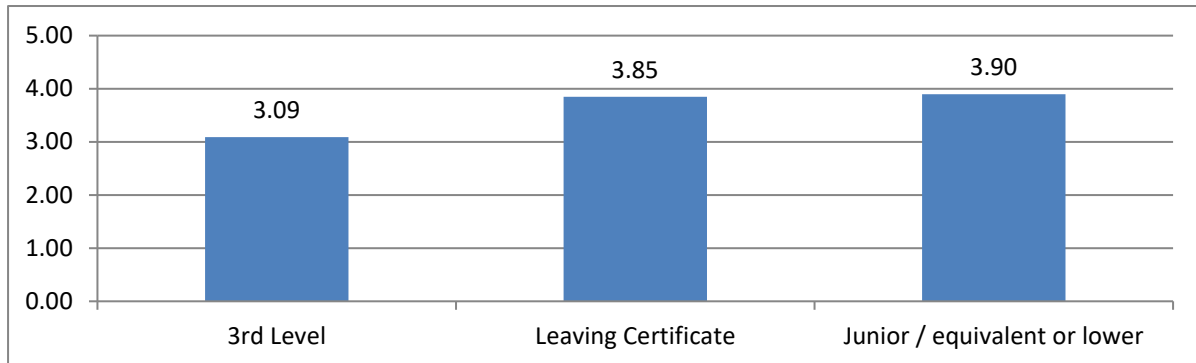
**Figure 2.8: Number of sporting sessions of participants in previous 7 days**



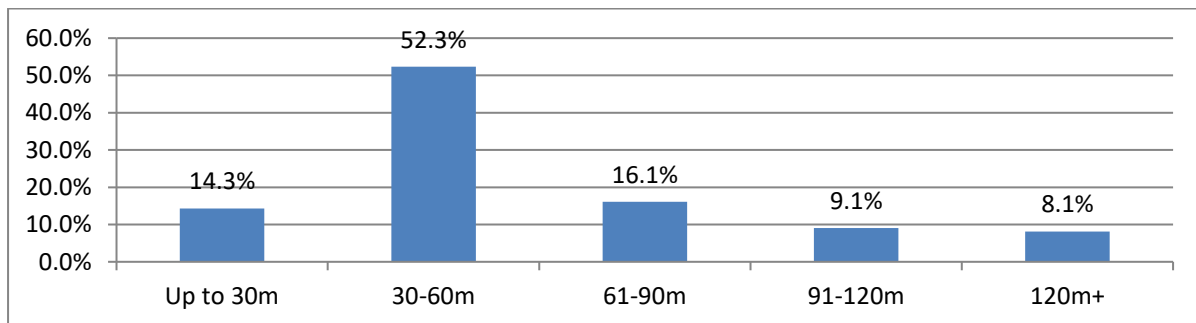
We saw earlier that there are large social gradients in active participation with those who are more highly educated being much more likely to be active participants. However, when we look only at participants, we see in **Figure 2.9** that it is those with the lowest level of educational attainment who

take part in more sporting sessions. This helps to explain why there is very little difference in the proportions meeting the National PA Guidelines by level of educational attainment.

**Figure 2.9: Mean number of sporting sessions in KL by level of educational attainment**

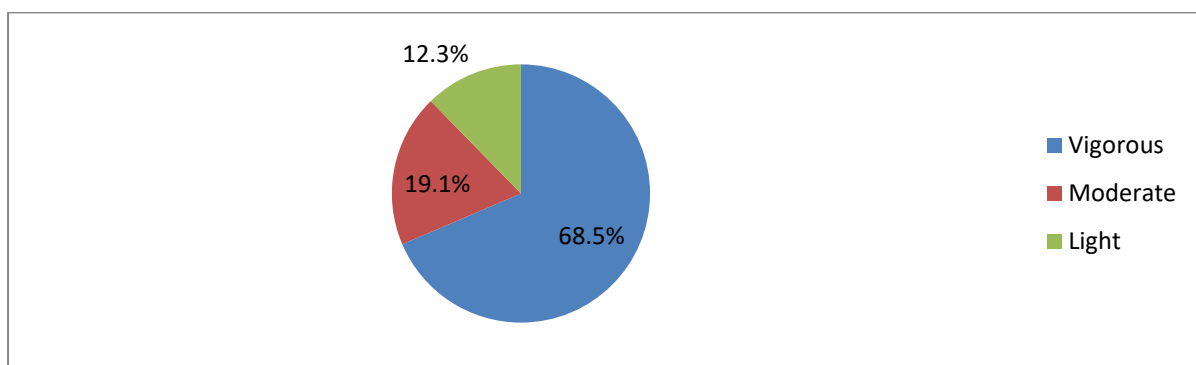


**Figure 2.10: Duration of sporting sessions in previous 7 days**



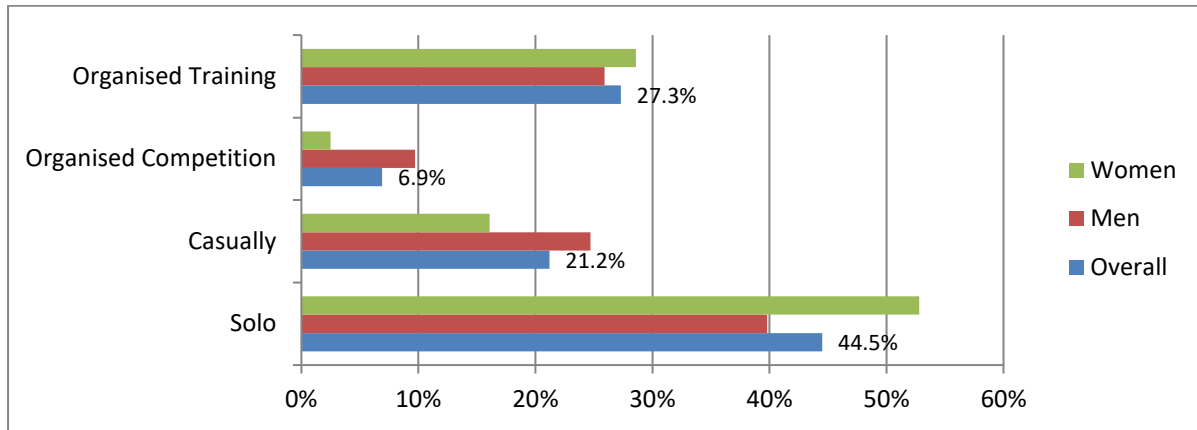
The majority of sessions last between 30 and 60 minutes reflecting the growing popularity of individual activities such as running, swimming and exercise which can be fitted around other time commitments. The average session lasts approximately 70 minutes with men engaging in significantly longer sporting sessions than women – 80 minutes vs. 55 minutes respectively. This is most likely due to their participation in team sports where the sessions typically last longer.

**Figure 2.11: Intensity of sporting sessions of participants in previous 7 days**



As shown in **Figure 2.11** almost 90% of participants reported that their efforts in a typical sporting session were sufficient to raise their breathing rate noticeably or for them to be out of breath or sweating<sup>16</sup>.

**Figure 2.12: Context of sporting sessions**



**Figure 2.12** shows that just over 1/3 of all sporting sessions took place in an organised context with the majority of those occurring in training sessions and classes rather than in competition. Most adult sport now takes place in a solo context in contrast to the situation that existed when the first ISM survey was conducted in 2007. At that time most sport was undertaken with family and friends in a casual setting. This current situation reflects the growth of sports such as running, swimming, exercise, and cycling in recent years. There is little difference overall in the proportion of men and women playing organised (training + competition) or “unstructured” (solo + casual) sport with approximately 2/3 of all sporting sessions occurring in the latter context.

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. 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

<sup>16</sup> The ISM defines vigorous activity as being where the respondent reported being out of breath or sweating as a result of the activity while moderate activity involved the participant reporting that their breathing rate was raised noticeably as a result of the activity.

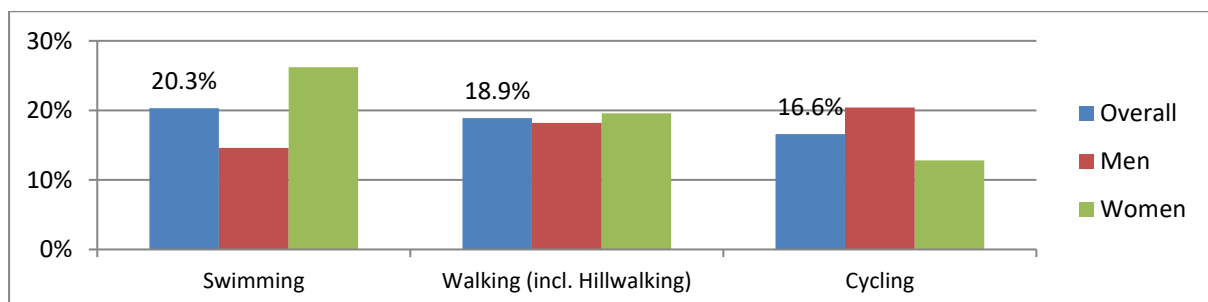
issue remains whether they are an active participant in the first place. Nevertheless, the findings with respect to the context of participation are also noteworthy as regards policy that aims to increase participation. The majority of sporting activity is occurring outside of formal sporting structures 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 45% of 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). 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

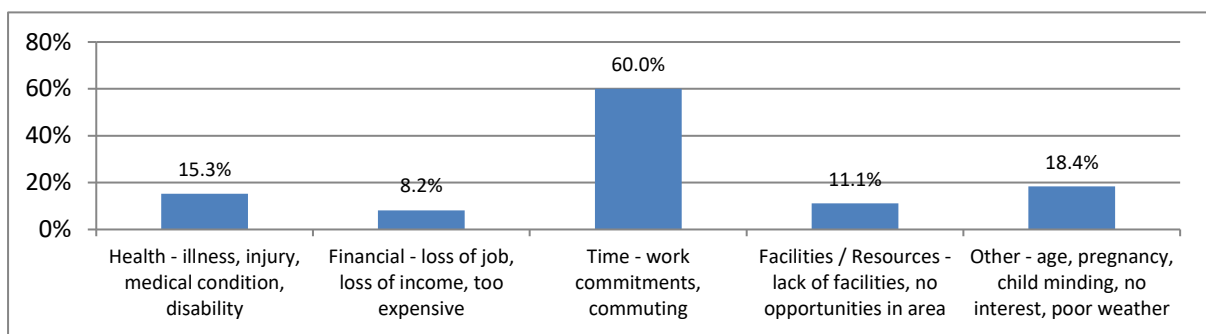
In 2011 ISM respondents were asked whether they were interested in doing more sport and if so which sport. Non-participants were asked the reasons preventing them from taking part. Encouragingly over half of participants are interested in increasing their sporting activity with very little difference across all groups in this regard. **Figure 2.13** displays the preferred sports in KL. These are broadly similar to those reported nationally and mirror the current most popular sports except for exercise which features slightly lower in people’s sporting wish list than in actual participation terms. Swimming features strongly among those aged under 44 and urban residents while hill walking and cycling are popular among those aged over 44 and rural residents.

**Figure 2.13 Interest in doing more sport – by sport (Base: All interested in doing more sport)**



When it comes to barriers to participation, time is easily the most commonly cited factor 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 in this regard. This echoes previous research findings (Fahey et al 2004, CSO 2007). Among the “other” category in **Figure 2.14**, pregnancy and child minding responsibilities feature prominently. 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 2.14: Barriers to participation (Base: Respondents not interested in increasing participation)**



### 3. Broader Physical Activity

#### 3.1 Introduction

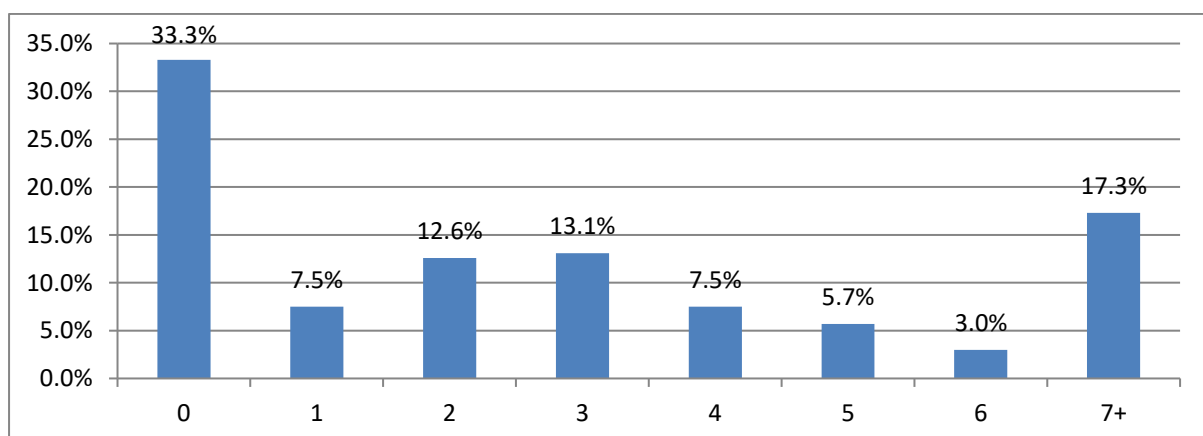
As well as looking at participation in sport and exercise, the ISM looks at broader physical activity including recreational walking, and walking and cycling for transport. This section looks at these issues and the extent to which respondents meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines or are sedentary.

#### 3.2 Recreational Walking

Recreational walking is an important source of physical activity for the majority of the adult population. It is particularly beneficial in providing health and other benefits to older age groups. As a low load-bearing activity that can be undertaken at various intensities, it overcomes one of the main disadvantages identified by older people to physical activity, namely that it is easier to injure yourself.<sup>17</sup> The ISM records information about the walking habits of Irish adults including the number of walks in the previous 7 days, the duration of each walk and the usual walking pace.

Recreational walking was the most popular activity with over 66% of adults in KL taking part in at least one walk in the past 7 days (**Figure 3.1**). Walking is significantly more popular with women (72.6%) than men (60.7%) and is highly popular across all age groups. In contrast to participation in sport, the social and disability gradients are less sharp in respect of recreational walking. The majority of recreational walkers took part in more than one walk per week with more than 1 in 6 respondents taking part in 7 or more walks.

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



<sup>17</sup> Physical Activity and Sport: Participation and Attitudes of Older People in Ireland, Ipsos MORI September 2009



On average, participants took part in more than four walks a week with urban residents taking significantly more walks than their rural counterparts (4.8 vs. 4.1). We already saw that urban residents also take part in more sporting sessions per week than rural residents; the combination of these two factors help to explain why they are also more likely to be highly active as we will see below.

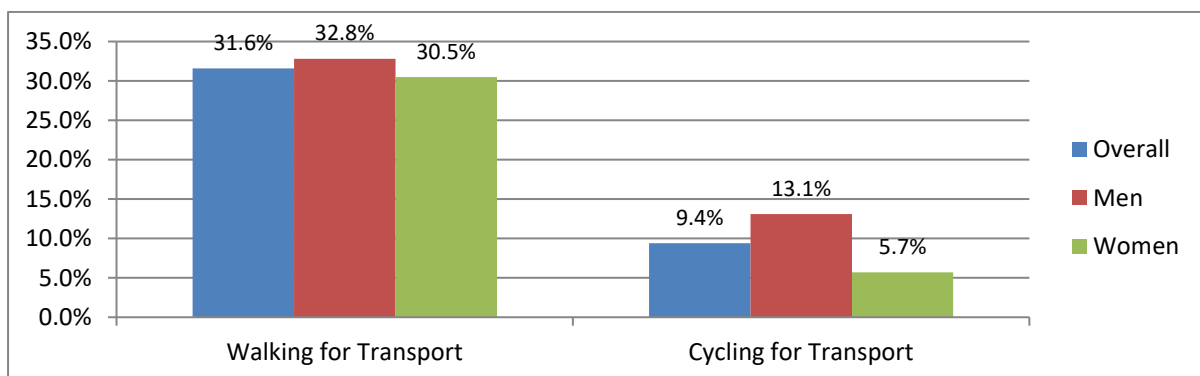
The average walk lasts just over 40 minutes with little differences across different groups in this regard. Almost 50% of walkers maintain a brisk or fast pace with most remaining walkers walking at a steady average pace; only 5% of walkers report walking at a slow pace. Older groups and those with a disability which prevents participation are significantly more likely to walk at a slow or average pace.

Overall, given the nature of the activity it is perhaps not surprising that recreational walking has a broader appeal than sport as it is an affordable, relatively easy form of exercise. It appeals to every age group and participants of various socioeconomic groups and abilities.

### 3.2 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. While walking for transport is equally appealing to men and women (albeit to a far lesser extent than nationally as we have already seen) over twice as many men as women cycle for transport – see **Figure 3.2** below.

**Figure 3.2: Walking and cycling for transport by gender and overall**



Other than gender, age and living location are important influences on whether or not an individual in KL is likely to walk or cycle for transport. Older adults are significantly less likely to do both than younger adults while urban residents are more likely to walk for transport than rural dwellers.

### 3.3 Overall Activity Levels

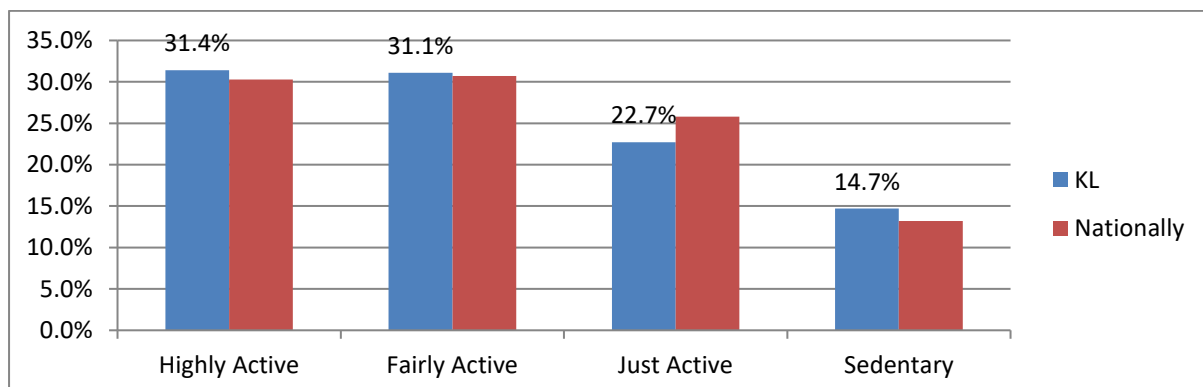
The ISM allows an approximate<sup>18</sup> analysis of adult activity levels against the National Physical Activity Guidelines based on a four-category classification system shown in **Figure 3.3**. The system is bookended by “sedentary” and “highly active” categories which are the main focus of this section.

**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**. Rural residents are significantly less likely to be highly active than urban residents with rates of 28% and 36.3% being reported respectively. As we have seen this is due to the lower number of sport and recreational walking sessions in which rural residents take part. By increasing the number of weekly sporting and / or recreational walking sessions slightly it can be expected that rural residents could achieve the activity guidelines to a much greater extent than currently. There is no difference in the proportions of urban and rural residents which are sedentary.

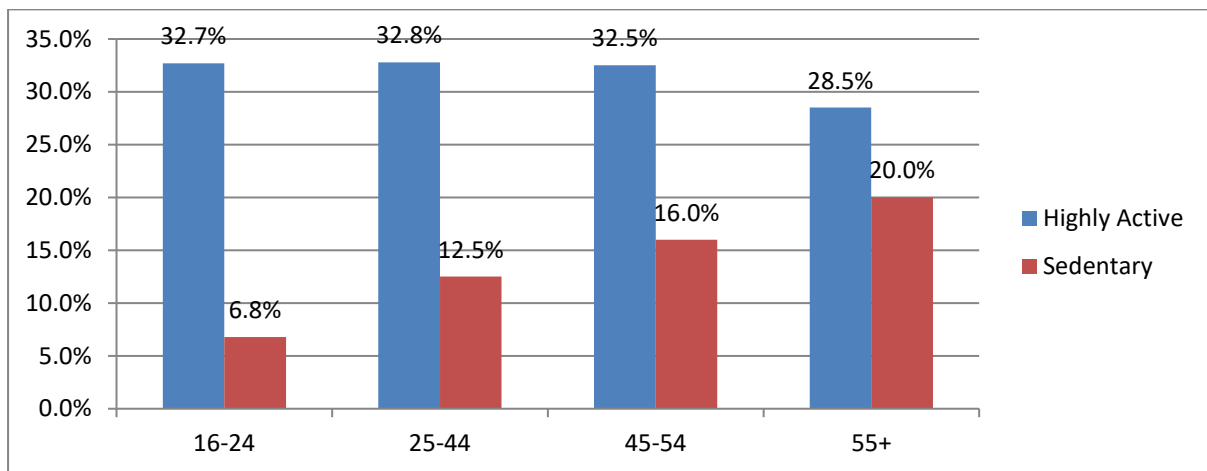
**Figure 3.4 Population by activity category in Kerry/Limerick and Nationally**



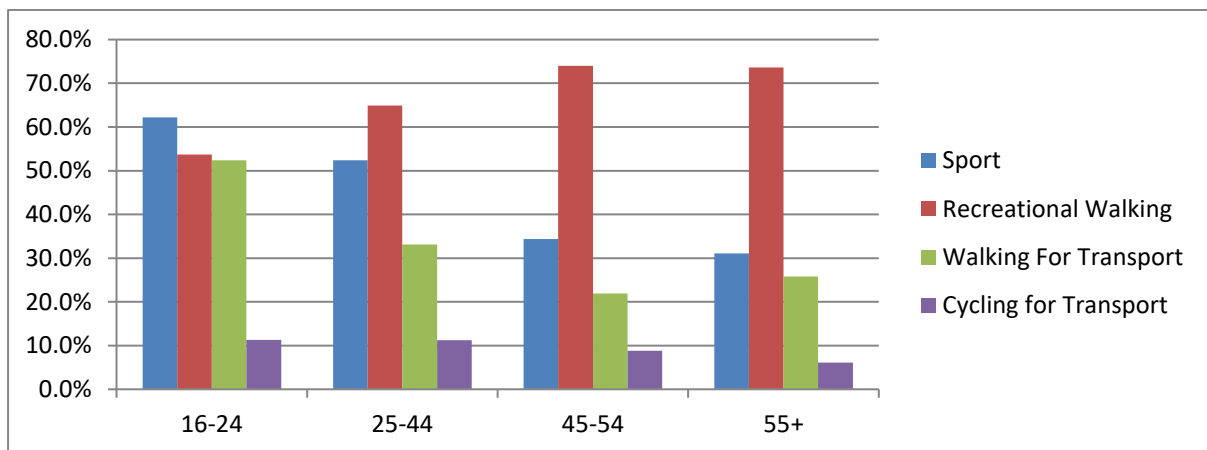
<sup>18</sup> This analysis can only be regarded as approximate as it does not take account of physical activity undertaken in the workplace or in the home.

Older groups are more likely to be sedentary as we can see in **Figure 3.5** below while the same figure also shows that there is little difference in the proportions which are highly active by age. **Figure 3.6** compares the proportions taking part in the four key physical activities by age. We can see that recreational walking can provide an alternative activity for those dropping out of sport as they get older. However, while recreational walking increases with age, there is a noticeable decline in walking for transport as people get older. There is also a decline in the proportions cycling for transport with age. These latter two aspects help explain the significant numbers of older adults who are sedentary.

**Figure 3.5 Proportions of Highly Active and Sedentary by age**



**Figure 3.6: Participation in all forms of physical activity by age**



Apart from the age, there are also strong social gradients around activity category but here they are primarily confined to the issue of sedentarism. For example, while between 12% and 14% of those who attained a leaving certificate or higher are sedentary, the figure rises to over 26% of those who

attained no higher than a junior certificate or its equivalent. That this is the case is almost entirely due to the lower levels of participation in sport among the latter group.

So, the solution to a reduction in the proportions of sedentary adults potentially varies across different demographic groups with “active commuting”<sup>19</sup> likely to help most in the case of older people while sport may have a key role to play in the case of those who are most socially disadvantaged.

Finally, those who combine activities are most likely to meet the guidelines. The proportions which meet the guidelines through only playing sport or taking part in recreational walking are quite small. By combining these activities it is much more likely that individuals will achieve the highly active category required to meet the guidelines. Promoting participation in both types of activity is something which policy makers should engage in.

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<sup>19</sup> Active commuting here means walking for transport or cycling for transport

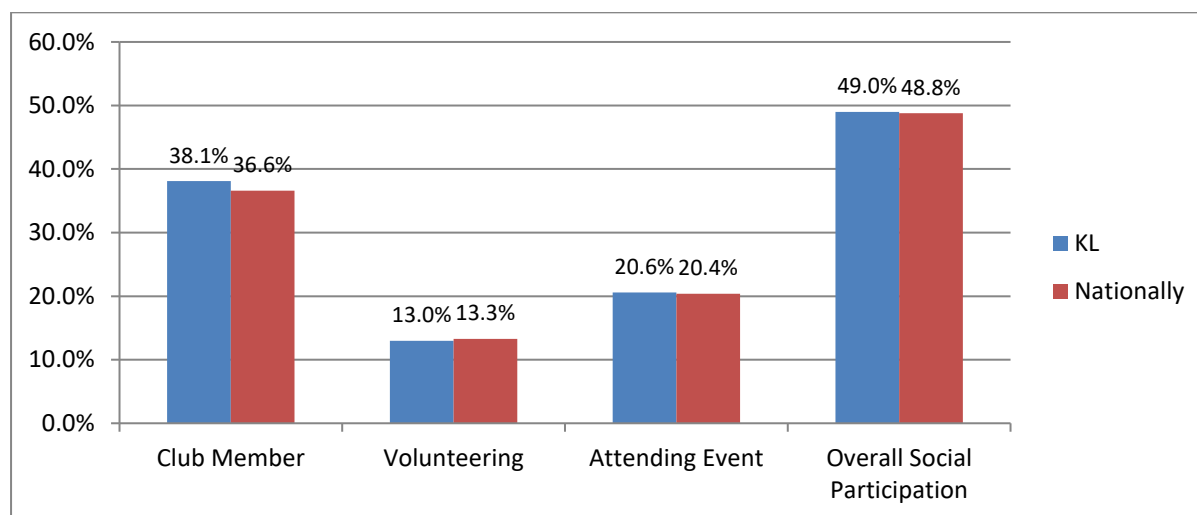
## 4. Social Participation

### 4.1 Overall

In the context of the ISM, social participation consists of club membership, volunteering and attendance at sports events. In 2013, the ISM 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<sup>20</sup> 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 issues around social participation in KL.

Before looking at each of the different forms of social participation in turn we compare the overall levels of social participation in KL with the national situation in **Figure 4.1** below. Social participation is broadly in line with the national picture in KL. Overall, nearly half of 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 two counties.

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

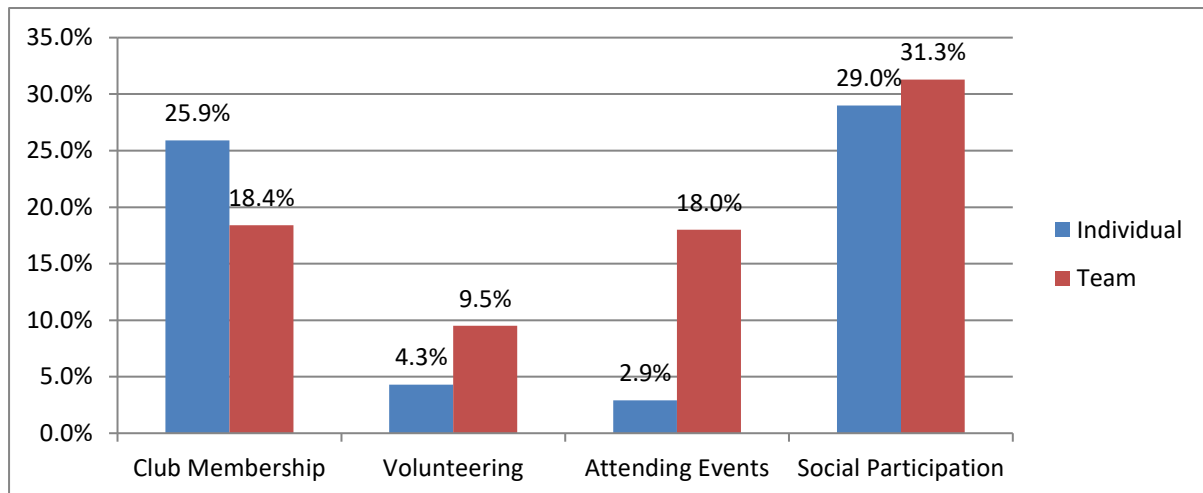


While active participation is dominated by individual sporting activities the situation is more mixed when it comes to social participation as we can see from **Figure 4.2** overleaf. The overwhelming majority of volunteering and attendance at sporting events is associated with team sports, in all likelihood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

<sup>20</sup> Available at <http://www.irishsports council.ie/Research/Irish-Sports-Monitor-Annual-Report-2013/>

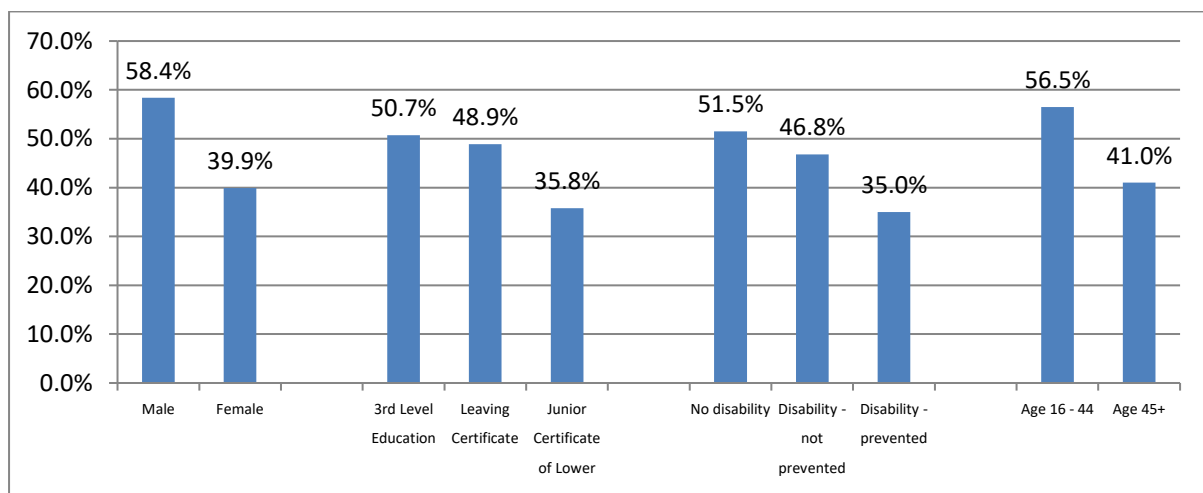
membership favours individual sports reflecting to some extent the dominance of those types of sports which are preferred by active participants. We will look at these more closely below.

**Figure 4.2: Social Participation in Sport by type of sport<sup>21</sup>**



Moving on to look at social participation across various demographic groups we find that there are significant differences by gender, level of educational attainment, age and disability. In **Figure 4.3** we look at overall social participation under each of these categories while in the sections on the individual components of social participation we look at where these differences arise. From figure 4.3 we can see that males, younger individuals, those with a leaving certificate or higher standard of education and those without a disability are more likely to engage in some form of social participation than their comparative groups.

**Figure 4.3: Any social participation by demographic characteristics**

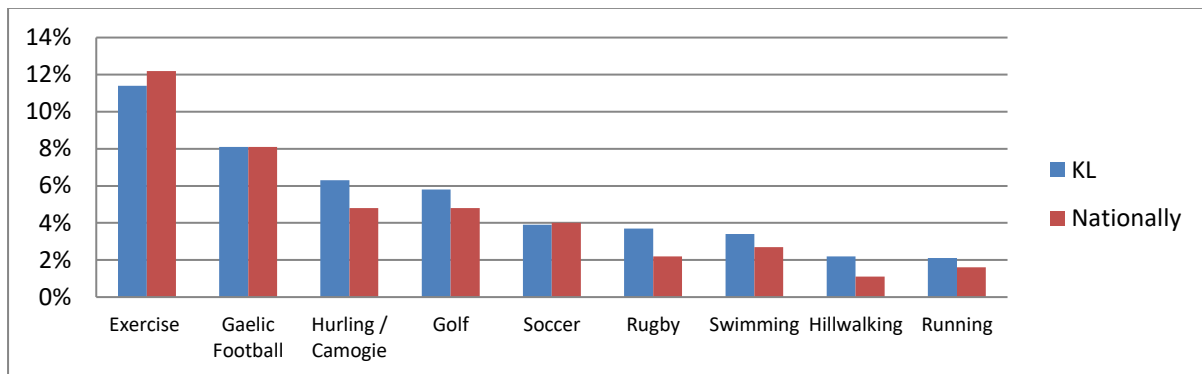


<sup>21</sup> Percentages add up to more than 100 due to certain respondents participating socially in both types of sport

### 4.3 Club Membership

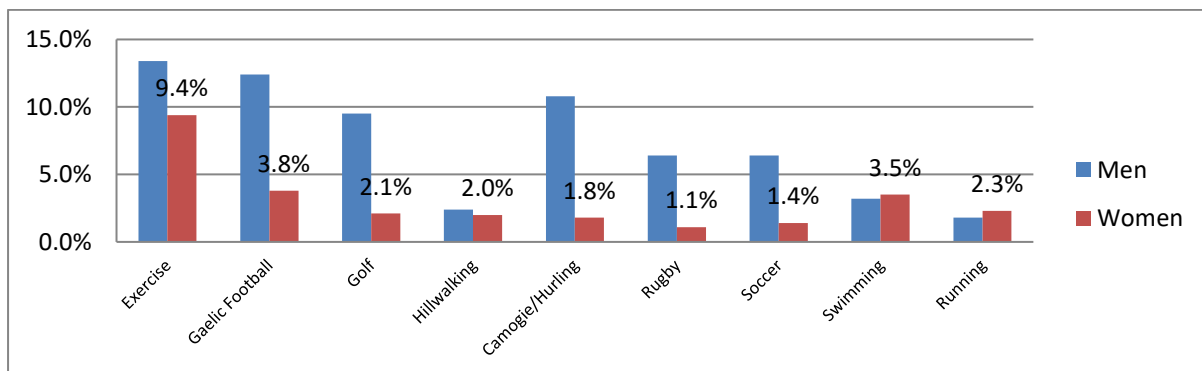
Figure 4.4 compares club membership by sport in KL with the national situation. A good mix of team and individual sports are present in both cases. While none of the differences between KL and nationally are statistically significant there are some suggestions of sports which are quite strong in the region, particularly hurling / camogie<sup>22</sup>, rugby and golf. More than one in four adults in KL are members of individual sports clubs while the figure for team sport is just over one in six.

Figure 4.4: Club Membership by sport in KL and nationally<sup>23</sup>



Twice as many men as women belong to a sports club (51.3% and 25%) and men are more likely to belong to individual and team sports clubs, where the ratio is almost 4:1(28.3% vs. 8.7%). Gyms are the most popular form of membership for both genders while of the nine sports shown in Figure 4.3, membership among men is significantly higher in six; the exceptions are hill walking, running and swimming where membership levels are similar.

Figure 4.4: Club Membership by sport by gender<sup>24</sup>



<sup>22</sup> Most of these members belong to a hurling club.

<sup>23</sup> Only sports with membership of 2% or more are shown. All other sports had a club membership percentage of below 1%.

<sup>24</sup> Clubs with membership between 1-2% among men include cycling, martial arts and shooting. Clubs with membership between 1-2% among women include basketball and sports shown above in the graph.

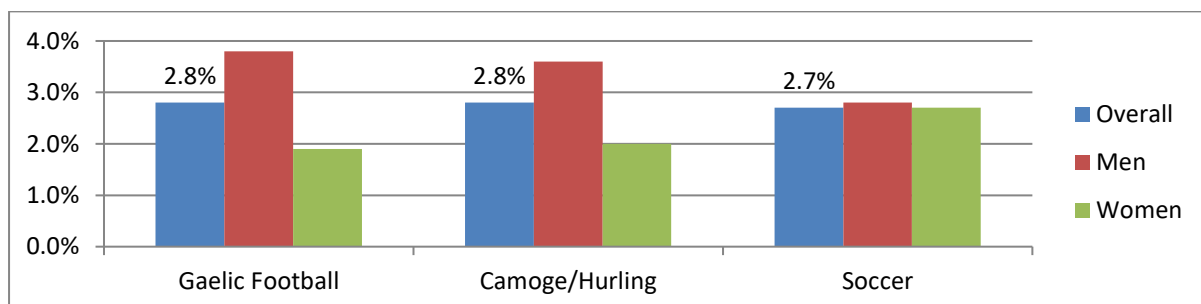
Apart from the influence of gender, younger age groups, those with a leaving certificate or higher education and individuals without a disability are more likely to be club members. Level of educational attainment tends to have a greater influence on membership of individual sports clubs such as exercise, hill-walking, swimming and running. Individuals with a 3<sup>rd</sup> level education are almost twice as likely to be members of individual clubs as those with a junior certificate education or lower. Age affects both types of clubs with younger groups being more likely to be members of gyms and soccer clubs while older adults are more attracted to golf clubs. Having a disability which prevents participation in sport is associated with lower membership of rugby and soccer clubs.

#### 4.4 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>25</sup> 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 KL is similar to that nationally. One in seven volunteered at least once in the previous 7 days during 2011 – 2013 with men being more likely to volunteer than women particularly in respect of team sports as can be seen in **Figure 4.5** below which shows the main volunteer-driven sports. Volunteering is strongly associated with children’s participation in sport with twice times as many adults with children volunteering than those without. Individuals with a leaving certificate or higher standard of education are more likely to volunteer than those with a lower level of educational attainment across both team and individual sports.

**Figure 4.5: Volunteering by sport by gender<sup>26</sup>**



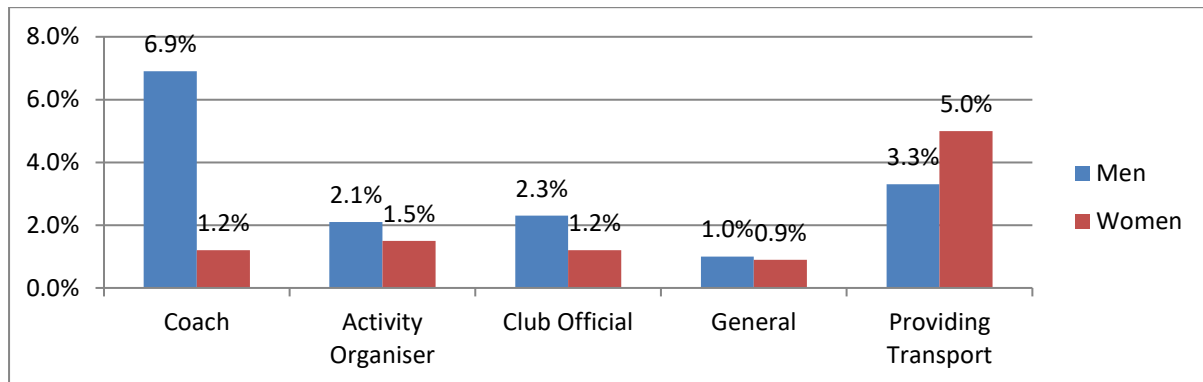
<sup>25</sup> <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/saveselections.asp>

<sup>26</sup> Overall Rugby has a volunteering rate of between 1-2%, Golf has a volunteering rate of between 1-2% among men and rugby has a rate of 2% or more among men. Dancing has a volunteering rate of between 1-2% among women.



Those who volunteer spend on average nearly 4<sup>27</sup> hours per week volunteering with men spending significantly more time volunteering than women (4.9 vs. 3.1 hours). The type of volunteering roles carried out also varies by gender as can be seen from **Figure 4.6**. 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 ISM Annual Report in this regard.

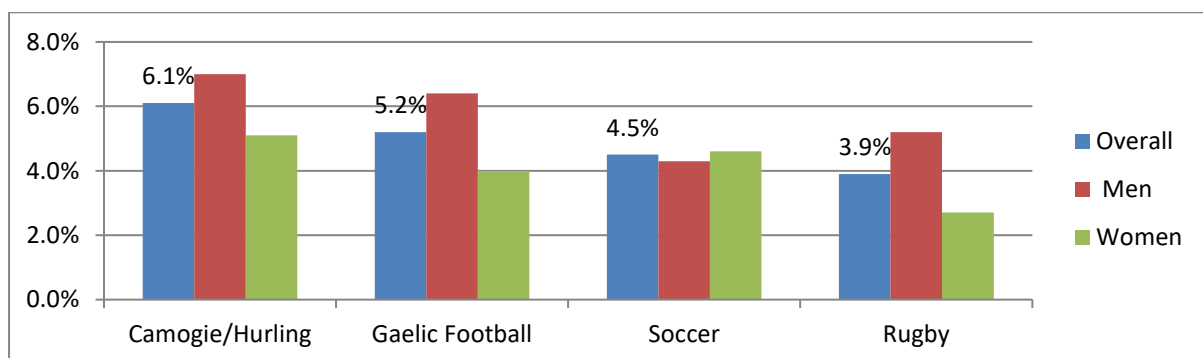
**Figure 4.6: Volunteering Roles by gender**



#### 4.5 Attendance at Sporting Events

One in five adults in KL regularly attends some form of sporting event whether involving adults or children. Even more than volunteering, attendance is dominated by team sports with more than 6 times as many adults attending such events as attending those involving individual activities. This reflects the importance of children’s activities to attendance patterns although in this respect there is little difference in attendance between those with and without children. Those aged over 55 are less likely to attend a sporting event while there is relatively little difference among those aged 16-54. **Figure 4.7** below shows attendance by most popular sports by gender during 2011 – 2013 in KL.

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



<sup>27</sup> Due to the presence of some large outlier responses to these questions a 5% “trimmed” mean was used to calculate all figures associated with volunteering time. The calculation of this mean excludes the most extreme values.

## **Policy Implications**

This briefing report has provided descriptive information on participation in sport and physical activity in KL. 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](http://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 therefore focuses on issues which have not necessarily been covered in depth in these research reports.

### **a) Social Gradients and Physical Activity**

Those with a third level education are more likely to play sport, belong to a club, volunteer for sport or attend a sporting event. However, among those who participate in sport, individuals with lower levels of education tend to take part in more sporting sessions than those with a third level education. Therefore the main obstacle appears to getting those with lower educational attainments involved in sport in the first instance. It is in the case of sports such as running and swimming where those with a third level education are significantly more likely to take part in KL. This lower level of participation among those lower levels of educational attainment appears to be associated with their higher levels of sedentarism in the region. Therefore we recommend policy makers seek to develop initiatives to promote running and swimming among disadvantaged groups in the region.

### **b) Combating sedentarism among older groups**

Overall 14.7% of residents in Kerry/Limerick are sedentary. While this is broadly in line with the national average, this figure represents 32,100 residents who are inactive in the region. Among older groups in the region the rate is significantly higher which is associated with the decline in sports participation and the low levels of engagement in active commuting. We recommend that policy makers promote greater engagement in active commuting and recreational walking among older groups to address this challenge.

**c) Meeting the Physical Activity Guidelines -the Urban / Rural divide**

Urban and rural residents in KL appear to be equally likely to take part in sport or recreational walking in KL. However, the patterns of their participation are quite different in that urban residents take part in more sessions of both activities. As a result they are significantly more likely to meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines. We recommend therefore that policy makers seek to encourage rural residents to engage in additional bouts of activity and / or diversify their activity patterns to help increase the proportions meeting the Guidelines.

**Appendix 1 – Demography of ISM Sample for Kerry Limerick compared to Census 2011**

	<b>2011 Census</b>	<b>2011+2013 ISM combined</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>16 years plus</b>	<b>16 years plus</b>
Male	49.9%	49.6%
Female	50.1%	50.4%
<b>Age</b>		
16-19	6.5%	6.5%
20-24	7.6%	7.6%
25-34	18.8%	18.8%
35-44	18.8%	18.8%
45-54	16.9%	16.9%
55-64	14.6%	14.7%
65+	16.8%	16.8%
<b>Working Status (Census 2011 includes those under 16)</b>		
Employee/Self Employed	49.4%	48.8%
Unemployed	10.4%	10.2%
Retired	14.2%	15.3%
Homemaker	9.8%	9.8%
Student	11.7%	11.5%
Unemployed-illness/disabled	4.5%	4.5%

## Appendix 2 – Comparison of Key High Level Participation Metrics between Kerry and Limerick

	Kerry (%)	Limerick (%)
<b>Active Participation</b>		
Recreational Walking	68.7	65.6
Sports Participation	45.3	43.3
Walking for Transport	31.4	31.7
Cycling for Transport	9.5	9.3
<b>Activity Outcome Measures</b>		
Highly Active	31.9	31.1
Sedentary	11.3	16.4 <sup>28</sup>
<b>Social Participation</b>		
Volunteering	14.4	12.3
Club Membership	38.6	37.8
Attendance	20.0	21.0
Any Social Participation	48.2	49.5