

**Sport and Physical Activity among those aged 16  
and over in County Meath**

**By**

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## Executive Summary

### Active Participation in Sport

- 46.8% of Meath respondents take part in sport, this is the equivalent of 63,200 adults aged over 16 years taking part in regular sport.
- Exercise/gym activities are the most popular sport to take part in.
- On average participants take part in three sporting sessions per week with the average session lasting over an hour.
- Over two thirds (68%) of sport is played informally i.e. in a solo context or casually with friends and family.

### Broader Physical Activity

- 64.1% of Meath residents take part in recreational walking.
- On average, participants take part in 4 recreational walks, with the average walking session lasting 40 minutes.
- 33.9% of residents take part in walking for transport and 5.9% cycle for transport.

### Social Participation

- 40% of residents belong to a sporting club, 16.5% volunteer in sport and 25.8% attended a sporting event.
- Individual sports are popular among club members while team sports are more popular among volunteers and spectators.
- Gyms and Gaelic Football are the most popular sports clubs. Gaelic football is also the most popular sport among volunteers and spectators.

### Sport and Health

- 70.6% would like to take part in more sport/physical activity, men are interested in increasing their cycling while women are more interested in hill walking.
- Time is the main barrier for people interested in taking part in more sport/physical activity.
- 28.7% of respondents are meeting the activity guidelines while 13.2% do not take part in sport, recreational walking, walking for transport or cycling for transport.
- Women are more likely to be highly active than men.

## 1. Introduction

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 county Meath. The analysis aims to be of interest and assistance to those involved in the promotion of sport in Meath, particularly Local Authorities, LSPs, 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 619 respondents to reduce the error margin within the results. Based on this sample size the error margin around key high level results is about 3.9%. So if we report a participation rate of 46.8% in the report we would expect the true participation rate for Meath to lie somewhere between 46.8% + 3.9% and 46.8% - 3.9% i.e. between 50.7% and 42.9%<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 Meath and should be treated as such.**

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.irishsportscouncil.ie/Research/The\\_Irish\\_Sports\\_Monitor/](http://www.irishsportscouncil.ie/Research/The_Irish_Sports_Monitor/)). The ISM is

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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.

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 Meath's demographic profile. Gender and age, age overall, employment status and year were considered in this re-weighting exercise. The Appendix compares the demographic profile of the dataset used for the report with the profile of Meath 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. The 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 gender issues in 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 sports policy 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.

### **Statistical Analysis**

In this report, the charts and tables generally show percentage participation rates in a given activity by a particular group (e.g. the percentage of women who play team sport). Where this is not the case the report highlights the basis for the participation rates. The report includes certain national figures for comparison purposes. In the main such national figures are composite averages from 2011 and 2013. Exceptions to this approach are noted.

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

The primary justification for public investment in sport is to increase physical activity and hence to improve health<sup>6</sup>. Consistent with this aim (and with the Irish Sports Council Act, 1999), the report defines "sport" broadly, to include recreational exercise (e.g. swimming, gym, dance classes, yoga, etc.), as well as field games (e.g. soccer, Gaelic football). The ISM also records recreational walking,

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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."

walking and cycling for transport, allowing sport to be set in the context of more general physical activity.

### **Limitations**

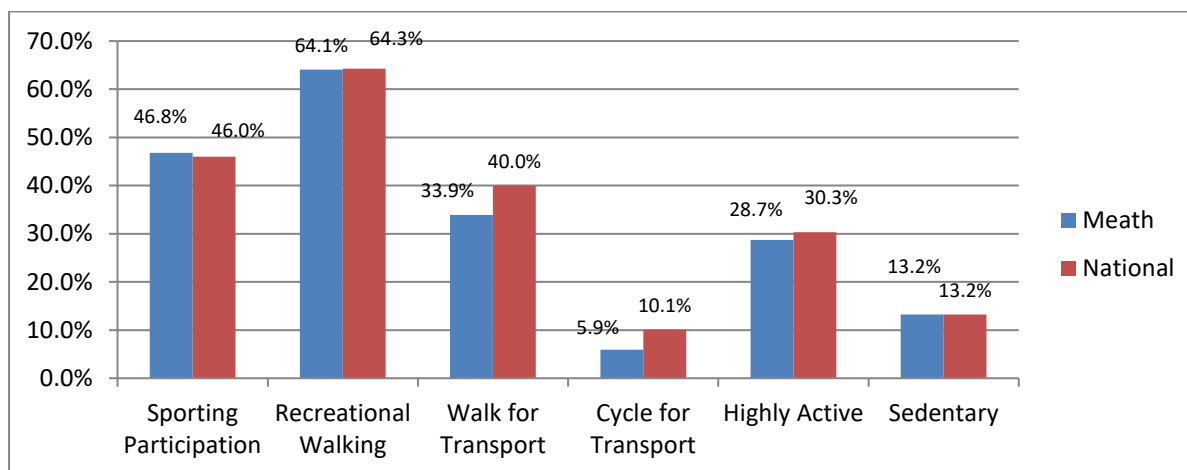
All statistical surveys are approximate. In the case of the ISM, measurement error may be caused by people recalling activity inaccurately, respondents wishing to paint themselves in a good light (social desirability bias), failure to survey hard-to-reach groups, mistakes made by interviewers, and so on. For example foreign nationals are underrepresented in the overall ISM and in the Meath 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 Meath with the national average. It captures regular<sup>7</sup> 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>8</sup> while those who are “sedentary” play no sport, are not recreational walkers and don’t walk or cycle for transport. Based on 2011 Census data the 46.8% participating in sport is equivalent to approximately 63,200 adults aged 16 and over taking part in regular sporting activity in Meath.

**Figure 1: Summary of Physical Activity – Meath vs. National**



Except for active commuting, participation rates in Meath are broadly in line with the national picture. Active commuting rates are significantly lower in the county than nationally with no difference being noted between urban and rural dwellers in the county in this respect.

In **Table 1** we look at these behaviours by gender. As is the case nationally, Meath men are more likely to play sport than their female counterparts while the opposite is the case for recreational walking. Men in Meath are much less likely to walk or cycle for transport than their national counterparts. While the table suggests that Meath women are more likely to be “highly active” than their male counterparts the difference is not statistically significant.

<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.

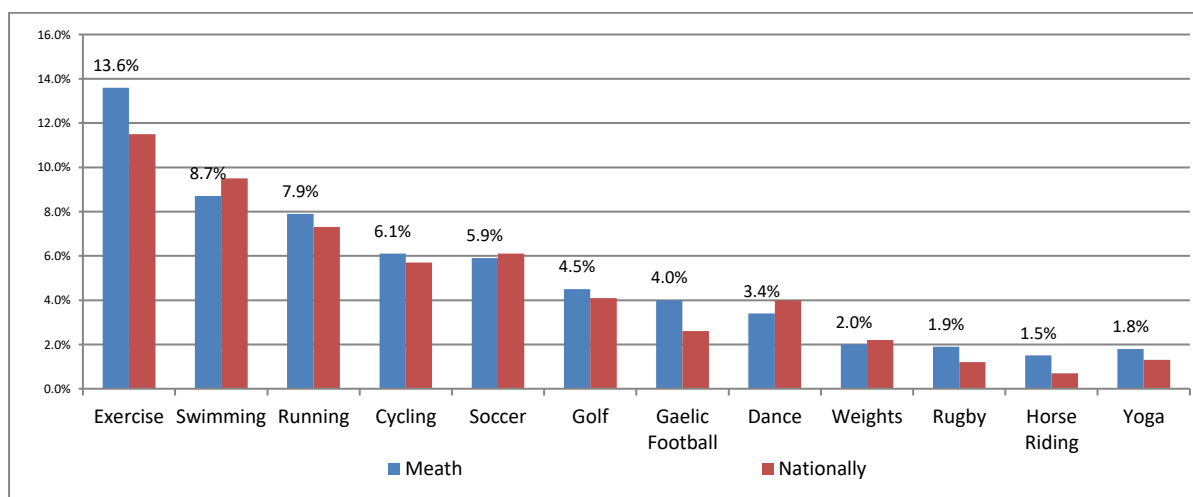
**Table 1: Summary of Physical Activity by gender – Meath vs. National**

	Meath		National	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sporting Participation	52.8%	41.1%	51.5%	40.9%
Recreational Walking	53.9%	73.9%	58.0%	70.3%
Walk for Transport	31.6%	36.2%	39.1%	40.9%
Cycle for Transport	7.5%	4.4%	14.6%	5.7%
Highly Active	25.6%	31.5%	29.9%	30.7%
Sedentary	14.8%	11.8%	13.3%	13.0%

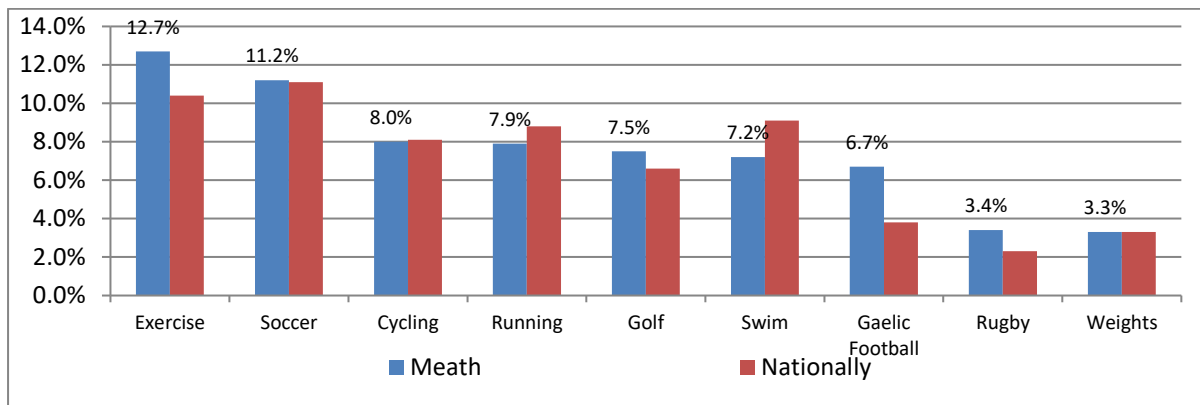
## 2.2 Most Popular Sporting Activities

Figures 2.2 and 2.3a and b show the most popular sports in Meath overall and by gender. Only sports with overall participation rates of 1% or more or gender-based participation rates of 2% or more are shown. Exercise is the most popular activity for men and women in Meath. Exercise and gaelic football (among men) are slightly more popular in Meath than nationally, but overall, participation rates in the most popular sports are in line with the national picture. Within the county, men are more likely to take part in team sports, cycling, golf and weights while women are more likely to take part in swimming, dance and yoga.

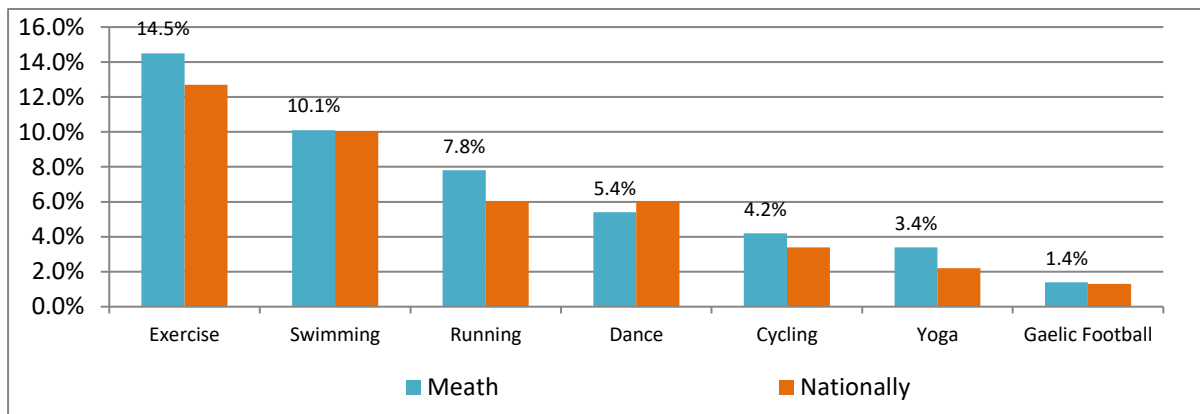
**Figure 2.2: Participation in Popular Sports - Overall**



**Figure 2.3a: Participation in Popular Sports - Men**



**Figure 2.3b: Participation in Popular Sports - Women**



## 2.3 Participation by Age and Gender

Previous research has demonstrated that participation patterns vary considerably across the life course and that those patterns are different for men and women. Men are six times more likely to take part in team sports compared to women (18.6% and 3% respectively) while the difference is marginal in respect of individual sports (41.9% and 39.7% for men and women respectively). Nationally<sup>9</sup> participation in team sports begins to decline after adolescence and there is evidence that this is also true in Meath. However the small sample size makes inferring findings difficult. In a policy context where the aim is to increase participation in sport and physical activity throughout life these patterns provide compelling evidence to support strong investment in individual sporting activities.

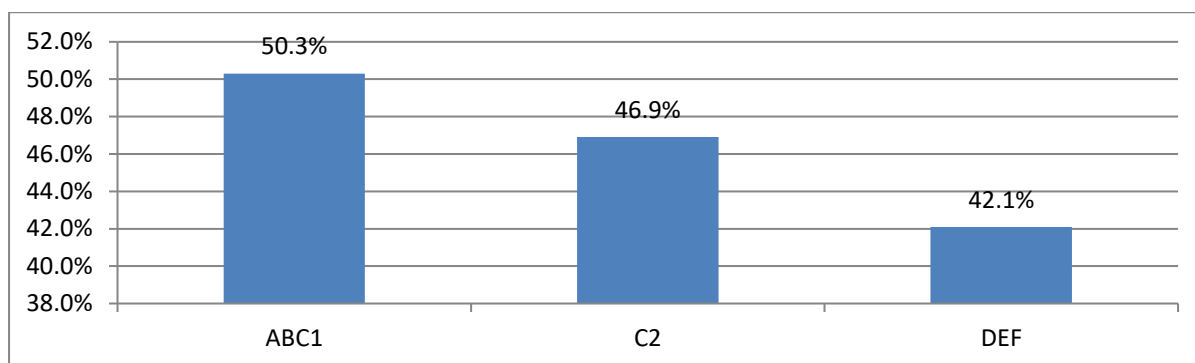
<sup>9</sup> The Irish Sports Monitor (2015)



## 2.4 Participation and Social Gradients

Research<sup>10</sup> shows that social gradients impact strongly on all aspects of participation with higher income earners and those with a higher educational attainment more likely to play sport, be club members, volunteer for sport and attend sporting events. The available evidence suggests that social gradients are as strong in Meath as elsewhere in the country as seen in **Figure 2.4** below.

**Figure 2.4: Participation by Social Class**



## 2.5 Participation and illness/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. 16.1% of Meath respondents do have an illness/disability with 11.5% (71.5% of those with an illness/disability) stating this prevents their participation in sport or exercise. 29.3% of those with an illness/disability take part in sport or exercise compared to 50.4% of those without an illness/disability.

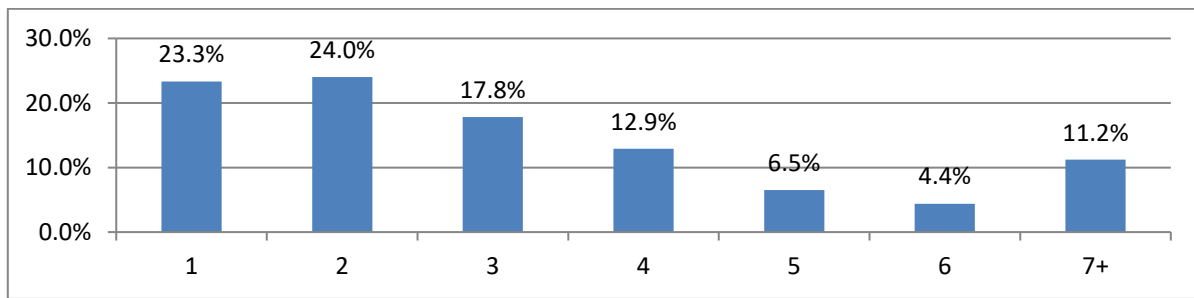
## 2.6 FITT Analysis

The ISM asks respondents 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 as in **Figures 2.5 – 2.8**. Figure 2.5 shows that almost 8 out of every 10 sports participants in Meath took part more than once in the previous week. Participants averaged 3 days of sport per week with men taking part more often than women (3.4 days vs. 2.9 days).

<sup>10</sup>

[http://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Sport\\_Social\\_Disadvantage\\_2007\\_/Fair\\_Play\\_Sport\\_Social\\_Disadvantage.pdf](http://www.sportireland.ie/Research/Sport_Social_Disadvantage_2007_/Fair_Play_Sport_Social_Disadvantage.pdf)

**Figure 2.5: Number of sporting sessions of participants in previous 7 days**



In Figure 2.6 we see that, the majority of sporting sessions lasted between 30 and 60 minutes reflecting the growing popularity of individual activities such as running, swimming and exercise. Men are more likely to spend more time per week playing sport, reflecting their greater participation in team sports and golf which typically require more time.

**Figure 2.6: Duration of sporting sessions in previous 7 days**

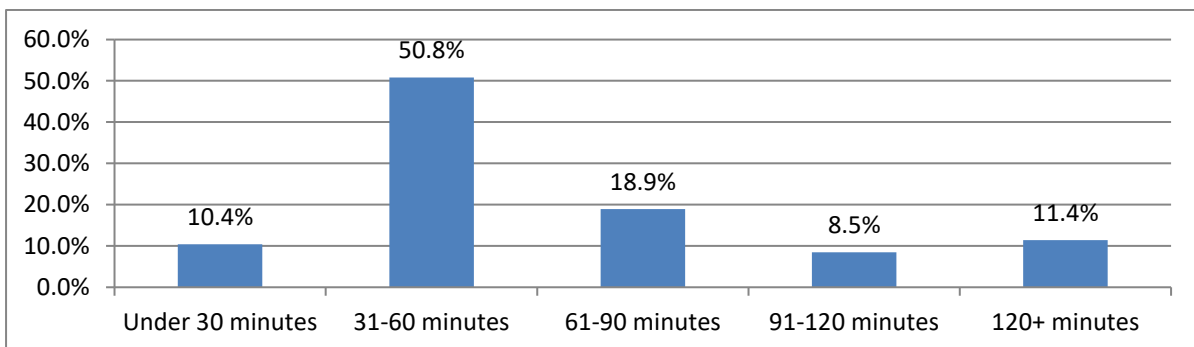
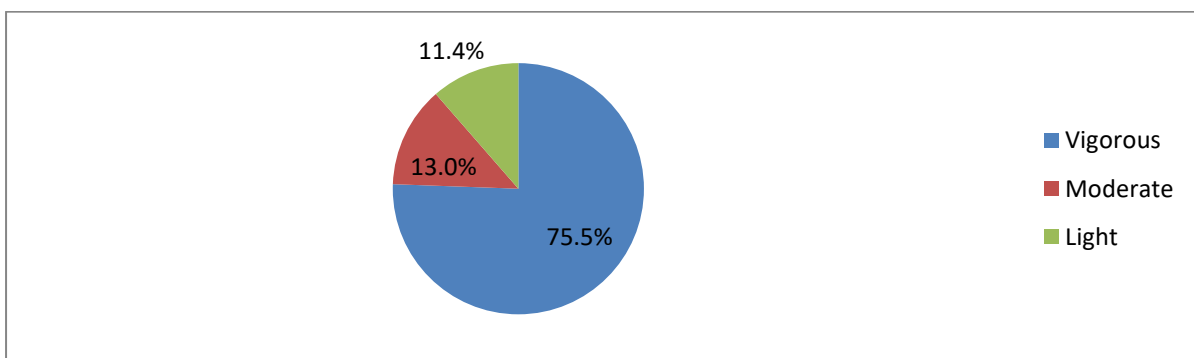


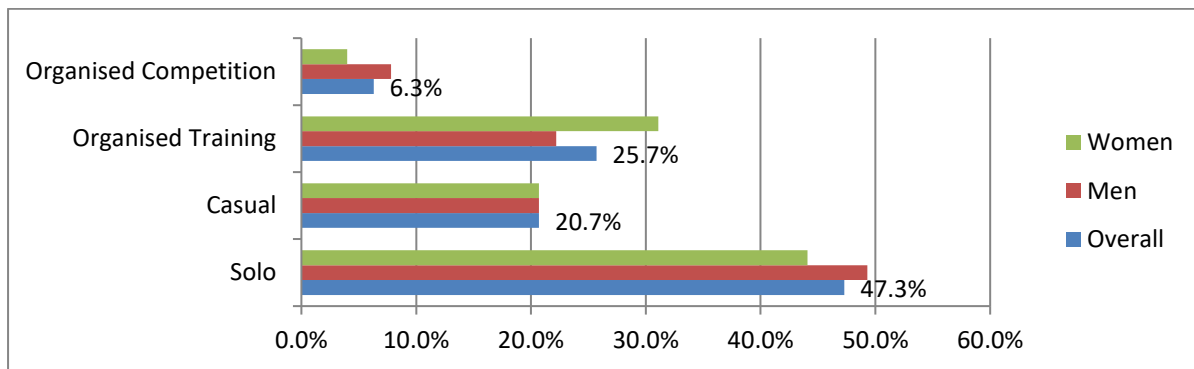
Figure 2.7 shows that almost 90% of participants reported that their efforts in a typical session were sufficient to raise their breathing rate noticeably or for them to be out of breath or sweating<sup>11</sup>.

**Figure 2.7: Intensity of sporting sessions of participants in previous 7 days**



<sup>11</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.

**Figure 2.8: Context of sporting sessions**



**Figure 2.8** shows that over 2/3 of all adult sport is “informal” (solo or casual) with the lion’s share of that involving solo sessions. The remaining 1/3 of adult sport occurs in a “formal” context with the majority of that involving training sessions and classes rather than competition. Specifically in terms of organised sport men are more attracted to the competitive aspect with women preferring organised training sessions. This supports previous research which found that men were more likely than women to cite “to compete with others” as their motivation for taking part in sport / exercise.

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 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.

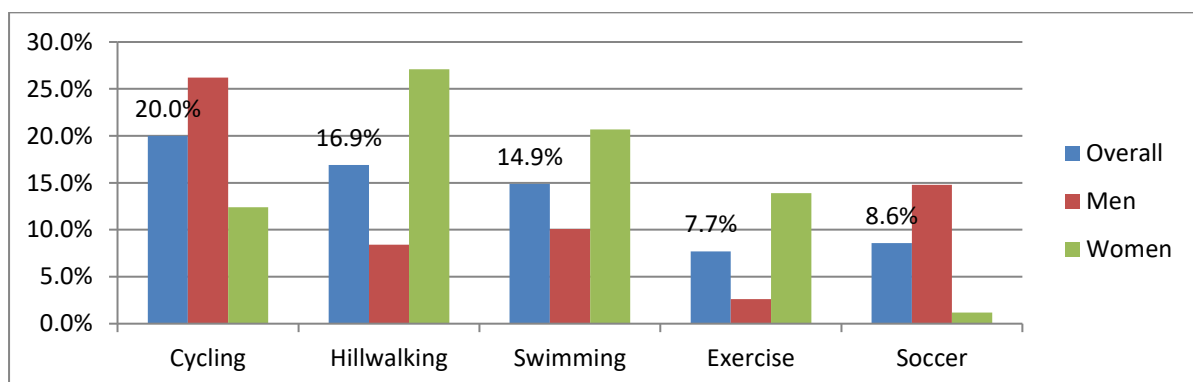
As regards the social benefits of sport, the fact that 47% of activity is undertaken by people on their own is striking. Previous research has also identified that the primary reason cited by non-participants for not playing sport is lack of time (Fahey et al., 2004; CSO, 2007). The solo activities

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.

## 2.7 Interest in doing more sports

In 2011 ISM respondents were asked whether they were interested in doing more sport; if so which one they would like to do more of; and if not what were the reasons preventing them from engaging in more activity. Encouragingly the majority (70.6%) of Meath respondents are interested in increasing their sporting activity with little difference between men and women. **Figure 2.9** displays the preferred sports in Meath which is broadly similar to that reported at national level. Gender differences in preferences tend to reflect actual participation patterns.

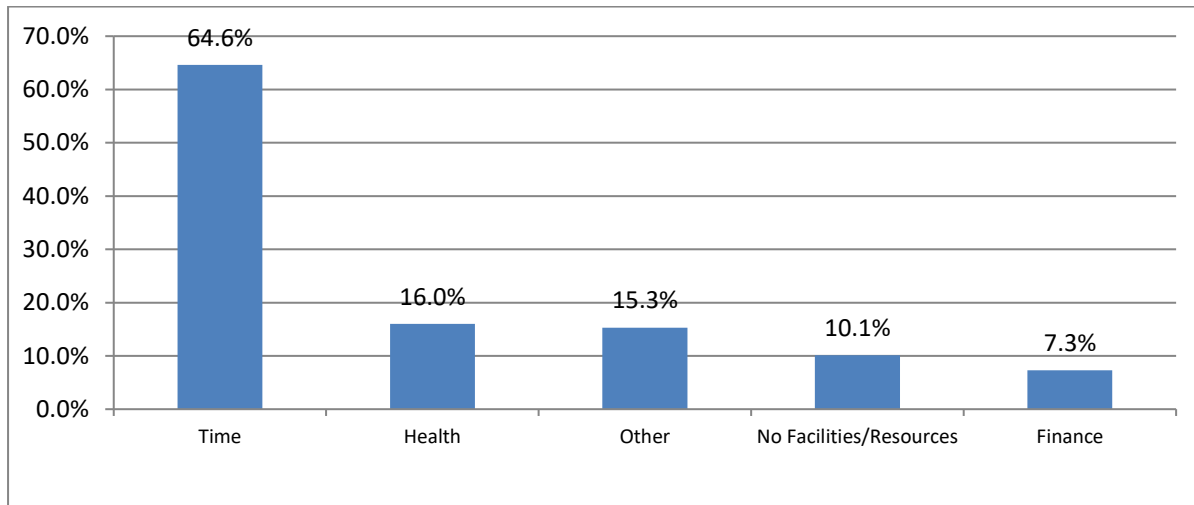
**Figure 2.9: Interest in doing more sport – by sport (Base: All interested in doing more sport)<sup>12</sup>**



When it comes to barriers to increasing participation, time is overwhelmingly the most commonly cited factor overall while for those with an illness or disability, health is the most common barrier. Financial constraints do not feature particularly strongly as barriers to increasing participation while, for about 1 in 7 Meath respondents, lack of facilities / resources were identified as a barrier. Among the “other” category in **Figure 2.10** 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.

<sup>12</sup> The base sample size for men and women who are interested in more sport is less than 100.

**Figure 2.10: Barriers to increasing participation (Base: Respondents not interested in increasing their participation)**



### 3. Broader Physical Activity

#### 3.1 Introduction

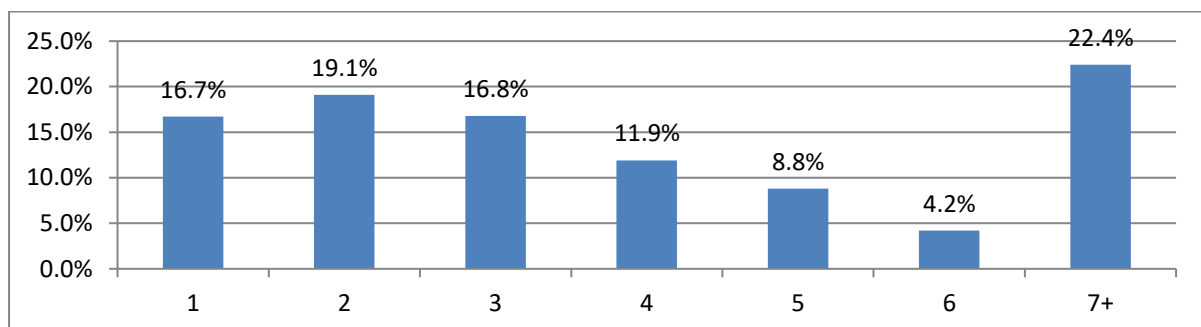
As well as looking at participation in sport and exercise, the ISM looks at broader physical activity including recreational walking, and walking and cycling for transport. This section looks at these issues and the extent to which respondents meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines or are sedentary. Those who are sedentary stand to gain the most health benefits from taking part in any amount of physical activity. If participation in sport and exercise is not feasible for participants, recreational walking or active travel could provide suitable alternative means of activity.

#### 3.2 Recreational Walking

The majority of sports participants in Meath take part for at least 30 minutes per session at a moderate intensity or greater. However, less than 7% take part in enough sport sessions of sufficient intensity and duration to meet the physical activity guidelines. Thus it is clear that recreational walking represents a suitably flexible and easily accessible means for the vast majority to supplement their sporting activity in order to meet the guidelines. It also provides an alternative for those not interested in sport and a starting point for those who are completely inactive. Older adults in particular have stated that their main barrier to taking part in sport and exercise is fear of injury<sup>13</sup>.

In Meath 64% of adults walk at least once a week making it the most popular adult sport and exercise activity. More than one in five adults walk every day as we see in **Figure 3.1**. They typically walk 4 times a week each walk lasting just over 40 minutes. Walking is more popular among women (74%) than men (54%) 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.

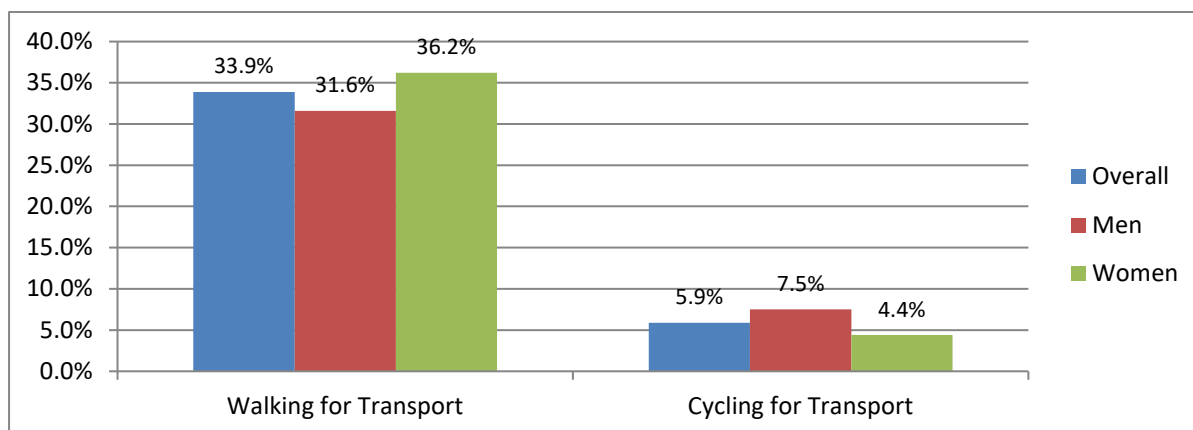
**Figure 3.1: Recreational walking by number of walks in the previous 7 days. (Base: All recreational walkers within the last seven days)**



### 3.3 Walking and Cycling for Transport

The ISM asks respondents if they walked or cycled 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) nearly twice as many men as women cycle for transport – see **Figure 3.2** below. Students are particularly likely to walk for transport while the unemployed are the most likely group to cycle for transport<sup>14</sup>.

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



### 3.4 Overall Activity Levels

The ISM allows an approximate<sup>15</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**

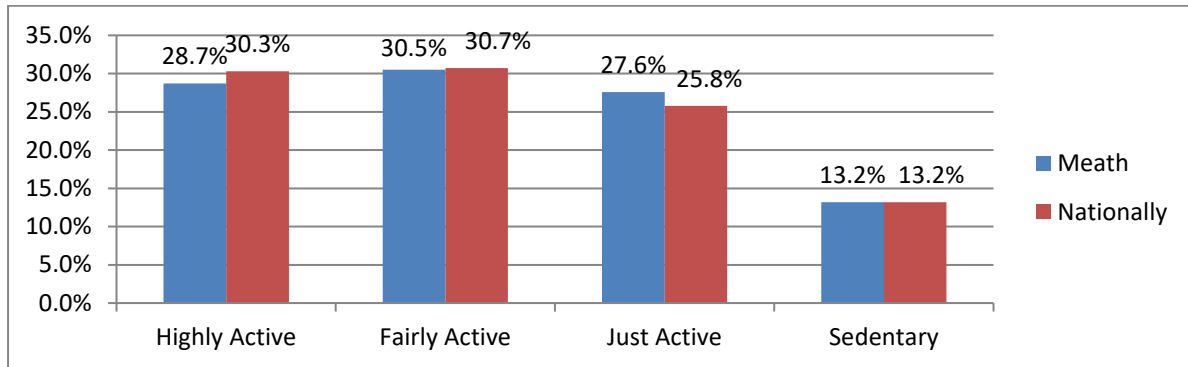
<b>Highly active</b>	Participate in 30 minutes moderate <sup>1</sup> physical activity at least five times during the previous seven days (i.e. meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines)
<b>Fairly Active</b>	Participated in 30 minutes physical activity at least twice during the previous seven days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

<sup>14</sup> The sample size for most of the employment categories was less than 100.

<sup>15</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.

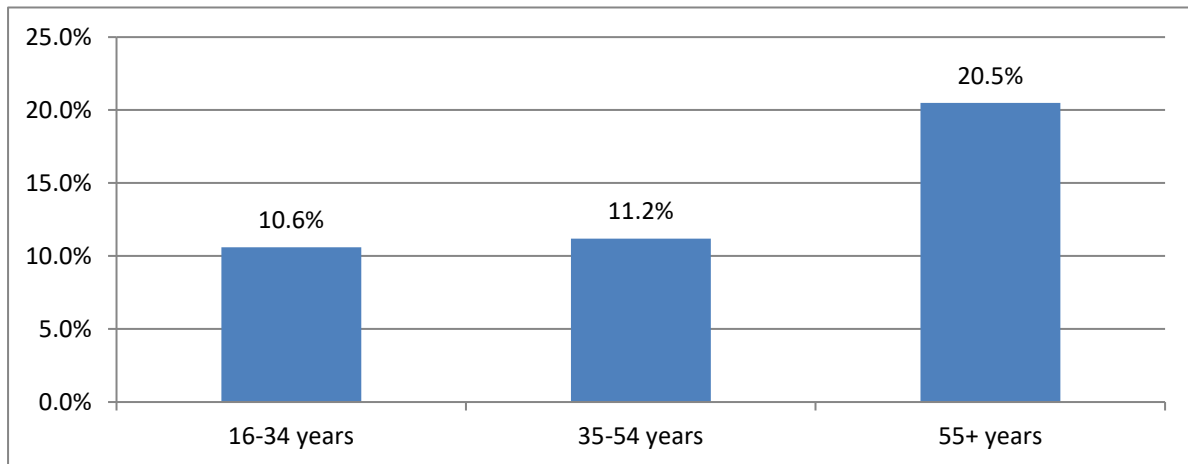
Activity levels are fairly well in line with the national picture, overall and among both men and women as seen in **Figure 3.4**. Women within the county are slightly more likely to be highly active and less likely to be sedentary primarily due to their higher levels of recreational walking.

**Figure 3.4: Population by activity category in Meath and Nationally**



Older adults are more likely to be sedentary as seen in **Figure 3.5**. Recreational walking can provide an alternative activity to those dropping out of sport as it appeals across age groups, abilities and educational attainments.

**Figure: 3.5: Levels of sedentarism by age group**





## 4. Social Participation

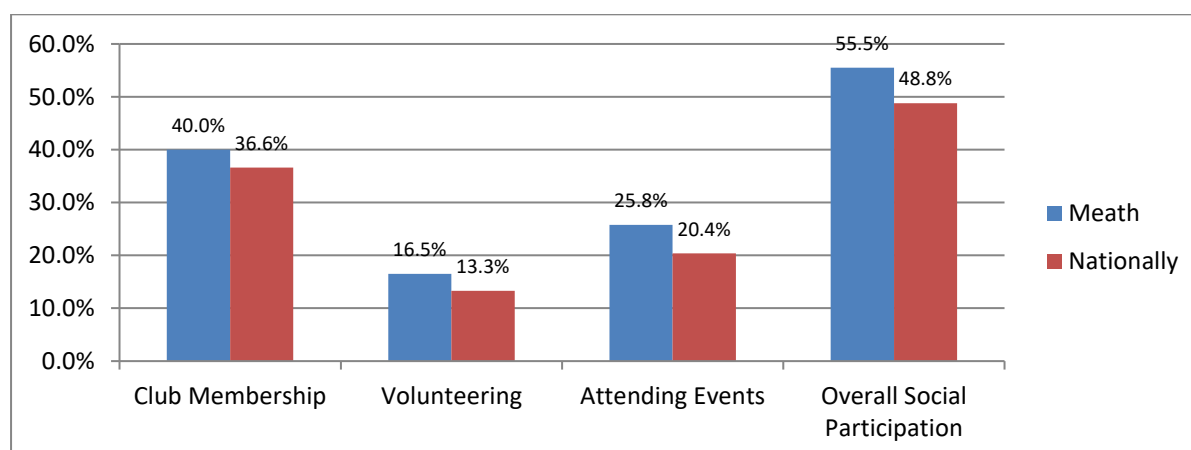
### 4.1 Introduction

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>16</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 Meath.

### 4.2 Overall social participation

Before looking at each of the different forms of social participation in turn we compare the overall levels of social participation in Meath with the national situation in **Figure 4.1** below. Levels of social participation are slightly higher in Meath than nationally, particularly attendance at sporting events. Overall, over half (55%) of adults reported being involved in some form of regular social participation in sport underscoring its importance as a generator of social capital in the county. It is important to note however that over 1/3 of these social participants did not actively participate in sport.

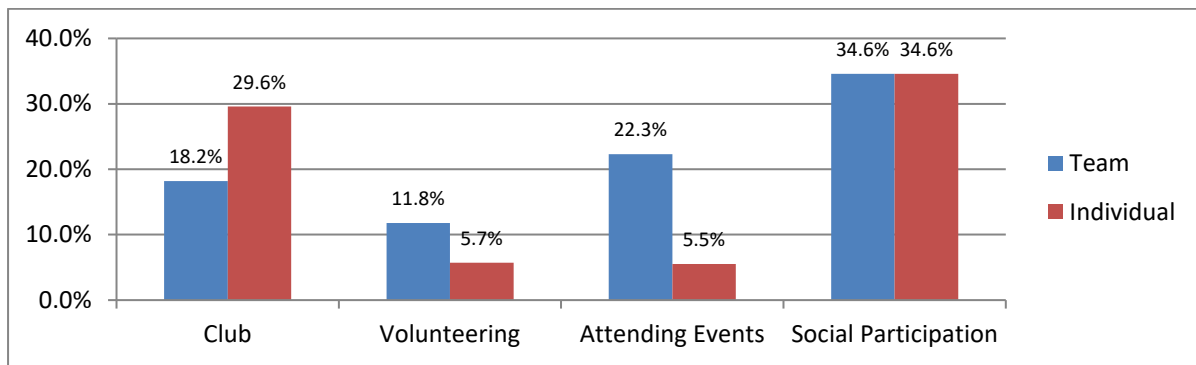
**Figure 4.1: Levels of Social Participation Meath and nationally**



Social participation is evenly split between team and individual sports with the majority of volunteering and attendance at sporting events being associated with team sports while club membership rates are higher for individual activities. Volunteering and attendance are associated with children's participation in the main, hence the dominance of team sports.

<sup>16</sup> Available at <http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Research/Irish-Sports-Monitor-Annual-Report-2013/>

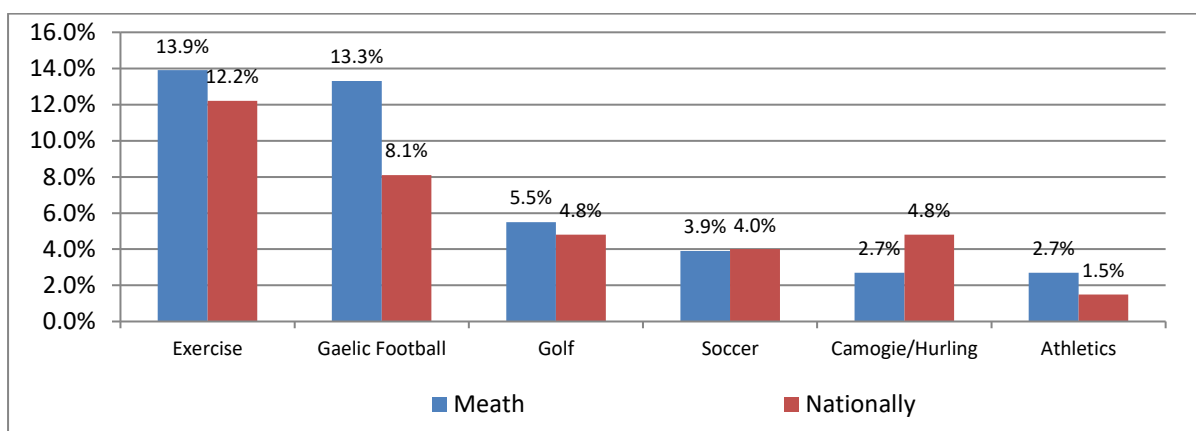
**Figure 4.2: Social Participation in Sport by type of sport**



### 4.3 Club Membership

Given that the majority of club members are likely to be active participants (in the case of Meath respondents the figure was 69%) it is useful to understand in more detail the nature of club membership in the county. **Figure 4.3** shows the six most popular sports for club membership in Meath with comparable national figures also shown. Gyms and gaelic football clubs are the most popular clubs among Meath residents with the latter in particular being particularly so compared to nationally while hurling / camogie is less popular in the county than nationally. There is also a suggestion that athletic clubs are more popular in the county than nationally. Men, individuals under 30 and students are among the most likely groups to belong to sports clubs while those who are unemployed or are not working due to a long-term illness or injury are least likely to be club members. In respect of gender almost 49% of men reported being a member of a club compared to 32% of women. Gaelic football, gyms, golf and soccer are the popular clubs for men while gyms and gaelic clubs are popular for women.

**Figure 4.3: Club Membership by sport<sup>17</sup>**



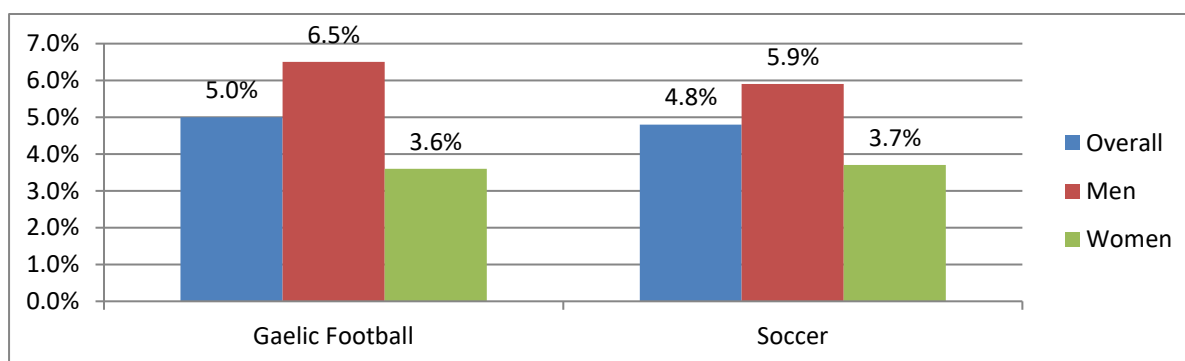
<sup>17</sup> Only sports with membership of 2% or more are shown, all other sports had a club membership percentage of below 1%.

## 4.4 Volunteering

Volunteering is at the heart of sport. Without the scale of volunteering that goes on much of sporting activity, particularly that involving children, would simply not occur. Volunteering is a key component of organised sport and, according to official sources, sport features prominently as the single activity involving the greatest amount of volunteering. The 2006 Census of Population<sup>18</sup> identified that 33% of all volunteers were involved in sport only slightly behind the 35% volunteering for the much broader category of “social / charity”.

The picture for volunteering in Meath is similar to that nationally. One in six adults volunteered at least once in the previous 7 days during 2011 – 2013 with men and women equally likely to volunteer (17% and 16% respectively). Volunteering is mainly associated with team sports with gaelic football and soccer<sup>19</sup> dominating as seen in **Figure 4.5**. Given its strong association with children’s participation in sport it is unsurprising that parents are nearly 4 times as likely to volunteer as non-parents all other factors being controlled for. Individuals aged 30 and over are also more likely than younger groups to volunteer.

**Figure 4.5: Volunteering by sport by gender<sup>20</sup>**



## 4.5 Attendance at Sporting Events

One in four adults in Meath regularly attends some form of sporting event whether involving adults or children. Even more than volunteering, attendance is dominated by team sports with four times as many adults attending such events as those involving individual activities. This reflects the importance of children’s activities to attendance; parents are more likely to be regular attendees than non-parents (30% and 18.3% respectively) which also helps to explain why individuals aged 30 – 49 are the most likely group to attend events compared to younger or older age groups. Finally, individuals living in a rural setting (either a village or an isolated location) are much more likely to

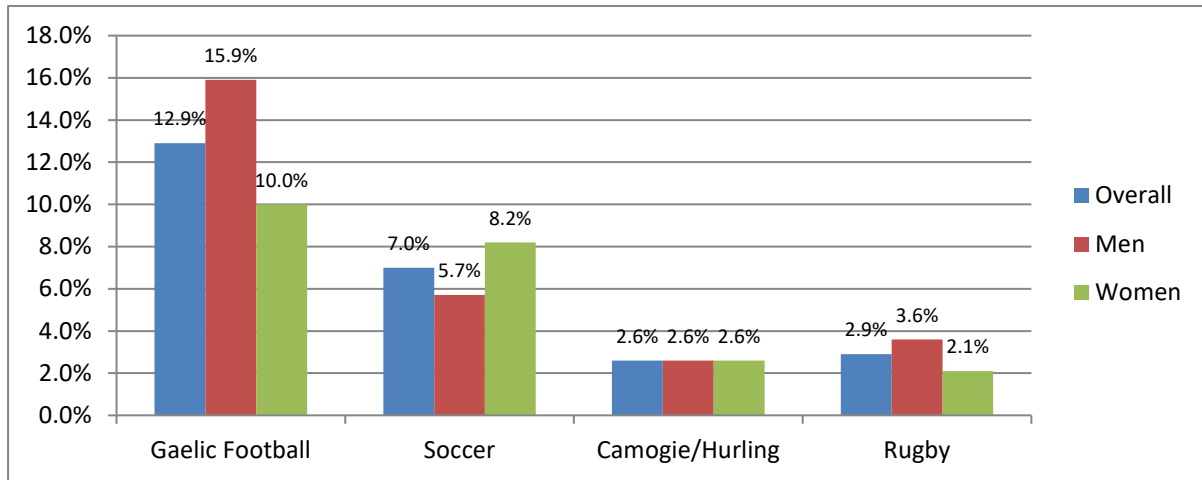
<sup>18</sup> <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/saveselections.asp>

<sup>19</sup> These are the only two sports that have volunteering rates of greater than 2% in Meath

<sup>20</sup> The sample size for men and women is less than 100.

attend than those in urban environments. **Figure 4.6** below shows attendance by sport by gender during 2011 – 2013 in Meath.

**Figure 4.6: Attendance at sporting events by sport by gender<sup>21</sup>**



<sup>21</sup> The sample size for men and women is less than 100.

## 5. Policy Implications

### **Promoting recreational walking to increase physical activity**

Adults aged eighteen years or over should aim to at least 30 minutes of at least moderate activity five times a week i.e. 150 minutes a week. While these guidelines outline the ideal standard of physical activity habits, it is also recognised that any activity is better than none<sup>22</sup>. Therefore a major goal of policy-oriented organisations should be to increase physical activity, at any level, and particularly among those who are currently inactive. Recreational walking provides a suitable supplementary activity for those who are already active in sport and an easy, low impact entry activity for those who are currently inactive. It is easily accessible, has little risk of injury is popular across groups irrespective of age, social or disability status and should be heavily promoted for its benefits.

### **Sports clubs as potential sites of even greater physical activity**

While 2/3 of those who are socially active in sport in Meath are also regularly physically active this means that 1/3 of these social participants do not actively participate in sport. Given the likelihood that much of the social participation is taking place within the context of an organised sports club there may be scope here for such clubs to promote greater active involvement in sport and physical activity among their “social” members who are typically parents. We saw that cycling, hill walking and swimming were activities that participants were interested in trying more of. Clubs might look at opportunities for participants to take part in these sports as well as recreational walking.

### **Promoting Individual Sporting Activities**

The analysis presented here once again demonstrates the sustainability of individual sports and the scale of the decline in team sport participation among both genders across the life course. Given the policy aim to increase participation in sport and physical activity throughout life these patterns provide compelling evidence to support strong investment in individual sporting activities.

**Appendix**

	<b>2011 Census</b>	<b>2011+2013 ISM combined Weighted</b>	<b>2011+2013 ISM combined Un-weighted</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>16 years plus</b>	<b>16 years plus</b>	<b>16 years plus</b>
Male	49.4%	49.3%	44.3%
Female	50.6%	50.7%	55.7%
<b>Age</b>			
16-19	6.4%	6.5%	5.8%
20-24	7.3%	7.3%	6.5%
25-34	21.6%	21.4%	12.0%
35-44	23.4%	23.4%	31.7%
45-54	17.0%	17.0%	16.8%
55-64	12.2%	12.2%	15.7%
65+	12.1%	12.1%	11.6%
<b>Working Status (Census 2011 includes those under 16)</b>			
Employee/Self Employed	54.6%	54.1%	56.1%
Unemployed	11.1%	10.9%	6.8%
Retired	10.2%	10.9%	12.4%
Homemaker	10.4%	10.5%	12.6%
Student	10.1%	9.9%	9.2%
Unemployed- illness/disabled	3.6%	3.6%	2.9%