

# **Sport and Physical Activity among those aged over 16 in South Dublin**

**By**

**Peter Smyth and Elizabeth Doyle**

**Sport Ireland**

**June 2016**

## Executive Summary

### Active Participation in Sport

- 48.1% of adults took part in sport or exercise, this is the equivalent of 96,500 adults aged 16 years and older taking part in regular physical activity in the South Dublin.
- More than four times as many participants take part in individual activities as team sports; individual sports account for 7 of the 8 most popular adult sports overall.
- Age, work status, club membership and playing sport while at school were found to be significant influences on adult participation in sport.
- Exercise / gym activities are the most popular activity overall and among men and women.
- Most sporting participants take part often enough, for long enough and at a sufficient intensity to benefit their health.
- The majority of sport and exercise participants take part on their own.

### Broader Physical Activity

- Almost two in every three adults took part in recreational walking within the past seven days with women more likely to walk than men
- On average participants take four walks a week with the average walk lasting forty three minutes.
- Active commuting is very popular in the county with 50.4% walking for transport and 13.7% cycling for transport at least once a week. This is associated with the highly urban nature of the county
- Primarily due to the high levels of active commuting, sedentarism levels are relatively low in the county.

### Social Participation

- 36% belong to a sports club, 11.6% volunteer for sport and 17.8% attended a sporting event as a spectator.
- While individual activities dominate active participation, team sports are more popular among volunteers and spectators. Club members are more likely to take part in individual sports.
- Gym/exercise is the most popular sport among club members while soccer is more popular among volunteers and spectators.

### Sport and Health

- 31.1% of adults aged over 16 are meeting the physical activity guidelines while 8.6% are sedentary.
- Two-thirds of adults would like to take part in more sport, particularly individual activities such as swimming, cycling, walking and running. Non-members of clubs are particularly likely to be interested in doing more sport.
- Time is the most common barrier to taking part in more sport and physical activity.

# 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 South Dublin. The analysis aims to be of interest and assistance to those involved in the promotion of sport in the county particularly the Local Authority, LSP, 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 1,116 respondents to try to reduce the error margin within the results. Based on this overall sample size the error margin around key high level results is about 2.9%. So if we report a participation rate of 48.1% in the report we would expect that the true participation rate for the county lies somewhere between 48.1% - 2.9% and 48.1% + 2.9% i.e. between 45.2% and 51.0%<sup>5</sup>. Where the sample has been divided into further sub-samples by gender or age, the error margin is increased.

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.

---

<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.

Therefore it was necessary to re-weight the data for this report so that the sample more closely represented South Dublin's current demographic profile. Gender and 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 the county 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 included over a number of months and therefore only include a sub-sample of the annual survey respondents. For this reason it is not always possible to carry out a meaningful analysis beyond the national situation. During 2011 and 2013 flexible modules were included on 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. In the main such national figures are composite averages from 2011 and 2013. Exceptions to this approach are noted.

In order to get a deeper understanding of the key factors influencing active and social participation behaviours a number of multivariate analyses using logistic regression were run. A logistic regression tries to predict the probability that an observation falls into one or other of two possible categories of a variable based on one or more independent variables. For example we can use it to assess whether or not an individual is likely to participate in sport based on their gender, age, socio-economic status, marital status, parental status, etc. and we can assess which of these variables is influential in this regard.

### **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, yoga, etc.), as well as field games (e.g. soccer, Gaelic football). The ISM also records recreational walking, walking and cycling for transport, allowing sport to be set in the context of more general physical activity.

### **Limitations**

All statistical surveys are approximate. In the case of the ISM, measurement error may be caused by people recalling activity inaccurately, respondents wishing to paint themselves in a good light (social desirability bias), failure to survey hard-to-reach groups, mistakes made by interviewers, and so on. For example foreign nationals are underrepresented in the overall ISM and in the sample. As previous research has suggested that their participation rates are lower than those of 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.

---

<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.”

## 2. RESULTS

### 2.1 Overall Physical Activity

**Table 1** compares physical activity participation in South Dublin 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> through playing sport and recreational walking ONLY while those who are “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 48.1% participating in sport is equivalent to approximately 96,500 adults aged 16 and over taking part in regular sporting activity in South Dublin.

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

	South Dublin	National
Sports Participation	48.1%	46.0%
Recreational Walking	65.5%	64.3%
Walking for Transport	50.4%	40.0%
Cycling for Transport	13.7%	10.1%
Highly Active	31.1%	30.3%
Sedentary	8.6%	13.2%

Levels of participation in sport and recreational walking are similar in South Dublin to nationally. As a result, the proportion of highly active adults in the county is also similar to the national figure. On the other hand, levels of active commuting are much higher in South Dublin with the results that residents of the county are less sedentary than their national counterparts. A relatively straightforward explanation for this is the highly urbanised nature of the county compared to the rest of the country. Well over 80% of ISM respondents from South Dublin reported living in an urban location (i.e. either a city or town) compared to 50% nationally. Walking and particularly cycling for transport tend to more associated with urban than rural residents.

---

<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.

In **Table 2** we look at these behaviours by gender. Some notable differences are apparent. Compared to their national counterparts, men in South Dublin are more likely to be active commuters and highly active; they are also less likely to be sedentary. Women in the county are more likely to walk for transport and less likely to be sedentary than their national counterparts. The gender gap in sports participation is lower in South Dublin than nationally whereas it is larger in the county in respect of cycling for transport and being highly active. We will look at each of these issues in further detail below.

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

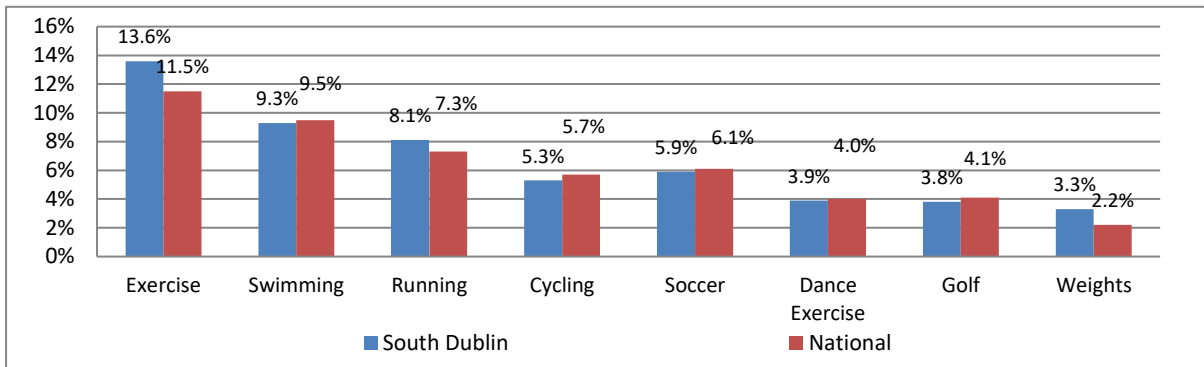
	South Dublin		National	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sports Participation	51.7%	44.8%	51.5%	40.9%
Recreational Walking	60.0%	70.6%	58.0%	70.3%
Walking for Transport	48.7%	52.1%	39.1%	40.9%
Cycling for Transport	20.8%	7.2%	14.6%	5.7%
Highly Active	34.3%	28.2%	29.9%	30.7%
Sedentary	9.2%	8.0%	13.3%	13.0%

## 2.2 Most Popular Sporting Activities

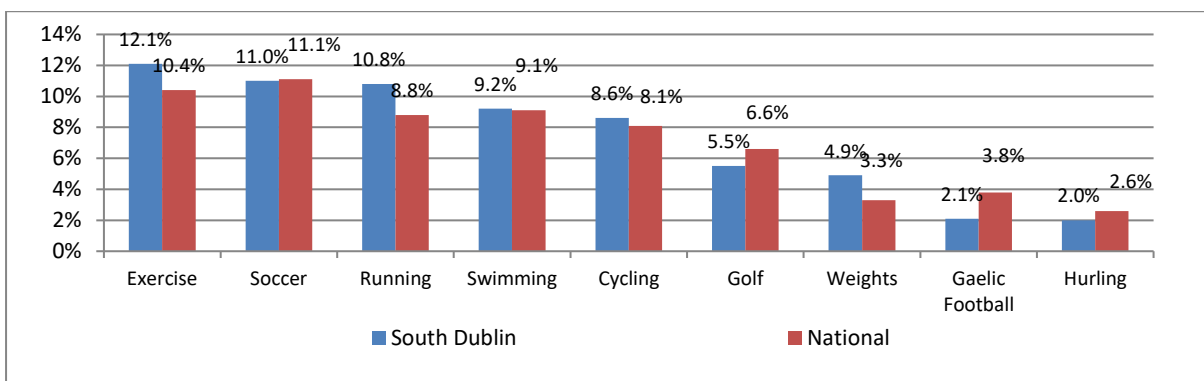
**Figures 2.1 and 2.2a and b** show the most popular sports in South Dublin overall and by gender. Only sports with participation levels of 2% or greater in South Dublin in the three categories are shown. Individual sports dominate, accounting for seven of the eight most popular activities. This is reflected at a combined level where more than four times as many participants take part in individual sports compared to team sports (42.0% and 9.6% respectively). While similar proportions of men and women participate in individual activities, over four times as many men take part in team sports as women (15.9% and 3.8% respectively).

Looking at overall participation, there is little difference in the preferred sports between South Dublin and nationally. However, team sports such as Gaelic games and rugby are noticeably absent from the list of top participant sports in the county. Reported participation rates in rugby are particularly low in the county. Exercise is the most popular sport among men and women in the county. While three team sports (soccer, Gaelic football and hurling) feature among the most popular sports for men in South Dublin no team sports feature in the top list for women.

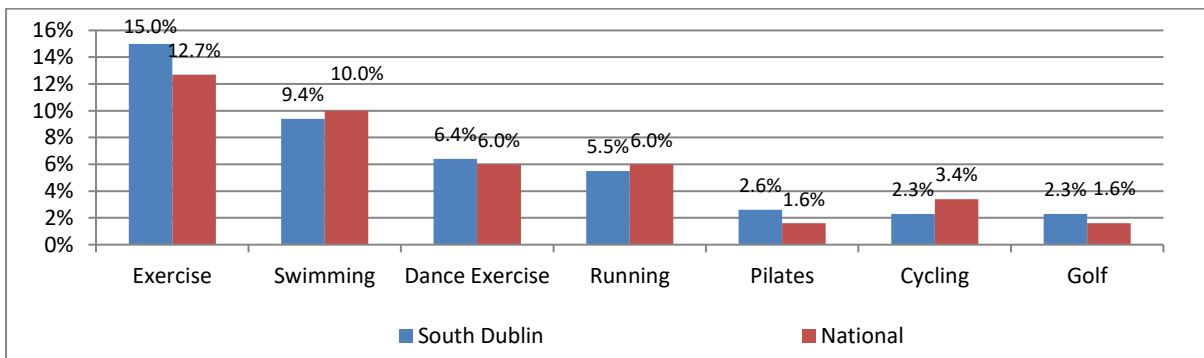
**Figure 2.1: Top Participation Sports in the South Dublin - Overall<sup>9</sup>**



**Figure 2.2a: Top Participation Sports in South Dublin – Men<sup>10</sup>**



**Figure 2.2b: Top Participation Sports in South Dublin and nationally - among women<sup>11</sup>**



<sup>9</sup> Overall, sports with participation rates of 1-2% are Gaelic football, hurling / camogie, martial arts and pilates.

<sup>10</sup> Among men, sports with participation rates of 1-2% are dancing, martial arts, boxing and tennis.

<sup>11</sup> Among women, sports with participation rates of 1-2% are camogie, martial arts, soccer, weightlifting, badminton, hockey and yoga.



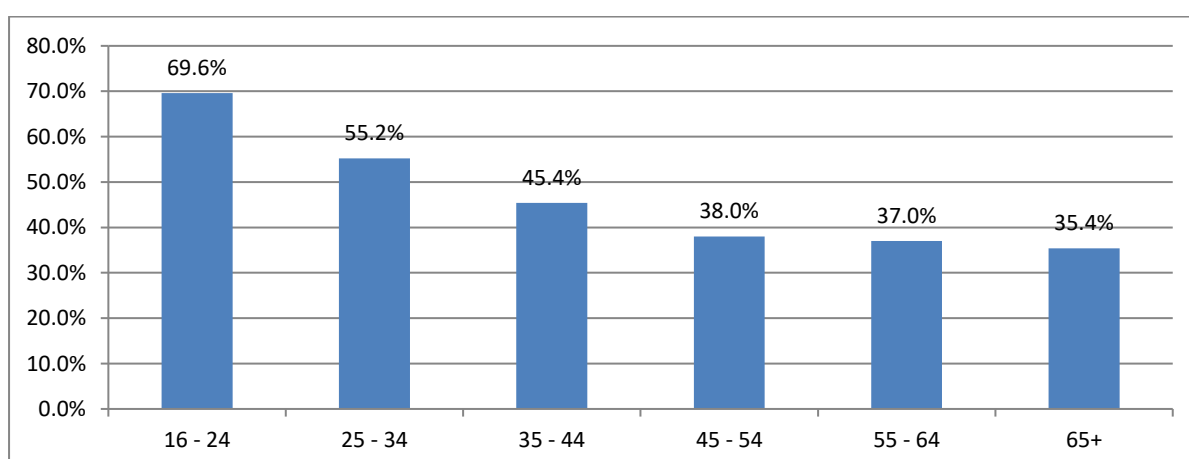
## 2.3 What Influences Adult Participation in Sport in South Dublin?

In order to look at the key influences on adult participation in South Dublin we have used a statistical technique known as logistic regression which seeks to predict the likelihood of an individual being in a particular category (in this case a sports participant) dependent on having certain characteristics. The usefulness of this technique is that it allows us to look at the influence of a particular characteristic while controlling for all others in the regression model. For the purpose of this analysis the characteristics included in the regression model were age, gender, work status, club membership, volunteering, level of educational attainment, disability status, parental status, marital status, car ownership, living location (urban or rural), whether the respondent played sport at school and whether the respondent's parents played sport while the respondent was at school. We found that age, work status, club membership and whether the respondent had played sport while at school were significant predictors of the likelihood of being a participant. We look at each of these briefly below.

### Age

Participation declines significantly with age can be seen from **Figure 2.3**. Participation rates among the youngest age group (16 – 24 year olds) were almost double those of respondents aged 45 and over. These differences held up in the regression model. Not surprisingly the differences in participation by age are more significant in the case of team sports where the rate of drop out is very pronounced through each successive age group.

**Figure 2.3: Participation in sport by adults aged 16+ in South Dublin**

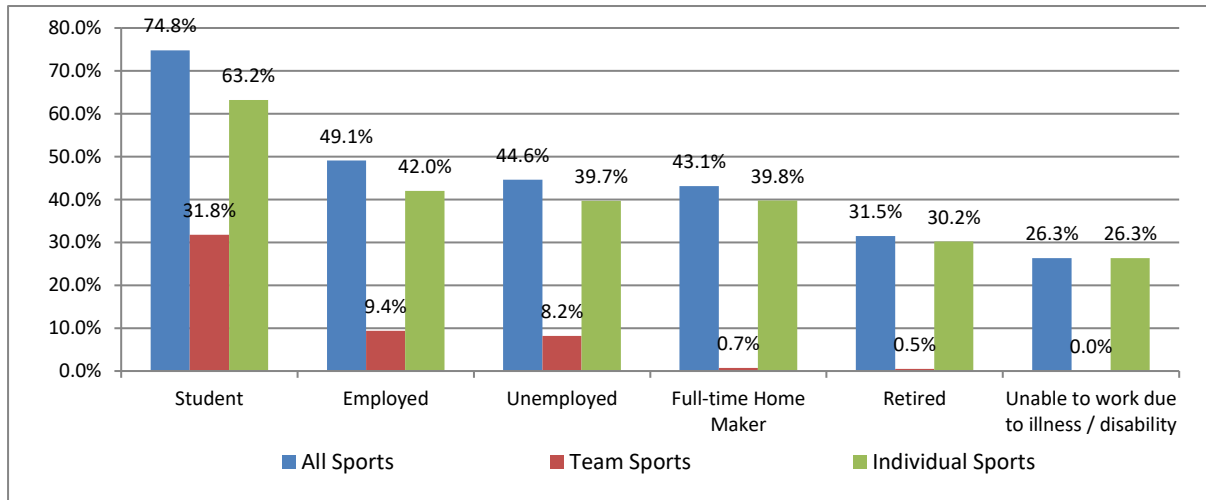


### Work Status

The ISM asks respondents a question about their current employment status with possible categories including employee, self-employed, unemployed / looking for work, full-time home maker, retired,

student and unable to work due to illness / disability. In **Figure 2.4** we look at the participation rates among each of these groups.

**Figure 2.4: Participation in sport among adults aged 16+ in South Dublin by work status<sup>12</sup>**



Significantly more students participate in team and individual sports than any other group. The gap between them and the next most active group (employees) in both types of sport exceeds 20%. **For 3 groups, namely home makers, retired individuals and those who are unable to work due to an illness / disability, participation in team sports is effectively non-existent suggesting that individual sports represent the best opportunity for any efforts to increase participation rates among these groups.** While students are well represented among the younger age groups which have the highest participation rates it should be noted that both effects i.e. being in the younger age group and being a student, were found to be significant in the logistic regression model, independent of one another.

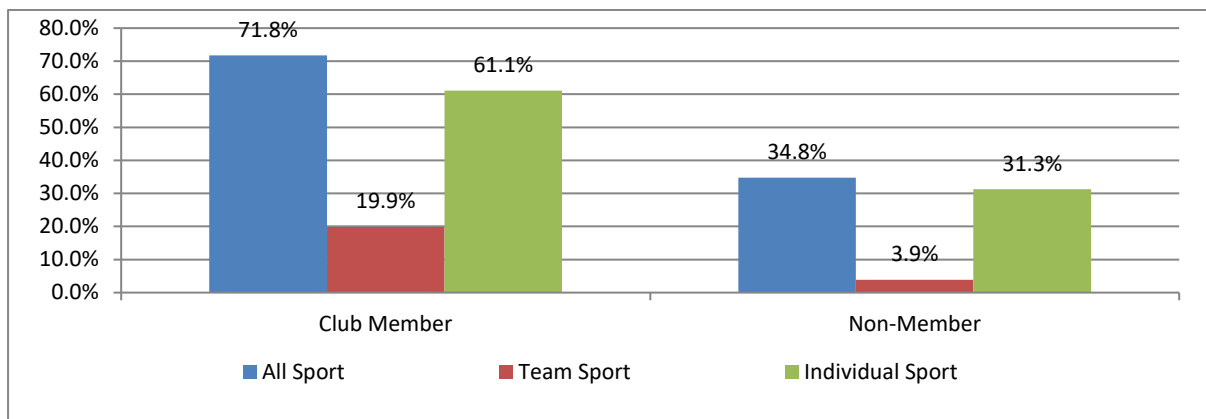
### Club Membership

While it might seem self-evident to say so, being a member of sports club has a significant bearing on whether or not an individual plays sport regularly as we can see in **Figure 2.5**. In the regression model club members were over 4 times more likely to play sport than non-members. **Yet given what we will see later on in the report around the context of participation (most of which is informal participation either solo or with family and friends) the finding that club membership is such an important influence on participation is important in providing encouragement to policy makers and sports clubs to invest greater efforts in trying to attract and retain members.**

<sup>12</sup> Sample sizes were less than 100 in the case of a number of these groups.



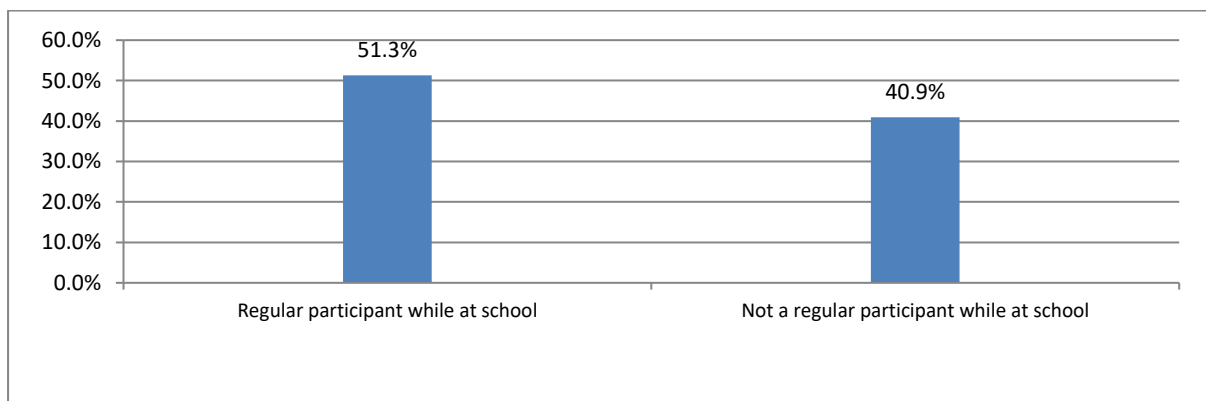
**Figure 2.5: Participation in team and individual sport in South Dublin by club membership status**



### Playing Sport at School

The ISM asks respondents whether they had played “regular sport at school” outside of PE lessons. As such the question is likely to give a good indication of emerging preference for sports participation during the formative years. Almost 70% indicated that they had played regular sport with men being more likely to have played than women (78% vs. 61%) but no notable generational differences being reported. In **Figure 2.6** we compare current participation rates of those who did / did not play sport regularly while at school.

**Figure 2.6: Participation by whether or not respondent played sport regularly while at school**



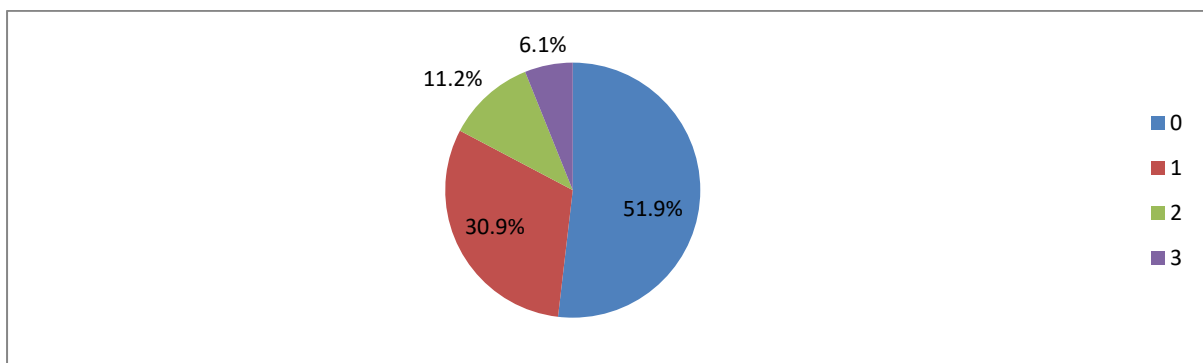
It might be asked why gender does not feature as an important factor in the above analysis given that we saw a 7% difference in participation rates between men and women in Table 2. This gender gap, while large, is still significantly less than nationally. Furthermore some of the difference associated with gender may be masked by the effects of club membership and whether or not the respondent played sport at school. In both of these cases women were much less likely to take part than men. It is suggested that the combination of these factors has resulted in gender being non-significant in the

regression model. Nonetheless, given that women are far less likely to be club members than men it is recommended that any efforts to increase club membership should include women as a priority.

## 2.5 FITT Analysis

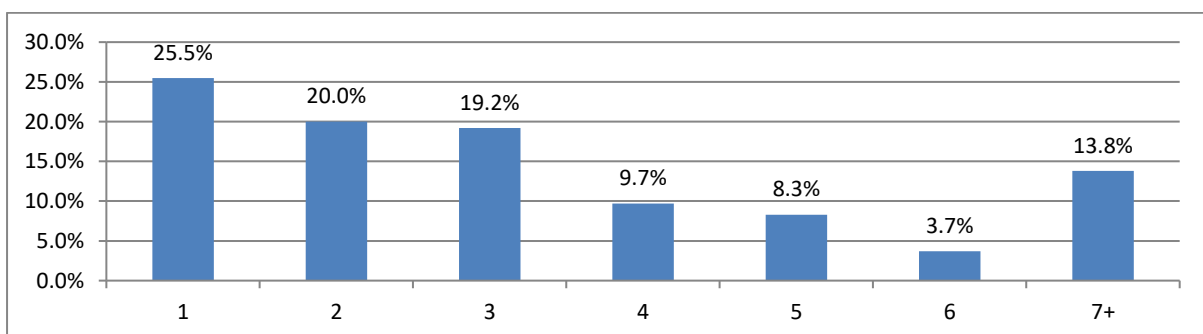
The ISM asks respondents about how often they play sport, for how long, at what intensity and in what context. This allows an analysis of F (Frequency), I (Intensity), T (Time) and T (Type) to be undertaken. Before looking at this aspect of participation we look at the distribution of participants by number of sports played in **Figure 2.7**. Almost 17% of adults in South Dublin played two or more sports in the previous 7 days with 6.1% playing more than 3 sports. Those aged 16 – 34, men and members of clubs play more sports than their comparator groups.

**Figure 2.7: Proportion playing none, one, two and three sports in the South Dublin**



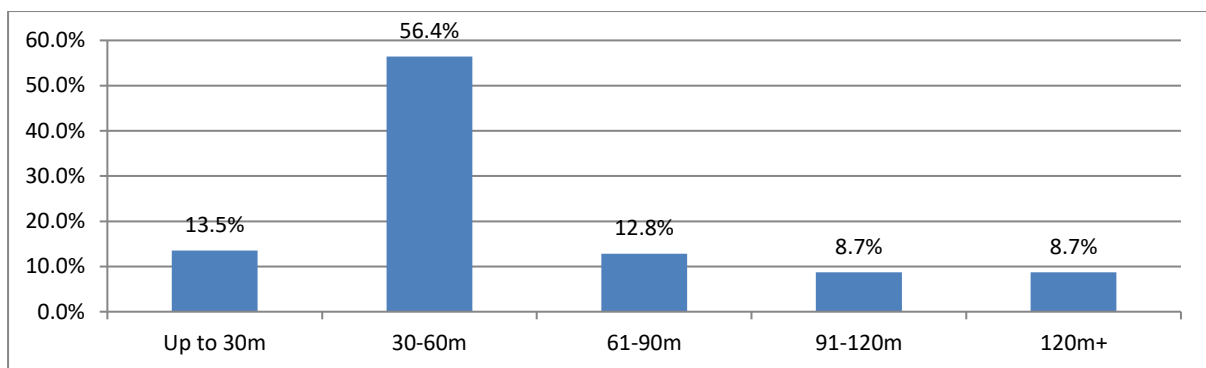
In **Figures 2.8 – 2.11** we look at the FITT of participation. **Figure 2.8** shows that nearly 75% of all sports participants took part more than once in the previous week with over one third taking part at least every other day. On average participants took part in 3.5 sessions per week with men taking part more often than women (4 vs. 2.9 sessions respectively) and club members taking part more often than non-members (4 vs. 2.8 respectively).

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



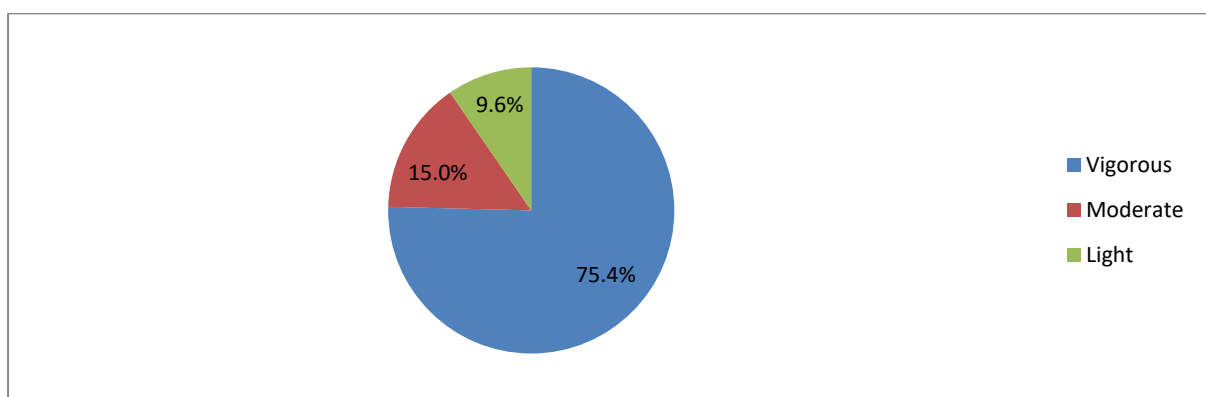
**Figure 2.9** shows that most sessions last 30 – 60 minutes reflecting the growing popularity of individual activities such as running, swimming and exercise which can offer flexible participation opportunities. The average session lasts 68 minutes with men, those aged 55+, club members, and those who played sport at school participating in longer sessions. In the case of men and older groups this may be due to their participation in team sports and golf respectively where sessions typically last longer. The average duration of a sporting session exceeds 60 minutes for all groups.

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



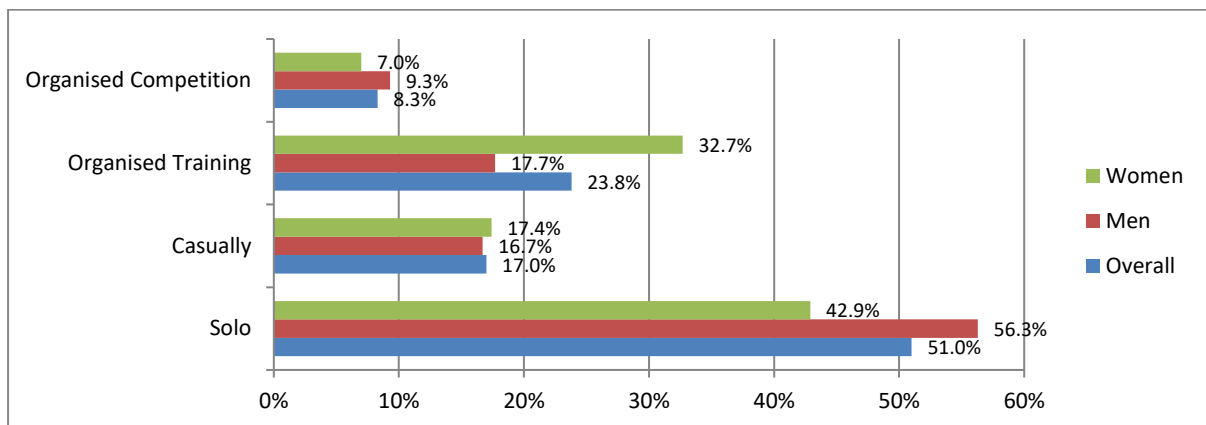
As shown in **Figure 2.10** most participants reported that a typical sporting session involved significant effort on their part with over 90% being out of breath or sweating as a result of the session. Differences were noted by gender, club membership and marital status. Men were more likely to play at a vigorous intensity (78% vs. 72%); single people were much more likely to participate at a vigorous intensity than married individuals (84% vs. 69% respectively) while non-club members were more likely to participate at the higher intensity than club members. Among all groups approximately nine in ten participate at a moderate intensity or greater with resulting benefits to their health.

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



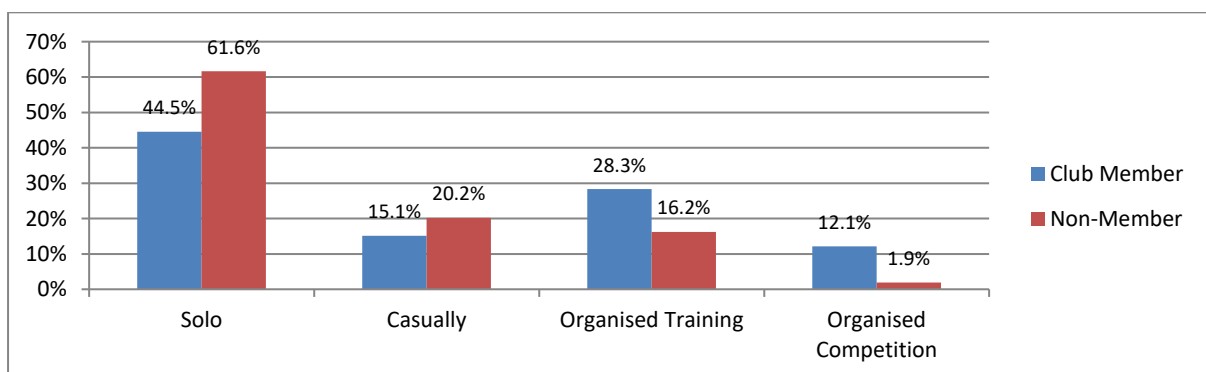
**Figure 2.11** shows that just less than one in three adult sporting sessions took place in an organised context with the majority of these involving training sessions and classes rather than competition. So, most adult sport (two in every three sessions) in the county took place in an informal context (either solo or casually with family and friends). This reflects the growth of sports such as running, swimming, exercise, and cycling in recent years. Significant differences exist between the genders in terms of the context of their participation with men being much more likely to participate alone than women while the reverse is the case in respect of organised training sessions.

**Figure 2.11: Context of sporting sessions in South Dublin – overall and by gender**



Apart from gender, club membership is also a strong influence on the context for participation in the county as can be seen in **Figure 2.12**. It is noteworthy that informal participation dominates for both members and non-members with 60% and 82% respectively of sporting sessions occurring in this context. Solo participation is the preferred choice for both groups, significantly so in the case of non-members for whom over 60% of sporting sessions are solo. Club members are much more likely to participate in an organised context than non-members.

**Figure 2.12: Context of sporting sessions in South Dublin by club membership status**



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 in South Dublin, as elsewhere, 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 context of participation are also noteworthy as regards policy that aims to increase participation. **The majority of sporting activity is occurring in an informal context even among sports club members 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 mainly engage.**

As regards the social benefits of sport, the fact that over half of all sporting activity is undertaken by people on their own is striking. Previous research has also identified that the primary reason for non-participation in sport is lack of time (Fahey et al., 2004; CSO, 2007). The solo activities 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.

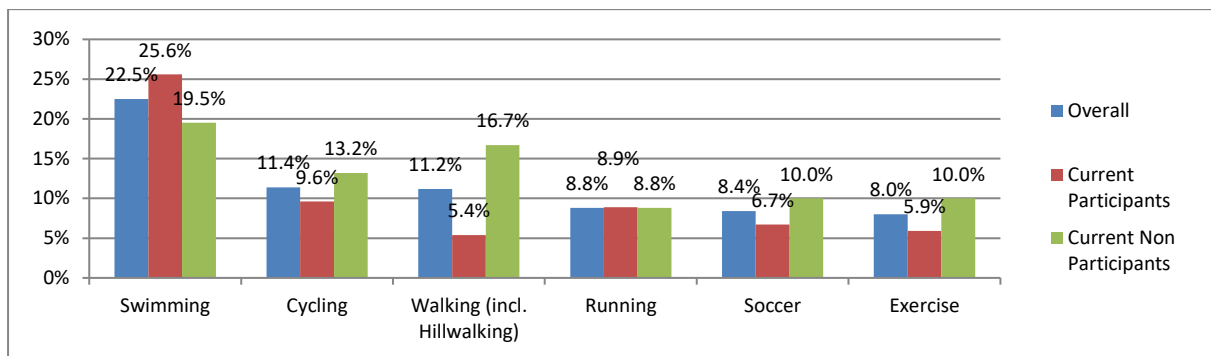
## **2.6 Interest in doing more sports**

In 2011 ISM respondents were asked whether or not they were interested in doing more sport or exercise and 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 two in three adults (66.3%) are interested in increasing their sporting activity with men and women equally likely to be of this view. Those aged up to the mid 40s are significantly more likely to say they would like to play more sport than older groups. Non-members of sports clubs are also more likely to express this view.**



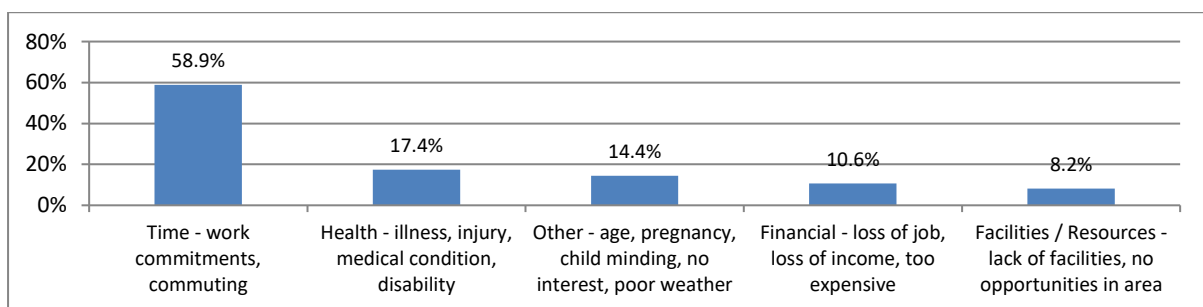
**Figure 2.13** displays the preferred sports in South Dublin which are broadly similar to those reported nationally. These preferred sports also mirror relatively closely the current most popular sporting activities. Participants and non-participants alike expressed similar levels of interest in participating more although some differences were noted in the specific sports preferred by the two groups as seen below. Of particular note is the strong preference for walking among current non-participants.

**Figure 2.13 Interest in doing more sport in South Dublin – by sport and participation status (Base: All interested in doing more sport)**



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. Neither cost nor lack of facilities features particularly strongly as barriers to increasing participation echoing previous research in this regard (Fahey et al. 2004<sup>13</sup>; Central Statistics Office 2007<sup>14</sup>). Among the “other” category in **Figure 2.14**, child minding responsibilities feature prominently. The analysis suggests that the major factors limiting people’s ability to participate in (more) sport generally 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 increasing participation (Base: Respondents not interested in increasing their participation)**



<sup>13</sup> [http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Research/Sports\\_Participation\\_Health\\_Among\\_Adults\\_2004\\_/Sports\\_Participation\\_Health.pdf](http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Research/Sports_Participation_Health_Among_Adults_2004_/Sports_Participation_Health.pdf)  
<sup>14</sup> <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/labourmarket/current/qnhssports.pdf>

### 3. BROADER PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

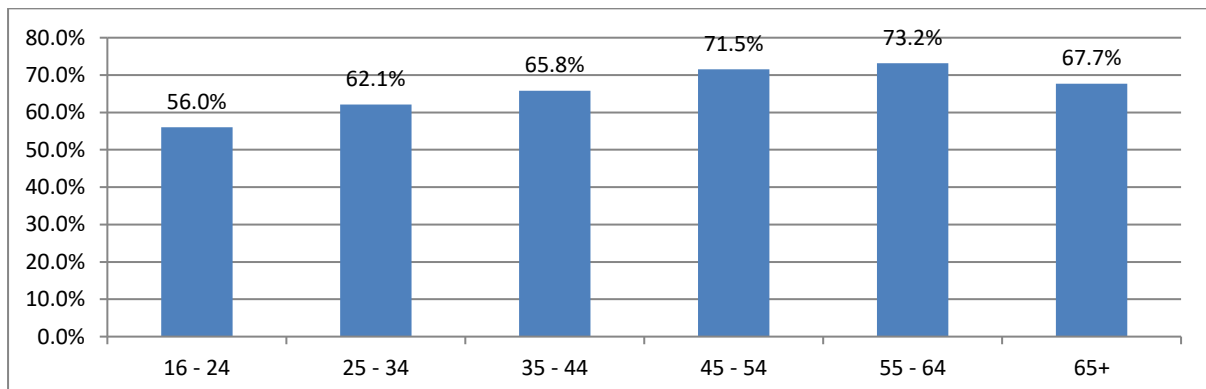
As well as participation in sport, the ISM also looks at participation in broader physical activity including recreational walking, and walking and cycling for transport. This section looks at these issues and the extent to which respondents meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines through participation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

#### 3.1 Recreational Walking

Recreational walking is an important source of physical activity for most adults. It can be particularly beneficial in providing health and other benefits to older age groups who do not play other sports. 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 being active, namely that it is easier to injure yourself.<sup>15</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 is the most popular sporting activity in South Dublin with almost 66% of adults walking at least once in the previous 7 days. It is significantly more popular with women (70.6%) than men (60%) and is highly popular across all age groups as can be seen in **Figure 3.1** below.

**Figure 3.1: Recreational walking in South Dublin by age group**



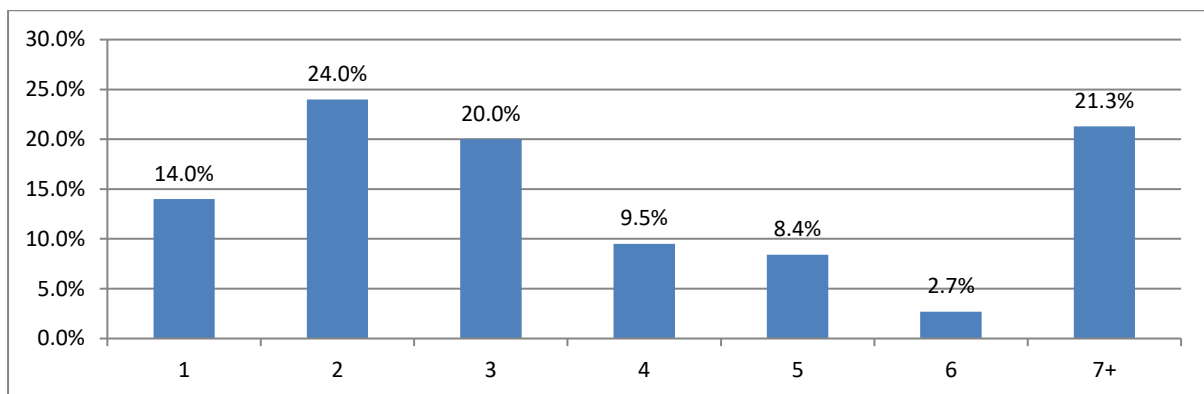
In addition to gender, other factors influencing participation in recreational walking were whether or not an individual had an illness or disability, marital status, employment status and whether or not they volunteered for sport. Individuals with an illness or disability were less likely to take recreational

<sup>15</sup> Physical Activity and Sport: Participation and Attitudes of Older People in Ireland, Ipsos MORI September 2009

walks than those without disabilities. However walking was still very popular among people with disabilities with 63% participating. Unemployed individuals were more likely to walk for recreation than students and the self-employed while married people were more likely to take a recreational walk than single people. Finally those who volunteered for sport were more likely to walk for recreation than those who didn't. Overall, however, the effect of these characteristics on recreational walking was not nearly as strong as the factors affecting participation in other sporting activities described earlier.

On average, participants take just over four walks a week with no difference between men and women in this regard. Over one fifth of walkers do so every day as seen in **Figure 3.2** below. The average walk lasts forty three minutes and the majority of walkers maintain a fairly brisk or fast pace<sup>16</sup>. Men and women are fairly similar in both regards although men walk for slightly longer while women walk slightly more quickly. **Given the nature of the activity it is perhaps not surprising that recreational walking has a broader appeal than other sports as it is an affordable, relatively easy form of exercise. It appeals to every age group and participants of various socioeconomic groups and abilities.**

**Figure 3.2: Recreational walking in South Dublin by number of walks in the previous 7 days (Base: All those who walked for recreation)**

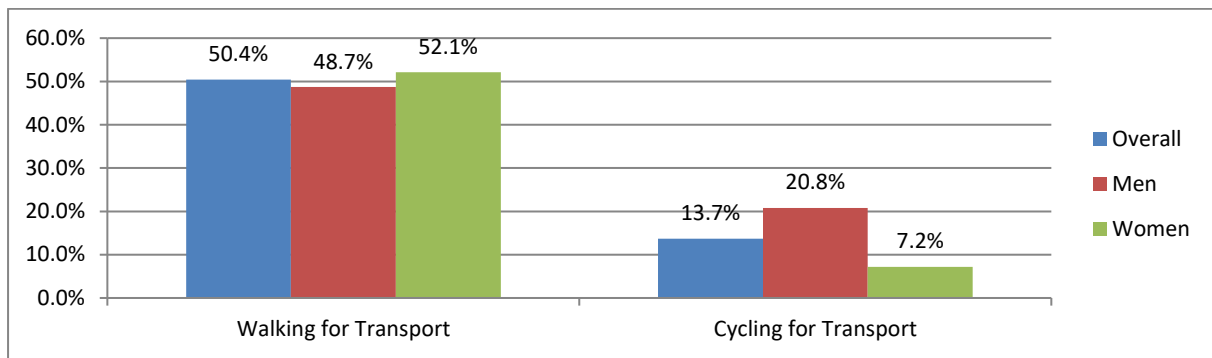


### 3.2 Walking and Cycling for Transport

The ISM asks respondents if they have engaged in any walking or cycling for transport in the previous 7 days. We have already seen in Table 1 above that both forms of activity are significantly more popular in South Dublin than nationally probably due to the highly urbanised nature of the county. While walking for transport is equally appealing to men and women, men are much more likely to cycle for transport – see **Figure 3.3** overleaf.

<sup>16</sup> Over 1 in 10 walkers report walking for recreation at a fast pace while over 4 in 10 report walking fairly briskly

**Figure 3.3: Walking and cycling for transport in South Dublin by gender and overall**



### 3.3 Overall Activity Levels

The ISM allows an approximate<sup>17</sup> analysis of adult activity levels against the National Physical Activity Guidelines based on a four-category classification system shown in **Figure 3.4** below. The system is bookended by “sedentary” and “highly active” categories which are the main focus of this section.

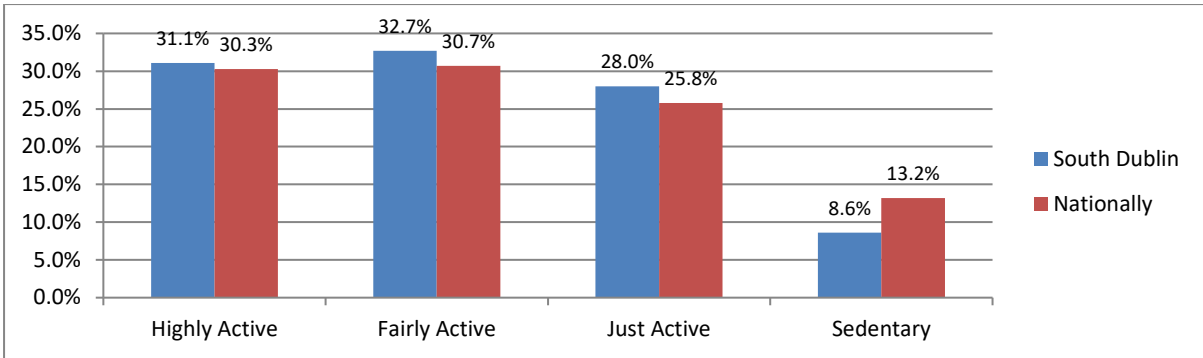
**Figure 3.4: Activity Spectrum Categories and Definitions**

<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.

Levels of sedentarism are significantly lower in South Dublin than nationally as seen in **Figure 3.4** below. This is primarily a result of the high rates of walking and cycling for transport in the county.

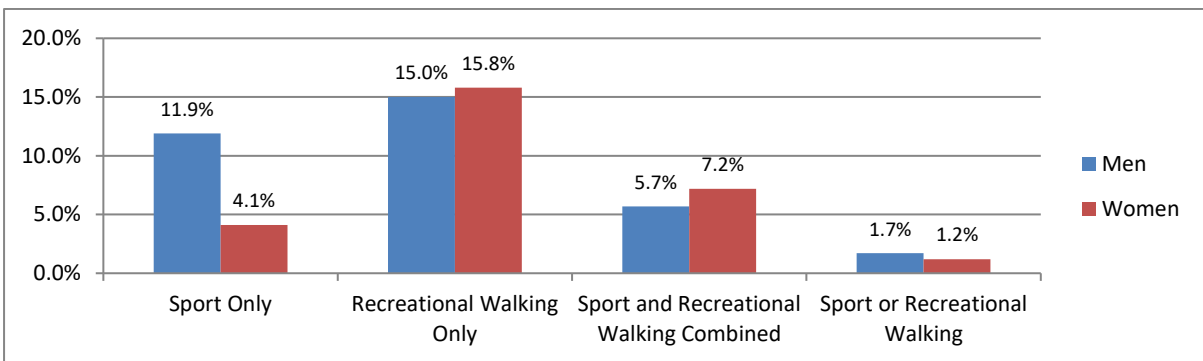
**Figure 3.4 Population by activity category in South Dublin and Nationally**

<sup>17</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.



We have seen in Table 2 earlier that women are less likely to be highly active than men in South Dublin (28.2% vs. 34.3% respectively). They are also less likely to be highly active than their national counterparts. The origins of these findings are not primarily in their participation rates in recreational walking or sport which are relatively high but in the frequency, intensity and duration of their participation in sport. In **Figure 3.5** below we show the extent to which men and women meet the Guidelines through the various combinations of sport and recreational walking available to them.

**Figure 3.5 Meeting the National Physical Activity Guidelines by Activity Type by Gender**



In **Figure 3.5** those individuals who met the Guidelines<sup>18</sup> through sport only were required to have taken part in at least 5 sessions of sport of moderate or greater intensity for at least 30 minutes each in the previous 7 days; importantly they did not achieve that threshold with their recreational walking activity. For those who met the Guidelines through recreational walking only the opposite was the case. Those who met the Guidelines through sport and recreational walking combined achieved the necessary threshold through a combination of sport and walking sessions. Finally, those who met the Guidelines through sport or recreational walking took part in at least 5 sessions of sport and at least 5 sessions of recreational walking of the necessary intensity and duration.

<sup>18</sup> In the context of this report meeting the Guidelines is synonymous with being “highly active”

Given these definitions it is clear that the overall difference in men and women meeting the Guidelines has its origins in the sport only category in the above figure. About one quarter of men who play sport met the Guidelines solely through their participation in sport (whether or not they walked for recreation) while for women the corresponding figure was less than one in ten. **Thus, while the gap in overall sports participation rates between men and women in South Dublin is not as large as nationally, there is perhaps a need to promote and disseminate to current female participants the benefits of increasing the frequency, intensity and duration of their participation in order to fully benefit their health.**

From a policy perspective it is even more important to understand the factors associated with sedentarism<sup>19</sup> given that sedentary individuals stand to gain the greatest health benefits from taking part in physical activity. Using a multivariate statistical model we found that work status, club membership and disability status were the most significant factors determining whether or not an individual was likely to be sedentary in South Dublin.

**Individuals who are not members of a sports club are over twice as likely to be sedentary as club members in South Dublin primarily due to their lower participation in sport which we have already seen. This suggests that encouraging membership of sports clubs is likely to prove beneficial for policy makers wishing to reduce the numbers of those who are sedentary.**

There are considerable variations in levels of sedentarism between individuals by work status. The unemployed (2.8%), students (3.9%) and home makers (4.7%) are the groups which are least likely to be sedentary while relatively high levels of sedentarism occur among those with an illness / disability<sup>20</sup> which prevents them from working (19.4%), retired individuals (17.4%) and to a lesser extent the self-employed (12.7%) These differences can be better understood by looking at the individual behaviours<sup>21</sup> for each group as we do in **Figure 3.6** below.

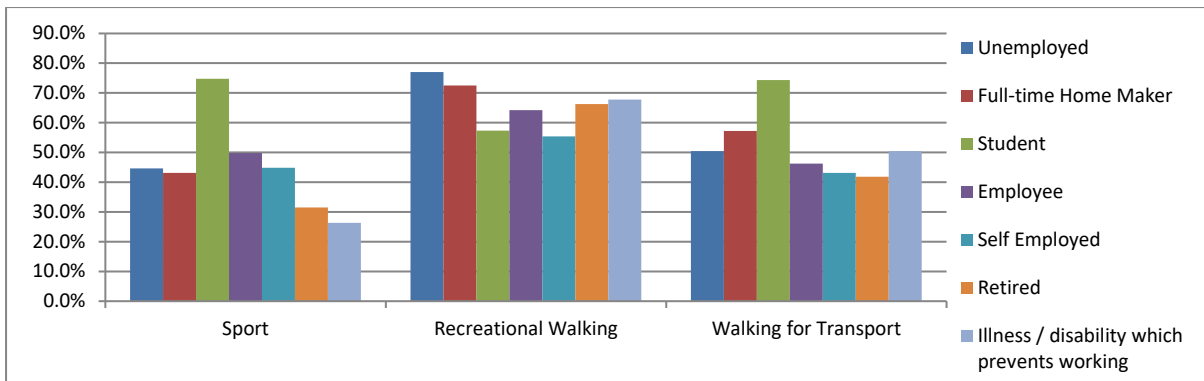
**Figure 3.6: Participation in all forms of physical activity in South Dublin by work status**

---

<sup>19</sup> In the context of the ISM sedentary means not walking for recreation or playing sport, or walking or cycling for transport

<sup>20</sup> Sample sizes for those with an illness / disability which prevented them from working and the self-employed were less than 100

<sup>21</sup> For simplicity, cycling for transport has been excluded from this figure as it makes little difference to whether or not an individual is classified as sedentary. 8.6% of the sample is sedentary if we include cycling for transport while 8.8% is sedentary excluding cycling for transport



The unemployed and full-time home makers are highly likely to walk for recreation in South Dublin with participation rates of over 70% for both groups. This helps to explain their lower levels of sedentarism. For students high participation rates in sport and walking for transport are the primary reasons for their low levels of sedentarism. On the other hand the low participation rates in sport appear to be the main factor behind the high sedentarism rates among the retired and individuals with a disability which prevents their participation in the work force. **As it is considered unlikely that large numbers of those who are retired or who have a disability which prevents their working could easily be encouraged to play sport it seems that walking, either for recreation or for transport, represent the best opportunities to encourage those who are most sedentary to engage in some activity. Local policy makers should seek to promote opportunities for these groups in this regard.**

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. 18.3% of respondents in South Dublin answered yes to the first question with 12.6% also answering yes to the second question. These figures are in line with the national averages<sup>22</sup>. Individuals who reported having a disability were more than twice as likely to be sedentary than those not so reporting primarily due to their lower levels of participation in sport. That said, it may be the case that walking for recreation or transport again represents the best opportunity for reducing levels of sedentarism among this group.

<sup>22</sup> Nationally the ISM reported that 18.3% had an illness/disability with 13.7% of the population indicating that this prevented participation.

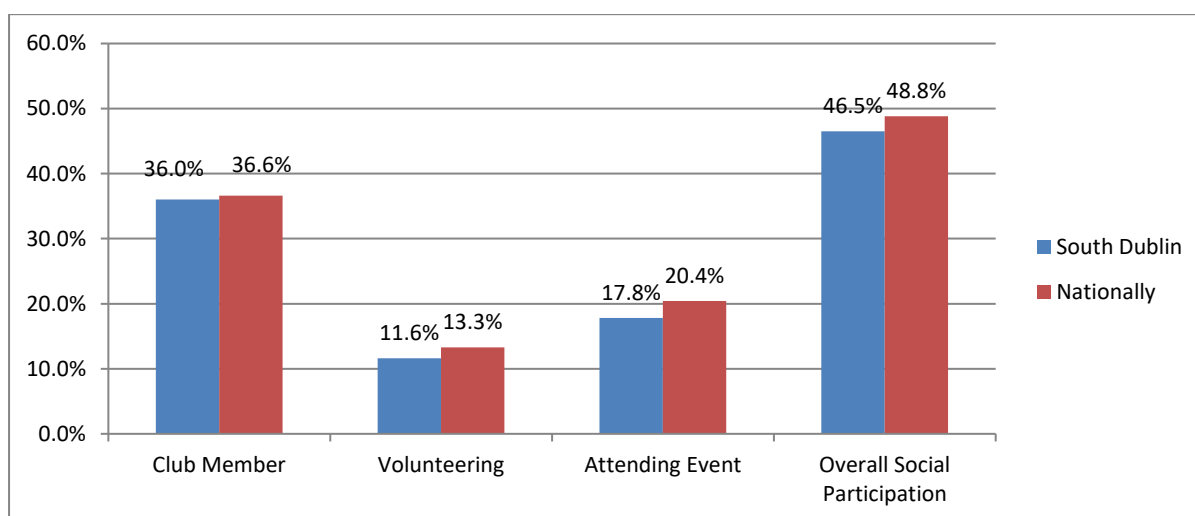
## 4. SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

### 4.1 Overall

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

Before looking at each of the different forms of social participation in turn we compare the overall levels of social participation in the region with the national situation in **Figure 4.1** below. Social participation is broadly in line with the national picture except that attendance levels at sporting events are lower in the county than nationally. **Overall, almost 47% of all respondents reported some form of regular social participation in sport underscoring its importance in contributing to social capital in the county.**

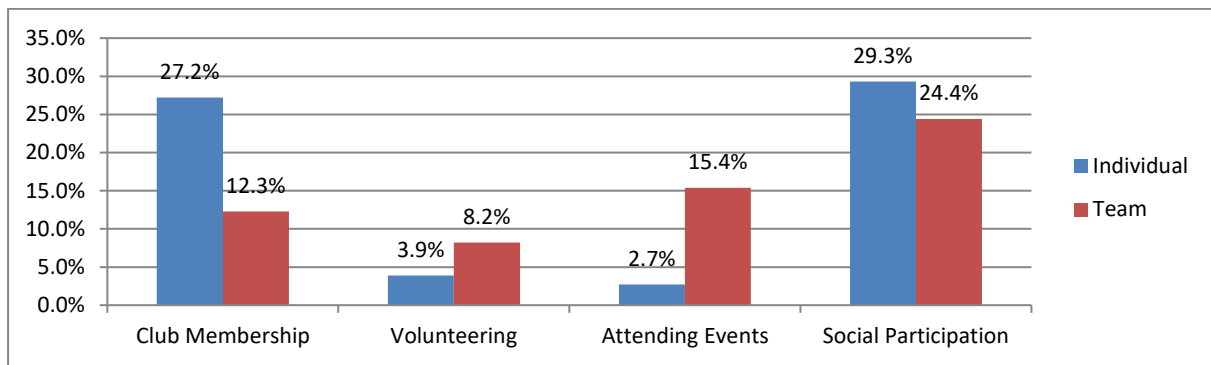
**Figure 4.1: Levels of Social Participation in South Dublin and nationally**



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. Volunteering and even more particularly attendance at sporting events are strongly associated with team sports, most of which is connected with children's participation. Club membership is dominated by individual sports.



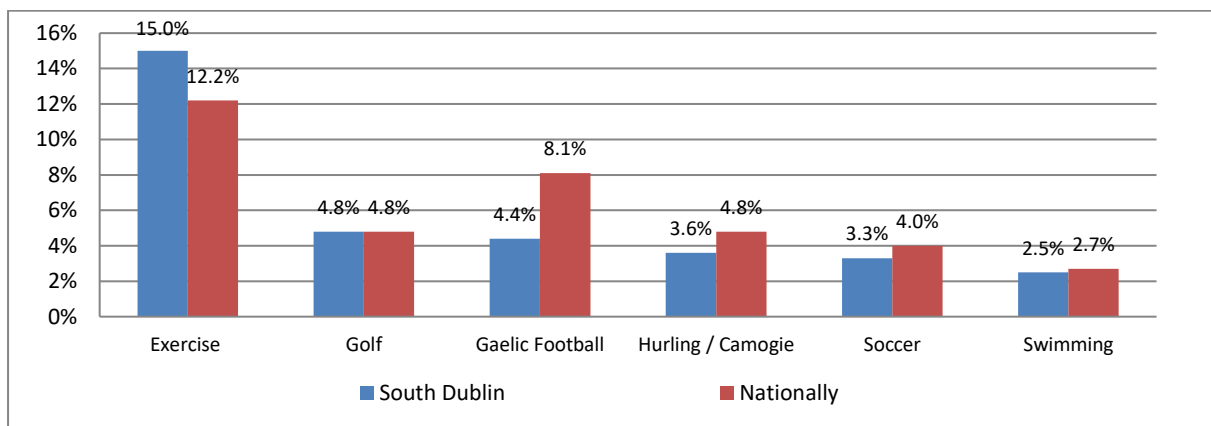
**Figure 4.2: Social Participation in Sport in South Dublin by type of sport<sup>23</sup>**



## 4.2 Club Membership

Exercise dominates the membership landscape with gyms having over 3 times as many members as any other type of sporting activity as seen in **Figure 4.3** below. Apart from gyms there is a relatively even split between team and individual sports although membership of gaelic football clubs is considerably lower than nationally as is the case for all the Dublin counties.

**Figure 4.3: Club Membership in South Dublin by sport<sup>24</sup>**



Gender, employment status, participation in school sport, marital status, parental participation in sport while the respondent was at school, and volunteering activity all feature as important determinants of club membership in South Dublin. We look briefly at the impact of these factors.

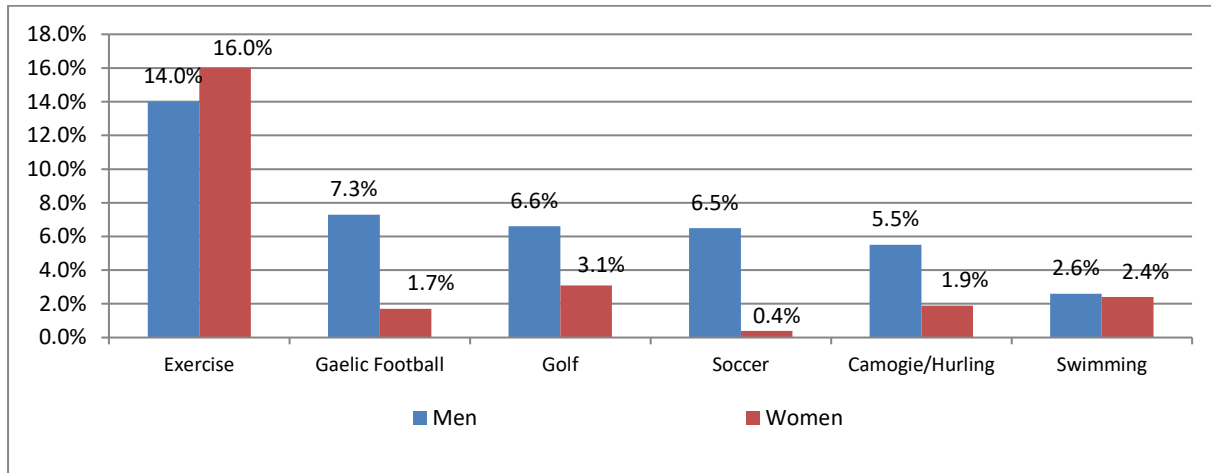
Men are significantly more likely to be club members than women (41.7% and 30.7% respectively) in South Dublin. This gender gap is entirely associated with team sports where men are more than 3 times

<sup>23</sup> Percentages add up to more than 100 due to certain respondents participating socially in both types of sport

<sup>24</sup> Only sports with membership of 2% or more in South Dublin are shown. Hill walking, rugby, martial arts and weightlifting had membership levels between 1 – 2%.

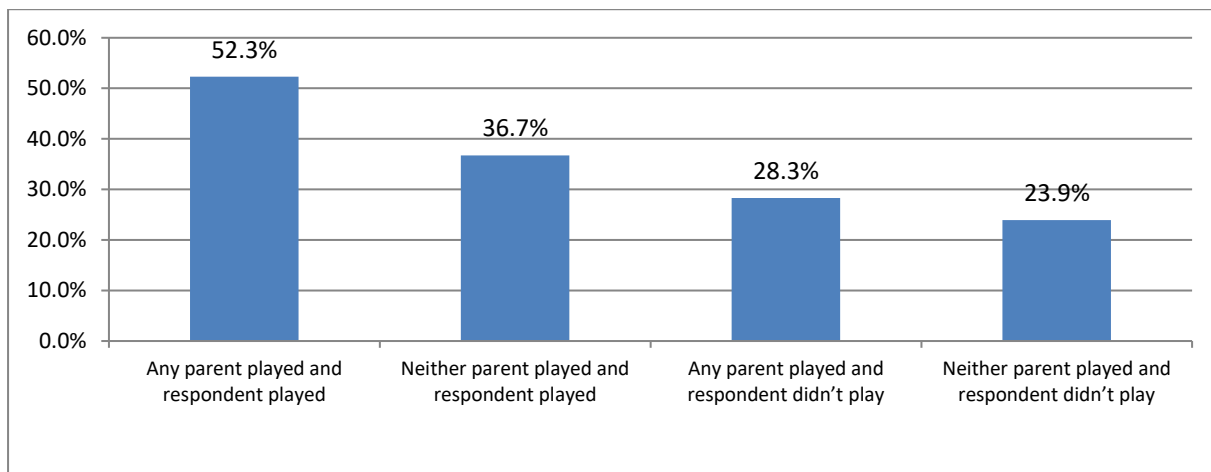
as likely to be members (19.1% vs. 6%). The most popular membership sports among men and women are shown in **Figure 4.4** below. Policy makers should seek to examine the issues which are giving rise to the significant gender gap in membership seen particularly in team sports.

**Figure 4.4: Club Membership in South Dublin by sport by gender<sup>25</sup>**



In **Figure 4.5** below we look at the influence of family and school on club membership among South Dublin residents.

**Figure 4.5: Club Membership in South Dublin by whether respondent played sport at school and whether parents played sport while respondent was at school**



<sup>25</sup> Sports with membership of 1-2% among men are boxing, hill walking, martial arts, rugby, sailing, tennis and weightlifting  
Sports with membership of 1-2% among women are badminton, dancing, hill walking and running.

**Figure 4.5** shows that parents playing sport while the respondent was at school along with the respondent themselves regularly playing sport (outside of the PE system) while they were at school had a strong and positive influence on the likelihood of them being members of a sports club. **Due to sample size constraints it is not possible to isolate the influence of individual parents but the overall message appears to be that, in South Dublin at least, a family culture of playing sport has some sustainable influence on the likelihood of individuals being involved with sports clubs as adults.**

Apart from the above influences, other findings to emerge from the multivariate analysis were that:

- Married individuals or those living as married were the least likely group to be members of sports clubs. Single people and those who were widowed, divorced or separated were 1.7 times more likely to belong to a club;
- Unsurprisingly those who volunteer for sport were almost 4.5 times as likely to be club members as those who didn't;
- Individuals with a disability / illness which prevented them from being in the workforce were the least likely of all work status groups to belong to a club while students and employees were the most likely among such groups 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>26</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 in the South Dublin is similar to that nationally although volunteering rates are slightly lower in the county. Just over one in nine adults volunteered at least once in the previous 7 days during 2011 – 2013 with men significantly more likely to volunteer than women (15.4% vs. 8.1% respectively). Volunteering is strongly associated with children's participation in sport and hence with team sport. Married people are more likely to volunteer than those who are single. Volunteers are most likely to be drawn from the 35 – 44 year old age group although volunteering is also quite strong among 45 – 54 year olds in the county. Volunteering is relatively low among 25 – 34 year olds and among those aged 55 and over.

---

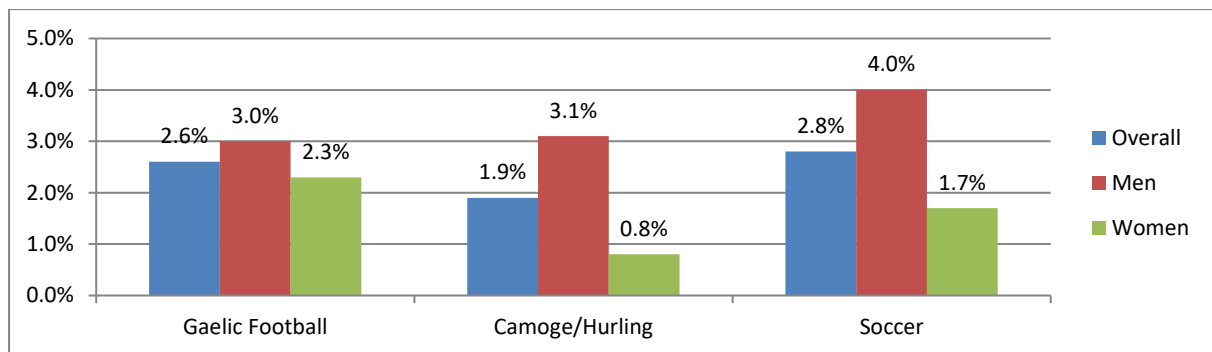
<sup>26</sup>

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

The importance of club membership (a theme throughout the report) is further underscored here by the fact that club members are more than four times as likely to volunteer for sport as non-members of a club. As we saw above with club membership those who regularly played sport at school as well as those whose parents played while they were at school (there is a significant overlap between these two groups) were more than twice as likely to volunteer as comparator groups.

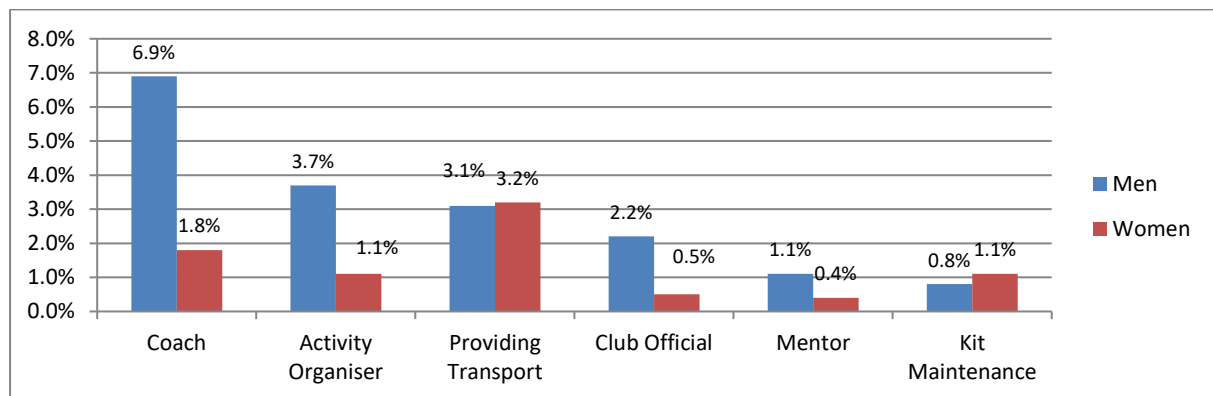
Men are most likely to volunteer for soccer and women for Gaelic football as seen in **Figure 4.6** below. No non-team sport has a volunteering rate of more than 1%.

**Figure 4.6: Volunteering by sport by gender**



Volunteers spend on average just over 3 hours per week volunteering with men spending more time volunteering than women (3.5 vs. 2.5 hours). The type of volunteering roles carried out varies by gender as can be seen in **Figure 4.7** below. The nature of these roles tends to reinforce the highly gendered nature in the administration of sport as perceived by ISM respondents during 2013.

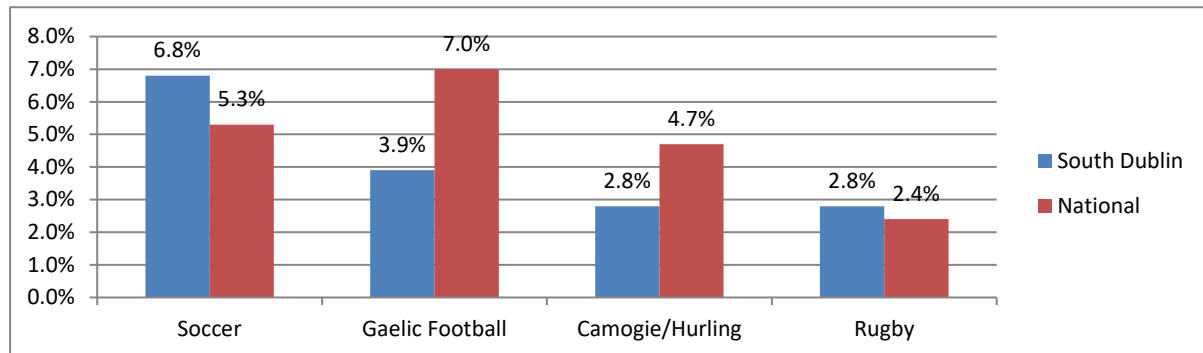
**Figure 4.7: Volunteering roles in South Dublin by gender**



#### 4.4 Attendance at Sporting Events

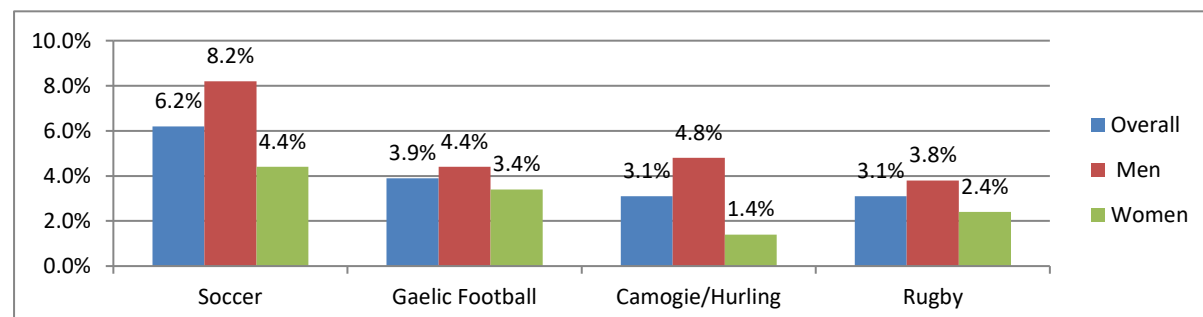
More than one in six adults in South Dublin regularly attends some form of sporting event whether involving adults or children. Attendance in the county is lower than nationally, driven entirely by Gaelic games as can be seen in **Figure 4.8** below. Attendance is dominated by team sports with almost six times as many adults attending such events as those involving individual activities.

**Figure 4.8: Attendance at sporting events in South Dublin and nationally by sport** <sup>27</sup>



Individuals with children are significantly more likely to attend an event than those without (23.1% and 10.2% respectively). Attendees are also most likely to be 35 – 44 year olds, from social class AB, individuals who volunteer and those who had regularly played sport at school. While it is reasonable to expect that volunteers would be more likely to attend than non-volunteers, the scale of the difference in the multivariate analysis is sizeable – in the model volunteers were almost seven times more likely to attend an event as non-volunteers. Men are more likely to attend a sporting event than women (21.9% vs. 13.9%) across all sports as can be seen from **Figure 4.9** below. Soccer is the most popular sport to attend in the county.

**Figure 4.9: Attendance at sporting events in South Dublin by sport by gender**



<sup>27</sup> No other sport has an attendance rate of 1% or greater in the county

## 5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This briefing report has provided descriptive information on participation in sport and physical activity in South Dublin. This section looks at some policy implications arising from the findings.

### a. Club membership

Club membership was found to be strongly associated with active participation in sport as well as being a positive influence on volunteering and attendance at sporting events. Clubs members were also significantly less likely to be sedentary. Sports clubs are therefore a strong source of social capital as well as being sites of significant physical activity and a possible means of reducing sedentarism levels in the county. However, membership is uneven across different groups and policy makers are encouraged to work with clubs to promote more inclusive membership initiatives in this regard. As a starting point they need to seek to engage greater membership rates among women.

### b. Interest in doing more sports

Well over 2/3 of respondents expressed an interest in doing more sport with non-members of sports clubs being even more likely to express this view. Given this latent interest among non-club members policy makers might seek to promote among this group the type of sporting activities in which they are interested in taking part, namely swimming, cycling, running and walking.

### c. Participation among women

While the gender gap in participation is not as large as nationally it is the case that women are far less likely to meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines through their participation than men. Given this, it might be useful for policy makers to promote and disseminate to current female participants the benefits of increasing the frequency, intensity and duration of their participation in order to fully benefit their health.

### d. Active Commuting

There are currently high levels of active commuting within the county suggesting that its urbanised nature is relatively conducive to walking and cycling for transport. It is suggested that the benefits of walking and cycling for transport be promoted particularly among those who are currently sedentary.

## Appendix 1 – Demographics of ISM Sample compared to 2011 Census

	<b>2011 Census</b>	<b>2011+2013 ISM combined</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>16 years plus</b>	<b>16 years plus</b>
Male	48.1%	48.1%
Female	51.9%	51.9%
<b>Age</b>		
16-19	6.7%	6.7%
20-24	9.0%	9.0%
25-34	24.0%	24.0%
35-44	19.7%	19.6%
45-54	15.8%	15.8%
55-64	13.4%	13.5%
65+	11.4%	11.4%
<b>Working Status (Census 2011 includes those under 16)</b>		
Employee/Self Employed	53.1%	53.2%
Unemployed	11.8%	11.8%
Retired	10.3%	10.0%
Homemaker	9.6%	9.4%
Student	11.1%	11.2%
Unemployed-illness/disabled	4.4%	4.4%