

National Advisory Council on Women and Girls: Monthly Spotlight

WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SPORT

Summary

Women in Scotland have notably different experiences to men of sport and of physical activity more generally. They **participate less than men** on average across all age groups, and often choose **different activities**. Women also cite different **motivations** for exercising; they are more likely to be motivated by a desire to lose weight, for example, but less likely to be motivated by the social or competitive aspects of sport. Particularly stark inequalities are seen around **women's sport in the media** and the allocation of **sports funding**.

The evidence base around how gender **intersects** with other inequalities when it comes to sport is limited. We know that having a disability, being from an ethnic minority background, being a member of the LGBT community, being pregnant or being a mother and experiencing socio-economic disadvantage all impact women's experiences of physical activity and sport, in many cases **making it harder for them to participate**. More research is required in all of these areas, however.

Recreational walking is an important leveller of physical activity inequalities not only between men and women, but across many other groups of people. Inequalities in physical activity participation are generally much wider when walking is excluded.

Key Figures

- Similar proportions of girls and boys regularly participated in sport – around two thirds of both girls (66%) and boys (67%).
- Around half (48%) of girls aged 5-7 were active at the recommended level of at least 60 minutes on every day of the week (including activity at school), but only one in ten (11%) of girls aged 13-15. For boys this was 42% and 24% respectively.
- Only three in five (60%) of women in Scotland met recommendations for physical activity, compared to almost three quarters (71%) of men.
- Less than a quarter (22%) of women aged 75 and over met the guidelines compared with over a third (36%) of 75+ men.
- Less than 5% of media sports coverage was dedicated to women's sport and just 1.8% of sports stories were written by women.
- Women's sport is estimated to receive less than 0.5% of the total value of UK sports sponsorship.
- Around 40% of sports coaches in Scotland were women.

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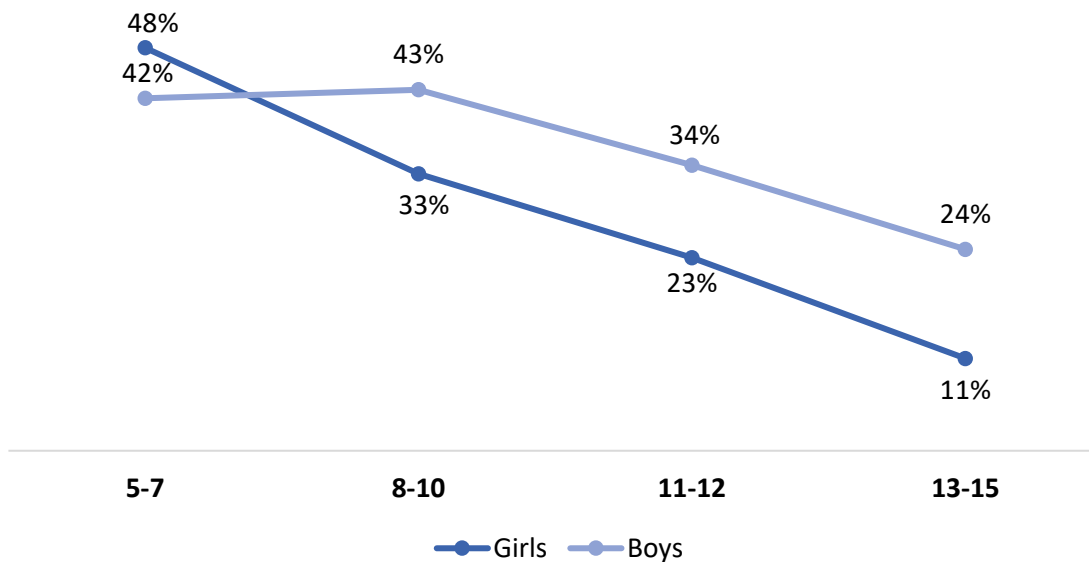
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1. Girls in Sport and Physical Activity

In 2017, 31% of girls in Scotland aged 5-15 met the recommended level of at least 60 minutes of physical activity on every day of the week (including activity at school).¹ This was lower than for boys, of whom 36% of 5–15 year-olds met this recommended activity level.

Girls are most active at ages 5-7, with 48% doing at least an hour of activity on all 7 days in the last week (including activity at school), and least active at ages 13-15, when this figure falls to 11%. In comparison, more than twice as many 13-15 year-old boys are active for at least an hour on every day of the week (24%).

Graph 1: Percentage of Scottish children doing the daily recommended amount of physical activity over the course of a week (including activity at school), by age and gender, 2017 (Scottish Health Survey)



These patterns are also seen when the physical activity children do at school is excluded. The percentage of girls meeting the recommended hour on all 7 days in the previous week fall from 44% for ages 5-7, to 32% for 8-10 year-olds, and then further to 21% for girls aged 11-12 and just 11% for those aged 13-15.² In comparison, 22% of boys aged 13-15 do at least an hour of exercise on every day of the week with school activity excluded.³ Research from 2015 shows that around 10% fewer journeys to schools are by active travel once children start secondary school (44% vs 55%), which may account for some of the reduction in physical activity at this age.⁴

Looking specifically at **sports**, overall participation levels are similar for girls and boys: 66% of girls aged 2-15 regularly participate in sport compared to 67% of boys.⁵ However, age once again has a significant impact: participation rates diverge more notably by gender after ages 11-12, with 45% of girls aged 13-15 having participated in a sport in the last week, compared to 69% of boys of the same age.⁶

In 2016, fewer girls than boys participated in the activities of Active Schools, sportscotland's national sports and physical activity programme for children and young people (42% of girls on the school roll vs 44% of boys).⁷ However, more young women were involved in leadership roles in sportscotland-supported activities in 2016–17, including making up 58% of both Young Ambassadors and competition organiser training participations, as well as two thirds of the Young People's Sport Panel.⁸

Dance, cycling, swimming and football were the most popular activities for girls aged 8–15 in 2008, with cycling, swimming and football the most popular for boys.⁹ The biggest gendered differences were seen with dance (32% of girls participate at least once a month compared to 2% of boys) and football (26% and 75% respectively).¹⁰ Karate, dodgeball, cross country, tennis and rugby are currently the fastest-growing sports for girls.¹¹

2. Women in Sport and Physical Activity

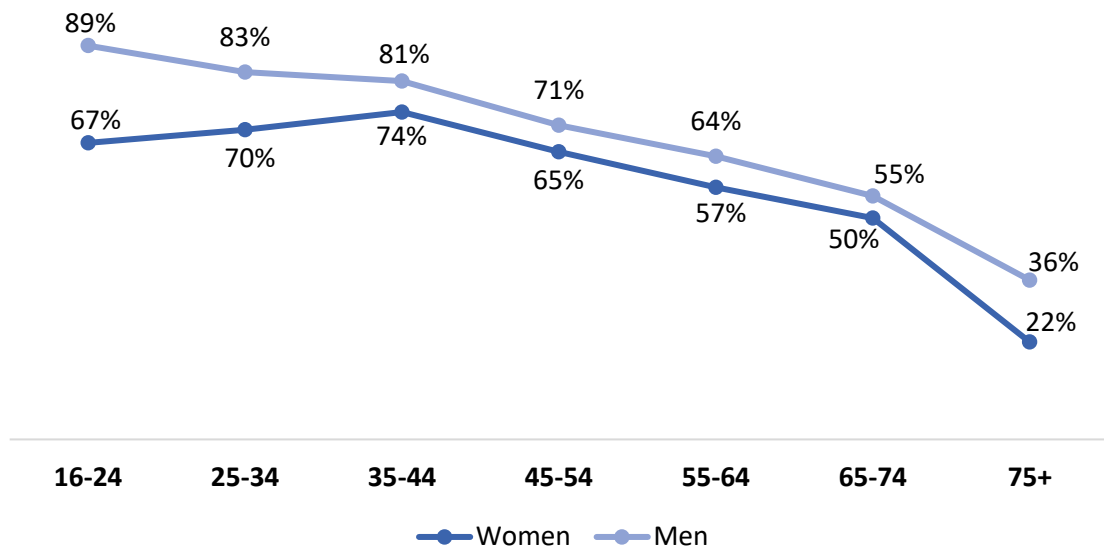
In Scotland in 2017, women were significantly **less likely than men** to meet physical activity guidelines: just 60% of women accumulate the recommended 150 minutes of moderate activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week, compared to 71% of men.¹² This is broadly similar to England, although the gender gap was found to be less pronounced there: in the 12 months to November 2018, 64% of women and 68% of men in England did the recommended amount of physical activity.¹³

20% of women in Scotland do not participate in any form of physical activity, compared to 17% of men.¹⁴ When walking is excluded, this difference rises: 51% of women do not regularly do any other form of physical activity, compared to 42% of men.¹⁵

The most recent European Health Interview Survey, which was conducted in 2014, found that fewer women than men took part in regular sport and physical activity across the EU as a whole.¹⁶ However, the survey also found that the five EU Member States where participation in sport was most common (Denmark, Germany, Finland, Sweden and Austria) bucked this trend, with more women than men taking part in sport, fitness or recreational (leisure) physical activities at least once a week. 55% of women from the UK who participated in the survey took part in regular sport and physical activity, compared to 60% of men. Women's participation in the UK was 9th highest out of the 26 Member States included; Denmark had the highest participation rate for women at 77%, and Romania the lowest at 3%.

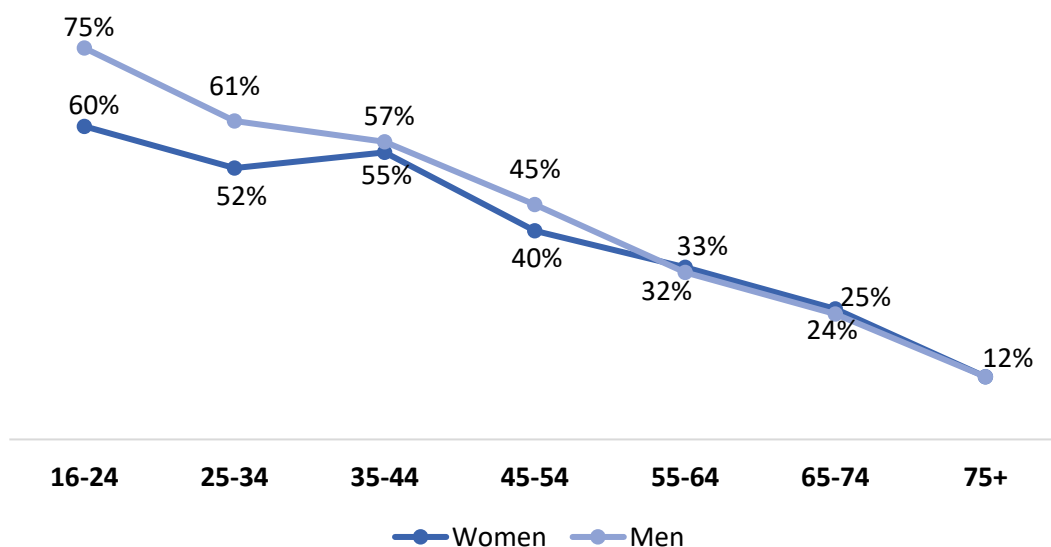
Physical activity levels among adult women in Scotland are lower across all age groups, diverging furthest from those of men amongst the youngest and oldest women, as the graph below shows.

Graph 2: Percentage of adult Scottish population doing the recommended amount of physical activity, by age and gender, 2017 (Scottish Health Survey)



Just 22% of women aged 75 and over met the guidelines in 2017 compared with 36% of men of the same age. Physical fitness is important for helping **older people** to maintain independent living.¹⁷ There is less evidence on participation in physical activity among older women than there is on younger age groups.¹⁸ The amount of people participating declines with age for both sexes.

Graph 3: Percentage of adults who participated in any sports or exercise in the last 4 weeks, by age and gender, 2017 (Scottish Health Survey)



Women are more likely to go swimming or do yoga, Pilates, aerobics, gymnastics or dance than men, but are less likely to go running or cycling, or to play football, rugby or golf.¹⁹ In 2017, swimming and aerobics were the most popular forms of exercise for women (after walking), each with 19% of women engaging.²⁰ 12% went running or to the gym, with 10% participating in dance. Just 1% of women played football and 2% played golf, compared to 14% and 10% respectively for men.

2.1 Motivations

Men and women have slightly different motivations for participating (and not participating) in sport or exercise.²¹ Of adults who say that they do some sport or exercise, similar proportions of men and women cite keeping fit (not just losing weight) as their main reason for doing so. Women are more likely to be primarily motivated by a desire to lose weight (10% of women compared to 2% of men) or because they are taking children (7% vs 3%). They are slightly less likely than men to say that their main reason for doing sport or exercise is to meet with friends (3% of women vs 6% of men), to improve their performance (2% vs 4%) or because they 'just enjoy it' (26% vs 32%). When asked what their main reason is for not doing any, or not doing more, sport or exercise, women are slightly more likely to say that their health isn't good enough (21% vs 17%) or that it's difficult to find the time (41% vs 39%).²²

2.2 The Media

The media has an important role to play in informing our knowledge and attitudes towards women in sport, and it is therefore significant that less than 5% of media sports coverage was dedicated to women's sport, both in Scotland and the UK more widely.²³ These inequalities are reflected in those involved in the UK media: across national newspapers, just 1.8% of sports stories are written by women and little significant change is being seen over time.²⁴ Just 4% of Football Writers' Association members are women and only 18% of sports journalism students.²⁵

2.3 Sports funding

Women in Scotland are more likely to be involved in individual and non-competitive sports activities and less likely than men to be involved in clubs, therefore also being less likely to access sports funding.²⁶ Women's sport is estimated to receive less

than 0.5% of the total value of UK sports sponsorship, with a further 14% going to mixed sports.²⁷

In 2017, it was found that 83% of sports worldwide offered the same prize money for men and women at the top level.²⁸ However, the some of the sports that offer the most prize money retain the largest gendered disparities; of the 4 sports that gave more than £1 million in prize money to men in 2017, only tennis was gender equal, while cricket, football and golf all offered more than twice as much prize money to male players.²⁹ The men's Scottish Professional Football League awarded more than £23.7 million in prize money during the 2017-18 season, while the Scottish Women's Premier League only began offering prize money in 2017 and the amount remains undisclosed.³⁰ There is less evidence on women's sports participation at elite level than for more general physical activity.³¹

2.4 Coaching

Around 40% of **sports coaches** in Scotland were female in 2017, up from 32% in 2015.³² Half as many women **volunteer** for sports or exercise organisations as men (3% and 6% respectively of all adults, or 11% and 23% of those who volunteer).³³ In contrast, women volunteer more than men overall (30% compared to 26%).³⁴

2.5 Sports organisations and governing bodies

With regards to sports governing bodies in Scotland, 32% of board members were women in 2017-18, up from 31% the year before.³⁵ As of 2016, the UK had 27% women on its national Olympic boards and committee; globally, the only countries with 40% or more women's representation were Australia, Bermuda, Kiribati, Malawi, New Zealand, Norway, Samoa and Tuvalu.³⁶

Within sportscotland, the Scottish national agency for sport, 51% of employees were women in 2018 (up from 46% in 2017).³⁷ Breakdown by job grade shows that they are more likely to be in lower-paid positions than their male colleagues.

People working within Scottish sports organisations have better awareness of inequalities in sport faced by women and in particular by teenage girls, as well as by those with disabilities and at socio-economic disadvantage.³⁸ Faith, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership inequalities were understood the least.

Case Study: Women's Football (or 'Soccer') in the United States

As the recent 2019 Women's World Cup highlighted, women's football (or soccer) enjoys a notably different status in the US compared to other countries. While men's football dominates in almost all countries around the world, this is not the case in the US.³⁹ Their national team have won 4 of the 8 Women's World Cup tournaments that have been held so far, and it was reported that the 2019 final between the US and the Netherlands was the most-watched soccer telecast in the US since the previous Women's World Cup final, in 2015.⁴⁰ Women players frequently appear as the expert commentators for the men's soccer games on US TV.⁴¹

A number of reasons for this have been proposed:

- Soccer is not a major part of America's (male-dominated) sports culture – which is focused on **American football, baseball, basketball** and **ice hockey** – therefore leaving space for women to occupy and dominate in soccer.⁴²
- **Title IX** of the 1972 Federal Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (strengthened in 1988), which 'mandated nondiscrimination [on the basis of sex] in admissions, access, and treatment in all educational programs offered by institutions that were the recipients of federal funds.'⁴³ This law extended to school- and university-sponsored extracurricular activities, including sports, and the proportion of girls playing with their high school's sports teams rose from 1 in 27 in 1972, to 1 in 3 by 1998.⁴⁴ It has been noted that 'women's soccer has been a particular beneficiary of Title IX, as the sport can provide a college with the opportunity to include at least 20 female student-athletes on a team with a minimal level of expenses for equipment.'⁴⁵ The national team's players generally all emerge from college soccer.
- The success of the national team at the **1999 Women's World Cup**, hosted by the US, which attracted huge numbers of attendees and TV viewers, made stars and role models of the team's key players and established women's soccer as part of US sports culture. It also led to the establishment of the Women's United Soccer Association, in 2000.⁴⁶
- This **Women's United Soccer Association** has become the main venue internationally for women's soccer, attracting the best players from around the world. The international landscape for men's football is quite different, with no one single competitive forum dominating.⁴⁷

3. The Impacts of other Characteristics

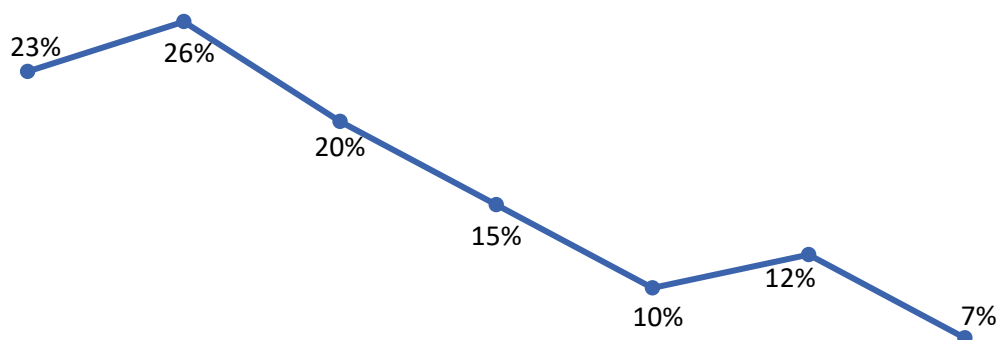
Beyond age, which is discussed in the above sections, there are a number of other characteristics which impact on women and girls' participation in sports and physical activity. These include disabilities, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and socio-economic disadvantage. Those with disabilities, those from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds and Asian minorities are all less likely to participate in sports.⁴⁸ These same groups, as well as other ethnic and religious minorities, are also less likely to use leisure facilities.⁴⁹

The evidence base on how these characteristics affect sports participation varies widely. There is **limited research** on the impact of sexual orientation and gender reassignment, and the research on ethnicity and religion is largely focused on Muslim women, whose physical activity levels have been found to be significantly lower than other groups.⁵⁰ There is a notable lack of data on the impact of pregnancy and maternity or marriage and civil partnership.⁵¹ Although we have some evidence relating to disabilities, this tends to offer a more general overview and not to be broken down to give an understanding of the varied experiences across different disabilities.⁵²

Walking has been found to be a leveller across different groups of people, with inequalities in physical activity participation generally much wider when walking is excluded.⁵³ Similar proportions of **men and women** in Scotland walk for recreational purposes (as an activity of choice); 69% of women and 71% of men had done so in the previous 4 weeks as of 2017.⁵⁴ Women were slightly more likely than men to walk to work in 2017 (13% of employed women not working from home, compared to 11% of men).⁵⁵ There is also less inequality by **age** for walking than for other types of physical activity; a fairly even proportion of people who walk recreationally across age groups, until it starts to drop for those aged 60-74 and then drops off more substantially at 75+.⁵⁶

Socio-economic status has a more complicated relationship with walking. On the one hand those with lower socio-economic status walk less recreationally, but on the other hand they are more likely to walk to work or school.⁵⁷ This may be more of a necessity than a choice. The graph below illustrates how the proportion of employed adults not working from home who usually walk to work is higher among those from lower income households.⁵⁸

Graph 4: Percentage of employed adults not working from home who usually walk to work, by annual net household income, 2017 (Scottish Household Survey)



up to £10,000	over £10,000 - £15,000	over £15,000 - £20,000	over £20,000 - £25,000	over £25,000 - £30,000	over £30,000 - £40,000	over £40,000
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Where choice is concerned, this may be influenced by other environmental factors and it is of note that those with lower socio-economic status are less likely to perceive a usable greenspace nearby and feel less safe walking in their local area after dark.⁵⁹

Walking also does not reduce the inequality gap for **disability**, unlike for most other protected characteristics.⁶⁰

3.1 Disabilities

34% of women have a limiting long-term condition (and 29% of men).⁶¹ This significantly reduces women's likelihood of being physically active; 46% of women with limiting long-term conditions do the recommended amount of physical activity, compared to 69% of those without.⁶² Women's greater likelihood overall of having a limiting long-term condition may be partly due to women living longer on average (the highest rates of limiting long-term conditions are found in the oldest age groups), but the biggest difference between the proportions of men and women with these limiting conditions is found among those aged 35-44 and 45-54.⁶³

As noted above, much current data groups together all different types of disability and often does not differentiate between limiting and non-limiting conditions, which obscures a more detailed understanding of the impact of different disabilities on women's participation in physical activity.⁶⁴

3.2 Ethnicity and religion

Pakistani adults are the only ethnic group which diverge significantly from the national Scottish average in meeting physical activity recommendations. Overall, they are around a third less likely to do so according to analysis conducted in 2015.⁶⁵ UK-wide research from 2009 found that women of Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnicity had particularly low levels of physical activity (around half as many met recommended levels of physical activity compared to both the national average for women and the average for Pakistani and Bangladeshi men).⁶⁶ For sports specifically, Muslims and Roman Catholics participate in sport less than the national average in Scotland (39% and 46% respectively compared to an average of 49%), while those of other Christian groups do more sport on average (52%).⁶⁷ There is significant overlap between race and ethnicity inequalities; 91% and 81% of those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin respectively are Muslim, for example.⁶⁸

Research indicates that there is no difference between white and Asian adults in Scotland with regards to walking, and that many South Asian women find this activity easier to incorporate into their lives than other physical activities.⁶⁹

Children from ethnic minority backgrounds are less likely to meet physical activity recommendations or to participate in sport than the national average (57% vs 73% for physical activity and 62% vs 72% for sport).⁷⁰

3.3 LGBT women and girls

There is some evidence that bisexual, lesbian and gay people overall in Scotland participate in physical activity and sport at similar levels to heterosexual people, but that those who define their sexual orientation as 'other' tend to participate less.⁷¹ It should be noted, though, that quantitative data on sexual orientation and sports participation in Scotland is very limited, and that underreporting and lack of distinction between LGB people who are 'out' or not is likely to affect some data. It is expected that a proportion of LGB people who are not out will decline to answer the sexual identity question in surveys, or report themselves as straight. This means that analysis of inequality based on the sexual identity question will tend to reflect the experiences of LGB people who are out to a greater extent than the experiences of LGB people who are not out, and the experiences of the two groups are not always the same.⁷²

There is little research available on LGB people working, volunteering or coaching within sport.⁷³

3.4 Transgender women and girls

A 2012 survey conducted by the Equality Network in Scotland found that 22% of the trans people who responded never engaged in sport or physical activity, and 30% were never spectators.⁷⁴ 68% said that they would be more likely to participate in sports if they were more LGBT-friendly. It should be noted, however, that this was a small and self-selecting sample (115 trans respondents) and therefore may not be representative of the Scottish trans population as a whole. The findings should therefore be treated with caution. The lack of national and administrative data on gender identity and trans status means that it is not possible to use standard sampling methods to gain a representative sample of transgender people. The relatively high number of trans people who are disabled (25% in this study) are also likely to impact these figures.⁷⁵

A British survey of LGBT secondary school and college pupils conducted for Stonewall in 2016-17 found that 29% of the trans students who responded were bullied during sports lessons.⁷⁶ 64% of trans respondents said that they were unable to play for the sports team they would feel comfortable in. The survey included around 600 trans respondents from across Britain; 11% of the total sample were from Scotland. Many trans women report negative experiences of sport at school, particularly with team games where strong masculine behaviour stereotypes often dominate.

There is an evidence gap around transgender women's employment in sport, their involvement in coaching or leadership roles, or how other inequalities also affect transgender women's experiences of sport.⁷⁷

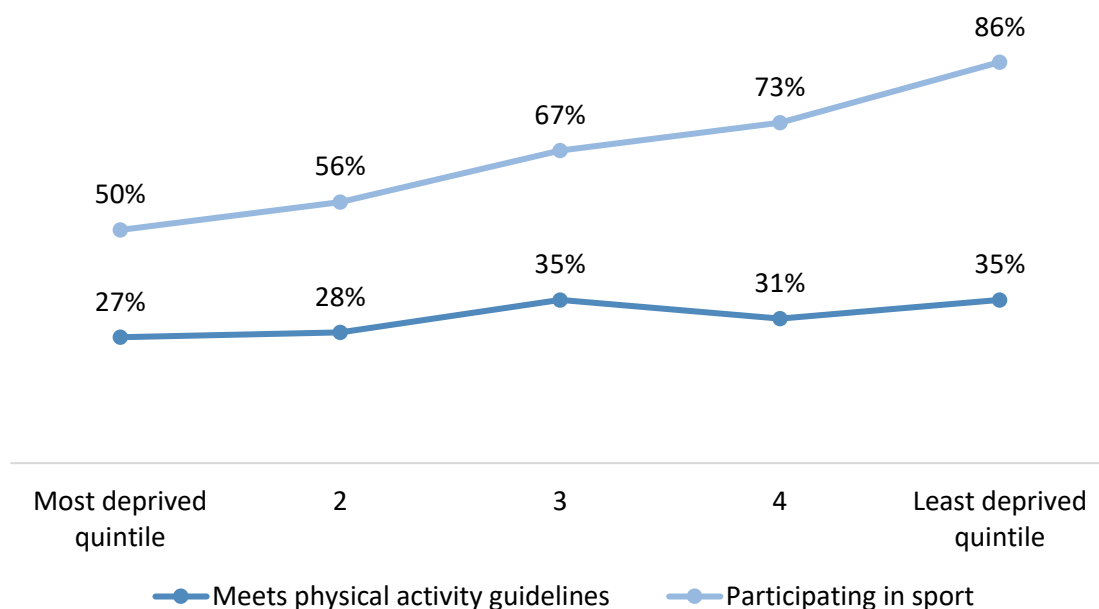
3.5 Pregnancy and maternity

There is very little quantitative evidence on pregnant women's participation in physical activity and sport, especially in a UK or Scottish context.⁷⁸ There is some qualitative data on the barriers faced by pregnant women and mothers, as discussed below.

3.6 Socio-economically underprivileged women and girls

Some research has found that girls from more socio-economically deprived areas are as likely to be **physically active** as those from advantaged backgrounds when they are children, while other studies have detected some differences (see graph below).⁷⁹ More conclusive differences have been found in terms of **sports participation** – girls from the most deprived areas considerably less likely to take part in sports.⁸⁰

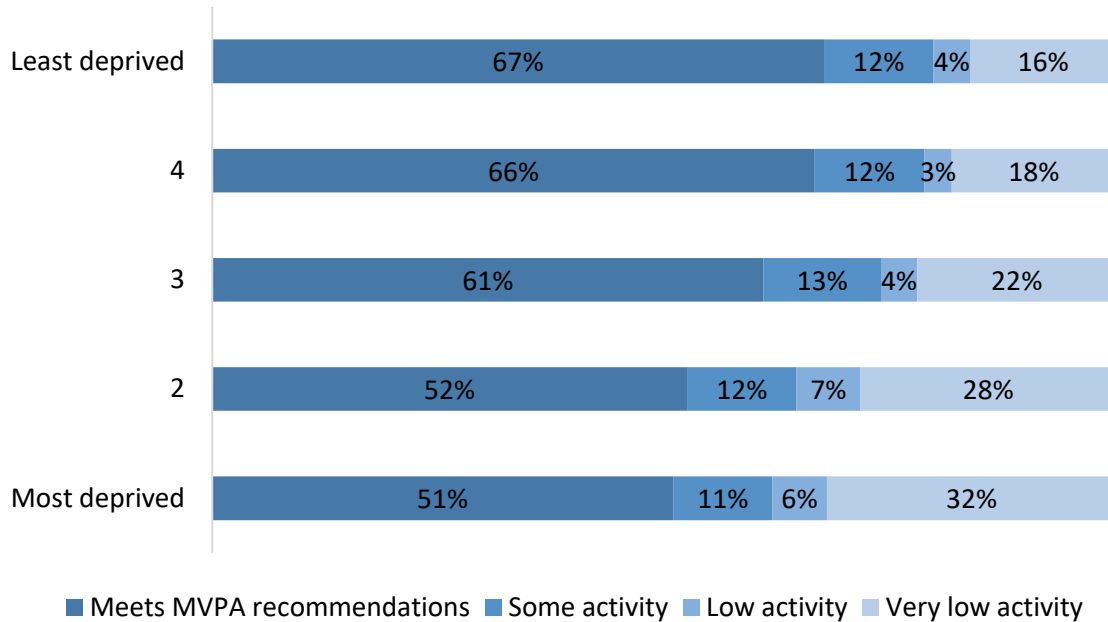
Graph 5: Percentage of Scottish girls doing the recommended amount of physical activity (including activity at school) and participating in sport, by area deprivation, 2017 (Scottish Health Survey)



Note: The figures for meeting physical activity guidelines include girls aged 5-15, while those for participating in sport include girls aged 2-15.

Adults from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are significantly less likely to participate in physical activity or sports than the average.⁸¹ Women living in the most deprived 20% of areas of Scotland are less likely to do the recommended amount of physical activity: 51% of women living in these areas meet the recommendations, compared to 67% of women living in the least deprived 20% of areas.⁸² Women living in the most deprived areas are almost three times as likely as women in the least deprived areas to say that the main reason they don't do any/more sport or exercise is that their **health** isn't good enough (32% vs 11%).⁸³

**Graph 6: Activity levels in adult women, by area deprivation, 2017
(Scottish Health Survey)**



Overall, children from the most deprived areas of Scotland are likely to have 20 fewer years of good health during their lifetime.⁸⁴

4. Barriers to Participating

There is strong evidence that being physically active has a wide range of positive health benefits. These include improved heart, muscle, bone, blood, immune and nervous system health, as well as improved self-perception, self-esteem, mood and sleep quality.⁸⁵ Physical activity also reduces the risk of chronic health conditions such as coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer and type 2 diabetes.⁸⁶ Being physically inactive reduces life expectancy; it is estimated to contribute to the death of around 2,500 people in Scotland every year.⁸⁷ In addition, sports participation has been linked with wider social benefits for women and girls such as improved self-esteem, social inclusion, better academic performance and development of leadership skills.⁸⁸ It is therefore important that we understand the reasons that prevent many women and girls from participating, and work to address them.

Experiences of **physical education**, lack of **self-esteem** and **body confidence**, poor **changing facilities** and influence of **family and peers** have all been found to be barriers to sports participation for women and girls.⁸⁹ Achieving greater equality in **coaching** is important since research has shown that some women prefer to be coached by female coaches.⁹⁰ Research has also shown that offering **single-sex sports activities** for young women can increase participation rates, as can facilitating a **non-competitive** atmosphere for those who are less enthusiastic about sports.⁹¹ Involving girls in the development of new sports activities or programmes and offering sports **leadership** opportunities have been successful in increasing young women's engagement in physical activity.⁹²

A lack of **media coverage** of sporting achievements of those with protected characteristics, a more general lack of **role models** in sport (particularly of deaf, LGBT and female Muslim sportspeople), negative school PE experiences and **costs** (especially for ethnic minority, disabled and LGBT people) have all been found to be barriers to sports participation.⁹³

Research with **staff** within sportscotland and other local school- and club-based activities has shown that while equality is generally considered to be increasingly prioritised, some consider the focus on increasing the number of people participating in sport overall to be a barrier to prioritising equality.⁹⁴ It was also suggested that some increased attention on equality was driven by sportscotland requirements or those of their boards rather than internal motivation. A lack of equalities awareness and resistance to change was reported particularly in club environments. Many of those working with sports organisations felt that high-performance environments responded well to many equalities issues, particularly regarding opportunities for disabled athletes. However, there were also concerns that the support required to reach elite level, both social and financial, may represent particular barriers for women and those at experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. Equalities-focused

training for those working in and facilitating sports has been recommended as a priority for reducing inequalities in sport.⁹⁵

4.1 Women and girls with disabilities

People with disabilities often find the cost of accessible equipment required to allow them to participate in sports to be prohibitive.⁹⁶ Those with mental health conditions report feelings of intimidation as a barrier to participation; this can include being intimidated by those facilitating or participating in the sport, by attending alone, or by the environment more widely.⁹⁷ Self-consciousness and low levels of confidence with regards to sport have also been found to be significant barriers for those with other disabilities.⁹⁸ Lack of information, support, appropriate facilities and transportation have also been found to prevent many of those with disabilities from doing sport.

4.2 Ethnic and religious minority backgrounds

Research has shown those of South Asian origin in Scotland tend to enjoy the same physical activities as the wider population and have similar motivations for wanting to engage in them, but that many, particularly women, have been discouraged by their cultural background and attitudes of older members of their families or community.⁹⁹ For some ethnic minority women, the appropriateness of sports clothing, self-image, concerns about body shape norms and lack of single-sex sessions for sports such as swimming have been found to be barriers.¹⁰⁰ A representative survey conducted by the Office of National Statistics in England in 1999-2000 found that home and family responsibilities prevented a significant proportion of ethnic minority women (over 40%) from participating in the sports they would like to do.¹⁰¹ The cost of sports (particularly in relation to children's sports) has also been cited as a barrier to participation by those of ethnic minorities.¹⁰²

UK research suggests insensitivity to cultural beliefs in the way school sports lessons are delivered can be a significant barrier to many Muslim girls' participation and leads to some skipping classes.¹⁰³ Current PE uniforms and communal showering, for example, both require exposing more of the body than some Muslim girls are comfortable with.¹⁰⁴ Finally, some Muslim children are also reluctant to participate in PE during Ramadan since fasting results in lower energy levels.¹⁰⁵

4.3 LGBT women and girls

Evidence suggests that homophobia and transphobia in sport results both in many LGBT people experiencing discrimination and intimidation when participating, and in many choosing to conceal their sexual orientation and thus having their rights to

freedom of expression infringed.¹⁰⁶ 79% of the LGBT people who responded to the Equality Network's 2012 survey thought that there was a problem with homophobia in sport.¹⁰⁷ This survey also found that the adult lesbian and bisexual women who responded were less likely to experience discrimination while participating in sports than gay and bisexual adult men respondents, although they still experience homophobic abuse. The widespread stereotype of women involved in sport being labelled as lesbian was also cited as leading to many heterosexual women experiencing related bullying. This was noted as a barrier to heterosexual women's participation in rugby, especially, which is seen as a stereotypically masculine sport.

A British survey of lesbian, gay and bisexual secondary school and college pupils conducted for Stonewall in 2011-12 found that the lesbian and bisexual girls who responded were half as likely as the gay and bisexual male respondents to have experienced homophobic bullying during sport at school (14% and 32% respectively; 10% of the sample were from Scotland).¹⁰⁸ Overall, 75% of the LGB respondents who had been bullied at school disliked team sports, compared to 59% of those who had not.¹⁰⁹ Research conducted in Wales found that for many LGB people, gendered division of sport at school has a negative impact on their experience of it.¹¹⁰

4.4 Transgender women and girls

The 2012 Equality Network survey discussed above found that discrimination was a barrier to participation in sport for 79% of the trans people who responded, and that 80% had personally experienced or witnessed abuse.¹¹¹ Research has found that some trans people would find it easier to participate in sports with clubs if the clubs promoted themselves as inclusive and open to all, therefore meaning that it would not be necessary for trans people to compromise their confidentiality by asking about this.¹¹²

Lack of appropriate changing and leisure facilities is a particular barrier to trans women's participation in sport and physical activity.¹¹³ Research shows that trans people generally prefer to have cubicles available, although using these in team sport environments can still result in bullying.¹¹⁴ Another barrier is the prevalent gender segregation in sport and the normative gendered expectations of behaviour around sport and physical activity, which trans people may not conform to or feel comfortable with.¹¹⁵ In competitive sport, trans women often have to face other people's concerns that they are at an unfair physical advantage, or that they pose greater risks to other female players.¹¹⁶ Finally, lower income levels and the costs of transitioning also make it harder for some trans women to participate in sport.¹¹⁷

4.5 Pregnancy and maternity

Qualitative research in Scotland has shown that pregnant and postnatal women report a lack of appropriate physical activities run by people with relevant training, especially cardio exercise.¹¹⁸ There is also a demand for activities that young babies can attend along with their mothers.¹¹⁹

Although general advice is for pregnant women to keep active and continue with the physical activities they participated in before pregnancy, some pregnant women are discouraged from participating by sports organisations who are concerned about being held liable for any injuries.¹²⁰

A lack of available childcare is a key barrier to women participating in physical activity.¹²¹ This may also affect some girls, who are more likely than boys to have caring responsibilities.¹²² Cost and confidence have been identified as further key barriers to UK mothers' participation in physical activity.¹²³

References

Data sources drawn on in this report collect self-reported data on whether respondents are male or female. The term gender is therefore used throughout this report, although though some data sources use the term sex in their research.

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- ¹ J. McLean, S. Christie, Hinchliffe & Gray (eds), 2018. *The Scottish Health Survey: 2017 Edition, Volume 1, Main Report*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-health-survey-2017-volume-1-main-report/> [accessed 31 July 2019].
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
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