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Active Young People in Wales

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HEADLINE PARTICIPATION FIGURES AND 'CLIMBING HIGHER' TARGETS

Primary Schools in Wales (7-11 year old children)

Participation Measure	2004 Participation Rate (%)	'Climbing Higher' Target (2020)
Any extra-curricular activity in the past year	80	—
Regular (weekly or more frequent) extra-curricular activity over the past year	58	—
Any club-based activity in the past year	78	80
Regular (weekly or more frequent) club-based activity over the past year	62	—
Regular (weekly or more frequent) visits to leisure centres over the past year	55	—
Participation in outdoor pursuits under any circumstances over the past year	25	100
Undertaking of 60 minutes of physical activity on five or more days of the week	41	100

Secondary Schools in Wales (11-16 year old children)

Participation Measure	2004 Participation Rate (%)	'Climbing Higher' Target (2020)
Any extra-curricular activity in the past year	71	—
Regular (weekly or more frequent) extra-curricular activity over the past year	42	—
Any club-based activity in the past year	73	80
Regular (weekly or more frequent) club-based activity over the past year	53	—
Regular (weekly or more frequent) visits to leisure centres over the past year	55	—
Participation in outdoor pursuits under any circumstances over the past year	17	100
Undertaking of 60 minutes of physical activity on five or more days of the week	24	90



INTRODUCTION

Public concern about rising rates of childhood obesity and inactivity has never been greater and media coverage of overweight children leading sedentary lifestyles is widespread. The health of our children is under constant scrutiny and the typical picture painted is far from favourable. Regular physical activity has the potential to significantly improve the quality of people's lives in addition to reducing the escalating economic costs of poor health.

The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has moved the health of the population of Wales to the top of the political agenda and the health of children and young people is a key priority. In its strategy for sport and physical activity, 'Climbing Higher', WAG sets some challenging targets to be achieved over the next 20 years. Target 2 states that:

"All children of primary school age will participate in sport and physical activity for at least 60 minutes, five times a week;

All primary schools will provide a minimum of 2 hours of curricular based sport and physical activity per week."

Target 3 focuses on young people of secondary school age and states that:

"At least 90% of boys and girls of secondary school age will participate in sport and physical activity for at least 60 minutes, five times a week;

All secondary schools will provide a minimum of 2 hours of curricular based and 1 hour of extra-curricular sport and physical activity per week."

In addition to the above, Target 7 advocates that:

"80% of children will be junior members of sports clubs or centres;"

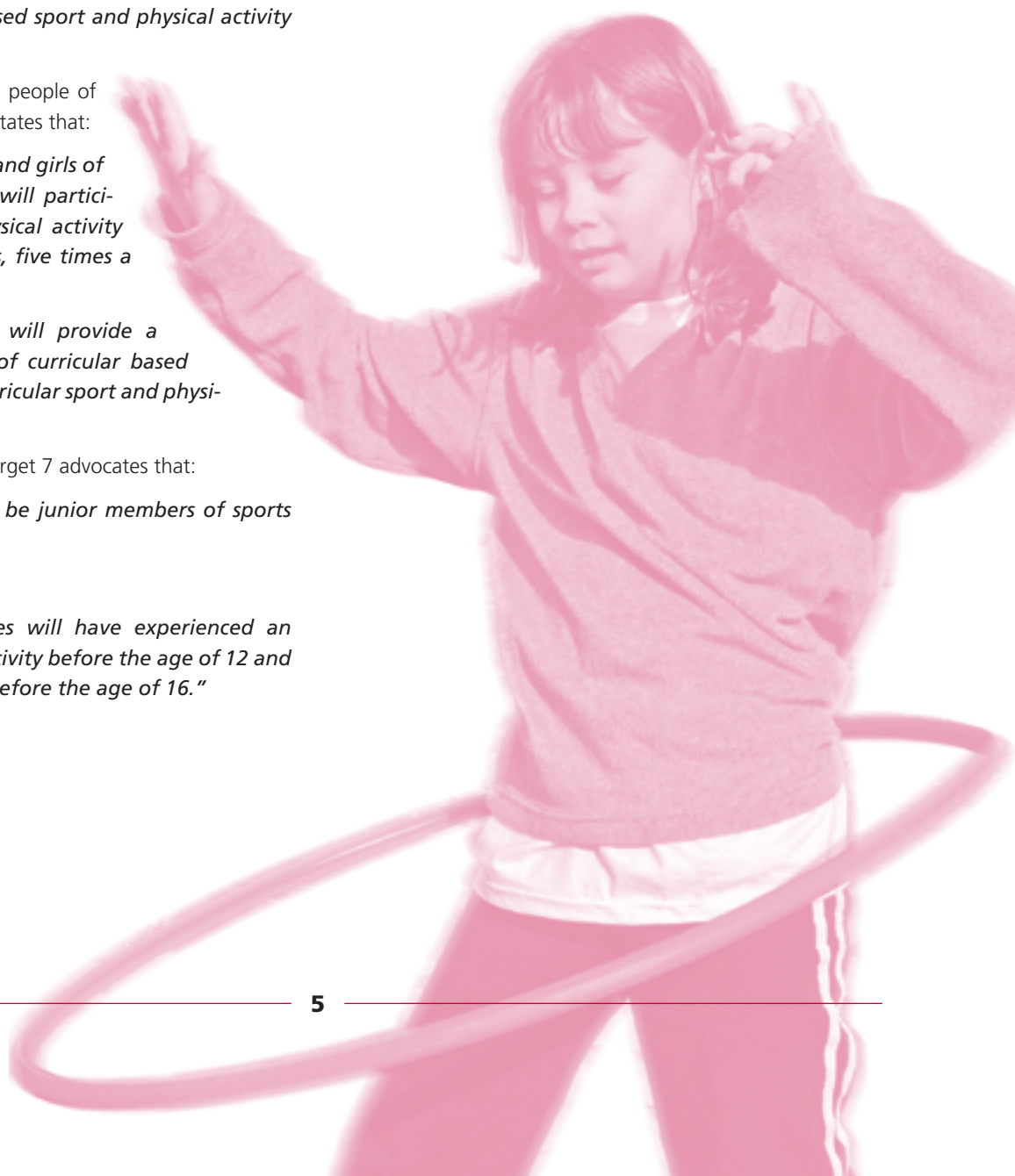
and Target 9 that:

"All children in Wales will have experienced an outdoor adventure activity before the age of 12 and a further experience before the age of 16."

A strong school of thought suggests that an enthusiasm for participation in sport by people of all abilities should be fostered in the young and the importance that WAG places on getting young people in Wales active is plain to see.

The Sports Council for Wales (SCW) also has a tradition of increasing the opportunities available to young people to participate in sport and physical activity. In 1999, SCW published a strategy for Welsh Sport, 'Young people first'. The strategy adopted an holistic approach to the development of sport for young people linking curricular, extra-curricular and community activities.

In addition to lobbying for physical education to be allocated adequate compulsory subject time in the national curriculum and for more time to be devoted to PE within initial teacher training, Young people first sought to increase sports club membership amongst the 7-11 and 11-16 age groups and to



increase extra-curricular participation in sport by children of school age, especially in the 7-11 age group. Table 1 reveals participation rates throughout the 1990s and the specific targets set by SCW to be achieved by 2005.

The latest participation data, collected in 2004, confirms that SCW has met and exceeded all the targets scheduled for achievement in 2005. Currently, 71% of young people at secondary schools in Wales have participated in extra-curricular activities and 73% have participated in activities organised by a club independent of a school. Still more encouraging; 80% of children at primary schools in Wales have taken part in extra-curricular activity and 78% have taken part at non-school-based sports clubs.

Despite the high participation rates recorded among children and young people in Wales for sport, it appears as though physical activity levels among this same population are below what might be desired. According to the latest surveys conducted, only 24% of secondary school pupils and 41% of primary school pupils are physically active for 60 minutes on at least five days of the week. Achievement of the targets set out by WAG in 'Climbing Higher', that all primary school children and 90% of secondary school children will participate in sport and physical activity for an hour on five or more days of the week by 2020, will therefore represent a significant challenge.

This paper will look briefly at some of the research conducted around physical activity in school-age populations before focussing on the current state of play with regards to participation in sport and physical activity at primary and secondary schools throughout Wales. The success of existing initiatives aimed at increasing the uptake of sport and physical activity will also be analysed and potential future areas of development will be identified.



Table 1 – Participation trends and 2005 targets for children and young people from the Sports Council for Wales' 1999 strategy document, Young People First

	1993/94	1995/96	1997/98	2005 target	2004 results
% young people (11-16 years) participating in extra-curricular activities	47	51	49	60	71
% young people (11-16 years) with sports club memberships	38	44	42	60	73
% children (7-11 years) participating in extra-curricular activities	–	–	40	70	80
% children (7-11 years) with sports club memberships	–	–	58	65	78

IS AN ACTIVE YOUTH IMPORTANT?

There is a wealth of academic research available to support the premise that physical inactivity in adulthood represents a serious risk to health, and that the undertaking of regular physical activity should form an integral part of a healthy lifestyle. Diseases to which insufficient physical activity leaves adults prone, however, require extensive incubation periods. A recent report (2004) by the Department of Health and Chief Medical Officer concluded that there is relatively little direct evidence linking physical activity in children with childhood health outcomes. Even though clinical symptoms may not become apparent until later in life, it seems highly probable that the origin of many chronic diseases lies in childhood (Riddoch *et al.*, 2005). Fostering positive attitudes towards exercise and establishing participation in physical activity among the young is likely, therefore, to impact positively on the future health of today's children.

According to Twisk (2001), physical activity during youth has the potential to impact on health through one of three mechanisms: that physical activity during youth is related to health during youth; that physical activity during youth is related to subsequent physical activity during adulthood; or that physical activity during youth is directly related to health during adulthood.

Obesity

Whatever method is used to classify obesity (and the methods are many and varied), studies continuously report a high prevalence of the condition as well as an increased rate of incidence. Children and young people are no exceptions to this pattern. Obesity is the result of the consumption of more energy than is expended throughout the course of daily life, but increased energy intake is not the sole cause of the obesity epidemic (Andersen and Jackie, 2003). In the prevention of obesity, increasing physical activity is as important as modifying diet within a framework of behaviour modification, particularly among children where only small reductions in energy intake are recommended (Fruhbeck, 2000) to ensure an adequate intake of the nutrients essential for daily growth.

The primary role of physical activity in the context of childhood health may be to help prevent excess weight gain in normal weight children and to help overweight children to lose weight. Hunter *et al.* (2000) reported a significant correlation between levels of body fat and fasting insulin; finding that insulin sensitivity was decreased in overweight children compared with normal weight peers. Davey (2004) confirms that insulin resistance (the earliest stage of late-onset diabetes) is now identifiable in children as young as five years of age. Obesity leaves children exposed to the same health risks

faced by obese adults: hypertension, hyperinsulinaemia, dislipidaemia and increased endothelial dysfunction (Must *et al.*, 1992). The condition has been proven to track well from childhood to adulthood (Olds and Tomkinson, 2004) and this tendency is reinforced among the children of obese parents.

The success rate of weight loss interventions is very low (Davey, 2004), so once established, obesity is very difficult to treat. This suggests that a focus on prevention is of prime importance. Treuth and colleagues (2004) found that children who spend more time engaging in moderate levels of physical activity have higher levels of aerobic fitness. Fitness levels may expand the activity potential of children, increasing the amounts of free living physical activity undertaken; concurrent with reported increases in the fatness of children have been declines in the aerobic fitness of children (Olds and Tomkinson, 2004). Obesity is associated with an increased difficulty in exercising and a consequent decrease in habitual physical activity (Hunter *et al.*, 2000). Physical activity is the most variable component of daily energy expenditure and, therefore, has an integral role to play in preventing the development of obesity among children.

Cardiovascular Disease

In 2001, the European Heart Health Initiative (EHHI) produced a consensus statement that every child born in the new millennium should have the right to live until the age of at least 65 years without developing avoidable cardiovascular disease. Although cardiovascular disease is very rarely observed in the young population, children with lower levels of physical activity are more likely to have high risk factors for developing cardiovascular disease. The presence of atherosclerotic lesions (the early stages of atherosclerosis) in the coronary arteries of children are well documented (Armstrong *et al.*, 1990).

A report by the Department of Health (2004) concluded that strong evidence is available to support the notion that the determinants of adulthood cardiovascular disease may be laid down in early life. Further evidence exists (Riddoch *et al.*, 2005) that major physiological risk factors persist from childhood into adulthood. Regular physical activity in childhood is associated with a number of protective mechanisms against cardiovascular disease development. Tolfrey and co-authors (1998) reported that increases in protective high density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL-C) have been observed among children undertaking regular exercise along with increased insulin sensitivity and beneficial blood lipid profiles. An inverse relationship between insulin sensitivity and the subsequent likelihood of developing non-insulin dependent (Type II) diabetes mellitus has previously been confirmed (Helmrich *et al.*, 1991).

Research by Barr Or and associates (1998) has established an association between elevated blood pressure among young people and an increased incidence of essential hypertension in adulthood. According to Twisk *et al.*, (2000) young people who engage in regular physical activity benefit from lower blood pressure readings and reduced body fatness, thought to be a further means of protection against developing hypertension. Undertaking physical activity is also linked to a higher level of aerobic fitness (Treuth *et al.*, 2004), while a poor level of aerobic fitness has been repeatedly associated with multiple risk factors for the development of cardiovascular disease. It seems safe to suppose that physical activity, fitness and body fatness are interrelated and that the whole complex can be assumed to be a risk factor for the development of cardiovascular disease.

Osteoporosis

Under normal circumstances, osteoporotic fractures occur only in the elderly population. A report published by the Chief Medical Officer (2004) revealed that substantial evidence is available to suggest that peak bone mass in young adults is a major determinant of peak bone mass in later life and therefore, that the risk of osteoporosis may be profoundly effected by events in youth and childhood. Valimaki and colleagues (2001) stated that exercise is the single most important environmental determinant of peak bone mineral density, exerting a greater effect than both smoking and calcium intake. This highlights the importance of exercise in the acquisition of peak bone mass and the potential advantages to be gained in reducing the risk of osteoporosis in later life.

The importance of exercise during the childhood years in attaining peak bone mineral density is stressed in a paper by Bass (2000). The skeleton undergoes rapid changes during childhood, modelling and re-modelling, resulting in large gains in bone mass. Furthermore, osteotrophic responses appear to be tempered soon after puberty and significant increases in bone mineral density are likely only achievable in the immature skeleton. Meaningful increases in bone density are achievable without targeted bone loading actions, elite sports performance or extraordinary amounts of activity. Greater bone densities have been reported by Janz *et al.* (2004) in physically active boys and girls than their less active peers. The authors advocate strategies to reduce inactivity and increase levels of moderate physical activity among children in order to incur a structural advantage for their future bone health.

Quality of Life and Psychological Factors

Physical activity and sport can have a profound effect on the quality of life and psychological well-being of children and young people. The 'feel-good' factor should not be underestimated as a motivation for increasing participation in sport and physical activity. Reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and osteoporosis in later life is likely to hold little appeal as a motivation to children to exercise. These factors are set in a distant future which children will struggle to relate to and it is the immediate, acute benefits of exercise that are more likely to determine a child's exercise behaviour.

Physical activity can have a positive impact on mental well-being through effects on self esteem and self-perceptions of competence and body image (Department of Health / Chief Medical Officer's Report, 2004). Telama and Nupponen (2005) reported that those children with high self-perception of physical competence are more active than those with low self-perception suggesting that an enhancement of perceived physical competence will be vital in promoting exercise among children. In addition, children with a high interest in physical activity have been observed to demonstrate higher scores in gross motor skills and lower body mass indices (Moore *et al.*, 2003).

The benefits of physical activity have regularly been associated with reduced incidence and severity of depression in adults (e.g. Martinsen and Sandvik, 1985). Tomson and co-workers reported an elevated risk for depressive symptomatology among inactive children, particularly boys. These authors suggest that daily involvement in physical education would not only ensure regular physical activity among children in general but might also serve a preventative role in the development of depression among children who display a tendency towards it. The use of physical activity as a preventative treatment or adjunct for depression in children is yet to be thoroughly examined but in light of the above results, perhaps should be. There is also evidence available (Morris *et al.*, 2003) to suggest that providing a safe and engaging environment for participation in physical activity might help to reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour and crime among youth.

Tracking and Environmental Influences

Substantial recent research has been conducted into the adolescent antecedents of adult physical activity behaviour but an accepted relationship has yet to be firmly established. There is general agreement, however, that physical activity levels have the tendency to decline between the ages of nine and 18, particularly among girls (Kimm *et al.*, 2000). Stability coefficients for both habitual physical activity and VO2MAX, a measure of aerobic fitness, are considered quite low (Twisk *et al.*, 2001), although Beunen and colleagues (2004) have reported stronger associations when considering the extremes (highly active individuals versus inactive individuals).

This pattern is confirmed in the work of Janz *et al.* (2000) who found when observing physical activity in children that more children remained in the 'extreme tertiles'¹ of activity than would have been expected by random distribution. These results suggest that, at least to some degree, the determinants of physical activity behaviours may occur in childhood and that early interventions are therefore likely to prove essential. However, the relative weakness of tracking emphasises the need for physical activity promotion as a lifelong process to revitalise the waning positive influences of activity promotion in children and young people (Trudeau *et al.*, 2004).

At younger ages, environmental influences from family and peers at school play a more important role in determining physical activity behaviours than personal factors such as gender and race (Chen and Zhu, 2005). Family interactions however, are complex; parent-child relationships are reciprocal with children being capable of influencing parents' behaviour (Lanotti *et al.* 2005). As a result, there is relatively little evidence for a direct relationship between parent and child physical activity. Indeed, recent work by Martin and colleagues (2005) has suggested that the degree of modelled behaviour exhibited by children with regard to the physical activity of their parents is showing signs of decreasing further still. Parents most often highlighted television and computers for the lack of physical activity among their children whereas children generally felt that they can achieve the recommended physical activity guidelines without sacrificing these activities (Gill *et al.*, 2004).

With this in mind, the importance of the school physical education environment in enhancing children's interest in physical activity becomes elevated. Chen and Zhu (2005) advocated the potential of physical education to provide

children with the skills and knowledge necessary to lead an active lifestyle and to develop a positive value system regarding physical activity. Other researchers (Vescio *et al.*, 2003) have highlighted the significance of role models in shaping physical activity behaviours. Role models form an essential component of the socialisation process of children, girls in particular. According to Vescio and colleagues (2003) elite sports stars may not serve as the best role models for young people who may struggle to relate to performances so far removed from their own abilities. Young people are more likely to be influenced by someone 'close to home,' (e.g. a teacher, parent or other family member) suggesting that peers may be the most effective role models.

A new line of enquiry focussing on innate biological mechanisms as additional factors in influencing exercise behaviour has begun to be considered (Stubbe *et al.*, 2005). Any innate drive would be likely to manifest itself in observed leisure time (self chosen) exercise behaviour. The authors (Stubbe *et al.*, 2005) concede that prior to the age of eighteen, the differences observed in participation in physical activity are highly attributable to environmental factors. They argue, however that among adults, differences in participation in physical activity can be accounted for almost entirely by genetic factors. Personality characteristics and physical fitness parameters definitely have the potential to influence exercise behaviour and both are known to be highly heritable (Armstrong *et al.*, 1990).

Numerous studies point toward the fact that physical activity among children and young people is influenced by a wide variety of social, psychological and environmental factors. A clearer understanding of the interrelation of these elements can be expected to help with the design of interventions that are effective at targeting inactivity among youth. The ultimate effects of inactivity in childhood on disease in adulthood remain unknown (Sallis, 2000) but there is bountiful evidence to suggest that this issue needs to be addressed in order to facilitate the protection of the future health of the adult population. Put simply, every child and adolescent needs exercise – it will prove a sound and largely risk-free investment in present and in future health (Ganley and Sherman, 2000).

¹ A tertile is one third of a given population that has been categorised according to a pre-defined classification system.

THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

The Sports Council for Wales (SCW) conducts biennial surveys into participation in sport and physical activity by children and young people throughout Wales. The latest of these surveys were conducted in 2004, by means of self-completion questionnaires administered to 10,750 children aged between seven and 11 years at 150 different primary schools across Wales and 11,961 young people aged between 11 and 16 years at 106 different secondary schools across Wales. The results of these surveys are presented below.

Levels of Physical Activity

- *41% of primary school age children and 24% of secondary school age children currently undertake sufficient physical activity to incur health benefits*

Current guidelines recommend that all children and young people should undertake at least 60 minutes of moderate intensity activity on at least five days of the week, in order to help promote and to maintain health. Among the key aims outlined in the WAG document, 'Climbing Higher', is that all primary-school aged children and 90% of secondary school aged children will achieve this recommendation by 2020.

Figure 1a shows that over two-fifths (41%) of children at primary schools across Wales currently undertake sufficient physical activity to satisfy the recommended guidelines. A further quarter (25%) are physically active on three or four

days of the week; just below the recommended amount. These figures are very similar to those reported in the 2002 survey, where 40% of children were sufficiently active and 26% active on three or four days of the week.

Primary school children are more active than their secondary school counterparts as Figure 1b below shows. Currently, a quarter (24%) of young people in Wales achieve the recommended guideline of an hour of activity on at least five days of the week. Furthermore, a quarter of secondary school pupils had failed to undertake an hour of physical activity on any day of the week prior to the survey and can therefore be classed as inactive. The proportion of young people who are inactive has increased from 20% since the previous (2001) survey, while the percentage that undertake sufficient physical activity has remained unchanged.

Gender Differences

- *A higher proportion of boys than girls in Wales are sufficiently physically active at both primary and secondary schools*

According to the latest surveys, boys (both of primary and secondary school age) are more likely than girls to undertake an hour of physical activity on five or more days of the week. This is a repeat of the trends observed in 2001 and 2002. In terms of inactivity levels gender differences are less pronounced, particularly among 7-11 year olds where very similar proportions of boys and girls are inactive.

Figure 1a – Number of days on which 60 minutes of physical activity is undertaken
Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years

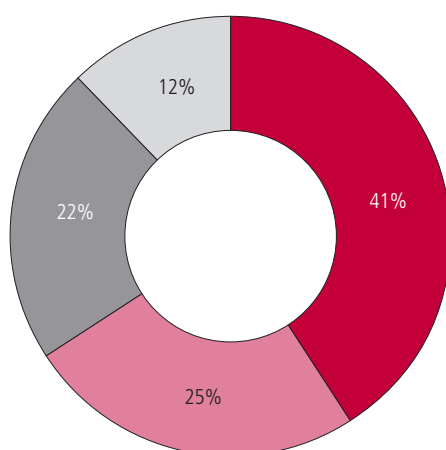
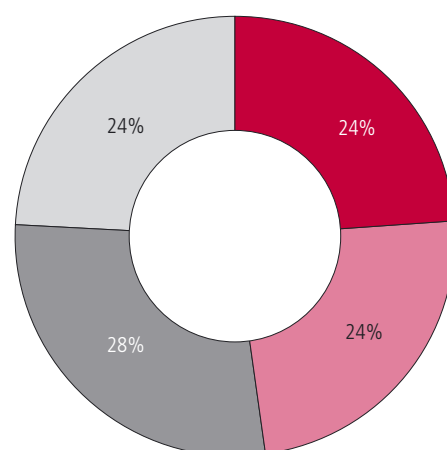


Figure 1b – Number of days on which 60 minutes of physical activity is undertaken
Base: young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years



■ 5 days+ ■ 3 - 4 days ■ 1 - 2 days ■ Inactive

The gender gap in undertaking sufficient physical activity is eight percentage points in favour of boys. Most of this difference can be accounted for by the fact that girls are more likely to be active on three or four days of the week, falling just short of achieving the recommended guidelines. There has been little change in the patterns of physical activity among boys since 2002. Then, as now, 45% of boys were sufficiently active and 12% inactive. During the same period, the proportion of girls engaging in sufficient physical activity has increased from 35% to 37%, while levels of inactivity have also increased slightly from 11% to 13%.

At secondary schools in Wales, the gender gap in undertaking sufficient physical activity is 11 percentage points in favour of boys. Boys are also more likely than girls to be active on three or four days of the week. Just over a quarter (26%) of girls can be classified as inactive compared with 22% of boys. Altogether, almost 60% of girls fail to complete an hour of physical activity on more than two days of the week. Conversely, 55% of boys are active for an hour on at least three days of the week. Since 2001, the percentage of boys who undertake sufficient physical activity has increased very slightly from 29% to 30% while the percentage of girls who do the same has remained unchanged. Over the same period,

levels of inactivity have increased among both boys and girls from 19% to 22% and from 22% to 26% respectively.

Age-Related Differences

- *At primary schools, older children are more likely than their younger counterparts to undertake sufficient exercise. Age has little bearing on activity levels among secondary school pupils*

The proportion of children that undertake sufficient levels of physical activity increases with increasing age throughout primary school. At seven years of age, around a third (34%) of children are physically active for an hour on five or more days of the week and a further fifth (19%) are active on three or four days of the week, just below the recommended level. By age nine, 39% of children are sufficiently active and a further 27% are active on three or four days of the week. Over half of all eleven year olds at primary schools in Wales undertake an hour of physical activity on five or more days of the week and over three-quarters are active on at least three days of the week.

Concomitant with an increase in the proportion of children who are sufficiently active is a decrease in those who are inactive. Approaching a quarter of seven year olds reported not having undertaken an hour of physical activity on any

Figure 2a – Gender differences in undertaking of physical activity
Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years

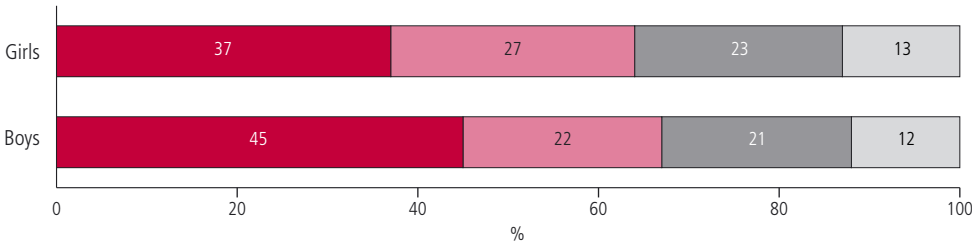


Figure 2b – Gender differences in undertaking of physical activity
Base: young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

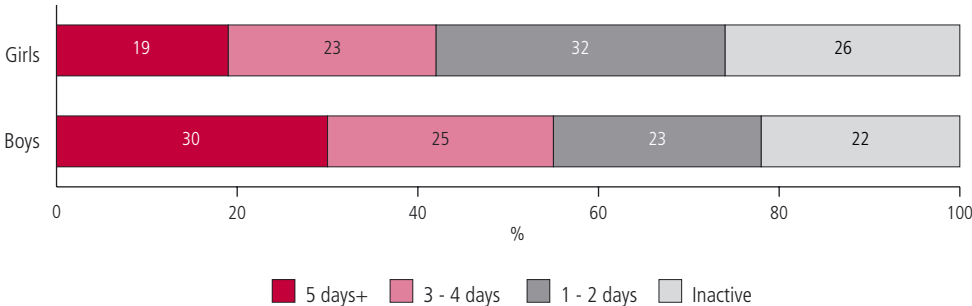


Figure 3a – Age-related differences in undertaking of sufficient physical activity
Base: children at primary Schools aged 7-11 years

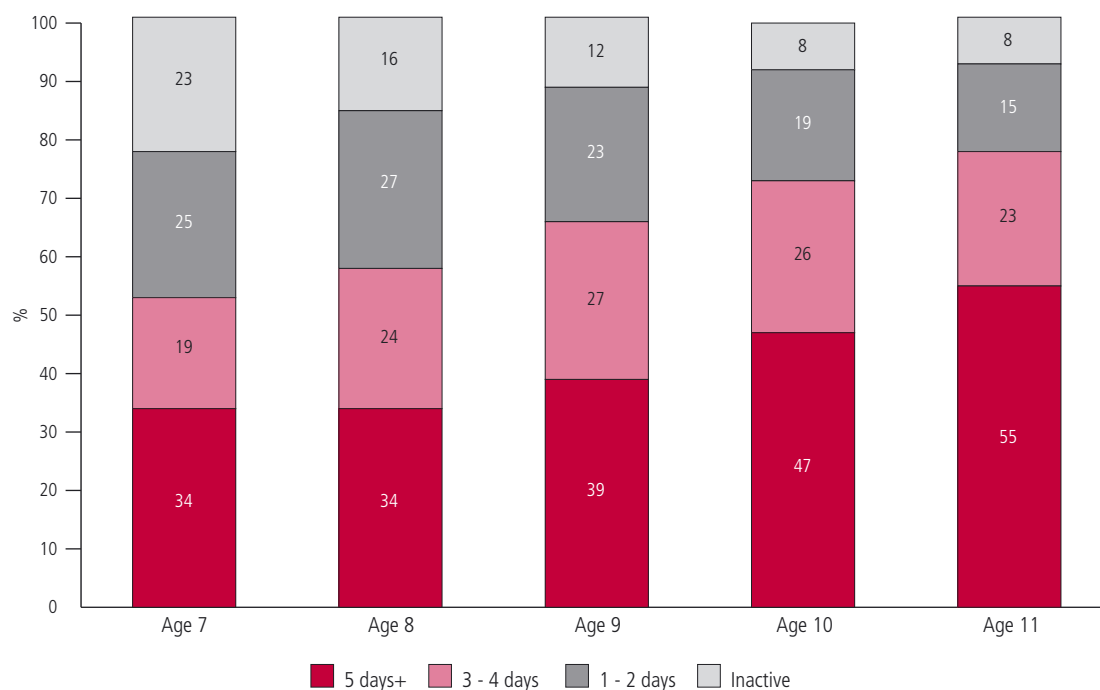
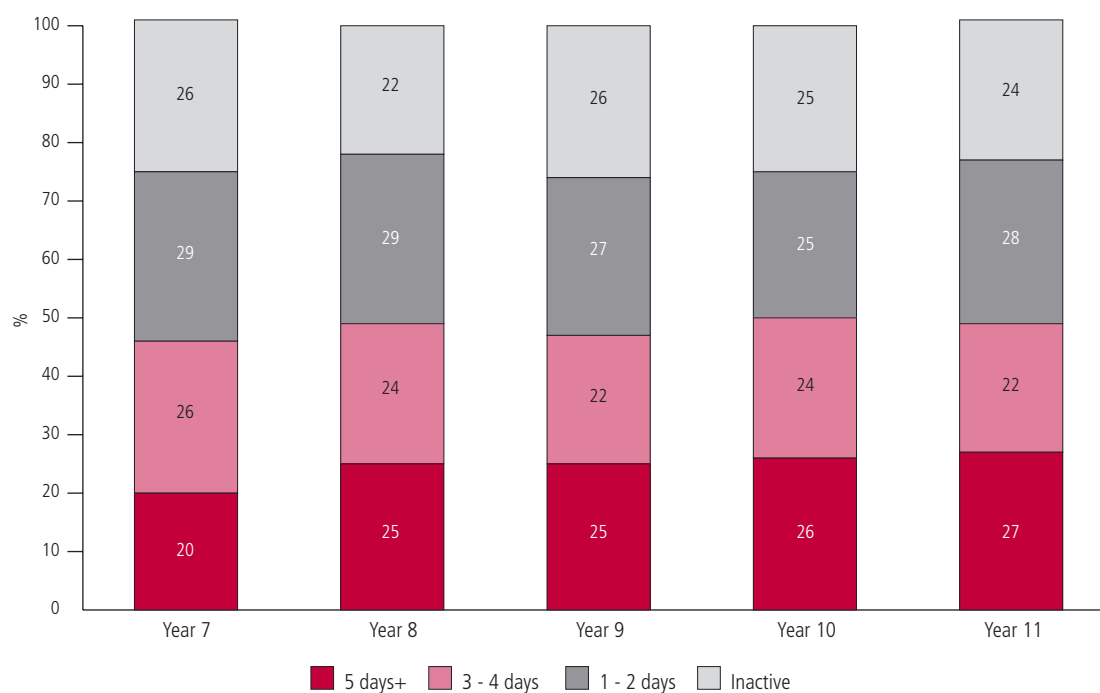


Figure 3b – Age-related differences in undertaking of sufficient physical activity
Base: young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years



day in the previous week. This figure falls to 16% of eight year olds and 12% of nine year olds. By age 10, the percentage of inactive children seems to have stabilised at less than 10%.

There is a large drop off in the proportion of children who are sufficiently physically active from age 11 in primary school to entering year seven in secondary school. Just a fifth of young people in year seven are active for an hour on at least five days of the week. By year 11, 27% of young people are sufficiently active, representing a seven percentage point increase on the figures recorded in year seven.

When studying Figure 3b as a whole, it appears as though age has relatively little impact on the physical activity behaviours of secondary school age young people. There is little change in the percentage of young people that are inactive

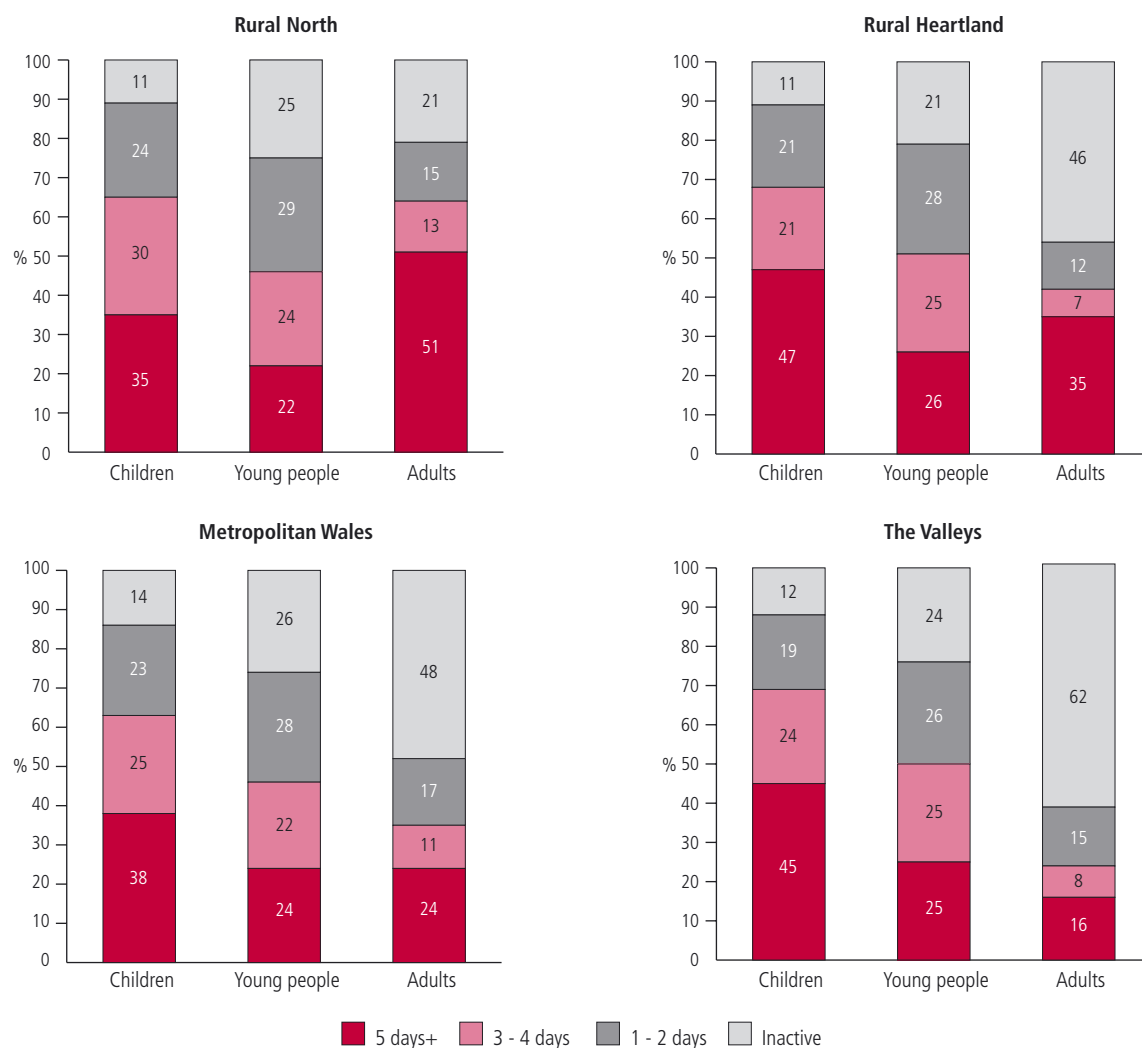
in the different year groups, remaining more or less constant at around 25%. This pattern is not dissimilar to the results observed in the 2001 survey, when inactivity levels were consistently lower at around 20% in each year group and the proportion of young people who were active on one or two days of the week was slightly higher at around 30%.

Geographical Differences

- *The likelihood of young people and particularly children undertaking physical activity varies by geographical area*
- *These variations are not reflective of the geographical variations observed among the adult population*

The Sports Council for Wales traditionally splits the principality into four distinct regions, namely the Rural North¹,

Figure 4 – Geographical differences in undertaking of sufficient physical activity (5*60 minutes children and young people, 5*30 minutes adults).



Rural Heartlands², The Valleys³ and Metropolitan Wales⁴. At adult level, geographical location has a major impact on the amount of physical activity undertaken – over half (51%) of the population of the Rural North undertake sufficient physical activity (30 minutes on at least five days of the week) compared to just 16% in The Valleys. Geographical location also appears to influence the amount of physical activity undertaken by young people, and children in particular. Interestingly, the differences do not appear to mirror those observed among the adult population (Figure 4).

Patterns of physical activity behaviour are relatively consistent across the different regions among secondary school age children. The highest proportion of sufficiently active young people can be found in the Rural Heartlands (26%) and the lowest in the Rural North (22%). The differences are equally small in terms of levels of inactivity, the lowest recorded in the Rural Heartlands (21%) and the highest in Metropolitan Wales (26%).

Among primary school age children, differences in physical activity behaviour are more pronounced. Inactivity levels remain relatively consistent across the regions, ranging from a high of 14% in Metropolitan Wales to a low of 11% in the Rural North and the Rural Heartlands. The proportion of children who are sufficiently active shows greater variation. The Rural Heartlands again enjoy the highest proportion (47%) of sufficiently active children, while 35% of children in the Rural North are sufficiently active, the lowest recorded rate throughout the different regions of Wales.

The Rural North is the only region of Wales where a higher proportion of adults are sufficiently active than both children and young people. Adults in the Rural Heartlands are more likely to be sufficiently active than young people in the region but less likely to be so than children. In Metropolitan Wales, the highest proportion of active individuals is found among children while similar percentages of adults and young people are sufficiently active. The proportion of the population that undertakes sufficient activity in The

Valleys decreases starkly from children to young people to adults.

As a general rule, adults are more likely to be inactive than children and young people (the exception being young people in the Rural North who have a higher inactivity rate than adults in the region). This pattern is most extreme in The Valleys, where adults are more than five times as likely as children to be classed as inactive. Almost half of all adults in Metropolitan Wales and the Rural Heartland are classed as inactive whereas less than 15% of children in these areas fall into this category. It is also noticeable that a smaller proportion of adults fall into the middle two activity groups compared with children and young people. Adults in Wales have a tendency either to be sufficiently active or inactive, with relatively few falling in between. This is not true of

¹ Rural North – Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Gwynedd

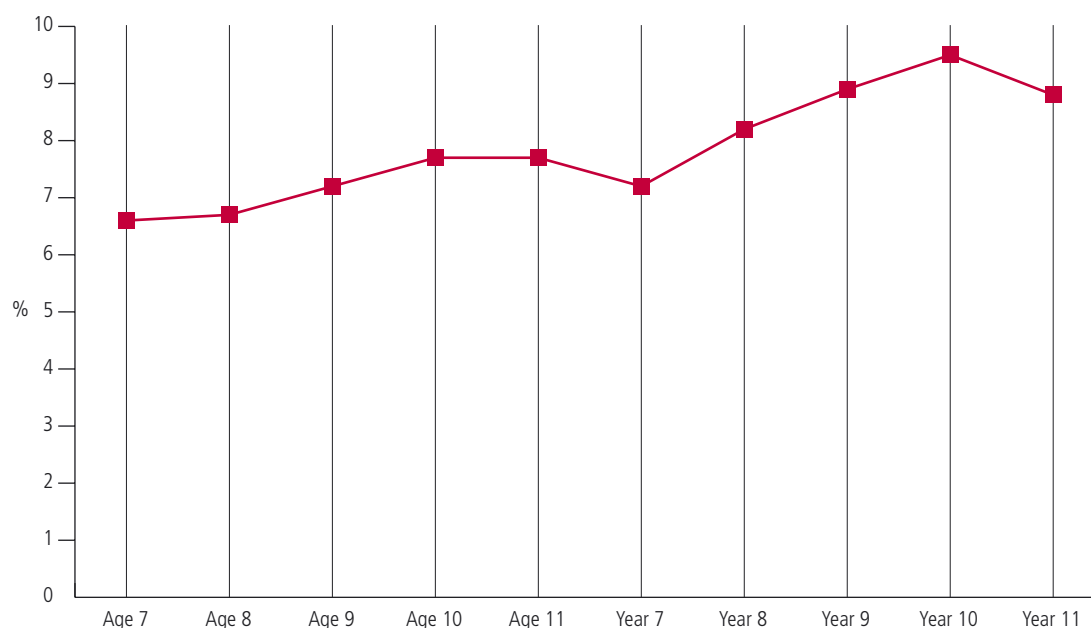
² Rural Heartland – Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Monmouthshire, Pembrokeshire, Powys

³ The Valleys – Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Torfaen

⁴ Metropolitan Wales – Bridgend, Cardiff, Flintshire, Newport, Swansea, Vale of Glamorgan, Wrexham



Figure 5 – Average number of curricular activities undertaken at different ages
 Base: children at primary school aged 7-11 years and young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years



children and young people, significant proportions of whom occupy the middle activity groups, undertaking physical activity on one or two days and three or four days of the week.

Curricular Activity

- *Older children undertake a greater number of curricular activities than their younger counterparts*
- *There is considerable variation by local authority in the average number of curricular activities undertaken by children*
- *Children who attend smaller primary schools undertake a greater number of curricular activities than children who attend larger primary schools*

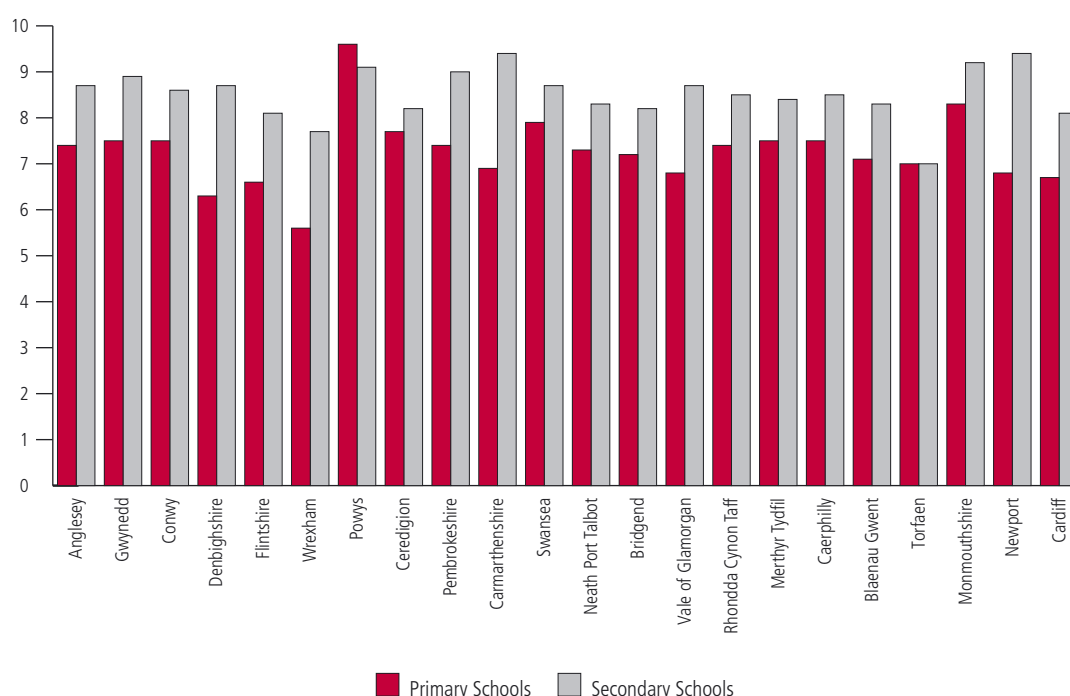
The average child at primary school in Wales will undertake 7.2 curricular activities over the course of a year with little difference between boys and girls, who undertake an average of 7.2 and 7.3 activities respectively. Secondary school children undertake a higher number of curricular activities than their primary school counterparts, 8.5 activities over the

course of a year. Gender differences are again small with the average boy undertaking 8.3 activities and the average girl undertaking 8.7 activities.

The number of curricular activities that the average child will undertake generally increases with age throughout school until reaching a peak of 9.5 in year 10. At primary school, seven year old children can expect to undertake 6.6 curricular activities while eleven year olds typically undertake 7.7 activities over the course of a year. There is a slight drop off in curricular activities undertaken between leaving primary school and joining secondary school but by year eight, this has recovered to a higher than previous level.

There is more variation in the average number of activities undertaken by children during curricular time when considering differences by local authority. At primary schools in Wrexham, the average child will undertake 5.6 curricular activities over a year. This is 4.0 activities less than the average child in Powys (9.6 activities). The range is less great at secondary schools. Young people in Carmarthenshire and Newport can expect to undertake 9.4 activities over the course of a year, 2.4 activities more than young people in Torfaen, who will undertake an average of 7.0 activities.

Figure 6 – Average number of curricular activities undertaken in different local authorities.
Base – children at primary schools aged 7-11 years and young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years



At primary school level the size of the school also has an impact on the number of curricular activities that a child can expect to undertake. At small schools (housing 60 pupils or less) children undertake an average of 8.1 activities over the course of a year. This is more than the average number of activities (7.4) undertaken by children attending medium sized schools (housing between 61 and 130 pupils) which, in turn, is more than the number of activities (7.0) undertaken by the average child at a large primary school of more than 130 pupils.

Popular Curricular Activities

- *There are large gender differences in undertaking of specific curricular activities at secondary schools*

On the whole, there is little difference in the popularity of curricular activities undertaken by boys and girls at primary schools in Wales. For the majority of sports, the participation rates for different genders are comparable. The biggest differences can be observed for participation in dance (boys 57%, girls 68%), football (boys 76%, girls 61%), netball (boys 38%, girls 55%) and rugby (boys 49%, girls 35%). In contrast, boys' and girls' rates of participation in curricular

activities at secondary schools differ greatly. Athletics, circuit training, cross country, outdoor pursuits and swimming are among the few sports in which boys and girls share a similar rate of participation.

Baseball / rounders is the most widely played curricular sport among 7-11 year old boys but is much less commonly played among 11-16 year olds. Upon reaching secondary school, football and rugby take over as the most commonly undertaken curricular activities followed by athletics and gymnastics. There is a substantial fall in the percentage of boys who undertake curricular swimming from 62% in primary schools to 40% in secondary schools.

There has been relatively little change in the percentage of children who undertake different curricular activities since the previous surveys in 2001 and 2002. Participation in dance and netball among primary school boys has increased by five and six percentage points respectively. At secondary school age, there have been increases in participation in basketball and circuit training, while participation in cricket and swimming has decreased.

Table 2 – Percentage of boys undertaking different curricular activities over the course of a year
Base: boys at primary schools aged 7-11 years and boys at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

Primary Schools			
Sport	2002	2004	Change
Baseball / rounders	81%	79%	– 2
Football	78%	76%	– 2
Athletics	67%	67%	+/- 0
Swimming	59%	62%	+ 3
Gymnastics	58%	59%	+ 1
Dance	52%	57%	+ 5
Cricket	48%	51%	+ 3
Rugby	47%	49%	+ 2
Hockey	36%	38%	+ 2
Netball	32%	38%	+ 6

Secondary Schools			
Sport	2001	2004	Change
Football	89%	91%	+ 2
Rugby	85%	85%	+/- 0
Athletics	75%	75%	+/- 0
Gymnastics	69%	67%	– 2
Basketball	61%	66%	+ 5
Cricket	64%	58%	– 6
Baseball/rounders	58%	56%	– 2
Circuit training	44%	48%	+ 4
Cross country	46%	48%	+ 2
Swimming	47%	40%	– 7

Among secondary school girls (Table 3), netball is the most commonly undertaken curricular sport with a participation rate of nearly 90%. The equivalent participation rate in primary school is just 55%. Football, rugby and cricket, sports traditionally associated with boys, are commonly undertaken by girls aged between seven and 11 years but not by girls aged eleven to sixteen years. Swimming does not feature in the ten most commonly played curricular sports at secondary school, despite being the fifth most common activity among primary school girls.

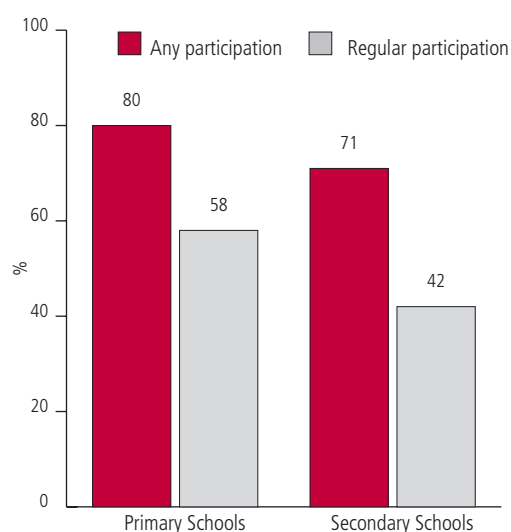
Increases in the participation rates of several sports are evident among primary school girls since the previous survey in 2002. Rugby and hockey, dance, gymnastics and cricket have all benefited from rises of four and five percentage points respectively. Since 2001, only circuit training has enjoyed an increase in participation (of six percentage points) among secondary school girls. Other sports, (gymnastics, five percentage points; dance, six percentage points and tennis, ten percentage points) have suffered a fall in the rate of curricular participation.

Table 3 – Percentage of girls undertaking different curricular activities over the course of a year
Base: girls at primary schools aged 7-11 years and girls at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

Primary Schools			
Sport	2002	2004	Change
Baseball/rounders	80%	80%	+/- 0
Athletics	68%	69%	+ 1
Dance	63%	68%	+ 5
Gymnastics	61%	66%	+ 5
Swimming	63%	64%	+ 1
Football	60%	61%	+ 1
Netball	52%	55%	+ 3
Cricket	41%	46%	+ 5
Hockey	34%	38%	+ 4
Rugby	31%	35%	+ 4

Secondary Schools			
Sport	2001	2004	Change
Netball	91%	89%	– 2
Gymnastics	80%	75%	– 5
Athletics	76%	74%	– 2
Hockey	75%	73%	– 2
Baseball/rounders	73%	72%	– 1
Dance	61%	55%	– 6
Cross country	44%	46%	+ 2
Tennis	54%	46%	– 10
Circuit training	38%	44%	+ 6
Badminton	40%	40%	+/- 0

Figure 7 – Percentage of children and young people participating in extra-curricular sport
Base: children at primary school aged 7-11 years and young people at secondary school aged 11-16 years



Extra-curricular Activity

- 80% of children and 71% of young people have participated in extra-curricular sport over the past year
- Participation in extra-curricular activity increases with increasing age at primary schools, while the reverse is true at secondary schools
- Considerable variation by Local Authority is evident in terms of participation in extra-curricular activities

In the 1999 strategy, 'Young people first' SCW set targets relating to extra-curricular participation in sport by children at primary and secondary schools. Its aim was that 60% of

secondary school-age children and 70% of primary school-age children would be involved in extra-curricular sport by the year 2005. The results of the latest surveys show that these targets have been exceeded. According to the latest figures, 80% of children at primary schools and 71% of young people at secondary schools have taken part in extra-curricular sport over the past year. Still more encouragingly, 58% of children and 42% of young people participated on a regular (at least weekly) basis.

Gender differences in participation in extra-curricular activities at primary schools (Table 4) are negligible. Eighty-one per cent of boys and 79% of girls reported having taken part on at least one occasion over the past year. In terms of regular participation, the gap is equally small (59% of boys and 57% of girls take part on a weekly basis). These figures are almost identical to those recorded in the 2002 survey of primary schools, suggesting a degree of stability surrounding the uptake of extra-curricular activities by girls and boys aged between seven and 11 years.

Participation in extra-curricular activities at secondary schools across Wales is subject to slightly greater gender differences, with boys being the more likely to have taken part. The same is true when considering regular participation and the difference is of similar magnitude. A slight narrowing of the gender gap since the 2001 survey is evident, but is the result of a slight decrease in participation among boys rather than an increase among girls. The figures recorded for regular participation in the current survey are identical to those reported by the 2001 survey for both genders.

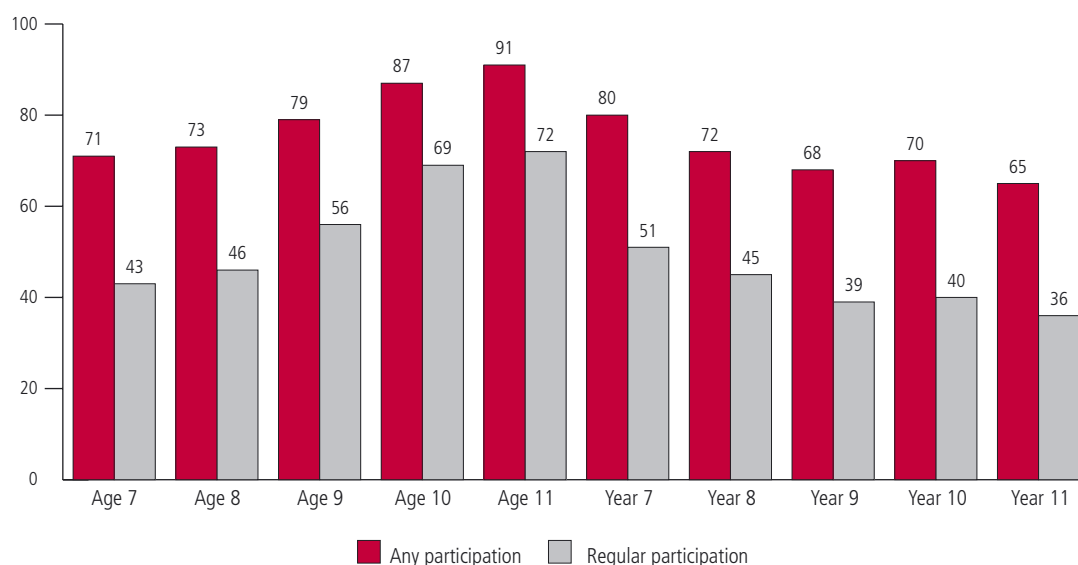
Whereas gender exerts a relatively small influence on levels of extra-curricular participation, age impacts significantly on the proportion of children who take part in extra-curricular sports. At primary schools, the proportion of children

Table 4 – Gender differences in any participation and regular participation in extra-curricular activities
Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years and young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

Primary Schools		2002	2004
Any participation over the past year	Boys	80%	81%
	Girls	79%	79%
Regular (at least weekly) participation	Boys	58%	59%
	Girls	58%	57%

Secondary Schools		2001	2004
Any participation over the past year	Boys	76%	74%
	Girls	69%	69%
Regular (at least weekly) participation	Boys	45%	45%
	Girls	40%	40%

Figure 8 Age-related differences in any participation and regular participation in extra-curricular activities
Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years and young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years



engaged in extra-curricular activity increases with increasing age. The reverse of this pattern is true of extra-curricular participation at secondary schools, where younger children enjoy higher participation rates than their older peers.

Just over 70% of seven year olds had participated in extra-curricular sport over the past year, increasing to nearly 80% of nine year olds and over 90% of 11 year olds. This represents a 20 percentage point increase in participation between the ages of seven and eleven. Forty-three percent (43%) of seven year olds took part in extra-curricular sport on a regular basis whereas nearly three-quarters (72%) of eleven year olds did the same.

There is a drop-off in the proportion of children who are involved with extra-curricular activities upon entering secondary school. Eighty percent of young people in year seven had participated in extra-curricular sport over the past year, a similar rate of participation to that found among nine year olds at primary school. Participation in extra-curricular sport continues to decline gradually with increasing age. By year nine, fewer than 70% of children take part in extra-curricular activity and fewer than 40% do so on a regular basis. The lowest rates of extra-curricular participation across the age range surveyed can be found among young people in year 11.

There is considerable variation in the participation rate for any and regular extra-curricular activity in different local



Table 5 – Participation and regular participation in extra-curricular activity at different local authorities across Wales
Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years and young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

Local Authority	Primary Schools		Secondary Schools	
	Any participation (%)	Regular participation (%)	Any participation (%)	Regular participation (%)
Anglesey	75.5	54.5	72.4	42.1
Blaenau Gwent	50.4	29.4	76.1	44.7
Bridgend	77.5	64.8	69.1	44.2
Caerphilly	84.7	57.0	75.4	49.5
Cardiff	82.0	65.7	67.2	36.1
Carmarthenshire	91.9	76.8	73.8	46.9
Ceredigion	78.7	54.6	67.6	39.7
Conwy	87.4	50.2	64.3	31.2
Denbighshire	85.9	60.3	69.4	39.9
Flintshire	84.4	59.8	70.2	38.3
Gwynedd	90.3	43.4	77.2	41.2
Merthyr	71.5	58.3	66.1	33.1
Monmouthshire	84.3	64.3	71.5	45.1
Neath Port Talbot	78.9	60.6	73.8	45.3
Newport	80.6	52.6	74.3	41.5
Pembrokeshire	91.3	70.3	75.2	49.3
Powys	88.8	72.6	70.0	46.5
Rhondda Cynon Taff	61.7	43.7	75.1	46.2
Swansea	79.8	52.6	72.6	42.4
Torfaen	76.5	58.9	59.3	34.8
Vale of Glamorgan	76.6	43.4	73.6	39.7
Wrexham	86.3	60.9	62.9	42.2

authorities across Wales. The range for participation at primary schools is particularly great (41.5% for any participation) and significant differences (range of 17.9%) are also evident at secondary schools. Table 5 presents participation rates for each of the 22 local authorities in Wales based on the results of the latest survey.

Popular Extra-curricular Activities

- *Gender differences in extra-curricular participation in specific activities are more pronounced at secondary schools*
- *Participation rate in most extra-curricular activities has shown little change since 2001/02*

At primary school level, boys and girls share a similar participation rate for the majority of extra-curricular activities.

Girls are more likely to participate in dance and netball while participation in football and rugby is dominated by boys. These examples aside, participation rates for boys and girls in other extra-curricular sports tend to be within a few percentage points of each other. This is in complete contrast to the situation in secondary schools, where gender divides in extra-curricular participation are pronounced. The biggest differences can be found in the same sports where differences exist at primary school level – dance and netball in favour of girls, and football and rugby in favour of boys.

Among primary school-age boys, football is by far the most commonly undertaken extra-curricular activity. Football is also the most popular extra-curricular activity at secondary schools but rugby comes in a much closer second. The most commonly undertaken extra-curricular activities are similar

Table 6 – Percentage of boys undertaking different extra-curricular activities over the course of a year
Base: boys at primary schools aged 7-11 years and boys at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

Primary Schools			
Sport	2002	2004	Change
Football	64%	63%	– 1
Rugby	35%	37%	+ 2
Baseball / rounders	32%	32%	+/- 0
Cricket	29%	30%	+ 1
Athletics	27%	28%	+ 1
Swimming	27%	26%	– 1
Hockey	14%	17%	+ 3
Basketball	10%	14%	+ 4
Cross country	12%	14%	+ 2
Dance	10%	13%	+ 3

Secondary Schools			
Sport	2001	2004	Change
Football	47%	47%	+/- 0
Rugby	46%	44%	– 2
Athletics	22%	19%	– 3
Cricket	20%	15%	– 5
Basketball	13%	14%	+ 1
Swimming	12%	11%	– 1
Cross country	10%	9%	– 1
Tennis	10%	9%	– 1
Gymnastics	9%	8%	– 1
Badminton	7%	7%	+/- 0

to those undertaken under curricular circumstances (Table 2), although the order of popularity is different.

There has been a four percentage point increase in participation in basketball among seven to eleven year old boys since the 2002 survey. Dance and hockey have both enjoyed increases in participation of three percentage points over the same period. Little change is evident in the participation rates for extra-curricular sports among boys of secondary school age. Cricket has suffered from a five percentage point decrease in participation since 2001 and participation in athletics has fallen from 22% to 19%.

According to the results of the latest survey, football has taken over from netball as the most commonly undertaken extra-curricular activity among primary school age girls and also features among the most popular extra-curricular sports at secondary schools. Netball is still the most commonly played extra-curricular sport among eleven to sixteen year old girls. The sports most commonly undertaken by primary school girls under extra-curricular circumstances are identical to those undertaken under curricular circumstances (Table 3). In the case of secondary schools, eight of the most popular extra-curricular sports also feature in the list of the most frequently undertaken curricular activities.

Table 7 – Percentage of girls undertaking different extra-curricular activities over the course of a year
Base: girls at primary schools aged 7-11 years and girls at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

Primary Schools			
Sport	2002	2004	Change
Football	35%	37%	+ 2
Netball	38%	36%	– 2
Baseball / rounders	35%	32%	– 3
Dance	28%	29%	+ 1
Athletics	28%	27%	– 1
Swimming	29%	27%	– 2
Cricket	21%	20%	– 1
Hockey	13%	18%	+ 5
Gymnastics	17%	17%	+/- 0
Rugby	14%	15%	– 1

Secondary Schools			
Sport	2001	2004	Change
Netball	41%	38%	– 3
Hockey	22%	21%	– 1
Athletics	18%	18%	+/- 0
Dance	15%	18%	+ 3
Football	10%	17%	+ 7
Gymnastics	15%	14%	– 1
Baseball/rounders	13%	13%	+/- 0
Swimming	13%	13%	+/- 0
Cross country	8%	10%	+ 2
Tennis	9%	8%	– 1

There has been a large increase (seven percentage points) in extra-curricular participation in football among girls at secondary schools since the previous survey in 2001. At primary school level, hockey has enjoyed the biggest increase in participation (five percentage points) since the 2002 survey. Most of the sports listed have undergone little change in rate of participation over the period since the previous surveys although small decreases are evident in baseball / rounders (primary school level) and netball (secondary school level).

Barriers to Extra-curricular Participation

- *Among primary and secondary school pupils combined, the most commonly cited barrier to extra-curricular participation is a lack of time*

Pupils at primary and secondary schools were asked to identify the reasons why they did not take part in extra-curricular activities, or if they did take part, why they did not do so more often. Figure 9 reveals the explanations offered by seven to 11 year olds. Among those children that never take part, the fact that they have never been asked was most commonly stated as the reason why, closely followed by not

having enough spare time. A dislike of sport was mentioned by just 10% of these pupils. The overwhelming majority of children that take part on a regular basis stated that they did not take part more often because they already do enough sport.

Lack of time is the most commonly cited barrier to extra-curricular participation among secondary school pupils. As at primary school, never having been asked is an important reason but secondary school pupils are more likely to feel that they are not good enough at sport. Again, a dislike of sport per se comes towards the bottom of the list of barriers to participation. Interestingly, lack of time appears to be an issue for those pupils who already participate regularly but would like to do so on a still more frequent basis.

Figure 9 – Barriers to (increased) extra-curricular participation among children
Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years

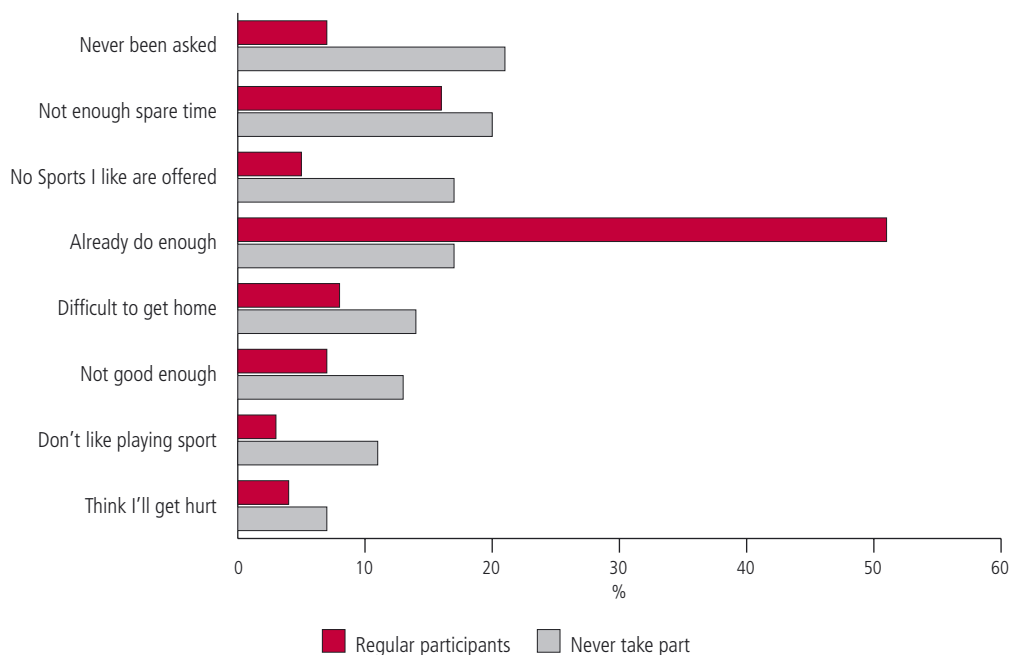
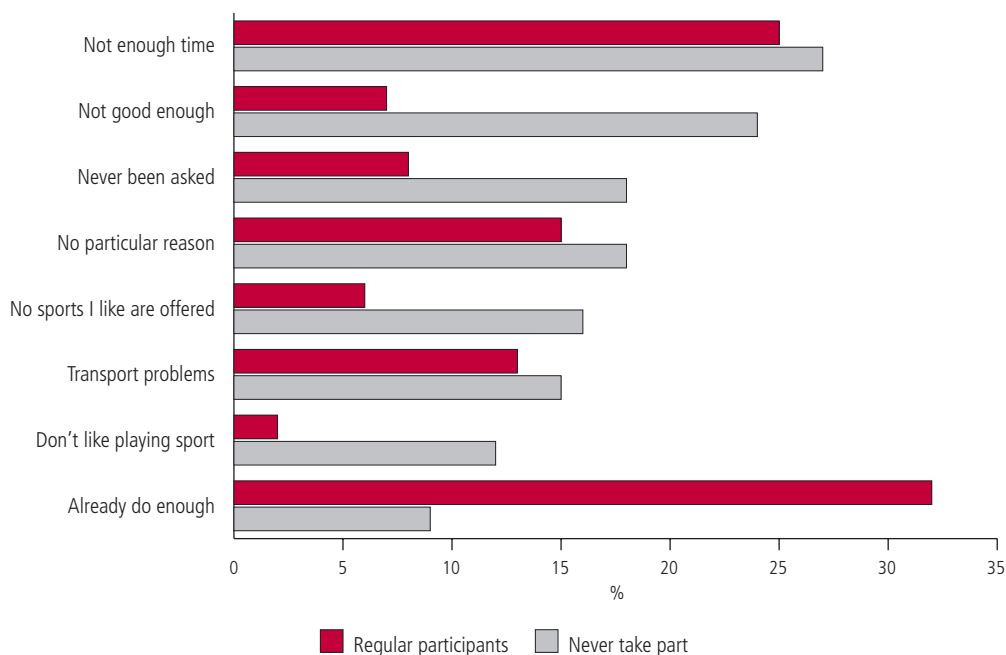


Figure 10 – Barriers to (increased) extra-curricular participation among young people
Base: young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years



Club-based Participation

- 78% of primary school children and 73% of secondary school children take part in club-based sporting activities
- There are pronounced gender differences (particularly at secondary schools) with boys being more likely to participate
- Peak rate of participation is achieved in Year 7, beyond which participation rates begin to decline
- Significant variation in participation by local authority is evident

Target seven of 'Climbing Higher' states that 80% of children in Wales should be junior members of sports clubs or centres by 2020. The targets set out for achievement by SCW were for 60% of 11-16 year olds and 65% of seven to eleven year olds to participate in club-based sports by 2005 (Young people first, 1999). The figures from the 2004 primary and secondary school surveys show that the SCW targets have already been achieved and that the 'Climbing Higher' target is most likely on course for achievement by 2020.

Over three-quarters (78%) of primary school age children and approaching three-quarters (73%) of secondary school age children participated in club-based sport over the previous year (Figure 11). These figures are exactly the same as

Figure 11 – Percentage of children and young people participating in club based sport
Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years and young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

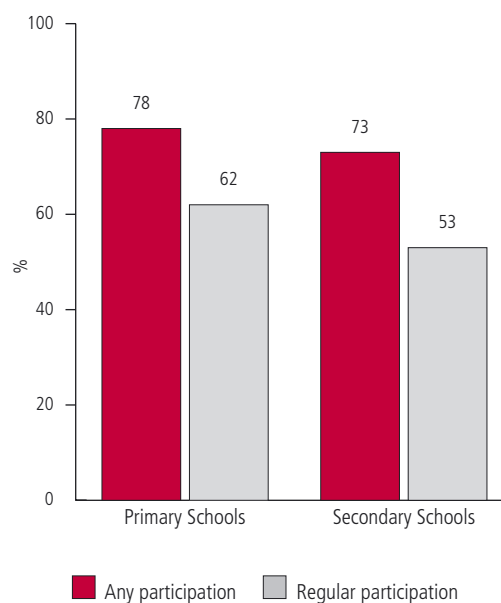


Figure 12a – Gender differences in participation and regular participation in club based activities
Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years

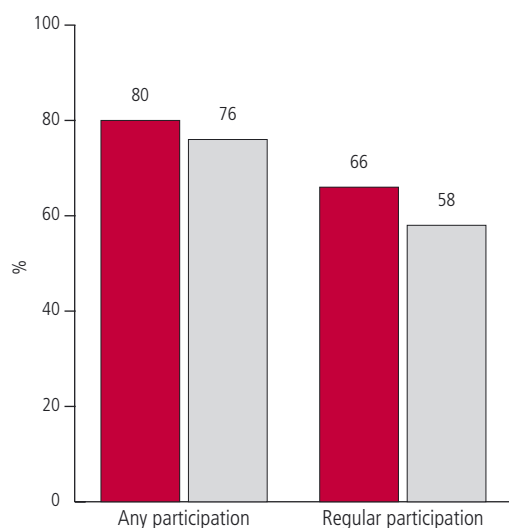
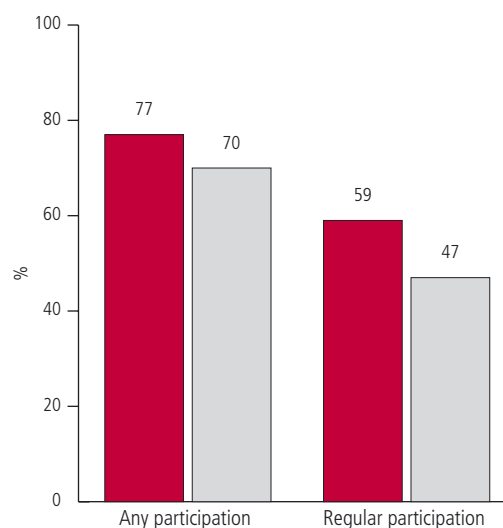


Figure 12b – Gender differences in participation and regular participation in club based activities
Base: young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years



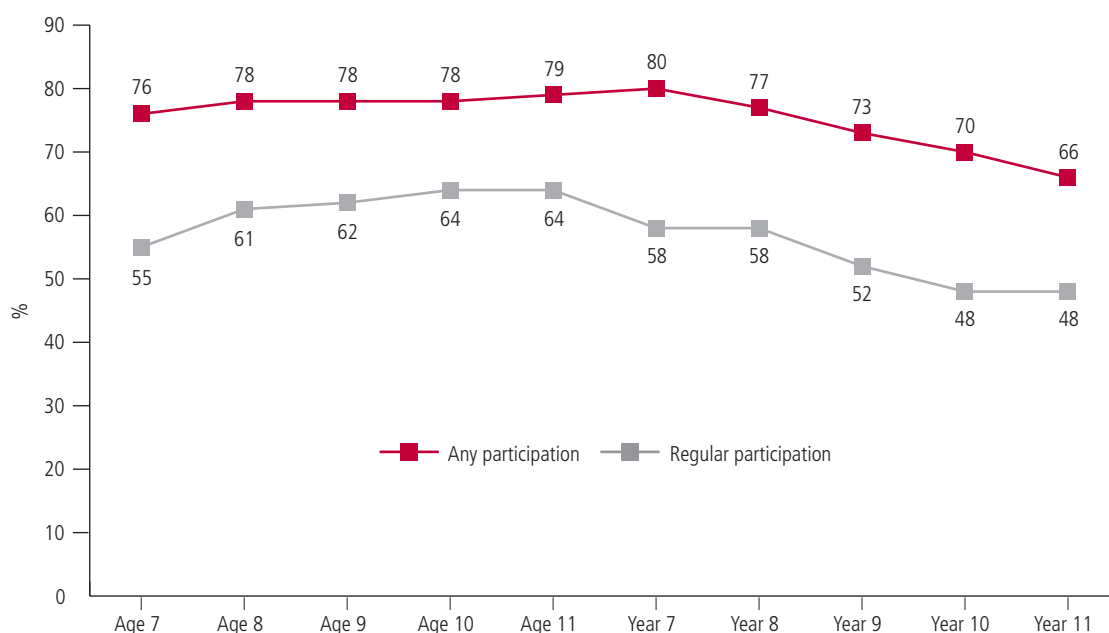
■ Boys ■ Girls

those recorded in the previous surveys conducted in 2002 and 2001 respectively. The proportion of children and young people who engage regularly (on at least a weekly basis) in club-based activities has also remained consistent since the previous surveys.

Larger gender differences in club based participation are apparent than were found in extra-curricular participation among seven to eleven year old children. Eighty per cent of boys and 76% of girls had taken part in club-based sport over the past year. In terms of regular participation, the gender gap became slightly larger with 66% of boys and 58% of girls taking part. Encouragingly though, the gender gap has shown a trend towards decreasing since the 2002 survey when 80% of boys and 75% of girls took part under any circumstances; 65% and 56% on a regular basis.

Among secondary school age children, gender differences in participation in club based sports are pronounced – much greater than the differences observed at primary school level and also greater than the gender differences previously reported for extra-curricular activity. Over three-quarters (77%) of boys had taken part in club-based sport over the past year compared with 70% of girls, a gap of seven percentage points. In terms of regular (at least weekly) participation, the

Figure 13 – Age-related differences in any participation and regular participation in club based activities
 Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years and young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years



gap increases to twelve percentage points – 59% of boys took part in club based sports regularly compared with just 47% of girls. Although the gender gap remains considerable, it has narrowed slightly since the previous survey. In 2001 participation rates for club-based activities were 77% of boys and 69% of girls with 59% of boys involved on a regular basis compared with just 44% of girls.

In contrast to the pattern observed for extra-curricular activity, age, although significant, plays less of a determining factor than gender in club based participation. At primary school level, the proportion of children that take part in club-based sports changes very little with increasing age. The proportion of children who are involved on a regular basis increases steadily with increasing age. The age-related pattern at secondary schools is different with the proportion of young people taking part in club-based activities under any circumstances and on a regular basis both decreasing with increasing age.

From the age of seven, until entering year 9, over three quarters of children and young people take part in club-based sport, with a peak of 80% reached in year seven, the first year of secondary school. Seventy per cent of young people in year 10 participate in club based activities falling further to two-thirds of young people in year 11. The partici-

pation rate in year 11 is ten percentage points lower than the participation rate at age seven and fourteen percentage points lower than the participation rate in year seven. Regular involvement in club based sport follows a similar trend but the peak participation rate is reached earlier, at age 10. Approaching two-thirds (64%) of ten and eleven year olds at primary school take part in club-based activities on a weekly basis. This proportion drops to 58% of young people in years seven and eight of secondary school and declines further to under half (48%) of young people in years ten and eleven.

There are significant differences in the participation rates for club-based activities across the different local authorities in Wales. At primary school level, the range is not as great as that observed for extra-curricular activities but it is still considerable (14.8% for any participation, 19.3% for regular participation). The magnitude of the differences at secondary school level is similar to those observed for extra-curricular activity and also similar to the disparities evident at primary school level, a range of 16.5% for any participation and 21.1% for regular participation.

Table 8 – Participation and regular participation in club based activity at different local authorities across Wales
Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years and young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

Local Authority	Primary Schools		Secondary Schools	
	Any participation (%)	Regular participation (%)	Any participation (%)	Regular participation (%)
Anglesey	72.8	59.9	74.9	50.5
Blaenau Gwent	69.3	51.7	72.0	54.4
Bridgend	68.8	61.1	74.3	52.8
Caerphilly	80.2	62.0	73.8	53.1
Cardiff	75.3	60.1	72.6	48.7
Carmarthenshire	80.3	66.2	73.1	52.5
Ceredigion	72.8	61.9	74.5	57.6
Conwy	82.8	67.5	63.8	39.1
Denbighshire	78.8	60.6	68.2	49.8
Flintshire	73.4	60.6	67.8	50.5
Gwynedd	83.4	67.3	75.4	51.0
Merthyr	74.9	58.9	71.8	51.1
Monmouthshire	83.6	65.3	74.8	54.2
Neath Port Talbot	83.6	70.2	76.7	58.1
Newport	74.6	53.3	79.2	55.3
Pembrokeshire	80.5	71.0	76.9	57.7
Powys	80.8	67.9	70.7	54.5
Rhondda Cynon Taff	77.0	65.7	77.7	60.2
Swansea	79.2	59.9	73.0	52.4
Torfaen	77.4	55.6	64.1	43.0
Vale of Glamorgan	81.3	60.7	80.3	57.1
Wrexham	82.0	61.1	69.0	50.7

Popular club based activities

- *There are significant gender differences in participation rates in specific sports, particularly at secondary school level*
- *Participation rates have remained largely consistent since the previous survey although increases in certain sports (notably dance and football) are evident among secondary school girls*

Primary school age boys and girls share the same participation rates for club based involvement in athletics, badminton and cross country. Boys are more likely than girls to take part in cricket, football and rugby whereas girls are more likely to be involved with dance, gymnastics and horse riding.

Club-based gender differences are the norm at secondary school level. As at primary school, the biggest differences are observed in football and rugby, where boys are more likely to take part, and in dance and netball, where participation by girls is more common.

Around half of all boys at primary and secondary school have taken part in club based football over the past year, making it the most commonly undertaken club sport. Among 11-16 year olds, rugby takes over from swimming as the second most popular activity. Club-based participation in swimming at secondary school is half that found at primary school.

Table 9 – Percentage of boys undertaking different club based activities over the course of a year
Base: boys at primary schools aged 7-11 years and boys at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

Primary Schools				Secondary Schools			
Sport	2002	2004	Change	Sport	2001	2004	Change
Football	53%	51%	– 2	Football	45%	47%	+ 2
Swimming	33%	35%	+ 2	Rugby	30%	29%	– 1
Rugby	25%	25%	+/- 0	Swimming	17%	17%	+/- 0
Cricket	16%	18%	+ 2	Golf	11%	11%	+/- 0
Judo / martial arts	19%	18%	– 1	Cricket	13%	10%	– 3
Golf	-	15%	-	Judo/martial arts	9%	10%	+ 1
Tennis	13%	12%	– 1	Tennis	11%	10%	– 1
Athletics	10%	10%	+/- 0	Weight training	8%	9%	+ 1
Baseball / rounders	12%	10%	– 2	Athletics	8%	7%	– 1
Basketball	8%	9%	+ 1	Basketball	7%	7%	+/- 0

The participation rate for specific club-based activities has remained largely stable since the previous surveys conducted in 2002 and 2001. A three percentage point decrease in participation in cricket among eleven to sixteen year old boys is the greatest change in participation observed.

Swimming, dance and football are the three most commonly undertaken club-based activities by both primary and secondary school girls. Participation rates are greater at primary schools, particularly for swimming where the rate of participation is fifteen percentage points higher. Horse riding is as popular as football among primary school age girls but

does not feature among the most common club-based activities of eleven to sixteen year old girls.

Since the 2002 survey, participation rates for the listed sports at primary school have remained stable; the biggest change observed being a three percentage point decrease in participation in tennis. Both dance and football have enjoyed increases in participation at the secondary school level since 2001, of five percentage points and six percentage points respectively. Trampolining has also undergone a small increase in participation while participation in other sports has remained largely constant.

Table 10 – Percentage of girls undertaking different club based activities over the course of a year
Base: girls at primary schools aged 7-11 years and girls at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

Primary Schools				Secondary Schools			
Sport	2002	2004	Change	Sport	2001	2004	Change
Swimming	42%	42%	+/- 0	Swimming	28%	27%	– 1
Dance	29%	31%	+ 2	Dance	21%	26%	+ 5
Football	17%	18%	+ 1	Football	10%	16%	+ 6
Horse riding	20%	18%	– 2	Netball	15%	15%	+/- 0
Gymnastics	17%	15%	– 2	Gymnastics	11%	11%	+/- 0
Netball	14%	12%	– 2	Tennis	9%	10%	+ 1
Athletics	11%	10%	– 1	Athletics	9%	9%	+/- 0
Judo / martial arts	10%	10%	+/- 0	Judo/martial arts	10%	9%	– 1
Tennis	13%	10%	– 3	Hockey	7%	8%	+ 1
Baseball/rounders	11%	9%	– 2	Trampolining	5%	8%	+ 3

Coaching and Competition

- *46% of primary school children have taken part in competitive activities over the past year compared with 61% of secondary school children*
- *Two-thirds (66%) of secondary school children have received sports coaching over the past year. Coaching is more likely to occur at a club than at school*

As part of the survey conducted in primary schools, children were asked whether they have played any sports in a competition or match with another school. The results of the latest survey revealed that 47% of children at primary schools had been involved in a competitive fixture over the past year.

The gender gap has widened slightly since the 2002 survey. Currently, just over half of seven to eleven year old boys (52%) have been involved in competitive activities compared

to just over two-fifths (42%) of girls. The proportion of boys that have undertaken competitive activity has increased by two percentage points since 2002 while the proportion of girls involved has remained constant over the same period.

Of greater significance than gender in determining the likelihood of a child undertaking competitive activity is age. In the first year of primary school, just 27% of seven year olds had taken part in a competitive match against another school. By age eleven, the proportion of children involved had risen to over 70%. The biggest increases in undertaking competitive activity can be seen between the ages of nine and ten and ten and eleven.

At secondary school level, competitive activities are divided into competition with a school team and competition with a club-based team. Sixty per cent of young people have taken part in a competitive fixture representing either their school or a club. Competition with a school based team is slightly more common, reflecting the pattern observed in the 2001 survey.

Figure 14 – Proportion of boys and girls who have taken part in a competitive match with another school over the past year
Base: children at primary school aged 7 – 11 years

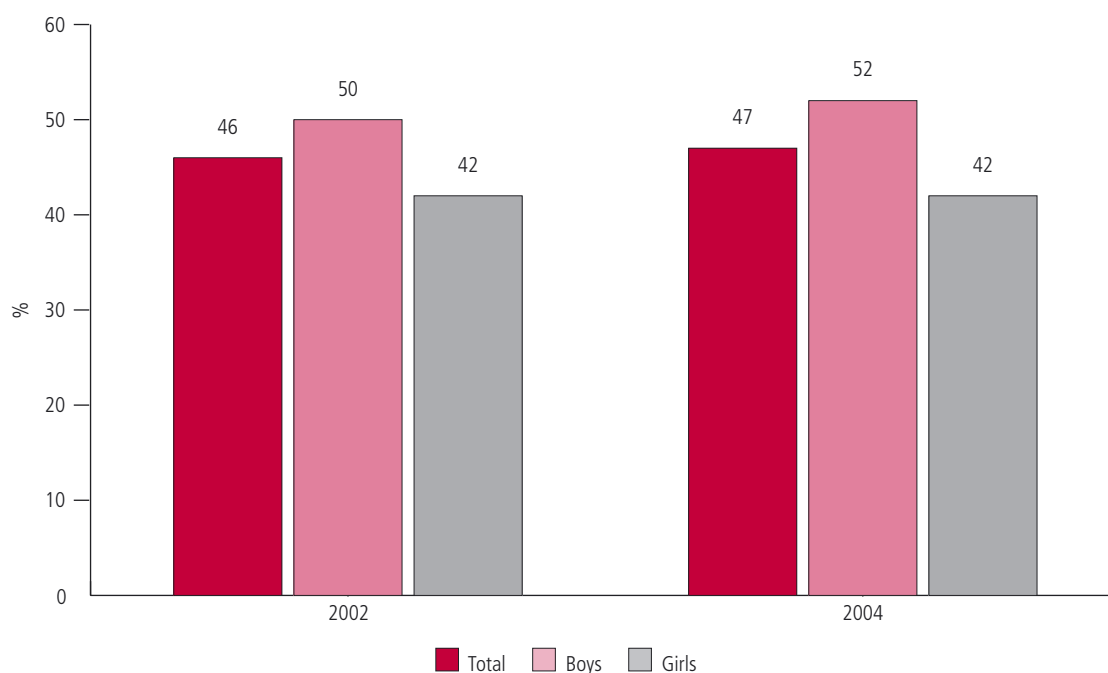


Figure 15 – Age related differences in involvement in competitive activities
 Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years

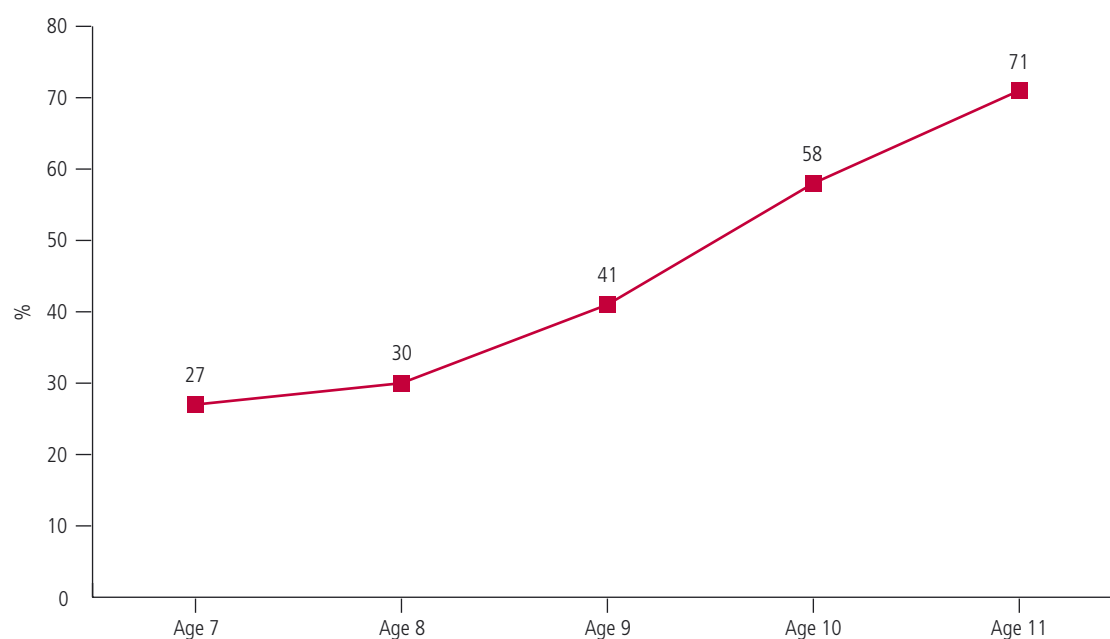


Figure 16 – Percentage of young people involved in competitive fixtures over the past year with school or club-based teams
 Base: young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

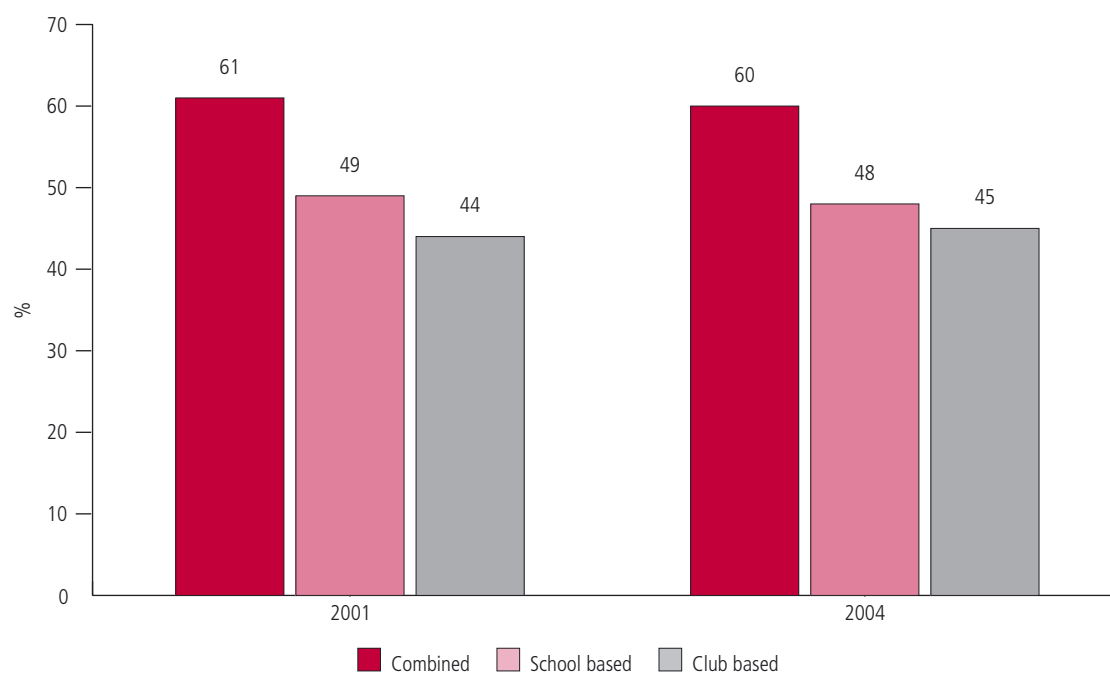


Table 11 – Gender difference in the percentage of young people involved in competitive fixtures over the past year with school or club-based teams

Base: young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

	2001		2004	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
School based competition	56%	42%	53%	43%
Club based competition	57%	30%	56%	34%
Any competition	69%	52%	67%	53%

Boys are more likely than girls to engage in competitive activities. Over half (53%) of boys have represented their school in a competition against another school whereas just over two-fifths (43%) of girls have done the same. This is a reduction in the gender gap observed in 2001 (Table 11). The proportion of girls involved in competitive activities has increased slightly since the last survey while the proportion of boys that take part competitively has decreased over the same period. Boys are also more likely to have represented a club in a competitive match than girls. In 2004, 56% of boys took part in competitive club-based activities compared with just 34% of girls. Again the gender gap has narrowed since 2001 when the equivalent figures were 57% and 30% respectively.

At primary school level, the proportion of children involved in competitive activities was seen to increase considerably with

increasing age. The pattern observed at secondary schools is somewhat different; the highest proportion of young people involved in competitive activities can be found in year seven. There is a decrease in competitive involvement in year eight after which the participation rate stabilises at around 45%. School-based competition is invariably more common than club-based participation throughout secondary school.

The survey conducted at secondary schools throughout Wales also probes whether young people have received sports coaching over the past year, either at school or at a club. Two-thirds of young people (66%) surveyed in 2004 had received coaching over the past year. This is very similar to the figure recorded in the previous survey in 2001 (67%). In both surveys, young people were more likely to receive coaching at a club rather than at school.

Figure 17 – Age related differences in involvement in competitive activities

Base: young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

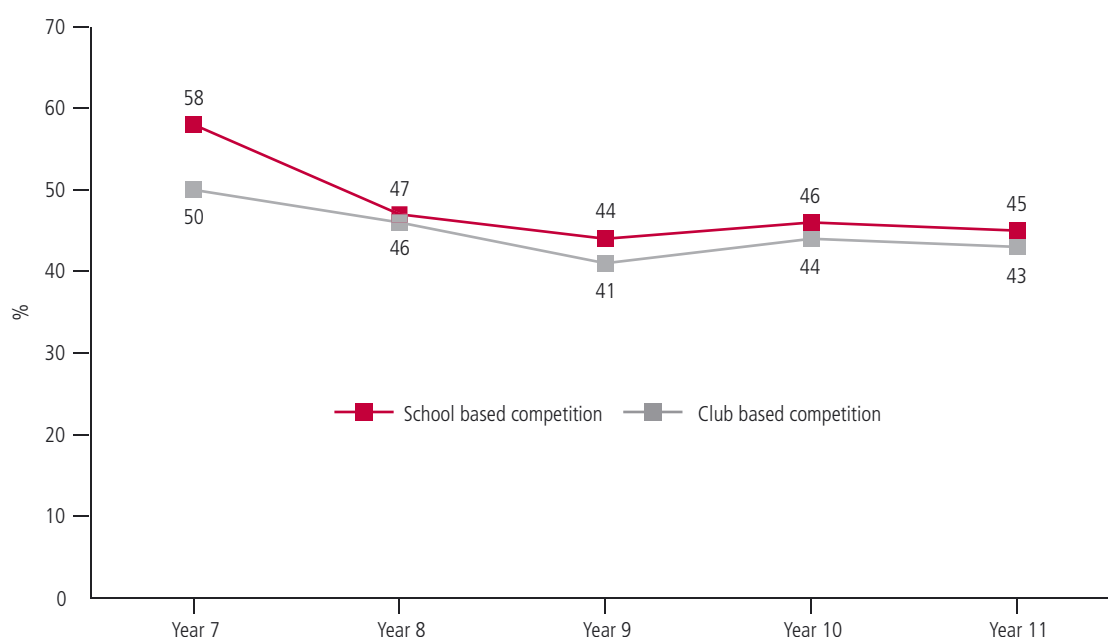


Figure 18 – Percentage of young people who have received coaching over the past year at school or at a club
Base: young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

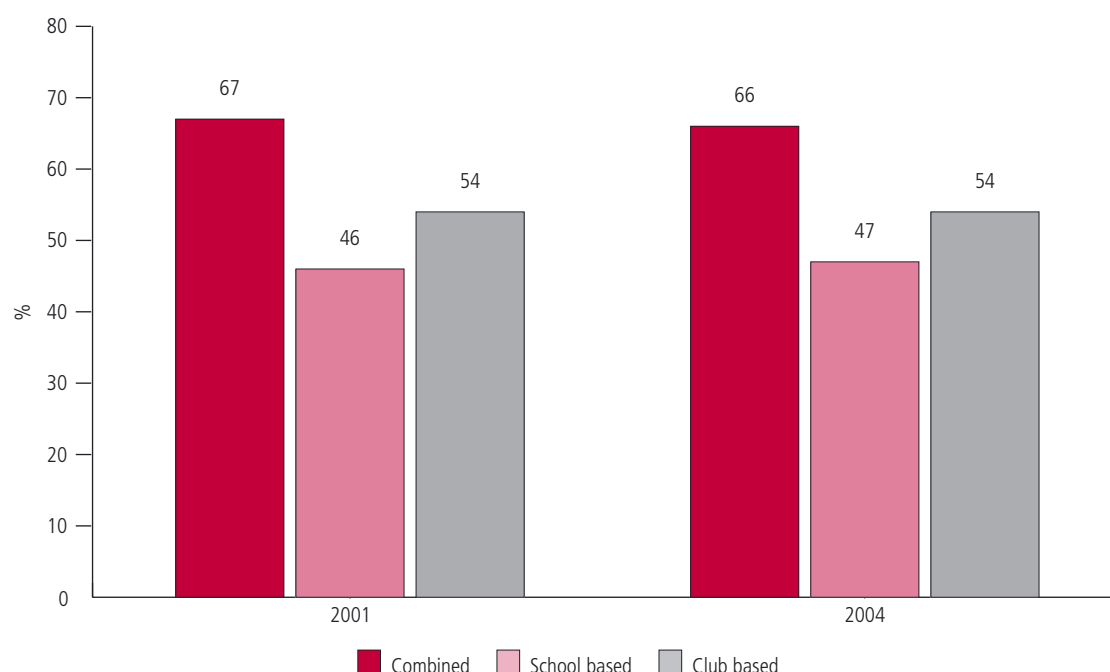


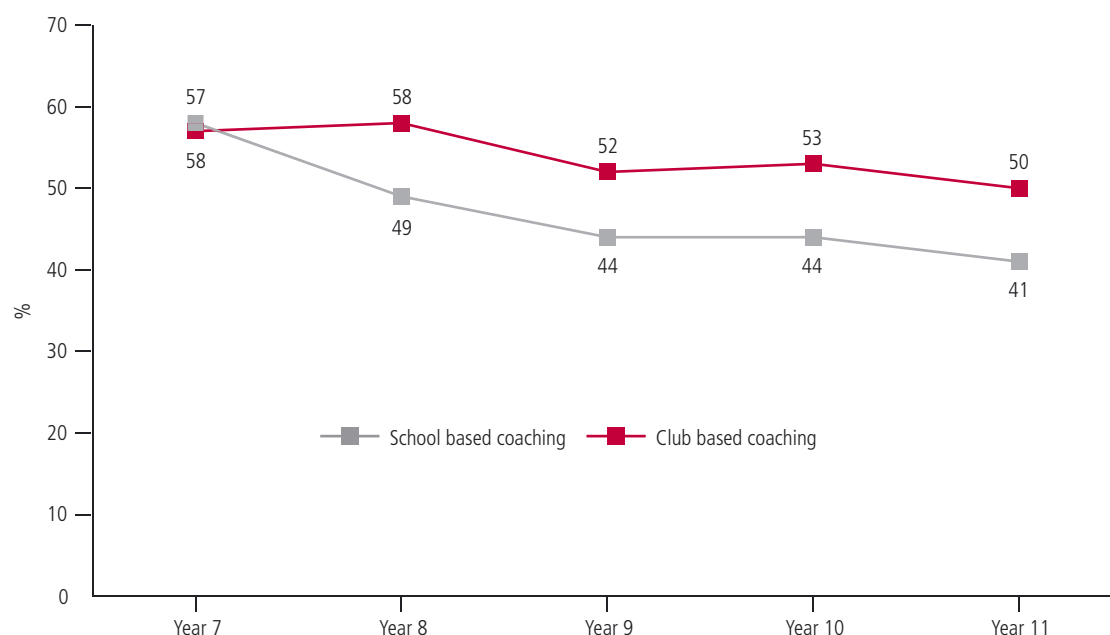
Table 12 – Gender difference in the percentage of young people who have received coaching over the past year at school or with a club
Base: young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

	2001		2004	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
School based coaching	50%	42%	50%	45%
Club based coaching	61%	45%	61%	48%
Any coaching	72%	61%	70%	62%

Boys are more likely to have received coaching over the past year than girls (Table 12) but the gender gap has narrowed slightly since 2001. When considering club-based coaching, the gender gap is far wider (13 percentage points in favour of boys) than when considering school based coaching (five percentage points in favour of boys).

The likelihood of receiving coaching decreases with increasing age but the decrease in coaching at schools is more pronounced than the decrease observed at clubs. In year seven, 58% of children were coached at school but by year 11, just 41% received school based coaching. Half (50%) of young people in year 11 still accessed coaching at a club.

Figure 19 – Age related differences in receiving coaching
Base: young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years



Leisure Centre Usage

- *55% of children and young people visit leisure centres on a weekly basis*

A high percentage of children and young people in Wales make use of leisure centres. Eighty five per cent of primary school age children and 90% of secondary school age children have made at least one visit to a leisure centre over the past year. Encouragingly, over half (55%) of both children and young people attend leisure centres on a regular (weekly or more frequent) basis.

Between the ages of seven and eleven, boys and girls are equally likely to attend leisure centres, both under any circumstances and on a regular basis. Boys of secondary school age are more likely to attend leisure centres on a regular basis than girls of the same age. The prevalence of leisure centre use varies more greatly with age. Attendance under any circumstance reaches 90% of children by age 11 and is maintained at this level until a slight drop off among pupils in year 11. Attendance on a regular basis increases with age, reaching a peak in year seven, after which declines can be observed with further increases in age.

Barriers to Leisure Centre Use

- *The most commonly stated barrier to leisure centre use is having no one to go with*

Despite the high rate of use of leisure centres among children and young people, certain barriers to use and to increased use can still be identified. Having no one to go with is the reason most commonly offered by the small percentage of primary school age children who never attend leisure centres. A lack of spare time and the leisure centre being too far away were the most significant other barriers cited by this group, whereas a dislike of sport in general represented a barrier to a very small proportion of the population.

Figure 22 reveals that the barriers to leisure centre use among young people are very similar to those identified among children. A dislike of sport is a relatively insignificant barrier when compared with factors such as having no one to go with, problems with transport and the leisure centre being too far away.

Figure 20 – Age related differences in visiting and regularly visiting leisure centres
 Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years and young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

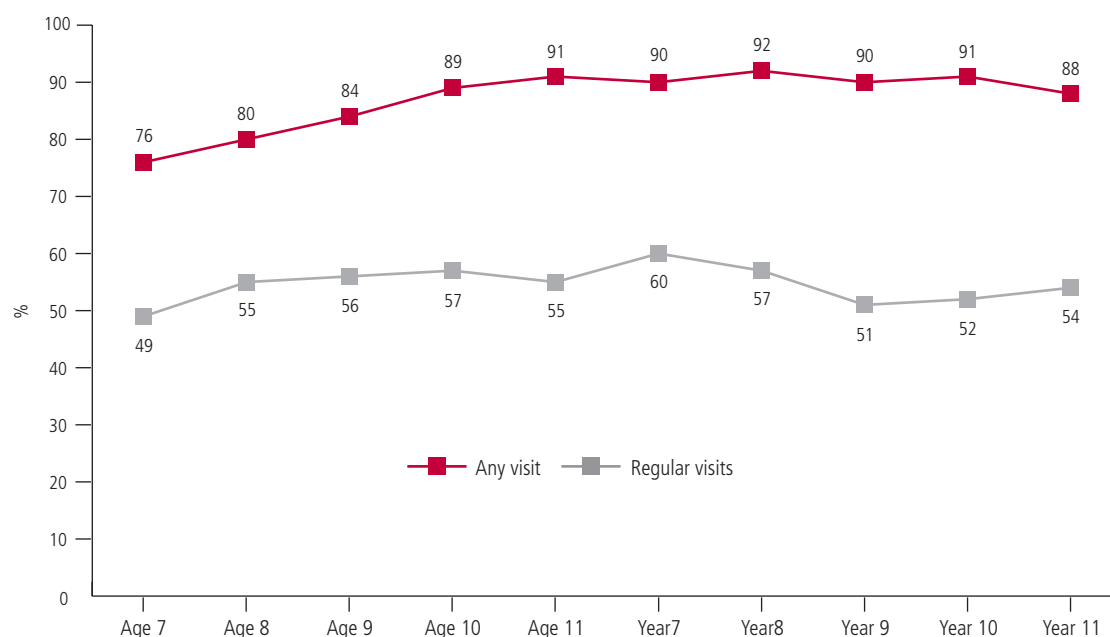
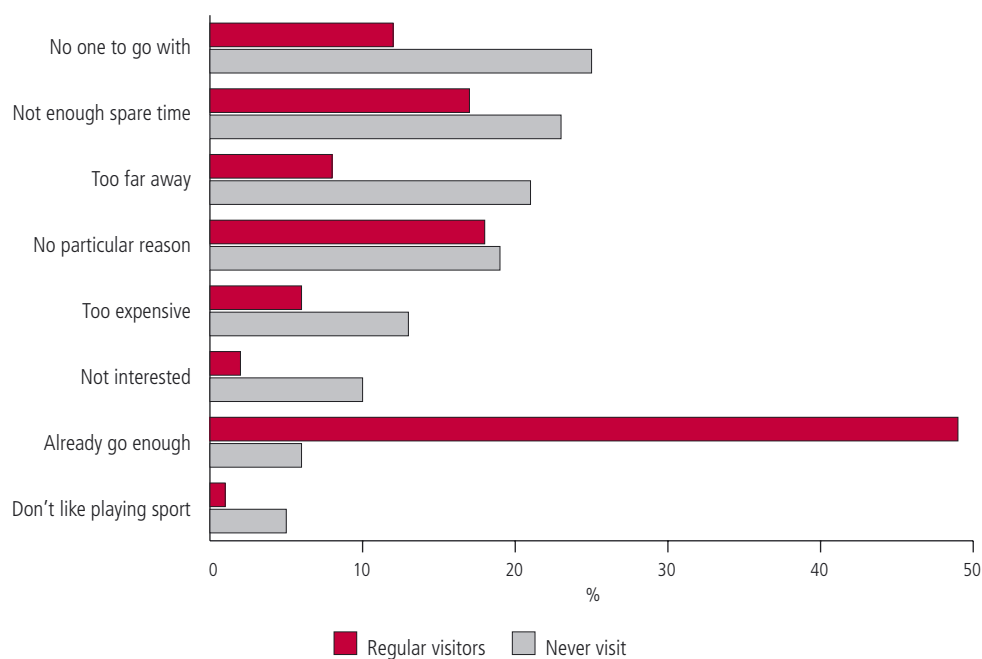


Figure 21 – Barriers to (increased) leisure centre use among children
 Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years



Participation in Outdoor Pursuits

- *25% of primary school children and 17% of secondary school children took part in outdoor pursuits over the past year*
- *Geographical variation is considerable with rural authorities typically boasting higher participation rates*

One of the stated aims (Target 9) of 'Climbing Higher' is that 'all children should enjoy an outdoor activity experience before the age of 12 and a further experience before the age of 16'. According to the latest data, 25% of primary school aged children and 17% of young people at secondary schools had taken part in outdoor pursuits / adventure activities over the past year, under curricular, extra-curricular or club based circumstances.

Gender differences in undertaking outdoor pursuits were insignificant. Figure 23 reveals that age plays a greater role in determining the likelihood of a child having participated in outdoor pursuits at primary school level. Children aged 11 years are more than twice as likely to have taken part as children aged seven years. At secondary school level, the

participation rate in every year group falls within a couple of percentage points of the 17% average.

There is considerable geographical variation in participation in outdoor pursuits, as evidenced in Table 13. Over 30% of primary school age children in Powys, Ceredigion, Caerphilly, Vale of Glamorgan, Monmouthshire and Pembrokeshire took part over the year. In contrast, under 20% of pupils in Blaenau Gwent, Anglesey, Merthyr, Cardiff and Bridgend engaged in outdoor pursuits. Those authorities with high participation rates seem generally to be located in rural areas, whereas those with low participation rates tend to be located in metropolitan regions or the valleys. At secondary school level, participation in two local authorities (Conwy and Pembrokeshire) was considerably in excess of the national average. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Wrexham and Flintshire both record participation rates that are six percentage points below the national average.

Figure 22 – Barriers to (increased) leisure centre use among young people
Base: young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

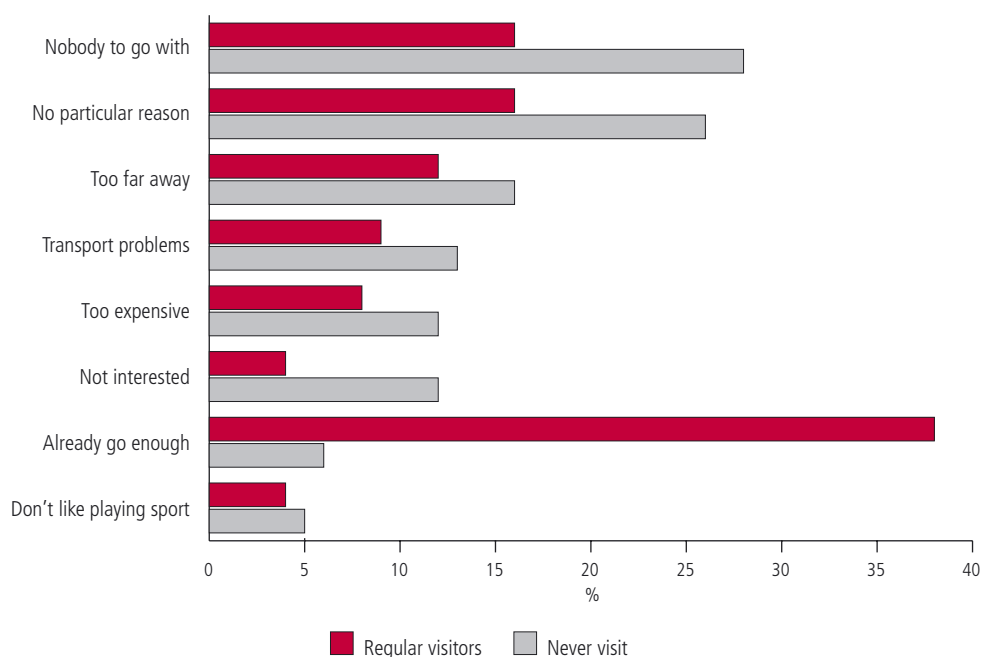


Figure 23 – Age related differences in taking part in outdoor pursuits

Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years and young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

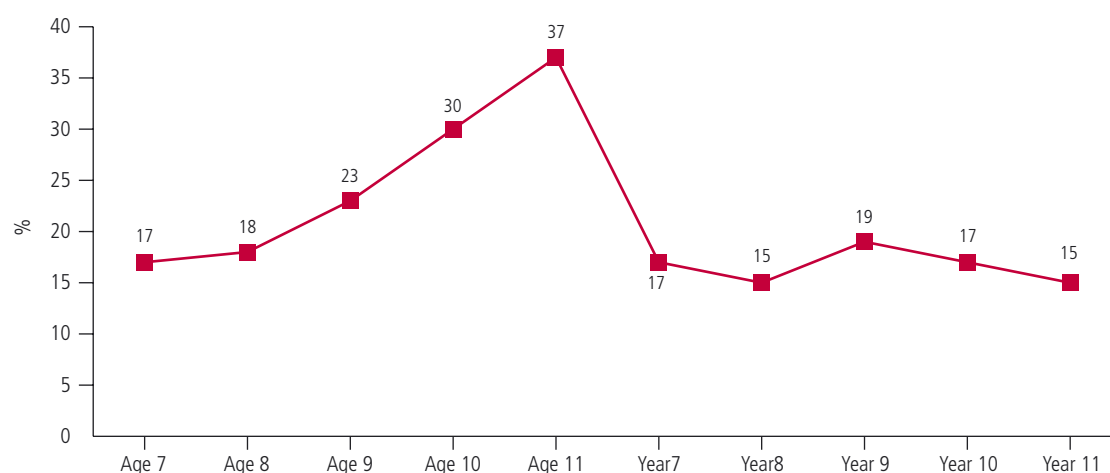


Table 13 – Participation in outdoor pursuits over the past year in the different local authorities across Wales

Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years and young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

Local Authority	Primary Schools		Secondary Schools	
	Participation in outdoor pursuits (%)	Departure from average (% points)	Participation in outdoor pursuits (%)	Departure from average (% points)
Anglesey	16	-9	23	+6
Blaenau Gwent	14	-11	17	+/- 0
Bridgend	19	-6	12	-5
Caerphilly	33	+8	12	-5
Cardiff	18	-7	12	-5
Carmarthenshire	28	+3	25	+8
Ceredigion	36	+11	17	+/- 0
Conwy	24	-1	28	+11
Denbighshire	25	+/- 0	21	+4
Flintshire	20	-5	11	-6
Gwynedd	28	+3	21	+4
Merthyr	18	-7	15	-2
Monmouthshire	30	+5	14	-3
Neath Port Talbot	28	+3	16	-1
Newport	20	-5	16	-1
Pembrokeshire	30	+5	26	+9
Powys	38	+13	12	-5
Rhondda Cynon Taff	20	-5	16	-1
Swansea	27	+2	16	-1
Torfaen	29	+4	17	+/- 0
Vale of Glamorgan	32	+7	19	+2
Wrexham	26	+1	11	-6

Latent Demand

- *Boys and girls differ significantly in the types of sporting activities they would like to be involved in, particularly at secondary school age*

In addition to establishing the current rates of participation both the Primary and Secondary School Surveys present children and young people with the opportunity to divulge which sports and activities they would appreciate the opportunity to be involved in more frequently. As can be seen in Table 14, this expression of latent demand is far greater among primary school aged children than secondary school aged children.

At both primary and secondary schools throughout Wales there are significant gender differences in the demand expressed for different activities. At Primary school age, boys express a higher latent demand for traditional games such as cricket, rugby and football whereas girls would prefer to be involved in swimming and horse riding. At secondary schools these differences are still more pronounced and few activities share a similar level of latent demand. Boys display a preference for traditional team games and also weight training whereas girls tend towards more artistic activities including swimming, trampolining and dance.

It seems clear that boys and girls evidently differ in terms of the activities that they would like to be involved in and these differences should not be neglected when providing opportunities for children and young people to participate in sport.

Table 14 – Activities with the highest scores for latent demand at primary and secondary schools across Wales

Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years and young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years

Primary Schools	
Activity	Latent Demand
Swimming	67%
Football	57%
Baseball/rounders	46%

Secondary Schools	
Activity	Latent Demand
Football	35%
Trampolining	32%
Swimming	31%

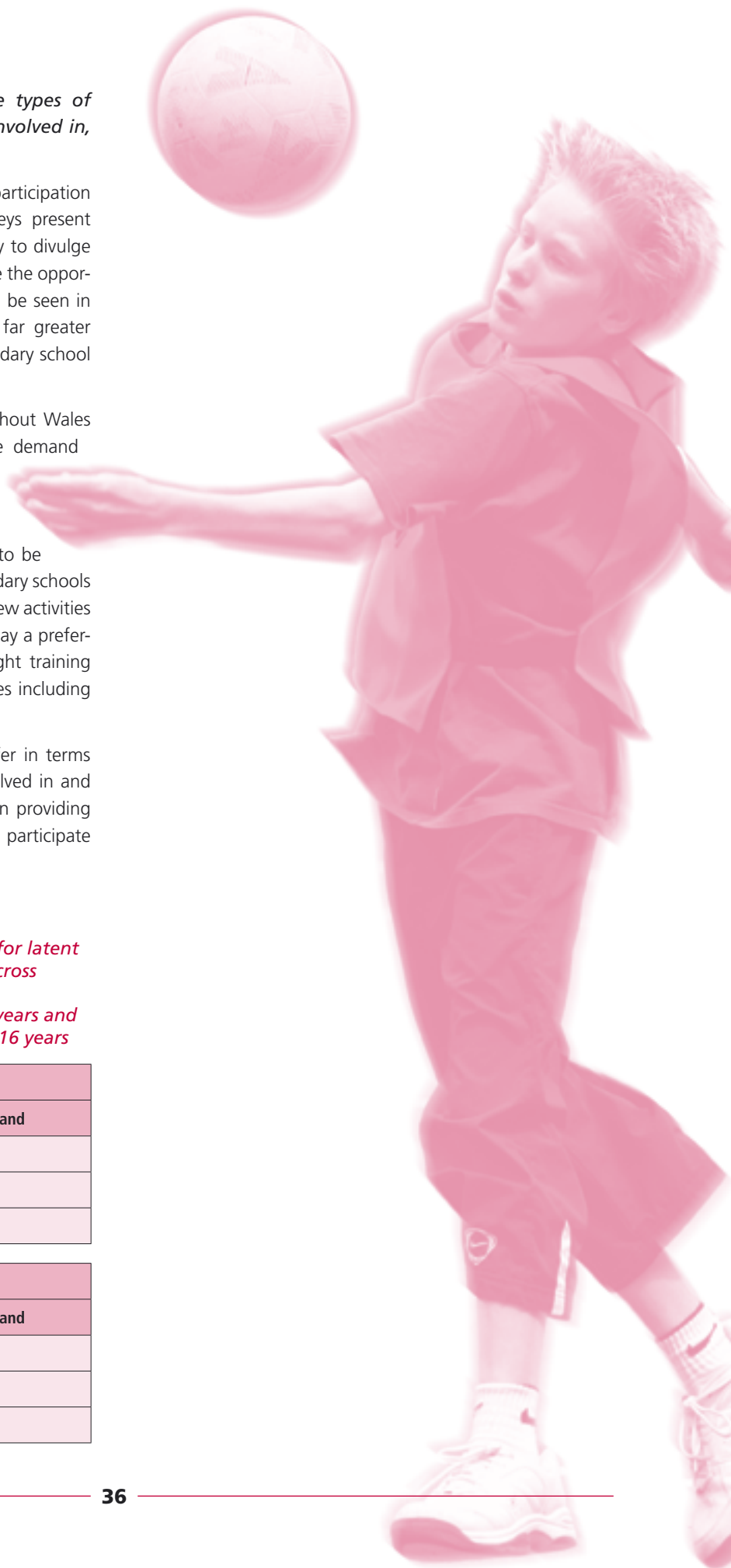


Figure 24a – Gender differences in latent demand expressed for different sports and activities
 Base: children at primary schools aged 7-11 years

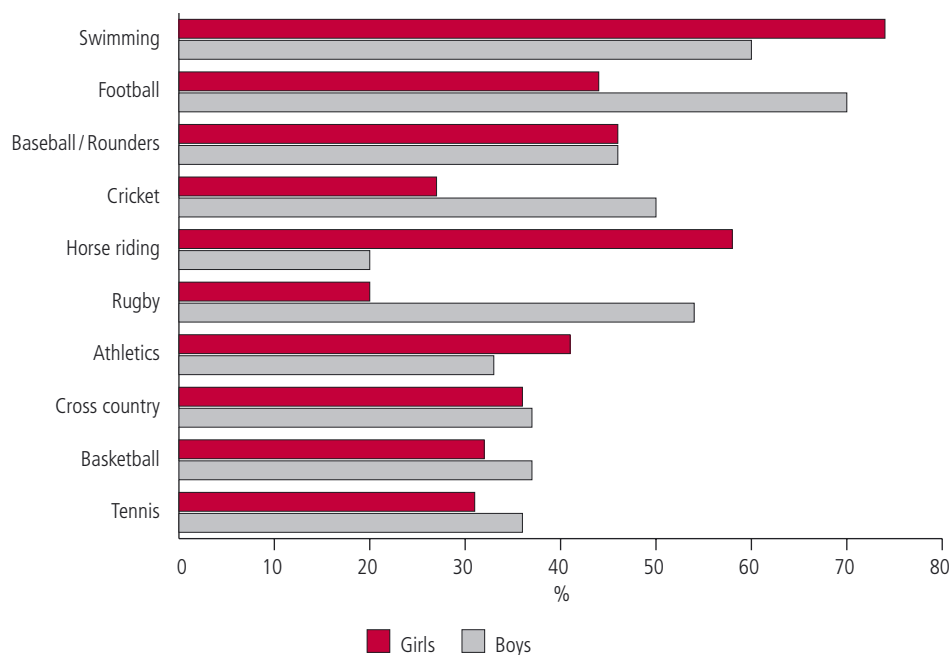
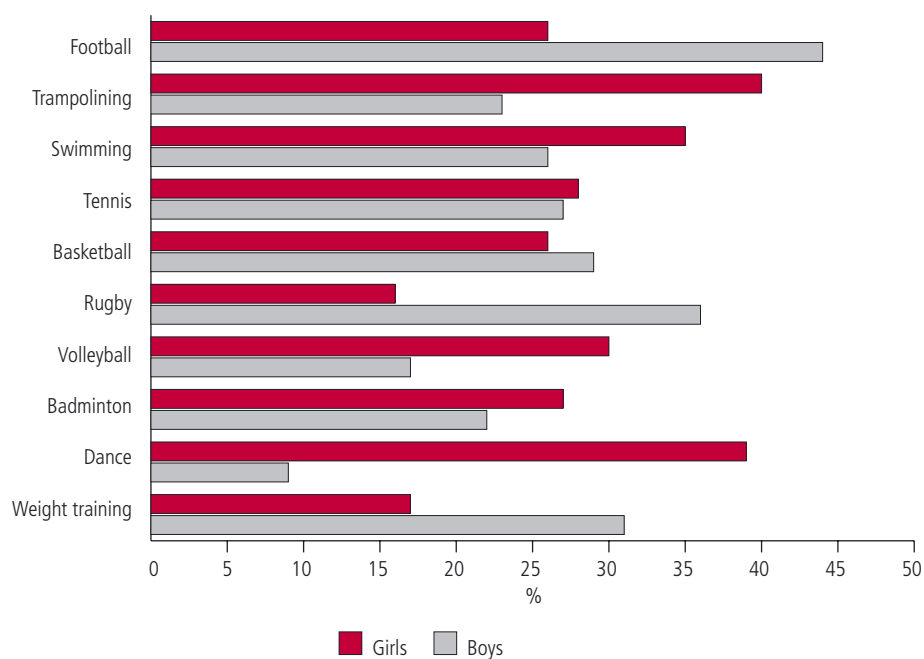


Figure 24b – Gender differences in latent demand expressed for different sports and activities
 Base: young people at secondary schools aged 11-16 years



CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Extra-curricular and club-based participation in sport has undergone significant change in the period between 1997/98 and completion of the latest SCW survey. The proportion of primary school age children that participate in extra-curricular activity has doubled in this time from 40% to 80%, while a 45% increase in the proportion of young people at secondary schools undertaking extra-curricular activities has also been observed. Club-based participation in sport has risen by 20 percentage points among children aged 7-11 years (from 58% to 78%) and from 42% to 73% of the 11-16 year old population. The average child at primary school will now undertake 7.2 curricular activities over the course of a year compared to 5.4 activities in 1997/98 while the average secondary school pupil will now undertake 8.5 curricular activities. Such increases in participation and opportunity are unprecedented; several initiatives and schemes currently in place throughout Wales have made a significant contribution to their achievement.

Dragon Sport

Dragon Sport is a Sports Council for Wales, National Lottery funded initiative. It was developed in consultation and partnership with National Governing Bodies, the British Association of Advisors and Lecturers in Physical Education (BAALPE), the Youth Sport Trust and local authorities. The core aims of Dragon Sport were to broaden the sporting interests of 7-11 year old children who already take part in particular sports and to involve children who currently lack the opportunity to participate outside school PE lessons. The principle objectives of the scheme were to establish Dragon Sport clubs at primary schools and sports clubs; to recruit and train volunteer organisers and leaders, particularly parents and teachers; and to make sport fun for all children.

The scheme was launched in October 2000 and the first Dragon Sport extra-curricular school clubs became active in February 2001. The original target set by SCW was to establish Dragon Sport clubs in half of all primary schools throughout Wales by 2005. To date, 1,265 schools are now on board the Dragon Sport scheme, confirming that the original target has been greatly exceeded. Throughout 2004/05, over 95,250 children took part in Dragon Sport clubs. This represents in excess of 50% of the 7-11 year old population of Wales.

Seven focus sports; athletics, cricket, football, hockey, netball, rugby and tennis were selected as the mediums for Dragon Sport because of their familiarity and the general good access to equipment and facilities for these sports in primary schools. Through these sports, children are introduced to sports coaching, skill development and appropriate

competition using modified versions of the games to meet the needs and skill levels of the children. Dragon Sport co-ordinators provide step-by-step advice and training to help volunteers, teachers and clubs to effectively deliver the scheme. This assistance is offered via a rolling development programme agreed in partnership with local authorities, physical education advisors, governing bodies, schools and other local sporting organisations.

Over 3,500 teachers and over 3,000 parents and other volunteers have been trained in the delivery of Dragon Sport since 2000. Volunteers frequently cite helping to provide opportunities to children to participate in sport and sharing personal experiences and enjoyment in sport with children as motivations to their involvement with Dragon Sport. A recent (2003) evaluation of the scheme found that over 90% of volunteers and teachers rated the training provided as excellent. The training offered was found to improve volunteers' confidence and perceptions of proficiency, particularly in organising safe and effective sessions and in adapting games for different situations.

Within the same evaluation, teachers and volunteers commended the support made available to them by Dragon Sport Co-ordinators during the establishment of clubs in addition to the ongoing support provided. The quality of equipment provided in the Dragon Sport kitbags was also highly praised and the information resources and promotional materials available were widely used and appreciated. According to the teachers and volunteers involved in the delivery of Dragon Sport, the three most critical factors to the success of clubs were commitment of the lead teacher, availability of kitbags and equipment and access to appropriate facilities.

Dragon Sport has attracted widespread praise from a variety of sources including teachers, parents, coaches, co-ordinators and local authority development staff and managers. It has become a very well established, successful flagship programme for SCW. In the latest SCW Partners' Perceptions Survey, both sports development officers and chief leisure officers rated Dragon Sport as a highly effective scheme. Recognised as an excellent tool for focussing on young people, Dragon Sport was singled out for particular praise due to the standard of resources and training available, the well organised structure of the scheme and the fact that dedicated people exist to help put the programme in place.

Since 2000, Dragon Sport has developed and strengthened its impact within primary school sport and can be regarded as a key element in the focus of provision of sporting opportunities to 7-11 year olds throughout Wales. The scheme has been very successful in achieving its core objectives and has exceeded the targets initially demanded of it. However, the

challenges are ongoing including the introduction of new activities such as golf and the continuous development of the current activities so that they are better able to maintain the interest of the children already participating as well as engaging new participants. Future developments are likely to include the further establishment of links with sports clubs, the creation of links with secondary schools, development of volunteers and implementing new ways of reaching those children who are still non participants.

Physical Education and School Sport (PESS)

The National Assembly for Wales' PE and School Sport action plan was published in June 2001. The plan promotes a common vision for improving standards in PE and School Sport, identifying the ways in which the Assembly and others responsible for its provision might take action to address some of the acknowledged shortcomings within the area. The Sports Council for Wales is responsible to the Assembly Government for managing the implementation of the plan, employing a national manager to work with a team of experts from ESTYN, the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC), the National Assembly, BAALPE and other key personnel and organisations.

A PESS co-ordinator is employed in each of the 22 local authorities throughout Wales who is responsible for taking forward the initiative at a local level. The co-ordinator provides support to the PESS development centres, liaising between education, sports development and health promotion departments within the local authority and schools. The co-ordinator will also share good practice arising from the PESS project with all schools in the area.

The Assembly originally funded a pilot programme of 18 development centres across Wales. A development centre is a cluster of at least four institutions, a minimum of three of which must be schools. Other partners may include further and higher education establishments or leisure centres for example. The structure of each development centre is determined by the needs, interests and specialisms already present locally and regionally and partners are chosen by the local authority in accordance with their existing plans. The key purpose of the development centres is to identify, strengthen and develop good practice in physical education and school sport. Expected to develop innovative approaches to curriculum delivery, use of facilities and staff development, the methods adopted by development centres and any resultant lessons learned will be shared with schools external to the programme to contribute to the raising of standards throughout Wales.

Based upon a favourable evaluation of the pilot scheme, the Welsh Assembly Government agreed a further five million pounds of funding over a three year period. There are now 48 development centres operational throughout Wales and specialist projects have been established covering areas such as initial teacher education and training, continuous professional development for teachers, information and communications technology in PE, health related exercise, dance and gymnastics. Further development centres are currently in the planning stage and are due to be operational in the near future. The PESS programme tackles one of the major issues affecting sports development and despite the associated challenges, clear progress has been made. Good reports regarding the work at development centres are being received from ESTYN and examples of good practice are being established through the instigation of the specialist projects. Progress will continue through the creation of new development centres and specialist projects with special needs being one of the next priorities for development.

Girls First

The Girls First Programme was introduced by the Sports Council for Wales in April 2001. Aimed at the 11-16 age group, the scheme presented secondary schools throughout Wales with the opportunity to apply for up to £1,000 of funding to provide a programme of extra-curricular sport designed to meet the needs of girls. Girls First money was to be used as a challenge fund to prompt, provoke and enable a range of different extra-curricular activities in schools for girls. The main aims of the programme were to raise the profile of sport for girls in school, bring about a cultural change in attitudes to girls' sport amongst the girls, their teachers and parents and to increase the number and range of opportunities available for girls to play sport in school.

Schools submitted applications for funding based on the provision of new extra-curricular opportunities for girls, offered in addition to those already provided. A willingness to adopt activities that would prove attractive and accessible to girls who were unlikely to otherwise be involved was required on the part of the school. As a result, many schools developed a programme encompassing new and frequently 'non-traditional' sports and activities. In addition to attracting new participants into taking part, this ensured that girls who were already involved in extra-curricular activities enjoyed the opportunity to experience and try out new sports and activities.

The majority of schools accessed Girls First funding for the purpose of providing coaching to the girls at their schools. In some cases, external coaches were brought in to deliver the new activities, providing quality coaching and a new face for the pupils. In other instances, teachers attended training

courses that endowed them with a coaching qualification to deliver the activity offered. There have also been examples of older pupils gaining leadership awards and coaching younger children as a result of Girls First funding. Transport costs and the purchase of new equipment were other examples of the use of funding obtained from the Girls First scheme. Teachers involved with the scheme have highlighted the benefits, citing an increase in self confidence and self esteem among those girls that took part consequent to the realisation that they could access and enjoy sport. The activities provided have also helped with the promotion of fitness and an awareness of the importance and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

The Girls First scheme has recently come to the end of its lifespan but it has proved successful in challenging schools to provide new opportunities and to reach new participants. By the year end 2004/05, 144 secondary schools throughout Wales (approximately two-thirds of all schools) had submitted applications for Girls First funding. The quality of the applications received was very high with evidence of greatly improved club and community links. The scheme had been

successful in offering in the region of 16,000 girls the opportunity of participating in new and innovative extra-curricular activity. The Sports Council for Wales' approach to promoting sport and physical activity among girls is now likely to be reviewed with informed new proposals and revised ways forward developed towards a more mainstreamed approach to work in this area.

Free Swimming Initiative

In the summer of 2003, the Welsh Assembly Government, in partnership with the Sports Council for Wales, the Welsh Local Government Association and the Welsh Amateur Swimming Association, delivered what was believed to be the first national free-swimming pilot for children and young people in Europe. Funding of two and a half million pounds was made available by the National Assembly to support free swimming for children aged 16 years and under during the summer school holidays. The initiative was introduced against a backdrop of decreasing numbers of juvenile swims across Wales and a trend towards declining levels of physical activity generally among Welsh adults and young people.

The initial pilot was launched with the aim of fulfilling several objectives. Removing barriers to participation (including cost and transport difficulties) was a key facet of the programme, together with promoting the health benefits associated with swimming and fostering an interest in participating in physical activity among the young population of Wales. Improving standards in swimming (through the incorporation of a degree of structure to the free sessions) and developing an interest in other sports, through engaging young people with positive experiences, were among the other stated objectives of the scheme.

The initial pilot proved to be a success, receiving praise from local authority leisure centre managers and parents of the children who took part in the scheme, as well as the children themselves. Eight hundred and three thousand juvenile swims were recorded in total over the 2003 summer holiday, an adjusted increase of 89% from the equivalent period in 2002. Of these, around 70% (over 560,000) visits were 'free swims.' The Free Swimming initiative has subsequently been extended and now offers children and young people the opportunity to go swimming at public pools during school holidays throughout the year free of charge. The scheme has continued to prove popular with high levels of awareness and uptake reported by young people at secondary schools throughout Wales. According to the currently available data four-fifths of pupils at secondary schools are aware of the existence of the Free Swimming opportunity and approaching two thirds (62%) have taken advantage of the scheme.

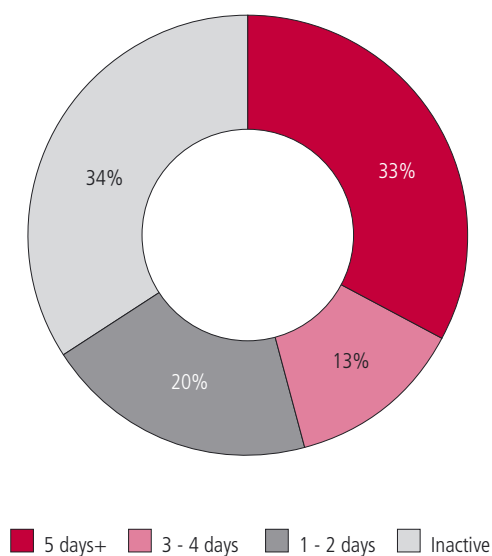


TOWARDS AN ACTIVE YOUTH

Despite the impressive levels of sports participation observed among children and young people in Wales and the progress made since the introduction of the 1999 SCW strategy, Young People First, these improvements have yet to translate into an increase in participation among the young adult population of Wales. The 15-24 age group record higher rates of participation than any of the older age groups, according to the latest data from SCW Adult Sports Participation and Club Membership Survey (2002/03). A significant drop-off in participation is evident however, from the rates observed among children and young people. Fifty-two percent of adults aged between 15 and 24 years had taken part in any sport over the past four weeks. This figure rises to 64% if walking is included as an activity. Of greater concern is the fact that only 21% of 15-24 year olds are members of a sports club and only 31% have visited a leisure centre in the past month, figures that are significantly below those observed among the non-adult populations.

In terms of undertaking sufficient physical activity, the guidelines for adults differ from those advocated for children. It is currently recommended that adults complete at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on at least five days of the week. Figure 25 reveals the current levels of physical activity prevalent among the 15-24 year old population of Wales.

Figure 25 – Number of days on which 30 minutes of physical activity is done
Base: adults in Wales aged between 15 and 24 years



Around a third of the 15-24 year old population undertake sufficient physical activity, which is higher than the proportion of secondary school aged children that do the same but lower than the physical activity levels observed among primary school aged children. Over a third of young adults in Wales however, are inactive which is considerably greater than the inactivity levels observed among children and young people at schools throughout Wales.

Bridging the gap between participation at school and participation in young adulthood has long been recognised as a challenging issue. The higher education sector may have an important role to play in approaching this challenge in the future. It is an ambition of the current Westminster Government that 50% of young people should undergo a university education, representing a very large proportion of the young adult population. The Sports Council for Wales undertook an audit of sports and recreation provision at universities throughout Wales in 2003. According to the results of this audit, higher education institutions in Wales unanimously agreed that the promotion of lifelong participation among students by university sports departments was important and that these departments had a significant role to play in encouraging participation in sport and physical activity among all their students. Universities variously offered low access costs, health education programmes, varied physical activity programmes and structured development routes in pursuit of this. Despite this, less than 13% of students in Wales held a membership of the sports facilities at their university. It is likely that more students than this actually make use of the facilities on a 'pay-as-you-go' basis, but clearly there is room for development in this area.

CONCLUSIONS

Dramatic annual increases in the proportion of children and young people engaging in extra-curricular and club-based sports participation have been witnessed since 1997. These increases now appear to have levelled out and stabilised with little difference being observed between the surveys conducted in 2002 and the latest surveys in 2004. Currently, 80% of primary school children and 71% of secondary school children participate in extra-curricular sporting activities. Both figures are in excess of the targets set for achievement by 2005 in the SCW strategy from 1999. The gender gap is just two percentage points in favour of boys among primary school children growing to five percentage points among young people at secondary schools across Wales. The proportion of children engaged in extra-curricular activity increases with age throughout primary school, reaching a peak among 11 year old children. Participation rates then decline steadily throughout secondary school and can be found at their lowest among young people in year 11.

Seventy-eight percent of children and 73% of young people have participated in club-based sports over the past year. This is already approaching the 'Climbing Higher' target, that 80% of children and young people should be junior members of sports clubs by the year 2020. The gender gap is four percentage points in favour of boys at primary schools, increasing to seven percentage points at secondary schools.

In terms of age-related differences, the participation rate for club-based activity is largely consistent between age seven and year eight of secondary school before a steady decline from year nine onwards. Just under half of seven to 11 year old children have experienced involvement in competitive sporting fixtures, rising to three-fifths of 11 to 16 year olds. In addition, around two-thirds of secondary school pupils have received coaching in sport over the past year.

Leisure centres are very well frequented; over half of children and young people reported attending on a weekly basis. Despite this, barriers to increased leisure centre use have been identified (the biggest being having no one to go with) and solutions to overcoming these barriers warrant some investigation.

A quarter of children and just under a fifth of young people have taken part in outdoor pursuits or undertaking an outdoor adventure activity. This falls a long way short of the target stated in 'Climbing Higher' – that all children in Wales will have experienced an outdoor adventure activity before the age of 12 and a further experience before the age of 16. Participation in outdoor pursuits needs to be addressed if this target is to be achieved by 2020. Latent demand for outdoor pursuits among children and young people however, is not particularly great. Girls are most likely to express latent demand for swimming, dance and trampolining (although demand for horse-riding, which could be classed as an outdoor adventure activity, is considerable). Football, rugby and swimming enjoy the highest levels of latent demand among boys, despite already being among the most participated in activities.

According to the recommended guidelines, the majority of children and young people in Wales are insufficiently physically active to incur health benefits. Two-fifths of children and just a quarter of young people are active for 60 minutes on at least five days of the week.

A further quarter of young people and a further quarter of children are active for sixty minutes on at least three days of the week and as such are approaching the levels of activity necessary to satisfy recommended guidelines. However, over 40% of children and over half of young people are either physically inactive or undertake physical activity on just one or two days of the week. Although currently inconclusive, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that being regularly physically active as a child will confer protective health benefits in adulthood, especially if physical activity is continued as a lifelong habit. The levels of inactivity currently observed among children and young people in Wales need to be addressed, in order to ensure that potential benefits to both present and future health can be optimised.



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