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Women and sport: A summary of potential issues

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This paper examines current participation levels of women in sport and physical activity in both Northern Ireland and elsewhere. It summarises the nature of current strategies and policies around this issue, before suggesting a number of potential issues for further consideration.

Key Points

- Women exercise significantly less than men in Northern Ireland; 45% of women have participated in sport in the previous 12 months, as opposed to 59% of men.
- Comparison of sports participation rates with other jurisdictions suggests that rates of female participation are particularly low in Northern Ireland.
- In terms of elite sport, Sport NI's Athlete Investment Programme awarded around 41% of its funds to women, with the larger sums going to swimming, equestrianism, netball, squash and skiing.
- However, a study which looked at Northern Ireland athletes at the Commonwealth Games concluded that there is a marked and long-term disparity between men and women in terms of medals won.
- Sport NI's strategy *Sport Matters* aims to improve the participation of women in sport by at least 6 percentage points by 2019. However, a report by the Women's Fitness and Sport Foundation predicts a 5.5 per cent drop in the participation levels of women by 2017.
- Around 78% of coaches in Northern Ireland are male. There is a relatively high number of female coaches in hockey and athletics, but no women coaches in cricket, and only a small proportion (2%) in rugby union. Fewer than 10% of football and Gaelic football coaches are female.
- A 2013 report found that in the UK, only one in five members of the boards of National Governing Bodies for sport is a woman, and just nine of the 57 organisations have a female chief executive.
- In England, there are a wide variety of sports programmes and projects for elite, grassroots and informal sport, some of it funded by the National Lottery.
- Internationally, to improve women's participation in sport, the Brighton Declaration was created by the International Working Group for Women and Sport. This seeks to promote female participation and representation in the sporting sectors.
- The causes of lower participation by women in sport would appear to be complex, with policy, funding, representation in the media, employment opportunities, and the availability of sporting programmes at elite, grassroots and informal levels all likely to play a role.
- A key period to focus on may be teenage years. At primary school, both girls and boys exercise at a very similar rate – between 85% and 90%. However, at post-primary age girls drop out of regular sporting activity at a significantly faster rate than boys.
- A number of researchers and organisations have suggested that providing a broad range of sports, particularly individual exercise options and non-team sports such as dance, may be effective in tackling this trend.

Executive Summary

This paper examines the degree of representation of women in sport in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, in terms of grassroots participation, elite sport, funding, in the media, and initiatives to boost such participation.

Women exercise significantly less than men in Northern Ireland; 45% of women have participated in sport in the previous 12 months, as opposed to 59% of men. The evidence suggests that when 'walking' is not included as a sport, just 25% of women participate on a regular basis.

Comparison of sports participation rates with other jurisdictions suggests that rates of female participation are particularly low in Northern Ireland. In Scotland, female participation rates are higher than men's.

In terms of elite sport, Sport NI's Athlete Investment Programme awarded around 41% of its funds to women, with the larger sums going to swimming, equestrianism, netball, squash and skiing. However, a study which looked at Northern Ireland athletes at the Commonwealth Games concluded that there is a marked and long-term disparity between men and women in terms of medals won.

Around 78% of coaches in Northern Ireland are male. There is a relatively high number of female coaches in hockey and athletics, but no women coaches in cricket, and only a small proportion (2%) in rugby union. Fewer than 10% of football and Gaelic football coaches are female.

A 2013 report found that in the UK, only one in five members of the boards of National Governing Bodies for sport is a woman, and just nine of the 57 organisations have a female chief executive.

In England, there are a wide variety of sports programmes and projects for elite, grassroots and informal sport, some of it funded by the National Lottery. These include generic programmes such as Active Women, but also sport-specific programmes such as Run England, No Strings Badminton and Just Play! football. These programmes suggest that initiatives can be successful when they either have a strong local community involvement, or when they are accompanied by an effective social media campaign.

Internationally, to improve women's participation in sport, the Brighton Declaration was created by the International Working Group for Women and Sport. This seeks to promote female participation and representation in the sporting sectors. Sport NI is a signatory of the declaration.

A key period to focus on may be teenage years. At primary school, both girls and boys exercise at a very similar rate – between 85% and 90%. However, at post-primary age girls drop out of regular sporting activity at a significantly faster rate than boys.

A number of researchers and organisations have suggested that providing a broad range of sports, particularly individual exercise options and non-team sports such as dance, may be effective in tackling this trend.

The causes of lower participation by women in sport would appear to be complex, with policy, funding, representation in the media, employment opportunities, and the availability of sporting programmes at elite, grassroots and informal levels all likely to play a role.

The Northern Ireland Female Sports Forum was set up in 2013 to provide a collective of expertise and support in boosting participation, but the forum has faced challenges due to issues with organisation and support, in particular the degree of resource allocated to its initiatives by governing bodies.

The information provided in this paper suggests a number of issues which may be worthwhile pursuing. For example, what further sources of funding might be available to provide for women's participation programmes? What progress has been made by the Northern Ireland Female Sports Forum? To what extent are Northern Ireland sports organisations aware of the Brighton Declaration and how many have signed up to it? How can the participation of women at senior managerial and board level within national governing bodies be boosted, particularly in Northern Ireland?

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1 Female participation in sport in Northern Ireland

The latest Continuous Household Survey for Northern Ireland suggests that 66% of women had participated in some form of sport within the last 12 months, compared with 69% of men¹. These results include the sport of 'walking for recreation', but without this category of activity, the results suggest that 46% of women had participated in some form of sport, compared with 61% of men.

When asked the question, 'Have you participated in sport over the past 12 months', trend data suggests that females have participated slightly more in sport each year from 2008 to 2013. The proportion of males who say they have participated has also increased slightly each year, so the 'gap' between the sexes has remained about the same.

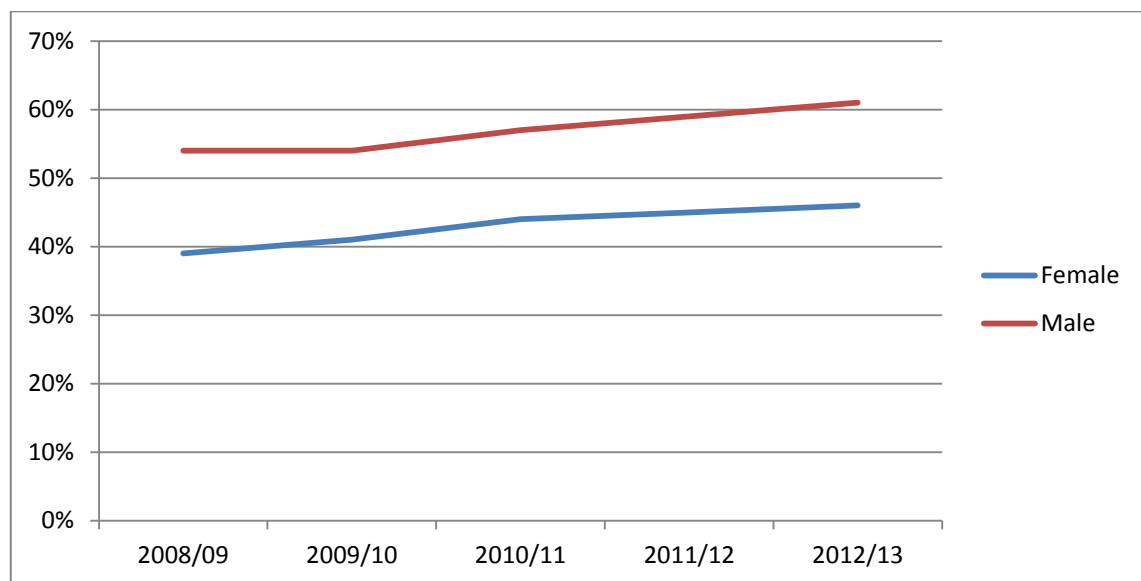


Figure 1: Responses to the question 'Have you participated in sport over the past 12 months' (Northern Ireland Continuous Household Survey results 2008/09 – 2012/13)

However, these levels of exercise on at least an annual basis contrast with the indications of more regular participation. When asked if they had participated in sport in the last four weeks, 58% of females said that they had. This proportion drops to just 23% when the 'walking for recreation' sport category is excluded, indicating that half of the females who had participated in sport in the last 4 weeks had 'walked for recreation' only.

In 2010, a more in-depth study was published, entitled the Sport and Physical Activity Survey (SAPAS)². This study examined the extent to which adults had achieved the recommended 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week (ie activities that raise the breathing rate). The SAPAS survey found that men are

¹ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2013. Experience of Sport and Physical Activity by Adults in Northern Ireland: Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2012/13:

http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/sport_and_physical_activity_chs_1213.pdf

² Sport NI & DCAL. 2010. The Northern Ireland Sport and Physical Activity Survey 2010 (SAPAS):

<http://www.sportni.net/about/PolicyAndResearch/Recent+Research/SAPAS+Report>

significantly more active than women. On average, men spend 557 minutes per week engaging in at least moderate intensity activities, compared to an average of 394 minutes among women.

There are also striking differences when analysing the *kinds* of physical activity carried out. The major source of women's physical activity is in the home, with 213 minutes spent on average undertaking activities in this domain that raise the breathing rate (compared with 132 minutes for men). Within the home, housework is the most important contributor for women (180 minutes compared with 41 minutes among men).

With regard to sport specifically, the amount of time that men participate in at least moderate intensity sporting activities is almost double that for women (116 minutes compared to 59 minutes per week). This gap is evident in all age groups; for example, men under the age of 30 participated in 178 minutes in sport per week, compared with 89 minutes for women.

During the previous CAL Committee's inquiry into sport and physical activity, the Public Health Agency referred to young mothers as a group with a particularly low level of participation in sport³. Sport NI also pointed to new mothers as a group prone to lower participation levels, stating that, 'it is recognised that there is a drop in participation in sports after children are born'⁴.

Lastly, the SAPAS survey indicated that women are less satisfied with sports provision in their local area than men (57% compared with 67%). However, the survey report notes that 'it is unclear if these lower levels of satisfaction among women reflect a lower interest in sport in general, or if there is a causal relationship between their lower satisfaction and their participation'.

2 Comparisons with other jurisdictions

Comparison of sports participation rates with other jurisdictions suggests that rates of female participation are particularly low in Northern Ireland.

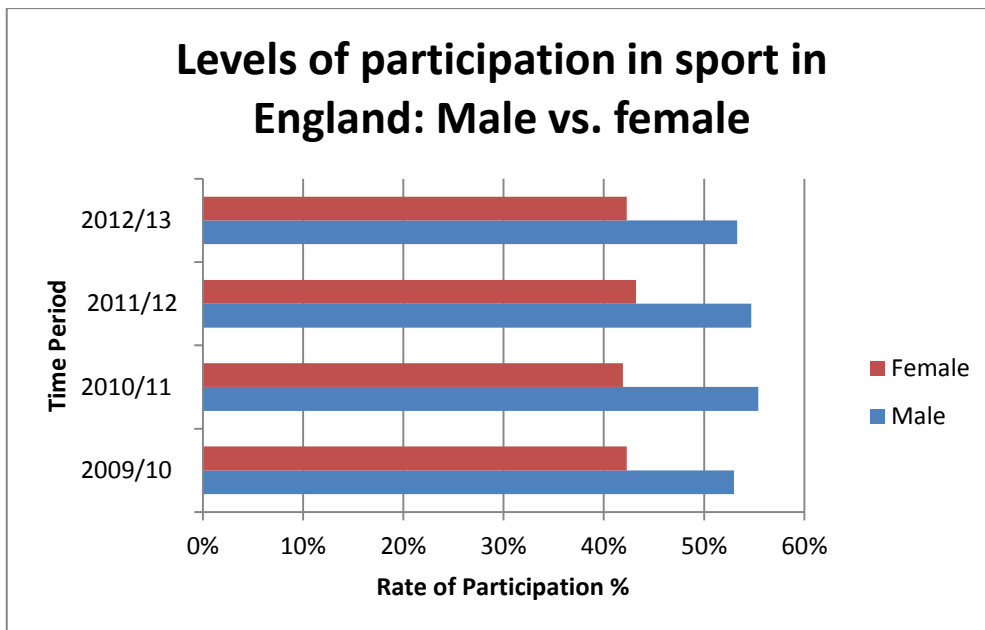
2.1 England

According to research and figures held by Sport England participation levels of women in sport within England, like those in Northern Ireland, are lower than that of men and, have steadily continued to be so⁵.

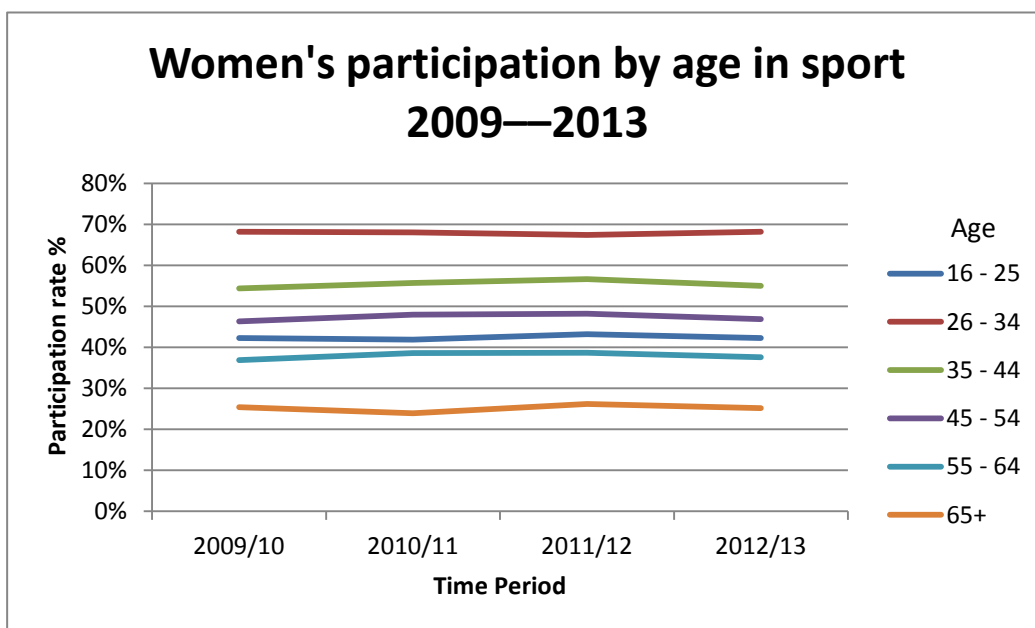
³ Former Health Promotion Agency. 2008, Armstrong, Bauman & Davies, 2000. Cited in CAL Committee inquiry into participation in sport and physical activity, 2009/10: <http://nia1.me/1ky>

⁴ Oral evidence provided by Sport NI, cited in CAL Committee inquiry into participation in sport and physical activity, 2009/10: <http://nia1.me/1ky>

⁵ Data taken from Sport England: Active People Interactive. This measures women's and men's participation in 'any sport' from 2009 to 2013 : <http://activepeople.sportengland.org/Query>



It was expected that levels of participation in sport would have grown significantly and steadily following the 2012 London Olympics. However, research published in 2013 by Sport England showed that, of 29 sports with complete figures for participation, there was a decline in levels of participation in 20 of the reviewed sports.⁶ In terms of female participation in sport and the impact of the Olympics, data shows little change;⁷



⁶ 'Fewer adults playing sport since London Olympics': <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2013/jun/13/fewer-playing-sport-since-london-olympics>

⁷ Data taken from Sport England: Active People Interactive. This measures women's participation in 'any sport' by age through 2009 to 2013: <http://activepeople.sportengland.org/Query>

Similar data patterns are shown in terms of those with disabilities or a limiting illness and their participation in sport, despite the apparent popularity of the Paralympic Games⁸.

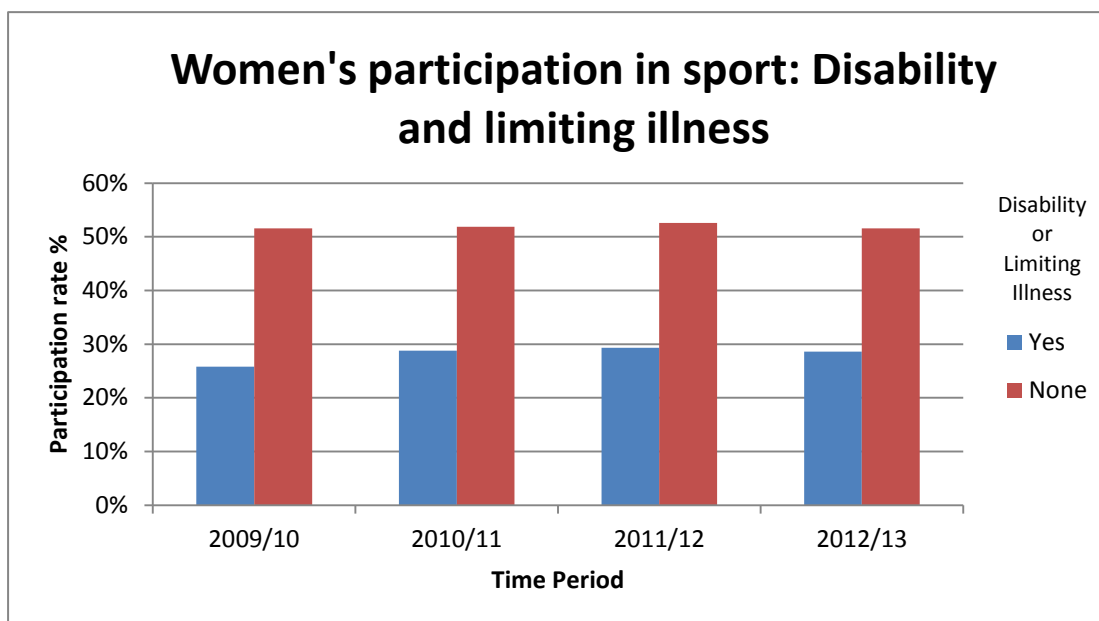


Figure 2: Women's participation in sport: Disability and limiting illness (Figures from Sport England)

2.2 Scotland

In Scotland, the results of the 2011 *Scotland's People Annual Report* suggest that the number of people who had participated in sport (including walking) in the last four weeks was 75%, compared with 53% in Northern Ireland. A male/female split indicates that women are *more* likely to have participated in sport in the last four weeks than men in Scotland, as opposed to *less* likely in Northern Ireland.

	% Male	% Female
Participated in sport in the previous four weeks (including walking)		
NI ⁹	56	50
Scotland ¹⁰	56	58
Participated in sport in the previous four weeks (excluding walking)		
NI	43	25
Scotland	60	48

Table 1: Comparison between NI and Scotland on the question, 'Have you participated in sport within the last four weeks?'

⁸ As above. This graph compares abled and less abled female participation levels in sport.

⁹ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2013. Experience of Sport and Physical Activity by Adults in Northern Ireland: Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2011/12: http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/sports_bulletin_2011-12_1.pdf

¹⁰ Scottish Government. 2012. *Scotland's People Annual Report. Results from 2011 Scottish Household Survey:* <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/08/5277/13>

2.3 Republic of Ireland

In the Republic of Ireland, a survey which asked respondents whether they had participated in sport over the last seven days produced results which indicate a marked rise among both men and women between 2009 and 2011¹¹.

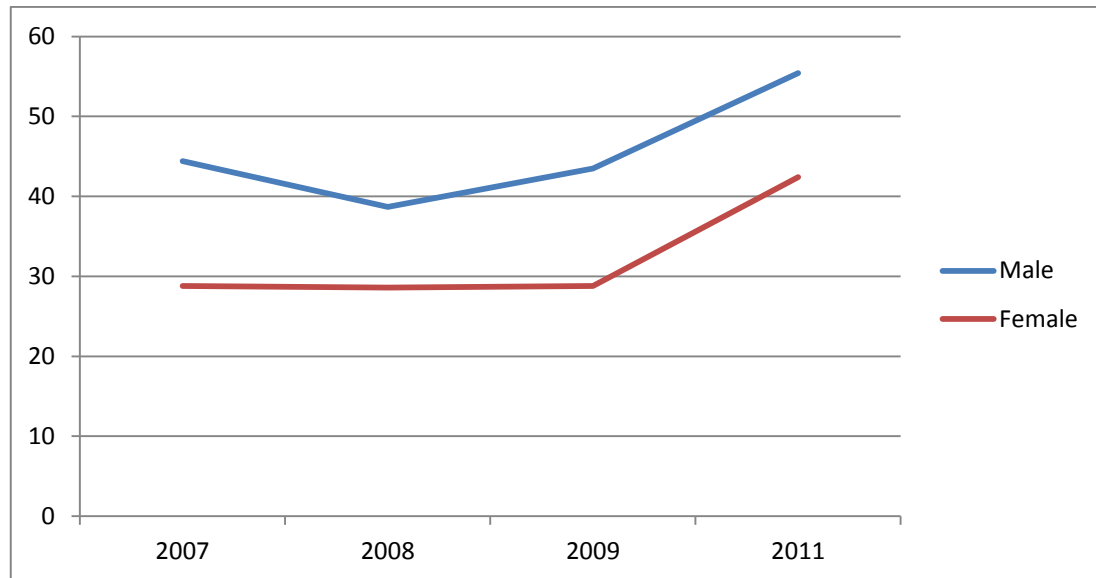


Table 2: Participation in sport in the Republic of Ireland, by gender

These results also suggest a marked and consistent gap between male and female participation in the Republic of Ireland, with, typically, a 10–15 percentage point difference between the two.

In 2013, the Economic and Social Research Institute published a major piece of research which examined the evidence for sports participation among children and young people. *Keeping Them in the Game*, written by a research team led by Pete Lunn, uses the School Leavers' Survey, the Irish Sports Monitor and the Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study.

This research found that the crucial years for children dropping out of sport happen during post-primary years and immediately thereafter. During the top two years of primary education, participation is high for both boys and girls taking part in either extra-curricular sport at school, or extra-school sport, with little gender difference between the two. For boys, there is 89% participation, and for girls 86%¹².

However, it is during the post-primary years that sports participation by both boys and girls falls consistently, with the decline for girls particularly marked. By the time of sixth year, around 66% of boys and 56% of girls participate in sport.

¹¹ Irish Sports Council. 2012. *Irish Sports Monitor 2011 Annual Report*. <http://nia1.me/1kx>

¹² Lunn, P, Kelly, E & Fitzpatrick, N. 2013. *Keeping Them in the Game: Taking Up and Dropping Out of Sport and Exercise in Ireland*. Dublin: The Irish Sports Council/An Chomhairle Spóirt & Economic and Social Research Institute: Research Series No 33.

The only exception to this is that there is an increase among girls who undertake a Transition Year following their Junior Certificate (ie at age 15–16) in participating in individual sporting activity (such as swimming or going to the gym).

The reasons for the overall drop in girls participating in sport throughout their second-level education are not immediately clear, and there may be a complex range of contributory causes. For example, the research by Lunn et al found that while other activities, such as watching television and playing video games, did have an impact on declining sports participation, the effect was only marginal.

However, a greater effect is seen during each of the major exam years, Junior Certificate (ie 15 years old) and the Leaving Certificate (either 17 or 18 years old). The study concludes that 'it is also apparent that the variation in participation associated with the exam years is more pronounced for females'¹³. Furthermore, this fall in participation during both of those exam years is particularly pronounced among girls who play team sport, and especially among girls who play such sport outside of school (as opposed to extra-curricular sport *within* school).

This trend, for falling participation around the time of exams, is in spite of the fact that in general higher sports participation coincides with higher grades at both Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate level.

Another significant finding from the research is that the trajectory of females dropping out from sport more than boys continues into early adulthood. Beyond the age of 21, falls in participation are generally the same between boys and girls, and once adults reach their late thirties, females are more inclined to take up new sporting activities than men.

The reasons for this continuation are not the pressure of exam commitments any longer, but more diverse life changes such as work commitments, the disruption of leaving school or college, encroaching family commitments, moving house for work or college.

Such changes can also be accompanied by changing relationships, and particularly moving away from the friends with whom they used to play sport. Team sports and especially Gaelic sports were particularly susceptible to a decline in participation. Lunn et al suggest that the strong connection to a local club means that Gaelic sports may be 'less portable' than other team sports when an individual moves to a new location. For example, the likelihood that an adult participant drops out of Gaelic football or hurling/camogie over the 3–4 years after school is greater than half.

A significant minority of those dropping out of sport once they had left school reported that loss of interest or other social activities were a factor. Interestingly, and perhaps surprisingly, financial cost was rarely cited as a factor.

¹³ Lunn et al, as above: p42.

The research also found that the longer a sport is played at school age, the more likely it is to be continued or resumed in the years after school and into early adulthood. The flipside of this is that as girls drop out of sport earlier in their school life than boys, they are therefore less likely to be active in the years after 17 or 18 years of age.

2.4 European comparisons

A Eurobarometer survey in 2010 found that across the 27 Member States, the countries with the highest participation rates overall were the three Nordic countries, followed by Ireland (58%), the Netherlands (56%), Slovenia (52%) and Luxembourg (51%)¹⁴. At the other end of the scale, Bulgaria (3%), Greece (3%) and Italy (3%) have the fewest citizens who play sport regularly.

In terms of female participation specifically, on average 43% of male respondents across Europe say they play sport at least once a week, as opposed to 37% of women. Furthermore, 49% of men either never play sport or do so less than once a month, compared with 57% of women.

The disparity is particularly marked in the 15–24 age group, with young men tending to exercise considerably more than young women. For example, 19% of men aged 15–24 play sport 'regularly' (5 times a week or more), as opposed to 8% of women in the same category; and 71% men in the same age group play sport at least once a week, compared with 50% of women. However, the gender gap is significantly narrower for older age groups, with men only playing marginally more sport than women in all other age categories. The Eurobarometer study concludes that¹⁵,

This data points strongly to the range of sporting opportunities open to young men in the EU, while also possibly highlighting a relative lack of opportunity – or at least encouragement – for young women.

3 Sports participation and body image

This section examines the degree to which sport is connected to the issue of body image, and whether this may be a disproportionately significant issue for girls and women.

A review of a number of qualitative studies of the potential barriers to sports participation has highlighted that the relationship between sport and body image is a complex and recurring theme¹⁶. Among teenage girls and young women, studies have indicated that negative experiences during school physical education classes are a strong factor in discouraging participation for some. For example, a number of

¹⁴ European Commission. 2010. *Sport and Physical Activity*. Special Eurobarometer 334: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_334_en.pdf

¹⁵ As above, p12.

¹⁶ Allender, S, Cowburn, G & Foster, C. 2006. 'Understanding participation in sport and physical activity among children and adults: a review of qualitative studies', *Health Education Research*, 21(6): 826-835.

contributors to the research raised the issue of tight, ill-fitting uniforms which were considered major barriers to girls participating in school sport, and concerns about image and relationships with peers led to a greater interest in non-active leisure¹⁷.

Other issues which discouraged teenage girls in particular from participating in sport at school include the disruptive influence of boys during physical education classes, the perception that participating in sport may appear 'butch' or masculine, the notion that school sports are 'babyish' compared with activities such as going to the gym, and a perceived lack of female sporting role models.

However, the same review of qualitative evidence also suggested that the desire to appear thin can lead to an increased motivation among both young females and young males to participate in sport. Other studies have found that while body image is certainly a factor governing the degree to which people exercise, it may in fact encourage adults to exercise more rather than less. Indeed, according to SportScotland, 'participating in sport can improve the quality of life of individuals and communities, promote social inclusion, improve health, counter anti-social behaviour, raise individual self-esteem and confidence, and widen horizons.'¹⁸

It may be that participating in sport in order to enhance body image can have negative connotations. For example, it has been noted that women are particularly susceptible to such issues regarding body image and have a higher risk of developing disorders such as anorexia and bulimia¹⁹. A study of Norwegian elite athletes found convincing evidence that the prevalence of eating disorders is higher in athletes than in the general population, and higher in female athletes than in male athletes. This study called for a collaborative effort among coaches, athletic trainers, parents, physicians, and athletes to recognise, prevent and treat eating disorders among athletes²⁰.

To further add to the complexity of the relationship between sport and body image, some evidence exists to suggest that for some there is no such relationship. A recent study of around one thousand college students in the USA examined self-reported barriers to physical activity. It found that body image was a significant factor in determining the amount exercised for a majority of participants (58%), as well as the location of exercise for some (22%)²¹. Non-exercisers were generally satisfied with their overall appearance and did not identify body image as a significant barrier to exercise. This highlights the fact that context is of key importance in weighing up the influence of body image on sporting participation. For some, it can encourage

¹⁷ For example, Allender et al cite: Porter, S. 2002. *Physical Activity: An Exploration of the Issues and Attitudes of Teenage Girls*. London: Scott Porter Research and Marketing; Coakley, J & White, A. 1992. 'Making decisions: gender and sport participation among British adolescents', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 9: 20–35; Orme, J. 1991. 'Adolescent girls and exercise: too much of a struggle?', *Educational Health* 9: 76–80.

¹⁸ Sport NI. 2005. *The Social Benefits of Sport*: <http://nia1.me/1vr> p4.

¹⁹ NHS. 'Eating disorders explained': <http://nia1.me/1vp> Page Accessed 27.01.2014.

²⁰ Martinsen, M & Sundgot-Borgen, J. 2013. 'Higher Prevalence of Eating Disorders among adolescent elite athletes than controls', *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* 45(6):1188-97.

²¹ Brudzynski, L. & Ebben, WP. 2010. 'Body Image as a Motivator and Barrier to Exercise Participation', *International Journal of Exercise Science*, 3(1): 14-24.

participation, but such encouragement can be associated with the incidence of eating disorders among female elite athletes. For others, a perception that they are not physically suited to sport, or that sport may make girls feel less feminine, is an issue. It would seem that co-educational physical education classes can create a reluctance among some girls to participate.

4 Women in elite sport

The following table summarises the total funding awarded to female athletes through Sport NI's Athlete Investment Programme for the year 2012–13, from a total programme budget of £996,419.

The amount awarded to female athletes is around 41% of the total, with the larger sums going to swimming, equestrianism, netball, squash and skiing. As can be seen, there are a number of sports for which no funds were awarded through this specific programme for the year 2012–13, including, for example, boxing.

Sport	£
Archery	5,000
Athletics	12,600
Badminton	12,000
Bowling	20,000
Canoeing	15,000
Equestrianism	51,000
Gaelic Sports\Handball	5,000
Golf	24,000
Gymnastics	2,100
Ice Skating	19,415
Judo	27,162
Motor Cycling	9,000
Netball	30,000
Rowing	6,000
Sailing/Yachting	3,000
Shooting\Clay Pigeon	9,000
Shooting\Full Bore	3,000
Skiing	28,097
Squash	28,755
Swimming	59,602
Table Tennis	15,180
Triathlon	15,000
Water Skiing	3,000
Wrestling	2,650
Grand Total	405,561

Table 3: Funding to female athletes through Sport NI's Athlete Investment Programme 2012-13

In terms of representation at a recent elite sporting event, the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, a breakdown of the athletes who took part is as follows:

	Total athletes		Female athletes	
	GBR	IRE	GBR	IRE
Olympic	6	14	2	4
Paralympic	2	6	2	2
Totals	8	20	4	6

Table 4: Athletes from Northern Ireland competing at London 2012

Of the ten female competitors, two (Bethany Firth and Eilish Byrne) won medals.

Sport NI conducted an analysis of Northern Ireland's performance in the Commonwealth Games since its creation. This analysis shows that men have out-performed women on 11 out of 15 occasions and women have out-performed men on just three. The gradient of the trend line between 2006 and 2010 is steeper for men

than women, and the 'gap' in market share between male and female performance was wider in 2010 than at any point since 1978.

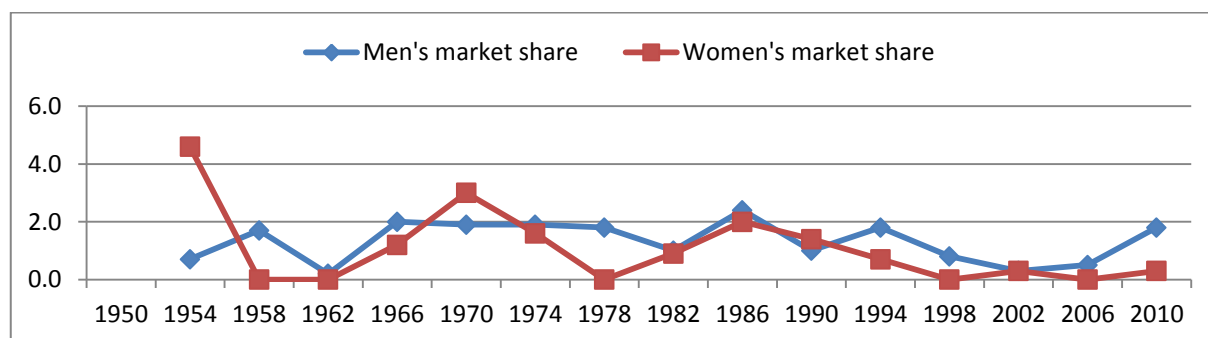


Table 5: Northern Ireland's 'market share' of Commonwealth Games medals by gender

5 Coaching and volunteering

The Sport and Physical Activity Survey (SAPAS) found that men are twice as likely as women to volunteer (12% compared to 6%). Given that most sports voluntary work is carried out in a club context, this gender gap is consistent with the finding that women are less likely than men to be members of a club. Coaching as a typical club voluntary activity is more popular among men than women (51% of male volunteers coach compared to 33% of females). Among women, fundraising is the most popular volunteering activity.

These findings are also consistent with the Coaching Workforce Survey, carried by Sport NI in 2010. This found that around 78% of coaches in Northern Ireland are male, though there is a high degree of variation across sports²². There are a relatively high number in hockey (41%) and athletics (38%), but no women coaches in cricket, and only a small proportion (2%) in rugby union. Fewer than 10% of football and Gaelic football coaches are female.

6 Women in sports governance

The Commission on the Future of Women's Sport in the UK publishes an audit each year for the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation of the number of women involved in sports governance. Their 2013 report, *Trophy Women*, found that only one in five members of the boards of NGBs for sport in the UK is a woman, and just nine of the 57 organisations have a female chief executive²³. One quarter of sports have no women in board positions at all. While almost half of all staff in NGBs is female, just 22% of Performance Directors and only 20% of senior management teams are women. Since 2009, this figure has only increased by one per cent.

²² Sport NI. 2010. Coaching Workforce Survey: <http://www.sportni.net/NR/rdoonlyres/A8EF3483-299B-4B12-B2AA-51F3A6BC523C/0/CoachingWorforceSurvey.pdf>: p24.

²³ Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation. 2013. *Trophy Women: NGB Leadership Audit 2013*: <http://nia1.me/1l2>

Furthermore, UK Sport has included a new expectation in their governance guidelines for NGBs that their Boards should comprise at least 25% of women by 2017; this report shows that 26 out of the 57 governing bodies surveyed *do* meet this new minimum expectation, but 31 do not.

Among the sports with a particularly low presence of female board members are boxing, angling, cycling, judo, squash, association football, wrestling, rugby and wheelchair rugby.

As a comparison, in 2013 the Amateur Boxing Association of England has no female Board members²⁴, and nor does the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (although the IABA does have female Council Secretaries in Connaught and Ulster)²⁵.

7 Media coverage

For the purposes of this paper, a brief comparison was made of media coverage of female elite sport. A comparison was made between two similar state-funded radio²⁶ sports programmes on Saturday 22 June 2013 to identify the length and nature of coverage of female elite sports, and sporting personnel. The two programmes analysed were BBC Radio Ulster's 'Summer Club' and RTÉ's 'Saturday Sport', both broadcast from 3–6pm.

A summary of this coverage is as follows (overleaf):

	BBC Radio Ulster Summer Club	RTÉ Radio 1 Saturday Sport
Total time covering female sports	58 secs	14 mins 5 secs
Sports covered	golf, tennis	athletics, camogie, hockey
Interviews with female participants	0	3
Female presenters/summarisers	0	0
Commentaries of female matches	0	0

Table 6: Summary of media coverage of female sporting participants

²⁴ Amateur Boxing Association of England. 'The Board of Directors': <http://www.abae.co.uk/aba/index.cfm/about-us/the-board-of-directors/> Page accessed 3.7.13.

²⁵ Irish Amateur Boxing Association. 'IABA Management': <http://www.iaba.ie/iaba-management/> Page consulted 3.7.13.

²⁶ This comparison focused on radio coverage only; for rights and cost reasons, television coverage proved difficult to access.

8 Strategy and policy work to date

8.1 Sport Matters strategy

Sport NI updated its *Women and Girls in Sport* policy in 2008 to enhance the inclusion and participation of women and girls in sport and physical recreation. In addition, it intends to promote the enhancement of engagement strategies from other organisations, with the aim of complimenting Sport NI's aim of improving female participation.

The *Women and Girls in Sport* policy more specifically aspires to improve women and girls' 'access and participation...in the provision of facilities, goods, services and employment opportunities in sport and physical recreation'. To do so, the policy aims to include women and girls in consultation on future policy and programme development. The idea is that this in turn will ensure that their needs, as indicated through consultation, are met and addressed. Therefore, future participation strategies will be built to address specific requirements highlighted by those directly affected.

Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2009–19 contains aims to improve female participation in sports, as follows:

PA8: By 2019 to deliver at least a 6 percentage points increase in women's participation rates in sport and physical recreation (from the 2011 baseline).

Such an increase would counter the predictions of the Women's Sports and Fitness Foundation Report, *It's Time: Future Forecasts for Women's Participation in Sport and Exercise* (2007). This report predicted a 5.5% (approximately 1.25 million) decrease in female participation among the UK population by 2017.²⁷

So far, Sport NI has been able to measure some improvement in female participation. The data which shows an increase was collected from Sport NI investment programmes. Data from the three year Community Sport Programme end-of-year reports indicate that female participation increased to 43% (4,244 to 6,087) between 2005 and 2008.²⁸ This momentum continued with a further 41% increase in female participation between 2008 and 2009.²⁹

One of the ways in which Sport NI intends to achieve this increase is through the appointment of 18 women's Sports Development Officers.³⁰ Their role will be to provide greater opportunities for women and girls in sport which will consequentially improve their participation. The policy recognises the importance of sustaining participation and is, therefore, cemented as a key function of a women's Sport Development Officer.³¹

²⁷ *Women and Girls in Sport*: <http://www.sportni.net/participation/Active+People/Women+and+Girls/>

²⁸ *Women and Girls in Sport*: <http://www.sportni.net/participation/Active+People/Women+and+Girls/>

²⁹ *Women and Girls in Sport*: <http://www.sportni.net/participation/Active+People/Women+and+Girls/>

³⁰ *The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2009–2019*: http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/sport_matters.pdf

³¹ *The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2009–2019*: http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/sport_matters.pdf

8.2 Northern Ireland Female Sports Forum

The Northern Ireland Female Sports Forum (NIFSF) was established in 2013 through Sport NI funding. As suggested by the IFA women's domestic football manager, Sara Booth, the purpose of the forum is to provide women's sport with a collective of expertise and support.³² The NIFSF set up consultations in March 2013 to gauge the interest in women's sport from a wide range of stakeholders.³³ Initial consultation events found areas that needed to be prioritised. For instance:

- Workforce development (Coach Pathways);
- Increased opportunities for participation (player pathways);
- The development of a co-ordinated and joined up approach (from school to club and on to representative sport); and
- Appropriate reward and recognition³⁴.

Members agreed that an action plan needed to be produced to achieve this. The Forum membership includes representation from the following bodies:

- Irish Football Association;
- Ulster Council GAA;
- Ulster Branch Irish Rugby Football Association;
- Ulster Hockey; and
- Ulster Camogie.³⁵

According to Sport NI, the NIFSF faced a number of issues including: the availability of human resources within each of the governing bodies to drive forward this work area; the strategic priority afforded to this work area by the governing bodies; and a lack of strategic focus within the Forum given the scale of the task faced by the sports to encourage increased participation among women/girls.³⁶ Therefore, it would seem that the forum was hindered by a lack of organisation and wider support.

Since initial consultations, the forum has worked to ensure each area is addressed through a business case. To support this, Sport NI has developed a resources bid as part of its 2014–2015 business plan submission to DCAL.³⁷

8.3 Strategy work in other jurisdictions

Ladies Gaelic Football Association's Gaelic4Girls (G4G) and Gaelic4Mothers&Others (G4M&O)

³² The Newsletter, 'Suzanne Beaney throws weight behind Northern Ireland Female Sports Forum', 19.03.2013: <http://www.newsletter.co.uk/sport/suzanne-beaney-throws-weight-behind-northern-ireland-female-sports-forum-1-4909392>
Page accessed 09/12/2013.

³⁴ Correspondence received from SportNI on 07/01/2014.

³⁵ Correspondence received from SportNI on 07/01/2014.

³⁶ Correspondence received from SportNI on 07/01/2014.

³⁷ Correspondence received from SportNI on 07/01/2014.

The G4G programme, also operating in Northern Ireland, engages with girls who are not already affiliated with a GAA club, encouraging them to play Gaelic Football. The programme targets girls aged 8–12 and it involves a 12-week programme of ‘coaching sessions with non-competitive blitzes’³⁸ to promote participation.³⁹ The programmes are run by local GAA clubs who are provided with training and resources to do so. And, girls undertaking the programme are then brought into training sessions with club players during the last four weeks, promoting integration into the club.

Club feedback has been very positive, for instance:

*The programme has been invaluable – we now have a Ladies Football Club with nearly 70 members – all of which was a result of G4G and the structures we developed.*⁴⁰

Participants also found the experience enjoyable. One participant, for example, stated that, ‘it was great fun’, and another, ‘I got a chance to play and nobody shouted at me!’⁴¹

The G4M&O programme aims to get women, not necessarily mothers but women who are at least 18 or older, involved in gaelic sports. Similar to G4G, sessions are carried out, which in this case are once a week for one hour, in a non-competitive, fun and social environment.⁴² After the 6-week programme, clubs are encouraged to continue sessions and attempt to integrate participants into the wider club. Furthermore, if participants do not wish to continue as a player, they may be able to get involved in coaching or club administration.

8.4 Active Women Fund in England

The programme’s purpose is to overcome the imbalance in sports participation between men and women. To do so, the Active Women programme contributes £10 million of National Lottery funding to relevant projects. The project’s focus is on improving and sustaining female participation in grassroots sports. The funding is expected to aid the projects in their initial and continuing growth. Projects were chosen for funding on the basis that they met certain criteria. Particularly, projects were to be designed to overcome barriers to women’s participation. For instance, challenging the barriers facing women from disadvantaged areas or those facing women with

³⁸ A blitz is a match, but less competitive and more about fun and social interaction.

³⁹ Ladies Gaelic Football Association, Gaelic4Girls: http://ladiesgaelic.ie/?post_type=promotions&p=23537 Page accessed: 08/01/2014.

⁴⁰ Ladies Gaelic Football Association, Gaelic4Girls: http://ladiesgaelic.ie/?post_type=promotions&p=23537

⁴¹ Ladies Gaelic Football Association, Gaelic4Girls: http://ladiesgaelic.ie/?post_type=promotions&p=23537

⁴² Ladies Gaelic Football Association, Gaelic 4 Mothers & Others leaflet: <http://ladiesgaelic.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/2014-G4MO-Booklet.pdf>

dependants under the age of 16 years old.⁴³ In 2011, the programme awarded funding to 20 projects.

A total of 61% of participants indicated that they agreed that they now take part in more sports activities than they had before their involvement in the programme. This would appear to show a significant positive impact on participants, particularly when compared to the 21% who stated that they took part in fewer sports activities.⁴⁴

However, issues arose in determining what activities could be accepted as a sports activity. For example, some projects allowed participants to count dance classes, such as Zumba, as a sports activity whilst others did not.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the barriers which projects were supposed to break down were largely unaffected. For instance, women with dependants under 16 were 'less likely' to have increased their sporting activities due to the programme and there was no significant difference found for women from deprived backgrounds.⁴⁶

Having said this, the programme has produced predominantly positive results and has further benefited the general well-being of participants. For instance, nine in ten women said that they felt healthier having participated in the programme and four in five had gained more confidence.⁴⁷

8.5 UK Sport initiatives

UK Sport is responsible for the annual investment of public funds in 'high performance sport'. The funding is around £100 million and is provided by both the National Lottery and the Exchequer. UK Sport openly states that their remit is concerned with the elite sport rather than grassroots. However, they do have a number of initiatives to improve the level of female participation in elite sport and, aim to improve the levels of employment opportunities for women within sport.⁴⁸ The following are examples of such initiatives.

Women and Leadership Development Programme

The Women and Leadership Development Programme aims to;

- Increase the representation of and the support for women in leadership roles in sport;

⁴³ Sport England Research in Female participation in Sport: <http://www.sportengland.org/research/idoc.ashx?docid=9e89c307-e988-46d7-912c-48fa2f2d6b68&version=-1> Page accessed 02/12/2013, p5.

⁴⁴ Sport England Research in Female participation in Sport: <http://www.sportengland.org/research/idoc.ashx?docid=9e89c307-e988-46d7-912c-48fa2f2d6b68&version=-1> p68.

⁴⁵ Sport England Research in Female participation in Sport: <http://www.sportengland.org/research/idoc.ashx?docid=9e89c307-e988-46d7-912c-48fa2f2d6b68&version=-1> p27, p74.

⁴⁶ Sport England Research in Female participation in Sport: <http://www.sportengland.org/research/idoc.ashx?docid=9e89c307-e988-46d7-912c-48fa2f2d6b68&version=-1> p68.

⁴⁷ Sport England Research in Female participation in Sport: <http://www.sportengland.org/research/idoc.ashx?docid=9e89c307-e988-46d7-912c-48fa2f2d6b68&version=-1> p72.

⁴⁸ UK Sport, 'Equality-Women' : <http://www.ukспорт.gov.uk/pages/women/> Page accessed 04/12/2013

- To promote the development of necessary skills, which will in turn promote confidence and competence among women in such roles; and
- To cultivate an international network between women in leadership roles.⁴⁹

The programme 'was developed and is supported by UK Sport in partnership with the British Olympic Foundation (BOF) and the Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR)'.⁵⁰ The programme plans to achieve its aims through 'intense' training and support. This is provided through a mentoring scheme⁵¹, workshops, events and presentations.

Girls4Gold: Canoeing and Disability Athletics

UK Sport's 'Girls4Gold' programme has two pathways: 'Girls4Gold Canoeing' and 'Girls4Gold Disability Athletics'. The former aims to recruit female athletes, aged 15–25, who already compete at a national level in any sport, to compete for GB in the 2020 Olympics. The latter aims to recruit potential paralympians from females aged 16–35 years of age, particularly those who use a wheelchair or are of short stature.⁵² Again though, those who wish to be recruited into Girls4Gold disability athletics need to have a 'background in sport or physical training'.

Therefore, Girls4Gold targets women already participating in sport, particularly those at an elite level. Having said that, this shows that there are opportunities for young women who wish to pursue a career in competitive sports. This could, in turn, persuade more female participation in sports at grass-roots level.

Sporting Giants

Similar to Girls4Gold, Sporting Giants was a programme, launched in 2007, targeting a certain type of athlete. The female component of this programme was aimed at women of a certain height – over 5'11" or 180 cm – and with an athletic background, to apply and potentially become part of the GB Olympic performance programme. The programme received, from both men and women, a total of 4,800 applications, of which 4,000 met the programme's criteria. As UK Sport's website states, it would be surprising for any of the Sporting Giants to be ready to represent GB in 2012, but states many had joined 'Olympic development programmes'. UK Sport have now embarked on another initiative for tall athletes called 'Tall and Talented' aiming to recruit tall athletes, male and female, who are talented in sports and can be trained in

⁴⁹ UK Sport 'Women in Leadership Development Programme': <http://www.uk sport.gov.uk/pages/women-and-leadership-development-programme/> Page accessed 04/12/2013

⁵⁰ UK Sport 'Women in Leadership Development Programme': <http://www.uk sport.gov.uk/pages/women-and-leadership-development-programme/>

⁵¹ Participants will usually be mentored by women with established careers within leadership.

⁵² English Institute of Sport, Girls4Gold, Paralympic Talent Portal: <https://www.eisconnect.co.uk/sites/TalentParalympic/layouts/15/start.aspx#/SitePages/Home.aspx> Page accessed 11/12/2013

either basketball or rowing.⁵³ This is in preparation for the 2016 Olympics and seems to follow a similar format to Girls4Gold and Sporting Giants of open application and physical tests.

8.6 Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (WSFF)

The purpose of the WSFF is to improve girl's and women's fitness levels by encouraging them to get active. They also campaign and work towards better support, employment opportunities and media coverage for women at elite level. This is done through, for instance, campaigns such as #GoGirl⁵⁴ and 'SheMoves'⁵⁵ and research projects such as 'Sweat in the City'⁵⁶.

The WSFF released their Impact report 2012/2013: *Elite Sport, Adult Women, Young Women and Children*. The report shows the success of online social media campaigns such as #GoGirl; this campaign achieved celebrity endorsement and widespread media coverage, having a positive impact on the way women viewed sport and their participation in it. It also details the steps taken by WSFF to address issues that arose from their 2012 report, *Changing the Game*. For example, as it was shown that schools were 'key' in encouraging girls to get active. Therefore, the WSFF has been working with 4000 schools and 46 sports bodies to improve participation in sports. They have also secured funding from the Department of Health and have been providing a programme of best practice within schools.⁵⁷

Furthermore, through the All Party Parliamentary Group on Women's Sport and Fitness, WSFF have lobbied to secure funding and to shape policy. For instance, they have secured funding which will allow them to appoint a Schools Relationship Manager, aiding in the programme of best practice. Also, WSFF has lobbied that other activities, such as dance, have not been taken off the curriculum in favour of competitive sports.⁵⁸

WSFF and informal sport

WSFF has carried out research into women's participation in informal sport. Their report, *Women and Informal Sport*⁵⁹, looks at running (Run England), badminton (No

⁵³ UKSport, Talented: 2016, Tall and Talented, <http://www.uk sport.gov.uk/pages/talent-2016-tall-and-talented/> Page accessed 16/12/2013

⁵⁴ #GoGirl was WSFF's twitter led campaign during the 2012 London Olympics. It was used to engage fans, politicians, the media and other athletes through showing their support for Team GB's and Paralympics GB's female athletes.

⁵⁵ 'SheMoves' was a campaign in 2013 which encouraged women to follow an everyday woman named Avril, a mother of two, as she documented her attempts to get fit on social media sites. The point of the campaign was to get women active along with Avril and to share in the experience.

⁵⁶ 'Sweat in the City' or SitC was a research project to find out why women were less active than men. It provided over 2000 young women with a free 3-month gym membership. The women were supported through an online forum, a fitness mentor and fitness programme. They were encouraged to share their experiences through an online fitness diary.

⁵⁷ Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation Annual Review 2012/2013: <http://www.wsff.org.uk/about/annual-review> p6.

⁵⁸ Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation Annual Review 2012/2013: <http://www.wsff.org.uk/about/annual-review>

⁵⁹ WSFF. 2011. *Women and Informal Sport*: <http://www.wsff.org.uk/resources/how-women-experience-sport-and-fitness/women-and-informal-sport>

Strings) and football (JustPlay!) to determine participation levels and the reasons behind them.

Informal sport has several meanings but the main factors include:

- Logistics and flexibility in terms of location time and fees;
- The atmosphere: informal being more friendly and sociable and;
- The ability to participate at own pace to achieve individual goals: a lack of pressure to perform.⁶⁰

The report suggests that women find informal sports appealing for a number of reasons. For instance; the no-pressure environment is appealing to women as enjoying participation takes priority over performance. It is suggested that pressure to perform and show skill is a key factor in putting women off formal sport⁶¹. It also found that many women found informal sports to be more convenient, as it can be arranged to coincide with free time, rather than conforming to a competitive timetable. Therefore, informal sport can be more suitable, for instance, for a working mother.

The biggest factor in participating in informal sports seems to be the social aspect. The gym is seen to be isolating, but with informal sport participants can take part within a group of mixed ability.

WSFF also found that a lot of satisfaction with informal sport came from a motivational coach. They have created recommendations for recruiting coaches for informal sports activities, for example:

- A coach needs to show 'passion and enthusiasm';
- Must be able to lead and have sports/fitness knowledge;
- Must be able to 'facilitate the social approach';
- The coach must be organised and use social media to promote the activity and develop relationships with participants⁶².

Run England

England Athletics created Run England to answer the increasing demand for a recreational running project. Run England's core aim is the enhancement of participation levels in recreational running for all. This is achieved through local groups, set up via Run England and led by volunteer leaders who achieve a Leadership in Running Fitness qualification (also provided by Run England).⁶³

⁶⁰ WSFF, 'Women and Informal Sport' A report for the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation 2011: http://www.wsff.org.uk/system/1/assets/files/000/000/267/267/e4e4de23f/original/Women_and_informal_sport_vFINAL.pdf Page accessed 18/12/2013, p24.

⁶¹ As above, p10.

⁶² As above, p41.

⁶³ Run England: <http://www.runengland.info/page.asp?section=1846§ionTitle=About+us> Page Accessed 18/12/2013

Currently there are 2199 groups across the UK⁶⁴, of which 2095 cater for beginners. Most groups are mixed gender, but 278 are women only, while there are 14 men only groups⁶⁵, suggesting women are keener to have single gender group activities. Membership of Run England is free and groups can be set up anywhere as long as there is a qualified leader.

No Strings Badminton

This was created by Badminton England in order to 'engage with a wider audience'.⁶⁶ The focus of No Strings is on the social side of the sport. It also aims to be simple and convenient through its 'pay and play' sessions, meaning constant commitment is not necessary.⁶⁷

The sessions are facilitated by a UKCC Level 1 qualified coordinator with a background in badminton and the ability to make the experience fun and social.

Just Play! Football

This programme allows participants to play football without the normal season commitment or tournament competitiveness. They hold women only sessions or 'kickabouts' and again, focus is on the social side of the sport.⁶⁸ There are over 400 centres across England providing services. Each session is facilitated by a Football Association qualified organiser.

8.7 Women in Sport Initiative and Women in Sport Programme

In 2005, the Irish Sports Council launched the 'Women in Sport Initiative' in 2005. An over-arching Women in Sports programme was introduced, aiming not only to bridge the gap between men's and women's levels of activity, but also to further enhance women's participation in sporting activities and to lend support for those in roles within sporting organisations.⁶⁹

8.8 International Working Group on Women and Sport

The first World Conference on Women and Sport was held in Brighton in 1994, during which the International Working Group on Women and Sport was established. The IWG was created with the principal aim of re-shaping international sports culture to both encourage and to value the participation of women in sporting activities, but also

⁶⁴ Primarily these groups are in England but there are some groups on the Isle of Man, in Scotland, Wales and there is also one in County Down.

⁶⁵ Run England, 'Your Sport and Activity Finder': <http://nia1.me/1vt> Page accessed 18/12/2013

⁶⁶ WSFF, 'Women and Informal Sport' A report for the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation 2011: <http://nia1.me/1vs> Page accessed 19/12/2013, p25.

⁶⁷ No Strings Badminton: <http://www.nostringsbadminton.co.uk/default.asp> Page accessed 19/12/2013

⁶⁸ Football Association, JustPlay!: <http://www.thefa.com/my-football/justplay/what-is-just-play> Page accessed 19/12/2013

⁶⁹ Irish Sports Council, Women in Sport: http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Participation/Women_in_Sport/ Page accessed 19/12/2013

in leadership roles.⁷⁰ As set out by the Brighton Declaration, they aim to achieve this through working with political institutions and sporting bodies internationally, drawing attention to barriers facing women in terms of participation and employment. Furthermore, they ensure such organisations uphold these requirements as set out by the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.⁷¹

The Brighton Declaration sets out ten principles:

1. Equity and Equality in Society and Sport: as stated above, political institutions and sporting bodies must ensure compliance to international law with regards to equality and discrimination;
2. Facilities: ensuring wide accessibility and facilities to encourage participation, for instance, child-care facilities;
3. School and Junior Sport: to ensure girls receive physical education which provides them with equitable 'opportunities and learning experience';
4. Developing Participation: providing sporting activities will endeavour to meet the needs and aspirations of women, to enhance participation and development;
5. High Performance Sport: organisations must ensure women are provided with the same encouragement with regards to participation and competition, with support and opportunities provided equally;
6. Leadership in Sport: policies, strategies and initiatives should be created to ensure women are provided with equal opportunities in leadership roles, ie coaching, management, administration etc;
7. Education Training and Development: those who provide training for leadership roles, such as coaching, should highlight and address issues facing women in sport and in leadership roles;
8. Sport Information and Research: those who are responsible should provide research which can inform policy and programme development with regards to women and sport;
9. Resources: funding should be allocated to those programmes, organisations and individuals which can progress the principles of the Declaration; and
10. Domestic and International Cooperation: political institutions, along with non-government organisations, should address issues with women and sport

⁷⁰ International Working Group, the Brighton Declaration: [Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport: http://www.iwg-gti.org/@Bin/22427/Brighton+Declaration_EN.pdf](http://www.iwg-gti.org/@Bin/22427/Brighton+Declaration_EN.pdf) Page accessed 06/02/2014

⁷¹ International Working Group, the Brighton Declaration: [Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport: http://www.iwg-gti.org/@Bin/22427/Brighton+Declaration_EN.pdf](http://www.iwg-gti.org/@Bin/22427/Brighton+Declaration_EN.pdf)

through policy and by using examples good practice. In doing so, the organisations/institutions should endeavour to work locally and internationally with similar bodies, sharing information and strategies.

These ten principles are seen to be crucial in ensuring equality for women in sport; therefore, IWG encourages institutions and organisations to sign up. To date, over 400 organisations have endorsed the Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport, affirming their commitment to equality in sports.⁷² Finland will hold the 6th IWG conference in 2014.

8.9 Committee for Culture, Media and Sport inquiry in Westminster

The House of Commons Culture, Media and Sports Committee (CMS) launched an inquiry into women and sport on the 26 July 2013. After London hosted the 2012 Olympics and the success of Team GB's female athletes, it was widely expected that women and girls would be more encouraged to participate in sport. However, as has been shown in this paper, this has not been the case. Therefore, CMS launched an inquiry 'to investigate what barriers remain to women's participation sport and how to overcome these...'.⁷³ The inquiry is currently focusing on key areas such as:

- Availability of facilities for training and playing sport, for both girls and women, at both elite and grassroots levels;
- Finance, including sponsorship and prize money;
- Media coverage;
- Reasons why participation in sport by women decreases;
- The variety of sports on offer to girls at school.⁷⁴

⁷² International Working Group, the Brighton Declaration: [Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport: http://www.iwg-gti.org/@Bin/22427/Brighton+Declaration_EN.pdf](http://www.iwg-gti.org/@Bin/22427/Brighton+Declaration_EN.pdf)

⁷³ Culture, Media and Sport Committee, inquiry into women and sport: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/culture-media-and-sport-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/women-and-sport/>

⁷⁴ Culture, Media and Sport Committee, inquiry into women and sport: <http://nia1.me/1vu>

9 Potential issues for further consideration

9.1 Summary of key findings

- Women exercise significantly less than men in Northern Ireland; 45% of women have participated in sport in the previous 12 months, as opposed to 59% of men.
- The Sport NI strategy states that it intends to increase participation by six percentage points among women by 2019. However, the Women's Sports and Fitness Foundation has predicted a 5.5% decrease in female participation by 2017.
- Female athletes do not receive the same amount of funding as their male counterparts and, some sports did not receive any funding in 2012/13 (for instance, boxing).
 - Sport NI's Athlete Investment Programme 2012/2013 had a total budget of £996,419, of which 41% (£405,561) was allocated to female athletes. (See Table on page 11 for full breakdown)
- Women are under-represented in elite sports:
 - Less than half the total of Olympic Athletes for both GB and IRE were female (although the 2 GB Paralympic Athletes were both female, while IRE female Paralympians accounted for one third of all such athletes).
 - The sports with the lowest female representation include boxing, angling, cycling, judo, squash, association football, wrestling, rugby and wheelchair rugby.
- It is much more likely for men to volunteer (12% compared to 6%) and to be a coach, than it is for women:
 - Sport NI survey found that 78% of NI coaches were male.
- Women are less likely to hold senior positions in sports governance:
 - In 2013, the Commission on the Future for Women's Sport in the UK reported that only one in five board members of NGBs were women and only nine of 57 organisations had a female chief executive;
 - UK Sport has included a new principle in their guidance guidelines stipulating that female representation should be raised to 25% by 2017. To date only 26 out of 57 organisations meet the minimum criteria.
- Sport NI's 'Women and Girl's' policy 2008 aims to improve the participation of women in Sport through including them in the consultation of future policy.
- Sport NI's *Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2009–19* stipulates that the recruitment of 18 Women's Sports Directors who are responsible for providing opportunities for women will improve their participation in sport.
- The Northern Ireland Female Sports Forum was set up in 2013 to provide a collective of expertise and support, but the forum has faced challenges due to

issues with organisation and support, in particular the degree of resource allocated to its initiatives by governing bodies.

- In England, many women's participation programmes receive funding from the National Lottery, for instance; the Active Women Programme which allocates Lottery Funding to Women in Sports Projects and UK Sport which allocates £100 million of funding from both the Exchequer and National Lottery into elite sports programmes.
- Further afield, there is an International Working Group on Women and Sport which holds conferences across the world promoting Women's participation in, and employment within, sports.

9.2 Potential actions for the future

- What further sources of funding might be available to provide for women's participation programmes? For example, could National Lottery funds, through SportNI, be used to fund informal sports programmes?;
- What progress has been made by the Northern Ireland Female Sports Forum?;
- To find whether Northern Ireland sports organisations are aware of the Brighton Declaration and how many have signed up to it;
- What is the relationship between body image and media portrayal of female sports? Would it be beneficial for broadcast agencies to increase the visibility of female sports?
- What forms of sports programmes and projects exist, both grassroots and elite, for women from disadvantaged backgrounds, working mothers and those with disabilities;
- What will be the outcome and recommendations of the Culture, Media and Sport inquiry into the current women and sport?; and
- How can the participation of women at senior managerial and board level within national governing bodies be boosted, particularly in Northern Ireland?
- Teenage years are a crucial period for girls dropping out of sport. What could be done to reverse this trend? A number of researchers and organisations have suggested that providing a broad range of sports, particularly individual exercise options and non-team sports such as dance, may be effective. What is the view of the Department of Education on this?
- Given that participation in sport has positive physical and mental health consequences, what discussions have taken place with the Department of Health regarding the funding or piloting of initiatives?