

SOUTH EAST – SPORTING REGION OR ARMCHAIR FANS?

Sport England's Active People Survey provides an unprecedented picture of sport and active recreation across England and the South East

The people of the South East are the most active in the country, according to the results of a major nationwide survey released today by Sport England (1).

Although almost half the population of adults aged 16 and over in the South East (46.9%) don't take part in sport or active recreation, the region out performs others around the country, both in terms of regular and occasional participation. Sport England's Active People Survey also shows that 71.8% of South East adults are satisfied with the sports provision in their local area, compared to 69.5% nationally.

More than one in four (27.6%) belong to a health or sports club, more than 1 in 5 (20.7%) have received coaching or tuition in the last year (18% nationally), and 17.1% have taken part in competitive sports in the last 12 months, again above the 15% national figure.

The Active People Survey, the largest ever held into the sport and recreational habits of people in England, paints a fascinating and diverse picture of participation among those aged 16 and over. Of the people questioned in the South East:

- **22.6%** are hitting the recommended target of 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport or active recreation on at least three days a week, compared to the national average of 21% (2).
- **30.5%** have built some sport or exercise into their lives. This compares to 28% across the country (2).
- **46.9%** took no part in moderate intensity sport or active recreation (for 30 minutes or more) in the previous four weeks, compared to 50.6% nationally (2).

- Hart in Hampshire is the most active local authority area in the region, and in the top five nationally for regular participation, while Hastings recorded the lowest percentage hitting the 3 x 30 minute a week target at 16.7%.
- The survey shows that socio-demographic factors heavily impact on participation, with lower regular participation among women (20.3%) than men (25%). The highest socio-economic groups have higher participation (25.7%) than those from the most deprived backgrounds (18.2%). Taking into account deprivation in the area Brighton and Hove, Chichester and Portsmouth are among the best performing local authority areas in the country for regular participation.

Sport England, the body charged with sustaining and increasing participation in sport, commissioned Ipsos MORI to carry out the survey to gauge how active England really is. Nationally, inactivity costs the UK an estimated £8.2 billion each year. The results of the survey will help Sport England, working with partners across the region, to target and inform future investment to improve community sport.

1,000 residents were questioned in every Local Authority area about their sport and active recreation habits as part of the survey. The sample size is more than twenty times larger than the 2002 General Household Survey, the last major survey conducted in sport. This will enable Sport England to segment the market with a greater level of accuracy and target partners, products and services accordingly.

When it comes to volunteering in the South East the people of Chiltern are most generous with their time with 7.9% giving at least one hour a week to help run a sport club or activity. Across the South East, 5.4% spend at least one hour on sport volunteering in an average week, compared to 4.7% nationally. Nationally some 1.9 million people give up one hour a week. People living in large cities tend to volunteer much less than their rural counterparts.

As expected the most active age group in the region are those aged between 16 and 24, and the survey shows that people drop out of exercise and do less and less as they get older. This has implications with the ageing population and could be seen as a call to action by sports centres, gyms and sports clubs across the region to make their offer more attractive to older people.

Nationally, the South East is the most active region, while the West Midlands has the lowest percentage hitting the 3 x 30 minute a week target. Richmond upon Thames in London has the accolade of being the most active Local Authority, closely followed by Macclesfield in Cheshire. Meanwhile, Boston in Lincolnshire and Newham in London are currently the least active.

The survey also gives a picture of the most popular sports across England. Walking is the most popular recreational activity, followed by swimming and going to the gym. Cycling, football, running and jogging, golf, badminton, tennis and aerobics make up the top 10.

The results of the survey will help Sport England, sports organisations and the government understand the obstacles to people taking part and take action to overcome them. The inactive group can now be analysed to look at factors including their age, social class, and car ownership. In light of the findings Sport England will look to provide targeted support to selected Local Authorities, looking at club, coach, volunteer and community sports provision.

Sean Holt, Director of Sport England South East, said today: "This survey provides an unprecedented picture of activity and inactivity in England. Knowing the scale of the challenge is the first step to putting it right. We will work with our partners at county and local level to make sure these findings help us all to continue to target our resources more accurately and effectively. This will help us ensure that we have the right places to play sport, and people on the ground to make sport happen – coaches, paid and unpaid, and other crucial volunteers.

“The survey results also complement existing tools, including our Active Places website, which allows us to analyse facilities around the country. This information will be crucial as we look to reach out to more of those currently missing out on sport and its benefits. Here in the South East region, we are tasked with getting 395,301 more people active by 2012. We’re pleased that the South East is performing well but there’s still a long way to go. It’s a huge challenge and we’re ready for it.”

Sport England provides advice to partners, invests National Lottery and Government funding in community sport, and promotes sport and its benefits. The organisation said that in light of the findings Sport England would undertake a review, working with selected Local Authorities, which will look at club, coach, volunteer and community sport provision.

The Audit Commission will use some of the results from the survey, adjusted to reflect the different levels of deprivation in local authority areas, in its culture service assessments as part of comprehensive performance assessment for single tier local authorities. And the survey will be repeated in three years time to see if the concerted efforts by all partners to get the nation active are having an effect.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Sport England is working to create an active nation through sport, providing advice to partners, investing in community sport and promoting sport and its benefits. Our aim is to increase the number of people participating in sport and active recreation by around 2 million by 2012 with specific focus on hard to reach groups that are currently under-represented. Sport England is a non-departmental public body that distributes both Lottery and public funding to develop community sport.

1. The Survey measured the number of days over the previous 28 days that people aged 16 and over take part in 30 minutes moderate intensity sport and active recreation, including recreational walking and cycling. The data on volunteering are based on time spent in the last 28 days.
2. Those described as not taking part in sport or active recreation had not taken part in any moderate intensity sport and active recreation of at least 30 minutes duration in the last 4 weeks. Those described as building some exercise into their lives did at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport and active recreation on between one and eleven (inclusive) days in the previous 28 days. Those described as satisfied said they were either very or fairly satisfied with sports provision in their area.
3. The survey collected information on 239 sports /activities. These did not include activities such as DIY, gardening, housework and occupational related activity.
4. Sport England commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct the Active People Survey. This was carried out by telephone survey between October 2005 and October 2006 with at least 1,000 interviews being conducted across every Local Authority area in England (except Isles of Scilly and City of London and Birmingham). A total of 363,724 people aged 16 and over were surveyed over the period.
5. The Isles of Scilly have the highest measured rates of participation in the country but these are less reliable due to the small sample sizes achieved.
6. The full results of the Active People Survey will provide the following key statistics:
 - o The % of the adult population (16 and over) participating in at least 30 minutes moderate intensity sport and active recreation in England on three or more days a week ('3x30') including by geographic area, down to local authority area.
 - o The % of the adult population participating in recreational walking and cycling.
 - o Information about sports participation broken down by age, gender, ethnicity, disabled/non-disabled and by socio-economic group.
 - o The % of the adult population volunteering in sport and active recreation for at least one hour a week, again down to local authority level.
 - o The % of the adult population who are members of sports clubs, or had received coaching or tuition, or taken part in competition in the previous 12 months.
 - o Levels of overall satisfaction with sports provision in respondents' local area.
7. The results of the Active People Survey will also inform the new sport and recreation indicators in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). The findings have been welcomed by the Audit Commission, the Local Government Association and many national Governing Bodies of Sport
8. The Active People Survey provides Sport England and its partners with an unprecedented picture of participation in sport and active recreation across England. These results will help Sport England and its partners to:
 - o Encourage the nation to become more active through sport.

- Present a current picture of activity levels. The survey will be repeated in 2008/09 and again in 2011/12. This will give an accurate indication over time of how sporting our nation is, and allowing us to measure the effectiveness of our work to get more people participating in sport and active recreation every year.
- Demonstrate the benefits that sport can bring to the health of the nation.
- Inform future policy and resource allocation by helping us identify the areas of greatest need. Sport England will work with its national and regional partners, with County Sports Partnerships at the sub-regional level, and through them with local partners to utilise this knowledge.

9. The data from Active People will be used in conjunction with Sport England's online facilities database, www.activeplaces.com