

Evaluation of Active Colleges

Summary of student survey, April 2013

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01. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2012 Sport England commissioned CFE Research to undertake an evaluation of the Active Colleges investment in the following three areas:

- *To measure the impact of Active Colleges on the number and proportion of FE college; students regularly participating in sport (at least once a week for at least 30 minutes);*
- *To find out what works, how, in what context and for whom;*
- *To communicate the evidence effectively to optimise its influence on policy and practice.*

In April 2013 the inaugural Active Colleges Student Survey was circulated to each in-post College Sport Maker employed during wave one of the Active Colleges programme. Nearly 12,000 students from 121 colleges responded to the survey. Key findings from the survey show that:

- *77.5% of respondents took part in 1 x 30 minutes of sporting or physical activity in the past week, with 25% taking part on one or two days in the past week and 52% taking part on three or more days in the past week.*
- *Having a keen interest in sport, being able to access and afford the sports they wanted to play and activities being appropriate for their abilities were the most commonly cited motivations students agreed with when describing their reasons for participating in sporting or physical activity.*
- *More students participate in sporting or physical activity at community leisure complexes or gyms (47%) and organised clubs or organisations outside of college (40%) than at college (33%). However, only around 10% of students taking part in sporting or physical activity do so only at their college and nowhere else.*
- *22.5% of respondents had not taken part in 1 x 30 minutes of sporting or physical activity in the past week. Of these students, around half had taken part in 1x30 minutes of sporting or physical activity per week at some point in the past, and around half had never regularly participated in 1x30 minutes of sporting or physical activity.*
- *71% of students who were not currently participating in sport, but had done in the past, stated that they would be interested in taking up sport or physical activity again.*
- *More than one in five students agreed that the sporting opportunities on offer at the college were influential in their decision to apply to that college, while almost half (47%) of respondents who actively participated in sporting or physical activity in the past week agreed that being involved in college sport meant they attended college more than they would have done otherwise.*
- *All respondents, regardless of whether they participated in 1 x 30 minutes of sporting or physical activity in the past week or not, viewed the main benefits of participation as physical and mental health. Those active participants, however, found sporting or physical activity more fun and enjoyable than those who did not participate.*

02. INTRODUCTION

In October 2012 Sport England commissioned CFE Research to undertake an evaluation of the Active Colleges programme, and to assess and report on its impact. The evaluation focuses on three main objectives:

- *To measure the impact of Active Colleges on the number and proportion of FE college learners regularly participating in sport (at least once a week for at least 30 minutes);*
- *To find out what works, how, in what context and for whom;*
- *To communicate the evidence effectively to optimise its influence on policy and practice.*

In April 2013 the inaugural Active Colleges Student Survey was circulated to colleges with a College Sport Maker in post.

The survey provides information on past and present sporting and physical activity undertaken by students currently enrolled at participating colleges. The survey was developed by CFE with support from Sport England, and was administered by the colleges. The survey was intended to provide baseline data for the evaluation of the programme, and will be repeated in the autumn of 2013 for colleges participating in wave two of the Active Colleges programme, or for those where response rates in this initial wave were low.

Nearly 12,000 students responded to the survey from across 121 colleges. The profile of respondents is as follows:

- *51% of respondents were male and 49% were female.*
- *13% of respondents were aged 16 years or younger; 37% were aged 17; 27% were aged 18; 9% were aged 19; and 14% were aged 20 or over.*
- *The ethnicity of students responding to the survey was similar to national population estimates with 82% classifying their ethnicity as 'White British', compared with the national population estimate of 83%¹.*
- *7% of respondents had a self-reported disability.*
- *91% of respondents were studying full-time, while one-in-five (20%) were undertaking a sport-related course or qualification.*
- *Over half (54%) of all students were undertaking paid or unpaid work alongside their studies, with more female students (59%) than male students (49%) and more 'White British' students (57%) than Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) students (38%).*

¹ Comparator is ONS Population Estimates by Ethnic Group mid-2009 (experimental) for the 15-19 age group. Available here: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Population+Estimates+by+Ethnic+Group#tab-data-tables> last accessed, July 2013.

03. CURRENT PARTICIPATION RATES IN SPORTING OR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN ACTIVE COLLEGES

Key participation figures

Students were asked “on how many days in the past week they had done 1x30 minutes or more of sporting or physical activity, which was enough to raise their breathing rate”. Figure 1 shows the range of responses that students gave. The key participant data is as follows;

- 78% of respondents took part in at least 1 x 30minutes of sporting or physical activity in the past week (these are described as **active participants**).
- 23% did not take part in 1x30 minutes of sporting or physical activity in the past week. Of these respondents.
 - 12% had taken part in 1x30 minutes of sporting or physical activity per week at some point in the past, but not in the last week (these are described as **latent participants**).
 - 11% had never participated in 1x30 minutes of sporting or physical activity per week (these are described as **non-participants**).

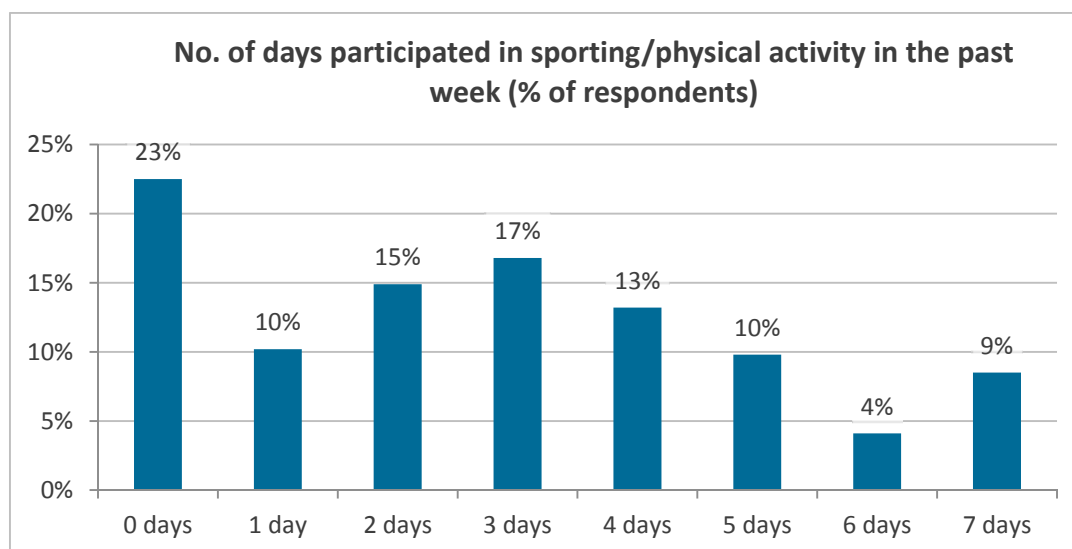


Figure 1: Number of days respondents stated they participated in sporting or physical activity in the past week which raised their breathing rate; base=11,942.

Analysis by different groups of respondents

Further analysis was undertaken to examine if different groups of students responding to the survey were more or less likely to participate regularly in sport. Figure 2 shows the percentage of students who did not take part in any sport in the last week by different groups.



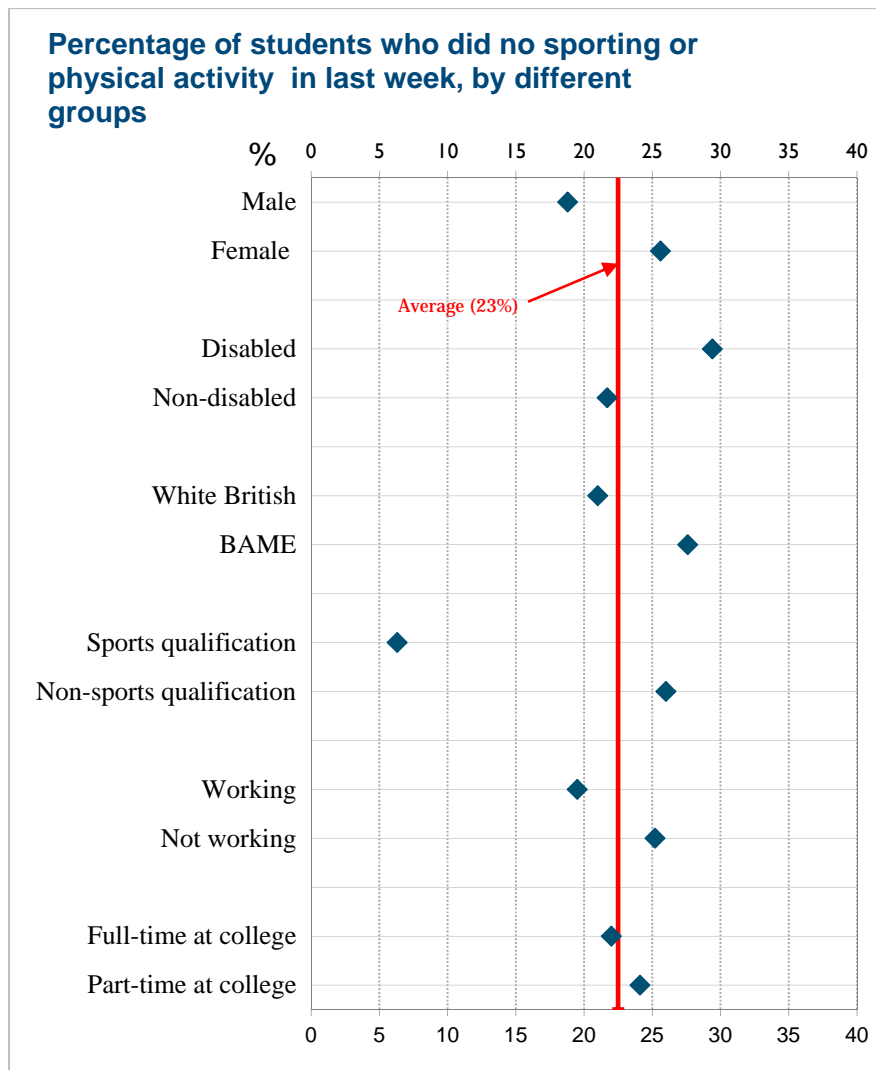


Figure 2: Respondents who stated that they did not participate in any sporting activity in the past week, by different groups; base=variable.

Gender

Female students were less likely to be involved in sporting or physical activity, with 26% stating that they had not participated in any sport or physical activity in the past week, compared with 19% of male students. Furthermore, fewer female students took part in sporting or physical activity on three or more days in the past week compared to male students (44% and 61% respectively).

Disability

Disabled students are less likely to be involved in sport than non-disabled students. Around 29% of disabled students had not participated in any sport or physical activity in the past week, compared to 22% of non-disabled students. Further to this, fewer disabled students took part in sporting or physical activity on three or more days in the past week compared to non-disabled students (46% and 53% respectively).

However, it should be noted that these survey findings suggest that a much higher proportion of disabled people at colleges participate in sport, compared with disabled people in the general population².

Ethnicity

Students from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background (BAME) are less likely to be involved in sport than those students who are White British, with just over a quarter (28%) not doing any sport or physical activity in the past week, compared to 21% of White British students. Fewer BAME students also took part in sporting or physical activity for three or more days in the past week, compared to White British students (47% and 54% respectively).

Sports qualifications

Those students studying for a sports qualification are more likely to have taken part in sporting or physical activity (outside of their qualification) in the past week than those not taking a sports-qualification. Only 6% of those studying for a sports qualification did not take part in any sporting or physical activity in the past week, compared to 26% of other students. Those taking a sports qualification also have a much higher incidence of engaging in sporting or physical activity in the past week on three or more days (77%) than those not taking a sports qualification (48%).

Employment

Students in employment are more likely to participate in sporting or physical activity than those not working: only 20% of those working did not take part in any sporting or physical activity in the past week, compared to 25% of those not working. Those in employment were also more likely to participate in sport or physical activity on three or more days in the past week, compared to those not in employment (55% and 50% respectively).

Full or part-time enrolment at college

There were only slight differences in the participation rates of full-time and part-time students with those in full-time study slightly more likely to participate in sporting or physical activity for three days or more in the past week (53% compared to 51%).

² Active People Survey 7, Q2 April 2012-April 2013 found that 18.2% of people with a long-term limiting illness or disability played sport once a week, compared with 70.6% of college students. Although the figures are not directly comparable – for example, the age ranges are different and the methodology of data collection is different – the size of the disparity suggests that participation rates may be higher for disabled people at colleges.

04. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN SPORTING OR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Typical sporting or physical activity

As highlighted in Section 3, 78% of students participated in 1x30 minutes of sporting or physical activity in the past week. These “**active participants**” were asked whether or not this was typical of the level of sport they normally did. Just over two-thirds of students (69%) reported that this was approximately the amount they normally did, 20% reported that they normally did more; and 12% less.

Active participants were also asked whether or not they currently participated in more or less sport or physical activity compared to one year ago. The findings were equally split with around one-third stating they did roughly the same amount of sport a year ago; one-third now did less and one-third now do more.

Figure 3 compares, in more detail, this typical activity with activity undertaken a year ago for active participants.

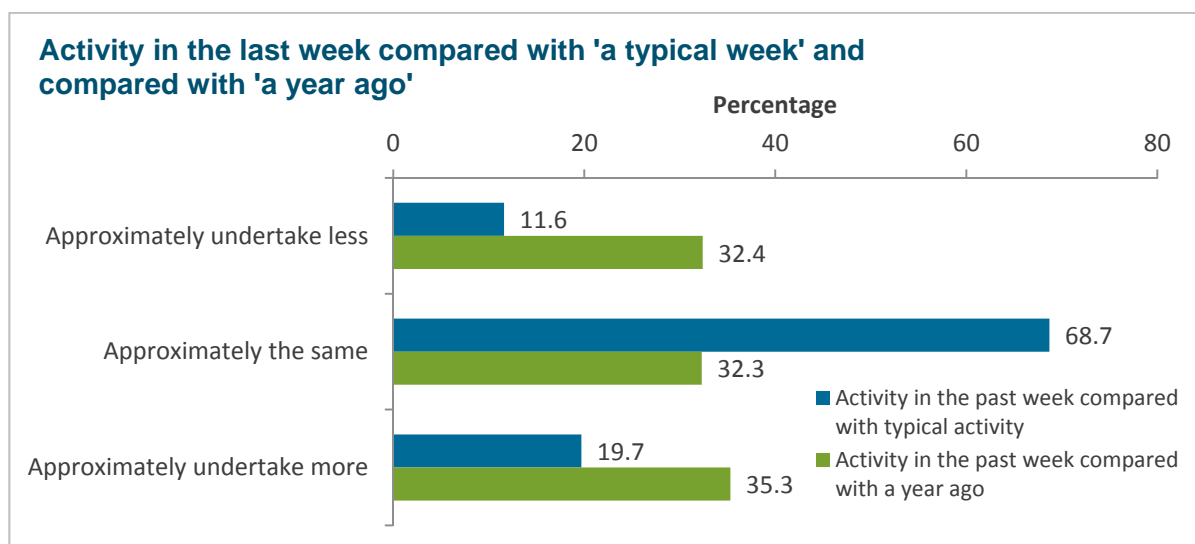


Figure 3: Sporting or physical activity in the past week compared to normal activity, and compared to activity one year ago; bases variable.

Motivations to participate in sporting or physical activity

Active participants were asked to what extent they agreed with a range of factors that were important in their decision to start sport or physical activity (Figure 4). The factors that were most commonly agreed with were;

- Having a **keen interest in sport.**
- Being **able to access and afford the sports they wanted to play.**
- Activities being **appropriate for their abilities.**

Being encouraged and supported by family and friends was a more influential driver for participation in sport or physical activity for active participants than **being encouraged and supported by their school or college**.

However, fewer active participants stated that the motivation to participate was due to “**friends and family taking part**”. Therefore, while encouragement and support from family and friends is an important influence on student participation in sport, whether those family and friends actually take part themselves may be less important.

In addition, 36% of active participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that they were “**inspired by London 2012 or other national/international sporting events**”. This figure was higher for respondents attending college in London (44%) than those outside of the capital (35%).

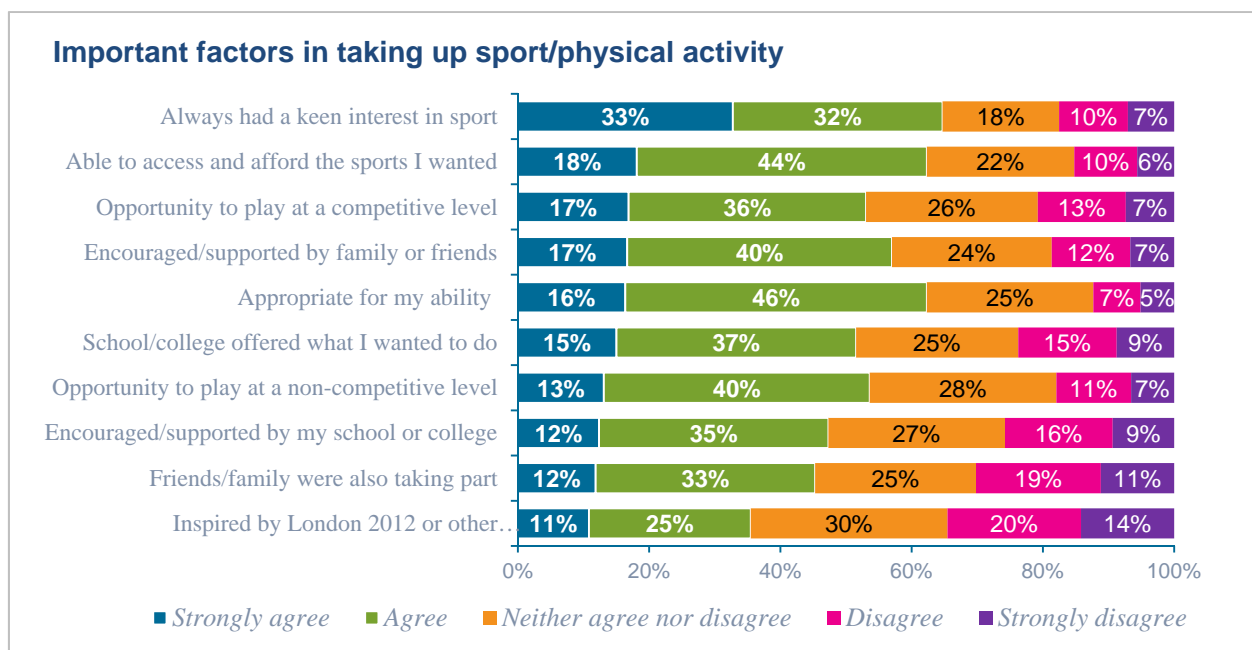


Figure 4: To what extent students agreed or disagreed that the following factors were important in them starting to do sport/physical activities; base=variable

When looking at the data by gender, some key differences are highlighted;

- The statement most strongly agreed or agreed with as a motivating reason among male active participants was “**a keen interest in sport**” (73%). However for females it was that activities were “**appropriate for their ability**” (61%).
- 60% of male active participants strongly agreed or agreed that the “**opportunity to play at a competitive level**” influenced their decision to participate in sport or physical activity, compared to 47% of female active participants. More females agreed that the “**opportunity to play at a non competitive level**” was a key influence (52%).

Location of sporting activity

Active participants were asked where they participated in sport and activity. The most common place that students are taking part in sport and physical activity is at a **community leisure complex (47%)**, closely followed by **organised club or organisation outside of college (40%)** and **college (33%)**.

Fewer respondents stated that this activity took place; at **“home” (13%)**, at **“an unspecified outdoor area” (9%)**, in a **“park or field” (4%)**, or in **“the workplace” (1%)**.

Out of the 33% of students who participated in sport at college, just 10% of them only took part at their college, with the remaining 90% also participating in other locations.

Gender

With regard to male and female active participants:

- A higher proportion of male students take part in sporting or physical activity at their **“college” (39%)** and at an **“organised sports club or organisation outside of college” (46%)** than female students (27% and 33% respectively).
- However, more than twice as many female students (18%) reported they did sporting or physical activity at **“home”**, compared with male students (8%).

Employment

When examining the responses of active participants who were in some form of paid or unpaid work, a higher proportion reported taking part in sport at an **“organised sports club/organisation” (43%)** and at a **“community leisure complex or gym” (50%)** compared to those who were not in employment (35% and 43% respectively).

Participation in competitive sports

Active participants were also asked whether or not they played competitive sport, and where this activity took place.

- Just over half of all active participants (53%) played some form of competitive sport.
- A much higher proportion of male active participants (63%) reported taking part in some form of competitive sport when compared to female active participants (41%).
- Of those taking part in competitive sport, 75% did so at an **“organised sports club or organisation outside of college”**, 61% at their **“college”** and 37% at a **“community leisure complex or gym”**.

05. LATENT PARTICIPATION IN SPORTING OR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Just over half (53%) of those students who had not undertaken any sporting or physical activity in the past week had done so at some time in the past. This means that 12% of all the students who responded to the survey are latent participants.

Reasons for latent participation in sporting or physical activity

A “**lack of time due to increasing pressures from school, college or work**” was the most commonly reported reason why students stopped taking part in sport with 72% of latent participants choosing this as a factor (see Figure 5).

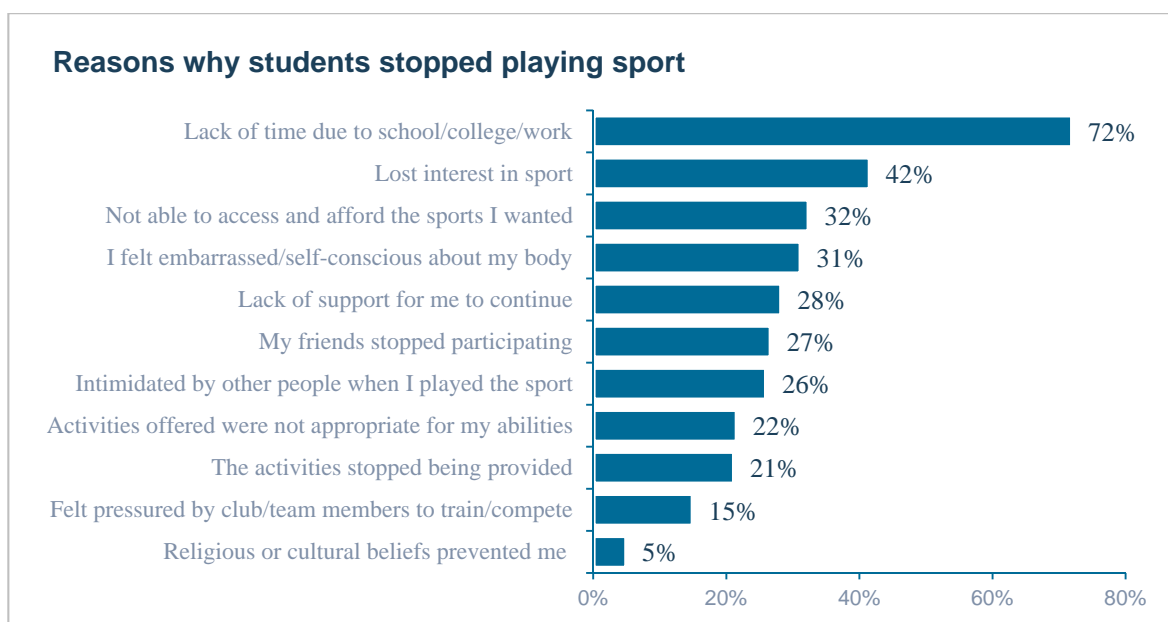


Figure 5: The factors for which students stated were influential in them ceasing participation in sporting or physical activity; base=variable)

On a positive note, 71% of latent participants stated that they “would be interested in re-engaging with sporting or physical activity” if the factors identified above (Figure 5) were overcome.

Gender

Analysing reasons for latent participation by gender show some key differences (Figure 6):

- A higher proportion (81%) of female students were latent participants because of a “**lack of time due to school, college and work**” when compared with male latent participants (59%).
- A higher proportion (39%) of female students also reported that they were latent participants because they “**felt embarrassed or self-conscious about their body**” compared with male latent participants (21%).

- Higher proportions (31%) of female students were latent participants because they felt “**intimidated by other people when playing sport**” compared to male students (19%).

Some latent participants identified, unprompted, a desire to try single-sex sporting activity (such as women’s rugby or men’s basketball) currently unavailable at their college.

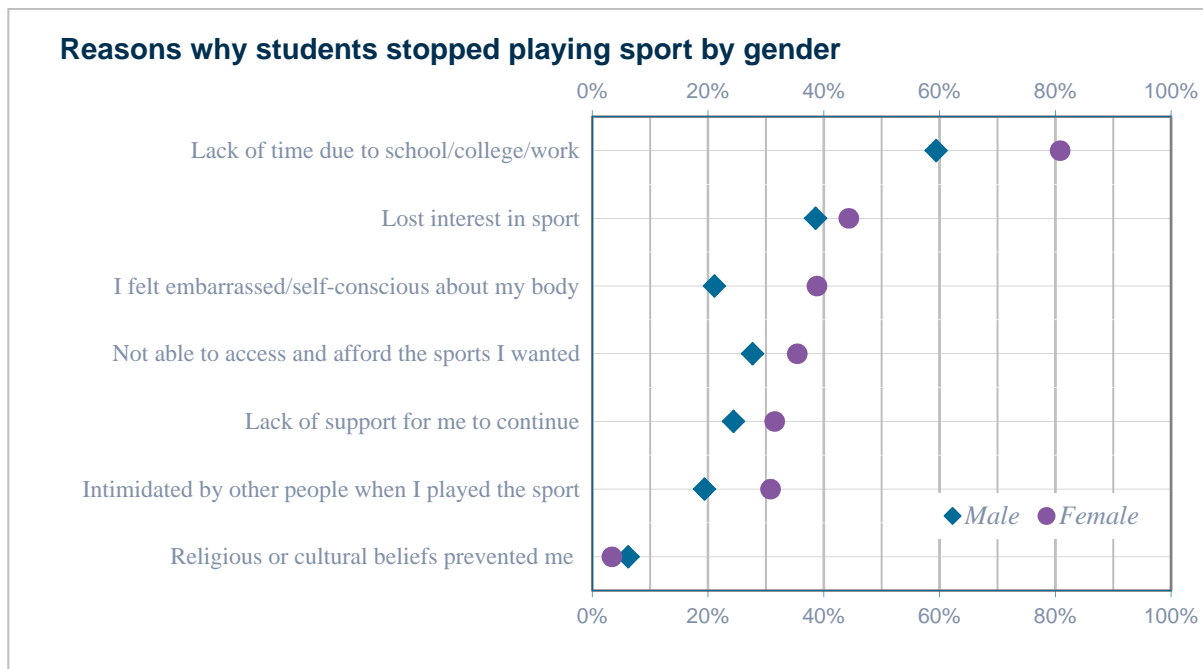


Figure 6: The factors which students stated were important in them ceasing participation in sporting or physical activity by gender; base=variable

Ethnicity

Analysing reasons for latent participation by ethnicity also highlighted some key differences:

- A higher proportion of ‘White British’ students than BAME students reported that they had stopped participating having “**lost interest in sport**” (44% compared to 32%) and due to “**feeling embarrassed or self conscious about their body**” (33% compared to 24%).
- BAME students were more likely than White British students to report reasons of a “**lack of support for them to continue**” (36% compared with 26%); because their “**religious or cultural beliefs prevented them**” from taking part (11% compared with 3%); and because of a “**lack of time due to school, college or work**”, (78% compared with 71%).

06. NON-PARTICIPATION IN SPORTING OR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Around one in ten students (11%) had never taken part in sport or physical activity for at least 1 x 30 minutes once a week.

Reasons for non-participation in sporting or physical activity

Figure 7 shows the range of factors that were influential in non-participation in 1 x 30 minutes of sporting or physical activity, with the primary reason being a “**lack of time to participate**” reported by 60% non-participants. Amongst non-participants, “**my friends do not participate**” (51%) was also an influential factor, more so than for latent participants (27%). This suggests that friends participating in sport may be a more important factor for starting participation than it is for maintaining that participation in sport and physical activity.

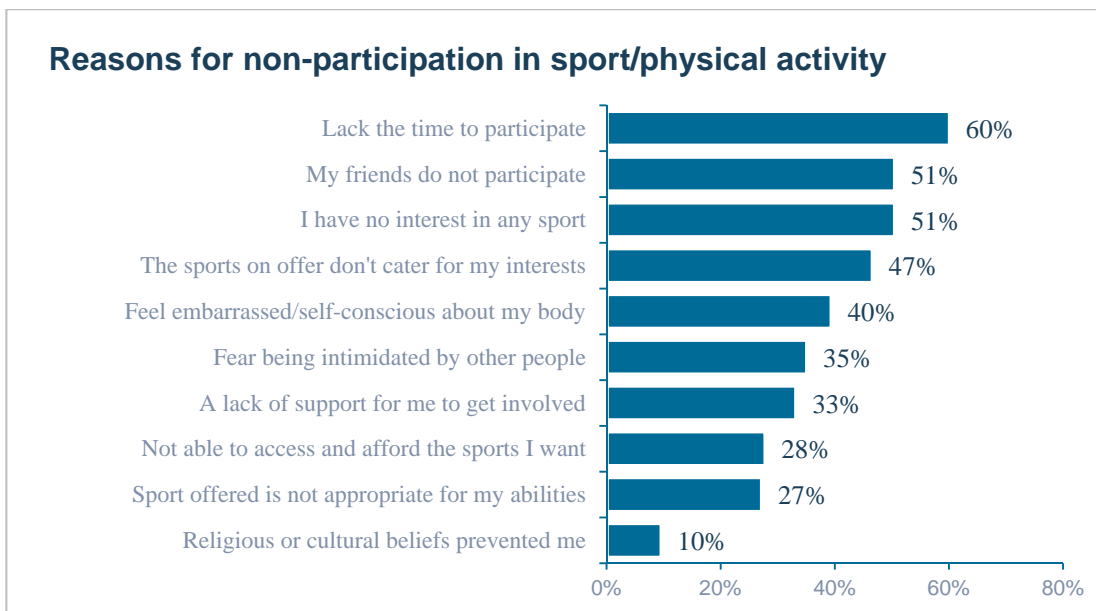


Figure 7: The factors which students stated were important in them never participating in sporting or physical activity; base=variable

Gender

The reasons why students have never played sport regularly shows the same gender difference as for those who had previously played sport and stopped (latent participation), with females more likely to not play sport due to “**a lack of time to participate**”, “**feeling embarrassed or self-conscious about their body**” or “**a fear of being intimidated by other people**” (see Figure 8). An additional reason that was higher for females than males was because “**their friends did not**” play sport (54% compared to 46%).

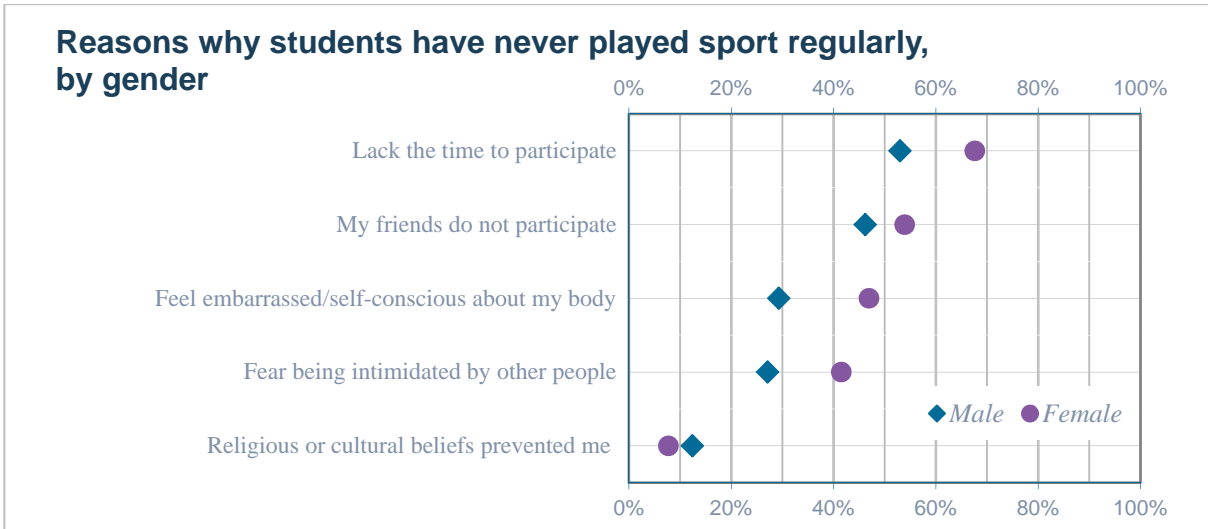


Figure 8: The factors which students stated were important in them never participating in sport or physical activity by gender; base=variable

07. SPORT IN COLLEGE

The benefits of participating in sporting or physical activity for students

Just over a fifth of students (21%) stated that the “**sporting opportunities on offer at the college were influential in their decision to apply**” to that college. As may be expected this was much higher for those students who were undertaking a sports qualification (50%) but even for those students *not* undertaking a sports-related course, the sports offer at college was an influential factor in the decision as to which college to apply to for around one in seven of them (14%).

Just over a third of students (37%) who were actively participating in sport and physical activity in the past week thought that doing so “**helps them with their college work**” and almost half (47%) reported that “**being involved in college sport means I attend college more than I would do otherwise**”. This highlights the value that sport can contribute to wider college outcomes.

Opportunities available for students to participate in sporting or physical activity at their college

Just over half of all students (52%) thought that their college “**offers a wide variety of sport and physical activities for them to take part in**”. Just under a third (30%) thought there were “**limited number of opportunities available to them**”; and around one in six students (17%) thought that there were “**no sport or physical activities on offer**” to them or “**none that they wanted to take part in**”.

Just under half of all students (48%) thought that they “**could always find out what sport is available at their college, as well as the timing and venues**”, whilst around a quarter (25%) disagreed or disagreed strongly.

Half of all students (50%) agreed, or strongly agreed, that their college “**...actively encourages all of its students to take part in some form of sport or physical activity each week**”, whilst a quarter (24%) did not agree.

Sporting or physical activity on offer at colleges

Respondents who stated that their college provided opportunities to students were asked to state in what form these activities were available (see Figure 9). By far the most common response was “**participation sessions or clubs on the college site**” (72%) followed by “**inter-** (45%) and “**intra-**(31%) **college competitions**”.

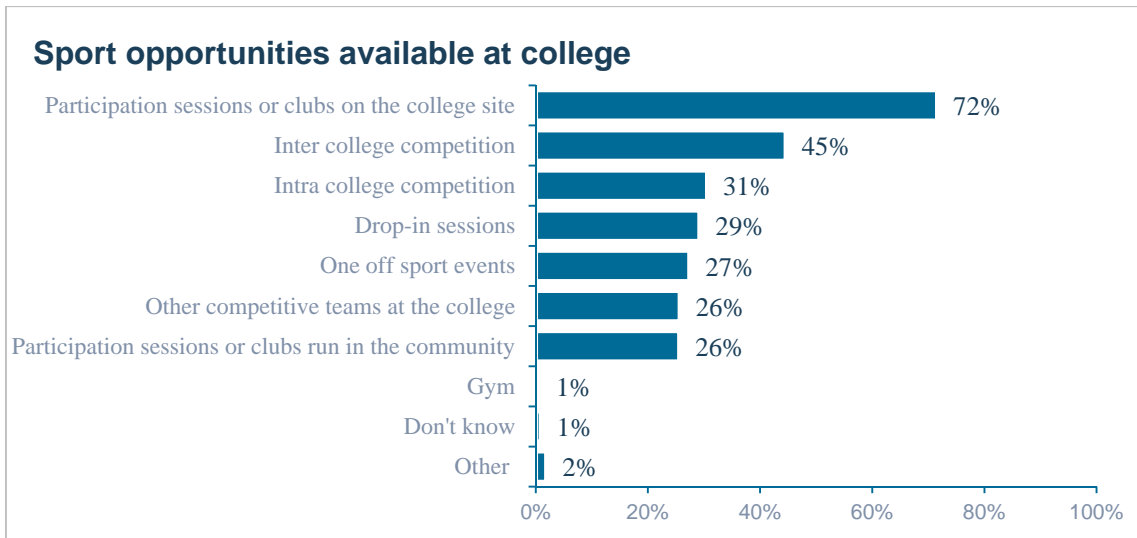


Figure 9: Sports opportunities that students know are available at their college; base=11,223 (asked only to those students who stated that their college provided opportunities)

Participating in sporting or physical activity opportunities on offer at colleges

Active participants were asked to state which activities or events they had been involved in that were offered at their college (Figure 10). The take up of different sport and physical activities on offer follows the same pattern as awareness of what is on offer (Figure 9) with 68% of students taking part in “**participation sessions or clubs on the college site**”, which was by far the most common activity.

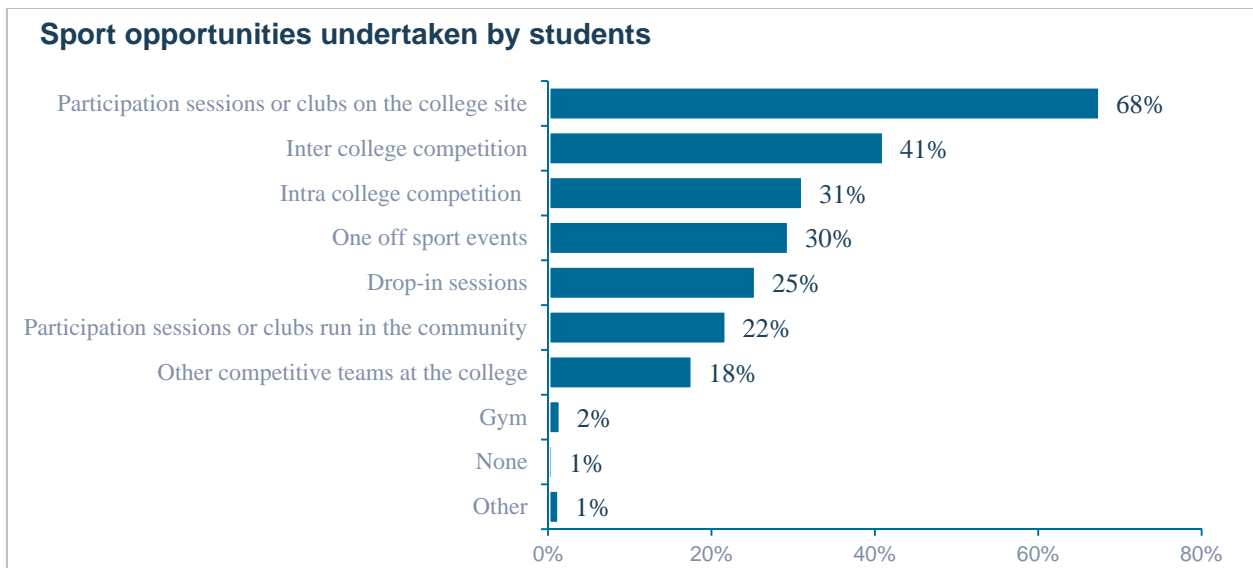


Figure 10: Sports opportunities students have taken part in at their college; base=2,862

Students opinion of the sporting or physical activity opportunities on offer at their colleges

Students active in sport or physical activities at their college held very positive opinions about the sporting offer at their college:

- *Around eight out of ten students believed that taking part in sport at their college gave them the “**opportunity to make friends and be part of a team**” (84%) and “**to take part in competitive sport**” (81%).*
- *Around eight out of ten students believed that the sports offer at their college was “**welcoming to people of all standards and abilities**” (79%), “**provided adequate facilities and equipment**” (80%), and enabled them the opportunity “**to take part in non-competitive sport**” (79%).*
- *Almost three-quarters of active participants (73%) thought that their college provided the “**opportunity to receive coaching**” in sport.*

The only statement that received a less positive response was with regards to whether activity timetables were flexible, with only 58% of students stating that they thought “**activity timetables were flexible**”.

Sports clubs, community complexes and gyms

As highlighted in Section 4 only around one in ten students who are active participants take part in activities **only** within their college.

Those active participants who take part in sporting or physical activity at sports clubs and/or community leisure complexes or gyms instead of, or as well as, their college were asked to compare their experience at these locations with the college offer (Figure 11):

- *Two-thirds (65%) either strongly agreed or agreed that local sports clubs and other venues “**have sessions at better times than those on offer at college**”.*
- *Relatively few (27%) stated that sessions at local sports clubs, community leisure centres or gyms have “**sessions that are cheaper than those offered at college**”.*

This suggests that for those students taking part in sport outside of college, convenience is more important to them than cost. With students who do participate at college having raised concerns over timetable flexibility, this would seem to be an important factor in student sports participation at college.

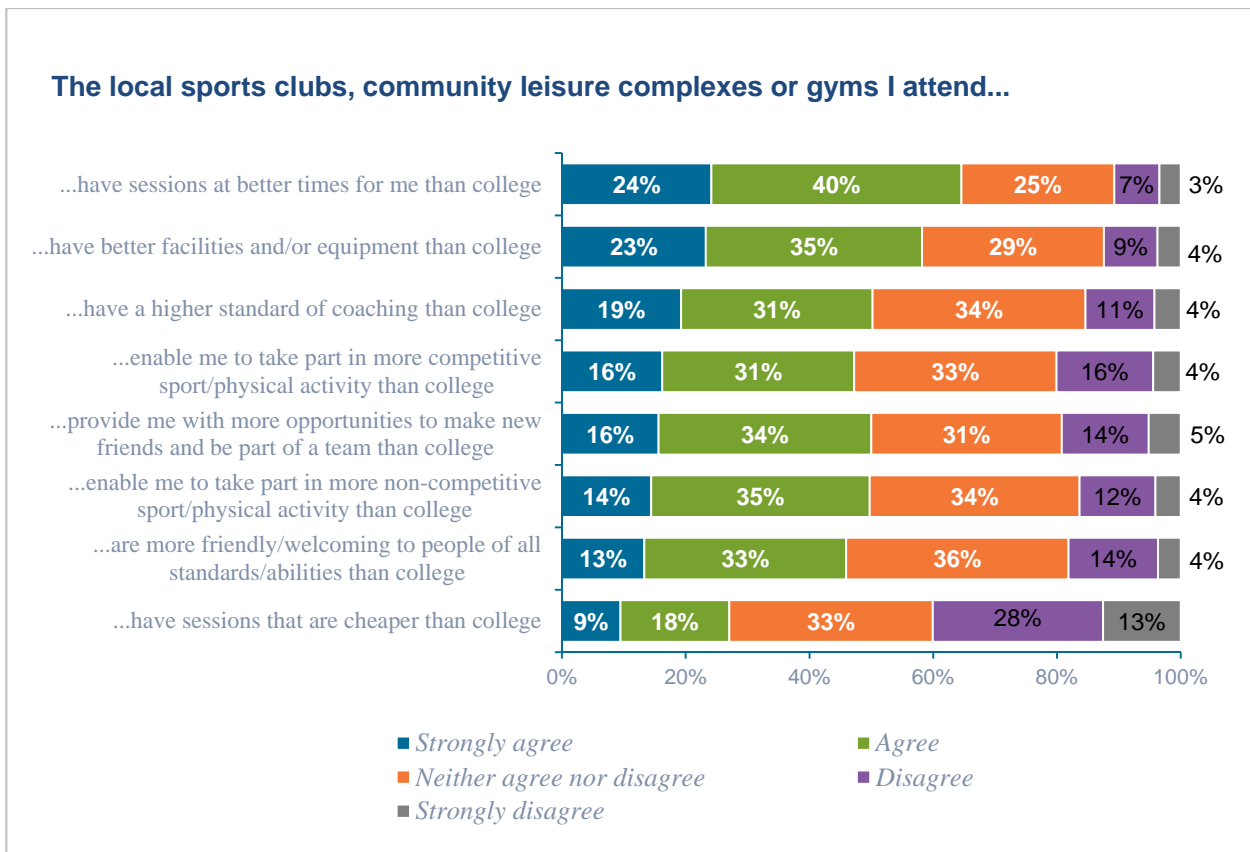


Figure 11: The extent to which students agree with the above statements; base=variable

Student demand

A quarter (25%) of all students responding to the survey reported that there was a sport or physical activity that they would like to try that they have so far been unable to participate in at their college. The most frequently cited sport, especially by male students, was **football** (in a variety of forms). This was followed by **badminton**, particularly popular with female students, then **swimming**, **tennis** and **basketball**.

Some sports were cited by similar numbers of both genders (basketball for example), while others were much more gender specific, for example:

- 167 female students wanted to participate in **netball** compared with three male students.
- Conversely, 132 male students wanted to do **rugby union** compared with 53 female students.

The most common reason as to why students had not taken part in these sports was because “**their school/college has never offered this**” (56%). This was a much higher figure than those who stated that there were “**no local facilities or sports clubs that offer this activity**” (36%). Other reasons that were commonly given are highlighted in Figure 12.

What prevented students from taking part in a sport they wanted to but have not been able to

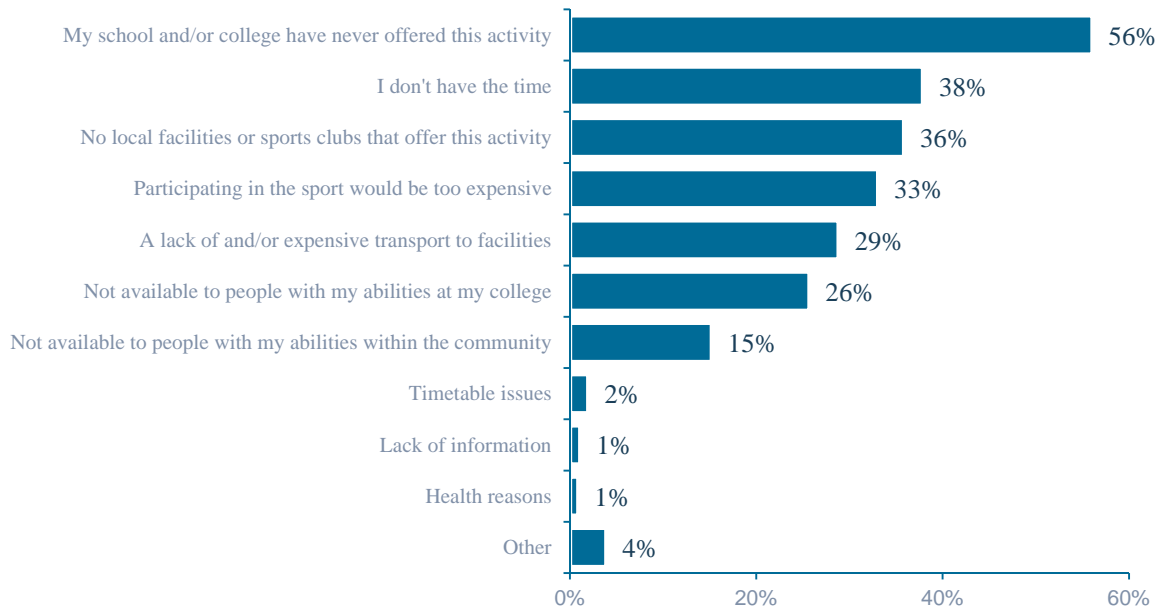


Figure 12: Reasons outlined by students to explain what has prevented them from taking part in these activities; base=2,904



08. THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN SPORTING OR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The benefits of active participation

Students responding to the survey who were active participants in sporting or physical activity were asked to state what they thought were the three main benefits of participating in sport (Figure 13). The top three benefits were:

1. *“Physical health benefits”* (71%);
2. *“Fun and enjoyable”*(55%);
3. *“Improved their mental health”*(48%)

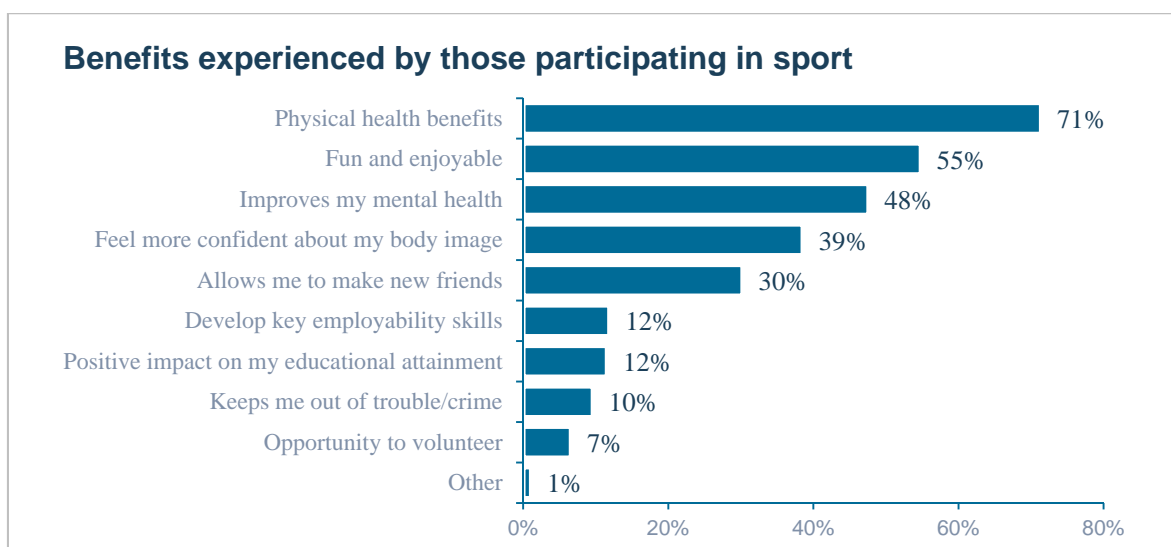


Figure 13: The frequency of the benefits of participation in sporting or physical activity for active students, reported as being in their “top three”; base=9,127

By Gender

When analysing the data by gender (Figure 14) a higher proportion of female active participants reported that sport made them **“feel more confident about their body image”** (48% female compared with 30% male). A higher proportion of female students also highlighted the health benefits, both **physical and mental**, when compared with their male counterparts.

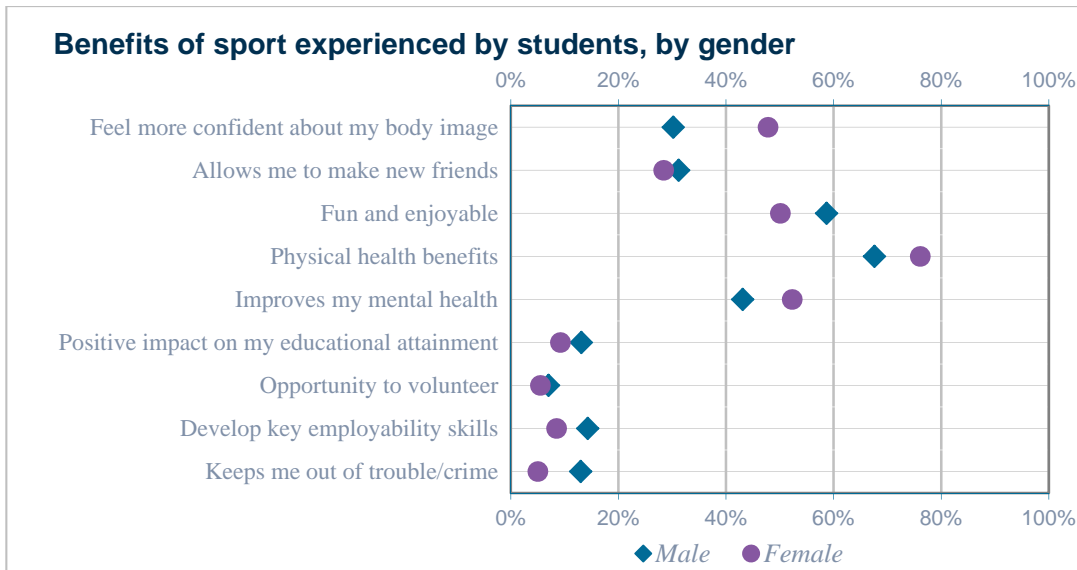


Figure 14: The three main benefits students reported as a result of taking part in sport or physical activity by gender; base=variable

Latent and non-participant views on the perceived benefits of sporting or physical activity

Latent and non-participants were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the perceived benefits of sporting or physical activity. Figure 15 illustrates that these views follow a broadly similar pattern to those benefits experienced by active participants with **“physical health benefits”** the most frequently reported (79% agreed or strongly agreed that this was a benefit). Combining responses for those who ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ highlights that the **“opportunity to make new friends”** (72%) is the next most common perceived benefit of participating in sport, according to those who are not currently active.

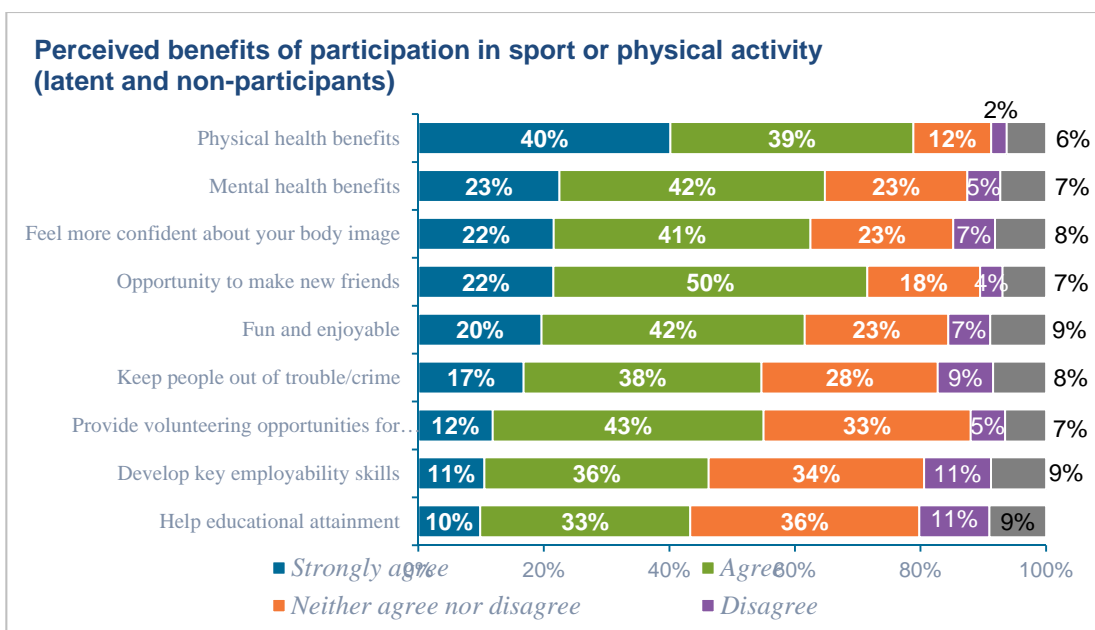


Figure 15: To what extent students that do not currently take part in sport agree or disagree with the benefits of sports participation; base=variable

Gender

Additional analysis was undertaken to explore the extent to which the perceived benefits of participation, amongst latent and non-participants, varied by gender. The findings suggest that a higher proportion of female students thought that a perceived benefit would be:

- The “**opportunity to make friends**” (76% female, compared with 67% male).
- To bring about “**mental health benefits**” (71% female, compared with 58% male).
- To make you “**feel more confident about your body image**” (67% female, compared with 57% male).
- To “**keep people out of trouble/crime**” (59% female, compared with 50% male).
- “**Physical health benefits**” (83% female compared with 75% male).

09. CONCLUSION & CONSIDERATIONS

With around 12,000 responses from college students, the Active Colleges Student Survey presents the largest survey carried out to date on sports participation in colleges in England.

The survey findings have established a high level of participation in sport amongst college students, with over three-quarters of the respondents participating in sport or physical activity, at least once a week for at least 30minutes. Of the students not participating in sport, around half had never participated in regular sport or physical activity. In order to achieve Active Colleges participation targets, colleges will need to consider how to engage those students not currently engaging in sport, whilst also taking into account the needs of those students most at risk of dropping out of sport.

Data from the survey showed that some groups of college students had lower levels of participation – female students, those with a disability, and those from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background. These findings are consistent with national trends and support the need to specifically target these underrepresented groups.

The findings also illustrate that there is a range of perceived benefits of taking part in sport and that this varies across the student population. This should be considered when marketing and promoting activity to different groups of students.

The majority of students not currently participating in sport stated they would be interested in re-engaging if the barriers which led to them giving up were overcome. This is encouraging as it indicates that there is the potential to attract a large percentage of non-participants, especially females, back into sport as long as their needs are addressed.

This survey has also highlighted the importance of sport to wider college outcomes such as recruitment, retention and attainment. This is incredibly valuable in supporting the case for student sport both within colleges and in the community at a local and national level.

To conclude, the survey has provided a range of valuable insight and data about the current trends in sports participation. Colleges should combine this information with their own local insight to develop a sporting offer that will attract and retain more students.

Furthermore, at a national level Sport England will use these survey findings as a baseline against which to measure the impact of their £25million investment into Active Colleges. The findings will also be shared with National Governing Bodies of Sport and other community sport partners to support their understanding of student sports participation in order to develop products and programmes that will appeal to this market.

