Higher Education Sport Participation and Satisfaction Survey

National Report
2014/15

September 2015
## Contents

1. Executive summary           Error! Bookmark not defined.
2. Introduction               4
3. Who plays sport?            11
4. How do students engage in sport? 21
5. Volunteering               31
6. What do students value in sport? 34
7. Conclusions                41
1. Executive Summary

1.1 TRENDS IN SPORTS PARTICIPATION AMONG STUDENTS

Participation among university students remained high, with over half (55%) participating at least once a week (1x30). Between 2013/14 and 2014/15, there was however a slight decrease in weekly participation.

57%  
2013/14

55%  
2014/15

VARIANCE IN PARTICIPATION

As in 2013/14, those with a disability, older students, women, Asian and Black students continued to be less likely to participate in sport than other groups.

It is however encouraging that participation levels amongst students with a disability remained constant.

NARROWING THE GENDER GAP: PARTICIPATION ONCE A WEEK %

8% gap

53  61

52  58

2013/14  2014/15

Despite female participation being lower than male, it is encouraging to see that the gap between male and female participation is narrowing at all participation frequencies.
1.2
TOP SPORTS

WEEKLY PARTICIPATION %

21
Gym

14
Running / Jogging

7
Cycling

TOP SPORTS: FEMALE PARTICIPATION %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gym</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness classes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aerobics</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FASTEST GROWING from 2013/14 to 2014/15

+14%
Yoga

+3%
Gym

Participation rates for the ten most popular sports were generally lower amongst students with a disability than for those without, with the exception of swimming and cycling where participation rates among disabled and non disabled people are on a par.

Rates of participation in yoga were higher amongst students with a disability.
Almost six in ten first year students said that university sporting opportunities and facilities were very or fairly important to them when selecting their university.

The main reason provided for using only non-university provision was the lack of convenience of university facilities, followed by the cost of university provision and a lack of appropriate activities or opportunities.

10% of students who participated at least once in the last month had volunteered in sport at university or in the wider community in the last 4 weeks.
1.4

HOW DOES SPORT PARTICIPATION CHANGE THROUGHOUT STUDENTS’ UNIVERSITY LIFE?

First year students were most likely to report a drop in participation: 39% said they were doing less than a year ago.

PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AT UNIVERSITY BY FIRST YEAR STUDENTS (%)

Those who were in sixth form the previous year were more likely to take part in school at university: 68% took part once a week. In contrast, those who were unemployed or at a Further Education College were more likely to be non participants, 46% did not participate in any sport at university.

YEAR OF STUDY AND 1x30 PARTICIPATION (%)

Weekly participation however, increased among students in higher years.

Students who participated in some sport in their final year had good intentions for after university.

- 35% thought they would do the same
- 37% thought they would do more

Although students acknowledged the importance of sport in helping them unwind, 37% of students who did some sport said that they did a lot less during exam time.

In contrast, 50% of students who participated in some sport said they did more or a lot more in holiday time in comparison to term time.
WHAT DO STUDENTS VALUE IN SPORT?

WHAT MOTIVATES STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE?

Top three factors in deciding whether to participate:

- Whether or not it was fun: 8.3/10
- Getting a good workout: 7.8/10
- It doesn’t cost much to do: 7.8/10

Over one in ten (12%) students said that university sporting opportunities and facilities were important to them when selecting their university (rating importance between 8 and 10 out of 10).

HOW SATISFIED ARE STUDENTS WITH THEIR SPORTING EXPERIENCE?

Students show high satisfaction with their experience of sport, an increase from 2013/14. Rating their satisfaction between 8 and 10 on a 10 point scale.

- 51% in 2014/15
- 48% in 2013/14

Coaching was viewed by students as the most important factor (69% scored this between 8 and 10 out of 10). Satisfaction with this area was also high (57% scored 8-10/10).

Lowest levels of satisfaction:

- Ease of participation: 44% scored 8-10/10
- Officials in university sport: 45% scored 8-10/10
- Value for money: 51% scored 8-10/10

Although value for money was considered to be the second most important factor (67% rated 8-10/10).
1.6 WHAT ROLE DOES TECHNOLOGY PLAY IN PARTICIPATION?

47%
Almost half of students owned fitness apps or fitness tracking devices, the most common being fitness apps for smartphones.

These devices appear to be becoming established participation tools.

42% fitness apps

Students who participated more regularly were more likely to incorporate fitness apps and devices into their weekly routines.

37% fitness tracking devices

Weekly or daily usage of fitness apps if owned:
for over a year 51%
less than 12 months 43%
2. Introduction

The Higher Education Sport Participation and Satisfaction Survey measures higher education students’ sports participation and satisfaction with their sporting experience. The survey was originally developed as part of Sport England’s Active Universities themed funding round, to enable Sport England to manage and evaluate the impact of the Active Universities themed funding round. The survey findings were also used to shape the delivery of the programme.

Sport England’s overall ambition is that by 2017 sport becomes a habit for life for more people and a regular choice for the majority. Sport England is seeking a year on year increase in the proportion of people who play sport once a week for at least 30 minutes. In particular, Sport England is working to raise the percentage of 14-25 year olds playing sport once a week and to reduce the proportion dropping out of sport. The Active Universities projects contributed towards this overall ambition.

Active Universities was a three year funding programme which ran from 2011 to 2014. Active Universities projects were specifically challenged with increasing participation within their student population and ensuring that students continue to play sport throughout their time at university. Forty one projects were funded through Active Universities.

In 2014 Sport England announced a further investment in universities through a new University Sport Activation Fund. Sixty two universities will be funded through this initiative, supporting projects with the aim of maintaining sports participation in universities, and increasing it by trialling new methods of getting students into sport and offering a wider variety of opportunities to keep them playing sport during their time at university.

Sport England will use the Higher Education Sport Participation and Satisfaction Survey to help to understand the impact of the new investment, and to performance manage projects. This will cover the academic years 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17.

The study was also developed in order to test a sport participation tool for the Higher Education sector, to demonstrate how universities contribute towards increasing participation in community sport across England as well as to provide information to individual universities which may assist with influencing decisions made about sport provision. The Higher Education Sport Participation and Satisfaction survey provides data to each university to help understand how their students participate in sport and how satisfied they are with the sport provision at the university.

The initial study was conducted over three years from 2011/12-2013/14. The study has now been extended for a further three years, and the questionnaire, while remaining largely consistent with the previous study, has been expanded to cover some new areas including use of technology, motivations for sport participation and communications about sporting opportunities. Students were asked additional open-ended questions about their satisfaction with sporting provision, as well as their reasons for not participating in sport at all or through university provision. Student responses to these questions are cited within the report.
In 2011/12, 49 HEIs took part in the study (some projects covered more than one university). From 2012/13, in addition to the Active Universities, non-Active Universities were given the opportunity to take part in the survey. Fifty two HEIs took part in 2012/13 and 55 in 2013/14. When the survey was relaunched in 2014/15, the number of HEIs involved increased further, with 70 HEIs taking part.

Owing to the increase in the number of HEIs taking part in the survey, differences between results from the 2013/14 study and the 2014/15 study may result from changes in the composition of the sample of universities represented, rather than being due to genuine changes. As a consequence of this, where year-on-year changes are examined in this report, results for the 48 HEIs that were part of both the 2013/14 and 2014/15 studies were also examined.

Data collected in the study were weighted within HEI to ensure that the age and gender profile matched the HEI population. A further weighting factor was then applied to weight data according to the size of each HEI in order to report national findings. The targets used for the weighting were up to date population counts provided by HESA.

This report summarises the key national findings from the 2014/15 study, and makes comparisons with the 2013/14 study. Overall 36,614 students participated in 2013/14 and 47,041 in 2014/15.

In both years, the survey was conducted online, in November and April/May, with each wave lasting three weeks. The research was conducted in two waves to minimise seasonal impacts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wave</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>Autumn wave</td>
<td>11 – 29 November 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>Summer wave</td>
<td>28 April – 16 May 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>Autumn wave</td>
<td>3 November – 1 December 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>Summer wave</td>
<td>5 – 26 May 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Who plays sport?

The questionnaire captures details of participation (including number of days on which the respondent participated in the last 28 days, and average duration per session) in over 70 individual sports. This information was aggregated to create a measure of overall sports participation. The combined sports participation was grouped into six bands for analysis purposes:

- No participation (0x30) – not taken part in any sport for at least 30 minutes in the last 28 days.
- Any participation (>0x30) – participation in a session of at least 30 minutes of sport in the last 28 days.
- Less than once a week (>0x30<1x30) – participation in a session of at least 30 minutes of sport on between 1 and 3 of the last 28 days.
- Once a week (1x30) – participation in a session of at least 30 minutes of sport on at least 4 of the last 28 days.
- Twice a week (2x30) – participation in a session of at least 30 minutes of sport on at least 8 of the last 28 days.
- Three times a week (3x30) – participation in a session of at least 30 minutes of sport on at least 12 of the last 28 days.

3.1 Trends in overall participation

Two thirds (64%) of students in 2014/15 participated in some sport, with over half of these (33% of all students) participating in high levels of sport activity (3x30 minutes per week). Compared with the 2013/14 survey, participation levels were very similar, however, there has been a fall in the overall participation level (from 67% in 2013/14). This decline was also observed in the 48 HEIs that were surveyed in both years of the study – overall participation in these universities fell from 66% in 2013/14 to 64% in 2014/15.

There was a decrease in overall participation for both genders, from 64% among women in 2013/14 to 62% in 2014/15, and from 70% among men in 2013/14 to 68% in 2014/15. The difference between male and female participation however narrowed at each level, meaning that the gender gap in sports participation closed slightly since 2013/14.

The overall findings are summarised in Chart 3a and detailed results for each of the different frequencies are examined in turn in the sections that follow.
### 3.2 Non participation (0×30)

Students are defined as non-participants if they have not taken part in any sport for at least 30 minutes during the past 28 days. In the latest study just over a third (36%) of students were classified as non-participants. This represents a small increase, from 33% in 2013/14. There was a similar trend in the universities that took part in both the 2013/14 and 2014/15 surveys – the percentage of non-participants increased from 34% in 2013/14 to 36% in 2014/15.

First year students who had attended a Further Education College or were unemployed the year prior to starting university were more likely to participate in no sport (46% of those in Further Education College and 47% of those unemployed prior to starting university).

Respondents were asked to indicate, from a list of options, why they had not participated in sport. The main reasons given are shown in Chart 3b.

As in 2013/14, the most common reason given for not participating in sport continued to be a lack of time due to study or work commitments. The proportion of students who cited this as a reason fell from 75% of non-participants in 2013/14 to 68% in 2014/15.

> I find balancing studies and sport/exercise/fitness very difficult...I wish I could find the time to do more physical activity.

Other key reasons given were a preference to spend time doing other activities and the expense of sporting activities. The number of students who said they did not take part in sport due to expense had declined since the previous year (from 30% in 2013/14 to 26% in 2014/15).
Chart 3b – Reasons for not participating in sport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time due to work or study commitments</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to spend time doing other activities</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's too expensive</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family commitments</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough of the right opportunities for me at my university</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: Students who do not participate in any sport 2013/14 (9,190), 2014/15 (12,528)

Around two fifths (39%) of students who had not participated in any sport said this was because they preferred to do other activities. The questionnaire collected details of whether students had done a range of other activities in their free time. Table 3a shows the proportion of students who took part in these other activities, comparing those who had not participated in any sport (0x30) with those who taken part in sport at least once a week (1x30).
Table 3a: Comparison of other activities preferred by students who did no sport (0x30) and who participated once a week (1x30)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>0x30 (%)</th>
<th>1x30 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spend time with friends/family</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to music</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch TV</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days out or visits to places</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat out at restaurants</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to pubs/bars/clubs</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIY</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport/exercise</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and crafts</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play a musical instrument</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to cinema</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit museums/galleries</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre/music concerts</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play computer games</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet/emailing</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits to historic sites</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table shows, non sports participants did not appear to be more likely than regular participants to have taken part in these other activities. It is however important to note that the study did not capture the length of time that respondents spent doing each of these activities, so it is possible that those who did less sport spent longer on other pastimes.

3.3 Any participation (>0x30)

>0x30 is defined as participation in a session of at least 30 minutes of sport on 1 or more of the previous 28 days. 64% of students had done at least one session of 30 minutes of sport in the 28 days leading up to the survey.

As in 2013/14, those with a disability, older students, women, Asian and Black students were less likely to participate in sport than other groups.
**Table 3b: Participation in any sport (>0x30) by demographic group, 2014/15**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport participation level</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;0x30</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Has a disability</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Up to 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Does not have a disability</td>
<td>Mixed/multiple ethnic groups</td>
<td>20-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Asian/Asian British</td>
<td>26-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black/Black British</td>
<td>30-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>35-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45-64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>65+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>68%</th>
<th>66%</th>
<th>66%</th>
<th>65%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a disability</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not have a disability</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed/multiple ethnic groups</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian British</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/Black British</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 19</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-29</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall proportion of female students who participated in any sport fell slightly since 2013/14 (from 64% in 2013/14 to 62% in 2014/15). The gap between male and female participation also reduced from 7% in 2013/14 (70.4% of men compared to 63.5% of women) to 6% (67.6% of men compared to 61.9% of women). Although overall participation dropped between these years, the proportion of students with a disability taking part in some sport remained stable. Around half (56%) of students with a disability took part in some sport in 2014/15, a similar percentage to 2013/14. It is likewise encouraging that the gap in participation between students with and without a disability narrowed from 13% in 2013/14 (56% of students with a disability compared to 69% of students without) to 10% in 2014/15 (56% of students with a disability in comparison to 66% of those without).

**3.4 Less than once a week (>0x30 & <1x30)**

>0x30 and <1x30 is defined as participation in a session of 30 minutes of sport on between 1 and 3 of the previous 28 days. This is the equivalent of doing sport less than once per week.
One in ten students in 2014/15 (9%) participated at this level, a decrease from 10% in 2013/14.

### 3.5 Once a week (1x30)

1x30 is defined as participation in a session of at least 30 minutes of sport on at least 4 of the previous 28 days. Participation levels remained high in 2014/15 of the study, although they fell slightly compared with 2013/14. Over half (55%) of students participated 1x30 - the equivalent of at least once a week in the 4 weeks before the survey (compared with 57% in 2013/14). A comparison of data collected from universities who took part in both the 2013/14 and 2014/15 surveys suggests a similar fall in participation from 56% in 2013/14 to 54% in 2014/15.

Students in their first year of university were more likely to participate once a week if they had previously been in a school sixth form. 58% of first years who had been in a school sixth form the year prior to joining university participated at this level in comparison to 54% of students who had been in employment, and 52% who had attended a Sixth Form College. Students who had been at a Further Education College the year preceding university were least likely to participate at this level (45%).

Chart 3c shows the 10 sports that have the highest level of 1x30 participation across the whole student population. Around one in five students (21%) went to the gym at least once a week, followed by 13% who did running at least once a week. For other sports the 1x30 participation rate was less than 10%. The number of students participating in gym and yoga had increased slightly since 2013/14, although the proportion of students taking part in cycling, swimming and football had decreased.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 3c – Top 10 Sports at 1x30, 2014/15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gym <strong>21%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football/Futsal <strong>6%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All students, 2014/15 (47,041)
While female students continued to be less likely than male students to participate at 1x30 level there are signs that the difference between male and female participation is reducing. The 2014/15 survey shows a six percentage point gap between the proportion of women and men who participated in sport on a weekly basis (52% and 58% respectively). This represents a narrowing of the gender gap at this frequency of participation, as the 2013/14 study found an 8 percentage point difference (53% and 61%). A comparison of universities who participated in both 2013/14 and 2014/15 shows a similar reduction of the gap between male and female participation (from 52% and 61% for women and men respectively in 2013/14 to 52% and 58% in 2014/15).

Sports participation was found to vary by gender and some of the top 10 sports were characterised by higher rates of participation among women than among men. Women were more likely to take part in fitness classes (9% of women and 2% of men), yoga (7% of women; 1% of men), and aerobics (6% of women; 2% of men) whilst men were more likely to use a gym (24% of men; 19% of women), cycle (9% of men; 6% of women), do weight training (7% of men; 2% of women) or play football (12% of men; 1% of women).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 3d – Sport participation by gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gym</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Football/Futsal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The fastest growing sports – i.e. the sports in both years that have experienced the greatest percentage increase in participation from 2013/14 to 14/15 - were yoga (a 14% increase, from 4.0% in 2013/14 to 4.5% of students in 2014/15) and gym (a 3% increase from 20.7% of students in 2013/14 to 21.4% in 2014/15). Yoga was also characterised by greater female participation, 7% of female students practiced yoga in comparison to 1% of men.

The proportion of students with a disability who took part in sport at this frequency remained stable from 2013/14 to 2014/15. Just under half (47%) of students with a disability participated in sport once a week (1x30) in 2014/15 (compared with 46% in 2013/14). Students with a disability were less likely than those without a disability to participate in most of the top 10 sports, with the exception of swimming (5% of students with a disability and 4% without), cycling (7% of students with and without a disability) and yoga. The percentage of students with a disability who took part in yoga (6%) was higher than for those without (4%) and this also represented an increase in comparison to the 2013/14 survey (5%).

Chart 3e shows variation in participation rates by region. Students based in the North East (56%), Yorkshire and Humber (57%), East Midlands (59%) and South West (59%) were most likely to participate in sport at least once a week. The only region that experienced an increase in participation was Yorkshire and Humber, where participation levels increased from 54% in 2013/14 to 57% in 2014/15. The North West, East Midlands, South East and South West maintained a similar level to 2013/14 whilst participation fell in the North East (from 62% in 2013/14 to 56% in 2014/15), East (56% in 2013/14 to 50% in 2014/15), West Midlands (57% in 2013/14 to 54% in 2014/15) and London (55% in 2013/14 to 53% in 2014/15).
3.6 Twice a week (2 x 30)
2 x 30 is defined as participation in at least 30 minutes of sport on at least 8 of the previous 28 days. This is the equivalent of doing half an hour of sport twice a week.

2x30 participation remained steady in 2014/15, with over four in ten (43%) students participating at this level, the same proportion as in 2013/14.

Although less likely to take part in sport overall, the level of participation in sport twice a week also remained steady amongst female students and students with a disability. The gap between male and female participation also narrowed from 9% in 2013/14 (48% of men and 39% of women) to 7% in 2014/15 (47% of men and 40% of women).

3.7 Three times a week (3 x 30)
3 x 30 is defined as participation in at least 30 minutes of sport on at least 12 of the previous 28 days. This is the equivalent of 30 minutes activity three times a week. A third (33%) of students participated at this level in 2014/15, a decrease from 34% in 2013/14.

The proportion of students with a disability who participated three times a week continued at the same level as in 2013/14. Over a quarter (26%) of students with a disability participated in some sport three times per week (in comparison to 27% in 2013/14). The gap between
levels of male and female participation also narrowed at 3x30 level from 10% in 2013/14 (29% of women and 39% of men) to 7% in 2014/15 (30% of women and 37% of men).

3.8 Summary and recommendations

Trends in sports participation

Sports participation among students remained high in 2014/15, with around two thirds (64%) participating in any sport, and 55% participating at least once a week (1x30).

There was a small decrease in participation since 2013/14 – overall participation fell from 67% to 64%, and once a week participation from 57% to 55%. It is not possible to tell from a single year’s data whether this is the start of a downwards trend.

As in 2013/14, those with a disability, older students, women, Asian and Black students continued to be less likely to participate in sport than other groups. This highlights a continuing need for targeting new initiatives and activities at these demographic groups in order to broaden participation, and to ensure opportunities provided are inclusive.

There was no significant change in once a week female participation between 2013/14 and 2014/15 although male participation (once a week) decreased (from 61% to 58%). Despite female participation being lower than male, it is encouraging to see that the gap between male and female participation is narrowing at all participation frequencies.

As in 2013/14, the most common reason given by non-participants for not participating in sport was lack of time due to work or study commitments. Other key barriers included preferring to spend time doing other activities, and cost.

Top sports

Sports participation among students was more likely to be in individual (rather than team) sports. The most common sports participated in weekly were gym (21%), running and jogging (14%) and cycling (7%).

The fastest growing sports since 2013/14 were yoga (+14%) and gym (+3%).

The proportion of students taking part once a week in cycling, swimming and football fell since 2013/14.

There were clear gender differences in the types of sports undertaken – women were more likely than men to practice fitness classes, yoga and aerobics, whereas men were more likely to use a gym, cycle, do weight training, or play football.

This gives a clear indication of the types of sports provision most likely to appeal to students.

Participation rates for the ten most common sports were generally lower among students with a disability than those without, with the exception of swimming and cycling (where participation rates among disabled and non-disabled students were on a par), and yoga (where participation was higher among those with a disability).
4. How do students engage in sport?

4.1 Importance of sport in university choice

Students in their first year were asked how important university sporting opportunities and facilities were when choosing their university.

More than one in ten (12%) first year students said that university sporting opportunities and facilities were very important to them when selecting their university (rating importance between 8 and 10). A further 24% said they were fairly important (score of 5-7/10). Around six in ten students (64%) did not consider this to be an important factor when selecting their university (<5 out of 10).

Amongst first year students who participated in university sport around a fifth (22%) said that university sporting opportunities and facilities were very important to them when selecting their university (rating importance between 8 and 10).

Table 4a: Importance of sports facilities when choosing the university in 2013/14 and 14/15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall importance</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All first year students who participated in sport through university provision, 2013/14

4.2 Provision of sports participation

Over a third (34%) of students participated in sport using some university provision, similar to 2013/14.

As shown in Table 4b, around one in ten (11%) students participated solely through university provision, an increase from 10% in 2013/14. A further 23% used a combination of university and non university provision. Universities who had taken part in both 2013/14 and 2014/15 of the survey experienced a similar increase in students using only university provision, from 13% in 2013/14 to 14% in 2014/15.

Around two fifths (37%) of students participated in sport through non university provision alone. This proportion declined since 2013/14, both overall (from 39%) and amongst universities who had participated in both 2013/14 and 2014/15.
Table 4b: Participation in sport through university/non-university provision in 2013/14 and 14/15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provision of sports participation</th>
<th>13/14 (%)</th>
<th>14/15 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only through non university provision</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both through university and non-university</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only through your university</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not participate in any sport</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All students, 2013/14 (36,614), 2014/15 (47,041)

Students who used university sport provision tended to participate more frequently than those who only participated outside university. Over half (54%) of students who used university provision participated 1x30 compared to 45% of those who only used non-university provision.

Use of university facilities varied depending on where students lived. Those living in university halls of residence on campus were most likely to only use university provision (33%), falling to 14% of students who rented privately and 3% of students living at their permanent address. This may be related to the fact that those living on campus are more likely to be within close proximity of the facilities provided by their institution, and as such they are more convenient to use.

Younger students were more likely to use university facilities than mature students. 41% of students aged 25 and under solely used university sport compared with 20% of those aged 26 and over. Undergraduate students were similarly more likely than postgraduate students to take part in university sport, although this distinction was less marked (16% of undergraduate students in comparison to 12% of postgraduates).

The main reasons given for not using the university provision for their sporting activities remained the same as in 2013/14. As Chart 4a shows, half of students (50%) who did not use university provision for their sporting activities said that it was not as convenient to go to university facilities. Other barriers to using the university provision, each mentioned by around a fifth of these students, were that the university provision was more expensive (22%) and that it did not offer appropriate activities or opportunities (20%).
Significant minorities of students who only did sport through non university provision said that this was because it was not easy to get involved in university sport (13%) and that university sport did not make them feel welcome (9%).

Although fewer female, older, postgraduate students and students with a disability participated in sport, these groups did not consider university sport to be more unwelcoming than other groups. Indeed, female students were less likely than male students to think of university sport as unwelcoming (8% of female students selected this factor in comparison to 11% of male students). Older and postgraduate students were instead more concerned with the lack of convenience of university provision; in all likelihood reflecting the fact they live further away from facilities (e.g. not in halls on campus near to facilities).

### 4.3 Level of participation

#### 4.3.1 Changes in participation levels

When asked about changes in the amount of sport and recreational physical activities participated in compared to the same time last year, around three in ten students (31%) said they were doing more than the previous year. Around a third (32%) said they were doing a similar amount to one year ago, and 35% said they were doing less. This was broadly similar to 2013/14 of the survey (32% said they were doing more, 31% about the same, and 35% less).

First year students were most likely to report a drop in participation in their first year of university. Around two fifths of first years (39%) said that they were doing less sport than the previous year. This may be linked to a change of routine when starting at university, and the
proportion of first years who reported taking part in sport increased significantly from the autumn to summer wave of the survey as students settled into university.

4.3.2 Reasons for doing more or less sport
Students were asked why they were doing more or less sport than last year. The most common reasons chosen for doing more sport were functional – to improve health or fitness (28%) and to improve appearance (28%). Reasons for increased participation were similar across years of study, although access to increased opportunities or facilities at university was a particularly important factor for first year students (9% in comparison to 3% of those in 2nd year or higher).

In contrast, students doing less sport than last year attributed this to a lack of time due to academic commitments (29%), having less free time or a preference to do other activities (15%) and not being able to afford to take part (12%).

4.3.3 Participation by year of study
1x30 participation rose steadily as students progressed through university, as shown in Table 4c.

Table 4c: Participation in sport by year of study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of study</th>
<th>1x30 participation (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Year</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Year</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Year</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th + Year</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 1st Year (20302), 2nd Year (12308), 3rd Year (10085), 4th Year (2961) and 5th + Year (638) students, 2014/15.

4.3.4 Intended future participation
Students in their final year had good intentions to keep up their participation level when they left university. Two-fifths (37%) of those who participated in some sport (>0x30) in their final year of study thought that they would do more and 35% the same amount of sport during the following year.

Of students continuing in academia the following year, seven in ten were keen to do more sport (69%) and around a fifth of these (22%) were certain that they would do more.

4.4 Membership, competitions and coaching
4.4.1 Membership
In 2014/15, 36% of students were a member of a club, society or organisation to participate in sport. This represents a decrease from 39% in 2013/14.

The most common form of non university membership was of a health or fitness club. 26% of students who were members of a club, society or organisation used a health or fitness club outside university. This was more common than university health or fitness club membership (19%) although university sports club membership was much more common, with almost four in ten students who were members of a club or organisation (37%) reporting membership of a university sports club.
As in 2013/14, students who participated more frequently in sport, and subgroups who were more likely to take part (White students, men and younger students) were more likely to be a member of a sports club, society or organisation. Male students were more likely than female students to be a member of a university sports club (42% of male students in comparison to 33% of female students), although the proportion of male and female membership of a university society or group was more balanced (23% of female students compared with 22% of male students).

Students who used university provision (61%) were more likely to be a member of a club, society or organisation than students who only used non university provision (31%).

Chart 4b: Membership, competitions and coaching 2014/15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>26%</th>
<th>36%</th>
<th>23%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Received coaching</td>
<td>Member of a club, society or organisation</td>
<td>Taken part in organised competition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All students, 2014/15 (47,041)

4.4.2 Coaching

Around a quarter (26%) of students had received tuition from an instructor or coach to improve their sports performance over the last 12 months. This represents a slight decrease since 2013/14 (27%), both overall and amongst universities who had participated in both 2013/14 and 2014/15 of the study. The proportion of students who participated in sport in the last four weeks (>0x30) who had received coaching however remained steady (34% of >0x30 students received coaching in 2013/14 and 2014/15).

Students who used university provision were more likely to have received coaching. 40% of those who did some sport at their university had received coaching in comparison to 25% of those who only participated through non-university provision. Students who took part in sport more frequently were also more likely to have received coaching, 41% of students who participated 3x30 had received tuition in comparison to 34% of >0x30 participants.

In line with trends in overall participation, younger students were more likely to have received tuition than more mature students. However, other subgroups less likely to take part in sport – female students and students with a disability – were no less likely to have received tuition than other groups. Students with a disability were equally likely to have received tuition as
those without (26%) and female students were more likely to have received coaching than their male counterparts (26% of female students in comparison to 25% of male students). Male students however remained more likely to have received university sports tuition. Almost half (48%) of male students had received tuition via sports clubs or sessions run by university in comparison to 41% of female students.

4.4.3 Competitions
Almost a quarter (23%) of students had taken part in organised competition in the past 12 months, rising to 30% of those who took part in some sport (>0x30). The proportion of students taking part in organised competition declined slightly since 2013/14 (24% had taken part in 2013/14). A similar trend is suggested by a comparison of universities who participated in both 2013/14 and 2014/15 of the study.

White students (25%) were more likely to have taken part in competition than Asian or Black students (18% and 20% respectively). Male students (30%) and younger students (25% of students aged 25 or under) were similarly more likely to have competed than female students (18%) and students aged 26 or over (16%).

Students who used university provision (39%) were more likely to have taken part in organised competition than students who only used non university provision (18%).

Chart 4c: Type of competition students have taken part in, 2014/15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Competition</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representing club or entering a local league</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual not attached to a club</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representing university in BUCs competitions</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representing university in varsity matches</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition within university</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representing university in local University leagues</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities Sport Leagues</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All students who took part in organised competition, 2014/15 (10, 745)
4.5 Variation of activity in holiday and exam time

Students acknowledged the positive benefits of sport in helping them relax and unwind (discussed further in section 6.1), a particular need during more stressful periods, such as exams:

“During the exam period I find it helpful to [do sport to take a] break from revision and often my mind is in a better place when I return to my studies.”

However, two thirds (65%) of students who did some sport (>0x30) said that they did less during exam time, with over half of these (37%) doing a lot less than usual.

“[Exercise] is very important however during exam time sport goes out the window.”

The lower the level of their regular sport participation, the more likely students were to do less sport than usual during exam time. Almost half (48%) of students who participated in less than one session of sport per week (>0x30 and <1x30) reported doing a lot less sport in exam time, in comparison to 31% of students who participated 3x30.

When asked about how their habits changed in holiday time, almost half (49%) of students said that they did more sport. Students who participated in sport through university provision were more likely to say that they did less sport during holiday time. 34% of students who used university provision said that they did a little or a lot less sport during holiday time, in comparison to 11% of those who used non university provision. This is likely to be due to university clubs and courses taking breaks and students moving away from their university sport provision during holiday periods. Students who lived at their permanent address all year were much less likely to report doing less sport in holiday time (9% did a little or a lot less) than those renting privately or in university accommodation different to their permanent address (39%).
4.6 Use of technology

Just under half (47%) of students owned fitness apps or fitness tracking devices. Fitness apps for smartphones were particularly popular, owned by 43% of students.

Chart 4d: Use of technology in sport

Male students were slightly more likely than female students to own traditional home gym equipment (29% of male students in comparison to 28% of female students reported owning home gym equipment), while female students were more likely to own sports technologies. 14% of female students owned fitness tracking devices and 46% owned fitness apps, in comparison to 12% and 39% of male students respectively.

Around two fifths of these technologies (42% of fitness apps and 37% of tracking devices) had been owned by students longer than a year, suggesting that that such devices are becoming established participation tools.

Students who had owned these apps or devices longer than a year still reported using them regularly. Students who had owned fitness apps for longer than a year were more likely to make use of these weekly or daily (51%) than users who had owned them less than 12 months (43%).

Use of sports technologies correlated with participation level. Students who participated more regularly were more likely to incorporate fitness apps and devices into their daily and weekly routines. Two-thirds (64%) of tracking device owners and 60% of fitness app owners who participated 3x30 used these devices weekly or daily, in comparison to 60% and 52% of owners respectively who participated >0x30.

Although fitness apps and tracking devices were more common amongst female students, usage of these devices was similar amongst male and female owners.
4.7 Summary and recommendations

The role of sport in university choice
More than one in ten (12%) first year students said that university sporting opportunities and facilities were very important to them when selecting their university (rating importance between 8 and 10). A further 24% said they were fairly important (score of 5-7/10). Providing good sporting opportunities and facilities can clearly be an important differentiator for universities when trying to attract new students.

University and community provision
The majority of students made use of non university sports provision. 37% used community provision only, and a further 23% used a combination of university and non university provision.

Over a third (34%) of students participated in sport using some university provision, similar to 2013/14.

Half of students (50%) who did not use university provision for their sporting activities said that it was not as convenient to go to university facilities, and a fifth said that the university provision was more expensive (22%) and that it did not offer appropriate activities or opportunities (20%).

Community provision is clearly an important part of the landscape for student participation and there may be scope for universities and NGBs to work more closely with the community in designing and delivering provision.

Variation in participation throughout students’ university life
Around three in ten students (31%) said they were doing more sport than the previous year. Around a third (32%) said they were doing a similar amount to one year ago, and 35% said they were doing less.

First year students were most likely to report a drop in participation in their first year of university. 39% said that they were doing less sport than the previous year. 1x30 participation rose steadily as students progressed through university, from 53% among first years to 57% among third years and 62% among those in their fifth or higher year. There may be scope for further work to engage first year students in sporting activities at the start of their university careers.

Final year students had good intentions to keep up their participation level when they left university. Two-fifths (37%) of those who participated in some sport in their final year of study thought that they would do more and 35% the same amount of sport during the following year.

Two thirds (65%) of students who did some sport (>0x30) said that they did less during exam time, with over half of these (37%) doing a lot less than usual. Given the positive benefits of sport acknowledged by students in helping them relax and unwind, HEIs could focus more on providing suitable sporting opportunities during exam times in particular.

Almost half (49%) of students said that they did more sport during holiday time. Students who participated in sport through university provision were more likely to say that they did less sport during holiday time.
Membership, competitions and coaching

36% of students were a member of a club, society or organisation to participate in sport.

Students who participated more frequently in sport, and subgroups who were more likely to take part (White students, men and younger students) were more likely to be a member of a sports club, society or organisation.

Students who used university provision (61%) were more likely to be a member of a club, society or organisation than students who only used non university provision (31%).

Around a quarter (26%) of students had received tuition from an instructor or coach to improve their sports performance over the last 12 months. Students who used university provision had more access to coaching. 40% of those who did some sport at their university had received coaching in comparison to 25% of those who only participated through non-university provision.

Almost a quarter (23%) of students had taken part in organised competition in the past 12 months. Again, students who used university provision (39%) were more likely to have taken part in organised competition than students who only used non university provision (18%).

Use of technology

Just under half (47%) of students owned fitness apps or fitness tracking devices, the most common being fitness apps for smartphones.

Around two fifths of these technologies (42% of fitness apps and 37% of tracking devices) had been owned by students longer than a year, suggesting that such devices are becoming established participation tools.

Students who participated more regularly were more likely to incorporate fitness apps and devices into their daily and weekly routines.
5. Volunteering

Sports volunteering includes any sports voluntary work undertaken without any payment except to cover expenses, for example organising or helping to run an event, campaigning/raising money, providing transport or driving, taking part in a sponsored event, coaching, tuition or mentoring.

As well as practicing sport themselves, 10% of students who participated in some sport (>0x30) had volunteered in sport at university or in the wider community in the last 4 weeks, a small increase from 2013/14 (9%). 12% of students who participated through university provision had volunteered in sport, compared with 6% of those who participated only through non university provision.

Although less likely to participate themselves, students with a disability were more likely to volunteer in sport than students without a disability. One in ten students with a disability who participated in some sport (11%) had done some sports volunteering, compared with 9% of students without a disability.

Students who participated in sport more frequently were more likely to have been involved in volunteering. 13% of students who participated 3x30 had taken part in some sports volunteering in the past 28 days in comparison to 10% of those who participated >0x30.

The most common forms of volunteering inside and outside university, among students who volunteered, are shown in Charts 5a and 5b.

Coaching an individual or team was the most common kind of volunteering provision both inside and outside university. The proportion of students helping others in a coaching capacity at university increased from 21% of students who volunteered in 2013/14 to 25% in 2014/15. This increase was also seen amongst universities that had taken part in the survey in both 2013/14 and 2014/15.
### Chart 5a: Principal forms of sports volunteering in university, 2013-14 and 2014-15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coached an individual or team(s) in a sport or recreational physical activity</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performed an administrative or organisational role for a sports club, organisation or event</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided any other practical help for a sport or recreational physical activity</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised funds for a sports club or sports organisation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refereed, umpired, or officiated at a sports match or competition</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided transport which helps children or adults take part in a sport</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other sports voluntary activity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: Students who volunteer 2013/14 (2,391), 2014/15 (3,611)
5.1 Summary and recommendations

10% of students who participated in some sport had volunteered in sport at university or in the wider community in the last 4 weeks.

Rates of volunteering were higher among students who participated through university provision, compared with those who participated only through non-university provision.

Other work has shown the importance of enhancing employability skills as a motivation for students’ sports volunteering. Sports volunteering also helps to support others’ sports participation (through tuition, coaching, running sports clubs etc).
6. What do students value in sport?

6.1 What motivates students to participate?
All students were asked what was important to them when considering whether or not to take part in a sport. Students were asked to rate the importance of a range of factors on a scale of 1-10 where 10 was very important and 1 not at all important. The mean score attributed to each factor is shown in Chart 6a.

Chart 6a: Importance of factors when considering whether to do sport or physical activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is fun to do</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get a good workout</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It doesn’t cost much to do</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is somewhere good that is convenient where I can participate</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It enables me to relax and unwind</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can go at my own pace</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can take part without having to commit to every session</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can develop a skill and progress</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am included as an equal part of the group</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to do a variety of different sports/activities and trying new sports/activities</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing myself as a person (e.g. for my CV)</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends also do it</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to compete</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning/being the best</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s seen as something ‘cool’ to do</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All students, 2014/15 (47,041)

The primary consideration for students when deciding whether or not to take part in a sport was whether or not it was fun to do. Other factors considered to be important related to the functional benefits of sport - getting a good workout and enabling students to relax and unwind - as well as practical considerations such as the cost and convenience of taking part.

Although 23% of students had taken part in organised competition, for most students the opportunity to compete was not one of the most important considerations when initially deciding whether or not to take part (mean rating 4.8 out of 10).
Students who participated in no sport over the past 28 days (0x30) placed more importance on the affordability of sport, the ability to go at their own pace and being able to take part without committing to every session, than students who participated once a week. Non-participants were also less concerned with the opportunity to compete or winning/being the best than students who participated once a week.

Although the most important factors were similar across different demographic groups, female students considered the cost of sport, being able to take part without committing to every session and the ability to go at their own pace to be more important than male students. Male students in contrast placed more value than female students on winning or being the best, the opportunity to compete and that a sport was seen as something ‘cool’ to do.

Students with a disability also valued being able to go at their own pace more than those without (the mean score for students with a disability for this factor was 7.7 in comparison to 7.3 for those without a disability). Black and Asian students were also more mindful of the value of sport for their personal development (e.g. for their CV).

6.2 What is important to students when they participate?

Students who participated in university sport were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with sport at their university, as well as scoring their satisfaction on a number of aspects of service and personal satisfaction.

The areas of service satisfaction examined were:
- Value for money
- Facilities and playing environment
- Coaching
- Ease of participating
- People and staff
- Officials in university sport

Students were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with each of these areas. A random sample of students was also asked to rate their satisfaction with more detailed aspects. For all aspects and for the overall measure, students were asked to rate their satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 was Extremely Satisfied and 1 was Extremely Dissatisfied. Students were also asked to rate the level of importance of each area. This was also rated on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being Extremely Important and 1 being of No Importance.

Students were also asked the importance of, and their satisfaction with, a number of measures of personal satisfaction:
- Opportunities to improve performance
- Opportunities for exertion and fitness in sport
- Opportunities for release and diversion from everyday life
- Social aspects

Overall satisfaction with university sport increased since 2013/14. Half of students who participated in university sport were very satisfied with university provision (51% rated satisfaction between 8 and 10 out of 10 compared with 48% in 2013/14). Around one in ten...
(9%) students were dissatisfied with university sport (rating satisfaction 1-4 out of 10), a decrease from 11% in 2013/14. There was a similar increase in satisfaction within universities who had participated in both waves of the survey.

Table 6a: Overall satisfaction with university sport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall satisfaction</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All students who participated in sport through university provision, 2013/14 (10,577), 2014/15 (17,476).

Satisfaction was higher amongst students who said that sport had been important in their choice of university. 63% of those who had said it was very important (8-10) were very satisfied with university provision (8-10) in comparison to 44% of those who had said it did not factor in their choice (1-4).

A small proportion of students who said that sport opportunities had been important in their choice of institution (6%) were dissatisfied with university provision (1-4), a similar amount as in 2013/14.

Female students were particularly satisfied with their experience of sport in comparison to male students. 54% rated their satisfaction 8-10 out of 10 in comparison to 49% of male students. In contrast, students with a disability were less satisfied with their experience of university sport overall than those without (48% rated their satisfaction 8-10 in comparison to 52% of students without a disability).

6.2.1 Service satisfaction

Chart 6b shows the relative levels of satisfaction and importance of each of the key areas of satisfaction (at a rating of between 8 and 10 on a ten point scale).
Chart 6b: Service satisfaction and importance

Base: All students who participated in sport through university provision, 2014/15 (17,476).

As in 2013/14, coaching was viewed as most important, with 69% scoring this factor between 8 and 10 on a 10 point scale (although this was only asked of those who had used university coaching facilities within the last 12 months) and satisfaction with this area was also high (57%).

Within the domain of coaching, students were most satisfied with the technical competence of coaches running sport (64%) and least satisfied with opportunities to receive coaching and improvements in performance as a result of coaching (53%). Satisfaction with improvements in performance had also fallen since 2013/14, when 58% rated this factor 8-10 out of 10. This trend was also apparent amongst universities who continued from 2013/14 to 2014/15 of the survey.

Female students were particularly satisfied with coaching. 59% of female students rated their satisfaction with this factor 8-10 in comparison to 56% of male students, and also were also more likely to view this as an important factor (73% rated importance 8-10 in comparison to 64% of male students).

Value for money was viewed as the next most important factor (67%). Satisfaction with this area was lower and had declined since 2013/14 (51% of students rated this factor 8-10 in 2013/14 in comparison to 46% in 2014/15). This decline in satisfaction was also apparent amongst universities who had taken part in both 2013/14 and 2014/15 of the study.

Students who gave a high (8-10) or low (1-3) score for each measure were also asked the reason for this. Their comments supported the importance of value for money in sport. If cost was considered too high, this could be viewed as an obstacle to participation:
Within this area, students were least satisfied with the value for money of non sport facilities (42%) and equipment hire (43%), and most satisfied with the value for money of coaching (47%) and sports club or organisation membership fees (46%):

Indeed, those who were satisfied with the value for money of their university’s sport commented that fairly priced memberships, equipment and facilities had enabled them to get involved in sports which may otherwise have been difficult to afford:

Facilities and playing environment and ease of participating were perceived to be equally important (64% and 60% respectively) although students were considerably more satisfied with the former (55% rated satisfaction with facilities and playing environment 8-10 in comparison to 44% for ease of participating). Students with a disability were equally satisfied with the facilities and playing environment of their university as those without, although they were slightly less satisfied with ease of participation (42% of students with a disability rated satisfaction 8-10 in comparison to 45% of students without).

Student satisfaction with ease of participation declined since 2013/14, with 44% of students rating satisfaction 8-10 in 2014/15 in comparison to 57% in 2013/14. This trend was also apparent amongst universities who had continued from 2013/14 to 2014/15 of the study. Aspects that students found less satisfactory in this regard were the ease of balancing sporting, work, family or education commitments and being able to take part at places that were not overcrowded (38% rated each factor 8-10).

Female students considered ease of participation to be a particularly important factor (64% rated importance 8-10 in comparison to 56% of male students) but were also more satisfied with this aspect than male students (46% rated satisfaction 8-10 in comparison to 42% of male students).

People and staff and officials in university sport were considered to be of similar importance (59% and 58% respectively) although students were more satisfied with the former (54% and 45% rated satisfaction 8-10 respectively).

6.3 Personal satisfaction
In terms of personal satisfaction, students were most satisfied with opportunities for release and diversion from everyday life, which was also viewed as the most important factor (55% of students rated their satisfaction 8-10/10):

University sport has allowed me to increase my social life and de-stress from some aspects of uni
Satisfaction was lowest with opportunities to improve performance:

> There are lots of opportunities around, however they are not continually advertised throughout the year so if you miss the original advertisement you have a strong chance of missing out

In terms of personal satisfaction, students with a disability were notably less satisfied with social aspects than those without (51% rated their satisfaction 8-10 in comparison to 54% of students without a disability).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.0%</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 6c: Personal satisfaction**

Base: All students who participated in sport through university provision, 2014/15 (17,476).

### 6.4 Summary and recommendations

**What motivates students to participate?**

When asked how important certain factors are in deciding whether to participate, the primary consideration was whether or not it was fun to do. The average importance for this was 8.3 out of 10.

Other important factors were getting a good workout (7.8/10) and that it doesn’t cost much to do (7.8/10).
Being able to take part at their own pace (7.3/10) and not having to commit to every session (7.2/10) were also considered important.

Students considered the opportunity to compete to be less important than most factors, with an average importance of 4.8 out of 10.

This has clear implications for the types of sports provision that are most likely to engage students – fun, inexpensive and flexible.

**Satisfaction with the sporting experience**

Overall satisfaction with university sport increased since 2013/14. Half of students who participated in university sport were very satisfied with university provision (51% rated satisfaction between 8 and 10 out of 10 compared with 48% in 2013/14).

Satisfaction was higher amongst students who said that sport had been important in their choice of university. 63% of those who had said it was very important (8-10) were very satisfied with university provision (8-10)

**Coaching** was viewed as the most important factor, and satisfaction with this area was also high (57%).

**Value for money** was viewed as the next most important factor (67%). Satisfaction with this area was lower and had declined since 2013/14.

Within this area, students were least satisfied with the value for money of non sport facilities (42%) and equipment hire (43%), and most satisfied with the value for money of coaching (47%) and sports club or organisation membership fees (46%).

HEIs could consider ways to make sports participation more affordable, given that this is an area where satisfaction has declined.

**Facilities and playing environment** and **ease of participating** were perceived to be equally important (64% and 60% respectively) although students were considerably more satisfied with the former (55% rated satisfaction with facilities and playing environment 8-10 in comparison to 44% for ease of participating). Ease of participating is a key motivation for students and should be built into planned provision.

**People and staff** and **officials in university sport** were considered to be of similar importance (59% and 58% respectively) although students were more satisfied with the former.

In terms of personal satisfaction, students were most satisfied with opportunities for release and diversion from everyday life, which was also viewed as the most important factor.
7. Conclusions

Sport remains a key aspect of university life and an important consideration for a large proportion of applicants when deciding which university to attend. It is therefore important that universities continue to invest in university sport provision to provide students with an environment that offers the sporting opportunities they seek during their time at university.

Findings from 2014/15 suggest that the frequency of sport participation has remained largely stable since 2013/14, although there was a small decrease in overall weekly participation. Overall, satisfaction with student experience of sport at their university has increased since 2013/14 with around half of students in 2014/15 (51%) rating their satisfaction at 8-10 out of 10, and students recognised the positive benefits of sport as a fun activity, as well as a way to get a good workout and to relax and unwind.

The survey results highlight a number of areas where sports provision could be tailored to students’ preferences and requirements to encourage increased participation. These could be considered when allocating future funding under the University Sport Activation Fund, and for NGBs when developing their offer to HEIs.

7.1 Key target groups for sports programmes
Those with a disability, older students, women, Asian and Black students continued to be less likely to participate in sport than other groups. It is however encouraging that the proportion of students with a disability who participated in sport remained stable since 2013/14, despite the overall decline amongst all students and that the gap between participation between students with and without a disability decreased from 2013/14 to 2014/15. The gap between female and male participation likewise narrowed since 2013/14 at 1x30, 2x30 and 3x30 level, and yoga, which is characterised by female participation, was the fastest growing sport in 2014/15, indicating that efforts to increase access to sport for women may be taking effect.

There may be scope to increase participation among women, as well as encourage participation amongst other groups that are less likely to take part in sport, by adapting sessions to their needs and preferences. Students who did not participate in any sport placed more importance on flexibility, affordability and ability to go at their own pace than those who did participate. Flexibility and pace were similarly more likely to be rated as important factors when taking up a sport by female students and students with a disability.

Studies are a priority [...] being able to follow a sporting schedule of a society is dependent on how flexible they can be if it is during the day

7.2 Type of sports provision
There is a clear demand among students for sports provision that is flexible, affordable, and allows them to take part at their own pace. More casual lunchtime or evening sessions could for example be suited to students seeking flexible participation without committing to a sport for an extended period:
They should run more casual events, not necessarily clubs that you need to pay a year's membership to, to try different activities

The main reason given for non-participation by students was a lack of time, so a more flexible session format could also be attractive to students who feel that they don't have enough time to take part in sport:

There is often a large amount of commitment associated with a sports team at university. As I am in my final year, I don't have much time to commit, so I would rather just pay for a gym membership elsewhere to allow more flexibility.

7.3 Overcoming the barriers to participation

Lack of time appears to be a particular issue during exam time, a period when students reported a general decrease in participation. This is however a time of the year when sport participation could be particularly beneficial to student wellbeing. Tailored sessions run during the exam term could provide students with a much-needed space to unwind during stressful periods of the year:

Naturally, around exam time it is harder to balance work and fun, but because of the wide variety and pure amount of sessions which are ran each day this is made easier

Affordability remains of central importance for sport participation, both amongst non-participants and students who take part in sport. Value for money however remained the area of least satisfaction amongst students who participated in university sport and was also cited as a key barrier to participation by those who did not take part in sport:

It is too expensive to pay for a gym membership all at once so I cannot join any of the teams

To enable students who cannot afford annual memberships to take part, more pay as you go sessions could also be introduced. This could also benefit postgraduate or mature students who may not spend much time on their university site:

[I would like] gym classes on a pay as you go basis so the days I am at uni I can stay after lectures to do a class without signing up for the year

7.4 Encouraging new participants

Tailoring advertisements about sporting opportunities to groups who are less likely to take part in sport could also encourage greater participation. For instance, although mature and postgraduate students did not find university sport to be less welcoming than other groups, they appeared to find it more difficult to hear about opportunities suited to them:

A lot of sports are advertised less to postgrads so it is hard to get involved if you don't know about it or if it feels like it is just aimed at undergrads
Further campaigns later in the academic year could also enable more students to get involved. Participation levels amongst first year students were lower in the autumn term and participation increased progressively through university years. Advertising opportunities to try sports out later in the year once new students are more settled into university life could encourage participation, as well as being useful for those who start their course later in the academic year:

I thought I'd be the 'odd one out' with being a mature student, but they have all been so friendly and welcoming that it just didn't seem to matter. When I'm there I don't feel odd at all!

As a postgraduate student starting my course after the fresher's fair it is more difficult to sign up and get information about sports

7.5 The role of sports volunteering
10% of students who participated in some sport had volunteered in sport at university or in the wider community in the last 4 weeks.

Rates of volunteering were higher among students who participated through university provision, compared with those who participated only through non-University provision.

Other work has shown the importance of enhancing employability skills as a motivation for students’ sports volunteering. Sports volunteering also helps to support others' sports participation (through tuition, coaching, running sports clubs etc). We recommend further consideration of whether HEIs are providing enough opportunities for students to get involved in sports volunteering, or whether this is an area that could be further developed.

7.6 Using new technologies
Technology was found to be an established aspect of participation, especially amongst female students. Incorporating fitness apps into sport sessions could be a way to engage students in university sport, as these could be accessible to all students with smartphones at no additional cost.

7.7 Understanding what works
Sport England’s University Sport Activation Fund funds a wide range of initiatives in a large number of HEIs. At the same time, NGBs are working with HEIs to develop offers for their own sports in order to increase take-up among students. In addition, this survey shows the importance of community sport participation in the landscape of students’ sports participation.

The 2014/15 survey shows a small decrease in participation since 2013/14. It is not possible to tell from a single year’s data whether this is the start of a downwards trend.

We recommend further investigation of this using the Higher Education Sport Participation and Satisfaction Survey results to explore the impact of the specific initiatives that have been funded, in conjunction with other research and evaluation work that may be carried out.