

# Adults' (35-64) participation in sport in Wales

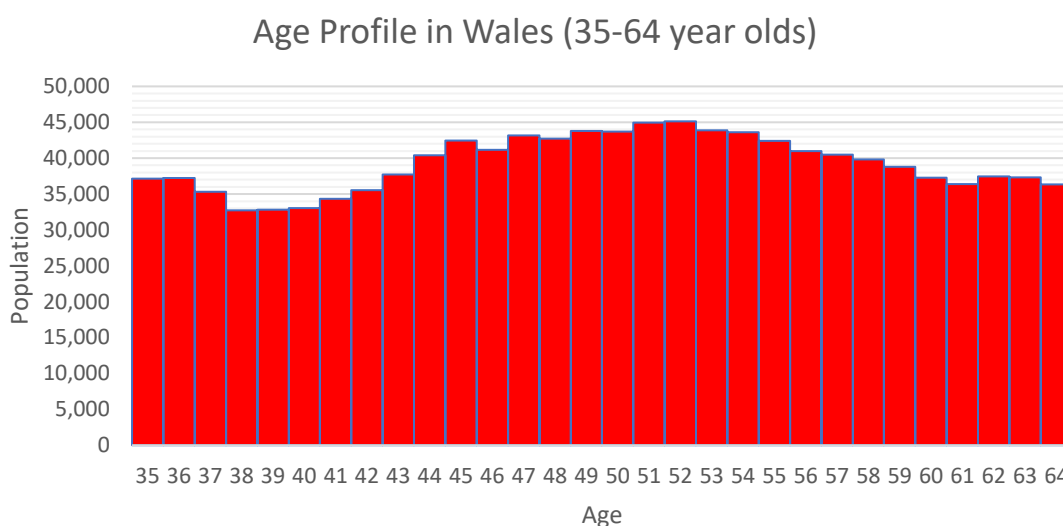
## Section 1 – What do we know about adults (ages 35-64) in Wales?

There are approximately 3.1 million people living in Wales. Around 557,000 people were ages under 16, 1.9 million were working age (16-64) and 635,000 were ages 65 and over<sup>1</sup>.

This paper focuses on adults, ages 35 to 64 (all will be working age adults). There are roughly 1.12 million adults in Wales in this age band.

The population of Wales changes every day. This is due to natural change (births and deaths) and migration (national and international)<sup>2</sup>. The annual increase in Wales is approximately 0.5%.

**Figure 1 – Age Profile (35-64) in Wales**



A higher proportion of adults in the 35-64 age group live in urban local authorities (see Table 1).

**Table 1 – Proportion of adults ages 35-64 by area**

	Adults 35-64	% of population
Urban	492,971	65%
Rural	595,195	59%
Semi-rural	256,885	61%
Valley	576,383	62%
<b>WALES</b>	<b>1,921,434</b>	<b>62%</b>

As the age band 35 to 64 is relatively large this paper will provide a breakdown for each ten-year age band where possible. In Wales there are approximately 356,000 adults ages 35-44, 435,000 ages 45-54, and 387,000 ages 55-64.

<sup>1</sup> The population of Wales is ageing, and the median age of people in Wales is currently 40.

<sup>2</sup> Includes Armed Forces

Adults ages 35-64 are likely to exhibit a lack of healthy lifestyle behaviours (Table 2). Looking across all healthy behaviours (those meeting CMO physical activity guidelines, normal BMI, non-smokers, drinking within recommend alcohol guidelines, and eating five fruit or vegetables a day) reveals that the likelihood of exhibiting healthy lifestyle behaviours generally declines with age.

**Table 2 – Fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours**

	<b>Fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours</b>
35-44 years old	12%
45-54 years old	13%
55-64 years old	13%
<b>All adults in Wales</b>	<b>10%</b>

Adults ages 35-64 are more likely to be overweight or obese, high risk drinkers, and smokers. Conversely, they are more likely to eat their 5 fruits or vegetables a day. The proportion of adults (ages 35 to 44) that meet CMO physical activity guidelines is significantly above the Welsh average (it is greater still for younger age groups).

The next section will focus on the sport behaviours of adults ages 35-64.

## **Section 2 - What do we know about adults' (age 35-64) participation in sport in Wales?**

In 2016-2017, 59% of all adults reported that they had taken part in some sporting activity in the last four weeks. The rate is 63% for adults ages 35-64 and males tend to participate more than females (65% and 61% respectively). This gender inequality is not limited to this age group.

Adults ages 35-44 and 45-54 participate more than average (71% and 65% respectively) and those ages 55-64 (54%) fall below the national rate. Frequency of participation exhibited by these age groups (Table 3) follows this same general pattern, adults ages 35-44 tend to participate most frequently (and above the national average).

**Table 3 – Frequency of Participation**

	<b>No frequent activity</b>	<b>Approximately once a week</b>	<b>Approximately twice a week</b>	<b>Three times a week or more (FG indicator 38)</b>
35-44 years old	43%	13%	10%	34%
45-54 years old	49%	12%	8%	31%
55-64 years old	58%	11%	7%	24%
<b>All adults in Wales</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>29%</b>

This participation pattern is also found for adults volunteering in sport (10% for all adults in Wales) and for volunteering in general. An above average number of adults ages 35-44 volunteer in sport (14%). The proportion of adults who volunteers falls with age (12% of 45-44 yr. olds and 9% of 55-64 yr. olds volunteer in sport). Males tend to volunteer more than females.

The trend in sport club memberships is slightly different (23% of all adults in Wales reported being a member of a sports club) with a large drop-off in membership between the ages bands 35-44 (28%) and those age 45-64 (22%). Again, a higher proportion of males are sports club members compared to females.

Adults in Wales are most likely to be taking part in walking (2 miles or more), swimming, exercise and fitness classes, running and jogging, football and cycling. This is no different for adults ages 35-64.

(National Survey for Wales 2016/17)

### Section 3 – What do we know about why adults’ (35-64) participation levels in sport vary?

In general, there are multiple reasons why people do not participate more in sport (See Table 4). These reasons differ between age groups (and most likely between people). Nevertheless, work and family commitments are common barriers for each age group between 35-64. Cost and a lack of facilities or clubs appears to be more of an issue for those ages 35-44. Fitness also appears to be an important factor (even more so in older age groups) whereas disabilities, illness and injuries is more prevalent, as a reason, for those ages 55-64. Age (i.e. 'if I was younger') appears to be a barrier for adults ages 45-54 and becomes the top reason for not doing more sport for adults ages 55-64.

**Table 4 Top Five Reasons: I would do more sport if....**

35-44 years old	<p>I was less busy at work</p> <p>I had fewer family commitments</p> <p>It cost less</p> <p>I was fitter</p> <p>There were more facilities or clubs in my area</p>
45-54 years old	<p>I was less busy at work</p> <p>I had fewer family commitments</p> <p>I was fitter</p> <p>I was younger</p> <p>It cost less</p>
55-64 years old	<p>I was younger</p> <p>I was fitter</p> <p>I was less busy at work</p> <p>I had fewer family commitments</p> <p>I didn't have a disability, illness or injury that prevents me from taking part</p>
All adults in Wales	<p>I was less busy at work</p> <p>I was younger</p> <p>I was fitter</p> <p>I had fewer family commitments</p> <p>It cost less</p>

Note: the analysis above does not differentiate between adults who already participate in sport and those who do not. For those adults who did not participate in sport the reasons of fitness, cost and disability, illness or injury tend to be quoted more often as a barrier.

Regardless by exploring the reasons that would encourage adults to participate more in sport (Table 4) it is clear that a lack of appropriate opportunities and resources limit the amount of times adults in this age group participate in sport.

Providing opportunities for those who work, have families or raising awareness of the opportunities and facilities that already exist may encourage an increase in frequency of participation.

Sport Wales has undertaken and commissioned a wide range of research to advance our understanding of why engagement in sport continues to vary so significantly across our population. Five themes consistently come up. We call these five themes the 'Elements of Engagement'<sup>3</sup>. The five Elements of Engagement are 1) Motivation, 2) Confidence, 3) Awareness, 4) Opportunity and Resources, and 5) The Experience. Each of these themes are explored in the context of adults' participation below<sup>4</sup>.

## **What do we know about adults' (35-64) motivation to take part in sport?**

Participants in the National Survey for Wales are asked which sports they would like to do more often, we call this latent demand. The pattern for latent demand follows the general pattern for participation. Adults ages 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 have above average latent demand (71% and 65% respectively). The proportion of adults aged 55 to 64 with latent demand is below the national average (58%). Swimming (indoor), gym or fitness classes, and cycling are most in demand. This reflects the general pattern for adults in Wales<sup>5</sup>.

Although not a main reason for encouraging adults to do more sport (Table 4), many adults in the 35-64 age band (between 9 and 12%) stated they would do more sport if they 'could be bothered to make the effort' and if they 'got around to doing it'. In addition, approximately 5% would do more sport if they 'prioritised it over other leisure activities'. This juxtaposition of reasons highlights that a lack of motivation, in general, is an issue.

The findings for adults ages 35-64 are not significantly different to the percentages for all adults in Wales<sup>6</sup>. Further statistical tests, using logistic regression, highlighted that a lack of motivation prevents adults participating more in sport no matter what age group they happen to be at the time.

Middle aged women appear to identify with the psychological health and well-being benefits of leisure time physical activity, which motivates them to engage (Lenneis & Pfister, 2017). Vahabi & Damba, 2014 have reported improved mental health and decreased psychological stress among South Asian immigrant women following a six-week Bollywood dance intervention.

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<sup>3</sup> An explanation of the Elements of Engagement is available here: [http://sport.wales/media/1922960/elements\\_of\\_engagement\\_-\\_overview.pdf](http://sport.wales/media/1922960/elements_of_engagement_-_overview.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> For further detail about these themes please read the 'Elements of Engagement Evidence Review, 2017' available upon request.

<sup>5</sup> Note: Latent demand is a weak predictor of any outcome e.g. I may say I want to go swimming but never actually go. If wanted to so much I would have already gone.

<sup>6</sup> see Table 14 [http://sport.wales/media/1929533/adults\\_2016\\_sw.xlsx](http://sport.wales/media/1929533/adults_2016_sw.xlsx)

## **What do we know about children and young people’s confidence to take part in sport?**

Confidence and motivation are also closely related when it comes to participation in sport (Sari, 2015). For example, you may be motivated to go swimming but lack the confidence to do so and vice versa.

Although confidence is not a common reason when it comes to encouraging adults to participate more in sport, it is still a significant predictor for participation<sup>7</sup>. We know if adults are confident they are more likely to participate. Females tend to quote a lack of confidence more often than males.

Between 6 and 8% of 35-64-year olds would do more sport if they were more confident. This is not significantly different from the national figure based on all adults in Wales (8%). 'Feeling less embarrassed' can also be linked to confidence but only a small proportion of adults mentioned this reason (2-3%).

It could be argued that a lack of confidence may contribute to why adults feel they are too old or not fit enough to participate more in sport. A lack of opportunity and resources, or awareness of them, could also play a role.

## **What do we know about adults’ (35-64) awareness of sporting opportunities?**

To improve awareness of the opportunities to participate in sport it is important to understand the communication channels and tone preferences of adults. Segmentation analysis provides a tool by which we can better understand the adult population and target resources more effectively. Segmentation analysis is a generic term for dividing a large group of people into distinct groups, or segments that share common characteristics. It is a useful tool because we don't have the resources to work with everyone in Wales at one time. Segmentation analysis offers a mechanism for understanding communication preferences, by linking together data from multiple sources to reveal these preferences. Preferences that can be used to impact on the behaviors of the adult population. Common communication preferences vary by both gender and age group<sup>8</sup>.

## **What do we know about adults’ (35-64) opportunities and resources to engage in sport?**

Younger adults in this age group are more likely to be living in material deprivation<sup>9</sup> but less likely to have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity (or be limited by it). In addition, those ages 35-44 are most likely to have children under 16 and in full-time education.

Indeed, this was reflected in Table 4, where work, family, and cost, presented barriers to adults ages 35-64 participating more in sport. Despite being highlighted as barriers, could these factors be circumvented, to some extent, by promoting workplace opportunities to be active and through the utilisation of public outdoor spaces. In addition, if parents help their children to be active they are more likely to improve their own mood (Dominick et al. 2012) and linked to this, other researchers

<sup>7</sup> Increased likelihood of being hooked on sport if confident (Active Adults, 2014)

<sup>8</sup> See here for more details for this age group <http://sport.wales/research--policy/tools-and-resources/people-segmentation.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> Material deprivation is a way of measuring long-term poverty (e.g. whether a household is able to afford things like keeping the house warm enough, make regular savings, or have a holiday once a year).

(e.g., Spivey & Hritz, 2013) have highlighted improved mood as a motivating factor for sport participation.

## **What do we know about adults' (35-64) experience of taking part in sport?**

From the National Survey for Wales the evidence experience is limited to reflection, as an adult, on experiences of sport at school. In terms of this experience, 59% of adults enjoyed sport at school 'a lot'. 20% did not enjoy sport at school at all. This pattern is broadly similar for adults ages 35-64.

We know that if adults enjoyed sport at school they are more likely to participate in sport or physical recreation as an adult.

**(National Survey for Wales 2016/17)**

Lenneis and Pfister's (2017) worked with less active 'middle-aged' women (aged 45-55) who noted that they felt guilty about their previous inactive lifestyles. Participation was influenced by changing life circumstances. Now they had time to exercise and, contrary to previous (negative) experiences, they found that exercising and playing games were pleasurable experiences.

A study by Segar *et al.* (2007) into the exercise habits of 'midlife' women (aged 40-60) identified that they judged satisfaction based on five criteria: 1) sense of well-being, 2) weight loss, 3) health benefits, 4) stress reduction, and 5) weight maintenance/toning.

For middle-aged men, Nielsen *et al.* (2014) reported that team games that include elements of social interaction and play, are intrinsically motivating for this population and, therefore, are more likely to lead to sustained engagement.

## **Recommendations**

Based on a review of published literature that relates to each of the five Elements of Engagement Didymus *et al.* (2017) have made a number of recommendations that should be considered when working with adults ages 35-64.

### **Recommendations when working with families**

PA and or sport interventions should include parents and their children given the multiple barriers to PA and sport that parents experience, and the draw for parents to spend time with their children. This type of approach may also help to overcome some barriers to PA and sport that young people experiences (e.g., a need for parental accompaniment).

Parents note that PA interventions for their children have a positive effect on their adolescents' active behaviours as well as their own. Interventions aimed at promoting PA among adolescents should, therefore, include measures to stimulate parent participation, have an empowerment approach, and should preferably be school-based (see Lindqvist *et al.*, 2015).

Family focussed sport and PA opportunities that centre around enjoyment and outdoor recreation are likely to promote engagement.

Sport and PA providers should actively resist dominant notions about motherhood, health, and the ideal body in their marketing materials if they want to increase participation and enjoyment of PA among mothers with young children (Lewis & Ridge, 2005).

## Recommendations when working with adults

Sport and PA related strategies should consider the beautification and maintenance of communities, increasing feelings of safety, enhancement of social support among community members, popularisation of PA, and mitigating car culture (see Belon et al., 2016).

Workers who are employed in shift work or work that requires long hours would benefit from on-site facilities that can be used at non-traditional times (i.e. early morning or late night), whereas time-management interventions might be more useful for office workers (see Fletcher et al., 2008).

Town infrastructure needs to be conducive to active transport interventions (e.g. cycle to work) to overcome some of the safety- and time-related barriers to PA that have been highlighted.

Interventions to dispel stereotypes about ageing and to stop the development of negative ageing expectations are likely to be important for ensuring future uptake of positive health behaviour and better health outcomes among older adults (see Dogra, Al-Sahab, Manson, & Tamim, 2015).

Enjoyment, personal investment, and involvement opportunities need to be maximised for participation retention of older adults (Wang & Chu, 2016).

## What next?

Research has shown that sport habits decline with age, however, most people are keen to go on exercising with the right support. Consider avoiding the word 'sport' itself and the use of jargon in any communication about any local activities that are available. To engage this age group the social component, fun and enjoyment of exercise are important motivators.

### **How can we better understand what motivates adults to participate in sport?**

#### **How do we ensure the limited marketing of sport in Wales also focuses on this age group?**

We know that females are less confident than males when it comes to engaging in sport, and that confidence is a determinant of participation.

#### **How can we increase females' confidence to engage in sport?**

Accessing and engaging in sport may be problematic for this age group because of work and family commitments. The cost of an activity might also be a barrier for adults living in material deprivation. Adults in this age group are likely to have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity and consider their age and fitness as a barrier to participation in sport.

#### **How can we increase the number and variety of opportunities for these working age adults to engage in sport in Wales?**

Many adults may have already developed unhealthy lifestyle habits e.g. smoking, drinking alcohol. For example, this age group tends to have a higher BMI than the rest of the population and the proportion of adults who are overweight or obese is above average. Despite being more likely to exhibit unhealthy lifestyles the physical activity levels are still above average for younger adults in this age bracket. In addition, younger adults in this age band are most likely to have children and we know that children's sport behaviours are influenced by their parents. If adults are supported and educated to develop healthy lifestyles it is likely to impact on the sport behaviours of future generations.

**How can we create sport experiences that encourage continued participation and encourage healthy lifestyle habits?**

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