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# Case Studies of Equality Data Collection in the Scottish Public Sector: sportscotland



## Equality, Poverty and Social Security



# A good practice case study of the collection and use of equality data: sportscotland

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The Scottish Government is committed to addressing inequality in Scotland. [Scotland's Equality Evidence Strategy 2017–21](#) set out a vision for a more wide-ranging and robust equality evidence base, to enable policy makers to develop sound, inclusive policy.

There are many costs and challenges to collecting, analysing and reporting equality data and, despite improvements in recent years, significant gaps remain in Scotland's equality evidence base. To address this, the Scottish Government launched the [Equality Data Improvement Programme](#) in April 2021. This programme builds on [research](#) which explored the collection of equality and socio-economic disadvantage data by Scottish public sector bodies.<sup>1</sup> The 27 organisations who took part in this research faced various barriers and challenges in this area of work, but they also identified factors that helped support the collection and use of high-quality equality data.

This document presents one of a series of six case studies produced to complement this research. The case studies aim to support the sharing of good practice by showing how different organisations have approached collecting and using equality data to provide better services and better outcomes for their 'customers'. Each of the case studies illustrates different aspects of practice across the public sector in Scotland. They do not provide a comprehensive picture of the work undertaken by organisations; rather they illustrate some of their positive actions in collecting, using and improving equality data.

## sportscotland has ....

- Given priority to (equality) data collection by making this the responsibility of the strategic planning team, and by re-instating (in 2020) their inclusion group – which has representation from across the organisation and is responsible for coordinating work in the area of equality.
- Implemented a standardised approach within the organisation – using equality monitoring forms – to the collection of equality data across all its surveys and programmes to better understand, measure and monitor the impact of its work; and added questions about disability and area deprivation (based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) into the annual data collection from sports' governing bodies.
- Commissioned a series of equality and sport research projects to update, refresh and grow the equality evidence base for the sporting sector.
- Worked in partnership with a range of other organisations and partners to align collection and use of equality data, and published and shared evidence on equality data both with those who provided the information and, more widely, with other stakeholders.
- Revised its investment principles to ensure a greater focus on providing funds to under-represented groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: 'equality data' refers to 'equality and socio-economic disadvantage data' and covers the protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010 (age, religion and belief, race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, and gender reassignment) and (any) indicators of socio-economic disadvantage.

## About sportscotland

**sportscotland** is the national agency for sport in Scotland. The organisation's corporate strategy, [Sport For Life](#), sets out the direction for sport and **sportscotland**. It sets out a commitment to ensuring that inclusion underpins everything **sportscotland** does. **sportscotland** provides leadership to the sporting sector, to influence and drive the changes needed to address inequality and ensure everyone has the opportunity to take part in sport and physical activity. The organisation also influences, informs and invests in organisations and individuals who deliver sport and physical activity.

**sportscotland**'s [equality outcomes 2021–2025](#) give a focus to the diverse needs of four key groups. This sets out that over this period the organisation will help people who:

- live in poverty and on low incomes
- experience mental health problems
- are over 50 years old
- come from diverse ethnic communities.

To do this, the organisation will build on learning from their earlier (2017–21) equality outcomes, which focused on women and girls, disabled people and those living in deprived communities.<sup>2</sup> They will also develop their approach in a way that recognises the importance of intersectionality.

## The data collections

Over the past 4 to 5 years **sportscotland** has developed, implemented, reported on, and published surveys of individuals who take part in and / or deliver a wide range of their programmes. These surveys include (i) an annual online survey of primary and secondary school pupils, (ii) an online survey of club members and participants, (iii) regular surveys of community programmes, and (iv) satisfaction surveys related to training, coaching and athlete support. All these surveys collect equality data. **sportscotland** also collects and uses equality data as a criterion for investment in relation to local and national partners.

The equality characteristics collected in relation to individuals routinely cover age, race, disability, sex and area deprivation (as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and indicated by the respondent's postcode – see Footnote 2 below). On occasion, information about religion and belief and sexual orientation is also collected.<sup>3</sup>

## Good practice in the collection and use of equality data

The strategic planning team lead on data collection (including equality data collection) across all **sportscotland** programmes. An analysis of their equality data is

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<sup>2</sup> 'Deprived communities' are defined by **sportscotland** as those belonging to the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

<sup>3</sup> In particular, the survey of club members and participants collects this additional information.

published in their equality [mainstreaming and outcomes reports](#) every two years in line with their statutory duty as a public sector organisation. The analysis is shared with senior managers through these reports and associated presentations. In the last year **sportscotland** have re-instated their inclusion group – this group comprises representatives from across the organisation and is responsible for coordinating equality work.

**sportscotland** has:

- Embedded a strategic focus on equality and inclusion throughout the organisation. The organisation aims to understand the barriers people face in participating in sport and physical activity, and to proactively address these barriers.
- Implemented an internally developed standardised approach to the collection of equality data across all its surveys and programmes to better understand, measure and monitor the impact of its work. **sportscotland** has also added questions about disability and area deprivation (SIMD) into the annual data collection from sports' governing bodies.
- Commissioned a series of [equality and sport research](#) projects to update, refresh and grow the equality evidence base for the sporting sector. This research operates as an 'evaluation framework' for work in this area and helps the organisation and its partners to understand factors affecting progress across the sector and the actions required to reduce inequality.
- Worked with a range of other organisations and partners to align collection and use of equality data.
- [Published and shared evidence on equality data](#) both with those who provided the information and more widely with other stakeholders including through their annual review and the provision of local authority reports.

A strong strategic focus, and clear messaging both internally and externally, has allowed **sportscotland** to build an organisation-wide and sector-wide understanding of the importance of collecting and using equality data. They have engaged with their stakeholders and networks to build understanding.

**sportscotland** has also adopted a highly collaborative approach to improving the collection and use of equality data. Key partner organisations in this regard include Plan 4 Sport, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, local authorities and the Sports Councils Equality Group (UK). This approach has enabled collaboration and discussions with other national agencies including Public Health Scotland, Education Scotland and Transport Scotland.

In addition, in developing its own approach, **sportscotland** has made good use of existing resources including the Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) Equality Forum, the [Scottish Government Equality Evidence Finder](#), and the materials (in terms of questions and definitions) produced in relation to the Census. **sportscotland** has also used national data from the Scottish Household Survey to improve its

understanding of participation by equality groups in sport and physical activity.<sup>4</sup> In all this, the organisation is seeking to capitalise on existing expertise and information and to increase consistency and decrease the costs of equality data collection.

More specifically, **sportscotland** has developed standard equality monitoring forms (EMFs) for use across all **sportscotland** programmes. The research manager, based in the strategic planning team, led this work, which built on the existing data collection questions already in place for the [Equality Standard for Sport](#). The EMFs include a 'prefer not to say' option and information about the use of this option is published.<sup>5</sup> The organisation is currently considering whether and how specific data fields (for example in relation to sexual orientation) should be adapted in order to be appropriate for children and young people.

## **Impacts of equality data collection**

Over the last 4 to 5 years, the organisation has moved from simply identifying inequality in participation (using, for example, data from the Scottish Household Survey), to also collecting standardised equality data across its programmes. This stronger evidence base (including the online surveys of primary and secondary school pupils) has helped **sportscotland** to understand the profile of participants and to target activities to groups under-represented in sport and is informing the continuous improvement of services to excluded groups more widely.

During this period, **sportscotland**'s investment principles have also been revised. The equality data they collect has supported decision making in relation to their [Sports Facilities Fund](#). **sportscotland** now contributes up to 75% of total project costs to club- and community-led projects within deprived communities through this fund. In addition, since April 2017, just over one-third (24 out of 63) of the awards **sportscotland** has made through its [direct club investment scheme](#) have focused on girls and young women, disabled young people, and young people from the most deprived communities.

Moreover, the availability of more comprehensive equality data has led to more collaboration – and more meaningful collaboration – with other organisations working with groups under-represented in sport as the data collected by **sportscotland** are shared with others. For example, **sportscotland** has used the equality data they collect to produce a [learning note](#) on key factors which organisations / groups should consider when designing (physical activity and sport-related) projects for women and girls.

Partly in response to the work they have undertaken, **sportscotland** think there is now greater knowledge and confidence around the collection and use of equality data both internally and across partners.

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<sup>4</sup> In the past, **sportscotland** commissioned its own omnibus survey to gather information but has now taken the pragmatic decision (based on value for money considerations) to discontinue this, and make use of other existing data sources instead.

<sup>5</sup> For example, 'prefer not to say' was selected in 3% of cases for race, 5% for disability and 3% for sex.

### Spotlight: Targeting investment to key equality groups

Netball Scotland used supplementary investment allocated by **sportscotland** for particular equality projects to expand their Walking Netball programme.

Walking Netball allows people of all ages and abilities to participate in social, low impact physical activity sessions. It is a slower version of netball – played at walking pace with adapted rules and court size. Walking Netball is endorsed by Age Scotland and is mainly played by the 60+ population.

In all, 22 Walking Netball Groups across the length and breadth of Scotland have been established. There are 284 members, almost all of whom are women. The average age is 64.

### Next steps

**sportscotland** will continue the ‘learning journey’ the organisation embarked on a few years ago. This will include:

- Providing equality analysis and insights to internal and external stakeholders.
- Improving the quality and interpretation of data through greater involvement in their work of groups that share protected characteristics.
- Extending their data collection and analysis to reflect their newly identified target groups (people living on low incomes, people with mental health problems, people who are over 50, and people who are from diverse ethnic communities).
- Continuing to develop their research programme to better understand racism in sport, transgender experiences and diversity among high-performance athletes.
- Working with stakeholders to further develop and use the equality data collected by **sportscotland**.

### Contact for further information

Queries and further information in relation to this case study should be directed to: [research@sportscotland.org.uk](mailto:research@sportscotland.org.uk)

### The Scottish Government Equality Data Improvement Programme

The Scottish Government launched its [Equality Data Improvement Programme](#) in April 2021. The first phase of the programme, which will run from April 2021 to December 2022, aims to raise awareness across the public sector of why equality data are needed, and how these data can be used to improve policy-making and outcomes.

Do you have an example of good practice in collecting and using equality data at your organisation that you would like to share?

Contact the Scottish Government at [social-justice-analysis@gov.scot](mailto:social-justice-analysis@gov.scot)



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