

## 8 Physical Activity and Sport

### Main Findings

In 2017 the vast majority of adults (81 per cent) had taken part in physical activity and sport in the previous four weeks.

Participation in all physical activity and sport remained relatively constant between 2007 and 2010 (around 72 per cent). Recently people have become more active (rising to 75 per cent in 2011 and again to 81 per cent in 2017). The rise in physical activity is driven by the rise in recreational walking.

Recreational walking (for at least 30 minutes) has consistently been the most common type of physical activity. Participation has risen from 57 per cent in 2011 to 70 per cent in 2017.

Excluding walking, just over half (53 per cent) of the adult population participated in physical activity and sport in the four weeks prior to interview. This has remained broadly constant since 2007.

Frequent participation (on more than 14 days in the past 4 weeks) was undertaken by just under half (49 per cent) of those who are active. This has remained relatively constant since 2014.

Men are more active than women (83 per cent and 80 per cent respectively).

Participation in physical activity and sport including walking declines with age.

Participation in physical activity and sport (including recreational walking) is lower for those living in deprived areas (71 per cent for those living in the most deprived areas compared to 90 per cent for those living in the least deprived).

Ill health and disability has the biggest impact on participation. Those with a long term limiting condition were less likely to be physically active (40 per cent compared to 89 per cent of those with no condition).

Satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities has remained relatively constant since 2011. In 2017 86 per cent of users in the last 12 months were very or fairly satisfied.

## 8.1 Introduction and Context

Physical inactivity is associated with a range of chronic diseases and is one of the leading risk factors of death globally<sup>46</sup>. Due to its impact on population health and its pandemic levels, physical inactivity is also responsible for a substantial economic burden<sup>47</sup>. In Scotland alone it contributes to more than 2,500 deaths annually<sup>48</sup>, costing the NHS around £77 million<sup>49</sup>.

The Scottish Government recognises this as a major health challenge and has made increasing physical activity a priority. The percentage of adults meeting the Chief Medical Officers' Guidelines of 150 minutes of moderate vigorous physical activity a week is one of the 81 national indicators for the [National Performance Framework](#). Scotland's ambitions for physical activity and sport are described in the recently published Active Scotland Delivery Plan<sup>50</sup>.

More widely we have set out our ambitions for a more active Scotland in the Active Scotland Outcomes Framework<sup>51</sup> (ASOF), developed by the Scottish Government in 2014 in collaboration with partners. The ASOF has six high level outcomes, including getting the inactive active and is underpinned by a commitment to equality. We want to ensure that people of all ages and from all communities across Scotland have the opportunity to participate in physical activity and sport. The ASOF is monitored through a suite of indicators, 11 of which are based on data from the SHS.

Questions on physical activity and sport participation were introduced in the SHS for the first time in 2007. The SHS questions cover levels and frequency of participation in physical activity and sport activities in the last 4 weeks. From 2012 onwards, it is possible to obtain data at local authority level every year.

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity>

<sup>47</sup> [Ding, D., Lawson, K. D., Kolbe-Alexander, T. L., Finkelstein, E. A., Katzmarzyk, P. T., Van Mechelen, W., & Pratt, M. \(2016\). The economic burden of physical inactivity: a global analysis of major non-communicable diseases. \*The Lancet\*, 388\(10051\), 1311-1324.](#)

<sup>48</sup> [Foster, C and Allender, S. \(2012\) Costing the burden of ill health related to physical inactivity for Scotland. British Heart Foundation Research Group report for SPARCOIL. NHS Health Scotland](#)

<sup>49</sup> [Townsend, N and Foster, C \(August 2015\) Costing the burden of ill health related to physical inactivity for Scotland. Report commissioned by the British Heart Foundation. Scottish Sports Association.](#)

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2019/06/1945>

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/partnerstories/Outcomes-Framework>

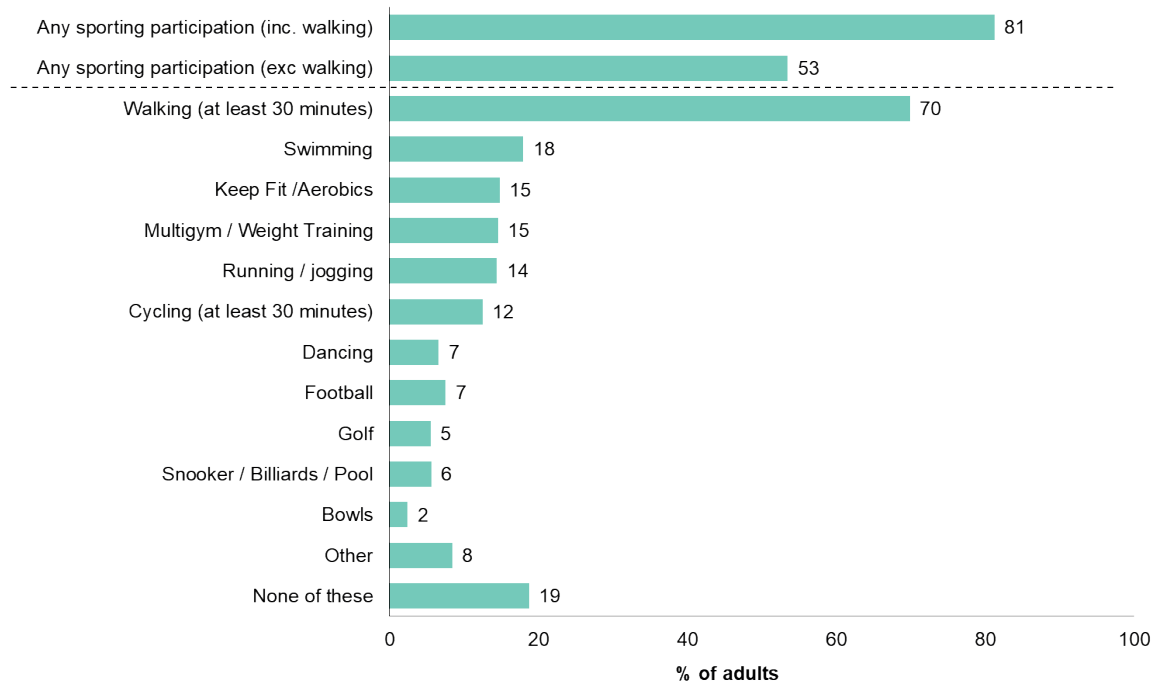
## 8.2 Participation in Physical Activity and Sport

### 8.2.1 Participation in Physical Activity and Sport in the Last Four Weeks

Figure 8.1 shows the percentage of adults participating in physical activity and sports. **In 2017 approximately four fifths of adults (81 per cent) participated in physical activity. The most prevalent activity by far was walking for at least 30 minutes (for recreational purposes), reported by 70 per cent of adults.** If walking is excluded over half of adults (53 per cent) participated in physical activity and sport. Participation in sporting activities ranged from two per cent (in bowls) to 18 per cent (swimming).

**Figure 8.1: Participation in physical activity and sport in the last four weeks**

Percentage of adults (base: 9,810)



## 8.2.2 Participation in Physical Activity and Sport – Trends Over Time

Figure 8.2 and Table 8.1 show that **participation in all physical activity and sport has been gradually increasing since 2011**, from 72 per cent in 2010 to 81 per cent in 2017.

This increase is **driven by a steady rise in the percentage of adults who walked for 30 minutes or more**, from 57 per cent in 2011 to 70 per cent in 2017. When recreational walking is excluded, participation in physical activity and sport remained relatively constant in the past 11 years, fluctuating between 51 and 54 per cent.

### Figure 8.2: Trends in participation in physical activity and sport in the last four weeks

Percentage of adults, 2007 to 2017 data (minimum base: 9,130)

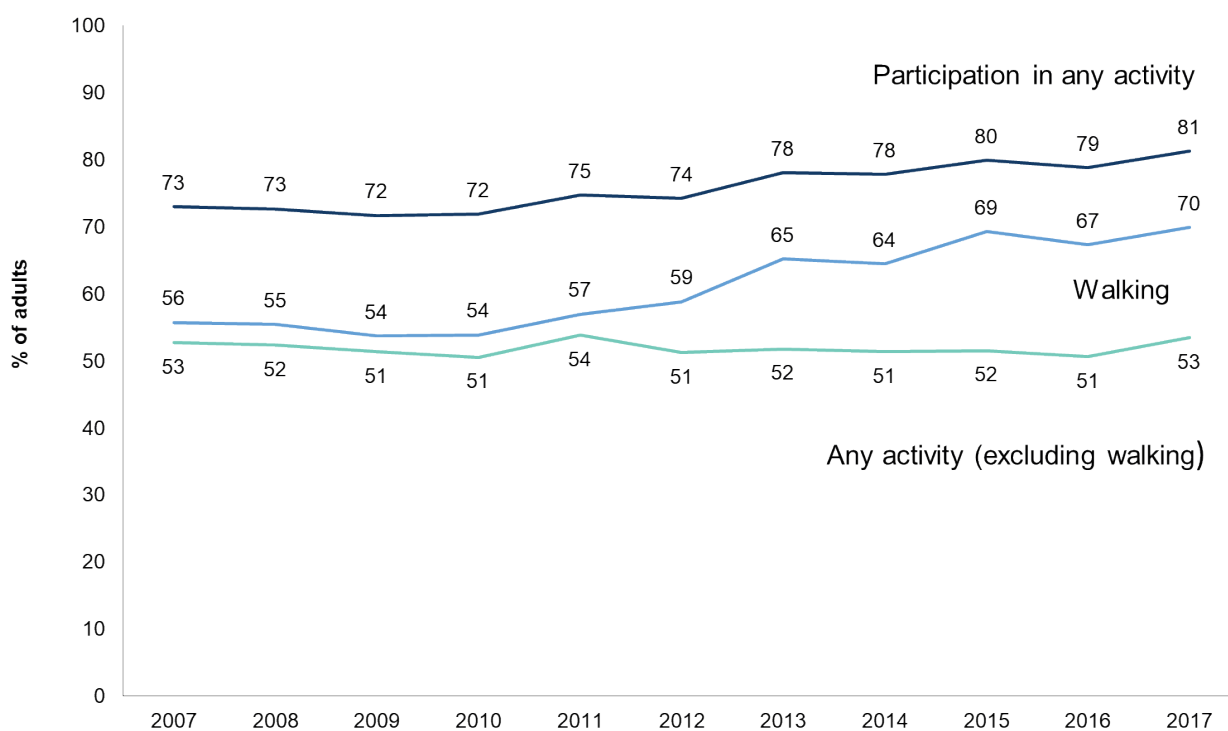


Table 8.1 shows that **participation in different types of sport remained stable over time** with the exception of dancing, which halved in popularity between 2007 and 2017 (14 to 7 per cent).

**Table 8.1: Trends in participation in physical activity and sport in the last four weeks**  
Percentage of adults, 2007 to 2017 data

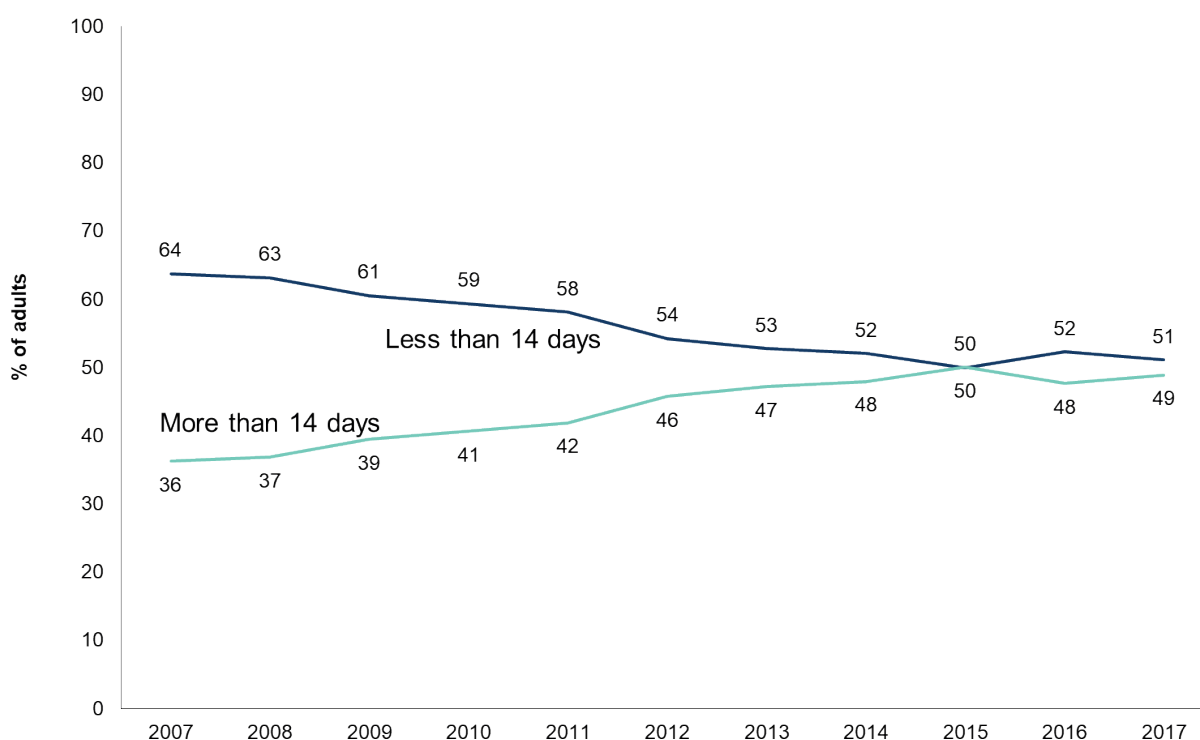
Adults	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Any sporting participation (inc. walking)	73	73	72	72	75	74	78	78	80	79	81
Any sporting participation (exc walking)	53	52	51	51	54	51	52	51	52	51	53
Walking (at least 30 minutes)	56	55	54	54	57	59	65	64	69	67	70
Swimming	19	19	17	17	18	17	17	18	17	16	18
Keep Fit /Aerobics	12	12	12	13	14	14	13	13	14	14	15
Multigym / Weight Training	11	11	11	11	12	12	12	12	13	14	15
Running / jogging	10	9	10	10	11	11	12	12	12	13	14
Cycling (at least 30 minutes)	9	9	9	9	10	10	11	11	12	11	12
Dancing	14	12	11	10	10	8	7	7	7	7	7
Football	9	8	9	9	8	7	8	7	8	8	7
Golf	9	8	8	7	8	6	7	6	6	6	5
Snooker / Billiards / Pool	9	9	8	7	7	5	6	5	5	6	6
Bowls	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
Other	9	10	6	8	10	10	10	9	9	9	8
None of these	27	27	28	28	25	26	22	22	20	21	19
Base	10,300	9,230	9,130	9,620	9,680	9,890	9,920	9,800	9,410	9,640	9,810

## 8.2.3 Frequency of Participation in Physical Activity and Sport – Trends over Time

Figure 8.3 shows that **frequency of participation in physical activity** and sport among participants has **increased since 2007**. The proportion of the population reporting frequent participation (on more than 14 days in the past 4 weeks) increased from just over a third (36 per cent) in 2007, to just under a half (49 per cent) in 2017. Given the relatively steady levels of participation shown in Figure 8.2 **it would appear this increase in frequency of participation is due to individuals who are already active becoming more active**.

**Figure 8.3: Trends in frequency of participation by adults who took part in physical activity and sport in the previous four weeks**

Percentage of adults, 2007 to 2017 data (minimum base: 6,240)



## 8.2.4 Participation in Physical Activity and Sport by Gender and Age

### 8.2.4.1 Gender

Overall physical activity and **sport participation is slightly higher for men than women** (83 per cent and 80 per cent respectively, as shown in Table 8.2). Gender differences are more pronounced for particular types of physical activity and sport.

This difference was larger when excluding walking (58 and 49 per cent respectively).

The **most common activity was recreational walking**, with similar level of participation for both men and women participating at around the same level (69 and 71 per cent respectively).

Men participated more than women in sporting activities (58 and 49 per cent respectively) apart from swimming (16 and 19 per cent), dancing (3 and 10 per cent) and keep fit (11 and 19 per cent respectively).

### 8.2.4.2 Age

**Participation in all physical activity and sport, including walking, declines with age** (Table 8.2). The highest levels of participation were in the 16 to 24 year age group (92 per cent). This fell gradually to 82 per cent for those aged 45 to 59. The decline becomes more evident in the 60 to 74 age group with 74 per cent participation and in the 75+ group only 51 per cent engaged in physical activity.

**Table 8.2: Participation in physical activity and sport in the past four weeks by gender and age group**

Percentages, 2017 data

Adults	Male	Female	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 59	60 to 74	75 plus	All
Walking (at least 30 minutes)	69	71	73	76	77	73	66	43	70
Swimming	16	19	20	25	28	17	12	3	18
Keep Fit / Aerobics	11	19	20	20	18	14	10	5	15
Multigym / Weight Training	17	12	30	23	18	12	5	1	15
Running / jogging	17	12	28	25	22	11	3	0	14
Cycling (at least 30 minutes)	16	9	13	16	18	15	8	1	12
Dancing	3	10	10	9	6	6	5	3	7
Football	14	1	21	14	9	4	1	-	7
Golf	10	2	5	5	4	6	7	5	5
Snooker / Billiards / Pool	10	2	14	8	6	4	2	1	6
Bowls	3	2	2	2	1	2	4	4	2
Other	9	8	13	9	9	8	8	3	8
None of these	17	20	8	9	12	18	26	49	19
Any sporting participation (inc. walking)	83	80	92	91	88	82	74	51	81
Any sporting participation (exc walking)	58	49	75	66	64	52	39	21	53
Base	4,540	5,270	650	1,290	1,400	2,410	2,590	1,480	9,810

Columns add up to more than 100 per cent as multiple responses allowed.

When walking is excluded, the decline in participation with age is even more pronounced. Participation levels are highest in age group 16-24 (75 per cent), decrease by almost half in those aged 60-74 years (39 per cent) and by more than two thirds for those over the age of 75 (21 per cent).

Recreational walking levels are highest in the 35-44 age group and decline gradually to 43 per cent for those older than 75.

The **popularity of different types of** physical activity and **sports varies by age**. **Football** is one example, with 21 per cent of those **aged 16 to 24** having participated in the previous four weeks compared with four per cent of 45 to 59 year olds. Running/jogging and weight-training showed a similar pattern. Contrary to this, participation in **swimming** initially increased with age, peaking at around 28 per cent for **35 and 44 year olds** and then began to decline from the age of 45.

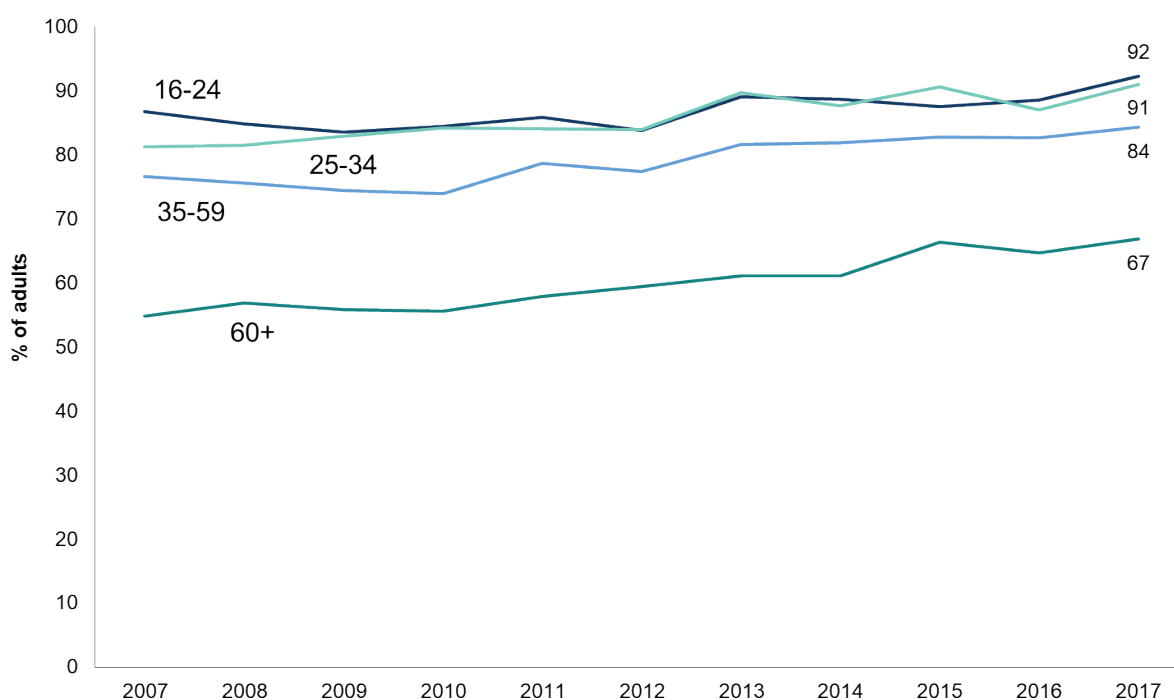
## 8.2.5 By Age Groups Over Time

Figure 8.4, Figure 8.5 and Figure 8.6 show how physical activity and sport participation changed over time for different age groups.

While fluctuations are evident, there is a definite **upward trend in participation in physical activity and sport since 2007 for all age groups** (Figure 8.4).

**Figure 8.4: Trends in participation in physical activity and sport (including walking) in the last four weeks by age**

Percentage of adults, 2007 to 2017 data (minimum base: 650)



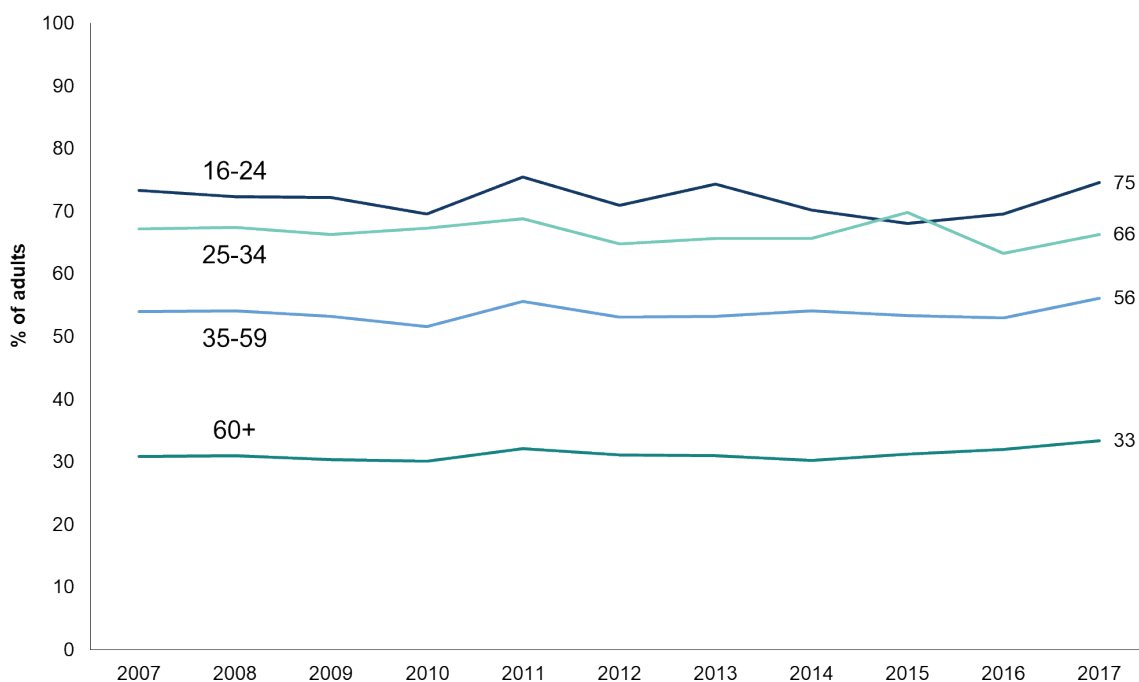


However, **when walking is excluded** (Figure 8.5), **participation remained relatively stable for most age groups over time.**

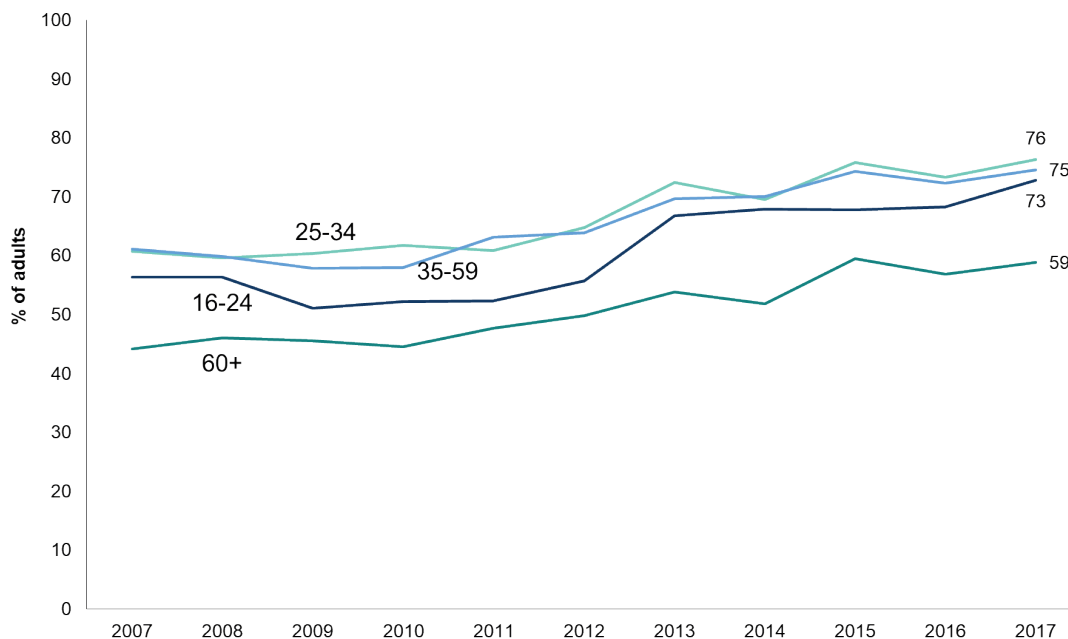
Figure 8.6 shows the **upward trend in recreational walking seen from 2011 applies to all age groups, with the exception of the 60+ age group**, where participation levels seem to plateau in 2015.

**Figure 8.5: Trends in participation in physical activity and sport (excluding walking) in the last four weeks by age**

Percentage of adults, 2007 to 2017 data (minimum base: 650)



**Figure 8.6: Trends in participation in recreational walking in the last four weeks by age**  
 Percentage of adults, 2007 to 2017 data (minimum base: 650)



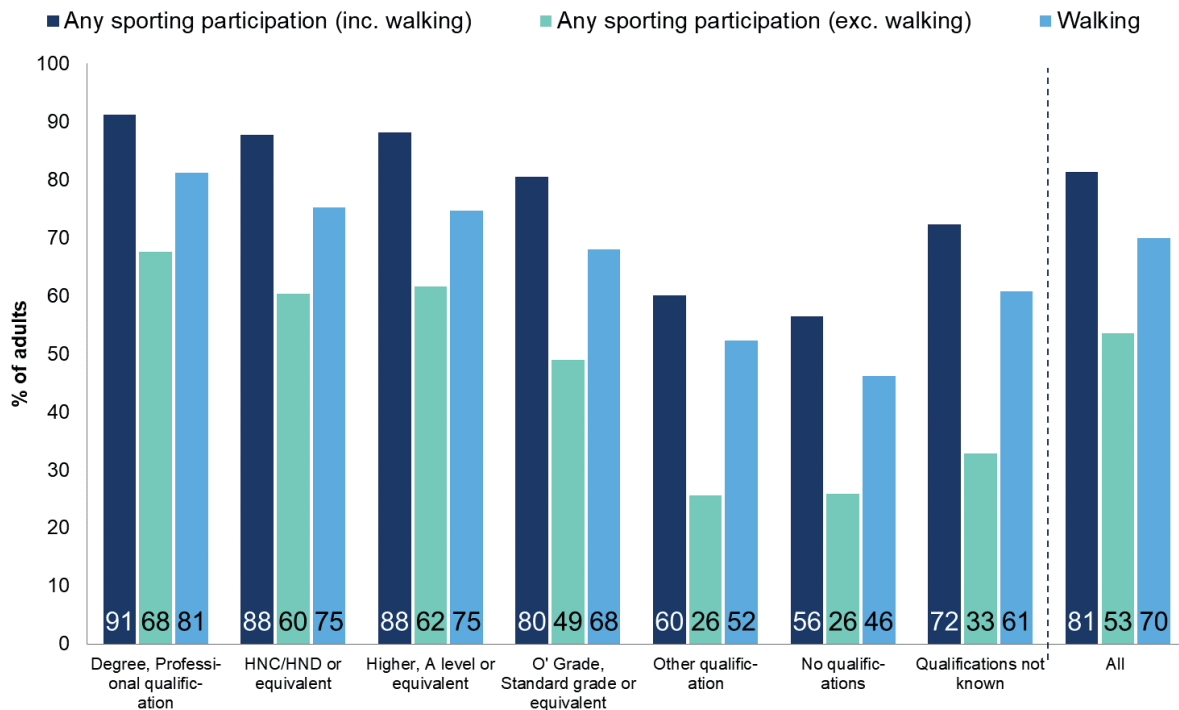
### 8.2.6 Participation in Physical Activity and Sport by Highest Level of Qualification

Figure 8.7 shows how participation in physical activity and sport varies with level of qualification. **In 2017 participation was highest amongst those with a degree or professional qualification (91 per cent) and lowest for those with no qualifications (56 per cent).**

**When walking is excluded, the difference between qualification levels is even greater (68 per cent compared to 26 per cent).** Walking is the most prevalent activity across the range of educational attainment but there is still a 35 percentage point gap in participation between those with a degree or professional qualification (81 per cent) and those with no qualification (46 per cent).

**Figure 8.7: Participation in physical activity and sport in the past four weeks by highest level of qualification**

Percentage of adults, 2017 data (minimum base: 110)



### 8.2.7 Participation in Physical Activity and Sport by Area Deprivation

Figure 8.8 shows how participation in physical activity and sport varies by area deprivation. **Participation** in the previous four weeks **was lowest** (71 per cent) **among those in the 20 per cent most deprived areas of Scotland**, compared with 90 per cent in the 20 per cent least deprived areas, as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Participation excluding walking and participation in recreational walking follow the same pattern with more activity being associated with lower levels of deprivation.

**Figure 8.8: Participation in physical activity and sport in the last four weeks by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation**

Percentage of adults, 2017 data (minimum base: 1,810)

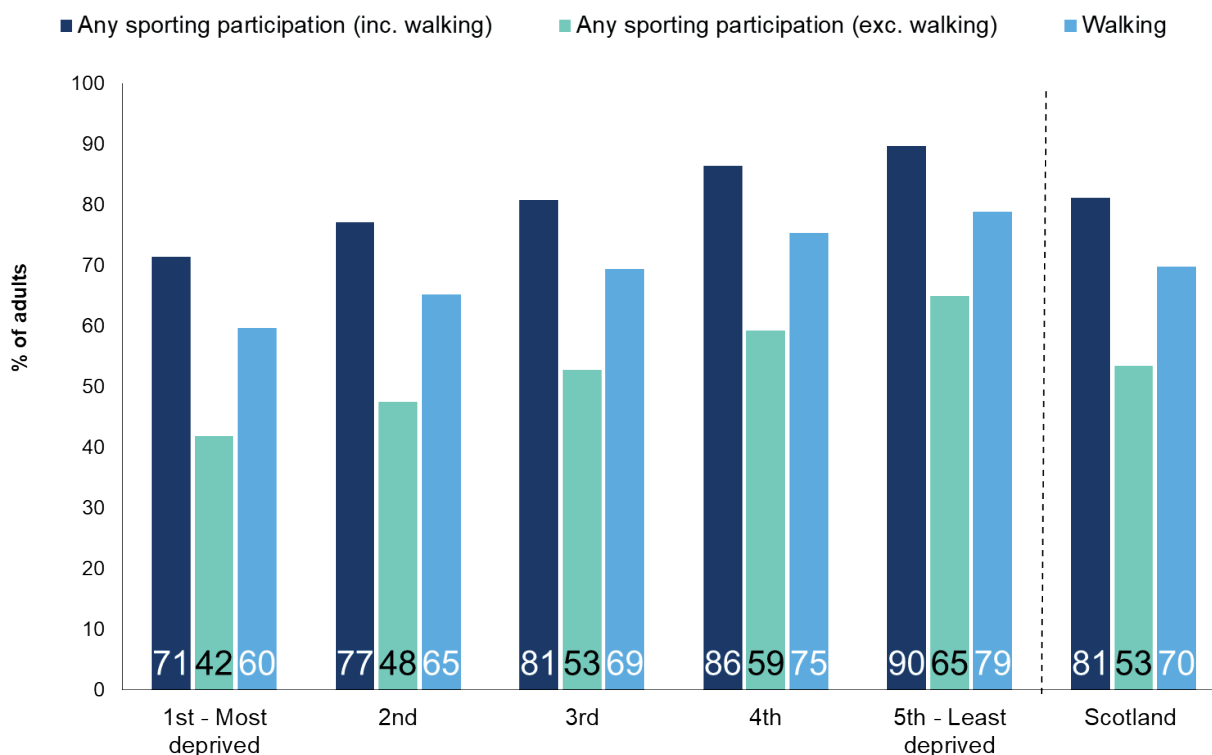


Table 8.3 shows participation in a range of different physical activity and sports by SIMD. This indicates that **walking is the most popular activity irrespective of deprivation**; however those in the least deprived areas participated substantially more than those in the areas of highest deprivation.

A similarly unequal pattern of participation was observed for swimming, keep fit, running, cycling and golf, whereas levels of participation in football, snooker, bowls and dancing were broadly similar between areas of both high and low deprivation.

**Table 8.3: Participation in different types of physical activity and sport in the last four weeks by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation**

Percentage of adults, 2017 data (minimum base: 1,810)

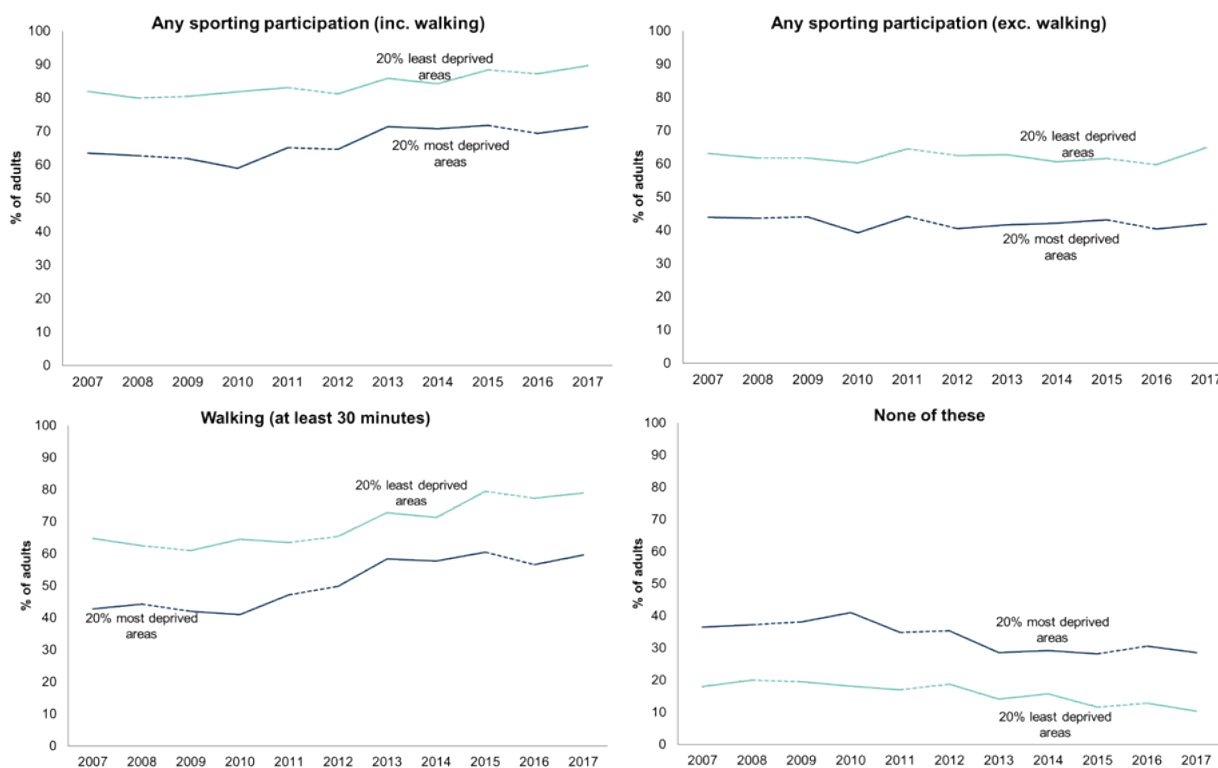
Adults	Most deprived 20%	2nd	3rd	4th	Least deprived 20%	Scotland
Walking (at least 30 minutes)	60	65	69	75	79	70
Swimming	16	15	18	19	22	18
Keep Fit /Aerobics	9	12	14	17	21	15
Multigym / Weight Training	9	13	14	17	20	15
Running / jogging	9	10	14	17	21	14
Cycling (at least 30 minutes)	7	8	13	16	19	12
Dancing	5	6	7	6	8	7
Football	7	8	8	7	7	7
Golf	3	4	5	6	9	5
Snooker / Billiards / Pool	6	6	6	5	5	6
Bowls	2	4	2	2	2	2
Other	6	6	8	10	11	8
None of these	29	23	19	14	10	19
Any sporting participation (inc. walking)	71	77	81	86	90	81
Any sporting participation (exc walking)	42	48	53	59	65	53
<i>Base (minimum)</i>	<i>1,820</i>	<i>1,960</i>	<i>2,140</i>	<i>2,080</i>	<i>1,810</i>	<i>9,810</i>

Columns add up to more than 100 per cent as multiple responses were allowed.

Figure 8.9 shows that the gap between participation in sport and physical activity in the 20 per cent most and the 20 per cent least deprived areas has been consistent over time. The gap was 18 percentage points in 2007 (63 per cent and 82 per cent respectively) and remains at the similar level in 2017 (71 per cent and 90 per cent respectively).

When walking is excluded the gap varied from between 18 and 23 percentage points. For recreational walking the gap narrowed over time from 22 percentage points in 2007 to 19 percentage points in 2017.

**Figure 8.9 Trends in participation in different types of physical activity and sport in the last four weeks by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation**  
 Percentage of adults, 2007 to 2017 data (minimum base: 9,810)



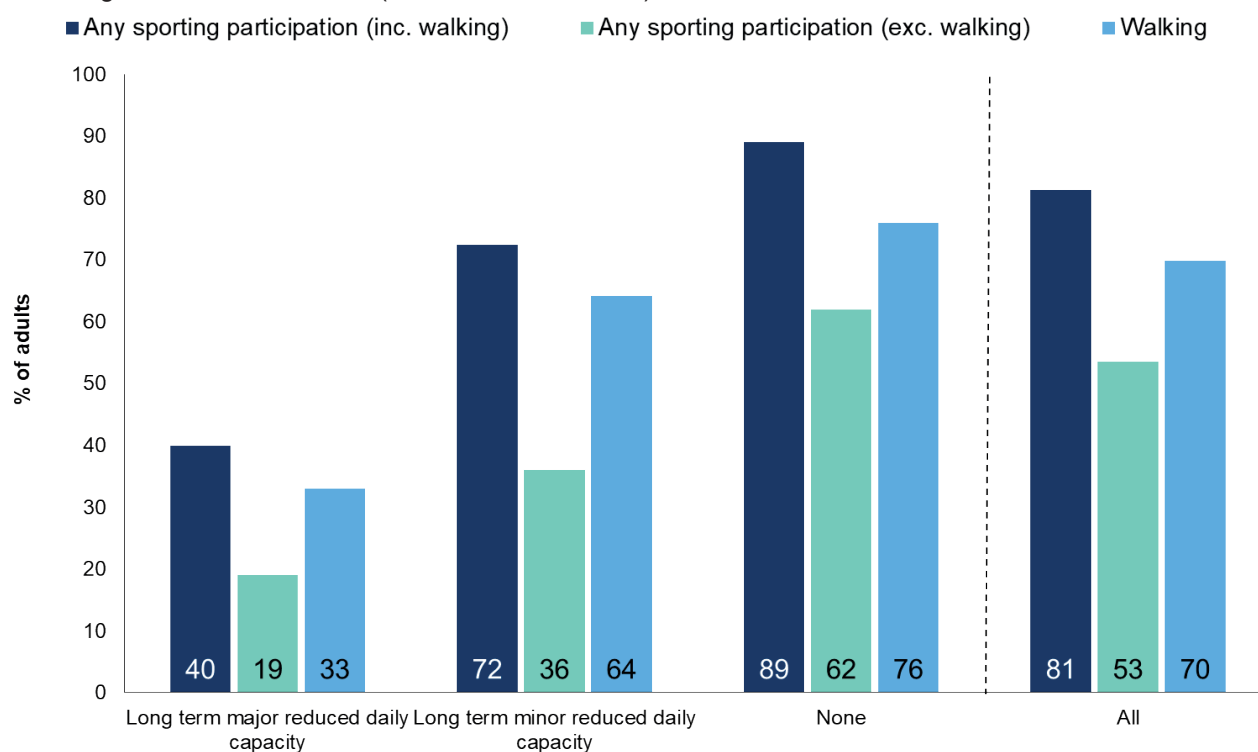
### 8.2.8 Participation in Physical Activity and Sport by Long-term Physical/Mental Health Condition

Figure 8.10 shows participation in physical activity and sport by long-term physical or mental health condition (lasting, or expected to last 12 months or more). **Participation was lowest for those who reported a long-term condition with major impact on day to day activities (40 per cent)**, compared to 89 per cent participation for those with no condition. For those where the condition caused minor reduced daily capacity, the participation rate was also lower, at 72 per cent.

There is also a marked difference in participation in recreational walking between those with (33 per cent) and without longer-term physical and mental health conditions (76 per cent).

**Figure 8.10: Participation in physical activity and sport in the last four weeks, by long-term limiting health condition**

Percentage of adults, 2017 data (minimum base: 1,270)



### 8.3 Satisfaction with Local Authority Cultural and Sports Services

Since 2007, questions have been asked on the frequency of use and satisfaction with local authority cultural and sport and leisure services. Table 8.4 presents the reported levels of satisfaction with local authority sports and leisure services in 2017. It shows that **levels of satisfaction amongst respondents** (which include non-users) **have been relatively constant since 2007** at around 50 per cent. There has been a small decrease in the proportion who expressed dissatisfaction, from around nine per cent between 2007 to around five per cent in 2017.

**Table 8.4: Satisfaction with local authority sport and leisure services**

Percentage of adults, 2007 to 2017 data

Adults	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Sports and leisure facilities</b>											
Very/fairly satisfied	50	50	48	49	51	51	53	52	51	50	51
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	11	9	9	9	9	7	9	12	14	14	15
Very/fairly dissatisfied	9	8	8	8	8	5	6	5	5	5	5
No opinion	30	32	35	35	33	36	33	31	30	31	29
<b>Base</b>	<b>10,220</b>	<b>9,240</b>	<b>9,710</b>	<b>9,020</b>	<b>9,660</b>	<b>9,890</b>	<b>9,920</b>	<b>9,800</b>	<b>9,410</b>	<b>9,640</b>	<b>9,810</b>

Table 8.5 shows levels of satisfaction with local authority sports and leisure services, as above, but **only** amongst **adults who have used these services in the past year. In 2017, a large majority were very or fairly satisfied** (86 per cent). This has been stable since 2011 but represents **an increase compared to 2007** (82 per cent).

**Table 8.5: Satisfaction with local authority culture and sport and leisure services (service users within the past 12 months only)**

Percentage of adults, 2007 to 2017 data

Adults	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Sports and leisure facilities</b>											
Very/fairly satisfied	82	83	82	82	85	88	88	87	86	87	86
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	7	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	6	5	6
Very/fairly dissatisfied	10	9	10	9	8	7	6	7	7	7	6
No opinion	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2
<i>Base</i>	<i>3,650</i>	<i>3,210</i>	<i>3,270</i>	<i>3,140</i>	<i>3,230</i>	<i>3,400</i>	<i>3,450</i>	<i>3,390</i>	<i>3,230</i>	<i>3,200</i>	<i>3,350</i>