

Equality in Sport

Learning notes



sportscotland
the national agency for sport

Putting sport first

Contents

1. Disability and sport
2. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people and sport
3. Gender reassignment and sport
4. Women in sport
5. Race and sport
6. Older people and sport
7. Religion/belief and sport

About these learning notes

sportscotland and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published a report into equality in Scottish sport. The report looks at who currently participates in sport, the barriers to participation, and suggests potential solutions and can be found [here](#).

The 'Equality and Sport Research' report was commissioned and managed by **sportscotland**, funded by the EHRC, supported by the Scottish Government, and conducted by Research Scotland. This is a resource for people to learn about equality which aims to help organisations across the sport sector drive improvement.

The report found that awareness of equalities in the sporting sector has significantly increased in recent years and also summarises the key challenges facing the sector. Women, people with disabilities, Pakistani adults, and people of Muslim faith are all less likely to take part in sport, while less information was available about sport and sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnerships.

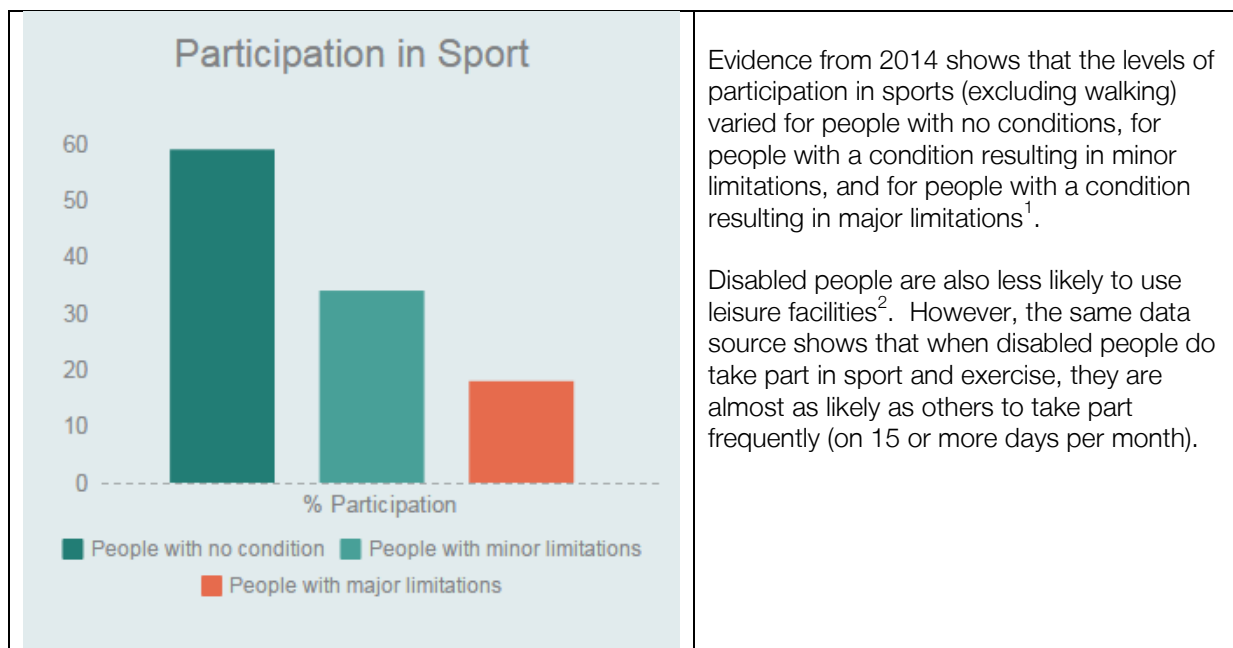
It also identified a number of key themes which can affect participation: negative experiences of PE, concerns about self-esteem and body confidence, the attitudes of others and the influence of family and peers, as well as issues relating to facilities, opportunities, and pathways.

This series of learning notes have been developed based on the findings of research. This research involved a review of relevant literature, surveys and discussion groups with people working in the sporting system in Scotland, and discussions with people with protected characteristics.

1. Disability and sport

What are the important issues?

Disabled people in Scotland are much less likely than non disabled people to participate in sport.



Low participation in sports by disabled people is important because it can:

- limit disabled people's opportunities to pursue a healthy lifestyle;
- limit the positive portrayal of disabled people;
- prevent sports organisations from drawing on the expertise and custom of disabled people;
- contribute to the isolation of disabled people; and
- discourage inclusion and diversity in the community.

What do we know about the problem?

Barriers to participation

There can be a range of barriers to disabled people taking part in sport. Literature emphasises that it is crucial to understand that disabled people are individuals, and have a range of different experiences. However, there can be some commonly experienced barriers which can impact on disabled people's participation in sports.

1. Attitudes

Negative attitudes and stereotypes can hinder some disabled people from participating in sport. There is a strong body of literature suggesting that attitudes can be a major barrier. This includes the attitudes of disabled people themselves, of those planning and delivering sports, and of other sports participants.

¹ Active Scotland Outcomes: Indicator Equality Analysis, Scottish Government, 2015

² As above, Scottish Government, 2015

Literature suggests that disabled people themselves may feel self-conscious, have low levels of confidence or fear of failure in relation to sports. Some suggest that this is strongly influenced by experiences at school³. Others suggest that the strong focus on physical perfection in sports can make those who do not feel physically perfect feel inadequate⁴.

However, there is also strong evidence that sport is very important to disabled people. For example, the Disabled People's Lifestyle Survey in England in 2013 found that disabled people said that keeping healthy and having time for hobbies and interests were among the most important things to them.

2. Accessibility

Physical accessibility and inclusion can also be issues. UK wide research⁵ has found that only one in four clubs thinks it has suitable facilities for disabled people to participate, suitably trained staff, and appropriate equipment. This indicates that three quarters of clubs need some form of additional support.

Some clubs may believe that they need specialised equipment to allow disabled people to take part in their sport, when in reality, some simple adaptations to the equipment they already have could be enough. Other barriers can include equipment, health and safety and support for disabled people.

There is a range of guidance on physical accessibility in sports facilities, largely focused on organisations in England. The Equality and Human Rights Commission strongly supports the Private Member's Bill currently under discussion, to require sports bodies to comply with 'Accessible Stadia' guidelines published by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority.

3. Pathways

Another important barrier is pathways into sport for disabled people - from school to community and onto competitive sport. Some popular sports such as wheelchair basketball have a higher profile and pathways are clearer. Scottish Disability Sport is working to ensure networks of opportunities for 13 sports, linked across local, regional and national level. But other areas are not always clear. This means that people can 'fall out of sport' where there are no suitable or known opportunities for them⁶.

Sporting system issues

1. Coaching and volunteering

There is some evidence that disabled people are under represented in the coaching workforce. Research showed that eight per cent of coaches in the UK are disabled, which is significantly below the estimated 15 per cent disabled population across the UK⁷. The research also highlighted falling proportions of disabled coaches, from 10 per cent in 2006 to eight per cent in 2008.

More recent evidence from Scotland highlights that people with long term conditions engage in volunteering in sports and activities less than those without conditions (3% compared with 5%)⁸. However, because of the small numbers involved it is important to treat these figures with caution.

With this gap in coaching representation, literature highlights concern about the skills, confidence and experience of coaches to work with and support disabled people. There is a significant body of guidance for coaches on how to be inclusive, and how to coach people in different

³ Sport and People with a Disability: Aiming at Social Inclusion, sportscotland, 2001

⁴ Perceptions of Disability and their Impact Upon Involvement in Sport for People with Disabilities at all Levels, Ian Brittain, 2004

⁵ Olympic and Paralympic Games Legacy Survey, Sport and Recreation Alliance, 2013

⁶ Solution Series 6, ILiS, 2014

⁷ Sports Coaching in the UK III, Sports Coach UK, 2011

⁸ Active Scotland Outcomes: Indicator Equality Analysis, Scottish Government, 2015

settings or with different impairments. However, many sports providers lack the confidence or experience to support disabled people, or to provide 'all inclusive' mixed opportunities⁹.

2. **Media coverage**

Media coverage can also have an impact on attitudes, aspirations and behaviours. However, research has shown that despite coverage of Paralympic competitions, sports clubs are not seeing increased uptake among disabled people as a result. Research¹⁰ found that only one in ten sports clubs saw an increase.

What can we do about it?

1. **Listen to disabled people**

It is vital to understand lifestyles of disabled people in relation to sport, listen to disabled people and involve them in the development of opportunities. Remember that everyone is an individual, and will have different preferences.

2. **Train and educate those working in sport**

Training and education, both on physical activity and disabled equality is essential. It should be delivered to the right people, at the right time and has the potential to address many of the issues and raise awareness of access, attitudes and assumptions. It can help if disabled people's organisations are involved in delivering this training.

3. **Build inclusive clubs**

Clubs are often the first point of contact, so disabled people need to know that clubs value their membership¹¹. Clubs can include disabled people in a variety of ways. Some clubs run fully inclusive sessions which include all its members. Other clubs have bespoke groups and sessions for disabled people, but they are still delivered within the main club structure. These both benefit disabled people to enjoy sport as much as non-disabled people.

4. **Profile disabled people's participation**

It is important to show disabled people participating in non-elite and non-competitive sports. Make sure that communications reflect a diverse range of images, and that the successes of disabled people are recognised and celebrated.

What is already happening?

There is lots of good work already happening. Here are just some examples.

Example

Trust Rugby International RFC is Scotland's first registered unified rugby club. This is where disabled players train and play in the same team as non-disabled players. TRI has worked closely with health promotion teams to build links and referral arrangements with relevant organisations. TRI is also working in partnership with Scotland Rugby League to support and develop a wheelchair rugby league. And it is working with communities to create a series of taster sessions to give participants the chance to experience the game.¹²

⁹ Active Together, English Federation of Disability Sport, 2014

¹⁰ Olympic and Paralympic Games Legacy Survey, Sport and Recreation Alliance, 2013

¹¹ Report of the Sport and Recreation Alliance's Sports Club Survey, English Federation of Disability Sport, 2013

¹² <http://www.trusrugby.com/#!wheelchair-rugby-league/c1feo>

Example

The Royal Caledonian Curling Club has worked to ensure that everyone, regardless of any impairment, can take part in curling. It has appointed a development manager who has a specific remit for disability curling (among other responsibilities) and has developed coach education modules for players with a visual impairment, deaf players and wheelchair users. It has also introduced wheelchair taster sessions and has developed a competition for all curlers, which emphasises inclusion. Training for coaches has been a key success factor of this work.¹³

Example

The English Cricket Board was one of the first sports governing bodies to introduce its own cricket specific disability training course. It has a dedicated disability cricket contact. It has also proactively offered cricket to disabled people in schools. It promotes the concept of inclusive clubs, with support provided. It has a target of having one inclusive club in every area by 2017. It stresses that clubs need to take time to think about what makes their club welcoming to disabled people.

Find out more...

Useful sources for finding out more include:

- Scottish Disability Sport - <http://www.scottishdisabilitysport.com/sds/>
- a [report by a Think Tank led by ILiS](#) (Independent Living in Scotland) into disabled people's equal participation in sport¹⁴;
- the documents referenced throughout this Learning Note – as footnotes; and
- the full research report on equality in sport, produced for **sportscotland** in 2015.

¹³ **sportscotland** Equality in Practice Guide, **sportscotland**, 2015

¹⁴ The Solutions Series, 'On your Marks...disabled people's equal participation in sport', The Independent Living in Scotland project, 2014

2. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people and sport

What are the important issues?

There is no official data on the total number of people in Scotland who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Estimates range from one to seven per cent. This makes it very difficult to explore equality issues in sport – and in many other areas - for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Scotland.

Participation in sports

Data on sports participation in Scotland¹⁵ indicates that lesbian, gay and bisexual participants are not significantly different from heterosexuals in activity levels. But, it is expected that many people do not identify themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual within national surveys – for example, due to concern about how this information may be used, or due to not being ‘out’ in all aspects of their lives. This means that this survey data is likely to reflect the experiences of those who are ‘out’, more than those who are not ‘out’.

More focused, qualitative research with a small number of people in Scotland¹⁶ has found that while most of those lesbian, gay and bisexual people have had positive experiences of sport, there are key barriers to participation including:

- homophobia;
- previous negative experiences of sport, particularly in school;
- lack of positive role models; and
- lack of knowledge of what is available.

Working, volunteering and coaching in sports

There is little evidence about the number of lesbian, gay or bisexual people working, volunteering, coaching or in decision making roles within sport. There are gaps in information about employment, coaching and leadership within sport for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Lack of data and evidence can mean that issues remain hidden.

What do we know about the problem?

There can be a range of barriers to lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people taking part in sport, including:

1. Homophobia

Homophobia (or fear of homophobia) is one of the key barriers facing LGB people in participating in sport. This is evidenced through a wide range of research undertaken both in Scotland and in other parts of the UK.

- **sportscotland** conducted a thorough investigation of the literature surrounding participation of LGB people in sports and found that homophobia was a significant issue in sport in Scotland¹⁷.
- The Equality Network researched LGB people’s participation in sport and found that homophobic and bi-phobic bullying was a major problem. Its survey results showed that 79 per cent of participants felt there was a problem with homophobia in sport¹⁸.

¹⁵ Analysed in Active Scotland Outcomes: Indicator Equality Analysis, Scottish Government, 2015

¹⁶ <http://www.equality-network.org/our-work/policyandcampaign/out-for-sport/the-facts/>

¹⁷ A Review of Sexual Orientation in Sport, **sportscotland** research report no 114. A research study for **sportscotland**, Sport Northern Ireland, Sport England and UK Sport by Celia Brackenridge, Pam Alldred, Ali Jarvis, Katie Maddocks and Ian Rivers, Centre for Youth Sport and Athlete Welfare, Brunel University, December 2008.

¹⁸ Out for Sport, Tackling homophobia and transphobia in sport, Equality Network, June 2012.

- Research carried out by Stonewall included an online survey of over 2,000 football fans. The results showed that LGB abuse was “all too common” and almost always went unchallenged. Fans believed that it was this abuse, from fans, players and teammates that deterred gay people from playing football and created a culture of fear where gay players felt it was unsafe to come out¹⁹.
- Research with LGB people in Wales identified that over half of those responding to a survey would be more likely to participate in club sport if other members were LGB, or if the club was inclusive of LGB people or LGB friendly²⁰.

2. Experiences at school

School sports also play an important role in influencing attitudes towards sport among LGB people²¹. A range of research shows that lesbian, gay and bisexual people can be put off participating in sport because of their experiences at school²²²³.

3. Lack of positive role models

There are some openly LGB elite athletes, particularly within women’s sport.²⁴ However, the numbers are small. During the 2012 Olympic Games there were only 23 ‘out’ gay participating athletes, and only one of these was from the UK²⁵.

Research undertaken by Stonewall, focusing on football, found that:

- three in five fans believed anti-gay abuse from fans dissuaded gay professional players from coming out
- one in four fans believed anti-gay abuse from team mates contributed to there being no openly gay players in football

Example

Thomas Hitzlsperger is a former Aston Villa player who revealed he was gay after his retirement from premier league football.

“I’m coming out about my homosexuality because I want to move the discussion about homosexuality among professional sportspeople forwards.”

The BBC reported in January 2014 that he was the most prominent footballer to publicly reveal his homosexuality. The BBC noted that examples of out gay footballers were ‘few and far between’, and that the culture of football needed to change to encourage more players to come out, while still playing premier league football.²⁶

What can we do about it?

1. Let everyone know you are committed to inclusion

It is vital that people understand that your organisation or group is inclusive, safe and committed to ensuring that everyone can be involved. This applies to opportunities to participate, volunteer

¹⁹ Leagues Behind – Football’s Failure to tackle anti-gay abuse, Stonewall,

²⁰ Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) People in Sport: Understanding LGB sports participation in Wales, Stonewall Wales, December 2012

²¹ Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) People in Sport: Understanding LGB sports participation in Wales, Stonewall Wales, December 2012

²² Out for Sport, Tackling homophobia and transphobia in sport, Equality Network, June 2012.

²³ Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) People in Sport: Understanding LGB sports participation in Wales, December 2012, Stonewall

²⁴ Out for Sport, Tackling homophobia and transphobia in sport, Equality Network, June 2012.

²⁵ Including LGBT young people in sport – a guide, LGBT Youth North West, with support from Pride Sports

²⁶ Including LGBT young people in sport – a guide, LGBT Youth North West, with support from Pride Sports

or work in sport. It is important to proactively let people know your opportunities are inclusive, through stating this clearly on all relevant communications.

2. Build links

There are a range of LGB sports groups and clubs in Scotland. These are trusted groups, and can provide a valuable link in to other activities. To encourage people to take part in your activities, try linking to existing LGB sports groups and clubs – through tasters, joint events, joint training sessions or other opportunities. Use LGB media to promote opportunities, and support and attend LGB sporting events. This will also help people to know that you are taking a proactive approach to providing inclusive opportunities.

3. Deal with negative behaviours

Homophobia (and fear of homophobia) is one of the strongest barriers to participation for LGB people. It is important to have clear, enforced policies and procedures on bullying and harassment which specifically mention dealing with harassment related to sexual orientation, and make sure that everybody knows about these.

4. Raise awareness

There are gaps in the evidence base around participation of LGB people in sport, and people don't always talk about the problems they experience. It is important that people planning, delivering and taking decisions in sport understand the problems and barriers that LGB people can experience. Training and awareness raising work is essential.

5. Showcase good work

Tell people about what has worked in getting LGB people involved in sport – and what hasn't. This will help build practice in Scotland, and will help people to realise that groups and organisations are working hard to involve LGB people. The more people talk about their experiences and share these, the more confident people will feel about becoming involved and coming out in the sports environment.

6. Take a leadership role

Governing bodies and organisations like **sportscotland** can play a key role through visible commitments to tackling homophobia in sport; work with the media to improve coverage of LGB issues in sport, train officials and stewards to identify and challenge homophobic language and support the creation of LGB sports clubs where there is interest.

7. Gather information

One of the key challenges in tackling inequalities for LGB people in sport is the lack of data about sports participation and involvement. Every group and organisation can play a role in helping to build the bank of evidence in this field, through building trust, talking to people about their experiences and gathering equality monitoring information (anonymously).

What is already happening?

There is lots of good work already happening.

The Scottish LGBT Sports Charter

In May 2015, the Scottish LGBT Sports Charter was launched in Glasgow. The charter was developed in consultation with sports governing bodies (SGBs), other sports stakeholders and LGBT people.²⁷ It has five principles, focusing on actively involving and supporting LGBT people, developing inclusive policies and practices, and creating a positive and welcoming sporting environment. It is accompanied by a practical guidance document on how to put these principles into action.

²⁷ <http://www.equality-network.org/sports-charter/>

LGB involvement in squash and racketball

Scottish Squash and Racketball mapped the demographics of the Scottish population, and used 'market segmentation' techniques to identify its target audiences. Its website now includes specific pages targeted at players and potential players from a variety of backgrounds. It developed information for lesbian, gay and bisexual participants, and used the high profile player Jonathan McBride as a role model to help positively promote the sports to LGB people. This web page also carries clear links to LGB organisations that support sport in Scotland. This approach required a clear commitment from a successful gay player to use his status and profile to positively promote squash and racketball to LGB people.

Pride House

LEAP Sports hosted a 'Pride House' in Glasgow city centre during the Commonwealth Games of 2014. A 'Pride House' is a venue to welcome LGBT athletes, fans and others during international sporting events. It was a welcoming place to view the competitions, to enjoy the event but also to learn about sexual orientation and homophobia in sport and to build relations with mainstream sport.

The first Pride House was organised for the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games in Vancouver and Whistler, and others have since followed. The aim of the Pride House approach is to help break down some of the social and personal barriers which discourage LGBT people from participating in sports.²⁸

Find out more...

Useful sources for finding out more include:

- the Scottish LGBT Sports Charter and Guidance - <http://www.equality-network.org/sports-charter/>
- the documents referenced throughout this Learning Note – as footnotes; and
- the full research report on equality in sport, produced for **sportscotland** in 2015.

²⁸ www.pridehouseglasgow.co.uk

3. Gender reassignment and sport

About this learning note

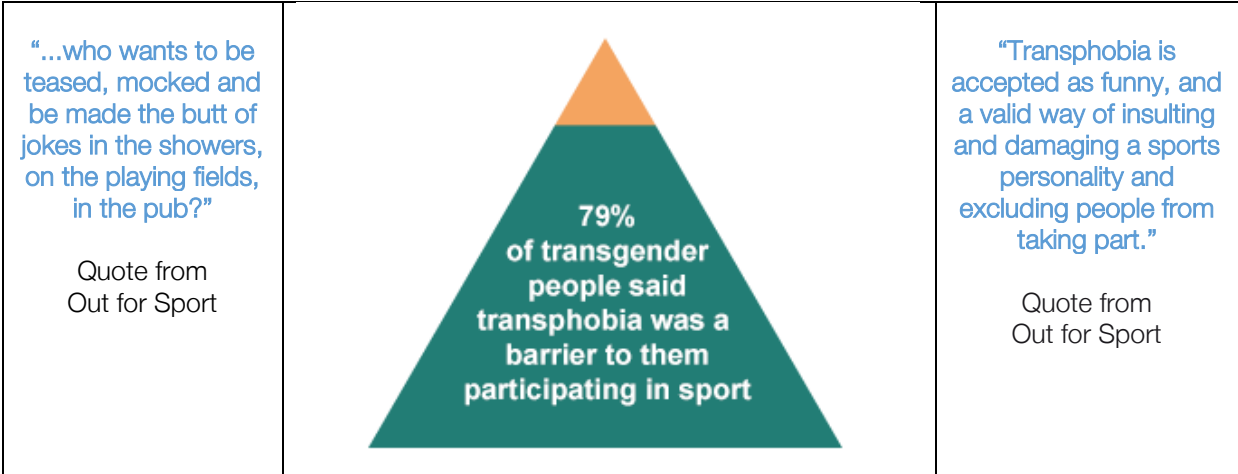
Of particular relevance to this learning note, one discussion group was held with transgender people with experience of sports participation in Scotland. This learning note has been developed to provide a broad overview of the important issues involved in gender reassignment in sport, to provide an introduction to the topic. This approach has been taken based on feedback from the research with people in the sporting system in Scotland.

What are the important issues?

There is no data available on the participation of people who have or are undergoing gender reassignment in sport in Scotland. None of the existing household surveys ask about transgender status, meaning that the number of people who are transgender or are going through gender reassignment is not known nationally.

Barriers

- 1. **Transphobia**
There has been research into transgender people’s participation in sport. The Equality Network conducted research²⁹ specifically into transgender participation in sport and found that transphobic bullying is a major problem.



Almost everyone who was involved in the research had experienced or witnessed verbal abuse while participating in or spectating at sports events. More than one in ten had experienced or witnessed physical abuse. In addition, seven per cent said they had experienced or witnessed other forms of sexual assault.

²⁹Out for Sport, Tackling transphobia in sport, Equality Network, June 2012.

2. Gendered sports

Many competitive sports have separate categories for men and women. This can create barriers for transgender sports participants.

The Gender Recognition Act 2004 created a process to enable transgender people to get their UK birth certificates and legal gender changed. Section 19 of the Act relates to sport. The Act makes clear that the participation of transgender people in competitive sporting events may be legitimately restricted in order to ensure fair competition and the safety of competitors. This only relates to people participating in the sport as competitors.

The Sports Council Equality Group has recently jointly funded the development of guidance for national governing bodies to help them develop inclusive policies to enable transgender people to participate fully in local and competitive sports.³⁰ This guidance includes a ten point plan for inclusion, including a public commitment to inclusion of transgender people; leadership at the highest level in the organisation; building relationships with transgender people and associated organisations; having clear codes of conducts and policies; and staff training.

Example

Gabrielle Ludwig is a transgender basketball player in California. She is believed to be the first transgender person ever to play community college basketball in the United States. She began living as a woman in 2007. She was the subject of a national media 'frenzy' and transphobia from spectators. Critics also complained that Ludwig's height and weight gave her an unfair advantage.³¹

"My first game, I sucked... I was so nervous... There were reporters everywhere and in my face. Photographers would zoom in on things that were more masculine on my features or on my hands to sensationalize something."

3. Lack of appropriate facilities and changing rooms

Another key barrier is the lack of changing and leisure facilities which meet the needs of transgender people. Without gender-neutral changing facilities, private showers and toilets, transgender people can find it difficult to participate in sports³²

What is already happening?

The Scottish LGBT Sports Charter

In May 2015, the Scottish LGBT Sports Charter was launched in Glasgow. The charter was developed in consultation with sports governing bodies (SGBs), other sports stakeholders and LGBT people³³. It has five principles, focusing on actively involving and supporting LGBT people, developing inclusive policies and practices, and creating a positive and welcoming sporting environment. It is accompanied by a practical guidance document on how to put these principles into action.

³⁰ Equality at [sportscotland](http://sportscotland.org.uk), Mainstreaming the Equality Act 2010 duties, 2011

³¹ <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Unique-challenges-for-transgender-player-4319130.php>

³² Transgender and Intersex Sports Provision at the University of Cambridge, 2013

³³ <http://www.equality-network.org/sports-charter/>

Taurus Club, Manchester

Manchester Concord, a transgender social group have paid to have a changing facility specifically for transgender people installed in one of the local gay-friendly bars.³⁴

Glenogle Swim Centre

In 2010, the LGBT centre in Edinburgh consulted with transgender people about gaps in services and found that there was an interest in transgender specific swimming sessions. Edinburgh Leisure agreed to provide sessions at Glenogle Swim Centre specifically for the transgender community and closed to the general public. Staff at the swimming pool were trained in transgender awareness before the sessions. The sessions have taken place twice a month since July 2010 and are well attended with participants travelling some distances to participate.³⁵

“I hadn’t been swimming for nearly 10 years and this helped me reconnect with the experience. It has improved my confidence and I’ve even managed to use some hotel pools. Without the trans swimming sessions, I couldn’t possibly have tried this.”

Find out more...

Useful sources for finding out more include:

- the Scottish LGBT Sports Charter and Guidance - <http://www.equality-network.org/sports-charter/>
- the documents referenced throughout this Learning Note – as footnotes; and
- the full research report on equality in sport, produced for **sportscotland** in 2015.

³⁴ <http://www.manchesterconcord.org.uk/taurus.htm>

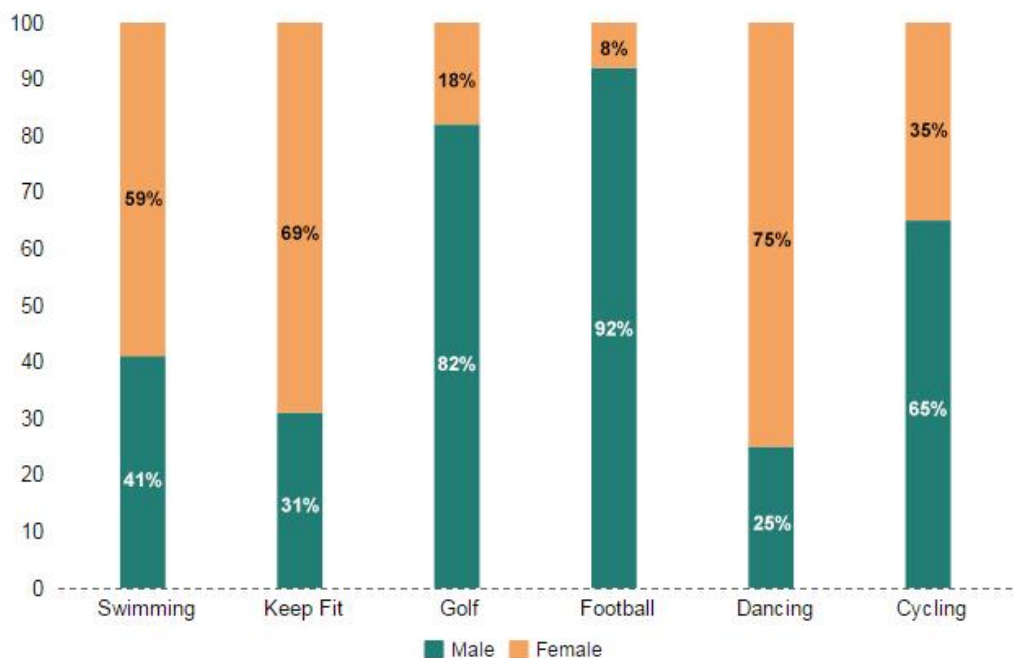
³⁵ Out For Sport, Tackling Transphobia in sport, Equality Network, 2012

4. Women in sport

What are the important issues?

There is a lot of research into women's participation in sport. Evidence shows that women don't take part in sports as much as men. For example, Scottish evidence from 2014³⁶ shows that more men (57%) than women (46%) reported taking part in sport and exercise in the past four weeks. The same evidence shows that as girls move into their teenage years, sports participation reduces and stays lower than boys'. And many different research studies across the UK show persistently low rates of women and girls participation in sports³⁷.

Men and women also often participate in different sports. The graph below shows the balance between men and women for those participating in a range of sports over a four week period in 2014, in Scotland³⁸.



These lower participation rates are important for equality in sport. But they are also important because participation in sport can have a positive impact for women and girls on health and wellbeing, self esteem and empowerment, social inclusion and integration, and opportunities to develop leadership and other skills.

What do we know about the problem?

Barriers to participation

There can be a range of barriers to women and girls taking part in sport:

1. Experiences of PE

³⁶ Active Scotland Outcomes: Indicator Equality Analysis, Scottish Government, 2015

³⁷ House of Commons, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, Women and Sport, First Report of 2014/15, July 2014

³⁸ Scottish Household Survey, 2014

Research has consistently demonstrated that girls are less positive about their school experiences of physical education than boys. Schools are where most girls and young women form their relationships with sport, and any negative experiences here can influence their involvement in sport over time.³⁹ PE and school sports tend to meet the needs of 'sporty' girls, but are often unappealing to less active girls.⁴⁰ There can be issues around lack of choice and a strong focus on competition.

Interestingly, experiences of opportunities and facilities in later life are not so different between men and women. Data from 2014 shows that there were no differences between men and women in either use of or levels of satisfaction with local authority sports and leisure facilities⁴¹. This highlights the importance of encouraging people at an early stage.

2. **Self esteem, body confidence and peers**

Many girls are put off participation in sport due to concerns about managing their appearance, and a growing lack of confidence. Research shows that while girls who feel self-conscious are more likely to feel they aren't good at sport and to not want to participate, girls reported feeling less self-conscious if they participated with a friend.⁴² Research shows that some girls reduce their sporting activity as they are anxious about being rejected from their peer groups if others are not involved.⁴³

However, while body confidence can be a barrier, weight management can also be a real motivation factor for girls taking part in sport. And while the attitudes of friends can be a barrier, they can also be an enabler if sport is undertaken together.

3. **Opportunities**

Discussion with pregnant women undertaken as part of this research found that the main barrier to participation was lack of opportunities – with many feeling pregnant women were encouraged towards more sedentary or gentle sporting opportunities.

4. **Sporting system issues**

Equality in sport is not just about participation. There are wider structural issues about how the sporting system in Scotland supports both women and men to participate. Most evidence about these inequalities is at a UK wide level. There are issues around:

- availability of facilities for training and playing sport;
- the variety of sports on offer to girls at school;
- finance – including sponsorship and prize money;
- media coverage; and
- female role models – as elite sportswomen, coaches and managers⁴⁴.

³⁹ House of Commons, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, Women and Sport, First Report of Session 2014-2015, July 2014

⁴⁰ Getting Girls Active, Developing inspiring PE and sport through research and innovation, Youth Sport trust, Girls Active

⁴¹ Active Scotland Outcomes: Indicator Equality Analysis, Scottish Government, 2015

⁴² Increasing demand for sport and physical activity for adolescent girls in Scotland, **sportscotland**, 2003

⁴³ Girls Participation in physical activities and sport, World Health Organisation,

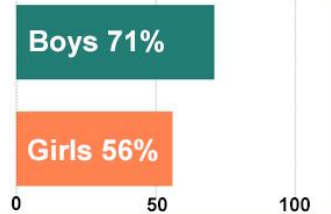
⁴⁴ House of Commons, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, Women and Sport, First Report of Session 2014-2015, July 2014

Taking part in sport...

(Source: 2014 Scottish Household Survey)



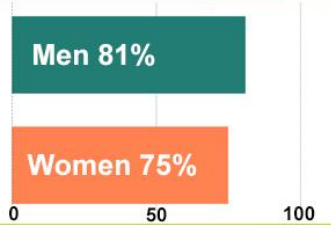
The gap in sports participation begins at around 13 to 15 years old



In Scotland, more men than women take part in sport and exercise



When walking is included, this gap narrows a little



"It's such a chauvinistic sport, I know some of the owners wanted to kick me off. I want to say to everyone else, get stuffed, because women can do anything and we can beat the world."
(Michelle Payne, Jockey)

"I've had a lot of hostility. When I first stocked up at Teddington they'd never had a female coach. There was one individual who might as well have had 'what the hell do you know?' stamped on his forehead."
Giselle Mather (London Irish Coach)



...coaching and leadership

(Source: Sports Coaching in the UK III, Sports Coach UK, 2011)

In the UK, 31% of coaches are women



A quarter of board members of Scottish Governing Bodies are women



18% of qualified coaches are women



Media coverage...

TV, radio and the newspapers play a central role in informing our knowledge, opinions and attitudes about women in sport. In turn, these attitudes influence participation in sport.



5% of sports coverage dedicated to women's sport



85% of elite sports women think that media coverage of women's sport is not adequate

What can we do about it?

- 1. Involve women**

If you are planning sports activity, you should firstly speak to women to find out about what they want and need. This means that you can explore potential barriers and negative experiences, and try to set up opportunities which meet people's needs.
- 2. Be flexible**

People like different things. Think about adapting the type of sport; style of sport; timing; venue; mix of participants; coaching style and volunteering opportunities.
- 3. Offer a range of opportunities**

You should promote and provide a choice of sport or activity - including contact, low-contact or non-contact sports; mixed or single-sex sports; team sports, double or single sports. Offering these different categories can help women to find the right sport for them to help increase participation.
- 4. Offer some single sex opportunities**

Offering single sex sports opportunities can help build confidence in sports participation. It can also be essential to ensure that ethnic minority women and women of a range of religions can participate in sport.
- 5. Add fun, fitness and social opportunities**

The atmosphere and style of opportunity is important. Many women enjoy a fun, sociable and less competitive style of sport. Having drop-in, casual and less competitive sports can encourage women and girls to take part in sports without feeling pressure or anxiety. This can help to fulfil the role of sport in offering wider benefits – around confidence, empowerment, information and skills.
- 6. Think about environments**

Women are less likely to be members of sports clubs, and some may feel that there is more of a focus on skills and competition within clubs. Thinking about sports activities in community centres, schools and other trusted venues may help to attract women to participate. Sports clubs can also think about their own cultures and environments, and how these could be adapted to attract more women.
- 7. Tackle unhelpful attitudes**

It is important that everyone involved in sports understands that stereotypes, prejudice and discriminatory behaviour are not acceptable. Clubs and organisations should have clear approaches for tackling these attitudes, and should proactively promote equality and diversity.
- 8. Support coaches, volunteers and decision makers.**

There are different ways to take part in sport. Supporting women to become involved as coaches, volunteers and decision makers in sport can provide role models to others, and help ensure positive decisions are made about sport in Scotland. This could involve working with women's organisations, schools, colleges and other organisations which have built up trust with women, to create links into leadership, coaching and decision making roles. Raising awareness of the opportunities available, and demonstrating that women can achieve well in these roles is an important first step.

What is already happening?

There is lots of good work already happening. Here are just some examples.

Cricket

Cricket Scotland wanted to focus on the participation of women and girls. It set up an indoor sixes tournament for women and girls, taking place in different locations across the country, and involving a mix of club, school and university sides. Key success factors include:

- providing opportunities to play all year round and therefore maximising opportunities for women and girls to take part;
- developing a welcoming atmosphere at events and building the feeling that everyone is helping each other;

making sure that people know anyone can take part – regardless of age, stage or ability; and limiting injuries in this environment through the use of a soft ball.

This example is from **sportscotland's** Equality in Practice Guide.⁴⁵ The guide also includes a range of other useful examples.

Communication

Practical guidance on helping women and girls to get active highlights the importance of good communication. Guidance suggests:

- using role models showing women happy and confident to be themselves;
- showing women that sport is a social thing, and it can be fun exercising with the girls, a partner or with the kids;
- emphasising the sense of personal achievement women can feel from having completed a session;
- talking about the health benefits of getting active - though they don't need to be the primary focus of your communications, unless you are targeting a specific audience with health issues.

This example is from Sport England's practical guidance - Helping Women and Girls to Get Active – A Practical Guide (2015)

Find out more...

Useful sources for finding out more include:

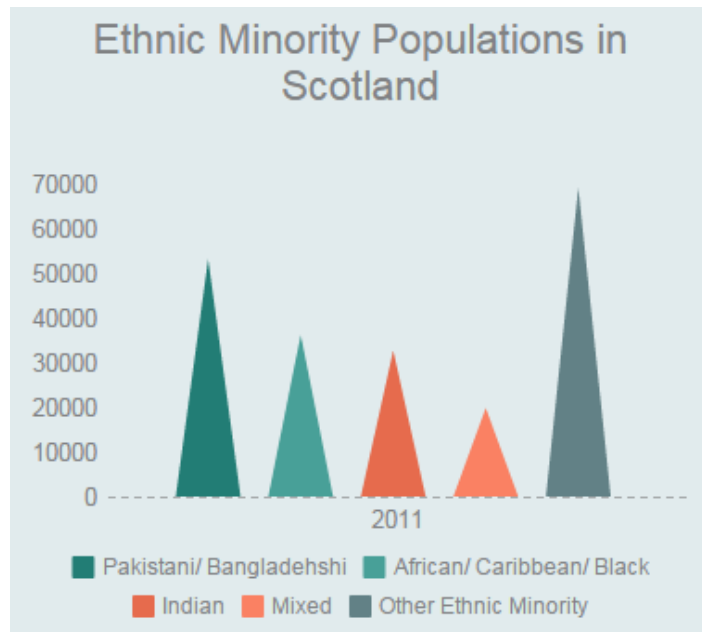
- Women In Sport – www.womeninsport.org
- the documents referenced throughout this Learning Note – as footnotes; and
- the full research report on equality in sport, produced for **sportscotland** in 2015.

⁴⁵ Equality in Practice Guide, **sportscotland**, 2015

5. Race and sport

What are the important issues?

The majority of Scotland's population is white, with 96 per cent identifying as white within the 2011 Census. Four per cent of the population identifies with a minority ethnic group. This is over 210,000 people in Scotland. Scotland's ethnic minority population is growing, having increased from just two per cent in 2001 to four per cent in 2011.



There is limited data about sports participation among ethnic minority people in Scotland. Because the size of ethnic minority populations in Scotland is small, this makes it hard to undertake robust analysis of participation in sport by ethnic group.

There is, however, some evidence of inequalities. Pakistani adults are least likely to participate in sport (30% compared to an average of 49%)⁴⁶. Recent research⁴⁷ also shows that while most ethnic groups in Scotland report better health than the 'white Scottish' ethnic group, older Pakistani (and Indian and Bangladeshi) women reported poor health, considerably worse than the older men within these groups.

There are no other ethnic groups which display significantly different levels of sports participation.

What do we know about the problem?

Barriers to participation

There is a range of research on the issues affecting ethnic minority people's involvement in sports. There is a clear intersection with religion, and many of the issues may be very similar to those explored within the separate religion and belief learning note.

1. Racism

⁴⁶ Active Scotland Outcomes: Indicator Equality Analysis, Scottish Government, 2015

⁴⁷ Which ethnic groups have the poorest health? Scottish Government, 2015

Racism can be a barrier to participation in sports⁴⁸. This can be because people have experienced discrimination in other aspects of their lives, including at school, at work or in the general public arena and expect that it might also occur within a sporting context. However, qualitative research has found evidence of racism, which had caused some participants to stop taking part in sport.

Recent incidents of racist abuse in the UK, often connected to football, have highlighted the fact that racism is a continuing problem. Social media has become both a tool for the spread of racist and abusive content within the sporting environment, and a potential means of combating such behaviour⁴⁹.

2. Time and family life

The amount of free time available to people from some ethnic groups can be a barrier. The Sports Participation and Ethnicity in England 1999/2000 survey⁵⁰ found that over 40 per cent of Indian, Pakistani, Black Caribbean and Black African women reported that home and family responsibilities prevented them from participating in some form of physical exercise. Work, school, childcare and other domestic duties are often stated as reasons preventing ethnic minority women from having sufficient leisure time to participate⁵¹.

The attitudes of ethnic minority parents towards their children's involvement in sporting activity has also been raised as one of the key reasons for low participation in sport⁵². Research has shown that parents of ethnic minority origin do not always recognise the value or worth of their children participating in sporting activities, when compared with academic achievement

3. Image

Research around ethnic minority participation in sports⁵³ found that self-image played a crucial role. Some research participants had stopped sports activity due to increased internal negative feelings of being seen by other women when getting changed and by men when exercising or attending a particular location. Research^{54,55} also found that different cultures have different ideals of image, which can affect how people – particularly women – feel about sports participation.

4. Support and coaching

Evidence from across the UK shows that only one per cent of qualified coaches are from an ethnic minority. Research by Sporting Equals⁵⁶ found that there was significant interest in coaching from ethnic minority people, but there were barriers, such as information, marketing and visibility of role models.

⁴⁸ Sport and Ethnic Minority Communities: Aiming at Social Inclusion, Scott Porter Research and Marketing Ltd, For sportscotland, May 2001

⁴⁹ House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, Racism in Football, Second Report of Session 2012-2013, Volume 1, September 2012

⁵⁰ Sports Participation and ethnicity in England, National Survey, 1999/2000, Rowe, N and Champion, R, as quoted in Exploring ethnicity and sports participation in Burton-on-Trent and Stoke-on-Trent, Dr Jamie Cleland, April 2009

⁵¹ Sport and Social Exclusion, Collins, M and Kay, T, 2003, as quoted in Exploring ethnicity and sports participation in Burton-on-Trent and Stoke-on-Trent, Dr Jamie Cleland, April 2009

⁵² Carroll, Bob and Hollinshead, G (1993) 'Ethnicity and conflict in physical education.' British Educational Research Journal, 19(1),59-76.

⁵³ Connecting Ethnicity, Gender and Physicality: Muslim Pakistani Women, Physical Activity and health, Wray, 2002

⁵⁴ Carroll, R., Ali, N and Azam. N. (2002) 'Promoting Physical Activity in South Asian Women Through 'Exercise on Prescription''. Health Technology Assessment. 6 (8): 1-99.

⁵⁵ Connecting Ethnicity, Gender and Physicality: Muslim Pakistani Women, Physical Activity and health, Wray, 2002

⁵⁶ INSIGHT, BME Coaching in Sport, Sporting Equals, December 2011

Rachel Yankey, Ghanaian Coach

Rachel is of Ghanaian descent and has made 115 appearances for the England Women's national football team and recently won the FA Cup, League Cup and Women's Super League with Arsenal ladies. She also works as a coach in schools, teaching football to children.

"I think it's important to be a role model both by being a professional footballer and also inspiring others through my work as a coach. I believe that sport helps communities build bridges and develop integration."

Rachel felt there was a strong need for female only courses as a lot of females don't feel comfortable in male orientated environments, particularly those girls from different culture or faith backgrounds. She also felt there was a need to promote the benefits of coaching and sport as a potential career option.

"Often BME communities don't realise the wider benefits of coaching and the importance of empathy when recruiting coaches who can relate to and inspire young people and eventually become role models."⁵⁷

What can we do about it?

- 1. Work with ethnic minority groups and organisations**
Working with trusted organisations which have strong links with ethnic minority communities is an important way of encouraging people into sport – as participants, employees and volunteers. You should try to work with and involve communities in planning, organising and delivering sporting activity. Take advice from people involved in ethnic minority organisations about how to ensure that links are made at all stages of the pathway, from casual participation into regular involvement.
- 2. Training and awareness raising**
Make sure that those planning and delivering sport understand the experiences and barriers faced by ethnic minority people in sports participation. This can be through training and awareness raising, often usefully delivered by ethnic minority organisations. Proactively working to recruit and train staff, volunteers or coaches from ethnic minority communities can help to enhance the skills within your workforce and develop positive role models.
- 3. Celebrate and promote positive role models**
Research has shown that celebrating successes of ethnic minority participants in sporting events can have a positive impact on involvement⁵⁸. Ethnic minority coaches and volunteers can also play an important role in encouraging participation and building relationships.
- 4. Tackle racism**
Make sure your organisation or group has a clear policy and procedure on tackling racism, which is enforced. Promote this policy clearly, so that everyone knows about it. Even if you believe that racism is not a problem in your sport, others may have different experiences, and stating that you have a clear policy and procedure can help tackle fear of racism, which is also a significant barrier.

⁵⁷ Rachel Yankey, quoted in BME Coaching in Sport, Sporting Equals, December 2011

⁵⁸ Carroll, Bob and Hollinshead, G (1993) 'Ethnicity and conflict in physical education.' British Educational Research Journal, 19(1),59-76.

What is already happening?

Example

The Scottish Ethnic Minority Sports Association (SEMSA) was established in 1990 in Glasgow. Since then, it has created and provided culturally sensitive sporting opportunities. There are weekly programmes of activities including football, women's football, kabaddi, cricket, badminton, and swimming.

SEMSA has worked in partnership with Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Life, Celtic and Rangers Football Clubs to host the UK Asian Football Championships in Glasgow. This event has been running for 15 years and helps to raise the profile of Asian people in football at all levels of the game.⁵⁹

Example

The Scottish Football Association's football equity project was set up in 2012, in partnership with BEMIS Scotland. It aims to ensure more people from diverse communities have the chance to participate, develop and achieve their potential within Scottish football. The SFA recognised that young ethnic minority women were not actively engaged in football. The team ran a survey and consultations to understand the potential barriers to participation. Girls from ethnic minority backgrounds highlighted cultural and religious reasons – such as needing to play in gender segregated teams, and away from the view of men. As part of the initiative, a female only participation centre was launched. The initiative also provides a pathway for girls who want to develop further, either as players or as coaches. Having ethnic minority female role models as coaches has been a key success factor, particularly in developing relationships with parents.

Example

In Newham, Asian women were engaged in a 'Fit as a Fiddle' programme initially through a cookery course. They were then invited to participate in Nordic Walking. Engaging the group in healthy eating and cooking first was important to building trust, and helped to encourage higher levels of participation. One of the women received training as a walk leader, and also acted as a translator. This role was developed gradually, as initially the walk leader would not have had the confidence to take on this role. However, she is now able to lead a small group, and Nordic walking has been one of the most popular activities.⁶⁰

Find out more.....

Useful sources for finding out more include:

- specific research focused on ethnic minority people's involvement in sport, commissioned by **sportscotland** in 2001 – which included useful examples <http://www.sportscotland.org.uk/Documents/Resources/SportandMinorityEthnicCommunitiesAimingatSocialInclusion.pdf>;
- the documents referenced throughout this Learning Note – as footnotes; and
- the full research report on equality in sport, produced for **sportscotland** in 2015.

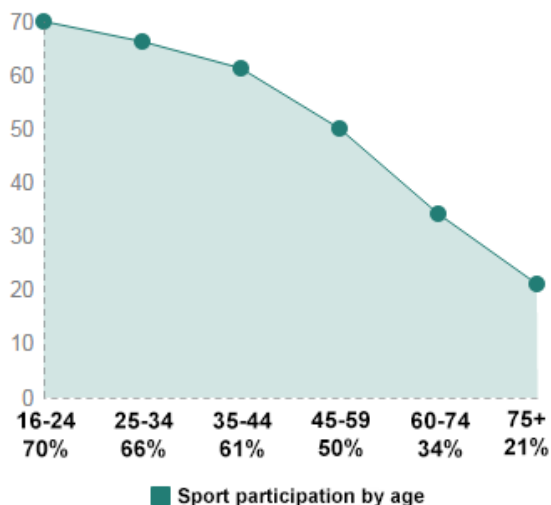
⁵⁹ <http://www.semsa.org.uk>

⁶⁰ Fit as a Fiddle: Engaging faith and BME communities in activities for wellbeing (2013)

6. Older people and sport

What are the important issues?

In adults, the 16 to 24 year old age group reports higher levels of sports participation (excluding walking) than other age groups. There is a clear drop off among those aged 45 and over, with rates of sports participation over the past four weeks in 2014 falling for these age groups.



However, there is evidence that physical activity (broader than sport) among those aged 65 and over is increasing each year. There is also evidence that older adults (up to the age of 74) are almost as likely as young people to walk for recreation⁶¹.

It is also important to be aware of trends by ethnic origin and gender. Recent research⁶² shows that while most ethnic groups in Scotland report better health than the 'white Scottish' ethnic group, older Pakistani women reported poor health, considerably worse than the older men within these groups. Pakistani adults are least likely to participate in sport (30% compared to an average of 49%)⁶³.

What do we know about the problem?

Barriers

Research⁶⁴ has revealed that there are complex individual, social and environmental barriers faced by older people who wish to participate more with sport and activity.

- Older people are more likely to have a limiting condition or disability. This means that many older people can face the same barriers as disabled people in sports participation. For more detail, see the separate learning note on disability and sport, produced within this series.

⁶¹ Active Scotland Outcomes: Indicator Equality Analysis, Scottish Government, 2015

⁶² Which ethnic groups have the poorest health? Scottish Government, 2015

⁶³ Active Scotland Outcomes: Indicator Equality Analysis, Scottish Government, 2015

⁶⁴ www.bhffactive.org.uk/files/502/49834_Evidence_Briefing_Adults_4.pdf

- Older people can have concerns about the safety of participation in sport, and the chances of being injured. Older people may have lost confidence in their ability to participate, and may require additional support to overcome this.
- Social support also plays an important motivational role in physical activity participation and can be influenced by friends, family, carers, health practitioners, and activity instructors. Trust, shared values and solidarity among neighbours is associated with higher levels of physical activity. Research⁶⁵ shows that older people who live alone have lower physical activity levels than individuals who are married.
- There can also be wider barriers around transport and fear of crime which may discourage older people from travelling to access exercise facilities.

Our research found that some older people felt less happy with the competitive element of sport as they aged. Some said that they only felt comfortable participating in sport for leisure purposes. Older people found they were looking for companionship and opportunities to socialise, rather than opportunities to play at a competitive level.

Our research also found that some older people found the cost of activities off putting and led to them reducing or stopping their sports activity.

“Sports clubs and groups can be very restrictive in terms of cost.”

(Older person, telephone interview)

However, compared with some other protected characteristics, there is comparatively little research into experiences of sport participation for older people in Scotland.

Sporting system issues

There is very little evidence about the age profile of those working, taking decisions, coaching or officiating in sport.

Evidence suggests that volunteering in the fields of activity and sport declines with age in Scotland. Among only those adults who do volunteer, 22 per cent of 16 to 24 year olds volunteer with sport or exercise (coaching or organising), falling to 16 per cent for those aged 60 plus⁶⁶.

There is a body of research and evidence around retirement ages for athletes and referees. For example, research exploring referee retirement ages found that organisations such as the SFA (Scottish Football Association) and FIFA used to have retirement ages for referees, but now use fitness tests to determine referee ability. European basketball and international ice hockey also use the fitness test approach to determine referee ability. However, the research suggested that some still have unwritten rules that referees should retire around the age of 50⁶⁷.

What can we do about it?

More research is needed to explore why certain older people maintain a new exercise activity while other older people decide to drop out quickly⁶⁸. However, there are some important lessons from existing research.

⁶⁵ www.bhfactive.org.uk/files/502/49834_Evidence_Briefing_Adults_4.pdf

⁶⁶ Active Scotland Outcomes: Indicator Equality Analysis, Scottish Government, 2015

⁶⁷ McArdle, D, Some Reflections on Age Discrimination, Referees' Retirement Ages and European Sports (Law), 2009

⁶⁸ [http://www.journalofphysiotherapy.com/article/S1836-9553\(14\)00080-0/abstract](http://www.journalofphysiotherapy.com/article/S1836-9553(14)00080-0/abstract)

1. **Emphasise the social aspect**
Presenting sports activities as opportunities for having fun, socialising and reducing isolation can help to connect with older people and their priorities.
2. **Listen to older people**
Involve older people in planning and developing programmes, and tailor programmes to the needs and level of individual participants.
3. **Address practical barriers**
Think about the social and economic barriers that older people may face, such as costs, transport and access to facilities. Remember that safety, trust, social connections and confidence play an important role in encouraging participation.
4. **Avoid stereotypes - Older people are all individuals, and have different interests and priorities**
It is important to develop innovative and creative programmes which avoid stereotyping older people and promote a positive image of older people⁶⁹.

What is already happening?

There is some good work already happening. Here are just some examples.

Example

The 'Mentor Allan' action research programme in Wales involved 14 different approaches to help hard to reach groups become more physically active. One project targeted older people. Initial contact was made with a core group through a local sewing club, and wider community consultation also took place. The project gathered views about potential activities, and those of most interest were archery, walking and Tai Chi. Taster sessions were set up for all three, and a successful archery group developed. Some participants also maintained an interest in Nordic Walking. Critical to the success of the approach was that it was participant led, flexible, started from where people felt comfortable and valued the social aspect of activities.⁷⁰

Example

Tennis is an adaptable sport, which enables people to play at a level appropriate to their age and fitness. Evidence from England shows that some clubs have marketed the social aspect of the sport to encourage older people to participate – including running club social nights, quiz nights and wine tasting. Many are using online information to promote the social aspects of the sport.⁷¹

⁶⁹ <http://www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/PromotingPhysicalActivityOlderPeople.pdf>

⁷⁰ <http://sport.wales/media/965416/mallancs1e.pdf>

⁷¹ Understanding variations in sports participation Case study in driving participation: LTA and tennis, Sport England, August 2010

Example

Edinburgh Leisure runs an Ageing Well programme for adults aged 50 and over. This programme caters for over 400 adults in community venues, and is supported by volunteers. Activities include swimming, chair based exercise, cycling, dancing, curling and walking – as well as gardening, photography, knitting and singing. There is a strong focus on a warm welcoming environment, with fun, chat and refreshments at the sessions. The costs are kept to a minimum, often a £1 voluntary contribution. The programme is funded by NHS Lothian and run by Edinburgh Leisure, in partnership with Pilmeny Development Project.⁷²

Find out more...

Useful sources for finding out more include:

- **sportscotland** commissioned [a very detailed study on older people and sport](#) in 2004, which contains a detailed analysis of barriers and drivers for involvement⁷³;
- the documents referenced throughout this Learning Note – as footnotes; and
- the full research report on equality in sport, produced for **sportscotland** in 2015.

⁷² <http://about.edinburghleisure.co.uk/what-we-do/physical-activity-health/ageing-well/>

⁷³ Older People, Sport and Physical Activity: A Review of Key Issues for sportscotland by Linda Nicholson The Research Shop, 2004

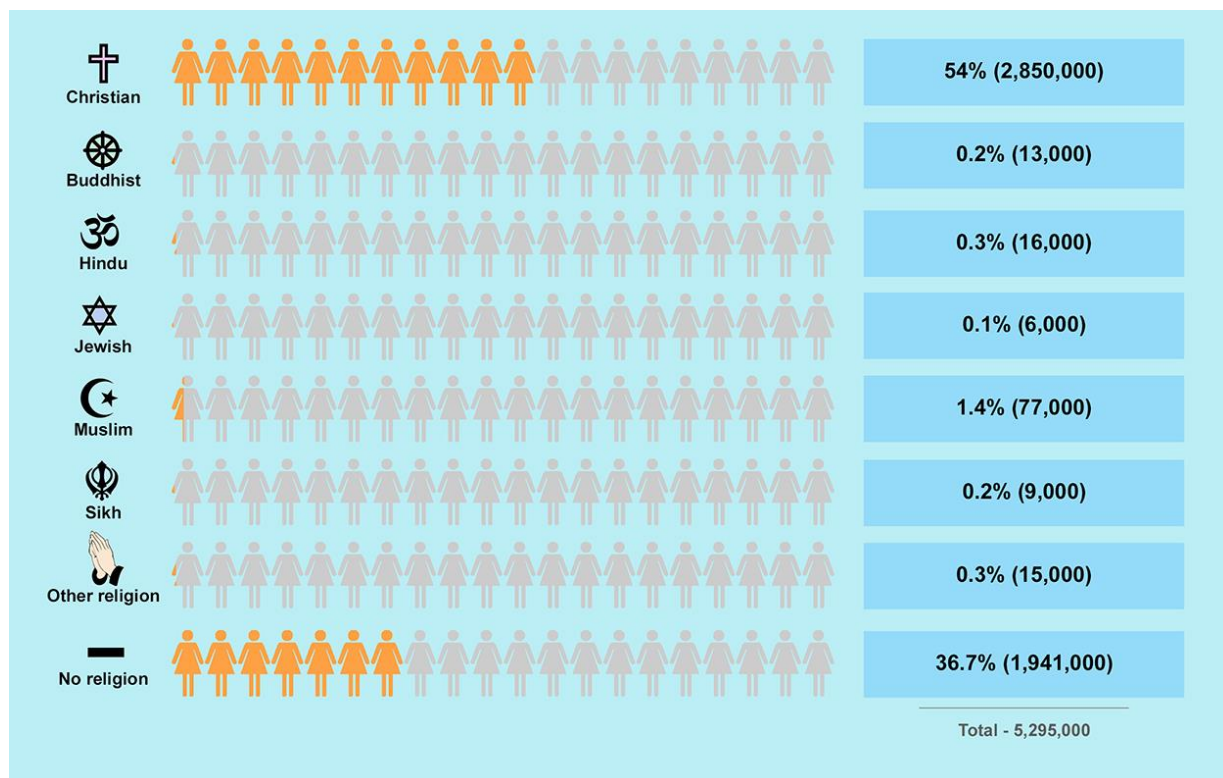
7. Religion/ belief and sport

About this learning note

This learning note has been developed to provide a broad overview of the important issues around religion and belief in sport, to provide an introduction to the topic. This approach has been taken based on feedback from the research with people in the sporting system in Scotland.

What is the profile of the population?

In Scotland, the 2011 Census shows that over half of the population identifies as Christian. More than a third of the population identifies as having no religion, and 2.5 per cent identify with a minority religion or belief. Although this is a small percentage, this equates to 136,000 people identifying with a minority religion or belief.



Note: A number of people chose not to answer the question about religion within the Census, meaning the figures do not add up to 100 per cent.

What are the important issues?

There is very limited evidence about sports participation in relation to religion and belief in Scotland. Due to the small proportion of people in Scotland identifying with non-Christian religions, it is not possible to undertake robust analysis of trends in relation to participation in sports by religion.

1. Lower participation rates for Muslim women

Despite the lack of evidence, the data available for Scotland does suggest that people with a Muslim faith are less likely take part in sport, with particularly low levels of sports participation among Muslim women⁷⁴. This is supported by research conducted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission⁷⁵ which shows that the lowest rate of sports participation is for Muslims. The vast majority of research into religion and sport focuses on the Muslim faith.

2. Higher participation rates for people with no religion

Data for Scotland also indicates that people with no religion are more likely to participate in sport than people identifying with a religion⁷⁶. However, analysis by the Scottish Government⁷⁷ has highlighted that people with no religion tend to be younger – which could be the reason for this correlation. Younger people are much less likely to be religious and much more likely to be physically active.

3. Issues around sport and sectarianism

In some parts of Scotland there are divisions between different religious groups. This can impact on society and on sport. The historical links of some clubs and the traditional ethnic and religious make up of their supporters have led to them being held as symbols of religious, cultural and political beliefs.

Research conducted by ScotCen⁷⁸ found that the majority of people in Scotland felt that sectarianism is a problem. Most (88%) of those interviewed identified football as a contributing factor, and over half (55%) said they thought it was the main factor.

What do we know about the problem?

Barriers

1. Barriers for Muslim women

There is a lot of research into barriers to participation for Muslim women. In general, Islam promotes good health and fitness and encourages both men and women to engage in physical activity to maintain healthy lifestyles. However, there are aspects of the religion which affect how sports can be practised. For example, women following their faith cannot engage in mixed gender sport and the dress code also requires consideration.

Research conducted with Muslim girls in the school environment has demonstrated that the girls were put off participating in sporting activities to the point where some were skipping classes. Clothing requirements and changing facilities were the main barriers⁷⁹.

⁷⁴ Active Scotland Outcomes: Indicator Equality Analysis, Scottish Government, 2015

⁷⁵ EHRC and Sporting Equals (Undated) *Equality and human rights in sport and physical activity*. [www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/EHRC_Web\(1\).pdf?dtrk=true](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/EHRC_Web(1).pdf?dtrk=true)

⁷⁶ Scottish Government Equality Outcomes: Religion and Belief Evidence review, April 2013, found at: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2013/04/3276/1>

⁷⁷ Active Schools Outcomes Framework Equality Analysis (not yet published)

⁷⁸ http://www.scotcen.org.uk/newsmedia/pressreleases/2015/february/ssa2014_sectarianism_pr/

Interestingly, research has found that Muslim women have different attitudes to sport in different countries. In traditional Muslim countries attitudes are actually far more positive towards PE than in the UK. Young Muslim women in the UK seem to have very negative views regarding PE in schools⁸⁰.

Muslim women's attitudes towards sport are also affected by a lack of visible role models. Celebrating and promoting these positive images is key to developing long term attitudinal change and increasing participation levels⁸¹.

Kulsoom Abdullah

The female weightlifter Kulsoom Abdullah was initially barred from the US championships, because she wanted to compete in clothing that would cover her elbows and knees - in accordance with her interpretation of Islamic rules of modesty for women. Officials were concerned that such clothing would obscure the view of the judges to assess whether she had achieved a proper "lock" of the elbows and knees, which is essential for a weight-lifting competition.

Subsequently, Kulsoom Abdullah proposed to wear a tight fitting unitard under the compulsory competition costume, which would allow the judges to assess whether her elbows and knees were properly locked while lifting weights. The International Weightlifting Federation agreed and Kulsoom Abdullah then registered for the US Championships⁸².

What can we do about it?

Ensuring that Muslim women have opportunities to participate in sports will require practical consideration of:

- women only sessions – with female coaches and tutors;
- flexibility in clothing choice; and
- single sex and safe changing facilities.

It will also require work to ensure that Muslim women and their families can see the positive benefits of sports participation, and feel confident that the environment is safe, welcoming and respectful of religious beliefs. This should build on training and awareness raising work to ensure that clubs recognise the barriers that Muslim women can experience, and the positive ways to address these barriers.

⁷⁹ Carroll, Bob and Hollinshead, G (1993) 'Ethnicity and conflict in physical education.' British Educational Research Journal, 19(1),59-76.

⁸⁰ Muslim Women in Sport, Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation and Sporting Equals, January 2010

⁸¹ Muslim Women in Sport, Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation and Sporting Equals, January 2010

⁸² http://www.altmuslimah.com/2011/07/the_dress_code_barrier_for_muslim_women_in_sports1/

Example

Sporting Equals has conducted research⁸³, looking at how ‘faith centres’ or places of worship for different religious groups can play an active role in offering sport and physical activity to the community. Sporting Equals developed a model which aims to bridge the gap with disengaged communities by connecting sports provision to the local community at a grassroots level, by using the local mosque or church as a gateway for access. Sporting Equals has worked with a number of faith centres and places of worship to hold community wellbeing events and to make links with partner organisations to offer sports activity to the local community.

Example

Nil By Mouth is an anti-sectarianism charity in Scotland. In April 2015, the charity worked with sports coaches at Ayrshire College to teach them about sectarianism in order to provide them with the insights, techniques and strategies they will need in the workplace. The campaign director for Nil By Mouth, spoke with groups of Sports Coaching and Development students to help them understand what sectarianism is and the consequences it has on society. He stressed how important it was for them to know how to deal with difficult situations once they are in coaching jobs⁸⁴.

Find out more...

Useful sources for finding out more include:

- guidance from Sports Coach UK about engaging Muslim women - <http://www.sportscoachuk.org/sites/default/files/Muslim%20women%20in%20sport%20-%20WSFF%20&%20sporting%20equals.pdf>
- the documents referenced throughout this Learning Note – as footnotes; and
- the full research report on equality in sport, produced for **sportscotland** in 2015.

⁸³ The role of faith centres in the provision of sport and physical activity, Sporting Equals, June 2012

⁸⁴ <http://nilbymouth.org/2015/sports-students-spurred-to-tackle-sectarianism/>

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