



**YOUNG  
PEOPLE  
& SPORT**  
in Northern Ireland



Evidence from the 2015 Young Life and Times (YLT) and Kids Life and Times (KLT) surveys

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# 1 Background to the Study<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In recent years ARK's Young Life and Times (YLT) and Kids Life and Times (KLT) surveys have included a range of health-related questions, on issues such as wellbeing and nutrition in KLT and physical, mental and sexual health in YLT. While these are important topics, the children and young people participating in the surveys have often suggested that we should ask them about their hobbies and their involvement in sport. We were therefore delighted when we were approached by Sport Northern Ireland in 2015 with a request to include modules in the YLT and KLT surveys that asked children and young people about their experiences of and participation in sport and physical activities. While undoubtedly health-related, these activities are also, for most children and young people, fun to do and interesting to answer survey questions on.

It is widely acknowledged that being physically active and/or participating regularly in sport has both individual and societal benefits. These include better physical and mental health, increased self-esteem and wellbeing (Hargie, Summerville and Mitchell, 2015: 25). In seeking to achieve these benefits children and young people are encouraged to be physically active for at least 60 minutes every day. Therefore, it is important to explore how young people and children reach or fall short of this target and what factors may hinder or assist them in doing so. The aim of this

research was therefore to explore children and young people's attitudes to and participation in sport and physical activities. The survey questions were designed in conjunction with Sport Northern Ireland and included in the YLT and KLT surveys addressed these issues. Not only were respondents asked whether or not they met the physical activity time target, but they were also asked about their experiences of sport inside and outside of school, the type of activities they were involved in and the reasons for their involvement barriers to participation, role models who inspired them and their sports idols.

## The need for the research: Sport Northern Ireland's perspective

The available evidence consistently shows that participation in sport reduces with age. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent amongst young people. At all of the major transition points from primary school to secondary school, from GCSEs to A Levels, and from secondary to tertiary education young people tend to drop out of sport. If this pattern of behaviour is to be reversed, it follows that we need to know more about young people, their motivations, their aspirations and how they feel about sport.

Whilst there is plenty of evidence on adult participation in national surveys such as the Continuous Household Survey (CHS) and the Northern Ireland

Sport and Physical Activity Survey (SAPAS), unfortunately there is relatively little evidence available on the participation patterns of children and young people. This is particularly unfortunate as there is some evidence that sport is a habit and that if this habit is instilled at an early age it is more likely to be maintained. Furthermore, research from England (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 2015) shows that what parents did when they were children has an impact on what their own children do now.

Children's participation in sport is therefore a complex and subtle area of research about which we know relatively little. This research project is a positive step towards making best use of the data we collect already for other purposes as well as gaining new insights from bespoke questions we have commissioned ourselves. As the search for 'what works, for whom, how and in what circumstances' goes on, we will leave no stone unturned in our desire to ensure that young people are introduced to sport at an early age and have such a positive experience that they develop a habit for life.

<sup>1</sup> This report was compiled by Dr Dirk Schubotz, YLT Director of ARK. The project team also comprised of Dr Paul Donnelly, Sport Northern Ireland, Angharad Bunt, Sport Northern Ireland, Dr Katrina Lloyd, KLT Director, Dr Martina McKnight ARK Research Fellow for KLT and YLT, Mike McCool ARK IT Director who provided support for the web surveys and the website presentation and Eileen Gray who provided admin support for KLT and YLT.

## 2 Methodology

As detailed in the Introduction, wide ranging questions on sport and physical activity were included in the 2015 KLT and YLT surveys. Whenever possible the wording of the questions was identical to allow comparisons to be made between both sets of respondents. However, the age difference between respondents and survey mode – KLT needing on average longer to read questions and having less time to complete the KLT survey meant that some allowances had to be made. As a result, 16-year olds completing the YLT survey were asked more questions than KLT respondents, and were, occasionally, given more complex answer options. Generally, however, variations were kept to a minimum. The full set of questions included in the two surveys can be found in the Appendix.

### **Young Life and Times (YLT) survey**

YLT is a postal survey conducted annually by ARK among 16-year olds in Northern Ireland (with optional online and phone completion where respondents prefer this). The survey sample for the YLT survey is taken from the Child Benefit Register (CBR). ARK receives the names and addresses of eligible YLT respondents directly from HMRC. Child Benefit is a social benefit for people bringing up children in the UK and is paid for each child. Although the UK government recently introduced means testing for Child Benefit, for the purpose of undertaking the YLT survey ARK still has access to the addresses of those families who do not receive the Benefit. Therefore, the CBR provides an almost



perfect random sample of 16-year olds for the YLT survey. Permission to access the addresses of recipients of Child Benefit for the YLT survey was granted to ARK after a statutory instrument and explanatory memorandum was approved by Parliament in Westminster in 2004. Data security and confidentiality are subject to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between HMRC and ARK. HMRC demands highest standards of data security which form part of a service level agreement signed between ARK and HMRC.

Fieldwork for the 2015 YLT survey was undertaken from October to December 2015. All young people who celebrated their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday during February and March of 2015 were invited to take part in the survey. In 2015, there were 3,558 eligible respondents. An initial information sheet on the study was posted to their home addresses and they were given an opportunity to opt out at this stage. Two weeks later those not opting out received further information and the paper questionnaire for completion; a link to an online version of the survey was also forwarded in case young people preferred to complete the survey online. Each respondent was allocated a unique identifier, which prevented duplicate completions. Incentives were given to the first 100 online respondents (£10 shopping voucher each) and a prize draw to the total value of £500 was also offered to everyone who participated in YLT either online or by completing the paper version of the survey. Data input was

contracted out to an independent data processing company.

### **Kids Life and Times (KLT) survey**

KLT is an online survey whose target population is all P7-aged children in Northern Ireland. This includes all children, regardless of whether they attend mainstream schools, special schools, alternative education providers, hospital schools or whether they are home-schooled. In 2015 this was approximately 22,880 children in 864 primary schools. Each is allocated a unique three digit identification number and this number is included on all correspondence sent to the school.

Consent to participate involved three levels:

Firstly, the school principal agreed that the school could participate.

Secondly, a parent or guardian of each P7 pupil within the participating schools received a consent form which they were asked to complete and return to the school if they did not wish their child to take part.

Thirdly, at the start of the questionnaire, each child was asked if s/he agreed to take part.

Fieldwork started on 2 November 2015 and, on request of some schools was extended to 22 January 2016. A dedicated telephone line was set up so that principals could contact the survey team for more information. Translations

of the parental consent forms were produced on request of principals in: Polish, Lithuanian, Czech, Hungarian, Latvian, and Romanian.

The online questionnaire was designed and administered by the ARK team. ARK had obtained permission to use characters from 'Bang on the Door' to make the survey fun and interesting to complete. Throughout the design of the questionnaire, the KLT team worked closely with C2kNI which is the organisation responsible for the provision of an ICT-managed service to all schools in Northern Ireland.

When the child logged on and confirmed that s/he wanted to take part, they are asked to enter the three-digit school identification number or their seven-digit school code used by the Department of Education (DE). When the code was entered, the full name and address of the school appeared on the screen, and the child confirmed if this was the correct school. No further identification codes or names of children were required. The questionnaire took about 20 minutes to complete and each question had a 'skip' option which the children could use if they did not want to answer.

## 3 Results

### Sample characteristics

The 2015 KLT survey was completed by 5,194 P7 children, and 1,158 16-year olds responded to YLT. The response rate in the YLT survey was 31 percent whilst 27 percent of primary schools and 23 percent of all P7 children completed the KLT survey. The majority of YLT respondents (84%) completed the paper survey which had been sent to their home address, whilst 16 percent opted for the alternative online completion.

Both sets of respondents were asked a range of background questions. These questions can be used to get a sense of how well the respondents represent the general population of children and young people in the respective age groups. These questions are also used to analyse attitudes and experiences by, for example, family and school backgrounds.

### KLT sample

More boys than girls completed the KLT survey, and the vast majority of children had been born in Northern Ireland. Over three quarters lived with both their parents. There were almost equal numbers of children attending Catholic Maintained and Controlled (Protestant) schools. Six in ten schools (62%) who took part in KLT were located in urban areas (Table 1).

**Table 1: Sample characteristics. KLT respondents**

Background variable	%
<b>Gender</b>	
Boy	<b>52</b>
Girl	<b>48</b>
<b>Always lived in Northern Ireland</b>	
Yes	<b>89</b>
No	<b>11</b>
<b>Who the respondent lives with</b>	
Their mum and dad in the same house	<b>77</b>
Their mum for most of the time	<b>15</b>
Other	<b>8</b>
<b>Has long-term illness or disability</b>	
Yes	<b>13</b>
No	<b>74</b>
Don't know	<b>14</b>
<b>School type attended</b>	
Maintained (Catholic)	<b>47</b>
Controlled (Protestant)	<b>46</b>
Controlled or Maintained Integrated	<b>6</b>
Other	<b>1</b>
<b>Location of school attended</b>	
Urban	<b>62</b>
Rural	<b>38</b>
<b>Family Affluence<sup>2</sup></b>	
Low	<b>14</b>
Medium	<b>59</b>
High	<b>27</b>

2 Family affluence is measured using the Family Affluence Scale (FAS). This asks children about material goods and comforts available to them and their families, such as their own bedroom, computers, family holidays, and cars.



### YLT sample

Females were more likely to respond to the YLT survey than males. In total, 58 percent of respondents were female, and 41 percent were male. Just under one percent of respondents identified as neither male nor female, for example as gender-fluid or transgender. While it is important that respondents do not have to identify as male or female, the number of these respondents is so small that they cannot be identified separately as a group in the analyses in this report. The vast majority of YLT respondents (92%) had lived in Northern Ireland all their life, as Table 2 shows.

**Table 2: Sample Characteristics. YLT survey**

Background variable	%
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	<b>58</b>
Female	<b>41</b>
Other (including gender-fluid and trans)	<b>&lt;1</b>
<b>Always lived in Northern Ireland</b>	
Yes	<b>92</b>
No	<b>8</b>
<b>School type recently attended</b>	
Planned Integrated	<b>9</b>
Grammar	<b>53</b>
Secondary	<b>34</b>
FE College	<b>2</b>
Other	<b>2</b>
<b>Where the respondent lives</b>	
A big city or its outskirts/suburbs	<b>18</b>
A small city or town	<b>42</b>
A country village or farm or home in the country	<b>41</b>
<b>Has physical or mental health condition</b>	
No	<b>89</b>
Yes, but not limiting	<b>6</b>
Yes, a little limiting	<b>4</b>
Yes, limiting	<b>1</b>
<b>Religious background</b>	
Catholic	<b>40</b>
Protestant	<b>30</b>
No religion	<b>30</b>
Other religion	<b>1</b>
<b>Minority ethnic identity (self-assessed)</b>	
Yes	<b>10</b>
No	<b>90</b>

### Every-day activities and physical activity targets

Respondents were asked about the type of physical activities they do in a normal week. This was a multiple response question, as some children and young people may be involved in more than one activity. As Table 3 shows, 42 percent of YLT and 49 percent of KLT respondents reported that they walked or cycled to and from school. Slightly higher proportions of respondents in both the YLT (44%) and the KLT survey (53%) said they did PE in school in a normal week. Over half of YLT respondents (52%) and nearly three quarters (74%) of KLT respondents said they were involved in out-of-school sport. Among KLT respondents one in five children (20%-21% boys and 18% girls) did all three of these activities in a normal week, whereas this figure was less than half that (9%-12% males and 7% females) among YLT respondents.

Fewer than one in ten YLT respondents (8%), but nearly one in five KLT respondents (19%) said they did none of these things in a typical week. However, when asked how many days in a normal week they spent at least 60 minutes on sport or physical activity, the reverse was true. Less than one in ten (9%) 16-year olds met the seven-times-a-week target, compared with almost one third of P7 children (32%). This would suggest that many P7 children meet the target of physical activity during unstructured play, which would be supported by

previous findings in the 2013 KLT survey which showed that the most common activity children engage in after school is playing outside (65% said they did this.) When we analysed the open responses given by children for the three sports they said they were involved in, a large number of children had mentioned

playing outside, or taking their dog for a walk as an activity.

Sixteen-year olds, on the other hand, appear to be more reliant on structured physical activity to meet the activity target.

**Table 3: Activities in a normal week (Multiple response)**

	%	
	YLT	KLT
Walk/cycle to school	42	49
Do PE in school	44	53
Sport/activities outside school	52	74
Outdoor adventure activities	11	N/A <sup>3</sup>
Any other physical activity	30	N/A
None of these	8	19



3 For KLT respondents, outdoor adventure activities were included in the 'Sport outside school' category rather than being listed separately.

Among YLT respondents a significantly larger proportion of males (62%) than females (55%) said they walked or cycled to school in a normal week ( $p=0.018$ ). Those attending Grammar schools were more likely to say that they did this (62%) than 16-year olds attending integrated (56%) or secondary schools (53%) ( $p=0.034$ ). However, the largest difference existed between 16-year olds from rural areas and those from urban areas ( $p=0.000$ ), as could have been expected. This is likely to be due to the greater distance young people from rural areas have to travel to school than those in urban areas (Table 4). However, as Table 4 shows, 16-year olds from rural areas are slightly more likely to take part in all types of other sports and physical activity, which perhaps compensates a little for the lack of walking and cycling to and from school.

The difference between rural and urban areas was not as large among KLT respondents as YLT respondents as Table 5 shows. However, still a significantly higher proportion of children from urban areas said they walked or cycled to school. Gender also mattered in KLT, with higher proportions of boys (52%) saying they walked or cycled to school than girls (46%). Children from more affluent homes were less likely to say that they walked or cycled to school, reflecting higher levels of car ownership in affluent families and subsequent higher levels of children being driven to and from school.

**Table 4: Sports and physical activities undertaken in a normal week. YLT respondents, by rurality (Multiple response)**

	%		
	Urban	Small town	Rural
Walk/cycle to school	50	52	26
Do PE in school	44	41	46
Sport/activities outside school	46	51	55
Any other physical activity	11	10	13
None of these	29	30	30

Interestingly significantly lower proportions of P7 children from low affluence backgrounds said they did not do PE in school when compared with children from medium and high affluence families (43%, 52% and 61% respectively;  $p=0.000$ ).

Children from Catholic maintained primary schools were less likely to say that they did PE in school in a normal week (71%) than children in controlled (Protestant) schools (77%) and integrated schools (78%) ( $p=0.000$ ).

**Table 5: Sports and physical activities undertaken in a normal week. KLT respondents, by rurality (Multiple response)**

	%	
	Urban	Rural
Walk/cycle to school	52	43
Do PE in school	53	53
Sport/activities outside school	73	76
None of these	18	19

### Activity targets

Fewer than one in ten (9%) YLT respondents reached the physical activity target, which is at least a total of 60 minutes of sports or physical activity every day. Male 16-year olds were much more likely to reach this target than female 16-year olds (13% and 5%;  $p=0.000$ ). Among KLT respondents, boys (37%) were also much more likely to reach this target than girls (27%;  $p=0.000$ ) (Table 6).



**Table 6: How many times during a normal week would you spend at least 60 mins on doing some physical activity?, by gender**

	%					
	KLT			YLT		
	Males	Females	All	Males	Females	All
Never	9	9	9	8	10	9
Up to 4 times a week	31	39	34	37	63	58
4 - 6 times a week	24	26	25	32	20	24
7 times a week or more	37	27	32	13	5	9

Same-sex attracted YLT respondents (17%) were more than twice as likely than their opposite-sex attracted counterparts (8%) to say that they never reached this target ( $p=0.007$ ). Also respondents who had no religious affiliation were much more likely to say that they never reached this 60-minute target (14%, compared to 8% of Protestants and 7% of Catholics). Again this might point to young who do not conform to heterosexual or religious norms to be more likely to be excluded from taking part in sport.

Among KLT respondents, family affluence played a significant role in relation to how active children were. Thirty-six percent of children from high affluence families reached the 'seven-day-60min' target compared to 31 percent of children from medium affluence families and 28 percent of children from low affluence families

### Happiness with the level of sport undertaken at present

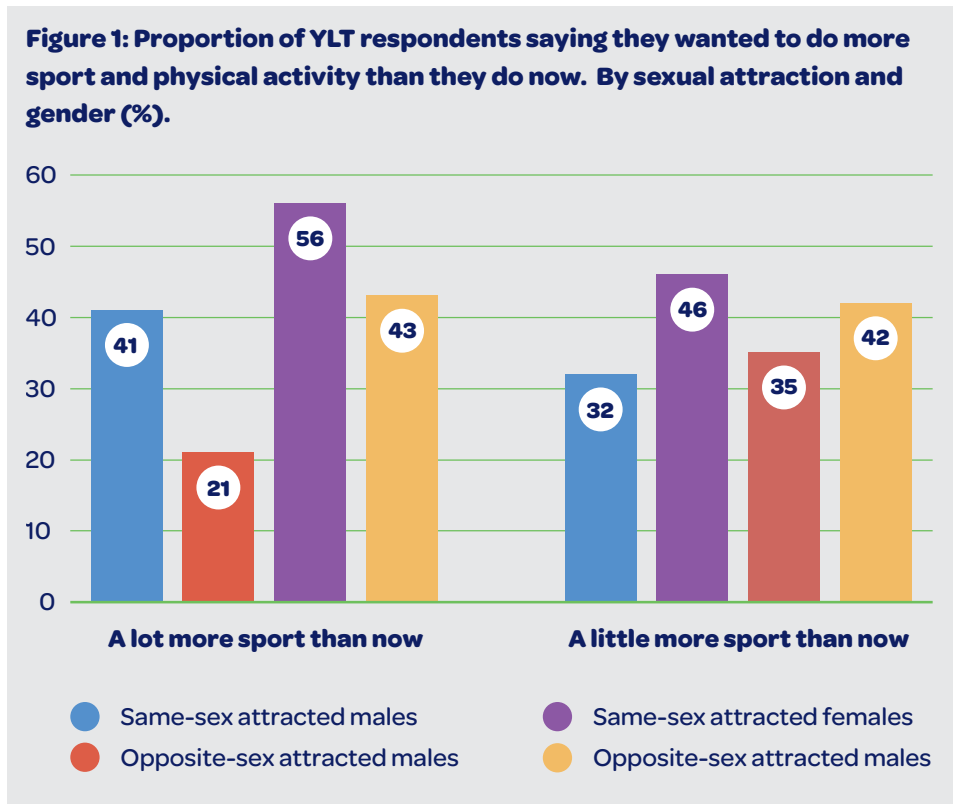
Sixteen-year olds were asked how happy they were with the level of sport they were currently undertaking, that is whether they would like to do more, less or about the same compared to what they were currently doing<sup>4</sup>. Over one third of YLT respondents (35%) said that they would like to do a lot more, and a further 43 percent said they wanted to do a little more sport or physical activity. Fewer than one in five (19%) were happy with the amount of sport and physical activity they engaged in.

Females were particularly unhappy with the level of sport they were taking part in. Forty-four percent of females said they wanted to have 'a lot more' sport and physical activity with a further 41 percent they would like 'a little more'.

4 P7 children were not asked this question.

Same-sex attracted young people were the group that was most likely to say that they wanted to do 'a lot more' sport with over half (52%) saying this, compared to one third (33%) of opposite-sex attracted 16-year olds. This difference was statistically highly significant ( $p=0.000$ ) for both males and females. Whilst a higher proportion of same-sex attracted females than males wanted to have do 'a lot more' sport and physical activity, the gap between same-sex attracted and opposite-sex attracted young people was particularly large for males, with twice the proportion of same-sex attracted males (42%) saying they would like to do 'a lot more' sport than opposite-sex attracted males (21%) (Figure 1).

Sixteen-year olds with caring responsibility were much more likely to say they wanted to do 'a lot more' sport than they were currently doing than those without caring responsibility ( $p=0.004$ ).



### Enjoying sports and physical activity

Children and young people were asked how much they enjoyed taking part in sport and physical activity. Table 7 shows that P7 children were much more likely

than 16-year olds to say that they enjoyed the activities they took part in. This difference was particularly noticeable for PE in school, which 82 percent of KLT respondents, but only 37 percent of YLT respondents said they

enjoyed a lot. The difference between KLT and YLT respondents was smallest in relation to outdoor adventure activities which both sets of respondents enjoyed to a similar extent.

**Table 7: Proportion of KLT and YLT respondents saying they enjoy the following activities**

	%							
	A lot		A little		Not at all		I don't do this	
	KLT	YLT	KLT	YLT	KLT	YLT	KLT	YLT
PE classes in school/college	82	37	15	26	2	15	1	22
Sports outside of school, e.g. sports clubs	77	48	17	24	2	7	4	21
Physical activity not organised by school or clubs	n.a.	52	n.a.	33	n.a.	5	n.a.	10
Outdoor adventure activities	57	46	22	21	4	7	16	27

Overall, a very small proportion of YLT and KLT respondents said that they did not enjoy sports or physical activity, as Table 8 shows. The greatest level of enjoyment was expressed about informal physical activities that were not organised by either school or sports clubs. Only one in ten 16-year olds said they did not engage in such activities, and only five percent said they did not enjoy these. The greatest level of dissatisfaction was expressed about PE in school, but even PE was enjoyed at least 'a little' by over six in ten respondents (63%).

#### YLT

In YLT, we found highly significant differences in relation to how particular groups of 16-year olds enjoyed organised sport in school (i.e. PE) and outside of school:

- 1. Females** were significantly less likely than males to say they enjoyed organised sport 'a lot' and significantly more likely than males to say they 'did not do this'. Half of YLT males (50%), but only just over one quarter (28%) of YLT females said they enjoyed PE 'a lot'. On the other hand, females were a little more likely to say they enjoyed informal

activities, such as walks with friends and family or outdoor activities, although this difference was not significant.

- 2. Young people from not well-off backgrounds** were much less likely to say they enjoyed organised sport than those from average well-off and particularly well-off backgrounds. Again, these differences were highly significant. In addition 16-year olds from not well-off background were much more likely to say that they did not take part in outdoor activities (36% saying this, compared to 22% of well-off respondents), such as

kayaking, surfing or orienteering, perhaps due to the price tag attached to some of these activities.

### 3. Students attending Grammar schools

were much more likely to say they enjoyed organised sport in school (PE) and outside of school. They were also much less likely to say that they did not do take part in organised sport outside of school. This finding is most likely related to the financial background of those attending different school types, so the difference between school types is an artefact of the difference between well-off and not well-off families that young people come from.

### 4. Young people from rural areas

were much more likely to say they took part in organised sport outside of school than those from urban areas and from small towns. Perhaps this is a result of sport clubs being one of the main ways to spend leisure time in rural areas which do not offer the same variety of alternative leisure time facilities as cities do, for example. However, they were also much more likely to say that they enjoyed organised sport 'a lot', including PE, which 42 percent of rural 16-year olds enjoyed 'a lot' compared to 37 percent from urban areas and 34 percent from small towns. On the other hand, young people from urban areas were most likely to say that they enjoyed outdoor activities 'a lot' (54%), much more so than their counterpart from

rural areas (48%) and small towns (41%) perhaps evidence for the experienced need and desire to escape the urban city life.

### 5. Same-sex attracted young people

were much less likely to say they took part in organised sport inside and outside of school or to enjoy it than opposite-sex attracted young people. These difference were highly significant. In addition, same-sex attracted young people were also much less likely to say they did undertake, or enjoyed, informal activities such as walks with their families.

### 6. Young people with no religious backgrounds

were much less likely to take part in, or enjoy, organised sport both inside and outside of school than both Catholics and Protestants. Only 29 percent of those with no religious affiliation said they enjoyed PE, compared to 40 percent of Protestants and 41 percent of Catholics. This significant difference is exclusively due to the low proportion (22%) of non-religious 16-year olds attending exclusively or predominantly Catholic schools saying they enjoyed PE 'a lot.' ( $p=0.022$ ). There were no statistical differences in how much young people of different religious backgrounds enjoyed PE in any other school type. Over one quarter (26%) of non-religious respondents said they did not take part in organised sport compared to 20 percent of Catholics and just 18 percent of

Protestants. Over half of Catholics (55%) and Protestants (52%) said they enjoyed sports in sports clubs 'a lot', but only 36 percent of respondents with religious affiliation said they did.

### KLT

Among P7 children, boys were more likely than girls to say they enjoyed all types of sport 'a lot'. The gender difference was largest for PE and smallest for outdoor activities, but all differences were statistically significant.

Just like their 16-year olds counterparts, P7 children from rural areas were more likely to say they enjoyed PE 'a lot' than children from urban areas (85% and 81% respectively). This was also true for sport outside of school (75% and 79%) and for outdoor activities (55% and 60%).

P7 children from low affluence families were much less likely than those from medium affluence families and high affluence families to say that they enjoyed sports outside of school (68%, 76% and 83% respectively) or outdoor activities (47%, 55% and 67% respectively). These differences were statistically highly significant ( $p=0.000$ )

### Being good at sport

YLT respondents were asked whether they thought they were good at sport. Eleven percent thought they were every good, whilst about half (49%) thought they were quite good. Twenty-nine percent of 16-year olds thought they were not good at all in sport whilst 12 percent said they did not know how good

they were. Whilst individual differences in how 16-year olds answered this question were to be expected, we also found some significant difference between different groups of young people, as Table 8 shows. Females were much less likely than males (p=0.000) to say that

they were very good at sport. In fact over one third (35%) thought that they were not good at all in sport compared to just one in five (20%) males. The proportion of 16-year olds thinking that they were not at all good at sport was highest among same-sex attracted 16-year olds

with half of these young people saying this. This difference was particularly stark among males. Over six in ten (62%) same-sex attracted males thought they were not good at all at sport compared to just 17 percent of opposite-sex attracted males.

**Table 8: Do you think you are good at sport? YLT respondents by gender, sexual attraction and family-financial background (%)**

	%						
	Gender		Sexual attraction		Family-financial background		
	Males	Females	Opposite-sex	Same-sex	Not well-off	Average	Well-off
Very good	17	7	12	4	11	10	14
Quite good	52	46	51	29	48	46	55
Not good at all	20	35	26	50	31	30	26
Don't know	10	13	11	17	9	14	5





Well-off respondents were more likely to think that they are very good at sport and less likely to think that they are not good at all compared to average well-off and not-well off respondents as Table 8 shows.

There is a close relationship between the level of activity children and young people undertake and their self-assessment of how good they are in sport, as could be expected (Figure 2).

The Figure shows that the proportion of those who think they are not good at all in sports is highest among those who never meet the 60 minutes activity target. On the other hand, those who are physically active for at least 60 minutes seven times a week or more often are also most likely to say that they are very good at sport.

**Figure 2: Do you think you are good at sport? By number of days activity target (60 minutes) is met. YLT respondents (%)**





### Reasons to take part in sport

Children and young people were presented with five potential reasons why they might take part in sports and physical activity and were asked to rate how important these reasons were for them. These potential reasons were:

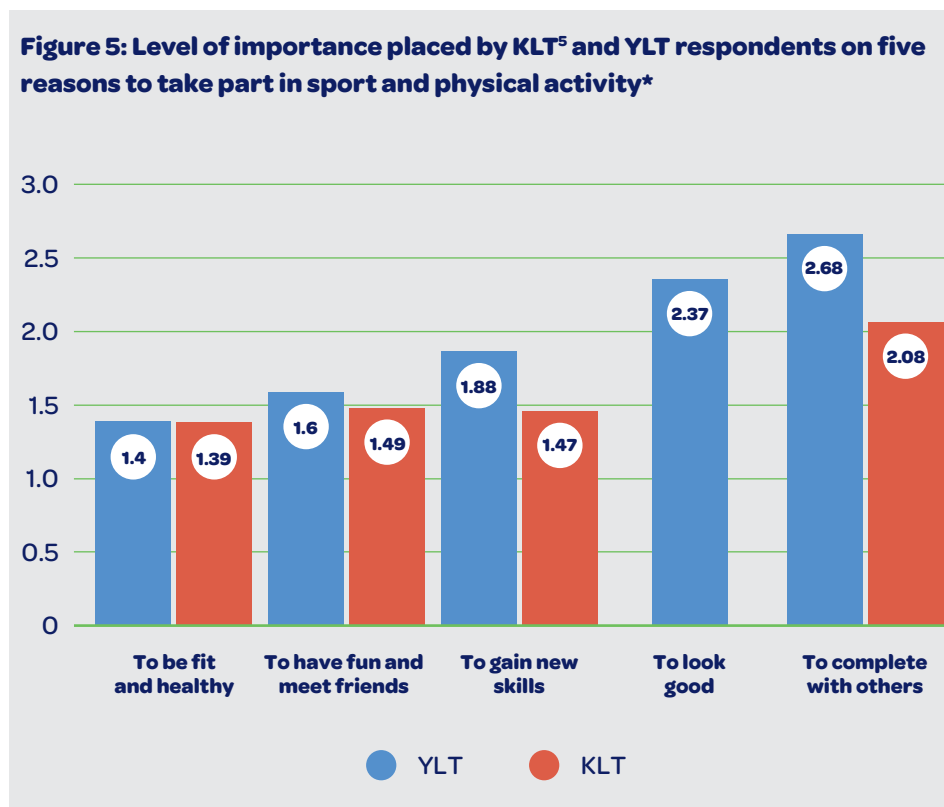
- To be fit and healthy;
- To gain new skills;
- To have fun and meet friends;
- To look good; and
- To compete with others.

Respondents could say for each of these five reasons whether it was very important, somewhat important, not very important or not important to them as a reason for taking part in sport and physical activity. They also had an option to say that they could not choose how important this was, but across all five reasons only one percent of respondents choose that option, so these responses were excluded from the analysis.

In order to rank the importance of these issues we calculated which reasons were most important we calculated the average (mean) of the responses for each answer option. Lower mean scores represent an overall higher importance that young people place on this respective reason for participating in sport and physical activity. We also calculated the mode response for each

reason, which represents the most common answer given for this question. Figure 5 shows that overall for both KLT and YLT respondents 'being fit and healthy' is the main reason why they take part in sport. The value of 1.4 that the Figure shows represents an average response between 'very important' and 'somewhat important', although for more respondents this is a 'very important'

reason. Of similar importance is 'to have fun and meet friends'. 'Competing with others' was overall the least important of the five issues with a mean response score of 2.68 for YLT respondents and 2.08 for KLT respondents, which suggests that competing is still a 'somewhat important' reason for P7 children, but 'not really very important' for most YLT respondents.



\* **Meaning of scores:** 1=very important; 2=Somewhat important; 3=Not very important; 4=Not important

5 KLT respondents were not asked how important it was for them to look good.

**KLT**

For P7 children from high affluence families, ‘being fit and healthy’ was a much more important reason to take part in sport than for children from low affluence families (68% compared to 60% saying this was ‘very important’). The same also applies to the desire to gain new skills. Sixty-three percent of children from high affluence families compared to just 52 percent of children from low affluence families said that taking part in sport was very important. Interestingly, children from low affluence families were very similar to those from high affluence families in relation to the importance they placed on competing with others, however children from medium affluence families placed much less importance on competing with others.

P7 boys (61%) were much more likely than P7 girls (55%) to say that ‘gaining new skills’ was ‘very important’. P7 boys were also much more likely than girls to say that competing with others was very important (38% and 29% respectively).

**YLT**

Among 16-year olds, with the exception of ‘competing with others’, there were virtually no differences between females and males in relation to the level of importance they place on these reasons, as also Table 9 exemplifies. Males were much more likely to say that competing with others was a reason they played sport, with 59 percent saying that this was either very important or somewhat important to them, compared with just 32 percent of females. In fact, males were almost three times as likely to say

that this was very important to them as females (30% and 11% respectively), as the Table shows. This means that competing with others is a more important reason for males to take part in sport than to look good. Otherwise, statistically there was no difference between females and males and the level of importance they place on making new friends and having fun, gaining new skills, getting fit and health or indeed looking good. Interestingly, the mean scores of responses of males and females in relation to ‘looking good’ as a reason to take part in sport was identical, so 16-year old males place exactly the same level of importance on ‘looking good’ as a reason to take part in sport as their female counterparts which is perhaps not what would have been expected.

**Table 9: How important are the following reasons for you to take part in sport and physical activity. YLT respondents, by gender (%)**

	%							
	Very important		Somewhat important		Not very important		Not important	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
To be fit and healthy	65	67	28	28	5	3	2	<1
To gain new skills	42	35	40	42	14	18	4	5
To have fun and meet friends	60	55	28	32	9	10	3	4
To look good	25	26	30	28	28	29	17	17
To compete with others	30	11	29	21	24	32	17	37

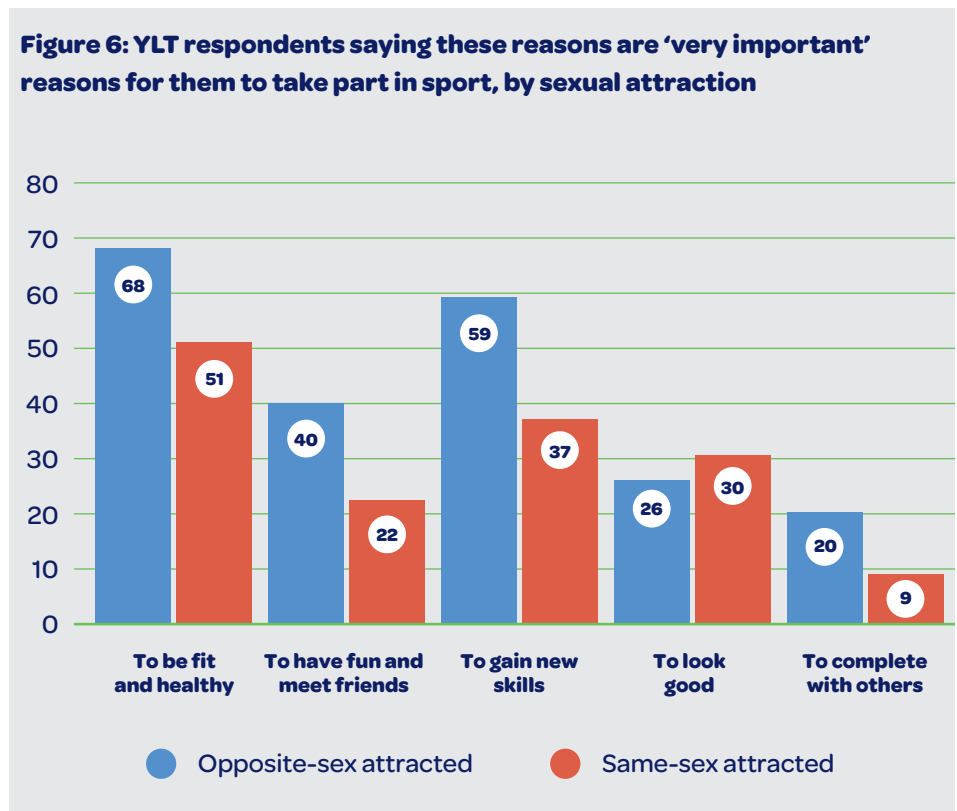
For respondents attending Grammar schools being fit and healthy was significantly more important than for those attending secondary or formally integrated schools.

Whilst 68 percent of opposite-sex attracted young people said being fit and health was a very important reason to take part in sport, just over half (51%) of same-sex attracted 16-year olds said this. Same-sex attracted young people were also much less likely ( $p=0.000$ ) to say that gaining new skills was very important than opposite-sex attracted

young people (22% and 40% respectively), or that it was 'very important' for meeting friends and having fun (37% and 59%). In fact, the only reason to take part in sport which was more important to same-sex attracted young people than opposite-sex attracted young people was 'to look good' (Figure 6). This was more so the case for same-sex attracted young women (33% saying looking good was 'very important').

For 16-year olds from rural areas, having fun and meeting friends was a

significantly more important reason to take part in sport than for those from urban areas and small towns (63%, 51% and 52% respectively saying this was 'very important'). This again stresses the importance that sport plays in rural areas for young people as a leisure time outlet. Competiveness was also a significantly more important reason to take part in sport, particularly female 16-year olds from rural areas were much more likely to say that competitiveness was 'very important' (15%) than females from urban areas (12%) and small towns (6%).



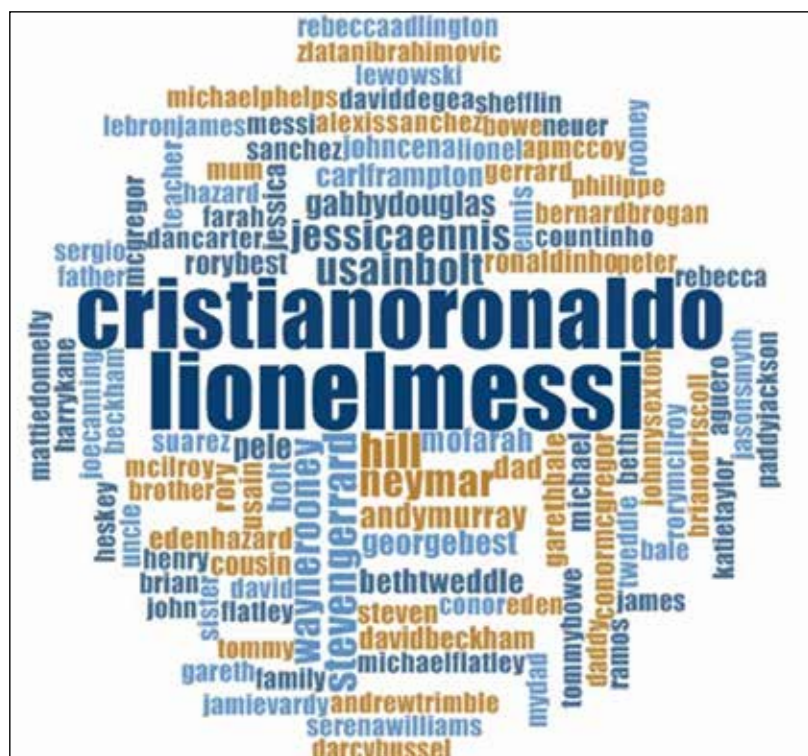
### Role models and sports idols

It may be that one of the main motivations for young people to become involved in sport is the role models that they see and hear about in the media. Famous sports men and women enjoy celebrity status and many children and young people treat them as idols as witnessed, for example, by the numbers who wear personalised sports tops. The children and young people responding to KLT and YLT were asked to name their sports role models and idols and, for P7s, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo were by far those most commonly recorded among this age group. In contrast, a more diverse group of role models were identified by YLT respondents and there was a notable gender effect. Jessica Ennis-Hill was the most commonly named sports idol among YLT respondents, as many females named her as a role model whilst the male vote among 16-year olds was heavily split not just among different football players, but also among stars from different types of sport (Figures 7 and 8).

Figure 7: Who are your sports idols? YLT responses



Figure 8: Who are your sports idols? KLT responses



As Table 10 shows, the role of famous sports persons as a motivating factor to become involved in sport decreases significantly with age. P7 children were most likely to say that a famous person inspired them to take part in sport (45%) with only 19 percent of KLT respondents saying a family member inspired them. Two thirds of P7 boys (66%), but only 43 percent of P7 girls said they had a sports idol. This is interesting as girls were much more likely to say that a famous person inspired them to take part in sport (see Figure 9). Sixty-two percent of children from high affluence families said they had a sports idol, compared to 53 percent of children from medium affluence families and 48 percent of children from low affluence families – a statistically highly significant difference ( $p=0.000$ ).

At age 16, famous sports personalities were the least likely people reported to inspire someone to be physically active, with only 16 percent of YLT respondents taking inspiration from sports stars. In fact, 62 percent of YLT respondents said that they did not have a sports idol at all. At the age of 16, family members were the main role models for young people (59%), followed by friends. Indeed, at this age, friends were more than twice as important as they were for P7 children. The role of a teacher in inspiring children to be physically active is also clear in Table 9; and, while this role model appears to decrease with age, nonetheless, more than one in four YLT respondents (27%) still reported that a teacher had encouraged or inspired them to take part in sport.

**Table 10: Has anyone ever encouraged or inspired you to take part in sports? (multiple response).**

	%	
	YLT	KLT
My family	59	19
A teacher	27	40
My friends	47	21
A famous person	16	45
Someone else	2	10
No-one has inspired or encouraged me	14	20



**YLT**

Among YLT respondents, the statistically most significant differences in relation to being encouraged and inspired to take part in schools existed again in relation to gender. Figure 9 shows that males were much more likely to say that they were encouraged or inspired by family, friends or a famous person. On the other hand, females were much more likely to say than males that no-one encouraged or inspired them to take part in sport. Interestingly, there was no difference in relation to encouragement from a teacher in school, which shows that school encourages both males and females equally to take part in school, however, this level of encouragement or inspiration is low compared to encouragement from the family or from friends.

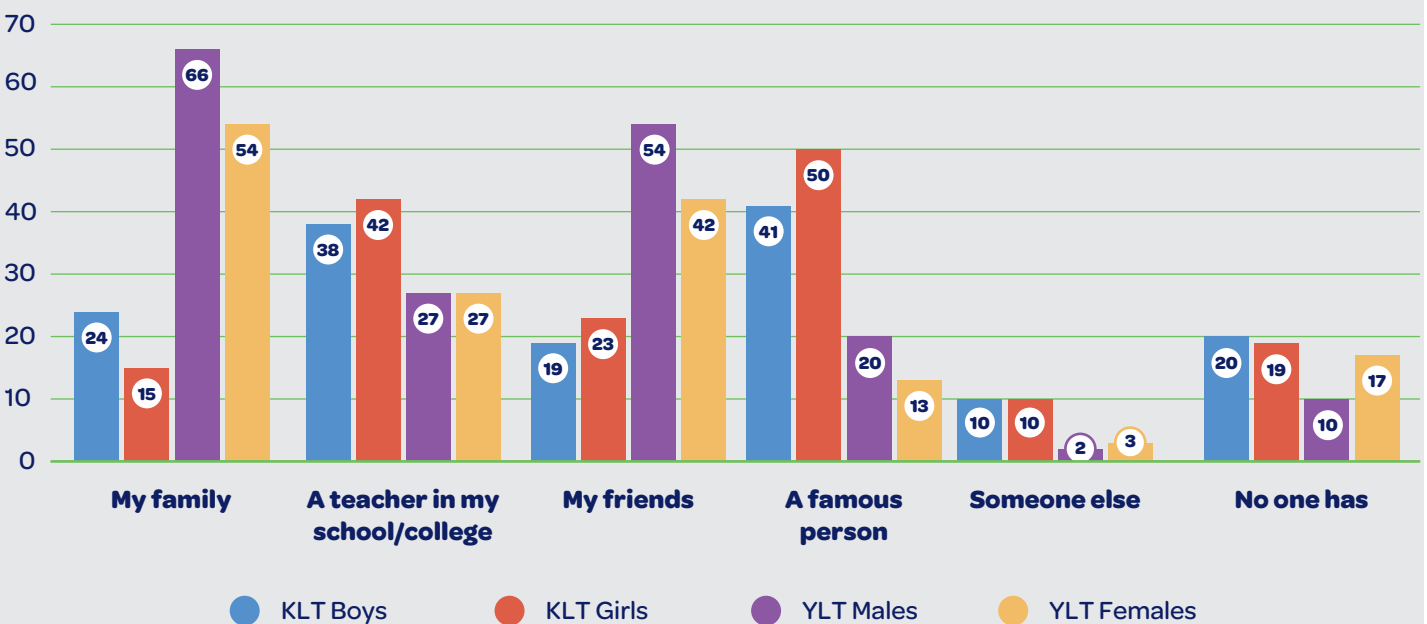
Other significant differences were found in relation to family financial background with 70 percent of YLT respondents from well-off backgrounds saying that they were encouraged by their family to take part in sport compared to just 58 percent from not well-off backgrounds and 54 percent and 54 percent from average well-off backgrounds (p=0.000). The same applied to encouragement from friends, with 55 percent of well-off respondents reporting encouragement from friends compared to 46 percent of average well-off respondents and just 40 percent of not well-off 16-year olds (p=0.008).

Same-sex attracted young people also took much less encouragement and inspiration for sport from their family and friends than opposite-sex attracted

young people (family: 47% and 61% respectively, p=0.000; friends: 40% and 50% respectively; p=0.001).

There was no difference between Catholics and Protestants in relation to encouragement and inspiration for sport from their family, but those with no religious background reported a much lower level of encouragement from their families (64%, 62% and 51% respectively, p=0.008). Those 16-year olds without religious background were also much more likely than Catholics and Protestants to say that no-one had encouraged or inspired them to take part in sport (19%, 11% and 12% respectively, p=0.007).

**Figure 9: Has anyone ever encouraged or inspired you to take part in sports? YLT and KLT respondents by gender (%)**





**KLT**

As 16-year old females, P7 girls experienced significantly lower levels of encouragement to take part in sport from their families; 24 percent of boys, but only 15 percent of girls said that their family encouraged or inspired them to take part in sport. This is a highly significant gender difference. Interestingly, girls (42%) were slightly more likely than boys (38%) to say that a teacher had inspired them to take part in school and that their friends encouraged them to do sports (23% and 19% respectively). These differences had disappeared (teachers) or were reversed (friends) for 16-year olds. Furthermore, half (50%) of P7 girls said they were inspired by a famous person to take part in sport compared to just 1 percent of boys (Figure 9). This is interesting as boys were much more likely than girls to say that they had a sports idol, as reported above.

A very large difference also existed between the encouragement from parents in high affluence and low affluence families. Twenty-two percent of children from high affluence families said their families encouraged them to take part in sport. This compares with 18 percent of medium affluence families and just 16 percent of low affluence families.

**Tuition, coaching and talent squads**

YLT and KLT asked respondents whether they had ever received tuition or coaching to improve their performances in sport or physical activity. YLT respondents were also asked whether they had ever helped with sports coaching, including in summer schemes and whether they were involved in an organised squad or programme for talented sports people. Fifty-four percent of YLT respondents and 66 percent of KLT respondents said they had been coached by someone else than their PE teacher.

**KLT**

Gender and family financial affluence were again the main background factors that differentiated between 10 and 11-year olds who had received sports tuition and coaching and those who did not. Almost three quarters (74) of P7 children from high affluence families said they had received sports tuition or coaching, compared to 64 percent of children from medium affluence families and only 57 percent of children from low affluence families. With regard to gender differences, 69 percent of boys said that they had received sports coaching or tuition compared with 62 percent of girls.

**YLT**

Among YLT respondents, males (59%) were significantly more likely to have received coaching than females (51%) ( $p=0.015$ ). There was an even more significant difference ( $p=0.002$ ) by family financial background, with those from well-off backgrounds (63%) being much

more likely to say that they had received coach outside of the PE classes than those from average well-off and not well-off backgrounds (50 and 49% respectively). This difference is then also reflected when comparing the experiences by school type attended, with Grammar school students – who are more likely to be from financially better-off backgrounds - being much more likely to have received coaching than their counterparts who attended secondary or integrated schools (59%; 47% and 44% respectively,  $p=0.000$ ).

Another statistically highly significant difference existed in relation to sexual attraction. Same-sex attracted 16-year olds were much less likely to have received coaching outside of their PE classes than opposite-sex attracted 16-year olds (57% and 42%,  $p=0.007$ ). This could suggest that many same sex attracted young people may perceive sports club to be heteronormative environments.

Lastly, respondents who said they had no religious affiliation were also less likely (47%) than their Catholic (56%) and Protestant (59%) counterparts to have received coaching outside of their school environment ( $p=0.030$ ). This probably points to the ongoing religious segregation of many sports clubs in Northern Ireland which perhaps prevents or discourages those who do not identify as either Catholic or Protestant to attend these clubs. Even when sports clubs may not be formally segregated along religious lines, historically particular sports are affiliated with particular

religions and religious communities, and this *de facto* segregation can be made stronger through segregation in schools and neighbourhoods.

Sixteen-year old males were a little more likely than their female counterparts to say that they had received sports coaching or tuition (59% and 51%), which reflects the slightly higher degree to which boys are involved in sports. The only other significant difference was that respondents from well-off families were more likely to say that they had received coaching than respondents from not-well-off and average well-off families (63% 40% and 49%). This also explains the differences found by school type attended with Grammar school pupils reporting the highest level of coach experience. As explained above, this is a reflection of the higher proportion of well-off pupils in Grammar schools.

Over one third of YLT respondents (36%) also said that they had helped with sports coaching. Males were more likely to have done so (40%) than females (33%), and this difference was statistically significant ( $p=0.007$ ). Same-sex attracted respondents were much less likely to say that they had helped with any sports coaching than opposite-sex attracted 16-year olds (23% and 39%,  $p=0.000$ ). Catholics (41%) and Protestants (35%) were much more likely to say than 16-year olds without religious affiliation (30%) that they had helped with coaching. Well-off respondents were also more likely to say that they had helped (41%) than average well-off respondents (35%) and not well-off

respondents ( $p=0.044$ ). Interestingly, those with caring responsibility (48%) were much more likely to have helped with sports coaching than those without (35%) ( $p=0.025$ ) which could suggest a level of transferrable skills in relation to the two activities that the 16-year olds are using.

Overall, 12 percent of 16 year olds said they had been involved in squad programmes for talented sports people. Significantly more males (16%) than females (9%) said this ( $p=0.004$ ). financially well-off respondents were more likely to reports this than those from not-well off backgrounds and average well-off backgrounds (15%, 13% and 10% respectively,  $p=0.027$ ). Only five percent of same-sex attracted young people said they had been involved in squad programmes compared to 14 percent of opposite-sex attracted young people ( $p=0.020$ ).

### **Sports as a way to bring different people together**

YLT respondents were asked whether they had ever participated in a project that used sports to bring people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds together, and whether they would like to participate in such sports-based community relations projects in the future. Around one third (31%) of 16-year olds said they had participated in sports-based community relations programmes, whilst over half (52%) said they would like to do so in future. Males were slightly more likely to have participated in such programmes (34%) than females (29%), whilst the reverse

was true for preferences for future programmes (males: 49%; females 54%). However, these gender differences were not statistically significant.

There was a statistical difference in experiences in relation to the type of school 16-year olds attended. Those attending Grammar schools (26%) were less likely to have experienced sport-based community relations programmes in the past than those attending formally integrated (35%) and secondary schools (36%) ( $p=0.019$ ). When it came to preferences to attend such programmes in future, Grammar school students were most likely to say that they would like to do so (54% saying 'yes') although this was not a statistically significant difference. Those who attended religiously mixed schools were significantly less likely to say that they wanted to take part in sports-based community relations programmes in future than their counterparts in religiously segregated schools ( $p=0.040$ ). The reason for this could be that they already mix on a daily basis with pupils from different religious backgrounds, so they may not feel that formalised programmes that encourage religious and ethnic mixing would add to their experience.

Participation in sports-based community relations programmes varied significantly between District Council areas (Table 11). Those living in the local districts of Belfast City (43%) and Fermanagh and Omagh (42%) were most likely to have participated in such programmes, whilst respondents from

North Down and Ards were by far the least likely to have taken part in such programmes (15%). The strongest preference for participation in future programmes was expressed by 16-year olds from Antrim and Newtownabbey (59%), whilst respondents from Derry City and Strabane were least likely to say they would like to take part in sports-based community relations programmes in future.

We explored whether those who had taken part in sports-based community relations programmes actually held more positive views towards others than those who had not taken part in these programmes in the past. Interestingly, the only statistically significant difference could be detected among respondents who said they had no religious affiliation. For these young people, participation in sports-based programmes that brought people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds together was related to significantly more favourable views towards Catholics, Protestants and people from minority ethnic groups ( $p=0.000$ ).

**Table 11: Proportions of YLT respondents by District Council Area<sup>6</sup> saying that they had taken part in sports-based community relations programmes in the past, or would like to do so in future**

District Council Area	%	
	Yes, in the past	Yes, in future
Belfast City	42	55
Lisburn and Castlereagh	26	45
North Down and Ards	15	52
Antrim and Newtownabbey	33	59
Mid and East Antrim	31	49
Newry City, Mourne and Down	24	50
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	28	52
Derry City and Strabane	30	44
Causeway Coast and Glens	32	54
Fermanagh and Omagh	43	56
Mid-Ulster	34	55



6 Further information relating to KLT/YLT findings by District Council is contained within the District Council Factsheet (available at [www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)).

### Perceived health benefits of sport

Both KLT and YLT respondents were asked whether they thought sport had benefits for their physical and mental health. Table 12 shows that only a very small minority of respondents in both surveys thought that there were no benefits at all. Five times as many KLT respondents as YLT respondents were unsure about both the physical and the mental health benefits of sport, and in both surveys the proportion of respondents unsure about mental health benefits was twice as high as the proportion unsure about physical health benefits. However, overall, these proportions were very small indeed.

Among KLT respondents, the more affluent the families were that children came from the more likely they were to respond that sport had ‘a lot’ of physical and mental health benefits.

**Table 12: Respondents’ perception about the health benefits of sport. KLT and YLT respondents**

	%			
	Physical health		Mental health	
	KLT	YLT	KLT	YLT
A lot	<b>78</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>65</b>
A little	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>28</b>
Not at all	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>
I don’t know	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>

There is a very strong link between self-assessed health and the level of physical activity respondents are involved in. Half of YLT respondents who were physically active at least to the recommended level said their health was excellent, whilst a further third thought it was good. In comparison, 47 percent who were never, or for only one day a week, physically active for the recommended 60 minutes said that their health was just fair, with a further 15 percent saying it was poor.

The results were similar for KLT respondents. Ninety-three percent of those who were active to the recommended level or above said their health was at least good, whereas this was the case for only 78 percent of KLT respondents who said they never completed the recommended level of activity.

There was a significant relationship between perceived body size - that is whether they felt they were too thin, too fat or about the right size - and the

importance young people placed on being fit and healthy. Among 16-year olds, both those who said they were too thin and those who said they were too fat were much less likely to say that being fit and healthy is a very important reason for taking part in sport than those who said their weight was about right. Those who said they were a bit or much too fat were most likely to say that they would like to do a lot more sport and physical activity than they were currently doing. Those who felt they were too fat were also much less likely ( $p=0.001$ ) than other respondents to say that their family had encouraged or inspired them to take part in sport.

Among 10 and 11-year olds, 18 percent among those who said they were ‘too fat’ said they never completed the recommended level of physical activity, this was about twice the proportion of those who were physically active at the recommended level (60 minutes per day) or above. Being fit and healthy was more likely to be a ‘very important’ reason to be physically active among

those children who said their body weight was 'about right' than those who thought they were 'too fat' (66% and 59% respectively).

### Prohibiting factors

The single most important factor why 16-year olds were not more involved in sports and physical activity was a lack of time, as Table 13 shows; seven in ten (69%) YLT respondents said this. This was more than twice the proportion of KLT respondents (25%).

### KLT

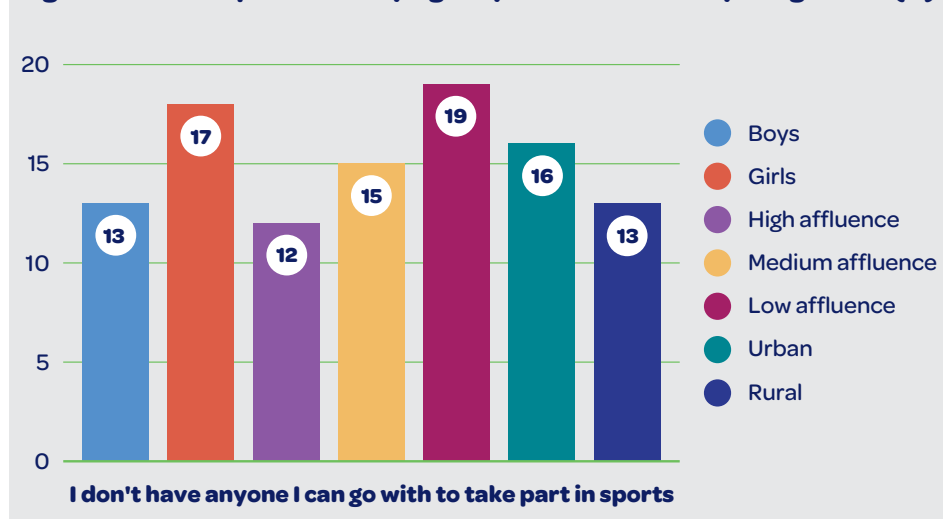
The main reason for children not to take part in sport was the lack of knowledge about where they could undertake activities, which highlights their reliance on parents to organise sport for them. It also reveals the potential for Sport Northern Ireland to work with schools to highlight what is available locally and how children might get involved.

The largest differences in P7 children were found in relation to having no-one to go with to take part in sport. Nineteen percent of children from low-affluence families said they did not have anyone to go with to take part in sport compared with 15 percent of children from medium affluence families and just 12 percent from high affluence families. Children from urban schools were also more likely than children attending rural schools to say that they had no-one to go with, as Figure 10 shows. All these differences were statistically significant.

**Table 13: Reasons preventing YLT and KLT respondents from taking part in sport (Multiple response)**

	%	
	YLT	KLT
Not enough time	69	25
Poor health or a disability	4	20
I don't have anyone I can go with	23	15
Difficulty getting there/lack of transport	26	n. a.
Costs involved	24	n. a.
Don't know where I can do activities	13	38
Other reason	7	n. a.
Nothing stops or prevents me	9	12

**Figure 10: KLT respondents saying they 'have no-one they can go with' (%)**



P7 girls were more likely than boys to say that not having enough time prevented them from taking part in sport (24% and 27%). Boys, on the other hand, were more likely to say that they did not know where the activities were. Boys were slightly more likely than girls to say that nothing stopped them to take part in sport.

Children from high affluence families were much more likely than their counterparts from medium affluence families and low affluence families to say that they did not know where the activities were, and this is strongly related to car ownership. Forty percent of those who said their families owned two cars or more said not knowing where the activities were prevented them from taking part in sport compared to 37

percent of families with one car and just 24 percent of children whose families who had no car. This suggests that children from affluent families were much more reliant on their parents to drive them to and from the sport activities they were taking part in. On the one hand this may increase the scope and range of activities available to these children; on the other hand it increases their dependence on parents.

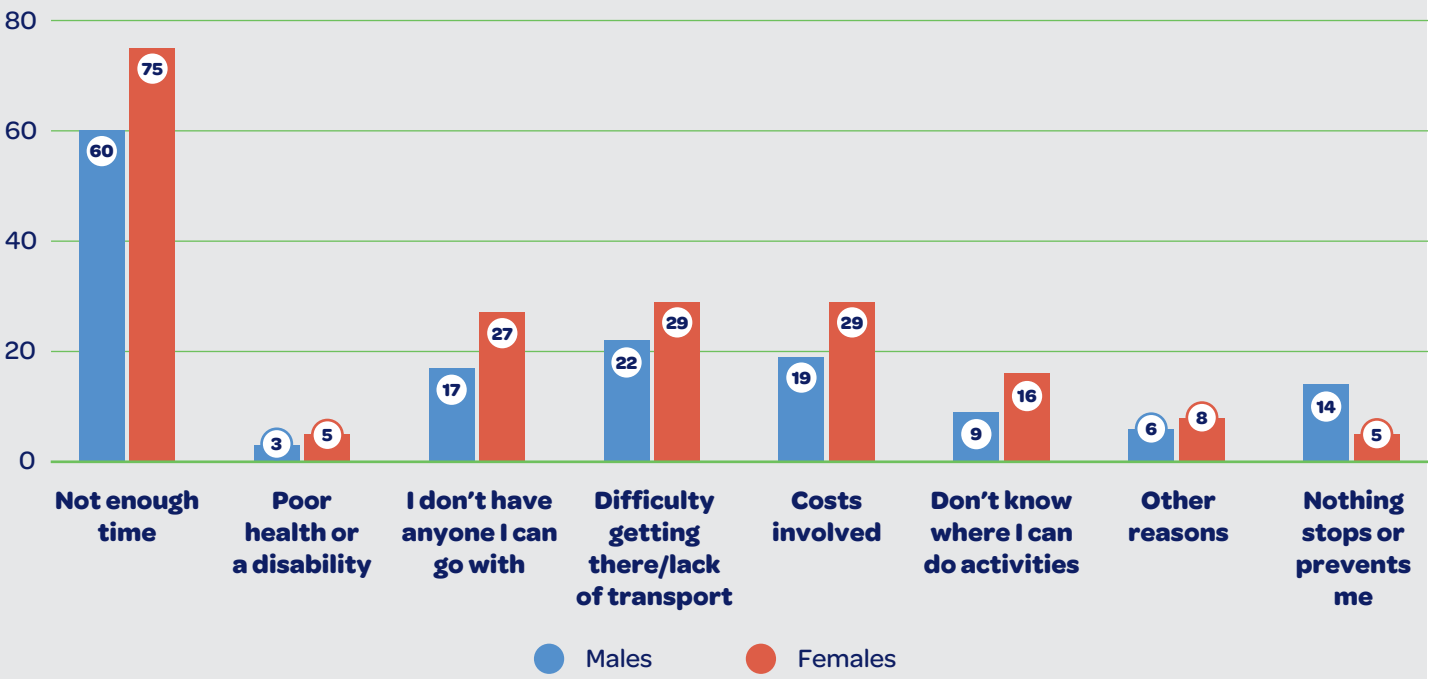
**YLT**

Female 16-year olds were significantly more likely than their male counterparts to say that all the potential prohibiting factors listed in the survey prevented them from taking part in more sports. In turn, males were much more likely to say that nothing prevented them from being more active (Figure 11). Except for ‘poor

health’ and ‘other reasons’ these differences were also statistically highly significant.

As it is unlikely that females have *per se* less access to means of transport than their male counterparts, the only reasonable explanation for this finding is that the kind of activities that females are interested in were less likely to be offered in close proximity to their homes. One example is that public playing fields or parks are perhaps more geared towards the needs of males than females. Females (29%) were also more likely than males (19%) to say that the costs involved in the activity were prohibitive ( $p=0.000$ ), which would support the argument that free leisure and sports facilities nearby are more attractive to males than females.

**Figure 11: YLT respondents saying the following reasons prevented them from taking part in more sport, by gender (%)**



The costs involved in sports were more of a prohibitive factor for young people from urban areas (34%) than small towns (23%) and rural areas (21%) ( $p=0.005$ ). Not well-off 16-year olds were also much more likely than respondents from well-off families to say that the costs involved in the activities prevented them from taking part, as could be expected ( $p=0.000$ ).

Those who attended Grammar schools were much more likely than those at formally integrated schools and secondary schools to say lack of time prevented them from taking part in sports (73%; 67% and 65% respectively,  $p=0.018$ ), which most likely emphasises the disproportionately higher extent of school work and homework Grammar school students are expected to complete.

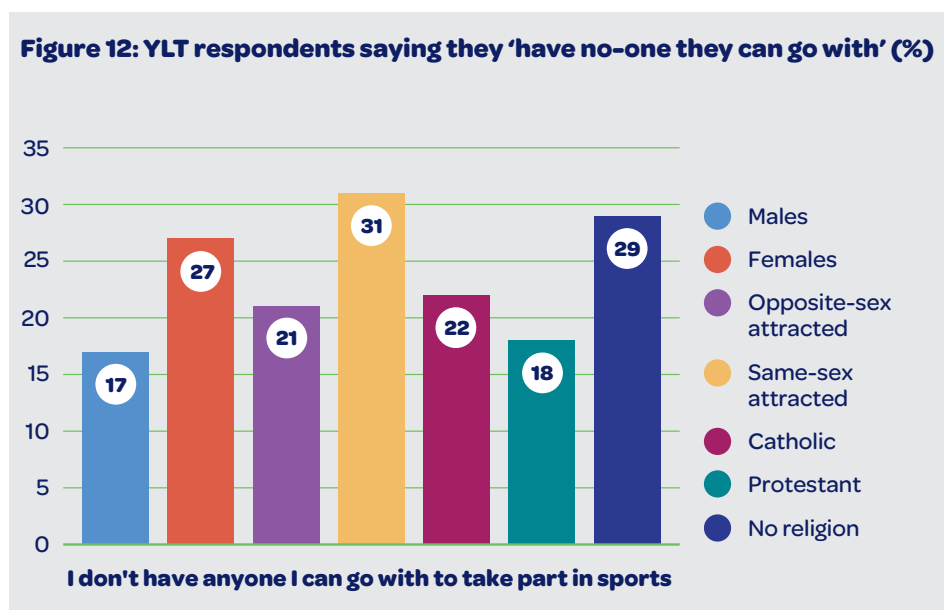
Same-sex attracted people were much more likely than opposite-sex attracted people to say that having no-one they can go with was a factor why they did not take part in sport (31% compared to 21%,  $p=0.018$ ). This also applied to YLT respondents with no religious background (29%) who were much more likely than their Catholic (22%) and Protestant (17%) counterparts to say that they had no-one they could go with ( $p=0.015$ ) (Figure 12).

Lack of transport was also much more of an issue for YLT respondents from rural areas and those from not well-off family backgrounds. Over one third (35%) of YLT respondents from rural areas said

that lack of transport prevented them from taking part in more sport compared to less than one quarter of urban YLT respondents (22%) and one in five 16-year olds who lived in small towns (20%) ( $p=0.000$ ). Almost one third (31%) of respondents from not well-off backgrounds said that lack of transport prevented them from taking part in sport compared to just over one in five (21%) of well-off respondents ( $p=0.024$ ).

Poor health was a reason for not being more active for one in five YLT respondents (20%) with a long-term disability of health condition compared to just two percent without health condition/disability.

Table 14 summarises lists the groups of 16-year olds most affected by restrictive factors to take part in sport and physical activity.



**Table 14: Groups of YLT respondents who are disproportionately affected by the following reasons for not taking part in more sport**

Not enough time	<b>Females; Grammar school students</b>
Poor health or a disability	<b>Disabled people</b>
I don't have anyone I can go with	<b>Females; same-sex attracted young people; 16-year olds with no religious affiliation</b>
Difficulty getting there/transport	<b>Females; 16-year olds from not well-off backgrounds; 16-year olds from rural areas</b>
Costs involved	<b>Females; young people from not well-off backgrounds; 16-year olds from urban areas</b>
Don't know where I can do activities	<b>Females</b>
Nothing stops or prevents me	<b>Males</b>

### Long-term illness, disability and sport

As reported above, 16-year olds who said they had a long-term physical or mental health condition or disability were more likely to report that this condition prevented them from being physically more active.

However, we did not find evidence that a long-term illness or disability meant that children and young people with such a condition led a more sedentary lifestyle, per se. In fact, as Table 15 shows, both KLT and YLT respondents with a disability or long-term health condition were slightly more likely to say that they cycled or walked to school than their counterparts without health conditions, although this difference is statistically insignificant. For KLT respondents, disability or long-term ill-health had virtually no effect on the extent to which they participated in physical activities during a normal week. This was different

for 16-year olds, where those with a disability or ill-health were much less likely to say that they took part in PE or organised sport via sports clubs outside of school. However, on the other hand, young people with a disability or long-

term illness were significantly more likely to say that they took part in 'other physical activities' and they were also slightly more likely to say they took part in outdoor adventure activities, as Table 15 shows.

**Table 15: Physical activities undertaken by KLT and YLT respondents in a normal week, by long-term disability or health condition (multiple response)**

	%			
	YLT		KLT	
	Disability	No disability	Disability	No disability
Walk/cycle to school	<b>44</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>48</b>
Do PE in school	<b>34</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>54</b>
Sport/activities outside school	<b>40</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>76</b>
Outdoor adventure activities <sup>7</sup>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>
Any other physical activity	<b>36</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>
None of these	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>

<sup>7</sup> For KLT respondents, outdoor adventure activities were included in the 'Sport outside school' category rather than being listed separately.



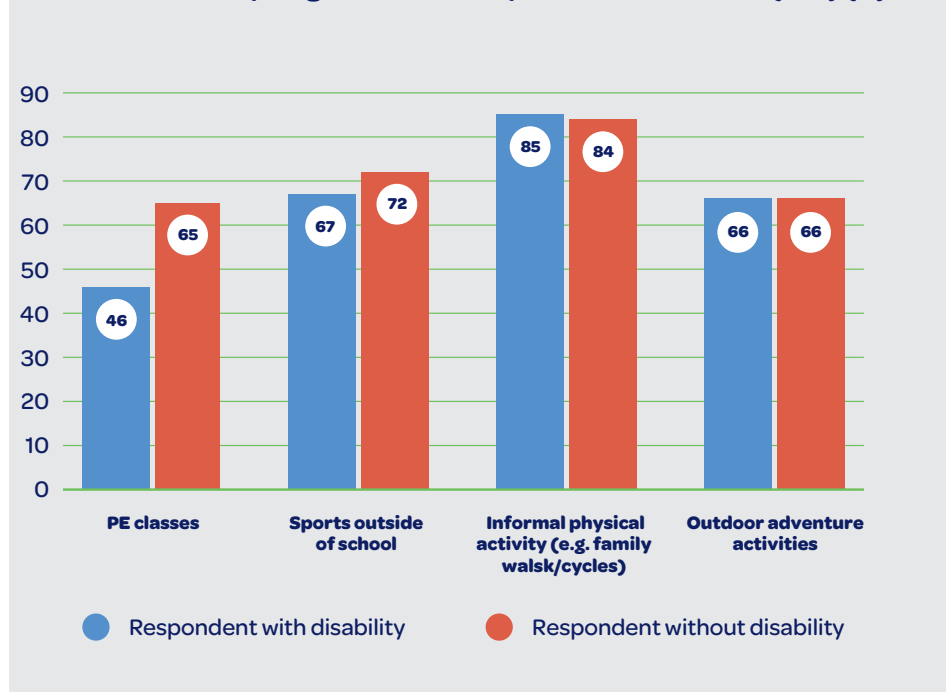
These results are reflected in the number of days that children and young people are physically active at the recommended level of 60 minutes per day, as Table 16 shows. There is basically no difference in the level of physical activity between P7 children with and without disability or long-term illness. However, the YLT data shows that 16-year olds with a disability or long-term illness have an overall lower level of physical activity in a normal week. Whilst the proportion of those who are sedentary and are never physically active, and the proportion of those who are very active differs little between 16-year olds with and without disability/long-term illness, it is in the group of those who are physically active several days a week, but not every day where the differences were significant. Here Table 16 shows that those with disability or long-term illness are on average less physically active. Almost twice the proportion of young people without physical or mental ill-health or disability said they had 60 minutes of physical activity 4-6 times a week as respondents with a disability or long-term illness.

YLT respondents with disability or long-term illness reported lower levels of enjoyment of organised sport inside and outside of school, but identical levels of enjoyment of informal physical activity with their friends or family and of outdoor activities as Figure 13 shows. Especially the much lower level of enjoyment of PE in school was noticeable.

**Table 16: Number of days in a normal week that respondents with and without long-term disability or health condition spend at least 60 minutes doing some physical activity. By KLT and YLT respondents, by (multiple response)**

	%			
	YLT		KLT	
	Disability	No disability	Disability	No disability
Never	12	9	10	8
Up to 3 times a week	67	57	33	34
4 to 6 times a week	14	26	24	26
7 times a week	5	6	19	18
More often	3	3	14	14

**Figure 13: Proportion of respondents saying they enjoy these activities 'a lot' or 'a little'. By long-term disability or health condition (YLT) (%)**





# 4 Discussion and Conclusions

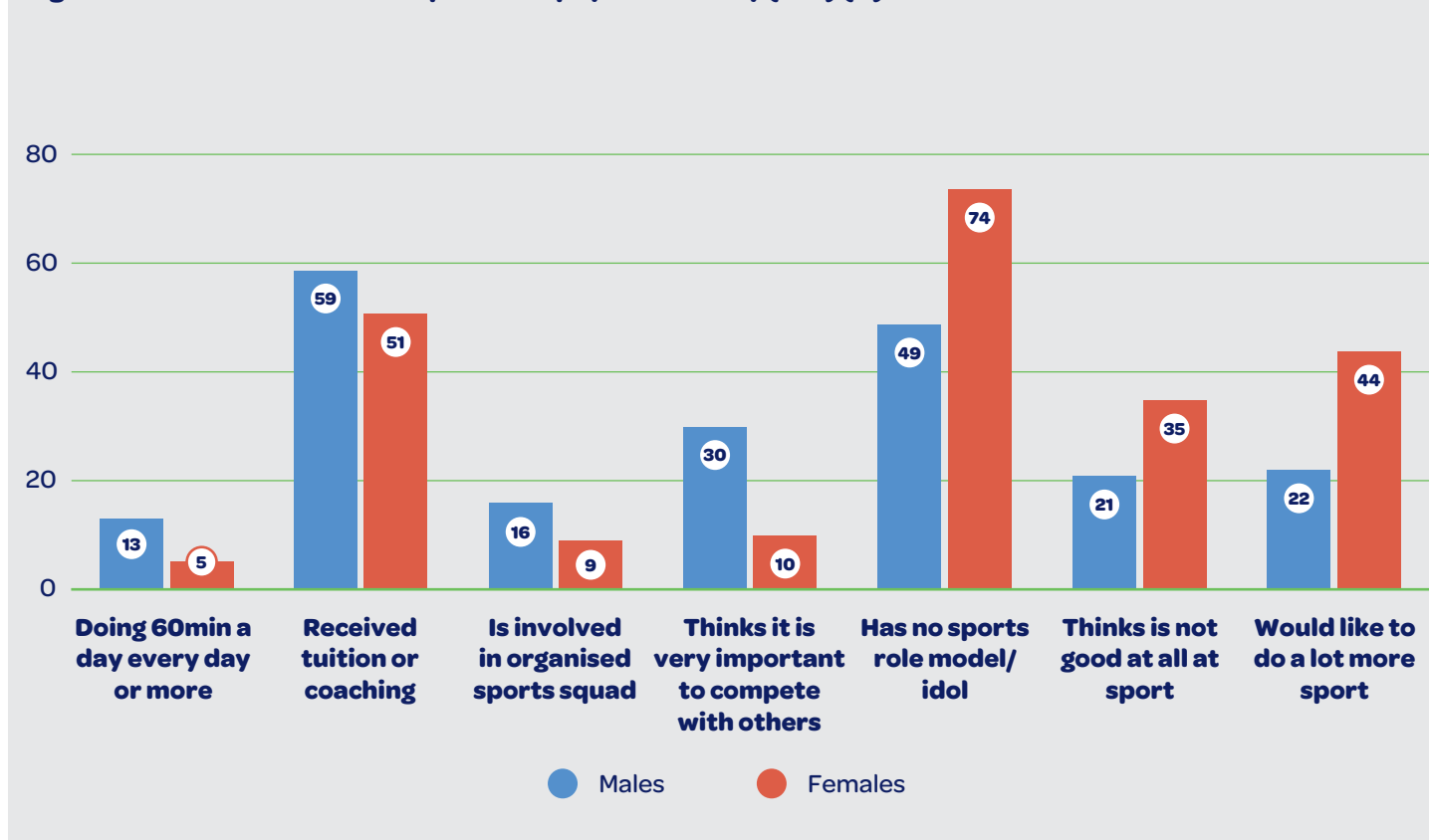
The 2015 KLT and YLT survey produced a large number of results which can be used as baseline data to continue to monitor children’s and young people’s attitudes to and experiences of physical activity and sport. Below we summarise the key findings of the surveys and offer some conclusions.

## 1. Gender and sport

The main variable that impacted on the experiences of and attitudes to sport and physical activity was respondents’ gender, and this was the case in both KLT and the YLT survey. Sixteen-year old males were more likely to be active to the level that is recommended and were more likely to be involved in sports including tuition and coaching outside

the school context. Females were much more likely than their male counterparts to think that they were not good at sport, but they were also much more likely than males to say that they would like to do much more sport. Three quarters of females had no sports idol or role model (Figure 14). The Figure also shows that males were more likely than females to value competitiveness in sport.

**Figure 14: Gender difference in sports and physical activity (YLT) (%)**



A comparison of gender differences among KLT and YLT respondents revealed that these are wider at age 16. At P7 stage, boys and girls still reported quite similar experiences in relation to sport and physical activity. As reported above, the most significant finding for P7 children is that boys appear to be much more likely to be encouraged by their parents to do sport at that age than girls (24% and 15% respectively). This could be interpreted as evidence for prevailing gendered upbringing for girls and boys. We found no evidence that schools encouraged boys more than girls to be physically active or to do sports, so any targeted activity campaigns – such as the ‘Activ8’ campaign - should perhaps target parents to stress the importance of sport – especially parents of girls who are currently least likely to be encouraged to take part in sport.

It is clear from the data that boys value competitive encounters in sports more than girls, so perhaps the range of activities that are offered specifically for girls and young women needs to take account of this. Some private and public fitness and sports centres already offer gender-specific courses and activities; however, YLT data suggests that costs and distance are inhibiting factors, especially for young women. The data on the range of activities undertaken by 16-year olds suggests that at that age activities, such as walking, cycling and jogging dominate. These are activities that be undertaken at any time of the day - individually or with friends - and can be tailored around the other commitments that 16-year olds have.

We cannot be sure whether these individualised activities dominate due to the lack of preferred alternatives, or whether these activities really are the favourite and most practical physical activities young people undertake at that age. In any case, we suggest that investments into convenient and non-competitive infrastructure, such as safe foot and cycle paths could encourage females to be physically more active.

## 2. Family affluence and access to sport

We found a relationship between family affluence and participation in sport. This was not a surprise. Membership in sports clubs, travel to and from training and competitions, respective sports clothing and equipment, membership in fitness clubs etc. all incur costs that families on low income or with more than one or two children may find hard to meet. One convenient and inexpensive way of offering sport would be after-school activities in schools; however increased pressures on school budgets also mean that the level of activities offered might be reduced or that parents or carers are asked to make a financial contribution toward these activities. Again, this ultimately means, as our data shows, that that families on low income may miss out. We therefore conclude that Sport Northern Ireland should continue to prioritise investment in sport and physical activity in areas of social deprivation. It is however important that these investments are being made in consultation with district councils and with children and young people in these

areas in order to ensure that they reach the target audience and meet their needs.

## 3. Religious belonging and sport

Northern Ireland is a society emerging from decades of violent conflict. Sport is undoubtedly one of the most appropriate means to bring people together. Almost one third of YLT respondents had experienced sports-based community relations programmes, and over half said that they would like to take part in programmes like this in future. The Shared Future and Shared Education Frameworks provide ideal opportunities to foster sharing and better community relations via sport.

However, the YLT survey also provided evidence that whilst sport can be an excellent vehicle to bring people from different backgrounds together, it currently also contributes to an ongoing segregation. We found that the increasing proportion of young people who do not identify as Catholics or Protestants are least likely to enjoy PE in schools and least likely to join sports clubs outside of school. The continued socio-religious segregation of schools with their often traditional range of school and afterschool sports opportunities offered can be an inhibiting factor for young people who do not fit into the respective majority socio-religious community. The same applies to sports clubs, especially those involved in what is perceived as ‘British’ and ‘Gaelic games’ respectively, such as football, rugby, cricket and Gaelic football, camogie etc. which are still often

run as or regarded as exclusively or majority Catholic or Protestant clubs (Sugden and Bairner, 1993).

There is no need to repeat Hargie, Summerville and Mitchell's (2015) extensive discussion of sport and religious segregation here. In particular the link between the GAA and Irish national/Catholic identity and the role that Gaelic games have played in Irish history and nation-building is well evidenced. It is important to be respectful of this and to acknowledge that this is a complex issue to resolve. However, the point of this report is not to dwell on historical issues, but to point out current disadvantage. The YLT data clearly shows that especially 16-year olds who are not part of the Catholic community but attend exclusively or mainly Catholic grand-maintained schools did not enjoy PE in school and were less likely to take part in sports outside of school, and this needs to be addressed.

As divided housing and segregated schooling mutually reinforce each other, and directly and indirectly contribute to continued segregation in some sports, this is not a matter that can be resolved through sports alone. Sports clubs often heavily rely on volunteers, and are closely embedded in traditionally single-religion neighbourhoods. This is unlikely to change very easily. However, a greater focus in school PE on (international) sports that are not associated with the socio-religious divide in Northern Ireland is likely to make those with no religious

background feel more welcome. A more proactive open-door policy of sports clubs that are associated with traditionally 'British' and 'Gaelic games' may have a similar effect.

#### 4. The rural and urban divide

We found an interesting relationship between rurality and the level of sport and physical activity undertaken by children and young people. It was not surprising to see that children and young people from rural areas were least likely to say that they walked or cycled to school. The lower population density in rural areas means that the distance between family homes and schools is larger, and for some young people it may therefore be unfeasible to walk or cycle to school, especially at post-primary level where some young people have to travel significant distances to get to their school.

However our data also indicates a greater involvement of children and young people from rural areas in organised sport outside of the school context. In addition we found that these young people were more likely to enjoy PE in schools. This would indicate that sport plays a greater role in the lives of non-urban children and young people as leisure time activity, which was evidenced by the fact that young people from rural areas were more likely than their urban counterparts to say that meeting friends and having fun was a very important reason why they took part in sport. Whilst it therefore seems crucial to protect sports facilities and

opportunities for young people in rural areas, it is also evident that the promotion of sport and physical activity as a healthy and fun way to spend time is particularly important for urban young people. We found that urban young people particularly enjoyed out-door activities, which could be an indication as to where funding could be effectively targeted at.

#### 5. Sport and heteronormativity<sup>8</sup>

We found significantly lower levels of participation in sport and enjoyment in sport among same-sex attracted 16-year olds. The recent public coming out of some of Britain's top athletes (e.g. Tom Daley, Keegan Hirst, Casey Stoney, Gareth Thomas), along with general policy changes (e.g. equal marriage law), have created a greater openness towards LGB athletes in sports. However, our evidence suggests that more needs to be done at the grass roots to welcome same-sex attracted young people. On the one hand, significantly lower proportions of same-sex attracted than opposite-sex attracted 16-year olds reached the daily physical activity target. On the other hand, same-sex attracted young people were the group that was most likely to say that they wanted to do 'a lot more' sport. This would suggest that there is either an open or hidden hetero-normative climate in some sports clubs that acts as an inhibiting factor for young people who do not identify as heterosexual to take part in sports.

8 heteronormativity - perpetuates the idea that heterosexuality is the accepted norm.

## 6. Making time for sport and physical activity

Sixteen-year olds - in particular 16-year old females - reported that a lack of time prevented them from taking part in more sport and physical activity. Young people often juggle school demands, volunteering, part-time jobs and family responsibilities, and they find it difficult to make time for physical activity. However, our data suggest that both KLT and YLT respondents are aware of the physical and mental health benefits that sport and physical activity have for them. This highlights the importance of offering opportunities for physical activity and sports, even for young people with already busy schedules. In school, PE should be treated as a subject that is just as important as Science, Maths or English, and ideally schools should offer opportunities for, and encourage, physical activity at break-time as well. An effective way to spend time being physically active would be to travel to school by bike or on foot, where this is feasible. The investment in cycle paths to and from schools, as well storage and appropriate changing and bike storage facilities in schools could support this, although some schools would probably also need to relax their uniform policies in addition to this, to facilitate comfortable cycling to and from school.

Another effective way to offer sport and physical activity is as an after-school activity as this cuts down travelling time. Especially for children and young people in rural areas, where distances to and from sports venues are larger, it is

important that a high level of sports activities in schools is maintained.

## 7. Implications for the promotion of sport and physical activity

Overall the 2015 KLT and YLT surveys show that sports and physical activity are a very important way for children and young people to spend their leisure time, to make friends, learn new skills, to compete and to relax. Activity levels are reasonably high, and most children and young people enjoy being active and have a good sense of the health benefits this has for them. At the same time, although very few children and young people lead sedentary lifestyles, the proportion of those who are physically

active to the level that is recommended – i.e. 60 minutes per day - is low. This is evidence that more can be done to encourage higher levels of activity. Crucially, sport can also play an important role in bringing people of different backgrounds together. This can be in a competitive context, but also in a non-competitive context, which would favour young females for whom competitiveness is a much less important aspect of physical activity. Investments in outdoor facilities that are easily accessible provide a flexibility in terms of the types of activities they can be used for, but also the times they can be used at appear to be a good way to encourage children and young people to be physically active.



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# Appendices

## KLT sport and physical activity survey module

The next few questions are about sports and physical activities. Physical activity can be done in school - in sports classes, school activities, playing with friends or walking to school. It can include many activities, for example, walking quickly, dancing, cycling, skateboarding, rollerblading, trampolining, football, gymnastics, athletics.

### Q26.

In a normal week would you do any of the following things? (Please click on ALL that apply)

Walk or cycle to school	<b>1</b>
Do PE in school	<b>1</b>
Take part in sports in a sports club, organised activities in a gym or outdoor adventure activities outside school	<b>1</b>
I do not do any of these things	<b>1</b>

### Q27.

How many times during a normal week would you spend at least 60 minutes during a day playing sports or doing some physical activity? You don't have to do the 60 minutes all together, but you have to be active for at least 10 minutes at a time doing something that makes you sweaty or out of breath

Never	<b>1</b>
Up to 4 times a week	<b>2</b>
4 – 6 times a week	<b>3</b>
7 times a week	<b>4</b>
More often	<b>5</b>

### Q28.

Please name the three main types of sports you play or physical activities you do in a normal week

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



**Q29.**

**How much do you enjoy the following?**

	<b>A lot</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>I don't do this</b>
PE classes in school	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Sport outside school, for example, in a sports club or leisure centre	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Doing outdoor adventure activities, for example, surfing, orienteering or kayaking	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

**Q30.**

**Below are some reasons why people take part in sports or physical activity. How important are these reasons for you?**

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Somewhat Important</b>	<b>Not very important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>I can't choose</b>
To be fit and healthy	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
To gain new skills	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
To have fun and meet friends	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
To compete with others	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

**Q31.**

**Which, if any, of the following reasons prevent you from taking part in sports and physical activity more often? (Please click on ALL that apply)**

Not enough time	<b>1</b>
Poor health or a disability	<b>1</b>
I don't have anyone I can go with	<b>1</b>
I don't know where I can do the activities I want to do	<b>1</b>
Nothing stops or prevents me	<b>1</b>

**Q32.**

**Has anyone ever encouraged or inspired you to take part in sports?**

**(Please click on ALL that apply)**

My family	<b>1</b>
A teacher	<b>1</b>
My friends	<b>1</b>
A famous person	<b>1</b>
No-one has inspired or encouraged me	<b>1</b>
Someone else, please type in	<b>1</b>

**Q33.**

**Do you have any sports idols? These are the sports personalities that you admire**

Yes, my sports idol is \_\_\_\_\_ **1**

No, I don't have a sports idol \_\_\_\_\_ **2**

**Q34.**

**Have you ever received any tuition or coaching from an instructor or coach (other than in PE lessons) to help improve your performance in any sport or physical activity?**

Yes	<b>1</b>
No	<b>2</b>
I can't remember	<b>3</b>

**Q35.**

**How much do you think sport or physical activity help to improve:**

	<b>A lot</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>I don't know</b>
Your physical health	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Your mental and emotional health	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

**Q36.**

**And do you think your body size is:**

Too thin	<b>1</b>
About the right size	<b>2</b>
Too fat	<b>3</b>
I don't know	<b>4</b>

**Now some questions about your health**

**Q37.**

**In general, how would you say your health is?**

Excellent	<b>1</b>
Very good	<b>2</b>
Good	<b>3</b>
Fair	<b>4</b>
Poor	<b>5</b>

## YLT sport and physical activity survey module

The next few questions are about sports and physical activities.

**Physical activity can be done in school – in sports, school activities, playing with friends or walking to school. It can include many activities, for example, walking quickly, dancing, cycling, skateboarding, rollerblading, trampolining, football, gymnastics, athletics.**

### 1. In a normal week, would you do any of the following things? (Please tick ALL that apply)

- |  |                          |   |
|--|--------------------------|---|
| Walk or cycle to school, college or work   | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 |
| Do PE in school, college or work   | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 |
| Take part in sports in a sports club, organised activity or a gym outside school           | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 |
| Take part in outdoor adventure activities e.g. canoeing, mountain biking, climbing         | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 |
| Undertake any other physical activity in your spare time ( <b><i>Please write in</i></b> ) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 |
| <hr/>  |                          |   |
| I do none of these things  | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 |

### 2. How many times during a normal week would you spend at least 60 minutes during a day playing sports or doing some physical activity? You don't have to do the 60 minutes all together, but you have to be active for at least 10 minutes at a time doing something that makes you sweaty and/or out of breath.

**(Please tick ONE box only)**

- |                  |                          |   |
|------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Never            | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 |
| Once a week      | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 |
| 2-3 times a week | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 |
| 4-6 times a week | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4 |
| 7 times a week   | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5 |
| More often       | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6 |

**3. Please name the three main types of sport you play or physical activities you do in a normal week.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**4. How much do you enjoy the following?**

*(Please tick ONE box in each row)*

	<b>A lot</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>I don't do this</b>
PE classes in school/college	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>1</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>2</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>3</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>4</b>
Sports outside of school e.g. in a sports club or leisure centre	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>1</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>2</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>3</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>4</b>
Physical activity not organised by school, or sports or leisure clubs e.g. family cycle or walk	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>1</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>2</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>3</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>4</b>
Doing outdoor adventure activities e.g. surfing, orienteering, kayaking	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>1</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>2</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>3</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>4</b>

**5. Below are some reasons why people take part in sports or physical activity.**

**How important are these reasons to you?**

*(Please tick ONE box in each row)*

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Somewhat important</b>	<b>Not very important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	<b>I can't choose</b>
To be fit and healthy	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>1</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>2</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>3</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>4</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>5</b>
To gain new skills	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>1</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>2</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>3</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>4</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>5</b>
To have fun and meet friends	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>1</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>2</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>3</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>4</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>5</b>
To look good	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>1</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>2</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>3</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>4</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>5</b>
To compete with others	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>1</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>2</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>3</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>4</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>5</b>

**6. Compared to how much sports or physical activity your currently do, would you like to do more, less or about the same?**

*(Please tick ONE box only)*

- A lot more  1
- A little more  2
- About the same  3
- A little less  4
- A lot less  5
- I don't know  6

**7. Which, if any, of the following reasons prevent you from taking part in sports and physical activity more often?**

*(Please tick ALL that apply)*

- Not enough time  1
  - Poor health or a disability  1
  - I don't have anyone I can go with  1
  - Difficulty in getting there/lack of transport  1
  - The costs involved  1
  - I don't know where I can do the activities I want to do  1
  - Some other reason (Please say what)  1
- 
- Nothing prevents me.  1

**8. Has anyone ever encouraged or inspired you to take part in sports?**

*(Please tick ALL that apply)*

- My family  1
  - A teacher in my school/college  1
  - My friends  1
  - A famous person  1
  - Someone else ***(Please write in)***  1
- 
- No one has inspired or encouraged me  1

**9. And do you have any sports idols or role models? These are sports personalities that you admire.**

My sports idols is \_\_\_\_\_

I don't have a sports idol  1

**10. Have you ever received any tuition or coaching from an instructor or coach (other than in PE lessons) to help improve your performance in any sport or physical activity?**

Yes  1

No  2

I can't remember  3

**11. Have you ever helped with any sports coaching or instructions, including helping in sports-based summer schemes?**

Yes  1

No  2

**12. How much do you think sport and physical activity help you to improve:**

*(Please tick ONE box in each row)*

	<b>A lot</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>I don't know</b>
Your physical health	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Your mental and emotional health	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

**13. And, in general, how would you say your health is?**

Excellent  1

Very good  2

Fair  3

Poor  4

**14. And do you think your body size is:**

- |                        |                          |   |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Much too thin          | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 |
| A bit too thin         | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 |
| About the right size   | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 |
| A bit too fat          | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4 |
| Much too fat           | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5 |
| I don't think about it | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6 |
| I don't know           | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7 |

**15. Do you think you are good at sport?**

**(Please tick ONE box only)**

- |                 |                          |   |
|-----------------|--------------------------|---|
| Yes, very good, | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 |
| Yes, quite good | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 |
| Not good at all | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 |
| I don't know    | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4 |

**16. Are you involved in an organised squad or programme for talented sportspeople in your sport (e.g. at county or Northern Ireland level)?**

- |              |                          |   |
|--------------|--------------------------|---|
| Yes          | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 |
| No           | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 |
| I don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 |

**17. Have you ever participated in a project that used sports to bring young people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds together?**

**(Please tick ONE answer only)**

- |                  |                          |   |
|------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Yes              | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 |
| No               | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 |
| I can't remember | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 |

**18. And would you like to participate in a sports project like that in the future?**

- |              |                          |   |
|--------------|--------------------------|---|
| Yes          | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 |
| No           | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 |
| I don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 |







This document is available  
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