

# Chapter 13

## UK: England

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### 13.1 Introduction

The organization and funding of sport in the United Kingdom is complicated. Elite sport, including major sports events and the financial support of elite athletes, is the responsibility of UK Sport. Support for sport participation and grassroots sport, however, and the monitoring of this through collection of data on sport participation is the responsibility of agencies of the home countries of the United Kingdom: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Each of these countries has its own sports council with responsibility for sport policy and each collects its own data on sport participation. This chapter is concentrating on sport participation not elite sport and therefore the situation in only one of the four home countries, England, will be considered. However, many of the activities of UK Sport do have a significant impact on England as by the far the largest of the countries that make up the United Kingdom so these will be considered as well where appropriate.

### 13.2 Sport System and the Structure of Organized Sport

The structures for administering and delivering sport in England are complex. The organizational network can be structured according to four levels (see Fig. 13.1):

- National (government)
- National (nongovernment)

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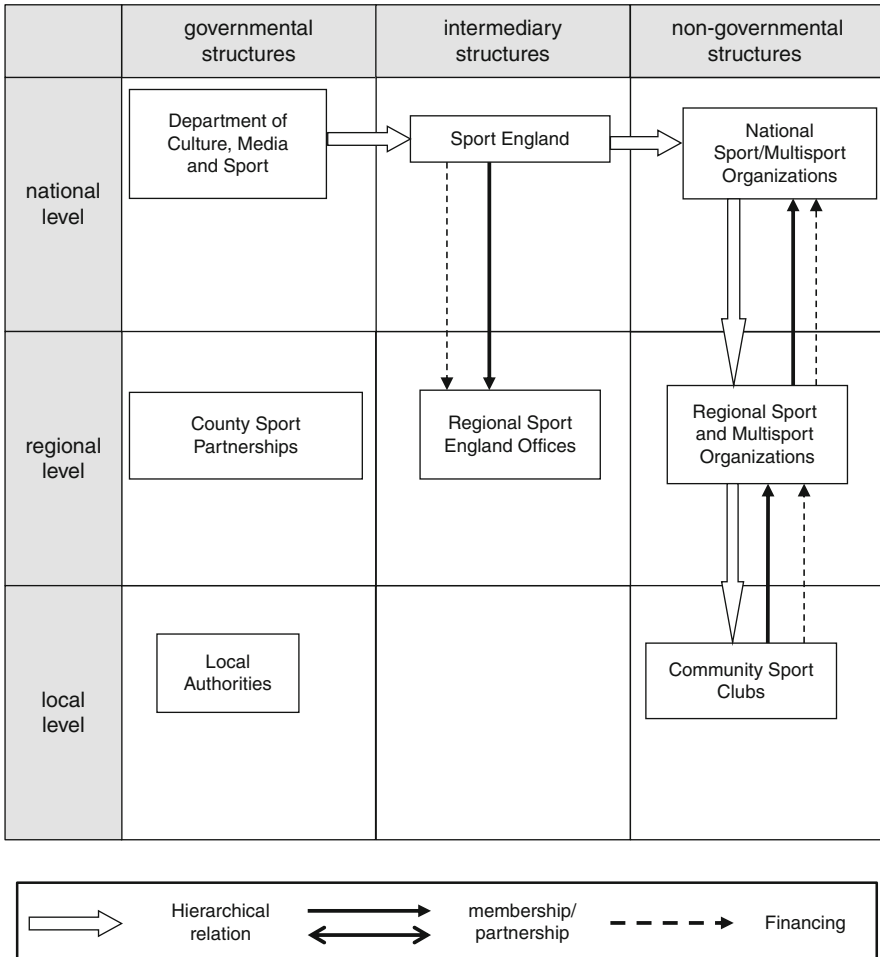


Fig. 13.1 The structure of sport in England

- Regional
- Local

### 13.2.1 National Organizations

Although the principal UK government department responsible for sport is the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), a number of other central government departments are relevant to sport, including Department of Health; Department for Children, Schools and Families; the Home Office; Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform; HM Treasury; and Department of

Communities and Local Government. This reflects the fact that sport contributes to a number of crosscutting agendas, such as social inclusion, crime reduction, citizenship, health, education, and enterprise.

Sport England is a nondepartmental public body (NDPB), funded by government, with main responsibility for sport participation and related policy in England. Sport England is accountable to parliament but used to have a reputation for being “quasi-autonomous” agents in the cause of sport. In the last two decades, however, it has been claimed that they are now much more agents of government policy.

Individual sports are run by independent governing bodies, the majority of which are “recognized” national governing bodies (NGBs). In the UK there are over 250 NGBs for just over 100 sports – many sports have more than one NGB.

Some NGBs have a UK structure, some a GB structure, and most are constituted separately in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Many of the major NGBs receive substantial funds from the government, via the national sports councils.

### ***13.2.2 Regional Organizations***

These include the following:

- Government offices
- Sport England regional offices
- County Sports Partnerships
- NGBs at regional and county levels

County Sports Partnerships (49 in England), also grant aided by Sport England and overseen by RSBs, were set up to provide strategic coordination in their geographical areas. Their remit is to help deliver Sport England programs in partnership with local authorities, healthcare providers, county level NGBs, and others and to facilitate a “joined-up” approach to increasing sports participation and building “talent pathways” for promising sportspeople.

### ***13.2.3 Local Organizations***

These include the following:

- Local authorities
- Community Sports Networks
- Schools
- Further and higher-education institutions
- Local trusts and not-for-profit organizations
- Private sector owners and operators, for example, health and fitness clubs
- Local sports councils, sports clubs, and associations

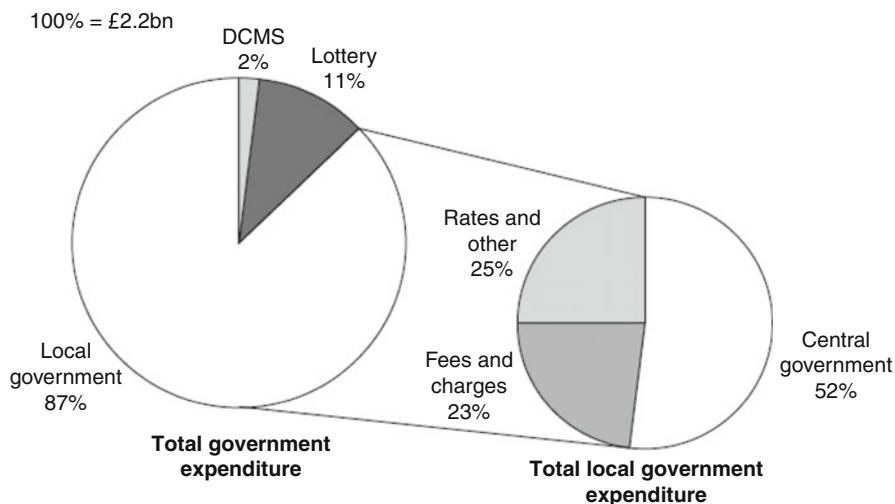
Local organizations are at the heart of sports provision in England and sports clubs and local authorities are the most significant. According to the Audit Commission (2006), there are 3,489 sport and recreation facilities with public access in England, three-quarters of these being local authority owned.

### 13.3 Financing Sport

Funding for sports comes from a variety of sources, including the following:

- Central government
- Local government
- National Lottery
- Sponsorship
- SportsAid (formerly Sports Aid Foundation), a private charity set up to provide funding to promising sportspeople
- Private sector companies
- Voluntary sector, benefactors, donors, and the public

According to DCMS/Cabinet Office (2002), in 2000 nearly 90 % of central government funding for sport was distributed by local authorities, and this central government funding represented just over a half of local authorities' expenditure on sport (see Fig. 13.2). The rest was financed by fees and charges to users (23 %) and local taxes (25 %).



**Fig. 13.2** Estimated government and lottery expenditure on sport and physical activity, 2000 (DCMS 2002). Note: total expenditure on sport estimated on the bases of lottery grants, sports council allocations, local government expenditure on leisure and recreation, education, sundry policing and grants to local clubs, and sundry central government expenditure through departments such as MoD, Royal Parks, and the prison service

**Table 13.1** National Lottery funding for sport by UK Sport and Sport England 1995–2009

	No. of grants	GBP million	Population (million)
Sport England	18,716	2,777	51.092
UK Sport	11,309	443	60.975

Source: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15106>

The National Lottery awards began in 1995 and sport has been one of the good causes throughout its existence. The DCMS website reveals a total of 47,703 grants awarded by the sports councils in the UK, totaling GBP 37.4 billion in value since awards began. Table 13.1 gives the details of the funding distributed by Sport England and UK Sport from 1995 to 2009. Sport England grants amounted to GBP 28 billion over this period with UK Sport adding a further GBP 4 billion. Given the relative population size of England to the United Kingdom, the majority of UK Sport grants will be in England. Many UK Sport grants are primarily for elite sport including elite training facilities, but in reality these facilities are also used for community use. One of the contentious issues with lottery awards is that increasing amounts have been going to major projects, such as the 2012 Olympics facilities, leaving less money for community level sport. Another concern is that Lottery funding has not all represented a net addition to investment in sport because it has been used as an excuse to reduce normal capital funding of sport by central government and local authorities.

SportsAid raises funds and supports talented young people usually aged between 12 and 18 and disabled people of any age. Since it was founded in 1976, it has distributed more than GBP 20 million and now gives grants to around 1,500 sportspeople a year.

## 13.4 Sport Policy

Sport, historically, was promoted by individuals, clubs, and associations and the governing bodies that they founded. Today, governments typically play a crucial role in terms of policy, sponsored agencies, and funding. A watershed document was published 50 years ago. The *Wolfenden Report (1960)*, commissioned by the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR), identified the need for a Sports Development Council. The Sports Council was established in 1965 and granted independent status by Royal Charter in 1972. Three other national councils followed, for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

In parallel with the setting up of the Sports Council, the second report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Sport and Leisure (1973) called for action to remedy deficiencies in sporting opportunities. This period was a turning point in sport and leisure policy:

“The state should not opt out of caring for people’s leisure when it accepts the responsibility of caring for most of their other needs. The provision of opportunities

**Table 13.2** Sports facilities in England, 2009

Facility type	Total count
Athletics tracks	379
Golf	3019
Grass pitches	56,097
Health and fitness suite	6,737
Ice rinks	44
Indoor bowls	366
Indoor tennis center	325
Ski slopes	159
Sports hall	9,311
Swimming pool	5,005
Synthetic turf pitch	1,651
<b>Total</b>	<b>83,093</b>

Source: Active Places Power, <http://www.activeplacespower.com/>

for the enjoyment of leisure is part of the general fabric of the social services” (House of Lords 1973).

Central government at the time had a belief that the provision of sports and leisure opportunities could help to alleviate antisocial behavior and many ills of the world. This belief was documented in Policy for the Inner Cities (Department of the Environment 1977) and the report of the Scarman Inquiry into riots in Brixton, London (Scarman 1981). In 1974 the government produced a White Paper on sport and recreation, which proposed substantial changes (Department of the Environment 1975). It was local authorities which took up the challenge and changed the face of public sports provision. In 1970, there were just 12 sports centers and 440 swimming pools in the whole of the United Kingdom. By 1980, this had risen to 461 sports centers and 964 swimming pools (Gratton and Taylor 1991), and Table 13.2 shows that in 2009, there are 9,311 sports halls and 5,005 swimming pools in England alone.

The next major development, in 1995, was a government policy document, *Sport: Raising the Game* (Department of National Heritage 1995). Sports participation in schools had declined and the policy aimed at reversing the trend, promoting closer links between schools and sports clubs, and establishing a new British Academy of Sport that would serve as a pinnacle of a national network of centers of excellence. This was later renamed as the English Institute of Sport. This development, together with Lottery funding for elite sportspeople, was significant because example: “Some countries invest vast public funds in special facilities, training programs and financial and status rewards for elite athletes, in order to win prestige and trade internationally. It is neither tradition nor policy to treat top level sport in this way in Britain” (Sports Council 1982).

Another pivotal government strategy for sport was produced by the government’s Cabinet Office (DCMS 2002). *Game Plan* was described by the prime minister in the foreword as “a thorough analysis of where we are now and an essential route

map to get us to where we want to be in the future” (DCMS 2002). It confirmed two major objectives for the government role in sport:

- To increase participation, “primarily because of the significant health benefits” (DCMS 2002)
  - To improve Britain’s success in international competition “particularly in the sports which matter most to the public” (DCMS 2002)
- Recommendations addressed not only these objectives but also the following:
- The need for “a more cautious approach” to hosting major events, especially in relation to the government’s role and the assessment of benefits
  - Organizational reform to encourage closer working between public, voluntary and commercial sectors
  - Identifying “what works” before committing further government investment in sport

A later independent review, the Carter Report (Carter 2005) concentrated on the financing and organization of sport. It echoed both the need for a better evidence base on which to build further public investment in sport and the need for organizational reform to eliminate wasteful duplication of effort. The Sport England strategy for 2008–2011 (Sport England 2008) attempts to address the organizational reform agenda. First, it creates a clear differentiation between responsibility for school sport, with the Youth Sport Trust; responsibility for community sport when school is finished, with Sport England; and responsibility for elite sport, with UK Sport. Second, it restricts Sport England’s remit to sport, narrowly defined, with physical activity being driven by a number of other government departments but particularly the Department of Health.

Sport England aims to deliver their key outcomes, which are as follows:

- More people taking part in sport
- Lower post-school dropout in at least five sports
- Increase in participants’ satisfaction with the quality of their sport experience
- Improved talent development systems in at least 25 sports
- A major contribution to the delivery of 5 h a week high-quality sports opportunities to young people 5–19 years

Sport England’s programs are largely designed to promote mass participation. Recently their strategies have identified National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) as the key agencies with which they will work (Sport England 2008, 2012d). NGBs of 46 sports are funded by Sport England, and they have been required to include national participation programs and targets into their whole sport plans. Furthermore, in recent years NGBs have been held accountable to these targets and some have suffered financial penalties when their participation targets have not been achieved. Sport England publishes progress reports for all NGBs funded by them (Sport England 2012a).

The 2009–2012 period of NGB funding by Sport England totaled GBP 438.6 million across 46 sports (Sport England 2012a). The 2013–2017 funding totals GBP 494.1 million, a rise of 13 %. However, mainly because of falling participation

numbers, some NGBs have had cuts to their Sport England funding for the new period – noticeably cricket, rugby union, rugby league, tennis, and judo. Other sports have had significant increases in their NGB funding, for example, archery, bowls, wheelchair basketball, and wheelchair rugby. Furthermore, Sport England has taken GBP 40 million of the total funding as a “Reward and Incentive” fund for particularly successful NGBs in the new period.

In addition to NGB funding, Sport England has several other major funding programs for mass participation, in particular, Places People Play, a GBP 150 million program over 3 years. This program includes Iconic Facilities, Inspired Facilities, and Protecting Playing Fields, three schemes for improving facilities; Club Leaders, a scheme to improve business skills in community sports clubs; Sport Makers, a program to recruit, train, and deploy 40,000 volunteers in sport; and Sportivate, a program to attract teenagers and young adults to sport (Sport England 2012c). Other Sport England funding programs include a Small Grants Program for nonprofit organizations, Sportsmatch to match sponsorship funding, Inclusive Sport for disabled participation, Active Colleges, and a Community Sport Activation Fund for very local initiatives (Sport England 2012b). All of this funding, however, will be directed from National Lottery monies, thus demonstrating that in practice the dividing lines between public expenditure and National Lottery funding are vague.

Sport England’s call for what realistically is a sea change in participation rates up to 2020 may intensify current academic debates between sociologists who emphasize controlling structures and society and psychologists such as Chelladurai (1985) who focus on individual agency, motivations, and intentions. However, the renewed welfarist drive to attain genuine Sport for All may well flounder in an era of austerity and public expenditure cuts.

In terms of sport development during the past two or three decades, an increasing emphasis on individual choice and motivations has been accompanied by increasing efforts to convince all groups in society to participate in sport. This tension between providing opportunities for all, while recognizing that not all individuals will want to become involved, has been clearly articulated by academics such as Coalter (1998). Interestingly while it has often been suggested that financial cost is the major barrier to greater participation, especially from the low participant groups, other research by Coalter for the Sports Council, as long ago as 1991 (Coalter 1991), suggested that this is not always the case. Coalter and Allison (1996) threw a sharper focus on lifestyle and individual choice in terms of identifying reasons for low or nonparticipation.

The sometimes evangelical zeal of those agencies and organizations committed to sport must be understood in the context of an increasingly open and flexible culture, where individuals may exercise choice to be indifferent or reject sport. Sports policy discourse is reminiscent of Victorian ideals of muscular Christianity, character building, and moral development through sport (McIntosh 1987). However, not everyone is convinced of the potency of government exhortations to play sport, volunteer, adopt health lifestyles, and become good citizens.

The latest UK government plan for sport at the time of writing is *Playing to Win*, from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (2008), which sets out “a vision



for sport to 2012 and beyond.” This plan reinforces the direction of change made clear in the Sport England strategy, the vision being “to give more people of all ages the opportunity to participate in high quality competitive sport.” The means to deliver it is a “system which will nurture and develop sporting talent, underpinned by a high quality club and competition structure.” This narrows the concept of sport to “competitive,” which is much more restricted than, for example, the commonly accepted definition of sport.

Recreational, noncompetitive sport is by inference no longer a remit of the DCMS, but instead is part of physical activity and therefore the remit of the Department of Health. The DCMS and Sport England plans are much more focused on a competitive sports system which delivers sporting success at the international level, particularly the 2012 Olympics, and also more focused on the voluntary sector – NGBs and clubs – to deliver this outcome. This is only partly consistent with one of the principal government aims for sport – to engage a more people in regular sport participation. The major increases in UK sport participation in recent years have been both noncompetitive (individual, fitness-oriented activity and not in the voluntary sector but in the public sector (local authorities) and commercial (fitness) sectors. Furthermore, these trends are likely to continue.

However, the focusing of DCMS and Sport England strategies does not mean they are turning their backs on noncompetitive sport and physical activity. DCMS (2008) does acknowledge its role in working with other government departments to promote physical activity and sports development. Furthermore, there is significant funding of initiatives to generate increases in physical activity, such as the GBP 140 million free swimming program for young and old people. The difference is that such initiatives are jointly funded by a number of government organizations – for example, free swimming is a cross-government initiative with funding from five government departments as well as investment from the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) and Sport England (SE).

One puzzle remains, despite all this attention on government policy. Although over 90 % of government funding for sport and physical activity is distributed by local authorities, sports services have always been a discretionary service for local authorities in England and Wales. Other services such as education and refuse collection and disposal are mandatory. If sport is so important to government, why give local authorities the option to not do anything for sport?

## **13.5 Sport Participation**

### ***13.5.1 Measuring Participation in Sport: The England Experience***

Since 2005, Sport England has invested millions of pounds to carry out an annual survey of adult (16 plus) participation in sport. The Active People Survey – the largest

survey of its kind in Europe – involves over 188,000 telephone interviews each year (in 2005/2006 only the sample size was 363,000 and there was no survey in 2006/2007) to establish patterns of sport participation. The survey – which is run continuously throughout the year – includes at its core measures of the types of sport people take part in, the frequency with which they take part (in a 4-week reference period), the intensity (in terms of energy expended – light, moderate, or vigorous), and the duration (in minutes taking part per session). The survey also includes measures of the following: the context in which participation takes place (club, competition, and coaching/tuition), the levels of volunteering, the reasons why people do or do not take part in sport, and their future intentions. An extensive range of sociodemographic questions is also included, supporting complex social profiling and modeling.

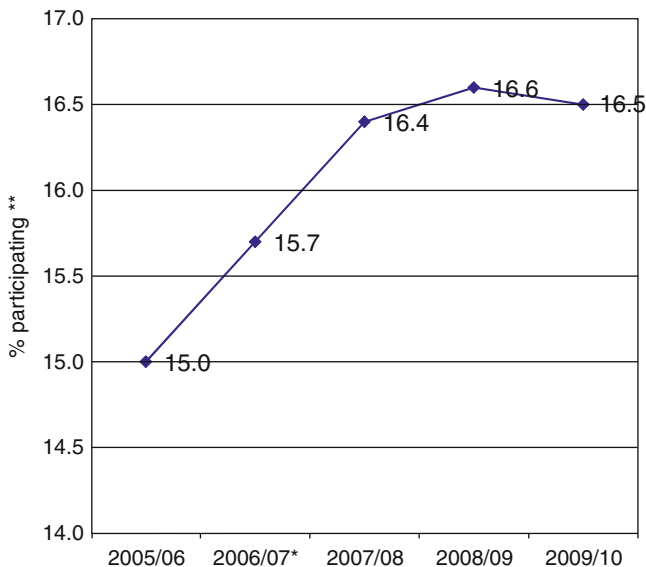
The Active People Survey has had a transformational effect on policy and practice across the whole of the sport system in terms of the following: (a) strengthening the accountability framework at national and local level (Sport England has a national target to grow and sustain participation rates in sport; national governing bodies have individually negotiated sport-specific targets linked to 4-year development plans; and many local authorities have adopted sport participation as key service outcome measures); (b) increasing understanding of trends, local geographical variations, and determinants of participation; and (c) supporting the development of tools that have practical policy and practice applications.

The survey results in England are consistent with many of the general European trends. As Fig. 13.3 indicates participation rates have increased between 2005/2006 and 2009/2010 with most of the increase occurring in the period 2005/2006–2007/2008 and a subsequent leveling of rates in the next 2 years.

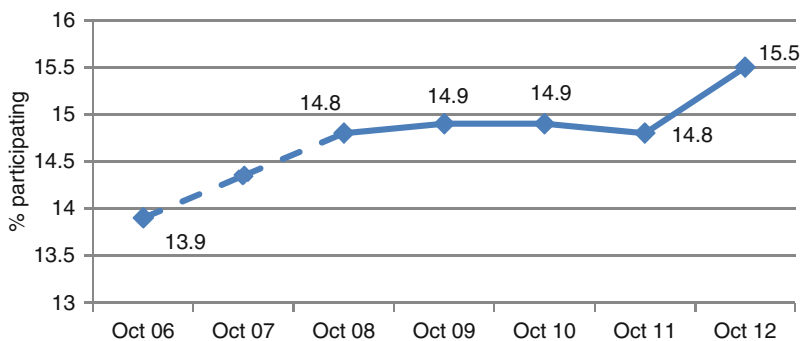
The standard measure of sports participation used in England changed with the Active People Survey. Before this the standard measure of participation was the percentage taking part in sport at least once in the previous 4 weeks. With Active People, as Fig. 13.3 indicates, the standard measure changed to the percentage taking part in sport on at least three occasions a week for at least 30 min and at least moderate intensity in the previous 4 weeks. This measure excludes all walking (which was included in the old measure). The reason for the change is the increasing emphasis on the health benefits of sport and health research indicating that the three times a week for at least 30 min is the minimum required for these health benefits to be realized.

In 2008 the government adopted a target of one million more people in sport (based on this new measure) by the end of 2012 on the basis of the inspiration to participate by the hosting of the Olympic Games in London in 2012. The benchmark level of participation was that achieved in APS2 in 2007/8 which as Fig. 13.3 shows was after the large increase in participation from APS1. As the figure shows nothing much happened to the level of participation in the next 2 years and the target was eventually abandoned in December 2011.

The standard measure of sport participation in Sport England's Active People Survey changed in 2012 to taking part at least once a week for a minimum of 30 min at moderate or more intensity. Only 14 % of the adult population was found to take part once a week in sport and active recreation in 2006. Trend figures for once-a-week participation from the Active People Survey are shown in Fig. 13.4. They

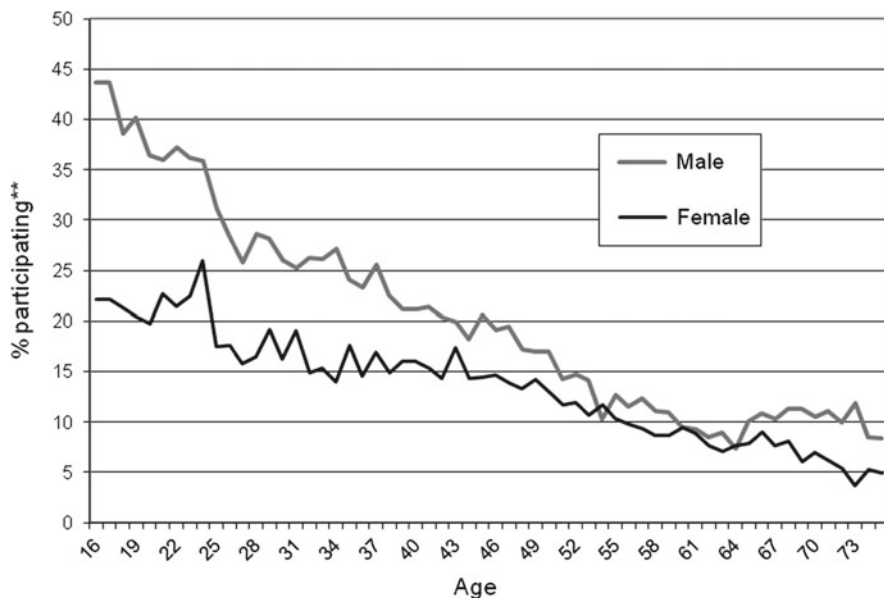


**Fig. 13.3** Sport participation in England, 2005–2010 (adults 16+) (Source: Active people survey 2009b, a). Note: \*Authors’ interpolation; \*\*On at least three occasions for at last 30 min and at least moderate intensity per week in the last 4 weeks (excludes all walking, includes frequent recreational cycling)



**Fig. 13.4** Sport participation in England 2006–2012 (once a week (1x30), adults (16+)) (Sport England 2012b)

demonstrate a period of strong growth from Active People 1 (2005/2006) to Active People 2 (2007/2008) followed by a flat period with no growth from 2008 to 2011, but then a significant rise in 2011–2012, possibly attributable to the policy emphasis on sport, the inspiration of the London Olympics and Paralympics, and a generally increasing concern for health and body image. The number of people participating in sport had actually increased from 13.9 million in 2005/2006 to 15.5 in 2011/2012,

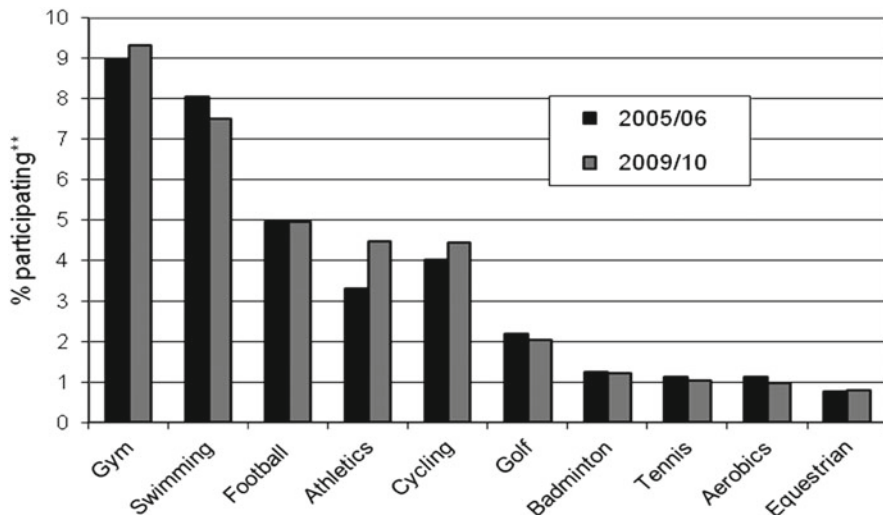


**Fig. 13.5** Sports participating by age and gender, England, 2009–2010

an increase of 1.6 million, substantially more than the target of one million. However, even if the target had been set with the new measure of participation, it would not have been met because the benchmark from which the growth was measured was 2007/2008 when participation had already grown to 14.8 million. The reality though is that over the period since London was awarded the Olympics participation did grow but not consistently over the whole period. There was strong growth in the early part of the period post-2005 and strong growth in 2011/2012 with little or no growth in between.

England, despite many years of concerted public policy focused on reducing sporting inequities, has yet to overcome the barriers (whether physical, social, or psychological) to achieve the greater levels of equality in participation seen in Nordic countries. For example, participation in sport in England declines with age with men having higher participation rates than women, particularly among young adults, as Fig. 13.5 demonstrates. These “structural inequities” of age and gender in participation in sport go a long way towards explaining England’s “middle range” European position for overall participation rates as presented in the recent Eurobarometer statistics.

The European trend towards more informal participation in health and fitness-related sports and a decline in more traditional team sports is replicated in England. As Fig. 13.6 indicates, the biggest growth sports between 2005 and 2010 have been in athletics (which includes road running and jogging), gym, and cycling. More traditional sports, such as golf, badminton, tennis, cricket, rugby union, and rugby league, have all experienced a decline over the same period.



**Fig. 13.6** Changes in participation in top 10 sports, 2005–2010, England. (Source: Active people survey 2009b, a). Note: \*\*On at least 1 occasion for at least 30 min and at least moderate intensity per week in the last 4 weeks (excludes all walking, includes frequent recreational cycling)

## 13.6 Conclusion

The awarding of the 2012 Olympic Games to London in 2005 was partly attributed to the final presentation to the IOC by Sebastian Coe in which he argued that if the games were awarded to London, they would “inspire a generation” to take part in sport. This argument was incorporated into sport policy in 2008 with a target of getting one million more people in sport by 2012. This chapter has shown that that target was achieved if measured from 2005 and on the current measure used for sport participation. However, the parameters on which the target was set were different and the target was abandoned before Olympic year even started. Sport participation has increased in England over this period but the distribution of this participation by gender, age, and social status remains unequal.

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