

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION LEVELS OF ADULTS IN YORKSHIRE BY LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA

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Context

Increasing levels of physical activity is a core objective for sporting organisations in England. Strategic documents, including *Game Plan*¹ and the *Framework for Sport in England*² have underlined the need for a reinforced focus on participation in sport and physical activity. More recently the Chief Medical Officer³ and Department of Health⁴ have published compelling scientific evidence that participating in physical activity does make a vital contribution to an individual's health status. However, Wanless⁵ (2004) identified a lack of reliable information at local level regarding actual levels of participation. Therefore, the specific aim of this research was to provide data on physical activity and sports participation amongst a regionally and locally representative sample of adults aged 16 years and over from across the Yorkshire region in order to reliably benchmark local authority areas against a set of six key policy related indicators.

Project/Partners

The research project was funded and managed by Sport England, with support from Sheffield Hallam University. MORI undertook data collection, processing and analysis.

This survey is the first ever in the UK to have used IPAQ (International Physical Activity Questionnaire) telephone long format as the core instrument to collect physical activity data. In addition to questions about physical activity participation, type, frequency and duration, further questions about general health, smoking, volunteering, club membership and coaching were included. All interviews were conducted using CATI technology (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews). The fieldwork was undertaken from 5 November 2004 to 25 January 2005, with a break for the Christmas and New Year holidays.

At the end of fieldwork a total of 21,149 interviews were achieved from adults (16 years and over) in Yorkshire (adjusted response rate 36%), comprising of at least 1,000 interviews in each local authority area.

Results

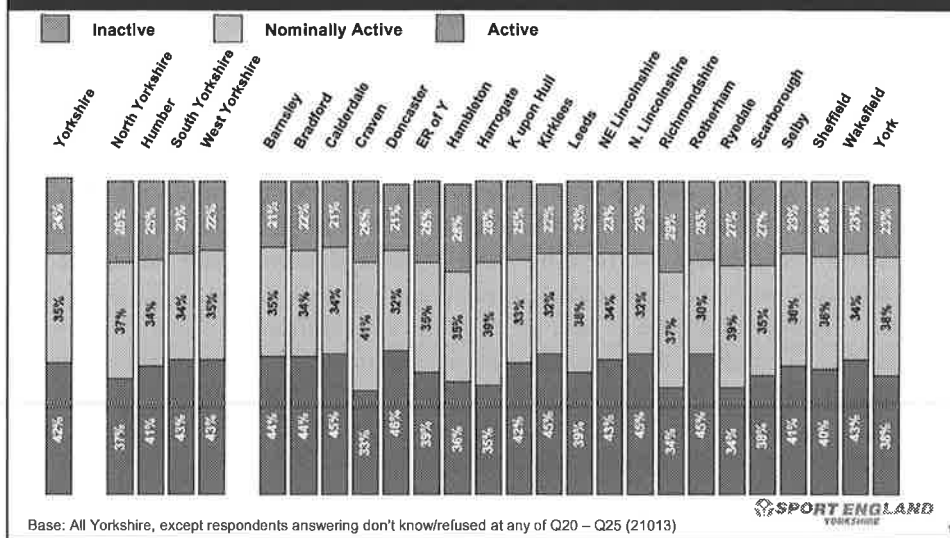
Figure 1 shows levels of physical activity in leisure time (that is physical activity solely for recreation, sport, exercise or leisure). A quarter of the population of Yorkshire are active (5 or more days of at least 30 minutes of physical activity per week) in their leisure-time (24%). A further 35% are nominally active (1-4 days of at least 30 minutes of physical activity per week) whilst two in five are inactive (less than 1 day of at least 30 minutes of physical activity per week) (42%).

At a local authority level, Richmondshire has the highest proportion of people who are active in their leisure-time physical activity (29%). This is higher than the baseline norm for Yorkshire (24%), as well as other local authorities, including Barnsley (21%), Bradford (22%), Calderdale (21%), Selby (23%) and Wakefield (23%).

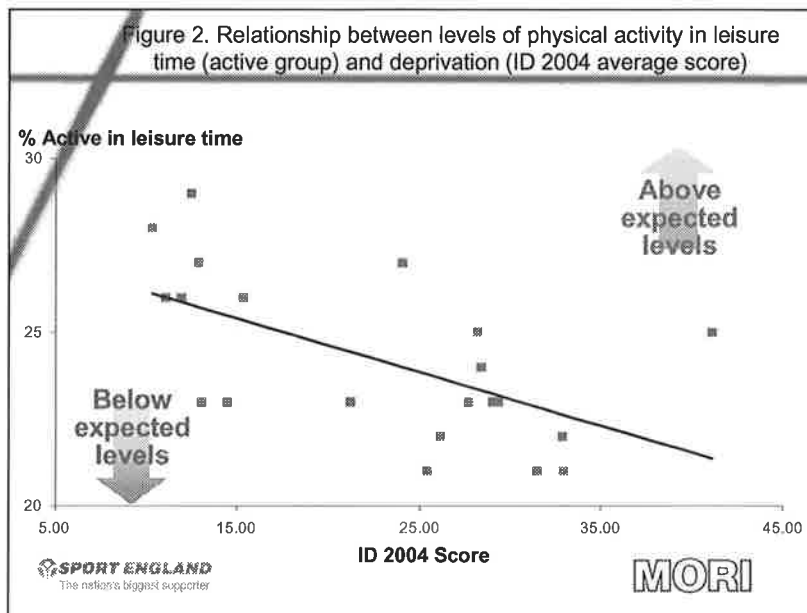
Figure 2 shows the relationship between levels of physical activity in leisure time (Active group) and

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1. Strategy Unit and DCMS (2002) *Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government's sport and physical activity objectives* London: Strategy Unit/DCMS
 2. Sport England (2004) *Framework for Sport in England* London: Sport England
 3. Donaldson, L. (2004) *At least five a week: evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health* London: Department of Health
 4. Department of Health (2005) *Choosing Activity: a physical activity action plan* London: Department of Health
 5. Wanless, D. (2004) *Securing good health for the whole population* Norwich: HMSO Licensing Division

Figure 1: Leisure Time-Related Levels of Physical Activity



deprivation (ID 2004¹), for local authority areas. An inverse correlation between physical activity in leisure time and average deprivation was observed ($r = -0.59$, $p = 0.003$). This finding supports policies that target resource at areas with higher levels of deprivation. However, Kingston upon Hull, the most deprived area in Yorkshire (ID 2004 average score = 41) seems to buck this trend with levels of participation 4% higher than Bradford which is 22% less deprived (ID 2004 average score = 32).



Discussion/implications

This research project has provided local authorities in Yorkshire with robust and consistent data on physical activity and sports participation at local level. This can and should be used by policy makers and professionals to inform decision-making and investment. In addition it has for the first time set a reliable benchmark against which local changes in participation can be measured in future year

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¹ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2004) *The English Indices of Deprivation 2004* (revised) London: ODPM