

# STUDENT ACTIVITY AND SPORTS STUDY IRELAND



## SUMMARY REPORT



# STUDENT ACTIVITY AND SPORTS STUDY IRELAND (SASSI)

## SUMMARY REPORT

*Commissioned and Published by Student Sport Ireland*

The full report is available for download from the Student Sport Ireland web site ([www.studentsport.ie](http://www.studentsport.ie)).

### PARTICIPATING COLLEGES (36)

33 colleges took part in the Self-Assessment Review (SAR), 31 took part in the Survey. Those who took part in only one phase are identified below.

#### UNIVERSITIES (9)

Dublin City University  
Maynooth University  
NUI Galway  
Queen's University Belfast  
Trinity College Dublin  
Ulster University  
University College Cork\*  
University College Dublin  
University of Limerick

#### PRIVATE COLLEGES (2)

Griffith College, Dublin\*  
National College of Ireland

#### INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY (13)

Cork IT  
Dublin IT  
Dundalk IT  
Galway Mayo IT  
IT Blanchardstown  
IT Carlow  
IT Letterkenny  
IT Sligo  
IT Tallaght  
IT Tralee  
Limerick IT\*  
Waterford IT  
Dun Laoghaire IADT\*

#### COLLEGES OF EDUCATION (6)

Coláiste Mhuire, Marino\*  
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick  
Mater Dei Institute of Education  
St. Angela's College, Sligo  
St. Patrick's, Drumcondra  
Stranmillis University College

#### COLLEGES OF FURTHER EDUCATION (6)

Belfast Metropolitan College\*\*  
Northern Regional College  
North West Regional College  
Southern Regional College  
South Eastern Regional College  
South West Regional College\*\*

\* SAR Only \*\* Survey Only

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sport Northern Ireland and Sport Ireland staff who contributed significantly to the funding and support of the research.

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Aaron Ballantyne (North West RC), Anne Marie Kelly (LKIT), Alexandra Murphy (TCD), Brian Mullins (UCD), Carmel Keane (UCD), Carmel Lynch (IT Carlow), Caroline Duggan (TCD), Charlotte Peile (UU), Christine O'Donovan (UCC), Conor McCallion (QUB), Corrie Adams (NCI), David McKee (Stranmillis CE), Declan Courell (St Angela's CE), Derek Crilly (DKIT), Donal McNally (IT Carlow), Eimear Foley (IT Tralee), Jillian Davis (Belfast Met.), Jane McGinty (South West RC), Kathy Hynes (NUIG), Lee Rooney (Southern RC), Lynda Robinson (South Eastern RC), Lynn Hegarty (Northern RC), Maura Coulter (St. Pats CE), Miriam Deasy (CIT), Molly Dunne (GMIT), Neasa Fahy O'Donnell (UL), Niamh O'Callaghan (DIT), Norma Buckley (CIT), Paddy Gallagher (LKIT), Paul Davis (MU), Paul Walsh (GCD), Robin Croke (WIT), Ronan Keaskin (ITB), Ross Lappin (ITS), Saoirse Bulfin (LIT), Suzy Macken (Marino CE), Tim O'Connor (ITT), Una Redmond (DCU), Will Murphy (Mater Dei CE) and Yvonne McGowan (DCU).

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# 1 INTRODUCTION



The Student Activity and Sport Study Ireland (SASSI) research was commissioned by Student Sport Ireland (SSI) to investigate sport and physical activity participation, preferences and provision in third-level colleges<sup>1</sup> on the island of Ireland about which little is known. Given the number of young adults progressing to third-level education, the potential of these colleges to influence participation in physical activity is vast. The study was undertaken in 2014 - 2015 with the report being drafted and finalised during 2015 - 2016. The research was supported by SSI, the colleges themselves, Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland. It was overseen by a group comprising representatives of these bodies. It was delivered by a consortium of researchers from Dublin City University, Ulster University, University of Limerick, Waterford Institute of Technology and University of Wolverhampton assisted by key individuals within each college which took part.

The research consisted of three phases:

**Phase 1, a Self-Assessment Review (SAR)** was conducted in 33 colleges to describe the environment, provision and support for student participation in sport and physical activity within these colleges.

**Phase 2, the SASSI online Survey** in which 31 colleges and over 9,000 students participated. The survey included self-reported participation in sport and physical activity within and outside the college, determinants, motivators and barriers to participation and a number of health-related behaviours and outcomes.

**Phase 3, Objective Measures of Physical Activity, Fitness and Health-related Factors** were carried out on 463 students in 5 colleges. The purposes of this phase was to provide a greater understanding of the physical health, fitness and physical activity levels of third-level students and to test the validity of the survey data.

All three phases relied heavily on the co-operation of key individuals ('Champions') in each college. They coordinated the provision of SAR data, administered the SASSI survey according to pre-determined protocols and facilitated the health and fitness measurements.

## **Classification of Colleges by number of students:**

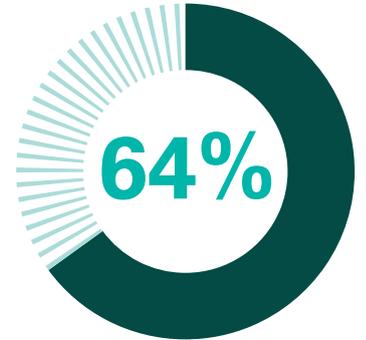
Colleges were classified as large  $\geq 11,000$  students, Medium 4,000 - 10,999 students and Small  $\leq 3,999$  students. Involvement in the different research phases is set out in the Table below.

Research Phase	Large Colleges	Medium Colleges	Small Colleges	Total
SAR	7	11	15	33
Student Survey	6	11	14	31
Objective Measures	2	2	1	5

## 2.1 Overall Activity Levels

**64% of students are 'highly active', and deemed sufficiently active to meet the recommended physical activity guidelines for health.**

- Male students are more active than females with 71% of them being highly active compared to 58% of females. This suggests that third-level students are significantly more active than the general population across comparable age groups. The 2015 Healthy Ireland report found that 56% of 15 – 24 year old males and 34% of 15 – 24 year old females were highly active.
- Student activity levels decline by more than 3% with each additional year of age.
- Obese students are significantly less likely to be highly active and significantly more likely to be inactive than those in other weight categories.
- The decline in physical activity levels matches the decline in perceived health among students.



## 2.2 Perception of Physical Activity / Knowledge of National Physical Activity Guidelines

**Over two thirds of all students feel that they are active enough to keep healthy; males are significantly more likely to be of this view than females.**

- Males are more “optimistic” in their perception of how active they are irrespective of whether they are inactive, moderately active or highly active. Worryingly, over 25% of students classified as inactive feel that they do enough activity to keep healthy. Males are again more likely to be of this view.
- One in three students accurately knew the National Physical Activity Guidelines.
- More female students (39%) than males (26%) knew the guidelines.
- Among students at least, knowledge of the guidelines is not a precursor to being highly active. 67% of those who didn't have an accurate knowledge of the guidelines were sufficiently active compared to 60% of those who knew them accurately.



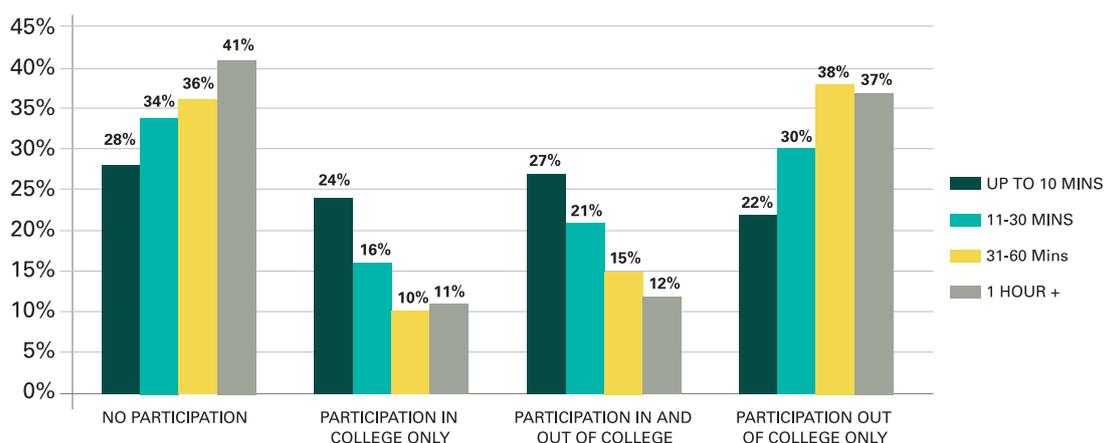
## 2.3 Sports and Exercise Participation

**65% of students participated in sport and exercise in the previous 4 weeks. Of these, 14% participated only in college, 18% inside and outside of college and 33% only outside college.**

- Males (72%) are much more likely to play sport overall than females (58%). Gender differences are particularly strong where participation is in and out of college or out of college only.
- Participation levels in college only are lower (14%) for male and female students when compared to participation outside college only (33%).
- Patterns of participation vary considerably with proximity to college as seen in Figure 1 overleaf. Those living a distance from college appear to be disadvantaged when it comes to participation with 41% of those living over an hour from college not participating in any sport compared to 28% of those who live within 10 minutes of college.



Figure 1: Participation in Sport and Exercise by Reported Travel Time to College

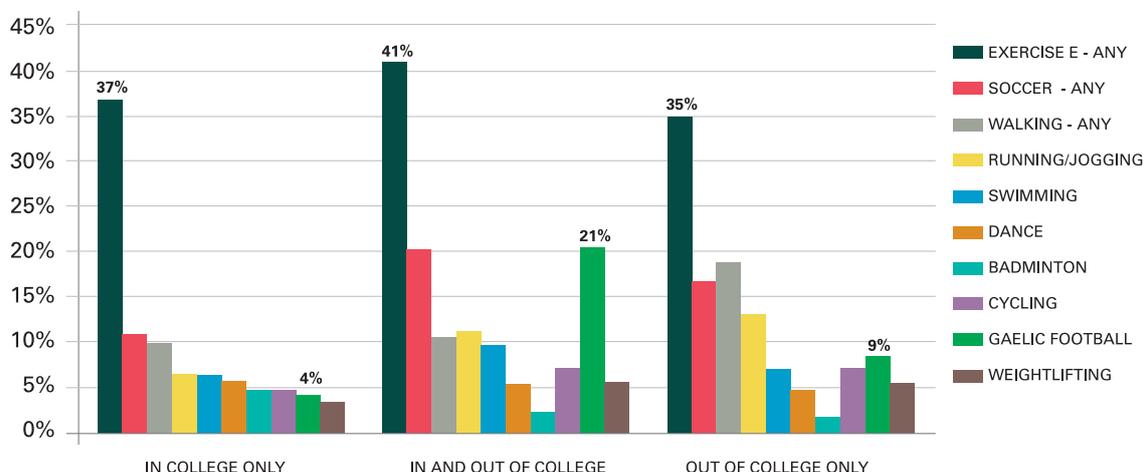


## 2.4 Sport and Exercise Activities

Across all three domains of participation (in-college only, in and out of college, out of college only) over 70% of participants take part in individual based sports. In respect of team sports the proportion of participants varies from a high of 53% (of participants who play in and out of college) to a low of 29% (of participants who play in college only). Of those who only play out of college approximately 33% participate in team sports.

- The proportions participating in the top 10 sports across each of the participation domains are set out in Figure 2 below.
- Exercise (including cardio, weight training, circuit training and exercise to music) is clearly the most popular activity across all domains with at least one in three participants taking part across each of the domains. Student ranking of their standard of participation in sport/activity as follows: Basic (60%), Competitive (34%) and Elite (6%).
- Individual activities account for 8 of the 10 most popular sports among those who participate both in and out of college. However outside of the “exercise” category, Gaelic Football (21%) and Soccer (11-a-side and 5-a-side) (20%) are the highest participation sports among students.
- Taking part in structured sport and recreational activities makes a key contribution to helping students reach recommended PA guidelines. Of the 65% of those who reported participating in sport and recreational activities over the previous 4 weeks, 75% were sufficiently active to meet the guidelines compared to less than 50% of non-participants.

Figure 2: Top 10 Participation Sports by Domains of Participation <sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Exercise-any refers to the following categories: exercise-cardio, exercise weight training, exercise circuit training and exercise to music. Soccer-any refers to 11-a-side and 5-a-side soccer.

## 2.5 Non-Participation in Sport and Physical Activity

**35% of students did not participate in any sport in the previous 4 weeks.**

- The top 3 reasons for non-participation among men and women were “lack of time”, “tiredness” and a preference for other leisure time activities.
- Male students were more likely than female students to indicate a lack of interest and a preference for other leisure time activities.
- Nearly 90% of all current non-participants reported that they could be encouraged to participate again with females being more likely to express this view than males.
- The majority cited ‘cheaper admission prices’ and ‘people to go with’ as the top two strategies to encourage them to participate either within or outside of college in the future.
- Among the 33% of students who only participate in sport outside of college, the main reasons cited for their non-participation in college were “not convenient” (58%), “already involved in an outside club” (38%), “not easy to get involved” (23%) and “activities not appropriate” (17%).



### Priority Recommendation

Consider how the large proportion of students who are currently inactive but interested in participating in sport and physical activity again can be provided with the right offering:

- Consider developing new social networking initiatives to provide friendship and support for non-participants to engage in physical activity.
- Develop promotional campaigns targeting specifically at females.
- Provide accessible, low cost, short, exercise and fitness sessions.

## 2.6 Motivations for Participation

Among the majority of students who participate in sport in any domain, the main motivations for doing so are improving health, improving fitness, improving physical appearance and having fun. Not surprisingly, for elite athletes performance and competition are the main motivations for playing.



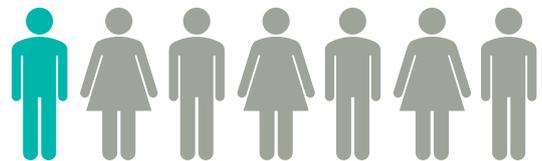
## 2.7 Determinants of Participation

**Gender, age and determinant score<sup>3</sup> were identified as important influences on participation in sport and physical activity.**

- Social influence was the main determinant of participation within colleges. The odds of students participating in sport and physical activity in colleges were 57% lower if they felt they 'did not have anyone to do physical activity with'.
- In response to questions related to motivations, environmental and social influences, goals, beliefs and knowledge and the influence of these on participation in sport and physical activity, two factors were highly associated with an increased likelihood of being active, namely high levels of motivation for activity and the ability to cope with obstacles to being active.
- To a lesser extent but still important in predicting higher levels of activity were having clear physical activity goals, possessing the skills to be physically active and having someone to be active with.

## 2.8 Provision for Sport in College and Social Aspects of Participation in College

**Sports clubs as a collective entity play a very significant role in the provision of physical activity opportunities and participation, with approximately 15% or 1 in 7 students being members of a sports club in college, representing well over 30,000 students.**



- Almost 850 clubs across 54 different club types were identified in the SAR. The average numbers of clubs per college were 14 (small colleges), 25 (medium-sized colleges) and 51 (large colleges). On a pro-rata basis (i.e. per 100 students) there were no differences in number of clubs between the different-sized colleges.
- Approximately 1 in 6 students volunteered for sport in the previous 4 weeks with coaching, refereeing and administration being the main roles carried out.
- Males are more likely than females to be club members and volunteer for sport.
- 53% of those playing sport only in college had taken up a new activity since starting their third-level education. 45% of respondents participating both within and outside college had taken up a new activity as had 23% of those participating only outside college. This suggests that colleges provide considerable opportunities for young adults to try new activities in which they are likely to sustain their involvement through adulthood.
- Those students who participate only within college expressed high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of provision including facilities and playing environment, the people and staff organising sport, ease of participating in college, opportunities to participate, opportunities to socialise, coaching and instruction and value for money aspects of provision.
- Female students were more likely to be satisfied with provision than male students.
- Only 42% of sports clubs report that they provide a service for individuals with a disability.

### Priority Recommendation

**Colleges and clubs within colleges need to consider how students with a disability can be better catered for in terms of access and provision of opportunities.**

**Those in charge of sport and physical activity in colleges should review the diversity, range and type of sports clubs provided in the light of the findings that some sports have particular potential to promote increased participation among male and/or female students.**



<sup>3</sup> Students were asked their views on a series of questions about knowledge, environmental resources, motivations, goals, beliefs about capabilities, skills, emotions, social influences, etc. which were summarised into standard scales to measure the determinants of participation in sport and physical activity



## 2.9 High Performance Sport

**6% of students currently participating indicated that they were competing in sport at a high level (regional, national, or international level). Approximately two thirds of these are male. 83% of all colleges offer scholarships/bursaries to high performance student athletes.**

- Just over 1 in 10 of current elite sports participants in college are in receipt of a scholarship or bursary from their college. For most, the perception is that this scholarship / bursary is insufficient to cover training and competition expenses.
- The number of scholarships awarded increased from 1,245 (2009) to 1,383 (2013). Over that 5 year period, just less than 6,700 scholarships were awarded (4,700+ to males and 1,900+ to females).
- Scholarships are provided in 30 different sports, the most popular being Gaelic Football, Soccer, Athletics, Basketball, Hurling, Rugby Union, Camogie and Golf.
- There are 60% more scholarships for male than female students.
- Over €1.1 million was invested in scholarships by colleges in 2013 with males getting €804,000 and females getting €335,000.
- Over one third of all colleges indicated that entry to academic programmes was available to some elite athletes with reduced academic requirements. Colleges actively target the recruitment of Gaelic Footballers (44% of them), Soccer players (38%), Hurlers (28%) and Rugby players (22%). Olympic and World University Games sports (apart from Soccer), are not a priority for most colleges.
- For two thirds of all colleges most of the funding for scholarships comes from the college's own resources. Corporate sponsors and National Governing Bodies of sport also provide support.



### Priority Recommendation

The scale of the gender difference in scholarship provision is significant. Colleges are recommended to review their scholarship programmes in the context of gender equality.

## 2.10 Commuting to College or University

**40% of students actively commute to college, comprising 34% who walk and 6% who cycle. The remainder take motorised transport.**

- There are strong gender differences in active commuting patterns with males being more likely to cycle for transport while females are more likely to walk for transport.
- The journey distance was reported as being “too far” by 74% of those who did not actively commute. This reason is strongly associated with the reported commuting time from college. However, even among those who live relatively close to college this is cited as the main reason for not commuting by one in four.
- Those who actively commute are more likely to be highly active.
- Active commuting programmes are a low priority across third-level colleges. Only 28% of them responded to the item in the SAR and expenditure on active commuting was less than 3% of total current investment in sport and physical activity between 2009 and 2013.

### Priority Recommendation

**Colleges should consider initiatives and investment to encourage more sustainable and active forms of transport by students as a means of increasing overall physical activity levels and reducing carbon emissions.**



## 2.11 Other Health Behaviours and Indicators

**The majority of students were categorised as normal weight (66%), 25% are overweight, 4% obese and 6% underweight. Less than 50% of students reported being content with their current body shape while 39% reported that their body is “a bit/much too” fat.**

- Over 70% of students spend more than seven hours per day sitting during week-days.
- Only 12% of students surveyed reported being non-drinkers with almost 80% non-smokers and a similar proportion reported never having used non-prescribed drugs.
- The majority of students (56%) reported their health as good or very good. Perceived health status was strongly associated with the likelihood of being highly active.
- The majority of students (64%) reported a high level of happiness.
- The mean mental health score for students was 67 (Scale 0-100).
- Those who are underweight or obese are significantly less likely to be sports participants than those who are normal weight or overweight.

# 3 INVESTMENT AND RESOURCES FOR SPORT IN IRELAND

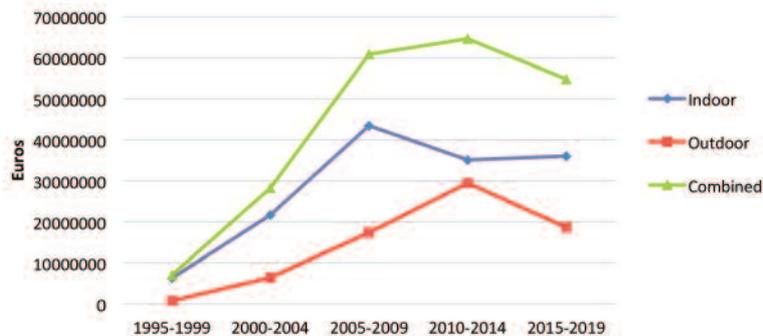


## 3.1 Capital Investment

Investment in indoor facilities increased significantly from 1995-1999 (total 6.3 million euro) to 2005-2009 (total 43.4 million euro). Investment in outdoor facilities showed an increase from 1995-1999 (total 0.8 million euros) to 2010-2014 (total 29.5 million euro).

- Compared to the period 2005 – 2009, outdoor capital investment decreased in 2010-2014 by almost 8 million euro.
- Colleges indicate planned investment of almost €55 million in indoor and outdoor facilities for 2015-2019.

Figure 3: Capital Investment in indoor and outdoor and combined from 1995 to 2014 and planned capital investment for 2015 – 2019.



## 3.2 Facility Stock

The provision of indoor sports facilities varies widely across the sector. The minimum provision appears to be a Sports Hall and Fitness Suites (82% of colleges), with fewer colleges (<50%) having direct access to swimming pools, squash and handball courts and specialised facilities like climbing walls.

- 58% of all facilities were deemed to be accessible for individuals with a disability.
- Medium and large sized colleges have significantly larger areas of indoor facilities than small colleges. However, when indoor facility area is ranked relative to the number of students in each college there is no difference by college size.
- The most frequently provided outdoor facilities are Grass Pitches: GAA (73% of colleges); Soccer (73%) and Rugby (61%); and Walking Trails (61%). Less than 50% of colleges own facilities with synthetic outdoor surfaces, track and field facilities and tennis courts.
- 64% of all facilities are owned with the rest being hired.
- 70% of colleges use facilities at 3 or fewer locations while the remaining 30% use facilities at 4 or more locations.

### 3.3 Current Investment

**More than 11 million euro per annum is invested annually by colleges in the provision of sport and physical activity through personnel, equipment, capitation and / or grant funding. Current investment over the 5 years of the study has been very consistent and has increased by approximately 5% between 2009 and 2013 as can be seen in Table 1 below.**

- Between 2009 and 2013 there was a 15% increase in total investment in representative sport clubs, from €4.5 million per annum to €5.2 million per annum.
- Representative/competitive sports clubs received 44% of the total current allocation while recreational sport, physical activity opportunities and active commuting received 48%. While this indicates a balanced investment between representative sports clubs and physical activity opportunities, it does not take into consideration that a much higher number of students are involved in basic level activity rather than representative or competitive sport.
- Very large differences between colleges in the level of spending on representative sport were found. So, while 34% of colleges spent less than €25,000 per annum on this area another 27% of colleges spent between €350,000 and €750,000 per annum.
- 28% of colleges spent up to €50,000 each per annum on active commuting programmes while almost three-quarters recorded no spending in this area.
- Large colleges invested considerably more than small and medium sized colleges. When investment was ranked relative to student population a significant difference remained between medium and large colleges with the larger colleges scoring a higher rank.

**Table 1: Overview of Total Current Investment 2009--2013**

	Sport Clubs (Rep. Sport)	Non Club Sport (PA, Rec. Sport)	Sport Clubs (PA Rec Sport)	Facility Hire	Exercise & Fitness Programmes	Active Commuting Programmes	Total Current Investment (TCI)
<b>2009</b>	€4,542,179	€3,354,213	€933,435	€842,821	€692,812	€258,300	€10,623,760
<b>2010</b>	€4,747,179	€3,331,714	€945,935	€812,821	€715,313	€212,810	€10,765,772
<b>2011</b>	€4,647,179	€3,371,713	€978,435	€919,957	€700,314	€297,874	€10,915,472
<b>2012</b>	€4,847,179	€3,578,972	€1,003,435	€962,457	€852,814	€312,509	€11,557,366
<b>2013</b>	€5,243,529	€2,567,022	€1,078,435	€1,013,311	€952,814	€297,874	€11,152,985
<b>5 Year</b>	€24,027,246	€16,203,635	€4,939,676	€4,551,369	€3,914,067	€1,379,368	€55,015,361
<b>% of TCI</b>	43.7%	29.4%	9%	8.3%	7.1%	2.5%	

## Priority Recommendation

The unique contribution of exercise to the activity levels of students should be recognized by colleges in their capital and current investment strategies.



### 3.4 Staff and Volunteers

**Almost 1,100 full-time and part-time staff are employed in colleges in support of sport and physical activity participation.**

- Seven large colleges accounted for 46% of all staff in 2014 while 15 smaller colleges accounted for 20% of total staff numbers.
- Categories of staff include facility management and operations (40% of all staff), administration / secretarial (18%), sports development / sports science (12%), sport and recreation director / head / officer (6%) and other staff (24%).
- Full- and part-time staff numbers increased significantly between 2009 and 2014. During that period over 50% of colleges reported an increase in staff numbers with just 6% reporting a decrease. 73% of the increase in full-time staffing was accounted for by only four colleges.
- As expected, large colleges have more staff than small colleges. However, when colleges were ranked based on total staff and staff provision per 100 students no significant difference was found across college size.
- 24 different types of sports clubs across all colleges reported that they had the support of a full-time or part-time staff member. Development officer support for team sports is particularly significant including Gaelic Football (74% of colleges that provide this sport), Hurling (80%), Camogie (87%), Handball (88%), Soccer (42 - 47%) and Rugby Union (48%).
- 34% of colleges (mostly small or medium-sized colleges) did not report the involvement of any volunteers and a further 25% reported very small numbers (1-8).
- Students are more likely to do voluntary work outside their college/ university than inside (60%- 40%). Males are 32% more likely to volunteer than females.

### 3.5 Relationship Between Investment, Provision and Activity Levels

**No association was found between indoor and outdoor facilities provision and self-reported levels of student physical activity. Higher levels of current investment in representative sports clubs was not associated with high student activity levels. There was a strong relationship between volunteering and participation in clubs.**

- Students in colleges with low levels of indoor facilities provision were 29% more likely to categorise themselves as non-participants.
- Students in colleges with low levels of current investment were 38% more likely to categorise themselves as non-participants when compared to high levels of investment.
- Colleges with high or moderate levels of facilities reported lower rates of non-participation.
- A strong association was found between the number of volunteers and the number of students participating in sports clubs.
- Students in large colleges were 35% less likely to volunteer than in small colleges.
- Volunteering is 32% more likely in colleges with high levels of current investment and 43% more likely with moderate investment compared to low investment colleges.
- College factors that influence participation only within the college are numerous. They include the number of staff, the scale of provision of indoor and outdoor facilities, perceived quality of provision for sport, perceived quality of provision for physical activity, sports clubs participation levels and the number of exercise and fitness sessions offered.



#### Priority Recommendation

**An increased emphasis on volunteer recruitment is recommended in all institutions but in particular in those with current low numbers of volunteers.**

### 3.6 Satisfaction Levels with Provision for Sport in Colleges

**The majority of respondents rated sport and physical activity opportunities and facilities as not particularly important in their choice of college, with 71% scoring their importance between 1- 5 (Scale 1-10). However, for students who played sport at an elite level, sport and physical activity opportunities (71%) and sports facilities (60%) were rated as particularly important (6-10) when choosing a college or university.**

- Approximately 60% of colleges indicated that sport and physical activity have become more strategically important to their college in the last three years.
- Prioritisation of sport was linked to raising the college profile and attracting students while prioritisation of physical activity was linked to perceived health benefits and improving academic performance.
- For most (71%) students sport and physical activity opportunities and facilities were unimportant in their choice of college. For elite sports persons the opposite was the case.
- 50% of colleges identified their indoor facilities as requiring improvement while 47% indicated that additional funding was required and 44% identified additional staffing as a priority.
- Evidence for concern regarding provision for non-competitive sport was found in 39% of colleges, regarding provision of facilities to support active and safe commuting (33%) and regarding disability provision for sport and physical activity (12%).
- The odds of students in colleges with moderate indoor facility provision being satisfied are 59% lower than in colleges with high indoor facility provision.
- The odds of students in colleges with low perceived quality of provision in sport and physical activity being satisfied are 72% and 70% lower respectively than in colleges where quality is perceived highly.
- No difference was found for the index of perceived quality of provision across small, medium and large colleges.

## Priority Recommendation

**Gender differences exist in levels of satisfaction with provision of sport or physical activity opportunities in colleges. This finding aligned to lower levels of participation by females suggests that interventions directed towards females may be warranted.**



# 4 RECOMMENDATIONS

1

When designing and promoting physical activity programmes and initiatives, colleges should recognise that knowledge of the detail of physical activity guidelines for health is not a barrier to participation and that the majority of students are positively disposed to increasing their physical activity levels.

2

Consider how the large proportion of students who are currently inactive but interested in participating in sport and physical activity again can be provided with the right offering:

- a. Consider developing new social networking initiatives to provide friendship and support for non-participants to engage in physical activity.
- b. Develop promotional campaigns targeting specifically at females.
- c. Provide accessible, low cost, short, exercise and fitness sessions.

3

Colleges should consider initiatives and investment to encourage more sustainable and active forms of transport by students as a means of increasing overall physical activity levels and reducing carbon emissions.

4

Sport clubs provide a physical activity outlet for a significant minority of the student population i.e. 15 of every 100 students. They merit continued support and investment by the relevant college authorities.

5

There is considerable scope to narrow the gender gap in the provision of sport through clubs. Sports clubs should seek to engage greater numbers of female students as active participants and volunteers.

6

Those in charge of sport and physical activity in colleges should review the diversity, range and type of sports clubs provided in the light of the findings that some sports have particular potential to promote increased participation among male and/or female students.

7

Colleges provide significant opportunities for students to try new sporting activities as part of their progress through third level education. Research suggests that these new activities are likely to be sustained well into adulthood. Colleges should continue to encourage and facilitate such opportunities and where possible expand the scope for students to avail of "taster" sessions.

**8**

Gender differences exist in levels of satisfaction with provision of sport or physical activity opportunities in colleges. This finding aligned to lower levels of participation by females suggests that interventions directed towards females may be warranted.

**9**

The unique contribution of exercise to the activity levels of students should be recognised by colleges. Colleges should review their capital and current investment priorities for both high performance sport and for the provision of exercise participation opportunities.

**10**

Colleges and clubs within colleges need to consider how students with a disability can be better catered for in terms of access and provision of opportunities.

**11**

The scale of the gender differences in scholarship provision is significant. Colleges are recommended to review their scholarship programmes in the context of gender equality.

**12**

SSI and National Governing Bodies of sport should consider if appropriate developmental structures / pathways for elite level male and female students currently exist in the third-level sector.

**13**

SSI should consider how their elite athlete / international competition programmes are aligned with their member colleges, elite sport provision and strategic priorities.

**14**

An increased emphasis on volunteer recruitment is recommended in all colleges but in particular in those with current low numbers of volunteers.

**15**

Colleges should consider why students are more likely to volunteer outside college than inside.

# SPORTING BENCHMARKS FOR FUTURE COMPARISON

**A number of potentially significant benchmarks which might be adopted by SSI and individual colleges for future comparison and assessment were identified in the study. These are:**

- 1** 32% of students participate in sport and physical activity within their college.
- 2** 14% of students participate in sport and physical activity within their college only.
- 3** 15% of all students are members of college sports clubs.
- 4** 40% of all students actively commute to college.
- 5** 64% of all students are sufficiently active to meet nationally recommended physical activity guidelines.
- 6** The gender gaps in terms of membership of sports clubs (males 66%, females 34%) volunteering (18% v 13%) and scholarship provision (71% v 29%).
- 7** 42% of college sports clubs cater for students with a disability.
- 8** 58% of college sport and physical activity facilities have access for students with a disability.
- 9** 53% of students participating in college only had taken up a new activity since starting their third level education.
- 10** 15% of students carry out some voluntary work in sport.

## 6

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