

## **YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

### **Introduction**

This note presents findings from an online survey of young people aged 8 to 26 on their participation in out-of-school activities. The survey was distributed by stakeholder organisations working with young people. Fieldwork was completed between October and December 2017 and 348 responses were received.

### **Key points**

- Most respondents had visited cultural sites or events (79 per cent) and had participated in volunteering or fundraising (67 per cent), but had only done so occasionally. Around half said they visited cultural sites or events about once every couple of months, while a third said that they participated in volunteering or fundraising once or twice a year only.
- Participation in team sports, individual sports and arts activities was also high (65 per cent, 60 per cent and 60 per cent respectively), and also tended to be very frequent, with between 70-80 per cent of attendees attending at least once a week.
- Participation was less common in uniformed youth groups (32 per cent); youth democracy groups (23 per cent); and youth clubs (21 per cent). Around six in ten survey respondents said that there were activities outside of school that they would have liked to have taken part in but didn't.
- The most commonly selected barriers were 'I don't have time' (27 per cent); followed by 'It's too expensive' (18 per cent); and 'it's not on at a time that suits me' (15 per cent). It was widely highlighted that a number of barriers may apply at the same time.

### **Respondents' profile**

The survey sample was self-selected and therefore cannot be considered representative of the population of young people in Scotland as a whole, and is very likely to substantially underrepresent young people who are not engaging in activities.

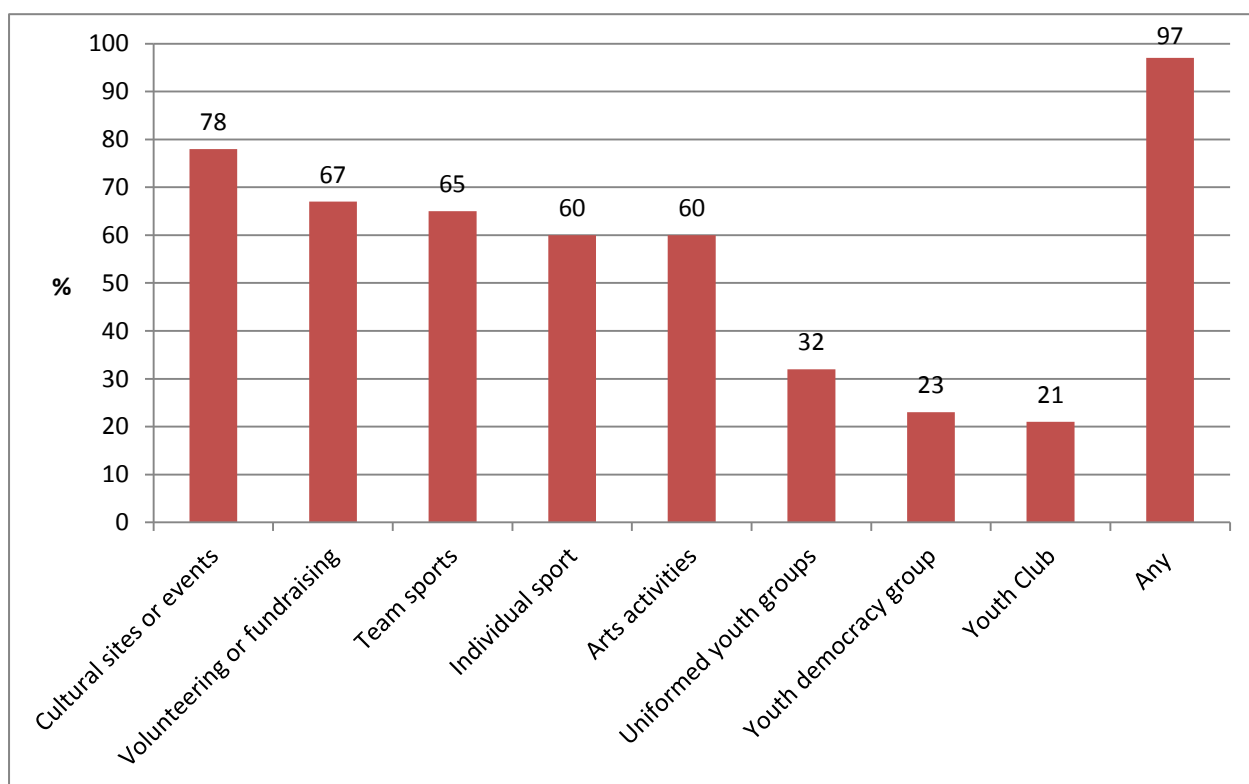
In terms of age, a large majority (72 per cent) of respondents were aged 12 to 18. 16 per cent were aged 8 to 11 and 12 per cent were aged 19 to 26. Looking at gender, 57 per cent of respondents were female, 38 per cent were male, and 5 per cent identified as either non-binary or other. Most respondents were white (94 per cent). Almost half of respondents came from East Lothian, Midlothian and

Edinburgh, but there were respondents from all local authorities. A substantial minority of 18 per cent had a long-term physical or mental health condition.

### Participation in activities

As Figure 1 shows, a very large majority or 97 per cent had participated in at least one type of activity in the last 12 months. The most widely taken part in activity was visiting cultural sites or events such as the theatre, museums or historical sites (79 per cent); volunteering or fundraising (67 per cent); team sports (65 per cent); and individual sports and arts activities such as drama, craft or music classes (both 60 per cent). Less common activities were uniformed youth groups such as Scouts (32 per cent); youth democracy groups such as the Scottish Youth Parliament (23 per cent); and attending a youth club (21 per cent).

**Figure 1: Participation in activities in the last 12 months**



Variation in participation by age group differed between different types of activities:

- Participation in team sports and arts activities was similar among 8 to 11 year olds and 12 to 18 year olds, but lower among 19 to 26 year olds.
- Participation in individual sports declined with age.
- Children in the youngest group were more likely to take part in uniformed youth groups, and less likely to get involved in youth democracy than the older age groups.
- Children in the middle age group were less likely to have visited cultural sites or events than both the youngest and oldest groups.
- There was no significant age variation in those attending youth clubs.

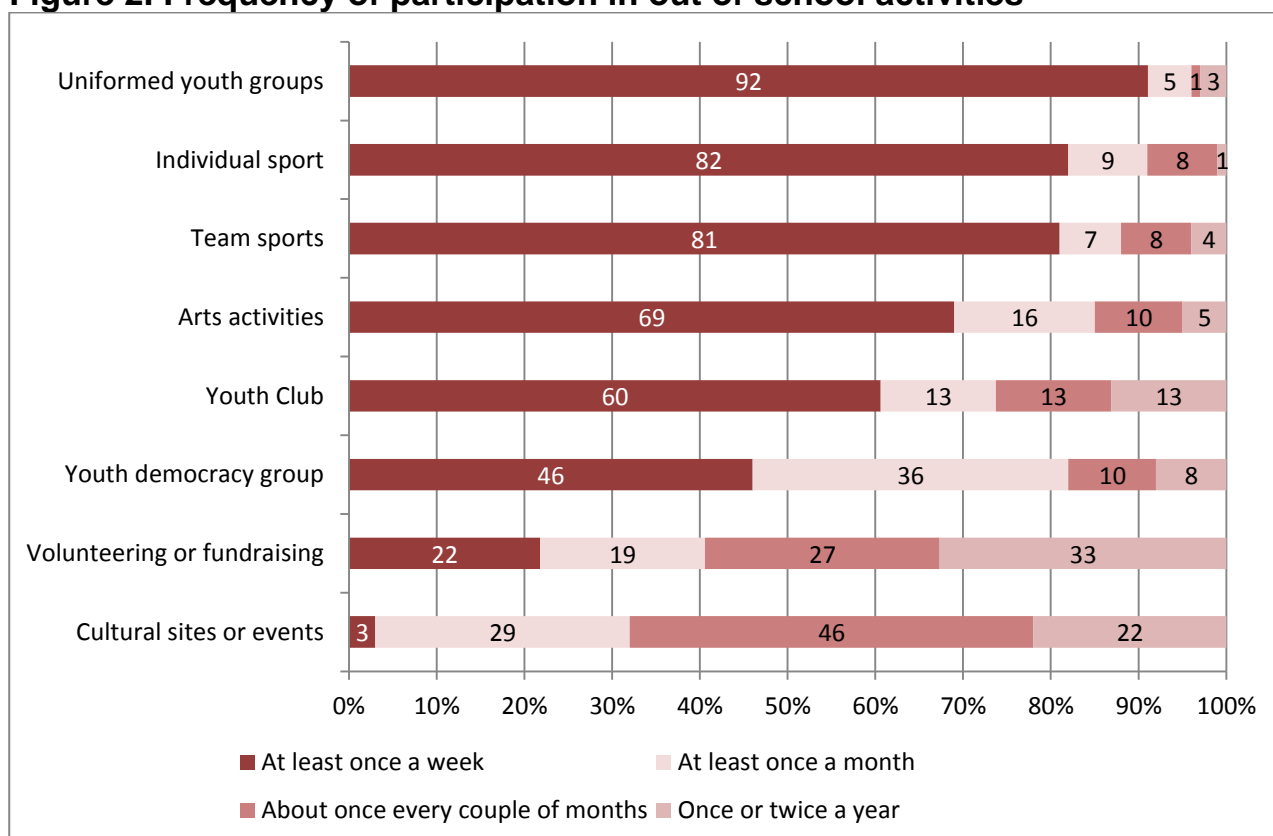
There was relatively little variation by gender. The only statistically significant differences were that girls were more likely to participate in arts activities, while boys were more likely to participate in team sports.

There was some variation in participation by whether respondents had a long term health condition. Young people with a health condition were substantially less likely to participate in both team and individual sports. However, they were more likely to attend youth clubs.

### Frequency of participation

Respondents who indicated that they had done a given activity were asked how often they had participated in that activity. As Figure 2 shows, very high percentages participated weekly for uniformed youth groups (92 per cent); individual sports (82 per cent); and team sports (81 per cent). For arts activities and youth clubs, this was slightly lower but still high at 69 and 60 per cent respectively. Just under half participated weekly in youth democracy groups, and 36 per cent participated monthly. Around a fifth volunteered or fundraised weekly, while a third did so once or twice a year. For visits to cultural sites or events, just under half said they went about once every couple of months, and around three in ten said they went once a month.

**Figure 2. Frequency of participation in out of school activities**



There was little variation in frequency by socio-demographic factors. The only statistically significant finding was that respondents in the oldest age group were less likely to participate in arts activities every week than other age groups.

## Barriers to participation

Respondents were asked if there were any activities outside of school that they would have liked to have taken part in but didn't. A high percentage of 62 per cent said that this was the case.

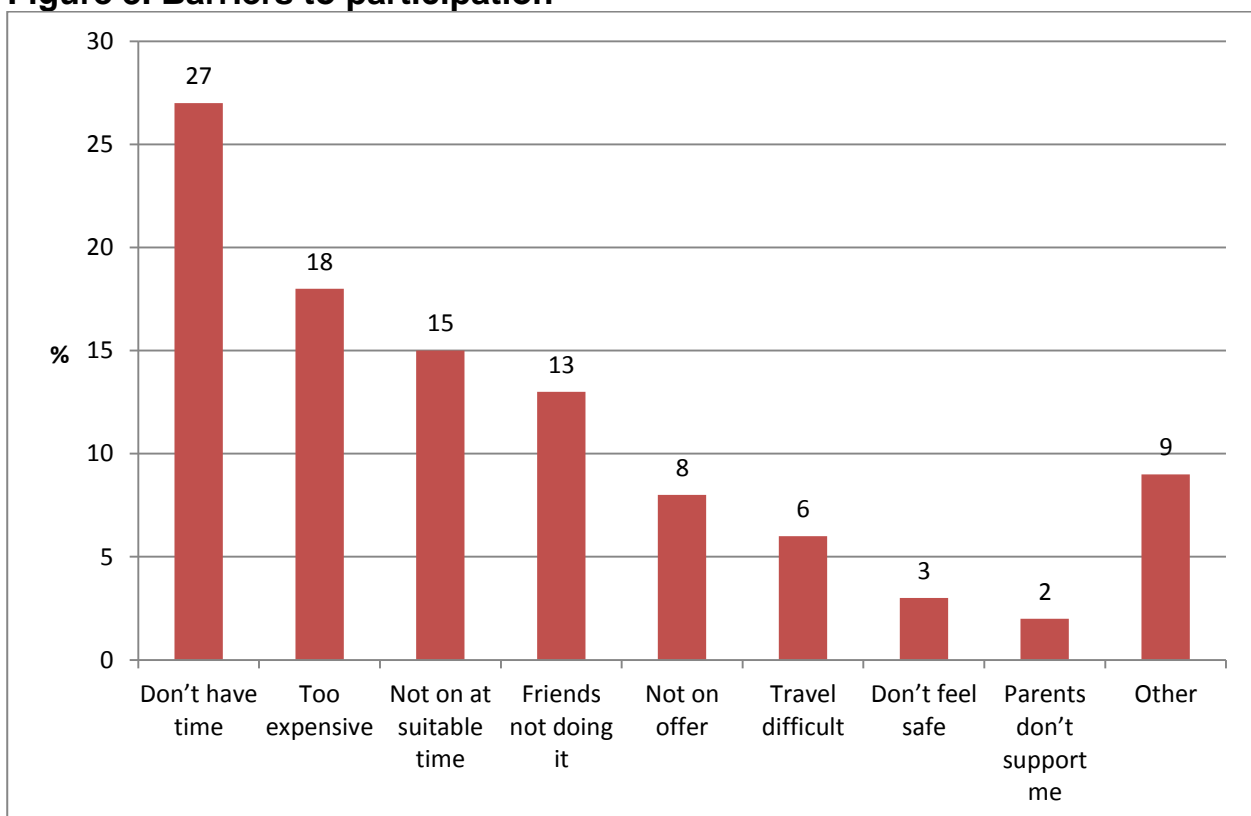
Those who answered yes were then asked for the main thing that was stopping them from taking part. As Figure 3 shows, responses were spread between the options given. The most commonly selected answer was 'I don't have time' (27 per cent); followed by 'It's too expensive' (18 per cent); and 'it's not on at a time that suits me' (15 per cent). A small number of respondents said that they didn't feel safe, either in the activity or in getting there (3 per cent) or that their parents didn't support them (2 per cent).

Most of the respondents selecting 'other' indicated that more than one reason applied, and this was also highlighted in open text responses. A couple of respondents also highlighted that the activities did not accommodate their health condition:

"[I] love idea of team sports but visual impairment means I feel like a burden to the team but on the other hand I am capable of playing the game so disabled sports doesn't work for me. [I] think more non-competitive sports clubs would be good"

"Need support and/or group leaders experienced and willing to support me because of my autism"

**Figure 3. Barriers to participation**



Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to comment in an open question. Most respondents used this space to provide details on their answers to the barriers question or their own pattern of participation. As noted above, a number highlighted that several barriers apply at the same time.

Two additional points relating to reasons why young people may not participate were made. The first related to pressures of school work making it difficult to fit in out-of-school activities:

“Activities outside of school are so important for physical, social, and mental health. For me, I am so aware of the impact all my extracurricular activities have on me. However, it's really hard for young people in S4/S5/S6 to fit these in due to exam studying and all the pressures that school can make you feel. A lot of young people drop out of activities through no fault of their own except that they physically can't balance it with school.”

“The school doesn't support or care about out-of-school activities and we can't go to them because we have so much homework therefore no time.”

The other barrier identified was that clubs may not feel welcoming to some people:

“There should be more sports clubs etc that put out advertisements encouraging people to join because people often find it hard to join a group/ team as they might feel they haven't been invited or [are] not as good or [are] not wanted there/ not involved, and so having an open invite would help this.”

Finally, one respondent pointed out the importance of young people doing activities as a family:

“No questions were asked about being active outside an organised group etc. We cycle and explore the local beaches/countryside which I believe is over looked by so many families. People would rather pay to keep their children active than spend time themselves enjoying quality time together.”

### **How to access background or source data**

The data collected for this social research publication:

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [socialresearch@gov.scot](mailto:socialresearch@gov.scot) for further information.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.



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ISBN: 978-1-78851-587-0 (web only)

Published by the Scottish Government, February 2018