



Department  
for Culture  
Media & Sport



# Taking Part focus on: social media



Statistical Release

April 2016



# Introduction

## This report

This report is one in a series of three *Taking Part, focus on* reports, presenting findings of the Taking Part survey. Taking Part is a continuous face to face household survey of adults aged 16 years and over and children aged 5 to 15 years old in England.

The *Taking Part, focus on* reports looks at specific topics in more detail, with each report covering one of the following areas:

- 1) Cross-sector participation
- 2) Libraries
- 3) Social media users

This *Taking Part, focus on social media* report looks at people in England who use social media and their demographic characteristics. There is a growing interest in using social media data to understand the wider population, which cannot be done without knowing how representative users of social media are. These statistics help clarify how representative users of the most popular social media platforms are of the general population, and look at how social media usage differs between people participating in different cultural and sporting activities in England.

Alongside the *Taking Part, focus on* reports, a *Taking Part: longitudinal report* was also published on 28 April. This report focusses on data from people who have responded to the Taking Part survey three times. It looks how participation in and engagement with cultural and sporting activities changes over time at an individual level, as well as reasons for changes in participation.

## Forthcoming statistical releases

The next adult and child Taking Part releases will be published on Thursday 21 July 2016, and will present data covering the period April 2015 – March 2016. Adult releases of Taking Part are published every six months, in July and December. Child release of Taking Part are published once a year, in July.

Another series of *Taking Part, focus on* reports will be published in October 2016. Like the current report, each 'short story' in this series will look at a specific topic in more detail, providing more in-depth analysis of Taking Part data than seen in the biannual adult or annual child report.

You can find out about upcoming releases in our Official Statistics Release Calendar [here](#) or, if you would like further information on these releases or the Taking Part survey, please contact the Taking Part team on [TakingPart@culture.gov.uk](mailto:TakingPart@culture.gov.uk).

## Changes to Taking Part survey

In March 2016 we published a [strategy](#) outlining proposed developments to the Taking Part survey over the next five years, which will ensure the survey is fit for the future and supports the evidence needs of DCMS sectors.

# Social media overview

This *Taking Part, focus on* report looks at people in England who use social media and their demographic characteristics. There is a growing interest in using social media data to understand the wider population, which cannot be done without knowing how representative social media users are.

These statistics help clarify how representative users of the most popular social media platforms are of the general population, and look at

how social media usage differs among people participating in different cultural and sporting activities in England. The accompanying *Taking Part, focus on: cross sector participation* report looks more closely at overlaps in participation among sectors.



**70%**  
of adults  
used social  
media in the  
past year 📅

Between April 2014 and March 2015, 70.4 per cent of adults in England had used social media in the past year, with Facebook,

YouTube and Twitter being the most popular platforms. Over two thirds of those who used social media did so at least once a day.

The order of popularity among the six most used social media platforms has remained unchanged since 2012/13 (when questions on social media were first asked in *Taking Part*). Facebook is the most commonly used platform: in 2014/15, 57.5 per cent of adults had used Facebook in the past year, up from 52.8 per cent in 2012/13.

**Younger  
people are  
over  
represented  
among social  
media users**



The most common reasons for using social media are to find out what's happening in the local area, and to share content and views on content.

This statistical release looks more closely at the characteristics of users of the six most popular social media platforms in England, as found by *Taking Part*: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Spotify. Social media users tend to be younger than the population of England in general. This is particularly true for Instagram, for which nearly half of their adult users in England are under the age of 24. Results also show that lesbian, gay and bisexual people are more than twice as likely to use some social media platforms as heterosexuals, while those with a limiting illness or disability are less likely to do so.

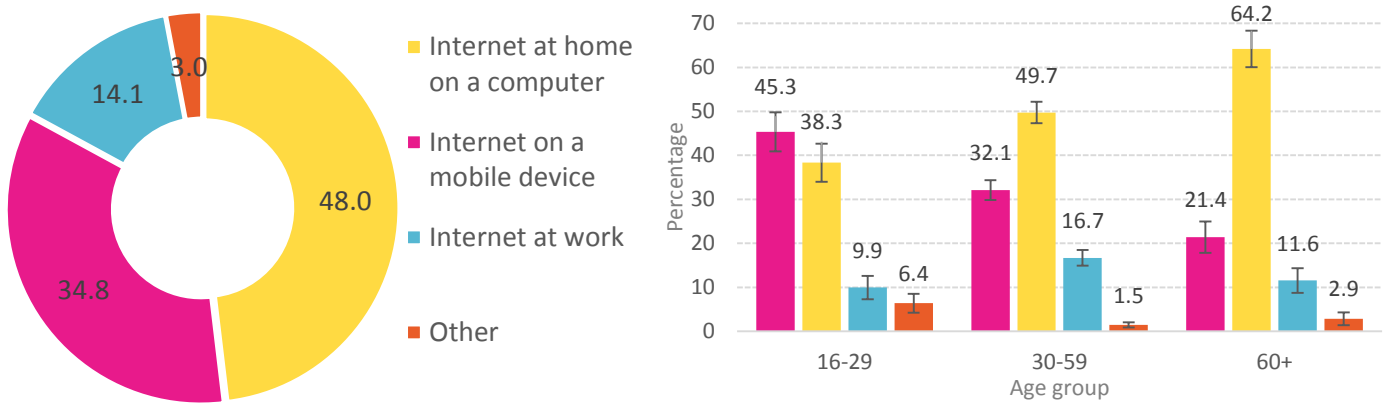


# Internet and social media usage

[Statistics on general internet usage in Great Britain](#) are published by the Office for National Statistics. In 2015, 78 per cent of adults in Great Britain used the internet every day. Taking Part provides an additional source of information about how people in England use the internet and, in particular, the demographics of people who use social media and similar networking websites.

Figure 1 shows the most often used means of accessing the internet for adults in England in 2014/15, as found in Taking Part. A home computer is the most often used means for 48.0 per cent of adults, followed by a mobile device (such as a phone) by 34.8 per cent. Use of the internet at home on a computer is more common for older age groups, while use of a mobile device is more common for younger age groups.

**Figure 1: Most often used means of accessing the internet, for all adults (left) and by age (right), 2014/15**

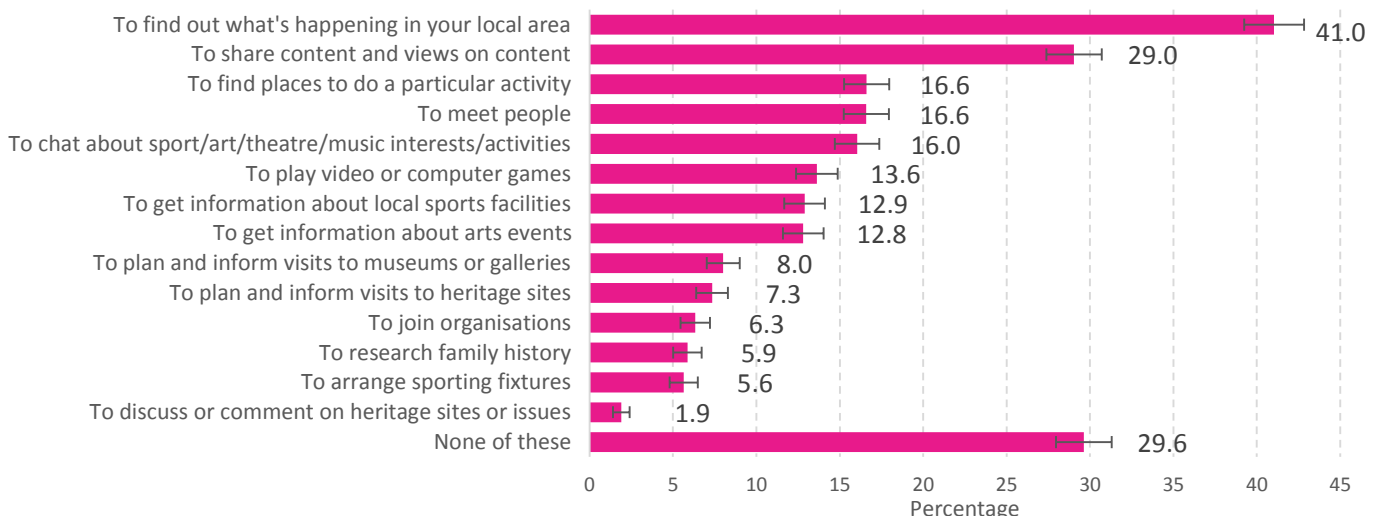


**Notes:**

(1) Confidence intervals range between  $\pm 0.6$  and  $\pm 4.4$ .

In 2014/15, 70.4 per cent of adults had used social media in the past year. Figure 2 shows the most common reasons for using social media in England. Among those who use social media, the most common use was to find out what is happening in the local area, which 41.0 per cent of adults did, followed by the sharing of content and views on content, which 29.0 per cent did.

**Figure 2: Reasons for using social media, 2014/15**

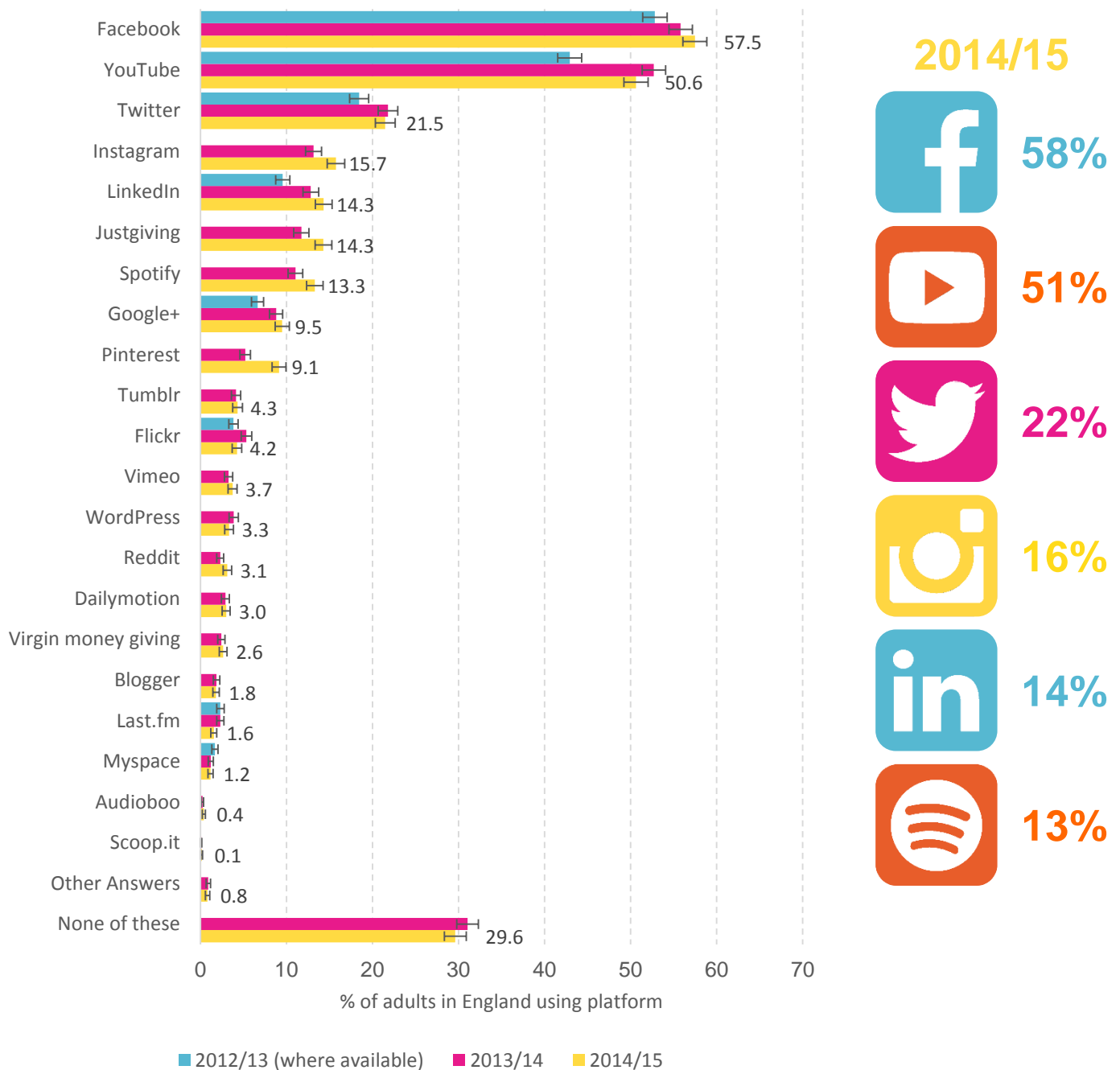


**Notes:**

(1) Confidence intervals, shown as error bars, range between  $\pm 0.5$  and  $\pm 1.8$ .

Respondents are asked which social media platforms they have used in the last year (see Annex A). The most commonly used social media platform in England was the social networking platform Facebook, which was used by 57.5 per cent of adults in England, followed by YouTube and Twitter. This publication will focus on the six most commonly used social media platforms, discounting JustGiving (for which the primary purpose is fundraising with social aspects, rather than to facilitate networking or the sharing of content with peers).

**Figure 3: Usage of social media platforms over time, 2012/13 – 2014/15 (labels indicate 2014/15 values)**



**Notes:**

(1) Confidence intervals, shown as error bars, range between  $\pm 0.1$  and  $\pm 1.4$ .

(2) Data for 2012/13 is not available for all platforms as not all platforms were included in the 2012/13 survey question.

(3) "None of these" indicates the respondent selected no answer from the list of social media platforms (see Annex A: Technical details), and did not state they used any other platform.

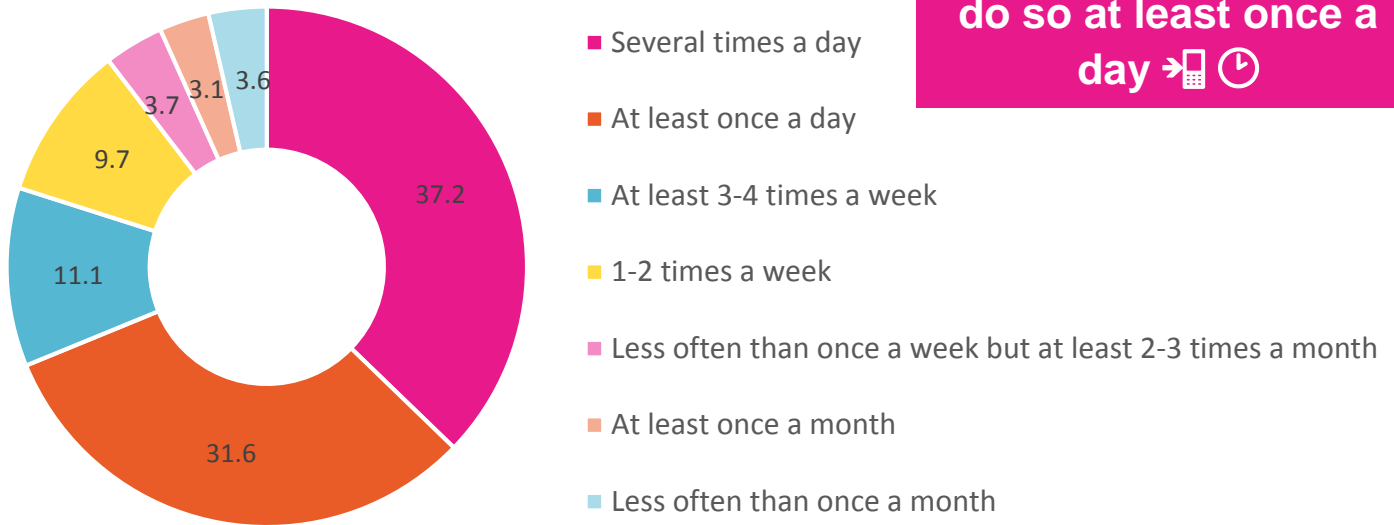


Figure 3 shows that use of most social media platforms has increased over the last 3 years. The percentage of adults in England using no social media platform was 29.6 per cent in 2014/15, a similar proportion to in 2013/14. Instagram was the most popular photo-sharing social medium, used by 15.7 per cent of adults in 2014/15, while YouTube was the most popular video-sharing social medium, used by over half of all adults in England. The order of popularity among the six most used social media platforms has remained unchanged since 2012/13, when questions on social media were first asked in Taking Part.

Figure 4 shows the frequency with which adults who use social media do so. 68.8 per cent of adults in England who use social media do so at least once a day, with over half of those accessing social media several times a day. Just over one in ten adults who use social media do so less frequently than once a week.

Over  
**two thirds**  
of adults in England  
who use social media  
do so at least once a  
day 📱 ⌚

**Figure 4: Frequency of social media use, 2014/15**



**Notes:**

(1) Confidence intervals, shown as error bars, range between  $\pm 0.6$  and  $\pm 1.7$ .

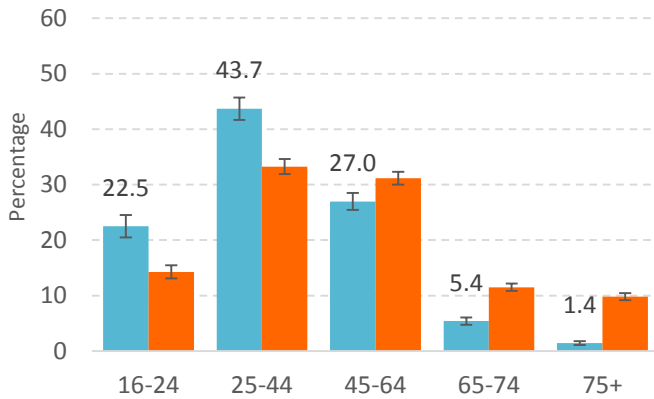
# Social media user demography

This section of the report focusses on the demographics of the users of the six most popular social media platforms (as measured in Taking Part): [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) and [Spotify](#).

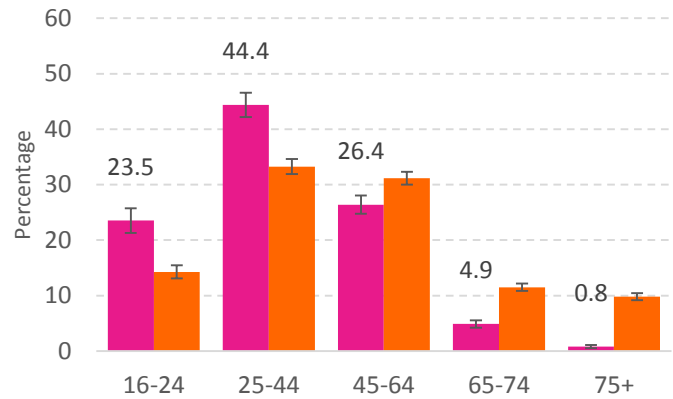
As shown in Figure 5, the distribution of ages of social media users varies from that of the English population in general, and varies between platforms.

**Figure 5: Age distribution of social media users by platform, 2014/15**

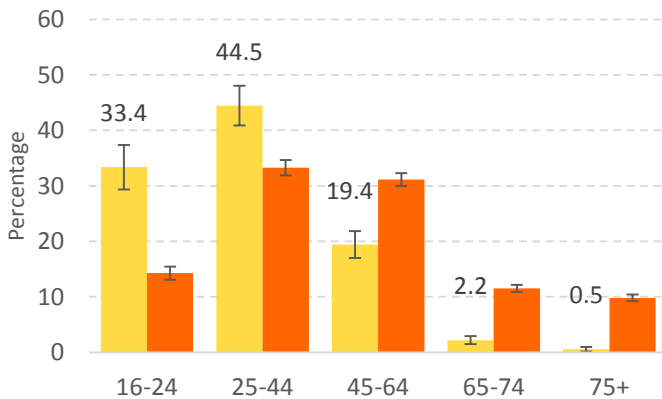
## Facebook



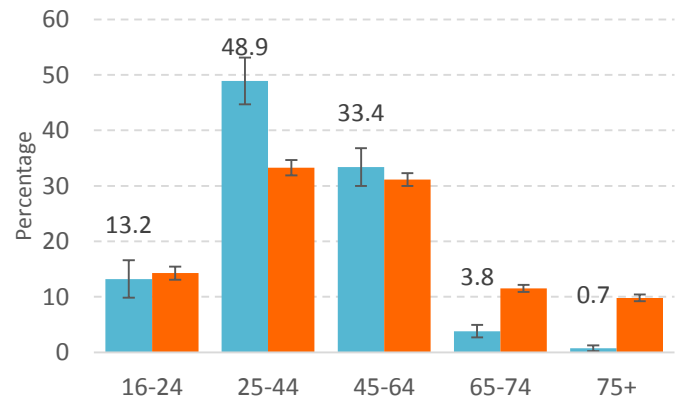
## YouTube



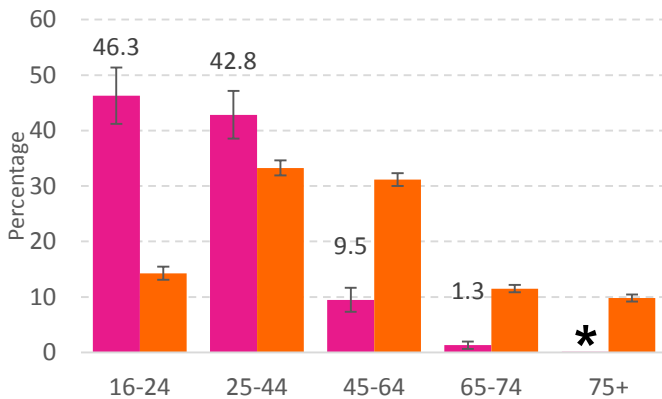
## Twitter



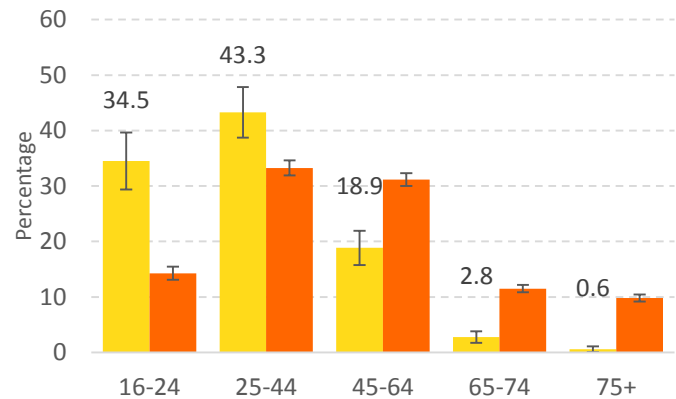
## LinkedIn



## Instagram



## Spotify



**Notes:**

(1) Confidence intervals, shown as error bars, range between  $\pm 0.2$  and  $\pm 5.1$ .

(2) The age distribution of the population of all adults in England is shown in **orange** for comparison.

(3) \* indicates data are disclosive and are therefore not shown



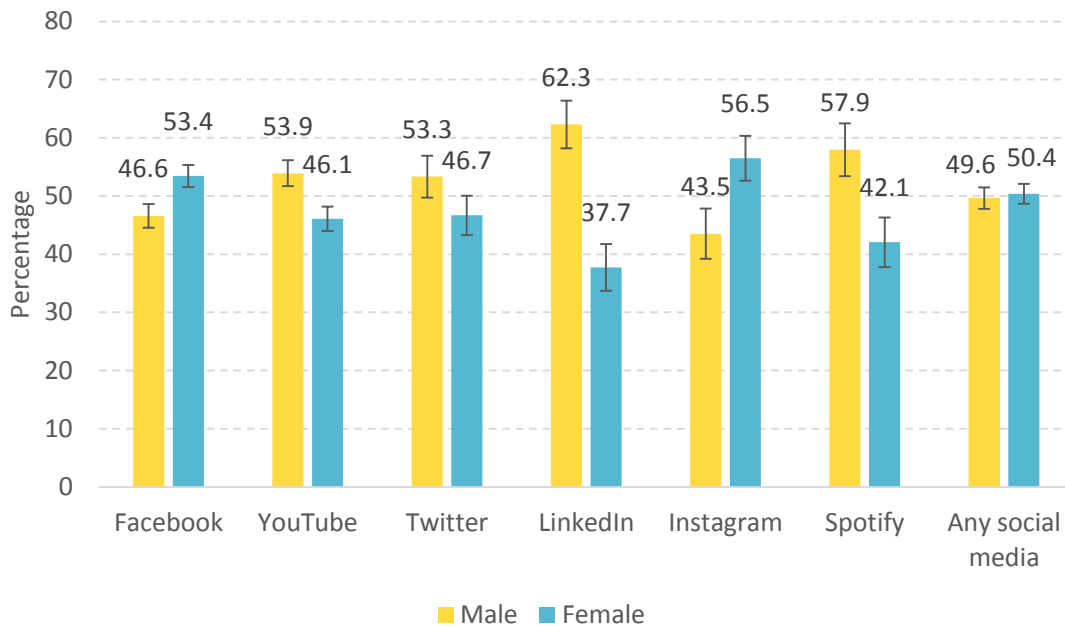
For most platforms, the overall shape of the distribution reflects that of the population in general, peaking on the 25-44 year old group, but in each case, is more heavily weighted towards the youngest two age groups. One exception to this is Instagram, where the youngest age group (16-24) contains the highest proportion. Across all platforms, younger people are over represented among users and older people are underrepresented.

Distributions of users by sex also vary depending on platform, as shown in Figure 6. YouTube, Twitter, Spotify and LinkedIn have more users who are male, whereas Facebook and Instagram have more users who are female. The discrepancy is largest for LinkedIn, where 62.3 per cent of users are male, and Spotify, where 57.9 per cent of users are male.

**How does this compare?**

The [2011 census](#) found that the adult population of England had slightly more females than males, with 48.7 per cent of the population male and 51.3 per cent of the population female.

**Figure 6: Sex and social media use, by social media platform, 2014/15**



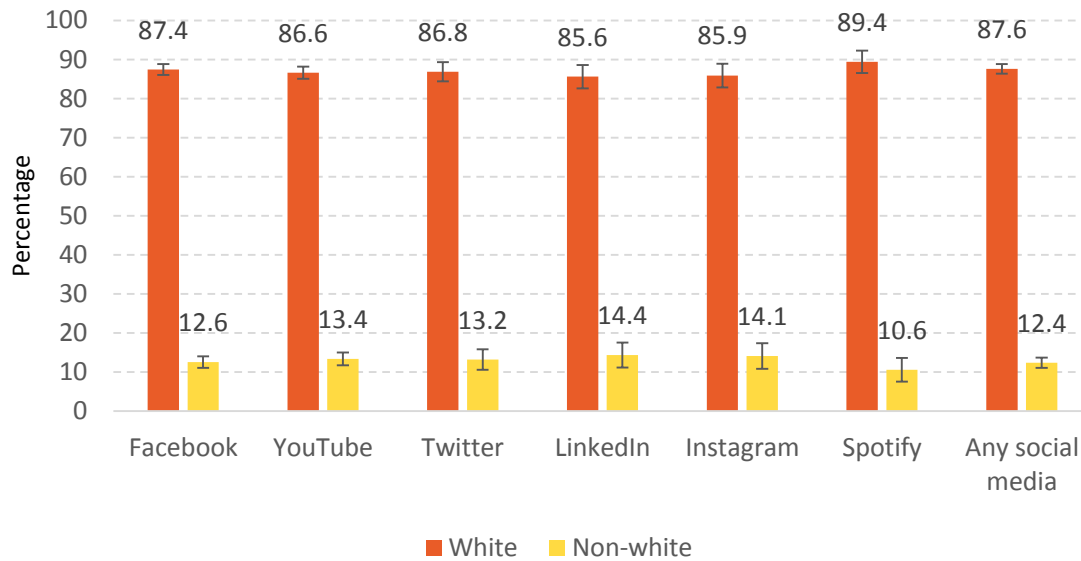
**Notes:**

(1) Confidence intervals, shown as error bars, range between  $\pm 0.2$  and  $\pm 15.1$ .

Distributions of user ethnicity, shown in Figure 7, are fairly uniform across all social media platforms, with the percentage of non-white users varying between 10.6 for Spotify to 14.4 for LinkedIn. For comparison, 13.0 per cent of the adult population of England are not white according to the [2011 census](#).



**Figure 7: Ethnicity and social media use, by social media platform, 2014/15**



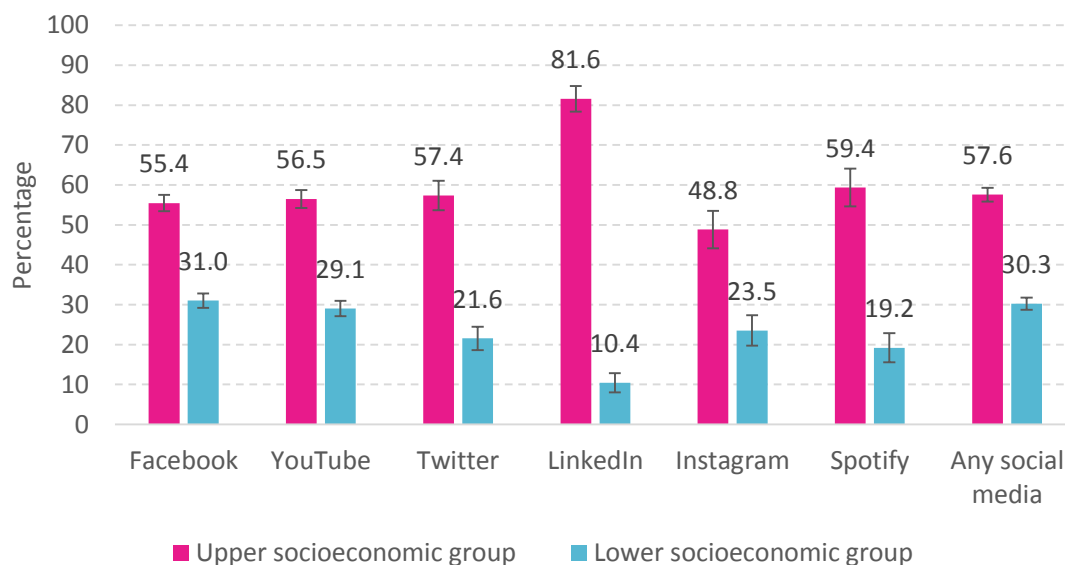
**Notes:**

(1) Confidence intervals, shown as error bars, range between  $\pm 1.3$  and  $\pm 3.3$ .

For each social media platform, with the exception of Instagram, the majority of users belong to the upper socioeconomic group. The distribution varies across platforms, as shown in Figure 8. For the upper socioeconomic group, the proportion of users ranges from 48.8 per cent for Instagram to 81.6 per cent for LinkedIn. This latter result is likely because the upper socioeconomic group includes all people who are in managerial, technical or professional occupations, and LinkedIn is primarily a professional networking site.

Conversely the percentage of users per platform in the lower economic social group ranges from 10.4 per cent for LinkedIn to 31.0 per cent for Facebook. Adults not included in either socioeconomic group include students; this might be why the largest percentage missing from Figure 8 is for Instagram (27.7 per cent), where the majority of users are young people.

**Figure 8: Socioeconomic group and social media use, by social media platform, 2014/15**



**Notes:**

(1) Confidence intervals, shown as error bars, range between  $\pm 1.8$  and  $\pm 4.7$ .



# Prevalence of social media use in minority groups

This section looks at the prevalence of social media use among those in minority sexual identities versus heterosexuals and those who are disabled or have a long term illness versus those with no such condition.

**Lesbian, gay and bisexual people were more than twice as likely to use Twitter, Instagram and Spotify as heterosexuals.**




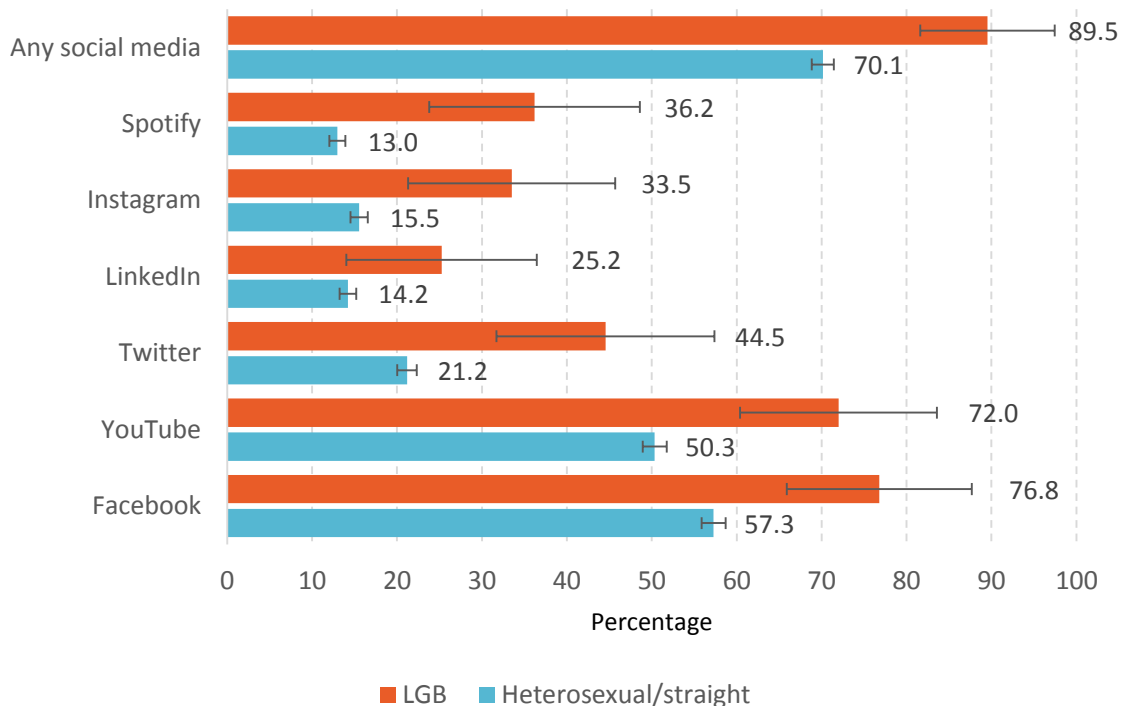
Figure 9 shows the percentage of adults in England using each platform by sexuality. Those identifying as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual have been grouped together because the number of respondents in individual minority sexuality groups would be too small for meaningful analysis to be conducted.

A greater percentage of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) people use each platform than heterosexuals, indicating LGB people are more likely to use social media in general. The percentage of LGB people using each platform varied between 25.2 per cent for LinkedIn to 76.8 per cent for Facebook, while for heterosexuals it varied between 13.0 per cent for Spotify to 57.3 per cent for Facebook.

LinkedIn to 76.8 per cent for Facebook, while for heterosexuals it varied between 13.0 per cent for Spotify to 57.3 per cent for Facebook.

The proportion of LGB people using Spotify, Instagram and Twitter is over twice that for heterosexuals. These results may be because a greater percentage of younger people identify as LGB in the Taking Part survey: 3.0 per cent of 16-29 year olds identify as LGB, versus 1.3 per cent of 30-59 year olds. Small sample sizes prevent further analysis considering both sexuality and age group.

**Figure 9: Rate of social media usage per platform by user sexual identity, 2014/15**



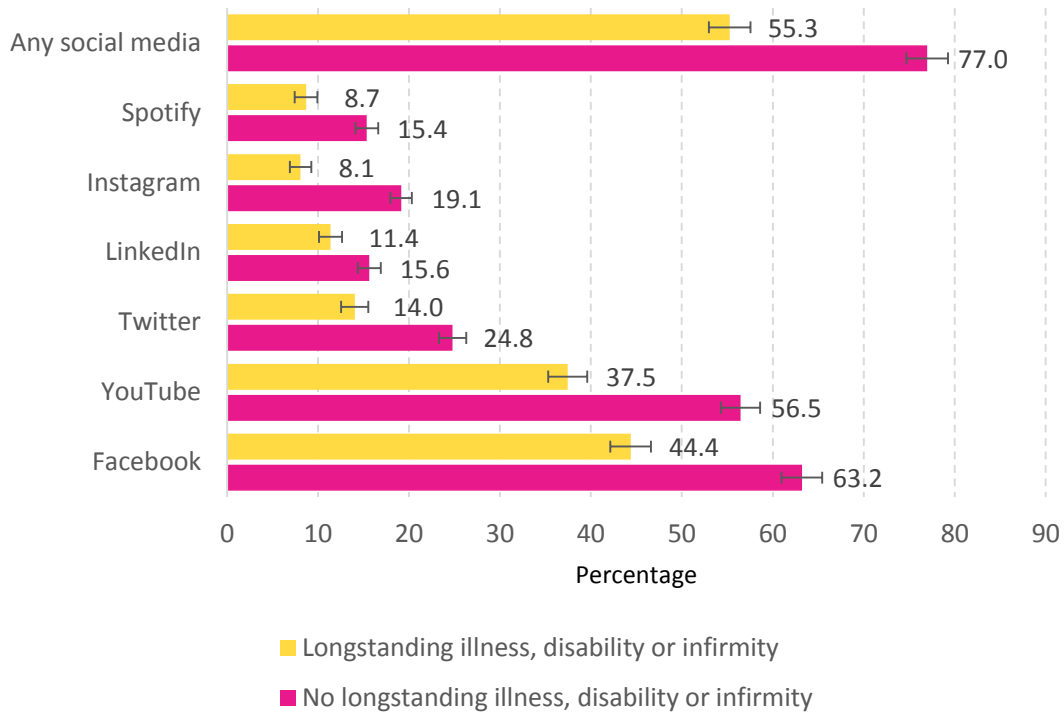
**Notes:**

(1) Confidence intervals, shown as error bars, range between ±1.0 and ±12.8.

Rate of social media usage similarly differs between those who have and do not have a long standing illness or disability. This is shown in Figure 10.

Those with a long standing illness or disability are less likely to be users of each social media platform than those who do not have a long standing illness or disability. This may be because those who have a long standing illness or disability tend to be older, and older people are less likely to use social media; 19.6 per cent of those without a long standing illness or disability are aged 60 or older, versus 48.1 per cent for those with a long standing illness or disability.

**Figure 10: Rate of social media usage per platform by user disability status, 2014/15**



**Notes:**

(1) Confidence intervals, shown as error bars, range between  $\pm 1.2$  and  $\pm 2.2$ .

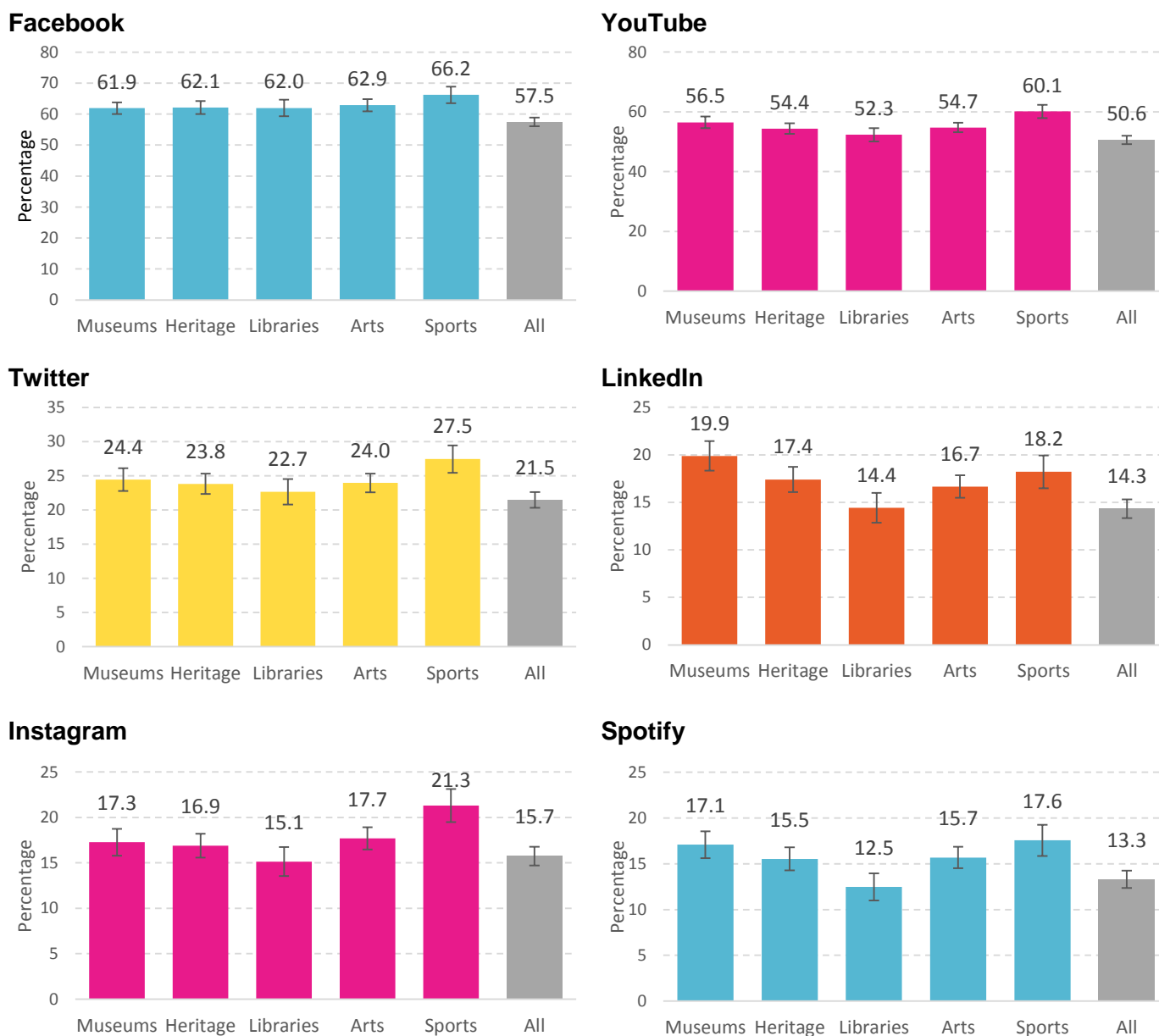


# Social media and cultural and sports participation

This section looks at the usage of social media platforms by those who participate in cultural and sporting sectors. These sectors are defined as Museums, Heritage, Libraries (those who have visited a museum, heritage site or library in the past 12 months, respectively), Arts (those who have participated in/attended the arts in the last 12 months), and Sport (those who have participated in a sport in the last four weeks).

Figure 11 shows the proportion of people who participate in each sector who use each platform. There is some variation in the usage of different social media platforms across the different participation groups.

**Figure 11: Use of each social media platform by participation group, 2014/15**



## Notes:

(1) Confidence intervals, shown as error bars, range between  $\pm 1.0$  and  $\pm 2.7$ .

In almost all cases, those who participated in one of the above sectors were more likely to use each social media platform than the population of adults in England in general. Of all the participation groups, those who have visited a library in the past year are least likely to use each social media platform, barring Facebook, for which use is approximately equivalent with other participation groups. Usage of each social media platform tends to be higher among those who have visited a museum or participated in sports.

## Annex A: Technical details

1. Respondents are asked “In the last 12 months, have you accessed any of the following social networking sites or applications?” and are presented with a list of social media platforms.

DCMS reviews the social media platforms asked about when it reviews the Taking Part questionnaire on an annual basis and, consequently, new social media platforms have been included in the 2015/16 and 2016/17 surveys.

2. The lists of social media platforms asked about in each year of the Taking Part survey is shown below in Table A1.

**Table A1: Social media platforms asked about in Taking Part by year**

	2013/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Audioboo		✓	✓	✓	✓
Bebo	✓				
Blogger		✓	✓	✓	✓
Dailymotion		✓	✓	✓	✓
Deviant Art					✓
Facebook	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Flickr	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Foursquare/Swarm					✓
Friends Reunited	✓				
Google+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Instagram		✓	✓	✓	✓
Justgiving		✓	✓	✓	✓
Last.fm	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LinkedIn	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LiveJournal					✓
MSN					✓
Myspace	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pinterest		✓	✓	✓	✓
Reddit		✓	✓	✓	✓
Scoop.it		✓	✓	✓	✓
Snachat					✓
Soundcloud					✓
Spotify		✓	✓	✓	✓
Stumbleupon					✓
Tumblr		✓	✓	✓	✓
Twitter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vimeo		✓	✓	✓	✓
Vine					✓
Virgin money giving		✓	✓	✓	✓
WhatsApp					✓
WordPress		✓	✓	✓	✓
YouTube	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



## Annex B: Further details

1. The Taking Part survey is commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and its partner Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs). For 2011 to 2016 these are Arts Council England, Historic England and Sport England.
2. Taking Part is a National Statistics output and as such has been produced to the high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. National Statistics undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs and are produced free from any political interference. See the [Statistics Authority code of practice](#) for more information.

The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed. See the [UK Statistics Authority assessment](#) for more information.

3. The latest results presented here are based on interviews issued between April 2014 and March 2015. The total sample size for this period is 9,817.
4. Statistical significance tests have been run at the 95% level. A significant increase at the 95% level means that there is less than 5% (1 in 20) chance that the difference observed within the sampled respondents was not also observed in the English population as a whole.
5. For more information see the [Taking Part survey](#) webpages, including previous publications. Versions of the [questionnaires](#) from all years of the survey are also available.
6. The fieldwork for the survey has been conducted by TNS-BMRB. For more information, see <http://www.tns-bmr.co.uk>.
7. The series of reports has been produced by Helen Miller-Bakewell, Wilmah Deda, Becky Woods and Niall Goulding (DCMS). Acknowledgement goes to colleagues within DCMS, Sport England, Historic England, Arts Council England and TNS-BMRB for their assistance with the production and quality assurance of this release.
8. The responsible statistician for this release is Helen Miller-Bakewell. For enquiries on this release, please contact Helen on 0207 211 6355.
9. For general enquiries telephone: 0207 211 6200 or email [enquiries@culture.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@culture.gov.uk).
10. To be kept informed about Taking Part publications and user events, please sign up to the Taking Part online newsletter [here](#). You can follow us on Twitter [@DCMSInsight](#).

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