



department for  
**culture, media  
and sport**



# Sport Participation Measurement

Consultation on Proposed Changes

May 2012

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# Introduction

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DCMS and Sport England wish to consult with users and other interested parties on proposals to change the way sport is measured in the Taking Part and Active People surveys.

This document and a survey hosted at [https://dcms.eu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_5BEONr4JAQkiFYo](https://dcms.eu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5BEONr4JAQkiFYo) form this consultation. Please click on this link to respond to the consultation.

If you have any questions, please contact:

DCMS and Sport England: [statsconsultation@culture.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:statsconsultation@culture.gsi.gov.uk) OR

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The consultation will be open for 12 weeks, closing at midnight on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2012.

# Reasons for Change

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DCMS and Sport England intend to change the way sport is measured in the Taking Part and Active People surveys. This change is proposed to provide the following benefits:

- Ensure we have the right measurement in place for the new [youth and community strategy](#);
- Underpin performance management of Sport England investment into sport National Governing Bodies and align with Payment by Results principles;
- Have a single survey of sports participation instead of the two we have currently;
- Deliver improved value for money; and
- Use data collection methods that provide wider coverage of the population.

Our measurement will also continue to support the public health outcomes framework and local authority level data.

We believe that, done correctly, changing to a single survey will allow the current strengths of both surveys to be combined:

- Telephone interviews in the Active People survey provide a large, cost effective sample, with broad geographical coverage, allowing measurement of a wider range of sports and local areas.
- The Taking Part survey covers a wider range of cross cultural activities (i.e. sport, arts and heritage) and has a longitudinal design (i.e. interviewing the same people over time). It also has the benefit of using face to face interviews, with high response rates and wide coverage.

We also feel it is an appropriate time to introduce other forms of data collection, such as online and mobile phone.

However, in making these improvements, we recognise it is important to retain consistency with measurement already in place (cross cultural, local sports measurement, demographic split and the overall sport indicators used).

# Quality Commitment

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The Taking Part and Active People surveys are both subject to the Code of Practice for Official Statistics (as a national statistic and official statistic respectively). We believe bringing together the surveys will increase public trust and confidence in sport participation statistics and further develop our commitment to the Code of Practice principles, in particular:

- Seek to balance quality (e.g. accuracy and timeliness) against costs, taking into account the expected uses of the statistics; and
- The production, management and dissemination of official statistics should meet the requirements of informed decision-making by government.

DCMS's Evidence and Analysis Unit and Sport England's Research Team are working closely with experts to develop and deliver these changes:

- Office for National Statistics Methodology Advisory Service: this unit has been appointed to provide technical guidance on these changes
- TNS-BMRB which delivers both surveys, will provide technical expertise on survey changes
- UK Statistics Authority: DCMS and Sport England are proud of the designation of Taking Part and Active People as a national statistic and official statistic respectively. We aim to retain these designations, endeavouring to implement changes that are acceptable to the UK Statistics Authority.

In addition:

- We **do not** intend to make any changes to the cross cultural data (i.e. arts, heritage) collected through Taking Part. This will ensure the continuity of this data.
- The longitudinal element (i.e. interviewing the same people over time) introduced as part of the Taking Part survey will also continue **unaffected** by the changes now being consulted on (apart from minor changes where sports questions are aligned between the two surveys).

# Proposal

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Following a detailed assessment of our requirements and potential solutions, with guidance from the Office for National Statistics Methodology Advisory Service, we have identified a preferred option. The proposed changes are:

- Have a single survey for measuring sport (rather than two separate surveys);
- Minor changes to the sports questions within Taking Part and Active People to harmonise them (so that results can be integrated);
- A single set of sport results;
- Integrating the face to face and landline telephone data collection methods of Taking Part and Active People;
- A total sample size (160,000 interviews) of sufficient scale for local measurement of sports participation;
- Extend data collection to ask 14 and 15 year olds the same sports questions as adults; and
- A research project into digital means of data collection (online and mobile phone), with a view to integrating results over time.

During our work, we identified a number of options which would be affordable within the combined budget of the two surveys, or which we expect to become budget neutral in the medium term.

We intend to pilot digital technology (online and/or mobile) as part of our data collection. As these are relatively new survey methods, we will need to pilot these alongside our main data collection methods, with a view to integrating and, if appropriate, substituting landline with digital responses over the medium term, once we are confident of the quality and effectiveness of these methods. The project also seeks to future proof the survey, both in terms of coverage and affordability, by utilising modern means of communication.

The table overleaf shows our preferred option plus four other options we considered. The options presented reflect our current thinking and may change, following the response to the consultation and as we develop the detail further.

Sample size and data collection method	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p><b>Preferred Option</b></p> <p>A single survey of 160,000 interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30,000 face to face interviews (10,000 of which are asked cross cultural questions)</li> <li>• 130,000 landline telephone interviews</li> </ul> <p>In addition, a research project into digital means of data collection will be carried out, with the aim of integrating results into the overall survey (subject to pilot results)</p>	<p>Large enough sample for performance managing sports and providing data at a local authority level (at least c500 interviews per local authority, as currently)</p> <p>An effective balance of face to face and landline interviews</p> <p>Sufficient face to face interviews with which to calibrate landline telephone interviews and provide improved coverage</p> <p>Cross cultural data (i.e. data spanning the arts, heritage and sport) is unaffected</p>	<p>It takes longer for this option to become cost neutral</p> <p>Potential challenges in integrating online and mobile phone data into survey results</p> <p>More complex</p>
<p><b>Option 2</b></p> <p>A single survey of 72,000 interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 36,000 face to face interviews (10,000 of which are asked cross cultural questions)</li> <li>• 36,000 landline telephone interviews</li> </ul>	<p>A high proportion of face to face interviews providing higher quality data</p> <p>Cross cultural data is unaffected</p>	<p>Sample size is not large enough to meet local authority level and sport specific reporting requirements (without reliance on modelling which will not directly capture the effect of local interventions)</p>
<p><b>Option 3</b></p> <p>A wholly face to face survey of around 40,000 interviews</p>	<p>Face to face interviews provide higher quality data</p> <p>Simplest approach to data collection</p> <p>Cross cultural data is unaffected</p>	<p>Sample size is not large enough to meet local authority level and sport specific reporting requirements (without reliance on modelling which will not directly capture the effect of local interventions)</p>
<p><b>Option 4</b></p> <p>Taking sport out of Taking Part and measuring sports participation using only the Active People survey</p>	<p>Single measure of sports participation data</p>	<p>Cross cultural data is lost (i.e. data spanning the arts, heritage and sport) and it would no longer be possible to analyse reasons for change together</p> <p>Cost of measurement across sport and culture sector would increase considerably</p>

Sample size and data collection method	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p><b>Option 5</b></p> <p>Continuing the surveys as they are, but with results integrated</p>	<p>Cross cultural data is unaffected</p>	<p>Questionnaire differences would remain and make the production of one set of integrated results problematic</p> <p>There would be a duplication of effort in terms of survey management</p>

Further details of the options and the reasons behind their inclusion are described in the annex of this document.

In addition, there are further supporting documents available to download on the consultation page of the [DCMS](#) and [Sport England](#) websites:

- A background paper which discusses the existing Taking Part and Active People surveys and sets out the reasons for the proposed changes in more detail.
- A paper commissioned from the Office for National Statistics Methodology Advisory Service looking at a discussion of options for Taking Part and Active People Survey Integration.
- The latest technical reports for both the Taking Part and Active People surveys.

### Note on the use of the sports participation data

Surveys like Taking Part and Active People measure the amount of sport and physical activity undertaken across a given population. The proposed new survey will measure sports participation amongst individuals aged 14 years or more in England. The design and management of these surveys means they provide independent estimates of sports participation for the whole population with known levels of confidence. Dependent on their size and design, population surveys also allow the consistent measurement of participation between demographic groups and geographical areas as well as changes over time.

Sport England uses the Active People survey for the performance management of the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of funded sports. Taking Part and Active People sports participation data is also used by other partners and stakeholders including Local Authorities, County Sports Partnerships, health agencies, academics, operators and those delivering sport. The proposed new survey will continue to meet these needs.

Their independence, consistency, and coverage make these surveys (both the existing surveys and the proposed new survey) suitable for performance management based on population level targets. However, project and management data remain important sources of information. Membership databases, turnstile clicks, and project attendance records all provide valuable intelligence that can complement but should not override national estimates of participation in sport.



# What will this mean for me?

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We aim for the changes to the surveys to result in minimal (if any) change to the statistics and information that you receive currently from the two surveys. The proportion of people undertaking at least one 30 minute session of moderate intensity sport each week will be our lead measure.

Changing the survey method could result in changes to the results. We have been testing a mixed-mode method in the Active People survey during 2011 and 2012 and will use the results of this in the design and delivery of the changes. We will work closely with our stakeholders to manage any changes in the data, providing weights to be applied to the data (if necessary) to take into account any discontinuity of the data series. Any changes to time series data will also be communicated via our websites.

The new survey will however provide new data on sporting participation by 14 and 15 year olds that will be comparable with the data on adult participation.



# Timing

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We will analyse the responses during August 2012 and post a summary and our response to the consultation on the DCMS and Sport England websites. We will not enter into correspondence with individual respondents, but may make your responses available on request unless you indicate that you wish your response to be kept confidential. We commit to reading and considering all responses, but will balance the importance of the issue and the impact of user views against the time and resources available.

Following analysis, we will begin preparing to implement changes in autumn 2012, with the new survey due to be launched from April 2013.

However, new funding agreements need to be agreed between sport National Governing Bodies and Sport England for the 2013 to 2017 period. The intention is for these agreements to include performance targets based on participation levels for 14 to 25 year olds. To obtain a baseline participation measure for this age group in advance of the new funding period, Sport England is planning to extend data collection for quarter 4 (mid-July to mid-October) of the 2012 Active People survey to 14 year olds. 14 and 15 year olds will be interviewed either face to face or via landline telephone. Apart from being able to provide additional information on 14 and 15 year olds in 2013, there will be no impact on the data or outputs as a result of this change.



# How Can I Respond?

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You can respond by accessing the survey at:  
[https://dcms.eu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_5BEONr4JAQkiFYo](https://dcms.eu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5BEONr4JAQkiFYo) until midnight on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2012. This survey provides structured questions and space for free text responses. If you wish your response to be confidential you will have the option to specify this at the end of the survey.

If you would prefer to respond by post, a word version of the survey is available to download on the consultation page of the [DCMS](#) and [Sport England](#) websites or please contact Tom Knight or Andrew Spiers (details at the beginning of this document).

## Annex: Discussion of Options

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This section outlines the reasons behind the options we are presenting in this consultation and why we have chosen our preferred option. We have included a range of options for stakeholders to comment on and are aware that a number of options will not meet all current stakeholder requirements. Options which do not meet all measurement requirements are included so that we can offer as broad a range of options to comment on and so that we can outline their strengths and weaknesses.

Sample sizes are estimates of what is likely to work in practice and are affordable within the current budget for both surveys, or which we expect to become budget neutral in the medium term. These estimates have been chosen after discussions with ONS Methodology Advisory Service, our current survey contractors TNS-BMRB and judgement by DCMS and Sport England.

There are no hard-and-fast rules for calculating, for example, an optimal mix of sample sizes within mixed-mode options (options which use more than one method of collection e.g. face-to-face and landline telephone collection). However we are able to outline the likely advantages and disadvantages of different sample sizes and survey combinations.

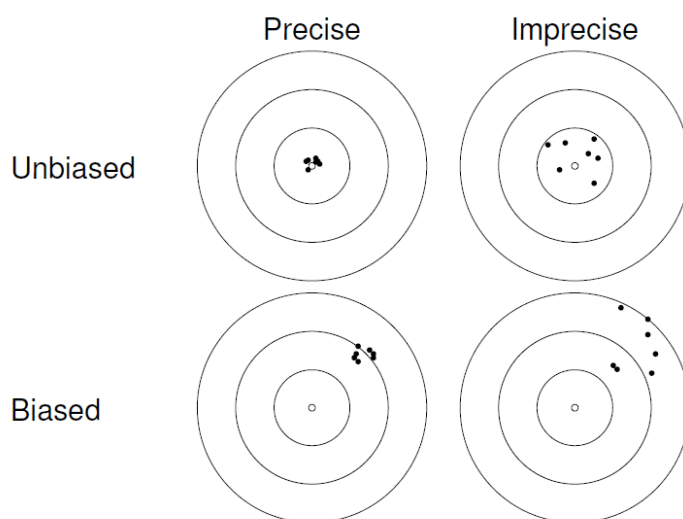
The Active People survey is currently undertaking a face-to-face 'parallel' study which compares the differences in responses to face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews – the outcome over the four quarters from October 2011 to October 2012 will inform the detail of exactly how the responses from these different modes can be combined to draw on the strength of the face-to-face element (better quality and wider coverage of the population) and apply it to the telephone survey results (which provide a large sample at a lower cost).

A more detailed discussion of a number of issues around these options is provided in the paper "Discussion of options for Taking Part and Active People Survey Integration" from the ONS Methodology Advisory Service which is available to download on the consultation page of the [DCMS](#) and [Sport England](#) websites.

Within the following options we are trying to find a balance between:

- Coherence (the desire to have one set of estimates)
- Precision (maintaining a large enough sample size to minimise random survey error)
- Overall accuracy (to reduce or compensate for any systematic bias which estimates may contain)

We are also trying to maximise value-for-money by balancing the quality of estimates with their cost. The interplay between precision (random error) and bias (systematic error) is show below.



A survey which has as wide a coverage of the population as possible should minimise bias. A face-to-face survey should have wide coverage of the household population (but may not cover ‘institutional households’ such as prisons or student halls, for practical reasons, unless specifically targeted).

A number of the options considered combine results from more than one type of data collection to form a ‘mixed-mode’ survey. Coverage of the population should increase under the mixed-mode options outlined compared with single mode landline telephone surveying and bias should decrease in the combined estimates; however there will be some loss of precision in the estimates by combining different data sources.

For reference, the Taking Part survey has an annual sample size of 10,000 face-to-face household interviews, these ask questions across participation in the arts, heritage and sport – so called ‘cross-cultural questions’. Active People currently has an annual sample size of 165,000 landline telephone interviews and a 6,000 face-to-face element has recently been introduced; questions on sport and health only are asked. A further summary is provided in the background paper available on the consultation page on the [Sport England](#) and [DCMS](#) websites.

### Preferred Option

A single survey of 160,000 interviews:

- 30,000 face-to-face interviews (10,000 of which are cross cultural questions including sport, 20,000 are sport only questions)
- 130,000 landline telephone interviews (sport only questions)

This option uses the strength and quality of a larger face-to-face survey element and combines this with the much larger sample size which landline telephone interviews can provide. The result is a single set of sports estimates.

The option allows the sports results from all 160,000 interviews to be combined and provides a substantial face-to-face survey element to calibrate or weight the telephone survey part with.

Cross cultural data are maintained at a level currently provided by the Taking Part survey so that analysis of participation and engagement across sport and culture can continue. The overall sample should provide at least 500 cases per local authority district (as currently). However by combining results from more than one mode there may be some loss of precision compared with a single mode survey (e.g. landline telephone) providing the entire sample.

In addition, we propose to carry out a research project into digital means of data collection, with the aim of integrating results into the overall survey, subject to pilot results (further details overleaf).

### Option 2

A single survey of 72,000 interviews:

- 36,000 face to face interviews (10,000 of which are cross cultural questions, 26,000 sport only questions)
- 36,000 landline telephone interviews (sport only)

Again, the strategy for this option is to combine results into a single set of estimates and use the face-to-face component to weight the landline telephone element and remove any bias from the landline element (which may be due to non-coverage of mobile only households). This option will provide high quality estimates, but the sample size would not be large enough for direct estimation of local authority district results and modelling would be needed. Direct estimation of participation in less popular sports would not be possible as there is no clear method for modelling different types of sport.

### Option 3

A wholly face to face survey of around 40,000 interviews (10,000 of which are cross cultural questions, 30,000 sport only)

This option will provide the highest quality estimates, but the sample size would not be large enough for direct estimation of local authority district results and modelling would be needed. Direct estimation of participation in less popular sports would not be possible, with no clear method for modelling different types of sport. The effects of local interventions could not be directly measured, although specific boosts to the sample could be used to assess known interventions – for example a boost to the Taking Part face-to-face sample is



currently being used to assess the impact on the six Olympic boroughs of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics.

#### **Option 4**

Take sport out of the Taking Part survey and measure sports participation using the Active People survey only.

This option has been included for completeness. It removes the duplication of asking sports questions in two separate surveys, with the result that a single set of estimates for sports participation remain. However it would no longer be possible to look at the effects of changes in sports and arts or heritage participation/engagement together. There would be little cost saving for the loss of this cross-cultural data and the broader analysis it offers.

#### **Option 5**

Continuing the two surveys (Taking Part and Active People) as they are, but with the results integrated

Again, this option has been included for completeness and outlines the position of least change, but we do not consider this a good way forward for the two surveys. Questionnaire differences would remain and make the production of one set of integrated sports results difficult. There would continue to be a duplication of effort in terms of survey management.

#### **Digital data collection**

In addition to these options, we are also proposing carrying out a research project into digital means of data collection (online and mobile phone), with a view to integrating results over time.

Introducing online data collection has the potential to provide efficiencies as this method is considerably lower cost than landline telephone or face to face data collection. Our intention would be to follow-up on respondents who have already been interviewed as part of the face to face survey and have agreed that they can be re-contacted.

Building up a panel of online respondents in this way is a gradual process. We estimate if this method was introduced in October 2012 following up with 6,000 face to face respondents from Active People Survey 6, that around 1,000 online responses could be achieved by October 2013. Based on a longitudinal design and the level of face to face interviewing increasing from October 2012, then the number of online responses would grow quickly in future survey waves.

If the quality of the data is high, the intention would be to replace part of the landline telephone sample with the online component, maintaining the overall total sample size. This approach would need to be successfully piloted before inclusion.

Collection of data by mobile telephone can potentially increase the coverage of fixed-line telephone surveys. However the quality of mobile telephone interviews can be low. There are scenarios where mobile data collection may add to coverage, but the method can be high cost and its value needs to be assessed against other approaches. Piloting this approach will help us to assess whether the data collected is of sufficient quality and that there is a robust method to include results alongside other types of data collection.