

# Equality and Sport Research Executive Summary

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### About this research

This report explores equality and sport in Scotland. This research aims to help improve work within the sport sector in Scotland, in relation to advancing equality, eliminating discrimination and fostering good relations. It consolidates what we know and identifies what we need to know. It will form a building block for priorities for action around equality, for **sportscotland** and its partners in the sport sector.

### Research method

The research involved four main stages.

- **A review of existing evidence** – We gathered, reviewed and created a database of existing evidence around sport and equality. We produced papers on sport and equality in relation to each protected characteristic.
- **A survey of staff within the sport system** – We issued a survey to over 1,200 staff, and 573 responded – a response rate of 46 per cent.
- **Discussion groups with staff within the sport system** – We held ten discussion groups with staff in the sport system in Scotland. These groups included staff involved at different levels and in different sporting fields and sectors. A total of 70 people took part in these groups.
- **Discussion groups with people with protected characteristics** – The research also involved discussions with people with protected characteristics. We held nine discussion groups with people with protected characteristics, and one set of six telephone interviews.

As the research was undertaken, we also liaised closely with Scottish Government analysts who were completing a review of the quantitative data available around equality in sport in Scotland, as part of the Active Scotland Outcomes Framework. The findings were weaved into this report to provide quantitative evidence from Scotland, to support our qualitative research.

### Key findings – availability of literature

There is a substantial body of literature relating to sport and equality. Much research and data relates to equality and sex, disability and young people – particularly young women. While there are some useful research studies in relation to sexual orientation and gender reassignment, there are gaps in the data and evidence in these areas. In relation to race and religion, much of the research focuses on Muslim women – where sports participation levels have been shown to be significantly lower than for other groups. There is also some research into experiences of older people in Scotland. There is very little research in relation to pregnancy and maternity, or marriage and civil partnership.

## Key findings – participation in sport

The literature and data available for Scotland highlights some clear inequalities in sports participation.

- In Scotland, more men participate in sport than women. More men are members of sports clubs than women, and women often participate in different sports from men. Lower participation by women in sport begins at around 13 to 15 years old.
- Disabled people in Scotland are less active, and are less likely to participate in sport.
- In Scotland, Pakistani adults are least likely to participate in sport. However, it is hard to identify other differences based on ethnic origin, due to the small numbers of ethnic minority people in Scotland.
- In Scotland, people of Muslim faith are least likely to take part in sport. Roman Catholics also have a slightly lower sports participation rate than average. It is hard to identify other differences, due to the small numbers of people with minority religions or beliefs in Scotland. However, research from England suggests that there are differences in participation of people with different religions and beliefs among different sports.
- In Scotland, adults in the 16 to 24-year-old age group report higher levels of sports participation than other age groups. There is a clear drop off among those aged 45 and over. In children, 13 to 15-year-old girls in particular participate in sport markedly less than other age groups.

There is some evidence around sexual orientation and sports participation. There is very little evidence around participation in sports in Scotland in relation to gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; and marriage and civil partnership.

## Key findings – barriers to participation

The available literature and our own fieldwork highlight some clear barriers to sports participation. There are some common themes, across people with different protected characteristics:

- negative experiences of PE
- lack of self esteem and body confidence
- attitudes of others
- facilities
- influence of family and peers
- opportunities and pathways.

There is also evidence of a number of barriers related to the wider sporting system. Key issues include:

- **Leadership, coaching and volunteering** – Ensuring that the profile of decision makers and facilitators in sport reflects the population; and
- **Media and equal pay** – There is a particular issue relating to equality for women. Women also experience a clear issue with equal pay, largely receiving significantly lower rewards for competitive sports participation.

## Key findings – priority of equality in sport

Staff within the sporting system in Scotland indicated a general view that equality was increasing in importance, with a stronger focus from **sportscotland** and the Scottish Government, and more training and development around equality in sport.

However, there was some concern that this had not led to significant action. Many staff indicated that they did not know how to integrate equality into their work. People with protected characteristics also indicated that they felt awareness of protected characteristics was increasing, but it was unclear if this was translated into actual change.

While some Scottish Governing Bodies of Sport were positive about the focus on equality, some felt that there was now too much focus on equality and some felt that the focus was driven by other organisations. There was also a concern that for some clubs, being 'open to all' was seen to be enough.

When people working in the sporting system were asked about understanding of equalities in relation to the protected characteristics, confidence was highest around sex, disability, age and socio-economic disadvantage, and lower for other groups. This strongly reflects the evidence from literature. Awareness and understanding was generally highest among those areas which had a bank of data and literature, and lower among the areas which were less well researched.

People with protected characteristics felt that the top priority for embedding equalities in sport was training for those working in and delivering sport. Some participants suggested that this training should involve equality organisations or people with protected characteristics, so that the issues can be discussed and explored.

## Key findings – lessons learned

A number of key lessons emerge, including:

- empower, support and listen to people when planning opportunities;
- work in partnership with trusted organisations to involve a range of participants;
- support staff and volunteers to understand experiences of inequality;
- base approaches on evidence - including equalities monitoring and research; and
- clubs have a vital role - and are often the first point of contact for people wishing to participate in sport.

## Key challenges for the future

The evidence gathered from this work suggests a need for a focus on six main challenges:

1. Learning
2. Culture and attitudes
3. Systems and monitoring
4. Involvement and partnerships
5. Coaching and volunteering
6. Pathways and club development

These challenges are explored in more detail in Chapter Five. The issues identified from this research are significant and wide ranging. It will not be possible to take forward action in all of these areas over the short to medium term. Clear, focused action in a small number of areas, with demonstrable impacts will be more useful than working to address a wide range of issues.

The responsibility for taking forward these challenges does not lie with **sportscotland** alone. **sportscotland** will need to work with partners to reflect on the issues raised within the research, and prioritise areas for action. However, **sportscotland** does have a critical role in influencing equality through:

- **Leading by example** – On issues like the profile of staff and decision makers, the culture within the organisation, and your policies and plans.
- **Sharing evidence** – Undertaking research, encouraging effective data monitoring and sharing learning.
- **Funding sports activity** – Integrating equality outcomes within funding approaches, and considering dedicated funding for supporting equality.
- **Supporting new approaches** – Providing staff and partners with support to try out new ways of working to promote equality and tackle inequalities.
- **Promotion and communication** – Raising awareness of the importance of equality, and the work that is being done to promote equality among those working, volunteering and participating in the sport system in Scotland.