

WAY OF LIFE: ARTS AND SPORT

Introduction

Arts, culture and sports in Northern Ireland have been increasingly linked to social and economic regeneration and well being, including contributing to a shared future.

The government department responsible for these areas is the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL). It oversees the work of a number of non-departmental public bodies and agencies, including the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, SportNI, the Northern Ireland Museums Council and the new body for library services set up in April 2009, Libraries Northern Ireland. Eighty five percent of the DCAL budget is allocated through non-departmental bodies and agencies.

Sport and Physical Activity

Participation in sport has declined steadily in Northern Ireland over approximately the last 15 years. In 1990/91, if walking was included as participation in sport, 57% of persons aged 16+ had participated in the previous year. In 2003/04, this figure was 55%; in 2004/05, it was 54%, dropping to 51% in 2005/06; in 2006/07, 53% had participated in sport; in 2007/08, it was 49%.

In promoting sport and physical activity, the Government works through SportNI. SportNI is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. It was established on 31 December 1973 under the provisions of the Recreation and Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1973. Its main objective was to further sport and physical recreation. SportNI's corporate vision is: "a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport which contributes to a peaceful, fair and prosperous society".

There are over 100 recognised sporting activities in Northern Ireland. SportNI recognizes 85 governing bodies and more than 5,000 clubs which provide opportunities for participation in sport and physical recreation at local and competitive levels. Most of these organisations depend on a pool of highly committed volunteers, although they can access support from a Northern Ireland wide network of Sports Development Officers employed by SportNI and local Councils.

The Strategy for the Development of Sport 1997-2005, was Northern Ireland's first sports strategy; it was developed under Direct Rule. It provided a basis for a number of initiatives including a Youth Sport programme; improved community sport infrastructure; the establishment of the Sports Institute for Northern Ireland and increased government investment in sport. The Northern Ireland Executive is developing a Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2007-2017. Drafts of the Strategy indicate that the Government aims to:

- promote the value, importance and priority of sport and physical recreation;
- secure the commitment of, and partnership working across, relevant Government Departments, particularly those responsible for health, education and regeneration, in realising the vision for sport and physical recreation in Northern Ireland;
- clarify the roles and secure a commitment to implementation from district councils and other public bodies with responsibility for sport and physical recreation;
- promote increased participation in sport and physical recreation among under-represented groups;
- support governing bodies of sport, sports clubs and local communities;
- promote community cohesion through sport and physical recreation in the context of 'A Shared Future';
- maximise the benefits for Northern Ireland from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London;
- establish world class sports services that enable world class performances by Northern Ireland athletes;
- establish Northern Ireland as a world class venue for sporting events.

The Strategy is to be used as “a reference point for prioritising public funding interventions in sport and physical recreation” while the government seeks to pursue “increased, sustained and effective investment in sport and physical recreation by the public and private sectors”.

Funding for Sport and Physical Activity

According to an analysis by the Northern Ireland Audit Office, about £450 million was allocated for sport and physical activity in Northern Ireland in 2003/04. The majority of that money, £169 million was ring-fenced capital expenditure, earmarked for a Multi Sports Stadium, the provision of training and/or competition facilities for Olympic and Paralympic sports, Safety at Sports Grounds, a High Performance Centre and the redevelopment of Tollymore Mountain Centre. District Councils invested £153 million in sports and physical activity; most of this investment was calculated pro rata in relation to leisure centres, water sports centres, country parks etc, with about £8.5 million devoted to developmental activity aimed at promoting Physical Literacy, Lifelong Activity and Performance (competitive) Sport.

Other government departments also contributed funding to promoting sport and physical activity. The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) provided £5.5 million to promote the recommendation of the Chief Medical Officers in the UK that ‘all adults should take part in a minimum of 30 minutes moderate intensity physical activity at least five times per week in order to achieve health benefits’. The Department of Education, Department for Social Development, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Department for Employment and Learning and Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment provided, between them, some £2.5 million in 2003/04.

The National Lottery has also been an important investor in sport in the region over the last ten

years. However, the amount of money generated through the National Lottery has declined over the years. The Lottery income that SportNI receives has dropped from a peak of £10 million in 1997/98 to around £6 million in 2008/09.

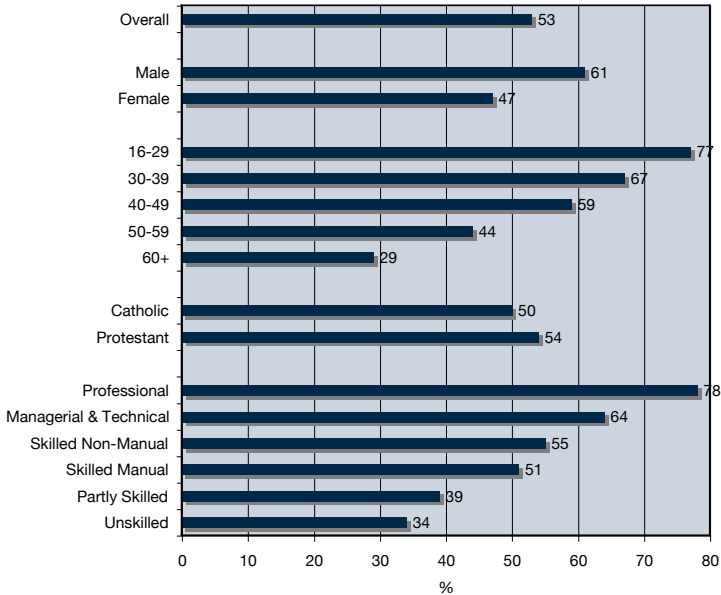
In June 2008, the Westminster Department of Culture, Media and Sport announced that much of the Lottery income is to be reallocated to the cost of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This reallocation is to commence in 2008/09 and end in 2012/13 with a total loss to SportNI of £4.2 million.

Participation in sport and Physical Activity in Northern Ireland

Due to the wide range of sports played in Northern Ireland, for example hurling and Gaelic football which are peculiarly Irish, rugby and cricket which are organised on an all-island basis and soccer which is organised on a regional basis, sports organizations in Northern Ireland have to apply different administrative and competitive structures and requirements, on a North-South and East-West basis. The draft Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2007-17 recognises this but also expresses concern that, despite efforts by local and central government and governing bodies of sport to effect change, there continues to be little sharing of resources and a lack of effective co-ordination across the sporting disciplines.

Men are more likely than women to have taken part in some kind of sporting activity in the previous twelve months; 61% of men had participated, compared to just 47% of women. Unsurprisingly, those without a limiting long-term illness or disability were twice as likely to have participated in a sporting or physical activity in the previous twelve months. In 2006/07, sports participation, whether in the last 12 months or the last month, was highest amongst those in professional occupations and those aged 16-29 years old. For those in professional occupations 78% had participated in sport in the previous twelve months and 63% in the previous month. For those aged 16-29, 77% had participated in the previous twelve months and 64% in the last month. In 2006/07, almost half (49%) of all 16-29 year olds and a similar proportion of those in professional occupations had participated in sporting activity in the last week. See Figure 1 below for further details.

Figure 1: Participated in Sporting Activity in the last 12 months to end March 2007



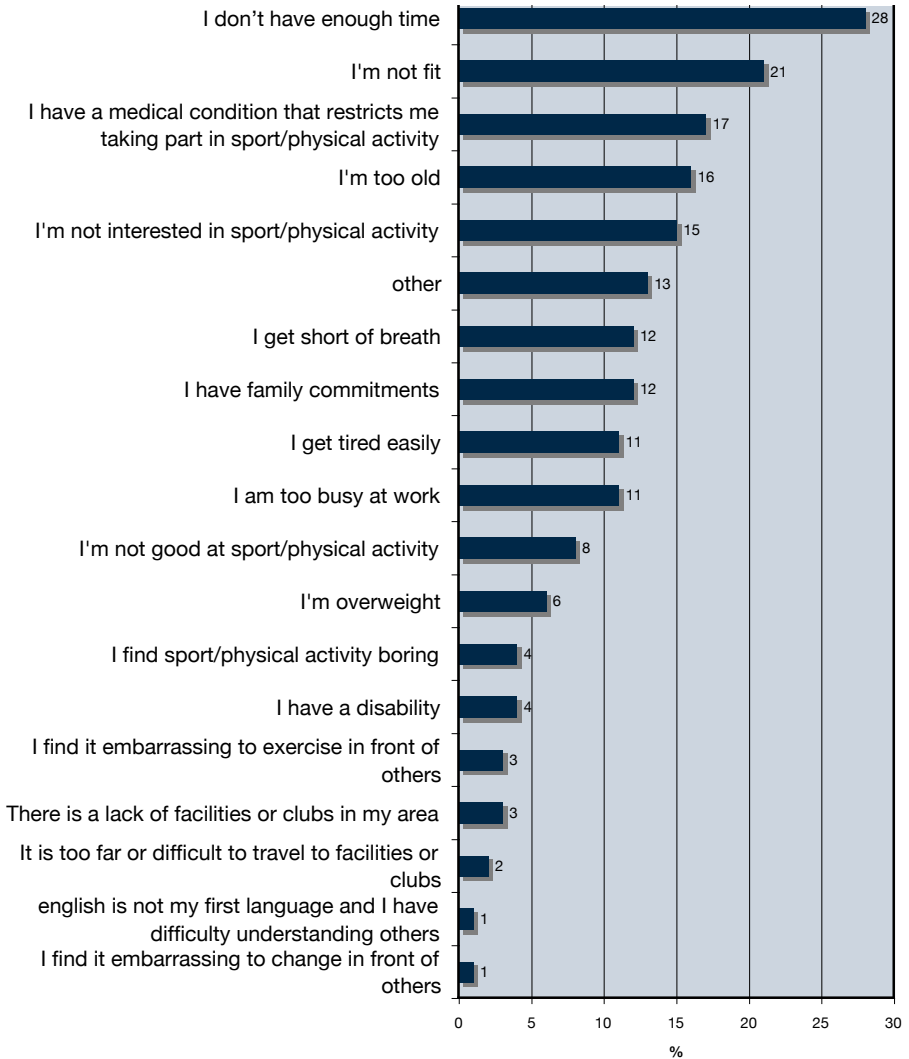
Source: DCAL (2008) ¹ Sports Participated and Satisfaction with Sports Provision in Northern Ireland.

The socio-economic gradient in participation in sport is steep and must impact on levels of health inequalities. Of those in paid employment, only one third (35%) have not taken part in any kind of sporting activity (including walking, darts, snooker, pool and billiards) in the previous 12 months. Two thirds (66%) of those not in paid employment had not participated in any kind of sporting activity in the previous twelve months. The figure for non-participation by those who are economically inactive is even worse, at 68%.

The non-participation rates for those not in paid employment or economically inactive are mirrored by non-participation rates of those with differing levels of qualifications. So, people with a degree or higher qualification were most likely to participate in some kind of sporting activity, with only 26% not participating in any kind of sport or activity. By contrast, 71% of people with no qualifications did not participate in any kind of sporting activity (including walking, darts, snooker, pool and billiards).

When respondents who took part in the Continuous Household Survey were asked what it was that put them off taking part in sport or physical activity, the responses were as seen in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: – I do not take part in physical activity because



Arts and Culture

Financing Culture and Arts

Funding for the arts in Northern Ireland comes primarily from Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and is allocated through the Arts Council for Northern Ireland. It is the regional agency responsible for the development of the arts in Northern Ireland. The Arts Council's stated vision is 'to place the arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life'.² The arts sector is also supported by a number of other government departments – Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Department for Social Development, Department of Education, and through partnership funding from the 26 local authorities. In recent years there has been substantial investment in capital projects with Government allocating £18 million for arts infrastructure, primarily in Belfast. It is planned that for the period 2008-2011 a further £31.6 million will be allocated on arts capital projects across Northern Ireland. Investment from the local business community in arts and culture was £2.1 million in 2005/06. Data from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure indicates that 34,600 people were employed in creative industries or creative occupations in Northern Ireland in 2005.³ This represents 4.7 per cent of the Northern Ireland workforce, compared to a UK average of 6.3 percent of the workforce (1.8 million employees).

Public attitudes as measured by questions in the 2007 Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey suggest strong support for the funding of arts related activity with 78% of respondents agreeing that there should be public funding of arts and cultural projects and 69% of respondents agreeing that their local authority should be spending money on arts and culture.

The details of the funding distributed to the Arts sector by DCAL are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of DCAL funding to the Arts sector (2005/06)

Organization	Expenditure (£)
Arts Council of Northern Ireland	10,832,000
NI Film and Television Commission	647,000
Arts and Business	456,000
Culture NI Website	197,763
British Council	148,250
Craft NI	32,510
West Belfast Festival	20,000
Ardoyne Festival	7,500
New Lodge Festival	7,500
Cultural Affairs Office (based in Washington)	7,000
Grand Opera House (capital Funding)	1,484,630

Historically, the per capita spend on the arts in Northern Ireland has been the lowest in the UK and Ireland. Table 2 details spending in the countries of the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

Table 2: Spending Per Capita on Arts

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Northern Ireland	£6.09	£6.11	£7.58
Scotland	£12.01	£9.21	£14.04
England	£8.09	£8.14	£8.47
Wales	£8.81	£9.60	£10.10
Republic of Ireland (Euro)	12.46	18.87	17.92

Source: Arts Council for Northern Ireland (2009)⁴ *Inquiry into the funding of the Arts in Northern Ireland*.

There has been debate and controversy surrounding the priorities for, and allocation of, Arts Council funding with criticisms of bias towards middle class users and interests and a focus on Belfast. The Arts Council argues that Grant Distribution Analysis produced in 2008⁵ records that 56% (£31.5 million) of the funding awarded by the Arts Council through its main funding programmes in the last five years has gone to the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland and to a wide range of community projects thus challenging prevailing myths about bias in allocation. It argues that the level of revenue funding allocated within Belfast reflects the concentration of organisations with a national remit which are based in the city.

In July 2006 the Arts Council launched a Northern Ireland wide project, *The Re-imagining Communities Programme*. It was a pilot programme with the objective of contributing to the building of a shared future for Northern Ireland. The project has been rolled out in partnership with other government departments - Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Department for Social Development, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Community Relations Council and the International Fund for Ireland. The project places artists in communities to work with local people to tackle visible signs of sectarianism and racism creating a more welcoming environment. It aimed to deliver 60 to 80 community-based projects within three years, with a spend of £3 million. This number of projects has been surpassed by 25% with a total of 109 projects receiving funding.

Local Authorities in Northern Ireland have a statutory duty to provide 'cultural activities' and it is anticipated that under the Review of Public Administration some element of current regional funding for the arts will be transferred from the Arts Council to local areas. In 2004/05 total local authority expenditure on culture was £19.8 million. This represents an overall increase of 1.6 percent in spend on the arts compared to 2003/04. Total expenditure by each individual council ranged from just over £3,000 to £9.2 million. The mean expenditure by Local Authorities was £763,000. The per capita spend on culture by Local Authorities varied from £0.11 in the case of Larne to £33.27 in the case of Belfast City Council, with the mean per capita spend being £8.10 and the median being £5.11.

Participation at Arts and Cultural Events

Attendance and participation at Arts events has been measured by a general population survey of participation.⁶ People were much more likely to go to see a film than to attend any other cultural event. More than double the number of people attended a film (55%) than the next most popular event – a play or drama (26%). While attendance is reasonably high with 76% of individuals interviewed attending at least one event within the previous 12 months (3% increase on 2004 figures) the survey data show that attendance at cultural and arts events varies considerably by age and occupational group. Those categorised as ‘professional’ attended most often, with 98% having attended an arts or cultural event within the last 12 months, an increase of 15% on the 2004 figure. People in the ‘unskilled manual’ category attended least frequently, with 49% having attended an event in the previous 12 months, a 6% decrease on 2004.

Of all age groups fewer people over 65 had attended events in the last 12 months than in any other age group (43%) compared to more than double this number in the 16-24 age group (93%) and 74% in the 50-64 age group. Participation rates for people with disability were also low. One in 5 adults interviewed for the survey reported having a disability and only 54% of this sample had attended an arts or cultural event within the last 12 months.

The main barriers to people attending or taking part in an event were time (30%), not interested (22%) and the cost (17%). These reasons tended to apply across the age groups apart from a significantly higher proportion of those in the 24-34 age group (43%) citing time as a problem.

This survey supported previous findings showing that people with disabilities were much less likely to attend and participate in arts and cultural events. Research by the Arts Council on the barriers to disabled people’s participation in arts events⁷ identified a range of barriers including inadequate physical access and ease of getting to venues (including lack of access to public transport), the cost of an event and awareness of what is available. There were also economic barriers which is not surprising given that a high proportion of people with a disability have to rely on income from social security benefits.

Libraries

Public Libraries are perceived by government as an important community learning resource. In addition to access to books and borrowing facilities, libraries have expanded their range of services to include multi-media material and free access to Internet Services. However, figures from 2003-2004 show that Northern Ireland libraries had the lowest number of visits per thousand population in the UK (Northern Ireland 4112, England 5724, Scotland 5920, Wales 4938). It also has the lowest number of book issues per head (Northern Ireland 3.83, England 5.80, Scotland 5.79, Wales 5.37). In Northern Ireland 18.5% of the population are active borrowers (borrowed at least one item last year) compared with 24.8% in England, 24.5% in Scotland, 29.5% in Wales (all figures from CIPFA 2003-04).⁸ A survey in 2009 found that only

five percent of respondents go to a public library at least once a week. Seventeen percent go to a public library at least monthly and twenty-seven percent go at least once every 12 months. While the vast majority of those who used library services were satisfied, the results show a downwards trend, with the latest figure being the lowest in the last 5 years. Reasons for not using library services included lack of interest or that people would buy or get bought all the books they needed.

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure policy is that libraries should work to target the following groups:

- o Young adults
- o Children who need school or homework support
- o Literacy support for those lacking basic skills
- o Non-English speakers, those for whom English is a second language, and other support for ethnic minorities.

Attempts being made by government to reinvigorate the public library service are outlined in the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2008-2018⁹ and include financial investment of £138 million between 2008 and 2018, a significant proportion of which is for capital expenditure. The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure has introduced a Public Library Standard (PLS 2) that aims to ensure that a local library service is available within 2 miles of 85% of the population of Northern Ireland.

Key Policy Challenges

Strategies for Arts and sport in Northern Ireland envisage these areas as making a fundamental contribution to the development of a healthier and more cohesive society in Northern Ireland. There are, however, key challenges including declining levels and varying rates of participation across groups in society. Participation in sport has declined steadily over the past 15 years. In relation to the Arts, attendance has gone up for 'professional' groups but declined for those in the 'unskilled manual' category. Factors linked to participation include age (with older people being less likely to participate or attend arts events), socio-economic group, gender and whether or not a person has a disability, with research showing that people with disabilities are much less likely to attend arts and culture events.

Capital investment in the Arts has increased quite significantly but per capita spend for Northern Ireland is the lowest in the UK. Challenges are also evident in relation to funding for sports where the funding available from the National Lottery has declined.

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