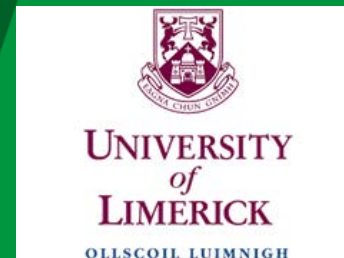




Active Students Are Healthier and Happier Than Their Inactive Peers

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Waterford Institute of Technology

Active Students are Happier

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Active Students Are Healthier and Happier Than Their Inactive Peers: The Results of a Large Representative Cross-Sectional Study of University Students in Ireland

Marie H. Murphy, Angela Carlin, Catherine Woods, Alan Nevill, Ciaran MacDonncha, Kyle Ferguson, and Niamh Murphy

Background: Time spent in university represents a period of transition and may be an appropriate time to promote physical activity among young adults. The aim of this study was to assess participation of university students in sport and physical activity in Ireland and to explore the association between physical activity and perceptions of overall health, mental health, and happiness. **Methods:** The Student Activity and Sport Study Ireland was a cross-sectional online survey among a representative sample (n = 8122) of university students in Ireland. Binary logistic regressions were performed to examine associations between self-reported physical activity and gender (predictor variables) and individual perceptions of overall health, mental health, and happiness (binary outcomes). **Results:** Only 64.3% of respondents met the recommended level of 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week with males significantly more active than females (72.1% vs 57.8% meeting guidelines). Those meeting physical activity guidelines were more likely to report greater overall health and higher mental health and happiness scores compared with their inactive peers. **Conclusions:** Active students enjoy better health (overall and mental) and are happier than their inactive peers. This provides a clear rationale for providing students with opportunities to be active at university. The data provide a baseline to monitor changes in physical activity patterns.

Keywords: physical activity, sedentary behavior, health

Physical activity is associated with multiple health benefits across the life course.¹⁻³ Regular activity has been shown to play a role in the primary and secondary prevention of cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and obesity.² In addition to these physical health benefits, regular participation in physical activity is associated with a range of positive mental health-related outcomes⁴ including reduced anxiety, stress, and depression.^{2,5}

levels of school children and working adults have been well-documented,^{7,14} there is less information on university students' physical activity engagement, and few are based on representative or random samples.^{13,15,16}

In addition to inactivity, the transition to university is associated with increased exposure to other health-risk behaviors, such as poor dietary intake and substance abuse.⁹ Research has indicated that while

https://journals.humankinetics.com/doi/full/10.1123/jpah.2017-0432?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori:rid:crossref.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub%3dpubmed

<http://www.studentsport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/SASSI-Full-Report-Without-Appendices..pdf>



Waterford Institute of Technology

February 2016: Situational Analysis

Self assessment audit of provision for sport and physical activity within each institution (n=33 third level colleges)

Online Survey

Classroom-administered survey of a representative sample of students (n=9197)

Objective PA and Health assessment

Physical activity, cardiovascular fitness, and health n=463



Institutional Champions

- ✧ Jillian Davis (BMET)
- ✧ Miriam Deacy/Norma Buckley (CIT)
- ✧ Niamh O'Callaghan (DIT)
- ✧ Derek Crilly (DkIT)
- ✧ Adam Crowther (DBS)
- ✧ Paul Walsh (GCD)
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- ✧ Ronan Keaskin (ITB)
- ✧ Ross Lappin (ITS)
- ✧ Tim O'Connor (ITT Dublin)
- ✧ Paddy Gallagher/AnneMarie Kelly (LyIT)
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- ✧ Lee Rooney (SRC)
- ✧ Maura Coulter (St. Pats CE)
- ✧ David McKee (Stranmillis CE)
- ✧ Caroline Duggan/Alexandra Murphy (TCD)
- ✧ Declan Kidney/Christine O'Donovan (UCC)
- ✧ Brian Mullins/Carmel Keane (UCD)
- ✧ Neasa Fahy O'Donnell (UL)
- ✧ Charlie Peile (UU)
- ✧ Robin Croke (WIT)
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- ✧ Eimear Foley (ITT)
- ✧ Gordon Brett, Joe Meeg Sinead Coughlan (AIT)
- ✧ Carmel Lynch/Jack Murray (IT Carlow)
- ✧ Robert O'Neill (DBS)
- ✧ Tara Ryan (IADT)
- ✧ Suzy Macken (MCE)
- ✧ Will Murphy (MDI)
- ✧ Jane McGinty (SWRC)
- ✧ Declan Courell (St. Angelas)
- ✧ Elaine McLaughlin (SMCE)
- ✧ Rob O'Neill (NCAD)



Methodology

- Binary logistic regression to examine associations between self reported physical activity (PA) and gender (predictor variables) and individual perceptions of overall health, mental health, and happiness (binary outcomes)
- A cross sectional survey design, so casual relationships between PA and health, mental health, and happiness cannot be drawn.
- PA measured using a self-report instrument (IPAQ), and this was validated in a subsample of participants.

Health, mental health, and happiness were dichotomized based on self-reported perceptions (all validated tools: Happiness, 10-point Likert scale; Mental Health Index, from the SF-36 questionnaire; Self-rated overall health, Short Form Health Survey (SF-36) .

•



Happiness



Those meeting the physical activity guidelines were 2.2 times more likely to report feeling happy than those classified as inactive

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Students and Sports Participation



- 15% of students are members of a sports club
- Males accounted for 66% of the total club numbers.
- Funding models generally favoured traditional team sports and competitive structures
-



- A sizeable minority of students (29% of males; 42% of females) insufficiently active (i.e. not meeting the PA guidelines) - could use further encouragement
- Approximately one-third (34.8%) of respondents **did not participate in any** sporting or recreational activity in the last 4 weeks (28.4% of males and 40.9% of females)



This starts much earlier than the college years!

Report & Findings

Keeping Young Women in Sport Project



Lacrosse SA / SA Government: Office Recreation & Sport
Submitted Feb 2014

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Social climate profiles in adolescent sports: Associations with enjoyment and intention to continue

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Parent
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Peers

ABSTRACT

This study explored whether adolescent sports participants' perceptions of the social climate fall into distinct profiles, and whether these profiles are related to enjoyment and intention to continue. A Latent Profile Analysis using 313 Australian sports participants ($M_{age} = 13.03$ years) revealed four distinct profiles: positive social climate (45.1%), diminished social climate (19.8%), positive coach relationship quality (19.8%), and positive friendship quality (15.3%). Individuals within the positive social climate and the positive coach relationship quality profiles reported relatively higher levels of enjoyment and intention to continue than individuals in the diminished social climate and the positive friendship quality profiles. Indirect path analyses found the social climate profiles were linked with intention to continue through enjoyment. Results highlight the value of investigating multiple dimensions of the social climate and suggest that the coach may be of particular importance in this age group. Findings have implications for understanding youth sports participation and preventing dropout.

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Understanding how aspects of the social climate – defined by the influence of key social figures (namely parents, coaches, and peers) – influence sports participation is valuable given that sports participation during childhood and adolescence has consistently been linked with positive health outcomes (Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity, & Payne, 2013; Ntoumanis & Biddle, 1999). For example, sports participation has been linked with a range of positive physical and psychosocial health outcomes including reduced rates of overweight and obesity, improved social skills, resilience, greater self-esteem, improved emotional

Stay In The Game—a solution to teenage dropout from sport

Ella Richardson, Ruth Kent and Kate Dempsey
Loreto Secondary School, Kilkenny

Why did we do this project?
We are all very involved in sport both at club, county and school level but have seen the numbers on our sports teams gradually decrease over the last few years this is the case for boys too. The purpose of our project was to measure the dropout rate in sport and physical activity amongst 16 and 17 year olds in the city we live in. We measured whether we could increase physical activity levels in these 'sport dropouts' by offering a 4 week programme 'Stay In The Game'.

Method
We surveyed 225 16 and 17 year old girls and 227 boys (16th and 5th years) in 3 secondary schools in Kilkenny city. We used the results of the survey to plan our 4 week Stay In The Game intervention and were successful in getting funding from KNSP for this and promoted the activities on social media. We measured who turned up to the classes and surveyed a subsample of 100 girls post-intervention.

Results-survey
43% of girls and 25% of boys either dropped out or never took part in any organised sport. The most important reasons for the girls drop out was that sports conflicted with other commitments, their friends weren't playing sports anymore or they no longer found sport fun and there was too much emphasis on competition. Boys dropped out mainly because sport wasn't fun anymore, had become too competitive, their friends weren't doing sports anymore and that it conflicted with other commitments. 42% of girls and 54% of boys did NOT meet the adult physical activity guidelines by exercising for 30 minutes 5 days or more in a week. 40% of boys met the physical activity guidelines. 50% of girls said that they would take part in teenage activities if they were available and 47% said that they might take part. Boys were a little more unsure with 35% saying they would and 52% saying they might take part.

Our research questions

- How many teenage boys and girls have dropped out of sports and are no longer active?
- What types of activities do they like to participate in, what are their attitudes to sport and physical activity, where do they like to do them and with whom?
- Can the 'Stay in the Game' initiative attract teenagers who are not already active to take part in sport and physical activity?
- Could we connect with teenagers by using various forms of social media and encourage them to get involved in Stay in the Game?

Results-the intervention
We had 6 different weekly activities available to teenagers. 36 new people took part in classes as a direct result of Stay in the Game-we took a strict approach and only counted new people due to our intervention. Before the Christmas break the project was starting to gain momentum after a slow start.

Results-post-intervention survey
We surveyed a sample of 100 4th and 5th year girls (only 1 boy came so we omitted boys) to ask them their opinions about Stay in the Game and how we could improve things. 78% of 4th year and 60% of 5th year girls had heard about Stay in the Game and 19% of those went to the classes. Reasons for not going was that their friends weren't going, lack of knowledge of the classes and other commitments.

Conclusions
We discovered that it is a real challenge to get inactive teenagers involved! We used different social media platforms as our project but many of the girls in the follow up survey said that they don't know about the activities. In spite of our efforts, to getting parents involved is probably a necessary step. We learned that there were a lot of barriers to getting things going (e.g. venue hire, contacting instructors, insurance) and that this also can affect our results. We managed to get 36 inactive girls involved. This is modest but we think it would be worth another try and we will run more classes in January. 62% of teenage girls do not meet the physical activity guidelines so teenagers need to get active. Getting groups of friends to come to activities together is key. Also we need to target girls right away when they start secondary school-16 is often too late.

Recommendations
Involve parents
Target boys and girls differently
Verify it really is important
Convenient activities, such as in school time or straight after school may work best

Stay In The Game

Self rated health

Approximately 1 in 5 young adults (aged 19–24 y) in Ireland experience mental health problems (Cannon et al, 2013)

Within the SASSI study, respondents who reported meeting the physical activity guidelines were **twice as likely to report feeling healthy** as those classified as inactive.

Over half of students (55.6%) reported their general health as very good/good within the present study. This is LOWER than the general population in Ireland (88% of adults very good/good in the SLÁN survey and 92% of 15-to-24 year-old adults in the Healthy Ireland Survey)

Female athletes enjoy higher mental health scores (MHI-5)

The overall mean score for the student respondents was 67 (\pm SD 20). Student athletes are significantly more likely to have a high MHI-5 score than the rest of the student population ($p=0.00$). The differences are particularly pronounced for females where the overall female student population has a mean score of 65 and female student athletes score over 70.



For discussion!

Physical activity and sporting involvement is good for happiness and health-but some students, especially females don't benefit

-Both physical activity, and sport, benefit students. Most funding is directed towards sport.

-Most sports funding favours team, club and competitive sport.

-What do universities value? Sporting success?

