

The WSA's vision is for a 'vibrant, active nation', and our mission is to empower our members to be stronger and more successful, contributing towards a society fit for the future. Ensuring that there are accessible opportunities for the people of Wales to be active through sport and physical recreation is key to delivering a generational shift in attitudes towards health and wellbeing.

We represent the deliverers and facilitators of a broad range of sports and activities in Wales, including national governing bodies of sport, community trusts, local authorities and trusts, and private providers. We work closely with Sport Wales and other relevant partners to champion the role of sport and its contribution to wider public policy.

Collectively our membership represents around 150 organisations involved in the delivery of sport, around 6000 amateur sports clubs, and up to 1 million volunteers who participate in the delivery of sport.

- Barriers to participation by multiple, intersecting characteristics in sport are relatively well explored and understood in the academic and research literature. Data on how this plays out in Welsh communities is more limited, but we have a relatively good picture in children especially from Sport Wales ongoing school sports survey.
- We know that poverty and income are often linked to many of these demographic characteristics – and this appears to be especially true in the Welsh data.
- The available data points to a slowly improving situation on inclusion up to 2018.
- Activity since 2018 has been significantly impacted by the pandemic, producing a significant break in the data available alongside changes in the methodology of some major surveys. Data emerging in 2022 should be interpreted in this context – with significant funds invested in the last two years to try to ensure participation gaps didn't widen.
- At a Wales wide level, we have good data on the participation rates of children as a result of the school sports survey. This data is also useful at a regional level, but due to sample size issues begins to break down at a local level – though it remains useful for schools in planning their own activity. This is especially true for sports with lower participation/awareness rates where survey responses might be limited.
- The 2018 school sports survey, as far as we are aware, provided 20 sports with individual reports setting out their participation rates and unmet demand. Unfortunately due to sampling issues, the smallest sports who could benefit most from such insight have historically missed out. We are aware changes to the schools sports survey mean more sports should receive such reports from this year and this is to be welcomed.
- Data for adults is much more limited, but where available tracks larger studies in England on key social indicators.
- It may be useful to track cohorts from each school sports survey to see if intervention is effective later in life. Though this would be time consuming and expensive and not practical within the current envelope.
- Our membership that owns and operates facilities report significant current challenges that could have long term implications for access to sport and physical activity. These are:
 - Staff shortages impacting venue capacities and opening hours. This seems especially true in terms of wet activities, where access to trained lifeguards and swim instructors is currently severely constrained.

- This appears to be from three main causes:
 - Short term disruption due to sickness absence etc.
 - Medium term a shift in people's employment profiles to other kinds of work during the pandemic
 - Long term disruption to the pipeline of newly trained young people during the pandemic.
- Rapidly increasing costs. Especially in energy, but also in terms of cleaning supplies and chemicals. Employment costs are also increasing.
- Reduced footfall post pandemic and constrained spending impacting takings.
- Facility stock is aging, and in some sports the average age of buildings and facilities is up to 50 years old. Many of these buildings are poorly designed for women and girls, those with disabilities and other protected characteristics.
- Public transport access to facilities is a constraint.
- Our members report effective long term intervention requires ongoing revenue support and staffing in communities to build trust and lasting impact. One off intervention and programme based approaches seem to be less effective.
- Real terms funding has been declining, but often the ask is increasing. Many of our members are being asked to do more with less.
- Where organisations had diversified to find alternative income, these were often the hardest hit by the pandemic. Those most dependent on grant or public funding were more insulated.
- Wales has an outstanding level of sporting participation and excellence based on a relatively small level of investment.
- Our often-cited comparator nation, New Zealand spends approx. 5x as much as Wales on sport development from the NZ Government budget. In Norway, roughly \$400 million is allocated by the state lottery to grassroots sport, approx. ten times the Welsh budget.
- There are opportunities in Wales to tackle issues of barriers to participation, lowering cost and removing financial barriers are areas the WSA is exploring through a charitable foundation.
- Given limited resources, the best policy option is to focus on children's activity – however sport could do more with greater resources.

Matthew Williams

Head of Policy & Advocacy

Matthew.williams@wsa.wales