



The return on investment of sport and physical activity in England in 2022/23

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Introduction

In 2023, Sport England commissioned a three-year project to create an updated model of the social value of sport and physical activity in England.

This project builds on the two previous Social Return on Investment (SROI) studies conducted by Sheffield Hallam University for Sport England using participation and volunteering data for 2013/14 and 2017/18. The reports from Year 1 of this work were published in October 2024 and considered the primary (wellbeing) and secondary (health) value of sport and physical activity¹, delivered in partnership by State of Life, Sheffield Hallam University and Manchester Metropolitan University.

The previous SROI studies presented the social value of sport and physical activity as a ratio of the 'inputs' that were required to support sport and physical activity engagement. This report provides an estimate of the inputs for community sport and physical activity in England in 2022/23, in order to derive a similar return on investment (ROI) ratio. We consider two types of ROI ratios. First, a ratio relating to social value only. Second, a ratio relating to the combined economic and social value of sport and physical activity, which incorporates the findings on the economic contribution of sport from the DCMS Sport Satellite Account². Environmental impacts were not quantified and are therefore not included in the ROI calculation.



1 [Social value of sport and physical activity | Sport England](#)

2 [Sport Satellite Account for the UK 2024: Key findings - GOV.UK](#)

Inputs

Inputs are those things that stakeholders contribute to support engagement with sport and physical activity in England, including money (financial) and time (non-financial).

The material financial and non-financial inputs provided by relevant stakeholders in 2022/23 are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Value of inputs in 2022/23

Inputs		£ million
Financial	Consumers	26,477.5
	Public sector	2,048.7
	<i>Of which:</i> Sport England	291.8
	Local authorities	1,407.4
	DCMS	8.3
	Department for Transport	273.0
	DHSC/OHID	68.2
	Other	1,036.7
	<i>Of which:</i> Educational institutions	5.0
	Charities	4.9
Non-financial	Volunteer time	5,577.0
OVERALL		35,139.9

Collectively, the value of the financial (£29.6bn) and non-financial (£5.6bn) inputs is estimated to be around £35bn. The data sources and key assumptions used to derive these inputs are outlined below.

- Consumer spending on sport and physical activity was estimated for England using the DCMS Sport Satellite Account, but we only consider the spending on active engagement (e.g. sports goods and equipment, members' fees, clothing and footwear used for participation etc.) and the figures were adjusted for inflation between 2021 and 2023 using standard GDP deflators. It is estimated that around 66% of sport-related consumer spending in England relates to community participation, which corresponds to £26.5bn at 2023 prices. We have explicitly excluded any consumer spending associated with sport-related media and gambling and other forms of expenditure on passive engagement.
- The activities of public sector agencies, local authorities and government departments are also recognised in the inputs (totalling ~£2bn), which were collated by Sport England from a range of sources including their annual reports, Local Government Association, DCMS, DHSC/OHID and the Department for Transport.
- The sport and physical activity spending on public and private education was estimated using the DCMS Sport Satellite Account (~£1bn). To avoid double counting, this expenditure has been removed from consumer spending and is recorded under inputs provided by educational establishments.
- Data on the contribution of charitable organisations is limited and is unlikely to make a material difference to the overall figure for inputs. However, we have included the inputs for one of the UK's leading charities for improving the education and development of children through sport (Youth Sport Trust). This figure excludes any inputs already allocated to Sport England.

- A material non-financial stakeholder input relates to the replacement cost of volunteer time, which is valued at £5.6bn based on the number of regular volunteers that support sport and physical activity, the average number of hours that they contribute annually, and the average hourly wage. This calculation is detailed in Appendix A.

As with the primary and secondary values, we have included material inputs that can be evidenced robustly. Reasonable care was taken to ensure that inputs were not double counted, for example between DCMS and Sport England. Similarly, the inputs associated with the private sector are captured as part of the consumer spending estimate and are therefore not recognised separately to avoid double counting. Some stakeholder inputs are excluded due to lack of robust data (e.g. third sector contributions and private sponsorship), but such inputs are unlikely to be material relative to the size of the inputs that have been captured.

Return on investment

Social ROI

The value associated with the replacement cost of the time contributed by volunteers to support sport and physical activity was treated as both an input and outcome in the 2017/18 SROI calculation on the basis that volunteer time represents a non-monetary benefit to organisations who rely on their services. If we adopt a similar (inclusive) approach, then the total social value in 2022/23 amounts to **£113bn** and the ROI ratio is **3.21** – see [Table 2](#).

While this ROI ratio is similar to 2017/18 (3.28), it is not directly comparable for two reasons. First, different outcomes were measured (e.g. social capital was included in 2017/18 but not in 2022/23 and wellbeing of children was included in 2022/23 but not in 2017/18). Second, different approaches and data sources were used to value outcomes and inputs (e.g. WELLBY analysis was used in 2022/23).

If we exclude the replacement value of volunteering as an outcome, then the ROI ratio is **3.05**. For illustrative purposes, if volunteering was to be taken out from both sides of the equation (i.e. inputs and outcomes), then the ROI increases to **3.63**.



Table 2: Return on investment – Social

Inputs	£ billion
Outcomes	
Primary value (wellbeing)	96.7
Secondary value (health)	10.5
Social value – 1	107.2
Volunteering replacement value	5.6
Social value – 2	112.8
<hr/>	
Inputs	
Financial	29.6
Non-financial	5.6
Total inputs	35.1
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Return on investment	3.21



Economic and social ROI

The combined economic and social value of sport and physical activity in England in 2022/23 is estimated at around **£148bn**, as shown in [Table 3](#). This figure consists of £113bn in social value plus £35bn in community sport related economic activity (gross value added – GVA). The £35bn GVA figure has been estimated using the DCMS Sport Satellite Account and adjusted for inflation. It is based on the assumption that 66% of GVA associated with sport and physical activity in England relates to community participation. The 66% figure used is a proxy based on the share of sport-related consumer spending in England that is associated with being active. This is a cautious assumption given that the DCMS Sport Satellite Account report identifies that 88% of all sport-related GVA relates to 'active sport'. However, the definition of active sport used in the Sport Satellite Account is not analogous to community participation due to the rigidity of how certain categories are coded within the accounts.

In 2017/18, the shares of sport-related consumer spending and GVA in England associated with community participation were 54% and 58% respectively. Hence, the assumption that the share of sport-related GVA that is associated with community participation is at least commensurate with the corresponding share of sport-related consumer spending seems reasonable and conservative.



Table 3: Return on investment – Economic and social

Inputs	£ billion
Outcomes	
Primary value (wellbeing)	96.7
Secondary value (health)	10.5
Social value – 1	107.2
Volunteering replacement value	5.6
Social value – 2	112.8
Gross value added (GVA)	34.9
Economic & social value	147.7
Inputs	
Financial	29.5
Non-financial	5.6
Total inputs	35.1
Return on investment	4.20

The ROI ratio for economic and social outcomes in 2022/23 works out at **4.20** including the replacement value of volunteering (3.91 in 2017/18) and 4.04 when excluding volunteering as an outcome. For illustrative purposes, removing volunteering from both sides of the equation (inputs and outcomes) increases the combined ROI to 4.81.



Appendix – replacement value of volunteering

Introduction

The time contribution of volunteers to support sport and physical activity represents a non-market benefit for organisations that rely on the services of volunteers. The 2017/18 SROI national model for sport and physical activity in England included an estimate of the replacement value of volunteering as a minimum representation of the non-market benefit to organisations in the sport and physical activity sector.

The manner in which volunteering data is captured and reported through the Active Lives Survey (ALS) has changed over time, which has necessitated some adjustments to the approach to how the replacement value of volunteering in a sport-related context is estimated.

- In 2018, the threshold for volunteering available from ALS was 'at least once in the last month'. In the current social value model, ALS data allows us to use 'any volunteering in the last 12 months'.
- In 2018, data relating to number of hours contributed per volunteer was derived from the Taking Part Survey. Recent waves of the ALS capture data on both the frequency and typical duration of volunteering, which can be used to derive an informed estimate of the number of hours contributed by volunteers.
- In 2018, the financial proxy used was the median hourly pay for all employee jobs in the UK sourced from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE). We have utilised the latest available data from the same source to support the calculation³.



³ [Earnings and hours worked, all employees: ASHE Table 1 – Office for National Statistics](#)

Data and assumptions

As per the 2022/23 Active Lives Data Tables, around 21.5% of the adult population (aged 16+) in England volunteered to support sport and physical activity in the last year, equivalent to 9,990,100 adults.

ALS data on volunteering frequency is captured using the four categories shown in Table 4. However, it is important to recognise that the sum total of adults in these categories is lower than the total number of adults using the headline statistic available for 'any volunteering' (9,484,300 v 9,990,100). The replacement value calculation utilises the latter (higher) figure.

Table 4 also shows our numerical assumption corresponding to each frequency of volunteering, which are on the conservative side. The number of volunteering occasions are estimated by multiplying the number of volunteers in each category by the relevant assumption about how many times they volunteered over the course of the last year. Using this approach, the average frequency of volunteering across all categories is estimated at 20.75 times.

Table 4: Volunteering frequency

Self-reported frequency	Adults	Number of times (assumed)	Volunteering occasions
Once/one-off	2,046,000	1	2,046,000
Every few months	2,565,400	6	15,392,400
Once a month but not once a week throughout the year	1,849,700	12	22,196,400
Once a week or more throughout the year	3,023,200	52	157,206,400
Total	9,484,300	20.75	196,841,200

Data on volunteering duration is not reported in the Active Lives Data Tables but can be extracted from the Active Lives Interactive tool. Like the frequency data, the data on duration is captured in categorial form and can be converted into a numerical value using a set of assumptions – see Table 2 below. Based on these (conservative) assumptions, the average duration per volunteer is estimated at 101.63 minutes or 1.69 hours.

According to ASHE, the median hourly pay for all employee jobs in the UK in 2021/22 was £14.79 which increased to £15.88 in 2022/23.

Table 5: Volunteering duration

Duration in any given instance	%	Number of minutes (assumed)	Total minutes per volunteer
Less than half an hour	9.0%	15	1.35
Around half an hour	11.5%	30	3.45
Around 45 minutes to an hour	28.3%	52.5	14.87
Around two hours	31.1%	120	37.36
Three or four hours	11.5%	210	24.17
More than four hours	8.5%	240	20.42
Total	100.0%		101.63



Replacement value

Bringing together the data and assumptions presented in the previous section:

- 9,990,100 adults volunteered to support sport and physical activity in 2022/23.
- The average frequency per volunteer was 20.75 times with an average duration per occasion of 1.69 hours i.e. around 35 hours were committed per volunteer.
- The hourly wage rate depending on the price year was between £14.79 and £15.88.

Using this data, the replacement value of sport-related volunteering is estimated at **£5.19bn** at 2021/22 prices and **£5.58bn** at 2022/23 prices.



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