

SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERING AND GENDER

Active Lives Adult Survey
May 2016-17

WELCOME

The Active Lives Adult Survey shows that 6.7 million adults (15% of adults in England) volunteered at least twice in the last year to support sport and physical activity. This is a huge contribution, with people giving their time in a range of different ways – from coaching and committee roles, to providing transport and marshalling at events.

Importantly though, those who volunteer in sport don't currently represent the diversity of the wider population, meaning that certain groups are not experiencing the benefits volunteering can bring. Here we focus on the gender profile in sport and physical activity volunteering.

Men currently make up 60% of volunteers and women only 40%, a gender difference this report will explore. This gender difference mirrors the trend we see in participation, with women less likely to be active, and contrasts with volunteering in other sectors, for example the arts, where women are more likely to volunteer (*Community Life Survey, DCMS, 2016/17*).

This report delves deeper into the statistics and the possible underlying reasons behind them, with talking points and further insight in each section. We've selected three key life stages to help understand the differences between men and women's likelihood to volunteer to support sport and physical activity. While the types of roles that volunteers carry out are wide ranging, this report will focus on the seven roles which are captured within the Active Lives Adult Survey. More information about the definition of these roles can be found in the Notes section.

PROFILE OF ADULTS (AGED 16+) WHO VOLUNTEERED AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST YEAR



WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- The sector is missing out on a wealth of experience, skills and expertise women have to offer as volunteers. Women are also missing out on the benefits we know volunteering can bring; from the social connections to improved mental wellbeing and opportunities to develop their skills.
- Volunteers can play a key role in bringing new people into sport and physical activity. A more diverse pool of volunteers will bring new perspectives and experiences to the roles and could help sport reach new audiences. In order to encourage more women to get active and take part in sport and physical activity, they need to see 'people like them' leading, delivering and supporting activities. By increasing the number of women volunteering across roles and activities, this could have a knock-on effect on participation in those activities as well.

KEY FINDINGS WHICH WILL BE EXPLORED IN MORE DETAIL:

- The gender difference is not as pronounced amongst student volunteers
- Women with children are less likely to carry out coaching and refereeing roles than women without children
- Some of the most extreme gender differences are seen amongst volunteers who are retired.

SETTING THE SCENE: ALL ADULTS (AGE 16+)

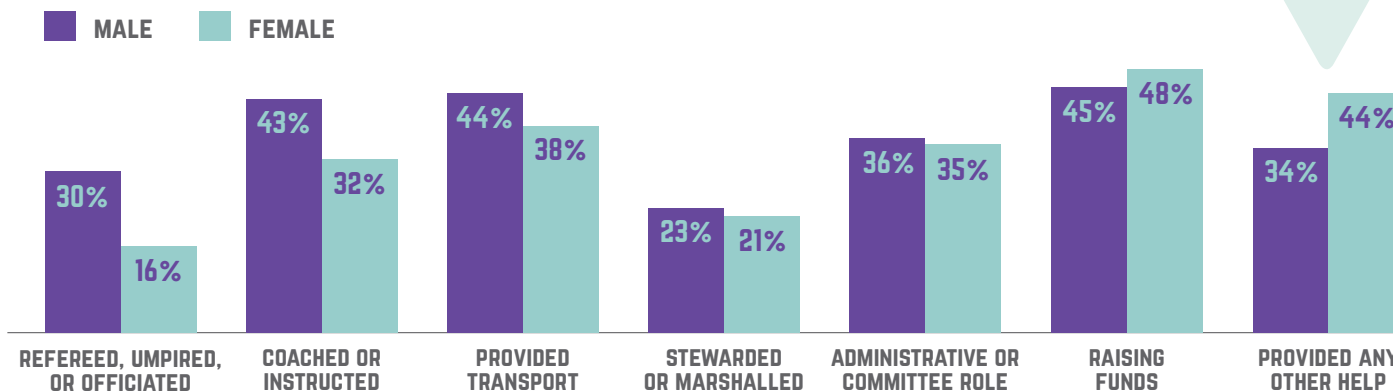
Unlike other sectors, volunteering within the sport and physical activity sector is skewed towards men, who account for 60% of volunteers. Women are under-represented across adults for all roles.

While there are some roles that female volunteers are more likely to do than male volunteers (as shown below), men still make up a larger proportion of all volunteer roles.*

Men who volunteer are more likely to do so through refereeing, coaching and transport roles than women who volunteer. The difference is particularly stark for refereeing, where men are almost twice as likely to volunteer in this role than women (30% vs 16%).

In contrast, women who volunteer are more likely to do so through raising funds and other ('any other help') roles than male volunteers.

PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS (AGED 16+ AND WHO VOLUNTEERED AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST YEAR) WHO CARRIED OUT EACH ROLE



'ANY OTHER HELP' will include a wide range of tasks and responsibilities and is likely to be more informal, infrequent and ad-hoc by nature.

FURTHER INSIGHT

Someone's likelihood to volunteer is influenced by a complex range of factors including a person's motivations, an individual's social networks, their ability to volunteer and the groups and organisations through which people participate ([Pathways through Participation, 2011](#)). These factors may be driving the gender difference we see.

The connection with taking part in sport and physical activity may be one particular factor driving someone's likelihood to volunteer. We know from our [Spotlight on Gender](#) that women are less likely than men to take part in sport and physical activity, and so perhaps less likely to be recruited to volunteer through taking part. Furthermore, some roles are more closely linked to playing sport, such as coaching and refereeing, which might explain why more men carry them out.

The trend could therefore be a result of lower numbers of women taking part in the type of sports and activities that offer more volunteering opportunities.

* This is because the overall number of male volunteers is higher than female volunteers.

SETTING THE SCENE: ALL ADULTS (AGE 16+) (CONTINUED)

TALKING POINTS

If we want to increase the number of women volunteering in certain roles and therefore improve the gender balance within volunteering, we need to understand what's driving the current trends.

Our insight suggests that the solution will require us to consider the nature of the volunteer roles and the experience they offer. For example, understanding what it's like to volunteer as a coach or referee within sport could highlight why men are more likely to volunteer

in these roles and what may need to change to make them more accessible and appealing to women.

We need to consider how volunteers are recruited, the level of commitment required, the support and training provided as well as the setting or culture of the volunteering. Below we have explored four factors in more detail and how evidence suggests they impact on women:

KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

How much training is required to volunteer in each role? Are any official qualifications needed?

Qualifications and training can take time to acquire and complete. The formal training and technical knowledge required, or perceived to be required, may be something that puts people off. Could this be a barrier for women who have never taken part in the sport or have taken part for fewer years? Do they have less time to give or have preconceptions about the amount of training and knowledge required?

PARTICIPATION

Are certain roles more likely to be carried out by those who have previously (or currently) taken part in sport or physical activity?

Women are less likely to take part in sport and physical activity, reducing the likelihood of them being recruited via participation. What other ways can volunteers be recruited?

TIME

Do certain roles require a lot more time commitment from volunteers? Are certain roles less flexible?

Everyone has time pressure, and some women report that competing time pressures are a problem with carrying out certain roles. Volunteering opportunities need to take into account other demands on people's time. If a role could be made more flexible, would more women be comfortable giving it a go?

CULTURE

Is there a perception that some roles are 'male roles'? Is there an unconscious bias towards men in certain roles?

Are there opportunities to make women in these roles more visible to provide more role models and challenge unconscious bias? Could sports clubs and groups do more to provide an inclusive environment? Do they reach out beyond their members or participants?

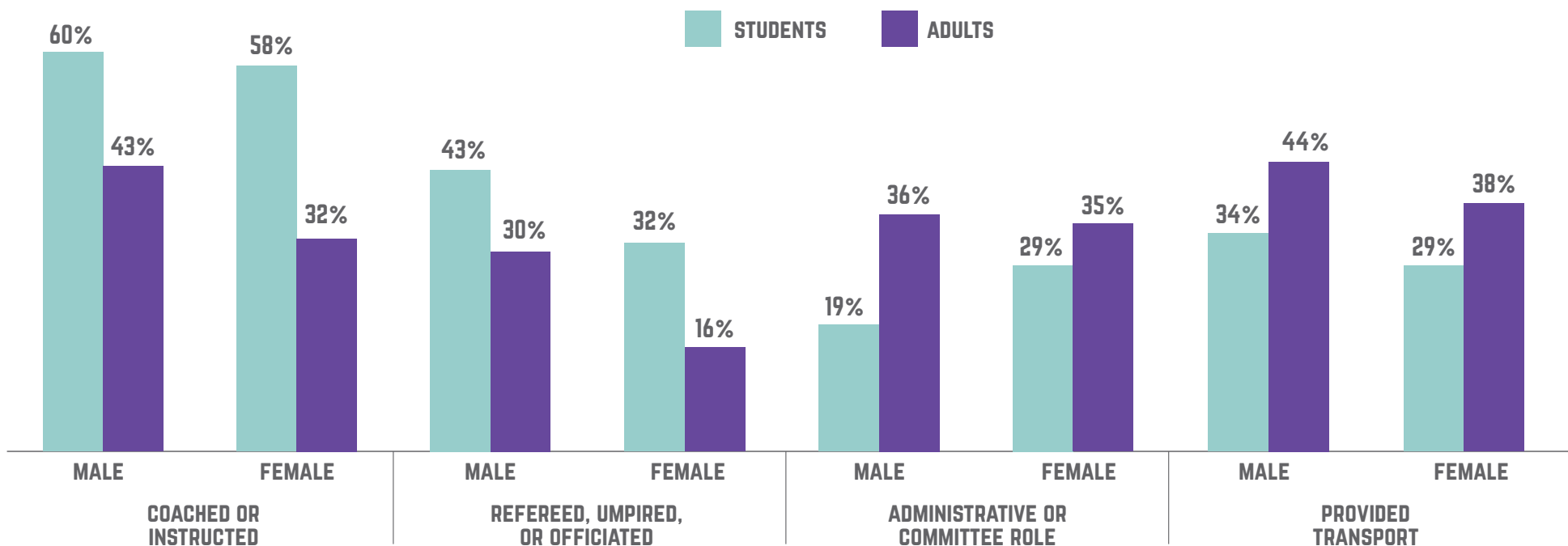
LIFE STAGE ONE: STUDENTS

- Life stages can present opportunities to change behavior, with people's likelihood to volunteer depending on what's going on in their lives at the time.
- Being a student is a distinct life stage for anyone and our Active Lives data reveals a pattern of sports volunteering amongst students that is markedly different from the national picture.
- Students are more likely to volunteer in sport and physical activity, with 25% volunteering twice in the last 12 months (compared to 15% of all adults aged 16 and over).

- In addition, the gender differences are not as pronounced across the different roles. For example, almost the same proportion of men and women carry out a coaching role at this life stage.
- The likelihood to volunteer in a refereeing role is at its highest for women at this life stage, although male students are still more likely to carry out this role. In contrast, female students outnumber male students in administrative or committee roles.

25% OF STUDENTS WHO ARE EITHER STUDYING FULL OR PART TIME VOLUNTEERED TWICE IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS TO SUPPORT SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

SELECTED ROLES UNDERTAKEN AMONGST ADULTS AND STUDENTS (AGED 16+) WHO VOLUNTEERED AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST YEAR



LIFE STAGE ONE: STUDENTS (CONTINUED)

TALKING POINTS

Why are women more likely to volunteer in certain roles like coaching while they are students? Is this a life stage when they feel more confident in taking up these roles? Or do they have more time to commit to more formal, regular volunteering roles at this point in their lives?

Below are some factors that may explain why adults (in particular women) who are studying may be more likely to volunteer:



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

More women may be encouraged to volunteer because roles are offered that appeal to different motivations. For instance, volunteering can help individuals to develop key skills such as leadership and time management, which might appeal to students looking to build their experience and CVs for future work. Could this also motivate women at other stages in their lives to volunteer, for example for those who have taken time out of the workplace to raise their children, or those looking for a career change?



A SOCIAL NORM

Sport and physical activity is closely associated with students and student life, and this culture means women are more likely to see their peers taking part and volunteering, therefore making it feel like something 'people like them' do.



NEW EXPERIENCES

We know that changes in circumstances and life stages present both opportunities and threats to habits. Does beginning a new course or qualification, moving to a new location and/or adopting a new routine, provide a 'new start' for men and women to get involved in activities they haven't previously? More importantly, how do we build on this to ensure that these volunteers are retained?



FLEXIBILITY

Students have a lot of responsibilities, but might have a greater amount of flexibility because they often manage their workload independently, not restricted to specific or set working hours. Could more flexible volunteer roles enable more men and women to take part throughout their lives?

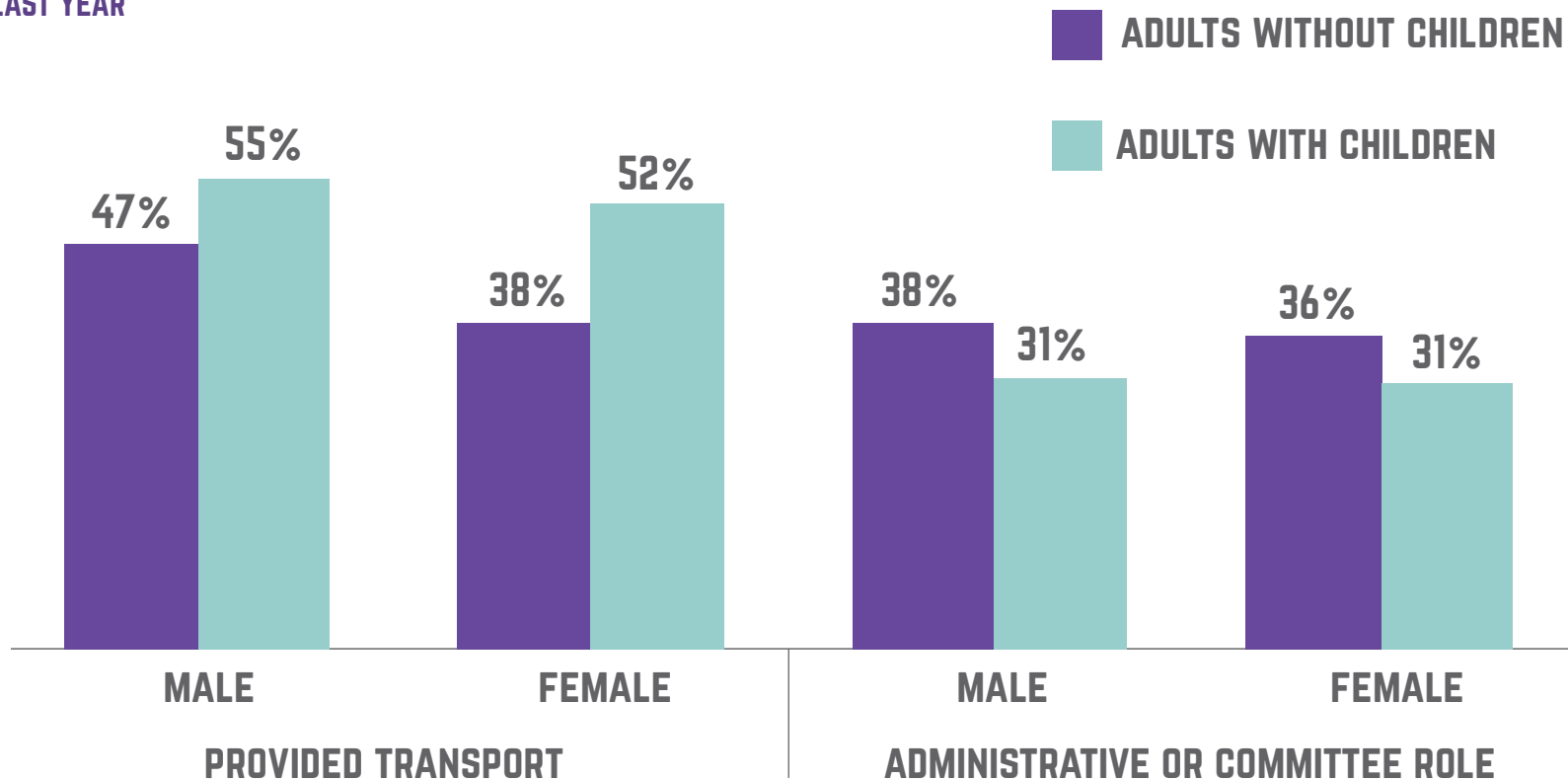
FURTHER INSIGHT

Research into volunteering in sport amongst students is limited. However, a study undertaken by the [National Union of Students](#) shows that almost half of students who volunteer (48%) say they found out about volunteering opportunities through their friends and family, with their place of study the second most common source, while 13% said they found out about opportunities through their student union. This demonstrates that while institutions might help advertise opportunities, the social networks that individuals are part of can play a crucial role in encouraging people to volunteer.

LIFE STAGE TWO: FAMILIES

- In the same way that having children can impact an adult's activity levels, men and women who have children are more likely to volunteer to support sport and physical activity.
- 18% of adults with dependent children volunteered twice in the last 12 months, compared to 12% of those without.
- Both men and women with dependent children are more likely to provide transport than those without dependent children, and less likely to carry out administrative or committee roles.
- For this report, we've looked at the comparison between adults aged 25-54 who have children under the age of 16 in their household and those who don't.

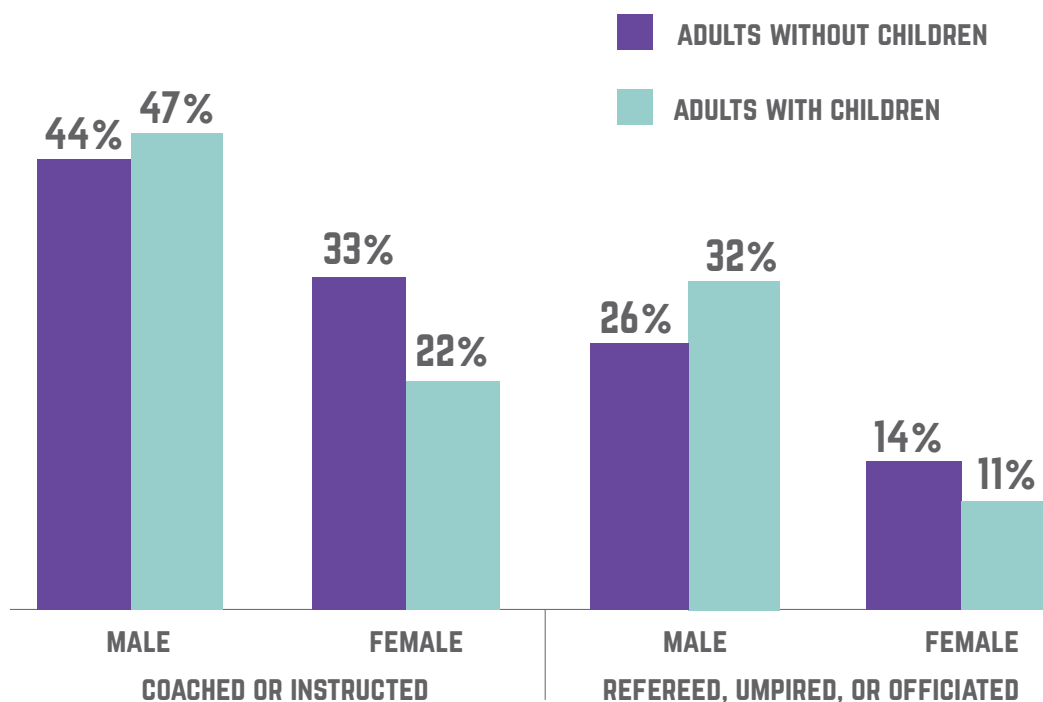
SELECTED ROLES UNDERTAKEN AMONGST ADULTS WITH AND WITHOUT CHILDREN (AGED 25-54) AMONGST THOSE WHO VOLUNTEERED AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST YEAR



LIFE STAGE TWO: FAMILIES (CONTINUED)

- Although adults with dependent children are more likely to volunteer than those without, our data shows that certain roles are less common for adults with children, in particular women.
- A third of women without children who volunteer do so through coaching or instructing, compared to 22% of those with children. The same pattern is seen for refereeing roles.
- In contrast, male volunteers with children are more likely to undertake these roles than male volunteers without children.

SELECTED ROLES UNDERTAKEN AMONGST ADULTS WITH AND WITHOUT CHILDREN (AGED 25-54) WHO VOLUNTEERED AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST YEAR (MAY 16/17)



FURTHER INSIGHT

Research has shown that volunteering is influenced by relationships and social networks. In particular, [Women in Sport](#) found that family can act as both an enabler and a barrier to women's involvement in sport volunteering. For example, having children presents challenges in how women manage competing priorities and roles like coaching can be particularly inflexible to help accommodate these responsibilities. However, having children who play sport often provides a 'route in' to volunteering for both men and women, with [other studies](#) showing that a majority of volunteers in sports clubs are motivated by being a parent of a child participating in a sports club.

TALKING POINTS

The previous section on students shows that at other times in their lives, roles like refereeing and coaching are more popular amongst women. What is it about having a family which decreases the likelihood of women carrying out these roles?

- How can we help encourage women at this life stage? Can we appeal to other motivations such as social aspects like spending time with their friends, family or community?
- Would more flexibility of roles, for example the opportunity to share a role, help volunteering fit into their lives? Considering family-friendly volunteering might enable more women to volunteer whilst spending time with their family, and help to overcome barriers like finding childcare.

LIFE STAGE THREE: RETIREMENT

12% OF RETIRED ADULTS VOLUNTEERED TWICE IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS TO SUPPORT SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

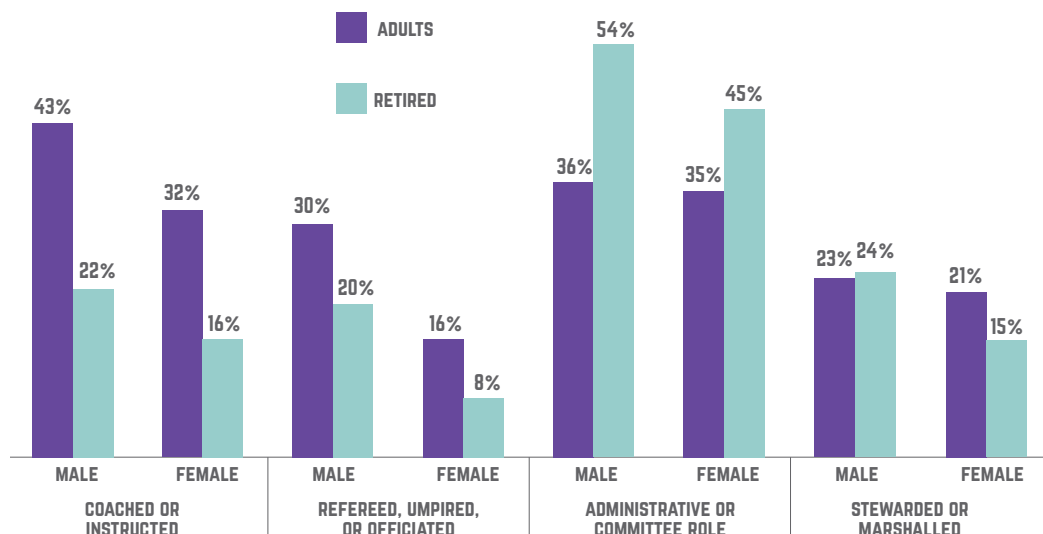
- Our Active Lives data reveals that 12% of retired adults volunteered twice in the last 12 months to support sport and physical activity.
- Although making a huge contribution, this life stage has some of the more extreme differences between men and women:
 - Refereeing has the biggest gender difference at retirement age, with only 8% of women refereeing compared to 20% of men.
 - Compared to the adult volunteer population overall, men and women who are retired are significantly more likely to carry out an administrative or committee role, but men become more likely than women to do so within this life stage (54% vs 45%), creating a gender difference which isn't there for adults.
 - The likelihood of men volunteering in a stewarding role is the same for adults overall and those who are retired, whereas for female volunteers who have retired, we see a decrease at this life stage (from 21% to 15%).

FURTHER INSIGHT

Data from the [Community Life survey](#) shows that sports clubs are the most popular organisations to volunteer with among all age groups, except for those aged 75 years and over. For this age group, they are more likely to volunteer for religious organisations (55%) or arts and social clubs (53%) than for sports clubs (45%).

Thinking about older adults who are retired in particular, there is [evidence](#) to suggest that their expectations of volunteering may be changing, suggesting that the sector needs to adapt its volunteering offer accordingly, as well as think about how we continue to encourage this age group to volunteer in the future.

SELECTED ROLES UNDERTAKEN AMONGST RETIRED ADULTS (AGED 16+) WHO VOLUNTEERED AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST YEAR (MAY 16/17)



TALKING POINTS

The sport and physical activity sector may need to make changes in how it seeks to attract, recruit and support people at this stage in their lives, or risk missing out on an extensive range of skills and experience from those in retirement. Retirement can be an opportunity to encourage more adults, both men and women, to volunteer and our Active Lives data demonstrates that this cohort already make an important contribution to the sport and physical activity sector. However, this is the life stage where we see some of the most extreme differences between men and women. This is important to understand because for many other sectors (for example the arts) women, and older women in particular, are more likely to volunteer than men.

CONCLUSION

The information in this report shows that both men and women make a huge contribution to sport and physical activity through volunteering. However, it's also identified that men and women are more likely to carry out certain roles than others, and this likelihood is affected by the individual's current life stage. While there will be lots of differences within these two genders, identifying broad patterns between men and women could unlock how we encourage more women to volunteer, and consequently improve the diversity and representativeness of the sector overall.

To understand the gender differences seen within volunteering, we need to look at the nature of different roles. In addition to someone's ability to undertake a role, factors like someone's motivations to volunteer, the time they have to offer and how they're recruited will all influence the likelihood of someone volunteering in a particular role and will change over their lifetime. The sector needs to make sure that these roles are designed and supported in a way that's as inclusive as possible in order to attract volunteers from the wider pool.

Finally, we know that for both men and women, seeing volunteering as something for 'people like them' is a strong driver for participation. If a conscious effort is made to encourage more women to take part in a wider range of roles, then it will also lead to more female role models within the sector being visible and a social norm being developed, which may help further encourage women to volunteer and take part in sport and physical activity.

DEFINITIONS

We count a person as having volunteered if they have taken part in a volunteering role to support sport/physical activity and volunteered at least twice in the last 12 months.

This report highlighted seven volunteering roles included in the Active Lives Adult Survey. They are defined as:

- **PROVIDED TRANSPORT:** to help people other than family members take part in sport
- **COACHED OR INSTRUCTED:** for an individual or team(s) in a sport or recreational physical activity (other than solely for family members)
- **REFEREED, UMPIRED, OR OFFICIATED:** at a sports match, competition or event
- **ADMINISTRATIVE OR COMMITTEE ROLE:** for a sports organisation, activity or event (e.g. chairman, treasurer, social secretary, first aider, welfare officer)
- **STEWARDED OR MARSHALLED:** at a sports activity or event
- **PROVIDED ANY OTHER HELP:** for a sport or recreational physical activity (e.g. helping with refreshments, sports kit or equipment)
- **RAISING FUNDS:** for a sports club, organisation or event (only includes fundraising for sport, not more general charitable fundraising through taking part in a sports event or activity). This role is only included in the overall definition of volunteering if a person has carried out this role in addition to one of the other seven.



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NOTES

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TO CARRY OUT YOUR OWN ANALYSIS OF THE ACTIVE LIVES DATA, VISIT:
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THE DATA INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT CAN BE FOUND HERE.