



Department for  
Digital, Culture  
Media & Sport



# Taking Part Survey

Guidance note

September 2017

# Taking Part Survey: Guidance document

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This document provides information on the Taking Part survey - the interviews, methodology, quality of the statistics and how to interpret them. For further information, please see the [technical report](#) or email [takingpart@culture.gov.uk](mailto:takingpart@culture.gov.uk)

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## 1. What is the Taking Part Survey?

Taking Part is a survey of adults aged 16 and over and of children aged 5-15 in England. The Taking Part Survey collects data on many aspects of leisure, culture and sport in England, as well as an in-depth range of socio-demographic information on respondents.

The survey is led by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in collaboration with the Arts Council England, English Heritage and Sport England who are co-funders.

## 2. Are there similar data for United Kingdom or Great Britain?

Data are collected by the other administrations within the United Kingdom, but no other single survey covers the full range of data for cultural and sport sectors like the Taking Part Survey provides for England.

The following data sources are available:

### **Wales:**

Sport Wales - Active adults survey - <http://www.sportwales.org.uk/research--policy/surveys-and-statistics/active-adults-survey.aspx>

Arts Council Wales - Arts in Wales Survey - <http://www.arts.wales/research/latest-research/arts-in-wales-survey-2015>

### **Scotland:**

Scottish Household Survey - <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00525075.pdf>

- Culture in Scotland - <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00525088.pdf>
- Sport in Scotland – <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00525084.pdf>

### **Northern Ireland:**

Continuous Household Survey - <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/continuous-household-survey#toc-4>

## 3. How can I find out more about Taking Part?

Further information on the Taking Part Survey is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-part-survey>

Enquiries can also be sent to [takingpart@culture.gov.uk](mailto:takingpart@culture.gov.uk)

### **Interviews**

## 4. How are the interviews conducted?

Randomly selected households receive an introductory letter explaining the Taking Part Survey. At least one week after these have been sent, an interviewer calls at the address. The interviewer randomly selects one member from the household,

aged 16 or over, to complete the questionnaire. Interviewers may also ask for consent to interview children aged 11-15 and may also survey a child aged 5-10 years via a proxy interview with their parent or guardian.

The interview happens within the home, face-to-face. The interviewer is able to enter the answers straight onto a laptop using a computer programme that specifies the questions, range, structure of permissible answers and the routing instructions. This method of interviewing is known as Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI).

## **5. How many interviews are carried out annually?**

In 2016/17, 9,352 adults and 638 children aged 11-15 were interviewed. Information was also collected from parents or guardians of 967 children aged 5-10.

## **6. Do the interview questions remain the same each year?**

Questions remain as consistent as possible each survey year to enable comparisons over time to be made. However as policies change and new data requirements emerge, changes to questions are necessary. Due to the adult interview needing to remain at approximately 40 minutes long, some questions have to be dropped to make space for new ones.

Questionnaires for each survey year are published at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/questionnaires-from-taking-part>

## **Methodology**

### **7. How do you ensure you have a representative number of interviews for England?**

The survey uses a random probability sample methodology, using the Post Office's Postcode Address File (PAF) as a sampling frame. It is representative at a National and Government Office Region (GOR) level. The sample size is kept as high as possible within funding constraints, to maximise the accuracy of our estimates and keep confidence intervals as small as possible. The survey is designed to yield a representative sample of adults aged 16 years and over and of children aged 11-15 who are normally resident in England. Relevant adults also provide information about children aged 5-10 so this population is also covered.

For practical reasons, residents of institutional accommodation (armed forces barracks, student halls of residence, hospitals, care homes, prisons etc) are excluded from the survey.

The Post Office's Residential Postal Address File (PAF) is used as the sampling frame. This provides a list of almost all private residential addresses in the UK and is the most comprehensive sampling frame available. However, because it lists addresses, not individuals, interviewers are required to randomly select respondents from among those eligible as described below.

At each sampled address, the interviewer randomly samples one dwelling unit (if more than one exists at the address), then randomly samples one household (if more than one) within the sampled dwelling unit. They then obtain information on all adult members of the household before randomly selecting one adult to participate in the survey.

Interviewers make a minimum of six calls at each address before regarding it as a non-contact. Calls are made on different days of the week and at different times of day: at least one call has to be made on a weekday evening (after 6.00 pm), at least one call at a weekend (10.00 am – 9.00 pm), and at least one further call either during a weekday evening or at a weekend. There must be at least three weeks between the first and last calls.

#### **8. If you are not interviewing residents of institutional accommodation then does this mean the survey includes bias?**

It is not possible to access residents of some institutional accommodation, for example army barracks or prison, nor is it ethical for the purposes of this particular survey to interview potential respondents in hospitals or care homes. Residents of these types of institutional accommodation are therefore not included in the sampling frame and so are excluded from the results published. It is assumed that participation in the sports and cultural sectors for these people is atypical. For example, a person in hospital is unable to visit a museum or take part in a sporting activity, whilst someone in prison may have little choice in what activities they take part in.

The results published from the Taking Part Survey provide a consistent measure of sport and cultural participation in England which can be compared across quarters and years. It is this time series element that brings the true value to the survey.

#### **9. How are the interviews turned into final figures for England?**

Results from each CAPI interview are uploaded by the interviewer from their laptops to our contractors. A computer program codes the answers to each question to provide a dataset of all responses within that quarter (April-June, July-September, October-December, January-March).

Despite many steps being taken to provide a representative sample of adults and children in England, it is not always possible to get the full quota for each segment of the population due to characteristics of certain strata of the population, for example males aged 16-24 years old are well known to be difficult to access to interview and often do not wish to be part of a survey. Weighting is therefore required. For a more technical and detailed explanation of the methodology, see the latest technical report at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-report-taking-part-survey-2016-to-2017-year-12>

## **Quality**

### **10. What quality assurance checks are completed on the data?**

Taking Part is a National Statistic and as such has been produced to the highest professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Strict quality assurance procedures are adopted for each statistical release. All data and analysis is checked and verified by two different members of the team and our contractors to ensure the highest level of quality.

Guidance on the quality that is expected of Taking Part statistical releases is provided in a quality indicators document at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quality-indicators-taking-part-survey>

These quality indicators outline how statistics from the Taking Part Survey match up to the six dimensions of quality defined by the European Statistical System (ESS).

These are: relevance, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, comparability and coherence.

### **11. Why are confidence intervals given? Are the figures not exact?**

Taking Part statistics are produced from a survey where data are only collected from a sample of the population. Extensive effort is made to make the sample as representative of the population as possible but the nature of sampling means that there is always a level of uncertainty in the statistics produced from the sampled respondents.

As the headline figures are therefore only estimates, we publish 95% confidence intervals alongside them. A 95% confidence interval means that, had the sample been conducted 100 times, creating 100 confidence intervals, then 95 of these intervals would contain the true value. All estimates have been rounded to one decimal place.

### **12. A value was 56% last year and is now 58%, yet this is not classified as a statistically significant increase. Why?**

In statistics, a result is called statistically significant if it is unlikely to have occurred by chance. But an element of chance is an inherent characteristic of surveys. So whilst the percentage has changed from 56 to 58, it may be that this difference of 2 percentage points is down to chance, and that if you were to re-run the survey again you would not see that 2 percentage point increase.

Statistical significance tests on the Taking Part data have been run at the 95% level. This means the probability that any given difference happened by chance is low (1 in 20). Where there has been a statistically significant increase, there is good evidence that the increase is real and not due to chance.

Many factors can affect whether the change is statistically significant or not, but often it is due to the sample size. The smaller the sample size, the larger the difference in the results is required to make the change statistically significant.

