Physical activity patterns – Adults in England

General Trends
The 2008 Health Survey for England (HSE) focused on physical activity and fitness. Adults were asked to recall their physical activity over recent weeks, and objective measures of physical activity were also obtained. Using self-report data it found:

- In 2008, 39% of men and 29% of women aged 16 and over met the Government’s recommendations for physical activity.
  - 52% men and 34% women aged 16-24 years
  - 43% men and 34% women aged 35-44 years
  - 31% men and 27% women aged 55-64 years
  - 8% men and 5% women aged 75+ years.

The 2008 HSE is the first time objective measures of physical activity were used in a national general population survey based in people’s homes. Based on the results of the accelerometer study:

- 6% of men and 4% of women achieved the Government’s recommended physical activity level
- on average men spent 31 minutes in moderate or vigorous physical activity in total per day
- women spent an average of 24 minutes in moderate or vigorous physical activity
- only about a third of this was accrued in bouts of ten minutes or longer which count towards the government recommendations
- men and women aged 16 to 34 were most likely to reach the recommended physical activity level (11% and 8% respectively)
- the proportion of both men and women meeting the recommendations fell in the older age groups.

Participation in sport
The Active People Survey 2011/12, measures the number of adults aged 16 and over in England who participate in at least 30 minutes of sport and active recreation at moderate intensity at least once a week. It found that:

- during the period October 2011 to October 2012, 15.51 million people participated in sport at least once a week; this is over 750,000 more people than 2010/11 when 14.76 million adults played sport once a week
- there has been an increase of 2.1% in participation for women but no change for men compared to 2010/11
• Sports participation among non-white adults has increased by 131,500 (from 33.4% to 35.5%) compared to 2010/11.
• Sports participation among adults with a limiting disability/illness has increased by 64,700 (from 17.7% to 18.3%) compared to 2010/11.

Taken from the latest Taking Part Survey, 2012/13 quarter 1, the key findings were:
• 56.2% of adults had participated in active sport at least once in the last 4 weeks.
• 26.3% had participated in 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport at least three times in the last week.
• 44.6% participated in 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport at least once in the last week.

Other physical activity
Results are based on the 2008 Health Survey for England.
• Most men (62%) and women (59%) considered themselves to be very or fairly active at work.
• 24% of men and 11% of women reported doing at least 30 minutes of moderate or vigorous activity in total whilst at work each day.
• The most common activity for men was sports and exercise (51% had participated in the past four weeks).
• The most common activity for women was heavy housework (59% had participated in the past four weeks).
• On average men had participated in non-occupational physical activity on 13.9 days in the past four weeks, compared with 12.2 days for women.

Travel
The 2011 National Travel Survey (NTS) presents information on personal travel in Great Britain collected from nearly 8,000 households, covering over 18,000 individuals.

Key findings
• In 2011, the average number of walking trips was 222 trips per person per year compared with 292 trips in 1995/97, a decrease of 24%.
• 79% of all trips less than one mile in length were walking trips.
• 23% of all trips were made by walking.
• There has been a small drop in the number of bicycle trips per person per year from 18 trips in 1995/97 to 16 trips in 2011.
• The average bicycle trip length increasing from 2.3 miles in 1995/97 to 3.0 miles in 2011.
• 10% of business/commuting trips were made by walking.

Sedentary behaviour
Sedentary behaviour is not simply defined as a lack of physical activity. It is a group of behaviours that occur whilst sitting or lying down and that require very low energy expenditure. Using accelerometer data, the 2008 Health Survey for England found that:
• Between the ages of 16-64, sedentary time remains relatively stable with both men and women averaging about 9.5 hours of sedentary time.
• Between the ages of 65-74, sedentary time in both men and women increased to 10 hours per day or more.
• By age 75+ years, individuals were sedentary for 11 hours per day.
• On average, adults watched 2.8 hours of TV on weekdays and 3.2 (men) and 3.0 (women) hours per day at the weekend.
• Daily TV viewing increased with age in both men and women.

References