

HEALTH OUTCOMES/BENEFITS OF SPORT AND PHYSICAL RECREATION

BACKGROUND

Whilst there has been generic research conducted into the sport and health field, there is no absolute defined figure available to quantify the health outcomes/benefits which result from spending on sport and physical recreation.

Some relevant information, however, which may be of use is included in the following documents;

- Sport Industry Research Centre, Sport, Health and Economic Benefit (see Appendix 1)
- Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Economic Importance of Sport in Northern Ireland (see Appendix 2)
- Scottish Economic Report, Health and Economic Benefits of Increased Physical Activity in Scotland (see Appendix 3)

Each of the above documents are summarized below, highlighting the key points contained.

SPORT INDUSTRY RESEARCH CENTRE – SPORT, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC BENEFIT

This paper provides examples of the economic cost in terms of health care for an inactive population. The benefits to individuals' health are contained within the document, highlighting the specific diseases and illness that can be positively impacted upon with increased levels of activity.

It is generally accepted that sport and physical activity can have positive impacts on health, these benefits include¹;

- (1) Decrease in the risk of cardiovascular mortality
- (2) Delays the development of high blood pressure
- (3) Helping people to control their body weight and diabetes
- (4) Reduces the risk of colon cancer
- (5) Increased physical activity enhances the immune system
- (6) Reduces the risk of depression
- (7) Has a valuable role in the prevention of non-specific low back pain

The British Cardiac Society recommend at least 30 minutes of physical activity of at least moderate intensity on five or more days per week. It is estimated that 37 per cent of Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) deaths could be attributed to inactivity² (pg 88).

¹ Sport, Health and Economic Benefit, <http://www.sportdevelopment.org.uk/duphealth.pdf>

² Sport, Health and Economic Benefit, <http://www.sportdevelopment.org.uk/duphealth.pdf>

In England the total cost of physical inactivity is £1.89 billion a year (in 2002). However, a 10% increase in adult activity would benefit England by £500 million a year. The estimated cost of inactivity in England to the NHS as £326 million per year, the estimated costs of days absent from work as £785 million, and the estimated costs of premature deaths due to physical inactivity as £780 million per year (pg 90).

The Confederation of British Industry states that in 2002, absence from work cost the UK economy £11.6 billion. On average workers took 6.8 days off because of sickness, which is 2.9% of total working time. The cost per employee of sickness leave in 2002 was £476 (pg 91).

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF SPORT IN NORTHERN IRELAND

This document details the economic relevance of sport in Northern Ireland. Highlighted are the multiple sectors that sport has an economic impact upon; including customer expenditure, employment and regional comparisons within the United Kingdom.

Customer Expenditure

Consumer expenditure on sport as a percentage of total expenditure is estimated as follows, Northern Ireland 2.8% and England 2.4%³. In 2004, some £446 million was spent by consumers on sport-related goods in Northern Ireland. There has been a 75% increase in sport-related consumer expenditure during the period 1998-2004 corresponding to a 63% growth. Sport-related activity adds £452 million to the Northern Ireland economy⁴ (pg 2).

Employment

In Northern Ireland 13,700 people are employed in sport-related employment, corresponding to 1.9% of total employment in the region. Despite average earnings being below the average for the UK, the popularity of sport has resulted in sport-related expenditure being 2.8% of total spending, higher than the English average (pg 3).

Regional Comparison

The proportion of sport-related spending in Northern Ireland (out of total spending) is 2.8%, this is the second highest in the UK. The same ranking is achieved in terms of sport-related output (2.0%) and employment (1.9%) (pg 12).

In terms of per capita sport spending, some £280.2 was spent in England, £313.4 in Scotland, £239.5 in Wales and £260.9 in Northern Ireland. The statistics for percentage of total employment in sport for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are 1.8%, 1.8%, 1.8% and 1.9% respectively: placing Northern Ireland as the highest ranking within the United Kingdom.

³ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, *Economic Importance of Sport in Northern Ireland*, http://www.sportni.net/document/economic_impact_of_sport_nov_2007.pdf

⁴ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, *Economic Importance of Sport in Northern Ireland*, http://www.sportni.net/document/economic_impact_of_sport_nov_2007.pdf

HEALTH AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF INCREASED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN SCOTLAND

The impacts of reduced levels of activity within a population are examined within this report. The economic impacts of reduced physical activity are examined in relation to number of working days lost due to ill health and the impact such illnesses have on the health service.

Increased physical activity is suggested to be of benefit in relation to illnesses such as Coronary Heart Disease (CHD), Stroke and Colon Cancer, health concerns that are prevalent in Scotland⁵. From the population at risk and actual mortality data it is estimated that approximately 42% of CHD, 26% of Stroke and 25% of Colon Cancer deaths in Scotland are attributable directly to existing physical activity levels⁶. A 5% increase in the percentage of the adults undertaking physical activity would reduce the number of premature deaths in Scotland, for the three disease groups, relating to a reduction in deaths of 157 over the next 5 years⁷.

Absenteeism from work due to ill health accounts for approximately 8.9 million scheduled workdays in Scotland (relating to 2.2 per cent of total work days). Research has shown that there is a positive link between increased physical activity and reduced absenteeism from work due to ill health. If such a change were to occur a potential reduction in the total number of days lost through sickness in Scotland would fall from 8.9 million to 8.25 million approximately⁸.

The NHS would benefit from the positive health impacts of increased physical activity. There are approximately 90 thousand admissions annually for CHD, Stroke and Colon Cancer. Thus, through increased physical activity a similar decrease in admissions, would occur of approximately 2,231 cases per year. The average cost per inpatient episode is £1575 for the NHS, the fall in admissions would then generate savings of approximately 3.5 million over the 5-year period⁹.

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⁵ Health and Economic Benefits of Increased Physical Activity in Scotland, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2003/02/16363/18103>

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