



SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND



Ipsos MRBI



# Impact of Covid-19 Restrictions on Sport and Recreational Walking

November 2020

## Introduction & Key Findings

### Key Findings

Levels of activity increased during the periods of Covid-19 restrictions, however these decreased during the reopening phase.

The numbers playing sport are broadly aligned with those seen during 2019 with an increase in the numbers cycling compensating for a reduction in the numbers swimming.

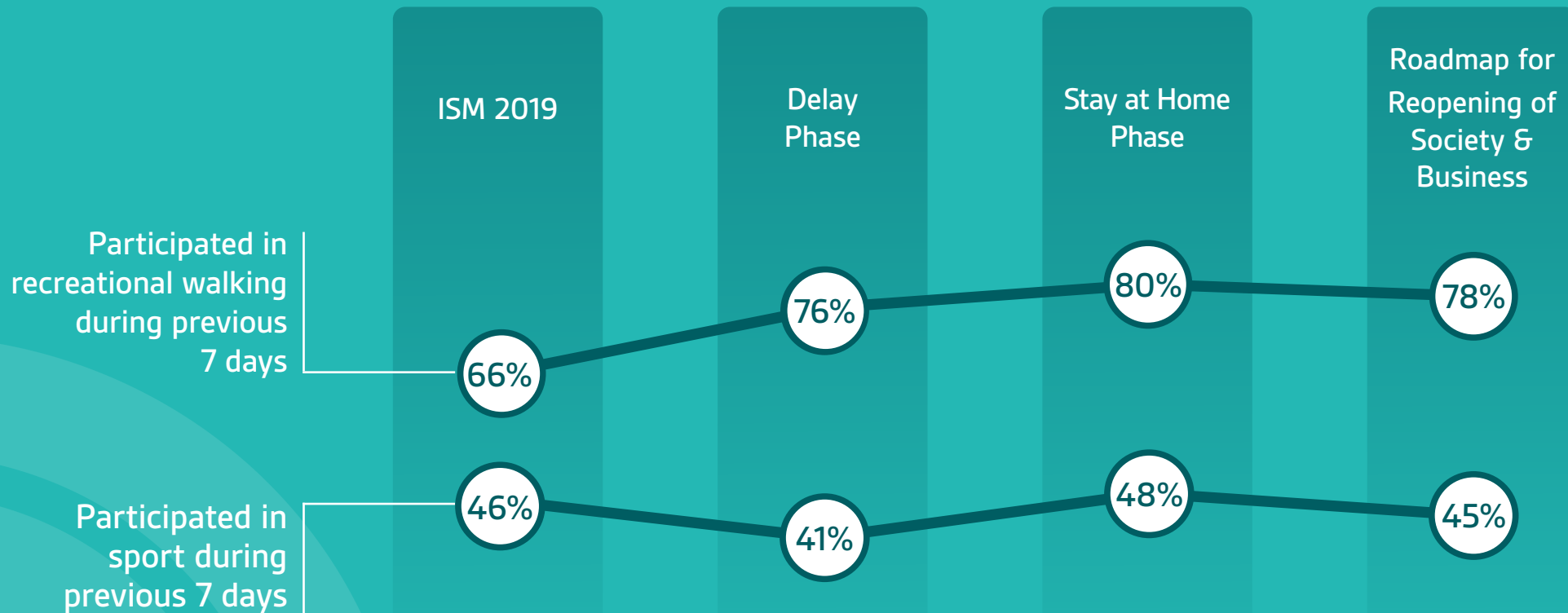
A large majority identify that physical activity was more important during these times. Roughly one in five adults have taken up a new activity with most intending to continue participating in it into the future.



### Introduction

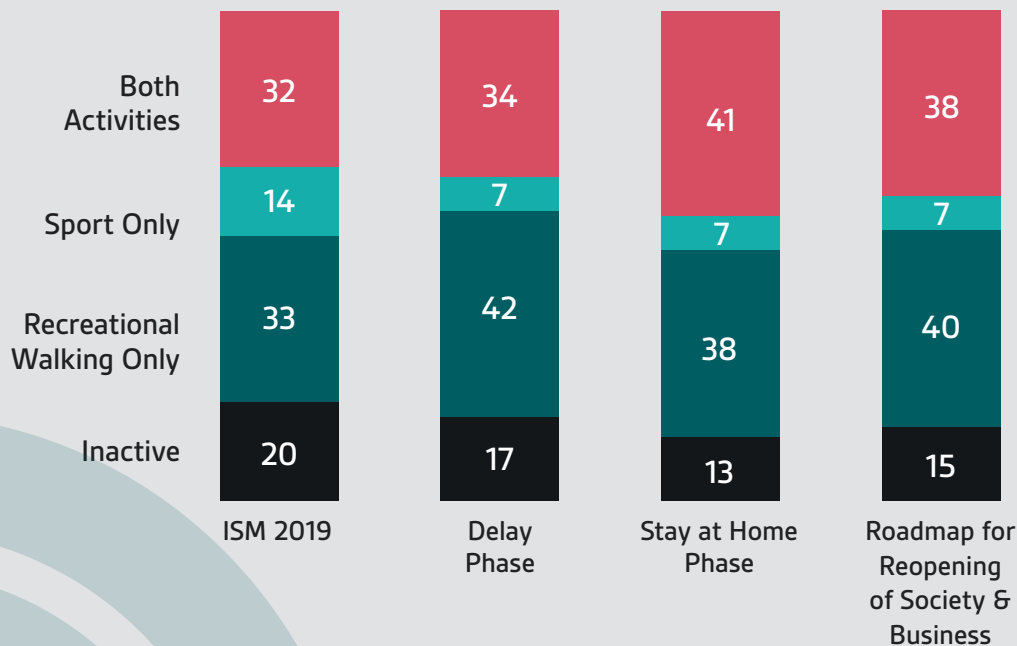
- This report presents the findings of research conducted by Ipsos MRBI on behalf of Sport Ireland to measure participation in sport and recreational walking between March and September 2020.
- The research includes the same questions asked on the Irish Sports Monitor (ISM). Comparisons are made to the results of ISM 2019.
- Full technical details are provided in the Appendix.

The proportion walking for recreation increased during the period of restrictions and remains ahead of 2019 levels



Over the course of the restrictions the proportion that was active increased steadily. However this decreased as restrictions were eased.

### Types of Activity Participated In



Inactive means taking part in no sport or recreational walking. It has the same meaning as sedentary in the National Sports Policy.

### Commentary

- Broadly equal levels of activity among both genders during the reopening phase with 85% of women active, compared with 83% of men.
- A strong social gradient exists in activity levels with 91% of those in the ABC1 socio-economic group active during the reopening period, compared with 81% of those in the C2DE socio-economic group.

# Lower levels of sports participation among women while participation among men is more robust

Participation in sport during previous 7 days

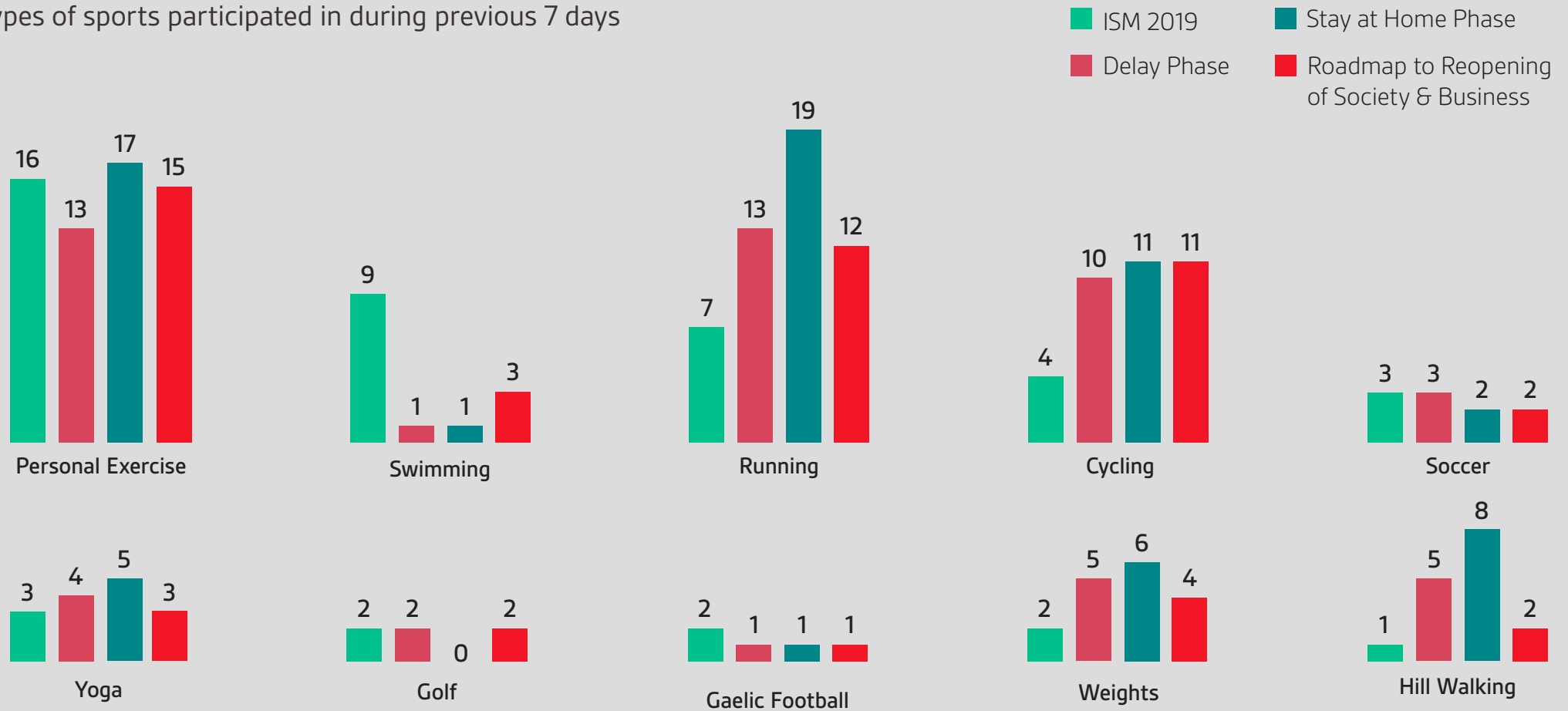
		ISM 2019	Delay Phase	Stay at Home Phase	Roadmap for Reopening of Business & Society
Gender	Men	48	43	48	48
	Women	45	38	49	42
Age Group	15-24	70*	60	75	75
	25-34	57	44	58	56
	35-44	49	50	55	51
	45-54	42	38	41	38
	55+	31	25	30	25
Location	Dublin	50	47	53	49
	Rest of Leinster	46	41	47	43
	Munster	46	34	46	45
	Connacht/Ulster	42	40	46	39
Social Class	ABC1	58	52	59	59
	C2DE	39	34	40	34

\* Figure shown for ISM 2019 is among 16-24 year olds

- The gender gap in sports participation was eliminated during the stay at home phase, however this reemerged during later phases.
- Reduction in participation levels among those aged over 35 during the reopening phase.
- Participation has decreased among the C2DE socio-economic group during the reopening phase, however is more robust among ABC1s.

Compared with ISM 2019 there has been an increase in the numbers cycling and running while there has been a sharp fall in the numbers swimming

Types of sports participated in during previous 7 days



## The strong increases in recreational walking were maintained across most groups during the reopening phase

Participation in recreational walking during previous 7 days

		ISM 2019	Delay Phase	Stay at Home Phase	Roadmap for Reopening of Business & Society
Gender	Men	61	71	77	75
	Women	70	81	85	82
Age Group	15-24	60*	75	86	83
	25-34	68	76	81	79
	35-44	64	81	84	76
	45-54	66	80	81	78
	55+	69	70	73	77
Location	Dublin	62	75	80	80
	Rest of Leinster	66	78	81	78
	Munster	71	75	80	78
	Connacht/Ulster	64	76	77	77
Social Class	ABC1	69	82	86	83
	C2DE	64	74	75	76

\* Figure shown for ISM 2019 is among 16-24 year olds

- While recreational walking has increased across all regions, it is seen most strongly in Dublin.
- Lower levels of recreational walking among those aged 35 to 44, but it remains ahead of 2019.
- As with sports, a persistent (but smaller) social gradient in recreational walking remains unchanged.

## Four out of five say that doing physical activity is now part of their weekly routine

% Reporting that they now have more time to be physically active



77%

Say it is more important to be active during the Coronavirus compared to other times

79%

Say that doing physical activity is now part of their weekly routine



1 in 5 have taken up a new activity during the restrictions with most planning to continue this activity into the future.

19%

Have taken up a new type of physical activity since the Covid-19 restrictions were introduced that they did not participate in previously

53%

Of under 25s have taken up a new physical activity compared with 6% of over 65s.

90%

Of those taking up a new physical activity expect to continue this activity in the future on a regular basis

### Type of activity taken up

Personal exercise  
(i.e. home exercise classes)

28%



Running

22%



Hillwalking

18%



Cycling

13%



Yoga

7%



## Appendix - Technical details

- The initial waves of this study were conducted through the Ipsos MRBI omnibus survey. This involves a sample of 1,000 respondents aged 15+ that are contacted using Random Digit Dialling through mobile and landline phone numbers. At analysis stage, the data is weighted in line with the known profile of the population according to the latest CSO estimates.
- Later waves of the study were conducted through a bespoke telephone survey that incorporated the full range of questions included on the ISM.
- Three core questions were included on every wave: one on recreational walking (did you take part in a recreational walk in the past 7 days); and two on sports participation (did you play sport in the past 7 days and, if so, please list up to 3 sports participated in). The questions used are identical to those used in the Irish Sports Monitor.
- Additional questions on wellbeing, social participation and general activity levels were included on the various waves.
- Fieldwork dates and sample sizes for this research are as follows:

Phase	Fieldwork dates	Sample size
Delay phase	16 - 31 March	1,003
Stay at home phase	1 - 13 April	1,009
	15 - 28 April	1,006
	30 April - 15 May	1,000
Roadmap for Reopening of Society & Business	14 May - 11 September	3,414





SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND

## Impact of Covid-19 Restrictions on Sport and Recreational Walking

