

Leisure, community and civic life

Key facts from the Life Opportunities Survey interim results, 2009/10

The Life Opportunities Survey (LOS) is a new large scale longitudinal survey of disability in Great Britain. Interim results from the first year of the two year baseline survey were published on the 9th December 2010(1) and the information below presents some of the key facts from this report. In addition to these results, presented in boxes are some of the findings from the qualitative research that was commissioned to complement the statistics provided by the LOS(1).

The information below explores barriers to participation experienced by adults(2) in the eight leisure, community and civic life activities shown in Table 1 below.

Participation in community, leisure and civic life

- Adults with impairments(3) were more likely than adults without impairments to experience barriers to participating in all eight leisure and civic activities. In particular adults with impairments were more likely to experience barriers to participating in sport than adults without impairments (72 per cent and 52 per cent respectively), as shown in Table 1 below.

1 See <http://www.odi.gov.uk/disability-statistics-and-research/life-opportunities-survey.php> for more information.

2 Results presented are from adults (those aged 16 and over) who were interviewed as part of the LOS between June 2009 and March 2010.

3 Please refer to the definition of adults with impairments included in Chapter 1 of the LOS Interim Report, 2009/10.

Table 1: Participation restriction prevalence by leisure activity for adults by impairment status, 2009/10

	Percentage of	
	Adults without impairments	Adults with impairments
	%	%
Going on holiday	55	66
Visiting friends	38	48
Spending time with family	33	39
Playing sport	52	72
Charitable or voluntary work	65	69
Going to a museum or place of historic interest	58	68
Going to the theatre, cinema or other arts activity	55	66
Going to the library or archive	43	47

Source: Office for National Statistics

Barriers to taking part in leisure and civic activities

- Among all adults, the most common barriers to not being able to take part in most leisure and civic activities were that they were too expensive or that people were too busy to take part.

Participants in the qualitative research described how their choices over what activities they took part in were dependent on cost and securing means of payment for those activities. For example, one participant with impairments was only able to attend the gym because his brother paid for his membership as a gift. Attending the gym kept him motivated and helped him to improve his muscle strength and as a result is able to walk further and has more energy. His brother has renewed his membership, so he can continue to go to the gym for another year.

- Difficulties with transport were more likely to have been a barrier for adults with impairments compared to adults without impairments. For example having difficulty with transport was a barrier to:
 - going to a museum or place of historic interest for 14 per cent of adults with impairments
 - visiting friends for 13 per cent of adults with impairments
 - going on holiday for 9 per cent of adults with impairments

A lack of public transport was also identified as a key barrier by participants with impairments in the qualitative research. This was particularly regarded as a barrier to taking part in leisure activities in the evening, when participants with impairments were less confident in driving and public transport options were more limited.

Participants with impairments provided examples of other barriers to participating in leisure activities. For example:

- one participant with impairments remarked that the local social club had a wheelchair-accessible toilet for men, but not for women. As a wheelchair user herself, she had stopped attending.
- previous experiences of discrimination or inappropriate attitudes had caused participants with impairments to give up activities or even to stop going out. For example, the carer of a young female participant with impairments explained:

“People put her off sometimes. Because when you see her she looks perfectly normal, so I think people, when they hear her voice...Then she’ll start noticing everyone’s attention to herself, but she can’t understand, she goes, “Everybody’s looking at me.” She probably thinks she’s in a fishbowl. In society people can be quite cruel.”

Choice over use of free time

- Adults with impairments were nearly twice as likely as adults without impairments to say they have little or no choice over how they spent their free time (26 per cent and 15 per cent respectively).

The qualitative research shows that having choice around leisure activities is linked to various factors, including the availability of transport to leisure activities, having access to equipment and assistance to make leisure activities more accessible and to having sufficient financial resources to afford to take part in activities. Where participants with impairments lacked choice, they could find access to leisure activities outside of the home limited, as shown by the quote below.

“I spend about 24-and-a-half hours in the house, except on Thursdays when it’s 23.”