

Taking part with disabled people

**activity
alliance**

disability
inclusion
sport

Non-disabled people's perceptions

May 2019



Taking part with disabled people:

Non-disabled people's perceptions

May 2019

Elliott Johnson

Research and Insight Manager

Based on a survey undertaken by ComRes on behalf of Activity Alliance

Activity Alliance brings its members, partners and disabled people together to make active lives possible. Collectively, we continue to challenge perceptions and change the reality of disability, inclusion and sport.

Activity Alliance is the operating name for the English Federation of Disability Sport.

Foreword

Activity Alliance research has shown that around two thirds of disabled people want to be active in an inclusive setting; that is, with both their disabled and non-disabled peers. Disabled people, however, remain twice as likely to be inactive as non-disabled people. Without understanding the experiences and perceptions of non-disabled people, and the approaches that are most likely to meet their needs, we are unlikely to be able to address this activity gap.

As an organisation, we exist to make active lives possible for disabled people with a vision that disabled people are active for life. But there is another side to this equation: non-disabled people must be able and willing to take part with disabled people to make inclusive activity possible. Activity Alliance's strategy involves challenging perceptions and changing the reality of disability, inclusion and sport. This report is another step toward that goal.

Barry Horne

Chief Executive

Activity Alliance

Contents

1.0 Executive Summary.....	4
1.1 Recommendations	6
2.0 Introduction	8
2.1 Research objectives	9
2.2 Method	9
3.0 Awareness and understanding of disabled people	10
3.1 Experience with disabled people	10
3.2 Perceptions of disabled people’s abilities	12
4.0 Awareness and understanding of inclusive sport and activity	13
4.1 Awareness and understanding of the term and concept of inclusive activity	14
4.2 Perceptions of inclusivity in different types of activity	15
5.0 Perceptions of engaging and participating with disabled people	17
6.0 Perceived risk and benefits of taking part together	23
6.1 Perceived risks	23
6.2 Perceived benefits of taking part together	28
7.0 Non-disabled people’s broader perceptions of disabled people and them being active	30
8.0 Conclusion and recommendations	38
8.1 Recommendations	39

1.0 Executive Summary

This report looks at non-disabled people's experiences and perceptions of taking part in sport and active recreation with their disabled peers. It focuses, in particular, on the concept of inclusive activity, in which disabled and non-disabled people take part together.

Using 'implicit association testing', the survey underpinning the report sought to get beyond 'politically correct' attitudes to understand underlying, deeply-held perceptions. Answers with higher than average response times were categorised as deliberate, more rational responses, and therefore less deeply-held beliefs.

Activity Alliance has undertaken a number of studies as part of a full review of perceptions among those with an influence on disabled people's activity. These have covered disabled people themselves, disabled people's supporters and those who deliver sport and activity.

The online survey was undertaken by ComRes on behalf of Activity Alliance and revealed the following findings:

Limited experience or awareness of participating in inclusive activity has informed beliefs about disabled people's participation that don't necessarily match reality.

- Just one in seven (14%) non-disabled people were aware that they had taken part in sport or physical activity with disabled people and only half (48%) of the sample said they knew a disabled person. This compares with 51% of disabled people who say they currently take part with non-disabled people.
- While taking part in sport or being active was often perceived as easier for disabled people than some more general activities, this varied significantly depending on impairment type.
 - Around three in five felt it would be difficult for someone with visual (60%) or physical (57%) impairments to play sport or be active compared to just one in five (20%) of those with a hearing impairment. This is despite people with hearing impairments being among the least active in reality.

Although the term 'inclusive sport' is not widely known, there is an inherent understanding of its meaning.

- Around two thirds (67%) had no prior knowledge of what the term 'inclusive sport' means.
- However, unprompted definitions suggest an awareness that inclusive sport is 'for everyone', with almost three quarters (74%) covering this or similar sentiments.
- Perceived inclusivity varied by type of sport, with group exercise (74%) – for example fitness classes – and individual sports (64%) – such as running or swimming – seen as most inclusive. Team sports (39%) and one-on-one sports (34%) – like tennis – were perceived as inclusive by a far smaller proportion.

When asked directly, non-disabled people were open to the idea of taking part in sport and active recreation with disabled people.

- Almost three quarters (73%) of non-disabled people were open to taking part in sport or active recreation with disabled people.
- However, the extent to which they would be comfortable with a disabled person joining their gym, sports club or team, varied by impairment type.
 - 85% said they would be comfortable about someone with a hearing impairment joining, compared to 72% for someone with a mental health problem and 69% for someone with a behavioural condition.
 - Respondents who were aware of having taken part with a disabled person were more likely to be comfortable with disabled people joining.

Non-disabled people were concerned that taking part together in inclusive activities may have a negative impact on the wellbeing of the disabled people.

- Respondents were most likely to mention as one of their top-three concerns that non-disabled people may patronise disabled people (53%), disabled people may get hurt (47%) or the non-disabled people may say something inappropriate (37%).
- Respondents who chose these concerns felt they applied more or less depending on the impairment group involved. While they were most concerned about patronising people with a learning disability (39%), people with physical (57%) and visual impairments (51%) were believed to be most likely to get hurt.

The benefits of taking part in inclusive activities were focused on the positive impact upon the non-disabled person themselves.

- By taking part in inclusive activity, respondents were most likely to mention as one of their top-three benefits that they could learn more about disabled people (60%), meet new groups of people they wouldn't normally interact with (57%) and feel more comfortable socialising or being around disabled people in a social environment (44%).

There was evidence of challenging underlying perceptions among non-disabled people, though this may be driven by an appreciation of the discrimination that disabled people face.

- Around a quarter (27%) implicitly associated disabled people with being 'equal to non-disabled people', although this increased to 69% when including those who gave more deliberate responses.
- Respondents believed that people with mental health problems, behavioural conditions, learning disabilities and physical impairments were the groups experiencing the greatest prejudice in the UK today. People with visual and hearing impairments were believed to experience less (though still significant) prejudice.

- When asked about more ‘negative’ statements, respondents were most likely to associate with disabled people those about facing adversity, such as ‘facing challenges’ (95% agreed), ‘lack of opportunities’ (74%), ‘disadvantaged’ (70%), ‘unfairly treated’ (69%) and ‘misrepresented in the media’ (63%)
- In terms of taking part in sport and active recreation, respondents associated disabled people with being ‘talented’ (96%), ‘able to compete’ (95%) and role models (89%). However, they also felt there was a ‘lack of funding’ (72%), ‘not enough opportunities’ (66%) and ‘difficulty accessing’ it (59%).

1.1 Recommendations

Three recommendations have been developed to address the issues raised by the study. They cover a range of issues and require action across and beyond the sector to ensure that non-disabled people are both able and willing to participate alongside their disabled peers.

Recommendation one

Increase public awareness of disabled people, especially in relation to being active. This must aim to challenge perceptions and create a more accurate and diverse picture of active disabled people among their non-disabled peers.

The media and those responsible for communications should be supported via resources such as [Activity Alliance’s Media Guide](#) to produce balanced, realistic and accessible content. This should demonstrate that any sport or activity can be inclusive while remaining competitive and fun. This could build on campaigns like Scope’s [‘End the Awkward’](#) but focus on inclusive activity. All impairment groups, including people with social and behavioural conditions as well as people with mental health problems, must be represented. Activity Alliance has produced videos covering these issues to accompany this report. These are available at its [YouTube channel](#).

Recommendation one in practice

National Disability Sport Organisations, supported by Sport England and Activity Alliance, undertook the Together We Will campaign between July and September 2016. The campaign aimed to support and motivate disabled people along with their friends and family to become healthier, stronger and have fun being active. It showcased a series of ambassador stories from disabled people, about how and where they enjoy being active with friends and family. It also made it easier to find useful information about people and organisations that can support you to be more active.

Together We Will demonstrated how inclusion can be embedded throughout a small-scale campaign. Recognising the diversity of disabled people and their influencers, the promotional messages did not focus solely on disability. It concentrated on the benefits of being active, rather than impairments. Campaign assets were inclusive and accessible to ensure everyone related to the campaign and could access the information.

Recommendation two

Embed inclusivity in many more opportunities so disabled and non-disabled people can be active together.

Experiencing inclusive activity is a key means of changing perceptions among both non-disabled and disabled people. It is also important to note that the vast majority of activity can be delivered inclusively. [Activity Alliance's 10 Principles](#) should be employed to create inclusive planning and delivery of sport and active recreation. This must include non-disabled people who might not otherwise feel comfortable in a traditional sport context. Making inclusivity the default among those delivering activity is crucial, as highlighted in Activity Alliance's '[Delivering activity to disabled people: The workforce perception gap](#)' report.

Recommendation two in practice

[Activity Alliance's Inclusive Activity Programme](#) is funded by Sport England National Lottery investment and delivered in partnership with UK Coaching. It will provide training for 8,500 people who deliver activity, encouraging an inclusive, person-centred approach.

In February 2019, 13 university students from Loughborough University's Coach and Volunteer Academy attended an Inclusive Activity Programme workshop, hosted by Leicester-Shire and Rutland Sport. The University arranged the workshop to support the students' personal development and learning.

UK Coaching tutor and former GB Paralympic swimmer, Martin Mansell guided students through the key inclusion principles. They learnt how to adapt sports and activities using the STEP Tool and Activity Inclusion Model, so disabled and non-disabled people can take part together. They were also introduced to the concept of 'reverse integration' by playing sitting volleyball and boccia.

Laura, a coach and PGCE student, signed up to the workshop because she wanted to increase her knowledge and become more confident in making sessions inclusive for all participants. The main learning points she took away were how to adapt activities for different groups and that disability specific sports, such as wheelchair basketball, can be a great activity for everyone.

Laura said the programme helped her 'to realise that separate sessions are not needed, just the adaptation of sessions to allow everyone to access it.' Laura now plans to use sitting volleyball as part of her sessions for both disabled and non-disabled participants because it enables everyone to take part together and builds on the fundamental skills of the game.

Recommendation three

Celebrate and share experiences of inclusive activity with representation for all impairment groups.

The Get Out Get Active programme is built on the concept of inclusive activity and involves disabled and non-disabled participants, volunteers and peer mentors supporting each other

to be active. Experiences are celebrated via stories available on the [Get Out Get Active website](#), with learning between everyone involved encouraged.

Recommendation three in practice

Launched in 2016 and funded by Spirit of 2012, the Get Out Get Active (GOGA) programme is providing opportunities to engage the UK's very least active disabled and non-disabled people in fun and inclusive activities together. GOGA is delivered in 18 localities across the UK and is supported by a network of national partners. It will reach 16,500 individual participants, at least 40% of whom will remain active. All activities are underpinned by Activity Alliance's 10 Principles.

Bradford's GOGA organiser spoke to women in the local community and realised that women-only sessions would help to remove many barriers to participation, particularly among those from a black, Asian, and minority ethnic background. The female fitness sessions are an opportunity for women of all ages and abilities to take part in a variety of activities at their own pace, while also making new friends. Most of the women who attend sessions do not have other similar opportunities and would be inactive without them. The group includes a mixture of disabled and non-disabled women, with all activities suitable for everyone.

Activity leaders are from the local community and promote to local groups who may attend non-physical activity related sessions. Facebook and flyers are used to advertise them. Since promoting the session and introducing the inclusive element, numbers have risen from 15 to around 50 women per week.

2.0 Introduction

Previous Activity Alliance research¹ has shown that almost two thirds (64%) of disabled people would prefer to take part in sport or active recreation alongside both disabled and non-disabled people, referred to as 'inclusive activity'. But in order to cater for this demand, similar interest must be encouraged and secured among their non-disabled peers, with inclusivity embedded in all sessions.

Since 2012, Activity Alliance has undertaken a series of research projects that have contributed to a thorough understanding of how to enable disabled people be active. This approach has resulted in both underpinning insight and a series of resources that are now being used to help the sport and active recreation sector to be more inclusive.

Other studies in the series have investigated the views and experiences of disabled people themselves, disabled people's supporters and those who deliver activity. The aim of this report is to equip the sector with an understanding of non-disabled people's real experiences and attitudes toward participating with disabled people.

¹ English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS), Disabled People's Lifestyle Survey (2013), 73, bit.ly/2uURcSn.



2.1 Research objectives

1. To understand non-disabled people's perceptions of disabled people and inclusive activity.
2. To identify the drivers and barriers to participating in inclusive activity among non-disabled people.
3. To compare non-disabled people's attitudes of disabled people taking part in sport compared to other areas of life.

2.2 Method

Activity Alliance commissioned ComRes to undertake an online survey with 2,066 non-disabled people aged 18+ across England between 24th February and 1st March 2016. It explored the following:

- What is non-disabled people's understanding of the term inclusive sport?
- How open are non-disabled people to taking part in sport and active recreation with disabled people, and how does this compare with other life activities?
- How easy or difficult do non-disabled people perceive taking part in sport and active recreation is for disabled people? How does this compare with other areas of life?
- Which types of activities are believed to be most appropriate for inclusivity?
- What are the underlying concerns or potential benefits in taking part in sport and active recreation with disabled people?

- Do these attitudes apply broadly to all disabled people or differ for particular impairment groups?

As this is a sensitive subject, and as it was crucial that accurate, truthful answers were obtained, a method that examines ‘implicit associations’ was also employed.

Analysis of speed and response patterns where people agreed to a series of statements indicates whether strong, instinctive associations are present. Answers with higher than average response times were categorised as deliberate, more rational responses, and therefore less deeply held beliefs.

Researchers have used these methods before to investigate implicitly held views about disabled people in other areas, including recruitment bias.² Implicit views are those that people are unwilling or unable to state when asked outright. They are deeply-held perceptions that they may be unaware of consciously, but can influence how they react to situations. We used this method to provide a more complete picture of non-disabled people’s perceptions of disabled people and how that relates to sport and active recreation.

3.0 Awareness and understanding of disabled people

One in five (20%), some 10.9 million people,³ people in England are disabled, meaning that they have a long-term condition, impairment or illness that negatively affects their ability to do normal daily activities. It is likely that almost everyone in the country has a relatively close relationship with at least one disabled person. This survey, however, revealed that there is a substantial lack of awareness of even knowing a disabled person, let alone taking part together in sport or active recreation.

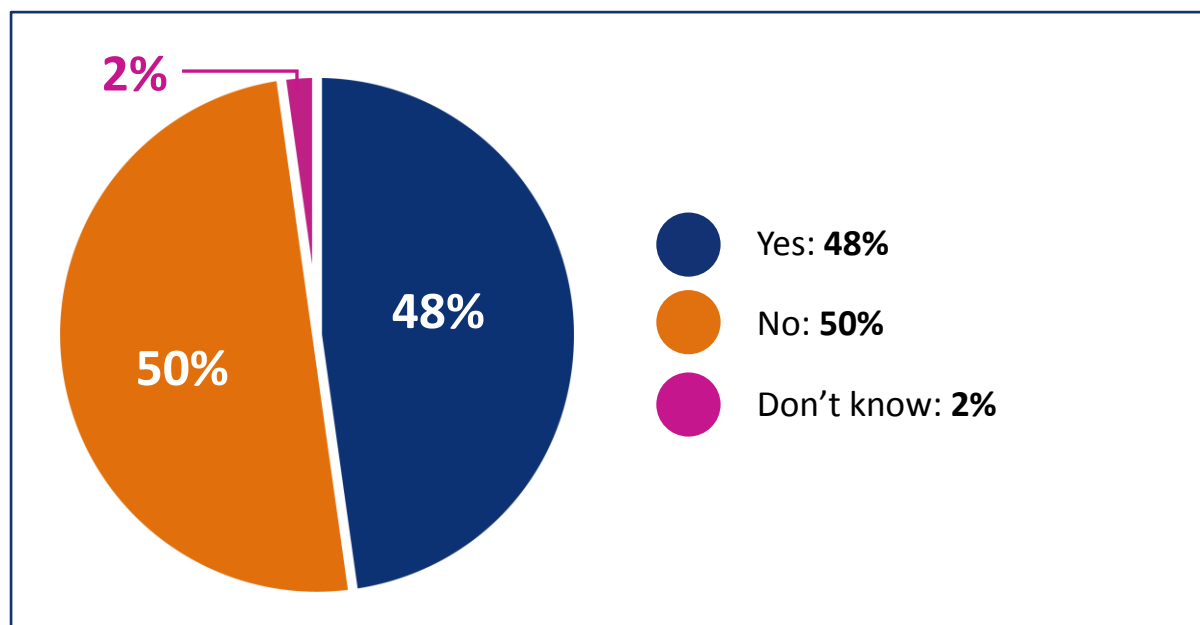
3.1 Experience with disabled people

More than half (52%) of non-disabled respondents to the survey said they either do not know a disabled person or aren’t sure. As many impairments are invisible, one possible theory behind this high figure is that respondents had a stereotypical perception of disabled people as having a visible, physical impairment, for example a wheelchair user.

² Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion, Disability: A Research Study on Unconscious Bias (2014), bit.ly/2AvHc4N.

³ Department for Work and Pensions, Family Resources Survey: financial year 2017/18, Disability Data Tables (2018), Table 4.4, bit.ly/2HXBe12.

Figure 3.1: Percentage of respondents by whether or not they know someone who is disabled⁴

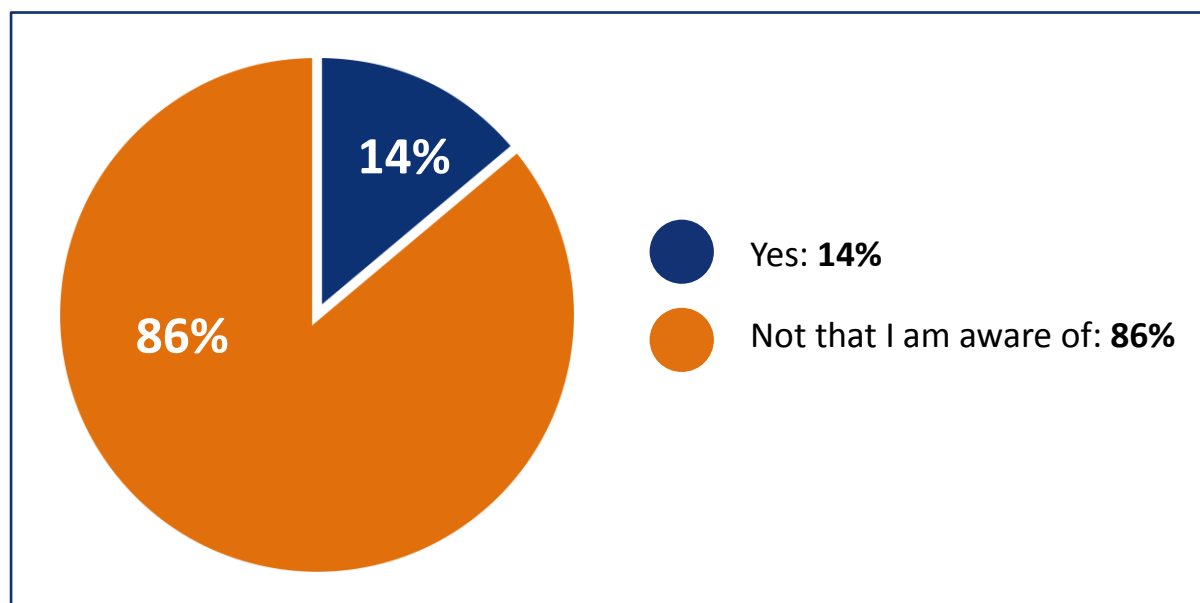


This perceived lack of experience of interacting with disabled people is even more apparent within the context of sport and active recreation. Only around one in seven (14%) respondents said they had taken part alongside a disabled person. In comparison, previous Activity Alliance research showed that around half (51%) of disabled people currently take part with non-disabled people.⁵ The level of awareness among non-disabled people may primarily be the result of stereotypical ideas of what a disabled person looks like. This highlights a key challenge in ensuring that non-disabled people have an accurate perception of inclusive activity and the desire to take part in future.

⁴ Q1: Do you know anyone who is disabled? (by disabled we mean someone who has a condition which limits their ability to conduct day to day tasks). Base: All respondents (n=2,065).

⁵ English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS), Disabled People's Lifestyle Survey (2013), 73.

Figure 3.2: Percentage of respondents by whether or not they have taken part in sport or physical activity alongside a disabled person⁶



3.2 Perceptions of disabled people's abilities

Respondents were asked to estimate how easy or difficult it would be for disabled people with a range of impairments to do day-to-day and leisure activities. These included driving a car, cooking for themselves, having a full time job, attending a sporting event as a spectator or playing sport and being active. Table 3.1 shows the results, with orange shading highlighting areas where respondents were more likely to say something was difficult than easy.

Responses varied substantially between impairment types. Overall, it was felt that people with visual impairments would be less likely to find tasks easy, with people with hearing impairments much more likely.

Interestingly, respondents generally felt it would be easier for disabled people with most impairment types to play sport or be active than to drive a car or have a full time job. Only around a third of respondents thought people with a visual (33%) or physical (34%) impairment would find taking part in sport or being active easy compared to around three quarters (73%) in relation to people with a hearing impairment.

In reality, Sport England's Active Lives Survey⁷ indicates that people who have a hearing impairment are the most likely of all impairment groups to be inactive.

⁶ Q14: Have you ever taken part in sport or physical activity alongside a disabled person? Base: All respondents (n=2,066).

⁷ Sport England, Active Lives Adult Survey: May 2017/18 data, activelives.sportengland.org.

Table 3.1: Percentage of respondents by whether they think people with different impairments find tasks easy⁸

	Play sport or be active	Attend a sporting event as a spectator	Drive a car	Cook for themselves	Have a full time job
Hearing impairment	73%	77%	52%	86%	60%
Learning disability	61%	75%	22%	44%	24%
Mental health problems	58%	67%	35%	52%	25%
Behavioural conditions	54%	58%	24%	46%	21%
Physical impairment	34%	64%	28%	35%	42%
Visual impairment	33%	49%	4%	22%	32%

It is clear that in relation to taking part in sport or activity, non-disabled people’s expectations do not accurately reflect reality.

4.0 Awareness and understanding of inclusive sport and activity

‘Inclusive activity’ is a term commonly used by the sport and active recreation sector to describe an environment in which disabled and non-disabled people take part together. However, Activity Alliance research⁹ has shown that even those who deliver activity do not necessarily have a strong understanding of what the term means, if they have heard of it at all. For this group, age and ability were more likely to be raised than disability.¹⁰ This study sought to examine non-disabled people’s understanding of the term and the concept.

⁸ Q7-Q11: How easy or difficult do you think it is for someone with each of the following conditions to... Base: All respondents (n=2,066).

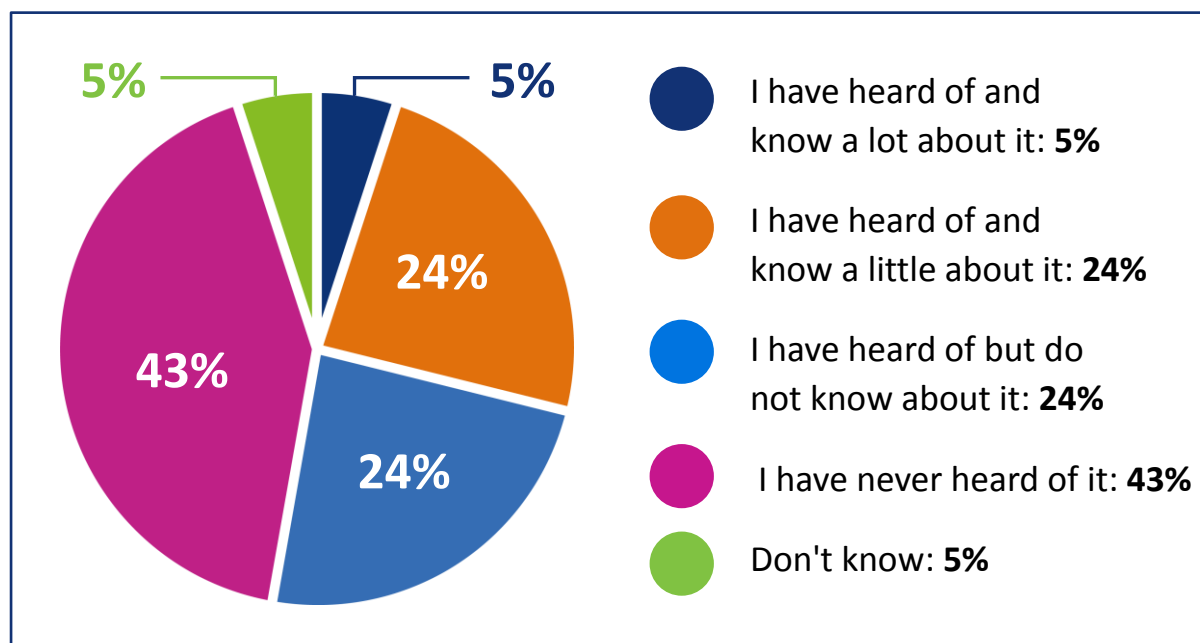
⁹ Activity Alliance, Delivering to disabled people: The workforce perception gap (2018), bit.ly/2DXOb8R.

¹⁰ Activity Alliance, Delivering to disabled people: The workforce perception gap (2018), p.17.

4.1 Awareness and understanding of the term and concept of inclusive activity

Awareness of the concept of inclusive activity was limited among respondents, with almost a third (29%) having heard the term, including 5% who knew a lot about it and 24% who knew a little. Around two thirds (67%) had no prior knowledge of the concept of inclusive activity, including 43% who had never heard of the term.

Figure 4.1: Percentage of respondents by awareness and knowledge of inclusive activity¹¹

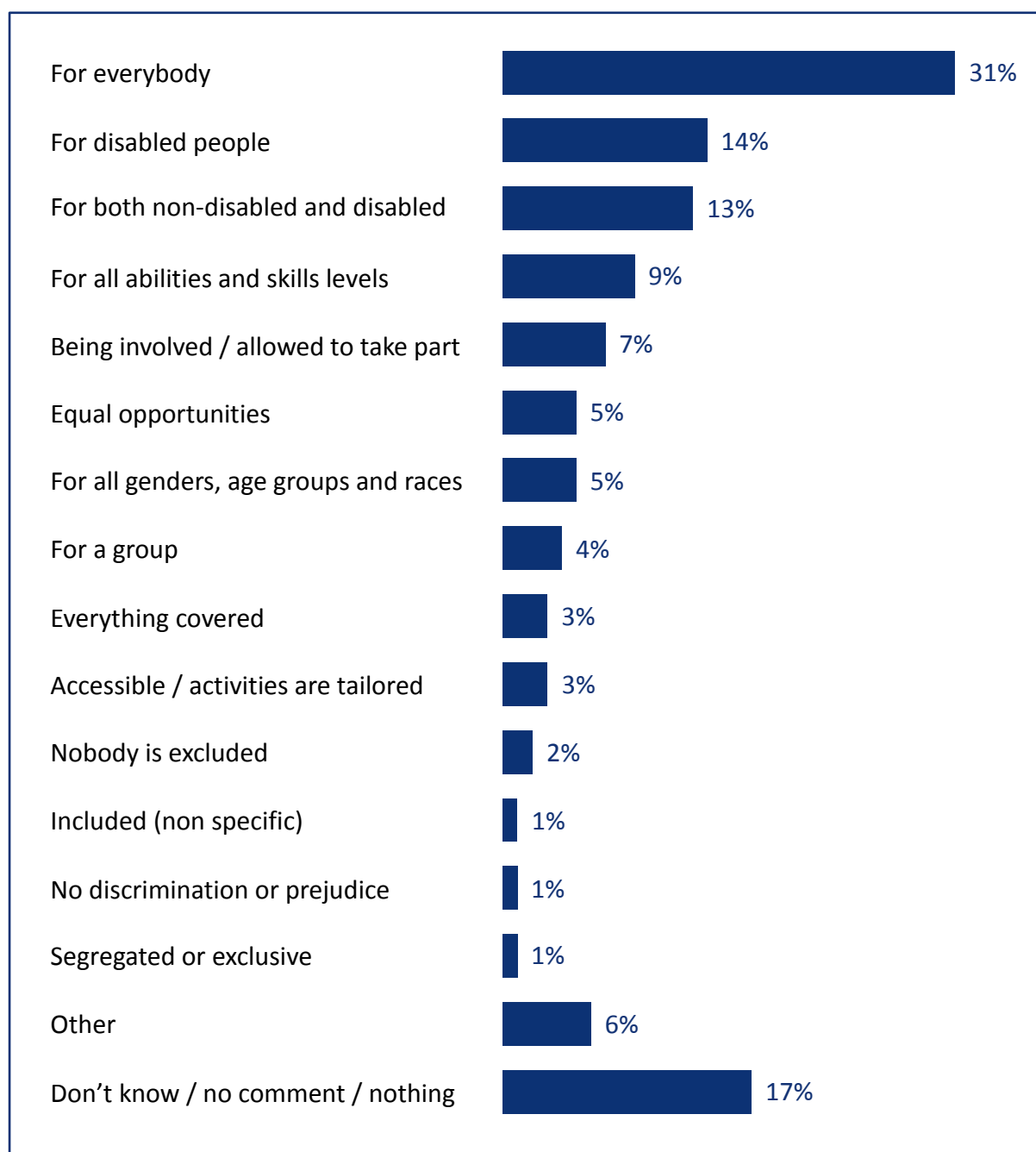


When asked to provide an open response, respondents were most likely to say that they think 'inclusive' in a sporting context refers to an activity for everybody, or one in which everyone can take part in and is welcome (31%). This was cited by twice as many respondents as the next most popular description, with only around one in seven saying it means disabled people can take part (14%), or that both non-disabled and disabled people can take part together (13%).

Overall, a large majority of non-disabled adults felt (in one way or another) that inclusive sport is for everyone, indicating a general understanding of the term, if not a specific focus on disability.

¹¹ Q12: Have you ever heard the term 'inclusive' used when talking about sport or physical activity? For example an inclusive football session or an inclusive exercise class? Base: All respondents (n=2,065).

Figure 4.2: Percentage of respondents by what they think 'inclusive sport' means¹²



4.2 Perceptions of inclusivity in different types of activity

Respondents felt some types of activity are more inclusive than others. Almost three quarters (74%) believed group exercise to be fairly or very inclusive while almost two-thirds (64%) said the same of individual sports or exercise like swimming or running. However, team (39%) and one-on-one (34%) sports were much less likely to be seen as inclusive.

¹² Q13: What do you think inclusive means in this context [sport]? Base: All respondents (n=2,066)

Figure 4.3: Percentage of respondents by how inclusive or not they believe each type of sport or active recreation to be¹³

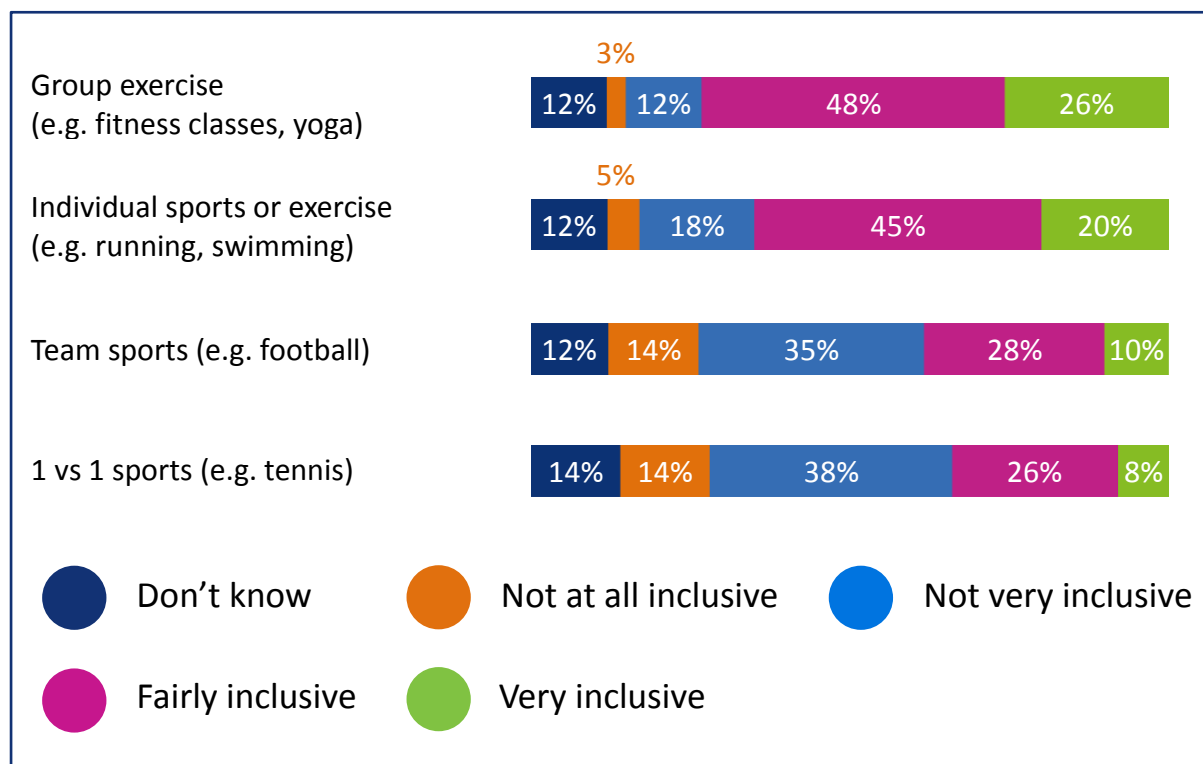
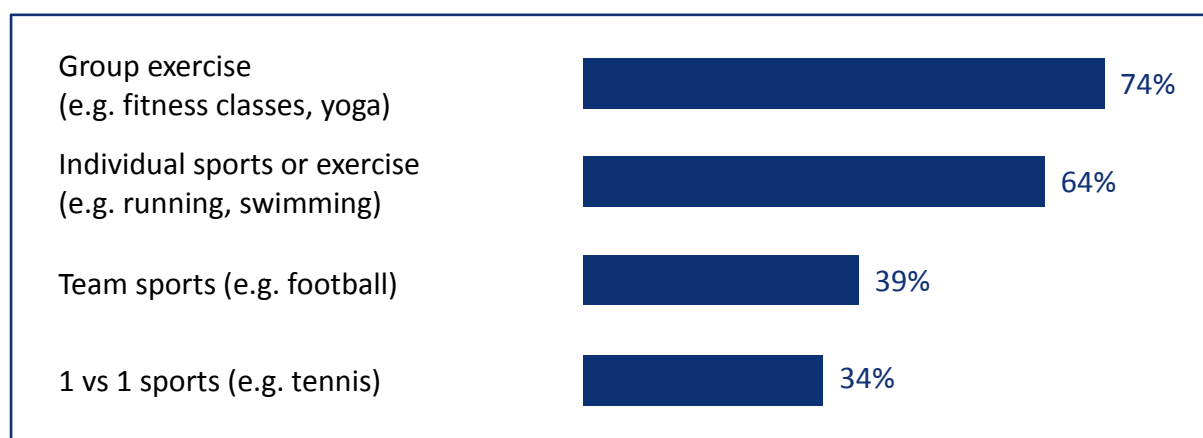


Figure 4.4: Percentage of respondents who see each type of sport and active recreation as fairly or very inclusive



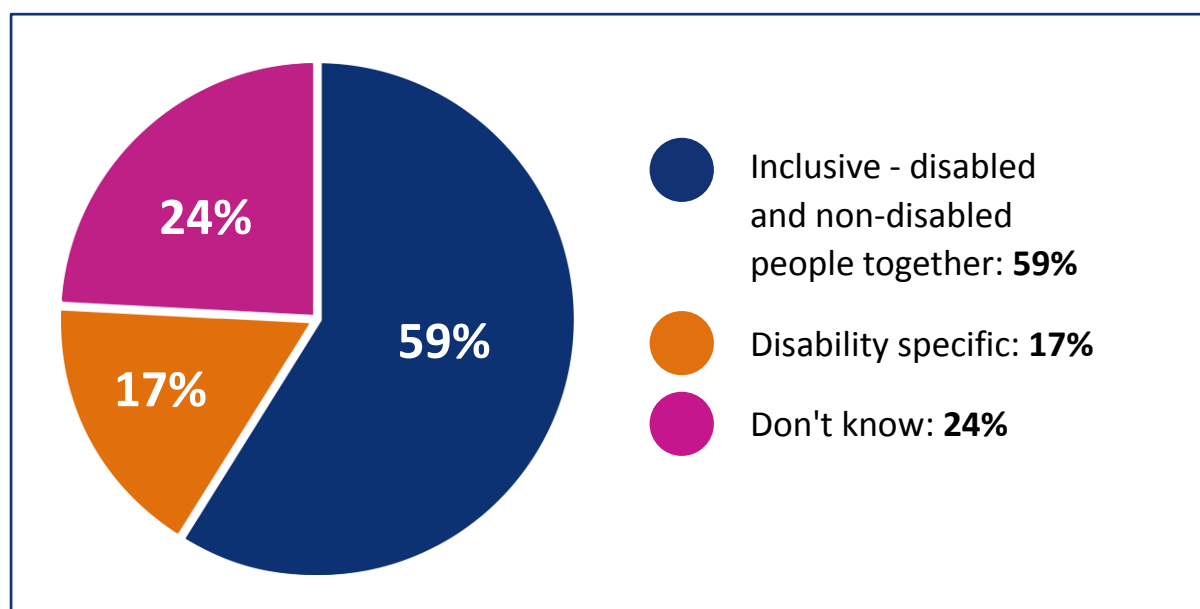
¹³ Q17: How inclusive, or otherwise, do you think the following types of sports or activities are? Base: All respondents (n=2,066).

These findings are a sign that the term ‘inclusive activity’ needs to be promoted more effectively and also that providers should complement any use of the term with other elements to make clear what is being offered. Activity Alliance’s 10 Principles provide advice and guidance on how to achieve this.

5.0 Perceptions of engaging and participating with disabled people

When asked, three in five (59%) non-disabled respondents felt it would be better for disabled people to take part in sport alongside both disabled and non-disabled people. Fewer than one in five (17%) believed disabled people would be better served by taking part with disabled people only. This closely mirrors the 64% of disabled people who said they would prefer taking part in inclusive activity.¹⁴

Figure 5.1: Percentage of respondents by whether they believe inclusive or disability-specific sport is better for disabled people¹⁵

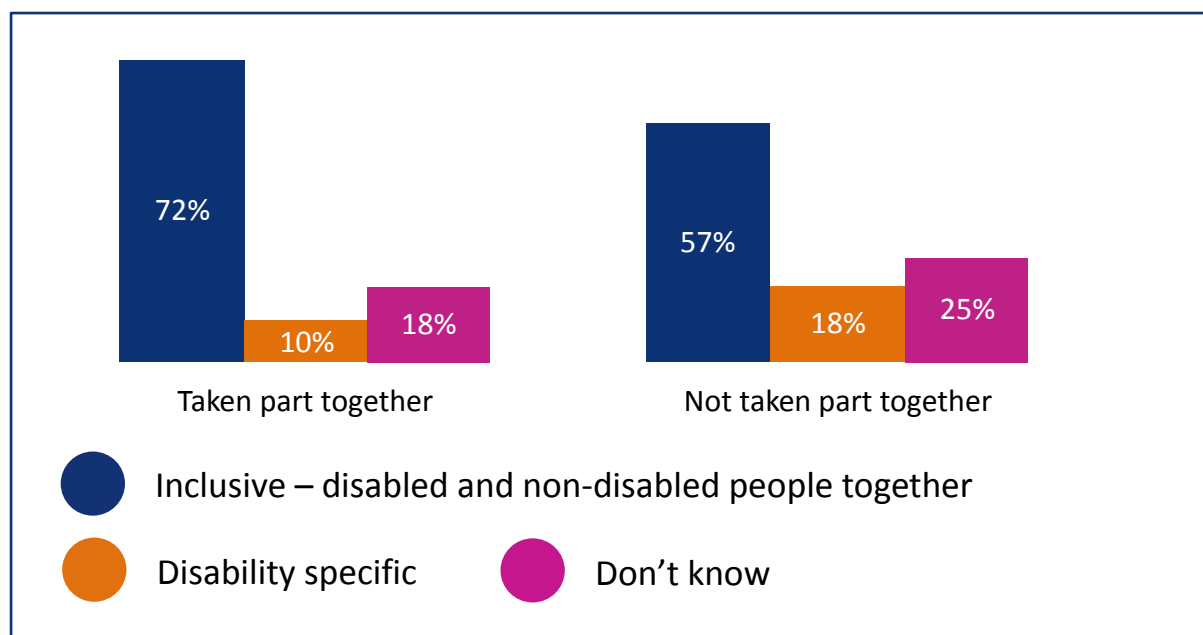


Respondents who said they had taken part in sport or active recreation with disabled people were more likely than those who didn’t (72% vs 57%) to believe that an inclusive setting is better for disabled people. This reflects findings from Activity Alliance’s study into people who deliver sport and active recreation, which showed that those who had delivered to disabled people (73%) were much more likely than those who hadn’t (49%) to believe that disabled people would be best served by inclusive sessions.

¹⁴ English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS), Disabled People’s Lifestyle Survey (2013), 73.

¹⁵ Q16: Generally speaking, do you think it is better for disabled people to participate in sports with non-disabled people, or should the only participate with other disabled people? Base: All respondents (n=2,066).

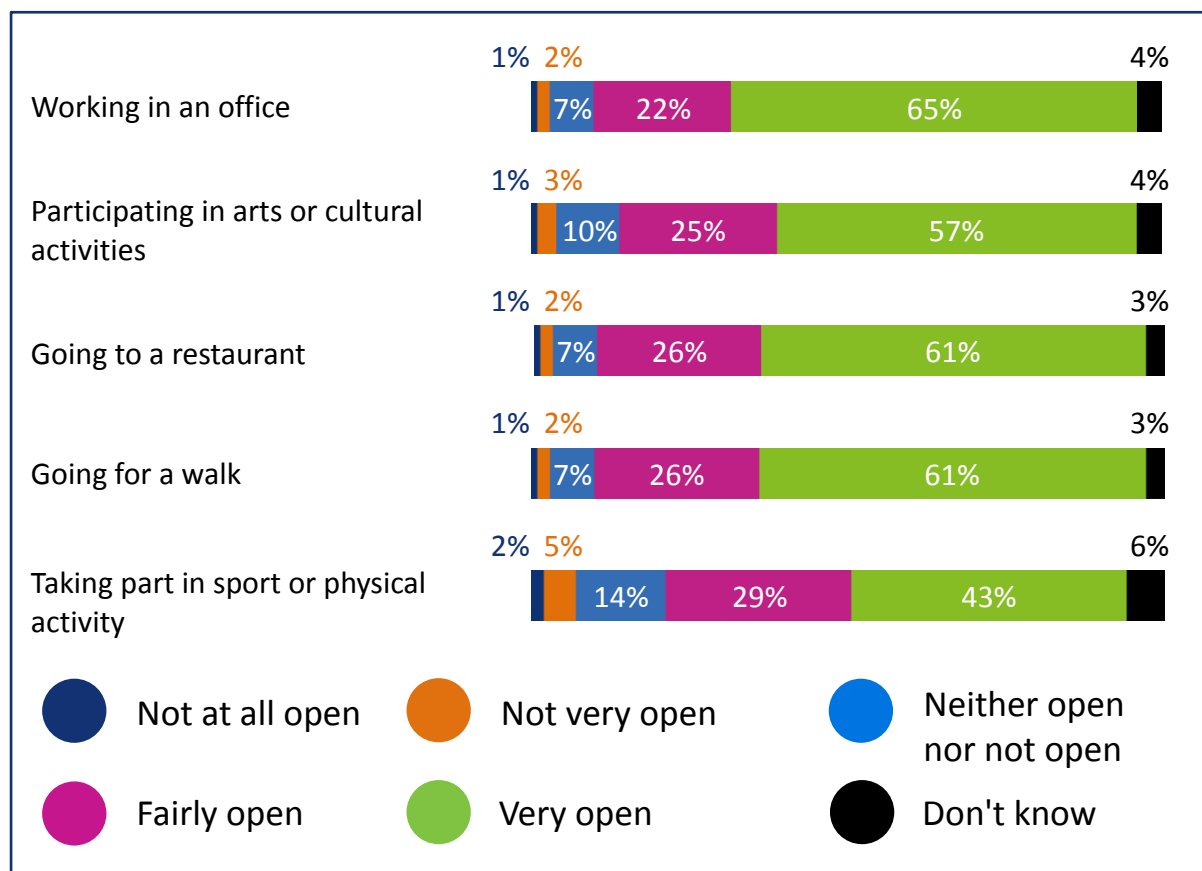
Figure 5.2: Percentage of respondents by whether or not they have taken part with disabled people and if they believe inclusive or disability-specific sport is better for disabled people¹⁶



Almost three quarters (73%) of respondents said they would be open to taking part in sport and active recreation with disabled people. Although this is a positive finding, it should be noted that non-disabled people were substantially less open to taking part in sport and physical activity with disabled people compared to other options. Arts or cultural activities were the next lowest at 82%.

¹⁶ Q16: Generally speaking, do you think it is better for disabled people to participate in sports with non-disabled people, or should the only participate with other disabled people?
Base: All respondents (n=2,066)

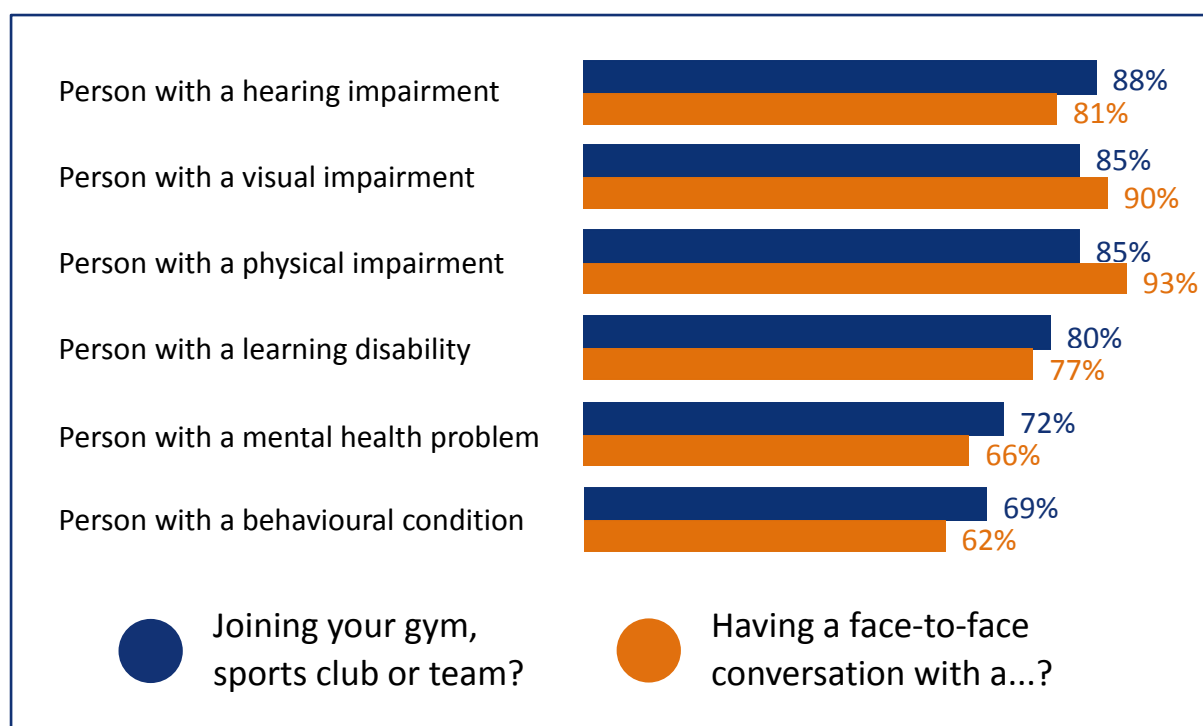
Figure 5.3: Percentage of respondents by how open or not they are towards taking part with disabled people in sport or active recreation and other activities¹⁷



A large majority of respondents generally said that they would be comfortable with a disabled person joining their club, gym or team. However, this was influenced heavily by impairment type. A much lower proportion were comfortable with people with behavioural conditions (69%) or mental health problems (72%) joining their gym, sports club or team compared to a person with a hearing (88%) or visual (85%) impairment.

¹⁷ Q15: How open, if at all, are you to taking part in each of the following with a disabled person? Base: All respondents (n=2,066)

Figure 5.4: Percentage of respondents who would be comfortable with having a conversation with a person with each type of impairment or them joining a gym, sports club or team¹⁸



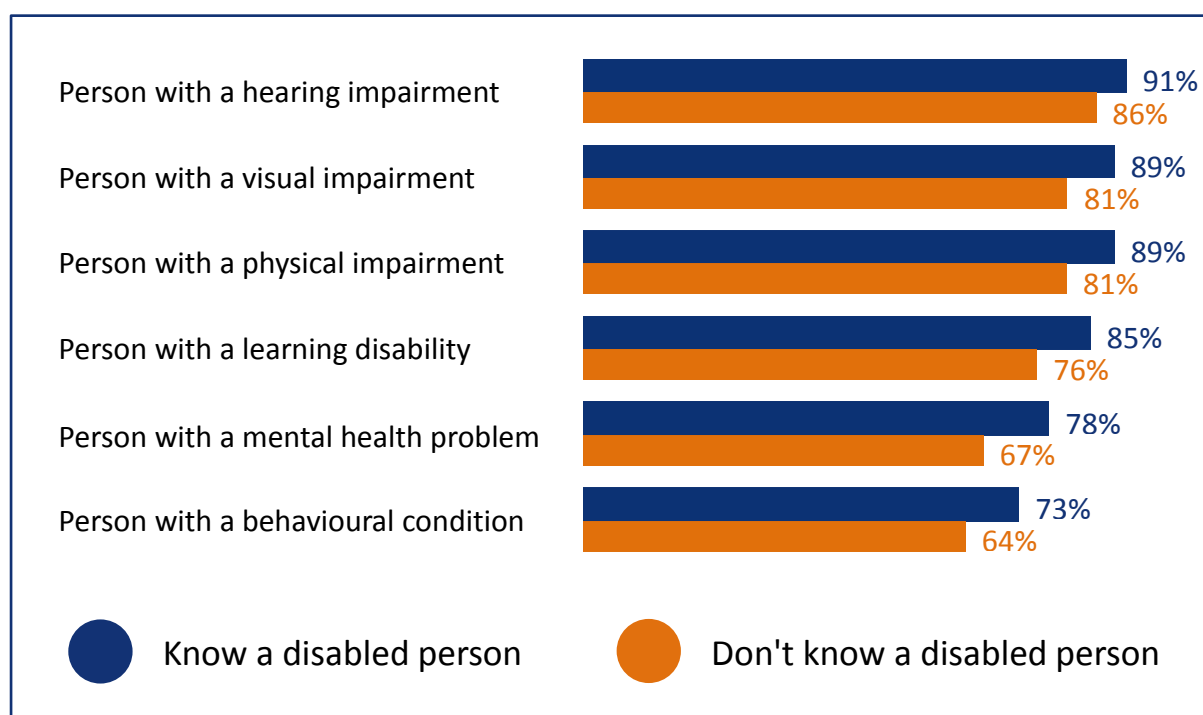
Respondents who said they know a disabled person and those who had taken part with disabled people were more likely to express comfort with a disabled person joining their gym, sports club or team. For those who knew a disabled person compared with those who did not, the percentage gap ranged from 5% points (91% vs 86%) in relation to people with a hearing impairment, to 11% points (78% vs 67%) with regard to people with a mental health problem.

For those who had taken part together compared to those who had not, the gap ranged from 6% points (90% vs 84%) in relation to people with a visual or physical impairment to 16% points (83% vs 67%) with regard to people with a behavioural condition.

Both groups who knew and had taken part with disabled people and those who had not remained least likely to be comfortable with people with behavioural conditions and mental health problems to joining their gym, sports club or team.

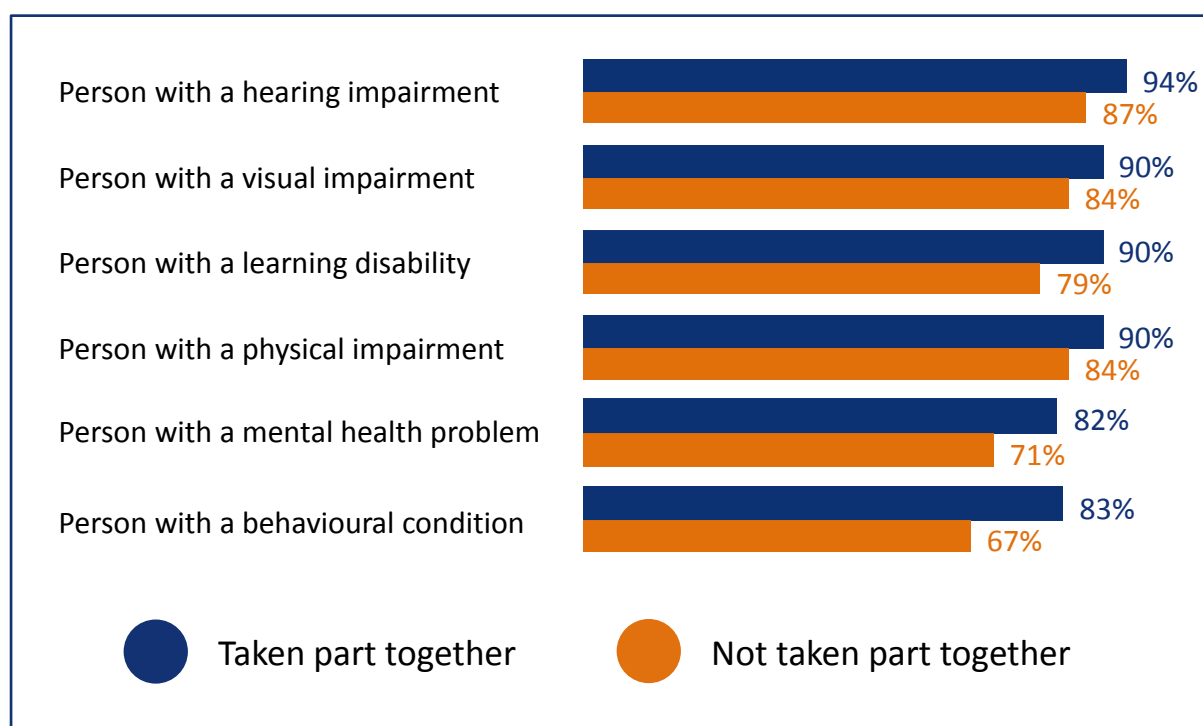
¹⁸ Q3: How comfortable or uncomfortable would you be having a face-to-face conversation with a...? Base: All respondents (n=2,066); Q4: How comfortable or uncomfortable would you be having each of the following join your gym, sports club, or team? Base: All respondents (n=2,066)

Figure 5.5: Percentage of respondents who would be comfortable with someone with each impairment type joining a gym, sports club or team by whether or not they know a disabled person¹⁹



¹⁹ Q3: How comfortable or uncomfortable would you be having a face-to-face conversation with a...? Base: All respondents (n=2,066); Q4: How comfortable or uncomfortable would you be having each of the following join your gym, sports club, or team? Base: All respondents (n=2,066); These questions and scenarios were designed by drawing upon other questions asked about perceptions towards disabled people from other previous social attitude surveys.

Figure 5.6: Percentage of respondents who would be comfortable with someone with each impairment type joining a gym, sports club or team by whether or not they have taken part in inclusive activity



Results in this survey are comparable with those recorded in the 2017 British Social Attitudes Survey,²⁰ which found that 16% of respondents thought of disabled people with ‘discomfort or awkwardness’. However, a 2014 survey from Scope suggested much greater levels may be present, with 67% stating they were uncomfortable talking to a disabled person.²¹

Overall, responses suggest that non-disabled people are, at least outwardly, willing to take part in an inclusive setting. This is more likely to be the case where they have experience of having done so previously, or even just personal experience of knowing a disabled person. Given the lower levels of comfort expressed about people with mental health problems and behavioural conditions, it is important to consider whether this is the result of these being ‘hidden’ or non-visible impairments. This may mean that even those who have taken part with disabled people are less likely to have awareness of having done so with those groups.

²⁰ Scope, The disability perception gap (2018), p.24, bit.ly/2FYPgwL.

²¹ Scope, Current attitudes toward disabled people (2014), p.3.

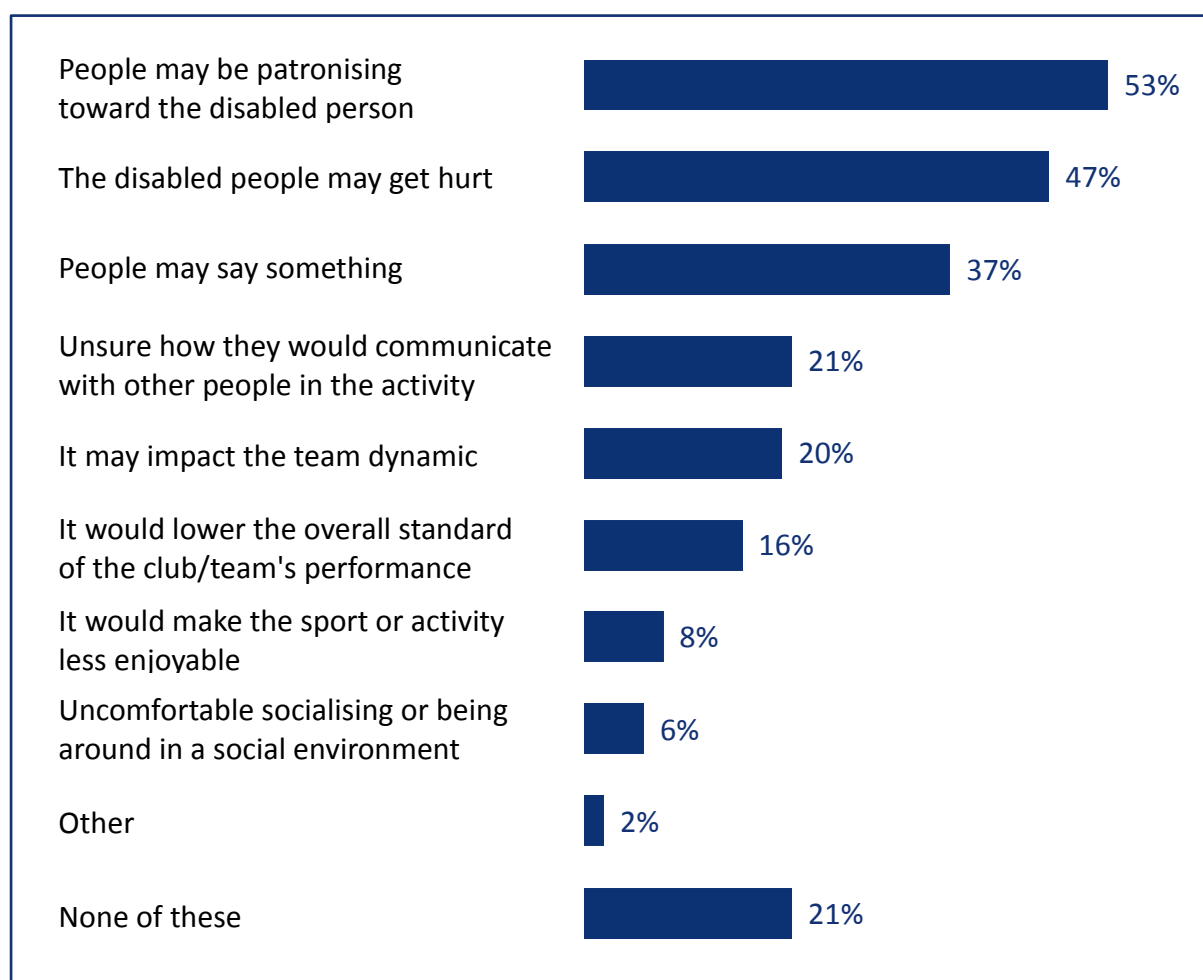
6.0 Perceived risk and benefits of taking part together

Non-disabled respondents were asked about the potential risks and benefits they anticipated in disabled and non-disabled people taking part in sport and active recreation together.

6.1 Perceived risks

In terms of concerns and risks, more than half of respondents said that one of their top three concerns was that people may patronise disabled people (53%) and almost half (47%) were concerned disabled people would get hurt. Almost two in five (37%) were worried that they might say something inappropriate.

Figure 6.1: Percentage of respondents who chose each concern as one of their top three about a disabled person taking part in sport or active recreation with non-disabled people²²



²² Q18: Which of the following concerns, if any, would you have about a disabled person taking part in an inclusive sport or activity with non-disabled people? Base: All respondents (n=2,066)

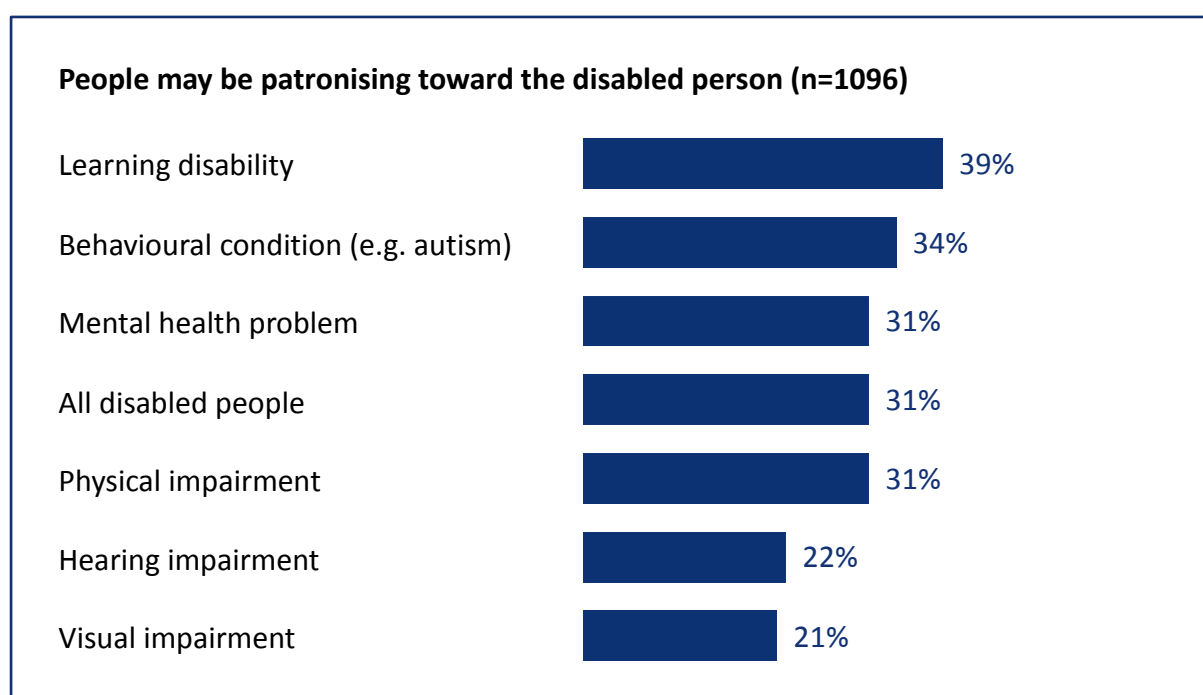
Respondents with concerns were asked whether they applied to situations involving people with a specific impairment type or to any disabled people.

Almost a third (31%) who were concerned that non-disabled people may be patronising to disabled people or say something inappropriate felt it would apply to a situation involving people with any type of impairment.

For most statements, however, respondents felt that concerns were much more likely to apply to a situation involving people with particular impairment types. For example, they were most likely to be concerned that people with physical (57%) or visual (51%) impairment could get hurt or that people with these impairments (57% and 51%) would lower the overall standard of the club or team's performance.

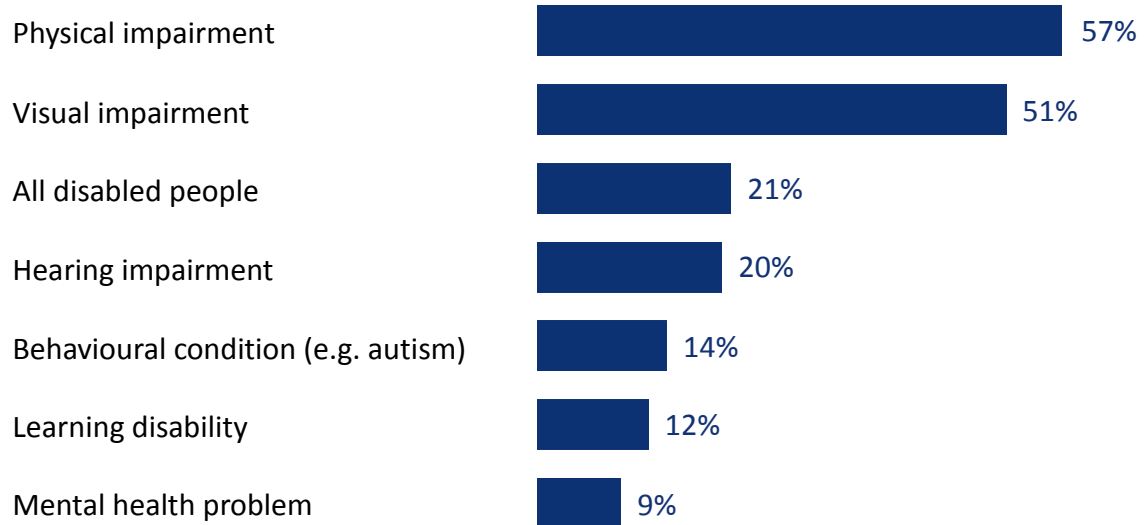
Respondents were more likely to have a concern about being uncomfortable socialising with people with a behavioural condition (41%), mental health problem (39%) or learning disability (36%). Meanwhile, respondents were much more likely to state they would be unsure how they would communicate with a person with a hearing impairment (53%) compared to a person with a visual impairment (30%).

Figure 6.2 (a-h): Percentage of respondents who selected the following as one of their top three had each concerns about taking part with disabled people, by which impairment groups they apply to²³

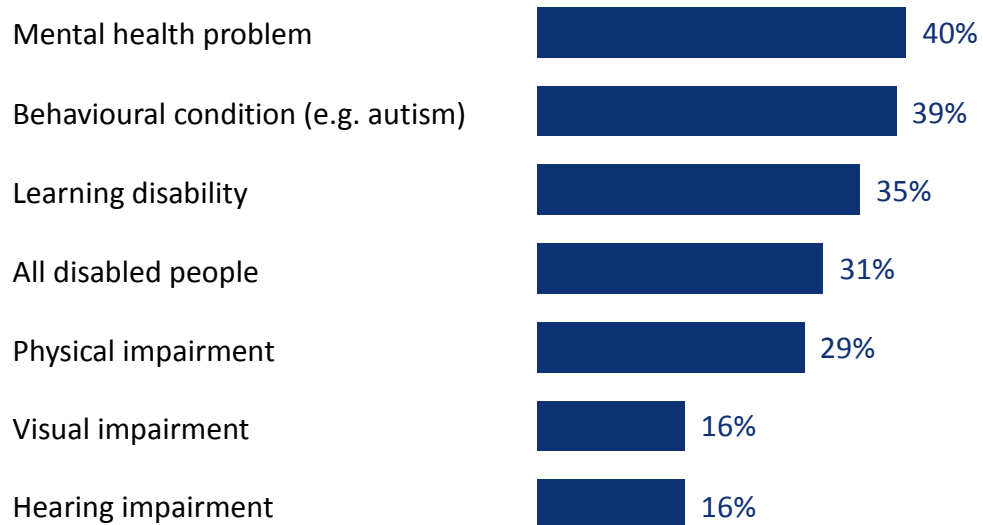


²³ Q19: You said that you would have some concerns about a disabled person taking part in an inclusive sport or activity with non-disabled people. For each of the concerns, please select which, if any, of the following disability impairment groups your concerns would apply to. Base: All mentioning aspect as a top three concern (unweighted)

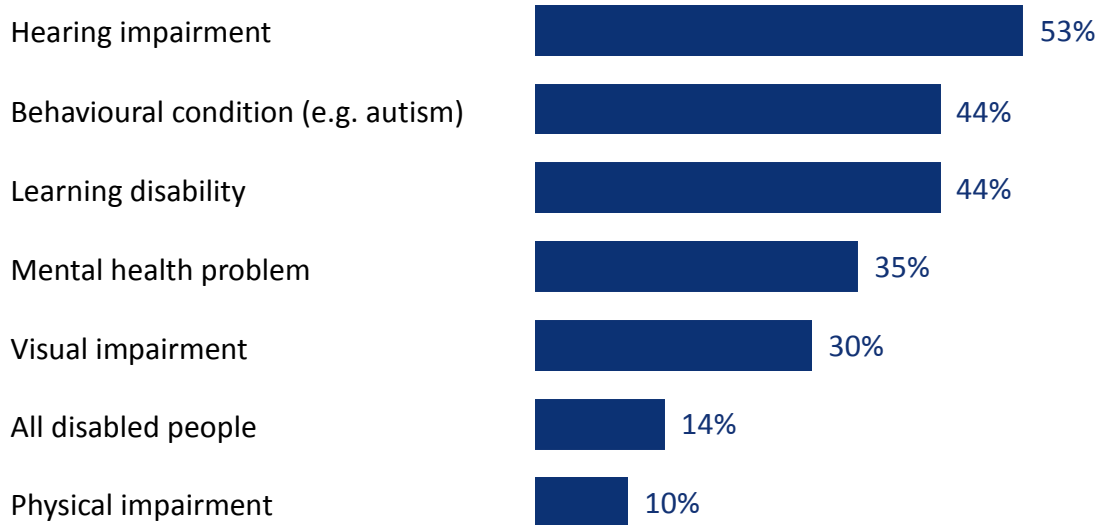
The disabled people may get hurt (n=964)



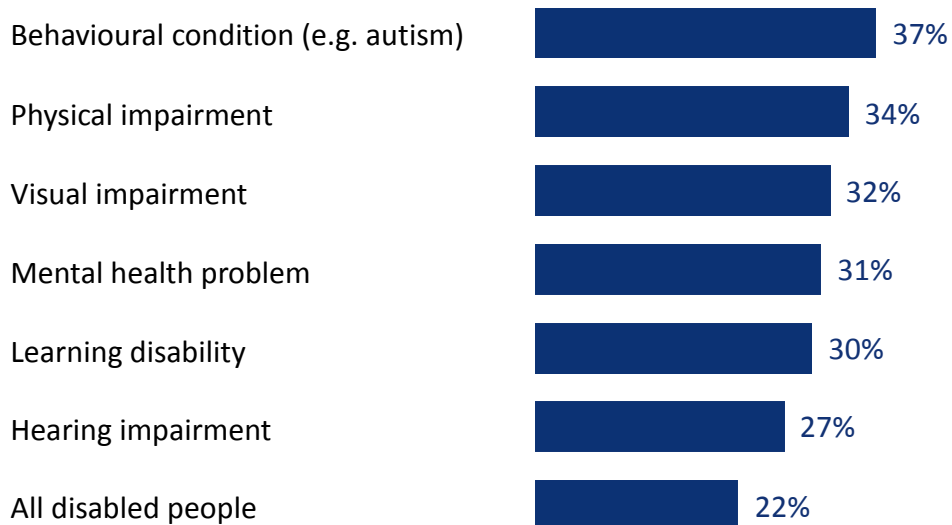
People may say something inappropriate (n=761)



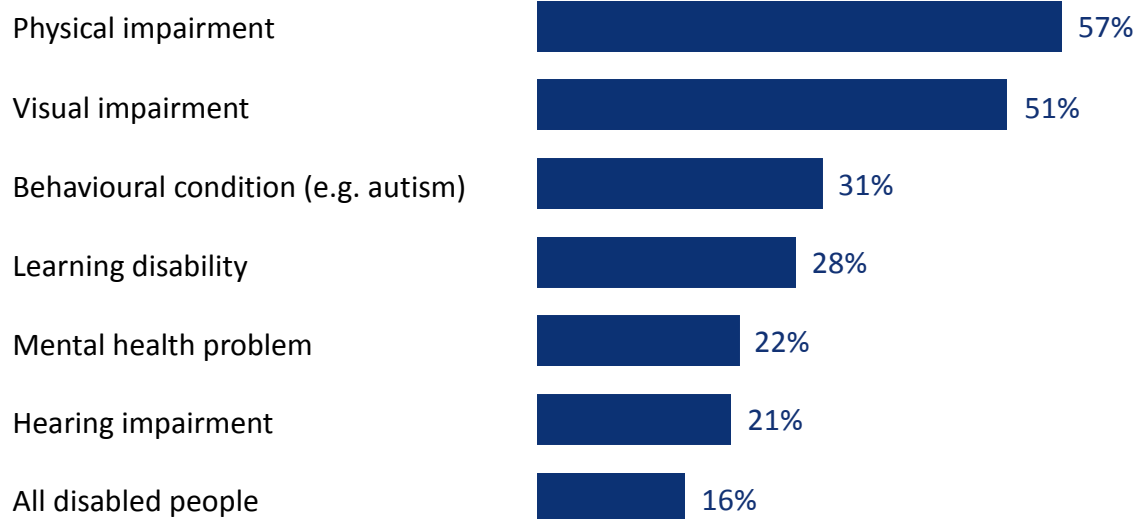
Unsure how they would communicate with other people in the activity (n=439)



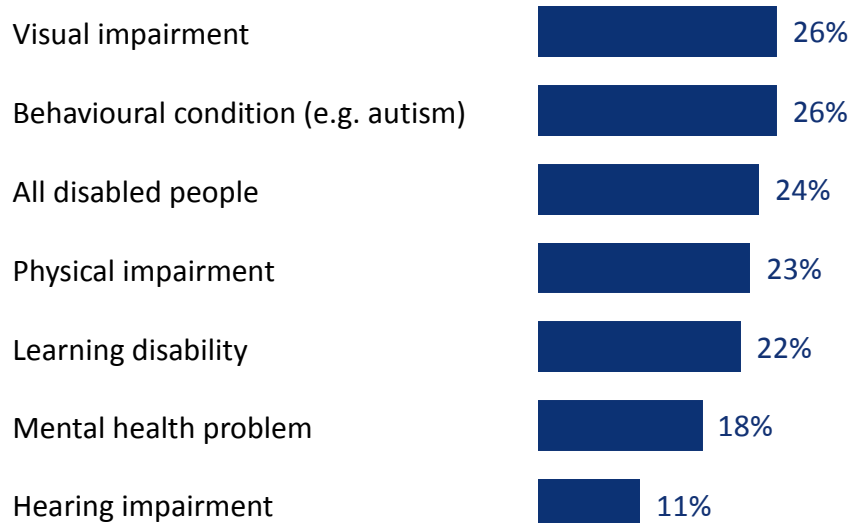
It may impact the team dynamic (n=413)

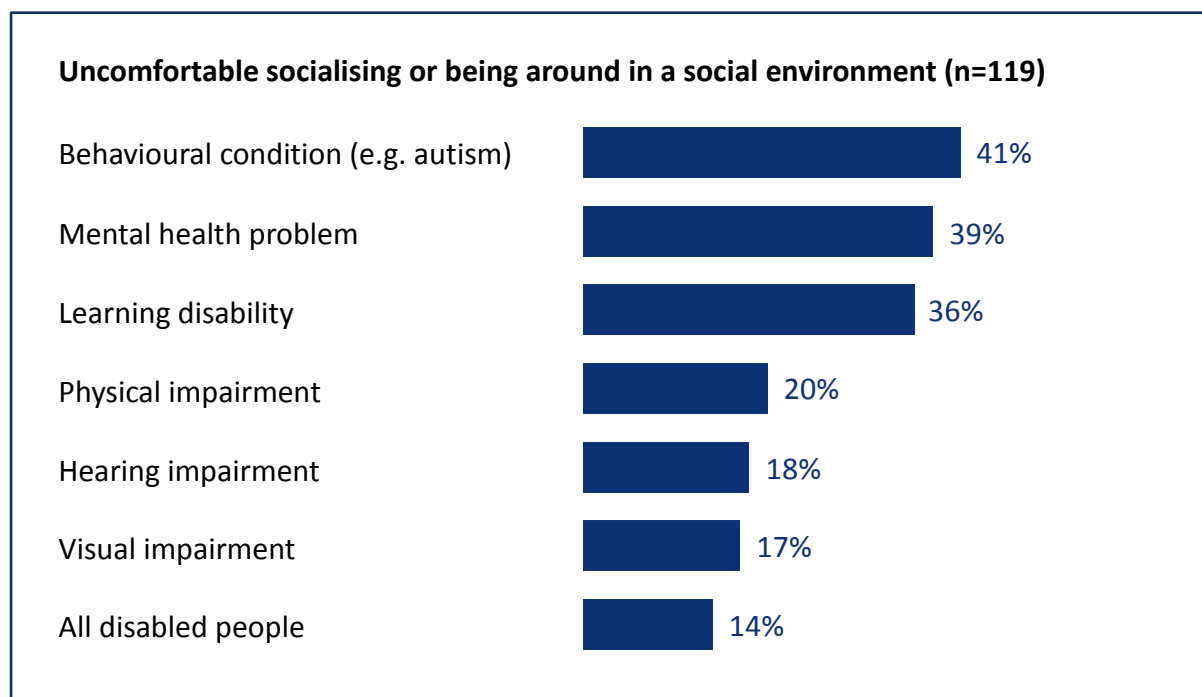


It would lower the overall standard of the club/team performance (n=345)



It would make the sport or activity less enjoyable (n=184)





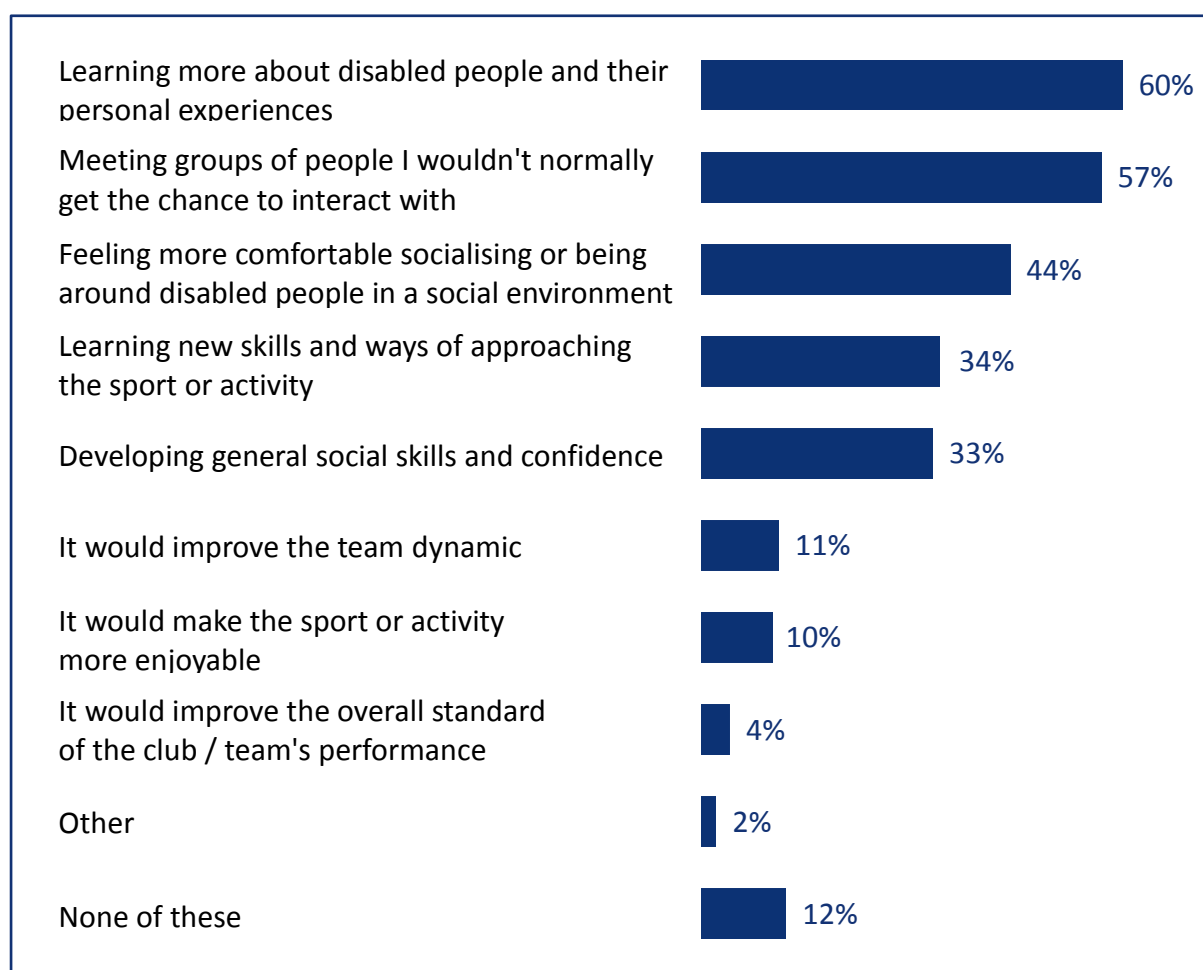
Given the relatively small percentage of respondents who had knowingly taken part with a disabled person (14%), these concerns are likely based on stereotyping. Ensuring that inclusive opportunities aim to include non-disabled people to provide an accurate, face-to-face experience of taking part with disabled people is therefore crucial.

6.2 Perceived benefits of taking part together

Non-disabled respondents were asked about any potential benefits they could see from taking part in sport and active recreation with disabled people. The main benefit (selected in their top three) identified by three in five (60%) respondents was seeing the activity as a way to learn more about disabled people and their experiences. Almost three in five (57%) saw it as getting a chance to meet people they would not normally get the chance to.

More than two in five (44%) said it would help them to feel more comfortable socialising with disabled people. Figure 6.1 suggested that just 6% of respondents were concerned that they would be uncomfortable socialising with disabled people, but many more mentioned concerns around communication and interaction more generally. This finding indicates that it may be possible address concerns about inclusive activity as potential selling points in communications targeted at non-disabled people.

Figure 6.3: Percentage of respondents who chose each benefit as one of their top three about a disabled person taking part in sport or active recreation with non-disabled people²⁴



Activity Alliance's 'Talk to me principles in action'²⁵ provides practical examples of how such promotion can be put into practice, including case studies of sitting volleyball and wheelchair rugby where a mix of disabled and non-disabled people are included in promotion.

²⁴ Q20: Which of the following benefits, if any, do you believe would result from you taking part in an inclusive sport or activity with disabled people? Base: All respondents (n=2,066)

²⁵ Activity Alliance, Talk to me principles in action (2014), bit.ly/2Aext5n.

7.0 Non-disabled people's broader perceptions of disabled people and them being active

As described in the methodology section, an implicit association test was used in the survey. Non-disabled respondents were presented with a list of general statements and asked to respond with yes or no to indicate whether or not they associated the statement with disabled people. The speed with which they answered indicated whether their response was a deeply held belief (a faster response) or something more considered and possibly altered to align with widely accepted social and moral views (a slower response).

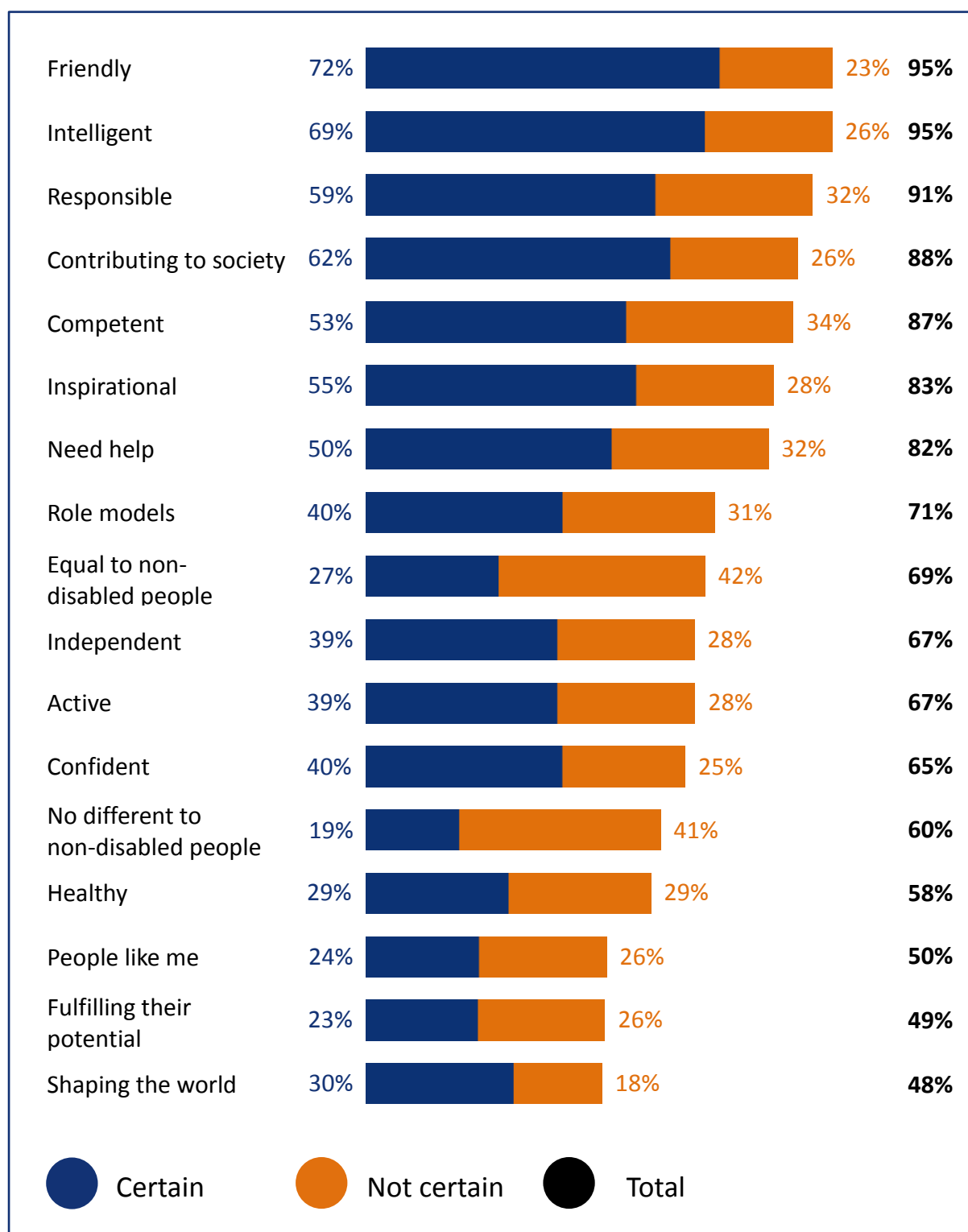
Figure 7.1, below, shows the level of association with the list of statements. The bar total is the overall extent to which respondents agreed with the statement. The left-most section of the bars is the proportion of people who had an implicit level of association; that is, they answered the question quickly indicating a more deeply held belief.

There were four statements, outlined below, that showed a much lower level of implicit, or 'certain' association. They were that disabled people are 'equal to non-disabled people' (27%), 'people like me' (24%), 'fulfilling their potential' (23%) and 'no different to non-disabled people' (19%). Low levels of implicit association with these statements suggest that there remain underlying perceptions of difference and inequality between non-disabled and disabled people.

The 2017 British Social Attitudes Survey²⁶ found that 83% of non-disabled people thought some or most of the time that disabled people are the same as everyone else. This did not include any implicit association testing. The low levels of implicit association identified in the Activity Alliance's study indicates that there could be a high social desirability bias when this issue has been examined by others.

²⁶ Scope, The disability perception gap (2018), p.24.

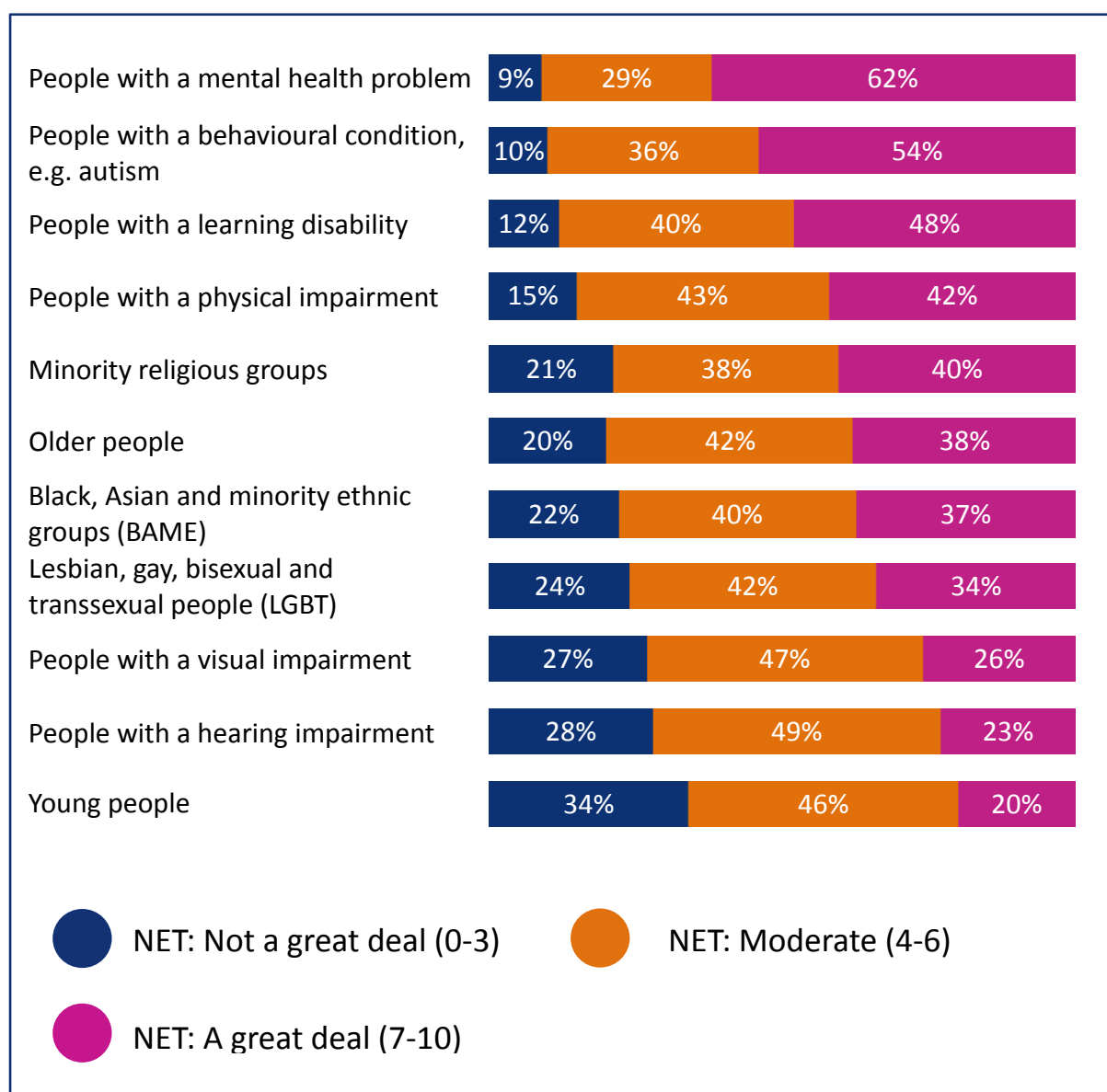
Figure 7.1: Percentage of respondents who associated each positive statement with disabled people by whether they were certain²⁷



²⁷ Implicit Q1: General perceptions of disabled people. Please quickly indicate if you think the word or statement applies to disabled people. Base: All implicit respondents (n=1,925)

While this could represent prejudice, it could also be a realistic reflection of society. Elsewhere in the survey, respondents indicated that they believed people with mental health problems (62%), behavioural conditions (54%), learning disabilities (48%) and physical impairments (42%) were the groups experiencing the greatest prejudice (rated seven to 10 on a scale) in the UK today. People with visual (26%) and hearing impairments (23%) were believed to experience less (though still significant) prejudice. These results are shown in figure 7.2, below.

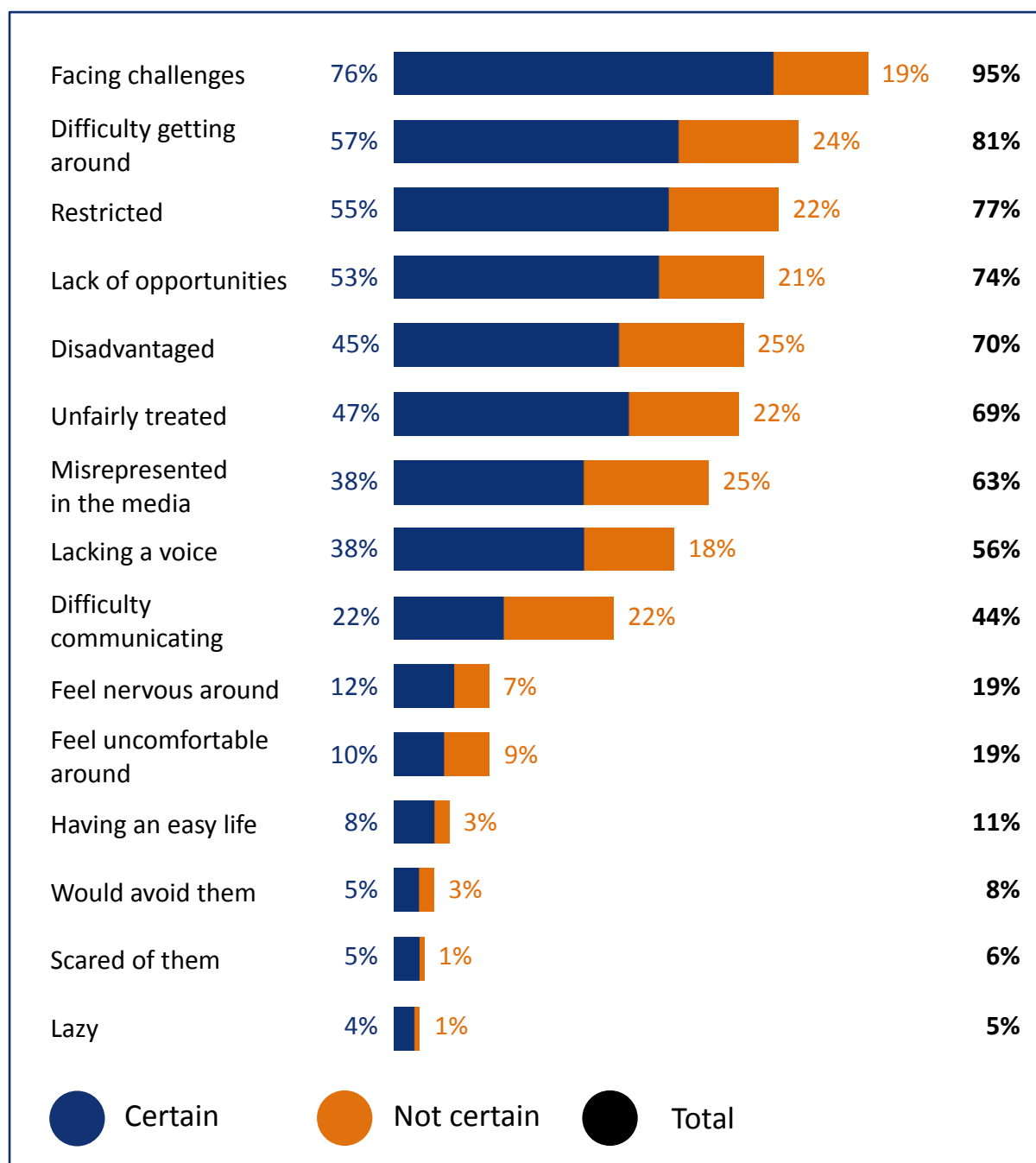
Figure 7.2: Percentage of respondents by how much they felt each group faced prejudice in the UK today²⁸



²⁸ Q6: Generally speaking, how much, if any, prejudice do you think each of the following groups face in the UK today? Base: All respondents (n=2,066)

Indeed, when shown more 'negative' statements, respondents primarily made associations between disabled people and those that focused on facing adversity within society. These included: 'facing challenges' (76% implicit; 95% overall); 'disadvantaged' (45% implicit; 70% overall); and 'unfairly treated' (47% implicit; 69% overall). Just 5% (4% implicit) associated disabled people with being 'lazy'.

Figure 7.3: Percentage of respondents who agreed with each negative perception of disabled people by whether they were certain or uncertain²⁹



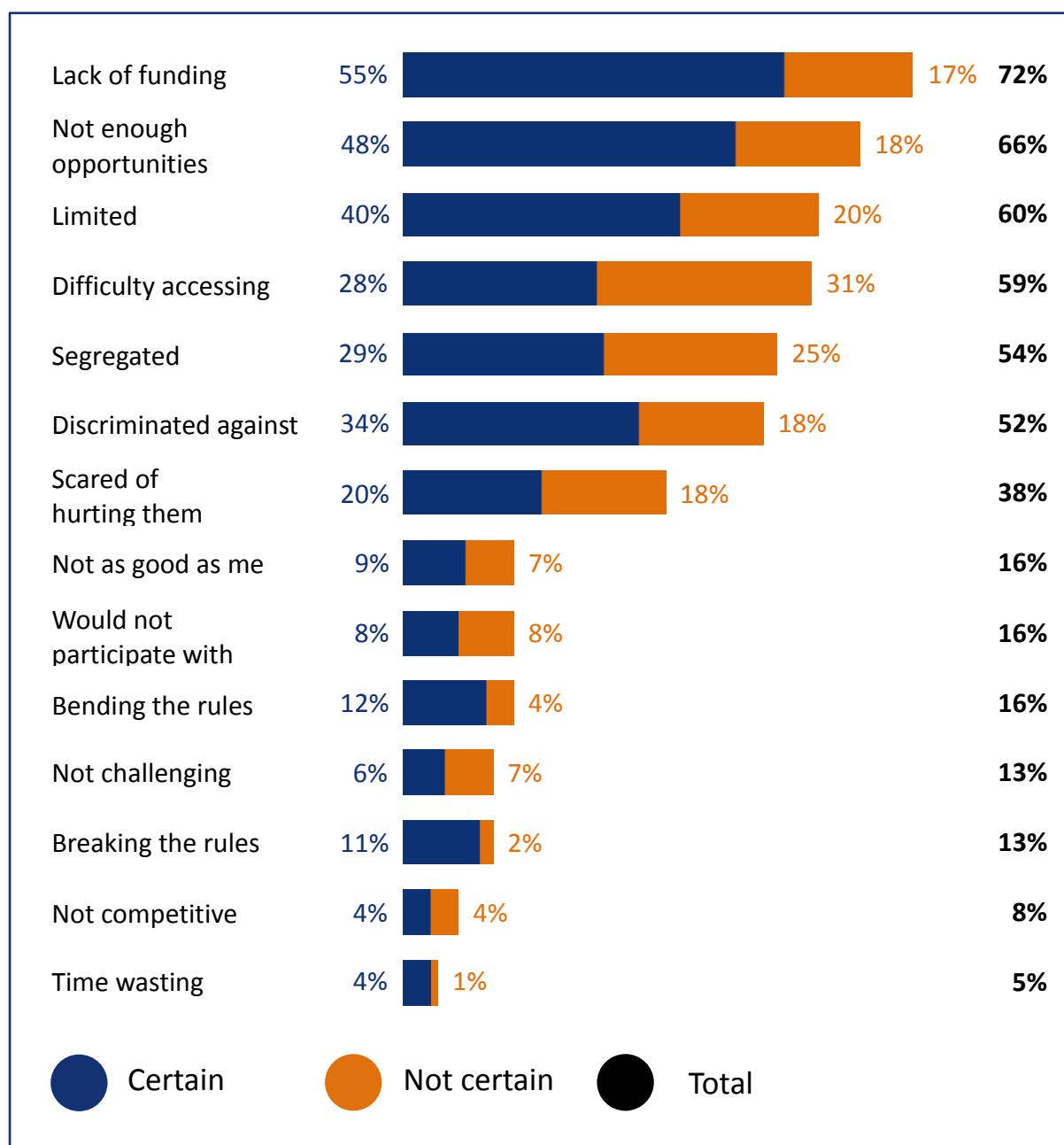
²⁹ Implicit Q2: Perceptions of disabled people in sport. Please quickly indicate if you think the word or statement applies to disabled people participating in sport and physical activity. Base: All implicit respondents (n=1,925)

This is also reflected in responses to negative perceptions about disabled people taking part in sport and physical activity. Of the options tested, a majority (55% implicit; 72% overall, including more deliberate answers) implicitly associated disabled people's participation in sport and physical activity with 'lack of funding'. This is the only negative statement tested with more than half agreeing implicitly. Despite this, a large minority implicitly associated the participation of disabled people in sport and physical activity with 'not having enough opportunities' (48% implicit; 66% overall), 'limited' (40% implicit; 60% overall), 'discriminated against' (34% implicit; 52% overall), 'segregated' (29% implicit; 54% overall) and having 'difficulty accessing' it (28% implicit; 59% overall).

Figure 6.1 showed that just under half (47%) of respondents said that disabled people getting hurt in the sport and activity would be one of their top three concerns to them taking part. But figure 7.4 suggests that just a fifth (20%) hold an implicit association, saying they would be 'scared of hurting them' with regard to disabled people in sport and physical activity.

Positively, only a small proportion of respondents implicitly associated disabled people's participation in sport and physical activity as 'bending the rules' (12% implicit; 16% overall), or that they 'would not participate with' disabled people (8% implicit; 16% overall).

Figure 7.4: Percentage of respondents who associated each negative statement perception with people taking part in sport and physical activity and whether they were certain³⁰

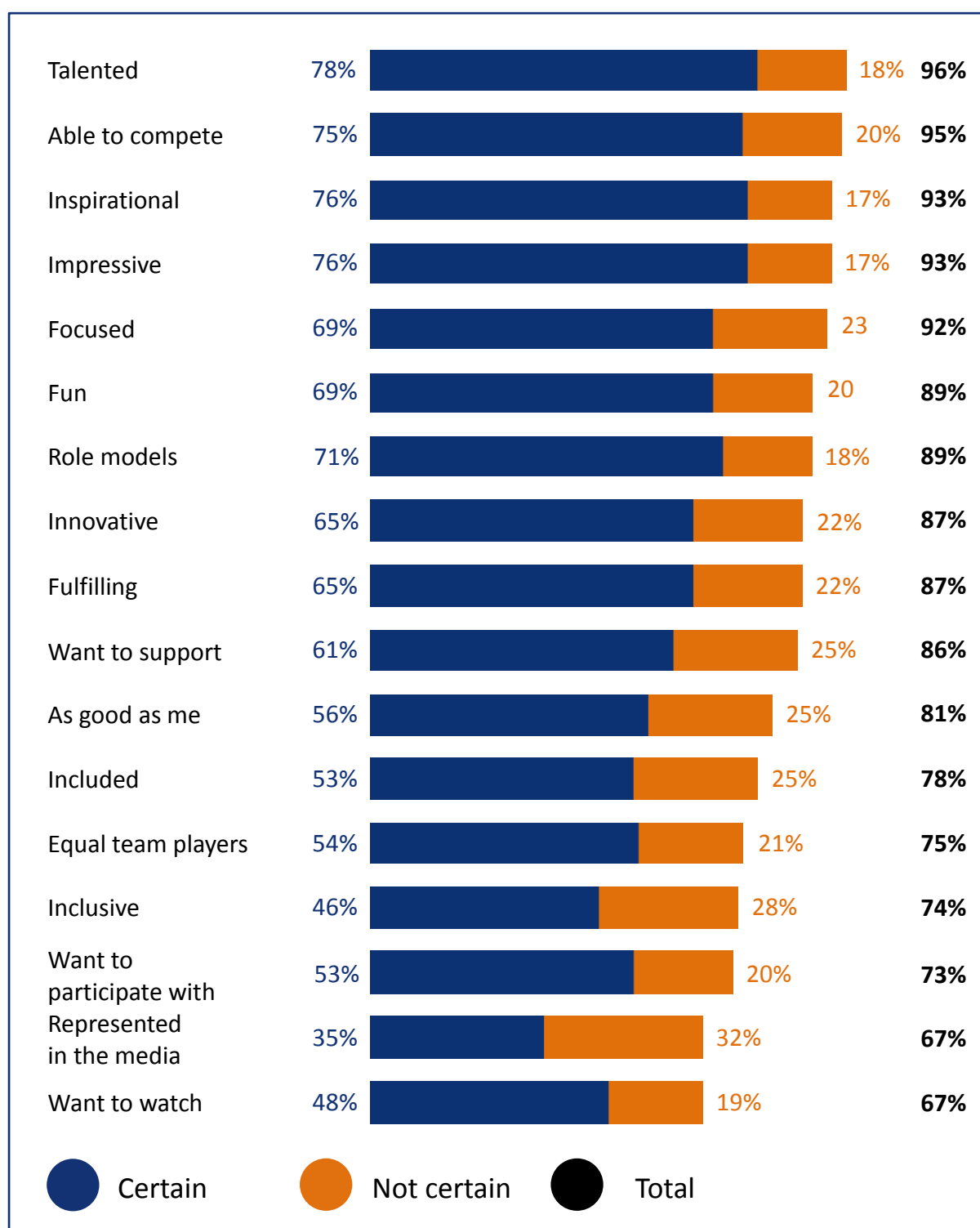


³⁰ Implicit Q2: Perceptions of disabled people in sport. Please quickly indicate if you think the word or statement applies to disabled people participating in sport and physical activity. Base: All implicit respondents (n=1,925)

On the other side of this equation, positive associations of disabled people taking part in sport were generally consistent and higher than perceptions of disabled people overall, with a majority of adults implicitly associating nearly all of the statements tested with disabled people. However, fewer than half of respondents made an implicit association that disabled people taking part in sport and active recreation is 'inclusive' (46%), despite three quarters (74%) making this association overall, including those who gave slower, more deliberate answers.

Similarly, around a third implicitly associated disabled people's participation in sport as 'represented in the media' (35% certain; 67% overall). Unfortunately, less than half implicitly associate it with being something they would 'want to watch' (48% implicit; 67% overall).

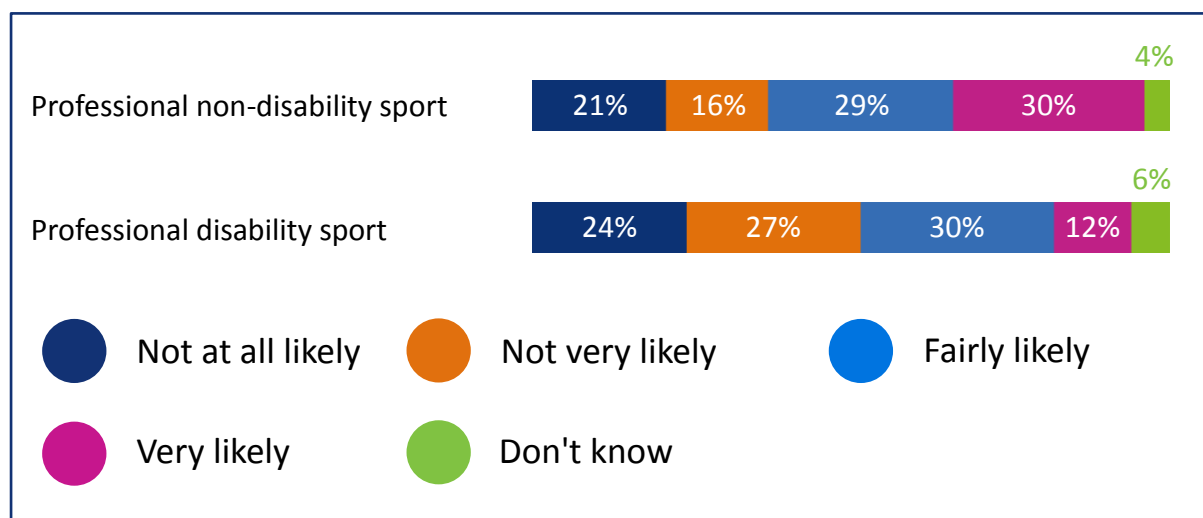
Figure 7.5: Percentage of respondents who associate each positive statement with disabled people taking part in sport and active recreation and whether they were certain³¹



³¹ Implicit Q2: Perceptions of disabled people in sport. Please quickly indicate if you think the word or statement applies to disabled people participating in sport and physical activity. Base: All implicit respondents (n=1,925)

This lower level of implicit interest in watching disabled people take part matches the proportion who said they would be likely to attend or watch professional disability sports events, for example wheelchair tennis or blind football (42%).

Figure 7.6: Percentage of respondents by how likely or not they are to attend or watch professional disability or non-disability sports events³²



It is important that we take into account this evidence of underlying attitudes when interpreting the rest of the findings. While non-disabled people may express an openness to taking part in sport with disabled people, these positive attitudes may not convert into positive action without further intervention and the removal of psychological barriers.

8.0 Conclusion and recommendations

This study has shown that there are both challenges and reasons to be hopeful around non-disabled people’s perceptions of taking part with their disabled peers.

For example, it seems clear that respondents’ perceived limited experience of inclusive activity has informed beliefs about disabled people’s participation that don’t necessarily match reality. On the other hand, although the term ‘inclusive sport’ is not widely known, there is an inherent understanding of its meaning

Meanwhile, when asked directly, almost three quarters of non-disabled people were open to the idea of taking part in sport and active recreation with disabled people. However, this again varied substantially depending on the impairment type of the disabled person.

³² Q24: How likely, or otherwise, are you to attend or watch professional sports events (either on TV or in person?) Base: All respondents (n=2,066); Q25: How likely, or otherwise, are you to attend or watch professional disability sports events (for example, blind football or wheelchair tennis), either on TV or in person? Base: All respondents (n=2,066)

There was evidence of challenging underlying perceptions among non-disabled people, with around a quarter implicitly associating disabled people as ‘equal to non-disabled people’. But this may be driven by an appreciation of the discrimination that disabled people face; respondents believed people with mental health problems, behavioural conditions, learning disabilities and physical impairments to be the groups experiencing the greatest prejudice in the UK today.

Positively, respondents felt disabled people taking part in sport and active recreation were ‘talented’, ‘able to compete’ and role models. In addition, around three in five believed that inclusive activity – disabled and non-disabled people taking part together – is better for disabled people than disability-specific sessions. This view reflects the desires of the two thirds of disabled people who favour integrated activity.³³

Finally, the perceived benefits of taking part in inclusive activities focused on the impact on the non-disabled people themselves. For example, respondents felt they could learn more about disabled people, meet new groups of people and feel more comfortable with disabled people.

It is clear that there is a great deal of work to be done to ensure that we can challenge perceptions and create inclusive opportunities that work, and are seen to work, for everyone. The recommendations below break this down into some clear opportunities.

8.1 Recommendations

Three recommendations have been developed to address the issues raised by the study. They cover a range of issues and require action across and beyond the sector to ensure that non-disabled people are both able and willing to participate alongside their disabled peers.

Recommendation one

Increase public awareness of disabled people, especially in relation to being active. This must aim to challenge perceptions and create a more accurate and diverse picture of active disabled people among their non-disabled peers.

The media and those responsible for communications should be supported via resources such as [Activity Alliance’s Media Guide](#) to produce balanced, realistic and accessible content. This should demonstrate that any sport or activity can be inclusive while remaining competitive and fun. This could build on campaigns like Scope’s ‘[End the Awkward](#)’ but focus on inclusive activity. All impairment groups, including people with social and behavioural conditions as well as people with mental health problems, must be represented. Activity Alliance has produced videos covering these issues to accompany this report. These are available at its [YouTube channel](#).

³³ English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS), Disabled People’s Lifestyle Survey (2013), 73.

Recommendation one in practice

National Disability Sport Organisations, supported by Sport England and Activity Alliance, undertook the Together We Will campaign between July and September 2016. The campaign aimed to support and motivate disabled people along with their friends and family to become healthier, stronger and have fun being active. It showcased a series of ambassador stories from disabled people, about how and where they enjoy being active with friends and family. It also made it easier to find useful information about people and organisations that can support you to be more active.

Together We Will demonstrated how inclusion can be embedded throughout a small-scale campaign. Recognising the diversity of disabled people and their influencers, the promotional messages did not focus solely on disability. It concentrated on the benefits of being active, rather than impairments. Campaign assets were inclusive and accessible to ensure everyone related to the campaign and could access the information.

Recommendation two

Embed inclusivity in many more opportunities so disabled and non-disabled people can be active together.

Experiencing inclusive activity is a key means of changing perceptions among both non-disabled and disabled people. It is also important to note that the vast majority of activity can be delivered inclusively. [Activity Alliance's 10 Principles](#) should be employed to create inclusive planning and delivery of sport and active recreation. This must include non-disabled people who might not otherwise feel comfortable in a traditional sport context. Making inclusivity the default among those delivering activity is crucial, as highlighted in Activity Alliance's '[Delivering activity to disabled people: The workforce perception gap](#)' report.

Recommendation two in practice

[Activity Alliance's Inclusive Activity Programme](#) is funded by Sport England National Lottery investment and delivered in partnership with UK Coaching. It will provide training for 8,500 people who deliver activity, encouraging an inclusive, person-centred approach.

In February 2019, 13 university students from Loughborough University's Coach and Volunteer Academy attended an Inclusive Activity Programme workshop, hosted by Leicester-Shire and Rutland Sport. The University arranged the workshop to support the students' personal development and learning.

UK Coaching tutor and former GB Paralympic swimmer, Martin Mansell guided students through the key inclusion principles. They learnt how to adapt sports and activities using the STEP Tool and Activity Inclusion Model, so disabled and non-disabled people can take part together. They were also introduced to the concept of 'reverse integration' by playing sitting volleyball and boccia.

Laura, a coach and PGCE student, signed up to the workshop because she wanted to increase her knowledge and become more confident in making sessions inclusive for all

participants. The main learning points she took away were how to adapt activities for different groups and that disability specific sports, such as wheelchair basketball, can be a great activity for everyone.

Laura said the programme helped her 'to realise that separate sessions are not needed, just the adaptation of sessions to allow everyone to access it.' Laura now plans to use sitting volleyball as part of her sessions for both disabled and non-disabled participants because it enables everyone to take part together and builds on the fundamental skills of the game.

Recommendation three

Celebrate and share experiences of inclusive activity with representation for all impairment groups.

The Get Out Get Active programme is built on the concept of inclusive activity and involves disabled and non-disabled participants, volunteers and peer mentors supporting each other to be active. Experiences are celebrated via stories available on the [Get Out Get Active website](#), with learning between everyone involved encouraged.

Recommendation three in practice

Launched in 2016 and funded by Spirit of 2012, the Get Out Get Active (GOGA) programme is providing opportunities to engage the UK's very least active disabled and non-disabled people in fun and inclusive activities together. GOGA is delivered in 18 localities across the UK and is supported by a network of national partners. It will reach 16,500 individual participants, at least 40% of whom will remain active. All activities are underpinned by Activity Alliance's 10 Principles.

Bradford's GOGA organiser spoke to women in the local community and realised that women-only sessions would help to remove many barriers to participation, particularly among those from a black, Asian, and minority ethnic background. The female fitness sessions are an opportunity for women of all ages and abilities to take part in a variety of activities at their own pace, while also making new friends. Most of the women who attend sessions do not have other similar opportunities and would be inactive without them. The group includes a mixture of disabled and non-disabled women, with all activities suitable for everyone.

Activity leaders are from the local community and promote to local groups who may attend non-physical activity related sessions. Facebook and flyers are used to advertise them. Since promoting the session and introducing the inclusive element, numbers have risen from 15 to around 50 women per week.



01509 227750



info@activityalliance.org.uk



activityalliance.org.uk



ActivityAlliance



@AllForActivity

activity
alliance
disability
inclusion
sport

This document is also available in Word format.
Please contact us if you need more support.

Activity Alliance is the operating name for the English
Federation of Disability Sport. Registered Charity No. 1075180.