

The Social Impact of Sport

Unlocking the potential of sport
to drive social transformations



Published in 2024 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation,
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

© UNESCO, 2024

ISBN 978-92-3-100698-2
<https://doi.org/10.54678/UNQQ6059>



This publication is available in Open Access under the Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO (CC-BY-SA 3.0 IGO) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/igo/>). By using the content of this publication, the users accept to be bound by the terms of use of the UNESCO Open Access Repository (<https://www.unesco.org/en/open-access/cc-sa>).

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors; they are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organisation.

Cover photo: © Francesca Farci

Graphic design: UNESCO

Cover design and typeset: UNESCO

Printed by: UNESCO

Printed in Paris.

To cite this report:

UNESCO (2024). The Social Impact of Sport: Unlocking the Potential of Sport to Drive Social Transformations. Paris, UNESCO

SHORT SUMMARY

Sport: A game-changer for global development

UNESCO's sport initiative, Fit for Life, advocates for harmonised methodologies and encourages more significant investments in sport as a cost-effective tool to deliver social impact, aligned with global agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals and UNESCO's International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity, and Sport.

Current data on sport-based interventions is insufficient to draw valid inferences of its impact at the global aggregate level. However, this Report provides robust evidence of how sport is a cost-effective investment with substantial health, educational, and other social benefits.

Sport offers broad social value, with significant returns on investment impacting individuals, communities and societies. The Report highlights eight dimensions of sport's social impact:

- health and well-being;
- equality and social inclusion;
- education and labour outcomes;
- youth empowerment and civic engagement;
- economic development;
- security, crime, and violence prevention;
- peacebuilding and environmental sustainability.

To maximise sport's social impact, policy-makers, investors, academia and sport stakeholders are encouraged to implement the recommendations of this Report, which focus on more data collection and evidence, increased investment in sport, collective action among multidisciplinary stakeholders, integration of sport into diverse policy agendas, and the design of intentional and intersectional sport-based interventions.

A study in the
UK found that for
every pound spent
in sport, there is a
social return of up to
GBP 3.28



unesco

"Since wars begin in the minds of men and women it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed"

The Social Impact of Sport

Unlocking the potential of sport
to drive social transformations

Foreword



UNESCO advocates for sport as a catalyst for social change, peace, economic development and the empowerment of youth, women, and vulnerable groups. With its [Fit for Life](#) flagship, UNESCO streamlines the transformative impact of sport through data and brings together a multistakeholder alliance to promote greater and more consistent investment in this area.

Despite the existing evidence on the impact of sport, sport remains underfunded, undervalued, and often overlooked by policy-makers and investors. The commitments made at International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport ([MINEPS VII](#)), provide a strategic framework for international cooperation and policy development. This report builds upon these agreements, advocating for enhanced collaboration and resource allocation to harness the full potential of sport.

One of the primary challenges highlighted in this report is the lack of large-scale comparable data to measure the multifaceted impact of sport. Consistent, relevant and accessible metrics are indispensable for qualifying and quantifying the benefits that sport provides at individual and social levels. Consequently, there is an urgent need for coordinated efforts to collect, monitor, and disseminate robust data on the sport sector, sport participation, and physical activity – both locally, where the impact of sport occurs, and globally, where aggregated data reaches a critical mass to orient policy-making and scale investments.

This publication provides compelling evidence of sport's cost-effectiveness and its profound benefits on individuals and society, notably as a platform to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. By assessing reported benefits and examining case studies, this report makes the case for sport as an essential ecosystem capable of driving significant social change. For instance, research¹ shows that a sport-based intervention can triple the social value of the economic input, yielding a social return of 3.28 monetary units for each monetary unit invested. Such evidence underscores the interest for public and private investors to integrate sport into broader strategies pursuing social, economic, and environmental goals.

[UNESCO's International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity, and Sport](#) acknowledges the pivotal role of research, evaluation studies and other evidence-based documentation on physical education, physical activity and sport. This report should inspire policy-makers, investors, academics, sport stakeholders, and communities to recognise and embrace the power of sport. The Charter's principles are echoed in the call to action for increased support and investment in sport as a means to enhance quality of life, fulfil human rights and promote sustainable development. By investing in sport-based interventions, we can maximise a wide-range of social benefits and contribute to a more inclusive, healthier, and sustainable future for all.

Gabriela Ramos

Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences

UNESCO

1. Davies et al., "Social Return on Investment of Sport and Physical Activity in England."

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared under the direction and supervision of UNESCO. The project was led by Gustavo Merino-Juárez and Phillip Müller-Wirth with participation as copy-editors and proofreaders from Sarah Lüdecke, Gerard Masdeu-Yélamos and Alexis Saillard. Marco López-Silva and Raúl Abreu-Lastra of C230 Consultores are the lead authors, with support from Helena Martínez Pardo-Salas as project coordinator and the assistance of Arturo Ramírez-Ramírez.

UNESCO and the authors would like to thank Madeleine Orr, Juan Pablo Salazar, Liam McGroarty, Tim Crabbe, Dina Buchbinder, Misael García, and Abraham Muñoz for their kind assistance in the form of interviews conducted to produce the study; as well as Jennifer Hicks, Liam McGroarty, Camilla Nordheim-Larsen, and Ming-Kuok Lim for their comments on the draft. Any errors are the responsibility of the authors.

Call to Action

1. Unleash the power of sport through data and research evidence

Governments and academia should prioritise research that examines the wide-ranging benefits of sport. By investigating the outcomes of sport-based interventions and refining social impact investment models, researchers can provide evidence-based insights for effective policy-making and programme development.

2. Invest in sport as a cost-effective solution

Investing in sport-based intervention yields significant returns by improving health outcomes and fostering social inclusion, among others. By allocating resources to sport, governments and investors can achieve both economic and social benefits.

3. Foster collective action in and through sport as the driving force behind social change

Collaboration among investors, policy-makers, academia, and sport stakeholders is essential for driving meaningful social change through sport. Unified efforts can multiply the positive effects of sport across communities worldwide.

4. Make sport and physical activity a cross-sectoral priority and integrate into public policies in general to maximise contributions to social, economic, and environmental outcomes

Policy-makers should incorporate sport-based initiatives into broader policy frameworks to enhance their impact. There is evidence on the impact of sport across various dimensions that go beyond the playing field. Consequently, sport should be considered into the planning, development, and implementation of policies across sectors.

5. Co-create sport-based interventions that are intentional and intersectional

Sport-based interventions must be designed with a clear purpose and consider the diverse contexts and needs of participants.

List of Acronyms

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
CAD	Canadian Dollars
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention of the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
GBP	Great Britain Pounds
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added
ICESRC	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INT	International Dollars (Geary–Khamis dollar)
IIS	Impact Investment in Sport
MINEPS	International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport
MSE	Major Sporting Events
MXN	Mexican Pesos
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RCT	Randomised Control Trial
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDP IWG	Sport for Development International Working Group
SFD	Sport for Development
SROI	Social Return on Investment
TRY	Turkish Lira
UEFA	Union of European Football Associations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USD	United States Dollars
WHO	World Health Organisation
YDI	Global Youth Development Index

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	11
1. INTRODUCTION	17
1.1. Sport as a driver for positive social change	18
1.2. Mobilising action to maximise the value of sport	19
1.3. Objectives and structure of the report	20
2. THE SOCIAL VALUE OF SPORT	21
2.1. The wide-ranging value of sport: from individual to institutional level	22
2.2. Previous initiatives measuring the impact of sport	23
2.3. Measuring sport's social impact at the aggregate level	24
2.4. Sport cross-cutting contribution to global policy agendas	25
3. DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL IMPACT IN AND THROUGH SPORT	27
3.1. Health and well-being	30
3.2. Equality and social inclusion	36
3.3. Education and labour outcomes	40
3.4. Youth empowerment and civic engagement	46
3.5. Economic development	50
3.6. Security, crime and violence prevention	56
3.7. Peacebuilding	59
3.8. Environmental sustainability	61
3.9. Multi-purpose interventions	64
4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	66
4.1. Conclusions	67
4.2. Recommendations	68
BIBLIOGRAPHY	77
APPENDIX A: Further information on evaluating sport's societal impacts	89

Executive Summary

Sport as a tool for social impact has been recognised by several international bodies, instruments and initiatives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, UNESCO's International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport, the Seventh International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS VII), and UNESCO's sport flagship initiative Fit for Life.

This report explores the potential of sport interventions to achieve positive outcomes in a range of social development dimensions. Sport for Development refers to the concept of designing and implementing sport initiatives for impact, using sport to achieve social objectives, such as reducing violence or bullying, increasing school attendance or educational achievement, improving health outcomes, or accelerating economic development.

The report has been prepared with the following objectives:

- Present current evidence on the social impact of sport to promote innovative social investment models.
- Review research on physical activity, sport, and Sport for Development interventions for delivering social impact.
- Identify gaps and shortcomings of the existing evidence base to advocate for additional research in the field.
- Propose actionable recommendations to enhance the role of sport in achieving social outcomes.

With these objectives in mind, this document aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the social value of sport, its impact dimensions, and actionable recommendations. It builds on previous initiatives undertaken by various organisations to measure the value and impact of sport.

The broad social value of sport encompasses from its impact on the individual level to its societal implications. It brings cross-cutting contributions to several policy agendas, development guidelines, and human rights treaties. Furthermore, existing aggregate evidence for some regions strongly supports the idea that investing in sport for social objectives has significant returns. Existing social return on investment studies focusing on general sport interventions in some regions have found a social return on investment of up to 3.28 for each financial unit invested. Sport for Development interventions can be a cost-efficient way to pursue social objectives.

The report analyses eight dimensions of social impact in and through sport, presenting causality theories and existing evidence drawn from a wide range of academic articles and policy documents.

1. Health and well-being

Academic studies have estimated that if physical inactivity continues its current trend, the next decade will see 500 million new cases of non-communicable, inactivity-associated diseases globally, primarily hypertension, depression, and anxiety. These inactivity-related cases would severely affect well-being and imply costs of 300 billion USD for the 2020-2030 decade. Sport could be highly effective in reducing them.

The effects of physical activity on health and well-being are strong and well-documented. For example, engaging in daily activity can lead to a 30% to 40% decrease in the likelihood of cardiovascular disease-related deaths. Physical activity also reduces stress hormones and anxiety, boosts self-efficacy and self-esteem, and improves psychological well-being and mental health, reducing the risk of depression. Evidence shows

that engaging in more than 30 minutes per day of physical activity can reduce the odds of experiencing depression by 48%. Finally, practising team sports has been shown to improve well-being beyond health outcomes: involvement in sport is consistently associated with increased emotional regulation and a greater sense of competence. The World Health Organisation recommends that adults engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week or at least 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week. For children, the recommendation is at least 60 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per day. Promoting Sport for Development interventions is an effective avenue to adhere to those recommendations.

Sport for Development interventions should be tailored to target populations like children, youth, and adults, consider well-established behaviour change theories, and leverage the use of technology to make it easier for people to remain physically active throughout their lives. Interventions should meet people where they are: school, workplace, or health communities. In terms of research, more is needed to understand the direct effects of sport on health outcomes. There is an area of opportunity to expand research on the dose-response relationship between physical activity and health outcomes, specifically for non-communicable diseases known to reach a significant proportion of the population globally, like depression, hypertension, dementia, cancer and type II diabetes. More research is needed to understand how different levels of physical activity and sedentary behaviour impact health outcomes across subgroups based on sex, age, disability, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, as well as across low and middle-income countries.

2. Equality and social inclusion

Sport initiatives can empower marginalised populations, challenge societal norms, and foster a sense of belonging and acceptance. Regarding gender, research has shown that sport and physical activity can positively influence women's health, well-being, educational aspirations, and academic achievement. Participation in sport improves self-esteem, promotes empowerment, and challenges stereotypes and societal norms that limit women's participation. Furthermore, sport benefits socially and economically disadvantaged people by bringing individuals from diverse backgrounds together and promoting teamwork, cooperation, and mutual respect. For people with disabilities, sport can bring numerous benefits, improving their physical and mental well-being, opportunities for social cohesion, and overall quality of life. For instance, research indicates that incorporating physical activities into the lives of people with disabilities can boost self-esteem, overcome participation barriers, and build supportive relationships with family and friends, enhancing their communication and social interactions.

Efforts to legally mandate equality in sport participation yield significant effects. For instance, implementing Title IX in the United States—which requires schools to ensure gender equality in budget allocation—has been linked to an increase of 0.4 years in education and 8% higher wages for beneficiaries. A rise in female sport participation of 10 percentage points was associated with increased female college attendance and labour force participation by 1 to 2 percentage points.

Sport for Development interventions should be accessible to people who are socially and economically disadvantaged, as well as to people with disabilities. They should be designed to clearly convey social inclusion goals, address stereotypes, and strengthen positive attitudes toward women and other socially disadvantaged groups. Research efforts should focus on increasing evidence from low-income countries and prioritising rigorous impact evaluations that consider counterfactual scenarios to better understand the impact of sport on equality and inclusion outcomes.

3. Education and labour outcomes

Sport can contribute to educational outcomes through its physical, mental, and social effects on individuals, including developing cognitive skills such as executive planning, attention, simultaneous and successive tasks, and social competence and capital. Several Sport for Development interventions to build skills for education have reported increased school attendance from 11% to 20%, improved behaviour at school in almost 60% of participants, and increased test scores by 40%. In general, Sport for Development programmes that use sport in a structured manner (instead of relying only on the inherent benefits of sport) yield better results.

As for labour outcomes, sport contributes to developing self-confidence, motivation, resilience, fair play, and cooperation skills, leading to higher chances of obtaining a job, earning better wages, attaining professional development, improving work performance, and reducing the number of people who are not in education, employment, or training. For example, Sport for Development programmes have been linked to increases of approximately 12% in hours of labour supply, and research has found evidence about the impact of sport and physical activity on increased earnings, with effects ranging from 4% to 17%, for example. In general, Sport for Development initiatives in this area should be designed with a structured framework that develops the skills and attitudes necessary to navigate the job market and thrive in a work environment. These should include a coaching and mentoring approach that helps participants with self-reflection, trust development, and direction-setting.

4. Youth empowerment and civic engagement

Sport can contribute to social capital formation, which is relevant for developing civic-minded behaviours and youth empowerment. Regular sport participation can help young people to strengthen their interpersonal networks and engage in more formal civic and political activities. For example, research suggests that adolescents who regularly participate in sport are 12% more likely to help friends, neighbours, or relatives and 3% more likely to undertake civic tasks in regional politics or citizen groups. While some of these effects might appear modest, they suggest an interesting relationship that warrants more research and investment. Additionally, sport participation can inherently expose people to political behaviours and activities, increasing the likelihood of developing a political and civic disposition. For instance, a study found that young people who practised high-school sports were significantly more likely than their non-practising counterparts to volunteer, vote, and watch political news.

Sport and physical activity interventions in this topic should ensure that people from various backgrounds and contexts are included and take advantage of organisational setups that foster a conducive environment for developing social capital, a sense of identity, and ownership for young people, such as sport clubs. Regarding research, updating the available evidence with recent data is encouraged, as well as further exploration of the long-run impact of sport in forming social and human capital.

5. Economic development

Sport is highly relevant to countries' economies. In 2023, the global sport market was valued at 480.2 billion USD and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of approximately 5%, reaching an estimated 629.8 billion USD in 2028. The sport industry creates jobs and attracts volunteer work, which has considerable economic implications. Furthermore, sport-based entrepreneurship has the potential to deliver social and financial value through job creation, revenue generation, and increased consumption of sport-related goods and services. Additionally, sporting events have a prominent effect on local and national economies through tourist and visitor revenues, infrastructure enhancement, and job creation.

Sport participation and physical activity also impact health spending and labour productivity. At the individual level, engaging in physical activities like cycling, which has numerous robust cost-benefit analyses, can lead to significant savings in personal resources such as income and time.

Governments should pursue identifying and developing strengths within their specific sport industries through comprehensive national sport policies and coordinated efforts to collect precise data on the scale of sport's economic impact. Regarding research, Social Return on Investment analyses of specific kinds of sports (especially grassroots sports) and rigorous ex-post studies on the effects of sporting events are recommended.

6. Security, crime, and violence prevention

Programmes that use sport to achieve crime or violence prevention objectives can have positive impacts. Sport helps individuals form bonds with each other and society, making them less likely to commit crimes and exercise violence. Participating in sport can also allow people to release aggression in an appropriate context and, when guided, can reduce the opportunity for deviant behaviour. Furthermore, sport can provide a medium for youth to learn and practise socially approved, rule-abiding behaviour. The demonstrated effects of sport in this dimension are modest at the social level but warrant further investment in research and implementation. For example, a study referring to England found that a 10% increase in sport participation led to a fall in crimes against persons between 1.30% and 1.56% and a decrease in property crimes between 0.64% and 0.73%. Furthermore, in the case of the United States, a study found that a 10 percent increase in interscholastic sport participation in high schools reduces school disturbances by 0.4 to 2 percent, depending on the school's size.

The potential of sport interventions for crime and violence is maximised when they have a holistic approach, which includes facilitating engagement, ensuring consistency, fostering individual development, offering structure and supervision, and providing future pathways for participants. Such an approach helps minimise the potential for unintended adverse effects identified in the existing literature. More research is needed on the impact of Sport for Development interventions on crime and violence prevention in low and middle-income countries.

7. Peacebuilding

Sport can help peacebuilding efforts once conflicting parties agree on de-escalation. Through developing individual skills, sport can help heal and rehabilitate traumatised individuals. It can help bring together formerly conflicting parties, move them away from conflictive symbols and identities, and create a sense of security and normality. Sport can foster rules-based, democratic, and peaceful coexistence and help parties learn to resolve conflict constructively and amicably. Evidence of the impact of sport in peacebuilding is still incipient but can

be found in initiatives such as PeacePlayers. This programme, initially implemented in the Middle East, helped Jewish boys increase their regard for their Arab-Palestinian counterparts as measured by an index comprising willingness for social closeness and the ability to share the perspective of the other, among other concepts.

Further research is recommended to identify specific areas where impact is feasible, understand the processes through which effects can be achieved, and determine the magnitude of these effects.

8. Environmental sustainability

Sport can positively impact the environment by significantly reducing its environmental footprint. One way to do this is by reducing the carbon footprint of sporting facilities' construction and operations. Evidence shows that sports facilities and events can be designed and managed for this purpose. Furthermore, sport can also help raise ecological awareness and inspire climate-friendly behaviour. Studies have shown that sports teams and clubs can influence sports fans' knowledge, values, identities, and expectations regarding the environment when they develop specific initiatives, such as "green games." Finally, recent literature confirms the significant potential of walking and cycling to reduce humanity's carbon footprint substantially. For example, data from European cities has found that cyclists had 84% lower life cycle CO₂ emissions than non-cyclists. Furthermore, another study estimated that if cycling in the United Kingdom returned to its popularity of the 1940s - when the average citizen cycled six times more per year than today - CO₂ emissions would be reduced by 7.7 million tons yearly.

Policy-makers could consider regulating reductions in sport's carbon footprint. For example, they could require sporting events to facilitate carpooling or busing, increase parking costs at venues, prioritise competitions between nearby clubs over those with distant fan bases, and mandate recycling programmes. Furthermore, sport stakeholders could leverage the "green" investments of sport clubs, teams, and facilities to build credibility among fan bases, transmit environmentally relevant information, and influence participants' values, identities, and expectations. Also, cities should increase their investments in active mobility by building adequate infrastructure, and promoting the use of active mobility.

9. Multi-purpose interventions geared towards several dimensions

When appropriately designed, Sport for Development programmes have the potential to positively impact several individual and social dimensions simultaneously. Evidence regarding the impact of multipurpose interventions is incipient but very encouraging. An example from the United Kingdom is Chances, a Social Impact Bond programme that focuses on children and youths who present low school attendance, are recent offenders, are looked after by public institutions, or are not in education, employment, or training. The programme operates with a network of local youth and sports organisations that work as intermediaries delivering sports and physical activities. Local authorities make payments when the sports-based service provider demonstrates effects on previously agreed outcomes.

General conclusions and cross-cutting recommendations

The analysis performed for this study strongly supports the conclusion that investing in Sport for Development can be expected to result in positive social impacts in all the eight dimensions analysed if intentionally designed and implemented for impact. Cross-cutting conclusions and recommendations include:

1. Unleash the power of sport through data and evidence:

Currently, policy-makers and investors have a substantial body of evidence supporting policies and programmes that encourage public and private investment in sport and physical activity. Governments, investors, and academia should prioritise research that examines the wide-ranging benefits of sport. Further research is needed on the long-term social impact of sport participation.

2. Invest in sport as a cost-effective solution:

Policy-makers have a strong body of evidence supporting public and private investment in Sport for Development interventions. Social return on investment studies make it feasible to leverage this evidence, quantify the economic benefits of sport-based interventions, and make a compelling case to attract investments from both the private and public sectors.

3. Fostering collective action as the driving force behind social change:

Policy-makers have a strong body of evidence supporting public and private investment in Sport for Development interventions. Social return on investment studies make it feasible to leverage this evidence, quantify the economic benefits of sport-based interventions, and make a compelling case to attract investments from both the private and public sectors.

4. Make sport and physical activity a cross-sectoral priority and integrate into public policies in general to maximise contributions to social, economic, and environmental outcomes:

Evidence of sport's impact across various dimensions goes beyond the playing field. Therefore, sport should be considered in the planning, development, and implementation of policies across sectors, also considering the pre-conditions and assumptions that must be in place for the expected causality to materialise. Additionally, research should strengthen our understanding of the specific mechanisms through which sport impacts social outcomes.

5. Co-create Sport for Development interventions that are intersectional and designed for impact:

Evidence of sport's impact across various dimensions goes beyond the playing field. Therefore, sport should be considered in the planning, development, and implementation of policies across sectors, also considering the pre-conditions and assumptions that must be in place for the expected causality to materialise. Additionally, research should strengthen our understanding of the specific mechanisms through which sport impacts social outcomes.

1.

Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1. Sport as a driver for positive social change

Sport can be a powerful catalyst for social development, transcending mere physical activity to address multifaceted societal challenges. The preamble to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)² recognises the key role that sport plays in contributing to solving the most pressing issues globally:

“Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognize the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives”.

UNESCO’s [International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport](#) acknowledges that sport, when appropriately organised, taught, resourced and practised, can have distinct contributions towards a wide range of benefits to individuals, families, communities and society at large.

The Seventh International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport ([MINEPS VII](#)) acknowledged the importance of qualitative and quantitative data in guiding policy and interventions in physical education and sport and mobilising investments in these areas. This aligns with the work initiated under [Action 2 of the MINEPS VI Outcome Document](#) to measure the contribution of sport across a range of SDGs.

UNESCO’s sport flagship initiative, [Fit for Life](#), a strategic programme endorsed by [MINEPS VII](#) and supported by a global compact of partners, strives to harness the power of sport and quality physical education for sustainable, social development. It is designed to activate smart investments in sport and physical education to boost social and developmental outcomes, particularly in equality, education and employability, and well-being.

This report aims to demonstrate the business – and the government – case of Sport for Development by showcasing solid research, successful initiatives and assessing the reported benefits. The report also aims to lay the foundations for harmonising and enhancing evidence on, and the measurement of, the social impact and value-added of sport, as a central pillar of UNESCO’s sport flagship initiative, [Fit for Life](#).

How is Fit for Life maximising the social impact of sport?

Through its Global Alliance of public and private sector partners, Fit for Life acts as a framework for collective action, harnessing the power of sport to achieve positive outcomes in social dimensions such as equality, education and employability, and physical and mental well-being.

Fit for Life prioritises activities that:

- Increase grassroots³ participation in sport, QPE (quality physical education) and physical activity (PA);
- Build the capacity of key national stakeholder groups (policy-makers, educators and civil society) to deliver high-impact activities that benefit individuals and communities;
- Support Member States in developing inclusive sport and physical education (PE) policies informed by data and knowledge of good practises.
- Generate and share evidence on sport’s impact on equality, education and employability, and well-being to inform policy and investment decisions.

2. United Nations, “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

3. Grassroots sport refers to amateur, non-professional participation in sport and recreation where participants are not compensated for their participation.

1.2. Mobilising action to maximise the value of sport

This report uses three related but distinct terms: sport, Sport for Development, and sport interventions. Distinguishing between the three is important because the existing literature sometimes refers to one but not necessarily the others.

For the purposes of this report, *sport* is used as a generic term “*comprising physical activity, sport for all, physical play, recreation, dance, organised, casual, competitive, traditional and indigenous sports and games in their diverse forms*”⁴.

In turn, the term *Sport for Development* (SFD) refers to the concept of intentionally using sport to achieve health-related and/or other social objectives. SFD programmes can also be referred to as “*Sport-based interventions*”. It is a well-established concept in research and practise. The existing literature further identifies two categories within SFD, in function of the centrality of sport within the search for other goals:

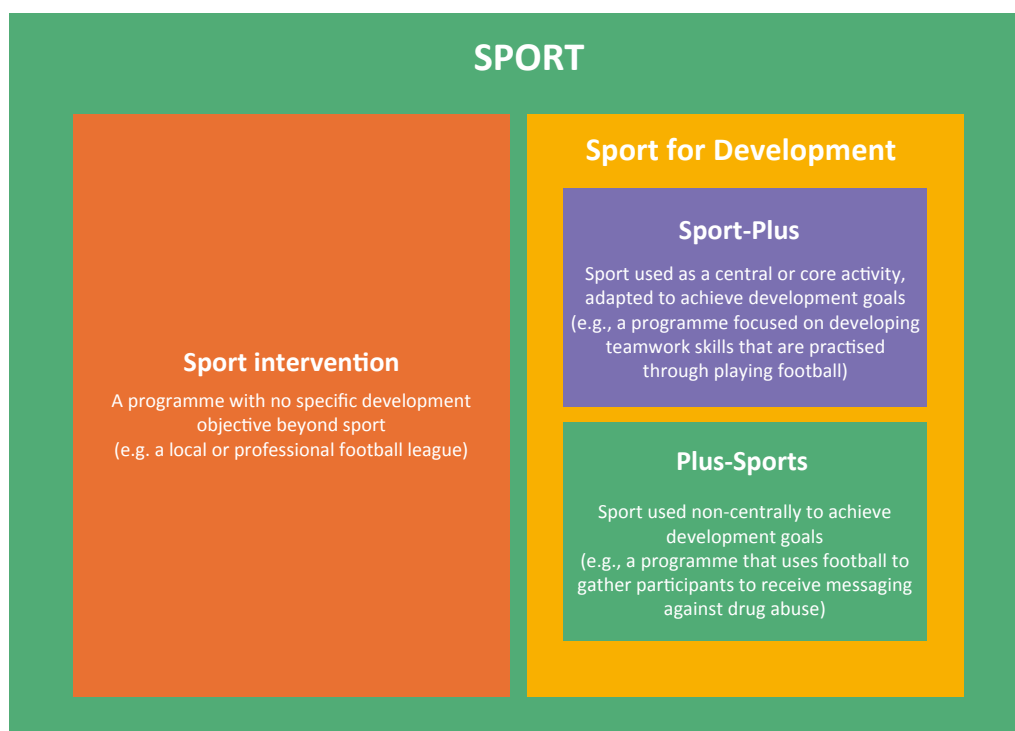
- *Sport-Plus*, referring to interventions in which sport is used as a central or core activity, which is adapted to achieve goals in other topics; and
- *Plus-Sport*, that is, interventions in which sport is used non-centrally - as an entry point, a means, or as part of a set of components - to achieve development goals.

These two considerations can also be referred to as the impact *in* and *through* sport.

Finally, the report uses the term *sport intervention* to refer to instances of sport with no specific development objective (beyond practising sport).

Figure 1 graphically explains the inter-relationship between these concepts and provides a few examples.

Figure 1. Sport, Sport for Development, and Sport Interventions



4. UNESCO, “Kazan Action Plan.”

1.3. Objectives and structure of the report

This report aims to demonstrate the relevance of sport in delivering social impact by presenting evidence of its tangible and intangible value-added in driving social outcomes. For this reason, it specifically aims to:

- a. Present current evidence on the social impact of sport to promote innovative social investment models.
- b. Review research on physical activity, sport, and Sport for Development interventions for delivering social impact
- c. Identify gaps and shortcomings of the existing evidence base to advocate for additional research in the field.
- d. Propose actionable recommendations to enhance the role of sport in achieving social outcomes.

The report addresses these objectives across the following eight social impact dimensions (for more detail, see [Chapter 3](#)):

1. Health and Well-being
2. Equality and Social Inclusion
3. Education and Labour Outcomes
4. Youth Empowerment and Civic Engagement
5. Economic Development
6. Security, Crime, and Violence Prevention
7. Peacebuilding
8. Environmental Sustainability

The report is structured to provide a comprehensive analysis of the social value of sport, its impact dimensions, and actionable recommendations. [Chapter 2](#) explores previous initiatives that have measured the impact of sport, discusses methods for assessing sport's social impact at an aggregate level, and highlights sport's contributions to global policy agendas. [Chapter 3](#) delves into the specific dimensions of social impact in and through sport, including health and well-being, equality and social inclusion, education and labour outcomes, youth empowerment and civic engagement, economic development, security, crime and violence prevention, peacebuilding, and environmental sustainability. Each subchapter provides detailed insights and evidence for these impacts. Finally, [Chapter 4](#) presents general conclusions and recommendations, followed by specific conclusions on each dimension discussed, offering a strategic roadmap for harnessing the full potential of sport for social impact.

A crucial cross-cutting issue in social impact is intersectionality. The concept of intersectionality describes how social identities such as race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, and others intersect and interact to create unique experiences, and how these overlapping identities cannot be understood in isolation from one another. In sport, intersectionality is especially important for women, since they often face participation barriers additional to (and inseparable from) those of gender discrimination. Throughout the report, the issue of intersectionality is addressed in two ways: as a core focus in the Equality and Social Inclusion dimension ([Section 3.2](#)), and as a dedicated subsection in each of the remaining dimensions.

2.

The Social Value of Sport

2. The Social value of sport

This chapter explores the broad social value of sport, beginning with its impact at the individual level and extending to its institutional effects. The discussion starts with how participation in sport enhances personal well-being, fitness, and cognitive and social skills. It then examines how these individual benefits aggregate to produce positive outcomes within communities, institutions, and society at large. Previous initiatives that have measured the social impact of sport are reviewed, highlighting key methodologies and findings. Additionally, methods for assessing sport's social impact at an aggregate level are discussed to provide a comprehensive understanding of its wide-ranging effects. The chapter concludes by emphasising sport's significant contributions to global policy agendas, demonstrating its potential to drive progress in human rights and development agendas.

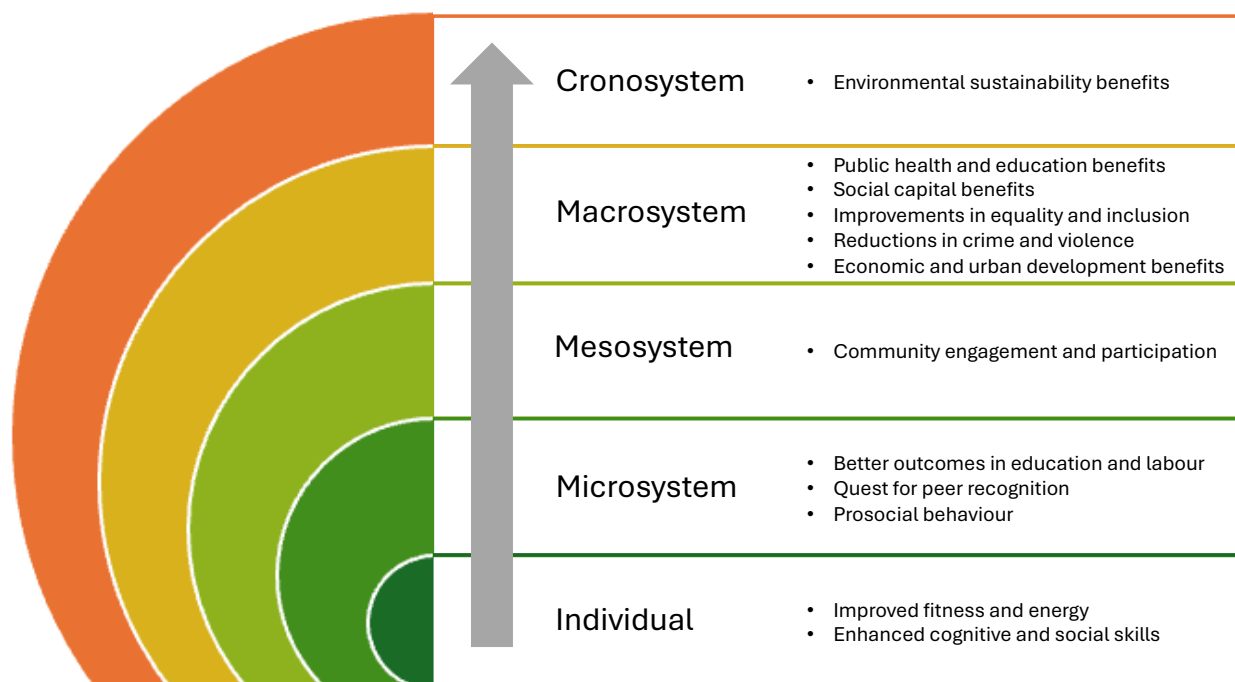
2.1. The wide-ranging value of sport: from individual to institutional level

The wide-ranging social benefits of sport have effects at multiple levels, not only at the individual level. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory⁵ can be used to illustrate. This theoretical model explains how different environmental settings affect an individual's development⁶:

- **Individual Level:** This level is the most evidenced by research. Extensive research shows how participating in sports enhances individuals' physical fitness, cognitive abilities, and social skills, among many other attributes.
- **Microsystem Level:** This refers to the relationships between an individual and their immediate environment, such as family, school, and workplace. Evidence shows how sport improves individual capabilities, including better educational outcomes, improved work performance, and enhanced prosocial behaviour.
- **Mesosystem Levels:** The mesosystem includes broader social structures that influence participation and engagement in social life, such as neighbourhoods, media, government agencies, and supply networks. At this level, the role of sport in enhancing community engagement and civic participation has also been evidenced.
- **Macrosystem Level:** This encompasses the overarching cultural institutions like economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems. The potential impacts of sports at this level include public health improvements, increased social capital, greater equality and inclusion, crime and violence reduction, and economic development.
- **Chronosystem Level:** This level refers to changes and transitions over a person's lifetime. Sport can have long-term impacts on environmental sustainability.

5. Bronfenbrenner, "Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development."

6. Taylor et al., "A Review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport." proposes an alternative way of visualising sport's social impacts, by identifying several impact layers: a direct individual level, an intermediate individual layer, risk reduction on three dimensions (individual, family and society), intermediate social outcomes and high-level social outcomes.

Figure 2. Sport's impact on social systems

Source: Adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1997⁷, Taylor 2015⁸.

Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive review of existing evidence on the impact of sport across multiple dimensions. The higher the environmental level, the more complex it is to find solid evidence, because additional elements are at play. While this report will provide significant evidence at the individual level, it will focus its attention on research conducted at the community and national levels, attempting to quantify sport's tangible and intangible value.

To further expand the value of sport worldwide, it is imperative that diverse stakeholders collaborate and mobilise resources to conduct high-level research, consolidating the sport ecosystem as one that has a significant impact not only at the individual level but also the community and societal levels.

2.2. Previous initiatives measuring the impact of sport

This report builds on previous initiatives undertaken by various organisations to measure the value and impact of sport. The following is a non-comprehensive list of relevant initiatives:

- The Sport and SDG Indicator Toolkit⁹, elaborated by the Commonwealth Secretariat as a follow-up to Action 2 of the MINEPS VI Outcome Document¹⁰ (see Figure 3).
- *The Global Sport and Sustainable Development Goals Impact Report*¹¹. The document, produced by the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO, provides the first (baseline) measurement of several indicators regarding sport's contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- *A review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport*¹². The report reviews the evidence base on the social impacts of sport and culture, based on a systematic review of relevant literature. It provides relevant data on four main domains: improved health, reduced crime, increased social capital, and improved education outcomes.

7. Bronfenbrenner.

8. Taylor et al., "A Review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport."

9. Hatton et al., "Measuring the Contribution of Sport, Physical Education and Physical Activity to the Sustainable Development Goals. Sport & SDG Toolkit."

10. UNESCO, "Kazan Action Plan."

11. The Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO, "Policy Brief - The Global Sport and Sustainable Development Goals Impact Report."

12. Taylor et al., "A Review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport."

- *El deporte como herramienta para el desarrollo sostenible*¹³ (Sport as a tool for sustainable development). Produced by Secretaría General Iberoamericana and Consejo Iberoamericano del Deporte, the report examines how sports can be used to improve outcomes in six dimensions: physical and mental wellbeing, education and employment, gender equality, inclusion of marginalised and rural peoples, social capital, and peaceful and cohesive communities.
- *Harnessing the Power of Sport for Development and Peace: Recommendations to Governments*¹⁴. The publication, produced by the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (SDP IWG), intends to raise awareness about the potential of Sport for Development and peace and provide recommendations to policy-makers on the design and implementation of SFD interventions, policies, and programmes.
- *Sports for development*¹⁵. Produced by the Inter-American Development Bank, this monograph reviews existing evidence on SFD's potential impacts and provides information about bank-supported interventions in the matter.
- *Understanding the social and economic value of an incredible industry*¹⁶. Produced by the THiNK Active Research Centre, this publication discusses the available evidence on sport's contributions to several outcome areas: healthcare savings from better physical and mental health, macroeconomic positive impacts, academic achievement, and individual capital development, social cohesion and crime prevention, and subjective well-being perception.
- *UEFA Grow*. The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) developed a cost-benefit analysis model to quantify the benefits of football across 55 European countries in three categories: health, society, and economy. The model is built on rigorous academic research on how sport impacts these dimensions and its economic impact. UEFA leverages data from football members about costs at the regional, club, and player levels. It is a significant example of using the power of data to assist cities and other stakeholders in identifying the social benefits of sports – currently expanded to rugby, basketball, badminton and floorball.
- *Impact Investment in Sport - Innovating the funding of Sport for Development*¹⁷: This UNESCO report explores social impact investment in sport (IIS) as an opportunity to scale up investment in SFD in a way that generates measurable benefits to sports ministries and their partners within and beyond governments in pursuit of specific national and local priorities.

2.3. Measuring sport's social impact at the aggregate level

Current data on physical activity, sport interventions and Sport for Development interventions across regions is insufficient to draw definitive conclusions about their impact at the global aggregate level. To reach conclusive evidence on this impact at the global level, an aggregate analysis is required. There are two prerequisites needed for undertaking such analysis:

- Conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of physical activity, sport initiatives, and SFD interventions at multiple levels. [Chapter 3](#) outlines the positive impacts of sport, which are well-evidenced within each of the eight dimensions discussed in this report.
- Defining a method to aggregate, discount, and compare these impacts. Several studies have estimated the social return on investment (SROI), or the cost-benefit ratio, of investing in sport in various regions of the world. These studies attempt to account for the value that an investment creates relative to its costs. In the case of SFD or sports interventions, the costs include expenses for the construction, maintenance, and operation of facilities, salaries of coaches and social workers, equipment, and potential negative unintended consequences (e.g., caring for injuries). On the other hand, SFD interventions and sport interventions generate value—intended consequences—in several areas, which can be valued in monetary terms using economic techniques.

13. Consejo Iberoamericano del Deporte, "El Deporte Como Herramienta Para El Desarrollo Sostenible."

14. Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, "Harnessing the Power of Sport for Development and Peace: Recommendations to Governments."

15. Jaitman and Scartascini, "Sports for Development."

16. Jimenez et al., "Understanding the Social and Economic Value of an Incredible Industry..."

17. Chih Hoong Sin, *Impact Investment in Sport: Innovating the Funding of Sport for Development*.

The reader can find further details in [Appendix A](#).

Key findings of SROI studies across regions

Several studies conclude that investing in sport and physical activity can yield significant societal benefits, making it economically sensible to invest in such programmes.

For instance:

- A study¹⁸ in England (2013-2014) focusing on sport in general found an SROI of 1.91, meaning every pound invested in sport yielded 1.91 pounds in benefits.
- Another study¹⁹ conducted by the Sport Industry Research Centre at Sheffield Hallam University in England (2017-2018), also focusing on sport in general, showed an SROI of 3.28, with 71.61 billion GBP in social value generated from 21.85 billion GBP of inputs.
- The Grassroot Soccer programme²⁰, which promoted youth employability and leadership through sport in South Africa, demonstrated an SROI of 1.72 ZAR per ZAR invested²¹.
- The Girls Are on The Soccer Field programme²² in Turkey reported an SROI of 12.45 TRY per TRY invested.

Even if existing studies do not cover every region of the world, their results point to an important conclusion: investing in sport to achieve social development outcomes can yield significant rewards, above and beyond its costs. It makes not only social but also economic sense to invest in Sport.

2.4. Sport cross-cutting contribution to global policy agendas

The influence of sport extends far beyond SROI calculations. Sport has the potential to contribute to numerous policy agendas significantly. For instance, using sport for developmental purposes aligns with relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and with specific indicators developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat under action 2 of the MINEPS VI²³.

Additionally, the dimensions identified in this Report correspond with other development guidelines and human rights treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). [Figure 3](#) depicts the alignment of these policy instruments with sport for social impact dimensions. By recognising and harnessing the multifaceted benefits of sport, policy-makers and stakeholders can leverage it as a powerful tool to address a wide array of societal challenges.

18. Davies et al., "Social Return on Investment (SROI) in Sport."

19. Davies et al., "Social Return on Investment of Sport and Physical Activity in England."

20. Sanders and Raptis, "Changing the Game - Can A Sport-Based Youth Development Generate a Positive Social Return on Investment?"

21. Sanders and Raptis.

22. Özgün, "Girls Are On the Soccer Field Academy."

23. The Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO, "Policy Brief - The Global Sport and Sustainable Development Goals Impact Report."

Figure 3. Alignment of the social impact of sport dimensions with development policy instruments

	Specific			Transversal	
	Sustainable Development Goals			Global and Regional Policy Instruments	HHRR Instruments
	SDG	SDG and Sport Indicators ¹ *			
Physical and Mental Health	SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being	Category 1 1,2,3,5	Category 2 S3.1 – .9	WHO Guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
Equality and Social Inclusion	SDG 5: Gender Equality SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities	Category 1 1,5,6,9,15,16	Category 2 S5.1 – .11 S10.1 – .10	- UN Women Sport for Generation Equality Principles - UN Plan of Action to Counter Hate Speech through Engagement with Sport	MINEPS VI: Sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (2017)
Education and Labour Outcomes	SDG 4: Quality Education SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	Category 1 4,11,12	Category 2 S4.1 – .13	ILO Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport 2020	Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
Youth Empowerment and Civic Engagement	SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	Category 1 1,9	Category 2 S10.8 – .9	- UN Youth 2030 Strategy - UNICEF Children's Rights in Sport Principles	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
Economic Development	SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Category 1 7,8	Category 2 S8.1 – .16	Non-applicable at the global level	United Nations Action Plan on Sport (2018)
Security, Crime and Violence Prevention	SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	Category 1 20	Category 2 S16.1, .7 – .12	Non-applicable at the global level	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
Peacebuilding	SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	Non-applicable	Non-applicable	UN Plan of Action to Counter Hate Speech through Engagement with Sport	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
Environmental Sustainability	SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	Category 1 13,17,19,23	Category 2 S11.6 – .9 S12.1 – .12 S13.1 – .13	- UNCCC Sports for Climate Action Framework - UNEP Sports for Nature: Setting a Baseline Handbook	Ibero-American Indicators of Sport and Development (2023)

* SDG and Sport Indicators have two categories: Category 1 are more general and globally measurable, while Category 2 are target-specific and identify more detailed measures for impact.
¹ The Commonwealth, "Sport and SDG Indicators Toolkit", 2020.

3.

Dimensions of Social Impact In and Through Sport

3. Dimensions of social impact in and through sport

This chapter presents eight dimensions of social impact in and through sport. These dimensions emerged from thematic analysis conducted after retrieving articles through a rapid review methodology. The review included a wide range of academic articles and policy documents.

These are the eight dimensions of the social impact of sport (see [Figure 4](#)):

Figure 4. Dimensions of the social impact of sport



Source: UNESCO

[Figure 5](#) shows the summary of the outcomes of sport and the key areas with strong evidence. These results helped define the eight dimensions outlined in this report. For example, in terms of Education and Labour Outcomes, the literature indicates that participation in sports helps individuals develop cognitive and soft skills, acquire behaviours and skills valued in the job market, and foster a cooperative and teamwork-orientated mindset. These immediate effects can lead to improved school attendance and enrolment, positive behaviours and attitudes toward education, higher educational attainment, and better job quality and wages. Additionally, sports engagement can reduce the number and proportion of individuals not in education, employment, or training (NEET).

In the following subsections, each of these dimensions will be thoroughly explored.

Figure 5. Causality theories for sport's impact on eight dimensions of social development

THEORIES OF CAUSALITY FOR SPORTS' POTENTIAL EFFECT ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES	VARIABLES FOR WHICH THERE IS EVIDENCE OF SPORTS' IMPACT	SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DIMENSIONS
According to the literature, sports may:  ...and there is quantitative evidence indicating that sports can lead to:  ... which implies a positive impact in the dimension of:		
Decrease risk of premature mortality and non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular, depression, some types of cancers, obesity, osteoporosis, stroke, and anxiety	- Improvement of health indicators like cardiovascular health, bone density, and quality of life scores - Improvements in life expectancy	Health and Well-being
- Improve women's and girl's health, well-being, educational aspirations, self-image, and academic achievement - Empower minorities, challenging stereotypes and societal norms that limit participation - Bring people from diverse backgrounds together, promoting teamwork, cooperation, mutual respect, and creating a sense of community and belonging - Leverage resources for targeted interventions to promote a healthy lifestyle for people with disabilities and improve their participation in sports and cultural activities	- Increased engagement of women and minority groups in sustained physical activity and improved fitness indicators - Improvements in women's school attainment and access to quality jobs - Improvements in attitudes toward women and social minorities	Equality and Social Inclusion
- Help develop cognitive and soft skills like executive planning, attention, simultaneous and successive tasks, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and social competence - Train skills and behaviours rewarded by the job market, such as efficiency, productivity, confidence, motivation, persistence, resilience, and stress management - Develop a cooperative and group work mindset	- Improvements in school attendance and enrolment - Improvements in behaviours and attitudes toward school - Improvements in educational attainment - Reduction of people in NEET - Improvements in quality of jobs/wages for individuals	Education and Labour Outcomes
- Contribute to the development of social capital formation and character-building - Expose individuals and groups to political behaviours and activities, increasing the likelihood of developing a political disposition and fostering civic engagement	- Increased volunteering and community engagement - Increased political involvement	Youth Empowerment and Civic Engagement
- Contribute to other economic sectors and to the overall economy of local communities, nations, and the world - Generate savings for both individuals and societies at large - Position cycling as an efficient form of urban mobility - Foster labour productivity and entrepreneurship orientations in individuals - Boost economic growth and urban development through sporting events	- National and global GDP growth - Healthcare savings for individuals and governments - Improved productivity and quality of labour - Mobility time and money savings for individuals - Urban and infrastructure development - Increased sports-related entrepreneurship	Economic Development
- Help people form social bonds, which discourage deviant behaviour - Allow participants to release aggression cathartically - Reduce the opportunity for participation in crime, by diverting time and attention - Instil rules-respecting, socially approved behaviour - Help people develop social and personal skills that reduce the risk of crime and violence - Provide a medium in which risk factors can be reduced or managed, while protective factors are enhanced, allowing for personal growth and instilling prosocial values	- Reductions in crime against persons and property - Reduction in juvenile crime - Reduction in school disturbances	Security, Crime and Violence Prevention
- Provide healing and rehabilitation to traumatised individuals - Help bring together formerly conflicting parties and assist in restructuring their relationship - Help people move away from conflictive symbols and identities and help develop new, shared ones - Serve as "hooks" to involve people in efforts to foster rules-based, democratic, peaceful coexistence - Facilitate the reconciliation of conflicting parties, by providing a sense of security and normality - Provide a focal point around which parties learn to resolve conflict constructively and amicably	Improvements in people's regard for, and willingness to have social closeness with, individuals from "outside" groups	Peacebuilding
"Green" its operations, substantially limiting its environmental footprint - Raise environmental awareness and inspire climate-friendly behaviour - Promote the use of active mobility, thus reducing carbon emissions	- Reductions in the carbon footprint of sports facilities and events - Improvements in fans' values, beliefs, and expectations regarding care for the environment - Reductions in carbon emissions due to the substitution of fossil-fuel mobility with active modes of mobility	Environmental Sustainability

3.1. Health and well-being

A sedentary lifestyle is directly linked to adverse health and well-being outcomes. Health and well-being encompass physical, mental, and social aspects of a person’s overall quality of life. Usually, health refers to the state of a person’s physical and mental condition, including the absence of illness or disease. Well-being is a broader concept that includes self-confidence, community engagement, social inclusion, and happiness or satisfaction²⁴.

Sport for Health and Well-being - Alignment with SDG specific targets

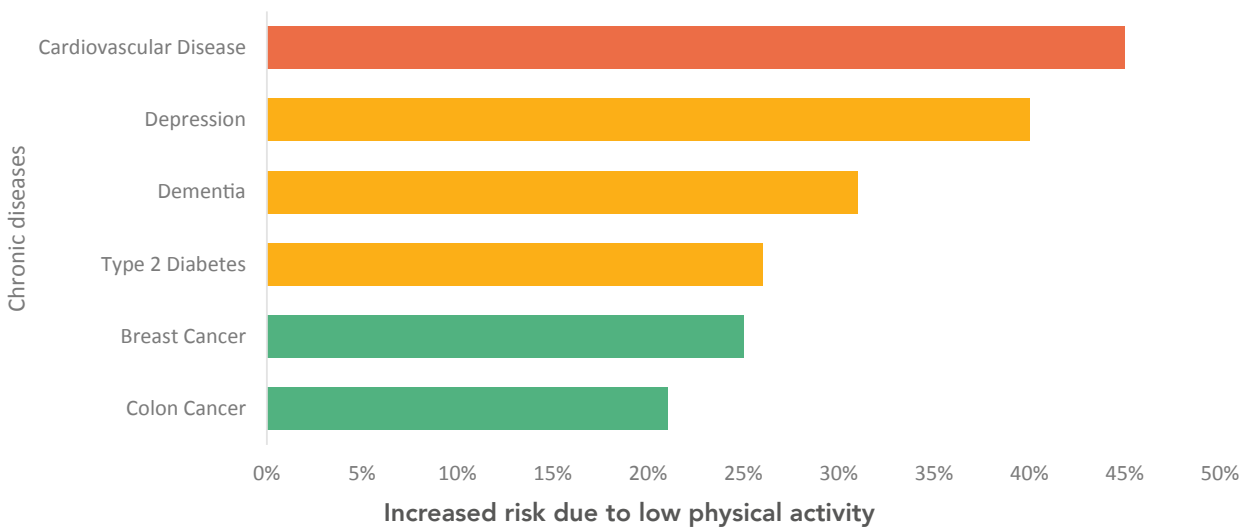
SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages. Particularly:

- **Target 3.4:** By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

A sedentary lifestyle is characterised by low physical activity. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that adults engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week (like brisk walking), or at least 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week (with activities like running or taking an aerobics class). For children (people under 18 years old), the WHO recommendation is at least 60 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per day²⁵.

Figure 6. Increased risk due to low physical activity



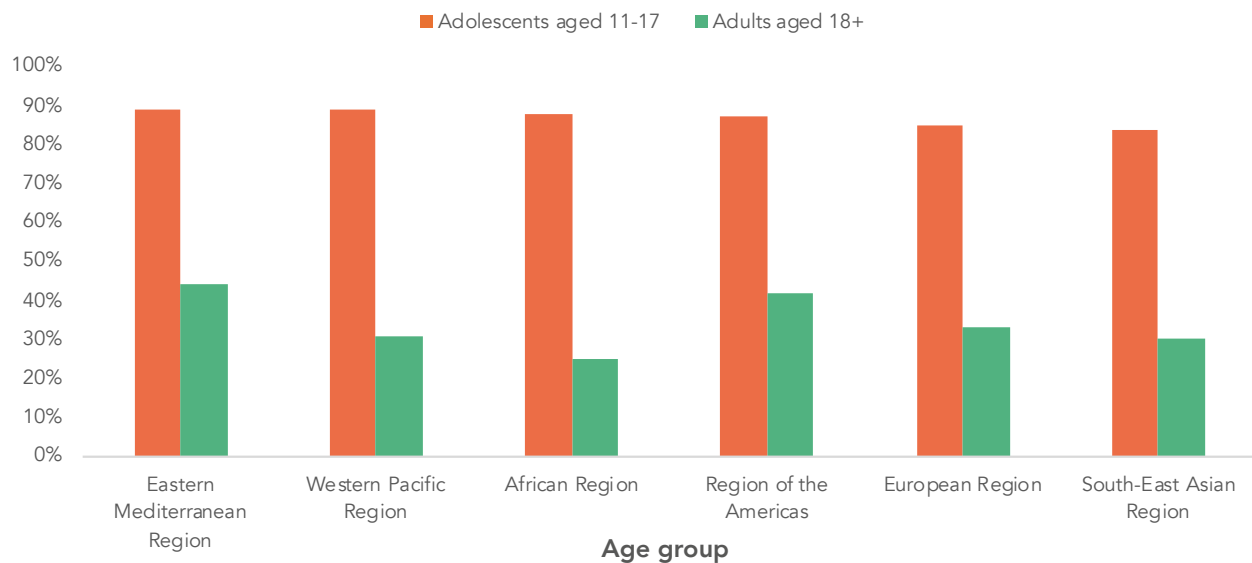
Source: Data from Physical Activity Guidelines Committee, 2018²⁶, Booth et al., 2017²⁷.

Low physical activity is associated with an increased risk of all-cause mortality and non-communicable diseases like cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer. Additionally, low physical activity can contribute to cognitive and mental health declines. Studies have shown that reduced physical activity levels are associated with impaired cognitive abilities and dementia in older adults²⁸.

24. Taylor et al., “A Review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport”; World Health Organisation, “Global Status Report on Physical Activity 2022.”
25. WHO Guidelines on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour.
26. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018, “PAGAC.”
27. Booth et al., “Role of Inactivity in Chronic Diseases.”
28. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018, “PAGAC”; Booth et al., “Role of Inactivity in Chronic Diseases.”

The world population, especially the youth, is at risk from a sedentary lifestyle. According to the Noncommunicable Diseases Data Portal published by the WHO, about 31% of the global adult population and 80% of adolescents do not meet the minimum guidelines for physical activity to improve and protect their health. The Eastern Mediterranean region exhibits the highest prevalence of low activity levels. High-income countries generally have a higher prevalence of physical inactivity than low-income countries. In adults, the levels of inactivity in high-income countries are around 36.8%, double that in low-income countries at around 16.2%²⁹.

Figure 7. Country average low activity prevalence by region



Source: WHO, 2024³⁰.

Physical inactivity is expected to bring significant costs to the world. Globally, almost 500 million new cases of preventable non-communicable diseases are predicted to occur between 2020 and 2030 due specifically to physical inactivity, incurring combined treatment costs of over 523.89 billion INT (301.8 billion USD)³¹. The annual cost of physical inactivity is estimated to be around 27 billion USD if there is no change in the current prevalence of physical inactivity³². This cost includes direct public health-care costs associated with non-communicable diseases and mental health conditions linked to physical inactivity.

Mental health conditions, like depression and dementia, will be the main burden for healthcare systems around the world, regardless of level of income or geography. For most regions and across levels of income, hypertension is the second most costly non-communicable disease. Providing access to sport and physical activity has the potential to save millions of lives and reduce health care costs significantly. These benefits can compound over time, provided that as population cohorts age, they will benefit from healthier lives for longer, improving the quality of life and reducing the care burden. This aligns with the concept of “active ageing”, defined by the WHO as “the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age”³³.

29. World Health Organisation, “Global Status Report on Physical Activity 2022.”

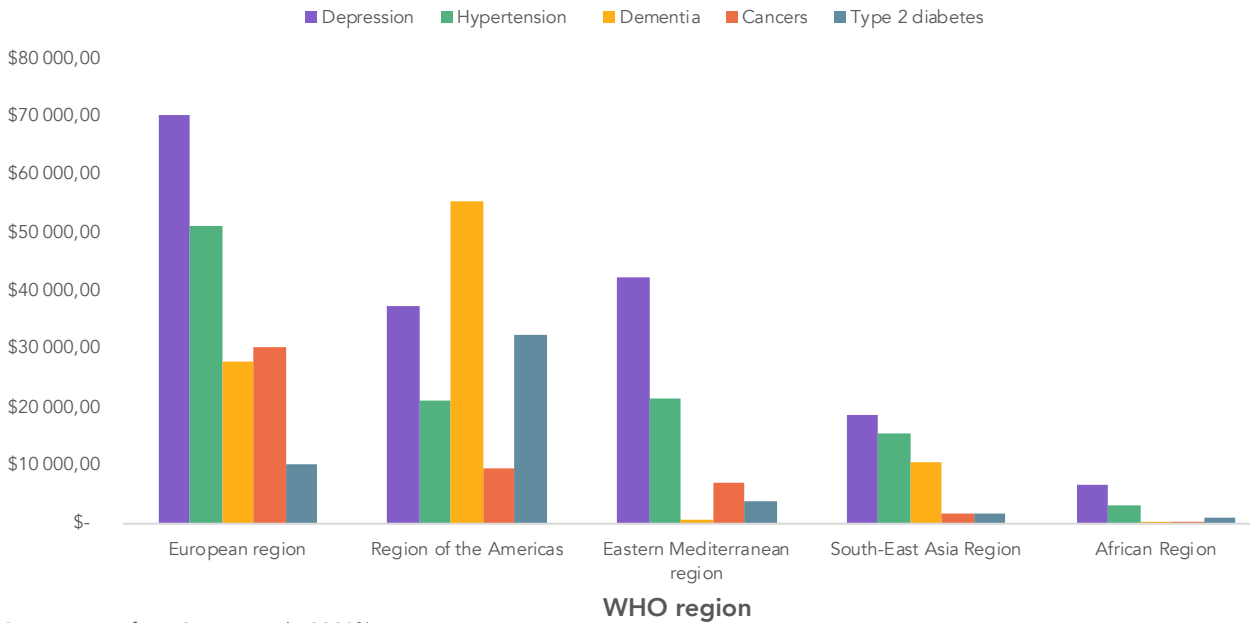
30. WHO, “Noncommunicable Diseases Data Portal.”

31. World Health Organisation, “Global Status Report on Physical Activity 2022”; Santos et al., “The Cost of Inaction on Physical Inactivity to Public Health-Care Systems”; Candari, Cylus, and Nolte, “Assessing the Economic Costs of Unhealthy Diets and Low Physical Activity.”

32. World Health Organisation, “Global Status Report on Physical Activity 2022.”

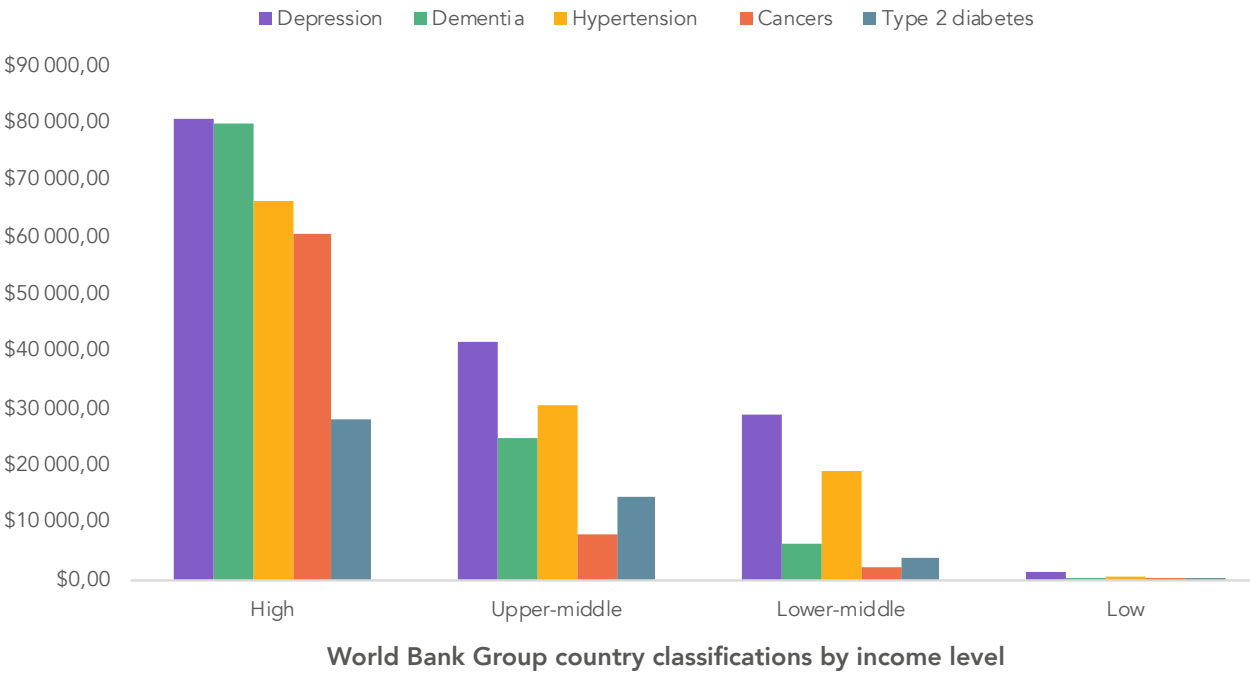
33. World Health Organisation, “Active Ageing A Policy Framework.”

Figure 8. Projected direct healthcare costs 2020-2030 by WHO region (in millions of International Dollars)



Source: Data from Santos et al., 2003³⁴.

Figure 9. Projected direct healthcare costs 2020-2030 by country income level (in millions of International Dollars)



Source: Data from Santos et al., 2003³⁵.

For this dimension, sport and physical activity directly impact the individual, micro, and mesosystems (See [Figure 2, Chapter 2](#)). As individuals participate in more activities, they improve their health and well-being and contribute to improving them at the community level and school systems. In the aggregate, these benefits can impact the macrosystem by reducing pressure on healthcare systems and improving economic and social benefits derived from a healthier society.

34. Santos et al., "The Cost of Inaction on Physical Inactivity to Public Health-Care Systems."
35. Santos et al., "The Cost of Inaction on Physical Inactivity to Public Health-Care Systems."

3.1.1. Contribution of sport and physical activity to a healthier life

There is compelling evidence that physical activity contributes to health and well-being through different mechanisms. At a glance, the main avenues of impact are:

- **Biological:** Physical activity helps to increase fitness levels, reduce the risk of cardiovascular and chronic diseases, and provide therapeutic benefits for certain chronic illnesses. Regular physical activity can prevent chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, some cancers, strokes, osteoporosis, and premature death. Participation in sport through SFD interventions is an effective avenue to engage in physical activity and realise these benefits.
- **Psychological:** Engaging in sport and physical activity boosts self-efficacy, distraction, and self-esteem and helps reduce stress and anxiety, ultimately improving psychological well-being and mental health. Psychological well-being is crucial in preventing and managing chronic diseases like cardiovascular issues³⁶.

3.1.2. Evidence for contributions

Evidence shows that even small amounts of physical activity can provide significant benefits. Mortality risks start to decrease once individuals regularly engage in moderate physical activity. Transitioning from being inactive to dedicating 100 minutes per week to activities like walking or cycling is linked with a significant risk reduction (approximately 20%). As activity levels rise, premature mortality risk decreases, albeit at a diminishing rate³⁷. Adhering to the minimum physical activity recommendations can reduce overall mortality worldwide.

Regular exercise has been proven to lower the risk of cardiovascular disease mortality³⁸. Studies have shown that engaging in activity daily can lead to a 30% to 40% decrease in the likelihood of cardiovascular-related deaths. Evidence suggests that the benefits of activity increase gradually. For instance, three hours per week of exercise can lower cardiovascular mortality rates by 16% for men and 22% for women. Moreover, engaging in light physical activities, like walking, for about four hours per week or more has been linked to a significant reduction of 27% among men and 24% among women in cardiovascular mortality.

Physical activity plays a crucial role in preventing type 2 diabetes. Studies indicate an inverse relationship between the volume of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity and the risk of type 2 diabetes. Specifically, moderate to vigorous physical activity for 150 to 300 minutes per week can reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by about 25% to 35%³⁹. The more physical activity a person engages in, the lower their risk. For individuals with type 2 diabetes, physical activity has been shown to have beneficial effects on several risk factors. These benefits include improved blood pressure, haemoglobin, and lipid profiles. Additionally, physical activity can lead to a 30% to 40% reduction in the risk of cardiovascular disease mortality, which is the leading cause of death in individuals with type 2 diabetes. The evidence suggests that physical activity can be particularly beneficial for individuals at the most significant risk for disease progression, and the effects tend to become more critical over more extended periods with consistent physical activity⁴⁰.

Regarding cancer, physical activity also reduces the risk of certain types, such as breast and colorectal cancer⁴¹. For instance, breast cancer risk decreases with more physical activity based on research found in several meta-analyses. Research suggests a 2% lower risk of breast cancer for every increment of 10 hours of light activity per week and a 3% for every increment of four hours of moderate activity, like walking⁴². The same logic applies to colorectal cancer, where studies show strong evidence that individuals with higher levels of physical activity have a reduced risk of developing colon cancer of 24% compared to those engaging in the lowest levels of physical activity⁴³.

36. Taylor et al., "A Review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport."

37. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018, "PAGAC."

38. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018.

39. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018.

40. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018.

41. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018.

42. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018.

43. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018.

Additionally, physical activity and sport may help to reduce depressive symptoms and anxiety across the adult lifespan. There is evidence that even limited volumes and intensities of physical activity can reduce depressive symptoms. Engaging in more than 30 minutes per day of physical activity can reduce the odds of experiencing depression by 48%. There is specific evidence that sport participation is associated with improved mental health, mood, higher life satisfaction, self-esteem, and lower levels of mental distress and depressive symptoms. Additionally, the evidence indicates that sport participation has a protective effect on symptoms of depression and anxiety in young adulthood, particularly for individuals who participated in sports during adolescence⁴⁴. Greater frequency and intensity of activity have a more significant effect on reducing depressive symptoms.

Furthermore, regular physical activity has been shown to lower the risk of dementia and reduce the incidence of cognitive impairment in older adults. Studies have indicated that higher levels of daily activity and moderate to vigorous exercise are associated with a reduced risk of Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias⁴⁵. In general, physical activity can positively influence cognitive outcomes, with the most significant effects observed in measures of executive function, global cognition, and attention. In individuals with dementia, physical activity interventions have been shown to improve cognition.

Beyond positively impacting health outcomes, participation in team sports has been shown to improve mental health and overall well-being in several ways. For children and adolescents, studies consistently show that involvement in sport is associated with improved self-esteem, reduced anxiety and depression, increased emotional regulation, and a greater sense of competence. Team sports, in particular, have been linked to enhanced social skills, a stronger sense of belonging, and better coping mechanisms for dealing with challenges. These benefits are likely due to the physical activity, social interaction, and goal setting that sport provides⁴⁶. Participating in team sports provides individuals with opportunities to develop new skills, overcome challenges, build self-control, and experience a sense of mastery, all of which can translate into greater confidence, coping abilities, and overall well-being in various aspects of life⁴⁷.

Case study: APPLE Schools

Canada

APPLE Schools is an initiative promoting healthy lifestyles in schools. It covers over 33,000 students annually across 100 schools in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, and the Northwest Territories. Since 2007, it has invested 25 million CAD to combat childhood obesity and related chronic diseases.

The APPLE Schools apply an approach called Comprehensive School Health, which promotes healthy eating and active lifestyle through changes in culture and environment.

Since its inception, the programme has promoted an evidence-based approach. To date, there are more than 100 academic papers about it. Recently, an impact evaluation was implemented to identify the results of promoting physical activity and fitness in children. The study found that exposure to APPLE Schools was associated with greater steps per hour during school and non-school hours compared to schools that did not have the intervention. Specifically, children from APPLE Schools experienced an increase of 1,221 steps per day on school days and 2,001 steps per day on weekends compared to children from comparison schools. The intervention sustainably increased physical activity levels in the intervention schools relative to those in comparison schools. The effects were still observed two years after the intervention was introduced.

Source: Vander Ploeg et al., 2014⁴⁸.

44.

Eather et al., "The Impact of Sports Participation on Mental Health and Social Outcomes in Adults."

45.

Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018, "PAGAC."

46.

Eime et al., "A Systematic Review of the Psychological and Social Benefits of Participation in Sport for Children and Adolescents."

47.

Eather et al., "The Impact of Sports Participation on Mental Health and Social Outcomes in Adults."

48.

Vander Ploeg et al., "School-Based Health Promotion and Physical Activity During and After School Hours."

Case study: VAMOS Programme (Active Living, Enhancing Health)**Brazil**

The VAMOS programme is a health promotion initiative in Brazil designed for adults and older adults of both sexes, with any level of education, and from different regions. It was launched in 2012. The programme aims to promote physical activity and healthy eating habits, and it can be adapted to fit the needs of different locations and cultures. It is based on empowerment, improving individual abilities, and overcoming barriers to healthier living.

VAMOS training is provided through distance learning, lasting approximately 20 hours and including a certification test. The programme is implemented in weekly meetings lasting from one to two hours over three to five months. It costs approximately 150 BRL (50 USD) per person, including educational materials and a pedometer for self-monitoring physical activity levels. The ultimate goal of VAMOS is to increase autonomy in health choices and reduce chronic diseases in the long term. Initially targeted to senior adults, the intervention has evolved to include all adults.

Recently, an intervention within the programme was implemented based on social cognitive theory, including elements such as self-efficacy, goal setting, self-monitoring, identification of social support and barriers, and solutions for the identified barriers. The programme participants were adults who were organised into groups limited to 20 individuals. These participants were involved in a health promotion programme utilising the VAMOS strategy, which aimed to motivate people to adopt a healthy lifestyle encompassing physical activity and good dietary habits. Participants in the intervention group attended weekly sessions for 12 weeks and were involved in objective measurements of usual physical activity and weight.

The study's results showed that the VAMOS strategy increased participants' time spent in moderate-vigorous intensity physical activity, improved dietary habits, and reduced weight. During the intervention, the proportion of participants in the control group who engaged in the minimum moderate-vigorous activity benchmark set by the programme increased by four percentage points. For the treatment group, the increase in this proportion was 10 percentage points.

Sources: Benedetti et al., 2017⁴⁹, Meurer et al., 2019⁵⁰.

3.1.3. Differentiated impacts of physical activity by intersectionality factors

Physical activity has a differentiated effect depending on an individual's characteristics. Beyond studies made on adults, there is a need to study health and well-being benefits based on intersectionality factors, particularly for children, women, and older adults. The Physical Activities Committee from the United States Government regularly conducts an extensive survey of state-of-the-art research on how physical activity impacts health. Table 1 summarises the benefits for these groups.

Table 1. Health and well-being benefits by intersectional factors: children, women and older adults

CHILDREN	
Between 3 and 6 years old	Improved bone health and weight status
Between 3 and 13 years old	Improved cognitive function
Between 3 and 17 years old	Improved cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness Improved bone health Improved cardiovascular risk factor status Improved weight status or adiposity Fewer symptoms of depression

49. Benedetti et al., "Logical model of a behavior change for community intervention – Active Life Improving Health – VAMOS."

50. Meurer et al., "Effectiveness of the VAMOS Strategy for Increasing Physical Activity and Healthy Dietary Habits."

PREGNANCY	
Pregnant (No risk to foetus from moderate-intensity physical activity)	Reduced risk of excessive weight gain Reduced risk of gestational diabetes
Postpartum	Reduced risk of postpartum depression
OLDER ADULTS	
Falls	Reduced incidence of falls and fall-related injuries
Physical function	Improved physical function

Source: Adapted from Table D-1. Physical Activity-Related Health Benefits for the General Population and Selected Populations Documented by the 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee⁵¹.

3.2. Equality and social inclusion

Sport and physical activity can enhance individual lives and strengthen communities by promoting health and well-being, fostering social connections, and encouraging teamwork and discipline. Providing equal access to sport and physical activity not only benefits individuals. Its impacts compound to higher-level systems at the community level, promoting an inclusive agenda and, ultimately, at the macrosystem (Figure 2, Chapter 2), strengthening social capital and levelling the ground for everyone to reach their potential.

Sport for Equality and Social Inclusion - Alignment with SDG specific targets

SDG 5: Gender equality. In particular

- **Target 5.1:** End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

SDG 10: Reduced inequalities. In particular

- **Target 10.3:** Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practises and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard

5

GENDER
EQUALITY



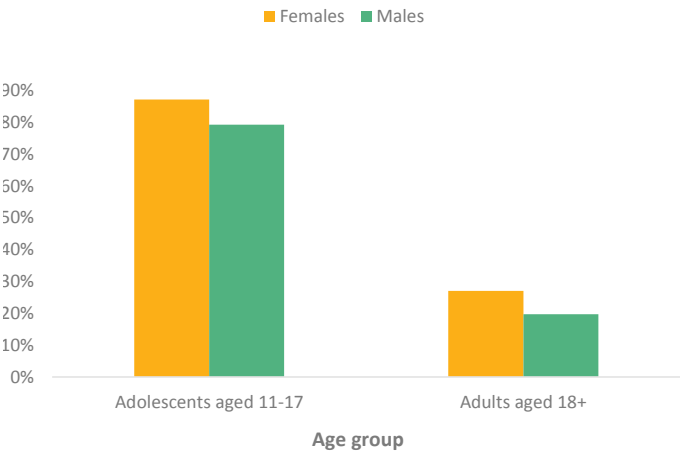
10

REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



However, the benefits of these activities are not equally accessible to all. Persistent gender barriers, along with significant inequalities faced by those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, some ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities, limit their participation and enjoyment. These disparities underscore the need for inclusive policies and programmes that address and dismantle these barriers, ensuring equitable opportunities for all to engage in and benefit from sport and physical activity⁵².

Figure 10. Average country prevalence of low levels of activity (WHO members)



Source: WHO, 2024⁵³.

51. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018, "PAGAC."
52. Bailey, "Evaluating the Relationship between Physical Education, Sport and Social Inclusion."
53. WHO, "Noncommunicable Diseases Data Portal."

There are consistent gender gaps in physical activities, putting women at higher risk of the consequences of a sedentary lifestyle. For adults, while the prevalence of low levels of activity worldwide is 24%, it is 33% for women, a gap of 9 percentage points. For adolescents, the gap persists. The average country prevalence of low activity levels for boys is 79%, and the proportion for girls is 87%. As noted in the previous section, women who do not engage in significant physical activity are more likely to suffer from chronic conditions like cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and some types of cancers; also, a higher risk of excessive weight gain, postpartum weight retention, future obesity, and the birth of an infant with macrosomia (large birth weight)⁵⁴. Particularly for women, there is a 25% increase in the risk of breast cancer. Other research shows that less participation in sports can limit opportunities to engage in leadership roles, lead to social isolation, have a negative impact on body image and self-esteem, and reinforce gender stereotypes⁵⁵.

Beyond gender gaps, research shows that social background can be associated with barriers worldwide to participation in sports⁵⁶. These backgrounds and their associated barriers can be summarised as follows:

Age

- Young Adults (16-40 years): Shortage of gender-appropriate facilities, shortage of suitable activities, time restrictions.
- Middle-aged People (40-60 years): Time restrictions.
- Elderly People (60+ years): Fatigue and lack of energy, health-related restrictions.

Women

- Lack of time, self-confidence, and support from peers, family, and teachers. Also, fear of being bullied or feeling inferior in physical education classes⁵⁷.
- Social stereotypes and negative attitudes towards women⁵⁸.
- Lack of access to infrastructure, including facilities, separate changing rooms, and social spaces⁵⁹.

People in low socioeconomic status

- Fatigue, lack of energy, and health-related restrictions.
- Financial restrictions.
- Time restrictions due to work commitments as they may have less flexibility in planning their everyday lives.
- Lack of access to sport facilities in areas where they live.

People with ethnic minority background

- Immigrants: Limited access or lack of knowledge of facilities, lack of social interaction, low motivation, religious and cultural norms, time restrictions, uncertain future.
- Asylum seekers: Lack of social interaction, low motivation, time restrictions, uncertain future.

People with disabilities

- Infrastructure obstacles: These include non-accessible athletic facilities, as well as hurdles to reach accessible facilities. For example: significant travel distances and local access barriers such as lack of transportation, sidewalks, and crossings⁵². Infrastructure obstacles also include a lack of accessible facilities like showers and changing rooms, accessible toilets, and disability-friendly exercise equipment.
- Psychological reasons: Personal perceptions, negative self-image, low confidence, anxiety, and stress.
- Organisational barriers: Lack of appropriate athletic programmes targeted to people with disabilities and adequately trained staff.
- Social barriers: Negative social attitudes toward disability, overprotectiveness in the family environment, and lack of inclusive programmes and services.
- Political and cultural barriers: Lack of recognition as participants or administrators of sport.

54. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018, "PAGAC."

55. Pedersen, Hansen, and Elmoose-Østerlund, "Motives and Barriers Related to Physical Activity and Sport across Social Backgrounds."

56. Pedersen, Hansen, and Elmoose-Østerlund.

57. Duffey et al., "Barriers and Facilitators of Physical Activity Participation in Adolescent Girls."

58. Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, "Harnessing the Power of Sport for Development and Peace: Recommendations to Governments."

59. Huggins and Randell, "The Contribution of Sports to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment"; Walseth and Fasting, "Sport as a Means of Integrating Minority Women."

Barriers that hinder people from participating in sport and physical activity can impact individuals and society as a whole. Health disparities become more pronounced when specific communities are less inclined to engage in activities that support their well-being. The lack of shared experiences in sport and physical activities hinders mutual understanding. It is crucial to overcome these obstacles to promote fairness, enhance health outcomes, and build stronger communities.

3.2.1. Contribution of sport to gender and social inclusion

Providing girls and young women with opportunities for participation and engagement in physical activity and sport can be a primary driver to reducing gender inequalities. Research has shown that sport and physical activity can positively influence girls' health, well-being, educational aspirations, self-esteem, and academic achievement⁶⁰.

There are health issues that affect women disproportionately. Depression affects twice as many women as men, and adolescent girls are particularly at risk. Women are more likely to experience depression, hesitate to disclose their feelings, and face stigma, affecting their willingness to seek help. Women have higher rates of major depression if they report sexual and emotional abuse as children⁶¹. The World Health Organisation estimates that depression will be the leading cause of disability among women by the 2020 decade. The gender gap in depression rates persists from adolescence to menopause, with girls twice as likely as boys to experience major depression. These disparities highlight the need for targeted interventions and support for women's mental health⁶².

Participation in sports improves women's and girls' general well-being. Evidence shows that participation in basketball, volleyball, and softball contributes positively to body image and, consequently, self-worth. Also, sport participation has been associated with improved physical competence and flexibility in gender roles, which all enhance self-worth and self-esteem among female athletes⁶³. Sport can help reduce gender inequality by promoting empowerment and challenging stereotypes and societal norms that limit their participation⁶⁴. Regarding academic achievement, sports participation from women in high school is associated with higher enrolment in advanced placement math and science courses⁶⁵.

While sport is an effective platform for social inclusion, SFD policies must be deliberately designed and implemented to achieve social goals. There is evidence that warns that sport, in the absence of specific mechanisms to address it, may play a role in perpetuating social hierarchies, preventing mobility from those at the bottom of these structures, and reinforcing discrimination patterns based on gender, race, and nationality. Also, there is a risk that engaging in sports activities could potentially divert focus and resources away from avenues for achieving social mobility especially for marginalised communities, which may happen if members from disadvantaged backgrounds spend a significant amount of time and energy on sport rather than focusing on education or gaining work experience⁶⁶.

Beyond promoting gender equality, sport benefits socially and economically disadvantaged people through different avenues, contributing to their well-being and social inclusion⁶⁷. This is because sport, as detailed in future sections, can positively impact social capital, labour, and education and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

Regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities, sport can bring numerous benefits, contributing to their physical and mental well-being, social cohesion, and overall quality of life. According to the 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee Scientific Report, physical activity programmes involving various modalities like walking, cycling, muscle strengthening, dancing, and balance activities can have positive effects on balance, strength, cardiovascular fitness, and overall health-related quality of life for people with disabilities like intellectual disabilities and Down syndrome⁶⁸. For specific disabilities like spinal cord injury and intellectual disability, there is evidence suggesting that physical activity can improve physical function in these populations as well. Also, research indicates that incorporating physical activities into the lives of people with disabilities

60. Staurowsky et al., "Her Life Depends on It III: Sport, Physical Activity, and the Health and Well-Being of American Girls and Women."

61. Staurowsky et al.

62. Cyranowski et al., "Adolescent Onset of the Gender Difference in Lifetime Rates of Major Depression."

63. Staurowsky et al., "Her Life Depends on It III: Sport, Physical Activity, and the Health and Well-Being of American Girls and Women."

64. Duffey et al., "Barriers and Facilitators of Physical Activity Participation in Adolescent Girls"; Chong et al., "Sport for Development Contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 5."

65. Veliz and Shakib, "Gender, Academics, and Interscholastic Sports Participation at the School Level."

66. Spaaij, Farquharson, and Marjoribanks, "Sport and Social Inequalities."

67. Taylor et al., "A Review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport."

68. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018, "PAGAC."

can boost self-esteem, overcome participation barriers, and build supportive relationships with family and friends, enhancing their communication and social interactions⁶⁹.

Furthermore, sport can foster social inclusion by bringing people together from diverse backgrounds and promoting teamwork, cooperation, and mutual respect. By engaging in sports activities, individuals can build relationships, bridge divides, and create a sense of belonging within their communities⁷⁰. This can lead to greater empathy, understanding, and solidarity among different groups, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive society.

Case study: Title IX of the Educational Amendments to the 1964 Civil Rights Act by Congress in 1972 in the United States.

The goal of this law, entering its 50th year, was to eliminate gender discrimination in educational institutions. The law states that “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Since its inception, all federal agencies providing financial assistance grants are required to enforce [Title IX’s non-discrimination mandate](#). These include approximately 17,600 local school districts, over 5,000 postsecondary institutions, charter schools, for-profit schools, libraries, and museums. Schools are required to provide equal opportunities for both male and female students in sport and other activities and achieve female participation rates to near equality with male participation.

Some of the results of the expansion of female athletic participation under this law are:

- Girls who participated in high school sports after Title IX received tangible benefits such as increased educational attainment and higher wages.
- Female students received a return of 0.4 years more education and 8% higher wages after participating in high school sports, even after controlling for underlying ability and resources.
- A rise in female sport participation of 10 percentage points was associated with an increase in female college attendance and labour force participation by 1 to 2 percentage points.

Source: Stevenson, 2010⁷¹.

Case study: ‘Physical Activity 4 Everyone’ (PA4E1) Programme

PA4E1 is a multi-component physical activity intervention guided by social cognitive theory conducted in 10 secondary schools in socio-economically disadvantaged communities in New South Wales, Australia. The PA4E1 (Physical Activity 4 Everyone) intervention consisted of several components that targeted the school curriculum, school environment, and broader community and parental support. The intervention was implemented for seven to eight school terms (19-24 months) and included strategies like training physical education teachers to increase motivation, developing monitoring plans for students, adapting school policies to promote physical activity, and involve parents and school community.

For a pilot version of this programme, a Randomised Controlled Trial impact evaluation showed promising results. The intervention group had lower weight and Body Mass Index (BMI) than the control group at 12 and 24 months. The intervention group’s students increased BMI by 1.59 kg m² over 2 years, while the control group increased by 1.87 kg m². This shows that the programme helped limit the increase in BMI compared to the control group over the 24-month period. The programme’s impact was especially notable in maintaining these positive outcomes for 2 years after the intervention had ended in participant schools.

Further evidence from a following iteration of the programme confirmed the positive outcomes and the potential cost-effectiveness of the intervention, as well as the high fidelity and reach of the implementation strategies. The research confirmed that an adapted implementation of PA4E1 could be suitable for further scale-up at a population level.

Sources: Hollis et al, 2016⁷², Sutherland et al ,2021⁷³.

69. Chen, “The Net Effect of Giant Sports Competition on Local Economy.”

70. See Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, “Harnessing the Power of Sport for Development and Peace: Recommendations to Governments.”, Taylor et al., “A Review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport.”, and Waring and Mason, “Opening Doors.”

71. Stevenson, “Beyond the Classroom: Using Title IX to Measure the Return to High School Sports.”

72. Hollis et al., “Effects of a ‘School-Based’ Physical Activity Intervention on Adiposity in Adolescents from Economically Disadvantaged Communities.”

73. Sutherland et al., “Scale-up of the Physical Activity 4 Everyone (PA4E1) Intervention in Secondary Schools.”

3.3. Education and labour outcomes

Positive educational and labour outcomes are crucial to individual and social development purposes. Education and labour are closely linked, with the availability and quality outcomes of the former heavily influencing the opportunities and performance of the latter. Moreover, both quality education and decent jobs are nationally and internationally recognised human rights across various treaties and policy instruments.

These outcomes are part of the individual and microsystem levels of social impact (see [Figure 2](#)) since they directly affect the person and the relations between them and their immediate environment, including school and workplace. However, they can also impact the macrosystem level through the contribution of education and labour to economic development. Notably, education has a range of positive externalities or added benefits to society, including economic growth, technology development and innovation, political stability, democratic and civic health, and reduced crime rates, among others⁷⁴.

Sport for Education and Labour Outcomes - Alignment with SDG specific targets

SDG 4: Quality Education

- **Target 4.4:** Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship
- **Target 4.6:** Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

- **Target 8.5:** Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value
- **Target 8.6:** Substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training



Around the world, however, labour and education face various challenges. While global school enrolment rates have improved over the past decades, there are still around 259 million out-of-school children and adolescents across primary and secondary levels⁷⁵. Reasons for low school enrolment include economic pressures, lack of adequate supply of and access to services, war and conflict, and cultural norms, the latter affecting girls and women the most. There are also significant challenges in terms of educational performance and attainment. Major cross-national learning assessments show that universal achievement of minimum proficiency in mathematics is still out of reach, and just over 43% of children (only 18% for Sub-Saharan Africa) have minimum reading proficiency⁷⁶. Similarly, international educational performance measurements, such as the latest PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) test, show that around 25% of 15-year-olds in OECD member countries –or 16 million children– perform poorly in math, reading, and science. This means that, on a proficiency scale going from Level 1 to Level 6, they could not attain Level 2 proficiency. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant negative impact on educational performance, with a drop in scores of over 20 score points in 2022 – approximately a year’s worth of education⁷⁷.

The challenges of educational outcomes are also related to labour and its conditions. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) reported that, in 2022, the global unemployment rate was 5.8%, and while this percentage showed a decline from previous peak years, it is still above pre-pandemic levels, with estimates expecting the total number of unemployed people to increase in 2023 and 2024 slightly. Labour productivity has shown a decreasing trend in growth worldwide for over a decade. Finally, gender disparities markedly affect the labour landscape. While women make up around 40% of the global workforce, only 28.2% held management positions in 2021, and the gender wage gap for all workers showed that, for each dollar men earned in labour income in 2020, women earned only 52 cents. This figure worsens in middle-lower income countries, with estimates of 29 to 33 cents to the dollar⁷⁸.

74. Munich and Psacharopoulos, “Education Externalities.”

75. UNESCO, “The Global State of Learning.”

76. UNESCO.

77. Schleicher, “PISA 2022: Insights and Interpretations.”

78. Sodergren, Karkee, and Kapsos, “Assessing the Current State of the Global Labour Market”; World Economic Forum, “The Future of Jobs

In this context, there is growing concern about the considerable proportion of people who are completely outside the margins of education and labour. Globally, more than a fifth –21.7% – of people between the ages of 15 and 24 were considered not in employment, education, or training (also known as NEET) in 2023. This problem is especially acute for developing countries. In the case of OECD members, South Africa, Turkey, and Colombia have the three highest NEET rates. Finally, NEET rates also display a gender disparity negatively affecting women, which can be attributed to the disproportionate burden of unpaid household and care labour. The NEET phenomenon hurts societies' social and economic fabric and can contribute to political instability. For individuals, being NEET can result in a general sense of hopelessness and is linked to depression, anxiety, substance use, and even suicidal tendencies⁷⁹.

3.3.1. Education outcomes

3.3.1.1. Contribution of sport to education outcomes

Educational processes have a variety of observable results or achievements (or "outcomes") in students, including knowledge acquired, skills, attitudes, and values, which can describe the state of an educational system and the socioeconomic environment in which it operates, with its strengths and areas of opportunity. When analysing the impact of sport and physical activity in this state, research and policy efforts most commonly refer to three specific outcomes: a) attendance and enrolment of people of school age; b) performance or attainment across various subjects, but mainly literacy and test completion; and c) attitudes and behaviours toward school and learning.

As stated in the causality theories outlined in [Figure 5](#), sport can contribute to achieving and enhancing these outcomes through the physical, mental, and social effects that practising it can have on individuals. Physical activity stimulates the development of relevant cognitive skills, such as executive planning, attention, simultaneous and successive tasks, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and social competence and capital. These skills, in turn, can promote the enhancement of educational performance and academic resilience, improvements in attendance, drop-out propensity, progression to higher education, and higher prosocial behaviours related to school and learning⁸⁰.

As is the case for several other dimensions, the value of SFD interventions focusing on education is better realised when designed and implemented for impact. This means that sport is undertaken with an intentional developmental approach and not relying only on the attractive and inherent benefits of sport participation⁸¹. On the importance of the deliberate design of sports initiatives for educational development, SFD expert Tim Crabbe says: *"How people experience sports (rather than the sport itself) will have an effect on how much they can take out of it"*⁸². Interventions that aim to reach social outcomes through sport-orientated approaches must prioritise adopting a personal and social development model over the standalone value of sport per se. Failing to do so can result in ineffective interventions or even bring counterproductive outcomes, such as participants neglecting or abandoning school to pursue a career in sport, or reinforcing negative attitudes and behaviours towards school⁸³. In general, SFD programmes that use sport in a structured manner tend to yield good results. This entails incorporating objective-orientated components and a supportive structure, for example, by including offers such as skill-specific building activities, counselling services, tutoring, and additional learning resources. A recent rapid evidence assessment study identified that programmes specifically labelled as SFD with these characteristics —some of which are mentioned in the following subsection on evidence— showed positive results regarding improved school attendance and promising results related to academic performance and attitudes towards school⁸⁴.

Another caveat must be taken into consideration, however. There is a trade-off between choosing to implement SFD interventions in-school and out-of-school settings. On the one hand, in-school interventions can benefit from existing school infrastructure and its logistic advantages, but they can also reproduce

Report 2023."

79. O'Dell, "1 in 5 Young People around the World Are NEETs. What Are NEETs?"

80. Taylor et al., "A Review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport."

81. Crabbe et al., "Sport Works Full Report"; Sanders and Raptis, "Changing the Game - Can A Sport-Based Youth Development Generate a Positive Social Return on Investment?"; Sportanddev, "Healthy Development of Children and Young People through Sport."

82. Crabbe et al., "Sport Works Full Report."

83. Eitle and Eitle, "Race, Cultural Capital, and the Educational Effects of Participation in Sports"; Rees and Sabia, "Sports Participation and Academic Performance"; Southall and Staurowsky, "Cheering on the Collegiate Model"; Zeiser, "Examining Racial Differences in the Effect of Popular Sports Participation on Academic Achievement."

84. Moustakas, "Can Sport for Development Programs Improve Educational Outcomes?"

problems already existing in that setting, like bullying and peer pressure problems. Additionally, in-school interventions may exclude potential subjects not enrolled in school. On the other hand, out-of-school interventions might be able to avoid these problems, but they will also need to find other infrastructure or networks to embed their implementation.

3.3.1.2. Evidence of contributions

A considerable body of literature and quantitative evidence supports the claim that sport participation can positively impact some educational outcomes. As the following paragraphs show, research has found positive links between sport or physical activity and the three outlined educational outcomes, from specific programme impact evaluations to econometric data and cost-effectiveness models.

School attendance and enrolment: Several studies have measured the positive impact of Sport for Development programmes on this issue. For example, evaluations of the Right to Play programme iterations in Azerbaijan and the Philippines, which uses sport and play before, during, and after class to build essential life skills for education and empowerment, reported up to 20% increases in school attendance from participants⁸⁵. Research on the Australian Sporting Chance programme showed an increase in school attendance: between 11% and 15% of the students increased their attendance since joining the programme⁸⁶. An evaluation of the Capoeira4Refugees programme in the Palestinian Territories found a slight decrease in self-reported school absences compared to an initial baseline. For boys, non-attendance went from 2 to 1.3 absences per month and, for girls, from 1.2 to 0.7 absences per month⁸⁷.

Attitudes and behaviours toward school: Studies suggest that Sport for Development programmes help foster a better disposition toward school and education. For instance, a study on the HSBC Outward Bound programme in the UK, a corporate-sponsored initiative that aimed to use sport to re-engage disaffected young people in the school context, found that 58% of project students in Year 2 of the programme, and 49.8% of project students in Year 3, showed positive improvements in behaviour, compared to 37.6% and 32.3% of non-participant students⁸⁸. The Doc Wayne Athletic League in the US, an initiative focused on students from challenging and often trauma-affected contexts, demonstrated a significant reduction in behavioural incidents from participants at their respective schools⁸⁹. The Sporteducate programme in London, developed to help young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, reported a 57% improvement in behaviour at school and an increase from 78% to 94% in students who think pursuing a career is important⁹⁰. Finally, the Sportworks organisation created a model to calculate projected impacts and estimated cost savings⁹¹ of SFD projects for several policy areas. For the policy area "Improved attendance and behaviour at school", the model analysed data from 2556 SFD interventions from 2011 to 2012 and pointed to a moderate but still positive impact. When comparing against the adverse monetary effects of poor attendance and behaviour at school, the model calculated 180.40 GBP in savings per participant per year⁹².

Attainment and performance: Some evidence points to a positive relationship between sport participation and academic performance. A UNESCO report states that being active improves brain functioning and can increase test scores by 40%⁹³. The Ishraq Programme, an SFD intervention in Upper Egypt, found a statistically significant relationship between time spent in the programme and the development of overall literacy abilities, and 92% of programme participants who took a standardised national literacy test passed⁹⁴. For the policy area of "Improved educational attainment", the Sportworks model mentioned earlier analysed the data from the same 2556 SFD interventions and suggested relatively high potential for impact when comparing against the adverse monetary effects of poor educational attainment. In terms of estimated cost savings, the model calculated £127.50 per participant per year⁹⁵.

85. McCracken and Colucci, "Using Sport and Play to Achieve Educational Objectives."
 86. Australian Council for Educational Research, "Evaluation of the Sporting Chance Programme."
 87. Prytherch and Kraft, "The Psychosocial Impact of Capoeira for Refugee Children and Youth."
 88. Sandford, Duncombe, and Armour, "The Role of Physical Activity/Sport in Tackling Youth Disaffection and Anti-social Behaviour."
 89. D'Andrea and Spinazzola, "The Doc Wayne Athletic League: An Adjunctive Therapeutic Intervention for Residential School Girls End-of-Year Evaluation."
 90. EdComs, "Sporteducate Programme Evaluation Report."
 91. According to the Sportworks report, this refers to savings in the estimated costs of the negative outcomes that the sports programmes are attempting to counter. For example, if the cost per school truant is £4,000 per annum and a project reduces the risk of participants truanting by 4.51%, the saving to society will be £180.40 per participant per annum.
 92. Crabbe et al., "Sport Works Full Report."
 93. Aquina et al., "Creating Inclusive Cities through Sport."
 94. Brady et al., "Providing New Opportunities to Adolescent Girls in Socially Conservative Settings."
 95. Crabbe et al., "Sport Works Full Report."

However, not all available evidence suggests a clear positive causal relationship between sport engagement and educational outcomes, especially when sport is introduced on its own, without a structured, guided, and development-based implementation. Some research has found no statistically robust association, mixed results, or even negative associations between sport participation and educational outcomes, particularly when people pursue sports as a professional alternative to, and not as a complement of, formal education⁹⁶. However, most evidence indicates a solid link between physical activity, sport participation and SFD interventions, on one hand, and desirable educational outcomes on the other, especially when the developmental approach discussed earlier is incorporated into sport interventions.

3.3.2. Labour outcomes

3.3.2.1. Contributions of sport to labour outcomes

Similarly to the causal theory of sport and educational outcomes, the benefit of sport participation in labour is that it contributes to developing several skills that, in turn, lead to better chances at obtaining a job, accessing jobs with better wages, better work performance, and a reduction of people in NEET status (see the causality theories outlined in [Figure 5](#)).

Sport and physical activity help develop cognitive and non-cognitive skills, including self-confidence, motivation, persistence and resilience, notions of fair play, a cooperative mindset, and teamwork inclinations. These skills are relevant to navigating job application processes and, after being hired, to the work environment. Furthermore, sport participation fosters socialisation, expands social networks, and opens new sources of information, leading to job opportunities and an enhanced capability to seize them⁹⁷.

Sport participation can also impact better wages when practised consistently throughout life. Improved health and well-being (addressed in [Section 3.1](#)) can lead to direct gains in individual productivity, such as efficiency, and other soft skills like endurance, stress management, and group work. Better health can also make individuals less prone to illness and accidents, and thus reduce work absenteeism. These are all valued characteristics rewarded in the labour market that can allow for access to better jobs, lead to raises and promotions, and, in the case of self-employed individuals, boost the performance of their businesses, all of which bring higher income opportunities. Along the same line, practising sport creates natural opportunities for socialising and expanding social circles, which may improve chances for better employment and other professional growth opportunities⁹⁸.

While engagement in sport and physical activity per se can help develop cognitive and non-cognitive skills relevant to the labour market, the issue of people in NEET status requires a more explicit SFD approach. Structured SFD interventions that include intentional coaching components (as opposed to simply inducing sport participation or physical activity) can motivate and provide young people with the necessary hard and soft skills to leave their NEET status⁹⁹. Given the negative mental health consequences that being NEET can have on individuals, the well-being benefits of practising sport are particularly relevant for overcoming this challenge. Additionally, SFD interventions can help reduce the social vulnerability of people in NEET status by expanding their perceived outlook on their lives and prospects and providing spaces where social bonds and networks can be formed with coaches and peers. However, it is important to note that this causality theory focuses more on individual skills development and less on the external socioeconomic conditions that might be causing the NEET phenomenon. For this logic to follow through, school opportunities and job or vocational

96. Eitle and Eitle, "Race, Cultural Capital, and the Educational Effects of Participation in Sports"; Rees and Sabia, "Sports Participation and Academic Performance"; Southall and Staurowsky, "Cheering on the Collegiate Model"; Zeiser, "Examining Racial Differences in the Effect of Popular Sports Participation on Academic Achievement."

97. Cabane, "Unemployment Duration and Sport Participation"; Cabane and Clark, "Childhood Sporting Activities and Adult Labour-Market Outcomes."

98. Tapşın and Yazıcı, "Sport Participation Rate And Market Outcomes"; Dudfield, Dingwall, and Silubonde, "Sport for Development and Peace and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"; Cabane and Clark, "Childhood Sporting Activities and Adult Labour-Market Outcomes"; Lechner, "Long-Run Labour Market Effects of Individual Sports Activities."

99. Coalter et al., "Sport and Employability."

training offerings must be available first. If these conditions are unattainable due to economic crises or other exogenous factors, even the most carefully designed sports interventions will not reduce the prevalence of people in NEET¹⁰⁰.

3.3.2.2. Evidence of contributions

Research supports the idea that sport participation and SFD interventions contribute to labour outcomes such as employment and the development of valuable job market skills. Regarding job attainment and the reduction of people in NEET status, for instance, the Sportworks cost-benefit model, referenced earlier for education outcomes, calculated the projected impacts and estimated cost savings¹⁰¹ of several SFD projects, including “Reducing young people’s NEET status”. The model analysed data from 2,495 projects from 2011 to 2012 and suggested a moderate but positive impact. When comparing against the negative monetary effects of NEET status, the model calculated savings of 247.90 GBP per participant per year¹⁰². And an earlier study from Germany found that people with some years of labour experience -at least three years- who regularly practise sports are significantly likelier to move from unemployment to employment¹⁰³.

Case study: Development-orientated sport intervention for NEET youth

Monrovia, Liberia

Mercy Corps’ “Sports for Change” is a life-skills programme aimed to improve labour force outcomes among youth in Monrovia, Liberia’s largest city. The programme is aimed at vulnerable, out-of-school youth between the ages of 15 and 25 with little or no prior formal work experience. It seeks to improve psychosocial or socio-emotional behaviours among participants, engaging them in competitive sports and coaching them through a complementary life-skills curriculum to increase their resiliency and readiness for the labour market.

A Randomised Controlled Trial of the programme, performed in 2021, showed significant impacts on labour force outcomes, increasing endline measures of labour force participation by 0.12 standard deviations one year after the intervention. It also found that the programme’s impact on the Labour Force Index prompted an 11%-12% increase in hours of labour supply and weekly earnings. The analysis suggests that the programme benefited most those in particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged circumstances, including women, people with low education and/or without vocational training.

Sources: Beaman et al., 2021¹⁰⁴, Mercy Corps, 2023¹⁰⁵.

Furthermore, there is a solid case regarding the impact of sport on the quality of job opportunities and wages. In terms of job quality, playing sports during childhood and adolescence has been associated with managerial responsibilities and autonomy at work as an adult. For instance, a 2015 study⁹⁴ found that, for men, practising individual sports weekly during middle school was associated with a 1.6% higher probability of becoming a manager 13 years later, while practising team sports in high school increased the probability by 1.4%. In the case of women, practising individual sports in high school increased their likelihood of being a manager 13 years later by 1.7%. The study also suggests that team sports play a larger role for boys, while individual sports bring better results for girls, and these were considered fairly large effects.

Existing evidence also suggests a robust correlation between income levels and sport participation, specifically in the long run, with consistent results across studies. For example, academic Michael Lechner has extensively studied this phenomenon across various times and places. Using data from Germany, he found that active sport participants increased their earnings by about 1,200 EUR per year over a 16-year period compared to more inactive people¹⁰⁶. For Canada, he identified that increasing the level of sport and exercise activity to a level higher than the one recommended by health organisations had an effect on earnings comparable to that

100. Coalter et al.

101. According to the Sportworks report, this refers to savings in the estimated costs of the negative outcomes that the sports programmes are attempting to counter. For example, if the cost per school truant is £4,000 per annum and a project reduces the risk of participants truanting by 4.51%, the saving to society will be £180.40 per participant per annum.

102. Crabbe et al., “Sport Works Full Report.”

103. Cabane, “Unemployment Duration and Sport Participation.”

104. Beaman et al., “Stay in the Game.”

105. Mercy Corps, “Goal!”

106. Lechner, “Long-Run Labour Market Effects of Individual Sports Activities.”

of one or two years of additional schooling¹⁰⁷. After reviewing studies from various countries, Lechner found strong evidence about the impact of sport and exercise on increased earnings, with effects ranging from 4% to 17%¹⁰⁸. A US study with data from 1971 to 2016 found a positive and bidirectional relation between wage level and high school sport participation rate in the long term: a 1% increase in sport participation increased wage level by 0.29%, and a 1% increase in wage level increased sport participation rate by 3.44%¹⁰⁹. A final example by a US study found that those who engaged in regular exercise earned salaries between 6% and 10% higher than sedentary people¹¹⁰.

3.3.3. Differentiated impacts of sport by intersectionality factors

Evidence points to a differentiated impact of physical activity, sport participation and SFD programmes on women and girls. For example, the SFD Ishraq Programme in Upper Egypt, which used sport to improve learning and skills development in young girls, found that participants were more likely to enrol in school than non-participants. Enrolment levels increased the longer individuals participated in the programme, culminating in a 68% enrolment rate for participants who completed the entire programme¹¹¹. A study for the United States found that a 10% increase in female high-school sport participation results in a 1% increase in college attendance and a 1% to 2% increase in labour force participation for women¹¹². It also suggested that more engagement in sport leads women to higher participation in occupations traditionally dominated by men, especially in high-skill fields. Another study found that the salaries of physically active women in Brazil are 15% to 19% higher than the wages of their sedentary counterparts¹¹³. Furthermore, according to the Women's Sport Foundation, in 2016, around 80% of female executives at Fortune 500 companies played sports at some point in their lives¹¹⁴.

In the case of people with disabilities, there is encouraging evidence suggesting that sport and physical activity can improve educational and labour prospects, with several studies identifying a direct association between exercise or sport participation and employment and full-time positions¹¹⁵. A 2016 study in the United States, for instance, found that playing an additional year of adaptive sport -in this case, wheelchair basketball or wheelchair rugby- was associated with a 4% increase in employment likelihood¹¹⁶.

Finally, SFD interventions can benefit students from disadvantaged ethnic and Indigenous minorities, which are often among the population groups more vulnerable to the NEET status. The following case study from Australia shows positive evidence supporting sport as a way of improving education and labour prospects for Aboriginal boys and men.

107. Lechner and Sari, "Market Effects of Sports and Exercise."

108. Lechner, "Sports, Exercise, and Market Outcomes."

109. Tapşın and Yazıcı, "Sport Participation Rate And Market Outcomes."

110. Kosteas, "The Effect of Exercise on Earnings."

111. Brady et al., "Providing New Opportunities to Adolescent Girls in Socially Conservative Settings."

112. Stevenson, "Beyond the Classroom: Using Title IX to Measure the Return to High School Sports."

113. Godoy and Triches, "Effects of Physical Activity on Earnings in the Brazilian Market."

114. Women's Sports Foundation, "Benefits - Why Sports Participation for Girls and Women."

115. Diaz et al., "Impact of Adaptive Sports Participation on Quality of Life"; Lastuka and Cottingham, "The Effect of Adaptive Sports on Employment among People with Disabilities"; Varahra, Ahmed, and Lindsay, "Exploring Direct and Indirect Associations of Exercise and Sport Participation with Employment among Individuals with Disabilities."

116. Lastuka and Cottingham, "The Effect of Adaptive Sports on Employment among People with Disabilities."

Case study: Sport enhancing life-skills for school and employment outcomes

Australia

The [Clontarf Academies](#) are an Australian initiative designed for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and men. The programme utilises football and other sports to enhance education, life skills, discipline, and employment prospects. Since 2000, it has been implemented through a network of 150 academies in collaboration with schools.

For 2023, the Clontarf Foundation reports a 78% school attendance rate among its Academy members, and a school/work retention rate of 88%. They report that 86% of Year 12 graduates remain engaged in employment or further education or training 12 months after graduating. The average unit cost per participant for said year was 7,018 USD, compared to a budgeted cost of 7,000 USD.

A 2016 third-party impact evaluation found a statistically significant effect on school-level attendance: the programme prompted an increase of between 4 and 10.6 days of schooling per student, per year, spread across students of Years 7 to 9. Students who were heavily involved in the Academy were more likely to complete Year 12 (70%) than non-participants at the same schools (51%). Within two years of leaving school, Clontarf graduates were more likely to be working or studying than the average trend for Aboriginal males in non-metropolitan areas of Australia.

Sources: Clontarf Foundation, 2023¹¹⁷, Yu et al, 2016¹¹⁸.

3.4. Youth empowerment and civic engagement

Young people are a crucial demographic group when accounting for social impact. People aged between 15 and 24 represent 16% of the world population or around 1.2 billion people¹¹⁹. Improving the conditions and life quality of young people is a development goal recognised and pursued by the global community and an objective for UNESCO. In this context, the concept of “youth empowerment” showcases the importance of incorporating young people’s agency and active involvement in their own development.

Youth empowerment and civic engagement - Alignment with SDG specific targets

SDG 10: Reduce Inequality

- **Target 10.2:** Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

- **Target 16.7:** Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels



Youth empowerment can provide the skills, information, critical awareness, and opportunities to positively impact youths’ lives, help others, organise, and engage with their communities¹²⁰. Civic engagement is one important quality of empowerment -not exclusively applicable to young people. Civic engagement can include various forms of political activism and participation, volunteering, community service, and other ways of engaging with social environments. Youth empowerment and civic engagement contribute to individual and community well-being, as they can lead to positive change and the development of a civic identity. When

117. Clontarf Foundation, “Annual Report 2023.”
118. Yu et al., “Evaluation of the NSW Clontarf Academies .”
119. United Nations, “Global Issues: Youth.”
120. Boakye and Procida, “What Does It Mean to ‘Empower’ Youth?”

young people are encouraged to participate actively in civic affairs, they develop crucial skills and contribute to shaping policies that affect their lives. Empowering youth through avenues like volunteerism and activism enhances their sense of agency and responsibility, which can result in long-term societal benefits¹²¹. As such, youth empowerment and civic engagement pertain to the mesosystem level of social impact (see [Figure 2, Chapter 2](#)) since it includes the social structures delimiting people, such as neighbourhoods, mass media, government agencies, and other networks of participation and agency.

Across the world, youth empowerment and civic engagement outcomes have experienced moderate change over the last decade. The Global Youth Development Index (YDI) gives a rating from 0 to 1 across various areas of youth development; the closer to 1, the better the state of youth development. The 2023 YDI report states that, from 2010 to 2022, the global average YDI score has improved by 2.8%, with regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, South America, and the Asia-Pacific showing notable progress. The domain of Political and Civic Participation recorded a 5.4% improvement during this period, with progress in indicators measuring voiced opinions to officials, volunteered time, and recognition for community improvement efforts. However, Political and Civic Participation displays the lowest average score in absolute terms for the last decade, reaching a peak of only 0.321 in 2021 and staying constant in 2022. This suggests that there is still an important need to invest more in enabling youth engagement in governance, decision-making, and civic action¹²².

3.4.1. Contribution of sport to youth empowerment and civic engagement

As stated in [Figure 5](#), there are at least two ways in which sport and physical activity can impact youth empowerment and civic engagement outcomes.

Firstly, sport participation can contribute to social capital formation, which is relevant for developing civic-minded behaviours and enabling youth empowerment. This theory takes from Robert Putnam's social capital concept, which describes the value of social networks for individuals. Social capital is closely linked to political participation, focusing on relationships to display the norms of reciprocity, trustworthiness, and networks of civic engagement. Social capital theory argues that active participation in cooperative groups, which includes sport teams or clubs, can facilitate the development and cultivation of relationships that can raise people's reputation of being reliable, responsible, and cooperative. Regular sport participation can help young people increase their social capital and make them more likely to help friends, neighbours, or relatives, strengthening interpersonal networks. This development of social capital then naturally opens the door for civic and political engagement. Regular sport participation is associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in civic tasks, contributing to bonding and bridging social capital, thus empowering youth to become active community participants¹²³.

Additionally, the existing literature indicates that sport participation also helps young people build character. An early study suggested that youth sports organisations expose young people, especially children, to moral socialisation environments where they absorb information about societies' preferred values, norms, and behaviour¹²⁴. Good character is carried into adulthood and contributes to civic identity and civic-minded behaviours. It develops qualities such as benevolence, compassion, honesty, humility, and responsibility, which involve thinking beyond the self, something central to civic activities. This makes sport a relevant area for thinking about how the traits and orientations adolescents develop there may crystallise into stable civic identities with prosocial behaviours¹²⁵.

A second argument poses the theory that sport participation can inherently expose people to political behaviours and activities, increasing the likelihood of developing a political disposition and fostering

-
- 121. Kirshner, Strobel, and Fernández, "Critical Civic Engagement Among Urban Youth"; Stoneman, "The Role of Youth in the Development of Civic Engagement."
 - 122. The Commonwealth Secretariat, "Global Youth Development Index: Update Report 2023."
 - 123. Häuberer, "Introducing the Civic Perspective on Social Capital – Robert D. Putnam's Concept of Social Capital"; Schüttoff et al., "Sports Participation and Social Capital Formation During Adolescence."
 - 124. Fine, *With the Boys*.
 - 125. Rotolo, Kirkpatrick Johnson, and McCall, "Examining the Effect of Adolescent Sport Participation on Civic Engagement and Orientation in Early Adulthood."

civic engagement. Research supports the contention that sport involvement may encourage future civic engagement by pointing out that cultivating civic engagement can take different forms beyond typical forms of political activity, such as membership in voluntary associations or political organisations. For example, a study argues that areas unrelated to politics (which may include sport participation) can help develop a “democratic imagination”: a mindset that makes people aware of situations requiring their political involvement¹²⁶. Other studies suggest that the competitive values embraced by participants in school sport influence young people to vote at a higher rate when the elections are competitive¹²⁷. Furthermore, some research argues that sport participation can be highly political on its own, with athletes acting in political ways, such as voting for team captains, engaging in activism, performing demonstrations at sport events, and debating athletic policies¹²⁸. For example, a recent study argues that sport teams can be sources of four forms of political activity: social control, contestation, representation, and allocation: “*High school sports demand that athletes follow team rules and norms (social control); foster local team culture relating to language, presentation, behavior, and ritual (representation); and assign status and identity to athletes (allocation). Contestation can arise in sports contexts, such as when athletes organize to protest the firing of a coach or the dismissal of a teammate*”¹²⁹.

It is important to note that some arguments exist for less positive civic engagement outcomes from sport participation. For example, high school sports may divert time, resources, and attention away from other educational activities where civic traits may be explicitly taught and instilled. Also, an overemphasis on the importance of winning, combined with the possibility of authority figures (such as coaches) displaying autocratic and unethical behaviours like cheating, “us versus them” mentalities, and other undesirable behaviours, may negatively influence young athletes in forming their civic identity¹³⁰. While these risks might be more associated with elite and competitive athletics, grassroots sport is not immune to them. To avoid them, sports interventions aimed at fostering youth empowerment and civic engagement must be designed and implemented for impact, considering these factors and carefully placing intentional measures to counter or minimise them.

3.4.2. Differentiated impacts of sport by intersectionality factors

Sport can foster youth development through social capital formation. Regarding the sport and social capital theory, a relatively recent study for young people in Germany, measured the impact of sport participation through two main indicators of social capital: *interpersonal networks and helping friends*; and *social engagement*¹³¹. The largest effect was found for the dimension of *interpersonal networks and helping friends*. Adolescents who regularly participated in sport were 12% more likely to help friends, neighbours, or relatives. Regarding the second indicator, the study showed that regular sport-active adolescents were 3% more likely to undertake civic tasks in regional politics or citizen groups. Analysis at the disaggregated level suggested that being organised in a sport club organisational format had significant and positive effects on all indicators of social capital. Additionally, the type of sport mattered: while practising team or group sports positively influenced both indicators, practising individual sports did so only for volunteering and helping friends. These effects might not seem particularly large; however, they point to a relationship between sport and social capital development that warrants more (and more updated) research and investment efforts.

126. Perrin, *Citizen Speak*.

127. Levine, *The Future of Democracy*; Sage and Eitzen, *Sociology of North American Sport*.

128. Sage and Eitzen, *Sociology of North American Sport*; Fortin, “High School Students Kicked Off Football Team After Protesting During National Anthem - The New York Times.”

129. Rotolo, Kirkpatrick Johnson, and McCall, “Examining the Effect of Adolescent Sport Participation on Civic Engagement and Orientation in Early Adulthood.”

130. Rotolo, Kirkpatrick Johnson, and McCall.

131. Schüttoff et al., “Sports Participation and Social Capital Formation During Adolescence.”

Case study: Sport empowering vulnerable youth to influence their community positively

South Africa

The [Grassroots Soccer \(GRS\)](#) intervention ran from 2013 until 2020 and focused on developing youth empowerment and leadership outcomes, among other social benefits. The programme turned unemployed young people between 18 and 30 into volunteer football coaches who acted as effective change agents for improving adolescent health through training and presenting health programmes to other young people. Following their tenure with GRS, the coaches moved on to other employment, education, or training opportunities.

The programme empowered young people to work as peer educators to tackle broader societal issues, including high unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, and the structural drivers of HIV and violence. They delivered adolescent health programmes to learners and out-of-school youths in historically disadvantaged communities. GRS organised regular structured group sessions, one-on-one mentoring, training sessions, and follow-up with participant coaches to track progress.

The programme was analysed under an SROI framework for the years 2013 to 2017. It was found that each South African Rand (ZAR) invested in the programme generated 1.7227 ZAR in social value for the stakeholders included in the study. The investments in the programme were recovered eight months after completion. During the remaining 28 months of the investigation, positive benefits were thus generated for both coaches and society at large.

Sources: Grassroot Soccer, 2024¹³², Sanders and Raptis, 2018¹³³.

Also, the available evidence finds that sport participation effectively increases the likelihood of fostering civic engagement and youth empowerment. A study for the US found that adolescents who played sport for longer are more likely to consider themselves active citizens in their communities and are more likely to volunteer, with the likelihood increasing with each additional year of practising sport¹³⁴. However, it is important to note that the models showed that, once other variables were controlled for, the associations between sport participation and civic orientation and voting were less significant, indicating a still existing, but more complex, relationship between sport participation and civic engagement.

Earlier studies have produced ample evidence, mainly in the US. According to this research, involvement in high school clubs can predict civic engagement two years later¹³⁵, and there are small but significant associations linking school sport participation and adult civic engagement over time¹³⁶. Data also suggests a positive association between memberships in, for example, non-school sport teams, and voter registration status¹³⁷. Finally, a study found that young people -between 18 and 25- who practised high-school sports were more likely than their non-practising counterparts to volunteer (32% vs. 21%), be registered to vote (58% vs 40%), have voted in the previous elections (44% vs 33%), and watched political news (41% vs 26%). While these results did not categorically prove a causal relationship, the effects remained even after the study statistically controlled for other factors that can influence civic behaviours¹³⁸. Outside of the US, some older studies also found a positive association between sport, social capital, and political commitment in the UK and Norway¹³⁹.

3.4.2. Evidence of contribution

Existent research finds some evidence of the effects of sport initiatives in youth empowerment and civic engagement, specifically for women and Black young people. For example, a study of the GirlPower initiative in Victoria, Canada, found that sport builds a sense of community in adolescents, with participants articulating their interest in becoming an active part of their community. The study proposes that physical activity and

132. Grassroot Soccer, "Grassroot Soccer."

133. Sanders and Raptis, "Changing the Game - Can A Sport-Based Youth Development Generate a Positive Social Return on Investment?"

134. Rotolo, Kirkpatrick Johnson, and McCall, "Examining the Effect of Adolescent Sport Participation on Civic Engagement and Orientation in Early Adulthood."

135. Fredricks and Eccles, "Is Extracurricular Participation Associated with Beneficial Outcomes?"

136. Perks, "Does Sport Foster Social Capital?"

137. Frisco, Muller, and Dodson, "Participation in Voluntary Youth-Serving Associations and Early Adult Voting Behaviour."

138. Lopez and Moore, "Participation in Sports and Civic Engagement."

139. Delaney and Keaney, "Sport and Social Capital in the United Kingdom: Statistical Evidence from National and International Survey Data"; Seippel, "Sport and Social Capital."

exercise provide a platform for social interaction and engagement, with sport occasionally serving as a crucial bridge between individuals from diverse ethnic, age, class, and status groups¹⁴⁰. For Black youth in the US, a study found a localised but significant relationship between participation in varsity individual sport and greater political participation, namely, registration and voting¹⁴¹.

3.5. Economic development

Economic development is a complex process that entails the improvement of quality of life and living standards in a society, involving economic, social, political, and institutional dynamics. It is a broader concept than *economic growth*, which focuses more narrowly on the monetary value of goods and services in a society, and on specific indicators such as GDP which do not necessarily reflect *development*. Economic development describes societies’ capacity to bring positive outcomes in many of the dimensions of social impact addressed in this report; for example, to provide public health services, offer quality education, create decent jobs, invest in crime prevention strategies, and become more environmentally sustainable, to name some. Fostering sustainable economic development is a key objective for all societies¹⁴².

Sport for Economic Development - Alignment with SDG specific targets

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

- **Target 8.2:** Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on added and labour-intensive sectors
- **Target 8.9:** Devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

- **Target 9.1:** Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



As such an overarching dimension, economic development pertains to the macrosystem level of social impact (see [Figure 2, Chapter 2](#)). However, the state of the economy also has a direct influence on the resources that individuals are able and willing to use to take care of their physical and mental health, pursue civic and educational goals, or attain better labour outcomes. In this sense, economic development can also correspond with the rest of [Figure 2](#)’s levels of social impact, including the individual, the microsystem, and the mesosystem.

An economy is significantly driven by the performance of its domestic sectors and industries. Key sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, or technology greatly impact the economy; however, smaller subsectors, such as the sport industry, are developing an increasingly important role in the economy. For example, in 2023, the global sport market, comprising the sales of goods and services related to participatory and spectator sport, was valued at 480.2 billion USD and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of approximately 5.0%, reaching an estimated 629.8 billion USD in 2028. While North America was the largest region in the sport market in 2023, this forecast predicts that, by 2028, Africa will experience the fastest growth in its sport sector¹⁴³. In industrial countries, sport was estimated in 2010 to contribute around 2% to gross domestic

140. Higgins and Reed, “The GirlPower Project — Recreation, BC Health Goals and Social Capital.”
141. Braddock, Hua, and Dawkins, “Effects of Participation in High School Sports and Nonsport Extracurricular Activities on Political Engagement among Black Young Adults.”
142. Popkova et al., “Specifics of Economic Growth of Developing Countries.”
143. The Business Research Company, “Sports Global Market Opportunities and Strategies.”

product¹⁴⁴. For the European Union (EU), the gross value added (GVA) of sport-related companies, in its broadest definition, amounted to 173.86 billion EUR, or 1.76% of total EU GVA in 2005¹⁴⁵. For context, this was comparable to the combined share of agriculture, forestry, and fishing. Or, put another way, every sixtieth euro generated and earned in the European Union that year was sport-related¹⁴⁶. More recent official data from 2022 estimated the United Kingdom's entire sport industry's contribution to the economy at 18.1 billion GBP, or around 0.8% of its overall economy, with a growth rate of 32.2% from 2010 to 2022. As a comparison, the growth rate of the overall economy for that same period was 21.5%¹⁴⁷. While markedly more information is available for western developed countries, there is some data regarding other regions. For example, some estimates put the value of the current sport market in Africa at more than 12 billion USD, prospectively reaching over 20 billion USD by 2035¹⁴⁸.

Furthermore, as discussed in other sections, sport participation and physical activity have a range of effects in individuals that impact outcomes of value to economic development, such as healthier populations, better education and labour performance, or entrepreneurship and volunteering dispositions, for example. This relationship is also bidirectional, with the characteristics and performance of the overall economy, such as the level of economic freedom and per capita GDP, impacting a society's degree of participation in sport and physical activity¹⁴⁹.

The following subsection will delve into the causality theories behind the contribution of sport (in terms of participation and as an industry) to economic development.

3.5.1. Contributions of sport to economic development

As [Figure 5](#) states, there are several avenues through which both the sport industry and sport participation can positively impact economic development.

Regarding the sport industry, the most self-apparent impact relies on sport's relevance as an economic sector in the overall economy. The value and size of the economic activities related to sport make up a significant and consistently growing proportion of economies. These activities also impact other related economic sectors and boost them. More elaborately, the sport industry especially helps the services sector grow. In turn, this growth positively affects overall economic development. This is because services are a critical sector for economic development in every economy, signalling a sophistication of economic performance and boosting it through job creation, entrepreneurship, volunteering, tax revenue, and foreign exchange generation¹⁵⁰, among others¹⁵¹.

Another avenue through which the sport industry impacts economic development with social and environmental implications is sporting events. Major sporting events (MSEs) have a prominent effect on local and national economies and can produce important development benefits. They can impact the host economy through tourist and visitor revenues, infrastructure enhancement, and job creation. MSEs also have the potential to drive large-scale urban regeneration and redevelopment and can lead to the economic revitalisation of deprived and challenged areas¹⁵². Furthermore, sport stars and professional athletes

144. Chappelet, "Sport and Economic Development."

145. Gross Value Added is understood as the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy.

146. SportsEconAustria and Sport Industry Research Centre, "Study on the Contribution of Sport to Economic Growth and Employment in the EU."

147. Weston, "Contribution of Sport to Society and the Economy."

148. Simpson and Calvey, "Game On: How Africa's Sporting Appetite Could Spark Economic Growth."

149. Acquah-Sam, "Developing Sports for Economic Growth and Development in Developing Countries"; Andreff, "The Correlation between Economic Underdevelopment and Sport"; Ruseski and Maresova, "Economic Freedom, Sport Policy, and Individual Participation in Physical Activity."

150. An economic benefit brought about by the sport industry that can be of particular importance to developing nations lies in foreign exchange generation. In the sport sector, foreign exchange generation can come from remittances from athletes and sports officials working outside their countries, export sales of sport-related products, services, and commodities, transfer fees of athletes, and the organisation of international sporting events. An increase in foreign exchange can help reduce exchange rate problems and the costs of importing goods and services, as well as help better the balance of trade positions of countries.

151. Acquah-Sam, "Developing Sports for Economic Growth and Development in Developing Countries."

152. Crabbe et al., "Sport Works Full Report"; Department of Communities and Local Government, "Our Towns and Cities: The Future - Full Report"; Dudfield, Dingwall, and Silubonde, "Sport for Development and Peace and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"; Swinnen and Vandemoortele, "Sports and Development: An Economic Perspective on the Impact of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa."

performing in global events can inspire and encourage people to participate in sports. However, it must be noted that MSEs also put national -but especially local- economies and societies under economic strain. They can demand a high volume of resources and impose environmental and social costs that eventually translate into additional economic costs. To foster economic growth despite these costs, MSEs and smaller sporting events must be executed considering the hosting community's whole economic and social picture¹⁵³.

Sport and sport tourism as a way to celebrate and safeguard cultural heritage

Sport has a significant impact on cultural heritage, serving as a vehicle for understanding and memorialising conflict, celebrating achievement, and shaping our understanding of history and the past¹⁵⁴. It can also be a tool for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, promoting sustainability, and driving long-term sustainability¹⁵⁵. The relationship between sport and heritage is particularly strong in the context of tourism, with sports-related heritage attracting significant visitor numbers and contributing to the overall quality of life¹⁵⁶. However, the full potential of sport heritage in enhancing the value of places and improving the quality of life for communities and society as a whole is yet to be realised¹⁵⁷.

On the side of sport participation, a relevant impact on the economy is its influence on public health spending. As discussed in [Section 3.1](#), illnesses derived specifically from physical inactivity result in high costs for public health in economies across the world. There is a large and solid body of research on how sport and physical activity lead to better health outcomes and reduced medical expenditures for both people and nations in the long run. Savings in public healthcare costs, allow, in turn, for redirecting at least some of these resources toward other areas of social impact that contribute to economic development, such as well-being, education, labour, and social stability¹⁵⁸.

Sport participation and physical activity also impact labour quality, which is a relevant driver of economic growth and development. The health outcomes associated with sport improve workers' and entrepreneurs' productivity, resulting in innovations, technological advances, improved business models, and generally enhanced management of inputs and outputs. All of this ultimately transforms the production of goods and services and leads to economic progress¹⁵⁹. More on the specific impact of sport participation and physical activity on labour outcomes can be found in [Section 3.3](#).

Finally, an interesting link between sport and economic development for individuals derives from the fact that people engage in physical activity not only for its own sake but also for functional reasons. A clear example is cycling, which is a sport and a form of physical activity, but also a means of transportation. This impacts the economy and urbanisation, as it contributes to personal and societal savings, generates revenue for cities, creates jobs, and prompts the development of more sustainable urban landscapes.

153. Agha and Taks, "A Theoretical Comparison of the Economic Impact of Large and Small Events"; Chappelet, "Sport and Economic Development."

154. Ramshaw, "Heritage and Sport"; Ramshaw, "Too Much Nostalgia?"

155. Thompson et al., "Beyond Conventional Limits: Intangible Heritage Values and Sustainability Through Sport"; Korkmaz, "Transfer of Sport Heritage in the Formation of a Sustainable Sport Culture."

156. Wood, "Olympic Opportunity"; Ramshaw and Gammon, "More than Just Nostalgia?"

157. Wood, "Olympic Opportunity."

158. Acquah-Sam, "Developing Sports for Economic Growth and Development in Developing Countries"; Ruseski and Maresova, "Economic Freedom, Sport Policy, and Individual Participation in Physical Activity"; Sanderson et al., "The Economic Benefits of Sport."

159. OECD, *OECD Compendium of Productivity Indicators 2024*.

3.5.2. Evidence of contribution

There is ample quantitative and qualitative data regarding the contribution of the *sport industry* and of *sport participation* to economic growth and development.

3.5.2.1. Social impacts of the sport industry in economic development

Impact of the sport industry on work and employment: The sport industry has a growing impact in the labour and employment market. For example, in 2022, the EU reported that 0.8% of total employment (1.51 million people) pertained to the sport sector. From the previous year (1.36 million), this represents an increase of 10.9%, much larger than the overall job growth rate (1.5%) in the region¹⁶⁰. In the United States, between 2010 and 2014, there was a 12.6% increase in job growth for the six largest sport-related industries¹⁶¹. And a study found that every 1 million USD spent on cycling and walking infrastructure could create 10 to 23 jobs at the state level and 8 to 11 at the municipal level¹⁶².

Additionally, the sport industry fosters considerable volunteer work with sizeable social and economic implications. Volunteers provide crucial labour for sports services, reducing costs and making sporting activities more accessible. For example, in the EU-8 (Austria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom), a 2022 study estimated that volunteers contribute work valued at 44.79 billion EUR to sports clubs, with only 1.84 billion EUR in compensations. This leaves 42.95 billion euros worth of uncompensated work. Without volunteers, personnel costs in the EU-8 would increase by approximately 2.64 times¹⁶³. Voluntary activities in sports offer significant social and personal benefits. They can increase volunteers' subjective well-being and social capital, which can be monetised and translated into personal and social economic benefits. For example, recent research reveals that sport volunteering can positively impact employability and higher earnings by signalling social skills and qualifications to employers. A 2020 study found that participants reporting sport volunteering activities in their CV resulted in an estimated salary surplus of 6%¹⁶⁴. Volunteering also attracts people to sports and fosters stronger community ties and social cohesion. Some data challenges limit the understanding of the actual impact of sport volunteering. National accounts and statistics often do not capture nor reflect the full economic impact of voluntary work in sport. Also, most available data is from Europe, which makes it difficult to paint a more accurate picture of sport volunteering across the world¹⁶⁵. Despite this, it is clear that sport volunteering provides sizeable social and economic benefits that should be further researched and considered for policy-making.

Impact of major sporting events (MSEs): The data around the estimated impact of MSEs on the economy shows high potential for economies. Globally, major sporting events were valued at an estimated 80 billion USD in 2014, or roughly 12% of the overall sport industry (comprising several segments, including sports infrastructure, sports events, training, media, goods manufacturing, and retail)¹⁶⁶. At the country level, significant impacts are documented in the available literature. MSEs hosted in the UK in 2023 generated 373 million GBP in direct economic impact and a 6 to 1 return on investment¹⁶⁷. In Hong Kong, MSEs held in 2017 generated an estimated economic impact of 2.1 billion HKD. These included international spectator events, such as football championships, and massive participation events, such as marathons¹⁶⁸. For the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games, the Brazilian state recorded an estimated increase in wages of 52% and in jobs of 53% between 2009 and 2016, when the games were held. The country's GDP registered a growth of 2.9% at the end of the year, driven considerably by the services sector. This sector experienced an increase of 4.2%, which greatly contributed to the overall GDP growth rate¹⁶⁹. These examples represent the considerable boost that MSEs and related sport tourism revenues can give to economic growth. However, as previously stated, it is important to remember that economic growth is only one feature of economic development, and that MSEs can also have a significant financial and environmental cost for the societies hosting them.

160. Eurostat, "Gross Value Added by Economic Activities"; Eurostat, "10.9% Increase in Employment in Sport in 2022 in the EU - Eurostat."

161. Acquah-Sam, "Developing Sports for Economic Growth and Development in Developing Countries."

162. Yanocha and Mawdsley, "Making the Economic Case for Cycling."

163. Grohall et al., "Study on the Economic Dimension of Volunteering in Sport."

164. Wallrodt and Thieme, "The Role of Sports Volunteering as a Signal in the Job Application Process."

165. Grohall et al., "Study on the Economic Dimension of Volunteering in Sport."

166. KPMG, "The Economic Impact of Major Sports Events."

167. Deloitte UK, "Elite Sport as a Catalyst for Economic Growth and Societal Change."

168. KPMG, "The Economic Impact of Major Sports Events."

169. Faria and Pereira, "The Impact on the Brazilian Economy of the Olympic Games in Rio De Janeiro in 2016."

Beyond strict economic returns, the event revenues and increased economic activity due to such events can have significant local and national development benefits. With this in mind, the Fit for Life Label on the Social and Environmental Sustainability of Major Sport Events empowers organisers and host countries with an innovative framework for developing and promoting lasting positive impact and legacies of MSEs, whilst ensuring accountability for negative environmental and social effects. The MSE Label maximises positive impact by setting clear and measurable objectives, clarifying different impact areas, promoting the exchange of good practises, and supporting the design and scaling up of high-impact initiatives. Similarly, it provides tools to minimise negative impact by identifying risks, strategies and responsibilities. It also establishes clear, actionable, and transparent criteria to evaluate and measure the impact of MSEs and serves as a practical monitoring and evaluation framework for sustainability performance and legacy delivery. The MSE Label thus closely aligns with the recommendations in this report and its vision to promote the social impact of sport.

Smaller-scale events have also been found to bring significant economic benefits to local communities, often with lesser costs. For example, an Italo-Swiss mountain trail event, Collontrek, was estimated in 2015 to bring an economic return of between 17.62 and 18.92 EUR per euro invested by the public administration. Between 5.64 and 6.9 EUR of these -or 32%–36%- go directly to the mountain valley community which biannually hosts the event¹⁷⁰. Another study found that a small-scale three-day running event held recurrently at a small mountain area in Greece brings a total of 671,604 EUR in tourist expenditure, representing a considerable impact on economic growth for the underdeveloped community¹⁷¹.

However, it must be noted that many of these figures, particularly for MSEs, are ex-ante estimates and that there is an important lack of ex-post studies to analyse their actual effects. Some studies point out that ex-post studies of economic impact, when conducted at all, show that the evidence of MSEs' economic benefits is still weak and that ex-ante studies could potentially overestimate benefits¹⁷². While this does not negate the relevance of MSEs, it does call for a more thorough evaluation of their actual economic impact.

Impact of sport-based entrepreneurship: Sport-related activity that involves enterprise and innovation has the potential to deliver social and financial value. It presents a dual opportunity for economic growth and for sport promotion and development. Like most other businesses, sport-based entrepreneurship contributes to local, national, and even global economies through job creation and revenue generation. Through advertising and marketing strategies, it can also foster sport participation in individuals, which often comes with increased consumption of sport-related goods and services, further contributing to economic growth. The following case study presents an example with evidence of the potential of sport-based entrepreneurship to foster economic development¹⁷³.

Case study: Sport-related entrepreneurship for economic development

Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia

For more than 20 years, **Alive and Kicking**, a United Kingdom organisation, has used the lifecycle of a sport ball to grow and economically strengthen communities in Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia. Through ball production, Alive and Kicking creates ethical jobs for adults from vulnerable job groups and empowers people to set up their own sport-based entrepreneurship. So far, the initiative has contributed 5,296,154 GBP to the local economies of the three countries. It has economically empowered 1,137 adults from vulnerable job groups through direct employment, and 90 refugees through entrepreneurship support. Alive and Kicking employees are also 53 times more likely than the national average to own their own home, and 75% of them use their income to access education for themselves or their dependents.

Sources: Alive and Kicking, 2024a¹⁷⁴, 2024b¹⁷⁵, International Platform on Sport & Development, 2008¹⁷⁶.

170. Duglio and Beltramo, "Estimating the Economic Impacts of a Small-Scale Sport Tourism Event."
 171. Tzoumaka, Leivadi, and Kaplanidou, "Recurring Rural Destination Sport Events."
 172. Bosch, Murillo, and Raya, "La importancia económica del sector deportivo y el impacto económico de los eventos deportivos"; Swinnen and Vandemoortele, "Sports and Development: An Economic Perspective on the Impact of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa"; Chappelet, "Sport and Economic Development."
 173. CareerBuilder, "Sports-Related Employment Is on the Rise and Creating Jobs in Other Industries, According to New Research from CareerBuilder and Economic Modeling Specialists"; Hammerschmidt, Kraus, and Jones, "Sport Entrepreneurship."
 174. Alive and Kicking, "Alive and Kicking - Impact."
 175. Alive and Kicking, "Alive and Kicking - Info Pack."
 176. International Platform on Sport & Development, "Sport and Economic Development Thematic Profile."

3.5.2.2. Social impacts of sport participation in economic development

Impact of sport participation on public health costs and the economy: As mentioned earlier, engaging in sport and physical activity has a large potential to contribute to better health and thus produce savings that can be used elsewhere. Cycling, in particular, has been found to reduce public health costs related to inactivity, air pollution, and stress and promote other societal benefits such as reduced greenhouse gas emissions and traffic congestion. For example, in Patna, India, a 15% increase in bicycle trips was estimated to save the city 166 million USD in healthcare costs and reduce premature mortality by 755 lives per year. The corresponding study also found that every kilometre cycled generates 0.16 EUR in economic gains to society, while every kilometre driven costs society 0.15 EUR, stating that *“a dramatic increase in cycling worldwide could save society 24 trillion USD cumulatively between 2015 and 2050”*¹⁷⁷.

Impact of sport on labour quality: Additionally, sport participation and physical activity have a positive impact on labour productivity and reduced levels of work absenteeism, which, on an aggregate level, can boost economic growth and development. For example, a study found that fitness participation was associated with 1.3 days fewer short-term disability days a year per participant employee and 0.39 fewer health risks, while non-participants were more likely to report health-related work productivity limitations for time management and overall work impairment¹⁷⁸. [Section 3.3](#) discusses the impacts of sport on labour outcomes in greater detail.

Impact of sport on personal economy: Finally, while discussions about economic impact tend to focus on the macro level, sport participation can also have economic benefits at the individual level. As previously discussed, sport participation has large benefits at the individual level in several dimensions such as health and well-being, education and labour, among others. Furthermore, cycling can entail savings in personal income and other economic resources. While a new car can cost more than the average annual household income in most parts of the world, purchasing a bicycle represents less than 6% of that. Maintaining and operating a bicycle costs approximately 3 USD per 100 kilometres of use versus 18 USD for a car. In addition, cycling saves individuals time, which they can invest in other pursuits, including economic ones. In Mexico City, for example, using cycle lanes can save an average of 11.5 minutes and 5.40 MXN per trip compared to other transport modes¹⁷⁹. While these savings might appear small, they can accumulate considerably over time. Furthermore, they point to a different angle through which individuals can look at (and be motivated to do) sport and physical activity: as a source of personal economic benefit.

3.5.3. Differentiated impacts of sport by intersectionality factors

Some data is available regarding the specific economic impact of sport targeted to women and people with disabilities. Economic interest in women's participation in sport, professionally and otherwise, as well as in women's sporting events, has experienced a surge in recent years. From sponsorship and investment to merchandise and media coverage, there is a mutually beneficial relationship between economic success and the development of female sports. For example, the success of the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, held in Australia, exemplifies the previously untapped economic potential of women's sporting events. It generated an estimated 570 million USD in revenue, making it the second highest for global sporting events. Other women's professional sport areas, such as college basketball and volleyball, have also experienced similar record-breaking economic success in the United States. Elsewhere, in the United Kingdom, the women's sport industry had an annual growth rate of 15% or more between 2010 and 2022¹⁸⁰.

Disability-adapted and sporting events also represent an important contribution to economies. In the United States, the total economic impact of adapted and para-sport events in 2022 was estimated at 139.1 million USD. For the UK in 2014, paralympic sport amounted to 2 million GBP of total GVA, created up to 70,000 jobs, brought 2.1 million GBP in consumer spending, and generated a turnover of 4 million GBP¹⁸¹.

177. Yanocha and Mawdsley, “Making the Economic Case for Cycling.”

178. Burton et al., “The Association of Health Status, Worksite Fitness Center Participation, and Two Measures of Productivity.”

179. Yanocha and Mawdsley, “Making the Economic Case for Cycling.”

180. Klein, “The Economics of Women's Sports”; Weston, “Contribution of Sport to Society and the Economy.”

181. All in Sport Consulting, Huddle Up Group, and Stitch Marketing Research, “Adapted Sport: Economic Impact Survey - Findings Report”; Sport Industry Research Centre, “The Economic Importance of Olympic and Paralympic Sport.”

Finally, there is some evidence highlighting the impact of youth-oriented sport tourism. For example, in the United States, 39.7 billion USD in direct spending was attributed to amateur and youth sport tourism in 2021, which generated a total economic impact of 91.8 billion USD, created around 635,000 jobs, and brought in 12.9 billion USD in tax revenue for local economies¹⁸².

3.6. Security, crime and violence prevention

Crime and violence seriously threaten the rights of individuals and the development of their societies. They can result, firstly, in bodily harm or death, as well as in psychological injury. However, they also affect economic development by introducing uncertainty; they impede the evolution of strong, responsive, and professional governments; and imply the need to distract valuable resources that could be used in education, health, or other important topics.

Sport for security, crime and violence prevention - Alignment with SDG specific targets

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

- **Target 16.1:** Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
- **Target 16.2:** Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all



3.6.1. Contribution of sport to crime and violence prevention

Programmes that use sport as a component - or adapt sport - to achieve crime or violence prevention objectives can potentially have significant impacts on participants¹⁸³. As synthesised in [Figure 5](#), several academic studies have identified different avenues for impact, including the following:

- Sport can help individuals form bonds with each other, and with society at large. People with stronger bonds, in turn, are less likely to commit crimes and exercise violence. This is a type of social bonds theory.
- Participating in sport can allow people to release aggression in an appropriate, low-consequence context. This is also referred to as the catharsis theory.
- Participating in well-designed sports activities — especially when supervised and monitored by adults — reduces the opportunity for deviant behaviour among youths. This is usually known as the crime opportunities or diversion theory.
- Sport can allow youths to learn and practise rules-respecting, socially approved behaviour, which they can apply in their lives. This is an application of social learning and cultural spillover theories.
- Practising sport can help develop social and personal skills that reduce the risk of crime and violence. These include the development of a sense of safety and belonging, teamwork and collaboration, adequate decision-making, and the ability to resolve conflicts.

182. Halff, "Youth and Amateur Sports Tourism Brings Economic Benefits."

183. Langbein and Bess, "Sports in School"; Nevill and Poortvliet, "Teenage Kicks the Value of Sport in Tackling Youth Crime"; Rhea and Lantz, "Violent, Delinquent, and Aggressive Behaviours of Rural High School Athletes and Non-Athletes"; Veliz and Shakib, "Interscholastic Sports Participation and School Based Delinquency."

- Sport can provide a medium in which risk factors for crime and violence (e.g., developing in a situation of unstructured socialising or coming from an underprivileged socioeconomic class) can be reduced or managed; and protective factors (e.g., developing self-esteem and being able to rely on external support) can be developed, fostering prosocial values and personal growth. The latter, in turn, positively impact crime and delinquency¹⁸⁴.

According to the literature, the potential of these interventions at the individual level is likely maximised when they have a holistic approach, seek to provide a site for positive socialisation experiences¹⁸⁵, and apply the following key concepts:

Facilitating engagement

- Providing access to popular sport activities (that is, offering sport options that youth are interested in practising, according to local conditions).
- Giving ownership to participants (allowing youth to select specific sport alternatives, making them responsible for defining their own growth objectives, and de-emphasising competition).
- Ensuring accessibility (for people with different abilities, backgrounds, and needs).
- Offering safety (providing a safe, neutral, and comfortable environment to develop). Notably, the literature indicates that programmes may be best organised outside of the regular school environment, especially when trying to engage at-risk youth. This helps facilitate engagement for participants who, in their regular school ambience, are subject to bullying or have relationships with adults (e.g., teachers) that are not perceived as constructive.

Ensuring consistency

- Having predictable schedules, allowing continued access even if youths need to skip sessions.

Fostering individual development

- Explicitly including opportunities to practise life skills (for instance, teamwork, negotiation, and learning about boundaries) and to manage emotions appropriately. As will be further discussed in the following sections, cognitive behavioural elements, which help youth recognise their automatic responses and slow down their thinking in high-stakes situations, show particularly good results.
- Facilitating progression routes for participants (in terms of feeling they are doing something good; that they are improving their sport performance; and providing opportunities for a sense of achievement).
- Allowing for extended friendship relationships outside the usual school connections.
- Providing opportunities to serve other people (for instance, by becoming a coach themselves).

Providing structure and supervision

- Providing coaches who can serve as role models, build personal, trusting, and non-judgemental relationships with participants, listen to youths and make them feel valued, provide direction, and intervene when situations diverge from rules and objectives.
- Managing factors that increase the risk for violent behaviour. Particularly avoiding the abuse of alcohol and drugs, toxic masculinity, and gender-based stereotypes.

Providing future pathways

- Providing referral services to other opportunities, such as labour training or educational mentoring¹⁸⁶.

It must be recognised that the literature identifies the potential to have unfavourable, mixed, or null effects when seeking impacts on crime and violence prevention through sport participation¹⁸⁷. For instance, depending on the context and the specifics of interventions, strengthening bonds could lead to the formation

184. Coalter, "There Is Loads of Relationships Here"; Nichols, *Sport and Crime Reduction : The Role of Sports in Tackling Youth Crime*; Scholes-Balog et al., "Relationships Between Sport Participation, Problem Alcohol Use, and Violence"; Taylor et al., "A Review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport."

185. Coalter, "There Is Loads of Relationships Here."

186. Armour, Sandford, and Duncombe, "Positive Youth Development and Physical Activity/Sport Interventions"; Crabbe et al., "Sport Works Full Report"; Noble and Coleman, "Exploring the Role of Sport for Development in the Prevention and Desistance from Crime"; Gardner, Roth, and Brooks-Gunn, "Sports Participation and Juvenile Delinquency,"

187. Endresen and Olweus, "Participation in Power Sports and Antisocial Involvement in Preadolescent and Adolescent Boys"; Mahoney, Stattin, and Magnusson, "Youth Recreation Centre Participation and Criminal Offending"; McHale et al., "Patterns of Personal and Social Adjustment among Sport-Involved and Non-involved Urban Middle-School Children"; Mutz and Baur, "The Role of Sports for Violence Prevention"; Scholes-Balog et al., "Relationships Between Sport Participation, Problem Alcohol Use, and Violence"; Spruit et al., "Sports Participation and Juvenile Delinquency."

of gangs. Moreover, some sports (in some instances and with specific populations) might increase aggressive behaviour or normalise toxic masculinity traits that can lead to gender violence. The list of desirable features above includes items that help avoid, adequately manage, or minimise situations and processes that, according to the existing literature, can lead to adverse outcomes.

Case study: Becoming a Man, Sport Edition

Becoming a Man is an in-school and after-school programme focused on low-income, minority male youths in Chicago. The programme follows cognitive-behavioural theory principles. The in-school intervention includes group counselling and mentoring sessions that teach a skill in each session through various teaching methods; students are assigned homework to practise a skill learned in the session. In the after-school programme, through activities such as wrestling, martial arts, archery, weightlifting, and handball, the programme helps children work on behavioural skills in a different “non-traditional after-school sport programme” context. Sessions meet once per week during the school day over eight months of the school year.

An evaluation of the programme, produced by the University of Chicago’s Crime Lab, found that during the programme year, for participants, the rate of arrests for violent crimes fell by 44 percent (8 fewer arrests per 100 participants). Arrests for vandalism and weapons decreased by 36 percent (11.5 fewer arrests per 100 participants). In the year after the programme, the youth participants’ likelihood of being detained and attending school in a juvenile detention centre was reduced by 53 percent.

The programme seems to generate crime reductions implying a benefit-cost ratio in the range of 3:1 (as a lower-bound estimate) to 31:1 (as the higher-bound estimate). Benefits are expected to reach 3,600 USD to 34,000 USD per participant, while the cost is around 1,100 USD per participant.

Source: The University of Chicago Crime Lab, 2012¹⁸⁸.

Case study: Premier League Kickz

Kickz was born in England in 2006 as a collaboration between the Metropolitan Police and the Premier League, to create opportunities for youth at risk of anti-social behaviour, or youth violence, or living in high-deprivation areas, to participate in sport. Professional football clubs deliver it several days a week. The programme provides sport coaching and workshops in drug awareness, healthy eating, volunteering, careers and weapons.

In addition to helping youths develop their sport skills, confidence and aspirations, Kickz is used as a medium for youth workers and the police to develop positive relationships with youths; to encourage positive relationships with adult mentors; and to deliver important messaging.

The programme has expanded significantly, with more than 4,900 delivery venues in England and Wales, and has benefited more than half a million youths.

It has been estimated that for each 1 GBP invested, it generates 7 GBP of value for the state and local community.

Source: Nevill and Poortvliet, 2012¹⁸⁹.

3.6.2. Societal impacts of sport in crime and violence prevention

Sport can have benefits not only for participants but for society at large, although they are modest in magnitude. This implies effects on the macrosystem, as explained in [Figure 2, Chapter 2](#). For instance, a 2017 study in England examined the relationship between sport participation in the general population and two categories of crimes (property crimes, which include thefts, robberies, and burglaries; and crimes against persons, which include violence against the person, sexual offenses, and homicides) between 2012 and 2015; it

188. The University of Chicago Crime Lab, “Preventing Youth Violence: An Evaluation of Youth Guidance’s Becoming a Man Program.”
189. Nevill and Poortvliet, “Teenage Kicks the Value of Sport in Tackling Youth Crime.”

found that a 10% increase in sport participation leads to a fall in crimes against persons of between 1.30% and 1.56%, and a decrease in property crimes of between 0.64% and 0.73%¹⁹⁰. Furthermore, a paper examining data from Italy found that an increase of 1% in the general population's sport participation reduces property crime by 0.3% and juvenile crime by 0.8%¹⁹¹. A different study used data from Iran to find that sport participation increases correlate with decreases in crime¹⁹². In the case of the United States, another study examined data for high schools and found that a 10% increase in interscholastic sport participation reduces school disturbances by between 0.4 and 2 percent, depending on the size of schools¹⁹³. Finally, an evaluation of three projects implemented in England - Kickz, The Boxing Academy and 2nd Chance - found that these resulted in financial savings to society by improving the life chances for young people, reducing costs to the criminal justice system and to the victims of crime¹⁹⁴. The first programme resulted in 7 GBP of value for the state and local community, for each 1 GBP invested; the second is estimated to generate 3 GBP for each 1 GBP invested.

3.6.3. Differentiated impacts of sport by intersectionality factors

Some studies have found that sport may have slightly different outcomes for males and females. For instance, the probability of delinquency may be higher for boys than girls¹⁹⁵, and the likelihood of participation in sport may be different due to perceptions of insecurity.

The study of sport's differentiated impacts according to other intersectionality factors implies a relevant gap in knowledge. Regarding age, for instance, most studies on this dimension analyse specific sport interventions' impact on youth, or of sport participation in general on society at large.

3.7. Peacebuilding

According to the discipline of peace studies, there are two ways to define peace¹⁹⁶. The first is *negatively defined* peace, which refers to the absence of violent conflict but the permanence of violent structures (e.g., denial of rights, poverty, social exclusion, injustice) and sources of violence (e.g., intolerance, hatred). The second one is *positively defined* peace, referring not only to the absence of violent conflict but also to the existence of a situation of social justice that prevents structural violence (or social injustice). In this view, peace should not be solely defined as the absence of violence, and it cannot be expected if social injustice is present because the latter invites the eruption of violence.

Sport for peacebuilding - Alignment with SDG specific targets

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. Particularly, it can contribute to:

- **Target 16.1:** Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere



According to Galtung, building peace requires a holistic process that must include three key factors: reconstruction of peoples and places, reconciliation of the parties in conflict, and resolution of animosities. The first concept, in turn, includes:

190. Brosnan, "The Impact of Sports Participation on Crime in England between 2012 and 2015."
 191. Caruso, "Crime and Sport Participation: Evidence from Italian Regions over the Period 1997–2003."
 192. Khanmoradi et al., "Crime and Sport Participation."
 193. Langbein and Bess, "Sports in School."
 194. Nevill and Poortvliet, "Teenage Kicks the Value of Sport in Tackling Youth Crime."
 195. Gardner, Roth, and Brooks-Gunn, "Sports Participation and Juvenile Delinquency."
 196. Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research."

- Rehabilitation, which refers to the healing of trauma through psycho-social support;
- Rebuilding, that is, the restoration of desirable pre-conflict entities;
- Restructuration, meaning the establishment of peace-facilitating structures, such as building a civil society based on voluntary participation; and
- Re-culturation, which implies transforming a culture of violence into one of peace¹⁹⁷.

3.7.1. Contribution of sport to peacebuilding

Sport cannot resolve conflict by itself. However, it can be instrumental in each step of peacebuilding once conflicting parties agree on de-escalation:

- It can provide healing and rehabilitation to traumatised individuals through physical activity and the development of individual skills.
- Sport facilities are an essential part of physical infrastructure reconstruction. They can function as gathering places, improve the liveability of urban areas, and restore a sense of normality.
- Due to their universal allure, sport can help bring together formerly conflicting parties and assist in restructuring their relationship.
- Sport participation can help move away from conflictive symbols and identities and help develop new, shared ones.
- Because most forms of sport require rules, they can serve as hooks to involve people in efforts to foster rules-based, democratic, peaceful coexistence.
- Sport can reconcile conflicting parties by providing a sense of security and normality.
- Sport can provide a focal point around which parties learn to resolve conflict constructively and amicably¹⁹⁸.

The most well-known example of the power of sport as a peacebuilding device is the Olympic Truce, dating back to ancient Greece and revived in modern times by United Nations Resolution 48/11 of 25 October 1993. There are many contemporary examples, for instance:

- The use of sport to promote a national, shared identity for South Africa. The image of a united South African team comprising Black and White athletes traveling in an airplane featuring the new national flag and of Nelson Mandela attending the 1992 Barcelona Olympics was a powerful symbol of the country's desire for reconciliation after apartheid¹⁹⁹.
- Efforts to provide bridges between traditionally nationalist and unionist football teams in Northern Ireland²⁰⁰.
- Initiatives run by the Asian German Sports Exchange Programme, an NGO, to bring together Nattandiya, Anamaduwa, and Nilaveli communities in Sri Lanka, for inter-community sport events²⁰¹.

3.7.2. Evidence of contribution

Although the evaluation of sport's impact on peacebuilding is a relatively new field of study, the existing literature includes encouraging findings. For example, PeacePlayers is a non-governmental organisation that invites youths from conflicting groups who otherwise live in separate neighbourhoods, attend different

197. Galtung, *Tras La Violencia, 3R: Reconstrucción, Reconciliación, Resolución*.

198. Cárdenas, "Peace Building Rough Sport? An Introduction to Sport for Development and Peace."

199. Höglund and Sundberg, "Reconciliation through Sports?"

200. Mitchell, Somerville, and Hargie, "Sport for Peace in Northern Ireland?"

201. Schulenkorf, "Sport Events and Ethnic Reconciliation."

schools, and speak different languages to come together through basketball. It started by working with Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Palestinian children. Its leadership and basketball SFD programme is based on the belief that, through opportunities for extended contact with “the other”, young people can form opinions, overcome stereotypes, and increase their willingness to interact in daily life. A recent, randomised controlled experimental evaluation of their Middle East programme found that after the second and third years of participation in the programme, Jewish boys increased their regard for their Arab-Palestinian counterparts as measured by an index comprising willingness for social closeness and the ability to share the perspective of the other, among other concepts²⁰². The organisation, launched in 2001, has expanded its operations to South Africa, Northern Ireland, the United States, and the Middle East.

3.7.3. Differentiated impacts of sport by intersectionality factors

Because the study of sport’s impacts on peacebuilding is incipient, there is scant evidence regarding differentiated effects by intersectional factors. However, the study referenced in the previous subsection did find differentiated results for boys and girls, with the latter showing no significant effects of their participation in the programme. In the authors’ words, *“To our surprise, [...] results suggest heterogeneity beyond ethnicity—by gender. These results raise interesting questions about how the effects of contact interventions may depend on one’s understanding of one’s own ethnicity, as filtered through the experience of one’s other group memberships [such as gender]”*.

3.8. Environmental sustainability

According to the Climate Change 2023 Synthesis Report, prepared by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change:

“Climate change is a threat to human well-being and planetary health. There is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a livable and sustainable future for all. Climate resilient development integrates adaptation and mitigation to advance sustainable development for all, and is enabled by increased international cooperation including improved access to adequate financial resources, particularly for vulnerable regions, sectors and groups, and inclusive governance and coordinated policies (high confidence). The choices and actions implemented in this decade will have impacts now and for thousands of years”.

Sport for Environmental Sustainability - Alignment with SDG specific targets

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.

- **Target 11.2:** By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons
- **Target 11.6:** By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management



202. Asimovic, Dittmann, and Samii, “Estimating the Effect of Intergroup Contact over Years: Evidence from a Youth Program in Israel.”

3.8.1. Contribution of sport to environmental sustainability

As with most human activities, sport relies on natural resources and can thus negatively impact the environment. Sporting events attract people who need transportation and thus generate emissions. Sporting venues use energy and may imply changing the use of green spaces. Product consumption at events generates residues, and so on. At the same time, environmental conditions influence sport: open sea swimming requires healthy bodies of water, while skiing requires snow. Furthermore, sport attendance may be influenced by the weather and air-quality conditions²⁰³. In this context, sport can help face the challenge of climate change via several avenues:

- **“Greening” sport²⁰⁴:** Sport can positively affect the environment by substantially limiting its environmental footprint. This includes reducing the carbon footprint of the construction of sporting facilities and their operations. Managers can reduce facilities’ use of energy (e.g., by having sporting venues use high-efficiency lighting powered by electricity from renewable sources and by installing low-flow water equipment); they can provide alternatives for non-contaminant transportation (such as facilitating walking, cycling, or carpooling; by providing charging stations for electric vehicles); and can introduce recycling for materials, among other examples.
- **Raising environmental awareness and inspiring climate-friendly behaviour:** By leveraging sport’s influence on participants’ and attendees’ knowledge, values, identity, expectations, and behaviour, it can encourage environmentally responsible action²⁰⁵.
- **Promoting the use of active mobility:** The transport sector is responsible for a significant fraction of greenhouse gas emissions (15%)²⁰⁶. One of the most promising areas for carbon reduction in this sector is substituting motorised modes with sport in the form of active mobility: walking, cycling (including e-bikes) or rolling for travel to work, school, leisure, and errands. A 2015 study estimated that increasing to 11% the global share of cycling/e-bike in urban passenger travel distance would cut CO₂ emissions by about 7% by 2030²⁰⁷. Another study estimated that if cycling in the United Kingdom returned to its popularity of the 1940s - when the average citizen cycled six times more per year than today - CO₂ emissions would be reduced by 7.7 million tons yearly²⁰⁸.

3.8.2. Evidence of contribution

Regarding the “greening” of sport, encouraging evidence shows that sports facilities and events can be designed and managed to reduce their environmental footprint substantially.

A case in point is the “green evolution” of the Olympic Games. The 2016 Rio Games were estimated to have generated games-wide emissions of 4.5 million tonnes of CO₂eq (carbon equivalent)²⁰⁹, while the 2020/2021 Tokyo Olympic Games generated about 1.960 million tonnes (although helped by lower attendance due to the COVID-19 pandemic). In the first case, emissions were partially compensated via emission reduction projects in Brazil (through a carbon mitigation strategy implemented by Dow and compensation initiatives led by the Rio de Janeiro State Government). In the latter, the same objective was pursued through a carbon offset programme with the assistance of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and the Saitama Prefectural Government²¹⁰, which enabled Tokyo 2020/2021 to achieve carbon neutrality. The International Olympic

203. McCullough, Orr, and Kellison, “Sport Ecology.”
 204. McCullough, Orr, and Watanabe, “Measuring Externalities”; United Nations Climate Change, “Sports for Climate Action Framework.”
 205. Casper, Pfahl, and McCullough, “Intercollegiate Sport and the Environment: Examining Fan Engagement Based on Athletics Department Sustainability Efforts”; Casper, Pfahl, and McCullough, “Is Going Green Worth It?”; Dastbarhagh et al., “Investigating the Role of Sport in Sustainable Environmental Development.”
 206. IPCC, “IPCC, 2023,” 2.
 207. Mason, Fulton, and McDonald, “A Global High Shift Cycling Scenario.”
 208. Cited in: Brand et al., “The Climate Change Mitigation Effects of Daily Active Travel in Cities.”
 209. Summer Olympic Games. Organizing Committee, “Rio Carbon Footprint Report.”
 210. Schmidt, “The Carbon Footprint of the Games – International Climate Change Law and the Olympics.”

Committee has pledged to reduce direct and indirect emissions by 30% by 2024 and 50% by 2030 and compensate more than 100% of its residual emissions²¹¹.

Furthermore, evidence shows that major league sports teams are indeed interested and already have initiatives regarding environmental sustainability²¹². The International Olympic Committee has pledged to use its influence to encourage stakeholders and Olympic fans to take action against climate change²¹³. Moreover, studies have shown that sports teams and clubs can influence sports fans' knowledge, values, identities, and expectations regarding the environment when they develop specific initiatives, such as "green games." However, evidence is still pending on whether that translates into actual behavioural changes²¹⁴.

Also, recent literature confirms the significant potential of walking and cycling to reduce humanity's carbon footprint substantially. Using data from seven European cities (Antwerp, Barcelona, London, Orebro, Rome, Vienna, and Zurich) found that cyclists had 84% lower life cycle CO₂ emissions than non-cyclists²¹⁵. Furthermore, the study estimates that an average person who replaces one daily car trip with a bicycle trip decreases life cycle CO₂ emissions by 3.2 kgCO₂/day. According to the study, on average, using a bike as the primary mode decreased life cycle CO₂ emissions by about 7.1 kgCO₂/day, compared to using a car or van.

Furthermore, a longitudinal panel study in the United Kingdom showed that walking or cycling could realistically substitute for car travel in 41% to 69% of all short trips, implying savings of between 5% and 10% of CO₂ emissions from car travel²¹⁶. Moreover, a review by the World Bank and the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy on case studies in China, Peru, Ethiopia, and Argentina regarding active mobility investments found ex-post-evaluated internal rates of return on investment of between 53.5% and 113%²¹⁷. Benefits evaluated include several dimensions: reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, improved air quality, decreased pedestrian and cyclist fatalities (better road safety), and time savings.

Finally, an evaluation of the results of an active-travel intervention in two small New Zealand cities, in which the latter built a mix of separated cycleways, walkways, and cycle lanes and provided education and promotion, had relevant impacts. First, the odds of trips being made using active modes (walking or cycling) increased by 37%. Second, the intervention's benefit-cost ratios were estimated at 11 : 1 over a 20-year period²¹⁸.

211. International Olympics Committee, "The IOC's Climate Commitment."

212. Blankenbuehler and Kunz, "Professional Sports Compete to Go Green."

213. International Olympics Committee, "The IOC's Climate Commitment."

214. Casper, Pfahl, and McCullough, "Intercollegiate Sport and the Environment: Examining Fan Engagement Based on Athletics Department Sustainability Efforts"; Casper, Pfahl, and McCullough, "Is Going Green Worth It?"

215. Brand, "Active Travel's Contribution to Climate Change Mitigation."

216. Neves and Brand, "Assessing the Potential for Carbon Emissions Savings from Replacing Short Car Trips with Walking and Cycling Using a Mixed GPS-Travel Diary Approach."

217. World Bank, "The Path Less Travelled."

218. Chapman et al., "A Cost Benefit Analysis of an Active Travel Intervention with Health and Carbon Emission Reduction Benefits."

Case studies: Active modes of mobility

Tianjin, China

Between 2015 and 2022, the Chinese city of Tianjin performed a project to expand the use of public transport, especially the metro. This included investing in 126 km of cycle lanes, complete streets, bus terminal upgrades, streetlights, traffic signals, and public squares. The project reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 34,281 Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (tCO₂e), equivalent to taking 7,600 cars off the road yearly. The internal rate of return on investment was initially projected at 17.6%, but an ex-post evaluation estimated it at 53.5%.

Buenos Aires, Argentina

From 2009 to 2013, the city implemented 100 km of bike lanes, reaching a 250 km network by 2020; it expanded a bike-share programme to 3,000 bikes and 200 stations. The network of protected bike lanes reached 307 km by 2023. The city's investments have led to an increase in the use of bicycles from 0.4% of trips in 2007 to 2.5% in 2015, and an ex-post evaluation estimated the internal rate of return on investment at 113%.

Mexico City

In 2010, the city launched its Ecobici bike-sharing programme with 1,200 bicycles in 85 stations. During its first three years of operation, the programme avoided emissions of 232 tCO₂e and saved 2,065 days of transportation for its beneficiaries. A study prepared in 2013 estimated the projected emission reductions for 2010-2020 at 3,641 tCO₂e. A considerable expansion in the protected bike-lane network in the city complemented the bike-sharing system. By 2023, the system included 4,500 bicycles and 471 stations, which had been used on trips totalling 7.8 million km.

Sources: World Bank, 2023²¹⁹, Ferreira and Martinez, 2013²²⁰, Mexico City Government, 2023²²¹.

3.8.3. Differentiated impacts of sport by intersectionality factors

Some studies have found gender-related differences in the potential effect of sport in this dimension, with female participants showing higher environmental awareness²²². This suggests that strategies that seek to engage sport fans in environmentally positive behaviour might benefit from gender differentiation.

3.9. Multi-purpose interventions

When appropriately designed, SFD programmes have the potential to positively impact several social dimensions simultaneously. Many existing SFD interventions target only one development objective, but several examples explicitly target many objectives at once. Evidence regarding the impact of multipurpose interventions is incipient but very encouraging.

A case in point is the Positive Futures programme, part of the UK's Active Communities Network. It offers a year-round programme of multiple sports and work provision for youths 10 to 19. By using sport as an entry point, the programme delivers messaging against substance misuse and participation in crime. An SROI analysis of the programme's intervention in Sutton found significant returns in terms of reduced stress, increased self-esteem, reductions in crime involvement, and engagement in volunteering for youth, as well as reductions in the chance of being victimised, and savings in police and judicial system costs, at the societal level²²³. When jointly evaluated with two other interventions, the estimated SROI ratio was 1 : 4.21, implying a total return of 4.21 GBP for each 1.00 GBP invested. The study also estimates that the social returns on the investment in the programme imply that the former is recouped in approximately three months.

219. World Bank, "The Path Less Travelled."

220. Ferreira and Martínez, "Estudio de la Reducción de Emisiones y los Co-Beneficios Generados por la Implementación del ECOBICI. (2010, 2011, 2012)."

221. Mexico City Government, "Llega el nuevo sistema de ECOBICI a 3.8 millones de viajes en la Ciudad de México."

222. Casper, Pfahl, and McCullough, "Is Going Green Worth It?"

223. Butler and Leatham, "A Social Return on Investment Evaluation of Three 'Sport for Social Change Network' Programmes in London."

Another example is Chances, which is also in the UK. It is a Social Impact Bond programme funded under the UK Government Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's Life Chances Fund. Chances is an SFD programme that focuses on children and youths aged between 8 and 17 who present low school attendance, are recent offenders, are looked after by public institutions, are not in education, employment or training, or are at risk of becoming part of the latter group. The programme is coordinated by Substance - the intermediary - which, in turn, works with a network of 16 local youth and sports organisations based at youth and community facilities. The latter may provide sports and physical activities, martial arts, dance, enterprise and social action projects, cooking, music, art and photography, leadership and personal development qualifications, residential experiences, and expeditions, depending on the local context. Local authorities make payments when the intermediary demonstrates effects on three dimensions: health and well-being (measured, for instance, by the completion of midpoint and endpoint questionnaires measuring physical literacy by participants); employment, education, and training (for example, by requiring the production of a certificate of achievement or a letter documenting volunteering or work experience, by participants) and reductions in offending (e.g., by requesting a letter from local authorities certifying a reduction in offenses, by participants). The programme does not yet have an external evaluation. However, it has been able to produce evidence for its outcomes - triggering payment - and is expected to produce a report by late 2024²²⁴.

A final example is Right to Play. The programme focuses on training teachers to use play inside the classroom to help children actively engage in their lessons; and to help students gain life skills through play outside the classroom. The latter can include sports, games, creative play, and free play. The programme is currently implemented in the Palestinian territories, Thailand, Lebanon, Pakistan, Jordan, Uganda, Canada, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique and Senegal. Although the programme does not yet seem to have undergone robust external evaluations, its reports indicate significant potential impacts when schools receiving the programme are compared to schools that do not. In Ghana, for instance, students in supported schools showed stronger overall reading fluency (17 more words per minute, on average) than those in unsupported schools. There are also encouraging before-versus-after results regarding community support for the rights of people with disabilities and relating to students' perceptions of a positive learning environment.

224. Government Outcomes Lab, "Chances."

4.

Conclusions and Recommendations

4. Conclusions and recommendations

This report offers a comprehensive analysis of the social value of sport and its potential to contribute to sustainable development. As outlined in [Chapter 3](#), sport is recognised for its potential to foster social cohesion, improve health, and drive economic development. In addition, in recent years, the global community has increasingly acknowledged the role of sport in achieving broader social objectives, such as promoting gender equality, enhancing educational outcomes and reducing violence. Drawing on the wide range of academic research and policy documents presented, this section provides general conclusions, followed by five general evidence-based recommendations aimed at policy-makers, investors, academia and sport stakeholders. Finally, the section synthesises conclusions for specific social dimensions, and makes recommendations to further enhance the impact of sport in these dimensions.

4.1. Conclusions

Robust evidence shows that appropriately designed SFD interventions are linked to positive social impacts in the eight development dimensions analysed in this report. Policy-makers and investors have a strong body of evidential support to endeavour in policies and programmes that encourage public and private investment in sport and physical activity. While available aggregate data does not cover all geographies, the existing evidence shows that investing in this type of interventions yields benefits above and beyond its costs and can be instrumental to achieving multiple SDGs.

Regarding the eight social dimensions analysed in this report, several points should be noted:

- Regarding sport's impact on Health and Well-being, Economic Development, and Environmental Sustainability, there is a vast volume of high-quality research, identifying predominantly positive outcomes.
- The evidence is also positive for Equality and Social Inclusion, Education and Labour Outcomes, Youth Empowerment and Civic Engagement, and Security, Crime, and Violence Prevention. However, the literature identifies caveats that must be addressed to avoid potentially adverse, unintended effects. Most studies examined on these topics show positive outcomes, while others find null or negative results. The latter typically involve evaluations of interventions that were not intentionally designed as SFD or did not adequately address the risk of adverse effects.
- Evidence about sport for Peacebuilding is incipient but encouraging. There is limited availability of evaluations based on robust methodologies, but they show positive effects. SFD interventions are only likely to succeed if the appropriate peace and equality conditions are already in place and if they consider possible limitations.

Finally, evidence stresses the importance of SFD interventions to be clear and intentional – that is, for them to be designed, and implemented, for impact. Programmes and projects in which sport is used to achieve impacts regarding social outcomes must be specifically and intentionally designed to:

- Include components focused on developing the skills, values, and opportunities directly related to the objectives sought after.
- Be clear about how sport is expected to promote the objectives that an intervention seeks to impact when used as the central component, or as part of a set of delivery components. The sport component will need to consider the specific needs of the related objective by: a) maximising the elements likely to lead to positive impacts; and b) including elements that can reduce and manage risks related to unfavourable or unintended results. For instance, when using sport to build confidence, personal

growth, strengthen social bonds, or civic engagement, interventions will probably need to de-emphasise competition, ensure that they avoid normalising prejudicial gender stereotypes, and emphasise cooperation and rules-abiding behaviour. This is especially important when an SFD intervention seeks to positively impact dimensions such as crime and violence prevention, peacebuilding, youth empowerment, and civic engagement. When seeking to engage at-risk youth from school-based ambiances, a sport intervention will need to determine if activities need to occur outside the attendees' regular school context, so that it does not inadvertently place some youths in a situation where bullying present in the school context is repeated in the intervention.

4.2. Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1 UNLEASH THE POWER OF SPORT THROUGH DATA AND RESEARCH EVIDENCE

Actions		Description
1.a.	Improve access to data and research	Improve the availability of comprehensive data on sport and its social impact, particularly focusing on vulnerable groups. This involves, for instance, expanding research on how sport-based interventions affect health and well-being, studying the dose-response relationship between levels of physical activity and sedentary behaviours and health outcomes across different demographics, and conducting longitudinal studies to uncover the long-term social impacts of sport participation.
1.b.	Address geographic gaps with a north-south perspective	Prioritise research and data on sport-based interventions in developing countries to provide evidence on how to adapt sport-based interventions to different contexts. Most literature comes from the developed countries, creating a knowledge imbalance. Bridging this geographical gap will ensure that sport-based interventions are effective and culturally relevant across diverse settings.
1.c.	Strengthen data collection and sharing systems	There is an urgent need for coordinated efforts to systematically collect, monitor, and disseminate quality data related to sport and physical activity globally. Less than 50% of UNESCO Member States have readily available data on sport participation, relying on outdated, incomplete, or non-comparable information, especially for developing countries. Addressing this issue can bridge research gaps and design more accurate, effective interventions.
1.d.	Advance research through multidisciplinary partnerships	Multidisciplinary partnerships are vital for understanding and addressing the complex impacts of sport at multiple levels. Collaborative approaches involving governments, academia, civil society, and other stakeholders can strengthen the mechanisms through which sport contributes to social impacts and enhance causal evidence.
1.e.	Invest in technology for data collection	Leverage technological advancements to enhance data collection on the impact of sport participation and physical activity. This includes funding research and development of wearable devices and mobile applications that can accurately monitor relevant variables of study. Such investments will provide robust data, enabling better analysis of the eight impact dimensions of sport, and inform more effective policy and programme development.

RECOMMENDATION 2**INVEST IN SPORT AS A COST-EFFECTIVE SOLUTION**

Actions	Description
2.a. Advocate for increased public and private investment	Use the impact dimensions of sport, as outlined in this report, as arguments for increasing investments in and through sport by investors with interests in specific outcome areas rather than in sport <i>per se</i> .
2.b. Promote social outcomes in and through sport	Invest in sport-based initiatives that incorporate clear indicators for economic, social and environmental outcomes into their evaluation methodologies. The promotion of social outcomes ensures a well-rounded assessment of the broader impact of sport-based initiatives, aligning investments with measurable outcomes, rather than with inputs or outputs.
2.c. Implement a Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework	SROI studies enable leveraging evidence to quantify the economic benefits of sport-based interventions, thereby making a compelling case to attract investments from both the private and public sectors.
2.d. Explore innovative funding approaches	Innovative funding approaches can bridge funding gaps by improving the cost-effectiveness of investments and mobilising financial support from the private sector. This is particularly relevant for sport-based interventions, as it recognises and enhances their multi-level impact across various sectors.

RECOMMENDATION 3**FOSTER COLLECTIVE ACTION IN AND THROUGH SPORT AS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND SOCIAL CHANGE**

Actions	Description
3.a. Establish inclusive and sustainable partnerships	Build partnerships between government agencies, private sector, civil society, academia and sport stakeholders to maximise the social impact of sport policies and programmes. An all-of-society approach is essential to maximise the impact of sport.
3.b. Disseminate evidence across global networks	Expand the impact of sport-based initiatives worldwide by sharing good practices, research findings, and innovative methodologies. Global networks, such as UNESCO's Fit for Life Sport Alliance, serve as platforms for sharing knowledge and fostering cross-sector collaboration to strengthen and promote evidence on the impact of sport.
3.c. Use this report as a living resource	Governments, academic institutions and civil society organisations are encouraged to continuously update this report with new data, policies, and strategies. This dynamic approach aims to guarantee that the report remains up to date and relevant, serving as a valuable resource for policy-makers, researchers, and practitioners in the field of sport-based interventions.

RECOMMENDATION 4
MAKE SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY A CROSS-SECTORAL PRIORITY AND INTEGRATE INTO PUBLIC POLICIES IN GENERAL TO MAXIMISE CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES

Actions		Description
4.a.	Embed sport in relevant policy agendas	Recognise the central role of sport in national legislation, norms, policies, budgets, and governance. Considering the broad-ranging dimensions of impact of sport outlined in this report, sport should be considered in the planning, development, and implementation of policies across sectors.
4.b.	Design inclusive sport policies	Ensure that sport policies are designed to be inclusive, addressing intersectional attributes and barriers faced by communities in vulnerable situations. Investing in those who are further behind can maximise the impact of sport and achieve broad-based community benefits.
4.b.	Align data with global agendas	Align information on the social impact of sport with global and regional policy frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals and Human Rights Instruments. This alignment highlights the contribution of sport to addressing international challenges and strengthens the relevance of the impacts of sport.

RECOMMENDATION 5
CO-CREATE SPORT-BASED INTERVENTIONS THAT ARE INTENTIONAL AND INTERSECTIONAL

Actions		Description
5.a.	Design for impact: targeted sport-based interventions to address social issues	Design and implement sport programmes to address specific social issues, such as gender disparities, youth unemployment or social exclusion of marginalised groups. Make sure to include beneficiaries in programme design to ensure relevance and sustainability. Ensure these programmes are evidence-based and encourage cross-programme learnings to further disseminate good practices.
5.b.	Ensure inclusive participation	Ensure that sports programmes are accessible to all segments of society, including marginalised groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities. Implement policies that address barriers to participation, such as cost, lack of facilities, and social stigma.
5.c.	Monitor and evaluate impact	Implement clear and effective monitoring frameworks to track progress against sport-related SDGs. Whenever possible, make use of econometric studies to understand the broader economic and social impacts of sport.
5.d.	Governance and leadership	Promote representation at governance levels and ensure facilities and programmes cater to the diverse needs of all participants. Engage stakeholders from marginalised communities in the decision-making process to ensure their perspectives and needs are integrated into sport policies and initiatives.

4.3. Summary of sport's impact dimensions

The following table provides conclusions and recommendations regarding the eight social development areas analysed.

DIMENSION	SPECIFIC CONCLUSIONS	SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS
Health and Well-Being	Physical activity and sport are effective ways to prevent non-communicable diseases such as depression, hypertension, and cancer. Sport is also proven to boost well-being and build stronger community.	Policy - Reducing inactivity should be a high priority for all countries. For adults, this implies promoting at least 150 minutes of moderate activity per week, like walking or biking. Children require at least 60 minutes of moderate activity every day. - Effective ways to promote physical activity and sport incorporate well-established behaviour change theories, leverage the use of technology, and facilitate people's participation from where they live, study, work, and play. Research - Evaluate the effects of popular sports (directly) on health and well-being. Most of the existing studies refer to physical activity, and a better understanding of the effects of popular sports would improve the design of SFD interventions. - Expand research on the dose-response relationship between physical activity and health outcomes, specifically for non-communicable diseases known to reach a significant proportion of the population globally, like depression, hypertension, dementia, some forms of cancer and type II diabetes²²⁵. More research is also needed to understand how different levels of physical activity and sedentary behaviour impact health outcomes across subgroups based on sex, age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and across low and middle-income countries.

225. See WHO Guidelines on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour., and Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018, "PAGAC."

DIMENSION	SPECIFIC CONCLUSIONS	SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS
Equality and Social Inclusion	• Evidence supports the idea that sport can be an effective tool for promoting social inclusion. • Unless social inclusion goals are deliberately included, sport may have unintended consequences, like limiting social mobility and perpetuating stereotypes. As is the case with other dimensions, SFD interventions for social inclusion must be designed and implemented for impact.	Policy • Investing in equal access to physical activity and sport is effective in mitigating gender disparities and promoting social inclusion. • Promoting social inclusion through sport and physical activity requires addressing barriers faced by disadvantaged groups. These include: a) availability of gender-specific sport facilities close to people who are economically and socially disadvantaged; b) adapting curricula, training programmes and public intervention designs to convey social inclusion goals, fight stereotypes, and strengthen positive attitudes toward women and socially disadvantaged groups. • Particularly for people with disabilities: a) increase availability of accessible sport facilities, including transportation and infrastructure required to travel safely; b) design sport programmes to address the needs and promote the inclusion of people with disabilities, at school and at work; train sport professionals and medical staff accordingly; c) promote a social and cultural transformation to change and create public awareness about the value of social inclusion; this implies providing more visibility, public acknowledgment, and support to athletes with disabilities; d) ensure representation in decision-making bodies and positions, from local to international levels. Research • Promoting rigorous impact evaluations based on a solid theory of change will help to understand the effects of sport participation. In particular, there is a need to understand better the motivations for engaging in physical activity and sport across different social backgrounds. • Increasing evidence from lower income countries can help identify the effects of sport worldwide more clearly and rally support for funding from national governments and international cooperation agencies.

DIMENSION	SPECIFIC CONCLUSIONS	SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS
Education and Labour outcomes	• Sport and physical activity help develop physical, cognitive and non-cognitive skills that are valuable for education and work. • SFD interventions can contribute to significant education and labour outcomes when designed and implemented with an intentional and guided developmental approach. Introducing sport without this careful approach can create counterproductive effects.	Education Policy • SFD programmes should incorporate elements such as credible leadership, decision-making opportunities for students, attention to social and peer relationships, and a focus on learning processes and skills that can be transferred to the educational sphere. • Policy-makers must analyse the trade-offs between selecting in-school and out-of-school settings for SFD interventions. While the former have the advantage of relying on existing school infrastructure and logistic resources, it requires solving school bullying and peer pressure dynamics. The latter, in turn, may make it easier for programmes to include subjects who are not enrolled in schools. Research • There is a need for further studies to clarify the causality between sport and physical activity, and educational outcomes. This can improve the implementation of SFD initiatives for education and their evaluation. • In light of some studies reporting mixed results, and others finding little, null, or even negative effects, more research is needed to better understand and avoid any potential risks for unwanted outcomes. Labour Policy • SFD initiatives should be designed to develop skills and attitudes necessary for navigating the job market and thriving in a work environment. • SFD programmes should include a coaching and mentoring approach that helps participants with self-reflection and self-esteem, trust development, and career direction-setting. SFD initiatives should target individuals at different stages of development and in different circumstances, from young students preparing to enter the work force, to professionals looking to improve their performance, to people who are (or are at risk of being) outside of all education, employment, or training tracks. Research • There is a need for further and updated research regarding the link between sport participation and labour outcomes in women and girls and people with disabilities.

DIMENSION	SPECIFIC CONCLUSIONS	SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS
Youth Empowerment and Civic Engagement	• Sport and physical activity can contribute positively to youth empowerment and civic engagement. Through the development of social capital and the exposure to civic-minded environments, sport can help individuals build a civic and socially conscious identity and provide them with tools useful for self and community advocacy and political participation.	Policy • Policy-makers should strategically design their working definitions of youth empowerment and civic engagement. • SFD interventions should actively and effectively involve young people in the design and governance of the programmes to ensure that young perspectives and experiences are taken into account, enriching the interventions and making them more relevant for the participants. • SFD programmes must ensure that people from various backgrounds and contexts are included. • Sport clubs (in contrast to other organisational formats) tend to foster a conducive environment for developing social capital and an enhanced sense of identity and ownership for young people, so it might be beneficial to embed some SFD initiatives into these settings. Research • There is a need for updated research efforts regarding the effects of sport on youth empowerment and civic engagement, including exploration of long-term effects and use of cross-sectional data.
Economic Development	• Both sport participation and sport as an industry have considerable effects on economies at various levels, with social and environmental implications for countries and individuals.	Policy • Policy-makers should foster a coordinated effort to increase capacity building to collect precise data on the scale of sport's economic impact, especially for developing countries at different levels. The data must be consistent, comparable, and representative. • Nations should pursue the identification and development of strengths related to their particular sport industries and develop national sport policies that include adequate tax incentives and support for grassroots sports initiatives. Research • Research should identify and analyse best practices to maximise the economic benefits of large sporting events and minimise their drawbacks, including assessments of whether hosting communities are better suited for major or smaller events. • There is a need for more cost-benefit analyses on the quantifiable economic benefits of specific kinds of sport.

DIMENSION	SPECIFIC CONCLUSIONS	SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS
Security, Crime and Violence Prevention	• SFD interventions can positively impact this topic when appropriately designed. However, policy-makers must be aware that unintended adverse effects might arise if interventions are not designed comprehensively. • SFD interventions on this topic tend to have larger effects at the individual level and modest ones at the social level.	Policy • To ensure impact, policy-makers and implementers need to include elements specifically focused on crime and violence prevention (e.g., cognitive behavioural therapy, links to opportunities beyond an SFD programme). • Unintended negative effects must be addressed (e.g., bullying, gender biases) - see Subsection 3.6.2. • The evidence points to the need for sport coaches — and other professionals who may be called upon for interventions that seek to prevent violence and crime through the use of sport — to be adequately trained. • More research is needed on the impact of SFD interventions on this topic for low- and middle-income countries.
Peacebuilding	• Evidence of sport's potential impact on peacebuilding is incipient but encouraging. • Sport can help in the process of peacebuilding if conflicting parties have already agreed to de-escalate; however, policy-makers must study the existing conditions to decide if an SFD intervention in this field makes sense.	Research • More research is needed to strengthen a) specific areas in which impact is feasible; b) the processes by which effects might be achieved; and c) the magnitude of effects that can realistically be expected in this topic.

DIMENSION	SPECIFIC CONCLUSIONS	SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS
Environmental Sustainability	• Sport can contribute to environmental sustainability by limiting sport's carbon footprint, raising participants' and fans' environmental awareness and positively affecting their values, beliefs and behaviour, and through larger use of active mobility. • The evidence confirms a significant potential for walking and cycling to substantially reduce humanity's carbon footprint.	Policy • Policy-makers should promote reductions in sport's carbon footprint²²⁶, especially in connection with sporting events. • Cities must step up their investments in active mobility, an area that has already demonstrated significant impacts in several geographies. When making investments in the topic, policy-makers need to include three elements: building infrastructure, providing encouragement, and building the capacity of institutions. • Sport clubs, teams, and facilities can leverage their "green" investments to build credibility among fan bases, transmit environmentally relevant information, and influence participants' values, identities, and expectations. Tools such as UEFA's carbon footprint calculator²²⁶ can serve this purpose. Also, according to experts' opinions²²⁷, they could commit to carbon-neutral supply chains, which would likely have ripple effects in many other industries. Additionally, they should explore ways for fans to enjoy sport and have a sense of community and shared experience without the need for long-distance travel (e.g. holding local events for remote watching of matches). • Adaptation measures to climate change should be built into investments today to help sports investors future-proof their businesses. Research • The sport world needs to understand how fans can be best categorised so that initiatives can be better designed to influence fans' knowledge, values, identity, and expectations effectively²²⁸. • Further research is needed to identify how sport can best influence participants' and fans' actual environmental behaviours (beyond positively affecting their values, beliefs, and expectations)²²⁹. This may include a more substantial utilisation of sport stars as communicators, models, and influencers.

226. Triantafyllidis, Ries, and Kaplanidou, "Carbon Dioxide Emissions of Spectators' Transportation in Collegiate Sporting Events"; McCullough, Orr, and Watanabe, "Measuring Externalities"; Dolf and Teehan, "Reducing the Carbon Footprint of Spectator and Team Travel at the University of British Columbia's Varsity Sports Events"; Damjanovic, "How Climate Change Is Changing Sport: Q and A with Sport Ecologist Madeleine Orr."
227. Interview with Prof. Madeleine Orr.
228. Casper, Pfahl, and McCullough, "Is Going Green Worth It?"
229. McCullough, Orr, and Kellison, "Sport Ecology"; McCullough, Orr, and Watanabe, "Measuring Externalities."

Bibliography

- Acquah-Sam, Emmanuel. "Developing Sports for Economic Growth and Development in Developing Countries." *European Scientific Journal ESJ* 17, no. 15 (May 31, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2021.v17n15p172>.
- Agha, Nola, and Marijke Taks. "A Theoretical Comparison of the Economic Impact of Large and Small Events." *International Journal of Sport Finance* 10, no. 3 (2015): 199–216. [https://doi.org/Agha, Nola and Taks, Marijke, A Theoretical Comparison of the Economic Impact of Large and Small Events \(January 1, 2015\). International Journal of Sport Finance, 10\(3\), 199-216, 2015, Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2709537](https://doi.org/Agha, Nola and Taks, Marijke, A Theoretical Comparison of the Economic Impact of Large and Small Events (January 1, 2015). International Journal of Sport Finance, 10(3), 199-216, 2015, Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2709537).
- Alive and Kicking. "Alive and Kicking - Impact." Alive & Kicking, 2024. <https://aliveandkicking.org/impact/>.
- Alive and Kicking. "Alive and Kicking - Info Pack." Alive and Kicking, 2024. <https://aliveandkicking.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Alive-and-Kicking-Info-Pack.pdf>.
- All in Sport Consulting, Huddle Up Group, and Stitch Marketing Research. "Adapted Sport: Economic Impact Survey - Findings Report." All in Sport Consulting, October 12, 2023. https://allinsportconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Stitch-MR_Economic-Impact-Study_All-in-Sport-2023-FINAL.pdf.
- Andreff, Wladimir. "The Correlation between Economic Underdevelopment and Sport." *European Sport Management Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (December 2001): 251–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184740108721902>.
- Aquina, Leo, Robert Barreveld, Karlijn de Jonge, and Ashley Newman. "Creating Inclusive Cities through Sport." UNESCO, 2023. <https://aceseurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Creating-inclusive-cities-through-sport-UNESCO-DEF.pdf>.
- Armour, Kathleen, Rachel Sandford, and Rebecca Duncombe. "Positive Youth Development and Physical Activity/Sport Interventions: Mechanisms Leading to Sustained Impact." *Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy* 18, no. 3 (July 2013): 256–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2012.666791>.
- Asimovic, Nejla, Ruth Ditlmann, and Cyrus Samii. "Estimating the Effect of Intergroup Contact over Years: Evidence from a Youth in Israel." *Political Science Research and Methods*, 2023, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2024.8>.
- Australian Council for Educational Research. "Evaluation of the Sporting Chance Australian Council for Educational Research, October 2011. https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=policy_analysis_misc.
- Bailey, Richard. "Evaluating the Relationship between Physical Education, Sport and Social Inclusion." *Educational Review* 57, no. 1 (February 2005): 71–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0013191042000274196>.
- Beaman, Lori, Sylvan Herskowitz, Niall Keleher, and Jeremy Magruder. "Stay in the Game: A Randomised Controlled Trial of a Sports and Life Skills for Vulnerable Youth in Liberia." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 70, no. 1 (October 1, 2021): 129–58. <https://doi.org/10.1086/711651>.
- Benedetti, Tânia, Sofia Manta, Luiz Gomez, and Cassiano Rech. "Logical model of a change for community intervention – Active Life Improving Health – VAMOS." *Revista Brasileira de Atividade Física & Saúde* 22, no. 3 (May 1, 2017): 309–13. <https://doi.org/10.12820/rbafs.v.22n3p309-313>.
- Blankenbuehler, Marlene, and Michelle B Kunz. "Professional Sports Compete to Go Green." *American Journal of Management* 14, no. 4 (2014): 76–81.
- Boakye, Andrea, and Carmen Procida. "What Does It Mean to 'Empower' Youth?" Aspen Institute, April 13, 2016. <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/mean-empower-youth/>.
- Booth, Frank W., Christian K. Roberts, John P. Thyfault, Gregory N. Rueggsegger, and Ryan G. Toedebusch. "Role of Inactivity in Chronic Diseases: Evolutionary Insight and Pathophysiological Mechanisms." *Physiological Reviews* 97, no. 4 (October 1, 2017): 1351–1402. <https://doi.org/10.1152/physrev.00019.2016>.

- Bosch, Júlia, Carles Murillo, and Josep Maria Raya. "La importancia económica del sector deportivo y el impacto económico de los eventos deportivos." *Papeles de Economía Española*, Deporte y Economía, 159 (2019). https://www.funcas.es/wp-content/uploads/Migracion/Articulos/FUNCAS_PEE/159art17.pdf.
- Braddock, Jomills Henry, Lv Hua, and Marvin P Dawkins. "Effects of Participation in High School Sports and Nonsport Extracurricular Activities on Political Engagement among Black Young Adults," 2007. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jomills-li/publication/234558395_Effects_of_Participation_in_High_School_Sports_and_Nonsport_Extracurricular_Activities_on_Political_Engagement_among_Black_Young_Adults/links/564e3c5308ae1ef9296c6f0d/Effects-of-Participation-in-High-School-Sports-and-Nonsport-Extracurricular-Activities-on-Political-Engagement-among-Black-Young-Adults.pdf.
- Brady, Martha, Ragui Assaad, Barbara Ibrahim, Abeer Salem, Rania Salem, and Nadia Zibani. "Providing New Opportunities to Adolescent Girls in Socially Conservative Settings: The Ishraq in Rural Upper Egypt—Full Report." Population Council, 2007. <https://doi.org/10.31899/pgy5.1002>.
- Brand, Christian. "Active Travel's Contribution to Climate Change Mitigation: Research Summary and Outlook." *Active Travel Studies* 1, no. 1 (August 11, 2021): 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.16997/ats.1036>.
- Brand, Christian, Evi Dons, Esther Anaya-Boig, Ione Avila-Palencia, Anna Clark, Audrey De Nazelle, Mireia Gascon, et al. "The Climate Change Mitigation Effects of Daily Active Travel in Cities." *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment* 93 (April 2021): 102764. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trd.2021.102764>.
- Bronfenbrenner, Urie. "Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development." *American Psychologist*, 1977. <https://scottbarrykaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/a4f4a4545519d84c5c57095b4bcc685d7dd9.pdf>.
- Brosnan, Stephen. "The Impact of Sports Participation on Crime in England between 2012 and 2015." *Sport in Society* 23, no. 6 (June 2, 2020): 1080–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2019.1631805>.
- Burton, Wayne N., Katherine T. McCalister, Chin-Yu Chen, and Dee W. Edington. "The Association of Health Status, Worksite Fitness Center Participation, and Two Measures of Productivity." *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 47, no. 4 (April 2005): 343–51. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.jom.0000158719.57957.c6>.
- Butler, William, and Karl Leathem. "A Social Return on Investment Evaluation of Three 'Sport for Social Change Network' in London." Actives Communities Network, 2014. <https://socialvalueuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Active-Communities-Network-Social-Return-on-Investment-Report.pdf>.
- Cabane, Charlotte. "Unemployment Duration and Sport Participation." Documents de Travail Du Centre d'Economie de La Sorbonne, November 2013. <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00639307v2>.
- Cabane, Charlotte, and Andrew E. Clark. "Childhood Sporting Activities and Adult Labour-Market Outcomes." *Annals of Economics and Statistics*, no. 119/120 (2015): 123–48. <https://doi.org/10.15609/annaeconstat2009.119-120.123>.
- Candari, Christine Joy, Jonathan Cylus, and Ellen Nolte. "Assessing the Economic Costs of Unhealthy Diets and Low Physical Activity: An Evidence Review and Proposed Framework." Copenhagen, Denmark: European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, 2017. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28787114/>.
- Cárdenas, Alexander. "Peace Building Rough Sport? An Introduction to Sport for Development and Peace." *Journal of Conflictology* 4, no. 1 (2013): 25–33. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=5589711>.
- Careerbuilder. "Sports-Related Employment Is on the Rise and Creating Jobs in Other Industries, According to New Research from CareerBuilder and Economic Modeling Specialists." PR Newswire, 2014. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/sports-related-employment-is-on-the-rise-and-creating-jobs-in-other-industries-according-to-new-research-from-careerbuilder-and-economic-modeling-specialists-272991311.html>.
- Caruso, Raul. "Crime and Sport Participation: Evidence from Italian Regions over the Period 1997–2003." 2011 40 (2011): 455–63. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.socec.2010.09.003>.

- Casper, Jonathan M, Michael E Pfahl, and Brian McCullough. "Intercollegiate Sport and the Environment: Examining Fan Engagement Based on Athletics Department Sustainability Efforts" 7 (2014). <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1138&context=jiia>.
- Casper, Jonathan M., Michael E. Pfahl, and Brian P. McCullough. "Is Going Green Worth It? Assessing Fan Engagement and Perceptions of Athletic Department Environmental Efforts." *Journal of Applied Sport Management* 9, no. 1 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.18666/JASM-2017-V9-I1-7690>.
- Chapman, Ralph, Michael Keall, Philippa Howden-Chapman, Mark Grams, Karen Witten, Edward Randal, and Alistair Woodward. "A Cost Benefit Analysis of an Active Travel Intervention with Health and Carbon Emission Reduction Benefits." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 15, no. 5 (May 11, 2018): 962. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15050962>.
- Chappelet, Jean-Loup. "Sport and Economic Development." The Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration, 2010. https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/sport__economic_development_in_english.pdf.
- Chen, Yugao. "The Net Effect of Giant Sports Competition on Local Economy: Evidence from Olympic Games and World Cup." *Advances in Economics and Management Research* 6, no. 1 (July 18, 2023): 587. <https://doi.org/10.56028/aemr.6.1.587.2023>.
- Chih Hoong Sin. *Impact Investment in Sport: Innovating the Funding of Sport for Development*. UNESCO, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.54678/SYRK9240>.
- Chong, Yong-Yee, Emma Sherry, Sophia Harith, and Selina Khoo. "Sport for Development Contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 5: A Review." *Sustainability* 14, no. 11 (June 2, 2022): 6828. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14116828>.
- Clontarf Foundation. "Annual Report 2023." Western Australia: Clontarf Foundation, 2023. <https://clontarf.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Clontarf-Foundation-2023-Annual-Report.pdf>.
- Coalter, Fred. "'There Is Loads of Relationships Here': Developing a Theory for Sport-for-Change" *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 48, no. 5 (October 2013): 594–612. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690212446143>.
- Coalter, Fred, Marc Theeboom, John Taylor, Tessa Commers, and Inge Derom. "Sport and Employability." MONITOR, 2021. <https://saso.research.vub.be/sites/default/files/2022-12/MONITOR%20Sport%20%26%20Employability%2C%202021.pdf>.
- Crabbe, Tim, Peter Bain, Natalie Djohari, Edgar Kath, and Fiona McGee. "Sport Works Full Report." sported, 2020. <https://www.substance.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Sportworks-Full-Report.pdf>.
- Cyranowski, Jill M., Ellen Frank, Elizabeth Young, and M. Katherine Shear. "Adolescent Onset of the Gender Difference in Lifetime Rates of Major Depression: A Theoretical Model." *Archives of General Psychiatry* 57, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 21. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archpsyc.57.1.21>.
- Damjanovic, Jelena. "How Climate Change Is Changing Sport: Q and A with Sport Ecologist Madeleine Orr." Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education, 2024. <https://kpe.utoronto.ca/faculty-news/how-climate-change-changing-sport-q-and-sport-ecologist-madeleine-orr>.
- D'Andrea, Wendy, and Joseph Spinazzola. "The Doc Wayne Athletic League: An Adjunctive Therapeutic Intervention for Residential School Girls End-of-Year Evaluation." Doc Wayne Youth Services, 2009. https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/dwal_evaluation_2009__2.pdf.
- Dastbarhagh, Hosein, Mohammad Sadegh Afroozeh, Younes Mohammadzadeh, and Arash Fadam. "Investigating the Role of Sport in Sustainable Environmental Development: A Case Study." *Journal of Archives in Military Medicine* 11, no. 1 (March 27, 2023). <https://doi.org/10.5812/jamm-132655>.
- Davies, Larissa, Elizabeth Christy, Girish Ramchandani, and Peter Taylor. "Social Return on Investment of Sport and Physical Activity in England." Sport England, 2019. <https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-09/Social%20return%20on%20investment.pdf?VersionId=5BgVln09jwpTesBJ4BXhVfRhV4TYgm9E>.

- Davies, Larissa, Peter Taylor, Girish Ramchandani, and Elizabeth Christy. "Social Return on Investment (SROI) in 10.1080/13573322.2019.1574731 Sport: A Model for Measuring the Value of Participation in England." *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 11, no. 4 (October 2, 2019): 585–605. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2019.1596967>.
- Delaney, Liam, and Emily Keaney. "Sport and Social Capital in the United Kingdom: Statistical Evidence from National and International Survey Data." *Economic and Social Research Institute and Institute for Public Policy Research* 32 (2005): 1–42.
- Deloitte UK. "Elite Sport as a Catalyst for Economic Growth and Societal Change," February 12, 2024. <https://www.deloitte.com/uk/en/services/consulting/perspectives/elite-sport-as-a-catalyst-for-economic-growth-and-societal-change.html>.
- Department of Communities and Local Government. "Our Towns and Cities: The Future - Full Report." Department for Communities and Local Government, 2000. <https://files.cambridge.gov.uk/public/ldf/coredocs/RD-HQ/rd-hq-060.pdf>.
- Diaz, Robert, Emily K. Miller, Emily Kraus, and Michael Fredericson. "Impact of Adaptive Sports Participation on Quality of Life." *Sports Medicine and Arthroscopy Review* 27, no. 2 (June 2019): 73–82. <https://doi.org/10.1097/JSA.0000000000000242>.
- Dolf, Matt, and Paul Teehan. "Reducing the Carbon Footprint of Spectator and Team Travel at the University of British Columbia's Varsity Sports Events." *Sport Management Review* 18, no. 2 (April 1, 2015): 244–55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2014.06.003>.
- Dudfield, Oliver, Malcom Dingwall, and Tikwiza Silubonde. "Sport for Development and Peace and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2015. <https://www.sportanddev.org/research-and-learning/resource-library/sport-development-and-peace-and-2030-agenda-sustainable>.
- Duffey, Keeva, Ana Barbosa, Stephen Whiting, Romeu Mendes, Isabel Yordi Aguirre, Antonina Tcymbal, Karim Abu-Omar, Peter Gelius, and João Breda. "Barriers and Facilitators of Physical Activity Participation in Adolescent Girls: A Systematic Review of Systematic Reviews." *Frontiers in Public Health* 9 (October 15, 2021): 743935. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.743935>.
- Duglio, Stefano, and Riccardo Beltramo. "Estimating the Economic Impacts of a Small-Scale Sport Tourism Event: The Case of the Italo-Swiss Mountain Trail CollonTrek." *Sustainability* 9, no. 3 (February 26, 2017): 343. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su9030343>.
- Eather, Narelle, Levi Wade, Aurélie Pankowiak, and Rochelle Eime. "The Impact of Sports Participation on Mental Health and Social Outcomes in Adults: A Systematic Review and the 'Mental Health through Sport' Conceptual Model." *Systematic Reviews* 12, no. 1 (June 21, 2023): 102. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-023-02264-8>.
- EdComs. "Sporteducate Evaluation Report." London: Sported, September 2017. <https://sported.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Sporteducate-Report-2017.pdf>.
- Eime, Rochelle M, Janet A Young, Jack T Harvey, Melanie J Charity, and Warren R Payne. "A Systematic Review of the Psychological and Social Benefits of Participation in Sport for Children and Adolescents: Informing Development of a Conceptual Model of Health through Sport." *International Journal of Nutrition and Physical Activity* 10, no. 1 (2013): 98. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1479-5868-10-98>.
- Eitle, Tamela, and David J. Eitle. "Race, Cultural Capital, and the Educational Effects of Participation in Sports." *Sociology of Education* 75, no. 2 (2024): 123–46. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3090288>.
- Endresen, Inger M., and Dan Olweus. "Participation in Power Sports and Antisocial Involvement in Preadolescent and Adolescent Boys." *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 46, no. 5 (May 2005): 468–78. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2005.00414.x>.
- Eurostat. "10.9% Increase in Employment in Sport in 2022 in the EU - Eurostat," July 28, 2023. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230728-1>.
- Eurostat. "Gross Value Added by Economic Activities." Key Figures in Europe, 2022. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/visualisations/keyfigures/>.

- Faria, Maria José Da Silva, and Bárbara Lorrayne Guerra Alves Pereira. "The Impact on the Brazilian Economy of the Olympic Games in Rio De Janeiro in 2016." *International Journal of Professional Business Review* 8, no. 11 (November 17, 2023): e03886. <https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i11.3886>.
- Ferreira, Lía, and Hilda Martínez. "Estudio de la Reducción de Emisiones y los Co-Beneficios Generados por la Implementación del ECOBICI. (2010, 2011, 2012)." Secretaría de Medio Ambiente del Gobierno del Distrito Federal, 2013. https://ecobici.cdmx.gob.mx/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/reduccion_gei_y_co-beneficios_generados_por_la_implementacion_delecobici_201020112012.pdf.
- Fine, Gary Alan. *With the Boys: Little League Baseball and Preadolescent Culture*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Fortin, Jacey. "High School Students Kicked Off Football Team After Protesting During National Anthem - The New York Times." *The New York Times*, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/02/us/high-school-national-anthem.html>.
- Fredricks, Jennifer A., and Jacquelynne S. Eccles. "Is Extracurricular Participation Associated with Beneficial Outcomes? Concurrent and Longitudinal Relations." *Developmental Psychology* 42, no. 4 (July 2006): 698–713. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.42.4.698>.
- Frisco, Michelle L., Chandra Muller, and Kyle Dodson. "Participation in Voluntary Youth-Serving Associations and Early Adult Voting." *Social Science Quarterly* 85, no. 3 (September 2004): 660–76. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2004.00238.x>.
- Galtung, Johan. *Tras La Violencia, 3R: Reconstrucción, Reconciliación, Resolución*. Gernika Gogoratuz, 1998.
- Galtung, Johan. "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research." *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (September 1969): 167–91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301>.
- Gardner, Margo, Jodie Roth, and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn. "Sports Participation and Juvenile Delinquency: The Role of the Peer Context among Adolescent Boys and Girls with Varied Histories of Problem." *Developmental Psychology* 45, no. 2 (2009): 341–53. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014063>.
- Gardner, Margo. "Sports Participation and Juvenile Delinquency: The Role of the Peer Context among Adolescent Boys and Girls with Varied Histories of Problem." *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology* 1, no. S (August 2011): 19–37. <https://doi.org/10.1037/2157-3905.1.S.19>.
- Godoy, Marcia Regina, and Divanildo Triches. "Effects of Physical Activity on Earnings in the Brazilian Market." *Economía* 18, no. 2 (May 2017): 180–91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econ.2016.07.001>.
- Government Outcomes Lab. "Chances." Blavatnik School of Government, 2022. <https://golab.bsg.ox.ac.uk/knowledge-bank/case-studies/chances/>.
- Grassroot Soccer. "Grassroot Soccer," 2024. <https://grassrootsoccer.org/>.
- Grohall, Günther, Themistoklis Kokolakis, Anna Kleissner, and Alma Papić. "Study on the Economic Dimension of Volunteering in Sport." Croatian Olympic Committee, November 2022. https://ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/46fb4f7c-4458-4f0e-9d6f-4984d756eaf3/Study_on_the_economic_dimension_of_volunteering_in_sport.pdf.
- Halff. "Youth and Amateur Sports Tourism Brings Economic Benefits." *Halff Insights* (blog), July 28, 2022. <https://halff.com/news-insights/insights/youth-amateur-sports-tourism-brings-economic-benefits-local-economies/>.
- Hammerschmidt, Jonas, Sascha Kraus, and Paul Jones. "Sport Entrepreneurship: Definition and Conceptualization." *Journal of Small Business Strategy* 32, no. 2 (April 22, 2022). <https://doi.org/10.53703/001c.31718>.
- Hatton, Damian, Ben Sanders, Kelly Smith, Iain Lindsey, Oliver Dudfield, and Mike Armstrong. "Measuring the Contribution of Sport, Physical Education and Physical Activity to the Sustainable Development Goals. Sport & SDG Toolkit." The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020. https://production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/migrated/inline/SDGs%20Toolkit%20version%204.0_0.pdf.
- Häuberer, Julia. "Introducing the Civic Perspective on Social Capital – Robert D. Putnam's Concept of Social Capital." In *Social Capital Theory*, by Julia Häuberer, 53–86. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-92646-9_3.

- Higgins, Joan Wharf, and Nancy Reed. "The GirlPower Project — Recreation, BC Health Goals and Social Capital." *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 92, no. 6 (November 2001): 448–52. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03404538>.
- Höglund, Kristine, and Ralph Sundberg. "Reconciliation through Sports? The Case of South Africa." *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (June 2008): 805–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590802052920>.
- Hollis, J L, R Sutherland, L Campbell, P J Morgan, D R Lubans, N Nathan, L Wolfenden, et al. "Effects of a 'School-Based' Physical Activity Intervention on Adiposity in Adolescents from Economically Disadvantaged Communities: Secondary Outcomes of the 'Physical Activity 4 Everyone' RCT." *International Journal of Obesity* 40, no. 10 (October 2016): 1486–93. <https://doi.org/10.1038/ijo.2016.107>.
- Huggins, Allison, and S. Randell. "The Contribution of Sports to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment," Vol. 3. Kigali, Rwanda, 2007. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237386165_The_Contribution_of_Sports_to_Gender_Equality_and_Women's_Empowerment1.
- International Olympics Committee. "The IOC's Climate Commitment." International Olympic Committee, 2021. <https://olympics.com/ioc/sustainability/climate>.
- International Platform on Sport & Development. "Sport and Economic Development Thematic Profile." International Platform on Sport & Development, June 2009. www.sportanddev.org.
- IPCC. "IPCC, 2023: Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (Eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland." First. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), July 25, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647>.
- Khanmoradi, Saeed, Shirin Zardoshtian, Shahram Fatahi, and Geoff Dickson. "Crime and Sport Participation: An Econometric Model with Simultaneous Equations Approach." *Journal of Social Sciences* 5, no. 2 (June 2022): 38–53. [https://doi.org/10.52326/jss.utm.2022.5\(2\).04](https://doi.org/10.52326/jss.utm.2022.5(2).04).
- Kirshner, Ben, Karen Strobel, and María Fernández. "Critical Civic Engagement Among Urban Youth." *Critical Civic Engagement Among Urban Youth*, 2003. <https://urbanedjournal.gse.upenn.edu/archive/volume-2-issue-1-spring-2003/critical-civic-engagement-among-urban-youth>.
- Klein, Jordan. "The Economics of Women's Sports." *HerSport: Empowering Women In Sport*, October 13, 2023. <https://www.hersport.ie/sports/the-economics-of-womens-sports-49646>.
- Korkmaz, Sevd. "Transfer of Sport Heritage in the Formation of a Sustainable Sport Culture." *Journal of Educational Issues* 5, no. 2 (2019). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1241656>.
- Kosteas, Vasilios D. "The Effect of Exercise on Earnings: Evidence from the NLSY." *Journal of Research* 33, no. 2 (June 2012): 225–50. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12122-011-9129-2>.
- KPMG. "The Economic Impact of Major Sports Events." KPMG, September 2018. <https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/cn/pdf/en/2018/09/the-economic-impact-of-major-sports-events.pdf>.
- Langbein, Laura, and Roseana Bess. "Sports in School: Source of Amity or Antipathy?" *Social Science Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (June 2002): 436–54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-6237.00093>.
- Lastuka, Amy, and Michael Cottingham. "The Effect of Adaptive Sports on Employment among People with Disabilities." *Disability and Rehabilitation* 38, no. 8 (April 9, 2016): 742–48. <https://doi.org/10.3109/09638288.2015.1059497>.
- Lechner, Michael. "Long-Run Labour Market Effects of Individual Sports Activities." IZA Discussion Paper Series. Bonn, Germany: Institute for the Study of (IZA), June 2008. <https://docs.iza.org/dp3559.pdf>.
- Lechner, Michael. "Sports, Exercise, and Market Outcomes." *IZA World of*, February 2015. <https://doi.org/10.15185/izawol.126>.
- Lechner, Michael, and Nazmi Sari. "Market Effects of Sports and Exercise: Evidence from Canadian Panel Data." *Labour Economics* 35 (August 2015): 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2015.04.001>.
- Levine, Peter. *The Future of Democracy: Developing the Next Generation of American Citizens*. University Press of New England, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1xx9bj4>.

- Lopez, Mark Hugo, and Kimberlee Moore. "Participation in Sports and Civic Engagement." The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, 2006. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED495209.pdf>.
- Mahoney, Joseph L., Hakan Stattin, and David Magnusson. "Youth Recreation Centre Participation and Criminal Offending: A 20-Year Longitudinal Study of Swedish Boys." *International Journal of Development* 25, no. 6 (November 2001): 509–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01650250042000456>.
- Mason, Jacob, Lew Fulton, and Zane McDonald. "A Global High Shift Cycling Scenario." Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, 2015. https://www.bisikletizm.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/A-Global-High-Shift-Cycling-Scenario_Bisikletli-Ulasim-Senaryosu.pdf.
- McCracken, Kathryn, and Emma Colucci. "Using Sport and Play to Achieve Educational Objectives." In *Commonwealth Education Partnerships* 2013/14, 384. Commonwealth Secretariat, 2013. <https://www.icsspe.org/system/files/McCracken%2C%20K%20and%20Colucci%20-%20Using%20Sport%20and%20Play%20to%20Achieve%20Educational%20Objectives.pdf>.
- McCullough, Brian P., Madeleine Orr, and Timothy Kellison. "Sport Ecology: Conceptualizing an Emerging Subdiscipline Within Sport Management." *Journal of Sport Management* 34, no. 6 (November 1, 2020): 509–20. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2019-0294>.
- McCullough, Brian P., Madeleine Orr, and Nicholas M. Watanabe. "Measuring Externalities: The Imperative Next Step to Sustainability Assessment in Sport." *Journal of Sport Management* 34, no. 5 (September 1, 2020): 393–402. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2019-0254>.
- McHale, James P., Penelope G. Vinden, Loren Bush, Derek Richer, David Shaw, and Brienne Smith. "Patterns of Personal and Social Adjustment among Sport-Involved and Noninvolved Urban Middle-School Children." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 22, no. 2 (June 2005): 119–36. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.22.2.119>.
- Mercy Corps. "Goal!: Sports, Community, and Supporting Young People." *Mercy Corps Blog* (blog), March 30, 2023. <https://www.mercycorps.org/blog/goal-sports-community-young-people>.
- Meurer, Simone Teresinha, Aline Cristine Souza Lopes, Fabio Araujo Almeida, Raquel de Deus Mendonça, and Tânia Rosane Bertoldo Benedetti. "Effectiveness of the VAMOS Strategy for Increasing Physical Activity and Healthy Dietary Habits: A Randomised Controlled Community Trial." *Health Education & 46*, no. 3 (2019): 406–16.
- Mexico City Government. "Llega el nuevo sistema de ECOBICI a 3.8 millones de viajes en la Ciudad de México." Jefatura de Gobierno, 2023. <https://www.jefaturadegobierno.cdmx.gob.mx/comunicacion/nota/llega-el-nuevo-sistema-de-ecobici-38-millones-de-viajes-en-la-ciudad-de-mexico>.
- Mitchell, David, Ian Somerville, and Owen Hargie. "Sport for Peace in Northern Ireland? Civil Society, Change and Constraint after the 1998 Good Friday Agreement." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 18, no. 4 (November 2016): 981–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1369148116656987>.
- Moustakas, Louis. "Can Sport for Development Improve Educational Outcomes? A Rapid Evidence Assessment." *Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research* 87, no. 1 (September 1, 2020): 56–69. <https://doi.org/10.2478/pcssr-2020-0019>.
- Münich, Daniel, and George Psacharopoulos. "Education Externalities: What They Are and What We Know." Luxembourg: European Expert Network on Economics of Education (EENEE), February 2018. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/309796>.
- Mutz, Michael, and Jürgen Baur. "The Role of Sports for Violence Prevention: Sport Club Participation and Violent Behaviour among Adolescents." *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 1, no. 3 (November 23, 2009): 305–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940903265582>.
- Neves, Andre, and Christian Brand. "Assessing the Potential for Carbon Emissions Savings from Replacing Short Car Trips with Walking and Cycling Using a Mixed GPS-Travel Diary Approach." *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practise* 123 (May 2019): 130–46. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2018.08.022>.
- Nevill, Camilla, and Matthew Van Poortvliet. "Teenage Kicks the Value of Sport in Tackling Youth Crime." Laureus, 2012. <https://allianceofsport.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Teenage-kickz.pdf>.

- Nichols, Geoff. *Sport and Crime Reduction : The Role of Sports in Tackling Youth Crime*. Routledge, 2007.
- Noble, James, and Justin Coleman. "Exploring the Role of Sport for Development in the Prevention and Desistance from Crime." New Philanthropy Capital, 2016. https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/theory_of_change_0.pdf.
- O'Dell, Hope. "1 in 5 Young People around the World Are NEETs. What Are NEETs?" Studio Article. The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, April 24, 2024. <https://globalaffairs.org/bluemarble/why-youth-neets-rise-worldwide-mental-health-cost-of-living>.
- OECD. *OECD Compendium of Productivity Indicators 2024*. OECD Compendium of Productivity Indicators. OECD, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1787/b96cd88a-en>.
- Özgün, Sabiha. "Girls Are On the Soccer Field Academy." Social Value International, 2016. <https://socialvalueuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/GSFA-SROI-Analysis.pdf>.
- Pedersen, Marlene Rosager Lund, Anne Faber Hansen, and Karsten Elmosø-Østerlund. "Motives and Barriers Related to Physical Activity and Sport across Social Backgrounds: Implications for Health Promotion." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 11 (May 28, 2021): 5810. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18115810>.
- Perks, Thomas. "Does Sport Foster Social Capital? The Contribution of Sport to a Lifestyle of Community Participation." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 24, no. 4 (December 2007): 378–401. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.24.4.378>.
- Perrin, Andrew J. *Citizen Speak: The Democratic Imagination in American Life*. Morality and Society Series. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2018. "2018 Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee Scientific Report." Department of Health and Human Services, 2018. https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/PAG_Advisory_Committee_Report.pdf.
- Popkova, Elena G., Aleksei V. Bogoviz, Ulyana A. Pozdnyakova, and Natalia V. Przhedetskaya. "Specifics of Economic Growth of Developing Countries." In *Management of Changes in Socio-Economic Systems*, edited by Dmitry A. Endovitsky and Elena G. Popkova, 135:139–46. Studies in Systems, Decision and Control. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72613-7_12.
- Prytherch, Hannah, and Kathryn Kraft. "The Psychosocial Impact of Capoeira for Refugee Children and Youth." University of East London, 2015. <https://repository.uel.ac.uk/download/b3d3060a536837598c04fe49215fcb0795241347c0fff1c8ca640034a28095c0/25980429/C4R%20Psychosocial%20Impact%20September%202015%20%282%29.pdf>.
- Ramshaw, Gregory, and Sean Gammon. "More than Just Nostalgia? Exploring the Heritage/Sport Tourism Nexus." *Journal of Sport & Tourism* 10, no. 4 (January 2005): 229–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14775080600805416>.
- Ramshaw, Gregory. "Heritage and Sport." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research*, edited by Emma Waterton, Steve Watson, and Sean Gammon, 248–60. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137293565_16.
- Ramshaw, Gregory. "Too Much Nostalgia? A Decennial Reflection on the Heritage Classic Ice Hockey Event." *Event Management* 18, no. 4 (December 9, 2014): 473–77. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599514X14143427352319>.
- Rees, Daniel I., and Joseph J. Sabia. "Sports Participation and Academic Performance: Evidence from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health." *Economics of Education Review* 29, no. 5 (October 2010): 751–59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2010.04.008>.
- Rhea, Deborah, and Christopher D. Lantz. "Violent, Delinquent, and Aggressive of Rural High School Athletes and Non-Athletes." *The Physical Educator* 61, no. 4 (2004). <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA126682762&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&issn=00318981&p=AONE&sw=w&userGroupName=anon%7E26001bca&aty=open-web-entry>.
- Rotolo, Thomas, Monica Kirkpatrick Johnson, and James Richard McCall. "Examining the Effect of Adolescent Sport Participation on Civic Engagement and Orientation in Early Adulthood." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (February 2020): 180–202. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764019853038>.

- Ruseski, Jane E., and Katerina Maresova. "Economic Freedom, Sport Policy and Individual Participation in Physical Activity: An International Comparison." *Contemporary Economic Policy* 32, no. 1 (January 2014): 42–55. <https://doi.org/10.1111/coep.12027>.
- Sage, George, and Stanley Eitzen. *Sociology of North American Sport*. Boston: McGrawHill, 2003.
- Sanders, Ben, and Emanuel Raptis. "Changing the Game - Can A Sport-Based Youth Development Generate a Positive Social Return on Investment?" *Commonwealth Youth and Development* 15, no. 1 (February 14, 2018). <https://doi.org/10.25159/1727-7140/1917>.
- Sanderson, Kel, Frances Harris, Sarah Russell, and Sheryl Chase. "The Economic Benefits of Sport: A Review." SDB Research Report. Hong Kong Sports Development Board, August 2000. <https://www.hksi.org.hk/f/page/611/r3.pdf>.
- Sandford, Rachel A., Rebecca Duncombe, and Kathy M. Armour. "The Role of Physical Activity/Sport in Tackling Youth Disaffection and Anti-social Behaviour." *Educational Review* 60, no. 4 (November 2008): 419–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131910802393464>.
- Santos, Andreia Costa, Juana Willumsen, Filip Meheus, Andre Ilbawi, and Fiona C Bull. "The Cost of Inaction on Physical Inactivity to Public Health-Care Systems: A Population-Attributable Fraction Analysis." *The Lancet Global Health* 11, no. 1 (January 2023): e32–39. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(22\)00464-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(22)00464-8).
- Schleicher, Andreas. "PISA 2022: Insights and Interpretations." OECD, 2023. <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA%202022%20Insights%20and%20Interpretations.pdf>.
- Schmidt, Rebecca. "The Carbon Footprint of the Games – International Climate Change Law and the Olympics." *AJIL Unbound* 114 (2020): 362–67. <https://doi.org/10.1017/aju.2020.71>.
- Scholes-Balog, Kirsty E., Sheryl A. Hemphill, Peter J. Kremer, and John W. Toumbourou. "Relationships Between Sport Participation, Problem Alcohol Use, and Violence: A Longitudinal Study of Young Adults in Australia." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 31, no. 8 (May 2016): 1501–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260514567962>.
- Schulenkorf, Nico. "Sport Events and Ethnic Reconciliation: Attempting to Create Social Change between Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim Sportspeople in War-Torn Sri Lanka." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 45, no. 3 (September 2010): 273–94. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690210366789>.
- Schüttoff, Ute, Tim Pawlowski, Paul Downward, and Michael Lechner. "Sports Participation and Social Capital Formation During Adolescence." *Social Science Quarterly* 99, no. 2 (June 2018): 683–98. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12453>.
- Seippel, Ørnulf. "Sport and Social Capital." *Acta Sociologica* 49, no. 2 (June 2006): 169–83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699306064771>.
- Simpson, Tony, and Paul Calvey. "Game On: How Africa's Sporting Appetite Could Spark Economic Growth." Oliver Wyman, 2024. <https://www.oliverwyman.com/content/dam/oliver-wyman/v2/publications/2024/mar/game-on.pdf>.
- Sodergren, Marie-Claire, Vipasana Karkee, and Steven Kapsos. "Assessing the Current State of the Global Labour Market: Implications for Achieving the Global Goals." *ILOSTAT* (blog), March 13, 2023. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/blog/assessing-the-current-state-of-the-global-labour-market-implications-for-achieving-the-global-goals/>.
- Southall, Richard M., and Ellen J. Staurowsky. "Cheering on the Collegiate Model: Creating, Disseminating, and Imbedding the NCAA's Redefinition of Amateurism." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 37, no. 4 (November 2013): 403–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723513498606>.
- Spaaij, Ramón, Karen Farquharson, and Timothy Marjoribanks. "Sport and Social Inequalities." *Sociology Compass* 9, no. 5 (May 2015): 400–411. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12254>.
- Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group. "Harnessing the Power of Sport for Development and Peace: Recommendations to Governments." Sports for Development and Peace International Working Group, 2013. <https://www.sport-for-development.com/imglib/downloads/sdpiwg2008-harnessing-the-power-of-sport-for-development-and-peace-summary.pdf>.

- Sport Industry Research Centre. "The Economic Importance of Olympic and Paralympic Sport." London: Sheffield Hallam University, September 2017. <https://www.active-together.org/researchandvidence/the-economic-importance-of-olympic-and-paralympic-sports>.
- Sportanddev. "Healthy Development of Children and Young People through Sport." Sportanddev.org, 2024. <https://www.sportanddev.org/thematic-areas/youth-development/healthy-development-children-and-young-people-through-sport>.
- SportsEconAustria and Sport Industry Research Centre. "Study on the Contribution of Sport to Economic Growth and Employment in the EU." Directorate-General on Education and Culture of the European Commission, November 2012. <https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/studies/study-contribution-spors-economic-growth-final-rpt.pdf>.
- Spruit, Anouk, Eveline Van Vugt, Claudia Van Der Put, Trudy Van Der Stouwe, and Geert-Jan Stams. "Sports Participation and Juvenile Delinquency: A Meta-Analytic Review." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 45, no. 4 (April 2016): 655–71. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-015-0389-7>.
- Staurowsky, E. J., DeSousa M. J., K. E. Miller, D. Sabo, and S Shakib. "Her Life Depends on It III: Sport, Physical Activity, and the Health and Well-Being of American Girls and Women." Women's Sports Foundation, 2015. https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/articles_and_report/her-life-depends-on-it-iii/.
- Stevenson, Betsey. "Beyond the Classroom: Using Title IX to Measure the Return to High School Sports." *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 92, no. 2 (2010): 1–41.
- Stoneman, Dorothy. "The Role of Youth in the Development of Civic Engagement." *Applied Developmental Science* 6, no. 4 (October 1, 2002): 221–26. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532480XADS0604_9.
- Summer Olympic Games. Organizing Committee. "Rio Carbon Footprint Report." Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio in 2016, 2014. https://library.olympics.com/Default/doc/SYRACUSE/72060/carbon-footprint-management-report-rio-2016-olympic-and-paralympic-games-organising-committee-for-th?_lg=en-GB.
- Sutherland, Rachel, Elizabeth Campbell, Matthew McLaughlin, Nicole Nathan, Luke Wolfenden, David R. Lubans, Philip J. Morgan, et al. "Scale-up of the Physical Activity 4 Everyone (PA4E1) Intervention in Secondary Schools: 24-Month Implementation and Cost Outcomes from a Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial." *International Journal of Nutrition and Physical Activity* 18, no. 1 (December 2021): 137. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-021-01206-8>.
- Swinnen, Jo, and Thijs Vandemoortele. "Sports and Development: An Economic Perspective on the Impact of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa." LICOS Centre for Institutions and Economic Performance Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, February 2008. [https://web.archive.org/web/20170816022047/https://lirias.kuleuven.be/bitstream/123456789/182730/2/SwinnenandVandemoortele\(edited\)21.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20170816022047/https://lirias.kuleuven.be/bitstream/123456789/182730/2/SwinnenandVandemoortele(edited)21.pdf).
- Tapşın, Gülçin, and Baris Erkan Yazici. "Sport Participation Rate And Market Outcomes." *Journal Of Humanities And Social Science* 23, no. 4 (April 2018): 16–23. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2304061623>.
- Taylor, Peter, Larissa Davies, Peter Wells, Jan Gilbertson, and William Tayleur. "A Review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport." The Culture and Sport Evidence, March 2015. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a74a738ed915d0e8bf1a0d6/A_review_of_the_Social_Impacts_of_Culture_and_Sport.pdf.
- The Business Research Company. "Sports Global Market Opportunities and Strategies." The Business Research Company, April 2024. <https://www.thebusinessresearchcompany.com/report/sports-market>.
- The Commonwealth Secretariat. "Global Youth Development Index: Update Report 2023." London: The Commonwealth, April 2023. https://production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2024-04/commonwealth-global-youth-development-index-update-report-2023_d19495_0.pdf?VersionId=IMu_XWYj0uzq_9dZdtSY07mYCPUWAza.
- The Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO. "Policy Brief - The Global Sport and Sustainable Development Goals Impact Report." London: The Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO, 2023. https://production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2023-06/D19255_Global-Sport-SDGs-Impact-Report-Policy-Brief.pdf.

- The University of Chicago Crime Lab. "Preventing Youth Violence: An Evaluation of Youth Guidance's Becoming a Man Policy Evaluation. The University of Chicago, 2018. https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/evidenceexchange/BAM_SIF_Final_Report_Revision_20181005_508_1.pdf.
- Thompson Allison, MT. Albert, F Bandarin, and A Pereira. "Beyond Conventional Limits: Intangible Heritage Values and Sustainability Through Sport." In *Going Beyond. Heritage Studies*, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57165-2_10.
- Triantafyllidis, Stavros, Robert Ries, and Kyriaki Kaplanidou. "Carbon Dioxide Emissions of Spectators' Transportation in Collegiate Sporting Events: Comparing On-Campus and Off-Campus Stadium Locations." *Sustainability* 10, no. 1 (January 18, 2018): 241. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10010241>.
- Tzoumaka, Eugenia, Stella Leivadi, and Kyriaki (Kiki) Kaplanidou. "Recurring Rural Destination Sport Events: A Study on Participants' Direct Spending." *International Journal of Financial Studies* 10, no. 3 (September 7, 2022): 78. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijfs10030078>.
- UEFA. "UEFA Carbon Footprint Calculator - User Guide." UEFA, 2024. <https://www.uefa.com/news-media/news/028b-1a57e8a4954a-33b55de0b457-1000--uefa-carbon-footprint-calculator/>.
- UNESCO. "Kazan Action Plan." Kazan, 2017. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000252725?posInSet=1&queryId=b3e7032f-192e-4e1d-a2ca-a4dd993b220e>.
- UNESCO. Impact Investment in Sport: Innovating the Funding of Sport for Development, 2023. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000386193>
- UNESCO. "The Global State of Learning." Unesco IIEP Learning Portal, August 7, 2023. <https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/issue-briefs/monitor-learning/the-global-state-of-learning>.
- United Nations. "Global Issues: Youth." United Nations. United Nations, 2024. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/youth>.
- United Nations. "The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," 2015. <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>.
- United Nations Climate Change. "Sports for Climate Action Framework." United Nations, 2018. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Sports_for_Climate_Action_Declaration_and_Framework.pdf.
- Vander Ploeg, Kerry A., Jonathan McGavock, Katerina Maximova, and Paul J. Veugelers. "School-Based Health Promotion and Physical Activity During and After School Hours." *Pediatrics* 133, no. 2 (February 1, 2014): e371–78. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2013-2383>.
- Varahra, Azar, Hiba Ahmed, and Sally Lindsay. "Exploring Direct and Indirect Associations of Exercise and Sport Participation with Employment among Individuals with Disabilities: A Scoping Review." *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation* 32, no. 1 (March 2022): 44–54. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10926-021-09962-x>.
- Veliz, Philip, and Sohaila Shakib. "Gender, Academics, and Interscholastic Sports Participation at the School Level: A Gender-Specific Analysis of the Relationship between Interscholastic Sports Participation and AP Enrollment." *Sociological Focus* 47, no. 2 (April 3, 2014): 101–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00380237.2014.88384>.
- Veliz, Philip, and Sohaila Shakib. "Interscholastic Sports Participation and School Based Delinquency: Does Participation in Sport Foster a Positive High School Environment?" *Sociological Spectrum* 32, no. 6 (November 2012): 558–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02732173.2012.700837>.
- Wallrodt, Sören, and Lutz Thieme. "The Role of Sports Volunteering as a Signal in the Job Application Process." *European Sport Management Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (May 26, 2020): 255–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2019.1598457>.
- Walseth, Kristin, and Kari Fasting. "Sport as a Means of Integrating Minority Women." *Sport in Society* 7, no. 1 (March 2004): 109–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461098042000220218>.
- Waring, Amanda, and Carolynne Mason. "Opening Doors: Promoting Social Inclusion through Increased Sports Opportunities." *Sport in Society* 13, no. 3 (April 2010): 517–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430431003588192>.
- Weston, Thomas. "Contribution of Sport to Society and the Economy." UK Parliament - House of Lords Library, May 13, 2024. <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/contribution-of-sport-to-society-and-the-economy/>.

- Women's Sports Foundation. "Benefits - Why Sports Participation for Girls and Women." Women's Sports Foundation, 2016. <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/advocacy/benefits-sports-participation-girls-women/>.
- Wood, Jason. "Olympic Opportunity: Realizing the Value of Sports Heritage for Tourism in the UK." *Journal of Sport & Tourism* 10, no. 4 (January 2005): 307–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14775080600805556>.
- World Bank. "The Path Less Travelled: Scaling Up Active Mobility to Capture Economic and Climate Benefits." World Bank, November 30, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1596/40672>.
- World Economic Forum. "The Future of Jobs Report 2023." Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, May 2023. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2023.pdf.
- World Health Organisation. "Active Ageing A Policy Framework," 2002. <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/WHO-Active-Ageing-Framework.pdf>.
- World Health Organisation. "Global Status Report on Physical Activity 2022." Geneva, 2022. <https://www.who.int/teams/health-promotion/physical-activity/global-status-report-on-physical-activity-2022>.
- World Health Organisation. "Noncommunicable Diseases Data Portal," 2024. <https://ncdportal.org/>. *WHO Guidelines on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour*. Geneva: World Health Organisation, 2020.
- Yanocha, Dana, and Sarah Mawdsley. "Making the Economic Case for Cycling." Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, 2022. https://itdp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Making-the-Economic-Case-for-Cycling_6-13-22.pdf.
- Yu, Katrina, Duncan Rintoul, Steven Hao, Ian Watkins, and Wai-Yin Wan. "Evaluation of the NSW Clontarf Academies." Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, October 2016. <https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/about-us/educational-data/cese/evaluation-evidence-bank/2017-evaluation-of-the-nsw-clontarf-academiespdf>.
- Zeiser, Kristina L. "Examining Racial Differences in the Effect of Popular Sports Participation on Academic Achievement." *Social Science Research* 40, no. 4 (July 2011): 1142–69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2011.03.002>.

Appendix A: Further information on evaluating sport's societal impacts

Broadly speaking, reaching general conclusions about sport's (including SFD) impact at the societal, global, aggregate level, requires an analysis of two elements: a comprehensive evaluation of its impact on a set of topics; and a way to aggregate, discount, and compare impacts across the latter.

The first element would require several steps:

A. Comprehensive evaluation of sport's impact on multiple social dimensions.

i. Identifying dimensions

This step would imply identifying the relevant dimensions (e.g., education, health, etc.) on which sport can be expected to impact and which must be evaluated.

ii. Identifying relevant interventions to be evaluated

To be appropriately evaluated, an intervention must be clearly defined. This would imply developing a working definition of a sport (and/or SFD) intervention: what does it look like? How does it differ from other types of interventions (e.g., a "just sports" intervention)?

Furthermore, an intervention needs to have clearly stated objectives (which would need to be related not only to sports but also to the development objective that is supposed to be achieved). Then, the operator (or the evaluator) would need to develop a theory of change, describing the causal chain of events that need to happen for the intervention to affect the development objectives (e.g. providing basketball opportunities may be expected to strengthen participant's social capital, which would lead to less inclination to be involved in illicit conducts, which would in turn reduce participation in crime or violence, ultimately resulting in reduced crime in a community).

Finally, the intervention's delivery would need to be clearly defined (i.e., exactly what will the intervention give participants? How much? How often? When? By who?). Furthermore, the evaluator and operator would need to ensure that delivery is homogeneous in time and geography (i.e., that the same benefits are delivered to all participants, regardless of different locations or periods of time).

iii. Identification of the relevant outcome variables

An evaluation would then need to select appropriate variables to measure the intended outcome. For instance, an intervention designed to improve education outcomes by using sport may be evaluated by looking into school attendance, educational achievement (years of education), or grades, inter alia. A discussion should be had regarding whether selected variables are appropriate to the intervention's stated objectives and design.

iv. Designing and implementing an evaluation

This implies defining a valid counterfactual (i.e., analysing what would happen in the absence of the intervention - for instance, selecting a control group), selecting a measurement (data collection) strategy, selecting a statistical methodology to identify the effects causally; measuring

the effects and, finally, discussing the internal and external validity. The latter refers to whether the results of an evaluation on a specific intervention (e.g. a midnight basketball programme in a city in the United States) can be extrapolated (e.g., to other sports or other geographies).

v. Reviewing robustness and validity

The abovementioned steps could be performed by developing ad hoc evaluations or using existing evaluations. In any case, a final step must be undertaken to examine the robustness and validity of results. This would result in a series of impacts that can be confidently expected regarding interventions on the selected dimensions.

The second element implies five steps:

B. Aggregating, comparing and discounting impacts across dimensions

i. Selecting a way to standardise values

The results of the first element would likely be expressed in terms relevant to each individual dimension (for instance, regarding health, we could conclude that increasing participation in sport and physical activity by 10% can be expected to reduce the risk of hypertension by some percentage). However, to aggregate results, we would need to express all results in a unified unit of measurement. We could decide, for instance, to express all impacts monetarily, so that the expected results of different dimensions can be added up. This, in turn, would require a discussion on how to transform dimension-specific values into monetary values (for instance, regarding health, it is usual to use concepts such as Disability-Adjusted Life Years, and the Value of a Statistical Life to monetise) and whether that is sensible and appropriate.

ii. Selecting the relevant period

An analysis of the matter would need to define an appropriate period. If several years are to be included, a way to adjust for inflation (or otherwise discount for time so that figures from different years can be compared or aggregated) must be selected.

iii. Identifying benefits and costs

The first element described above would estimate sport's positive impact on several dimensions. However, any public policy intervention also has costs; in this case, interventions imply expenses for the construction, maintenance, and operation of facilities, salaries of coaches and social workers, equipment, caring for injuries, and so on.

iv. Identifying deadweight

Interventions do not happen in a void but in a specific context, which affects their target objectives. For instance, a policy-maker might be interested in accelerating the reduction of overweight in a population where that phenomenon is already (but slowly) decreasing. Therefore, a robust analysis needs to identify a counterfactual—what would happen anyway— evaluate and subtract it.

v. Evaluating all benefits and costs, discounting and aggregating

The final step implies discounting monetary figures (for the passage of time), aggregating benefits, and subtracting costs and deadweight.

Two methodologies are usually applied to perform this second element: Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA), and Social Return on Investment (SROI) studies. They differ somewhat—most saliently in the expression of their final results—but are similar in scope and process: they attempt to identify an intervention's costs and compare it to the value it creates.



unesco

United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

The Social Impact of Sport

Unlocking the potential of sport to drive social transformations

Sport as a tool for social impact has gained recognition from international bodies and initiatives such as the SDGs and UNESCO's flagship, Fit for Life. At UNESCO's 7th International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS VII), practitioners, experts and representatives of 110 countries in attendance reaffirmed UNESCO's leading role in building knowledge, developing Member States' capacities and implementing programmes in the field of impact investment in sport, as critical means to increase public and private investments in Sport for Development.

The Social Impact of Sport report aims to contribute to global knowledge and strengthen the case for sport's potential as a low-cost, high-impact solution for delivering social impact. This report delves into sport's substantial returns on investment and impact on individuals, communities and societies worldwide and encourages the scaling of investments.

Drawing on insights from a wide range of academic and policy documents, this report presents a comprehensive analysis of the social value of sport across eight dimensions: health and well-being, equality and social inclusion, education and labour outcomes, youth empowerment and civic engagement, economic development, security and violence prevention, peacebuilding, and environmental sustainability. It provides compelling evidence of sport's cost-effectiveness and its profound benefits on individuals and society. The report highlights key challenges such as gaps in research and evidence, geographical imbalance in global evidence and knowledge, insufficient funding, the need for coordinated action and inadequate programme design along with opportunities to enhance sport in achieving social impact. Actionable recommendations are provided to advance the role of sport, including enhanced research, increasing investments in sport, fostering collective action among stakeholders, integrating sport into various policy sectors and designing intentional, context-specific sport-based interventions.

The report is a vital resource for policy-makers, academic and investors. It underscores the pivotal role of sport as a driver of positive social development and offers directions to maximise its potential.



To learn more, please contact
F4L@unesco.org

