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Your movement matters literature review

A review of existing research work studying the demographics of those who participate in walking and climbing activities in the UK and Ireland

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# List of Abbreviations

ABC – Association of British Climbing Walls

ABCTT – Association of British Climbing Walls Training Trust

BMC – British Mountaineering Council

CCC - Camping and Caravanning Club

NGB – National Governing Bodies

NIBAS – National Indoor Bouldering Award

NICAS – National Indoor Climbing Award Scheme

OIA – Outdoor Industries Association

# Introduction

The Your movement matters study has been commissioned to better understand who is and who is not participating in walking and climbing activities within the UK and Ireland. Prior to this study, understanding of participation rates by different demographic groups in the UK and Ireland has been limited. The partners specifically have requested that we gather information on who is participating to serve as a ‘benchmark’ measurement, how to approach understanding demographics, and how to improve inclusion within their respective activities. This review is not an extensive literature review of all existing research and texts available relating to participation in walking and climbing. The purpose is to provide an overview of the most prominent research and identify gaps that need addressing. This has helped us to understand what information we need to gather to best address the desires of the funding partners through the Your movement matters survey.

## The structure of this review

The review begins by considering the types of sources, as well as some of the strengths and weaknesses of the sources included. The language and terminology used is then considered and explained.

Walking is the first activity covered in the review, we consider general participation rates and participation rates according to demographic groups. Motivators, barriers and constraints to walking are investigated next, followed by successful initiative and programmes already in existence.

The next section follows the same structure but for climbing and mountaineering. We consider; general participation rates, participation rates according to demographics, motivators, barriers and constraints, followed by successful initiatives and programmes.

Although the Your movement matters study is interested in understanding participation in walking and climbing, often these activities are synonymous with spending time outdoors. Therefore, the next section goes onto to consider activities ‘beyond walking and climbing, spending time in the outdoors.’ This section explores participation in campsite camping, wellbeing and the outdoors, and leaders as facilitators. After this, general and transferable demographic trends are considered, as they provide insight into participation in the outdoors and physical activity that can be transferred to walking and climbing activities. Finally, studies that deal with the impact and implications of Covid-19 are examined.

Throughout the review, executive ‘Key finding’ boxes are featured to allow for the easy identification of major points and themes. The cumulation of key findings are summarised in the final section – ‘what does Your movement matters need to find out?’ This section re-emphasises evaluations on the level of detail in information available, data gaps and considers what information the Your movement matters survey needs to gather to best support the development of evidence based strategies to improve inclusion in a meaningful way

## Summary table of existing data regarding the demographics of walking and climbing participants

**Extensively researched (ER)** - (credible research processes applied with a broad cohort)

**Well researched** **(WR)** - (research conducted to a superficial level, such as annual impact reports containing evidence from a narrow cohort)

**Under researched (UR)** – (some quality research has been conducted but not a significant amount)

**Very under researched** **(VUR)** - (research has either not been conducted or the work is not widely publicised often including unconfounded claims based on inappropriate or tokenistic data sets)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Activity | Ethnicity | Age | Gender | Sexual orientation | Where participants live | Disability & long-term health conditions | Religion or faith | Socio-economic parameters | Pathway to starting | Progression within/across activities | Influence of activity on well-being | Barriers / Constraints | Enablers |
| Walking | WR | ER | ER | VUR | UR | ER | UR | WR | WR | VUR | ER | ER | ER |
| Urban, lowland and coastal walking | WR | WR | WR | VUR | VUR | ER | UR | WR | WR | VUR | ER | ER | ER |
| Hill, moorland and mountain walking | VUR | WR | WR | VUR | VUR | WR | UR | WR | WR | VUR | ER | WR | WR |
| Winter hill and mountain walking | VUR | UR | ER | VUR | VUR | UR | VUR | WR | UR | VUR | WR | WR | WR |
| Climbing | VUR | WR | ER | VUR | UR | WR | VUR | UR | UR | UR | UR | ER | WR |
| Indoor bouldering | VUR | WR | ER | VUR | UR | WR | VUR | UR | UR | UR | UR | WR | WR |
| Indoor roped climbing | VUR | WR | ER | VUR | UR | WR | VUR | UR | UR | UR | UR | WR | WR |
| Outdoor bouldering | VUR | WR | ER | VUR | VUR | VUR | VUR | UR | UR | UR | UR | WR | UR |
| Outdoor roped climbing | VUR | WR | ER | VUR | VUR | VUR | VUR | UR | UR | UR | UR | WR | UR |
| Mountaineering | VUR | UR | WR | VUR | VUR | UR | VUR | VUR | VUR | UR | VUR | WR | UR |
| Scrambling | VUR | UR | WR | VUR | VUR | VUR | VUR | VUR | VUR | VUR | VUR | UR | VUR |
| Ice & alpine climbing | VUR | VUR | UR | VUR | VUR | VUR | VUR | VUR | VUR | VUR | VUR | UR | VUR |

## Types of research we have reviewed

This rapid review contains a combination of:

* **Academic** studies and texts (e.g. journal articles, theses, books, book chapters, conference papers)
* **Organisation and NGB reports** (e.g. Sport England Active Lives, NatureScot reports, the Outdoor Industries Association)
* Funding partners **raw data** and **reports** (e.g. membership demographics, reports, presentations)
* **Popular reading** articles, event transcripts, organisation website information (e.g. UKC articles, Arc’teryx diversity panel discussion, Climbing Alongside Mental Health initiative information)

A particular strength of academic work is that it is peer reviewed, to ensure that research published is of a high standard. Within this review, academic texts are approached less critically as it is the participation information that we are interested in extracting. We are less concerned with academic theory and methodology, unless it adds insight and value to understanding participation in walking and climbing.

Reports by major organisations tend to be of a high standard, particularly when organisations have a designated research teams and regularly conduct research and produce reports. However, these must always be approached with caution as they often gather data from a limited number of participants. For example, Active Lives survey data provides an understanding of participation rates in activities for England. It is important to highlight that that the data is only representative of the population who respond to the survey. Active Lives data used in this survey shows participation for activities, and then within those activities come disciplines. Most of the activities discussed in this review using Active Lives data (excluding walking for leisure) are considered by Active Lives to be ‘Adventure Sports’ and to be niche activities [6]. This means that the number of respondents who participate in the activities that this study is interested in is limited. As a result, there are gaps in the data.

Funding partners’ raw data and reports are included in this review. These sources allow us to understand data that partners held prior to the commencement of this study and enables the researchers to provide recommendations for data collection moving forwards. To give the funding partners maximum value from this review, when examining funders’ data and reports, the researchers have done so critically where appropriate to best advise on accurate data collection, storage and presentation. For example, instances where data has not been organised in the most effective or accurate format can lead to a lack of clarity or inappropriate conclusions. Although the data is largely useful, weaknesses in methodological quality, i.e. the methods used to collect, handle, organise and present data, can result in confidence in the findings being reduced [7].

More ‘popular’ style texts are also included. Popular style reading texts sometimes get missed from reviews as they can be considered less rigorous and ‘riskier’ in terms of information accuracy. Popular texts included in this review are from a variety of sources, including articles, charity and organisation websites and panel discussions. All are deemed to be relevant and from trusted sources. Information about existing initiatives and charities addressing demographic inequalities and wellbeing issues are relevant to this study and this information can often be found on the organisations’ own website or articles about their work.

The existing studies, research and reports examined in this review range in date from the late 1990s to the present day. Literature on demographic participation in walking and climbing related activities is limited and texts published in the past decade remain limited, despite volume of publications increasing. The data and research available on walking and climbing is inconsistent between organisations, tends to be niche within academia and reveals large data gaps on demographic participation. The amount of research and data available between nations within the UK and Ireland is also largely varied, with there being a significant lack of data on participation in walking and climbing in Wales, Ireland and Northern Ireland. This review further reinforces the need for this participation demographics study on walking and climbing.

## Terminology and language

Terminology and language used to refer to different demographic factors is constantly changing. This review uses the language used in the text being discussed when referring to demographic groups. It is important that readers are aware of this, as some terminology may no longer be considered the most appropriate choice when gathering data or questioning people on demographic factors.

For example, language and terminology according to author, and the type of publication, the country texts originate from and as time progresses. Certain terminology or phrasing also removes the opportunity for nuance and detail. For example, the problematic nature of referring to “people from an ethnic minority background” [8] as a ‘catch all’ phrase does not account for difference in identity. It is difficult to account for nuance in broad reports and research projects, but an awareness of the implications of using vague and broadly encompassing language is important.

It is impossible to use set or uniform language/terminology in this review, however when we are writing the findings from the data generated in this research study, we will use language that is consistent with the survey data.

# Walking

**Key Findings:**

* Abundance of information available on walking for leisure.
* Increase in data and reporting because of Covid-19 pandemic.
* Information available for participation levels in walking across England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland in varying levels of detail.
* Substantial number of studies considering motivators and constraints to walking.
* Walking styles that require higher skill levels (e.g. map reading and navigation) have received far less attention in studies.
* Walking frequently mentioned in relation to time spent in green and natural environments.

This section provides an overview of the information available on participation in walking. There is an abundance of information available on walking for leisure. There has been an increase in data collection and reporting in lieu of the Covid-19 pandemic, as local authorities and NGBs have tracked and continue to track changes in participation as the timeline of the pandemic unfolds. Information relating to walking for leisure is available for participation across the UK and Ireland in varying levels of detail. There have been a substantial number of studies conducted considering motivators, constraints and general trends for walking in natural, green and rural environments. However, the level of detail for participation rates for different demographic factors is limited.

In relation to walking styles that require higher skill levels (e.g. map reading and navigation skills) and are less accessible, such as some forms of hill, moorland and mountain walking, there have been a limited number of studies conducted. The most current available information on general participation in these walking styles are usually part of a broader study such as those investigating use of green and natural space.

### Participation rates

Key Findings:

* Walking is the most **popular** and **accessible** form of activity.
* Detailed participation rates from members of organisations (e.g. BMC, Ramblers)
* Data suggests that walking is the most popular and most participated in physical activity by **all genders.**
* There is a large amount of data for recreational walking according to **age**, with ‘older’ age groups containing the highest numbers of those who walk for leisure.
* The data that is available tells us that those with a **disability** and/or a **long-term illness** participate less frequently in walking related activities than the non-disabled population [4].
* Evidence suggests that those considered to be from an **ethnic minority background** according to ethnic group categories are less likely to be participating in walking activities for leisure, in the hills and mountains.
* There is a significant lack of data available on participation in walking activities according to **sexual orientation.**
* There is a small amount of data available for participation in walking by **faith groups** at a local and casual level for England. There is little or no data available on participate rates in walking according to religious or faith group for Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland.
* It is clear that people from **lower income backgrounds** are less likely to participate in walking activities, however we need a more detailed picture of participation rates.

There is more detailed information on participation rates from organisation membership databases and surveys. For example, responses to the BMC’s Equality Survey for members 2019 provide insight into participation in hill walking by members and non-members (24.78%) [9]. The results show that 39.28% of respondents participate monthly in hill walking, 29.11% participate less than once a month, 23.29% participate weekly, 4.16% participate three times or more a week and 4.16% participate never [9]. As the key interests of the BMC are in hillwalking and climbing, frequent participation in walking activities by members is not unexpected. This data captures participation rates of those who are known to take part in walking, however, this data does not capture participation rates by those who are not known to the BMC.

Research indicates that walking is the most popular and accessible form of outdoor activity. According to Active Lives data ‘Walking for leisure’ or casual walking of short distance appears to be the most popular activity across all demographic groups [10]. Those who spend time in the outdoors in England are most likely to walk, hike or ramble, with 27% of participants taking part in walking related activities [5]. Between November 2018 and November 2019, in England, 76.7% of adults were walking for leisure and 24% of adults were hill or mountain walking [11]. Between May 2019 and May 2020, 20.4 million adults in England were getting active by walking for leisure [11]. The Irish Sports Monitor found that in 2019, 66% of adults regularly walked for leisure in Ireland [12]. For 2019 – 2020, Sport Wales found that adults in Wales who were active were most likely to be walking 2 miles or more, with 792,000 people participating [13].

Table 1 (below) shows data for participation in walking related activities from the initial Covid-19 lockdown to a period in which the restrictions were relaxed in Scotland. Despite strict lockdown regulations in Scotland, walking less than 2 miles saw 57% of adults surveyed participating during lockdown and this increased to 59% as restrictions eased [14].

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activity | Percentage of adults participating in March - May 2020 (Scotland) | Percentage of adults participating in August - September 2020 (Scotland) |
| Walking less than 2 miles | 57% | 59% |
| Increase in walking 2 – 8 miles | 46% | 56% |
| Walking +8 miles | 8% | 16% |
| Hillwalking | 3% | 9% |

*Table 1 NatureScot 2020*

## Participant demographic data

### Gender

Data suggests that walking is the most popular and most participated in physical activity by all genders. The following tables (tables 2, 3 and 4) show participation in walking activities in the last 12 months according to gender.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activity | Percentage of males who participated in activity in the last 12 months out of population surveyed Nov 18 – 19 (England) | Club membership - Participated at least once in last 12 months in Nov 18 – 19  (England) |
| Walking for leisure | 75.3% | 3.4% |
| Hill and mountain walking | 25.7% | 3.4% |
| Hill or mountain walking or hiking | 26.5% | No data |

Table 2 Active Lives Survey Nov 18 – 19, Sport England

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activity | Percentage of females who participated in activity in the last 12 months out of population surveyed Nov 18 – 19 (England) | Club membership - Participated at least once in last 12 months in Nov 18 – 19 (England) |
| Walking for leisure | 78.2% | 4.1% |
| Hill and mountain walking | 21.6% | 3.9% |
| Hill or mountain walking or hiking | 21.7% | No data |

Table 3 Active Lives Survey Nov 18 - 19, Sport England

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activity | Percentage of those who identify their gender in another way who participated in activity in the last 12 months out of population surveyed Nov 18 – 19 (England) | Club membership - Participated at least once in last 12 months in Nov 18 – 19  (England) |
| Walking for leisure | 56.4% | No data |
| Hill and mountain walking | 19.9% | No data |
| Hill or mountain walking or hiking | 17.6% | No data |

Table 4 Active Lives Survey Nov 18 - 19, Sport England

The data for England displayed in Tables 2, 3 and 4 show that across all genders, walking for leisure is overwhelmingly the most popular style of walking activity in England. Female participation in walking for leisure is 2.9% higher than male participation and female participation as a club member is at 4.1%, which is 0.7% higher than male participation as a club member. Data for “those who identify their gender in another way” who walk for leisure is at 56.4%. It is important to highlight that the categorisation of “those who identify their gender in another way” removes opportunity for nuance and limits participants to identify in the way that they choose.

In Scotland, the population has become more active, with walking being the most common form of physical activity for both men and women [15]. The same applies to Wales, with 35% of males walking (over 2 miles) and 35% of females walking (over 2 miles) [16].

In Ireland, women are more likely to walk for recreation than men, with 70% of women regularly walking for leisure compared to 61% of men [12]. The report finds that 66% of men that are married or are living as married regularly walk for recreation compared to 54% of single men, using this data, the report suggests that women play a significant role in encouraging men to walk for recreation [12]. This must be treated with caution, for the data does not provide enough detail to make this statement, e.g. if the men who responded are in heterosexual marriages or homosexual marriages and are therefore influenced by female spouses to go walking. The data also states that 73% of women who are married or living as married regularly walk for recreation compared to 67% women who are single. This could possibly relate to the finding that women are more likely to experience feelings of vulnerability and concerns over safety, but the data does not tell us who single and married women are walking with, and therefore is not a suggestion that can be made with confidence despite it not being an unreasonable suggestion [17]. The report finds that women are more likely to walk for recreation than men until the age of 65+, and then participation between these two genders is just as likely. The Sport Ireland report does not contain data for non-binary genders, nor does it acknowledge non-binary genders [12].

Between April 2014 and March 2015 the majority of those who participated in Walking for Health (England) were female at 70.3% [18]. For 2019 – 2020, 72.64% identified as female and 27.36% as male, there is no data for other genders [19].

The Ramblers membership data tells us that 43% of members are male and 55% are female [20]. Yet, for Ramblers volunteers, 59% are male, 39% are female, 2% would prefer not to say and 0% identifying in some other way [21]. However, in reality two volunteers identify in some other way, but the percentage values do not account for this due to rounding to an inappropriate number of decimal places. We would recommend that organisations ensure that they manage data in a way that allows small numbers of individuals to be visible in data, this instance omits two individuals from the data set at first glance. This is especially important as those who identify their gender in some other way, are from a group that is continually marginalised by societies [22].

Walking is the most participated in physical activity for all genders across England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, with figures varying between countries. The difference in proportions of genders participation rates are sometimes buried within broader measures, e.g. physical activity including walking. Rates for England show a slightly higher participation rate by females, whereas Wales shows an equal gender split. There is a distinct lack of data on walking participation by non-binary genders.

### Age

There is a large amount of data for recreational walking according to age, with ‘older’ age groups containing the higher numbers of those who walk.

Data for England shows that walking for leisure is the most popular form of walking for adults of all ages. Participation in walking for leisure increases as respondents get older, starting at 70.4% for those aged 16 – 24, rising to and peaking at 82.2% for ages 65 – 74, then beginning to fall, with participation at 68.2% for ages 75 – 84, and at 43.5% for those aged 85+ [10]. Membership in the Ramblers (UK) reflects this, with the highest age group for membership being 65 – 74 years, with 47% of members falling into this category [20]. The lowest proportion of members fall into the 25 – 34 age group, with membership at 1% [20]. The largest age category participating in Walking for Health between 2019 and 2020 is the 65 – 74 group at 42.53% [19].

Evidence suggests that walking remains one of the most accessible forms of physical activity as adults age [23]. In Ireland, as participation in sport decreases across life course, participation in recreational walking increases. Those who are aged 65+ participate in walking for recreation at a rate of 67% compared to 60% for those aged 16 to 19. The peak for walking for leisure participation between 65 – 74 (England) and 65+ (Ireland) corresponds to findings that adults in early retirement find more opportunity to participate in walking but as adults reach later retirement, mobility becomes a major limiting factor (reduced participation for ages 85+) [24].

Data for England shows that younger groups are more likely to be participating in hill and mountain walking than older groups [10]. This could possibly be because of the level of fitness, health and ability perceived to be required for these styles of walking. The reasons for patterns in participation rates according to age for hill and mountain walking is something that the Your movement matters survey could explore.

### Disability and Mental Health

Studies considering the relationship between disability, long-term or chronic illness and mental health are more likely to focus on motivators, barriers and constraints to participation, as opposed to participation rates. Motivators, barriers and constraints tend to be synonymous with experiences of and access to the outdoors more generally and are discussed later in this review in a broader context.

The data that is available tells us that those with a disability and/or a long-term illness participate less frequently in walking related activities than the non-disabled population [4]. For example, a report by Sport Ireland finds that 61% of those with a long-term illness or disability regularly walk for recreation, this is 6% lower than the non-disabled population [12]. Data for England shows that of those with a disability or long term health condition, 64.1% participated in walking for leisure and 13.1% participated in hiking, hill or mountain walking between November 2018 and 2019 [4].

12% of Ramblers members reported having a “long-term illness, health problem or disability that limits daily activities or work” [20]. In the Walking for Health Walker Health survey, results show that 15.18% of participants have “a long term illness, health problem or disability which limits daily activities or work” [19].

Walking for Health is England’s largest network of health walk schemes, helping thousands of people across the country lead a more active lifestyle [25]. Thus, a high number of participants with a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits daily activities or work is not surprising, as Walking for Health actively welcomes individuals to support their health and can be used as an example of a successful initiative to facilitate access to walking.

### Ethnicity

Evidence suggests that those considered to be from an ethnic minority background according to ethnic group categories are less likely to be participating in walking activities for leisure, in the hills and mountains. For example, Active Lives data shows that for England, 55.4% of those surveyed identify as White British and White Other, participated in hiking, hill or mountain walking between November 2018 and 2019. Whereas of those surveyed who identify as Black, only 10.7% participated in hiking, hill or mountain walking [10].

Overwhelmingly, 93% of Ramblers members identity as “English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish /British [White],” 1 % identify as Irish and 3.5% as “other white background” [20]. A strength of Ramblers membership data is that it contains a broad range of ethnicity categories with accurate numbers of responses:

* Gypsy or Irish Traveller (0%)
* White and black Caribbean (0.1%)
* White and black African (0.1%)
* White and Asian (0.2%)
* Any other mixed / multi ethnic background (0.3%)
* Indian (0.2%)
* Pakistani (0%)
* Bangladeshi (0%)
* Chinese (0.2%)
* Any other Asian background (0.2%)
* African (0.2%)
* Caribbean (0%)
* Any other Black / Caribbean background (0%)
* Arab (0%)
* Any other ethnic group (0.5%) [20].

Studies tend to pay greater attention to motivators, barriers and constraints to participation in walking by different ethnic groups. Many of these apply broadly to spending time in outdoor spaces, walking and climbing and will be explored later in this review. The data available for participation in walking by different ethnic groups although available, remains limited. This data is usually found within broader government reports on health and physical activity. Thus, the Your movement matters study will aim to collect data on participation for different ethnic groups.

### Sexual Orientation

There is a significant lack of data available on participation in walking activities according to sexual orientation. Studies that consider the relationship between sexual orientation and physical activity often focus on constraints, barriers and inequalities.

Active Lives do hold data on walking according to sexual orientation, with four categories of sexual orientation, the data shows that of those surveyed who participate in hiking, hill or mountain climbing participation according to sexual orientation comprises of:

* Heterosexual or straight (23.8%)
* Gay or lesbian (35.4%)
* Bisexual (28.5%)
* Other sexual orientation (20.7%) [10]

These figures suggest that sexual orientation is not a significant factor in influencing participation in walking. However, there is not detailed data available for other parts of the UK and Ireland and participation rates according to sexual orientation is not highlighted in reports.

Ramblers volunteers’ sexual orientation is comprised of 86% identifying as Heterosexual/Straight, 13% preferring not to say, 1% identity as Gay/Lesbian, there is 0% Other and 0% Bisexual, however in reality four people identify as “Other” and one person identifies as Bisexual but the percentage figures of the whole sample group do not account for this [21].

According to Stonewall, only half of lesbian, gay and bisexual people feel able to be open about their sexual orientation to everyone in their family, and more than one third of LGBT people have hidden that they are LGBT at work for fear of discrimination [26]. This helps us to understand that not everybody from the LGBTQIA+ community feels comfortable with disclosing their sexual orientation. Therefore, it is imperative that the Your movement matters survey is clearly inclusive, to encourage participation by LGBTQIA+ individuals.

### Faith

There is a small amount of data available for participation in walking by faith groups at a local and casual level for England. It tells us that walking for leisure is most participated in by those who identify as having no religion at 83.8% and least participated in by those who identify as Muslim at 47% [10]. Other groups who participate at a lower rate include those identifying as Hindu at 59.6% and Sikh at 60.6% [10]. These rates are reflected in hiking, hill and mountain walking, with those identifying as having no religion participating at the highest rate, 29.5% and those identifying as Muslim with the lowest participation rates at 13.5% [10].

There is little or no data available on participate rates in walking according to religious or faith group for Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland. The Your movement matters survey will ask participants for their faith or religious group to begin to fill this data gap.

### Socio-economic status

Despite a lack of data on participation rates, it is glaringly obvious that those from a lower socio-economic background are less likely to participate in walking activities [1]. Having a lower income is a constraining factor to participation, and although this does not indicate the numbers of people from lower socio-economic groups who are walking, it does suggest that steps can be taken to begin to close the gap created by wealth inequality.

Data for England shows that there is a direct correlation in participation in walking for leisure between the top most deprived group, Decile 1 at 62.2% and the least deprived group, Decile 10 at 84.9% [10]. As the level of deprivation decreases from Decile 1 to Decile 10, the participation rates in walking for leisure increase [10].

Formal organisations or groups are usually made up of people from ‘higher’ income groups. For example, data for Ramblers membership shows that 83% of members fall into the groups ABC1 and 16% fall into groups C2DE [20].

Although it is clear that more needs to be done to facilitate participation in walking for those from lower-income backgrounds, clearer participation rates for the UK and Ireland are needed.

## What motivates people to participate?

**Key Findings**

Motivators for participating in walking include:

* Awareness of health and well-being benefits [1, 2].
* Good weather.
* Accessible and attractive paths are a motivator for walking in certain locations.
* Sociability and companionship.

Existing studies find that people are motivated to walk for a number of reasons. Many, but not all are synonymous with spending time outdoors and in natural environments. Therefore, some motivators are included later in this review, under the beyond walking and climbing section.

Awareness of health and well-being benefits is cited as a major motivator for participating in recreational walking [1, 2]. In Ireland, approximately 2.5 million people gain from the physical, mental and social benefits of walking [12]. A report found that those in Northern Ireland who walk the most have higher levels of life satisfaction, with motivations for participating including relaxation and the opportunity to “unwind” [27].

People are more motivated to spend time walking in the UK and Ireland when the weather is good. Improved weather is a reoccurring reason for increased participation in walking [28] and spending time in the outdoors more generally [5, 29]. Improved weather assists in the enjoyment of landscapes, scenery, and the environment [1]. In people over the age of 65 in the UK, there is a relationship between participation in walking and the quality and ‘pleasantness’ of the paths available to them [30]. For recreational in older adults living in retirement communities, paths selected for walking tend to be longer, well connected, do not have steps and possess attractive views [31].

Sociability and companionship is a reoccurring motivator for participating in recreational walking, however if a person does not have somebody to walk with, walking alone is a barrier [1]. In a study focusing on walking activity of Gujurati immigrants, participants reported a key motivator for walking was to connect with one another and to share news [2].

The Your movement matters survey will ask people why they participate in walking activities, to further increase our understanding of what motivates people to walk.

## Barriers and Constraints

**Key Findings**

Barriers and constraints to participating in walking include:

* Health.
* Access to certain environments is a constraint to participation in walking.
* Concerns over safety, perceived lack of knowledge and lack of confidence.
* Existing negative attitudes towards walking.

It has been suggested that the term ‘constraint’ is more possibly more appropriate than ‘barrier,’ as barrier immediately indicates a factor that is completely blocking participation in a very definitive sounding way, whereas constraint is restricting [32]. In this rapid review, we use both barrier and constraint in correspondence to the text being discussed. It is useful to have an awareness of the differences between these terms, when considering strategies to tackle ‘barriers’ and ‘constraints.’

Health is a constraining factor for walking, with poor and deteriorating health being one of the biggest barriers to participation in recreational walking [1].

Access to certain environments is a constraint. Access is restricted or enabled by many possible factors including; lack of knowledge and information provision, practicalities including time, money/cost, equipment and an individual’s expectations around these factors [1].

The built environment may facilitate or restrict participation in walking, specifically in highly urbanized neighbourhoods with a low percentage of recreation and green areas are related to physical inactivity for older adults [23]. Path accessibility, path quality and obstructions are also factors that restrict access [1].

Concerns over safety is a major limiting factor for participation in walking and being in outdoor spaces, commonly mentioned by older people and women [1, 17, 33, 34]. Studies also show that men are less likely to be concerned about safety when walking [33]. More broadly, a recent report by Plas y Brenin shows that 15% of Brits refrain from taking part in outdoor activities due to concerns for their safety [34].

Existing negative attitudes to recreational walking act as a barrier to participation for those who do not currently walk, especially for young people, a perceive lack of reward or a lethargy towards walking is a barrier [1].

Although we have some understanding of the barriers and constraints that people are facing, this study will ask respondents directly for reasons why they do not participate and if they have faced any constraints or barriers in the past. This information will assist us in developing and implementing strategies to support more people in accessing walking activities.

## Trying to make a change - Successful programmes & initiatives

There are organisations and charities that are already working to increase the accessibility of walking activities. This section provides some examples of who is already involved in work and strategies that have been successful.

[Walking for Health](https://www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/get-healthy/walking-for-health.aspx) is England’s largest network of health walk schemes, helping thousands of people across the country lead a more active lifestyle [25]. Walking for Health is recognised as a successful programme at targeting and engaging older adults, as the vast majority of participants are in the over-55 group [18]. Between 2019 to 2020, data shows that 16.99% of participants begun walking by joining the Walking for Health programme [19].

By the end of December 2011 the [Ramblers’ Get Walking Keep Walking](https://www.ramblers.org.uk/-/media/Files/What%20we%20do/impact-report-Nov2011-web.ashx?la=en&hash=23FD8619F0BC585D23DFE9713CC13C85#:~:text=Get%20Walking%20Keep%20Walking%20is,or%20in%20time%20spent%20walking.) project helped almost 87,000 people become active through walking, almost 75% of those who took part were inactive prior to first contact with the project [35]. 12 week ‘face to face’ programme delivery was most effective as increasing people’s activity compared to taster walks or packs [36]. A report from the Countryside Recreation Network found that almost half of participants were from the top fifth of most deprived wards in England and almost half were from black and minority ethnic communities [35]. Around 70% of participants reported experiencing increased physical activity levels six months after first contact [35]. 750 volunteers were trained and supported for this programme, they reported significant personal benefits [35], it is reasonable to suggest the longevity and sustainable positive impact of this programme through training volunteers and increasing community assets for supporting walking related activities. 97% of participants reported that they intended to continue walking for more exercise [36].

In 2020, Sport Ireland reported success in facilitating the participation of people who were not yet regularly walking through [local partnerships](https://www.sportireland.ie/participation/local-sports-partnerships), 24,110 took part in ‘Operation Transformation Walks,’ 6,407 people took part in ‘Get Ireland Walking Initiatives,’ and 4,633 took part in ‘Walking Initiatives’ [12].

An impact report by the [South West Coast Path](https://www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/) found the number of path users had grown by 11% and expenditure by path users increased from £86.7 million to £468 million [37]. This demonstrates the positive impact on local economies of having a well-maintained, attractive and accessible public footpath.

[Slow Ways](https://beta.slowways.org/) launched in 2020 with the aim “to create a comprehensive network of walking routes that connect all of Great Britain’s cities and towns as well as thousands of villages. Slow Ways is to be used for both recreational and functional purposes, aiming to offer reasonably direct walking options backed by trusted route information. This will include walking to visit friends and family, travelling to meetings, going to the shops, pilgrimages, charity fundraisers, or travelling to school or work” [38]. Slow Ways is an example of an accessible resource for facilitating greater access and local area walking.

# Climbing and Mountaineering

**Key Findings:**

* There is a significant amount of data available participation rates in climbing within formal organisations.
* There is significantly more data available for participation in rock climbing compared to mountaineering.
* Participation demographics in mountaineering is extremely under researched.

This section looks at research available surrounding participation in climbing and mountaineering activities. There is a significant amount of data available participation rates in climbing, particularly within formal organisations. For example, via funding partners the BMC and the ABCTT (NICAS). Membership data tells us who is already participating within the formal and existing organisations and structures within climbing, but this information is less effective in capturing those outside of membership bases and formal systems. In addition, existing research is less effective at identifying the demographics of who is participating in climbing.

There is significantly more data available for participation in rock climbing compared to mountaineering. There are a number of studies that investigate motivation and psychology of those who participate in mountaineering [39-43] but participation demographics in mountaineering is extremely under researched.

### Participation rates

**Key Findings:**

* Climbing is one of the fastest growing activities in the UK and Ireland.
* The rapid growth on indoor climbing facilities contributes towards the increasing amount of people climbing indoors.
* More climbers climb indoors only than indoors and outdoors.

Robinson identifies climbing as one of the fastest growing sports in the UK [44]. In England between November 2018 and November 2019, 1.2% of adults were participating in mountaineering or scrambling [11]. UK participation in rock climbing and mountaineering is at 2.48 million [45].

“On average, how regularly do you take part in the activities below;”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 3 times or more a week | weekly | Monthly | Less than once a month | Never |
| Rock Climbing | 8.37% | 19.63% | 23.91% | 32.65% | 15.44% |
| Indoor Climbing | 23.55% | 43.24% | 10.67% | 12.42% | 10.12% |
| Hill Walking | 4.16% | 23.29% | 39.28% | 29.11% | 4.16% |
| Mountaineering | 0.96% | 5.45% | 19.315% | 51.05% | 23.23% |

*Table 25 BMC Equality Survey for members 2019*

Findings from the BMC’s 2019 Equality survey for membership (which included 24.78% non-members) show that respondents participate more frequently in indoor climbing, with 23.55% of respondents climbing three or more times a week and 43.22% participating weekly [9]. The most popular response for frequency in rock climbing (outdoors) was less than a month a 32.66%, followed by monthly at 23.91%.

The responses for mountaineering show that respondents most commonly participate less than once in a month at 51.05% and 23.3% never participate. The figures for frequency of participation may reflect access of respondents to certain activities and the environments where activities take place. In the UK and Ireland, weather is a frequently cited reason for not participating in the outdoors and this can be suggested as a constraining factor to outdoor climbing related activities and could account for the lower frequency in participation when compared to less weather dependent activities [5, 29, 46].

According to the ABC, one million people climb independently indoors in the UK, including 100,000 people who regularly climb [47]. In January 2020, there were 600,000 adults (60% of indoor climbers) in the UK climbing indoors at least twice per week, with a UK average of 2.8 visits per week [48] 150,000 adults (15% of indoor climbers) climb less than once per week. 4.5 million people reported to having used to climb indoors but have now stopped [48]. The ABC finds that of those climbing indoors, 44% climb both indoor and outdoor, and 56% of climbers climb indoors only [48].

The ABC found that in 2019 indoor climbing participation comprised of:

* Bouldering (92%)
* Top roping (61%)
* Lead climbing (53%)
* Auto belaying (39%)
* Fun climbing (8%)
* Speed climbing (8%)
* Bouldering only (39%)
* Bouldering mostly (8%)
* Bouldering and routes (lead, top rope, auto, speed) (53%)
* Routes mostly (6%)
* Routes only (8%) [49]

Between 2017 and 2019 there was an increase of 40 – 50% of those climbing indoors due to an increase in the number of walls, and an increase in the number of bigger walls opening in the UK [49]. In 2019, one in five centres in the UK were less than two years old [49] and more walls have opened since. In 2019 75% of large walls were solely or predominantly bouldering centres [49]. More accessible styles of climbing such as Clip n Climb, auto belaying and bouldering are highly popular, profitable and should be viewed as potential entry points into other disciplines of climbing [47, 49].

The BMC’s 2019 Equality Survey finds that 44.1% of respondents are members “of a climbing, mountaineering or hill walking club” and 55.88% are not [9]. Of those who responded yes to being a member “of a climbing, mountaineering or hill walking club,” 75.20% stated that their club is affiliated to the BMC and 11.68% stated no.

## Participant demographic data

**Key Findings:**

* **Male participation** in climbing is **higher** than **female participation.**
* Participation by **non-binary genders** in climbing is **significantly under researched.**
* **Less women** participate in **mountaineering** than men.
* **Gender inequality** remains a **significant issue** in climbing and mountaineering.
* **‘Older’ people** **participate** in climbing and mountaineering **less** than **‘younger’ people.**
* People who climb are **more likely** to be from a **higher socio-economic group.**
* Available information tells us that there is a **distinct lack of ethnic diversity** in those participating in climbing and mountaineering.
* There is **limited information** available for participation in climbing and mountaineering by those with **disabilities** and/or **mental health conditions.**
* There is **limited information** available on participation by the **LGBTQIA+ community** in climbing and mountaineering.
* There is **extremely limited information** on participation rates in climbing and mountaineering according to **faith.**

### Gender

The following tables contain data for participation in the last 12 months (Nov 18 – 19) in climbing related activities according to gender. This is data for England only.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activity | Percentage of males who participated in activity in the last 12 months out of population surveyed Nov 18 – 19 | Club membership - Participated at least once in last 12 months in Nov 18 - 19 |
| Rock climbing or bouldering | 1.9% | No data |
| Climbing or bouldering wall | 2.7% | No data |
| Climbing and bouldering | 4.1% | No data |
| Mountaineering or scrambling | 1.8% | No data |

Table 5 Active Lives Survey Nov 18 - 19, Sport England

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activity | Percentage of females who participated in activity in the last 12 months out of population surveyed Nov 18 – 19 | Club membership - Participated at least once in last 12 months in Nov 18 - 19 |
| Rock climbing or bouldering | 1.1% | No data |
| Climbing or bouldering wall | 1.4% | No data |
| Climbing and bouldering | 2.5% | No data |
| Mountaineering or scrambling | 0.7% | No data |

Table 6 Active Lives Survey Nov 18 - 19, Sport England

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activity | Percentage of those who identify their gender in another way who participated in activity in the last 12 months out of population surveyed Nov 18 – 19 | Club membership - Participated at least once in last 12 months in Nov 18 - 19 |
| Rock climbing or bouldering | No data | No data |
| Climbing or bouldering wall | No data | No data |
| Climbing and bouldering | No data | No data |
| Mountaineering or scrambling | No data | No data |

Table 7 Actives Lives Survey Data Nov 18 - 19, Sport England

Tables 5 and 6 show that male participation in climbing related activities tends to be higher than female participation. Table 7 demonstrates that participation in climbing related activities of those who identify outside of the binary genders is very under researched in England. In 2019, 54% of those climbing indoors were male, and 46% were female [49].

In 2006, according to a BMC members survey 25% of members were female, which was an increase from 16% in 2000 [44], 72% were male and 3% preferred not to answer [50]. In 2016 the survey found that 71% of members were male, 28% were female and 1% were non-binary [50]. The BMC’s Equality Survey finds that 48.41% of respondents were male, 48.41% were female, 1.46% were non-binary, 0.00% were transgender and 1.73% preferred not to say. In 2019, actual female membership in the BMC was at 28% [45]. However, the BMC Equality Survey for membership results showed that 48.41% of respondents were female [9]. The BMC’s 2019 membership survey was open to both members and non-members [9]. 75.22% of respondents were members and 24.78% were not [9]. The participation of non-members as well as members can be suggested as the reason for such disparity between actual female membership and female response to the survey. The 2019 BMC membership survey results do not provide a representative overview of the demographic composition of members, but it does give an indication of who is participating in walking and climbing activities and interact with the BMC.

Interestingly, the most current BMC membership data (January 2021) shows that the younger the age group, the higher the proportion of female members [51]. For those aged <18 the gender split is 51% male, 48% female and 2% unknown [51]. As the data progresses through the age groups, the proportion of female members decreases, reaching its lowest female proportion of 18% female, 76% male and 6% unknown for the age group >65 [51]. In January 2021 members were asked if their gender differed from that which they were assigned at birth, 0.96% of respondents answered yes, 96.34% answered no and 2.70% preferred not to say [51].

There is a significant gender gap in those enrolled in Mountain Training (UK) qualification course and those qualified. This gap varies according to qualification. The percentage of people passing in 2020 who are women as Lowland Leaders was 46.4%, however the number of people passing in 2020 who are women as Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructors was 6.3% [52]. The pass rates for those enrolled are largely the same for men and women between 2013 and 2019 – but the gender gap exists in the number of women enrolled onto Mountain Training courses [45, 46]. The reasons for difference in proportion of qualification passes according to gender is something that needs to be further examined.

Gender inequality in climbing and mountaineering related activities is highlighted frequently by researchers [44, 45, 53-57]. Studies tell us that societal gendered discourses impact on how people of different genders negotiate climbing and mountaineering. Risk and responsibility can be heavily gendered, with women reporting to be reluctant to participate in high risk “edgework” activities [participating at a level where risk is very high, i.e. on the edge] because of the expectations placed on them by society [54, 58]. This is reflected in the statistic that men are three times more likely to be involved in a mountain incident by women, and are more willing and likely to take risks than women [59].

Overly gendered treatment or perceptions of women in climbing negatively impact on women’s lived experiences of climbing related activities across the world [45, 54, 55, 60-62]. For example, a male participant in Kiewa’s study commented that when climbing with women, he felt he has to “step-around” things as his perception was that femininity equated with over-sensitivity [61].

Despite improvements for women’s experiences of rock climbing related activities, they continue to face micro-aggressions which negatively impact on experience [54]. Although gender inequality is widely recognised in climbing and mountaineering, Rahikainen highlights the complexity and issue of elite female climbers being unwilling to comment on the issue of gender as it could negatively impact on their sponsorship [53]. This indicates that there is a perception that some in the industry is still reluctant to support those highlighting gender inequalities.

### Age

Older people are seen to participate less frequently in rock climbing, other climbers have expressed the perceptions that this could be due to age, health and for women, childcare by other climbers [54]. In 2019, those in the age category 55 – 64 made up 6% of climbers climbing indoors [49]. This is the smallest group according to age category [49]. The age category with the largest proportion of people participating in indoor climbing was 25 – 34 at 36%, followed by aged 16 – 24 at 26% and then 35 – 44 at 26% [49]. Respondents to the BMC’s Equality Survey for members shows that the age category with the highest proportion of people is age 25 – 34 with 25.25% of respondents falling into this category [9]. This is followed by the age category 35 – 44 at 20.78% and then the age category 45 – 54 at 17.32% [9]. The age category with the smallest proportion of people is <18 at 2.10% [9].

For children and young people (aged 8 to 15 years old) there are 775,000 climbing indoors [49]. Between 2008 and 2020 142,000 young people have been introduced to NICAS and over 11,100 more to NIBAS [63]. The average age of young people on NICAS courses is 12.2 and the gender split for female: male is 46 : 54. For NIBAS, the average age of a young person on is 11.4 and the gender split for female : male is 39 : 61. This shows a greater gender gap in bouldering when compared to climbing as a broad activity. The ABCTT finds that girls aged between 12 and 15 years old begin to drop out of indoor climbing qualification training and courses, particularly courses in bouldering [48]. This is useful data for identifying a group that needs interaction with and training provisions crafted to encourage more girls aged between 12 and 15 to remain on indoor training qualification courses. However, the report makes the claim that “bouldering is strongly preferred by males” based on the information for drop off rates by females aged between 12 and 15 years old [63]. A statement on preference for climbing style cannot be deduced from data that shows participation drop off rates and quantitative data does not provide this level of nuance. To find out preference for climbing style, participants must be directly asked for their point of view and lived experience. It is not appropriate for organisations to make statements on participant preference using numerical data in this way.

Existing data on participation in climbing according to age is relatively strong. However, data is usually in correspondence to those climbing as members of a club or part of a formal training program. The Your movement matters study will aim to gather data on those who climb outside of these settings and in a more casual, or less formal format.

### Socio-economic status

There have an been an abundance of studies that consider socio-economic status and lower income as a constraining factor to participation in climbing. However, participation rates according to socio-economic status are not readily available.

Indoor climbers arranged by socio-economic groups in 2019 show that 48% of indoor climbers fit the ABs category, 20% fit the C1 category, 13% fit the C2 category and DE fit the 19% category [49]. This is also reflected in data for children, with children from higher socio-economic groups more likely to climb indoors than children from lower socio-economic groups.

Income level and socio-economic status as a constraining factor will also be considered later in the review as a wider issue when accessing outdoor and climbing environments.

### Ethnicity

There is data available for the ethnic groups of those who are participating in climbing and walking within formal organisations, but we have a very limited amount of information for those who are participating outside of those structures. The data that is available tells us that there is a distinct lack of ethnic diversity in those who participate in climbing and mountaineering.

Between 2011 and 2015 of those who registered for Mountain Training course, only 2.4% were non-white and of those who passed qualifications, only 1.7% were non-white [64]. These figures increased slightly between 2016 and 2020, with 2.9% of those who registered being non-white and 1.8% of those who passed being non-white [64]. The data shows that enrolment and pass rates by non-white females are significantly lower than non-white males [64].

Data held by the BMC shows that in 2006, 98% of members are believed to have been white, in 2016 95% of members are believed to have been white, with 3.3% identifying as non-white and 2.4% preferring not to say. In 2019, responses to the Equality Survey for members showed that 82.83% of respondents identify at White British, 2.40% identify at White Irish and 7.11% identify as White Other, which totals at 92.34% White respondents [9]. The BMC suggests that a decrease in the proportion of white respondents and an increase in those who identify their ethnicity in others ways could be due to an increased number of climbing walls being built in areas with more ethnic diversity [50].

According to data held by the ABC, in the UK, the ethnicity of indoor climbers is comprised:

* White 79%
* Mixed 3%
* Asian/Asian British 13%
* Black/Black British 4% [49].

Active Lives data for England tells us that in indoor climbing, 2.2% of respondents who participate in climbing or at the bouldering wall are White British, 2.8% are White Other, 1% are Asian (excluding Chinese), there is no data for Black, Chinese and Other ethnic origin and 3.1% are Mixed. Active Lives data for England only returns results for White British, White Other and Asian (excluding Chinese), there is no data for Black, Chinese, Mixed and Other ethnic origin participation in mountaineering or scrambling [10]. This highlights an issue with a lack of data for ethnic minority participation in climbing.

Much of the data for ethnicity of those who climb is held within membership data or formal structures. We are lacking insight into those who participate in climbing outside of traditional pathways or within traditional organisations. A key recommendation for further research by other studies has been gaining a better understanding of the experiences of black and minority ethnic climbers [54]. The Your movement matters survey will aim to collect information about ethnicity of people who climb in the UK and Ireland.

### Disability and Mental Health

There is a limited amount of information regarding participation in climbing and mountaineering by those with disabilities. There is information for those who are members of the BMC, but outside of this data source, information is limited. There is a pattern in the number of people who climb with mental health conditions increasing. There is very little information available for people with disabilities and/or mental health conditions who participate in mountaineering.

In 2006, 6% of respondents believed to be BMC members reported to have a disability [50]. In 2016 this figure was 7.9% and in 2019 it increased to 11.83% [9, 50]. In 2019 only 4% of indoor climbers in the UK identified as being disabled [49]. In 2019, 11.83% of respondents to the BMC’s Equality Survey reported to have a “long term illness, health problem or impairment that limits your daily activities” [9]. 44% of those who responded yes possess “other (including stamina or breathing difficulty, difficulty speaking or making yourself understood, dexterity issues, long term pain),” 28.68% possess a mental health condition and 24.03% possess a physical disability “(for example wheelchair user, mobility issue, amputee, dwarfism)” [9]. The BMC is working to provide disability awareness ‘Climbing for all’ courses, a step towards increasing opportunity and access for disabled people in climbing [50].

In 2016 10.35% of those who responded to the members survey reported a mental health condition [65]. In 2019 this figure increased to 28.68% of respondents to the BMC’s Equality Survey for members stating that they have a mental health condition [9]. This was the second most selected condition. This tells us that mental health is a priority area for service and resources for BMC members. The BMC already addresses mental health through its partnership with Black Dog Outdoors [66], and we recommend that they continue with this work.

The Your movement matters survey will seek to gather more information about disability and mental health for those who climb outside of membership bases and for those who climb outside of a formal organisation.

### Sexual Orientation

There is limited data available with regards to sexual orientation and the outdoors. The BMC’s 2019 Equality Survey asked for sexual orientation returning the following responses:

* Heterosexual (78.35%)
* Gay (4.50%)
* Lesbian (3.35%)
* Bisexual (6.90%)
* Asexual (0.67%)
* Prefer not to say (6.23%)

In 2015, Natalie Berry observed “on a wider level in sport there are patterns emerging which demonstrate the barriers holding LGBT individuals back from taking part in particular types of sport” [67]. This remains true six years later, with very limited data being available on LGBTQIA+ participation in climbing related activities. LGBTQIA+ experience in physical activity and sport more broadly will be considered later in this review.

The lack of high-quality data and information available indicates the need for this Your Movement Matters study to collect data on LGBTQIA+ participation in climbing activities.

### Faith

With regards to religious and faith groups, there is very little data or literature available that indicates numbers or proportions of faith groups participating in climbing related activities. Active Lives Survey data returns results showing that 4.4% of respondents who climb and boulder as having No Religion, 1.7% as Christian and then for Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Other faith there is no data [10]. Similarly, for mountaineering and scrambling, there is data available for No religion at 1.9% participation and Christian at 0.9%, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Other faith there is no data [12]. This indicates a need for more data on the participation of faith groups in climbing activities.

## What motivates people to participate?

**Key Findings**

Motivators for participating in climbing and mountaineering include:

* Social contact
* Risk seeking
* Challenge
* Fun
* Self-awareness
* Adventure
* Engagement with online media
* Representative role models
* Gender specific environments
* Wellbeing and mental wellness

Studies find that people participate in climbing and mountaineering activities for a multitude of reasons including; social contact, risk seeking, challenge, fun, quest for uncertainty, exhilaration, self-awareness, testing of personal skill and adventure [68]. Wellbeing and mental wellness is another key motivator for participating in climbing related activities [54, 69]. Academic studies have generated substantial evidence that bouldering psychotherapy (bouldering sessions with an instructor possessing a profound psychotherapeutic background) can be effective long term in the treatment of depression [70, 71]. Rock climbing is also found to be associated with acute regulatory effects, i.e. “processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express their emotions” [72].

Commercialisation and media sensationalising of climbing has contributed to an increased in engagement with climbing related resources and climbing as an activity [47, 54]. Berry cites an increase in online engagement with climbing related sources growing by 69% from January 2014 – January 2015, associated with ‘Dawn Wall mania’ [54]. Academic scholars argue that the “selling of risk” and adrenaline fuelled advertising is a pull factor into climbing and a motivation to participate [54, 73].

Social media is found to have an impact on influencing more people to try climbing [47]. Social media, representation through social media and representation more broadly all contribute towards increasing the amount of visible role models. Role models are frequently cited as a reason for motivation to participate in climbing and mountaineering activities by women [54, 74-76].

In the context of LGBTQ participants, the role of social media for increasing visibility, representation and visible role models is highlighted as an enabler, e.g. Unlikely Hikers Instagram account [77]. Events such as the LGBTQ Outdoor Summit was established “to cultivate connections, build community and inspire leaders from across the outdoor industry and beyond to create more accessible and affirming ways for LGBTQ community to get OUTside” [78].

Representation is considered key to increasing participation. The impact of lack of diverse ethnic representation in climbing is considered detrimental to participation by girls and women from diverse ethnic backgrounds; “what about young black girls? They’ll look into this world and they can clearly see a difference” – that they are less or not represented [54]. Gender specific environments are identified as a motivator for participating in climbing, as women state that this can increase their comfortability and sense of inclusion when participating [45, 54, 74].

## Barriers and constraints

**Key Findings**

Barriers and constraints for participating in climbing and mountaineering include:

* Finance
* Lack of experience or exposure
* Fear and anxiety
* Grade-ism
* Family commitments
* Health

Finance is identified as a barrier to participation in climbing related activities, as initial costs and membership fees can be high [45, 54]. A study on the US context of competition climbing which can easily be transferred to UK and Irish competition climbing found that participants believed competition climbing to be expensive, the cost of gym memberships, coaching, team fees and travel as constraints to increased ethnic diversity in competition climbing [32].

The study also found that lack of experience or exposure to climbing, a culture that is “white” and a lack of active and actionable inclusivity are constraints to entry into climbing [32]. Knowledge of climbing facilities and access also come up as constraints to accessing climbing [32].

Specifically around qualification training in mountaineering, Doran and Hall have identified a number of constraining factors to women’s participation including; fear of expressing masculinity, shame and crying, the perception of anxiety as a demonstration of lack of competence, as a form of extreme feminism [45]. They also found competency and fitness to limiting, and the notion of needing to be fast as a deterrent from women wanting to lead, “grade-ism” i.e. not feeling as though they are climbing at a ‘hard enough’ grade and constantly feeling they must re-affirm their status as leaders to counter sexism [45]. Mothers who climb identify the birth of children as having a huge impact on their motivation and willingness to participate in climbing due to the risks involved and family commitments [45, 54]. Embarrassment surrounding physiological needs were highlighted as constraining to participation including anxiety surrounding menopause and menstruation [45].

## Trying to make a change - Successful programmes & initiatives

The BMC has in place initiatives to increase participation in walking and climbing related activities by people from BAME backgrounds, to increase numbers of BAME outdoor leaders [50]. In partnership between the BMC, Mountain Training and [MOSAIC Outdoors](https://mosaic-outdoors.org/), an equity symposium was run in 2019 at the Hollowford Centre in Castleton with more than 80 people attending the workshops [50]. To ensure sustainability and longevity, we recommend frequently running events such as this to develop increased and sustained participation from people coming from BAME backgrounds.

To address lower participation rates by those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the BMC has implemented reduced membership rates for U18s, students, the unemployed, families, and youth competition fees for families on low income support, as well as free places on BMC outdoors courses for U18s from lower economic backgrounds [50], and free places in partnership with the Pinnacle Club for women’s [‘Ready to Rock’](https://www.thebmc.co.uk/ready-to-rock-outdoor-days-2021) courses for women from underrepresented groups [79].

The data for indoor participation shows no shortage of people below the age of 25 climbing indoors, but members of the BMC are more likely to be over the age of 25. The BMC has implemented reduced membership rates for U18s and students [50]. In 2020 the BMC launched their [Under 27 digital membership](https://www.thebmc.co.uk/join-the-bmc-for-1-month-U27-membership) at a £1 per month [80]. Due to the launch of the Under 27 membership taking place recently it is not yet possible to evaluate the effectiveness of this step for increasing under 27 membership in the BMC, however we suggest that this targeted action is a positive way to meet the needs of the younger hill walking and climbing community. We suggest that other organisations considering taking similar steps in addressing age disparity in the activities they facilitate.

[Climbing Alongside Mental Health (C/A/M)](https://www.climbalongsidementalhealth.org/)  “is a non-profit awareness movement dedicated to promoting the positive effects of rock climbing in helping with mental health, including (but not exclusive to) depression, self-injury, and thoughts of suicide” [81]. C/A/M have partnered with climbing walls across the UK to provide free climbing induction sessions for up to two adults (no previous climbing experience required) [82].

Events and initiatives that are designed to address gender inequality receive positive feedback from those who attend. For example, the [Women’s Trad Fest](https://www.womenstradfestival.co.uk/) “is a trad climbing festival in the Peak District, bridging the gap between indoor and outdoor climbing” [83]. Their key aims are to help beginners transition from indoor to outdoor climbing, support women in outdoor leadership, and to help create a supportive network of female climbers [83]. The Women’s Trad Festival actively states that “climbers of all abilities, ages and genders, ethnicities and backgrounds” are welcome [83]. Their recent ‘Climbers Like Me’ campaign showcases their commitment to diversity and inclusion in climbing [84].

# Going beyond walking and climbing – Spending time in the Outdoors?

So far, this review has considered participation in walking and climbing. Studies and research focusing on the experience of the outdoors are highly relevant. Spending time in the outdoors can be considered a pathway to influencing the desire of individuals to walk and climb.

Data shows that 27.6% of the total active population are active outdoors and 16% of the regularly active population are active outdoors [5]. Reasons for participation in outdoor activities generally include to spend time with family, to have fun, enjoy the scenery and nature [5]. 40% of the English population prefer to take exercise outside to enjoy fresh air and 92% participate in the outdoors to relax [5]. Between May 2019 and May 2020, 3.2 million people in England were getting active through adventure sports [11].

This section will consider participation in campsite camping, the influence of leaders as facilitators and the influence that the outdoors can have on our wellbeing. It will then consider general and transferable demographic trends for spending time outdoors and in physical activity. Although these are not specifically focused on walking and climbing, research is highly relevant and provides insight. An understanding of general and transferable trends has informed the crafting of the Your movement matters survey questioning. The final part of this section provides an overview of findings from other studies that have investigated the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on physical activity and use of out outdoor space.

## Campsite camping

**Key Findings:**

* A major motivator to camp is to **socialise.**
* **Value for money** and **cost** is a motivator for choosing camping as accommodation.
* Camping is found to have a positive impact on **wellbeing.**

The Camping and Caravanning Club (CCC) has a membership bases of 320,817 [85] and the CCC believe that membership is continuing to rise [86]. In 2021, membership statistics show that members of the CC are more likely to be in an ‘older’ age bracket, with a significant lack of younger members. Memberships ages comprise of 0% membership for the age group 16 – 24, 3% for those aged 25 – 34, 10% for those aged 35 – 44, 21% for those aged 45 – 54, 28% for those aged 55 – 64 and 38% for those aged 65+ [85]. However, this is unlikely to be truly representative of the proportions of age groups who are going camping but are not members of the CCC, this is information that the Your movement matters survey will seek to gather.

The CCC’s data reveals that the most popular form of camping by members is caravan camping at 38%, followed by motorcaravan at 31% and tent camping at 15% [85]. This suggests that that the socio-economic make up of CCC members is of higher income individuals and families, with caravan and motorcaravan camping being a more expensive style of camping compared to tent camping.

Data collected during the 2017 National Camping and Caravanning Week tells us some key motivators for participation in camping. A major motivator to camp is the opportunity for socialisation, with one in three campers use camping as an opportunity to spend time with friends and 55% of campers believing that camping is a great way to re-engage with old friends and family [87]. Cost has been highlighted as a constraining factor for other activities, the affordability of camping is a major motivator with 67% of campers says that the affordability of camping appeals to them [87].

In 2016, during a Camping and Caravanning Club pop up tour, parents’ perceptions of the impact of camping on children were collected. The reports shows that four in five parents think that camping has a positive effect on school education and 93% of parents said that camping provides useful for skills for later in life [86].

The positive impact on wellbeing motivates people to camp, 64% of campers see camping as an “escape” and an opportunity for rest, with 49% finding it easier to “switch off” from work when camping [87]. 95% of parents say that their children are happier when camping and 98% say that camping helps their children connect to nature [86]. The motivation of improving wellbeing and connected to nature is a common theme between activities and spans outdoor recreation and reasons for being present in outdoor spaces.

The Your movement matters survey will aim to collect information about the frequency in and desire to choose camping as accommodation by those who participate in walking and climbing. This information could potentially help facilitate camping as a pathway into walking and climbing, and vice versa.

## The influence the outdoors can have on our well-being

**Key Findings:**

* There are a significant amount of texts that focus on the benefits of outdoor sport and for mental health [3].
* Access to the outdoors can reduce stress, increase wellbeing, physical and mental health.

Outdoor sports and physical activities are associated with a range of positive health benefits including increased fitness and general physical health [3]. There are a significant amount of texts that focus on the benefits of outdoor sport for mental health [3]. One in four people experience a ‘significant’ mental health problem in any one year and there is an increasing recognition of the importance of nature and place as a determinant on individuals’ mental health [88]. There is substantial evidence that there is a positive relationship between people’s nature connectedness and their wellbeing [3, 89]. Research shows that contact with nature can reduce stress, enhance mood and replenish mental fatigue [90]. Access to the outdoors and nature has also been evidenced to improve quality of life for people living with dementia [91] and is used as an effective method for preventing mental illnesses such as Alzheimer’s disease, dementia or major depressive disorders [3].

There is a correlation between physical activity and higher levels of wellbeing in disabled people; 23% of disabled people who did some sort of physical activity said they were satisfied with their life compared to 17% of those who did no physical activity [4]. This could be extended to physical activity in the outdoors, by increasing provision and opportunity for disabled people in walking and climbing.

In Northern Ireland, 73% of outdoor visits are taken for exercise and to improve health and 56% of residents took visits to relax and unwind [27]. The study found that connectedness to nature leads to an increased desire to protect the environment [27]. In 2020 the most common motivators for spending time outdoors in Scotland included a desire to stay fit and healthy and relaxation, with care for physical and mental wellbeing being major factors influencing peoples’ decisions to spend time outdoors [14].

A report for Natural England makes key recommendations for effectively improving wellbeing through the outdoors including; collaboration between the green care sector and partners to raise awareness and the promotion and sharing of evidence of the effectiveness of nature-based interventions for people who experience mental health problems [88]. They recommend green exercise, including walking, as a treatment intervention for mental health [88].

The role of physical activity and recreation for improving mental health in the outdoors is one of the foundations that [Black Dog Outdoors](https://www.blackdogoutdoors.co.uk/) is built upon [92]. Black Dog Outdoors is a UK based mental health outdoors charity focused on “promoting the idea of ‘green exercise’ to those that will benefit from it, providing opportunities for those people to take up outdoor activities, and to support and encourage them as they set out on their individual adventures” [92]. Black Dog Outdoors organise recreational events in the outdoors for people to attend at no cost. In September 2020 their participants were comprised of 51% female attendees, 27% male attendees and 22% unspecified gender attendees [93]. The average age of attendants is 40, the age bracket with the largest number of attendees is 35 – 39 [93]. Their success is demonstrated by participant feedback; “within not long of arriving I felt at ease, still uncertain, but that I would be looked after by experienced instructors. Once we got started it was great fun, lots of laughs and such a sense of achievement. Really boosted my confidence” [94]. Evidence suggests the importance of outdoor instructors as enablers to outdoor related activities and associated physical and mental health benefits and outdoor instructors recognise the health benefits of nature exposure and report to enjoy being mediators of others’ relationships with nature through their work [95].

The survey showed that by attending a Black Dog Outdoors event 96% of respondents helped them feel achievement and accomplishment, 76% felt a sense of self confidence or self-belief, 84% felt that they had connected to others, 76% felt they had connected with the outdoors, 64% felt present or mindfulness and 88% felt that the day had provided an escape from ‘every day worries’ [94].

Spending time in the outdoors contains a wealth health and wellbeing benefits. This further justifies the need to help increase inclusive participation in the outdoors by people in the UK and Ireland. Generating information that will assist in addressing barriers and constraints to get into the outdoors, more people will be able to access and benefit from the outdoors.

## The influence of leaders as facilitators

**Key Findings:**

* Leaders and organised activity are facilitators and serve as entry points for participation in outdoor related activities.
* Delivered sessions are significant in facilitating youth access to outdoor activities.
* Staff training and education is important for the most effective delivery and engagement.
* A collaborative approach with organisations who have specialist knowledge on different groups or issues can be effective for widening diversity and being meaningfully inclusive.

Studies emphasise the importance of leaders and organised activities as facilitators into outdoor related activities [96, 97]. Authors describe how outdoor sport [and activity] can be used as an attractive and motivational method to interest young people in sustainability, learning through participating in the outdoors can have a long lasting impact [3].

“Outdoor pursuits and outdoor education work have a rich history of being embedded into youth work. Such activity tends to have less of a competitive element within it and can often have more obvious and tangible interrelated developmental outcomes such as confidence and skills building or teamwork. These activities are recognised as good entry points for young people, particularly those young people who are inactive. Future strategies would benefit from using these as clear starting points on a sports pathway rather than discrete one-off opportunities” [97].

An Active England Woodland Projects Evaluation finds that staff/volunteer led activities and ‘facilitated’ (supported) access can be crucial in enabling some groups to overcome barriers to participation [98]. Projects designed to meet the needs of certain groups and carried out in partnership, using community based networks to address barriers that lie outside of the immediate influence of the organisations’ specialisms are suggested to be the most successful in engaging groups [98].

To improve successful delivery and increasing participation, researchers asked providers for perceived barriers, especially when working with underrepresented communities [96]. Perceptions include; “there is no demand, lack of financial resources (it was perceived that extra staff would be needed to meet the need of underrepresented groups), a lack of appropriately trained staff, no strategic plan in place, a lack of appropriate facilities, lack of awareness of needs and abilities of underrepresented groups” [96]. We suggest that many of these perceptions could be altered or changed with improved staff training and education.

Representation within the workforce has been highlighted as important for increasing participation of those from underrepresented groups in the outdoors. In an attempt to improve delivery, in 2016 The Outward Bound Trust committed to increasing the diversity of its workforce [99]. Approximately 15% of young people who visit Outward Bound centres come from an ethnic minority backgrounds and the Outward Bound Trust has recently recognised their workforce contains under-representations and acknowledge that the same can be said for the sector more widely [8]. In 2019 The Outward Bound Trust partnered with Lindley Education Trust to trail a 12 month outdoor leadership course for young people from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic backgrounds [100]. The Outward Bound Trust acknowledged that at the beginning of the course they had little experience in running a course for specifically BAME participants, yet Lindley Education Trust have one of the most ethnically diverse staff teams with 25% of staff coming from a BAME background [100]. Taking a collaborative approach with other organisations who have experience in increasing diversity in all forms is significant. We recommend that the funding partners take this approach moving forward with the implementation of strategies. We advocate for partnering with organisations who are working to increase diversity.

## General and transferable trends for demographic groups

All demographic groups overlap. However, there is not scope within this rapid review to meaningfully consider how identities and demographic factors intersect and overlap. Usually, when factors of identity intersect, particularly in relation to marginalised demographic identity, inequalities are exaggerated. An awareness that these trends for demographic groups cannot be neatly packaged, tend to be generalisations despite being based on evidence and cannot fully account for the nuances of data is important. Organisations should be mindful of intersectionality and not consider identities to not always be separate, clear-cut and defined.

### Gender

**Key Findings**

For women, constraining factors for getting outdoors include:

* Societal gender expectations
* Lack of exposure
* Fear
* Work
* Time
* Money
* Injury/health
* Family commitments
* Lack of confidence
* Perceived lack of knowledge
* Weather
* Not having somebody to participate with

Motivators for getting outdoors include:

* Role models
* Friendly and accessible events focused on development as opposed to competition

Research indicates that females who do participate in outdoor recreation are more empowered and have higher levels of self-esteem, self-worth, confidence and more positive sense of body image [101]. Women in Adventure find women are inspired to participate in outdoor activities by other women who they feel they can relate to, role models who display passion, determination, perseverance, strength, resilience and positivity are a motivator for women’s participation [74]. Women in Adventure find that experiences for women in the outdoors are improving and moving in the right direction but there is still work to be done [3].

Studies show that women tend to participate in outdoor recreation at lower rates than men for reasons including societal gender expectations, a lack of exposure, and fear [101]. Other reasons include work, time, money, injury/health, family commitments, lack of confidence, weather and not having a partner to participate with [74, 102].

Concerns over safety are a major influencer on women’s use of outdoor and natural spaces. Women and mothers of young children are more likely to experience feelings of vulnerability and concerns over safety [17]. 39% of women have reported feel unsafe in London’s green spaces in 2015 [5].

Studies have found that in some circumstances women prefer to participate in activities in all female environments [54, 74, 103]. Prominent reasons for preferring all-female settings include removing the chance of male dominance in a situation, comfort and reducing anxiety, not being in the minority and feeling safe [54]. In 2019 the Outward Bound Trust ran its first women’s only Outdoor Leadership Course in 2019 [104]. Participants on the course reported feeling an increased sense of self confidence, belief in abilities, as well as an increased sense of possibility around making progress towards leadership qualifications [104].

Lack of skill development or knowledge is highlighted as a constraining factor for women’s participation in outdoor activities [74], largely due to [gendered] social factors that disadvantage women. The recommendation is that training providers must disrupt gendered social factors to increase the amount of women developing technical skills [105].

Women in Adventure asked women for desires to assist them in being active in the outdoors at all levels of ability, responses for beginners include more friendly and inclusive events for all abilities, particularly events that take the focus away from competition and towards achievement [74]. At an intermediate level, women would like there to be a focus on progression, feeling that some women may be slow to gain confidence in their skills and ability and said that they would benefit from more female instructors and coaches [74]. Those participating at an advanced level expressed that they find it difficult to find other women at a similar level of ability to train with, it is also common for women to consider adventuring alone and there is an appetite for this knowledge [74].

### Age

**Key Findings**

For **older people**, constraining factors for people getting outdoors include:

* Health
* Poorly maintained paths
* Perception that older age is a barrier
* Feelings of vulnerability and lack of confidence

For **younger people**, constraining factors for people getting outdoors include:

* Negative perceptions and stereotyping of people who spend time outdoors

For **younger people**, facilitators for getting outdoors include:

* Seeing parents and older family members having a good relationship with the outdoors

Those who are active in the outdoors are set to rise, those who are over 60 and active will rise by 40% over the next 20 years [5]. Indicating that we need to increase how accessible the outdoors is for those who fall into older age groups.

Studies find that older people who do not find it easy to get outside can spiral into poor physical health, less social contact and reduced quality of life [106]. Participation in outdoor sports [or physical activities] has been found to assist the elderly in maintaining their physical performance, as well as improving mood and happiness [3]. However, poorly maintained paths are a barrier to elderly people spending time in outdoor environments [5, 96]. Sport Wales find that the second most frequent reason for not participating in sport or physical activity is “if I was younger” [13]. This could be connected to a lack of accessible opportunities for older people or stereotyping around age.

The Forestry Commission finds that the elderly are more likely to feel vulnerable and a lack of confidence [17]. They also find that younger people feared perceptions that they would appear “geeky or weird” if that were seen to be spending time in nature, as well as perceptions that they are participating in anti-social behaviour and fear of teenagers was reported to be a barrier to other groups. [5, 17]. Both points can be seen as a result of the stereotyping of young people. In addition, it has been highlighted that some young people hold a perception that the ‘countryside’ is backward, stifling, inward-looking and conversative [5].

Levels of being connected to nature among children are positively correlated to those of the adults in their household [89]. This shows that those of a younger age are influenced by the behaviours and attitudes of adults in their lives. A positive relationship with the outdoors displayed by adults in front of children, is more likely to result in children maintaining a positive relationship with the outdoors

The Outdoors Industries Association in partnership with Sport England find that in England demographics are forecast to shift, with those over the age of 60 set to rise to over 40% in the next 20 years (this means the population of those over the age of 60 will be six times higher than those under 60) and this group is expected to remain active. Millennials will comprise of 22% of the population by 2030 [5].

### Sexual Orientation

**Key Findings**

* There is an ongoing problem with homophobia and transphobia in sport and physical activity
* Organisations need to be more visibly and actively inclusive of those from the LGBTQIA+ community.
* There is a very limited amount of information on participation in and experience of the outdoors by the LGBTQIA+ community.

A report for the Equality Network (Scotland) finds that 79% of respondents think there is a problem with homophobia in sport, 66% of respondents think that there is a problem with transphobia in sport and 73% of respondents think that homophobia and transphobia are barrier to people participating in sport and physical activity [107]. Importantly, 57% of LGBT respondents said they would be more likely to participate if sport and physical activity was more LGBT friendly [107].

Studies on physical activity and LGBTQ+ participation show that institutions fail to prioritise accessible practices despite evidence of discrimination towards LGBTQ+ folk [108] and that sport managers [including organisations] are reluctant to address the harm caused to the LGBTQ+ community [109]. A lack of action to make physical activities, including walking and climbing related activities a safe and welcoming space for LGBTQ+ people by organisations and institutions has a detrimental effect on the health of the LGBTQ+ community [97]. Findings show that 55% of LGBT men, 56% of LGBT women and 64% of LGBT people who identified as something other than male or female (e.g. genderfluid or genderqueer) are not active enough to maintain good health [97]. Transgender people are highlighted as facing the most serious inequality and discrimination in all sectors of society [97].

Finance and income as a chief driver intensifies inequalities and unequal opportunity, e.g. evidence shows that when using facilities or spaces for physical activity, if an LGBT group is smaller, they often lose their time slots if larger groups want to use the facility/space [97]. The owner of the facility profiting from a larger group paying to use their space, but the LGBT group already marginalised, further marginalised. This clearly indicates that providers and organisations need to be aware of instances such as this example and make adjustments to ensure opportunity for underrepresented groups.

Expertise and research on LGBT inequality in sport and physical activity is increasing [110], however in the outdoor industry in particular there remains a severe lack of data. This emphasises the importance of gathering data on LGBTQIA+ experience of walking and climbing related activities to drive meaningful change to improve experience and opportunity.

### Ethnicity

**Key Findings**

* There is a significant lack of ethnic diversity in those who spend time outdoors.
* Experiences of racism and prejudice are frequent and a constraint to many from ethnic minority groups spending time in the outdoors.

For those from **ethnic minority** backgrounds, constraints to getting outdoors include:

* Feelings of vulnerability and lack of confidence
* Concerns over safety
* Awareness
* Language
* Culture
* Perception that the outdoors is a middle-class, Caucasian space
* Environmental constraints
* Worries of appearing ‘outside of the norm’
* Lack of access to entry pathways

In England and Wales 14% of the adult population are from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, in Scotland this figure is 4% [8]. Data shows that in England those from ethnic minorities visit the natural environment 60% less than the rest of the population [111].

Experiences of racism and prejudice are frequently mentioned in conversations taking place on mainstream social media as a reason for those from ethnic minorities being less present in the outdoors. Amira Patel, founder of The Wanderlust Women, works with groups from ethnic backgrounds for a long time, “I speak to many individuals, that say they do feel alienated. They do feel unwelcome and they do have the threat of standing out and you know, being susceptible to racism and prejudice” [112]. Marcus Brown, Founder of Black Trail Runners and ‘Host of A Runner’s Life Podcast’ highlights that the outdoors is institutionally racist; “there’s the things you do see, and the things that you don’t see, you know, there’s little micro biases that occur, that you can’t always pinpoint, but that’s one of the difficulties that we kind of have trying to explain to people who don’t look like me” [112]. Racism in the outdoors is a serious issue that needs continued and sustained work from organisations, individuals, businesses and brands within the industry.

People from ethnic minority groups are found to feel vulnerability and a lack of confidence in natural spaces [5, 17]. It is reported that for black and minority ethnic communities constraints to being present in outdoor environments include; awareness, language, culture, confidence, concerns over safety and hold the perception that the outdoors is full of Caucasian, middleclass stigma [5].

Some members of ethnic minority groups report to worry about perceptions of them when using natural spaces, including appearing to be ‘outside of the norm’ [17]. Role expectation is a core theme in a study investigating female South Asian Indian immigrant participation in physical activity, four major reasons for not participating include lack of time, loss of interest, diminished social support and environmental constraints, i.e. lack of access to facilities/spaces to participate in physical activity [113].

Rurality is inherently connected to “Englishness” and Englishness is racialised as white [114]. It is important that the reader has an awareness of the implications of historically and culturally embedded associations of national identity with the outdoors, despite best efforts to show that all are welcome, organisations and governing bodies must think more deeply about the implications of context on experience of natural spaces. Askins argues that “productions of rurality and nationality are caught up in processes of social exclusion – physical and emotional – that impact non-white groups’ access to the countryside [and other natural environments, including for the purpose of participating in the named activities] [114].

Research on participation in wider sport and physical activity can be applied to the context of this study. Fletcher and colleagues find that while BAME communities are no less likely to participate in sport than white Britons, participation by South Asian groups remains relatively low [115]. Fletcher and colleagues’ study focuses on the “significant and powerful” barriers that prevent progression of BAME individuals into higher level coaching qualifications and job roles in cricket [115]. There are a number of factors that can be transferred to the context of leading in walking and climbing related activities. Reasons for a halt in progression include a lack of network into the institution, lack of mentoring and opportunity to develop expertise, as well as infrequent and costly training courses [115].

“The interplay of these social, cultural, economic and institutional barriers demonstrate that practices of institutional racism reproduce whiteness in sport coaching and are underpinned by patterns of hegemonic white privilege embedded within the core structures of decision-making bodies at the highest levels” [32]. Although this statement is specifically referring to cricket, much of this statement can be transferred to the context of this research study. Mountain Training have recognised the cost associated with developing qualifications and in 2021 launched the Mountain Training England’s Skills and Training Fund grant of £5,000 to support and encourage greater ethnic diversity [116].

Fletcher et. al’s study also shows that South Asian cricketers often come from a different pathway into cricket, “which are less formal and feel separate from the ‘mainstream’ (white) British system” which tends to have more pathways to governance networks and coaching pathways [115]. In walking and climbing related activities, it would be useful to understand how individuals enter into activities, to establish connections to existing entry points and facilitators to ensure greater opportunity for progression and qualification development.

Previous studies suggest that future research for Europe needs to examine minority ethnic recreational behaviours and participation outside of urban areas, taking into account motives for participation in the outdoors and the influence of acculturation on ethnic minorities’ outdoor recreation patterns would provide a more comprehensive picture [117]. The issue of acculturation or assimilation to a dominant culture is important to consider. The researchers are aware of importance of asking respondents why they do or do not participate in outdoor, walking and climbing related activities in a style that does not force assimilation to the dominant cultures of these activities. It is important to gain an understanding of different recreation habits and activities need to capture the interest of diverse cultures [5]. This means allowing respondents to use their own choice of language and words when answering questions surrounding constraints, enables and motivators.

### Disability

**Key Findings**

* Disabled people are less likely to be active than able-bodied people
* Disabled people are more likely to access information about activities through medical professionals and community groups

For **disabled people**, constraining factors for getting outdoors include:

* Fears for safety
* Feelings of vulnerability
* Lack of confidence
* Constraints to access
* Social stigma
* Health issues

In 2021, the Annual Disability and Activity Survey 2020 – 21 found that disabled people are less likely to be “fairly active” compared to non-disabled people, with levels of disabled people at 44% compared to non-disabled people at 54% [4]. When asked for perception of who physical activity is for, it is found that disabled people are likely to hold more negative perceptions when compared to non-disabled people, especially around the word ‘sport’ [4]. Furthermore, there is a difference between perceptions held by people from different socio-economic groups. Those who are managers ae more likely than those in manual positions to have a positive view of sport and physical activity [4]. This is an example of how intersecting and overlapping demographics result in a more complex experience.

Findings show that between 2020 – 21, disabled people were most likely to access information about sport and physical activity through medical professionals and local community facilities [4]. Findings also show that disabled people are most likely to listen to advice about participating in physical activity from medical professionals (65%) and significantly less likely to take advice from national sports organisations or charities (6%) [4]. We suggest that partners should be working with medical professionals and bodies to provide accessible and accurate information relating to participating in walking and climbing related activities is likely to be a successful way to reach more disabled people and subsequently increasing disabled participation.

The Forestry Commission found that disabled people and their carers are constrained from being present in natural spaces due to fears for safety, feelings of vulnerability and lack of confidence [5, 17]. Other reasons for those with physical disabilities, hearing impairments and visual impairments for not participating in the outdoors include restrictions to access caused by stiles, gates, bridges, steep and uneven paths, distance, shelter and rest points, access to information [5].

Some groups of disabled people are disinclined to visit woodland and other countryside areas because they perceive access and services to be paternalistic and “over-regulated” [17]. This is an issue of social stigma, disabled people do not want to be treated obviously differently [17].

Researchers find that the existence of personal disability or a long-term illness is a larger constraint to outdoor recreation than the presence of a person with a disability in one’s household and recommend that in future studies researchers attempt to find out why some people with a disability seek to overcome this to spend time outdoors, whereas others do not [5, 118]. However, it has also been found that in some cases, negative attitudes of some providers, parents/carers and participants have negative attitudes towards the participation of some underrepresented groups, particularly people with disabilities [96]. People often develop more health issues as they age and it is recommended that organisations who manage outdoor recreation spaces should be aware of this [118].

### Faith

**Key Findings**

For those from **faith groups**, constraining factors for getting outdoors include:

* Fears for safety
* Feelings of vulnerability
* Lack of confidence
* Fears of getting lost
* Not understanding access rules
* Lack of support when in difficulty
* Negative stereotyping and perceptions

Those from “faith groups” are more likely to feel a lack of confidence and vulnerability, related to fears of getting lost, not knowing where to go, not understanding land access and lack of support in difficulty. Reference to “faith groups” is incredibly vague, but is useful to be aware of when examining data generated in this study.

During an Arc’teryx event, Amira Patel highlighted her concerns over stereotypes and misconceptions that people may hold in relation to Muslim women; “there is a lot of negativity that we do have within the media with the veil, hijab and all these things… are always negative. I’m trying to change those to make people aware we’re just normal people doing normal activities”[112].

Socio-economic status

**Key Findings**

* People living in urban deprived environments are less likely to visit natural spaces.

For **people from lower socio-economic groups,** constraining factors for getting outdoors include:

* Lack of confidence
* Cost
* Travel distance required
* Lack of local opportunities
* Access

In England, people living in urban deprived environments visit natural spaces 40% less than others in a different socio-economic classification, and people from the socio-economic groups D and E are more than 20% less likely to visit [111]. In Northern Ireland, 50% of residents from the 10% more deprived areas typically visit the outdoors once a week [119].

Cost is recorded as a reason for not spending time in the outdoors, as well as travel distance required, confidence and lack of local opportunities [5].

The Your movement matters study will seek to identify costs associated with walking and climbing that act as a barrier to participation.

Access is an issue for many groups, not having access to a cheap bus named as a reason for not entering natural spaces [17], general difficulties with public transport [96] and a lack of local opportunities [5]. This indicates that those from socio-economic groups who do not have access to their own vehicle find it difficult to access spaces. Dependence on others is also named a constraining factor to entering natural spaces, this could include transportation [96].

## Impact and implications of Covid-19

**Key Findings**

* The Covid-19 pandemic seems to have increased the perceived importance of the outdoors and amount of time spent in the outdoors.
* The Covid-19 pandemic has widened inequalities for those facing constraints to getting outdoors.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on behaviours and participation in outdoor activities. A study conducted across Europe finds like 70% of respondents missed not being able participate in outdoor activities due to Covid-19 and over half of respondents reported to missing outdoor activities the most out of all restrictions [120]. A report by Plas y Brenin found that during the Covid-19 pandemic 17 million adults in the UK tried an outdoor activity for the first time [34].

Research by Natural England finds that in December 2020, 61% of the adult (age 16+) population had visited a green/natural space in the last 14 days and 41% of adults felt that visiting green and natural spaced has become even more important to them since the Covid-19 pandemic [29] .

The Annual Disability and Activity survey for 2020 – 21 finds the top motivators for being physically active for disabled people include relaxing and socialising with friends, compared to the year previously [pre-Covid] [4]. In Europe, nearly 90% of general survey respondents agree that outdoor activities are essential to wellbeing and 70% are looking forward to more outdoor activities post-Covid [120]. Sport Wales found that 63% of adults were exercising to manage their mental health during the pandemic [121]. There is a general trend in an increased perceived value of wellbeing motivators amongst those who participate in physical activity and in outdoor activities since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

During January 2021 national lockdown restrictions do not appear to have had an effect on the proportion of adults visiting green and natural spaces, with 61% of adults visiting a natural green space in the last 14 days, consistent with figures for November (64%) and December (61%) [29]. 30% of adults had not spent any time in green and natural spaces in the previous 14 days, and 15% had not visited natural or green spaces in the previous month [29]. For those adults who did not spend time outdoors in the last 14 days, 51% of them stayed at home to stop coronavirus spreading due to Government restrictions [29].

NatureScot found that during the period of August – September 2020 80% of adults in Scotland visited the outdoors at least once a week, a higher percentage when compared to 71% during initial lockdown period for Scotland, March – May 2020 [14]. The places where people tended to spend time outdoors has also changed, those spending time in local parks/open spaces increased from 42% to 49%, on paths/tracks away from the road increased from 37% to 42%, in woodland/forest increased from 22% to 34% and wildlife area/nature reserve increased from 8% to 15% [14]. The study also found that those spending time in the mountains and hills increased from 7% to 16% [14].

49% of the population expect to increase their time outdoors in future, and 20% would like to spend “a lot more time” outdoors [14]. Those who are most likely to spend more time outdoors include people with children (62%), people aged under 35 (56%) and dog owners (58%).

A report found that two in three residents in Northern Ireland visit the outdoors for leisure every week but participation levels are lower amongst some population groups and have changed during the pandemic [27]. The report finds that Covid-19 lockdown restrictions worsened participation inequalities for some demographic groups, those who visited the outdoors less include "unemployed people, people with no car, people in the least affluent socio-economic groups and people with disabilities,” 29% of residents do not have access to greenspace within an easy walking space [27].

However, 22% of residents increased their time outdoors, especially those from younger age groups, people with children, full-time workers and more affluent socio-economic groups [27]. This report also asked respondents “what, if anything, could be done by organisations responsible for developing outdoor recreation to improve the opportunities for you to use greenspaces and trails in your local area?” Answers include; “more control of dogs/ dog fouling, more dedicated cycle routes, more paths and trails away from roads, improved access/rights of way/right to roam, better facilities/maintenance on paths (e.g. seats, signs), more access to open green spaces/parks, more bins/ address litter/fly tipping issues, more paths/greenways connecting to places, trails more accessible for people with disabilities/buggies, male places feel safer, more toilets, more information/maps/publicity of maps” [27].

Sport Wales found that overall participation in sport and physical activity in Wales kept to roughly the same levels during national lockdown [122]. However, findings show that children, older adults (55+) and those from a lower socio-economic backgrounds tended to take part less in sport and physical activity during lockdown than they had done previously [122]. Sport Wales reports that the pandemic appears to have widened inequalities in sport and physical activity across gender, socio-economic status, long standing illness or conditions, and age [121].

In October 2020 61% of adults in Wales reported to have participated in walking the week before the survey [121]. Since May 2020, Sport Wales reported an increase in adults undertaking activities outside of the home, this does not automatically suggest outdoor based activities, but the report does find that parks are the setting in which adults are most likely to feel confident taking part in physical activity with 61% of adults feeling confident to participate in this space [121].

The Annual Disability and Activity Survey 2020 – 21 report finds that 58% of disabled people felt they were given the same opportunity during the pandemic to be as physically active as they wanted to be before the pandemic [4]. There is a lack of the same effect among non-disabled people and the researchers observe similar positive trends in other questions, indicating a meaningful positive change among disabled people prior to the pandemic [4]. However despite this development, disabled people still feel they have less opportunity to be active compared to non-disabled people [4]. 27% of disabled people said that Covid-19 had reduced their ability to exercise to ‘a great extent’ compared to 13% of non-disabled people [4]. The report finds that the Covid-10 pandemic is disproportionately affecting disabled people’s ability to be active [4]. This is useful in the context of this study, as it shows that improvements must be made to facilitate equal opportunities for disabled people in walking and climbing related activities, particularly taking into account Covid-19 precautions and measures. The report explicitly recommends that organisations “work collaboratively to address new challenges arising from Covid-19” to increase disabled people’s physical activity (including walking and climbing related activities) [4].

In their Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025, Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland have laid out their aims for outdoor strategy, these include championing the outdoors, delivering training and sharing best practice, planning and developing quality experiences, increasing awareness, widening, increasing and sustaining participation [119]. This report has been created based on evidence and data, it is an example of a high-quality output and strategy to be implemented. Many of the constraints and barriers can be applied to walking and climbing related activities in the UK and Ireland.

It is difficult to anticipate the full impact of the pandemic on how people’s relationships with the outdoors will change, or how participation rates will change, but early research indicates that participation will increase. This emphasises the importance of addressing the needs of those who have stated desires/factors that will improve use of and access to the outdoors, including walking and climbing related activities.

## What does Your movement matters need to find out?

This review has provided an overview of the most prominent studies and research available on demographic participation in walking and climbing activities.

The information available tells us that walking is the most popular and accessible form of physical activity for people of all genders. We have found that there is an abundance of information available on walking for leisure with level of detail varying across England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, but less information is available about those who participate in walking styles that require higher skill levels and knowledge. Detailed participation rates are available from members of formal organisations, but less detailed information is accessible for those participating outside of these organisations.

There is a large amount of data available for recreational walking in relation to age, finding those who belong to ‘older’ groups being the most likely to walk. Those with a disability and/or a long-term illness participate less frequently in walking related activities than the non-disabled population [4]. Evidence suggests that those considered to be from an ethnic minority background according to ethnic group categories are less likely to be participating in walking activities for leisure, in the hills and mountains. Information on demographic participation in walking is varied both in terms of quality and who it captures. There has been an increase in data capture in lieu of the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in relation to walking for leisure or casual walking. There are significant data gaps in participation in walking by those from the LGBTQIA+ community and faith groups. It is clear that people from lower income backgrounds are less likely to participate in walking activities, however we need a more detailed picture of participation rates. Participation in hill and mountain walking is significantly under researched and the Your movement matters project should aim to gather information to better understand overall participation rates.

Most of the detailed information for participation in climbing and mountaineering comes from within formal organisations and we have less knowledge about those participating outside of traditional or formal pathways. Existing information for climbing tells us that male participation in climbing and mountaineering is higher than female participation and gender inequality remains a significant issue. Participation by non-binary genders in climbing is significantly under researched. We also know that ‘older’ people are less likely to participate in climbing and mountaineering activities than ‘younger’ people. People who climb are more likely to be from higher socio-economic groups and available information reveals a distinct lack of ethnic diversity in those who climb and mountaineer.

There is a limited amount of information about participation by those with disabilities and/or mental health conditions, those from the LGBTQIA+ community and participation rates according to faith.

We need a more detailed understanding of participation rates by different demographic groups in walking and climbing within the UK and Ireland. There are huge data gaps identified in this literature review, which have informed the creation of the Your movement matters survey to understand participation in relation to the following demographic factors:

* Gender
* Sexual orientation
* Age
* Disability
* Mental health condition/illness
* Ethnic group
* Faith
* Socio-economic status

This research survey will also be designed with the desires of the funding partners in mind. The survey should generate data to assist the funding partners in understanding who is and who is not participating in walking and climbing and why people may not be participating. Findings will drive the development of evidence-based strategies to improve inclusion in a meaningful way.

**“There is no silver bullet; the only way to fully understand what is required and therefore, to instigate meaningful change is to fully understand the needs, wants and desires of those for whom the change is intended” [115].**

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