



Centre for Health, Activity
& Wellbeing Research

Adolescent organised activity participation for supporting health and wellbeing outcomes: opportunities and challenges

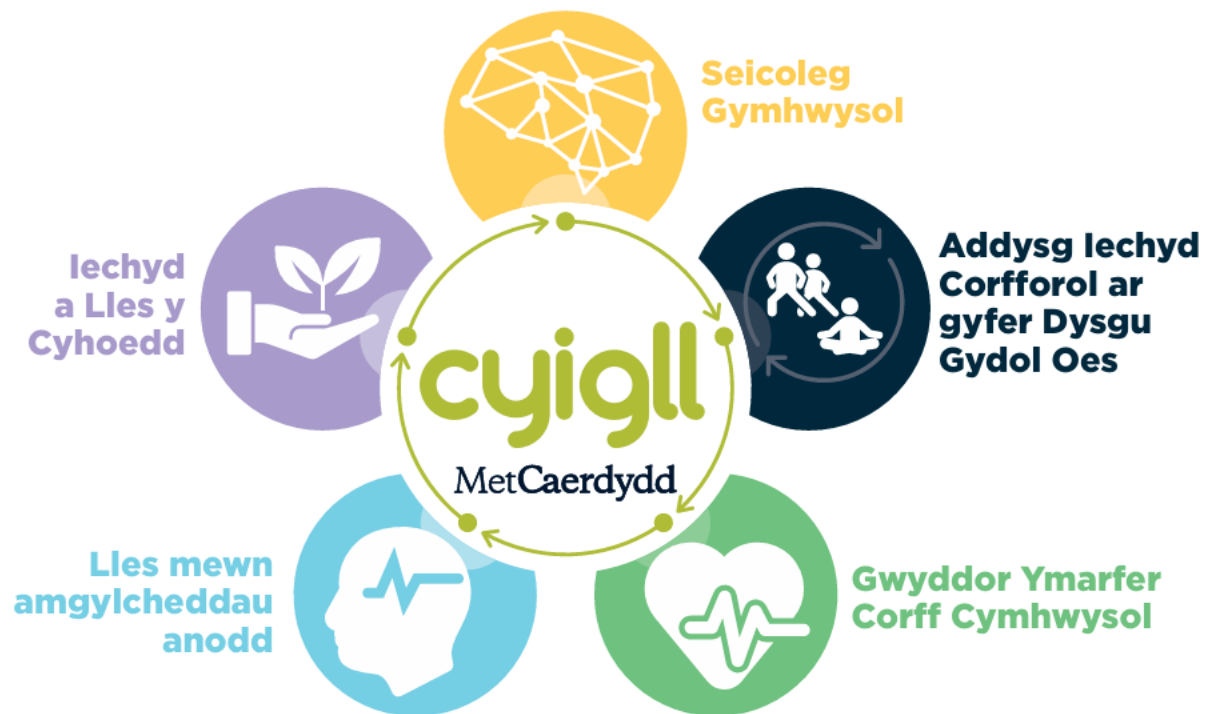
Dr Britt Hallingberg

Reader in Public Health, Cardiff Metropolitan University

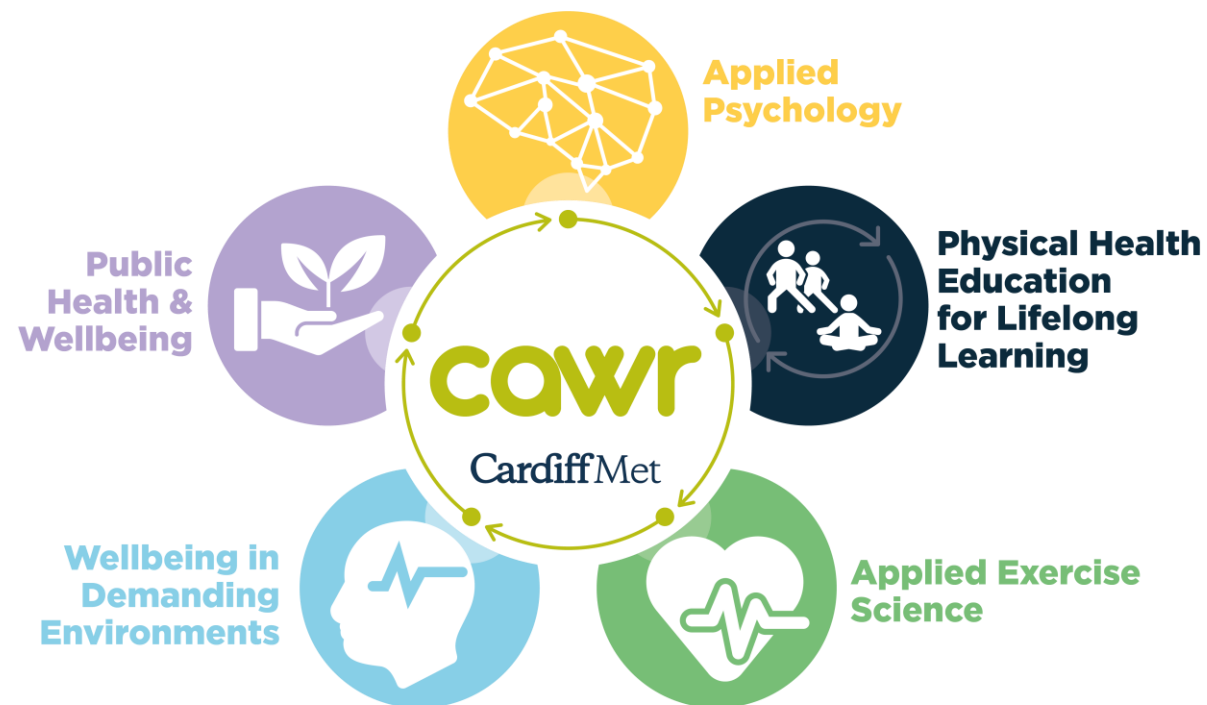


Cardiff
Metropolitan
University

Prifysgol
Metropolitan
Caerdydd



**Canolfan Ymchwil Iechyd,
Gweithgarwch a Lles**



**Centre for Health, Activity
& Wellbeing Research**

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 31

1. Right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts
2. Right to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

cawr



Adolescence

A comparatively health stage of life, but of great public health importance

Why is adolescence important?

- 1. Causes of morbidity and mortality during adolescence shift from infectious disease towards 'risky' behaviours**
- 2. Behaviours and mental health challenges that emerge during adolescence track into adulthood**
- 3. Unique time of development = opportunities for intervention**

Leisure provides opportunities to explore

Svacina et al., 2022

Engagement in activities are shaped by:

International motivation

- Enjoyment

External motivation

- Parental praise
- Friendships
- Certificates



Leisure provides opportunities to support wellbeing:
Is adolescence a critical stage for this?

Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

Competence

Relatedness

Autonomy

Adolescence

Skill development

Peer influence

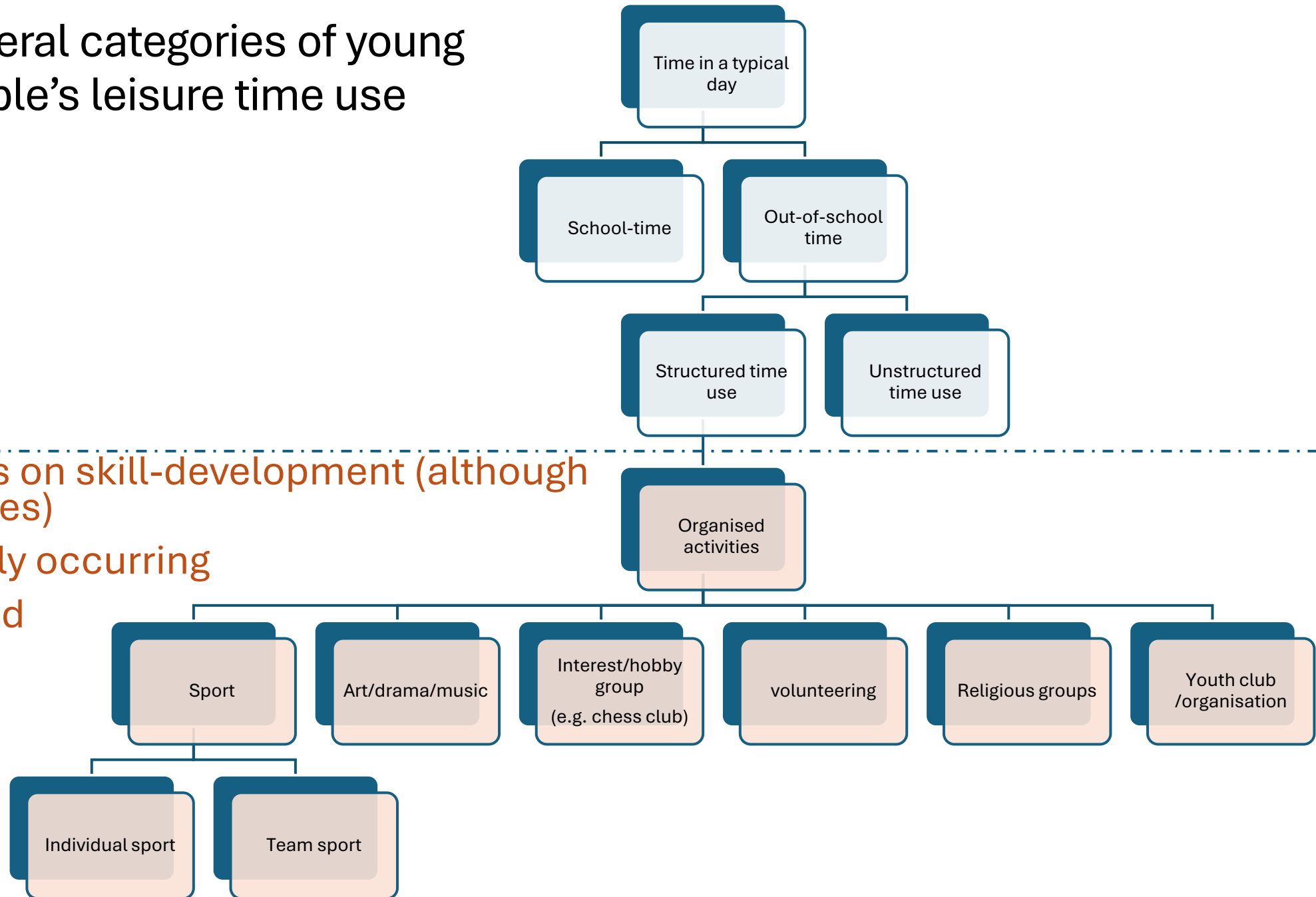
Exploratory behaviour

A photograph of children playing tennis on a clay court. In the foreground, a young girl with braided hair, wearing a white t-shirt, is smiling and holding a tennis racket high in the air with her right hand. In the background, other children are also playing, with one child holding a racket and another holding a tennis ball. The scene is set outdoors with trees and a fence in the background. The image has a warm, slightly blurred aesthetic.

Organised activities

Settings to support youth development,
health and wellbeing

General categories of young people's leisure time use



- Focuses on skill-development (although this varies)
- Regularly occurring
- Adult-led

Associated benefits from organised activities

Better psychological wellbeing (Badura et al., 2023)



Fewer physiological complaints (Badura et al., 2023)



Higher academic and educational achievement
(Badura et al., 2018; Barber et al., 2009; Vandell & Simpkins, 2024)



Less contact with police (Vandell et al., 2021)



Fewer risk behaviours (Badura et al., 2018; Vandell et al., 2021)



Organised activities

Childhood

Initial engagement

Focus is on enjoyment, less on competition

More community-based opportunities?

Parental influence and motives?



Organised activities

Early adolescence

Further skill development

Progression and competition

Activity breadth peaks

Role of identity, peer affiliation and group belonging beginning to emerge?



Organised activities

Mid-Late adolescence

Breadth of activities narrow

Challenges present in managing time

Increases in 'no participation'

'Make or break' point?

Opportunities for scholarships



International observations of organised activity participation (Badura et al., 2021)

Early OA participation predicts later participation (sports)

Participation in any OA declines with age

More boys participate in sports

Girls participate in a greater variety of OAs

Inequalities in participation by income, ethnicity and migrant background





Organised activities In and outside of school

Out-of-school organised activity participation differs depending on levels of family affluence.

Study of students in America by Bennett, Lutz & Jayaram (2012).

School Activities:

C = cultural

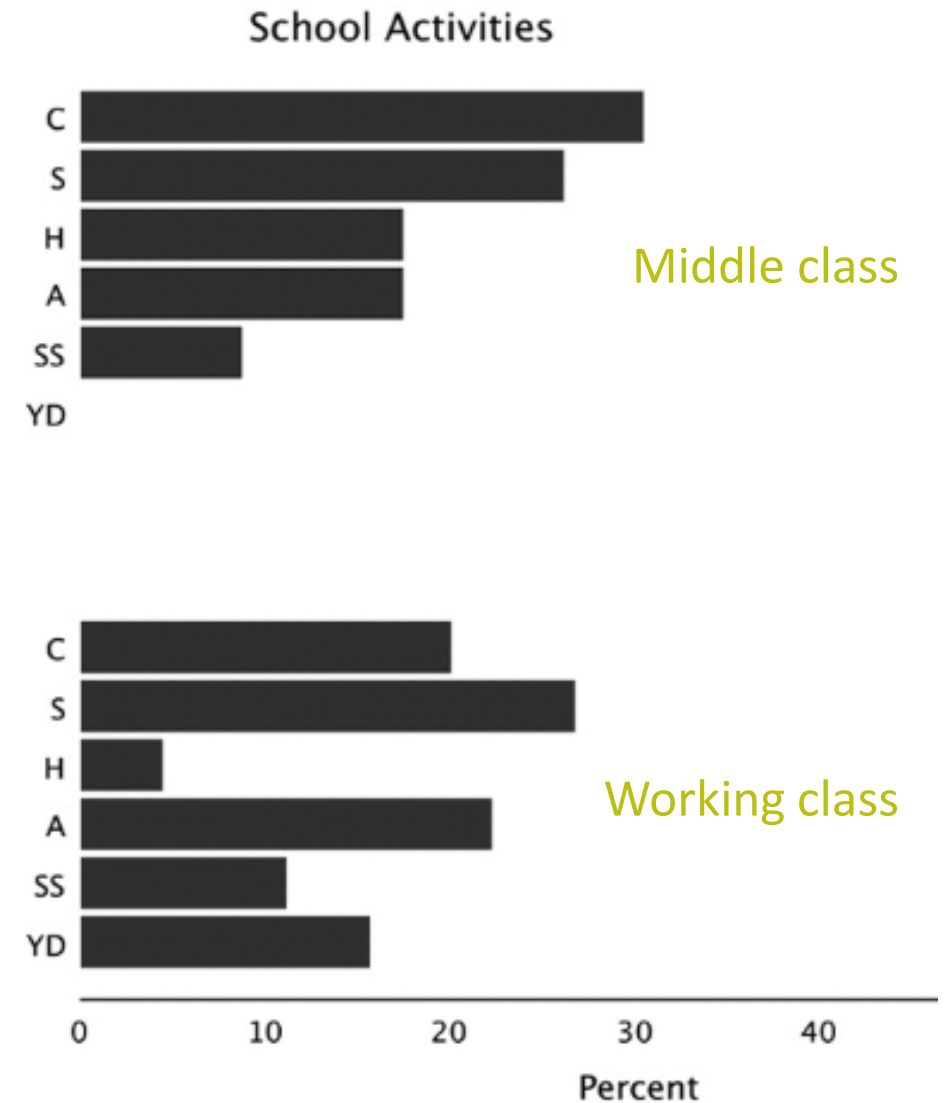
S = sports

H = hobby

A = academic

SS = school service

YD = Youth Development



Study of students in America by Bennett, Lutz & Jayaram (2012).

Non-School Activities:

C = cultural

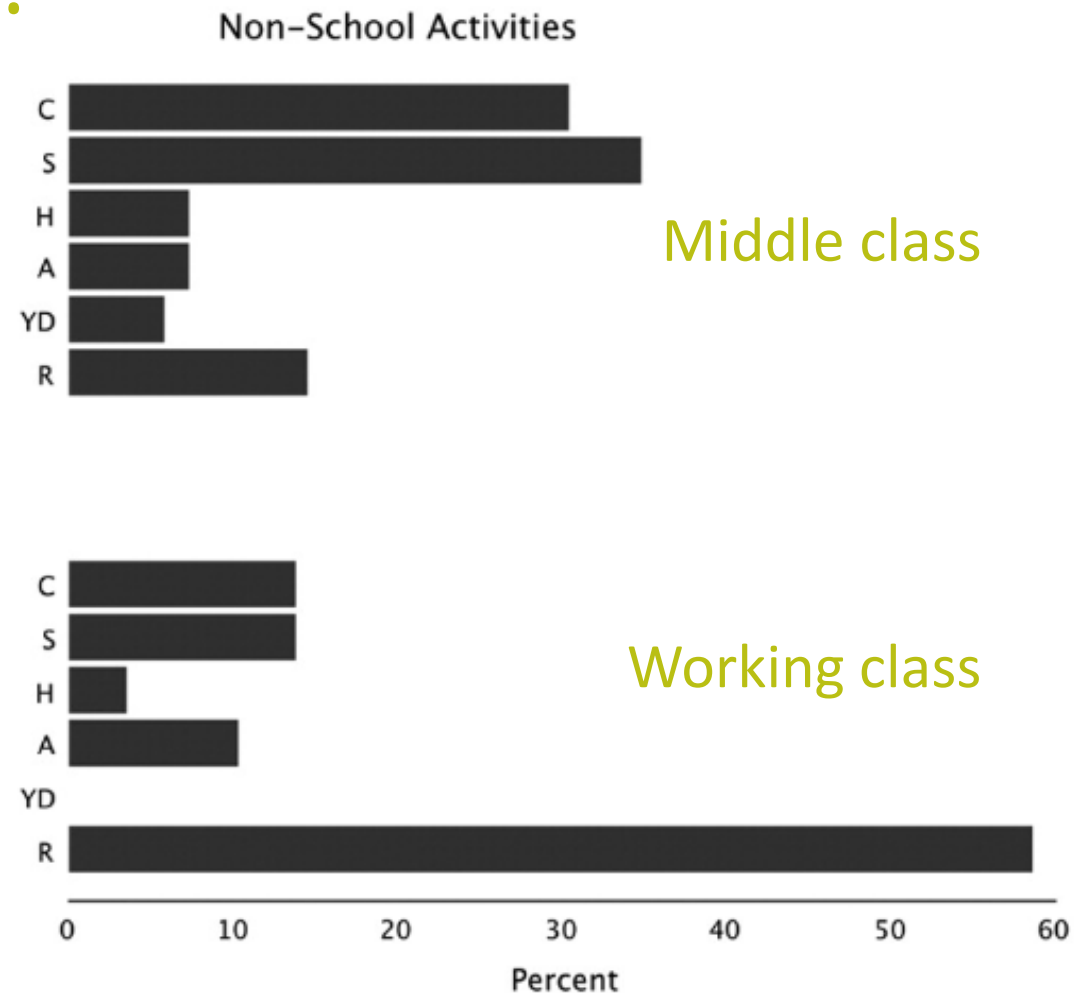
S = sports

H = hobby

A = academic

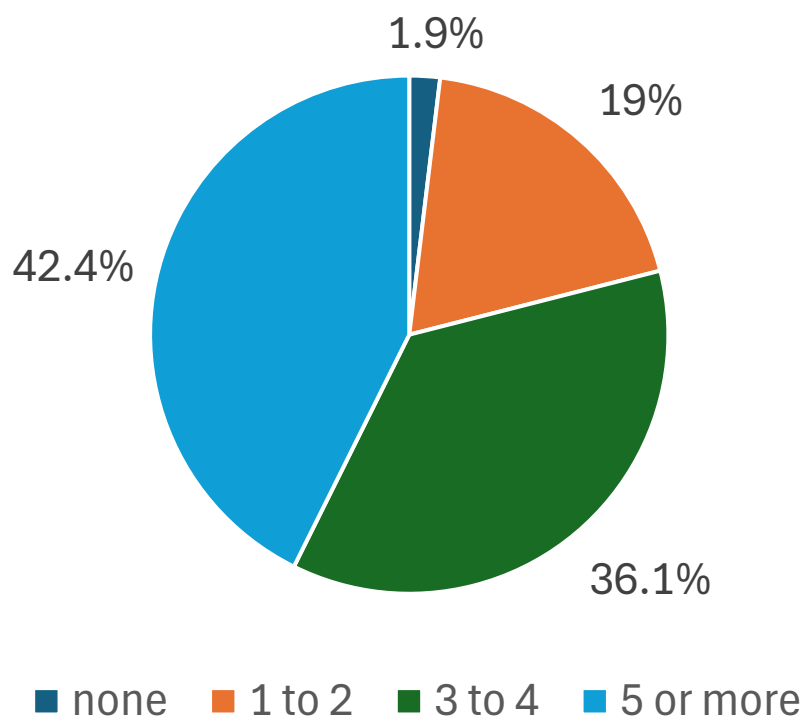
YD = Youth Development

R = Religion

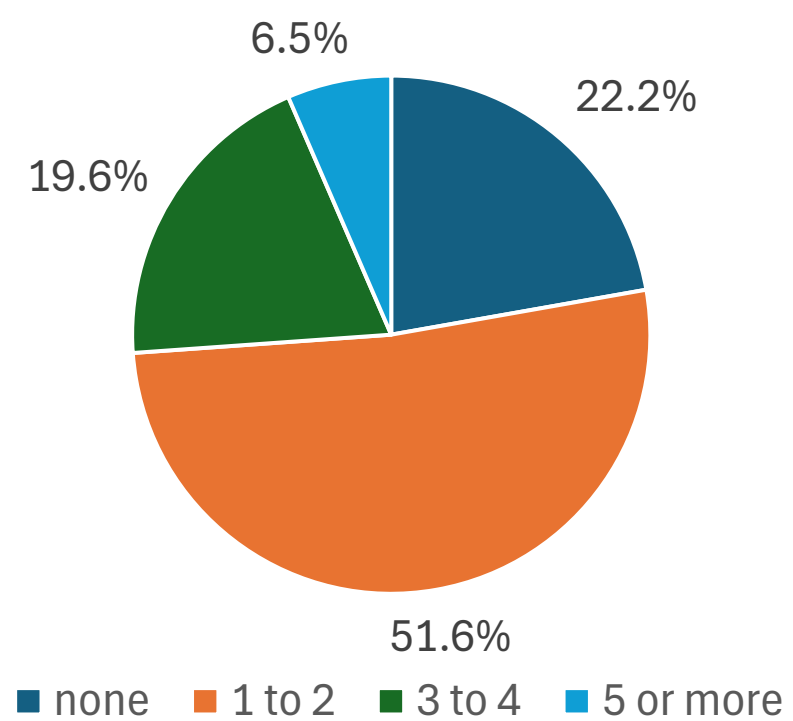


Study of students in England by Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson (2014)

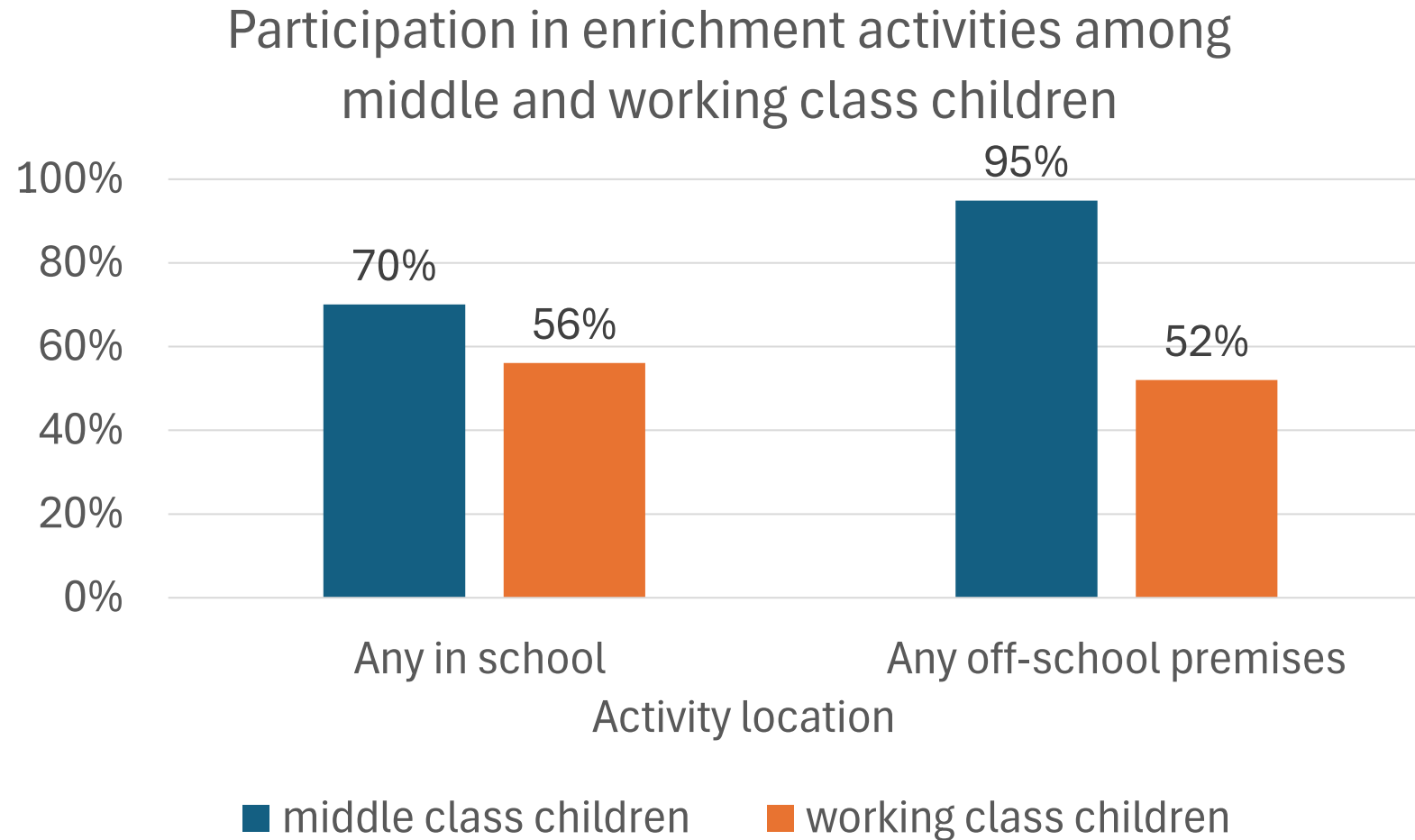
Middle class children: Number of activities



Working class children: Number of activities



Study of students in England by Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson (2014)



Why are there inequalities in organised activity participation?

Fewer programmes available for low-income groups and limited high quality activity options

transportation issues

parents' job schedules

adolescents need to contribute to the family (working or watching siblings) in order to make ends meet

greater pressures of schoolwork

increasing demands of the activity itself

lack of interest and motivation to participate

Vandell & Simpkins, in press; Belošević & Ferric, 2022

Partnerships



Opportunities for alleviating barriers to engagement?

- Challenge: Reliance on community opportunities
- In the US, more activities are offered within schools (addresses some barriers).
- In other countries, offered in the community, or by third-sector organisations and volunteers
- Organisations in less affluent areas that are more reliant on government grants and public funding are more vulnerable to reductions in government funding (Clifford, 2021)
- Partnership working may offer opportunities for sustainable delivery. **Does Wales have an advantage here?**



**LLESIANT
CENEDLAETHAU'R DYFODOL
WELL-BEING OF
FUTURE GENERATIONS**

- Community Focused Schools
- HAPUS campaign
- National Framework for Social Prescribing

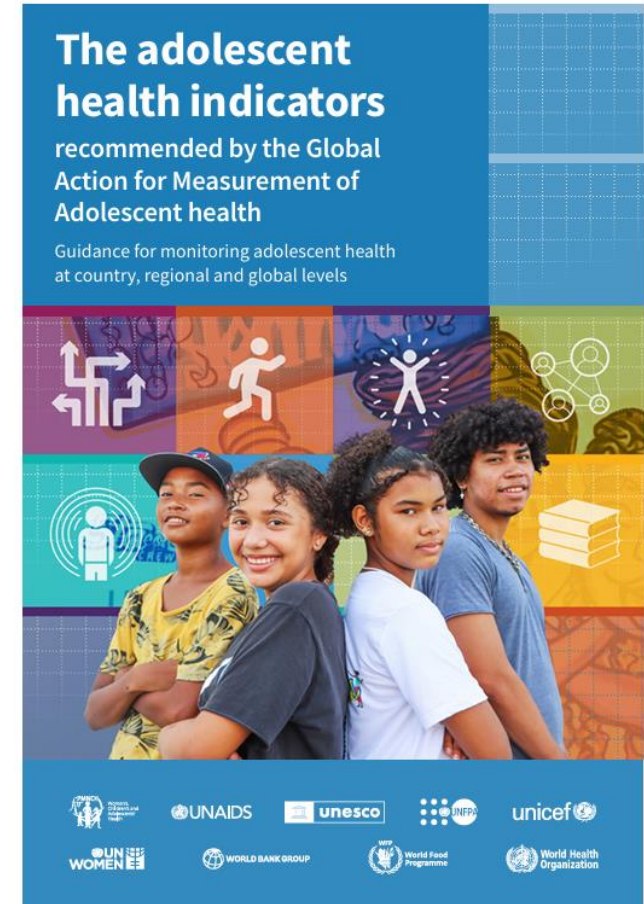
WHO adolescent health indicators

Guidance for monitoring adolescent health at country, regional and global level By WHO and United Nations partners

Subjective wellbeing is a (small) focus

Core measure: **Proportion of adolescents with someone to talk to when they have a worry or problem**

[9789240092198-eng.pdf](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/9789240092198-eng.pdf)



Supporting young people through organised activities

Enjoyment is key (Badura et al., 2024).

How we support young people in communities is important for subjective wellbeing, which in turn impacts other domains of life.

- Active Balancing (Juneja, Hansen & Lemon, 2024)
- Relational Capability approach to playing and being well (Russell, Barclay & Tawil, 2023)

Such a supportive relationship in anyone's life is important for navigating those experiences and the transition of adolescence.

***“When conditions are right, children
can create their own wellbeing.”***

Russell, Barclay & Tawil, 2023



Britt Hallingberg
Bhallingberg@cardiffmet.ac.uk

Thank you
Diolch



Cardiff
Metropolitan
University

Prifysgol
Metropolitan
Caerdydd

References

- Badura P, Svacina K, Hallingberg B. It doesn't matter if I feel obliged as long as I enjoy it: The associations between organized leisure-time activities and adolescents' mental health and wellbeing. *Journal of Adolescence*. 2023 Aug;96(6):1368-78.
- Badura P, Hamrik Z, Dierckens M, Gobiņa I, Malinowska-Cieślik M, Furstova J, Kopcakova J, Pickett W. After the bell: adolescents' organised leisure-time activities and well-being in the context of social and socioeconomic inequalities. *J epidemiol community health*. 2021 Jul 1;75(7):628-36.
- Belošević M, Ferić M. Contribution of leisure context, motivation and experience to the frequency of participation in structured leisure activities among adolescents. *International journal of environmental research and public health* 2022; **19**(2): 877.
- Bennett, P. R., Lutz, A. C., & Jayaram, L. (2012). Beyond the Schoolyard: The Role of Parenting Logics, Financial Resources, and Social Institutions in the Social Class Gap in Structured Activity Participation. *Sociology of Education*, 85(2), 131-157. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040711431585>
- Clifford D. Disparities by deprivation: The geographical impact of unprecedented changes in local authority financing on the voluntary sector in England. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 2021; 53(8): 2050-67.
- Holloway SL, Pimlott-Wilson H. Enriching children, institutionalizing childhood? Geographies of play, extracurricular activities, and parenting in England. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 2014; **104**(3): 613-27.

References

- Juneja A, Hansen DM, Lemon MP. Cultivating the capacity for active balancing during adolescence: pathways to a coherent self. *Frontiers in Developmental Psychology* 2024; **2**: 1418666.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>
- Steinberg, L. (2010). A dual systems model of adolescent risk-taking. *Developmental Psychobiology: The Journal of the International Society for Developmental Psychobiology*, 52(3), 216-224.
- Svacina K, Hamrik Z, Hallingberg B, Badura P. I have to do it, but I like it: The sense of enjoyment and obligation in adolescents' organized leisure-time activities. *Leisure Sciences*. 2022 Dec 7:1-20.
- Twenge, J., & Blanchflower, D. G. (2025). Declining Life Satisfaction and Happiness Among Young Adults in Six English-speaking Countries (No. w33490). National Bureau of Economic Research. DOI 10.3386/w33490
- Vandell DL, Simpkins SD. Organized afterschool activities as a developmental context for children and adolescents; 2024. In press.
- Welsh Government. Well- being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Welsh Government; 2015. <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/> Accessed: 03.01.2025
- Welsh Government. Community Focused Schools. How schools can engage with families, communities and multiagencies to support the needs of their learners and families and benefit the wider community: Welsh Government; 2022. <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2024/2/4/1708614958/community-focused-schools.pdf> Accessed: 03.01.2024
- Welsh Government. National Framework for Social Prescribing. Welsh Government; 2023. <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-02/national-framework-for-social-prescribing.pdf> Accessed: 03.01.2024