



What factors predict participation in a mass community physical activity programme?

The case of the five Sheffield “parkruns”

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Background



- “Parkruns” are weekly community based 5k running/walking events run by volunteers.
- Nationally, over 100,000 people participate every Saturday morning
- In Sheffield alone, over 1200 people currently participate every week
- BUT.....the five events run in Sheffield attract very different numbers of participants
- This study explored factors that affect participation across the five Sheffield parkrun events

Methods (1)

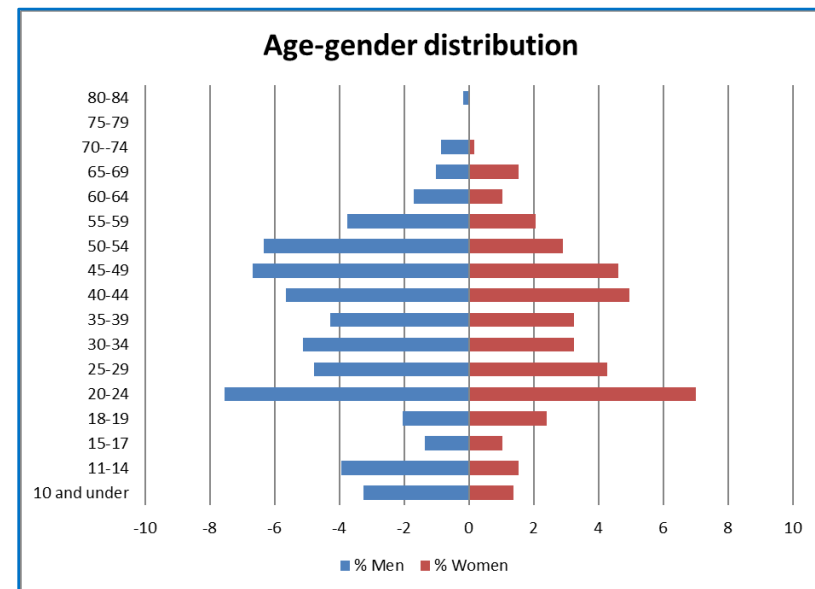


- Structured observations were performed at the five ParkRun events in Sheffield, and combined with quantitative data on participants and neighbourhood characteristics for each location.
- Two observers completed a structured observation at each of the ParkRuns in Sheffield to further understand factors such as:
 - Features of the local environment location and ParkRun course
 - Attendees - who they are and what they do
 - Organisation of the event at different phases
 - Participant Experience

Methods (2)

- To supplement the observational data, a snapshot of the participation statistics was recorded on the same day using the data on the ParkRun website.
- Data collected for each of the five ParkRuns included –

- Total participation rates
- Affiliation to a Running Club
- Total number of volunteers
- Age and gender distribution
- ‘New’ Park Runners
- Social media activity

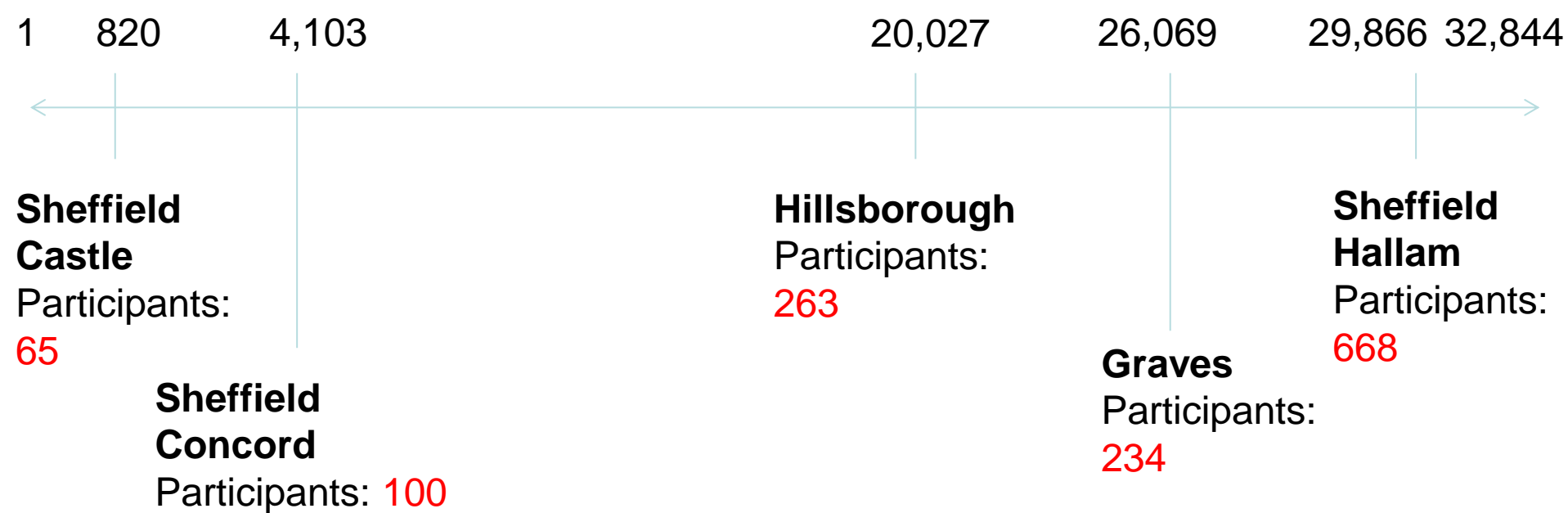


Quantitative – Index of Multiple Deprivation

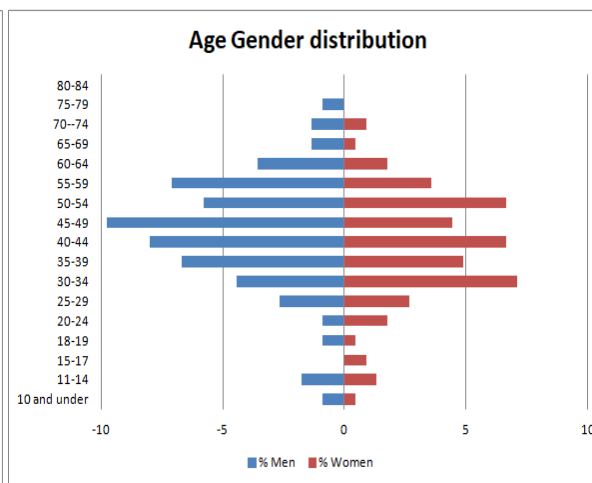
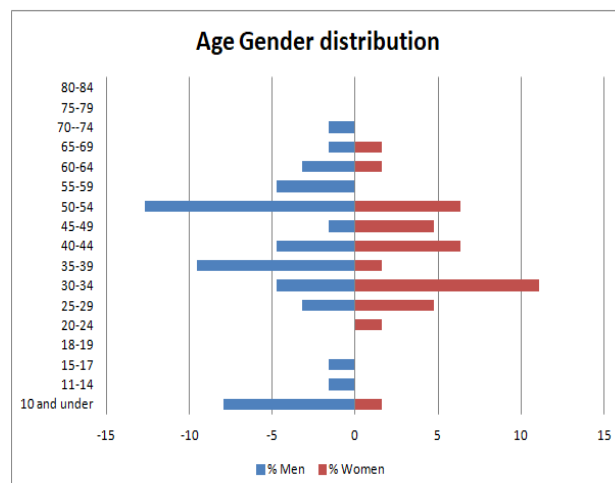
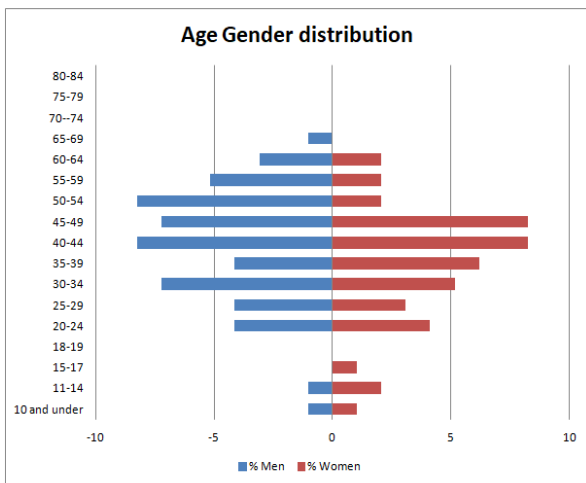
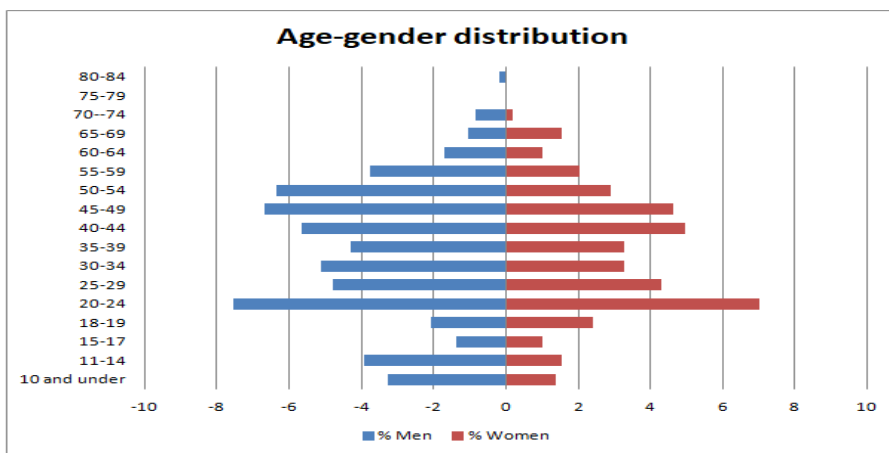
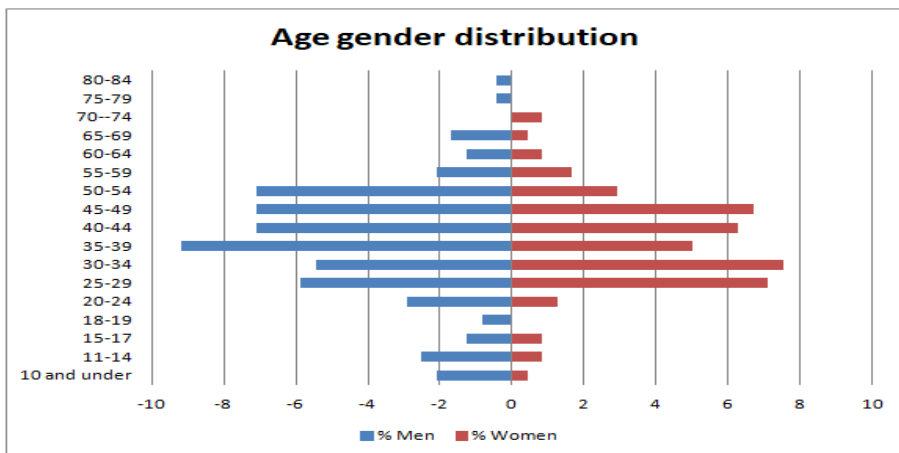


Most
deprived

Least
deprived



Quantitative – Age & Gender



Qualitative results



- Although, the parkruns differed little procedurally, a large difference in participant experience was observed between the events.
- A number of factors caused these differences
 - Number of participants
 - Parkrun location
 - Parkrun setting
 - Volunteers
 - Participants

Qualitative results



- The key differences noticed between the larger and smaller parkruns were
 - The larger parkruns had an increased degree of anonymity and sense of competition for runners
 - Whereas the smaller parkruns had a greater sense of community and social engagement

Implications for practice



- There is a risk that these types of events are **“inequalities generating interventions”**, because those who could benefit most do not participate
- It is not enough to encourage **the setting up of “Parkrun” and similar mass participation events in deprived neighbourhoods**, without understanding what would encourage the local community to participate.
- We need to explore different ways to **attract more participants** to events like parkrun **whilst preserving the perceived benefits of smaller, non-competitive events**, that may promote community ownership and engagement

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Any questions?

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<http://www.parkrun.org.uk>

Issues for discussion



What more do you think could be done to.....

- Increase participation (especially underrepresented groups such as BME communities)?
- Increase volunteering?
- Increase wider community involvement?
- Ensure regular events are sustainable?