

Supporting Children

Only 19% of primary and 12% of post-primary school children meet the national physical activity guidelines. It is essential that we provide every support mechanism possible to increase these figures in the years ahead. In other countries such as Canada and the UK tax measures have been introduced successfully to encourage participation of children in physical activity. In Ireland, the widening of the exemption from VAT beyond swimming lessons into other physical activity programmes will help support the efforts of our members in providing affordable programmes directed at children.

Supporting jobs

The leisure and fitness sector supports 9,500 indigenous jobs in every community in Ireland. The 9% VAT rate has seen a 27% increase in employment in the tourism sector (including leisure) since its introduction in 2011. The leisure and fitness sector is growing as the population is becoming more health conscious and public policy is being directed towards a more active population. The Irish leisure and fitness industry need the support of government to ensure the conditions exist to grow employment further in the sector.

Supporting Health

Physical inactivity is estimated to cost the Irish state €1.6 billion each year. We are asking government to maintain and expand existing tax measures to support the increase of physical activity. We believe that these measures will contribute to a more active Ireland.

Sources:

Irish Sports Monitor, 2011-2015

European Health & Fitness Market, Deloitte, 2016

CSSPA Report, Irish Sports Council, 2010

Children's fitness tax credit- Canada

Exemption for sporting and physical

education services- UK

RAI, 9% VAT Report, 2016

Nutrition and Health Foundation, 2010

Ireland Active is the representative and

advocacy body for Ireland's leisure and fitness

sector. Membership is comprised of over 200

different leisure and fitness providers. Ireland

Active is a not for profit organisation.

Ireland Active,
Irish Sport HQ,
National Sports Campus,
Blanchardstown, Dublin 15,
Ireland

Tel 01-6251192
Email info@irelandactive.ie
Web www.irelandactive.ie

Follow us [/irelandactive](https://twitter.com/irelandactive) [/IrelandActive](https://facebook.com/IrelandActive)



We have two key priorities for government in the budget:

1

Keep the 9% VAT rate for the leisure and fitness sector

We need government support to help get our country active.

Since the introduction of the reduced rate of VAT in 2011, participation in personal exercise in leisure centres and gyms has increased from 11% to 13.4% of the adult population. Measures covered by this reduced rate of VAT include gym membership, swimming pool admission and the renting of sports pitches and halls.

2

Extend the Exemption from VAT for swimming lessons to all exercise programmes for children

Swimming lessons which align with the primary and secondary physical education curriculum are exempt from VAT. We would like to see this exemption extended to other physical activity programmes which help to keep our children active.



About Ireland Active

Ireland Active is the representative body for the leisure and fitness sector in Ireland. Our membership includes leisure centres, gyms, education providers and swimming pools in every community in Ireland. Our standards programme includes the White Flag National Quality Standards and Register of Exercise Professionals for the industry. Physical inactivity is a growing

problem in Ireland with over two thirds of the adult population and 80% of children not meeting the national physical activity guidelines. Our members are making an enormous contribution to creating a more active society and we are seeking the support of government in helping us to get Ireland active.

Irish Leisure & Fitness in numbers

- 490,000 people participate in personal exercise in gyms and leisure centres each week, making it the most popular sport in Ireland
- 300,000 additional adults swim in our member's pools each week
- 33% of all club members are members of gyms or leisure centres, making it the most popular club membership in Ireland
- 81% of gym members exercise regularly, compared to only 60% of other club members meaning it is a proven forum to getting and keeping people active.
- 9,500 people are employed in the leisure and fitness sector across Ireland
- €230m is spent on health and fitness club memberships alone, contributing to a €2.4billion sport and physical activity sector in Ireland

Supporting Government Policy

We believe that government tax policy can help contribute to a more active population. In 2016, we have seen the publication of three key pieces of government policy in the area of health, sport and physical activity; 1) the National Physical Activity Plan, 2) the National Exercise Referral Framework and 3) the National Obesity Policy. All three documents cite physical activity as being a key factor in transforming our population from being sedentary, overweight and obese to becoming a more active nation which reaps the health benefits of physical activity:

- **35% lower risk of coronary heart disease and stroke**
- **50% lower risk of type 2 diabetes**
- **50% lower risk of certain cancers**
- **83% lower risk of osteoarthritis**
- **30% lower risk of depression**

The actions contained in the National Physical Activity Plan include identifying 'existing resources across all sectors that support physical activity' and exploring 'new public and private funding and investment mechanisms for organisations promoting physical activity and sport.' We believe that the two tax measures outlined in this document can support an increase in physical activity in Ireland.

