

Fewer people playing Scotland's national sport

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Just eight per cent of people play football on a monthly basis, despite its reputation as Scotland's national sport.

Official figures have revealed more people take part in cycling, running and swimming, despite efforts to get more people involved in the Beautiful Game.

The Scottish Household Survey showed, when asked what sport people have taken part in over the past four weeks, just one in 12 said football.

The figures have remained broadly static over the past few years, even though general participation in regular physical activity has risen from 73 per cent to 79 per cent since 2007.

The Scottish Conservatives said more had to be done to encourage people to play football and improve access to facilities in leisure centres.

The survey also revealed that, on a monthly basis, six per cent of people play golf, six per cent play snooker or pool, and two per cent have a game of bowls.

Physical activity is key to reducing rates of obesity in Scotland, which are soaring to their worst ever levels.

And the party said increasing participation in sport was also key to improving mental health.

Scottish Conservative sport spokesman Brian Whittle said:

“Football is supposed to be Scotland's national sport, but – for a sport that so many watch, enjoy and talk about – surprisingly few of us seem to have the opportunity to get out there and kick a ball.

“That has to change.

“If we really are to boost levels of physical activity across the board, football should play a key part in that.

“We need to have better, more affordable access to sports facilities for all ages and abilities.

“Even the most basic things like taking down ‘no ball games’ signs and making sure the grass is cut on public pitches would give the public more opportunity to play.

“If more people played on a regular basis, not only would the nation’s health improve, but we could foster new talent for our national team as well.”