Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Where are the jobs?
- There has always been a problem in defining exactly what is included in “leisure”. The same problem is becoming apparent with “tourism” and, particularly with the effect of the Olympics in London in 2012, will be increasingly evident in sport. So many other industries depend on or benefit directly from the leisure, sport and tourism industries – everything from petrol stations to supermarkets in addition to the obvious industries like catering and transport.
- 415,000 people are employed directly in the sport and leisure industry in the UK, plus an additional 116,000 in travel and tourism. These figures do not include almost 2 million employed in associated hospitality industries. But they do include 34,000 leisure or sports managers, 42,000 sports assistants, 35,000 sports coaches or similar and 42,000 sports and leisure assistants (1). This is a growing industry that includes 3,200 private health and fitness clubs, 2,700 public gyms and, according to Sport England (in England alone), nearly 59,000 sports pitches and over 9,000 sports halls (1, 2).
- 62% of those working in travel and tourism and 44% of those in sport and leisure are female. Self-employment is 14% in each of these sub sectors. The proportion of part-time workers is especially high in sports and leisure at 43%; in travel and tourism it is 27% (1).

What is the pay like?
- Although many jobs in the industry do offer attractive salaries, many more are especially low paid, bringing the industry averages down. Overall, median gross weekly earnings in the industry are below the UK average for all industries of £405 per week at £345 per week for travel agencies, £433pw for tour operators and only £222 in the sport and fitness sub-sector (3).

Extra info for aspiring graduates
- Over recent years there has been an increase in the numbers of sports, leisure and tourism degrees on offer. There are also many jobs in the industry for which more general degree subjects are acceptable (4). Overall, although many people in the industry may have degrees, a relatively low percentage of the jobs in the industry are at what is normally deemed to be ‘graduate level’ (1).

Where will the jobs be in the future?
- 11 million spectators attended the 2012 Olympics bringing a boost to UK’s sport, travel and tourism industries in particular which will be felt long after the games are over (5). A total of 680,000 foreign residents visited the UK in connection with the 2012 games (6).
- Over the ten years to 2020 an additional 114,000 jobs (20% of the current number of jobs) are expected to be created in culture, media and sports industries. Plus an additional 221,000 people will need to enter the industry just to replace people leaving due to retirement or just going into different types of work. In leisure, travel and related industries 5,000 new jobs are expected to be created over the same period, with an additional 267,000 people needed to replace people leaving (7).

Where did you get this information from?
Sources of Information
2. Fitness Industry Association, reported 2012 based on 2011 data.
4. UCAS, Sept 2013.
Where can I find out more?

For more detailed information on this industry visit these sites:

For detailed industry information:
National Guidance Research Forum  http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/iier/ngrifuturetrends/

For detailed industry statistical tables:
Nomis  www.nomisweb.co.uk
National Statistics  www.statistics.gov.uk

For info on a wide range of specific industries aimed at (aspiring) graduates:
Prospects  www.prospects.ac.uk/industry_insights1.htm

For Career Companion links to sites offering industry information on specific branches of the industry:

For Northern Ireland specific info for this industry sector
Department for Employment and Learning at

For information relating specifically to Scotland across a range of industries:
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Economy/labour-market

For general information on a range of leisure, sport, recreation industry sub-sectors:
SkillsActive  http://www.skillsactive.com/our-sectors

For salary guides and employment possibilities for yacht crew, sailing/windsurf instructors, suba, surfing, ski or snowboard instructors:
Flying Fish  www.flyingfishonline.com/careers_advice/your_new_career/1194.asp

For employee numbers by age and gender in horse racing stables:
British Horseracing Authority

For info on British tourism (visitors rather than employment) inc trends and forecasts:-