



GPA ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SURVEY 2025

Responses: 3,676 Inter-county Players

Date: October 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every year, thousands of inter-county players give their time, energy, and passion to represent their counties and their clubs with pride. They do so without personal reward, motivated by something far deeper, a sense of belonging, community, and love for our games. The Gaelic Players Association exists to honour that spirit and to protect those who give so much.

This annual membership survey, completed by 3,676 inter-county players, one of the largest in Irish sport, gives us a vital understanding of the realities behind that commitment. It allows the GPA to assess how we represent our members' voices, where our advocacy must focus, and how we direct investment in player development and welfare programmes.

The findings reaffirm the core pillars that will shape the GPA's strategic direction for the year ahead:

PLAYER WELFARE & SEASON SUSTAINABILITY:

87% of players support a mandated off-season to protect physical and mental health.

83% had less than two weeks between county and club seasons and **44% of players had less than 2 weeks rest after their club** – a clear welfare concern that demands reform.

EQUALITY & MINIMUM STANDARDS:

86% of players received full Charter provisions, yet **female codes lag behind** (73% camogie vs. 92% in male football).

92% of male players believe male and female players should receive equal travel expenses – equality must be delivered, not promised.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT & WELLBEING:

98% of players believe off-field development is vital, and **GPA programmes earned an exceptional 8.8/10 satisfaction rating.**

AMATEURISM WITH FAIRNESS:

64% of players are content with the amateur status of Gaelic Games, but **85% insist that spending must protect minimum player welfare standards.**



AMATEURISM & NIL (NAME, IMAGE & LIKENESS)

As the games evolve commercially, 87% of players believe they should receive recognition and a share of any revenue generated from their name, image, or likeness.

Protecting the amateur spirit means ensuring fairness, not financial gain — that players are valued, respected, and supported in proportion to the role they play in driving the profile and success of Gaelic Games.

The GPA will continue to lead on NIL policy, ensuring that increased visibility and commercial growth translate into opportunity for players, not exploitation

Our mission is clear, to protect and empower the elite amateur player in an increasingly professional environment. That means ensuring proper standards, fair reimbursement of out-of-pocket costs, genuine rest periods, and opportunities to grow both on and off the field.

As CEO, I am committed to ensuring that investment in players — in their welfare, equality, and development — remains the most powerful way for the GAA and the Gaelic Games family to recognise these players. Because when players thrive, Gaelic Games thrive.

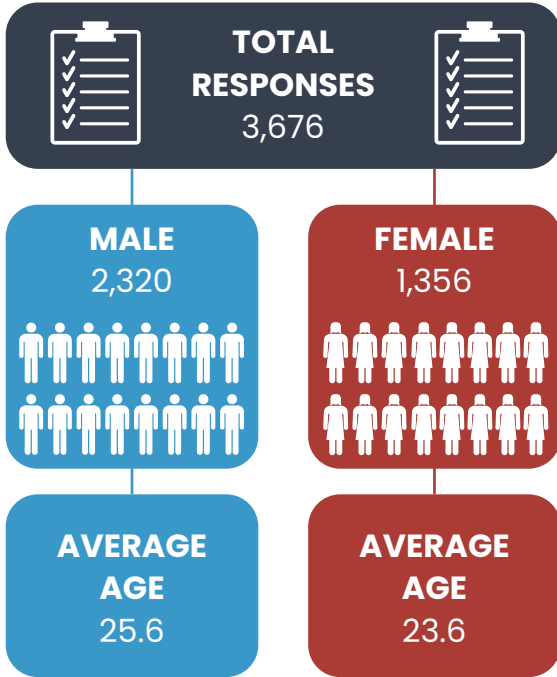
Tom Parsons,
GPA Ceo

The background of the page features a black and white photograph of Gaelic football players on a field. The scene is captured in silhouette against a bright sunset or sunrise, with the sun low on the horizon creating a lens flare effect. In the foreground, two players are prominent: one on the left holding a hurley and a sliotar, and one on the right holding a helmet and a hurley. In the background, other players and spectators are visible on the field.

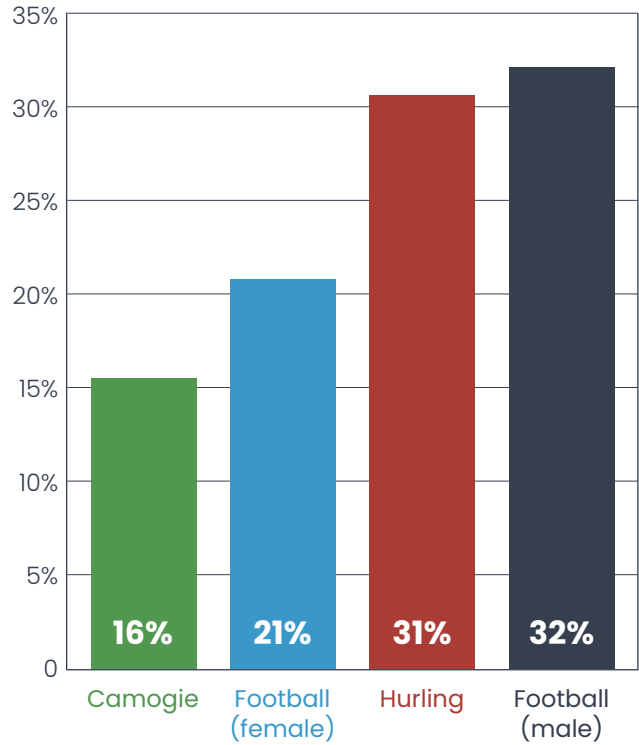
SECTION ONE **DEMOGRAPHICS**

Players' commercial and media visibility is central to modern Gaelic Games and fairness in recognition. The findings underscore the appetite for structured and supported player engagement.

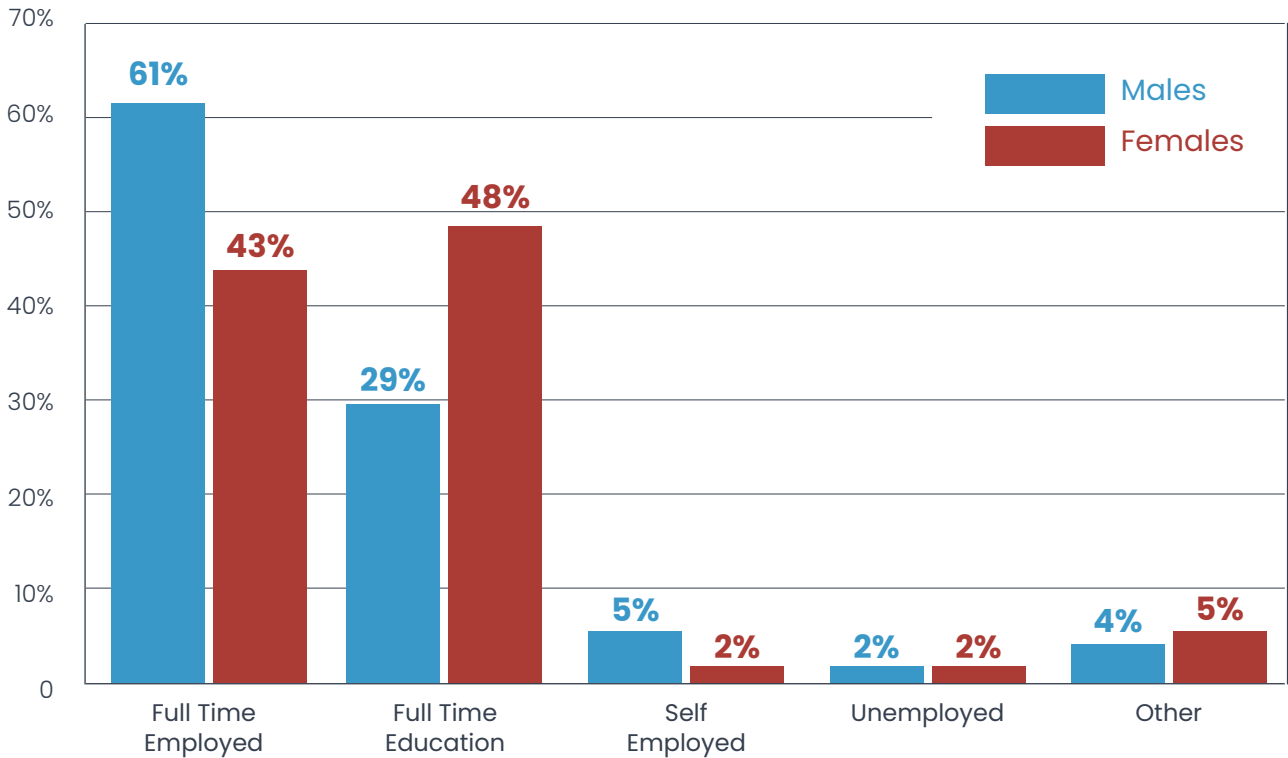
RESPONSES BY GENDER



RESPONSES BY CODE



EMPLOYMENT STATUS



Number of responses to each question from all respondents unless otherwise stated.



SECTION TWO

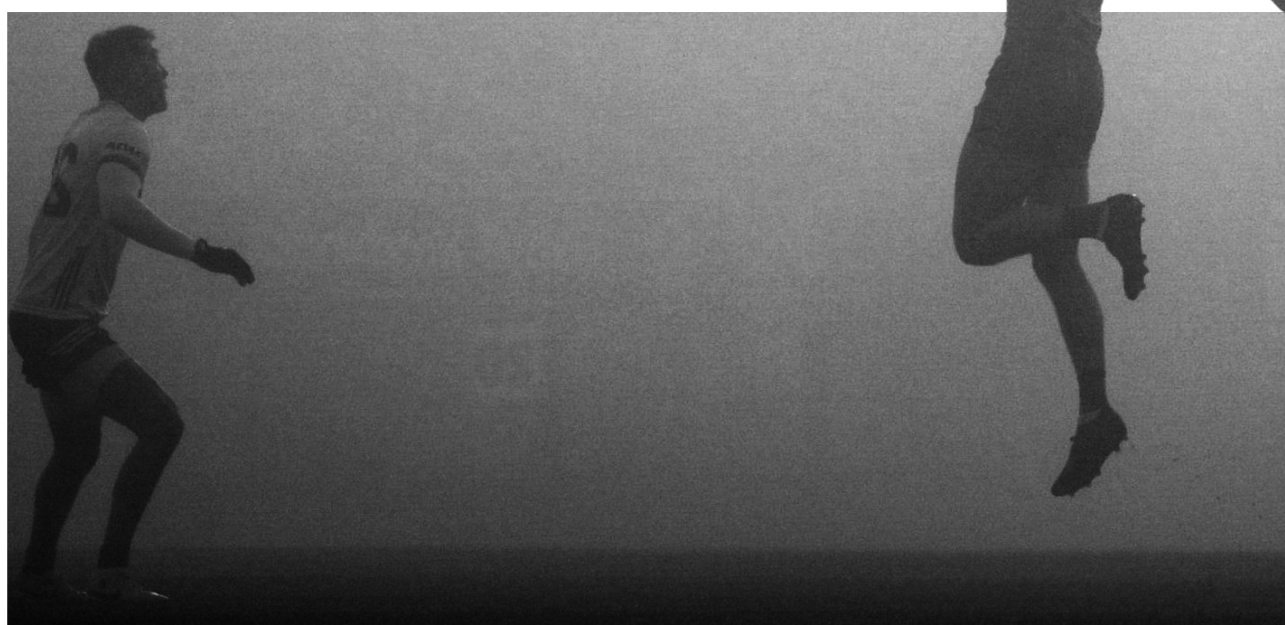
NEW MEN'S FOOTBALL PLAYING RULES

Rule changes dramatically shape player welfare, preparation, and public interest. The 2025 survey offers the first broad insight into how inter-county footballers are adapting and responding.

OVERALL PLAYING EXPERIENCE

95% of respondents said the new football rules have **Improved** their overall playing experience.

Have the new football rules improved or worsened your overall Playing Experience?	
Much Improved	66%
Slightly Improved	28%
No Difference	3%
Slightly Worsened	2%
Much Worsened	1%
Grand Total	100%



Open-Ended Feedback (incidence of mentions in brackets)	
Space & Expression (31%)	More space, freer play, more 1v1 contests, greater creativity, especially for forwards.
Enjoyment (26%)	The game is more fun, fresh, and engaging, restoring the football they grew up playing.
Speed & Intensity (24%)	Matches are faster, higher tempo. Exciting constant action. More physical demands.
Skills & Scoring (12%)	Kicking / high fielding have re-emerged. More variety, higher scoring, risk-taking.
Challenges & Concerns (6%)	Goalkeeper limitations, increased physical strain, injuries, mid-season rule changes.

MENTAL / PHYSICAL LOAD

57% of respondents reported the new rules has **increased their Physical Load**, whereas **39%** said they had **increased their Mental Load**.

What impact has the new football rules had on your Physical Load?	
Increased the Load	57%
No Real Change	40%
Reduced the Load	3%
Grand Total	100%

What impact has the new football rules had on your Mental Load?	
Increased the Load	39%
No Real Change	59%
Reduced the Load	2%
Grand Total	100%



Open-Ended Feedback (incidence of mentions in brackets)	
Increased Physical Load (40%)	More sprints, greater distance, higher injury risk.
Early Learning Spike (28%)	Adaption to rules/tactics: extra analysis, meetings.
Time / Life-Balance Strain (12%)	Harder to juggle; condensed schedules; fatigue/burnout.
Mental Load Unchanged (11%)	After initial learning phase, mental load broadly steady.
Position-Specific Effects (5%)	Middle 8 physical hike; inside forwards run less; keepers extra pressure.

OTHER IMPACTS

PUBLIC BUZZ

Uptick in attendance, atmosphere, interest; player pride



GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Strong pushback on mid-season changes



WEATHER MOMENTUM SWINGS

Wind + 2-pointers = huge swings



ROLE SPECIALISATION

may drive selection toward specialists



TRAINING SHIFT

S&C to be explosive. More kicking/catching



KICKOUT CRITIQUE

short-KO devalued, more 50/50 plays



REFEREEING INCONSISTENCY

Club struggles new rules v County.



ENJOYMENT IN PREPARATION


Better prep; purpose improved by fun.



COMMUNITY/PR SHIFT

Positive narrative, easier to talk about





SECTION THREE

COMMERCIAL/ MEDIA

Players' commercial and media visibility is central to modern Gaelic Games and fairness in recognition. The findings underscore the appetite for structured and supported player engagement.

5%

said a manager / coach / team official blocked them from a commercial or media opportunity (rising to 8% for male football)

69%

would take up more commercial / media opportunities if endorsed by management / county board

87%

believe players should receive recognition & share of revenue generated when their name, image, likeness or personality (NILP) is used for commercial purposes



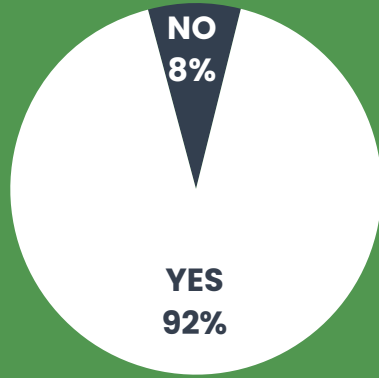
The background of the page features silhouettes of athletes in motion against a cloudy sky. On the left, a large silhouette of a person is captured in a dynamic, mid-air pose, possibly performing a jump or a kick. On the right, there are smaller silhouettes of other people, including one standing and another partially visible in the foreground. The overall aesthetic is high-contrast and energetic.

SECTION FOUR

CHARTER \ STANDARDS

The Player Charter underpins welfare and equality. Measuring compliance reveals where agreements are working and where gaps persist, particularly between codes.

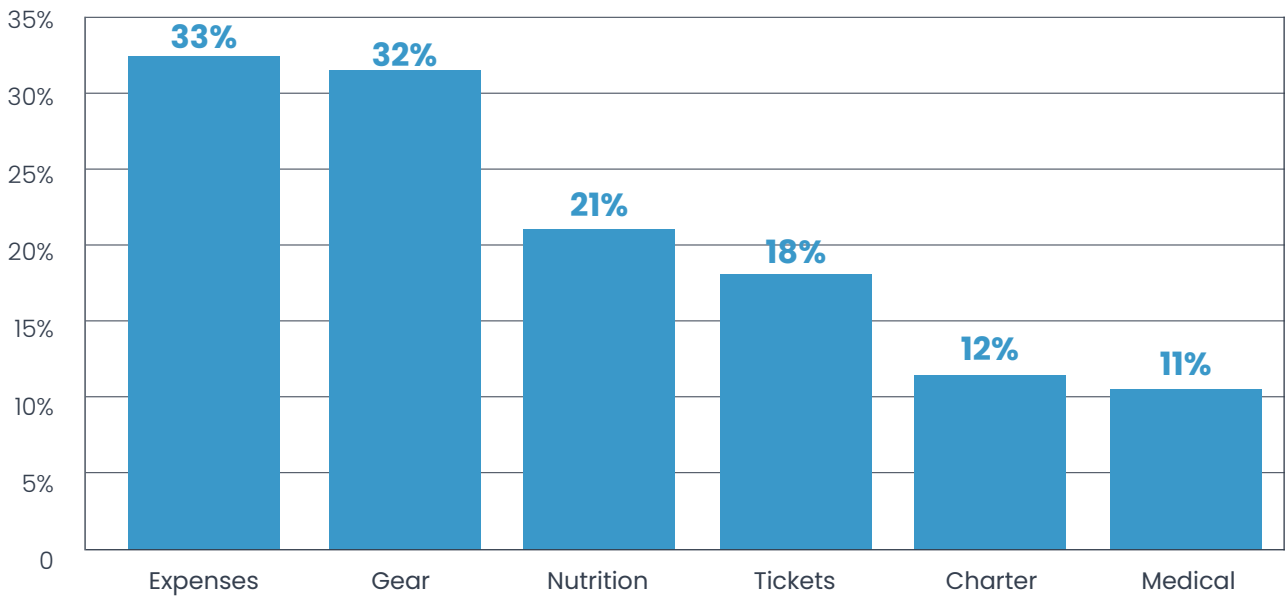
Do you believe male and female players should be receiving the same travel expense rate from the GAA/LGFA/Camogie Association?
(male players, n=2,320)



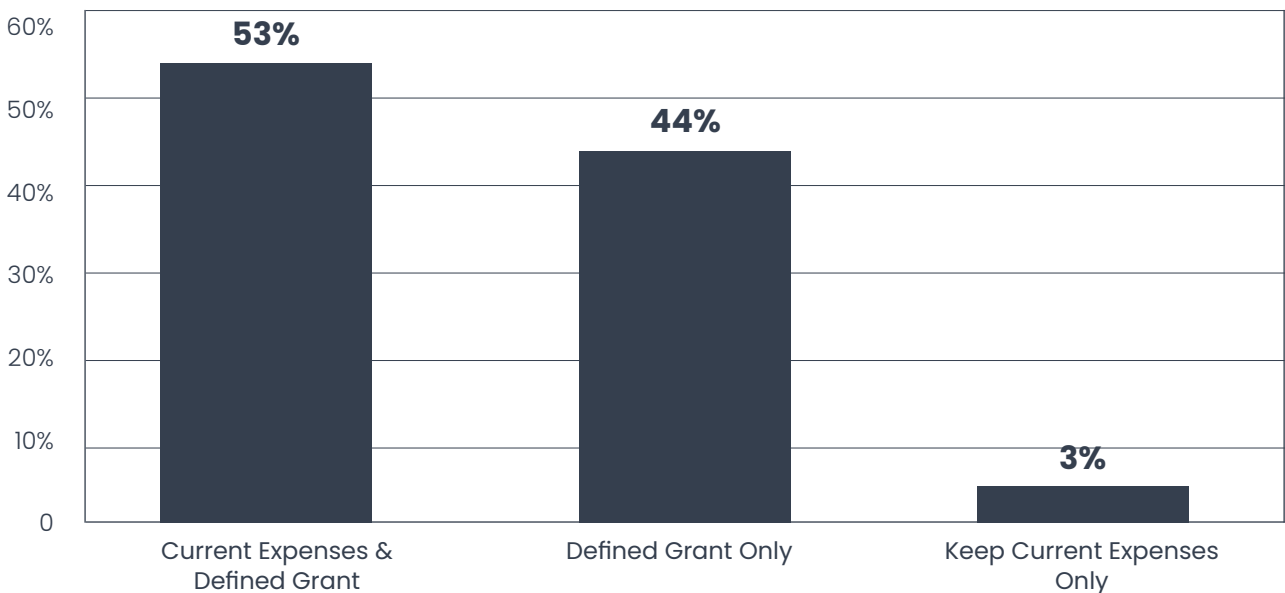
86%

of all players received the full provisions as set out in the Charter
Range: 73% Camogie
-> 92% Male Football

CHARTER ISSUES



Would you support current expenses model and / or replacing this with a defined annual training grant, to cover indirect costs of participation?

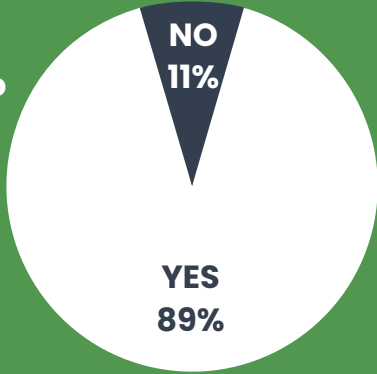




SECTION FIVE
**SEASON
STRUCTURE**

Season length, rest, and balance are core to physical and mental wellbeing. Players' views indicate how the calendar impacts sustainability and performance.

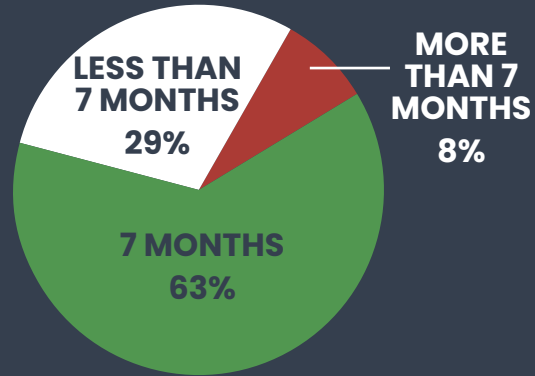
Do you continue to agree with the split season model?



69%

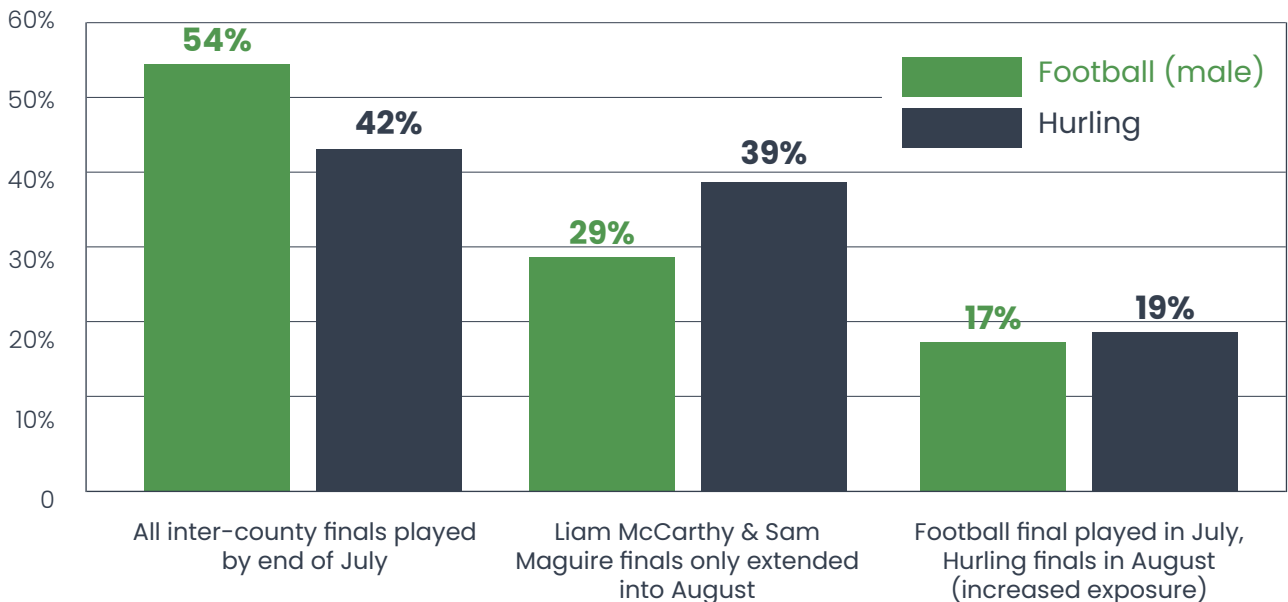
of players would support a shorter season with more games per month
(Range – 60% of Hurlers to 78% of Ladies Footballers)

Maximum sustainable length of the inter-county season, from the first collective training to the last game of the year?



WHATS YOUR PREFERENCE FOR SEASON STRUCTURE?

(by code, male players only, n=2,320)



48%

of all male players (2,320) want to see all inter-county finals played by the end of July

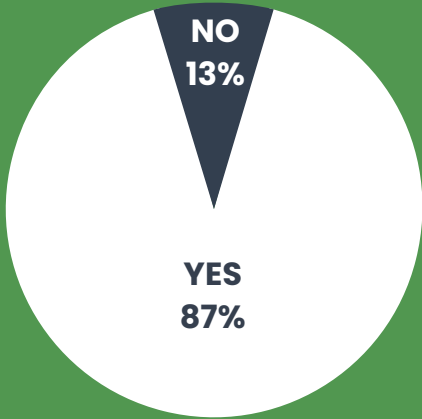
34%

support the extension of Liam McCarthy and Sam Maguire finals only into August

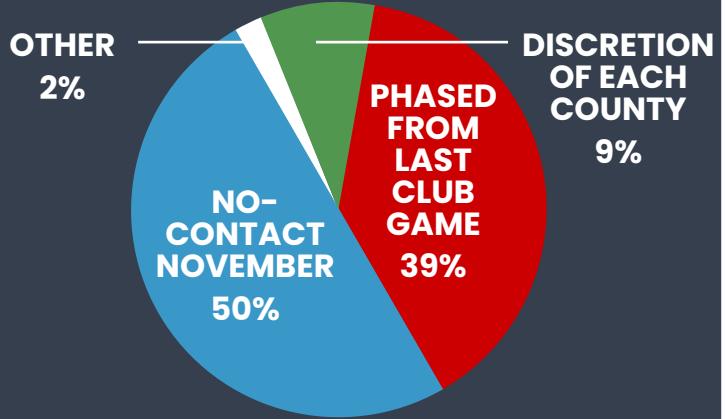
18%

preferred the extension of the Liam McCarthy final only into August

Do you believe there should be a mandated off-season for all inter-county players?

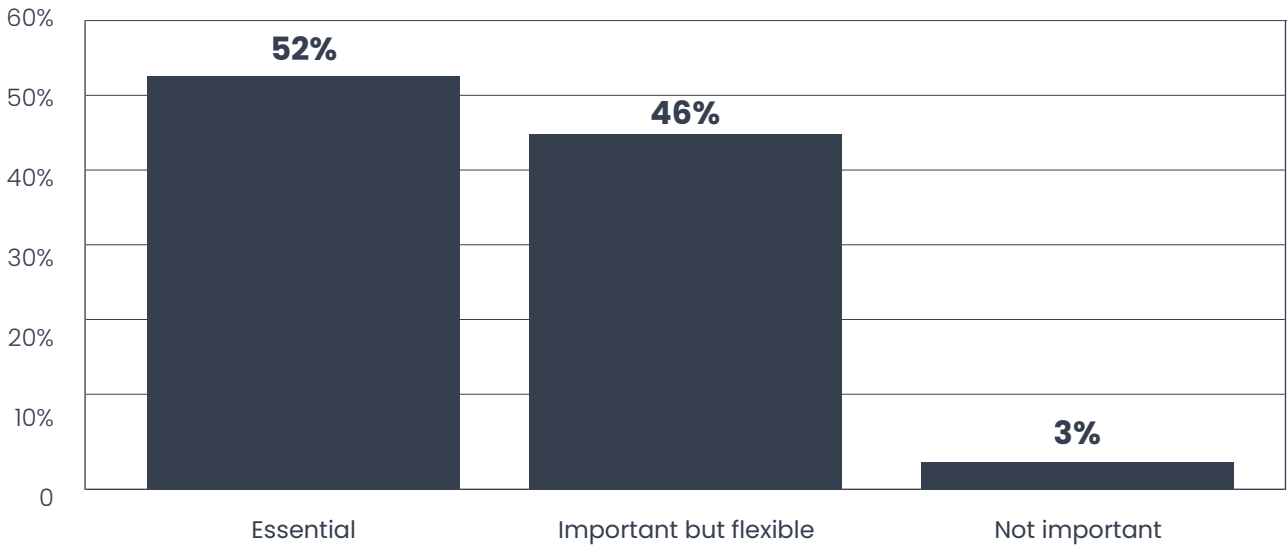


If Yes to a mandated off-season, what is the best option?
(n=3,190)



HOW IMPORTANT IS IT THAT PLAYERS HAVE GUARANTEED OFF-SEASON WINDOWS?

(min 8-10 weeks of no collective training or games every year)



84%

of male players said their county adhered to No-Contact November

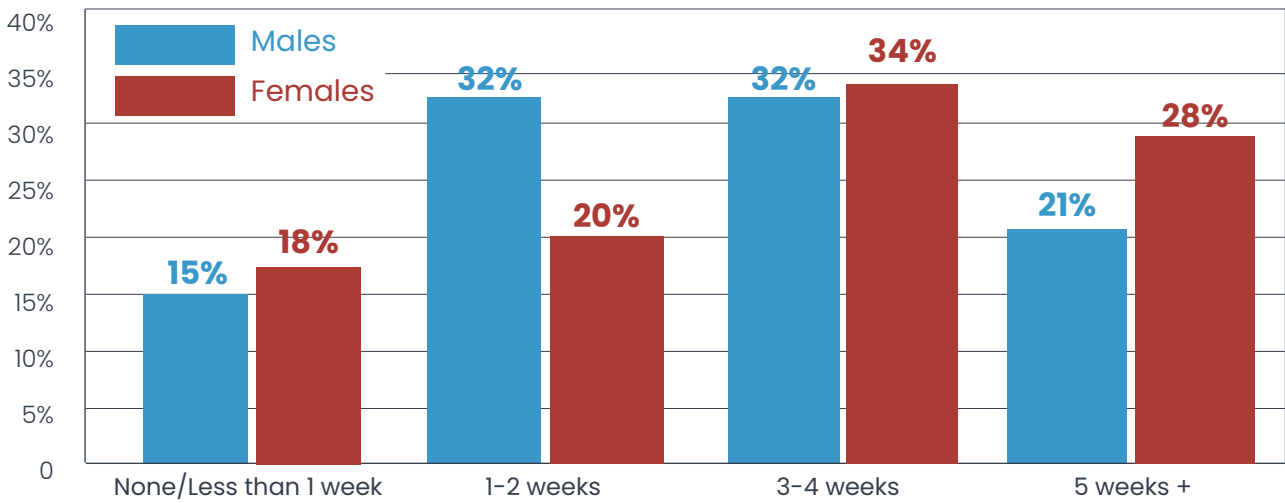
44%

of players had between 0 to 2 weeks rest between the end of club and start of Inter-county activity

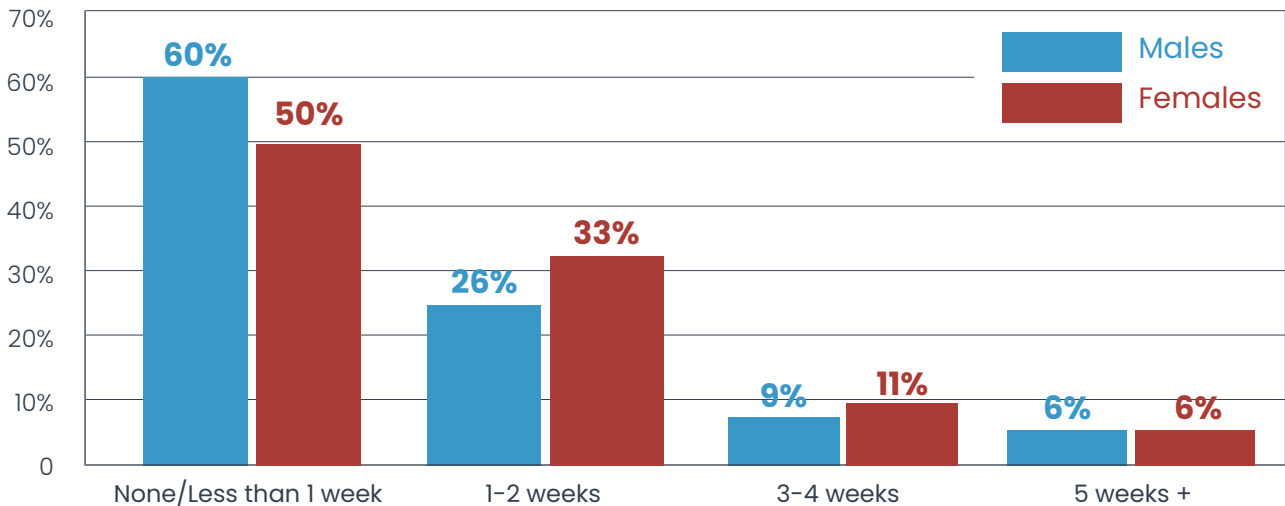
83%

of players had between 0 to 2 weeks rest between the end of Inter-county activity and the start of club activity (53% had 1 week)

REST BETWEEN END OF CLUB ACTIVITY AND START OF INTER-COUNTY ACTIVITY



REST BETWEEN END OF INTER-COUNTY ACTIVITY AND START OF CLUB ACTIVITY



IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE CHANGED TO IMPROVE THE CURRENT SPLIT SEASON MODEL? (Open-ended Feedback)

Players strongly value the **split season** but want **better balance, more rest, and structural tweaks**. Biggest concerns are the rushed feel of competitions and **lack of meaningful downtime**.

Championship / League Structure
236 mentions

Season Timing / Length
216 mentions

Club vs County Balance
214 mentions

Rest Periods / Burnout
151 mentions



SECTION SIX

LADIES FOOTBALL RULES

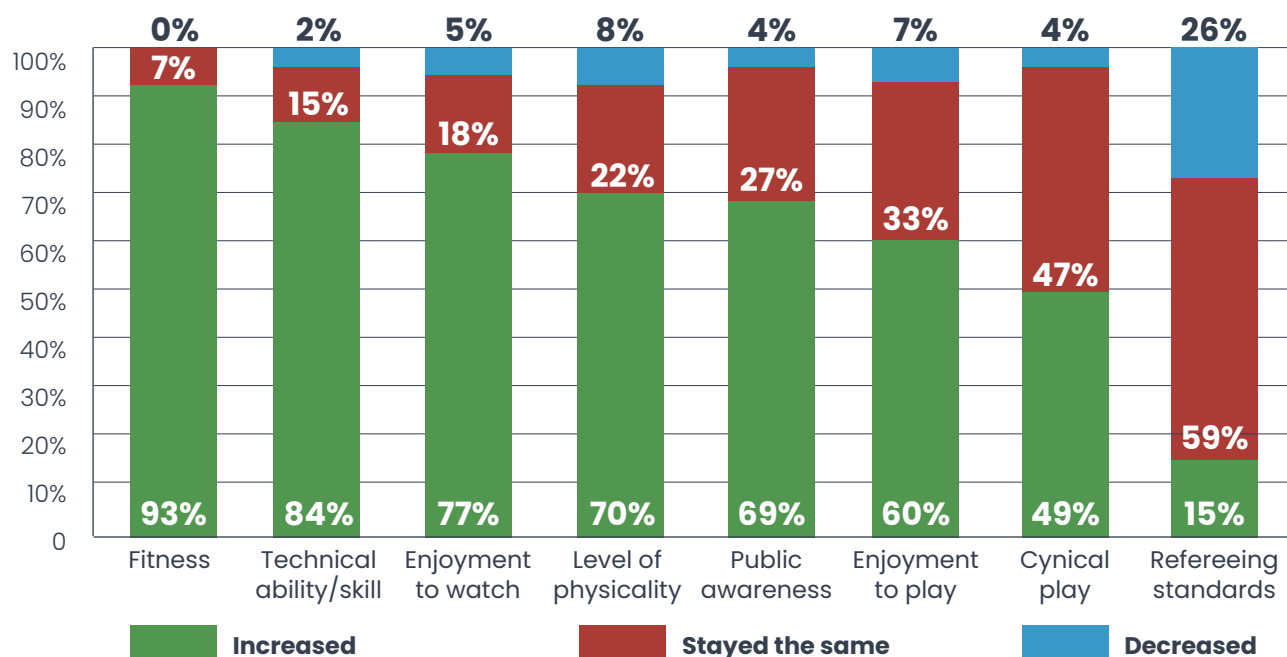
Female players are calling for modernisation and consistency. The findings show a strong appetite for evolution towards a faster, fairer, and more physical game.

WHAT WORD(S) WOULD YOU USE TO DESCRIBE THE GAME OF LADIES FOOTBALL? MOST FREQUENT WORDS:

COMPETITIVE
EMPOWERING **FAST**
EXCITING
SKILFUL **IMPROVING**
PHYSICAL
STOP-START
INCONSISTENT

The majority of players rated that Fitness, Skills, Physicality and Enjoyment have all increased in the last 5 years, with Refereeing Standards most commonly rated as 'Stayed the Same'

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE CHANGE IN EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS OF ADULT INTER-COUNTY LADIES FOOTBALL IN THE LAST 5 YEARS? (Igfa players n=754)



95%

of LGFA players feel they have a comprehensive understanding of the playing rules
(48% excellent, 47% good)

92%

think that Ladies Football need rules review / enhancements
(34% Needed A Lot, 58% Somewhat Needed)

92%

said they would be in favour of trialling any new rules in the National League 2026

IF YOU WERE TO CHANGE ANY OF THE RULES IN LADIES FOOTBALL, PLEASE OUTLINE THE MAIN CHANGES YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE?
(Themes of Open-ended Responses)

More Physicality



Improve Flow



Reward Skill



Modernise & Standardise



CONSIDERING SOME OF THE MAIN CHANGES INTRODUCED TO MEN'S FOOTBALL THIS YEAR, HOW SUPPORTIVE WOULD YOU BE OF TRIALLING ANY OF THE FOLLOWING IN LADIES FOOTBALL?

(Rule changes with majority in favour)

88%

The Solo & Go free kick

73%

2 points from outside the scoring arc

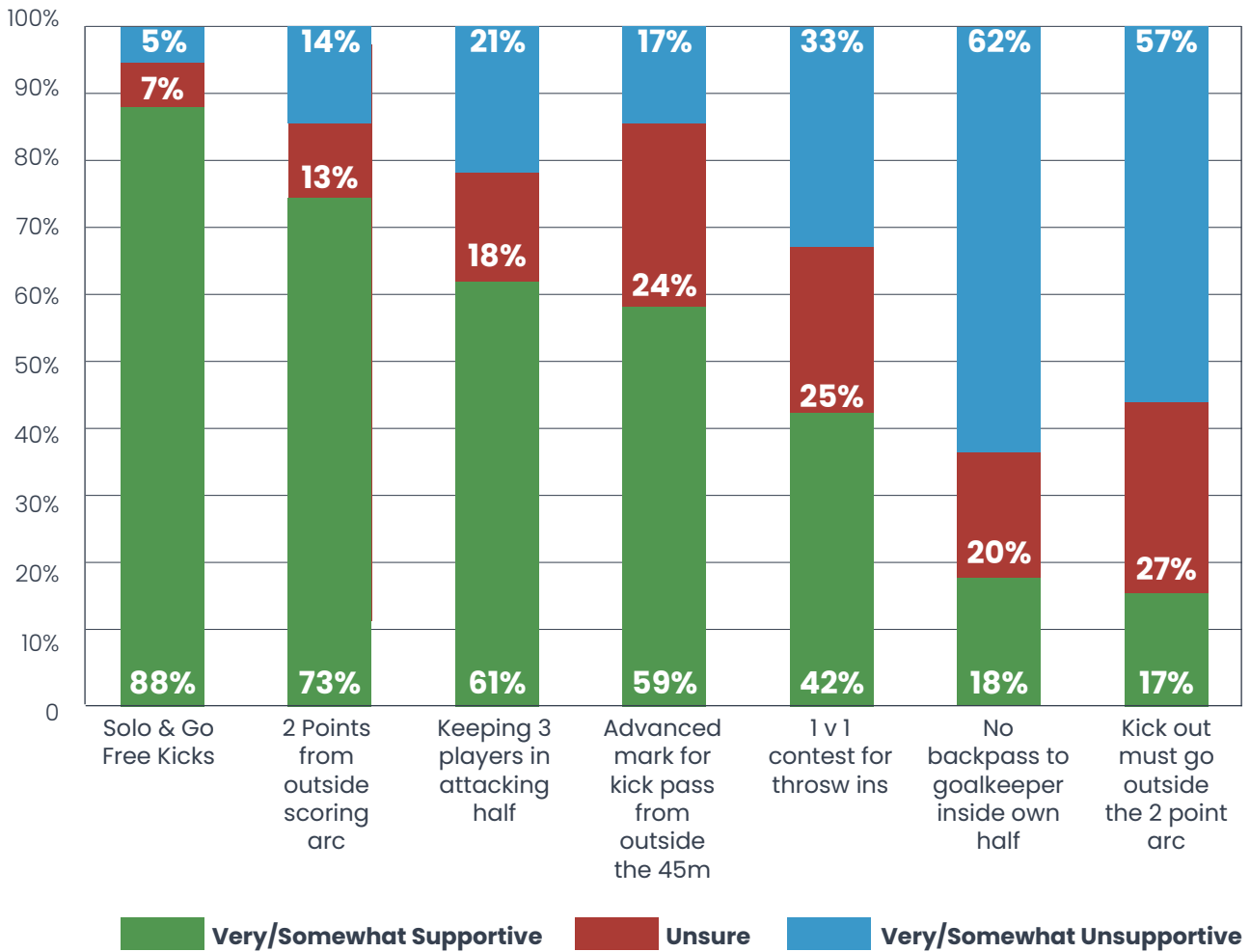
61%

Keeping 3 Players in Attacking Half

59%

Advanced Mark for Kick Pass from Outside the 45m

HOW SUPPORTIVE WOULD YOU BE OF TRIALLING ANY OF THE FOLLOWING IN LADIES FOOTBALL? (lgfa players n=754)



78%
of players believe there should be more physicality allowed in Ladies Football

87%
do not think the TACKLE is adequately defined and policed in LGFA

48%
have been coached to 'buy' a free kick under the charging rule

97%
believe there should be some incidental contact allowed in the tackle

88%
disagree that the tackle should remain non-contact

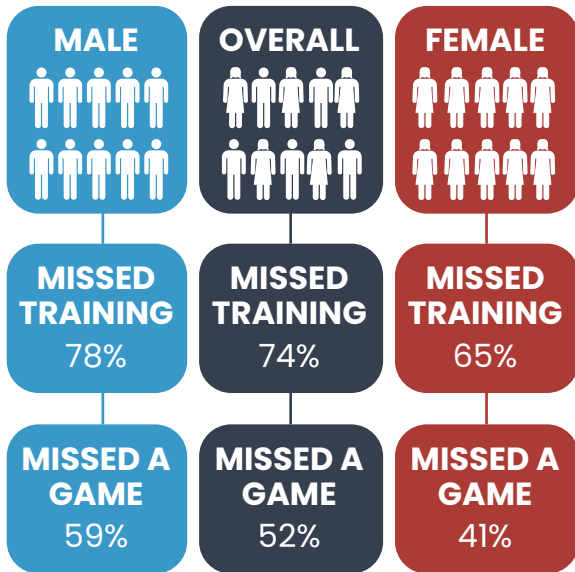
73%
believe that teams can rotate players to commit fouls to avoid sin bins



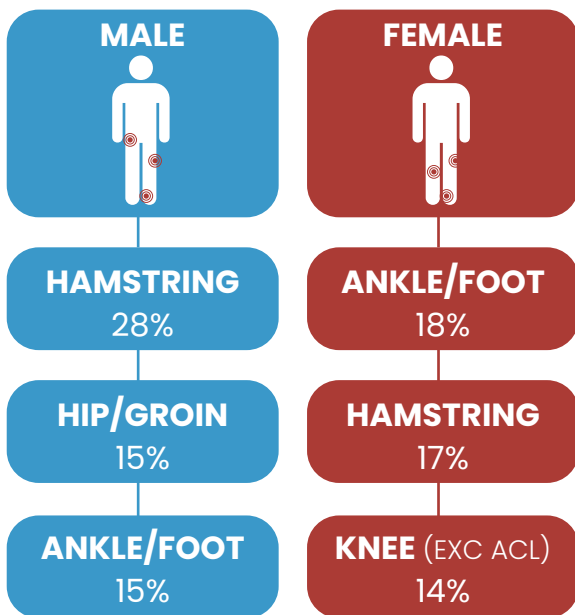
SECTION SEVEN **INJURIES**

Injury trends reveal the true cost of elite amateur sport. Data across gender and duration highlight the need for consistency in medical and insurance supports.

IMPACT OF INJURIES



TOP 3 INJURY CATEGORIES BY GENDER

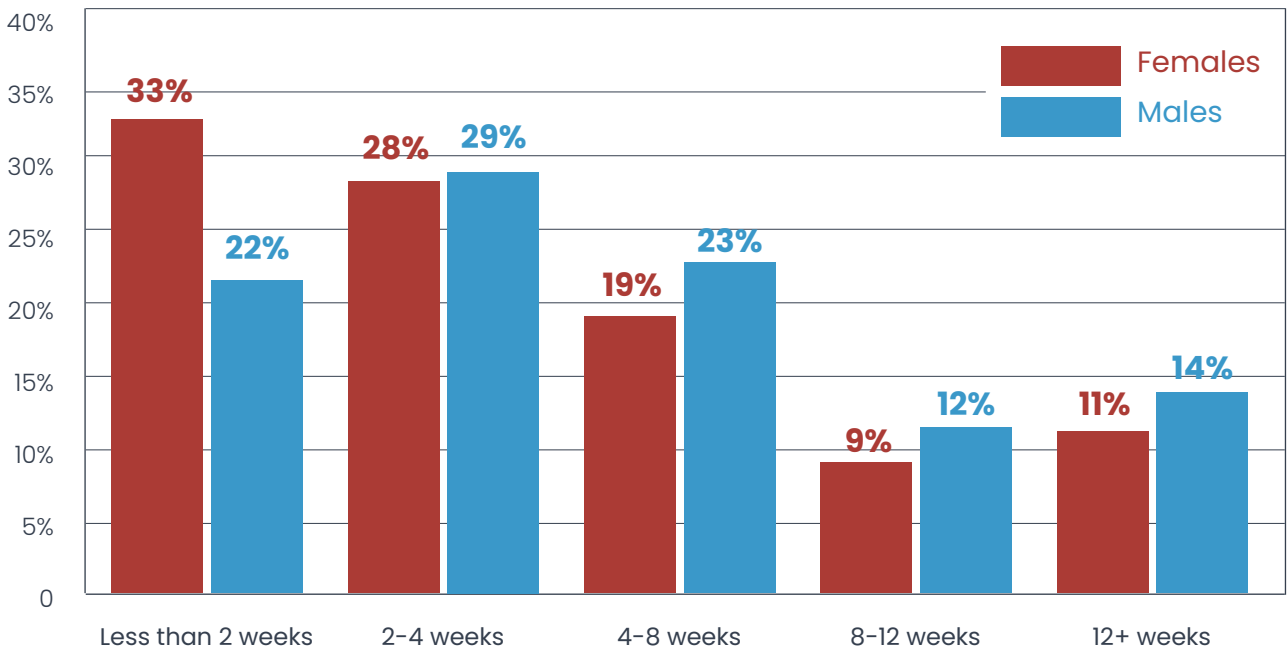


THE AVERAGE INJURY LAYOFF FOR MALE PLAYERS WAS APPROXIMATELY 6.1 WEEKS, COMPARED WITH 5 WEEKS FOR FEMALE PLAYERS (USING MIDPOINTS OF DURATION BANDS TO ESTIMATE)



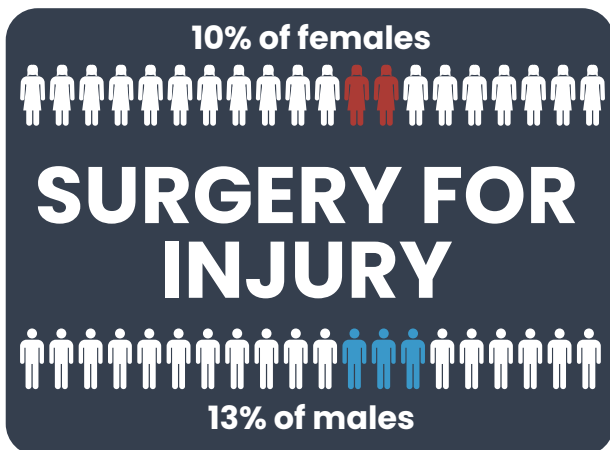
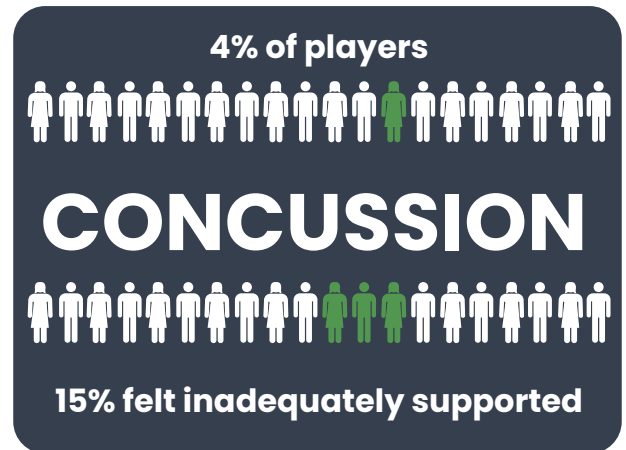
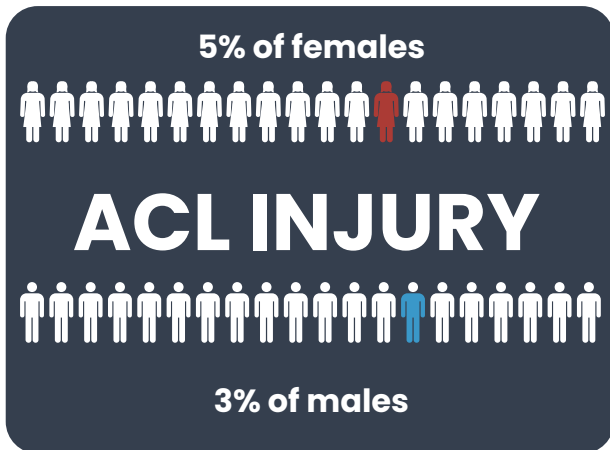
LENGTH OUT WITH INJURY

(players with injury, n=2,743)



OTHER INJURY SPOTLIGHT

(All % of those with an injury)



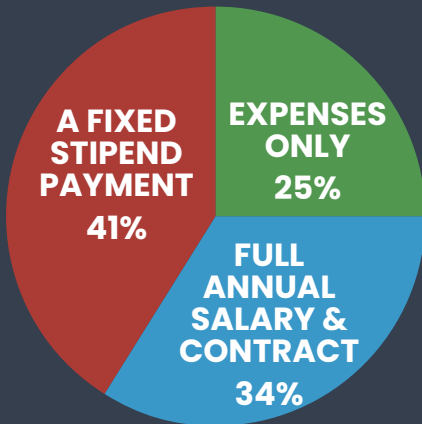
The background of the page features silhouettes of several athletes in various poses, suggesting movement and competition. A large white circle is centered on the page, containing text. The overall aesthetic is high-contrast and dynamic.

SECTION EIGHT

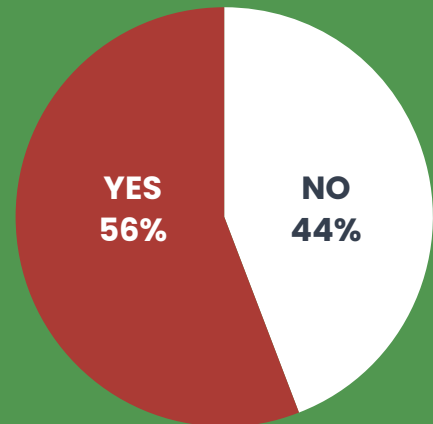
AMATEUR STATUS

As spending rises,
players are reflecting
on what amateurism
means today,
balancing fairness,
sustainability, and
integrity.

How should managers be compensated?
(male players)



Do you think there should be a cap on the number of Backroom Team personnel?



62%

of male players believe that training camps are beneficial and necessary, rising to

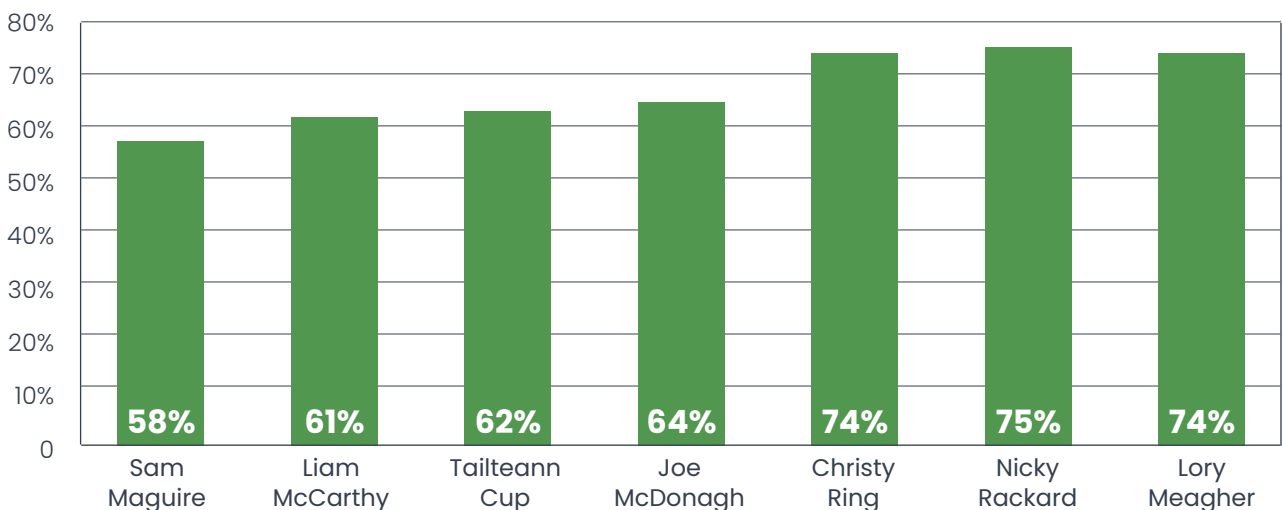
76%

among Liam McCarthy & Sam Maguire players

85%

of male players insist that if spending limits are introduced minimum welfare standards for players must be protected

ARE YOU CONTENT WITH THE CURRENT AMATEUR STATUS OF INTER-COUNTY PLAYERS? (Male players, Yes, n = 1,479)



64%

of male players content with the current amateur status of Gaelic games (60% Footballers, 68% Hurlers)



SECTION NINE

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT & WELLBEING

Off-field development is essential to sustaining performance and life balance. This section measures the GPA's impact and the wellbeing supports provided by the system around the player. Players are aware of drug misuse as a growing societal issue and are calling for a compassionate, education-led approach rather than punitive measures.

98%

Of all players think it is important for Inter-county players to focus on their personal and professional development

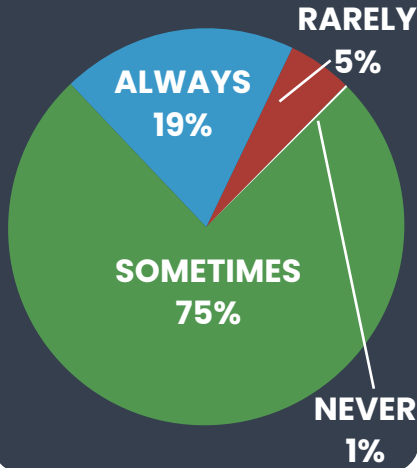
44%

Of all players said their county board or management team were very supportive of their studies / professional career

41%

Of all players said their county board or management team were very supportive of their Emotional Wellbeing

How often do you feel tired/not fully recovered before your next training session/game?



65%

Of all players report that at some point in the Inter-county career they have felt unsupported, undervalued or mentally drained

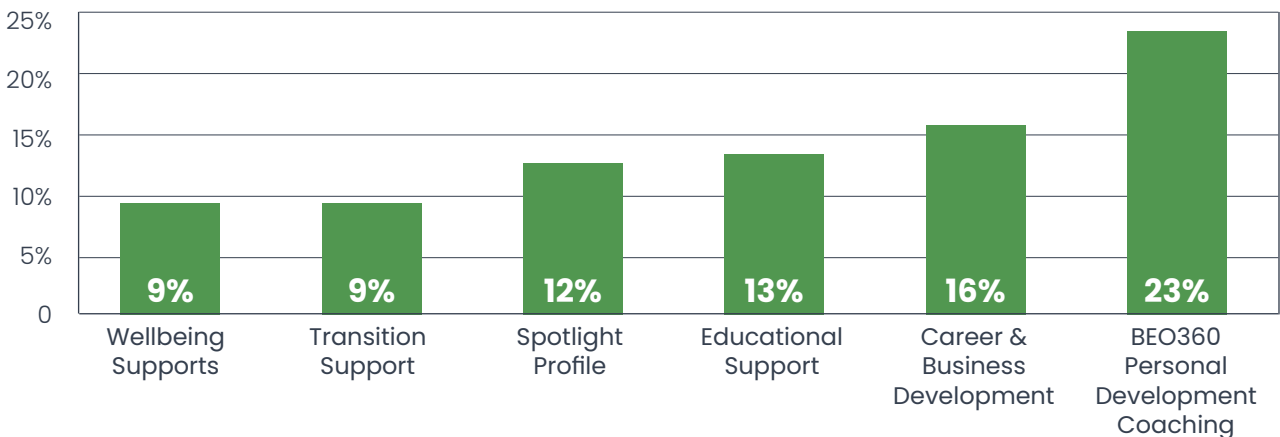
31%

Of all players say they would feel uncomfortable raising concerns within their team / around player welfare or wellbeing issues

74%

Would be most comfortable discussing a wellbeing / welfare concern with a TEAMMATE (Coach 10%, Manager 9%)

TOP 5 PROGRAMMES DELIVERED



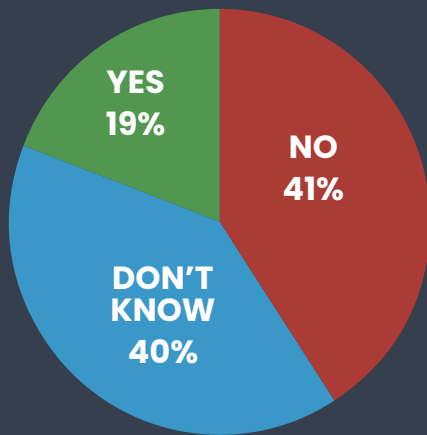
17%

Of all players say they have engaged in any of the GPA's BEO360 Player Development or Wellbeing Programmes

8.84

Average rating (NPS) among those who have participated in a GPA programme shows *very strong satisfaction*

Do you believe drug use is an issue among Inter-county players?



20%

of males are aware of a teammate who has struggled because of drug misuse

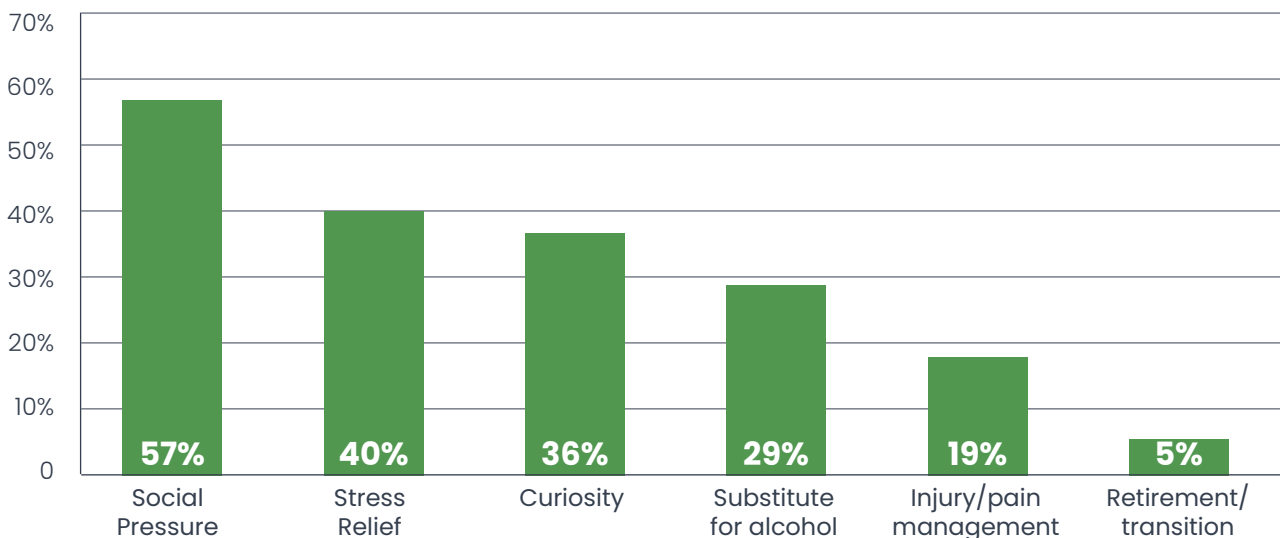


4%

of females are aware of a teammate who has struggled because of drug misuse

FACTORS INFLUENCING DRUG USE AMONG PLAYERS?

(multiple responses allowed)



When asked “Is there anything else you want to share about the challenges players face with drugs or what the GAA / GPA / Sporting Bodies can do differently to address drug use?”, responses suggest that, players overwhelmingly recognise that drug use is part of a **broader social issue**, not confined to Gaelic games. However, the **inter-county environment’s pressure, scrutiny, and imbalance** can heighten vulnerability. They call for a **mature, educational, and compassionate approach**.

The strongest message is that **punishment won’t work** – players want **understanding, early support, and honesty** about the realities of drug use among athletes.



SECTION TEN
**SOCIAL
IMPACT**

The social contribution of inter-county players is enormous, they are role models and community leaders who give back significantly to society.

88%

Of all players see themselves as a Role Model for young people in their club & community

82%

Of all players 'Gave Back' to society by voluntarily supporting initiatives / campaigns in their community this year

Type of Community Engagement	% of those who gave back (multiple responses)
Coaching Kids	77%
Wider Physical Activity	10%
Inclusion Initiatives	7%
Mental Health Awareness / Literacy	4%
Mens / Womens Health Campaign	2%

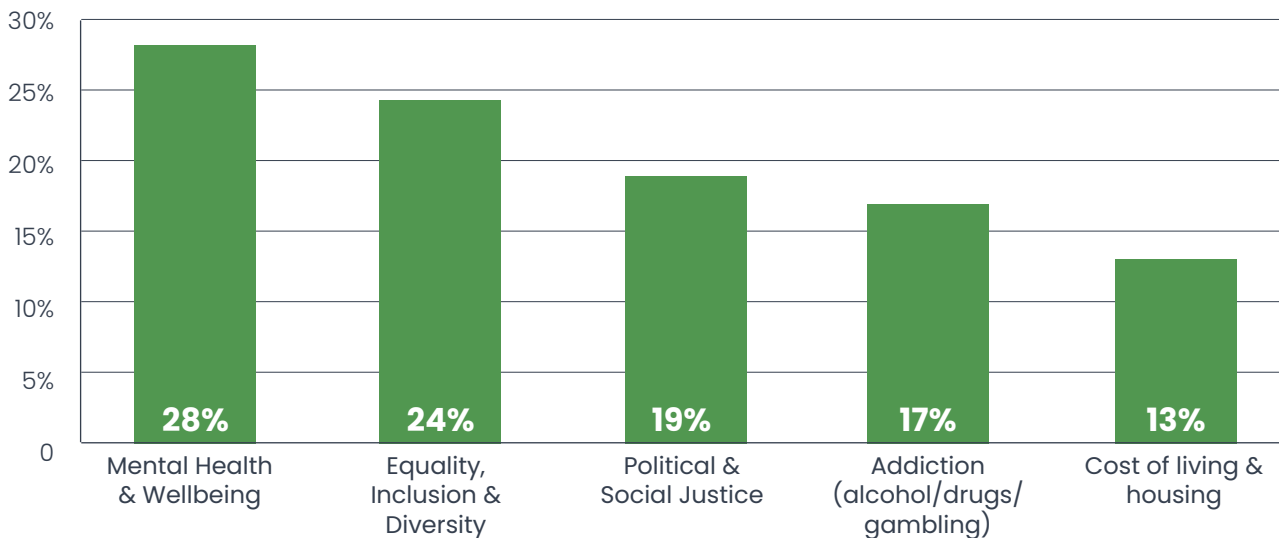
Number of days giving back	% of responses
1-5 days	34%
6-10 days	23%
11-20 days	13%
21+ days	17%

23,344

Estimated total days volunteered

WHAT WIDER SOCIETAL ISSUES DO YOU THINK THE GPA SHOULD BE REPRESENTING THE COLLECTIVE PLAYERS' VOICE ON?

(respondents n = 297)



While a **minority of players** (297) suggested the GPA should use its platform to speak on wider societal issues such as **mental health, equality, and social justice**, the **vast majority did not put forward any issues for the GPA to take public positions on outside Gaelic games**. Among those who did express wider views, **mental health and equality** were the most frequently mentioned, followed by **addiction, cost of living, and social justice**.



www.gaelicplayers.com