



# State of Play

Equality  
Snapshot for  
Female  
Intercountry  
Gaelic Games

A chairde,

It is timely to update our members and the wider public on progress in the area of equality in Gaelic Games. So much has changed for the better since the last comprehensive report on the experiences of female intercounty players (Levelling the Field report) in 2020.

- The WGPA & GPA merged into one association and is now firmly committed to equality for all of our 4,000 strong membership.
- The Irish Government made a groundbreaking statement on the value of women, by equalising government grant funding for male & female intercounty players.
- The GPA prioritised structural change in Gaelic Games by bringing a motion on integration to GAA congress, which has ultimately set the GAA, LGFA & Camogie Association on a path towards 'One Association for all Gaelic games and built on the principle of equality'.

However, against the backdrop of significant change on a macro level, it is important to capture and amplify the continuing lived experiences of our members. Rich data hand-in-hand with real life stories has been central to identifying and pursuing the priority areas for female players. Since late 2022, the GPA has again analysed the current 'state of play'. This report serves to highlight the context in which they continue to participate. It is important to stress there are county boards who are doing excellent work providing a high-performance environment for players, allowing them to reach the best of their potential and demonstrate the pinnacle spectacle of our games. Counties are however working within resource constraints that are common across a majority of female sports, which makes it difficult to align on agreed minimum standards across all squads.

Therefore there remains a great variety and disparity across the provisions and supports available for players in different counties. It is unfortunately the player who suffers from prolonged pain or absence when they don't have regular access to a centralised physio, or suffers loss of form when they cannot afford to drive home from college for training sessions, or suffers injuries when they don't have adequate athletic development coaching to prepare them for the demands of an intercounty season, or suffers the health impacts when they don't have the nutritionist or medical support to help them manage menstrual cycle effects and energy demands for the intercounty workload.

Thankfully, it is within our power in to rectify this in the immediate future and demonstrate a world class example of gender equality in sport. We can and must continue to improve conditions for female players in the interim, as we move towards one association. The GPA is calling for collective responsibility from the Camogie Association, LGFA and GAA in the near term, to deliver on available interim solutions to make our Gaelic Games the best place to be for Irish female athletes.



# THE FEMALE PLAYER & THE WGPA/GPA

Since the inception of the WGPA in 2015 and subsequent merger with the GPA in 2020, there have been a number of female player specific developments.

Among these, the WGPA published two bespoke reports, in 2015 and 2020, which described the experiences of female Gaelic players and equality is now one of four core work areas in the GPA with a dedicated EDI Manager appointed.

This report provides an up to date state of play for female players.

2015	2016	2020	2021	2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• WGPA Launch</li><li>• Making Things Better report</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Female Government Grants for Intercounty Teams</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Levelling the Field Report</li><li>• WGPA &amp; GPA Merge</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Government Funding Equalised, Individual Female Player Grants Introduced<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• GPA Programmes &amp; Supports Equalised for Male &amp; Female Players</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• GPA Motion on NGB Integration passed at GAA Congress</li><li>• NGB Integration Motions also passed at LGFA &amp; CA Congresses</li></ul>





# LEVELLING THE FIELD (2019)

## PROGRESS REVIEW

Recommendation	Outcome	Notes
1 Develop Best Practice for Supporting the High Performance Female County Player through all of their Playing Commitments	Some Progress	Gaelic Games Sports Science Working Group established and developing a framework for sports science in gaelic games.
2 Prioritise the Development of a Practical Player Expenses Model	No Progress	No centralised agreement on direct mileage expenses
3 Continue to progress and evaluate progress in minimum standards for Female County Players	Some Progress	Ongoing evaluation, baseline provision of minimum standards established and monitored, additional team grant funding for gear & nutrition. No progress on player charter provisions. No minimum standards of medical support.
4 Strive for Equitable Funding and Investment for Intercounty Female Players	Achieved	Government funding equalised in 2020, female player grants introduced.
5 Finalise formal partnership with GPA in order to establish a single players voice	Achieved	WGPA & GPA merged in 2020 to become a united 4,000 member organisation.

GPA have taken **big strides** forward in delivering on **equality of investment, recognition** and **opportunity** for female members; now **structural change** needed within Gaelic Games.



# 2022 STATE OF PLAY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## DATA GATHERING

**Survey of 1,579 players**  
November 2022



**5 Regional Reps Workshops**  
December 2022



**Phone Calls to 57 squad reps**  
January 2023



## KEY INSIGHTS

**Continued lack of consistency on expenses, gear, nutrition allowances and other supports**

**Continued lower access to sport science supports & more barriers to accessing facilities than male players**

**Female specific issues around menstrual cycle mitigation and injury incidence / costs**

## PRIORITIES

**Travel Expenses funding to compensate female players for costs incurred from 2023 onwards**

**Squad Charter for female players with agreed minimum standards from 2024 season onwards**

**Female Specific Supports to be prioritized in relation to reproductive health and injuries**

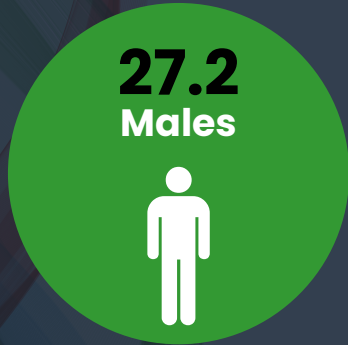
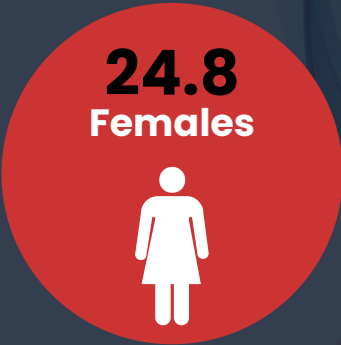
## SUPPORTED & UNDERPINNED BY

### **Intercounty Review Committee**

Joint working Group for CA/GAA/LGFA & GPA to improve the training and playing experience of female players in tandem with progress towards integration

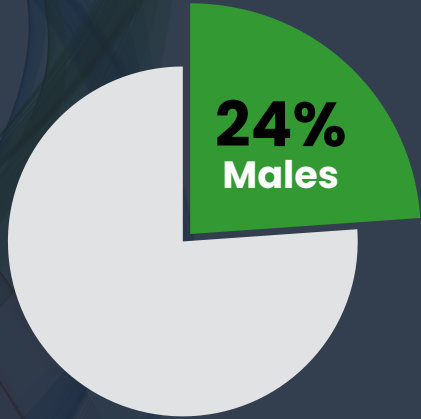
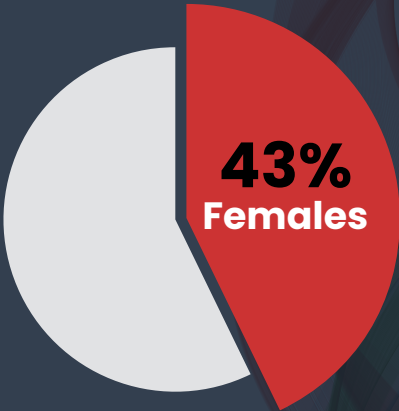
# DEMOGRAPHICS

## AVERAGE AGE



Female players are younger on average.

## STUDENTS

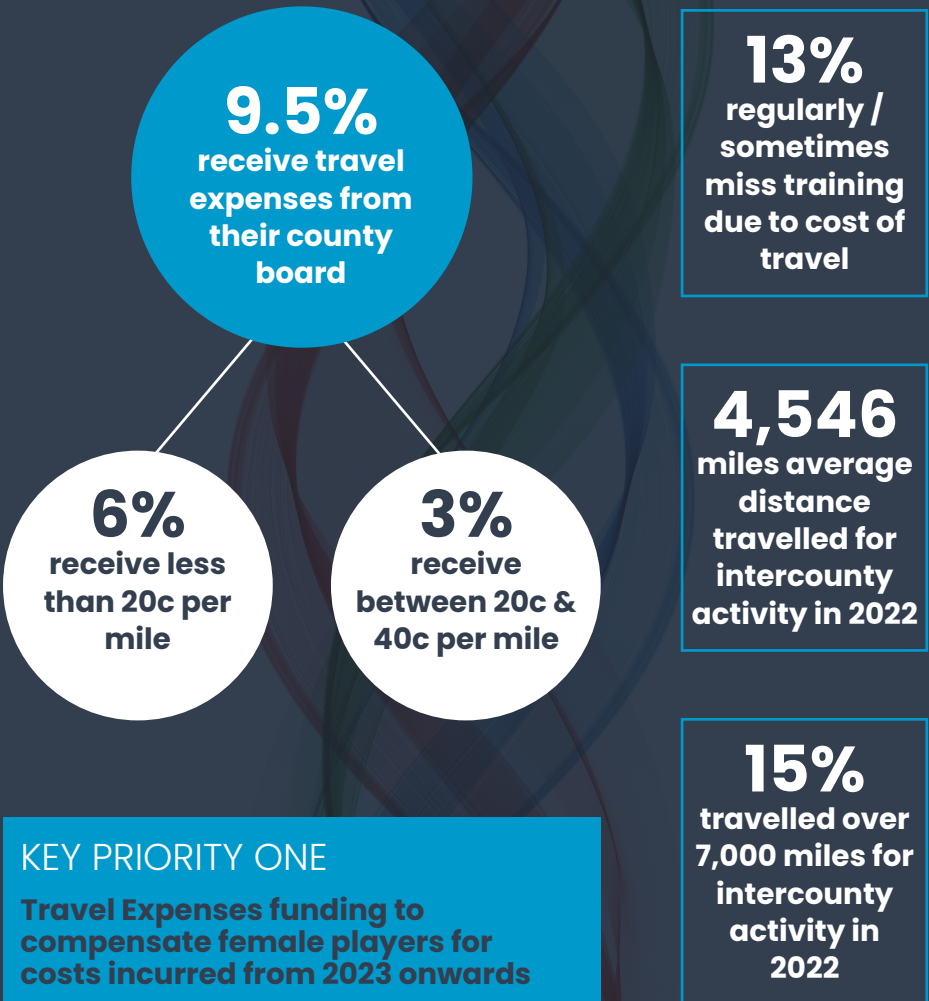


Higher proportion of female players are students so need additional financial and playing supports.



# DIRECT MILEAGE EXPENSE

Government Grant funding was equalised for all intercounty players in 2021; female player grants introduced for the first time contributing to the costs associated with intercounty. However the largest cost for players continues to be travel expenses, with a significant rise in the cost of fuel in the last 2 years but little change in the number of players receiving reimbursement.

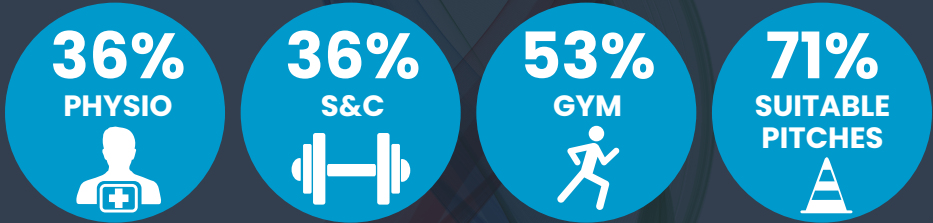




# PLAYER SUPPORT ENVIRONMENT

The female support environment has improved since the 2015 Making Things Better Report and the 2020 Levelling the Field Report. However there remains a disparity between male and female players.









The following percentages of players **DO NOT** have *full access* to:



The following percentages of players **DO NOT** have *regular access*\* to:



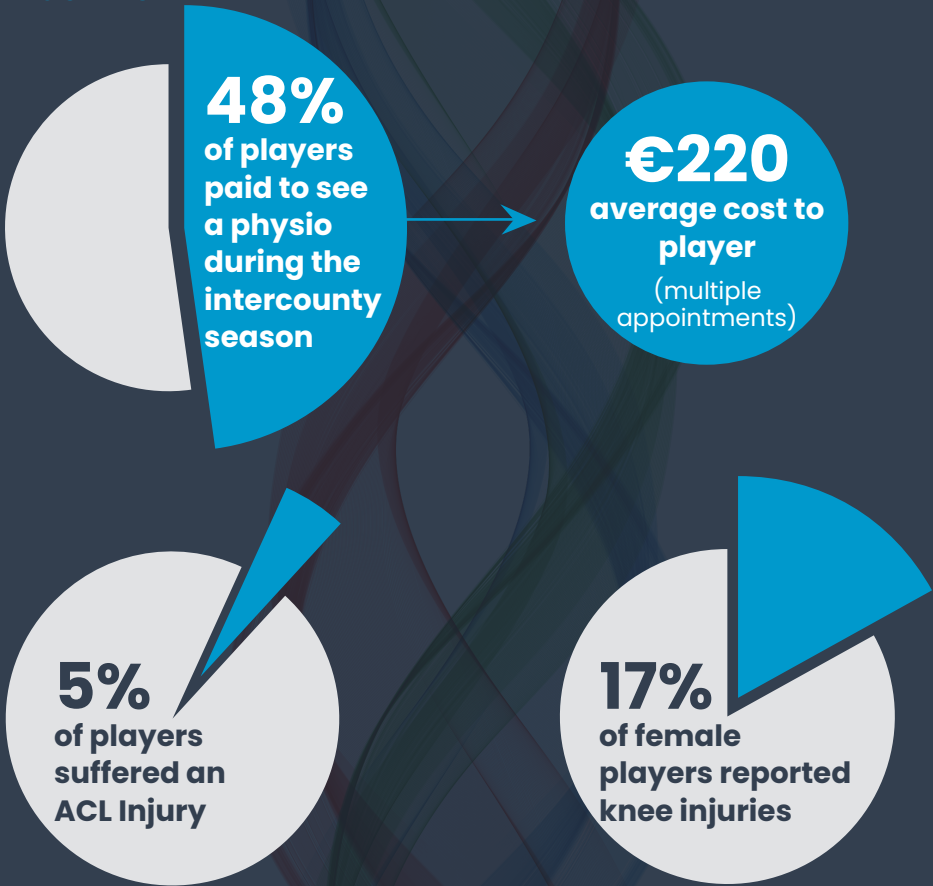
\* Regular = always or sometimes

GAA / GPA CHARTER FOR MALE PLAYERS			
 Travel Expenses 70c per mile	 Nutritional Allowance €20 per week	 Meals after Training & Games	 S&C and Gym Access
 Physio & Medical Support	 Training Gear, Match Kit, Leisure Wear, Hurls, Helmets, Footwear	 Nutritionist Support	 Complimentary tickets for League & Championship
<b>Annual Guaranteed Provisions</b>			

**KEY PRIORITY TWO**  
**Squad Charter for female players with agreed minimum standards from 2024 season onwards**

# STANDARDISE AND PRIORITISE SUPPORTS FOR FEMALE ATHLETES

## INJURIES



- 50% of female players have private health insurance. 25% applied to the LGFA Injury Fund / Camogie Insurance Policies to cover the costs of their treatment (29% LGFA v 18% Camogie). Approximately half indicated that this did not cover the full cost of their claim.
- **Hamstrings**, followed by **ankle** and **knee** are the most common injury sites for female players.
- **17% of females** in total reported knee injuries, compared with 13% of male players

## MENSTRUAL CYCLE SUPPORTS

**37%**  
reported a  
menstrual  
cycle  
outside the  
25–35 day  
range



**38%**  
of players use  
a hormonal  
contraceptive



**72%**  
of players  
track their  
hormonal  
cycle



**72%**  
of players  
reported  
perceived  
impact of the  
menstrual  
cycle on their  
performance



- Similar to research on elite athletes, many players are currently using some form of **Hormonal Contraceptive (HC)**. This highlights the importance of players understanding not just the menstrual cycle (MC) but also the use of HC.
- A large number of players perceive that the MC affects their performance. Therefore a more open conversation around the MC, associated symptoms and management strategies would be beneficial.
- **Education on the MC and HC** use may help manage and potentially reduce the perceived impact of the MC on performance, including for those on HC.
- Cycle tracking appears common but the lack of knowledge on the MC highlights an issue with tracking in the absence of good player knowledge.
- 7% of players reported having a long MC of greater than 35 days or no MC at all. This may be indicative of players having difficulties fuelling for the demands of their training and competition. Access to nutritionist support remains low.

### KEY PRIORITY THREE

**Female Specific Supports to be prioritized in relation to reproductive health and injuries**



# STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES

- 3 motions passed for integration, 98% of players support integration in Gaelic Games.
- There are one-club guidelines in place and progress is underway on integration at national level but there remains no one-county model for Gaelic Games.
- Opportunities exist to improve collaboration, tackle the resource challenges and explore structural improvements, to improve the experience of female intercounty players.
- **Collective responsibility and action will be required from the GAA, Camogie Association, LGFA and GPA to bridge the gap in experiences and supports for female intercounty players in the short term.**

## OVERVIEW OF CHALLENGES ENGAGEMENT WITH SQUADS AND PLAYER REPS

General sense of frustration from the reps on the lack of progress over the last 3 - 4 years, no mandatory charter, growing awareness of and comparison to the male charter.

Hopelessness over dealing with county board - "can't afford" team supports or lack of implementation of what's agreed at the start of the year.

Frequently players running their own fundraisers to raise standards for the adult team, but being left with very little as money is redistributed within county.

*We're a Division One team and we didn't have any centralised physio all year; girls had to organize their own sessions on nights we weren't training and pay for the sessions ourselves. Mostly we couldn't claim back from the LGFA injury fund or we wouldn't have been allowed to train or play. It's hard to believe!*

Numerous examples of issues with cross-code sponsor within a county; unfair distribution of sponsorship money, female players wearing branded training gear that they've had to pay for themselves.

Dependence on team grant to fund the adult team; lack of motivation / willingness to chase fundraising / sponsorship to raise standards.

*We've barely trained in the same two pitches since we returned to training, depending on clubs to allow us in. We usually don't know until the day of training where we'll be that night. We've played 3 challenge games on freezing wet nights and we haven't even had showers for girls who are getting in cars to drive miles back home. It's so disappointing, the team just feels so undervalued within the county.*

## KEY PRIORITY FOUR

**Intercounty Review Committee to improve the training and playing experience of female players in tandem with progress towards integration**