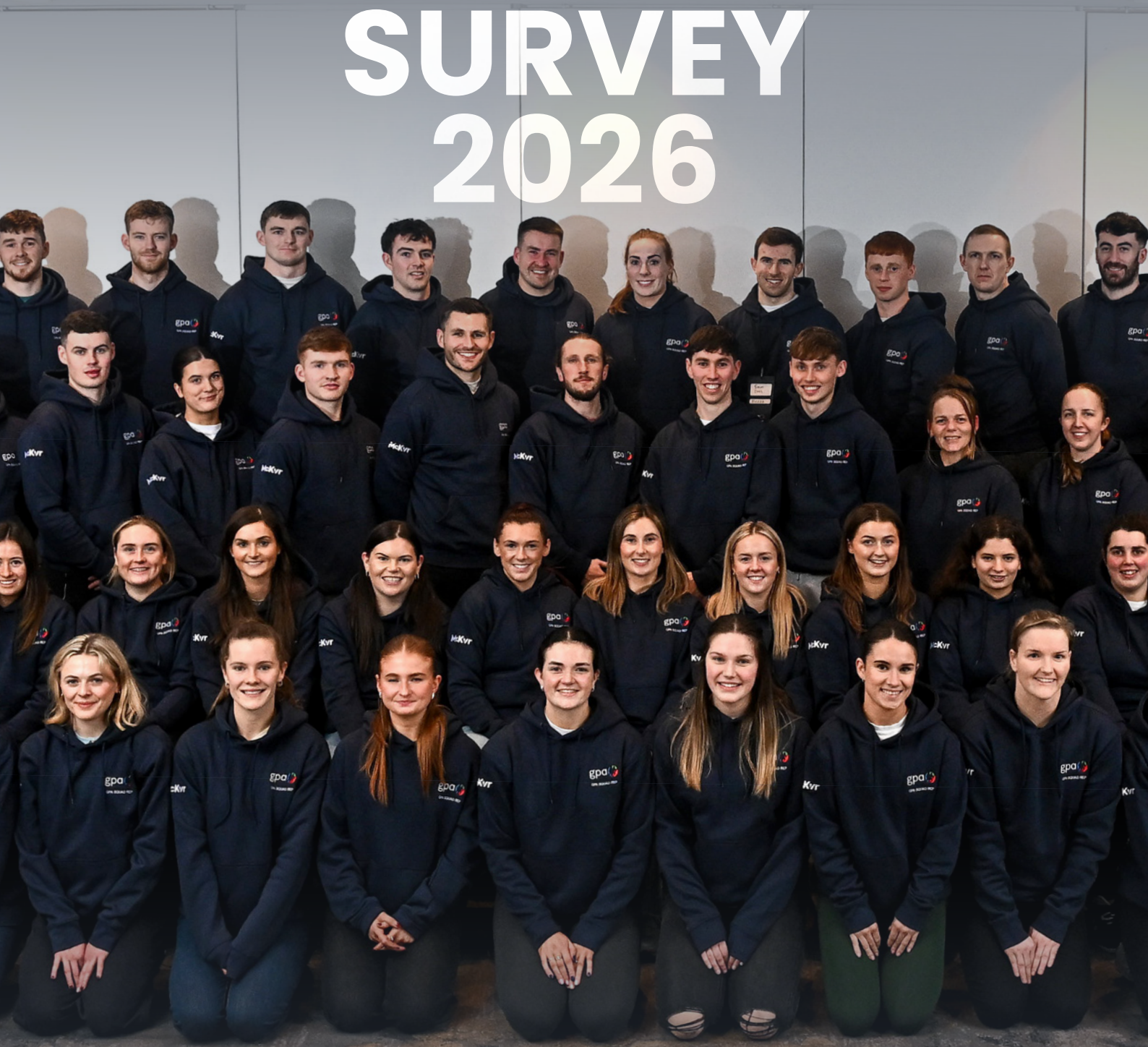
GPA ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SURVEY 2026



gpa

CONTENTS

Executive Summary ..... **page 3**
Demographics ..... **page 5**
GPA Representation & Engagement ..... **page 7**
NILP, Media & Commercial ..... **page 9**
Player Data & Usage ..... **page 12**
Season Structure & Recovery ..... **page 14**
Football Rules & Technology ..... **page 18**
Hurling Focus ..... **page 21**
Injuries ..... **page 25**
Player Charter ..... **page 29**
Team Scorecards ..... **page 34**

SURVEY DETAILS

Responses: 3,555 Inter-county Players
Date: July & August 2026
Format: Self Report, Mixed Methods Quantitative & Qualitative
Reporting: No Significant Code/Gender Differences Unless Stated

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every player who pulls on a county jersey gives time, effort and a part of themselves to our games. Listening to those players is the starting point for making the inter-county experience better. **This survey tells us what we should protect, where standards are falling short and what players want us to change.**

The 2026 GPA Annual Member Survey captures the views of **3,555 inter-county players** across Camogie, Ladies Football, men's football and hurling. The findings demonstrate a strong relationship between players and their association: **90% agree that the GPA represents their interests** and 78% would know how to access wellbeing services if needed.

Equality of standards emerges as one of the clearest themes. Among male players familiar with the Charter, 88% reported receiving their full entitlements. For female players, core match-day provisions are generally strong, but significant gaps remain in the training and performance environment. Both male and female lower-tier players consistently report lower provision. Female players identify the timing of expenses as an immediate priority: 70% report at least one significant issue with the current two-instalment system and 94% support monthly reimbursement in 2027. **78% of all players support equalising one minimum standards Squad Charter for all inter-county players post integration.**

Player welfare and workload remain major challenges. Almost half of players have two weeks or less between club and inter-county activity. Open-ended feedback indicates that players are not simply seeking shorter seasons; their priority is better calendar design, more consistent spacing between games, fewer competition clashes and adequate recovery. This workload sits alongside a persistently high injury burden. **74% of respondents reported missing a training OR a competitive game with an injury during 2026.** More than one-third of players carried an injury from inter-county into the club season.

The survey also highlights significant differences in the quality of the team environment. The new Team Scorecard gives male players an overall experience rating of 4.4 out of 6. Importantly, several lower-tier teams also perform strongly, demonstrating that high standards are achievable irrespective of competition level and providing an opportunity to identify and share best practice across counties.

Players are also increasingly conscious of their commercial and data rights. **86% support players having the right to commercially benefit from their NILP**, while some report their image being used without consent or being prevented from pursuing commercial opportunities. Data collection is now widespread but highly unequal across the game, and **39% of players**

do not know whether their data has been shared beyond their team. Nevertheless, players strongly support responsible data use: 85% support centralised use for player welfare, 82% support commercial use where players receive a fair revenue share and 80% want a meaningful say over how their data is used.

There are also important messages about the future development of the games. **In hurling, 78% are concerned about the future of hurling in weaker counties.** Players identify the gap between stronger and developing counties as the central challenge and favour greater investment, coaching and opportunities to compete at higher levels. Male footballers, meanwhile, are broadly positive about the new playing rules, with 76% believing no further change is required. 72% of male players support some increased use of technology, with the majority favouring limited and targeted usage.

Finally, players continue to value the GPA's development and social-impact role. BEO360 participants rate their experience 8.61/10, while more than half of non-participants express interest in at least one GPA programme.

Overall, the 2026 survey provides a clear direction from players: protect player rights, improve recovery and workload management, reduce inequalities in the inter-county environment and establish consistent minimum standards across the game through one Squad Charter and a system in which the quality of a player's experience is not determined by their gender, code, county or competition tier.

The players have spoken clearly and it is now up to all of us across Gaelic games to act on what they have told us. We have good practice to build on, practical changes we can make, and a shared opportunity through integration to raise standards for everyone. **The GPA will bring players' voices to that work and push for progress they can see and feel, in every county and every code.**

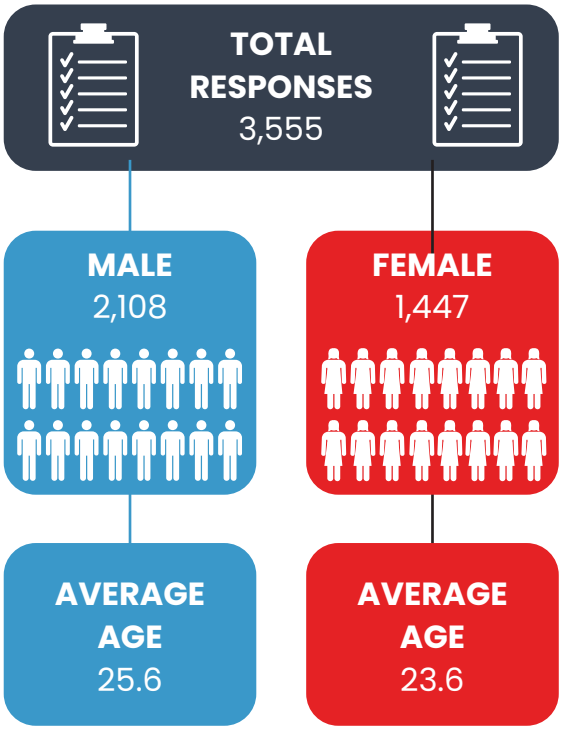
Tom Parsons,
GPA Ceo

*Responses n = 3,555 and no significant differences cross gender / code, unless otherwise stated throughout

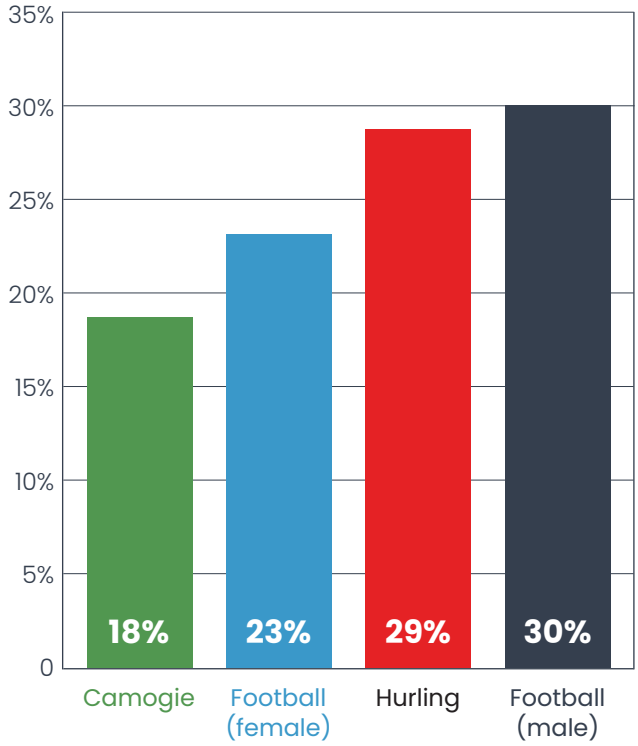
SECTION ONE

DEMOGRAPHICS

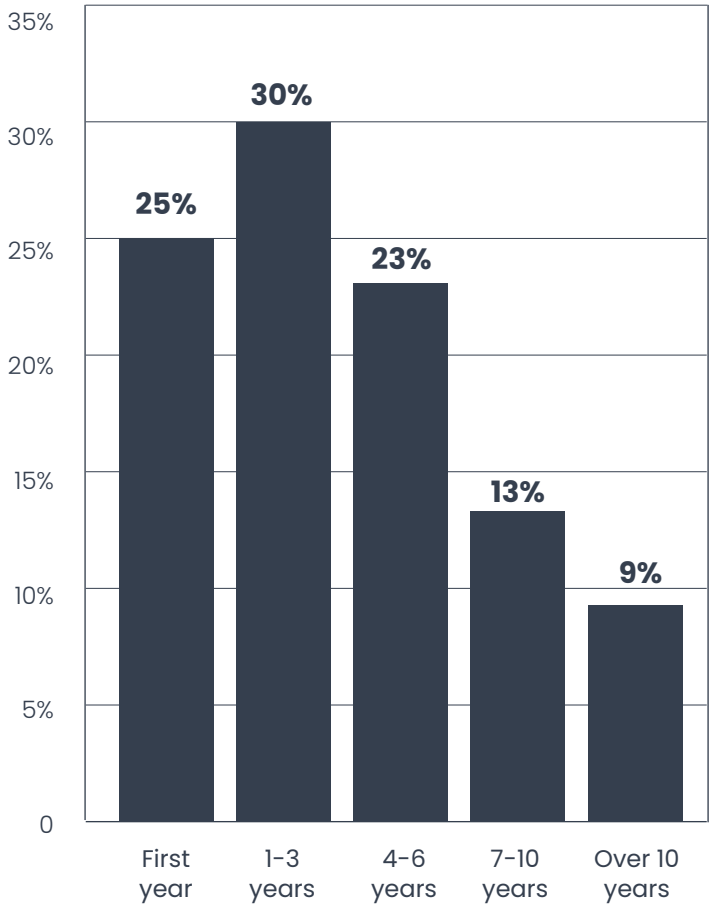
RESPONSES BY GENDER



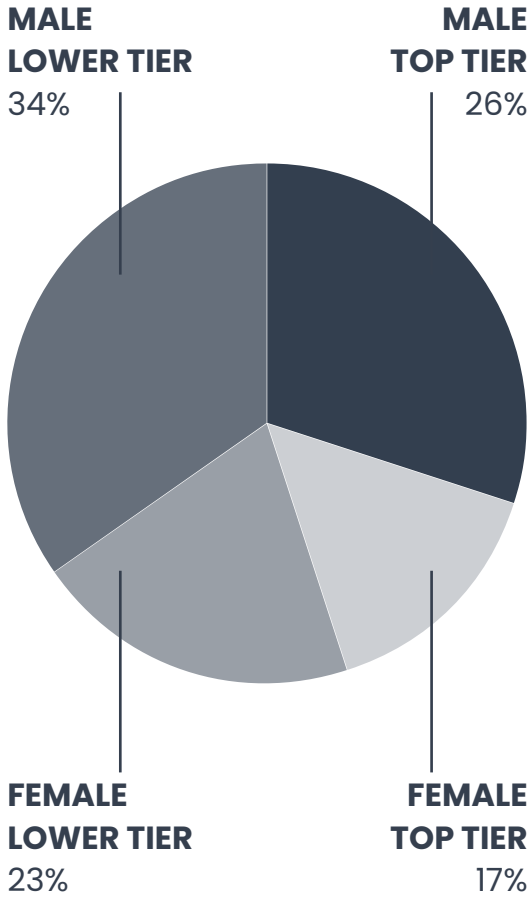
RESPONSES BY CODE



HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN ON THE PANEL?



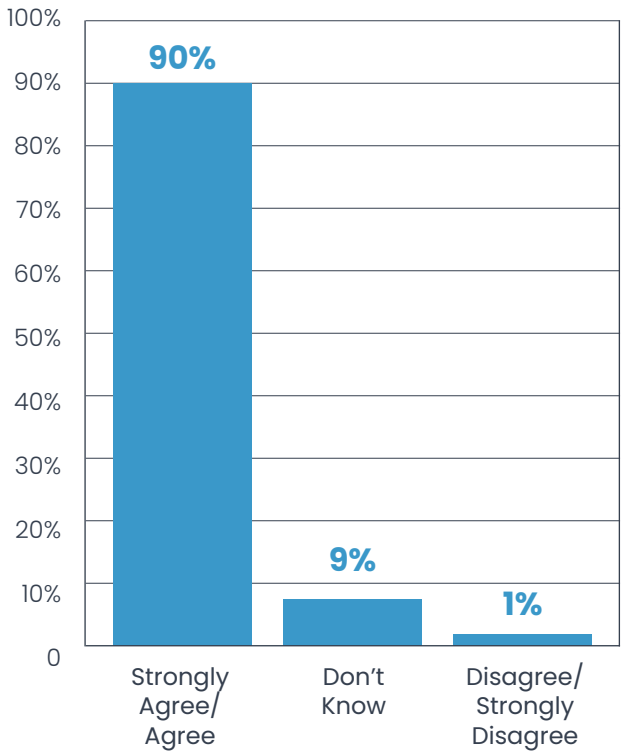
RESPONDENTS BY GENDER/TIER



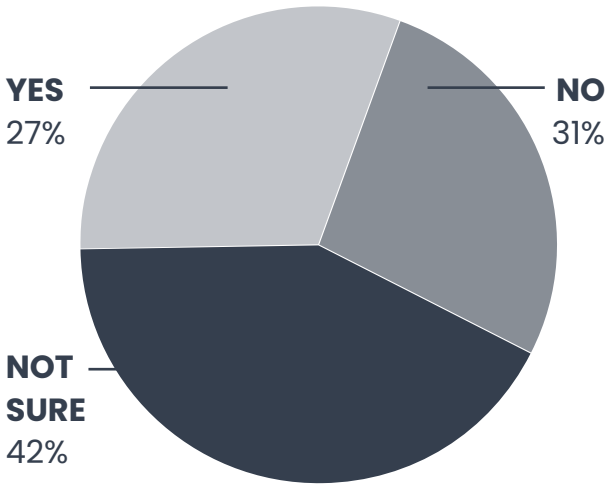
SECTION TWO

GPA REPRESENTATION & ENGAGEMENT

DO YOU FEEL THE GPA IS YOUR PLAYERS' ASSOCIATION AND REPRESENTS YOUR INTERESTS AS AN INTER-COUNTY PLAYER?



DO YOU THINK THE VOICE OF THE PLAYERS IS LISTENED TO IN DECISIONS AFFECTING INTER-COUNTY GAMES?



58%

FEEL THEY HAVE A HEALTHY BALANCE BETWEEN SPORT AND OTHER AREAS OF LIFE

78%

SAY THEY KNOW HOW TO ACCESS GPA WELLBEING SERVICES IF NEEDED

22%

OF PLAYERS ENGAGED IN GPA BEO360 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT OR WELLBEING PROGRAMMES

(exc first years, n = 2,657)

8.61

OUT OF 10 - AVERAGE EXPERIENCE RATING FOR BEO360 PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS

(n = 624, consistent with 2025)

53%

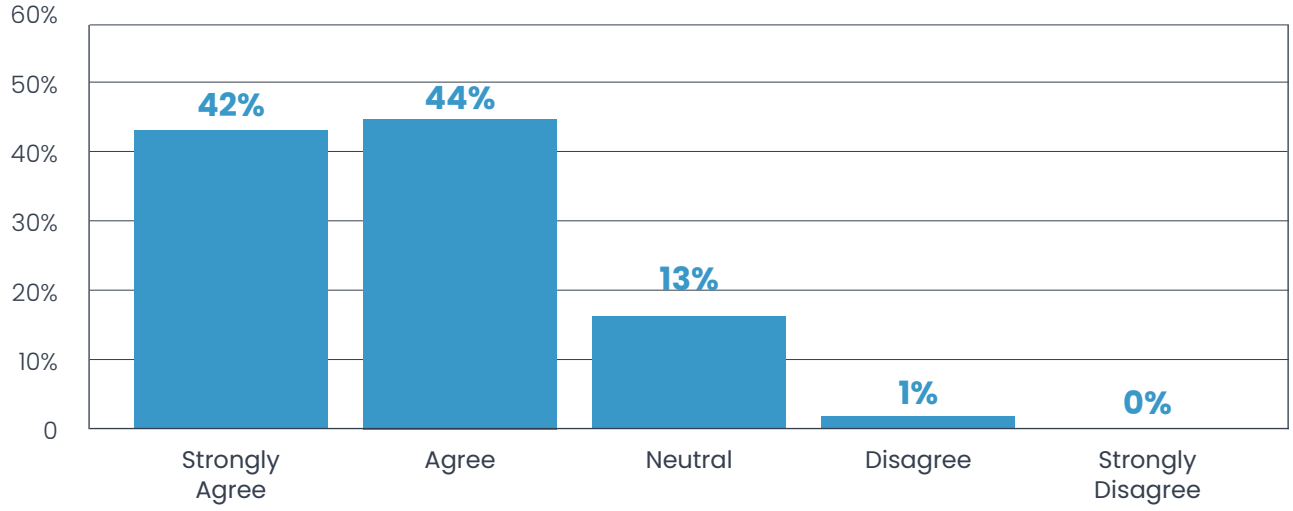
OF PLAYERS WHO HAVE NOT YET ENGAGED WOULD LIKE TO

Top demand for Career & Biz Development, BEO360 Coaching and Educational Support

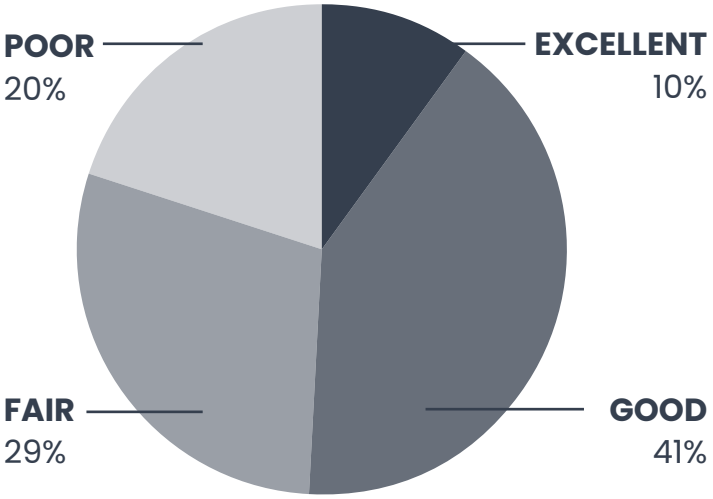
SECTION THREE

NILP, MEDIA & COMMERCIAL

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE THAT PLAYERS SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO COMMERCIALLY BENEFIT FROM THEIR OWN NAME, IMAGE, LIKENESS AND PERSONALITY (NILP)?



HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR NAME, IMAGE, LIKENESS AND PERSONALITY (NILP) RIGHTS?



86%

AGREE THAT PLAYERS SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO COMMERCIALLY BENEFIT FROM THEIR OWN NAME, IMAGE, LIKENESS & PERSONALITY (NILP)

5%

OF PLAYERS ARE AWARE OF USE OF THEIR NILP WITHOUT THEIR CONSENT, RISING TO A MAX OF 10% AMONG SAM MAGUIRE PLAYERS

WHERE WAS YOUR NIL USED WITHOUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE?

(N=140)

1. MATCH & COMPETITION PROMO
2. COMMERCIAL BRAND & SPONSOR ADVERTS
3. KIT, EQUIPMENT & MERCHANDISE PROMO
4. SOCIAL MEDIA, MEDIA & CONTENT REUSE
5. OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

52%

OF PLAYERS HAVE NOT HAD ANY COMMERCIAL OR MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LAST 2 YEARS (avg. excluding Rookies)

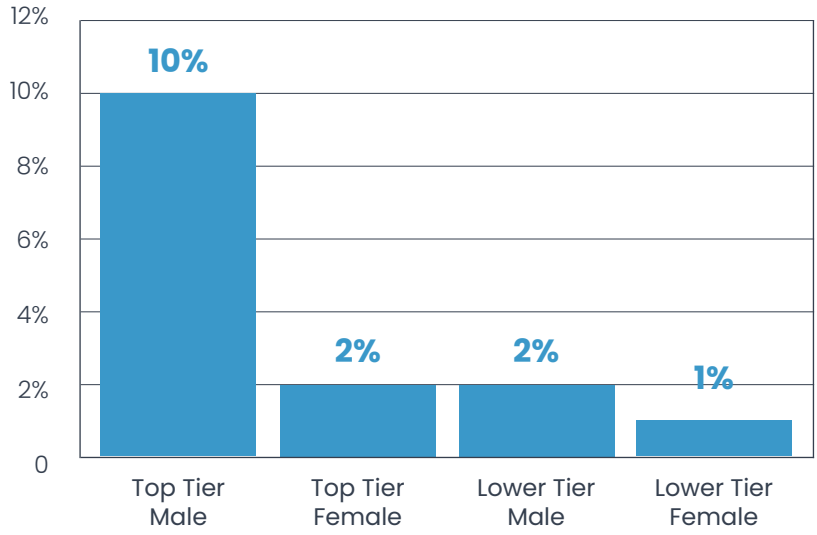
24%

OF TOP TIER MALE PLAYERS HAD 4 OR MORE COMMERCIAL OR MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LAST 2 YEARS (avg, excluding Rookies)

49%

WERE 'ALWAYS' OR 'FREQUENTLY' UNCLEAR ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS & OBLIGATIONS WITH COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES (n=1,277)

HAS A MANAGER, COACH OR TEAM OFFICIAL DISCOURAGED OR BLOCKED YOU FROM TAKING UP A PERSONAL COMMERCIAL OR MEDIA OPPORTUNITY THIS YEAR? (Yes, n=139)



139

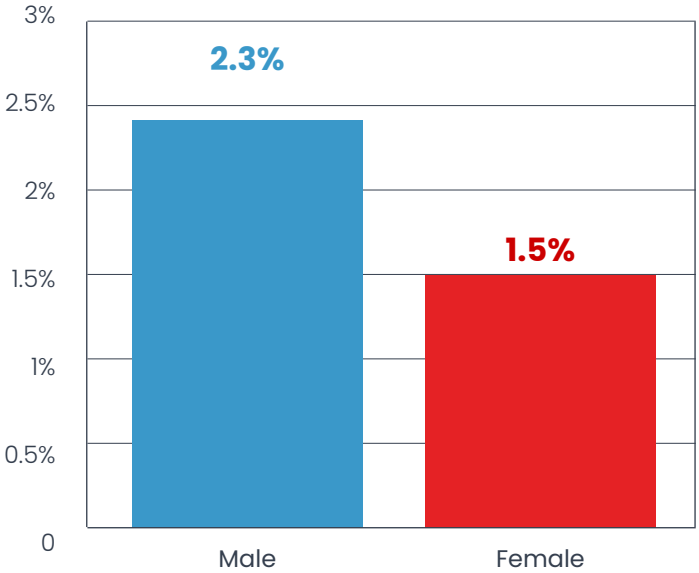
PLAYERS REPORTED THEY WERE BLOCKED FROM A COMMERCIAL OR MEDIA OPPORTUNITY THIS YEAR WITHIN THEIR TEAM

71

PLAYERS REPORTED WORKING WITH AN AGENT ON THEIR COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

DO YOU WORK WITH AN AGENT TO MANAGE YOUR COMMERICAL OPPORTUNITIES / ACTIVITIES?

(Yes, n=71)



SECTION FOUR

PLAYER DATA & USAGE

TYPES OF PLAYER DATA COLLECTED

82%
GPS/PERFORMANCE DATA
(Range: 99% Top Tier Male to 54% Lower Tier Female)

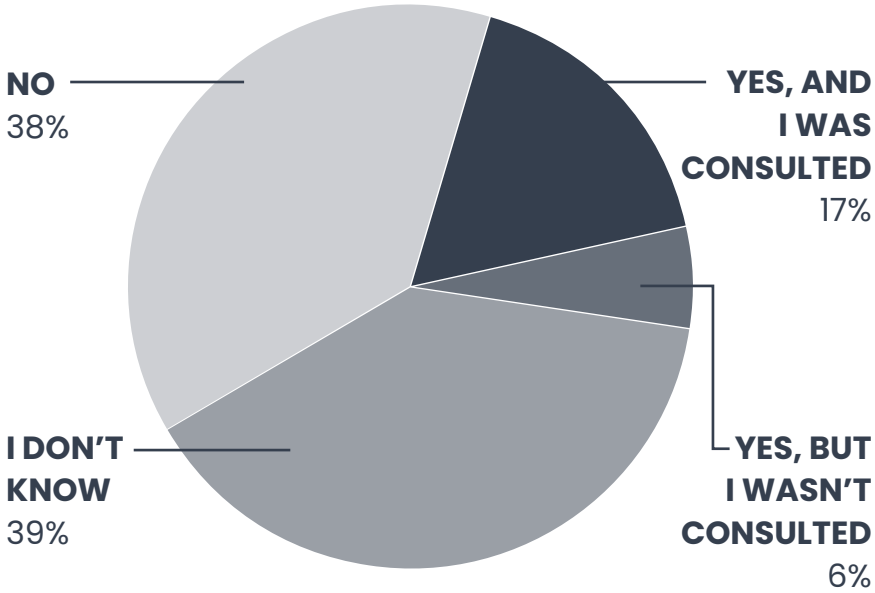
88%
VIDEO ANALYSIS/STATS
(Range: 93% Top Tier Male to 78% Lower Tier Female)

68%
MEDICAL/INJURY RECORDS
(Range: 93% Top Tier Male to 43% Lower Tier Female)

50%
WELLNESS QUESTIONNAIRES
(Range: 75% Top Tier Male to 29% Lower Tier Female)

Data collection is widespread across Inter-county Gaelic games, but access is highly unequal. Male players are significantly more likely than female players to have GPS, medical and wellness data collected, while senior players are significantly more likely than lower-tier players to experience intensive performance and health monitoring.

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN CONSULTED BEFORE YOUR PERSONAL OR PERFORMANCE DATA WAS SHARED OR USED BEYOND YOUR TEAM?



80%
SUPPORT PLAYERS HAVING A MEANINGFUL SAY IN THE COLLECTION AND USE OF THEIR PERFORMANCE DATA

85%
SUPPORT THE SHARING OF THEIR PERFORMANCE DATA TO A CENTRALISED DATABASE TO SUPPORT WORKLOAD, WELFARE AND INJURY RISK

82%
SUPPORT THE COMMERCIAL USE OF THEIR PERFORMANCE DATA IF PLAYERS RECEIVED A FAIR SHARE OF ANY REVENUE GENERATED

SECTION FIVE

SEASON STRUCTURE & RECOVERY

49%

OF PLAYERS HAVE 2 WEEKS OR LESS OFF BETWEEN CLUB AND INTER-COUNTY

84%

OF PLAYERS HAVE 2 WEEKS OR LESS OFF BETWEEN INTER-COUNTY AND CLUB

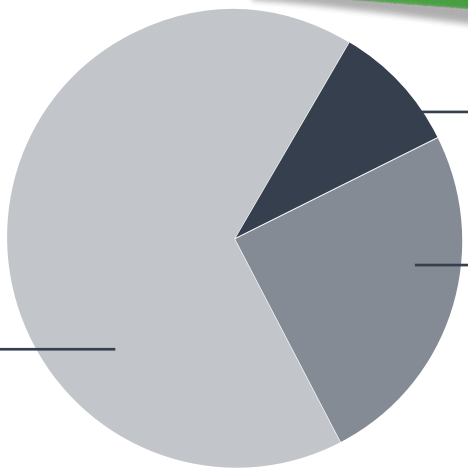
Players Receiving 0-2 Weeks Rest Periods		2026
End of Club and Start of Inter-county	Female	47%
	Male	50%
End of Inter-county and Start of Club	Female	86%
	Male	83%

47%

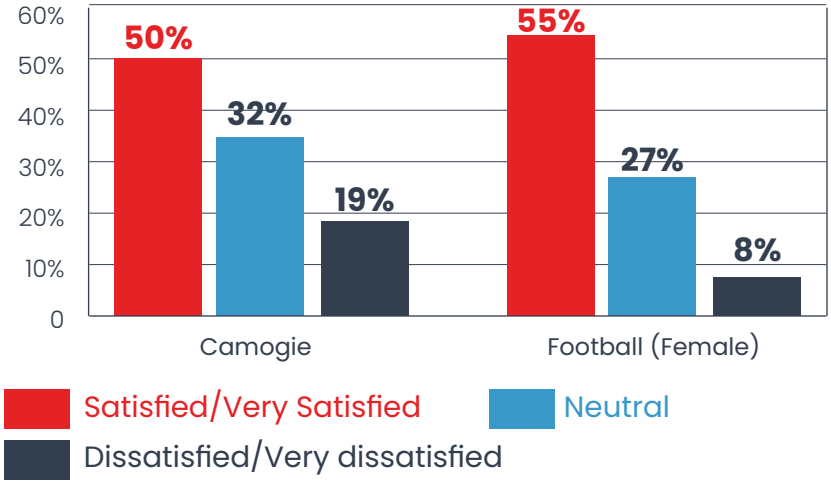
OF FEMALE PLAYERS HAD 2 WEEKS REST OR LESS BETWEEN INTER-COUNTY & CLUB

(V 38% IN 2025)

DO YOU FEEL YOU GENERALLY GOT ENOUGH RECOVERY BETWEEN GAMES THIS YEAR?



HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE CURRENT INTER-COUNTY COMPETITION STRUCTURES? (female players)



82%

OF FEMALE PLAYERS WHO TOOK A POSITION ARE SATISFIED WITH THE CURRENT COMPETITIONS

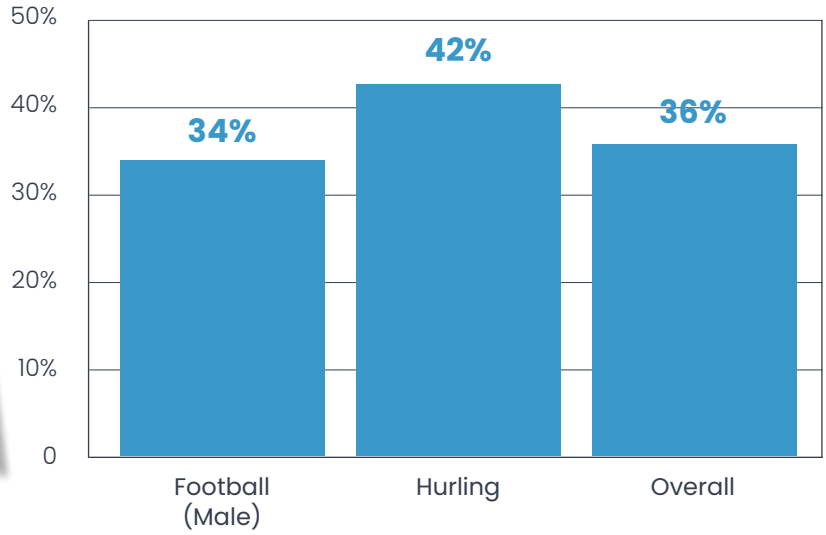
38%

OF MALE PLAYERS WANT A SHORTER LEAGUE WITH MORE RECOVERY, 28% WERE NOT SURE, 34% SAID NO

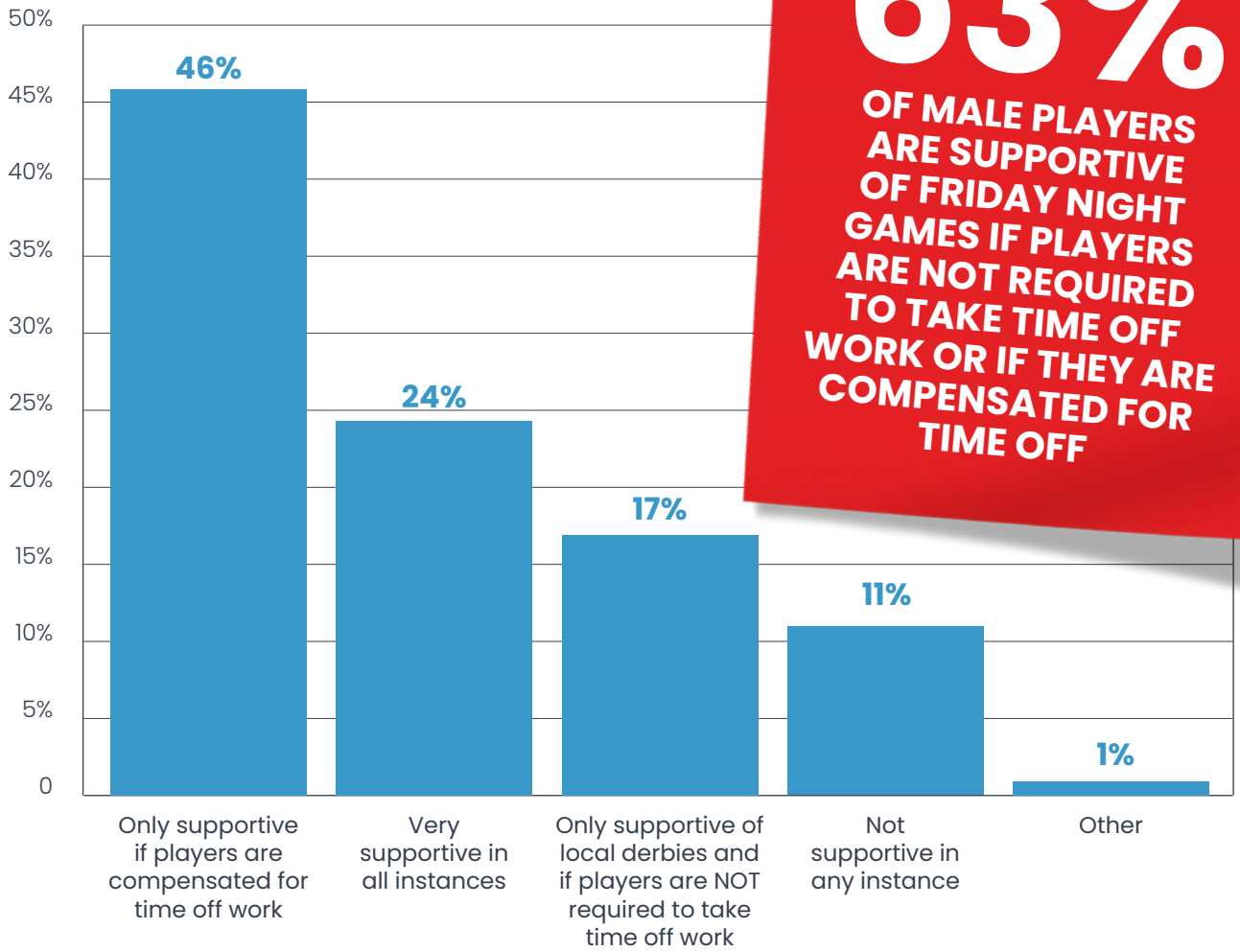
(only Liam McCarthy players with majority support for a shorter league (52%)

DO YOU THINK THERE SHOULD BE A SHORTER LEAGUE, WITH MORE WEEKENDS FOR RECOVERY?

(Response - Yes, males, n=2,108)



WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE INTRODUCTION OF FRIDAY NIGHT GAMES? (males, n=2,108)



63%

OF MALE PLAYERS ARE SUPPORTIVE OF FRIDAY NIGHT GAMES IF PLAYERS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO TAKE TIME OFF WORK OR IF THEY ARE COMPENSATED FOR TIME OFF

CHANGES TO COMPETITION STRUCTURES - THEMATIC FEEDBACK

(Responses n = 661)

Top 5 Themes	% of responses
Calendar spacing / recovery / congestion	32%
Competition format / fairness / qualification	30%
Provincial / All-Ireland alignment	19%
Clashes – club, college, U23, other codes	19%
Shorter season / earlier finish	12%

PLAYERS ARE CALLING FOR BETTER-DESIGNED COMPETITION CALENDARS RATHER THAN SIMPLY SHORTER SEASONS. THE STRONGEST CONCERNS RELATE TO INCONSISTENT SPACING BETWEEN GAMES, INSUFFICIENT RECOVERY, COMPETITION OVERLAP AND STRUCTURES WHICH CREATE UNEQUAL WORKLOADS.

CODE SPECIFIC FINDINGS

CAMOGIE is the standout; 108 responses on fairness of competition structures. Seeded group structure is challenged: different numbers of games, teams progressing despite losing all their games, unequal relegation risk, sense the structure reinforces the gap between teams.

Camogie has a **welfare overlap issue: 90 comments on spacing / recovery and 56 on clashes.** U23 is prominent with senior players asked to play U23 and senior fixtures on consecutive days, explicit references to fatigue / injury.

** Hurling is dealt with separately in the next section*

Female Footballers are much more focused on how competitions connect. Largest distinctive theme is **provincial/ All-Ireland alignment (57 responses)** compared with 45 on general format/ fairness.

Players question the value of winning provincial championships, unequal provincial structures and playing the same opposition repeatedly. Players argue that winning a province should confer an advantage entering the All-Ireland series.

MALE FOOTBALL is comparatively less concentrated around one structural problem.

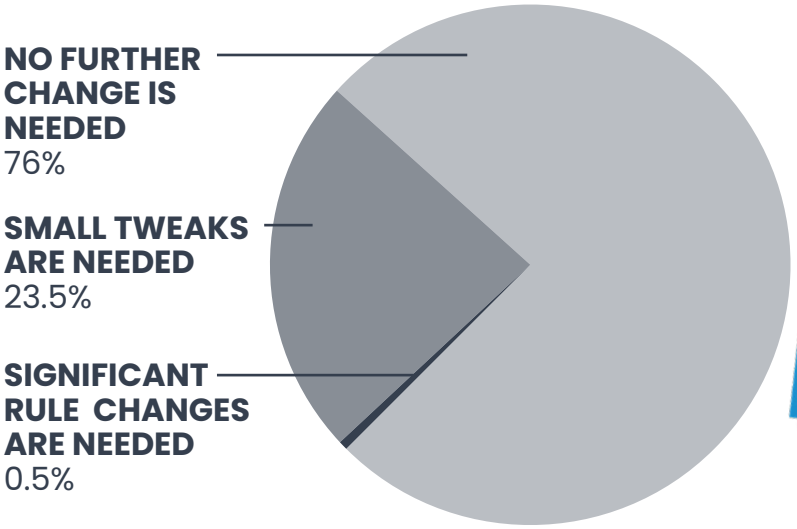
Recovery/calendar management is the largest theme (70), followed by provincial/All-Ireland alignment **(48)** and competition format **(46)**. Feedback is more about **refining an established structure.**

SECTION SIX

FOOTBALL RULES & TECHNOLOGY

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE CURRENT PLAYING RULES IN FOOTBALL?

(male footballers n=1,056)



76%

OF MALE FOOTBALLERS FEEL THERE ARE NO FURTHER CHANGES NEEDED TO THE RULES

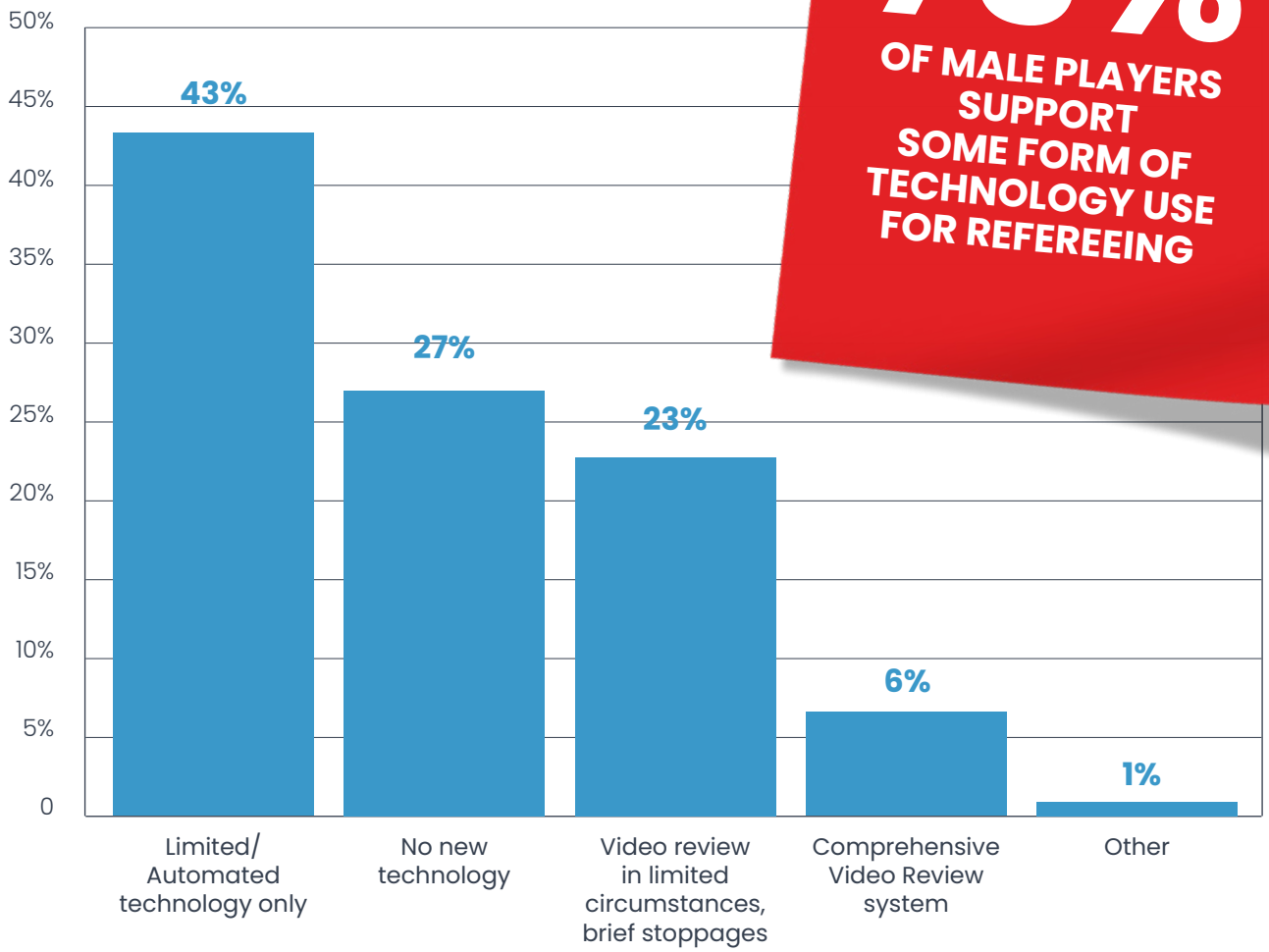
CHANGES TO RULES IN FOOTBALL - TOP 3 AREAS OF FEEDBACK

(Responses n = 190)

Suggest Rule Change Area	Thematic Feedback
Handing Ball Back (55 Mentions)	Consistent message is this creates ambiguity and overly severe 50m penalties. Recurring suggestion is to allow the player to place the ball on the ground at the point of the foul.
Scoring System (52 Mentions)	Four points for a goal appears repeatedly; others want two-point scores restricted to open play, the two-point arc extended towards the end line, two points for sidelines, or the fisted point removed.
Hooter (31 Mentions)	Most responses favour either removing it or returning to the 2025 approach whereby the hooter signalled the final play and the game continued until the ball became dead.

WHAT LEVEL OF TECHNOLOGY WOULD YOU SUPPORT BEING INTRODUCED?

(males, n=2,108)



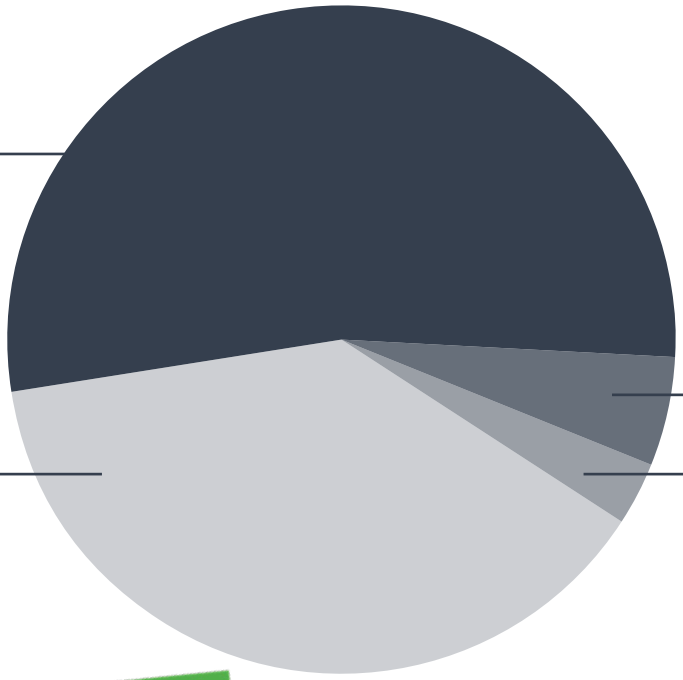
73%

OF MALE PLAYERS SUPPORT SOME FORM OF TECHNOLOGY USE FOR REFEREEING

SECTION SEVEN

HURLING FOCUS

CHAMPIONSHIP STRUCTURE PREFERENCE?
(hurlers n=1,052)



JOE MCDONAGH PLAYERS ONLY TIER WITH MORE SUPPORT FOR A SEPARATE ALL-IRELAND SERIES (47%) THAN RETAINING CURRENT STRUCTURE (45%)

76%
OF HURLERS HAPPY WITH THE CURRENT LEAGUE STRUCTURE
(Christy Ring players 83% to Liam McCarthy players 68%)

THEMATIC FEEDBACK ON CHANGES TO STRUCTURES (66 responses)

GREATER ACCESS TO HIGHER-LEVEL COMPETITION PARTICULARLY FOR DEVELOPING COUNTIES
(27 MENTIONS)

CONCERN ABOUT THE 'YO-YO' EFFECT OF PROMOTION AND IMMEDIATE RELEGATION BETWEEN TIERS
(18 MENTIONS)

CALLS FOR CHANGES TO THE COMPETITION FORMAT
(14 MENTIONS)

NUMBER OF TIERS AND THE SIGNIFICANT GAPS BETWEEN THEM
(11 MENTIONS)

79%

OF HURLERS ARE WORRIED LONG-TERM FOR HURLING IN WEAKER COUNTIES
(RISING TO 93% IN LORY MEAGHER)

56%

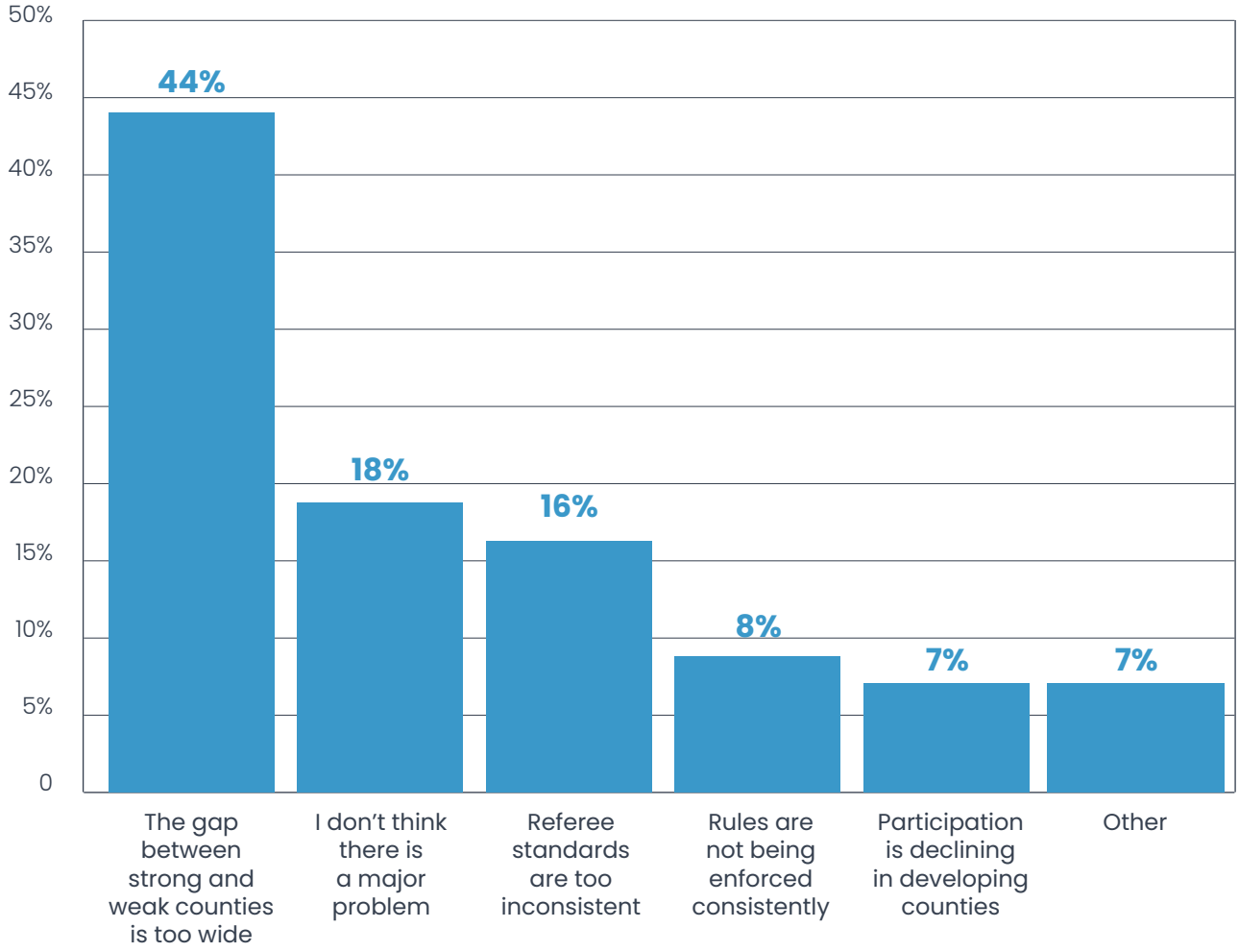
OF HURLERS FEEL INTER-COUNTY HURLING DOESN'T RECEIVE ADEQUATE PROMOTION FROM THE GAA

44%

OF HURLERS FEEL THAT MORE INVESTMENT IN DEVELOPING HURLING WOULD MOST HELP PROMOTE HURLING
(GREATER COVERAGE 27%, MORE PLAYER PROMO 11%)

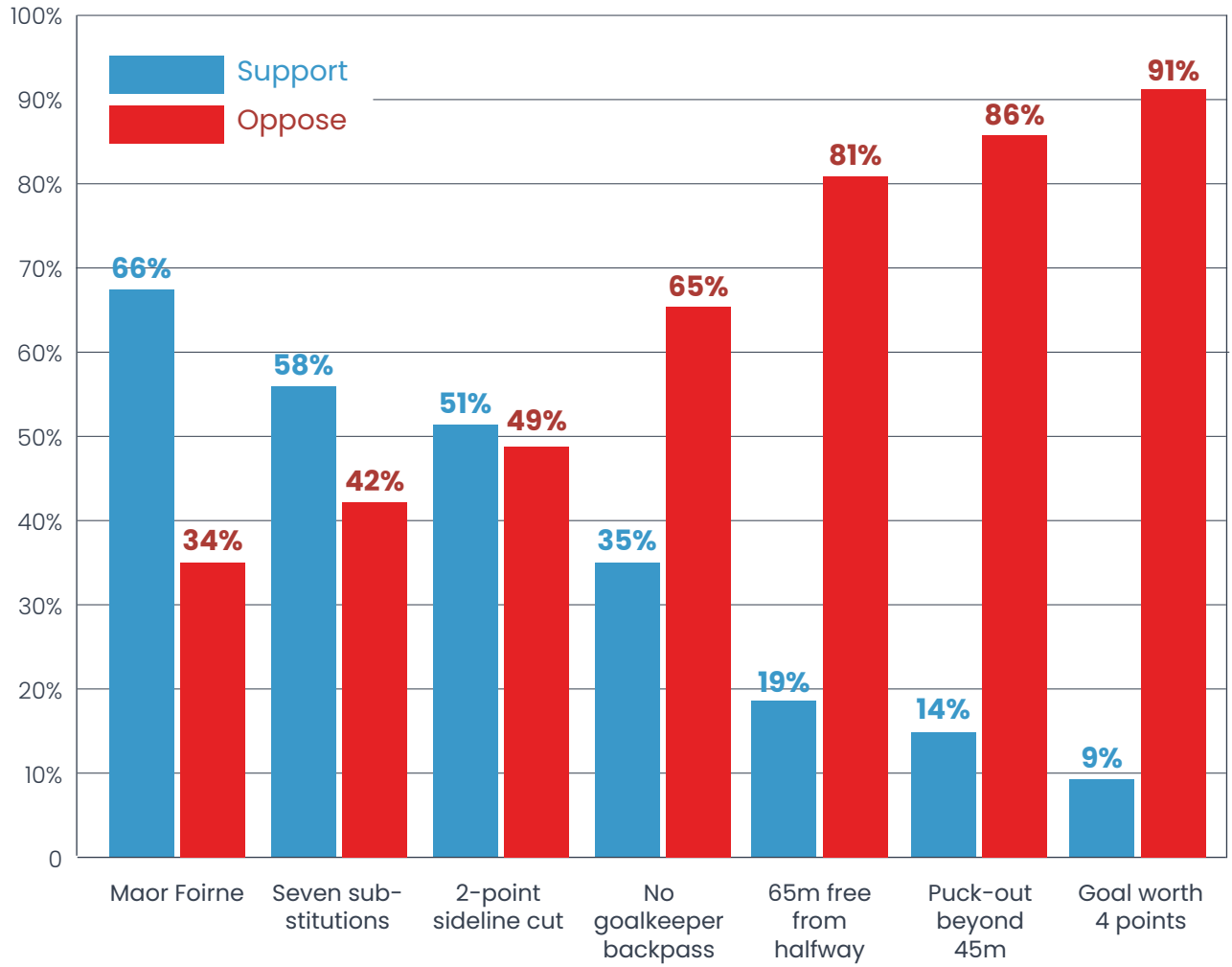
WHAT IS THE BIGGEST PROBLEM WITH THE GAME OF HURLING?

(n=371)



Gap between strong & weak counties was biggest issue for Joe McDonagh players (63%), while lowest among Liam McCarthy players (27%). The top tier players were also most likely (23%) to indicate they didn't see any major problem with the game.

SENTIMENT ON PROPOSED HURLING RULE CHANGES



No strong player mandate for major rule change. Only 3 practical changes attract more support than opposition, while more fundamental changes are overwhelmingly rejected. These findings are consistent across the tiers. Overall, the findings suggest players favour limited, practical refinements.

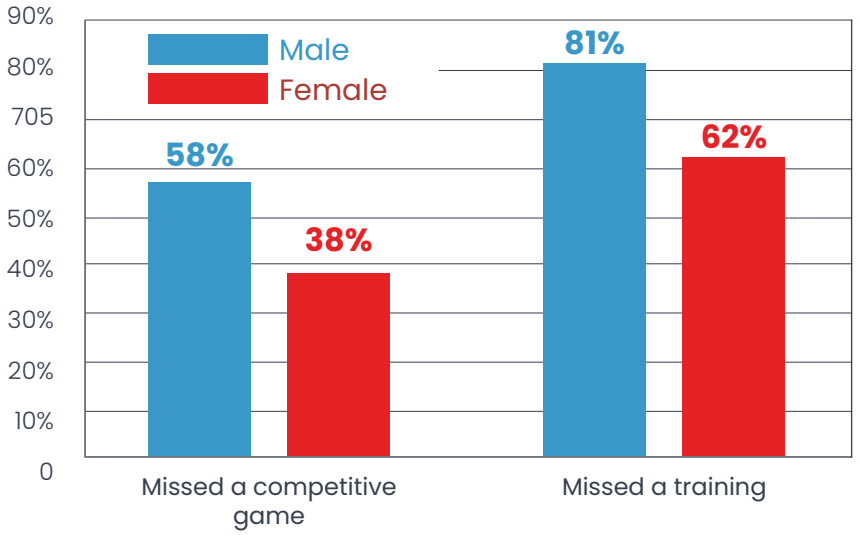
SECTION EIGHT

INJURIES

74%

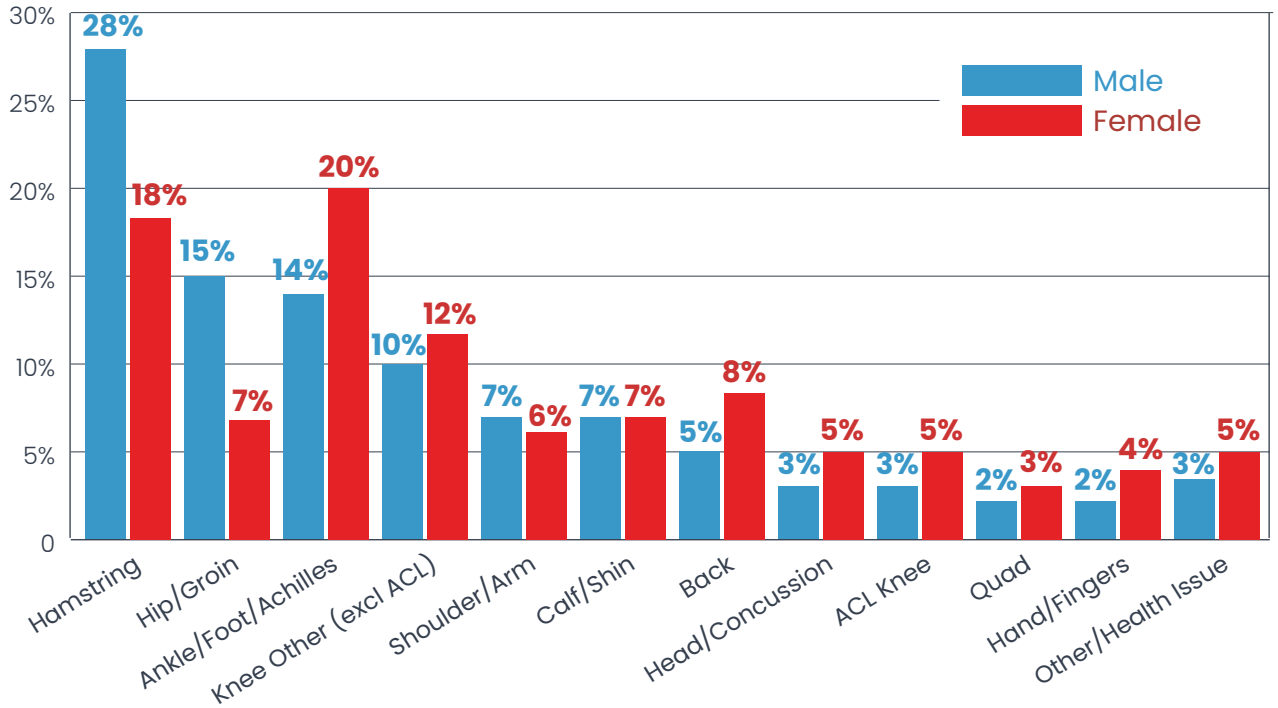
OF ALL PLAYERS REPORTED AN INJURY
(2,632 UNIQUE PLAYERS)

HAVE YOU HAD ANY INJURIES THAT LED TO A MISSED TRAINING SESSION/COMPETITIVE GAME THIS YEAR? (Response - Yes)



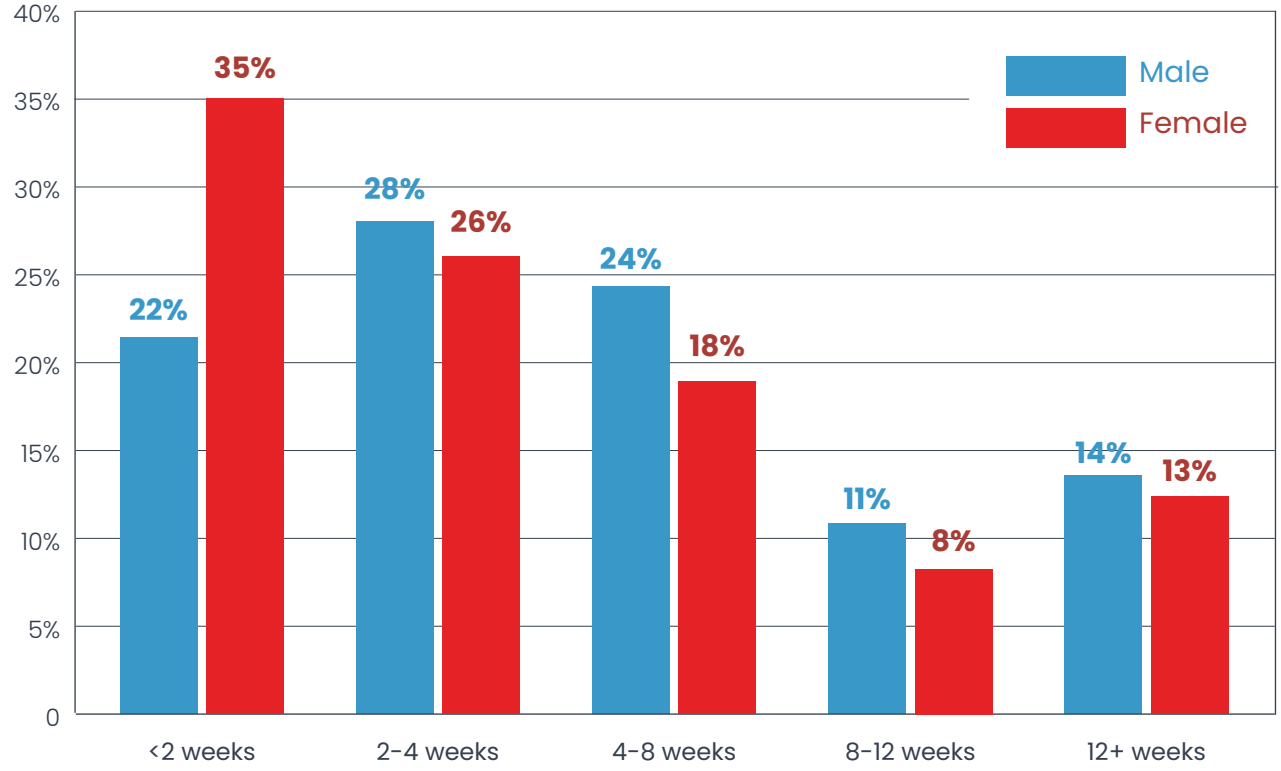
Injury rates similar to 2025. Injury-related absence remains high, particularly among male players. 81% of male players reported missing a training due to injury in 2026 (78% in 2025) while the those who reported missing a competitive game remained stable (59% in 2025). Reported Female injury absences fell slightly across both training (65% to 62%) and games (41% to 38%).

INJURY TYPES BY GENDER (n = 2,595)



Relatively little year-on-year variance v 2025. Hamstring remains by far the most common injury among males at 28% and a high prevalence of soft-tissue injuries. Lower leg injuries dominate for females (20%) with a notable gender difference in ACL injuries persisting (5% f v 3% m).

WHAT WAS THE LENGTH OF TIME BEFORE RETURNING TO PLAY?
(n = 2,632)

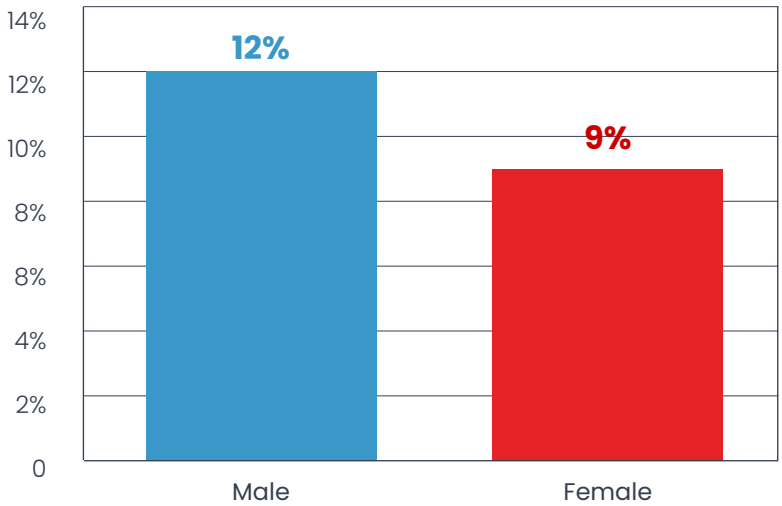


Male players continue to report experiencing longer injury-related absences than female players. 49% of injured males reported they were out for four weeks or more, compared with 39% of females. Estimated average layoff of 5.7 weeks for males versus 4.8 weeks for females. The is consistent with 2025, 6.1 weeks for males and 5.0 weeks for females.

45%
OF INJURED PLAYERS WERE OUT FOR 4 WEEKS OR MORE

11%
OF OF INJURED PLAYERS HAD SURGERY (V 12% IN 2025)

DID YOU HAVE SURGERY FOR YOUR INJURY THIS YEAR? (Yes, n=287)



45%

OF OF INJURED PLAYERS CARRIED INJURY OVER INTO THE CLUB SEASON
(49% MALE V 38% FEMALE)

63%

GOT CONTINUED SUPPORT FROM INTER-COUNTY PHYSIO/S&C FOR INJURY
(71% MALE V 43% FEMALE)

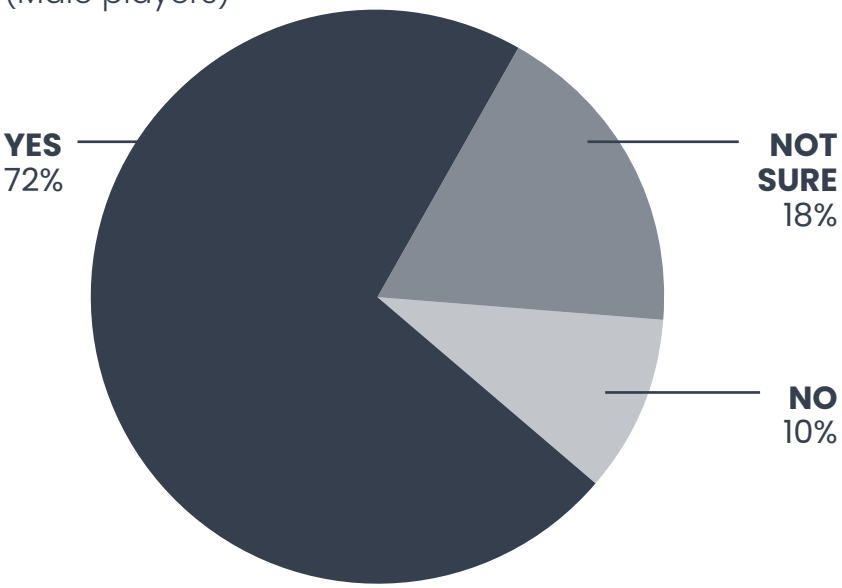
SECTION NINE

PLAYER CHARTER

MALE CHARTER

HAVE YOU RECEIVED THE FULL ENTITLEMENTS OF THE SQUAD CHARTER?

(Male players)



90%

OF PLAYERS WERE SATISFIED WITH SQUAD CHARTER IMPLEMENTATION

THEMATIC FEEDBACK ON MALE SQUAD CHARTER ISSUES

(Responses n = 208)

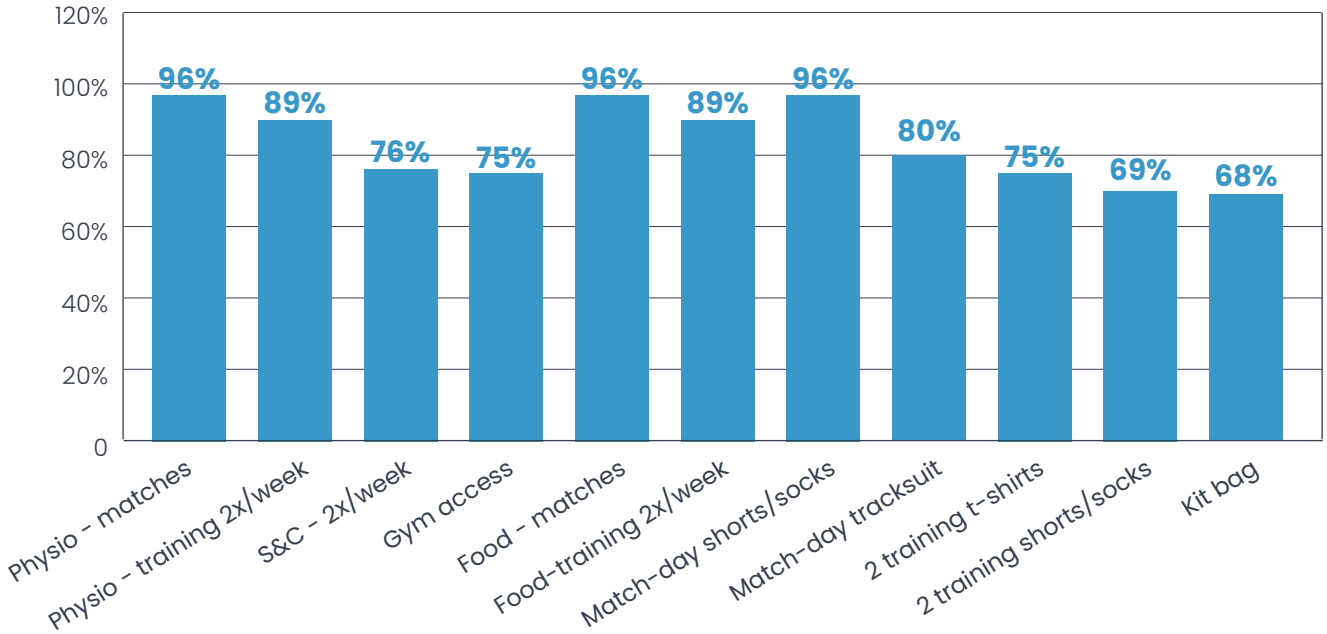
Gear / equipment / footwear (121) Missing / incomplete / late gear, incorrect sizes, poor-quality gear, unpaid boot/hurley allowances and disparities football/ hurling	**Expenses / delayed reimbursement (78)** Outstanding / delayed payments, reduced mileage rates, rejected claims, travel/toll/flight costs not fully covered, players out of pocket
Nutrition / food support (29) No nutrition allowance, insufficient food provision, delayed payments and inconsistent support between teams in the same county.	**Medical / injury costs (20)** Players personally covering scans, consultations, physio, hospital treatment etc, reimbursement delayed or incomplete.

The recurring pattern is inconsistent delivery of agreed Charter standards, particularly around timing, reimbursement and differences in support between teams and codes. Hurlers repeatedly report lower levels of gear, nutrition and other supports than footballers within the same county, suggesting inconsistent application of Player Charter standards across codes.

FEMALE CHARTER

FEMALE CHARTER PROVISIONS

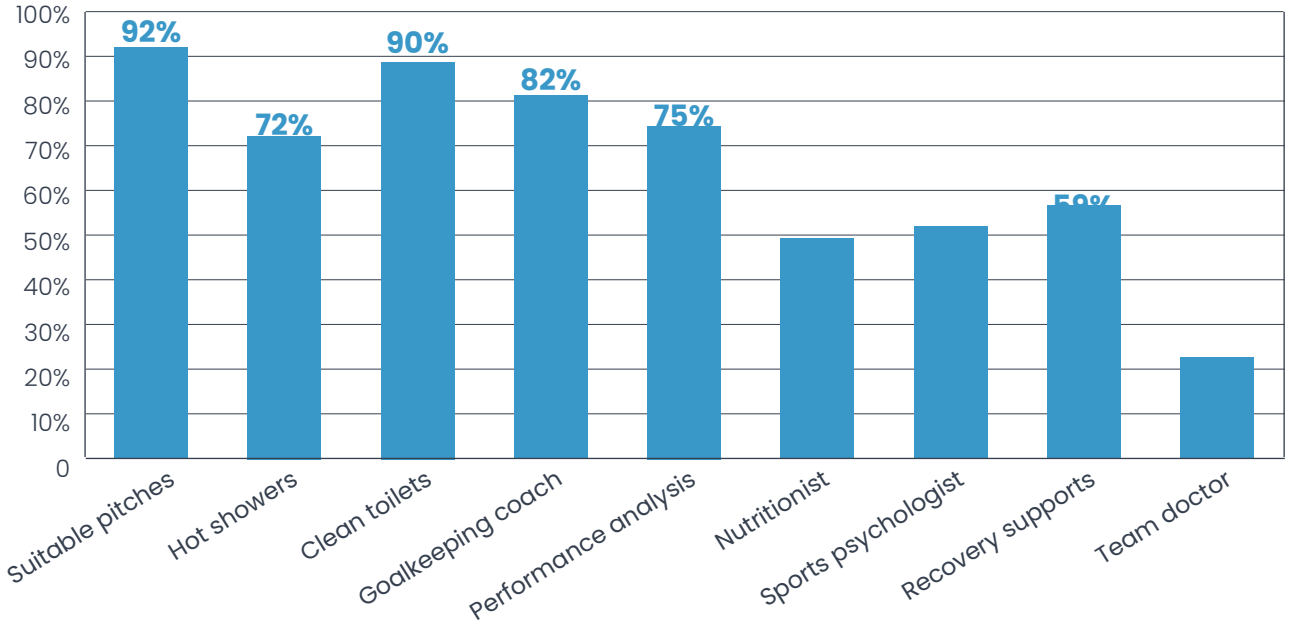
(response = Yes)



TEAM SUPPORT/ENVIRONMENT

TEAM SUPPORTS

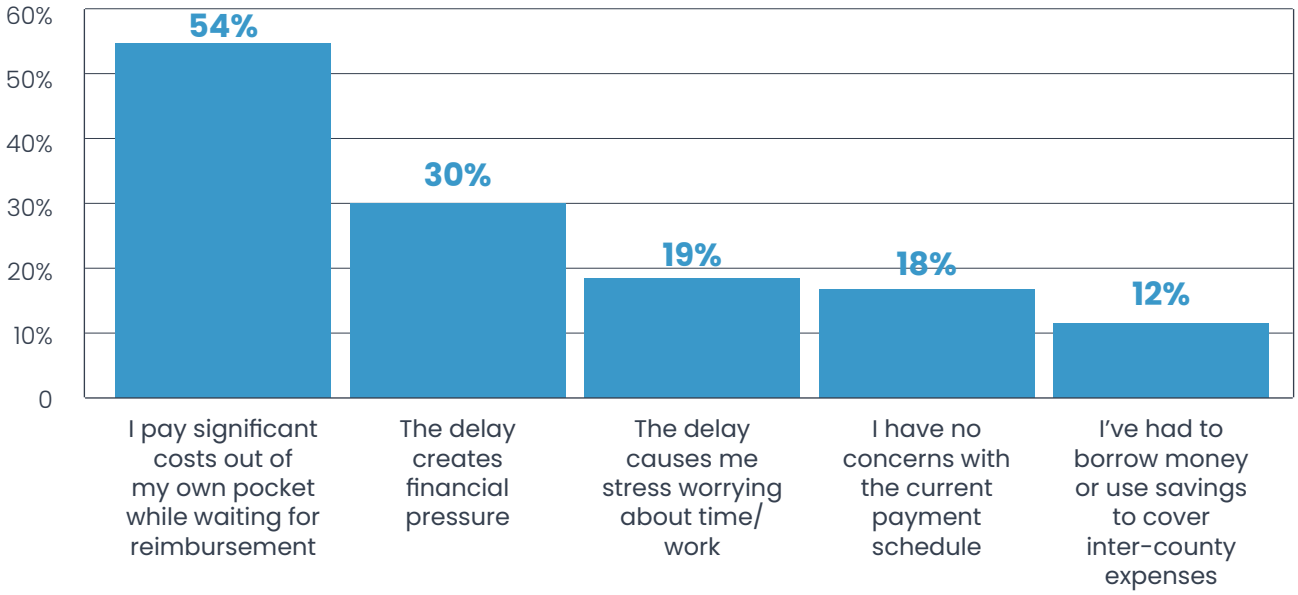
(response = 'Always' or 'Sometimes')



Core match-day provisions delivered consistently, however with significant variation by tier in the provision of regular supports. Team supports show greater variation and large tier differences were again evident. Overall, the findings suggest that the greatest inconsistencies in Charter exist for Lower-Tier Camogie players experiencing the most significant gaps.

FEMALE EXPENSES

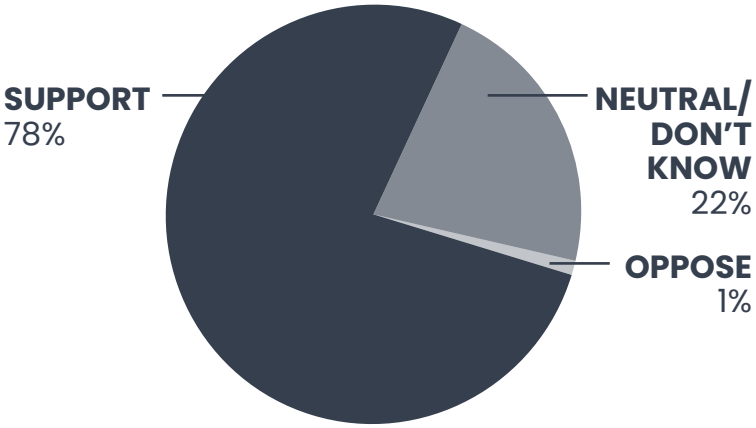
VIEW ON EXPENSES TIMING
(female players, select multiple answers)



70%
OF FEMALE PLAYERS REPORTED AT LEAST ONE SIGNIFICANT ISSUE WITH THE CURRENT EXPENSES TIMING
(2 REIMBURSEMENT WINDOWS ONLY)

94%
OF FEMALE PLAYERS SUPPORT MOVING TO MONTHLY EXPENSES IN 2027

WOULD YOU SUPPORT THE INTRODUCTION OF ONE PLAYER CHARTER THAT GUARANTEES THE SAME MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR ALL INTER-COUNTY PLAYERS POST-INTEGRATION?



98%
OF OF MALE PLAYERS WHO TOOK A POSITION SUPPORT ONE MINIMUM STANDARDS CHARTER FOR ALL INTER-COUNTY PLAYERS

SECTION TEN

TEAM SCORECARDS

Male players were asked to complete a detailed **Team Scorecard**, rating their inter-county environment across 6 key team areas, plus their Overall Experience, on 6-point scale (from 1 Very Poor to 6 Excellent).

The results provide a comprehensive picture of the inter-county environment for players, highlight areas of strong practice, areas for improvements, and allow benchmarking. This pilot of the Team Scorecard highlights generally a very postive experience for players.

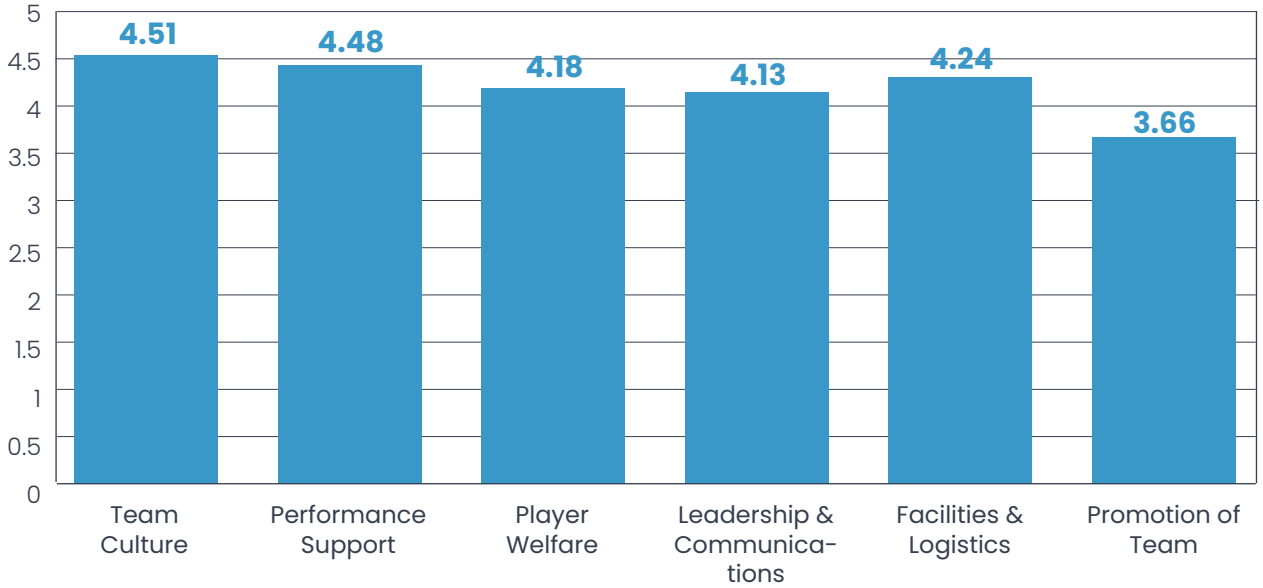
AVERAGE PLAYER EXPERIENCE

4.4

OUT OF 6

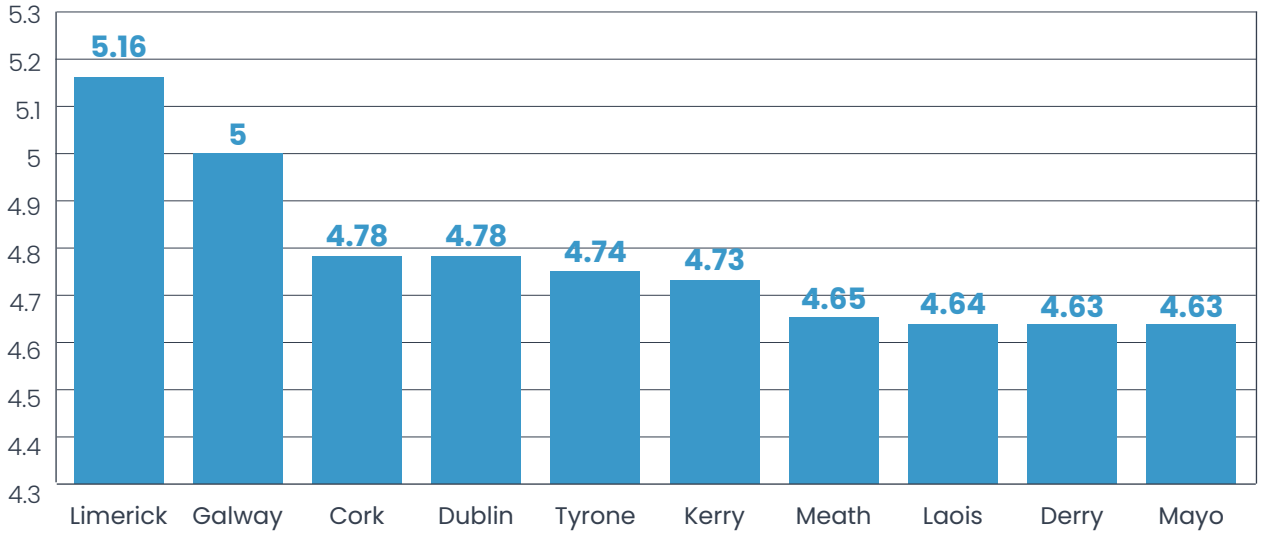
AVERAGE SCORE BY AREA

(score out of 6)



TEAM SCORECARDS BY COUNTY TOP 10

(Football & Hurling squads combined, scores out of 6)



SCORECARDS BY TEAM TOP 20

(Scores out of 6)

	Team	Team Score	Leadership & Comms	Performance Support	Team/ Player Promo	Facilities & Logistics	Player Welfare	Team Culture	Overall Player Experience
1	Limerick Hurling	5.75	5.89	5.83	5.60	5.57	5.71	5.83	5.77
2	Mayo Football	5.39	5.44	5.33	5.23	5.26	5.33	5.54	5.49
3	Kerry Football	5.33	5.21	5.31	5.24	5.48	5.41	5.34	5.31
4	Louth Football	5.20	5.03	5.09	5.34	5.28	5.16	5.28	5.19
5	Galway Hurling	5.17	5.26	5.17	5.09	4.94	5.17	5.11	5.29
6	Armagh Football	5.10	5.05	5.28	5.31	4.62	5.05	5.26	5.15
7	Dublin Football	4.94	4.97	4.97	4.76	4.86	5.14	4.95	4.92
8	Offaly Hurling	4.92	5.15	4.73	4.64	5.24	4.88	5.00	4.88
9	Clare Hurling	4.92	4.95	4.76	4.65	4.84	5.03	5.16	4.97
10	Wexford Football	4.90	4.75	4.78	4.75	5.22	4.97	5.16	4.81
11	London Football	4.90	5.22	4.74	4.26	4.74	4.85	5.30	5.04
12	Donegal Football	4.88	4.91	4.71	4.80	4.91	4.97	5.03	4.83
13	Galway Football	4.87	4.90	4.80	4.68	5.00	4.85	5.07	4.83
14	Westmeath Football	4.86	5.03	4.94	5.19	3.32	4.81	5.35	5.45
15	Cork Football	4.85	4.97	4.48	4.29	5.03	5.19	5.06	4.90
16	Tyrone Hurling	4.81	4.57	4.82	4.32	5.25	4.96	4.68	4.93
17	Derry Hurling	4.80	4.88	4.68	4.08	4.72	4.84	5.00	5.12
18	Laois Hurling	4.77	4.81	4.38	4.56	5.09	4.69	5.09	4.75
19	Meath Football	4.75	4.65	4.71	4.74	4.65	4.90	5.00	4.68
20	Cork Hurling	4.69	4.94	4.67	4.76	4.52	4.76	4.88	4.52

Importantly, high-performing teams are not confined to the top competitions, showing that a strong player environment can be created irrespective of tier. The detailed Scorecards also show different strengths between teams across different areas providing an opportunity to acknowledge best practice across the inter-county game.

Individual team and county scorecards will be available directly to county boards, allowing them to benchmark their player environment against national standards and identify areas for improvement. The GPA will work collaboratively to share best practice and support improvements in player standards across all levels of the game.

gpa

www.gaelicplayers.com