

COVID-19 IMPACT REPORT

FEDERATION OF
**IRISH
SPORT**

COVID-19 IMPACT

Survey of National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships.

MAY 2021



BACKGROUND

COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of society since March 2020. For the Irish Sport and Physical Activity sector, the pandemic brought an almost universal cessation of activity through 2020 and early 2021.

There is no doubt that through the most challenging of times, the sector took every effort to support society, abide by public health directions and cease operating across the island of Ireland. Many clubs and groups around the country proved just how integral sport and physical activity is to society by stepping up to support their local communities through their volunteer efforts.

There is no denying the immense challenges that the sector has faced from loss of revenue to cancellation of competitions and potential declines in membership.

Many in Irish society will have witnessed some of the more large scale, high profile impacts including the cancellation of EURO2020, the postponement of the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the disruption to international and elite sport on the world stage. However, this report seeks to showcase the more granular impact of COVID-19 on the sector as a whole. From grassroots participation and access to opportunity for minority groups to significant financial losses and stalling of progress, the sector has been hit hard.

The findings contained within serve to illustrate the need for continued support of the sector as society emerges from the pandemic and beyond.

**THE FEDERATION
OF IRISH SPORT IS
PROUD TO
ADVOCATE FOR
OUR MEMBERS.**

CONTEXT & CONTRIBUTIONS

The Federation of Irish Sport is a representative body for 109 sport and physical activity organisations in Ireland. Throughout 2020 the Federation sought to support members during a period of unprecedented challenge and change. As part of this work, the Federation of Irish Sport advocated for a financial support package for the sector which came to fruition and was announced by government in June 2020. The recovery and resilience fund provided much needed support to keep the sector afloat.

However, as the pandemic progressed it became clear that the impact on the sector was growing. The Federation sought to better understand and quantify that impact through a survey of members in May 2021. The survey of the sector was conducted by the Federation of Irish Sport and analysed by the University of Limerick.

Contributions were received from 50 bodies representing a cross section of Local Sports Partnerships and National Governing Bodies across the country.

Findings were analysed by academics from University of Limerick. This report was compiled and narrated by the Federation of Irish Sport executive.

The Federation would like to thank all who contributed to the survey for their honest reflections on the impact of COVID-19.

The Federation would also like to thank Mary O'Connor, CEO and Sinead Conroy, Business Services Manager for their work in leading this project and Helen Purtill of University of Limerick for her professionalism and support in analysing and compiling the data.



THE TOP LINE

4 KEY AREAS:

- ECONOMIC IMPACT
- SOCIAL IMPACT
- IMPACT ON PROGRESS
- FUTURE OUTLOOK

49%

have seen income reduced by more than 30%.

66%

have seen 75% or more of their physical activities cancelled.

91%

have tried to adapt activities for digital delivery.

46%

believe their organisation possesses the resilience and governance structures survive the effects of COVID-19.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

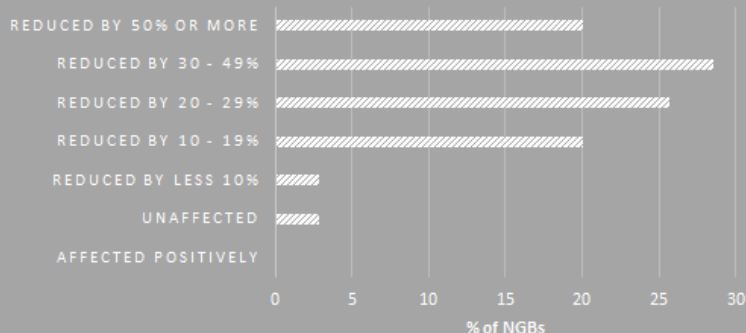
FINANCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON YOUR ORGANISATION



86%

say impact is 'Negative' or worse.

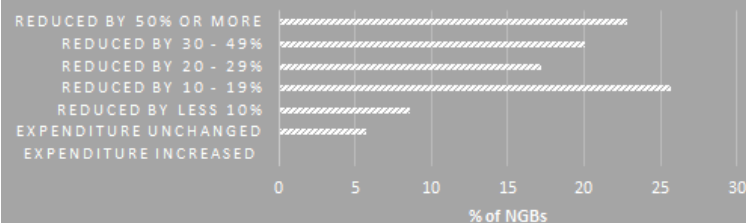
EFFECT ON INCOME SINCE MARCH 2020



THE NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE INCOME OF ORGANISATIONS HAS BEEN SUBSTANTIAL.

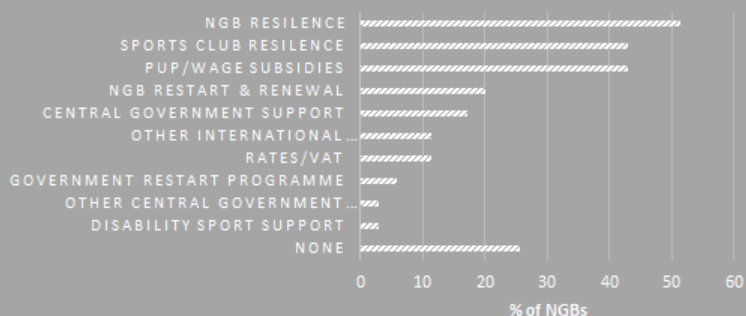
GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS HAVE BEEN KEY TO SURVIVAL.

EFFECT ON EXPENDITURE SINCE MARCH 2020



ECONOMIC IMPACT

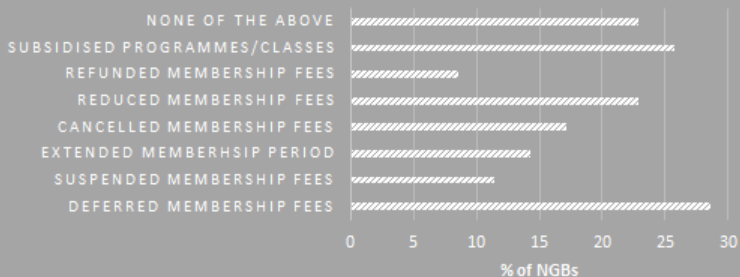
WHAT SUPPORTS HAVE YOU AVAILED OF?



74%

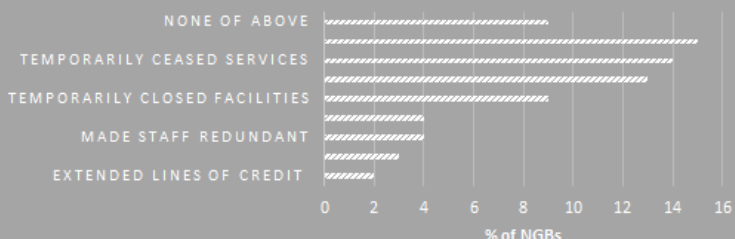
have availed of at least one government financial support.

WHAT ACTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO REDUCE COST FOR MEMBERS?



MANY NGBS HAVE SUPPORTED THEIR MEMBERS BY DEFERRING FEES, SUBSIDISING OR APPLYING EXTENSIONS.

WHAT ACTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO REDUCE EXPENDITURE OF THE ORGANISATION?



WHILE BENEFICIAL FOR MEMBERS, THIS HAS THE POTENTIAL TO EXTEND THE FINANCIAL BURDON FELT BY THE ORGANISATION.

SOCIAL IMPACT

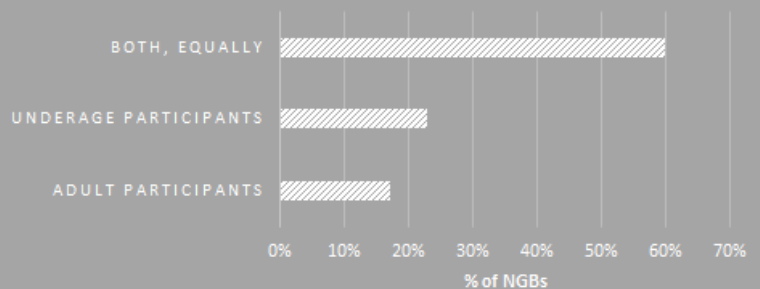
68%

believe the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will result in a permanent loss of volunteers.

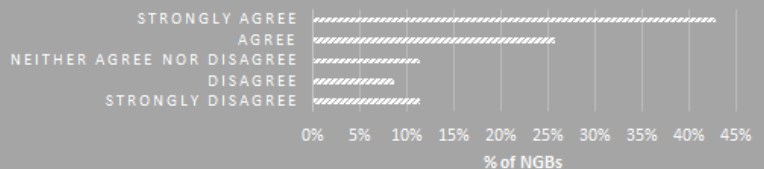
THE CHALLENGES FACING VOLUNTEERS HAVE NEVER BEEN GREATER.

PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IS KEY TO A SAFE AND SUBSTANTIAL RETURN OF ALL TO SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.

WHICH PARTICIPANTS HAVE BEEN MOST IMPACTED BY THE REDUCTION OF ACTIVITY?



WE ARE CONCERNED THAT THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC WILL CAUSE PERMANENT LOSS OF VOLUNTEERS TO OUR ORGANISATION.



SOCIAL IMPACT

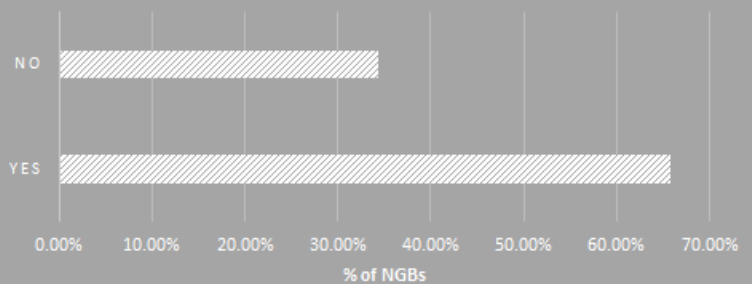
69%

believe minority groups have been disproportionately affected by the restrictions posed by COVID-19.

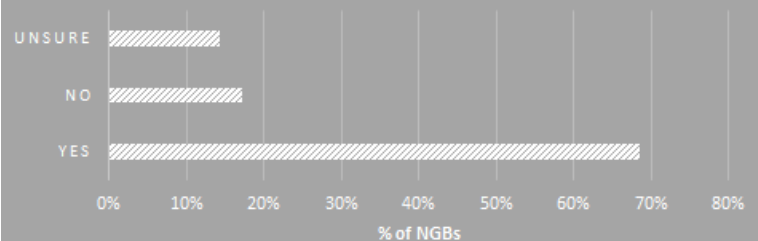
MINORITY GROUPS HAVE BEEN DISPROPORTIONATELY EFFECTED BY COVID-19.

PROGRESS ON NATIONAL SPORTS POLICY OBJECTIVES FOR MINORITY GRADIENTS STANDS TO BE IMPACTED BY THE CESSATION OF ACTIVITY.

DOES YOUR ORGANISATION RUN PROGRAMMES TO TARGET/ASSIST INDIVIDUALS IN MINORITY GROUPS?

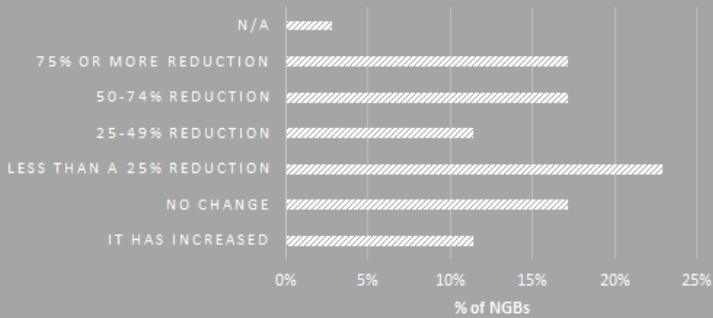


DO YOU BELIEVE INDIVIDUALS IN UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS, AS OUTLINED BY THE NATIONAL SPORTS POLICY INCLUDING DISABILITY, GENDER, ETHNIC MINORITY, OLDER PEOPLE, AND LOWER SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS, ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED BY COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS?

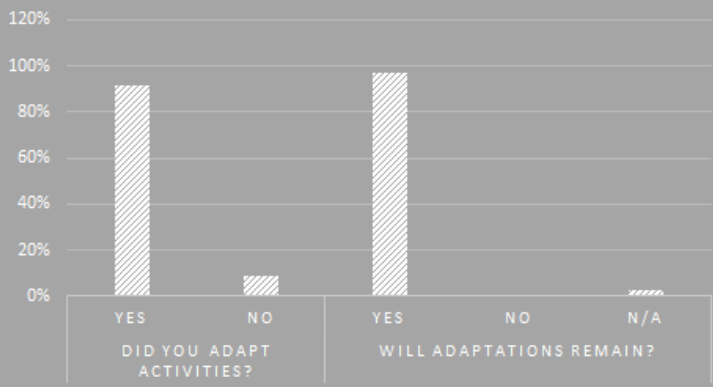


IMPACT ON PROGRESS

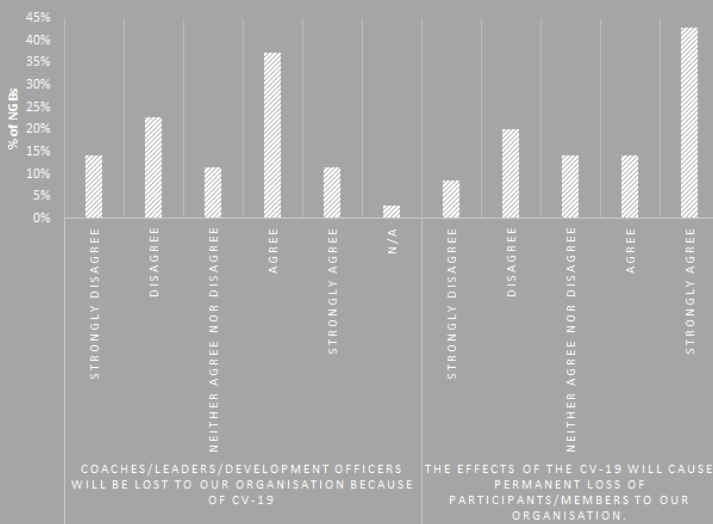
HOW HAS MEMBERSHIP OF YOUR ORGANISATION CHANGED SINCE MARCH 2020?



ADAPTING OF ACTIVITIES



LOSS OF SUPPORT PERSONNEL



91%

of organisations adapted their activities in some form.

WE MUST CONTINUE TO DELIVER ON NATIONAL SPORTS POLICY OBJECTIVES AND SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS TO DO SO EVEN WHEN FACING EXCEPTIONAL CHALLENGES.

INNOVATION AND ADAPTATION SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED AS WE RECOVER.

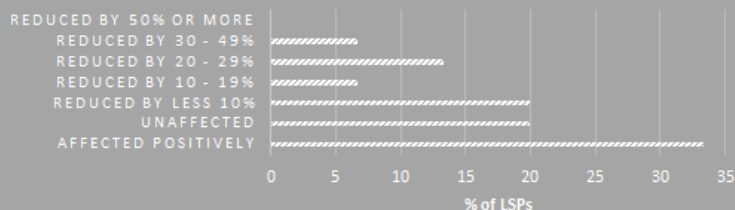
SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS IN FOCUS

53%

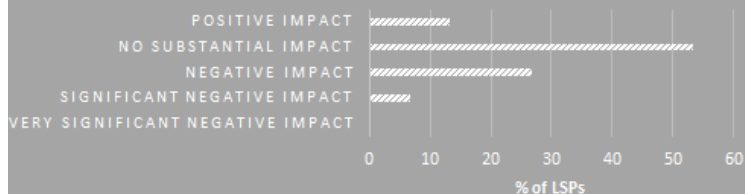
of organisations will require ongoing financial support to return to full capacity

WHILE THE IMPACT HAS BEEN SUBSTANTIAL, SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS ARE SEEING LESS SEVERE FINANCIAL IMPACTS THAN THOSE EXPERIENCED BY NGBS.

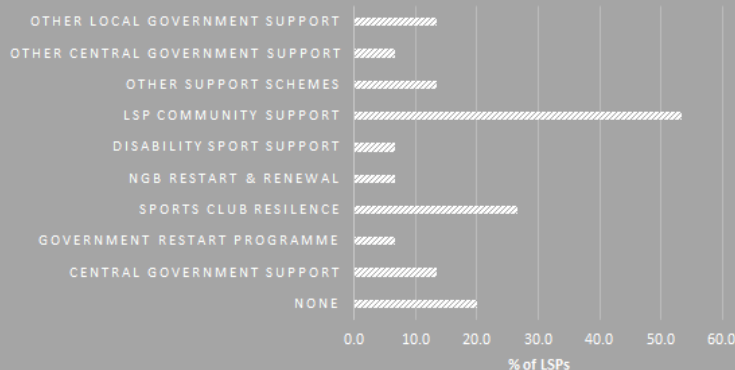
EFFECT ON INCOME SINCE MARCH 2020?



FINANCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE ORGANISATION



USE OF FINANCIAL SUPPORTS



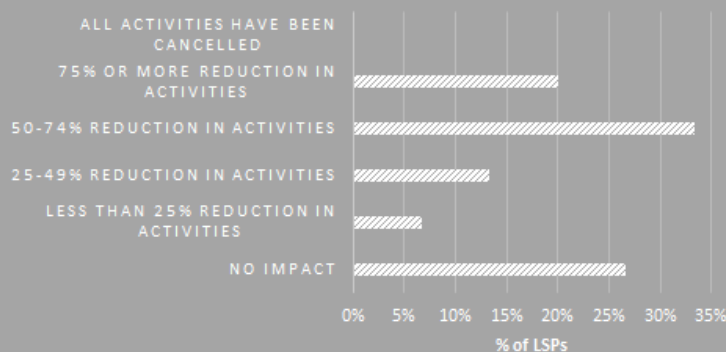
SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS IN FOCUS

67%

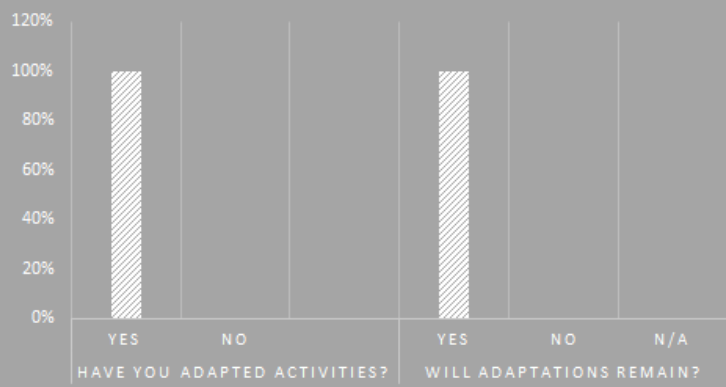
believe their organisation possesses the resilience and governance structures survive the effects of COVID-19

INNOVATION AND ADAPTATION IN DELIVERING ACTIVITIES HAS BEEN EVIDENT ACROSS ALL SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS AS THEY CONTINUE TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN THE COMMUNITY.

IMPACT ON ACTIVITY LEVELS



ADAPTING ACTIVITIES



IMPACT ON SUPPORT PERSONNEL





THE IMPACT & THE FUTURE

- **57%** 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that they are concerned that participants from u16 down will lose the habit of regular participation.
- **46%** 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that former participants will be lost to other activities.
- **57%** 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that they will have reduced capacity as a result of having fewer volunteers available to the organisation.
- **54%** 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' that costs of participation will increase because total costs will have to be shared across fewer members.
- **49%** 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' that the number of opportunities delivered by the organisation will decrease.
- **43%** 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that their organisation will rebound to how things were before COVID-19.
- **79%** 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that with adequate financial support, they can rebound more quickly.



"SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CAN BE A SIGNIFICANT PART OF THE SOLUTION FOR SOCIETY GOING FORWARD."

While the impact of COVID-19 has been immensely challenging for the sport and physical activity sector, it has also presented opportunities to enhance innovation and capitalise on an increased focus on physical health and activity. In order to recover, reemerge and maximise any potential opportunities going forward, the sector must be financially supported as society begins to re-open.

It is also essential that progress is not lost as a result of the pandemic. The National Sports Policy provides a clear pathway for progress to 2027 and it must continue to guide the actions of the sector and government.

Sport and Physical Activity organisations have proven their importance in Irish society is stronger than ever before. Through the most challenging of times those within the sector have provided much needed support and assistance to their communities and the wider public health effort.

It is essential that the impact on organised sport and physical activity organisations is considered and their recovery supported as society emerges from the pandemic.

With the right support, sport and physical activity will thrive again in 2021 and beyond.



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The logo for the Federation of Irish Sport, featuring the text "FEDERATION OF IRISH SPORT" in white on a teal square background.

FEDERATION OF
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