

***Sport 21* Background Report no. 2**

This is no. 2 in a series of background reports being prepared during 2002/03 to inform the revision of *Sport 21*, the national strategy for sport in Scotland.

**Public Attitudes to the Importance  
of Sport in Scotland**

Research Digest no. 89

by

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## Further Information

This Research Digest is one of a series of background reports being produced during 2002/03 by **sportscotland**'s Research Unit to provide contextual information for the revision of *Sport 21*, the national strategy for sport in Scotland.

A parallel background report uses further information from the same survey of the general public to explore *Public attitudes to the importance of excellence in Scottish sport* (Research Digest no. 88).

These background reports – and all **sportscotland**'s research reports and summary digests – are put on our website as soon as they become available:

[www.sportscotland.org.uk](http://www.sportscotland.org.uk)

This report has included differences in attitudes according to five out of ten of the various socio-demographic characteristics gathered by System Three's Scottish Opinion Survey. These were the profiles where a few differences tended to emerge, although there are some differences in attitudes for profiles not included. The data for these are available; figures for attitudes broken down by the following profiles can be obtained from the Research Unit:

- Social class
- Marital status
- Working status
- Local authority region (former mainland regions plus greater Glasgow)
- Suburban, rural or urban location of respondent's home

For further information, contact:

**sportscotland**  
Caledonia House  
South Gyle  
Edinburgh EH12 9DQ

Tel: 0131 317 7200

Fax: 0131 317 7202

email: [research@sportscotland.org.uk](mailto:research@sportscotland.org.uk)

# Introduction

1 In May 2002 **sportscotland** commissioned questions from the general public on their attitudes to the importance of sport in Scotland. The questions were included in the regular household Scottish Omnibus Survey by System Three and were asked of adults aged 16 and over. The sample was a reasonably representative cross-section of the adult Scottish population.

## Sport and the Quality of Life

2 An overwhelming majority (95%) thought that sport adds to the quality of life for the population in general. Their main reasons were that it keeps people fit and healthy (81%), is just enjoyable and fun (17%) and creates community spirit and brings people together (12%). A substantial majority (71%) also considered that sport adds to the quality of life for them personally. (Table 1)

Table 1: Whether Sport Adds to the Quality of Life in Scotland													
Issue	Total	Gender		Age Group				Participation in last 4 wks <sup>1</sup>		Children in Household <sup>2</sup>		Limiting Disability <sup>3</sup>	
		M	F	16-24	25-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Percentage of respondents <sup>4</sup>													
Do you agree or disagree that sport adds to the quality of life in Scotland for the population in general?													
Agree	95	95	95	93	96	95	97	96	94	93	97	96	95
Disagree	5	5	5	7	4	5	3	4	6	7	3	4	5
Sample no.	860	419	441	124	161	295	279	485	375	303	556	219	640
<i>[Those who agreed] Why do you say that? [Unprompted; more than one response per respondent included]</i>													
Keeps you fit	81	78	84	87	86	79	79	83	79	81	81	79	82
It's fun	17	14	11	12	10	12	15	11	15	10	14	15	12
Community spirit	12	18	15	12	16	22	15	20	14	20	15	17	17
Sample no.	827	406	422	113	157	284	271	470	356	287	539	212	615
Do you agree or disagree that sport adds to the quality of life in Scotland for you personally?													
Agree	71	77	66	80	78	75	60	87	51	75	67	61	75
Disagree	29	23	44	20	22	25	40	13	49	25	33	39	25
Sample no.	867	419	448	123	169	293	282	493	374	306	561	215	652

<sup>1</sup> Respondents were asked if they had taken part in any sport or physical recreation during the four weeks prior to interview (interviewing took place during 23-28 May 2002). Those who reported 'no' would include participants who took part regularly during a different season or simply had not taken part during this period, as well as non-participants.

<sup>2</sup> Any children aged under 16 living in the household.

<sup>3</sup> "Do you have any long-term illness, health problem or disability that limits your daily activities or the work you can do?"

<sup>4</sup> Throughout, the small proportions who said 'don't know' have been excluded from the sample.

- 3 While the respondents were fairly uniformly in agreement that sport adds to the quality of life for people generally, there was more variation when the question related to their own quality of life. Those who agreed that it added to their own quality of life were more likely to be sports participants (87%), in the professional social class AB (83%), male (77%), under 55 (77%), and without a limiting disability (75%).

## Benefits of Sport

- 4 When asked to choose the one most important benefit of sport, over a third (36%) considered it to be the improvement of the population's health. Others considered the most important benefit to be the mental and/or physical well-being of individuals (16%) and fun and enjoyment (14%). Fewer than ten per cent considered that the most important benefit was as a social activity, providing opportunities for those who are disadvantaged or reducing youth crime and truancy. (Table 2)
- 5 Young adults (aged 16-24) were less likely to consider the most important benefit to be the mental and/or physical well-being of individuals and more likely to cite fun and enjoyment.
- 6 When asked to consider each of these separately (apart from fun and enjoyment), however, high proportions rated each of them as an area where sport is 'very' or 'quite' important. This varied from 93 per cent who considered sport very or quite important for an individual's mental or physical well-being to 75 per cent for reducing youth crime and truancy:
  - 6.1 93 per cent thought sport important for an individual's mental or physical well-being
  - 6.2 92 per cent thought sport important as a social activity, providing an opportunity to make friends and meet other people
  - 6.3 92 per cent thought sport important for improving the health of the population
  - 6.4 89 per cent thought sport important for providing opportunities for those people who are disadvantaged in some way
  - 6.5 75 per cent thought sport important in reducing crime levels and truancy among young people
- 7 Sport was also considered very or quite important in a further list of areas by high proportions of respondents (Table 3):
  - 7.1 86 per cent: creating national pride
  - 7.2 83 per cent: helping young people perform better at school
  - 7.3 78 per cent: developing a sense of pride in the local community
  - 7.4 76 per cent: providing opportunities for volunteers to get involved
  - 7.5 75 per cent: providing more employment and training opportunities

**Table 2: Views on the Main Benefits of Sport**

Issue	Total	Gender		Age Group				Participation in last 4 wks		Children in Household		Limiting Disability	
		M	F	16-24	25-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Percentage of respondents												
In your opinion what would you consider to be the most important benefit of sport to the people of Scotland? <i>[prompted]</i>													
Improving health of population	36	35	38	34	35	37	38	39	34	35	37	32	38
Well-being of individuals	16	13	18	11	18	18	14	18	13	19	14	15	16
Fun and enjoyment	14	16	13	21	16	16	10	15	14	15	14	14	15
As a social activity	9	11	7	10	11	8	9	8	10	10	9	7	10
Reducing youth crime/truancy	7	7	7	6	4	7	10	7	8	7	7	9	7
Opportunities for disadvantaged	5	6	4	4	4	4	7	4	6	3	6	6	5
Sample no.	890	429	463	124	171	306	290	498	394	312	580	225	667
Please tell me the level of importance you think sport currently has in Scotland in each of the following areas:													
• An individual's well-being, mentally and/or physically													
Very important	63	59	66	57	64	63	64	65	59	60	64	65	62
Quite important	31	32	29	33	30	30	30	29	33	33	29	26	32
Sample no.	896	434	462	125	170	305	296	498	398	310	586	227	669
• As a social activity – providing an opportunity to make friends, meet other people													
Very important	47	46	48	47	47	46	47	49	44	41	50	48	46
Quite important	46	44	48	45	45	46	46	44	48	52	42	45	46
Sample no.	899	434	465	125	172	306	296	499	400	313	586	228	671
• Improving the health of the population													
Very important	66	67	68	66	65	66	68	69	64	63	68	67	66
Quite important	25	25	25	23	25	25	27	24	28	28	24	24	26
Sample no.	900	433	467	125	171	306	297	499	401	312	587	230	669
• Providing opportunities for those people who are disadvantaged in some way													
Very important	51	50	52	54	48	52	49	50	51	48	52	56	49
Quite important	38	35	40	35	35	38	40	36	40	39	37	36	39
Sample no.	891	429	462	123	170	305	293	492	399	311	580	227	664
• Reducing crime levels and truancy amongst young people													
Very important	46	45	47	41	43	46	49	44	49	43	48	51	45
Quite important	29	28	29	28	26	29	29	29	28	32	27	24	30
Sample no.	893	431	472	123	175	305	296	495	399	310	583	227	667

Table 3: Areas Where Sport is Considered to be Important													
Issue	Total	Gender		Age Group				Participation in last 4 wks		Children in Household		Limiting Disability	
		M	F	16-24	25-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Percentage of respondents												
Please tell me the level of importance you think sport currently has in Scotland in each of the following areas:													
• National pride													
Very important	45	47	43	41	38	46	49	45	44	38	48	49	43
Quite important	41	40	42	43	48	40	37	40	41	43	40	38	42
Sample no.	893	433	459	124	169	304	295	492	401	307	586	226	666
• Helping young people perform better at school													
Very important	42	40	45	38	34	48	44	42	43	41	44	44	42
Quite important	41	41	40	39	44	37	43	40	42	43	40	37	42
Sample no.	890	430	460	124	169	304	294	493	397	300	580	228	662
• Having pride in your local community													
Very important	34	36	32	26	29	37	38	31	38	29	37	41	32
Quite important	45	42	48	51	46	43	44	44	46	45	45	43	46
Sample no.	895	433	462	125	170	305	295	495	400	312	583	227	668
• Providing opportunities for volunteers to get involved													
Very important	24	20	28	23	24	22	27	23	25	20	26	26	23
Quite important	52	51	53	56	48	53	52	51	53	52	51	56	51
Sample no.	888	430	458	124	165	305	293	496	392	313	582	223	665
• Providing more employment and training opportunities													
Very important	34	30	38	35	34	33	34	34	34	31	35	36	33
Quite important	41	41	41	39	40	42	42	40	42	42	41	42	41
Sample no.	890	433	457	124	170	305	291	494	396	310	581	223	667

## Provision of Sports Facilities

- 8 When given a choice of the four types of providers of sports facilities, two-thirds (68%) considered that local authorities should be the main providers. A fifth thought that national agencies and governing bodies of sport should be the main providers; a tenth that it should be local clubs and organisations; and only two per cent that commercial operators should be the main providers. (Table 4)

**Table 4: Views on the Provision of Sports Facilities**

Issue	Total	Gender		Age Group				Participation in last 4 wks		Children in Household		Limiting Disability	
		M	F	16-24	25-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Percentage of respondents												
Who do you think should be the main providers of sports facilities in Scotland? <i>[prompted]</i>													
Local authorities/ councils	68	63	73	62	74	69	65	68	68	72	66	64	69
National agencies and gov bodies	20	26	15	26	15	22	28	22	18	19	21	22	20
Local clubs and organisations	10	10	10	10	6	7	16	9	12	8	12	12	9
Commercial operators	2	1	3	2	4	1	1	1	3	2	3	1	2
<i>Sample no.</i>	<i>864</i>	<i>424</i>	<i>440</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>297</i>	<i>282</i>	<i>480</i>	<i>384</i>	<i>303</i>	<i>561</i>	<i>220</i>	<i>644</i>
<i>[Those who specified local authorities]</i> Which of the following options would be your preferred choice for the provision of sports facilities by local authorities?													
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing with a similar level of subsidies by tax payers so that current admission prices are maintained.</li> <li>Increasing the level of subsidies by tax payers so that access to sports facilities would be free to all users.</li> <li>Increasing admission charges for those who can afford to pay, not including those who are disadvantaged in some way. This would enable better quality facilities to be provided.</li> <li>Reducing the level of subsidies by tax payers so that admission prices would be increased, except for those who are disadvantaged in some way.</li> </ul>													
Continue subsidy	49	45	52	42	51	47	51	54	43	54	46	33	54
Increase subsidy	26	28	23	32	25	27	21	24	27	24	27	29	25
Increase charges	22	23	21	23	21	21	24	19	26	21	23	33	19
Reduce subsidy	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	4	2	5	6	3
<i>Sample no.</i>	<i>544</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>296</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>197</i>	<i>167</i>	<i>308</i>	<i>237</i>	<i>204</i>	<i>340</i>	<i>126</i>	<i>418</i>
<i>[Those who did not specify local authorities]</i> Why do you think that local authorities should not be the main providers of sports facilities in Scotland? <i>[Unprompted]</i>													
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Because they don't have the funds</li> <li>People/clubs should get together and fund them</li> <li>They have got enough to do</li> <li>They are never organised</li> </ul>													
No funds	35	33	37	40	21	44	31	38	30	40	33	35	35
Clubs fund them	26	28	24	19	40	22	27	27	26	23	28	24	27
Enough to do	14	15	13	24	16	12	11	14	14	13	14	12	15
Never organised	12	17	12	10	8	17	19	12	10	10	12	24	14
<i>Sample no.</i>	<i>261</i>	<i>150</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>146</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>178</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>186</i>

- 9 Those who thought that local authorities should be the main providers were given four options on how sports facilities should be funded. Half (49%) wanted the level of subsidy to continue so that current admission charges were maintained; a quarter (26%) wanted subsidies increased so facilities were free to all users; and nearly a quarter (22%) wanted charges to be increased for those who could afford to pay so that better quality facilities were provided.
- 10 Those who did not think that local authorities should be the main providers were asked why not. The main reasons were that respondents thought that local authorities did not have sufficient funds (35%) or that people and clubs should get together and fund them (26%).

## Top Priority for the Lottery Sports Fund

- 11 The overwhelming majority wanted community and youth sport to have the first priority for support from the Lottery Sports Fund (Table 5). Local community facilities (28%), youth and school sport (27%) and sports programmes in deprived areas (23%) were each seen as the top priority by about a quarter of respondents. Only four per cent wanted either national/regional facilities or support for international athletes to be the no. 1 priority. However this priority for funding sport in their own area did not mean that respondents were opposed to funding excellence: three-quarters (74%) thought it very or quite important that public funds were used to support Scottish athletes who compete at international level (Table 6).

Issue	Total	Gender		Age Group				Participation in last 4 wks		Children in Household		Limiting Disability	
		M	F	16-24	25-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Percentage of respondents												
Which of these do you think should be the no. 1 priority for support from the Lottery Sports Fund? [prompted]													
Local community facilities	28	32	24	23	32	29	25	30	24	78	27	24	29
Youth/school sport	27	25	28	30	29	27	24	25	29	91	23	24	27
Sports progs in deprived areas	23	20	24	26	21	23	22	25	20	61	23	23	22
Local community sports clubs	10	11	9	14	7	11	9	11	9	25	11	8	11
Sport/physical rec for the elderly	5	3	6	1	2	2	10	1	9	5	6	8	4
National/regional facilities	4	5	3	2	4	4	6	4	5	9	5	7	4
International athletes' support	4	3	4	2	4	4	5	3	5	8	4	3	4
Sample no.	882	421	462	125	170	303	284	495	388	112	571	224	658

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**Table 6: Importance of Investing Public Funds in International Athletes**

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<b>Importance</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents</b>
Very important	33
Quite important	41
Neither important nor unimportant	10
Not very important	11
Not at all important	5

*Sample no.: 882*

Further details on attitudes to excellence are provided in Research Digest no. 88, *Public attitudes to the importance of excellence in Scottish sport*, on **sportscotland's** website.

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## **Conclusions**

- 12 In some respects sport may be seen as having achieved 'apple pie and motherhood' status: people in Scotland overwhelmingly perceive it as important for the quality of life of the country as a whole. These attitudes are spread across the population as there were few major differences according to a range of socio-demographic characteristics. Perhaps more importantly, a smaller majority also see it as important for their own quality of life.
- 13 When asked about sport in a range of areas within modern society high proportions viewed it as providing an important contribution, particularly to health.
- 14 Most considered that local authorities should continue to be the main providers of sports facilities and that they should continue to provide subsidies to maintain current charges or even increase them to make free entry available to all.
- 15 Almost all thought the first priority for the Lottery Sports Fund should be community and youth sport. This was balanced by a wide recognition that Scottish athletes performing at international level should be supported by public funds.
- 16 These positive attitudes to sport provide a valuable basis for the key objective of encouraging people to take a more active part in what they recognise as beneficial.