



FOOTBALL REVIEW COMMITTEE
FINAL REPORT

GAA

WHERE WE
ALL BELONG

FRC
2024/2025

A dark blue silhouette of a football player in mid-kick, positioned centrally. The player is wearing a jersey and shorts. A solid dark blue circle representing the ball is to the right of the player's foot. The background features a series of concentric, perspective-distorted lines that create a sense of depth and movement, resembling a football pitch or a tunnel.

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FRC

2024/2025

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FRC COMMITTEE MEETINGS

67 (49 online/18 in-person)

PUBLIC SURVEY

>7.3k responses
(Opened 05/04 - Closed 30/06)

CLUB SURVEY

>7.8k responses
(Opened 10/07/25 - Closed 1/08/25)



SURVEY COMMENTS, EMAILS, LETTERS ANALYSED

>5k reviewed and considered

DELPHI SURVEY WITH GAA COACHES

3 of 3 rounds completed



1-2-1 STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Connacht Council
Leinster Council
Ulster Council
Munster Council
County Board Chairs
National Referee's Committee x2
Senior Referee's Group x7
GAA Games Development Office
GAA GDMs and GDAs
Cumann na mBunscol

GAA Medical, Scientific & Welfare Committee
GAA World Council x2
Gaelic Writers Association x2
Provincial & County Heads of Games
GAA Britain
GAA Higher Education Council
Inter-County Managers x2
Gaelic Players Association x2

GOVERNANCE

Coiste Bainiste x1
Ard Chomhairle x3
Standing Committee on Playing Rules x7



FOCUS GROUPS

- Munster #1, Páirc Uí Chaoimh, 16/05/24
- Leinster #1, Portlaoise, 13/06/24
- Ulster #1, Monaghan, 12/06/24
- Leinster #2, Enfield 10/06/24
- Ulster #2, Toomebridge, 12/06/24
- Connacht, Began 10/06/24

SAND BOX GAMES

SB#1 Mullingar
SB#2 Began
SB#3 Abbotstown
SB#4 Abbotstown

SB#5 Ennis
SB#6 Inniskeen
SB#7 Mullahoran
SB#8 Abbotstown



TEACHTAIREACHT ÓN UACHTARÁN

Is mór idir inniu agus inné agus is cinnte gur fíor an cor cainte seo i gcás na peile Gaelaí.

Tá scoth na hoibre déanta ag Coiste Athbhreithnithe na Peile faoi stiúir Jim Gavin le go maith os cionn bliana go leith anuas agus ní haon áibhéil a rá go bhfuil cluiche den chéad scoth againn an athuair de bharr a gcuid díograise agus a gcuid dúthrachta.

Tá muid thar a bheith buíoch díobh uilig as an obair mhór atá déanta acu agus, dar ndóigh, le gach duine eile a raibh baint acu le múnú na peile mar atá sí anois.

This time last year the process of reviewing the playing rules of Gaelic football was underway and while not quite in its infancy, the emerging proposals were largely untested and had a long road ahead of them.

What a difference a year makes.

In the intervening period it is no exaggeration to state that we have got our game back and at

inter-county level both the Allianz Leagues and GAA Championship as competitions bore this out.

There was a degree of nervousness around how the same rules might apply from the highest level down into our club competitions, but this too has been a huge success, bedding in well and breathing life back into our game amongst the largest cohort that plays it – namely our club players.

Needless to say, this juncture has not been reached by accident.

An incredible amount of work was undertaken by the Football Review Committee and its chairperson Jim Gavin – work that began the day after Congress 2024 in Newry.

The diligence of those charged with embracing what was an onerous task is something we should be grateful for and



is one of the reasons the process ran in the efficient manner that it did.

The second observation worth making in that regard was the engagement process that underpinned the initiative.

People at every level of the organisation were afforded an opportunity to contribute and this fostered a buy-in and general goodwill which assisted immeasurably in the profile and awareness of the proposals that emerged.

When you have players, match officials, coaches, administrators, supporters and journalists all involved in any such initiative the chances of delivering impactful change are enhanced immeasurably.

All of these groupings deserve commendation.

Similarly, the metrics brought to bear on the exercise were similarly crucial.

The old adage 'What gets measured gets done' holds water for a reason. The follow-up and attention to detail around the whole initiative was second to none and is evidenced once more by the information included in this publication.

The various stages of the project were well flagged from the outset and closely followed, and we are well and truly in the review phase.

The rule changes will now go before Special Congress with a view to having them included in the permanent rules of Gaelic football and our delegates will ultimately debate associated issues before providing their verdict.

It has been a busy and ultimately productive period for the great game and one that leaves the code in an infinitely better state, a belief supported by the transformation of the national commentary around the game.

Le gach dea ghuí,

Jarlaith Ó Broin

Jarlaith Ó Broin
Uachtarán
Chumann Lúthchleas Gael



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In his inaugural address as Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael (GAA President), Jarlath Burns declared his intent to “establish a Football Review Group to completely take every aspect of the game apart and put it all together again, with a view to making Gaelic football a more enjoyable spectacle to watch and play.”

Shortly thereafter, in February 2024, the Football Review Committee (FRC) was formally established to evaluate the existing rules and structures of Gaelic football and identify opportunities for meaningful enhancement.

Following extensive engagement with the GAA community and key stakeholders, including workshops, sandbox games, and surveys, the FRC published its Interim Report on 10 October 2024 at Croke Park, outlining seven core rule enhancements aimed at improving the playing and viewing experience.

These proposals were trialled during the Gaelic Football Inter-Provincial Series on 18th - 19th October 2024, reviewed by Ard Chomhairle (Central Council) on 26th October, and subsequently ratified by An Comhdháil Speisialta (Special Congress) on 30th November 2024 as temporary rules for the 2025 season across inter-county and club competitions.

This Final Report presents a comprehensive evaluation of those enhancements and proposes their retention, along with modifications for permanent adoption in the Official Guide from 2026.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Retain in full the suite of temporary rule enhancements adopted in 2024 and as amended, during the inter-county competitions, in 2025.
2. Modify specific rules, including:
 - Penalising early movement by players before 1v1 throw-ins.
 - Changing the kick-out mark delay penalty from a throw-in to a free kick.
 - Clarifying enforcement of Solo and Go distance.
 - Introducing a black card for jersey-pulling in goal-scoring situations.
 - Extending penalty awards for cynical fouls in goal-scoring situations to club competitions.
 - Clarifying conditions for 2-point scores when touched by the opposition.
 - Empowering neutral sideline officials to report foul play.



3. Establish a Gaelic Football Expert Advisory Group, supported by the Games Intelligence Unit, to monitor trends and advise the Standing Committee on Playing Rules.

The FRC advocates allowing time for the rules to embed across all levels while continuing to monitor, collect data, and inform future decisions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Football Review Committee extends its sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of this project. From the coordinators and participants of the online and Delphi surveys to those who engaged in workshops, stakeholder sessions, and sandbox test games—your input was invaluable.

Special thanks to the Games Intelligence Unit for their data-driven insights into the evolving dynamics of Gaelic football.

Our appreciation also goes to the players, team officials and support staff, match officials, and administrators across the Association who supported the implementation and transition to the new rules.

We are grateful to the media for promoting our national games, and to the clubs, schools, and

members of our Association for their engagement and commitment throughout this process.

The FRC acknowledges the continued support of the Standing Committee on Playing Rules, the Rules Advisory Committee, Central Council, and the Management Committee.

Míle buíochas to all who played a role in shaping the future of Gaelic football and to make it, along with our brother and sister games of Ladies Football, Hurling and Camogie, the most enjoyable amateur games in the world to play and watch.

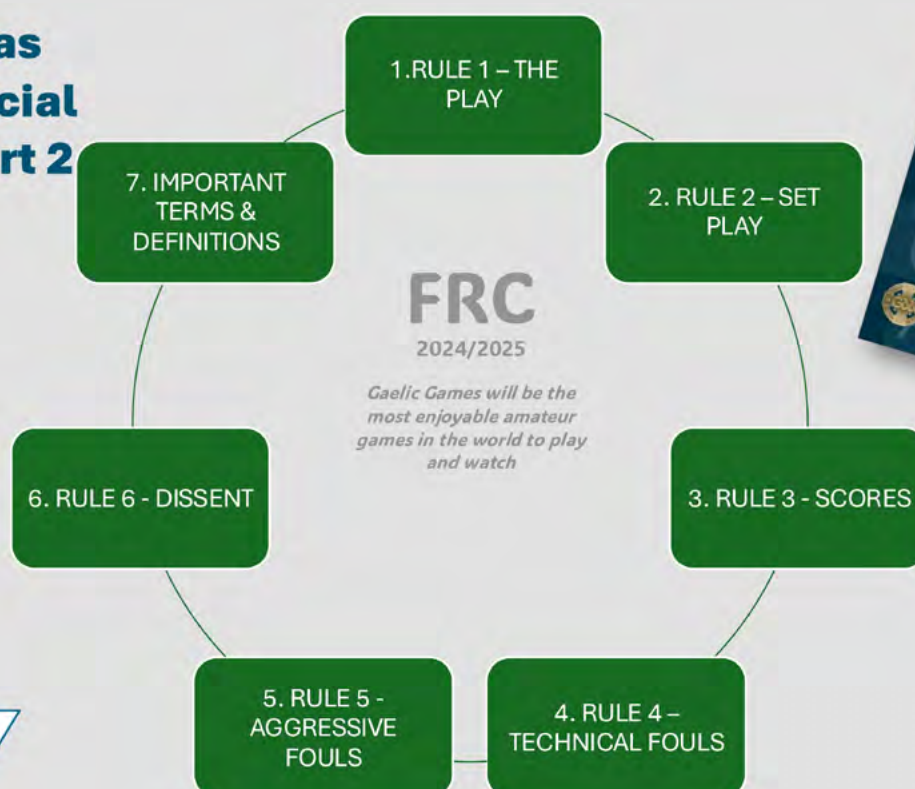
Ní neart go cur le chéile – There's no strength without unity.

Jim Gavin

Séamus Ó Gáibhín/Jim Gavin
Cathaoirleach/Chairperson
Choiste Athbhreithnithe na Peile/
Football Review Committee



Focus areas in the Official Guide - Part 2



Emerging Themes aligned with Official Guide Part II





CHRONOLOGY OF THE EVOLUTION OF GAELIC FOOTBALL RULES

Credit: Dr Paul Rouse and GAA History Committee

Eve of founding of GAA: Maurice Davin wrote in *United Ireland* newspaper on 13 October 1884 of localised football games:

“I may say there are no rules and therefore the games are often dangerous.”

Who wrote the first rules of ‘Gaelic’ football and what were they?

When the second meeting of the GAA was held in the Victoria Hotel in Cork on Saturday, 27 December 1884, Maurice Davin, as the Association’s new President, was asked to head a committee, which included the secretaries of the GAA (Michael Cusack, John McKay and John Wyse Power), to draft the GAA’s rules for athletics, hurling and Gaelic football. As it turned out, Davin went about drafting the rules largely on his own. It was a job he was well-placed to do. A detailed notebook which he kept during the 1870s and 1880s contains notes and newspaper cuttings on the rules and organisation of English athletics, as well as notes on the rules and terminology for soccer. At the third GAA meeting – held in Thurles on 17 January 1885 – Davin presented a set of rules which were unanimously adopted.

1885

First Football Rules, 17 January 1885:

1. Teams up to 21 players aside. All players from both teams line up in midfield for the throw-in.
2. Pitch at least 120 yards long by 80 in breadth and properly marked by boundary lines.
3. Soccer-shaped goalposts, 8ft high and 15ft wide. Only goals can be scored.
4. Pushing, tripping, holding and headbutting not allowed.
5. When the ball is kicked over the sideline it shall be thrown back by a player of the opposite side to him who kicked it over.

Michael Cusack: *“We have to remind those who play football that it is not to be passed or carried in any way. It may be caught, but it must be kicked or put on the ground at once. It may also be hit with the hand. The passing and carrying is entirely foreign, having been imported from rugby.”* Letter to *The United Irishman*

The first football match under the new rules was played in Callan on 15th February 1885 between Callan and Kilkenny teams. The result was a scoreless draw and about four thousand spectators attended.

1886

Due to the number of matches finishing scoreless, points posts are added, which measured 21ft to each side of the soccer-shaped goalposts, which are also widened to 21ft. The distance from outside post to outside post is 63ft. These point posts were copied from the Australian Rules game.

Points were introduced but only count if the teams finish level on goals.

The rule which allowed players to break off and wrestle each other while the play continued is abolished.

After a wide (or score) play is restarted by a kick-out, opponents have to be at least 25 yards from the kicker (goalkeeper).

Referee may send a player off for all, or part of a game (sin bin idea) and may allow a substitute but only for a player injured by an opponent.

Team jerseys to be of different colours.

Maurice Davin



1888

Substitutions allowed for injured players.

Recommended that referees use a whistle.

When a defending player played the ball over his own goal line (outside the goal posts) or over his own crossbar a ‘free in’ was awarded from 40 yards (from 20 yards in 1885).

The first time a field was clearly marked out with flags spaced at 20 yard intervals was on Easter Monday 26th April 1886 in Athlone when Athenry played Clara.



Michael Cusack



Early style goalposts



1892

The value of a goal is set at 5 points, previously a goal had been worth more than any number of points.

Number of players reduced from 21 to 17.



1895

21 yard and 50 yard line introduced.

Playing the ball over own end line was penalised by a 50 yard kick.

Modern linesmen and goal umpires introduced.

The ball can only be caught before it bounces after being kicked or fisted on.

No throwing of the ball.

No hopping of the ball and no carrying for longer than 4 steps, by which time it must be struck with the hand or kicked.

All free kicks awarded by referees to be kicked off the ground.

Ball reduced from Size 6 to Size 5.

A 7-yard square introduced in front of the goals from which all kick-outs must be taken. Giving rise to the term "square ball".

1896

Goals reduced in value from five to three points.



1901

GAA establishes sub-committee to examine the playing rules.

A 7-yard square replaced by a 10-yard line from which all kick-outs must be taken.

Width of soccer-style goals reduced from 21ft to 18ft and width out to sideposts also reduced from 21ft to 18ft.

1907-9

The ball may be caught whether it has bounced or not.

The ball may not be picked off the ground.

14, 21, and 50 yard lines, as well as a midfield line, marked on pitches.

A parallelogram measuring 15 yards by 5 yards in front of the goals for kick-outs to be taken and in which no attacking player can stand before the ball arrives to protect goalkeepers.

Players allowed one hop with the ball.

Players allowed bounce the ball going forward in basketball style, provided they haven't caught it first.



1910

Modern H-shaped goalposts introduced.

For throw-in to start each half, all midfielders and forwards from each team line up opposite each other in the middle of the field.

Players taking the Kick-Out can touch the ball more than once (the practice was to flick it up to yourself before pulling on it).

1913

Teams reduced from 17 to 15 players a side.

1923

If a player is tackled after he kicks the ball, the free will be given from where the ball lands.

A penalty kick is introduced.

1926

Running while tipping the ball in the air on your hand is banned.

1945

Instead of one-handed throw-in, sideline kicks now to be taken from the ground.

A booklet produced for referees insists that the ball must be “toed into the hand” and not picked off the ground.

Referees encouraged not to blow for every “petty infringement” but to let the game flow.

1950

Handpasses can only be given using a closed fist.

1955

Three substitutions allowed per team.

1965

Throw-in to begin each half now restricted to both midfielders from each team.

A fair charge defined as having to be shoulder-to-shoulder.

1970

Players allowed to take a quick free without waiting for the referee’s whistle.

Senior championship matches now extended to last 80 minutes.

1974

The elimination of the third man tackle. “Charging a player unless he has possession or is about to play the ball shall be a foul”.

Large parallelogram introduced as a penalty area. It’s an offence to charge the goalkeeper within the small(er) rectangle and an offence for an attacking player to be within the small(er) rectangle before the ball enters it during play.

1975

Open-handed handpass allowed.

Return to 70-minute championship matches.

Ball brought forward ten yards for dissent to referee.

Players to be booked after two personal fouls and then sent off after a third.

1980

Pitch markings now changed to metres from yards.

1981

All handpassed scores disallowed.

1990

Free kicks can be taken from the hand or off the ground.

All sideline kicks now to be taken from the hand.

Footballers allowed fist a point but not a goal.

1995

Pitch markings changed to include exclusion zone outside 20m line.

2000

Number of substitutions allowed increased to 5 per team.

2007

Temporary blood subs introduced.

2012

Player allowed be in small rectangle before the ball arrives, except from free kicks, line balls and 45s.

2014

Introduction of a Black Card for Cynical Behaviour Fouls, which are:

1. Deliberately pull down an opponent.
2. Deliberately trip an opponent with the hand(s), arm, leg or foot.
3. Deliberately body collide with an opponent after he has played the ball away or for the purpose of taking him out of a movement of play.
4. Threaten or to use abusive or provocative language or gestures to an opponent or a teammate.
5. Remonstrate in an aggressive manner with a Match Official.



Substitutes: Change in the number of substitutes allowed: Increased to SIX per team.

2017

Introduction of the Mark, when a player catches the ball cleanly from a Kick-Out without it touching the ground, on or past the 45m line nearest the Kick-Out point. The player awarded a ‘Mark’ shall have the options of (a) Taking a free kick or (b) Playing on immediately.

2020

Advanced Mark: Players who take a ‘Mark’ or clean possession inside the opposition’s 45 will be rewarded with a free kick. Players can choose to play on or signal to the referee that they wish to take the free instead. This can be brought back to the 13m line for balls caught between there and the end line.

Sin Bin: If a player gets a black card, they will spend 10 minutes off the field. No substitute allowed, reducing his side’s numbers for that period. A second black card, or a black following a yellow, will result in a red card. The player will be sent off for the rest of the match.

All kick-outs must now be taken from the 20-metre line rather than the current Mark of the 13m line. The ball must travel forward, and all players must be at least 13m away and outside the D and 20m line when the kick is taken.

2021

Concussion substitute permitted.

2024

Decision made by Special Congress in Nov 2024 to adopt all temporary rules as proposed by the FRC for 2025 season.

SANDBOX GAMES





Sandbox #5 Ennis 20.07.24



Sandbox #5 Ennis 20.07.24



Sandbox #6 Iniskeen 30.09.24



Sandbox #6 Iniskeen 30.09.24



Sandbox #7 Mullahoran 05.10.24



Sandbox #8 Round Towers Clondalkin vs Fingallians 30.7.25





TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 1.** Evaluate the current rules and regulations of Gaelic Football, including their application and enforcement, to identify potential areas for modification or enhancement that could contribute to a more exciting and dynamic viewing experience.
- 2.** Examine the pacing and flow of Gaelic Football matches, considering options to maintain a balance between tradition and introducing innovations that could increase the overall entertainment value for spectators.
- 3.** Examine the previous reviews of Gaelic Football which have been undertaken by the Association as well as the work of the Standing Committee on Playing Rules.
- 4.** Explore possibilities for adjusting scoring systems or introducing new elements that could encourage more strategic and engaging gameplay, aiming to captivate the audience and create memorable moments.





- 5.** Engage with players, coaches, referees, officials, and fans to gather diverse perspectives on the current state of Gaelic Football and to identify potential changes that align with both the spirit of the game and the desire for a more entertaining spectator experience.
- 6.** Examine the Motions which have been submitted for Congress 2025 with a view towards gauging the landscape of change and incorporating some of them into the new blueprint for Gaelic football which will emerge from the group's deliberations and research.
- 7.** Consider a coaching and games template which may be required depending on the proposals emanating from the review process.
- 8.** Present an interim report for consideration by Ard Chomhairle with a view towards full discussion and ratification in 2025.





STAKEHOLDERS

STAKEHOLDERS

STAKEHOLDER GROUP A

Below the Horizon

Defined as organisational and administrative structures that the Association is founded on, with the Club being the bedrock.

*Uachtarán
Coiste Bainistí
Ard Chomhairle
Provincial Councils
County Boards
Clubs - Ireland & Overseas*

*Others:
CCCC
Senior Croke Park Staff
Medical, Science & Welfare
Committee
GAA Games Development Office
Comhairle Árdoideachais
Cumann na mBunscol*

STAKEHOLDER GROUP B

On the Horizon

Defined as those who partake directly in the game of Gaelic Football.

*Players - Club
Players - Inter-county
Players - Cumann Na mBunscol
Gaelic Players Association
Club Referees
Senior Referees Group
Managers - Club
Manager - Inter-county
Provincial Coaches
GDMs/GDAs/GPOs*

STAKEHOLDER GROUP C

Above the Horizon

Defined as those who support, report or who have general interest in the game of Gaelic Football.

*Fans/ Supporters
Gaelic Writers Association
The Media/ Journalists/ Podcasts
Official Partners/ Sponsors*



COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

FRC
2024/2025

JIM GAVIN (CHAIRPERSON) – Round Towers GAA, Clondalkin – Dublin

A member of Round Towers GAA Club, Clondalkin, Dublin, Jim learnt to play Gaelic games in the local street leagues (coached by his father Jimmy) representing The 9th Lock, in Clonburris National Primary School and in Moyle Park College. He represented his club in hurling and football at all grades. Played Minor, U21 and Senior inter-county football with Dublin and later coached and managed Dublin U21 and senior football teams. Currently coaches Ballyboden St Enda's U16 Football and Hurling teams.



PETER CANAVAN – Errigal Ciarán GAC – Tyrone

Peter Canavan is from the Errigal Ciarán club in Co Tyrone. He has played for club and county at all levels, the highlight being the capture of the Sam Maguire for the first time in 2003. Peter is married to Finola and has 4 children Áine, Claire, Darragh and Ruairí. He is vice chairman of Errigal Ciarán GAC and is currently involved in coaching the club minors. Peter is a PE teacher in Cookstown and is the Director of the Holy Trinity College Foundation.



COLM COLLINS – Cratloe GAA – Clare

A native of Kilmihil in Co. Clare. Attended St. Flannan's College secondary school and completed a B.Ed. in Mary Immaculate College. Played and managed at all levels in Kilmihil. Involved in coaching since the age of 19. Played for Clare club in New York. Got involved with the development squads. Coached U14s, U15s, U16s and U17s. Managed minors and U21s. Appointed Clare Senior football manager in 2014 and did that job for 10 years. Currently manager of his adopted club Cratloe's senior football team and has been in that job for the last 15 years. Also involved in underage coaching in the club.



MAURICE DEEGAN – Stradbally GAA – Laois

Maurice, a native of Stradbally, Laois, is married to Aishling and has two children, Cormac and Edel. He is a supply chain manager in Naas with Cargill. He is a member of Stradbally GAA and is current Chairman of Timahoe Ladies LGFA.

He was a member of the Stradbally panel that won back-to-back titles in the Laois Senior Championship in 1997-98 and has won numerous county titles at junior level. He has also coached numerous juvenile teams with Laois, Stradbally and Timahoe Ladies.

Maurice has been refereeing for the past 27 years and still currently referees at club level. He has refereed numerous finals, most notably the All-Ireland finals of 2008, 2012, the replay in 2016 and the All-Ireland club final in 2017. He is also currently a member of the National Referees Development Committee.



PATRICK DOHERTY – The Downs GAA – Westmeath

Patrick Doherty played hurling and football in Westmeath for his clubs, Delvin and The Downs, and represented the county in underage grades in both codes. He was a member of the Coláiste Mhuire, Mullingar team which won the Leinster Colleges' senior football championship in 1983, and won a Freshers' Football title and Trench Cup medal with Sligo R.T.C. He was PRO of the Westmeath County Board for seven years.

He is a Chartered Accountant and worked in practice and industry up to 2008, before a change in career when he became GAA National Match Officials Manager and is currently Head of Operations for Westmeath GAA, a position he was appointed to in 2019. He completed an MSc in Sport Management in UCD in 2020.



ÉAMONN FITZMAURICE – Finuge GAA – Kerry

Éamonn Fitzmaurice is from Kerry, is married to Tina and has two children Faye and Rian. He is a secondary school principal in Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne in Dingle. He played club football with Finuge and hurling with Lixnaw. He represented Kerry at all levels winning All-Irelands at minor, U21 and senior level. He managed Kerry to All-Ireland success, having also served as a selector. He is currently coaching Fossa and various school teams. He is a football analyst with *The Irish Examiner* and *RTÉ*.



SHANE FLANAGAN – Johnstownbridge GAA - Kildare

Shane Flanagan is the GAA's Director of Coaching and Games Development with responsibility for leading the strategic direction of games development at all levels of the Association. He joined the GAA in 2004 as Policy and Planning Officer, having worked at Meteor Mobile Communications as Site Acquisition and Property Officer. After this he was Provincial Games Manager and Operations Manager for Leinster Council GAA between 2006-2020. He has served on numerous central committees. A native of Johnstownbridge in Co. Kildare where he played for over 20 years that also included Trench Cup with Mary Immaculate Limerick, Sigerson with Maynooth University and U21 with Kildare. He has coached at underage and senior level with his club.



JAMES HORAN – Ballintubber GAA - Mayo

James Horan is a former Mayo senior player and manager who has had a successful eight-year tenure leading the Mayo senior team to six Connacht titles. He holds a Masters in Management Coaching, a Bachelor of Science, and a Diploma in Professional Management. With experience coaching teams such as Ballintubber, Westport, and Turloughmore, Horan has displayed his versatile coaching abilities across both football and hurling. A double All-Star, he has also contributed to the Mayo U20 team and mentors' various high-performance teams and athletes. Horan's on-field and off-field achievements underline his expertise and dedication to sports.



SÉAMUS KENNY (RUNÁÍ) – Simonstown Gaels GFC - Meath

Séamus is a member of the Simonstown Gaels club in Navan and a former Senior Inter-county footballer with Meath for 14 years. He has coached at various level in his Club from underage to adult. Séamus is the National Participation and Programmes Manager for the GAA and has served on various National Committees for the Association.



ALEC McQUILLAN – Con Magees Glenravel GAC - Antrim

Alec McQuillan is a member of Con Magees Glenravel GAC in Co. Antrim. He played senior county football for Antrim from 1979 to 1990 and continued playing for the club until 2010. He has been involved in coaching and managing teams at youth and adult level. He was a member of the Antrim County Board from 2015 to 2018, as a delegate to Ulster Council, and he is currently a member of the Ulster GAA Hearings Committee. In the context of the Playing Rules, he was a member of the Standing Committee on the Playing Rules from 2018 - 2023.



MICHAEL MEANEY – Old Leighlin GAA – Carlow

Michael is a member of Old Leighlin GAA in Carlow, having served in a variety of roles within the club, including Club Secretary to Club Chairperson. Representing Carlow as their delegate on Central Council, and a former member of the GAA Management Committee, Michael has also served as Carlow GAA Chairperson, and Treasurer. Outside of his endeavours with the GAA, Michael has over 40 years' experience in construction related industries and is Company Director of Stoneworld Limited and Eco Window Concepts Limited. Additionally, Michael has also served as a Director and Chair of Leighlinbridge Housing Association, which is a Voluntary Approved Housing Body.



MICHAEL MURPHY (FEB – OCT 2024) – Glenswilly GAA – Donegal

Michael is a member of the Glenswilly GAA club and Senior Inter-county Gaelic Footballer with Donegal. Was part of the Donegal teams that achieved 2012 All-Ireland success and five Ulster Senior Football Championships. Captained Ireland in the Compromise Rules series in 2013 and 2014. Studied a BSc. in Physical Education with Biology in DCU and a MSc. in Sport and Exercise Psychology in UUJ. Currently works as Head of Sport at Atlantic Technological University Donegal.



COLM NALLY – Newtown Blues GAA – Louth

Colm, an employee of the Department of Foreign Affairs, is a seasoned coach with over 20 years' experience coaching both club and county. He has spent many years coaching juvenile and adult teams with his local club Newtown Blues in Drogheda. He started his football career playing with O'Dwyers in Balbriggan, then moved to Drogheda where he played for Newtown Blues winning three senior county championships and two of which he captained. He has represented both Dublin and Louth at county level. He coached the Louth senior footballers for two years, Meath senior footballers for four years. Colm is a Master Tutor for the GAA and Sport Ireland.



MALACHY O'ROURKE (FEB – OCT 2024) – Errigal Ciarán, Tyrone – Fermanagh

Malachy O'Rourke was Head of PE in St Joseph's College, Enniskillen. He played with his native Derrylin O'Connell's, winning two Intermediate Championships; won a Sigerson Cup with St Mary's University College, Belfast; and two Championships with Errigal Ciarán. He played Inter-county football with Fermanagh for 15 years. He managed Fermanagh for three years, leading them to their first Ulster Final in 26 years. He then managed Monaghan for seven years, taking them from Division 3 to Division 1 and winning two Ulster titles in 2013 and 2015. He is the current Tyrone manager. At club level, he has won six senior county titles across Tyrone, Cavan and Derry; alongside three Ulster Club titles with Loup (2003) and Watty Graham's, Glen (2022 & 2023) and an All-Ireland Club title with Glen in January 2024.





FRC RULE ENHANCEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONTEXT

The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is Ireland's largest sporting organisation with a total of 1,616 Clubs and 450 overseas units promoting Gaelic games in their local communities.

The strategic plan 'Aontas 2026 – Towards One GAA for All'¹ features a variety of objectives to realise the GAA's vision as a sustainable community-based and volunteer-led Association where as many as possible, participate in Gaelic games and culture for as long as possible. A key focus area is to provide "the best possible games experience for players and spectators" with the vision description that *"Gaelic games will be the most enjoyable amateur sports in the world to play and watch"*.

Against this backdrop Jarlath Burns, Uachtarán CLG/GAA President, established a Football Review Committee with the aim of evaluating the current rules and regulations of Gaelic football, the most popular sport on the island. The FRC, comprising of former players, managers, referees, coaches, officers, a member of Central Council, and full-time staff of the Association were issued terms of reference including a remit to establish a new blueprint for Gaelic Football by identifying potential rules enhancements that respect and balance both the tradition of the game with modern innovations, to create a more exciting and dynamic playing and spectator experience².

METHODOLOGY

Initial research was conducted through a bespoke online public survey, engagement with Provincial Councils, The GAA World Council, Provincial Council Britain GAA, Provincial Head of Games, County Board Chairpersons, County Heads of Games, The National Referees Development Committee, the Senior Inter-county Referees' Group, GAA Higher Education Council, Cumann na mBunscol, GAA Medical, Scientific and Welfare Committee, The Gaelic Writers Association, Inter-county managers, the Gaelic Players Association and through consideration of ideas expressed in correspondence received by email or letter. In addition, workshops took place in each province and separately a focused Delphi survey was conducted over several rounds with subject matter experts to stress test emerging ideas.

In advance of the online survey the FRC members individually completed an assessment of the rules of Gaelic football, on how they were applied and enforced including an assessment of potential rule enhancements. This foundation exercise formed the basis of the Committee's initial discussions. Along with analysing current trends in Gaelic football the committee received quantitative data and briefs on the game over the last decade, considered games from the 1940s to the present day and how the rules have evolved since the first Gaelic football rules were adopted by the Association in 1885.

FRC members chaired workshops in the four provinces with local coaches and briefed and received input from provincial councils and county board chairpersons. Reports from previous Football Review Committees were analysed as was the work of the Standing Committee on Playing Rules and recent motions submitted by GAA Units for

consideration by Congress 2025 were assessed with a view towards gauging the landscape for change and incorporating some of them into the new blueprint for Gaelic football which emerged from the FRC's deliberations and research.

RESULTS FROM INITIAL RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS IN 2024

Across all ages, provinces and grades the top five skills dominating the online survey, and letter/email correspondence received were: kicking, catching, scoring of long-range points, goal scoring and general creative play. The top three tactical skills were: 1 v 1 contests to gain possession of the ball, taking on an opponent in a 1 v 1 situation, and good support play during speedy attacking transitions. A consistency of similar themes emerged from the committee's engagement with all stakeholders.

The survey also highlighted the extent to which people dislike dissent towards match officials and cynical/delaying tactics.

In general, people like the game of Gaelic Football, but there are specific things that they don't like. There is an awareness and acceptance that the shape of the game has changed, however people want to see:

- A game where skill and risk taking are rewarded.
- A game which encourages forward momentum.
- A game of contests.

The FRC proposals are a synthesis of various ideas from the public online survey, workshops with the provincial coaches, the Delphi survey, multiple stakeholder engagement, player engagement through survey, post-game feedback following Sandbox test games and the many FRC members focus group meetings and workshops.

FRC PROPOSED RULE ENHANCEMENTS

In October 2024 the FRC published their proposed 7 Core Rule Enhancements and other interconnecting proposals, which can be summarised as follows³:

1. To start the game and restart it after half-time, the referee will throw-in the ball between 2 players. The other 2 midfielders will take position on opposite sides of the field on the halfway line.
2. Kick-outs must go beyond the 40m arc. Players must remain 13m from the ball but may stay inside the 20m line.
3. The goalkeeper may only receive a pass from a teammate if they are inside the opposition half, or if they and the player passing the ball are inside their own large rectangle.
4. A player fouled may immediately take a solo and go (a toe-tap).
5. Each team must keep any 3 outfield players in each half of the field. Leaving 11 outfield players to defend in one's half of the field and 11 outfield players to attack (a dashed line, from sideline to sideline, will now mark midfield).

1. www.gaa.ie/the-gaa/administration/strategic-plan

2. www.gaa.ie/article/football-review-committee-202425

3. www.gaa.ie/article/football-review-committee-launch-interim-report

6. The current advance mark is gone. A new mark is introduced whereby a player may claim a mark if the ball is caught inside the 20m line after it is kicked outside the 45m line. To reward the risk, the player may continue on until the advantage is no longer accrued, whereby the referee will give a free-kick from the place of the mark.
7. A new 40m arc will be introduced at each end and extend back to join at the 20m line. A point scored outside the arc is worth 2 points, a point inside the arc or inside the 20m line is worth 1 point and a goal will accrue 3 points.

Other interconnected rule proposals include:

- a. To disincentivise any tactical fouls which purposefully delay and impede play, the ball will be advanced 50m.
- b. To disincentivise dissent by players, the ball will be advanced 50m.
- c. To disincentivise dissent by team officials, a free will be conceded on the 13m line.
- d. Any dissent by a player under 18 or younger grades will warrant an automatic Sin Bin for 10mins (i.e. zero tolerance) and a 50m penalty – however in this instance, not to penalise their teammates, the player Black Carded can be replaced.
- e. The cynical behaviour of deliberately holding up a player will be considered a Black Card offence.
- f. A Stop Clock (Public Clock) will be introduced.
- g. Players contributing to a melee (i.e. the 3rd or subsequent player in) will receive a Black Card.
- h. Contact with the head of an opponent head will warrant a red card.
- i. Interfering with, or any form of restraint to the neck or throat area of an opponent will warrant a red card.
- j. Referees may use vanishing foam to indicate the place for a free kick inside the 65m line.
- k. The 'square ball' rule from a free kick is now aligned with that from open play i.e. player may now enter the small rectangle once the free kick is taken.
- l. The referee may allow advantage to develop without time limit.
- m. The team captain, or a nominated deputy, are the only player to speak to the referee to seek clarification of a decision made by the referee.

RATIFICATION OF THE RULE ENHANCEMENTS

Following extensive testing of the rule enhancements a four game Gaelic Football Inter-Provincial Series was held in Croke Park the weekend of 18th - 19th October 2024 where the games were broadcast live by RTÉ and TG4. Motions proposed for temporary rule changes were reviewed and endorsed by Ard Chomhairle on 26th October for consideration by An Comhdháil Speisialta where on the 30th November

2024 Congress voted in favour of implementing the rule changes on a trial basis for the 2025 season, with a commitment to ongoing evaluation by the Games Intelligence Unit and further review at the end of the championship cycle⁴.

2025 SEASON

A total of 214 inter-county games were played under the temporary new rules during the 2025 Senior Inter-county Football season. These included:

- 115 National League games
- 29 Provincial Championship games
- 35 Tailteann Cup games
- 35 Sam Maguire Cup games

In addition, club activity throughout the Association at all grades and levels took place.

After Round 5 of the National Football League and again at the end of the league, the FRC conducted an assessment based on its Benefits Realisation Framework and made several recommendations to the Standing Committee on Playing Rules for modifications to the new rules.

FRC BENEFIT REALISATION REPORT BASED ON ANALYSIS OF THE 2025 NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE ROUNDS 1 TO 5

REPORT CONTEXT

This report was published in March 2025 by the FRC as part of a mid-season evaluation of the new rule enhancements introduced for the 2025 Gaelic Football season. The review was timed to inform decisions ahead of the 2025 Inter-county Senior Football Championship, beginning in April, and to guide potential permanent rule changes for 2026.

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

To assess the impact of the new rules, the committee developed a Benefits Realisation Framework, collecting data from:

- The Games Intelligence Unit (GIU) analysis of NFL Rounds 1–5.
- GPS-based physical performance data.
- Surveys from players, officials, and spectators via QR codes and online platforms.
- Direct engagement with county managers, referees, and the GPA.
- Public submissions via email.

KEY FINDINGS

The review found that the new rules are largely achieving their intended outcomes, including:

- Enhanced game flow and reduced time-wasting.
- Increased scoring and attacking play.
- Improved clarity and fairness in officiating.
- Greater enjoyment for players and spectators.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Maintain Current Rules

- No major changes are proposed at this time.
- Continued monitoring through the remainder of the NFL and Championship is advised.
- Final recommendations will be made to Special Congress in October 2025.

4. www.gaa.ie/article/all-49-motions-passed-at-gaa-special-congress

Recommendation 2: Amend the 3/3 Structure Rule

- Support remains strong for requiring three players in the opposition half.
- Amendments proposed to allow flexibility:
- Teams must have at least four players (including goalkeeper) in their own half and three outfield players in the opposition half.
- Exceptions for unintentional breaches, within 4m of the halfway line, and non-interference.

Recommendation 3: Minor Rule Adjustments

- Kick-out Mark: Player may play on immediately; illegal challenges within 4m result in a free kick 50m more advantageous.
- Advanced Mark: Automatic advantage if player plays on and scores.
- Two-Point Score: Remove the word “directly” to allow scores that deflect off posts.
- Dissent by Team Officials: Clarify categories of misconduct and adjust penalty location to the 20m line.

Recommendation 4: Clock & Hooter System

- Widely supported for improving timekeeping and reducing delays.
- Proposal to end halves after the hooter when the ball next goes out of play (score, wide, sideline).
- Penalties and 45s awarded before the hooter may still be taken.

These recommendations were endorsed by Ard Chomhairle.

FRC REPORT FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE 2025

REPORT CONTEXT

The FRC published this assessment following the conclusion of the 2025 Inter-county National Football League competition. The report evaluated the impact of newly introduced or modified rules across various aspects of gameplay. The purpose was to determine whether these changes enhanced the game’s flow, fairness, and spectacle, and to decide if further adjustments were necessary ahead of the 2025 Inter-county Championship season.

SUMMARY OF KEY ASSESSMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The FRC reviewed multiple rule changes and enhancements, each assessed for effectiveness, impact on gameplay, and referee management. Across all categories, the FRC concluded that the rules were functioning as intended and **recommended no changes at this time.**

1. 1 V 1 THROW UPS

- Replaced 2 v 2 throw-ins at the start of each half.
- Resulted in fewer fouls and more immediate attacking opportunities.
- Recommendation: No change.

2. KICK-OUTS

- Ball must travel outside the 40m arc; 47% reached beyond 65m.
- 65% of kick-outs were contested, promoting aerial duels.
- Recommendation: No change.

3. GOALKEEPER RESTRICTIONS

- Goalkeepers cannot receive passes in their own half unless inside the large rectangle.
- Led to increased turnovers and reduced recycling.
- Recommendation: No change.

4. 4/3 STRUCTURE

- Improved balance in attack and defence compared to the previous 3/3 structure.
- Easier for referees to manage.
- Recommendation: No change.

5. SOLO & GO

- Allows quick restarts after fouls.
- Used in 25% of fouled situations; speeds up play and transitions.
- Recommendation: No change.

6. SCORING SYSTEM

- Two-point arc encouraged long-range shooting.
- Increased shots (57.7 vs 51.9) and scores (32 vs 25) per game compared to 2024.
- Goals per game rose from 1.9 to 2.3.
- Recommendation: No change.

7. BLACK CARD

- Easier for referees to administer, especially in melees.
- Hold-up tackles less frequent.
- Recommendation: No change.

8. DELAY FOULS

- Penalises time-wasting tactics.
- Led to 50% reduction in disciplinary cards and hearings.
- Recommendation: No change.

9. ADVANTAGE RULE

- Allows play to continue until advantage is clearly lost.
- Reduces punishment for technical fouls during advantage.
- Recommendation: No change.

10. DISSENT RULES

- Improved consistency in enforcement.
- Ball moved 50m for dissent; needs further referee alignment.
- Recommendation: No change.

11. CAPTAIN COMMUNICATION

- Only captains or deputies may speak to referees during breaks.
- Reduced dissent fouls (6.1 per game).
- Recommendation: No change.

12. CLOCK & HOOTER / PITCH MARKINGS / LINE UMPIRE

- All functioning well; improved officiating teamwork and game management.
- Recommendation: No change.

13. CROSSING A LINE

- Requires minimum player distribution across halves.
- Reduced lateral play and stoppages.
- Recommendation: No change.

RESULTS FROM RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS IN 2025

SURVEY RESULTS 2025

Following the 2025 All-Ireland Quarter-Finals, the FRC conducted a comprehensive survey involving two groups: a longitudinal Cohort of 1,207 participants and a broader Foireann group of 7,253 respondents. The survey assessed the impact of rule enhancements trialled during the season.

The findings show a significant improvement in public perception of Gaelic football, with satisfaction rising across all age groups, roles, and provinces. The enhancements—particularly Solo and Go, 3 Up/4 Back, and the 40m scoring arc—were widely praised for improving game flow, excitement, and skill expression. However, the Advanced Mark and 1v1 Throw-In received mixed feedback.

Over 90% of respondents agreed that club football had improved, though concerns were raised about inconsistent rule application at club and underage levels due to limited officiating resources.

Players and coaches reported increased enjoyment in playing and coaching, while referees noted improved game flow and discipline. However, they also highlighted increased workload and the need for more training support. The Advanced Mark and 1v1 Throw-in received mixed feedback, and there were calls for further refinement, especially regarding handpassing and underage rule application.

Overall, the data strongly supports the FRC's direction, while identifying areas for continued development ahead of proposed permanent rule changes in 2026.

GAMES INTELLIGENCE UNIT (GIU)

The GIU was established in January 2025 in partnership with South East Technological University

(SETU) and Atlantic Technological University (ATU).

Its role included:

- Supporting the implementation and evaluation of the new rule enhancements in Gaelic football.
- Supplying data and video analysis to inter-county referees to help them review their performances.
- Conducting the most detailed analysis of a Senior Inter-County season ever undertaken by the GAA.
- Building on previous work by commercial providers, media, analysts, and coaches.
- Strengthening collaboration within the Performance Analysis Community of Practice through shared video footage from county analysts.

The results of the GIU report can be summarised as follows:

1. GAME DYNAMICS

- Shots per game increased by 12%.
- Scores per game rose by 16%.
- Goal attempts increased by 45% compared to 2024.
- Kick-outs rose by 11%, with a 30% increase in long kick-outs and 31% more contested kick-outs.
- Short kick-outs declined by 31%.
- Passing sequences dropped by 12%, reflecting a faster, more direct style of play.



2. TIMEKEEPING AND GAME FLOW

- Average game duration increased to 78 minutes and 42 seconds.
- Ball-in-play time decreased slightly to 56%, attributed to more stoppages and kick-outs.
- The Stop Clock and Hooter were credited with improving transparency and reducing time-wasting.

3. SCORING TRENDS

- Teams averaged 2.3 goals and 4.7 two-point scores per game.
- Open play shots accounted for 82% of all shots, up from 77% in previous years.
- Shot-to-score ratio from open play improved to 57%.

GAMES INTELLIGENCE UNIT (GIU) – PHYSICAL DEMANDS

The GIU – Physical Demands partnered with the School of Health & Human Performance and the Insight Centre for Data Analytics at Dublin City University (DCU). Their goal was to:

- Use GPS data to measure High Intensity Running (HIR) across different player positions.
- Compare physical performance data from the 2025 Sam Maguire Cup and Tailteann Cup with equivalent data from 2024.
- Provide data-driven insights to the FRC and coaching staff to inform training and preparation strategies under the new rules.

- This report focused specifically on HIR patterns across six 12-minute match periods, helping to understand how the rule changes have influenced physical outputs during games.

The results of the GIU – Physical Demands report can be summarised as follows:

1. HIGH INTENSITY RUNNING (HIR) PEAKS LATE IN GAMES

- In the Sam Maguire Cup (SMC), HIR was highest during Period 6 (final 12 minutes) across nearly all positions in 2025.
- This suggests increased physical demands in the closing stages of matches under the new rule enhancements.

2. TAILTEANN CUP (TC) TEAMS SHOW DECLINE

- TC teams generally performed less HIR in 2025 compared to 2024, with a consistent decline across match periods.
- Exceptions were full backs and midfielders, who showed increased HIR in Period 6.

3. SMC TEAMS OUTPERFORMED TC TEAMS

- Across all six match periods and all positions, SMC teams consistently recorded higher HIR than TC teams in 2025.

4. OPENING PERIODS SHOW MIXED TRENDS

- Only full back and half-back lines in the SMC showed increased HIR in Period 1 of 2025 compared to 2024.



FRC EVALUATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENTS

The FRC developed a Benefits Realisation Framework to monitor, track and collect data to allow an assessment *if the new rule enhancements translate into real and measurable improvements* in line with the Association's aim that Gaelic Games, and in this instance Gaelic Football, will become the most enjoyable game in the world to play and watch.

The following are the FRC assessments of the temporary new rule enhancements deployed during the 2025 Inter-county season:

THE THROW-IN

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Fouling consistently occurred at the commencement of each half during 2 v 2 throw-ins. Fouling happens either before or as the ball is thrown in, or as one of the midfield players gains possession.

The 1 v 1 throw-in proposed to make for an improved spectacle, as the player gaining possession will have the opportunity to immediately attack. The other two midfielders are positioned on opposite sidelines adjacent to the 2 players contesting the throw-in and enter the field of play as the ball is thrown in.

BENEFIT REALISATION

The introduction of 1 v 1 throw-ins at the start of each half has significantly enhanced the spectacle of Gaelic Football. This rule change allows the player gaining possession - whether through a clean catch or by winning the breaking ball - to immediately transition into attack, creating dynamic and engaging openings to each half. The impact on discipline and game flow has also been notable. Previously, 2 v 2 throw-ins were frequently marred by early fouling, but in the 2025 season, only 22% of plays within 10 seconds of the throw-in resulted in a foul, compared to 45% in senior club games from 2023-24. This marks a substantial improvement in early-phase discipline.

Moreover, the shift has led to more scoring opportunities directly from throw-ins, with 38% of possessions following a throw-in resulting in a score, up from 25% in previous seasons. These figures confirm that the rule is functioning as designed: reducing early fouls, improving flow, and enhancing the attacking potential of the game from the outset.

Survey data from the FRC cohort study further supports this, with 65.1% of respondents rating the 1 v 1 throw-in as having made the game "better" or "substantially better." While some concerns were raised about enforcement at club level - particularly regarding players breaking the sideline or 45m line before the ball is thrown in - participants still acknowledged the rule's positive impact on game structure and excitement. One respondent noted: "The 1v1 throw-in opens the game brilliantly, but it needs stricter enforcement to prevent early encroachment."

In response to these concerns, the FRC recommends the permanent adoption of this rule, alongside a new enforcement measure: if a player moves prematurely from the sideline or 45m line before the referee has thrown in the ball, a free kick should be awarded to the opposition from the midpoint of the halfway line. This aims to preserve the integrity of the throw-in and reinforce fair play.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE

KICK-OUTS

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Kick-outs: The ball must travel beyond the 40m arc.

With the introduction of the 40m arc for scoring, all kick-outs will have to travel past the 40m arc. This requires a slightly longer kick-out from the midpoint of the 20m line (20m to the apex of the arc, and 34m to where the arc intersects the 20m line). It will also create more 1 to 1 contests, as the arc is larger than previous, thus taking up more space on the pitch. Similar to the current kick-out rule for the 13m semi-circle arc, the ball can only be played once it travels outside the new 40m arc i.e. players will need to be outside the 40m arc to receive the ball from a kick-out.

However, to speed up the kick-out, players from both teams may be inside the 40m but must be 13m from the ball. If they play the ball inside the arc from a kick-out, a free kick is awarded to the opposition. Players on the opposition may intercept/play the ball inside the 40m arc from an opposition kick-out without penalty.

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

The resumption of play after a score or wide is often delayed as players return to position outside the 20m line.

Allowing players to remain inside the 20m line during a kick-out will speed up the game, possibly allowing an attack to quickly develop by the team in possession before the defending team get into position. It will also allow for some innovation, where defending teams may position a player(s) behind the goalkeeper kicking the ball, in the off chance that they win the kick-out and pass the ball immediately to that player(s).

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

Kick-outs have evolved significantly under the new rule enhancements, delivering on their intended impact. In the 2025 season, 63% of all kick-outs were contested, a sharp increase from 26% in 2024 and an average of 31% between 2022 and 2024. This shift reflects a more competitive and dynamic restart phase, encouraging physical contests and strategic planning.

The rule requiring kick-outs to travel outside the 40m arc has led to a dramatic rise in long kick-outs. Between 2022 and 2024, 48% of kick-outs were short (inside the 45m line). In contrast, 78% of kick-outs in 2025 crossed the 45m line, indicating a clear tactical adjustment across teams. Despite the increased contesting, teams retained 60% of their own kick-outs on average throughout the season, showcasing innovation and adaptation by the players and coaches. The average duration of a kick-out was 20.2 seconds, suggesting no undue delay in restarting play.

Feedback from the FRC cohort survey reinforces the rule's success: 80.6% of participants believed the kick-out enhancement made the game better, with 31.5% rating it as "substantially better." One respondent described the change as having "revolutionised the game," while another noted it had "brought back contesting for the ball." However, some concerns were raised about its impact on smaller clubs and underage teams, with suggestions that the rule may disproportionately penalise less physically dominant sides.

Should this rule be adopted permanently, the FRC anticipates further tactical evolution as teams seek to optimise retention and exploit space from longer restarts.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE



GOALKEEPER

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Inside the halfway line the Goalkeeper can only receive the ball from a teammate inside the large rectangle.

The rule is to encourage the team in possession to play in a forward direction and not use the goalkeeper as a pivot and an outlet to recycle possession. It supports recent team play innovation, where goalkeepers support the attack beyond their halfway line. It will also allow goalkeepers to position themselves out from their goal area on opposition kick-outs, and during general play. This rule promotes the ball to be moved forward by the team in possession, in their half of the field, as the option of 'back passing' to the goalkeeper, will no longer be allowed.

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

The Goalkeeper can receive the ball from a teammate beyond the halfway line.

The rule is to encourage the team in possession to play in a forward direction and not use the goalkeeper as a pivot and an outlet to recycle possession. It supports recent team play innovation, where goalkeepers can still support the attack beyond their halfway line. It will also allow goalkeepers to position themselves out from their goal area on opposition kick-outs, and during general play. This rule promotes the ball to be moved forward by the team in possession, in their half of the field, as the option of 'back passing' to the goalkeeper, will no longer be allowed. Aligning this rule on the halfway line with the 4/3 structure rule will simplify it for players, match officials and spectators.

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

This rule enhancement has delivered its intended impact, significantly altering team behaviour and game dynamics. By restricting goalkeepers from receiving passes in their own half - except within the large rectangle when both the goalkeeper and teammate are inside it - teams can no longer recycle possession laterally or backwards with ease. This has encouraged more forward-oriented play and reduced passive build-up in the defensive third.

The rule has also incentivised teams to press higher, challenging opposition possession in their own half rather than retreating into deep defensive shapes. While goalkeepers remain involved through interceptions or receiving passes in the opposition half, their role in build-up play has diminished, resulting in a decrease in lateral handpassing.

In the National Football League, teams averaged 9.6 passes to the goalkeeper per game, but this dropped to just 1.6 per game in championship competitions. The requirement to keep four players in the defensive half further contributed to this shift. Goalkeeper shots averaged just 0.3 per game across the full inter-county season, indicating limited offensive involvement.

Survey data supports this trend: 79.6% of respondents believed the goalkeeper restriction rule made the game better, with 41.3% rating it as "substantially better." Match officials and coaches were particularly supportive, citing improved game flow and reduced time-wasting. One respondent noted, "This rule has brought back urgency and purpose to possession - it's a game changer."

However, some concerns were raised in qualitative feedback, particularly regarding the impact on younger players and smaller clubs. Several coaches highlighted that the rule may discourage participation in the goalkeeper role, with one stating, "We're seeing fewer young players willing to play in goal - it's become a less attractive position." These concerns suggest that while the rule has succeeded at senior level, further refinement may be needed for underage and development contexts.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE



4/3 STRUCTURE RULE

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

During play, a team must have at least four players (which may include the goalkeeper) in their half of the field and at least three outfield players in the opposition half of the field, providing a traditional structure for both teams.

For the team in possession, this set-up creates outlets and encourages quicker transfer and forward kick-passing of the ball by the attacking team. It should help to reduce the lateral recycling and passing of the ball inside the defensive half of the pitch and lead to more exciting play in the attacking areas. It also promotes one-to-one defending; a lost art in the game at present.

The 4/3 Structure Rule will also limit the number of outfield players defending in their own half of the pitch to 11, rather than 13 or 14 outfield players, as is often the case currently. This will potentially create more space to attack into for the team in possession. It will also negate the need to reduce teams to 13 a side, as has been suggested by many contributors to the initial FRC survey in 2024. It is this lack of shape, rather than space, that is leading to the stalemate situations in matches.

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

The 4/3 structure rule is achieving its intended effect, creating a more balanced 11v11 attacking setup and mitigating the overload issues previously seen under the 3/3 structure. The style of play has shifted noticeably – games are now more open, dynamic, and energetic. This is reflected in a 45% increase in goal attempts (from 4.2 to 6.1 per game) and a 16% rise in overall scores compared to the 2024 season. The return to one-on-one attacking and defending is becoming more evident, supported by a 5% increase in goals scored and a 12% rise in shots per game.

Survey data supports this transformation: 88.8% of respondents rated the 4/3 rule as having made the game better, with 47.6% describing it as “substantially better.” Coaches and match officials were particularly supportive, with over 90% of coaches and 81% of match officials endorsing the rule’s positive impact. One respondent noted, “The 3 Up/4 Back rule has opened up the game brilliantly – it’s the best tactical change in years.”

In addition, officiating has become more straightforward. The rule now allows for unintentional crossing of the halfway line under specific conditions, such as when players are within 4m of the line, not interfering with play or opponents, and not gaining an advantage. This clarification has further enhanced game flow and reduced unnecessary stoppages.

The other amendment – requiring teams to keep at least three outfield players in the opposition half, even when a player is sent off – has also worked as intended. It ensures attacking integrity and prevents ultra-defensive setups, contributing to the more fluid and balanced nature of the modern game.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE



ADVANCED MARK INSIDE THE 20M LINE

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

The new Advanced Mark is introduced to encourage long range kick passing and high fielding.

An additional benefit, adding to excitement, will allow the player who made the Mark to continue for a score (either goal or point). If neither is taken, the Mark will be given from where the catch was made.

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

The FRC believe this rule is functioning as intended, promoting long-range kick passing, high fielding, and one-on-one contests. GUI statistics indicate that there were a total of 25 marks taken/claimed out of 215 Inter-county Games in 2025.

As the rule allows players to play on in the knowledge that they still have possession, a correlation can be drawn between the increase of goal shots per game: 4.2 in 2024 vs 6.1 in 2025, and goals per game: 2 in 2024 vs 2.1 in 2025. However, survey data from the FRC cohort study indicates that the advanced mark was the least positively received of the seven core rule enhancements. Only 48.2% of participants believed it made the game better, and it was most frequently selected as the least beneficial rule change. Support for the advanced mark was lowest among players with concerns raised about its fairness to defenders and its impact on game flow.

The FRC anticipates that teams will develop strategies to maximise the return of this rule amendment going forward, though further refinement and clearer communication may be necessary to improve its perception and effectiveness at both inter-county and club levels.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE



SCORING SYSTEM ASSOCIATED WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE 40M ARC

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Encourage teams to shoot for long range points by introducing a 40m arc, with two points for that score. This, we believe, will get supporters up off their seats. This will also ask tactical questions of the defending team, which will require defending players to push out to the 40m arc or beyond to prevent the team in possession attempting shots for two-point scores. This has the potential to create more space closer to the goal. A point taken inside the arc and/or inside the 20m line will be awarded one point. In the original principle concept to balance the two point score and encourage more goal scoring and excitement, a goal would be awarded four points.

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

The scoring system is working as planned. The introduction of the 40m arc has successfully promoted shooting from distance and contributed to increased scoring. In 2025, the average number of shots per game rose to 60.1, marking an 11% increase compared to the previous three-season average of 52.7. This upward trend was consistent across all stages of the inter-county season.

A significant shift toward open play scoring was observed, with 82% of shots originating from open play—up nearly 5% from the 2022–2024 average. This reflects a continued shift toward generating more scoring opportunities in open play and aligns with the FRC's objective of encouraging more dynamic, attacking football.

In championship football (Provincial and Sam Maguire/ Tailteann Cups), teams averaged 2.1 goals and 39.7 total points per game (excluding two-point scores), both up from 2024 (goals: 2.0; points: 1,785 vs 1,849 in 2025). The number of goal attempts per game also increased significantly, from 4.2 in 2024 to 6.1 in 2025, suggesting that the rule enhancements are creating more opportunities for high-impact scoring.

Survey data supports these trends: over 90% of participants believed the 40m arc had made the game better, with 47.1% rating it as “substantially better.” One respondent noted, “The arc has brought back the art of long-range kicking -it’s thrilling to watch and rewards skill.”

The FRC recommends the permanent adoption of this rule, but also proposes a refinement: that a two-point score should count only if no other player from the same team touches the ball after the kick is taken. Additionally, the proposal to increase the value of a goal from three to four points has sparked debate. Advocates argue it could promote more attacking play, reward high-skill efforts, and balance the impact of the two-point score—especially as many participants expressed concern that the current two-point score “demeans a goal” and that “2 points for a free is too much of a reward.” There was also strong support in qualitative feedback for increasing the value of a goal to four points as a corrective measure. However, concerns remain about its potential to disrupt game balance, particularly in low-scoring contests, and to place undue pressure on defenders and goalkeepers. This is especially relevant given that lower-tier and underage teams have struggled with conceding multiple goals early in mismatched fixtures, leading to “brutal scorelines.” These insights suggest that while the proposal has merit, its implementation would require careful calibration to avoid unintended consequences.

Recommendation: Further analysis is required to evaluate the merits of awarding four points for a goal following the conclusion of the 2026 Inter-county season.

Recommendation: Further analysis is also required to assess whether a hand-passed or fisted score over the bar should be allowed under the current scoring system.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE



50M ADVANCEMENT FOR TACTICAL FOULING

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Disincentivise tactical fouling, which significantly slows down the play, by introducing a penalty which advances the ball forward 50m from where the tactical foul occurred.

Tactical Fouling is defined as “any foul which purposefully and deliberately delays or impedes play”.

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Penalty for delaying or interfering with an opponent taking a free kick or sideline kick, or not handing the ball back to the player fouled.

Disincentivise teams who purposefully attempt to delay and slow down play after conceding a free kick or side line ball, by introducing a penalty which advances the ball forward 50m from where the tactical foul occurred. There is also evidence where players commit a technical foul (e.g. overcarrying) and do not release the ball to the opposition in a prompt manner, with the aim of delaying play. The current penalty for this infraction is a free kick to the opposition, 13m more advantageous than the place of the original kick – up to the opponent’s 13m line. A 50m penalty for this infraction will disincentivise this practice of holding onto the ball for the purpose of delaying or slowing down play.

In addition, analysis indicates that players do not return, or are slow to hand over, the ball to the opposition player who was fouled/ or if the player in possession technically fouled the ball to hand it to the opposition. This behaviour of rolling the ball away, throwing it in the air or handing it to the referee deliberately slows down and delays play and prevents the fouled player, or opposition team taking advantage of an immediate Solo and Go, or from taking a quick Free Kick.

Players should hand over the ball to the player fouled in a prompt and respective manner and is aligned with the Association’s ‘Give Respect – Get Respect’ initiative.

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

The rule for delay fouls, such as failing to retreat promptly to allow a free kick or solo & go, or not handing over the ball - has proven effective and aligns with the FRC’s intended outcomes. By penalising teams that attempt to slow play, the rule creates a strong disincentive for timewasting tactics. In 2025, delay fouls accounted for 5% of all fouls, with the highest occurrence in the National League (1.8 per game), gradually decreasing across the Provincial Championship (1.6), Tailteann Cup (1.4), and Sam Maguire Cup (1.4), indicating player adaptation and improved discipline. The rule has also contributed to a 11% increase in shots per game, reflecting its role in maintaining game momentum and reducing stoppages. Additionally, the overall foul count dropped from an average of 27.7 (2022–24) to 25 in 2025, and there was a significant decrease in red, yellow, or black cards during the 2025 inter-county season - evidence that this rule has helped improve discipline without escalating punitive measures.

Year	Red	Double Cards - Red	Yellow	Black	Red TO	Yellow TO	No. of Games
2024	25	29	810	82	3	9	215
2025	8	13	539	56	0	9	214
Difference	17	16	271	26	3	0	
Difference %	68%	55%	33%	31%	100%	0%	

Handing the ball back has been very effective, rather than place the ball directly on the ground where the team fouled, they would need to collect the ball and retreat/move to the position of where the foul occurred to take the free kick. This could be some metres away which would not allow a solo and go – as that has to be taken immediately – and the delayed time taking a static free kick gives the team that fouled (the defending team) an unfair advantage. The FRC propose amending the rule to “handing over on the full” to bring clarity that the ball must be given directly to the nearest opposition player, or the player fouled, in a prompt and respectful manner.

Qualitative feedback from the GIU report supports this impact, noting that the rule enhancements have “transformed the game and created a new level of discipline.” The ability for the fouled team to restart play quickly has helped maintain momentum and prevented defending teams from regrouping unfairly. Furthermore, the report highlights that penalties for delaying a free kick, dissent, and structural fouls have directly contributed to increased scoring opportunities, reinforcing the rule’s effectiveness in keeping the terms of reference to make Gaelic Football exciting to play and watch.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE

SOLO & GO

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

To speed up play when a player is fouled.

Currently a player must have the Referee's permission to take a quick free (Rule 2.6 "With the Referee's consent, a free kick may be taken immediately").

Introducing a Solo & Go (a Toe-Tap) whereby if a player is fouled, he may immediately take a Solo & Go, will significantly speed up the game and present many advantages to the team in possession.

The Solo and Go must be taken immediately otherwise the free kick must be taken from the place of the foul.

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

The principle behind the "Solo & Go" rule is to accelerate play following a foul, and its introduction has been overwhelmingly welcomed by players, officials, and spectators. It not only speeds up the game significantly but also offers strategic advantages to the team in possession, enabling rapid transitions from defence to attack. As the 2025 league and championship season progressed, teams became increasingly adept at using the rule to initiate fast, fluid counter-attacks.

Across all competitions, 51% of Solo & Go phases led to a shot, and 60% of those resulted in scores, underscoring its effectiveness in generating scoring opportunities and maintaining attacking momentum. The rule was also rated highest among all seven core enhancements in the FRC cohort survey, with 99.4% of respondents identifying it as beneficial to the game. Furthermore, 94.7% of participants believed it had made Gaelic football better, with 65.7% rating it as "substantially better"—the highest endorsement of any rule change.

Qualitative feedback reinforced this sentiment, with participants describing Solo & Go as "excellent," "brilliant," and "transformational." One respondent noted, "I really enjoy watching players utilise Solo & Go - it gives them individual decision-making they can be proud of." Match officials also praised the rule for improving game flow, with 95% agreeing that the enhancements overall had made Gaelic football more enjoyable to referee.

The rule is functioning exactly as designed—enhancing pace, reducing delays, and enriching the overall spectacle of Gaelic Football.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE



CATEGORY II INFRACTIONS – CYNICAL BEHAVIOUR FOR DELIBERATELY HOLDING UP A PLAYER

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Disincentivise intentional tactical fouling where, for the purposes of gaining an advantage, a player, either in possession or not, is deliberately held up, but not pulled down to the ground by an opposing player.

As such the offending player while committing a foul, knows they will avoid a Black Card as they have not pulled down the player to the ground (see: Category II Infraction - Rule 5.10 “To deliberately pull down an opponent”).

Category II Infraction - To Contribute to a melee.

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Contributing to a melee is currently a Category III Infraction (Rule 5.19). Evidence suggests that match officials are reluctant to enforce this rule (i.e. sending off a player who is contributing to a melee), unless an attempted kick or strike or other Category III Infractions were observed during the melee. The FRC rule amended moves ‘contributing to a melee’ to a Category II Infraction.

This will assist match officials who are more likely to issue a Black Card/10 min Sin Bin to those player(s) who join in and contribute to the fracas/melee with behaviour such as pushing and shoving/ grappling with opposition players etc, which is not acceptable and reflects poorly on our game but might not be deemed a Category III Infraction/ Red card offence. The threat of a black card, which is more likely to be actioned on by match officials, will discourage players from contributing to a melee.

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

The new Black Card rules are functioning as intended. The expanded authority granted to referees - particularly in melee situations - has contributed to a more disciplined game environment. This has coincided with a noticeable decline in the prevalence of the hold-up tackle, aligning with broader reductions in foul play. In 2025, the average number of fouls per game fell to 25, down from 27.7 across the previous three seasons, and Black Card incidents decreased by 31%, dropping from 82 in 2024 to 56 in 2025.

Year	Red	Double Cards - Red	Yellow	Black	Red TO	Yellow TO	No. of Games
2024	25	29	810	82	3	9	215
2025	8	13	539	56	0	9	214
Difference	17	16	271	26	3	0	
Difference %	68%	55%	33%	31%	100%	0%	

Survey data supports this trend: over 60% of match officials reported that the rule enhancements had improved player behaviour, and 87.3% believed coach behaviour had also improved. Referees expressed greater confidence in applying the rule, with 95.1% agreeing that the enhancements had improved the flow of the game. One official noted, “The Black Card rule has helped reduce cynical play and made officiating more consistent.”

Aggressive fouls accounted for 78% of all infractions, while technical fouls comprised 13%, with the remainder attributed to structural, dissent, and delay-related offences. These shifts have improved the flow of play, reduced stoppages, and enhanced the pace and fluidity of Gaelic Football, contributing to a more engaging and watchable spectacle.

However, the FRC has identified a gap in the current rulebook: instances where a player shooting for goal has their jersey pulled are not classified as cynical fouls. To address this, the FRC proposes a new Category II – Cynical Foul offence, specifically targeting the deliberate denial of goal-scoring opportunities by jersey-pulling. Additionally, it recommends that a penalty kick be awarded in all such scenarios at club level, ensuring consistency and fairness across all tiers of play.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE

DISSENT

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

A player to show dissent with the Referee's decision to be penalised with the award a free kick to the opposing team.

To reinforce the importance of showing respect to Referees, the penalty for dissent towards referees is made more severe to establish that dissent towards Referees is unacceptable. The penalty for this infraction is the ball is advanced 50m.

This proposal supports, in a meaningful way, the Association's 'Give Respect – Get Respect' initiative seeking to ensure that Gaelic Games are promoted and played in a positive, fair and enjoyable manner at all ages and regardless of competition where players, coaches, referees and spectators Give Respect and Get Respect from each other.

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

To Show dissent by a player at U18 or younger grades

The initiative calls for the promotion of the Code of Behaviour at U18 and younger grades, emphasising to players, regardless of age, that they should at all times respect their own fellow team members, their opponents and at all times respect the decisions of match officials.

The introduction of this Black Card offence for players at U18 or younger grades is aligned with the 'Give Respect – Get Respect' initiative and emphasises to players that dissent towards a match official is unacceptable and will not be tolerated by the Association.

The rule focuses on the player who shows dissent, rather than penalising the team, as the player who is ordered off for 10 minutes can be immediately replaced by a teammate for the duration of the 10 minutes.

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Misconduct At Games By Team Officials – Dissent

The aim of this rule amendment is to discourage misconduct by Team Officials and non-playing substitutes towards game officials. The penalty for such misconduct will be the concession of a free kick to the opposition on the offending team's 13m line.

This proposal supports, in a meaningful way, the Association's 'Give Respect – Get Respect' initiative, seeking to ensure that Gaelic Games are promoted and played in a positive, fair and enjoyable manner at all ages and regardless of competition where players, coaches, referees and spectators Give Respect and Get Respect from each other.

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

The dissent rule for showing "dissent with the referee's decision to award a free to the opposing team" is working effectively and delivering its intended impact. A substantial 64.3% of survey participants believe it has made the game better, while 88.8% of match officials endorse its positive impact on discipline and game flow. Referees also reported a 94% improvement in player behaviour and 87.3% improvement in coach behaviour, though only 28% felt it improved supporter behaviour. However, continued reinforcement across all referees is still needed, particularly in ensuring consistency when moving the ball up 50m and addressing dissent situations on the field. This is underscored by the 32.5% of club-level respondents who felt that the dissent rule was not enforced as diligently at club level compared to inter-county level, with qualitative feedback highlighting challenges in consistent rule application.

Coaches have also adapted their approach, with 52.5% reporting changes in sideline behaviour and leadership to align with the rules and the Association's value to Give – Get Respect. Among those, 71.7% said they now show more respect to officials, 59.6% adjusted sideline behaviour, and 61.5% provided clearer leadership through their own conduct. These behavioural shifts reflect a broader cultural change in response to the rule. Despite some concerns about the severity of the 50m penalty and its discretionary application, the rule has contributed to a more disciplined and fluid game. Referees overwhelmingly agree that the rule enhancements have improved the flow of the game (95.1%), though 67.2% also noted increased workload, and 76.1% said they now track more in-game details.

Overall, the rule and its implementation have been positively received, contributing to improved discipline, game flow, and respect for officials.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE

CAPTAIN

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

The team Captain or a nominated deputy are the only players to speak with the Referees to seek clarification on a decision made by the referee.

To reinforce respect for match officials and to increase the communication between a team and the referee the FRC propose that the team captain, or a nominated deputy are the only player to speak to the referee to seek clarification of a decision made by the referee.

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

The Captain's Rule is proving highly effective in promoting respect and reducing dissent across Gaelic football. Under this rule, only the team captain, or a nominated deputy if the captain is the goalkeeper or no longer on the field, is permitted to speak to the referee for clarification, and only during a break in play.

This structured approach has significantly reduced on-field confrontations and improved communication between teams and officials. According to GIU data, just 1% of fouls per game are now attributed to dissent, a marked improvement that reflects the rule's success in fostering a culture of respect and accountability. This is echoed in the FRC Cohort Survey, where 64.3% of participants reported that the 50m penalty for dissent had made the game better, with match officials particularly supportive: 88.8% believed it improved player behaviour. Additionally, 52.5% of coaches said the rule had impacted how they coach, with over 70% reporting they now show more respect to officials and provide clearer leadership through their own behaviour.

By clearly defining who may engage with referees and when, the rule has helped streamline match management and reinforce the values championed by the Association.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE

PITCH MARKINGS

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

The introduction of a midfield line (a broken line) will assist the introduction of some of the new enhancements and make it easier for match officials to control the game. It will also simplify these rules for players and spectators. It should also be noted that some GAA pitches are not marked with 65m lines and, in these cases, a midfield line will be relatively easy to mark.

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

The introduction of a new 40m arc will require an amendment to the Official Guide - Part 2, Rule 1 – The Field of Play.

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

The new pitch markings to indicate a 'dashed' half-way line and the 40-metre arc are working as designed and have contributed positively to the game. Survey data confirms strong support for the 40m arc rule, with over 90% of participants believing it has improved the game. However, some referees and analysts noted that pitch markings were not always clear or consistently applied, particularly at club level. In these instances, the lack of clarity of the line made it difficult to enforce the 40m arc rule accurately.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE

Additionally, the FRC recommends that a review be conducted on the necessity of marking the 'D' (the 13m semi-circle arc centred on the 20m line), as it is now only required for penalties in both Gaelic Football and Hurling.

DELAY FOULS

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Disincentivise teams who purposefully attempt to delay and slow down play after conceding a free kick or side line ball, by introducing a penalty which advances the ball forward 50m from where a delay (also known as a 'tactical foul') occurred.

There is also evidence where players commit a technical foul (e.g. overcarrying) and do not release the ball to the opposition in a prompt manner, with the aim of delaying play. The current penalty for this infraction is a free kick to the opposition, 13m more advantageous than the place of the original kick – up to the opponent's 13m line. A 50m penalty for this infraction will disincentivise this practice of holding onto the ball for the purpose of delaying or slowing down play.

In addition, analysis indicates that players do not return or are slow to hand over the ball to the opposition player who was fouled/ or if the player in possession technically fouled the ball to hand it to the opposition. This behaviour of rolling the ball away, placing the ball on the ground away from the position of the infraction, throwing the ball in the air or handing it to the referee deliberately slows down and delays play and prevents the fouled player, or opposition team taking advantage of an immediate Solo and Go, or from taking a quick Free Kick.

Players should hand over the ball to the player fouled in a prompt and respective manner and is aligned with the Association's 'Give Respect – Get Respect' initiative.

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

The rule for delay fouls (e.g. not deliberately moving back to delay a free kick or Solo & Go, or not handing over the ball) is working as the FRC intended and is proving highly effective. By penalising teams that attempt to slow play, the rule has created a strong disincentive for time-wasting tactics. In 2025, delay fouls accounted for 5% of all fouls, with the highest occurrence in the National League (1.8 per game), gradually decreasing across the Provincial Championship (1.6), Tailteann Cup (1.4), and Sam Maguire Cup (1.4) – indicating player adaptation and improved discipline over time.

This rule has also contributed to a 11% increase in shots per game, reflecting its role in maintaining game momentum and reducing stoppages. The overall foul count dropped from an average of 27.7 (2022–24) to 25 in 2025, and there was a significant decrease in red, yellow, and black cards. Specifically, from a total of 214 games, yellow cards dropped by 33% (from 810 in 2024 to 539 in 2025), and black cards fell by 31% (from 82 to 56).

Qualitative feedback from the GIU report supports this impact, noting that the rule enhancements have “transformed the game and created a new level of discipline.” The ability for the fouled team to restart play quickly has helped maintain momentum and prevented defending teams from regrouping unfairly. Furthermore, the rule requiring players to hand the ball back “on the full” has been particularly effective in preserving the advantage of the fouled team, especially in enabling immediate Solo & Go restarts.

Survey data reinforces these findings. In the Foireann survey, over 90% of participants agreed that the rule enhancements had improved club football, with many citing improved game flow and discipline. One respondent described the delay foul rule as “a game-changer that rewards urgency and punishes cynicism.” Match officials also reported a 94% improvement in player behaviour and an 87.3% improvement in coach behaviour, attributing much of this to the enforcement of delay and dissent penalties.

While the delay rule has been widely praised, some concerns were raised about its application at club level – 32.5% of respondents in the Foireann survey felt that the rule was not enforced as diligently at club level compared to inter-county games. Nonetheless, the overall sentiment remains strongly positive, with referees overwhelmingly agreeing that the rule enhancements have improved the flow of the game (95.1%).

The FRC expects to see further player adaptation as players continue to adjust their behaviour to avoid unnecessary fouls or delay fouls, further reinforcing the rule's effectiveness. The Committee also recommends continued referee education and the development of clearer guidance to ensure consistent enforcement across all levels of play.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE

ADVANTAGE

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

This rule supports the ambition of the Association to make Gaelic Games the most attractive amateur sport in the world to play and watch. The current advantage rule (5.40) permits *“When an Aggressive Foul is committed, the Referee may allow the play to continue if the referee considers that this presents the potential of a goal-scoring opportunity or another advantage to the team offended by creating or capitalising on time and space”*. Although this is a well written rule, the second paragraph of Rule 5.40 limits the advantage to five seconds.

The FRC proposal will allow the referee to exercise more judgement without the limitation of 5 seconds (this practice had been observed in the 2024 football and hurling inter-county championships) and allows the advantage to develop for the team in possession until a clear and real advantage has been accrued or if no advantage is accruing.

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

The advantage rule is working, for the most part, as planned. The player that is fouled is no longer limited by a time constraint, as referees now allow the advantage to run until it becomes clear that no advantage has accrued. The player is also aware that when the advantage ends, the referee will indicate this by saying “advantage over,” lowering their arm and allowing play to continue as normal.

Importantly, the player fouled is no longer punished if they commit a technical foul during their advantage. Should a player from the team offended commit a technical foul before the advantage is realised, the referee will stop play and apply the penalty for the first infringement. Furthermore, if a player from the team that committed the original foul commits another foul during the advantage, the free is awarded from the more favourable position to the team offended.

Survey data supports the rule’s effectiveness: 77.5% of respondents believed the advantage rule had made the game better, with 32.6% rating it as “substantially better.” Match officials were particularly supportive, with 86.6% endorsing the rule’s positive impact. One official noted, “The advantage rule has improved flow and fairness - it’s a major step forward.”

However, anecdotal evidence at club level suggests that some referees allow the advantage to run for too long, potentially leading to confusion or missed opportunities. This concern was echoed in qualitative feedback, where participants called for more consistent application and clearer referee training. The FRC recognises this and recommends ongoing education and refresher workshops to ensure uniform understanding and implementation across all levels of play.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE

LINE UMPIRE

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

To promote increased cooperation between Referees and Line Umpires, and to assist Referees’ decision making with timely information, the rule book requires amendment to immediately allow Line Umpires bring to the attention of the Referee, rather than in a break in play as per the current rule, any instance of foul play in addition to immediately assisting a referee in determining the validity of a score and an advanced mark. The Referee’s decision on any question of fact shall remain unchanged, all other match officials shall operate under the direction of the Referee.

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

The empowerment of Line Umpires in their roles and responsibilities has strengthened teamwork among Match Officials and increased their overall awareness of in-game events. This rule is working as intended, enhancing officiating consistency and ensuring a more effectively managed game. According to the cohort study, 88.8% of match officials reported that the rule enhancements have positively impacted coach and player behaviour, and over 83% found officiating more enjoyable. Furthermore, referees noted improved game flow, increased collaboration, and a need for more regular workshops and refreshers to maintain consistency - highlighting the growing interdependence and shared responsibility among officials.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE

STOP CLOCK & HOOTER

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

The Stop Clock brings clarity to timekeeping for officials, players, mentors and spectators.

Following a proposal by the FRC 2012/2013, at the November 2013 meeting of Ard Chomhairle, it was agreed that the new Clock/Hooter system should be trialled during the Sigerson and Fitzgibbon Cup Finals in 2014 “after which Ard Chomhairle will finalise its views on its implementation”. Protocols adopted for these Trials were approved by Coiste Bainistí. The trial was carried out over six games. A report was completed after the trials, which outlined that “we believe that the Clock/Hooter system will be an addition to the presentation of our inter-county championship games. However, we also believe, that our playing rules at present do not necessarily provide for what it was hoped the Clock/Hooter system would achieve. It is our view that if the system is implemented without changes to the existing playing rules, it creates considerable risk for the Association”. Following this report no actions were completed.

FRC 2024/2025 propose to introduce the Stop Clock, with rule change proposals, which will bring clarity to timekeeping for officials, players, mentors and spectators. This will also bring more excitement to the games, as witnessed in Ladies Football.

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

The introduction of the Stop Clock and Hooter has had the intended positive impact, particularly in enhancing clarity and transparency in timekeeping. It has also helped address concerns around time-wasting tactics, especially in scenarios where a player has been black-carded. According to GIU data, the average game duration in 2025 increased slightly to 78 minutes and 42 seconds, while the percentage of time the ball was in play decreased marginally to 56%, reflecting more stoppages and a higher number of kick-outs. These changes underscore the importance of precise timekeeping mechanisms.

Survey feedback also indicated strong support for the Stop Clock and Hooter, but highlighted some confusion and inconsistency around when a game should end. In response, the FRC recommends reverting to the original proposal: that the game should end when the hooter sounds - unless the ball is in flight or a free-kick is being taken, including 45s and line balls. This adjustment is intended to further streamline match conclusions and eliminate ambiguity around when a game ends.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE AND TO END THE GAME WHEN THE HOOTER SOUNDS

CROSSING A LINE

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

To bring clarity that a player must have one or both feet over a line to deem them in or out of play.

BENEFIT REALISATION OF THE NEW RULE ENHANCEMENT

Unless stated otherwise, where a Rule requires a player to be inside or outside a particular line on the Field of Play, the player is required to have both feet inside or outside the line, as appropriate. This has brought greater clarity and is working as intended. This clarification ensures consistency in decision-making, and evidence suggests that it has been effectively implemented across games.

FRC RECOMMEND THE PERMANENT ADOPTION OF THIS RULE

FRC ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ADVANTAGE RULE

The FRC recommends guidance material is developed to help match officials apply the advantage rule in Gaelic Football.

In defensive situations, advantage should be limited to allowing the fouled player to either escape the tackle or successfully passing to a teammate.

In attacking scenarios, advantage should only be applied when there is a clear and immediate opportunity to take a shot within a single phase of play. It should not be used to justify prolonged possession aimed at eventually creating a scoring chance.

2. OVER AND BACK RULE

The FRC recommends that analysis be undertaken to assess the merits of introducing an ‘over and back’ rule in Gaelic Football.

Under this proposed rule, once a team moves the ball into the opposition’s half, they would be prohibited from playing it back into their own half. Any breach of this rule would result in a free kick awarded from the point where the ball crossed ‘back over’ the halfway line. The objective is to incentivise teams to press forward and actively seek to regain possession. However, careful consideration is needed regarding how this rule would apply to kick-outs and other transitional phases of play.

3. FIST PASS

The FRC recommends that analysis be undertaken to assess the merits of permitting only the use of a closed fist for handpasses in Gaelic Football.

This change aims to eliminate the prevalent throw-style handpasses currently seen in the game. As fist-passing is more technically demanding than using an open palm, it is expected to lead to more turnovers and, in turn, a more exciting and engaging spectacle.

Additionally, the rule may help reduce the overall volume of handpasses per game, thereby encouraging a greater emphasis on kick passing.

4. SCORING VIA HAND PASS OR FIST PASS

The FRC recommends that analysis be undertaken to assess the merits of allowing a score when the ball is hand-passed or fisted over the crossbar.

This review should carefully consider the potential impact on game dynamics, skill execution, and overall scoring patterns before any formal rule change is proposed — including the possible removal of the ability to score via hand pass or fist pass.

5. RATIO OF HAND PASSES TO FOOT PASSES

The FRC recommends that, at age grades below U15, consideration be given to introducing a rule whereby a player who receives a hand pass must kick the ball on their next play.

This initiative aims to promote greater use of kick passing, reduce over-reliance on hand passing, and encourage more open and skill-based play at underage levels.

6. INCREASING THE VALUE OF A GOAL

The FRC recommends that analysis continue on the merits of increasing the value of a goal to four points.

This evaluation should consider the potential incentive for teams to create more goal-scoring opportunities, the strategic balance a four-point goal offers compared to a two-point score, and the impact that consecutive four-point goals could have on the overall dynamic and momentum of a game.

7. SOLO & GO – SIDELINE RESTART OPTION

The FRC recommends that the option of taking a sideline restart by means of a solo and go be considered.

The primary advantage of this approach is the increased speed and excitement it could bring to the game, enhancing the flow and spectator appeal. However, the potential impact on game balance must be carefully assessed, as it may lead to an overemphasis on possession and transitions, potentially reducing contests and diminishing traditional skills such as kick passing.

8. PASSING TO THE GOALKEEPER

The FRC recommends the development of clear guidance to support players' understanding of Rule 1.10 – Rules of Fair Play – Rule 1, particularly in relation to when a player is permitted to pass the ball to their goalkeeper within their own half of the field.

This guidance should aim to clarify the rule's intent and ensure consistent application across all levels of play.

9. TACKLE

The FRC recommends that the Standing Committee on Playing Rules reconstitute its Tackle Workgroup, with the objective of continuing the work of the previous group.

The renewed workgroup should focus on developing updated proposals for the Official Guide, specifically regarding the definition of the tackle in Gaelic Football and the associated rules. This initiative aims to ensure greater clarity, consistency, and alignment of the tackle with the demands and realities of the modern game.

10. PHYSICAL DEMANDS IN GAELIC FOOTBALL

The FRC recommends that further analysis be conducted during the 2026 inter-county season, due to the limited GPS data currently available from inter-county teams regarding the physical demands of recent rule enhancements.

This analysis is essential before making any decisions on increasing the number of substitutions or introducing rolling substitutions. Robust data will ensure that any changes are evidence-based and aligned with player welfare and the evolving nature of the game.

11. REFEREE HAND SIGNALS IN GAELIC FOOTBALL

The FRC recommends that an official guide outlining the hand signals used by match officials in Gaelic Football be developed by the National Referees' Development Committee.

This guide should form the basis of a schedule of signals to be adopted as Guidelines by Central Council. In parallel, the Central Competitions Control Committee should prepare appropriate educational and briefing materials to support the consistent use and understanding of these hand signals across all levels of the game.

12. LEAVING THE FIELD OF PLAY AT HALF-TIME

The FRC recommends the introduction of a protocol whereby, at half-time, the team that loses the toss remains on the pitch until the opposing team has fully vacated the field of play.

This measure is designed to reduce the risk of skirmishes or confrontations that may arise when both teams exit simultaneously.

The FRC supports the adoption of this protocol as standard practice across all levels of Gaelic Football.

13. LATE ARRIVAL ONTO THE FIELD OF PLAY AFTER HALF-TIME

The FRC recommends consideration should be given to penalising a team who return late to the field of play after the half-time break.

In circumstances where a valid reason for the delay isn't given to the Referee in a timely fashion, the suggested penalty is that the Throw-In is cancelled, and a free-kick is awarded to the opposition team from the mid-point of the halfway line.

14. MARKINGS ON THE FIELD OF PLAY

The FRC recommends that a review be conducted on the necessity of marking the 'D' - the 13m semi-circle arc centred on the 20m line - as it is now only required during penalties in both Gaelic Football and Hurling, to keep players outside the D while the penalty is being taken.

15. MISCONDUCT AT HALF-TIME BY TEAM OFFICIALS

The FRC recommends that guidance for referees is updated to address instances of misconduct by team officials occurring during the half-time interval, in contravention of Rules of Control – Rule 5: Misconduct at Games by Team Officials, specifically Category Ia, IIa, IVa, and Va infractions.

While the Committee is satisfied that the conduct of team officials has improved during play, anecdotal evidence suggests that infractions are now more likely to occur during half-time in a small number of cases. In response, the Committee recommends the following actions: Enhanced monitoring by referees at half-time; Full enforcement of Rule 5 - Misconduct at Games by Team Officials; and sanctions to be imposed in line with the official rulebook, including carding. Consideration of a penalty may be considered necessary, that on the resumption of the second half, the throw-in is cancelled and a free-kick is awarded to the opposition team from the mid-point of the halfway line. This recommendation is intended to reinforce the importance of maintaining the GAA value of respect throughout all phases of the game, and to empower referees to act decisively in upholding the integrity of match proceedings.

16. STOP CLOCK AND HOOTER

The FRC recommend that Ard Chomhairle revert to the original proposal to end the game when the hooter sounds - unless ball is in flight or free-kick (incl 45/ line ball).

17. APPLICATION OF PERMANENT RULE CHANGES AT UNDER 18 OR YOUNGER GRADES

The FRC recommended that a Council or Committee in Charge may adopt competition regulations for competitions at under 18 or younger grades which modify or restrict the application of some of the permanent Rule changes made by Special Congress on 4ú Deireadh Fómhair 2025, subject to the approval of the Development Competitions Control Committee.

18. GAMES INTELLIGENCE UNIT

The FRC recommends that the Games Intelligence Unit be established as a permanent unit within the Association, reporting directly to the Director of Games Development.

This would ensure continuity in data-driven analysis and strategic insights to support the ongoing evolution and enhancement of Gaelic Games.

19. GAELIC FOOTBALL EXPERT ADVISORY GROUP

The FRC recommends the establishment of a Gaelic Football Expert Advisory Group, comprising former inter-county and club managers, players, referees, and other experienced stakeholders.

Supported by the Games Intelligence Unit, this group would report to the Standing Committee on Playing Rules and provide informed advice on emerging trends in Gaelic Football, as well as potential rule amendments aimed at continued enhancement of the game.

NEXT STEPS

The supreme authority within the GAA is An Comhdháil (Congress). This body, comprising of delegates representing counties and other units of the organisation, are the authority to enact, amend, or rescind rules in the GAA Official Guide. On the 4th October 2025 An Comhdháil Speisialta (Special Congress) will convene with the purpose to discuss and ratify FRC proposals.

Prior to this meeting, Ard Chomhairle (Central Council), the supreme governing body of the Association, will meet on the 3rd September 2025 to review the FRC Report for consideration by Special Congress.

Rule changes made at Special Congress will be adopted as a permanent rule change to the Official Guide Part II from 1st January 2026.

Following conclusion of the 2025 Inter-county competitions the FRC will present a Final Report with proposals that will again be discussed and considered for ratification to come into effect as a permanent rule change in 2026.

CONCLUSION

The Football Review Committee was established in early 2024 with a clear and ambitious mandate: to reimagine Gaelic football in a way that honours its heritage while embracing the innovations necessary to make it the most enjoyable amateur sport in the world to play and watch. This Final Report marks the culmination of 18 months of intensive work, consultation, experimentation, and reflection. It presents a comprehensive evaluation of the rule enhancements trialled during the 2025 season and sets out a roadmap for their permanent adoption and future refinement.

From the outset, the FRC adopted a rigorous and inclusive methodology. Thousands of stakeholders – players, coaches, referees, administrators, supporters, and analysts – contributed through surveys, workshops, sandbox games, and direct correspondence. The Committee also drew on historical analysis, expert Delphi panels, and the most detailed performance data ever compiled in Gaelic football, thanks to the newly established Games Intelligence Unit. This multi-dimensional approach ensured that the Committee's recommendations were grounded in evidence, shaped by experience, and informed by the lived realities of the game at every level of the Association.

The feedback was clear and consistent. Gaelic football remains a beloved sport, but there was a strong appetite for change. Participants expressed frustration with overly defensive tactics, excessive handpassing, and slow, possession-based play. They called for a game that rewards skill, encourages risk-taking, promotes forward momentum, and restores the excitement of contests, particularly one-on-one battles and dynamic transitions. The FRC's seven core rule enhancements were designed to address these concerns directly.

The results of the 2025 season speak volumes. Across 214 inter-county matches, including National League, Provincial Championships, Tailteann Cup and Sam Maguire Cup, the impact of the new rules was profound:

- Shots per game increased by 12%, and scores rose by 16%, reflecting a more open and attacking style of play.
- Goal attempts surged by 45%, and two-point scores from outside the 40m arc averaged 4.7 per game, showcasing the return of long-range kicking as a core skill.
- Kick-outs became more contested, with a 63% contest rate compared to 26% in 2024, and long kick-outs increased by 30%, revitalising midfield battles.
- Solo & Go was the most popular enhancement, with 99.4% of survey respondents rating it positively and 60% of Solo & Go phases resulting in scores.
- The 4/3 structure rule restored balance to the field, reducing defensive congestion and enabling more fluid attacking play.
- The 1v1 throw-in reduced early fouling and increased scoring opportunities from restarts, with 38% of possessions leading to scores.
- The goalkeeper restriction rule encouraged forward play and reduced passive recycling, with a 79.6% approval rating from survey participants.

These enhancements did not merely tweak the game, they transformed it. Players and coaches reported increased enjoyment, referees noted improved discipline and flow, and supporters expressed renewed enthusiasm for the spectacle of Gaelic football. The data confirms that the FRC's proposals are not only popular but effective in delivering on the Association's strategic vision: to make Gaelic games the most enjoyable amateur sports in the world to play and watch.

However, the Committee recognises that reform is not a destination but a journey. While the core enhancements are recommended for permanent adoption from 2026, the FRC also proposes refinements to ensure consistency, fairness, and clarity. These include:

- Penalising early movement at throw-ins with a free kick from the halfway line.
- Clarifying enforcement of Solo & Go and the 40m arc scoring rule.
- Introducing a black card for jersey-pulling in goal-scoring situations.
- Extending penalty awards for cynical fouls to club competitions.
- Empowering neutral sideline officials to report foul play.
- Refining the scoring system to ensure two-point scores are only awarded when untouched by teammates after a free.

The FRC also recommends further analysis of emerging proposals, including the Over-and-Back rule, scoring via handpass or fist pass, and increasing the value of a goal to four points. These ideas reflect ongoing stakeholder feedback and merit careful consideration in future seasons.

Importantly, the Committee advocates for flexibility at underage levels. Recognising the unique developmental needs of younger players, the FRC recommends that competition organisers be permitted to tailor rule applications for U18 and younger grades, subject to approval. This approach balances innovation with inclusivity and ensures that the game remains accessible, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate for all participants.

To support the continued evolution of Gaelic football, the FRC recommends the establishment of two permanent structures:

1. The Games Intelligence Unit - to provide ongoing data-driven analysis of game trends, rule impacts, and player welfare.
2. The Gaelic Football Expert Advisory Group - comprising of experienced managers, players, coaches, referees, and analysts, to advise the Standing Committee on Playing Rules and ensure that future changes are informed by practical insight and strategic foresight.

These structures will ensure that the game continues to evolve in a thoughtful, evidence-based manner, guided by the principles of fairness, enjoyment, and excellence.

In closing, the Football Review Committee expresses its deepest gratitude to all who contributed to this process. From the thousands who completed surveys and attended workshops, to the players, coaches, referees, and administrators who embraced the trial rules and provided invaluable feedback - your passion, commitment, and insight have shaped the future of Gaelic football.

Special thanks are due to the Games Intelligence Unit, whose data-driven approach has set a new standard for performance analysis in Gaelic games. The FRC also acknowledges the support of the Standing Committee on Playing Rules, the Rules Advisory Committee, Central Council, and the Management Committee, whose guidance and governance have been instrumental throughout.

This Final Report is not merely a set of recommendations — it is a vision for the future. A future where Gaelic football is faster, fairer, more exciting, and more enjoyable. A future where tradition and innovation coexist, and where the game continues to inspire players and supporters across Ireland and around the world.

Ní neart go cur le chéile - there is no strength without unity. Together, we have laid the foundation for a new era in Gaelic football.

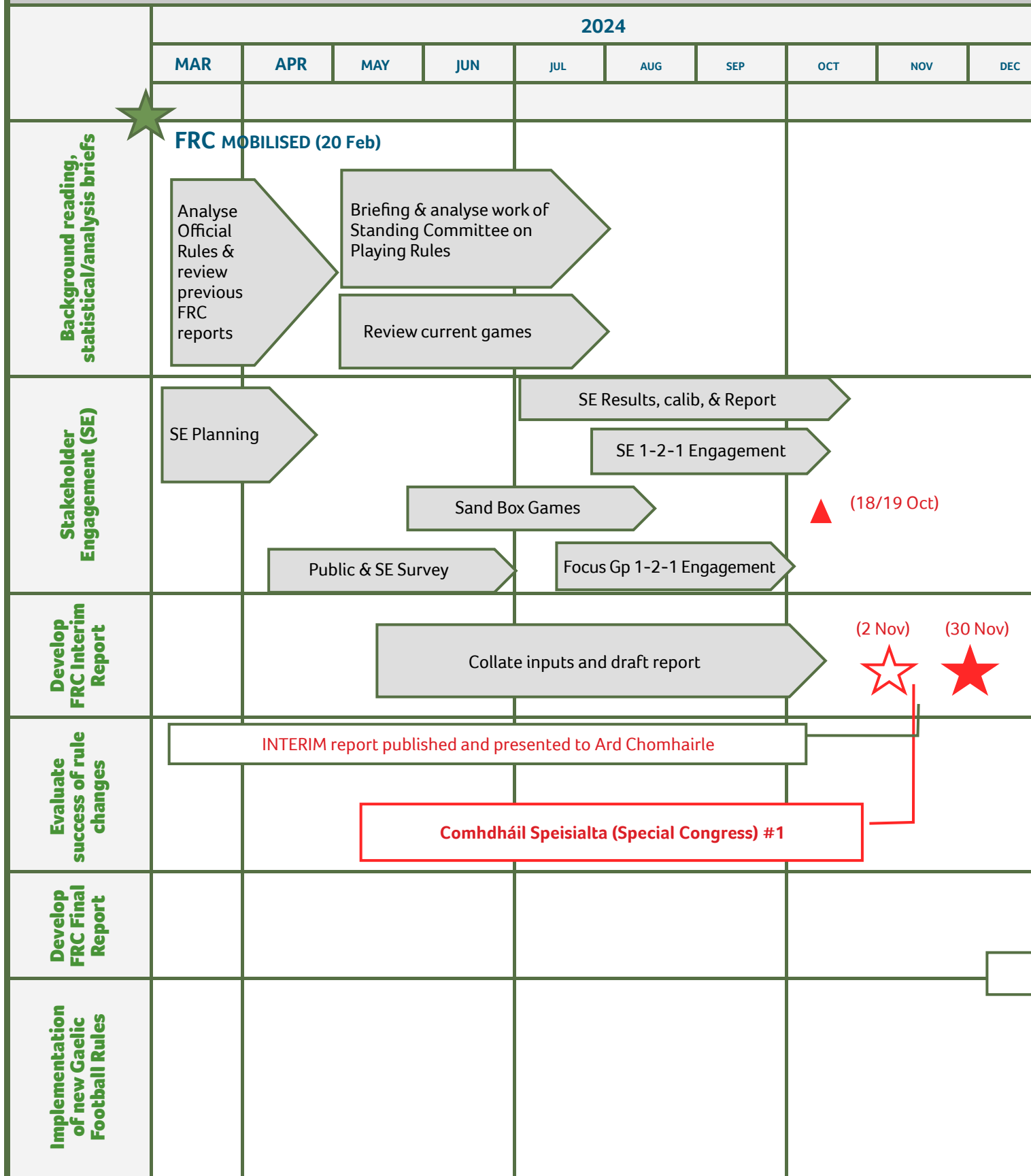
Le buíochas,

The 2024/2025 Football Review Committee



APPENDICES

FOOTBALL REVIEW COMMITTEE 2024-2025



53



**REPORT ON THE COHORT SURVEY AND
RESPONSES TO THE CLUB SURVEY,
FOLLOWING QUARTER-FINALS OF THE
2025 FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP**

Dr Michael McKay
Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
&
Dr Peter Horgan
Gaelic Athletic Association

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The roll out of the Football Review Committee (FRC) Rule Enhancements has been the subject of study in a variety of different ways. Initially, in the development of the proposals, a large-scale public survey was conducted. This was followed up with a Delphi Study to narrow the findings of the public survey.

Once the Rule Enhancements were adopted for implementation, it was agreed to continue the analysis of their implementation; during the Allianz National Football League two data collection methods were employed. Firstly, an open public survey was undertaken, using social and more traditional media (including match programmes) to circulate a QR code to access the survey. Secondly, a cohort study was conducted, whereby participants were issued a survey at various times during the Allianz NFL. The Cohort represents the strictest form of analysis – the same people followed over time. These completed a baseline questionnaire just prior to round one of the Allianz National Football Leagues (February 2025) to allow for analysis of responses in comparison to this baseline.

The results of each of these pieces of research have been published previously.

This report contains the results of two further studies undertaken on behalf of the FRC. Continuing from the implementation of the Rule Enhancements during the League, the cohort were further surveyed during the All-Ireland Senior Football Championship, just after the Quarter-Finals of the All-Ireland Championship (July 2025). The results of this survey are presented below.

In addition, and reflective that the Rule Enhancements were introduced at Club as well as at inter-county level, a survey was conducted of GAA Club members, using the Foireann membership system as the target participants to establish feedback on the implementation of the FRC Rule Enhancements at Club level.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Findings reveal overwhelmingly positive perceptions of the game following implementation. Gaelic football is now regarded as faster, more skilful, and more enjoyable to both watch and play. Six of the seven major enhancements were widely endorsed, with the “Solo and Go” and “40m scoring arc” among the most popular. The changes have driven increased attendance likelihood, stronger approval from older supporters, and more alignment in opinions across provinces and roles. At Club level, over 90% of respondents agreed the game has improved, though concerns remain regarding consistency of rule application, officiating challenges, and suitability for underage players.

While implementation is not without its challenges—

particularly referee support, advanced mark criticisms, and player welfare considerations—the respondents to the various research studies have described how the rule enhancements have broadly “reinvented” Gaelic football, restoring excitement, enhancing discipline, and encouraging skill expression.

KEY FINDINGS

OVERALL SPECTACLE OF GAELIC FOOTBALL

- Average rating rose from “fair” (~3.2) to “very good” (~4.6).
- Positivity converged across age, province, and role categories, with older participants showing the greatest improvement.

1. PERCEIVED NEED FOR ENHANCEMENTS

- Endorsement of necessity grew over time, with older cohorts consistently most supportive.
- Club and County officers initially showed strongest support; players and officials recorded the largest positive shift over time.

2. ATTENDANCE INTENTIONS

- Likelihood of attending both inter-county and Club games increased significantly, particularly among older age groups and those in Ulster.

3. ATTITUDES TO INDIVIDUAL ENHANCEMENTS

- Six of seven rules rated as improving the game; “Solo and Go” and goalkeeper limitations particularly well received.
- Advanced Mark remained the least popular enhancement across both County and Club levels.

4. CLUB-LEVEL APPLICATION

- Majority felt rules were applied as diligently as at County level, though one-third disagreed.
- Players (40%) most likely to perceive weaker enforcement.
- Despite this, over 90% of respondents agreed enhancements improved Club football.

5. ROLE-SPECIFIC IMPACTS

- Coaches reported increased opportunities to emphasise skills, tactical variety, and player development.
- Match officials found refereeing more enjoyable overall, though challenges remain with rule enforcement consistency and workload.
- Players largely endorsed improved enjoyment but raised concerns about injuries, workload, and the diminishing appeal of the goalkeeper role.

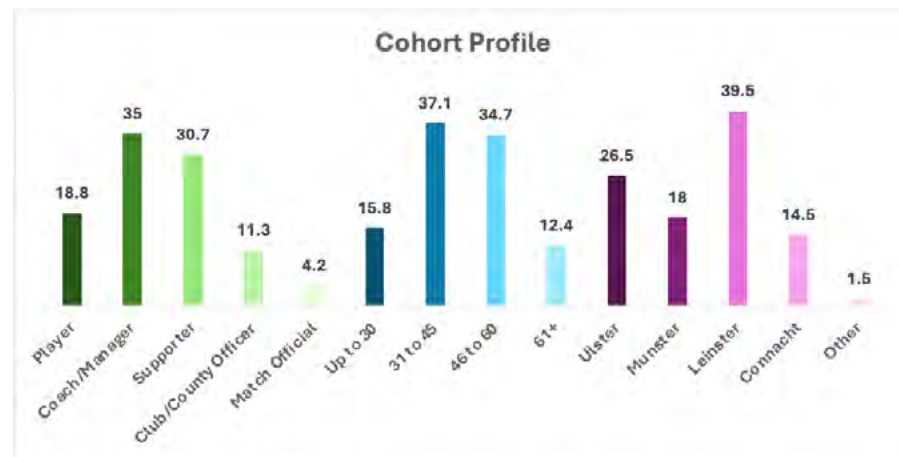
6. RECURRING THEMES IN FEEDBACK

- Strong approval for revitalising the spectacle and flow of Gaelic football.
- Persistent criticisms of officiating consistency and difficulties at Club/underage levels.
- Ongoing debate around fairness of the two-point score (especially from frees), the role of handpassing, and the relevance of the advanced mark.

THE COHORT

The results in this section are based on responses given by an ongoing cohort of participants (hereafter Cohort). The Cohort represents the strictest form of analysis – the same people followed over time. These completed a baseline questionnaire just prior to round one of the Allianz National Football Leagues (February 2025) and were revisited just after the Quarter-Finals of the All-Ireland Championship (July 2025).

A total of 1,207 participants signed up to be part of the Cohort. Their demographic details are displayed below. Results show in terms of role (green font), around two-thirds were supporters or coaches/managers (as their 'main' self-reported role), in terms of age (blue font) over 70% were aged 31 to 60, and around two-thirds were from Ulster or Leinster (purple font).



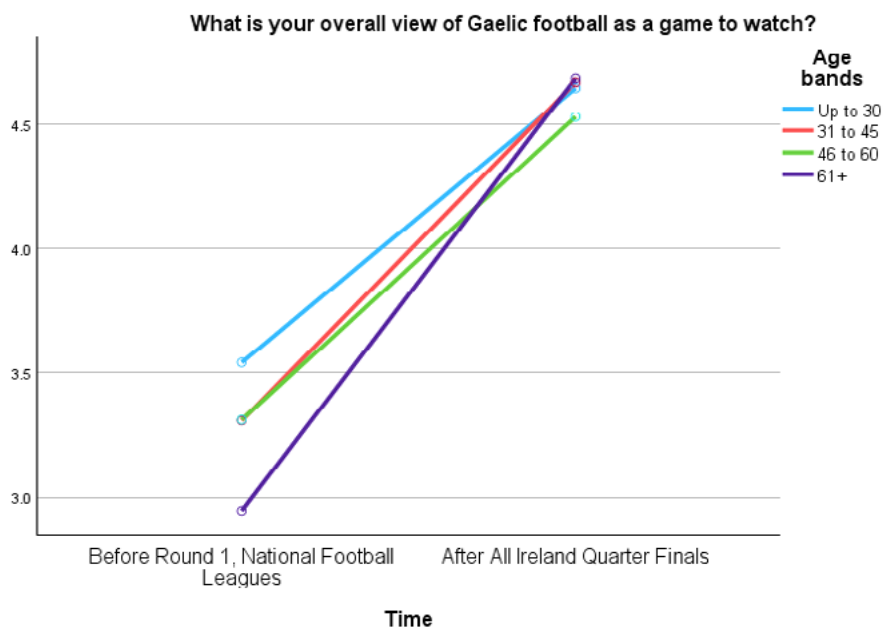
QUESTION 1

WHAT IS YOUR OVERALL VIEW OF GAELIC FOOTBALL AS A GAME TO WATCH?

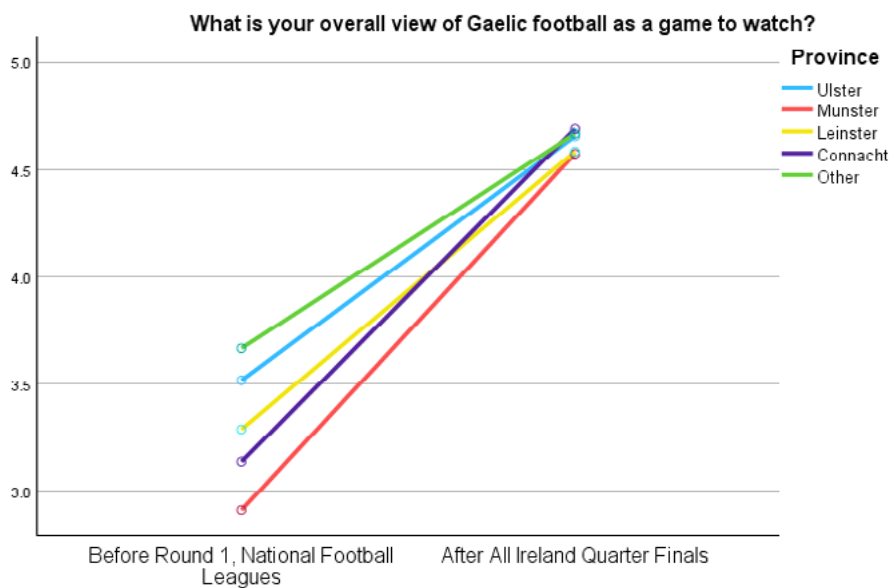
This was scored: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = fair; 4 = good; 5 = very good.



Overall, the direction of travel is positive (average of just over 3.2 to just over 4.6), with the sample moving from an average score equating to fair, to an average score closer to very good. By any standards, that is a substantial change. Below, these responses are fractured by age, main self-reported role within the GAA, and province.



In the initial FRC report, greatest dissatisfaction with Gaelic football was reported by older participants. This is reaffirmed at baseline here. However, as is clear from the figure, there is a convergence developing by all Ireland Quarter Finals stage (where the age bands are not as widely distributed in their responses), with responses for all age groups coalescing around 4.6 (indicative of a response equating to 'very good'). Of note, whereas the older participants were most disapproving at baseline, they are the most approving at final follow up.



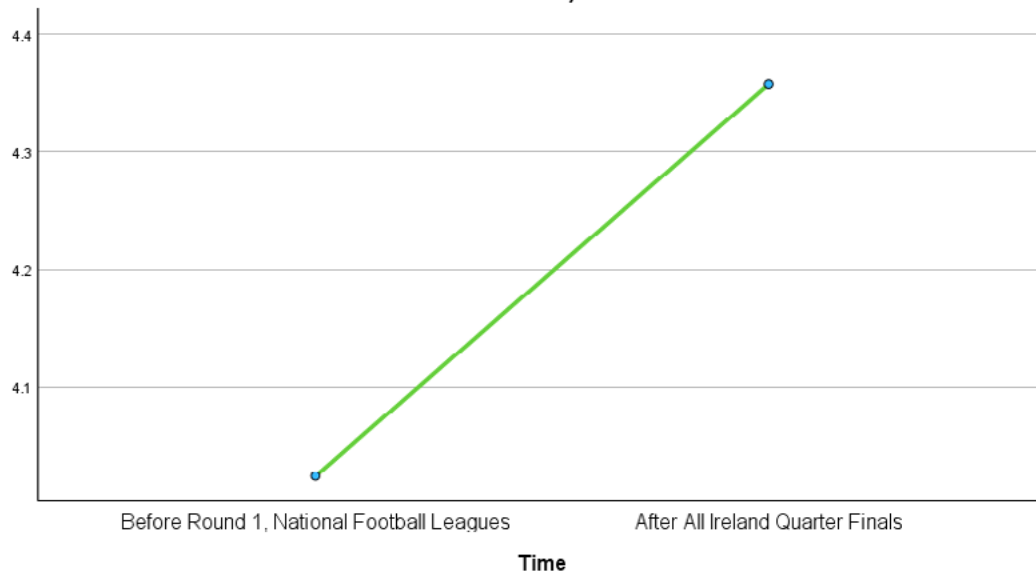
The figure above shows that at final follow up, there is very little between-province difference in satisfaction levels, quite different to baseline. Similar to the results for age bands, there is a clear convergence of averages across the five jurisdictions.

QUESTION 2

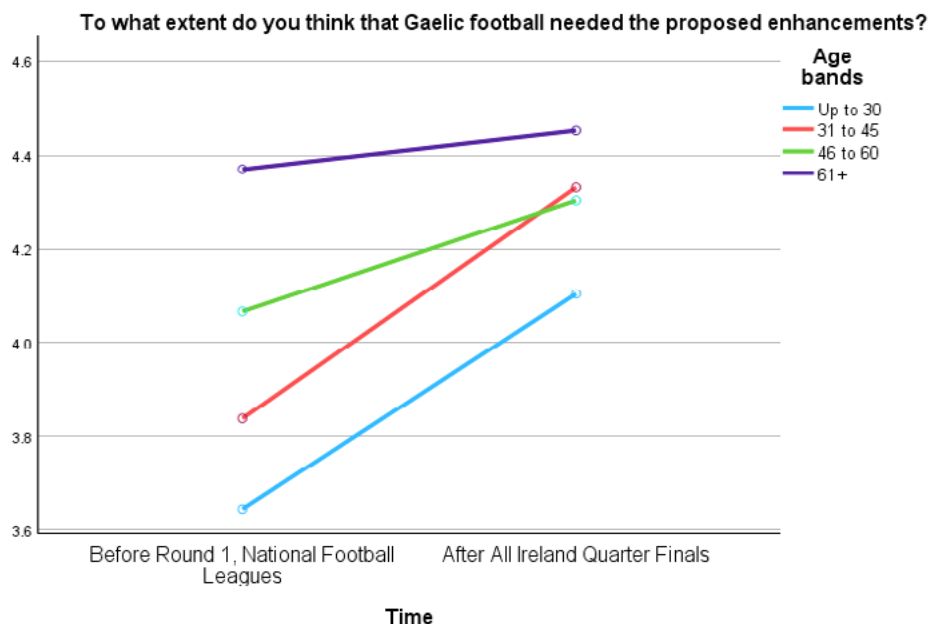
TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU THINK THAT GAELIC FOOTBALL NEEDED THE PROPOSED ENHANCEMENTS?

This was scored: 1 = not needed at all; 2 = somewhat needed; 3 = moderately needed; 4 = quite needed; 5 = needed a lot.

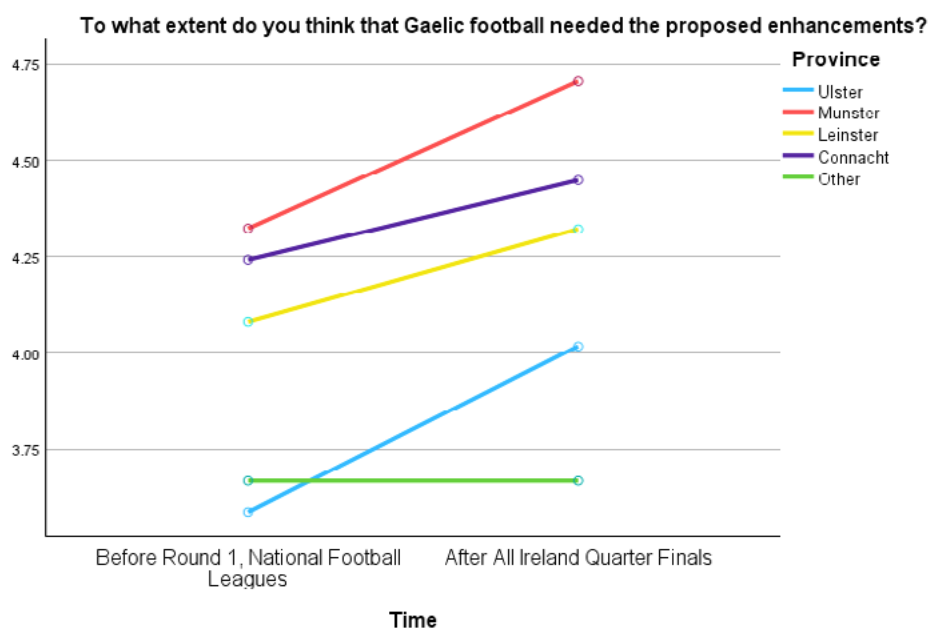
To what extent do you think that Gaelic football needed the proposed enhancements? (1 = not at all needed; 5 = needed a lot)



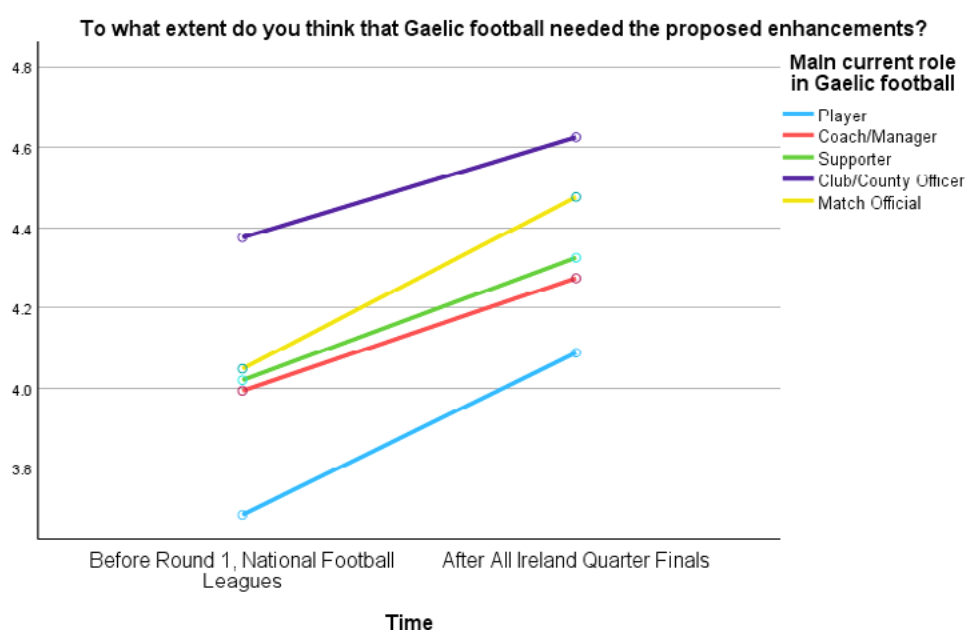
While question 1 enquired about how good the game is to watch, this one enquired about how necessary the enhancements were (this was not specific to any individual enhancement). The figure above shows that at baseline, the average response equated to 'quite needed', and that across time, this has changed from around an average of 4, to an average closer to 4.4, meaning that with time, members of this cohort have become more convinced, on average, of the need for the enhancements.



These findings show consistency. At baseline, the oldest participants were those who thought that Gaelic football needed the rule enhancements most. This remains the case at final follow up. The variation in the vertical axis is substantial. Younger participants remain to be convinced that the enhancements are as necessary as the older participants.



There is also relative consistency here, both in terms of the ordering (top to bottom), and the consistency of average scores for each province or area. Average responses in both Munster and Ulster rose at a slightly higher rate than was the case in Connacht and Leinster, although the margin of differences here was small.



At baseline, the proportion of Club or County Officers indicating a greater need for the enhancements was higher than for all other roles. Relatively speaking, the largest changes (in terms of positivity) over time are to be seen for players, and match officials.

QUESTION 3

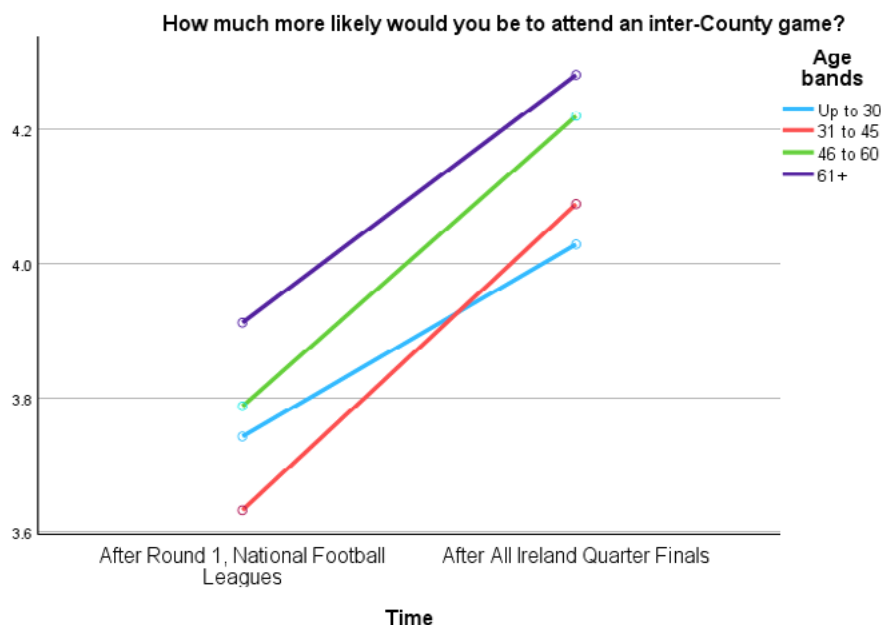
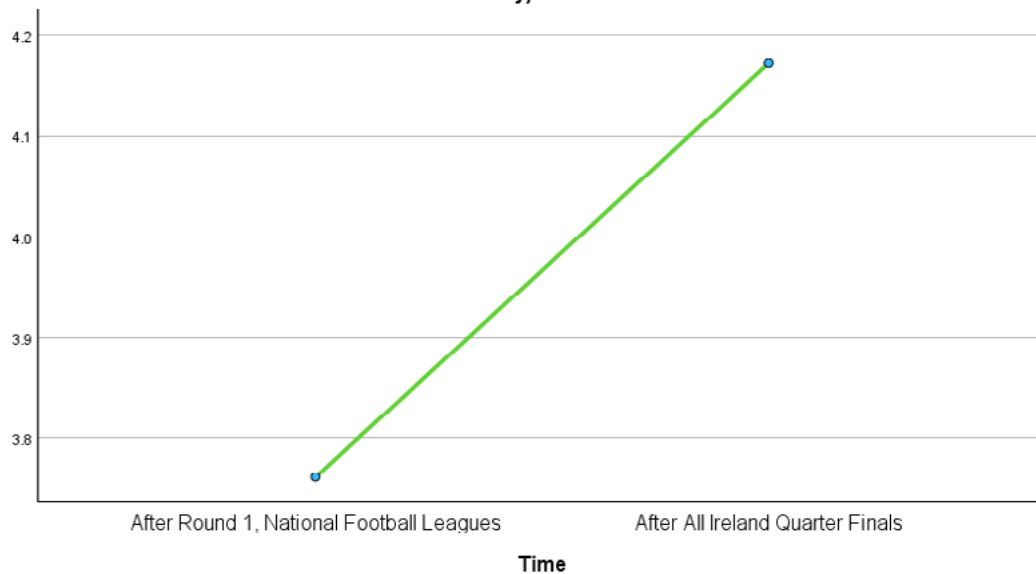
HOW MUCH MORE LIKELY WOULD YOU BE TO ATTEND EITHER A COUNTY OR CLUB GAME?

This question was not asked at baseline, given that the games had not begun, and therefore there would have been no basis upon which to have made this choice.

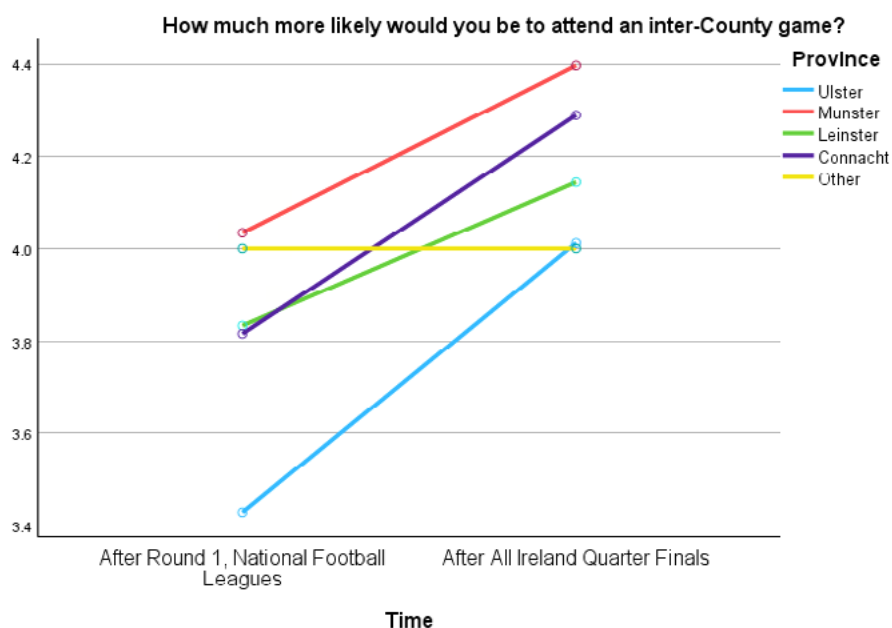
SECTION 1 – INTER-COUNTY GAMES

The first observations are that the variation on the vertical axis is small, but the direction of travel is positive (towards much more likely).

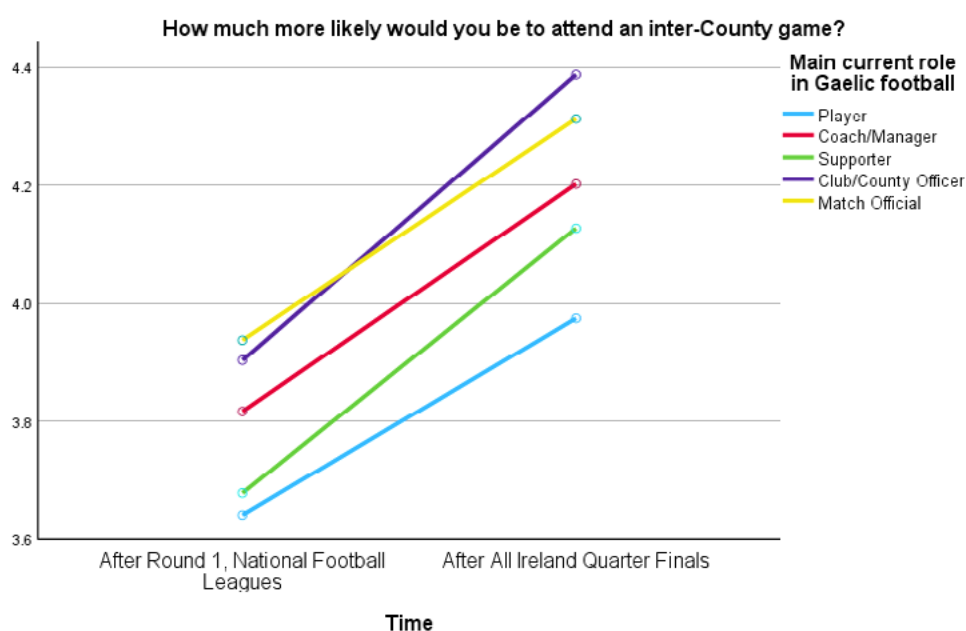
How much more likely would you be to attend an inter-County Game? (1 = much less likely; 5 = much more likely)



At both time points, older participants reported being more likely to attend an inter-county game. This is interesting as they were also the ones who marginally thought Gaelic football was least good to watch (although the score was increasing with time), and they were also the ones who thought Gaelic football most needed the enhancements. There was a crossover between the two youngest bands, so that by final follow up, likelihood of attending an inter-county game was completely patterned by age bands, with the oldest reporting greatest likelihood, and the youngest, lowest likelihood.

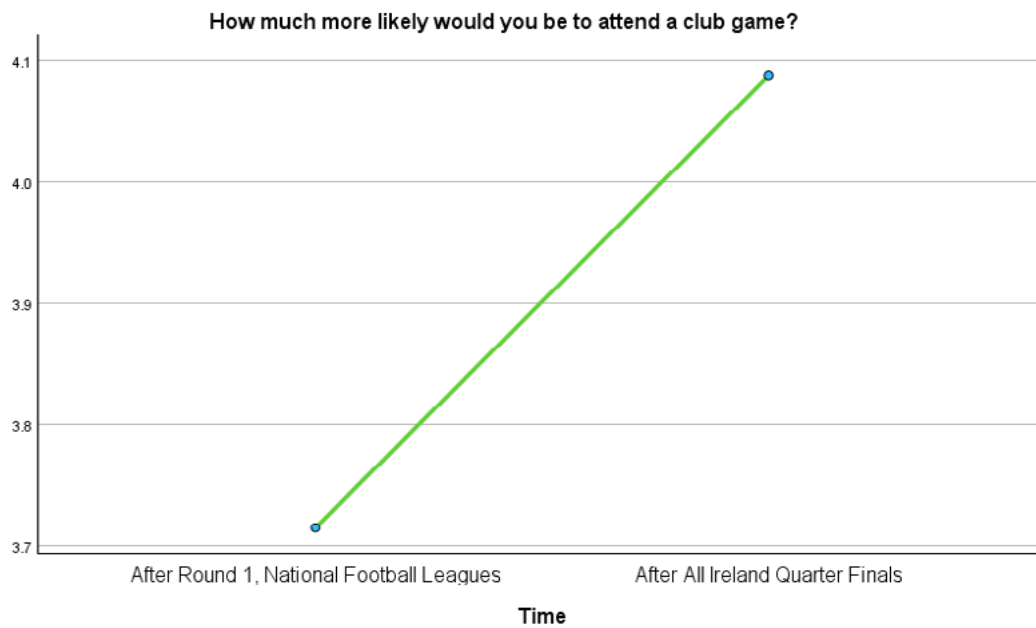


Of those living on the island of Ireland, those from Munster reported the greatest likelihood at both time points, with the reverse true for those from Ulster. However, the greatest change with time is observed for those reporting living in Ulster.

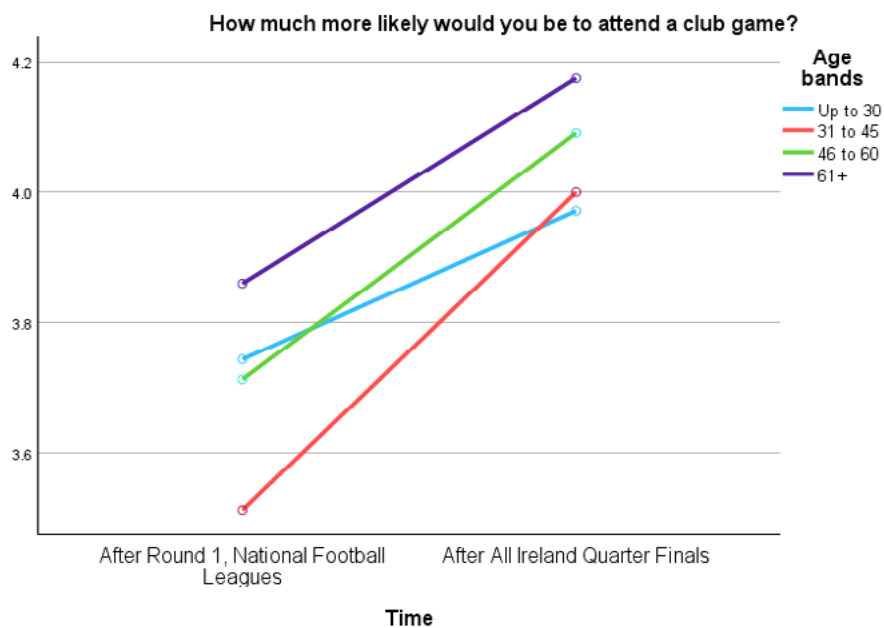


The direction of travel from baseline to final follow-up is positive in all cases.

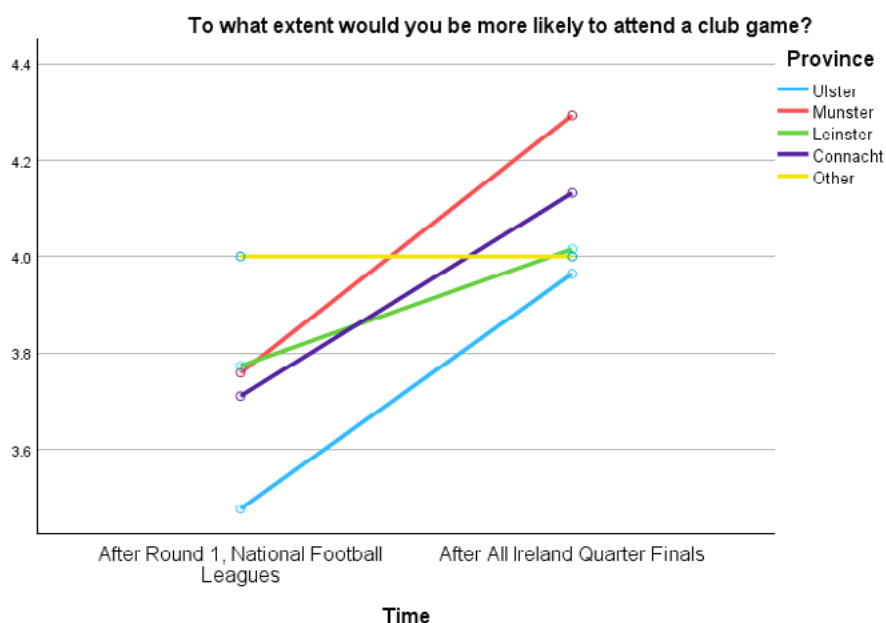
SECTION 2 – CLUB GAMES



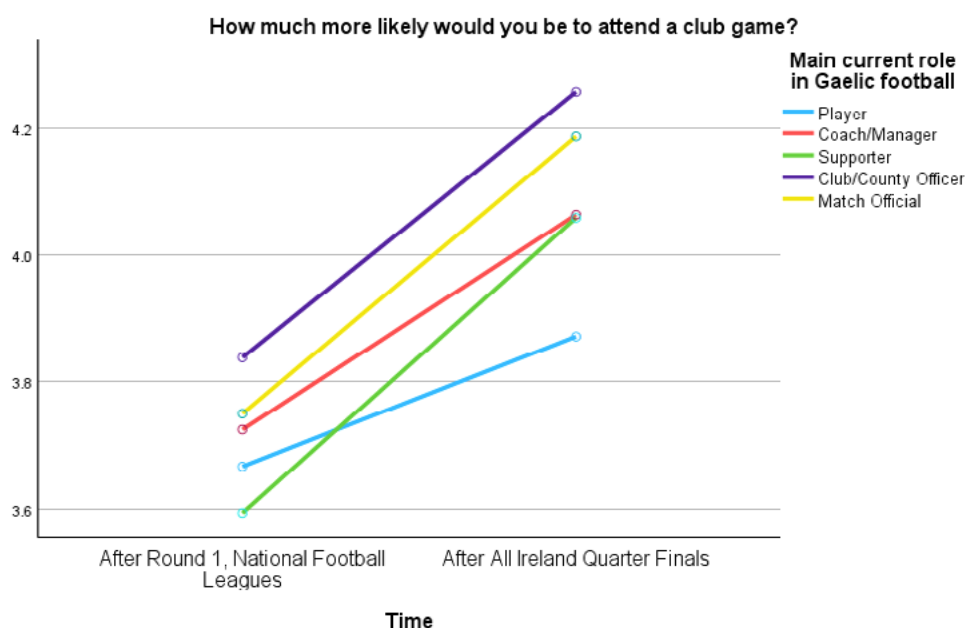
Over time, the reported likelihood of attending a club game increased from an average score of around 3.7, to a score around 4.1.



Those in all age bands reported a greater likelihood of attending a club game. There was no clear pattern by age bands, however, being older (aged 46+) was associated with a greater reported likelihood of attending a club game, than those aged younger than 45 years, although the margin of difference was small.



There was no overall change with time for those living outside of Ireland. On the island, the direction of travel is positive for all Provinces, with a greater self-reported likelihood of attending a club game at follow up, than was the case at baseline.

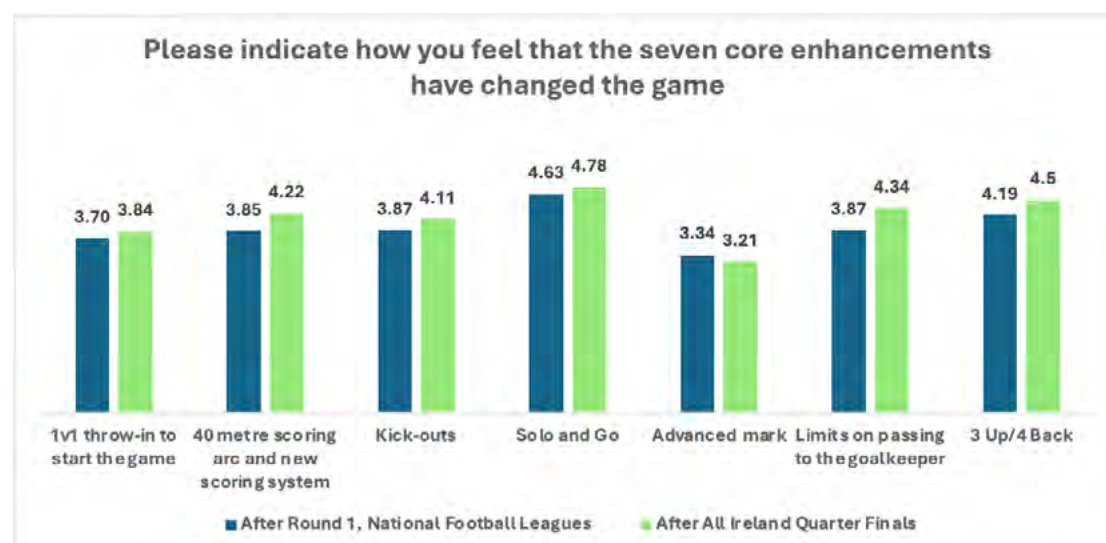


The greatest changes from baseline are observed for match officials, supporters, and club/county officers. While players did report, on average, a greater likelihood of attending a club game, the margin of difference between baseline and follow-up was lowest for this category. This could well be attributable to the fact that players have relatively little choice about the games that they are able to attend as a result of training and fixtures for their own teams.

QUESTION 4

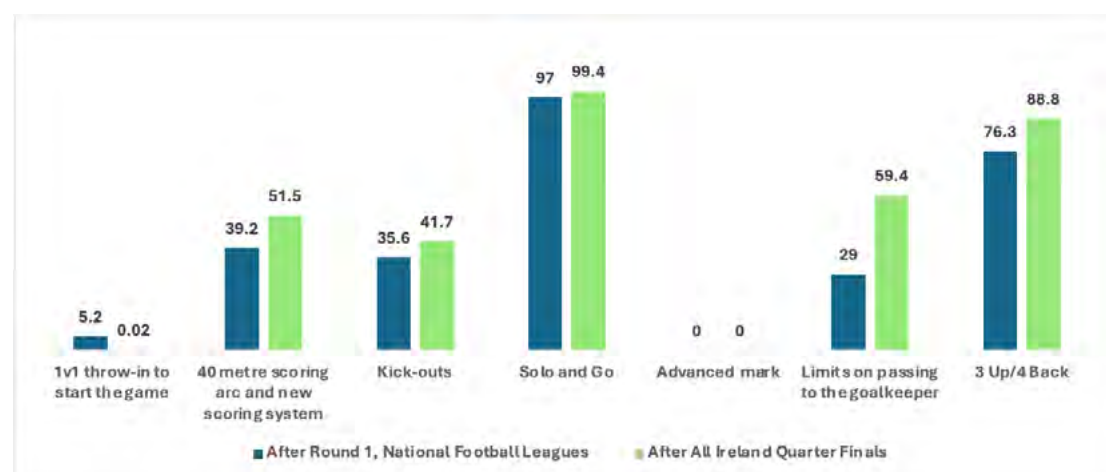
THE SEVEN CORE ENHANCEMENTS

These results are presented as average scores. Participants indicated responses for each enhancement as follows: 1 = substantially worse; 2 = worse; 3 = no difference; 4 = better; 5 = substantially better.



Results clearly indicate that six out of the seven enhancements are thought to have made Gaelic football a better game (the exception being the advanced mark). It is suggested that the reader focus on the green columns, more so than the difference between green and blue. Taking Solo and Go as an example, this scored highest at both time points, but because the score was already high at baseline, the magnitude of change with time appears relatively low.

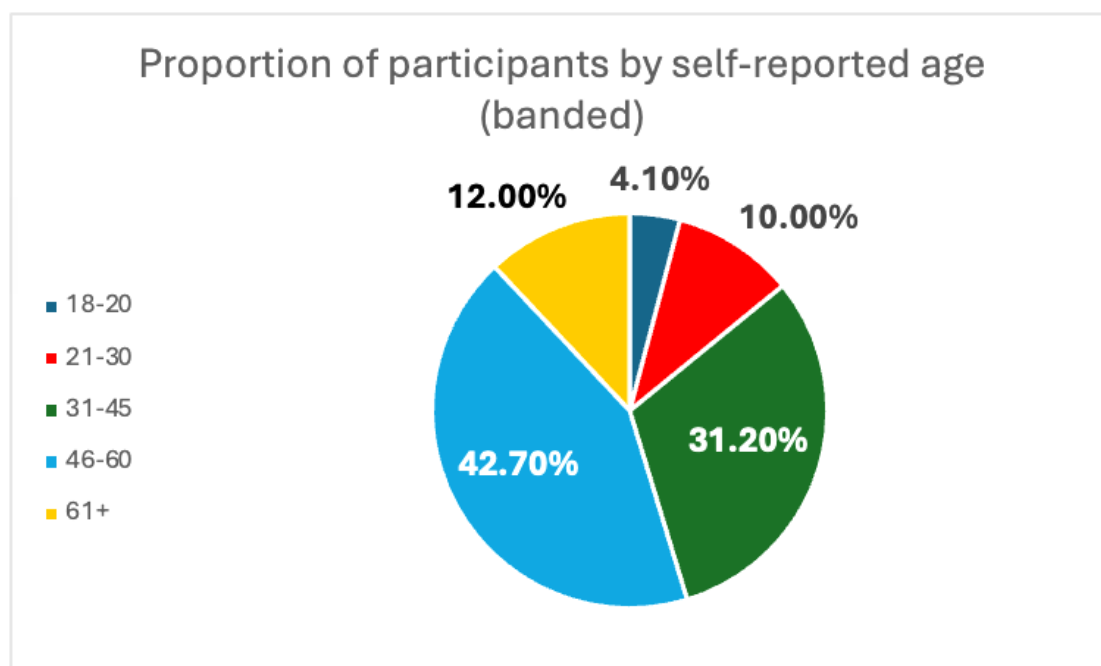
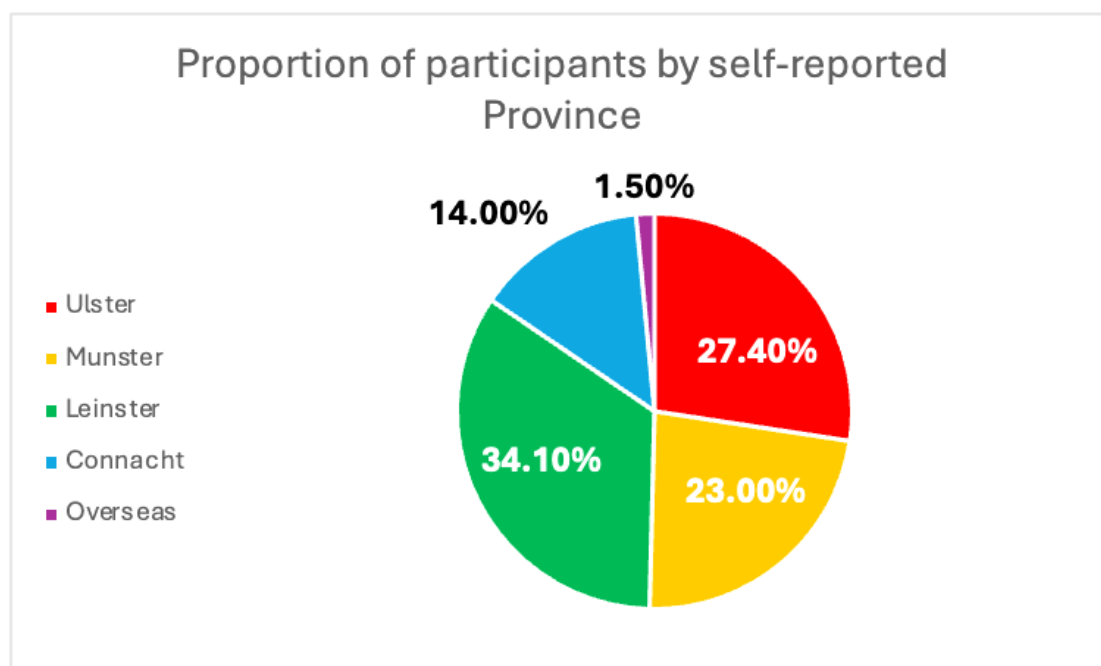
Participants were asked to indicate which of the enhancements were 'most beneficial' to football (only one could be chosen), and which was not (again, only one could be chosen). For each of the enhancements a percentage 'positive' was calculated, based on these responses.



Results show that again, responses regarding the Solo and Go were extremely positive, and consistent across time. Here, the least popular of the enhancements was the Advanced mark, closely followed by the 1v1 Throw-in. With time, it would appear that the limitations on the goalkeeper in particular have gained popularity.

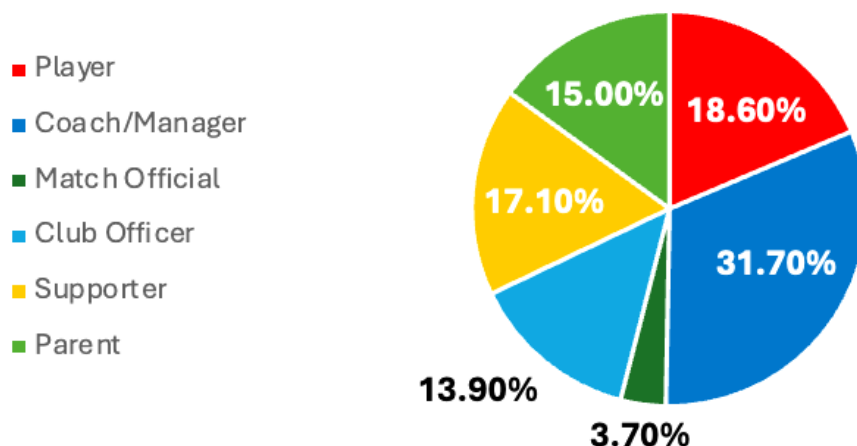
THE CLUB SURVEY (FOIREANN)

A survey was distributed through the Foireann platform. A total of 7,253 responses were received. The categorical breakdown of participants is displayed below for Province, age, and role in the GAA.



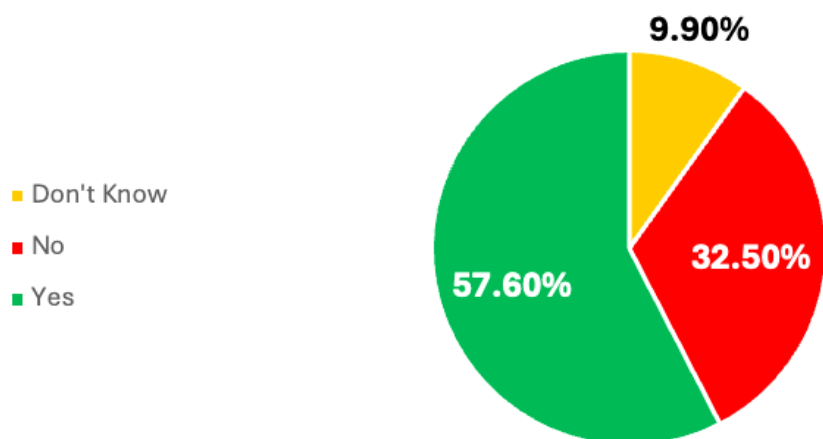
Almost two-thirds of participants were aged 46 and above. In terms of role, there was a disproportionately high proportion (more than 30% of the sample) of coaches/managers who took part.

Proportion of participants by self-reported Role

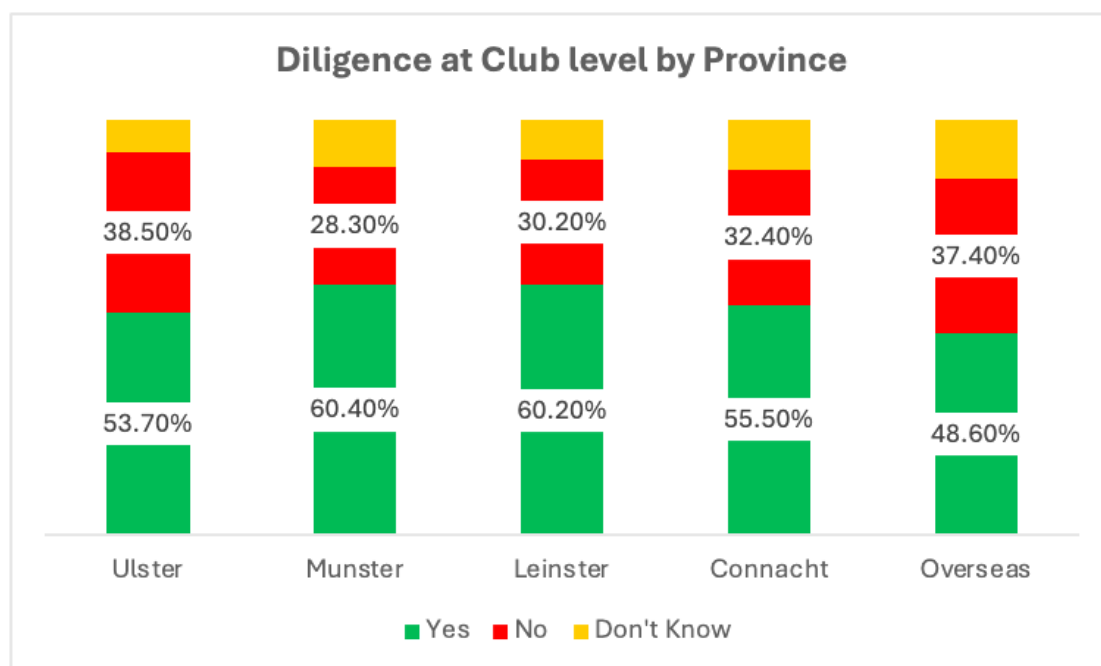


Participants were asked: In your experience, have the FRC Rule Enhancements been applied at Club Level as diligently as at Inter-County? While a majority said yes, a substantial minority (32.5%) said no, with around one in ten answering, don't know. These results are displayed below.

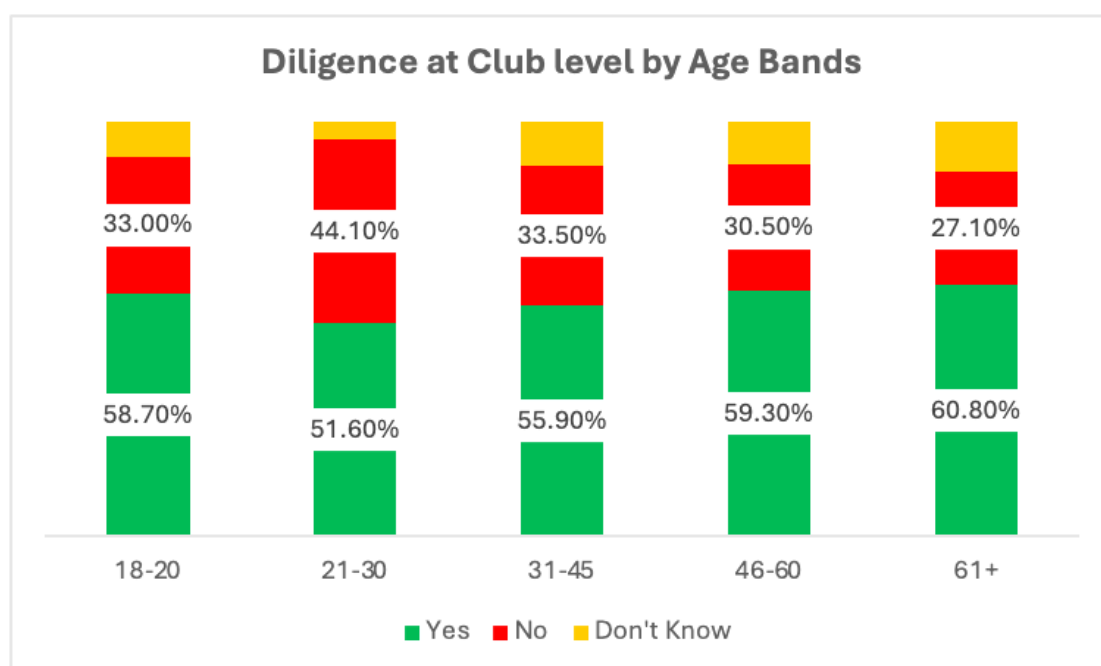
Application of rules at Club level as diligent as at inter-County level?

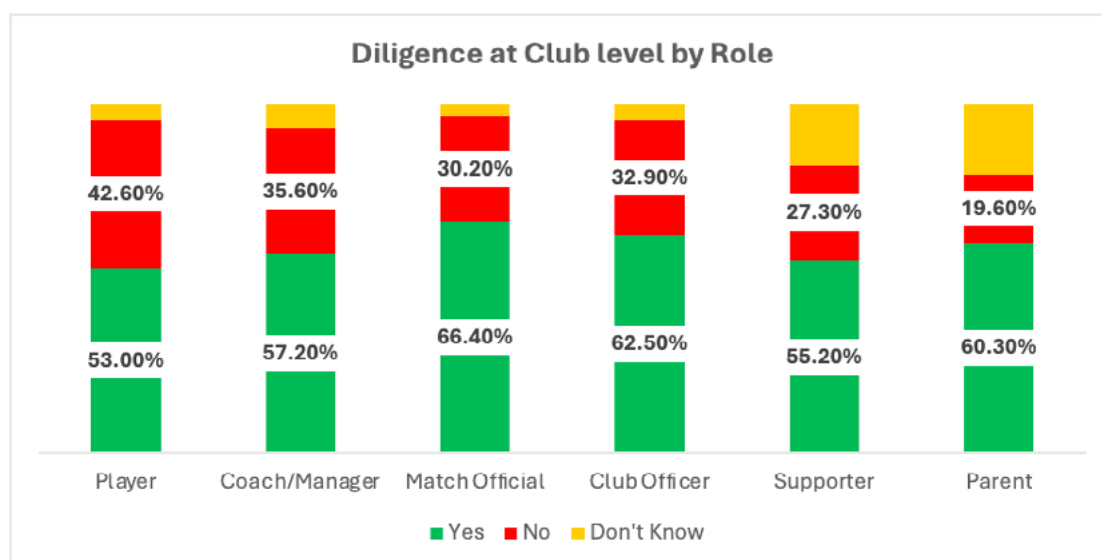


Responses to this question are fractured by age, Province and role within the GAA below.



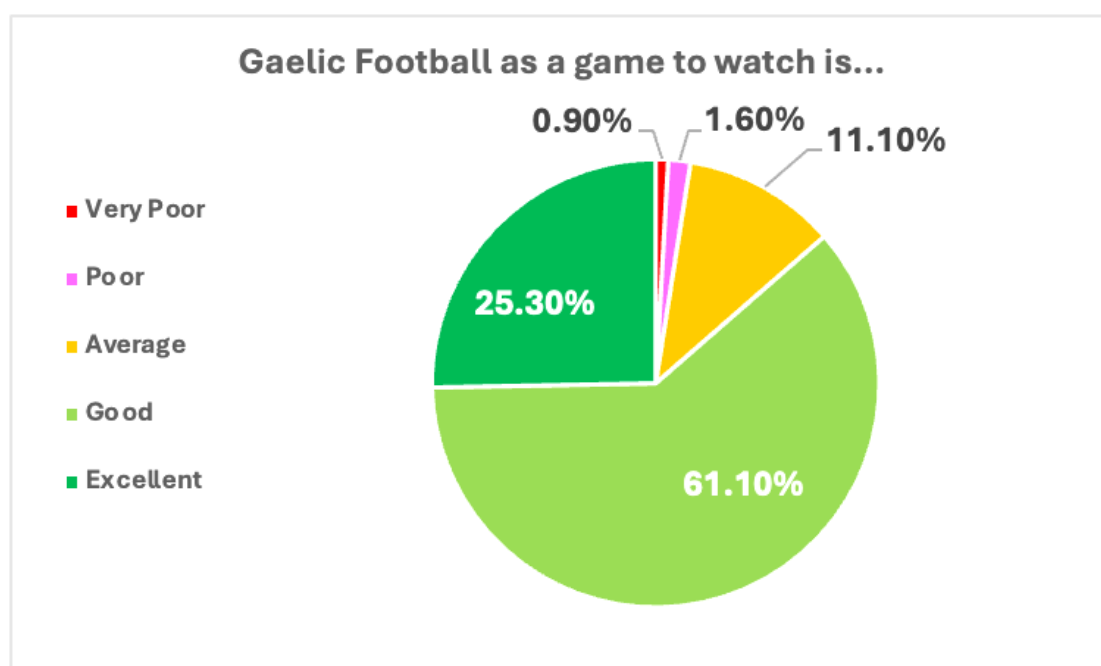
The highest proportion endorsing 'no' was observed in Ulster, with the lowest in Munster. In terms of age, substantially more said 'no' in those aged 21 to 30, than in other age bands.



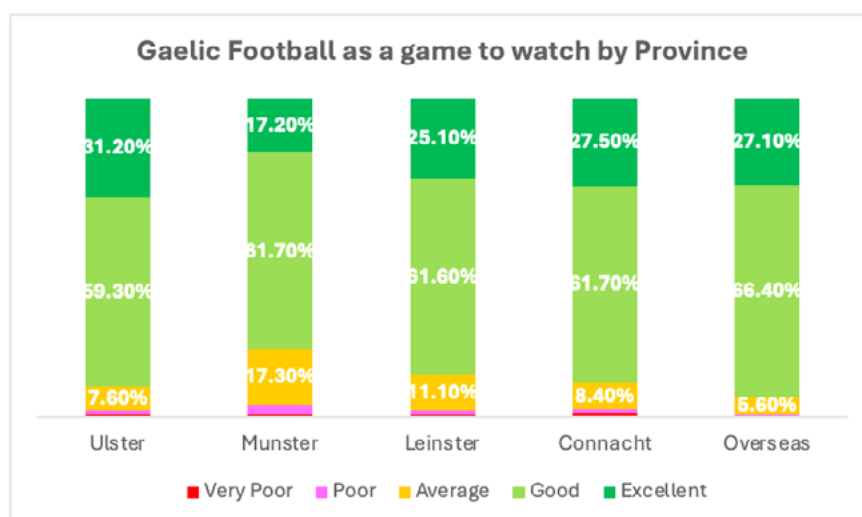


In line with the responses for age, the highest proportion endorsing 'no' was observed among players, with more than four in ten suggesting that the rules were not as diligently applied at Club level. Among supporters and parents there were substantial minorities endorsing 'don't know', while two thirds of match officials believed that the rules were as diligently applied at Club level.

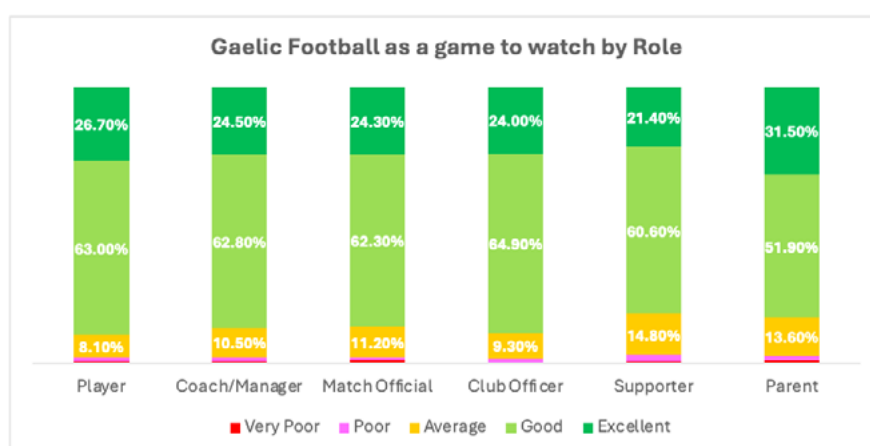
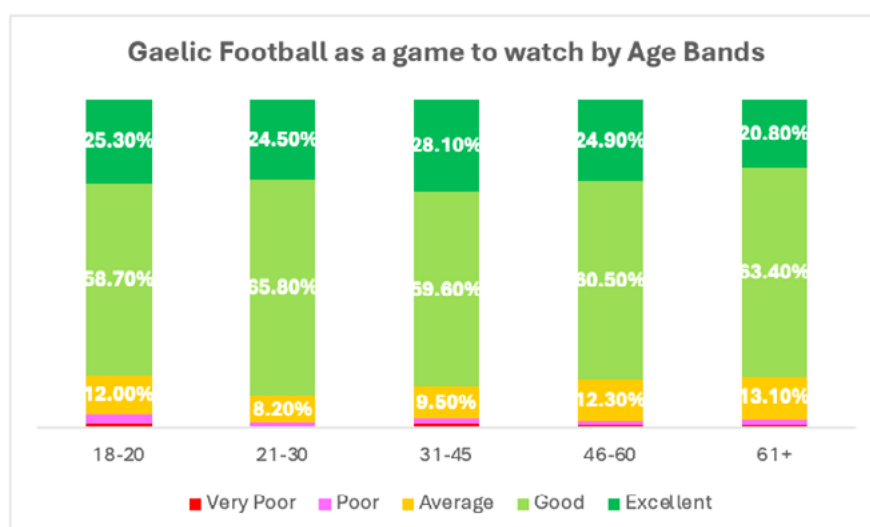
Participants were asked to comment on the current spectacle of Gaelic football. Results for the whole sample are displayed below.



Over 86% of participants indicated that football is either good, or excellent to watch.

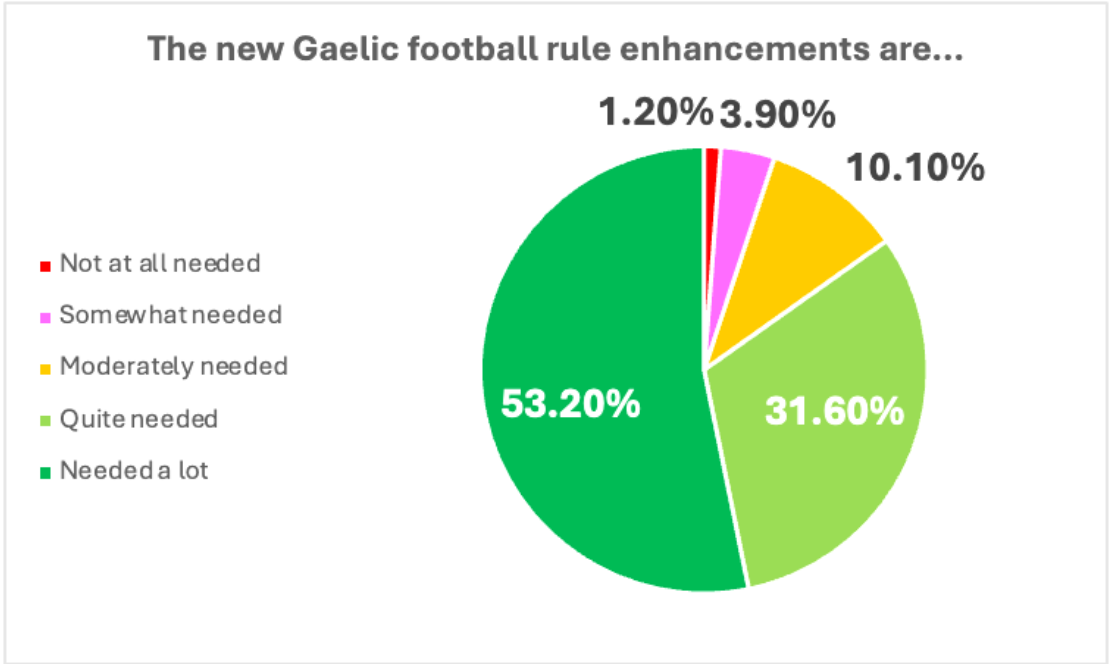


The figure above suggests that any Provincial effect in these responses is driven by differences of opinion in Ulster and Munster. The figure below indicates that there was a broadly similar response profile across age bands, perhaps with a slight tailing off in terms of positivity in the older two categories.

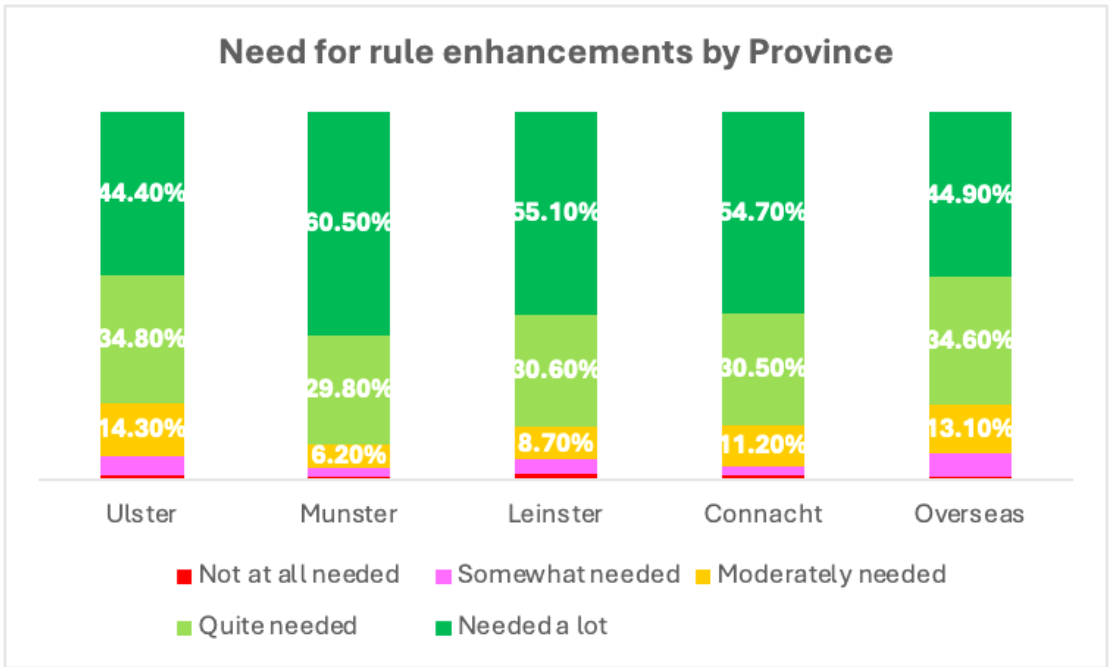


In terms of role, a slightly higher proportion of supporters and parents endorsed 'average', at the same time the highest proportion endorsing the 'excellent' option was also seen among parents.

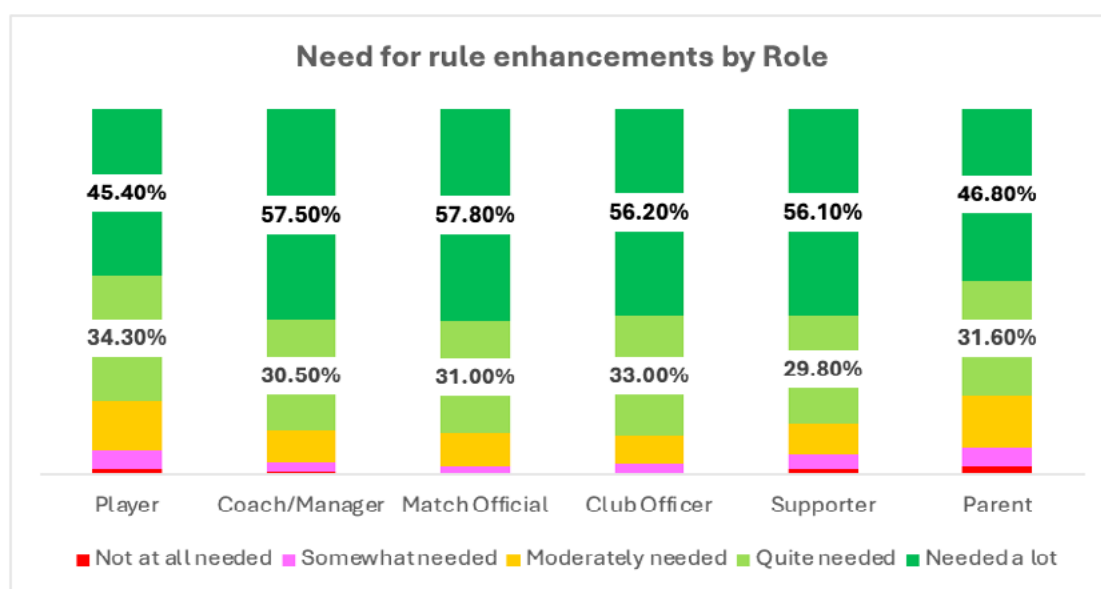
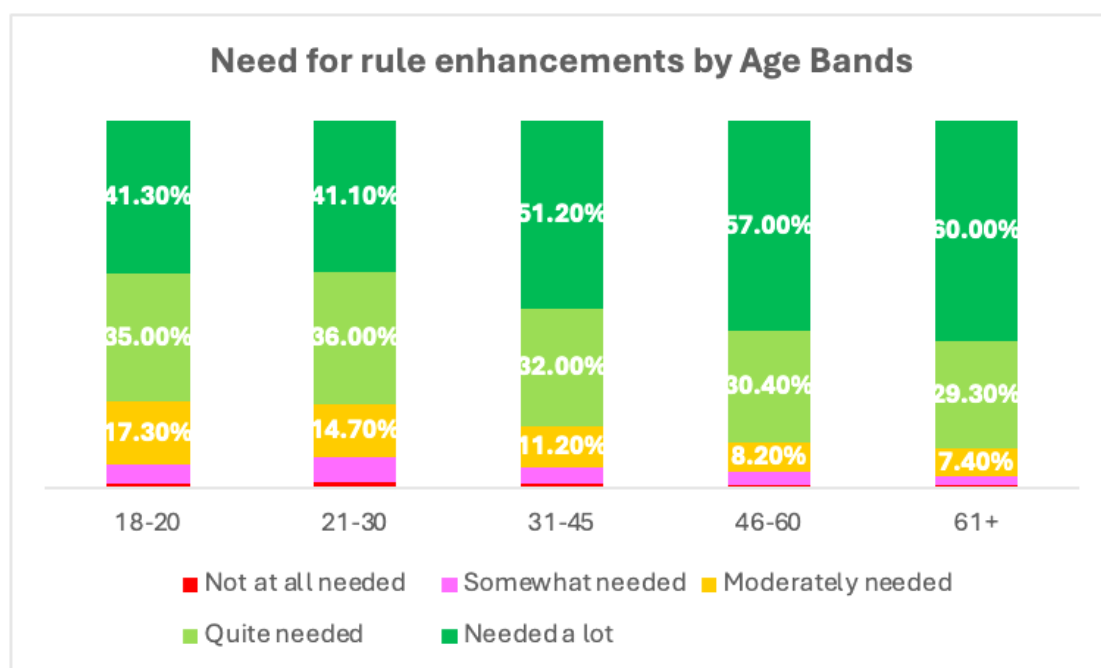
Participants were asked for their views on the requirement for the rule enhancements. Responses for the overall sample are displayed below.



In line with the responses about the spectacle of Gaelic football, around 85% of participants endorsed either 'quite needed', or 'needed a lot'.

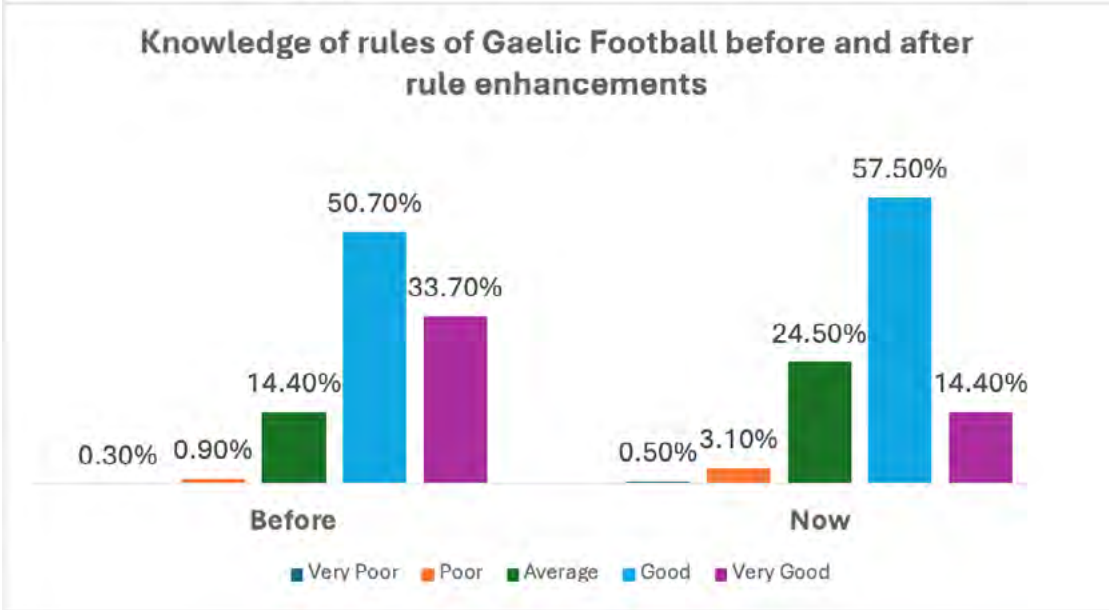


When examined by Province, results show remarkably similar results for those in Ulster and those Overseas, and for those in Leinster and Connacht. Responses in Munster were the most positive in terms of need. Results by age bands were not at all consistent, with a decrease in stated need with age.

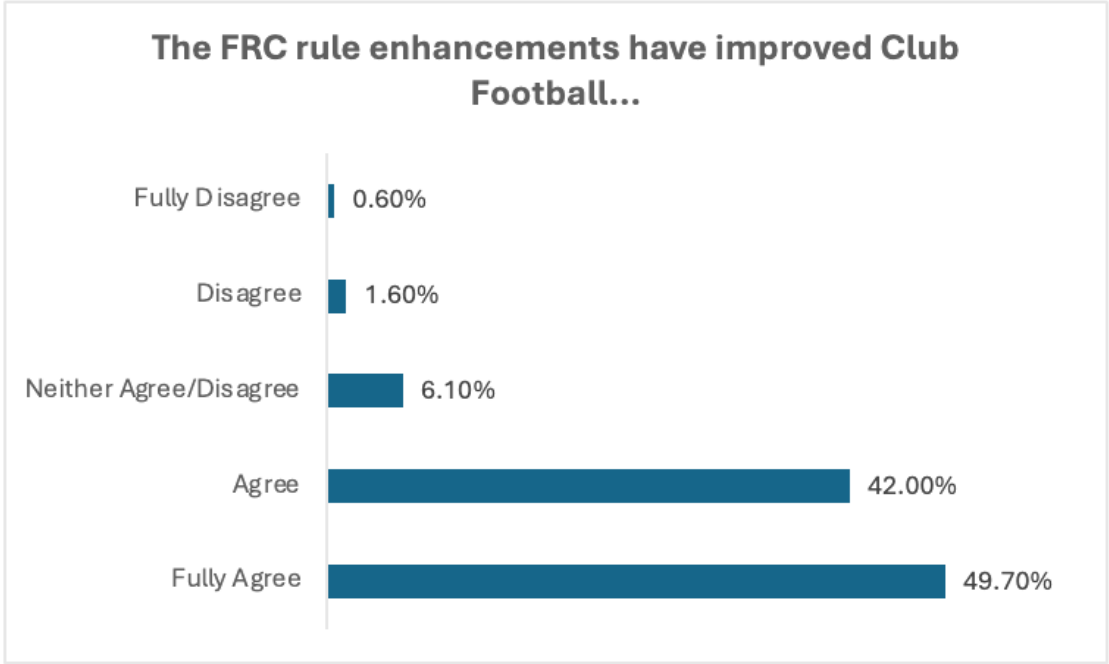


In terms of role in the GAA, response profiles were similar for coaches/managers, Club officers, match officials, and supporters, while a lower overall level of need was suggested among players and parents.

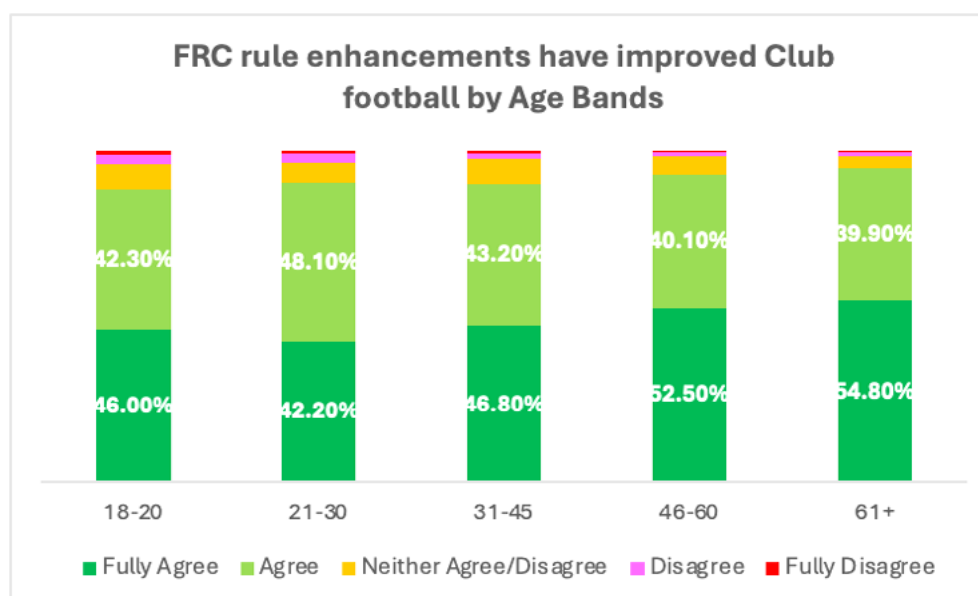
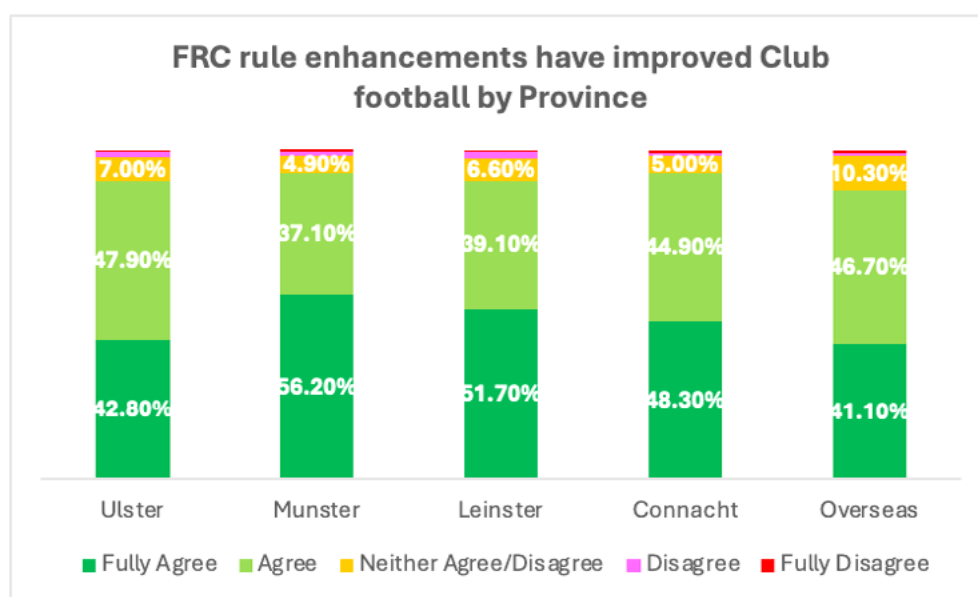
Participants were asked about their knowledge of the rules of Gaelic football before, and after the rule enhancements. Comparing the profiles of results suggests that currently, a lower proportion have a 'very good' understanding of the rules now, and a higher proportion report an 'average' understanding of the rules than was previously the case.



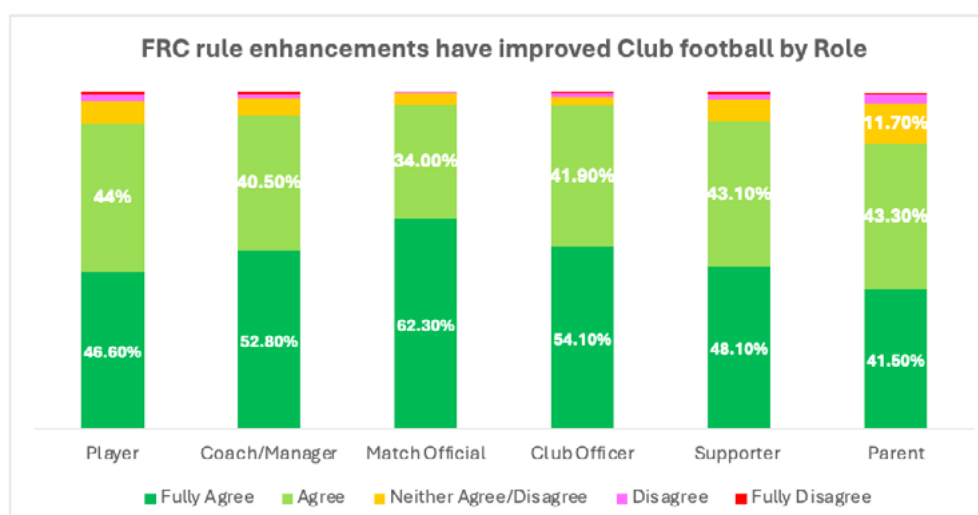
Participants were asked if they believed that the rule enhancements had improved Club football. Over nine in ten participants reported that they had improved Club football.



In terms of the overall response profile, around or over 90% of participants in all areas agreed or fully agreed that the enhancements had improved football at Club level. There was some variation in the proportions in full agreement across Provinces, with a high of 56.2% in Munster, and a low of 42.8% in Ulster (on the island of Ireland).

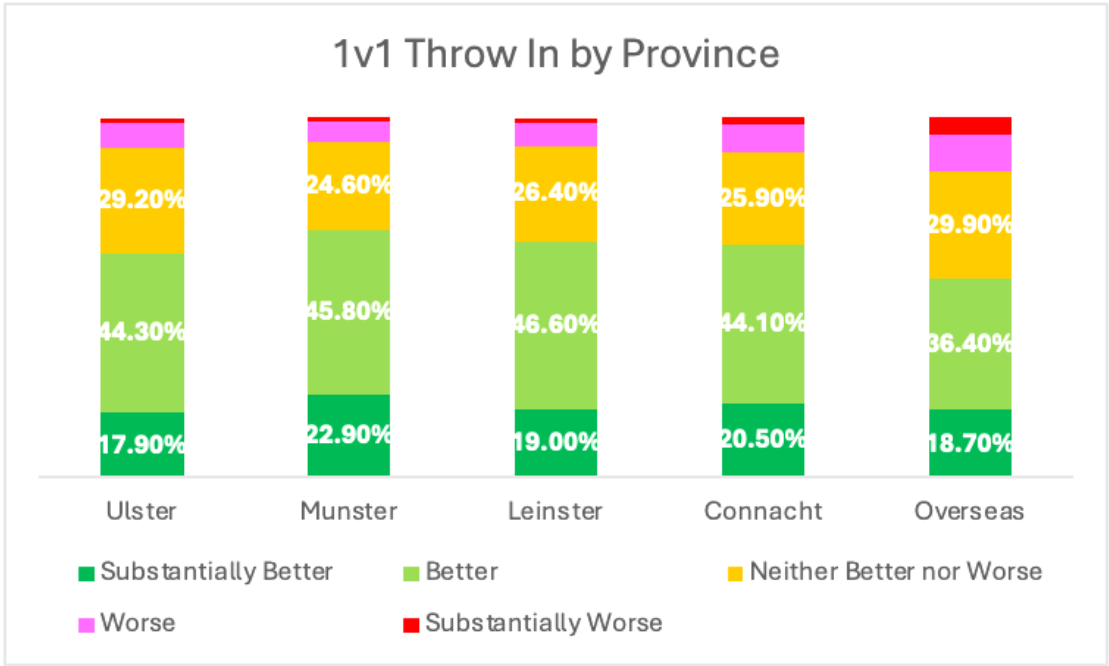
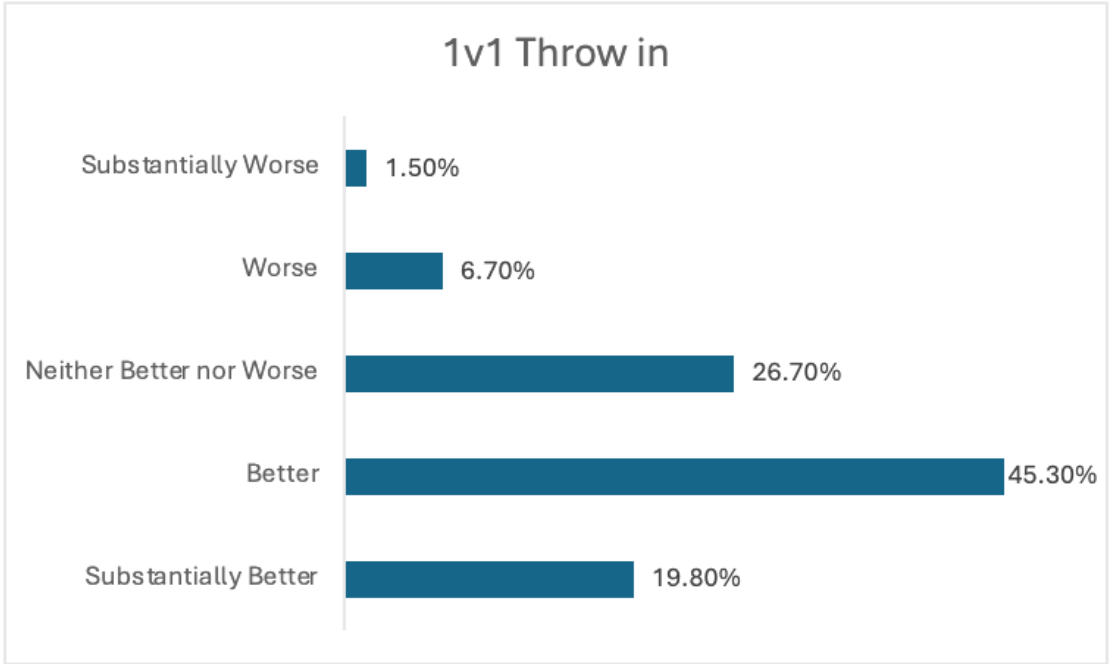


Similarly with age, the overall proportion in each category endorsing agree or fully agree was similar, with a small increase with age in terms of 'fully agree' from age 21-30 up to age 61+. In terms of role in the GAA, greatest agreement was seen among match officials, followed by coaches/managers and club officers, with lower proportions of players, supporters, and parents in full agreement.

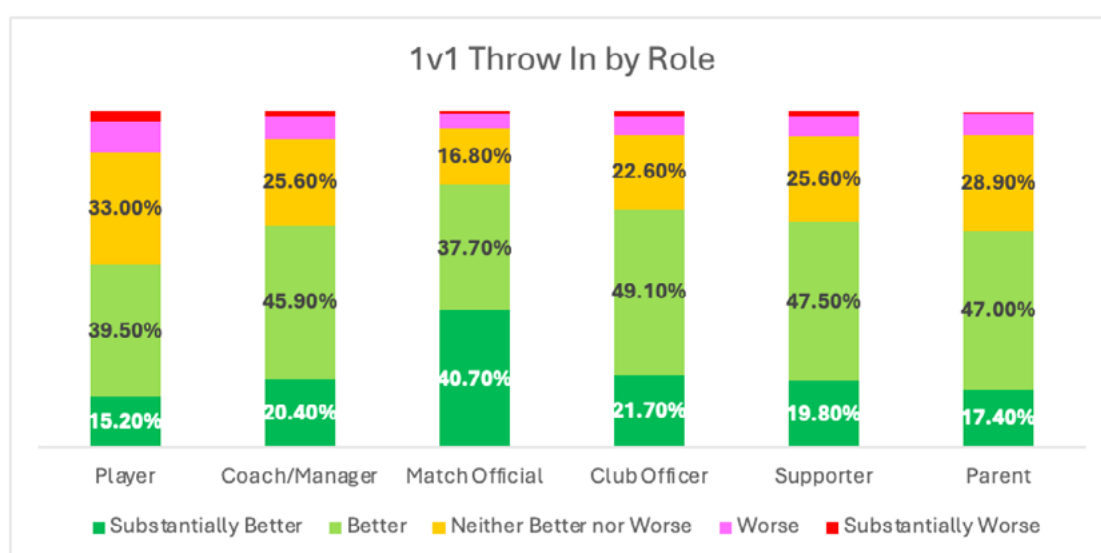
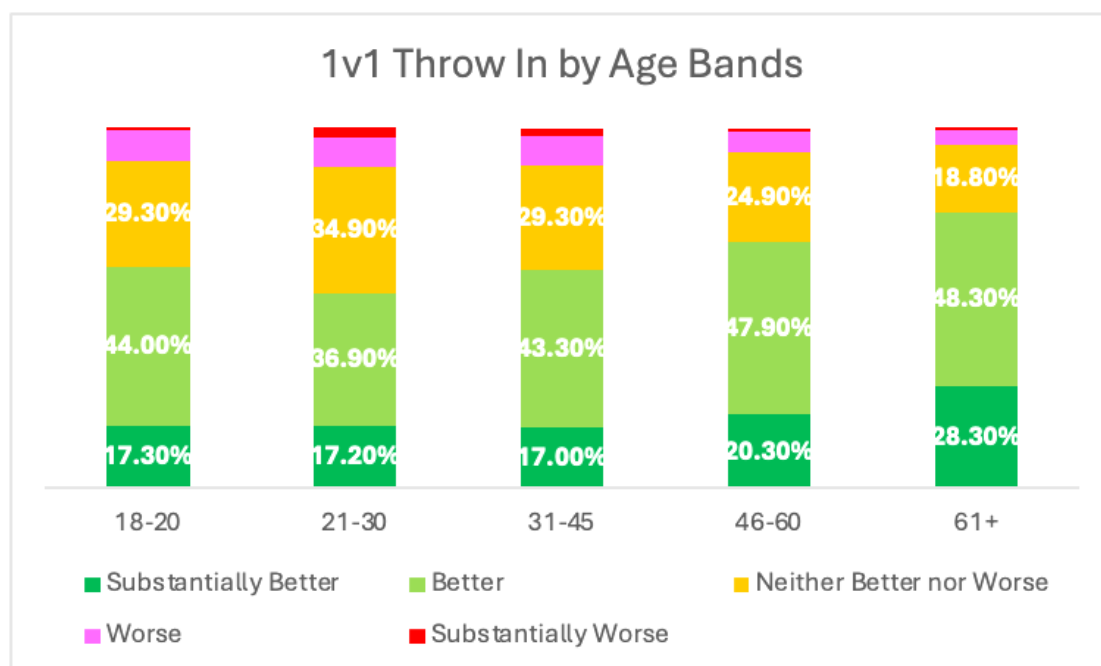


Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which NINE enhancements had improved football at Club level (ranging from substantially better through substantially worse). For each, commentary will be reserved for the proportions endorsing 'better' or 'substantially better'. The reader can interpret the totality of responses for him/herself.

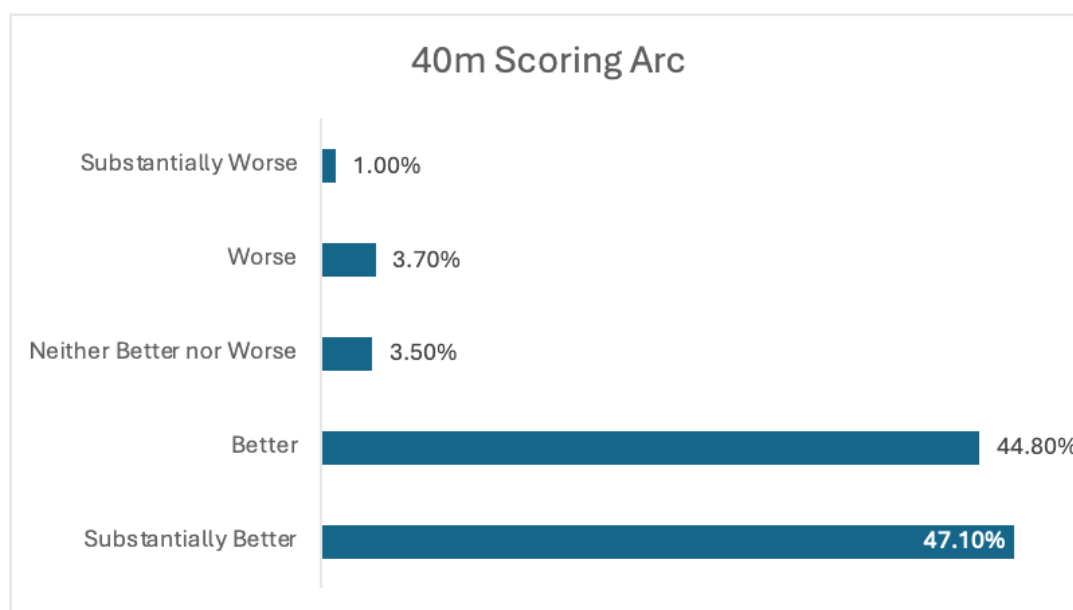
Responses relating to the 1v1 throw-in to start the game suggest that overall, almost two-thirds of participants were of the view that it made the game better, or substantially better.



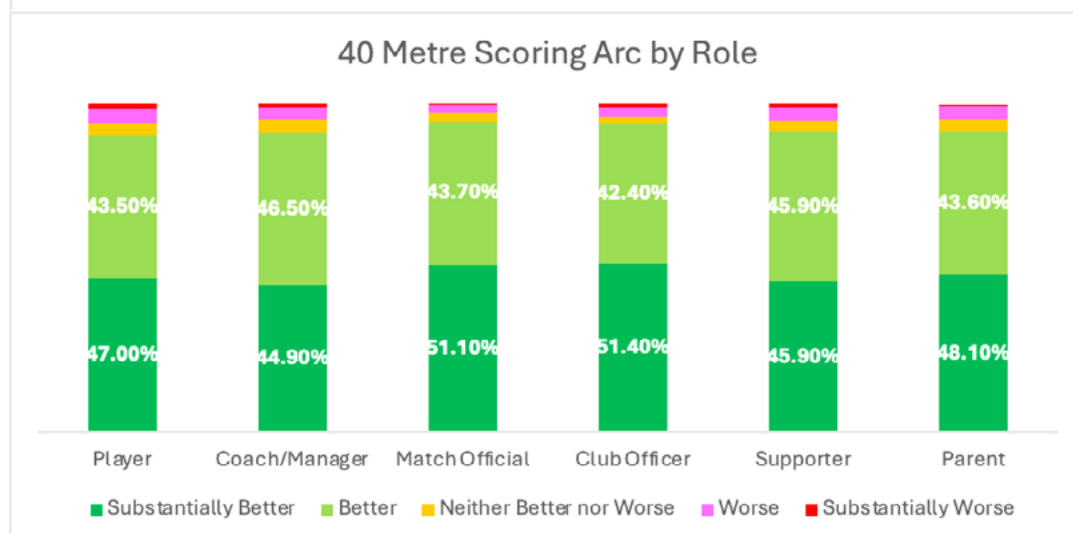
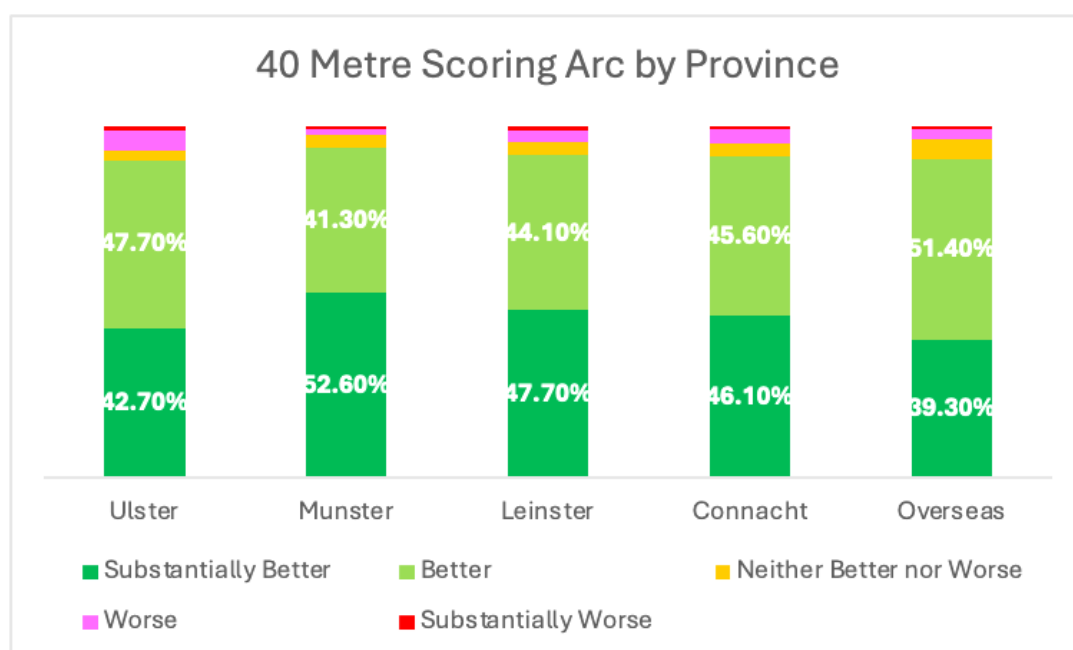
Response profiles by Province were relatively similar (slight peak in Munster, and a dip Overseas). In terms of age, the 1v1 throw-in appears to increase in popularity with age.



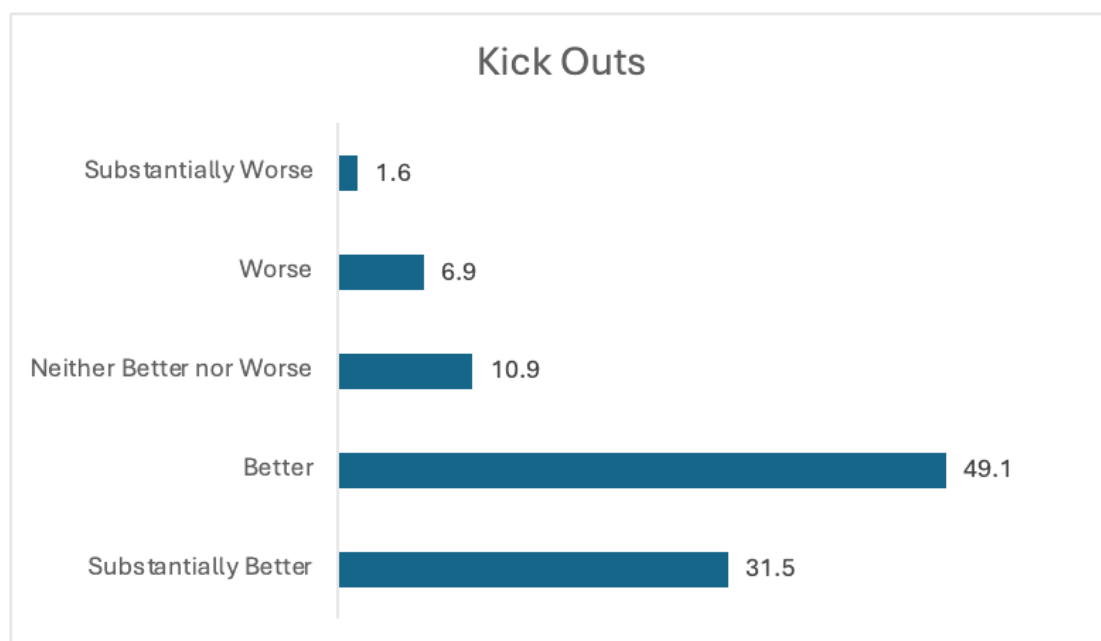
In terms of role, a substantially larger proportion of match officials reported that it made the game better than was the case for players (a difference of over 20%).



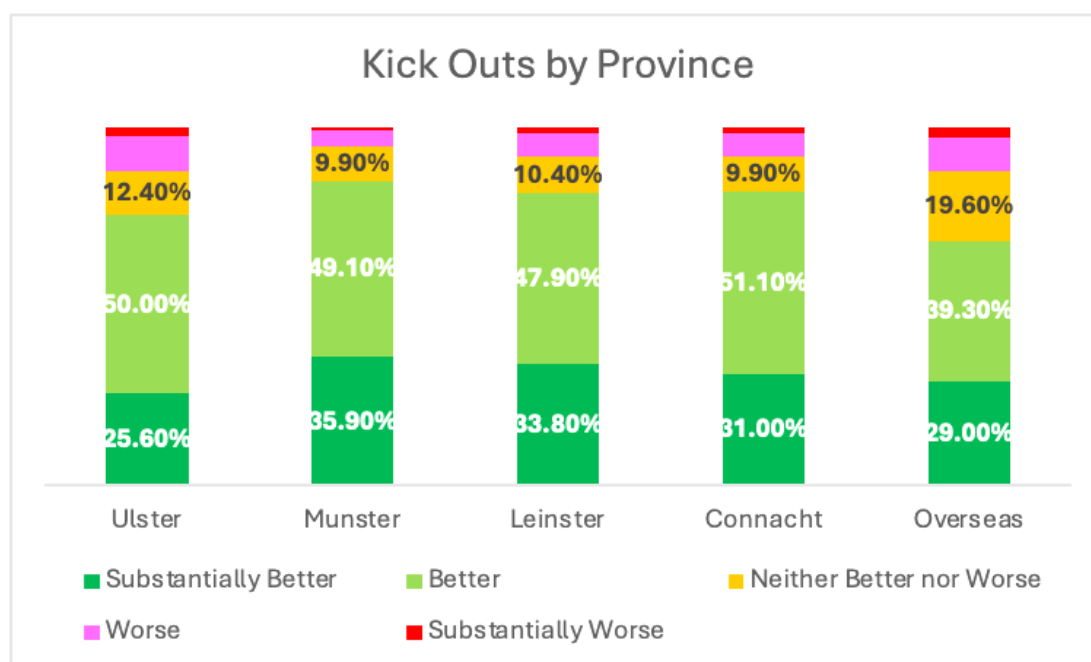
Over 90% of participants believe that the 40m scoring arc has made football better. This was observed across Provinces, Age bands, and roles in the GAA.

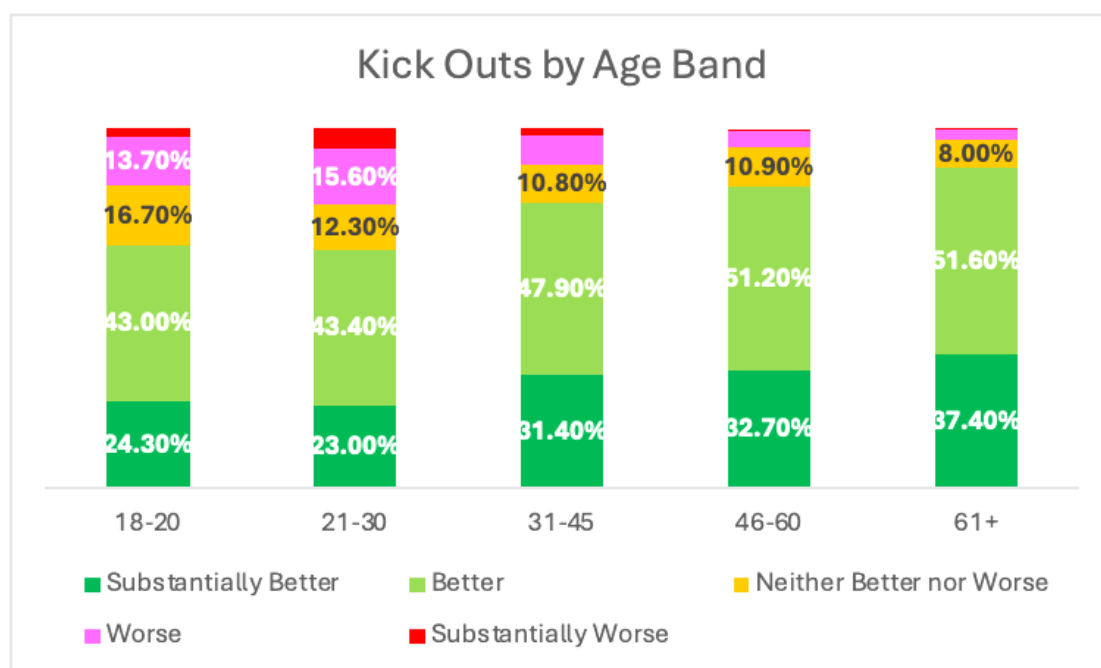


A substantial majority (80.6%) were of the view that the rule enhancement on kick-outs had made the game better.

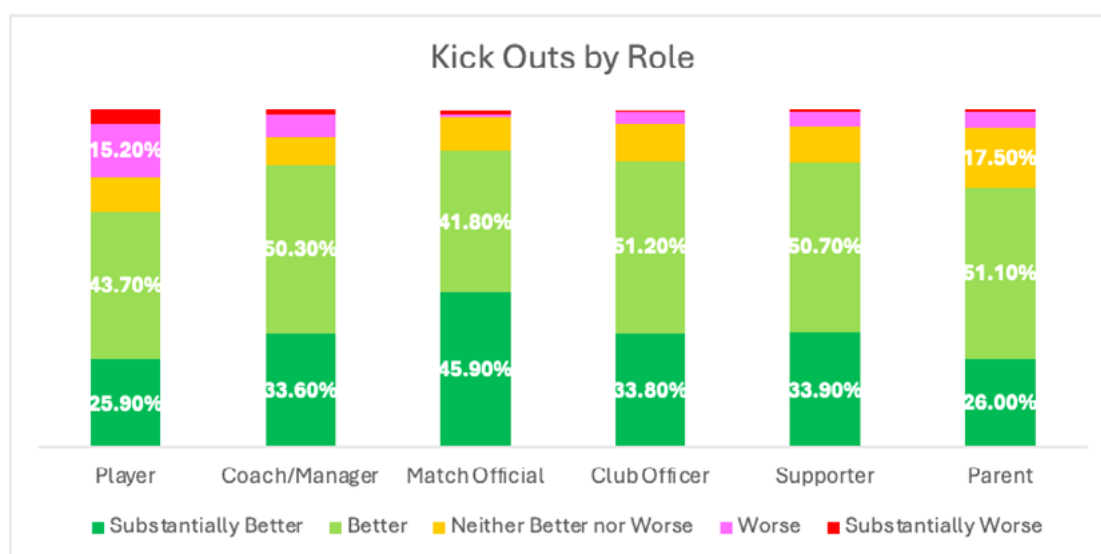


Here, there was greater inconsistency across Provinces. While 35.9% in Munster believed it had made the game substantially better, only 25.6% in Ulster believed that to be the case. A total of 85% in Munster responded 'better' or 'substantially better', while only 68.3% of those Overseas, and 75.6% of those in Ulster did so.

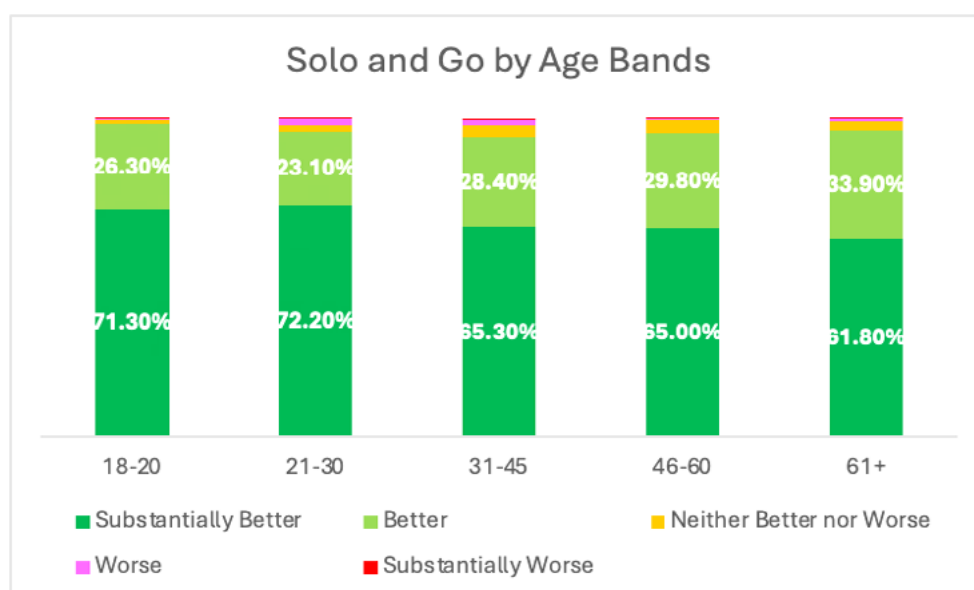
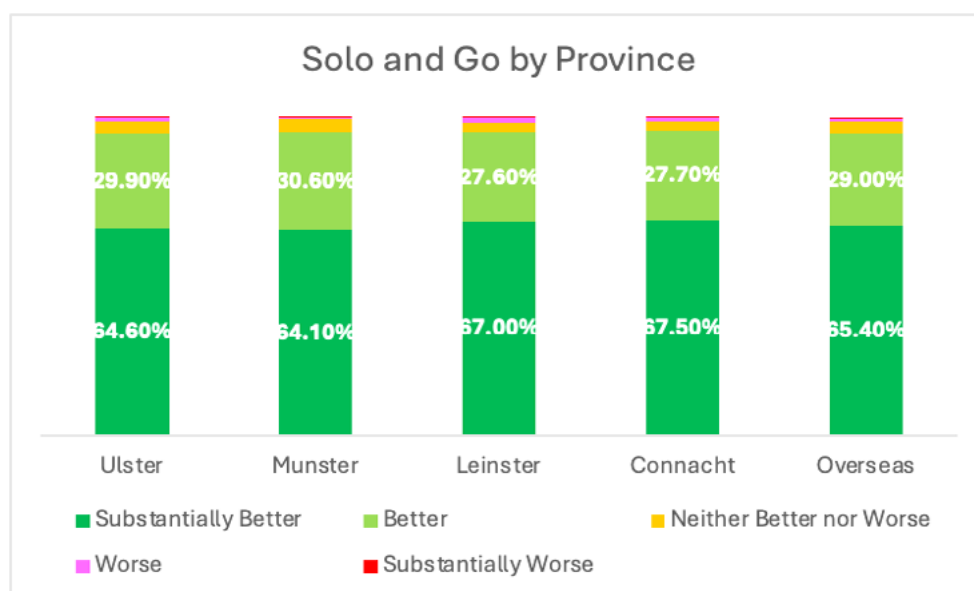
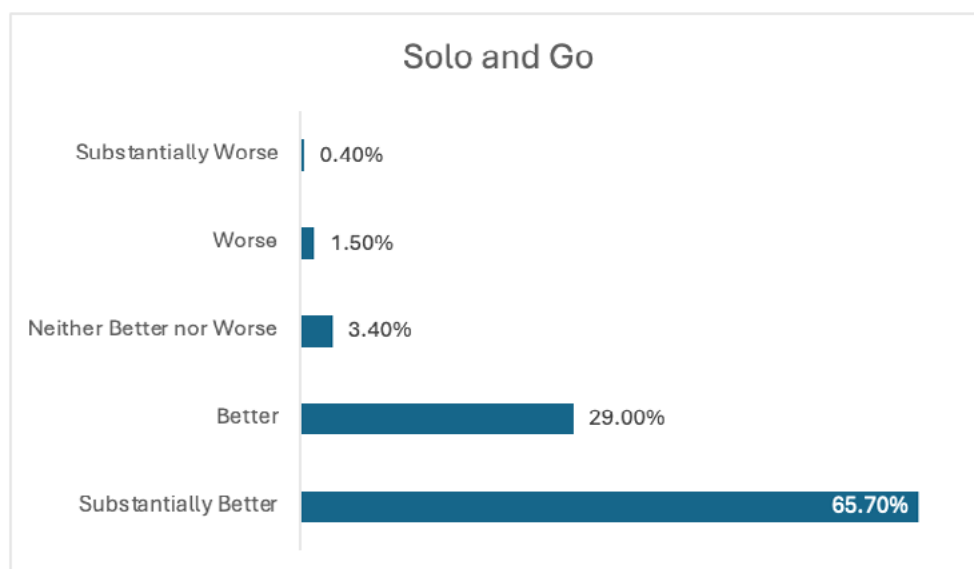




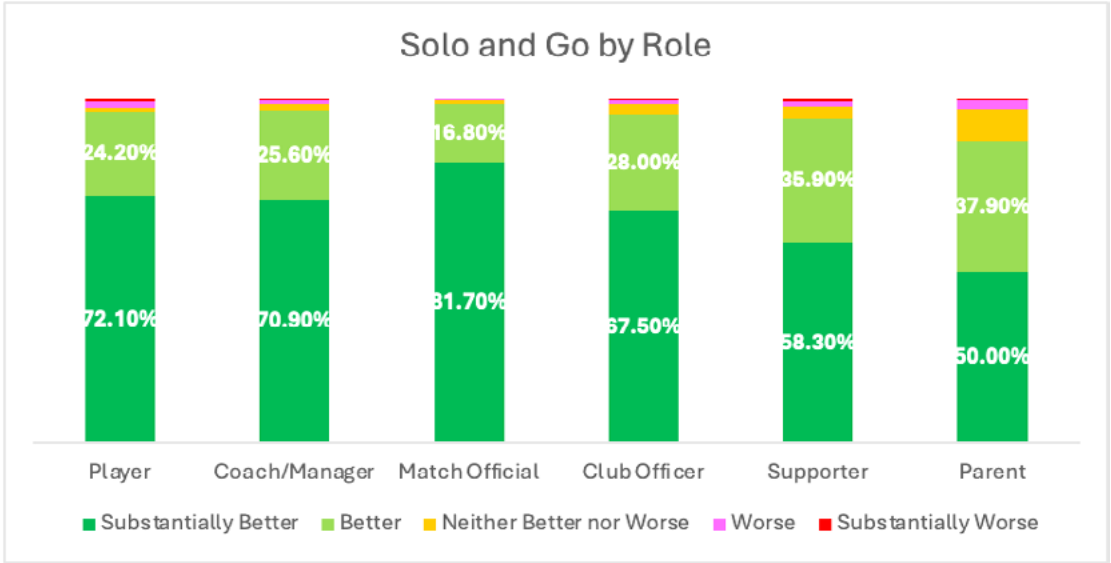
Results varied greatly by age. While only 67.3% of those aged 18 to 20 agreed that it had made the game better, or substantially better, 89.0% of those aged 61+ did so. Relatively low proportions of players (69.6%) and parents (77.1%) agreed that the kick-out rule enhancement had made the game better, while this was higher for all other categories (ranging from 83.9% to 87.7%).



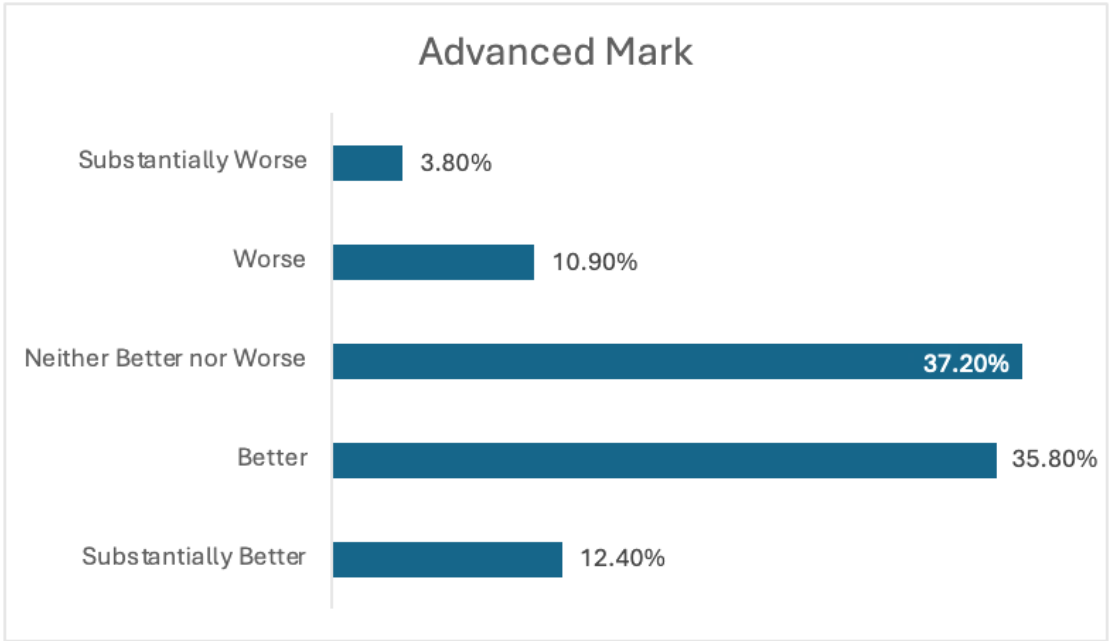
The 'Solo and Go' enhancement was very popular, with 94.7% of participants of the view that it had made the game better.



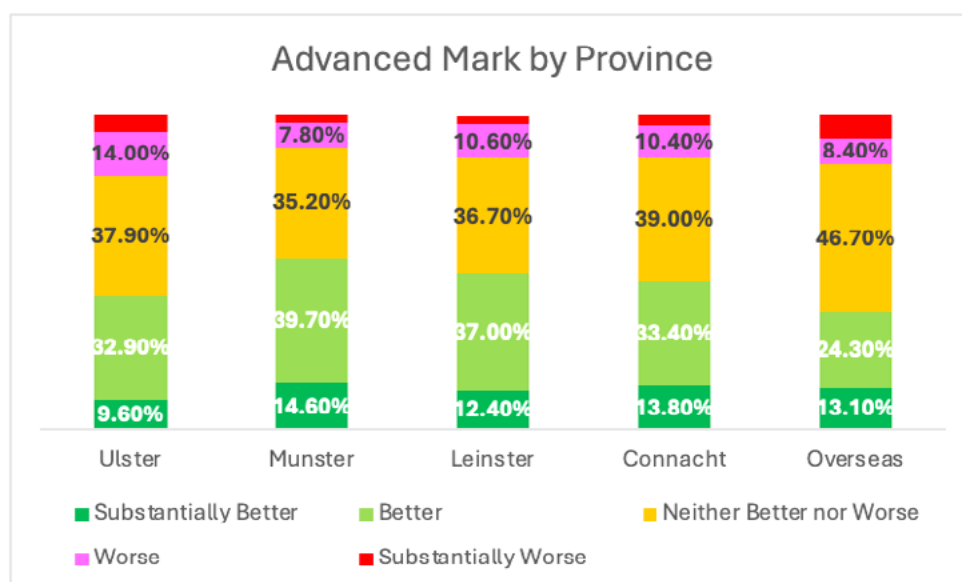
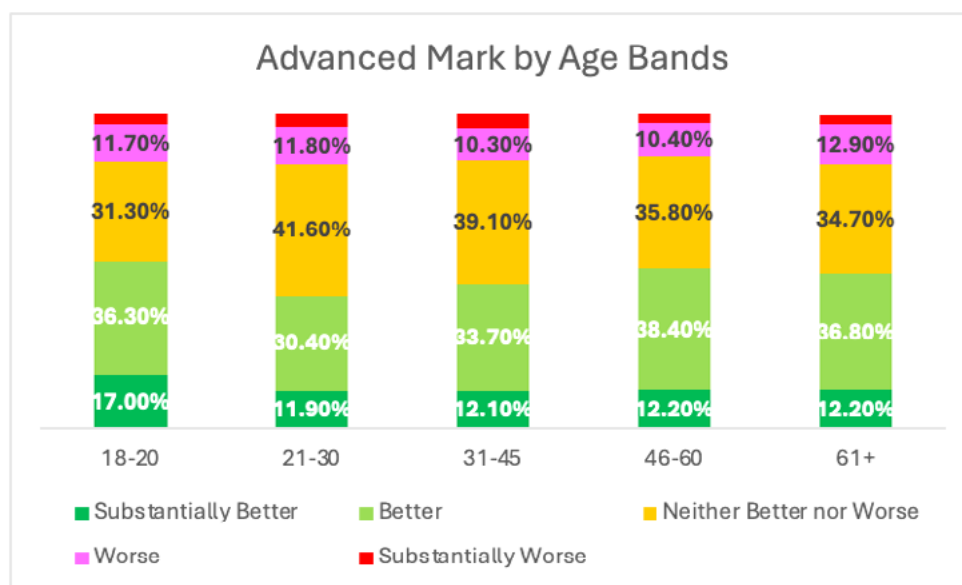
There was very little difference in response profiles by Province. In terms of age bands, a steadily decreasing proportion endorsed the 'substantially better' option, while in terms of role, the proportions endorsing 'substantially better' varied from a low of 50% of parents, to a high of 81.7% of match officials.



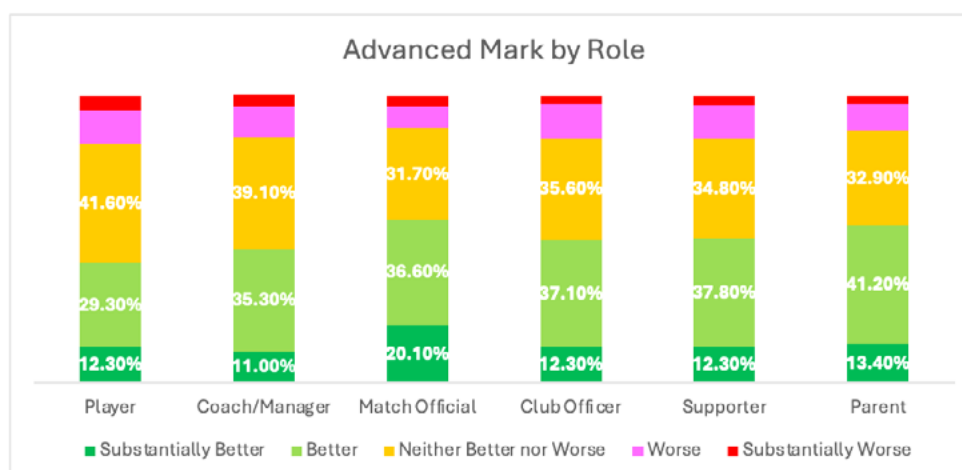
Relatively speaking, there was a lot less support for the advanced mark rule enhancement. Overall, less than half of participants (48.2%) believed that it had made the game better.



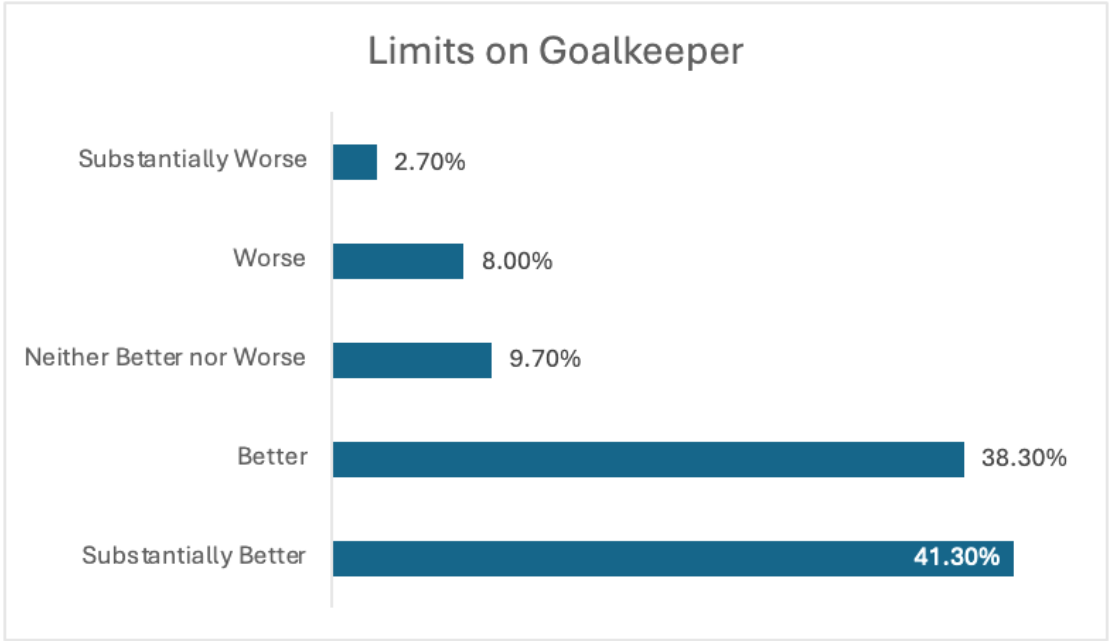
In terms of Province, the most support was observed in Munster (54.3%) and the least, Overseas (37.4%; the lowest on the island of Ireland was in Ulster at 42.5%).



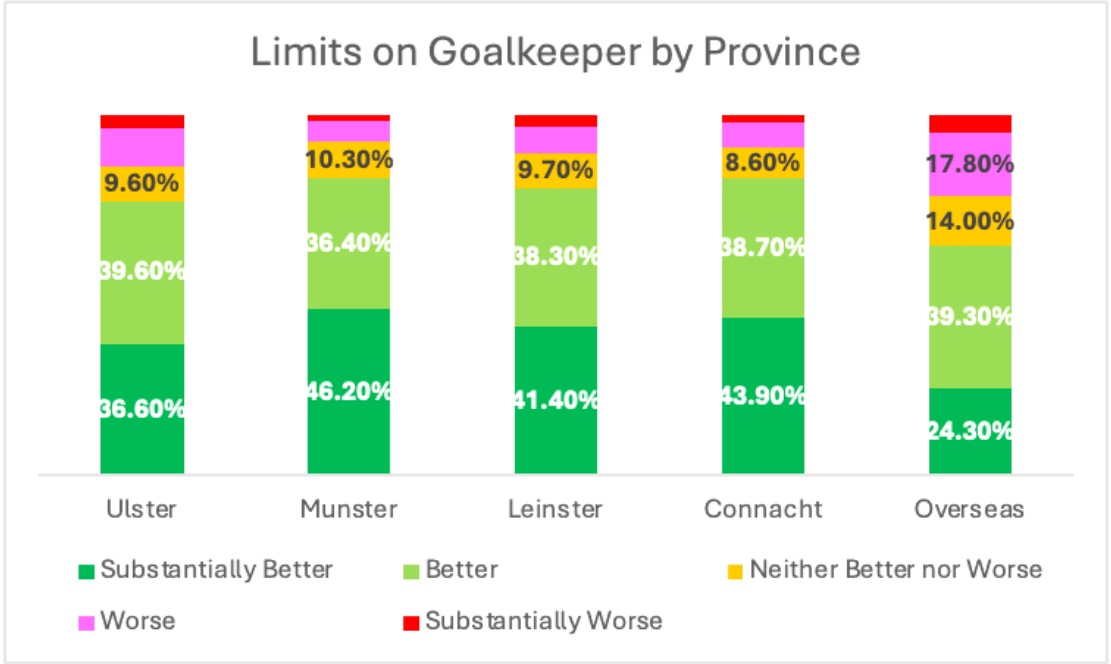
In terms of age, the lowest proportion endorsing 'better' or 'substantially better' was seen in those aged 21 to 30 (42.3%), with the highest in those aged 18 to 20 (53.3%). In terms of role, match officials were the most supportive, and players, the least.



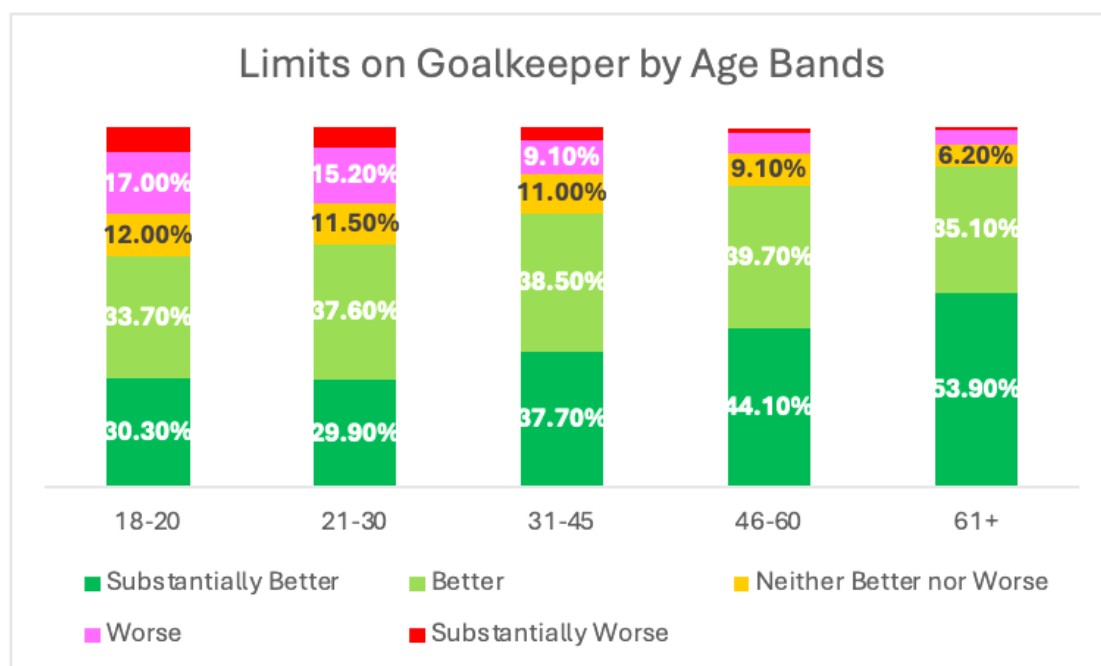
There was substantial support for the limits placed on the goalkeeper, with 79.6% believing that it had made the game better.



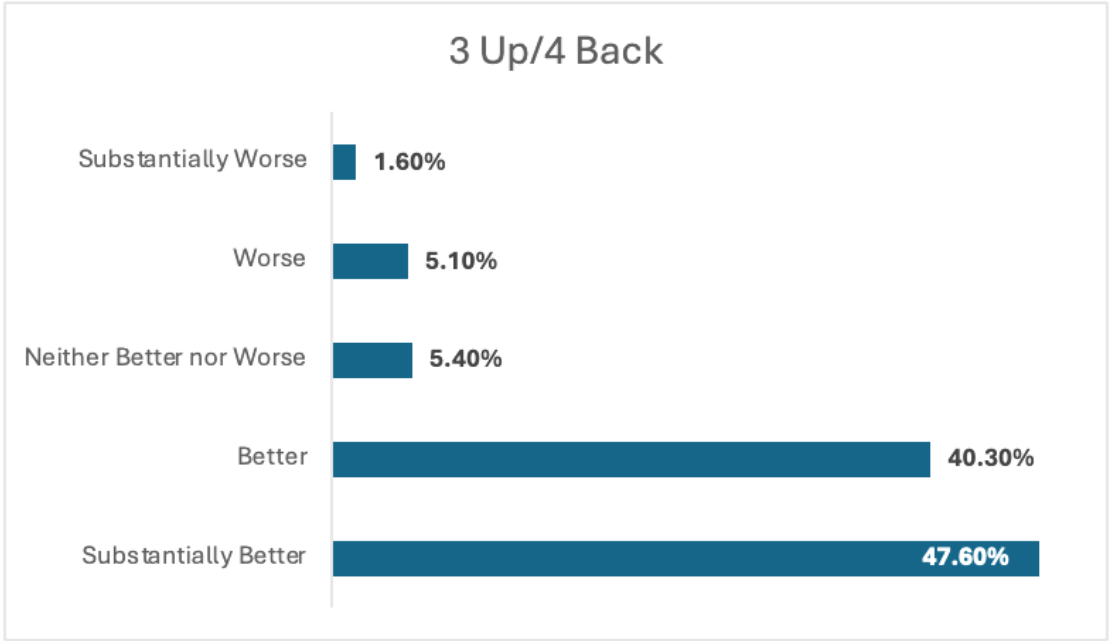
In terms of Provincial variation, Munster (82.6%) was most supportive, and Ulster (on the island of Ireland), least at 76.2%.



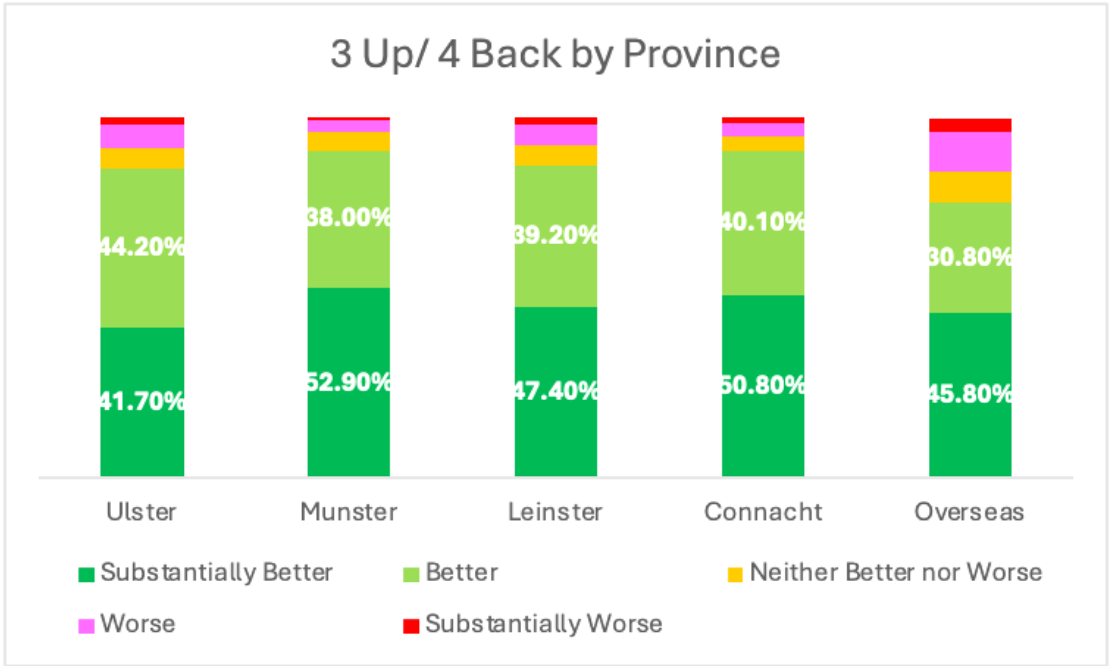
There was a clear trend in favour of increasing support with age, and differences in terms of proportions endorsing 'substantially better' (for example) with a low of 30.5% among players, to a high of 47.8% among match officials (although the proportions for match officials, club officers, and supporters were all very similar).

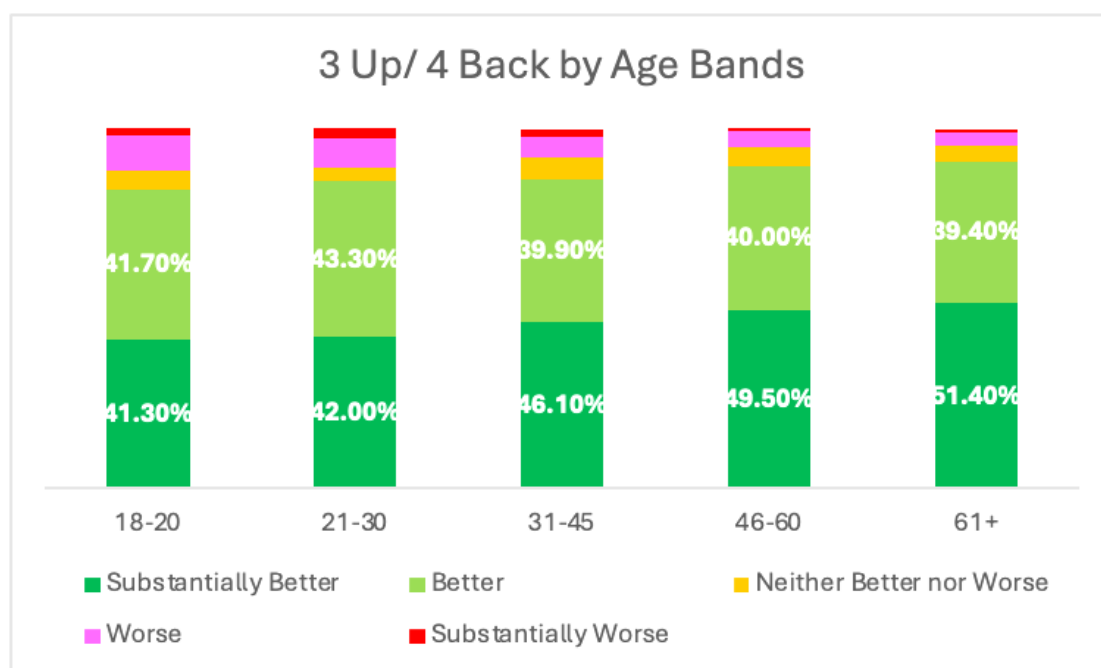


A substantial majority were of the view that the 3 up/4 back rule enhancement made the game better.

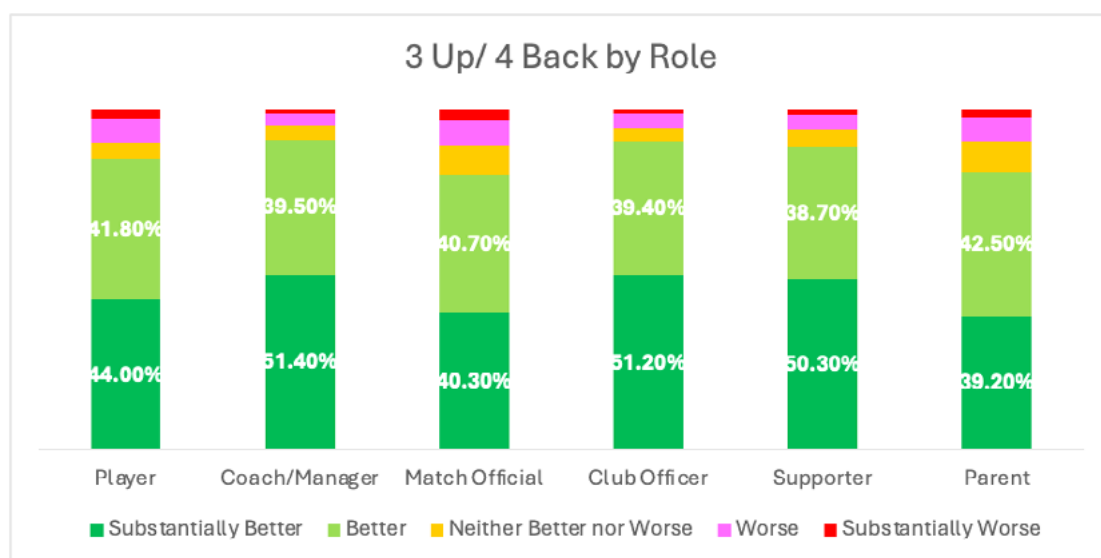


There was some variation by province, particularly in the ‘substantially better’ responses, with a low of 41.7% in Ulster, and a high of 52.9% in Munster.

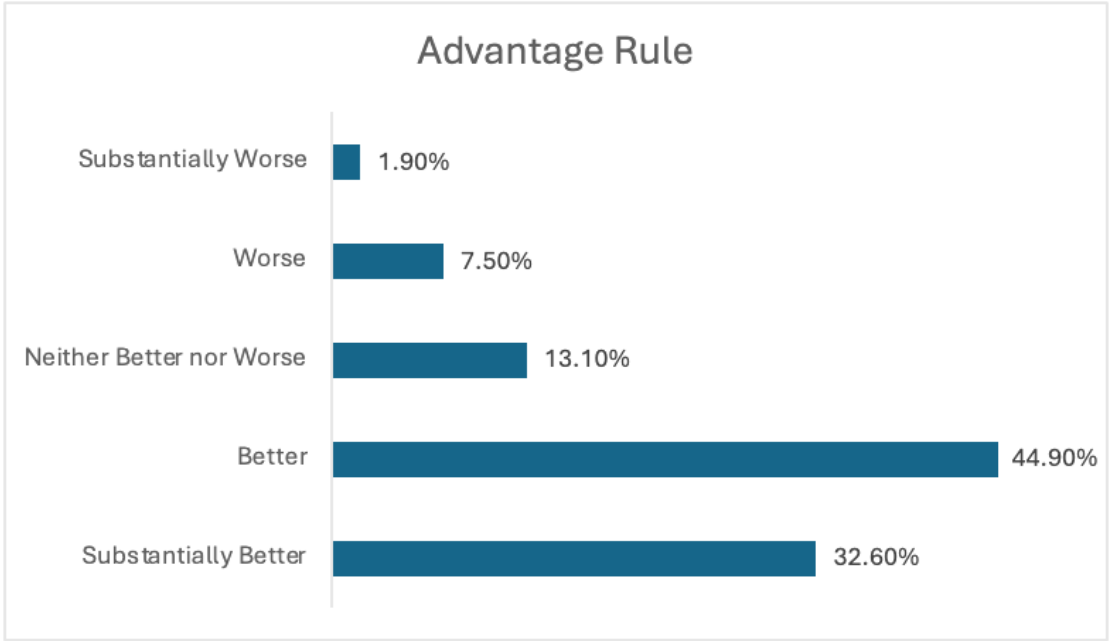




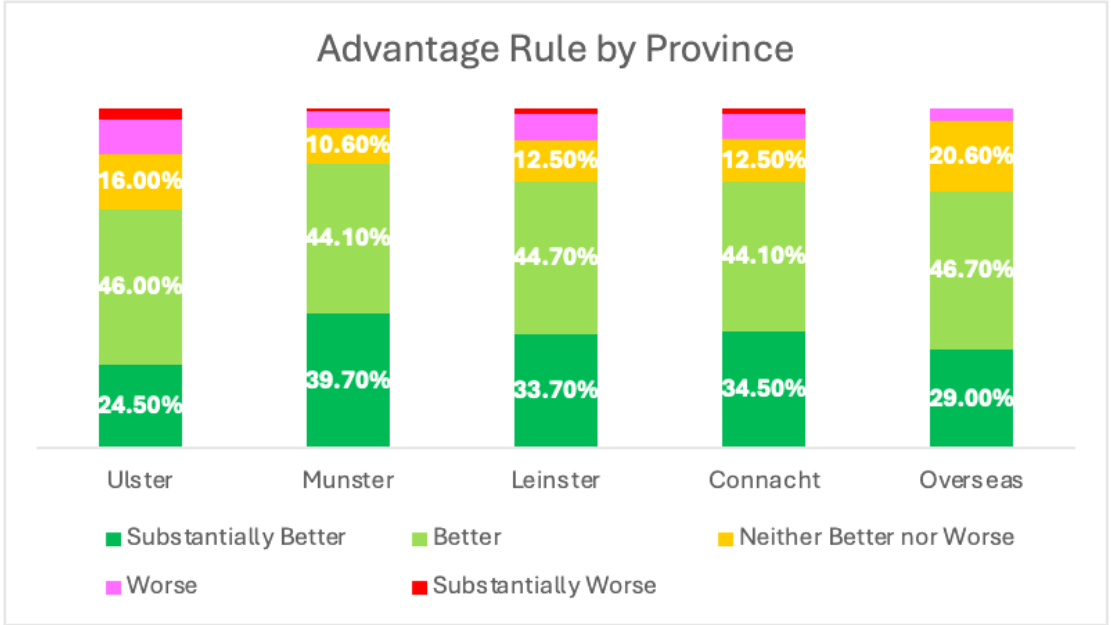
In terms of age bands, there was a slight trend towards positivity with age, while in terms of role, a low of 81.0% of match officials, and a high of 90.9% of coaches/managers were of the view that it made the game better.



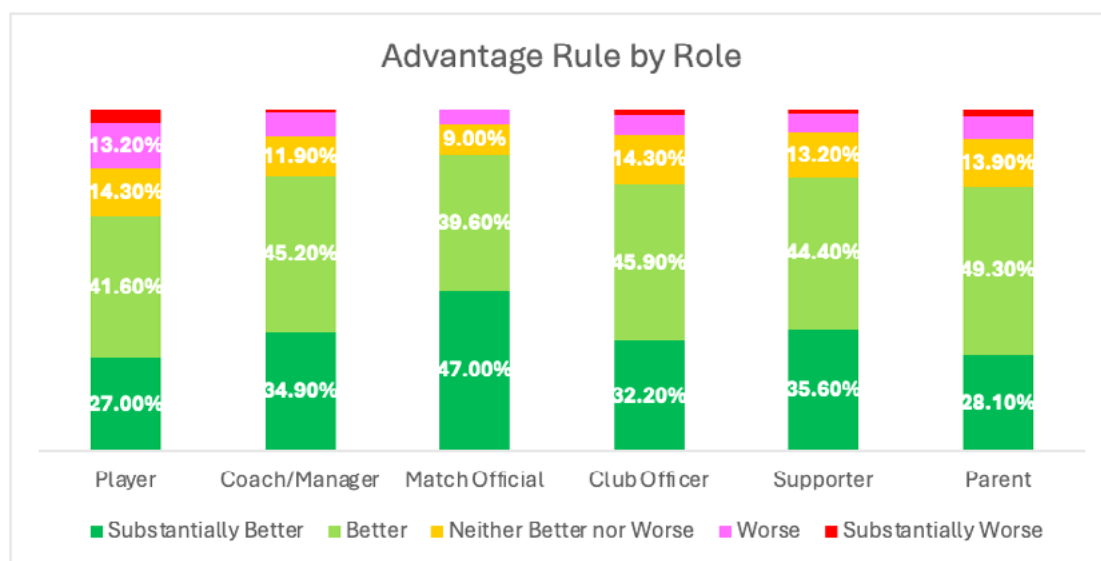
Another substantial majority (77.5%) of participants reported believing that the advantage rule made the game better.



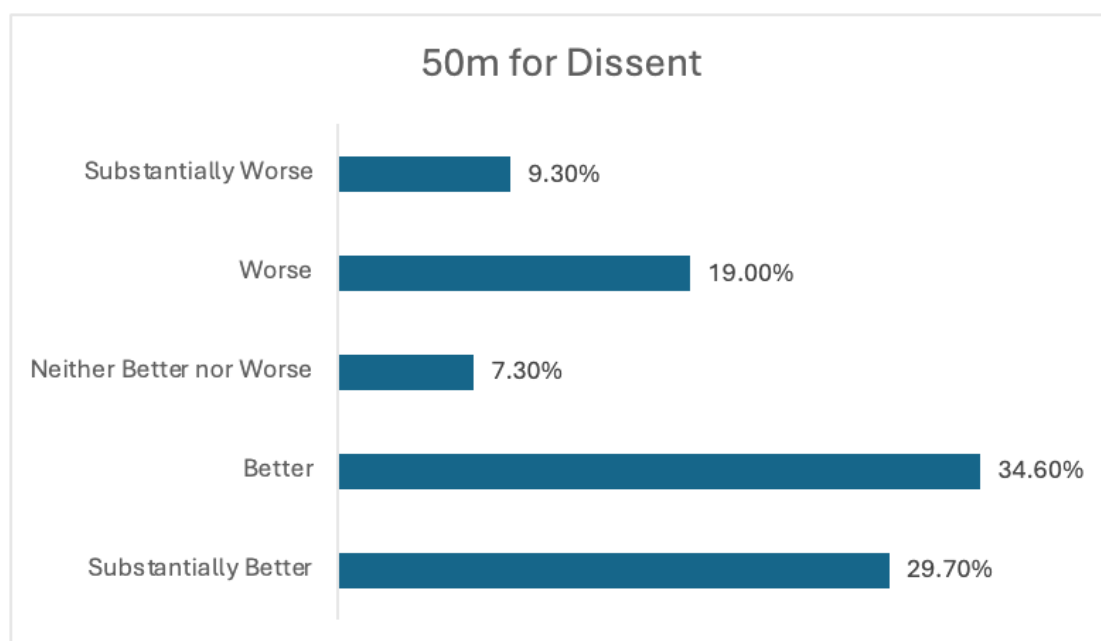
In terms of Provinces, a high of 83.8% in Munster, and a low of 70.5% in Ulster thought that the advantage rule made the game better. There was a greater degree of variation in terms of 'substantially better', with 39.7% in Munster, and 24.5% in Ulster endorsing this.



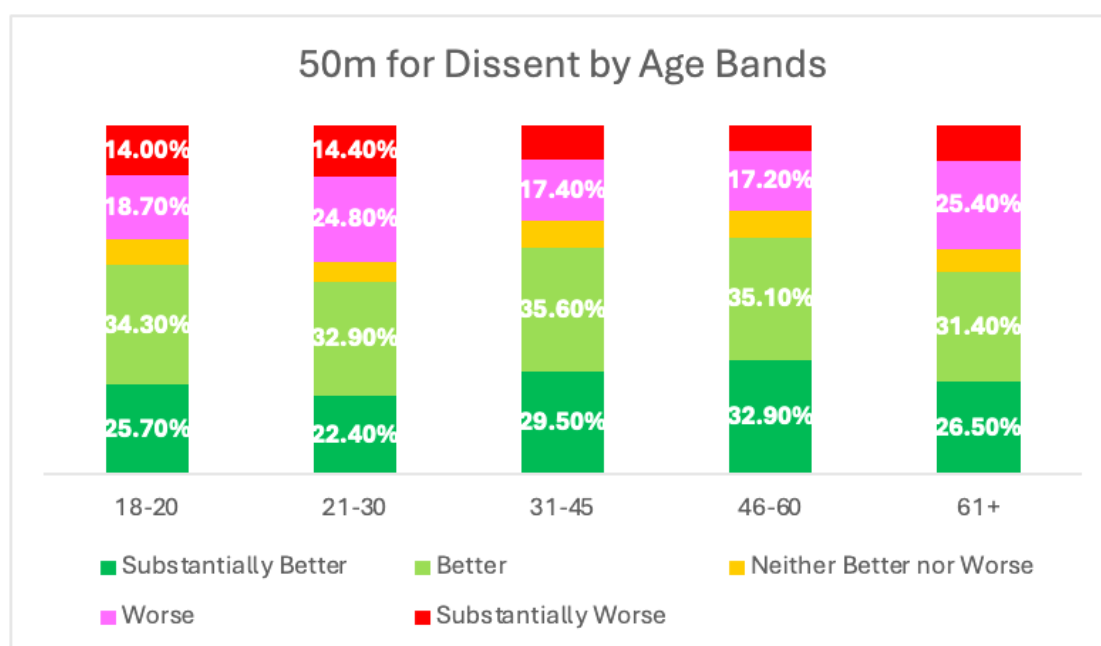
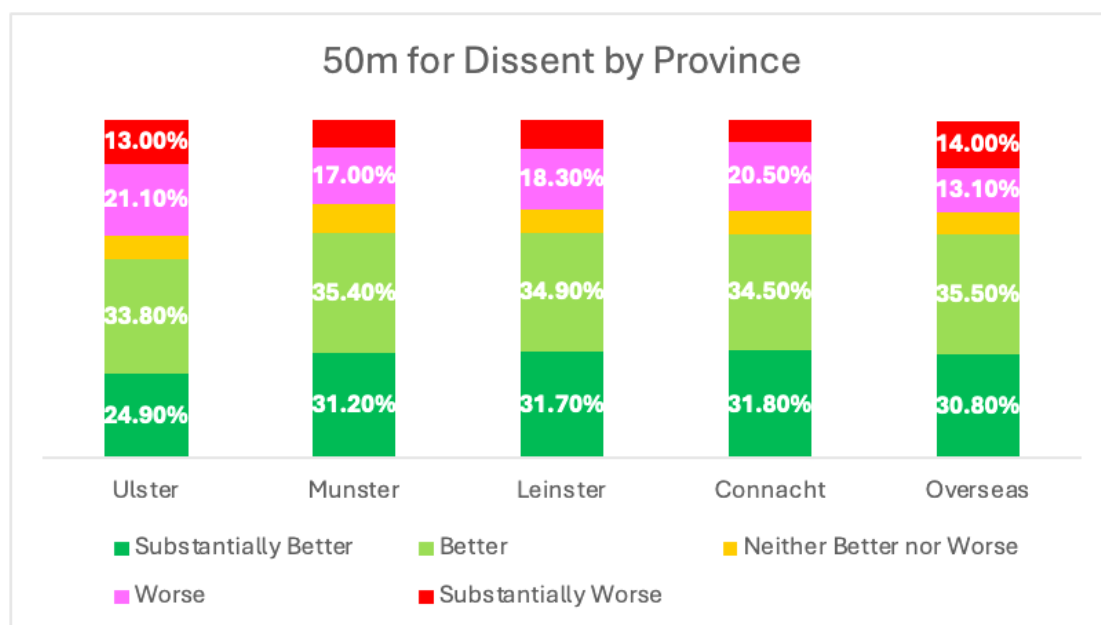
A low of 62.1% of those aged 21 to 30, contrasted with a high of 83.3% among those aged 61+. There was also variation in terms of role, with a high of 86.6% of match officials in contrast to a low of 68.6% of players.



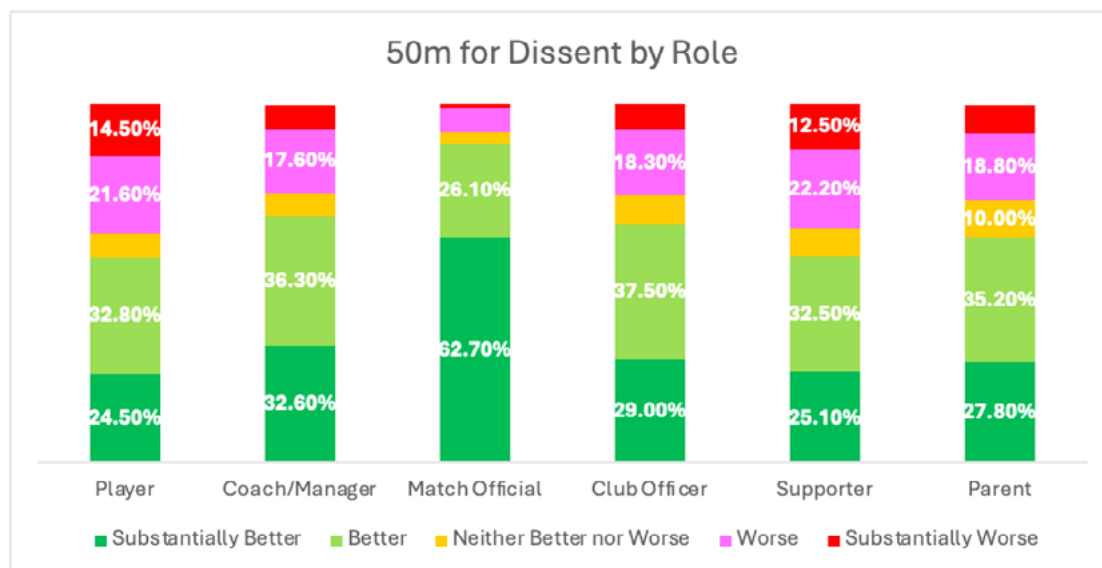
There was less unanimity in terms of these responses than there was for many of the other enhancements. While a majority (64.3%) were of the view that the 50m dissent rule made the game better, 28.3% were of the view that it made the game worse, or substantially worse.



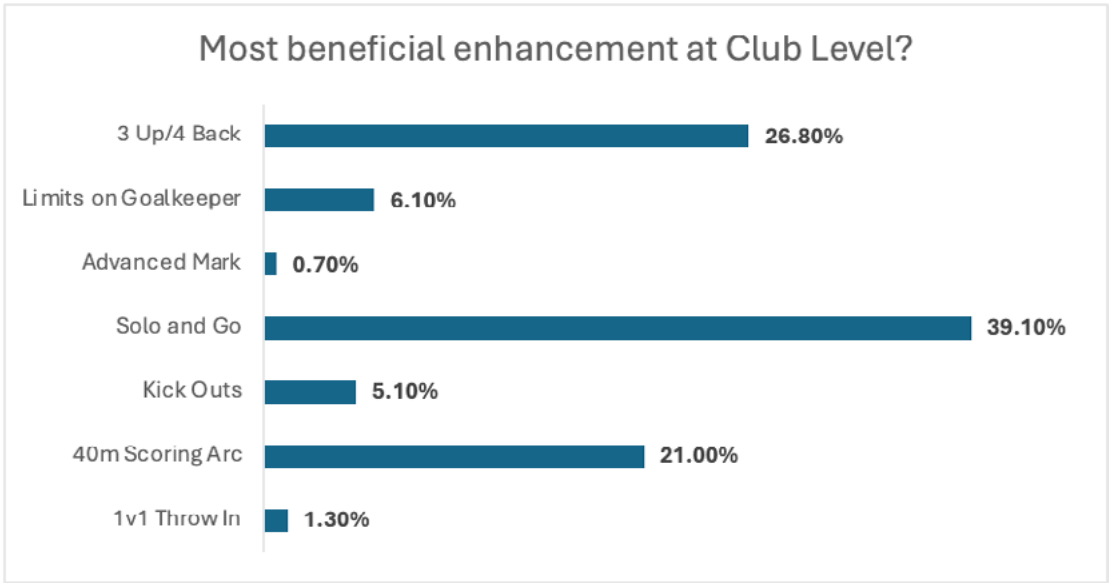
The response profiles for Munster, Leinster, Connacht, and Overseas were broadly similar, with Ulster somewhat of an outlier with overall endorsement of the dissent rule lower than elsewhere.



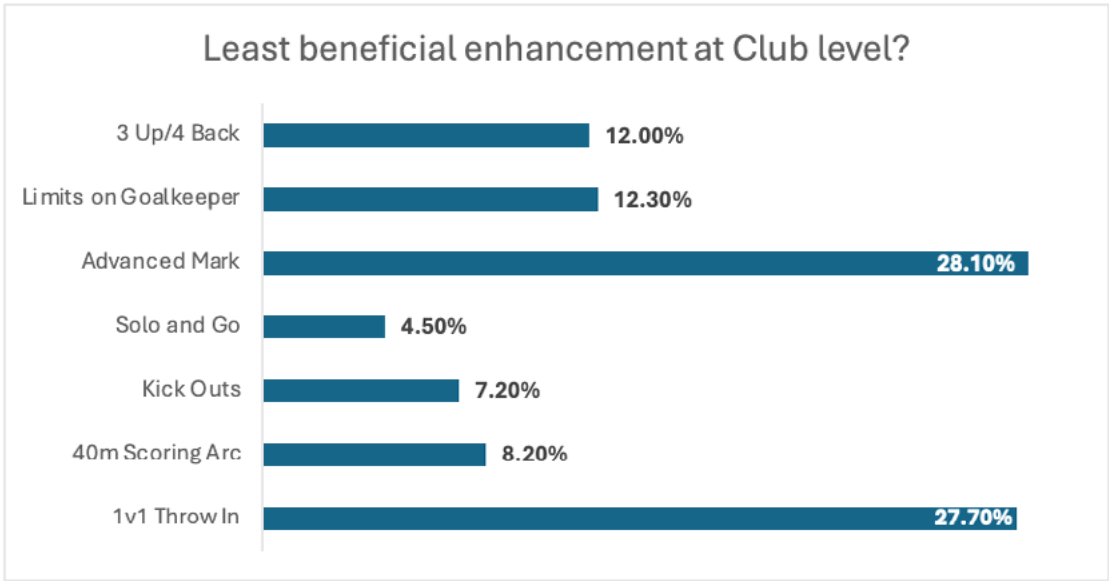
Results for age bands were not straightforward. There was a 'trend' towards increasing endorsement with age, however, this did not extend to the oldest age category. In terms of role, a large majority of match officials (88.8%) thought it made the game better overall, while only 57.3% of players and 57.6% of supporters agreed.



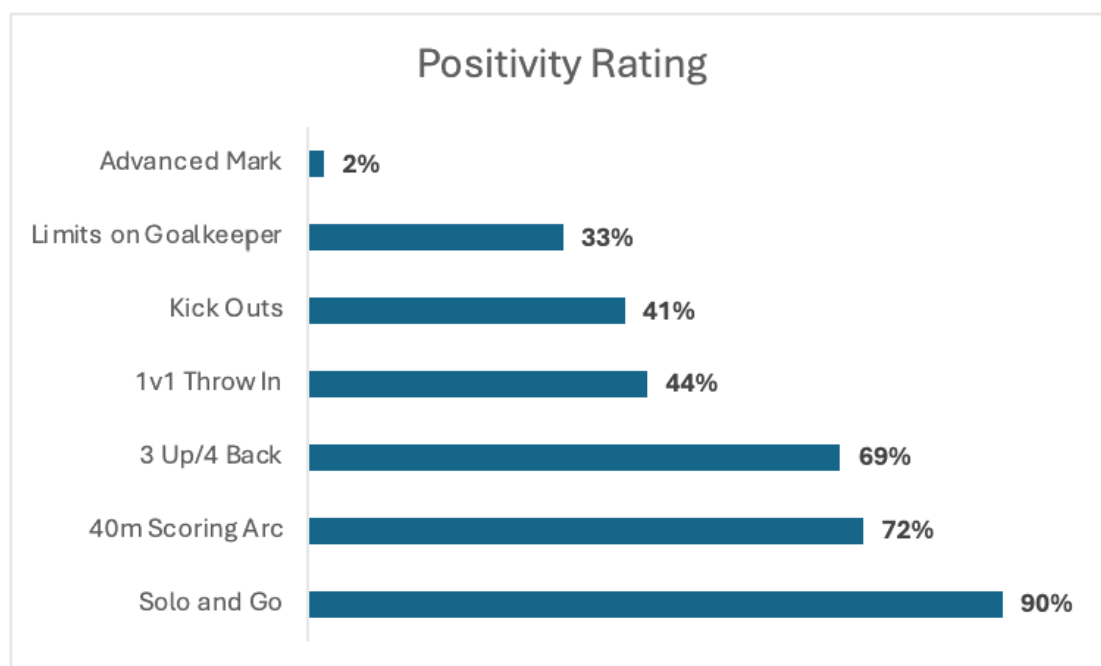
In summary, participants were asked to indicate which enhancement was most, and least beneficial. In terms of most beneficial, the solo and go, 3 up/4 back, and the 40m scoring arc were the top three.



In terms of the least beneficial, the advanced mark and the 1v1 throw-in scored highly.

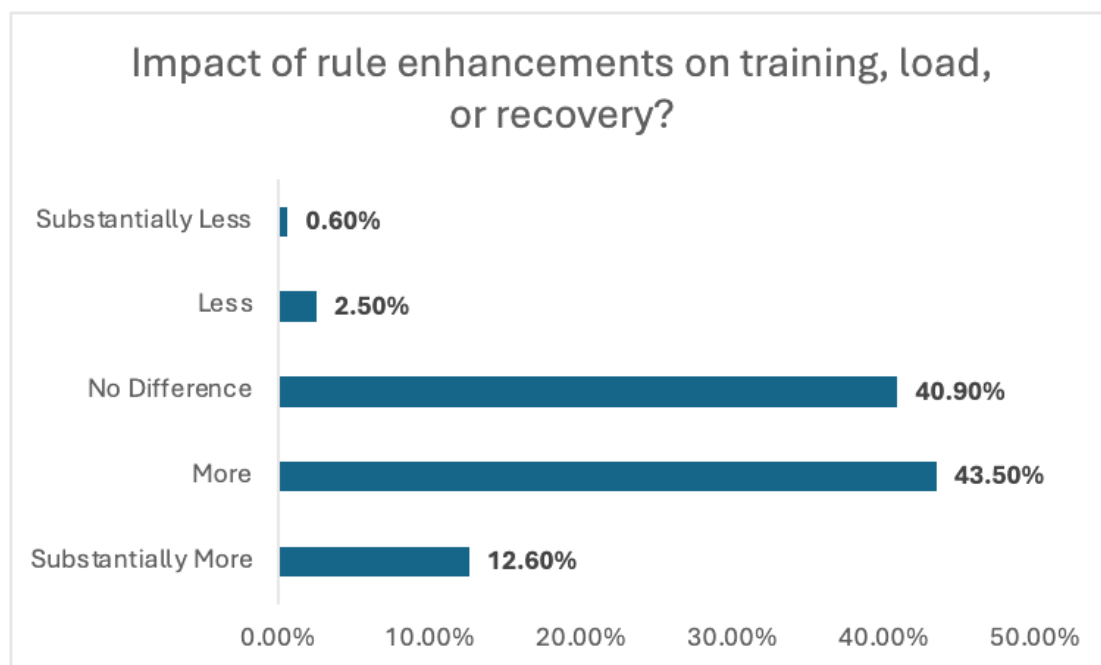


In order to incorporate both responses simultaneously, a 'positivity rating' was calculated for each of the enhancements. These are displayed below and show that the advanced mark was relatively negatively viewed, with the reverse true for the solo and go.

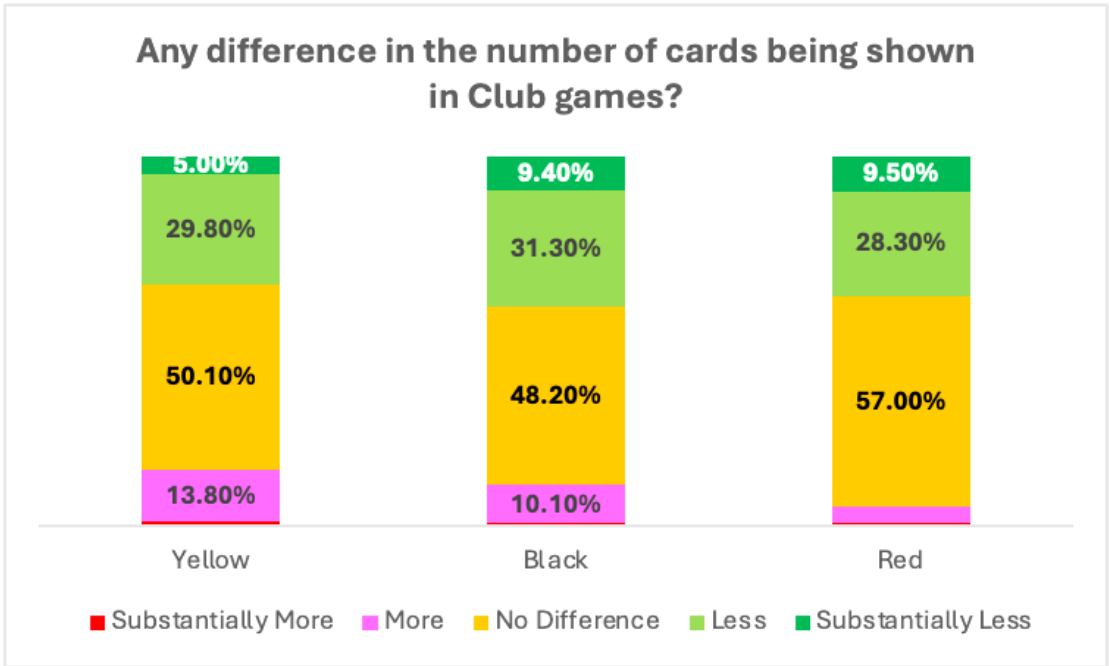


The following questions were asked only of players, coach/managers and match officials.

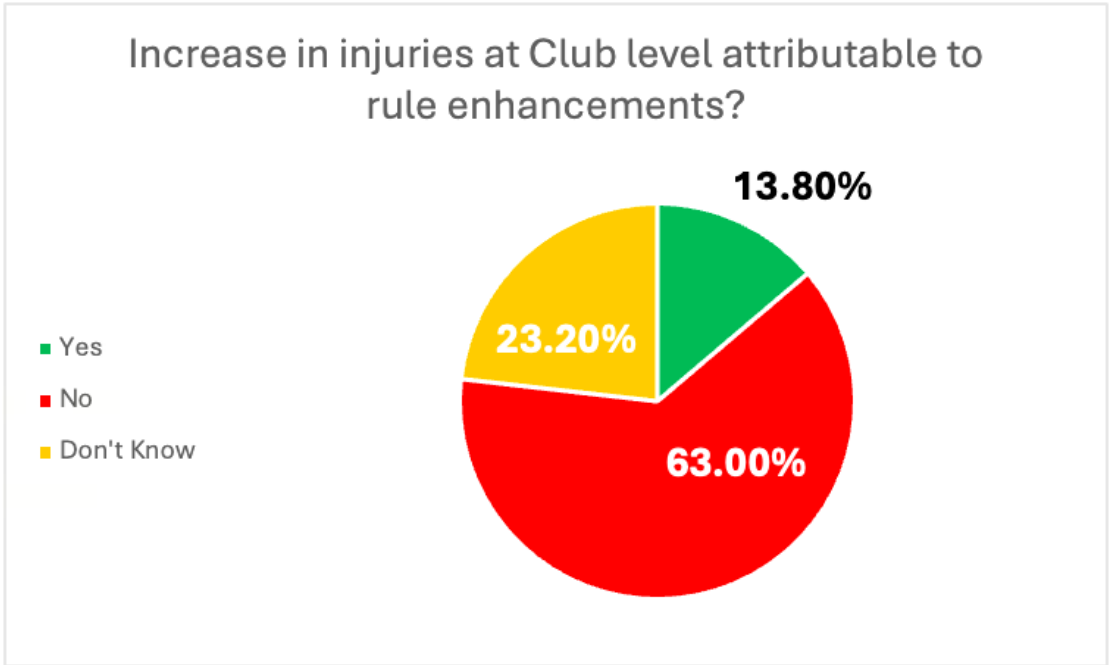
Participants were asked to comment on their perceived impact of the rule enhancements on training, workload, and recovery. Overall, a small majority (56.1%) of participants believed that there was a greater impact on training, workload and recovery as a result of the new rules.



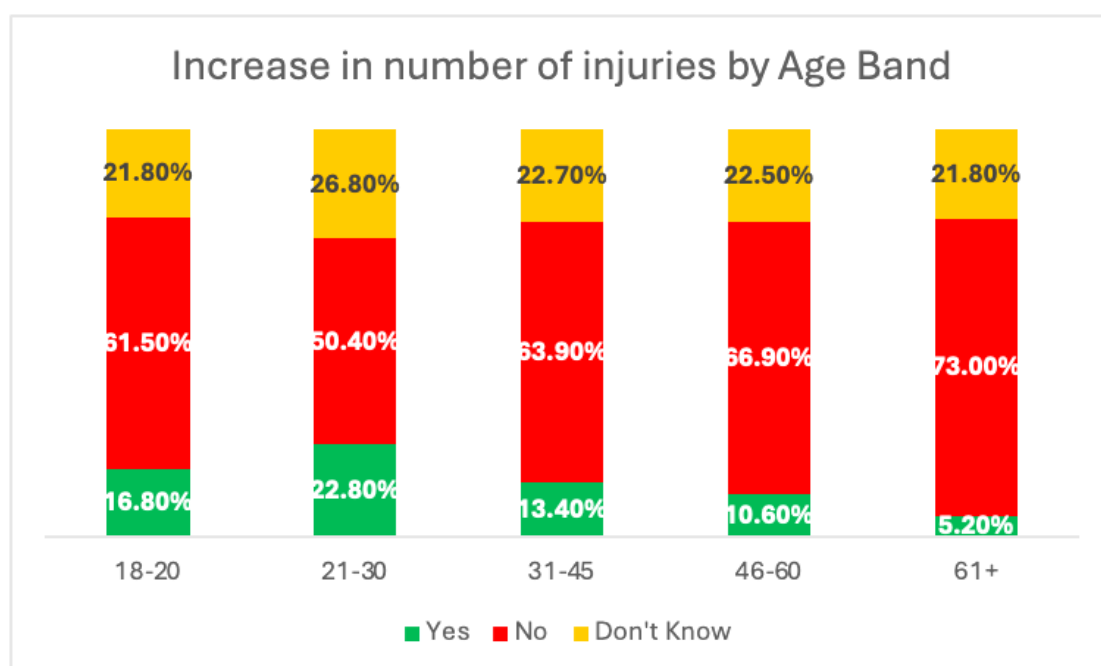
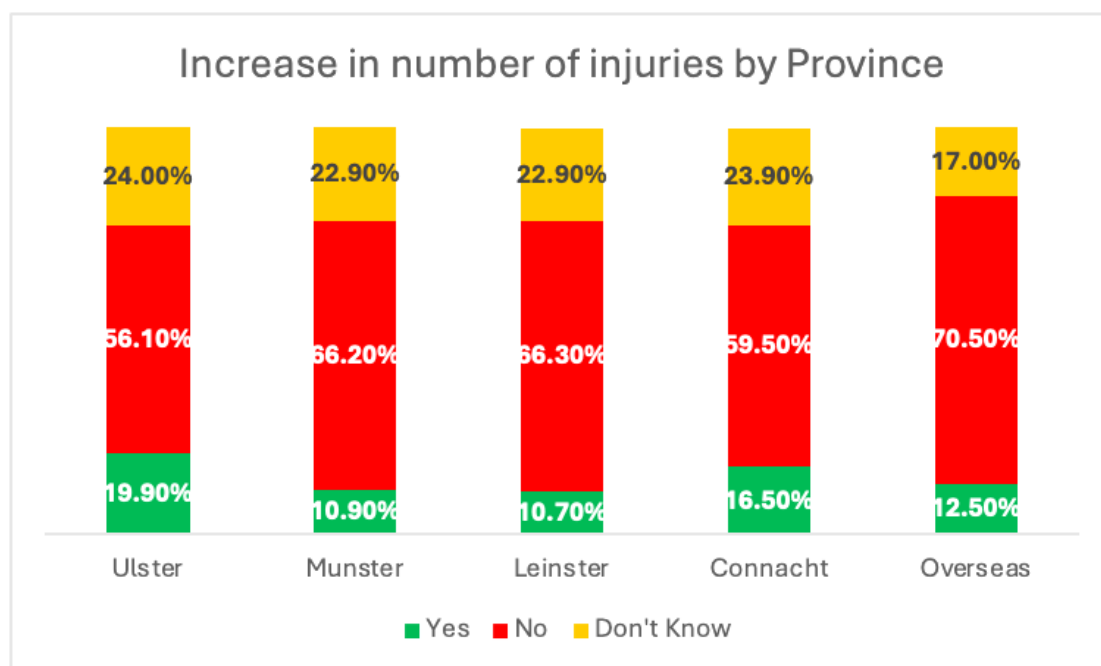
Overall, participants did not perceive that there was either substantially more or fewer yellow, black, or red cards in the game. In the case of each card, around half believed that there was no difference in the administration of cards, with substantial minorities endorsing the view that there were less or substantially less being given.



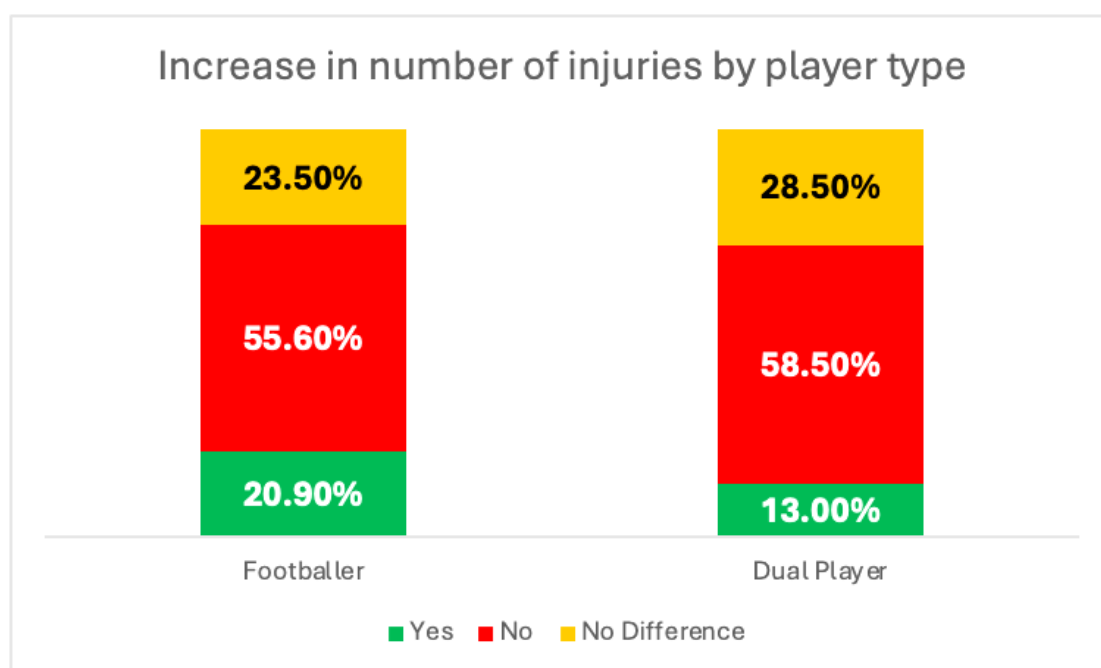
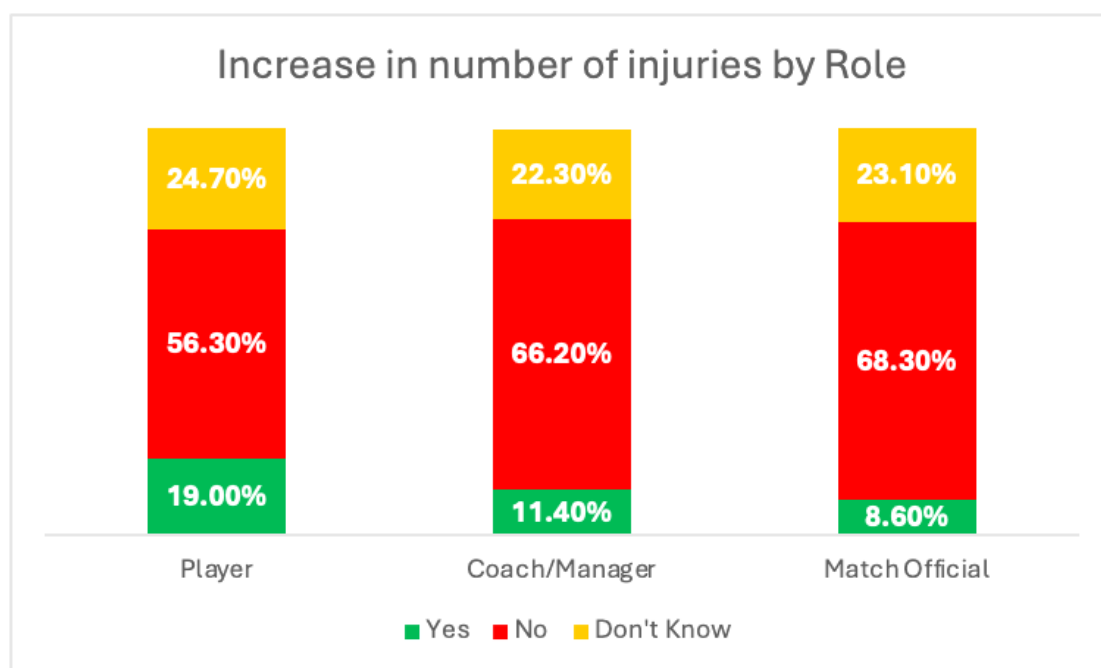
Participants were asked if they believed that the rule enhancements were associated with an increase in injuries? Only a small minority (13.8%) believed that there was an increase, with a substantial majority of the view that there was no attributable increase.



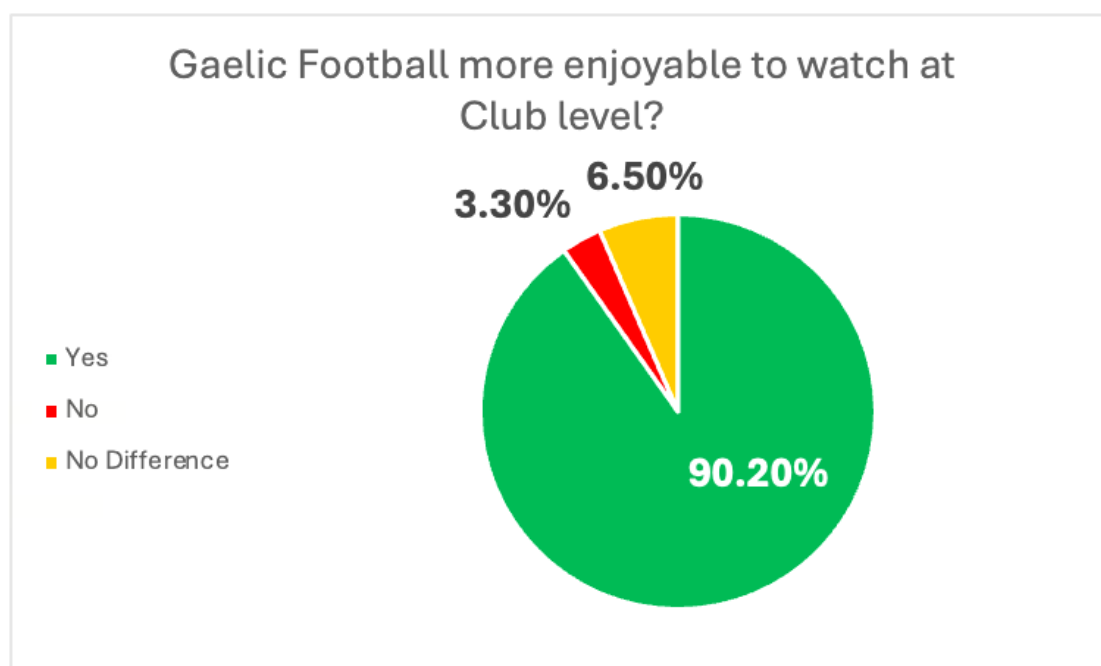
In terms of how this fractured by Province, the figure below suggests that a substantially higher proportion of those in Ulster and Connacht believed there to be a negative impact on injuries.



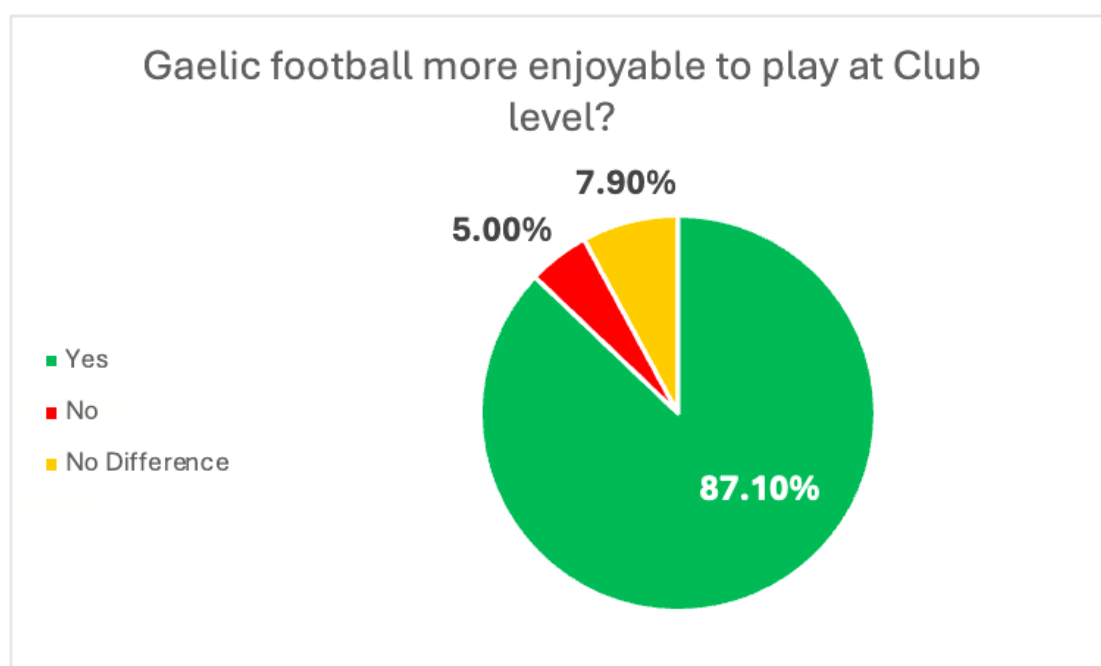
In terms of age bands, there was a higher proportion of those of playing age (18 to 30) of the view that there was a relationship between the rule enhancements and an increase in injuries. When examined by role, more than twice the proportion of players than match officials endorsed the relationship.



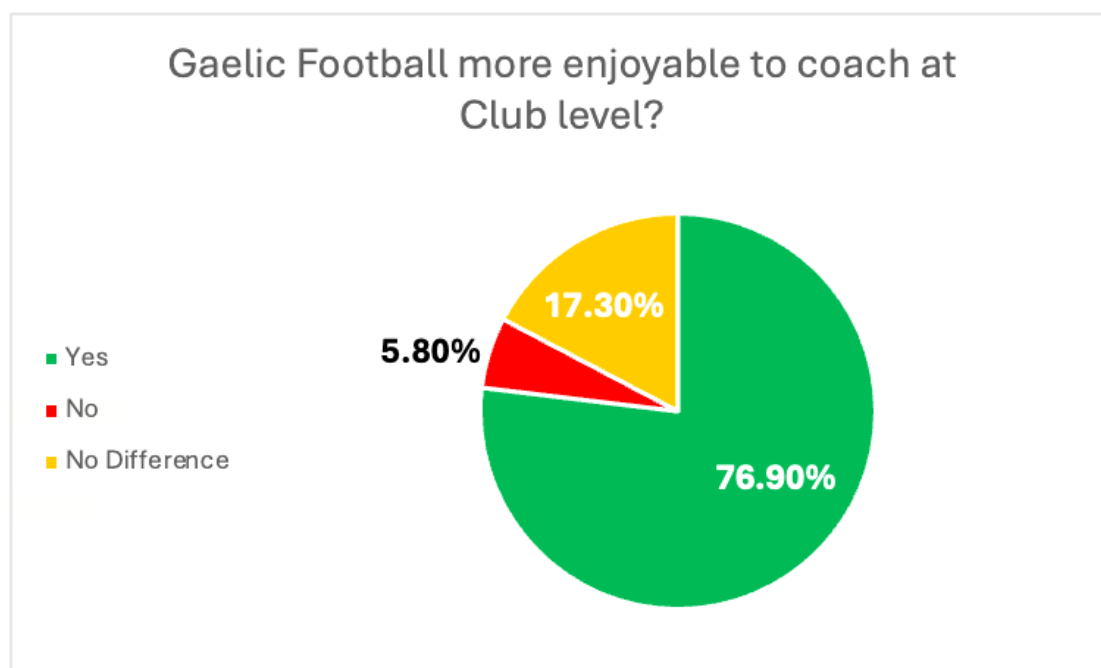
Interestingly, a greater proportion of footballers only, as opposed to dual players, were likely to endorse a relationship between the rule enhancements and an increase in injuries. In terms of how enjoyable football is as a game to watch at Club level, a huge majority believed that football post rule enhancements, is more enjoyable to watch.



In terms of football as a game to play, a substantial majority of players were of the view that it is more enjoyable to play, post rule enhancements.



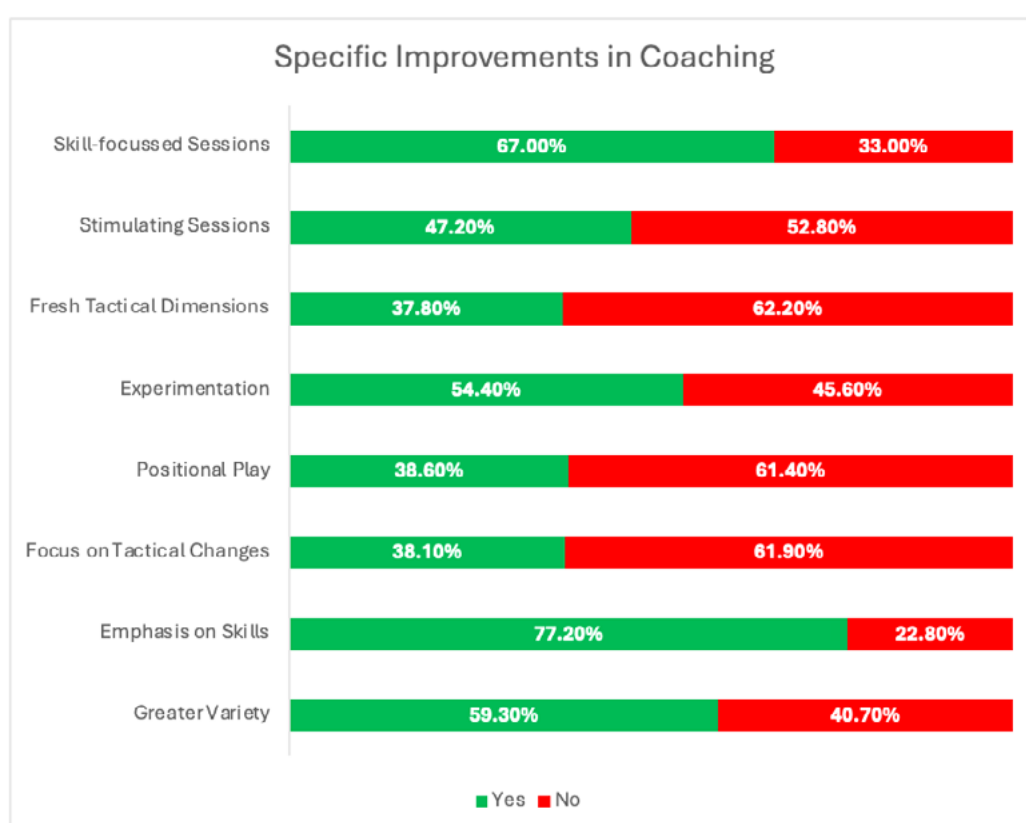
Among coaches, more than three quarters were of the view that the game is now more enjoyable to coach



For those that were of this view, a series of follow-up questions were posed as follows:

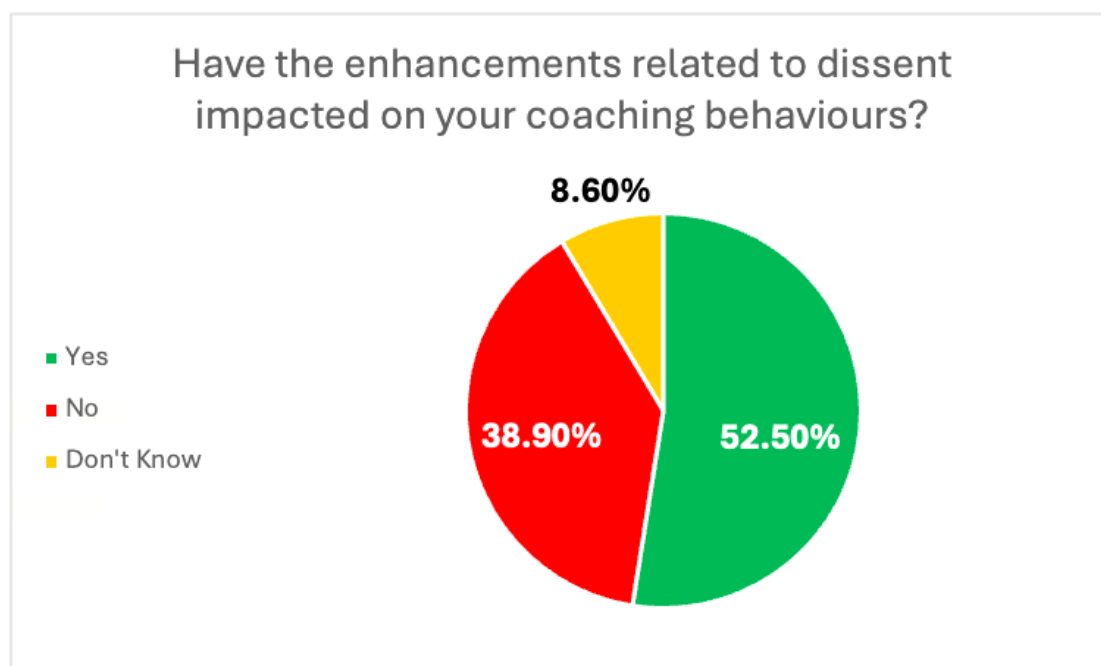
1. It allows a greater variety in training
2. I can place an emphasis on skills such as kicking and high fielding
3. I can focus more on tactical changes to how we play
4. I can provide activities to develop positional play
5. I can experiment with new systems, kick-out routines, attacking patterns, and transition drills
6. The rule enhancements (like the advanced mark or kick-out changes) add fresh tactical dimension
7. Sessions have become more stimulating and less repetitive
8. I have enjoyed seeing players improve and respond positively to skill-focused sessions

Responses are presented below, by individual question.



In particular, coaches and managers were of the view that coaching with the rule enhancements allows for a greater emphasis on skills.

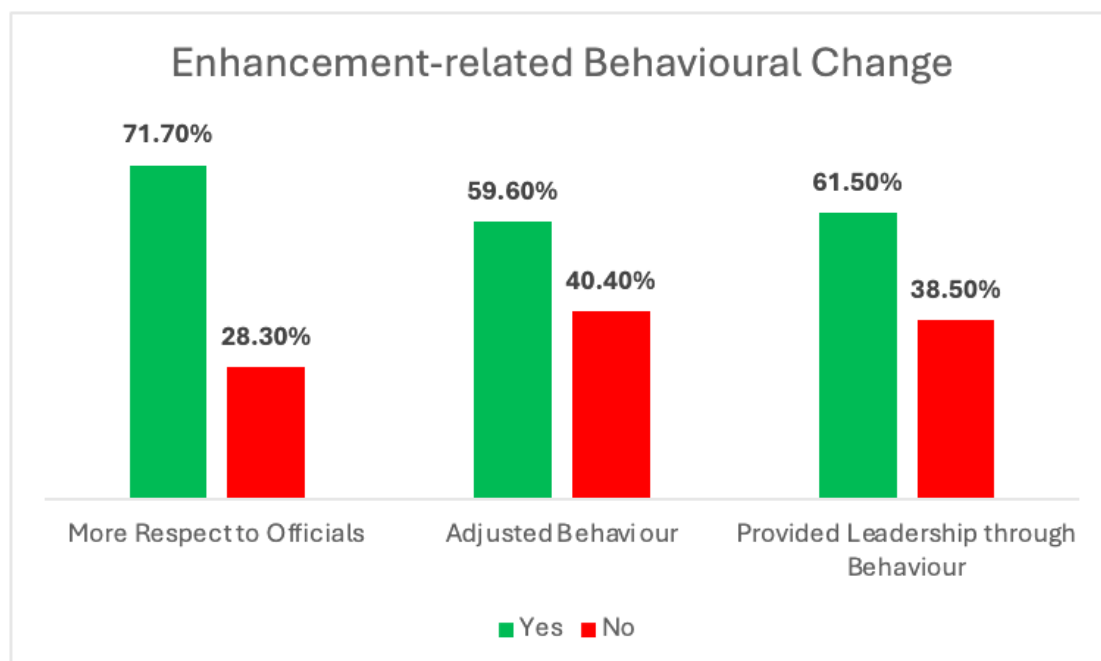
In terms of the impact of the rule enhancements on dissent, a small majority (52.5%) reported that this has impacted on how they coach.



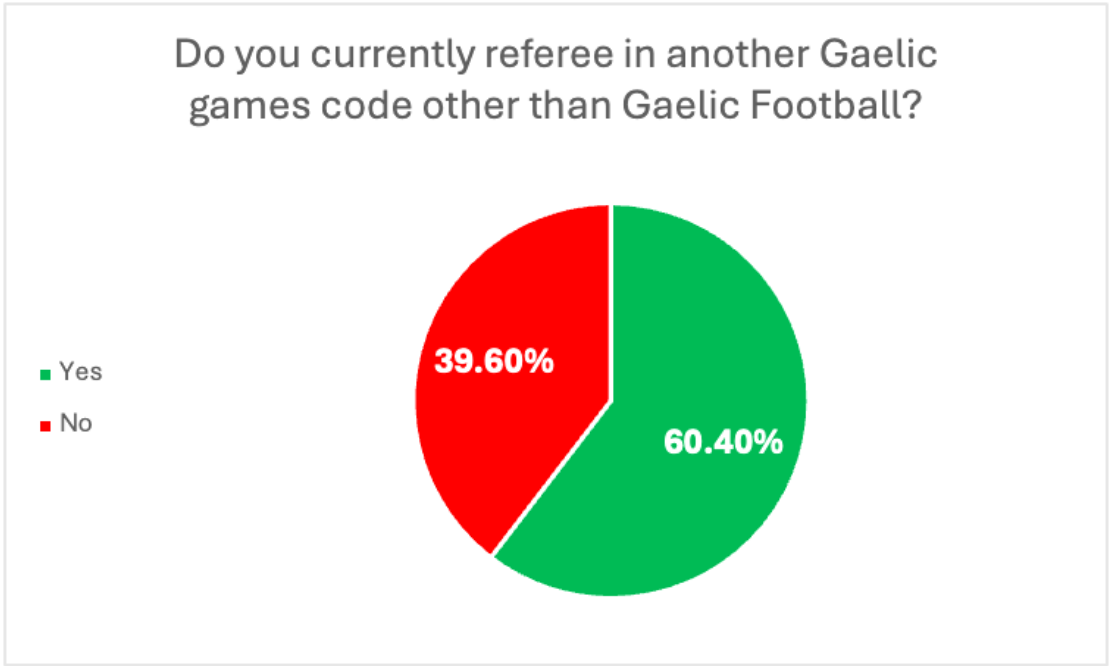
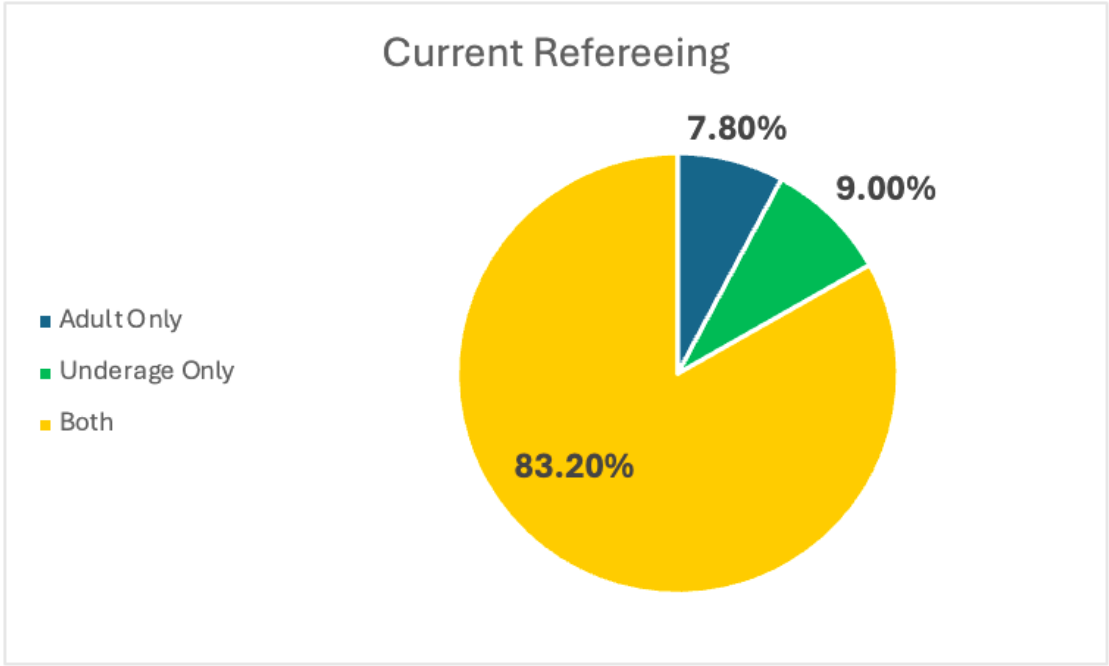
For those who said 'yes', a number of additional statements were presented, as follows:

1. (I give) More respect to officials
2. (I have) Adjusted my behaviour on the sideline
3. (I have) Provided clear leadership to players by my own behaviours

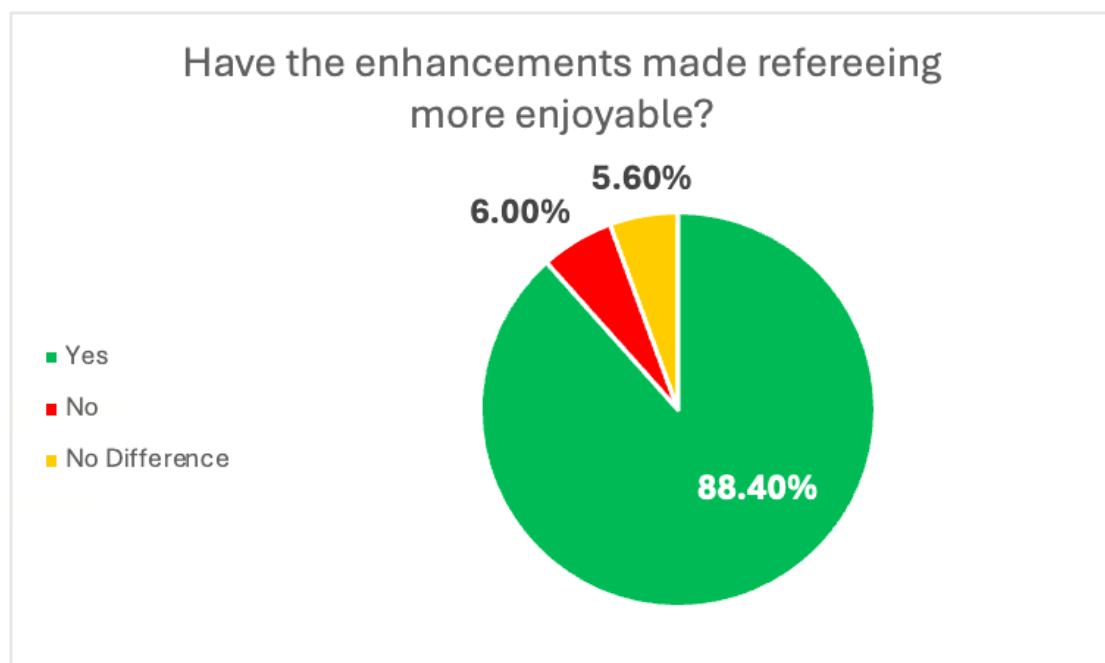
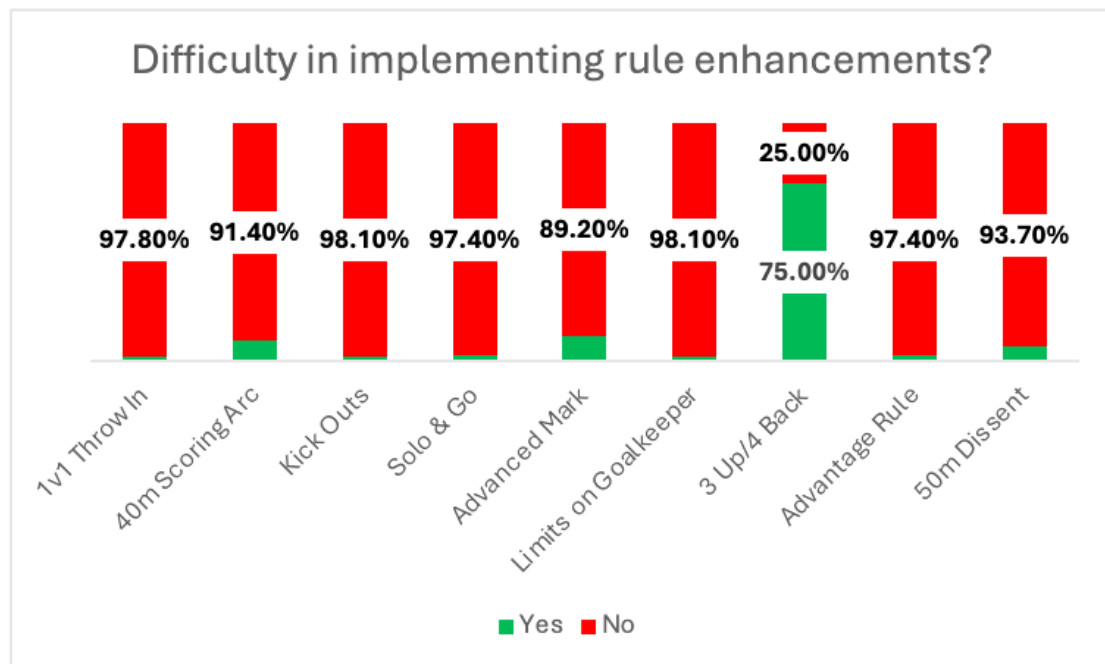
There were majorities for all three in favour of 'yes'. This is displayed below.



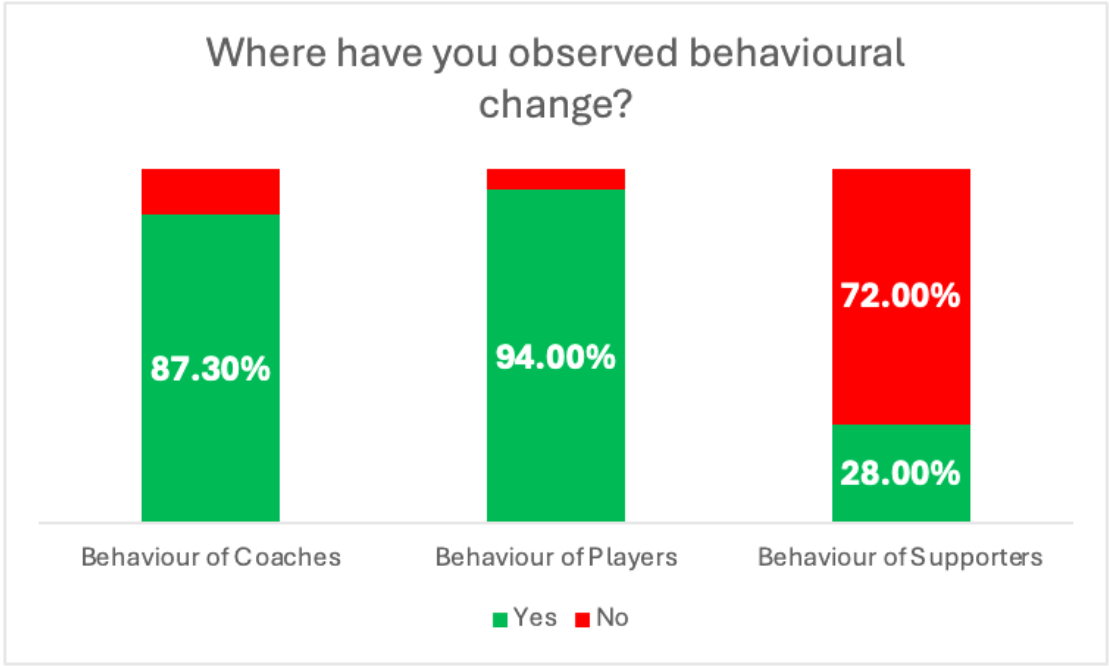
Match officials were asked to indicate the context of their officiating. A large majority reported refereeing both adult and underage games, and a majority reported refereeing beyond Gaelic football (camogie, hurling and/or ladies football).



For each of the enhancements, referees were asked to indicate if the enhancement was difficult to implement at Club level. With the exception of 3 up/4 back, sizeable majorities did not believe them to be difficult to implement.



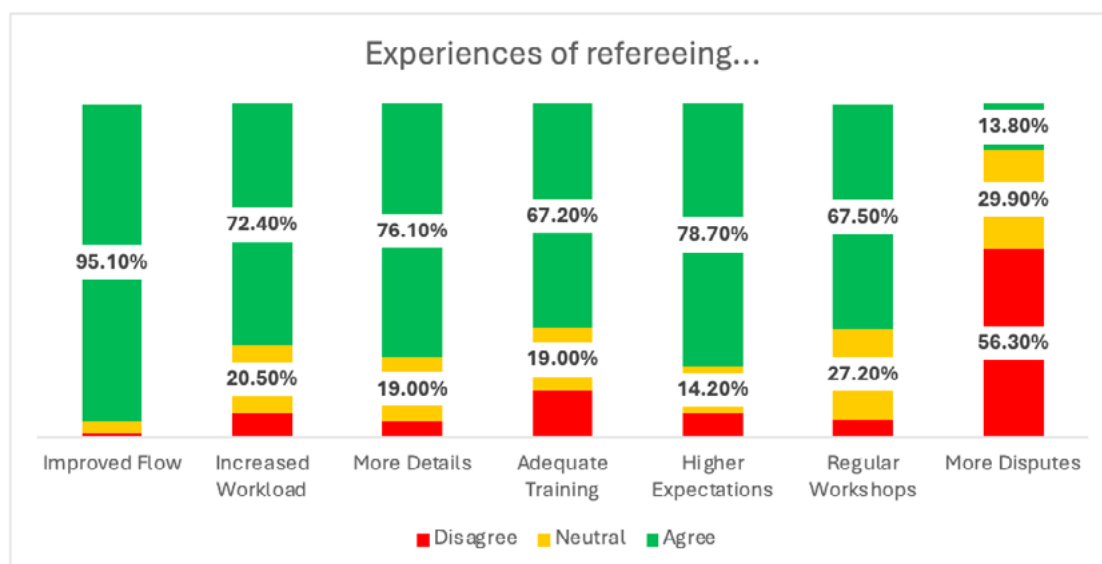
A large majority of referees were of the view that the enhancements have made Gaelic football more enjoyable to referee, and in terms of the impact on behaviour, large majorities believed them to have had a positive impact on coach behaviour, and player behaviour, but not on the behaviour of supporters.



Match officials were asked to comment on the following set of statements:

1. The rule enhancements have improved the flow of the game
2. The rule enhancements have increased your workload during matches
3. The rule enhancements require you to track more in-game details than before
4. You have received adequate training support to apply the new rules effectively
5. The expectation placed on Referees has increased with the rule enhancements
6. You would benefit from more regular workshops and refreshers on the rule enhancements
7. You have experienced more disputes/complaints from players/coaches since the rule enhancements were introduced

The responses are summarised below. The vast majority were in agreement that the rule enhancements had improved the flow of the game, while only a small minority agreed that the rule enhancements were associated with a greater volume of disputes or complaint with players or coaches (13.8%). For all other issues, the proportion agreeing with the statements was between 67.2%, and 78.7%. Of note, over two thirds agreed that more regular workshops would be useful, That the enhancements brought with them an increased workload, more tracking of in-game details, a greater level of expectation of the referee, with over two thirds also of the view that the training received regarding the enhancements had been adequate.



QUALITATIVE (TEXT) FEEDBACK.

OVERVIEW

At various stages throughout the questionnaire, participants were able to submit text responses. Here, there was often a 'compare and contrast' between the inter-county game, and the game at Club level. Overall, many participants viewed the changes as positive, improving the game's flow, excitement, and discipline, while also rewarding skilful play. However, recurring concerns included the difficulty for referees to consistently apply new rules at the Club level, mainly due to a lack of support officials (linesmen or umpires), the apparent harshness of certain penalties like the 50-metre advancement for dissent, the controversy surrounding the 2-point score from frees, and the advanced mark. Beyond what has already been implemented by the FRC, suggestions for further improvements include limiting hand passes, increasing the value of a goal, and refining the application of rules at underage levels.

ANALYSIS

The text responses gave an insight into the perceived successes of the rule enhancements, but also some criticisms.

The following were the key themes, with some supporting quotes. These quotes are indicative, more than exhaustive.

1. OVERALL IMPACT AND GAME SPECTACLE

Overall, participants were of the view that the rule enhancements have significantly improved the game and were "badly needed".

Many claimed that the changes have "reinvented Gaelic football", making it a "much better game to watch" and "more enjoyable to play". The game is now described as "faster" and "more exciting", with more "attacking play" and "higher scoring". Some even credit the FRC and the rule enhancements with "saving Gaelic football".

"The term 'Rule Enhancements' is an understatement (most likely chosen by the FRC committee to help get them through Congress) as they are actually the most radical football rule changes in my lifetime. The changes have been fantastic and have emphasised the core values of Gaelic football that I was brought up with as a child in Galway. They are also a very positive example for society in general that positive change is possible in a very traditional organisation with planning, persuasion and goodwill."

"They are fantastic. They have dramatically improved the game. Please do not allow the noisy minority to make changes. It is the best thing to have happened to the game in many years. Well done to all involved and thank you for saving our game. You have done the Association a great service."

"Football is back baby!"

"It (the enhancements) has transformed the game and created a new level of discipline"

2. REFEREEING AND OFFICIATING CHALLENGES

A significant theme to emerge involved the inconsistent application and knowledge of the new rules by referees, especially at Club and underage levels. Many highlight the lack of neutral officials (line officials, umpires) at Club games, which makes it "impossible for a single referee to police" complex rules like the 3-up/4-back. There was a call for "better education on the rules for officials". Despite these challenges, many note a "huge improvement in level of abuse aimed at referees", attributing it to rules like the 50m advancement for dissent.

"At club level it's nearly impossible for the referees to enforce the rules."

"Referees are not applying all rule enhancements consistently, 2 pointers are being given inside the arc! I am an analyst, and it infuriates me"

"The 3up/ 4 back rule is impossible to police and causes a lot of unnecessary bellowing to try and alert referees to indiscretions which is frustrating referees and coaches. It's unfair on everyone involved"

"Referees are reluctant to give frees just outside the arc even if it is a blatant foul. It is easier to score frees kicked from the ground from longer distances and most teams have a player capable of doing so. FRC should amend the rule to state frees kicked from the ground, from inside or outside the arc, only score 1 point but frees kicked from the hand outside the arc still score 2 points. This may encourage referees to give legitimate frees and teams may use the tap and go rule to break defensive lines and penetrate the opposition defence or attempt a 2-point shot from the hands, which is a more difficult skill."

3. IMPACT OF SPECIFIC RULES

2-Point Score (40m Arc): While seen by many as making games more “exciting” and rewarding long kicking, there remains significant concern that it “demeans (a) goal” and that “2 points for a free is too much of a punishment” or “too much reward”. There was strong support for goals to be worth 4 points and frustration if a keeper’s touch reduces a 2-pointer to 1.

3-Up/4-Back Rule: This was widely praised for opening up the game but was also viewed as “very hard to police at Club level” due to lack of officials. The penalty for breaches was said to often be “too severe”.

50m Advancement for Dissent: This was widely viewed as “excellent” and “transformational” for improving discipline. However, it is also frequently described as “too severe” and “too open ended at referees’ discretion”.

Solo & Go: This rule enhancement was viewed overwhelmingly positively and described as “excellent” and a “brilliant rule change”, significantly speeding up the game.

Kick-outs (Beyond 40m Arc): This rule enhancement was credited with “revolutionising the game” and bringing back “contesting for the ball”. However, it was also seen as “hard on smaller clubs and underage”, and “penalises smaller teams disproportionately”. It was also suggested that it might make position of the goalkeeper as less attractive.

Advanced Mark: Overall, there was not widespread support for this. Many suggested that it is “not needed” and is “unfair on defenders”.

Handing Ball Back: This rule was widely disliked, with many suggesting that players should simply be allowed to “place the ball on the ground” instead. It’s perceived as “ridiculous” and “childish” and is one where referee inconsistency and discretion might be problematic.

Hooter/Clock System: Often seen as “distracting” and “killing the excitement”, especially as teams can play down the clock.

“The 2-point score should only be allowed from play. Still confusion surrounding when a team gets a black/red card and the rule for 3 up/back...”

“1v1 throw-in not working at club level, players are still charging in long before the ball is thrown up. At a game last night and there were at least 8 players in on top of the referee by the time the ball ‘came down’ from the throw-in. 3 up not being policed at all by refs in league games, blatant breaches of rules are being ignored by refs.”

“Advanced Mark not required as too easy to hit an inside forward with more space in front of them - Let defenders defend - the defender’s job is not just to deny possession it is to defend when the attacker has possession - Denying possession is an impossible task if more space and quick ball - how you defend it one v one is where real defenders come alive”

“Handing the ball back to opposition is a step too far. If the ref deems a player to be obstructing the quick restart, then it should be advanced, however going out of your way to find a player to give the ball to is making it too much like a child’s game and is completely unnecessary. You should be allowed to drop it immediately and retreat the 4 steps and let the player go get the ball themselves and then solo and go or take the free”

4. HANDPASSING OVERUSE

Despite the new rules, many still lament the issue of “too much handpassing”. There were repeated calls to “limit the number of hand passes” or even “ban handpass over the bar as a valid score”. Some suggest a “shot clock” or a rule that “once you cross the halfway line you cannot play it back into your own half.”

“Great and badly needed. I still think that there is far too much handpassing around the midfield area - this has taken much of the excitement out of the game i.e.: the ball being released quickly and the subsequent battle for possession. It’s far too easy to just keep handpassing for an eternity without having to take a chance and play the ball forward or at least kick it to a teammate.”

“I would like to see an increase in kick passing and a reduction in hand passing (2) reduction in the possession / keep ball culture. Club training is really training a culture of “keep ball” and eliminating the flair / individualism of a natural forward”

5. UNDERAGE APPLICATION CONCERNS

Several rules, particularly the kick-out distance and the 3-up/4-back rule, were thought to be too demanding for younger players, especially goalkeepers. There were some suggestions to defer these rules to U16 level or older.

"At u14 level some keepers struggle to kick-out beyond the 40m arc off the ground from 21m line. Also struggle to kick-out from the hands from within the small square beyond the 40m arc. Penalty for abuse towards match officials be it players or coaches is very welcome."

"At u14 level the arc (accepting the players can run in when the ball is kicked is helpful) means in 1 sided games, teams can really struggle with conceding from it if the keeper hasn't a decent kick-out - this has led to some brutal scorelines and keepers looking terrible. Sides conceding 3 or 4 goals and a few points before getting to their own halfway line. I strongly think this should be deferred to u16 and weaker and younger teams can't cope well with this rule."

"I coach u16s. Players with learning difficulties found the rule changes extremely difficult. A lot of work was needed to support these young players. I really enjoy watching players utilise solo and go, it's gives them individual decision making they can be proud of. We're working on the advanced mark. Goalkeepers have been taken out of the game apart from their specific role - keepers have said, I'm bored in the game! The 40m 2point scoring is no advantage at the younger ages. Only really comes into effect at minors with highly skilled players. A lot still to be learnt and achieved with the new rules for underage"

6. PLAYER WELFARE AND INJURIES

Some participants raised concerns about increased serious injuries, particularly related to high fielding in midfield. The faster pace of the game requires higher fitness levels it was suggested, which could potentially lead to more injuries. There was also a call to define the tackle more clearly and address "physical abuse" not being called.

"Concern re increased level of SERIOUS injuries players are experiencing. Wondering how referees could be afforded increased support. Communication from linesman again and again found wanting regarding heavy tackles especially around middle third. This is true in County game as well. Grave concern that we will see a fatality, especially regarding head injuries."

"Should not have removed the 50m penalty for tackling the player who won the KO mark. Already the reward for fielding has reduced and the great fielding we saw has lessened. A free on the spot is no advantage to the team fouled against - the 50m penalty worked. Players are on the ground deliberately interfering with the player who lands with the ball. The only real problem was that another layer who also jumped for the ball could not get out of the way when they landed, as they had just landed and had no time to get out of the way. The solution to that is that players who DON'T leap for the ball should not be allowed tackle the player who fielded the ball (and the 50m penalty should apply). But the player who DID leap for the ball but failed to get it should be able to tackle the ball winner. We want to reward competing for the ball in the air. The matches where the 50m penalty applied had the best fielding I have ever seen in Gaelic Football this year - but this has regressed since the penalty was removed."

7. GOALKEEPER'S ROLE

A recurring point of concern was the reduced involvement of goalkeepers in open play. Many fear this will “discourage younger players from playing in goal”. Suggestions included allowing them to receive a pass within their own 21m line or 40m arc.

“Goalkeeper position restricted now. Why was there not a goalie on review committee??? Position most effected”

“If the role of the goalkeeper will not be improved, we will not be able to get players to play there - it is fast becoming a position that younger players are saying I'm not playing there and I have also seen parents advise their kids not to play there - this is not being spoken about and a discussion has to be had - particularly at club level”

8. NEED FOR FURTHER REFINEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

While largely positive, many expressed the need for “tweaks” and “further refinement”. There were calls for “better communication of changes” and consistency in rule interpretation across all levels of play.

“Communication on rule changes and also rule interpretations are not passed appropriately from FRC/National referees to club level referees. This is a big problem when we have situations where club referees are inherently assuming the meaning of a rule when national panel referees are already getting memos on the correct interpretations.”

“The Rules Enhancements are only going to work if Officials apply them uniformly in games. In my experience (Snr Club Level) there have been far too many referees selectively applying rules and, in some cases, not applying at all. Some have even openly stated they won't be applying certain rules. This is hugely frustrating when coaching a team to adhere to new rules in training and then in matches officials don't bother enforcing them. It is unrealistic in some cases to expect club referees to enforce some rules.”

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the data strongly supports the idea that the rule enhancements have revitalised Gaelic football, making it more dynamic and appealing for both players and spectators. However, the challenges in consistent refereeing and the lack of official support at Club and underage levels are significant obstacles to the full realisation of the benefits. Specific rules like the 2-point score (especially from frees) and the handling of kick-outs and advanced marks are areas of ongoing debate and proposed revision. The call for limiting handpassing also remains a strong undercurrent.



GAMES INTELLIGENCE REPORT

THE IMPACT OF RULE ENHANCEMENTS ON GAELIC FOOTBALL



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This year saw the introduction of a radical suite of rule enhancements in Gaelic Football designed to make the game faster, improve spectator enjoyment, and address issues like dissent and the flow of the game. In order to understand the impact of the rule enhancements, it was essential to monitor their implementation and impact on the game on an ongoing basis. The Games Intelligence Unit has provided objective and reliable data to underpin the implementation of the rule changes by supporting the work of the Football Review Committee, referees and inter-county teams.

The rule enhancements in Gaelic football have led to noticeable shifts in how the game is played. Overall, teams are generating more attacking opportunities, with shots per game increasing by p 12% and scores rising by p 16%. There has also been a p 5% increase in both shots from open play and goals scored. There has been a substantial p 45% increase in goal shots in 2025 when compared to the 2024 season. Games now feature p 11% more kick-outs, with a p 30% rise in long kick-outs and a p 31% increase in contested kick-outs. In contrast, short kick-outs have declined by q 31%. Finally, passing sequences have reduced by q 12%. The new rule enhancements collectively have encouraged a faster and more attack-oriented game, with emphasis on contests and scoring.

2. GIU BACKGROUND

Game intelligence is the ability to interpret data and information to recognise patterns and generate insights into a sport. The GAA Games Intelligence Unit (GIU) was established in January 2025 in partnership with South East Technological University (SETU) and Atlantic Technological University (ATU). Led by Johnny Bradley, the GIU's primary role in 2025 was to provide the Football Rules Committee (FRC) with comprehensive and reliable game data on an ongoing basis. This work represents the most detailed analysis of a Senior Inter-County season ever conducted by the GAA. The GIU provided the FRC with insights and data to support their decision-making throughout the year, and data and video have also been supplied to our inter-county referees, enabling them to review their performances throughout the season.

The GIU has built on the excellent work previously undertaken by commercial providers, media, Gaelic Games analysts, and coaches. The project has been supported by video footage shared by all counties through their performance analysts, strengthening the existing collaboration within the Performance Analysis Community of Practice. It is intended that a GAA Gaelic Football Technical Report, outlining performance benchmarks from the 2025 season, will be published in the autumn.

GAMES INTELLIGENCE UNIT (GIU) 2025

Project Lead: Johnny Bradley.

Insight Development: Johnny Bradley, Dr Denise Martin & Barry Cleary.

Data Collection Team: Johnny Bradley, Aoife McColgan, Katy Heron, Abby Tarrant, Cian Flanagan & Conor Cosgrove.

3. GAME SAMPLE

A total of 212 games from the 2025 Senior Inter-county Football season were analysed, encompassing all fixtures from the National League, Provincial Championship, Tailteann Cup, and Sam Maguire Cup. Operational definitions for all variables were validated by the Football Review Committee (FRC). For comparisons with previous championships, extra-time periods were excluded, only data from normal time were used to ensure consistency and comparability. Figure 1 presents the number of games included in this report, along with a breakdown of weekly games analysed.

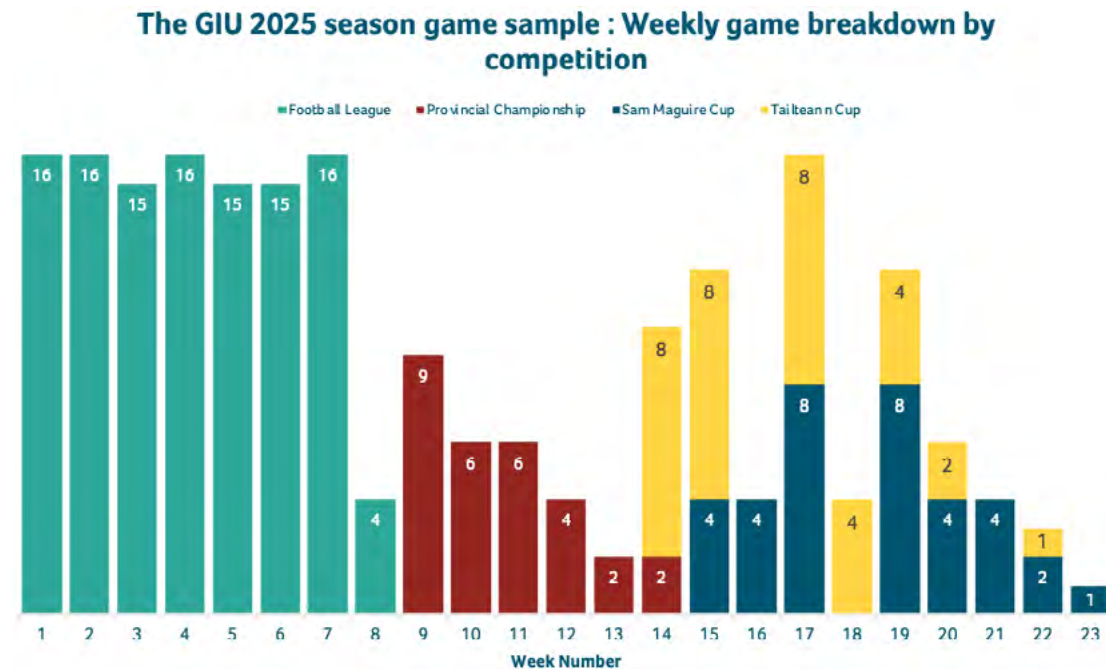


Figure 1. The GIU analysed a total of 212 games during the 2025 season: 113 National League games, 29 Provincial Championship games, 35 Tailteann Cup games and 35 Sam Maguire games.

4. SCORING IN THE CHAMPIONSHIP

All games from the 2025 season were compared with the previous three seasons to identify scoring trends. The 2025 season recorded the highest number of goals and points in the past four years. In championship football (Provincial and Sam Maguire), teams averaged 2.1 goals and 39.7 total points per game. Goals increased slightly compared to 2024 (2.1 vs 2.0), while total points, excluding two-point scores, also rose (2025: 1,849 vs 2024: 1,785).

	2022	2023	2024	2022-24	2025
Games	176	215	215	606	214
Goals	383	441	445	1269	487
Two points	-	-	-	-	1012
Points	4558	5709	5643	15910	5690
Total scores	5117	6365	6303	17785	7403
Total points	5641	5642	5643	16926	7714
Overall total	5707	7032	6978	19717	9175
Max winning margin	23	31	27	31	25

Table 1. Total scoring in the 2025 season compared with the 2022-24 average and individual totals for 2022, 2023, and 2024.

	2022	2023	2024	2022-24	2025
Average goals/game	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.3
Average two points/game	-	-	-	-	4.7
Average scores/game	29.1	29.6	29.3	29.3	34.6
Average points/game	25.9	26.6	26.2	26.3	26.6
Average total points	32.1	26.2	26.2	27.9	36.0
Average per game (All)	32.4	32.7	32.5	32.5	42.9
Average winning margin	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0

Table 2. Average scoring in the 2025 season compared with the 2022–24 average and individual averages for 2022, 2023, and 2024.

5. KICK-OUTS

Kick-outs in the championship increased slightly in 2025, averaging 49 per game, driven by the higher number of shots and scores. This trend was consistent across all competitions in the season.

Average kick outs per game in the 2025 Championship vs previous seasons

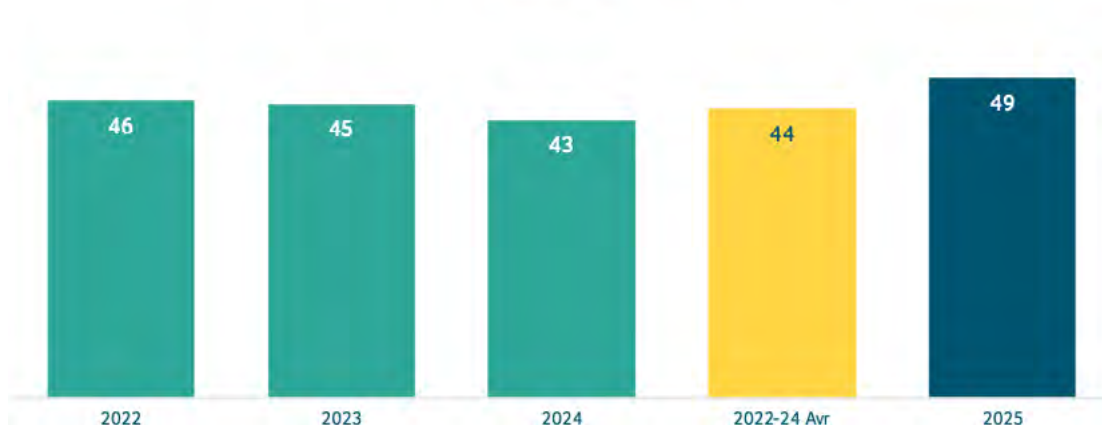


Figure 2. The average number of kick-outs in the 2025 season was 49, up from 43 in 2024.

2025 competition	Average kick-outs	Average kick-out Retention	Kick-out time
Football League	46	59%	20.2
Provincial Championship	49	49%	20.3
Tailteann Cup	49	62%	19.9
Sam Maguire Cup	49	61%	20.2
Average per game	48	60%	20.2

Table 3. Average kick-outs, retention rates, and kick-out times across competitions in the 2025 season.

One of the most significant changes in the 2025 season compared with previous years was the move toward more long kick-outs. Over the previous three seasons, teams took an average of 48% of their kick-outs short. These included various types of short kick-outs, such as kicks to players inside the 45 m line under pressure or a simple kick-out to the edge of the D to an unmarked defender. However, due to new rule changes requiring kick-outs to travel at least 40 m and for teams to keep three players in their own half, there was a marked shift toward longer restarts. In 2025, 78% of kick-outs crossed the 45m line. Figure 3 shows the locations of every kick-out across all competitions in the 2025 season which will give an idea where teams are winning these kick-outs.

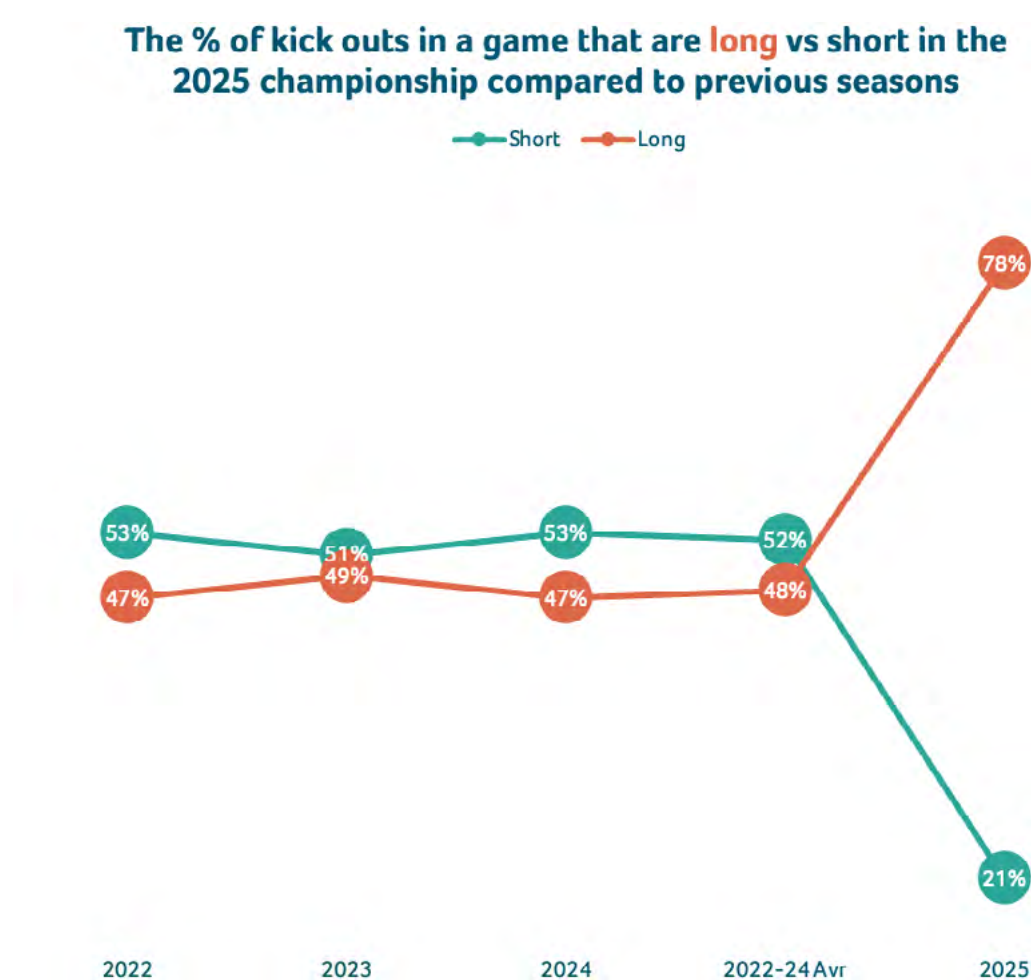
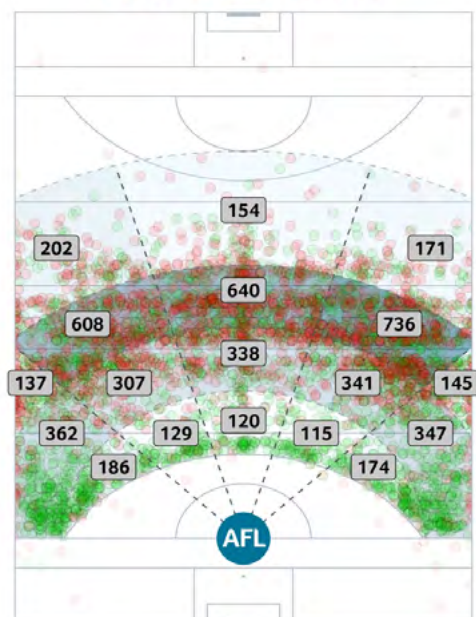
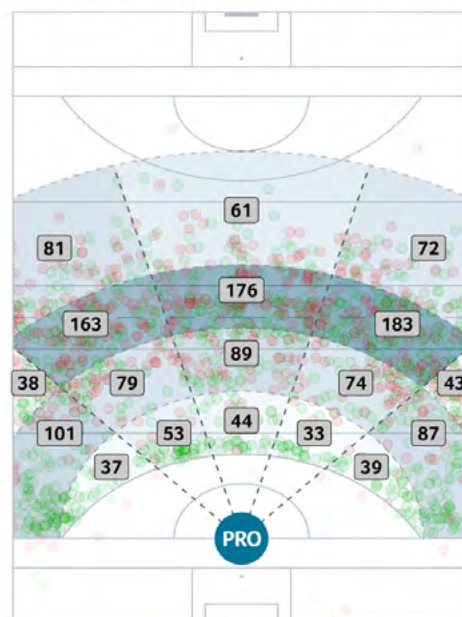


Figure 3. The number of short kick-outs has decreased compared to previous championships

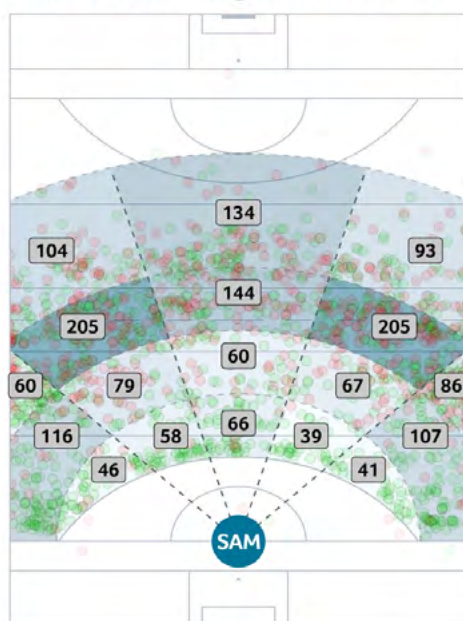
2025 AFL Kickouts



2025 Provincial Kickouts



2025 Sam Maguire Kickouts



2025 Tailteann Cup Kickouts

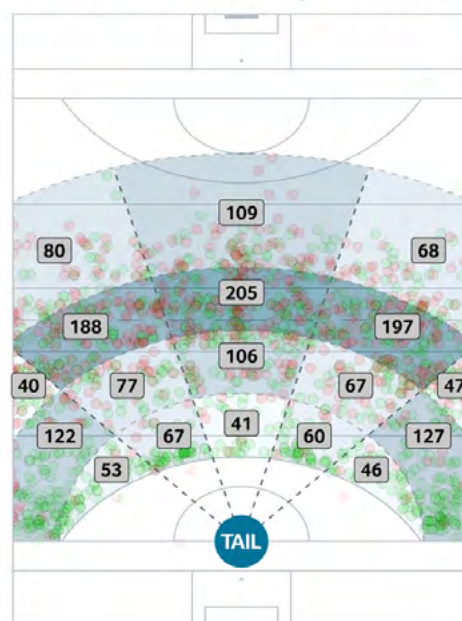


Figure 4. Kick-out map for each competition in the 2025 season (All won/lost kick-out locations).

Along with the rise in longer kick-outs, contested kick-outs also increased significantly in 2025. However, retention rates for contested kick-outs declined slightly compared with previous years. Figure 5 presents contested kick-outs for all kick-outs in 2025 compared with previous seasons, while Figure 6 focuses specifically on long kick-outs.

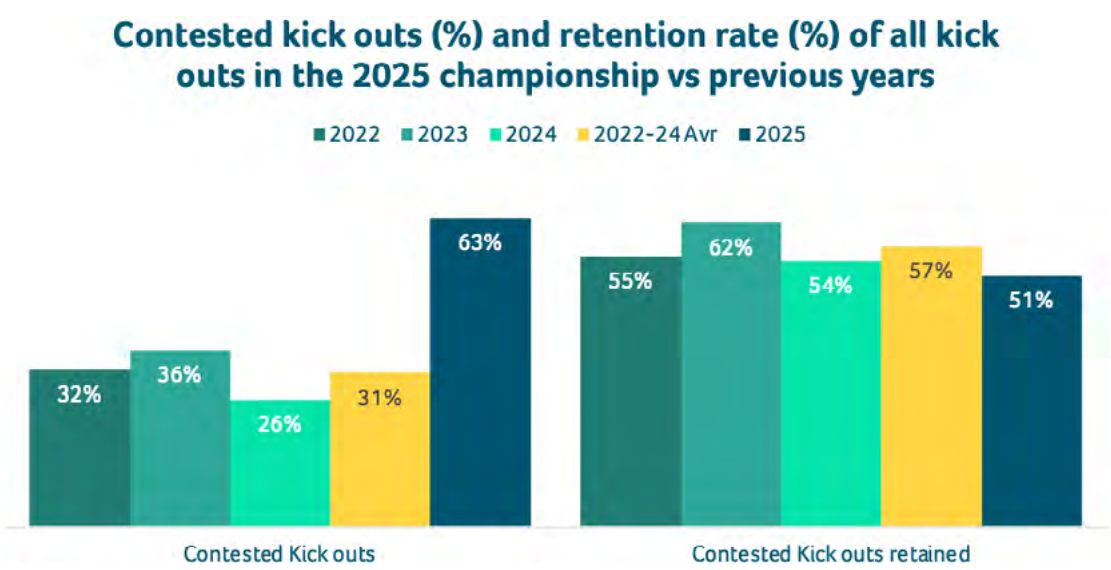


Figure 5. Percentage of all contested kick-outs (left) and their retention rates (right).

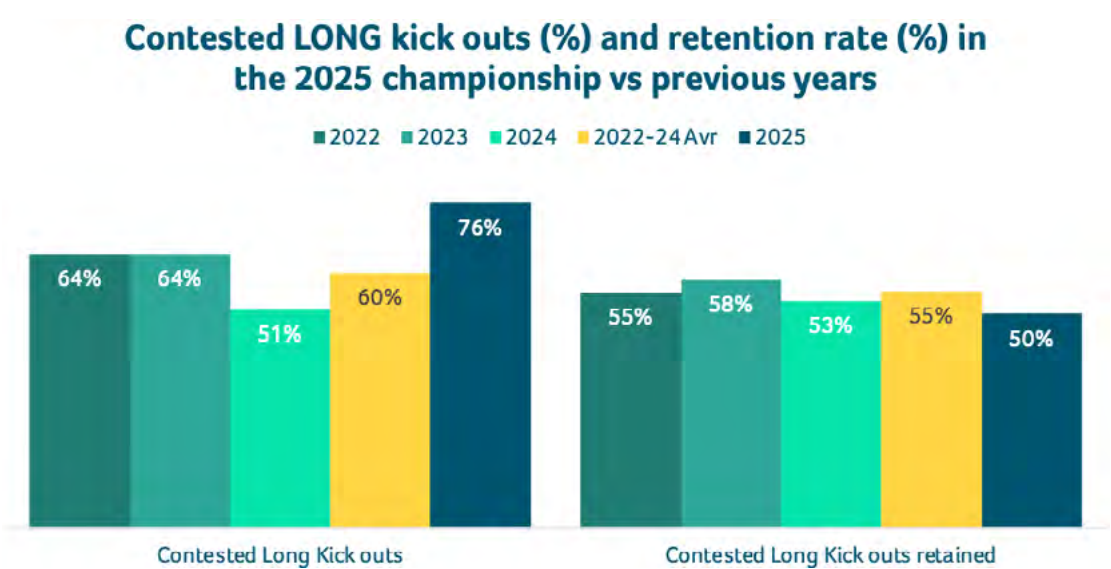


Figure 6. Percentage of all contested long kick-outs (left) and their retention rates (right).

To compare with previous championship data, we categorised kick-outs into two distances: short (inside the 45m line) and long (outside the 45m line). In 2025, a medium category (45m–65m) was added also, allowing the classification of kick-outs into three distances: short, medium, and long.

Comparison of kick out distances across 2025 competitions

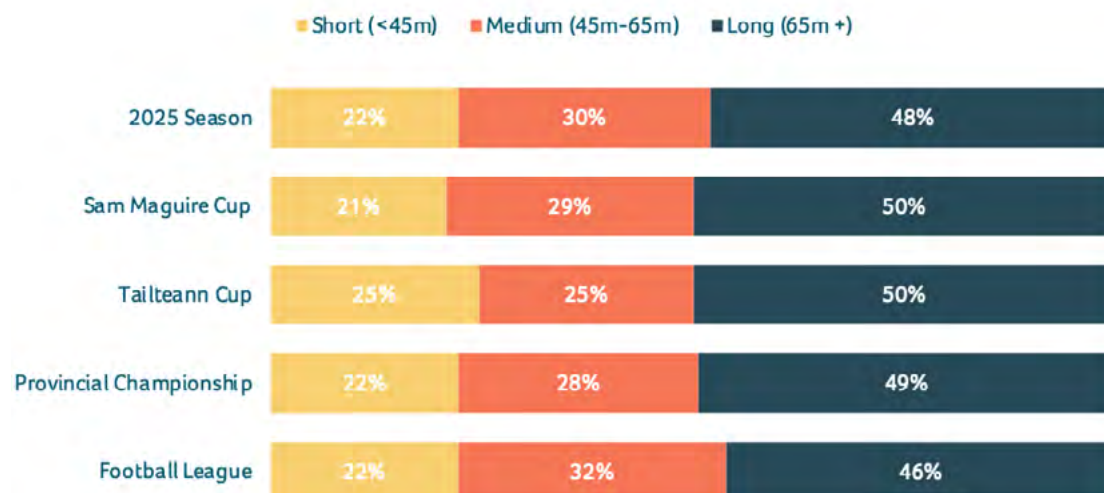


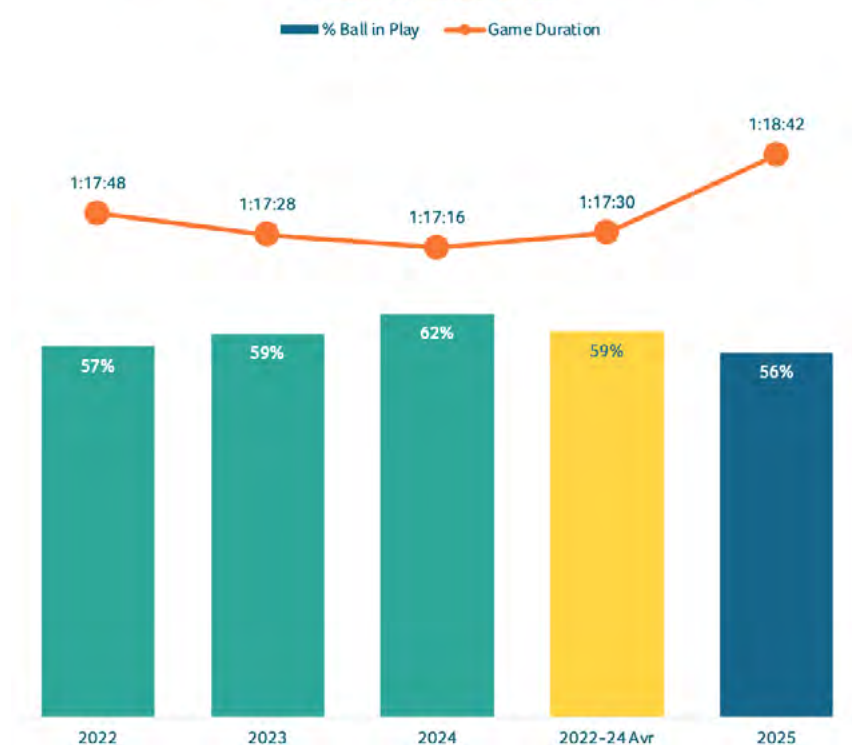
Figure 7. Comparison of kick-out lengths in each competition in the 2025 season.

6. GAME DURATION AND BALL IN PLAY TIME

In 2025, game duration increased slightly compared to previous championship years to 78 minutes and 42 seconds, this is similar to Tailteann Cup games where the game duration was 77 minutes and 20 seconds.

The percentage of time the ball was in play decreased marginally (56% in the Sam Maguire and 57% in the Tailteann Cup). This reflects the rise in the number of kick-outs (ball out of play for longer) in the 2025 championship. In contrast, 2024 saw a higher ball-in-play percentage, which was possibly influenced by longer passages of play and a higher volume of passes when teams were in possession.

Ball in Play % and Game Duration in championship football 2022-2025



7. PASSING

The 2025 championship saw a decrease in both handpassing and kick passing (Figure 8). Previous GAA championship reports have shown a steady increase in passing over the past 14 years. Across the last three championships (2022–2024), teams averaged 547 passes per game (126 kick passes and 421 hand passes). In the 2025 championship, this dropped to 394 hand passes (81%) and 90 kick passes per game (19%) a total of 484 passes. Some of the factors which may have contributed to the change in passing trends are:

- **Introduction and use of the “Solo & Go”:** This reduces the number of kick passes, as players are more likely to solo-and-go rather than kick a free ball.
- **Change in short kick-outs and build-up play:** The increased use of long, contested kick-outs, along with a decline in passes back to the goalkeeper, may have reduced passing in midfield and defensive areas.
- **Opposition kick-outs:** In 2025, teams won more long opposition kick-outs, reducing the distance required to reach scoring positions and the number of passes needed.

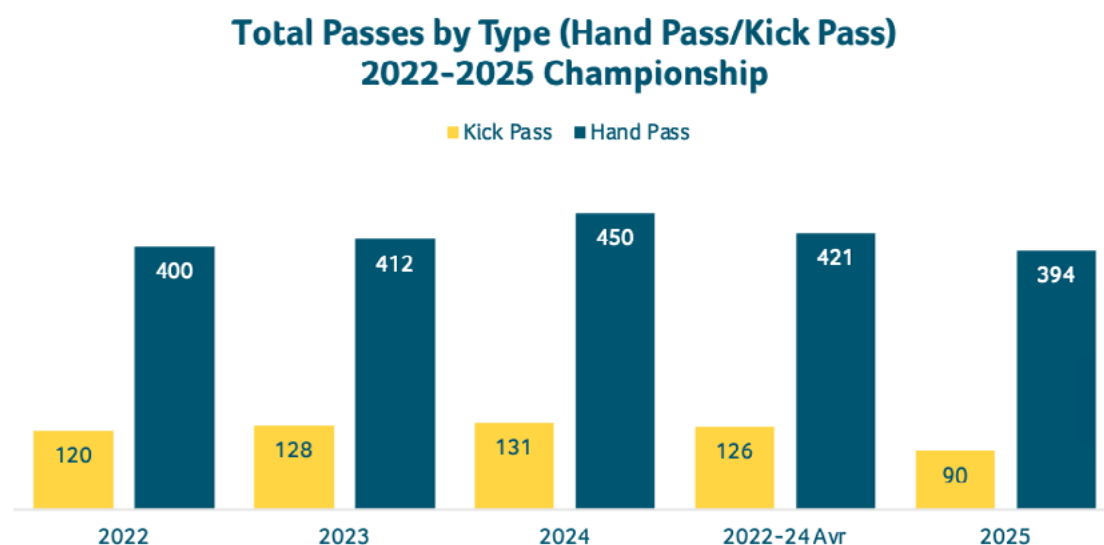


Figure 8. Comparison of average kick and hand passing in 2025 compared to previous seasons.

While average data is presented throughout this report, it is important to note that there was variation in passing trends between games and the different competitions. The additional lines on the bar graph show the variation in the number of kick passes per game in each competition with standard deviations marked on the axis. The most kick passes recorded in a game was 167.

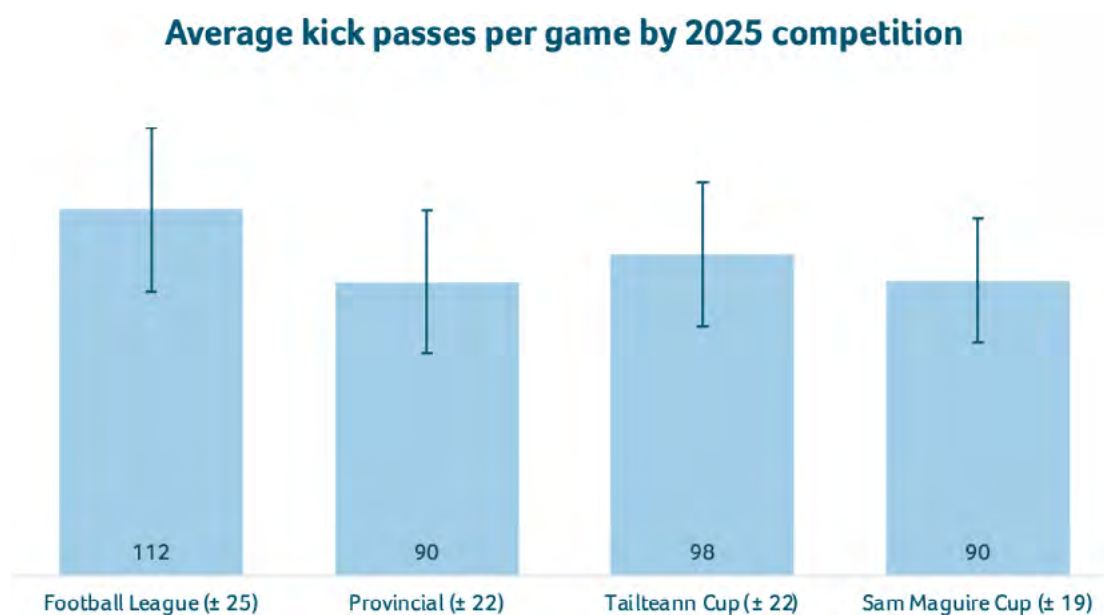


Figure 9. Average kick passes per game in each competition in 2025 (values in brackets show the standard deviation, indicating variation of kick passes between games).

8. THROW-UPS

A total of 424 throw-ups at the start of each half occurred during normal time across all competitions in the 2025 season. Clean possessions accounted for 16% of these throw-ups, while the majority (84%) were broken ball situations (Figure 10).

Method of winning possession on throw-ups

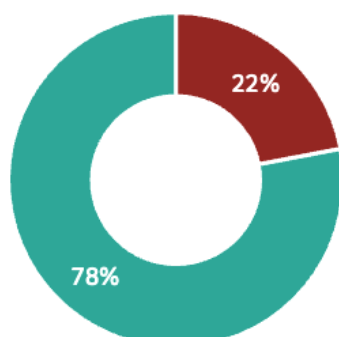


Figure 10. The method of winning possession from the throw up.

Overall, fouls were committed within 10 seconds of the start of play in 22% of throw-ups. In comparison, research from Mangan et al. on 48 senior club games from 2023–24 found that 45% of 2v2 throw-ups resulted in a foul being awarded within the first 10 seconds. This reduction in fouls has contributed to more scores at the start of each half directly from the throw-up, 38% in the 2025 championship compared to 25% from Mangan et al.

Throw-ups with a foul in the first 10 seconds (%)

■ Foul within 10s ■ No Foul



Throw-ups that resulted in a score (%)

■ Score ■ No Score

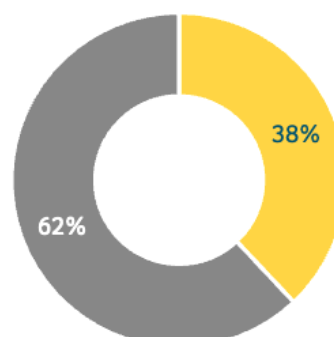


Figure 11. Percentage of throw-ups resulting in a foul within 10 seconds (left) and percentage of scores in the possession following winning the throw-up (right)

9. SHOOTING

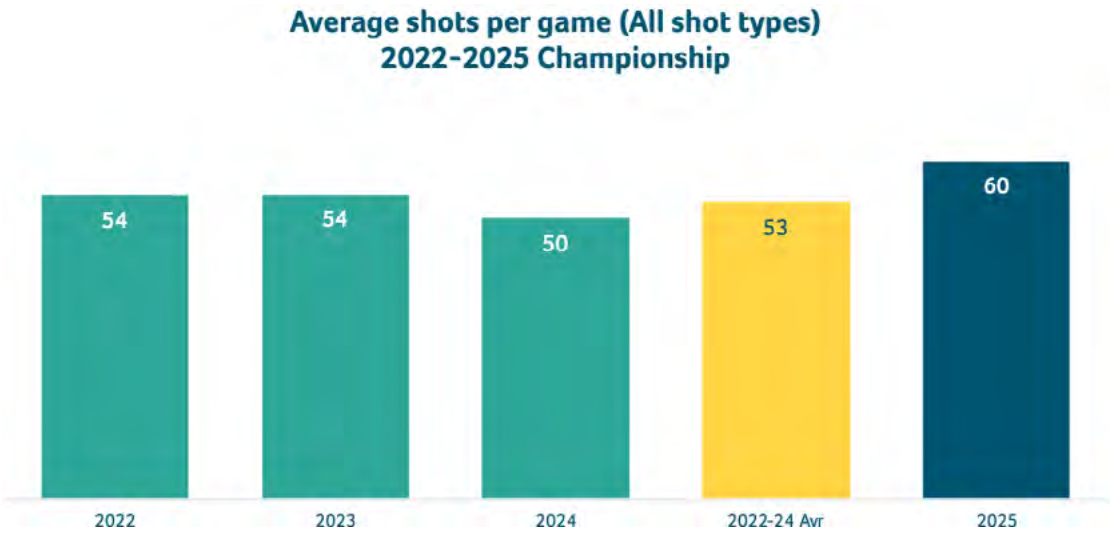


Figure 12. Average number of shots per game in 2025 compared to previous seasons.

In 2025, there was an 11% increase in the number of shots during the championship (60.1 per game) compared to the average from the previous three seasons (2022–2024: 52.7 per game). Across the different stages of the competition, the average number of shots per game remained consistent throughout the year. New rule enhancements, such as penalties for delaying a free kick, dissent, and structural fouls have contributed to this rise, as these fouls can often lead directly to a shot. However, with an average of 3 fouls occurring per game throughout the year, there has been an increase in the number of shots per game.

2025 competition	Average shots per game
Football League	58
Provincial Championship	61
Tailteann Cup	61
Sam Maguire Cup	60
Average per game	59

Table 4. Average number of shots per game across all competitions in 2025.

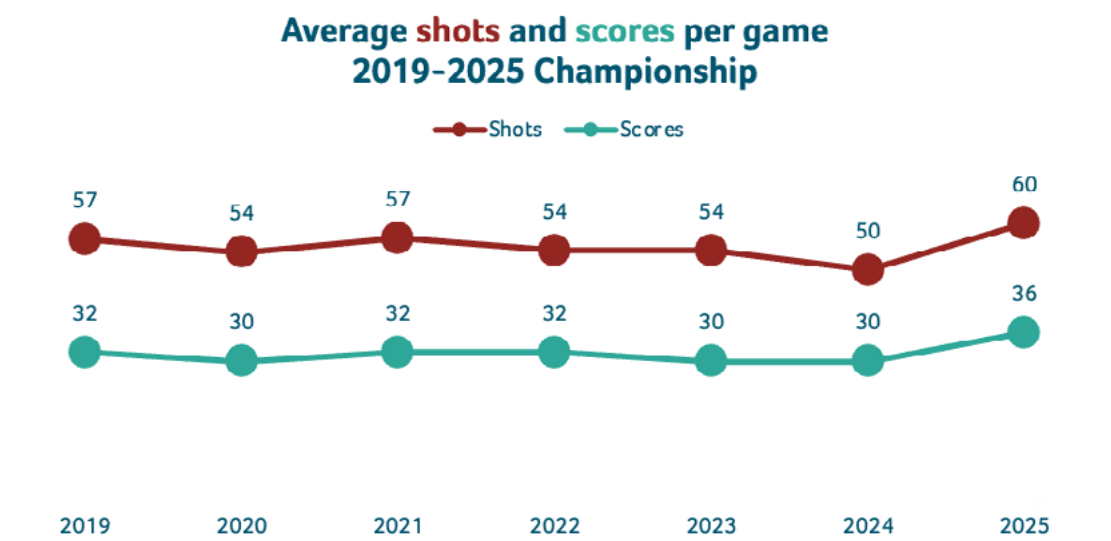


Figure 13. Average number of shots per game in 2025 compared to previous seasons (2019-25).

% of shots in a game from open play vs placed

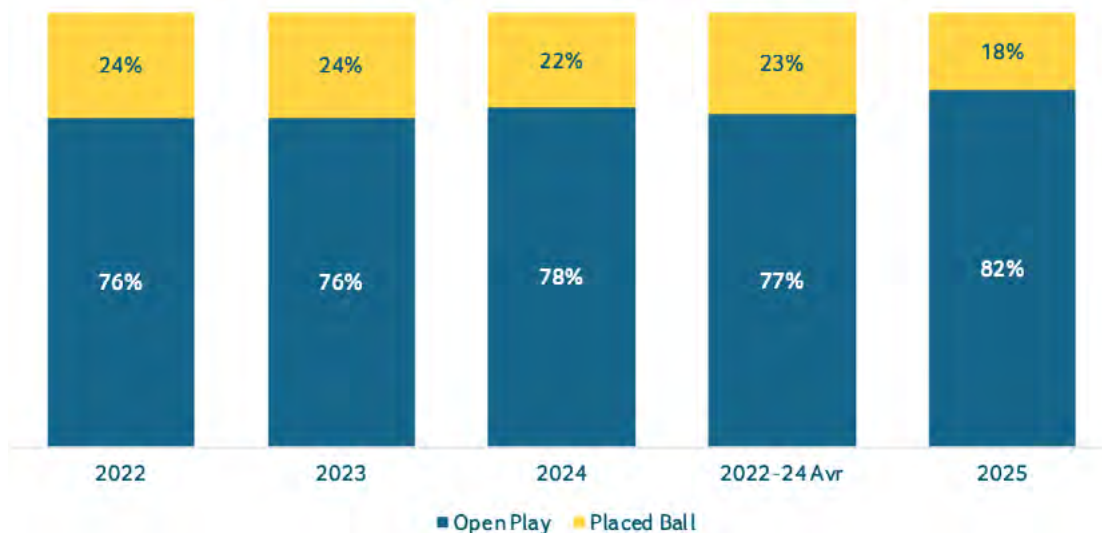


Figure 14. Percentage of shots from open play versus placed balls in the 2025 championship compared to previous seasons.

With the increase in shooting from open play, the efficiency of teams has also increased. The shot/score ratio from open play in championship football is now 57%, this is in comparison to 52% over the past three seasons. The shots from placed balls is down slightly from 80% to 75%.

Shot Category	Total Shots	Proportion	Goals	2-Point Scores	1-Point Scores	Total Scores	Shot/Score %
All Shots	3899	-	134	347	1849	2330	60%
Open Play	3215	82%	130	237	1454	1821	57%
1 Point Shot	2642	82%	130	1	1499	1630	62%
2 Point Shot	573	18%	0	236	5	241	42%
Placed Ball	684	18%	4	110	395	509	74%
1 Point Shot	479	70%	4	0	394	398	83%
2 Point Shot	205	30%	0	110	1	111	54%

Table 5. Breakdown of Shot Types in the 2025 Championship (Including Extra-Time) including the Shot/Score ratio (%).

The average number of goals per game increased slightly from 2.0 in 2024 to 2.1 in 2025, while goal attempts rose considerably from 4.2 to 6.1 per game. The increase in goal attempts is a positive trend, possibly reflecting more one-on-one attacking opportunities. Despite this, conversion rates have not risen proportionally, likely due to the high-quality performances of goalkeepers and shots taken under more pressure.

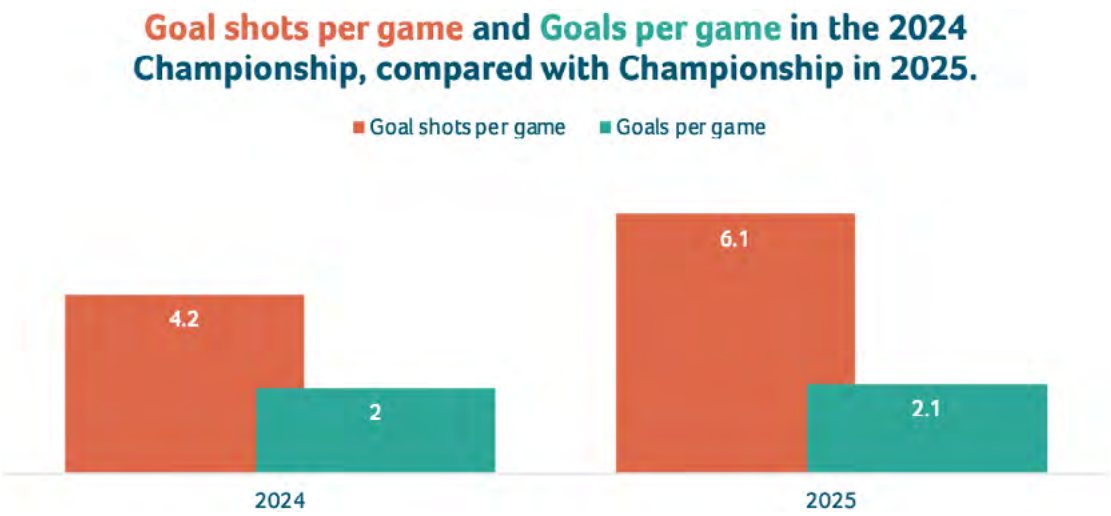


Figure 15. Number of goal shots and goals per game in 2025 compared to 2024.

The introduction of the 40 m scoring arc added a new dimension to how teams generate scoring opportunities. Figure 16 presents the breakdown of all two-point shots in 2025, with 73% originating from open play.

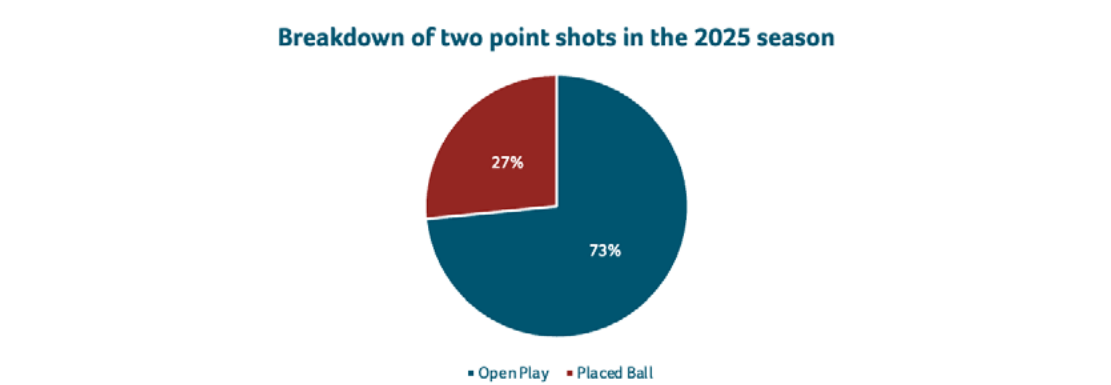


Figure 16. Composition of all two-point shots in the 2025 season, showing that 73% were from open play.

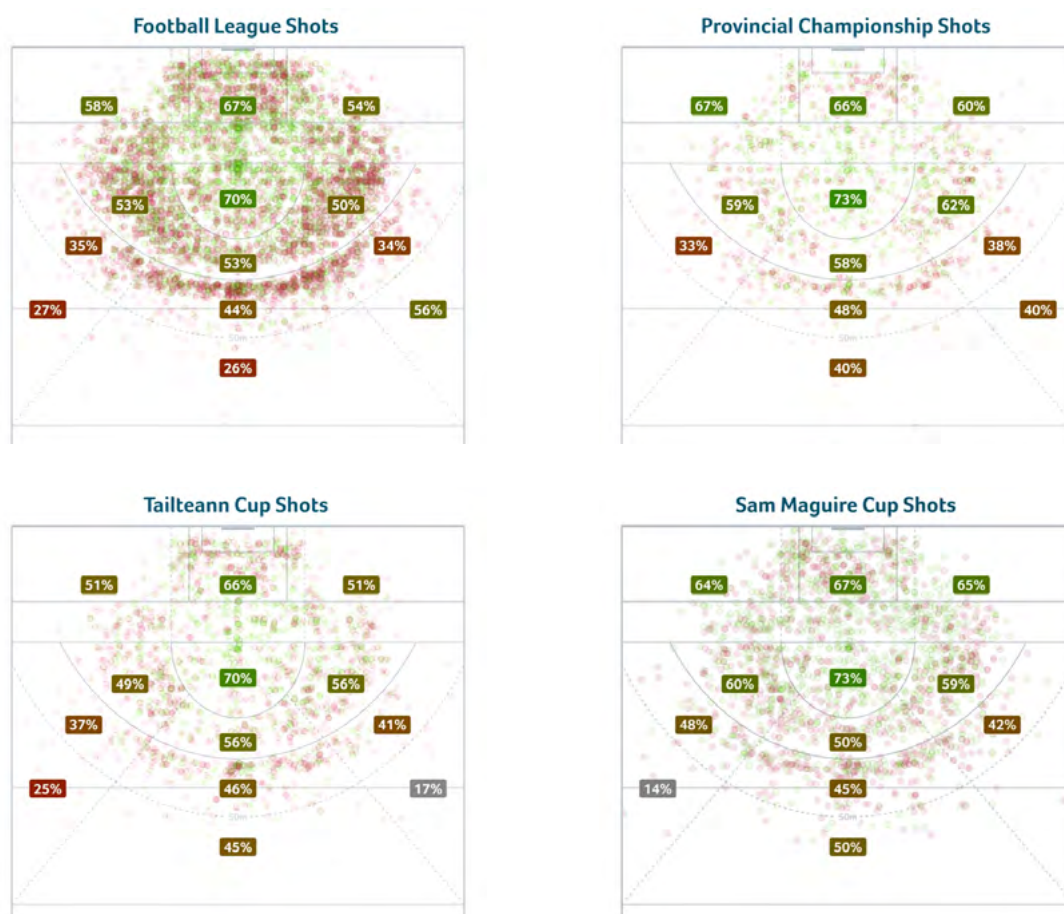


Figure 17. Each shot map displays the shot-to-score ratio (%) for all shots taken for each competition during the 2025 season. The pitch is divided into 13 zones, with the shot-to-score ratio (%) labelled in each zone.

10. SOLO & GO

In the National League, there was an average of nine Solo & Go's per game, which dropped to around seven in subsequent competitions (Provincial Championship, Tailteann Cup, and Sam Maguire Cup). As the season progressed, teams became more selective about when and where to use the solo-and-go. When used effectively, the subsequent phase can generate scoring opportunities, 51% of phases that started with Solo & Go's led to a shot, with 60% of these shots resulting in scores. It has shown to maintain momentum in the build-up and attack.

2025 competition	Average per	Solo/Shot	Shot	Shot/Score	Score
Football League	9	53%	5	59%	3
Provincial Championship	7	55%	4	61%	2
Sam Maguire Cup	7	56%	3	58%	2
Tailteann Cup	6	45%	3	67%	2
Average per game	8	51%	4	60%	2

Table 6. Breakdown of Solo & Go's across 2025 Competitions.

11. GOALKEEPER

In the 2023 Championship, teams averaged 23.1 passes back to the goalkeeper, and 22.9 in the 2024 Championship. Following the new rule enhancements, this number dropped to 9.6 per game in the National League and further declined to 1.6 per game in the subsequent championship competitions (Provincial Championship, Tailteann Cup, and Sam Maguire Cup).

2025 competition	Passes to GK per game	GK shots per game	% of GK poss resulting in shot
Football League	9.6	0.6	6%
Provincial Championship	1.7	0.3	18%
Tailteann Cup	1.7	0.2	12%
Sam Maguire Cup	1.4	0.2	14%
Average per game	3.6	0.3	12%

Table 7. Breakdown of passes to the goalkeeper across 2025 competitions.

12. FOULS

The number of technical and aggressive fouls fell slightly in the 2025 Championship compared with the average from the previous three seasons (Figure 18). However, the introduction of additional penalties for delayed, dissent, and structural fouls increased the overall foul count per game.

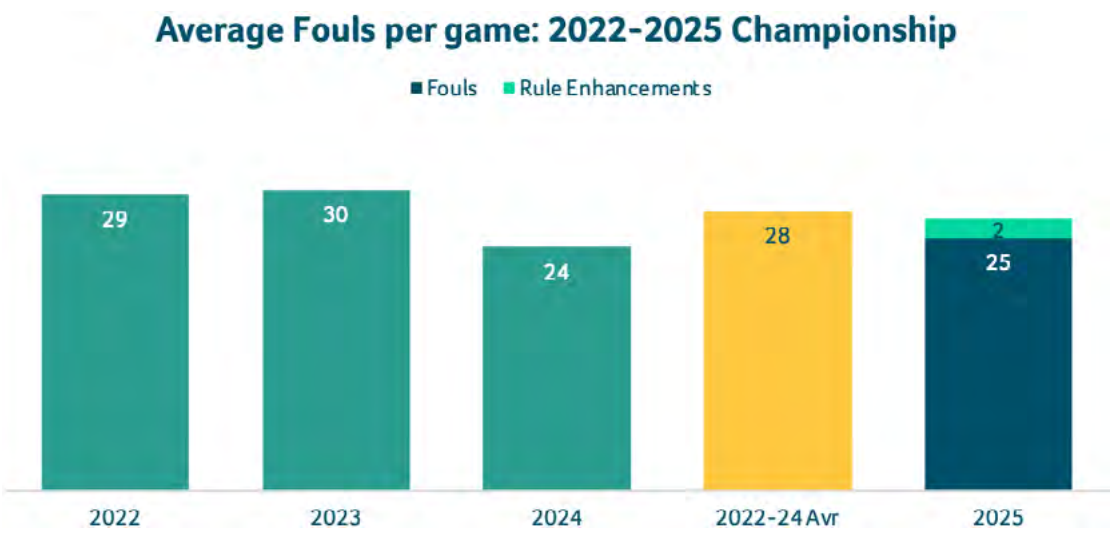


Figure 18. Average number of fouls per game in 2025 compared to previous seasons.

Across all competitions, there was an average of 29 fouls per game (Table 8), with aggressive and technical fouls accounting for around 90% of all fouls. The National League recorded the highest occurrence of delay, dissent, and structural fouls, but these decreased as the season progressed, as both teams and officials became more familiar with the new rules.

2025 competition	Fouls/Game	Aggressive	Technical	Delay	Dissent	Structure
Football League	31.9	24.7	4.0	1.8	0.4	1.1
Provincial Championship	29.1	23.0	3.5	1.6	0.1	0.8
Tailteann Cup	27.1	21.0	3.9	1.4	0.2	0.6
Sam Maguire Cup	26.6	20.8	3.5	1.4	0.1	0.8
Average per game	28.7	78%	13%	5%	1%	3%

Table 8. Breakdown of fouls across 2025 Competitions.

13. THE CLUB GAME

The GIU analysed 13 club games from a range of competitions across all four provinces during the 2025 season and compared them with a random sample of inter-county games from the 2025 Provincial, Tailteann Cup, and Sam Maguire competitions. **Note: The table below is for illustrative purposes only and is intended to highlight the general make-up of games at club level in comparison with inter-county level.**

Variables	Club Sample	Inter-County Sample
Possessions	73.2	85.7
Goals	2.2	1.3
2 Point scores	3.5	6.2
Points	20.7	30.5
Passes	430.5	496.3
% of kick passes per game	21%	19%
% of hand passes per game	79%	81%
Hand pass/Kick pass ratio	3.8	4.2
Passes Per Possession	5.9	5.8
Kick-outs	37.9	50.8
% of short kick-outs (inside 45m line)	17%	27%
% of medium kick-outs (45m-65m line)	33%	29%
% of long kick-outs (+65m line)	50%	44%
Kick-outs retained (%)	60%	64%
Contested kick-outs	74%	55%
Shots	47.5	62.7
Scores	26.5	38
Productivity	4.7	5.5
% of shots from play	77%	83%
% of scores from play	74%	78%
Shot/Score ratio from open play (%)	53%	57%
% of shots from placed Balls	23%	17%
% of scores from placed Ball	26%	22%
Shot/Score ratio from placed balls (%)	64%	80%
% of 2 Point shots	19%	22%
Shot/Score ratio from 2 point shots (%)	39%	46%
Turnovers (Lost)	32.8	32.8
Turnover rate (%)	45%	38%
% in defensive third (end line to 45m line)	3%	6%
% in middle third (45m line to opp 45m)	23%	21%
% in attacking third (opp 45m line to end line)	74%	73%
Fouls	30.3	28.8
% in defensive third	28%	33%
% in middle third	49%	41%
% in attacking third	22%	26%

Table 9. Average per game event data for 13 club games in comparison with 13 inter-county games.



GPS DATA ANALYSIS

AN OBJECTIVE REVIEW OF THE PHYSICAL RUNNING DEMANDS SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FOOTBALL RULE ENHANCEMENTS

UTTARAN BERA, AARON O'NEILL & PROF. MARK ROANTREE, DCU

INTRODUCTION

It is envisaged that the rule changes may impact on physical demands of players. To assess these changes, the FRC has measured physical demands during the 2025 All-Ireland Senior Inter-County Football Championships (AIC) and compared the results against data from previous seasons. The GIU has partnered with the School of Health & Human Performance and the Insight Centre for Data Analytics at Dublin City University (DCU) to investigate the physical demands on players using only the GPS devices. This investigation provides an objective, data driven analysis. This report represents the third of 3 reports comparing the 2025 and 2024 football seasons where in this case, the focus is on the Sam Maguire Cup (SMC) and Tailteann Cup (TC) competitions.

The primary objective was to compare the High Intensity Running (HIR) demands of different positional lines using different time “windows” of match play, comparing the 2025 SMC and TC competitions under the recent rule enhancements, and their respective 2024 competitions. For this report, player activity in both competitions were aggregated and subsequently divided into six 12-minute periods (three per half). Each 12-minute period was then analysed for the HIR distances (actions performed at speeds greater than 4.5 metres per second (m/s)), per player position. The 2025 data was then cross-examined against 2024 data to compare the amount of HIR performed in both years, per positional line during each respective 12-minute period of match play. In summary, Periods 1, 2 and 3 refer to the first half and Periods 4, 5 and 6 refer to the second half where Period 6 is the final 12 minutes of the game. Out of the 32 counties, four teams (n = 4) shared their GPS data, and 34 games (n = 34) were analysed. We extend our gratitude to those teams for helping us to obtain valuable insights for this project.

WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

Our assumptions were that our analysis would find the following:

- Middle third positions will perform less high intensity running in 2025 than in 2024.
- Full back lines will perform more high intensity actions in 2025 than in 2024.
- Full forward lines will perform more high intensity actions in 2025 than in 2024.
- SMC competition teams will spend more time performing high intensity actions than TC competition teams under the new rules (2025 only).

ACTUAL FINDINGS

The main findings of this analysis are:

- SMC teams performed more HIR during period 6 in 2025 in all positional lines (table 1), except in the full forward line where it decreased (fig. 10).
- TC teams performed less HIR across all positional lines and periods of game play in 2025 (table 2), except for full back and midfield lines where HIR increased during period 6 (fig. 2 and 5).
- Only full back and half back lines performed more HIR in the opening (period 1) of games in the 2025 SMC (fig. 1 and 4).
- In 2025, HIR for all positions declines across each period for TC teams, except for full backs and midfield (fig. 1 and fig. 5)
- SMC teams perform more HIR across all periods of gameplay compared to TC competition teams in 2025 competitions (table 3.)

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this third report suggest high intensity running peaks during period 6 (final 12 minutes) of gameplay for Sam Maguire Cup teams. Sam Maguire Cup teams performed more high intensity running in the last period of games in 2025 when compared to 2024. Practitioners must prepare players to be able to perform higher physical outputs in the latter stages of gameplay under the rule enhancements to be competitive in the Sam Maguire Cup. However, in periods 1 to 5 (outside of the last period of gameplay), there has been a decrease in the amount of high intensity running performed by all positions in both the SMC and TC competitions under the new rules.

Finally, SMC teams outperformed TC teams during every period of gameplay at every position. TC teams tend to perform their most HIR during period 1 and decline throughout the game. Tailteann Cup teams looking to compete in the Sam Maguire Cup next season must increase their physical readiness to cope with the increased high intensity running demands of teams who compete in the Sam Maguire Cup, especially during period 6.

CONCLUSIONS

Unlike the previous 2 reports compiled by this subgroup, this analysis focused on HIR distances, those actions performed at speeds greater than 4.5 m/s. This report provides some evidence that the rule enhancements are changing gameplay patterns in each positional line, especially during the last period of gameplay.

However, this report is not without limitations. While every effort has gone into creating valid and reliable results, the depth of our analysis is restricted due to the limited amount of data (n = 4) submitted by inter-county teams to the GIU for analysis. Thus, with a relatively small subset of games (n = 34), there is a possibility of anomalies that can overly influence the results, and this should be considered when interpreting the data.

As this report examined the physical demands over temporal periods of game play, only outfield positions who played the full game were included in the analysis, further shrinking the sample size. As games end at the referee's discretion after the hooter, it is likely that periods 3 and 6 of games are slightly longer than other periods which may impact results. The main recommendation of this report is to continue this research on a larger scale, with a sample data, to validate the findings of this analysis and provide more in-depth, reliable and up-to-date data for practitioners to use to inform their physical preparation with elite inter-county Gaelic football teams.

APPENDIX 1

Figures 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 illustrate the temporal changes in HIR over each 12-minute period of game play during the 2024 and 2025 Tailteann Cup. Full backs (fig. 1) and midfield (fig. 5) performed their most HIR in period 6, whereas all other positions performed their most HIR in period 1. The general trend for the TC competition was as the game progressed through periods 1-5, HIR performed during each period decreased. TC teams performed less HIR under the new rule enhancements compared to 2024.

Figures 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 visually show the temporal changes in HIR over each 12-minute intervals of game play during the 2024 and 2025 Sam Maguire Cup. The full forward line was the only position not to deliver highest HIR in period 6 under the rule enhancements (fig. 10). All positions tended to perform less HIR under the rule enhancements, except for the full back line which performed more HIR in all periods except period 3 (fig. 2).

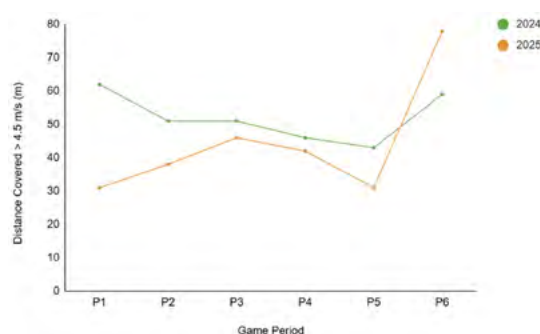


Figure 1. TC HIR Full Back 2024 vs 2025 7

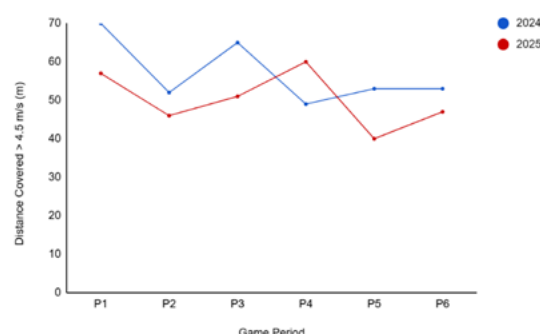


Figure 2. SMC HIR Full Back 2024 vs 2025

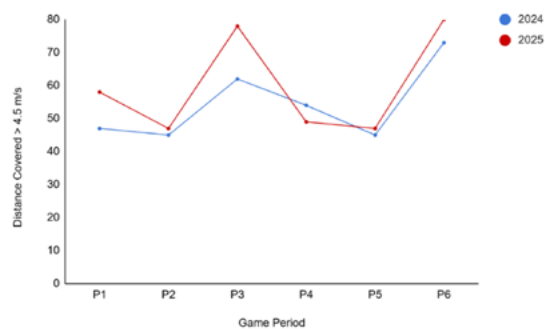


Figure 3. TC HIR Half Back 2024 vs 2025 7

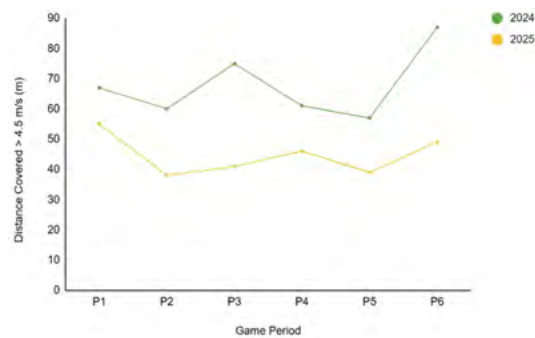


Figure 4. SMC HIR Half Back 2024 vs 2025 7

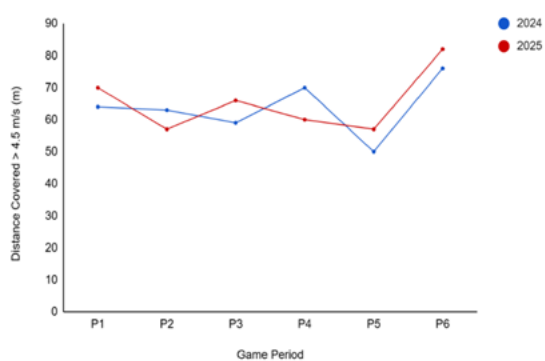


Figure 5. TC HIR Midfield 2024 vs 2025 8

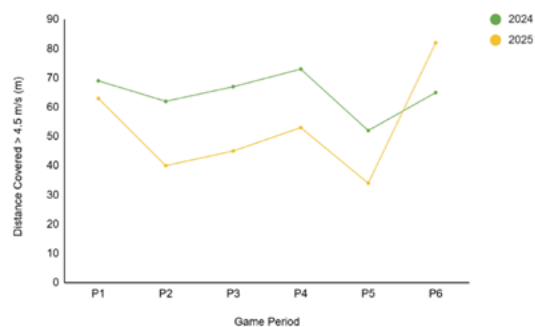


Figure 6. SMC HIR Midfield 2024 vs 2025 8

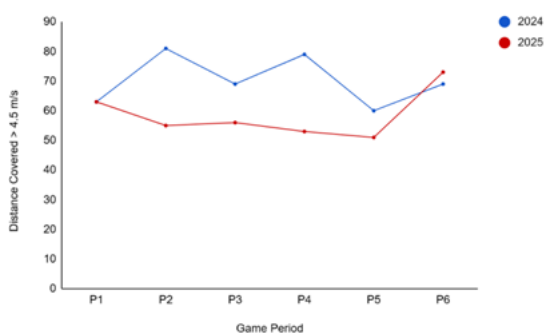


Figure 7. TC HIR Half Forward 2024 vs 2025 8

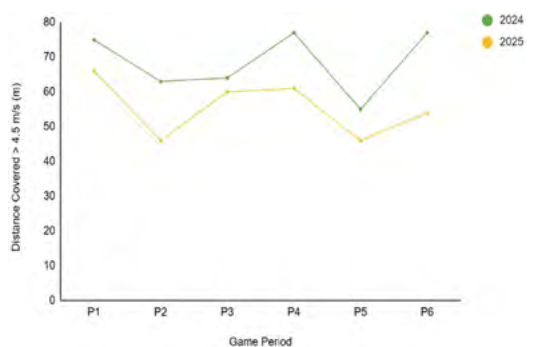


Figure 8. SMC HIR Half Forward 2024 vs 2025 8

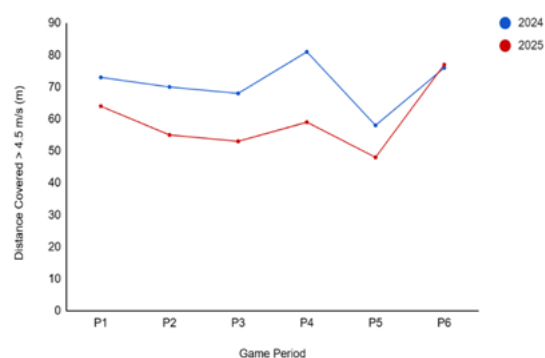


Figure 9. TC HIR Full Forward 2024 vs 2025 8

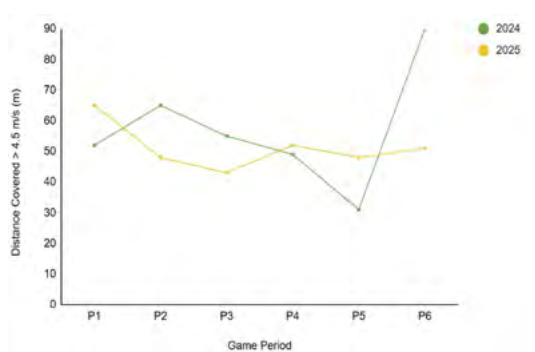


Figure 10. SMC HIR Full Forward 2024 vs 2025 8

APPENDIX 2

Table 1 displays the high intensity running distance (in metres) performed during each 12-minute interval of game play and positional line in the 2024 and 2025 Sam Maguire Cup competitions. The data displayed in this table is a direct match with the data used in figs. 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10. HIR tends to peak in period 6. In 2025, HIR tends to be lower across all periods and positions in 2025, except in period 6 where it is higher than 2024.

Table 2 displays the high intensity running distance (in metres) performed during each 12-minute interval, by each positional line in the 2024 and 2025 Tailteann Cup competitions. The data displayed in this table is a direct match with the data used in figs. 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9. 2025 HIR tends to be lower across all periods and positions in 2025.

Table 3 displays a direct comparison between the high intensity running (in metres) performed during each 12-minute interval, by each positional line in the 2025 Sam Maguire and Tailteann Cup competitions. SMC teams outperform TC teams during almost every period at every position, and more so, for period 6.

	Period 1		Period 2		Period 3		Period 4		Period 5		Period 6	
Position	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025
Full-Back	47 m	58 m	45 m	47 m	62 m	78 m	54 m	49 m	45 m	47 m	73 m	80 m
Half-Back	64 m	70 m	63 m	57 m	59 m	66 m	70 m	60 m	50 m	57 m	76 m	82 m
Midfield	63 m	63 m	81 m	55 m	69 m	56 m	79 m	53 m	60 m	51 m	69 m	73 m
Half-Forward	73 m	64 m	70 m	55 m	68 m	53 m	81 m	59 m	58 m	48 m	76 m	77 m
Full-Forward	70 m	57 m	52 m	46 m	65 m	51 m	49 m	60 m	53 m	40 m	53 m	47 m

Table 1. Sam Maguire Cup Temporal High-Intensity Running Distance 2024 vs 2025

	Period 1		Period 2		Period 3		Period 4		Period 5		Period 6	
Position	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025
Full-Back	62 m	31 m	51 m	38 m	51 m	46 m	46 m	42 m	43 m	31 m	59 m	78 m
Half-Back	67 m	55 m	60 m	38 m	75 m	41 m	61 m	46 m	57 m	39 m	87 m	49 m
Midfield	69 m	63 m	62 m	40 m	67 m	45 m	73 m	53 m	52 m	34 m	65 m	82 m
Half-Forward	75 m	66 m	63 m	46 m	64 m	60 m	77 m	61 m	55 m	46 m	77 m	54 m
Full-Forward	52 m	65 m	65 m	48 m	55 m	43 m	49 m	52 m	31 m	48 m	90 m	51 m

Table 2. Tailteann Cup Temporal High-Intensity Running Distance 2024 vs 2025

	Period 1		Period 2		Period 3		Period 4		Period 5		Period 6	
Position	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025
Full-Back	58 m	31 m	47 m	38 m	78 m	46 m	49 m	42 m	47 m	31 m	80 m	78 m
Half-Back	70 m	55 m	57 m	38 m	66 m	41 m	60 m	46 m	57 m	39 m	82 m	49 m
Midfield	63 m	63 m	55 m	40 m	56 m	45 m	53 m	53 m	51 m	34 m	73 m	82 m
Half-Forward	64 m	66 m	55 m	46 m	53 m	60 m	59 m	61 m	48 m	46 m	77 m	54 m
Full-Forward	57 m	65 m	46 m	48 m	51 m	43 m	60 m	52 m	40 m	48 m	47 m	51 m

Table 3. Sam Maguire Cup vs Tailteann Cup 2025 High Intensity Running Demands

Shane Flanagan
Director of Games Development

Project Lead: Prof. Mark Roantree

Analytical Researchers: Aaron O'Neill & Uttaran Bera

Data Collection Team: Aaron O'Neill.

Special thanks to the sports scientists and coaches from the respective counties
who shared their data with us for this report.



NFL AND CHAMPIONSHIP ATTENDANCES 2024 V 2025

Year	Total Sales Rnd 1	Games	Juvenile
2025	82,804	16	10,001
2024	57,852	16	
Year	Total Sales Rnd 2	Games	Juvenile
2025	59,496	16	16,420
2024	49,244	16	
Year	Total Sales Rnd 3	Games	Juvenile
2025	51,654	16	11,043
2024	61,586	16	
Year	Total Sales Rnd 4	Games	Juvenile
2025	69,117	16	14,368
2024	33,193	16	
Year	Total Sales Rnd 5	Games	Juvenile
2025	74,963	16	19,731
2024	42,752	16	
Year	Total Sales Rnd 6	Games	Juvenile
2025	69,170	15	13,540
2024	33,193	16	
Year	Total sales Rnd 7	Games	Juvenile
2025	51,993	16	12,755
2024	42,789	15	
Year	Finals	Games	
2025	51,500	1	
2024	58,568	1	

Note
Leitrim v Fermanagh not Played

	Total Rnd 1 - 7 & Finals	Juvenile
2025	510,697	97,858
2024	379,177	
Difference	131,520	

Difference	131,520
Juvenile	97,858
Total increase	33,662

FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP	
	SALE
2024	858,459
2025	1,029,963
DIFFERENCE	171,504
% INCREASE	20%



DISCIPLINARY REPORT 2024 V 2025

Year	Red	Double Cards - Red	Yellow	Black	Red TO	Yellow TO	No. of Games
2024	25	29	810	82	3	9	215
2025	8	13	539	56	0	9	214
<i>Difference</i>	17	16	271	26	3	0	
<i>Difference %</i>	68%	55%	33%	31%	100%	0%	

*One walkover in 2025



NATIONAL REFEREES PANEL - POST INTER-COUNTY NFL & CHAMPIONSHIP REVIEW

PLEASE SUBMIT FURTHER THOUGHTS ON HOW YOU FEEL THE RULE ENHANCEMENT IMPLEMENTATION HAS GONE, OR ANY OTHER POINTS OF NOTE.

All bringing forward ball offences should be uniform. All instances of yellow cards for team officials should result in a free also.

Apart from the releasing of incorrect versions of the rule book, this has been an excellently run project which has enhanced the game, I actually think it will make it easier to retain new referees, we may lose some who have given much service, but the experience should be better for new referees which can only be a good thing. The pre-championship slides for club referees was very good too, I gave the talk to one county and the content was excellent.

I would also consider altering the sin bin rule when there is no hooter to be playing time. Refs should be stopping the watch anyway rather than guessing injury time so this would be an improvement.

The game has become easier to ref because of the new rules, the game has become a better spectacle and way more enjoyable to be a part of.

As mentioned earlier in the year, the new advantage rule giving the referee his discretion to apply the rule and bring it back if none occurs or let's it proceed if a clear advantage is availed of has certainly given referees a confidence to be consistent and able to give the correct signalling. Game has also been able to speed up as creation of space has occurred with scores resulting from the advantage instead of blowing it up.

Still need to clear up the 1 point/2 point score if touched by keeper as in the Connacht Final this year...

I believe there should have been more time given to referees to come to terms and understand the rules prior to their implementation. This would have allowed for greater understanding of the rules at the beginning of the year, the rules have been a fantastic addition to the game of Gaelic football.

Rules have been excellent and made the game easier to referee.

- Refereeing has become easier. Linesman is more challenging. Club championship may also bring complications - this review should also be taken after they have been completed.

-Is it possible to streamline some of the rules e.g. wasting time for a kick-out is a free; wasting time for a free kick is a throw in (In my opinion all throw-in's should be removed, where possible, as they can be very messy. Tactically delaying a free kick should be a free the opposite way for example).

-Is it possible to remove hand-pass point, no skill involved and may encourage going for goals.

- Rule 2.10 the following should be removed: [to enable a seriously injured player to be treated on the field or removed from the field of play], as it would give us the option of restarting the play like that in any scenario, for example where a 4v3 is given incorrectly. Even though that wording would be removed, it would still allow us restart in the same way for injuries regardless.

- The dissent rules should also be brought in to hurling, easier on dual referees, plus would increase respect for Hurling referees.

New Rules have gone well. Supporters and players really enjoying them. 4 points for a goal comes up a lot in conversation though. A lot of emphasis being placed on 2 pointers which is great but the new rules don't seem to have led to more goals, maybe I am wrong.

I think the rule enhancement implementation has gone very well from a refereeing perspective. As a group, I feel we educated ourselves very well and got to grips with them very quickly.

No comment. I feel rules have been good for referees.

I think the rule enhancements have been massively successful and referees have managed them brilliantly. I would still hold reservations over the handing the ball back and the stop clock/hooter.

I think we should always be open to tweaks in the rules but I also think that it is now universally accepted that the rules have been a major positive development for the game.

2 points from open play only. I don't think a team should have an option to bring it back out if the ball has been brought forward inside the arc.

The enhanced rules has transformed our game into a very entertaining game to the most part. It has also reduced our card count with less contact areas on the pitch. Players and referees have also adapted well to the new rules.

Overall the rule enhancements have improved our game, I would argue improved standards in refereeing and would also suggest perhaps made refereeing easier and more enjoyable.

I think overall when they first came in I think every referee was worried. But as games came fast in the league refs adapted fairly fast. They have made football matches watchable again and that was clear in the Allianz leagues and championship.

All good.

The GK touch to stop a 2 point shot needs serious review. A fantastic shot that gets a touch and now only 1 isn't fair, and as has been seen in big games it caused some controversy. It should be 2 as long as not dropped short and punched over etc.

Please consider allowing a quick free to be taken from a place within 4m of original foul. This will align with solo and go and promote fast football after a foul.

Consider review a fist passed point. Multiple occasions a team in on goal and fist pass over the bar.

Please align the 4/3 breach, manager dissent and KO fouls to be all on 13 or 20, it's causing issues for IC refs, so one or the other will be easier implement.

A cynical black card is required. As above, we've multiple examples of cynical foul that we cannot issue a BC for as it isn't deliberate hold up or deliberate pull down etc.

We have Rough play, dangerous play and need cynical play card.

I feel the rule enhancements have been good for the game and have helped referees.

Just a thank you to the FRC for improving our game.

There were issues at the beginning but constant dialogue ensured there were addressed.

I do believe as we move through the club championships there will be more issues which will need to be addressed.

I think it is very important the FRC continues to work with the national referees until the end of the 2026 season.



The possibility of a Solo & Go from a side line.

I probably feel that a player should only get a two pointer from open play where as a free kick should remain as a single point. This would help encourage scoring from open play rather than trying to win free kick.

1. Should a free kick inside the 45m line and outside the 40m line be awarded two points?

2. Should it be required that a point scored from play via a "fist-pass", must be made with a closed fist as using just an underhand action with an open hand is becoming more of a throw ball? By all means if the ball is in flight an open hand should still be allowed.

3. Should verbal interference during play be penalised? When players are nearing their opponents goal, it is not uncommon for an opponent to be running after them and verbally trying to put their opponent off from scoring/ passing. Since such verbal interference is not tolerated in set play, should it be extended to open play?


All going good. Only other issue is delaying a solo and go. Put it in rule book as a retake if they delay. Some ref by the rule book especially at club level and saying the rule in the book is free against but telling them to let them retake it in graphics put out makes it confusing.

After being very negative on a lot of rules at the start, it turns out these rules are excellent. Game is much easier to referee. The 2 pointer from on or outside the arc catches people out at times and can lead to some arguments to whether it was or was not a 2 pointer. Still too many hand passes though!

Excellent - well done to the FRC and Croke Park refs committee.







***Make Gaelic
games the most
enjoyable amateur
sports in the world
to play and watch***



*Ní neart
go cur le
chéile*



A silhouette of a person in mid-kick, viewed from behind, on a floor with a strong perspective of parallel lines. A ball is in the air to the right. The background is a solid dark blue.

MÍLE BUÍOCHAS

FRC

2024/2025

