



Irish Sports Monitor 2021  
- Mid-year report

## Introduction & Key Findings

### Key Findings

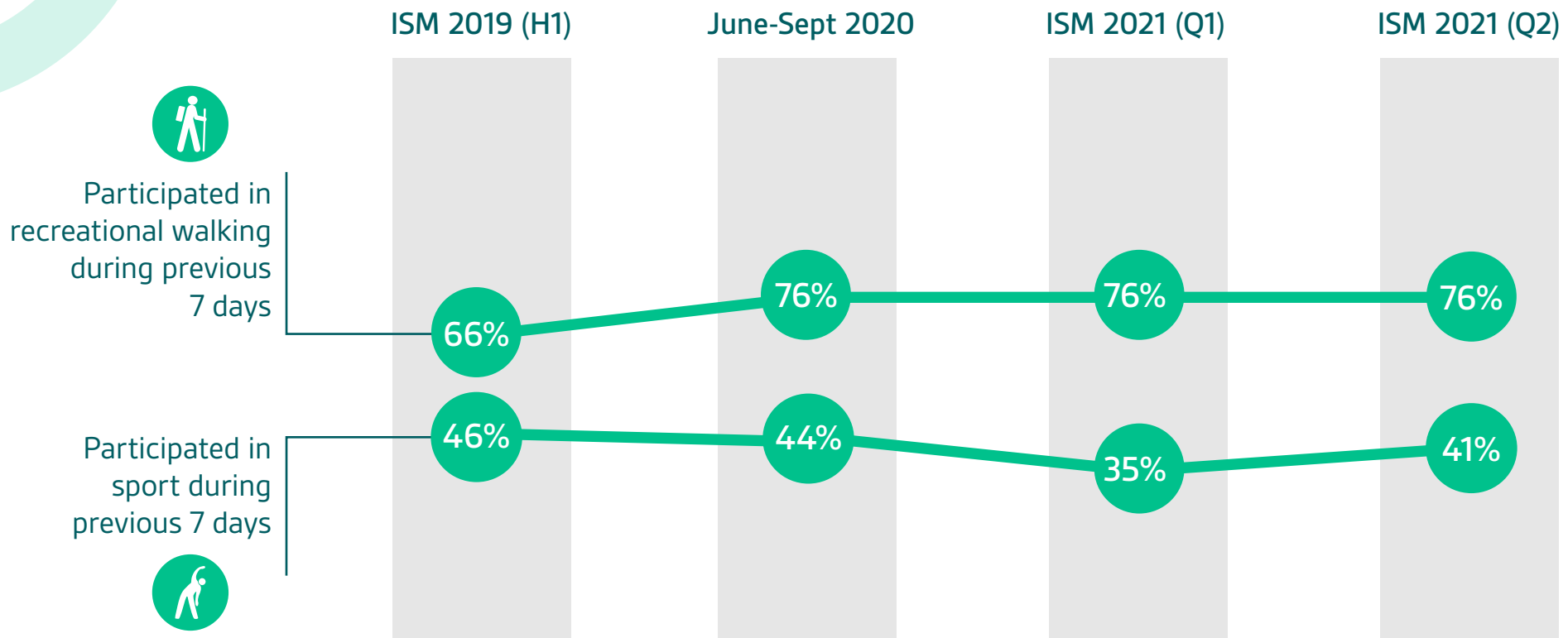
- The number of people taking part in sport has risen in recent months due to increases in the numbers cycling, swimming and playing popular team sports.
- The numbers walking for recreation remain significantly ahead of 2019. This is driven by increases in recreational walking among younger age groups and those living in Dublin.
- There has been a slow return to social participation in sport, however most expect to return to pre-pandemic levels of participation as restrictions ease.
- Those that have given up a sport intend to recommence it once restrictions have ended.
- Those that have taken up new physical activities intend to continue participating in them into the future.



### Introduction

- This interim report presents the results from the first 6 months of data collection on the Irish Sports Monitor 2021 (ISM 2021).
- Comparisons are provided to the equivalent period for ISM 2019, along with equivalent research conducted during 2020.
- Full technical details are provided in the Appendix.

The proportion playing sport increased during the second quarter of 2021



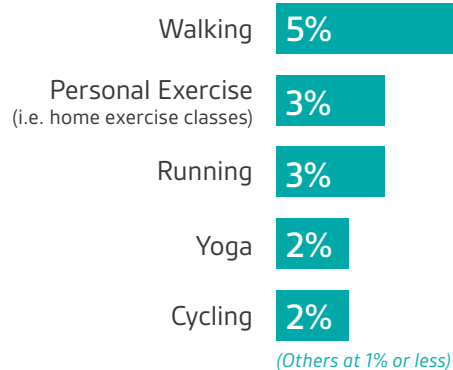
# Just over 2 in 5 people gave up an activity due to Covid-19, however the majority plan to return once restrictions are lifted

## Taking Up Activity in COVID Times

**17%**

Took up a new sport or physical activity that they did not normally participate in prior to Covid-19 restrictions

### Type of activity taken up



**85%**

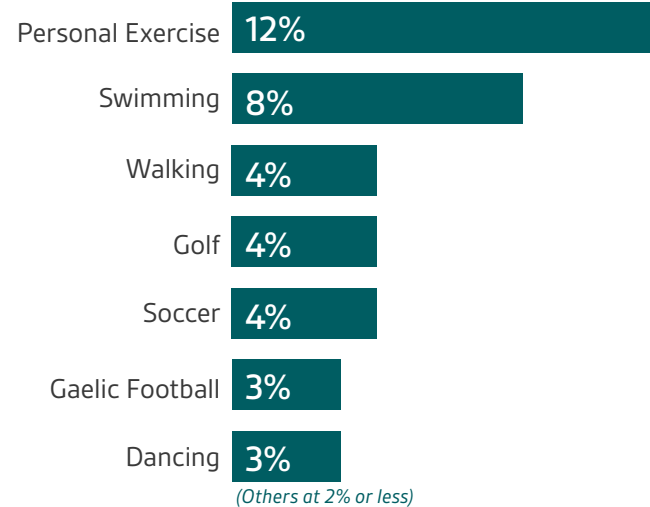
Expect to continue in the new activity after restrictions are lifted

## Giving Up Activity in COVID Times

**44%**

Gave up a sport or physical activity  
(56% of those aged under 35)

### Type of activity given up



**89%**

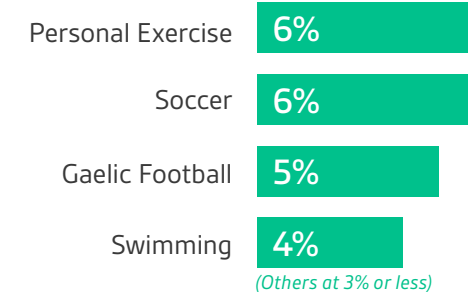
Say they will return to this activity after restrictions are lifted

## Perceptions of Activity in COVID Times

**48%**

Agree with the statement "I am fearful of participating in certain sports or physical activities because of Covid-19"

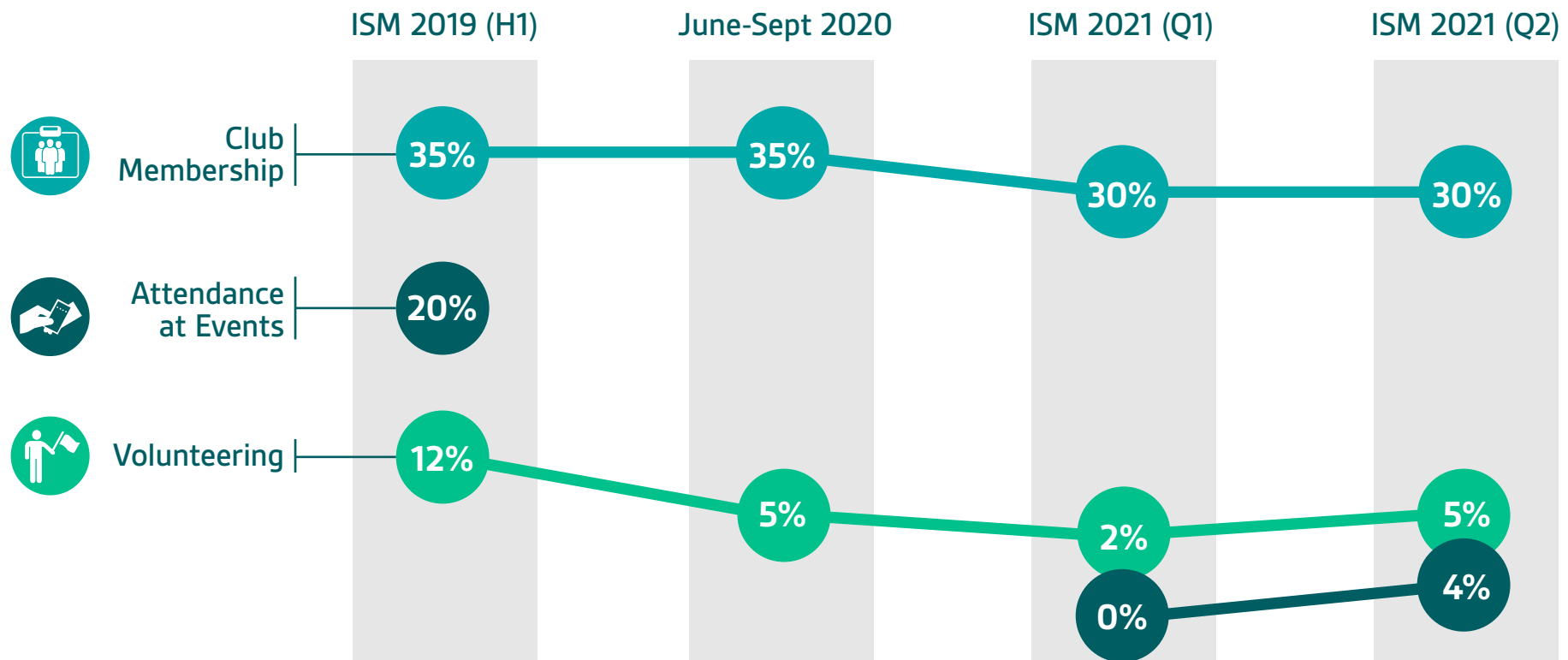
### Activities people fear because of Covid-19



### Physical activity compared to a typical week before Covid-19 restrictions were introduced

	Total	Under 35	35-64	65+
More Activity	20%	24%	21%	11%
The Same Amount	25%	14%	31%	27%
Less Activity	55%	62%	48%	60%

There has been a slow return to social participation in sport, which remains behind pre-pandemic levels



## Most expect to return to pre-pandemic levels of social participation in sport as Covid-19 restrictions ease

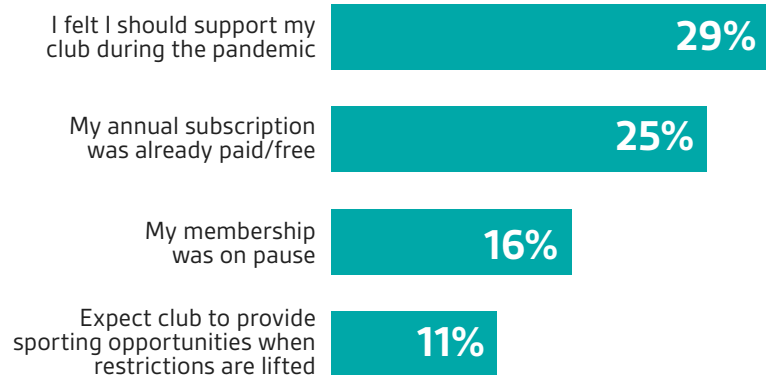


### Club membership

**89%**

expect to renew their membership when it's next due for renewal

#### Main reasons given by the 84% of club members who maintained their membership throughout the period of restrictions

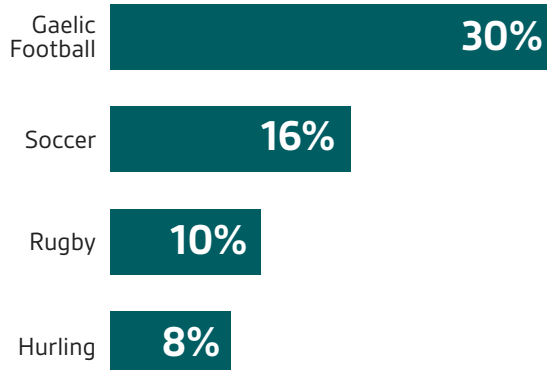


### Attending Events

**54%**

expect to attend a sports event after restrictions are lifted

#### Top sports people want to attend after Covid-19

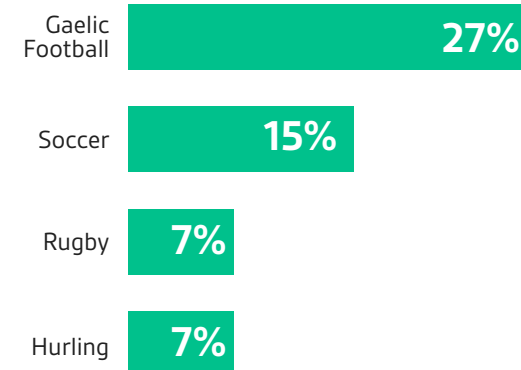


### Volunteering

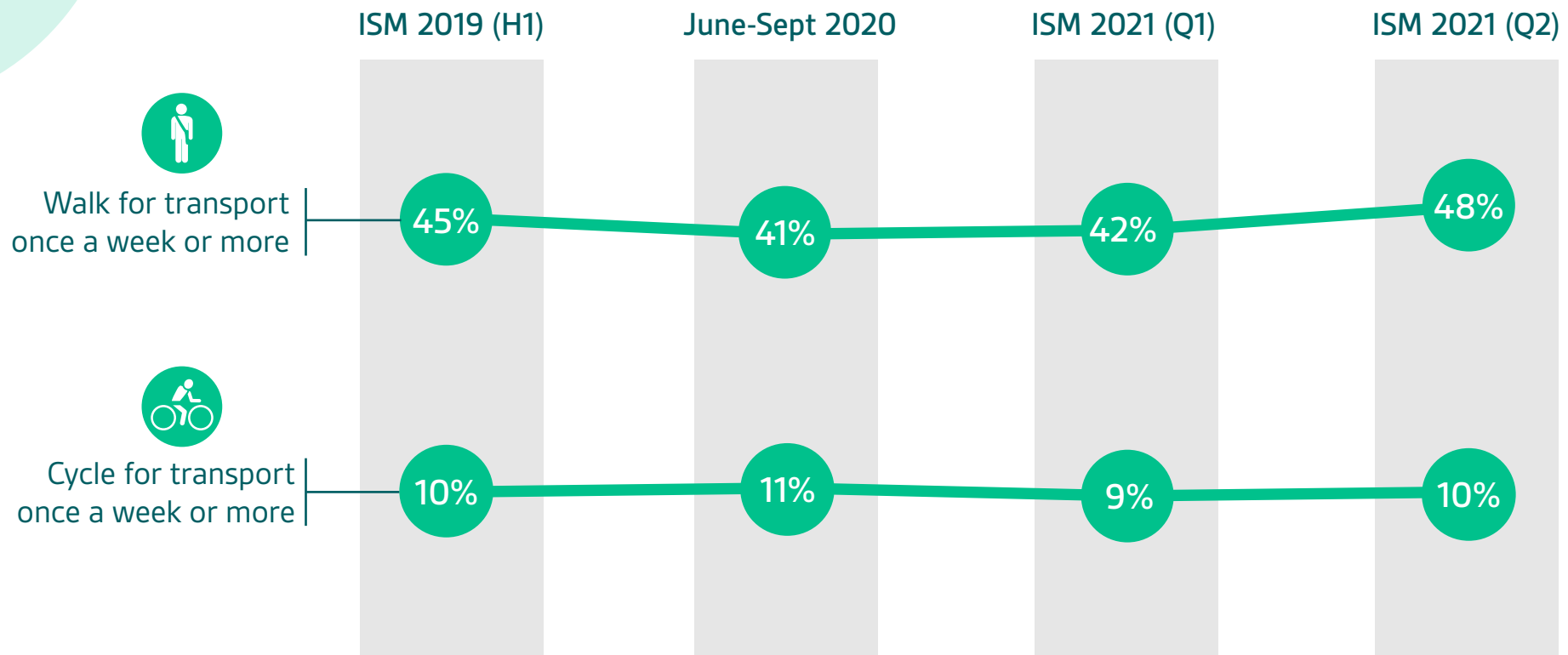
**81%**

expect to return to volunteering after restrictions are lifted

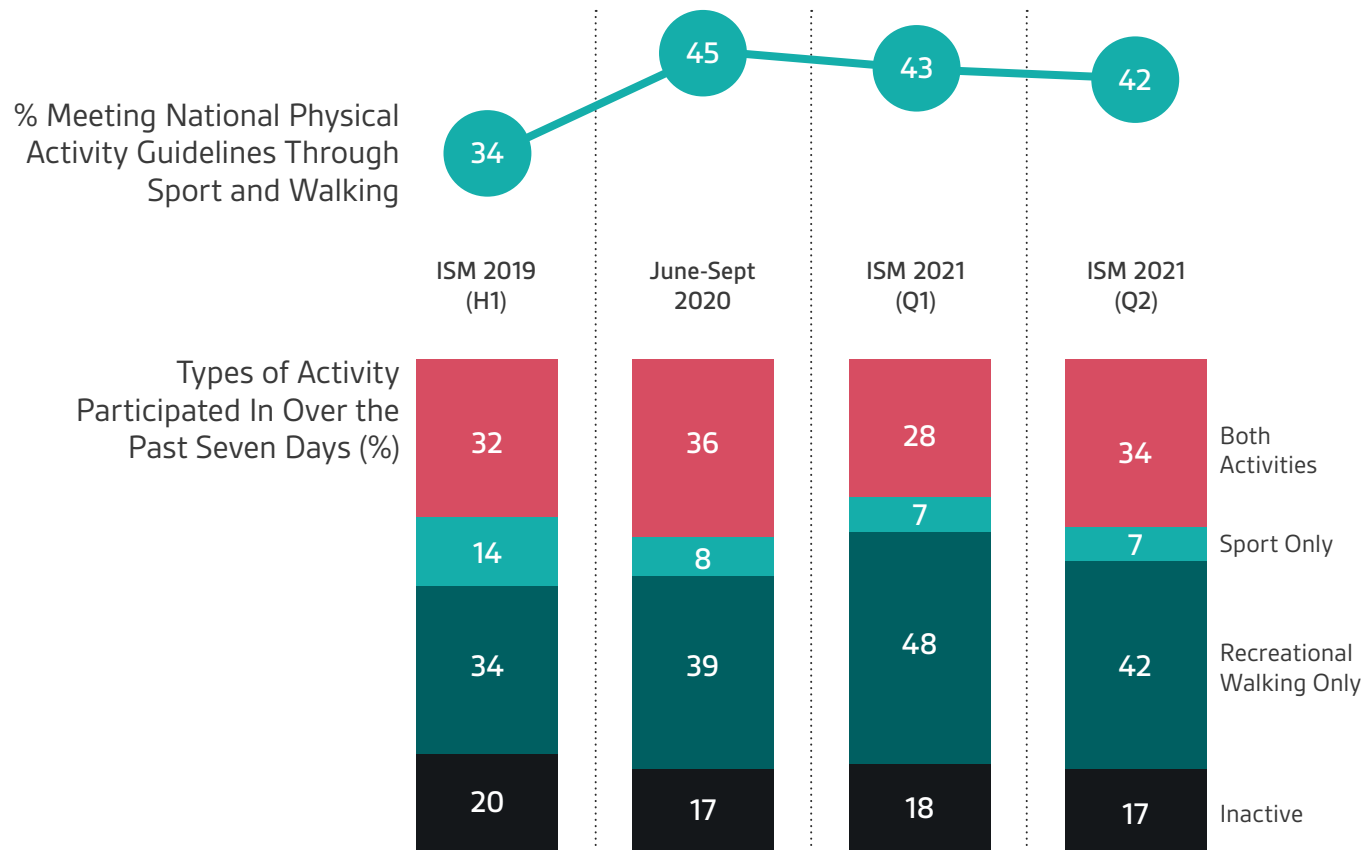
#### Top sports among the 13% who previously volunteered before Covid-19



The pandemic has had very little impact on the numbers walking and cycling for transport once a week or more



## Increases in recreational walking and sports participation mean that 42% now meet the National Physical Activity guidelines through these activities alone



Inactive means taking part in no sport or recreational walking. It has the same meaning as sedentary in the National Sports Policy.


### Commentary

- Women were more likely than men to be active during Q1.
- Activity levels have increased among younger age groups - the proportion of under 25s that are active increased from 87% in Q1 to 94% in Q2.
- A strong age gradient remains, with the proportion of over 65s that are active remaining unchanged at 74%.
- A strong social gradient also exists with 92% of ABC1s active, compared with 77% of C2DEs.



Participation in **Sport** during previous 7 days

Sports participation has increased across all genders, age groups and social classes in recent months. However, gender, age and social class gradients are beginning to re-emerge



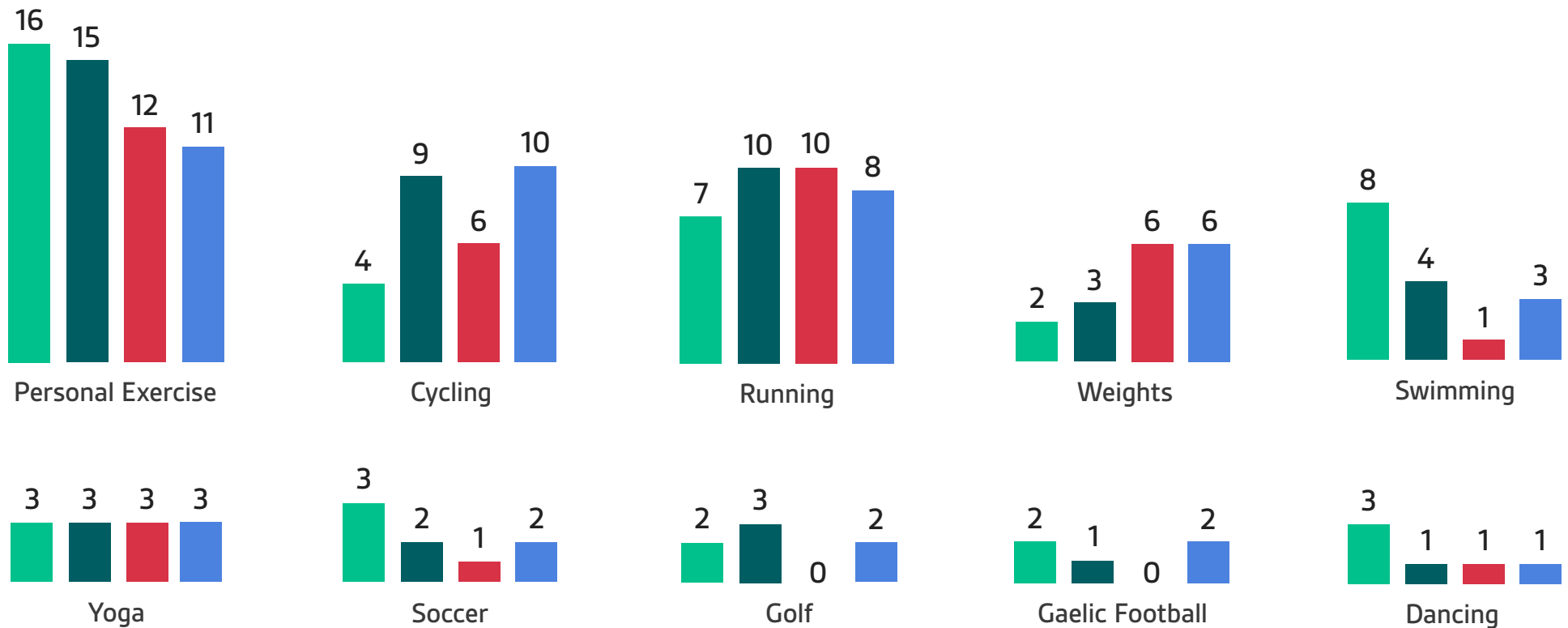
		ISM 2019 (H1)	June-Sept 2020	ISM 2021 (Q1)	ISM 2021 (Q2)
Gender	Men	48	47	35	45
	Women	44	41	34	38
Age Group	16-24	72	75	58	70
	25-34	55	55	45	53
	35-44	49	52	39	44
	45-54	41	37	28	37
	55+	29	23	19	23
Location	Dublin	50	50	39	45
	Rest of Leinster	47	40	37	37
	Munster	43	45	31	40
	Connacht/Ulster	41	39	31	42
Social Class	ABC1	59	60	45	56
	C2DE	39	31	26	30

- A larger increase in sports activity among men during Q2 means that a gender gap has re-emerged.
- Participation rates are lower across all age groups when compared to the 2019 measurement.
- Sports participation among the ABC1 social group has almost returned to pre-pandemic levels. However, only a slight increase in participation among C2DEs results in a widening gap between the two groups.

## Recent increases in the numbers cycling and swimming, as well as those playing golf and Gaelic football


Types of sports participated in during previous 7 days

ISM 2019 (H1) June-Sept 2020 ISM 2021 (Q1) ISM 2021 (Q2)



Participation in **Recreational Walking** during previous 7 days

Increases in recreational walking among the younger age groups and those living in Dublin



		ISM 2019 (Q1)	June-Sept 2020	ISM 2021 (Q1)	ISM 2021 (Q2)
Gender	Men	61	72	72	71
	Women	71	79	80	81
Age Group	16-24*	60	81	72	78
	25-34	68	76	76	83
	35-44	65	73	77	74
	45-54	64	76	82	77
	55+	69	75	74	73
Location	Dublin	63	77	73	78
	Rest of Leinster	64	76	76	73
	Munster	71	75	79	81
	Connacht/Ulster	66	76	75	73
Social Class	ABC1	69	81	83	84
	C2DE	64	73	73	71

\* Figures shown for measurements in 2020 are among 15-24 year olds

- Women remain more likely than men to walk for recreation.
- Increase in recreational walking among the youngest age groups, with activity levels well ahead of 2019.
- Much of the increase in recreational walking during Q2 is seen in Dublin. The numbers walking are much higher than they were in 2019.

## Appendix - Technical details

- The Irish Sports Monitor (ISM) is a large population study undertaken biennially in order to provide trends in participation in sport and physical activity in Ireland. Data collection is conducted by telephone among a representative sample of the population aged 16 and older.
- During 2020 a number of additional telephone survey measurements were undertaken to understand the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions on sport and physical activity. These replicated the questions asked on the ISM and were representative of the population aged 16 and older. Data collection was undertaken by telephone.
- Fieldwork dates and sample sizes for this research are as follows:

Phase	Fieldwork dates	Sample size
ISM 2019 (H1)	Jan-June 2019	4,255
Special Covid-19 survey	June - Sept 2020	2,400
ISM 2021 (Q1)	Jan-Mar 2021	2,129
ISM 2021 (Q2)	Apr-Jun 2021	2,124





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