

# school sport participation and the Olympic legacy

a survey of teachers, school games  
organisers and school sport  
partnerships staff



## Abbreviations

School Sport Partnerships (SSPs)  
School Games Organisers (SGOs)  
School Sports Coordinator (SSCO)  
Primary Link Teacher (PLT)  
Partnership Development Manager (PDM)

## Online survey

1,019 people were surveyed:

- 673 Primary school teachers
- 225 Secondary school teachers
- 121 SGO/SSP staff that work with a total of 3,617 schools

Responses were given between 14th March and 19th April 2013

Not all respondents answered all questions. Figures for each question can be found in the relevant sections.

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# Key findings

## Key findings

### Falling participation since the loss of ring-fenced funding for School Sports Partnerships

- Over two thirds (68%) of School Games Organisers and School Sport Partnership staff surveyed reported a decrease in sports participation since ring-fenced funding ended in 2011.
- A third of primary and secondary school teachers (34% and 35% respectively) reported that there had been a decrease in participation.
- The main reasons mentioned for those who indicated decreased levels of participation were a lack of funding and as a consequence pressure on time. This was impacting the ability of schools to run sports clubs, competitions and events and therefore resulted in fewer opportunities for participation.
- Those who were able to maintain or increase levels of participation cited longer working days, their school's commitment to sport and continued collaboration. There were concerns from some, however, about how sustainable this will be.

### Old versus new funding system

SGO and SSP staff were asked whether they preferred the former system (ring-fenced funding of School Sport Partnerships) to the new one (PE Teacher Release, non-ring-fenced funding for School Sport Partnerships and School Games):

- 88% stated the old system was better.

Teachers were asked about the impact of the change in the funding system on provision of PE and sport:

- 36% of primary school teachers surveyed reported a worsening of sport in their school under the new system, 48% said it had stayed the same and 16% it had improved;
- 37% of secondary school teachers surveyed reported a worsening of sport in their school under the new system, 55% said it had stayed the same, and 8% said it had improved.
- A large number of respondents from schools thought that money earmarked for PE teacher release was actually being spent to that end. However, a significant number reported that only some or none of the money was being used to release teachers (68% and 58% of respective responses from primary and secondary

- school teachers).
- The results therefore suggest that there has been a significant loss of funding channelled into school sport.

### **School Games and School Sport Partnerships**

- Whilst a majority of teachers who responded to the survey are signed up for School Games a significant minority, especially those who were primary school teachers (42%), stated they were not.
- The majority of respondents reported that their School Sports Partnerships had remained in place after ring-fenced funding had ended:
  - o However, a significant minority of primary school teachers (28%) and secondary school teachers (34%) surveyed reported that they were no longer a part of a School Sport Partnership; and
  - o Two thirds (64%) of School Games Organiser and School Sport Partnership staff who's SSP had continued reported that at least one school which previously was a member of the retained School Sport Partnership had left.
- Those schools who reported that they were registered for School Games were more likely to be part of a School Sport Partnership than the average.

### **Views on sport in schools**

- Over 90% believe that non-competitive physical activities must be encouraged alongside competitive activities.
- 97% agreed that schools should have a minimum target of two hours PE and Sport a week.
- 69% agreed that schools should be required to monitor participation and make the information available to parents.
- 95% agreed that physical activity improves educational attainment.
- Under half of respondents (47%) agreed that a strategy focused on competitive sport will inspire inactive children to engage in sport and PE.



# Introduction

## Introduction

Following Britain's successful hosting of the Olympic Games and record breaking medal tally the Smith Institute decided to undertake an online survey of people currently involved in school sports. The survey forms part of an ongoing programme of work on sport in schools, including a report of policy perspectives to be published later in the year.

The survey was initially prompted by the abolition of the School Sport Survey and is intended to provide an assessment of the impact of the lifting of ring-fenced funding for School Sport Partnerships.

The survey aims to: understand how those teaching sport feel about recent changes to school sports; and what impact they think the changes are, and will have, on sport participation levels and School Sport Partnerships.

The online survey took place between March and April 2013 and covered over 1,000 respondents, including primary and secondary school teachers, School Games Organisers, and School Sport Partnerships staff.

The Institute would like to thank all those who took part in the survey.

### **Recent changes to school sports**

School Sports Partnerships (SSPs) were developed under the previous government and involved families of Secondary, Primary and Special schools working together to increase the quality and quantity of PE and Sports opportunities for young people. All schools in England were part of an SSP. SSPs received £162 million ring-fenced funding per year.

Each SSP was managed by a Partnership Development Manager (PDM), who was funded centrally and employed directly by schools. Under SSPs each secondary school had a School Sports Coordinator (SSCO) to coordinate sport and each Primary School had a Primary Link Teacher (PLT).

Ring-fenced funding for SSPs was removed in 2011. After widespread complaints about this the government agreed to spend £32.5 million for PE teacher release for two years - a scheme to allow a PE teacher to provide PE support to local schools and within their own school. It also aimed to help provide more competitive sport for pupils, including the School Games. This funding is not ring-fenced and only runs until the

end of the next academic year.

In February 2011<sup>1</sup> the government announced its funding for a new version of School Games. These are based around four tiers of sport: intra-school; inter-school; county; and national. School Games are designed to improve engagement in competitive sport and would be supported by School Games Organisers.



# Survey results

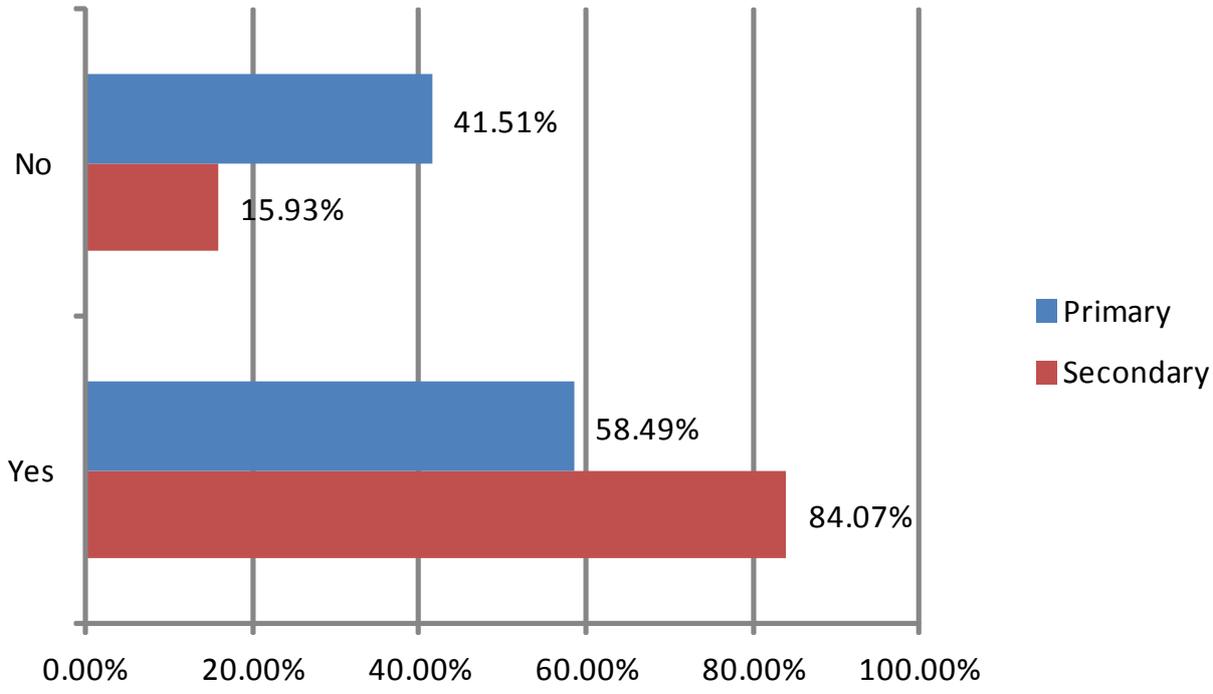
# 1. School Games take-up

Respondents were asked whether their school or schools in their area were signed up for the new system of School Games.

The majority of teachers stated that their school was registered for School Games:

- However, a significant minority of primary school teachers reported that they were not (42%).
- This was significantly different to secondary school teachers who reported a much higher rate of registration.

**Figure 1: Is your school registered for the School Games?**

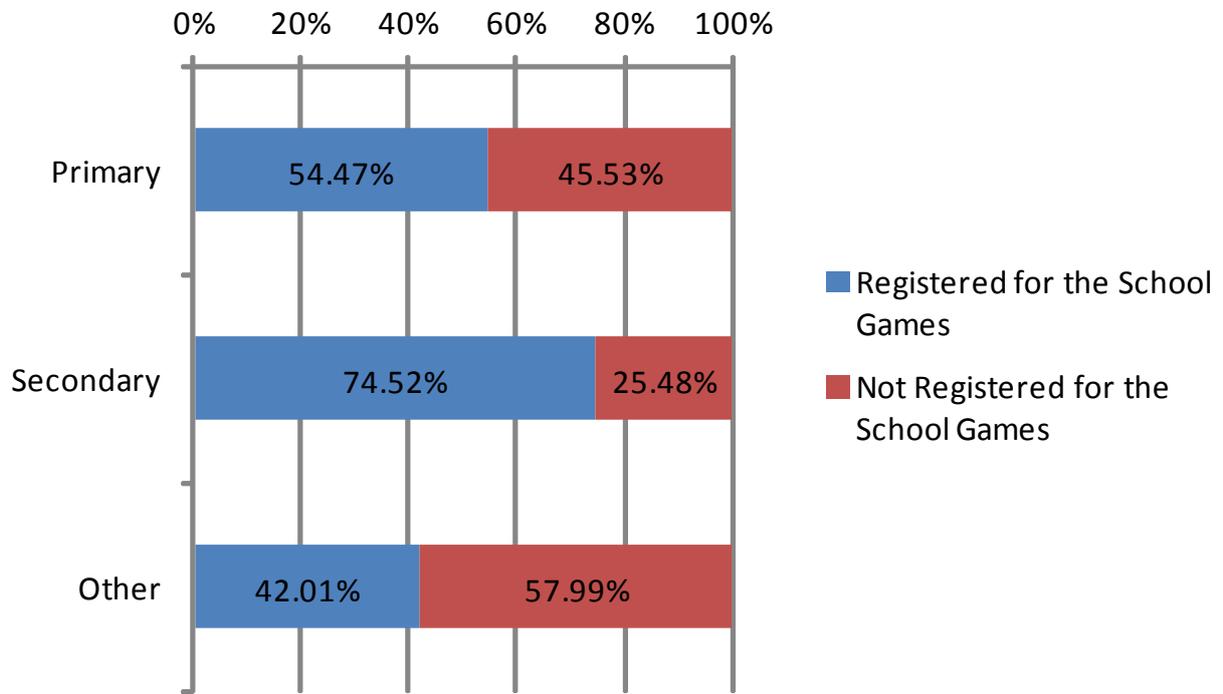


Base: Primary: 542; Secondary: 182

SGO/SSP staff also reported that most schools they worked with were signed up for School Games with a similar split (albeit it not as wide) between secondary and primary schools:

- Those surveyed reported that 54% of primary schools were signed up.
- Those surveyed reported 75% of secondary schools were signed up.

Figure 2: School Games Organisers/SSP Staff - How many of the schools you work with are signed up for the School Games?<sup>2</sup>



Base: 76 reporting on 3617 schools (2875 Primary, 573 Secondary and 169 other)

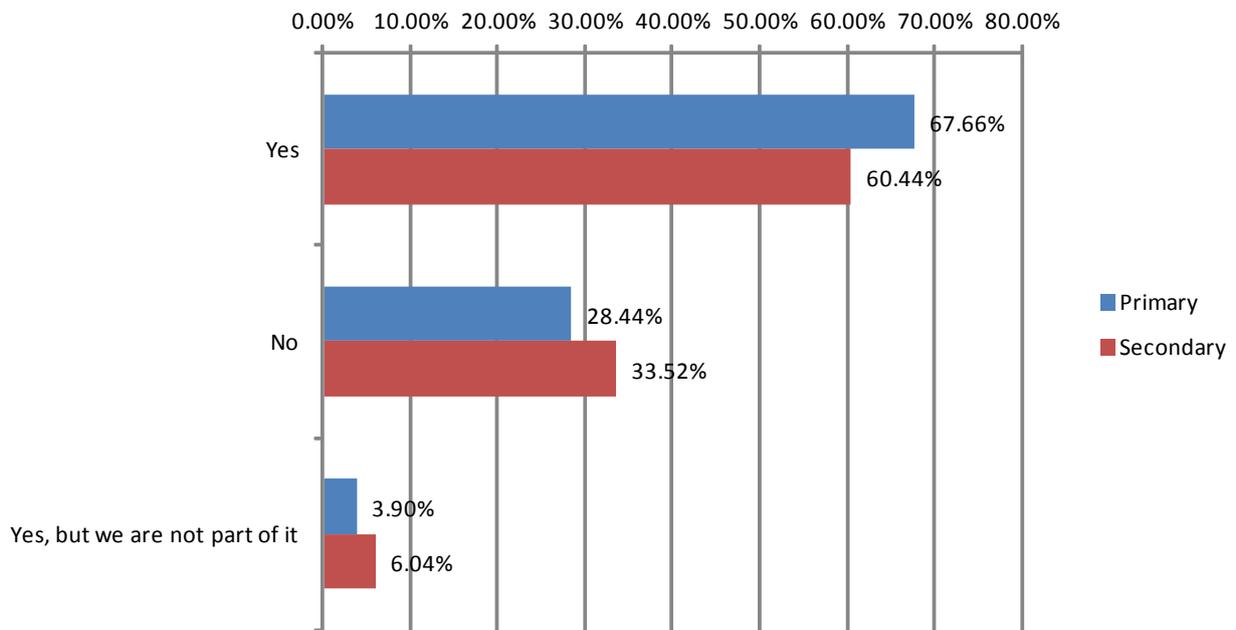
<sup>2</sup> Compared to – How many schools in your area are you responsible for?

## 2. Retention of SSPs

Following the removal of ring-fenced funding for School Sports Partnerships, respondents to the survey were asked whether their SSP had remained in place. The government has stated that it is up to schools to decide whether to continue with SSPs. The survey found:

- The majority of respondents reported that their SSP had remained in place.
- However, a significant minority of primary school teachers (28%) and secondary school teachers (34%) reported that they were no longer a member of an SSP.

**Figure 3: Following the removal of the ring-fence of funding in 2011 has your School Sport Partnership remained in place?**

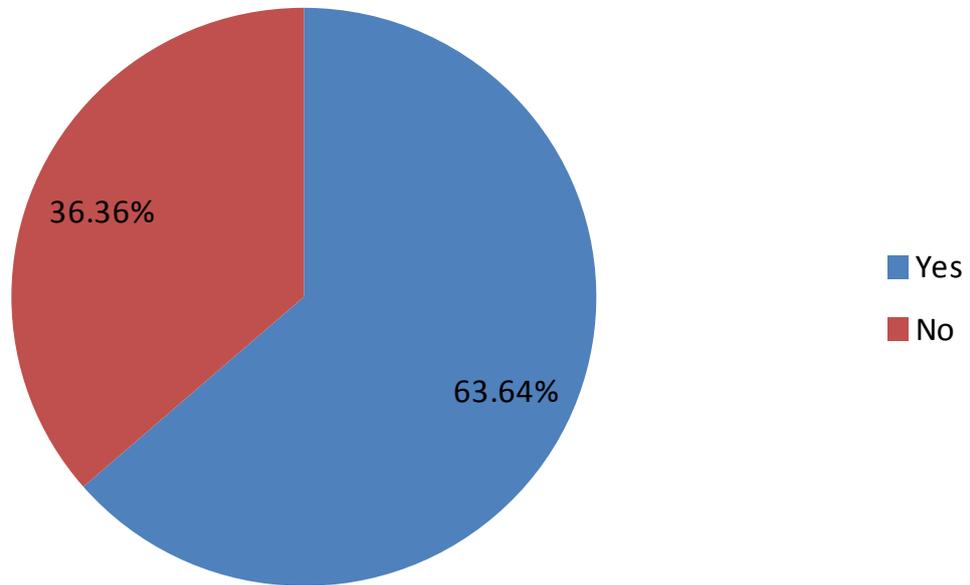


Base: Primary: 538; Secondary: 182

SGO and SSP staff were asked whether any schools had left the local SSPs that had been retained:

- Almost two thirds of those surveyed whose partnership continued reported that at least one school had left their partnership (64%).

**Figure 4: If yes [SSP is still running], since 2011 have any schools left your partnership?**



Base: 66

The responses from teachers on whether their school was part of the SSP and registered for School Games were then combined to analyse engagement with these schemes.

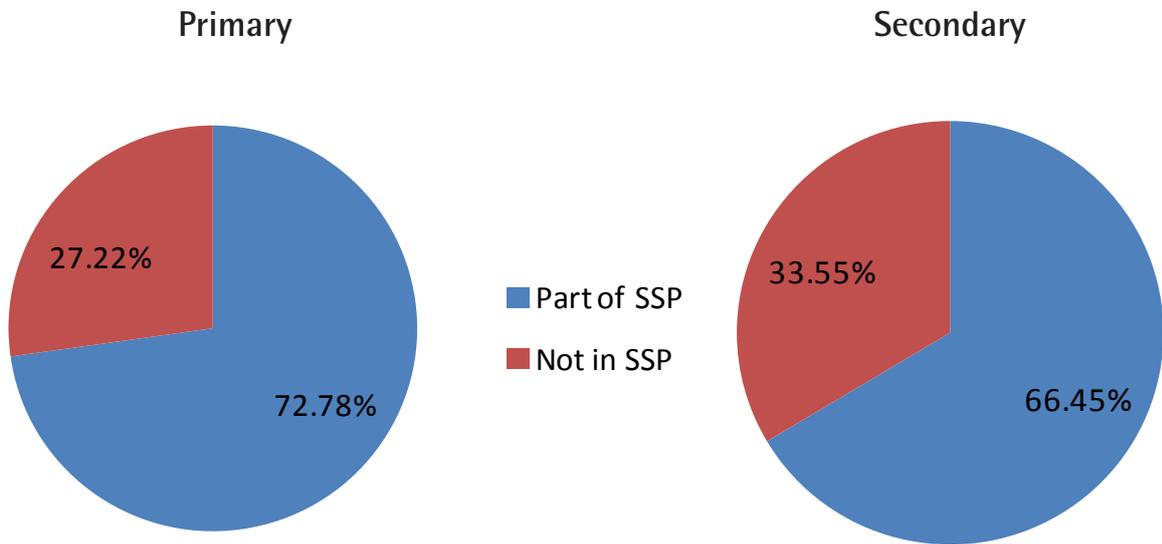
Those who reported that they were registered for School Games were more likely to be part of a SSP than the average reported above:

- 73% of primary school teachers reported that they were part of a SSP and registered for School Games; and 66% for secondary school teachers.

There was a split between primary and secondary school teachers for those not registered for School Games or part of a SSP:

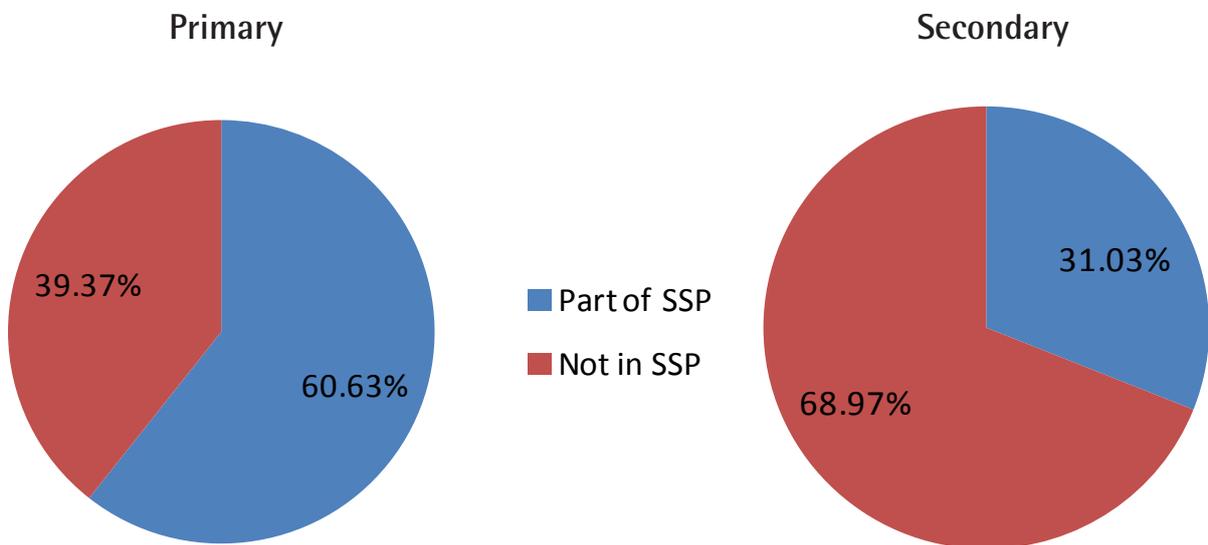
- 39% of primary school teachers who reported that their school was not registered for School Games also said that they were not part of an SSP.
- 69% of secondary school teachers who reported that their school was not registered for School Games were also not part of an SSP (although given the smaller sample size these figures should be treated with some caution).

Figure 5: Schools who stated that they are registered with the School Games broken down by engagement with SSP<sup>3</sup>



Base: Primary: 316; Secondary: 152

Figure 6: Schools who stated that they are not registered with the School Games broken down by engagement with SSP



Base: Primary: 221; Secondary: 29

<sup>3</sup> Figures for those who stated their partnership had not continued and those who stated it had continued but they were not part of it have been combined

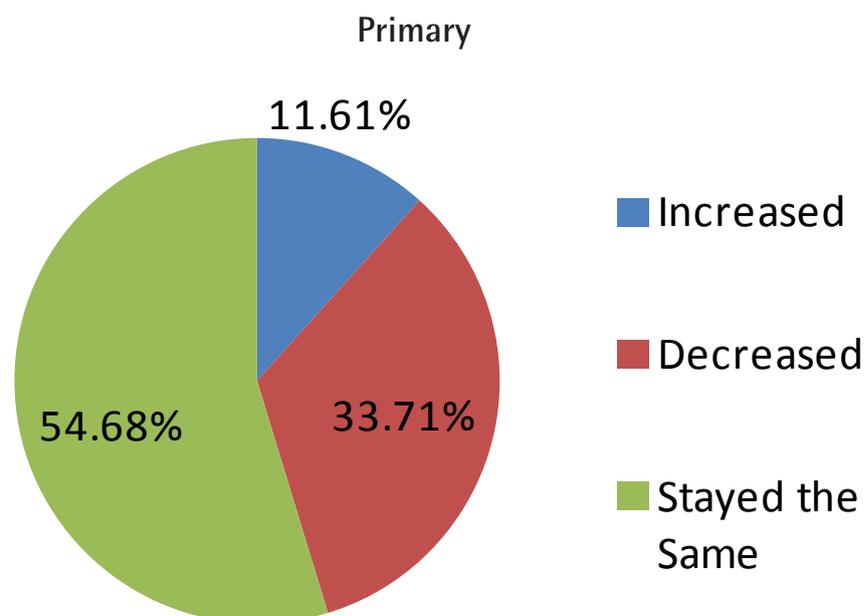
### 3. Levels of participation

Respondents were asked to give their thoughts on the level of participation since ring-fenced funding had been abolished. They were asked whether they felt participation had increased, decreased or stayed the same and why.

A significant proportion of the teachers who responded, around a third, thought the levels of participation had decreased since the ending of ring-fenced funding. Higher levels of School Games Organisers (SGOs) and School Sports Partnership (SSP) staff (around two thirds) thought that levels had fallen.

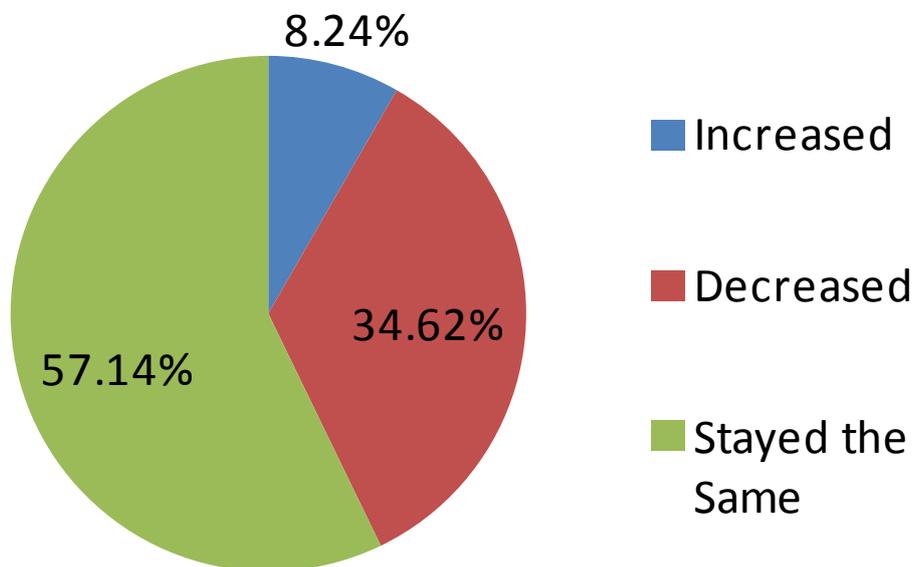
- A majority (68%) of SGOs and SSP Staff that responded reported that there had been a decrease in participation.
- A significant minority of primary school teachers (34%) reported that there had been a decrease, with 11% stating that there had been an increase and 55% saying that it had stayed the same.
- There were similar results for secondary school teachers – over a third (35%) reported a decrease, 57% stayed the same; and 8% increased.

**Figure 7: Since the removal of ring-fenced funding for School Sport Partnerships has participation in sport for your pupils: Increased, Decreased or Stayed the Same?<sup>4</sup>**

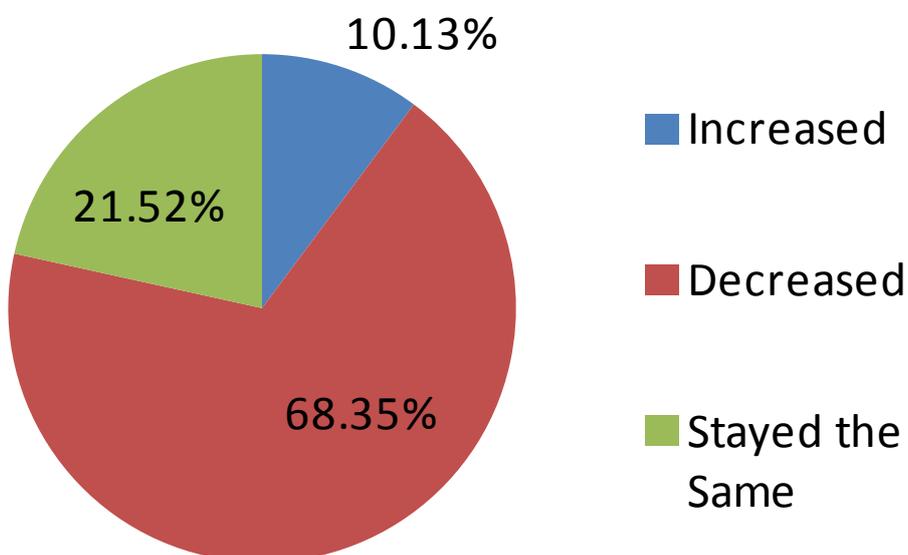


<sup>4</sup> SSP staff/SGOs were asked: Since the removal of ring-fenced funding for school sport partnerships has participation in sport by school children in the area you are responsible for...

Secondary



School Games Organisers and SSP Staff



Base: Primary: 534; Secondary: 182; SGO/SSP: 79

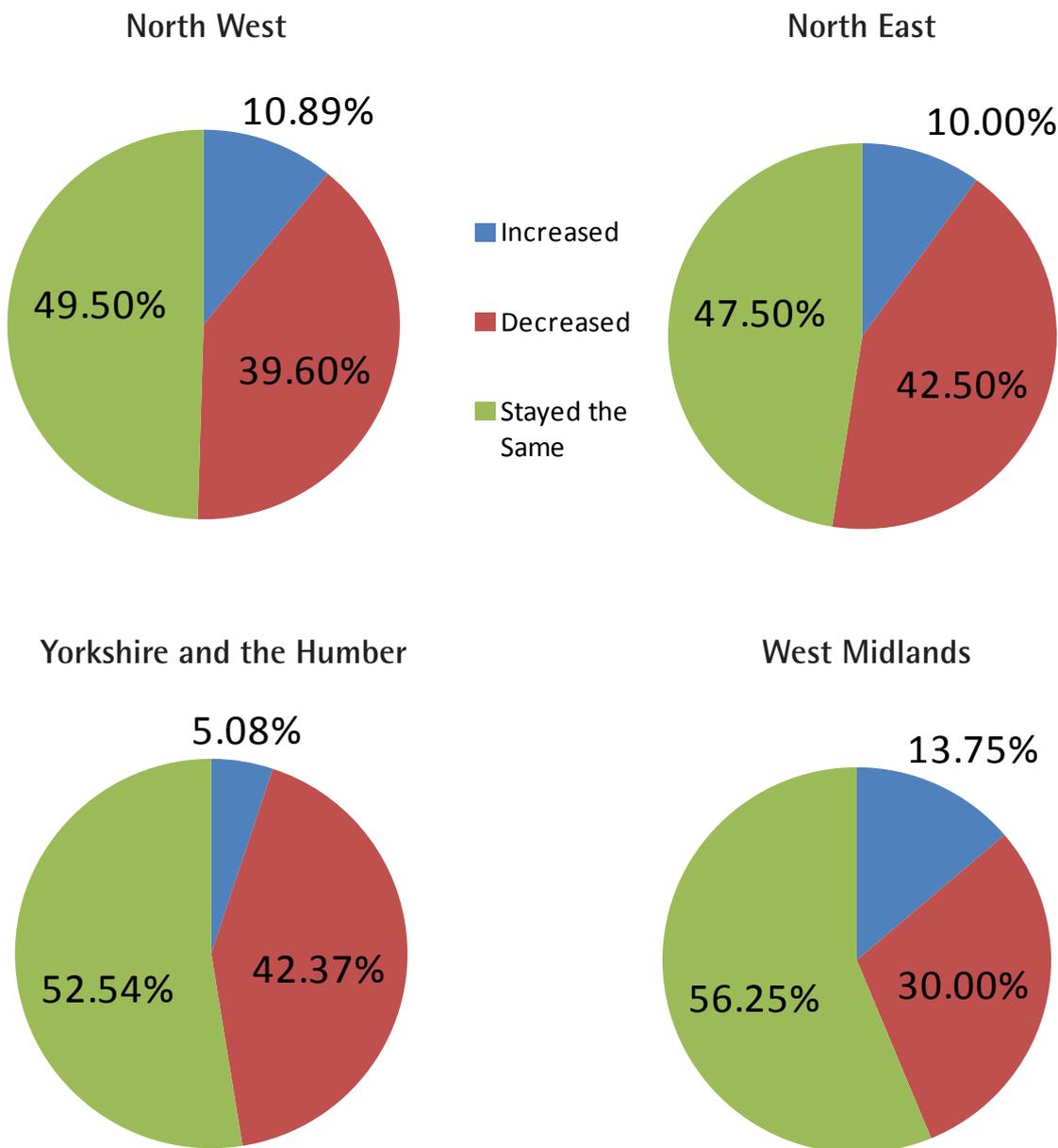
**Participation by regions**

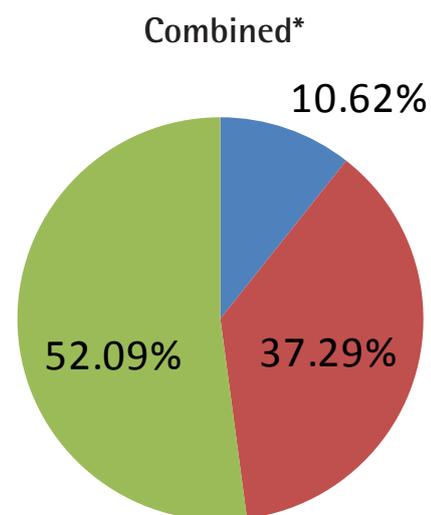
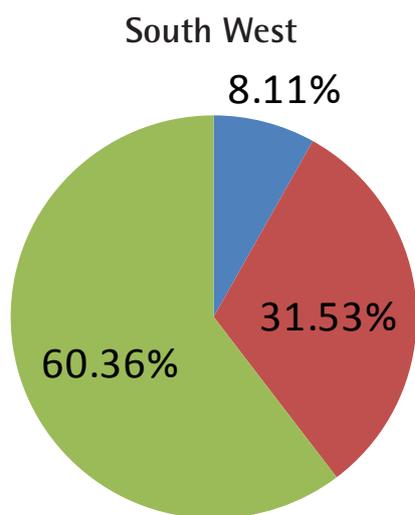
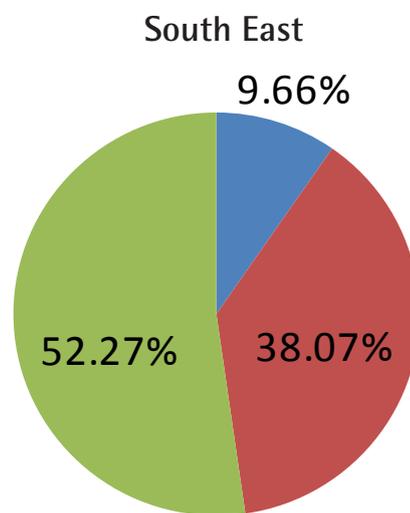
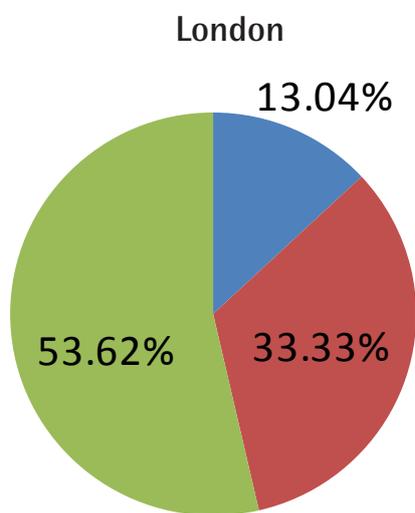
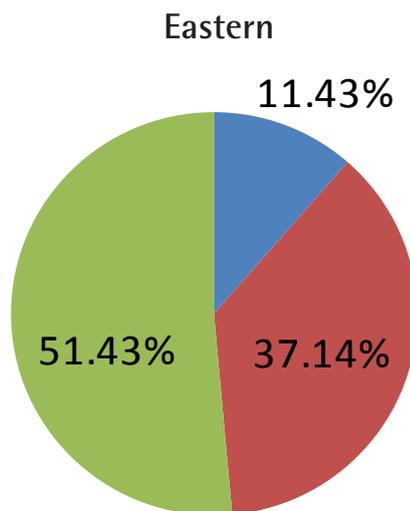
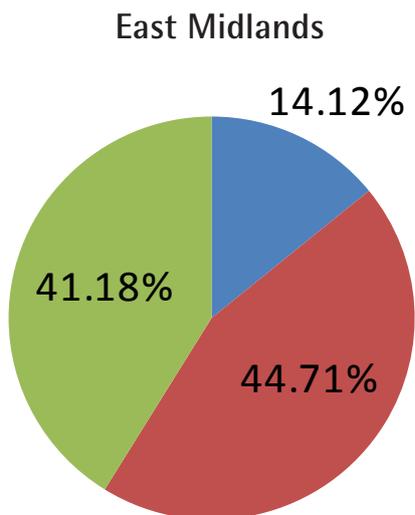
The participation results were broken down by region. In most areas the results showed similar levels to the national average:

- Yorkshire and the Humber saw the smallest proportion (5%) reporting an

- increase in levels of participation and the Midlands the highest (14%).
- Fewer respondents proportionately in the West Midlands, South West and London reported a lower decrease than the average – all at or just above 30%. Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midland and North East showed the highest proportion of respondents reporting a decrease (all above 40%).

**Figure 8: Reported change in participation since end to ring-fenced funding of SSPs by region**





Base: 791

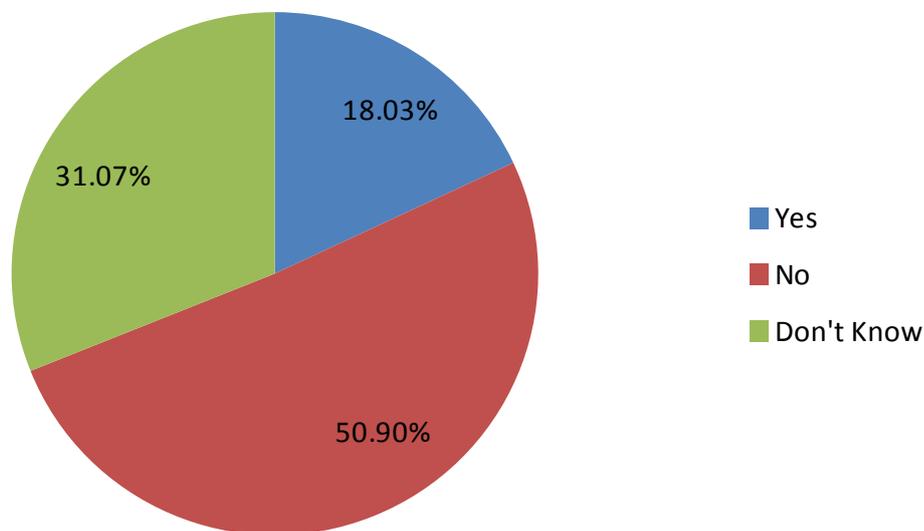
\* Excludes those who did not report their region

### Participation in other schools

The teachers surveyed were also asked whether they thought other schools in their area were able to maintain the levels of sports participation that existed under the former SSP system:

- Half of respondents thought that schools were not able to (51%); 18% thought they were; and 31% did not know.

**Figure 9: Do you believe that other schools in your area have been able to maintain the level of sports participation that existed under School Sport Partnerships?**



Base: 721

### Reasons for a decrease in participation

#### *A decrease in participation*

Those who reported a decrease in levels of participation were asked to give reasons why:

- The main issue mentioned was a lack of resources. Funding was consistently raised, as was a lack of staff/time.
- A reduced level of staff, support and coordination provided by the SSP was reported to be impacting the ability of schools to run sports clubs, competitions, events and a wide range of sports and therefore resulted in fewer opportunities for participation.

5 Combined responses from Primary & Secondary School Staff

*"The Sports Partnership is much reduced and is offering far fewer competitions, and no staff training or opportunities to meet other Primary School PE coordinators"*

Primary school teacher from Yorkshire and the Humber

*"As a secondary school we have not been working as closely with our primary schools. School sports leadership in our school has decreased since the funding has been lost."*

Secondary school teacher from the East Midlands

### *Similar levels of participation*

Those who reported participation levels as staying the same were asked to explain how:

- The emphasis was on the school's commitment to sport as a subject, including meeting the costs of running competitions and events and working much harder.
- There was a sense that whilst participation had not decreased things had become much more difficult. Some were worried about how long the commitment to sport would remain and others acknowledged that neighbouring schools were suffering as a result of the changes.

*"It has stayed the same for us, but I know other schools have been affected as not all the secondary schools have stayed involved."*

Primary school teacher from the South East

*"We have increased our individual commitment to PE as a school. Not through any help from the DfE"*

Primary school teacher from the South East

*"We have had a member of staff cut from 2 days to 1. We have had to pull harder to still offer the same."*

Secondary school teacher from the Eastern region

### *Increased levels of participation*

For those respondents who had an increase in levels of participation, the reasons given were:

- A commitment to PE as a subject (including paying for extra coaching) and driven by the hard work of staff.
- A number of responses from primary school teachers also mentioned employing a full time PE coach.

- Mention was also made to continued partnerships, local clusters and the introduction of School Games.

*"Year on year our commitment to further enrichment to the school life means we offer more. This is purely down to the continuing commitment of all staff within the school to offer their time for the benefit of the students."*

Secondary school teacher from London

*"We aimed to be proactive in response to the removal of the ringed fence funding and already had plans in place to increase participation."*

Secondary school teacher from the East Midlands

## 4. PE Teacher Release

In the survey we asked whether the money earmarked (but not ring-fenced) to release a PE teacher for one day a week to coordinate School Games with local primary schools was being used to that end.

Answers among the three groups varied, with large numbers reporting that part or none of the money was being spent to release a teacher:

- Just over half of respondents from primary schools thought that local secondary schools were using part of the money for PE teacher release (53%); a third all (32%) and 15% reported that none was being used. However a large number of respondents were not sure.
- 42% of respondents from secondary schools said they were using all of the money available for PE teacher release; 30% thought that part of it was being used and almost an equal number (28%) thought that none was being used.

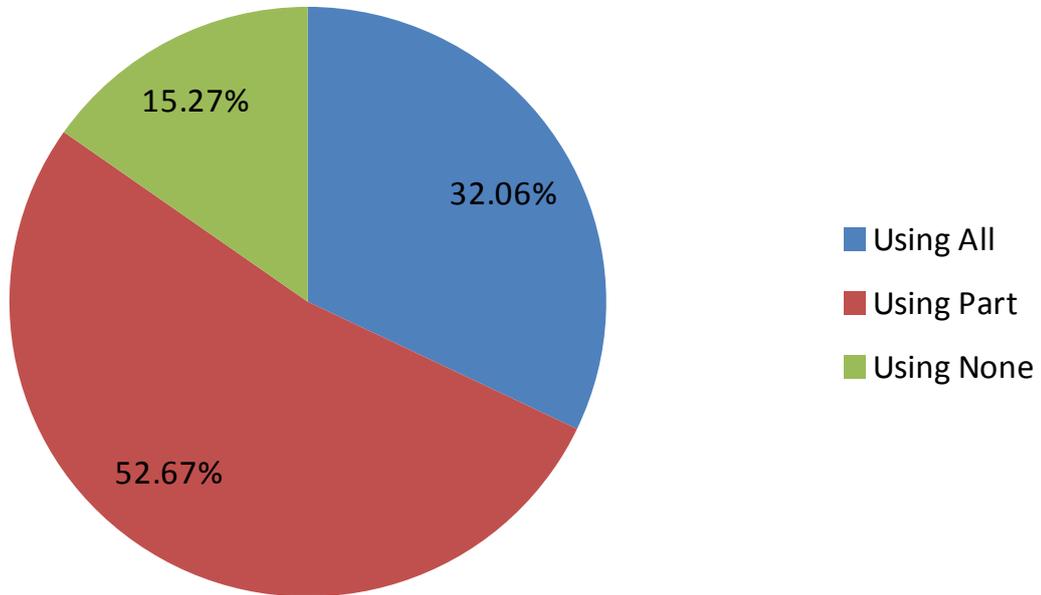
SGOs and SSP staff were asked a slightly different question regarding how many schools in their area spent part, none or all of funds on PE teacher release:

- According to the combined figures 59% of schools spent all on PE teacher release; 27% part; and 14% none.<sup>6</sup>

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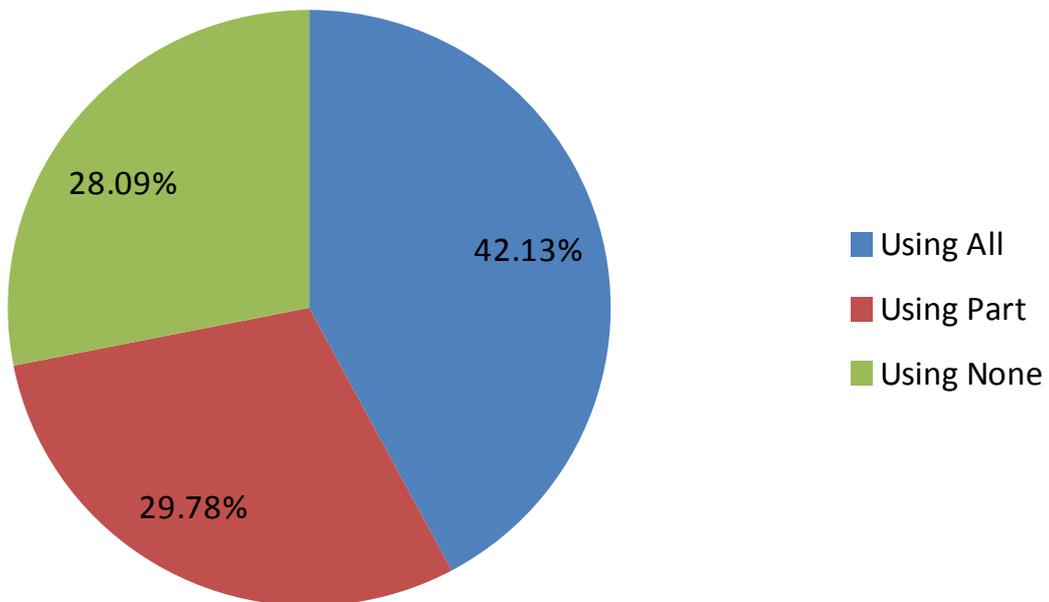
<sup>6</sup> This figure was reached by combining all reported numbers for all SGO/SSP staff – they were asked how many schools they looked after and how many of them used all, part, or none of the funding for to release teachers

**Figure 10: Primary Schools – To the best of your knowledge are the secondary schools in your area using the money for PE teacher release to organise School Games in your area?<sup>7</sup>**



Base: 262

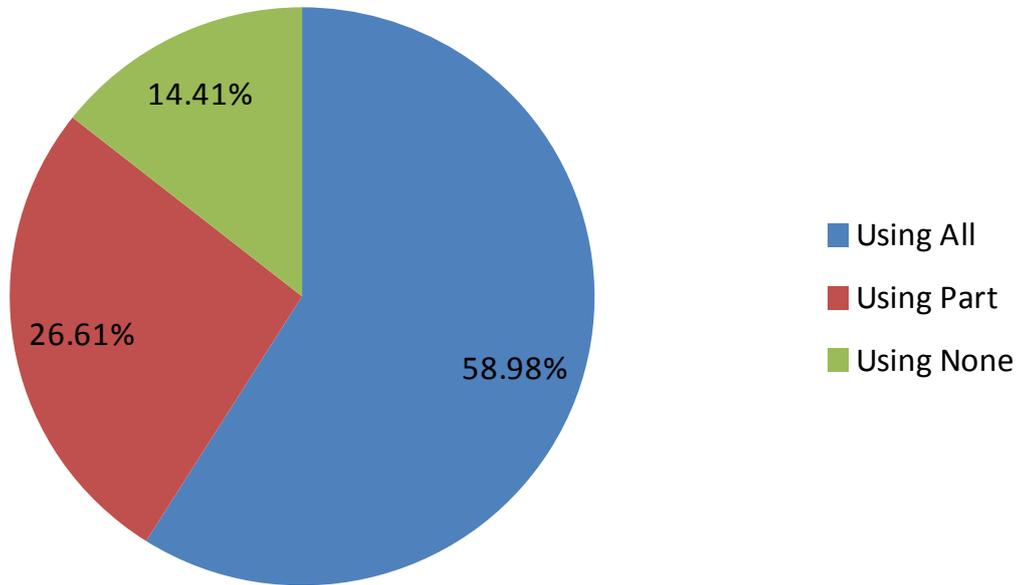
**Figure 11: Secondary Schools – Is your school using all, part or none of the money for PE teacher release to organise School Games in your area?**



Base: 178

<sup>7</sup> Excluding those that replied not sure - 50.84% of total

**Figure 12: School Games Organisers - Of the secondary schools that you work with how many use all, part or none of the PE teacher release money for its intended purpose?**



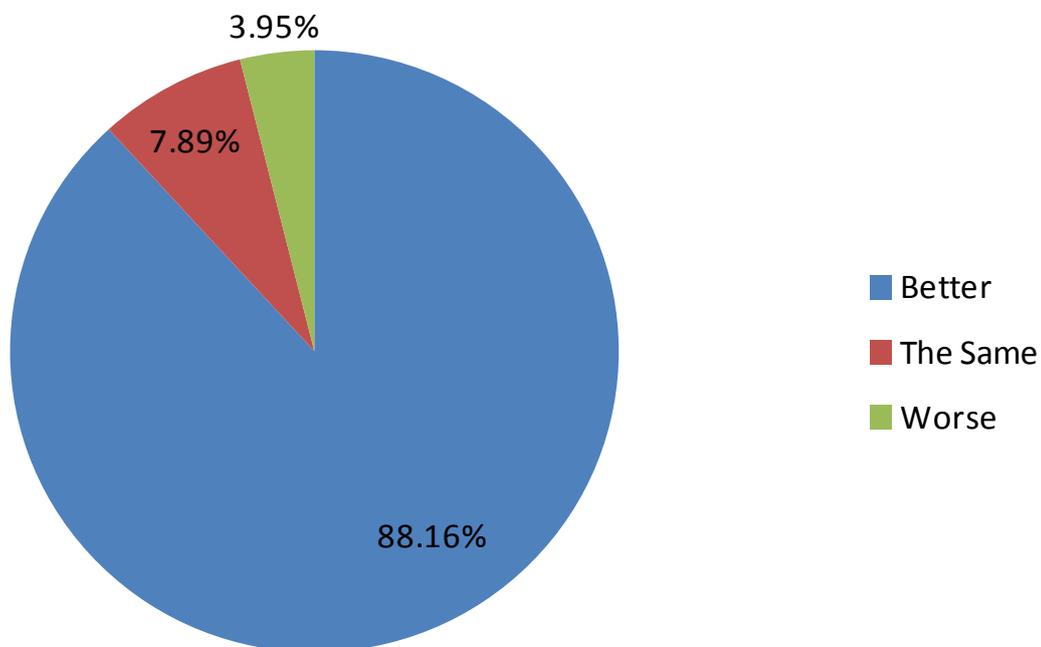
Base: 76 respondents who referred to 590 schools

## 5. The impact of changes

Respondents were asked to consider the overall impact of the switch from ring-fenced funding for SSPs to teacher release and School Games.

- An overwhelming majority (88%) of SSP staff and SGOs stated that the old system was better than the current one.
- A very small number (4%) thought the old system was worse.

**Figure 13: School Games Organisers/SSP Staff - From your experience was the School Sport Partnership system better, the same or worse than the current system for delivering school sport?**



Base: 76

Primary and secondary school teachers were asked a slightly different question about whether the change had brought about improvements.

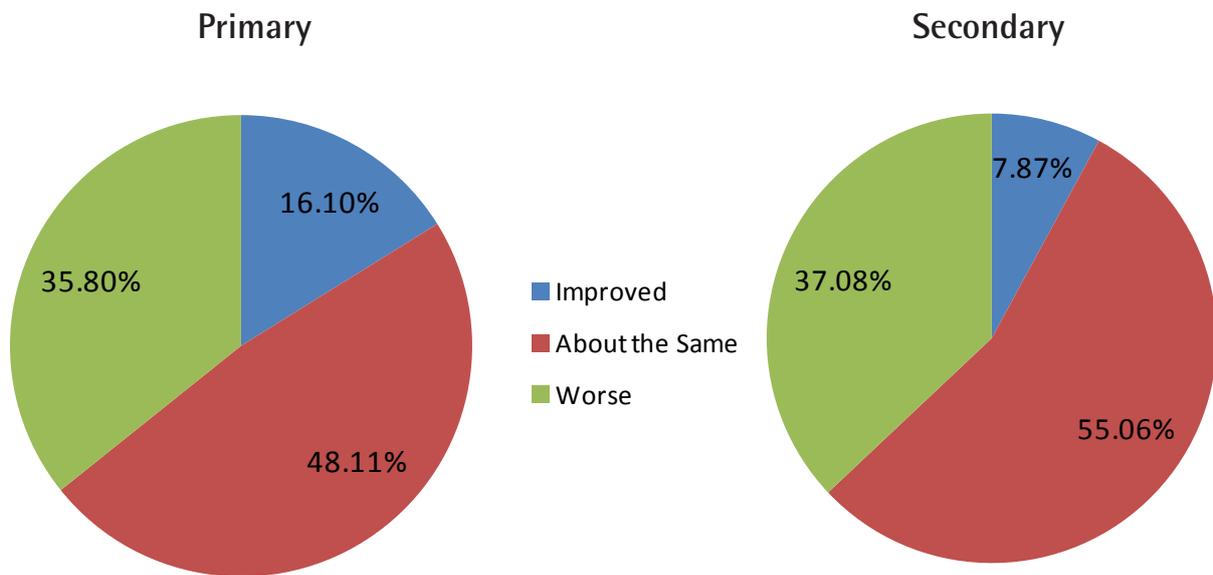
Only a small minority reported an improvement, although the responses from the teachers were more varied:

- 48% of primary school teachers who responded thought that sport and PE in

their school had stayed about the same since the changes; 36% reported a worsening; and 16% an improvement.

- 55% of secondary school teachers who responded thought the sport and PE in their school had stayed about the same since the changes; 37% reported a worsening; and a far smaller number (8%) an improvement.

**Figure 14: Considering your experience of School Sport Partnerships what has been the change, if any, to sport and PE in your school compared to teacher release and the School Games**



Base: Primary: 528; Secondary: 178

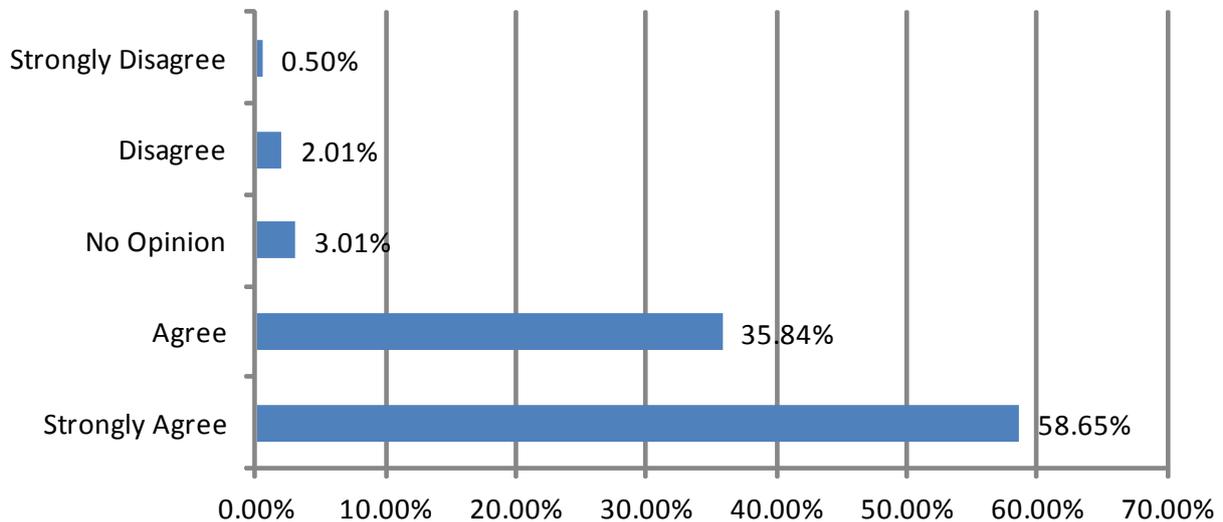
## 6. Opinions on school sport

As part of the survey respondents were asked a range of questions regarding priorities for sport in schools.

### *Responses from Teachers, SGO and SSP Staff*

An overwhelming majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that non-competitive physical activities should be encouraged alongside competitive ones (94%)

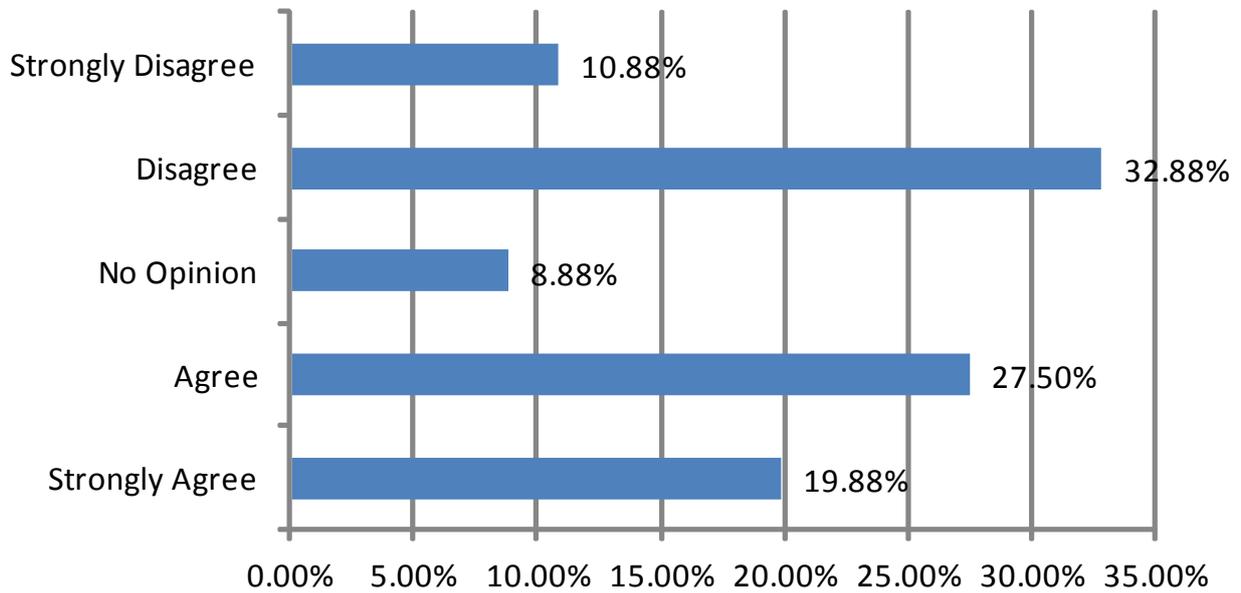
**Figure 15: Non-competitive physical activities must be encouraged alongside competitive activities**



Base: 798

Less than half of those surveyed (47%) thought a strategy focused on competitive sport would inspire inactive children to engage in sport and PE, and 44% disagreed.

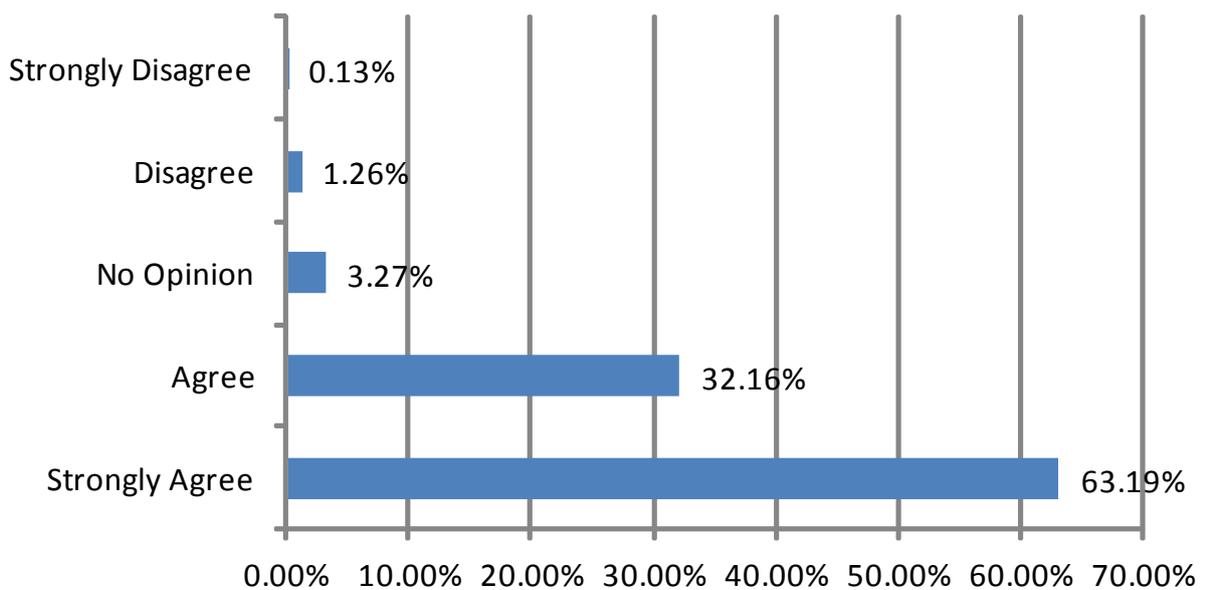
**Figure 16: A strategy focused on competitive sport will inspire inactive children to engage in sport and PE**



Base: 800

The vast majority agreed with the statement that physical activity improves educational attainment (95%).

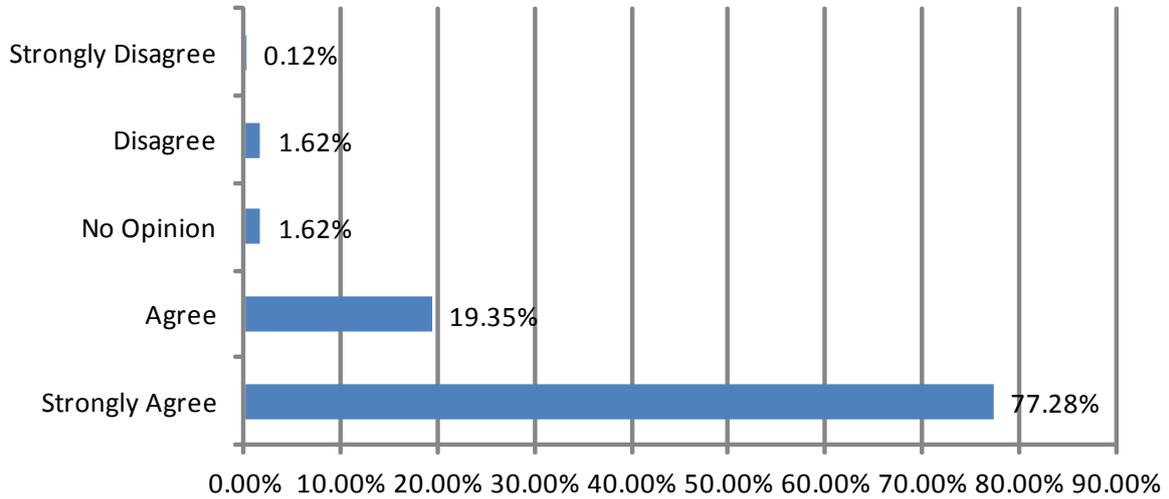
**Figure 17: Physical activity improves educational attainment**



Base: 796

A similar number also thought that schools should have a minimum of two hours PE and sport a week (97%).

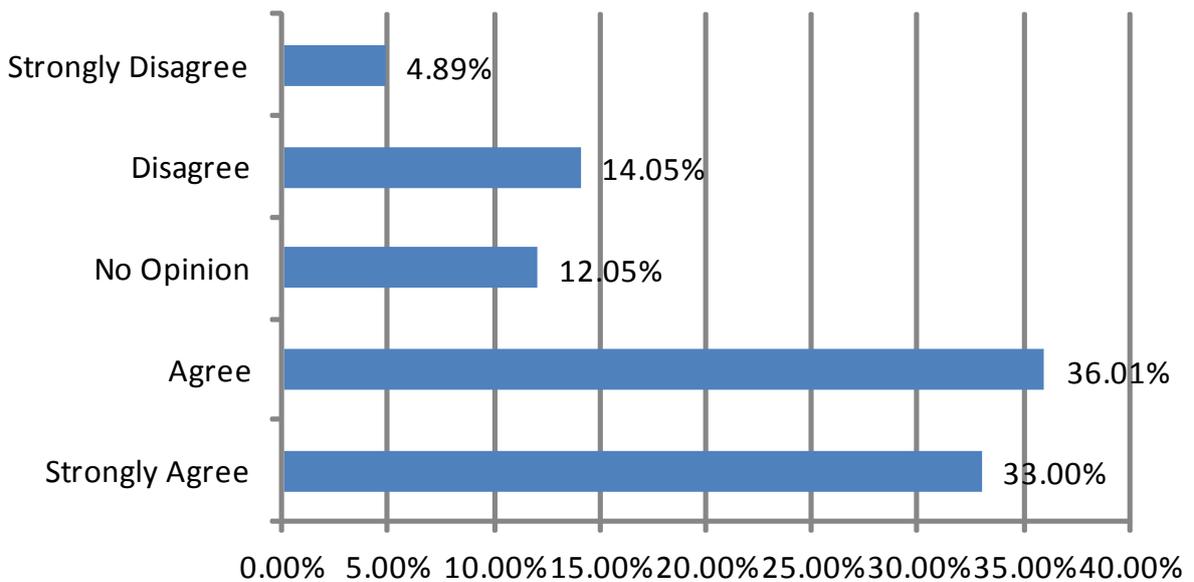
**Figure 18: Schools should have a minimum target of 2 hours PE and sport a week**



Base: 801

On whether schools should be required to monitor participation and make this information available to parents, the majority (69%) either agreed or strongly agreed and only 19% disagreed.

**Figure 19: Schools should be required to monitor participation and make this information available to parents**



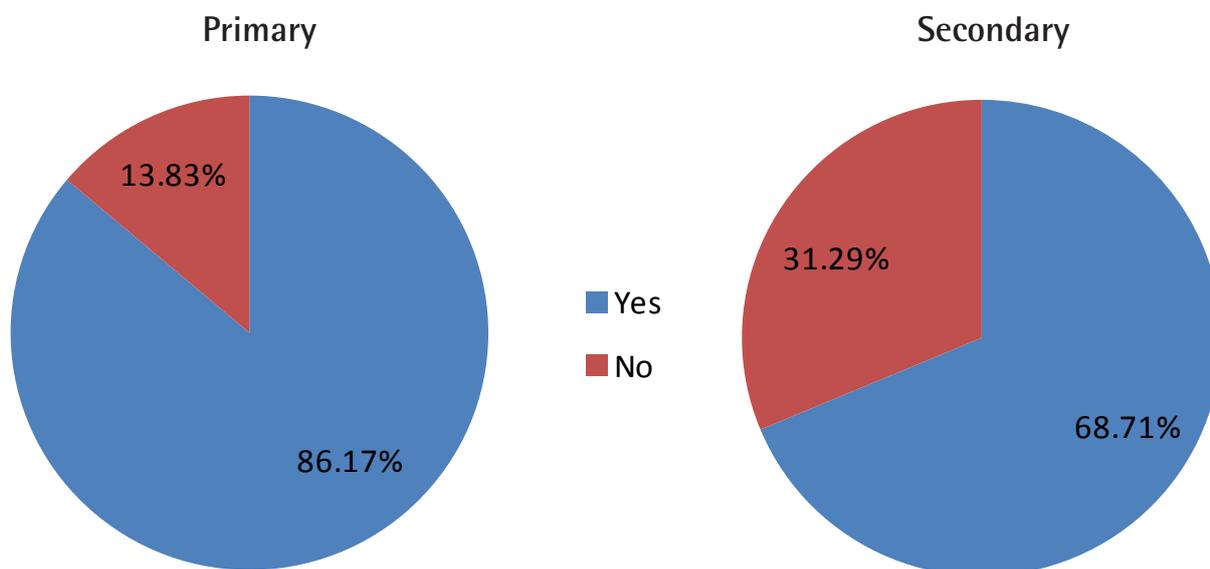
Base: 797

*Views of School Teachers*

The majority of both primary and secondary school teachers surveyed believed that children should be taught a broad range of sports by specialist coaches:

- 86% of respondents from primary schools thought so.
- However, a lower (although relatively high) proportion of secondary school teachers agreed (68%).

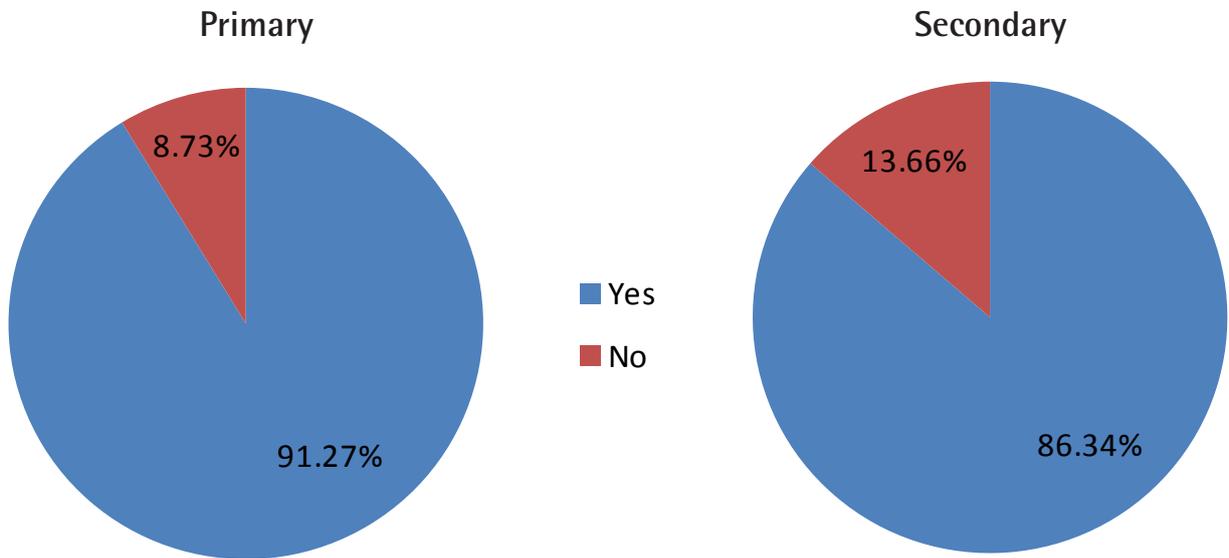
**Figure 20: Do you believe that children should be taught a broad range of sports by specialist coaches?**



Base: Primary: 506; Secondary 163

There was general agreement that if resources were available respondents would buy in expert sports coaching.

Figure 21: If resources were available would you buy in expert sports coaching for children in your school?



Base: Primary: 461; Secondary: 161

## **The Smith Institute**

The Smith Institute is an independent think tank which provides a high-level forum for thought leadership and debate on public policy and politics. It seeks to engage politicians, senior decision makers, practitioners, academia, opinion formers and commentators on promoting policies for a fairer society.

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