

**THE INSPIRATIONAL EFFECT OF  
MAJOR SPORTING EVENTS**

**UK SPORT**

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## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>FOREWORD – WHY IS INSPIRATION IMPORTANT?</b>	3
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	5
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	6
<b>2 METHODOLOGY</b>	6
<b>3 SAMPLE PROFILE</b>	
3.1 Live events	7
3.2 TV viewers	8
<b>4 KEY FINDINGS</b>	
4.1 The inspiration effect	9
4.2 Who is inspired by major events	10
4.3 Market penetration and market development	15
4.4 Attitudinal changes and the likely causes of the inspiration effect	16
4.5 The ‘levers’ that might cause people to act on the inspiration effect	16
<b>5 CONCLUSION</b>	17
<b><u>List of tables</u></b>	
Table 1: The three events	6
Table 2: Specific televised events/sports reported as creating an inspirational effect	7
Table 3: Activity and ‘importance of sport’ profiles of the spectator and TV event viewer samples	8
Table 4: Drivers of inspiration as indicated by spectators	16
<b><u>List of figures</u></b>	
Fig 1: I am inspired to do sport or recreational physical activity more frequently than I normally do: spectators and TV event viewers	9
Fig 2: I am inspired to do sport or recreational physical activity more frequently than I normally do: spectators by age	11
Fig 3: I am inspired to do sport or recreational physical activity more frequently than I normally do: TV event viewers by age	12
Fig 4: I am inspired to do sport or recreational physical activity more frequently than I normally do: spectators by activity level	13
Fig 5: I am inspired to do sport or recreational physical activity more frequently than I normally do: TV event viewers by activity level	14

## FOREWORD - WHY IS INSPIRATION IMPORTANT?

*“When I was 12... I was marched into a large school hall with my classmates. We sat in front of an ancient, black and white TV and watched grainy pictures from the Mexico Olympic Games... That day a window to a new world opened for me. By the time I was back in my classroom, I knew what I wanted to do and what I wanted to be. London's vision is to reach young people all around the world. To connect them with the inspirational power of the Games. So they are inspired to choose sport”*

Seb Coe (6<sup>th</sup> July 2005)

It is an extremely powerful idea that experiencing the performance of a world-leading athlete can directly and positively impact on people's inclination towards their own participation in sporting activity. The concept of an inspirational effect in sport is appealing as it defines a system that is connected from top to bottom. The idea of inspiration is perfectly suited to sport – no other activity combines such a structured hierarchy to identify the best in the world with such a sophisticated global media network to communicate this. Inspiration is often cited as the reason why national sporting achievement and major sporting events are so important. It is therefore surprising that more is not known about the ways in which people are inspired by sporting achievement.

The potential for sport to inspire people is not a new concept. For many years, global corporations have recognised that sport is a highly effective vehicle for inspiring and influencing people's behaviour. Substantial sums have been spent acquiring the rights to use sport to achieve attitudinal and behavioural change in respect of products and brands. As the primary showcase for sport, major events have been at the heart of this activity, and in recent years their inspirational effect has been further amplified through the massive reach of new global broadcasting platforms.

Increasingly, public sector authorities around the world have begun to recognise the potential to use major events to help achieve some of their objectives – especially in the areas of tourism and economic development. However there have been comparatively limited efforts to use large-scale events to help support other public sector objectives, such as the encouragement of sporting and physical activity. If major sporting events are powerful enough to be used to effect an attitudinal change in people towards commercial products, it is not unreasonable to suggest that an even stronger opportunity may exist to effect an attitudinal change in people towards the actual sport being played, and their disposition towards participating more frequently in that sporting activity.

This study – comprising spectator surveys at three events held in the summer of 2010 and an associated omnibus survey of a representative sample of the British population (August 2010) - has therefore explored the link between major sporting events and their power to inspire people to participate in sport. It does not claim that major events will automatically lead to participation increase – they will not. There are many subsequent causal factors beyond the control of a major event that determine whether people translate inspiration into behavioural change. What it does show however, is that major events can play a powerful role at the start of what is a complex process, sparking people's desire to participate or participate more, and signposting them towards the next stage of that journey.

Therefore the focus of this study is very consciously limited to the power of events to inspire attitudinal change around participation. In limiting the scope of the study in this way, we hope to assess the impacts that can realistically be attributed to a major event, as opposed to attempting to measure people's complex journey from inspiration through to actual behavioural change. In this respect we

have taken our lead from the recently published eventIMPACTS project ([www.eventimpacts.com](http://www.eventimpacts.com)), which advocates setting realistic and measurable objectives in respect of what major events can and cannot achieve. By assessing the immediate impact of major sporting events on people's inclination to participate in the future, we have also sought to complement recent studies that have introduced the idea that major events can have a 'demonstration effect'<sup>1</sup> on the participatory behaviour of certain groups.

UK Sport is the lead agency responsible for co-ordinating the bidding and staging of major international sporting events in the UK. Ahead of London 2012, its major events investment strategy has focused primarily on driving benefits to high performance sport in preparation for a home Games. After London 2012, investment will seek to achieve a wider set of four objectives:

- Support and profile high performance success
- Create high-profile opportunities to engage people with sport
- Use and demonstrate the legacy of London 2012 and Glasgow 2014
- Create positive economic and social benefits for the UK

With previous research having demonstrated the performance advantages of hosting major events on home soil<sup>2</sup>, and given that there exists a significant body of research highlighting the economic benefits of hosting major events, this study has therefore sought to better understand UK Sport's second major events objective of creating high-profile opportunities that engage people with sport.

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<sup>1</sup> The 'Demonstration Effect' is outlined in a review paper produced for Sport England by Professor Mike Weed: [http://www.sportengland.org/about\\_us/sport\\_england\\_conferences/idoc.ashx?docid=b97bc095-eb32-4c20-91d4-5943b85e9462&version=2](http://www.sportengland.org/about_us/sport_england_conferences/idoc.ashx?docid=b97bc095-eb32-4c20-91d4-5943b85e9462&version=2)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.uk sport.gov.uk/publications/home-advantage>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 67% of live spectators at the major sporting events studied felt inspired to participate or participate more frequently in sport as a result of their attendance at that event.
- Over two-thirds of the British population (68%) had watched a major sporting event on TV in the three months prior to interview.
- 28% of these viewers felt inspired to participate or participate more frequently in sport as a result of watching a major event on TV. The ability to inspire 280,000 people in a broadcast that reaches 1m viewers presents a significant opportunity to encourage people towards greater physical activity.
- Major events are a particularly powerful way of inspiring young people to participate in sport. Nearly three quarters of spectators under 25, and half of all TV event viewers under 25, felt inspired by that experience to participate more frequently in sport.
- The inspirational impact of major sporting events is most effective on people already participating in sport or physical activity, however major events can have an impact in inspiring currently inactive people.
- The primary drivers of the inspirational impact experienced at major sporting events relate to the performance of the top players and athletes themselves, as opposed to the nature, location and presentation of the events.
- The study shows that major events possess real potential to stimulate audiences to undertake more sport. Consequently, we believe that:
  - There are benefits in co-ordinating national/regional major event strategies with national/regional sports development strategies. Major events in isolation can only make a contribution towards people's journey on the road to increased participation. In the long-term, the significant promotional impact generated by major live and televised events will count for little unless it is picked up and connected to resourced programmes designed to activate that interest.
  - Broadcasters should give greater consideration to how they can use the promotional and inspirational impacts associated with their coverage of major sporting events to support participation initiatives.
  - Major event organisers should consider how they can harness the inspirational impact of their events on live spectators, with particular attention being paid to the fact that spectators are likely to already be involved in the sporting system, and will often be inspired to participate more frequently than normal.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

People experience major sporting events in one of two ways – as a live spectator, or through the media. For this reason, and acknowledging that these are two very different groups, we have looked at the question of impact from the perspective of both spectators and those who watch events on TV.

This report presents the findings from a programme of primary research commissioned by UK Sport and conducted by the Sport Industry Research Centre (SIRC) at Sheffield Hallam University at three major sporting events in the summer of 2010 - the FIH Women’s Hockey Champions Trophy in Nottingham; the Triathlon World Championships Series in Hyde Park, London; and the IRB Women’s Rugby World Cup in Guildford and Twickenham. All three events were supported by UK Sport’s World Class Events Programme (WCEP). These findings were then supplemented by the results of an omnibus survey of a representative sample of the British population carried out by Ipsos MORI between 13-19 August 2010.

The basic aim of both pieces of research was to explore the extent to which major sporting events have the potential to inspire people – whether spectators or TV viewers - to participate in sport or recreational activity more frequently than they do normally.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

A standard self-completion questionnaire was used at each of the three live events. The content of the questionnaire was developed by UK Sport in consultation with Sport England and focused on the immediate inspirational impact generated by the events. The questionnaire contained demographic questions and behavioural and attitudinal questions, which were used to explore differences in inspiration levels experienced by different types of spectators. Overall, more than 2,300 responses were achieved across the three events. An overview of the events and the sample size achieved at each event is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The three events

Event	Days	Location & Date	Ticketed	Sample Size	Spectators (unique visitors)
Women’s Hockey Champions Trophy	9	Nottingham 10-18 July 2010	Yes	781	5,100
Triathlon World Championships Series	2	London 24-25 July 2010	No	781	14,300
Women’s Rugby World Cup	5	Guildford/London 10 Aug–5 Sep 2010	Yes	750	8,800

Many of the questions used in the spectator survey were replicated in the Ipsos MORI omnibus. This was carried out via face-to-face interviews with 1,998 adults aged 15+. The major difference from the live spectator surveys was around the identification of the major event that had been viewed. For the omnibus survey, people were asked firstly whether they had watched a major sporting event on TV in

the past three months, with prompts provided as to some of the events they might have seen. Those who had seen an event, were then asked whether the experience of watching that event had made them feel inspired to do sport or physical activity more frequently than they normally did. Finally, those viewers who gave a positive response to this question were asked to identify the particular event they were thinking of. While most respondents did identify a particular event, some merely named a sport. Table 2 consolidates the two types of response – there may be significant seasonal variation in the responses based on the time of year the survey was conducted (this survey was conducted in summer 2010).

Table 2: Specific televised events/sports reported as creating an inspirational effect

<b>Event / Sport</b>	<b>% of respondents mentioning an event or sport</b>
FIFA World Cup/Football	50
Wimbledon/Tennis	21
European Athletics Championships/Athletics	11
Open Golf Championship/US Masters/Golf	9
Cricket	6
Swimming	5
Tour de France/Cycling	5
Rugby	3
Boxing	1
London Marathon	1
Olympic Games	1
Other	5
Don't know/no answer	3

*Base: all respondents who felt inspired to take part in sport as a result of watching a major sporting event on TV (n=371)  
 Nb. some respondents mentioned more than one event or sport*

### **3. SAMPLE PROFILE**

#### **3.1 Live Events**

Across the three live events, the sample of spectators interviewed was predominantly female (56%); able bodied (95%); white (95%); and relatively young (56% were aged 16-34). Around 90% of respondents were UK residents. While it cannot be claimed that the samples were fully representative of the crowds who attended each event, the SIRC research team on each occasion sought to achieve what it considered to be a reasonably representative cross-section of interviewees in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. Ensuring that survey samples collected during live fieldwork are reasonably representative of their population is achieved, as on this occasion, by: professional research design; training staff to Market Research Society standards; overseeing fieldwork by using senior staff at the event; and interviewing as large a sample size as possible to minimize the introduction of bias.

Compared with the population generally, live spectators at the sporting events surveyed were extremely active. More than half (54%) of the live spectator sample undertook sport or recreational physical activity on a regular basis (3x30 minutes per week) and a further 40% were occasional sports participants (ie. they had done at least 30 minutes sport or physical activity on between 1-11 days in the four weeks before interview)<sup>3</sup>. The large majority considered doing sport or physical activity to be an important part of their lives (92%) and were supporting a particular athlete or team at the event at which they were interviewed (76%). Moreover, all three events attracted very high concentrations of participants of the sport featured, with high proportions of those participants also being club members of that sport.

### 3.2 TV Viewers

In the omnibus survey we found that some two thirds of the British population (68%) watch major sporting events on TV. Among this group, men were slightly over-represented (54%) while women (46%) and those in social grade DE (18%) were under-represented.

We found that whilst TV viewers of major sporting events also have above average activity levels, these were at nowhere near the same levels as those of live event spectators. According to the above definition, 28% were 'regular' participants, 37% were 'occasional' participants, and 68% considered doing sport and physical activity to be an important part of their lives. The greater these 'activity' and 'importance' levels are, the more likely people are to watch televised events.

Table 3: Activity and 'importance of sport' profiles of the spectator and TV event viewer samples (%)

Variable	Category	Hockey	Triathlon	Rugby	Total spectators	TV event viewers
		<i>n</i> = 781	<i>n</i> = 781	<i>n</i> = 750	<i>n</i> = 2312	<i>n</i> = 1349
Sport / Physical Activity Level	Zero days	6	5	9	6	34
	1 – 11 days	46	31	43	40	37
	12+ days	48	64	49	54	28
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Importance of Sport	Very Important	68	61	57	63	35
	Quite Important	26	29	34	30	33
	Not Important	6	10	9	8	32
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Nb. Where percentages do not add up to 100%, this is due to rounding*

<sup>3</sup> By comparison, the latest results of Sport England's Active People Survey (Sep 2010) indicate that, during the 12 months to July 2010, 16.7% of the adult population in England participated in sport three times a week for 30 minutes at moderate intensity. Meanwhile 26.1% of the population had taken part in between 1-11 sessions in the four weeks before interview



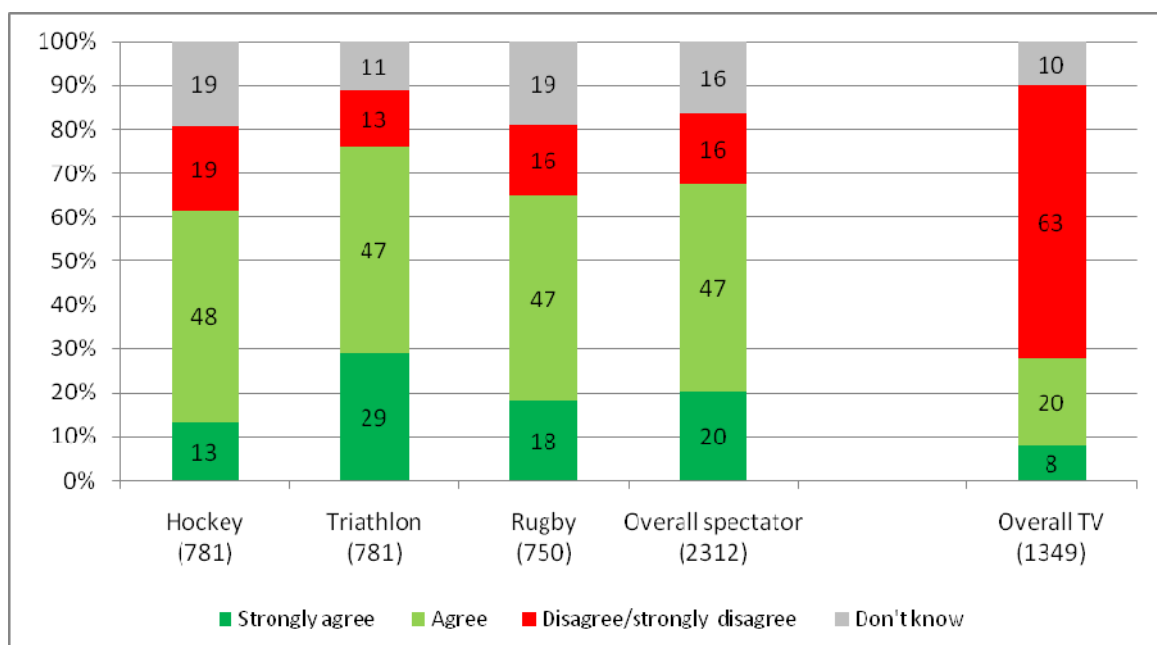
## 4. KEY FINDINGS

### 4.1 The inspiration effect

Around 67% of respondents at live events either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that, based on their attendance at the event, they felt inspired to do sport or recreational physical activity more frequently than they did normally.

Around 28% of all TV event viewers either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that, based on their viewing of a major sporting event, they felt inspired to do sport or recreational physical activity more frequently than they did normally. Figure 1 sets out both findings, together with the inspiration effect experienced by spectators at each of the three events included in the study.

Figure 1: I am inspired to do sport or recreational physical activity more frequently than I normally do: spectators and TV event viewers (%)



Bases: all spectators/TV event viewers

Whilst higher inspiration levels were recorded for spectators at live events, the potential reach of televised sport means that, in numeric terms, the aggregated inspirational impact is likely to be significantly higher on TV event viewers. The ability to inspire 280,000 people in a broadcast that reaches 1m viewers presents a significant opportunity to inspire people to participate more frequently in sport. This is especially relevant as the majority of the population (68%) watch major sporting events, meaning that, overall, some 19% of the public draw a sense of inspiration from televised major sporting events.

A further factor to consider when comparing these levels of inspiration, is that live spectators responded to questions asked immediately at the event, whereas TV event viewers were asked about a major sporting event they had watched in the previous three months. It is reasonable to speculate that inspiration is higher when captured during or immediately after the excitement and euphoria of an

event. It is therefore possible that the inspiration levels of TV event viewers may have been higher had their reactions been captured immediately after the event(s) in question.

Among live spectators, the inspiration effect was significantly higher in the Triathlon event than the Hockey and Rugby events – perhaps due to the presence of a mass participation element of the Triathlon World Championships Series. Those spectators who took part in the mass participation element of the Triathlon event had higher levels of inspiration than those who did not. There may be aspects of those major events which have a mass participation component that is particularly inspiring.

Overall, 58% of spectators who claimed to have been inspired said that this was related to taking part in the specific sport featured at the event. This response was more common in the case of the Women's Hockey Champions Trophy (67%) than in the World Championships Series Triathlon (54%) or the Women's Rugby World Cup (56%). However, a half of spectators (50%) said they felt inspired to do another sport (or sport generally).

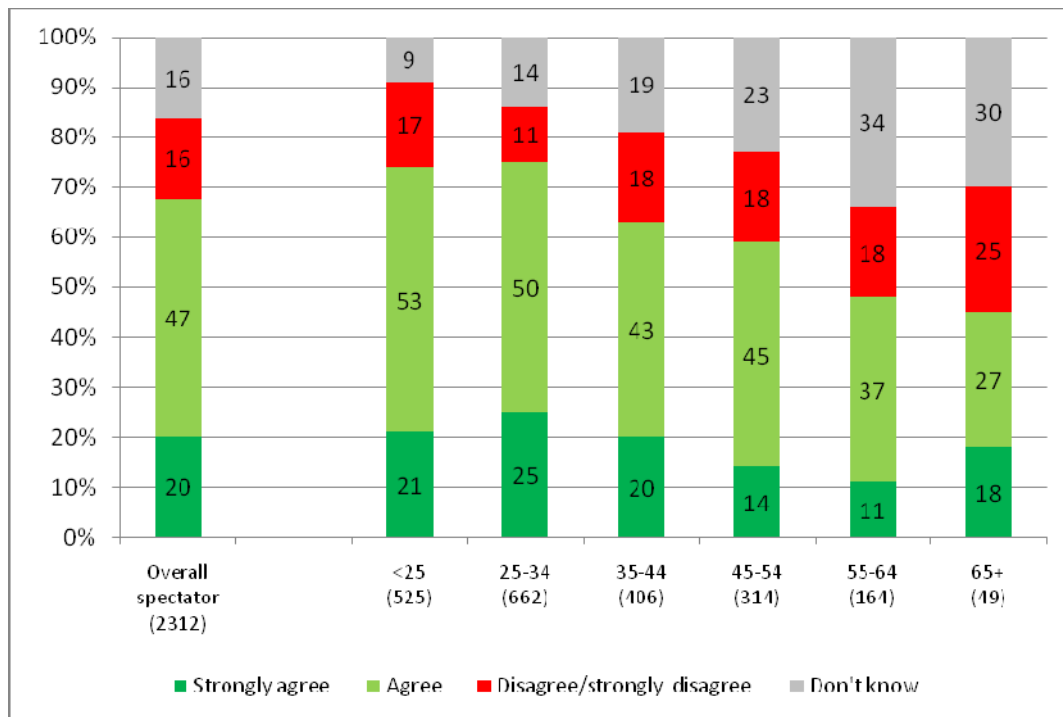
As far as TV event viewers were concerned, the inspiration felt was more specific to the particular sport featured during the event watched. Over three-quarters of those who claimed they had been inspired (77%) said they felt inspired to take part more often than they normally did in the specific sport featured at the event. Around a quarter (28%) said they felt inspired to do another sport (or sport generally). Those respondents who claimed to have been inspired by watching a major event on TV were most likely to have been inspired (see Table 2 above) by watching an event in football (50%), tennis (21%) or athletics (11%). Athletics appears to be the sport that provides the most 'generalist' source of inspiration for TV event viewers, with 50% of those who said that athletics had been their source of inspiration indicating that they felt motivated to do something other than (or as well as) athletics.

#### ***4.2 Who is inspired by major sporting events?***

##### Age

There is a significant difference in the inspiration effect when the results are assessed by age. Among live spectators (see Figure 2), the inspiration effect is above average in the 16-34 age range (under 25: 74% and 25-34: 75%) and begins to fall from the 35-44 age group onwards. There is a gap of 30 percentage points between the most inspired age group (25-34; 75%) and the least inspired age group (65+: 45%).

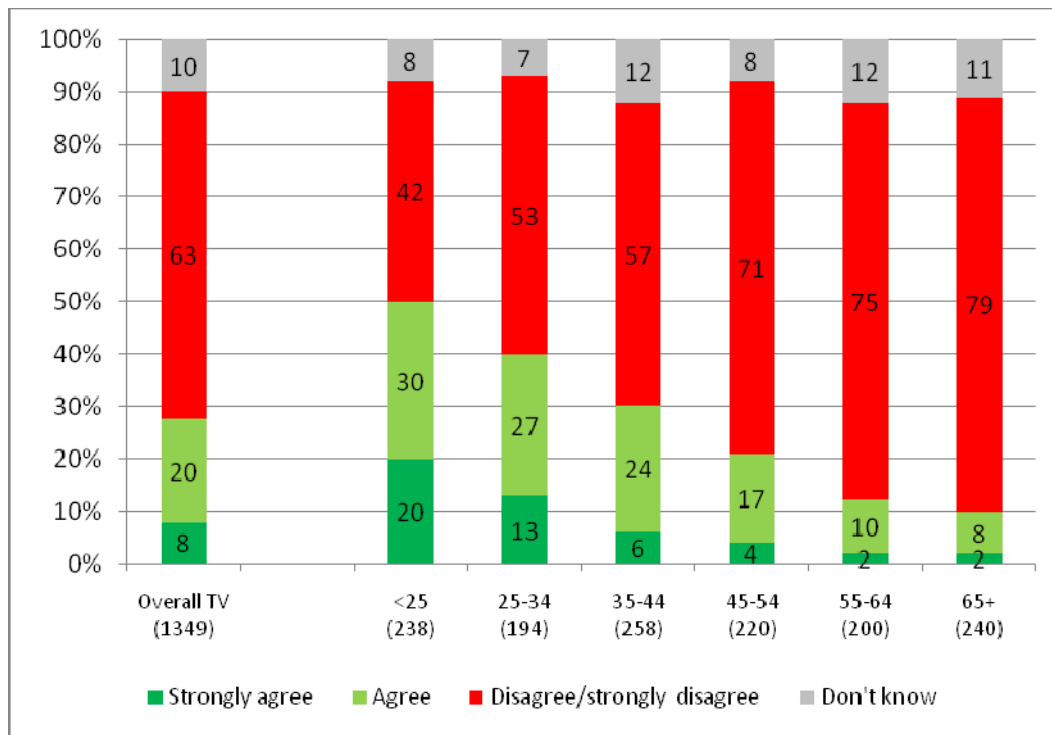
**Figure 2: I am inspired to do sport or recreational physical activity more frequently than I normally do: spectators by age (%)**



Base: all spectators (nb. 192 respondents did not specify their age)

Viewers of major sporting events on TV also showed a marked correlation between age and inspiration (see Figure 3). Around 50% of under-25 year olds watching a major sporting event on TV said they felt inspired to participate more frequently in sport than they normally did. The inspirational effect then decreases consistently and steadily in age, by around 10 points through each of the next three age bands (25-34, 35-44 and 45-54). The potential to use major events to inspire young people to participate in sport is seen as particularly important, especially as this is often identified as a key group in which to sustain sports participation.

**Figure 3: I am inspired to do sport or recreational physical activity more frequently than I normally do: TV event viewers by age (%)**



Base: all TV event viewers

#### Gender, Ethnicity and Disability

There is no significant difference in the inspiration effect on live spectators when the data is broken down by gender, ethnicity and disability. Among viewers of major sporting events on TV however, the inspiration effect is more keenly felt by men (32%) than by women (22%), and by people from non-white (51%) rather than white (26%) backgrounds.

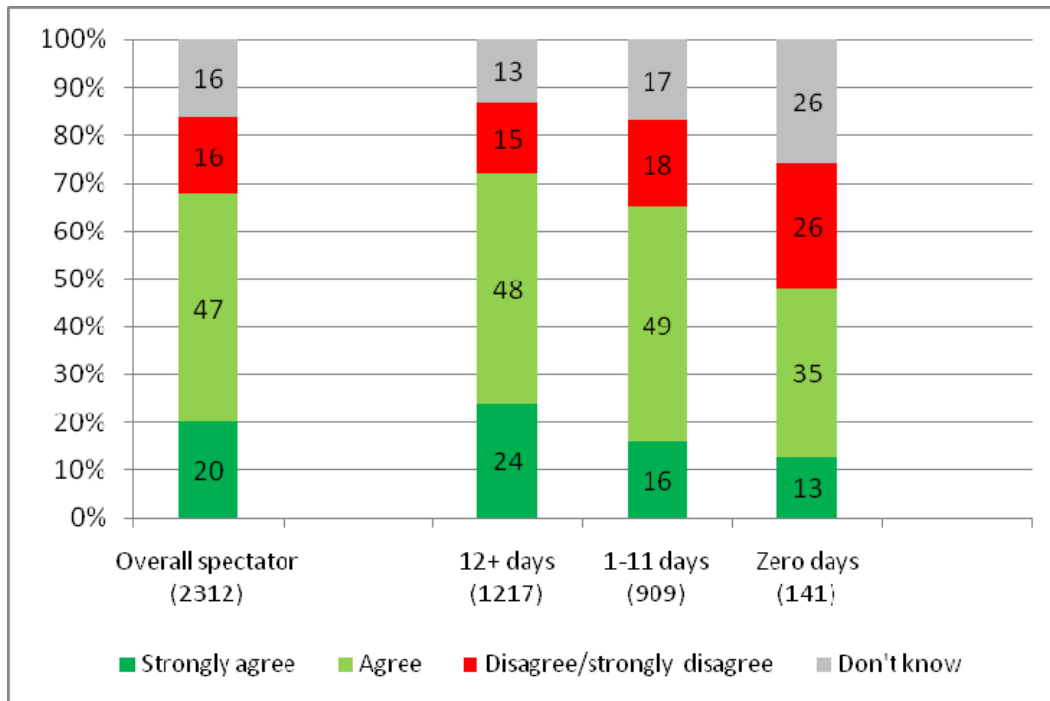
#### Predisposition to Sport

As already mentioned, taking part in sport and recreational physical activity was quite important or very important to 92% of the live spectator sample: among TV event viewers, 68% said that doing sport was important to them. The more important sport was to respondents of both types, the more likely they were to agree – and agree strongly – that they had been inspired by the event they had attended or watched on TV.

#### Existing Participation Levels

Inspiration is also positively associated with existing levels of participation in sport and physical activity. Figure 4 shows that, of those spectators considered 'inactive' (zero days of activity in the past four weeks), 48% reported that they had been inspired to participate more frequently as a result of attending the event. This figure increased to 65% for those who had undertaken occasional activity (1-12 days of activity in the past four weeks). This in turn increased to 72% for those considered to be regularly active (12+ days of activity).

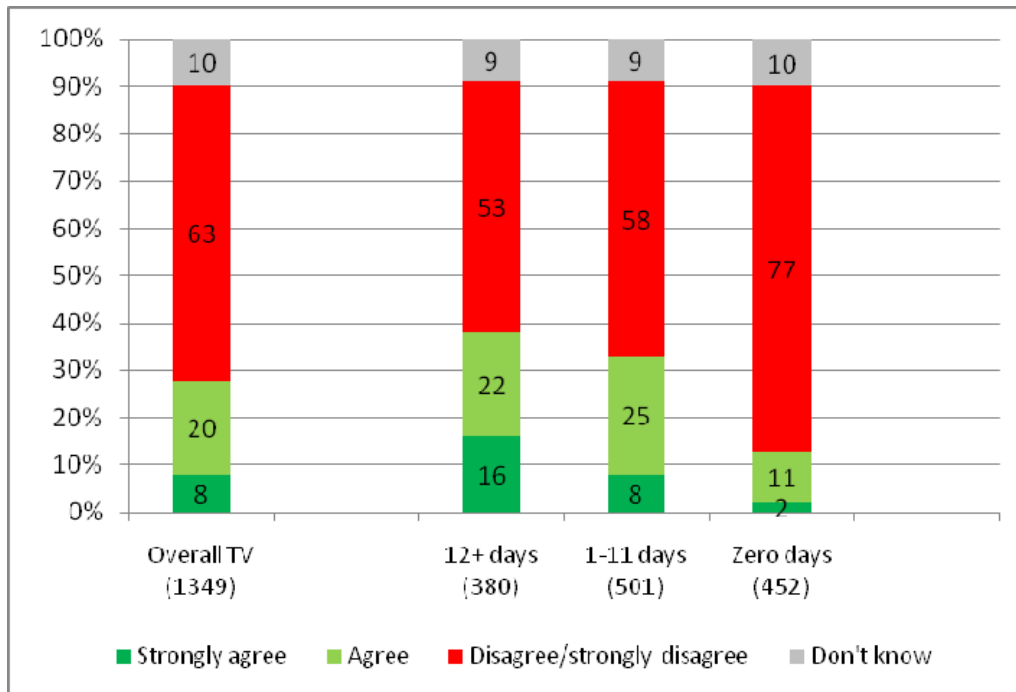
**Figure 4: I am inspired to do sport or recreational physical activity more frequently than I normally do: spectators by activity level (%)**



*Base: all spectators (nb. 45 respondents did not specify their activity level)*

Among viewers of major sporting events on TV, there was a similar pattern of increasing inspiration levels relative to frequency of current participation. Figure 5 shows that 13% of 'inactive' TV event viewers reported that they had been inspired to participate more frequently as a result of watching an event, whereas this figure increased to 33% for those occasionally active, and 38% for those regularly active. These figures are considered further below in terms of market penetration and market development.

**Figure 5: I am inspired to do sport or recreational physical activity more frequently than I normally do: TV event viewers by activity level (%)**



Base: all TV event viewers (nb. 16 respondents did not specify their activity level)

The idea that the inspirational effect is felt more strongly by those already ‘within’ sport is further supported by results that consider club membership. 71% of those spectators who were members of a club in the sport featured at the event reported that they had been inspired by attendance, whereas this figure fell to 66% for those who were not club members. Spectators who were already supporting a particular team or athlete were also found to have a marginally higher inspiration effect score (69%) than those who were not (64%).

For spectators who received information at the event they attended about opportunities for taking part in sport and recreational physical activity, the inspiration effect score was again significantly higher (85%) than for those who did not (65%). However this finding relates to only 10% of the sample who said that they had received any such information. There was, however, no evidence of a 'dose response' effect: that is, people attending one day of an event are just as likely to be inspired as those attending two or more days of the event.

These findings indicate two distinct but related conclusions:

- The inspirational effect itself can be felt by both active and inactive people; however it tends to be more effective impacting on those who are already active.

- Major events tend to attract live spectators (and, to a lesser extent, TV viewers) who take part in sport or physical activity more often than the general population. As a result, the inspirational effect is ‘communicated’ through events to a greater number of active people than inactive people.

If this is correct, then it means that any inspirational effect generated by a major sporting event on spectators or TV viewers will primarily be a ‘market penetration’ effect, rather than a ‘market development’ effect.

### **4.3 Market Penetration and Market Development**

Market penetration is used to describe the potential of an event to effect a positive change in those already considered to be within the market – in this case those already active. Market development is used to describe those who have been brought inside the market for the first time – in this case those who are considered inactive.

The findings of the study indicate that major events have significant potential to support market penetration in that they can inspire those already connected to sport to participate more frequently. Market penetration is a worthwhile outcome and clearly contributes to ‘sustain’ targets set by bodies such as Sport England for retaining participation in sport. This value is further strengthened given that the inspirational effect of major sporting events is strongest with young people, for whom retention in sport is particularly important.

The study suggests that whilst major events are less successful at supporting market development, they can have an impact in inspiring currently inactive people. Whereas the spectator sample was dominated by active people for whom doing sport was an important part of their life, televised events attract significant numbers of people who are not particularly predisposed to doing sport - 34% of TV event viewers indicated that they did not currently take part in sport. Of these inactive TV event viewers, 13% claimed to have been inspired to do ‘more sport than they normally do’ as a result of having watched a major sporting event or events on TV. Scaling this across a mass TV broadcast generates a potentially interesting route to influence a meaningful number of inactive people.

Even among live spectators, many of whom are predisposed to sport and activity, there is some evidence of a market development effect. 48% of the 141 spectators who indicated that they are not currently active sports participants reported an inspirational effect. Scaling this finding to the total number of spectator admissions made across the three events in the study (approximately 50,000 which, allowing for repeat viewing over multiple event days, were generated by around 28,200 different people), our calculation is that some 855 individuals who were completely inactive in the four weeks prior to being interviewed felt inspired to take up sport as a result of their event experience.

In the case of live events, given that a relatively significant percentage of inactive people reported an inspirational effect (48%), the action most likely to increase overall market development could be the introduction of measures designed to attract more inactive people to major sporting events.

#### 4.4 Attitudinal changes and the likely causes of the inspiration effect

When ‘inspired’ spectators were asked to evaluate in more detail how their attitude towards taking part in sport and physical activity had changed, their most common responses were about a reconnection with the enjoyment of sport (92%), a desire to get fitter (88%) and a desire to improve their performance or achieve personal sporting success (85%). These levels of agreement were consistent both across the three events and with the responses of ‘inspired’ TV event viewers when they were asked the same question.

When asked to rate the particular features of an event that had resulted in the inspiration to do more sport or physical activity, spectators tended to highlight those things connected to the inspirational standard of the competition and athletes, as opposed to the ancillary presentation and ‘show’ of the event (see Table 4). The primary driving factors of inspiration were the ‘*skill and ability of the competitors*’ (60% of respondents said that this factor had had a ‘high impact’ on them); the ‘*quality of competition on show*’ (51%); and the ‘*performance of any team or athlete being supported*’ (50%). Again, these results were broadly consistent across the three events and with the responses of TV event viewers. Together, these findings all provide useful pointers for event organisers and broadcasters who may have an interest in maximising the sports development impact of a major event they are staging or broadcasting.

Table 4: Drivers of inspiration as indicated by spectators

	High	Moderate	Low	None N /A	Total
The whole atmosphere	35%	49%	9%	7%	100%
The physical environment in which the event is taking place	31%	49%	12%	8%	100%
The skill and ability of the athletes	60%	29%	5%	6%	100%
The quality of the competition	51%	36%	7%	6%	100%
The performance of the team / athlete I have been supporting	50%	30%	6%	14%	100%
Activities that have been going on around the main event	12%	36%	29%	23%	100%
Information I've received while I've been at the event	7%	20%	29%	44%	100%

Base: all spectators (n=2312)

#### 4.5 The ‘levers’ that might cause people to act on the inspiration effect

These surveys have sought to measure feelings of inspiration rather than absolute commitments to action. Although the results are positive for both spectators and TV event viewers, there is no guarantee that the motivation generated by spectating and viewing experiences actually translates into increased participation, whether in the near future or in the longer term.

On the basis that people may need active encouragement to convert intention or aspiration into action, spectator and omnibus survey respondents were asked to indicate the degree of importance they attached to six different types of intervention which might harness their inspiration. These were listed on the survey questionnaire as follows:



- Taster sessions ... where I live<sup>4</sup>
- Information about sports that I can do where I live at a level that is appropriate to my fitness and ability.
- Information about local clubs or centres where I could have a go.
- The chance to talk to sports people about the right types of sport for me to try.
- The chance to meet athletes and hear how they got started in their sport.
- The chance to try sport in a non-threatening environment (with other inexperienced people).

Amongst spectators, the highest scoring interventions (in terms of their importance) were both concerned with information: either information about local sports clubs (68% of respondents rated this as 'very important' or 'quite important'), or information about sports that people can do at an appropriate level given their fitness and ability (69%).

The third most important choice among spectators – the opportunity to try sport in a non-threatening environment with other inexperienced people (60%) – was nevertheless the most popular option for viewers of major events on TV (80%), who actually scored all six intervention types in the 70-80% range. This may correlate with the findings detailed above which indicate that viewers of major events on TV are less likely to have an existing connection or experience within the sport.

What these findings indicate is that sports providers ideally need to make available a package of measures when seeking to capitalise on the excitement and enthusiasm generated among the public at large by major sporting events. As far as spectators are concerned, however, these efforts can afford to be a little more focused – because, as we have shown, those individuals who actually attend events tend to be younger and more active than the population generally, and regard doing sport as more important. It should be noted that spectators (as opposed to TV viewers) were also asked to rate the importance of taster sessions held at an event itself, but this intervention achieved a considerably lower score (40%) than the other types of intervention, with the most common rating being 'not particularly important'. There is no significant variation in the relative importance of the seven levers when they are analysed by event.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The measurement of the inspiration effects of three major sporting events in the UK, and of televised sporting events generally, provides a new dimension to event impact evaluation. The research has provided an insight into the potential of events to stimulate audiences to undertake more sport and in doing so has raised some important issues. These relate to the process of measuring inspiration amongst spectators; the nature of those who attend major sporting events; identifying who is inspired by major sports events; and implications for future research.

However, whilst stimulating inspiration in itself represents a step in the right direction, the ultimate aspiration of sport development professionals is for target audiences to make positive changes in their participation levels. However, there is no guarantee that 'intent to change' will necessarily result in 'actual behavioural change'.

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<sup>4</sup> Spectators were asked about taster sessions in the sport featured at the event they were attending, or other sports. TV event viewers in the omnibus survey were asked about taster sessions in sports 'they were interested in'.

It is therefore important to recognise the unique benefits and limitations of major events in the overall drive to encourage people to participate in sport. The inspirational power of major sporting events, amplified by their huge media reach, suggests that they can be an extremely powerful marketing tool to generate greater interest in participating in sport. However, major events in isolation can only make a contribution towards people's journey on the road to increased participation. In the long-term, the promotional impact generated by an event will count for little unless it is picked up and connected to a resourced programme designed to activate that interest.

The following recommendations should be considered:

- There are benefits in co-ordinating national/regional major event strategies with national/regional sports development strategies, to ensure that the 'sports marketing effect' of major live and televised events is backed up by co-ordinated resource to activate and support any inspirational effect.
- Greater consideration from broadcasters as to how they can use the promotional and inspirational impacts associated with their coverage of major sporting events to support participation initiatives.
- Major event organisers to consider how they can harness the inspirational impact of their events on live spectators, with particular attention paid to the fact that spectators are likely to already be involved in their sporting system, and will often be inspired to participate more frequently.
- Longitudinal research to assess the subsequent actions of individuals who are inspired is required to understand fully whether and how major sporting events can contribute to a quantifiable increase in sport participation amongst spectators.