



# THE SOCIAL, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC VALUE OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL IN ENGLAND

October 2024



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# INTRODUCTION





# The social and economic value of grassroots football

## Foreword

The Football Association (The FA) is the not-for-profit governing body of football in England. It is responsible for promoting and developing every aspect of the game, from grassroots to professional.

The unique ability and reach of football to provide significant mental, physical, and social wellbeing benefits is widely understood. This report aims to build on this robust foundation and provide further evidence about how football can continue to contribute to our society and to our economy.

In 2021 our report stated that grassroots football was contributing £10.2bn, to society per annum. We are delighted that in the last three years, this value has continued to grow, with the grassroots game now contributing £15.9bn to society in England, each year.

Football remains the most popular team sport in England with 15.7m people playing across all forms and frequencies. This represents approximately 25% of the population of the country and is an increase of 1.6m more people playing, than when we published our last National report on Social Return on Investment (SROI), in 2021.

This report continues to build on and expand our understanding of SROI. This year we have included further insight and data sources on areas such as Walking Football, our equality, diversity, and inclusion

work, as well as the impact of our valued grassroots workforce. We've also developed an SROI Club Impact Calculator to support our community clubs to demonstrate their own unique social and economic impact, as well as producing bespoke reports for our County FAs, to demonstrate their individual SROI value.

Once again it is clear to see the significant physical and mental health benefits of football; 95% of children who play football say it helps them to be fitter and healthier. At a time when the health of England's children is under greater threat than ever, with 1 in 10 children classified as obese by the age of 5, we must continue to support children to be active. 92% of children who play football say it makes them feel happier, again demonstrating the important impact football can have on children leading healthy lives.

Football also has a significant positive impact on life skills and education attainment; 86% of children who play football regularly say it enhances their confidence and we know that £908m of social value is derived through improved educational performance of children in this country.

In adults, football is contributing to the prevention of 259k disease cases and £3.1bn healthcare savings each year. 82% of Walking Football participants say that the format has improved their mobility and 90% report a positive impact on their levels of social activity.

We also know that levels of community connection in adults who play regularly, are 19% higher'.

Over the past four years, we have seen some significant challenges to the grassroots game, from Covid-19 recovery to the cost-of-living crisis. Despite this, the game has continued to grow from strength to strength, and more people are playing the game now than ever before.

The grassroots game has continued to evolve; since the Covid-19 pandemic, we have learned that people want to play the game differently, with flexibility and choice being two key elements that our participants now want and expect. Within our new 2024-2028 Grassroots Strategy, this will be a key pillar of our work, ensuring that we meet the needs of our participants and develop a grassroots game that is fit for football in 2024, and beyond.

To achieve the objectives in our new 2024-2028 Grassroots Strategy, and to help the game continue to thrive, our continued close collaboration with our valued partners will be essential. The fantastic growth set out in this report would not have been possible without the contribution, investment and support from our County FAs, Education Partners, The Premier League, The English Football League, Football Foundation, Sport England, The Government, and many others.

The FA hopes this report is useful to researchers, academics, government officials, our wider football partners and any members of the public who may be interested in the significant benefits of grassroots football.



**James Kendall**  
FA Director of Football Development



# The social and economic value of grassroots football in England

15.7m people across England play football regularly<sup>1</sup>, contributing £15.9bn<sup>2</sup> to society each year. This includes:

£11.8bn

Direct economic value

£3.2bn

Total healthcare savings

£935m

Social value



All footnotes can be found in the References section at the end of this document.  
The abbreviations used in this report are as follows: "k" represents thousand, "m" denotes million, and "bn" signifies billion.

<div>Children</div> <div></div>	5.1m children who play football provide <sup>3</sup> :	
	£110m in health savings from the reduction of:	
	200k fewer cases of obesity	60k fewer cases of anxiety and depression
<div>Adults</div> <div></div>	10.6m adults who play football provide <sup>3</sup> :	
	£3.1bn in health savings from the reduction of:	
	259k cases of physical and mental health illnesses	
<div>Older Adults</div> <div></div>	Registered Walking Football participants across England reap the benefits of playing:	
	92% of Walking Football players report a positive impact on their fitness <sup>4</sup>	90% of Walking Football players believe the game increases their social interaction <sup>4</sup>
	Enabled by a grassroots football workforce exceeding 1m, 21k <sup>5</sup> facilities and 114k teams across the country	



# Executive Summary

 More people than ever are playing football, creating growing value to society:

**£15.9bn** annual SROI value in 2024 vs **£10.2bn** in 2021, driven primarily by a **16%** growth in participation

 Participation continues to provide mental and physical wellbeing benefits, driving significant savings for society:

**95%** of children who play football say it helps them to be fitter and healthier; Grassroots football participation contributes to **519k** preventions of disease cases and **£3.2bn** NHS savings , which is equivalent to reducing **34.8m** A&E visits.<sup>1</sup> Regular footballers are **20%** more likely to have met the Chief Medical Officer's physical activity guidelines (vs non-players)



**Walking Football provides unique social and health benefits to older and disabled participants:**

**85%** of participants say Walking Football provides them with a sense of belonging and **92%** report a positive impact on their overall physical health



**The 1m strong grassroots workforce provide crucial support on and off the pitch:**

Each workforce member supports **~15** players; working in football has a positive impact on confidence, skills development and community building





**Grassroots football is a powerful tool to tackle societal issues and drive greater societal outcomes:**

Football provides over **360m** hours of social interaction for England's children each year; helping to drive **£908m** worth of GDP growth through improved educational attainment



**Greater support for the game could create additional value to society:**

**£200m** potential additional value per year, through achieving gender equality in child participation



**Investment has ensured grassroots football is impacting under-served communities:**

Football is **4 times** more popular than any other team sport in adults from lower socio-economic backgrounds; over **1,000** FA programmes are run in the most deprived areas across England



**The rapidly growing women & girls' game is creating a generation of fitter and more confident women & girls:**

**4.4m** women & girls currently play regularly; **86%** of girls who play say it helped them to be more confident







# Methodology Overview

This work was commissioned to provide evidence of how football can act as a vehicle through which societal challenges can be acknowledged, addressed and improved. The study captures the benefits of grassroots football participation in children, adults, older adults and the workforce using three approaches:

- 1 Analysing primary datasets to assess the statistical association between grassroots football and a range of health and social measures. Where possible, this is conducted using detailed OLS regression analysis to better isolate the effects specific to football.
- 2 Quantifying the value of 'regular' grassroots football participation using a socio-economic model. In line with previous academic and government studies, all monetary values are based on primary analysis or academic research that control for socio-demographic factors.
- 3 Providing additional insights from academic research, case studies and individual interviews.

# Key Definitions

- Adults**  
Those who are 19 years and older
- Affiliated participant**  
A player registered to The Football Association
- Affiliated team**  
A team that is registered to their Local County FA or The FA
- Children**  
Between the ages of 5-18
- Regular participant**  
'Regular' adult footballers defined as playing within the last month  
  
'Regular' defined as playing once within the last week for children
- Older Adults**  
Those who are 55 years and older
- NEET**  
"Not in Education, Employment, or Training", is a person who is unemployed and not receiving an education or vocational training
- Physically active**  
Defined according to the Chief Medical Officer guidelines, which recommend children aged 5-18 should take part in an average of at least 60 minutes physical activity each day across the week, and adults aged 19+ should take part in at least 150 'moderate intensity equivalent minutes' of physical activity per week
- Volunteer**  
Any person who spends time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit football
- Workforce**  
The football workforce includes all paid and unpaid individuals involved in supporting football activities



# CONTEXT

- » Football at the heart of our society
- » The participation landscape
- » The 2024-2028 Grassroots Strategy





# Football holds a significant cultural presence and influence in England, making it uniquely placed to deliver impact

A UNIQUE POWER TO CAPTURE THE NATION	
42M	Watched UEFA Euro 2020 Final – most watched event in UK broadcast history <sup>1</sup>
Attendance at Women's UEFA Euro 2022 final – a record for a women's international fixture in Europe <sup>2</sup>	87,192

TOUCHES EVERY CORNER OF THE COUNTRY	
99.7%	Of the population have an Accredited club in their local authority <sup>3</sup>







SUSTAINED GROWTH ACROSS THE WHOLE GAME

400%

Increase in average game attendance in Women's Super League (WSL) during the 2023-2024 season compared to the 2021-2022 season<sup>4</sup>

New regular football players since 2021<sup>5</sup>

2.2m

A PATHWAY TO CONTINUED IMPACT



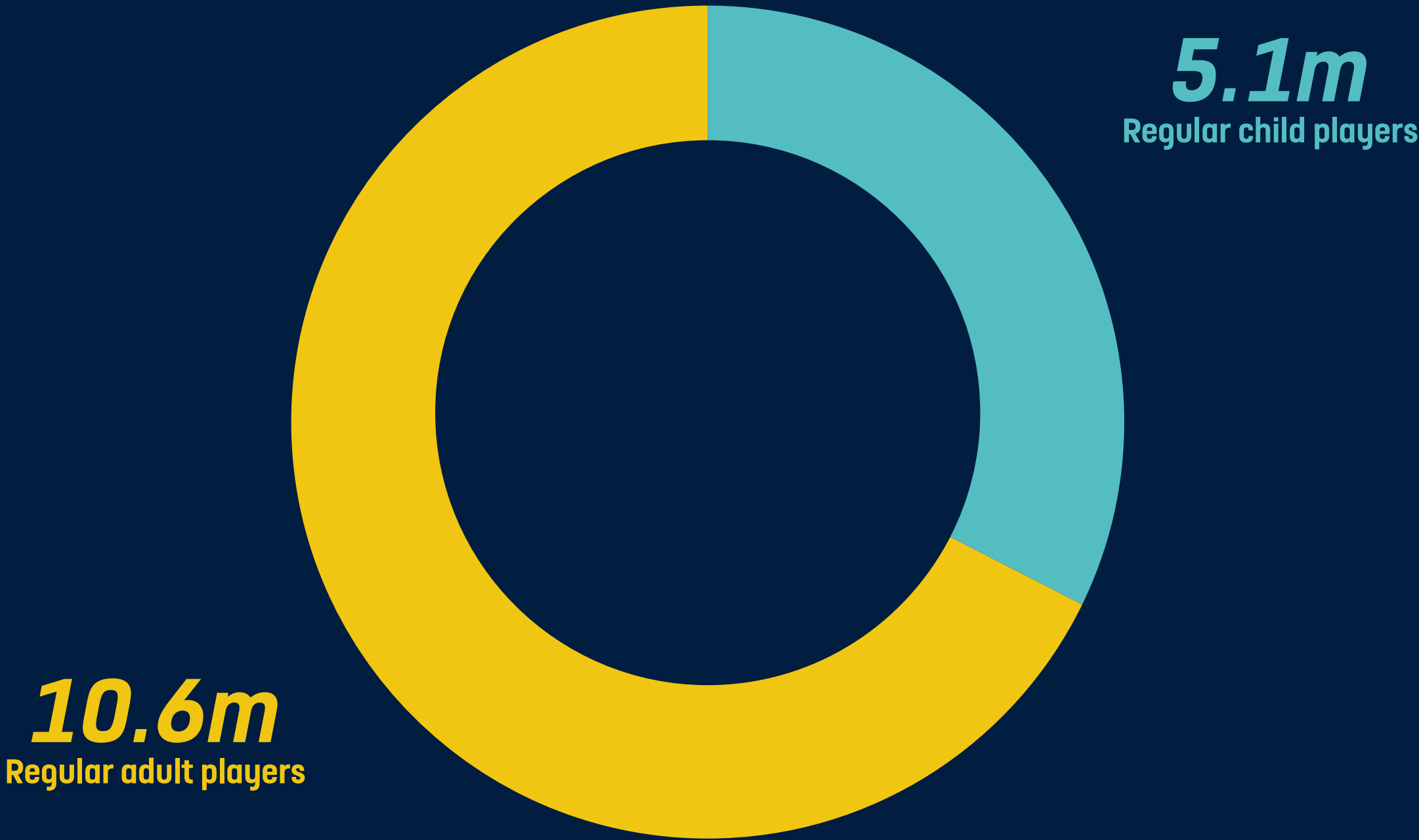
The next four-year strategy cycle will set out our pathway to impact through to 2028  
England will co-host the UEFA Euro 2028 Tournament



# 15.7m players regularly participate in grassroots football across the country

Like many sports, football faced significant challenges following the Covid-19 pandemic – mainly around individuals' confidence to return to participation.

However, the game has bounced back. It is now in the healthiest state it has ever been, with **15.7 million** people reaping the health and social benefits football offers vs **14.1 million** grassroots players in the United States<sup>1,2</sup>.





# The growth in participation is being bolstered by the continued development of the affiliated game

Since the 2020/21 season, there has been a significant increase in the number of affiliated teams, with 13,976 teams affiliating with The FA during this period. At the same time, The FA's aim of growing community clubs has resulted in a +33% year-on-year increase in the number of clubs with 40+ teams.<sup>1</sup> This growth in the affiliated game has been felt across the nation.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the presence of over 14,000 female teams today highlights the increasing participation among women & girls.<sup>1</sup>

## THE AFFILIATED GAME AT A GLANCE



1.3m

Affiliated Players<sup>2</sup>

18k

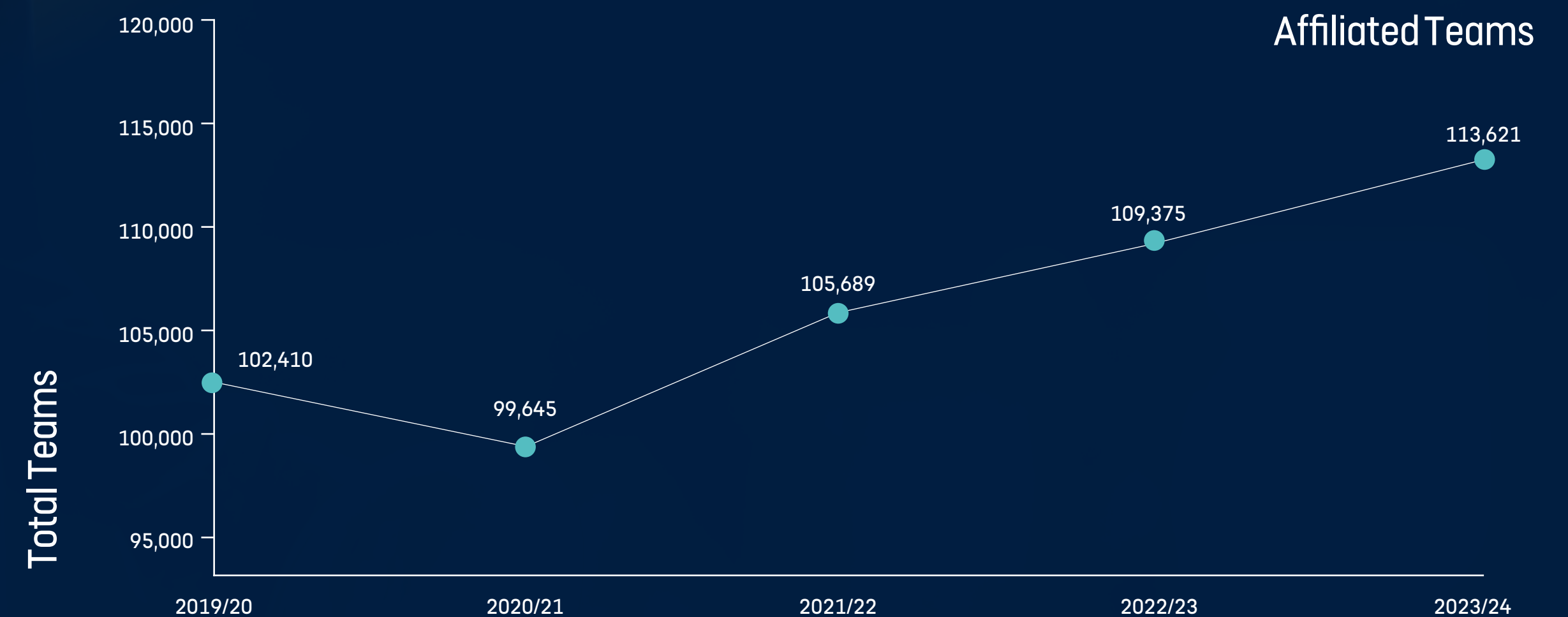
Affiliated Clubs<sup>2</sup>

+16%

Year-on-year growth in the number of female affiliated teams<sup>1</sup>

114k affiliated teams<sup>1</sup>

Total number of affiliated teams





# Women's and girls' participation has sky-rocketed, growing significantly since 2021

Since the launch of The FA Women's and Girls' 2020-2024 Strategy, 'Inspiring Positive Change', significant growth in grassroots women & girls' football has been achieved.

4.4m women & girls now play regular football across the country, making it the most popular team sport for women & girls<sup>1</sup>. Within the affiliated game, the number of female teams has grown by 16% year-on-year<sup>2</sup>. This growth has been driven by increased provision in schools and clubs, as well as being boosted by the success of the Lionesses at the UEFA Women's Euros and FIFA Women's World Cup.

## NEW AND GROWING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN & GIRLS TO PLAY



Keeping adult women in the game through 'Just Play', including the growth of female only Walking Football opportunities



Tackling the teenage dropout through Squad Girls Football for girls aged 12-14



Introducing girls to the game through Wildcats for girls aged 5-11



A record-breaking 475,000 girls from 5,000 schools across England took part in The FA and Barclays' third **Biggest Ever Football Session**, as part of our 'Let Girls Play' campaign

## INSPIRING POSITIVE CHANGE ACROSS THE SYSTEM

# 4.4m

women (2.5m) and girls (1.9m) playing regular football across the country<sup>1</sup>

# 205k

registered women (+20%) and girls (+17%) across the country<sup>4</sup>

# 77%

of schools currently offer equal access through girls' PE lessons (vs 67% in 2021/22)<sup>5</sup>

# 58%

increase in girls teams since 2020/21 season<sup>2</sup>

# 24%

of girls who started playing football were inspired by the Lionesses<sup>3</sup>  
(50% higher than the number of boys who were inspired to start playing football by the England Men's team)



# There are also more opportunities than ever for disabled people to participate

The launch of The FA's disability **Football Your Way plan (2021-2024)** signaled a step change in The FA's commitment to and investment in disability football. The plan ensures that we are fostering and maintaining a culture throughout the game, where disabled individuals have access to opportunities, feel safe, and know they belong.

Our aim is to provide disabled people with greater access to participate in football by increasing the number and variety of opportunities to play across the following formats:

- **Mainstream football**
- **Pan-disability football:** a pathway for players with a broad spectrum of impairments and health conditions
- **Impairment-specific football:** a pathway for players with the same type of impairment

## DISABILITY FOOTBALL AT A GLANCE

2,418<sup>1</sup>

Opportunities to play, including the new Comets Programme<sup>2</sup>

42

County pan disability leagues

6

National Impairment Specific Leagues

30%

Increase in opportunities to play since the launch of the Football Your Way plan





# Grassroots football is reaching and impacting under-served communities

Relative to other developed countries, England has a high level of income inequality.<sup>1</sup> In 2021/22, almost 40% of total disposable household income in the UK went to the top 20% of individuals with the highest household incomes, while just under 10% went to the fifth with the lowest.<sup>2</sup> These disparities have been worsened by the cost-of-living crisis: while inflation rates for the least deprived were estimated at 9.6% at the end of 2023, for the most deprived inflation rates were almost 30% higher.<sup>3</sup>

Amid widening socio-economic disparities, grassroots football is a powerful vehicle for reaching underserved communities. Through dedicated facility investment, a wide-reaching club network and targeted programmes, football is striving to ensure equal opportunities for all.



4X

Football is four times more popular than any other team sport in adults from lower socio-economic groups

1000+

FA programmes are run in the most deprived areas across England<sup>6</sup>

50%

Of the Football Foundation's investment is directed into the 40% most deprived and inactive communities

Leadership

Regular footballers from Lower Socio-Economic Groups perceive their leadership skills to be 1.5x superior to their counterparts from Higher Socio-Economic Groups<sup>7 8</sup>

Wellbeing

Regular football participants from Lower Socio-Economic Groups are less likely to feel anxious vs. non-regular footballers<sup>7 8</sup>



# The FA is actively creating a more welcoming environment that fosters participation from all backgrounds

The 'EDI Community of Practice' supports those in the men's and women's grassroots game by providing opportunities for communication and collaboration on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) topics. Currently, there are 31 members across seven County FA regions, the men's National League System, and the women's pyramid. Driving EDI efforts and expanding the game for underrepresented communities at the local level presents unique opportunities and challenges. People can feel more integrated and supported by fostering stronger connections and engagement with The FA through the EDI Community of Practice.



## THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE'S KEY AIMS INCLUDE TO:



Strengthen the connection between The FA and local communities in the most diverse regions across the country, improving communication and trust.



Support the work of County FAs in their efforts to drive diversity and inclusion in grassroots football – playing, off the pitch and volunteering.



Drive best practice, foster meaningful EDI conversations, and encourage collaboration across the network.



The 'Community of Practice' has helped us to build trust with local communities who have voiced their opinions at some of our EDI events. We've been able to support clubs and groups to ensure there is a sense of belonging for everyone involved in the game. This wouldn't have been possible without our 'Community of Practice' who connect The FA with participants!

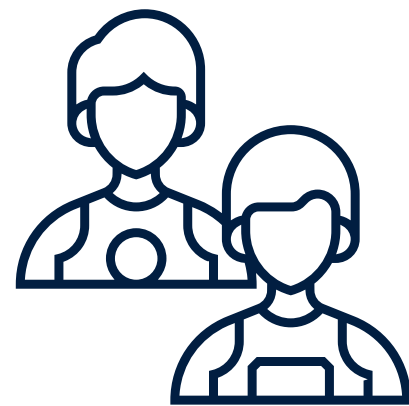
**The FA EDI Community of Practice Ambassador**





# One of the driving forces behind the increased participation has been The FA's annual £65M investment into grassroots football

The FA is a not-for-profit organisation. All profits made, are reinvested back into English football. During the 2023-24 season, we reinvested £65 million for grassroots football, in areas such as:



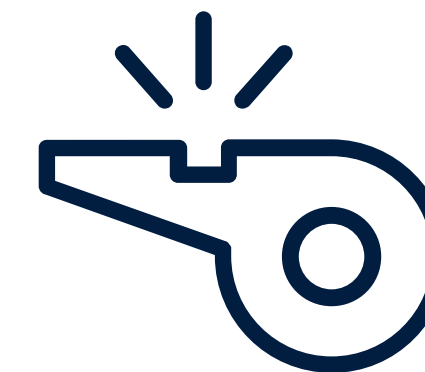
Players



Volunteers



Coaches



Referees



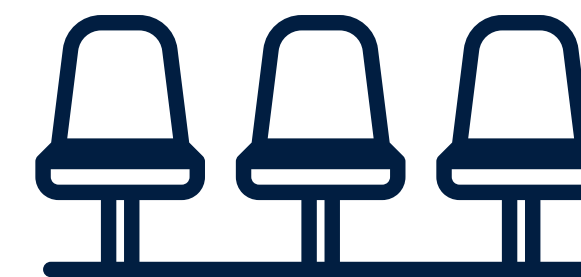
Teams



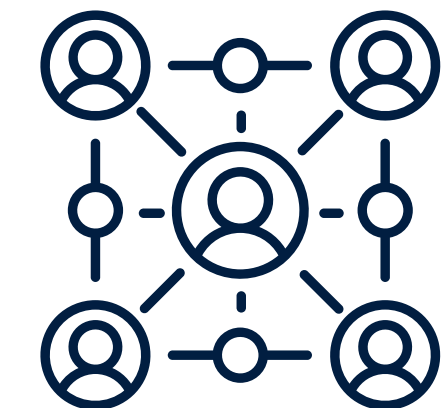
Clubs



Leagues



Facilities



And many other stakeholders



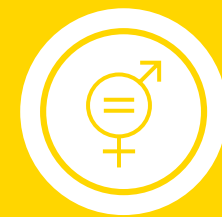
# The new FA 2024-2028 Grassroots Strategy is focused on supporting the areas of the game that need it the most

Our purpose: Inspiring positive change through football – by uniting communities, tackling inequalities and improving the health of the nation.

## OUR FIVE PRIORITIES



IMPROVE PLAYING CHOICE & OPPORTUNITIES



DELIVER EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN & GIRLS TO PLAY



BUILD MORE & IMPROVE EXISTING FACILITIES



TACKLE POOR BEHAVIOUR



DEVELOP A VALUED NETWORK OF VOLUNTEERS, COACHES & REFEREES

## OUR THREE DRIVERS

**SUPPORT** THRIVING COMMUNITY CLUBS

CONNECT & SERVE PARTICIPANTS

**PROGRESS** THE GAME'S GOVERNANCE



# Critical to the success of The FA 2024-2028 Grassroots Strategy is a deep understanding of the impact of grassroots football on society

2019 report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First understanding of its kind into the social impact of grassroots football</li><li>• New findings of impact of football on individual mental and social wellbeing</li><li>• First quantification of monetary social contribution to society</li></ul>	
2021 report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• £10bn social impact demonstrated, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Expanded understanding of participant health impact and associated NHS savings</li><li>– First understanding of impact of children's participation</li><li>– New insights into older adults via launch of Walking Football survey</li></ul></li></ul>	
This Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Almost £16bn social impact demonstrated, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Expanded understanding of the value of the football workforce, facilities and clubs</li><li>– Deepened insights into the impact of football on children through the new FA Tracker survey</li><li>– Customised reports by County FA (CFA) to highlight the community benefits of local grassroots football</li></ul></li></ul>	



# THE PARTICIPATION IMPACT

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- » Children
- » Adults
- » Older Adults






Impact



# The social and economic value of children's grassroots football in England<sup>1</sup>

**5.1m** children across England play football regularly, contributing **£2.2bn** to society each year<sup>4</sup>. This includes:

<div>Social</div> <div></div>	<div>360m</div> <div>hours of social interaction</div>	<div>£908m</div> <div>growth in GDP through education impact</div>	<div>£6m</div> <div>savings through crime reduction</div>
<div>Health</div> <div></div>	<div>£110m</div> <div>NHS saving contribution through</div>		
	<div>200k</div> <div>fewer cases of obesity</div>	<div>60k</div> <div>fewer cases of anxiety and depression</div>	
<div>Economic</div> <div></div>	<div>£1.2bn</div> <div>direct economic value through participant consumption</div>	<div>£200m</div> <div>spent on match and training fees</div>	<div>£225m</div> <div>spent on kit and equipment</div>

78%<sup>2</sup>

of children who play football regularly say it helps them to communicate with others more easily

92%<sup>2</sup>

of children who play football regularly say it makes them feel happier

86%<sup>2</sup>

of children, who play regularly, report that football enhances their confidence

20%<sup>3</sup>

more likely to have met the Chief Medical Officer's physical activity guidelines in regular footballers vs non-players



# Grassroots football is creating a generation of healthier children, contributing to over £100m societal savings annually

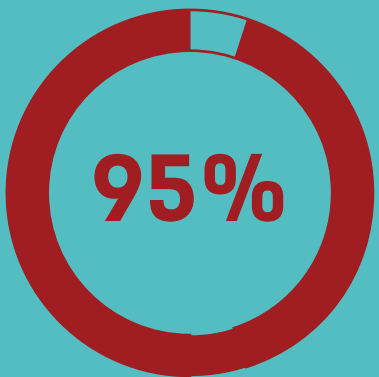
The health of England's children is under greater threat than ever. 10% of children are classified as obese by the age of 5. This figure rises to 23% by age 11<sup>1</sup>. By providing children with the skills and opportunities for physical activity (54% of children who play football meet physical activity guidelines vs. 47% national average)<sup>2</sup>, football helps to address this obesity crisis. Tackling childhood obesity is crucial to tackling adult obesity, as 88% of obese children will go on to become obese adults<sup>3</sup>.

These foundational years of activity are also critical to building strong and healthy bones in childhood, which is directly associated with reduced risk of osteoporosis and fragility fractures as adults. Engaging in physical activity during childhood is known to have profound and enduring effects on healthy behaviours. Boys and girls who are active during their childhood are up to 19 times and 7 times more likely to continue being active into adulthood<sup>4</sup>.

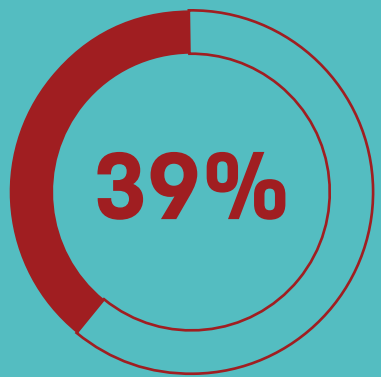


## IMPACT OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL ON CHILDREN'S PHYSICAL HEALTH

### HEALTHIER INDIVIDUALS



Of children who play football say it helps them to be **fitter and healthier**



Reduction in odds of developing obesity in boys (and 20% in girls) through physical activity<sup>7</sup>



Playing football regularly is associated with an increased likelihood of having a healthier diet<sup>6</sup>

### CONTRIBUTING TO A HEALTHIER SOCIETY TODAY AND TOMORROW<sup>8</sup>

**£11m**

NHS savings through **200k** obesity case preventions each year

**£480m**

With 88% of obese children becoming obese adults, this can create future savings to society:





# Playing football helps address the growing mental health challenges faced by the younger generation

Children's mental health has declined with higher levels of depression and emotional difficulties<sup>1</sup>. This impact continues to be felt today, with a recent report stating that 20% of 8-16-year-olds have a probable mental disorder<sup>2</sup>.

Children who play football regularly are happier and healthier compared to non-players. With 50% of all mental health conditions established by the age of 14 and 75% before the age of 24<sup>3</sup>, these mental wellbeing benefits are long lasting throughout players' lifetimes.

## IMPACT OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL ON CHILDREN'S MENTAL WELLBEING

**92%**

of children who play football regularly say it makes them feel **happier**<sup>4</sup>

**70%**

of children who play football regularly say it makes them feel **less anxious**<sup>4</sup>



Increase in likelihood of feeling that their life is **worthwhile** in regular footballers

**45k**

depression cases are prevented by regular football participation<sup>6</sup>



**15k**

anxiety cases are prevented by regular football participation<sup>6</sup>

Which saves the NHS over  
**£95m**  
each year<sup>6</sup>

### Case study

## The Greater Game

**THE  
GREATER  
GAME**

The Greater Game Programme is inspiring 12–16-year-olds to enhance their wellbeing by engaging in at least one additional healthy activity each week.

The FA is working with founding partners Nuffield Health and M&S Food to deliver this initiative; the programme leverages the power of football to engage, empower and educate children on four fundamental elements:



Think Well



Eat Well



Sleep Well



Move Well

After a pilot phase in 2023, The Greater Game rolled out nationally in 2024, with the aim to impact as many 12–16-year-olds as possible.

[englandfootball.com/thegreatergame](https://englandfootball.com/thegreatergame)



# Grassroots football has a disproportionately greater health and wellbeing impact on disabled participants

During the Covid-19 pandemic twice as many disabled people reported feeling lonely compared to non-disabled people, with almost 1 in 2 disabled people feeling uncomfortable leaving the home<sup>1</sup>. This isolation has been linked to increased desires for participation with almost 8 in 10 disabled people saying they wished they could have done more physical activity during the pandemic<sup>2</sup>. Grassroots football is an important way for disabled people to improve their health and socialise:

## Impact of grassroots football on disabled players

Of disabled children who play football regularly<sup>3</sup>:

93%

find football inclusive<sup>4</sup>

93%

find football safe<sup>4</sup>

92%

agree it helps them feel fitter

84%

say it has helped their confidence

88%

agree it helps them feel happier

78%

agree it helps them to communicate with others



### Case study

## Comets



Comets is a recreational, pan-disability football programme for disabled children aged 5–11 that's all about playfulness, friendships and having fun.

All sessions are delivered by FA qualified coaches, who have received specific programme training and guidance to provide a safe place for disabled children to try football for the first time.



**Current Opportunities**  
197 (June 2024)



**Target**  
613 (June 2028)

“

He's made some good friends here and nobody is judging his performance. He's here to have his best time. Anybody who's thinking about bringing their child to a Comets session, I'd say go for it!

Jane, Parent of a Comets player

”



# Football has a significant impact on life skills and education attainment

## The benefits of football participation for children reach far beyond the pitch

Football has a significant benefit on **key life and social skills in children**. Research shows that these skills are linked to wellbeing and employability in adulthood<sup>1</sup>. Combined with its ability to reach children of all demographics, football is a powerful tool for empowering and providing equal opportunities for children across the country.

### Of children who play football regularly<sup>2</sup>:

**86%**  
say it enhances their confidence

**78%**  
say their communication has improved

**67%**  
say it increases their resilience

### This translates into social value for society<sup>3</sup>:

**£908m**  
social value through improved educational performance

**£21m**  
savings from preventing children from not being in education, employment or training





# The social impact of football participation is particularly strong in girls

Football participation in girls has grown significantly in recent years (see page 14), with over 1.9m girls playing the game <sup>1</sup>.

For these girls, football is a powerful mechanism to tackle wellbeing and social obstacles. 89% of girls and young women acknowledge feeling generally worried or anxious.<sup>2</sup> By the age of 10, there is no noticeable difference in confidence levels between boys and girls. However, by age 15, girls are 24% less likely than boys to report having high confidence.<sup>2</sup>

Our research show that football participation can help girls become fitter, happier and more confident – and supports them to develop key social and developmental skills for life.

86%

of girls who play football say it has helped make them more confident

94%

of girls who play football agree it helps them feel happier

96%

of Wildcats players say it is a great way to have fun<sup>3</sup>

94%

agree it helps them feel fitter

94%

of girls who play football say they find it inclusive

83%

of parents and carers whose daughters play football agree that it has made them more active<sup>3</sup>



## Case study

### Wildcats



Wildcats provides an opportunity for girls aged 5-11 to get involved in football in a non-competitive setting.

Sessions are taught via themed games and activities helping to both engage and develop children's imaginations. Our post-programme surveys demonstrate the impact of the sessions to help:



Boost Confidence



Meet New Friends



Get Active



Being active, making new friends, building confidence and the no pressure approach to football where its about fun – not winning.

Wildcats parent





# Football is also a powerful tool to build social cohesion and tackle crime

Crime and anti-social behaviour has reached new heights in recent years. 82% of UK adults witnessed some form of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in their local area in the last year<sup>1</sup>. Meanwhile, by the end of September 2023 police recorded that reported crimes in England and Wales had risen to over 6.7 million in the past year<sup>2</sup>. Participation in grassroots football can tackle this through:

- Building **life skills**, boosting the chances of staying engaged in school and employment (see page 26)
- Providing **safe environments** for children at risk
- Strengthening **local communities**
- Providing children with a **positive diversionary activity**

## THE IMPACT OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL ON REDUCING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS AND CRIME:

360m

social interaction hours provided by football for England's children each year<sup>3</sup>

10%

increase in sports participation is linked to a 10% decrease in crime across England<sup>4</sup>



13k

crimes prevented through national football participation, equating to £6.7m savings each year<sup>3</sup>

When you already have a strong family structure, in football, it's harder for other people to get to you, to draw you away into things like knife crime or gang crime, because you have such strong connections with that family that are there for you.

Inaya, player

### Case study

## 'She Inspires' football programme

Hosted by Liverpool FA, the multi-award winning 'She Inspires' football programme provides girls with football sessions and holistic workshops focusing on confidence, mental wellbeing, and leadership, as well as access to FA Coaching and Refereeing qualifications. The programme has benefitted 30 secondary schools and 600 pupils across 200+ sessions and 2 celebratory events, with exit routes provided into our grassroots football clubs.



The program helped me overcome social struggles and low confidence. Through football and classroom lessons on teamwork, self-esteem, and positivity, I gained resilience, courage, and self-love, improving my life significantly.




Fola, Programme Participant





# The social and economic value of adults' grassroots football in England

**10.6m** (vs 9m in 2021) adults across England play football regularly<sup>1</sup>, contributing **£7.9**bn to society each year<sup>3</sup>. This includes:

<div>Social</div> <div></div>	<div>502m</div> <div>hours of social interaction</div>		
<div>Health</div> <div></div>	<div>£3.1bn</div> <div>NHS saving contribution through:</div>		
	<div>200k</div> <div>fewer cases of illness in men<sup>4</sup></div>	<div>60k</div> <div>fewer cases of illness in women</div>	
<div>Economic</div> <div></div>	<div>£4.8bn</div> <div>direct economic value through participant consumption</div>	<div>£713m</div> <div>spent on match and training fees</div>	<div>£450m</div> <div>spent on kit and equipment</div>

61%<sup>1</sup>

of adults who play football regularly, report that it encourages healthier eating

8%<sup>2</sup>

increased life satisfaction in adults who play football regularly vs non-players

19%<sup>2</sup>

higher levels of community connection in adults who play regular football vs non-players

4%<sup>2</sup>

higher levels of resilience in adults who play football regularly vs non-players



# Participation continues to provide adult players with a range of social, health and wellbeing benefits

10.6m adults in England play football regularly<sup>1</sup>.

92% of adults that play football regularly meet physical activity guidelines, compared to 63% nationally<sup>2</sup>, meaning football is contributing to improving the physical and mental wellbeing of 9.6m adults across the country.

These 9.6m adults are less likely to develop non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including cardiovascular diseases and diabetes. With NCDs causing an estimated 89% of deaths in the UK<sup>3</sup>, football is an important tool for preventative health.

As a team sport, football participation also provides important individual, community and social development.

25% reduced risk of developing NCDs\* in physically active football players<sup>4</sup>

Adults who play football are 12% more likely to have felt in good health in the last 12 months vs non players<sup>6</sup>

Adults who play football have 8% higher life satisfaction vs non players

Adults who play football have 10% higher confidence vs non players

52% of adult footballers agree that football encourages them to make healthier food choices<sup>1</sup>

\*Non-communicable diseases



# In men, football participation can be a powerful tool to level up physical health and mental wellbeing

Men are disproportionately affected by several long-term health conditions, including:

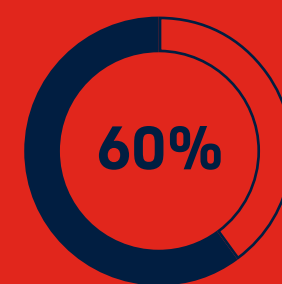
- Mental health conditions: 40% of men have never discussed their mental health<sup>1</sup>. In 2022 male suicide rate was nearly three times higher than that of women<sup>2</sup>
- Diabetes: Men are up to 26% more likely to develop type 2 diabetes vs women<sup>3</sup>

With physical activity being proven to reduce these health issues and football as the most participation popular sport for men<sup>2</sup>, the power of football to tackle these issues should not be underestimated.

## Impact of grassroots football on male health and wellbeing:



Positive association between activity levels and good mental wellbeing<sup>4</sup>



60% of male regular football participants agree that playing football made them more likely to quit smoking

Over  
**60k**

cases of depression and anxiety prevented in men, contributing to over £400m NHS savings<sup>6</sup>

Over  
**£250m**

of NHS savings due to the reduction of dementia<sup>6</sup>

### Case study

**MAN v FAT FOOTBALL**

## MAN v FAT Football

MAN v FAT Football offers small-sided football leagues, specifically designed to help overweight men improve both their physical and mental health.

The programme now supports thousands of men in over 150 clubs across the UK on a weekly basis.

**90% of participants who complete their first season lose weight.**



What I love most about MAN v FAT is the camaraderie. It has done wonders for my mental health

Lee O'Kelly (Chester)





# Grassroots football can also help address the unique health challenges faced by women

Women in society face several unique health challenges. In England and Wales, 1 in 7 females will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime<sup>1</sup>, whilst more than two million women suffer from osteoporosis<sup>2</sup> which significantly impacts health and mobility in old age. Football serves as a preventive measure against these health challenges by promoting physical activity and impacting physical health and mental wellbeing.

At the same time, women face unique barriers to taking part in football: almost a third of women do not feel that their needs are supported within the grassroots game<sup>3</sup>. Addressing the specific participation barriers associated with female health is a priority in our new strategy.

58% of female football participants agree that playing football makes them more likely to eat healthier<sup>4</sup>

Female participants are more likely to report feeling in good health than non-participants

Over £14m in savings for the NHS from reduction in cancer cases<sup>6</sup>

Over 20k fewer cases of osteoporosis in women contributing to over £335m in NHS savings<sup>6</sup>



## Case study

### Active Through Football

The 'Active Women in Leicester' project tackles cultural, physical, and financial barriers hindering women's participation in sports. The project aims to engage women aged 18 to 62, particularly from Somalian and South Asian communities.

As well as football, Active Women offers multi-sport opportunities, coffee & exercise, and dance sessions, encouraging participants to get active, build confidence and improve mental health.

Since I started coming to these sessions, I feel really happy and it boosts my confidence a lot. It helped me with my depression and these women have become my family. Now in my mind, I feel like I can do anything.

Participant,  
Active Women in Leicester





# For disabled adults, participation in grassroots football has a significant positive impact on health and wellbeing

During the Covid-19 pandemic disabled people had poorer wellbeing ratings than non-disabled people across all four well-being measures<sup>1</sup>.

This isolation has been linked to increased desires for participation with around twice as many disabled people reporting feeling lonely than non-disabled people<sup>1</sup>. Grassroots football plays a crucial role in promoting physical and mental health while fostering valuable social connections.

## Impact of grassroots football on disabled players<sup>2</sup>



Disabled people are most motivated to play by the chance to be part of a team, make new friends, and experience health benefits.

Over  
**95%**

of current and prospective players value having fun while playing.



While being competitive is seen as less important, it is more significant for current players (66%) than prospective players (33%).

Football plays a massive role in the inclusive disability football community that I am part of. It encourages participation and inclusion of all members of our community. Football is for everyone.

Gavin Harvey, footballer with Down Syndrome

Football offers our players so much. Social isolation is a big issue for many of our players and coming to sessions breaks that barrier.

Paul Gorman, powerchair football coach

Amputee football has had a huge impact on my physical and mental health. Without it and my team, I would not be able to do what I love with a team that I see as family.

Shelbee Clarke, amputee football player



# Adult football is contributing to the prevention of 259k disease cases and £3.1bn NHS savings each year

Number of cases prevented yearly by playing football



£910m

Total NHS healthcare savings<sup>1</sup>

£2.2bn

Additional indirect savings<sup>1</sup>



# Altogether, adult grassroots football participation contributes almost £8bn in social value across England<sup>1</sup>



**£7.9bn**  
Social value of  
adult participation

<b>502m</b> hours	<b>Social interaction</b> Social interaction through football is the time individuals spend engaging in exchanges between two or more people
<b>£3.1bn</b>	<b>Healthcare savings</b> Contribution to direct healthcare savings and indirect societal costs through prevention of 259k cases of disease, which saves the equivalent of £34.8m in A&E visits
<b>£4.8bn</b>	<b>Economic contribution</b> £322 average direct expenditure per participant including membership fees, training/ matchday fees, transport and equipment costs <sup>2</sup>



# The benefits of Walking Football for older adults

## Impact of Walking Football on participants

### IMPROVING BALANCE AND MOBILITY



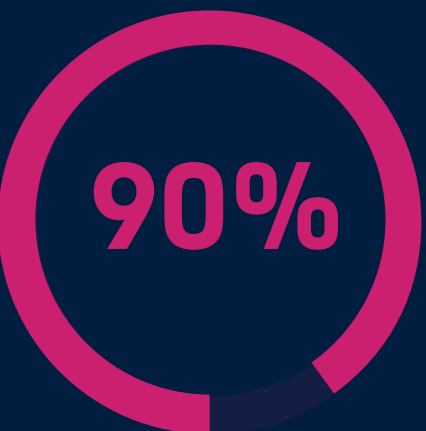
of Walking Football participants say that the format has improved their mobility

### IMPROVING PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH



say that Walking Football has improved their happiness

### PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO SOCIALISE



say that playing Walking Football has had a positive impact on their socialisation with friends



# Walking Football continues to grow, providing thousands of older adults with participation opportunities

With no running, no heading and no physical contact, Walking Football is adapted to allow older adults and those who suffer from impairments and long-term health conditions to continue playing the game. **81%** of registered participants are aged 55+<sup>3</sup>, and **91%** of these say the format has helped them stay involved in football.<sup>4</sup>

The FA continues to play a crucial role in Walking Football, providing almost 7,000 registered participants with opportunities to play across the country. Our new strategy aims to grow Walking Football by building a strong, connected network that offers quality opportunities for everyone.



**1,072**  
Walking football teams

Case study

## Age UK Walking Football Programme



A partnership between Age UK, Sport England and The FA to support an increase in participation in Walking Football across England with a focus on targeting those from lower socio-economic groups, older people with long-term health conditions and groups that can be marginalised from society.

**86**  
Walking Football groups established

**38**  
Local Age UKs engaged

**1,833**  
older people reached

**2,800**  
Walking Football sessions delivered



# Walking Football is a powerful tool to combat loneliness and declines in physical health as we age

## The Covid-19 pandemic disproportionately affected older adults<sup>1</sup>.

Older people lives were heavily impacted by the pandemic with 42% reporting that they now find it harder to get up the stairs and 18% with a long-term health condition find it harder to look after themselves<sup>1</sup>.

The pandemic also caused long-term anxiety and isolation: 36% of older people feel more anxious since the start of the pandemic and 18% feel less confident leaving the house<sup>1</sup>.

In this setting, activities like Walking Football which provide opportunities for fitness and socialisation have become increasingly important.

”

Walking Football has inspired me to make my health and fitness a priority and I am enjoying better fitness, excellent mobility, and fewer aches and pains as a result!

Participant, aged 43

”

”

You connect with people from all different communities and build friendships!

Participant, aged 62

”

## The impact of Walking Football on participants<sup>2</sup>

### Improving balance and mobility

Of Walking Football participants:

- 82% report it has had a positive impact on their mobility
- 75% say that it has improved their co-ordination
- 90% say that it has improved their stamina levels

### Improving physical & mental health

Of Walking Football participants:

- 92% report that it has had a positive impact on their physical health
- 83% say that it has had a positive impact on their mental health
- 75% say it has improved their confidence

### Providing opportunities to socialise

Of Walking Football participants:

- 85% report that it provides them with a sense of belonging
- 72% say that it is inclusive of individuals with disabilities
- 90% report a positive impact on their levels of social activity



# KEY PARTICIPATION ENABLERS

- » The workforce
- » Community clubs and facilities





# The social and economic value of the grassroots football workforce in England

Working in football has a positive impact on





# The 1m strong football workforce is crucial to delivering the benefits of grassroots football





# Coaches provide crucial support to the game on and off the pitch

The **160k coaches across the game are a crucial backbone of grassroots football**. Their dedication generates the players of the future, allows them to develop their own lifelong skills and shapes lives beyond football. The thousands of coaches actively involved in the game also serve as mentors, teaching invaluable life skills like leadership and teamwork to the players with whom they interact.

## The individual and community benefits of coaching

### Developing lifelong skills

**69%**

of young coaches were motivated to start coaching to develop personal skills<sup>1</sup>

**9%**

higher confidence levels in coaches vs. people who do not coach<sup>2</sup>



Leadership



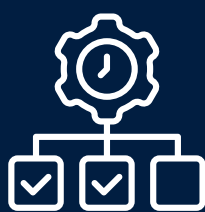
Communication



Conflict management



Resilience



Time management



Safeguarding awareness<sup>3</sup>

### Providing mentorship and role modelling

I started my coaching journey my coaching journey at the age of 16 and instantly loved the responsibility of session planning and the delight of witnessing my players develop.

Coach, aged 24





# Refereeing provides 37k individuals with fitness, financial support and lifelong development skills

The grassroots game has witnessed a 26% surge in referee numbers over the past two years, highlighting the post-COVID rebound in officiating, with over **37k** referees ensuring matches are able to take place every week.

Our research shows that these referees are not only crucial to the game, but they also receive significant health and fitness benefits, as well as lifelong individual development by acquiring new skills and growing confidence.

## The individual and community benefits of refereeing

### Building health and fitness

**53%**

of referees value the physical benefits it brings<sup>1</sup>

“

I was never the most fit kid so when I started refereeing football I really improved my fitness and especially my pace, now I am easily able to keep up with play.

Level 6 Referee

”

### Developing communication and management skills

**10%**

higher leadership skills in referees vs non-referees<sup>2</sup>

“

As referees we build communication skills. Referees need to effectively communicate decisions, which builds confidence to manage the game and gain respect from players.

Level 5 Referee

”

### Supporting the game and wider community

**57%**

of referees value giving back to the game<sup>1</sup>

“

Young female players tell me that it is great to have a good female referee. Knowing I can positively influence a young players enjoyment of playing the game and be a positive role model is extremely rewarding.

Level 5 Referee

”





# Grassroots football is supported by and impacts the lives of a 876k strong network of volunteers

From coaches and managers, to club and league officials, there are over 876k people who dedicate their free time to the game.

The impact of these volunteers extends far beyond the sidelines, as they play a key role in safeguarding and positively influencing their wider communities.

Over the next four years, The FA is aiming to transform the volunteering experience. We will drive engagement and retention, grow the diversity of our workforce and support volunteer development beyond the pitch (see page 19 for more details).

## The individual and community benefits of volunteering

### Impacting physical and mental wellbeing

**75%**

of volunteers say it enhances their mental health and wellbeing<sup>1</sup>

**£717m**

annual wellbeing value received through volunteers across the game each year<sup>3</sup>

### Giving back to the game and wider community

**90%**

of volunteers feel like they make a difference through volunteering<sup>2</sup>

**47%**

of volunteers feel that they make a difference to an individual's life<sup>2</sup>



Volunteering for a grassroots team has allowed me to give back. I think a lot of people start to neglect football after school/university as they get busy with work, so it's rewarding to provide a platform where people can keep playing the game and stay in touch with friends.

**Grassroots Volunteer, aged 24**



# Altogether, the grassroots football workforce contributes £5.8bn in social value across England<sup>1</sup>

**£5.8bn** Social value of football workforce

**£5.8bn**

**Economic contribution**

Value of time dedicated across the paid and volunteer workforce

**£29m**

**Healthcare savings**

Contribution to direct healthcare savings and indirect societal costs through prevention of 2,500 cases of disease of coaches and referees

**£880m**

**Wellbeing value**

Additional wellbeing value associated with improved life satisfaction, equating to £1,480 in wellbeing value per each member of the football workforce<sup>2</sup>



# Grassroots clubs



**18k<sup>1</sup>**  
registered clubs  
across the country

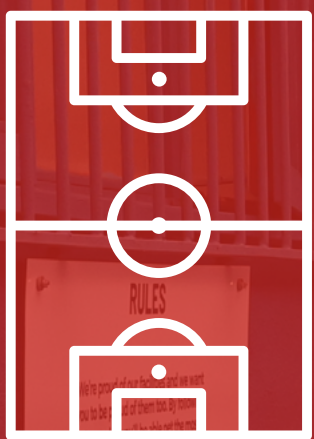


Supporting  
participation of  
**1.3m**  
affiliated players<sup>2</sup>

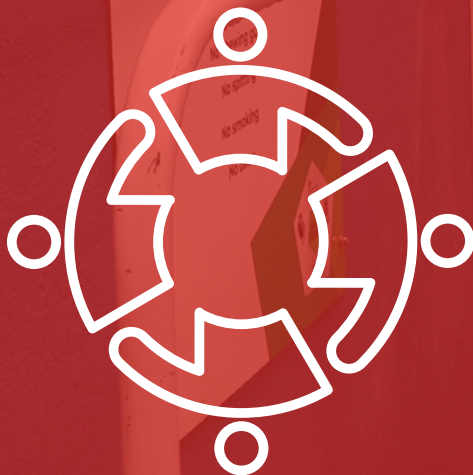


**99.7%**  
of the country have an  
accredited club in their  
local authority<sup>3</sup>

# Grassroots facilities



**£1bn**  
invested into facilities  
since 2000 via the  
Football Foundation<sup>4</sup>



**50%**  
of investment is  
directed at the 40%  
most deprived and  
inactive communities<sup>4</sup>



# Grassroots football is supported by a crucial network of 18k clubs across the country

## The English grassroots club landscape has experienced a transformational change over the last 10 years.

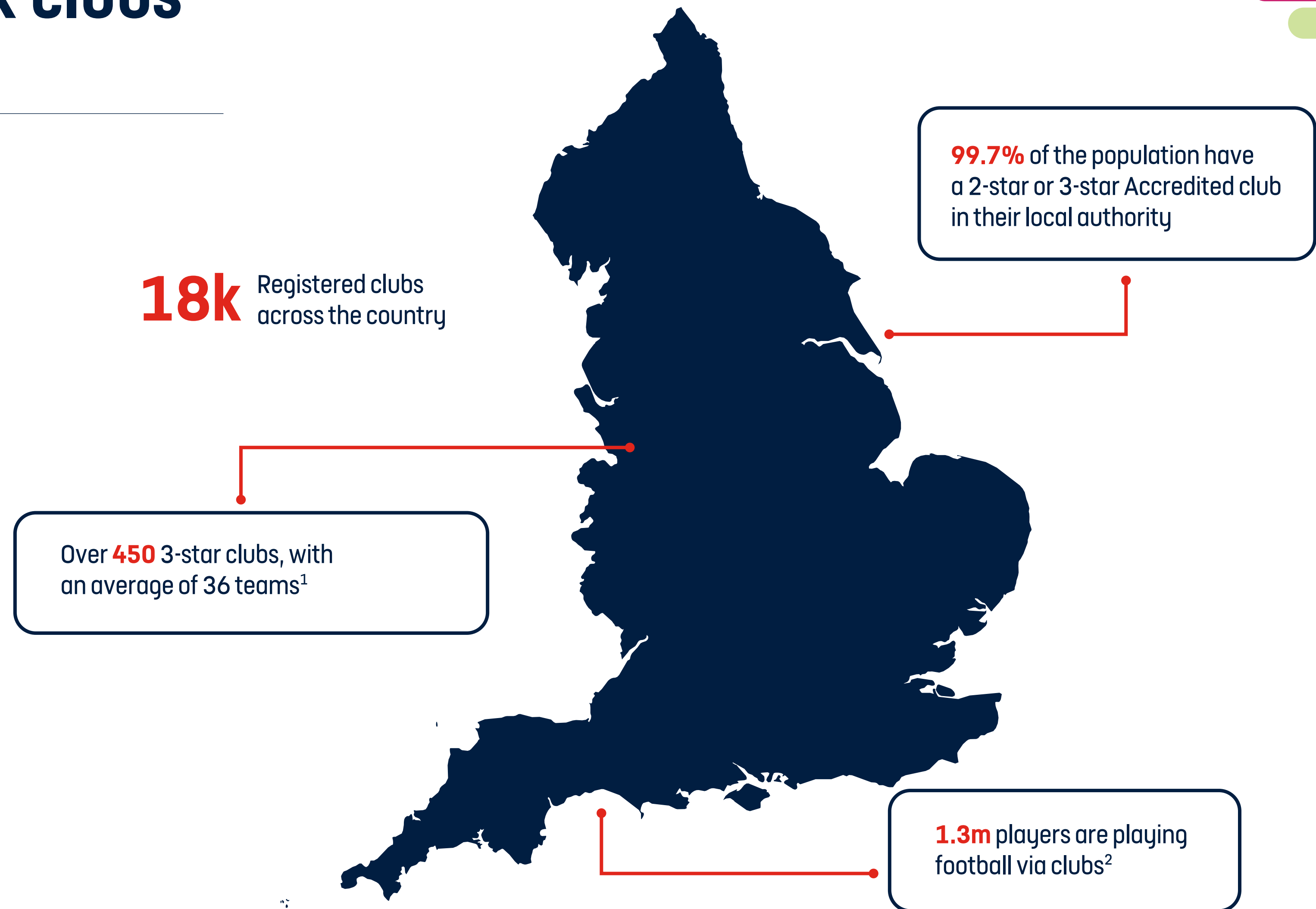
Whilst the overall number of clubs has reduced, there is more affiliated and recreational football being played in clubs than ever. There has been a noticeable shift in club sizes: smaller clubs with 1 to 4 teams have decreased by 25%, while larger clubs with over 40 teams have experienced a remarkable 200% growth. Some of the largest clubs now have well over 100 teams.

By the end of 2028 it is estimated that more than half of all affiliated football will be played in clubs with over 20 teams.

As these clubs expand and develop dedicated facilities alongside a committed volunteer workforce, they become increasingly embedded in their local communities, providing both football and a range of social and community-based outcomes.

England Football Accredited clubs are at the forefront of this change with 3-star clubs offering football for male, female and players with a disability.

We recognise the importance of clubs to the grassroots game. This is a key pillar of our new Grassroots Strategy, focused on supporting thriving community clubs (see page 19).





# These clubs are more than a place to play football – they play a key role in uniting and inspiring communities

## Rugby Borough Football Club – A 3-star Accredited club

Rugby Borough's vision is to ensure football is accessible. Each week, the club provides football for over 1,000 children players and over 350 adult players, playing a vital role in the wider community:

**£3.6m** of social value is generated by Rugby Borough, as measured by The FA's Club Impact Calculator

**85%** of members agree that they interact with people from different social groups at Rugby Borough, helping to increase social cohesion.

**74%** of Rugby Borough members believe that football helps to reduce anti-social behaviour in their community.



**ACCREDITED CLUB** ★ ★ ★  
PART OF ENGLAND FOOTBALL

It teaches my son social skills, to interact with kids from different cultures and backgrounds.  
Parent

My club is home, a place where I can feel comfortable, happy and excited to go to when I need to.  
Player





# Since 2000, The FA and Football Foundation have invested over £1bn into improving grassroots clubs and facilities<sup>1</sup>

In 2000, The FA, the Premier League and Sport England came together to form the **Football Foundation**, a charity dedicated to improving facility infrastructure across grassroots football.

So far, **over £1bn** of direct funding has been invested into grassroots facilities, with an additional **£1.3bn** investment from partnership funding. **50% of investment is directed at the 40% most deprived and inactive communities**, meaning the fund is continuing to deliver to those areas with the greatest need.

However, the work is far from finished. To sustain and expand football's positive impact on our society, significantly more investment is required (see Looking Forward, page 53).

## £1BN INVESTED INTO GRASSROOTS FACILITIES SINCE 2000:

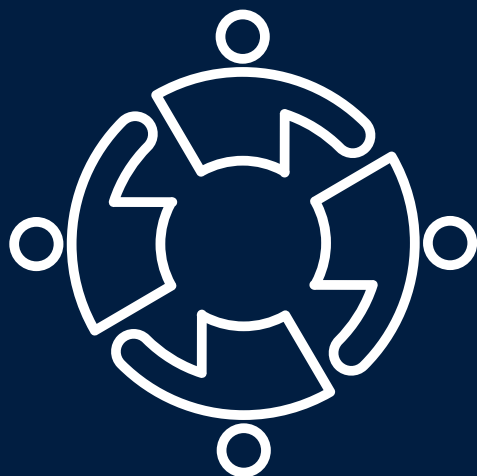




# The Football Foundation's investment transforms communities beyond football



Creating jobs and growing local economies



Investing in the most deprived and inactive communities



Improving the health and wellbeing of participants

## Case study

### Sunderland Football Hubs



The Hubs programme is a dedicated programme of funding for sites with 3G pitches and additional non-football provisions. Overseen by the National Football Trust and opened in 2020, the Sunderland Football Hubs were the result of £18m funding, including £14.2m of investment from the Football Foundation. In the 3 years since, the Sunderland Hubs have created significant impact on and off the pitch:

<b>10</b> Full sized 3G pitches	<b>3</b> Local community projects supported with donations
<b>10k</b> Matches hosted per season, with 50% of participants from most deprived communities	<b>3k+</b> Students and 13 local schools engaged in local education programmes

Looking around, the facilities on offer are just brilliant and cater to so many different needs within the local community. It's difficult to put into words just what a difference this will make

Duncan Watmore – ex-Sunderland FC player



# Greater investment is being dedicated to improving the sustainability of our clubs and facilities

## Supporting financial sustainability

The cost-of-living crisis has impacted everyone, and grassroots football has been no exception. To support our participants, clubs and partner organisations, The FA recently launched the **Cost-of-Living Resource Hub**. The Hub provides and directs towards resources and opportunities, including:



### Dedicated grants

e.g. £3m invested to transform kitchens for clubs and communities - providing essential revenue to support financial sustainability via our Howden's Gamechanger Programme



### Providing guidance and supporting tools

e.g. Xero partnership, revenue-generation guides.



## Reducing environmental footprint

In 2023, The FA launched our new five-year sustainability strategy, setting out a plan to make a positive impact on the environment and communities we touch. Reducing the environmental footprint of the grassroots game is an important component of this. Our commitments include:

**£6m**

**Football Foundation investment** to reduce energy bills at clubhouses and to install energy-efficient LED lights on 3G pitches



The FA will launch **The Greener Game** programme in the 2024/25 season, designed to help clubs decarbonise while also helping them reduce costs along the way



Football Foundation funded facilities are designed and built to **minimise their environmental footprint**





# LOOKING FORWARD



Looking Forward



# Continued support is crucial for sustaining social value and unlocking potential

Sustained support is essential to maintaining the positive impact showcased in this report, while also unlocking further benefits such as promoting gender equality in children's participation.

## £200m

additional value for society each year, if girls had the same participation opportunities as boys<sup>1</sup>





# ACADEMIC PANEL

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# Academic Panel

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We would like to thank the academic panel for their valuable input regarding this report. Their expertise has helped ensure that the analysis follows best practices from academic and government studies. All monetary values are based on careful research that accounts for different social and demographic factors, and the studies used are peer-reviewed. Their contributions have ensured the continued reliability and accuracy of the results.



**Professor Aaron Smith** is a Professor of Sports Business and Innovation at Loughborough University London, and Director of the Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

He was previously at Australia's Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University, where he was the Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor at its College of Business and part of the RMIT Graduate School of Business and Law. Prior to RMIT he was Head of Department and Chair of Sport Management at Melbourne's La Trobe University.



**Dr Justin Davis-Smith CBE** is associate professor in voluntary sector management and course director of the charities master's programme at Bayes Business School, City, University of London. He was previously chief executive of Volunteering England and founder of the Institute for Volunteering Research. He is a lifelong supporter of Watford FC and previously trustee of its community sports and education trust.



**Professor Carol Holland, PhD, CPsychol., AFBPS, FAcSS** is a Professor in Ageing within the Division of Health Research at Lancaster University, and Director of the university-wide Centre for Ageing Research (C4AR).

She is currently President of the British Society of Gerontology, the national learned society representing researchers in ageing across disciplines. She has interests in reduction of risk factors for frailty, cognitive decline and dementia across the lifespan, including the impact of physical activity such as Walking Football.



# References

**(4) THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VALUE OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL IN ENGLAND**

- 'Regular' adult footballers defined as playing within the last month. 'Regular' defined as playing once within the last week for children.
- £2.1bn children, £7.9bn adult, £5.9bn workforce.
- Portas Consulting socio-economic model. Note Health values do not include the effects of injuries due to limited data availability for the grassroots game & economic values do not account for 'counterfactual deadweight' (the situation in the absence of grassroots football) or displacement factors (the fact that jobs in the football sector could be taking away jobs in other sectors).
- FA Walking Football Survey.
- Sport England, Active Places.

**(6) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- Key facts & Figures about the NHS, The King's Fund.

**(10) FOOTBALL HOLDS A SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE IN ENGLAND, MAKING IT UNIQUELY PLACED TO DELIVER IMPACT**

- Inews.
- UEFA.
- England Football Accredited Clubs.
- The FA Attendances Tracker.
- FA Tracker Surveys Sept 2022-Aug 2023 (Includes non-affiliated players).

**(12) 15.7M PLAYERS REGULARLY PARTICIPATE IN GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

- FA Tracker Surveys Sept 2022-Aug 2023 (Includes non-affiliated players).
- 2024 Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report.

**(13) THE GROWTH IN PARTICIPATION IS BEING BOLSTERED BY THE CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFFILIATED GAME**

- FA Affiliated Team Analysis (January 2024) . Note: 2020/21 decrease due to impact of Covid pandemic.
- FA March 2024 Data.

**(14) WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' PARTICIPATION HAS SKY-ROCKETED, GROWING SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE 2021**

- FA Youth Tracker (September 2022 - August 2023) + FA Adult Tracker (September 2022 - August 2023).
- FA Affiliated Team Analysis (January 2024).
- FA Youth Tracker (September 2022 - August 2023).
- FA Whole Game System – 2023 Vs. 2024.
- Youth Sport Trust Equal Access Survey July 2024.

**(15) THERE ARE ALSO MORE OPPORTUNITIES THAN EVER FOR DISABLED PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE**

- FA Data February 2024.
- The new pan-disability football programme for disabled boys and girls aged between 5-11.

**(16) GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL IS REACHING AND IMPACTING UNDER-SERVED COMMUNITIES**

- The Equality Trust.
- Income Inequality in the UK – UK Parliament Report.
- Institute For Government – Cost -of -Living Crisis .
- ALS Survey (November 2021 – 2022). IMD deciles 1-2.
- Football Foundation.
- The FA. ~1/4 programmes are run in the most deprived areas across England.
- The FA Tracker (September 2022 – August 2023). Linear regression analysis statistically significant at the 1% significance level.
- See Definitions page for definition of LSEG & HSEG.

**(22) THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VALUE OF CHILDREN'S GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL IN ENGLAND**

- The definition of 'children' used throughout this report is ages 5-18 unless otherwise stated.
- FA Youth Tracker (September 2022- August 2023).
- The FA Youth Tracker (September 2022 – August 2023). Linear regression analysis statistically significant at the 1% significance level.

- Portas Consulting Socio-economic Model. All monetary values are based on primary analysis or academic research with appropriate socio-demographic controls. Note: Health values do not include the effects of injuries due to limited data availability for the grassroots game & economic values do not account for 'counterfactual deadweight' (the situation in the absence of grassroots football) or displacement factors . See technical report for more detail.
- Based on the links between improved academic attainment and sport participation in children in academic research.

**(23) GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL IS CREATING A GENERATION OF HEALTHIER CHILDREN, CONTRIBUTING TO OVER £100M SOCIETAL SAVINGS ANNUALLY**

- House of Commons Library – Obesity Statistics.
- Active Lives Children Survey (2022/23).
- Hagman, M. et al. (2018).
- Compared to inactive children.
- FA Youth Tracker (September 2022- August 2023).
- The FA Youth Tracker (Septemb1er 2022 – August 2023) . Linear regression analysis statistically significant at the 1% significance level.
- University of England. UCL Institute of Education. Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Millennium Cohort Study: Sixth Survey, 2015-2016. 6th Edition. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive, March 2007. SN: 4683. Calculated using logistic regression analysis, controlling for socio-demographic factors.
- Portas Consulting Socio-economic Model. All monetary values are based on primary analysis or academic research with appropriate socio-demographic controls.
- Direct savings are cost savings for the NHS, such as preventing treatment and public social care costs and indirect savings are wider societal cost savings, for example improving productivity in the workplace and reducing informal care.

**(24) PLAYING FOOTBALL CAN ALSO TACKLE THE WORSENING MENTAL WELLBEING OF THE YOUNG GENERATION**

- Montero-Marin et al (2023).
- NHS Mental Health CYP 2023.
- Kessler, RC. et al. (2005).
- FA Youth Tracker (September 2022- August 2023).
- The FA Youth Tracker (September 2022 – August 2023). Linear regression analysis statistically significant at the 1% significance level.

- Portas Consulting Socio-economic Model. All monetary values are based on primary analysis or academic research with appropriate socio-demographic controls. Note Health values do not include the effects of injuries due to limited data availability for the grassroots game.

**(25) GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL HAS A DISPROPORTIONATELY GREATER HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPACT ON DISABLED PARTICIPANTS**

- ONS Gov.
- Activity Alliance, Annual Disability and Activity Survey 2022-23.
- FA Youth Tracker (September 2022 – August 2023).
- Respondents find playing football safe and inclusive within their clubs.

**(26) FOOTBALL HAS A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON LIFE SKILLS AND EDUCATION ATTAINMENT**

- Feinstein, L. (2015) Social and Emotional Learning: Skills for Life and Work.
- FA Youth Tracker (September 2022 – August 2023).
- Portas Consulting Socio-economic Model. All monetary values are based on primary analysis or academic research with appropriate socio-demographic controls.

**(26) THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF FOOTBALL PARTICIPATION IS PARTICULARLY STRONG IN GIRLS**

- FA Youth Tracker (September 2022 – August 2023).
- Girlguiding: Girls' attitudes Survey 2023.
- Weetabix Wildcats Programme Data.

**(27) FOOTBALL IS ALSO A POWERFUL TOOL TO BUILD SOCIAL COHESION AND TACKLE CRIME**

- Savanta for BBC – January 2024.
- ONS – Crime in England and Wales Year Ending September 2023 .
- Portas Consulting Socio-economic Model. All monetary values are based on primary analysis or academic research with appropriate socio-demographic controls.
- Specifically, person & property crimes: The Impact of Sports Participation on Crime in England between 2012 and 2015, Stephen Brosnan.
- Assumption-based calculation, based on number of arrests of children arrested in 2023 & 22% crime rate reduction as result of sport (NPC).



# References

(29)

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VALUE OF ADULTS' GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL IN ENGLAND

1.

FA Participation Tracker (September 2022- August 2023).

2.

The FA Participation Tracker (September 2022 – August 2023). Linear regression analysis statistically significant at the 1% significance level.

3.

Portas Consulting socio-economic model. Note Health values do not include the effects of injuries due to limited data availability for the grassroots game & economic values do not account for 'counterfactual deadweight' (the situation in the absence of grassroots football) or displacement factors (the fact that jobs in the football sector could be taking away jobs in other sectors).

4.

Refers to prevention of illnesses caused by playing football.

(30)

PARTICIPATION CONTINUES TO PROVIDE ADULT PLAYERS WITH A RANGE OF SOCIAL, HEALTH AND WELLBEING BENEFITS

1.

FA Participation Tracker (September 2022- August 2023).

2.

ALS Survey (November 2021 – 2022). The UK's Chief Medical Officer recommends that adults must achieve an average of at least 150 'moderate intensity equivalent minutes' of physical activity per week in order to obtain these benefits.

3.

Parliament – The Long-Term Sustainability of the NHS and Adult Social Care.

4.

Lee, I. M., et al (2012).

5.

The FA Participation Tracker (September 2022 – August 2023). Linear regression analysis statistically significant at the 1% significance level.

6.

Evidence is correlative rather than causative. Determining causality between sport participation or physical activity and health/social outcomes is complex.

(31)

IN MEN, FOOTBALL PARTICIPATION CAN BE A POWERFUL TOOL TO LEVEL UP PHYSICAL HEALTH AND MENTAL WELLBEING

1.

The Priory Group – Men's Mental Health.

2.

UK Parliament – Men's Health (December 2023).

3.

Men's Health Forum – The Male Diabetes Crisis .

4.

Understanding the impact of movement on mental health and wellbeing, ALS Nov 22-23.

5.

FA Participation Tracker (September 2022- August 2023).

6.

Portas Consulting socio-economic model. Note Health values do not include the effects of injuries due to limited data availability for the grassroots game.

(32)

GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL CAN ALSO HELP ADDRESS THE UNIQUE HEALTH CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN

1.

Cancer Research UK – Breast Cancer Statistics.

2.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence – Osteoporosis.

3.

FA Participation Tracker (April - December 23).

4.

FA Participation Tracker (September 2022- August 2023).

5.

The FA Participation Tracker (September 2022 – August 2023). Linear regression analysis statistically significant at the 1% significance level.

6.

Portas Consulting socio-economic model. Note Health values do not include the effects of injuries due to limited data availability for the grassroots game & economic values do not account for 'counterfactual deadweight' (the situation in the absence of grassroots football) or displacement factors (the fact that jobs in the football sector could be taking away jobs in other sectors).

(33)

FOR DISABLED ADULTS, PARTICIPATION IN GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL HAS A SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE IMPACT ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING

1.

ONS Gov.

2.

FA Disability Football research.

(34)

FOOTBALL IS CONTRIBUTING TO THE PREVENTION OF 235K DISEASE CASES AND £3.1bn NHS SAVINGS EACH YEAR

1.

Portas Consulting socio-economic model. Note Health values do not include the effects of injuries due to limited data availability for the grassroots game & economic values do not account for 'counterfactual deadweight' (the situation in the absence of grassroots football) or displacement factors (the fact that jobs in the football sector could be taking away jobs in other sectors).

2.

Coronary Heart Disease.

(35)

ALTOGETHER, ADULT GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL PARTICIPATION CONTRIBUTES ALMOST £8bn IN SOCIAL VALUE ACROSS ENGLAND

1.

Portas Consulting socio-economic model. Note Health values do not include the effects of injuries due to limited data availability for the grassroots game & economic values do not account for 'counterfactual deadweight' (the situation in the absence of grassroots football) or displacement factors (the fact that jobs in the football sector could be taking away jobs in other sectors).

2.

FA Participation Tracker (September 2022- August 2023).

(36)

THE BENEFITS OF WALKING FOOTBALL FOR OLDER ADULTS

1.

All figures from The FA Walking Football Survey 2024.

(37)

WALKING FOOTBALL CONTINUES TO GROW, PROVIDING THOUSANDS OF OLDER ADULTS WITH PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

1.

Age UK 2023 Report.

2.

Age UK Loneliness Research.

3.

FA Waling Football Data.

4.

FA Walking Football Survey March 2024.

5.

FA Whole Game System.

(38)

WALKING FOOTBALL IS A POWERFUL TOOL TO COMBAT LONELINESS AND DECLINES IN PHYSICAL HEALTH AS WE AGE

1.

Age UK – Impact of Covid-19 on Older People's Mental and Physical Health.

2.

All figures and quotes from The FA Walking Football Survey 2024.

(41)

THE 1M STRONG FOOTBALL WORKFORCE IS CRUCIAL TO DELIVERING THE BENEFITS OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

1.

FA Workforce Data.

2.

Ground Management Association Data.

3.

ALS Children and Young People Survey Academic Year 2022-2023.

(42)

COACHES PROVIDE CRUCIAL SUPPORT TO THE GAME ON AND OFF THE PITCH

1.

FA Drivers and Barriers to Coaching survey (2021).

2.

The FA Participation Tracker (September 2022 – August 2023). Linear regression analysis statistically significant at the 1% significance level.

3.

291,972 individuals have a mandatory safeguarding qualification that has not yet expired.

(43)

REFEREEING PROVIDES 35K INDIVIDUALS WITH FITNESS, FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND LIFELONG DEVELOPMENT SKILLS

1.

A Conversation About Our Game.

2.

The FA Participation Tracker (September 2022 – August 2023). Linear regression analysis statistically significant at the 1% significance level.

(44)

GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL IS SUPPORTED BY AND IMPACTS THE LIVES OF AN 876K STRONG NETWORK OF VOLUNTEERS

1.

A Conversation About Our Game.

2.

NCVO (National Council for Volunteer Organisations).

3.

Portas Consulting Socio-economic Model. All monetary values are based on primary analysis or academic research with appropriate socio-demographic controls.

(45)

ALTOGETHER, THE GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL WORKFORCE CONTRIBUTES £5.8bn IN SOCIAL VALUE ACROSS ENGLAND

1.

Portas Consulting socio-economic model. Note Health values do not include the effects of injuries due to limited data availability for the grassroots game & economic values do not account for 'counterfactual deadweight' (the situation in the absence of grassroots football) or displacement factors (the fact that jobs in the football sector could be taking away jobs in other sectors).

2.

Not included in overall social value due to overlap with healthcare savings

(46)

CLUBS AND FACILITIES

1.

FA Affiliated Club Analysis (January 2024).

2.

FA March 2024 Data.

3.

2\* or 3\* accredited club.

4.

Football Foundation.

(47)

GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL IS SUPPORTED BY A CRUCIAL NETWORK OF 18K CLUBS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

1.

The highest level of FA club Accreditation.

2.

FA Affiliated Player Analysis (January 2024).

(49)

SINCE 2000, THE FA AND FOOTBALL FOUNDATION HAVE INVESTED OVER £1bn INTO IMPROVING GRASSROOTS CLUBS AND FACILITIES

1.

All figures from the Football Foundation.

(50)

THE FOUNDATION'S INVESTMENT TRANSFORMS THE COMMUNITIES IT TOUCHES WITHIN AND BEYOND FOOTBALL

1.

All information from the Football Foundation.

(53)

THIS SUPPORT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO CONTRIBUTE GREATER SOCIETAL VALUE THROUGH GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

1.

Portas Consulting Socio-economic Model. All monetary values are based on primary analysis or academic research with appropriate socio-demographic controls.





**ENGLAND  
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