



Report Subject: **Sporting Capital Research Study - Summary Overview**

Title: **Sporting Capital**

Sporting Capital - What is it?

Why is it that some people become committed lifelong sport participants while others drop out from sport in their teens and do not return to an active lifestyle?

For many years it has been assumed that the reasons for non-participation are found in an analysis of the barriers to engagement – and that way of looking at the problem gives many useful insights and guides to action. But that might be only part of the answer.

In 2012/13 StreetGames commissioned research to explore this issue. This is what the research told us and how we think we can use the findings to help disadvantaged young people develop a life-long love of sport and exercise.

Using data and information included within Sport England's Active People Survey (APS 6) the study looked at responses to a range of questions covering aspects related to health/fitness, body image, sport and confidence. The



research then gave the answers a value and called this: total 'Sporting Capital'. The higher an individual's sporting capital, the likelier they are to take part in sport. Those with high sporting capital are more able to resist the pressures to drop out.

Think of sporting capital as the answers to these questions on a scale of 1-10:



Background Facts for Doorstep Sport



1. How healthy and physically fit are you?
2. Have you had or do you have any health issues that affect your ability or desire to exercise and play sport?
3. How good are your core movement and hand-eye coordination skills?
4. How confident are you about sport and how sporty do you see yourself?
5. How confident are you about your body if you are taking part in an exercise or sports session?
6. How big a role do you want sport and exercise to play in your life and how much would you miss it if it wasn't there?
7. How much sport and exercise do members of your family take part in?
8. How much sport and exercise does your circle of friends participate in?

Your score combined across all of these questions is the sporting capital score. It defines how likely you are to exercise and play sport not just in your teenage years but throughout life. Think of sporting capital as a person's 'locked-in potential for participation in sport.' Increase the score and you increase their potential for always making the effort to exercise and always thinking it's worth making the effort to exercise and play sport - not just in their teenage years but throughout life.

The three key components of a sporting capital score are:

- Physical aspects;
- Psychological aspects (or confidence); and
- Social aspects.

Questions 1, 2 and 3 (above) relate mostly to the physical component, questions 4, 5 and 6 to the psychological component and questions 7 and 8 to the social component.

We all know that there are barriers to be overcome so that young people in disadvantaged communities can be active and play sport in the right place, at the right time and at the right cost. Everyone in the StreetGames network is working hard to remove those barriers to participation. But to make the biggest difference we must also try to give young people a better chance of developing a sporting habit for life by helping them to improve their scores in every one of the questions above - that is to 'build their sporting capital'.

Background Facts for Doorstep Sport

For example, the research found that for a young person with a sporting capital score of 4 out of 10, there is only a 7% chance that he or she will take part in a moderately intensive 30-minute sport or exercise session every week. For a score of 5, it jumps to a 16% chance. Take it up to 6 and it becomes 30%. At a score of 7 and above, we reach and go beyond the magical 50% figure at which a young person is more likely than not to be taking part in sport at least once a week.

Building up an individual's sporting capital is about helping people to change some of their habits and it is about providing sporting opportunities. Taking part in more enjoyable sport is a good way to raise sporting capital. It is about:

- making it fun, easy and inclusive to play sport and be active;



- giving participants tips and skills to keep their bodies fit and healthy and encouraging them to want to be healthy;
- developing core coordination and movement skills;
- maximising their potential which in turn enhances their enjoyment of sport and exercise;
- giving them confidence and making them comfortable with their appearance;
- helping them to find the right sporting experience for themselves; and
- building a circle of friends with whom they can play sport.

If we can build up a young person's sporting capital, he or she is much more likely to carry on exercising and build a sporting habit even when constraints and barriers are placed before them such as: a lack of money or lack of easily accessible facilities and sessions in their local area.

Or maybe:

- when they start a new school;
- when they start a new job or go to college;
- when they move home; and
- when they have their own children.

If we don't build up a young person's sporting capital, then opportunities may arise and the barriers may come down but they won't necessarily have the mind-set to take advantage, exercise regularly and join in sport sessions.

This approach to encouraging more people to stay active does not over-trump the way StreetGames has always

Background Facts for Doorstep Sport

talked about sport. It is still necessary to bring down the barriers that exclude disadvantaged young people from sport. But bringing down the barriers and increasing sporting capital at the same time will increase the benefits from our approach.

What we can do in Doorstep Sport

Increasing sporting capital scores in the young people who attend our projects will have a sustained impact on their lives.

Sporting capital is not the prerogative of the few.

Everyone is born with the potential to have moderate to high levels of sporting capital. It is acquired through education and experience. It is influenced by a person's surroundings, by their family, their peers, teachers, coaches and community leaders.

Participation in sport and exercise can be temporary - sporting capital is for life. If we can improve a young person's comfort and excitement level about sport and exercise and also give them a long-term reason for wanting to stay in a sporting environment, they are much more likely to carry on participating as they grow into their adult life. The higher the sporting capital, the greater the resilience to overcome hurdles to participation.

Therefore, the focus of Doorstep Sport needs to be on building sporting capital within the young people who attend our sessions and not just on increasing short-term



participation - vital though that is; it is the quality of the participation experience that matters.

Some young people who first come along to our projects will start with very low levels of sporting capital, some will have moderate levels and some very high levels.

The research highlights that there are more disadvantaged young people with lower sporting capital than amongst their affluent peers and that a higher rate of sporting capital is needed to overcome the barriers that disadvantaged young people face – it is harder to become and stay active in areas of deprivation than in affluent areas.

It is important to understand where a young person is on the 'sporting capital scale' and to try and identify where each individual can improve their Sporting Capital.

Background Facts for Doorstep Sport



- With one young person, it may be that his or her core movement and hand-eye coordination skills have never been properly developed.
- With another, it may be that he or she is lacking in confidence in general and is not comfortable with how their body looks when they exercise or play sport.
- With a third young person, it may be that none of his or her friends or family play sport and that it is not the 'social norm' in their local community. Therefore, the decision to step away from his or her social circle in order to participate is a difficult and brave one to take; and if none of their friends take part this may negatively impact upon their perception of what their experience would be like if they attended a sport session, and reduce their intention to attend.

With the probable exception of professional sportsmen

and sportswomen, everyone's sporting capital score can be improved so that they look for reasons to attend sessions, not convenient excuses not to attend like bad weather or feeling tired.

That means the training and quality of sports leaders, mentors and coaches is vital in helping them to achieve this.

However, one coach does not necessarily fit all. Some project leaders and coaches may be better suited to working with young people with high levels of sporting capital. Others may find it easier to relate and inspire young people with low levels.

Working with an individual is exactly that - an individual process.

Those young people with a **low** sporting capital score will be at the highest risk of being early drop-outs from sessions and projects. Helping to increase their score will usually be a slow process.

Building their confidence will be the most important task in many instances:

- offering positive praise and ensuring the sessions generate a feeling of achievement;
- finding out why they have come to the sessions in the first place;

Background Facts for Doorstep Sport

- finding out what their worries and concerns are (for example, health, family issues, peer pressure or thinking they will look stupid and out of place); and
- trying to gauge what factors are most important in making sure they continue to attend and grow.

Perhaps they need reassurance from their peers or maybe we need to make them feel wanted and part of a new social network of friends and family. With the girls there may be a need to encourage them to challenge the idea of what looking good means - chasing pipedreams and mimicking celebrity brings a lack of confidence when you don't match up.

In many cases, they would benefit most from being mentored by someone with whom they can identify - ideally a coach, a project leader or a volunteer who can give them one-to-one support and attention in the early stages.

If they are relatively new to organised participation, they may find the idea of visiting a gym or sports centre intimidating and need logistical help with knowing what to wear, how lockers work in changing rooms or how to book their place on a session or a class.

Over the next year StreetGames will be undertaking work to explore the best ways to increase sporting capital amongst disadvantaged young people.

For those with **low** sporting capital, this may include simple to action suggestions such as: placing the emphasis on enjoyment and fun, ensuring a positive non-threatening experience or pointing them towards other connected leisure and social activities that can help to keep them involved.

Young people with a **medium** sporting capital score have already bought into the idea of exercising and playing but we need to coax and cajole them to make sport an everyday part of their lives. So for example, suggestions may include providing them with a new, sport-friendly social network or giving them opportunities to access appropriate levels of competition that are challenging but not threatening.

Those young people with a **high** sporting capital score are already very sporty and are very likely to come back



Background Facts for Doorstep Sport



to sport following a short-term drop out. However, it is dangerous to take their participation and continued attendance for granted and to believe that they don't need encouragement and guidance. So for these participants, it will still benefit them to try new sports, talk over their ambitions and what they want from sport, develop their sporting participation competitively (if this is what they want), provide information on local sports clubs and opportunities to volunteer, gain coaching qualifications and help others.

The suggestions above are merely initial ideas - we will be building up our knowledge on this topic over the next year. It is also important to remember, that each group can benefit from every one of these tips. The aim is to help every young person who walks through the door of a Doorstep Sport Club to improve their sporting capital

score however passionate or ambivalent about sport and exercise they are when they come to us. If we can achieve this we can be confident that we have made a real difference not just now but through the opportunities and enjoyment that a lifelong love of sport can bring.

Sporting Capital Research Study - Summary Statistics

The research undertaken highlighted that Sporting Capital is not shared equally across the population. For example it highlighted that:

Gender

- Average sporting capital score for men in England - 6.1
- Average sporting capital score for women in England - 5.3
- The highest sporting capital score for women is found between the ages of 21-35 years.
- The average score in men is constant between the ages of 16-30 but dips markedly thereafter.
- Men aged between 45-64 years have higher average sporting capital scores than 16-19 year old women.

The greatest difference in the scores of men and women is in the psychological component (the confidence side), particularly in confidence issues in response to the question: "How comfortable are you in the appearance of your body when taking part in sport and exercise?" Almost 90% of men are, but for women it is just over 50%.

Background Facts for Doorstep Sport



On average, the research findings highlighted that women tend to:

- see themselves as less sporty than men;
- have lower self-confidence in their physical abilities;
- have more negative views about their body image;
- feel less confident in sporting situations;
- be more likely than men to mix in non-sporting social networks; and
- be less worried if taking part in sport didn't feature in their lives.

Social Standing

- Average sporting capital score in upper socio-economic groups in England - 6.0
- Average sporting capital score in lower socio-economic groups in England - 5.3
- This may only seem like a small difference, but it should be remembered, that the research highlighted, that whilst a

person with a sporting capital score of 6, is 30% likely to take part in sport at least once a week, someone with a score of 5 is only 16% likely to do so.

- Social class matters more for women. Women in the lower social classes are further behind their counterparts in the higher social classes than men are.

Again, as with gender, the greatest difference in the scores of those in the upper socio-economic groups in England and those in the lower is in the psychological component (the confidence side).

So people from lower social class backgrounds generally have lower levels of sporting capital and we know from other evidence that they also face the biggest barriers to participating in sport.

Age

- Average sporting capital score of young people aged 16-19 in upper socio-economic groups in England - 7.1
- Average sporting capital score of young people aged 16-19 in lower socio-economic groups in England - 6.4
- Again, this is significant, as someone with a sporting capital score of 7, is 50% likely to take part in sport at least once a week, compared to just a 30% probability for someone with a sporting capital score of 6.

75% of young men aged 16-25 said they would feel a real loss if playing sport was taken out of their lives while only 53% of young women aged 16-25 said they would feel a real loss if playing sport was taken out of their lives.

Background Facts for Doorstep Sport

Sporting Capital levels do decline in older age but levels achieved as a young person do not stick with you well into middle age and it is never too late to top them up.

Type of Sport

Fitness-related sports attract people with lower sporting capital scores more easily than do team or racquet-related sports. It is likely that this is because many fitness-related sports have few technical demands, can be taken part in casually in a less competitive environment and require less organisation. It is also possible that unlike team games they do not echo bad memories of 'last pick humiliations' at school.

If you would like to know more about Sporting Capital and the research undertaken to date, the full research findings can be downloaded from the StreetGames website:

<http://www.streetgames.org/www/sgplus/content/sporting-capital-and-doorstep-sport-working-build-legacy-sports-participation-england>

StreetGames

StreetGames is the only national charity dedicated to developing sport with disadvantaged communities. Our mission is to 'Change Sport, Change Lives and Change Communities'.

StreetGames is creating networks at national and local levels to strengthen the commitment to doorstep sport, as well as seeking significant funding to make the StreetGames projects sustainable. StreetGames' ambition is to link new doorstep sport with sports clubs, National Governing Bodies of Sport programmes, local authority services and health projects.

©StreetGames 2013



streetgames.org

