

**Curling Success and its Impact on
Participation**

Research Report no. 92

*Undertaken by MORI on behalf of **sportscotland***

Published by:

© **sportscotland**
Caledonia House, South Gyle
Edinburgh, EH12 9DQ
Tel: 0131 317 7200
www.sportscotland.org.uk

ISBN 1 85060 439 8
Price £5
2004

A copy of this report is also available in pdf format on the **sportscotland** website at:

www.sportscotland.org.uk

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Acknowledgements

sportscotland would like to thank the following for their contribution to the successful completion of the study:

- To the ice rink managers, club secretaries and new curlers for taking the time to complete and return questionnaires.
- To ice rink managers, Royal Caledonian Curling Club staff and Curling Development Officers who agreed to take part in interviews.
- To Chris Hildrey, former Director of Development at the RCCC, for assisting with the setting up of the study.
- To MORI Scotland for undertaking the study design, data collection, data analysis and reporting.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In 2002, Scottish women curlers won Britain's first Winter Olympic gold medal since 1984, when Torvill and Dean won gold in Sarajevo. This gold in Salt Lake City, USA was followed by a further gold in the Curling World Championships in Bismarck, Canada. These successes generated a substantial amount of media coverage and public interest in the sport across the United Kingdom, and particularly in Scotland.

The media coverage suggested that there had been an increase in interest and participation in curling as a direct result of the success at the Winter Olympics and World Championships. Anecdotal evidence suggested that people with no previous experience of curling sought to find out more about the sport and expressed an interest in taking part in curling. Furthermore, newspapers reported that bookings from businesses for corporate days out had also increased.

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The broad aim of the research was to examine whether the success of the women's Olympic and World Championship curling teams in 2002 had any effect on participation in curling in Scotland. More specifically, the research aimed to:

- Measure any changes in participation in curling between the seasons of 2001/02 and 2002/03;
- Gauge to what extent the success in curling has had on participation and interest in curling.

In order to establish whether the success in curling had an impact on participation, **sportscotland** commissioned MORI Scotland to undertake the study in the season following the success at the Olympics and World Championships.

1.3 Research Approach

The study used a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods to obtain data from a number of different groups involved in curling.

1.3.1 Quantitative Research Approaches

The following quantitative research approaches were used:

- A survey of all ice rinks in Scotland that provide ice time for curling was undertaken to establish throughput for curling during seasons 2001/02 and 2002/03. Self-completion questionnaires were sent to the 29 ice rink managers in Scotland. A total of 16 completed questionnaires were returned - a response rate of 55 per cent.

- A survey of all curling clubs in Scotland was undertaken to establish the impact of the recent success on club membership. In total, 585 questionnaires were posted to curling club secretaries. A total of 295 completed questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 50 per cent.
- A small-scale survey of curlers new to the sport in 2002/03 was also undertaken. A total of 47 interviews were undertaken - 29 face-to-face at the end of a game/session, with the remaining 18 undertaken by telephone.

1.3.2 Qualitative Research Approaches

The following qualitative research approaches were used:

- Ten telephone interviews were undertaken with Ice Rink Managers.
- Fourteen telephone interviews were undertaken with Royal Caledonian Curling Club (RCCC) employees and Curling Development Officers.

2 Curling in Scotland

This section briefly describes the structure and scale of curling, identifying the main organisers and providers of curling in Scotland.

2.1 The Royal Caledonian Curling Club

The Royal Caledonian Curling Club (RCCC), which dates back to 1838, is the governing body for curling in Scotland, although it has branches, affiliated associations and clubs across the world. The objectives of the RCCC, as laid out in the *Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Royal Caledonian Curling Club* (RCCC, 2002), are:

- to unite Curlers throughout the world into one Fellowship of the Rink;
- to regulate by rules the ancient Scottish Game of Curling;
- to supply and promote related sporting and other services; and
- to educate the public about the Game of Curling.

The RCCC has 585 affiliated clubs in Scotland and has approximately 14,000 members.

To support the development of curling in Scotland, the RCCC has a team of seven Curling Development Officers whose function is to work with key funding sponsors to meet the needs of all curlers, new and existing, ensuring continual growth at all levels. The Curling Development Officers are based in local authorities across Scotland.

2.2 Curling Rinks in Scotland

There are 29 ice rinks across Scotland that provide opportunities for people to take part in curling. All the managers of these rinks were invited to take part in the survey although only 16 returned a completed questionnaire.

The rink managers were asked to provide information about the ice rink and the availability of the ice for curling.

Thirty-eight per cent of the managers that responded to the survey indicated that the rink was used for curling only, while the other 63 per cent indicated that the rink was used for other activities. The activities provided at multi use rink included public skating (100%), figure skating (100%), ice hockey (80%) and speed skating (30%).

Rinks have on average six lanes for curling.

Curling takes place between the months of September and March with an average season length of 27 weeks.

2.3 Curling Clubs in Scotland

It is estimated that there are in excess of 600 curling clubs in Scotland, 585 of which are affiliated to the RCCC. Questionnaires were sent to curling club secretaries of all 585 RCCC affiliated clubs, of which 295 returned a completed questionnaire.

Scottish curling clubs vary substantially in size. The smallest club in the survey had four members, with the largest club having 156 members.

3 Curling Rinks in Scotland – Throughput and Usage

The survey of ice rink managers sought to establish:

- Throughput for curling at ice rinks across Scotland.
- Amount of time programmed for curling and usage of ice time for curling.
- Increase in new curlers at rinks.
- Changes in corporate bookings for curling.

3.1 Curling Rink Throughput

The survey of ice rink managers requested throughput figures for curling for the seasons 2001/02 and 2002/03. In total, 13 managers provided throughput data for their ice rink. The survey findings showed that these ice rinks had on average 19,524 visits for curling in 2001/02 and 20,736 in 2002/03 – an average increase of 1,212 visits per rink in 2002/03 compared to 2001/02. This represents an increase in throughput of six per cent in the season following the success at the Olympics and the World Championships.

Curling throughput in season 2002/03 ranged from 5,400 visits at one rink (a multi-use ice rink) to 54,000 visits at the busiest rink (a curling only ice rink).

Based on the survey data, it was estimated that in 2001/02 there were 566,000 visits to all curling rinks across Scotland, which increased to 601,000 in 2002/03 – an estimated increase of 35,000 visits in one year.

3.2 Curling Rink Usage

The survey of ice rinks revealed that the amount of hours available for curling was the same for both season 2001/02 and 2002/03. Ice rinks whose sole purpose was for curling provided on average 84 hours of ice time for curling each week in 2001/02 and 2002/03 – an average of 12 hours per day seven days per week.

Table 1: Programmed hours for curling at curling-only ice rinks and multi-use ice rinks in 2001/02 and 2002/03

		2001/02	2002/03
Curling-only ice rinks (n=4)	Off-peak hours	54	54
	Peak hours	30	30
	Total hours	84	84
Multi-use ice rinks (n=8)	Off-peak hours	18	18
	Peak hours	17	17
	Total hours	35	35

Source: MORI

Ice rinks which are used for other activities (including ice skating and ice hockey), were available for curling on average for 35 hours per week in 2001/02 and 2002/03, although one multi-use ice rink provided as few as 13 hours per week for curling.

In spite of an apparent increase in throughput and demand through corporate bookings (see below), there has been no increase in the number of either peak or off-peak hours programmed for curling at ice rinks between season 2001/02 and 2002/03.

3.2.1 Proportion of Programmed Ice Time Used

In addition to the increase in number of *visits* to curling rinks across Scotland, the survey data revealed that a higher proportion of the ice time was used in 2002/03 compared to 2001/02. In 2001/02, 68 per cent of the ice time available for curling was used, however, this increased three percentage points to 71 per cent in 2002/03.

The proportion of the programmed ice time used at curling-only ice rinks (76%) was higher than at multi-use ice rinks (68%).

The amount of programmed ice time used varied between rinks. In 2002/03, the proportion of programmed ice time used varied from 34 per cent at one rink to 95 per cent at another.

3.2.2 Booking Capacity

Although not all programmed hours were used, more than half (56%) of ice rink managers experienced occasions during season 2002/03 when they were unable to take bookings. Two-thirds (67%) of ice rink managers indicated that the number of bookings they had to turn down during the 2002/03 season had increased a little compared to the 2001/02 season. None of the ice rinks surveyed experienced a decline in the number of bookings they had to turn down.

The number of bookings turned down at the busiest week of the year ranged from three bookings up to 25 bookings, although the average per rink was ten bookings.

A factor affecting the number of bookings turned down was the number of programmed hours for curling – rinks with a higher number of hours for curling turned down fewer bookings than rinks with fewer hours for curling. Rinks that did not turn down bookings had an average of 53 programmed hours for curling per week compared to the 49 hours in ice rinks that did turn down bookings.

The findings suggest that although ice rinks are running under capacity, there are times when rinks do not have the capacity to cater for all interested curlers, either through lack of programmed hours at the appropriate times or through lack of curling lanes at the busiest times.

3.3 New Curlers

Curling rink managers were asked to provide information about the number of *new* visitors participating in curling to their rink, compared to the previous season.

Managers reported that there was an increase in the number of new participants to the sport of curling in 2002/03, compared to 2001/02. Just over two-thirds (69%) indicated that there had been an increase in the number of *new* participants to curling at their rink. However, this increase was not evident at all ice rinks. Six per cent of ice rink managers indicated that there had been a decline in the number of new curlers to their rink, while one-quarter (25%) indicated that there had been no change in the numbers of new participants between seasons 2001/02 and 2002/03.

Curling-only ice rinks appeared to attract more new curlers than multi-use ice rinks. Eighty-three per cent of curling-only ice rinks experienced an increase in the number of new participants compared to 60 per cent of managers at multi-use ice rinks. Furthermore, none of the curling-only ice rinks experienced a decrease in the number of new curlers compared to the previous year.

Table2: Percentage of ice rinks that experienced a change in the number of new curlers between 2001/02 and 2002/03

	Curling-only ice rinks	Multi-use ice rinks	All ice rinks
	Percentage of ice rinks		
Increased	83	60	69
Decreased	0	10	6
Stayed the same	17	30	25
<i>Base number</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>16</i>

Source: MORI

Some interviewees supported the view that the number of people participating in curling was up on the previous year. One Development Officer commented that:

“There’s definitely been a marked increase in participation in curling...”

While a RCCC employee was of the opinion that:

“There’s an awful lot of people coming in and trying [curling].”

3.4 Corporate Bookings for Curling

Ice rink managers were asked to provide information about changes in corporate bookings for curling between 2001/02 and 2002/03. It was clear that curling-only rinks experienced greater interest in corporate bookings for curling than multi-use rinks. Eighty-four per cent of curling-only ice rinks reported an increase in corporate bookings (‘increased a lot’/‘increased a little’) in the season following the medal success, compared to 29 per cent of multi-use rinks.

Table 3: Percentage of ice rinks that experienced a change in the number of corporate bookings between 2001/02 and 2002/03

	Curling-only ice rinks	Multi-use ice rinks	All ice rinks
	Percentage of ice rinks		
Increased a lot	17	0	8
Increased a little	67	29	46
Stayed the same	17	57	39
Decreased a little	0	14	8
<i>Base number</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>16</i>

Source: MORI

Fewer than one-in-ten of rink managers (8%) indicated that the number of corporate bookings declined between 2001/02 and 2002/03.

4 Curling Clubs in Scotland

The survey of curling clubs in Scotland sought to establish:

- Changes in membership between 2001/02 and 2002/03.
- Profile of club membership.
- Changes in patterns of enquiries to clubs about curling between 2001/02 and 2002/03.
- Club satisfaction with availability of ice time for club activities.

4.1 Curling Club Membership

The survey found that curling club membership had increased by three per cent in the season following success at the Olympics and World Championships – an average of one new member per club. In 2001/02 there was an average of 32 members in the clubs that responded to the survey – in 2002/03 this increased to 33 members.

For those clubs that gained new members, the number ranged from one up to 14 new members, with 80 per cent attracting up to five new members and 20 per cent attracting between six and 14 new members.

For those clubs whose membership declined, 62 per cent lost one or two members, although one club alone lost eight members between 2001/02 and 2002/03.

4.2 Profile of Club Membership

4.2.1 Adult and Junior Membership

Most of the members of curling clubs in Scotland were adults. On average, only two members out of 33 were junior members (under 18 years of age) and the number of junior club members was the same in 2001/02 and 2002/03.

The number of junior club members ranged from none in some clubs up to 34 in one club.

One ice rink manager estimated that the average age of those participating in curling was "up in the fifties". Many of the rink managers and RCCC employees interviewed expressed concern that about the ageing profile of the sport, particularly in clubs. One RCCC employee indicated that they had experienced difficulty in attracting 25 to 40 year olds into the sport.

Despite this concern, a number of Curling Development Officers and RCCC employees interviewed for the study indicated that there had been a "huge increase" in the number of children participating in curling.

It is possible that the views of these staff were influenced by experience of the RCCC-supported school curling programme, 'Curling's Cool'. Introduced in 1997, the Curling's Cool initiative is a sponsored programme run by the RCCC aimed at introducing primary schoolchildren to curling. With the involvement of ice rinks across Scotland, more than 10,000 schoolchildren have been introduced to the sport of curling since its inception (**sportscotland**, 2002b). However, this appears to have made little impact on junior club membership between 2001/02 and 2002/03.

4.2.2 Male and Female Membership

There were higher proportions of males (59%) than females (41%) in the surveyed clubs.

Of the new members to join clubs in 2002/03, two out of three new members were male; however, in the previous season (2001/02) the proportion of new male and female members was the same.

4.2.3 Trends in Club Membership

Although membership of curling clubs increased by three per cent between 2001/02 and 2002/03, it is important to establish whether this is part of an ongoing trend in club membership. It would appear from the survey data, and data from the **sportscotland** (2002a) study, that the increase between 2001/02 and 2002/03 appears to have been greater than it has in recent years.

Table 4 below shows that a greater proportion of clubs experienced an increase in membership between 2001/02 and 2002/03, compared with the period 1997-2001.

Table 4: Club membership changes

	1997 – 2001*	2001/02 - 2002/03
	Percentage of clubs	
Increased	29	44
Decreased	42	27
Stayed the same	29	26
<i>Base number</i>	61	295

Note: * Data obtained from: **sportscotland** (2002) *A Profile of Curling Clubs in Scotland*, **sportscotland** Source: MORI

Between 1997 and 2001, 29 per cent of clubs indicated that they had experienced an increase in club membership (**sportscotland**, 2002a). However, for the period between 2001/02 and 2002/03, 44 per cent of clubs indicated that they had experienced an increase in club membership. It should be noted however, that clubs may have experienced similar levels of increase between years during the period 1997-2001, but were unable to sustain the increase over a four-year period.

4.3 Enquiries to Clubs

In addition to obtaining information about the number of members in clubs, the survey sought information about general levels of interest in curling. Clubs were asked to provide information about enquiries they received about curling from the public. During 2002/03, almost one-half (49%) of the clubs experienced an 'increase'/'substantial increase' in the number of people enquiring about playing curling through their club, compared to the previous season.

Table 5: Enquiries about curling in 2002/03 compared to 2001/02

	Percentage of respondents
A substantial increase	4
An increase	45
No increase	49
Don't know/did not answer	2
<i>Base number</i>	295

Source: MORI

Four per cent of clubs experienced 'a substantial increase' in the number of enquiries they received in season 2002/03 compared to 2001/02, while a further 45 per cent of clubs experienced 'an increase' in enquiries. However, 49 per cent of clubs indicated they had not experienced an increase in enquiries about curling.

Clubs that received more enquiries about curling were more likely to have experienced an increase in the number of members. Twenty-nine per cent of clubs that experienced an increase in enquiries also increased club membership. However, only 15 per cent of clubs that had not experienced an increase in enquiries about curling also increased club membership.

4.4 Availability of Ice Time for Club Activities

Almost nine out of ten clubs (87%) were satisfied with the amount of ice time available to them. Furthermore, clubs found it easy to book ice time for club activities. The amount of time a curling club booked for club activities varied from 30 minutes per week through to 30 hours per week, with an average of 4.8 hours per club per week. Only four per cent of clubs were 'dissatisfied' with this, while 53 per cent were 'very satisfied' with the ice time available and 34 per cent 'fairly satisfied'.

As a result of this general level of satisfaction with the amount of time available for club activities, the average amount of additional ice time required by clubs to fulfil their playing requirements per week was only 0.4 hours. However, this average included one club that indicated that it would like an additional 12 hours of ice time for club activities.

5 Participants New to Curling in 2002/03

In addition to the surveys of curling rinks and curling clubs, a survey of participants new to curling in 2002/03 was undertaken. The purpose of the survey was to obtain information about:

- Profile of new participants to curling.
- New members' levels of participation in curling.
- Factors influencing their decision to take part in curling.
- Quality of the curling experience.
- Involvement in other sports.

The findings about factors influencing new curlers' decisions to take part in curling are presented in Section 6.

The 47 people surveyed were all new to curling in the season 2002/03. Those surveyed participated in curling at nine rinks across Scotland and included those who had become members of curling clubs (60%) and those who were not attached to clubs (40%).

5.1 Profile of New Participants in Curling

The survey revealed the following about the profile of people new to curling in 2002/03:

- Of those surveyed, 53 per cent were male and 47 per cent were female.
- The age profile of new curlers ranged from those aged 18-21 through to those aged 65-74. However, almost two-thirds (62%) of new curlers were 45 years of age or over.
- Fifty-eight per cent of new curlers were in employment (47% full-time; 11% part-time), with almost one-quarter (23%) retired. None of those surveyed was unemployed.
- Almost three-quarters (72%) of new curlers were from social class ABC1, while only four per cent of new curlers were from social class groups D and E.

5.2 New Curlers' Participation in Curling

Although those surveyed were new to the sport, the respondents had built up a regular pattern of participation in curling. Eighty-three per cent of those surveyed took part in curling at least once per week (19% more than once per week; 64 per cent once per week). None of those surveyed took part in curling less often than once per month.

It should be noted that the method of identifying new curlers for the survey would likely identify those more involved in the sport than those less often involved.

Table 6: Frequency of participation in curling by club members and non-members

	Members of clubs	Non-members	All new curlers
	Percentage of respondents		
More that once per week	25	11	19
Every week	57	74	64
Every two weeks	18	5	13
Every month	0	11	4
Less often than once per month	0	0	0
<i>Base number</i>	28	19	47

Source: MORI

New participants who were members of clubs were more likely to play more often than non-members. One quarter (25%) of those who were members of clubs indicated that they played more than once per week, more than twice the proportion of those who were non-members (11%).

5.2.1 Level of Participation

Over one-half (55%) of those new to curling indicated that they played at a 'learning to play/basic level', with just under one third (30%) playing 'competitively within a club'.

The level at which those new to the sport played was dependent upon whether they were, or were not, a member of a club. Eighty-four per cent of new participants that were not members of a club, indicated that they played at a 'learning to play/basic level', compared to 36 per cent that were members of a club. One half (50%) of those that were members of a club took part in curling competitively within the club.

Table 7: Level at which new curlers participate by club members and non-members

	Members of clubs	Non-members	All new curlers
	Percentage of respondents		
Learn to play/basic level	36	84	55
Casual participation	11	5	9
Competitively within the club	50	0	30
League competition	4	11	6
<i>Base number</i>	28	19	47

Source: MORI

Although none of the non-members played competitively within a club, 11 per cent indicated that they competed in league competition, a higher proportion than those in clubs (4%).

5.3 New Curlers' Experiences of Curling

The majority of new curlers reported having had good initial experiences of the sport. However, this was not surprising considering that the curlers interviewed were still involved in the sport at the end of the 2002/03 season. The study did not seek the

views of curlers who may have had their first experience of curling in 2002/03 but did not continue to participate.

New curlers were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences. Over three-quarters (83%) rated their overall experience as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’, with no new curlers having rated their experience of curling as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’.

However, there was a difference in perception between males and females. Women curlers were more likely to be positive about their experiences of curling than men, with almost all women (98%) rating their curling experiences as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’, compared to 68 per cent of men.

A number of factors play a part in shaping participants’ experiences of curling and these include the standard of the equipment provided, the quality of the ice, the standard of the changing rooms and toilets, and the social facilities available. The experiences of new curlers and clubs were broadly similar in these areas and were largely positive. The main weakness appears to be the changing room facilities at the ice rinks, although less than one in five (17%) described them as ‘poor’/‘very poor’.

5.3.1 Suggestions for improvement by new curlers

Over one-half of new curlers (54%) thought that improvements could be made to the sport to enhance their enjoyment of their curling experience. The most common improvement suggested was the opportunity to curl all year round and play more beginner games.

Table 8: Suggested improvements to curling by new participants

	Percentage of respondents
More opportunities to play (inc. all year round)	23
Improve facilities/equipment	15
More coaching/guidance for beginners	9
Make it cheaper	4
More club members/female members	4
<i>Base number</i>	<i>47</i>

Source: MORI

Around one in six (15%) respondents indicated that facilities and equipment could be improved whilst nine per cent thought that more coaching and guidance for beginners would help enhance their enjoyment of curling.

5.3.2 New Curlers’ Desire to Play More Often

Not only did club members play more often than non-members, but also they were more likely to indicate that they would like to play more often. Sixty-eight per cent of new curlers who were club members would like to play more often, compared with 47 per cent of those who were non-members.

Table 9: New curlers' desire to play more often

	Members of clubs	Non-members	All new curlers
	Percentage of respondents		
Yes	68	47	60
No	32	47	38
Don't know	0	5	2
<i>Base number</i>	28	19	47

Source: MORI

New curlers provided a number of reasons why they were unable to play more often. Fifty-seven per cent indicated that constraints created by the club prevent them from doing so, including a lack of games for new curlers, too many members and club curling at inconvenient times. In addition, 39 per cent of respondents indicated that 'other commitments/a lack of time' prevented them from taking part more often.

5.4 Participation in Other Sports

Although the study findings suggests that participation in curling increased between 2001/02 and 2002/03, it is clear from the survey findings that curling has attracted few people into sport that were not already active in sport. Almost all of the participants were active in other sports at the end of the 2002/03 (although the survey data is insufficient to identify whether any of the respondents were new to sport at the beginning of the season).

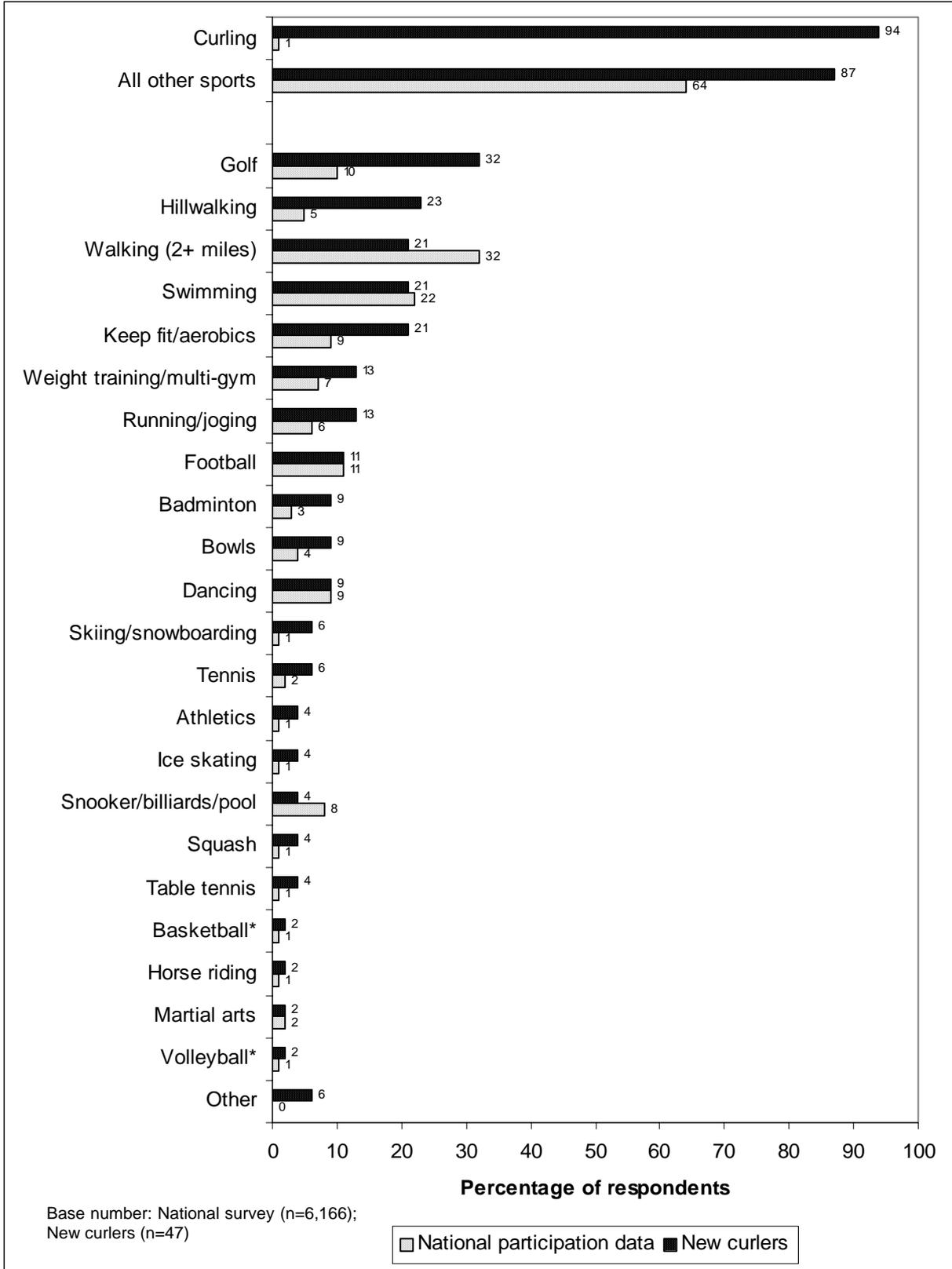
Chart 1 shows that 94 per cent of those surveyed had taken part in curling at least once in the four weeks prior to the interview. However, this is not surprising, given that many of the interviews took place immediately after a curling session.

Excluding curling, almost nine out of ten (87%) new curling participants had taken part in at least one other sport in the four weeks prior to the survey. Given that adult participation in sport was 64 per cent (over the period 1999-2001 – **sportscotland**, 2002c, p5), it is clear that the people attracted to curling were more active in sport than the population in general.

The sports in which those surveyed participated in most were, golf (32%), hillwalking (23%), keep fit/aerobics (21%), swimming (21%) and walking (21%).

Compared with the national participation statistics on sport (**sportscotland**, 2002c, p6), new curlers were very active compared with the population as a whole. In many sports (including golf, hillwalking, keep fit/aerobics, running/jogging, weight training/multi-gym, badminton) the levels of participation by new curlers were at least twice as high as that of the adult population. Only in two activities – walking (2+ miles) and snooker/billiards/pool – were the participation rates of new curlers lower than the national population as a whole (see Chart 1).

Chart 1: New curlers' levels of participation in sport (in the four weeks prior to the survey) compared with national participation data



Note: *The national participation data for basketball/netball/volleyball are combined
Source: MORI and **sportscotland**, 2002c

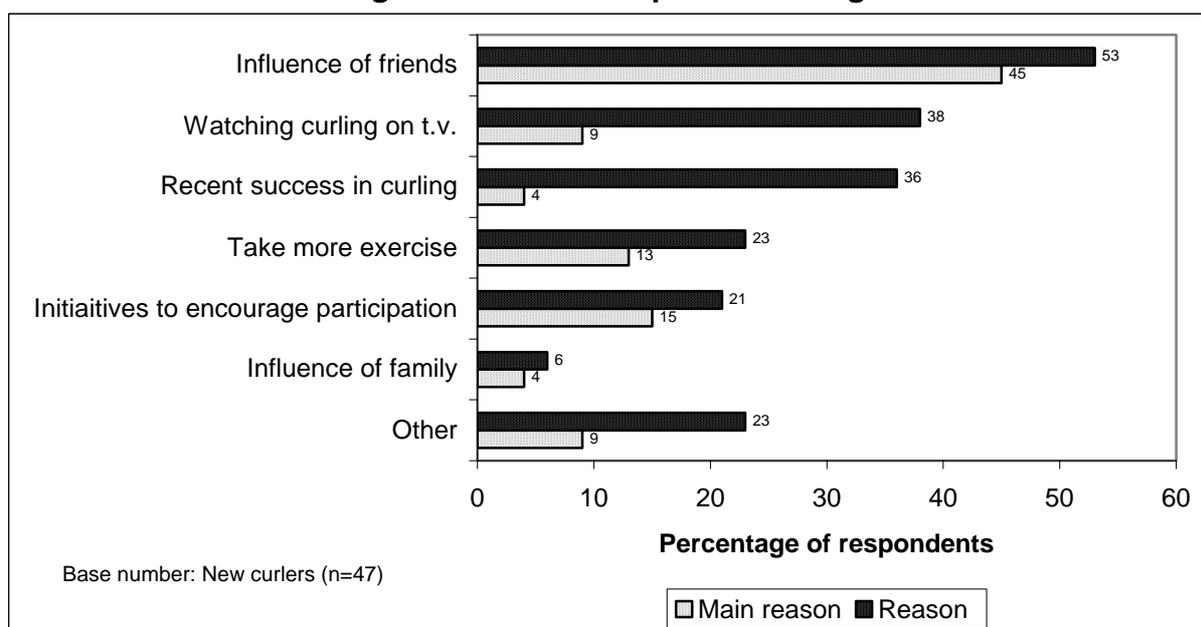
6 Factors Influencing Levels of Participation in Curling

In addition to establishing whether there had been an increase in participation in curling between 2001/02 and 2002/03, the study sought to examine reasons for any change in participation. The factors considered included:

- Influence of friends and family.
- Impact of the medal success at the Olympic and World Championships in 2002.
- The impact of television coverage of curling.
- Initiatives intended to attract people into curling at rinks and clubs.

In the survey of new curlers, respondents were asked to provide information about the factors influencing their decision to take up curling. Chart 2 below shows the different factors influencing their decision and the main factor influencing their decision to take up curling.

Chart 2: Factors affecting decision to take part in curling



Source: MORI

The new curlers gave as their top three reasons for choosing to take up curling:

- Influence of friends.
- Watching curling on television.
- Recent success at the Olympic Games and World Championships.

6.1 Influence of Friends and Family

The most important factor in new curlers' decisions to take up curling was the influence of friends. Over one-half (53%) of new curlers indicated that the influence of friends was important, while just under one-half (45%) indicated that it was the *main* reason for taking up curling.

Of less importance was the influence of families. Only six per cent of new curlers indicated that the influence of family members was important to their decision to take up curling, with only four per cent indicating that this was the main reason for taking up curling.

6.2 The Impact of Television and Olympic and World Success

The findings of the study suggest that the success at the 2002 Winter Olympics and the 2002 World Championships had some impact on increasing participation in the curling.

6.2.1 Influence of Television Viewing and Success in Curling

In the survey of new curlers, respondents indicated that watching curling on television (38%) and the recent success (36%) were among the reasons for choosing to take part in curling. In total, almost two-thirds of new curlers (62%) cited television and/or recent success as being important to their decision to take part in curling.

However, only a small proportion of new curlers indicated that these were the *main* reasons for taking part in curling. One in ten (9%) indicated that television coverage was the *main* reason to taking up curling, while only four per cent indicated that the success in curling was the *main* reason for taking up curling.

The survey data suggests that female curlers were influenced more by the success at the Olympics and World Championships than males. Almost two-thirds (65%) of those that were influenced by the success were females, compared to around one-third of males (35%). This may be because the success at the Olympics and World Championships were with the British women's teams.

6.2.2 Perceptions of Success

For those in paid positions in the sport (ice rink managers, Curling Development Officers and RCCC employees), there was a perception that the impact of the successes at the Olympics and World Championships has had a positive influence in increasing participation in curling. There was a general appreciation that the recent success had increased the profile of the sport and that this had challenged common misconceptions about the sport. One Development Officer commented:

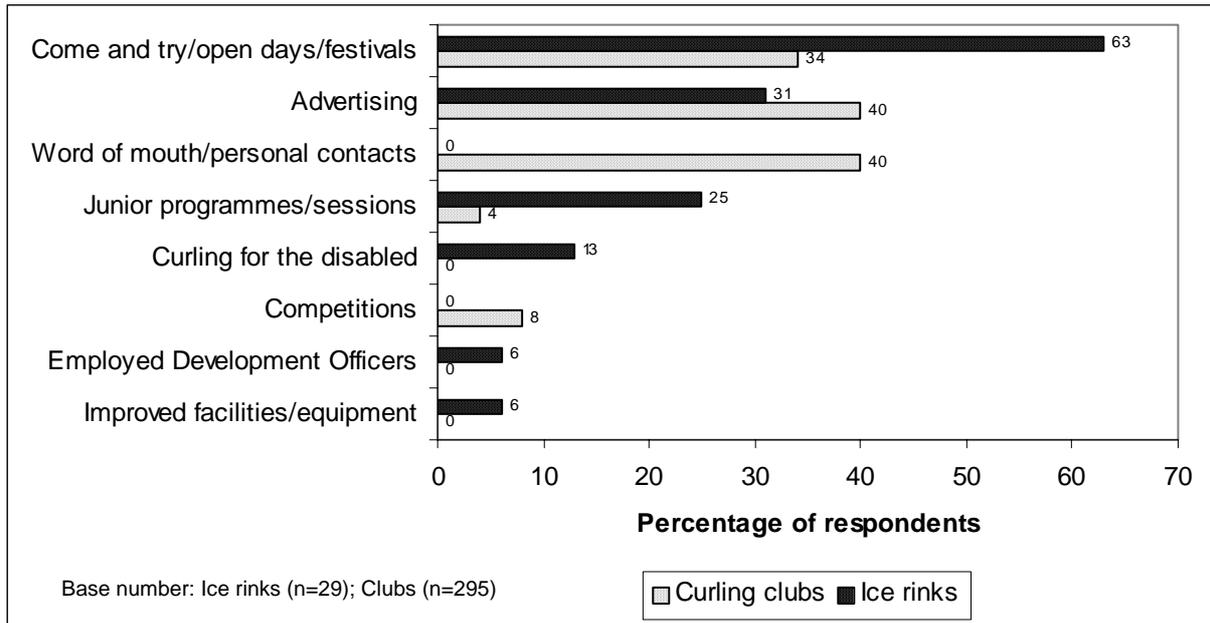
“I think people didn't know enough about the game and thought it was an old man's game. I think people have a new perception of the game.”

However, interviewees recognised that the sport was faced with the challenge of maintaining the profile of curling and capitalising on the publicity generated around the time of the Olympics and World Championships.

6.3 Initiatives

At the time of the success in curling in 2002, ice rinks and clubs all ran initiatives/promotions aimed at encouraging people to take up the curling. Chart 3 shows the types of initiatives/promotions offered by rinks and clubs.

Chart 3: Initiatives/promotional activities used by ice rinks and curling clubs to attract new members



Source: MORI

6.3.1 Initiatives Used by Ice Rinks

Ice rinks have taken a number of steps to attract new curlers. Around two-thirds (63%) of ice rinks provided 'come and try sessions/open days/festivals' as a means of attracting new participants to curling. Around one-third (31%) of ice rinks advertise curling to the public through leaflets or the local press.

One quarter (25%) of ice rinks also provide opportunities for children and young people to take part in curling.

6.3.2 Initiatives Used by Curling Clubs

Curling clubs have also been proactive in attracting new members with two-thirds (68%) of clubs using initiatives/promotions as a means of attracting new participants. For clubs, the most common methods of attracting new curlers were advertising (40%) and informal approaches such as word of mouth and personal contacts (40%).

Given that 45 per cent of new curlers indicated that the influence of friends was the main factor in their decision to take up curling, it would suggest that the 'word of mouth/personal contact' approach has been successful in attracting new participants.

Around one-third (34%) of clubs have also organised 'come and try sessions/open days/festivals', as a means of attracting new participants.

Clubs that have been pro-active in attracting new participants appear to have been rewarded by increased membership. Around one-third (32%) of clubs that used initiatives/promotions were successful in increasing their club membership. Clubs not using initiatives/promotions have been less successful in increasing club membership

– only 12 per cent of clubs not using initiatives/promotions increased their membership in 2002/03.

6.3.3 Impact of Initiatives on New Curlers

Chart 2 shows that initiatives to encourage participation in curling were an important factor to some new curlers. One-fifth (21%) of new curlers indicated that initiatives were important to their decision to take up curling, while 15 per cent indicated that an initiative was the *main* reason for their involvement.

The most successful initiative/promotion appears to have been free introductory sessions. Sixty per cent of new curlers influenced by initiative/promotions indicated that free introductory curling sessions encouraged them to try curling.

Adult-only beginner sessions (30%) and discounted tuition (20%) were the next most popular initiative/promotions to encourage new curlers to take part.

Table 10: Initiatives/promotions most effective in attracting new participants

	Percentage of respondents
Free introductory curling sessions	60
Adult only beginner sessions	30
Discounted tuition	20
Local club promotions	10
Group packages	10
Other	10
<i>Base number</i>	<i>10</i>
Base: New curlers influenced by initiatives/promotions	

Source: MORI

Ice Rink Managers, Curling Development Officers and RCCC employees were positive about the use of initiatives/promotions to attract new participants into curling, although much of this enthusiasm was targeted towards the junior programme ‘Curling’s Cool’. Few of the interviewees mentioned initiatives involving groups other than juniors.

7 Summary and Conclusion

7.1 Increased Participation in Curling

Overall participation in the sport of curling in Scotland increased between 2001/02 and 2002/03. The number of visits to ice rinks for curling increased by six per cent (an estimated 35,000 visits), while club membership increased by three per cent.

Although there has been an increase in the number of club members, it is unlikely that the increase in club members was sufficient alone to account for the increased throughput at ice rinks. From the survey of new curlers, it is evident that many people taking part in curling for the first time have done so outside the club structure. Furthermore, the increase in corporate bookings will have contributed to the increase in the number of visits to ice rinks in Scotland.

Consequently, the increase in participation was in part due to a substantial number of more casual participants to curling.

7.2 Why was there an Increase in Participation?

The study findings suggest a number of factors were important to the increase in participation.

7.2.1 Factors Most Important to Increase Participation

It would appear that the media coverage during and following the British women's team's involvement in the Olympics and World Championships and the success gained at these events contributed to public interest in the sport, and that these factors contributed to increasing participation.

Thirty-eight per cent of people new to curling indicated that television coverage of curling was an important factor in their decision to take up curling, while 36 per cent of new curlers were influenced by the success.

However, the survey suggested that the most important factor was the influence of friends. Almost one-half of new participants indicated that the influence of friends was the most important factor in their decision to take part in curling.

However, the full impact of the success in curling was difficult to quantify. It is not known what impact the success had on the friends that encouraged the new curlers to take part and new curlers. Also, the success may have made the new curlers more likely to respond to the influence of their friends.

7.2.2 Benefits of Initiatives to Increasing Participation

Although the recent success was a contributing factor, it was clear also that rinks and clubs that benefited most from the success and media coverage, were those that were prepared in some way to deal with the increased level of demand. The rinks and clubs that had initiatives or promotions in operation were the ones best placed to capitalise on the interest shown by those not previously involved.

7.3 Impact on Participants in Sport and Non-Participants

Although the study findings support the media reports that participation in curling increased following the success in the Olympics and World Championships, it would appear that the success has had the greatest influence on those who were already active in sport. Consequently, care should be taken when asserting that success on the world stage in sport has an impact on general levels of participation. Success may attract people active in sport to another activity but, in the case of curling, it appears to have had little impact on those not currently active in sport. This suggests that overall participation in sport by the Scottish population is unlikely to be directly affected by success on the world stage.

7.4 Future Growth of Participation in Curling

Many of the interviewees were confident that the publicity surrounding the successes has had a positive impact on the profile of the sport; however many recognised that there was now a challenge in maintaining levels of interest and retaining those that had been attracted to the sport.

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