

PRESS RELEASE: 21st May 2020

4 in 10 SUPPORT A RETURN TO LIVE SPORT IN 2020

1 in 5 Irish adults support the idea of playing landmark Irish sporting events including the GAA Senior Football & Hurling Championships, Guinness 6 Nations & Autumn Series Rugby and FAI League of Ireland behind closed doors and viewable digitally in the second half of 2020, with a further 17% in favor of reduced capacity crowds being allowed to attend such games, according to new research by sponsorship consultants ONSIDE.

The latest wave of the **ONSIDE Sponsorship Market Monitor** has revealed that 44% of Irish adults claim that they will only attend live sports events or concerts when a vaccine is available for Covid-19, with the varying sports fan bases of GAA, Rugby and Irish soccer largely aligned on their return to play preferences.

4 in 10 Irish adults also believe the remaining Republic of Ireland Senior Men's International Team qualifiers for the postponed **UEFA European Championships in 2021** at the Aviva Stadium should be played out later this year. According to John Trainor, Founder and CEO of ONSIDE: "Age is a definite factor in Irish adults' return to play preferences. While 3 in 10 young Irish adults aged 18-24 are against these games being played out this year, this grows to 52% of adults aged 45-64".

Trainor continued, "The return to sports on the global stage has been a success for early movers so far, with high interest and viewership gains won for many. Over 6 million viewers tuned in across Germany for Sky's coverage of the return to football between Borussia Dortmund and Schalke, which represents a doubling of what would have been expected for the game under normal circumstances. Similarly, the return of Nascar's North American stock car racing series on May 17th delivered an average audience of 6.32 million viewers for US broadcast network Fox, up nearly 40% compared to the last race to take place before the series was paused due to the current pandemic."

Trainor noted that: "Among the 17% in favour of events going ahead in Ireland with live attendees later this year, 50% capacity is the preferred option, with close to 1 in 10 generally open to the major sports events tested in our research being played in half filled sports stadia".

The ONSIDE survey also uncovered a more cautious approach by the Irish public to returning to live music, arts and theatre performances at major indoor venues in 2020, with 1 in 4 in favor of reduced capacity or digitally streamed music concerts, while close to 6 in 10 would rather see such events in major indoor entertainment venues hold off on a return until 2021.

Striking a somewhat positive note for income streams of sports, music and theatre rights holders in Ireland, 30% of Irish adults would be ready to buy a ticket now to a major sports, music or theatre event that is due to take place in the first half of next year. Trainor notes that: "Encouragingly for the indoor music and theatre sector, their 'regular fans' in particular are more likely to be ready to buy into 2021 shows now, with 48% of regular goers to venues like the 3 Arena and Bord Gáis Energy Theatre ready to buy tickets now for 2021 shows at such venues".

Testing the business case for sponsorship within this landscape, the latest ONSIDE research found that 53% of sports fans and 60% of music and arts event goers believe that in today's economy, it is more important than ever for companies to invest in sponsorship and 56% of avid Irish sports fans went on to say that they would be more inclined to support companies or brands who in turn continue to support their favourite sports events and teams through sponsorship.

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About the 'ONSIDE Sponsorship Market Monitor'

In the consumer research cited in this release, ONSIDE used a nationally representative survey of 1,001 adults aged 18+ across the Republic of Ireland. Fieldwork was conducted from 7th - 12th May 2020.

ONSIDE is a leading specialist in marketing and sponsorship consulting and research services – With a proven track record and strong industry experience in a cross section of sectors, ONSIDE is currently feeding into the marketing and sponsorship decision making of circa €50m+ of Irish spend – working on many of Ireland's premier sponsorships – on sporting, music, cause-related, broadcast and other platforms.