



**AMATEUR
SPORT
ASSOCIATION**



CLUB SURVEY 2018



BACKGROUND

The New Zealand Amateur Sport Club Survey is a new initiative to generate insights that can be used to improve sport for all New Zealanders.

The purpose of the survey is to learn more about the current state of amateur sport clubs in New Zealand. The 2018 survey was the first undertaken and serves as a pilot for what will be annual from 2019.

While other sport industry data exists at individual level this survey provides a unique snapshot of the sector at club level. Due to the relatively limited scope of this pilot project, what follows is for discussion purposes only and ought not to be generalised.

It is important to acknowledge the inherent bias of self-report and that higher functioning/healthier clubs are likely overrepresented.

METHOD

An email invitation was sent to representatives of more than 1000 sport clubs across the country and more than 15 sports. Each club was registered as an incorporated society.

Both numeric and open-ended questions were posed to club representatives across five thematic areas:

- **MEMBERSHIP,**
- **FACILITIES,**
- **VOLUNTEERS,**
- **MANAGEMENT/GOVERNANCE/STRATEGY,**
- **AND GOVERNING BODIES.**

Club representatives were also queried broadly about Amateurism and its current place in sport clubs. These six sections form the structure of this report. “Further Insights” were compiled through the analysis of open-ended questions related to each section.

Questionnaires (n=169) were completed by club representatives of varying roles. Athletics, Bowls & Football clubs are best represented. Participating clubs had an average (mean) of 259 members.

SPORTS CLUB REPRESENTED			
ATHLETICS	22	ROWING	10
BASKETBALL	3	RUGBY LEAGUE	3
BOWLS	25	RUGBY UNION	6
CRICKET	11	SOFTBALL	8
FOOTBALL	18	SQUASH	6
HOCKEY	12	SLS	5
MULTI-SPORT	10	SWIMMING	10
NETBALL	6	TENNIS	9

CLUB REPRESENTATIVES BY ROLE	
PRESIDENT	29
SECRETARY	73
TREASURER	6
VP/OTHER COMMITTEE	10
MANAGER/ ADMIN	17
CHAIRPERSON	9
CLUB CAPTAIN/COACH	18
LIFE MEMBER	2

RESULTS

Results are presented in the Five Thematic Areas + Amateurism in the pages that follow.

MEMBERSHIP

78% of surveyed clubs report the same or larger membership compared with 5 years ago

No relationship between club size and membership decline/growth

It was reported that an average (mean)

75% of sport club members are “**active**” (i.e., participated in a club activity at least once per month over the past year)

MEMBERSHIP - FURTHER INSIGHTS

- A wide range of ideas were conveyed when club representatives were asked to describe the membership of their club. Many ideas are traditional notions associated with sport clubs like a family orientation, community engagement and volunteerism.

“We have an old school set-up”

“Great community feel. We all support each other. Take seriously the idea that we are growing the person, not just the sport”

- Most participating clubs report recruiting for new members in about two ways (e.g., word of mouth, online and/or “have a go” days).
- A minority of clubs report more “strategic” recruitment activity through linkages with schools and/or targeting young adults who are through school/university.
- Many club representatives report struggling to recruit/retain a particular segment like school-aged participants or seniors.
- A variety of alternative programs including “social sport” and “business house” were noted as attempts to recruit/retain members.

FACILITIES

85%

of surveyed clubs have a “home” consisting of land and/or facility

48%

of surveyed clubs share their “home” with others (including other sport clubs)

Athletics likely to share,
Bowls not likely to share

32%

of surveyed clubs own the land of the club

Bowls likely to own,
Athletics not likely to own

45%

of surveyed clubs have catering service for at least 10 hours per week

36%

of surveyed clubs have bar facility open for at least 10 hours per week.

Athletics very unlikely to have bar facilities,
Football & Bowls very likely

VOLUNTEERS

Clubs had an average of 30 volunteers who contributed at least three hours per month.

FURTHER INSIGHT

Some reported that their club was run entirely by volunteers and others that the club was entirely dependent on volunteers.

MANAGEMENT/ GOVERNANCE/STRATEGY

14%

of surveyed clubs have a **paid administrator/manager** at least 15 hours per week

Larger clubs (100+ members) much more likely to report having a paid administrator

95%

of surveyed clubs have **board meetings** at least **five times per year** with at least **five members**

No relationships between governance rigor and sport or club size

97%

of surveyed clubs have a **treasurer and file** with the Registrar of Incorporated Societies

53%

of surveyed clubs create and circulate a **Strategic Plan** at least every five years

Very large clubs (300+ members) most likely to report regular strategic plans

5%

of surveyed clubs were **losing money**,

38%

were **achieving a surplus**

No relationship between overall financial health and club size or sport

57%

of surveyed clubs had at least one sponsor

MANAGEMENT/ GOVERNANCE/STRATEGY

FURTHER INSIGHTS

- Several comments were about strategic plans – in particular about a plan being developed for the first time.
- Some reported that paid staff were now needed in order for the club to function.
- Diversification was a theme - either that their club needed to diversify or that without alternative activities they would not survive.
- One club representative described a very progressive mindset for a sport club in 2018:

“Our systems are under review currently.
New strategic plan is being developed.
We are very focused on accessing current research
around member retention and marketing.”

GOVERNING BODIES

7% of surveyed clubs report **financial support from an RSO**

11% of surveyed clubs report **financial support from an RST**

2% of surveyed clubs report **financial support from an NSO**

77% of surveyed clubs receive **NO financial support from any governing body**

4% of surveyed clubs received **financial support from more than one body**

90% of surveyed clubs pay an **affiliation fee/levy** to an RSO

67% and 67% to an NSO

57% of surveyed clubs report utilising **coaching resources** from a governing body.

GOVERNING BODIES

FURTHER INSIGHTS

- Comments here related mainly to high performance pathways.
- Some acknowledged supportive GB's, others were concerned about a lack of support.

“We utilise the coaching resources but we have to pay for them”

“We may belong to a higher body... but there is no financial support. Only if we can prove we meet all their requirements which quite often is difficult to reach...”

AMATEURISM IN NEW ZEALAND

The word amateurism refers to the pursuit of activity on an unpaid basis. However, alongside sport, amateurism seems to have a deeper meaning intertwined with other aspects of the activity and context. It is important to understand how sport club representatives in New Zealand understand this phenomenon.

Club representatives were asked *“What does amateurism mean to you in the context of your club and New Zealand sport?”*

Responses about **payment** ranged from participants being unpaid to all organisational activity being voluntary and unpaid.

The link between **inclusiveness** and amateurism was demonstrated in suggestions that an amateur organisation was available or gave opportunities to everyone in the community

THESE SENTIMENTS WERE ALSO COMMON:

■ Enjoyment ■ Club-Level ■ Everyone ■ Not Elite
■ Funding ■ Love of the Game ■ Approach to Competition

FURTHER INSIGHTS

Comments were varied, perhaps reflecting not only differing ideas about “amateurism”, but perhaps the very nature of what sport clubs are and should be striving to achieve.

“Community based, not for profit, run by members”

“Amateurism to me is anything ‘club level’ – where our members play for the love of the game and are not getting paid for it”

“Ultimately out to do sport”

“Everyday people engaging in a social activity”

“About giving people a sense of belonging”

“... reactionary... Strategic planning and organisation are not present”

DISCUSSION

MEMBERSHIP

Nearly a quarter (22%) of surveyed clubs reported that their membership had fallen over the past 5 years, with recruitment and retention of members a key focus for most survey respondents. The importance of providing non-traditional ways of participating in a sporting code (for example, acknowledging that prospective and existing members have become increasingly time-poor), appears to be a way of both attracting new members (as well as retaining existing members), and perhaps reenergising long-standing social links of the club to the community.

Clubs need to be innovative delivering sport in their communities to attract and retain members.

FACILITIES

While most clubs (85%) have a home consisting of land and/or facility, less than half (48%) share this with another sporting code, suggesting that clubs consider themselves to be competing for the attention and support of the sporting community where they exist, perhaps seeing their sport as more important than the needs of the community at large. Despite this, only a minority of clubs are offering hospitality as a means of encouraging community engagement outside of the sport itself, or as a means of attracting additional funds to financially support the club

Clubs should focus on community benefits rather than just their sport

MANAGEMENT/GOVERNANCE/STRATEGY

With nearly two-thirds (62%) of clubs either “losing money” or “approximately breaking-even”, only half of clubs (53%) report having a Strategic Plan, (with nearly half of all clubs (43%) having no financial sponsor).

There appears to be a greater realisation that long-term viability means diversifying interaction within the community.

Although clubs rely on volunteers, many would benefit from having the services of a paid administrator.

DISCUSSION

GOVERNING BODIES

With over three-quarters of clubs (77%) receiving no funding from any governing body, despite most (90%) having to pay affiliation fees or levies, there appears to be a significant drain of financial resources away from where clubs need them most. While over a half of clubs (57%) report receiving coaching resources from a governing body, a significant proportion of clubs pay-to-play, yet appear to receive little in return. The question should be asked of NSOs as to the role of clubs in their strategy for the long-term development of their sports.

National Sporting Organisations have a responsibility to nurture and support clubs in the community, at the risk of losing their grass-roots support and community interest.

AMATEURISM

Clubs relish their roles in providing a meaningful connection across members in a community, through a shared love of a particular sporting code.

The absence of money as a motivating factor for participation in clubs continues to be key, which sharply contrasts with the financial challenges in maintaining and operating a club, which many clubs currently face. In this regard, lack of formalised structures, funding models and strategic planning can be both a benefit (to encourage casual participation) and a barrier (to long-term organisational viability).

“Love of the Game” is the heart-beat of clubs, but increasing commercial and regulatory challenges threaten the community’s support over the longer-term.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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THE NEW ZEALAND AMATEUR SPORT ASSOCIATION

The NZASA was formed in 2017 to work collaboratively with all sporting codes in promoting, fostering, advancing and encouraging the core values of organised amateur sport, with the goal of ensuring there are opportunities, incentives and recognition for all participants, which are aligned to their distinctive status as amateurs. The Association's vision is for all New Zealand communities (urban and rural) to have viable and enduring amateur sporting bodies which are able to attract, engage, build and sustain membership based on each participant's and each community's unique needs.

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