

In Spring 2021 the TPA designed a survey to better understand the impact of pickleball at indoor tennis facilities across Canada. We wanted to get a picture of where and how pickleball is offered, as well as understand the different motivations that led clubs to integrate this fast-growing and tennis-adjacent sport. In cases where facilities do not offer pickleball -- or offer it only on a limited basis -- we wanted to gain insight into barriers that club leaders perceive or have encountered, and to identify points of resistance that may exist.

Data collected from this survey will be used to provide TPA members and facilities with tools and resources should they want to incorporate pickleball in the future, or grow an existing program.

Information About Respondents

- Responses were from tennis leaders at 74 indoor facilities -- approx. half of the indoor facilities in Canada (see full list in Appendix).
- Facilities were categorized as high-end (16), medium (34) and low (24). These designations were connected to affordability and amenities offered.
- 47% of all respondents indicated that they currently offer pickleball at their facility.
- The high-end clubs, which tend to be larger facilities, are clearly embracing pickleball. Of the 16 high-end clubs that responded to this survey, 10 (62%) currently offer pickleball and 2 are actively considering it.
- Of the 40 respondents who do *not* currently have pickleball, 9 (23%) are either thinking about incorporating it or plan to do so and 31 (77%) are *giving little or no consideration* to pickleball.

Pickleball Programming

- At clubs with pickleball there were a range of programming options offered: Drop-In/Rec Play was most common (97% offered this) with group lessons (44%), private lessons (39%) and round-robins/socials (30%) following. League play was offered by 28% of clubs and 19% offered tournaments. Only 5% of clubs offered ladders.
- Drop-in play was reported to have the most participation (64% ranked it most popular), followed by Leagues, Round-Robins/Socials and Group Lessons).

- According to most respondents there is limited crossover between their tennis players and pickleball players. In the majority of cases the pickleball players play pickleball and the tennis players play tennis. However, 10 facilities reported that between 11% and 25% of their tennis players also play pickleball.

Leading the Programs

- Tennis professionals are commonly running pickleball programs at indoor facilities in Canada. 35% of clubs reported their tennis pros to be in charge of delivering their PB programming. This is followed by 26% of clubs who report that the players run it themselves. 16% of respondents indicated that a dedicated pickleball coach runs their programs. Volunteers and non-tennis facility staff run the programs, according to 24% of respondents.

Motivation to Offer Pickleball

- 67% of respondents indicated that **member demand** motivated the incorporation of pickleball; 67% listed **fill empty court/facility time** as a rationale. 54% saw pickleball as a **potential source of revenue** and 42% viewed the chance to **attract new members** as a reason to introduce PB.

Challenges

- Clubs that offered PB encountered some barriers. While 44% of respondents indicated little to no problem with noise, 56% listed “noise complaints” as at least somewhat of a challenge to deal with.
- 62% found the strain on courts or facilities to be challenging.
- 28% of respondents indicated that a lack of PB knowledge was a challenge, although none considered it to be an extreme one.
- 61% of respondents with pickleball at their facilities indicated little or no concern about pickleball changing the nature or mission of their club. 38% of respondents, however, considered it somewhat of a challenge to introduce pickleball and stay true to the nature/mission of their facility.
- Just over half of the respondents who have PB at their club indicate that they are somewhat or well connected with their local PB community.

Requested Resources

- Facilities with pickleball programs are looking for resources. 73% indicated that they'd like to see a coach education/coach certification program for pickleball. 62% asked for TPA-run workshops and well over half were interested in a guide to starting/growing pickleball (59%) and instructional videos (56%).

Pickleball and Finances

- 44% of respondents reported that pickleball generated *as much* or *more* revenue per hour than did tennis -- nearly half of this group reported that pickleball revenue per hour outpaced tennis revenue.
- 56% of respondents indicated that each hour of PB brings in less revenue than does tennis -- the majority said it was significantly less.

Pickleball Venues

- Pickleball can be played on different surfaces and facilities offer it in a range of places.
- 25% of respondents with pickleball indicated that they have dedicated courts.
- 55% of respondents with pickleball indicated that they use tennis courts.
- 39% of respondents with pickleball indicated they use badminton courts.
- 16% of respondents with pickleball indicated that they use a gymnasium.

Concerns About Pickleball

- 62% of respondents identified facility availability as a limiting factor when making decisions about introducing or expanding pickleball.
- 62% of respondents were concerned about potential conflicts with other facility users.
- The cost of integrating pickleball was not identified as a major issue, with just 3% of respondents identifying it as a barrier to introducing or growing pickleball.
- 8% of respondents were not sure how to get started with pickleball.
- 27% believed that there was not enough demand for pickleball to justify introducing or expanding it at their club.

Selected Additional Comments from Respondents (via open-ended questions)

- The more TPA gets involved with certification and providing resources, the better. The quality of coaching in PB is understandably unpredictable with no governing body.

Pickleball will be an asset to clubs who can provide court time for play as it can be used as a "progressive" start to tennis for juniors, as well as being an activity for an aging demographic where covering a tennis court is difficult.

- Cela fait 3 années que nous avons instauré le pickleball dans notre centre sportif. Ce sport est de plus en plus populaire... [it's been 3 years since we incorporated PB in our centre. It is becoming more and more popular]
- TPA is behind and needs to catch up. There is no proper Canada wide Canadian organized Pickleball coaching program. I did the IPTPA myself and it was the equivalent but much less content to Instructors course for Tennis.
- For pickleball to flourish is to design a plan for clubs to incorporate dedicated pickleball courts. The friction between tennis players and pickleball players is almost always having to share the court. Tennis at the moment is very popular so court time is at a minimum [sic] so having pickleball advocates demand court time puts strain on open court time and therefore causes conflict between the two.
- Le problème que nous rencontrons avec les joueurs de pickleball c'est au niveau tarif. Trop cher pour eux même si c'est moitié prix versus le tennis. [the problem we have is with regulating prices. It is too expensive but still just half the price of tennis]

Appendix A: Respondents TPA

The survey received 76 responses from 74 different facilities. The regional breakdown was as follows: **BC - 17 MB/SK/AB - 7 ON - 28 QC - 17 Atlantic - 5**

High-End (Exclusive/Elite, typically member-owned, initiation fees are common)

Middle (More accessible, often for-profit; some amenities)

Low (Few amenities, most affordable, often smaller, often publicly owned)

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