



PFA Player Survey May 2020 Summary July 2020

Introduction

In May 2020 the PFA conducted a Survey of Petanque players in Australia. The survey instrument was open on the SurveyMonkey platform for three weeks in May. The survey contained 48 questions covering a range of issues relevant to the playing of petanque in Australia.

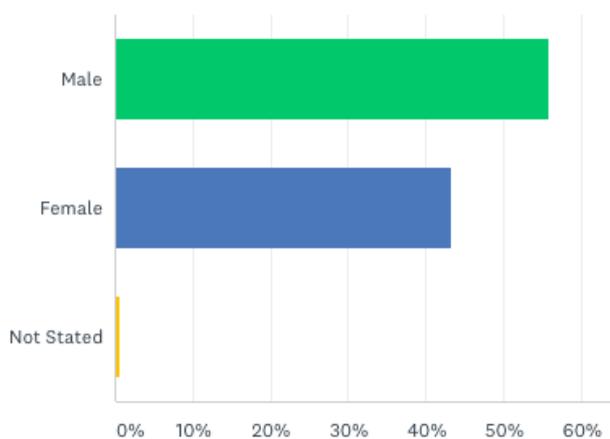
There were 477 responses. The full list of answers was published by the PFA Board on the PFA website in June.

This Paper analyses the major issues arising from the survey.

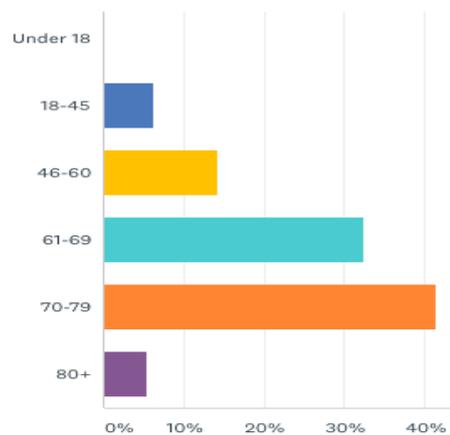
General Information

The **gender** and **age** distributions roughly corresponded with the available data from the PFA Portal showing that Petanque is played by men and women in roughly equal numbers and is mostly played by the older demographic.

Responses: 477

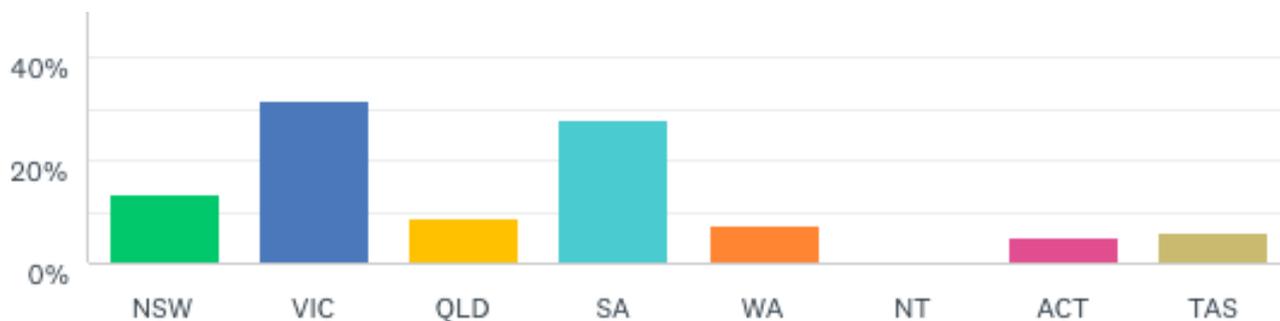


Responses: 451



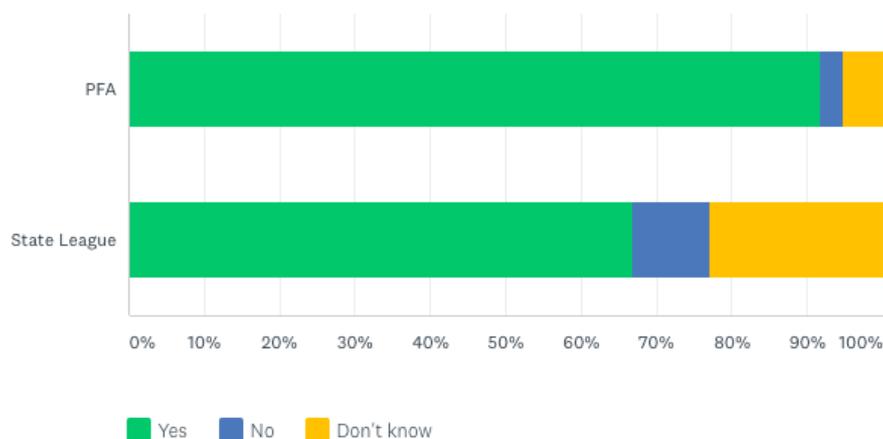
Responses came from **52 different Clubs** (six of whom were not PFA-affiliated) across all States where PFA Clubs exist.

Responses 422



Most players knew they were **affiliated** with the PFA whereas the relationship with the relevant State League was less known.

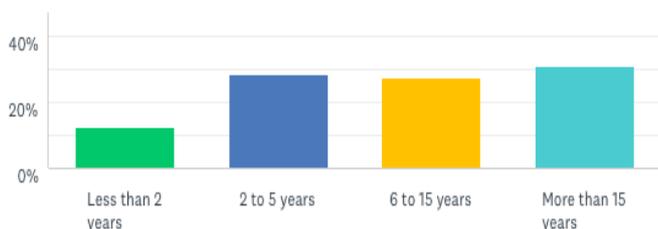
Responses 422



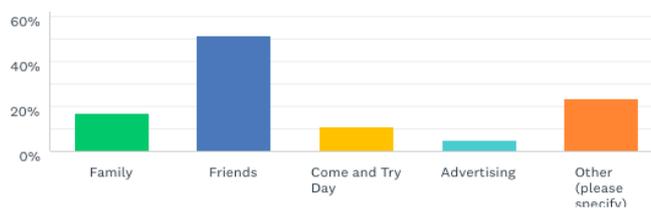
You and Petanque

Respondents have been playing petanque for a considerable **time** correlating with the age demographic. They were mostly introduced to the game through friends although come and try days were also popular.

Responses 414

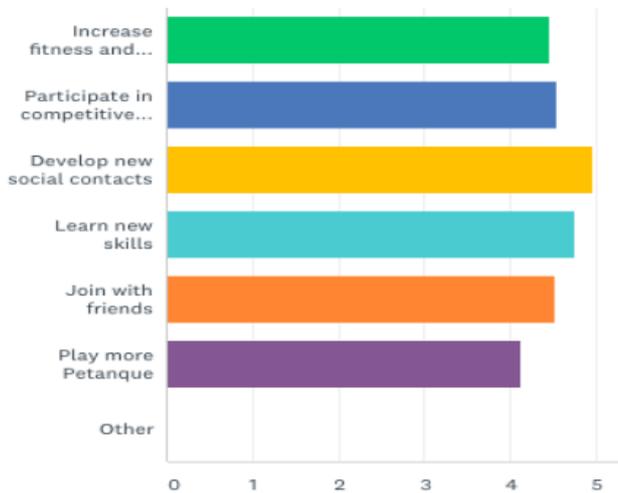


Responses 415



Eighty percent of the respondents were **PFA Licenced**. Most of the unlicensed players came from those respondents who were from Clubs not affiliated with PFA (65% from QLD and SA)

Thirty percent of players played **social petanque** only. The large majority play both social and competitive petanque (67%).



Players play for a number of reasons none of which are predominant.

Other significant reasons given included Fun & Social Aspect (7 Comments), Involved in Foundation of a Club (7), the French Influence (6), Family & Friends (6).

The Rules

Timed games are preferred by 37% as opposed to untimed (21%) although the majority (42%) don't care which form. 75% of respondents said they were familiar with the different Rules that apply to timed games.

When asked for comments about **specific rules**, there was a very mixed opinion base as to changes. Although aware that we can review and recommend to FIPJP but not change ourselves (except local rules), many responses were for relaxing rules.

With regard to **social play**, rules can only be enforced with effect, by umpires if the basics are taught at club level. Perception is that the rules change too often, this is every 4 years. It has been additional interpretations that confuse players showing a definite difference between social players and competition players responses.

Licensing

Regarding **Insurance**, 78% of respondents were familiar with the PFA Insurance coverage but more (50%) didn't know whether their Club had separate Insurance.

Asked about the current **player licensing** system, many respondents were happy with the present system however, the majority of responses referred to having variable licencing levels, ranging through lower fees for social players, family licences, everyone to be licenced, to increased fees for a full licence, etc.

Several suggested that **unlicenced players** should be permitted to play, while many seemed unaware of the Day licence provisions. There were suggestions for more-relaxed and less rules-focussed play, more public exposure be playing in frequented areas, promoting to the young and a welcome pack including rules for new members. A few suggested more input from Clubs, Leagues and the PFA and gaining sponsorship. There was one suggestion for more focus on the 60+ group and another for a limit on Club membership numbers.

Communications

The monthly **Newsletter** was seen as useful by the large majority of respondents (70%). Less than 50% use the PFA **website**.

When asked about the PFA **Members Portal** respondents didn't use it (not unexpected as it is for Club officials only) or thought it was generally good. There were some criticisms of its functionality but also a number of constructive suggestions for improvement.

Suggestions for any additional **communication** content that should be provided from the PFA to Licenced Players and Clubs included; more content in the Newsletter, more information on selection processes. Most comments were positive about current communication methods.

Asked about other forms of communication PFA should use 49 respondents suggested email (34%) and 45% suggested social media both of which are currently used by the PFA.

Growth of our Game

Asked about the **positive** things that attracted them to the sport, the large majority mentioned the social aspect and friendly atmosphere and meeting people (220 responses). Others liked the competitive nature of the game (80). Next was learning more skills (66). Other reasons included, a sport that didn't discriminate on age or gender (41), an easy game to play, good value for money and several others.

Negatives that detract from the game were mentioned by 215 respondents. They included lack of sportsmanship and bad behaviour (62), problems with governance and politics (58), issues with competitions (30) (particularly untimed games/days too long), umpiring and rules (20). Given the importance of this issue regarding any improvements that might be planned, a full list of responses from this question is attached as Appendix 1.

Asked to provide suggestions on how **Clubs** could **increase participation** in the sport, the most popular suggestions were: run Come and Try/Open days (45), publicity in the local media/distribution of flyers or stickers (36), get into schools and Universities (15).

Asked about how **State Leagues** could help increase participation, respondents indicated that more advertising in all media (including Social) plus Demonstration Days in Public areas might be beneficial.

Several respondents either indicated that their State needed to form a League, or that one did not exist in their State or Territory.

Several thought that the League should approach educational institutions. There were a few who hoped for less in-fighting, for financial assistance or for more inter-Club comps and Social events.

Also mentioned, were coaching sessions, non PFA involvement in State League comps, a Seeding system, regular newsletters, open competitions Extreme Petanque, a Buddy system, State uniform to be worn at comps, more focus on State - not National, represent the sport at State Govt levels, host Open Days in areas without Clubs, participate in mini-Olympics for Disabled and focus on ethnic groups.

Asked how the **PFA** could increase participation in the sport the largest single response, was that petanque needs to improve marketing of our sport through improved media coverage. The next largest response was that increasing exposure and membership numbers was best approached at a local level through Clubs.

The issue of how to get more **juniors**/young people involved with the sport led to 167 comments. Development of a schools program, especially leveraging off the French connection (46%) was the most regularly mentioned suggestion.

Other ideas included targeting those who are just leaving other sports (like football, netball, etc.) and looking for another activity. Using the obvious family relationships, grandparents, parents, children is already quite prevalent but could be prioritised. Getting high-profile ambassadors involved who could attract younger interest was also suggested. A full synopsis of the responses is included in Appendix 3.

Current National PFA Organised Events

The **PFA National Titles** being held at Easter was preferred by 52% of respondents with 33% preferring the titles to be split, the other 15% not having an opinion. A majority supported cash prizes for these competitions.

At the **Inter-State level**, suggestions regarding reformatting the Interstate Challenge, the large majority of responses favoured keeping the current system (3 men and 3 women). A limited number of players have participated in this competition, the selection criteria in States seems to be a problem. However, the response was favourable to the competition, it just needs to be a fixed format.

The idea of introducing **handicapping** or divisions in competitions was supported by twice as many respondents who didn't like the idea.

Ideas for improving the **selection procedures** for PFA National teams were diverse. There were several suggestions on how to improve the selection criteria. A similar number noted that they didn't know the selection process. Some thought that the process wasn't transparent enough. These comments were significant enough to include in their entirety as Appendix 2.

There was strong support for having State-based **ranking** systems to support the selection processes although 40% didn't have an opinion

Respondents strongly (80%) agreed that participating in **Interstate and International competitions** was important for increasing the visibility of the sport. They also supported PFA assisting representative teams including paying them to participate (roughly twice as many agreeing with this who opposed it). Some thought that current PFA assistance to representative teams was too little (22%) although the large majority didn't have an opinion (67%)

Umpiring

A large majority of respondents (85%) supported the aspiration for all affiliated Clubs to have at least one resident qualified Umpire.

Reasons for the **lack of umpires** offered were that players just want to play, timed games didn't allow for playing umpires, there wasn't a need for umpires in social games, compensation was poor and there is a lack of respect for umpires. The need for more consistent training was also mentioned.

PFA Priorities

Priority issues that the PFA should concentrate on included; promotion and marketing, skills development, awareness of the rules, encouragement and support for National and International events, increasing and improving Coaches, Umpires and Competition Organisers, seeking sponsorship (Govt and Business),

There were a lot of suggestions about how to restructure the **management** or organisation of the PFA. The largest response to this question was; Don't know how it how it works so can't comment. This is disturbing and indicates the PFA needs to communicate what it is doing more effectively to its membership. This was also raised under Communication, where better communication and accountability was raised as an issue.

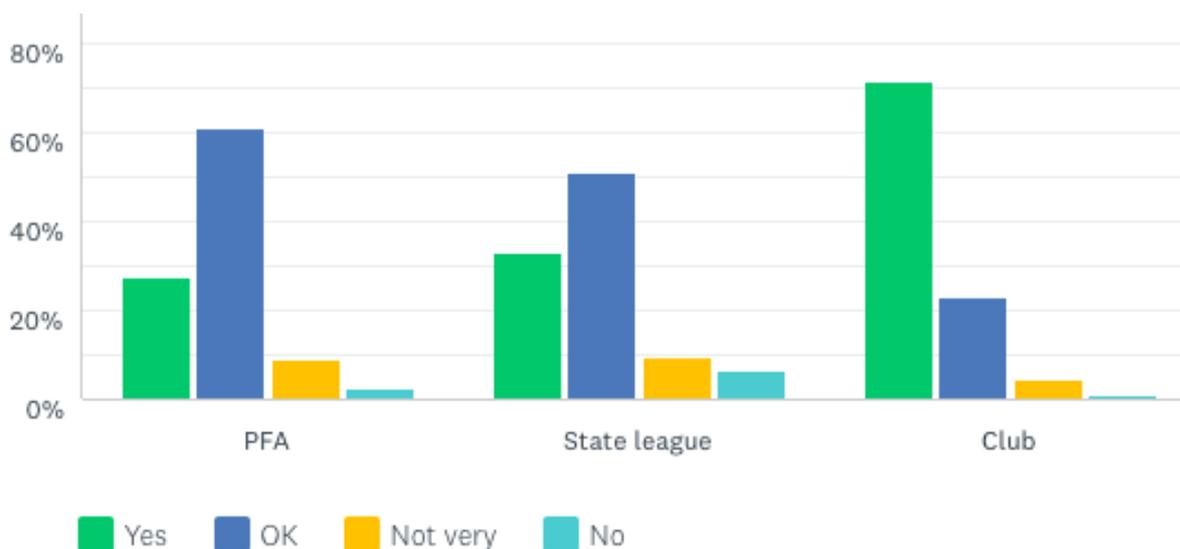
The second largest response was that each State should be represented on the PFA Board.

The third largest response was that the current structure is OK. There also some comments about the relationship between the federal body (the PFA) and State Leagues.

General

Asked what extra support they would like from the PFA, most mentions were: coaching and skills improvement, financial support for clubs, umpiring workshops, clarity on the rules, and support for travel to competitions.

In terms of satisfaction with the National, State and Club bodies, respondents were generally satisfied.



Respondents were asked if they had any **skills** they could offer to the sport. 50 or so did offer skills. These can be followed up by the Board of the PFA.

Asked for their **final thoughts** about the Survey or the sport in general, respondents congratulated the PFA for reaching out to players for their opinions (17). Although there was comment that the survey was too long (3). They also said that they loved petanque because it was a good sport to play without the pressure of competition (15).

Others asked for improved cooperation between the National and State bodies (11). There was support for developing the game, including getting more young people involved (8)

Conclusion

This Summary Paper will be distributed to State Leagues and Clubs for comment ahead of the PFA issuing a Policy Paper outlining suggested changes to operations and policy.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Reasons for negative view of the sport.

Sportsmanship & Behaviour (62 comments) 28.83%:

- 18 respondents @ 29.03% of total believe that at times the game is played in an overly competitive, too serious nature by some players.
- 16 respondents @ 25.80% of total believe that bad sportsmanship, anti-social behaviour, rudeness, selfishness & bossiness abounds & is a major factor in ruining the enjoyment of the game.
- 8 respondents @ 12.90% of total added that aggressive, arrogant & intimidating behaviour including negativity & criticism was reasonably common.
- 5 respondents @ 8.06% of the total listed cheating players as a concern.
- 4 respondents @ 6.45% of the total listed domineering behaviour including sexism & self-importance as an issue.
- 2 respondents listed time wasting as a problem & a further 2 respondents indicated swearing as a problem.
- Smoking was identified as a turnoff by 1 respondent.

Competitions (30 comments) 13.95%

- At the top of the list as identified by 13 respondents at 43.33% of the total, was the issue of competition days going on far too long, especially in the case of untimed games. This seems to be a major turn off & can make the experience less than enjoyable for many.
- 6 respondents @ 20% of the total listed prizemoney as a negative factor. Only 1 response requested more prizemoney, whilst 5 respondents suggested that prizemoney be scrapped altogether as it brings out bad unsportsmanlike behaviour in some of the competitors. It was also suggested that this bad behaviour needs to be better policed by the umpires.
- 3 respondents @ 10% of the total believe that gradings or divisions would make for a more enjoyable event.
- 2 respondents commented in a negative manner about player rankings.

- 2 respondents mentioned player rankings as an issue.
- 1 respondent listed poorly run events (particularly PFA ones) as a negative.
- Other general comments included the interesting observation that competitions tend to be self-centred or team centred rather than club centred, also another that competitions weren't enjoyable.

Administration & Governance (30 comments) 13.95%

- Petty politics, personality clashes, power seeking & hidden agendas were listed by 10 respondents as a problem. This was 34.48% of the responses to Administration & Governance.
- 7 people, 24.13% believe that PFA focuses too much on the elite level players at the expense of grass roots petanque players.
- 6 respondents @ 20.68% identified the arguing & fighting amongst administrative bodies (in particular VPCI & PFA) as negative & damaging – with 2 respondents feeling that their own clubs should disaffiliate from their State League body.
- 5 comments @ 17.24% of the total listed some suggested improvements which could be implemented at PFA level including: Clear & honest dealings with players, promptness in addressing issues, look at the validity of PFA MPIO & looking at the PFA complaint section policy to see if can be improved including the role of the State Leagues with this issue.
- 2 respondents had negative feelings about the perceived level of bureaucracy now imposed on the organisation of the sport.

Club Relationships (Internal & External) (28 comments) 13.02%

- 28.57%, 8 respondents aren't happy with the level of internal politics, personality clashes & infighting at their own club & the inability to work together for the good of the club & the sport.
- Equally with 28.27%, 8 respondents identified rivalry, bullying officials, & undermining activities from other clubs as an area of concern. Also noted was the infighting & intransigence of officials from different ethnic backgrounds.
- 5 respondents @ 17.85% said that cliques & 'clubby' type behaviour of clubs & groups was detrimental to welcoming new players as well as social type players to their club.
- There were also another 5 responses pointing out that gossip, criticism & lack of help detracted from enjoyment.
- A further 4 comments @ 14.28% believed their club management was stuffy & over controlling.

Umpiring & Rules (20 comments) 9.30%

- 9 responses @ 45% of the total said that playing with people who did not understand the rules, would not play by the rules or argued about the rules was a big negative factor to the enjoyment of the game.
- Over umpiring, Overly Official Umpires & pedants made up for 8 responses @ 40% of the total.
- Lack of adaptability & flexibility to application of rules at a local level made up 5 % of responses.
- Biased umpiring also made up for 5% of responses.
- Insistence by umpires/officials that all players be licensed made up for 5% responses.

Players & Membership (12 comments) 5.58%

- 7 comments @ 58.33% of the total identified a lack of younger, middle aged & junior players are involved either playing or involved in running of the clubs.
- 4 comments @ 33.33% of the total are concerned that there are just not enough players in Australia or at competitions.
- 1 comment @ 8.33% of the total was suggesting an annual fee that encourages members to visit other clubs & not have to become a member at that club.

No Complaints or Negative Experiences (8 comments) 3.72%

- 100% of this group has no negative problems with any aspect of petanque or people.

Coaching & Training (8 comments) 3.25%

- 6 comments @ 85.71% of the total suggest that there is a lack of coaching, mentoring or skill development available at club level, nor have there been coaching courses run in their club or area.
- 1 comment @ 14.28% of the total believes that at a National level Australia is not being coached to be aggressive enough. Not enough emphasis on shooting & no shooting coaching available.

Facilities (5 comments) 2.32%

- 2 comments @ 40% find that the low numbers of clubs & venues is a negative.
- 1 comment each @ 20% of the total each for: no lighting for evening players, poorly maintained pistes & no indoor venues.

Representative Petanque (4 comments) 1.86%

- 1 comment re lack of transparency with national selection process, lack of fair process, not open to all registered players due to headhunting.
- 1 comment re toxic culture & negativity within the national squad process.
- 1 comment re lack of financial support for players.
- 1 comment re lack of personal responsibility while representing AUS, i.e. drinking habits

Travel (3 comments) 1.39%

- 2 comments @ 66.66% indicated they didn't particularly like the time it took to drive to their club or elsewhere to play.
- 1 comment @ 33.33% said that the cost to travel to tournament from a rural area was a negative.

Language (2 comments) 0.93%

- 2 comments along the same lines that too much French being spoken when non-French speaking people present. English should be universal.

Other Comments (4 comments) 1.86%

- Don't always have time to play
- Don't like excessive heat
- Don't like playing in the rain
- Start time could be earlier in summer
- Fundraising can be a challenge

Appendix 2: Procedure used for selecting National teams and how this could be improved?

This question drew a total of 74 comments. The list of response categories of highest to lowest ranking for comments is as follows:

Make Up of Selection Criteria (28 Comments) 37.83%

There were many valid observations & worthy suggestions for this sub group of responses. These included:

- Rankings & ratings must be obtained across the country under similar conditions at State Championship events.

- The need for more consistent Interstate Competitions where the best players are playing for each state.
- Stop picking players who rarely play in State Events & Club competitions. They need to show commitment.
- Should have fair dinkum trials as part of the selection process, not just 'expressions of interest'.
- A possible minimum selection criteria could be: Players must play in say 6 Selected Tournaments in Season (CHOICES given)- must include 2 of State Championships, i.e. Singles, Doubles, Triples, Shooting or Mixed?, then 2 Metropolitan & 2 Country Tournaments. Some need to be Same Gender, Doubles or Triples, not just play in all Mixed teams. Those results are then assessed when Player registers Interest in Selection.
- Once selections have been finalised for the squad they should attend a training camp to vie for final selection.
- It is vital that players are not selected on their individual ability alone. They need to have the capacity to be a team player & get on with other team members.
- There is a perception that State Coaches & Commissions are promoting & favouring players from their own area rather than being impartial & considering the best nationally. No favouritism.
- Stop picking players solely on past reputation. Performance & ranking from recent events need to be a key element. Player need to regularly compete to be considered.
- Players must be selected on merit only. No coaches should be playing & no spouses should be selected if not on merit.
- Selection should not be determined by capacity to pay for the trip.
- Teams should be given the chance to develop & play together over time without being changed all the time. This is unsettling.
- A proper national ranking system needs to be implemented.
- There needs to be a penalty for players who nominate, get selected & then pull out. Suggestion – can't be selected for 2 years.
- Ideally, each State should have input in a National Selection Panel.

Don't Know / Not Aware of Process (21 Comments) 28.37%

The large cohort of respondents is not aware of the selection process & how it works.

Currently Lacks Transparency (10 Comments) 13.51%

These respondents suggest that there is lack of transparency, process & consistency across the country of how our National sides are selected. This needs to be tidied up to give all applicants equal & fair chance to be selected.

All selection criteria must be readily available, clearly spelled out & adhered to by those responsible for selection.

Happy with Current System (5 Comments) 6.75%

5 respondents are happy with the current system. However, they have noted that 1 particular State is dragging its feet (no State Coach or similar) whilst offering no solution, and that some players find it hard to accept it if they are not selected (consider themselves Prima Donnas).

Costs of Competing (4 Comments) 5.40%

These respondents acknowledged that the cost of competing does restrict the available talent pool considerably. One suggestion is that prospects should be informed of the approximate costs before they apply to be considered or selected.

It has also been suggested that some talented players could do more to try & raise funds & look at how they choose to spend their money before expecting handouts to cover the costs.

Regional Players Disadvantaged (3 Comments) 4.05%

These respondents identified that it is more difficult for regional players to be considered for selection due to factors such as difficulty to be able to attend all events & trials required to gain selection. Suggestions include a better player ranking system, & scouts & spotters to be present at some key regional events.

Scrap National Team (3 Comments) 4.05%

These respondents feel that the national team should be scrapped as it is too costly for most & panders to a minority of players who can afford it. The best possible side is very rarely available. A similar comment was National Teams should not be chosen if there are not quality players available.

Appendix 3: Attracting juniors to our sport

Target Market Demographics (163 Comments)

There were a wide range of comments & thoughts on where best to find juniors & also younger adults. There were a lot of similar type comments with slightly different variations on the same theme proposed. Here is a scaled down overview of the content of those comments. There were some 262 comments for this question.

Development of a Schools Program (69 Comments) 42.33%

- Create a program, each club to approach a selected school in their zone, duplicate over multiple zones, maybe school electives, outdoor education program, at end of period tournament between schools.
- Target schools that have 'French Immersion Program' or similar. Incorporate into French curriculum as cultural activity.
- Focus main target on school kids that may not be engaged in established team & contact sports. Target upper primary school age – starting grade 6/7. Then progress program to high school age.
- Responses show there is mixed results with some locations having good success with running regular annual programs in their area, whilst some have tried with no success.
- Promote 'Come & Try' type days through local schools.

Thoughts on Younger Adult Demographic (20 Comments) 12.26%

- Arrange social days with other clubs, eg. Cricket, tennis & footy clubs, CFA, CFS & other community groups.
- Target 35 to 50-year-olds who may be just finishing playing competitive or contact sports & still have competitive tendencies.
- Form alliances or even combine with other sports clubs – bowling clubs, community sports centres etc to share costs & expose game to new people.
- Improve facilities to make them more appealing – club houses, dining facilities, lighting, bar etc
- Organise promotional competitions in high profile places such as beach, city parks etc.
- Make a competition for strictly under 25's.
- Look to work with venues that have included Petanque pistes as one of their attractions that is introducing the game to a younger demographic – Cellar Doors, Vineyards.

- Promote your petanque facility as a venue for corporate social club days, team building etc
- Have sessions available that cater to working people's hours, not just retiree's.
- 45 to 65-year-old age bracket easiest to attract. But promote to under 45 couples as they will provide long term recruits.

Families, Parents, Grandparents (18 Comments) 11.04%

Currently this would be one of the main avenues of introduction to the sport in AUS & will continue to be the case. Some ideas & thoughts include:

- Family days, Parents & Grandparents days
- Promote petanque as a 'family game' for all generations
- Come & Try days with a free BBQ & prizes, for juniors & families
- Family versus family games
- The key is having the support of parents. If they have no interest or see little value in it, it will be hard.

Improving Profile to Younger Generation (14 Comments) 8.58%

- Find an ambassador, known entity to juniors to be involved in marketing material & promotion of the game.
- Try & get some high profile a celebrity playing to show it is a 'cool game' to play. To be used in marketing material.
- Get junior Petanque role models.
- Look to learn for other sports programs such as barefoot bowls (lawn bowls)
- Look at forms of the game such as Extreme Petanque. The game as it is played & looks in AUS is hardly dynamic & appealing to younger people. Consider variations & hybrid forms.
<https://www.facebook.com/extreme.petanque/>
- Look at other ideas that are out there already such as from AIS.
https://www.sportaus.gov.au/youth_participation

Target Other Local Junior & Community Groups (12 Comments) 7.36%

Whilst the largest response was different methods of working with schools some responders suggested that it may be hard to get petanque accepted in the main stream curriculum & thought it might be more successful to target other local after school & junior community groups such as scouts, guides, youth groups, community centres, & other junior sports clubs where timing doesn't clash. There is little point going into direct competition with established sports, Better to & try & work in tandem with them. Develop alliances with French organisations such as Alliance Francaise.

Marketing Avenues (10 Comments) 6.13%

Some of the main areas identified through the responses were:

- Advertise & promote to juniors making it known there is a path to representing your country.
- Use of social media platforms aimed at promoting participation to juniors
- Production of short video/youtube, or documentary type clips that can be supplied to different media & news outlets. Must be dynamic with controlled narration.
- Commitment from clubs to local marketing – local paper & radio, social media & other.
- It may be worth seeking advice from overseas.
- Advertising & promotion which highlights junior world championships footage, & also opportunity to compete.

It's an Older Folks Sport (9 Comments) 5.52%

There was a certain element of responses that believe that Petanque is really for the older generation. Some of these responses were as follows:

- Don't encourage junior players as boules are dangerous for children without awareness.
- Possible accusations of child abuse is a put off.
- Kids that are introduced to the game by family drift away from it after 20.
- Too many other mainstream sports for them to choose from.
- Junior attention span is too short for the long days & formats currently played.
- Current formats of the game not dynamic enough to engage juniors.

Influence & Perception of the Older Generation (7 Comments) 4.26%

- The negative attitude of older players towards juniors can be a turn off to the few juniors that come into the system.
- Create an environment where they do not have to hang out with too many oldies.
- The average age of members is a disadvantage of attracting juniors.
- Need to take away the stigma of an old peoples game.
- You cannot solve the problem with or by asking the people that put you there in the first place (old people). Survey juniors.

PFA & State League (4 Comments) 2.45%

- PFA or Government sponsorship for the kids
- PFA – too much focus on providing for the elite
- Doubt that it can be done from national level, needs local effort
- If you don't scare people off with this fighting between the two bodies (VPCI & PFA) people are more inclined to involve their kids into the sport. This 2 year-long nonsense makes me want to leave the VPCI and not involve anyone else, especially my kids in the sport.