



CLUB VOLUNTEER NUMBERS PLUMMET, DESPITE MEMBERSHIP RECOVERY



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The foundations of amateur sport in New Zealand have significantly eroded since COVID-19.

The average number of sport club volunteers, who volunteer for at least 3 hours per month, has nearly halved over the past five years.

Insights from the 2024 National Sport Club survey (NSCS) are now available related to important organisational metrics being tracked year-on-year, as well as new thematic areas for 2024. Five years on from the onset of COVID-19, this year's survey provided a snapshot of how well community sport clubs have rebounded relative to pre-pandemic times, in 2019.

In 2024, the size of New Zealand's sport clubs has recovered to surpass pre-pandemic levels, with the average membership of clubs now over 200, compared to 190 in 2019. While the average size of bowls clubs is about the same, there are fewer members (on average) of swimming clubs today compared to five years ago, while the average membership of golf clubs has grown.

Despite a more upbeat membership metric in this year's survey, the proportion of clubs reporting they are now losing money compared to 2019 has nearly doubled to 9%, clearly reflecting New Zealand's post-pandemic economic environment, with fewer clubs reporting a surplus in 2024 and around the same number of clubs reporting that they are managing to break even.

Of specific concern, the average number of club volunteers, who volunteer for at least 3 hours per month, has nearly halved from 31 to 18 over the past five years, representing one of the biggest changes in sport club operating metrics. Sport codes negatively affected include athletics, football and rugby union, while others including cricket and netball have seen an increase.

In this year's survey, the project team also explored sport clubs' views on the Incorporated Societies Act 2022. Around half said they believed the legislation was fit for purpose, with only one-third having already taken the steps to re-register a new Constitution as required by the Act. While most signalled an intention to re-register, only one-third said they knew what to do.

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This year, club representatives were also asked to report on how recent weather events have had an impact on club activities, and ways in which clubs are taking action to minimise these impacts.

More than half of clubs (55%) reported they had been negatively impacted by the weather in the past year, including financial losses due to cancellation, infrastructure damage, deterioration of playing surfaces, and reduced access. While some clubs are taking practical actions to minimize the impact of future weather events on their sport activities, most are not.

Further 2024 NSCS insights will be disseminated in weeks upcoming. This will include workshops in partnership with Harbour Sport, Sport Hawke's Bay, and Nuku Ora.

For further comment concerning this year's survey, please contact Gordon Noble-Campbell, Chair, New Zealand Amateur Sport Association Inc., on 021 612 451.

About The National Sport Club Survey (NSCS)

The NSCS is an annual snapshot of the management and operation of sport clubs.

2024 is the seventh year for the NSCS project, which is undertaken in collaboration between the New Zealand Amateur Sport Association and the Sport Performance Institute New Zealand based at Auckland University of Technology.

The NSCS was conceived to complement a myriad of sport sector data at individual level by focusing on sport clubs as organisational entities and the hub of many communities across the country.

The 2024 NSCS was open from 20 August to 15 September. Around 900 sport clubs engaged with the survey, across all 16 regions of New Zealand.

Several important metrics are being tracked year-on-year relating to club membership, governance and finances. In 2024, a comprehensive set of items related to climate, the Incorporated Societies Act 2022, integrity, and injury prevention.

nscs.org.nz