

## **Chico State University Pickleball Survey**

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### **Introduction**

A web-based survey (SurveyGizmo) was created to provide the following information;

- How often do the respondents play pickleball, e.g. days and minutes per week,
- Do the respondents want to play more, and if so, what are the constraints they face,
- How much the respondents spend on various items related to pickleball,
- Is pickleball part of the decision process when traveling,
- The extent that pickleball provides the respondents the following benefits, e.g. physical, social, and psychological,
- How important pickleball is to the self-identity of the individual,
- The percentage of pickleballers who suffered an injury during the past year that prevented them from playing.

### **Executive Summary**

About six out of ten respondents have played at least three years. About 20% had played one year or less. Nine out of ten play at least two times a week. Approximately one out of two respondents play at least one other sport on a weekly basis. Approximately 9 out of 10 play at least 150 minutes a week, which is the standard set by the Center for Disease Control as the minimum amount of moderate exercise one should get.

Nearly six of 10 would like to play more, with one in three mentioning both not enough courts and other obligations as the major reasons for not playing more pickleball. Only one in 10 indicated a problem with finding other people to play with as the reason for not playing more.

Approximate seven out of ten respondents had purchased shoes and other equipment during the past year. Six out of 10 had bought pickleball related clothing and had pay dues (USAPA, local dues, etc.). Nearly 30% had spent on pickleball related travel.

Over 90% indicated that staying active, healthy and keeping in shape were important benefits they got from playing pickleball. Eight out of ten indicated that improving their endurance was an important benefit they got from playing and six out of ten felt that reducing stress levels was an important benefit.

Approximately 80% felt pickleball helped them maintain friendships and 70% felt pickleball made them feel part of a group and helped them meet new friends. Nearly 90% felt pickleball provided a challenge, and approximately 70% felt pickleball provided them a competitive outlet and gave them a sense of accomplishment.

Nearly every respondent (97%) indicated that having fun was an important benefit they received from playing pickleball.

Almost all (96%) agreed with the statement that "pickleball helps me keep moving" and 8 out of 10 agreed that "I am slowing the aging process by playing pickleball". Seven of ten respondents agreed with the statements "pickleball is a major reason I am staying as healthy as I am", and 9 out of 10 agreed that "playing pickleball keeps me alert". Two thirds (65%) agreed that "I don't think about my health conditions when I am playing pickleball".

Nine of ten respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that pickleball is very important to them and nearly half are thinking about playing pickleball when they are not playing. About 6 out of 10 feel badly when they something keeps them from playing pickleball.

Injuries are a part of playing pickleball. About one out of three had experienced a pickleball related injury during the past year that kept them from playing for at least a week. The most common injuries where related to the knee (10%), the back (4%), the shoulder (4%), foot or ankle (4%) or tendon overuse related injuries (4%).

Nearly all respondents (94%) had traveled away from their home for at least one night. Of those who did travel, approximately six out of 10 (57%) indicated they checked for pickleball opportunities in a place (s) they were traveling to. Nearly half (49%) had played with a local pickleball group in the area they were visiting, and 1 in five chose a place to visit based at least partly on the opportunity to play pickleball.

**Profile of the 2017 Chico State sample**

There were a total of 415 responses. This report focuses on those respondents who were at least 50 years old and had played at least one year. The final sample size used for this report was 366.

**Table 1: Where respondents play most of their pickleball.**

Location	Percentage	Number
Lincoln CA	33%	120
Chico CA	20%	73
Redding	13%	48
Northern CA	10%	36
Green Valley AZ	9%	32
Santa Rosa CA	6%	21
All others	9%	36
		366

**Table 2: Age of the respondents**

Age	Percentage	Number
50 to 59	14%	51
60 to 64	16%	60
65 to 69	31%	115
70 to 74	26%	96
75 and over	13.00%	44
		366

**Table 3: Age of respondents by sex by percentage**

Age	Male	Female	Number
50 tp 59	10%	16%	47
60 to 64	13%	20%	58
65 to 69	23%	31%	110
70 to 74	27%	26%	92
75 and older	19%	7%	43
Number	158	192	350
Missing = 16			

**Table 4: Self-reported health**

Years played	Percentage	Number
Poor	<1%	1
Fair	1.4%	5
Good	12%	40
Very good	48%	174
Excellent	38%	137
		357
Missing = 9		

**Other sports played besides pickleball**

Approximately one half of the respondents played at least one sport other than pickleball on a weekly basis. There was no significant difference as to how many other sports were played on a weekly basis based on age, sex, or the number of days pickleball is played each week.

Approximately 20% of respondents played golf on a weekly basis. About 10% of respondents played tennis on a weekly basis, and about 5% played volleyball, exercised, biked, hiked or did a water activity on a weekly basis.

**Table 5: Number of other sports besides pickleball played on regular basis**

How many	Percentage	Number
None	53%	191
One	25%	92
Two	12%	43
Three	8%	30
Four	2%	7
		363

**Number of years played and number of days that pickleball is played each week**

Table 6: Number of years respondent has played pickleball

Years played	Percentage	Number
Less than one year	10%	33
One year	12%	38
Two years	20%	67
Three years	18%	58
Four years	11.00%	35
Five or six years	11%	37
Seven or more years	19%	61
		329

Table 7: Average number of days pickleball played per week

Days	Percentage	Number
1	10.00%	35
2	30%	101
3	30%	101
Four	13%	43
Five to seven	18.00%	62
		342

Table 8: How much time played each day

Time	Percentage	Number
One hour or less	8.00%	27
75 to 90 minutes	29%	99
100 to 120 minutes	36%	128
2 and a half hours	11%	36
Three hours or more	16.00%	55
		345

The Center for Disease Control and the American Cancer Society’s guidelines for exercise recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week. Nearly 9 out of 10 respondents (87%) reported getting at least 150 minutes of exercise per week playing pickleball.

**Do respondents want to play more than they do?**

Approximately 6 out of ten respondents wish they could play more than they currently do. Other obligations and not enough courts were mentioned by approximately one out of three respondents.

Physical issues other than sports related injuries was mentioned by only 2% of those under 60 and 16% of those over 75. In this survey, one constraint that was not listed was overcrowding on the available courts that exist. Considering the rapid growth of the sport, anecdotal information, and personal experience, this should be asked in future surveys.

Table 9: Constraints minimizing play

<b>Constraint</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Permanent courts not available	13%
Lack of indoor courts when weather is bad	21%
Problem finding people to play with	12%
Not enough courts	32%
Other obligations	34%
Sports related injury	18%
Physical issues other than sports related	9%
Respondents could mention more than one constraint	

**Spending during the past year**

Table 10: Percent making following expenditures during past year

<b>Constraint</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Shoes for Pickleball	73%
Equipment	70%
Clothes	60%
Dues, e.g. USAPA, local dues, etc.	57%
Fees to play	34%
Tournament fees	47%
Travel to play Pickleball	29%
Respondents could mention more than one type of purchase	

## Self-perceived benefits from playing pickleball

Respondents were asked how important pickleball was to them in providing several possible benefits. There were 16 possible benefits, including six items measuring health benefits, four items relating to social benefits, five items relating to challenge/competitive types of benefits, and one question related to having fun playing pickleball.

### Health benefits from playing pickleball

Table 11: How important is pickleball in providing the following benefits (Health related)\*

Benefit	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Important or very important
Staying active	1%	3%	16%	80%	96%
Staying healthy	1%	2%	25%	72%	97%
Staying fit	1%	3%	25%	71%	96%
Keeping in shape	1%	4%	31%	64%	95%
Reducing stress levels	16%	25%	36%	22%	58%
Improving endurance	2%	19%	37%	42%	79%

### Social benefits from playing pickleball

Table 12: How important is pickleball in providing the following benefits (Social related)\*

Benefit	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Important or very important
Maintaining friendships	1%	18%	38%	43%	81.00%
Being part of a group	6%	21%	38%	35%	73.00%
Meeting new friends	3%	25%	40%	32%	72.00%
Being social	2%	22%	41%	35%	76.00%

## Challenge/competitive benefits

Table 13: How important is pickleball in providing the following benefits (Challenge/competitive related)\*

Benefit	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Important or very important
Providing a challenge	1%	13%	43%	43%	86.00%
Being competitive	6%	28%	37%	29%	66.00%
Giving you a sense of accomplishment	4%	24%	45%	27%	72.00%
Providing recognition	32%	42%	18%	8%	26.00%

## Having fun

Table 14: How important is pickleball in providing the following benefits (Having fun)\*

Benefit	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Important or very important
Having fun	0%	3%	20%	77%	97.00%

## Additional questions related to benefits

Players were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements relating to other benefits of playing pickleball.

Table 15: How important is pickleball in providing the following benefits

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree or agree
Pickleball makes me feel younger than my age	33.00%	40%	23.00%	3.00%	1.00%	73.00%
Pickleball helps me keep moving	56.00%	40%	3.00%	0.00%	1.00%	96.00%
Pickleball has helped in my rehabilitation process from an illness	7.00%	11%	64.00%	13.00%	5.00%	18.00%
I am slowing the aging process by playing Pickleball	30.00%	49.00 %	20.00%	2.00%	1.00%	79.00%
Pickleball is a major reason I am staying healthy as I age	26.00%	47%	23.00%	3.00%	1.00%	73.00%
I will do whatever it takes to keep playing Pickleball	30.00%	48%	18.00%	2.00%	2.00%	78.00%
I don't think about my health conditions when I am playing Pickleball	24.00%	41%	24.00%	10.00%	1.00%	65.00%
If you can keep moving, you can play Pickleball	39.00%	48%	10.00%	3.00%	1.00%	87.00%
Playing Pickleball keeps me alert	39.00%	50%	9.00%	1.00%	1.00%	89.00%
I am more energized to do other things because of Pickleball	34.00%	42%	20.00%	3.00%	1.00%	76.00%



Table 16: How important is the sport to the respondent

Statement	Percentage indicating Strongly agree or Agree
This sport is very important to me	89%
I feel bad when something keeps me from playing pickleball	62%
Pickleball makes me feel good about myself	72%
Most of my friends know how important this sport is to me	62%
I think about pickleball when I am not playing it	48%
I really look forward to playing pickleball	92%

### Health of the respondents

Approximately 9 out of 10 respondents indicated their health was either excellent or very good. About 25% indicated that poor physical or mental health had kept them from doing their usual activities such as self-care, work or recreation.

### Sports injuries due to playing pickleball

Approximately three out of 10 respondents indicated that they had suffered an injury while playing pickleball during the past year that made them stop playing for a least one week. The most common injuries were related to the knee (10%), the back (4%), the shoulder (4%), foot or ankle related injury (4%), or tendon overuse related injuries ((4%).

### Travel related to pickleball

Nine out of ten respondents had traveled away from their home for at least one night during the past year. Nearly half had checked for pickleball opportunities in the places they were going to travel. Nearly six of 10 had played with a local pickleball group in the area they were traveling. Eight of 10 had chosen a place to visit at least partly on the available opportunities to play pickleball.

Table 17: Travel related decision making related to pickleball

Constraint	Percentage
Before leaving home, checked on pickleball opportunities in the places you were going to visit	57%
Played with a local pickleball group in the place you visited	49%
Chose a place at least partially on the available opportunities to play pickleball	21%
Played pickleball, but only with traveling partners	10%
N = 327 who had traveled during the past year.	
N = 21 who had not traveled	
Missing = 18	

### Two other studies that focus on pickleball participation.

Jonathon Casper and Jung Hwan Jeon, "Pickleball Participation: A preliminary Investigation of Involvement and Commitment", April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017 NC State University. Sample included 791 respondents living in North Carolina, the majority living in the research triangle area and Charlotte. The authors have published the following paper based on their research, Jonathon Casper and Jung-Hwan Jeon, "Psychological Connection to Pickleball: Assessing Motives and Participation in Older Adults, Journal of Aging and Physical Activity.

Michael Hess and David Salley, Results of the Pickleball Survey, December, 2013. Sample included 594 respondents, 87% lived in the U.S., 8% lived in Ireland, and 5% lived in Canada. The full report can be accessed at <http://grandpickleball.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Pickleball-Player-Survey-Results-December-2013.pdf>

**Examples of comments** to open-ended question asking about the role pickleball plays in helping the respondent maintain or improve their health (For a copy of all the stories, contact me at [rgitelson@csuchico.edu](mailto:rgitelson@csuchico.edu))

*I have lost 20 pounds since I started playing... I also think I'm in the best shape since I was 30*

*Pickle ball has help me feel stronger and I anticipate getting up in the morning to go play pickle ball. It is great for fellowship with other people and just good fun. When I play pickle ball after I'm done I don't remember if I won or lost because it's so much fun I don't care, just good exercise.*

*After having 2 cervical neck disks removed with 2 fusions, I didn't want to play tennis any longer. When I found pickleball, it was a game I could play without throwing my head/neck back as in tennis.*

*Smaller court with less area to cover greatly helps as my knees are worn out. The physical activity of pickleball & knee injections has kept me away from pending knee surgery for the past few years.*

*I played tennis for over 40 years and stopped playing due to mobility issues and the difficulty in finding people to play. My wife, who had never really played any sports before, and I discovered pickleball about five years ago. Two hip replacements later, I play pickleball outdoors seven days a week, weather permitting (and it's usually permitting here in Northern California). We have met over a hundred and fifty local individuals we had not known, and many are now friends we get together with on numerous occasions during the month. We have drop in play every morning (eight dedicated outdoor courts) and everyone is welcoming and the play is great. It is always possible to find a game (regardless of skill level), which was not the case when I played tennis. My wife is now a pickleball fanatic and is playing a sport on a regular basis for the first time in her life. We play with my daughter and her husband, and have a blast, even though they are 40 years younger than us. Basically, I go to sleep thinking about playing the next day and can't wait to get back on the courts.*

*All my life I have been very active with power walking, golf, and occasionally racquetball. Four years ago, I became incapacitated from back pain. Eventually I required a 3 level spinal fusion. I was very stiff and sore after the surgery and walking became my main activity. I found myself getting depressed. A friend introduced me to pickleball, which had started the year before in my small community. The local group was comprised of about 12 people...all of whom were friendly, welcoming and willing to teach me the game. I caught on quickly and began study the game more thoroughly in order to improve. I also participated in some local clinics which helped immensely. I found myself looking forward to playing the game not only for exercise and competition, but for the comradery and social aspect of my warm and friendly group - which has grown to over 30 people!*

*As a younger tennis player, I always found it easy to make friends by just joining a club and beginning to play. The same was true when I played racquetball. Living in Chico, I do not want to belong to any organized club but instead play at a community park. I went to the park to find tennis and found pickle ball instead two years ago. I LOVE how welcoming the sport was. I like all the fellowship and good-natured kidding. As we age, if we don't belong to a church or some community club, it is hard to make friendships. I have come to rely on the pickle ball community for much of my fellowship needs. It is a great, diverse group of people and I love it.*

*At my age it makes me feel very good that I can participate in this sport. Played softball until I was 55.*

*Because I love pickleball so much I have added a gym and stretching routine to my life so I can stay in better shape. I was new to the community a year ago and knew nothing about pickleball. Wandered up to the courts and was taught and embraced as a friend by other pickleball players. Great social community! Wouldn't want to live without it!*

*Being outdoors and socializing with active people is what drew me to the sport.*

*I had a knee replacement a year and a half ago after injuring my knee on the pickle ball court. My knee replacement has not gone well and I will be having my third operation on my knee. I really miss playing pickle ball, and I am determined to get back to it after rehabbing from this next surgery. Pickleball is very important to me especially because of the social interaction of the group.*

*Pickle ball has help me feel stronger and I anticipate getting up in the morning to go play pickle ball. It is great for fellowship with other people and just good fun. When I play pickle ball after I'm done I don't remember if I won or lost because it's so much fun I don't care, just good exercise.*

*A friend of mine told me that the pickleball is an addictive sport, he advised me that do not start if you don't want to be addicted. Guess what? I am totally addicted!*

*Advanced aging, seems to be slowed by activity. I believe I am much younger than my parents were at this age.*

*After I became a widow I increased my solitary walking for hours at a time, I also resumed snow skiing and stared golfing to keep active, emotionally and socially engaged not only for my physical health but also to help me cope in my grieving process. Then I was introduced by an acquaintance to pickleball. I soon discovered that not only was it a wonderful very active physical as well as physically and mentally challenging but also a very socially interactive sport. I have met many new friends with whom I socialize outside of pickleball and traveled to other states and countries to play pickleball. I find that it is an ever evolving and challenging sport as I strive to improve my skills. The most important event is that I met my present husband, who was also a widower, playing pickleball!*

*After playing handball, racquetball for 45 + years I had a knee replaced and did not play anything for several years. At age 74 I rediscovered pickleball at a Senior RV resort. And was determined to get started in Chico, Ca. The rest is history.*

*After the death of my partner involving a multi-year caregiving situation, I needed new social outlets. Pickleball has provided one (I have a few others as well, I don't want all my eggs in one basket in case injury keeps me from playing).*

*As a former tennis player, I was thrilled to find an active pickle ball group in our area. It offers fun, social opportunities and great exercise. I tell people I love it. I am happy to have a sport that I can take into winter when golf is not available.*

*At times, my job is very stressful and playing pickleball provides an opportunity to reduce my stress level and blood pressure. Pickleball also has helped me to reduce weight and increase flexibility and stamina.*

*Basically, I would play soccer or volleyball one or two times a week prior to Pickleball, which would maintain basic conditioning, but I was always sore after. Adding Pickleball has helped me reduce soreness from exercising and reduced some weight because I can do it every day (pretty much). Since I hate to just run, I love that I get exercise and have fun too. I think it has to be excellent for eye hand coordination as we age! Also, Pickleball is a positive environment to learn in. Most people compliment others when they make a good shot rather than feel too bad about missing and get upset. Don't get me wrong I want to make the shot, but that just means I need to improve. We are humans and sometimes players seem unhappy with their partner, if they are playing poorly. The good news is there are enough players that one can usually find other positive players. I love the idea of going to other cities when traveling and playing with other groups. I have meet some really nice people.*

*Before I was 190 lbs. at 6 ft. I now have managed to keep my weight at 175 lbs. and, have reduced my blood pressure by 10 points.*

*Being a type 2 diabetic, I truly believe it (regular pickleball matches) has helped along with diet changes to lower my AC1 numbers to be lowered 4 points in one year.*

*Being outdoors and socializing with active people is what drew me to the sport.*

*Being social and exercising is important to me and makes me feel younger.*

*Best thing about pickleball in my opinion, you can drop in just about any town, play as long as you like, and are welcomed by players to join in regardless of your abilities.*

*Daughter 27, passed away in 2014, started playing pb in 2015, helped me get thru a very tough time in my life!*

*Due to spinal surgery I had to stop playing for two years. It was very important to be able to play again both physically and mentally. I returned and loved it for the social and physical well-being of my body. I unfortunately injured my arm and have not been able to play regularly. I had cortisone injections and my own platelets injected into arm. Pickleball definitely aggravates it but I am trying to work they pain. Am returning from a Baltic cruise and played pickleball twice on cruise. Had fun etching a couple of Canadian couple how to play. Have so many good friends they pickleball! Great game and nice nice people!*

*Even though I have had a variety of sprains and aches (from arthritis) I was able to recover, and I think pickleball overcame the ailment by moderating my play until I was completely fit.*

*Fabulous opportunity to exercise on a regular basis. To be outside and to interactive with others. My husband also plays PB. He is 4.5 level with USAPA. He is 70, but at the senior games in St George, Utah, where they have an extensive health exam, they said his physical age is 55. He also plays softball on a regular basis. Sports, and not being overweight, keeps him 15 years younger than his birth age.*

*Fast-paced sport, no commitment, you can show up at various locations and find a game. Fun people and I feel it keeps me fit and agile*

### *Fellowship*

*First, I lost 30 pounds after taking up pickleball. I became competitive. 2 years ago, I began suffering from diverticulitis. That required a diet change and some fatigue set in. I gained back some weight and today work hard to control that. With the weight, I do not move as agile as before, but I am improving again. Regarding mental game skill, I practice mental skills I learned as a competition trap shooter. The skills are well documented by Lanny Bassham, in his book 'With Winning in Mind' I*

*practice positive reinforcement. Additionally, I study the most highly skilled pickleball players and take skill lessons from the best. I was a 4.0 player, but the weight issue slowed me down and I now play at 3.5. I expect to grow my game back, as I get a better diet regimen going following Joel Fuhrman's recommendation (without the seeds). Also, when pickleball is not available, I walk. My Fitbit, registers 10-11k steps daily.*

*For me, the best exercise is the kind I will consistently do. 40 minutes on cardio equipment can seem like an eternity, but 2+ hours playing pickle ball goes very quickly.*

*Fun game, until my wife hurt her arm at pickleball. Our club is almost too organized.*

*Getting out & up early in A M , for a morning of friendship, fun, exercise, lots of easy movement, fresh air, meeting new people of all ages all the time. We in Redding have a friendly & very warm welcoming group. It's contagious & people want to come back. We are about Pickleball 4 All- The players always welcome & teach any one that wants to learn & play. Great Group of people.*

*Great game. Much more aerobic than golf. Appeals to my competitive juices. Great way to meet people with similar interests. Easier on the knees and hamstrings than softball and tennis. Very easy to learn and master if you've played other racquet sports.*

*Great sport and much less impactful than tennis. Always fun.*

*Great sport for all levels and ages, we accommodate new players creatively (six players-3 on each side, Walk of Shame)*

*Great sport. Fun social. At times not competitive. Friendly players willing to help and give advice/teach.*

*Great way to meet new people, stay in touch with people, go to new and interesting places and have fun.*

*Hate gyms, pickle ball helps me maintain weight control and keeps joints from stiffening*

*Having been an athlete all my life, pickle ball came to me at a perfect time to replace some activities that were becoming more difficult. A whole new group of friends, lots of laughter, and a really good workout several times each week.*

*Having played many paddle / racquet sports it's the one that is easy to play at my age and still be competitive while getting some good fun exercise. Also, it's easy to get pickup games across the*