

**NDCA
PLAYER
SURVEY
REPORT
2011-2012**

Research

by

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Introduction

This research was conducted between December 2010 and January 2012. The report was done independently; I was not approached to do the research by anyone on the NDCA committee and did the whole thing voluntarily. Before doing the research I discussed the relative merits of the project with Paul Marjoribanks and other people around the competition before deciding it was worthwhile to pursue and that the questions I intended to ask were relevant.

My motivation to do this study came from a number of factors. Firstly as a player, personally, I think the standard of cricket has dropped over the last decade in first grade, and based on my experience this year, in second grade as well. That said, maybe my opinion on this is influenced by getting older, more experienced and confident. Either way, I care a lot about our competition and want to ensure that we maintain high standards and create the best pathways for our young players towards higher honours while ensuring that players of all standards, from 1st grade to 4th grade, are being catered for in NDCA cricket.

Secondly, there's my own engagement with the recent efforts of the NDCA committee to restructure the competition. I talk to a lot of people around the competition and, for the most part, there seemed to be tacit approval for something to be done to maintain or raise playing standards. But all of this seemed to be qualified by a very basic and understandable position: progress is good, restructure is fine, as long as it doesn't affect my club negatively! There also seemed to be a lot of confusion and conflicting opinions out there and I hoped that a formal study would help to illustrate exactly what Newcastle cricket players want in the future.

Thirdly, I'm not convinced that club committees always represent the wants and needs of their own players, in particular, young players (and I say this as a long time club committee member at Charlestown). Committee members seem to be older, often with first grade experience, and despite not doubting that most committee members have their own club's best interests at heart, tend to put forward their own 'old school' way of seeing things when it comes to answering tough questions about the future of the game. In this sense, there seems to be a continuum of old and ex-players deciding the future of the game for young people, rather than the younger players having a say themselves.

Fourthly, and in connection with the last point, the world has changed rapidly in recent decades. More and more people work casualised jobs with irregular hours and weekend shifts. This has great influence in the people's attitudes towards life in general and towards the way they play sport and whether they can wholeheartedly commit. In a time intensive sport like cricket, this will have consequences that are difficult to deal with.

Hopefully the data here can help provide some clarity to the future organisation and progress of the NDCA competition.

Research Methodology

The survey data was collected personally. I toyed with the idea of sending out the surveys to each club's committee via email, asking them to get 20 players to fill them out then send it back. But I was worried that this process would be too easily corrupted by club self interest and/or further time constraints on volunteer club members.

So, I went to games and training sessions of each club and personally 'interviewed' players by asking them the survey questions and ticking the corresponding boxes for their answers. In terms of the open ended questions at the end, I wrote down the answers as close to verbatim as I could, the exact words of those who chose to answer these questions, even if it meant writing large chunks on the back of the surveys. Towards the end of the data gathering process when I was increasingly pressed for time, I collected some clubs' data with a combination of face-to-face surveys at games and/or training and by also ringing a handful of players on the phone with numbers provided by club secretaries. For Stockton/Raymond Terrace, the data was gathered by their secretary via email and in person.

This change in data collection method happened in the last part of the data gathering process because I started playing cricket again myself and could not get to other clubs' training or games anymore. This should have very minimal affect on the consistency of the data.

I tried to target young players when I could, but overall, there is a good mix of young/old and players from each grade. I also tended to avoid committee members when I could, but some committee members took part. There are 240 participants overall, 20 from each club. This means the survey represents approximately half the players taking part in games each weekend. With such a small number of overall participants, the statistics are not mathematically viable for large generalisations and should only be thought of as a snapshot or guide.

The report largely consists of descriptive statistics. For the most part I will just present the statistics and some demographic distinctions and let the reader decide what they mean themselves. On occasion I will make some analytical comments.

Thanks to all the clubs and players who made the data collection process run relatively smoothly – it was good to catch with some people that I hadn't seen for a long time.

Special thanks to Paul Robinson who helped out with data gathering for Stockton at a time when I was struggling to get the research done.

Demographics of Research Participants

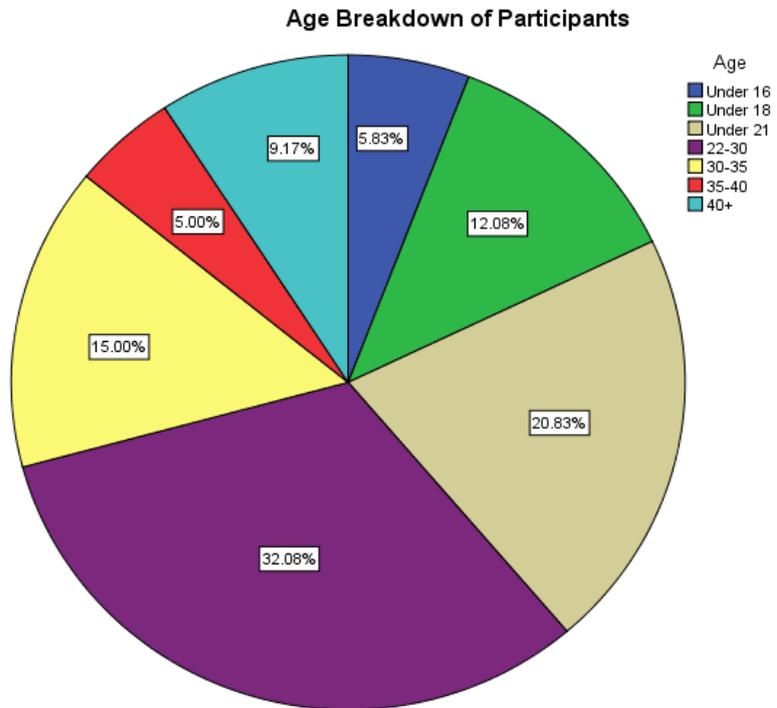
The following outlines various details of the research participants. Later in the report, some of these categories are used to highlight differing opinions towards certain issues according to age, grade and marital status.

38.74% of participants are below the age of 21.

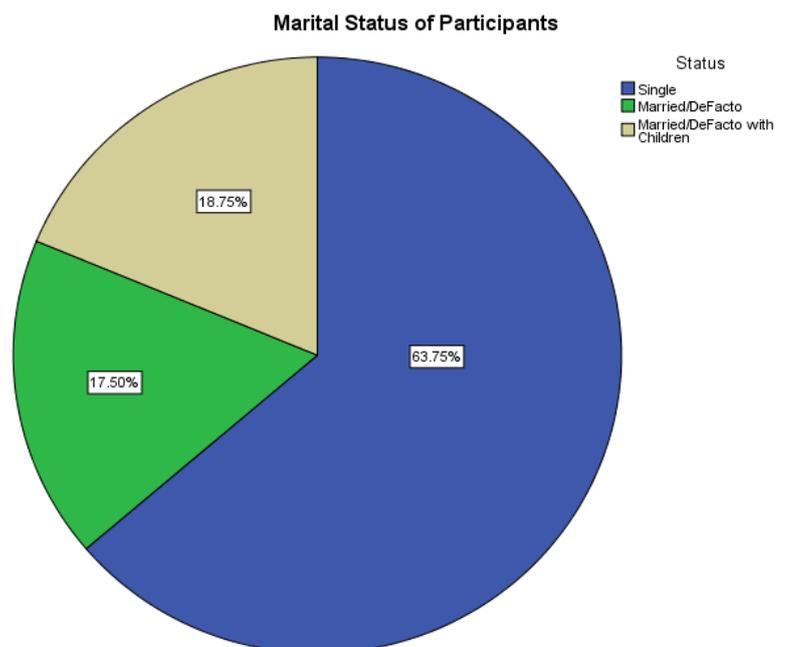
47.08% of participants are between 22 and 30.

14.17% of participants are over 30 years of age.

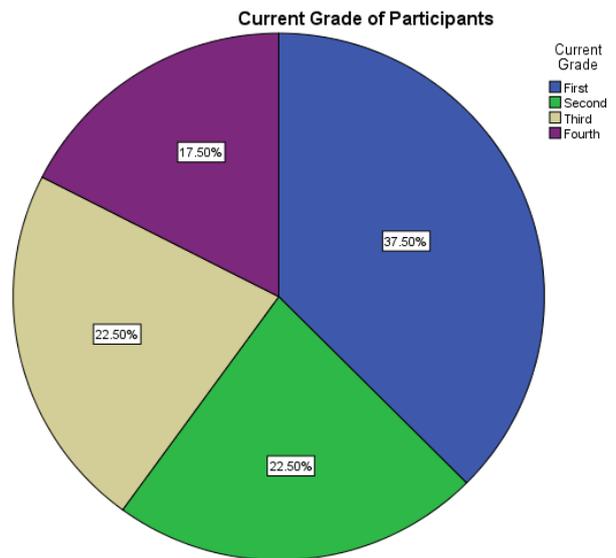
Overall, this provides a good mix of age demographics with a solid representation of young players.



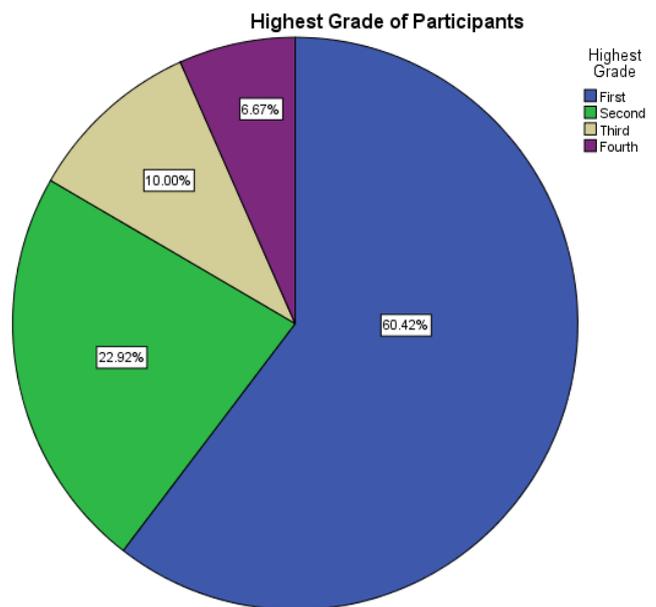
Nearly 2/3 of the participants were single, with the other 1/3 evenly split between having kids or not.



Probably due to a lot of the research being done at training, with first graders tending to be the most regular trainers, first grade cricketers are over represented in the data cohort.

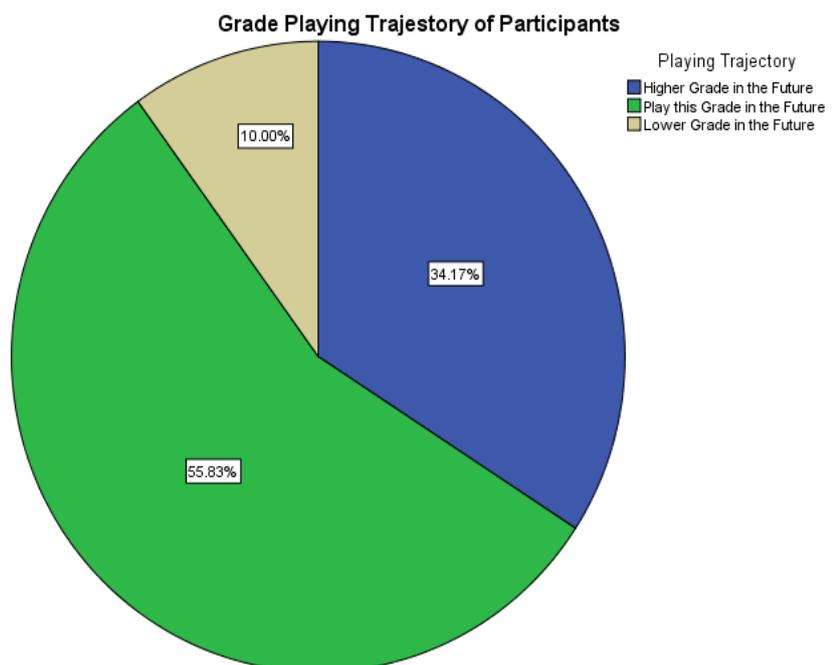


60% of cricketers in the survey have played a game of first grade some time in their career.



For the most part, players are happy in the grade they are playing, with, predictably, a large minority of usually younger players looking to go up the grades in the future.

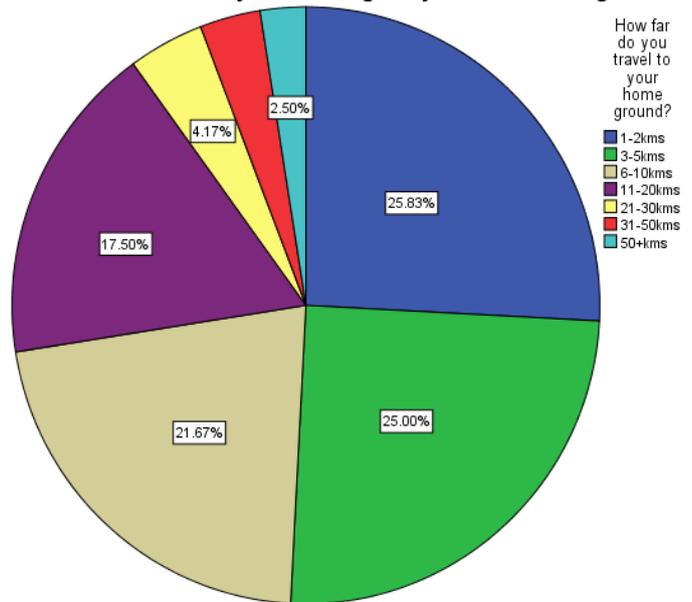
10% of players are looking to go down the grades in the future, which were usually people over 30 years of age.



72.5% of players travel less than 10kms to their club's home ground, with over half travelling less than 5km.

Only 10% of players surveyed travel more than 20kms.

How far do you travel to get to your club's home ground?

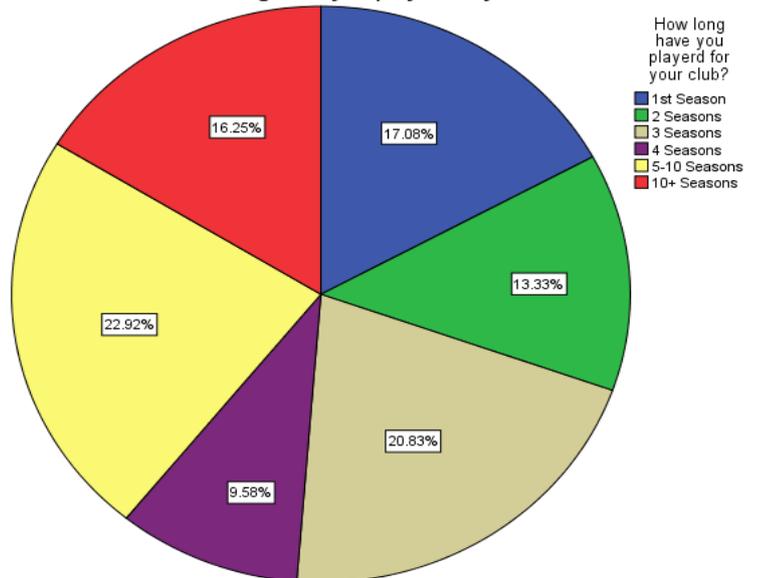


60.82% of participants were playing in their 4th or less season for their club.

39.17% had played 5 years or more for their club.

16.25% were ten year-plus club stalwarts.

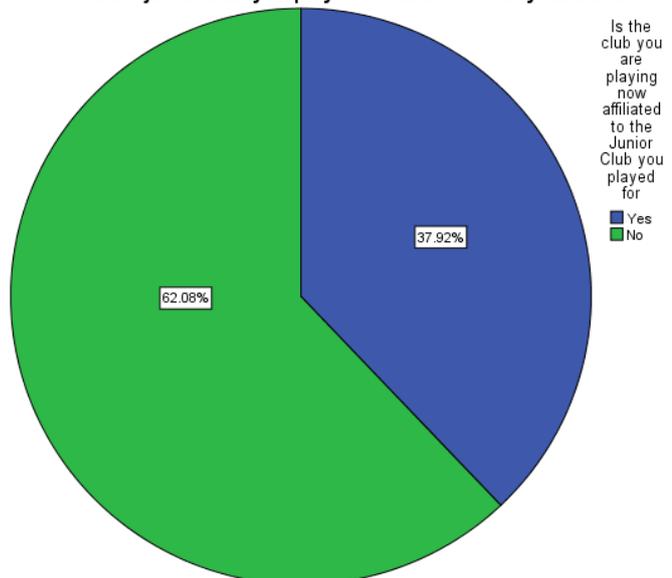
How long have you played for your current club?



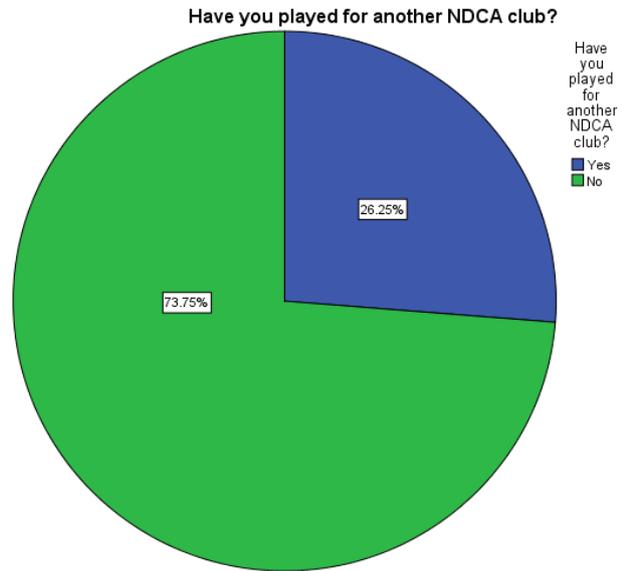
The majority of players, nearly 2/3, do not currently play for a club that is/was affiliated with who they played juniors for.

This is due to a number of interlinking factors including some clubs not having junior affiliated clubs when they came through; players moving NDCA clubs; players coming from outside the area; or not actually playing junior cricket at all.

Is the junior club you played for affiliated with your current club?

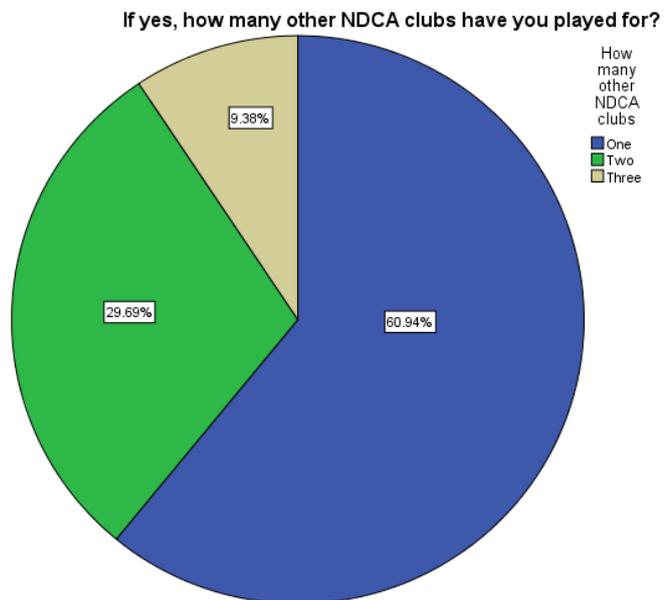


Nearly ¾ of players have only played for one NDCA club.

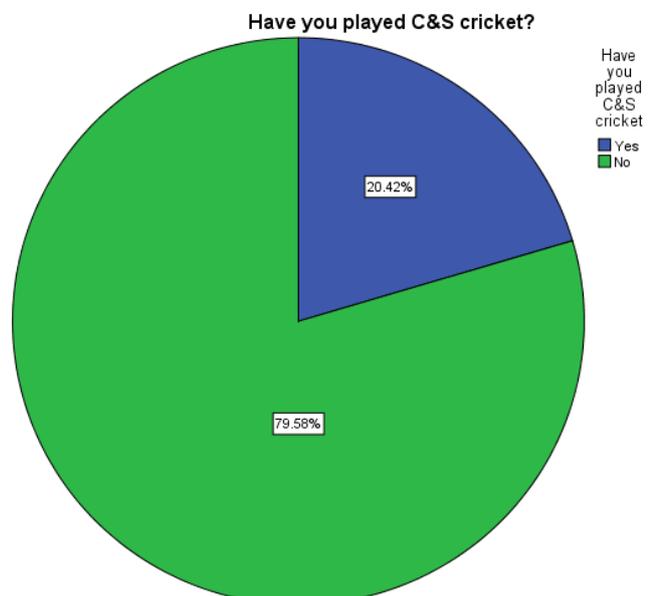


Of the players who have played for more than one NDCA club, 3/5 had played for only one other club.

A couple of players had played for 4 clubs or more, which blew away my scale and are therefore not included in the stats!



Only one in five players surveyed had played a season of C&S cricket in the past.



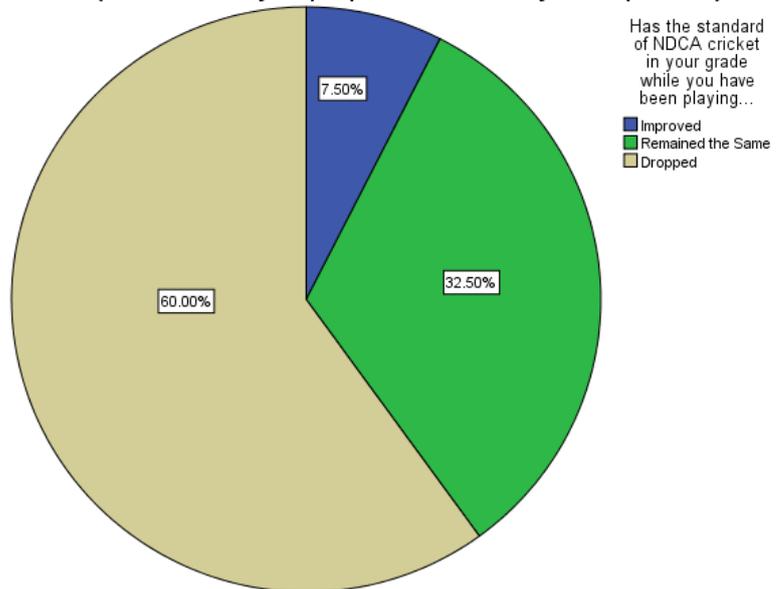
Standards, Amount of Teams and Outside Teams

To ensure the data here was meaningful and the player had relevant and appropriate experience to make an informed judgement, this question was only asked to players with 5 or more years of NDCA experience, or, only 39.17% of survey participants.

Of these players, 60% deemed that standards had dropped in their experience.

32.5% said that standards had remained the same and 7.5% said that standards had improved.

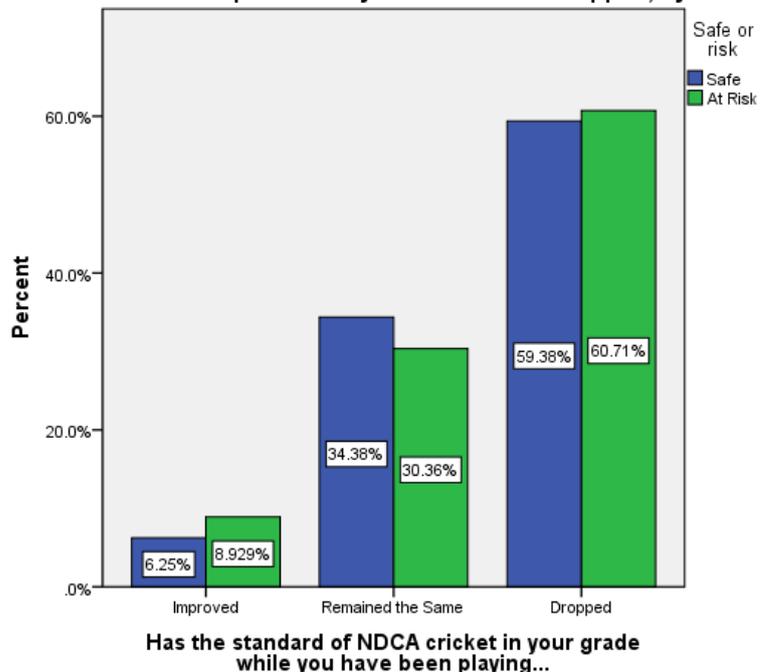
Has the standard of cricket while you have been playing...
(Question is only for people with 5 or more years experience)



As the survey was done after, for these questions, it is worth comparing any differences between the opinions at clubs that were deemed 'safe' in the recent competition criteria review (Belmont, Cardiff, Charlestown, Merewether, Toronto and Wallsend) versus the clubs deemed 'at risk' (Ham/Wicks, Newcastle City, Stockton, University, Waratah and Wests).

The differences are surprisingly negligible.

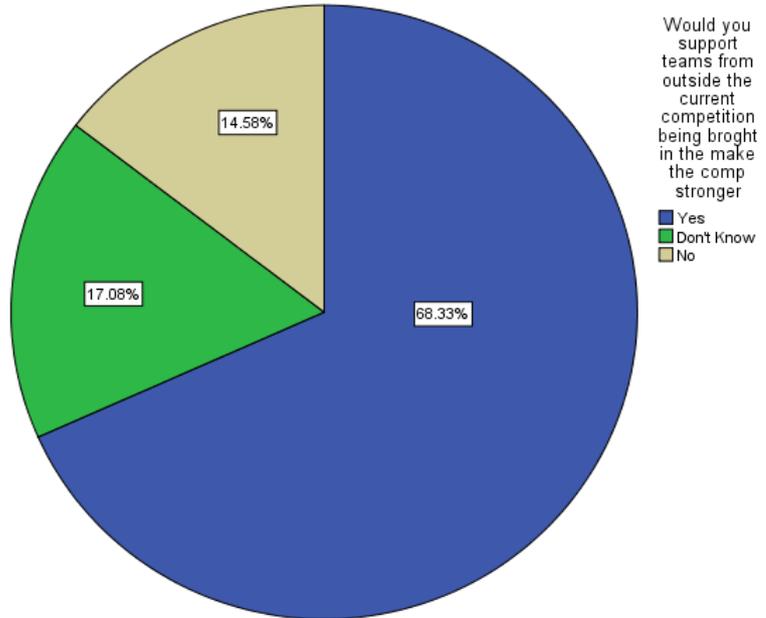
Has the standard improved/ stayed the same/ or dropped, by club review status



Would you support teams from outside the current competition being brought in?

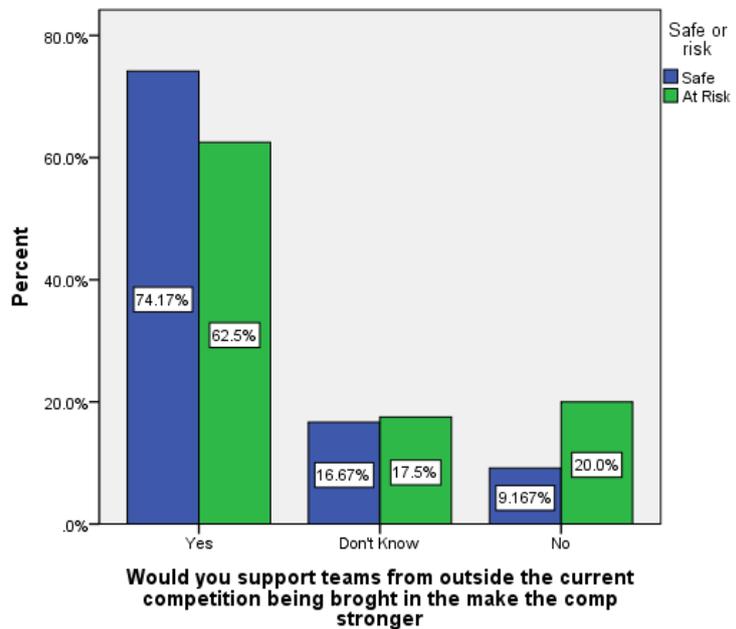
The next two questions were asked together as they interlink. Survey participants were asked to consider their answers to supporting outside teams being let into the competition and their ideal amount of teams in the competition at the same time.

There was majority support for the possibility of bringing clubs into the competition from outside the current area to make the competition stronger.



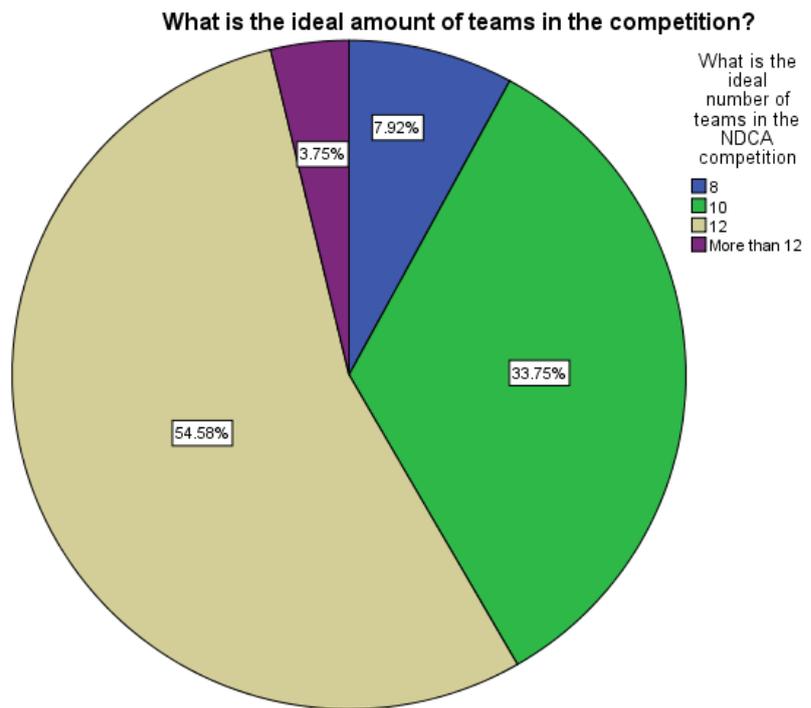
Would you support teams from outside the current comp being brought in, by review status

There was less support for this from clubs deemed 'at risk', but there was still majority support.

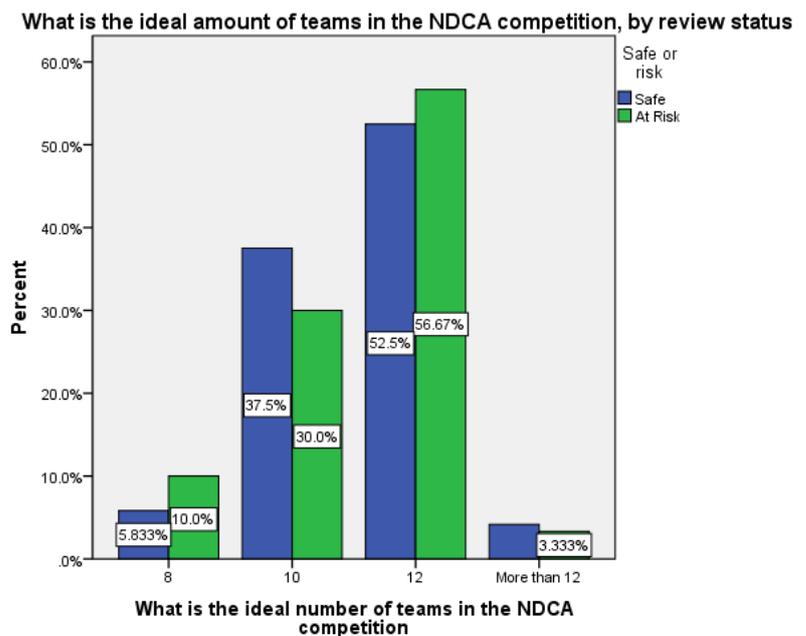


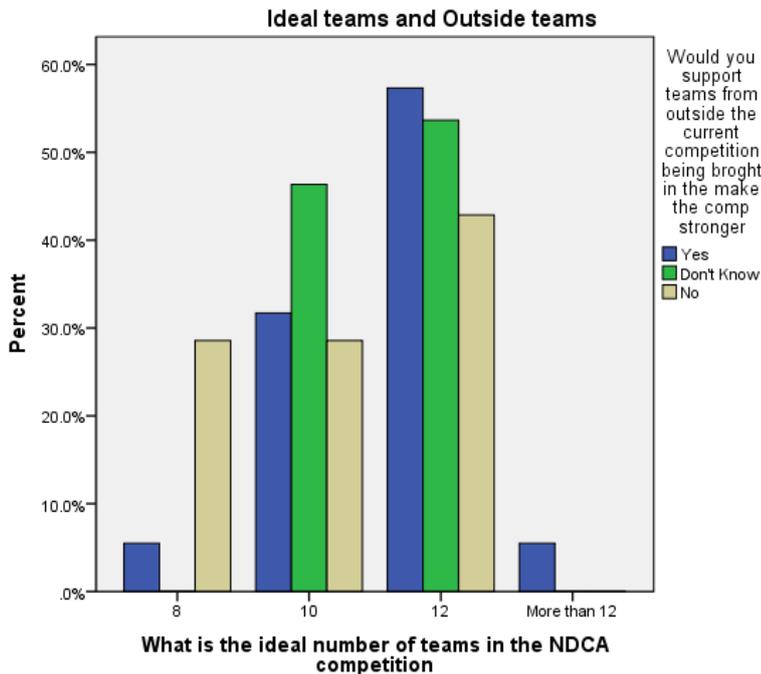
Just over half of the survey respondents saw the current number of 12 clubs being ideal.

About a third deemed ten teams ideal and nearly 8% though eight teams would be best.



Again, the differences between 'safe' and 'at risk' clubs was pretty small. Although, it is interesting that the 'at risk' respondents were twice as likely to nominate 8 teams as ideal.





The most interesting thing about this data is when you break it down further and compare and contrast ideal amount of teams in the competition versus attitudes towards including teams from outside the area.

If we look at the blue columns first, which represents players who support including teams from outside the competition; over half of them say there should be still 12 teams in the competition.

This means these players acknowledge that current teams would have to merge or be cut for this to happen.

For the players in the blue column who argue that there should be either 8 or 10 teams in the competition and there should be teams from outside the area, this means that they may well support even more mergers and/or cuts.

For the green columns, which represents players who are unsure if teams from outside should be let in, well over 40% support a ten team competition.

The cream column represents players who are against letting teams in from outside the current competition.

Just less than 60% of respondents who are against letting teams in from outside the current competition still would like to see the amount of teams in the competition lowered to 10 or 8.

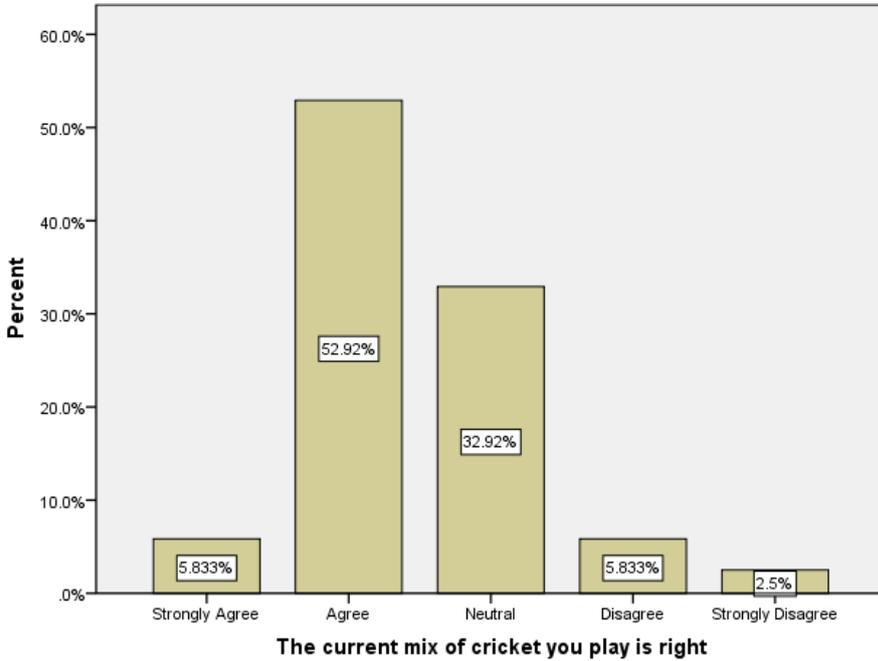
The remaining players who say no to outside teams and state the competition should retain 12 teams are effectively arguing for the current structure to remain.

This column represents less than 15% of the 240 respondents.

Effectively, this means that up to 85% of the players surveyed implicitly support changes to the competition structure.

Mix of Cricket

The current mix of cricket you play is right

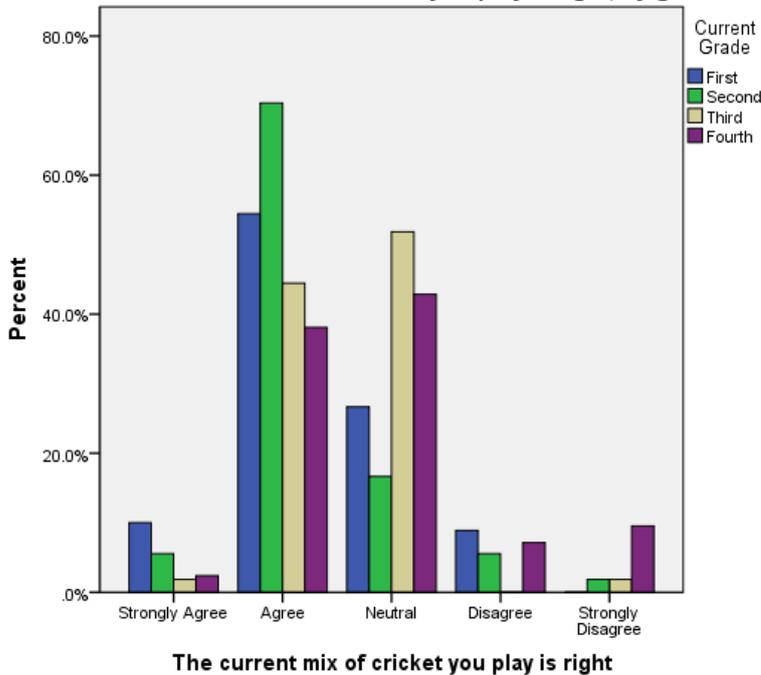


For the most part, players in all grades are happy with the mix of cricket they are playing.

This leads to the high degree on 'neutral' responses for the following graphs about the mix of cricket, because if respondents said they were happy with the current mix, they were marked as neutral in the following categories.

32.92% were ambivalent.

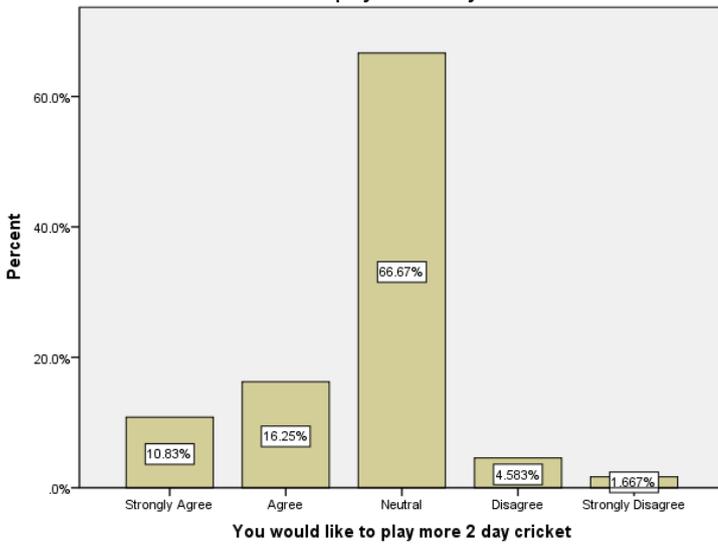
Current mix of cricket you play is right, by grade



There is a slightly higher rate of dissatisfaction in 4th grade.

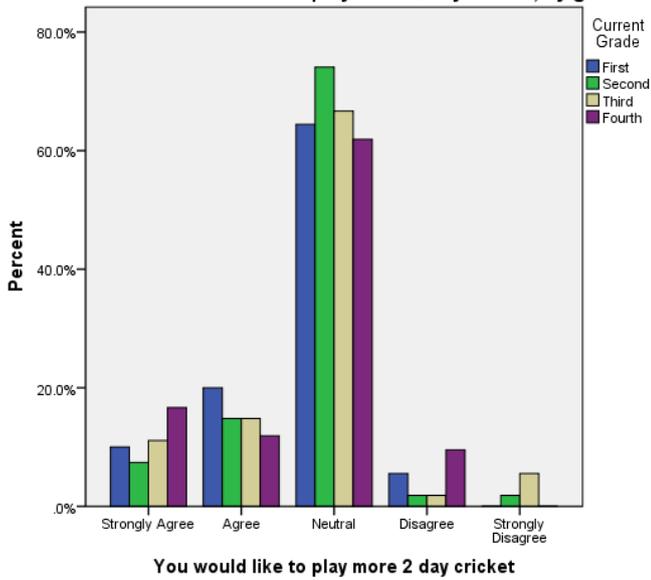
This tended to be older players who maintain that everyone should play each other in a 2 day game and/or that one day games were too short to give everyone in the team a chance to have a bat and/or bowl.

You would like to play more 2 day cricket



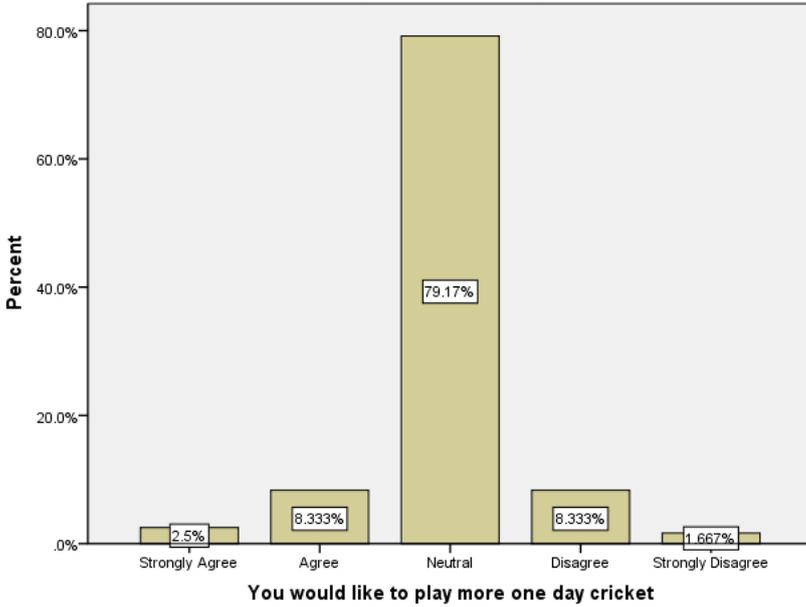
Over 25% of respondents regardless of grade said that they would like to play more 2 day cricket.

You would like to play more 2 day cricket, by grade



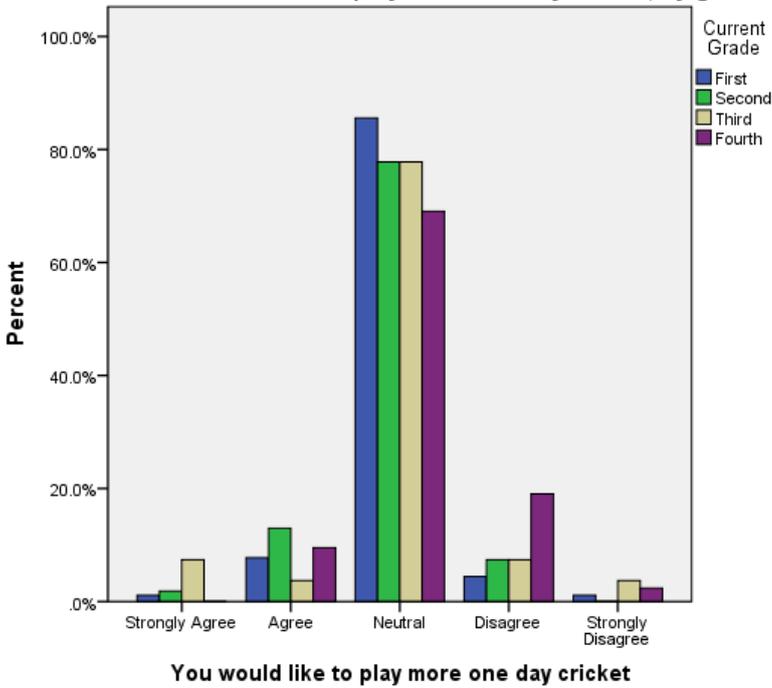
There is a healthy minority here who argue that district cricket should maintain a focus on 2 day cricket.

You would like to play more one day cricket.



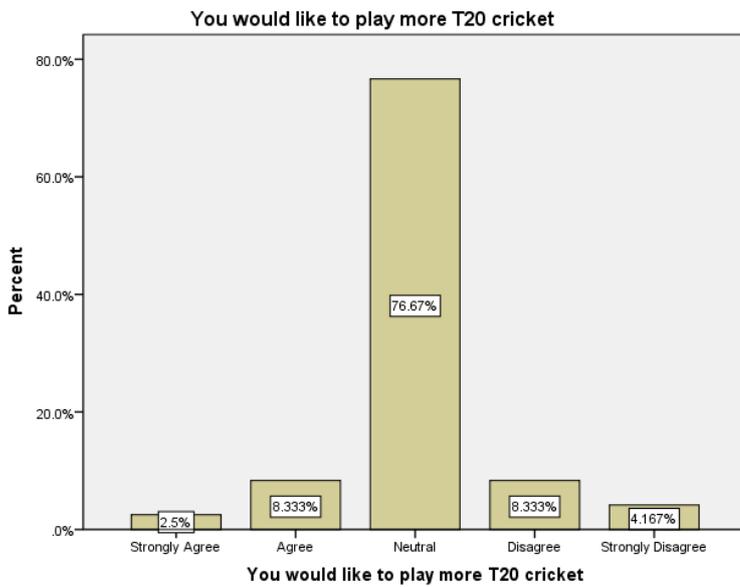
Overall, players seem to be satisfied with the amount of one day cricket they play, with a large expression of neutral, and almost identical numbers on either side.

You would like to play more one day cricket, by grade

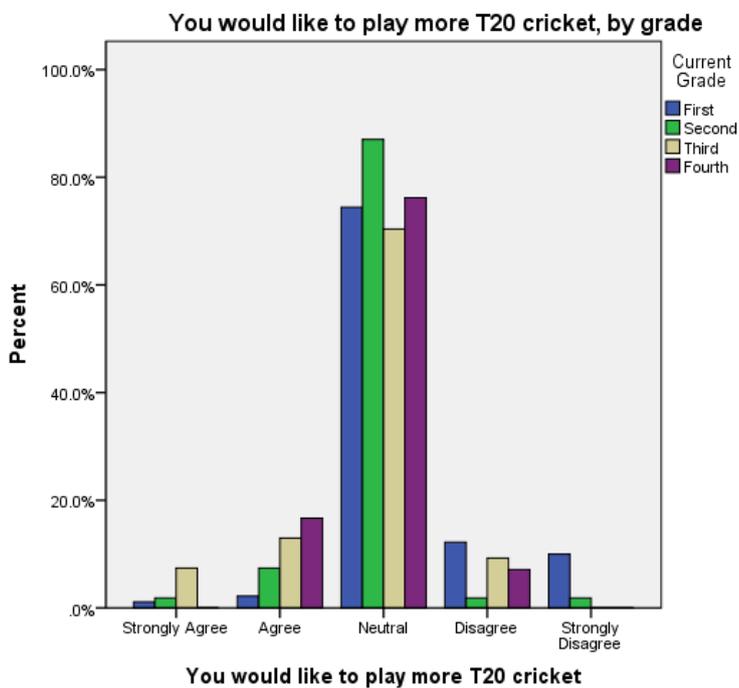


The difference between grades is negligible, other than a higher rate of disagreement in 4th grade.

The players who disagree here want to play more 2 day cricket.



Again, most players expressed satisfaction with the amount of T20 cricket they can play.



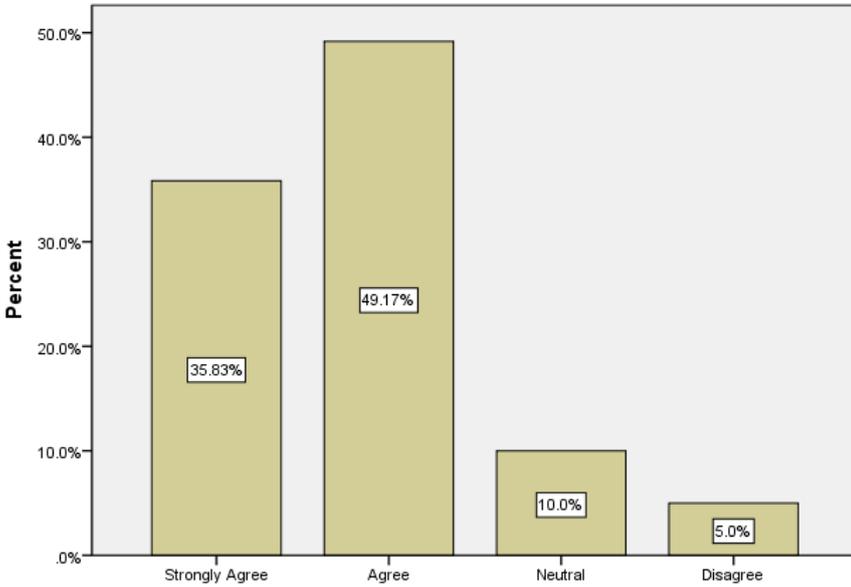
Fourth graders showed a slightly higher inclination to want to play more T20.

I think this is because Dennis Broad Cup teams seem increasingly to be made up of 2nd and 3rd graders, leaving many 4th graders unable to get a game.

This goes against one of the reasons the Dennis Broad Cup was originally brought in for, that is, to give lower graders an opportunity to play on the better grounds.

Newcastle in the Big Bash

If Newcastle had a T20 side in the Big Bash, you would attend games regularly

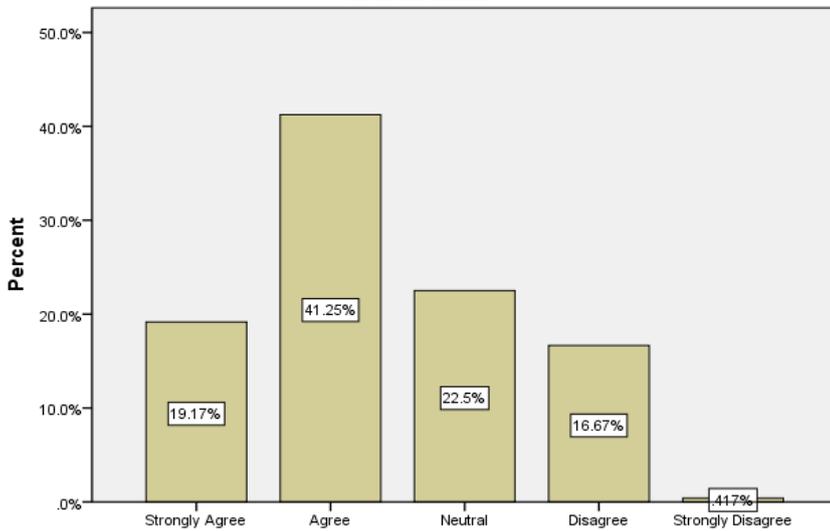


If Newcastle had a team in the Big Bash, you would regularly attend games

There is a lot of support in the NDCA competition for a push to bring a Big Bash team to Newcastle.

85% of players said that they would attend games regularly.

If Newcastle had a T20 side in the Big Bash, you would be interested in getting a season ticket

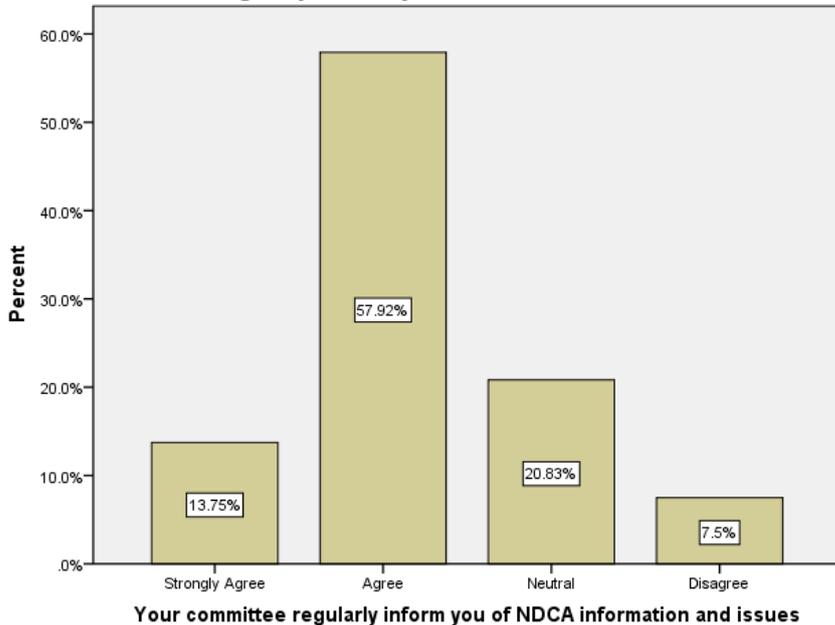


If Newcastle had a T20 side in the Big Bash, you would be interested in buying a season ticket.

60.42% said that they would be interested in buying a season ticket for a Newcastle Big Bash team.

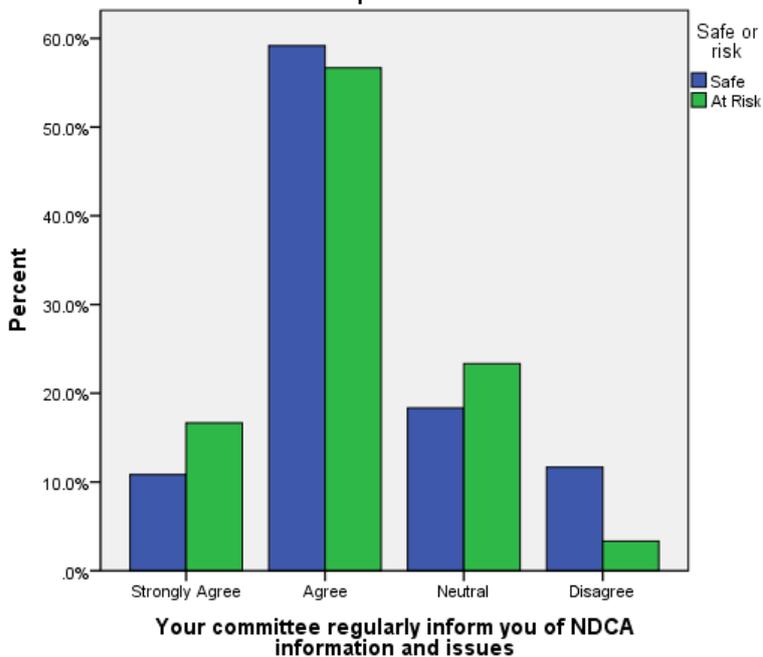
Rating of Committees

Your committee regularly informs you of NDCA information and issues.



71.67% of players said that their committee regularly informed them of NDCA information and issues.

Your committee regularly inform you of NDCA information and issues... by competition review status



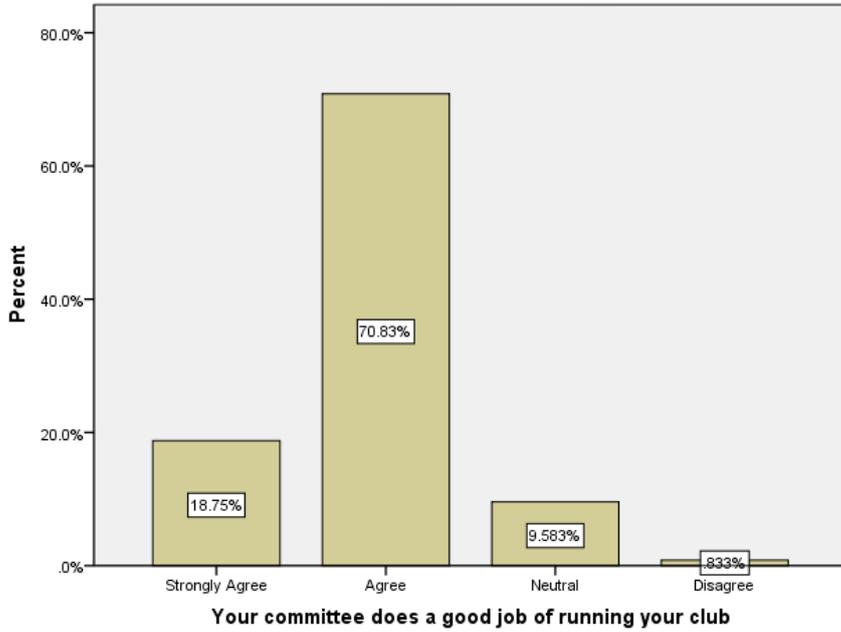
There was minimal difference between clubs by review status.

NOTE: I'm a bit suspicious of this data. It has a bit of a "if a tree falls in the forest..." kind of aspect.

How would players actually know if they are being kept informed or not? Also, players surveyed may have been confused by the question and answered in regard to information they receive from their committee that is actually about club matters.

What makes me especially suspicious here is the lack of knowledge about the DeCourcy Club (see data below).

Your committee does a good job of running your club

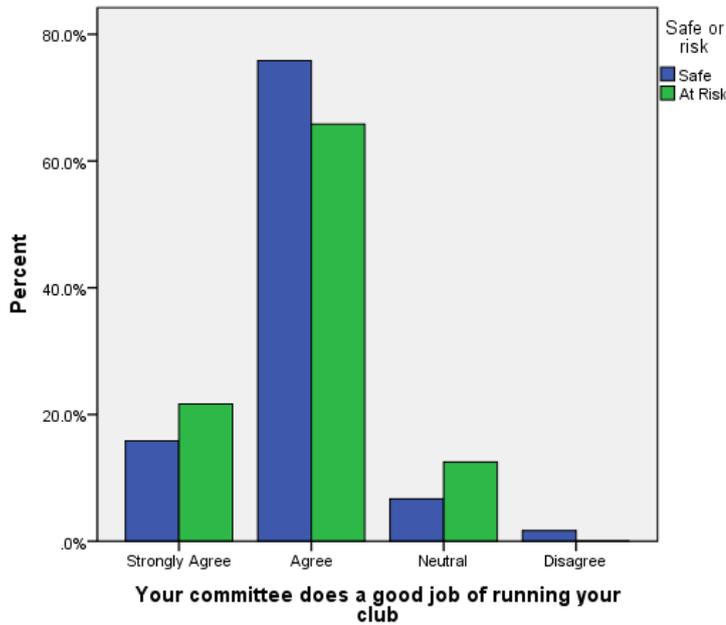


Most players are satisfied that their committees are doing a good job of running their clubs.

Less than 1% disagreed and less than 10% were neutral.

89.58% of players agreed or strongly agreed (although, the 18.75% of strongly agree were often club committee members!)

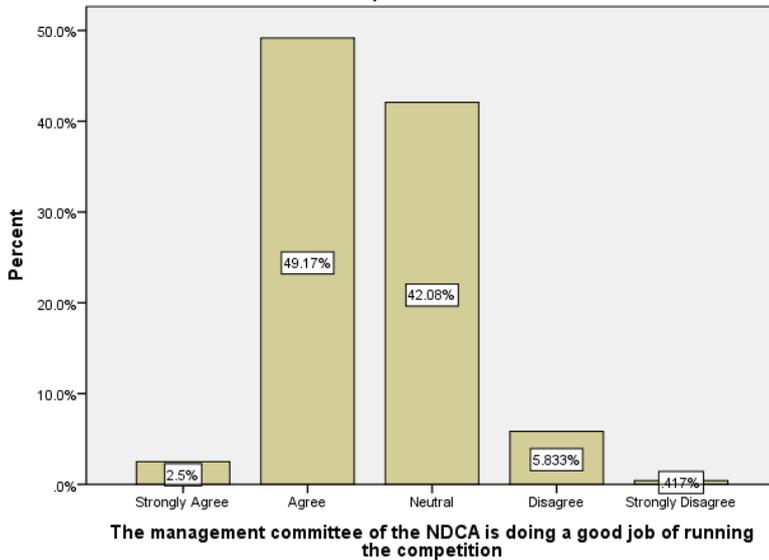
Your committee does a good job of running your club... by competition review status



Again, there are negligible differences regarding club review status.

Rating of NDCA Committee

The management committee of the NDCA is doing a good job of running the competition

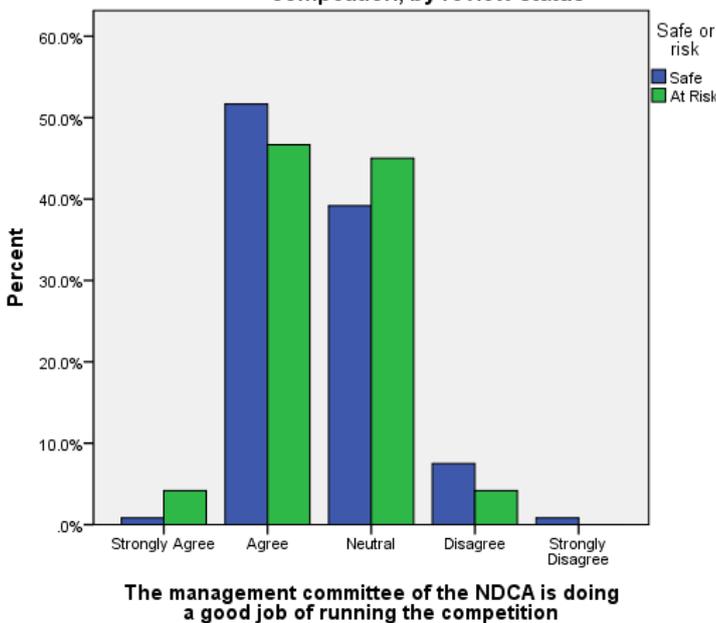


The data here is very surprising.

In most research done within a particular institution or organisation, questions about the management are usually answered very negatively or critically. This is especially the case in times of change and uncertainty.

While 42.08% of players were had neutral opinions here, over 51.67% were on the positive side of the ledger.

The management committee of the NDCA is doing a good job of running the competition, by review status



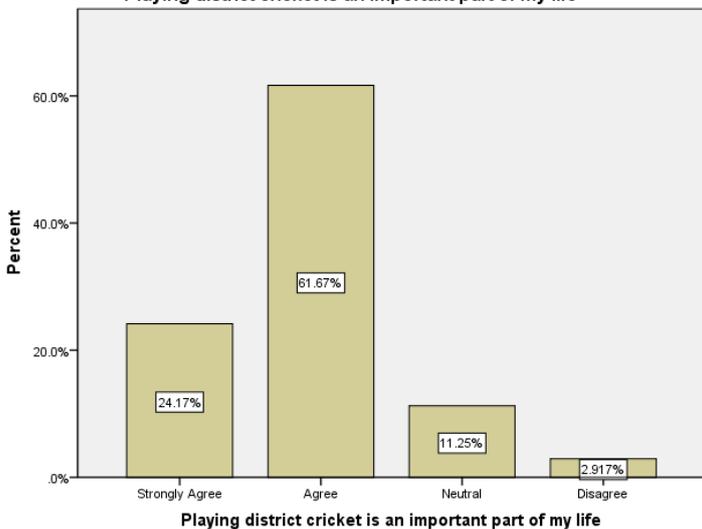
There was negligible difference in terms of review status.

For the most part when asking this question, players responded that the NDCA committee had a tough job to please everyone and under the circumstances were doing a satisfactory job.

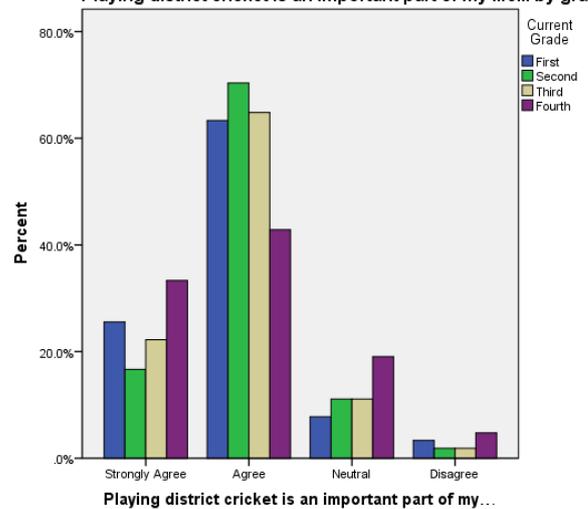
That said, there are many issues and problems brought up in the 'suggestions' section below.

Importance of Playing Cricket

Playing district cricket is an important part of my life



Playing district cricket is an important part of my life... by grade

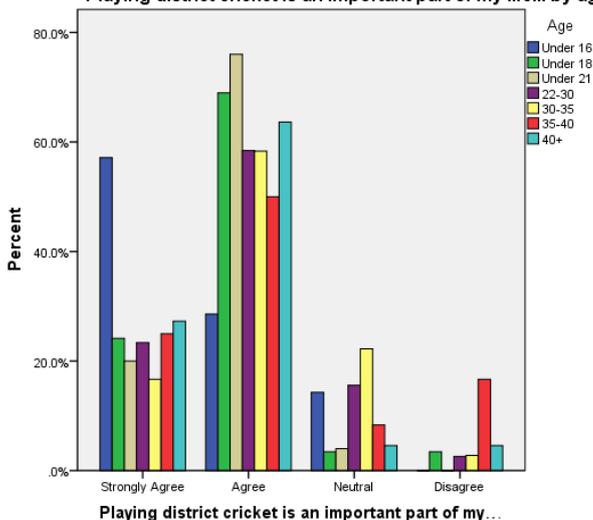


This is an 'emotive' themed question used in survey research to try to measure the investment of research participants in the topic area or issues being investigated. If participants respond in ways that seems to indicate that they don't care too much about the field being investigated, it casts doubt over the legitimacy of the data.

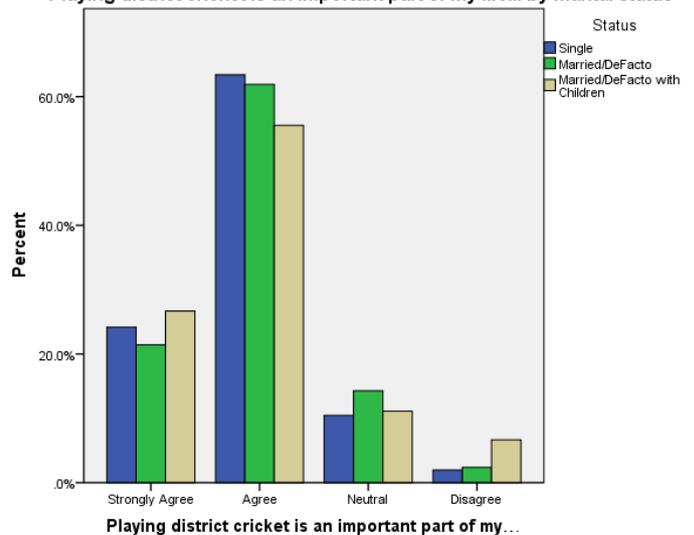
Over 85% of respondents see playing NDCA cricket as an important part of their life. If it was the other way around, for instance, it would make the data here much less reliable and robust.

There are negligible differences by various demographics (although Under 16s are particularly keen!)

Playing district cricket is an important part of my life... by age

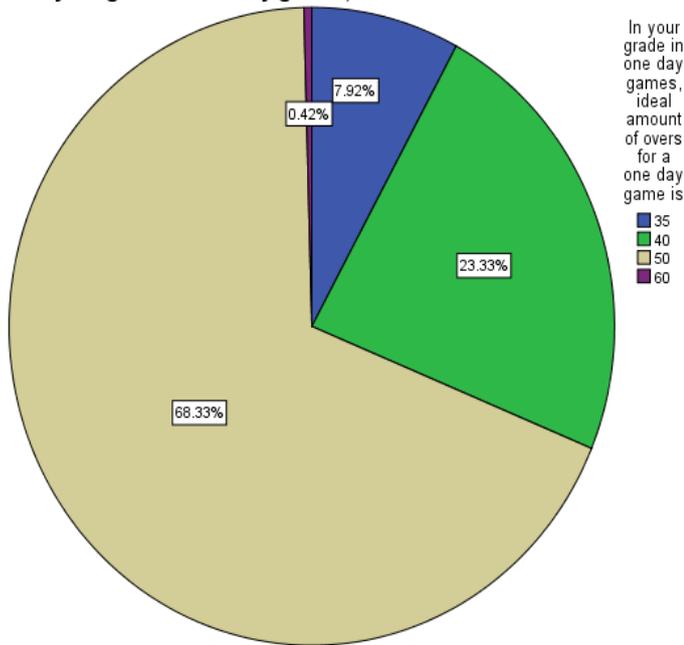


Playing district cricket is an important part of my life... by marital status



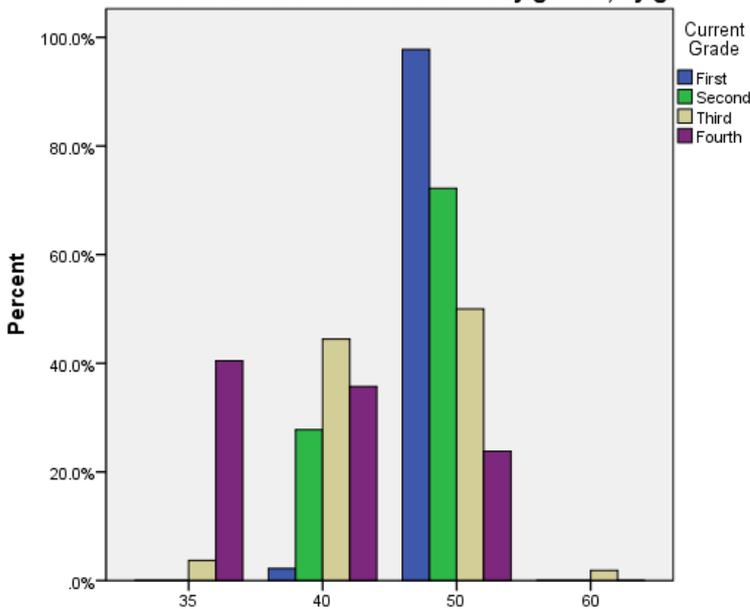
Ideal Overs in a One Day Game

In your grade in one day games, ideal amount of overs for a one day game is



Overall, players seem to want to play 50 over one day games.

Ideal amount of overs in one day games, by grade.



In your grade in one day games, ideal amount of overs for a one day game is

Pretty much all first graders want to keep 50 over one day games (blue column).

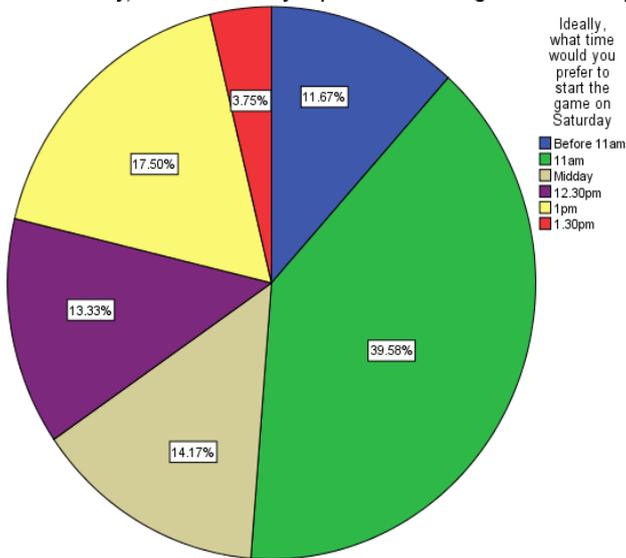
Second graders are split between wanting to keep 40 overs or bring in 50 over games (green column).

Third graders have similar results (cream column).

While 40% of 4th graders are happy with 35 overs, the majority of players (60%) want to play more overs in one day games (purple column).

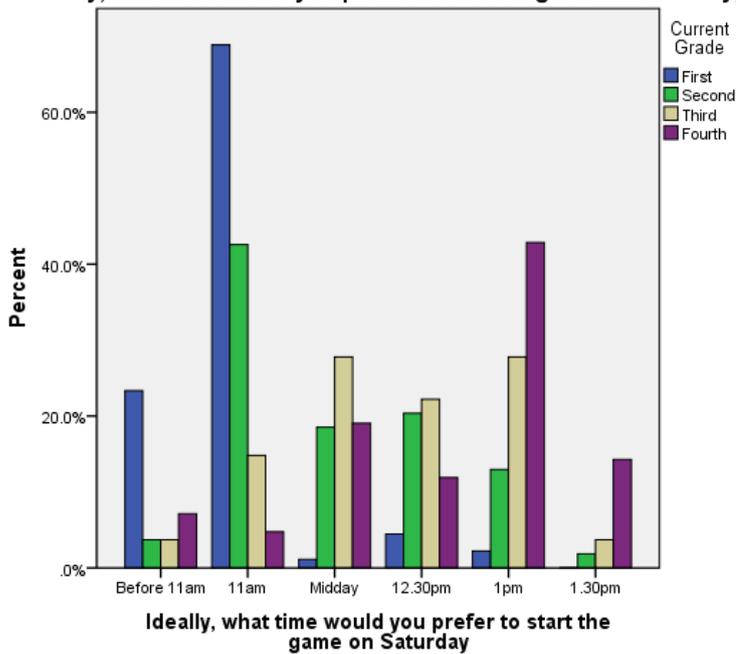
Starting Times

Ideally, what time would you prefer to start the game on Saturday?



The statistics for the ideal time to start a game of cricket are not very meaningful unless you break them down by grade.

Ideally, what time would you prefer to start the game on Saturday, by grade



1st grade (Current start times – 10am for one day games; 11am for 2 day). For the most part, 1st grades are happy with their starting time.

2nd grade (12.30 for both one and two day). A large percentage of second graders want to start their games earlier.

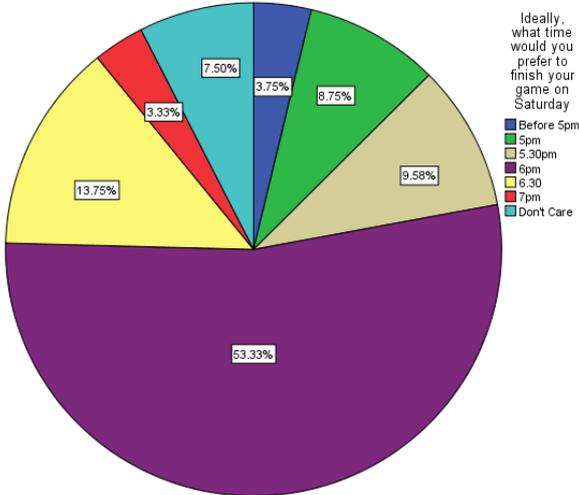
3rd Grade (12.30 for one day; 1pm for 2 day). Again, there is a trend for starting games earlier.

4th Grade (1.30 for both). Over 40% would like to start at 1pm; many more express a want to start earlier.

Overall, lower graders seem to want their games to start earlier. When answering this question, they tended to comment about wasting half of the day and finishing games too late. Others expressed a need for all grades to finish at approximately the same time to help promote club culture. There is an obvious problem with junior cricketers being able to play senior cricket if games started earlier but many older players argued that this is a false problem – that good junior players, if made to choose, would chose grade cricket.

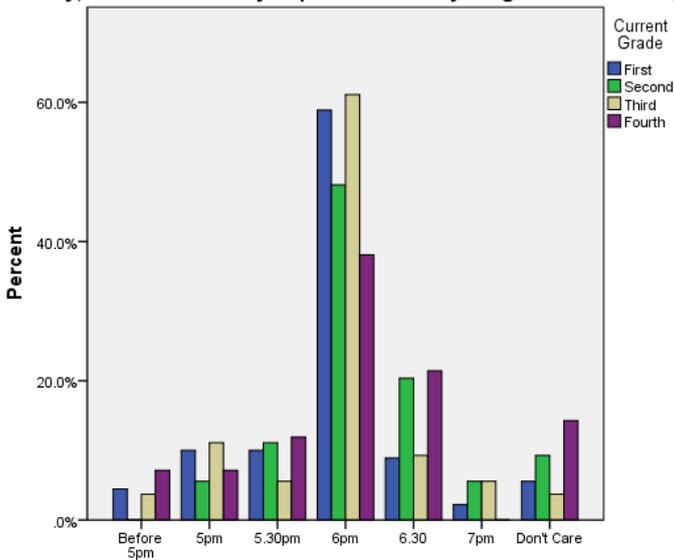
Finishing Times

Ideally, what time would you prefer to finish your game on Saturday?



Over half of all players surveyed would like to be off the park by 6pm. This obviously links in with the previous data regarding starting times.

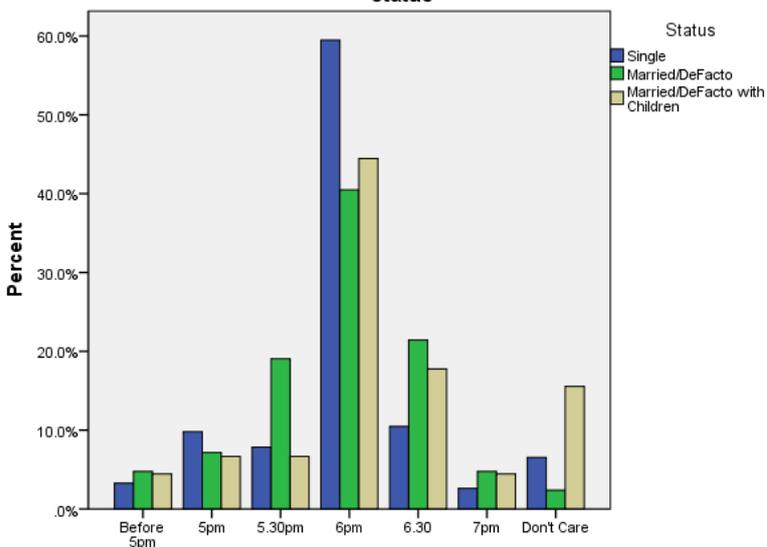
Ideally, what time would you prefer to finish your game on Saturday, by grade



The data by grade here is also pretty consistent, with 4th grade showing a slight favour towards finishing later.

Ideally, what time would you prefer to finish yo...

Ideally, what time would you prefer to finish your game on Saturday, by marital status

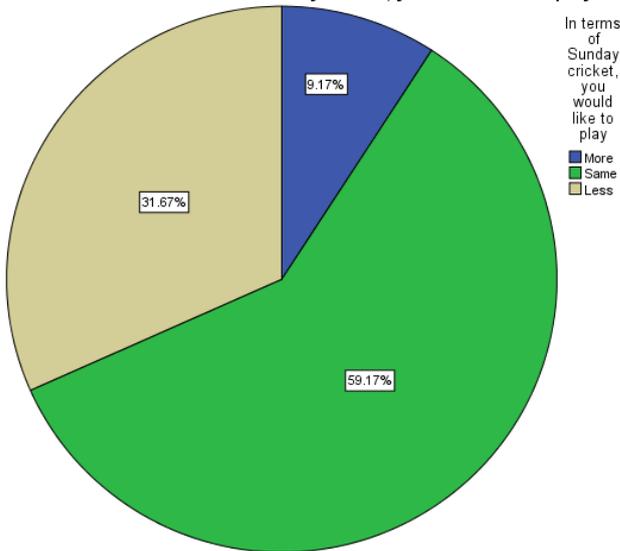


Single players seem to want to finish earlier and cited work and social life as factors.

Ideally, what time would you prefer to finish yo...

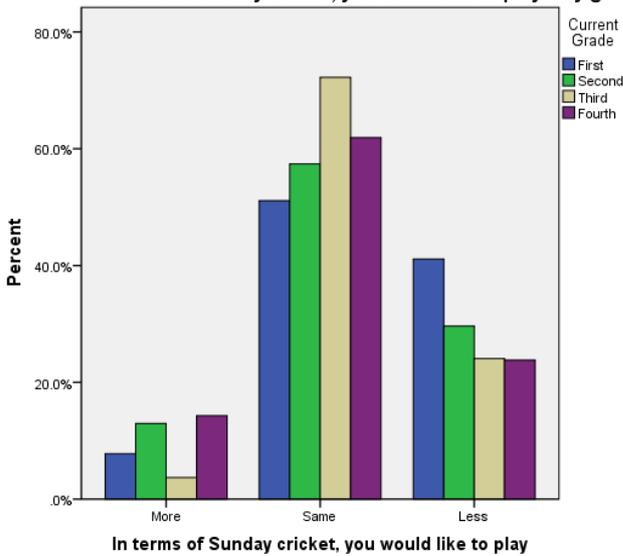
Sunday Cricket

In terms of Sunday cricket, you would like to play



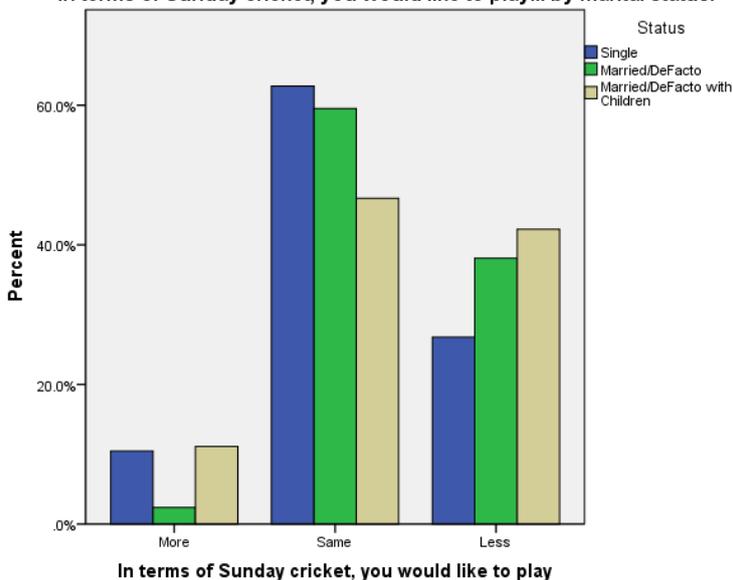
Overall, nearly 60% of players are happy with the amount of Sunday cricket they play, with just over 30% wanting to play less.

In terms of Sunday cricket, you would like to play... by grade.



First graders seem to most fatigued by the amount of Sunday cricket they play.

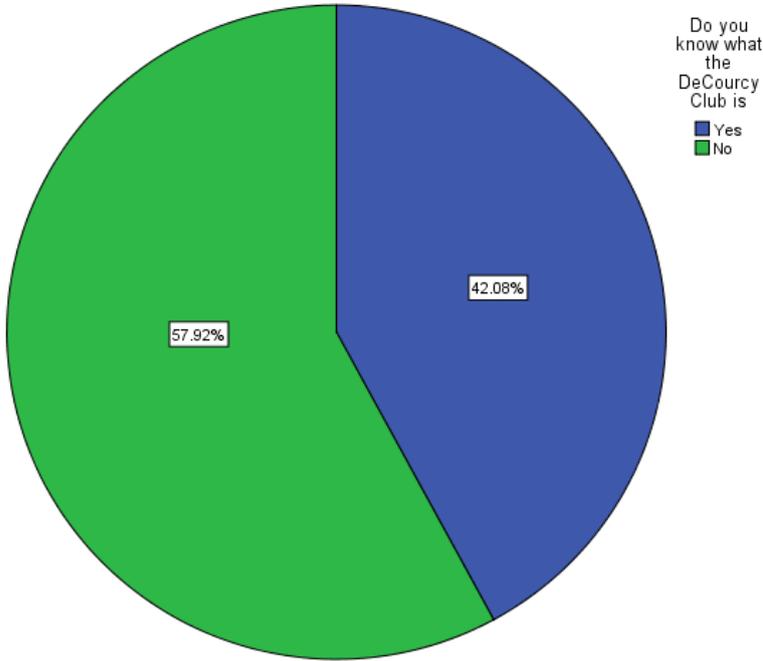
In terms of Sunday cricket, you would like to play... by marital status.



As seen in the 'less' column, there is a small correlation with single marital status and wanting to play Sundays, but it is minimal.

DeCourcy Club

Do you know what the DeCourcy Club is?

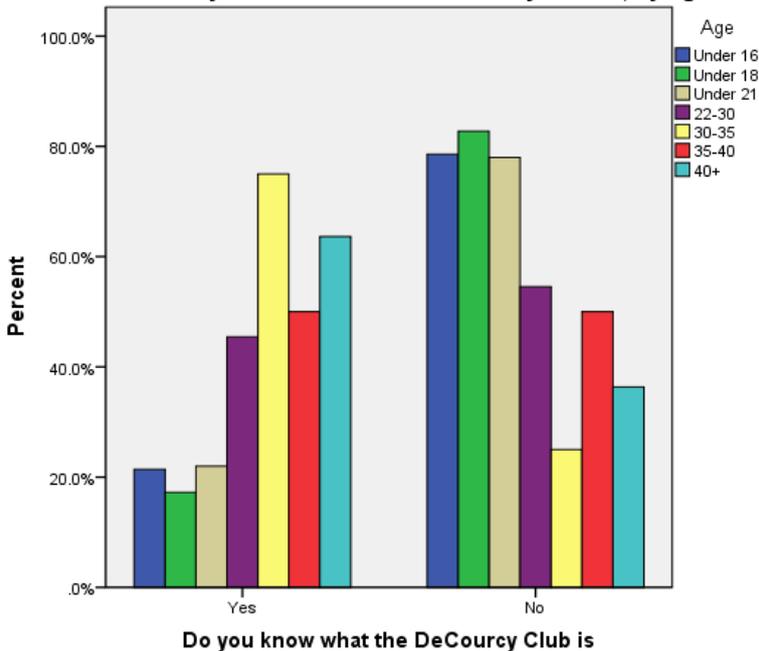


As a member of the DeCourcy Club committee, this is a very disappointing result. The DeCourcy Club needs support from all clubs; I'm sure every club is happy to take the money from the cup! In the future, we intend to have scholarships and prizes for young players, but we need to build up funds to do this.

Some clubs had virtually 100% of their players saying they did not know what the DeCourcy Club is.

As the graph below shows, younger ages are least likely to know about the club.

Do you know what the DeCourcy Club is, by age.



As I said above, this data makes me suspicious of whether clubs are really passing on information from the NDCA to their players or filtering it selectively.

In terms of supporting the DeCourcy Club, Robert Faraday-Bensley and I will be in contact with some clubs in the near future to come to speak to them about their lack of support for the DeCourcy Club.

What may stop you playing cricket in the future?

This was an open ended question where I wrote down player's responses.

Many players chose not to answer this question, or said that 'nothing' would stop them.

Despite being 'open ended', the responses are very uniform in themes and by age (older married players often just said "The Wife"!).

Often players would cite a combination of reasons.

For the age bracket of Under 21s, 18s and 16s:

- 35.3% mentioned injuries could stop them playing in the future (every time a young player said this I felt like saying wait until you get older and you can't move after a game until Wednesday...).
- 38.2% cited a new job or change in work commitments.
- 15% cited study commitments.
- 13% cited the possibility of overseas travel.
- 9% cited family commitments.
- Some other issues that came up once or twice included finding it difficult to make travel arrangements to get to games; prohibitive costs; club selection issues; and other friends stopping playing.
- 1 respondent said that, according to the Mayans, the world will end in 2012, so there will be no cricket after then. Fair enough.

For the 22 to 30 age bracket.

- 25.8% cited family, kids or wife as a reason they might have to stop playing.
- 16% said injury might be a factor.
- 9.7% said 'old age' would get them.
- 53.2% perceived work commitments or changes in work might affect their availability.
- 9.7% said 'too much Sunday cricket'.
- Some other cited issues were late starts and finishes for games; general loss of enjoyment and/or commitment; continued drop in standards; study commitments; melanoma.

For the Over 30s:

- 41.3% said family/kids and/or wife.
- 45.7% said old age.
- 17.4% said injuries.
- 13% said work commitments.
- Some other cited issues were general decline in ability and/or fitness; general loss of enjoyment and/or commitment; "If second grade 2 day games end up 70 overs... I want to play real 2 day cricket"; "Cricket standard dropped, only was interested in playing against a few of the strong teams, the others were a waste of time"; "too much one day cricket – that's what C& S is for".

For the Over 40s:

- 21% said work commitments.
- 21% said family/wife/kids.
- 63.2% said old age.
- 47.4% said injury or lack of general fitness.
- Some comments included: "Shorten formats will force me out"; "Once my son is too good to play lower grades, I'll probably stop and go to his games"; "Move aside in the future for kids"; "Generational change sees less mates playing".

Suggestions for the NDCA management committee

This was an open ended question where I wrote down what people had to say. I am putting all comments in and only organising them by age. Young people were much more likely not to answer this question. Older players were more opinionated.

What comes out of these comments overall is the large range of opinions about the competition, some of which seem well thought out and good ideas while others don't make a lot of sense.

What is also interesting about these comments is that there sometimes seems to be confusion about who is responsible for various matters. What I mean here is quite a few of the things mentioned in these comments are actually the responsibility of clubs or other associations/organisations, not the NDCA committee. Examples include: moving juniors up the grades, including families, making connections with junior clubs, junior rep team selections, and aspects of ground maintenance – among many others.

Further, some of the comments here mention things that have already been done or have been done, which again makes me suspicious of the communication lines from the NDCA to club players.

Overall though, the comments do show that players care about their competition.

Here are the responses to the question: Do you have any suggestions for the NDCA management committee?

Under 21s, 18s and 16s

- Try to move more juniors up the grades
- More umpires in lower grades
- Be open to ideas: don't act above everyone, act for them. Committee needs to be more neutral; less people from that are still involved with clubs.
- Make more one day games in the lower grades
- Keep things like they are this year
- Better communication from NDCA to players. More inclusion of families.
- More cricket for Under 21s, should be every Sunday
- More advertising at the start of the season for juniors and seniors to draw more players
- Lunch break in first grade is too long. Umpires need to be stricter about on field behaviour.
- The new balance of cricket in 1st grade is good, as is Dennis Broad Cup as T20.
- Bring in Maitland team. More umpires in 4th grade to stop biased calls. Scrap the junior bowling rules.
- More info. on NDCA website
- No games on public holidays!
- Fairer points system - 2 days need to be worth more.
- Weaker teams aren't necessarily bad as they give young blokes a chance to develop
- Less overs does not help raise standard
- Don't cut teams, keep it how it is.
- More opportunities to play teams from outside Newcastle

- All one day/T20 and 2 day need to be identified as separate competitions. More interaction and assistance with junior clubs and associations with attracting kids to cricket and then development pathways into senior cricket. Need to address the issues regarding loss of players in especially lower grades to attract players back into cricket with an attractive format.
- More selectors need to be seen at grounds
- Get more power to the NDCA - the clubs have no idea and are only interested in their own agendas
- Should be more overs in 4th grade 1 dayers
- Balance is good.
- More focus on junior cricket at grassroots level, to Rep focussed. Use current and ex first graders to do this. Getting teams from outside area would be great to improve strength of comp.
- NDCA has improved since Marjoribanks took over, but there is still room for improvement. There are too many inner city teams. Need more focus on junior cricket. The T20 comp. should be mid-week and not part of Club Championship. The website needs to be utilised more. The NDCA committee needs to be more ruthless.
- Make the NDCA website better; more constant info
- Good to see the NDCA attempting to find out ways to improve
- Too many teams in the city, they need to merge or be cut
- Dennis Broad Cup regulations for player availability needs to be easier; if you played one game of 1st grade the year before, you should be allowed to play. Should have to have played 3 1st grade games the year before.
- Push the franchise/business T20 thing ahead, but T20 should not count for points in the club NDCA comp.
- Like the idea of the T20 franchises, but T20 should not count in our comp.
- Don't really like T20 for Dennis Broad Cup
- Better communication, too much 'grapevine'

Age 22-30:

- Shorten 2nd grade from 80 to 70 overs so it finishes same time as 1st grade. More 1 day cricket, fewer 2 days because it makes it easier to fill teams and there is no need to bracket players. Try to bring players back from C&S.
- Need to play everyone in a 2 dayer, and they should be the majority of comp. points. Less points for 1 dayers, none for T20.
- T20 should not be in the comp points
- Too much Sunday cricket. T20 not in comp points
- Shorter over games does not improve standards, it weakens it.
- NDCA should keep going in what they are trying to do over the last few years
- T20 should not be in the comp. points - gives weaker teams too much of a chance to fluke a win through one good over. Should play everyone in a 2 day game. Start all first grade games at 10am - it's better for families.
- Actually make changes, follow through, and not just talk about them. Too much talk not enough action.
- Scrap the junior bowling rules or at least allow kids to bowl a few more overs

- Comp doesn't need to be messed with too much.
- More overs in 2 day lower grade games. One day and T20 comps should stand alone. The rules for playing Dennis Broad cup are too strict, hard to get teams out.
- The new one day format would be good to try (referring here to 20 overs break as in state cricket)
- NDCA needs to communicate more directly with players through the website.
- T20 points should not be in the comp. Outright wins are undervalued with points. Bonus points in 1 dayers are too much.
- Shorter season. Play 1 and 2 dayers in blocks, not all over the place in the draw as it makes the club's organisation easier
- The winners of the DeCourcy Cup each week should actually get the cup presented to them to drink out of! The new T20 is pushing it in terms of time and resources.
- Don't reduce the overs. There is no need for two umpires in second grade, spread them down the grades.
- Less T20 - no points for t20. Have it as a separate midweek comp.
- Do more with the website
- Do something with the website. Make the most of it, sell stuff through it and use it to advertise to make money.
- Sunday T20 was excellent - good fit and good for clubs. The NDCA committee members (not the executive) need to actually spend time and do work. What else do they do than just turn up at meetings? They need to be raising money.
- NDCA website needs to be improved, it is outdated. Need to sell it for ads, I'm sure it gets enough hits to do this. The NDCA needs some young people on it. Get naming rights for each separate competition. Be a lot more proactive raising funds.
- Provide more options for those that want to play more cricket. Have flexible arrangements for players.
- 8 teams in 1st grade, all clubs in lower grades. 8 teams from Maitland, Newcastle and Lake Macquarie would be great
- Less focus on reputation of juniors when selecting sides
- One day cricket for 4th grade
- Too many inner city teams, but it was good clubs weren't railroaded.
- T20 could be mid-week day/nighters
- T20 should be day/night
- Improve the website
- Any outside teams let in should be very strong and pretty close in terms of location
- The validity of the point score at the moment is dodgy. Need to be more proactive about quality of umpiring. For instance, the State League soccer has an assessor.
- Keep going hard with the restructure
- In terms of rep cricket selections, less politics, more on form. Don't pick the same players on reputation if they are not performing.
- Too many inner city teams
- Better info in NDCA website
- There should be 2 umpires in 2nd grade games, especially when there's an umpire in third grade. Umpires need to enforce player code more strictly.
- More longer forms of the game, less T20

- More umpire training - need higher standard. More effort to improve the standard of grounds.

Over 30s:

- If there's more clubs there can't be too much travel.
- T20 could be a carnival around Xmas or midweek, not in the comp. Like the 15 over comp years ago.
- Dennis Broad cup should stand alone, as should Tom Locker like they used to. Everyone should play each other in a 2 day game. T20 should be a separate tournament.
- Second grade should be the same overs as first grade to improve standard. Lower grades should be more overs as well; shorter games do not improve quality.
- Less T20 hit and giggle shit.
- Play everyone in a 2 day game. No T20 points in comp.
- Point score is a problem; need more balance - one dayers are over rewarded, outrighters under rewarded. Getting 20 wickets is much harder than pumping someone in a one dayer.
- NDCA doing a good job of making the type of cricket we play different.
- Should play everyone in a 2 day game
- One day games in 4th grade are too short.
- NDCA should assist clubs more. Need to be much more proactive at fundraising to help at club level. Could centralise common tasks such as getting playing shirts, as bulk would lessen costs.
- There are too many people running the comp, the committee needs to be streamlined. Make the website a commercial entity. Royce should not be sending out all those emails. Make people visit the site to get information; sell the hits for ads.
- There is 4 teams too many in the comp, and 4th grade should all be 1 day cricket.
- Remove 3rd and 4th grade one dayers
- Get a team in the Big Bash
- 3rd and 4th grade to play one day cricket, not make 4th grade compulsory
- Need leadership - make changes; enforce them if you have to. You can't please everyone and people will be selfish about their own club even if that means they are holding the whole comp back.
- Keep trying to improve the comp
- Keep Under 21s as a round robin, not a knockout
- Less overs does not increase quality, it makes standard worse. Don't need to be more like the C&S, need to remain different.
- Too many inner city teams. need to promote T20 better as a family day
- Too many teams in the inner city. Don't reduce the overs any more - stops blokes getting a bat and bowl which especially bad for young blokes.
- Every team should play each other in a 2 day game. 2 pools for 1 day games like it used to be when Tom Locker points were included.
- The comp points are a problem: all games should count and there can be winners of a 'league' like the Premier League. but when it comes to the semi' and finals, only the 2 day cricket should count for the points to make the semis, esp. as you only play 2 day cricket in the semis.

- The draw should have every team playing each other in a 2 day game. Need more promotion and communication from the NDCA. Only 2 day game points should count for who makes the semi-finals as they are 2 day games.
- Better umpire education
- NDCA should help more with the grounds, especially about their overuse. Could then try to have a mid-week comp.
- 3rd grade overs is good. 4th grade 2 dayers should be more overs with same starting times.
- More one day cricket in 2nd grade
- Doing a good job. A Sunday lower grade comp. would be good.
- Get tough non clubs, they only want to do what suits them. Less Rep cricket.
- get rid of 4th grade
- More emphasis on longer forms of the game. Focus on quality, not retention; don't dumb it down. Less overs reduces quality does not improve it, especially for Juniors
- Do something with the website. Make money out of it. Stop Royce sending out all those emails and make people come to the website to get info.
- T20 - get a bit more out of it... old boys days - the NDCA needs to be more proactive, white balls, coloured balls - get young people more interested

Over 40s:

- Like to see the NDCA be more proactive about the state of grounds and to take councils to task.
- Need more leadership: need to make a model of a competition that the NDCA want then stick to it. No constant tinkering. You can't please everyone. The NDCA area needs to get a full time administrator.
- Improve umpiring in general, esp. in first grade.
- District cricket is elite; it should be 1st and 2nd grade only. Other grades still play for clubs, but focus should be on 1st and 2nds
- Time to make changes is NOW, before it's too late
- work closer with the C&S
- More umps in lower grades, 2nd grade does not need 2.
- Don't punt clubs just for the sake of it. Uncertainty for clubs is not good. Need to be clear and positive with respect to clubs. Need a clear process for amalgamation with clear communication.
- Need to be careful re. too much cricket for juniors, esp. those who play rep. Don't necessarily need fewer teams, we need better clubs. Need closer ties with C&S and could even develop a relegation system in the future.
- Needs better interaction with the C&S.
- Don't reduce overs in any grades, it doesn't improve standards or make it more attractive to players. The T20 with Dennis Broad and Tom Locker is a great initiative. Could even have another T20 midweek comp - even an over 35s comp to keep old blokes involved with clubs.
- I think 12 clubs is ideal, standards are swings and roundabouts. Look at Toronto, one coach comes and reinvents the whole club. It doesn't take much to turn a club around. In the early 90s I played we came last in every grade, the next year we made finals in most grades and came 2nd in the club championship. Not sure reducing teams is the answer, clubs need to be proactive and vigilant on what they are doing, but it's inevitable clubs will go up and down

- T20 points should not count in main comp. NDCA needs more lower grade input. 3rd and 4th grade should have matching overs and times. Lower grade games should start earlier: make juniors choose to play seniors like they do in Sydney. This will help for earlier finishes for young blokes who often work and older blokes with families. The young bloke overs restrictions make lower grade cricket very difficult. Need to introduce a minimum amount of spin overs bowled per innings. Lower grade games need more overs so young blokes get a go: less overs is lower quality. In terms of keeping players in NDCA, need to think about cost. Why would you pay the large fees in district to play 50 over games compared to low cost of C&S. The bonus point system in lower grades cooks the books: there's not enough time to get outright etc.
- Lower grade less overs just sees fewer opportunities for young players. Need to play everyone in a 2 day game. 3rd and 4th grade needs to be same overs and times. The T20 double headers works really well.
- Grade cricket should remain a 2 day comp - improve it, don't destroy it. More one dayers and T20 weaken the comp, not strengthen it.
- If there are more teams brought in, other teams should not be forced out; needs to be natural attrition. The current NDCA committee started well but has lost it a bit recently - need to concentrate on improving standards and T20 is not the answer.
- NDCA is trying hard, but it could get better results; needs greater vision. Need to be more inclusive of club's views, rather than exclusive; the NDCA works on BEHALF of the clubs.

Conclusion

Overall, the data here poses some contradictions. There seems to be a want to keep longer forms of the game – 2 day cricket and 50 over one day games – but people want to be off the ground by 6pm. Much of the move towards shorter games seems to be met with the response that shorter games have nothing to do with quality. There seems to be general approval for restructure and progress in the competition, but what is to be done is not clear.

One of the main things that I get out of this data is that there seems to be a problem of communication from the NDCA getting to players. I would suggest some changes here, but before I do I want to be clear that this is in no way a criticism of Royce McCormack – Royce does an excellent job as secretary in a time consuming, underappreciated and largely thankless task.

The NDCA website certainly has to be utilised a lot more. One way to do this is for Royce to stop sending multiple emails out to club secretaries (and his ever growing email list) and post it directly to the website. Information and press releases from Cricket NSW and Cricket Australia can just be posted on the website and the NDCA site should be reworked into a cricket information hub – a local Cricinfo. The only emails club secretaries should be receiving from Royce are specifically about NDCA and country cricket matters (this will also make clear to club secretaires that the information is important, rather than the information fatigue that multiple emails about things not related to club cricket creates). All NDCA emails to clubs should then be passed on to players as a matter of course by club secretaries. Added to players regularly checking the ladder and their stats (for instance, I know Chad White checks his stats daily), the NDCA website should receive considerable hits. The NDCA should be measuring website hits and try to use the website to attract sponsorship. For instance, local businesses could be encouraged to advertise on the site or offer deals to NDCA players.

Further to this, the NDCA needs a Facebook and other social media page to disseminate information – this would be particularly effective and free way for reaching younger players.

Both these forums would allow the NDCA to more clearly communicate to players what is going on, what issues need to be sorted out and what changes are being made and why. The NDCA committee in this regard needs to be more proactive in getting its message out there. The NDCA committee needs to make more direct announcements on the website; not just send out minutes of meetings.

I was thinking of going ahead and making several recommendations about all kinds of things, but I don't think it's my place to do that.

Hopefully the research can provoke some discussion around the competition; help inform club and competition committees about what their players want; and most importantly, help the decision making processes we are going to have to go through in the very near future to keep our great game relevant and to maintain high level of playing standard.

Appendix: NDCA Player Survey

1. **Age:** a. Under 16 b. Under 18 c. Under 21 d. 22-30 e. 30-35 f. 35-40 g. 40+
2. **Status:** a. Single b. Married/De facto c. Married/De facto with children
3. **Current Grade:** a. First b. Second c. Third d. Fourth
4. **Highest Grade:** a. First b. Second c. Third d. Fourth
5. **Playing trajectory:** a. Higher grade in future b. Play this grade in future. c. Play lower grades in future
6. **How far do you travel to play for your club?**
7. **How long have you played for your club?**
a. 1st season b. 2nd, 3rd or 4th season c. 5-10 seasons d. 10+ seasons
- 7a. **Is the club you are playing now affiliated to the Junior Club you played for?** Y/N
- 7b. **For those with 5+ years of experience only: Has the standard of NDCA cricket in your grade while you have been playing:** improved/ remained the same/ dropped
- 8a. **Have you played for any other NDCA clubs?** Y/N **8.b** How many?
- 9a. **Have you played C&S cricket?** Y/N **9.b** How many?
- 10a. **Would you support teams from outside the current comp being brought in?** Yes/Don't Know/No
- 10b. **What is the ideal number of teams in the NDCA competition?**

11. Please respond to the following:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. The current mix of cricket you play is right					
b. You would like to play more 2 day cricket					
c. You would like to play more one day cricket					
d. You would like to play more T20 cricket					
e. If Newcastle had a T20 side in the Big Bash, you would be interested in getting a season ticket					
f. If Newcastle had a T20 side in the Big Bash, you would attend games regularly					
g. Your committee regularly inform you of NDCA information and issues					
h. Your committee does a good job of running your club					
i. The management committee of the NDCA is doing a good job of running the competition					
j. Playing district cricket is an important part of my life					

12. **In your grade in one day games, ideal amount of overs for a one day game is:** a. 35 b. 40. c. 50
13. **Ideally, what time would you prefer to start the game on Saturday?**
14. **Ideally, what time would you prefer to finish your game on Saturday?**
15. **In terms of Sunday cricket, you would like to play:** more/same/less
16. **Do you know what the DeCourcy Club is?** - Y/N
17. **What are some of the things that may stop you playing cricket in the future?**
18. **Do you have any suggestions for the NDCA management committee?**