

STRONGER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SPORT



NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL
SPORT CLUB SURVEY

NZ AMATEUR
SPORT
ASSOCIATION

AUT

COMMUNITY SPORT SITS AT THE HEART OF KIWI LIFE





**UNDERSTANDING
ITS EVOLUTION
IS KEY TO SUSTAINING
ITS IMPACT**



WHAT DO WE REALLY KNOW ABOUT SPORT CLUBS IN NEW ZEALAND?

Not that much, really.

Clubs are the backbone of New Zealand sport, but until now little has been known about them in detail.

How they are run, who runs them, who they serve, their financial situations, how important volunteers are to their survival, their strengths and weaknesses, how COVID impacted them. What support they need, now and in the future, and more.

The annual National Sport Club Survey is about finding out.

Since 2018, it has tracked trends in membership, leadership, funding, and inclusion.

It gives a clear national picture of the realities on the ground, year after year.

It will enable the people who work, play or volunteer in sport to understand more about how their clubs are doing: what challenges they all face, what they have in common, how things are changing, and what they could do to strengthen their clubs and, as a result, their communities.



GRASSROOTS IN FOCUS

UNDERSTANDING THE EVOLUTION OF SPORT CLUBS IN NEW ZEALAND

Since its inception in 2018, the National Sport Club Survey (NSCS) has been New Zealand's primary source of longitudinal data on the community sport club sector.

Developed to address a critical gap, the NSCS provides a consistent and evidence-based understanding of how community clubs are operating, evolving, and responding to emerging challenges.

These clubs are mainly volunteer-led and community-driven. They form the backbone of sport in New Zealand, playing a vital role connecting people, fostering wellbeing, and sustaining local sport participation.

A partnership between AUT's Sport Performance Research Institute New Zealand (SPRINZ) and the New Zealand Amateur Sport Association (NZASA), the NSCS is conducted annually.

Responses come from over 1,000 clubs each year representing more than 200,000 participants. The survey is a trusted barometer for the health and sustainability of grassroots sport.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of data from 2018 to 2024, from membership and governance trends, to societal influences on community sport.

The period includes disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, economic pressures related to the cost-of-living crisis, and severe weather events such as Cyclone Gabrielle.

These challenges tested club resilience and highlighted the need for adaptability. National sport policy changes have impacted clubs. New compliance requirements through the Incorporated Societies Act, growing investment in female participation, and the creation of the Sport Integrity Commission have reshaped the environment.

This NSCS report brings together seven years of voices, data, and trends from community sport across New Zealand.

LONGITUDINAL TRENDS

MEMBERSHIP

Since 2018, community sport club membership has shown resilience. The pandemic caused a significant dip in membership in 2020, yet the sector has rebounded.

In 2024, average club membership surpassed pre-COVID levels. This is consistent with broader shifts seen across New Zealand. Large clubs are growing, while smaller clubs, mainly those with fewer than 100 members, are becoming rarer and, in some cases, closing.

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Membership Number	201	189	175	185	203	204	211

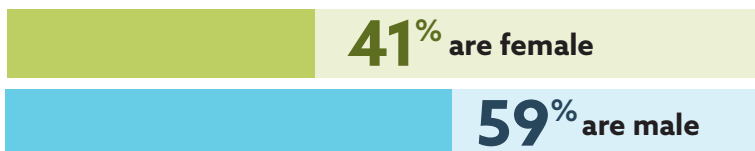
Covid outbreak

Since data on member demographics began in 2021, club composition has stayed mainly consistent. Despite national and local initiatives, alongside targeted funding from Sport NZ, aimed at increasing participation among women and girls, the gender gap has remained unchanged for four years.

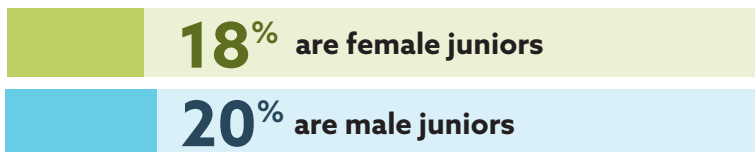
Adult participation dominates club membership. School-aged youth are often involved in school-based sport, and clubs' ongoing challenge is retaining these individuals post-secondary school – a known drop-off point in lifelong sport participation.

Average Club Member Demographics (2021-2024)

Gender Breakdown of Club Membership



Of the overall total membership



Revitalising Participation Across All Clubs

The decline of small clubs suggests a need for shared resource models or strategic mergers to maintain community identity and improve sustainability.

Despite national investment, female participation remains stagnant. Locally led initiatives, better visibility of women in sport, and community-specific solutions are key.

Stronger school-to-club partnerships, with flexible, social, and inclusive sport formats, can help keep young people engaged during this critical transition period when they leave secondary school.



The National Sport Club Survey is a vital resource for anyone seeking to understand and support the future of community sport in New Zealand.



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa



SPORT CLUB BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

The National Sport Club Survey (NCSC) data on sport club boards and committees offers a clear picture of who leads these organisations and how governance is evolving.

Over seven years, women have consistently made up an average of 46% of sport club board members. Overall gender balance is commendable compared to many sectors, however representation at chair level remains unequal.

Efforts by national and regional sport organisations aim to reach gender equity at all levels of governance. However, consistent under-representation of women as board and committee chairs needs addressing.

Average female board members (2018-2024) **46%**

Average female chairs (2021-2024) **28%**

Age profiles of board members are a persistent trend. Under 30s make up just 9% of all governance roles. This has remained largely stable since 2019. A lack of youth voice has implications for innovation, inclusivity, and succession planning.

Average U30 board members (2019-2024) **9%**

Many club leaders have held their roles for extended periods. Long-serving board members provide continuity and institutional knowledge, but healthy turnover is essential for innovation and organisational agility.

Clubs that refresh their boards may be better at adapting to change and engaging in a broader cross-section of their community.

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Long Term Board Tenure 5+ Years	63.6%	50.0%	54.8%	53.3%	55.4%	51.9%

Building Boards for the Future

Board gender diversity is strong overall; however, women are underrepresented in chair roles. Focused mentoring, leadership training, and equity-based policies can help close this gap.

Just 9% of board members are under 30. Clubs must engage younger voices through advisory positions and youth-governance pathways. Long board tenures constrain innovation.

Term limits and planned succession ensure boards stay agile, representative, and responsive to changing community needs.



“
Diverse governance,
in age and gender, will
ensure clubs remain
responsive and future-
focused.”
”

Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

SPORT CLUB MANAGEMENT

The community sport sector in New Zealand has shown encouraging signs of resilience in recent years. Membership numbers, which dipped significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, have now surpassed pre-pandemic levels. This upward trend signals a renewed appetite for local sport participation and reinforces the critical social role clubs play in their communities.

However, while participants have returned to the field, the same recovery is not evident behind the scenes.

Volunteer numbers – long the backbone of community sport – have steadily declined.

This drop-off of volunteer capacity reflects a mix of factors: growing time pressures on individuals, ongoing disengagement following COVID-19, increasing compliance demands on volunteers, and fewer clear pathways for new people to get involved.

Many clubs now rely on a small group of individuals doing the work of many, placing long-term sustainability at risk.



Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Avg. Volunteer Number	30	28	19	18	18	18	17

Financial pressures are also ongoing. While some clubs have recovered, a significant portion of the sector remains fragile. In 2024, 9% of clubs reported operating at a loss – nearly double the rate observed in 2019.

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Losing Money	6%	5%	10%	10%	10%	8%	9%

Average clubs that have a paid administrator or manager (2018–2024) **16%**



Photos above courtesy Masanori Udagawa



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

ANNUAL THEMES

Alongside its core longitudinal data, the National Sport Club Survey (NSCS) investigates specific themes each year tailored to current trends, sector challenges, and stakeholder interests in New Zealand's sport system. This approach ensures timely, relevant insights that can inform strategy and policy development.

2018-2020 SPORT CLUB FACILITIES

New Zealand's community sport clubs operate in a wide variety of facility arrangements, from purpose-built venues to shared community grounds. The data from 2018–2020 provides insight into how clubs access, share, and manage their physical spaces.

Year	2018	2019	2020
Have a Home	86%	76%	86%

Year	2018	2019	2020
Own the Facility	38%	41%	32%

Year	2018	2019	2020
Shared Home	56%	51%	48%



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

In 2020, 86% of clubs reported having a regular 'home' facility. However, club ownership of land or facilities is much less common. Most clubs operate out of shared spaces, with 48% reporting shared facility use in 2020.

These insights highlight the ongoing importance of facility access partnerships with schools, councils, iwi, and private providers – especially for clubs that lack owned infrastructure.

Shared arrangements help reduce costs and improve community connectivity, but can also lead to scheduling conflicts, inconsistent maintenance, and limited access during peak times.

Supporting Facility Sustainability

Clubs that do not own their own facilities often face challenges in scheduling, maintenance, and long-term certainty. Continued investment in multi-use community sport hubs, and local partnerships are key strategies to improve equitable facility access.

For those that do own facilities, rising maintenance and insurance costs remain pressing issues.



Shared spaces help reduce cost and improve connection, but also come with challenges around access and upkeep.





Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

2018-2020

SPORT CLUB SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship continues to be a key income stream for many of New Zealand’s sport clubs, particularly through partnerships with local businesses.

In each of the three years surveyed (2018-2020), 58% of clubs reported being sponsored by at least one local business. The average number of formal sponsorship relationships per club ranged from two to three.

Time and capacity to pursue new sponsorship opportunities remain limited.

By 2020, clubs reported spending an average of just two hours per month actively seeking new sponsorship – down from four hours in 2019. This drop-off reflects wider volunteer capacity pressures and the increasing complexity of commercial engagement.

Year	2018	2019	2020
Sponsored by local business	58%	58%	58%

Year	2018	2019	2020
How many formal sponsor relationships	3	2	2

Year	2019	2020
Hours per month someone actively solicits new sponsorship	4	2



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

Key Challenges in Sponsorship Generation

Clubs identified several barriers to securing greater sponsorship income:

- Lack of time and volunteer capacity
- Limited commercial knowledge and marketing expertise
- Weak business networks, especially for smaller or rural clubs
- Difficulty demonstrating value or visibility to potential sponsors
- Challenging economic conditions of oversaturated local markets.

Reimagining Local Sponsorship

To unlock new sponsorship opportunities, clubs need support in building commercial capability and storytelling confidence. Training, resource toolkits, and sector-led sponsorship matchmaking initiatives can help bridge the gap between grassroots sport and local businesses looking to make an impact.



Many clubs struggle to prove their value to sponsors – not due to lack of worth, but in lack of time, tools, and know-how.



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa



Photo courtesy Adriel Kloppenburg

2020 THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound and immediate impact on community sport in New Zealand. In 2020, 76% of clubs reported being negatively impacted, with nearly 70% experiencing financial setbacks, and 40% noting a decline in membership.

While the pandemic temporarily disrupted play and participation, its longer-term effects have been felt behind the scenes – particularly in volunteer engagement, funding certainty, and club operations.

Importantly, while we now understand that the impact of the pandemic had long-lasting and complex effects on the sport sector, the insights presented here are drawn from the 2020 NSCS data collected in August and September – in the midst of the pandemic. The figures reflect clubs' immediate experiences, responses, and perceptions during an ongoing period of disruption, uncertainty, and adaption.



The sector's views on institutional support during this time were mixed. Just 34% of clubs found central government relief measures helpful, while only 21% felt supported by their local council.

In contrast, support from sport sector stakeholders was seen more positively, with 64% of clubs reporting that their National Sport Organisation's (NSO) response was helpful, and 54% saying the same about their Regional Sport Organisation.

Clubs negatively impacted overall **76%**

Clubs financially impacted **69%**

Clubs reporting membership decline **40%**

Clubs who found central government support helpful **34%**

Clubs who found local council support helpful **21%**

Clubs rating National Sport Organisations response as helpful **64%**

Clubs rating Regional Sport Organisations response as helpful **54%**

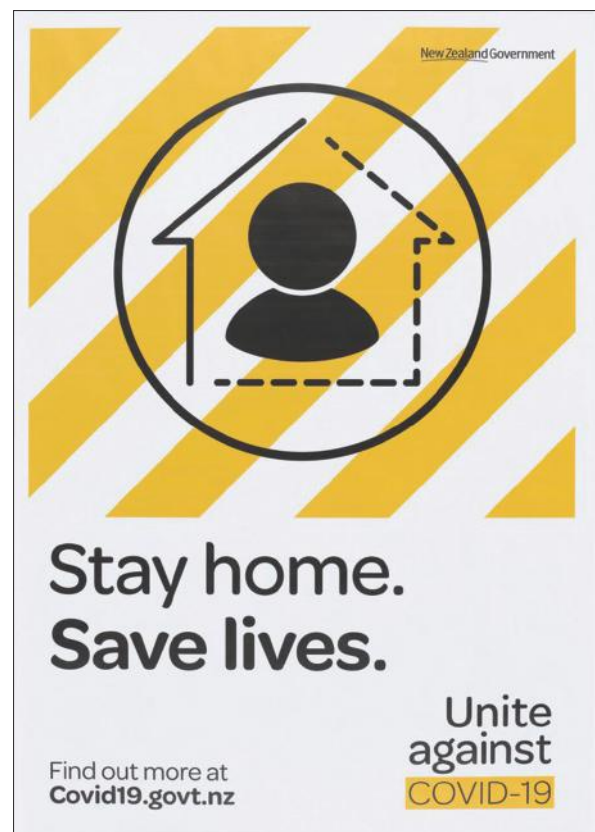
Navigating Disruption

COVID-19 forced clubs to pause, adapt, and reimagine operations.

While participation has since rebounded, the experience underscored the sector's vulnerability – and its resilience.

The 2020 data provides a valuable snapshot of that critical period, capturing how clubs coped in real-time.

Going forward, clearer coordination between national, regional, and local entities is needed to strengthen collective response and future crisis preparedness.





2020 CLUB INNOVATION

Innovation emerged as a defining feature of club adaption during the pandemic. In 2020, 60% of clubs introduced a new initiative, with 45% attributing this innovation directly to the pressures and opportunities created by COVID-19.

Innovations ranged from digital solutions to new partnership models, extending service offerings, and alternative membership formats. Casual memberships and tech-enabled engagement became more common, especially among clubs seeking to retain participants in uncertain times.

In addition to collecting survey data, the 2020 NSCS included interviews with selected clubs to gain deeper insight into how innovation was taking place across the sector. These conversations provided rich, practical examples of how clubs were adapting and responding to emerging challenges in real time.

Interviewed clubs highlighted a strong willingness to share successful innovations – but also noted a lack of formal mechanisms or platforms to do so. Smaller clubs were more likely to share ideas, viewing collective growth as a shared responsibility to strengthen 'the game'.



Examples of Club Innovation

Cross-sector partnerships

These involve working with organisations outside the traditional sports sector to create mutual value:

- Partnering with a local health clinic to offer wellness checks for members
- Working with schools to provide coaching clinics
- Teaming up with a business to sponsor youth uniforms in exchange for branding.

These partnerships can bring in funding, increase reach, and offer added benefits to members.

Product and programme extensions

This means expanding your club's offerings beyond the core sport:

- Adding off-season fitness classes or holiday programmes.
- Running beginner clinics or social leagues to attract new participants.
- Creating leadership or referee development programmes for youth.

These extensions increase engagement, cater to wider demographics, and can provide additional income.



Photos courtesy Masanori Udagawa

Technology integration

Using technology to improve club operations, communication, or experiences. For instance:

- Implementing an app for managing team schedules, registrations, or notifications
- Using video analysis tools for player development
- Offering livestreams of games or online coaching sessions.

Technology can streamline admin, improve performance, and keep members engaged.

Flexible membership options

Offering a range of membership types and payment structures to suit different needs.

- Casual 'pay-to-play' options for those who can't commit to a full season
- Family discounts or multi-sport packages
- Short-term memberships for people trying out the club.

Flexibility helps lower barriers to entry, boost participation, and increase retention.

Building a Culture of Innovation

To strengthen the innovation ecosystem, clubs need more spaces for peer learning and sector-driven knowledge exchange. Enabling clubs to share what works – especially in challenging times – can accelerate transformation across the sport system.



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

2020 CLUB RESILIENCE

The concept of resilience came to the forefront in 2020 as clubs navigated pandemic-related disruptions. Despite the significant challenges, 91% of clubs believed they had the ability to cope with unexpected incidents, and 40% reported becoming more resilient as a result of COVID-19.

Operational flexibility and resource adaptability proved critical. Many clubs reported the capacity to reallocate resources (62%), generate revenue from multiple sources (45%), or relocate to alternative facilities when needed (42%). These are key indicators of a club's ability to respond to future disruptions, whether economic, environmental, or social.

Believe they can cope with unexpected events

91%

Feel more resilient post-COVID

40%

Can reallocate internal resources

62%

Generate revenue from multiple sources

45%

Can access alternative facilities

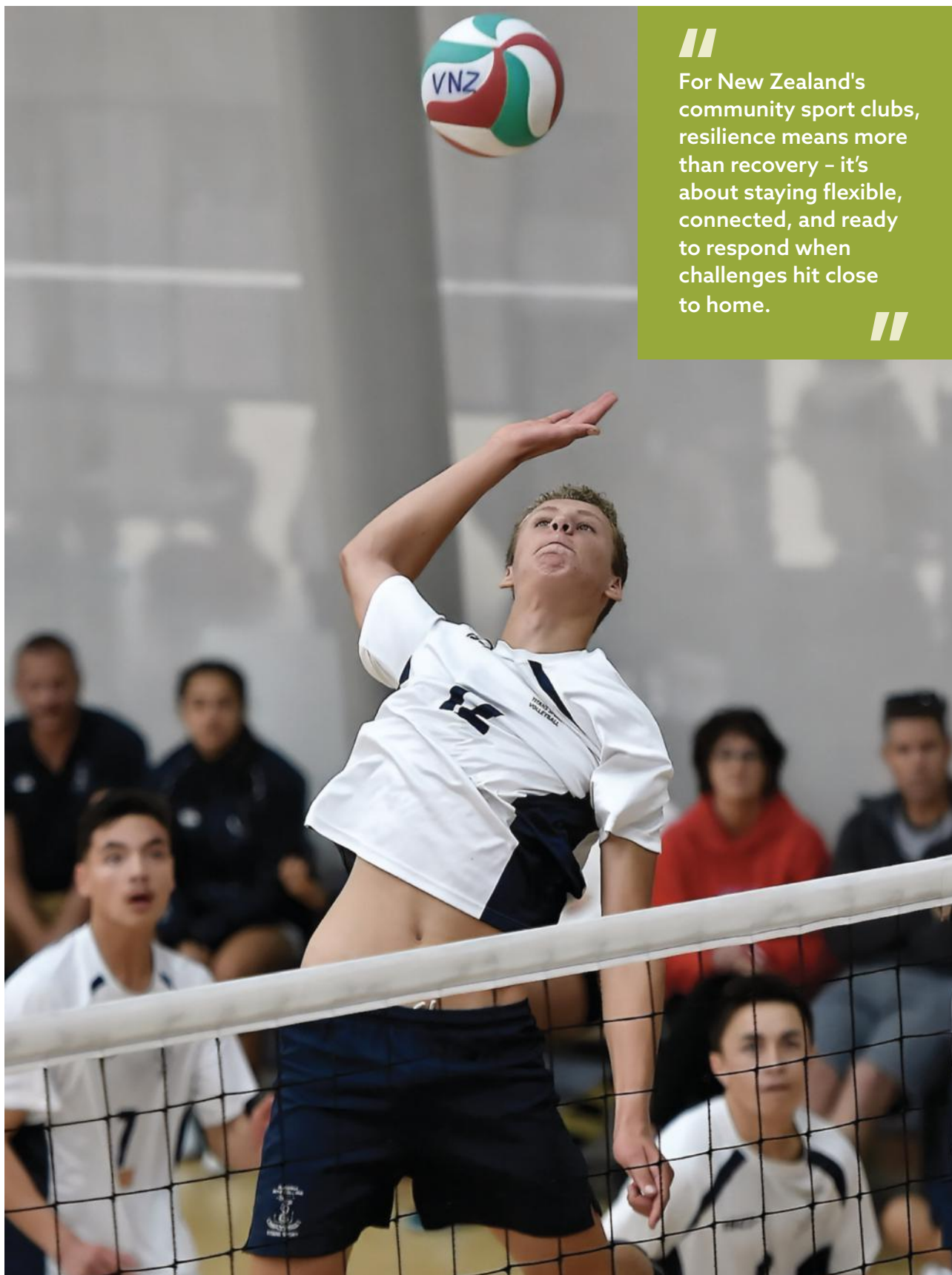
42%



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

Strengthening System Resilience

Resilience is more than recovery – it’s about preparing for future disruption. Clubs that embed flexibility, diversify income, and build collaborative networks will be better positioned to thrive amid uncertainty.



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For New Zealand's community sport clubs, resilience means more than recovery – it's about staying flexible, connected, and ready to respond when challenges hit close to home.

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Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa



Photo courtesy Club Rugby

2021 WOMEN & GIRLS

Following Sport NZ's strategic prioritisation of women and girls in sport, there was an increased interest across the sector in understanding what was working at club level.

The NSCS responded to this interest by collecting both survey data and interview insights to help build a clearer picture of how clubs in New Zealand were engaging women and girls.

While 94% of clubs reported that their club was welcoming to women and girls, deeper insights revealed significant variation in how this was experienced.

Interviewed clubs identified several key enablers of participation: inclusive environments, opportunities to build friendships, visible female role models, and social events tailored to women.

Female-friendly clubs also offered equitable access to changing rooms, playing times, equipment, coaching, and apparel – features shown to influence both perception and participation.



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

Elements of Female-Friendly Environments:

- Equitable access to facilities, training, playing times, equipment, and coaching
- Gender-appropriate apparel and equipment
- Safe club spaces

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It's just the best environment. It's amazing. It's mad, it's chaotic - women are going everywhere. But when you see everyone, they're so buzzed out. It's the best feeling. Women love that group camaraderie, cheering each other on.

Triathlon Tauranga Club

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Photo courtesy Triathlon Tauranga Club



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

Types of Female-Friendly Clubs

Based on club responses and interview insights, New Zealand sport clubs tend to fall into one of three categories when it comes to creating female-friendly environments. These types help highlight where support is most needed and how different clubs are approaching gender inclusion.

Type I: Female-Friendly Clubs (Least Common)

These clubs are proactive, intentional, and strategic in supporting the participation of women and girls. They recognise that creating a female-friendly environment requires more than being welcoming – it involves structural adjustments, leadership commitment, and targeted programming.

These clubs often act as exemplars within their codes or regions and are more likely to collaborate, share ideas, and influence others.

Type II: Aspirational Clubs

These clubs recognise the importance of creating a female-friendly environment but may lack the knowledge, tools, or capacity to implement meaningful changes. Their intentions are strong, and they are often open to learning and improving – but practical barriers limit progress.

These clubs are ideal candidates for targeted training, toolkits, and mentoring.

Type III: Disengaged Clubs (Most Common)

These clubs either believe they are already sufficiently inclusive or do not see women and girls as a specific priority group. Their approach tends to be reactive or passive, with limited strategic thinking around female participation. While not necessarily hostile to inclusion, these clubs may inadvertently sustain environments that are unwelcoming or inequitable.

Engaging these clubs often requires broader culture change and strong sector leadership to shift perceptions and embed inclusive practices over time.

Driving Gender Equity

To grow participation among women and girls, clubs must embed inclusive practices across their environments, programmes, and policies. Education, visibility, and targeted support can help aspirational and disengaged clubs become more responsive to the needs of female participants.



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa



2022 COUNCIL & LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Councils and local authorities play a pivotal role in the sustainability of community sport in New Zealand, particularly through facility provision and local partnerships.

The 2022 NSCS data reveals that half of all clubs regularly use council-owned outdoor grounds or pitches, and one in five use indoor council facilities. These spaces form the foundation of many clubs' weekly operations, training, and competitions.

Formal agreements with councils are also common. Over half (51%) of clubs reported having a lease, contract, or other arrangement in place with their local authority, and 43% pay a ground or facility fee. On average, these fees make up 19% of a club's total expenses, highlighting the material impact that council pricing structures can have on financial sustainability.

Clubs using outdoor council-owned facilities **50%**

Clubs using indoor council-owned facilities **21%**

Clubs that have formal agreements with council **51%**

Clubs that pay fees to council **43%**

Total expenses (on average) that go to facility fees **43%**



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

Most clubs (89%) reported having a positive relationship with their local council or authority. However, this figure drops significantly in Auckland, where only 70% of clubs described their relationships positively.

A similar pattern was evident in perceptions of communication: 80% of clubs nationally said communication was effective, compared to just 59% in Auckland.

Open comments from clubs provided further insight. Many clubs described a transactional or bureaucratic tone to council interactions – often feeling that relationships were about compliance rather than collaboration.

There was also a noted polarity in responses: some clubs described their council relationship as highly productive, while others expressed frustration over slow response times and lack of engagement.

Several clubs highlighted the need for more proactive, sport-friendly approaches that recognise the social value of community clubs beyond simply managing facilities.



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Where relationships with councils are strong, clubs flourish – but too often, engagement feels like a compliance exercise, not a partnership.
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Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

Strengthening Local Partnerships

Councils and local authorities are essential stakeholders in the health of grassroots sport. Where relationships are strong, clubs benefit from access, support, and shared goals. Building more consistent and productive engagement – particularly in urban centres – is critical to ensuring clubs can thrive in an increasingly complex operational environment.



Photo courtesy Club Rugby

2023 SCHOOLS

Schools represent a key connection point for many community sport clubs – particularly when it comes to growing youth participation and creating sustainable player pathways.

In 2023, 65% of clubs reported some form of engagement with one or more local schools.

These relationships took multiple forms: 38% of clubs allowed schools to use their club facilities, 29% provided coaches to schools, and 32% actively recruited members from school-based sport programmes.

The value of school partnerships was widely recognised. Even among clubs not currently engaging with schools, 80% expressed interest in doing so in the future.

Clubs cited a range of benefits, including attracting new and younger members, increasing their sport's visibility, and building early affinity with club environments that can carry through beyond school years.

However, building and sustaining school relationships is not without challenges.

Clubs commonly cited a lack of response or interest in schools as a barrier, alongside limited club capacity to initiate or maintain these relationships.

Time, volunteer resources, and competing priorities were frequently mentioned as constraints.

Clubs that engage
with local schools

65%

Clubs that provide
facilities to schools

38%

Clubs that provide
coaches to schools

29%

Non-engaged clubs see value in school engagement

80%

Clubs that recruit members from schools

32%

Enhancing the School-to-Club Pathway

Partnerships between clubs and schools have significant potential to support lifelong participation, leadership development, and community connection.

More deliberate alignment between sport providers and the education sector – backed by resourcing and shared objectives – can help ensure young people stay engaged in sport beyond their school years and see clubs as welcoming, inclusive spaces to continue their journey.



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

2023 DISABILITY SPORT

With up to one in four New Zealanders identifying as having a disability, ensuring inclusive opportunities in community sport is not just important – it's essential.

The 2023 NSCS included a focused exploration into how clubs are engaging disabled participants and the extent to which disability inclusion is embedded across governance, programming, and club culture.

While some encouraging practices are emerging, the data also highlights significant gaps.

Only 29% of clubs currently ask members whether they have a physical or intellectual impairment.

Moreover, disability sport rarely features as a regular discussion topic at the board level – with 68% of clubs reporting that it is discussed “rarely” or “not at all”.

This suggests that for many clubs, disability inclusion remains peripheral rather than strategic.

Clubs that ask about physical/intellectual impairment

29%

Discuss disability sport “rarely” or “not at all” at board level

68%

55% of clubs have taken inclusion steps

- Specialised/modified equipment
- Accessible facilities
- Tailored events/programmes
- Upskilling coaches

Most clubs reported supporting inclusive participation models. 78% said they provide opportunities for disabled people to engage alongside non-disabled participants. Strategies included providing alternative equipment, forming teams based on ability rather than disability, and using 'buddy' systems.

Meanwhile, 65% of clubs also provide opportunities for disabled participants to engage in tailored environments – often by partnering with other disabled people or offering specialised events or programmes.

Still, only 14% of clubs considered enhancing opportunities for disabled people to be a high or essential priority. This signals a need for stronger leadership, resourcing, and sector-wide guidance to shift disability sport from being an optional extra to a core part of inclusive community.

Embedding Disability Inclusion

To create truly inclusive club environments, disability sport must be treated as a core responsibility of community sport – not a separate or secondary initiative.

Elevating disability inclusion requires greater visibility at board level, targeted support for coaches and volunteers, and programme design that accommodates diverse needs.

Sector-wide frameworks, education resources, and peer learning opportunities can support clubs to shift from well-meaning intentions to practical action – ensuring that all people, regardless of ability, have access to meaningful participation, leadership, and belonging in sport.



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa



We are upskilling members and surrounding coaches of disabled weightlifting, to develop connections and awareness to participate in the sport with disabilities.

*Weightlifting Club,
Manawatū-Whanganui*



Photo courtesy Special Olympics New Zealand



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

2023 - 2024

INTEGRITY

Integrity in community sport is receiving renewed attention, following the establishment of the Sport Integrity Commission in July 2024 and the enactment of the Integrity Sport and Recreation Act 2023.

The data shows that most clubs feel confident in managing integrity issues internally.

In 2023, 76% of clubs said they were well-prepared to address integrity concerns.

This figure increased to 81% in 2024 – a promising trend that suggests growing awareness and readiness. However, confidence does not necessarily translate into structured systems or proactive practice.

Despite these high levels of self-reported preparedness, only 53% of clubs indicated they were actively promoting a culture where integrity is well understood and embedded.

When asked to describe their efforts, most pointed to general communication of expectations, promotion of fair play, or reliance on existing club policies.

Believe they are prepared to manage integrity issues

81%

Say they are taking proactive steps

53%

Believe members know how to raise a concern

46%

Believe members are satisfied with how concerns are handled

35%



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

Common Board-Level Integrity Topics

Integrity discussions at board level vary significantly. The most commonly discussed topics included safeguarding children and preventing bullying, harassment, or abuse.

More complex or less visible issues – such as competition manipulation, discrimination, or doping – were rarely raised. This suggests that club-level integrity discourse remains focused on immediate and interpersonal concerns, rather than broader systemic risks.

Most Discussed:

- Safeguarding
- Bullying / Harassment
- Abuse / Violence

Least Discussed:

- Racism
- Corruption / Fraud
- Doping

Awareness of formal integrity structures remains low. Just 8% of clubs were aware of the newly formed Sport Integrity Commission as of the 2024 survey period – despite its recent launch.

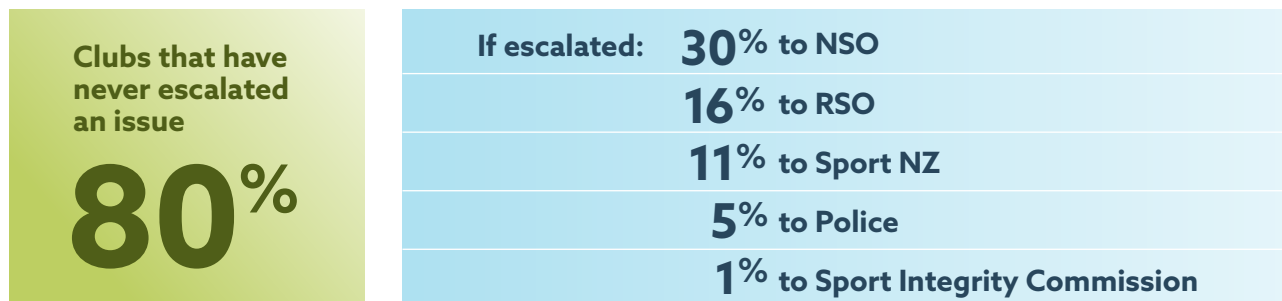
When clubs were asked whether they had ever escalated an integrity issue to another organisation, 80% said they had not.

Among the small group that had, issues were most often raised with National or Regional Sport Organisations. Police or independent bodies such as the Commission were rarely engaged.



Where Clubs Escalate Integrity Issues

When asked under what circumstances they would escalate a concern, clubs commonly mentioned criminal activity, cheating, or abuse involving another club. However, many were unsure when escalation would be appropriate – pointing to a need for clearer processes and shared understanding.



Embedding a Culture of Integrity

While more clubs believe they are doing the right thing, the data highlights gaps between intent and implementation. True integrity requires more than reactive problem-solving – it involves visible leadership, regular dialogue, and deliberate systems to protect participants and uphold fair sport.

As the sector adapts to a new regulatory environment, clubs will benefit from plain-language resources, practical guidance, and shared case examples to help them build stronger, more transparent cultures of integrity. Increasing visibility of the Sport Integrity Commission – and clarifying its role – will also be key to creating trusted pathways for clubs navigating difficult issues.



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

2024 INCORPORATED SOCIETIES ACT

The Incorporated Societies Act 2022 represents a major legislative shift for community sport governance in New Zealand.

With over 91% of clubs operating under the Incorporated Societies framework, the new Act has direct implications for the sector. Although re-registration is not required until 5th April 2026, many clubs are already beginning to navigate the process.

As of the August-September 2024 survey period, just 34% of clubs governed under the Act had completed re-registration.

Of those that had, 78% reported confidence in meeting the new legal and regulatory requirements - indicating that early adopters generally feel well-equipped to comply.

Clubs governed by
the Incorporated
Societies Act

91%

Clubs that had
re-registered by
Aug/Sept 2024

34%

Re-registered clubs
that felt confident
in meeting new
requirements

78%

Remaining clubs
planning to re-register
before April 2026

80%

Among clubs that had not yet re-registered, 80% planned to do so before the 2026 deadline. However, only one-third (33%) stated they knew what steps to take to re-register, highlighting a clear need for improved information and support.

Clubs were also asked whether they felt the legal and compliance environment for community sport was fit for purpose. Just over half (52%) agreed that it was straightforward and manageable – suggesting that while the majority can navigate these requirements, many still find the framework complex and burdensome, particularly in the volunteer-led context of community sport.

Clubs who knew
how to complete
the process

33%

Clubs that agreed
the compliance
framework is fit for
purpose

52%

Ensuring Clubs are Ready

While the transition to the new Act is still underway, the 2024 data reveals an important window for action. Sport-sector stakeholders have an opportunity to provide clearer communication, templates, and tailored advice to ensure clubs can comply confidently ahead of the 2026 deadline. For many, proactive support could be the difference between maintaining legal status and falling behind.



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa



2024 THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE

The growing impact of extreme weather and climate-related disruption is being increasingly felt across New Zealand's community sport sector. In the 2024 NSCS, over half of clubs (55%) reported that their activities had been negatively impacted by the weather over the past year.

For some, this meant cancelling training or postponing competitions.

For others, the damage was more serious – from deteriorated playing surfaces and inaccessible grounds to thousands of dollars in infrastructure losses.

Clubs who discussed
climate & weather-related
issues at board level

34%

Despite these challenges, only 34% of clubs reported that climate or weather-related issues were regularly discussed at the board level.

This suggests a need to bring climate resilience more firmly onto the governance agenda.

Among those taking proactive steps, clubs cited a range of mitigation efforts, including upgrading facilities, adjusting schedules, planting native trees, and developing contingency plans.



Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

However, many clubs expressed a sense of powerlessness, noting that extreme weather is beyond their control and that meaningful adaptations may be limited by resources or infrastructure constraints.

Number of clubs concerned about delivering sport due to climate or weather-related risks

46%



Looking ahead, nearly half of all clubs (46%) said they were concerned about their ability to continue delivering sport at current levels due to future climate or weather-related risks. Yet when asked what support they would need to feel prepared, many clubs were unsure what assistance was available or where to start.

Those that identified support needs pointed to education, funding for recovery or resilience building, and expert assessments such as drainage reviews or risk modelling.

Building Climate Resilience in Community Sport

Extreme weather is no longer an isolated challenge – it is becoming a defining feature of sport planning and delivery. Embedding climate considerations into club planning and governance – supported by practical guidance, targeted funding, and infrastructure assessments – will ensure grassroots sport can continue to thrive in an era of increasing environmental disruption.



Auckland Flood January 2024 totally destroyed 8 tennis courts, 4 squash courts and flooded the club house. \$80,000 damage and loss of facilities for 2-5 months.



Photo courtesy Rangitoto Observer



LOOKING AHEAD: THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY SPORT IN NEW ZEALAND

The future of sport in New Zealand will be shaped by how well we support, resource, and listen to our communities.

Community sport clubs – powered by volunteers and grounded in local identity – remain essential to our national sport system. They are where participation begins, where lifelong involvement is nurtured, and where social connection thrives.

As participation patterns shift and expectations grow, clubs will need ongoing support to stay connected, inclusive and sustainable.

The importance of local partnerships, equitable access, diverse leadership, and innovative delivery models will only increase. Volunteer capacity, climate resilience, financial stability and inclusive governance remain key pressure points.

Addressing these will require coordinated approaches across the sport ecosystem – drawing on the strength of grassroots insight, national coordination, and shared responsibility.

The National Sport Club Survey will continue to play a vital role in this journey. Conducted annually, the NSCS will keep gathering evidence from thousands of clubs each year to track how the sector is changing, where support is needed, and what's working on the ground. This commitment to regular, robust data collection ensures that sport sector leaders, funders, policymakers, and clubs themselves can make informed, future-focused decisions.

By listening to the voices of clubs, responding to lived realities, and using data to guide action, the NSCS helps ensure that community sport in New Zealand remains strong, inclusive, and ready for the future.



STUDY AT AUT

AUT's Sport Performance Research Institute New Zealand (AUT SPRINZ) is a nationally and internationally recognised hub for sport and health research. AUT SPRINZ brings together researchers, practitioners, and industry partners to drive innovation in sport performance, physical activity, rehabilitation, and leadership. AUT SPRINZ provides students with the opportunity to work alongside experts in real-world settings – from high-performance environments to community sport initiatives – ensuring your learning is grounded in practice.

Whether you're aiming to enhance athlete outcomes, explore sport science, or lead system-level change, AUT SPRINZ offers academic rigour and industry access to help you make meaningful impact

Master of Sport, Exercise and Health (MSPExHe)

The 180-point Master's is tailored for working professionals and offers both full-time (1.5 years) and part-time paths with flexible delivery – online and on-campus in Auckland.

You can specialise in areas like Sport Leadership and Management, Coach and Athlete Development, Sport Data Analytics, Physical Activity and Nutrition, Outdoor Learning, or Health and Physical Education. Core to the degree is either a 60-point dissertation or a more extensive 90-point thesis. This programme is ideal for those aiming to step into higher-level roles within sports, health, and education sectors.

Master of Business – Sport Leadership and Management (MBus)

This 180-point research Master's within the AUT Business School provides advanced study specifically in sport leadership and management.

Delivered on-campus in Auckland, or online, it equips you with business fundamentals—marketing, event management, finance—through sport-focused courses such as "Advanced Sport Leadership & Management", "Sport Development" "Sport Marketing" and "Sport Event Management".

Combined with robust research methods training, and the option of either a 60-point dissertation or a 120-point thesis, it positions you for leadership roles in governance, sponsorship, major events, and commercial sport sectors.





NEW ZEALAND AMATEUR SPORT ASSOCIATION

The New Zealand Amateur Sport Association (NZASA) is a national body established to advocate for and support the interests of amateur sport across New Zealand.

Founded in 2017, the Association works to preserve, promote, and protect the role of amateur sport in communities by representing the collective voice of clubs, volunteers, and participants at local and national levels.

Through policy advocacy, research, education, and legal support, NZASA plays a key role in highlighting the social, cultural, and health benefits of community-based sport.

Its efforts aim to ensure that the values of amateur sport—such as participation, fairness, and inclusion—remain central to New Zealand’s sporting landscape.

Why Join the NZASA?

Sport organisations across the country are increasingly choosing to join the NZASA to strengthen their advocacy voice and gain access to tailored support and resources.

Membership enables clubs and regional associations to stay informed on legislative changes, governance responsibilities, and sector trends that directly impact amateur sport.

It also offers opportunities to contribute to national research, participate in policy consultations, and build stronger networks across codes.

By coming together under the NZASA umbrella, member organisations are better equipped to respond to shared challenges, protect their not-for-profit status, and reinforce the community-first ethos at the heart of amateur sport in New Zealand.

Find out more at asa.org.nz



Bottom two photos courtesy Masanori Udagawa





Photo courtesy Masanori Udagawa

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**NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL
SPORT CLUB SURVEY**





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