



2023 USA Pickleball Fact Sheet

Pickleball is a court sport played on a badminton-sized court with the net set to a height of 34 inches at the center. It is played with a perforated plastic ball and composite or wooden paddles about twice the size of ping-pong paddles. It can be played indoors or outdoors and is easy for beginners to learn, but can develop into a fast-paced, competitive game for experienced players. In addition, the game has developed a passionate following due to its friendly, social nature, and its multi-generational appeal.

Pickleball can be played as singles or doubles. New players can learn the basic rules quickly in a single session. No special apparel is needed – just something comfortable and appropriate for a court sport. Equipment is inexpensive and easily portable. The game can be played by all ages and is particularly popular in school physical education programs and in adult living communities.

The sport is governed by USA Pickleball (USAPickleball.org), which maintains the rules, promotes the sport, sanctions tournaments, and provides player ratings. For more information, please visit: usapickleball.org.

History

2023 marks the 58th anniversary of pickleball, as it was invented in 1965 on Bainbridge Island, a short ferry ride from Seattle, by three enterprising dads – Joel Pritchard, Bill Bell, and Barney McCallum. Their children were bored with their usual summertime activities. It evolved from the original handmade equipment and simple rules into a popular sport throughout North America and is now taking off in other parts of the world.

The origin of the game's name is very interesting, especially since no pickles are used. Accounts of how the name originated differ. According to Joel Pritchard's wife (Joan), she started calling the game pickleball because "the combination of different sports reminded me of the pickle boat in crew where oarsmen were chosen from the leftovers of other boats." However, according to Barney McCallum, the game was officially named after the Pritchards' dog Pickles who would chase the ball and run off with it. According to McCallum, "the Pritchards had a dog named Pickles, and you're having fun at a party, right? So anyways, what the hell, let's just call it pickleball."

Others claim both accounts may be true. In the early years, no official name was assigned to the game. However, a year or two after the game was invented, the Pritchards' purchased a cocker spaniel and named it Pickles. As the game progressed, an official name was needed and "pickleball" was it.

The Court

A pickleball court is 20' x 44' for both singles and doubles. The net is hung at 36" at the ends and hangs 34" in the middle. A non-volley zone extends 7' back from the net on each side, commonly called "the kitchen." In 2017, USA Pickleball and the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA) co-produced and released an official pickleball courts construction and maintenance manual for the industry. In 2020, USA Pickleball and ASBA produced an updated version of the court construction manual. Copies of this manual can be purchased at:

<https://www.sportsbuilders.org/publications/>

The Equipment

Competitive paddles used in pickleball are constructed from a high-tech composite. An official pickleball is made of plastic and is between .78 to .935 ounces and 2.874 to 2.972 inches in diameter. There are no color restrictions other than the ball must be a single, consistent color. USA Pickleball has tested and approved several outdoor and indoor balls for official tournament play. [Click here](#) to review the complete list of all tested/approved paddles and balls approved for sanctioned tournament play.

Places2Play

Every U.S. state and all Canadian provinces now have pickleball venues. Senior residence communities, YMCAs, local community recreation centers, schools and parks are just some of the places likely to have pickleball courts. USA Pickleball compiles the most up-to-date and comprehensive listing of places to play on a new dedicated website: places2play.org. The known places to play totaled 10,724 at the end of 2022, an increase of 1,557 locations or approximately 130 new locations per month.

Tournaments

USA Pickleball supports and sanctions tournaments throughout the United States. See the [Upcoming Events List](#) for a current list of upcoming USA Pickleball sanctioned tournaments. In 2009, USA Pickleball held the first Nationals Pickleball Tournament in Buckeye, Arizona. Over 400 players participated in divisions for all ages. In 2022, the Margaritaville USA Pickleball National Championships were held at the world-renowned Indian Wells Tennis Garden, just outside of Palm Springs, CA. The event drew nearly **2,300** registered players with the professional players competing for \$150,000 in prize money. [Click here](#) for detailed information regarding this event. The 2022 event also included over 100 hours of broadcast on three courts and a two-hour program was aired to a nation-wide audience on ESPNU.

Estimated Pickleball Players Within the United States

Pickleball grew in 2021 to 4.8 million players in the US, according to the 2022 Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) Single Sport Report on Pickleball. SFIA is the premier trade association for top brands, manufacturers, retailers and marketers in the American sporting goods and fitness industry.

This 14.8% growth from 2020 to 2021 follows on the heels of 21.3% growth the previous year and contributes to a 11.5% average annual growth rate over the past 5 years.

- Of the 4.8 million Total participants, 3.5 million were "Casual" players who play 1-7 times a year
- 1.4 million were "Core" players who play 8 or more times a year

- While the number of Core participants did not grow from 2020 to 2021, Casual players grew by 22%
- 60% of total participants are men and 40% are women; with a slightly faster rate of growth among women
- The average age for all players continues to drop, to 38.1 years old in 2021, a decrease of 2.9 years from 2020
- The average age of Core players is 47.9 and Casual players 34.3 years old
- 52% of Core players are 55 or older while 79% of Casual players are 54 or younger
- Growth of total participants from 2020 to 2021 was the fastest among players under 24 years of age (21%)
- Annual growth among players 55 and older was a more modest 10%
- The percentages by age of Total, Core, and Casual participants in 2021 are:

AGES	TOTAL	CORE	CASUAL
6-17	21.2%	14.2%	23.9%
18-34	28.8%	16.8%	33.5%
35-54	20.4%	17.0%	21.8%
55-64	12.0%	19.2%	9.2%
65+	17.6%	32.7%	11.6%

- The SFIA US regions with the largest number of Total participants were:
 - South Atlantic (FL, GA, SC, NC, VA, WV, DC) = 1,087,000
 - East North Central (WI, MI, IL, OH, IN) = 801,000
 - Pacific (CA, OR, WA) = 780,000
 - Mid-Atlantic (NJ, NY, PA, WV) = 675,000
 - These four regions account for 69 % of players
- The region with the highest rate of growth is the West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD) at 30% year-over-year (245,000 to 318,000)
- Growth is lagging in the East South Central region (AL, KY, MS, TN) with the smallest number of players (151,000) the lowest percent of total population participating (0.9%) and a modest but above average annual growth rate (14%)
- 61% of players live east of the Mississippi River
- The 4.8 million Total pickleball participants represent 1.6% of the US population of 305M people ages 6+: demonstrating the tremendous potential for further growth of the sport.

Any citation of this data should reference the SFIA report as its source.

USA Pickleball usapickleball.org

USA Pickleball was formed in 2005 to promote the sport. It maintains the official rules, sanctions tournaments, provides player ratings and produces the annual USA Pickleball National Championships Tournament. It is run by a CEO, executive staff and a volunteer board of directors supported by an all-volunteer Ambassador corp and thousands of dues-paying members.

Field Operation Structure

USA Pickleball field operations is divided into four sectors across the country. Each of these sectors support 3 unique regions including but not limited to ambassador support, regional tournament operation, recreational expansion and facility development.

Ambassador Program

USA Pickleball currently has a network of nearly 2,000 volunteer ambassadors who have pledged to promote both the sport of pickleball and USA Pickleball in their local area. They serve as local volunteer representatives for USA Pickleball for all activities related to pickleball within the area they represent. Ambassadors support and abide by all official rules, assist with local clinics and tournaments and look for opportunities to add/grow the game in their community. The USA Pickleball Ambassador Search feature can be found on the USA Pickleball website. [Click here.](#)

Recreational Programs

USA Pickleball Recreational Programs and Services Department has developed free training and downloadable resources for youth program providers nationwide to help with programs conducted in schools, parks, youth centers and pickleball facilities. A Campus Pickleball Guide has been created to help grow pickleball for middle school, high school, and college students. Additionally, a Fun Play Formats and Events resource has been developed to support programs for all ages offered in parks, HOA's, retirement communities, and pickleball facilities.

Youth Program Provider (YPP)

USA Pickleball offers a digital Youth Program Provider (YPP) Membership to support physical education teachers, youth program leaders, coaches and recreation professionals with training and program resources to introduce pickleball to youth. YPP members receive access to the Youth Pickleball Playbook, activity cards, twenty activity plans (ten for ages 8-12 & ten for ages 13-18), access to the Youth Pickleball Video Series, access to discounted, multiplayer equipment packs and grants.

Official Club Memberships

USA Pickleball now offers a club membership program for pickleball clubs, groups, and facilities. Benefits include discounts and access to USA pickleball approved software providers that offer solutions for managing fees, ladder/league play, calculated playing levels, socials, events, etc. Additionally, official members receive a USA Pickleball Official Club Banner for the organization (\$90.00 value) and a mailed subscription to Pickleball Magazine. Lastly, the Official Club Plus Membership includes access to affordable liability coverage that includes accident medical insurance and certificates of insurance.

Youth & Collegiate Grant Program

Youth Program Providers or Official College/University Club members can apply for a USA Pickleball Youth & Collegiate grant for a maximum of \$350 per location for the purchase of eligible pickleball equipment. The grants funding will be equally targeted to every defined USA Pickleball region and, when feasible, awarded to different communities within the region. For more information, [click here.](#)

Community Grant Program

A USA Pickleball Community Grant will provide current USA Pickleball members a maximum of \$250 reimbursement for the purchase of qualified pickleball equipment dedicated to a specific location. Special considerations will be given to locations with written “new player” training programs, areas with few pickleball locations in the vicinity, and individuals and groups that USA Pickleball deems most in need of financial assistance. For more information, please [click here](#).

Officiating Program

As the governing body, USA Pickleball provides the sport's training and development program for pickleball tournament referees and officials. Referees reside in each USA Pickleball Region and participate as officials in the capacities as Head Referees, Referee Coordinators, Match Referees and Line Judges. New referees participate in a 'tiered' training program that affords participants the opportunity to progress through the various stages of referees at their own pace. The highest level of referees, those who have achieved the title of Certified Referee after a thorough evaluation process, are considered the top professionals in the sport.

USA Pickleball Social Media

USA Pickleball social media followers support the sport's rapid growth. As of January 2023, the total audience on Facebook numbered over 65,000. Instagram was added as a new channel in 2019 and ended that year with 12,383 followers. At the end of 2022, Instagram had 31,900 Followers. In November of 2020, USA Pickleball added an official Twitter account that currently has over 4,600 followers. Overall, USA Pickleball social channels saw 52% year over year growth from 2021 to 2022.

Facebook - [USA Pickleball](#) @usapickleballassociation

Instagram - [USA Pickleball](#)@usapickleball

YouTube - [USA Pickleball](#) @usapickleball

LinkedIn - [USA Pickleball](#) @usapickleball

Twitter - [USA Pickleball](#) @usapickleball

TikTok- [USA Pickleball](#) @usapickleball

2022 USA Pickleball Facts and Highlights (as of 1.17.23)

- **Places to Play:** USA Pickleball Places2Play Database ([places2play.org](#)) increased to **10,724** known locations. Nearly 1,557 new locations were added to the database (130 new locations per month).
- **Total Known Courts: 44,094** ([places2play.org](#)).
- **Membership: 68,697** (an increase of 30% over 2022). This rapid growth is contributed to Pickleball being embraced across the nation at the recreational and competitive levels for the professional, amateur, and casual players. USA Pickleball's governance, coupled with the commitment to provide and support forward facing new programs, initiatives, membership offerings, sanctioned tournament opportunities and strategic partnerships drove this success.
- **USA Pickleball Ambassadors: 1,973**
- **Sanctioning:** USA Pickleball sanctioned **237** tournaments including the National Indoor Championships, the National Championships and the first ever Diamond Amateur Championship

- **Grants:** USA Pickleball awarded **72** Community Grants and **66** Youth/Collegiate Grants, with a total allocation of **\$41,100**.
- **2022 National Championships:** The 2022 Margaritaville USA Pickleball National Championships were held at the world-renowned Indian Wells Tennis Garden, just outside of Palm Springs, CA. The event drew nearly **2,300** registered players with the professional players competing for \$150,000 in prize money.
- **2022 Diamond Amateur National Championship:** The inaugural USA Pickleball Diamond Amateur Championship was held at the world-class Pictona pickleball complex just outside of Daytona Beach, FL. The first-ever championship saw **1,193** registrants from all over the country competing for their golden ticket to the 2023 USA Pickleball National Championships at Indian Wells Tennis Garden. The 2023 Diamond Amateur Championship will be held again at Pictona during the first week of December.
- **Certified Referees:** USA Pickleball certified **45** new referees in 2022. By year's end, USA Pickleball had **212** Certified Referees.
- **Referee Evaluations:** USA Pickleball referee evaluators conducted a total of 65 referee evaluations.
- **Level I & II Referees:** By year's end in 2022, USA Pickleball had 478 Level 1 and Level II referees.
- **National Championship Matches:** All matches in the 2022 Margaritaville USA Pickleball National Championships were refereed by USA Pickleball Certified Referees.
- **Professional Pickleball Registry:** USA Pickleball's teaching and training partner, Professional Pickleball Registry (PPR) at present has **4,300** PPR members. In 2022, PPR conducted 202 workshops across the U.S. (record) with 1,935 workshop participants. <https://usapickleball.org/get-involved/usa-pickleball-ppr-agreement/>
- **Pickleball Magazine:** USA Pickleball's publishing partner, Dollard Publishing, produced another **7** issues of Pickleball Magazine. <https://usapickleball.org/pickleballmagazine/>
- **Referee Training Page:** To help educate and inform referees and the public on referee matters, USA Pickleball restructured and updated the following comprehensive webpage: <https://usapickleball.org/referee-training-tools/>
- **USA Pickleball Rulebook:** The USA Pickleball rules committee and board updated and approved the 2023 Official Rulebook.
- **Officiating Handbook and Casebook:** The USA Pickleball Officiating Handbook and Casebook were updated in 2023.
- **Ambassador Handbook:** The 2022 USA Pickleball Ambassador Handbook was updated by USAP field operation staff and ambassador committee members. The book was distributed electronically to all Ambassadors and is available for review in the Ambassador Academy.

- **Paddles & Balls:** USA Pickleball Equipment & Evaluation Committee (EEC) and its independent lab tested and approved **525** new paddles and **34** new balls in 2022.
- **Facilities Development:** USA Pickleball is directly involved in the development pipeline of over **\$100M** in new facilities, including over 25 regional and sector level venues.
- **Special Olympics North America (SONA) Partnership:** To encourage the growth of pickleball within the Special Olympics, USA Pickleball will provide resources and assistance in support of this goal and SONA's mission to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition.
- **Media Relations Highlights:** In 2022, "pickleball" was one of the hottest trends in the U.S. as it continues to be the fastest growing sport in the nation. Hundreds of media outlets covered every aspect of the growth of the sport including pickleball segments featured on NBC's The Today Show, CNBC, Live with Kelly and Ryan, and stories published within top-rated publications and news sources including the New York Times, Bloomberg, ESPN, Vanity Fair, Forbes, Allure Magazine, The Boston Globe, The Economist, USA Today, SportsBusiness Journal, Sports Illustrated, and Axios, among others.

For photo requests and media inquiries:

Email: [Media Relations](#)
USA Pickleball
P.O. Box 7354
Surprise, AZ 85374