



GROUNDS
MANAGEMENT
ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL WORKFORCE SURVEY

2022



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INTRODUCTION

The Grounds Management Association conducted an industry-wide research project in 2018/2019 which resulted in the report, Sports Vital Profession. An essential part of the research was a survey of professional and volunteer grounds managers which provided an important baseline to measure the effectiveness of existing and future activity. It was agreed by the GMA, Sport England, Football Foundation and the National Governing Bodies of sport that annual 'temperature checks' should be taken post-Covid and beyond, to build on the work of the industry research and to provide data and feedback for the continuing development of the Pitch Advisory Service¹.

The GMA 2022 Annual Survey email invitations began circulation on 7th February 2022 and the survey closed on 11th March 2022. The survey request was sent to GMA members, previous survey respondents who agreed to be contacted again and through the National Governing Bodies of sport.

- 293 responses were submitted by professional grounds managers and 445 responses were submitted by volunteer grounds managers.
- 46 professionals and 142 volunteers provided additional comments.

The survey was followed up with a small number of interviews and The survey was followed up with a small number of interviews and meetings with grounds managers. The 2019 Industry Research found that around a third of grounds managers were greenkeepers which should be borne in mind when reviewing the survey outcomes.

¹ The Pitch Advisory Service is a programme managed by the GMA and funded by the Football Foundation, Rugby Football Union, England & Wales Cricket Board and the Rugby Football League.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Priority areas to address

1. Recruitment crisis. This is a significant issue for professionals and volunteers. Professional grounds managers have expressed concern at the lack of young people available for recruitment and there would seem to be insufficient training places available.

Once the figures are adjusted for age variations the survey responses indicate approximately 3,220 professional grounds managers will be retiring over the next 3 years

Volunteers are dedicating a lot of hours to grounds care. Over 40% of volunteers give over 11 hours per week. Recruiting more volunteers could help reduce the number of hours required and spread the workload. Around 17% of volunteers are planning to stop volunteering in the next 3 years and there is some concern about who will replace them.

It is recommended that baseline data is established which includes the quantity and demographics of new people entering relevant training. This data will be required to measure future success in increasing the awareness of the role as a career and in the take-up of courses..

2. Salaries are an issue for many professional grounds managers with many feeling that existing salary levels do not fully recognise the full responsibilities and requirements of the role. Good salaries are also a key requirement for young people and the grounds sector is now having to compete for young people against better paid sectors.

3. Work/Life balance is an area of concern for many professionals who are struggling to achieve it in their workplace. Over two thirds of grounds managers work overtime for which many feel they are not fairly rewarded. Unsociable and long hours may be negatively impacting on the mental health and well-being of professional grounds managers. Developing guidance on managing work patterns and offering advice on how to manage mental health in the workplace should be prioritised.
4. Budgets. Over a third of volunteers answered that they are not provided with enough funding by their club to carry out the work required. Many volunteers and professionals reported that their budgets had reduced or stayed the same. With the highest inflation rate in 30 years there is a need to understand more about how budgets will be managed. Are grounds managers going to be able to do more with less or will areas of work be sacrificed?

Continuing areas of work

1. Diversity. Much work remains to be done to ensure that the grounds management sector reflects the society within which it operates.
2. Lack of equipment. This was a common issue for volunteers. NGB's have introduced and delivered equipment programmes for a number of years and these need to be continued where funds allow, particularly for football and rugby.
3. Awareness of PGF. Awareness of PAS and PGF is good considering they are relatively new programmes/schemes however some of the respondents who entered that they has used the PGF were referring to Pitch Power. A few programmes, products and service have been introduced over a fairly short time period, therefore the differences between them and how they all work together may not yet be clear to grounds managers. When GMF/PGF is launched formally the more practical uses for the PGF can be promoted. Identifying and promoting some case studies may be useful.

Use strengths to advantage

1. Appeal to older people. Grounds management is something that seems to appeal to older volunteers. While it is physical work most elements are not too taxing. Where there is a group of volunteers, the mix of physical activity, working with nature and social interaction should provide a very positive volunteering experience and a boost to mental health and well-being. As sport in general struggles to attract older volunteers this is an area where grounds management can contribute significantly to volunteer strategy goals.
2. Passion for job. The vast majority of grounds managers enjoy their role and are passionate about what they do. More research should be considered to look at how opportunities could be provided for retiring professionals to stay involved with the work they enjoy so much. In particular to look at how their skills, knowledge and many years of experience can be used to help volunteers.

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

**The following pages summarise the findings of the
2022 Grounds Management Association
Annual Workforce Survey.**

A photograph of two young men playing football. The man in the foreground is wearing a maroon jersey and is holding a white football with both hands, looking intently at it. The man behind him is wearing a dark green jersey and has his arms around the first man's shoulders. The background is a blurred football field with other players and spectators. A large red circle is visible in the top right corner of the page.

PROFESSIONALS' DEMOGRAPHICS

In terms of diversity the picture for professionals is very similar to volunteers although it has improved very slightly since 2019. However there is still significant under-representation of women and girls and from more diverse ethnicities.

More than a third of professionals are over 55 years old which raises serious concerns about the number of grounds managers that will be retiring over the next 10 years. This may be helped to a small extent in the short-term by the increasing age of retirement. In the general UK population the age of retirement has been increasing over the last 20+ years. The following statement is taken from the government report: Economic labour market status of individuals aged 50 and over, trends over time: September 2020. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/economic-labour-market-status-of-individuals-aged-50-and-over-trends-over-time-september-2020>

"the average age of labour market exit has increased over the past 2 decades. In 2000 the average age of exit for men was 63.3 years old, increasing to 65.2 years old in 2020, an increase of 1.9 years. Over the same time period, in 2000 the average age

of exit for women was 61.2 years old, increasing to 64.3 years old in 2020, an increase of 3.1 years"

The report further outlines that in the working age group 50 to 64, the employment rate increased from 55.8% in 1984 to 72% in 2020. For those aged 65 and over, the employment rate increased from 4.9% in 1984 to 10.4% in 2020.

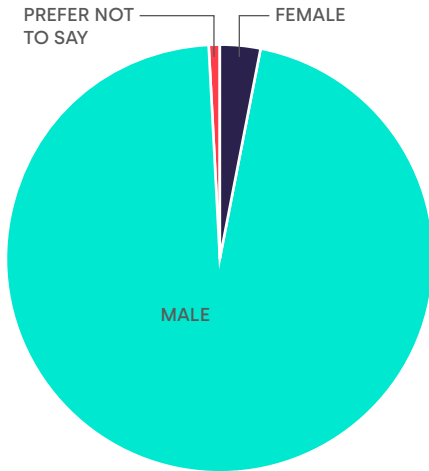
The trend therefore in general is for people to stay employed for longer. However there is still an urgent need to have trained and skilled younger people ready to take the places of retiring grounds managers.

Only 3% of professionals are in the 16 to 24 years age group. The very small number of young people joining the profession would not seem to be sufficient to replace those retiring. In interviews with professional grounds managers the shortage of young people applying to join the sector was a very major concern and most are struggling to attract new staff.

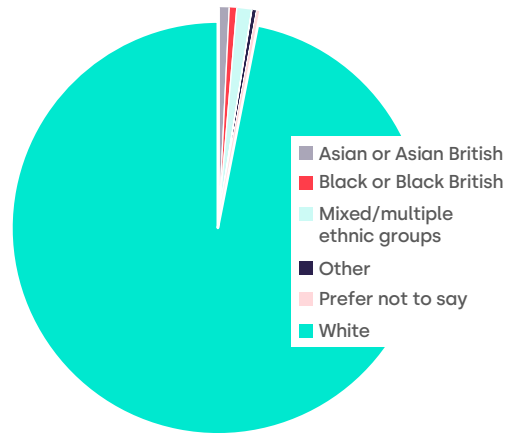
This issue is covered in more detail later in this report.

PROFESSIONALS – DEMOGRAPHICS DASHBOARD

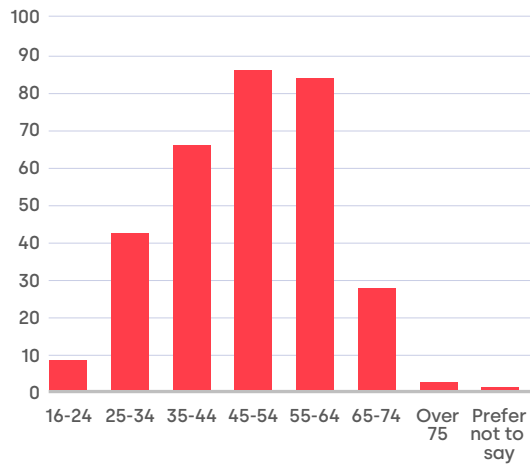
Gender



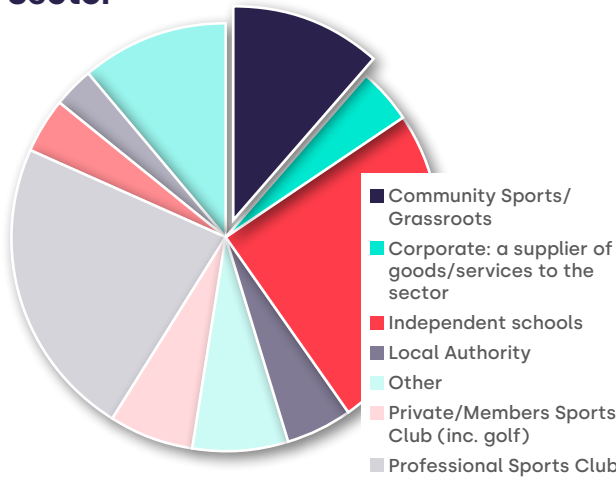
Ethnicity



Age



Sector



96% of professionals are male

3% of professionals are female

3% of professionals are non-white

36% of professionals are over 55 years old

only **3%** of professionals are 16 to 24 years old

25% of respondents are from independent schools and 23% from professional sports clubs

PROFESSIONALS' RECRUITMENT AND RETIREMENT

The most popular reason for joining the profession is an interest in sport. As millions of people across the country have an interest in grass surface sports this suggests there should be a large pool of sports fans to recruit from. Similarly the second most popular response was an interest in horticulture which again includes millions of people interested in gardens and the natural environment.

Only a small percentage became involved in the profession because of school or careers guidance.

The most appealing aspect of the profession for grounds managers is working outdoors with 86% of respondents selecting it. The practical aspects of the work, working in teams and the variety of tasks were all also important.

Only 6% of grounds managers selected Pay and Benefits as appealing. The comments section of the survey and the interviews that have been conducted also highlight that pay and benefits are considered to be a real weakness of the sector. Pay and Benefits will be discussed further in this report.

Satisfaction with the overall job remains very high at 86%. The same levels of enjoyment and passion for the work that were identified in Sports Vital Profession remain. Only 4% of grounds managers were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. According to research by the Resolution Foundation on UK work experiences:

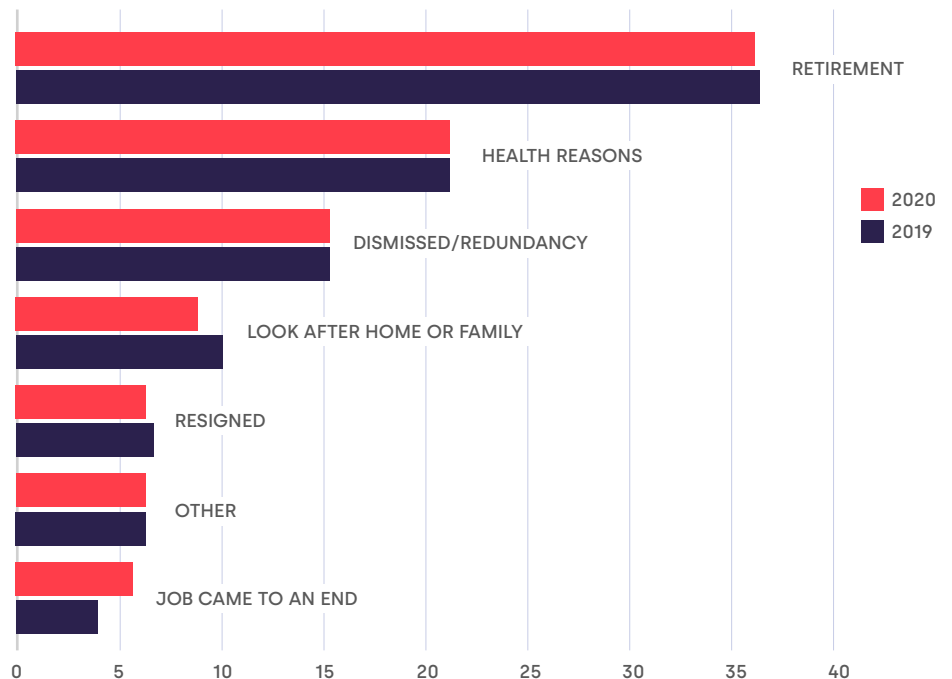
"employees' overall job satisfaction levels remained resilient at around 60 per cent in the 1990s and 2000s, before falling to 52 per cent immediately following the financial crisis and recovering slightly to 56 per cent by 2017-2019".

Clearly people working in grounds management are enjoying

their role more than the average UK employee. Overall 13% of grounds managers are planning to retire over the next 3 years. In rugby league and rugby union 13% are planning to retire. For cricket the figure is 12% and for football 8%.

The following chart is from the government report: Economic labour market status of individuals aged 50 and over, trends over time: September 2020 which provides the reasons that were given for leaving work by people who are not in work and aged 50 to 64.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/economic-labour-market-status-of-individuals-aged-50-and-over-trends-over-time-september-2020>



One major factor for leaving work once over 50 years is health concerns. One major factor for leaving work once over 50 years is health concerns. In grounds management the more physical nature of the work may be an issue for some, however there may be ways in which older grounds managers can be supported to continue to work in the sector, or alternatively to stay involved in grounds management by sharing their skills and experience with others, particularly volunteers. Opportunities to encourage grounds managers who are planning to leave the profession to remain involved in ways that are more suitable for them should be considered.

The main concerns expressed by professional grounds managers were the limited number of young people available to take the place of those retiring, lack of awareness of the profession and the restricted number of workers available since the UK left the EU, which has increased competition for workers.

The GMA's 2019 report, Sports Vital Profession, highlighted that approximately 25,000 people are employed in grounds management. Just over a third are estimated to be greenkeepers.

As discussed around 13% of professionals stated they plan to retire in the next 3 years.

Once the figures are adjusted for age variations, the survey responses indicate approximately 3,220 grounds managers plan to retire over the next 3 years with new, trained grounds managers required to take their place. This does not factor in any additional demand from the growth of grounds teams.

Approximately 2,146 of the retirees will be grounds managers and 1,074 will be green keepers. We can reasonably assume

therefore that over the next 3 years approximately 1,073 more grounds managers will be required per year requiring approximately 715 new sports turf grounds managers and 358 greenkeepers to be trained annually.

The average take-up of Apprenticeships for grounds care and golf combined was around 419 people per year from 2017/18 to 2020/21.

- The number taking up a Level 2 Greenkeeping Apprenticeship from years 2017/18 to 2020/21 was on average 277 apprentices peaking at 317 per year.
- The number taking up an Advanced Level Greenkeeping Apprenticeship was 70 however only one year's numbers, 2020/21 are available.
- The number taking up a Level 2 Sports Turf Apprenticeship from years 2017/2018 to 2020/21 was on average 72 apprentices peaking at 87 per year.

The combined total of students commencing Level 2 and Level 3 greenkeeping apprenticeships averaged around 347 annually, however the average for sports turf is just 72 per year. As the majority of students have completed a greenkeeping course rather than sports turf, it is reasonable to assume for many their ambition is to work in the greenkeeping sector rather than sports turf. Therefore the situation may be considerably more serious for pitch sports.

It is not clear at the moment how many students fail to complete grounds management apprenticeships, however a government reports suggests it may be as high as around a third of students in general.

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships/2020-21>

For Further and Higher Education it is difficult to establish the full number of students studying sports turf. Most courses are currently listed under the code for Agriculture and Horticulture. Sports turf management will generally be included under Horticulture. Although there are some courses that specifically mention greenkeeping or sports turf, many courses just include optional modules.

Table 1 shows the number of students that were enrolled on courses listed under horticulture. It is important to note the majority of the students will not be studying sports turf or greenkeeping.

While the HECoS² Horticulture code descriptor is the most relevant to sports turf/greenkeeping it does not incorporate all relevant courses. For example, the most relevant HE courses available, i.e. Golf Course Management (HNC, HND) available at SRUC and BSc (Hons) Sportsturf Science and Management at Myerscough College, are classified under the Sports Management (100097) code. More detailed analysis of HE courses will likely reveal other relevant courses falling outside of Horticulture.

Most of the HE students attending a Horticultural course will not be studying sports turf however we have not been able to establish exact numbers within the timescales. It has also not been possible to establish Further Education numbers. It is clear however that the number of students qualifying with appropriate sports turf knowledge will be low.

TABLE 1 NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED ON HORTICULTURE COURSES IN 2019/20 & 2020/21

Course subject	Year	No. of students	No. of HE qualifiers
Horticulture	2019/20	340	135
	2020/21	405	170

With low numbers on apprenticeship schemes and on other courses, it is anticipated that there will be a significant shortfall in the number of qualified people required to replace those planning to retire (1,073 per annum), which may be particularly severe for pitch sports.

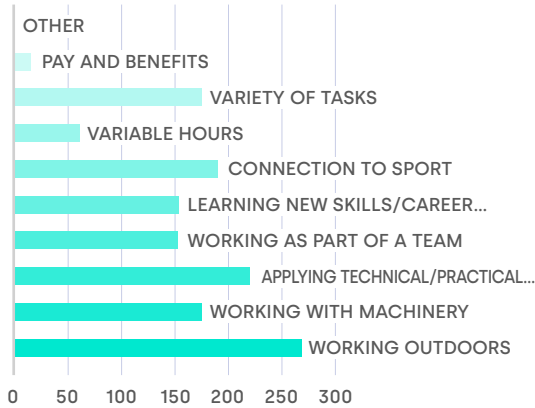
During interviews with Elite grounds managers, and from the comments submitted during the survey, it is clear that a significant problem with recruitment is already being experienced. Prestige venues such as Wembley and Wimbledon are already struggling to recruit therefore this area needs to be prioritised.

It is recommended that baseline data is established which includes the quantity and demographics of new people entering relevant training. This data will be required to measure future success in increasing the awareness of the role as a career and in the take-up of courses.

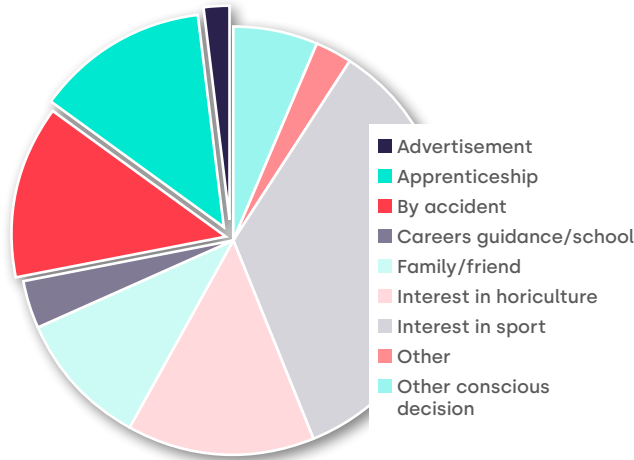
² HECoS is a coding system used by Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

PROFESSIONALS – RECRUITMENT & RETIREMENT DASHBOARD

Most appealing aspect



How became involved



35% of professionals became involved because of an interest in sport

only **4%** of professionals became involved because of career guidance

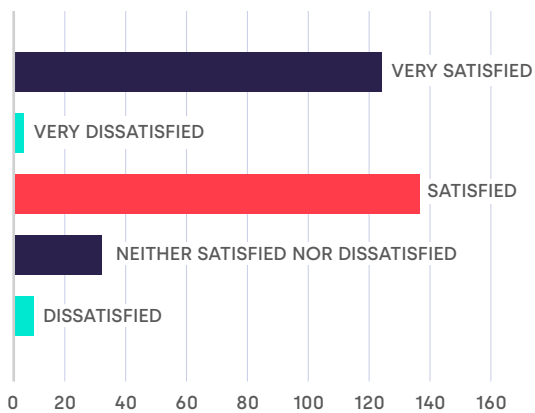
the most appealing aspect of grounds management role was 'working outdoors'

13% of professionals are planning to retire over the next 3 years

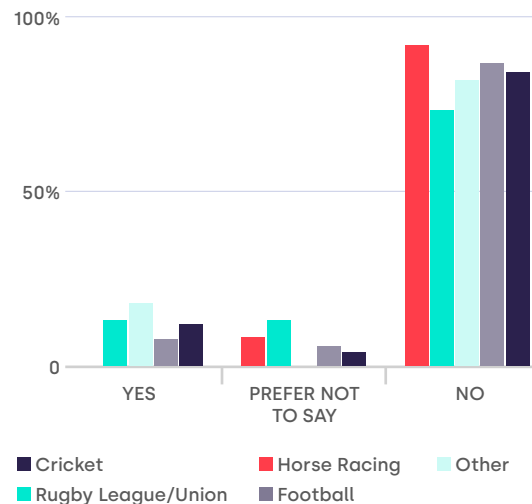
almost a **1/3** of professionals at private/members clubs are planning to retire in the next 3 years

86% of professionals are either satisfied or very satisfied with their overall job

Satisfaction with overall job



Planning to retire by sport



PROFESSIONALS' WORKING LIFE

Over a third of professionals did not agree they feel satisfied with their work/life balance and 17% disagreed. Only 22% of survey responders stated that they do not work overtime which suggests that well over two thirds do. Working unsociable and long hours can make work/life balance particularly difficult.

The Mental Health Foundation is the leading UK charity concerned with both mental health and learning disabilities policy, research and development. In a survey report it produced in 2003 it identified a positive correlation between the number of hours worked and the number of hours spent thinking or worrying about work outside of working hours. The report summarised this "as a regressive tax". The more you work, and the less free time you have, the more of your free time you spend thinking or worrying about work. It is reasonable to assume that this imbalance is harmful to an employees' mental health and general well-being.

Overwork can create 'burnout' in the workplace. This can result in poor concentration, increased physical and mental illness and reduced performance. These are clearly not in the interests of employers.

Good work/life balance is also a very high priority for young people. As part of the [2016 Deloitte Millennial Survey](#), Deloitte set out to discover how loyal millennials are to their employers, and what makes them want to stay or leave. The following chart shows what millennials prioritise in a job when looking at things other than salary or financial benefits.

In order to attract more young people to the profession the sector needs to prioritise work/life balance and mental health.

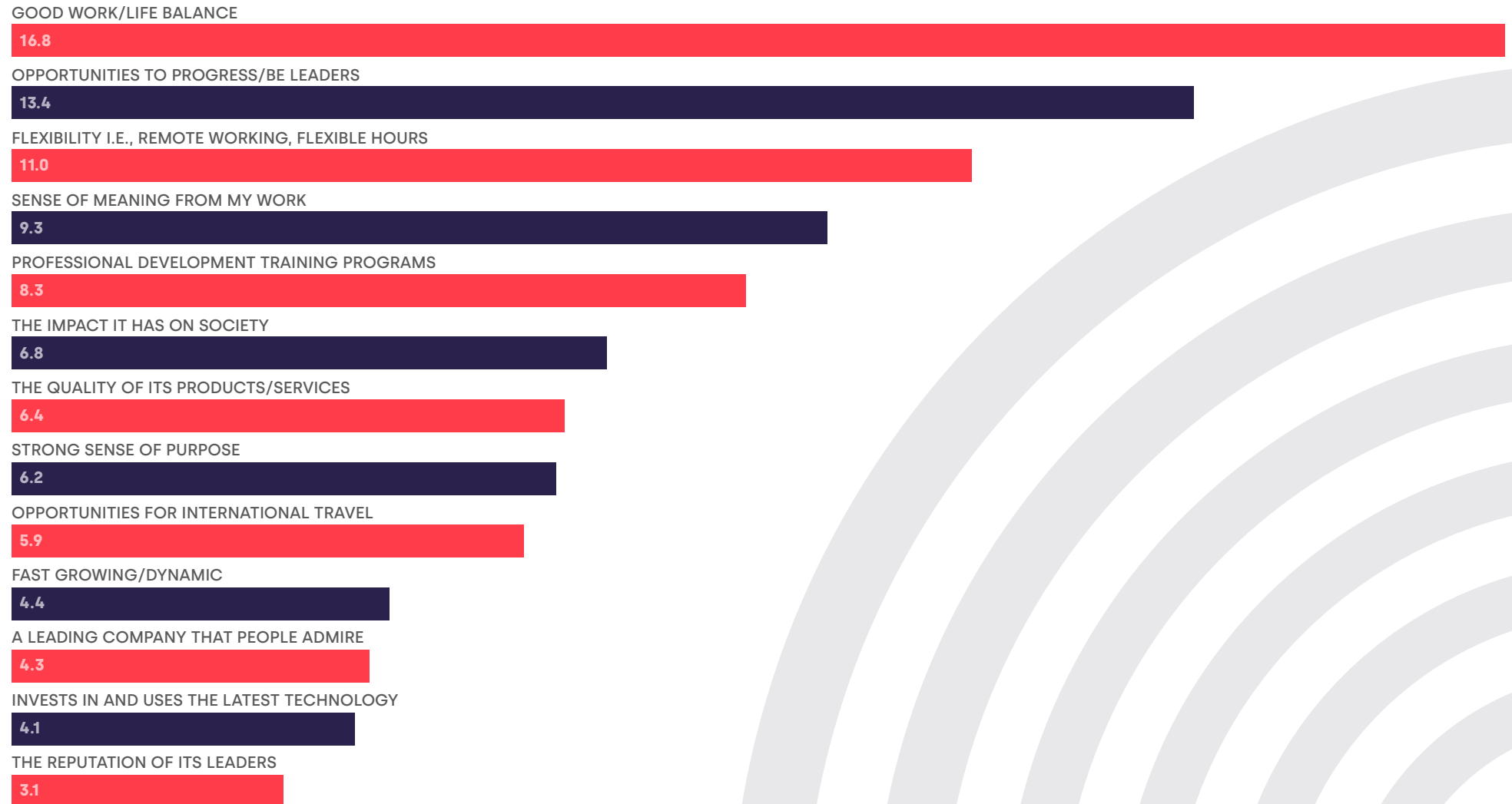
Over a half, 56%, of professionals agree their employer has realistic expectations of them. Under a half, 44% do not agree and around a fifth, 19%, disagree/strongly disagree that their employer's expectations are realistic. However 81% feel they can influence their employer with only 4% feeling that they cannot.

The majority of grounds managers, 61%, agree they are respected as a professional by their employer while 49% do not agree and 15% disagree that they are respected as a professional.

59% agree they feel they are valued by their employer however 41% did not agree and 17% disagreed they are valued by their employer.

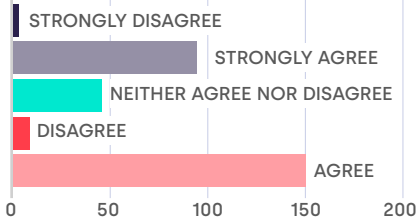
In general 10% to 20% of grounds managers would appear to be dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the views of their employers. The majority of grounds managers who did not agree they feel valued or respected as a professional, are over the age of 45 years and this dissatisfaction is more common in the education sector, although it was also evident in professional clubs, local authorities, community sport and was seen across all sports.

In most markets, work/life balance comes before career progression when evaluating job opportunities *Relative degree of importance (excluding salary)*

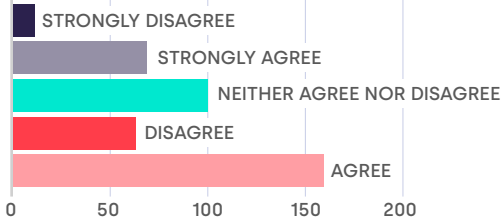


PROFESSIONALS – WORKING LIFE DASHBOARD

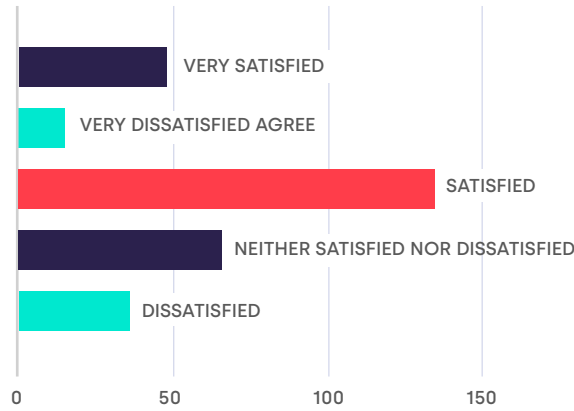
Can influence decisions



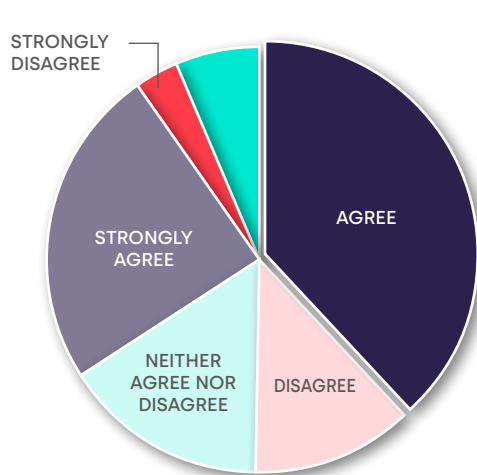
Employer has realistic expectations



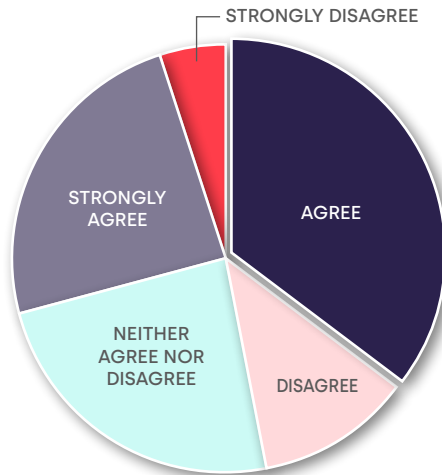
Work Life Balance



Feel respected as professional



Feel valued



just over **1/2** of professionals believe their employer has realistic expectations

61% of professionals are satisfied or very satisfied with their work/life balance

81% of professionals feel they can influence decision making

15% of professionals do not feel respected by their employer

61% of professionals feel respected by their employer

59% of professionals agreed they feel valued by their employer

PROFESSIONALS' PAY AND BENEFITS

Just over a half of professionals, 52%, are satisfied or very satisfied with their salary leaving 48% who felt unable to agree they felt satisfied. However, many comments regarding salaries were negative and respondents who expressed satisfaction with their salary also commented that they did not feel it fairly reflects the work they do. Over a fifth are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their pay and benefits.

During interviews the major concern expressed was about pay and benefits and the issue of attracting a shrinking number of young people to the profession. Many are already struggling to recruit. The sector needs to be very competitive in offering good pay and benefits and clear career progression.

To help companies gain an insight into what motivates their younger employees, the [Millennial Careers: 2020 Vision report from Manpower](#) has identified five things that young people prioritise when looking for a career. Money and job security are top of the list.

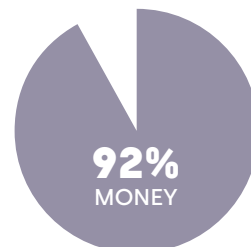
Money is a very clear priority for young people followed by job security (priorities 3 to 5 could also be considered as crucial to work/life balance and good mental health). Some of the survey and interview comments relate to concerns about the GMA's salary recommendations and a belief it does not reflect the full scale of the responsibilities, skills and

knowledge of the profession. Some stated that the GMA's salary recommendations have been used by employers against their argument for a salary increase and to justify the salary they are paying. Over a quarter have used the salary recommendations to discuss their salary with their employer.

Excluding the respondents who do not do overtime or responded that they 'don't know' just over half of professionals believe they are not paid fairly for the overtime they work. Working regular long hours was identified as an issue within the industry research and may be a key factor in issues around work/life balance. According to a report by the Trades Union Congress, UK employers benefitted from £27 billion of free labour in 2021 because of workers doing unpaid overtime. The current recruitment issues being faced by many sectors may make the demand for longer working hours greater as fewer staff become available to cover the work required.

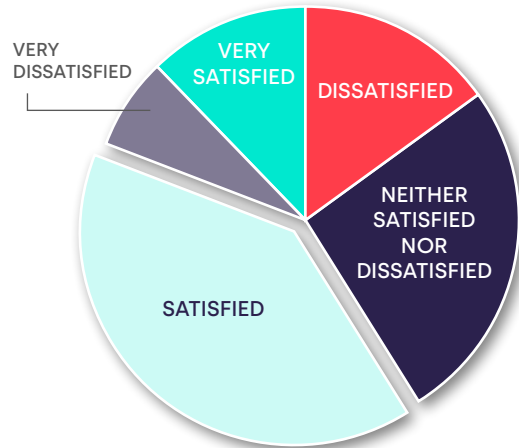
Over half of grounds managers stated that their budgets had stayed the same or reduced. With inflation predicted to reach 8% in 2022 by the Bank of England, the highest level in 30 years, many grounds management budgets will be become more stretched. The salaries of grounds managers will also need to stretch further.

What do millennials look for in a job?

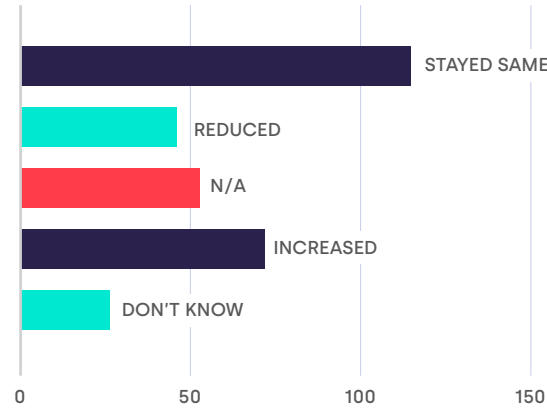


PROFESSIONALS – PAY & BENEFITS DASHBOARD

Satisfaction with Pay and Benefits



Budget Changes



22% of professionals are dissatisfied with their pay and benefits

only **12%** of professionals feel very satisfied with their salary

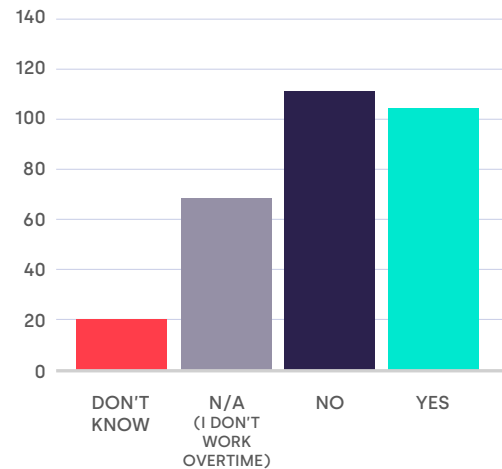
81% of professionals are aware of the GMA's salary recommendations

only **27%** used the GMA's salary recommendations in negotiations

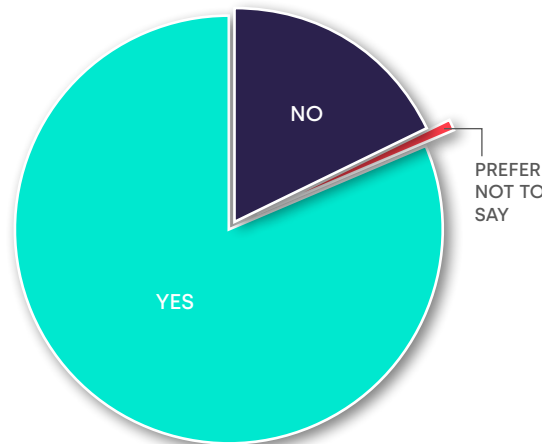
37% of professionals feel they are not paid fairly for overtime

over **1/2** say their budget has stayed the same or reduced over the last year

Paid fairly for Overtime



Aware of Salary Recommendations



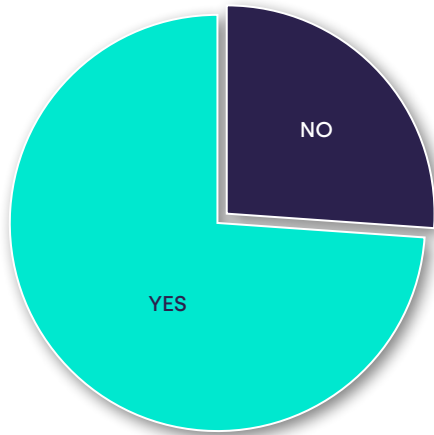
PROFESSIONALS' AWARENESS OF GMA PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Overall, awareness of the Pitch Advisory Service among professional grounds managers is high at 74%, although lower at professional sports club at 64% and also lower in football and rugby. Awareness in horse racing is particularly low at 42% which is understandable as the PAS scheme does not cover the sport.

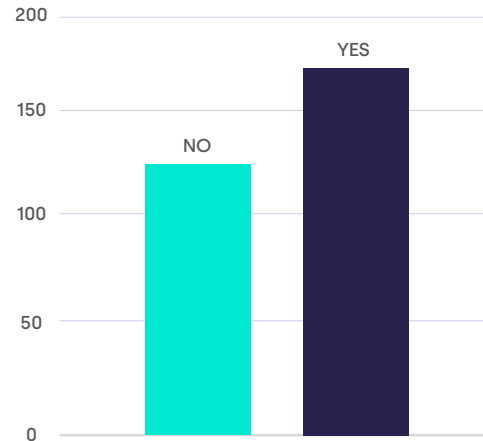
Awareness of the Pitch Grading Framework is 57% overall with the highest awareness levels in football.

However, only 10% of grounds professionals have used the framework in discussions around pay and budgets and less than 10% used the framework to plan training for staff. As well as raising the awareness of the PGF, the GMA also need to raise awareness on how the framework can be used in the workplace by professional grounds managers.

Aware of PAS



Aware of PGF

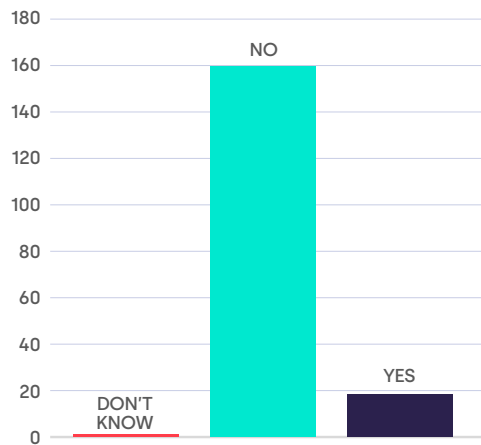


74% of professionals are aware of Pitch Advisory Service

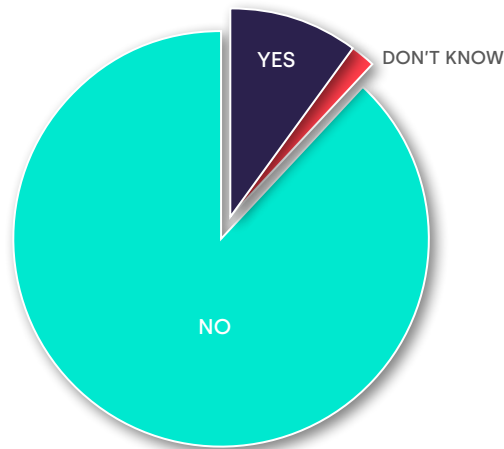
57% of professionals are NOT aware of Pitch Grading Framework

only **10%** of professionals used the PGF in pay or budgetary discussions

PGF used in budget discussions



Used PGF to plan training



15% of cricket professionals used the PGF during pay or budgetary discussions

88% of professionals have NOT used the PGF in budget discussions

less than **10%** of professionals have used the PGF to plan training

COMMENTS FROM PROFESSIONALS



I see a lack of women within the sector, and a lack of encouraging women into the sector."



We are being asked to do more and more jobs at work that used to be outside a groundsman's job. Very stretched at work."



There still seems to be a lack of people entering the industry of grounds person, this reflects in the pay that is generally on offer for the responsibility of the job."



Although the GMA publish pay scale recommendations most employers do not seem to take them on board."



I think the love of my job sometimes disguises various issues and problems."



... finding it hard to find groundsmen who want to do the job these days."



The view seems to be that the general grounds staff employed are merely manual labourers and anyone can do the job."



Nobody is coming into the industry, and it will soon die."



It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and keep staff due to the low wage and work life balance."



I also am concerned about how we don't seem to be recruiting and retaining younger people ... and the age of the workforce is getting older."



Pay is not great in this sector"



Unfortunately staff pay is inadequate for the positions we advertises for, which limits the quality and experience of staff we can employ."

COMMENTS FROM PROFESSIONALS



I love the job I do. The wages have always been poor, and work life balance has never been achievable. The only evidence we have to argue for better pay and conditions are the GMA and BIGGA pay scales, but these have fallen behind other skilled professions. We are being paid as unskilled labour not as skilled professionals. Because of this it is becoming impossible to encourage young enthusiastic people into this profession. Get the pay and conditions right and they will come. It is a profession I am proud of, but it will die out if something is not done soon."



You can't beat seeing a pitch you've renovated looking immaculate on TV."



Where I am satisfied with my salary and respect from employer the work that goes into my job is way above and beyond the remuneration I receive."



More youngsters need to be recruited into the industry on a fair rate of pay and made aware of the long hours employers expect them to work. Staff retention is a serious issue."



Most employers don't recognise the 37.5 hour a week guidance set out by the GMA."



A lot of staff are on 40-44hrs per week before overtime and are pressured to work 7 days a week to meet the demands of the employer throughout the year with little thought of work life balance."



Football needs to protect head groundsmen more in the lower divisions. From managers demanding Premier League pitches with a lot less staff and budget. If not, there will be no grounds staff in a few years in low divisions."



Speaking to my team and grounds staff elsewhere, they are all talking about leaving the industry."
Main reason - pay. We are all talking about it across the industry but not outside of it. I truly believe in about 10 years' time wages will go up due to companies struggling to find a skilled groundsmen. Until then we will be seeing a lot of hiring and a lot of people leaving their job as a groundsmen."



VOLUNTEER DEMOGRAPHICS

There has been little change in the ethnicity of grounds volunteers and only 3% of grounds volunteers are non-white. According to the Office for National Statistics "In 2019, the most common ethnic group in England and Wales was White (84.8%)". As the percentage of grounds manager who are white is 97% there is still some way to go before grounds management reflects the make-up of the UK population.

There has also been little change in the number of women and girls volunteering as grounds managers and the percentage is still only 2% of survey responders. The percentage of women and girls in the UK population is very slightly over 50%, therefore there is a very significant shortfall of volunteer grounds women. Further research may be required into what would appeal most to women and girls. Sport in general attracts more women volunteers across other volunteering roles therefore better promotion of grounds volunteering to women and girls may encourage more interest.

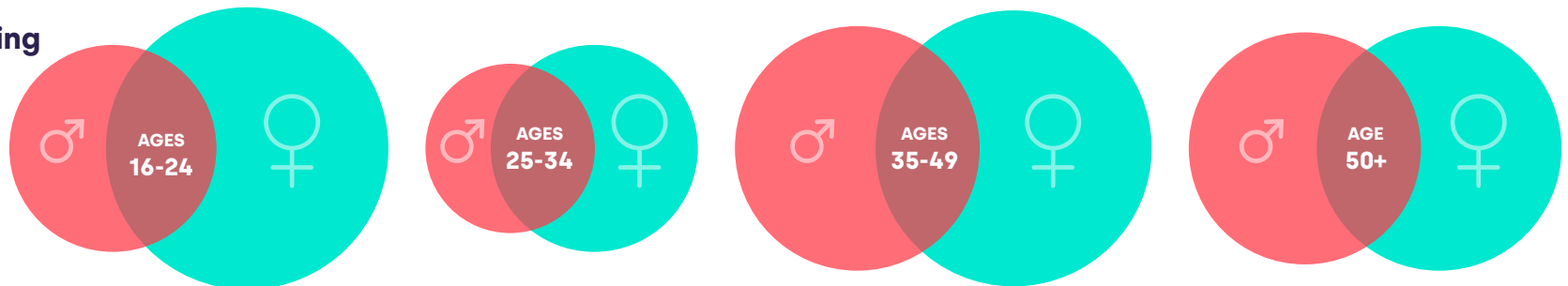
Over 60% of grounds volunteers are 55 years old and older. It should be borne in mind however that the survey includes bowls volunteers. As bowls is a sport that is generally played by an older demographic, most volunteers in the sport are likely to be older, this may distort the figures slightly.

The following is from *Community Life Survey and Taking Part Survey 2017-18: Focus on volunteering by age and gender report* which was commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

The diagram below shows that the make-up of volunteers in grounds managements in terms of gender and age differs in many ways from general volunteering in sport and/or heritage. Sport in general attracts volunteers across a wider age group but the percentage significantly drops as volunteers get older.

The *Community Life Survey and Taking Part Survey 2017-18: Focus on volunteering by age and gender report* found that volunteering estimates within DCMS sectors show little difference between age groups, except in sport, where those aged 50+ were significantly less likely to participate than any other age group. There is less participation in playing sport within this age group which may help explain the lower numbers participating in other ways as volunteers. However the opposite is true for grounds volunteering. This presents opportunities for the grounds sector to support sport in increasing the number of older volunteers and to help them deliver their volunteer strategies.

Formal volunteering



There is a requirement for some voluntary grounds care activity to take place outside of the usual 'coaching and playing hours' which are at evenings and weekends, therefore the role may fit better into the lives of those who are not working. However, a number of reports suggest that volunteering is declining in older age groups. It is becoming increasingly clear that the lives and expectations of older people are changing. In 2017 Age UK published figures showing 40% of over 50s provide regular childcare for their grandchildren, while the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has highlighted the extent of caring responsibilities taken on by older people – including those still in full-time employment. The age of retirement is also increasing. Therefore the free time available to the older demographic may be declining.

Only 1% of grounds volunteers are in the 16 to 24 age range. There are a number of factors which may help explain this. Younger people may still be actively playing sport or have commenced training as coaches or officials. If they are working, they may have less free time outside of evenings and weekends. They may also be involved in relationships, have children or be committed to their education and careers at this stage in their lives.

Younger age groups may also not be aware of the opportunities, benefits and training available for volunteers involved in the maintenance of pitches. Even if they are not able to volunteer when young, grounds volunteering can be promoted and positioned as something they could or should consider if they are looking to volunteer at a later time. Young people may also not be aware of the skills and experiences that can be gained through grounds management. Basic skills such as health and

safety awareness, budget management, soil science, work scheduling and planning among many others can be a useful addition to a Curriculum Vitae when they leave education or are looking for alternative work.

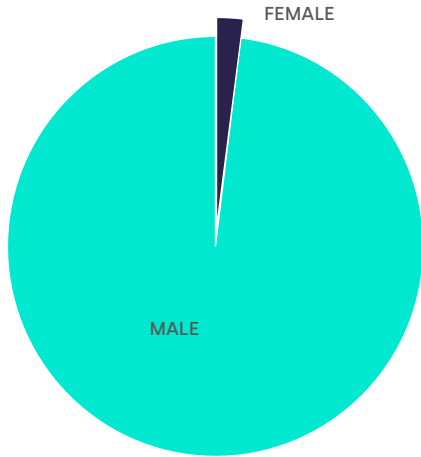
Almost half of grounds volunteers became involved because of their interest in sport and almost a quarter became involved because they wanted to help their local communities. According to the *Community Life Survey and Taking Part Survey 2017-18: Focus on volunteering by age and gender report* reasons given by volunteers across all sectors for becoming involved in formal volunteering were: 46% I wanted to improve things/help people, 31% the cause was important to me, 25% I had the spare time, 25% I wanted to meet people/make friends.

The priorities for volunteers in general and in grounds management would seem to be an interest in the cause (sport) and 'making a difference'. Both can be offered by grounds volunteering. As the time spent on pitch care can be quite high, offering 'bite-size' work areas may attract more people that have some spare time. In situations where there is only one or two grounds volunteers at a club, the social side can be limited. Therefore this needs to be considered when exploring how to attract more volunteers.

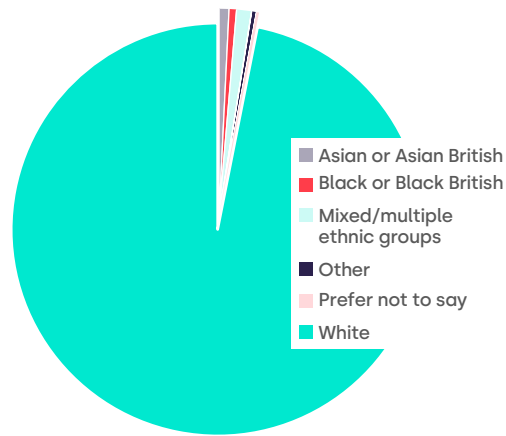
The reasons for not being able to volunteer were - work commitments 51%, do other things with spare time 37%, children 26%, never thought about it 15%, don't know any groups that need help 12%, haven't heard about any opportunities 12%. These responses also need to be factored into any offers and opportunities made available to grounds volunteers across age groups.

VOLUNTEERS – DEMOGRAPHICS DASHBOARD

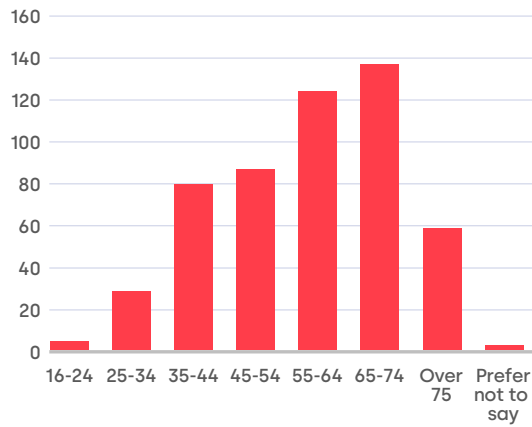
Gender



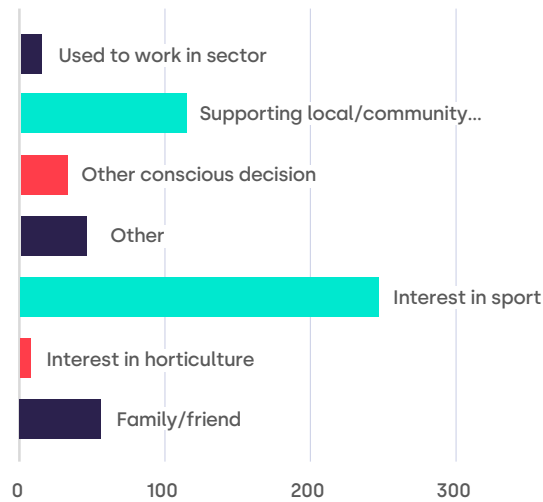
Ethnicity



Age



How volunteers became involved



98% of volunteers are male

only **2%** of volunteers are female

3% of volunteers are non-white

over **60%** of volunteers are over 55 years old

only **1%** of volunteers are 16 to 23 years old

2/3 of volunteers give more than 5 hours per week



VOLUNTEER ISSUES

Overall almost a third of volunteers and over 40% of football and rugby volunteers stated that not all the equipment they need is provided by their clubs. National Governing Bodies of sport have introduced equipment funding schemes and equipment sharing schemes to help alleviate this issue. Some equipment suppliers have also discussed payment and lease schemes for clubs, and this should be reviewed to check for progress. Some further intervention may be required.

Overall 39% of volunteers feel they do not have enough funding to carry out the work they need to do. With the increasing costs of supplies, fuel and materials it can reasonably be assumed that this situation is likely to worsen. Two thirds responded that their budgets had decreased or stayed the same over the last 12 months. With higher inflation this may become an issue with more having to be done with less resources.

Around two thirds of volunteers spend more than 5 hours per week volunteering and a third spend more than 11 hours per week. 15% spend more than 20 hours per week volunteering which is equivalent to a part-time job. Overall around a half of volunteers spend more than 11 hours per week volunteering. Many volunteers make a large time commitment, and this may reflect a shortage of grounds volunteers being available or trained to help and assist with regular maintenance tasks. A larger well-trained volunteer workforce would help spread-the-load and take the pressure off current volunteers.

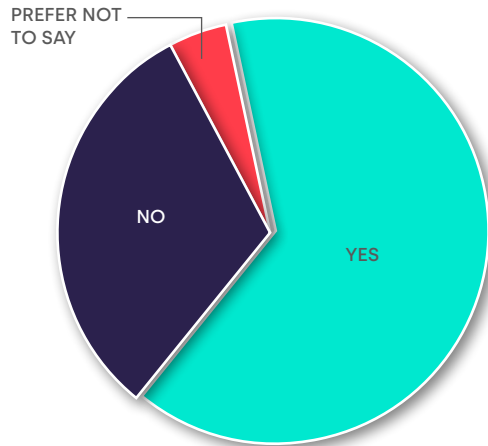
Overall 17% of volunteers are planning to retire in the next 3 years. Some of the comments provided were from people in their eighties who said they would keep going as long as their health allowed. They were concerned about who would take over from them when they left, but also were reluctant to stop volunteering. Recruiting new grounds volunteers, to replace those retiring and also to help reduce the workload of existing volunteers, is crucial if the quality of grass pitches is to be maintained and improved.

Over a third of bowls volunteers were planning to retire in the next 3 years. As bowls in general is a sport played by an older demographic this may be a natural churn of volunteers with 'younger' retired volunteers coming through regularly.

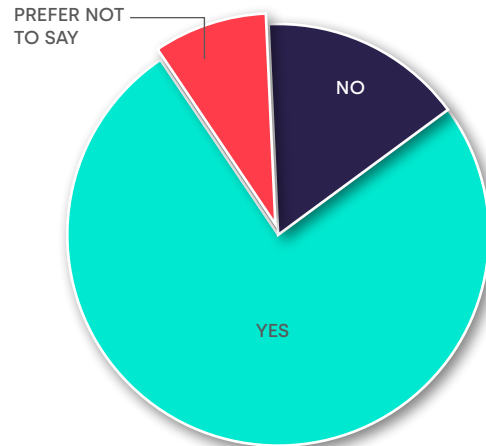


VOLUNTEERS – ISSUES DASHBOARD

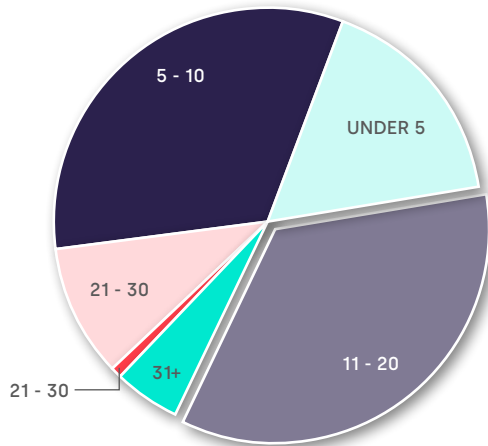
Is all equipment required provided by organisation



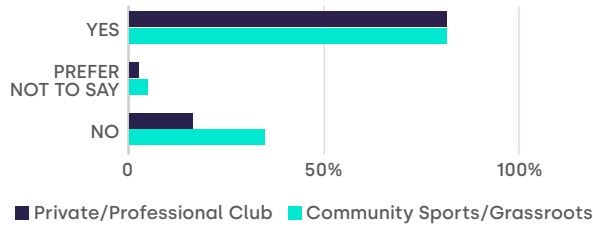
Planning to stop volunteering in the next 3 years



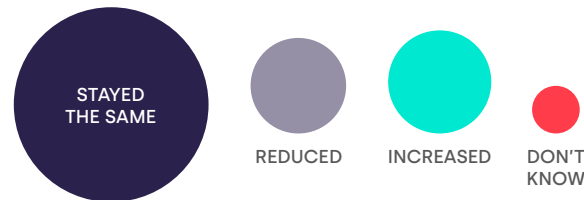
Time spent volunteering per week (hours)



Is enough funding provided



Budget changes over last 12 months



40% of rugby and football volunteers stated that not all equipment is provided

37% of bowls volunteers plan to stop volunteering in the next 3 years

17% of volunteers plan to stop volunteering in the next 3 years

39% of volunteers feel they do not have enough funding

66% of volunteers say their budget has decreased or stayed the same

around **2/3's** of volunteers give more than 5 hours per week

VOLUNTEER AWARENESS OF GMA PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Over 60% of volunteers are aware of the Pitch Advisory Service. This figure increases to 70% for cricket volunteers and is slightly lower for football at 57% and rugby 53%.

Around 41% of volunteers are aware of the GMA's Pitch Grading Framework (PGF) and 36% of volunteers have used the PGF in their volunteer role in the last 12 months. Awareness is higher among football volunteers, 46%, than rugby volunteers, 23%, which may be due to the Football Association and Football Foundation being involved for longer in the Grounds Management Association's Pitch Advisory Service (PAS). However some of the respondents who answered that they had used the PGF were referring to Pitch Power.

Awareness in bowls of the PGF is very low at 16% and no bowls grounds managers used the PGF in their role in the past year. However awareness of the PAS is around 51%. As bowls is not involved currently in the PAS the awareness level is very good. This may suggest an appetite for PAS support.

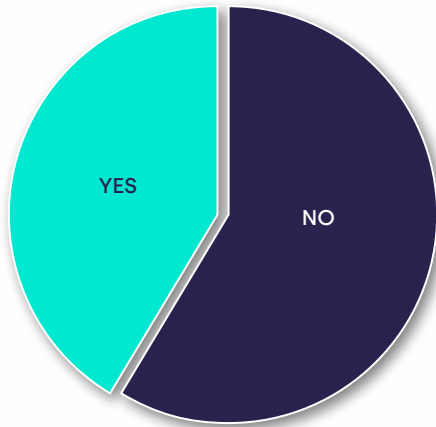
A surprising 82% of volunteers feel they understand how to develop the skills and knowledge they need for their role. Only 5% feel they do not. This may be an area for further research to understand more fully how volunteers approach increasing their skills and knowledge and their awareness of the training available. In particular their understanding of the training available from the GMA.

Overall awareness of GMA products and services among survey participants is reasonable however there is scope to increase awareness particularly in groups that are not part of the Pitch Advisory Service scheme.

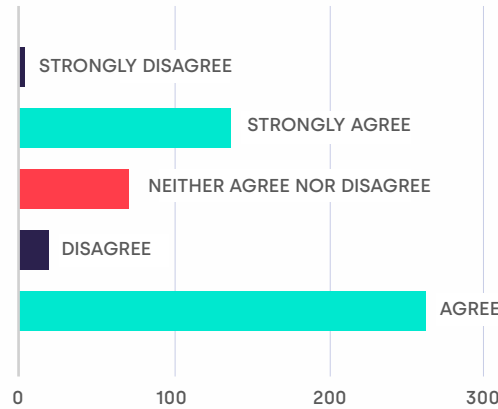
A person wearing a blue t-shirt with the word "VOLUNTEER" printed on it in white capital letters. They are holding a small green plant with soil in their hands. The background is a blurred green field. A red circle is visible in the top right corner of the image.

VOLUNTEER

Aware of PGF



Know how to develop skills and knowledge

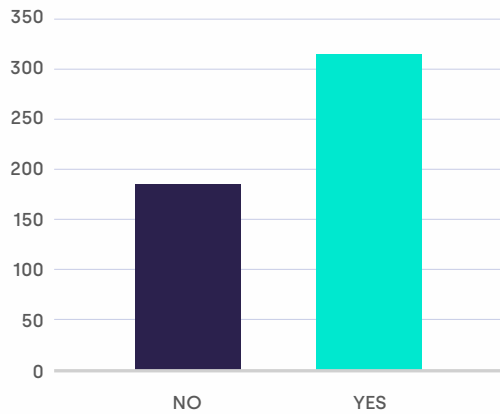


41% of volunteers are aware of the Pitch Grading Framework

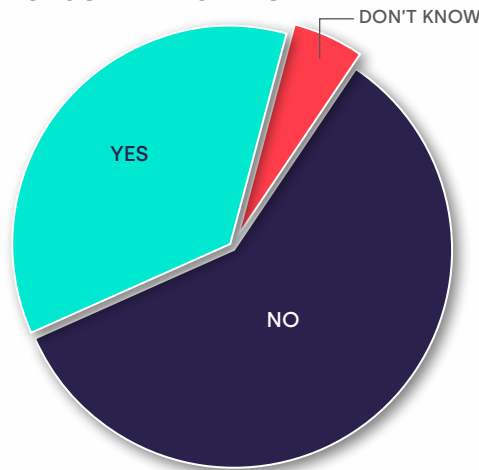
46% of football volunteers are aware of the PGF compared to 25% in rugby

82% of volunteers feel they know how to develop the skill and knowledge they need

Aware of PAS



Have they used the PGF in the last 12 months



over **60%** of volunteers are aware of the Pitch Advisory Service

over **2/3's** of cricket volunteers are aware of the Pitch Advisory Service

only **36%** of volunteers have used the PGF in the last 12 months

COMMENTS FROM VOLUNTEERS



Do it for the love of the game."



One of our concerns is where the next volunteer is coming from within the club to help with the ground and machinery maintenance."



Ground maintenance community is extremely supportive and willing to share ideas which has been a blessing as it can be a lonely place sometimes."



Having a job and trying to maintain a pitch especially in the winter when daylight is short can be extremely testing, but very rewarding when you get it right."



It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and keep staff due to the low wage and work life balance."



Absolutely love being a groundsman and only wish I'd discovered it at a younger age... Frustrating, stressful, rewarding, relaxing but just downright enjoyable."



At 64 I am the youngest of our group of volunteers looking after 2 x 16 wkt squares."



Would be good if Professional clubs could take volunteers in for extra training sessions etc learning from pro who get paid to do same jobs."



I am aged 87, so my health will determine how long I can continue."



I also am concerned about how we don't seem to be recruiting and retaining younger people ... and the age of the workforce is getting older."



Our club recognises our efforts. We put in between 60 to 80 hours a week between us. Not just on the grass pitches but within the clubhouse and the wider estate of 17 acres which the club "owns. We have trees, hedges and ditches to maintain."



I enjoy it, keeps me sane, shame I get little help from other volunteers. Need to get the teenagers on board."



We lease our football ground from our local parish council and get minimal assistance for the upkeep, so we have to fund everything ourselves, so all machinery costs are our issue."

COMMENTS FROM VOLUNTEERS



Finding volunteers is never easy, I could always do with a hand, and would be more than happy to pass on my knowledge and experience. As I am in my 80th year I do worry about who will take it on."



I volunteer for my local rugby club and have been doing the role for 20 years. Our club is only small with little resources or funds. I have very basic equipment, no mower or groundwork equipment/tractor etc. I am in charge of two full size fields a training pitch and general grounds. We share the ground with a local cricket club, there is a committee covering the running of the grounds, with little funds we are restricted in what can be done on the grounds. Over the year I am generally out of pocket by buying things like fuel for my own mower to cut the lines, buying weed killer etc."



We provide decent pitches and surfaces, but we can only work with the equipment we have.

More funding for machinery and tools for the job would be appreciated by the volunteer ground staff, the organisation and communities."



We're a new club using the local authority grass pitch. They mow it regularly at a reasonable hire cost to us but marking and improving the pitch is down to the club. We have some knotted, paint encrusted rope, tape measure, a 100 year old line marker and pickup cheap paint before each game. I've been quoted by professional grounds care companies for £4000+ to flatten, drain, aerate and mark it for us, but this far exceeds our meagre club income."



As far as funding is concerned the Club is the only source, but that is a very limited source. Our machines will soon need replacing and the Club will struggle to replace effective equipment due to cost."



I have on many occasions used the opportunity to speak with a pitch advisor as part of the Pitch Improvement Programme and found it to be an excellent facility."



I use a ride on garden mower to cut the pitch that is 20 years old. I use a 25 year old garden ride on mower to aerate and brush the pitch. I limit marking the pitch as buying paint costs so much money. I can't water the pitch as we are on a metre."

Thank you to our supporting partners:



Information from within this report can be shared in part or in full when credited to the Grounds Management Association.

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