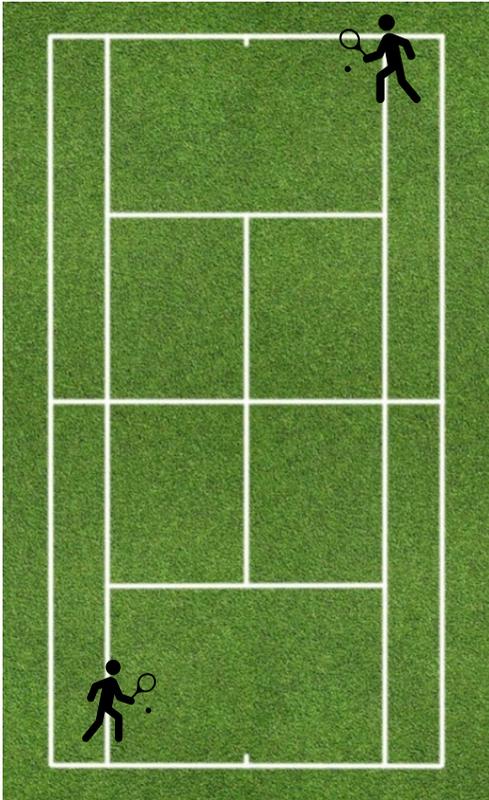
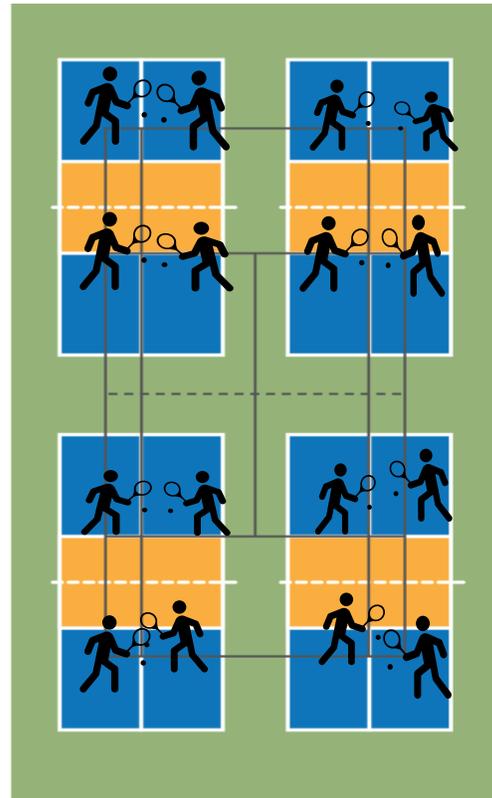


How to Close the Age and Gender Gap in Access to Recreation in Los Angeles



Tennis : 2/4 players
Norm = Singles



Pickleball: 16 players
Norm = Doubles

Pickleball is a multi-generational, gender equal sport played on $\frac{1}{4}$ of a tennis court with lightweight paddles and balls. It is inexpensive, easy to learn, an effective recreation for gaining & maintaining physical fitness in a friendly welcoming open play environment. It would turn around the City's long standing failure to attract seniors to public parks.

American Seniors **love** this sport making it the ideal public park recreation for keeping fit and healthy and narrowing the exclusion of seniors from city parks. Yet playing pickleball on a tennis court is banned in Los Angeles Public Parks.

This survey of West LA Pickleball players (July 2021) illustrates the personal and social benefits of this sport which increased 11% every year since 2013 and by 21% 2019-2020. Unlike most cities in California, Los Angeles provides no recreational amenities for pickleball in its park system. Our aim is to modernize recreational choice in LA Rec. Centers & bring this joyful sport within reach of every LA resident.

How to Close the Age and Gender Gap in Access to Recreation in Los Angeles

A Survey of Pickleball in West LA

Nicky Hart B.Sc., Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus UCLA

The research surveys and resulting policy recommendations of RAND HEALTH Santa Monica (2013-2016) were an invaluable resource in the making of this report.
Thanks are also due to all 314 players who took part in the survey, to Ambassador Ho Nguyen, who helped distribute it, to individual pickleball friends who offered editorial comments and advice, to Michael Mann for ruthless editing, & Laura Mann for graphics inspiration, Ken and Julie Chan generously published the hard copies & Alicia Celmer who created www.west-losangeles-pickleball.info

Publications from the Trust for Public Land (TPL) were also illuminating.

This is a summary of the full report which contains the detailed survey results and further evidence from published research.
Please contact the following email address for permission to quote, copy or use original data in the full report: nhart@soc.ucla.edu

To read the full report online or to download copies of the short summary
Go to this website

www.west-losangeles-pickleball.info

Document printed by Nonstop Printing in Hollywood

website: <https://www.nonstopprinting.com>

Pickleball in West LA: Themes and Topics

	Page Number(s)
Preface: Summary of Main Issues.	4-5
Pickleball: The Missing Recreational Amenity in Los Angeles	6
LA: Economic Wealth and Recreational Poverty	7-8
The Economics of Pickleball versus Tennis	9-10
Gender Inequality in the LA Park System	11-12
The Invisibility of Seniors in LA Parks	13-14
Is Recreation too important to be left to Recreational Administrators?	15
Introducing the Pickleball Community of West L.A.	16
Age and Gender on the Pickleball Court	17-18
Tennis and Pickleball : Life Cycle Sports.	19-21
Playing Occasions: Preferred Time of Day, Frequency & Length of Play	22-23
Is Pickleball easier to learn than other sports you have tried?	24
Motivation: What players like most about pickleball?	25-26
In their own words : Summary of open-ended comments	27-28
Let's make the Joyful Sport of Pickleball available in every LA neighborhood	29-30
Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire	31
Appendix B: Pickleball: Age and Frequency of Play US 2016	32
References: Websites , Books and Articles	33
End Notes	34-35
Guide to Abbreviations	

Preface: Summary of Main Issues

The full report presents original survey data on the personal and social benefits of pickleball. It was gathered to persuade Los Angeles to provide facilities for a sport which has grown nationwide by 11% per annum since 2011, and by 21% from 2019-2020. This preface provides is a short summary of the full report which is accessible here:

Pickleball already thrives in smaller cities bordering L.A. including San Diego. Unlike the existing amenities of LA parks, this is a gender neutral sport which attracts large numbers of seniors, male and female (60+ years) every morning to open play sessions. This is the off peak period for park visits.

Independent research has exposed the continuing failure of LA parks to attract visits from females and seniors, pickleball helps to reduce this deficit and has been singled out by independent researchers and policy experts as an ideal recreation for exactly this purpose.

Pickleball is an easy to learn racquet sport, a blend of tennis and ping pong, played on a badminton size court (20' x 44') with lightweight paddles and balls making it especially appropriate for children and seniors.

60% of West LA players are current or former tennis players who find, in the small court and lightweight equipment, the means to continue exercising their recreational skills with less risk of physical stress and injury. It is also a pick-up sport where players can turn up at will and find a game. Participation is effortless, with no demand on park staff or resources other than access to paved court space. Players or volunteers supply their own nets

One 2 hour session of pickleball 2-3 times per week meets the C.D.C. definition of moderately vigorous activity for maintaining physical fitness and improving psychological wellness. Regular West LA players in our survey (median age 60+) already surpass this recommendation. They do so in a Santa Monica Park because pickleball is actually forbidden on existing LA tennis courts by rigid rules which enforce a tennis only policy.

Recreational planners throughout California including LA county, alert to the needs and preferences of local residents have successfully converted dozens of tennis courts for this sensational new sport simultaneously expanding rates of recreational participation and drawing in more seniors. The city of LA which has turned away virtually every request or appeal from resident pickle-ballers, is the 'odd man out which is why West L.A. players depend on a Santa Monica's Rec. Center where demand now greatly exceeds supply.

Pickleball is 8 times more economically efficient than tennis. One tennis court used for singles, converts to 4 PB courts allowing 16 players to participate in 4 sets of doubles. Conversion is a quick, easy, low budget expense, involving the addition of PB lines on an existing court surface which makes it available to either sport. The permanent tennis net acts as barrier to errant balls.

Even a simple rule change promoting flexible use of public courts would make a difference. If this is all it takes, surely the time has come for elected council members who represent West LA to subject current recreational policies to rigorous scrutiny and to remove what is in effect: age and gender discrimination.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) recognizes an important role for public parks as places for the continual regeneration of 'know your neighbor social capital'. In 2018, they reported with approval a 69% national increase in pickleball courts, the largest new investment in municipal recreational amenities that year.

Pickleball is a perfect fit for the TPL movement. '*The most social sport I have ever experienced*' is how many players describe their entry into the pickleball community whose solidarity is sustained by open play sessions, volunteer support and shared equipment. This is the local community at work directly organizing their own recreation, fostering social cohesion at the same time. It is vital that these basic organizational features of the sport are carried over when the sport becomes a recreational amenity in the LA public park system. It is hoped that the LA chapter of the TPL will study our report and use its good offices to help us increase access to this joyful sport in the city of LA and reduce inequity in access to its park system.

Pickleball: The Missing Recreational Amenity in Los Angeles

Pickleball is flourishing in Memorial Park, Santa Monica where 4 tennis courts striped for pickleball provide an option to use the space as 16 pickleball courts where 64 players can participate to the same time. Santa Monica residents flock to this venue which they share with players from all over LA county as well as tourists staying in local hotels who never travel without a paddle because pickleball is a daily fitness regime they do not want to missⁱ. This is a popular venue catering to a wide range of playing skill and experience from beginners to national tournament champions. On global 'Where to play pickleball websites', Memorial Park is the Go To place in LA to be sure of a warm welcome .

The overall majority of players are residents of the City of L.A. living nearby in Venice, Marina Del Rey, Mar Vista, Pacific Palisades, and other neighborhoods who rely on the small city of Santa Monica for their recreational needs because the big city of L.A. has failed to provide any facilities for the growing population of PB players who live in Districts 5 and 11ⁱⁱ. As a result, a large self-help community of PB players carrying heavy portable nets make their way to Olympic and 14th Street every day of the week to take part in open play, drop-in sessions organized and equipped by volunteer players themselves. Providing court space in LA parks for volunteer run PB sessions is a no-brainer solution to the city 's continuing problem of age and gender exclusion in recreational amenities (pp. 12-15)

Pickleball is America's fastest growing sport. The USAPA reports that 4.2 million people were playing pickleball in 2020, following an annual growth rate of 21.3% from 2019ⁱⁱⁱ. Further evidence comes from The Trust for Public Land who reported a 69% increase in public recreational facilities for pickleball in 2018. Reports out of Florida describe retirement communities with dozens of courts so busy that their use is timetabled by age or playing ability. Corporate landscaping firms report that PB courts top their inquiries from park directors modernizing facilities; Tennis Pros looking for a full-time job need PB experience on their curriculum vitae. One report even suggests that pickleball helps rehabilitation behind bars because the game has a calming effect on in-mates and makes them laugh. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/2018/06/27/pickleball-countrys-fastest-growing-sport-also-popular-cook-county-jail/718232002/>

These trends are visible in Memorial Park every weekend by a constant stream of beginners arriving for free introductory lessons with all equipment provided. The majority are 'hooked' after one or two sessions. As one respondent to this survey (2021) put it

'Anyone who does not like pickleball has not tried pickleball.'

LA: Economic Wealth and Recreational Poverty

Los Angeles is among the world's richest cities. <https://howmuch.net/articles/richest-cities-in-the-us>. It is home to some of the wealthiest people on the planet. It is the venue for the 2028 Olympic Games, yet it is currently ranked in the bottom quartile of major US cities (24/100) for recreational amenities. <https://www.tpl.org/city/los-angeles-california>. This lamentable performance accounts for LA's low rank (29/100) on the Trust for Public Land Annual Score Card evaluating the performance of Park systems in major US cities.

LA's poor score is not result of a lack of public open space. The TPL data bank, records that 64% of the population living within 10 minute's walk of their local park. This rises to 69% when low income household is factored into the analysis. Making access to parks within a 10 walk of every home is an important goal for the TPL. The current national average is 55%. LA's performs relatively well on this indicator by virtue of its location, close to the Pacific coastline & surrounding mountains. So what is the problem with LA? As always, *following the money* is illuminating.

Los Angeles spends less per capita on access to recreation than other major US cities.

City	LA	NY	Chicago	Seattle	San Francisco	San Diego	Oakland
Per capita budget	\$94	\$205	\$173	\$281	\$241	\$118	\$137
Acres /1000 pop	9.9	4.7	4.6	9.9	6.7	32.9	14.7

RAND (Santa Monica) ^{iv} researchers have carried out a number of well-designed surveys ^v of LA parks designed to assess the contribution of recreational amenities and access to attractive open space to the health and wellbeing of the LA population. In 2016 they brought their findings together in 'City of Los Angeles Neighborhood Parks : Research Findings and Policy Implications (2003-2015)'. Their report should make uncomfortable reading for the city's elected representatives and the professionals who control the budget for recreation and parks and the way it is used. These are their main findings:

1. Proximity is a key determinant of park use: 4 out 5 park users live within 1 mile.
2. Males use parks more than females; 'Seniors seldom use park's' (pp. 12-15 this report).
3. The walk to the park itself was the most common physical activity and, within parks, 'sitting' was more important than using any recreational amenity;
4. Public space in parks is largely unoccupied during 'substantial portion of the week.
5. 'Supervised activities draw more people to parks'

RAND observed a dis-joint between what residents say and do. Though most claimed: to visit their park one or more times per month, to find getting there easy and the park was safe, RAND's observers reported that "parks were empty throughout the day and sometimes even on weekends.'

This aligns with a TPL household survey of LA residents (2017) assessing the economic benefit of LA 's recreational amenities in promoting regular physical activity to reduce the risk of premature disease. Only 3.4 % of LA adults claimed to use park amenities (ball sports as well as hiking/ running/ biking trails) to a level which would impact on health care costs. This study estimated a total saving of health care costs of \$151 million per annum which is a drop in the ocean of the \$billions which LA and its residents spend on medical treatment every year.

Exploring the use of the local park and its amenities for moderately vigorous physical activity was an important aim for RAND's survey research. Their initial findings prompted the following suggestions. Develop:- alternative, attractive urban walking routes; more versatile approaches to under-used public space; more appropriate amenities to attract females and seniors; more supervised programs for groups with free time in off-peak periods. And ironically, since the simple act of walking to the park is the main recreation it promotes, increase the incentives for people to do this more often by making the park a more attractive and restful destination.

This list was issued in 2006 but nothing has changed. Though shortage of funds may be one reason why LA performs badly compared to other cities, it does not explain the absence of an innovative, flexible approach to modifying regulations governing the use of existing space and facilities to make way for additional low cost, age appropriate amenities. The West LA PB community has direct experience of these failings in repeated efforts (all in vain) to persuade local supervisors for access to space for pickleball^{vi}. It's as though park managers are fearful of ceding control to volunteers. Even making contact with recreation policy makers is a near impossible challenge.

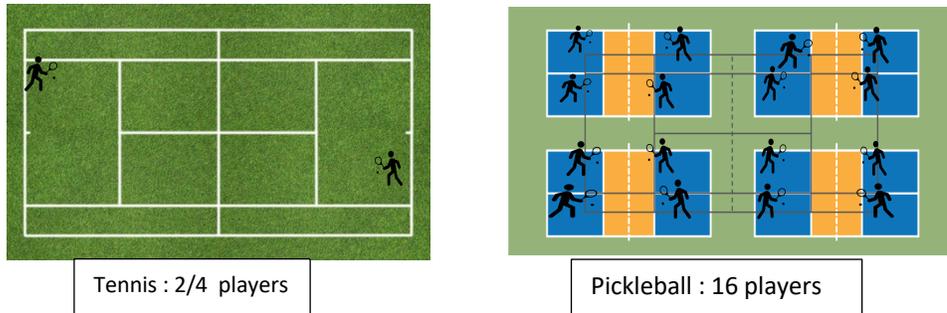
LA's Department of Rec. & Parks has not only failed to provide recreational amenities for pickleball, it even continues to forbid retired seniors with private portable nets from using them on public courts. Players trying to reserve a tennis court are warned that only tennis balls and racquets may be used, that they face the humiliation of being ordered off the court if they attempt to set up a portable net.

Pickleball is an energetic multigenerational sport which operates like a supervised program (another RAND recommendation) welcoming local residents with free instruction and open play sessions. Its embargo on LA's public tennis courts is baffling. To put it more bluntly : LA Rec. & Parks tennis policy is economically absurd for a cash strapped authority since pickleball revolutionizes the productivity of public recreational space by a factor of 8 to 1.

The Economics of Pickleball versus Tennis

One tennis court (7200 sq ft) provides recreation for 2 singles players^{vii}. The same space in Memorial Park makes 4 PB courts accommodating 16 players. For every tennis court striped for pickleball, per person hours of recreation rise by a factor of 8 to 1. Instead of 2 people playing tennis, 16 people can play pickleball.

One tennis court converted to four pickleball courts



The increased productivity of pickleball is among its most important virtues. It explains why many small independent cities bordering Los Angeles (Beverly Hills, El Segundo, Huntington Beach, Long Beach, Manhattan Beach, Monterey Park, Seal Beach) found it easy to respond swiftly to the changing recreation preferences of residents they serve. Converting just one existing tennis court to either multi-sport surfaces or permanent PB courts is a revenue neutral modification and not a zero sum game. Paved court space can easily be shared. Why LA refuses to do this is a mystery.

The economic benefits of pickleball as a recreational amenity

1. Per Person Hours (PPH) of recreational participation increase 800%
2. The core of the pickleball playing community are seniors using recreational amenities 9am – 3pm, the off peak period for park visits. This increases ‘turnover’ in the use of existing space in both parks and parking areas. Land is the most expensive resource limiting recreational provision, maximizing its use by raising PPH during off peak periods will improve the economic performance of the LA Park System.
3. Existing courts can be quickly, easily and inexpensively converted to multi-use sports surfaces – Memorial Park Santa Monica has shown the way and pickleball players provide their own equipment, they set it up and take it down themselves.
4. Investing in recreational pickleball is a low risk economic venture. It has already proved it’s worth in California even within the county of Los Angeles, but outside the territory of

LA. The game is so popular that some tennis centers have found it rational to convert more than half of their courts to pickleball.

The Bobby Riggs Tennis Center and Museum in Encinitas is a good example. It was founded (1994) in memory of one of most colorful international tennis stars^{viii} (Wimbledon, French and US Champion: 1939). It opened in 1994 with 7 tennis courts and an emphasis on public access. Today it has it has been re-named: Bobby Riggs Racquet & Paddle housing 3 tennis and 20 dedicated PB-courts: <https://www.bobbyriggs.net/> The fact that pickleball rocks at Bobby Riggs is a fitting development. Riggs was a master of the serve, volley, drop shot game. His autobiography 'Court Hustler' reveals a 'can do', pragmatic, confident, tennis entrepreneur. He died in 1995 and is no doubt looking down approvingly from Tennis Heaven at the healthy surplus from \$5 per day passes earned by converting more than half the courts in his Tennis Center Museum to pickleball. Profits from his center are donated to a medical charity.

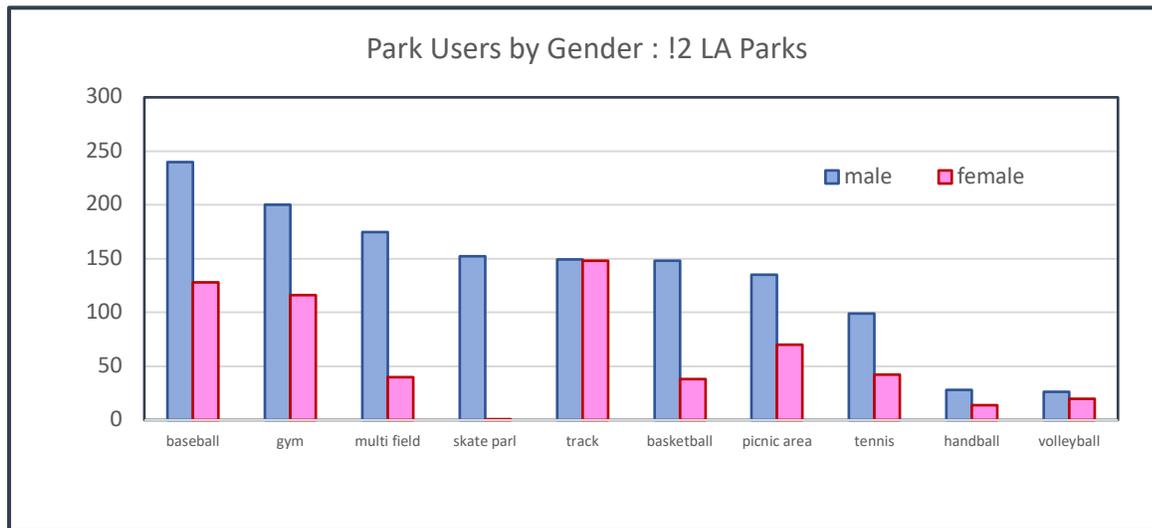
Nearby in San Diego, recreational planners list 53 PB courts in the city's recreation portfolio and they are currently researching for further space to convert. This is a role model of recreation staff fully aware of the advantages and popularity of pickleball and doing their best to tailor scarce resources to the needs and preferences of the population they serve. <https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/prbr210318a-item202.pdf>

Why isn't this happening in LA? Is City Hall nervous about reducing access to time honored tennis for a new sport with a funny name? Is a lack of research on, or awareness of, changing recreational preferences the problem? Or is it simply the absence of accountability of a big city bureaucracy? Whatever the cause, LA is perpetuating, as we will see, an ageist and sexist recreational repertoire. More responsive, innovative park managers in neighboring cities with a keener grasp on the economics of recreational space have discovered that permanent PB courts are so extraordinarily popular that hourly reservation fees for non-resident, private use of dedicated PB courts generate a healthy stream of maintenance revenue.

In noting this potential economic benefit, it must be said that many West LA players hold strong views on the fairness of charging fees for the use of public park amenities and especially for open play sessions designed and intended to make participation free and easy. The case for maintaining easy access to daily off peak morning sessions is overwhelming. Where courts are reserved for private use, reservation fees are more easily justified but these are as much political as economic questions to be debated democratically in town hall meetings. What is undoubted is the economic efficiency of pickleball in multiplying opportunities for local residents to participate in a sport which is enjoyable, maintains physical fitness and strengthens social cohesion.

Gender Inequality in the LA Park System

The monopoly of tennis on the paved court surfaces of LA's recreation centers is not only economically irrational, it helps to perpetuate gender discrimination and exclusion. This is illustrated in the following chart drawn from data gathered in one of the first surveys carried out by RAND between 2003 to 2015.



This graphic illustration of gender inequality in LA Parks was drawn from data in an initial report of 2006 'Park use and Physical Activity in a sample of Public Parks in the City of Los Angeles' which reported 'Males use the parks more frequently than females.' This is an understatement: apart from a track facility used equally by male and female athletes, gender disparity permeates the use of all recreational facilities in the City's public parks even for tennis, a sport where US women performed more successfully than men over the last two decades.

RAND counted two amenities with a higher usage rate for women: playgrounds and senior centers. Even picnic areas were twice as likely to be used by men than women suggesting that male bonding, spilling over from the Park's masculine oriented recreational provision, made the picnic space a further amenity favoring males.

For measuring equity, use of facilities is limited to the extent and appropriateness of the recreational facilities of offer. It risks identifying the cause as a deficit of initiative among excluded groups or assuming that barriers exist blocking access to amenities that are essentially gender and age neutral. An alternative perspective pays attention to long standing cultural values or prejudices about who does sport and what constitutes authentic recreation worthy of public investment held by those in control of the recreational amenities on offer. Observations recorded in the West LA pickleball survey make it clear that the problem is an absence of facilities allied to an embargo on the innovative use of existing amenities notably tennis courts. The self-help enterprise of residents conveying their own weighty portable infrastructure on a daily basis to convert existing tennis courts for pickleball on Santa Monica territory, reveals that the deficit of initiative lies downtown with recreational administrators not local residents.

The RAND research team has continued to monitor the gender inequity they initially identified in 2006. Gender disparities have not gone away. Their report of 2016 observed: ‘We have consistently found that males use parks more than females. ‘The gap is substantial 63% to 37%.‘ (2016: p.5).

Increased participation by females in major male identified sports has been recorded over the last decade with some outstanding results . American women played a pivotal international role in turning soccer into a more gender equal sport as A.Y.S.O^x girls matured into the world’s leading female soccer stars. Internationally, US women have won 4 gold medals since women’s soccer made its debut at the 1996 Olympics. But though soccer is the most popular sport globally, it is a minor male sport in the US. Baseball is far more significant occupying the majority of sports-field recreational space in most public parks, helping to ensure that public recreational facilities in general remain strongly identified with males.^{xi}

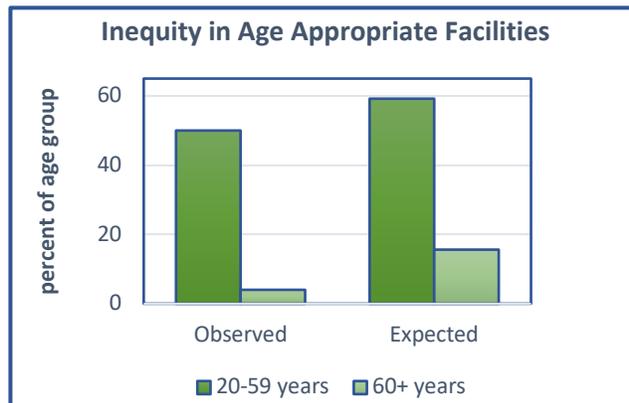
Is there any better pictorial reminder of this than the contents of the L.A. Times sports page where it is unusual to see a female athlete any day of the week. These pages are filled with helmeted, bellicose images associating sport with stature, gladiatorial strength, and aggressive postures. If these taken for granted representations continue to shape the consciousness and priorities of professionals who control recreational choice in public parks, is it any wonder that they are blind to alternative uses of existing recreational space. As the RAND Study (2006) observed ‘Baseball is not a particularly vigorous sport, but it takes up a large proportion of park acreage and is played by a relatively small number of individuals.’ It also requires a significant share of the annual maintenance budget especially where lighting is installed. Recreational planners and newspaper editors alike have barely begun to come to grips with the sport’s gender gap arising from the uneven allocation of public space and, especially in LA, scarce public economic resources and space, allocated to young male dominated recreation.

Overall, 64% of city residents live within a 10 minute walk of a neighborhood park, among seniors the figure drops to 59%. This suggests a very important role for Park and Recreation Centers as a venue for preventive health care. The CDC guideline of weekly **Moderately Vigorous Physical Activity (MVPA)** to reduce the risk of chronic disease is just 150 minutes per week. Yet a 2017 TPL Survey found that only **3.4%** of LA’s adult population make use of the city’s recreational facilities, including both hiking trails and recreation amenities to make enough impact on their physical health that their annual expenditure on medical care is reduced. This suggests an enormous scope for improving the performance of LA’s park system by implementing RAND recommendations to: i) increase publicity and outreach; ii) introduce a tracking system to measure usage rates; iii) add more supervised programs to draw females and seniors into the park.

Volunteer organized pickleball sessions are a perfect example of a low cost supervised program.

The Invisibility of Seniors in LA Parks

The absence of age appropriate recreational facilities, even attractive sitting areas is another recurrent theme of RAND research on LA Parks. In their 2016 report, the authors reveal a 4:1 age gap in the use of park amenities among adults above and below age 60.



Seniors 60+ years are 16 % of the local population but only 4% of park users. Adults below 60 years are 59% of the population and 50% of park users. The failure to make the local park an attractive and inviting place for the retired local population is a further long-standing feature of LA's Park and Recreation System.

Successive RAND reports and papers reiterate the same observation: 'Seniors seldom use parks'. Can we assume the administrators of LA's park system have got the message? Do they keep abreast of important and relevant research evaluating their performance. If the answer is yes, what is being done to address disparities repeatedly uncovered in the RAND studies? In 2016, the RAND went beyond the measurement of LA's recreational deficit with the following recommendations:

Target females and seniors. Females of all ages are under-represented in parks, as are seniors. Efforts should be made to identify which programs and facilities would potentially attract more members of these groups to parks. Parks might need more attractive seating areas to accommodate people whose exercise is mainly walking to the park but who need a place to rest before leaving. Few females and seniors reported participating in organized sports. More attention could be paid to offering and publicizing sports that may attract these groups, such as pickleball (an easy-to-learn paddle sport). p. 20, RAND (2016).

The term 'under-represented' highlights the alternative explanation for inequity: Do young men dominate the use of recreational amenities because they were designed for them in the first place? (Tripp: 2016) ^{xii} If so, correcting the age and gender imbalance requires:

- i) Fresh thinking about appropriate recreation for all ages;
- ii) A willingness to loosen up rigid rules and regulations;
- iii) A reallocation of space;
- iv) Attractive seating areas for relaxation and meeting friends and neighbors.
- v) Greater respect and attention to what LA residents' preferences in recreation.

The provision of attractive seating to turn the local park into worthwhile and restful destination for a neighborhood walk seems so obvious, one is left wondering why park managers have not already figured this one out for themselves. And while we are on the topic, why not add beautiful landscaping (created by 'green thumb' volunteers) and a kiosk for fresh refreshments to encourage communal interaction. Let's make the neighborhood park a charming place to meet and eat as well. Isn't this what city parks strive to provide for visitors all over the world?

It is gratifying to see off leash dog areas where four legged companions can engage in joyful play but why not the same opportunities for senior residents eager to spend time outdoors, whether in moderately vigorous recreation or just relaxing with other park users in a beautiful hospitable environment. If Covid is with us for the foreseeable future, extending the local park's community cohesion function through the provision of attractive outdoor settings for meeting and relaxing with friends, workmates and neighbors is a truly worthwhile goal.

Is Recreation too important to be left to Recreational Administrators?

If recreational planners at City Hall were not already aware of the proven effectiveness of pickleball as a sport to address the exclusion of seniors from local parks, RAND's research team spelled it out for them in 2016. After a decade of investigating the strengths and weaknesses of LA's park system, these independent researchers single out pickleball as exactly the sort of age appropriate sport to bring seniors into the park. Since pickleball also attracts mature women (see pp 17-18 below), it would also exert a beneficial effect on the gender gap.

Five years later (spring of 2021), the West LA pickleball community contacted the Director of Penmar Recreation Center (6 tennis courts) on the border of Venice and Mar Vista to offer introductory pickleball sessions including portable nets, paddles, balls, and a band of volunteers - all experienced players ready to set up the courts and introduce the game to local residents, plus free lessons from local USAPA ambassadors and a demonstration match by the US no. 4 female player. There would be no demand on park employees. What is not to like?

After an initial warm reception, including an enthusiastic visit from the Park's recreational coordinator responsible for '*Rolling out pickleball at Penmar*', some internal opposition within the park authority structure intervened to stymie the proposal. In June 2021, Penmar's director let us know that before agreeing to our modest proposal equivalent to 3% of weekly tennis reservation hours, an internal enquiry on the impact on tennis reservations was necessary! We were promised an answer within a week, more than 3 months later nothing more has been heard from Penmar.

To encourage a response, a petition from 225 players (all LA residents) calling on Penmar to include pickleball stripes in a forthcoming Quimby financed resurfacing project was delivered to the Park Director. This too was ignored. Park seemed unwilling to make space for volunteers organizing open play sessions of pickleball. We requested a meeting with the District 5 Councilman's office. The staffer who came to hear our concerns reported his impression that LA's Rec. Dept. would never countenance the permanent conversion of existing tennis courts to pickleball but it should be possible to add pickleball stripes to convert the courts to a multi-use purpose. He and we expected him to come with a representative of Rec and Parks, but no one was available to accompany him.

What is so bad about 16 PB players reserving one of 6 tennis courts for a 4 hour open play session during off peak periods? What is wrong with sharing one or two courts in every park with pickleball players? Why have these rules not been moderated after a recommendation singling out pickleball out as the type of sport which could bring underserved groups in the local population into the park (see p. 12). It is a 'no-brainer'! If the funds are not available for additional courts, sharing what is available is the practical and civilized solution.

For the sake of clarity, no one should assume that the absence of PB facilities in every local LA recreation center is the result of lack of finance, it is official departmental policy enshrined in the city's recreational rule book.

The Pickleball Community of West L.A.

Memorial Park, Santa Monica has been the primary venue for Pickleball in West LA since 2015. Open play sessions Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday mornings attracted players from all over West LA, Santa Monica, Westchester, Inglewood, Manhattan Beach, Culver City, Beverly Hills as well tourists from local hotels and players from other states visiting family or friends. It is a highly successful example of communal association on urban public space. Thanks to Santa Monica.

USAPA Ambassador Doug Nichols was in every sense the founding father of the West LA PB community, welcoming new players, providing nets and paddles striping the playing surface with removable tape, even supplying drinks, fruit, and ingredients for peanut butter sandwiches in case anyone forgot to have breakfast. When the nets wore out, volunteers repaired them by hand. Doug established 3/4 weekly open play sessions at Memorial Park and 2 on Venice Beach paddle tennis courts. He persuaded Santa Monica to paint permanent stripes on the tennis courts at Memorial Park creating a multi-sports surface with the potential for 16 temporary PB courts. By 2018, weekend morning sessions were packed with all 16 courts in use and players queueing up for their turn to play. The momentum was broken by Covid. Santa Monica locked the tennis courts to prevent infection.

When Memorial Park tennis courts re-opened in 2020, regular PB sessions were quickly re-established initially by informal networks of masked players with private nets until a new USAPA ambassador, Ho Nguyen, was appointed. With donated paddles and nets, Ho, an unusually energetic, diplomatic and public-spirited volunteer, started daily morning PB sessions on any available court. Within 6 months, the original PB community re-emerged from pandemic hibernation joined by a continuous stream of newcomers who were initiated into the community during Ho's free lessons. Memorial Park was once again established as the Go To venue for pickleball on the westside of LA.

To document playing habits and motivation, a survey was administered to a sample of West LA players during July 2021. This is a report of survey findings including a demographic profile of players their residence, playing habits, experience, and attraction to the sport. The survey was administered during more than a dozen open play sessions – mornings, afternoons, and evenings during the course of one month. All attending players were eligible to take part including 'out of town visitors' who had found the venue online and turned up expecting and receiving a warm welcome. Of 316 players invited to participate, 314 completed the survey.

All were approached individually while they waited courtside for a turn to play and invited to participate in an anonymous survey designed to build a profile of active players in the Memorial Park PB Community. A sustained effort was made to give everyone present the chance to participate. The one page questionnaire was self-completed on a clip board. Over the whole period only 2 players declined to take part. More than half were City of LA residents. The questionnaire is appended. Its design aimed to create questions which could be quickly completed to deliver series of simple dichotomous variables with a final opportunity to add a personal comment. A summary of the findings follows

Age and Gender on the Pickleball Court

Pickleball is a communal pick-up sport, easily incorporated in the routines of daily life. The decision to play is a matter of personal inclination independent of the willingness or availability of another player. It is especially attractive to seniors in search of moderately vigorous, competitive yet communal recreation to maintain physical fitness and nourish social networks^{xiii}. Spectacular use rates are recorded wherever this all-age appropriate amenity has been introduced.

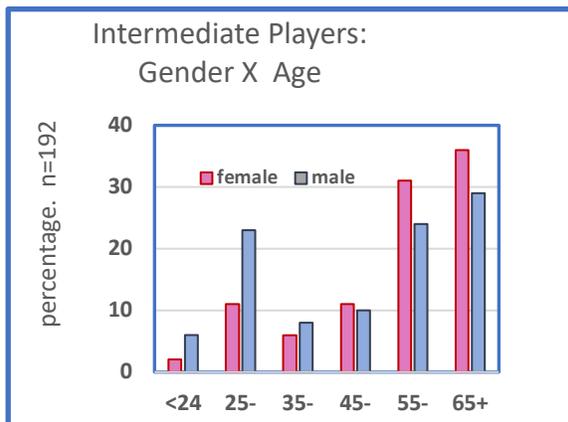
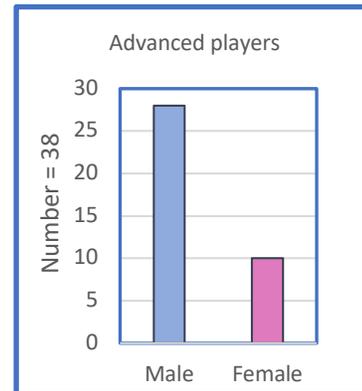
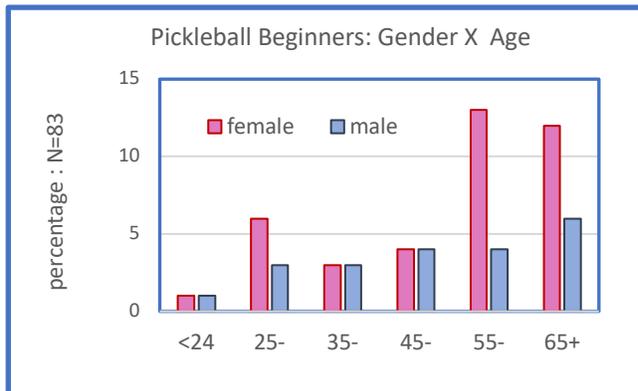
This is evident in Memorial Park which, in contrast to recreational amenities in LA Rec. Centers, attracts equal numbers of male and female players to play on tennis courts striped for pickleball. What is more, males and females play together, the sport is gender neutral.



Among 314 players taking part in the survey, the gender ratio was virtually equal: 49.5%, 50.5 % females. An important reason for the unusual pattern of gender equity in pickleball is the sport's attraction older players and particularly older women. The average age of West LA female players at 58 is significantly above that of males at 51.5 years. The median (which bi-sects an ascending age curve into 2 halves) represents average age more accurately than an arithmetic mean.

Respondents were asked to rank themselves in one of three categories: Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced.^{xiv} The majority checked intermediate which undoubtedly includes a wide range of playing ability. More women identified as beginners and more attend free introductory lessons on weekend mornings. The survey evidence is however subjective and likely to capture gender variations in sporting self-confidence. The following charts illustrate these differences

Among beginners, more females are in their twenties or over 55. Of 38 advanced players, only 6 were female, too few for a detailed age breakdown. Most players checked intermediate (192/314) with young men (to age 45) more numerous young women. After age 45, the pattern is reversed, more intermediate players are female.

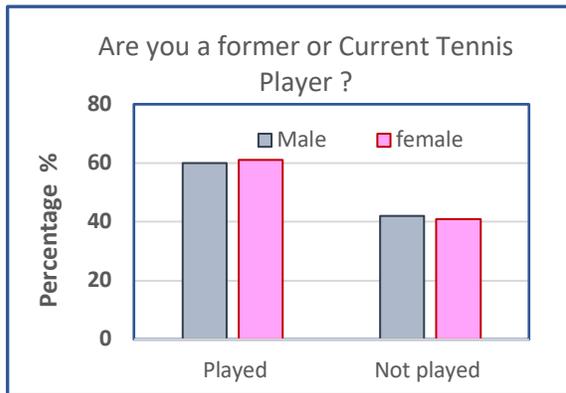


The reasons underlying these differences go beyond gender disparities in sporting self-confidence. Pickleball is currently attracting more young men perhaps because younger women have less free time available because of family responsibilities. The low representation of both genders between the ages of 35-54 years also reflect life cycle preoccupations and gender divided time budgets linked to work/career and family responsibility affecting mid-life parents, especially mothers.

The existence of additional public recreational choices available to males who, for example, dominate pick-up basketball games in every city park, may play some part in reducing their interest in trying pickleball in midlife. Pickleball is becoming more popular with the younger set (male and female) who turn out in large numbers for evening open play sessions. Older players, the original vanguard who took pickleball from a backyard family game to the international level, remain the core of the playing community by virtue of their regular (several times per week) attendance at open play morning sessions. Players of a younger age, though they constitute a growing presence in the community, tend to be more casual

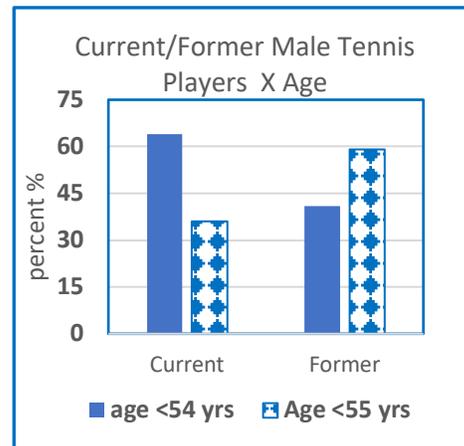
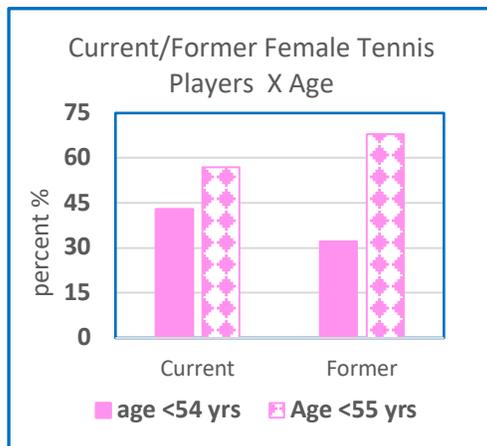
Tennis and Pickleball : Life Cycle Sports

Most players taking part in this survey, male and female, were either current or former tennis players (60%) for whom the transition from one game to the other is deceptively easy. Players coming from tennis are initially deceived into thinking their skills can be seamlessly applied on the smaller court. Among beginner- or improving players, a stylish tennis backhand is an asset but not enough to outwit an experienced PB player who has learned the crafty arts of ‘dinking and dropping’ the ball into the kitchen, where a slamming volley loses the point or ends up beyond the boundary. Sooner or later, lessons are essential to break ‘kneejerk’ tennis impulses, improve thoughtful shot selection and tactical knowledge.



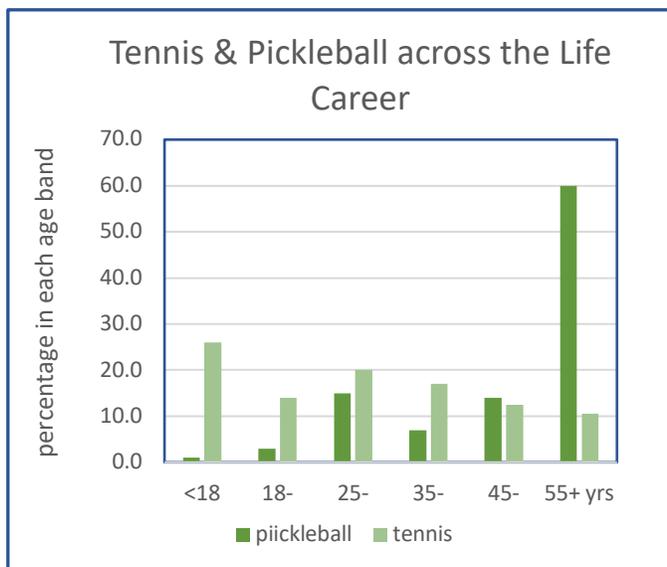
The equal ratio of female to male PB players in West L.A. applies whether a player is or is not a current or a former tennis player. Within this even gender division, more male than female PB players are still playing tennis in addition to pickleball.

This reflects the higher incidence of younger males (<54 years) in the survey sample. Over the age of 55 years, the gender ratio is reversed, Former female tennis players are more numerous in both age groups, suggesting that women are somewhat more likely to concentrate on one sport: pickleball.



Six out of every ten pickleball players completing the questionnaire were 55 years or older. How does this compare with tennis? In the following chart, the national age profile of tennis players^{xv} is compared to the age distribution of West LA pickle-ballers.

Tennis and pickleball serve different generations. Seventy percent (70%) of recreational tennis players are below 45 years with the single largest age group (26% overall) being school children aged 6-17 years. ^{xvi} The age distribution of PB players is dramatically different with more than 70% aged over 45+ years, 60% over 55yrs. Scarcely 10% of recreational tennis players are over 55 years, 23% are over 45 years.



The two sports exhibit a reciprocal relationship in an average life career. Tennis predominates at younger ages, pickleball predominates in maturity. The contrasting rise and fall relationship is experienced first-hand by the majority in this survey. Some remember playing with wooden racquets which favored the serve, volley and drop shot game. They are tennis players of an earlier generation with nostalgic memories of Rod Laver, John McEnroe, Maria Bueno & Billie Jean King. Pickleball is more like the game they used to play than modern base line drives of 100 mph tennis fired by titanium racquets.

Without Memorial Park, tennis players who find the size of the PB court more hospitable as their strength and energy level declines would effectively be forced into a premature sporting retirement by LA's tennis only policy.

Core and casual are categories employed by sports surveys to measure tennis playing habits. Core participants play '10 or more times per annum' They account for 86% of all the money spent in the 'tennis economy' and for 93% of play occasions'. Local tennis pros, who enjoy the privilege of reserving public courts to conduct lessons, are sponsored by tennis corporations who depend on them to replenish the stream of core players. At Memorial Park, a tennis pro with a permit has the power to order 16 PB players off a public court to make way for an hour's lesson with a fee paying single client. Indirectly a local public park operating a tennis monopoly and issuing low cost permits and reservations to private tennis instructors is also subsidizing businesses in the tennis economy while excluding pickleball players.

Since 2009, tennis playing occasions have seriously decreased in concert with demographic trends. The changing popularity of the sport is tuned to the life cycle of the Baby Boom Generation. The TIA reports a continuing shift away from Core towards Casual play (1-3 times per annum) amid a steady decline in the numbers of core players, many of whom are now eligible for Medicare and playing pickleball. Between 2009 and 2018, a period coinciding with the rising popularity of pickleball, the number of tennis play occasions declined 23% from almost 500 million to 384 million prompting the following observation:

‘This decrease in core players is in line with a trend towards more casual play for sports overall, rising inactivity levels, aging baby boomers, and a new generation of players who are ‘samplers’ of multiple sports and activities and is a major concern for our industry’. “

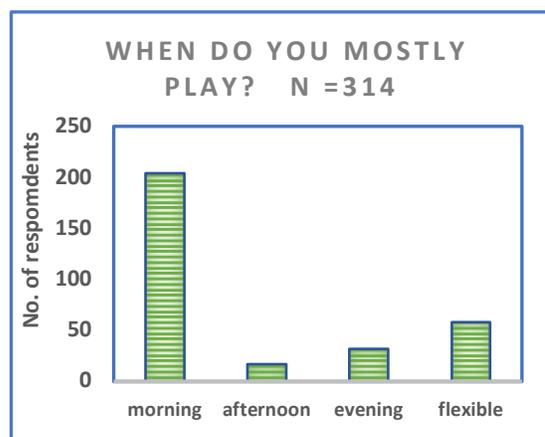
One consequence: companies generating profits from the tennis economy are increasingly moving into the PB market where sales of equipment are booming because baby boomers are exactly the group bucking the trend towards rising inactivity.

If the *‘business as usual’* tendencies of LA’s park system reflects a tardiness on the part of recreational administrators nationwide in recognizing and responding to changing recreational preferences, rising inactivity levels are not inevitable, they are the variable result of some, not all, recreational land use planners remaining innocent of demographic trends and their consequences for the professional decisions they make or fail to make.

Playing Occasions: Preferred Time of Day, Frequency and Length of Play

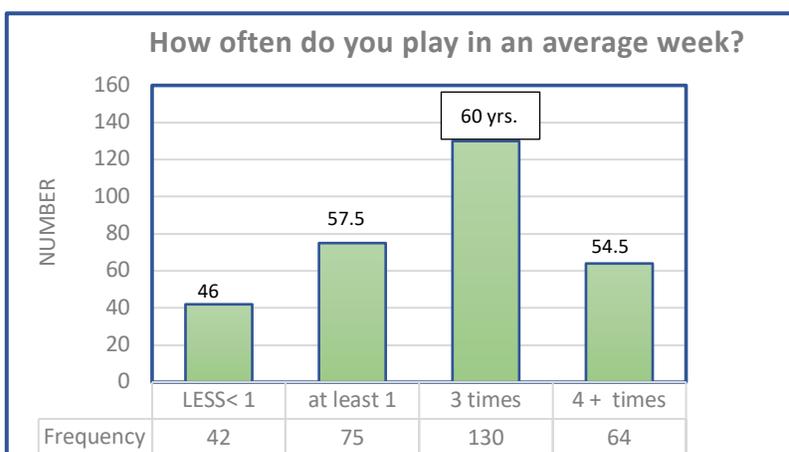
Preferred time of day

PB players are early risers. Mornings are, far and away, the most popular time of day for a game of pickleball in Memorial Park. Two out of three arrive early in the day as soon Memorial Park opens to ensure they find space to set up their portable net. Time of day is correlated with age. Among morning players, the median is 61.5 years, compared to 33 and 46.5 years in the afternoon and evening. On crowded weekends, this pattern gives way to intergenerational mixing as all ages queue up awaiting their turn to play.^{xvii}



Frequency: How many times in an average week?

The majority (63%) of West LA's PB players play 2 or more times per week, 42% play 2-3 times, a further 21%, 4 or more times. Compared to recreational tennis where core is defined as 10 or more times per year, the average recreational PB player is on the court 12 or more times a month.



This constitutes a regular intensive playing regime capable of exerting a substantial effect on health and wellbeing and maybe even Medicare expenditure. The evidence that this has been established at sessions organized by volunteer ambassadors in a public recreation center which encourage flexible use of

existing facilities is the stand-out finding of this survey. It reveals the practicality of offering seniors, male and female, an opportunity to participate in a highly pleasurable, competitive sport, 63 % of whom play between 2-5 times per week. Even at younger ages, tennis does not compete with the level of intensity in recreational physical exercise recorded by the majority in this retired section of the West LA pickleball community.

Age is associated with frequent play in an unexpected direction. Average age for those who play more than twice a week (66%) is 60 years. Players reporting less than once per week (13%) are younger at 46 years^{xviii}. The association of increasing frequency of play with rising age is verified in the SIFA annual survey (see appendix B, p.32) .

Younger casual players have more choice. Pickleball is one among several exercise options. Not so for retirees for whom pickleball evolves into a virtual lifestyle, an activity which structures daily life and allows them to maintain physical fitness and active social relations. As many regulars joke: *‘It is a reason to get up in the morning.’*^{xix}

Length of Play Occasions

The term play occasion, borrowed from Tennis Industry Statistics, identifies single outings for a game. It does not attempt to measure the length of time spent on the court making a direct comparison with our survey impossible. Public tennis courts are generally reserved by the hour which likely equates to the length of an average singles’ play occasion. Open play sessions at Memorial Park last 4+ hours, with players arriving and leaving at different times.



The majority of respondents circled 1-2 hours in answer to the question: In an average visit, for how long do you play? This underestimates what most players do. Memorial Park is often crowded during morning and, especially weekend, sessions. Players can face a 20-minute wait between games.

A further complication: the question was badly designed. (*me-a culpa*). The absence of an intermediate choice (2-3 hours) left 1-2 hours as the only option for any period of less than 3 hours. In practice, very few depart in under 2 hours.

Some stay all morning, resting between games as they move to another court with different players. Median age is unrelated to length of playing occasions. Variety of partners and opponents is a further attractive feature of open play sessions. Players bring folding chairs expecting to wait and even rest between turns and are content to watch or chat with fellow players. Waiting and watching are shared activities which engender friendships. Regular attendees at open play sessions see a significance increase in their social networks. Friendships forged courtside are the ingredients of a **loose knit playing community** unintentionally nurtured by volunteers including the USAPA Ambassador who arrives before 8am each morning to set up the nets. By comparison, public park tennis is a more privatized experience in which individuals reserve courts to ensure exclusive access, then arrive, play (mostly singles) and depart scarcely, if ever, acknowledging the presence of other players. Tennis reinforces private friendships between playing partners who already know each other, it does little to encourage neighborhood cohesion or broaden social networks.

Privatized recreation is fostered by a court reservation system and an administration wary of providing space and opportunity to volunteers. Open play sessions, set up and organized by volunteers generate community cohesion by bringing together new and established players and encouraging the circulation of players who gradually get to know one another. The sense of community is also strengthened by the appreciation participants express for what they recognize is the voluntary service of ambassadors and players who assist them to ensure that sessions are regularly available.

This communicates an understanding that not everything worthwhile in modern life is delivered by Amazon or the cash nexus.

Is Pickleball easier to learn than other sports you have tried?

Almost 9 in 10 players in West LA PB community circled yes to the above question. This makes a negative answer more interesting. Who is most likely to recognize the distinctive playing skills and tactics which raise the quality of a PB game? Does it vary by rank, experience, length of play? The answer: not very much.

Among 33 'deviants' answering No. to the above question, intermediates and those with a 'playing career' of 7-12 months were marginally more likely to recognize the challenge of moving beyond the impulse to hit the ball as hard as possible in the right direction rather than attempt to thread it through the needle into awkward to reach corners of the court surface.

Agreement that pickleball is easily learnt implies no misunderstanding that a wide variation in skill level stratifies the standard of play at Memorial Park where one the nation's top female players and her hitting partner are an occasional spectacle to behold. Most players know enough of where they stand in the skill hierarchy to select courts where they feel at home. In an open play session, there are always some sets where one or two are 'out of place' and vote with their feet when the game ends. Better players are usually ready to moderate their game to avoid 'demoralizing' the less experienced though everyone prefers to play at a level at or just above the level of their skill.

Pickleball appears easier because the initial slope of the learning curve is mastered more rapidly with less downtime from 'unforced errors'. With a small court, retrieving errant balls takes no time at all. Lightness of balls and paddles also make it easier to control the distance and direction of shots enabling an average beginner to attain enough skill to maintain a short rally with players of similar standard.^{xx} Reaching the same threshold on a full-size tennis court is far more challenging. It demands more training: a) to hit accurately within the boundary of a much larger playing surface; b) to develop dependable forehand and backhand strokes; c) an effective ball toss and serving action. This takes most players years not months. In the words of an enthusiastic 28 year old grateful to be transitioning from tennis to pickleball at an early age: *'Finally feel like I found My Sport'*. (respondents own emphasis)

Most people develop a liking or discover an aptitude for a particular sport in their youth. What is remarkable about pickleball is its appeal to older players who have not participated in a competitive sport since PE at school but feel the pressure of public health advice to get out and exercise. This makes it an excellent choice to encourage seniors, male and female, to look more favorably at the local park as the appropriate environment for the regular physical exercise so strongly advocated by private physicians and public health experts.

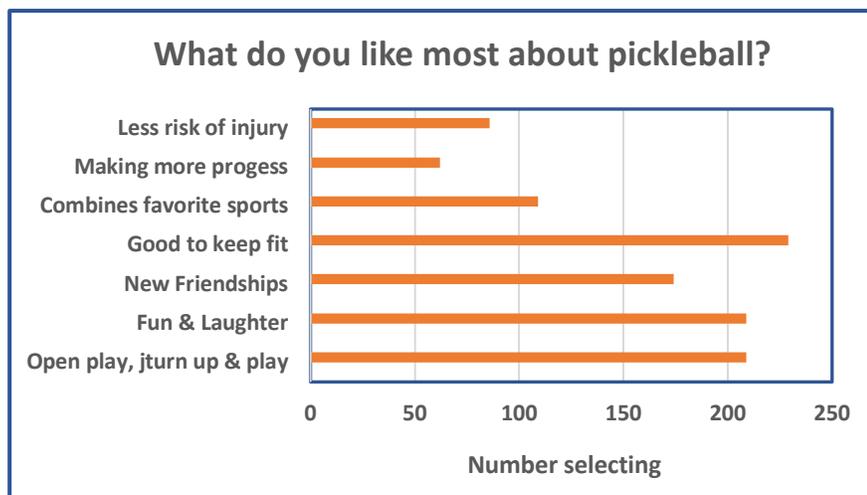
Motivation: What do you like most about pickleball?

Players were invited to select three of seven statements identified in the following chart to explore their motivation to start and continue playing pickleball. They include utilitarian motivations like keeping fit or avoiding injury as well as pleasurable experiences: laughing and having fun.

Check 3 of the following to describe what you like most about pickleball?

- Open play sessions, just turn and play
- So much fun and laughter
- New friendships
- Good outdoor game to keep fit
- Combines other sports I always enjoyed
- Making more progress than other games I have tried
- Less risk of injury at my time of life

The mode was physical fitness, checked by more than 229 players. It was probably a major attraction of pickleball in the first place. Avoiding injury was checked by 86 (25%) respondents with a median age of 58 yrs. Other statements covered reasons for continuing to play with commitment and intensity after experiencing the pleasures and benefits of the game and the way it is organized.



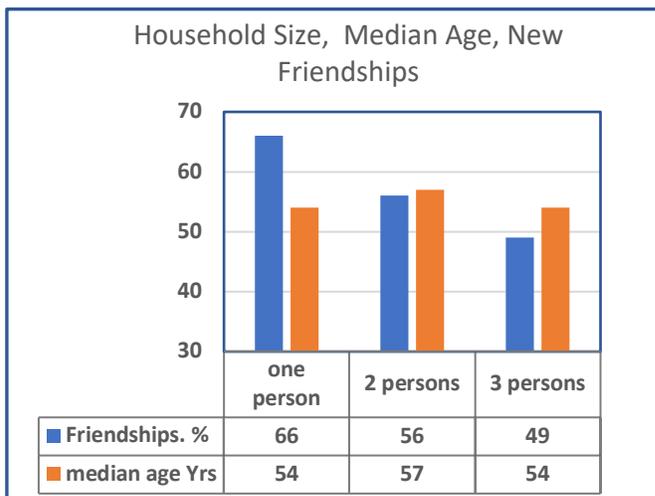
Two other statements scored above 200: open play and fun and laughter (209 each).

Open play allows players to turn up alone without a playing partner. This makes individual participation effortless, no prior arrangement necessary, as convenient but less expensive than a gym membership and infinitely less boring than the ‘tread mill’. Older ex-tennis players tired of cancelled tennis dates because their usual partner is out of action for health or other reasons, strongly favored circle of player acquaintances, reinforcing a sense of belonging to a genuine playing community.

Fun and laughter, another popular choice refers to the light-hearted nature of action on court where squeals of laughter are part of the background noise. Doug Nichols, ‘founding father’ of the Memorial Park venue, included this memorable phrase on his website ‘I never laughed more than the first time I played pickleball’ to capture the friendly effervescent nature of play on the PB court. The friendly side of pickleball is a very important feature of the game’s ability sustain commitment to a regular physical exercise regime. Many people start but fail to sustain alternative forms of physical exercise finding them isolating or boring and good intentions fade away. **Pickleball attracts stayers.**

This is not to suggest that competition is an absent ingredient. Winning is an important marker of individual progress and the number of players of all ages paying for lessons to improve playing skill and tactical knowledge and entering tournaments testifies to the seriousness and commitment with which beginners and improving players at all ages approach the sport.

Pickleball is a friendship generating sport. The statement: New friendships was intended to capture what many players recognize and refer to as the **social nature of the game** which is appreciated after repeated visits to Memorial Park. Selected by 174 respondents, it was the 4th most popular statement. It also featured frequently among added comments (see below). Though widely appreciated, the unexpected opportunity to make new friends was selected by more females and associated with higher frequency of play. Respondents who reported playing several times a week were 25% more likely to value new friendships developed through pickleball.



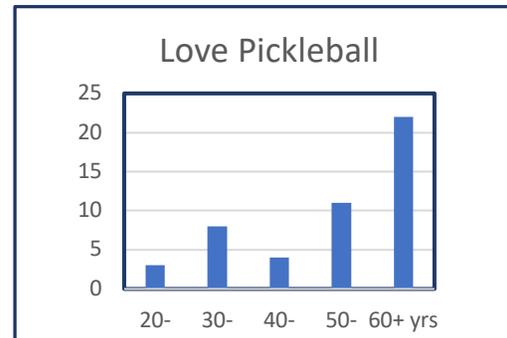
New Friendship also scored more favorably with players living in one, (66%) compared to two person or larger households (56% and 49%). Median age is not associated with this difference.

In their own words : Summary of open-ended comments

The questionnaire included a final invitation to share additional comments. One in three responded expressing a wide range of sentiments, indirect demands to local politicians, statements of gratitude to volunteers especially Ambassador Ho and personal reports of how they had benefited from pickleball.

The most frequent expression was  or Love as a shorthand for several appealing features of pickleball. A total of 48 wrote variations of: 'love it' 'love this game' 'love the sport' 'love Pickleball' 'love the program' 'Love it here'

Some went further: 'Love the game, the camaraderie, the exercise' (male, 55 yrs.), 'Love this game, an awesome addition to my life' (female 64 yrs.)



Females were somewhat more likely to use 'love' to capture their relationship with pickleball. (ratio 29:19), the age profile was in line with the total sample.

Next most popular (40 mentions) were complaints about the absence of facilities for pickleball in the city of LA :

'It is terrible that there are no PB courts in LA' (male 66 yrs.).

'A city the size of LA and all surrounding areas should offer designated PB courts to its tax paying citizens' (female 65 yrs.);

'Would love more courts to play on - there are more players than courts' (female 58yrs);

' West LA is the only city in this area without dedicated real courts for pickleball' (male 50yrs);

'Our family plays on public courts in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Phoenix and Santa Barbara, Los Angeles is the only place we have difficulty finding courts' (female, 61yrs);

'I drive to El Segundo currently because they have excellent courts' (female 65yrs – court hire is \$5 for residents, \$12 for non-residents of El Segundo);

'The politician who brings Pickleball to the city will go down in LA History' (male, 71yrs).

Of remaining comments, many overlap thematically. The words social, fitness or fun are run together or even packaged in a ‘wholistic’ view of health squeezing feeling better, fitness and friendliness in the small space allowed for a comment.

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Examples</u>
Social Nature of Sport (19)	<p>‘Most social sport I have ever experienced’</p> <p>‘Builds Inclusivity, Community, Health, Fitness: Great use of city parks’</p> <p>‘Pickleball is a great way to exercise and socialize for all ages’</p> <p>‘This is good for cooperation and friendships’</p> <p>‘Great sport for all ages and genders’</p> <p>‘Reminds me of my childhood village tennis club where you know everyone and we always had tea with home-made cakes and sandwiches after club sessions’</p>
Fitness, Health & Wellbeing (17)	<p>‘This is a great game to maintain health in our community’</p> <p>‘Pickleball is a life saver for retired folks looking for fitness and social interaction’</p> <p>‘Since I started to play pickleball, I am in a better place physically and mentally.’</p> <p>‘Pickleball has been a life saver for many of us, the community is so welcoming, and camaraderie is unsurpassed’. ‘Saved my life’</p>
Gratitude (15)	<p>‘<i>Ho is Fabulous; ‘I adore Ho’, ‘Ho is terrific’, ‘Thanks so much for setting up the nets’, ‘Thanks for being so kind to beginners’_‘Such a welcoming environment’</i></p> <p>It’s the ambassadors who deserve all the credit for the growth’</p>
Good Fun (12)	<p>‘Having fun, getting in shape, meeting people’, ‘Pickleball is fun’,</p> <p>‘It’s a lot of fun’</p>

The open play system organized by volunteers is a brilliant, low budget device for bringing people of all ages, generations and different walks of life together in shared recreation. It works especially well with pickleball. In Memorial Park, it is not unusual to find unrelated 30 and 60 year-olds playing with and against each other on the same court or different generations of the same family celebrating a birthday on a PB court. One parent reports a teenager’s reply when asked how he spent the summer vacation : “ *With seniors learning pickleball*”. The fact that games are short and generate a lot of laughter makes it appropriate for shared family recreation which takes us back to the reason the game was invented in the first place on Bainbridge Island in the summer of 1965 (see endnote iv). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kPJD4LF1o>

Conclusions: Make the Joyful Sport of Pickleball available in Every LA Neighborhood

Evidence of the effectiveness of pickleball as a regular physical exercise regime enjoyed by millions of older people is plentiful. This survey of West LA players reveals the part pickleball plays in the daily life practices of players and why it sparks the level of commitment needed to make an impact on some of modern America's most serious public health problems, including the serious decline in food energy output arising from highly processed foods and sedentary modern work. The electronic tread mill cannot compete with the multi-sided benefits of a sport which is easy to learn, pulls its weight as a moderately vigorous form of physical exercise, is lots of fun and inherently social.

A TPL study of the economic benefits of public parks in Los Angeles^{xxi} estimated that annual health care savings received by individual residents whose use of public recreation achieved the MVPA^{xxii} standard was \$1170 (2016). Impressive but only 3.4 % of adults reported to a telephone survey that they engaged in MVPA to the required extent. There must be room to improve access to, and participation in recreation which promotes high rates of physical fitness. **Pickleball qualifies.** It is also the most promising candidate to ameliorate the long standing exclusion of seniors from L.A. public park based recreational programs and amenities summarized earlier in this report. The evidence that participants derive personal pleasure plus a sense of social belonging means the sport is also impacting socio-psychological wellness.

The fact that pickleball is up to 8 times more economically productive than its closest competitor, is a further highly significant virtue in 21st century urban environments where land is the most expensive component in providing access to public recreational amenities. So why are the professionals who control recreation in Los Angeles unwilling to embark on simple reforms to expand the versatility and use of existing recreational facilities i.e. paved racquet sport surfaces?

Leaving aside the measly size of the budget, the practical question in a context of financial stringency, is how to re-shape recreational priorities to reduce inequity and stay in step with changing demographics and associated preferences. To be blunt : How to break what appears to be the complacent *business as usual* policy of the Dept. of Recreation and Parks which results in an institutionally entrenched pattern of age and gender exclusion.

If funds are unavailable for new facilities, diversification of existing amenities must be the target of intervention. For pickleball, this means tennis courts. Neighboring cities in the county of LA have already converted dozens either to permanent pickleball or to multi-use surfaces. This is an inexpensive and easily achieved intervention.

The efforts of the West LA pickleball community (so far in vain) to gain access to temporary venues for pickleball in LA Rec. Centers highlight several low cost reforms to bring more accountability, fairness and social justice to the allocation of public resources for recreation. By their reputation for volunteering, welcoming new players and sharing resources, they have also earned a right for their voice to be heard. Here is their **to do list** of revenue neutral reforms.

1. Make equality of access to age and gender appropriate recreation a priority;
2. Stop protecting the recreational rights of tennis players against the rights of other potential users of the same paved public court space;
3. Share court facilities by adding pickleball stripes to at least 25% of all tennis courts in any recreation center;^{xxiii}
4. In parks with less than 3 courts stripe all of them and time-table their use for each sport;
5. Where access to amenities is limited, **prioritize** open play sessions over private court hire;
6. Eliminate rigid rules governing tennis court use which exclude alternative age appropriate uses which pose no risk to **life, limb** or the **paved surface**. **On its own, this would break LA's tennis only monopoly;**
7. Liaise with and support USAPA volunteer Pickleball Ambassadors in organizing regular open play sessions of pickleball at times to be negotiated;
8. Open channels of easy communication with all voluntary recreational associations, including regular Town Hall meetings with Facility Directors in attendance;
9. Give priority to **new** i.e. additional, age and gender appropriate amenities when Quimby funds are the source of finance;
10. Carry out and publicize the results of regular cost benefit analyses of existing patterns of space utilization, including per capita maintenance costs;
11. Where maintenance exceeds annual budgets, apply modest reservation- or quarterly pass fees to cover outgoings including a reserve fund for periodic re-surfacing.
12. Apply exemptions to fees and passes on economic criteria as and where appropriate to ensure that access is not limited by the ability to pay.
13. Acknowledge a public duty to respond constructively to petitions and all volunteer offers.

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Some Questions about Pickleball : Select & Circle your answer or Write in

1. How long have you been playing? a) < 6 months; b) 7-12 months; c) more than 1 year

2. How **often** do you play in an average week? a) less than 1 ; b) at least 1; c) 2 or 3 4+

3. **When** do you mostly play? a) Morning ; b) Afternoon; c) Evening d) Flexible

4. In an average visit, for **how long** do you play? a) 1-2 hours ; b) 3+ hours

5. **Rank** your level of play? a) Beginner); b) Intermediate; c) Advanced

6. Are you a current or former tennis player? a) No); b) Former; c) Current

7. Any other sport you participate in regularly ? Write in:

8. Is Pickleball **easier to learn** than other sports Yes or No

9. Have you paid for lessons to improve your playing skills? Yes or No

10. Have you participated in a Pickleball tournament or Round Robin? a) Yes b) Not yet; c) No

11. **Check 3** of the following to describe what you **like most** about pickleball?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Open play sessions, just turn and play
<input type="checkbox"/>	So much fun and laughter
<input type="checkbox"/>	New friendships
<input type="checkbox"/>	Good outdoor game to keep fit
<input type="checkbox"/>	Combines other sports I always enjoyed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Making more progress than other games I have tried
<input type="checkbox"/>	Less risk of injury at my time of life

Other Write in?

12. My age is I am Female or Male

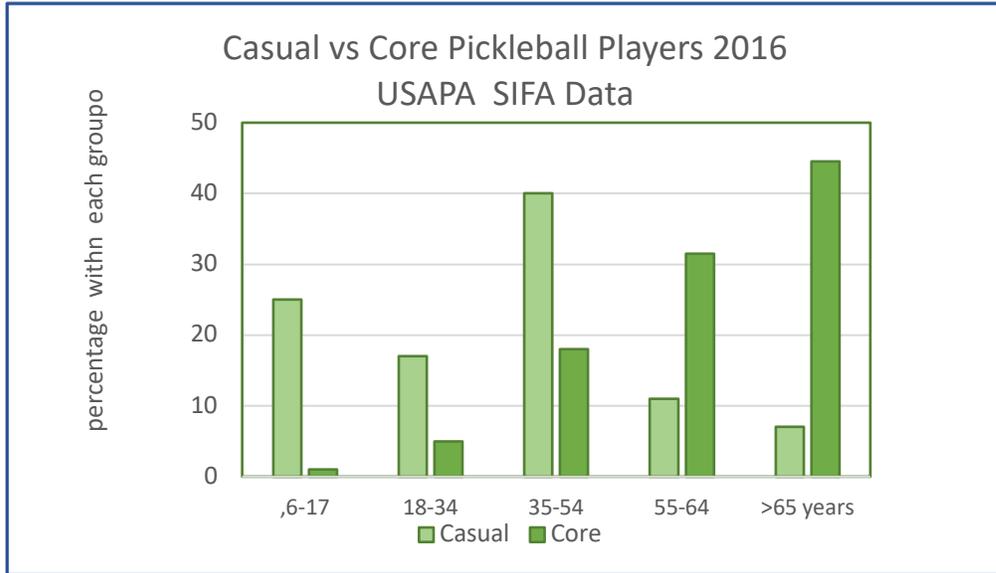
13. My Household Size is a) Just me; b) Me + 1; c) Three plus

14. My address is a) Santa Monica; b) City of LA c) Other.....Write in.

Please add any comment you would like to share.....

Thank you for helping with this **anonymous** survey. If you complete this questionnaire at home, please **return** the hard copy next time you come to play or **scan it and send** to nhart@soc.ucla.edu

Appendix B: Pickleball: Age and Frequency of Play US 2016



References & Websites

<https://howmuch.net/articles/richest-cities-in-the-us>.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/2018/06/27/pickleball-countrys-fastest-growing-sport-also-popular-cook-county-jail/718232002/>

<https://www.3rdactmagazine.com/lifestyle/what-the-heck-is-pickleball/>

<https://howmuch.net/articles/richest-cities-in-the-us>

<https://www.bobbyriggs.net>

<https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/prbr210318a-item202.pdf>

<https://www.tpl.org/city/los-angeles-california>

<https://www.tpl.org/econbenefits-losangeles>

http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/ParksAndRecreation/PoliciesPlanning/PickleballPilotStudyReport-Final_2019.pdf

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kPJDj4LF1o>

Books & Papers

1949 Tennis is My Racket Bobby Riggs, Simon and Shuster

1973 Court Hustler Bobby Riggs with George McGann, Lippincott

2016 Ty Cobb: Baseball and American Manhood Steve Elliot Tripp
Rowman & Littlefield Lanham, Maryland

RAND HEALTH 2006 ' Park Use and Physical Activity in a Sample of Public Parks in the City of Los Angeles. Deborah A. Cohen, Amber Sehgal, Stephanie Williamson, Roland Sturm, Thomas L. McKenzie, Rosa Lara, Nicole Lurie https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR357.html

RAND 2016 'City of Los Angeles Neighborhood Parks: Research Findings and Policy Implication (2003-2015) Cohen, D.A, DeRose, K.P., Han, B., Williamson, S., Marsh, T., Raen, L.
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1573.html

End Notes

ⁱ People playing almost every day often describe themselves as **addicted** to this joyful sport
<https://www.3rdactmagazine.com/lifestyle/what-the-heck-is-pickleball/>

ⁱⁱ The survey whose findings are reported here was undertaken to build a detailed profile of PB players to add gravity to the campaign for pickleball amenities in all local parks of the City of Los Angeles.

ⁱⁱⁱ This estimate is drawn from the Sports % Fitness Industry Assoc. Participation Report. (SIFA Feb. 2021)

^{iv} RAND Corporation of Santa Monica staffed by a talented group of social scientists

^v RAND 2006 carried out household surveys within a 2 mile radius of LA parks in their study and on site observations of park use 7 days a week.

^{vi} In 2018, a local nationally ranked pickleball player negotiated the inclusion of pickleball stripes in a re-surfacing project of courts in Stoner Park, West LA. Though the park authorities seemed ready to cooperate, the resurfacing went ahead without the promised modification. Between 2013-2016, Santa Monica's ambassador for pickleball was active but unsuccessful in offering intro pickleball programs to several local LA park directors.

^{vii} Nine times out of ten, public tennis courts are used for singles, pickleball courts are used for doubles.

^{viii} In 1973, Bobby Rigg (then 55yrs) challenged Billie Jean King (then 29 yrs) to a primetime Battle of Sexes tennis match in the Houston Astrodome in front of 30,000 spectators but broadcast to 60 million US tennis fans and 90 million worldwide. He had already defeated Margaret Court ('Mother's Day Massacre') in May of the same year. This time, it was a female victory in 3 straight sets.

^{ix} Winning Wimbledon, the world's most famous tournament in the amateur era, Riggs officially received the famous trophy and unofficially, the sum of almost \$2 million (1939 prices) by betting on himself to win all three titles, singles, men's, and mixed doubles. He remains the only male player to achieve this triple win at Wimbledon.

^x A.Y.S.O is a wonderful example of what volunteers can achieve eliminating gender inequality in public recreation.

^{xi} In Ty Cobb: Baseball and American Manhood Steve Tripp traces the role of Ty Cobb's vision of baseball : " a red-blooded sport for red-blooded men" shaping American sporting culture for the 20th century. Baseball, Cobb's Great American Pastime, continues to monopolize recreational space in LA Rec. Centers

^{xii} See footnote 11.

^{xiii} Covid and Zoom have both curtailed opportunities for social contact at work which increases the importance of outdoor recreation as a context for social interaction.

^{xiv} The choice was limited to maintain minimum cell numbers

^{xv} Data for illustrating the national age profile of tennis players is collected via telephone household surveys and published by the Tennis Industry Association (TIA) which supplies strategic information to corporations in the Tennis Economy. T.I.A. statistics come at a hefty price. They are useful to monitor the state of the game to inform corporate investment policy. They are collected via large scale sports and fitness surveys and are not strictly comparable with the primary data collected direct from active on court PB players in this West LA survey. Even so, the age distribution of the two sports is so different that a comparison is justified. Appendix 2 displays the national pickleball demographic profile using the same type of data.

^{xvi} *How many of these 6 -8 year old kids are classified as tennis players by parents responding to a SIFA Household survey on the basis that their children enrolled in regimented tennis camps during working hours in school holidays is unclear.*

^{xvii} *A preference for morning play is shared by most older players year-round but the time of year when the survey was conducted also played a part. In July 2021, players took advantage of cooler early morning temperatures. Another factor was the Covid pandemic which left even working age players with more daylight time on their hands for one reason or another. This probably aided the 21% increase in pickleball popularity occurring in year 1 of the pandemic.*

^{xviii} *Data gathered by the Sports & Fitness Industry confirms the age and frequency play pattern reported by survey participants. Appendix 2 (p.28) charts the data for pickleball gathered in 2016, shows a steady increase in frequency of play by age among PB players contacted via a SIFA household survey.*

^{xix} *This echoes an observation of Barney Mc Callum, one of the founders of Pickleball back in the 1960s. Though the game was 'invented' to amuse children, it immediately became an adult game. The morning after its invention Barney remembered that he could not get up soon enough to join the other adults on the court. The following charming YouTube video contains plenty of evidence that pickleball was a multi-generational game in its early days. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kPJDi4LF1o>*

^{xx} *Pickleball is an ideal entrée to racquet sports for children. The paddle is light and maneuverable, the ball is unpressurized, does not travel far. Most important of all, pickleball is a lot easier to learn than tennis. Once the economic efficiency of pickleball as a game for PE classes is appreciated the tennis lesson will become a strictly an after school hours tuition episode in homes where parents can afford the tennis pro's hourly fees.*

^{xxi} *<https://www.tpl.org/econbenefits-losangeles> 70% of the annual economic benefit LA's park system goes to home owners living close to a park. Overall the annual value of their property rises by a whopping \$2.29 billion.*

^{xxiii} *Adding PB stripes or complete conversion of 2 out of every 6 public tennis, leaves a majority (4) of the courts allocated for tennis. The 2 converted courts make 8 PB courts for 32 players.*

Abbreviations used in the text

AYSO: American Youth Soccer Organization;
C.D.C : Centers for Disease Control;
Intro: Introductory;
L.A.: City of Los Angeles. (not LA County);
MVPA: Moderately Vigorous Physical Activity;
PB: Pickleball (used as adjective);
PPH: Per Person Hours of Recreation,
Rec.: Recreation
SIFA: Sports and Fitness Association;
TIA: Tennis Industry Association;
TPL: Trust for Public Land
USAPA: United States of America Pickleball Association

Nonstop Printing, Hollywood, CA

website: <https://www.nonstopprinting.com>