



## 2020 Pickleball Fact Sheet

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

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

The sport is governed by the USA Pickleball Association ([USAPA.org](http://USAPA.org)), which maintains the rules, promotes the sport, sanctions tournaments, and provides player rankings. For more information, please visit: [www.usapa.org](http://www.usapa.org).

### **History**

2020 marks the 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of pickleball, as it was invented in 1965 on Bainbridge Island, a short ferry ride from Seattle, by three enterprising dads – Joel Pritchard, Bill Bell, and Barney McCallum. Their children were bored with their usual summertime activities. It evolved from the original handmade equipment and simple rules into a popular sport throughout North America and is now taking off in other parts of the world.

The origin of the game's name is very interesting, especially since no pickles are used. Accounts of how the name originated differ. According to Joel Pritchard's wife (Joan), she started calling the game pickleball because "the combination of different sports reminded me of the pickle boat in crew where oarsmen were chosen from the leftovers of other boats". However, according to Barney McCallum, the game was officially named after the Pritchards' dog Pickles

who would chase the ball and run off with it. According to McCallum, “The Pritchards had a dog named Pickles, and you’re having fun at a party, right? So anyways, what the hell, let’s just call it pickleball.”

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

### **The Court**

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

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

### **The Equipment**

Competitive paddles used in pickleball are constructed from a high-tech composite, ranging in cost from \$50-\$150 each. An official pickleball is made of plastic and is between .78 to .935 ounces and 2.874 to 2.972 inches in diameter. There are no color restrictions other than the ball must be a single, consistent color. The USAPA has tested and approved several outdoor and indoor balls for official tournament play. For more information on equipment approved for sanctioned play, see the following:

[Approved Balls](#)

[Approved Paddles](#)

### **Places to Play**

Every US state and all Canadian provinces now have pickleball venues. Senior residence communities, YMCAs, local community recreation centers, schools and parks are just some of the places likely to have pickleball courts. The USAPA compiles the most up-to-date and comprehensive listing of places to play on a new dedicated website: [places2play.org](https://places2play.org). The known places to play totaled of 7,928 at the end of 2019 which represents an increase of 1,335 or approximately 111 new locations per month.

### **Tournaments**

The USAPA supports and sanctions tournaments throughout the United States. See [Upcoming Events List](#) for a current list of upcoming pickleball tournaments. In 2009, the USAPA held the first Nationals Pickleball Tournament in Buckeye, Arizona. Over 400 players participated in divisions for all ages. In 2019, the Margaritaville USA Pickleball National Championships were

held at the world-renowned Indian Wells Tennis Garden, just outside of Palm Springs, CA. The event drew more than **2,000** registered players who competed for \$80,000 in prize money: the largest cash purse in the history of the sport. [Click here](#) for detailed information. The event also included over 200 hours of livestreamed matches.

**Estimated Pickleball Players Within the United States**

In the Sports & Fitness Industry Association’s (SFIA) 2019 Pickleball Participant Report, they reported pickleball currently has **3.3 million** players in the US. SFIA formed in 1906 and is the premier trade association for top brands, manufacturers, retailers and marketers in the American sporting goods and fitness industry. Here are a few details from the 2019 SFIA Pickleball Participation Report:

- Of the 3.3 million players, 2.0 million were “Casual” participants who play 1-7 times/year
- 1.3 million were “Core” participants who play 8 or more times a year
- The Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR) for all players from 2015 to 2018 was 9.7%, for a total growth rate of 29.1% over three years
- 62% of participants are men; the percentage of participants who are women grew from 33% to 38% over three years
- The average age for all players is 41 years old
- The average age for Core players is 54 and Casual players 33 years old
- 64% of Core players are 55 or older
- 84% of Casual players are 54 or younger
- From 2015-2018:
  - the percentage of Core players ages 54 and younger grew from 25% to 36%
  - the percentage of Casual players ages 54 and younger grew from 78% to 84%
  - these increases in the percentages of both Core and Casual less than 55 years of age reflect faster growth among younger players
- The percentages by age of Total, Core, and Casual participants are:

<b>AGE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>CORE</b>	<b>CASUAL</b>
<b>6-17</b>	16.7%	8.1%	22.2%
<b>8-34</b>	28.0%	11.4%	38.6%
<b>35-54</b>	20.3%	16.3%	22.9%
<b>55-64</b>	14.9%	24.6%	8.7%
<b>65+</b>	20.2%	39.6%	7.7%

- The 3.3 million participants represent 1.1% of the US population of 301M people ages 6+. The 1.3M Core players represent 0.43% of that population.
- The US regions with the largest number of Core participants were:
  - South Atlantic (FL, GA, SC, NC, VA, WV, DC) = 276,000
  - East North Central (WI, MI, IL, OH, IN) = 268,000
  - Pacific (CA, OR, WA) = 260,000
  - Mountain (AZ, NV, NM, UT, CO, ID, WY, MT) = 164,000

- These four regions account for 74% of Core players
- The fastest growing regions are the South Atlantic and Mountain with AAGR of 19.5% and 18.0% respectively.
- 58% of Core players live east of the Mississippi River (750K)

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

### **The USA Pickleball Association** [www.usapa.org](http://www.usapa.org)

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

### **USAPA Ambassador Program**

USAPA currently has a network of over 1,900 volunteer ambassadors who have pledged to promote the sport of pickleball and the USAPA in their local area. They serve as local representatives for USAPA for all activities related to pickleball within the area they represent. Ambassadors support and abide by all official rules, assist with local clinics/tournaments and look for opportunities to add/grow the game in their community. The USAPA Ambassador Search feature can be found on the USAPA website. [Click here.](#)

### **Community Grant Program**

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

### **High School Grant Program**

The High School Grant Program will award a maximum of \$350 in reimbursement to USAPA members for the purchase of start-up pickleball equipment for regular high school physical education classes and after school programs. The grants funding will be equally targeted to every defined USAPA region and when feasible awarded to different communities within the region. Considerations will be given to schools and districts where pickleball is being introduced into the high school physical education curriculum and schools that USAPA deems most in need of financial assistance. For more information please click on the following link: [Click here.](#)

## USAPA Social Media

USAPA social media followers continues is steady growth with December 2019 followers on Facebook at 27,300, almost double from two years ago and Instagram a new channel in 2019 and year-end followers of 7,500. In addition, there were more than 7 million Facebook impressions throughout 2019.

### Facebook

- [USA Pickleball Association](#) @usapickleballassociation
- [USAPA Juniors Pickleball](#) @juniorpickleball
- [USAPA Places2Play](#) @places2play

### Instagram

- [USA Pickleball](#) @ usapickleball
- [USAPA Juniors](#) @juniorpickleball

### Youtube

- [USA Pickleball](#) @ usapickleball

### LinkedIn

- [USA Pickleball](#) @ usapickleball

## 2019 USAPA Facts and Highlights (as of 12.31.19)

- **Places to Play:** USAPA Places to Play Database: **7,928**. Over 1,300 new locations were added to the database (over 111 new locations per month).
- **Membership:** **39,722** (increase of 8,919 or 743 per month). Since 2017, USAPA membership has doubled in size.
- **Total Courts:** **30,238**
- **Ambassadors:** **1,904**
- **Sanctioning:** USAPA sanctioned a record 192 sanctioned tournaments
- **Grants:** USAPA awarded 119 Community Grants and 27 High School Grants, with a total allocation of \$42,000. Pickle-Ball, Inc. joined USAPA and donated 828 wooden paddles to various programs.
- **2019 National Championships:** The Margaritaville USA Pickleball National Championships had over **2,000** registered players and the sport's highest ever cash purse of \$80,000.
- **Certified Referees:** USAPA added another 45 certified referees bringing the new, yet growing list to 206 certified referees.
- **Referee Evaluations:** USAPA referee evaluators conducted a total of 84 referee evaluations.
- **Level I & II Referees:** Launched in April, USAPA added a new referee training program. In 2019, approximately 70 people were trained as either a Level I or Level II referee.

- **Medal Matches:** All medal matches in the 2019 Margaritaville USA Pickleball National Championships were again called by USAPA certified referees.
- **USAPA UTPR Ratings:** USAPA partnered with Pickleballtournaments.com to produce and launch the sport's first results-based tournament player ratings (UTPRs). See <https://www.usapa.org/usapa-tournament-player-ratings/>
- **Professional Pickleball Registry:** USAPA's teaching and training partner, Professional Pickleball Registry (PPR), a subsidiary of the Professional Tennis Registry (PTR) ended their year with 1,665 PPR members. See <https://www.usapa.org/usapa-ppr-agreement/>
- **Hall of Fame:** 2019 Inductees were Daniel Gabanek, Jennifer Lucore, Steve Paranto and Enrique Ruiz.
- **Newsletter:** USAPA produced 6 newsletters in 2019. Archive copies of the newsletter are available at <https://www.usapa.org/usapa-newsletter/>
- **Pickleball Magazine:** USAPA's publishing partner, Dollard Publishing produced another 7 issues Pickleball Magazines and one Product Guide <https://usapa.org/pickleball-magazine/>
- **Referee Training Page:** To help educate and inform referees and the general public on referee matters, the USAPA updated the following comprehensive webpage: <https://www.usapa.org/referee-training-tools/>
- **USAPA/IFP Rulebook:** The USAPA rules committee and board updated and approved the 2019 Official Rulebook.
- **Referee Handbook:** The USAPA Referee Handbook was updated in 2019 by the Certified Referee Handbook Committee.
- **Ambassador Handbook:** The 2019 USAPA Ambassador Handbook was updated by a special committee of ambassadors. The book was distributed to all ambassadors and is updated periodically with new sections.
- **Paddles & Balls:** USAPA tested and approved 134 paddles and 10 balls in 2019.

**For photo requests and media inquiries**

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