



International  
**Quadball**  
Association

# GENDER REPRESENTATION IN QUADBALL

SURVEY 2023





## BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

Inclusivity and gender equality is at the heart of quadball, and since 2019 there has been support from our community to introduce the rule unofficially known as the ‘3-Max gender rule’.

Currently, quadball has a ‘4-Max gender rule’, meaning there may not be more than 4 individuals of the same gender on pitch at any time. The introduction of 3-Max would mean the maximum number of players of the same gender is reduced to 3, which promotes inclusivity and gender equality on pitch.



Photo by Tama Ortiz

COVID-19 impacted the implementation of this rule, but there has still been strong support for many years. There have been notable player-led projects showcasing their support, such as a petition that was circulated via social media in 2022 and a motion passed at the 2023 Annual Assembly, voted on by full members of the IQA. There were however concerns that the current conversations about the '3-Max gender rule' did not adequately address the concerns members may have of its implementation. The rule change was also not passed by the 2022 Rules Team and Rules Committee, which is a representative body with individuals from IQA Full and Associate Members as well as IQA volunteers.

In order to provide a neutral space for the debate to take place the IQA created the 'Gender Representation in Quadball Survey' through a dedicated committee.

The goals of this survey was to understand:

Community support for the '3-Max gender rule'

The experiences of different genders in games and training at different levels of competition

Any barriers or issues that may arise from the implementation of the '3-Max gender rule'

Any exemptions to the '3-Max gender rule' that may be necessary, how long they should be implemented for and if there is community support for exemptions.

## Key findings

516 responses were received.

The survey concluded that a strong majority of respondents are supportive of the implementation of the '3-Max gender rule'. There was also clear support for exemptions applicable to a range of teams, from local teams to national teams. Most respondents support exemptions for at least a two year period, with a smaller group of respondents supporting the implementation of exemptions for a longer period of time.

Overall, respondents believe the implementation of the '3-Max gender rule' would positively impact player experiences, leading to fairer distribution of game time and assessment of skill, as well as increasing the value of players of all genders.

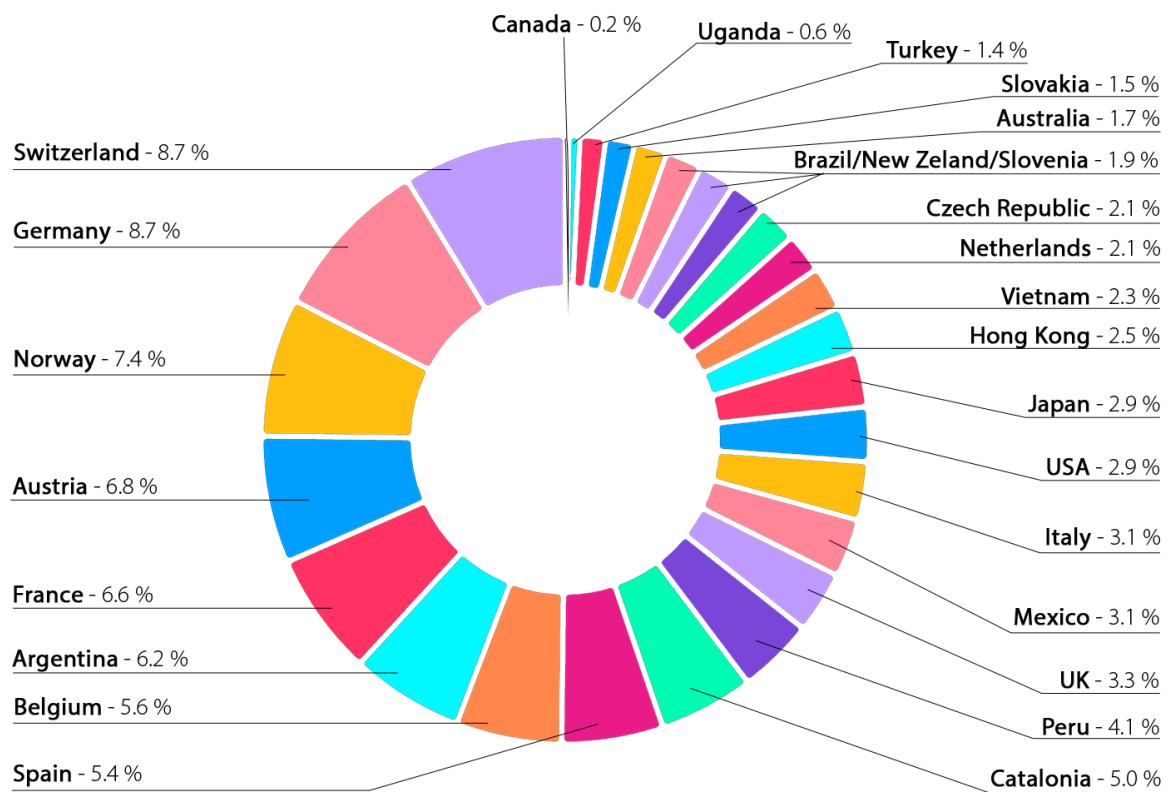
It was also noted that the majority of respondents do not believe that their perceived gender impacts their current playing time, and this remained consistent across all

genders. A majority of respondents also revealed their teams have already implemented the 3-Max gender rule.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

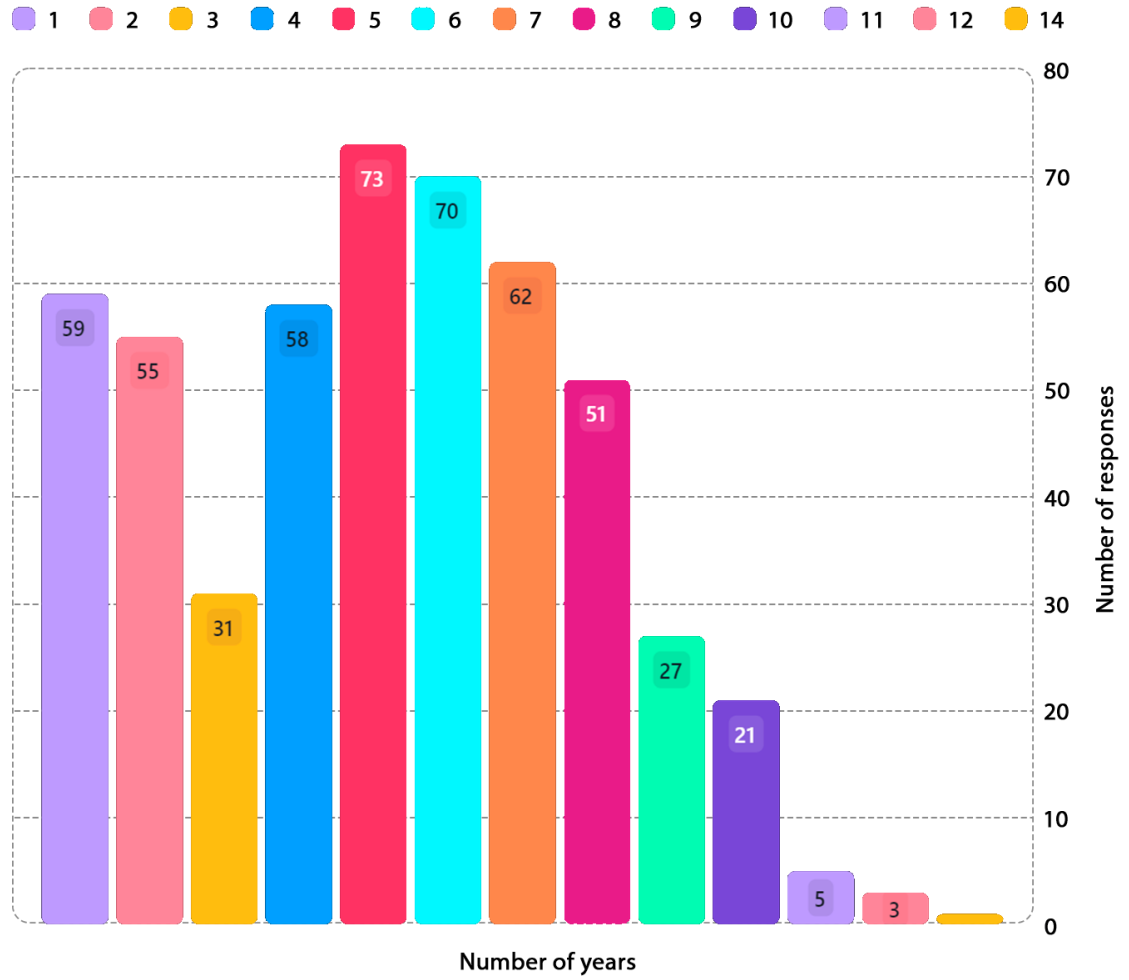
### Player profile

#### 1. Which NGB do you primarily play in?

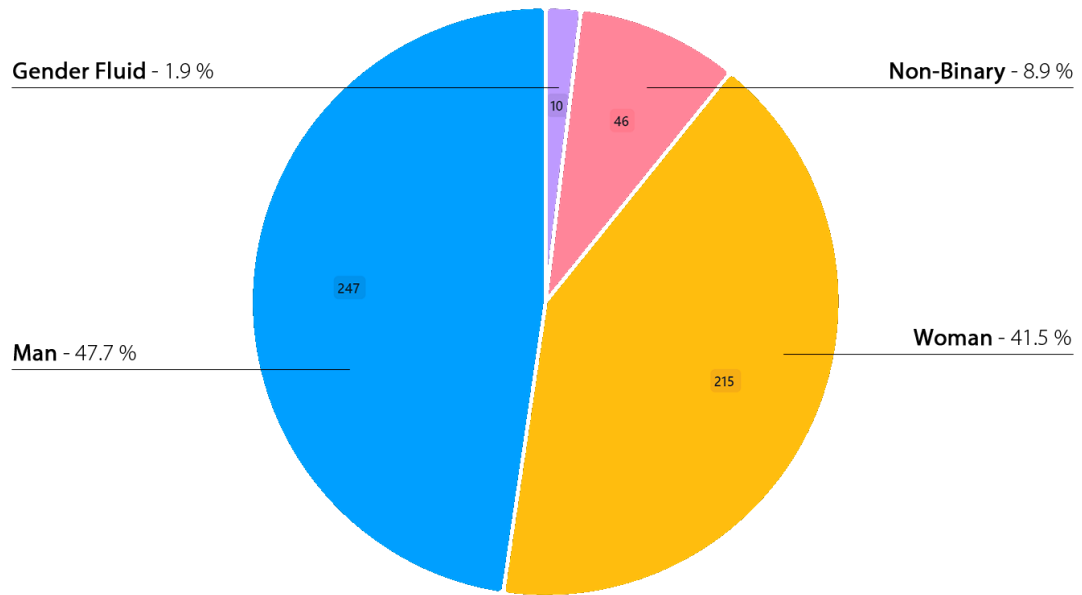




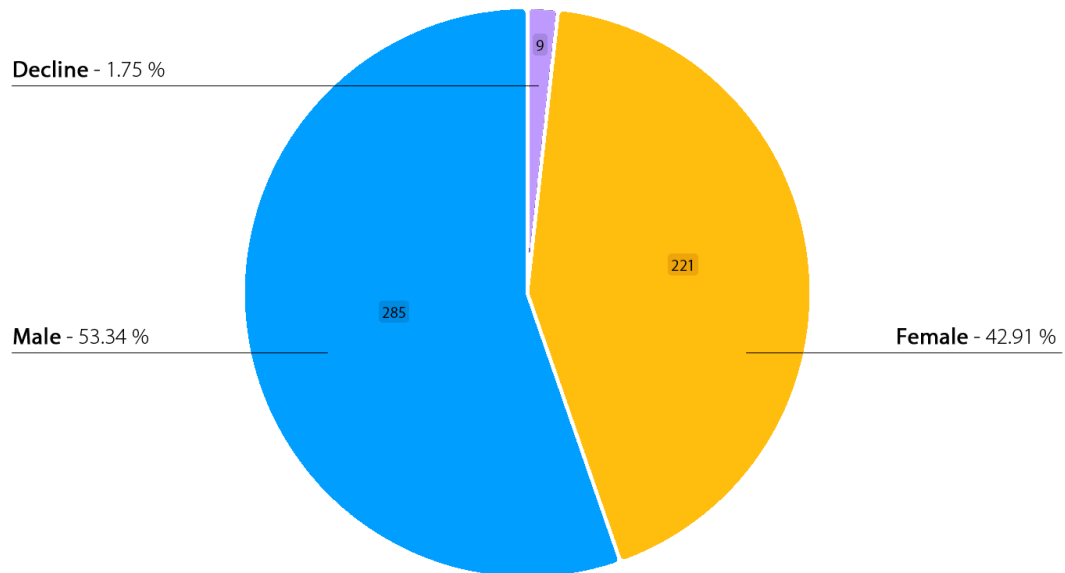
## 2. For how many years have you been playing quadball?



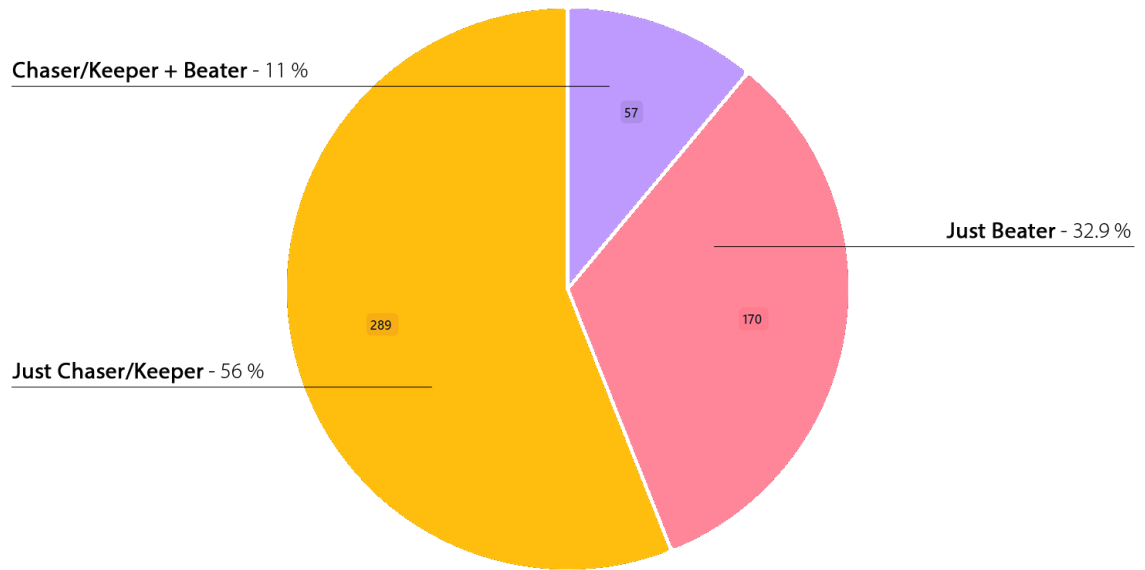
### 3. What is your gender?



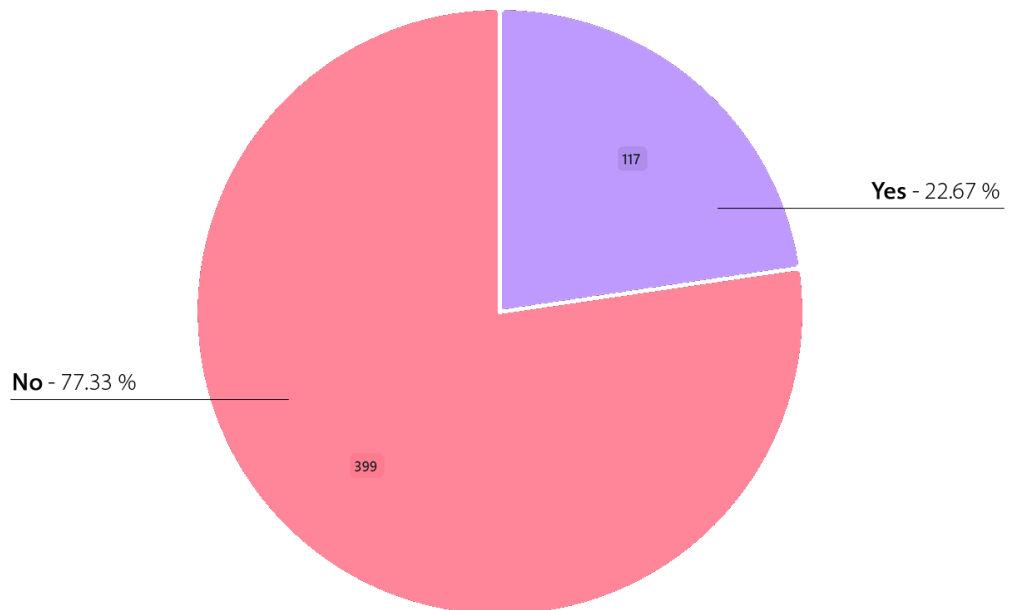
### 4. What was your assigned sex at birth?



5. What is your current primary position when there is no seeker in play?

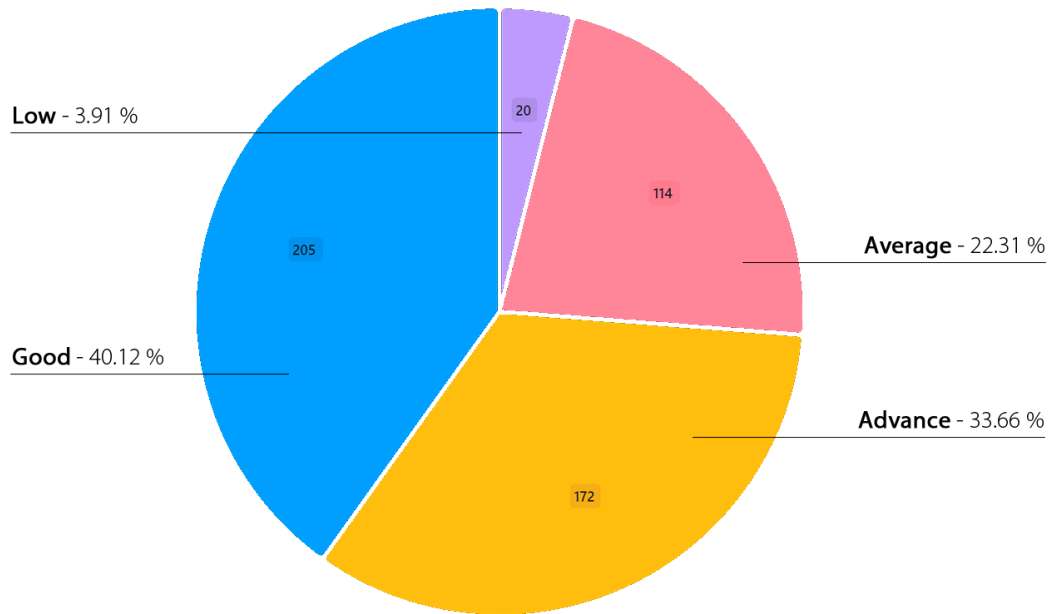


6. Do you commonly play as a seeker?

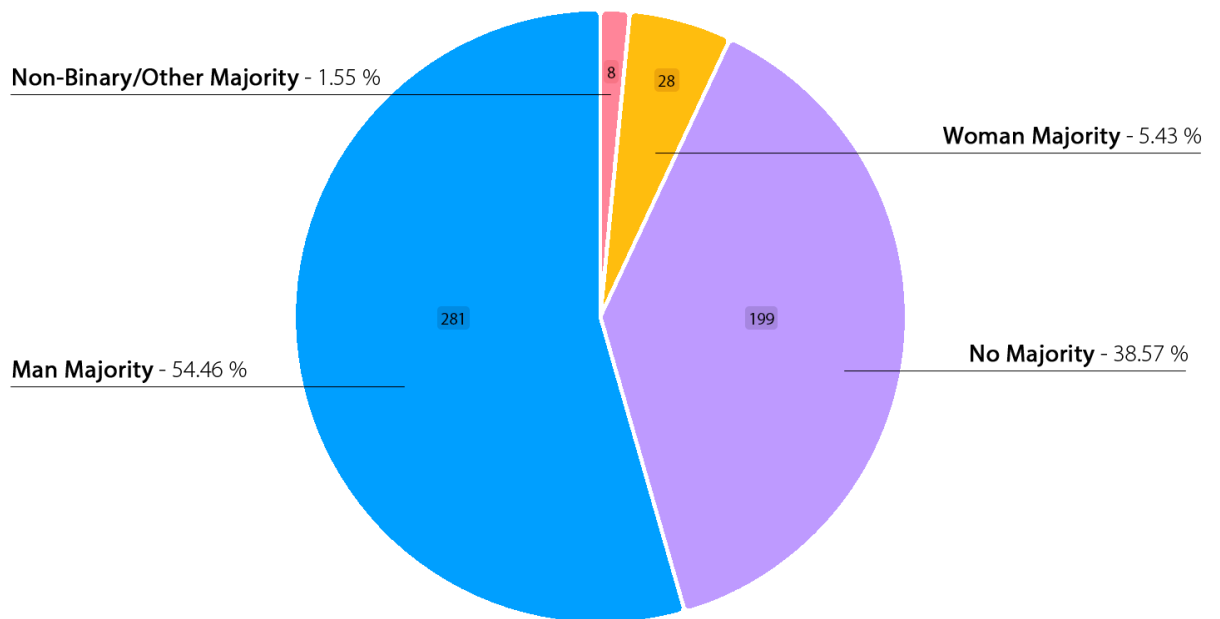




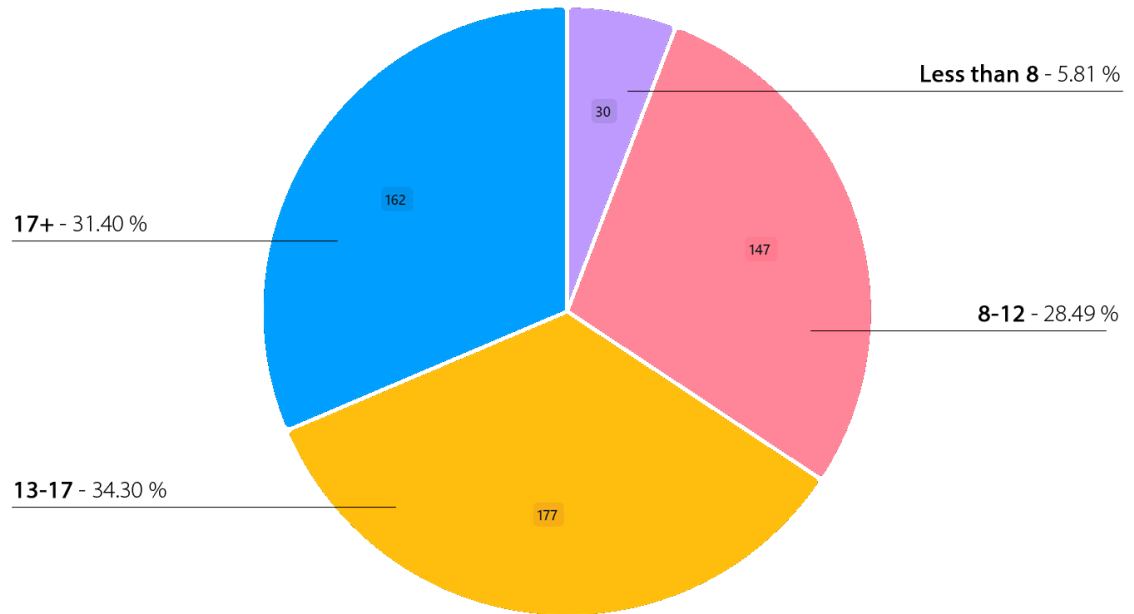
**7. How would you define your personal level of play?**



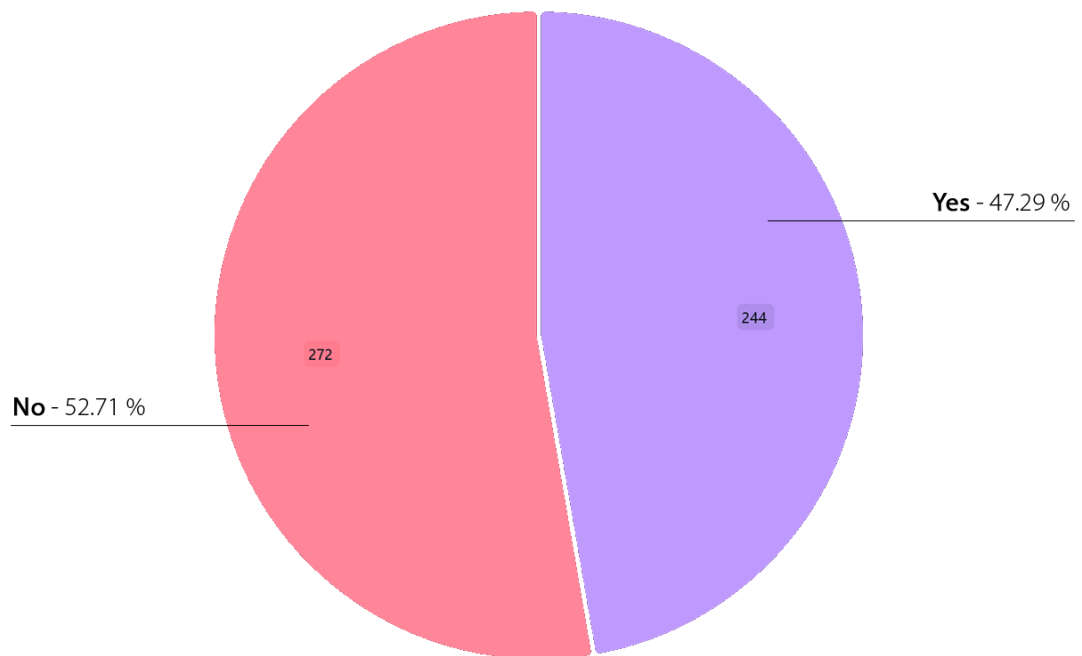
**8. Is there a gender majority in the team you primarily play in?**



**9. How many players are there in the team you primarily play in?**

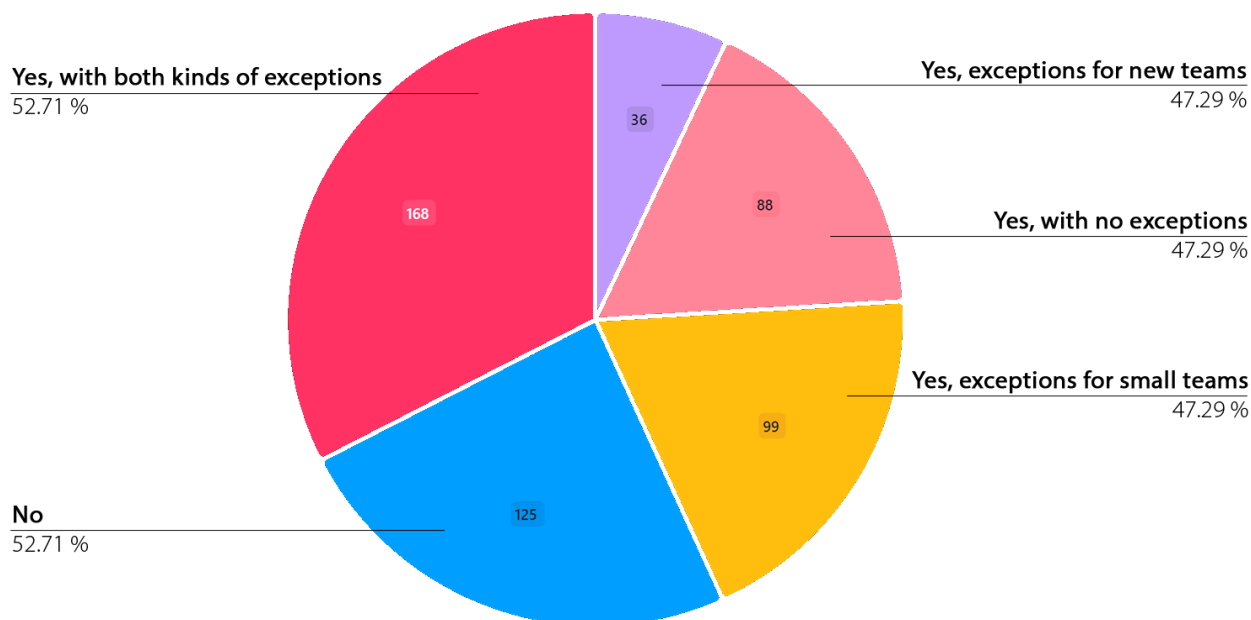


**10. Have you been selected in a national team during the past three years?**

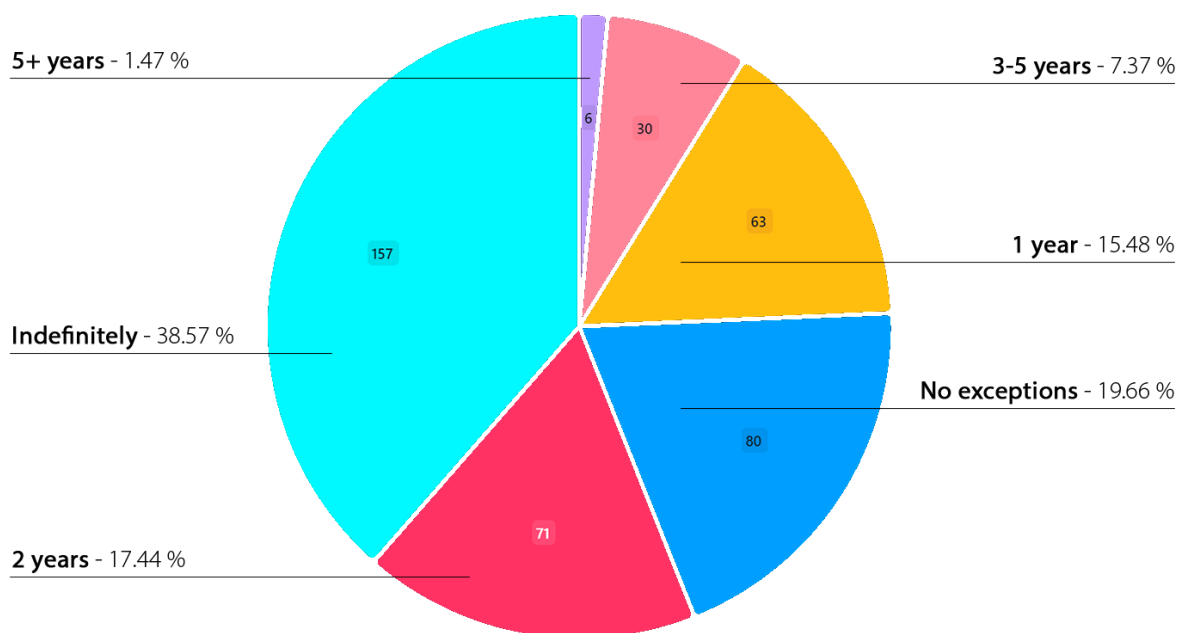


## Part 1

1. Do you believe that your NGB should adopt the 3-max rule for games between teams within your country?

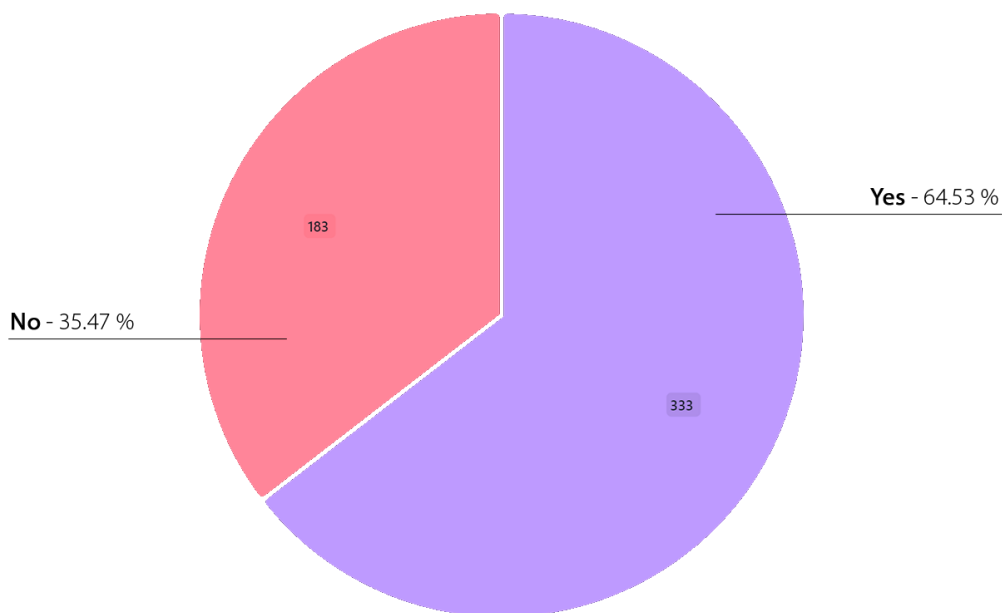


2. If you answered above that the rule should be implemented with exceptions, for how long do you believe those exceptions should be allowed after the rule would be implemented?

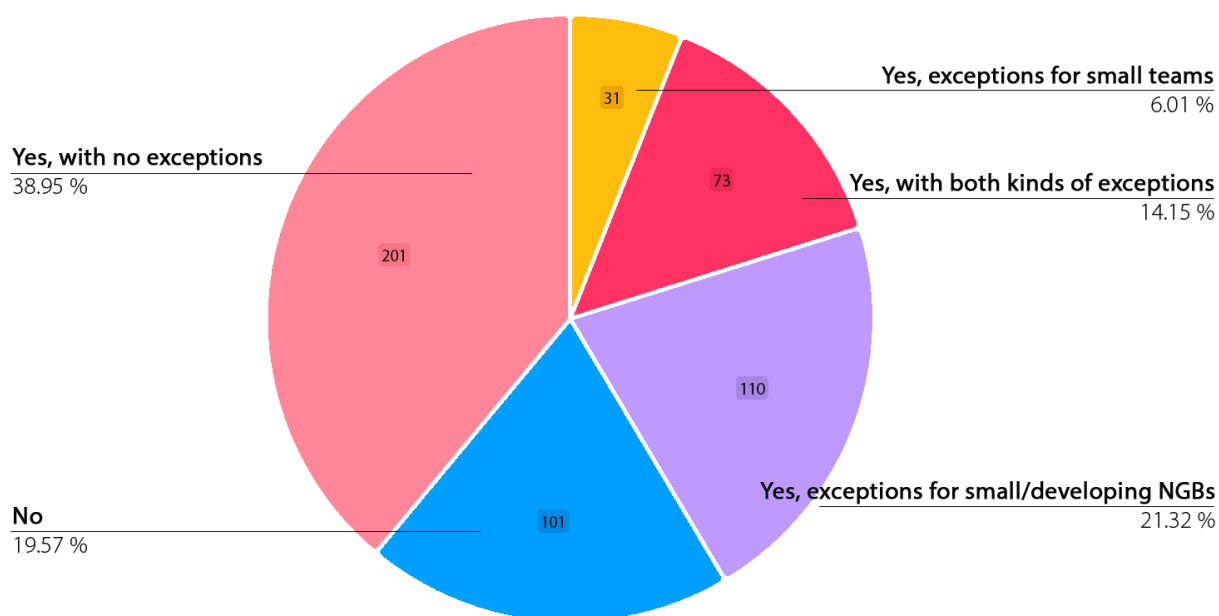




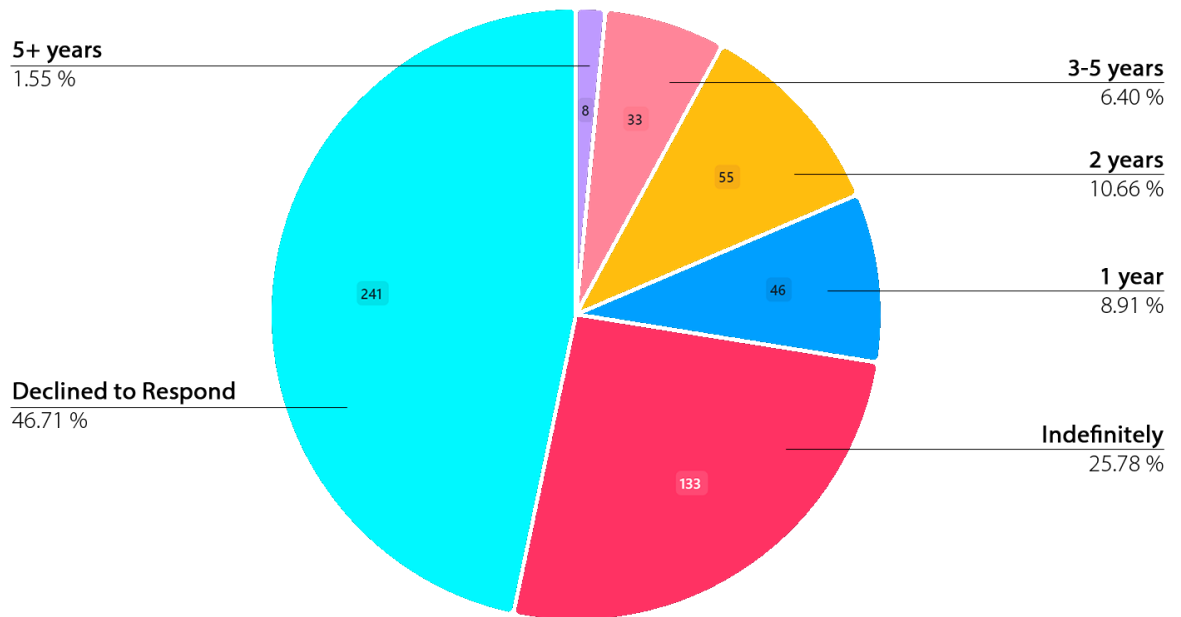
**3. Do you believe that teams operating under an exception to the gender rule should be allowed to compete for official games / tournaments?**



**4. Do you believe that the IQA should adopt the 3-max rule for games between national teams (for events such as Continental Games and World Cup)**



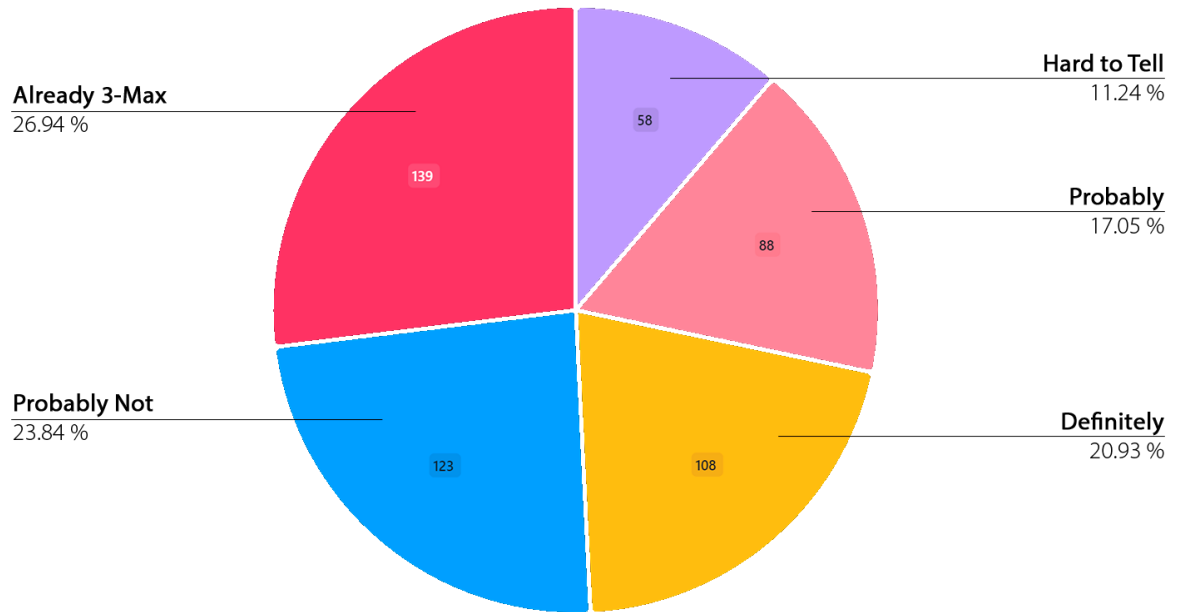
5. If you answered above that the rule should be implemented with exceptions, for how long do you believe those exceptions should be allowed after the rule would be implemented?



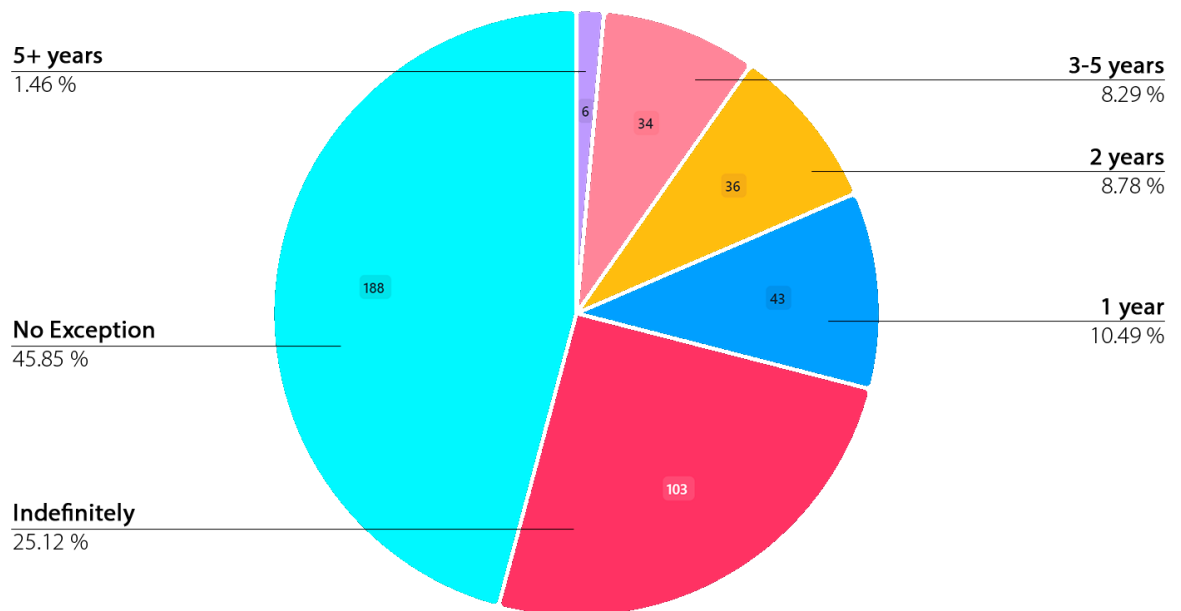
242 respondents did not answer this question. It was not a compulsory question as it was dependent on respondents supporting exemptions for national teams, asked in the previous question.

## Part 2

1. Compared to the current season: do you believe your team would need an exception to the 3-max gender rule to maintain the same level of game attendance, if the rule were to be implemented next season?

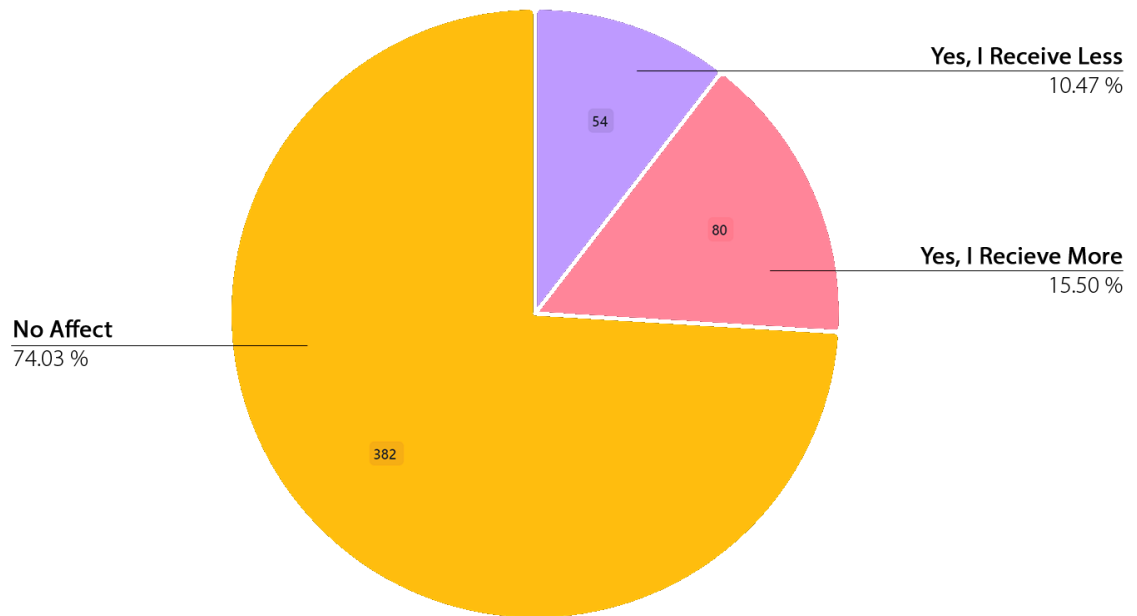


2. If you answered that your team definitely or probably would need an exception, for how long do you believe your team would need the exception before it could consistently attend events under that rule?

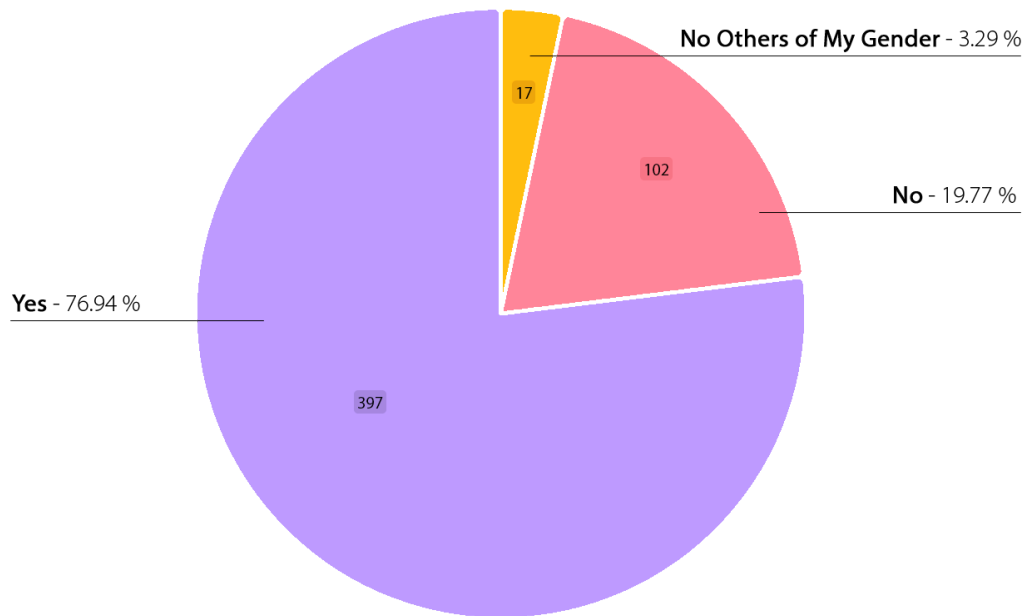




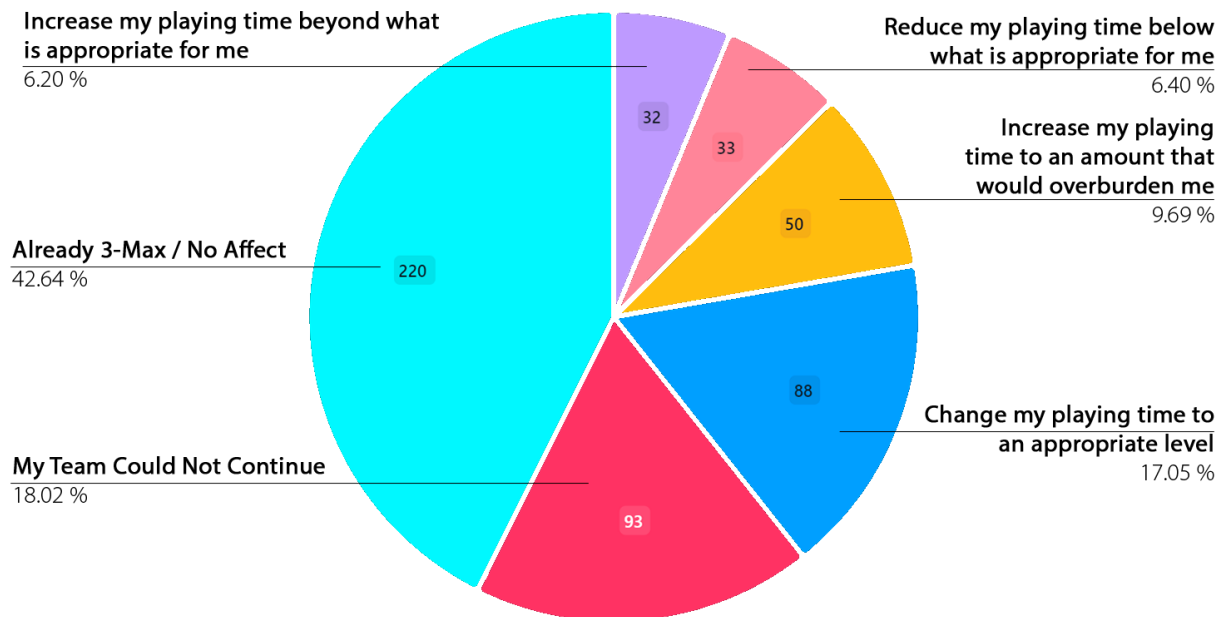
**3. Do you believe that your gender or sex, or the perception of your gender, is affecting your playing time relative to how much you should be playing?**



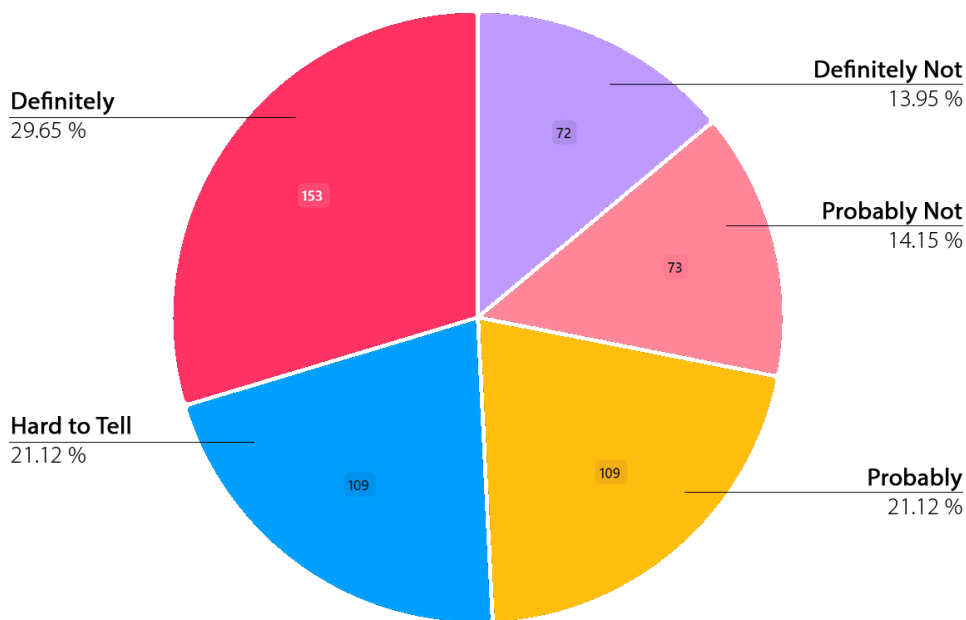
**4. Do you believe others on your team who identify with the same gender as yourself would generally answer the previous question with the same answer as you gave?**



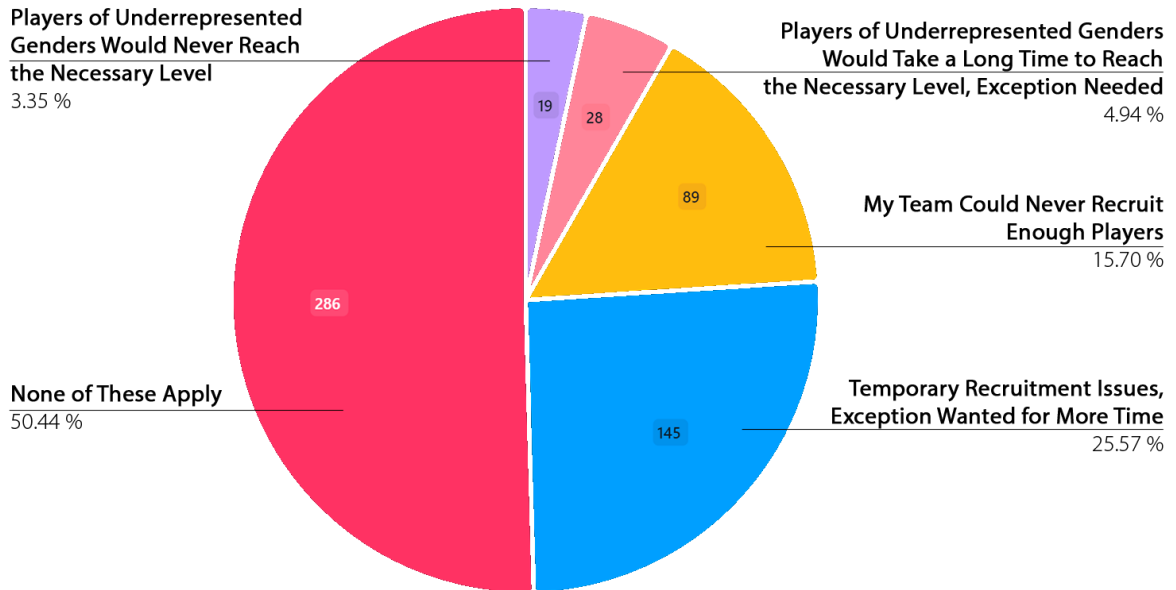
5. If a 3-max gender rule were to be implemented for your team's games now, without exceptions, how would that affect your playing time with your team's current roster?



6. Do you believe that the 3-max gender rule would contribute (or has contributed) towards a more appropriate distribution of gametime amongst different genders within your team?



**7. If you believe implementing 3-max would inappropriately distribute gametime amongst different genders within your team, why would it be the case, in your opinion?**



**8. If you answered “None of the above”, please give the reasons why a 3-max rule would inappropriately distribute gametime amongst different genders within your team:**

Many respondents used this section to further develop their views on 3-max. While a large part of these comments were simply supportive of 3-max, some challenges were mentioned multiple times:

**Player exhaustion**

The most common concern was that the 3-max rule could lead to player exhaustion for underrepresented genders, in particular for women. Teams with limited recruitment options, especially in countries where women are less likely to engage in contact sports, might struggle to recruit enough players of underrepresented genders to not overburden the ones that are currently on their teams.

Many respondents however believed that 3-max would encourage teams to actively recruit women, which would lead to a more balanced gender representation over time.

**Unpredictability of player availability**

The unpredictability of player availability was described as another important challenge. Many respondents pointed out that small teams experience difficulties



to ensure balanced rosters for each game, as they have fluctuating gender majorities depending on which players can make themselves available for official games and tournaments. A 3-max rule would make it more difficult for them to form their rosters.

### **Overall recruitment issues**

More structural issues, such as the lack of visibility of the sport and the overall recruitment struggles in many regions, were highlighted as barriers for an effective implementation of 3-max. Some respondents considered that a 3-max gender rule would push certain teams to extinction.

Many respondents therefore insisted on the importance of having an exemption system curating for these challenges faced by smaller teams or by regions where quabdall is currently underdeveloped.

### **Oversimplification of gender discrimination**

Some respondents also argued that the numerical approach of the “3-max rule” oversimplifies the complex dynamics of team sports. They suggested that the focus should shift away from gender-specific rules and focus more on cultivating a coaching environment and community culture that prioritize skill development and player satisfaction, regardless of gender identities.

Many respondents however believed that implementing the 3-max rule would stimulate (or has stimulated, where the rule is already voluntarily applied) skill development and satisfaction for players that feel traditionally less valued, such as women. They argued that their integration in the game dynamics would become more essential and would allow them to exercise a wider variety of skills.

### **Substitution line challenges**

In addition, a few respondents underlined that the 3-max rule would make it more difficult to have players of different genders within the same rotations.

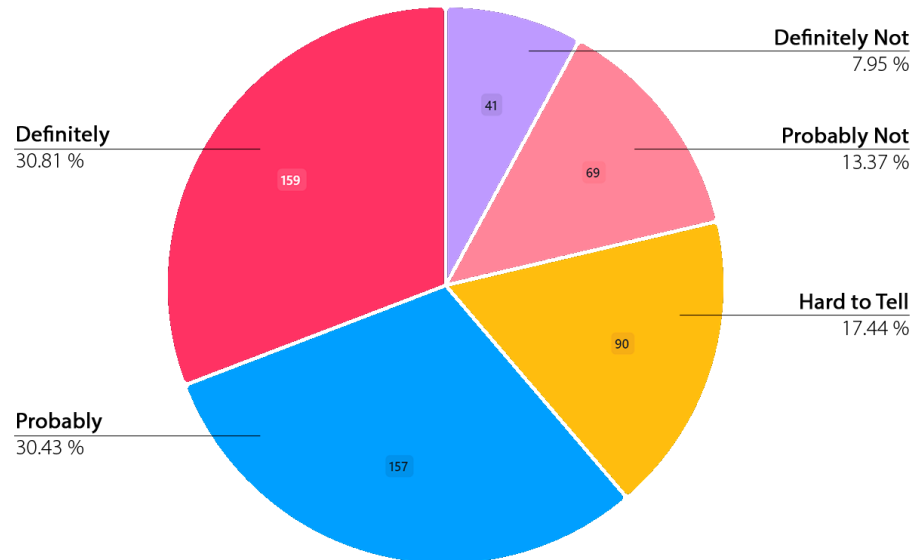
Others however believed that the 3-max rule would stimulate player development by encouraging teams to diversify their playing strategies and develop more “utility-type” players of all genders.

### **Gender rule abuse**

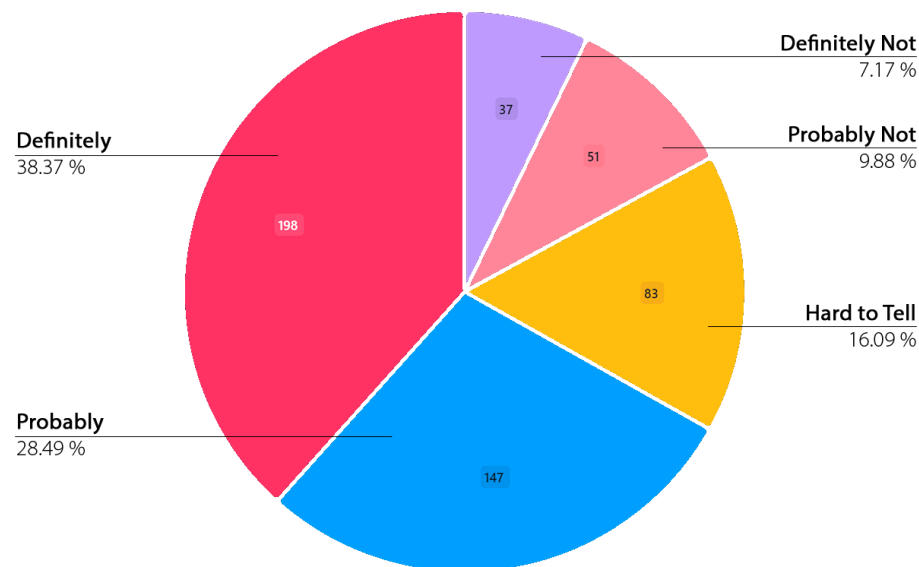
Some respondents expressed concerns about potential rule abuse, such as players misrepresenting their gender or coaches exploiting the rule to give their teams physical advantages. They suggested alternative measures, such as a

minimum number of female players, to address gender disparities without limiting team dynamics.

**9. Do you believe that the 3-max gender rule would contribute (or has contributed) towards a more appropriate and fair valuation of the skills of players of all genders on other teams within your NGB?**



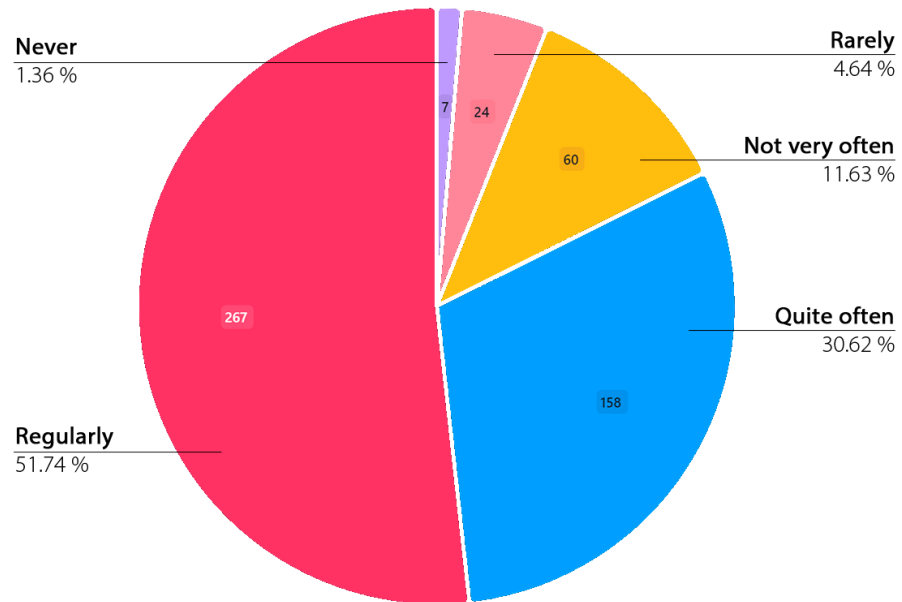
**10. Do you believe that the 3-max gender rule would contribute towards a more appropriate and fair valuation of the skills of players of all genders on other teams globally?**



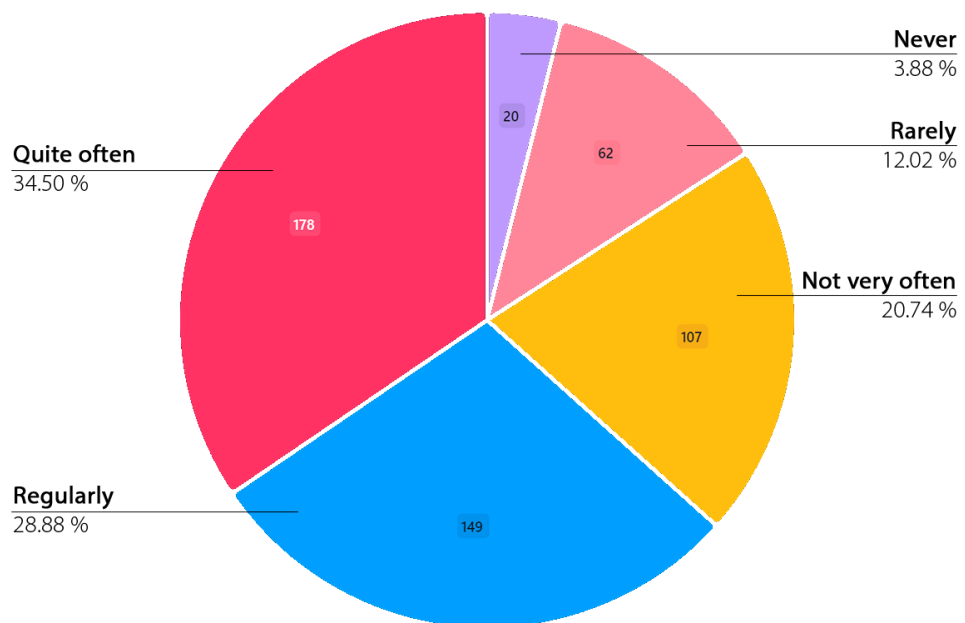
## General Questions

1. In your team, at practice, how often do you have the opportunity to assume different roles on pitch, within your primary position?

At practice:

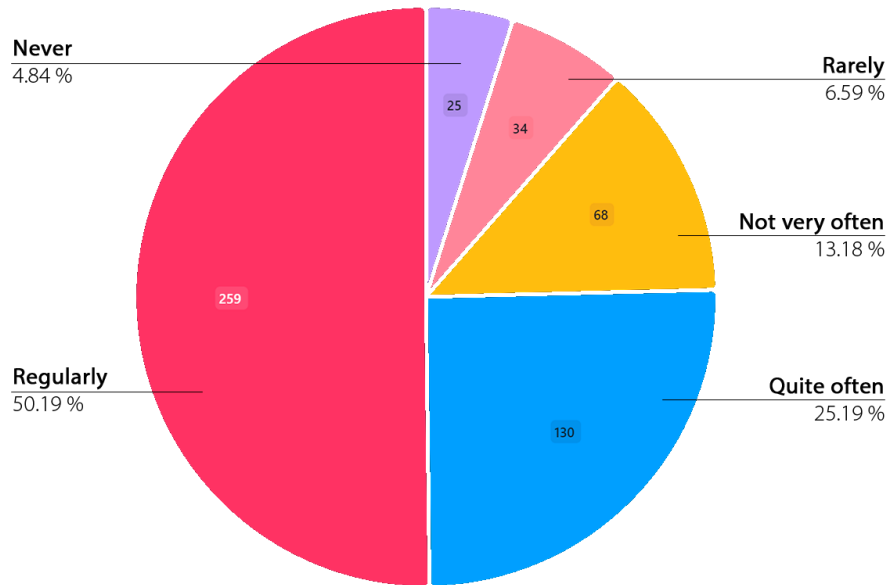


During games:

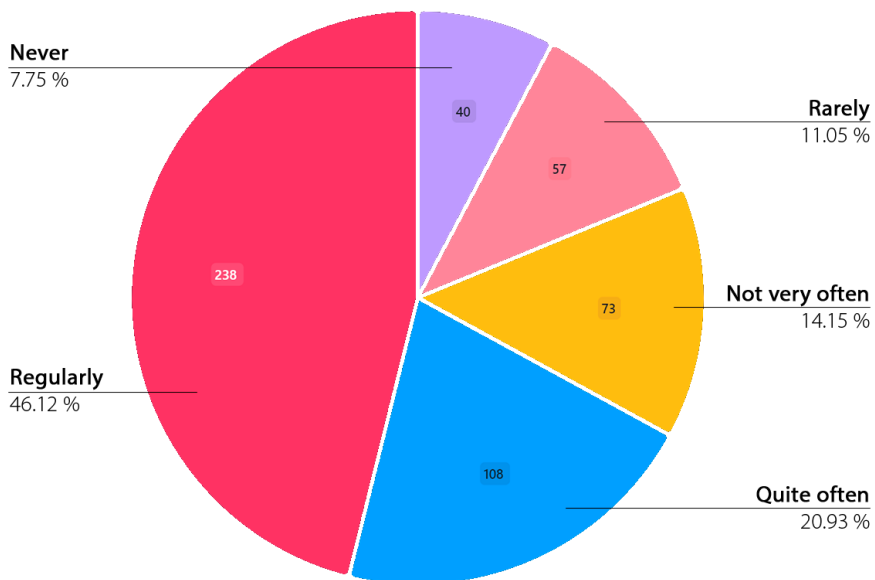


**2. For chasers and beaters: how often do you have the opportunity to play with persons of your gender in your team, playing the same position as yours?**

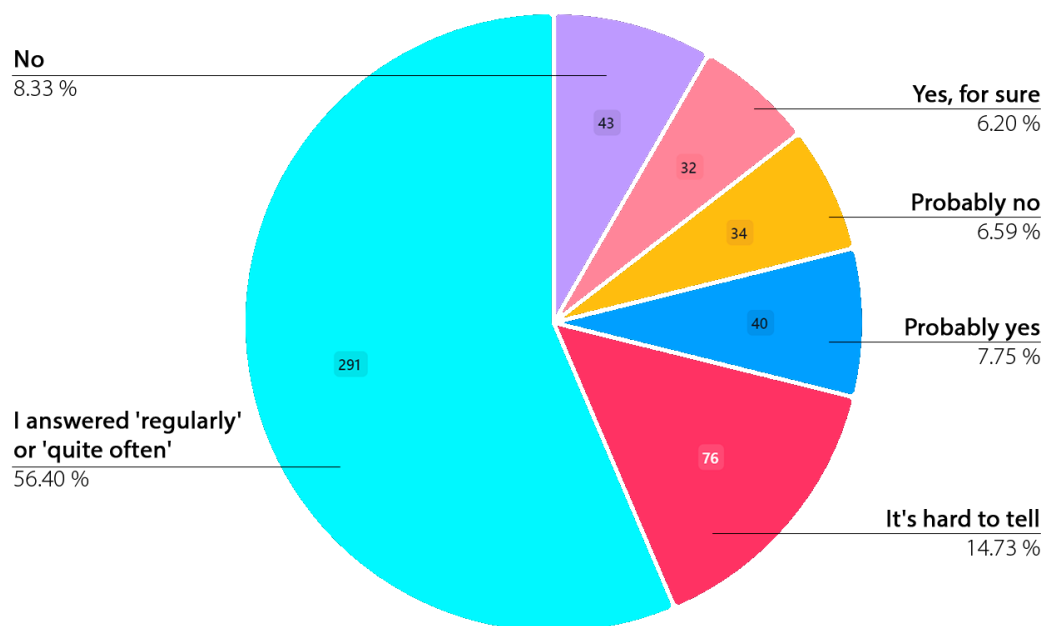
At practice:



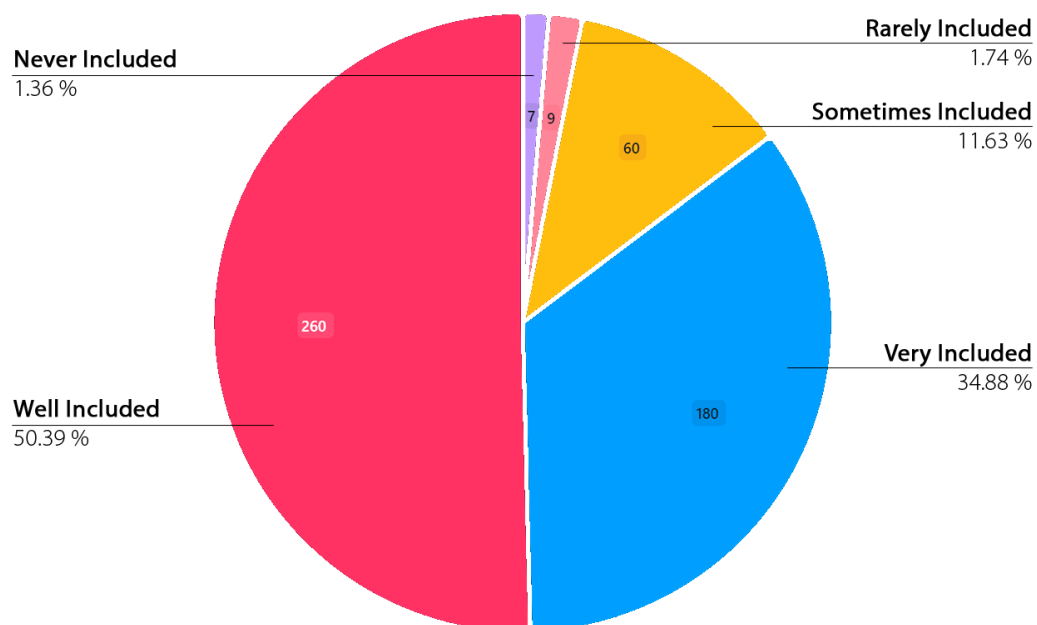
During games:



3. If you answered “not very often”, “rarely” or “never” (either at practice or during games): do you think playing more often with a person of the same gender within the same position could help you or improve your experience within the sport?

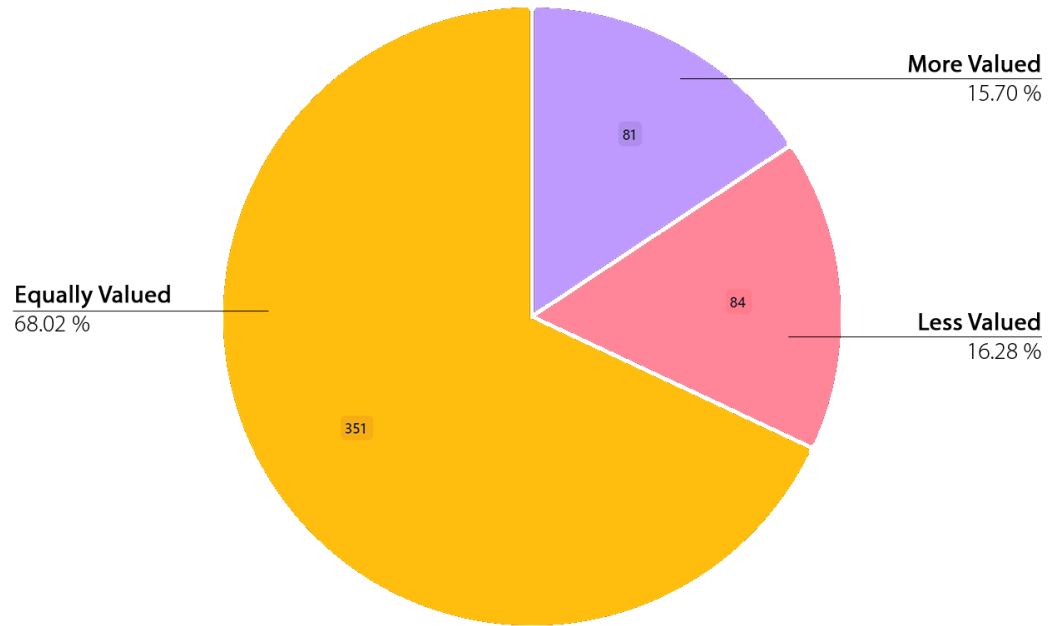


4. How included do you feel during games compared to other genders?

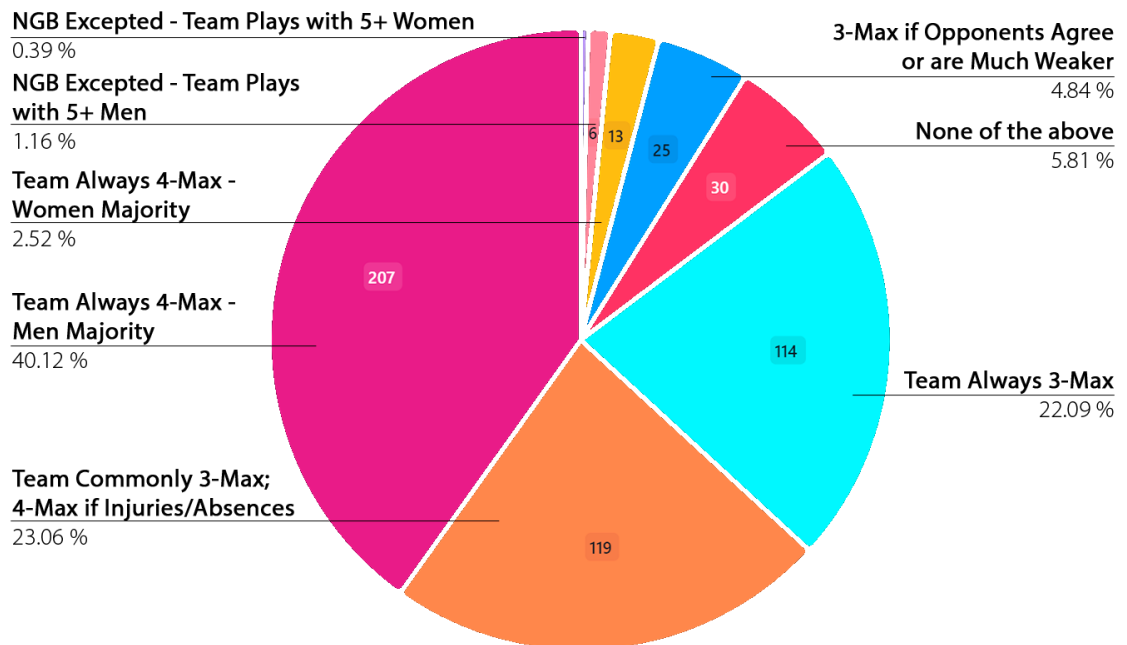




5. If you were playing a non-mix sport (ie: if you were playing with persons of your own gender only), do you think your skill set would be more valued, less valued or equally valued?



6. How does your team play with relation to the gender rule during the seeker floor?



## General Questions

### 1. If you experience a lack of gender inclusivity in your quadball life, what do you think could be done to improve the situation?

Overall, the answers reflected a strong support for the 3-max gender rule. A large part of the answers highlighted the importance of implementing this rule to promote gender inclusivity and improve the experience for underrepresented categories of players, in particular women, by making them feel more valued and integrated in the sport.

They underlined that both IQA and the NGBs have a significant role in setting the standard, in particular by making sure that the composition of top teams, such as national teams, reflect the values of gender equity.

Many however highlighted that 3-max was not a silver bullet solution to gender discrimination within quadball, and a few respondents believed that traits inherent to sex/gender did not have an impact on the game experience. Some identified recruitment difficulties, particularly for female players, sharing their concerns that implementing the 3-max rule could exacerbate this issue.

Respondents generally agreed on the need for better recruitment strategies and coaching efforts to make the sport more appealing to underrepresented genders. Their suggestions can be summarized within the following categories:

#### Coaching Culture

Many respondents mentioned the need to have a **coaching culture nurturing the skills and confidence of players of underrepresented genders, in particular women**, who often start quadball with less sportive experience than the average male players and are less likely to assert themselves on pitch due to persisting social norms. They believed that coaches should thrive to:

- Offer exercises and drills that help build their confidence and skills;
- Make sure these players have more opportunities to take a central role on pitch, for instance by asking them to practice positions that are usually male-dominated, such as keepers, “high beater”, seekers;
- Actively de-dramatize their errors;
- “Hype” them;

- Restrict solo-playing styles and promote more inclusive tactics that involve moving the volleyball between all the players.

Awareness workshops for coaches were often cited as a means to foster a more inclusive environment during practices and games.

### **Leadership roles**

Lack of representation in leadership roles was also noted as a barrier to gender inclusivity.

A common recommendation was therefore to have coaching teams that reflect gender diversity, for instance by creating mentorship programs for female coaches. Female coaches were seen as valuable for providing role models and creating a welcoming environment. In the same spirit, more gender diversity in captainship was also called for.

Several respondents advocated for greater gender diversity among referees, by promoting more diverse referee crews in both high-level and general games.

With regards to the broadcasting of games, some respondents also highlighted the need for female commentators, especially during high-level games. In general, acknowledging and celebrating the achievements of all players (not only the ones who manage to score or make impressive beats) was considered crucial to boost confidence and participation.

### **Targeted recruitment strategies**

Strategies such as targeted recruitment efforts in universities, schools or local communities (for instance by reaching out to women or LGBTQI+ organizations) were suggested, with a particular focus on better representation in promotional materials.

Other strategies, such as hosting recruitment events and tournaments specifically aimed at these demographics, were recommended.

### **Active consultation**

Respondents emphasized the need for equal involvement of all genders in team decisions, strategies, and playing time. Suggestions included:

- Asking players about their preferred roles on pitch;
- Encouraging communication within the team to address any issues related to gender inclusivity;

- Designating individuals responsible for fostering inclusivity and open discussions within teams.

Some respondents suggested that NGBs should conduct regular consultations to gauge the inclusivity of their local teams and identify areas that need improvement. Input from governing bodies was seen as important to address toxic team cultures and foster inclusivity.

### **Gender-neutral terminology**

Some respondents emphasized using gender-neutral terminology in officiating and communication to avoid excluding non-binary individuals. A few respondents cited misgendering as having a deterrent effect on their will to engage in the sport. Respondents stressed the importance of raising awareness on this issue and conducting sensitivity training to educate players and officials on this matter.

### **Rule abuse prevention**

Some respondents expressed concerns about potential gender rule abuse, such as players misrepresenting their genders or coaches exploiting the rule to give their teams physical advantages. They called for measures to ensure that the flexibility provided by the gender rule would not be abused by teams (see next section).

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In summary, while there is widespread support for the 3-max rule as a means to promote gender inclusivity in quadball, there are also concerns about its potential impact on teams with fewer female and non-binary players. The responses highlighted the need for a multilayered approach that considers regional differences and promotes diversity in coaching, officiating, and player recruitment.

## **2. Do you believe the IQA could put in place a more appropriate rule than the 3-max rule to improve gender representation? If yes, what would be the rule and why would you find it more appropriate?**

Many respondents used this section to further develop their views on 3-max, either by supporting this gender rule or by advocating for a status quo. As we already covered these views and concerns in previous sections, we will summarize here the alternative rules that were suggested by respondents.

### **A minimum number of AFAB players**

While they generally believed that 3-max would be beneficial for assigned-female-at-birth (AFAB) players, a significant portion of respondents expressed concerns about continuous sex-based discriminations impacting these demographics. In their opinion, maintaining a gender approach would allow certain teams to keep on limiting opportunities for cis and non-binary AFAB players by excessively fielding cis and non-binary assigned-male-at-birth (AMAB) players.

Some respondents also reported witnessing male players claiming non-binary status for the sole purpose of gaining a competitive advantage (AMAB players having in average stronger body types). They believed these strategies were detrimental to core values of the sport like inclusivity and fair-play, and called for measures to prevent an abusive use of the flexibility given by the gender rule<sup>1</sup>.

Many believed that a sex-based rule should be considered to address discrimination against AFAB players. They advocated for a rule that mandates a minimum number of AFAB players on the field to prevent teams from fielding squads depleted of such players. Two suggestions were often given:

- A "min 2-sex rule," which would require at least two female players and two male players on the field, with room for two players of any gender;
- A 3-max gender rule combined with a 2-min female rule to ensure female representation.

Many respondents, while advocating for a sex-based rule, expressed concerns that such a rule could lead to conflicts and be less inclusive for trans/NB/GNC players. They emphasized the importance of ensuring a competitive playing environment while also promoting inclusivity. Many believed that a 3-max gender rule was a step in the right direction and hoped it would heighten AFAB players participation.

Other ideas, such as creating sex-based leagues, or fielding squads composed of players representative of the overall percentage of men / women / GNC individuals (etc) present at team or NGB level, were also suggested as a means to maintain competitiveness while addressing representation concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> Amongst the participants of the survey who expressed concerns regarding sex-based discriminations, a few requested the IQA to implement a gender verification system. The IQA is continuing to work with NGBs on various ways to combat sex-based discrimination, but will not explore nor advocate for a gender verification system.

## Other rules

Other rules were sporadically suggested, such as:

- Revising the starting procedure so as to ensure that female players are given more often the opportunity to run for the contested balls: for instance, by having a one-max gender rule for the two designated runners lined up in front of the contested balls;
- Deciding on coin toss, before the start of the game, whether seekers will have to be female players or not;
- Carding more often high-impact contacts, even when they are unintentional;
- Using smaller balls, as they are easier to handle with small hands.





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