



# Survey Results 2021



[theofficialsmind.com](http://theofficialsmind.com)

Early last year we surveyed members of our organization to see the demographics of the officials in our organization and how officials' felt about certain aspects of the game. I have made notes in some categories, posed questions and left some things out, so you can draw your own conclusions, based on the findings. The following is a review of those findings.

## **OFFICIATING DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

### **Question 1 – How many years have you been officiating?**

The majority of the members in our organization were either brand new, which means that we have done a good job recruiting, or had over 25 years of experience, which means a lot of members are in it for the long haul.

30% have officiated at 25 or more years

30% have officiated between 1-5 years

### **Question 2 – What level of high school soccer do you officiate?**

A large portion of HSSRA officials work both varsity and sub varsity games, while a little over a third are varsity only. A small amount of HSSRA members do sub-varsity only.

48% officiate both varsity and sub varsity

36% officiate varsity only

16% officiate sub varsity only

### **Question 3 & 4 – How many games do you officiate during a boy's (3) girl's (4) season?**

The boy's season is in the fall, along with college season. The reason for asking this question and question 4 was because we wondered if members had more availability and/or received more games in the boy's or girl's seasons, considering our membership consists of several college officials. The thought process was that some of us, would see fewer games during the Fall season so the numbers on the lower end would be higher. However, because some of the college officials are taken out of the mix the numbers on the higher end would be higher as well, because there are less officials fully available in the fall. The survey results showed the following:

**Boy's season**

0-10 games – 3%

11-20 games – 47%

21-30 games – 36%

31-40 games – 13%

41+ games – 1%

**Girl's season**

0-10 games – 10%

11-20 games – 39%

21-30 games – 36%

31-40 games – 10%

41+ games – 5%

Looking at these numbers, the number of games people officiate in each of the seasons still remains fairly balanced regardless of obligations.

**Question 5 – How many post-season games have you officiated in your career as a high school soccer official?**

0 – 22%

1-10 – 22%

10-20 - 18%

21-30 – 6%

31-40 – 10%

41-50 – 0%

50+ - 22%

Looking at these percentages, can we infer that the wealth is NOT evenly spread? Over 44% of our organization has gotten less than 10 post season games in their entire careers; and more than half of the people surveyed (62%) have had less than 20 post-season games in their entire high school careers. Does this make anyone think about the process? I would presume as we continue with our training, our members may see more balance.

**Question 6 – What other levels of soccer do you officiate?**

USSF – 33%

CYC – 27%

College – 18%

Futsal – 6%

Professional/Semi-professional – 4%

Other – 12%

This question may bring light to where we are recruiting from and how we are providing an additional platform to help members move on, diversify, improve and succeed in this hobby/profession.

**Question 7 – How many years have you officiated soccer at any level?**

1-5 – 3%

6-10 – 12%

11-15 – 16%

16-20 – 12%

21-25 – 22%

25+ - 35%

There are several ways to look at the responses to this question. We have people with experience. This is outstanding for a mentorship program. The officials with less experience should embrace the resources that are available through their peers with so much dedication and time they have spent in this sport. It also shows a need to recruit. If the majority of our membership have been in this for over 20 or 25 years, natural attrition becomes a factor.

**Question 8 – On average, how many soccer games do you referee per year, at any level?**

0-100 – 61%

101-250 – 29%

251-500 – 0%

501-750 – 3%

751-1000 – 3%

1001+ - 4%

These numbers clearly show that the majority of our membership (90%) does this for a hobby. It looks like there is really nothing much in between. We have our ‘weekend warriors’ (expression only folks, we know these games are during the week) and our lifers; maybe those who are retired, or rely on this for income. Either way, I was surprised to see that we still had 10% of our membership trying to keep up with Kenny Seitz!

**Question 9 – Besides being a referee, do you hold another position in soccer?**

Assignor – 18%

Assessor – 18%

Instructor – 27%

Administrator – 23%

Other – 14%

Take this one for what its worth. I did not add coach to this list, so that could be the ‘other’ but overall, this group has a wealth of knowledge from all aspects of the sport.

**Question 10 – How old are you?**

Under 20 – 0%

20-29 – 3%

30-39 – 6%

40-49 – 10%

50-59 – 29%

60-69 – 35%

70+ - 16%

These numbers show a couple of things. As I said in a previous question, it is clear we are a group of veterans with a lot of experience. It is also clear that we NEED to recruit younger members to carry on our legacy. These numbers could be slightly skewed (but only slightly) because not everyone participated in this survey. However, this shows that 80% of our members are over 50 years of age and as an organization we need to recruit and train new members to carry on our legacy!

**Question 11 – What sex do you most closely associate with?**

Male – 98%

Female – 2%

Looks like Pam and I participated in the survey. There is a need to recruit females. The problem is a lot of female’s priorities change as they age (I can say that as a proud mom).

### **Question 12 – What is your relationship status?**

87% of the membership is currently in a relationship or married

### **Question 13 – How many children do you have?**

Our membership has an average of 2.5 children.

This is above the average in the United States, which was 1.93 in 2019. This means we do have some potential referees to recruit that may want to follow in their parent's footsteps.

### **Question 14 – Do you have another job?**

Full-time – 47%

Part-time - 14%

Self-employed – 11%

Retired – 22%

No job – 5%

My analogy for question 8 may not necessarily follow suit with the number of games and work status. We do not know if self-employed means full-time or part-time, but it looks like almost a quarter of our organization is retired and could do more games. Or is that really what it means? Maybe the people who are retired in this organization are doing less games and taking time for themselves? Thoughts?

## **OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

### **Question 15 – How has COVID affected you?**

At this point in the evolution of this virus, we can all agree that we have been affected by COVID in one way or another. Here is what some of the members had to say.

- a. Besides losing games, returning to the game was very important for my physical and mental health. Refereeing is a big part of my life. It was a huge loss to not be able to get out on the field and be a part of this amazing game.
- b. It has affected many different portions of the game. Some players and referees have been affected. One team had sever started not available for matches for 14 days. Learned a lot about CDC and communities that we referee in
- c. Less games to work, more caution being around people
- d. None other than I miss some of the personal contact (conversations) with the players and coaches.

- e. Lost a lot of money and miss being with my peers!
- f. lack of games put mentally/physical lapse on me

**Question 16 –What part of the game causes you the most stress? Officials ranked their responses from the most stressful to the least stressful on a 1-10 scale**

1. Making an incorrect call
2. Making a controversial call
3. Verbal abuse from players and coaches
4. Being out of position
5. Verbal abuse from spectators
6. Problem with my crew
7. Mistakes with my mechanics or signals
8. Presence of a supervisor or assessor
9. Personal injury or pain
10. Threat of physical harm

**Think about these and look at these three criteria**

- a. What you can control
- b. What you can influence
- c. What is out of your control

**Question 17 – How do you respond when you make a controversial or incorrect call?**

Below is a list of how some officials responded. Do you respond in a similar way? How easy is it for you to move on after making an incorrect call? Does it take you out of your game, or can you push your way through it? Do you remain confident?

Official's responses:

- a. Game deciding calls tend to be more difficult to process emotionally. Generally, that call stays with me in the game. I tend to think about the call when time allows (i.e., during a stoppage, half-time, etc.)
- b. Try to remain calm and think through the controversial call. If the call is incorrect and it can be changed, I would take steps to make it correct such as consulting with my ref partners.
- c. Uncomfortable
- d. When I know that I have made an incorrect call, I normally own it, and my facial expression show my displeasure with myself.
- e. I push myself to become more focused
- f. Rapid pulse, feelings of insecurity

- g. Tell myself that there is no reason that the rest of my calls in that game can't be right
- h. Keeping yourself calm and collected. Showing confidence in your call if correct but if incorrect getting it right.

#### Thoughts

- a. Just because it was controversial does not mean it was incorrect!
- b. How do you work through being uncomfortable?
- c. Stop negative thoughts in track
- d. Manage it – but 'save it until later'
- e. Confer with partners
- f. Refocus
- g. Practice mindfulness techniques
- h. Think - what can you control, what can you influence and what is out of your control

#### **Question 18 – How do you react when you get verbal abuse from players and coaches?**

Very interesting responses to this question. As a group, we have very different ways of handling this. Does the way that we handle things have something to do with individual personality traits?

Official's responses:

- a. Yellow card or Red Card depending on the level of abuse
- b. Address the abuse calmly and professionally because if not, it can easily escalate (respect issue)
- c. Brush it off because we don't want to yell at our abuser
- d. Ignore it
- e. Angry
- f. I'm tolerant in the beginning of the season and less tolerant at the end of the season
- g. it doesn't really bother me personally, but I feel they are disrespecting the game
- h. Staying calm and under control, not giving in to the situation. Handle the occurrence under control not stooping to their level
- i. I become angry initially, but try to remain calm. I will usually warn players/coaches to refrain from verbal abuse. Ask, tell, send off.

Think about what your actions communicate to the players and coaches. How do you handle this? Like any of these referees? And why does your technique work or not work for you? Should you try theirs?

**Question 19 – What motivates you to officiate high school soccer? Officials ranked their responses from the thing that motivates them the most to the thing that motivates them the least on a scale from 1-10.**

Official's responses:

1. The love of the game
2. I want to give something back
3. Passionate about the game and want to stay involved
4. The challenge of being an official and managing a game
5. It helps me to stay in shape
6. Learning more about the game
7. The money
8. Building friendships
9. Prestige and accolades
10. Being in charge/center of attention

HSSRA members are primarily intrinsically motivated, which is reflected in their choices of the things that motivate them the most. However, official's levels of motivation often change throughout their careers. Those that start off completely intrinsically motivated often become motivated by being able to move up and financial rewards as they continue in their careers. Extrinsically motivated officials, which are reflective in answers 9 & 10, usually do not last that long, as they quickly learn, the game is NOT about them and officials who have that style are often not successful managing games or forming relationships or credibility with crews, players, coaches, and administrators. Think about where you fall. Some officiate for all those reasons, because they cannot imagine a life without soccer!

**Question 20 – How confident are you in your ability to officiate the games that you are assigned? Most officials were fairly confident and honest with where they are with their abilities.**

Officials' responses:

- a. At my senior age, I am most confident reffing JV or some of the lesser competitive varsity matches. My day of doing the higher end matches has passed me by. So, I am highly confident doing the games assigned because my skills, experience, preparation, work ethics and commitment are my strongest attributes.
- b. Very. I have a good feel for the game; Communicate well with players and coaches; Am fit and able to keep up with play; Feel I am respected by participants and partners
- c. Very confident. Have been doing it so long that I believe I've seen about everything and know how to handle it
- d. I guess I've never looked at it that way. It's a job. I know my job and go do it. I get anxious at times depending on the level of competition but that drives me to do better.



- e. Extremely confident. Due to training mentally/physically and confident in my ability
- f. I'm comfortable working any level high school match. Not that I think I'm the best official, but rather that I hold myself to a high standard and want to do a good job at every match that I work. I've worked high level matches during the season and post season, with some going great and others having hiccups in them. Every game is a challenge in its own way and I try to learn from each experience for future matches. We are only as good as our last match.

Confidence is built through many things:

- a. Success
- b. Experience
- c. Developing Coping Skills
- d. Handling Adversity
- e. Knowing YOUR own strengths and weaknesses
- f. Setting achievable goals

### **Question 21 How do you feel about your game assignments?**

Official's responses:

- a. The schedule of games I get are near perfect for me. I enjoy doing games at that level and appreciate the interactions I have with players, coaches, administrators and almost universally with my ref partners.
- b. Game assignments are not fairly distributed among our membership and I think many of the members are unhappy with games. I fear we are losing many younger or newer members after a few years because others receive a larger number of assignments or the "plum" assignments.
- c. Too few games. I referee college as well. It appears the high school assignor does not like college referees, so we get fewer games.
- d. It's been fine. However, seeing the same team multiple times and the same week can be a concern.
- e. I get a good diversity of games and teams, but not enough higher-level games to help improve my abilities and exposure to the game. In talking with other officials, they seem to be getting more games and higher quality ones.
- f. The number is OK, but I would like to be assigned as an AR to more varsity games
- g. When I first started doing high school 4yrs ago I refereed in a rural town 2hrs from the city doing all 3-man games varsity/JV for 2yrs and I was traveling a lot like 2 to 3 times a week doing other 3-man games in rural towns that were 1 to 2 hrs. from the city which I really enjoyed it. Then back in 2019 I moved to St. louis and started doing games in the city and the games I was doing in St louis were 2-man games and I was used to doing 3-man games and I wasn't traveling as far just a few miles instead of 70 miles. At first, I didn't like doing the 2-man games because it was hard doing a competitive game with only 2 referees but then after a few games I got used to it and I enjoy doing 2-man games but I still like 3 man better than 2-man.
- h. Overall, I feel as if I am treated fairly. I am pleased with my schedule

**Question 22 – How satisfied are you with your crews?**

1. Moderately satisfied – 62%
2. Extremely satisfied – 27%
3. Slightly dissatisfied – 8%
4. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied – 3%

Ironically, no one was moderately dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with their crews. While the survey did not ask why officials felt this way, discussing why we gel as an organization on the field with each other could be good information and something we could pass along. Is it because we all respect each other and the friendships we have formed?

**Question 23 – How do you prepare for the physical demands of the game?**

Official's responses:

- a. Run, bike, walk, hike, weights
- b. Start walking and running 30 days before season starts
- c. I work on endurance
- d. Work out in the off season to prepare myself for the season
- e. Before a game I like to jog back and forth across the field which helps me to physically be ready for a game.
- f. Continuously working out not only running my mentality as well. Target my workouts on the specific demands from game itself. Lots of sprints. Upper body as well.

What do you do to prepare yourself for the physical demands? Do you get plenty of rest, have proper nutrition or stay sharp by officiating games other than high school?

**Question 24 – How do you prepare for the mental demands of a high school soccer game?**

Official's responses:

- a. Watch games and learn from other officials
- b. Watch videos
- c. Read materials that help train officials
- d. A good pre-game
- e. Practice calming techniques in my daily life that carry over on to the field.
- f. Review rules, think through possible scenarios, have pre-game discussions with coaches and administrators and with my partners.
- g. I go through the rules before each season and sometime before games for a refresh; I read up or watch games to see other official's positioning and calls
- h. Before a game I like to just sit and relax on the sideline and focus on clearing out my mind and only focus on refereeing which prepares me for the criticism from coaches/players and fans.
- i. I put the cares of the day out of my mind

**Question 25 – How has being a member of HSSRA benefitted you?**

Official's responses:

- a. We are being presented a consistent message on how to handle games, situations and issues; Socializing with members at events helps build friendships
- b. Keeping me fit. Meeting people. Learning from others. Staying involved in the game.
- c. The great training that I receive from the organization.
- d. Get a different perspective of the game from other officials and wells and new insights on the rules and game management
- e. The organization has helped show me different situations and how to handle them
- f. Being a HSSRA member has benefitted me by learning some knowledge of referee from all the veteran referees.
- g. It's been a huge benefit. The extra training, meeting new folks that have many years of experience helps with how calls and situations can be handled.

**Question 26 – What else can HSSRA do for you to make a better official?**

Official's responses

- a. Support for members (if there was a game situation or event that occurred, a board member should contact that referee and provide support). I think many don't feel that there is such support.
- b. I'd like to see a focus on recruiting younger members. Finding a connection with the younger Federation referees to recruit them into the high school game, so we may have a 3-man system of control for each high school game.
- c. Keep up the training programs!
- d. A way to motivate some officials to be better at the game; Not just stay at the 40-yard mark and not move. Also, a "play book" on the coaches as to how they treat refs and their calls to better prepare on how to handle a game.
- e. I have been a part of the association for many years and watching how it has developed over the last few years is great seeing the training of new officials, along with seasoned officials and the on-field assessing of officials have benefitted many officials.
- f. The only thing that would help me a better referee is do some hands-on training with HSSRA and reffing with more of the top level HSSRA referees
- g. Better website maybe a chat group link for refs to vent
- h. Would love to get to watch some upper-level members' referee

**Question 27– How do you feel about the support you receive from HSSRA?**

Official's responses:

- a. I'm very grateful for the leadership and members of the HSSRA. The time and effort that goes into our organization is very much appreciated.
- b. Been involved long enough to say that training for officials has come a long way. New officials are getting vital training they need to feel comfortable in their position
- c. Assign mentors to all new referees
- d. The association is always reaching out to officials to make them better. With the winter trading sessions as an example
- e. I feel like all those veteran referees are helping me get better as a referee and helping me reach my goals in the future as a referee so I can take over for them when they retire.
- f. Adequate

**Question 28 – In what area’s do you feel the HSSRA and its members need additional training?**

Official’s responses:

- a. I'd like to have an official mentor program. One in which new members are assigned to veteran officials to help them advance. Currently a new official has to seek out help. I believe one reason we lose newer officials is that they do not feel guided or supported. I've talked with many new(er) officials, and they all ask the same question when I ask them about a mentor, "Who should I choose as a mentor?" We could use a part of our HSSRA dues to fund (pay the mentor).
- b. Continue the AR training. More school are going to the 3-man system
- c. positioning on the field for both center officials, linesmen and referees working a two-man system. it is amazing that we end up with officials assigned to work varsity matches that have no clue where they need to be on the field or line and even more amazing that some of them have no clue as to how to hold a flag, much less use it to signal information to the referee. I don't know how you train someone for this next thing, but the general lack of acceptance of constructive criticism from some of our officials is appalling. For some that work USSF and college level matches, they need remember the high school rules when they are working a high school game, especially if they are too good to open the rule book to see what changes have been implemented each year.
- d. More training on the two-man system
- e. Physical training, not mandatory, since the state does not require a physical test to receive a license but strongly encouraged for the members and present a training course. Mechanics during the game.

**Question 29 – How much longer do you plan to officiate high school soccer?**

Official’s responses

- a. As long as I'm loving the game and healthy
- b. As long as my body allows me to do a good game, 6 or 7 years, maybe more
- c. As long as I am physically and mentally able. I do not want to be an official who cannot meet the demands of the game.
- d. Till I die

**Review**

I hope you have enjoyed reviewing last year’s research study on our organization. We have presented a small glimpse into who our members are and what our needs are. It is my intention for HSSRA members to review the findings and begin engaging in discussions on what the HSSRA can provide so we can develop additional training programs to meet our members needs.

Thank you again for participating!!

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