



# Beyond Millennials: New Generations and the Influence of Family

2022 Millennial Golf Industry Survey



# About the Study

## Who

An ongoing research collaboration between growth-of-the-game organization National Collegiate Club Golf Association (NCCGA), The City Tour and GGA Partners, international consulting firm and trusted advisors to the golf, private club, and leisure industries.

## What

The sixth annual Millennial Golf Industry survey of over 1,500 millennial golfers who shared their habits, attitudes, and preferences about golf. To date, more than 8,300 survey responses have been analyzed during the six-year study.

## Why

The study provides insights on young intermediate-aged golfers, the challenges they face, and the opportunities for facilities to help support the long-term sustainability of the game and the industry.

## How

The 2022 Millennial Golf Industry Survey, conducted in November 2021 through January 2022, was administered via survey link distributed by NCCGA and The City Tour to their nationwide email and player network.

## Aim

By identifying the evolutions occurring within the millennial golfer demographic, facility operators can identify approaches to adapt and develop their offerings to meet the needs of the next generation of members and customers.

When research began in 2017, the study focused exclusively on golfers in the millennial generation (those born between 1981-1996, roughly ages 26-41 in 2022) and now, has grown to span two generations. Nearly one-third of the sample audience now technically belongs to Generation Z (those born after 1997, roughly ages 10-25 in 2022), an emergent golfer cohort which the study will continue to evaluate in the future.

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# Executive Summary

To support the needs of golfers and courses alike, this report examines how the moderating impacts, of generational membership and the presence of family, influence the golfer.

By examining the presence of children, partners, and generational membership, we seek to understand how these factors directly impact the expectations, behaviors and priorities of golfers.

Families, those with the presence of children and those without, play a moderating role in the golf experience. A total of 30% of study participants identified as having children in the household. The majority of respondents indicated having a partner and children (i.e., more traditional nuclear family).

Generational membership matters and this report considers three different generations: Generation Z, golfers who are 25 and under, Millennials, those between 26 – 39, and Generation X, over the age of 40.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created a new baseline to understand golfers – can momentum be maintained? Will the changing working mindset continue to contribute to golf growth? We know that prior to the pandemic, the game of golf stagnated...



A group of people are gathered on a golf course during the golden hour of sunset. In the foreground, a woman with long blonde hair, wearing a pink and white striped button-down shirt, is smiling broadly and looking towards the right. Behind her, a man in a dark blue polo shirt is also smiling. To the left, another man in a blue polo shirt is visible, and a woman is partially seen in the background. The scene is set on a lush green golf course with a residential area visible in the distance under a warm, glowing sky.

# Respondent Profile

# Respondent Profile

The 2022 study brings forward survey findings from over 1,500 millennial golfers across the United States and builds upon research executed annually since 2017.

Respondent demographics remain highly consistent with those in prior research installments, especially in relation to profile factors like age, gender, and race or ethnicity.

Noteworthy changes from last year's study can be attributed to a general sense of life stage progression:

- **% employed decreased 5%**
- **% of students increased 4%**
- **Average household income increased \$35k**
- **% with children increased 5%**



## AGE

30.3	Average age
66%	Under age 35
34%	Over age 35



## RACE/ETHNICITY

81%	Caucasian/White
6%	Asian/Pacific Islander
4%	Hispanic/Latino
4%	Undisclosed
3%	African American/Black
1%	Other



## HAVE CHILDREN

31%	Have children
69%	No children



## GENDER

93%	Male
7%	Female
0.2%	Undisclosed



## OCCUPATION

65%	Employed
30%	Student
5%	Retired



## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$130k	Average
54%	+\$100k



# Player Preferences and Involvement

# Golfing Frequency and Skills

NCCGA and City Tour players love to play the game of golf, and their capabilities on the course show an elevated level of dedication, even as some are just learning the game.

Survey respondents are frequent golfers as 45% golfed at least 40 times annually. Generationally speaking, Gen Y play significantly less golf than Gen Z and Gen X, with minimal differences between Z and X.

When examining the relationship between handicap and rounds played, respondents have a higher-than-average skill level as 79% of respondents have a handicap of below 17, with an incredible 41% having a handicap below 7. Scratch golfers played significantly more rounds of golf (44) as compared to the other groups, with 1-7 handicappers playing the second most (39), and those not tracking/not sure of their handicaps playing the least amount (24). Results also indicated that those with children play significantly less golf and their skill level is also impacted – in that those players with children, have higher

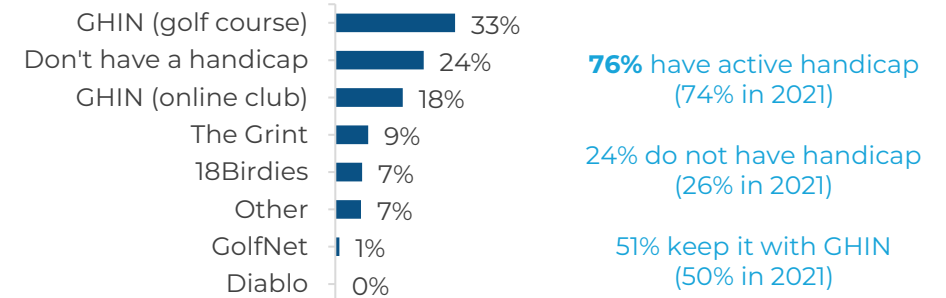
handicaps.

Marriage, much like children, also impacts the handicap of respondents. For example, single players can be very passionate about the game or new to the game as this group had a high proportion of respondents who were scratch golfers and did not know/track their handicap. Married players also represented a greater number of players with handicaps between 8 – 27, indicating they are more than likely to be casual players due to their other responsibilities.

Generationally, there is a direct relationship between ability and age. For instance, scratch golfers have a disproportionate membership of Gen Z players (59%), while golfers with a 1 to 7 are primarily Gen Y (45%). Oppositely, players unsure of their handicap were made up of 47% of Gen Z, with 31% of unsure players being from Gen Y. Gen X did have a higher-than-expected percentage in the 8 to 17 handicap group as 48% of respondents fell into this category, but, had a lower-than-expected number of good golfers (handicap less than 7) with 26% falling into these categories.

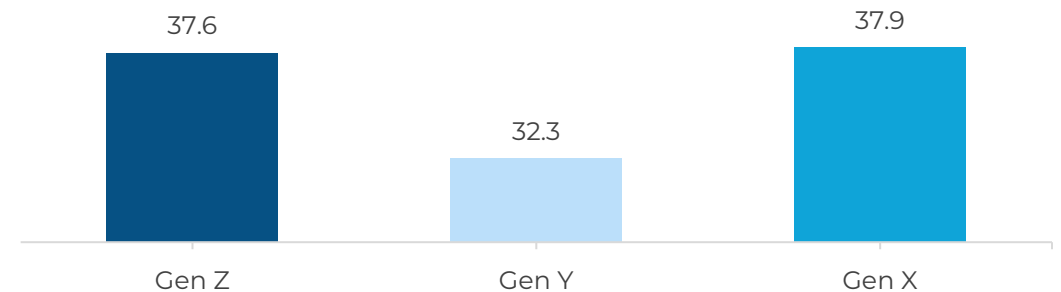
## GOLF SKILL

### Where do you keep your handicap?



## FREQUENCY OF PLAY

### Average Annual Rounds by Generation





# Golf Play and Commuting

For many, golf is more than a game, it is a passion and this love of the game shows not only in where we play, but in the willingness to spend time traveling to the right type of course.

The majority of respondents played at public courses (65%), with 15% playing at private courses. There was a relatively equal distribution between all generations and their preferences when it comes to the course they prefer to play. Off-course facilities were considered a relatively novel location for all groups examined given the nature of the respondents.

When it comes to getting to the course, respondents indicated they are willing to spend substantial time traveling to play the game they love, with average travel time being 23 minutes, but with a willingness to drive up to 45 minutes to play a round of golf. However, from a generational standpoint, Gen Z traveled the least amount of time for a round of

golf (20 minutes) and had a lower tolerance when it comes to their potential travel time (43 minutes). Millennials currently travel the furthest (26 minutes) and were statistically tied with Gen X when it comes to a willingness to travel the furthest to play (45 minutes). From a marriage standpoint, there were minimal differences between potential time while those who were single indicating travels times that were significantly lower than married respondents (22.5 compared to 24.5).

## GOLF SOCIAL TENDENCIES

Transit Time		Transit Tolerance	
<b>23 mins</b>	Average transit time (21 in 2021)	<b>45 mins</b>	Average drive time tolerance (44 in 2021)
<b>76%</b>	30 mins or less (81% in 2021)	<b>10%</b>	30 mins or less (12% in 2021)
<b>24%</b>	More than 30 mins (19% in 2021)	<b>90%</b>	More than 30 mins (88% in 2021)

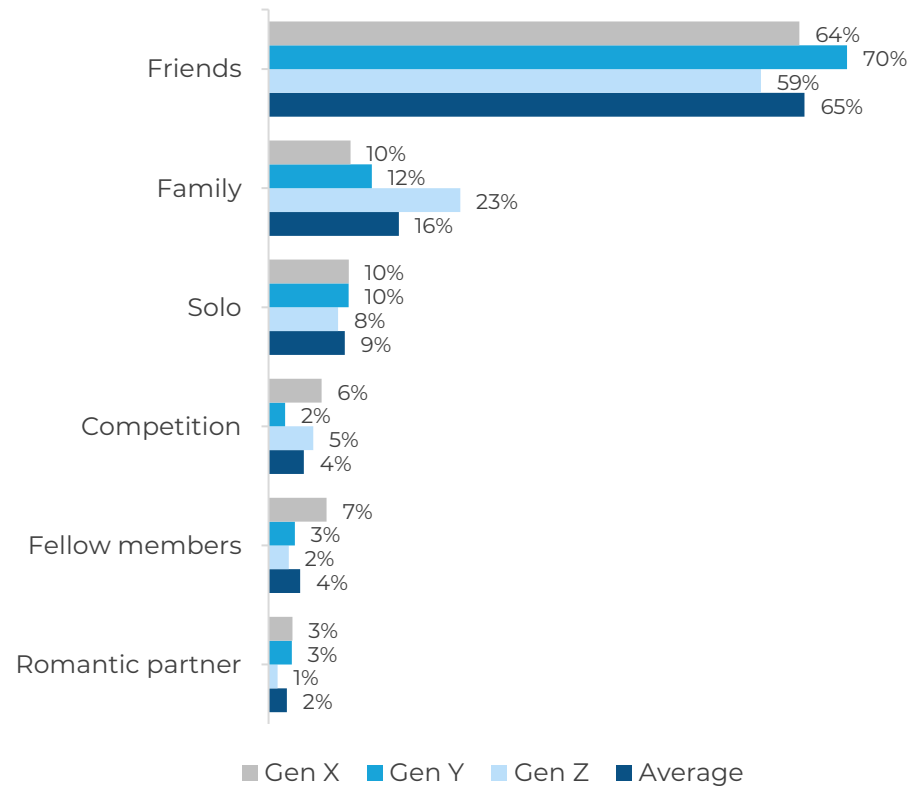
## WHERE MILLENNIALS PLAY GOLF MOST OFTEN

<u>Gen Z</u>	<u>Gen Y</u>	<u>Gen X</u>
Public (62%)	Public (67%)	Public (63%)
Semi-Private (21%)	Semi-Private (20%)	Semi-Private (22%)
Private (17%)	Private (13%)	Private (15%)
Off-Course (1%)	Off-Course (0%)	Off-Course (1%)

# Golf Play and Partners

## GOLF SOCIAL TENDENCIES

Who do you play golf with most?



The game of golf is a social activity – one where the challenges and rewards are often experienced with other players and our friends are clearly the most preferred playing partner.

When playing, most respondents play with friends (65%), with 16% playing with family. When comparing location played with playing partners, we know that respondents tend to spend time with their closest mates (family, partner, friends) while on a public course (65%). A minimal number of play competitively on public courses as semi-private courses were more likely to have players who played competitively, with those who played with members being concentrated at private facilities.

Generation X played with fellow members at higher rates than expected, while Gen Z and Gen Y showed lower levels of interest in playing with members. When comparing the three generational cohorts, Gen Z played with family at the highest rate (23%) of all playing partner options, while Gen Y selected partners at the highest rate, as this cohort made up 51% of those who played with their romantic partners.

# Learning the Game

While family often serves an important role in introducing the game to the next generation, the importance of supporting those who are self-taught is imperative.

When it comes to learning the game, the majority of respondents are self-taught, followed closely by being taught by family. While private instruction is under 20% of the sample, this represents a significantly greater number than both group instruction and friends teaching participants to play the game. From a learning to play perspective, the majority of respondents learned before they graduated high school, with a significant decline in numbers until players reach 30 (which would indicate they picked up a later-in-life hobby).

From an age of learning perspective, there is a clear relationship between generational cohort and the age they learned to play the game. Gen Z were introduced to the game at a much younger age than other respondents,

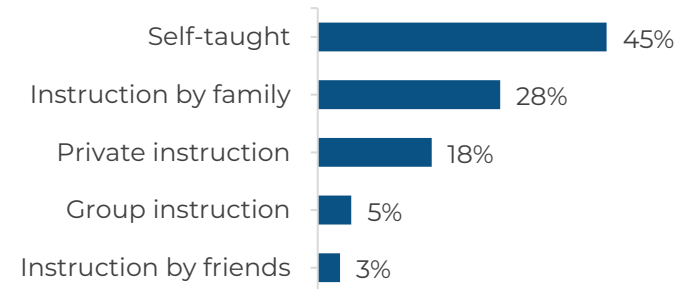
while Gen X was generally introduced at a much older age.

When examining the relationship of having kids and learning to play, there are significant differences. For instance, those who are self-taught or plan to learn from their friends typically have children, while those with no children have some level of instruction or are taught by their family. Those who were self-taught were more likely to be married, and those who were single overwhelmingly indicated private instruction over other presented methods.

Single respondents were self, or friend taught at a much lower rate than other types of instruction while generationally speaking, Gen X was self-taught at significantly higher levels than other types of instruction (58%).

## GOLF SOCIAL TENDENCIES

### How did you learn to play golf?



Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X
Self-taught (35%)	Self-taught (46%)	Self-taught (58%)
Family (34%)	Family (31%)	Family (16%)
Private (17%)	Private (16%)	Private (16%)
Group (5%)	Group (5%)	Group (5%)
Friends (3%)	Friends (2%)	Friends (5%)



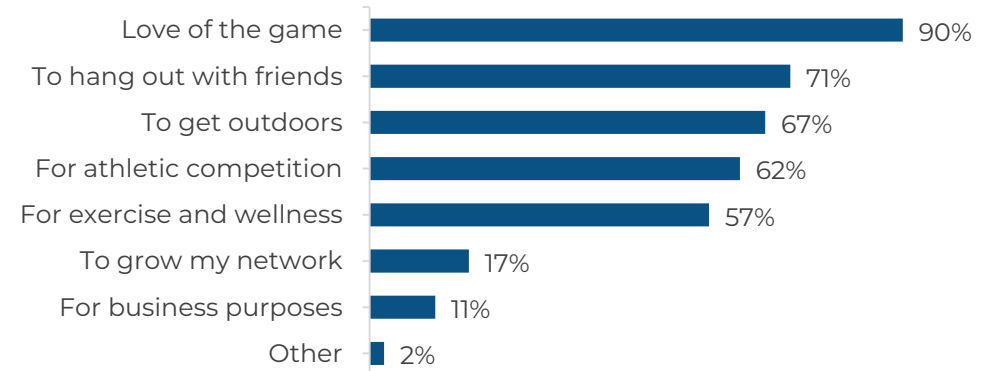
# Motivations and Barriers

# Motivations

What motivates people to play the game of golf beyond their love of the game? It all comes down to getting outdoors and enjoying the comradery of playing with your closest mates.

When looking at potential differences in reasons behind playing the game, results show that Gen Y's love of the game is higher than other generations, but so is the importance friends, being outdoors and the role of business. However, Gen Z shows love of the game as significantly less as the other groups as their reasons have increased emphasis in other areas, while yet selecting athletic competitions at a higher level. Gen X, as the senior members of the respondents, selected friends and the athletic competition at a lower level than the other generations.

## REASONS THAT YOU PLAY GOLF



### Gen Z

Love the game (86%)

Friends (71%)

Athletics (67%)

### Gen Y

Love the game (93%)

Friends (75%)

Outdoor (70%)

### Gen X

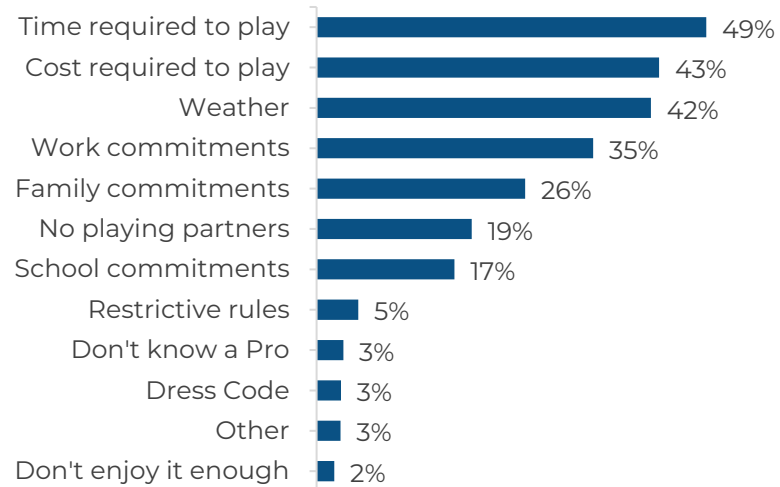
Love the game (92%)

Outdoors (64%)

Friends (63%)

# Barriers

## BARRIERS TO PLAYING GOLF



### Gen Z

Cost (55%)  
Time (44%)  
School (42%)

### Gen Y

Time (59%)  
Work (42%)  
Cost (42%)

### Gen X

Weather (46%)  
Work (38%)  
Time (38%)

What stops people from playing the game they love? Time is often the primary barrier, but there are significant differences between generations.

When it comes to barriers, Gen X shows some stark departures from the other cohorts as they indicated time to play and costs at much lower levels, while having the largest percentage of respondents indicate weather as an impediment to play. Gen Y continued to demonstrate unique considerations as almost 60% of respondents indicate the time to play as a barrier, with both work and family commitments at higher levels than other respondents. Gen Z, as a younger cohort, indicated school commitments at almost 42%, with family and work commitments coming in at much lower levels, while indicating cost at a level 13% higher than Gen Y and an incredible 19% more than Gen X.

# Golf Satisfaction

NCCGA and City Tour golfers love the game they play and promote the game at a very high level. While pace of play remains a primary challenge, players are satisfied with other aspects of their on-course experience.

Overall, golfers in this survey have a Net Promoter Score of 83, which demonstrates they have a high degree of satisfaction and are loyal promoters of the game of golf. To better understand potential pain points with the on-course experience, seven areas were assessed.

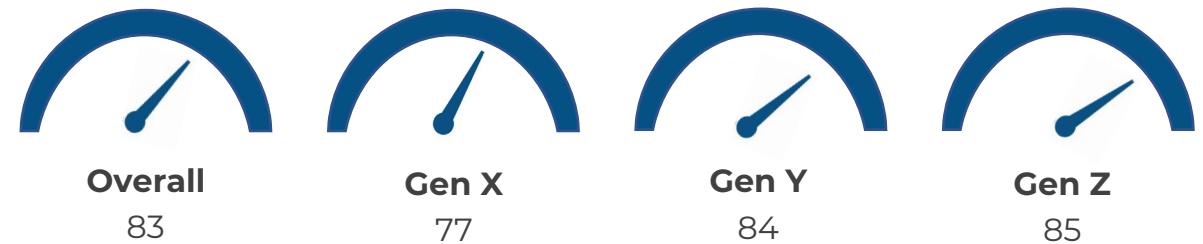
Not surprisingly, pace of play was an area of the game rated significantly lower than the remaining areas of the game, while players were most satisfied with course design. Service features that support the game were rated second lowest with the general course facilities being rated second highest.

When considering the family dynamics, the presence of a marital partner and satisfaction, differences exist as service features were rated significantly lower for married (3.19) when compared to single players (3.30).

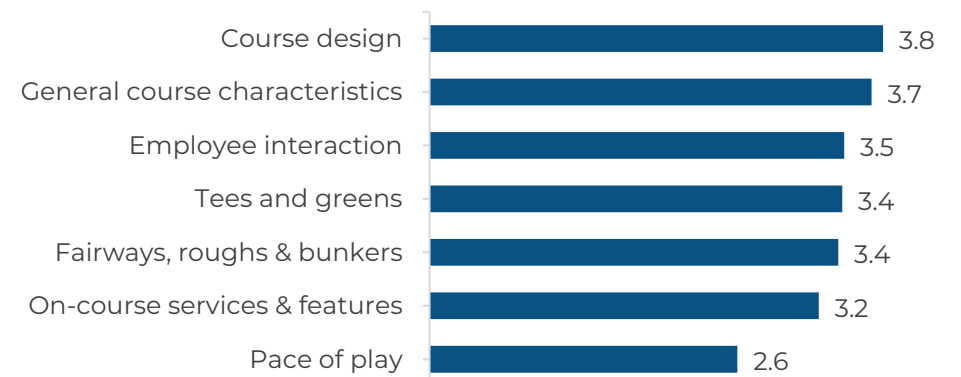
When examining differences between generations, significant differences do exist. For instance, Gen Y showed a significantly lower satisfaction with pace of play than the other cohorts. Gen Z was significantly more satisfied with service features than both other generations, with Gen X being the least satisfied with the quality-of-service features. When interacting with employees, Gen Z was much more satisfied with service interactions and when it comes to the general course, Gen Z was significantly more satisfied with the general course than both the other cohorts, with very minimal differences between Gen Y and Gen X players.

## HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO RECOMMEND GOLF TO A FRIEND?

### Net Promoter Score



## SATISFACTION BY GOLF COURSE ASPECT (OUT OF 5)





# Factors Influencing Private Courses



# Factors Influencing Private Courses

The changing expectations of private club amenities continues to change as new and more social components continue to grow in importance.

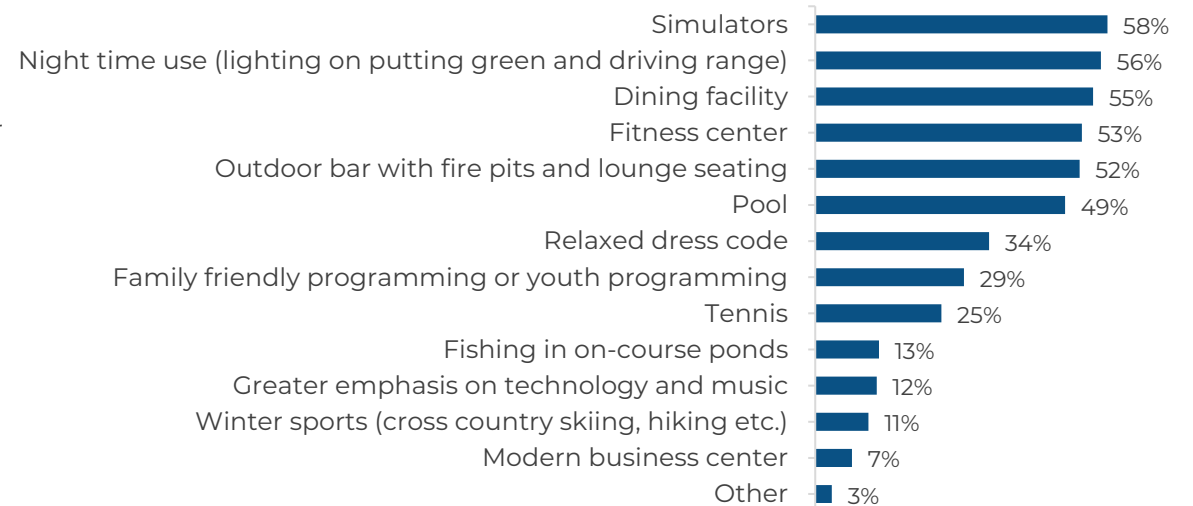
When looking at club amenities, simulators were the top choice as 58% of respondents indicated this as important. This selection, in addition to the nighttime features (56.5%), dining (54.9%), fitness center (53%) and outdoor bar (51%) were all top 5 considerations when asked what non-golf amenities or social components were important at private clubs. These results make sense as younger club members are looking for opportunities for social interaction as part of their private membership experience.

When examining differences among the generational cohorts, there are very stark differences. For instance, Gen Z place a higher value on simulators, nighttime, dining, fitness, outdoor bar, and pool compared to the other two cohorts.

When looking at the demands of Gen X, which is more typical of private club membership, their most important amenity is dining, followed by the presence of a simulator. However, just because their younger contemporaries may place high overall importance on nighttime use, the presence of an outdoor bar and nighttime activities are also highly rated for this group.

While it would be easy to say that each generation has their own demands, these results can also be tied to the life stage they are currently experiencing as one ages, interests and expectations also change. For instance, those without kids showed a much higher demand for simulators, nighttime activities, fitness facilities and outdoor bar. Those with kids wanted more family amenities but also placed a higher demand on the pool and dining options that would probably include children's options.

## CLUB AMENITIES/SOCIAL COMPONENTS DESIRABILITY



### Gen Z

- Simulators (58%)
- Nighttime use (57%)
- Dining Facility (55%)

### Gen Y

- Nighttime use (63%)
- Simulators (61%)
- Outdoor Bar (60%)

### Gen X

- Dining facility (54%)
- Simulators (51%)
- Nighttime use (45%)

# Private Course Cost Tolerance

The cost tolerance for players to join a private club continues to rebound, even as interest in paying more annually has seen a significant decrease this past year.

When it comes to annual fees to join a private club, there was similar appetite to pay annual fees as part of a golf membership with 39% indicating a willingness to pay between \$2,000 and \$3,000 annually to be part of a club. However, 25% would not be willing to pay additional fees to joining a private club.

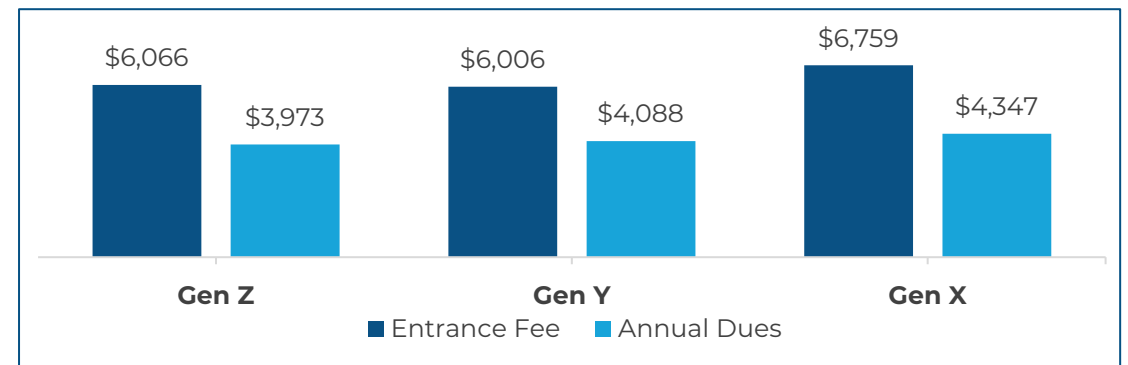
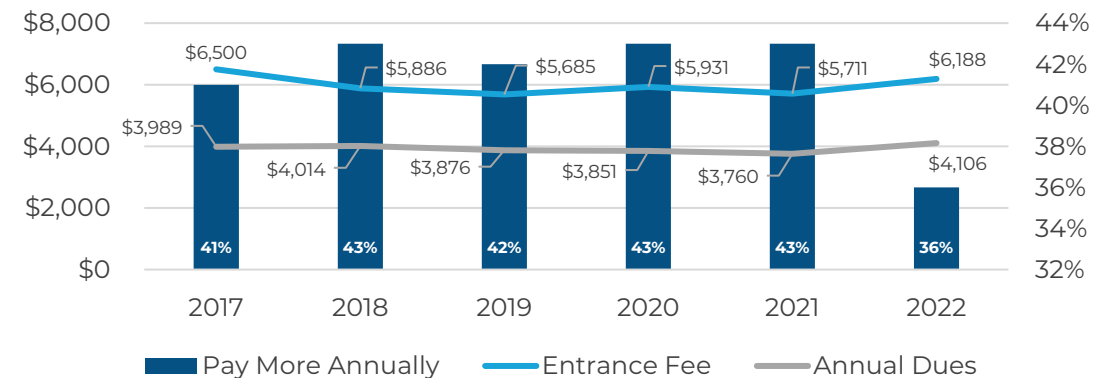
Respondents indicated a willingness to pay, on average, \$6,188 to join a private club, with the presence of children having no influence on the amount respondents are willing to pay. However, Generation X was willing to spend more (\$6,759) on entrance fees as compared to both Gen Z and Gen Y, who were both at about \$6,000. Widowed/divorce respondents are willing to spend the most (\$6,818) with singles willing to spend the least (\$6,022) when marriage is considered, with the

presence of kids having no impact on this number.

Marriage/partner did not significantly impact the willingness to pay annual dues, however, married respondents were willing to spend the most (\$4,044) with singles spending the least (\$3,802). Generationally, Gen X had a willingness to spend more (\$4,327) on annual fees than the other groups, with Gen Z willing to spend the least (\$3,973).

But what impacts have the pandemic, and the increased interest in playing golf, had on overall interest in joining a private club? While 1/3 would be willing to spend more monthly than have an entrance fee, 50% of respondents indicated they would be willing to spend up to \$5,000 to join a private club, with less than 10% willing to spend more than \$15,000.

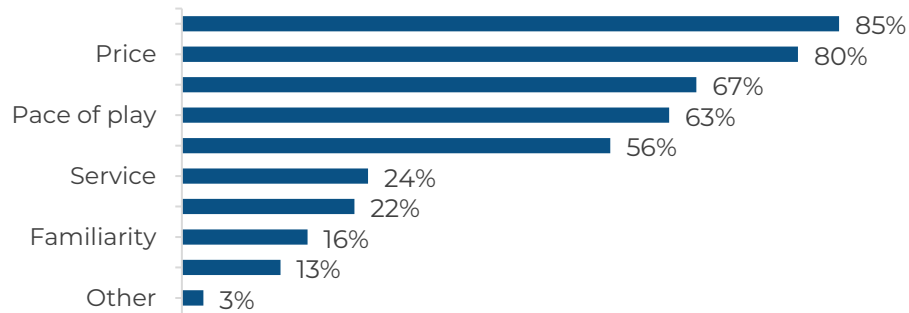
## ENTRANCE FEES AND ANNUAL DUES TOLERANCE (2017 – 2022)



**Note:** "Pay More Annually" represents the percentage of respondents who indicated their preference to pay more annually rather than pay an entrance fee to join a private club. Listed prices reflect weighted averages.

# Factors Influencing Public Courses

## FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE DECISION ON COURSE CHOICE



Price (83%)

Course conditions (82%)

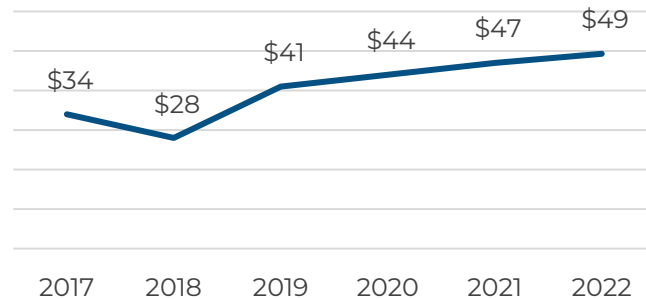
Travel distance (64%)

## AVERAGE SPEND

### Average Spend per Round (2017 – 2022)



Gen Z, \$41  
Gen Y, \$54  
Gen X, \$55



For public courses, there has been a continued increase in the average amount spent since 2018, even as price continues to be an important consideration in selecting which course to play.

Public course expenditures generally come from green fees and discretionary spending before, during and after a round. From a green fees perspective, the majority (66%) of those who pay greens fees pay between \$25 - \$75, with 25% of respondents being members who do not pay green fees. Of those respondents who pay green fees, the average cost per round is approximately \$50.

From a discretionary spending perspective, the overall average spend is \$15 per round with the majority of respondents spending between \$10 and \$20 per round, with over 30% of respondents indicating they spend within this range.

When partners are considered, married respondents spend the most during a round as compared to the other groups,

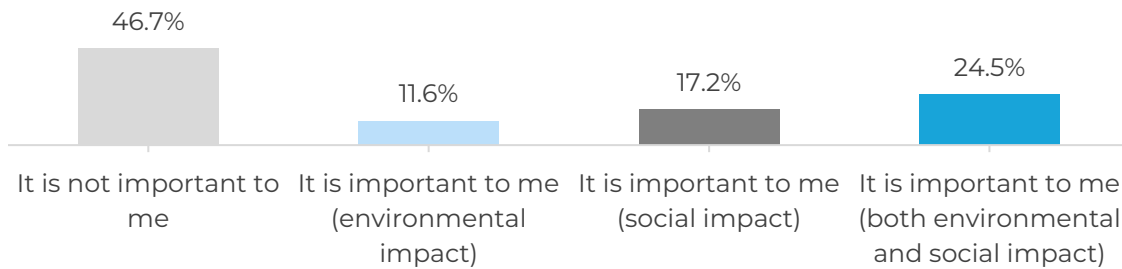
and significantly more than those who are single. Much of this expenditure comes from higher-than-average greens fees as on-course expenditures range between \$13-\$19 per round.

Generationally speaking, Gen Y spend the most during a round of golf (\$54), at almost more than 25% more as compared to Gen Z golfers. Gen Y spend significantly more for green fees than either Gen Z or Gen Y. When it comes to the presence of children, those with kids spent significantly greater amounts (35% more) than those without kids.

When examining generational differences, Gen X indicated higher importance for the condition of the course while price becomes less important. Pace, which is always considered an important concern, saw a significantly smaller number of Gen Z indicating this as one of the most important five factors. It is important to note that course familiarity for Gen Z is increasingly important when compared to the other groups (23% indicated this as important, compared to the average of 16%).

# Social and Environmental Impact

## ARE GOLF CLUB'S SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT IMPORTANT WHEN CHOOSING A GOLF VENUE?



**53% of Gen Y say social and environmental impact are important when choosing a golf venue (43% in 2021).**

Age Group	When choosing a golf venue, environmental impact is important to me	When choosing a golf venue, social impact is important to me
Gen Z	40%	51%
Gen Y	30%	38%
Gen X	40%	35%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>42%</b>

Social and environmental awareness continues to grow for golfers, even if the importance placed on various areas of concern differs between generational cohorts.

Awareness surrounding the social and environmental environments in which we live have continued to grow in importance. Golf is no different as more than half of NCCGA and City Tour golfers indicated that they are concerned with these factors as 25% paid close attention to both environmental and social factors, with 17% paying close attention to the social impacts while 12% looking towards the environmental impacts of the course they play.

Within the groups, Gen Z had the highest level of concern with social considerations when compared to the other cohorts, while Gen Y showed the least interest in the environmental impacts and Gen X showed the least interest in the social considerations.

Gen Y had a higher-than-expected interest in social considerations while Gen X had a lower-than-expected interest in that same area. Of the three groups, both Gen Z and Gen X had a higher-than-expected interest in the environmental impacts while Gen Y had a higher interest in social than Gen X.

# Social and Environmental Factors

While the top environmental factors are consistent for NCCGA and City Tour players, there is a clear difference between the importance that golfers place on social factors, with youth programming being the top area of concern.

From a social factor perspective, youth golf programming (30%) and the diversity of golfers (27%) were of primary emphasis. Being engaged with the local community (19%) and accessibility for low-income residents (17%) were the third and fourth most important considerations.

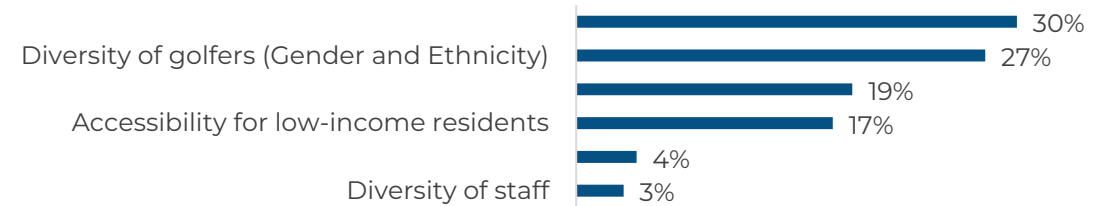
When looking at the various cohorts, unique insights emerge. For instance, while youth programs were most important for Gen Y, the diversity of players was most important for Gen X and accessibility for low-income residents was for Gen Z. Accessibility also showed some stark differences as Gen Z prioritized this on the same level as youth involvement

while Gen X showed significantly less concern for this area of concern.

Community was generally considered an important consideration, while both the diversity of staff and political views were minimally identified.

From an environmental stewardship perspective, players were most concerned with the course's maintenance practices, followed by the use of electric carts and minimal resource usages in areas such as water and energy. When comparing results between the three generations, results were very similar in scope with minimal differences present except that Gen X looked to the importance of maintenance at a much higher, more significant level, while the other two groups looked towards the use of electric carts with a higher degree of importance.

## TOP SOCIAL FACTORS



### Gen Z

- Accessibility (26%)
- Youth programs (26%)
- Golfer diversity (23%)

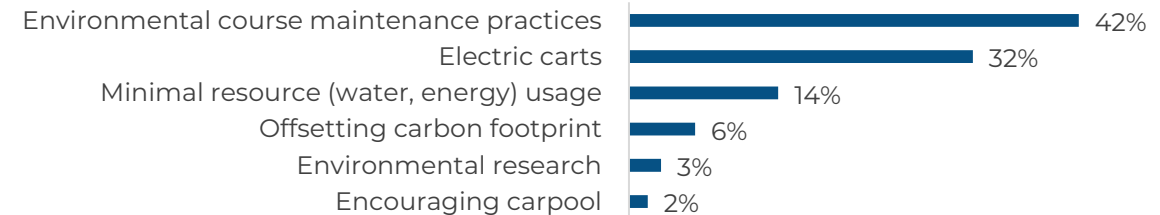
### Gen Y

- Youth programs (32%)
- Golfer diversity (27%)
- Community (19%)

### Gen X

- Golfer diversity (35%)
- Youth programs (30%)
- Community (17%)

## TOP ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS



### Gen Z

- Course maintenance (41%)
- Electric carts (32%)
- Resource usage (14%)

### Gen Y

- Youth programs (32%)
- Golfer diversity (27%)
- Community (19%)

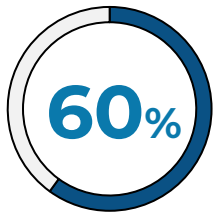
### Gen X

- Course maintenance (48%)
- Electric carts (29%)
- Resource usage (14%)

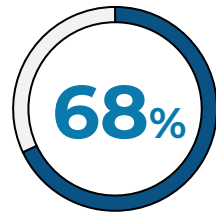
# Golf and Travel

## HAVE YOU GOLFED WHILE TRAVELING OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS?

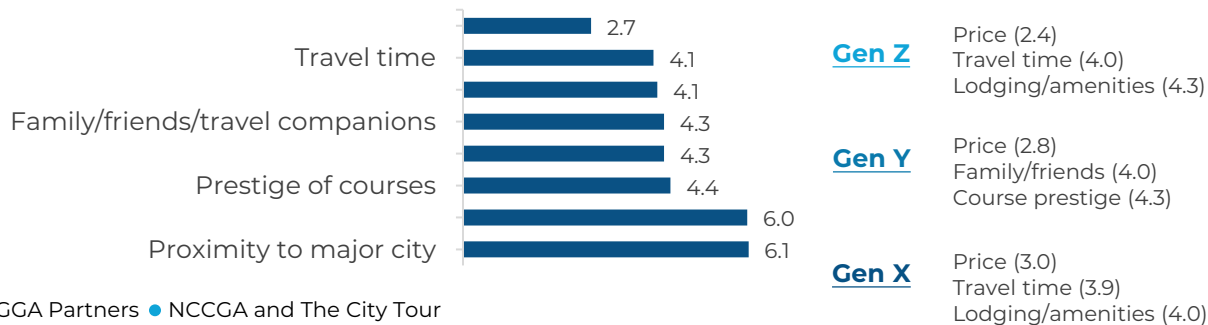
### Been on a golf trip



### Golfed while on vacation



## IMPORTANT FACTORS IN SELECTING A GOLF TRIP DESTINATION (AVERAGE RANKING)



Social and environmental awareness continues to grow for golfers, even if the importance placed on various areas of concern differs between generational cohorts.

Of the respondents, 60% have traveled specifically to play golf while 68% have played golf when traveling for other reasons. When it comes to selecting destinations for travel, we asked golfers to rank order the importance of golf travel attributes, and the price was the most important, followed by the travel time and lodging/amenities associated with a golf trip.

When examining travel differences, Gen Y ranked companions as the second most important consideration, followed by course prestige and then lodging and amenities. Gen X and Gen Y were very similar in their rankings, as travel time and lodging/amenities were important, but were very different than Gen Y in what they deemed important.

When considering the presence of a partner/marriage, lodging became the second most important consideration for widowed/separated travelers as compared to the average group rank, along with an increase in importance for multiple courses over travel companions. Some minor adjustments in importance for singles also emerged as prestige increased over importance of having multiple courses. The presence of children did not impact the importance of these variables, indicating that kids are not part of golfer's travel plans.

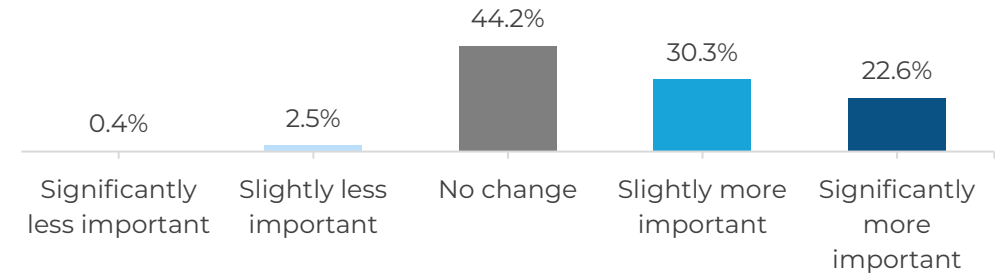
# COVID-19 Influences

It is no secret that golf's popularity has exploded as a result of COVID-19. In 2020 and 2021, golf was one of the activities least likely to contribute to the spread of COVID-19 as it is played outside where one can keep their distance from others. For most people, travel and other recreational activities were significantly restricted, leaving both new and experienced golfers with more time and money to dedicate to the game of golf. In the 2021 Millennial Golf Industry Survey, 60% of respondents indicated that golf has become more important in their life because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, that number decreased slightly to 53%, but it is clear that the elevated interest in golf has somewhat sustained, even as the threat and related restrictions have diminished.

Outside of the actual restrictions and threat of the virus, the pandemic has provided many people with additional flexibility to play golf. Although some offices have recalled employees on a part-time or full-time basis, 46% of millennials have been able to golf more as a result of working from home, the same amount as in 2021.

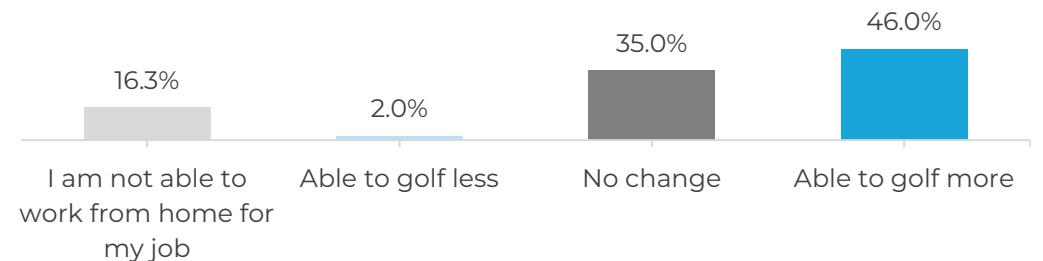
Over half (56%) of Gen X respondents indicated that there was "no change" to golf importance as a result of COVID-19, compared to only 36% of Gen Z. 61% of Gen Z respondents indicated that golf became more important in their lives, compared to 53% of Gen Y and 40% of Gen Z respondents. Over half (51%) of Gen Z and Gen Y respondents have been able to play more golf working from home, compared to just 30% of Gen X respondents.

## HAS COVID-19 CHANGED THE IMPORTANCE OF GOLF IN YOUR LIFE?



**53% of millennials say golf has become more important (60% in 2021)**

## HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO PLAY MORE GOLF WORKING FROM HOME?



**46% of millennials say they can golf more because of WFH (46% in 2021)**



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The National Collegiate Club Golf Association is an initiative dedicated to the organization and promotion of collegiate club golf. Our mission is to increase opportunities for college students to play golf in college.

The City Tour runs team-based golf tournaments for amateur golfers in major cities across the United States.

[nextgengolf.org/college-golf/nccga](http://nextgengolf.org/college-golf/nccga) 

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