

WFTDA Competitive Play Listening Sessions: What We Learned

Study Basics

Date of Study: November 12-15, 2021

Session Length: 30-90 minutes

Leagues Participated (24):

Arch Rival Roller Derby

Arizona Roller Derby

Black Rose Rollers

Boston Roller Derby

Cherry City Roller Derby

Denver Roller Derby

DuPage Derby Dames

Eves of Destruction

Fox Cities Roller Derby

Gotham Roller Derby

Harrison Area Roller Derby

Limerick Roller Derby

Madison Roller Derby

North Star Roller Derby

Peninsula Roller Derby

Rainy City Roller Derby

Rose City Rollers

Roughneck Roller Derby

Sailor City Rollers

Stockholm Roller Derby

Suburbia Roller Derby

Texas Roller Girls

Toronto Roller Derby

Victorian Roller Derby League

Study Conducted by: Bones (WFTDA Senior Director of Programs), DiFibrillator (Golden City Rollers, WFTDA Board Member), Tifa Knoxhard (Santa Cruz Roller Derby, WFTDA Board Member), Iron Tyrant (Golden City Rollers, WFTDA Board Member)

Data Processed by: Iron Tyrant, Tifa Knoxhard

Data Analyzed by: Tifa Knoxhard



Introduction

The data analyzed in this report was collected via listening sessions in November 2021 with WFTDA member leagues as listed above. The goal of these sessions was to gather information from member leagues in regard to their current difficulties in league sustainability and competition, as well as their sentiment on a 2022 competitive play proposal.

The questions asked included, but were not limited to:

Listening Portion

“What are the issues that your league is currently facing?”

“In an ideal scenario only for your league’s needs and abilities, what would you be interested in as far as competitive play for 2022?”

“In the current reality we live in, what do you imagine competitive play could look like in 2022?”

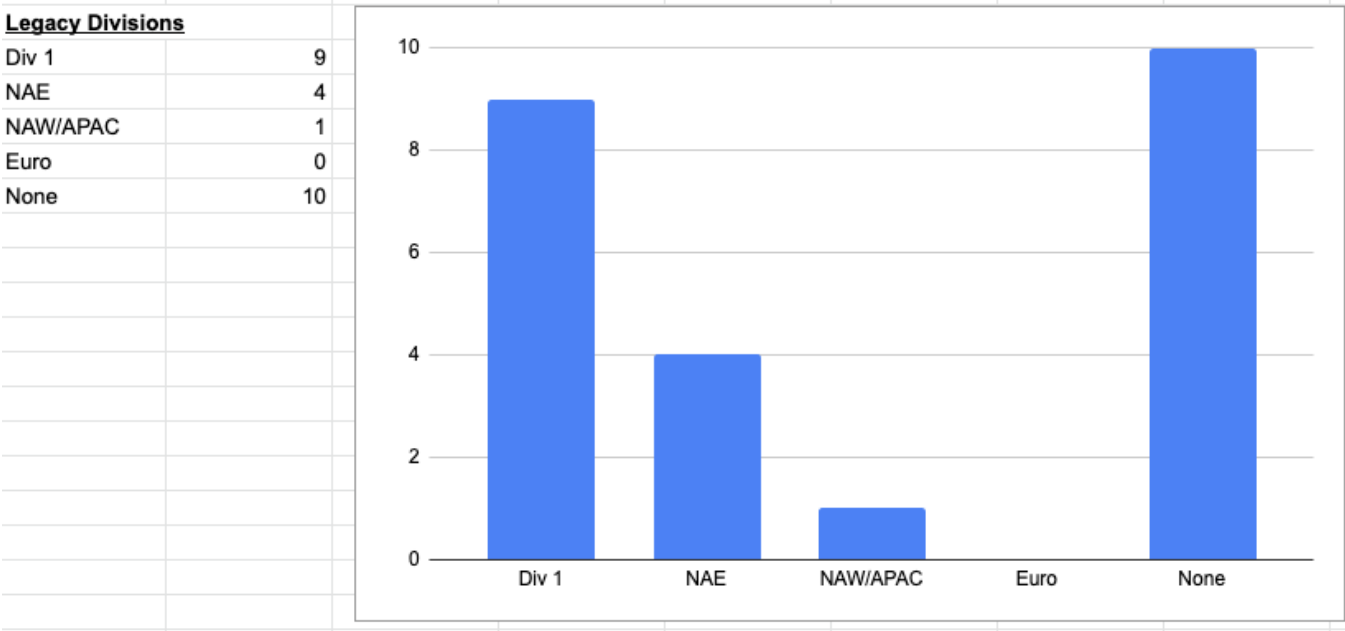
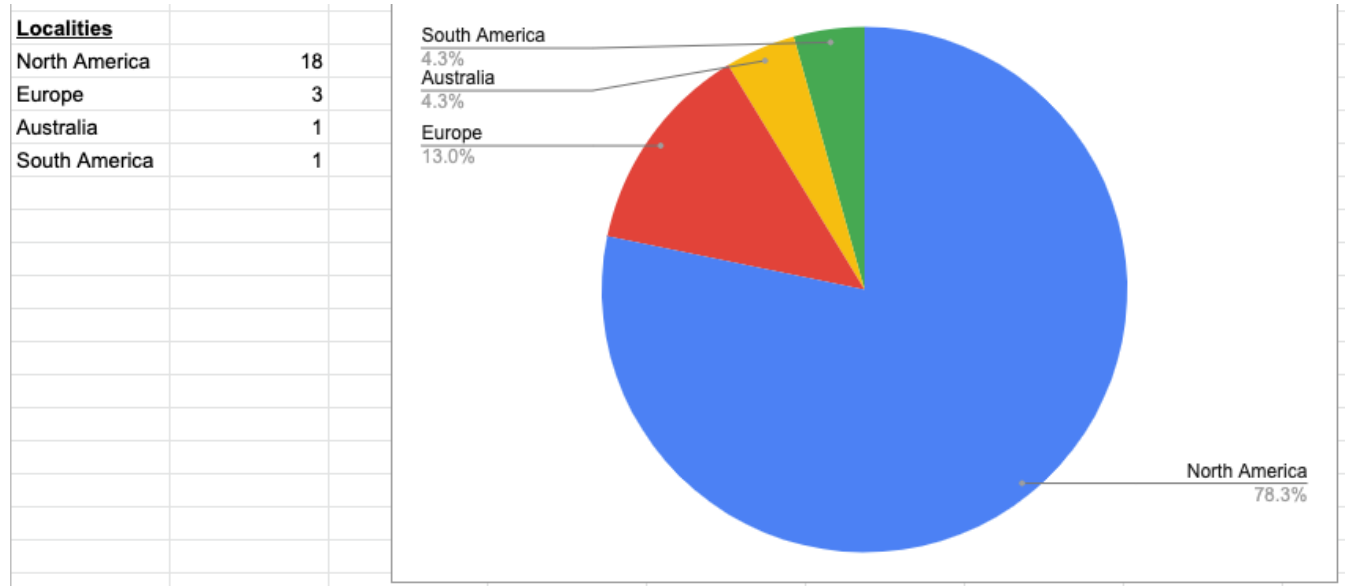
Feedback Portion

((Introduced with a description of the 2022 proposal from BOD representative))

- What do you like about this?
- How could this be improved?
- Do you think this is feasible?
- Do you think this is equitable?

The following graphics represent data collected from these leagues, during these sessions.

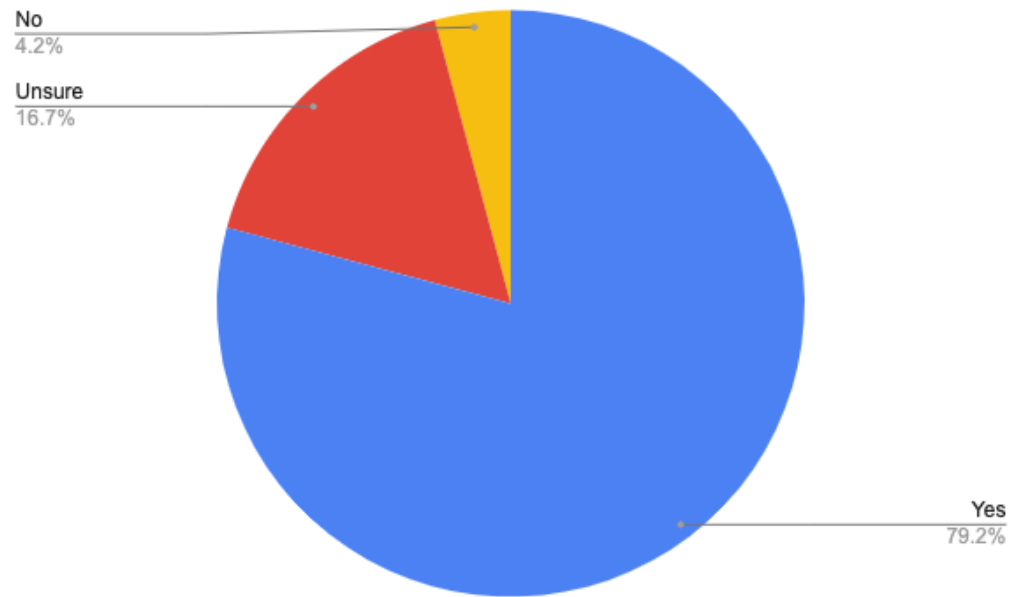
Participating League Demographics



High-Level Information

Plan Approval

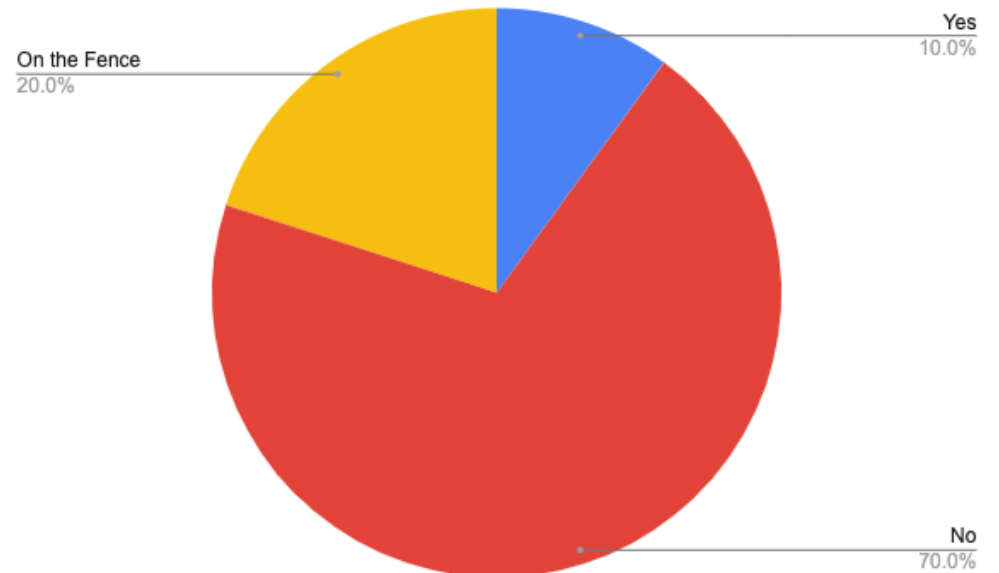
Yes	19
Unsure	4
No	1



Likes Legacy Ranking System

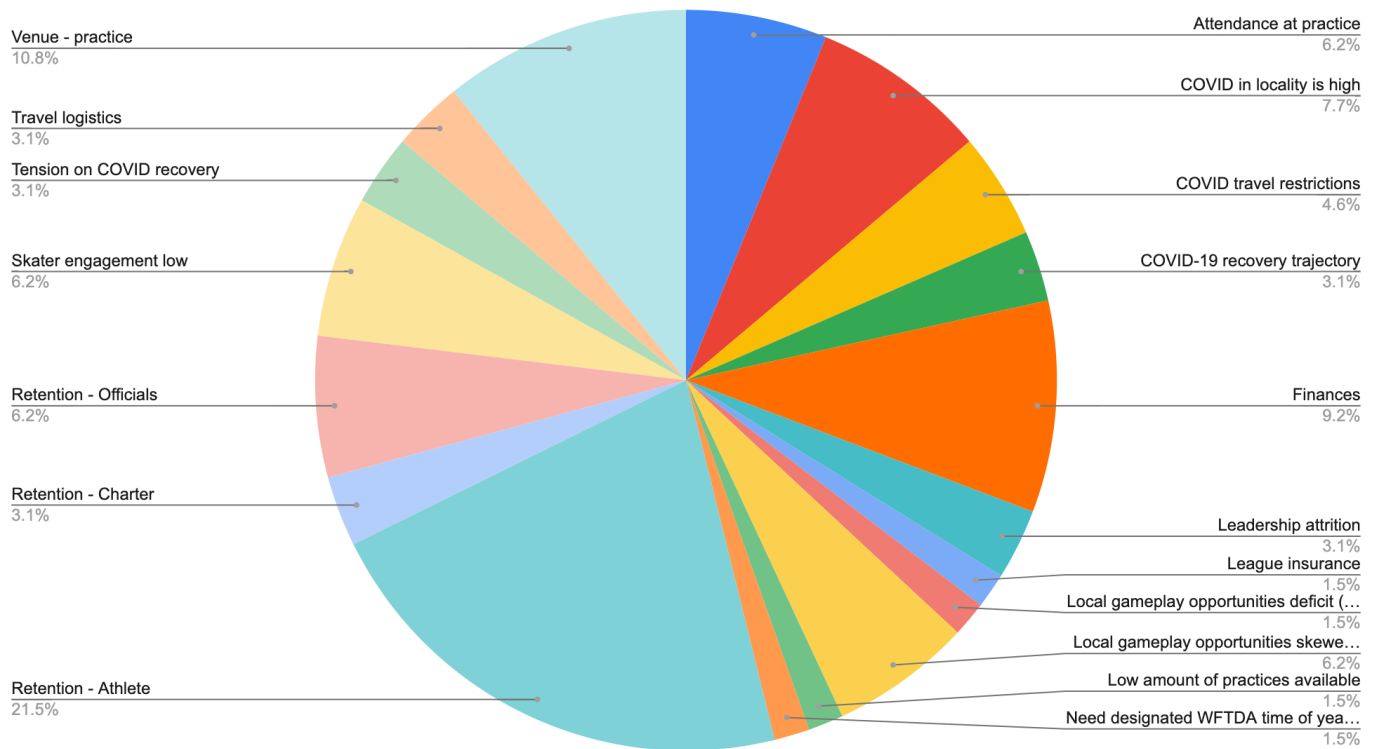
Yes	2
No	14
On the Fence	4

(Question not asked in all sessions.)



Current Challenges for Leagues (3 responses per league)

Challenges for Leagues



While there are always challenges in running roller derby, the COVID-19 pandemic certainly has made things exponentially more difficult. Approximately 20% of aggregated challenge categories are directly COVID-19 related, including issues such as continued high infection and fatality rates (7.7%), recovery trajectory (3.1%), covid-19 related travel restrictions (4.6%), and tension on COVID-19 recovery planning (3.1%). In addition, other challenges such as venue loss (10.8%) and skater engagement (6.2%) can be adjacently attributed to COVID-19 related losses and complexities.

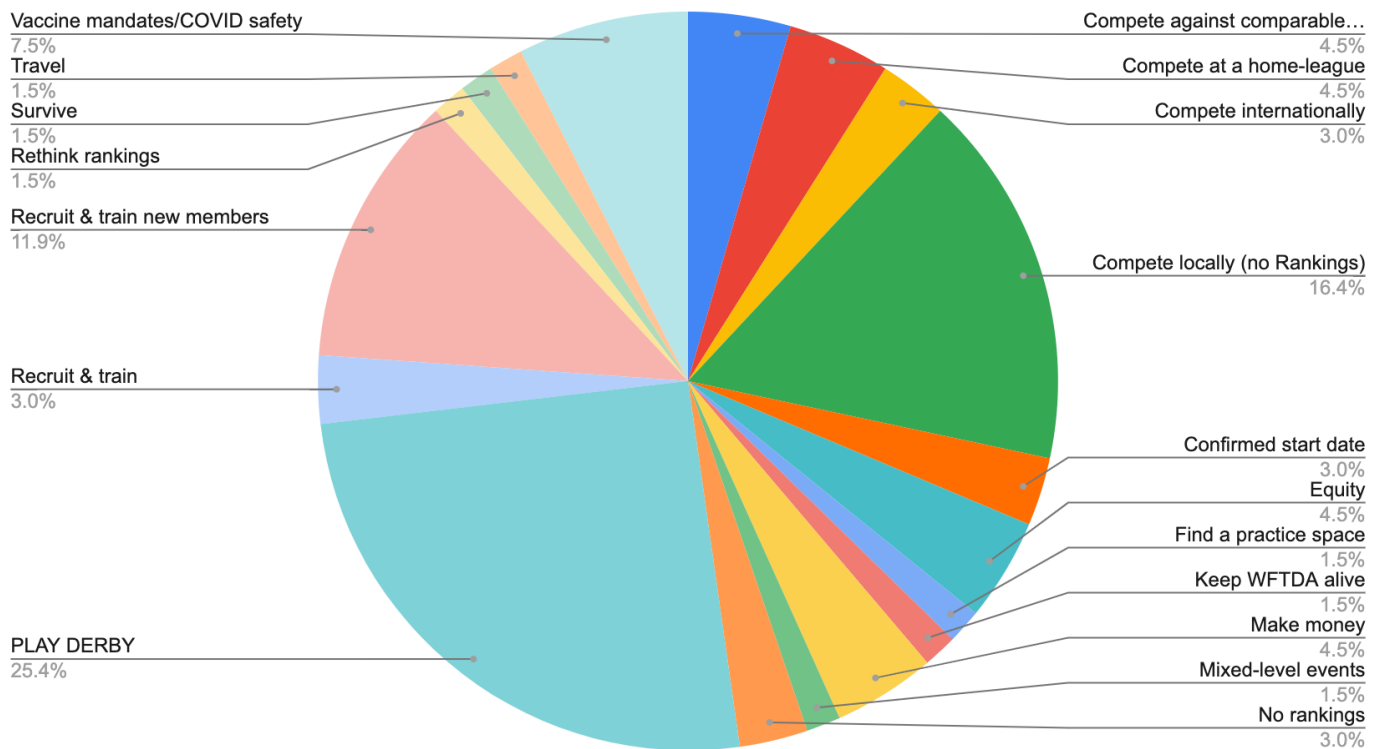
As far as the largest block of challenges for the leagues we spoke to, those center around retention. Whether it's Officials (6.2%), Charter skaters (3.1%), Leadership (3.1%), or just Athletes overall (21.5%), leagues are experiencing extreme turnover across all roles. There were many reasons articulated for this, ranging from folks finding other ways to spend their time during the pandemic, to persistent covid-19 safety concerns, to people just not wanting to come back to the "drama" and workload that derby brings to their lives.

The final item to draw attention to is Finance. With 9.2% of leagues reporting this as one of their top three challenges, it's clear that many of our leagues are fiscally struggling.

It's also important to note that many of the leagues who did not respond may have done so due to challenges that they're facing that are too great to allow them the bandwidth to engage in these sorts of activities. We need to consider that issues such as Retention, Finance, and just overall Burnout/Leadership Attrition may be incorrectly skewed (i.e. presenting lower than is true when extrapolated to all member leagues) because of this.

Desires for 2022 in Derby (3 responses per league)

Desires for 2022



Equity included: Intersectional, Language, Travel, and Financial

There are a lot of categories here, but the bottom line from this section of data is that people “want to f*ckin’ play roller derby.” Not in an aggro way, in the way of just wanting some derby, any derby, back in their lives in a way that’s safe and lets them feed the derby fire in their souls. Folks from every legacy level shared this sentiment, which you can see in the data; over twenty-five percent of the responses to this category were some variation on this theme. The interest in how this manifests is varied across international competitive interest (3.1%), home-league play only (4.5%), to local competition with no rankings being the largest slice, almost 5x the size of the first (16.4%).

The next largest areas were significantly smaller, but still important to review. The second highest Desire pairs with the largest Challenge from the prior section, with folks wanting to recruit and train, both specifically for existing members (3.0%) and for a mix of new and existing members (11.9%).

Finally, the third largest Desire is guidance and support from the WFTDA around vaccine mandates for their leagues and events (7.5%). Many leagues have membership and leadership that want to execute vaccine mandates but either don’t know if they’re permitted by the WFTDA to do so and/or are unsure of a way to do so in the most equitable way possible.

Conclusion

Based on the feedback from the surveyed leagues, the 2022 proposed plan is aligned with their expectations given the current global covid-19 situation. While some leagues will likely conduct additional competition in addition to the WFTDA Q3 tournament, and some will focus on recovery and internal-only play, the structure proposed is a solution that is flexible and yet attractive enough to serve the needs of the majority of the membership who will be able to compete in the next calendar year.

With this information, it is the recommendation of Bones, DeFibrillator, and Tifa Knoxhard that we move forward with the 2022 competitive play proposal. The next steps will be to clearly define sections for improvement and elaboration, and convene with sub-groups of the Task Force, Board, Rankings, and other necessary folks to finalize those areas.