

# Surrey Chess



## SCCA Survey 2020 - Status Report 30th March 2020

Dear SCCA Chess participants,

A little later than we had originally intended, due to the distractions caused by some very important developments of a global nature, here is a preliminary status report of the results of the survey we ran throughout February 2020.

### **Firstly: Thank You! We have had a great response!**

When the survey closed on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020, we had received a total of **70 individual responses**. That figure compares favourably with the 54 responses for the survey last year on ECF Fees and Budget and means that **we heard from approximately 25% of our chess participants**. That is a great response rate as the general public response rate to non-incentivised surveys is typically between 1-20%. Source: PracticalSurveys.com

The response rate indicates a roughly **95% confidence level that the question results are +/- 10%** of representing the entire population (Source: SurveySystem.com). It might be argued that there could be a bias because the people responding were self and not randomly selected. However, when all the quantifiable results are essentially 50:50 as you will see, that would be a difficult line to maintain with any credibility. Plus, put bluntly, if you don't give your opinion it can't be taken into account!

We had **responses from individuals from 25(!) different chess clubs** (there were several multi-club players), so we have heard from a diverse set of people from within Surrey.

For reference, here is a [link](#) to our original communication soliciting the survey feedback.

### **Results**

#### **Q1. Do you want SCCA to make monthly ECF grading submissions?**

**Yes: 41%      No: 44%      Don't know or don't care: 14%**

This is effectively a tie given the accuracy of the data. That was a bit of a surprise. The ECF survey, <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/grading-consultation-results/>, had seemed to indicate a healthy majority in favour of monthly grading.

It might be worth looking closer at the ECF survey. The question "Do you agree with the Board's decision to move to monthly grading?" sounds like a done deal, right? Implying that a decision has already been made introduces bias (called "acquiescence bias") towards encouraging agreement and it also tends to reduce response rate (ca. 900 responses from >10,000 membership is <9% response). What about the 90+% who did not respond? To assume that they all didn't care rather than that they were happy with the status quo could be misleading.

The SCCA survey solicitation document described that there was a potential cost to monthly grading either in the need for new systems or new processes although we did not have enough information to quantify it. This is different from asking "Do you want something for nothing which we have already decided?", which was effectively what the ECF asked. The latter is easy to say "yes" to, isn't it?

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When looking at our results, we looked for bias in the demographic categories and the only one we picked up was that older players (55+) are less receptive than younger players to monthly gradings. That might be understandable, in the sense that older players have lived with the current system for a long time, seen their grades go up and down, and may be less inclined to see a reason for change. Possibly they may also be seeing some decline in grading and don't wish to be reminded of it on a monthly basis! Regardless, SCCA has an equality policy which means that, if you are aged 18 or 80, we treat your opinions as equally important.

### Conclusion

**There is no overwhelming drive for monthly grading submissions in Surrey.** Opinion is split down the middle.

**The position we intend to adopt is that SCCA will consider moving to monthly grading submissions only if we become very comfortable that our grader, our webmaster and their successors will be able to manage the transition and ongoing workload.**

We would also want the ECF to give us substantial support in terms of building new IT interfaces, if necessary. If the current process can be more automated such that the ongoing workload in the future is no greater and preferably less than the status quo, then that would be a potential persuader. In any event, SCCA should not be in the first wave of leagues moving to monthly submissions and should let others go first and fix the inevitable teething problems before we make our final decision. We should also liaise with other leagues who use independent, non-standard LMS, websites to help each other going forward.

### **Q2. Do you want FIDE rating for your county match games?**

**Yes: 37%    No: 39%    Don't know or don't care: 24%**

Again, a tie within the accuracy of the data. The devil is in the demographic details.

What was not a great surprise was that only 2 out of 70 respondents who are not already Platinum or Gold members want their county matches FIDE rated. What was a surprise was that there are a significant number (about a third) of Gold members who don't want their county matches FIDE rated! The result of the latter is that, even for the higher teams (Open, U180, U160), about 50% of respondents don't want FIDE rating and that proportion is consistent across the teams.

In light of the difficulties our county captains have had in recent years in fielding full teams it seems highly problematic to try to implement FIDE rating either in lower (other than the Open) teams in the National Stages or in any (including the Open) teams in the SCCU stages. SCCA had previously resisted an ECF proposal to FIDE rate the U180 National Stages. The survey results support that stance and **the SCCA position should be to continue to support the status quo in the future.**

### **Q5. Do you support the increase to the ECF Members' contribution to the International Budget from ca. £30k/a to £46k/a?**

**Yes: 39%    No: 40%    Don't know or don't care: 19%    Skipped question: 3%**

Yet another tie within the accuracy of the data!

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There was no significant correlation of bias using membership category, grading or age. This, in itself, was a surprise as the received wisdom (including that of the SCCA Board prior to this survey) has been that Gold and Platinum members, who tend to spend more on their chess than Silver and Bronze members, would be more receptive to a higher ECF Budget. However, the survey suggests that the same proportion of players enjoy the performance of English teams at international events, regardless of their own level of involvement.

If the Surrey sample is representative of the whole of England then the previous positions at ECF Council of the Gold representatives being strongly in favour and, conversely, the Bronze and Silver representatives being strongly against an increase in the International budget both appear to have been too extreme. It would be interesting to know what proportion of their populations they had heard from when they formed their positions.

The previous position of the SCCA Board on this matter was firmly against the increase in the International budget. We will take on board the lesson that our original question on this matter was not bounded sufficiently. It asked whether participants would support or not an unlimited International Budget. Having got a big majority against that we then took the view that we should resist the increase. In hindsight, our participants' opinion is more nuanced. However, the resulting process we went through caused the International Director to state that he would live with the new, higher, International Budget in future, subject just to inflation increases. There's no absolute certainty that the statement will be honoured but it is a helpful clarification and reference point for future Budget discussions in Finance Council.

**With a tied result in SCCA chess participants' opinion and with 4 votes in SCCA control (3 SCCA and 1 SCC) we will adopt a neutral position at ECF Finance Council.** That means abstaining on a hand vote or, more likely given current travel and other restrictions, casting 2 votes in favour and 2 against in a card vote. Our expectation is that the increase in ECF Budget and resultant impact on Fees will be passed comfortably at ECF Finance Council 2020, based on last year's polls.

### **Questions 3 and 4.**

Those were non quantifiable questions, asking for textual comments on ideas for making both the Surrey Chess Congress and the Surrey Individual Tournaments more attractive to entrants. We are still reviewing the messages that came out of the helpful comments received and will report back on these matters in a separate status document in due course.

Surrey chess participants who wish to make any constructive comments in response to this report are welcome to do so by email to me at [tv1div1@surbitonchessclub.co.uk](mailto:tv1div1@surbitonchessclub.co.uk)

Finally, I would like to thank again all of those who participated in the survey. Your opinions and comments have been very helpful and will inform the SCCA Board's policy making going forward.

**Paul Shepherd - SCCA President - on behalf of the SCCA Board**