

Survey of ex-members of gliding clubs: Overview of findings

Prepared for: Victorian Soaring Association

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Introduction

This document summarises the results of a survey of ex-members of Australian gliding clubs.

Survey methodology

The research involved an 8 minute telephone survey of ex-members of gliding clubs. The Victorian Soaring Association (VSA) provided lists of members, from clubs across Australia, who had not renewed their membership.

The first list of lapsed members (72) was supplied in February 2012, and the first batch of telephone interviews was conducted in March–April 2012.

The second list of lapsed members (49) was supplied at the end of June 2012 and further telephone interviews were carried out in July–August 2012.

A total of 121 names was provided, but of these, 12 had no telephone number included and 10 had disconnected telephone numbers. Therefore only 99 names had valid telephone numbers.

Of these 99 potential respondents:

- 30 (30%) had since renewed or intended to renew their membership and thus did not qualify (most were happy to provide their email address so they could participate in the online member survey)
- 29 (29%) completed the telephone survey
- 28 (28%) could not be reached when called at least three or four times, at different times of day and on different dates
- 12 (12%) did not wish to participate in the survey.

The total number of ex-members who completed the survey ($n=29$) is low. The response rate was reasonable, although slightly lower than anticipated for calls to mobile phones. Some people screen calls to their mobiles, as well as their landline telephones, and will not answer a call from an unfamiliar number.

Results

The consolidated results from the survey follow. Other than the first item (Type of membership), the item headings used refer to each of the questions included in the survey.

Due to the small sample size, cross-tabulation of questions (i.e. analysing the data in terms of more than one question at a time, such as satisfaction rating versus length of membership) is not considered to be meaningful.

Type of membership

The data for this question comes from the information that the VSA supplied with the names and telephone contacts for lapsed members.

Most (62%) of the ex-members surveyed were adult members; that is, they had signed up for the normal full 12 month period and were aged over 21 years. The next most common category was student members (still attending an educational institution) at 17%. Most of the other respondents had signed up for a trial period of one or three months (14%), and one was a student who had immediate family in the club.

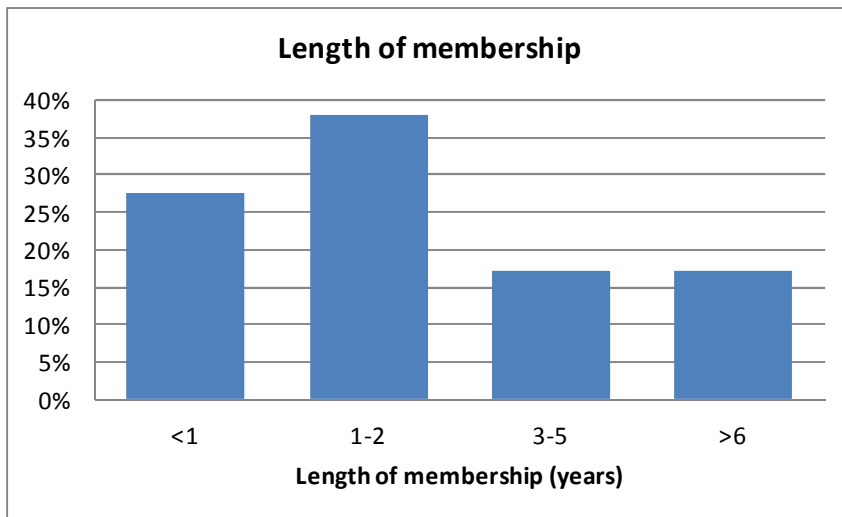
Membership type	
	<i>n=29</i>
MEMB ADLT	62%
MEMB STUD	17%
ST3 ADLT	10%
MEMB STUDF	7%
ST1 ADLT	<u>3%</u>
Total	100%

M1 For approximately how long were you a member of a gliding club?

Two-thirds (66%) of the ex-members surveyed had been members for less than two years. This includes 21% who had been members for less than three months, another 6% who had been in the club for three to 12 months and 38% who had been members for between one and two years.

The remaining third (34%) had been members for at least three years.

Length of membership	
	<i>n=29</i>
Less than 3 months	21%
3 months to less than 6 months	3%
6 months to less than 1 year	3%
1–2 years	38%
3–5 years	17%
6–10 years	0%
More than 10 years	<u>17%</u>
Total	100%

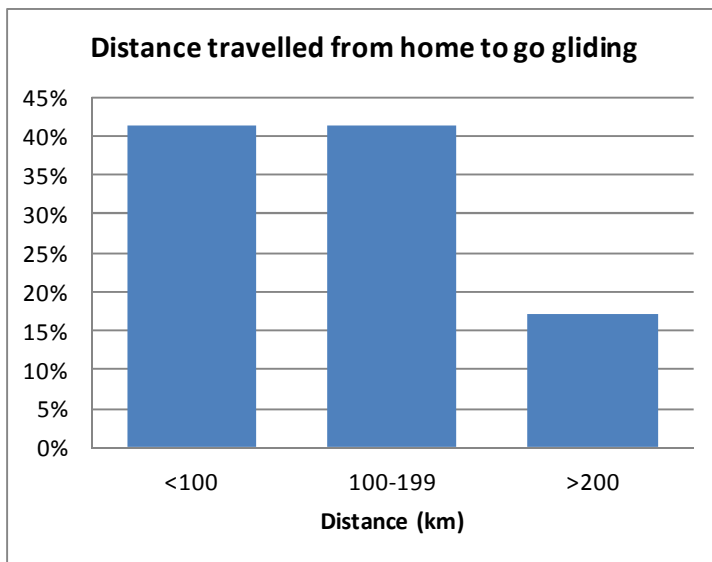


M2 Approximately how far did you have to travel from home to go gliding?

About four out of 10 (41%) of the ex-members surveyed had to travel less than 100 km from home to go gliding, while another 41% travelled 100–200 km. A smaller percentage (17%) travelled at least 200 km to go gliding.

Distance from home

	<i>n=29</i>
Less than 20 km	3%
20-99 km	38%
100-199 km	41%
200-299 km	3%
300-399 km	14%
More than 400 km	<u>0%</u>
Total	100%



M3 How did you commence glider flying training?

Most of the ex-members (72%) had undertaken glider training via weekend sessions at their club. About a quarter had done a week-long training session.

(Note that in the comments in question F9, a few said that they would have liked a week-long training session.)

Type of glider training	
	<i>n=29</i>
Weekend by weekend sessions at the club	72%
A concentrated (week-long) training session	24%
Trained overseas	<u>3%</u>
Total	100%

M4 Did you complete training?

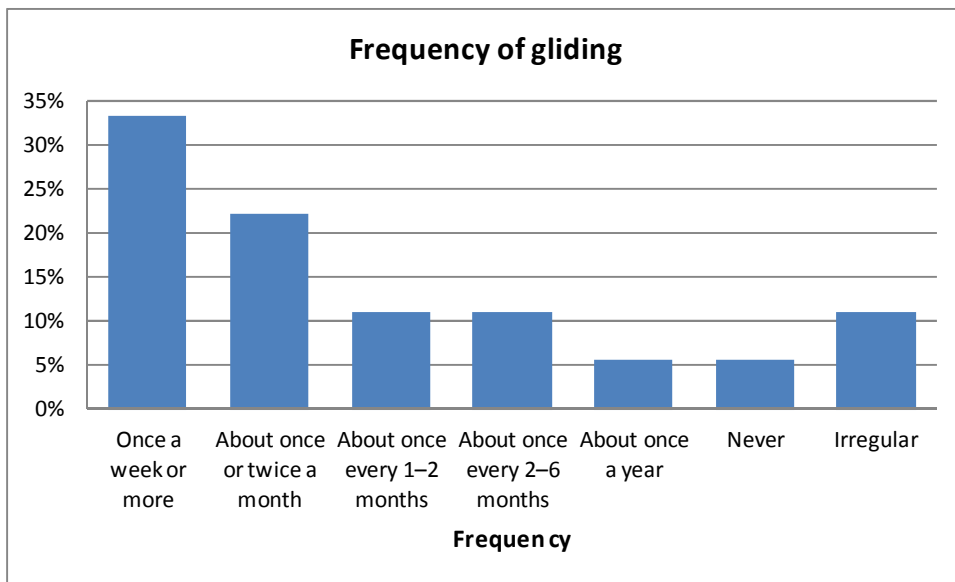
Almost 40% of the ex-members surveyed had not completed their training.

Whether completed training	
	<i>n=29</i>
Yes	62%
No	<u>38%</u>
Total	100%

M5 Approximately how often did you go gliding?

Of those who had completed their training ($n=18$), a third had been gliding at least weekly, and another 22% went once or twice a month.

Frequency of gliding	
	<i>n=18</i>
Once a week or more	33%
About once or twice a month	22%
About once every 1–2 months	11%
About once every 2–6 months	11%
About once a year	6%
Never	6%
Irregular	11%
Total	100%



F1a What was it that attracted you to gliding in the first place?

F1b What was the main reason for you taking up gliding?

The main reason most ex-members started gliding was simply that they wanted to fly (97%). A few also mentioned that it was fun, and a challenge to learn a new skill. Other factors were mentioned, but each by only one person.

Reasons for starting gliding		
	All reasons	Main reason
	<i>n=29</i>	<i>n=29</i>
I wanted to fly	97%	97%
Fun	10%	
Challenge/learning new skill	7%	3%
Being part of a club	3%	
Interested in instructing/teaching	3%	
Like being outdoors/fresh air/nature	3%	
Economical way to learn to fly	3%	
Member of air force cadets	3%	

F2 On a scale of 0 to 10 ... how satisfied were you with your gliding club?

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 means extremely satisfied and 0 means extremely dissatisfied, most ex-members were very satisfied with their gliding club, and the average rating was 7.6/10. The majority (69%) gave scores of 8 or 9 out of 10.

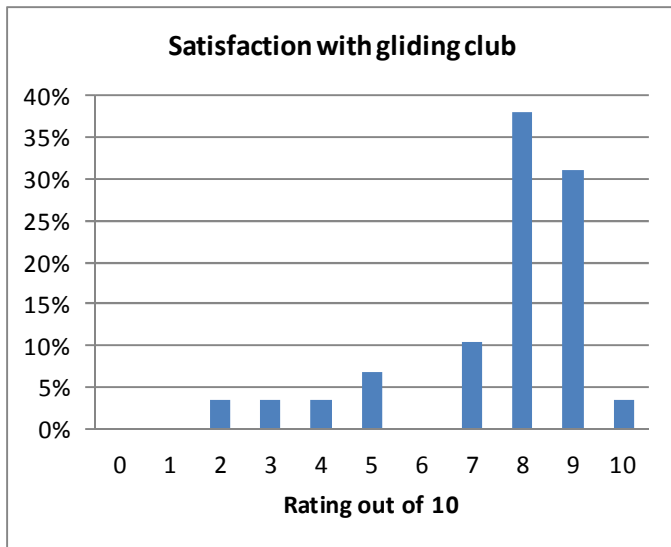
This suggests that most members who leave gliding are not doing so because of dissatisfaction with their club.

Satisfaction with gliding club

n=29

Rating out of 10

0 (extremely dissatisfied)	0%
1	0%
2	3%
3	3%
4	3%
5	7%
6	0%
7	10%
8	38%
9	31%
10 (extremely satisfied)	3%
Total	100%



F3a Could you tell me the main reason you decided not to renew your gliding membership?

There was great variation in the main reasons ex-members gave for leaving gliding. The single most common reason (17%) was that they had moved house and now lived too far away.

As shown in the following table, when reasons are grouped into themes, the pattern becomes clearer. Most respondents left due to changes in their personal circumstances (62%). For 17%, the main motivator for leaving was an issue related to flying, while 10% had decided they were more interested in other hobbies or sports. A few had other reasons for not renewing their membership, including one who had become a life member.

Main reason for leaving	
	<i>n=29</i>
Personal circumstances	
Moved house – too far away	17%
Too old/health reasons	14%
Increased work/school commitments	10%
Change in finances	10%
Increased family commitments	7%
Lack of time	<u>3%</u>
<i>Subtotal</i>	62%
Flying	
Too much time waiting around on ground	7%
Poor quality of training	3%
Training takes too long	3%
Too time-consuming as a hobby	<u>3%</u>
<i>Subtotal</i>	17%
Other interests	
Prefer other hobbies/sports (non-aviation related)	7%
Prefer motor gliders	<u>3%</u>
<i>Subtotal</i>	10%
Other	
Didn't relate to other members/fit in	3%
Became life member	3%
Sold glider	<u>3%</u>
<i>Subtotal</i>	10%

F3b Were there any other reasons?

The majority of ex-members (69%) said there were no other reasons behind their decision to leave gliding.

The most common of the other reasons mentioned were:

- issues related to flying (14%), such as too much time on the ground
- preferring other hobbies/sports (10%)
- personal circumstances (7%)
- problems with other club members (7%)
- cost (3%).

Other reasons for leaving

	<i>n=29</i>
No other reasons	69%
Flying	
Too much time waiting around on ground	10%
Too time-consuming as a hobby	<u>3%</u>
<i>Subtotal</i>	14%
Other hobbies/sports	
Prefer other hobbies/sports (non-aviation)	7%
Prefer other aviation sports	<u>3%</u>
<i>Subtotal</i>	10%
Personal circumstances	
Increased work/school commitments	3%
Change in finances	<u>3%</u>
<i>Subtotal</i>	7%
Club members	
Didn't relate to other members/fit in	3%
Problems with leadership/internal politics	<u>3%</u>
<i>Subtotal</i>	7%
Cost - too expensive/poor value for money	3%

F4 Did you leave gliding partly because it wasn't affordable?

A minority (21%) of ex-members said they left gliding partly because it was not affordable.

Was gliding unaffordable?	
	<i>n=29</i>
Yes	21%
No	<u>79%</u>
Total	100%

F5 Did you think gliding was good value for money?

A few ex-members (14%) did not think gliding was good value for money.

Was gliding good value for money?	
	<i>n=29</i>
Yes	86%
No	<u>14%</u>
Total	100%

F6 What, if anything, might have made you reconsider your decision to leave?

When asked what might have made them stay in gliding, most ex-members (72%) said 'nothing' and a further 3% said 'don't know'.

The remaining 24% had the following comments on what might have made them reconsider their decision:

- "The Form 2 inspection is getting very hard to get. In South Australia, no new courses have been done for ages, that anyone has passed. Maintenance is an issue that should be resolved."
- "I didn't know when my scholarship ended and I ran out of time."
- "Less work at the club and more gliding!"
- "Most starts are on a tug, rather than a winch start. In Holland, there is a fixed fee for the year for all flights. There is a wait list queue. 15 minute flights."
- "You get a poor amount of time in the sky. Members get bumped for trial flights or old members."
- "The risk assessment was a bit over the top. Trial flights superseding members is a bit annoying. I was gliding for 15 to 20 years."
- "School commitments."

F7 Do you think you might return to gliding some time in the future?

A high proportion (86%) of ex-members thought they might return to gliding in the future. Of those who did not think they would return (14%), three out of the four had left gliding to due age or health-related reasons.

Might return to gliding?	
	<i>n=29</i>
Yes	86%
No	<u>14%</u>
Total	100%

F8 How long before you can see yourself returning to gliding?

Of those ex-members who thought they might return to gliding, a third (32%) expected to return within a year. A further 24% said they might come back within one to two years.

When might return to gliding	
	<i>n=25</i>
Less than 6 months	16%
6 months to less than 1 year	16%
1–2 years	24%
3–5 years	32%
6–10 years	8%
More than 10 years	<u>4%</u>
Total	100%

F9 Do you have any (other) suggestions as to how gliding clubs could improve the services they offer?

About 60% of ex-members gave suggestions on how clubs could improve their services. Most of their comments concerned training; booking/waiting; younger members/instructors; and the club atmosphere:

Training

- “A week-long, live-in course is a better idea than weekends – a 10 to 15 minute flight can take an 8 to 10 hour day.”
- “Would have liked to have the option of a one week course.”
- “Education on how to start gliding. An info pack or website. The air force cadets relationship is important.”
- “More of a structured program for pilot training.”
- “More theory might be good.”

Booking/waiting

- “Check your account online? Book a time online for a flight?”
- “Sometimes there’s a bit too much time on the ground. Fines for students who don’t turn up is a good idea.”
- “Less hanging around time. There were not enough planes.”
- “The single strip at Boonah is a problem.”
- “Would enjoy a more commercial club – pay for tow etc. Less time in 'helping'. Mainly because just don’t have the time. Gave up flying because of club mentality.”
- “No queue jumping. Booking in advance – should stick to time booked in and not change it too much or too often. Was very nice to get refund of some of pro rata amount.”

Young members/instructors

- “More younger members would be good.”
- “More younger teachers would be great – in their thirties? More publicity about gliding in schools.”
- “More young people to stay longer than a year or two.”

Club atmosphere

- “Make club atmosphere more positive.”
- “Improve club atmosphere.”

Other

- “Improve the costing structure.”
- “Ensure membership numbers are large enough for clubs to survive.”
- “Great club – the location is the only drawback. Thermals are great! Routing of aircraft away from gliders on a Saturday!”

DEM1 Gender

Nearly all respondents (93%) were male.

DEM2 Age bracket

The average age of the ex-members who were surveyed was 43.5 years. There was a relatively low proportion aged 25–39 years, but without further information on the age profile of current gliding club members and that of the ex-members who did not participate in the survey, it is not possible to draw any conclusions regarding age.

Age of respondent	
	<i>n=29</i>
14-24 years	28%
25-39 years	10%
40-59 years	45%
60 years or over	17%
Average age (years)	43.5