

Final Report

Specific Findings from a Survey of Cricket Players related to Cricket Gear and Plant-based/'Vegan' Leather Alternatives

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1. Introduction

The online survey was conducted using Jisc cloud services¹ between 1st April and 25th April 2023. It was circulated, twice to an email list of 114 individuals involved in cricket, 5 cricket players who distributed via their teams, as well specific individuals involved in the sector via LinkedIn and Twitter. Prior to circulating, the survey was piloted with 4 cricket experts to verify the scope and content of the questionnaire. The survey received 42 responses and findings, analysis and conclusions should be treated as indicative and not definitive.

This first analysis focuses on responses relevant to the Vegan Cricket Gear project². While a full analysis and report will be completed at a later date for the Circular Cricket Gear project.³

Based on the 42 responses received, 16 relate to recreational players, 20 to league players, 4 to 'friendlies/ 'friendly club' players, while 1 player indicated intermediate recreational/university level and 1 survey was completed by a 'former league cricketer'. Based on this, below is a percentage breakdown for each category:

- League: 48%
- Recreational: 38 %
- Friendly Club/Friendlies: 9%
- Other: 5%

The demographic breakdown of respondents was: 83% identified as male and 41% aged over 55. Other age group represented included the following: 14% indicated that they between 18-25, 7% between 25-35, 12% between 35-45 and 26% between 45-55, making it the second largest age group after the over 55s. In addition, the average number of cricket games played per year was 13; perhaps reinforcing the number of respondents from recreational and friendly cricket. An initial analysis indicates that the number of games played, does not correlate to age or gender.

The survey indicated that cricket gear and specifically, cricket gloves, appear to be kept for over 8 seasons by 38% of respondents and between 2-3 seasons⁴ by 36%. Initially, it was hypothesised that older respondents (over 55), playing 'friendlies', would have kept their kit for over 8 seasons, while younger players (between 18-25) would perhaps change their kit every 2-3 seasons. However, surprisingly, after cross-analysing individual responses focusing on age group, level of play, gender and how many seasons gloves were kept in use, the survey indicated that there is no correlation between age, gender, level of play and how many seasons cricket gear is kept.

¹ <https://www.jisc.ac.uk>

² Funding provided for the Vegan Cricket Gear project was provided by UKRI via University for the Creative Arts, AHRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA).

³ Funding for the Circular Cricket Gear project was provided by UKRI CE-Hub Flexible Fund

⁴ 1 season is equivalent to 1 year.

2. Sustainability considerations and Relevance for Vegan Cricket Gear Project

57% of respondents indicated that they have considered the environmental impact of cricket gear in the past 6 months. However, when asked to elaborate further on their response, it appears that most respondents had not identified specific environmental issues. For those that had considered 'the environment', most focused primarily on the disposal of cricket gear at 'end of life' and the carbon footprint associated with the cricket gear supply chain.

Respondents did not perceive the use of bovine leather to produce cricket batting gloves and cricket balls to be a significant contributor to the negative environmental impacts associated with the production of cricket gear. Only 1 respondent selected the use of bovine leather as the highest contributor to the environmental degradation in relation to the production of cricket gear. Conversely, the carbon emissions related to overseas manufacturing and transportation were perceived as the highest contributor. This was followed by the use of materials derived from non-renewable sources such as high-density-foam for paddings and synthetic leather. Therefore, from a player (user) perspective, replacing the use of bovine leather is potentially not perceived as a priority for reducing the negative impacts associated to the production of cricket gear.

However, when respondents were asked if they would consider replacing their existing cricket gear - specifically batting gloves and cricket balls - with a 'plant-based'/'vegan' leather alternative, 71% replied positively. The main reasons highlighted were related to the alignment with lifestyles such as veganism, or increased awareness of sustainability considerations. However, it was also highlighted that to consider switching to cricket gear incorporating 'plant-based'/'vegan' leather alternatives, new equipment would be required to match existing products' durability, quality, and performance. Likewise, new products would have to be affordable. From the 29% that indicated they would not consider using cricket gear made from a 'plant-based'/'vegan' leather alternative, the main reasons appear to be player (user) perception regarding potential lower quality, durability, and performance of the material e.g., 'not as hard wearing' as 'true' leather. Further research should seek to address why there is a gap between lack of environmental concern in relation to bovine leather in cricket gear and interest in 'plant-based'/'vegan' leather alternatives.

3. Conclusions

Based on the preliminary analysis outlined above, key conclusions for the Vegan Cricket Gear project are the following:

- Players (users) do not consider the use of bovine leather to be a high contributor to the negative environmental impact associated with the production of cricket gear.

- There appears to high market interest amongst players (users) for cricket gear incorporating ‘plant-based’/‘vegan’ alternative leathers.
- The main reasons highlighted for cricket gear used ‘plant-based’/‘vegan’ leather alternatives primarily relate to improved product sustainability and alignment with specific lifestyles such as veganism.
- However, the survey also highlights that player (user) confidence in ‘plant-based’/‘vegan’ leathers alternatives is low. This relates particularly to its quality, durability, and technical performance.
- Therefore, it can be concluded that if players (users) are to adopt cricket gear produced using a ‘plant-based’/ ‘vegan’ leather alternatives, firstly, industry must address player (user) confidence in the material. This requires further research into player (user) behaviour and a wider demonstration of technical and functional properties of these materials for relevant cricket gear.
- In addition, based on findings of project on the refurbishment of cricket batting glove using a ‘vegan’ chamois leather⁵ ‘plant-based’/‘vegan’ leathers would need to address some of the perceived failures of leather. For example, issues related to leather cracking or sweat and odour considerations, which in turn, result in loss to grip
- Lastly, it is important to highlight that the findings presented in this report are based on an older demographic of cricket players (over 55), and responses are primarily from a male perspective. As such, further research focusing on a younger demographic and perhaps from a female perspective is required to gain a better understanding of the requirements for the development of cricket gear incorporating ‘plant-based’/ ‘vegan’ leather alternatives.

⁵ See final report: ‘Refurbishing a Right-hand Cricket Batting Glove using a ‘Vegan Chamois Leather’. Available at: <https://cfsd.org.uk/projects/vlcg/research/>