

Survey on Figure Skating Age Limits



ISU **Athletes**
Commission

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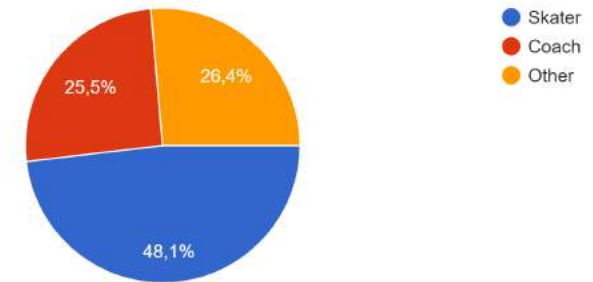
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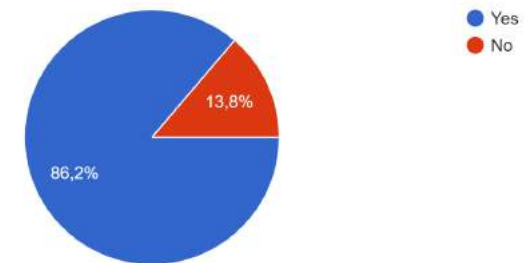
Summary of the results

- 966 responses from 48 different ISU members.*
- Of the respondents:
 - 48.1 % Skaters
 - 25.5 % Coaches
 - 26.4 % Others
- **86.2 % of all respondents agree to raise the age limits to 14 in Juniors and 17 in Seniors.**
- **13.8 % do not agree.**

In which role are you replying to this survey?



Do you agree with increasing the age limits in figure skating so that the minimum age limit for juniors would be 14 and for seniors 17?

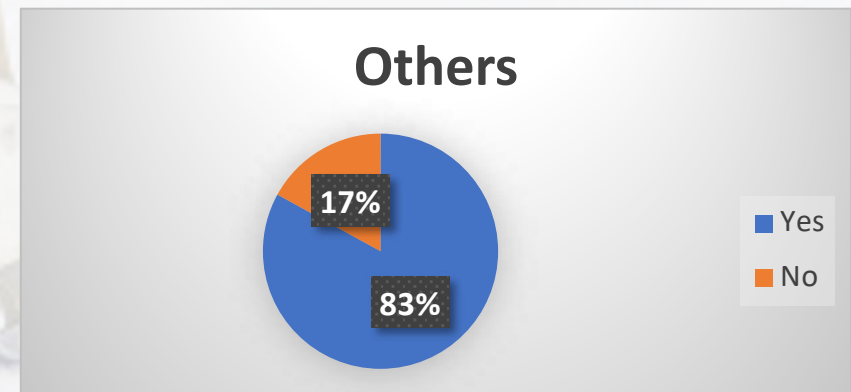
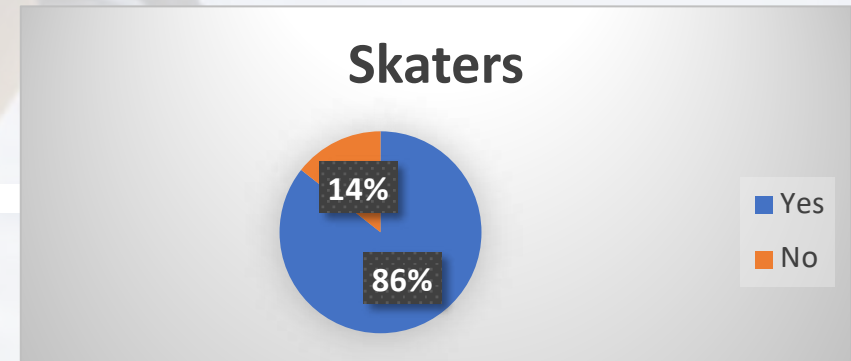


* List of participating ISU members attached.

Summary of the results

- 86 % of Skaters support raising the age limits.
- 90 % of Coaches support raising the age limits.
- 83 % of Others support raising the age limits.

The respondent group "Other" consists of ISU member employees, former skaters, officials and parents of current skaters.



How the survey was conducted

- The target group of the survey was Novice, Junior and Senior aged skaters/pairs/teams and their coaches. They were asked if they agree with amending figure skating age limits to 14 (Juniors) and 17 (Seniors) and why.
- The survey was sent to:
 - Athlete & coach contacts of the AC members.
 - The S&P, ID and SYS TC Appointed Coaches and Skaters.
 - All ISU members with the request to forward it to skaters and coaches belonging to the target group.
- The survey was open for replies during the period between 18.12.2020 – 10.1.2021.
- For the sake of reliability, respondents had to include their email address, ISU member and role (Skater/Coach/Other).
 - Among the respondents were many current junior and senior top level skaters from all disciplines as well as established coaches from Asia, Europe, Africa, North America, South America and Australia.

Most common responses in favor of the amendment

1. Injury prevention.
2. Healthy physical and mental development of skaters.
3. Longer careers for top skaters.
4. Ethical, sustainable coaching methods.
5. Maintaining the interest of fans, sponsors and media by not having children/teenagers as the main stars of figure skating events.
6. General image of figure skating.

Comments in favor of raising the age limits

The first reason is safety. There's an urgent need to protect young skaters from excessive demands at a young age – 6 year-old skaters may be required to train 3-6 hours every day to reach their competitive peaks as early as possible before they hit puberty. Excessive training affects growth plates which aren't fully fused, and bone density development. There is a high risk of injury.

Second, girls skating and women skating are different. Young kids no matter how hard they train are unable to demonstrate maturity in skating skills and music interpretation, which is why people attend competitions. It is to protect the image of skating as a sport – women's sport rather than kids'.

I think it all comes down to longevity, which is healthy for the athlete and healthy for our fan base. We see too many skaters, especially young girls, who are forced to retire by the time they are 16 or 17 because of injuries or mental health issues. This is obviously not good for the athlete as human beings and I don't believe this is good for the fans either. Spectators are what essentially drive our sport forward and having more long-term athletes that fans can follow for years (i.e. Carolina Kostner), helps keep them interested.

I think often there is very short time to stay in the novice category. I would like the skaters to have chance to stay one more year in the novice, before heading to the juniors.

I support the increase of the age limits because I believe it promotes the rights of children and youth to receive coaching and instruction in figure skating that is considerate of their physical, mental and emotional well-being and level of development. I believe that coaching in figure skating should first and foremost aim at developing the athlete as a full human being. Coaching that aims at technical sport specific skill development on the expense of the athletes' physical or mental health and well-being is unethical and should not be encouraged at an organizational level.

I think that the mature age in the top category is one of the most important value for an athlete to have. And even more important is the health of the athlete during the Senior carrier, and in many cases, the maturity of the body is not enough to support to practice loads.

I agree that skaters must start young in our sport and train hard, but I've always been as a coach a big defender, that the training on ice and off ice must stay healthy. It shouldn't be that young students must do already some operations (hips, knees, feet) or stop after their first big medal on junior worlds or senior worldchampionships. Also they shouldn't take a psychological or other physical damage in the development of puberty especially. Their is also life after sport!

Increasing the age will reduce risk for injury and future health issues. It will also allow skaters to have longer careers, which is important for the athlete but also important for fans. We should aim to have athletes competing longer and not have pre-pubescent champions who are barely teenagers competing against women.

It would be necessary to do this so that skaters would have longer careers and not having the best seasons at the age of 15.

It would be more healthy for the skaters to have more years to train and improve before they reach the age for junior and senior. Additionally, it is not right that kids compete against adults in the Senior class, and it is better for the figure skating sport as a whole to extend the age limit because then fans can follow the international skaters for many more years because the skaters will not be too injured to continue the sport already in their teens, or have their peak of carrier at a very young age.

Most common responses not in favor of the amendment

1. Restricting extremely talented individuals from competing.
2. In general, SYS and ID do not impose the same type of requirements on a skaters body as "jumping" disciplines.
3. Synchronized skating teams may have difficulties in compiling teams.
4. Ice dance junior careers and their longevity.
5. Amount of international junior competitions – respondents stated that more international junior events should be organized if an amendment in the age limits would take place.

Comments not in favor of raising the age limits

First of all for sys this will increase the difficulty for some countries to create teams, since it reduce the range of age that a junior skater (of 1 year) and a senior skater (of 2 years) can have. I also believe that in sys there is no reason to increase the lower age limit since the load of the junior and senior category do not bring so many injuries.

For ice dancers, this period will shorten the already short period of skating in juniors, and for singles, this will lead to the fact that competitions in juniors will be more interesting than in seniors

Many teams in the senior division for synchronized skating would cease to exist and reduce the likelihood of the participation of smaller countries and thereby diminish the presence of the discipline on the international stage (and essentially hamstringing the disciplines olympic ambitions!). The age restrictions would in particular be beneficial in reducing the risk of injury in the discipline of figure skating, where high impact forces through jumps can negatively effect joints and cause developmental problems/stress in the body. Synchronized skating (and ice dance) should be excluded from such age restrictions as this discipline does not exert the same level of stress on the body.

Some Girls can grow physically earlier than others. Coaches can decide if skater is right level.

I am comfortable with the current age limits that are in place for junior and senior categories. Also, giving athletes the opportunity to learn and experience international competition at a younger age allows them to use that knowledge at the senior levels at an older age.

Because of the huge differences in skating skills and physical + emotional development. Young, but talented and developed skaters would be neglected and they would for sure drop out motivation. For the same reasons the development in their skating skills would stop and frustration would take place.

Participating ISU members

Federació Adorrana d'Esports de Gel	Finnish Figure Skating Association	Lithuanian Skating Federation	Slovak Figure Skating Association
Ice Skating Australia Incorporated	Fédération Française des Sports de Glace	Fédération Monegasque de Patinage	Slovene Skating Union
Österreichischer Eiskunstlauf Verband	Deutsche Eislauf Union e.V.	Koninklijke Nederlandsche Schaatsenrijders Bond	South African Figure Skating Association
Skating Union of Belarus	Hellenic Winter Sports Federation	New Zealand Ice Figure Skating Association Inc.	Federación Española de Deportes de Hielo
Fédération Royale Belge de Patinage Artistique	Hungarian National Skating Federation	Norwegian Skating Association	Svenska Konstakningsförbundet
Brazilian Ice Sports Federation	Icelandic Skating Association	Peruvian Skating Federation	Schweizer Eislauf-Verband
Skating Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ice Skating Association of India	Philippine Skating Union	Figure and Speed Skating Association of Thailand
Skate Canada	Israel Ice Skating Association	Polish Figure Skating Association	Turkish Ice Skating Federation
Croatian Skating Federation	Federazione Italiana Sport del Ghiaccio	Korea Skating Union	National Ice Skating Association of U. K. (Limited)
Czech Figure Skating Association	Japan Skating Federation	Romanian Skating Federation	The United States Figure Skating Association
Dansk Skøjte Union	National Skating Federation of the Republic of Kazakhstan	The Figure Skating Federation of Russia	Ukrainian Figure Skating Federation
The Estonian Skating Union	Latvian Skating Association	Singapore Ice Skating Association	Skating Federation of Vietnam

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