

SFN Team · Feb 6, 2024

# Pioneering study sheds light on Europe's squash landscape



The Squash Facilities Network (SFN) is conducting a comprehensive study that offers, for the first time, a deep insight into the multi-faceted world of squash in Europe.

By collecting data from around 3,500 squash locations with over 10,000 courts and surveying players about their motivations, skills and social backgrounds, the SFN is pioneering the exploration of the European squash ecosystem.

This study highlights the regional differences that shape squash on the continent and provides a unique perspective on the dynamics that influence the development and popularity of squash in various European regions.

**A continent, two squash worlds: The diverging paths of Western and Eastern Europe**

The initial findings of the study reveal a striking contrast – the different development paths of squash sport in Western and Eastern Europe. In Western Europe, the first facilities were built in the 1970s and 1980s, and even earlier in the United Kingdom and Ireland. This stands in sharp contrast to Eastern Europe, where the development of the sport only gained momentum after the fall of the Berlin Wall towards the end of the 20th century. The study shows these differences between East and West as interesting developments that warrant deeper investigation.

Particularly noteworthy is the almost complete decline of smaller and mono-functional squash facilities in Western Europe over the past decades. This underscores a significant change in the structure and offering of the squash infrastructure. The SFN intends to further explore this.

Moreover, the SFN's initial analyses reveal a clear difference in the structure of squash facilities between nations. For this purpose, the SFN categorizes all squash facilities into five types: profit-oriented facilities, non-profit facilities funded by public money, member clubs, educational institutions that integrate squash into their sports offerings, and additional facilities such as hotels or military bases that offer squash courts as an additional incentive.

Distribution of facility types in European countries with more than 100 squash courts

	total		add on	education	member club	non profit	profit
	facilities	courts					
England	1434	3673	8%	17%	25%	26%	25%
Netherlands	173	782	1%		9%	6%	84%
Germany	180	750	1%		9%	3%	87%
France	172	695	1%		20%	10%	70%
Poland	111	434		2%	1%	7%	90%
Switzerland	111	350	3%		13%	11%	73%
Belgium	72	261			21%	21%	58%
Ireland	119	240	8%	14%	46%	21%	10%
Scotland	87	216	6%	7%	46%	36%	5%
Czech Republic	67	204	3%		3%	7%	85%
Denmark	65	194	3%	1%	48%	40%	8%
Spain	69	184	7%	11%	15%	34%	33%
Sweden	63	180	4%		27%	22%	47%
Austria	63	179	9%	1%	6%	14%	70%
Finland	52	129	2%		23%	30%	44%
Wales	49	121	7%	7%	26%	48%	12%
Norway	49	117	5%		3%	21%	71%
Portugal	63	110	27%	5%	5%	24%	39%
Hungary	35	104	10%		5%	14%	71%

This chart shows a significant divergence in the ratio of commercial to non-profit squash facilities between Western and Eastern Europe.

While England leads the list with the highest number of squash facilities, there is a steady decline in commercially operated facilities observed there – as well as in other Western European countries. Today, the share of commercial facilities in England has dropped to only 25%. This reduction in the share of commercial facilities, with the exceptions of Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, is recorded across all Western European countries.

In stark contrast is the situation in Eastern Europe, especially in Poland and the Czech Republic, where over 85% of squash facilities are commercially oriented. This clear inclination towards commercial operations in Eastern Europe paints a very different picture of squash, indicating different market dynamics, investment patterns, and perhaps also different perceptions of sports culture and accessibility.

The Squash Facilities Network (SFN) will further delve into these aspects and the associated questions in its study to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the driving forces behind these regional differences and to derive targeted recommendations for the development of squash sport throughout Europe.

As the Squash Facilities Network continues to unpack the wealth of data collected, it is already clear that this SFN study will not only reflect on the current state of squash but also serve as a guide for its future.

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