

# USA Weightlifting Masters Survey Results



Prepared for the USAW Board of Directors, CEO, Staff and Masters Community by  
the Masters Task Force

December, 2023

Masters Task Force

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Survey Dates

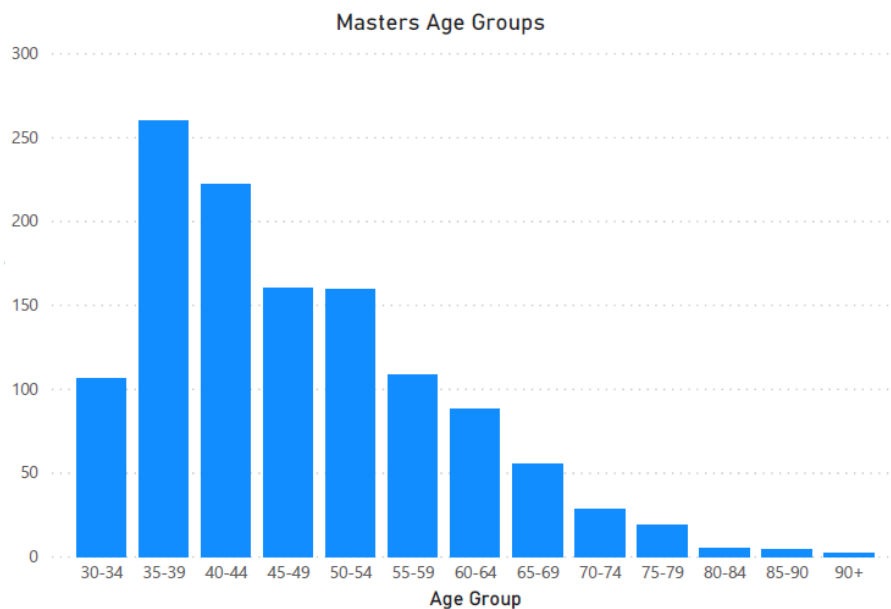
10/17/2023 – 11/17/2023

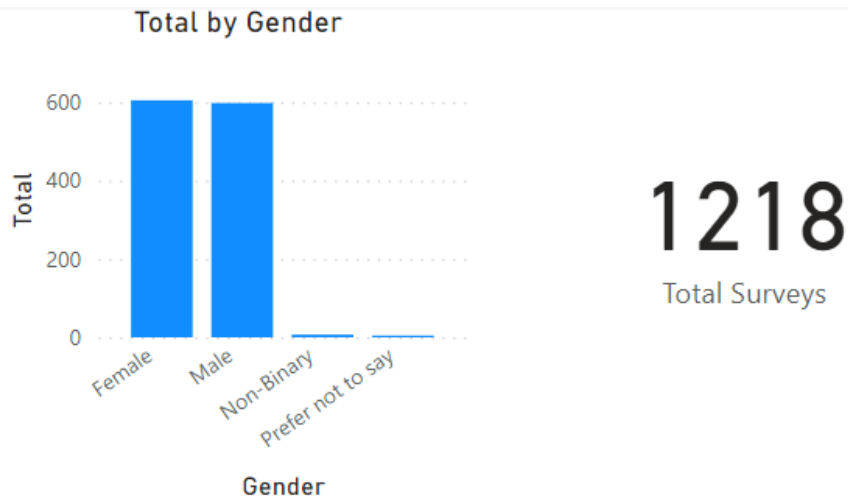
Following events resulting in the Masters Committee forming a separate Masters organization outside of USA Weightlifting (USAW), USAW commissioned a Masters Task Force comprised of seven current community members, of varying backgrounds, within the Masters base. The Masters Task Force deliberated the state of affairs concerning Masters Weightlifting athletes within the USAW organization and how to best serve their needs. One staff member and one member of USAW’s Board of Directors were assigned to the USAW Masters Task Force, JP Nicoletta - Director of Sport Development, Michael Choi – USAW Board Liaison.

The Masters Task Force met periodically via Zoom from September – December of 2023 to provide community feedback, insight, and observations. After several rounds of conversation, the Masters Task Force’s first exercise was to help develop a community survey to gauge Masters Membership sentiment. The Task Force developed open and closed ended questions, along with open ended commentary to be completed anonymously. The survey was delivered to all active USAW Masters members aged 35+ including the Masters of tomorrow, aged 30-34. A copy of the survey results is provided within the addendum to this report.

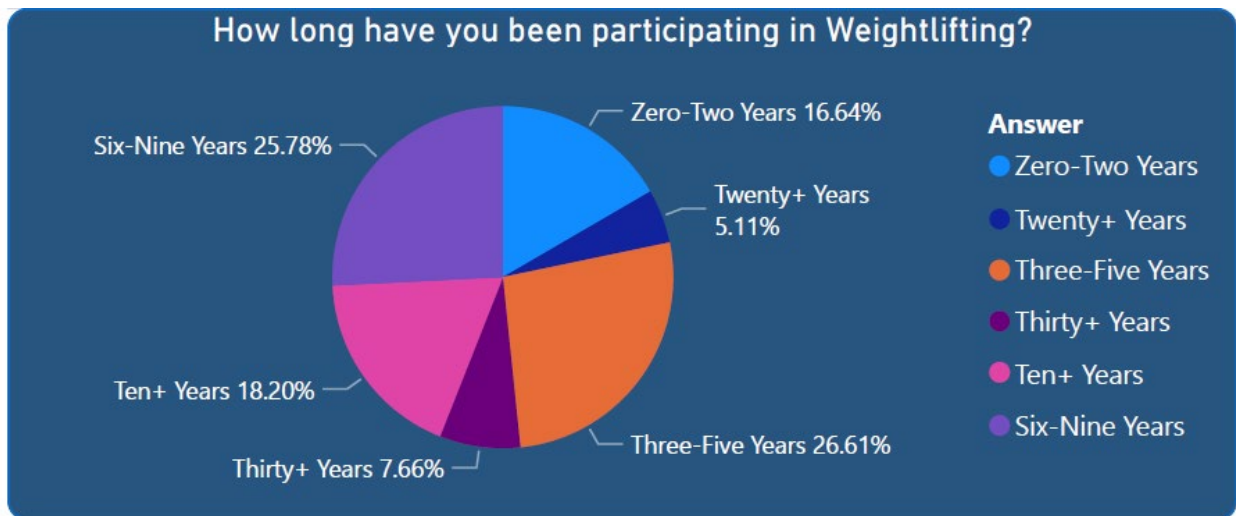
A total of 1,218 responses were received between October 17<sup>th</sup> and November 17<sup>th</sup> 2023. The Masters Task Force looked for correlations, patterns, with informative insight from the community’s responses. The following information details those findings.

## Demographics





Of the 1,218 responses Masters ages 35-39 and 40-44 represented 40% of the population with 482 responses. Masters ages 45-49 and 50-54 represented 26% at 319 responses. Masters ages 55-59 and 60-64 represented 16% at 196 responses. Masters ages 65+ represented 9% at 113 responses. Our Masters of tomorrow aged 30-34 provided 106 responses and represented another 9% of the population for a total of 1,216. Two surveys neglected to select an age category.



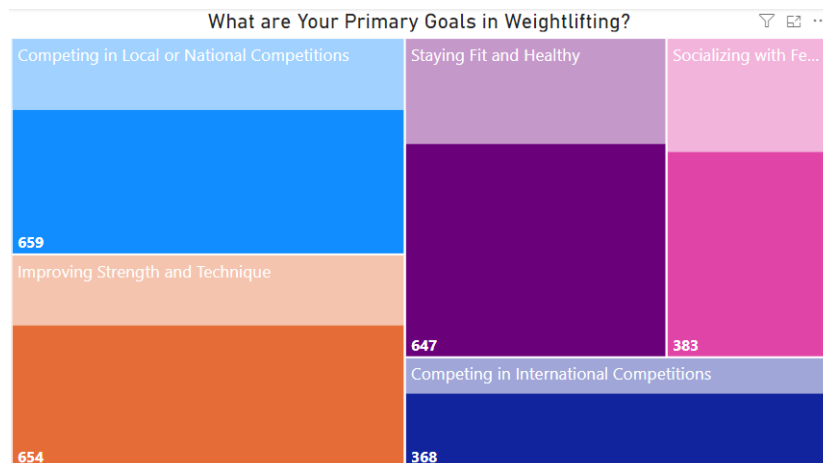
Representing 68% of the population, 838 participated in weightlifting as a sport for under 10 years. 376 respondents or 31% reported participating in weightlifting as a sport for over 10+ years with 93 of those having selected 30+ years.

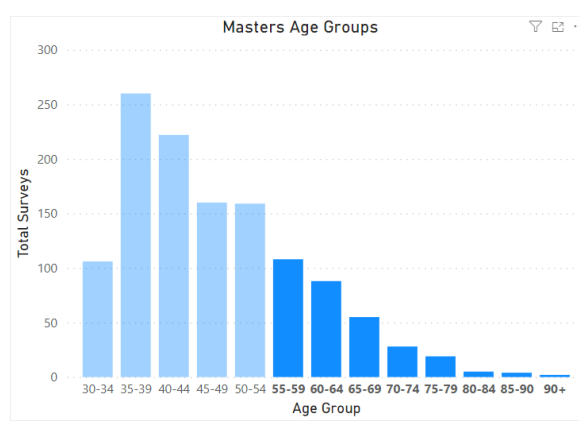
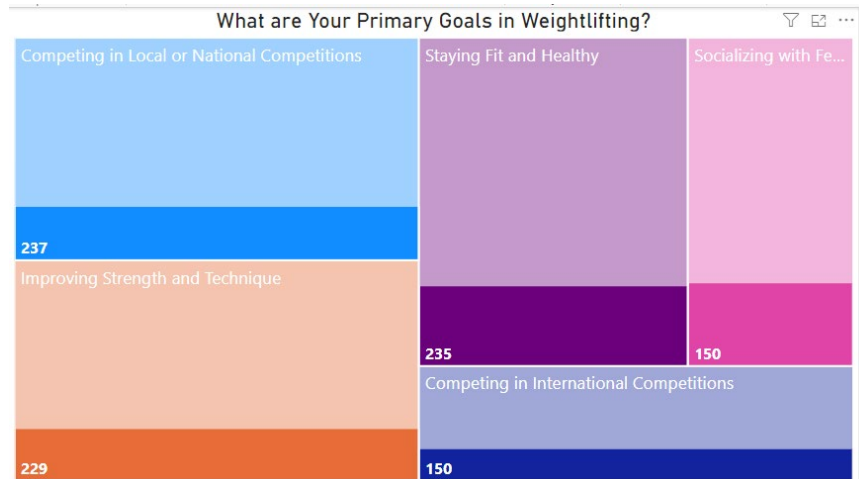
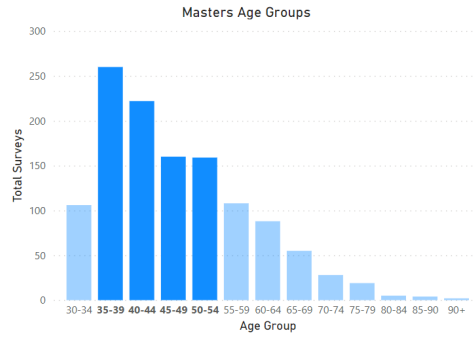
## Primary Goals and Values

What are Your Primary Goals in Weightlifting?



Allowing respondents to select multiple answers, the question “What are Your Primary Goals in Weightlifting?” resulted in a strong common denominator for most respondents, Competing in Local or National Competitions 988 selections, Improving Strength and Technique 979 selections, and Staying Fit and Healthy 969 selections. Less commonly selected combinations included Socializing with Fellow Athletes, and Competing in International Competitions, however still notable at 596 and 547 selections respectively.





When comparing age categories, weightlifters of all gender selections ages 35-54 selected Competing in International Competitions at a rate of 56% of the time versus the most selected category Competing in Local or National Competitions. Weightlifters of all gender selections ages 55+ selected Competing in International Competitions at a rate of 63% of the time over the most selected category Competing in Local or National Competitions. This would suggest that International Competitions are important for both categories, however the 55+ community signaled a slightly higher priority of importance on International Competition for their goals.

### What Aspects of Competing as a Masters Lifter do you Find Most Valuable?

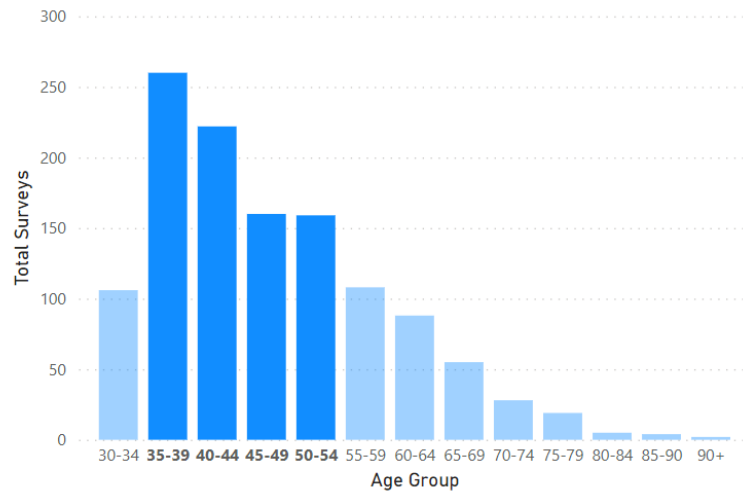


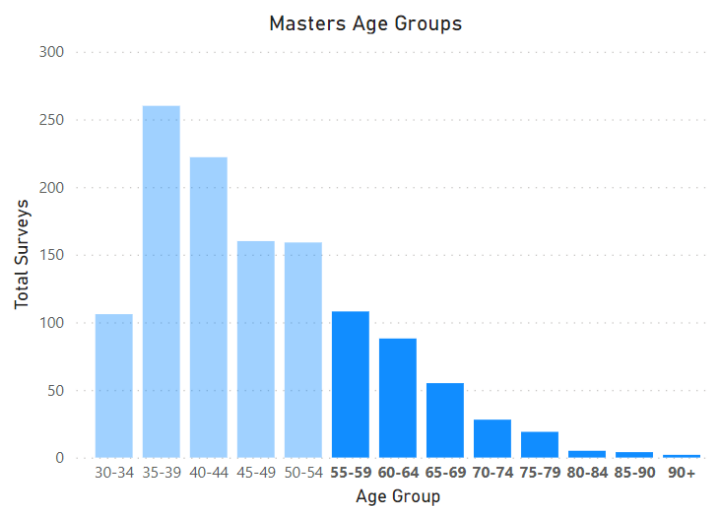
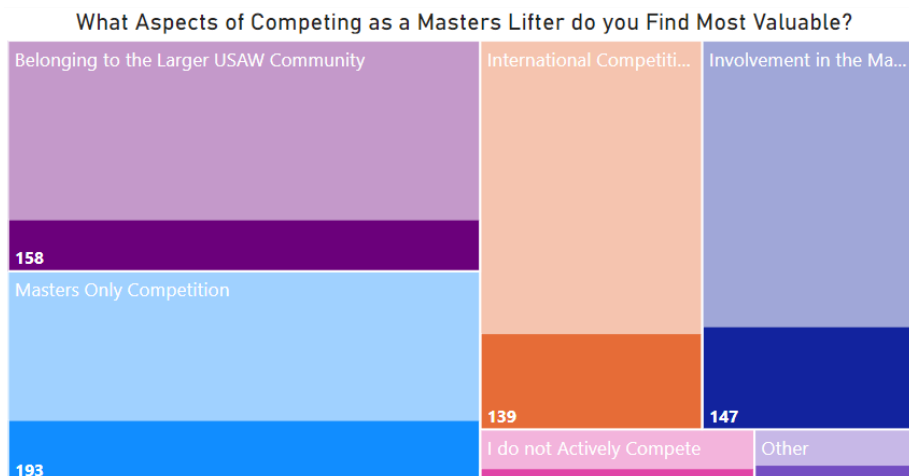
Using the Same logic for the following question “What Aspects of Competing as a Masters Lifter do you find most valuable?” respondents most commonly selected Belonging to the Larger USAW Community 717 selections, Masters Only Competition 659 selections. International Competitions and Involvement in the Masters Community were nearly tied at a selection rate of 568 and 560.

### What Aspects of Competing as a Masters Lifter do you Find Most Valuable?



### Masters Age Groups

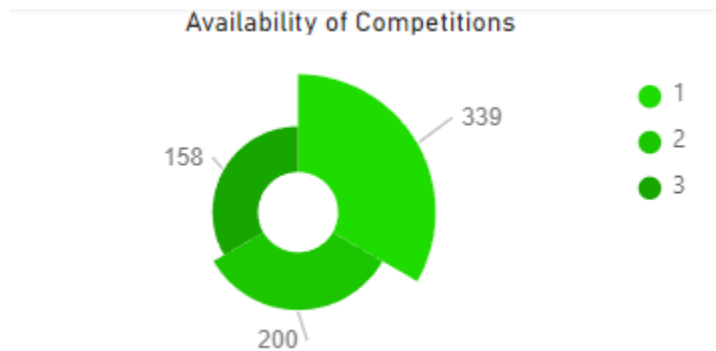




When breaking this question down by age categories for all genders selected, out of 801 responses for Belonging to the Larger USAW Community ages 35-54 selected it 60% of the time. Ages 55+ out of 309 responses selected the same question 51% of the time. This represents a slight generational gap in the value of USAW to weightlifters. Diving in to this further, out of 260 responses, ages 35-39 selected valuing belonging to a larger USAW community in 68% of the responses while ages 60-64 (88 responses) selected valued belonging to a larger USAW community in 52% of the responses, 16 percentage points less than the youngest active master's category.



## Factors that Influence Decisions to Compete



In a ranked question format, the survey asked respondents to select the importance of categories that factored in their decisions to compete 1-8. In no particular order the selections were as follows,

- Entry fees, Travel Distance and Cost, Competition Schedule and Timing, Prize Incentives, Quality of Competition Facilities, Availability of Competitions, Personal Goals and Readiness, Support of USAW

Taking each of these categories and removing the bottom five numbered rankings selected by respondents left respondents answers to each question, one through three ranked selections. This provided insight into the importance of each category to a Master Weightlifter from highest to lowest priority when selecting a competition.

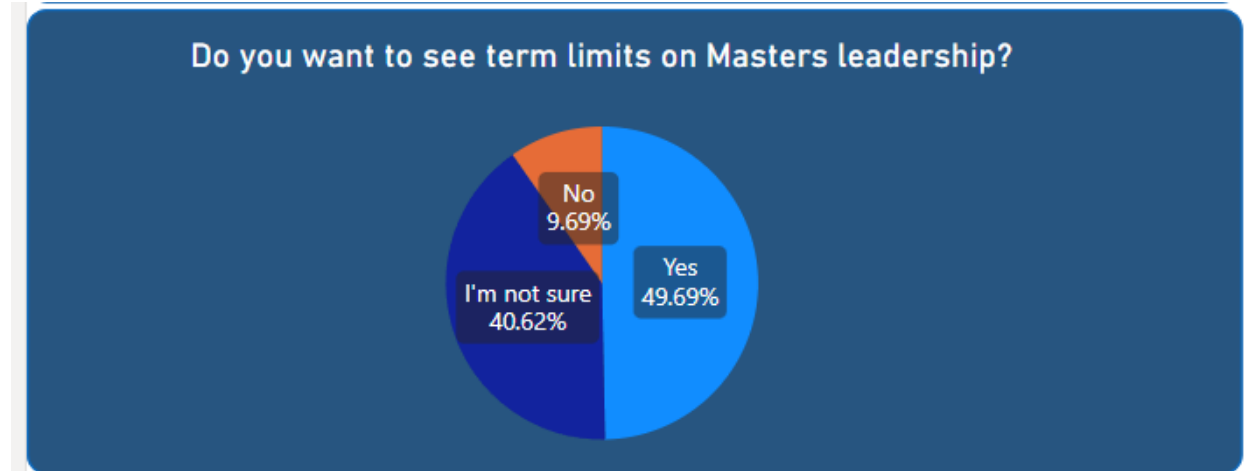
Availability of Competitions was the number one selected option amongst all respondents. 697 ranked it in their top three factors. Among all selections the ranking decision and number values associated with it were as follows:

- |                                      |                           |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Availability of Competition       | 697 Ranked it as a top 3. |
| 2. Personal Goals and Readiness      | 576                       |
| 3. Travel Distance and Cost          | 567                       |
| 4. Competition Schedule and Timing   | 557                       |
| 5. Quality of Competition Facilities | 383                       |
| 6. Entry Fees                        | 232                       |
| 7. Support of USAW                   | 192                       |
| 8. Prize Incentives or Awards        | 143                       |

## Leadership Questions



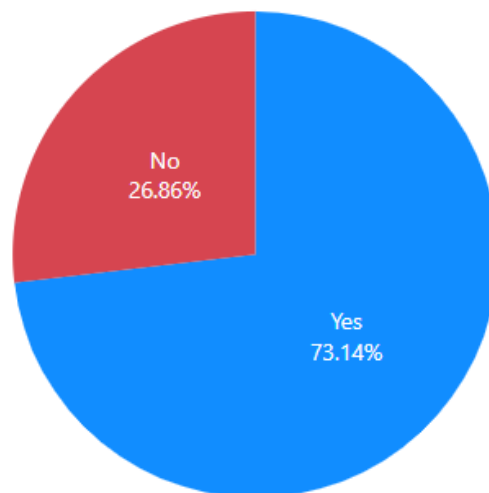
75% of all respondents (869) are either not aware or unsure if they are aware of the eligibility criteria for Masters Leadership roles. The bulk of respondents who were not aware came from the younger age categories while 40% of ages 65+ were aware of the criteria for leadership positions. This suggests there is opportunity for USAW to socialize the criteria amongst all age categories.



Only 9% of all respondents stated they would not like to see term limits on Masters Leadership. Nearly 50% of all respondents stated they would like to see term limits on Masters Leadership and another 41% were unsure if they wanted term limits. Pro statements for term limits provide fresh ideas and new sets of eyes on current affairs within the Masters community. Con statements for term limits are valued leaders with extensive knowledge Masters operations are termed out after a specific time period. A combination of both worlds can be sought after with term limits that provide a cooling off period before someone can be nominated or elected again.

## Advantages of USAW

Do you believe that USA Weightlifting Masters (athletes aged 35 and older) stand to gain significant advantages by maintaining their affiliation with USA Weightlifting?



73% of all respondents (757) stated they believe that USAW Masters stand to gain significant advantages by maintaining their affiliation with USA Weightlifting. This number dropped slightly to 67% when selecting ages 65+. Age categories 35-54 selected Yes 73% of the time. When selecting the Masters of Tomorrow, ages 30-34 this number increased to 85%. This further suggests a disconnect between older generations of Masters lifters and younger generations of Masters. USAW will need to find ways to bridge this gap so that lifters of all ages feel like they have advantages of being with USAW.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

This survey represented responding members of the USAW Masters Community who hold active memberships in good standing. Documentation included in the analysis is this report, the full survey data along with the results transformed into a Microsoft PowerBI visual representation from which the graphics and analysis within this document were derived.

The Masters Task Force deliberated the content of the survey and provided feedback on their own experiences within the community to evolve recommendations for USAW's consideration. The following are the recommended courses of action.

## Leadership Categories and Eligibility Education

Masters Athletes need to feel representation by those that walk in their shoes. Leadership for the Master's Committee should be comprised of age group categories so that representation is had from younger to older Masters. Leadership should be on a revolving basis where terms of service are limited, and then allowed to recycle after a cooling off period. This provides fresh minds to the leadership pool while also not limiting someone to one term in their lifetime of potential affiliation.

USAW should work to meaningfully educate the Masters base on ways to become a Masters leader on the Committee and continue to communicate openings, upcoming votes and governance material of importance.

## Masters Governance

The Masters Task Force acknowledges and affirms the USAW Board of Directors decision in September 2023 to remove the sitting members of the Masters Committee for reasons of conflict of interest. It is important to recognize their commitment, dedication and time invested to Masters Weightlifting. All should continue to be respected and welcomed as valued members of the USAW community. The vacancies created offer an opportunity to re-constitute the committee in a way that offers broader opportunity for individual members who raise their hands to volunteer over a more diverse spectrum of Masters aged members. As such, the Masters Task Force recommends the following:

An elected committee comprised of seven Masters aged members, in accordance with USAW bylaws with respect to gender representation.

- Three athlete representatives with at least one individual in the below age ranges, elected by members of those age ranges:
  - 35-49
  - 50-64
  - 65+
- Four at-large representatives, elected by all Masters aged members.

To stagger the terms of the committee, it is recommended the initial athlete representative term run for two years, while the initial at-large representative term extend to four years. All terms should be four years thereafter with a limit of two consecutive terms per individual. An individual with two terms served can become eligible in the future after a cooling period equal to the time served as a member of the committee.

It should be noted that per USAW bylaws, "elite athlete," representation is a requirement on all committees. Our understanding is certain exceptions can be authorized, upon request to the USOPC, for approval. In the case of the Masters Committee, whose purpose and focus is to serve Masters aged athletes and their interests, we believe an exemption from the published bylaws elite athlete requirement should be considered.

With respect to eligibility for election, any Masters aged USAW member in good standing should be eligible. The recommended exception to this is limited to individuals previously removed from the committee and any individual serving in an official capacity as an officer, board member or committee member of a separate conflicted organization. Such individuals should be considered ineligible for

election to USAW's Masters Committee until such a time when a conflict of interest can be demonstrably resolved. A review by USAW's Ethics Committee is the recommended pathway should any such individual seek election.

An initial election should be held in March 2024 in person and electronically at the Masters Nationals in Reno, NV.

As mentioned, it is also clear many USAW members have confusion surrounding the process and pathway to volunteer in support of the Masters community. This should be addressed aggressively by the office.

## **Masters Inclusion**

Masters are an integral part of USAW's membership base. While most Masters athletes understand USAW's primary mission is "to support United States athletes in achieving excellence in Olympic and world competition," this is assumed to focus on the development of Youth, Junior and Senior athletes to the world stage, including the Olympics. Masters athletes have often felt lacking support from USAW in areas that are within USAW's control. Examples include NAO series events and sponsor gifts provided to Seniors for medaling however Masters were left out. The Masters Task Force recommends developing creative solutions so that athletes from Youth to Masters are included in similar perks provided by sponsorship. This includes working with sponsors to educate them on the importance of athletes other than just Seniors. It should be noted that the recent change to conduct on platform award ceremonies for Masters (and Youth) athletes at USAW events should be continued as a positive first step.

Masters Athletes often compete at and or coach in series events, Senior Nationals along with Masters specific events. With many pathways to competition, the Masters Task Force implores USAW to consider that USAW Masters specific events created by USAW (specifically Masters Nationals), remain exclusive and do not intentionally overlap other important events throughout the competition year. It is recommended, starting in 2025, Masters Nationals move to a date at least eight weeks later than the NAOS1 in early March.

## **International Competition**

World competition is a component of Masters decisions to compete. Athletes that are eligible for the world stage want to ensure their preparation and commitment is rewarded with viable and meaningful competition. While the United Masters Weightlifting Federation (UMWF) is a new opportunity for Masters to compete, it needs to be proven as a viable option as it is brand new to the world of weightlifting. While exploring that, the Masters Task force recommends continued efforts to communicate and work with the International Masters Weightlifting Association (IMWA) to find pathways for competition as 73% of all 1,218 respondents found benefit to maintaining an affiliation with USAW.

## **Masters Communication**

Continue to communicate on Masters specific topics often through official USAW channels. A recommendation brought up in discussion suggested partnering with affiliated content creators to develop a spotlight series where segments of Masters can tell their stories. Suggestions ranged from

leadership video interviews, Masters athletes with interesting backgrounds and pathways to USA Weightlifting, podcasts, articles, YouTube and other Social Media outlets.

### **Masters Specific Awards**

The Masters Task Force recommends developing an award system that highlights Masters Athletes' achievements and contributions to the community. Suggestions included a Grand Slam equivalent for Masters Nationals, NAO Series, NAO Finals and/or additional USAW specific Masters Competitions. Consider developing community engagement awards that highlight Masters Members above and beyond contributions to the Masters and USAW missions.

### **Apparel and Discounts**

USAW has a wide network of affiliates and sponsorships that support the mission statement of sending Youth, Juniors and Senior athletes to the world stage. Masters athletes understand that individual athlete sponsorships for Masters events are unrealistic given size and number of athletes. The Masters Task Force recommends working with affiliates to provide Master specific discounts or provide a line of products that Masters Athletes can purchase either through USAW or the affiliate at a discounted rate. Items can include Masters specific competition wear, warmups, approved supplements, that allows Masters to show their support of USAW while representing their country on the Masters world stage.