



# Research Summary: Perspectives on the Green Armband Initiative Among Manitoba Hockey Officials

## Pre-Amble

This research summary analyzes responses from the HWRD Community Survey, a dataset containing hockey officials from across Manitoba. The survey explored perceptions of the green armband initiative, a program intended to identify and protect newer or younger officials, reduce maltreatment, and improve recruitment and retention.

## Methods: The Survey

The survey was posted on wpgrefs.com between August 2025 and August 2026. It was advertised using social media and email blasts to the wpgrefs.com email list during the 2026-2026 season.

The demographic items on the survey included location, experience, gender and age questions.

- Winnipeggers represented 73% of respondents.
- Experience of respondents ranged first-year to 7+ years with 55% having 3 or fewer years of experience.
- 82% of respondents identified as male, 7% female, and the remained choosing not to respond.
- Respondents range widely in age (12–54+) with 54% being younger than 18.

The dataset included both quantitative Likert scale items and qualitative open-ended responses.

## Results & Discussion

This results & discussion section is divided into the following themes:

- Perceived impact on Maltreatment
- Recruitment and Retention Effects
- Qualitative Themes: Strategies to Reduce Maltreatment
- Quantitative Themes: Concerns and Critiques of the Initiative

For overall results, two pieces of data can be highlighted:

- 95% of respondents were aware of the green armband initiative prior to this survey.
- 73% of response strongly agreed or agreed that Manitoba should implement the green armband initiative.

## Perceived Impact on Maltreatment

### Youth Officials

Most respondents agreed that the green armband initiative reduces maltreatment for youth officials (58% agree or strongly agree), though the strength of agreement varied. Younger officials frequently expressed that the armband helps remind coaches and spectators of their age and experience. One youth official noted: “Fans seem to forget that many officials...are just kids themselves... A green armband would hopefully be a reminder.”

### Adult Officials

Perceived impact on adult officials was weaker (42% agreed or strongly agreed). Many respondents selected “Neutral” (36%) or “Disagree” (18%) when asked whether the initiative reduces maltreatment for adults. This suggests that officials view the initiative as primarily beneficial for youth, not universally applicable.

## Long Term Trends in Maltreatment

When asked to compare maltreatment levels to 10 years ago, responses varied indicating no consensus on perceptions of long term trends in maltreatment:

- Many selected “remained the same” (40%).
- A significant number selected “decreased” (33%)
- Smaller but notable groups selected “increased” (22%) or “greatly increased” (11%)

## Recruitment and Retention Effects

### Recruitment

Respondents were more optimistic that the initiative could improve recruitment of youth officials compared to its effect on recruiting adult officials.

- 54% agreed or strongly agreed that the armband initiative would improve recruitment of youth officials; 27% were neutral.
- In comparison 38% agreed or strongly agreed that the armband initiative would improve recruitment of adult officials; 36% were neutral.

Many emphasized that visibility, safety, and support are key motivators. For example: “Word of mouth... many new officials start their journeys hearing/seeing from their friends and family members that officiate.”

However, in open-ended questions, several respondents argued that pay, cost of entry, and mentorship are more influential than the armband itself.

### Retention

Retention responses were more mixed. While some agreed the initiative could help retain youth officials, many felt that broader structural issues—maltreatment, inconsistent mentorship, and lack of advancement opportunities—play a larger role. One respondent wrote: “Providing opportunities to all officials for advancement... will help increase retention.”

## Qualitative Themes: Strategies to Reduce Maltreatment

Across open ended responses, several themes emerged:

### 1. Stronger Penalties and Enforcement

This was the most common theme. Respondents repeatedly called for harsher suspensions, zero tolerance policies, and consistent enforcement. Examples include:

- “Harsher penalties/suspension for people ejected for maltreatment.”
- “Make it easy for someone to report someone who maltreats an official.”

### 2. Education for Coaches, Parents, and Players

Many respondents emphasized education as a foundational strategy:

- Respect in Sport training
- Pre-season workshops
- Clear communication of maltreatment rules

One official wrote: “Training & education to players, coaches and fans... clear definitions of what happens when you break the rule.”

### 3. Mentorship and Support Systems

Mentorship was frequently cited as essential, especially for youth officials:

- Pairing young officials with experienced mentors
- Mid-season check ins
- On ice support programs

### 4. Cultural Change and Community Accountability

Several respondents argued that maltreatment is rooted in hockey culture and requires community wide change:

- Encouraging parents/coaches to self-police
- Creating positive experiences for officials
- Building a stronger officiating community

## Qualitative Themes: Strategies to Improve Recruitment and Retention

### Recruitment

Key strategies included:

- Increased pay
- Subsidized clinics or equipment
- Social media promotion
- Word of mouth campaigns
- Highlighting health and social benefits of officiating

### Retention

Retention strategies overlapped with maltreatment reduction but also included:

- Recognition programs
- Advancement opportunities
- Stronger community support
- Ensuring officials feel valued

One respondent summarized: “Strong pay. Sense of community – opportunities to feel valued and to advance.”

## Concerns and Critiques of the Initiative

While many respondents supported the initiative, several concerns emerged:

### 1. Potential Stigmatization

Some officials felt the armband could make youth officials feel singled out or less valued:

- “This segregates us in a way.”
- “It puts a target on the Official.”

### 2. Limited Effectiveness

A number of respondents doubted whether the armband would meaningfully change behavior:

- “Angry coaches will still be angry coaches.”
- “You cannot reduce it. Humans are imperfect and driven by emotions.”

### 3. Need for Broader Systemic Change

Many argued that the initiative is only one piece of a larger puzzle requiring:

- Policy enforcement
- Cultural change
- Better training
- Stronger mentorship

## Conclusion

The survey data reveals a complex but generally supportive view of the green armband initiative. Youth officials overwhelmingly support it, citing increased visibility and protection. Experienced officials are more divided, with some expressing strong support and others voicing concerns about stigmatization or limited effectiveness.

Across all experience levels, respondents agree that the initiative alone cannot solve maltreatment, recruitment, or retention challenges. Instead, they emphasize a multi-layered approach involving education, stronger enforcement, mentorship, community accountability, and fair compensation.

Future research needs to address the small sample size of this survey while also exploring the effect of the green armband initiative after it has been implemented.