



Impact of Pool Indoor Air Quality

on Patrons and Facility
Management

SURVEY REPORT

*A survey of athletes, coaches, officials,
parents, spectators, facility managers,
and operators.*

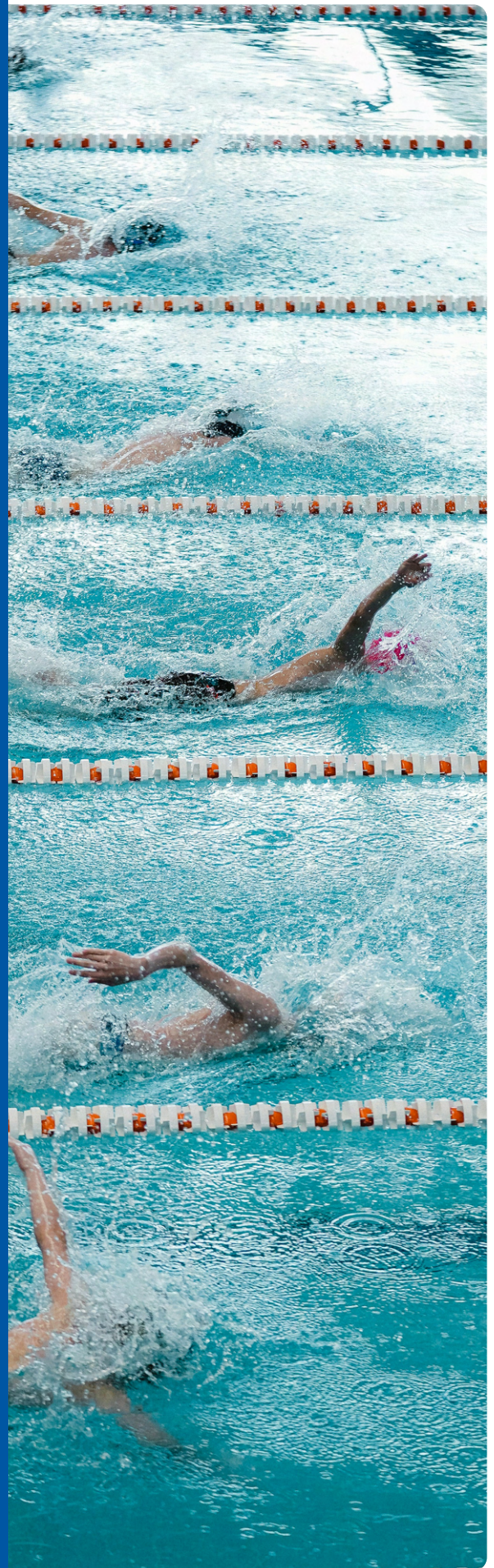


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FOREWORD FROM IAQ MISSION SPOKESPERSON



“I’ve spent more time breathing pool air than swimming in the water. That’s why air quality matters to me.”

ROWDY GAINES

*3x Olympic Gold Medalist Swimmer
IAQ Mission Spokesperson*

“I’ve spent a lifetime around indoor pools, and one thing I know for certain is that air quality matters. Over the years, I’ve heard concerns from swimmers, coaches, officials, parents, and spectators about how these environments can affect comfort, breathing, and the overall experience on deck. That’s why we’re excited about the IAQ Mission – to help raise awareness and better understand how indoor pool environments are experienced every day. I hope you’ll join us.”

ABOUT THE MISSION

Our mission is to make Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) impossible to ignore.

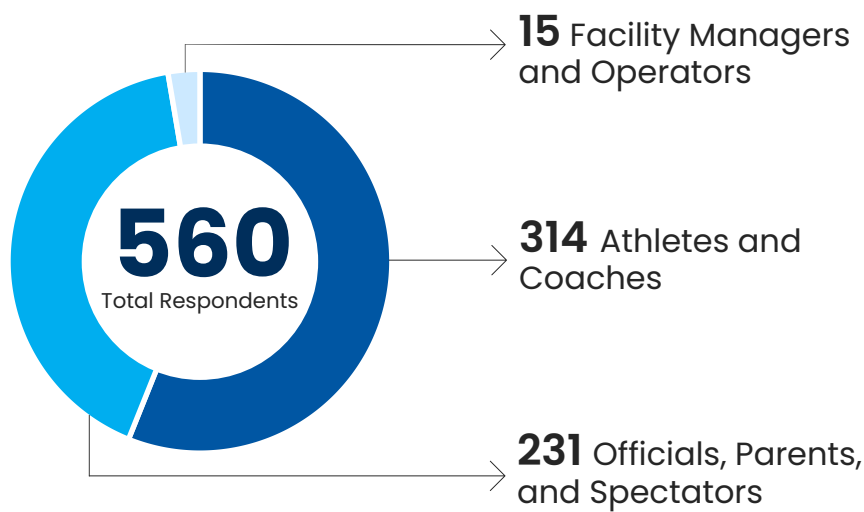
Working with some of the top voices in the industry and backed by the community, the IAQ mission aims to establish best practices, create meaningful partnerships, raise awareness, and drive lasting improvements in indoor air quality to support healthier, safer indoor environments for all.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The pool Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) survey was aimed at gathering feedback from patrons of indoor pool facilities regarding their experience with indoor air quality. Over the course of 6 months, we received 560 responses from athletes, coaches, facility managers and operators, officials, parents, and spectators. This report represents a comprehensive presentation and analysis of the survey results, and highlights key findings that may inform next steps for improving patron experience within indoor pool facilities.

SURVEY OVERVIEW

Summary of Respondents



Methodology

Survey distributed by
ROWDY GAINES
through
MULTIPLE CHANNELS

Survey Period

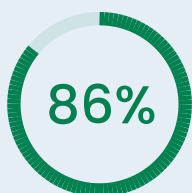
OCT 17, 2025
to
MAR 17, 2026

KEY FINDINGS

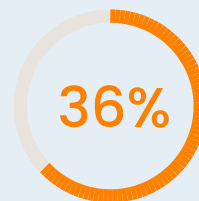
SERIOUS HEALTH IMPACTS



of athletes and coaches have experienced health impacts from poor IAQ



report that they (or someone they know) need an inhaler as a result of poor IAQ



have shortened or modified training sessions due to air quality

ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

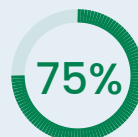
98%

of athletes and coaches report that poor IAQ affects their performance in training and competition

PATRONAGE

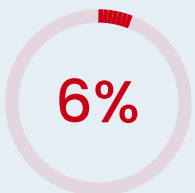


of athletes and coaches would pick one facility over another for better IAQ



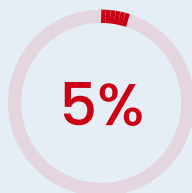
of officials, parents, and spectators say IAQ affects whether they would bring others to a facility

CONFIDENCE IN SOLUTIONS IMPLEMENTATION



of athletes and coaches

feel confident that pool facilities are doing everything they can to deliver safe IAQ



of officials, parents, and spectators

FACILITY BOTTOM LINE

78%

of facility managers and operators believe that IAQ affects their facility's revenues and profits

89%

report that IAQ affects their ability to attract or retain programs/events

78%

report that IAQ affects their facility's cost of maintenance

ATHLETES AND COACHES

The responses from athletes and coaches overwhelmingly indicate serious challenges surrounding health and performance. Most within this cohort engage in mitigation strategies, such as shortening sessions or choosing facilities with better indoor air quality.

In the qualitative free response section of the survey which asks: **“What’s the first thing you notice when pool air isn’t right?”**, recurrent themes mentioned (total: 275 responses) include:

Response	Count (within 275 responses)
Coughing and sneezing	65
Chlorine and chemical tastes and smells	55
Burning, stinging, and tired eyes	44
Heavy, thick, and humid air	41
Asthma, difficulty breathing, tightness and pain in the lungs, and shortness of breath	39
Throat and sinus congestion and irritation	24
Inhaler use	8
Fatigue	5
Weight in the chest	3
Skin irritation and dryness	3
Vomiting	2
Increased heart rate	1
Symptoms that continue or worsen long after a session, or even begin shortly after leaving a session	3

ATHLETES AND COACHES

Below are some particularly illustrative examples from this cohort which indicate corrective actions are urgently needed:

"I can't breathe and start coughing. I don't have asthma but have **to have an inhaler** for swim because the air is so bad. My doctor told me I am close to **pulmonary edema** due to chloramine poisoning. **I am only 13.**"

-Swimmer / Sectionals

"I have severe **lung problems** from decades of coaching in poor conditions, as soon as I enter a pool with poor air, my throat itches and lungs start to react."

-Lorin Collins / Coach / Nationals

"I cannot race to my fullest potential. I have trained all season for this meet but I can't breathe when racing so it **ruined my entire season**. My body does not get the oxygen it needs to preform. It also doesn't affect just one race it **affects all races.**"

-Thane Cardon / Swimmer / Regionals

"My eyes burn, my throat feels irritated, I can smell chlorine in my nose for hours after I've left the pool (as a coach - I am not in the water). My swimmers will cough and many have inhalers, and sometimes they cough so hard they **start to gag**, or they stick their head out the door to the outside fresh air."

-Kelsey Slayton / Coach / States

"It's thick and heavy. Spurs my asthma which I developed as **a result of poor deck air quality** and makes my lungs and airways itchy and tight"

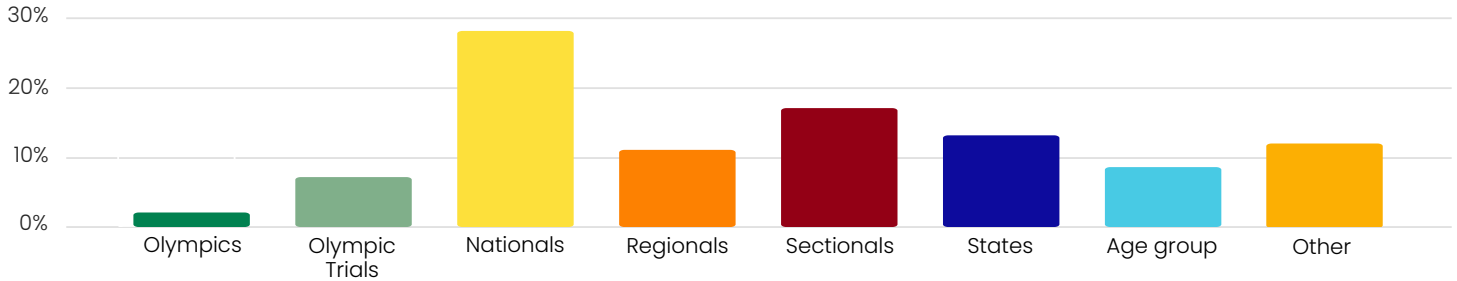
-Kentaro Bauer / Swimmer / Regionals

"Your lungs begin to burn when you breath, and when you breath anywhere past like a 50% breath you start to hack up a lung and start coughing nonstop for about 100 seconds. Your eyes/skin begin to burn... You see fellow swimmers **throwing up left and right** from all of their coughing (true story)"

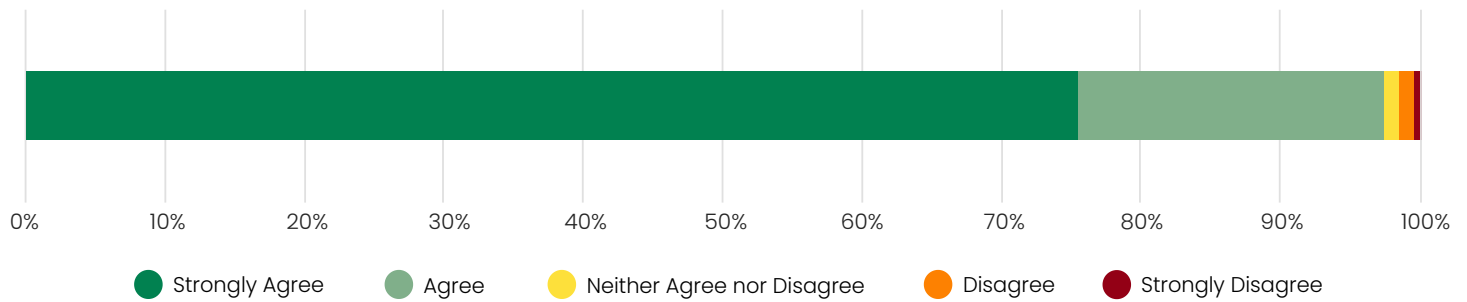
-Swimmer / Nationals

ATHLETES AND COACHES

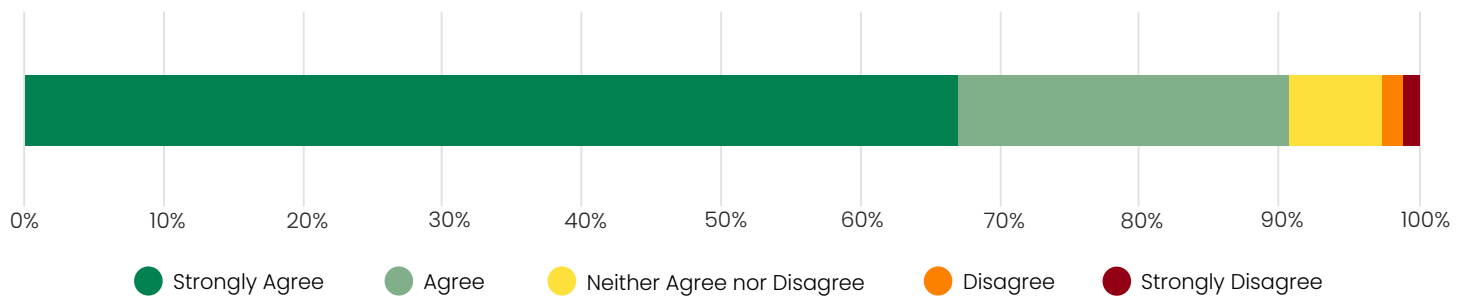
Q1: What is your highest level of competition?



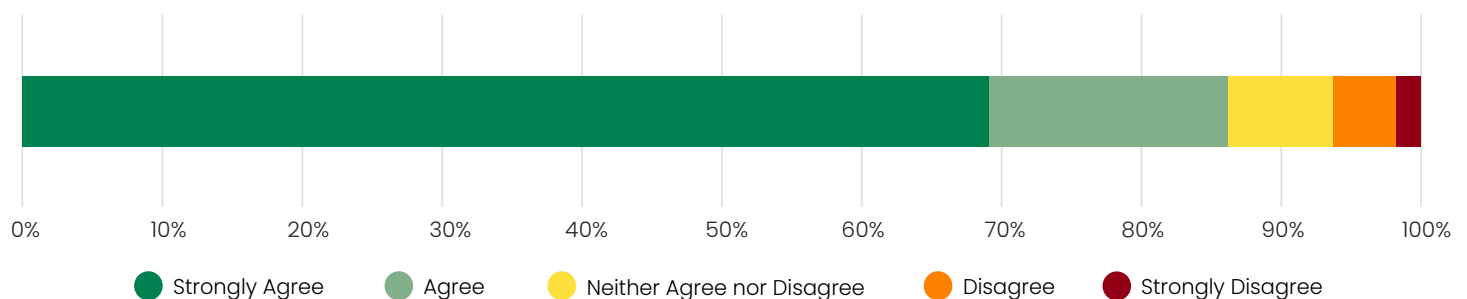
Q2: Poor air quality affects my performance in training or competition.



Q3: I have experienced health effects from poor pool air quality.

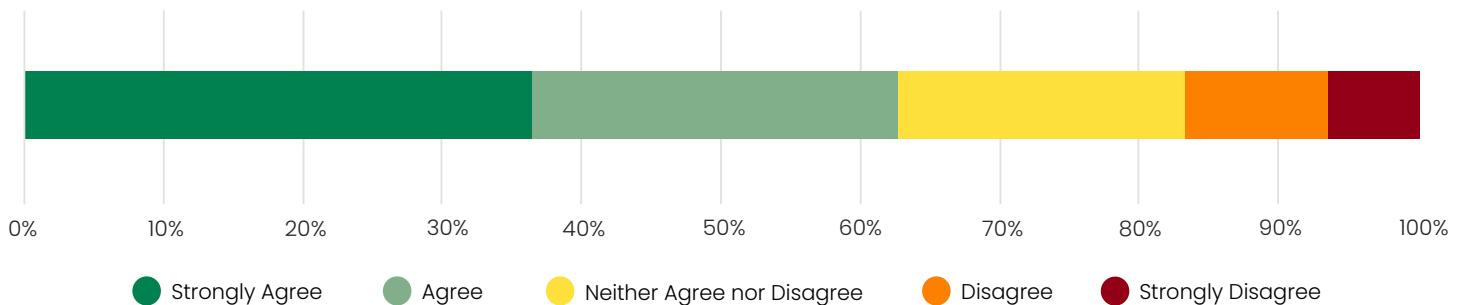


Q4: I (or someone I know) use an inhaler as a result of poor pool air quality.

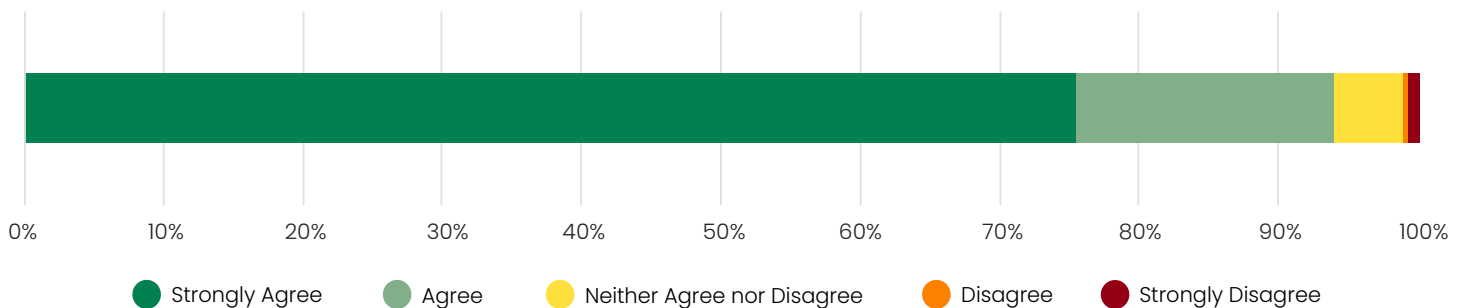


ATHLETES AND COACHES

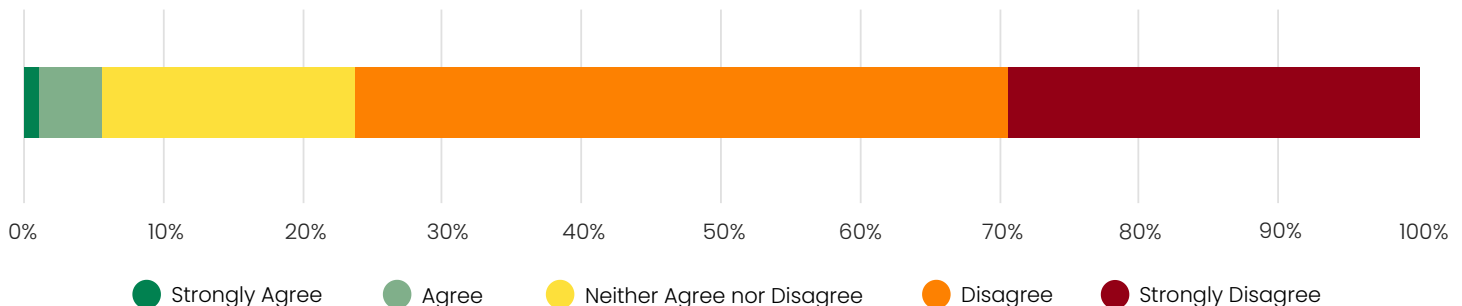
Q5: We have shortened or modified sessions because of pool air quality.



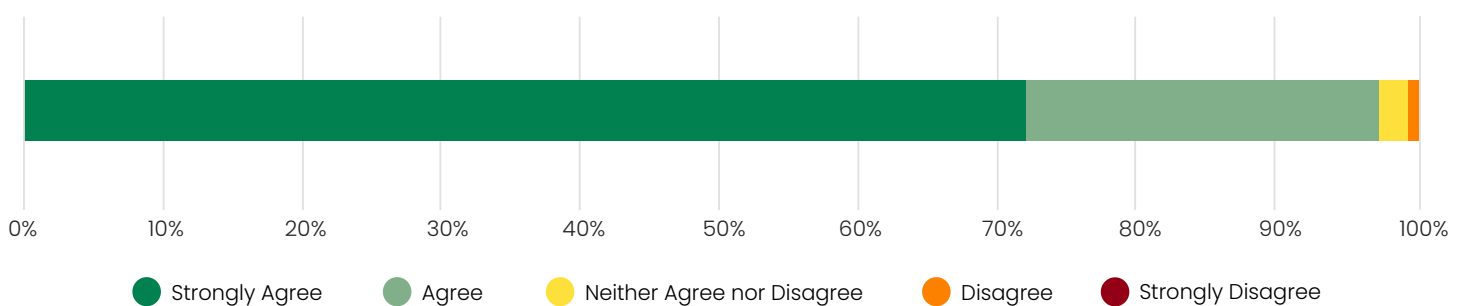
Q6: I have chosen (or would choose) one facility over another for better air quality.



Q7: I feel confident that pool facilities are doing everything they can to deliver safe air quality.



Q8: I can easily tell the difference between a pool with good air quality and a pool with poor air quality.



OFFICIALS, PARENTS, AND SPECTATORS

The responses from officials, parents, and spectators, strongly suggest more work needs to be done regarding patron comfort and athlete health. Most within this cohort have strong expectations of facilities to deliver safe indoor air, but have low confidence this is being done to its fullest potential. This cohort makes decisions surrounding a facility and whether to bring others to them based on indoor air quality.



In the qualitative free response section of the survey which asks: **“What would give you the most peace of mind about the air quality at a swim facility?”**, recurrent themes mentioned (total: 201 responses) include:

Responses	Count (within 201 responses)
Me or my children not experiencing health impacts from using the pool, such as coughing, breathing problems, or sinus issues	176
Development of a certification program to indicate whether a pool facility is following best practices, with governing bodies enforcing the requirements	34
Better ventilation systems	34
Fines and education for people who urinate in the pool	3

OFFICIALS, PARENTS, AND SPECTATORS

Below are some illustrative examples from this cohort discussing their observations and requests in the interest of public health:

"Having good air quality that does not affect my kids ability to swim and compete. Knowing that my swimmer is **not struggling to breathe or coughing** throughout an entire weekend of swim competitions due to poor air quality at the pool..."

-Jay Borick, MD.

"Having a governing body that facilities go thru to certify that their facility has proper ventilation for their pool and max capacity. Seeing **a certification posted at the facility** showing they went thru the approval process each year..."

-Jillian Segel

"The air quality is what cause my older child to develop eczema, hives, and asthma... Some parents are already considering **quitting swimming due to the risk**. My daughter quit and it took her 3 yrs for her lungs to calm down."

-A.N.N.

"It's unfortunate that the air quality is such an issue. Systems should be purged. Clean air brought in. **Regular testing being done**. This weekend we attended the [redacted] Age Group meet in [redacted]. Kids coughing, vomiting, using oxygen, parents coughing and sneezing. Coaches in safety goggles and masks. That's unacceptable. **Our skin burned**. Lungs burned from chlorine poisoning."

-Parent

"A standard **set of rules and regulations** that each facility has to follow in order to operate. And frequent testing/audits of the facility's compliance with standards."

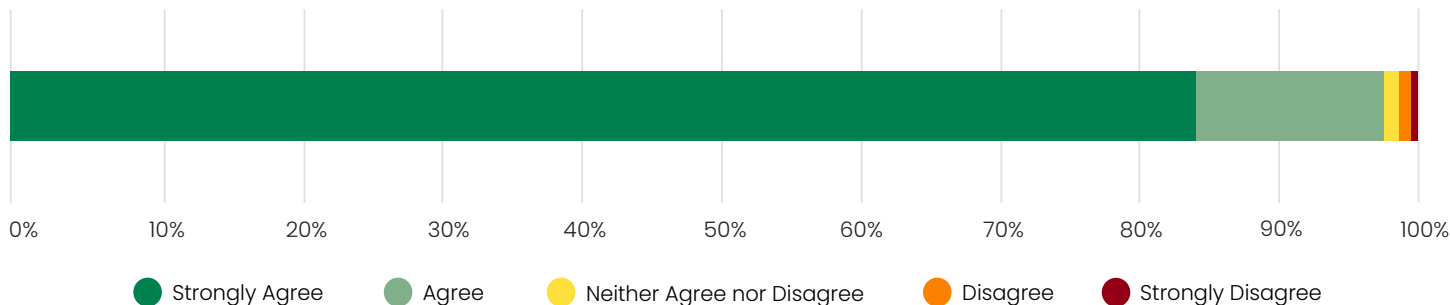
-Justin Grundy

"...Peace of mind would be knowing that the air quality is conducive to competitive swim. Ideally an **air quality rating would be visible at all times**, like a restaurant rating that's posted for all only the air quality would be constantly monitored. That would make me feel great and know that my swimmer is safe..."

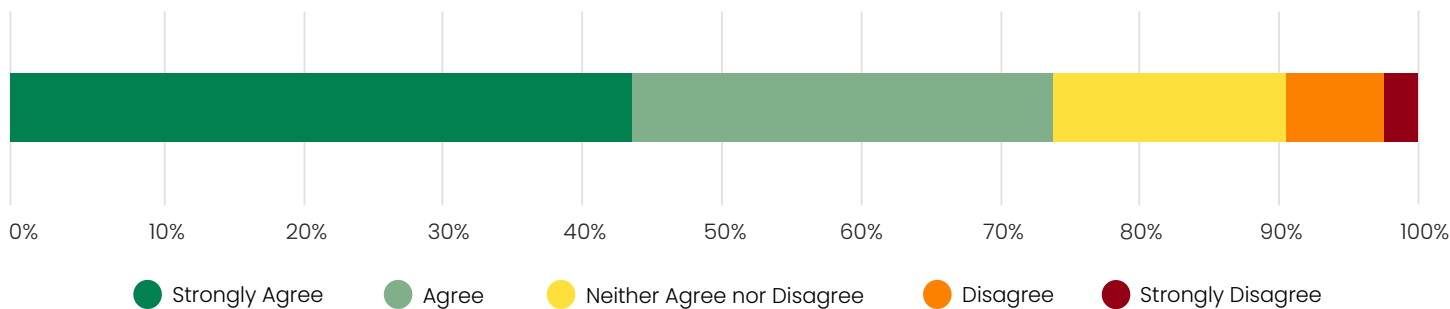
-Keri Weeter

OFFICIALS, PARENTS, AND SPECTATORS

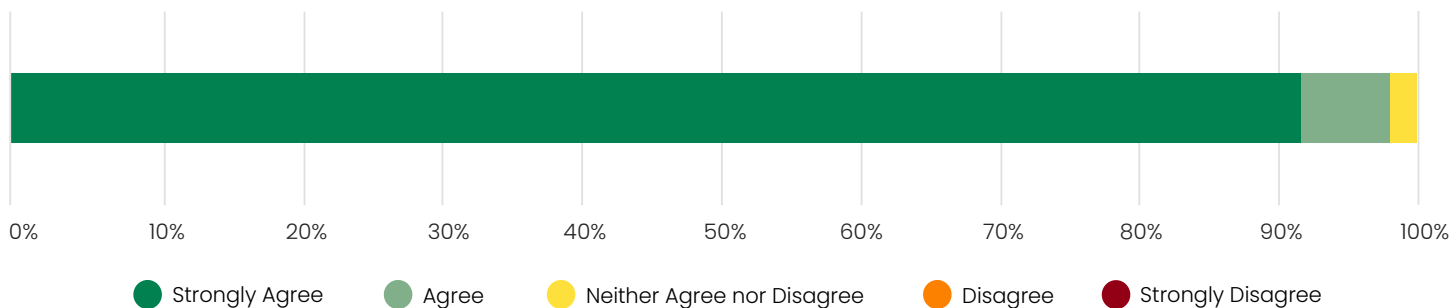
Q1: I have noticed discomfort (coughing, irritation, smell) during swim events.



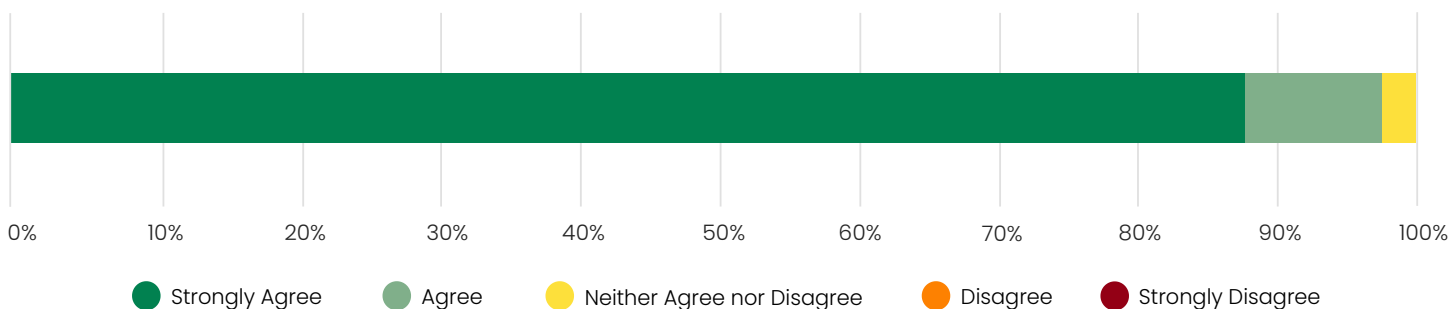
Q2: Air quality affects whether I attend or bring others to the facility.



Q3: I expect air quality to be safe and properly managed at a facility.

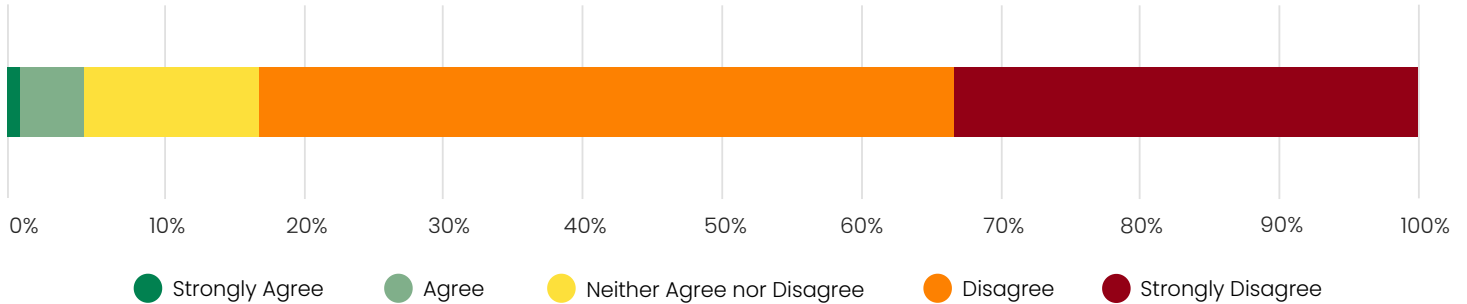


Q4: Poor air quality changes my overall perception of a facility.

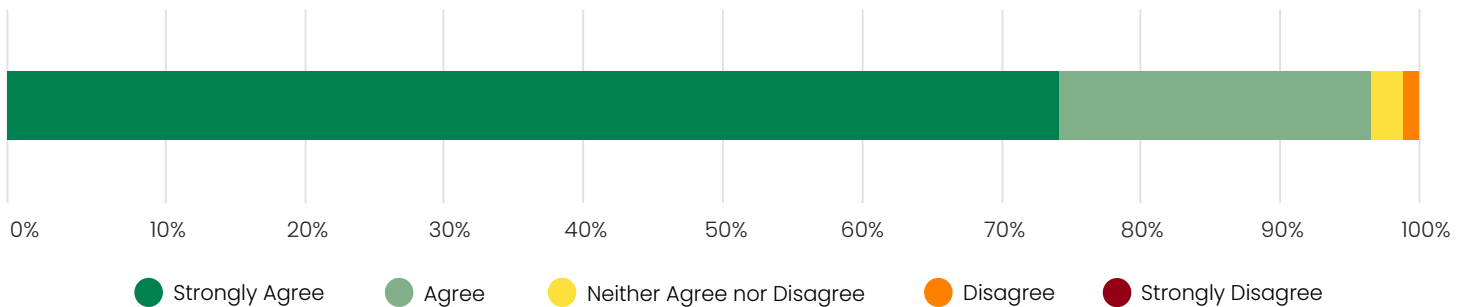


OFFICIALS, PARENTS, AND SPECTATORS

Q5: I feel confident that pool facilities are doing everything they can to deliver safe air quality.



Q6: I can easily tell the difference between a pool with good air quality and a pool with poor air quality.



FACILITY MANAGERS AND OPERATORS

The responses from facility managers and operators indicate most within this cohort believe indoor air quality directly impacts their revenues and profits. The drivers include: their ability to attract and retain programs and events, facility cost of maintenance, and the general guest experience.



In the qualitative free response section of the survey which asks: **“Looking ahead, what would make managing air quality easier for you?”**, recurrent themes mentioned (total: 8 responses) include:

Response	Count (within 8 responses)
Well-designed HVAC and air quality systems	6
Data, research, and science-backed recommendations on how to manage indoor air quality	3

Below are some illustrative examples from this cohort discussing what would make managing air quality easier for them.

“More data and research on what causes the breathing issues people have, and how to make it better.”

-Facility Manager/Operator

“Science backed recommendations that I can take to administration for improved facility conditions.”

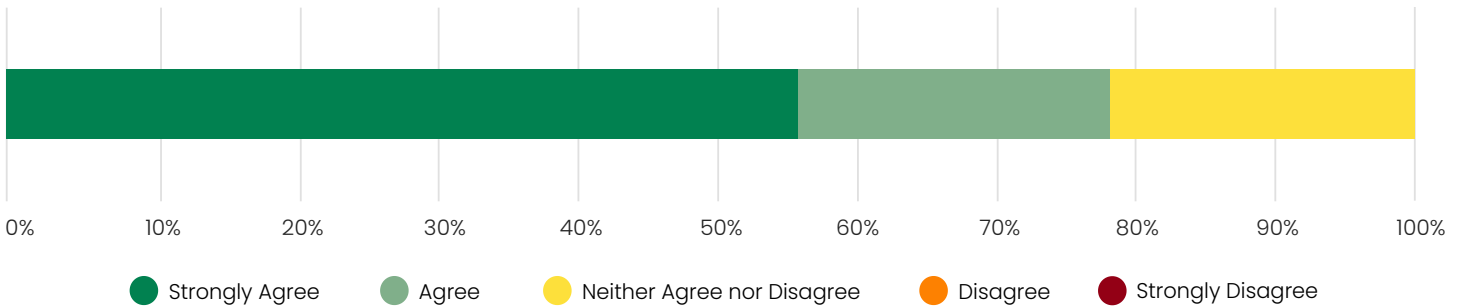
-Mark Fino | Facility Manager/Operator

*“Maintaining a low combined chlorine level and **having an action plan to address higher levels of combined chlorine**. Also, maintaining and monitoring our air handling system.”*

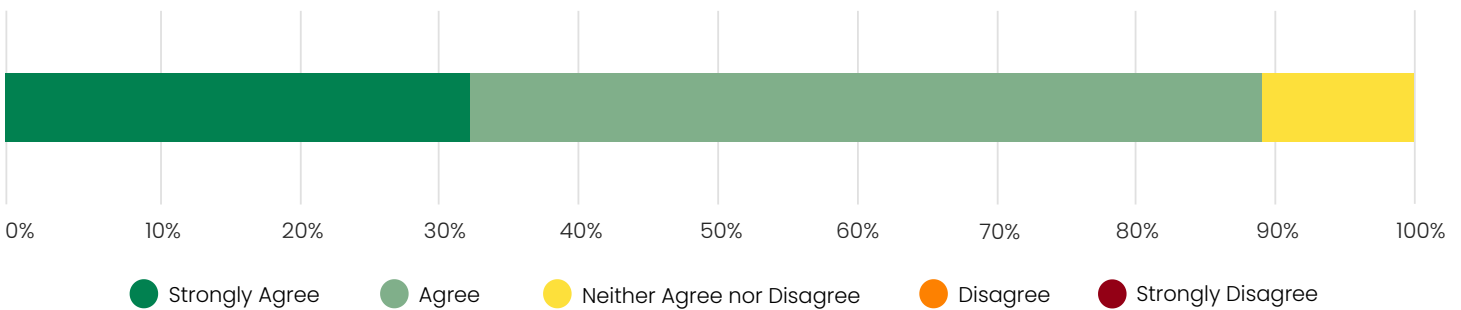
-Zane Hugo | Facility Manager/Operator

FACILITY MANAGERS AND OPERATORS

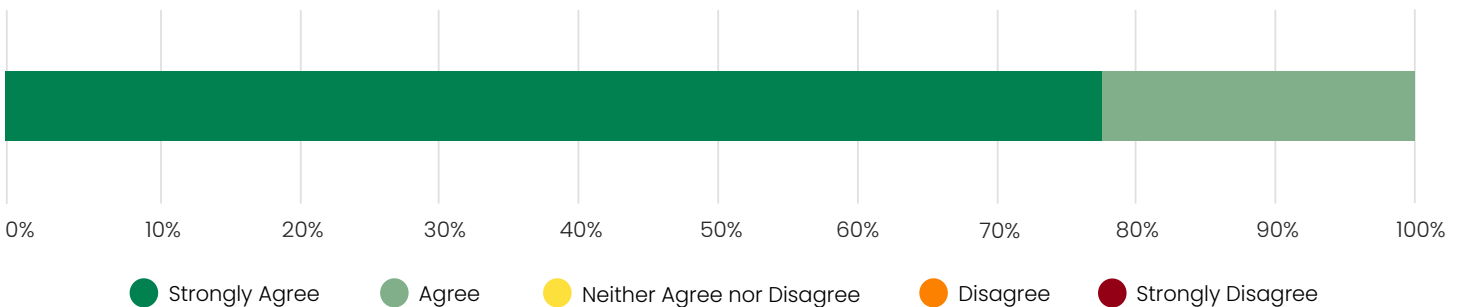
Q1: Air quality affects our facility's cost of maintenance.



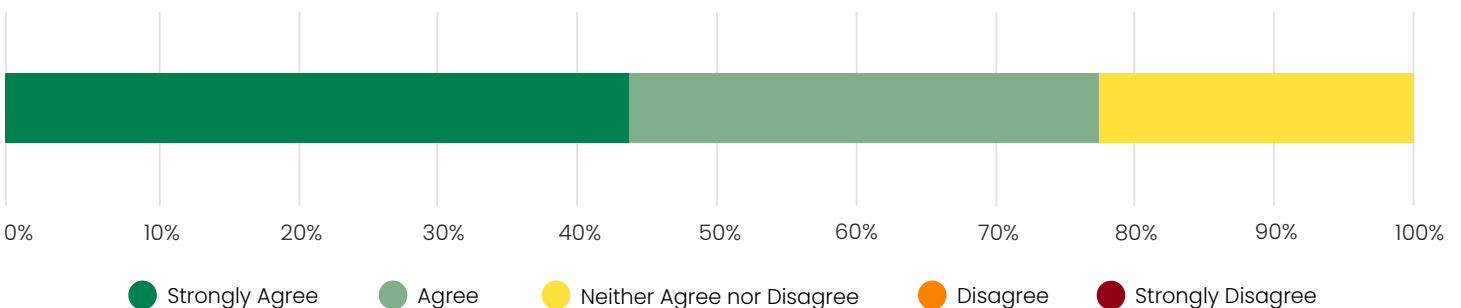
Q2: Air quality affects our ability to attract or retain programs or events.



Q3: Air quality at a facility impacts guest experience.



Q4: Air quality affects our facility's revenues and profits.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

ENDORSE OUR MISSION

Sign up for our newsletter <https://iaqmission.com/join>

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



ARE YOU A MANUFACTURER IN THE POOL INDUSTRY?

Become an IAQ Mission partner and help amplify the message

<https://iaqmission.com/partners>

GET IN TOUCH

✉ info@iaqmission.com 🌐 iaqmission.com

IAQ MISSION

YOUR VOICE MATTERS • ROWDY GAINES • FAST FACTS • WHY IT MATTERS • THE MISSION • PARTNERS

"I've spent more time breathing pool air than swimming in the water. That's why air quality matters to me."

— Rowdy Gaines, Olympic Swimmer
3x Olympic Gold Medalist

Real experiences. Real people. Improving air quality for swimmers and facilities.

HAVE YOU NOTICED HOW THE POOL AIR FEELS? ADD YOUR VOICE.

Let us know how pool air affects you.

IAQ Mission is a community effort to better understand how indoor pool air affects the people who use these facilities. By building a community of voices, we aim to better understand the impact of indoor air quality.

[START THE SURVEY](#)

