

Report on research regarding recruitment and retention of young badminton players.

Club Survey



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1. Introduction

1.1. Project Shuttlers Rationale

Even though the benefits of participating in sports are widely known, low participation rates and high dropout rates from sports during the teenage years continue to persist in Europe. The project, titled 'Kid Shuttlers – Attract and Nurture Young Badminton Players' (SHUTTTLERS), addresses the weaknesses and obstacles that are faced by most of the badminton clubs at grassroots level, while facilitating and enhancing a healthy and active lifestyle for our future European communities. The specific objectives of this project are:

- Strengthen the organizational and administrative element of the clubs hereby ensuring a more sustainable model
- Identify best practices in relation to the recruitment and retention of children in sport with a focus on badminton.
- Develop strategies regarding how best to recruit and retain young badminton players.
- Test and evaluate novel initiatives to ensure that the deliverables could be adopted across different European countries.

The project is led by Badminton Europe – the governing body for 53 European Member Associations – together with Sports Coaching Europe, Universidad Europea, Austrian Badminton Association, Deutscher Badminton-Verband e.V. and the Lithuanian Badminton Federation. The main deliverables of the project include:

- Education Toolkit 'Strengthening the Badminton Club Model' and its digitization
- The European Framework on Recruitment of Young Badminton Players Report
- Education through Sports Training Modules
- Badminton Open Week Guidebook
- The European Framework on Retention of Young Badminton Players Report and its digitization
- Dissemination Plan and Sustainability Plan to ensure a multiplier effect amongst all Badminton clubs across Europe

1.2. Recruitment and Retention Research Report

To better understand the challenges, successes and strategies of clubs across Europe when recruiting and retaining young in badminton we conducted a survey aimed at existing clubs. This report details the findings of such survey, draws conclusions from them and offers some

preliminary recommendations to inform the development of the deliverables described above.

2. Methodology

2.1. Survey

Following consultation with project partners, a brief online survey was developed to obtain relevant demographic information as well as investigate club's practice in relation to the recruitment and retention of children.

2.2. Participants

Project partners contacted a diverse selection of badminton clubs in their countries and asked them to complete the survey. Overall, 65 clubs from six countries responded to the questionnaire. Spain and Germany provided 72% of the sample combined. The diagram below provides a percentage-based breakdown per country.

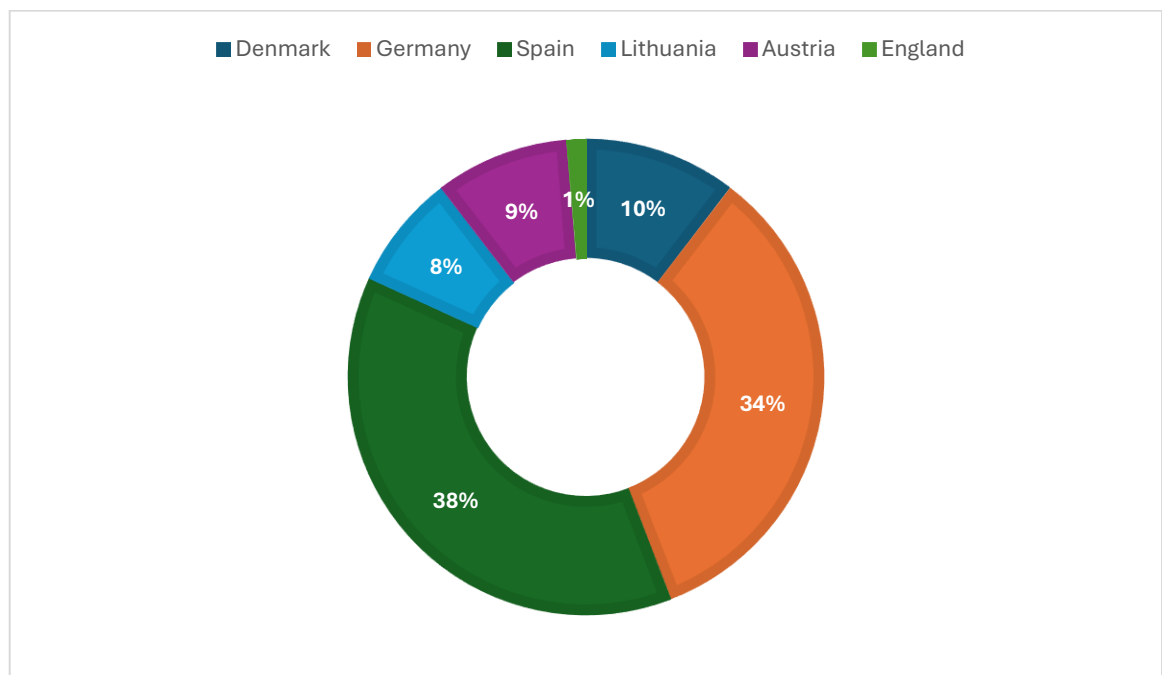


Diagram 1 – Responses per country

2.3. Analysis

Given the purpose of the survey only descriptive statistics were generated. The results are shown in the following section.

3. Findings

3.1. Club Location

The majority of clubs were located in small (n=32/42%) and medium-sized towns (n=26/34%).

● Small (less than 20.000 habitants)	32
● Medium town (between 20.000 and 300.000)	26
● Big town (more than 300.000)	18

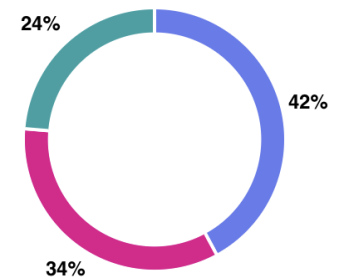


Diagram 2 – Responses per club location

3.2. Years of operation

The vast majority of responding clubs (n=58/76%) had been established for 15 years or more.

● Less than 5 years	3
● Between 5 and 10 years	8
● Between 10 and 15 years	7
● More than 15 years	58

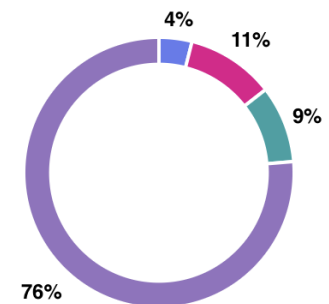


Diagram 3– Responses per years of operation

3.3. Number of members

The largest subgroup of clubs had between 50 and 100 members (n=30/30%), followed by smaller subgroups of 100-250 members (n=19/18%) and less than 50 (n=18/16%).

● Less than 50	18
● Between 50 and 100	30
● Between 100 and 250	19
● Between 250 and 500	3
● More than 500	6
● Otras	0

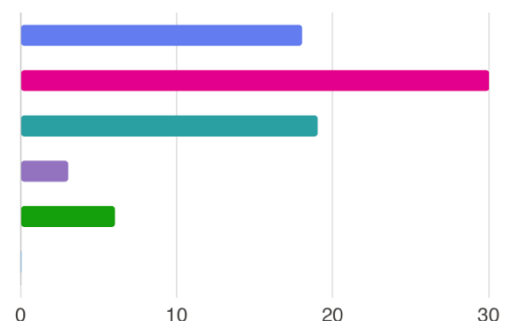


Diagram 4 – Responses per number of members

3.4. Club offer by age group and level

A large proportion of clubs provided activity for a variety of age groups and levels of the game. Most clubs provided introductory programmes for children (n=57/88%) as well as youth recreational activities (n=56/86%). Considerably less clubs provided elite youth programmes (n=35/53%)

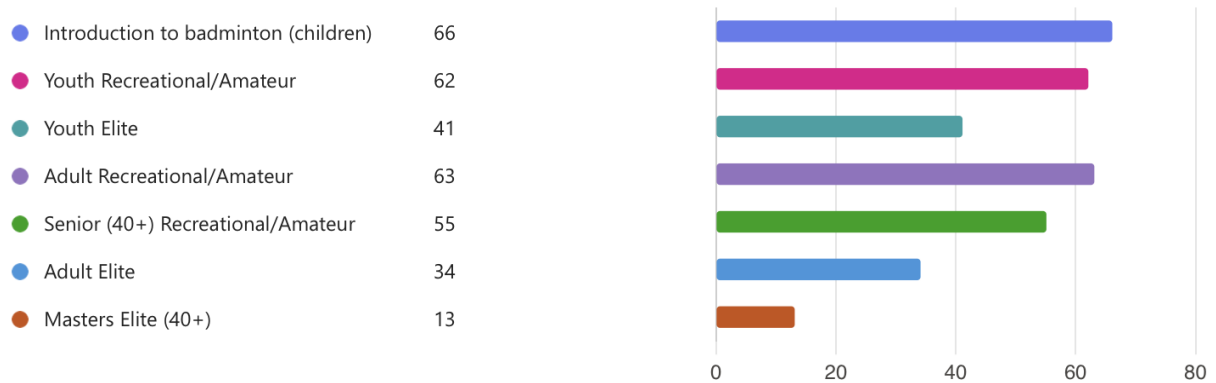


Diagram 5 – Responses per club offer by age group and level

3.5. Competition offer

The majority of clubs took part in a combination of local competitions, regional competitions and national competitions. In addition, 34 clubs (16%) also took part in international competition.



Diagram 6 – Responses per competition offer.

3.6. Gender

Overall, the gender split in the majority of clubs appears quite healthy with 77% of clubs having either a 50/50 or 60/40 split.

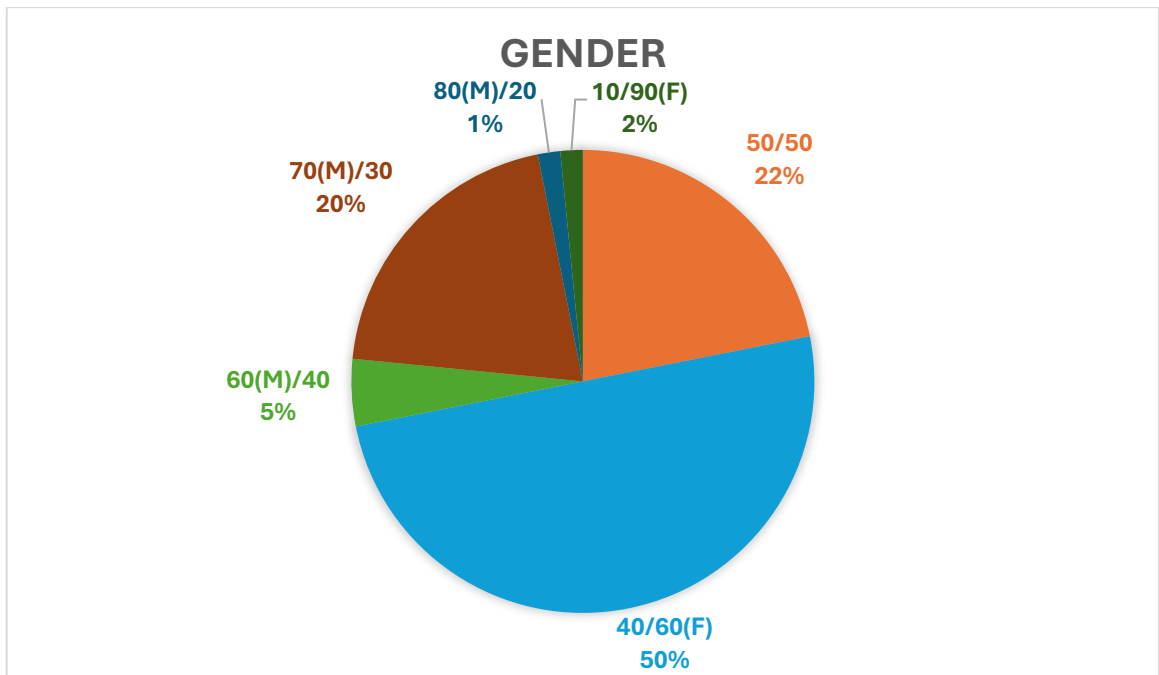


Diagram 7 – Responses per gender.

3.7. Profile of youth section

Across the 6 countries, clubs had a variety of profiles. When taken as a whole, however, an average profile emerged where most clubs had the bulk of their junior membership in the 13-16 category.

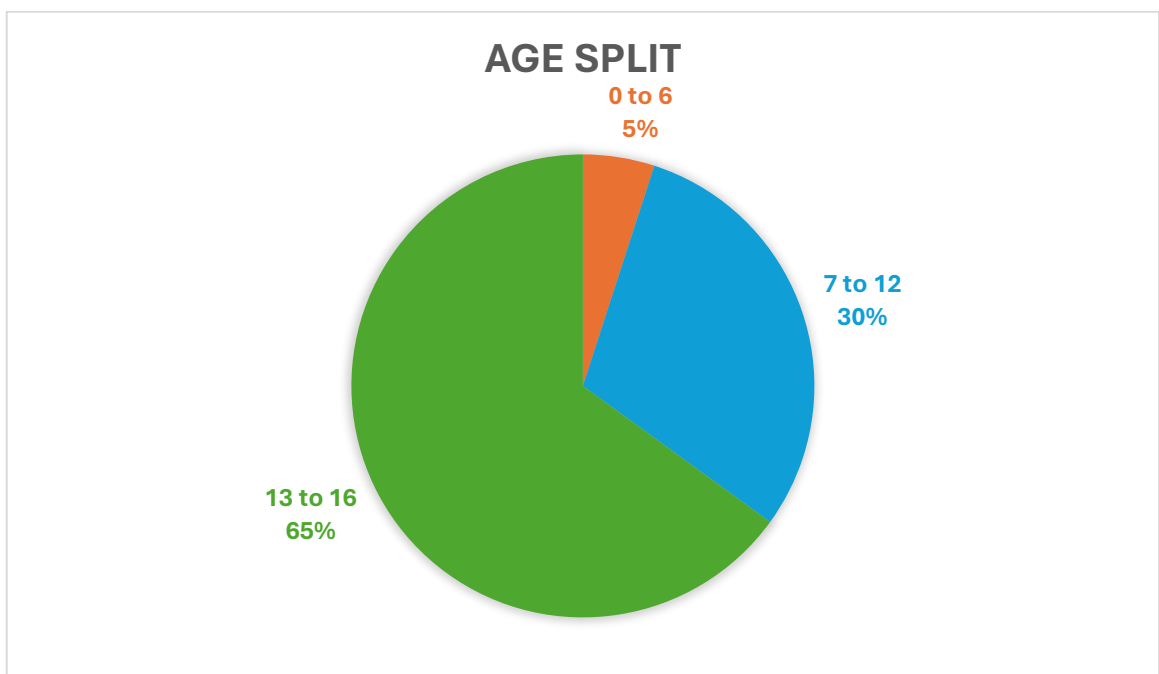


Diagram 8 – Average profile of youth section.

3.8. Size of club coaching workforce

Clubs were also asked to report on the number of coaches they had delivering their programmes. In accordance with the average size of clubs, most clubs had between 1 and 3 coaches.

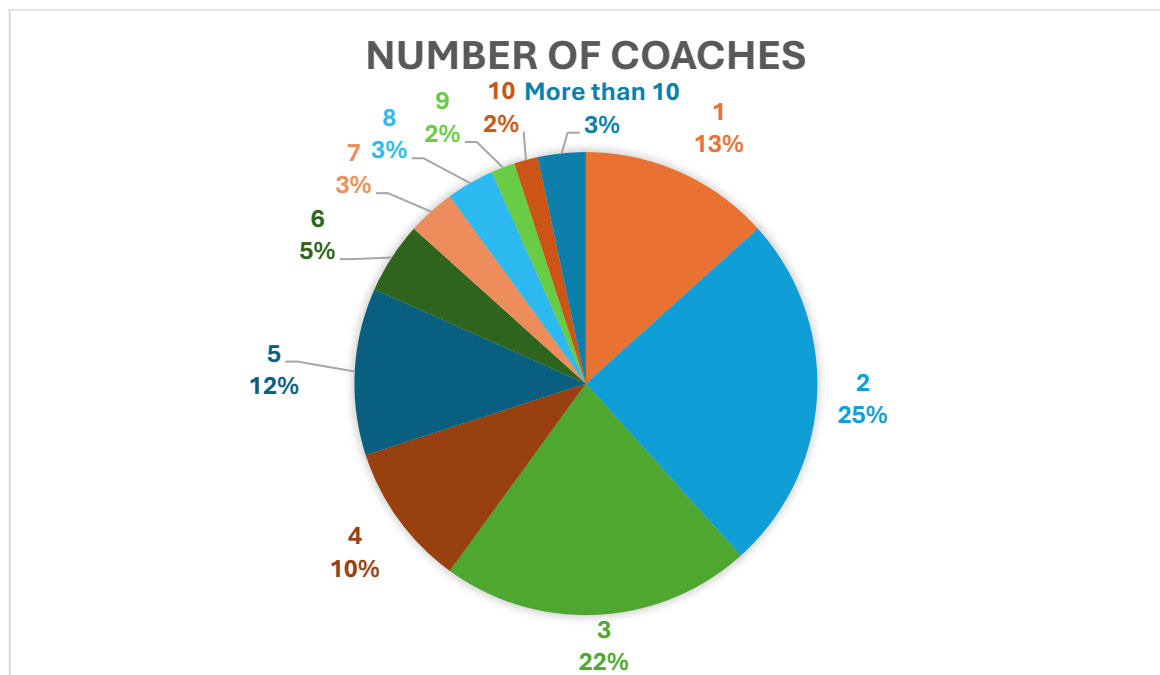


Diagram 9 – Size of coaching workforce

3.9. Junior Coaches' Educational Level (Coaching Qualifications)

In relation to the qualification profile of junior coaches, there is a broad range of workforce structures amongst the respondent clubs. However, there are two basic operational models which are most common. The most reported model includes a mix of unqualified coaches and coaches who hold a basic level qualification (i.e., Level 1 or Entry Award). In some cases, clubs operating this model will also have a 'head coach' figure supervising the junior section with a higher-level qualification (i.e., Level 2, Level 3, Talent Coach, Elite Coach, etc). The second model operates with perhaps a smaller number of coaches yet all of them hold mid to high level qualifications, in some cases including talent development-specific and elite coaching qualifications.

3.10. Overall Club Workforce

In addition to coaches, clubs reported a variety of roles they employed to help run their operations. It is uncertain whether these positions are paid full time or part time. Nonetheless, clubs appeared to have a suitable human resource structure with the majority of them using the services of a doctor and physiotherapist (98%), psychologist (92%), fitness coach (87%) and a social media coordinator (78%). Notably, only 58% reported employing a Club Manager/Director, perhaps pointing at the typically volunteer nature of this position in

some clubs/countries, or to perhaps a ‘head coach’ playing a dual role as a ‘Club Coordinator’.

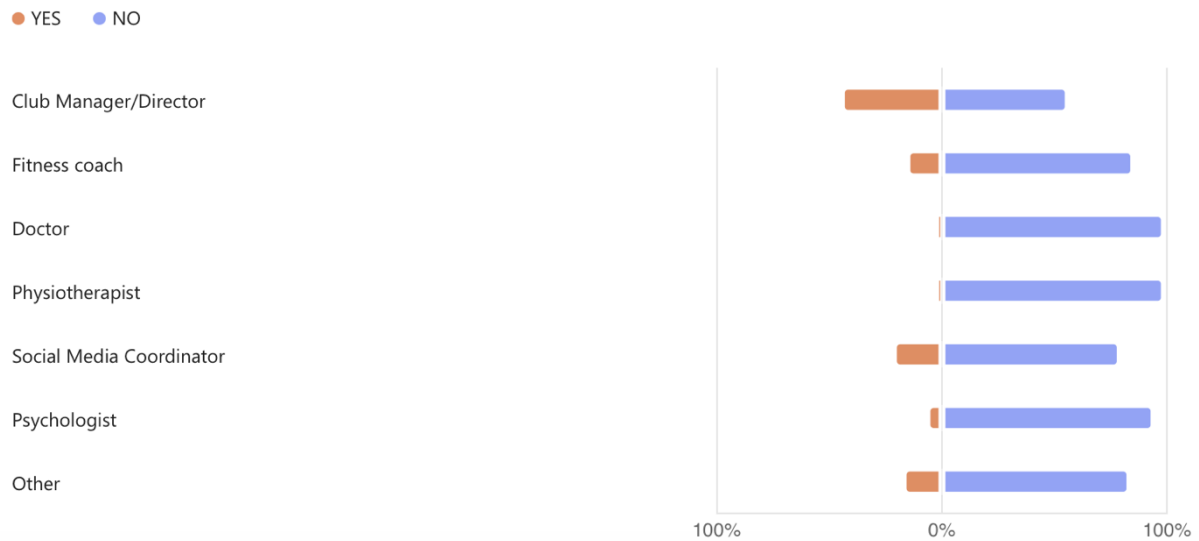


Diagram 10 – Overall club workforce

3.11. Training facilities (number of courts)

The majority of clubs reported having between 3 and 6 training courts at their facility (n=38/50%) followed by a significant number of clubs which had between 6 and 9 (n=24/32%).



Diagram 11 – Number of available training courts

3.12. Facility status (badminton only vs shared)

Regardless of the number of courts available for training, clubs primarily reported having to share the training facility with other sports (n=66/88%). Only a very small proportion of clubs (n=9/12%) used a badminton-only facility. It is uncertain if these small number of clubs owned or leased the facility.

- Badminton only 9
- Shared with other sports 66

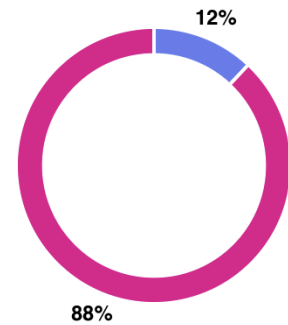


Diagram 12 – Facility status

3.13. Additional club facilities/spaces

The majority of clubs (n=46/61%) reported not having any additional spaces in their training facility (i.e., fitness suite, cafeteria, meeting room, offices, etc). However, some clubs (n=30/39%) reported having a variety of additional spaces. These included a fitness suite, open air courts, meeting room, cafeteria, and even a climbing wall and a swimming pool.

- NO 46
- YES 30

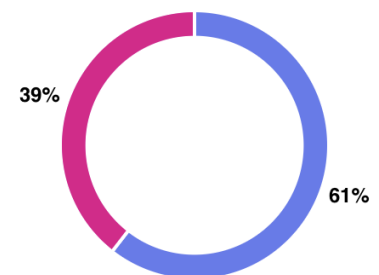


Diagram 13 – Additional club facilities/spaces

3.14. Club partnerships

When asked about whether clubs had partnerships with other organisations to improve their offer, delivery and performance, 31% (n=23) stated they did, compared to 69% (n=52) who did not. Those who did reported the national federation, the national sport agency, the local and regional government, the department for education and charitable foundations as the most likely partners.

- YES 23
- NO 52

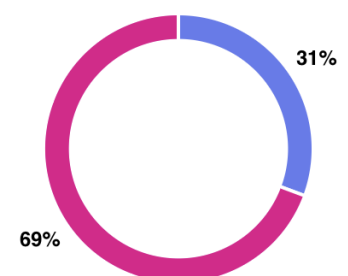


Diagram 14 – Club partnerships

3.15. Factors impacting on club stability

In relation to the factors that most impacted club stability, 54.5% of the clubs indicated that membership and registration fees were the most important factor to guarantee it. This was closely followed by access to a variety of grants, reported as having high importance for 38.8% of the sample. The diversification of revenue generation was rated the least importance (7.8%), perhaps indicating a need for clubs to reconsider their business models going into the future to seek alternative revenue sources beyond traditional ones.

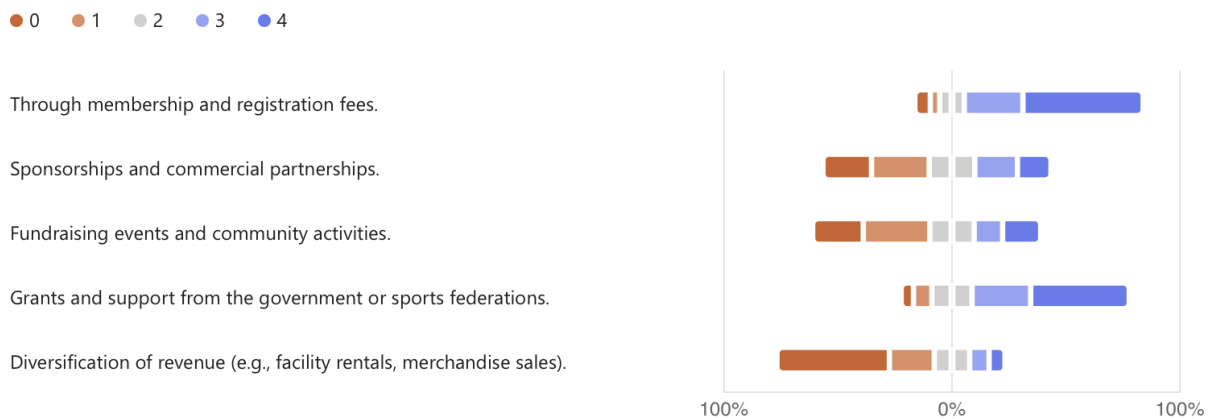


Diagram 15 – Factors impacting on club stability

3.16. Factors leading to joining the badminton club

Clubs rated a variety of reasons, as highly important for families when making the decision to join the badminton club. The quality of the club’s coaches (32.8%), the location of the club (32.4%), the inclusiveness of the environment (31.9%), and the club’s reputation (30.9%) scored the highest.



Diagram 16 – Factors leading to joining the badminton club.

3.17. Perceived recruitment success.

Clubs were asked to rate their club’s success in recruiting members. The majority of the clubs felt they were successful (n=28/37.3%) or moderately successful (n=34/46.2%) in recruiting members.

● Very successful.	7
● Successful.	28
● Moderately successful.	34
● Not very successful.	5
● Unsuccessful.	2
● Not sure.	0

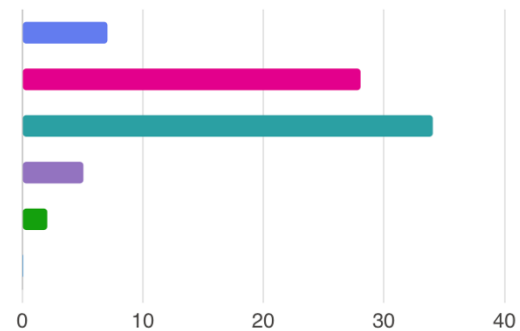


Diagram 17 – Perceived recruitment success

3.18. Recruitment methods

Clubs were asked about the different recruitment methods they used. Social media was the most used method (n=55/73.1%). Notably, ‘bring a friend to badminton’ was the second most used method (n=39/55.2%), followed by school visits (n=36/49.2%) and club open days (n=30/40%).

● Email.	14
● Traditional media (radio, newspaper, etc)	25
● Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).	55
● Distributing posters/flyers/adverts in local venues (libraries, fitness gyms, shops, etc)	27
● Bring a friend to badminton days	39
● Holiday Badminton Camps	19
● School visits/programmes	36
● Open days	30

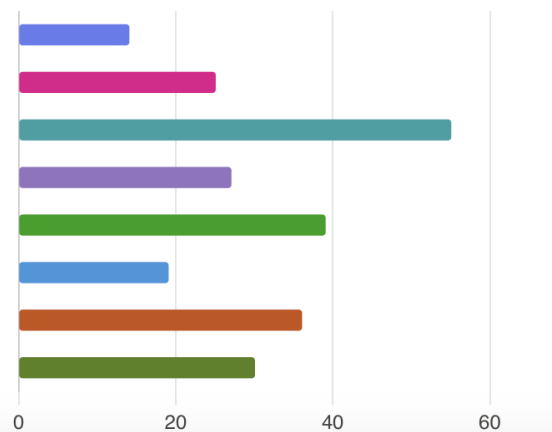


Diagram 18 – Recruitment methods.

3.19. Effectiveness of recruitment methods

When asked about the effectiveness of the various recruitment methods used, in line with the previous question, social media was the highest rated method (34.9%) followed by school visits (31.3%) and outreach activities (23.4%). Emails, traditional media, and flyers/posters were considered to be inefficient methods.

● 0 ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● Not Applicable

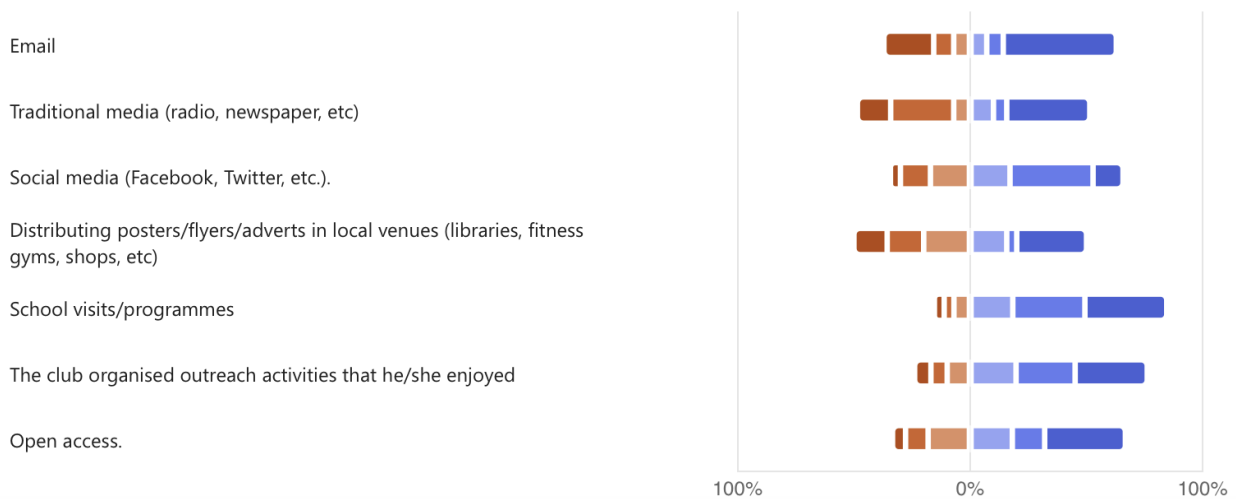


Diagram 19 – Effectiveness of recruitment methods.

3.20. Barriers to recruitment

Clubs identified the main barriers to recruitment. Competition with other sports for the same children (42.4%) and resource and facility constraints (37.9%) were the most important reasons. The overall level of promotion and visibility of badminton was also deemed highly important by a substantial number of clubs (18.2%). Location, affordability and programme structure were not deemed as important barriers to recruitment.

● 0 ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4

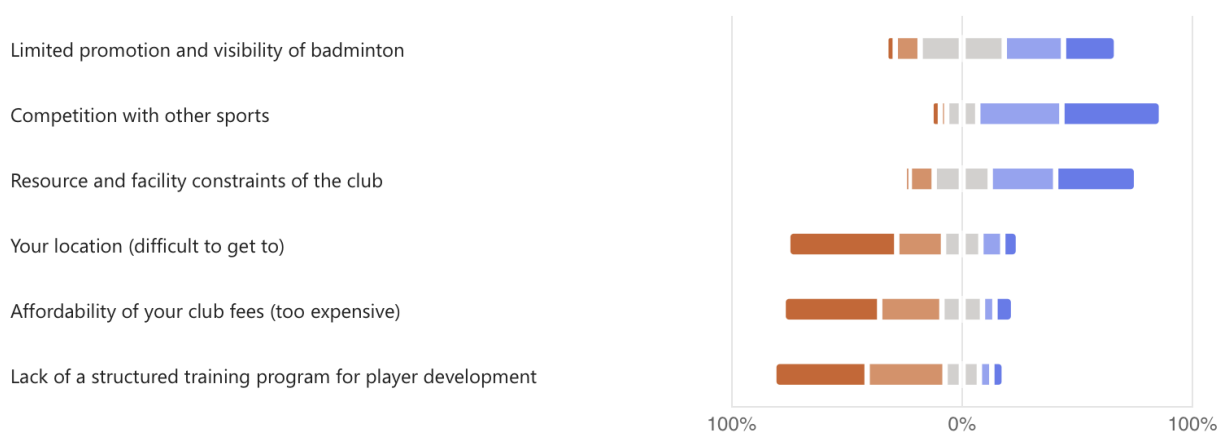


Diagram 20 – Barriers to recruitment.

3.21. Frequency of recruitment activities

The most typical type of recruitment was an annual drive for new members (i.e., prior to the start of the new season). This was the case for 23 clubs (29.8%). This was followed by recruitment campaigns every 6 months which were used by 20.89% of the clubs (n=17).

Notably, another 14 clubs, stated that they rarely ran recruitment campaigns, and 5 clubs never did.

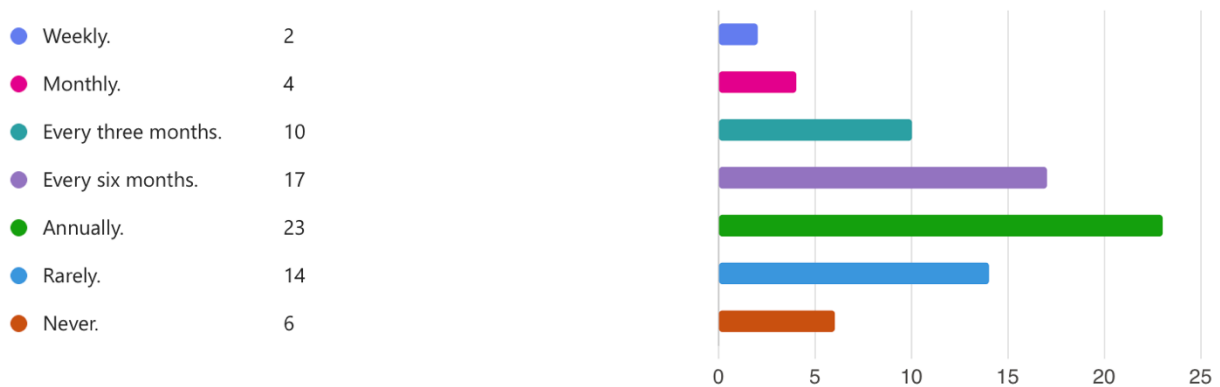


Diagram 21 – Frequency of recruitment campaigns.

3.22. Financial incentives to increase retention

The most popular incentive used by clubs was family discounts (n=30/41.7%), followed by ‘first month free’ offers (n=25/35.8%). Very few clubs used ‘pay as you play’ schemes (n=9/13.4%) or ‘introduce a friend’ discounts (n=3/2.9%)

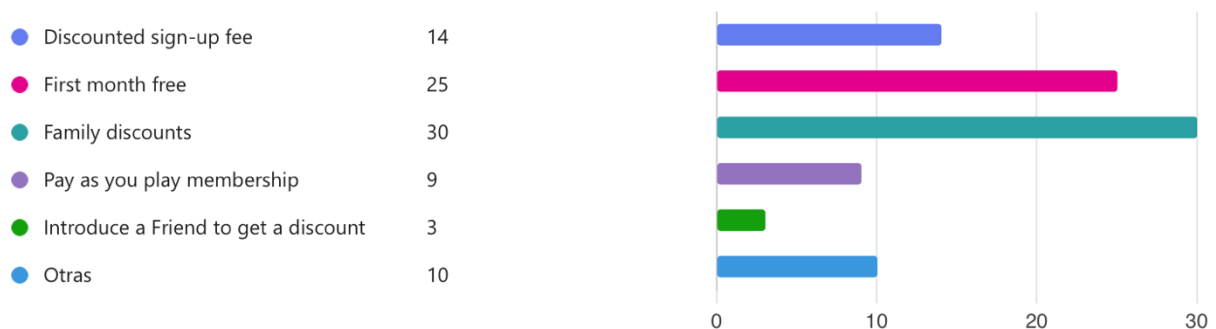


Diagram 22 – Financial incentives to increase retention.

3.23. Strategies to retain youth members

Clubs were asked to select which strategies they used the most in trying to retain young players. Having customised training groups (n=52/67%) and customised competitions by age and standard (n=43/62.6%) and offering a mix of recreational and competitive opportunities (n=38/56.7%) were the most common strategies. Notably, regular social events (n=31/44.7%) and high-quality coaching (n=35/41.7%) were also important for a high number of clubs.

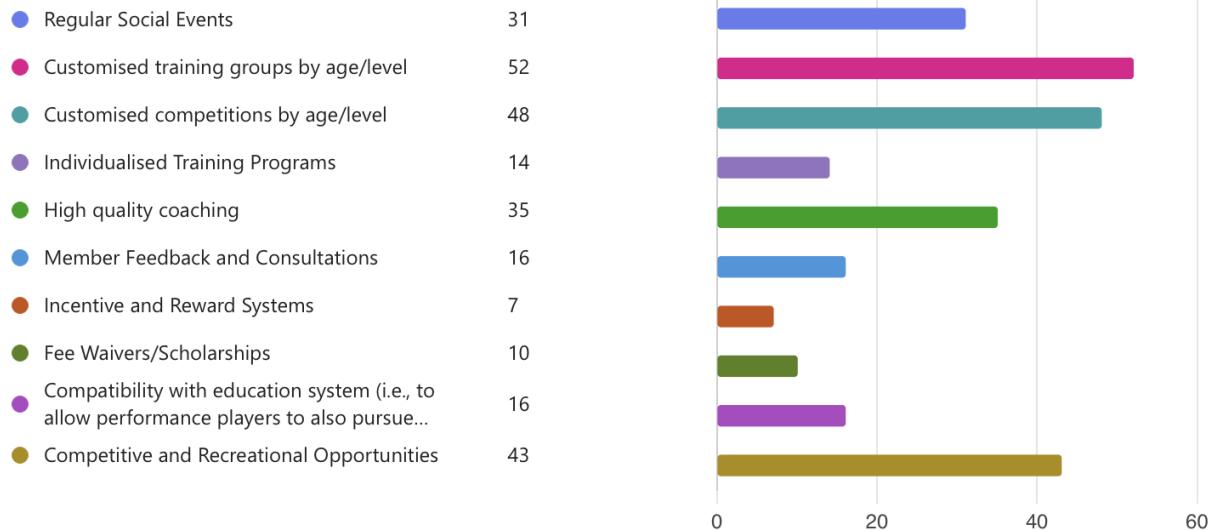


Diagram 23 – Strategies to retain youth members.

3.24. Member feedback collection

Interestingly, the majority of clubs (n=46/48%) did not collect feedback from young club members as to how to improve the club. Notwithstanding this, 26 clubs (27%) held open meetings with members and parents. However, very few clubs conducted regular surveys to engage their young players (n=10/11%)

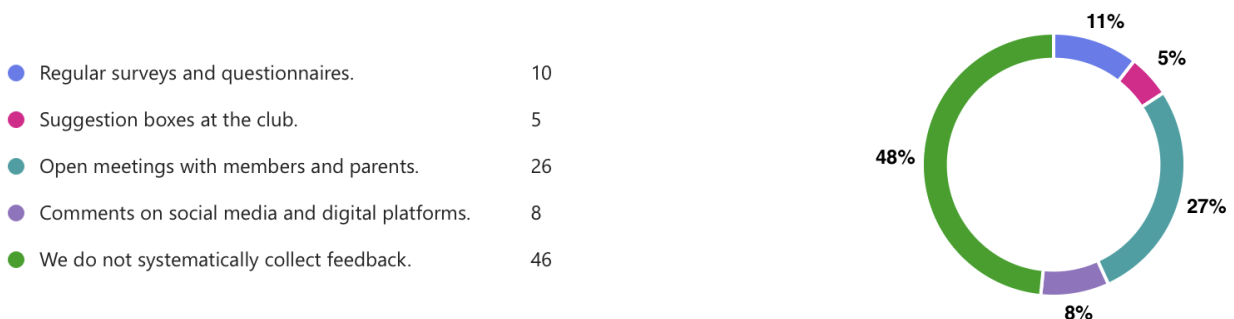


Diagram 24 – Member feedback collection

3.25. Factors contributing to retention

Finally, clubs were asked to rate the importance of various factors in retaining club members. Customised training and competition by age/level was considered as highly important by 36.1% of the clubs, followed by member appreciation/social events at 27%. Social media engagement was highlighted as highly important by 18% of the clubs.

● 0 ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4

Regular feedback sessions for members.

Social media engagement (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).

Member appreciation/social events.

Customised training and competition by age/level

Individualised training programs.

Flexible membership plans.

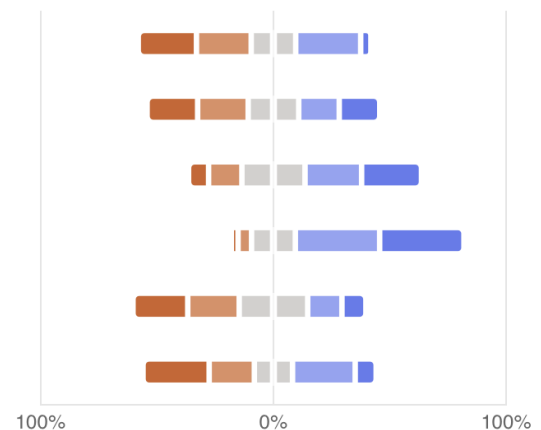


Diagram 25 – Retention factors

4. Recommendations

4.1. Preliminary considerations

The purpose of this section of the report is to extract some potentially significant information from the survey findings in order to start building a set of recommendations (see section 5). Although sample size is sufficient, these conclusions must be taken with caution given the quantitative nature of the findings. These findings must be considered together with the additional qualitative research conducted by project partner. This recognises that each country and each club are likely to be part of a distinct sport and badminton system imbued with cultural nuances and characteristics which will influence participation and dropout..

4.2. Recommendations

- The majority of clubs were located in small and medium size towns. This begs the question of whether national federations can do more to encourage the creation of more clubs in the bigger cities.
- A large proportion of clubs provided introductory activities for children a broad range of competitive opportunities.
- Likewise, the participant gender split was very close to equal representation
- Notably, the largest number of young people in the surveyed clubs belong to the 13-16 age group (65%) with the 7-12 accounting only for 30% and 0-6 being just 5% of the total population. This speaks well to the club's ability to recruit new participants at an age when they are typically dropping out of sport (12-14). However, it also points out at the potential to increase recruitment in the lower age groups.

- There is work to be done in supporting clubs help their coaches achieve initial and further qualifications to increase the proportion and level of qualified coaches.
- Although overall the club's workforce structure appeared to be healthy and well resourced, there are still some elements which points towards a culture of voluntarism in some of the clubs. This warrants further investigation.
- Most clubs (89%) had to share their training facility with other sports. This is an area with significant room for improvement and national federations could explore how to support clubs in developing their own facilities with the benefits for recruitment and retention this could afford them. This was highlighted as one of the main barriers for recruitment by 37.9% of the clubs.
- Likewise, this applied to the lack of additional facilities (i.e., fitness gym, cafeteria, etc) for many clubs which may also have a negative impact on participant and parent experience, and thus recruitment and retention.
- Another area of concern is the lack of partnerships for the majority of clubs (69%). National federations may wish to explore ways in which they can support clubs build suitable partnerships to increase their development and reach.
- In line with the above, clubs relied on members' fees and grant to fund their activities. Partnerships and other non-traditional revenue generating activities could help clubs grow and flourish.
- Despite the above, most clubs were satisfied with their recruitment ability. Exploring further whether or not clubs have a desire to grow and why could yield interesting information to lead the national federation's support efforts.
- Social media and school visits/programmes were the most popular and effective recruitment methods for clubs. Creating resources to support and enhance these two areas would seem to be a positive development.
- Competition with other sport was identified as the main barrier for recruitment. Exploring how badminton can position itself as a 'better, more positive, healthier' alternative than some of the other sports could be an effective step to increase retention.
- In addition, clubs may wish to engage in more periodic and regular recruitment drives and campaigns. Currently most clubs only recruit once a year or every six months.
- Moreover, very few clubs (10.4%) regularly survey their participants to gain valuable feedback as to how to improve. This is a key area for improvement going forward.

- Finally, the three main factors contributing to retention were customised training and competition by age/level, member appreciation/social events, and social media engagement. Supporting all clubs in becoming proficient in all these areas is a must.

5. Closing Comments

This survey is the first step towards understanding the badminton landscape in relation to club development and the recruitment and retention of young badminton players. The findings provide some clear points for consideration which will be taken into account during the development of the various outputs of project Shuttlers.

September 2024