

Report on research regarding recruitment and retention of young badminton players. Parent and Player 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 reasons why young children start and stop playing badminton we conducted a survey aimed at parents and their children. 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 children's reasons for joining and leaving badminton clubs.

The survey contained two sections:

- Section 1 was aimed at parents and included 16 questions.
- Section 2 was aimed at children and included 4 questions.

Parents were asked to complete their section and pass the device to their child to answer their section.

2.2. Participants

Project partners contacted a diverse selection of badminton clubs in their countries and asked them to distribute the survey amongst the parents of their members (14 years old and below). Overall, 85 individuals from five countries responded to the questionnaire. The diagram below provides a percentage-based breakdown per country.

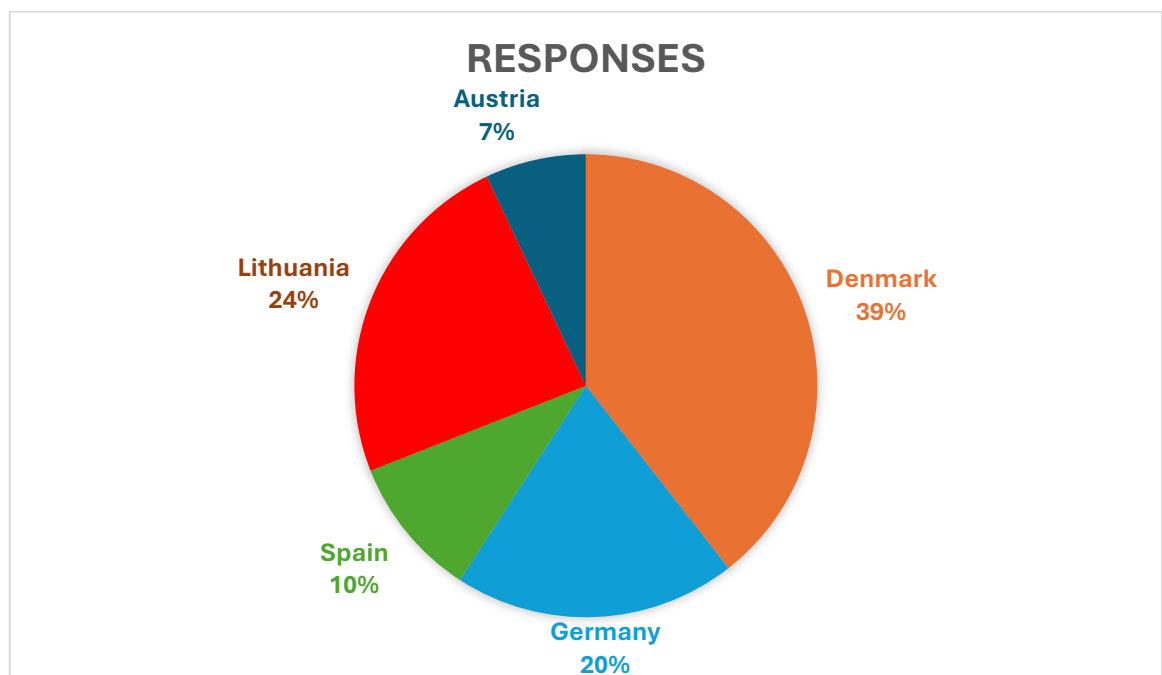


Diagram 1 – Responses per country

2.3. Analysis

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

3. Findings

As explained in the methodology section, the survey contained two sections. First, we report the results of the parent section.

3.1. Parent gender

Female respondents (n=57/63%) outnumbered males (n=33/36%). The diagram below provides a percentage-based breakdown per gender.

● Female	57
● Male	33
● Non-binary/Third Gender	1
● Prefer not to say	0

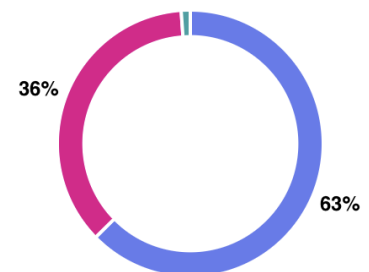


Diagram 2 – Responses per parent gender

3.2. Residential location

The majority of responded were inner-city residents (n=51/56%) with the rest split between the suburbs (n=18/20%) and rural areas (n=20/21%).

● Inner City	51
● Suburbs	18
● Rural Area	20
● Otras	2

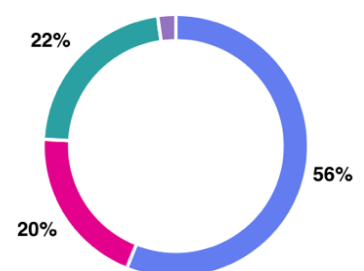


Diagram 3 – Responses per residential location

3.3. Socioeconomic status

The majority of respondents (n=87/96%) self-reported belonging to the medium-income bracket with a very small number of respondents reporting low income (n=4/5%)

● High Income	18
● Medium Income	69
● Low Income	4

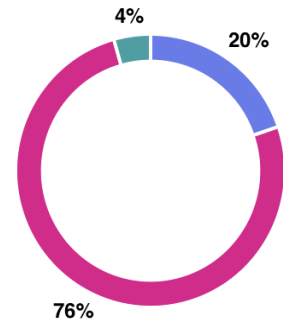


Diagram 4 – Responses per socioeconomic status

3.4. Migratory background

The majority of respondents did not have a recent migratory background (n=81/89%)

● Yes	10
● No	81
● I'm not sure/Prefer not to say	0

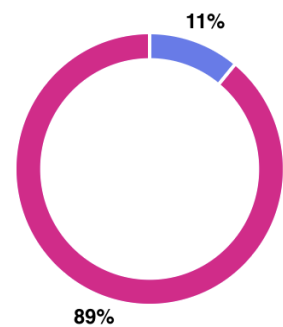


Diagram 5 – Responses per migratory background

3.5. Family relationship to badminton

Notably, families which did not have a pre-established relationships with badminton (i.e., parents played; n=53/58%) outnumbered those which did (n=38/42%).

● Yes	38
● No	53

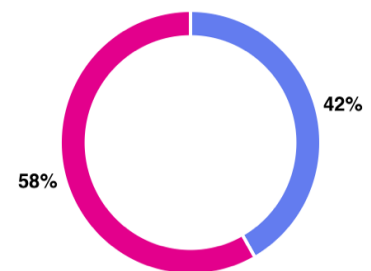


Diagram 6 – Responses per family relationship to badminton.

3.6. Child's Age

Overall, the majority of respondents were between 10 and 13 years of age (n=46/67%).

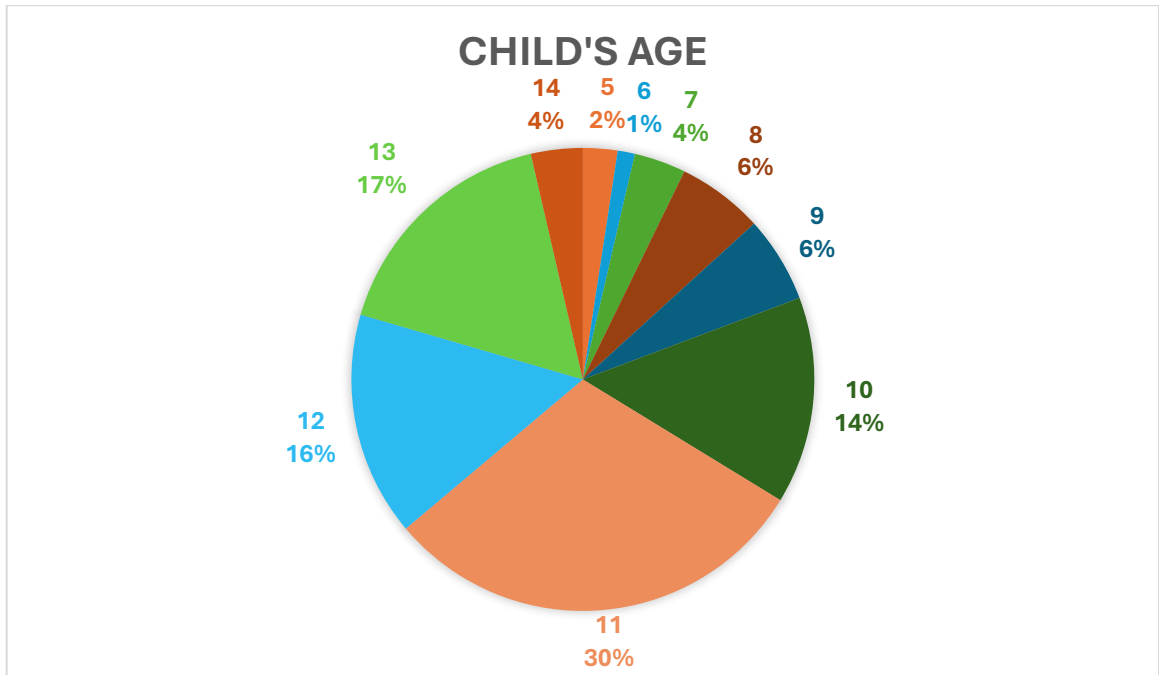


Diagram 7 – Responses per child’s age.

3.7. Child’s Gender

Boys (n=49/55%) slightly outnumbered girls (n=40/45%).

Male	49
Female	40
Non-binary	0
Prefer not to say	0

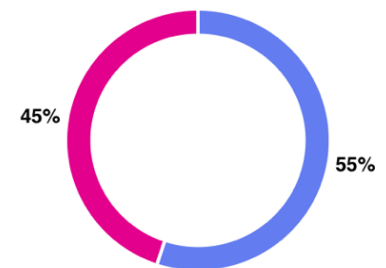


Diagram 8 – Responses per child’s age.

3.8. Sport participation history

The majority of children played only badminton (n=35/61%), whereas the rest played multiple sports (n=54/39%).

Yes	35
No	54

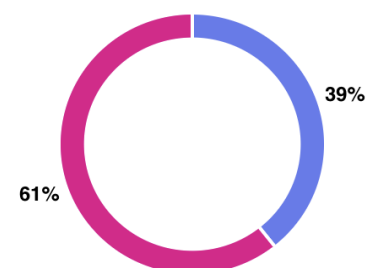


Diagram 9 – Responses by sport participation history

3.9. Introduction to badminton

Being socialised into badminton through family was the most common (n=50) with school (n=11) and club outreach activities (n=13) being the largest choices thereafter. Notably traditional media and social media’s impact on recruitment was minimal.

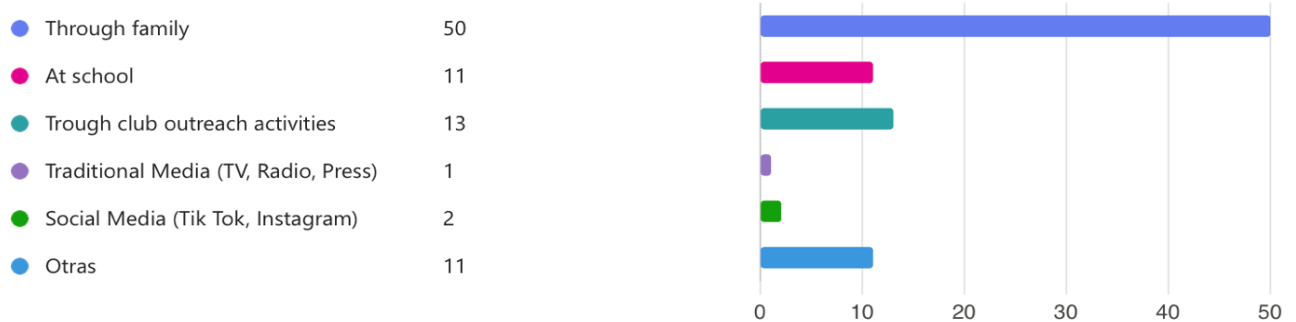


Diagram 10 – Introduction to badminton

3.10. Badminton participation history

Most children had played badminton for between two and four years (n=46/52%) or less than two years (n=20/22%)



Diagram 11 – Badminton participation history

3.11. Participation level

The majority of parents described their child participation in badminton as recreational/amateur (n=53/60%), although a substantial number reported their child’s involvement was at the elite/performance level (n=30/34%).

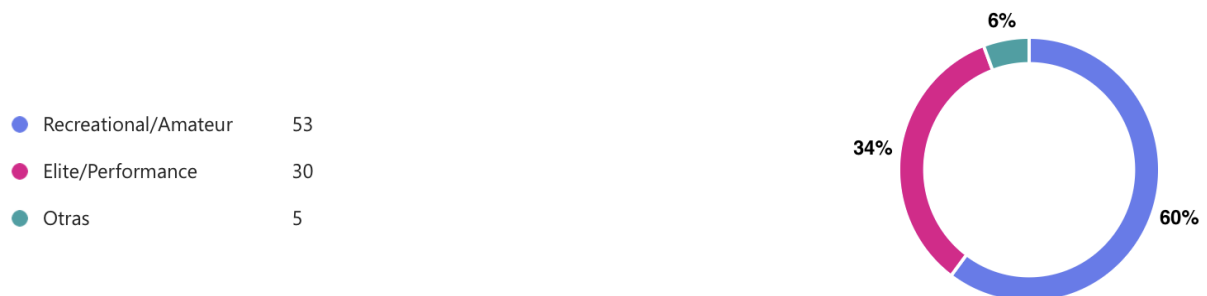


Diagram 12 – Badminton participation level

3.12. Factors leading to children joining a badminton club

The most important factors for children to join badminton clubs were parents wanting children to be fit (42% of parents felt this was very important or extremely important), followed by the family being into badminton (28.8%), and enjoyment of the club's outreach activities (28.2%).

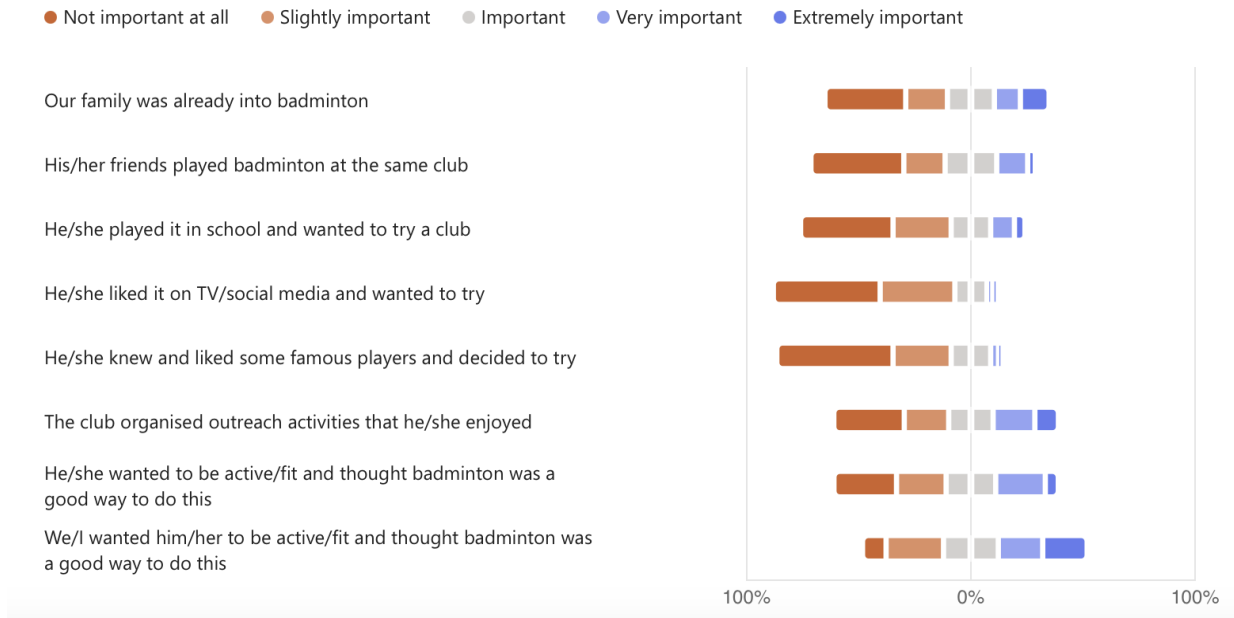


Diagram 13 – Factors leading to children joining a badminton club

3.13. Potential reasons for not joining a badminton club

By far, the most cited reason for not joining a club would be children not enjoying badminton (62.5%), followed by the club being difficult to get to (36.1%), and children being interested in other things (26.4%). Notably, club fees or not having friends at the club were not significant factors for the majority of parents.

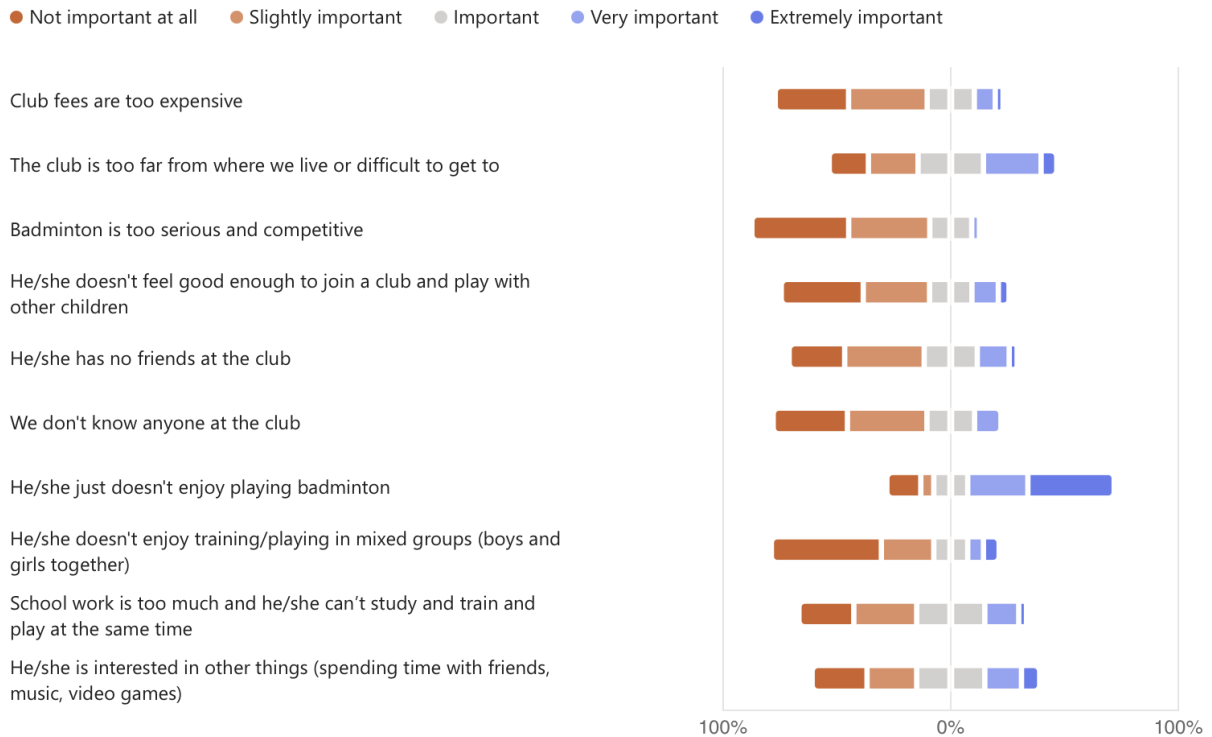


Diagram 14 – Potential reasons for not joining a badminton club

3.14. Factors for sustained participation in badminton

Although a broad range of factors were deemed extremely important, loving playing the sport was undoubtedly the most important factor to sustain participation (58.3% rated this extremely important). Spending time with friends at the club (30.1%), the club feeling like a family (26%), and liking the coaches (28.4%) were also highly reported.

● Not important at all ● Slightly important ● Important ● Very important ● Extremely important

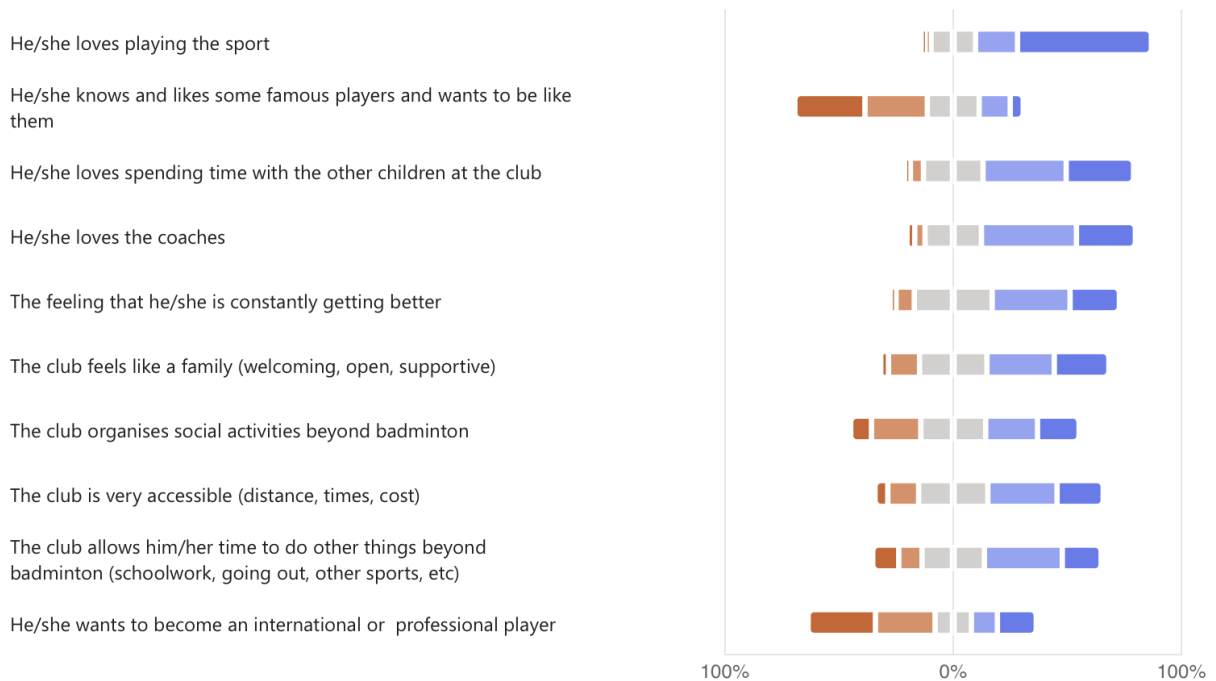


Diagram 15 – Factors for sustained participation in badminton

3.15. Factors leading to dropping out of badminton

In line with the previous graph, enjoyment – in this case, lack of – was the most reported cause for potential dropout (27.8%). In addition, other players behaving in negative ways (23.6%), and becoming interested in other things (19.4%) were also cited regularly.

● Not important at all ● Slightly important ● Important ● Very important ● Extremely important



If coaches become too hard/demanding on him/her

If the level of expectation and ambition of the club and the coaches is too high

If he/she feels too much pressure from us the parents/guardians

The effort my child puts in is not worth what he/she gets from it

Other players behave in negative ways (bullying, etc)

He/she has become interested or want to make further progress in a different sport

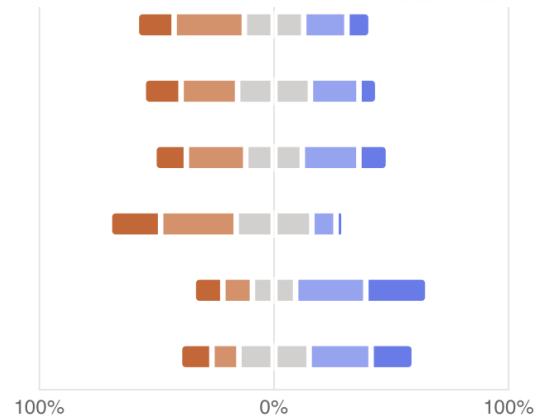


Diagram 16 – Factors leading to dropping out of badminton

We now report the findings from the children’s section.

The number of possible response options for children were simplified to facilitate their completion of the survey.

3.16. Factors leading to joining the badminton club (child’s perspective)

The most important reasons for children to join the badminton club was badminton being fun (52.7%) followed by wanting to get fitter (30.1%), family being already into badminton (24.7%) and having friends that already played badminton at the club (23.3%).

● Not important at all ● A little bit important ● Super important

My parents/ guardians took me to club; it really wasn’t my choice.

My family was already into badminton

My friends played badminton at the same club

I played it in school and wanted to try a club

I watched it on TV/social media and wanted to try it

The club came to my school to do a taster session and I enjoyed it

I thought badminton was fun and wanted to try playing at a club

I wanted to get fitter and thought badminton was good for that

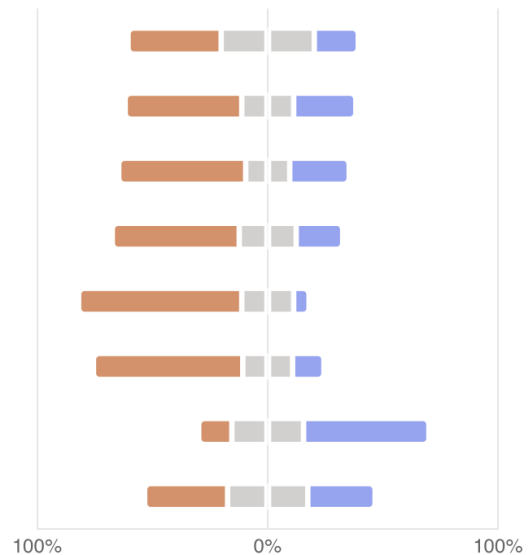


Diagram 17 – Factors leading to joining the badminton club (child’s perspective).

3.17. Factors leading to sustained participation in badminton (child’s perspective).

Although children identified a broad range of factors as super important for them to continue to play badminton, the sheer love and enjoyment of playing badminton was the highest rated (87.7%). Liking the coaches (72.6%), a friendly club atmosphere (71.2%), and a sense of

improvement (68.5%) were also highly ranked. Notably, non-badminton activities were the lowest rated (21.4%).

● Not important at all ● A little bit important ● Super important

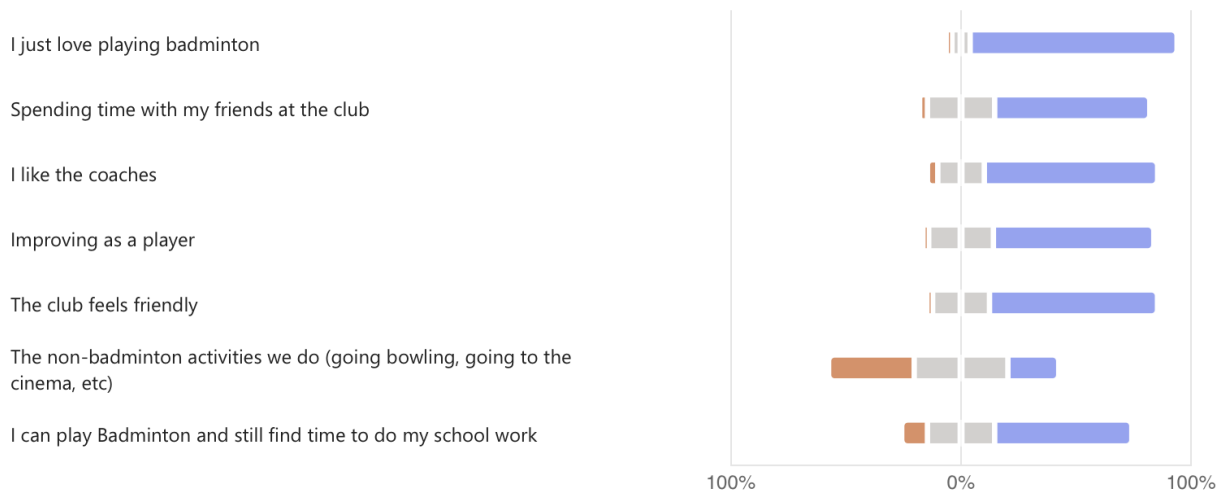


Diagram 18 – Factors leading to sustained participation (child’s perspective).

3.18. Enjoyment of different types of badminton activities

Children tended to enjoy all the activity types, however they expressed very high levels of enjoyment of intraclub badminton games where they could test their skills against their own clubmates (77.8%). They also found highly enjoyable taking part in activities with a partner where they could learn new skills (71.2%) as well as group non-badminton activities (51.4%) and fitness-related activities (47.2%).

● Not at all ● A little bit ● A lot

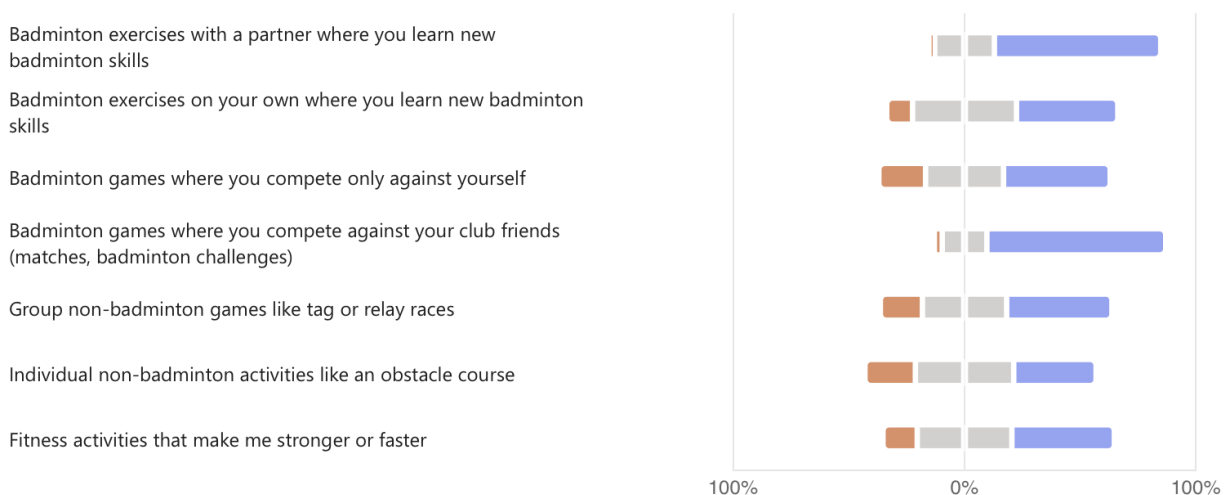


Diagram 19 – Enjoyment of different types of badminton activities (child’s perspective).

3.19. Potential reasons for dropping out of badminton (child’s perspective)

The highest rated potential reason for dropout was not enjoying badminton anymore (66.7%). Other important reasons that stood out from the rest included other players behaving in negative ways (53.5%), wanting to progress further in a different sport (42.3%), and pressure from parents (35.7%).

● Not important at all ● A little bit important ● Super important

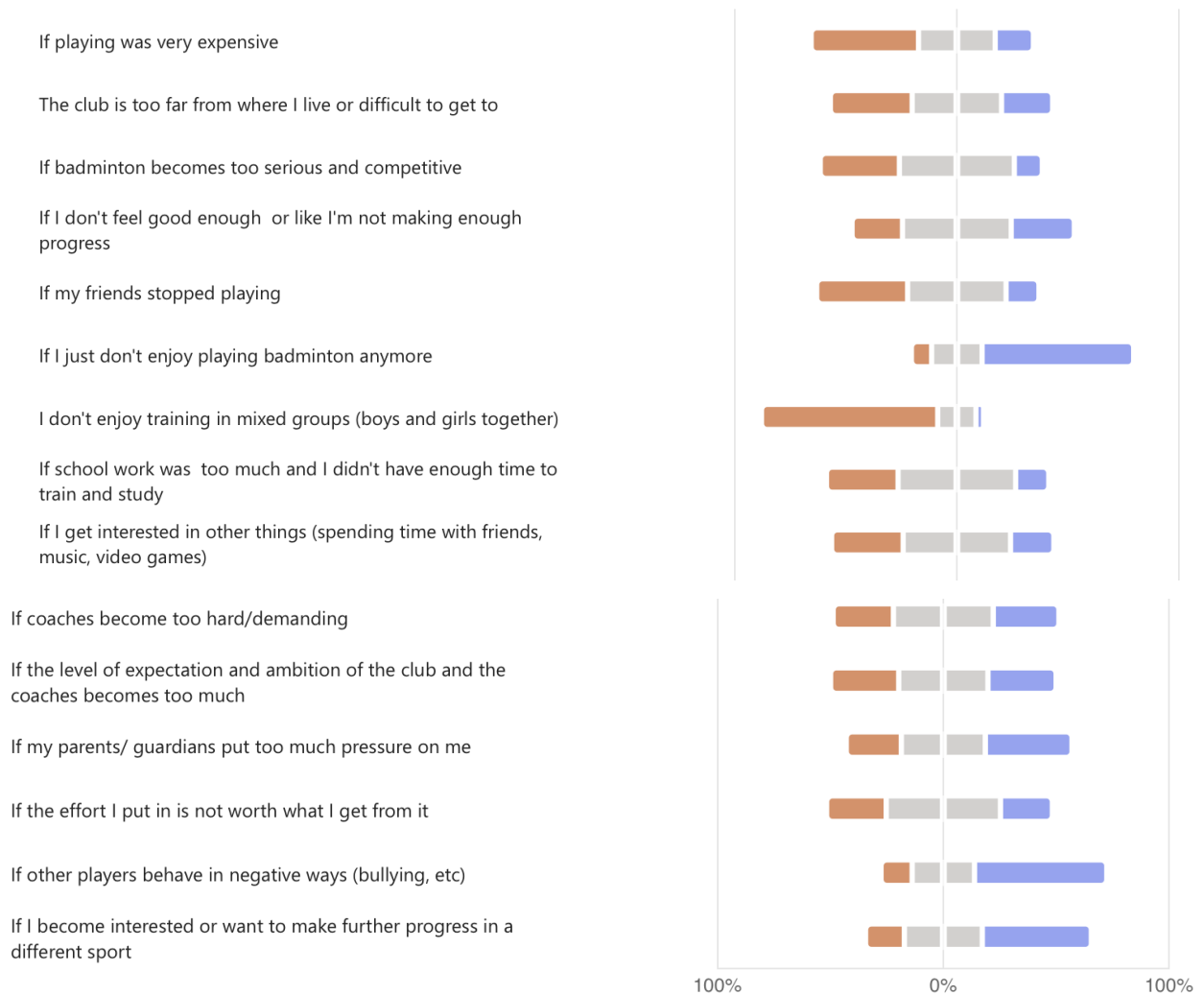


Diagram 20 – Potential reasons for dropping out of badminton (child’s perspective).

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). Due to the limited sample size, however, these conclusions must be taken with caution. Further research with a larger sample size is recommended in the future. In addition, 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. It is thus also recommended that nations and clubs conduct wider research specific to their national and local contexts.

4.2. Recommendations

- Female parent responses outnumbered males. This may indicate that in the badminton context, mothers mediate their children's participation and thus attempts to recruit new players, and strategies to keep those already involved playing should prioritise reaching mothers as they appear to be the primary decision-maker in this case.
- The majority of respondents lived in inner-city areas. This may indicate that there is room for improvement in how those living in suburbs and rural areas can be introduced to badminton. It may also indicate a need for new clubs to be created in these areas or for existing clubs to run "satellite centres" in these areas or at least run outreach activities.
- A very large proportion of respondents came from affluent families with no migratory background. This clearly signals the potential for the growth of badminton amongst children from low-income families and migratory backgrounds. National federations and clubs may need to explore how they can make their activities more accessible to these families.
- Notably, the majority of children only played badminton. Clubs may need to consider how to attract players who are already playing other sports. This may include considering the days/times of their sessions to avoid clashing with other sports.
- Most children were introduced to badminton through their families. However, school badminton lessons and outreach activities appeared to also be effective in recruiting new players and thus should be considered and perhaps increased.

Crucially, social media did not appear to be a central recruitment strategy and therefore appears to be an avenue worth exploring for clubs and federations.

- Elite/performance levels of participation were reported by 35% of parents. This is an unusually high percentage of participation at this level for a sport. This may be down to a sample bias, but it could also indicate a need to grow the recreational side of the sport, especially amongst younger children.
- From the parent's perspective, the most important factor leading to children joining a club was the desire for their child to be fit and healthy. This area is thus elevated as a potential key focus in the promotion of badminton in Europe.
- Parents also felt that children's enjoyment of their participation in badminton was the most important factor both for sustaining and discontinuing participation. This unequivocally indicates club and coaches' need to prioritise fun and enjoyment in their sessions as a mechanism to improve both recruitment and retention.
- Friendships and a family feeling were also highly ranked by parents as factors that keep children in badminton and thus clubs and coaches may wish to prioritise these areas.
- Coaches were consistently highlighted as central to the experience and key to recruitment and retention. This may indicate a need for clubs to emphasise in their recruitment the need to employ coaches who are a good fit to work with children and motivate them to stay in the sport.
- Other children behaving in negative ways was highlighted by parents and children as a key reason for dropout. This may signal a need for clubs to carefully manage their training groups and educate coaches, children and parents on the need to cultivate positive relationships and key strategies to do so.
- Children stated that enjoyment and fun were the primary reason why they started and continued to play badminton. As aforementioned, clubs and coaches may wish to prioritise this area above everything else.
- Children also ranked having friends at the club as a key reason to join. Clubs may wish to explore how to best capitalise on 'friendship networks' to more specifically target potential new recruits (i.e., through school visits, one-off bring a friend events/parties, member-led social media posts, etc).
- Beyond enjoyment, liking the coaches, a friendly club atmosphere and a sense of improvement were highly ranked by children as key to sustained participation. Exploring effective ways to enhance the club's family atmosphere and for children to

gain a higher sense of competence and improvement may offer a high return on investment.

- Children reported that internal opportunities to compete was the type of badminton activities they enjoyed the most. Clubs could consider creating or increasing the number of internal competitions they run to offer children more opportunities to test their skills in a friendly, non-threatening environment.
- Excessive pressure from parents was highlighted by children as a potential factor leading to dropout. Clubs and coaches may wish to consider incorporating parent education sessions to help them support their children in the best possible way to extend their badminton involvement.

5. Closing Comments

This survey is the first step towards understanding the badminton landscape in relation to 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.

June 2024