

# 2011 Athletics Facts

## ABAC Fact File 2.

### Participation 11-15 years old

**Background.** Sport England regularly commission surveys aimed at determining participation levels in sport. Over recent years a number of “Active People Surveys” have been completed and data from these have been used in a series of detailed sport evidence packs. The latest Athletics information pack dated 26 June 2009 claims to provide information which can be used to develop NGB proposals. Specifically, they claim that this information can be used to provide a rationale for focusing on particular areas and for developing and agreeing interventions in partnership with Sport England. The latest Athletics information pack also claims to provide information on two of Sport England’s key Strategic Outcomes. “Grow” and “Sustain”.

Some interesting figures are recorded, namely:

- 1.6million people participate in athletics.
- 609,000 are women and 992,000 are men.
- 159,000 young people **aged 11-15** participate in track and field regularly
- 383,000 young people **aged 11-15** participate in jogging/cc and road running regularly
- 233,000 participants are aged 16-19 years
- 194,000 participants are aged 20-24 years

The definition of “regularly” as used in the evidence packs is that an athlete competes at least once a month.

This Fact File provides statistics relating to competing 11-15 year olds athletes in 2010

**Quick numbers check.** In this section we look at the implications on the number of meetings which would be needed to accommodate the numbers published by Sport England.

We start with the fact that on average the number of athletes of 11-15 years of age competing at a NYAL meeting is 110. For 159,000 young athletes to compete once a month it would be necessary to hold around 1,500 meetings each month for this age group alone.

In the six summer months there are about 300 recorded track and field meetings per month in the UK, which cater for all age groups. Assuming 50% of these meetings are for 11-15 year olds then there are close to 150 young athlete meetings of all types held per month in the summer. **This is 1350 meetings per month short of what would be needed to accommodate the participation numbers claimed by Sport England.**

There are of course small numbers of inter schools meetings but the details and performances of these events are not recorded as in the main they are not organised to recognised procedures nor are most of the officials trained to recognised standards.

**Participation statistics.** In this section we record the numbers of young athletes registered with the sport’s governing bodies and the numbers obtained from all competition results which are collected daily and collated by the country’s leading statisticians.

England Athletics fully implemented its athlete registration scheme in 2008 which required that all competing athletes be registered with them. The total numbers registered in England within this age group in that year were:-

Age 11 - 2954, Age 12 - 4707, Age 13 - 5239, Age 14 - 5185, Age 15 - 4498

Making a grand total of 22,583 young athletes registered with England Athletics in 2008-2009.

More recent reports for athletics in England claim the number of registered athletes has grown by about 3% in the last 2 years. The breakdown of the latest participation figures into age groups has not been published and so the change in numbers in the 11-15 age group over the last year is unknown. Although registered athletes in this age group are likely to compete in track and field all registered athletes do not in fact compete. Several clubs have reported that coaching sessions frequently entail looking after youngsters who do not compete and some clubs now demand that young athletes must agree to compete before being allowed to participate.

It will be noted from the breakdown that age 13 is the peak age for track & field registration, it declines from then on.

**NYAL in England.** Analysis has shown that between 12,500 and 13,000 athletes aged 11 to 15 competed in the NYAL in 2010. Athletes reaching the age of 16 in 2010 have not been counted. A detailed analysis of athletes competing in the more senior NJAL shows that junior athletes compete on average 2.2 times per season. It may be assumed that athletes in the 11-15 age group have a similar participation record. That is less than 3 NYAL competitions per year.

**English Schools County Championships.** It is known that many competitors at the annual ESCC events do not belong to clubs. Schools County Championships can give an indication of the numbers of these non club competitors. An analysis has been made using results from half of the 2010 Schools County Championships. Using this data and factoring the rest of the Counties by size we have calculated that in 2010 the number of 11 to 15 year olds competing in all 43 county championships in England was just under 11,000.

It should be noted that many 'athletes' competing in these meetings have no recorded performances elsewhere. It is most unlikely that all of them fulfil the Sport England criteria of competing once a month.

From the same sample it has been calculated that there has been a drop off in participation at Schools County Championships from 2009 to 2010 of around 2% in this age group. However, this figure includes some counties who have increased the number of U13 events in 2010. Therefore taking this into account the drop off in the 13-15 age group is 3.5% over the last year.

**English Schools Cup.** The largest single competition in the 11-15 age group is the English Schools Cup. The number of competing athletes in this competition during the last 3 years were:-

2008 -27,000,            2009 - 26,300            2010 - 26,900

It relevant to note that 80% of the schools in the English Schools Cup only compete in the first round. Therefore the majority of the 11-15 year old participants will not meet the Sports England criteria of competing once a month

**The total number of 11-15 year old athletes.** The number of 11-15 year olds belonging to athletic clubs and registered with England Athletics in 2008-2009 was 22,583. Of these close to 13,000 (approx 56%) compete for clubs on average 2.2 times per year in the NYAL

Clearly there are some young athletes competing in school events who do not belong to clubs. Analysis of the Schools' County and English Championships has identified the total number of 11-15 year olds in these events. The cross checking of names to identify participation of club athletes registered with EA at these events is outside the scope of this study.

The maximum total number of 11-15 year old athletes (boys and girls together) participating in athletics can be obtained by adding the individual competition participants together. These figures are:- YAL **13,000** athletes, ES County Champs **11,000** athletes, ES Cup **27,000** athletes making a **total of 51,000**.

### **Concluding summary.**

The June 2009 Sport England Athletics Information Pack claims that 158,000 athletes between the ages of 11 and 15 years regularly compete at least once per month. (Later figures quote 165,000).

In the year 2008-2009 there were 22,583 athletes in this age group who belonged to athletic clubs and were registered with England Athletics.

In 2010 13,000 athletes in this age group competed in the National Young Athletes League on average 2.2 times in the season.

In 2010 there were major schools competitions at which a number of non affiliated children competed. If all these people only competed in one competition including the NYAL the maximum number of 11-15 year olds competing would total 51,000.

**Based on the above and using the most favourable assumptions we deduce that the population of 11-15 year old athletes is only 30.9 % of the figure claimed by Sport England and most of these athletes do not meet the competition requirement of competing once a month.**

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