

2012 British Athletics Facts

ABAC Fact File 16.

Participation levels in SeniorTrack and Field Leagues.

Introduction.

UKA Ltd is proposing a number of changes to track and field Leagues in England. Current proposals will reduce the amount of competition available to junior athletes as well as restricting the number of meetings for young athletes. Furthermore there are proposals to change fixture dates so that British Athletic League (BAL) and Area Leagues will be held on the same dates. This study looks at the participation levels in all senior Leagues in England during 2011 in the hope that an exact understanding of the demography will add to the debate and aid decision making.

Leagues' analysis

ABAC has commissioned Rob Whittingham to provide details of the participation levels in the various men's and women's leagues in 2011. His analysis breaks down numbers into senior, under 20 and veteran age groups. The broad results are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. The numbers of athletes competing in senior leagues in 2011

MEN	Only BAL	Only Area Leagues	In Both	Total of all athletes	
U20	153	1329	179	1661	
Senior	677	1272	364	2313	
V35	75	465	72	612	
totals	905	3066	615	4586	
WOMEN	Only UKWL	Only Area Leagues	In Both	Total of all athletes	
U20	110	1512	135	1757	
Senior	264	687	226	1177	
V35	23	214	31	269	
totals	397	2413	392	3202	

1. MEN.

British Athletics League. In 2011 the total number of athletes used by BAL clubs was 1520 (905 +615). Of these 332 (153 +179) were Juniors, 1041 (677 +364) were seniors and 147 (75 +72) were V35 athletes.

It is noted that of the total number of men competing in BAL, 615 (or 40.5% of the athletes) also competed in Area Leagues.

The League composition by age group was : Junior 21.8%, Senior 68.4% and V35 9.8%

Area Leagues. In 2011 the total number of male athletes used by clubs in all Area Leagues was 3681 (3066+615). Of these 1508 (1329+179) were Juniors, 1636 (1272+364) were seniors and 537 (465+72) were V35.

The Area Leagues' composition by age groups was: Juniors 41.0%, Seniors 44.4% and V35 14.6%.

2. WOMEN

UK Women's League. In 2011 the total number of athletes used by UKWL clubs was 789 (397 +392) of which 245 (110 +135) were juniors, 490 (264 +226) were Seniors and 54 (23+392) were V35.

It is noted that 392 women (or 49.7%) also competed in Area Leagues.

The UKWL composition by age group was : Junior 31.1%, Senior 62.1%, and V35 8.8%.

Area Leagues. In 2011 the total number of female athletes participating in Area Leagues was 2805 (2313+392). Of these 1647 (1512+135) were juniors, 913 (687+226) were seniors and 245 (214+31) were V35 athletes.

The women's Area Leagues composition in 2011 was: Junior 58.7%, Seniors 32.6% and V35 8.7%

Concluding comments

There are a number of startling statistics arising from this study. The key ones are:

- Only 677 senior men competed in the BAL alone.
- 615 athletes of all age groups competed both in BAL and Area Leagues
- 21.8% of BAL athletes were Juniors and 41% of Area League athletes were Juniors
- In the UKWL 31.1% of athletes were Juniors
- Only 264 senior women competed in the UKWL alone.
- 392 women competed in both UKWL and Area Leagues
- 1647 junior women competed in Area leagues
- Junior women made up 58.7% of Area League teams.

Many will be surprised at the small numbers of senior athletes competing in National and Area Leagues. Even more surprising is the extent to which teams are propped up by Junior athletes.

The participation of large numbers of athletes in both National and Area Leagues points up the fact that if National and Area Leagues are mainly scheduled for the same days then one or other, or even both of the National and Area Leagues will be significantly and negatively impacted.

This analysis represents the first significant factual study on League Participation levels. The data used in the public domain and it is surprising that the various bodies running the sport and Leagues have not carried out a proper analysis themselves.

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