

2015 Athletics Facts

Fact File 31

16 and over - 2014 track and field numbers

Preamble. Sport England's Active People report for 2014 was based on data collected from a sample of 0.3% of the adult population. In January 2015 Sport England announced that the number of people aged 16 and over in England who participated (competing or training) in track and field athletics had risen to 108,000 from 92,000 the previous year.

This figure was endorsed by Chris Jones, the CEO of England Athletics on the England Athletics website.

<http://www.englandathletics.org/england-athletics-news/growth-in-athletics-participation-in-england-announced-1?returnLink=bmV3cy5hc3B4P3NpdGVzZWNoaW9uaWQ9NDlmc2I0ZXNlY3Rpb250aXR sZT1FbmdsYW5kK0F0aGxldGljcytOZXdzJnBhZ2U9MTcmcmFuZ2U9>

These official figures were at odds with the 2013/2014 England Athletics accounts which stated that the number of track and field athletes had experienced a slight decline. So what is the true situation?

Factual numbers. The 2014 British Athletics statistical review compiled by the National Union of Track Statisticians contains an analysis of track and field participants which provides the most accurate figures available. The analysis is based on the UKA funded Power of 10 data base which records almost every track and field performance throughout the year.. Additional data comes from the *topsinathletics* database.

Power of 10 records that there were 21,760 English athletes aged 16 and over who competed in track and field athletics in 2014.

ABAC has commissioned Rob Whittingham to further refine the 2014 British Athletics review with the remit to increase the population percentage analysed. This report analyses all of the older age group athletes and as many as possible of the younger age groups. Overall 25% of all men and 40% of all women were analysed. The overall conclusions were as follows.

	Men	Women	Total
Athletes	13,761	7,999	21,760
Track Athletes	10,895	6,719	17,614
(all athletes who competed in more Road/XC meetings than track and who competed in less than 5 track meetings were removed)			
2+ meetings	8,911	5,631	14,542
5+ meetings	5,932	3,806	9,738
10+ meetings	2,584	1,908	4,492

It will be seen that the total numbers who competed at least once during the year was 17,614 track and field athletes and 4146 Road/XC totaling 21,760. If the criteria were for an athlete to register 5 performances during the year then the total men and women would number 9,738.

The full breakdown on a year by year basis.

The analyses included every woman over the age of 30 and every man over the age of 55 years. Below these ages the percentage analysed reduces. The results are for both track and field (column 3) , Track only with a minimum of 1 performance (column 4). The remaining columns list the number of both track and field athletes with higher number of competitions.

Men

Age	Born	Athletes	Track	2+Meets	5+ Meets	10+ Meets
88	1926	1	1	1	0	0
86	1928	1	1	1	0	0
85	1929	1	1	1	0	0
84	1930	3	2	0	0	0
83	1931	2	2	1	1	0
82	1932	4	4	3	1	1
81	1933	4	4	4	3	0
80	1934	11	9	7	3	0
79	1935	6	6	6	1	0
78	1936	8	8	7	3	0
77	1937	7	6	5	0	0
76	1938	8	7	5	2	0
75	1939	19	15	15	9	4
74	1940	14	9	6	3	0
73	1941	13	10	8	4	2
72	1942	33	28	23	10	3
71	1943	21	15	13	8	3
70	1944	33	27	21	13	7
69	1945	16	14	14	5	1
68	1946	21	17	14	9	2
67	1947	57	35	29	15	2
66	1948	38	26	23	14	4
65	1949	50	36	30	17	8
64	1950	40	28	24	15	2
63	1951	38	24	23	18	6
62	1952	60	45	35	22	6
61	1953	73	47	42	29	13
60	1954	49	31	26	8	4
59	1955	35	21	18	11	3
58	1956	62	41	35	20	7
57	1957	87	57	47	24	10
56	1958	88	59	50	26	9
55	1959	100	66	55	31	7
54	1960	124	67	52	40	18
53	1961	152	95	83	45	12
52	1962	124	91	70	42	15

51	1963	137	86	71	42	15
50	1964	151	85	70	48	9
49	1965	142	76	64	42	18
48	1966	144	90	78	68	12
47	1967	143	80	74	54	15
46	1968	144	84	75	48	9
45	1969	135	78	63	51	18
44	1970	154	79	70	39	9
43	1971	161	57	49	28	8
42	1972	144	63	51	30	6
41	1973	133	67	58	42	18
40	1974	172	92	84	52	28
39	1975	148	73	67	36	18
38	1976	121	58	49	39	15
37	1977	134	71	56	36	12
36	1978	148	88	64	57	30
35	1979	134	77	65	42	21
34	1980	148	76	67	36	12
33	1981	160	100	96	68	12
32	1982	141	96	87	45	18
31	1983	164	96	84	52	24
30	1984	162	110	82	52	20
29	1985	208	138	128	70	25
28	1986	219	159	124	115	35
27	1987	252	182	162	120	55
26	1988	255	200	170	115	65
25	1989	264	209	174	115	65
24	1990	313	283	253	198	120
23	1991	419	349	314	252	119
22	1992	457	405	345	248	156
21	1993	528	458	368	230	105
20	1994	563	493	413	285	95
19	1995	753	711	564	399	154
18	1996	1077	981	805	576	304
17	1997	1516	1396	1066	670	350
16	1998	2314	2194	1704	1080	440

Women

Age	Born	Athletes	Track	2+Meets	5+ Meets	10+ Meets
81	1933	1	1	1	0	0
79	1935	1	1	1	0	0
78	1936	2	1	1	1	0
77	1937	2	2	2	1	1
76	1938	3	3	2	0	0
75	1939	4	4	4	1	0
74	1940	3	1	1	1	0

73	1941	6	5	4	3	1
72	1942	7	5	5	2	1
71	1943	5	4	4	1	0
70	1944	13	8	7	1	1
69	1945	7	5	5	3	2
68	1946	11	9	7	6	2
67	1947	13	7	6	3	2
66	1948	13	8	5	4	1
65	1949	19	14	14	10	4
64	1950	21	19	17	11	7
63	1951	14	7	7	2	1
62	1952	21	12	10	7	4
61	1953	30	18	16	8	6
60	1954	23	18	17	14	5
59	1955	19	11	9	8	3
58	1956	17	9	7	4	1
57	1957	34	27	25	16	5
56	1958	38	24	21	12	6
55	1959	48	29	25	15	5
54	1960	53	39	33	16	4
53	1961	36	26	23	18	7
52	1962	55	39	33	18	5
51	1963	59	40	38	26	6
50	1964	65	47	38	25	9
49	1965	63	42	40	23	5
48	1966	63	41	38	25	7
47	1967	61	35	29	13	8
46	1968	63	39	28	17	3
45	1969	67	49	44	24	7
44	1970	64	37	28	17	9
43	1971	84	48	40	26	6
42	1972	68	40	35	23	11
41	1973	66	40	34	23	6
40	1974	62	44	40	27	9
39	1975	73	38	30	14	5
38	1976	71	40	35	23	12
37	1977	64	34	27	21	7
36	1978	54	29	28	19	6
35	1979	77	52	39	26	9
34	1980	65	38	33	19	8
33	1981	65	37	29	20	8
32	1982	65	46	43	28	10
31	1983	72	45	38	26	13
30	1984	81	59	51	39	19
29	1985	97	67	51	38	14
28	1986	102	70	58	34	20

27	1987	105	<i>85</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>18</i>
26	1988	128	<i>90</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>24</i>
25	1989	133	<i>100</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>15</i>
24	1990	171	<i>150</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>45</i>
23	1991	205	<i>185</i>	<i>165</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>56</i>
22	1992	216	<i>208</i>	<i>184</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>44</i>
21	1993	285	<i>261</i>	<i>217</i>	<i>136</i>	<i>56</i>
20	1994	333	<i>301</i>	<i>237</i>	<i>156</i>	<i>56</i>
19	1995	487	<i>432</i>	<i>352</i>	<i>265</i>	<i>145</i>
18	1996	697	<i>661</i>	<i>571</i>	<i>384</i>	<i>192</i>
17	1997	1104	<i>984</i>	<i>792</i>	<i>576</i>	<i>342</i>
16	1998	1945	<i>1849</i>	<i>1545</i>	<i>1048</i>	<i>624</i>

Figures in *italics* are calculated from the sample numbers as stated above. To repeat, for all women aged 30 and over and for men aged 55 and over the analysis is for the all athletes.

These numbers are the most accurate breakdown of track and field athletics in England ever.

Comments on the findings. The fall off in the number of participating athletes with age confirms earlier data published by ABAC. It is legitimate therefore to use the above distribution data to quantify age related fall off rates.

For example there are 1945 under 16 women reducing to 205 at the age of 23. That is a **fall off of 89%**. For men of the same age span the **fall off rate is 82%**. We note that the current 4 year funding plans relate to targets for increasing retention in the 14 to 24 year age group and ABAC will continue to monitor these numbers as we move through 2015.

The latest Active People survey claims that in the last year the number of track and field athletes has risen from 92,000 to 108,000. This number is based on athletes who participate for at least 30 minutes every week. However this report's comprehensive and highly accurate survey shows that only 21,760 athletes above the age of 16 competed in England last year at all.

The Sport England Active People Survey is for people who participate (compete or train) in track and field athletics for 30 minutes every week.

***The number of 108,000 is 5 times the number of athletes who compete at all.
10 times the number who compete in 5 meetings a year.
More than 20 times the number who compete in 10 meetings a year***

Conflicting statements. England Athletics boost participation perceptions by listing the number of registered athletes. Chris Jones EA's CEO has stated that in 2014/2015 the number of registered athletes stands at just under 135,000, more than 2000 up on the 2012 figure. However this figure includes a large number of young athletes under the age of 16 years as well as a very large number of road runners who do not compete on the track.

In their 2013/2014 Annual Accounts England Athletics report a small decline in the number of track and field participants. But Sport England claims that in the same period 16,000 more people participated in track and field alone. (from 92,000 to 108,000). Not consistent.

The England Athletics Affiliation numbers give no indication of the true numbers of track and field athletes over the age of 16 years.

Concluding remarks. The Sport England figures for the number of track and field athletes overstate the true situation by a factor of 5. England Athletics rely on youngsters and road runners to boost their membership numbers. They give no indication of registered track and field athlete numbers. As noted above the EA 2014 Annual Accounts state that the number of track and field athletes have shown a slight decline over the last year. This implies that they have the figures and for the sake of clarity should release them annually.

After all, much of the funding for our sport relies on the official statistics. If these are wrong then the funding is being misapplied. More seriously this degree of massive misinformation prevents the formulation of proper strategies going forward.

It is the duty of the NGB Directors and their fund providers to operate in an open and accurate way. At present they are not.

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