

2015 Athletic Facts

Fact File 37

Younger athletes pay a price and help fund raising by clubs.

Background. Traditionally athletics clubs raise funds in a variety of ways. Until recently many have organized road races but recently several of these have been curtailed due to the increase in the number of free entry ParkRun events.

Another source of revenue is the organization of open track and field meetings. Here again clubs are adapting to demographic changes with some startling results.

The increase in young athlete numbers. At a recent “successful” open meeting there were 300 competitors entering a total of 627 events, From the published list of entry fees we calculate that the organizing club raised £1881. Nothing startling there, but when we looked at the age distribution for the meeting we found that 82% of competitors were under the age of 14 years. The numbers in each age group is listed below with the resulting income shown by age group.

	No. Athletes	Event Entries	Revenue
U9F	15	32	£ 96
U9M	16	47	£141
U11F	40	104	£312
U11M	21	58	£174
U13F	51	112	£336
U13M	24	46	£138
U15F	43	81	£243
U15M	21	38	£114
U17F	14	21	£ 63
U17M	14	25	£ 75
U20F	2	2	£ 6
U20M	5	6	£ 18
Sen F	6	8	£ 24
Sen M	28	47	£141
	300	627	£1,881

This breakdown shows that **56% of the revenue** from the meeting came from competitors **aged 12 or less.**

86.3% of all competitors were under the age of 17 years. Of these 63% were female.

Comments. The large number of young competitors made this open meeting financially viable. Clubs should note this trend and provide appropriate competition for the younger age groups if they wish to make money.

By contrast, the small number of senior and U20 athletes present confirms the difficulty in retaining athletes over the age of 17 years. So while there is a financial advantage in attracting large number of youngsters the long term future appears no brighter for athletics unless more of the younger athletes can be retained in the years ahead.

The demography at this open meeting highlights the paucity of older competitors, as well as the fact that the financial viability of track meeting (and organizing clubs) is based on very young members many of whom will not stay in the sport.