

## 2015 Athletic Facts

### Fact File 38

#### Track and Field Athlete drop-out rates 2014 to 2015.

**Background.** In previous Fact Files which dealt with retention and drop-out rates we looked at the annual variations for net total numbers in each age group. Up till now we have not broken out figures for new entries into an age group nor have we quantified the number of retirees.

In this study we look at the progress of individual athletes to determine how many compete in consecutive years. We asked Rob Whittingham to look at individual athletes who competed in 2014 and to determine how many managed to compete again in the 2015 season. In his analysis he looked at all senior and veteran athletes and selected those born in specific years and to see if numbers were affected by age groupings. Here is what he found.

**Ages 55 and above in 2014.** In 2014 there were 1366 athletes in the age group who recorded at least one performance. Of these 952 recorded a performance in 2015, That is a **drop-out rate of 30.0%** from year to year.

**Age 50 in 2014.** 215, 50 year olds competed in 2014. In 2015 only 138 of these athletes competed. **That is a drop-out rate of 36.0%.**

**Age 40 in 2014.** 233, 40 year olds recorded a performance in 2014. In 2015 only 148 performed in 2015 making the **drop-out rate of 36.5%**

**Age 30 in 2014.** 242, 30 year olds competed in 2014. In 2015 only 145 of these turned out making the **drop-out rate 40.0%**

**Age 20 in 2014.** The analysis for this age was based on 252 individuals randomly selected out of a total population of 896. Only 161 of the 252 studied competed in 2015 making the **drop-out rate 36.0%**

**Comments.** For 30 year olds and above the total number of competing athletes were analysed for 2014 and 2015 and the drop-out rates year on year determined. **The average drop-out rate for 30, 40, 50, and over 50 found to be 35.6% per annum** which is effectively the same for the 20 year olds sampled.

Clearly with this high annual fall there would be no athletes in the older age groups unless other factors are coming in to play. The two main explanations for the numbers of older athletes staying reasonably constant are that new and older athletes are taking up the sport and that after several years out some athletes do in fact return to competition.

What this analysis does highlight is that senior numbers are not being sustained by the progression of younger athletes from the lower age groups but rather a replenishment of older competitors from the same age groups. Many of these older entrants will not be of the same standard as those coming through the ranks.

The key point from all this is that retention rates for young athletes are not as high as previously thought. This is a major cause of concern. Future analysis of younger age group retention will be made by tracing the retention of all athletes on an individual name basis.

*(Note, The 2015 figures are up to October. There may be a few athletes who start their year in October or later, but historically these have been only a very small number)*

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