

2016 British Athletics Facts

ABAC Fact File 52.

The decline in senior athlete numbers in County Championships

Background. A number of athletic blogs have recently reported a reduction in senior athletes participating in County Championships. Overall entries have held up due to increasing numbers of very young athletes. Almost all County Championships now cater for U13's and one County has introduced an U11 Championships. Demography is shifting to the younger and veteran age groups. We wondered what the facts were on this and tasked Rob Whittingham to find out.

Starting Point.

In this study we look at the number of senior athletes competing in County Championships in 2011 and 2016. We have used the levels of performance required to make the rankings on topsinathletics.info. These cut off performances closely match those on Power10 website.

The cut off standards used were:-

	Men	Women
100	11.3	12.85
200	23.05	26.45
400	52.0	62.0
800	2:00.0	2:21.5
1500	4:08.0	4:52.5
5k/3k	16:00.0	10:50.0
3kSt	11:00.0	13:00.0
110H/100H	17.0	17.0
400H	62.0	71.0
HJ	1.75	1.51
PV	3.25	2.50
LJ	5.85	4.92
TJ	11.95	9.90
SP	9.50	8.40
DT	28.00	26.50
HT	28.00	28.00
JT	37.00	26.00

Numbers of Seniors meeting these standards in Championships

The number of senior athletes making these levels are shown below for County Championships in 2011 and 2016. It will be noted that of the 37 counties analysed, 29 Counties showed a reduction in Senior numbers, 7 recorded gains and 1 County remained the same..

	2011	2016	
Avon	31	13	Loss 58.06%
Beds	18	17	Loss 5.56%
Berks	27	18	Loss 33.33%
Bucks	19	18	Loss 5.26%
Cambs	50	23	Loss 54.00%
Ches	18	7	Loss 61.11%

Cornwall	13	7	Loss 46.15%
Cumbria	3	7	Gain 133.33%
Derbs	15	11	Loss 26.67%
Devon	29	16	Loss 44.83%
Dorset	16	13	Loss 18.75%
Essex	79	78	Loss 1.27%
Glos	13	13	Level
GMan	11	22	Gain 100.00%
Hamps	86	57	Loss 33.72%
Herts	21	24	Gain 14.29%
Humber	18	16	Loss 11.11%
Kent	73	50	Loss 31.51%
Lancs	33	29	Loss 12.12%
Leics	24	15	Loss 37.50%
Lincs	17	9	Loss 47.06%
Mersey	20	26	Gain 30.00%
Mx	85	50	Loss 41.18%
NECo	54	58	Gain 7.41%
Norfolk	5	16	Gain 220.00%
Northants	18	11	Loss 38.89%
Notts	23	20	Loss 13.04%
Oxford	28	13	Loss 53.57%
Shrop	9	5	Loss 44.44%
Somerset	10	9	Loss 10.00%
Staffs	15	7	Loss 53.33%
Suffolk	7	13	Gain 85.71%
Surrey	83	81	Loss 2.41%
Sussex	46	32	Loss 30.43%
Warks	41	26	Loss 36.59%
Worcs	16	10	Loss 37.50%
Yorks	85	78	Loss 8.24%
Totals	1159	918	Loss 20.79%

Findings The number of senior athletes achieving the defined ranking standards in County Championships has fallen by 241 (20.79%) during the last 5 years.

The largest drop offs occurred in Oxford (13 down from 28, -53.57%), Staffs (7 down from 15, - 53.33%) and Lincolnshire (9 down from 17 , - 47.06%).

The largest improvements were in Norfolk (16 up from 5, + 220%), Cumbria (7 up from 3, +133%) and Greater Manchester (22 up from 11, +100%)

Conclusions. If this trend continues Senior County Championships will disappear except for the strongest and largest ones.

End