

THE STATE OF MASTERS ROWING

Annual Survey Results

BY FASTER MASTERS ROWING

2023



Faster Masters Rowing has run its second annual “State of Masters Rowing Survey”. It's designed to track changes in masters participation and attitudes in rowing and to inform policy makers as they make future plans by supplying accurate information about the direction of change in masters rowing.

We very much hope that masters rowing becomes a beacon for progress in rowing - enabling access for more adults to live healthy lifestyles, build community and also support the funding and growth of other groups within a rowing club.

We see potential everywhere for masters rowing - but policy and strategy has to lead change for grassroots rowing provision. Anonymised raw data from the survey is available.

THE IMPLICATIONS

The operational structure and strategy for masters rowing needs revision. Clubs and federations need to plan for significant changes in masters participation over the coming years.

Based on our survey results, we predict annual increases in over 40s starting learn to row classes of 2-5% each year. Many of these new rowers will join clubs and continue in the sport for ten years or more. The consequences of this are pressure on club size, equipment availability, coaching resource and club finances. The opportunity this presents is increased revenues, growing participation and high profile for rowing as a proactive, friendly and age-agnostic sport.

Masters rowing is rarely a smooth path of consistent progress. “Rowing with adaptations” is our motto.

And so strategists need insight into structural impediments to the growth of masters rowing. These barriers are tightly grouped into four areas: coaching, equipment, fund raising and member recruitment.

None is insurmountable with some forward planning, but all of these will disrupt a club who has not planned ahead to manage the balance of club resources. A failure to provide any one of these four rapidly affects the others and can take a couple of seasons to “work through” the consequences and actions to redeem poor decisions from the past.

When writing club strategy, club boards must ensure that the rowing environment provided for masters incorporates elements of camaraderie and programmed fitness workouts as well as regatta competition.

Equal weight is given to these three by our survey respondents. Therefore clubs should be providing opportunities to socialise alongside rowing participation and need to create structures to ensure members get to know each other.

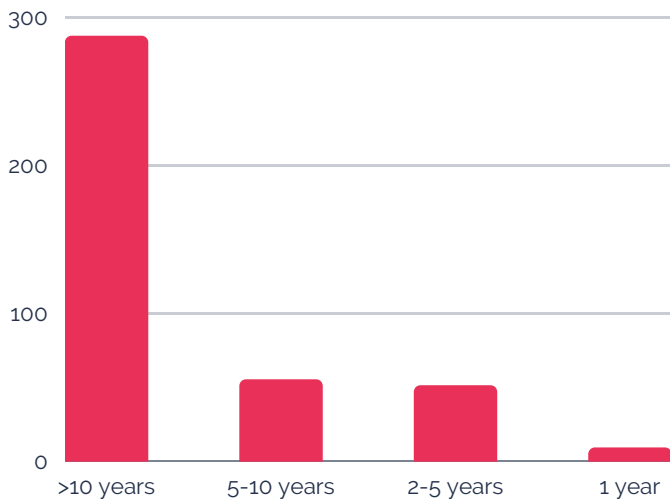
Data continues to be important for racing and there's a knowledge gap in masters cohorts between those who use and those who don't use training and racing data to improve their performance. The number of athletes using data is rising - 5% more collect and analyse rowing data compared to last year.

1. RESPONDENTS' BACKGROUND

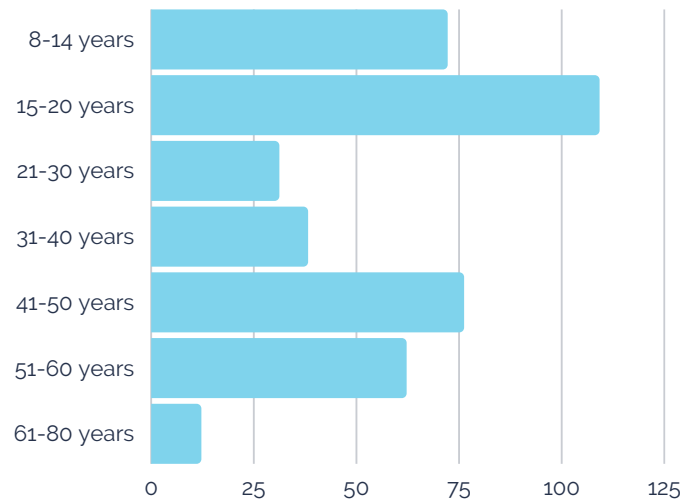
Proof that rowing is a sport for life is demonstrated by the profile of the survey respondents. Over 70% have rowed for ten years or more. The age at which masters started rowing is critical to understanding the masters rowing demographic.

34.5% started between the ages of 31-50 which is an 8.5% increase over the 2022 survey. And 47% started rowing when already in masters age groups. Over 65% row for a club.

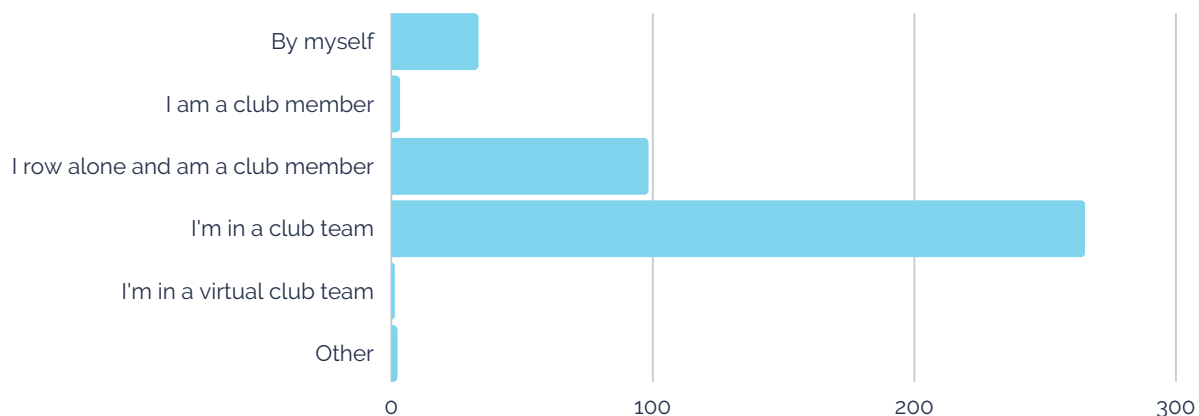
HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN ROWING?



HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU STARTED ROWING?



THE ORGANIZATION THROUGH WHICH YOU ROW

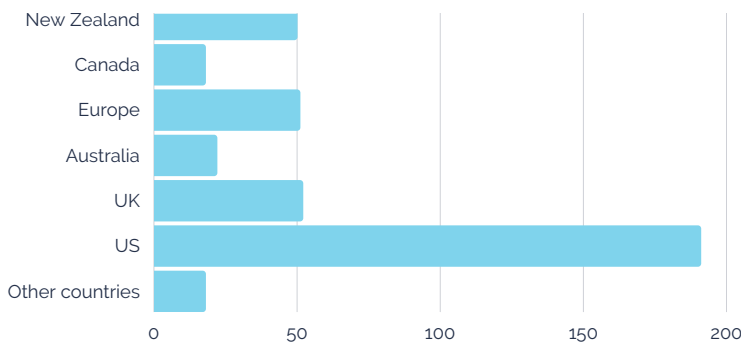


2. GEOGRAPHY AND PARTICIPATION

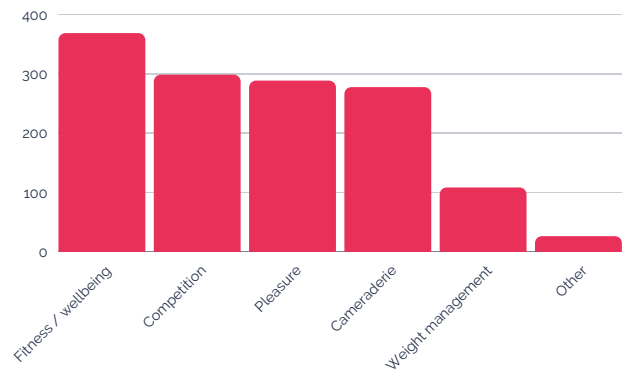
One third of respondents describe themselves as scullers, 22.5% as sweep rowers and 15% as indoor rowers. Coastal is around 5% (responses in multiple roles were recorded). In addition 11% are club administrators, 8% are coaches and 2% cox.

Overall 60% row for fitness and recreation and 32% do competitions. One third say they row on flat water for fitness and recreation while 26% erg for fitness and 3% do coastal fitness rowing. 25% of masters who race do flat water events and 7% do indoor rowing races while 3% do coastal races.

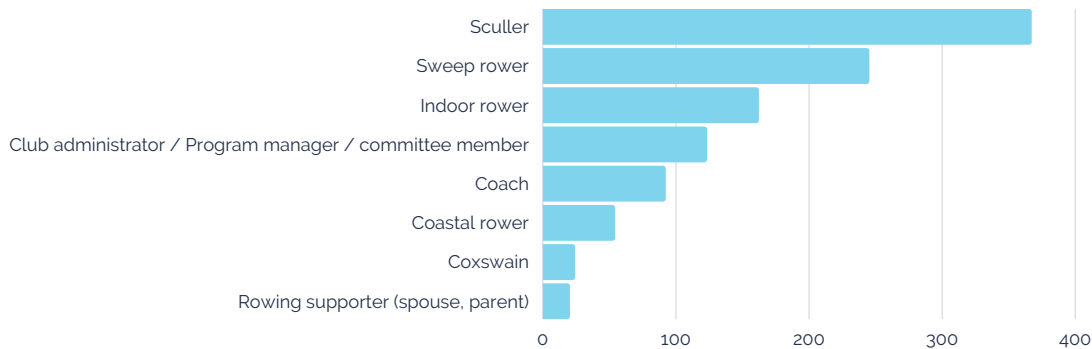
WHICH COUNTRY DO YOU LIVE IN



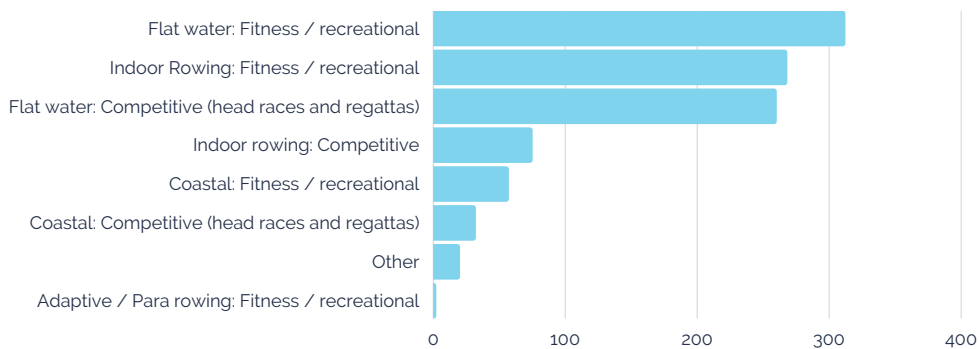
WHY DO YOU ROW



WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOU



WHAT DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN

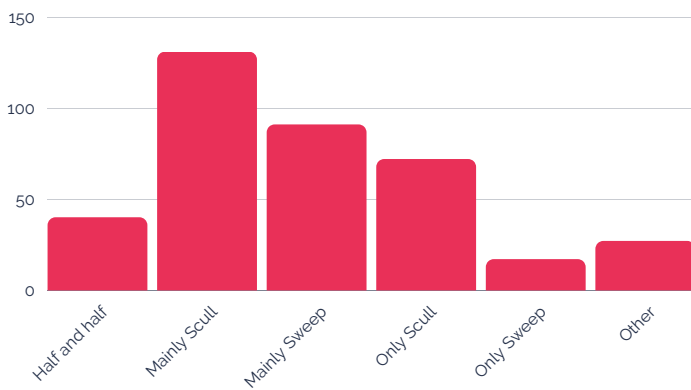


2. GEOGRAPHY AND PARTICIPATION CONTINUED

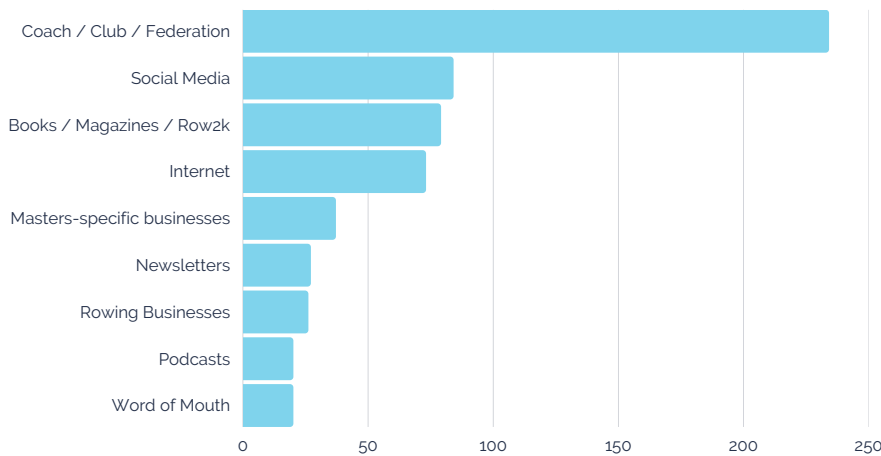
When asked about sweep and sculling preferences, 19% of respondents only scull - demonstrating the dominance of sculling in masters groups. The balance splits into 35% who mainly scull; 24% mainly sweep and 10% do both equally.

The reasons masters rowers are instructive - the top four with 20-26% each are competitions, camaraderie, pleasure and fitness. Around 8% row for weight management. Masters rowers self-educate about rowing with 39% using their coach, club or federation as a source of information, social media, books/magazines and "the internet" are informational resources for another 39% of masters while the balance cite newsletters, rowing businesses, word of mouth and "masters-specific businesses" as helpful resources.

WHAT % OF TIME DO YOU SWEEP / SCULL



WHERE DO YOU GET ROWING INFORMATION FROM



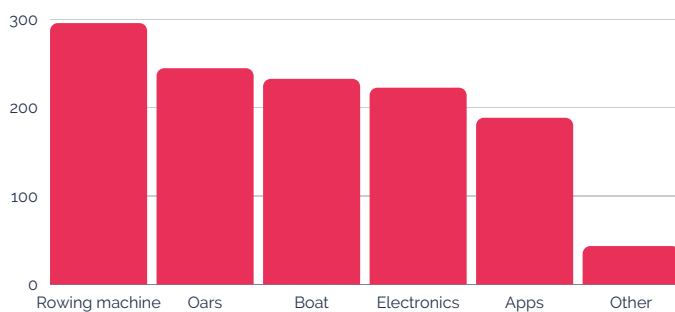
3. TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET

Half the masters rowing population report an annual expenditure on rowing between \$1,000 and \$4,000. Some spend less than \$100 and some over \$20,000 on their sport. Bear in mind that equipment purchases can skew this strongly. Club dues (20%) and regattas (17%) are the largest proportion of rowing spend while coaching, education and training programs together account for another 17%.

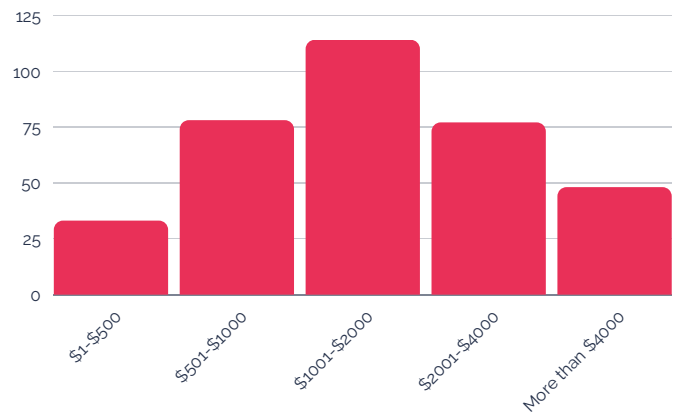
Just under 20% of masters own a boat and oars; 25% have a rowing machine and most have electronics and rowing apps as well.

Training effectiveness remains strongly correlated with the amount spent. Individual judgements about the results of their training are strongly skewed towards the positive. 36% say they've made strong progress and 34% have had mixed results this past year.

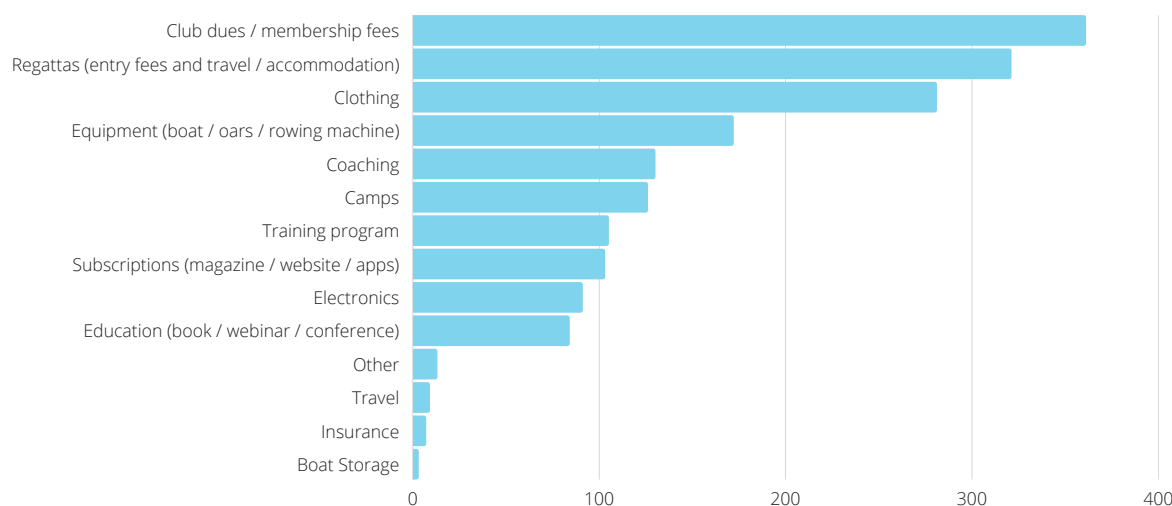
WHAT EQUIPMENT DO YOU OWN



ROWING BUDGETS. HOW MUCH DO YOU SPEND ON YOUR ROWING PER YEAR



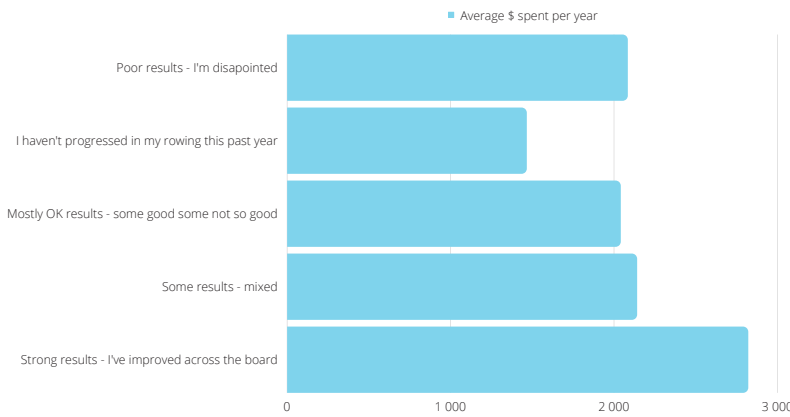
WHAT DO YOU SPEND MONEY ON



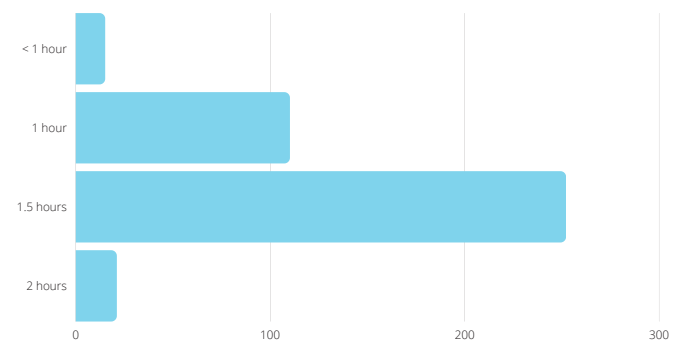
4. TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS AND OUTING LENGTH

Rowing is a sport that rewards time spent training and this graph shows that those with the strongest results also spend between 60-90 minutes per practice. Overall 70% of masters train 3-5 times per week and half do land training one to two times a week as well.

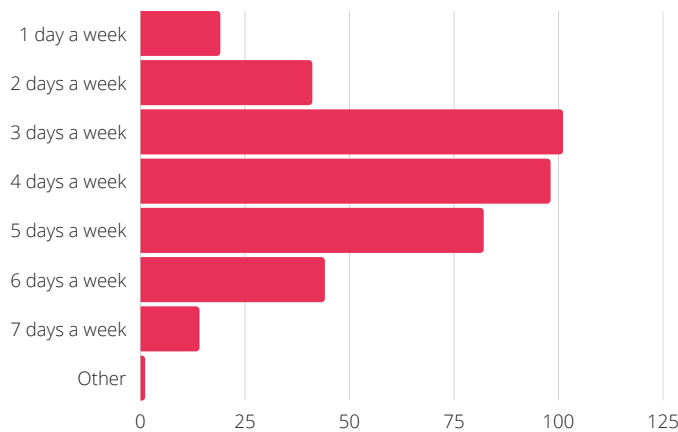
ARE YOU ACHIEVING STRONG RESULTS IN YOUR TRAINING, SOME RESULTS OR DISAPPOINTING RESULTS



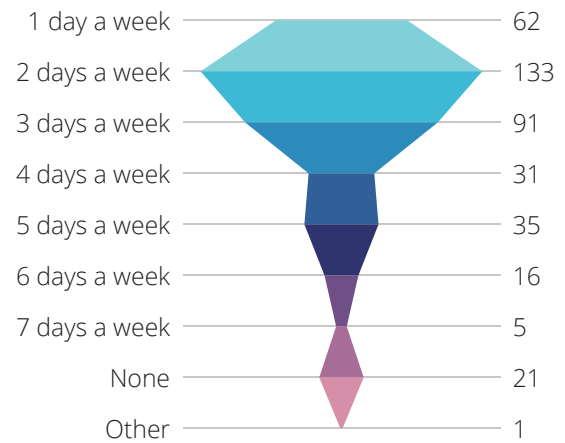
HOW LONG IS A TYPICAL OUTING/TRAINING PRACTICE



TYPICALLY HOW OFTEN DO YOU ROW OR ERG PER WEEK? EXCLUDE LAND TRAINING CROSS TRAINING



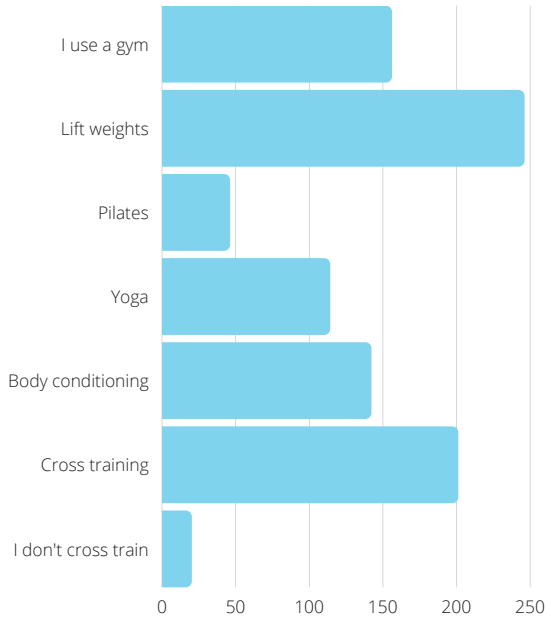
TYPICALLY HOW OFTEN DO YOU DO LAND TRAINING OR CROSS TRAINING PER WEEK



5. TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS VS TRAINING FREQUENCY

Compared with last year, more masters are training more often and this is reflected in their results. Workouts vary from endurance low rate (27%) through mid rate (26%) and race pace (20%). Around 23% of sessions are focused on skills and drills. This reflects the spread of relative inexperience and racing preferences across respondents. Land training workouts selected include weights, gym, pilates, body conditioning and cross training.

TRENDS IN LAND TRAINING. WHAT SORT OF TRAINING DO YOU DO

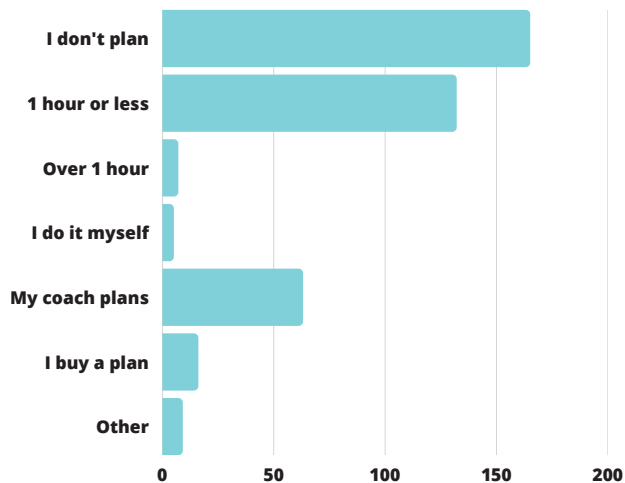


6. TRAINING PLANNING

Responses to the question “how long does it take to plan your training for the month?” are binary, 41% do not plan at all and 33% say it takes an hour or less. This likely reflects the level of expertise and interest in structured training from respondents.

Just under 20% say their coach does this for them or they buy a training program and so don't have to plan workouts themselves.

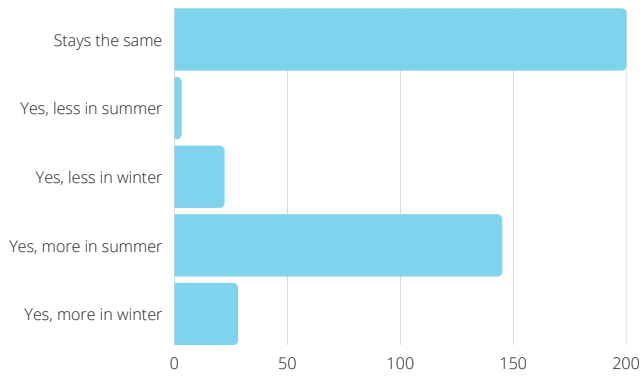
HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO PLAN YOUR TRAINING FOR THE MONTH



7. TRENDS IN TRAINING FREQUENCY

Over half of masters rowers train the same amount across winter and summer seasons and 36% do more in summer than winter.

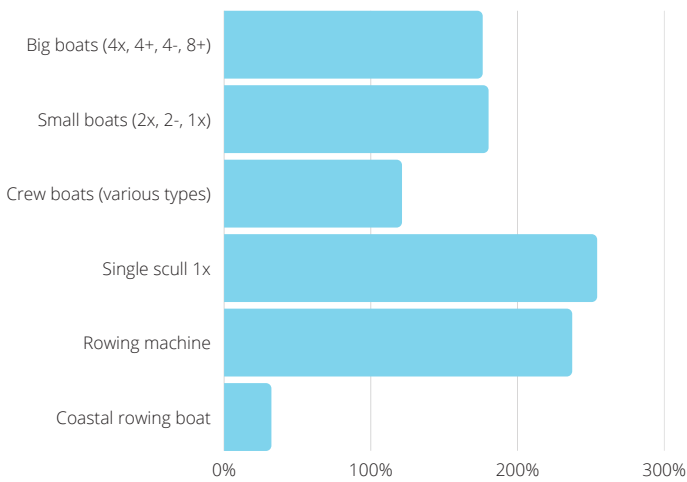
DOES YOUR TRAINING FREQUENCY CHANGE FROM WINTER TO SUMMER



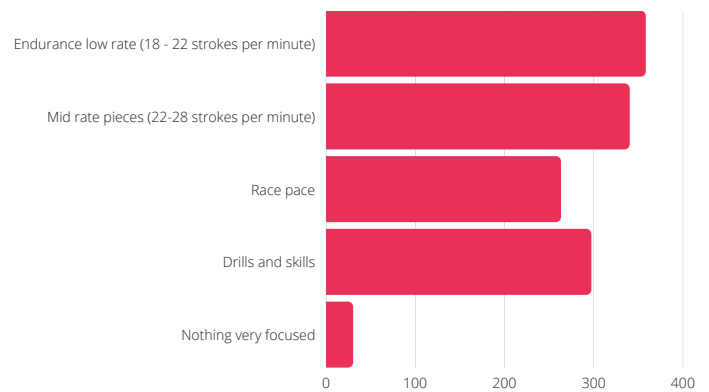
8. TRENDS IN ROWING FORMATS

Masters favour single sculling with 50% reporting they only use the single scull, 23% also row on the rowing machine and 17% row in big boats (quad, four, eight).

WHAT KINDS OF ROWING TRAINING DO YOU DO



WHAT SORT OF TRAINING DO YOU DO



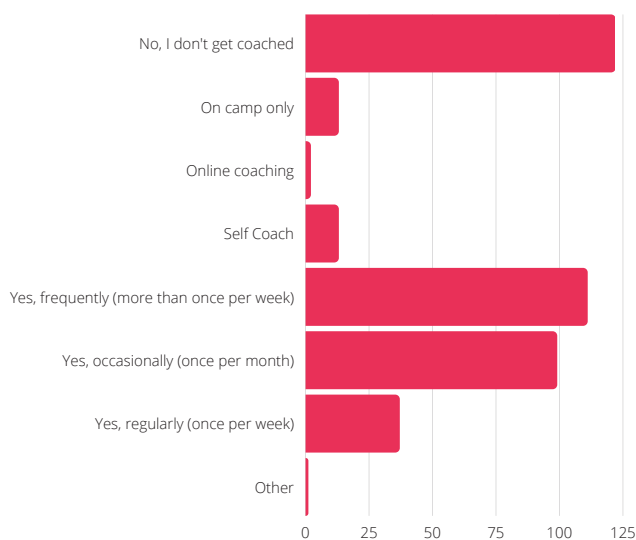
9. TRENDS IN COACHING

Over 37% of masters get coached once a week or more and a further 24% get coached once a month. As with last year's survey 30% do not get coached at all - this is down from 32% last year. The number of coaches who don't meet masters needs is high at 32% who scored 5/10 or less.

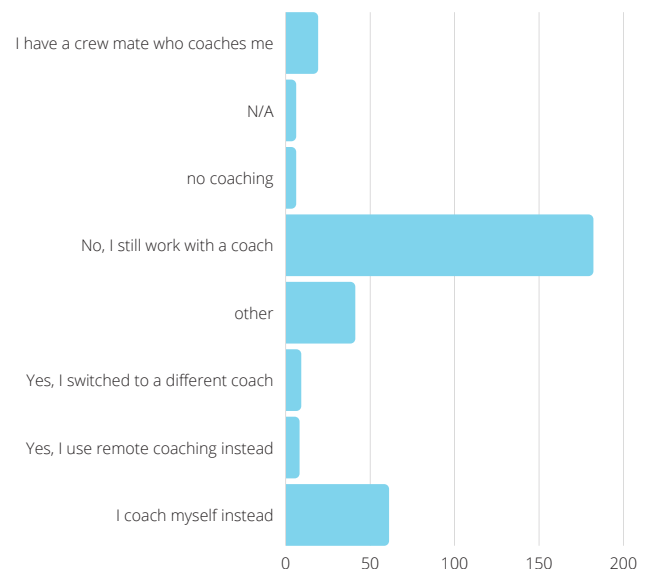
The four things which would improve masters/coach relationships are having a program, coaches with more experience coaching masters, coaching frequency and individual attention. Of the masters athletes who changed coach in the past year, 5% use a crew mate to coach them, 18% coach themselves instead and 2.5% use remote coaching.

Coaches mostly have a qualification (62%) or are experienced but without a qualification (15%) and 4% say they wish their coach had a masters coaching qualification. During the year 13% experienced an injury, 9.3% stopped rowing due to work or family situations and 7.5% caught Covid.

DO YOU WORK WITH ROWING COACHES



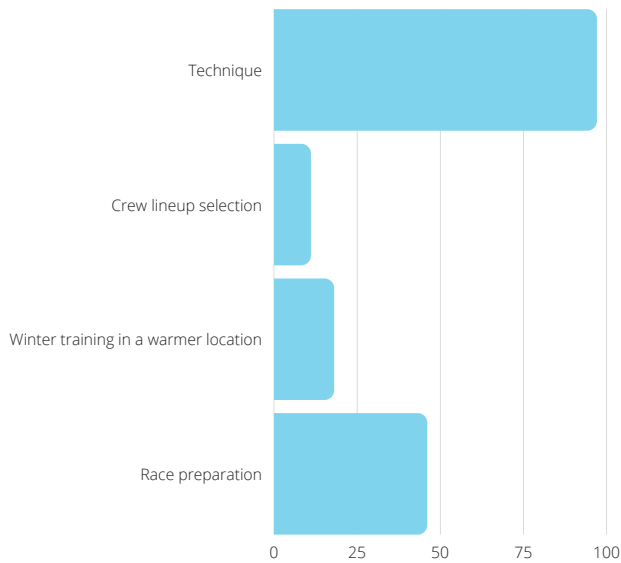
HAVE YOU STOPPED WORKING WITH A COACH IN THE PAST YEAR



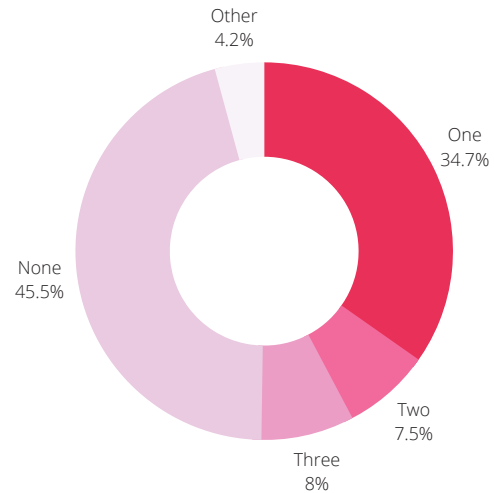
10. TRENDS IN CAMPS

Around a quarter of masters surveyed attended a camp with 20% traveling to a different venue and the balance having camps at their club. The camps focused on technique (56%), race preparation (26%) and crew lineups (6%). 34% did one camp and 8% did three camps during the year. One third intend going on camp during 2023, 31% will not go on camp and the rest said maybe they'd go on camp.

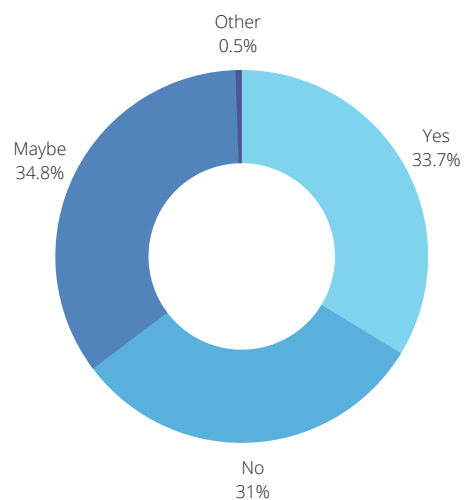
DID THE CAMP HAVE A SPECIFIC FOCUS



HOW MANY CAMPS DID YOU DO IN 2022



DO YOU INTEND GOING TO A CAMP IN 2023

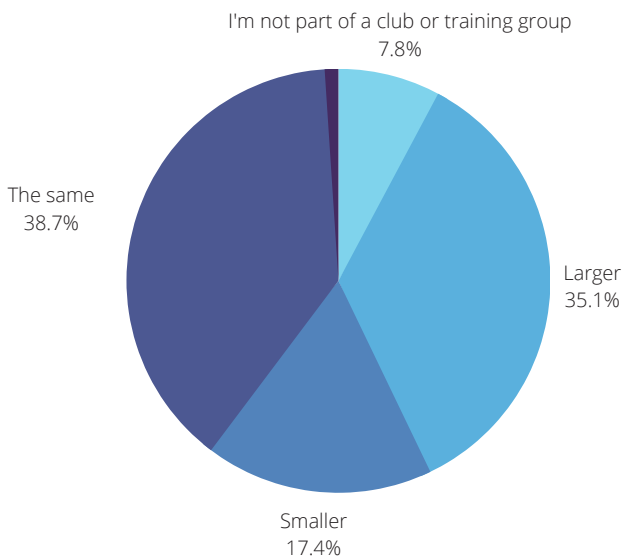


11. TRENDS IN CLUB GROUP COMPOSITION

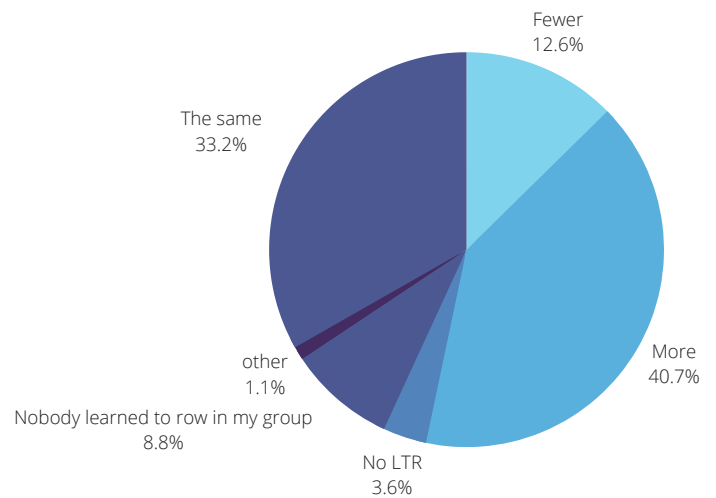
Some masters club groups are growing because 35% reported a higher head count this year; 38% say their club is the same size. This looks set to grow as 40% reported more novice learn to row participants and 33% had the same number as in prior years.

18% of clubs run a learn to row once a year, 17.5% twice and 30% run them three or more times - this is a slight increase over 2022. 28% of LTR participants join the club after the course which is consistent from last year's survey.

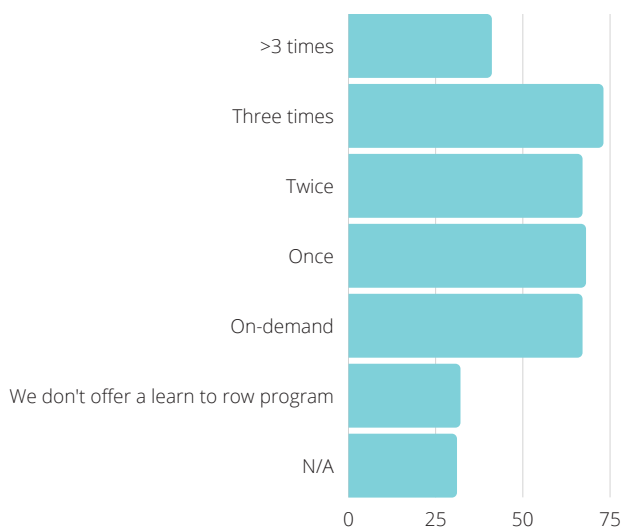
IS YOUR CLUB OR TRAINING GROUP LARGER OR SMALLER THAN A YEAR AGO



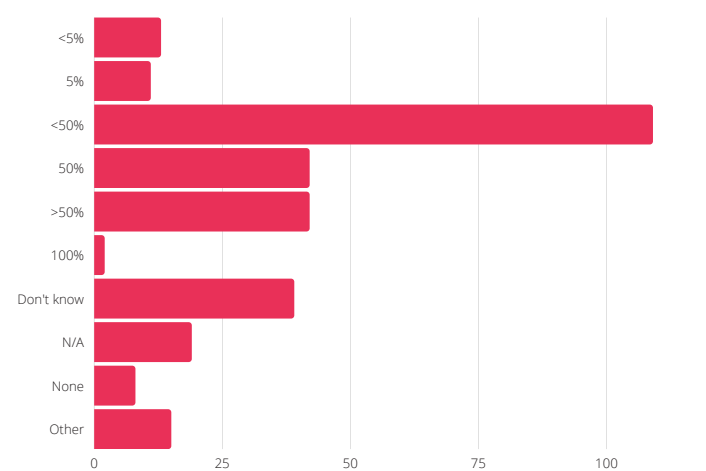
DID YOU NOTICE MORE PEOPLE LEARNING TO ROW (LTR) FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2023



HOW MANY TIMES A YEAR DOES YOUR CLUB RUN LTR



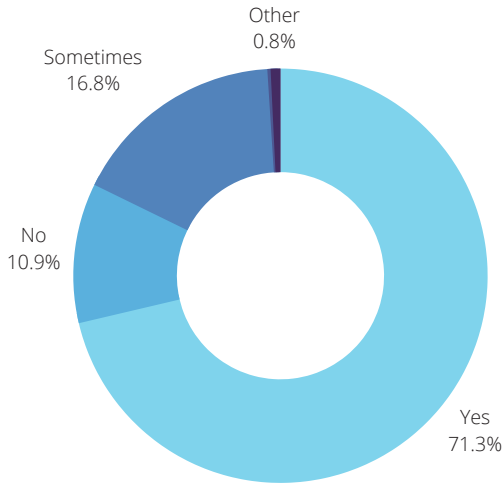
WHAT % OF LTR ATHLETES JOIN THE REGULAR TRAINING GROUP AFTER THE COURSE FINISHES



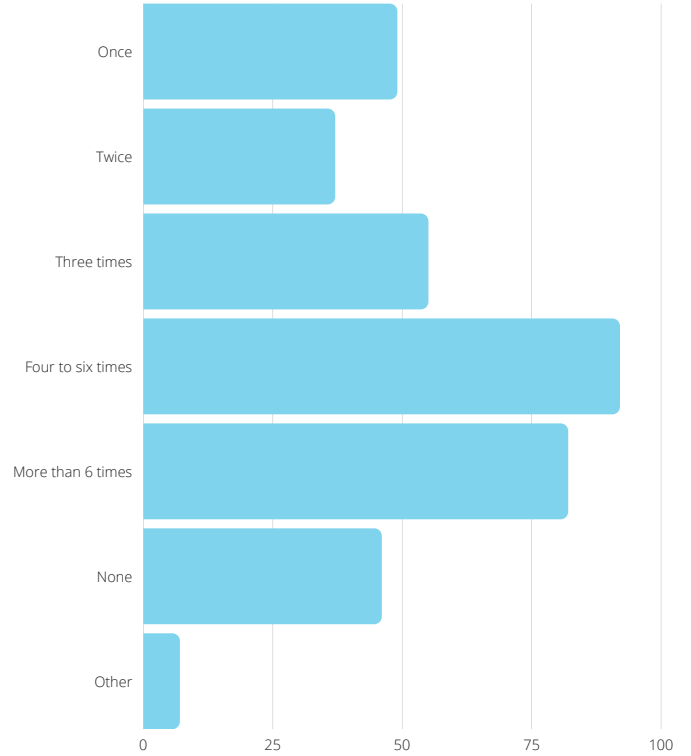
12. TRENDS IN RACING

Over 70% of masters take part in races and half race at between two to six regattas in a year. 22% race more than six times and 13% race once. While 12.5% do not race at all. 40% raced less than in 2022 and 27% did the same number of events.

DO YOU TAKE PART IN RACES



HOW MANY TIMES IN 2022 DID YOU GO TO A RACE

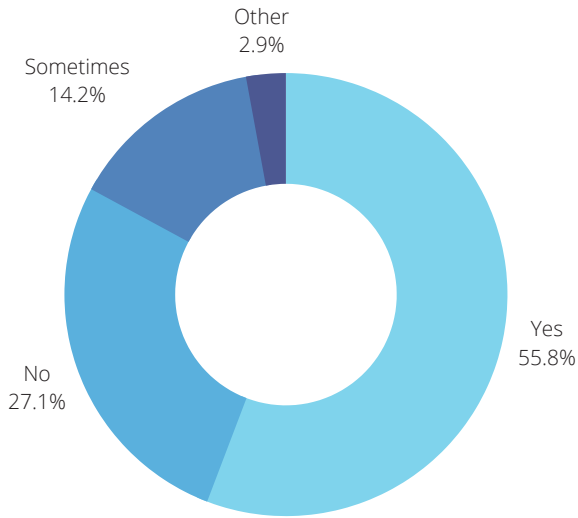


13. TRENDS IN ROWING DATA ANALYSIS

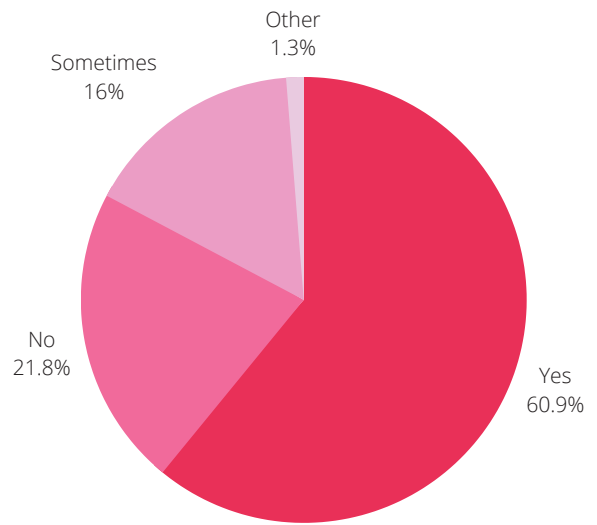
Serious racing masters need data - and yet although 70% race, only 55% collect their race data and only 61% collect training data consistently. This group shrinks further when we asked whether they analyse their rowing data. 43% say they analyse their training data with 43% doing it “sometimes” and 32% “every time”. One third analyse their rowing every session.

Compared to 2022 those collecting and using data are increasing by around 5%, which is encouraging.

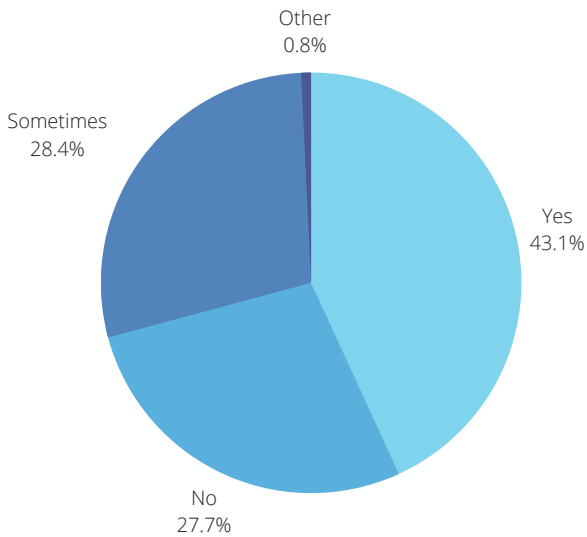
DO YOU MEASURE AND RECORD YOUR RACE RESULTS



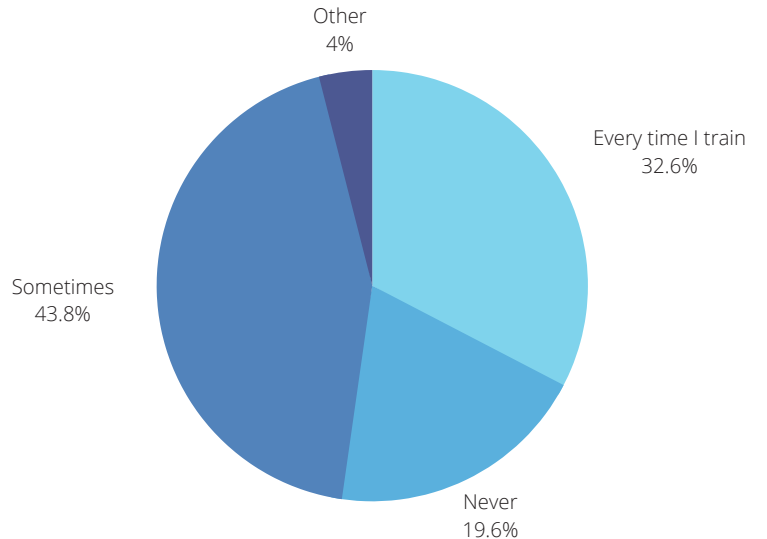
ARE YOU COLLECTING DATA ON YOUR ROWING



DO YOU ANALYSE YOUR ROWING TRAINING DATA



FREQUENCY OF ANALYSIS?



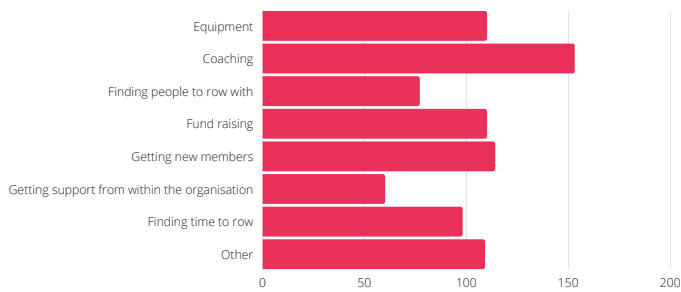
14. CHALLENGES

Masters rowing clubs face challenges which are tightly grouped into four areas: coaching, equipment, fund raising and member recruitment - each has 13-18% of responses. Finding time to row and people to row with are also significant. When asked about challenges they face personally, most people mention aging, finding crew mates and lack of time. But 16% find coaching quality and availability worthy of mention as an issue they would like to have solved.

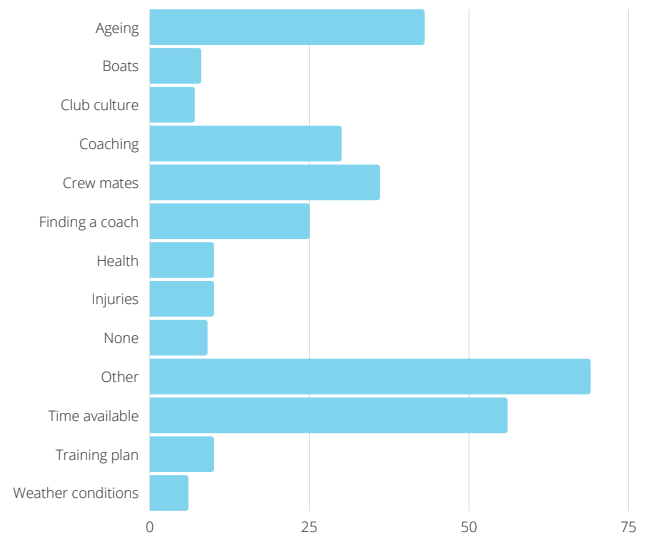
Changes to clubs caused by the pandemic are fading with 25% saying their club is unchanged and 11.5% reporting it's "back to normal". Membership headcount varied - 18% said it fell, 7% said it rose and as a result 4.3% of clubs now have financial concerns.

On a personal level, Covid is no longer impacting 31% of masters, for the rest they mention more time in the single scull, interrupted training and 2.25% say they "love rowing more now" after the Covid interruptions.

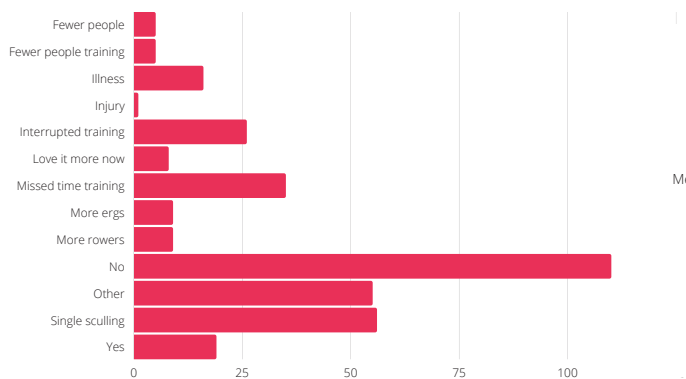
WHAT ARE THE BIG CHALLENGES FOR YOUR CLUB / GROUP



WHAT ARE THE BIG CHALLENGES FOR YOUR OWN ROWING



HOW HAS COVID AFFECTED YOUR ROWING?



HOW HAS COVID AFFECTED YOUR ORGANISATION, GROUP OR CLUB

