

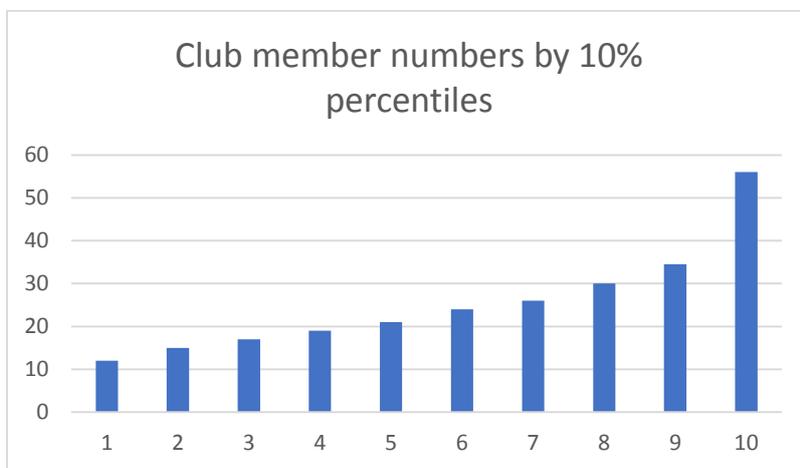
Treasurer's Survey 2020-21

The response rate to the survey was mixed across the Federation with 83.04% of UK and ROI clubs responding, 18.1% of Asia clubs and 28.57% of Caribbean clubs. This report has therefore focussed on the UK and ROI as there was insufficient data from elsewhere. Please note that all comments below relate to the clubs that responded – not all clubs.

Number of members

The average number of members in the UK & ROI clubs is 22.75 with 60% of clubs having this or fewer members. 70% of clubs have 26 or fewer members.

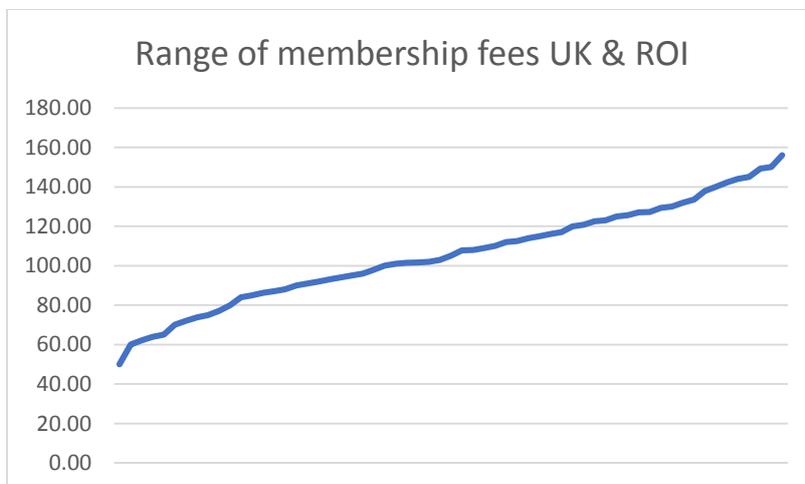
There is a significant range of number of members with the top 10% of clubs having between 36 and 56 members whilst the bottom 10% have 12 or fewer.



...but, does this have an effect on membership fees?

Fees

The lowest membership fee charged in UK & ROI is £50.00 and the highest £156.00.



The average membership fees for all responding clubs in UK and ROI is £98.54 though when extras are added in the average rises to £100.88.

However, the average fee in the bottom 10% is £85.07/£90.43 and the average in the top 10% is £99.29/£99.29.

The fees for the top 10% are 16.7% higher than the bottom 10% and yet membership in those bigger clubs are 400% higher on average.

It would seem therefore that fees do not play a part in determining membership numbers.

Extras

A significant number of clubs with low membership fees then ask members to pay an additional amount every time they come to a meeting - £1 or £2 – to cover the cost of the room. Some clubs have kept their fees low but require that their members should become social members of the local leisure centre or golf club so that the room they meet in is free.

For these clubs, the average membership fee is £95.17 but, when the extras are included, this average rises to £112.57 – significantly higher than the overall average.

In addition, average membership numbers in these clubs is 19 – 16.5% less than the overall average.

Of course, I imagine the argument is that if you don't come to meetings then you don't have to pay but it can be shown that, as a result, those attending meetings are subsidising the others. An example below

Club with 18 members having 20 meetings per year

£2 per meeting charge to cover room cost	£
Membership fee	70.00
Room cost if attending all meetings	40.00
Total cost to attending member	<u>110.00</u>
Assume the room cost is £25 per meeting	
Total cost is	500.00
Per member this would be	<u>27.78</u>

Therefore, if all members paid towards the room in their fee the cost would be

Membership fee	70.00
Room cost per member	27.78
Total cost to every member	<u>97.78</u>

In this scenario, spreading the cost over all members would reduce the fee for the members who attend by £13.

Since these clubs are smaller than average, is the requirement to dip one's hand in one's pocket every time a member attends a meeting somehow unpalatable? Including all club's costs in its budget and therefore its membership fee gives a fairer spread of the cost to each member and is shown in larger clubs not to be the deterrent to membership that others may fear.

In addition, is asking a member to be a social member of another organisation inconsistent with what we say we are? Are the members of those clubs paying, in aggregate, considerably more than room hire would be elsewhere?

One meeting a month or two?

57.22% of clubs have two meetings a month, 42.78% have one.

What has been surprising, and we have not been able to determine the reason, is that average membership fees in a one-meeting club are £98.76 whereas the average for two-meeting clubs is marginally less at £98.37.

However, when we look at membership numbers for those clubs a possible reason emerges – one-meeting clubs have fewer members on average at 20.63; two meeting membership on average is 24.35. Therefore, whilst the two-meeting clubs may have higher costs in room hire etc they have more members over which to spread those costs.

Supper meeting or not?

59.36% of clubs now do not have a supper meeting though many club members might meet informally before a meeting for something to eat.

It seems that the cost of supper, added to a membership fee, is seen as being too high and therefore many clubs have done away with the tradition.

How do we pay our annual fees and does it have an impact?

The vast majority of members still pay an annual membership fee though the number of clubs offering payment in smaller increments is increasing.

	Annual	Bi-annual	Quarterly	Monthly
Number of clubs	119	20	3	44
Average members	21.89	23.18	23.06	23.39
Average fee	£102.03	£106.10	£112.93	£113.35

Whilst there isn't a significant difference between number of members in each category, it is notable that those paying annually have an average membership which is lower than the overall average despite fees between almost 10% lower than those of the monthly payers.

Regional levies and attendance costs

Regional levies range from £6.50 to £17.50, including UKPAC contribution.

Information on the cost to a member to attend Region meetings was provided by all 18 Federation Councillors from the UK and ROI. The costs vary significantly ranging from nil to £28 per meeting with the average cost being £12.61, excluding travel costs.

Regions vary in how they deal with travel costs, some not paying any, some paying for Club Representatives to Region, others paying travel costs of Region Officers for Region and Executive meetings. One region only pays travel costs for Region Executive meetings and one pays travel mileage for one vehicle per Club and for Club Representatives.

Mostly the costs paid by the member are for her tea/coffee and lunch. However, there is variance in what the Region levy is used for and in some Regions members costs to attend also include IT/room hire and speaker costs, meaning those attending pay the full costs of the day. Some Regions subsidise room hire and lunches so that members pay a fixed cost per meeting.

Accommodation costs do not seem to be relevant apart from Northern England and Scotland North.

In the majority of cases there is a correlation between the levy charged and the cost of attendance in that regions with low levies tend to have higher attendance costs and vice versa. We did not investigate how many people attend these regional meetings and whether the cost of attendance has an impact but, if it follows the pattern seen in club fees, members seem to prefer to pay a higher initial fee and lower or no additional costs rather than putting the greater expense onto attendees.

It is interesting to note that, anecdotally, online regional meetings held during the pandemic have seen a significant increase in attendance. It would imply that distance, time and cost are a factor in attracting members to Region.

Other stuff

Paying honoraria

It seems that some clubs are still paying honoraria to their Presidents and, sometimes, Secretaries. Honoraria were originally supposed to be an easy way of recompensing Presidents for attending events, buying raffle tickets, the odd glass of wine etc. These amounts were never meant to be a gift.

Clubs and regions should be aware that these honoraria are taxable on the people who receive them; in other words, the Presidents receiving them should be declaring them and paying tax. It is for that reason that many clubs, some time ago, moved to paying expenses or considered reducing the President's membership fee for her term of office.

In the world of smaller clubs, I would encourage Treasurers to think about how much your honoraria are per head of membership of your club – is this an amount you can no longer afford? Is the President still attending numerous events and therefore needs to be reimbursed? Don't just follow what happened last year.

Using accounts software

Some clubs have purchased small accounts software to prepare their accounts. This obviously costs money and, of course, can cause issues when the Treasury is handed over to a successor. The Finance committee are working on a template Excel version to be publicised soon which will, hopefully, help with this.

Annual insurance

It was through this survey that it came to light that many clubs are paying large amounts to insure their regalia. As you will have seen in the mailing recently the SIGBI insurance has been changed to include this and therefore I'm hoping clubs will see a reduction in their fees.

Following on from last year

It has also come to light that a number of clubs don't prepare an annual budget relying more on charging the same or slightly more than last year. This has the result of locking in expenditure no longer required so I would urge all clubs to prepare a budget. Again, the committee is working on a template budget for all clubs to use.

Cost or value?

It has become very evident that there is a marked difference in clubs between those that see the cost of membership and those that see the value.

Those clubs looking at cost have talked about reducing fees because of the pandemic, trying to keep costs down etc. These clubs tend to have smaller membership numbers.

Larger clubs, on the whole, look at things differently; they are not reducing fees - they talk about donating surpluses to their favourite charities or looking to see what else they could do with the money they have raised, including paying for adverts to spread the word about SI which, in turn, brings in new members.

Conclusion

There is significant evidence that membership fees do not have an impact on membership numbers – higher fees do not put people off particularly if they are paid in smaller tranches.

Many clubs have grown significantly during the pandemic though it will only be once the annual returns are received this year that we will know the full impact of the last 12 months. It will be interesting to see which of our clubs have grown and which have not and whether fees have been an issue at that point.

I would be very interested to hear your comments and to find out if there is anything else concerning clubs and regions

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