



ATHLETES' COMMISSION

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**2006**

**ATHLETES' REPORT:**

**World Rowing  
Championships  
ETON**

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## 1. Introduction

Welcome to the Athletes' Report from the 2006 ETON World Rowing Championship .

This is the second time we ask athletes to give their opinion on different issues they are concerned with.

Key outcomes from 2005...

- The input given to regatta organising committee around athlete facility issues and subsequent rise in standards in 2006.
- The importance of fairness and the resulting work of AC done with fairness commission.
- The identification of variations in frequency doping control tests around the world, which has backed up the information given to the Sports Medicine Commission from national federations (NF).

We want to thank the 809 athletes that took the time to give us their thoughts during the Regatta; we value their commitment at a time when their minds would have been focusing on racing.

The return rate of over 74% is very high for this type of work, and demonstrates how keen athletes are to give their opinion to Athletes Commission.

The report has been divided into four sections

- 1.1. Review of the World Championships in ETON
- 1.2. FISA services
- 1.3. National Federations issues
- 1.4. Your opinion

The key findings include:

1. Athletes considered the World Rowing Championships at ETON a great success, despite the major concerns with fairness.
2. Anti-doping measures remain an issue for our sport.
3. A significant number of athletes are open to innovation and change in the way regattas are held.

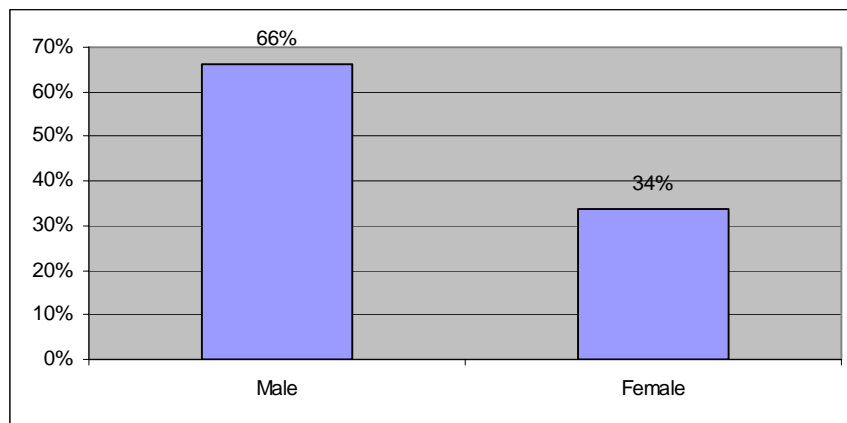
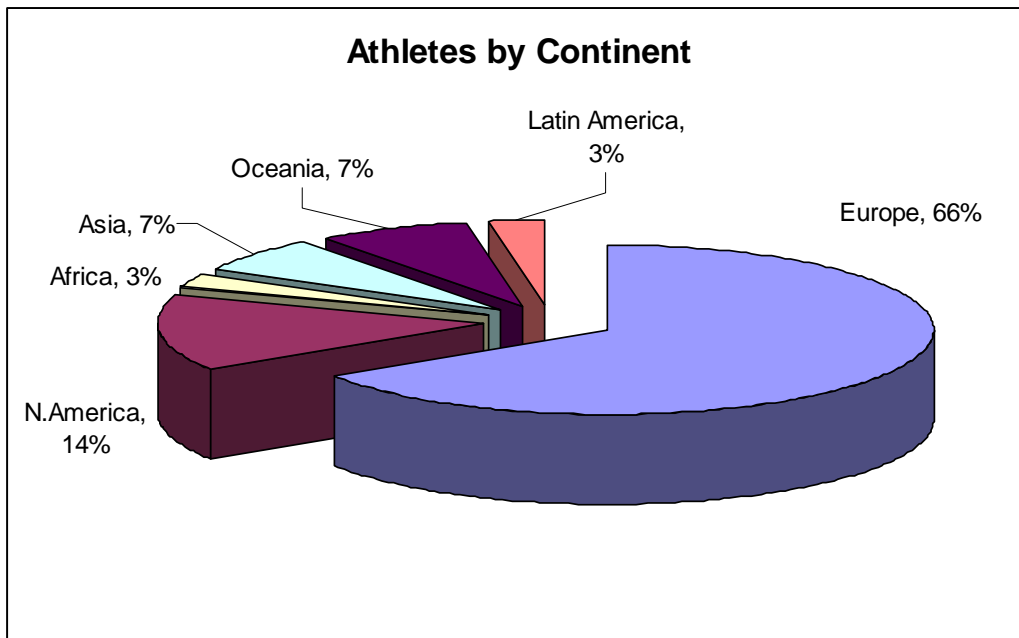
On behalf of the Athletes' Commission.

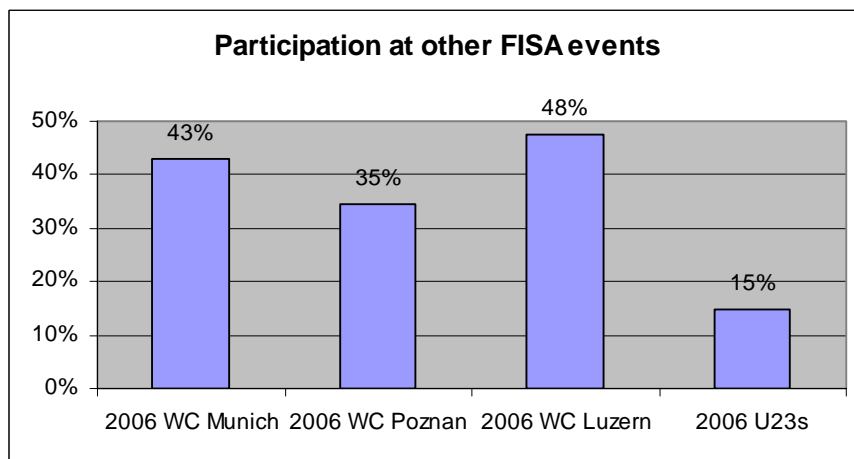
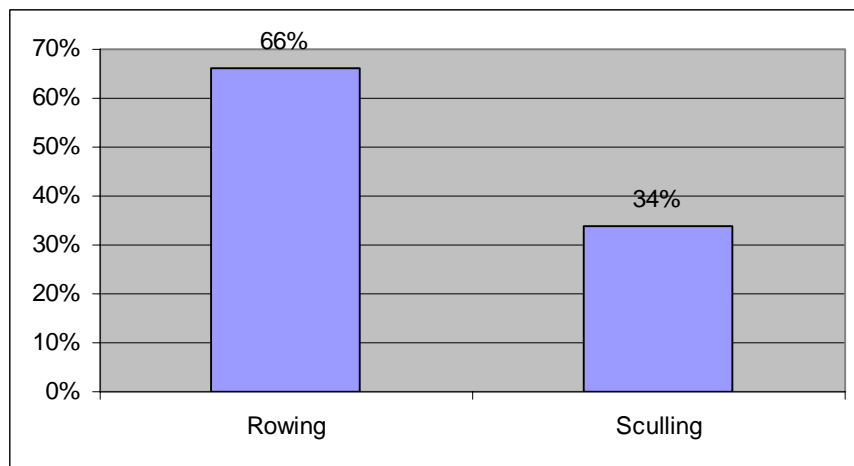
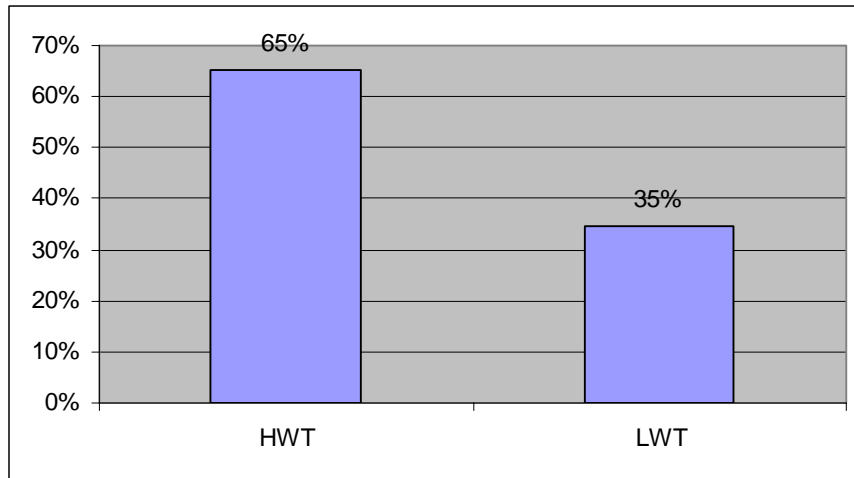
JC Rolland  
Rower  
Chair of the Athletes Commission.

2. Background

The questionnaire was completed by 809 competitors at the 2006 FISA World Rowing Championships in ETON, Great Britain. Members of the Commission and a team of helpers handed out questionnaires to competitors and once completed these were placed in collection boxes around the regatta site. The questionnaires were translated in to 6 different languages (English, German, French, Spanish, Chinese and Russian).

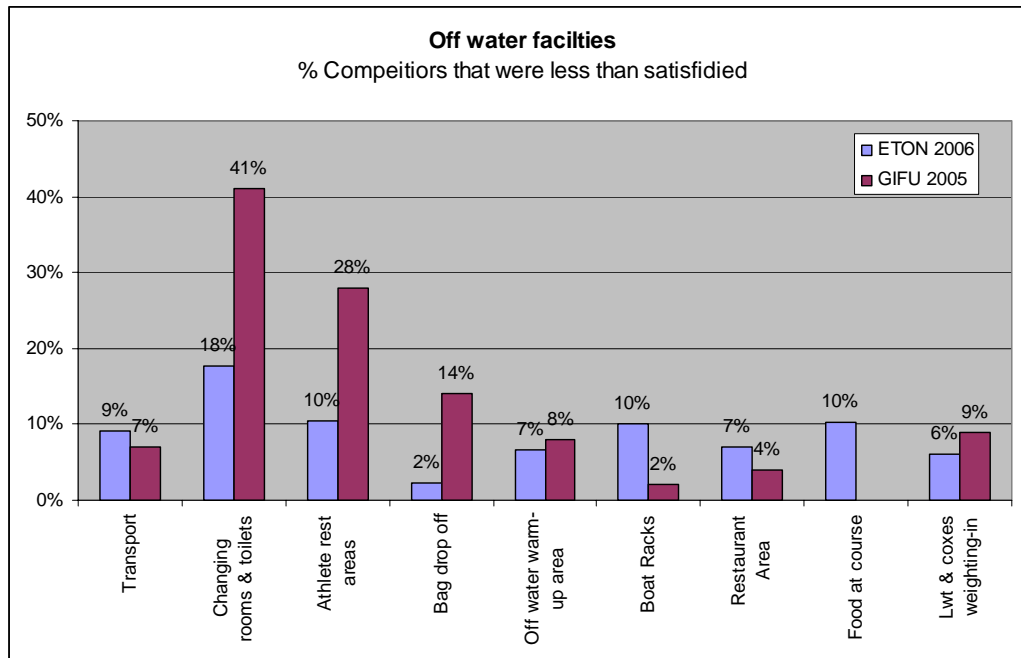
The response rate from the competitors at the FISA World Rowing Championships was a very respectable 74% (some 10% more than in 2005) with a total of 809 competitors (322 more than in 2005) completing the questionnaire. 61 adaptive athletes took part in the questionnaire making, 8% of the survey population. There were 66% male (3% less than 2006) and 33% female (4% more than 2006).





3. World Rowing Championships organisation ETON

3.1. Off water facilities



The greatest improvements in athletes' rating in the off water facilities from Gifu were the changing and toilet facilities (23% improvement) and the athlete rest area (18% improvement). Despite this improvement, these areas remain facilities that the competitors are the least happy with.

The facilities that the competitors were satisfied or more than satisfied with were the bag drop-off (98%) and lightweight weighing in (94%).

In general other than the changing rooms and toilet facilities, 90% of the competitors were happy or more than happy with the off water facilities that were available to them at ETON.

Comments included:

- "Regatta was very well organised and volunteers so friendly."*
- "Satisfied but side wind at course big problem."*
- "Water bottles provided were good but need recycling bins for them."*
- "Wireless internet access was brilliant."*
- "Always have an athletes after party – very important."*
- "Need different colour buoys – these are hard to see."*

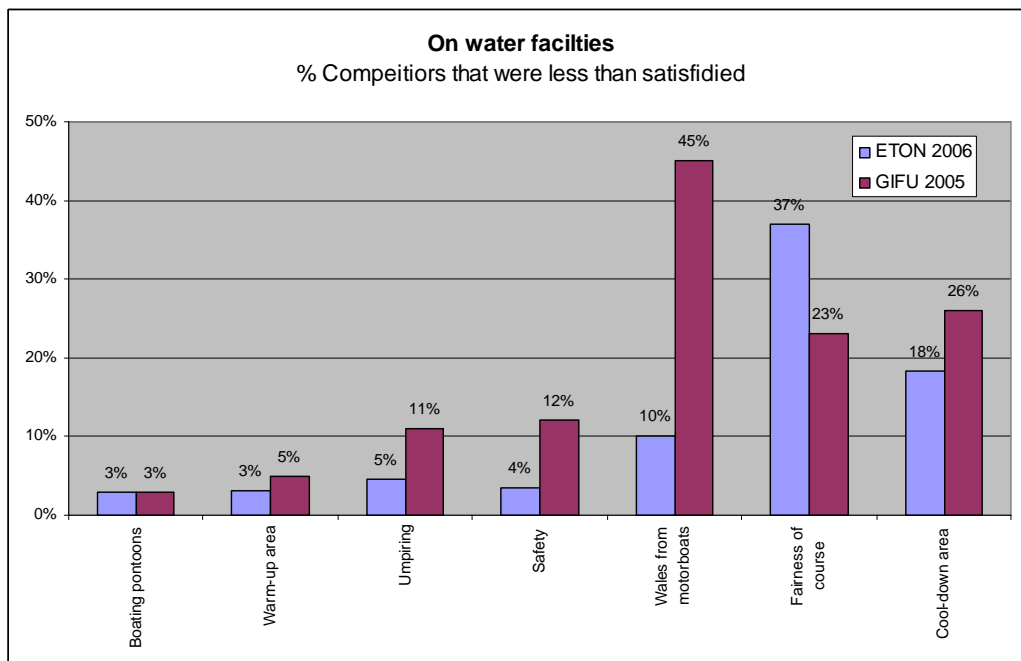
**Athlete Commission recommendations:**

- **In future, facilities for equipment storage should include enough space for all equipment (ie. oars), also taking into account the needs of adaptive rowers.**
- **Transport is a crucial issue to athletes. It needs to account for peak times in competitor movements and needs to be flexible enough to**

**account for changes in racing schedule brought about by weather conditions.**

- **Future organising committees need to be aware of an increase in athletes' expectations regarding rest areas, changing rooms, toilet facilities and the hygiene of all of these.**

On water facilities



97% of the competitors were satisfied or more than satisfied with the World Championships, 28% rated it at the highest level of satisfaction.

The competitors declared a high degree of satisfaction for the majority of on water facilities, most notable being the boating pontoons, umpiring and safety & the warm-up area. The impact of boat washes was reported as being substantially better than in GIFU.

The major on water issue was fairness of the course 37% (23% in GIFU) of the competitors were less than happy, while just over a third were more than happy.

Comments included:

*“Need bow holders at start.”*

*“Some of the safety requirements (i.e. being in the correct lane during training) are a bit retentive.”*

*“Some countries just do not respect the training patterns i.e. the Chinese women’s sweep squad that would always cut people off at the turning points.”*

**Athlete Commission recommendations:**

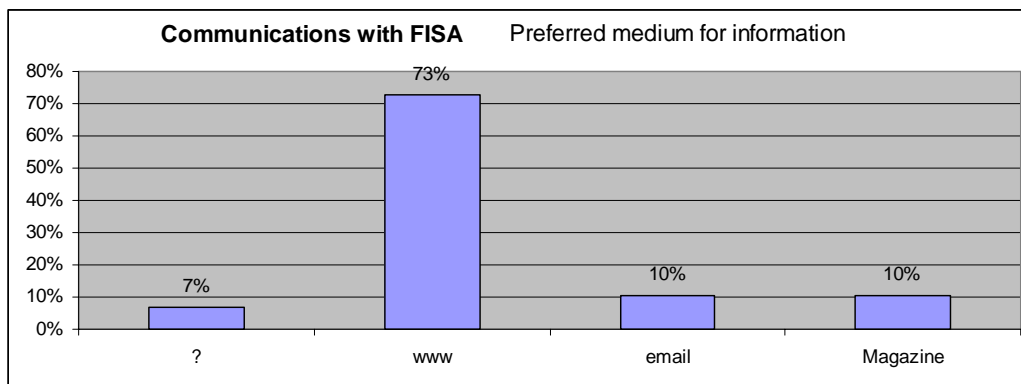
- **The organizers and the umpires should be congratulated on the running of the World Championships as the competitors had a high degree of overall satisfaction for the event.**
- **Fairness of the course remains an important consideration for all athletes.**

- **The standard of the television coverage of racing is very important to the success of a regatta. There needs to be more advice from experienced personnel in the camera selection during racing.**

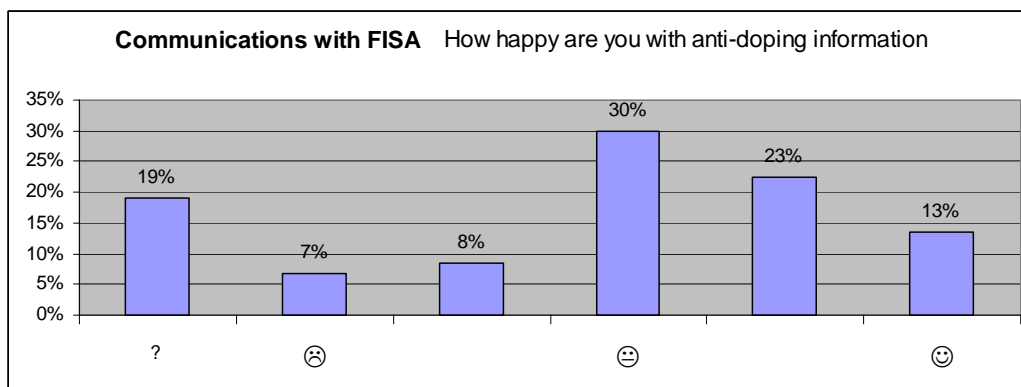
4. FISA

For FISA overall, 91% of athletes who had an opinion were satisfied or more than satisfied. 63% of those athletes rated it with above average satisfaction - an improvement of 13% from 2005.

4.1. Communication



When asked how competitors would like to receive information from FISA the clear majority selected the website.



This graph reveals that more than nearly 300 athletes were less than satisfied with anti-doping information from FISA or unable to answer the question. However, two thirds are happy with the level of anti-doping information that they receive.

There is a noted variability in this area of communication.....

Comments included:

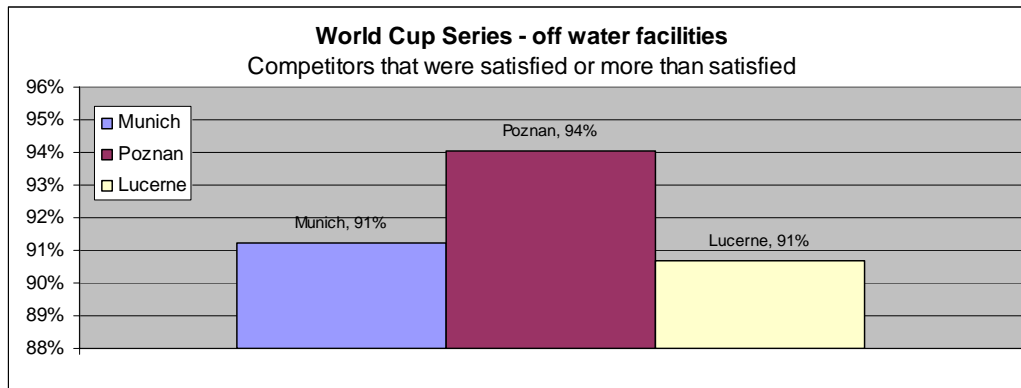
- "Very little advertising space, FISA too conservative."*
- "Don't feel that they do enough to make the sport spectator-friendly (example making races so early in the day) and they need to allow more sponsorship on the boat to help glamorise the sport."*
- "Taping of equipment logos is ridiculous."*
- "I'd like to get more information about Athletes Commission."*
- "Anti-doping regulations are too confusing."*
- "Was not happy with ruling made on M4- dead heat, would rather a seven lane final."*

**Athlete Commission recommendations:**

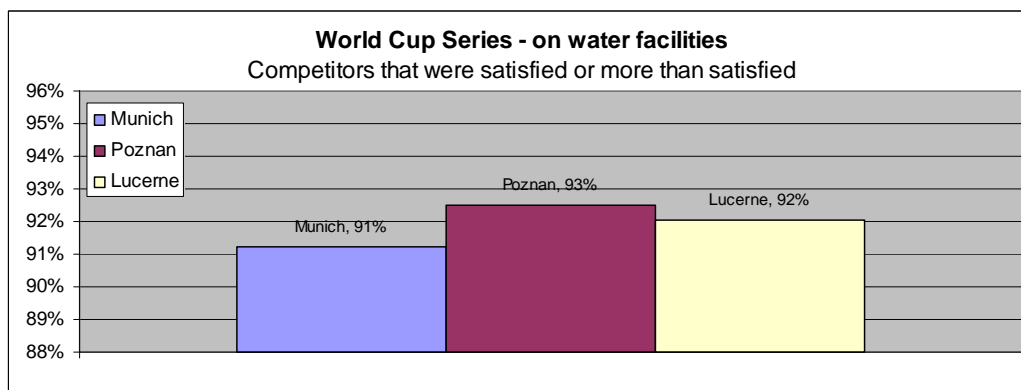
- The utmost importance should be put on developing the athletes section of the FISA website, including clear and relevant information on anti-doping.
- Space for sponsors on equipment remains a central issue to athletes. FISA should consider allowing more space for sponsorship on athletes' uniforms, oars and boats.
- FISA should be encouraged to involve athletes in attracting sponsorship. Comments suggested that there was a lot of interest in this issue.
- The rule regarding dead heats should be reviewed, in view of the number of courses that now have 8 lanes or more.

4.2. Racing

4.2.1. World Cups



Of the three host of the World Cups Poznan rated highest for both the off water and on-water facilities,



Comments included:

*“There was no soap in the girls toilets ALL WEEK at Luzern World Cup.”*

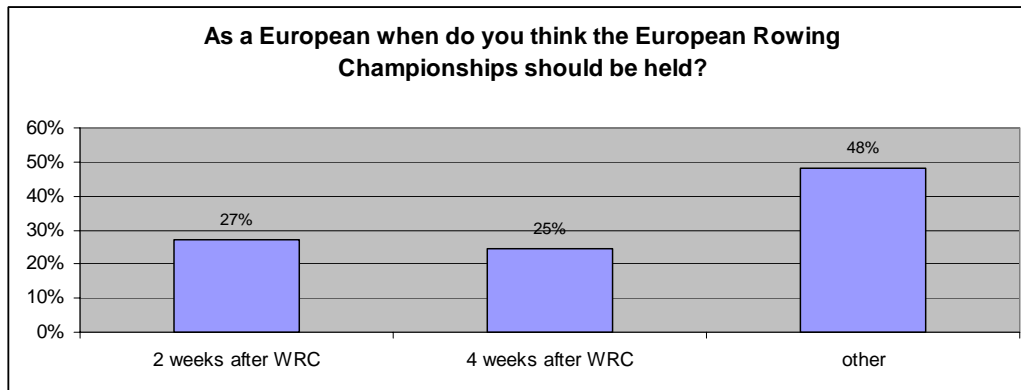
*“The toilets are disgusting at Lucerne, I feared for my health.”*

*“More space to sit when raining!”*

**Athlete Commission recommendations:**

- **In due of the rising standards of off water facilities, all World Cup organising committees should ensure that the quality of their infrastructure and service is up to expectations.**

4.2.2 European Championships



The majority of European athletes who answered the question felt that the European Rowing Championships should be held at a time other than 2 or 4 weeks after the World Rowing Championships.

Comments included:

*“ERC should be instead of World Cup I.”*

*“Should start the season off – sometime in May.”*

*“Not necessary.”*

*“Should be before the World Champs because the season will be too long.”*

*“Every second year.”*

*“Between the last World Cup and the World Championships.”*

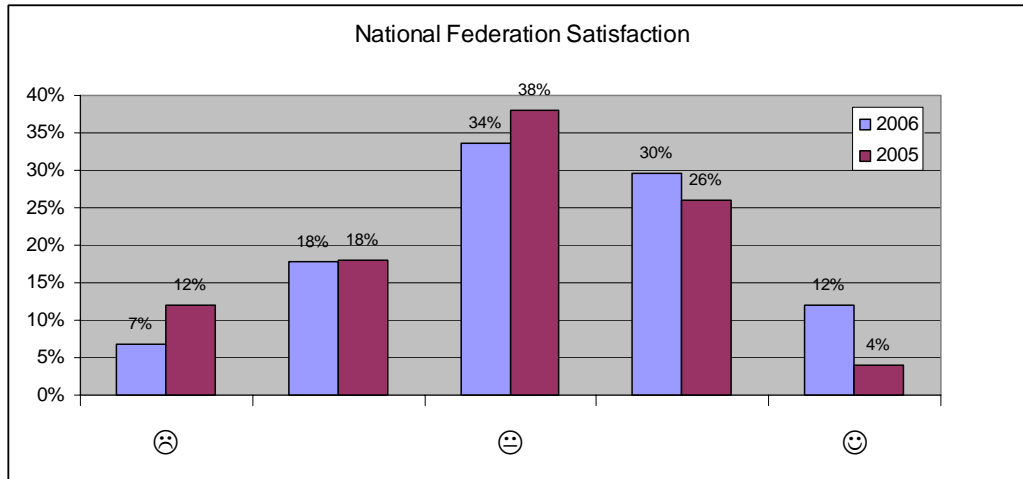
*“Whenever you get the best media coverage.”*

**Athlete Commission recommendations:**

- **The timing of the European Rowing Championships (ERC) should be reviewed after the staging of the event in 2007. The Athlete Commission representatives at all 2007 international regattas should gather feedback on the timing of the ERC.**

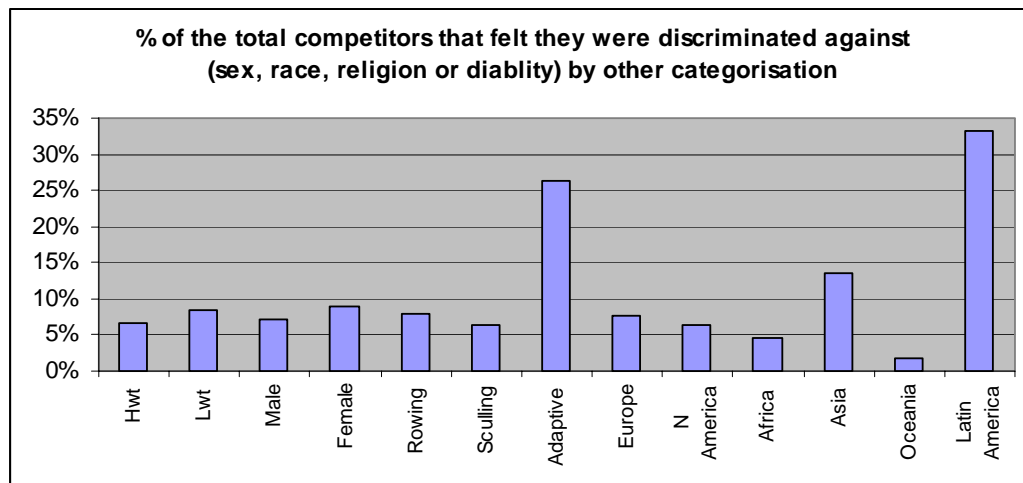
5. National Federations

The competitors overall satisfaction with their National Federation was 75%, with a 25% dissatisfaction rate, this shows an overall increase in satisfaction by competitors of their National Federations since last year.



Over a third of competitors state that they are not happy with the level of information they receive from their National Federation.

Over one quarter (26%) of competitors do not get medical support from their National Federations.



66 athletes felt that they had been discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, religion or disability.

The breakdown of this highlighted two areas; adaptive rowing and Latin American athletes as having a higher percentage of feelings of personal discrimination than any of the other categories.

Comments

*“Will be better if they are closer to the athletes and gave them prizemoney.”*

*“They should support us financially as they take 60% of our everyday time ... sometimes we lose our motivation.”*

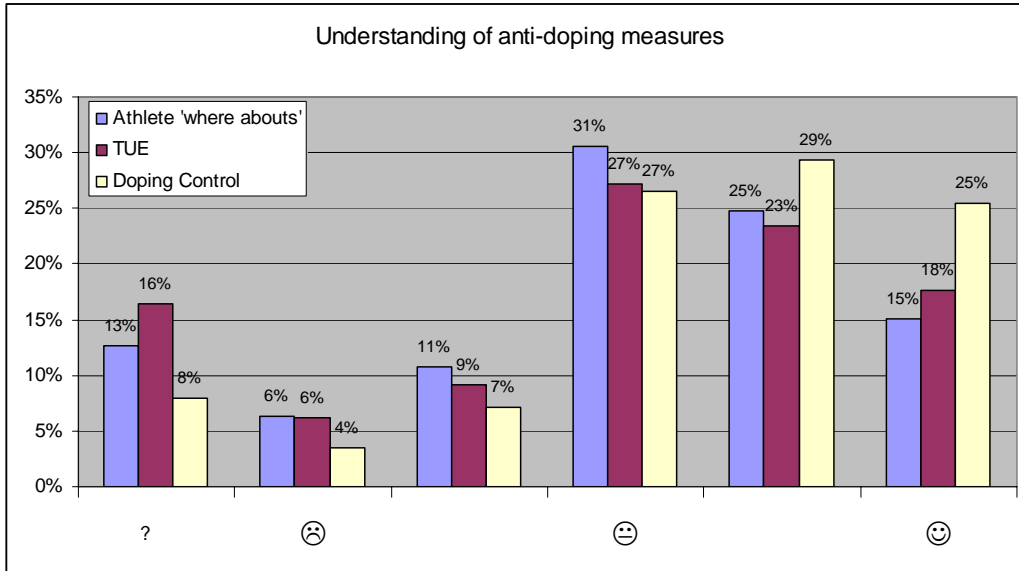
*“All NF’s should cooperate and coordinate with FISA to make our sport more attractive to sponsors / media / spectators.”*

*“My federation will not support me because the head coach thinks that women should not row.”*

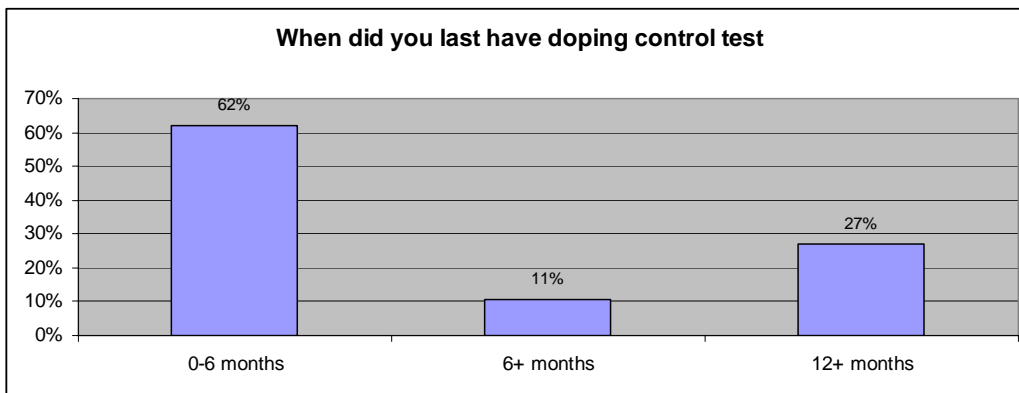
**Athlete Commission recommendations:**

- **Whilst the National Federation (NF) satisfaction rate has improved since GIFU, the comments suggest that there are still very significant specific issues between the NF’s and their athletes. NF’s should continue to find ways to improve communication**

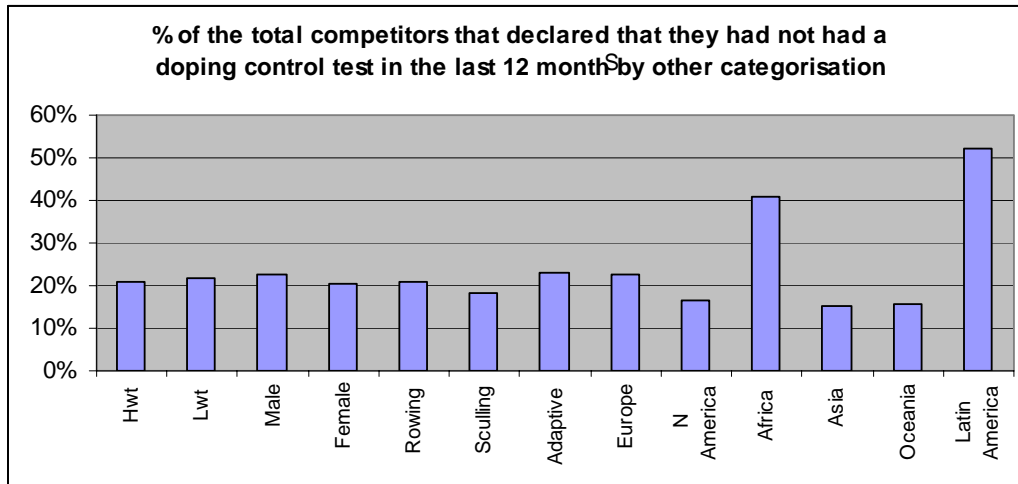
6. Doping



The majority of competitors had a good understanding of doping control measures, but surprisingly 15% stated that they did not know, while 14% state that they were not happy with their understanding.



Over a quarter of athletes have not had a doping control test in the last 12 months. Of these Africa and Latin America stood out as having the largest percentage of 41% and 52% respectively.



**Comments**

*“We don’t always know which forms to fill out – FISA or our federation’s. “*

*“Little communication with athletes.”*

*“More tests please.”*

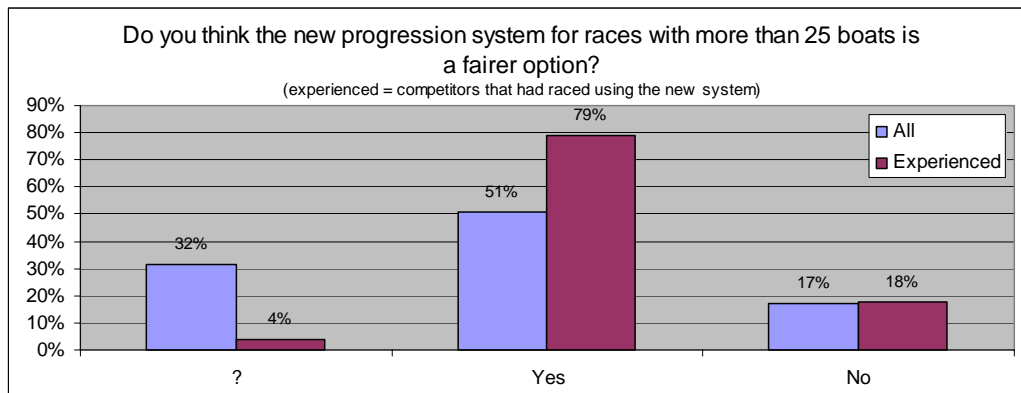
**Athlete Commission recommendations:**

- 1. All stakeholders should be encouraged to ensure that doping control measures are systematic across the world and enforced consistently in the interests of our sport.**

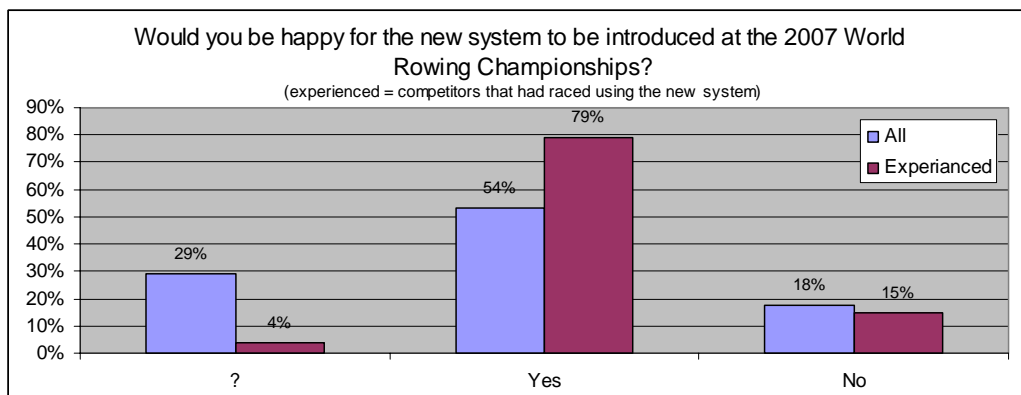
7. Opinion

7.1. Progression system

Competitors were asked about the new progression system for boats with more than 25 entries. The results were analysis using all competitors at the Championships and those that stated they had experienced the new system in Munich.



Interestingly, athletes that had experienced the system (79%) were more likely to think the system was fairer and keener to have system introduced in 2007.



Only 27 experienced competitors were against introducing the new system.

Comments

- "I feel positive about trying this system."*
- "I think that the new system is fairer and fairness is the most important thing in competition."*
- "Athletes are guaranteed the same level of exhaustion before the final, which is good."*
- "Much more fair for semis."*
- "Too many races"*
- "It is bad for weaker rowers, World Cup can be over for them only after one race."*

**Athlete Commission recommendations:**

- **In light of the responses, the new progression system should be implemented in 2007, including the World Rowing Championships.**

**7.3 International development**

241 athletes stated that they would be prepared to help international development in a voluntary capacity through the Development Commission. The majority of these athletes left their email address, so they would be contacted if required.

## Comments

*"More detail needed."*

*"I'd really love to but I study and I could not manage it perfectly."*

*"I would love to help if I had money at all."*

*"What exactly is the development commission?"*

**Athlete Commission recommendations:**

- **Now that the interest has been established, the Development Commission and AC need to explore means by which this enthusiasm can be put into practice.**

**7.3 Improving Rowing**

The athletes were asked if they had any original ideas that could be used to help make international rowing better. The comments have been categorised in commission areas.

## Media and Marketing:

*"More sponsorships and media coverage."*

*"Give more space to sponsors so we can actually get them."*

*"More inventive TV coverage – GPS, heart rate and rating graphics, scenery shots sponsored by local tourism body, cameras on boats and underwater."*

*"Improve the video material of rowing races to make it more spectacular to watch."*

*"When televising races there should always be a small picture in the corner of the screen to show who is winning."*

*"Rowing IS attractive, just make PR better."*

*"Athlete diaries on FISA website so we get to know what people are doing in the winter and autumn."*

*"Market the SWE LW2x as that is what sells on the open market – harsh but true."*

## Youth:

*"Make rowing more accessible to children."*

## Events / Competition:

*"Introduce 500m racing at World Cups."*

*"Make small boats (1x, 2x, 2-) in first three days of World Champs then big boats (4-, 4x, 8+) in second three days."*

*"Night racing at Dorney – no cross wind!"*

*"As with the leaders t-shirts at World Cups, so we should have leaders race in boat manufactures."*

*"International mixed events."*

*“Green jersey for fastest sprinter over 500m.”*

*“Change under subscribed events like LM8+ into sprint events to create more interest and more chance that other athletes will double up.”*

**Athlete Commission recommendations:**

- **These ideas to be discussed with the relevant commissions in the forthcoming year.**

## 8. Summary

The key findings from the 2006 Athlete Survey include;

1. Athletes considered the World Rowing Championships at ETON a great success, despite the major concerns with fairness.
2. Anti-doping measures remain an issue for our sport.
3. A significant number of athletes are open to innovation and change in the way regattas are held.
4. The athletes have a desire to be involved in both the marketing and the development of rowing.
5. The new progression system should be implemented.
6. There is an element of discrimination present in our sport.

The report was completed by members of the Athletes Commission.

Athletes Commission Questionnaire and Report Working Group

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The Athletes' Commission would like to thank:

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