



THE MASS PARTICIPATION REPORT 2025

GROWTH, TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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SUMMARY



The mass participation sports events industry delivered strong growth in 2025, with participation increasing **7.8%** for like-for-like events (those we've worked with for two or more consecutive years).

Three defining trends emerged: younger participants aged 25-39 are driving growth, female participation is accelerating faster than male across all age groups, and the traditional 40-44 age peak is flattening as the participant base diversifies.

Key Findings

Industry growth:

7.8%

year-on-year for like-for-like events

The 35-39 age group contributed

14.7%

of all new participants

Gender parity approaching:

20-24

year olds at 49.7% female, 49.9% male

Digital wallets now account for

75%

of transactions

14.5% merchandise attachment rate, averaging

£16

per purchase

26%

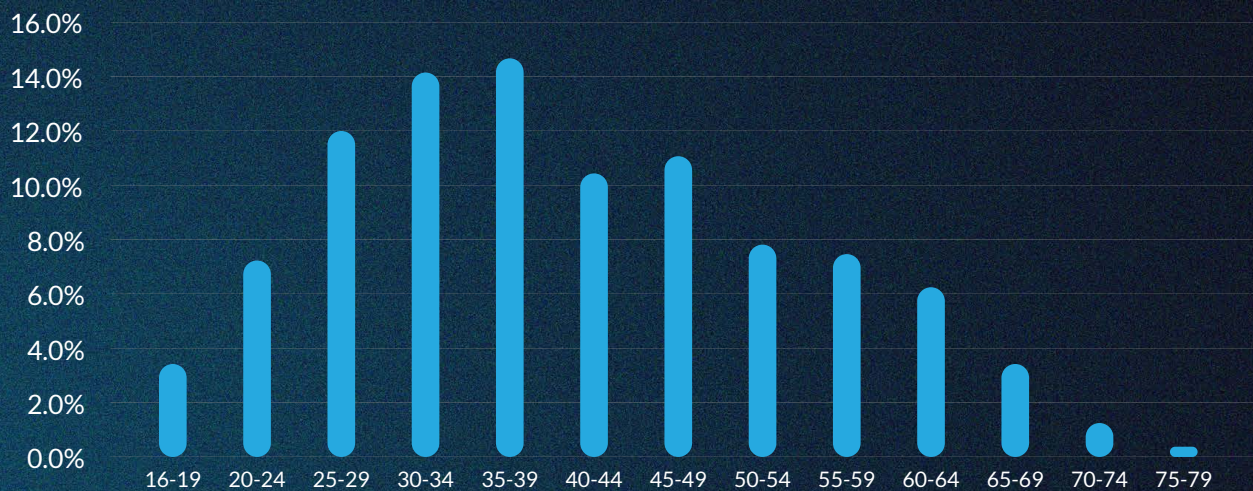
of 2024 participants returned to the same organiser in 2025

WHERE GROWTH HAS COME FROM

Age Demographics

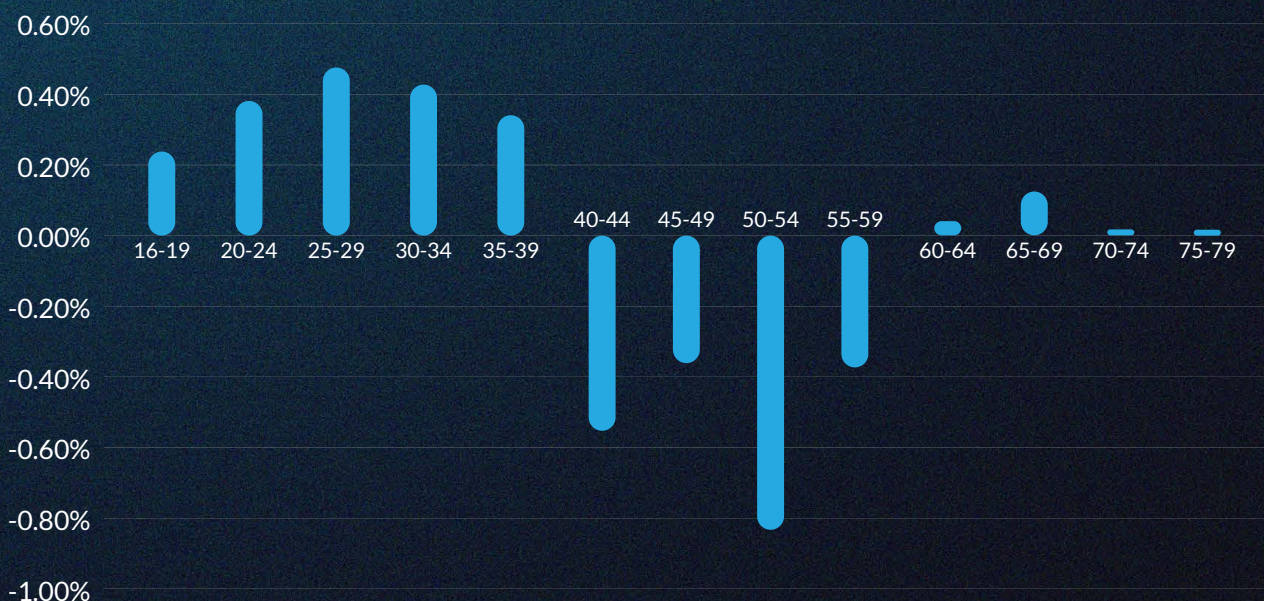
All age groups saw growth in 2025, but the distribution reveals clear patterns. The 35-39 age cohort emerged as the largest single contributor, representing 14.7% of all new participants to events. The 30-34 and 25-29 groups followed closely behind.

Contribution to overall growth

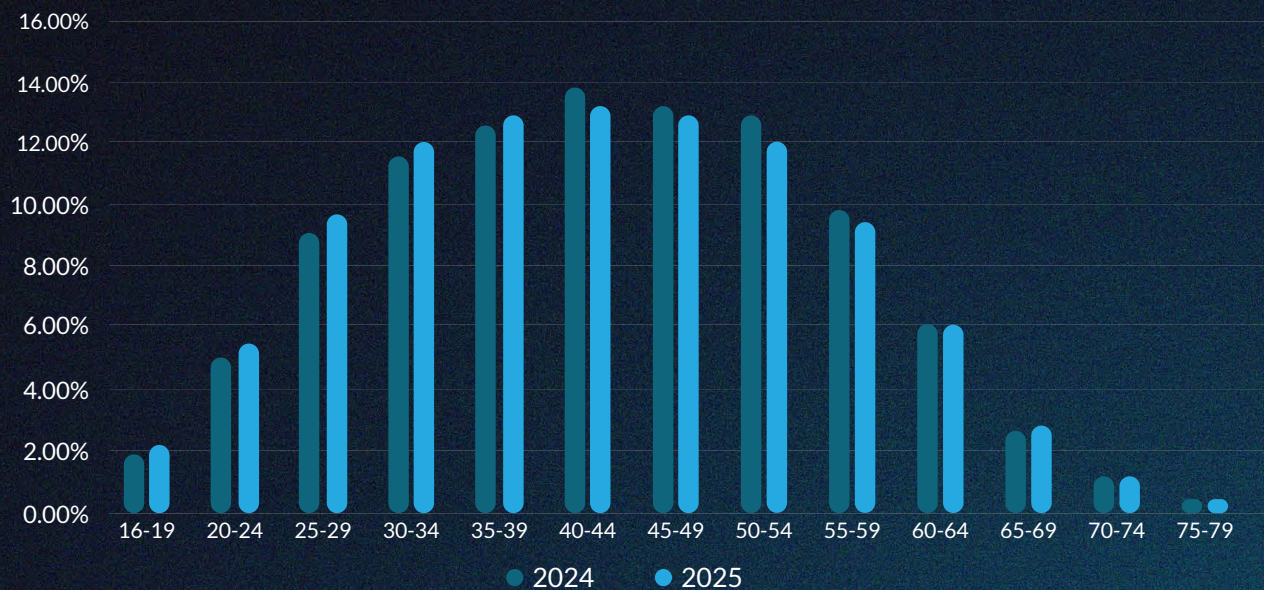


Relative Change

The trend of adults aged 25-39 turning up to events continued into 2025, with all age groups under 40 gaining market share, alongside those over 60. This shift is producing what we call the 'flattening of the bell curve'—the traditional peak around 40-44 is becoming less dominant as younger and older participants claim larger shares of the total.



Age Demographics

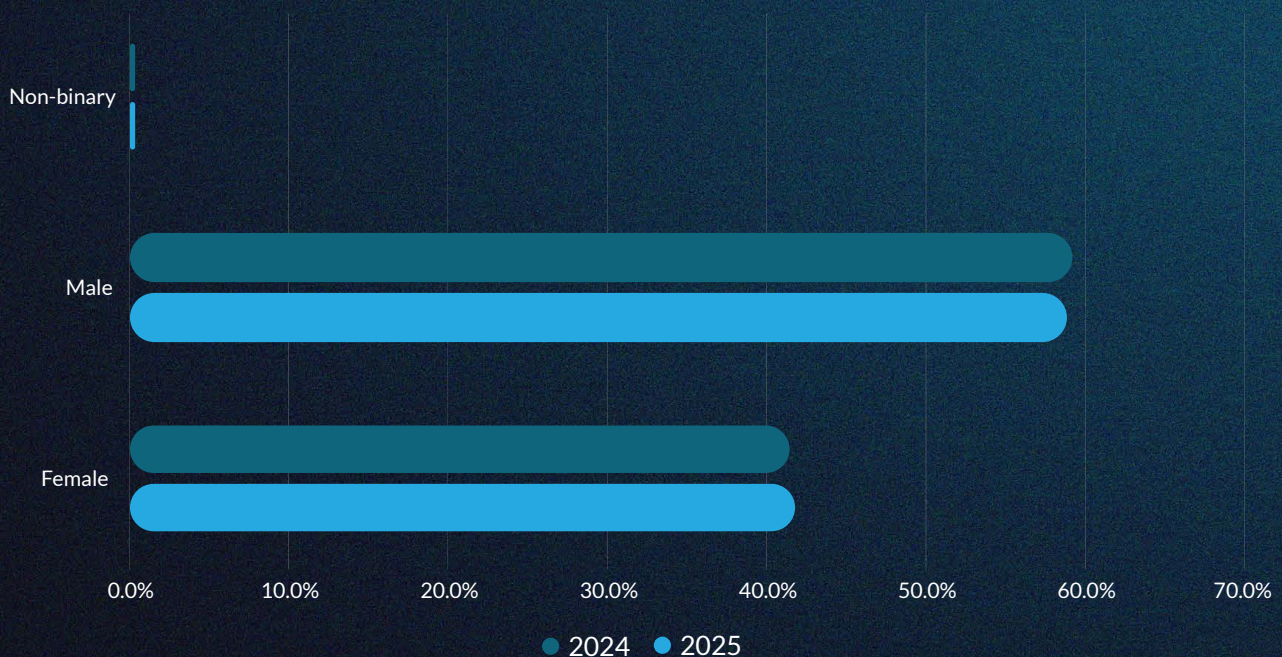


This more even distribution of participants across age groups presents opportunities for organisers to tailor experiences and marketing to different demographics.

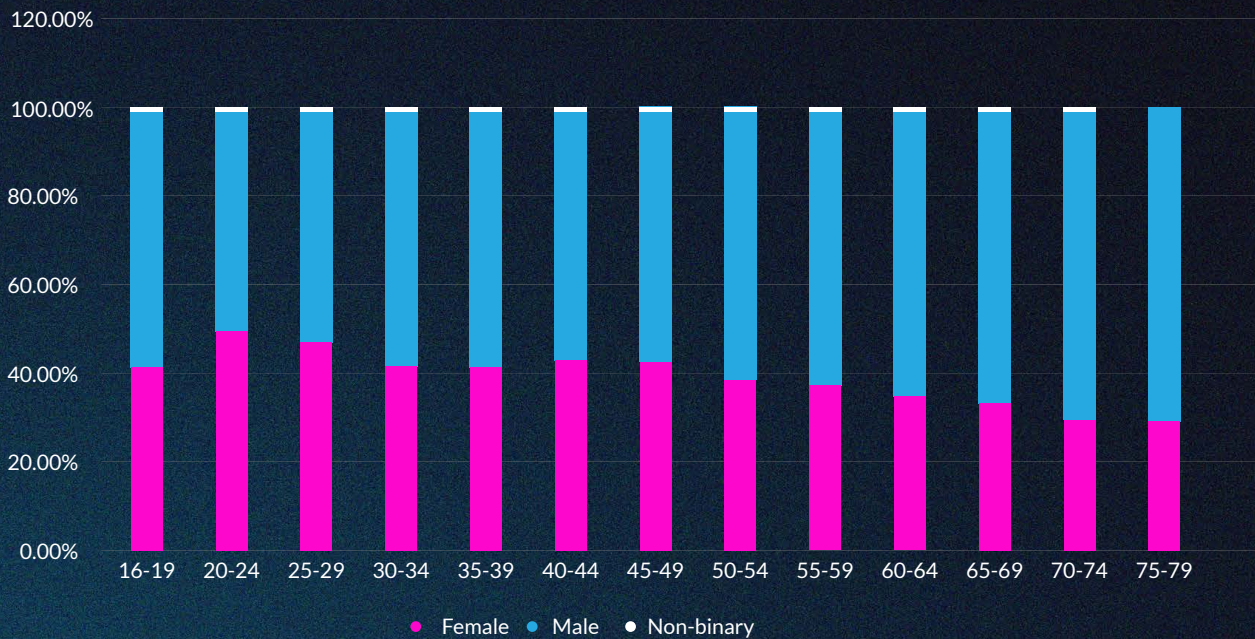
Gender Demographics

Progress towards gender parity continued steadily in 2025. Whilst overall participation across the industry remains weighted towards male participants, the generational differences are striking.

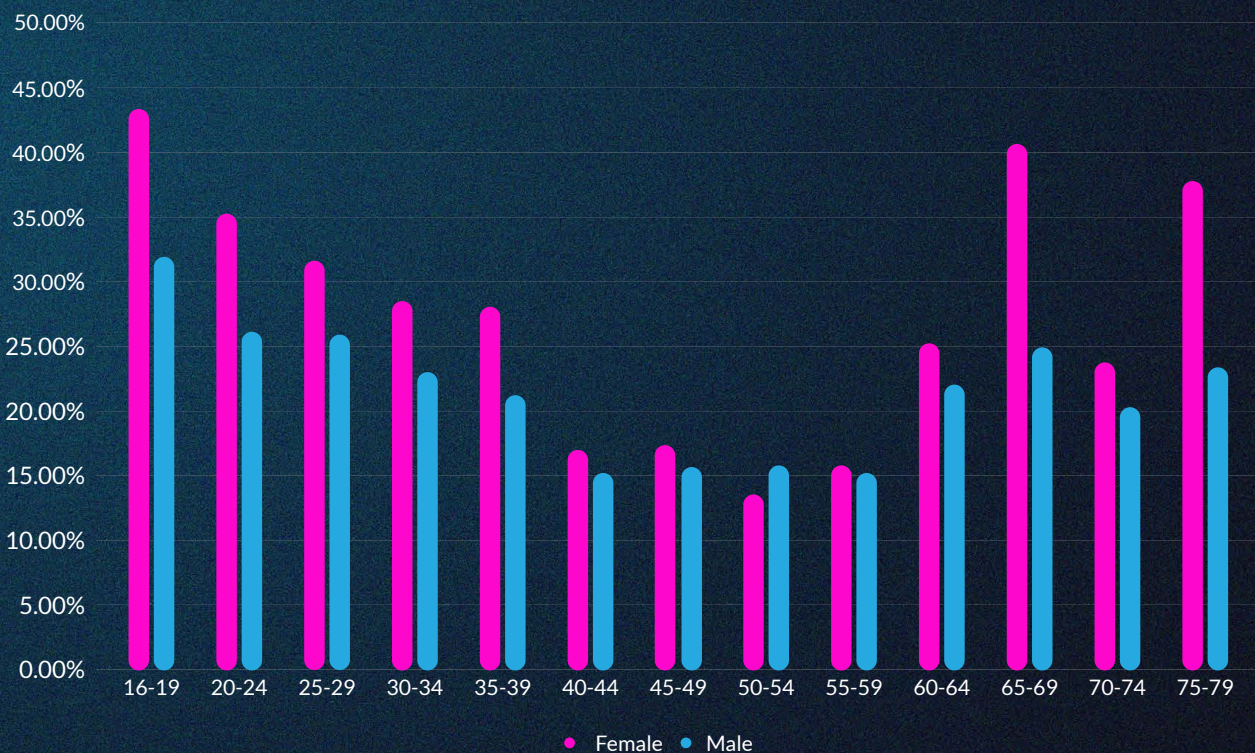
Gender Analysis



Among 20-24 year olds, the gender split has effectively reached parity: 49.7% female, 49.9% male, and 0.4% non-binary. This stands in sharp contrast to older cohorts where male participation still dominates.



The data reveals a consistent pattern: female participants are growing at faster relative rates than male participants across all age groups, with the effect most pronounced amongst younger generations.



As younger, more gender-balanced cohorts age through the demographic pyramid, the industry's overall composition will naturally evolve towards parity. Events that cultivate inclusive, welcoming environments for women will be well positioned to capitalise on this shift.

Growth Across Disciplines

Growth varied significantly by discipline. Walking events saw the strongest growth at 13.4%, though it should be noted that walking distances are not heavily utilised by organisers, so this represents a smaller data set. Cycling followed at 10.6% and running at 10.2%. Multisport disciplines grew more modestly, with duathlon at 5.7%, triathlon at 4.8%, and swimming at 2.7%.

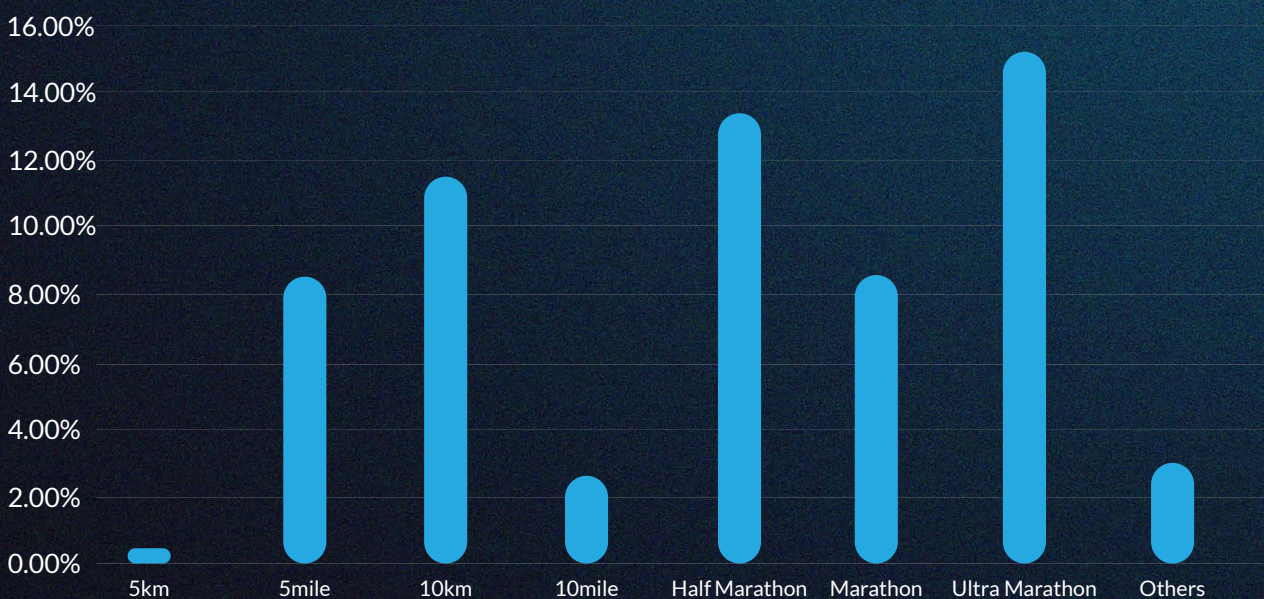
Growth by Discipline (24 v 25 like-for-like events)



Growth Across Running Distance

Running accounted for 80% of all bookings, making it the dominant discipline by volume. Half marathon and 10km remained the most popular distances. Within running, ultra marathons drove the strongest growth at 15.19%, followed by half marathons at 13.40% and 10km at 11.55%. Mid-range distances also performed well, with marathons at 8.60% and 5 miles at 8.49%. The 5km distance grew just 0.53%, whilst 10-mile events recorded 2.49% growth.

Running Distance % Change (24 v 25 like-for-like)



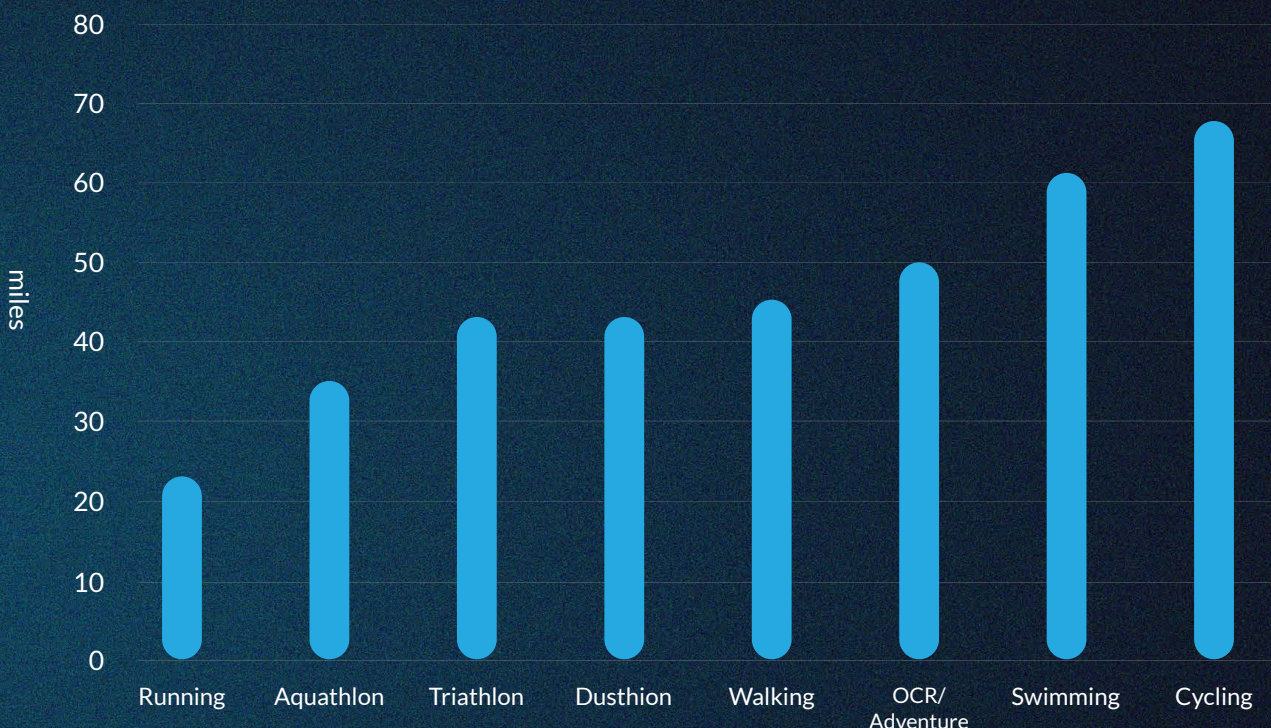
How Far People Traveled

The average participant travels 26 miles, which is roughly 45-60 minutes by car.

Runners stay closest to home (averaging 24 miles), whilst cycling, multisport and adventure disciplines attract participants from much further afield: cycling events saw an average travel distance of 68 miles and OCR/ adventure 50 miles.

This reveals two participant types: most seek local events they can fit into their routine, whilst specialist disciplines with fewer options pull participants from wider catchments. For mainstream running events, this reinforces the importance of local marketing and community building over destination appeal.

Distance Travelled



**26
MILES**

The average
distance a
participant travels
for an event

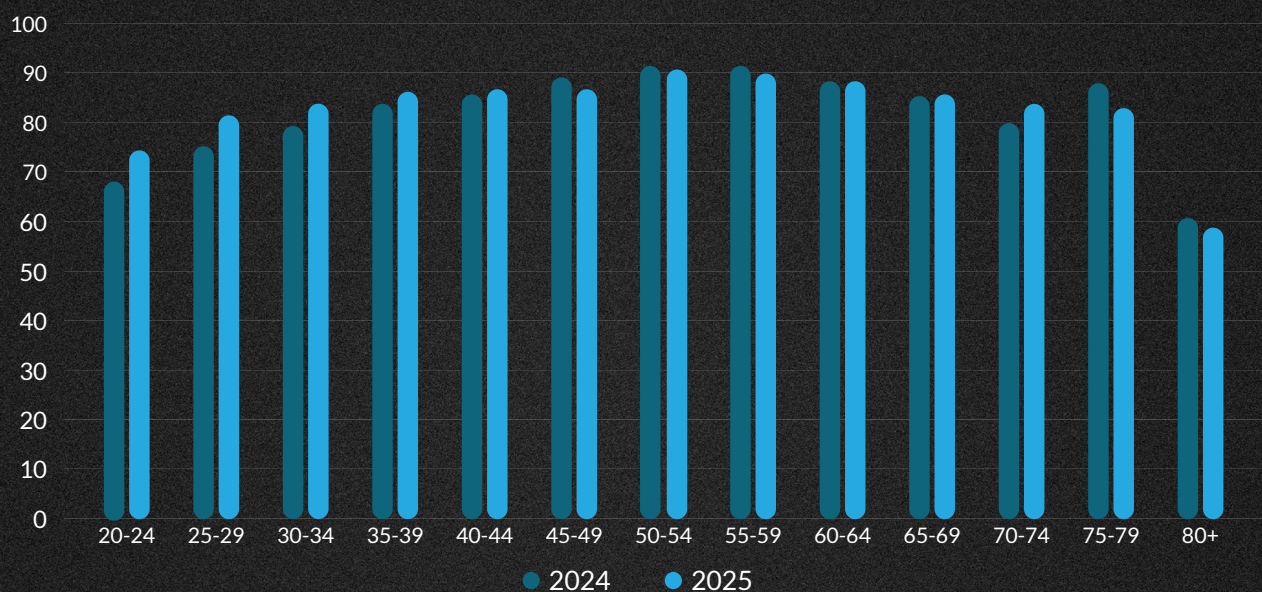
BOOKING BEHAVIOUR

How Early People Register

Participants booked an average of 83.6 days in advance in 2025, compared to 82.5 days in 2024—a modest improvement. However, this aggregate figure masks significant variation by age group and season.

Younger participants consistently book closer to event dates than their older counterparts, likely reflecting both lifestyle flexibility and financial considerations.

Days Before Event



A single average figure doesn't capture the full picture due to the seasonal nature of events. Summer events see the highest proportion of last-minute bookings, likely driven by spontaneous decisions about outdoor activities. Events during the rest of the year show more disciplined planning, with the majority of bookings occurring 1-2 months in advance.

Month Before Event Event Month	Same Month	1 Month Before	2 Months Before	3 Months Before	4 Months Before	5 Months Before	6 Months Before	7 Months Before	8 Months Before	9 Months Before	10 Months Before	11 Months Before	12 Months Before
January	26%	27%	17%	19%	4%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	2%
February	17%	30%	14%	18%	9%	5%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%
March	9%	14%	23%	11%	13%	10%	6%	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	5%
April	19%	26%	16%	17%	13%	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
May	15%	17%	14%	13%	15%	9%	8%	5%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%
June	19%	24%	14%	12%	7%	8%	4%	5%	4%	1%	0%	1%	2%
July	27%	25%	17%	8%	8%	6%	4%	2%	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%
August	33%	24%	13%	9%	7%	4%	2%	3%	3%	1%	0%	0%	0%
September	21%	23%	15%	10%	9%	6%	5%	4%	3%	1%	1%	1%	2%
October	17%	24%	12%	9%	7%	6%	6%	6%	4%	3%	2%	1%	3%
November	15%	28%	19%	11%	8%	4%	5%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	4%
December	19%	32%	21%	12%	5%	3%	2%	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%

WHEN BOOKINGS HAPPEN

Month of the Year

January emerges as the peak booking month, capturing over 10% of annual bookings—a clear manifestation of New Year's resolutions. September and October also show strong booking activity, whilst mid-summer months see relatively lower volumes despite higher event density.

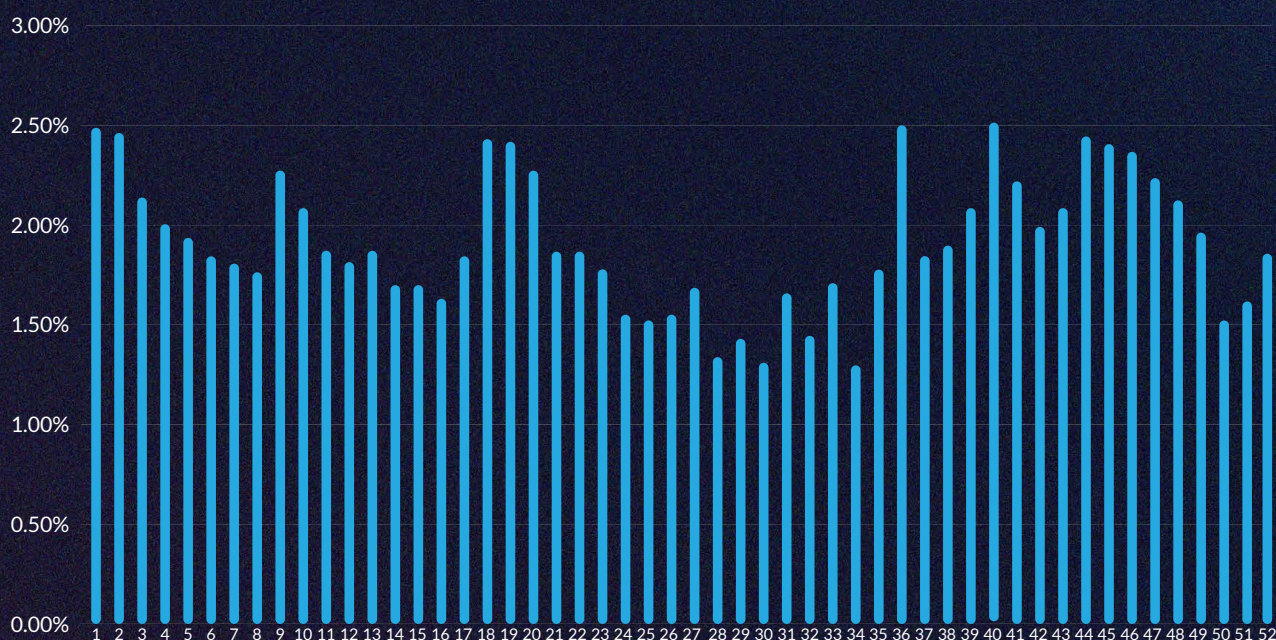
Bookings by Month



Week of the Year

The first couple of weeks in January remained dominant in producing bookings. Week 36 produced the single biggest week, which coincided with when schools went back in the UK i.e. the end of the school summer holidays.

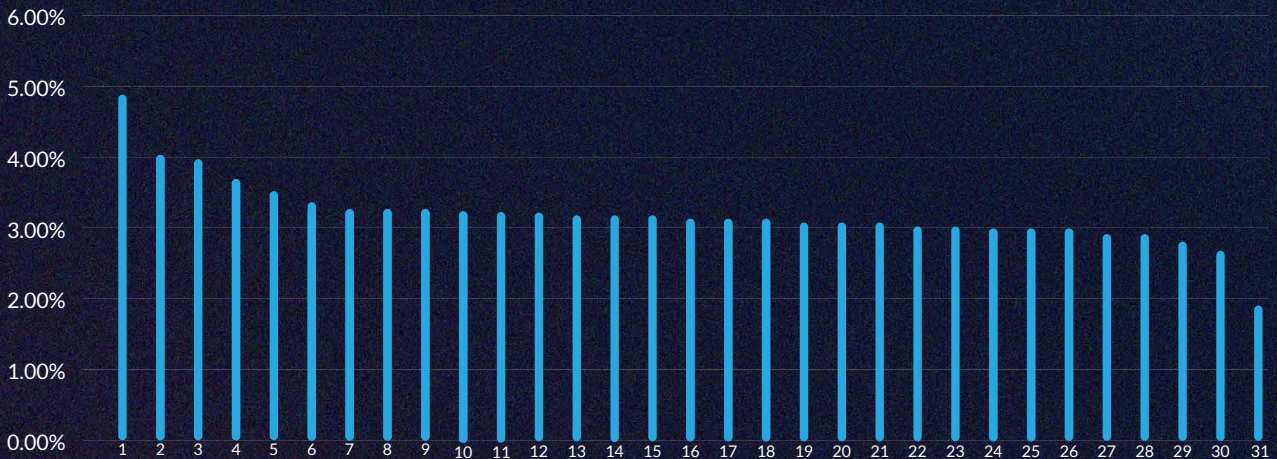
Bookings by Week



Day of Month

The beginning of each month consistently outperforms later dates, with the first three days capturing significantly higher booking volumes. This pattern likely reflects pay cycle timing and the psychological appeal of 'fresh starts'.

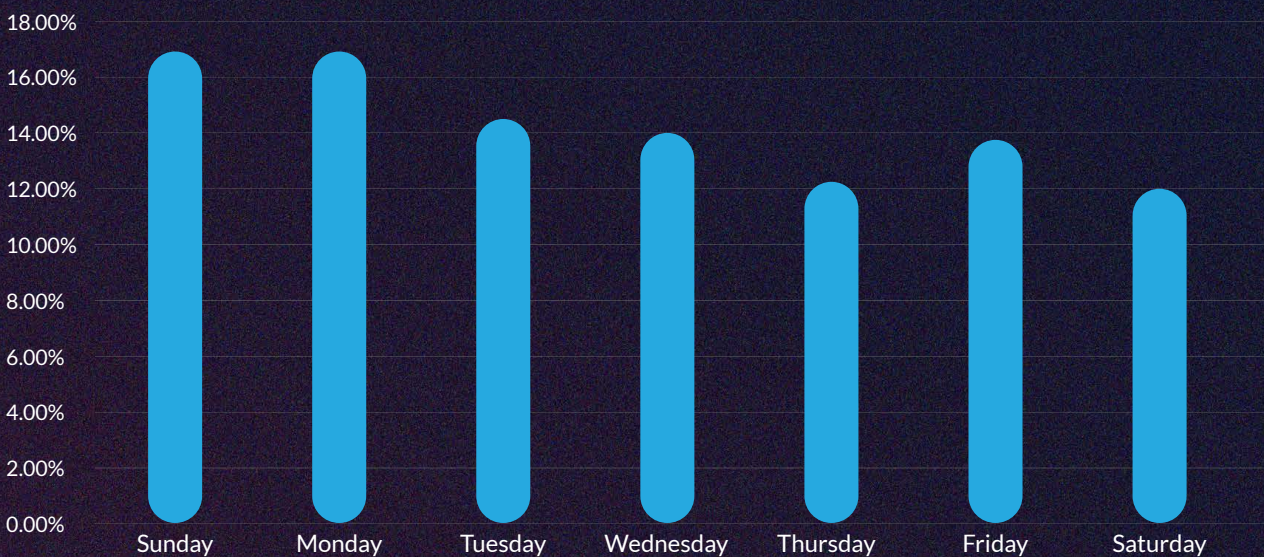
Bookings by Day of the Month



Day of Week

Sunday and Monday emerged as the strongest days for booking activity.

Bookings by Day of the Week



SUNDAY

The strongest day for booking activity across the week

1ST OF THE MONTH

The first three days of each month consistently capture the highest booking volumes

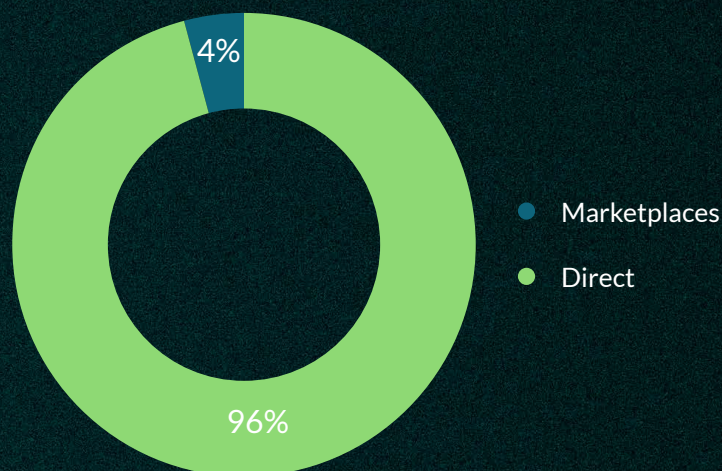
JANUARY

Captures over 10% of annual bookings. September and October also show strong activity

WHERE BOOKINGS COME FROM

Direct bookings, those made directly through an organiser's own website or registration platform continue to dominate, accounting for 96% of all bookings. The remaining 4% originated from third-party marketplaces and partner channels.

Marketplace V Direct Bookings

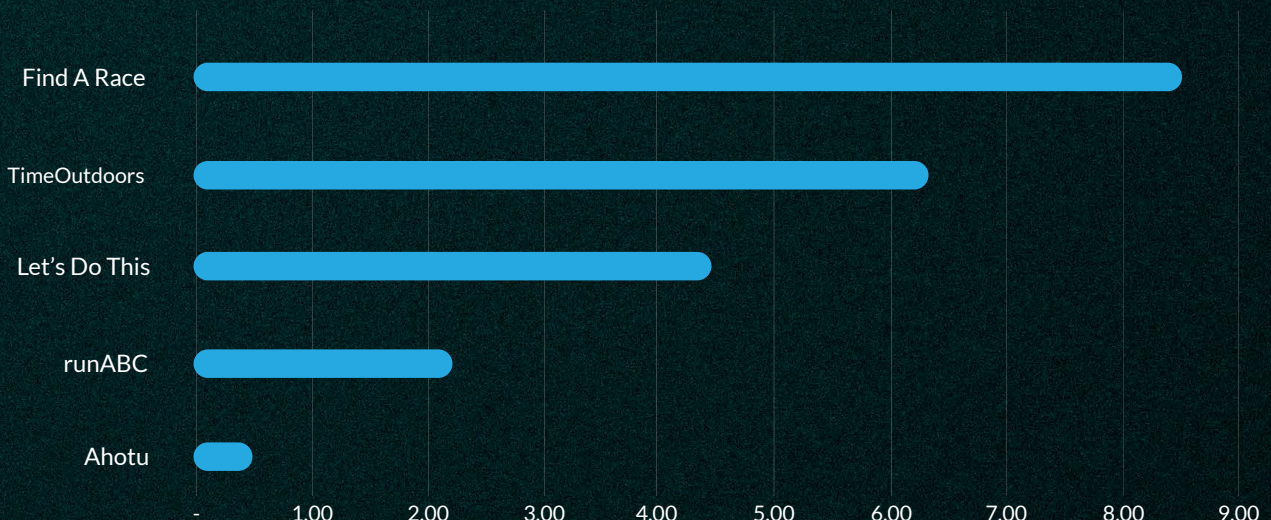


Looking deeper at organisers actively using marketplace integrations, different platforms demonstrate varying effectiveness and attract distinct demographics. For 2025, we refined our analysis methodology to provide more meaningful comparisons: the graph below shows the percentage of total bookings that come through each marketplace when an organiser has that integration enabled.

This approach isolates actual marketplace performance rather than simply measuring adoption rates, giving organisers a clearer picture of what to expect when enabling a specific platform.

Find A Race proved most effective, generating an average of 8% of total bookings for organisers who have the integration enabled, followed by TimeOutdoors at 6%.

Marketplace Booking Contribution



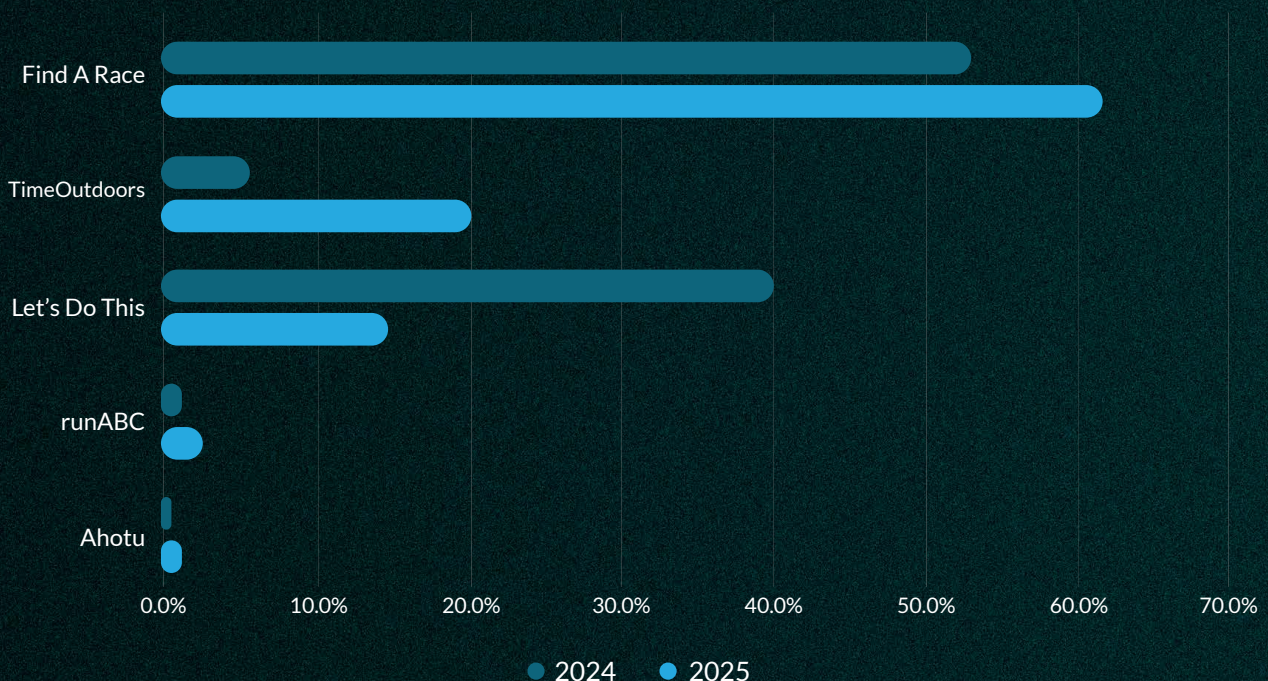
Find A Race accounts for 61% of all third-party entries. However, this largely reflects its maturity—we've offered automatic syncing between eventrac and Find A Race since 2019, giving them over six years to gain adoption compared to newer platforms.

TimeOutdoors is in its second year of partnership with eventrac and delivered significant growth in 2025. As more organisers enable this connection, we expect its share to increase throughout 2026.

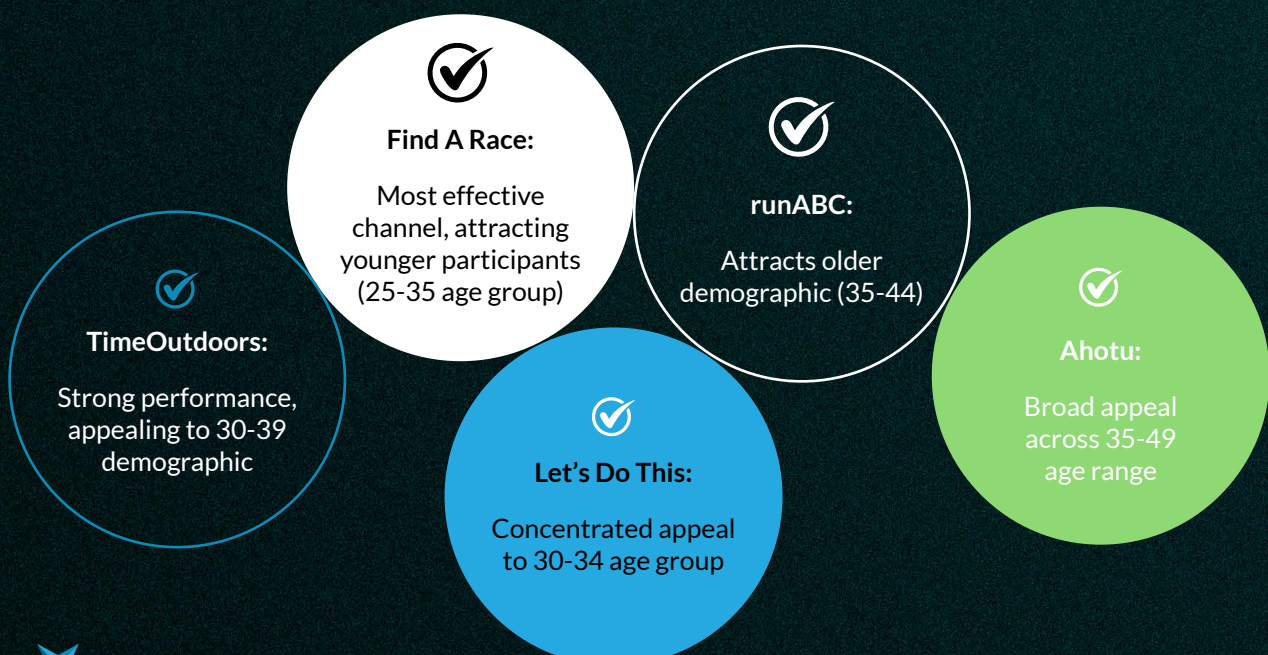
Let's Do This bookings continue to decline following their decision to discontinue API support in 2023 and scale back marketplace investment. The data reflects this strategic shift away from the platform.

Ahotu remains relatively underutilised by UK event organisers. However, the platform recently invested in tooling to onboard eventrac customers more efficiently, so we expect to see more meaningful data in 2026.

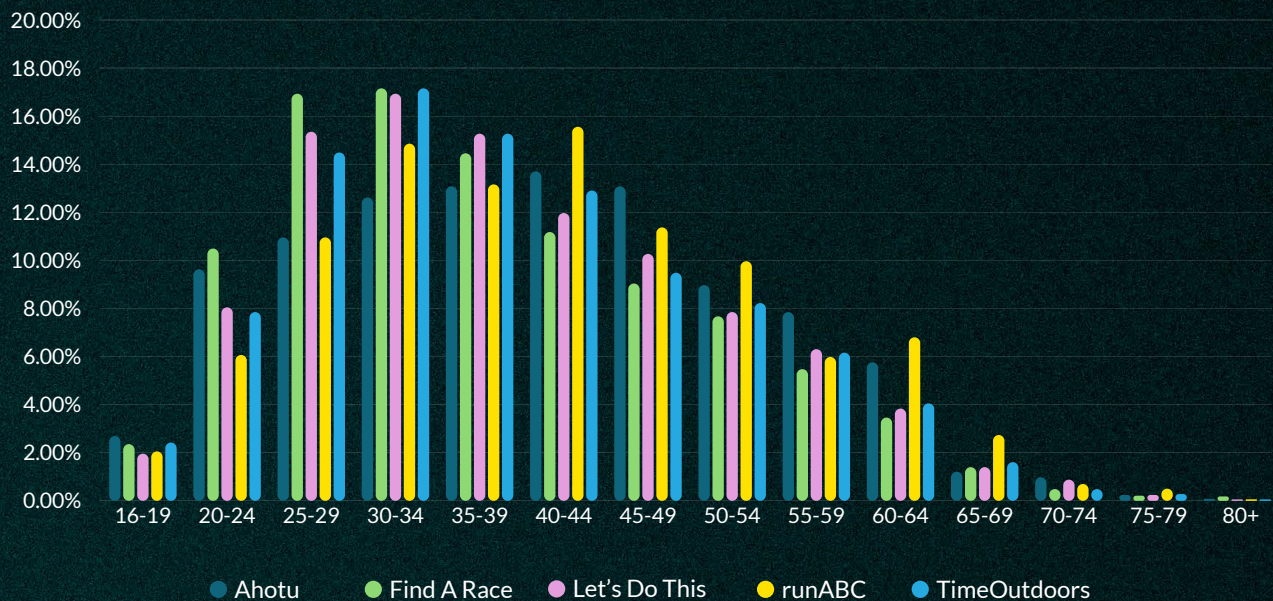
Marketplace Bookings - Total Share



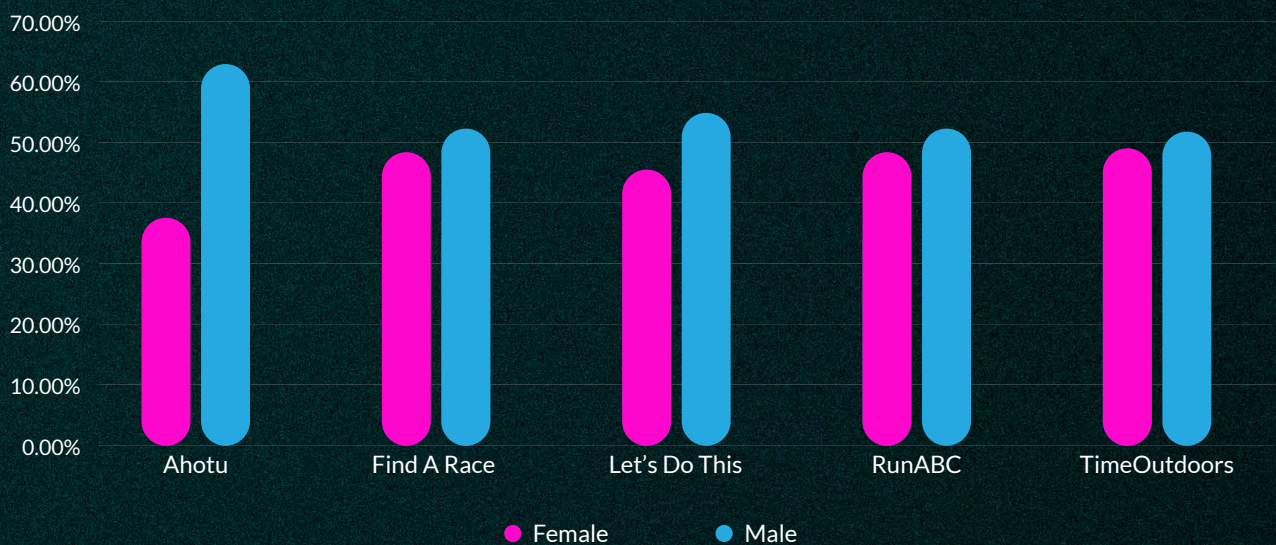
Marketplace Demographics



Marketplace Age Demographics



All marketplaces generated more male bookings, though this mirrors the overall industry composition. Event organisers should view marketplaces as complementary discovery channels rather than primary booking platforms, with value derived from exposure to audiences who might not otherwise find their events.



Referral and Group Entries

8.5%

of bookings came through referrals or group entries, demonstrating the social nature of events and the value of facilitating group participation.

Abandon Cart Recoveries

33.8%

recovery rate from abandon cart emails—one of the highest-return interventions available to organisers.

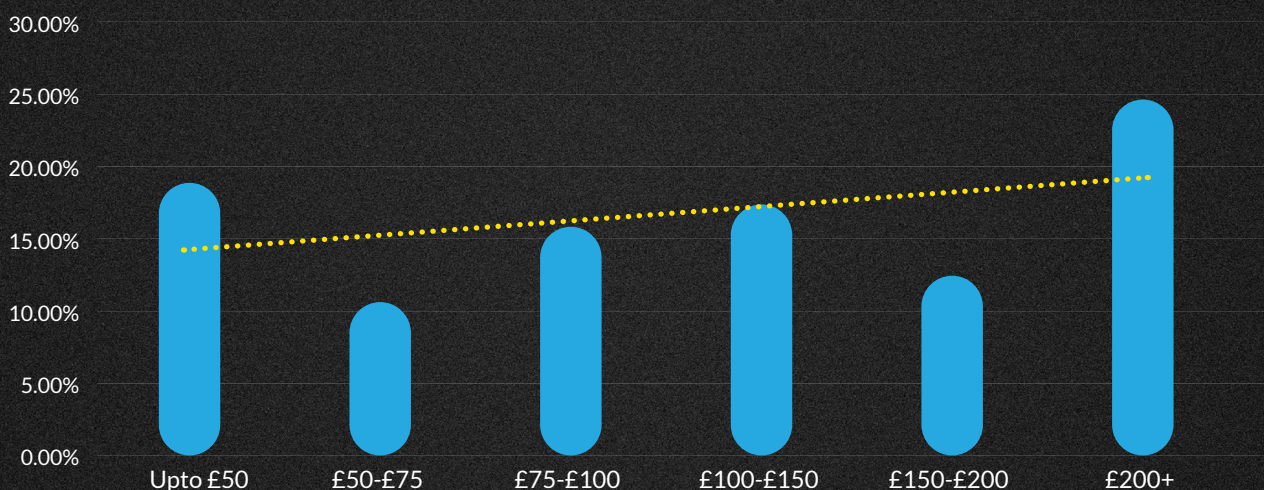
PAYMENT TRENDS

Digital wallets continued their rise in popularity, with over 75% of transactions now happen through Apple Pay, Google Pay, and Link. This reflects broader consumer payment preferences and the superior checkout experience these methods provide.

Buy Now Pay Later services (Klarna and Clearpay) accounted for approximately 1% of transactions, though this payment method is not yet widely enabled across the platform.

Payment Plans (subscription payments allowing participants to spread the cost of an event/merchandise over multiple months using regular card payments rather than Klarna or Clearpay) were used by 4.2% of participants when making purchases. However, this average masks an important dynamic: as basket value increases, payment plan adoption rises sharply. When the total basket reaches £200 or more, nearly 25% of participants opt to spread their payments.

Payment Plans



This demonstrates the importance of offering flexible payment options, particularly when trying to increase basket value through add-ons, upgrades, or premium experiences.

Participant Retention

11%

of participants entered more than one event with the same organiser within 2025.

26%

of 2024 participants returned to the same organiser (not necessarily the same event) in 2025.

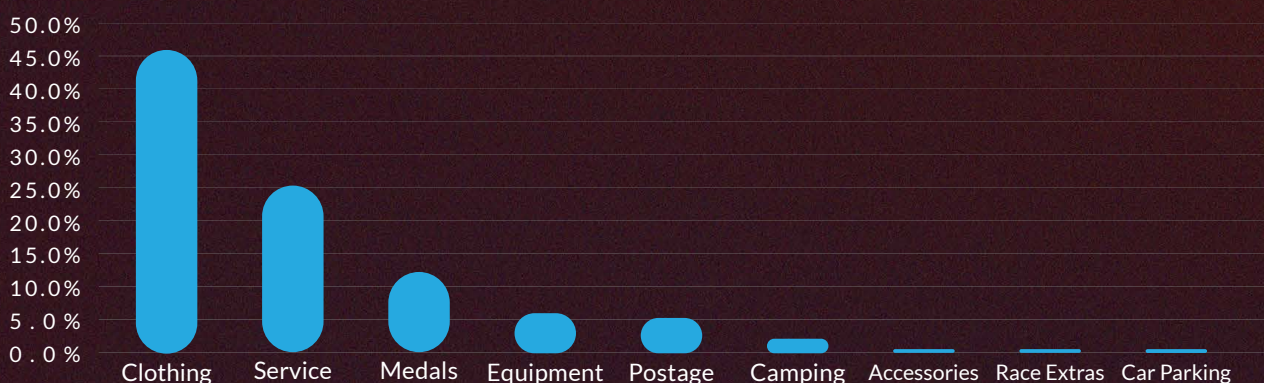
REVENUE BEYOND ENTRY FEES

Merchandise and Add-on Purchases

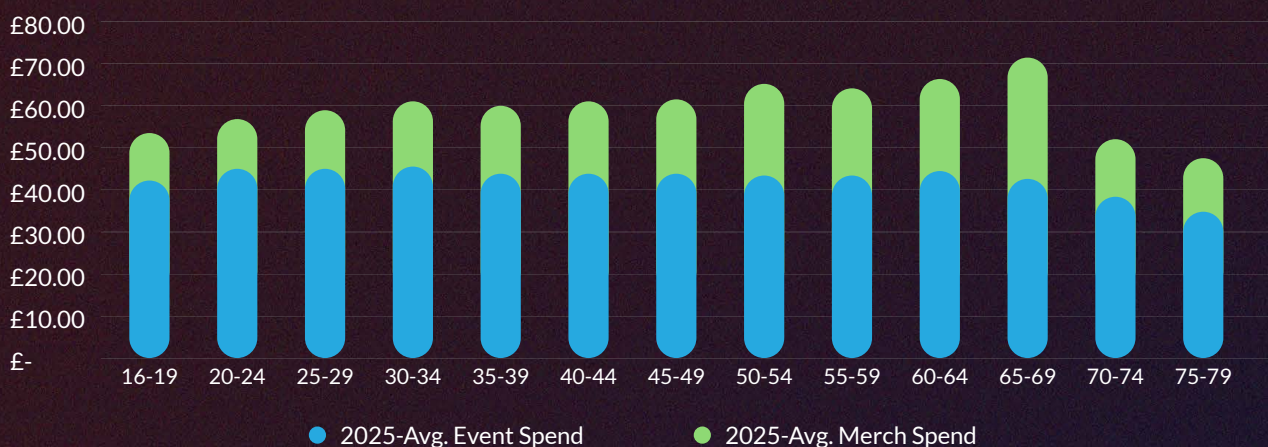
Additional purchases remain one of the best ways to increase revenue per participant. In 2025, 14.5% of participants made optional purchases beyond their entry fee, with an average spend of £16.

Clothing dominated add-on sales, comprising over 45% of all merchandise purchases. Event-branded apparel serves both practical needs (race day wear) and emotional ones (memento of achievement, community identity).

Add-ons by Type



Age demographics revealed an interesting spending pattern: whilst younger participants paid slightly more for event entries (likely due to later booking and missing early-bird prices), older participants spent significantly more on add-ons. Total basket value increased with age, driven primarily by merchandise purchases.



Donations

7.9%

of participants donated when given the option, averaging £5 each.

Add-on Purchases

14.5%

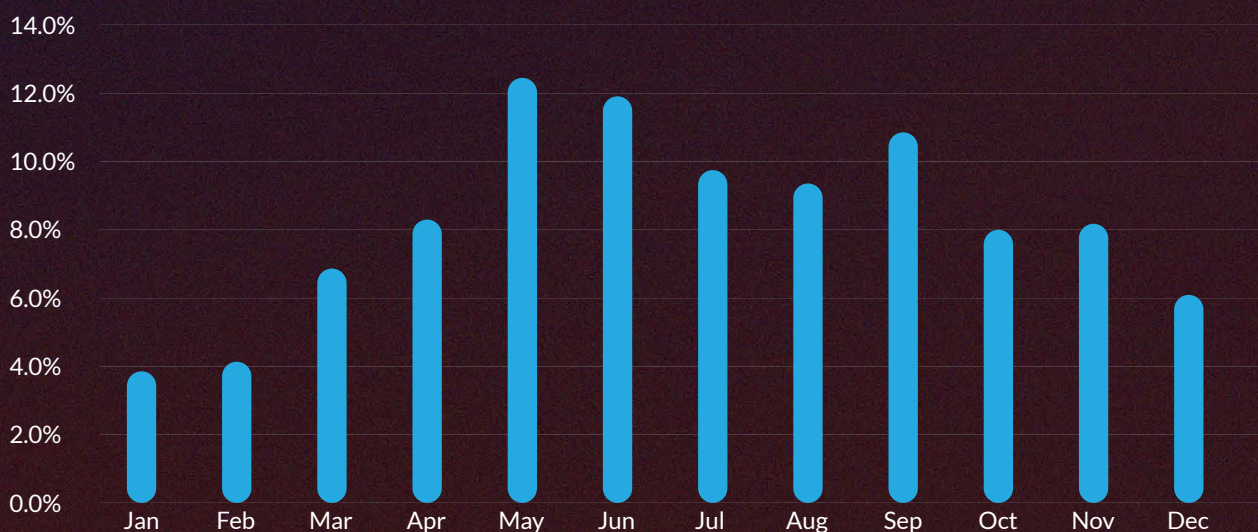
of participants purchased add-ons, averaging £16 per transaction.

EVENT ANALYSIS

Event Density

2025 saw a record number of events working with eventrac. May and June were the most popular months to stage a race, hosting 12.5% and 11.9% of annual events respectively. The lowest months were January, February and December, which accounted for a combined total of 14% of races.

Event Density



Pricing

Running event prices increased by an average of 6%, with short distances showing the biggest increases:

5km:
+10.1%

10km:
+9.9%

Half Marathon:
+3-4%
for established events

Marathon:
+4-6%
for established events

Event size proved more important than distance for pricing. Smaller boutique events (100-249 participants) charged on average 15-20% less than large mass-participation events (2,500+), yet successfully maintained premium pricing through quality and personalised experiences.

Events don't need to be large to charge premium prices—professional organisation and participant experience justify higher fees regardless of size.

Triathlon pricing remained stable, with Sprint distances at £64 (+1.9%) and Olympic distances at £90 (+5.4%). Mid-to-large-sized triathlon events (500-2,500 participants) face increasing pressure from both cheaper grassroots alternatives and premium branded experiences, highlighting the importance of clear differentiation in the market.

CONCLUSION

The mass participation sports events industry delivered strong growth in 2025. The 7.8% year-on-year increase demonstrates genuine market expansion.

Three structural shifts will define the industry's trajectory over the coming years:



Demographic Evolution.

The steady influx of participants aged 25-39 isn't a temporary phenomenon—it represents a fundamental recomposition of the participant base. This cohort brings different expectations around technology integration, social experience, and value proposition. Event organisers who adapt to these preferences will capture disproportionate growth.



Accelerating Gender Parity.

Female participation growth outpaces male growth across all age groups, with younger cohorts already achieving near-perfect gender balance. Events that cultivate welcoming, inclusive environments will benefit from this expanding market segment, whilst those that neglect it will face competitive disadvantage.



Revenue Diversification.

Entry fees alone represent an incomplete revenue model. The data clearly demonstrates that merchandise (14.5% attachment rate), payment plans (25% uptake for baskets over £200), donations (7.9% participation), and premium experiences generate meaningful incremental revenue.

DON'T GET LEFT BEHIND: ESSENTIAL CAPABILITIES FOR 2026

Frictionless digital payments:

75% of transactions use digital wallets—clunky checkouts cost bookings

Payment plans matter:

18% uptake for events under £50, rising to 25% when baskets exceed £200

Active retention pays off:

26% return rates leave money on the table. Email, referrals, and loyalty programmes work—with eventrac, they cost nothing to implement

Merchandise drives revenue:

14.5% attachment at £16 average. Make products available at checkout through your own stock or partnerships

Abandon cart recovery:

34% recovery rate means not using it wastes one in three lost bookings

Market to 25–39 year olds:

They drive growth. If your imagery and messaging targets 40-somethings, you're behind

Inclusivity isn't just nice to have:

Younger cohorts are at gender parity. Male-dominated events will struggle

The industry is growing and the participant base is changing. Younger participants expect seamless digital experiences, women are entering events in record numbers, and revenue increasingly comes from beyond just entry fees.

Organisers who embrace these shifts through better technology, inclusive marketing, and diversified revenue streams will thrive. Those who don't will struggle to compete.

2026 offers a clear opportunity: capture growth by investing in the capabilities that matter and building relationships that keep participants coming back.

ABOUT EVENTRAC

eventrac is a comprehensive event management and marketing platform built for mass participation sports events across the UK and beyond. It's easy to use - no technical knowledge needed - and most organisers use it for free.

We bring everything you need into one online place: your own website, entry forms, payment processing, automated advertising across FindARace and other UK platforms, email marketing, referral schemes, loyalty programmes, membership tools, and your own time-saving AI-powered customer support agent. Built-in analytics show you booking trends and participant behaviour to help you make smarter decisions about your events.

GET IN TOUCH



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