



University Ringing Society Survey 2025

The Results...



THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH
BELL RINGERS

Undertaken by the CCCBR Young
Ringers for Ringing 2030 Workgroup



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Survey Aim

The Survey was aimed at University Ringing Societies, and was designed to gather information about

- The size of the Society
- The activities which the societies undertake
- Interaction with non university ringing in the area
- Leadership within the societies
- Recruitment methods
- Teaching practises
- SU Affiliation
- Finances
- Major projects which had been undertaken
- Communication within and between societies
- Thoughts of members on ringing after University

Survey Analysis

Ideally this information can be used to understand how University societies achieve success in various areas.

It is hoped to transfer this success into other areas of ringing, especially that of the 'after University age' ringing.



Size of University Societies

Current Student Ringers

Looking at the numbers of pre-existing ringers and those taught by the societies, divided up by society size...

Size of Society	Number of Student Ringers	Number of Ringers Taught by Society	Percentage of Ringers Taught by Society	Number of Pre-Existing Ringers
Smaller Societies	1	0	0%	1
	4	0	0%	4
	4	0	0%	4
	4	1	25%	3
	5	3	60%	2
	5	2	40%	3
Medium Societies	7	2	30%	5
	8	4	50%	4
	8	2	25%	6
	12	6	25%	6
	14	10	50%	4
	15	10	66%	5
Larger Societies	17	9	55%	8
	17	10	60%	7
	20	1	5%	19
	20	10	50%	10
	22	10	45%	12
	28	12	40%	16
	30	15	50%	15
Totals	241	107	45%	134

Conclusion

There appears to be a significant amount of teaching going on within University Societies. Excluding very small societies approximately half of the student ringers were taught by the society they ring with.

The survey was released at the end of the academic year, so it is reasonable to assume that people taught by the society are still ringing with them after at least 1 (academic) year, as they are counted as active members.



Nearly half (8 of 19) societies have 9 or more current members taught by the society. Given the turnover of students, many of whom are on 3 year courses, on average they could be teaching and retaining 3 new ringers a year.

Non Student Ringers – Ringing Critical Mass

Once a University society is established, and has achieved a critical mass, of about 5–6 ringers, from this survey, it appears that enough other ringers are available that ringing can take place in a healthy environment of 15–25 active ringers. The largest numbers were reported for societies who regularly ring at towers with 10 or 12 bells.

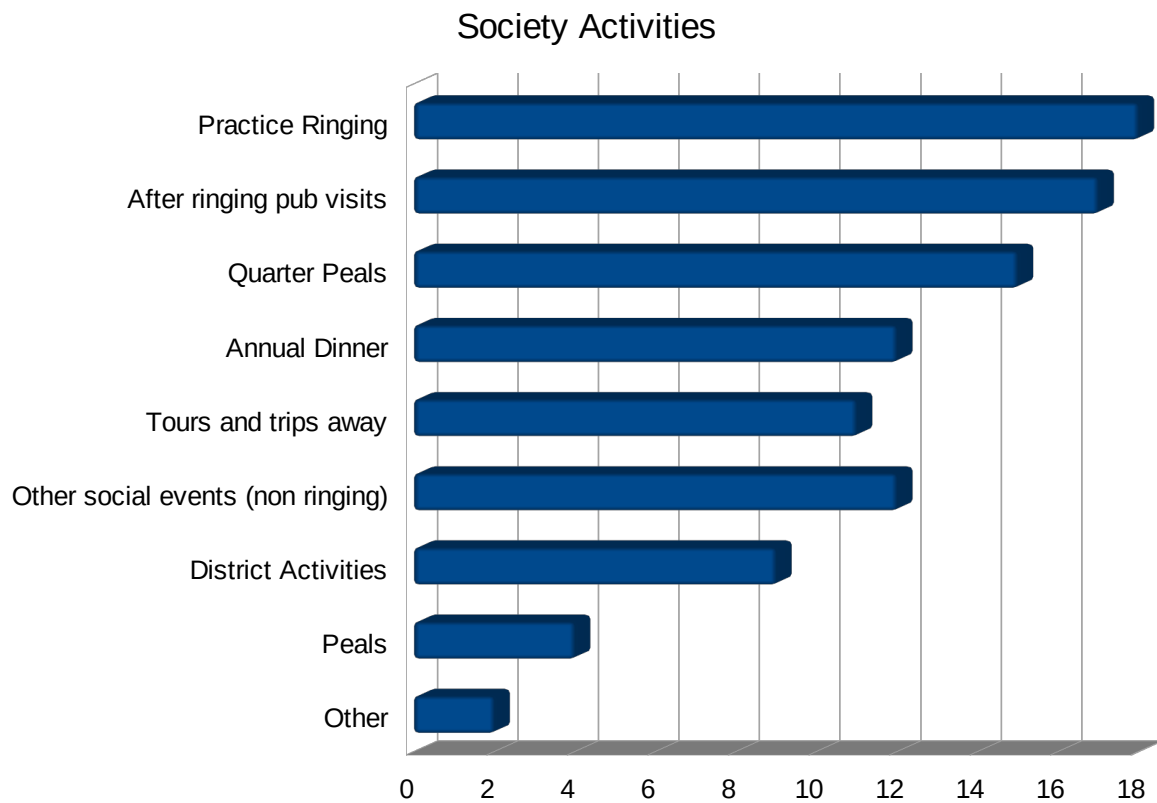
Leadership

Much of the leadership / organisation of societies is done by people who arrive with ringing experience. This seems to be particularly true in the smaller societies. Those societies that teach a high proportion of their members, seem more likely to sometimes have new ringers in leadership / organisational roles. Attracting experienced ringers seems to be important in keeping societies active and attractive.



Activities

What do University societies do?



Most societies have activities beyond the ringing practice. Nearly half take part in District activities. More than half have non ringing based social activities.



Ringling in the Area

Do society members ring outside the society? If so, why? Are they actively involved with the local guilds etc, and do they involve local ringers?

8. Ringing around the area. Do society members...

● Never ● When asked ● Sometimes ● Often ● Does not apply

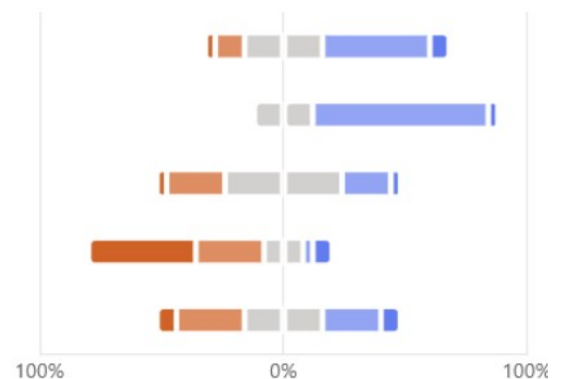
Visit other local practices to help out?

Visit other local practices to improve own ringing?

Join in District and Guild events?

Hold posts in local District / Guild?

Do local ringers attend Society ringing events?



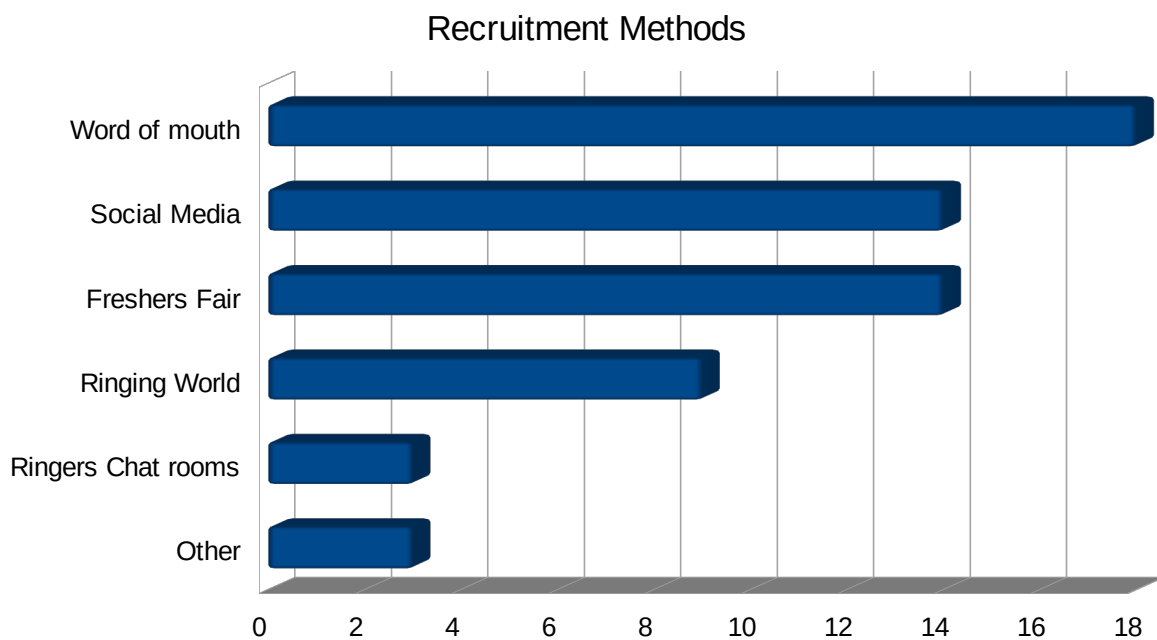
Generally University societies appear to be quite gregarious. They often go to other practices, both to help those practises out and to improve their own ringing. Does this interaction and willingness to go out to improve help with teaching and retaining new ringers?

They are less interested in District / Guild activities, but there is some interaction nonetheless.



Recruitment

Recruiting Existing Ringers who are coming to University



Word of Mouth is the most popular way of recruiting existing ringers. Only the OU did not include it as a recruitment tool.

Social Media and the Freshers Fair are the other main means of attracting existing ringers.

Affiliation to SU and Fresher's Fair

All societies which are Affiliated to their Student Union use the Fresher's Fair (except OU). Several of the larger societies (Birmingham, Oxford and London) are not affiliated to the SU, but Birmingham still attend the Freshers Fair.

The smallest societies are often not affiliated, which puts them at a disadvantage, if the Fresher's Fair is a good recruitment area.



Recruiting New Ringers at University

All but 3 University Societies actively try to recruit new ringers. Of those that do not, one is OU, and the others are very small, and do not have enough ringers to run a practice, they ring with local ringers.

Half of University Societies attempt to recruit ringers from other Institutions. Those that do not, generally replied that there are no other local Institutions from whom to recruit.



It is clear that Word of Mouth, The Freshers Fair are important in recruiting new ringers.

We would like information about marketing and recruitment techniques used.



Retention, Progress and Teaching...

Retention

University Societies seem to generally find it very easy to retain contact with alumni.

There was an almost equal split between the societies who found it Difficult, Easy or were Neutral about retaining ringers for their whole university life. There appears to be no pattern for smaller or larger societies.

Progress

Progressing Ringers to Methods

Generally this was regarded as Neutral or Easy. The only society which found it Difficult, was also the only society which regarded teaching handling as Difficult.

Learning Advanced Methods

In general, the smaller societies have difficulty learning more advanced methods. Larger societies, seem to find it easier. Medium sized societies showed a spread of opinion.

The societies who suggested it was difficult to learn advanced methods, in general seem to teach more new ringers. It may be that time is spent on new recruits, whereas if fewer people are taught from scratch, existing ringers can progress more, in the time available. Obviously there is a difficult trade off as people only have some much time available.

Attracting New Ringers

All of the societies who had Difficulty attracting new ringers are small, with the exception of UL, who presumably face unique difficulties due to the multi institutional set up, and the large distances etc in London.

Teaching

The smallest societies rely very heavily on local ringers to provide teaching for new ringers. The medium sized and larger societies generally replied the teaching of new ringers is done by 1 or 2 Experienced ringers and Recent Graduates.



Larger societies are more attractive to ringers, and those wanting to learn. They have more power to progress people. The confidence and ability to teach may have a long term influence on the success of ringers who start ringing at University.

In general, university societies seem to be happy teaching, with a Neutral or Easy score in all but one case.



Student Union Affiliation and Finances

Affiliation

13 of the Societies are affiliated to their Student Union. 7 are not.

Bank Accounts

Of the 13 Affiliated societies, 11 use banking facilities provided by the SU.

Of the 7 unaffiliated societies, only one reported any difficulty opening and maintaining a bank account, but 5 of the societies reported that this question was Not Applicable, suggesting that they do not use a bank account.

Major Projects

The Annual Dinner profits seem to be a popular fund raising source. Careful selection of people to do work, and therefore reduction of costs has been mentioned.

Conclusion

2/3 of societies are affiliated to their Student Union, of whom about half receive funding. Banking facilities from the SU are generally used where available, but non affiliated societies generally seem to have no problem opening and managing a bank account.



Communication

Communication within societies is generally by WhatsApp and email.

Communication between societies is traditionally by Facebook / Messenger, but Instagram is becoming more widely used.

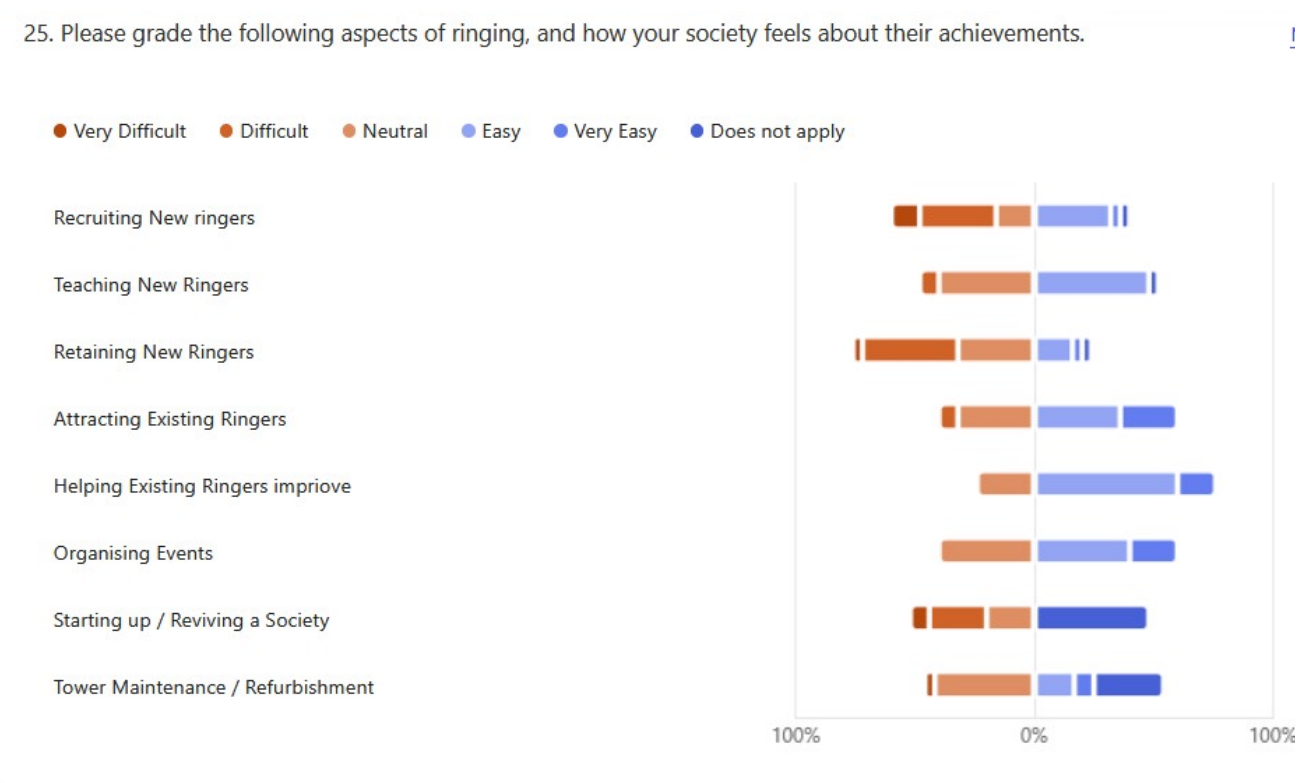
NUA seems very organised, with a dedicated Facebook group every year, but contact information on web pages is a valuable resource, especially for those societies who use a generalised email address which does not change from year to year.

The online presence is very important when recruiting. As more societies move to Instagram there are lessons that can be learned about marketing to younger people in general.



Achievements

This is a representation of the answers received, concerning how societies perceive the ease / difficulty of their achievements.



These figures would suggest that it is difficult to revive or start a University Ringing Society, but once it is established, teaching and learning in this environment are very successful, and societies, once established, can continue healthily, attracting ringers who go to University, and helping them improve and progress.

The obvious difficulty is attracting and retaining new ringers. Several societies have shared their experiences, and these will be available on the new University Ringing website.



Help!

There is a strong tradition of support for University societies from local ringers.

The main benefits of using local ringers seem to be

- Engagement
- Ease of contact
- Practical help when numbers are low at practise nights etc
- Easy communication

Few societies seem to feel the need for everyday help from any other source, but there are certain areas where centrally provided help, using information and experience gained from similar societies would be useful.

Generally the smallest societies see the greatest need for help, especially in the following areas...

- Student Union – Non affiliation, access to Freshers Fair etc
- Building up a society – there are several societies who have historically achieved this and their stories can be useful.

I think there should also be help available in the area of large project / fundraising etc as there is limited experience of this amongst the respondents, probably because these projects do not happen very often.



The Future

How do people view post University Ringing?

29. How do members feel about ringing after University, especially if planning to move away?

[N](#)

Disagree Neutral Agree Does not apply

They expect to continue ringing when they leave

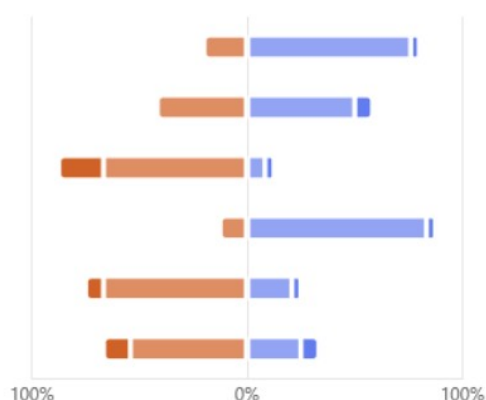
They expect to find it easy to find ringing at their standard

They would expect to take leadership roles where they ring

They would hope to find other younger ringers to ring with

They feel work will make progress in ringing difficult

Ringing will be their main social activity when they move to a new city



The expectation is that people will

- Continue ringing after university
- Probably find ringing of the standard they would wish
- They strongly wish to find other young ringers to ring with
- They are generally neutral about whether work will interfere too much with ringing
- They will have other social activities outside of ringing

Generally they do not expect to take leadership roles immediately. This may not be their choice.



What would you like to take with you?

The Question was...

Which Aspects of University ringing would you most like to take with you in your ringing life after University?

Comments included...

- Sociability, leadership opportunities. The general willingness to try interesting things out.
- Friends, ringing skills, involvement in a worldwide, tight-knit community, providing a service for my local area, involving myself in local traditions, continuing multi-generational relationships, intense enjoyment
- Ringing with other young ringers/ringers our age is a major part of it, as these friendships are often closer than those formed between us and older ringers
- Organisational aspects – as we are a small society, most members will be on committee at some point in their time at University. This gives opportunities to experience responsibilities – such as organising events, managing risk assessments and other admin for the SU, running Freshers' Fair stalls, etc – in a relatively low-pressure environment, with other members available for support.
- As a new ringer myself this year, the patient, open-minded attitude of the experienced ringers in the society makes University ringing a really enjoyable and pressure-free experience – I think having a variety of experience/skill levels within a ringing practice makes it a really rewarding time for all. Doing social activities outside of ringing is also really valuable as well

What university ringing offers which is difficult to find in the wider ringing community...

- Ringing with younger people
- Having responsibility and leadership roles
- Learning to organise
- Not have to wait for older people to learn things
- Peer support
- Ready made social life outside ringing



Appendix 1 – Survey Timescale and Guidance

The survey was open to responses from invited University Societies from 26th May to 30th June 2025.

The survey link was sent out, with an invitation to partake, to all UK University Societies thought to be currently active. The invitation specified that the survey could be filled in by individuals or groups, and multiple replies from the same society would be welcome.

Response Summary

A total of 25 responses were received from the survey participants. These represented 20 societies, with a maximum of 2 responses from any one society.

There were no notable failures to respond. (For any societies which did not submit data, a reply to the invitation to say that the society was not active was received).

Time Taken to Complete the Survey

The average time to complete the questionnaire was 19 minutes.

Below 10 minutes – 11

10-20 minutes – 7

Above 20 minutes – 7