

“Dropout” - the *Facts*

As evidence to the latest ISAF investigation into the “impact of high level sports on youth sailors” IODA has been researching the future sailing of top-level (and not so top-level) Optimist sailors.

The influential American Academy of Pediatrics has noted that:

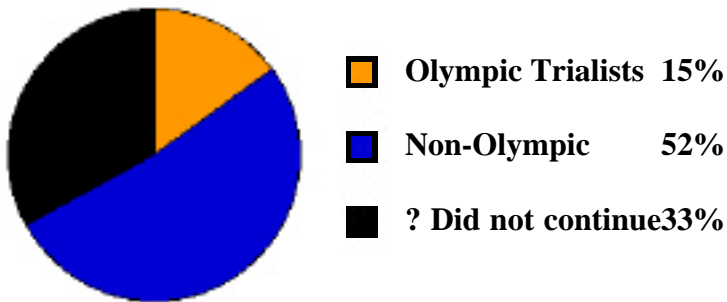
“Considerable research has addressed anxiety and stress that affect children who engage in competitive sports *but little data exist about the effects.*”

IODA has decided to research and publish some data in relation to sailing.

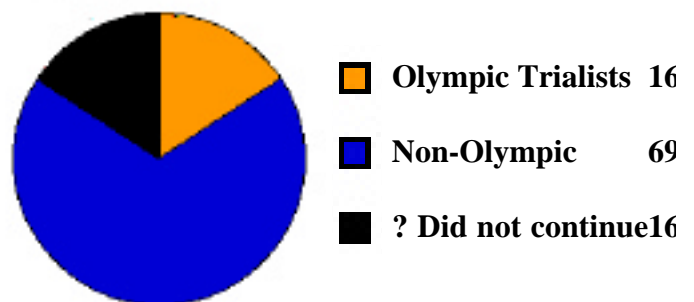
Ten Years On: the sailors at the 1994 Worlds

In 1994 181 sailors from 39 countries took part in the Optimist Worlds in Sardinia. What happened to them afterwards?

67% of them continued to sail

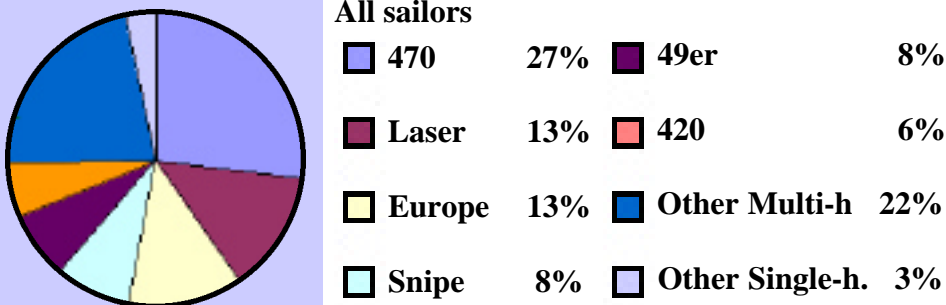


and in the European Union 84%

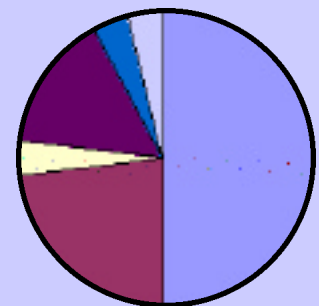


What did they sail?

All sailors



Olympic trialists

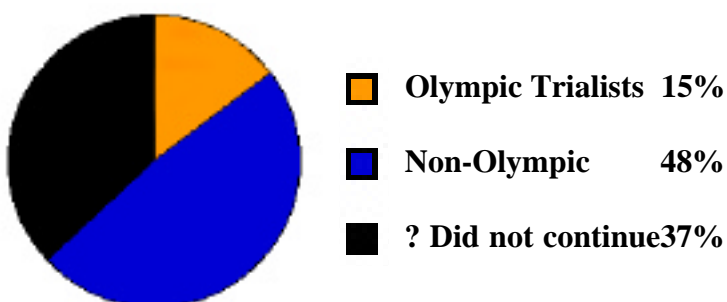


What about the younger sailors:

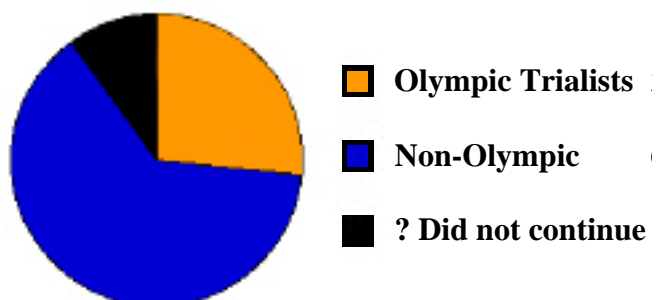
Concerns have been expressed that those who compete in our Worlds at a young age may “burn out”.

So we studied the 108 sailors who competed at aged 12 or under in the ten years 1987-1996.

63% of them continued to sail



and in the European Union 90%





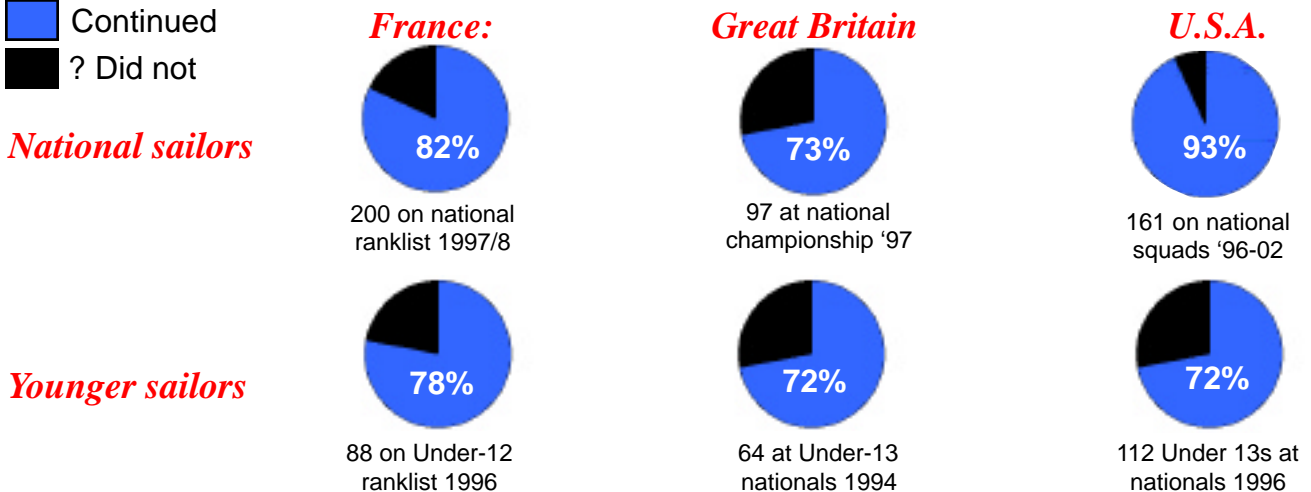
Among the 12-year olds who competed in these Optimist Worlds are such famous names as **Gustavo Martinez Doreste** and **Ben Ainslie**. but it is equally important for the future of sailing that they include **Wong May-E** (SIN) who sailed a 470 in the SEA Games, **Marcos Mascarenhas** (BRA) who sailed in the Snipe Western Hemispheres and **Helen Fischer** (GER) who helms her H-Boat successfully against men.

So the “elite” continue to sail. What about the others?

We studied participants in two national championships (France and Great Britain) in 1997/8 and the U.S.A. national training squad 1996-2002. These are “ordinary” racing sailors, some of the estimated 6,000 who take part in Optimist national championships worldwide. And again we looked also at the 12 year olds. **A total of 722 sailors were researched.**

What percentage continued to sail after the Optimist?

 Continued
 ? Did not



So once sailors are enthusiastic enough to enter their national championships or get on training squads 70-80% of them at least will continue to sail after 16.

This drop out rate compares very favourably with most other sports.

Our conclusions:

There is more to a lifetime of sailing than the Olympics

Yes, “high-level” Optimist sailing produces most of the Olympic helms. But this is an ambition achieved by less than 250 sailors at each Games.

In the “developed” sailing countries drop out is very low, even among non-elite sailors

Over 70% of Optimist sailors who reach even national championship level continue to sail. And if they reach national team level this rises to over 80%. In other countries the drop-out level may be slightly higher; there may be fewer opportunities to sail and there may be other priorities.

Drop out occurs. Not every child who engages in “nautical activities” will continue to do so. Not every one who takes an introductory course at his local sailing school will enjoy sailing (however eminent a sailor his father may be!).

But most young sailors who choose to sail competitively will continue to do so for life.

Methodology: The above research was conducted using Google, keying in the name of the sailor + ‘sail’, ‘vela’ etc. The apparent lower continuation level in less-developed countries may be due to to less use of the internet to post regatta results and to transliteration of non-European names.