The Show Organisers Survey

Summary

The survey of 70 show organisers, conducted between 11 August and 23 September 2026, indicates that the current show model is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain.

Organisers face acute shortages of judges, stewards and volunteers, alongside static or declining entries, narrow financial margins, venue constraints and limited succession planning. Most rely on personal networks and other organisers rather than formal RKC support, highlighting a need for more accessible official guidance.

Only 34% are confident they will still be running shows in five years, while 21% already consider their show at risk or unsustainable. Priority actions include creating a central directory of judges, stewards and volunteers; expanding training and mentoring for judges; simplifying qualification routes for judges; strengthening organisational support; and developing a clear strategy to attract and prepare the next generation of organisers and officials.

Background

One of the key areas identified on the OLC Strategic Plan, was to support clubs to continue to run shows and to grow new show options. To help us gain a better picture of the current situation for clubs, we compiled a survey to be completed by any involved in the organisation of shows so that we have as much information as possible.

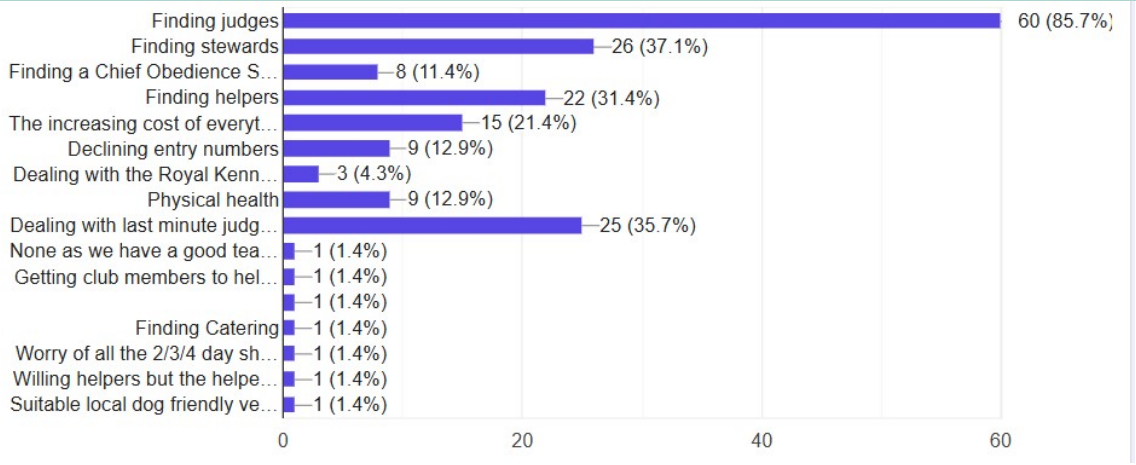
The survey ran from 11th August 2026 until 23rd September 2026 and 70 people responded.

The Responses

- 67% of the respondents had been running shows for 10 years or more and only a 17% have started with the last 5 years.
- 59% of people organise 1 main season show a year, and 36% run 2 or more main season shows
- 44% run a championship show
- 56% run a show for 2 or more days
- Only 26% run a winter show
- Distribution of respondents from all areas, most from South East & East Anglia, fewest from Northern Ireland & Wales.

Main Challenges

- Almost 86% of show organisers said that finding judges was the biggest challenge
- Finding stewards was next (37%) and
- Dealing with last minute judge/steward changes was close behind (36%).



Solutions suggested – Key Themes

	Number of replies	%
Giving back/mandatory participation/ more judges	35	50%
Judges training & mentorship	16	23%
Official Directory	10	14%
No clear solution/current issue	8	11%

N.B. Themes are non-exclusive, so percentages do not total 100%

Support required

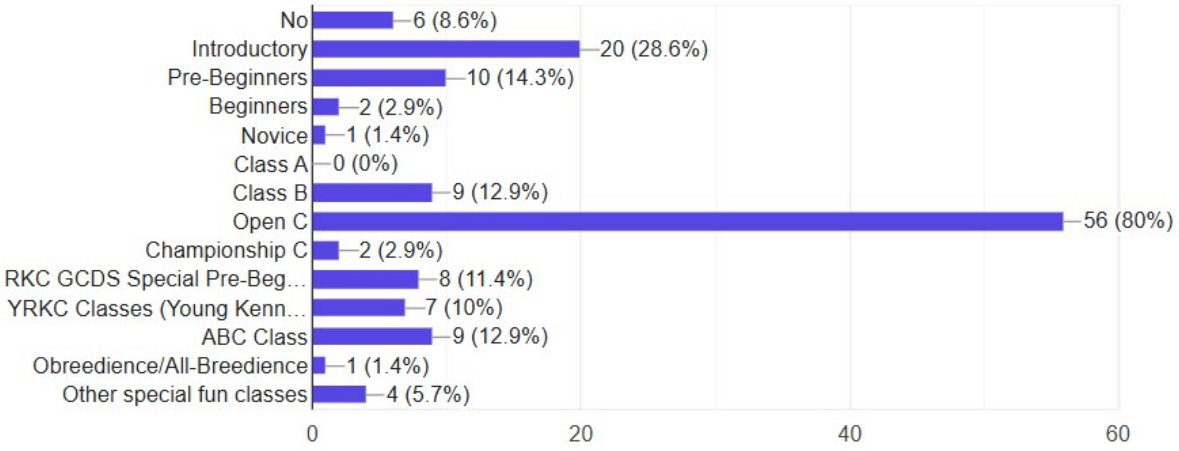
- Giving back, incentives & culture change
- More Judging courses / mentorship
- Streamline the process to be a judge - look at different ways to qualify rather than an exam
- List of Judges /stewards

Chief Steward

- 75 % said that they did not have a problem finding a CS
- There were concerns about succession planning if the current stable situation changed

Finding Judges for Classes

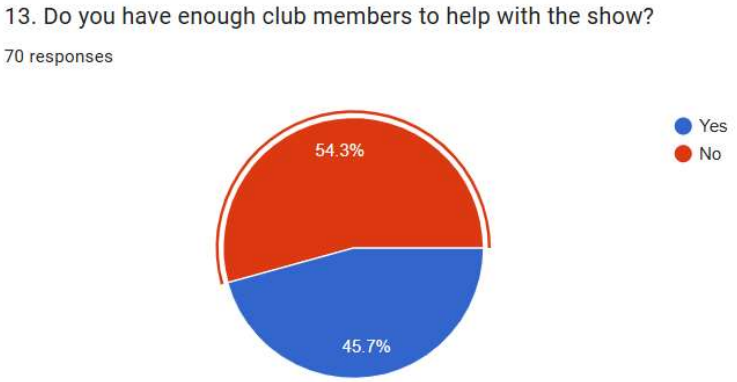
- Class C was by far the hardest to fill (80%)
- Followed by Introductory (29%)
- Class A and Novice were the least hard to fill



How hard to fill other roles

- 33% stated that finding stewards was hard
- 19% general help on the day
- 16% car parkers
- 17% Scent decoy
- 13% scoreboard stewards

Help Required



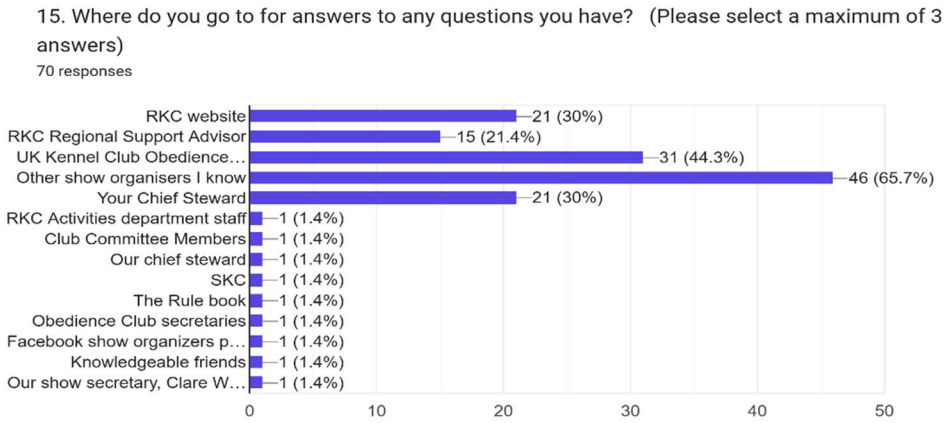
Where does help come from

Key sources of help:

- Friends and personal networks: 21 (50%)
- Competitors/show attendees: 14 (33%)
- Clubs, committees or former members: 10 (24%)
- General appeals/social media: 9 (21%)
- Family: 7 (17%)

Support for Show Organisers

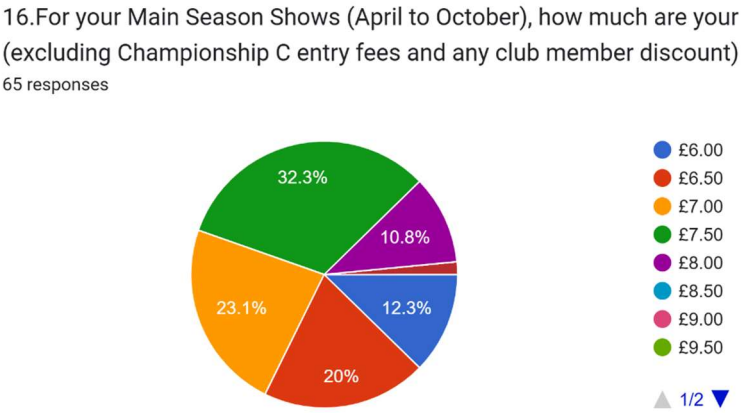
- Majority of show organisers look to other show organisers either directly (46 people) or via the facebook page (31 people) compared the RKC website or advisor



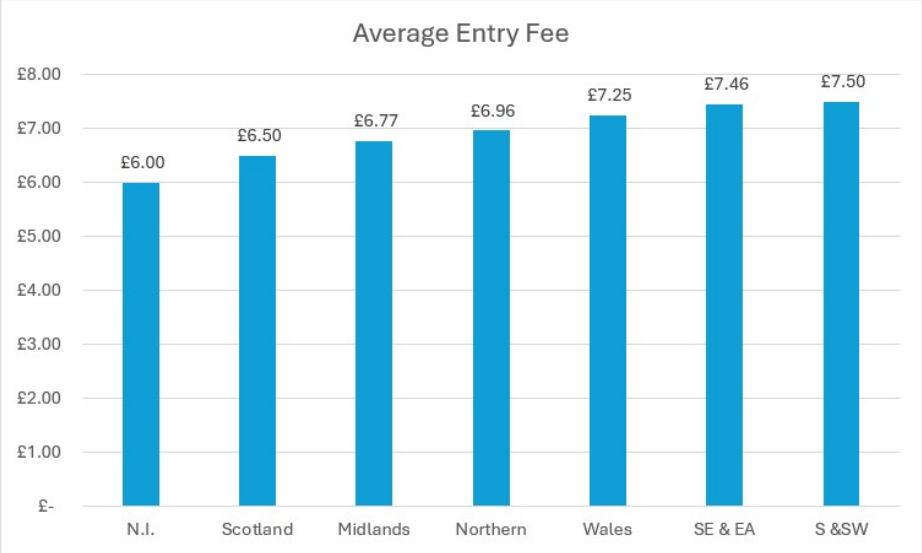
Entry Fees

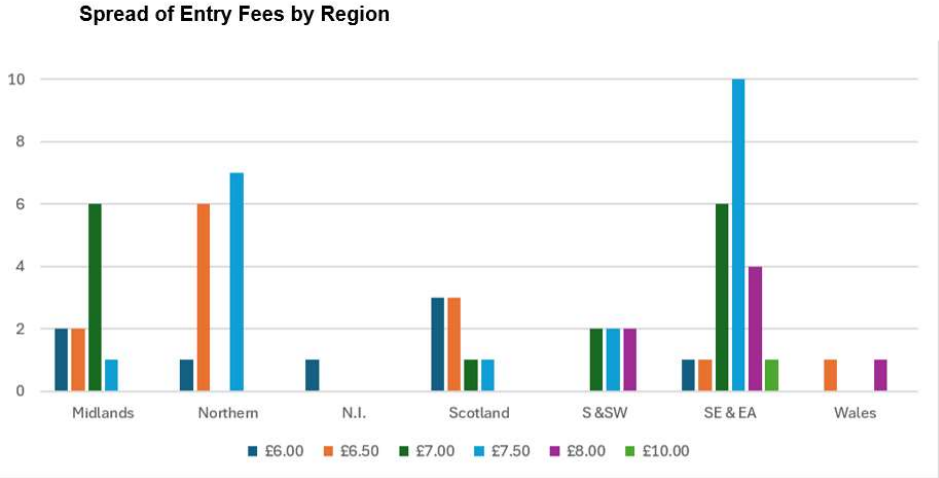
Main Season shows

- 75% are between £6.50-7.50
- Range £6.00-£10.00



Average entry Fee by Area





Winter shows

- 74% are between £7-7.50
- 26% are £9.50-10
- Range £7.00-10.00

Finances

	Make a loss	Break Even	Make a profit
Main Season shows	8%	56%	42%
Winter shows	8%	65%	39%

NB respondents could click 2 boxes

- Loss is mostly covered by club funds (56%)
- 21% said show was at risk / unsustainable
- 9% plan to increase entry fees.

Entries Numbers

Over the last 5 years, are your entries numbers -

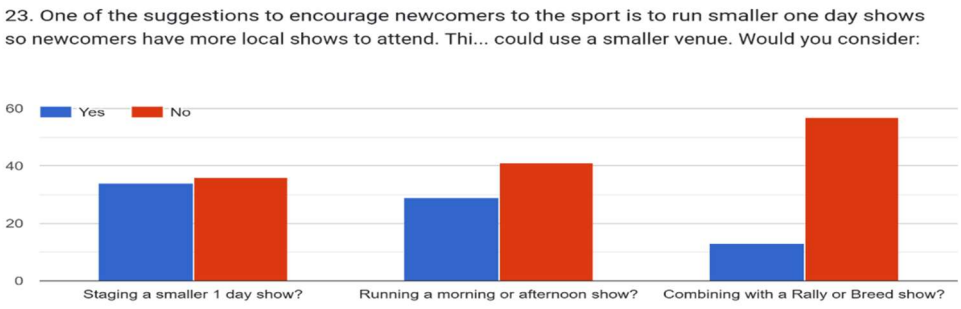
	Down	The same	Up
Main Season shows	39%	45%	16%

Future of shows

- Only 34% were confident they would be running a show in 5 years time.
- 26% saying they definitely won't be running shows
- 40% uncertain for a variety of reasons

Show format

One of the suggestions to encourage newcomers to the sport was to run smaller one day shows which were more local. When asked if the community would consider staging a smaller show, morning or afternoon show or combined show the results were



Reasons for answers

- Venue availability/suitability: 20 (31%)
- Workload, volunteers, age or time: 14 (22%)
- Already running/trialling these formats: 13 (20%)
- Cost and financial viability: 13 (20%)
- Positive or open to options: 11 (17%)

Other comments about show organisation

- RKC support, administration or rule changes: 13 (50%)
- Judges, stewards and volunteer participation: 10 (38%)

- Ageing workforce, workload and succession: 7 (27%)
- Promotion, newcomers and development: 6 (23%)
- Management support and shared services: 6 (23%)
- Conduct, respect and fairness: 4 (15%)

Conclusion

There were a number of issues raised by the survey :-

- The overwhelming concern is the lack of Judges/stewards
- The lack of helpers could greatly affect the running of shows in the future
- There was also a concern about the lack of RKC support, as most show organisers contact other show organisers for help/advice and not the RKC.
- A significant percentage are unsure if they will be running shows in the next 5 years
- Over half the clubs only expected to breakeven, which is a risk with escalating prices
- Although CS is not highlighted as a problem in the survey, there is a concern about succession planning for CS.
- Whilst most have good venues currently, there is a risk that a number of shows share the same venue so there could be a significant effect if that venue was lost.

Future consideration

- Directory of judges, stewards and volunteers
- Chief Steward being able to work dog
- Support for running shows
- CS training/ support & succession planning

Obedience Liaison Council

Results of OLC Show Organisers Survey September 2026

Appendix – Comments received

Create lists of qualified judges and stewards

Less red tape to qualify judges.

More availability to get new judges

tangible incentives to judge e.g priority treatment

A points system for those that give back to shows in all capacities

Encouraging the running of shows with less classes

Encouraging more people to judges

A points system - So many points for running/helping judging stewarding etc

Cheaper / free judging courses

People need to understand if they just take from this sport and don't put anything back then we won't have obedience shows.

We rely on offers of help from friends, family, competitors, or from other local clubs

Since our CS retired it's near impossible to engage a CS who has sufficient knowledge of the regs

More local shows as people are unwilling to give up their day to judge and steward with so few shows in the area.

Use Club funds to cover loss but not sustainable. If the show is not profitable it will be end of show.

Morning or afternoon shows are a good idea but the licence is too expensive

Venues are very difficult to obtain

We made a loss last year...couldn't afford to do that for too long

Cost of venue vs number of entries, risk of overrunning the time