

# BCA Demographics Report

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## Introduction

The report was produced to understand the demographic composition of the current BCA membership population and to understand trends relating to age and sex. This report has taken past influence from the 2020 BCA demographics report in structure and intent.

## Methodology

Data was collected from the membership database, and anonymised then sent to the publications and information officer. The data was imported to an Excel spreadsheet where simple statistical tests were carried out.

In this iteration, active caver and whole memberships were subcategorized within the dataset. Active cavers were taken to be any caver membership type not of the Non-Active caver which included student and the under 18 category. Furthermore, due to a small sample size of both age and gender data, for this report age and sex data were analyzed individually.

## Geographic Dataset Methodology

The dataset contained 6730 records. 247 records without postcodes were removed (these being the non-Irish international members), leaving 6483 membership records. There were 1791 unique postcode outcodes (first half) in the data, and there were members in nearly all of them.

After data cleaning, including removing blank or duff postcodes, a total of 5255 member records were added to the produced map. Due to issues with the shapefile the Northern Ireland dataset could not be easily rendered.

Note that there are a few postcodes where we have no recorded members such as central Scottish Motherwell postcode.

## Results

### Statistical reporting

Table 1: These statistics were generated from the combined Age- Sex dataset, showing a low set of complete records. Female and male ages though contain a similar average. (rounded to 3sf)

	<b>Active caver</b>	<b>All members</b>
Total Records	5695	6730
Complete records Age-Sex	869 (15.3%)	905 (13.4%)
Female mean age (years)	40.6	41.4
Male mean age (Years)	46.4	46.1

Table 2: taking both age, and sex as two separate datasets the average age of a caver rises and the gender imbalance becomes more apparent (round to 3sf)

	Active Caver	All Members
Complete records Age Only	2828 (50%)	3133 (47%)
Average Caver age (years)	45.5	47.1
Complete records Sex Only	1203 (21.1%)	1312 (19.5%)
Average Male: Female ratio	3.5:1	3.3:1

Age and

Gender

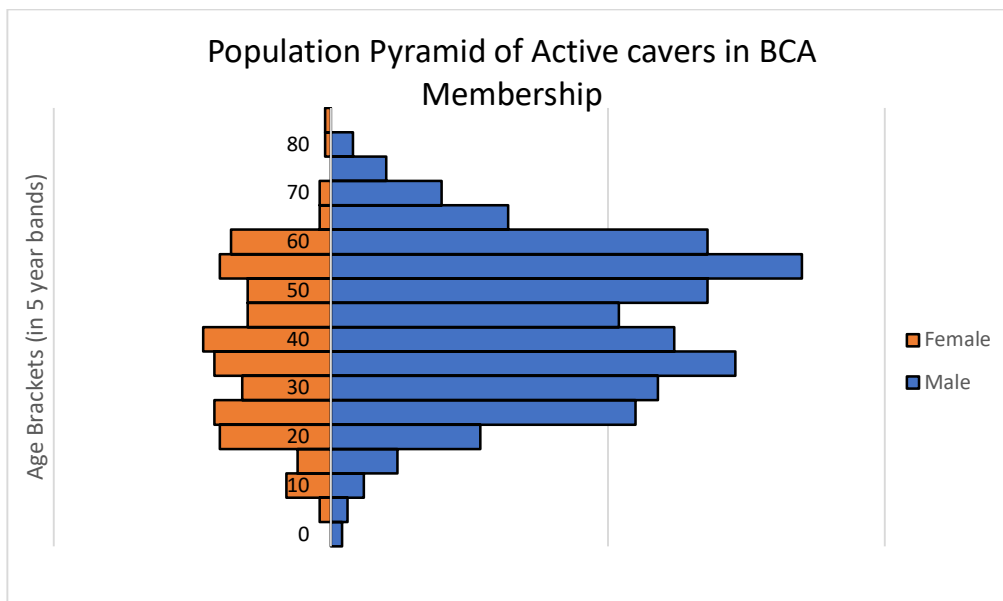
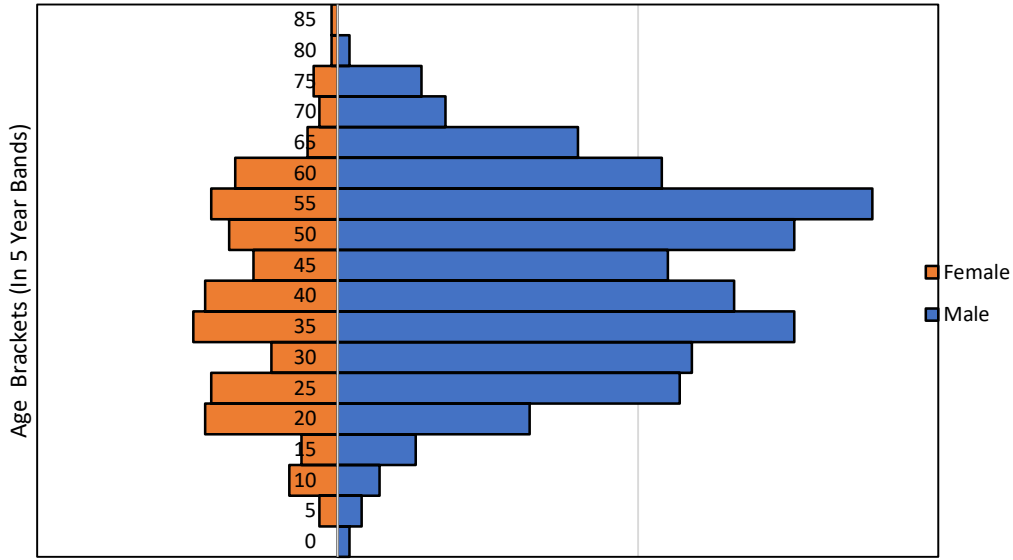


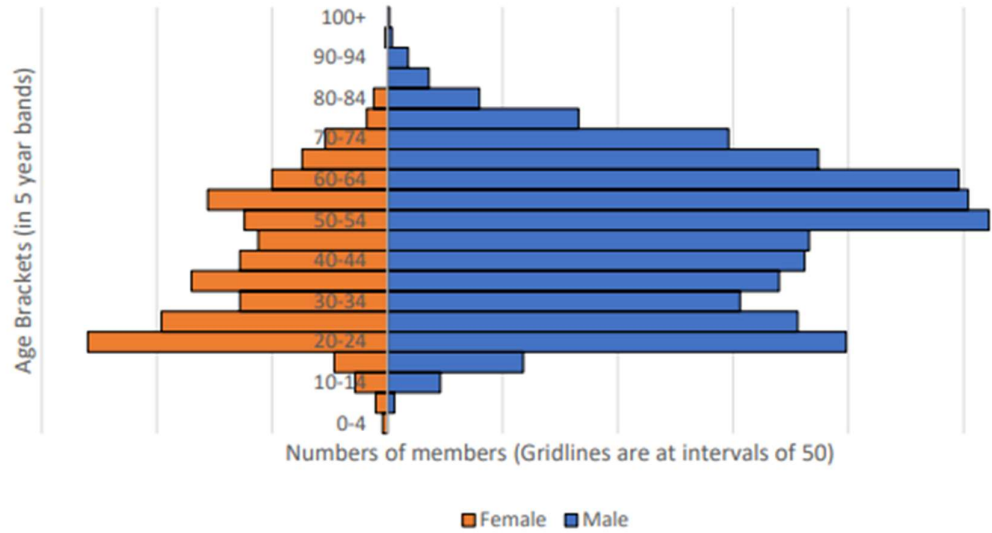
Figure 1 Across most age categories there is a larger number of male covers to female covers with the largest total number difference in the 55-59 Age category with a ratio of 4.25:1. Data lines are at intervals of 50.

Full BCA Membership Population Pyramid December 2024



With the same data listed below for the end of 2020

Population Pyramid of BCA Membership



## Sex

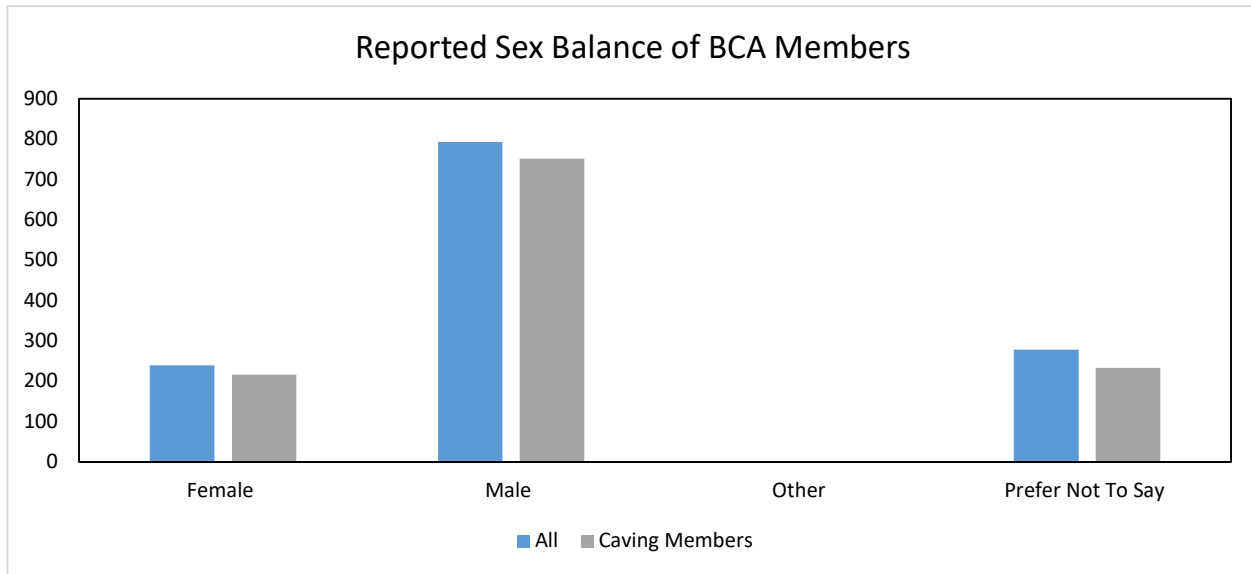
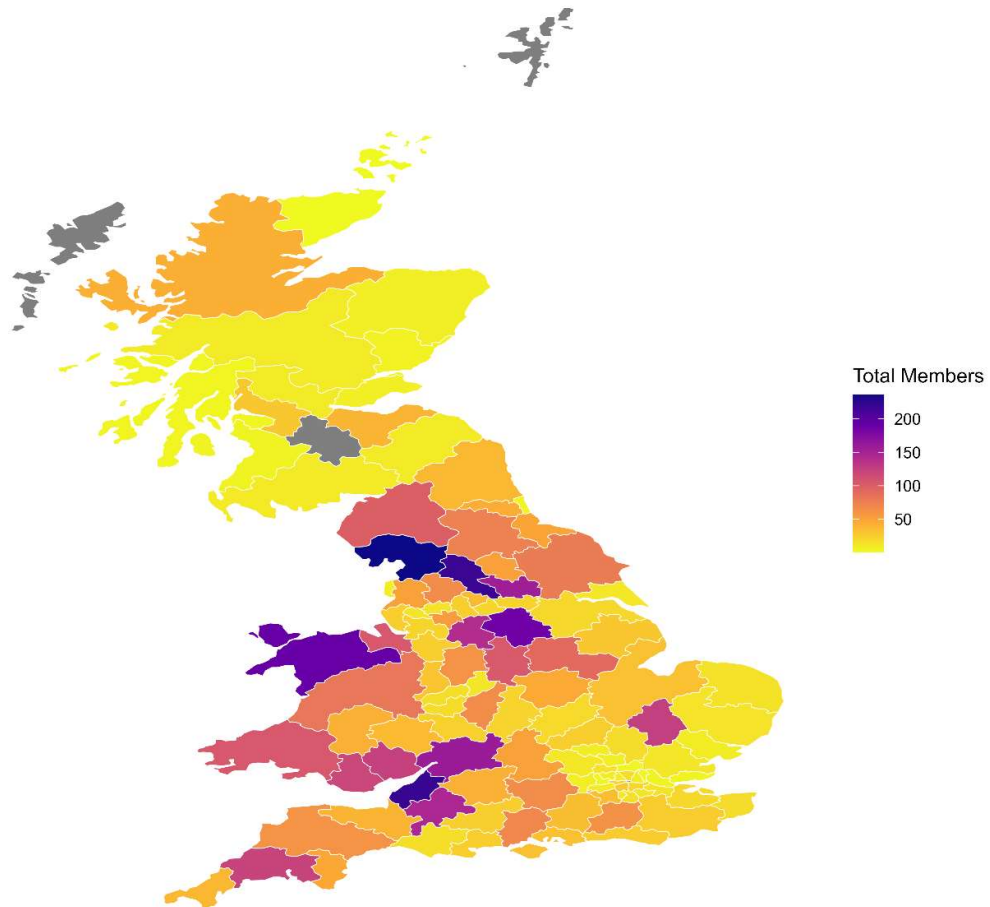


Figure 3: A separate sex dataset was made to look closer at the reported sexes and to compare the number of people reporting Prefer not to say. Though people report reporting as other were present they appear as a very low number in the dataset.

## Total Members per UK Postcode Area



<b>Most Populous Postcodes</b>	
LA	236 Lancashire
BS	220 Bristol and surroundings
BD	218 Bradford and West Yorkshire
LL	190 North Wales
S	186 Sheffield and South Yorkshire
GL	159 Gloucestershire
LS	155 Leeds and West Yorkshire
BA	145 Bath and Somerset
SK	140 Stockport and Derbyshire
CB	126 Cambridge and surroundings
<b>Least Populous Postcodes</b>	
KW	1 Orkney and Northern highlands
MP	1 Isle of Man
PT	1 Plymouth and South Devon
D	2 Dundee
IG	2 Ilford and East London
JE	2 Jersey
EN	3 Enfield North London

## Discussion

Just Go has been implemented since the last demographics report and this has altered the way that data is collected. The addition of address data has contributed to a drop in the percentage of 'complete records' but it is evident that the old database had a greater ratio of Sex and Age data than the current one. It will be interesting to see if this changes as the database matures.

The other major impact since the last demographic report has been the legacy of Covid 19. The previous report published in 2021 used end of year data from 2020, a highly unusual year. Unfortunately yearly reports were not produced and so a large question mark remains over the 2020 data being an unusual snapshot or more indicative of the preCovid trends.

There remains a significant skew in the population towards older male cavers, though it is notable that the mean age of male cavers has dropped (from 48.6 to 46.1) though the female age rose (40.6 to 41.4). This may reflect three things: more retention of male cavers into their 30s without the same retention of female cavers, a loss of male cavers in their 80s and 90s and a small drop in the overall membership (from 7075 to 6730). Conclusions about this drop would be dangerous – again we have changed the membership database, and the last snapshot was during the first year of Covid.

The active caver population has a slightly younger average age than the full BCA membership present, this was not previously commented on but is intuitive.

The male-to-female ratio remains high and has slightly increased from a rough 2.9:1 ratio to a 3.5:1. This appears to mainly be driven by the reduction in women aged 20-24.

The addition of geographic data is very illuminating – all four of the traditional caving regions are easily visualised and comprise 8 of the 10 most populous postcodes. The two striking findings is the large membership in North Wales and the scarce membership in London. The former is driven by some very large healthy clubs, like UCET, who draw on very different demographics to other caving clubs. The poor recruitment in the capital likely reflects two things. Firstly ICC (Imperial) is the only BCA University club that recruits in London and their data will be isolated to one/two postcodes that will be lost in that visual. This comes with the caveat that students often remain registered at their home address though you can still see clubs like Cambridge and Southampton have strong showings on the map.

Secondly it likely reflects the traditional London clubs (think the Chelsea, Westminster, Croydon etc) both diversifying their membership around their huts and their own membership moving out of London and into the commuter belt. The low recruitment in London is not the only urban area with poor showings – Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool are surprisingly absent from the map. This may represent significant potential for growth in the membership, though how to keep a recruitment engine that remains in cities as their members move away as they get older will be a significant challenge.

In conclusion it is hard to extrapolate significant conclusions without further work. The singular definitive action point from the demographic data is to make more of an effort to ensure people in their 80s and 90s get all the support they need in order to stay connected to caving as we continue to undergo our digital transition. The data does raise the troubling prospect of successful female recruitment over many years backsliding and so should be treated as a priority by the BCA and its member clubs. The geographic data raises significant questions, and highlights the potential data services we can offer to our member clubs.