

## Public Knowledge and Understanding of Orienteering

### Introduction

One of the longstanding objectives for our sport, as it is for most minority sports, has been to 'increase public awareness', and this remains one of our priority activities for orienteering under our 2005-08 Strategic Plan.

However, to increase anything really requires having a very good understanding of where you are to start with!! So rather than continuing to rely on anecdotal comments and the personal views of a few individuals on what the public recognition of the sport is, the NZOF recently commissioned AC Nielsen to actually measure it, and to provide the framework so that the measure can be repeated in the future and give us clear, statistically accurate evidence of whether our activities are working or not.

Having a scientific baseline also makes setting targets much more realistic and will help drive the strategy in the marketing and communications area.

### How was the research carried out?

The research was conducted using AC Nielsen's Omnibus survey, a regular survey of 1,000 people nationwide on a variety of subjects. It is a telephone survey with the interviews regarding the recognition of orienteering taking place between 9<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> June. Telephone numbers are generated at random from the White Pages listings, selecting individuals from households who are over 15 years old. To ensure a nationally representative result the results are then 'weighted' to bring them back to a national population profile.

This is a very well established research method, having been operating in NZ for many years and provides a very cost- and time-effective means of surveying a large number of people on a specific subject.

The individuals were asked to choose a statement that best described their understanding of orienteering. These statements had been jointly developed with AC Nielsen and included options for those who had never heard of the sport and those who had their own opinions as to what it is.

The intention is to repeat this research in 2008.

### The results

The overall results were:

Rank	Description	%
1=	A competitive sport involving navigation, principally using a map	27%
1=	A competitive sport involving navigation, principally using a compass	27%
5	A competitive sport using a compass and a map	8%
	<b>Cumulative total</b>	<b>62%</b>
3	Being able to read a map	10%
4	Being able to use a compass	9%
7	Being able to use a compass and a map	6%
	<b>Cumulative total</b>	<b>87%</b>
6	Never heard of orienteering	7%
8	Don't know which statement is best	4%
9	Heard of orienteering but none of the statements is correct	3%
	<b>Cumulative total</b>	<b>101%</b>

### What did this tell us?

- A surprisingly high number of the general public appear to have a good understanding of what orienteering is (ie the 62% that chose one of the three responses that it was a competitive sport).
- Equally surprisingly was the small proportion that did not know what orienteering was (the 14% in the three bottom categories).
- 25% associated orienteering with just being able to use a compass and/or a map, which was the 'pre-survey favourite' and while it is a significant number it was perhaps lower than expected.
- Overall basic awareness at 87% appears to be high, albeit not everyone has an entirely accurate understanding of what the sport is (with 36% clearly favouring compass over map).

### Where are our areas of strength?

By using the 3 responses that indicated orienteering is a competitive sport (whether it be principally using a map, a compass or both) as the baseline of an accurate understanding it is then possible to look at sub-groups of the population that score significantly **higher** than the average (which was 62%).

These were:

<b>Sub-groups</b>	<b>% choosing those 3 responses</b>
Children in family who are under 5	75%
Personal income > \$80k	75%
Household income > \$100k	74%
Professional occupation	74%
Age in 25-34 range	73%
Young couple with no children (NB: small sample)	71%
Personal income in \$60 - \$80k range	71%
Age in 35-44 range	70%

The results generally confirm the expectation that the higher socio-economic groups will have a better awareness and understanding of orienteering. However it was also interesting to note the age bias around the 24-44 range and the influence of either having no children or a young family.

### Where are our areas of weakness?

By using the same 3 responses that indicated orienteering is a competitive sport (whether it be principally using a map, a compass or both) as the baseline of an accurate understanding it is then possible to look at sub-groups of the population that score significantly **lower** than the average (which was 62%).

These were:

<b>Sub-groups</b>	<b>% choosing those 3 responses</b>
Main income earner at home (ie on a benefit)	32%
Household income < \$20k	38%
Aged 65+	44%
Retired	48%
Not working	52%
Age in 15-24 range	53%

Equally predictable was the outcome that the lower socio-economic groups would not have such a good understanding or awareness of the sport, although the absolute level is still quite high. But again there is an interesting age bias coming through with lower levels of understanding in both the older and younger age groups. Not only was accurate recognition relatively lower for the 15-24 age group but this group also had the highest proportion, at 23%, who did not know what orienteering was.

## **Factors with no apparent influence on awareness & understanding**

- Gender.
- Location.
- Household size.

## **Summary**

This research was a very useful baseline measurement of the general public's awareness and understanding of our sport. It has helped to reduce the level of speculation and personal opinion on what the true level of awareness of our sport is.

The question then becomes, so what? Where to we go from here?

- From a Marketing & Communications perspective we now know the size of task we have ahead of us to remove the misconception of orienteering as just being able to use a compass and read a map. We also know how many people associate our sport primarily with a compass, so as we push the 'map' aspects of it in the coming years we can measure our success.
- We also can reflect from a Marketing & Communications perspective about the need to better target the youth segment and the older/retired segments if we want to tap into these more. With Kiwisport now in operation for 15 years, the high proportion in the 15-24 age group who don't know what orienteering is perhaps gives pause for thought as to how effective Kiwisport is and/or whether we have managed much penetration in schools through it.
- However, overall we can be reasonably satisfied that we don't have a crisis situation on our hands and while we will always aim for better results, the awareness and understanding levels in the general public alone are not holding us back as a sport.

For any individual or club wanting to see the full results, please contact the NZOF General Manager, Stuart Payne.

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