

RESEARCH

IMPROVING EVENT EXPERIENCE

modern

orienteering

delivered

OVERVIEW

This report draws on the successful delivery of ASOM and the broader work of KONO, the team behind EOC2025, to identify practical strategies for enhancing orienteering events in the UK. It highlights how Belgium—despite limited public awareness of the sport—has built a loyal volunteer base, secured meaningful sponsorships, and gained access to private and urban spaces through strong local relationships and participant-first planning. By focusing on atmosphere, branding, and community engagement, ASOM has created a replicable model that offers valuable lessons for British Orienteering clubs seeking to elevate their event experience, attract new audiences, and build long-term sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

This report combines direct insights from the ASOM and EOC2025 organising team with participant feedback and volunteer interviews to explore how high-quality orienteering events are delivered in Belgium. Drawing on survey responses from international attendees of the EOC Supporters Tour, as well as conversations with key volunteers and Event Organiser Jeremy Genar, the analysis identifies practical strategies for British Orienteering—spanning volunteer mobilisation, sponsor engagement, urban access, and event presentation. These findings offer a transferable knowledge for British Orienteering and its clubs seeking to elevate their event experience and broaden public appeal.

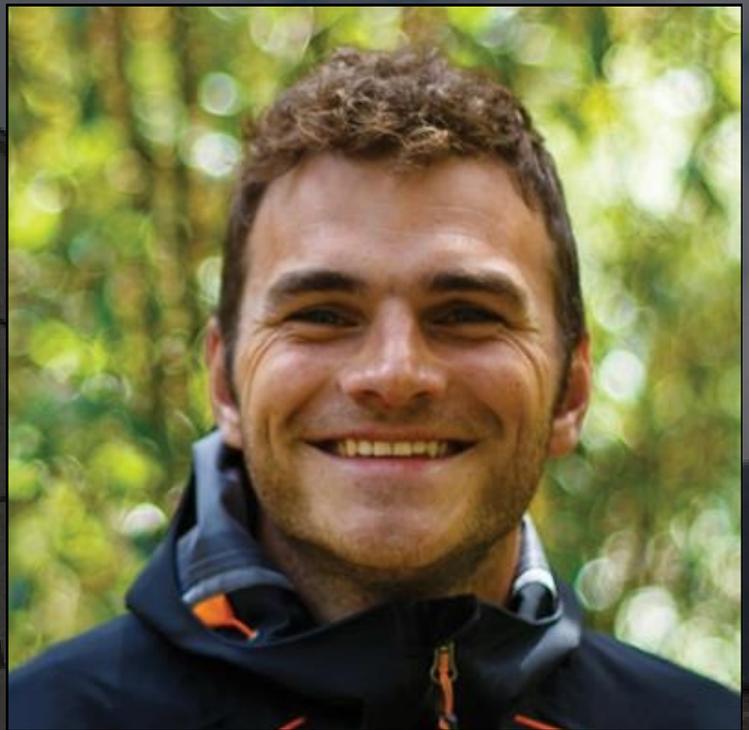


EDGE
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Jeremy Genar

Event Director



I think one of the biggest keys to success for ASOM is our volunteers team. I am fully employed by KONO who specializes in orienteering: making maps, orienteering team building for companies, organising EOC2025, ASOM etc.

KONO tries to survive on the team building and other orienteering activities. I organise ASOM for the love for the orienteering sport and with every decision we make in the organisation we put the participants, elites, partners and even our volunteers first.

Obviously it is hard to make a lot of money out of an event with that kind of attitude, but it helps a lot with bonding with all of the stakeholders at the event, especially the orienteers and the volunteers.

KONO

KONO



KONO, the team behind ASOM (Antwerp Sprint Orienteering Meeting) delivered EOC 2025 and the EOC Tour on behalf of ABSO-BVOS (Belgian Orienteering). Belgium has limited tradition in hosting high-level international orienteering events.

To deliver an event of the scale of EOC, a dedicated professional entity was required. KONO offered:

- **Proven track record:** ASOM has run for 10 years, attracting 20,000 participants from 40+ countries. It consistently demonstrates high-quality courses, access to urban/private areas, sponsor engagement, and festival-style arenas.
- **Volunteer structures:** ASOM's cross-club volunteer network (80–120 for ASOM, up to 350 for EOC) was already in place and trained.
- **Professional leadership:** KONO can dedicate full-time staff to project manage and coordinate international federation requirements - a struggle for a volunteer-led party.
- **Stakeholder relationships:** Established contacts with Belgian municipalities, sponsors and media partners - critical for EOC's visibility.

KONO positions orienteering as a **fun, team-based adventure** rather than a niche competitive sport, KONO successfully engages non-orienteers and builds lasting interest.

The year-round **City Runs** programme is designed to be accessible, engaging, and highly visible—bringing the sport into the heart of urban life and attracting participants who may have never encountered orienteering before.

KONO works closely with local authorities to gain access to key urban spaces and promote events through official channels. Councils often fund or co-brand resident communications, helping to legitimise the sport and reach non-orienteering audiences. Events are positioned as part of broader community wellbeing and outdoor activity initiatives, aligning with public health and youth engagement goals.

Visibility and Branding

Each City Run is branded with local identity—e.g. “Herentals City Run”—and supported by digital promotion, local press, and social media. KONO ensures that the events are visually appealing and easy to understand, using clear maps, signage, and QR codes. This helps demystify orienteering and makes it feel modern, inclusive, and fun.

Community Integration

KONO

Feature / Practice	What KONO do	How it engages business & locals
Accessible entry & format	The City Runs are 6 km, <30 checkpoints; “easy for everyone” – good entry point for all.	Low barrier of entry (distance, complexity) encourages non-regular orienteers, locals, families to try out the sport.
Business / Corporate Participation Packages	Offer “business package” (~€500) giving 20 participants, reserved zone, refreshment / tent, etc. Premium Package (€2,500) for more visibility: logos, more employees, reserved space in arena.	Enables companies to engage as teams (teambuilding, reward experiences) and helps sponsors get exposure; creates word of mouth among business-communities.
Local visibility / exploring hidden spots	Routes run fully through the area in high visibility spots, sold as a way to discover the most beautiful places and best hidden locations.	It connects with city pride, gives locals a sense of discovering familiar places in new ways, encourages place-based identity and tourism.
Affordable pricing & inclusions	Entry €15; includes timing chip, printed waterproof map, refreshment, bag storage etc. T-shirt optional for extra.	Inclusive cost; people can opt in or out of extras; makes participation more accessible.
“Spectator / elite tie-in”	Many City Runs are scheduled near or alongside elite races (during EOC25); local racers can run then watch elites. Eg: Geel City Run happens just before or during elite knockout / finals.	Draws people who like sport, elevates event profile, gives local participants extra incentive; spectator interest adds atmosphere.
Year round engagement	The City Runs series happens multiple times in different cities (Geel, Turnhout, Hasselt, Lier, Herentals) all through the year	Consistent touch points and awareness throughout the year and opportunity to promote the sport. People become familiar with the brand/event and may attend multiple times.

ASOM 2025 | Jeremy Genar

This year was the first year we had such a great support from the city: they were so supportive with every aspect of the organisation: from finding keys buildings and gates we could use to sending out 'there will be an event' letters to all inhabitants in the area.

It also showed in the feedback from the city we received: the Mayor and the Alderman of Sports who were present at the prize giving ceremony were incredibly enthusiastic about the races, the participants and the atmosphere at the arena.

It was also the first year we could find a big sponsor (except for Runners' Lab who have been involved since 2015).

Car dealers (like the KENIS group) seem to have a lot of money they want to invest in marketing at events.

They did not know Orienteering when we first talked to them(!). But we explained they would get a lot of exposure in the arena in the middle of the city and we would make sure every local participant knew they were involved in the event.

In 2025, we had **2 title partners** (KENIS and Turnhout Municipality), **1 Orienteering Partner** (Runners' Lab) and **1 team partner** (McDonalds) who just wanted their logo on the website

KENIS As Main Partner Sponsor

We contacted every car dealer in Turnhout for ASOM - maybe 12 car dealers - there were 3 really interested. Kenis and another one both wanted to be main partner - we played them out and put some pressure on them (xxx is also interested, we are having a meeting with them on xx, if you would like to partner up please decide fast). And that helped a lot! In general, we asked around 50 businesses in Turnhout, McDonalds (500€ cash) and the supermarket Colruyt (refreshments) were the only successful ones.

For the EOC, it is very hard to get sponsors involved at the increased costings for them, if we could sell it at ASOM rates, 500/1000/2000€, it would be a lot easier.

To enhance the event experience we had about 110 gates and doors to private areas we needed to open with a key over the weekend.

Opening gates and doors involves risks (if you don't have a lot of spare volunteers/stewards who can guard it), but if it makes the courses better. Making a simple in/out run through (but interesting for the runners) with minimal disruption is what sells it to people to allow access.

We want to put the orienteers first and give them the value for what they are paying for (and making the trip to Belgium for!).

BRINGING BUSINESSES ONBOARD

UK APPLICATION

FOCUSING ON APPEALING TO BUSINESS TO USE THEIR CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY BUDGET WHICH TAPS INTO THEIR DESIRE AS A BUSINESS TO VOLUNTARILY MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON SOCIETY, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

Community engagement

Sponsorship of local events, partnerships with charities, or support for schools and youth programs.

Environmental initiatives

Sustainability projects, carbon offsetting, biodiversity efforts (e.g. wildflower meadows), or waste reduction schemes.

Employee volunteering

Paid time off for staff to volunteer, or organising company-wide volunteering days.

Ethical business practices

Fair trade sourcing, diversity and inclusion programs, or health and wellbeing schemes.

Brand and reputation

Swag bags at community events, branded shake-out runs, or public-facing campaigns that align with company values.

Business Benefits

- **Boost Local Visibility:** Their brand will be front and centre in an exciting, public event that draws participants from different places
- **Support Employee Wellbeing:** Orienteering promotes physical activity, mental focus, and outdoor engagement—perfect for team-building or CSR-linked staff participation.
- **Positive Brand Association:** Sponsors are recognised not just for funding, but for enabling civic experiences. Branded shake-out runs, pop-up engagement zones, and swag bags connect a brand with memorable moments and activity.
- **Reputation:** CSR is increasingly tied to brand trust and public perception.
- **Stakeholder expectations:** Customers, employees, and investors often expect businesses to demonstrate social and environmental responsibility.

SPONSORSHIP

Title Partner
€ 5000

Orienteering Partner
€ 1250

Team Partner
€ 500

Alle prijzen excl 21% BTW



Sponsoring ASOM 2025

Naamsponsor: [jouw bedrijf] ASOM 2025 & [jouw bedrijf] Turnhout City Run

Opname in communicatie van het hele event:

Logo bedrukking op het (gratis) deelname shirt van alle deelnemers **LOGO ON SHIRT GIVEN TO RUNNERS**

Website

Social Media

Programmaboekje

Borstnummers **BIB NUMBERS**

Kaarten

Banners & Beachflags in wedstrijdcentrum **BANNERS AND FLAGS IN ARENA**

Gepersonaliseerde social media content **PERSONALISED SOCIAL MEDIA**

Opname logo als partner in advertentie De Zondag

Exclusiviteit

VIP Deelnamepakket op Turnhout City Race (27 april 2025)

Gereserveerde zone aan de aankomst **VIP ZONE**

Deelnametickets aan de Turnhout City Run (6km) **PARTICIPANT ENTRY**

Title Partner

x

x

x

Full Page

x

x

x

min. 3 posts

x

x

40 gratis tickets

x

40

Orienteering Partner

x

x

1/2 Page

x

x

x

min. 1 post

x

sector

20 gratis tickets

x

20

Team Partner

x

x

Logo

10 gratis tickets

x

10

ASOM Sponsorship Packages.

NEXT STEPS IN THE UK?

- City exploration orienteering: Hold “city orienteering fun runs” per year in different UK towns/cities. Use city centres to highlight hidden or historic spots. Suggested hot spots, Manchester & Birmingham (Student populations/historical sites), Bristol. Put orienteering in the public eye.
- Corporate / Business race teams: Packages allowing local businesses to enter teams with branding / reserved zones / hospitality. Could align with CSR / staff wellbeing budgets.
- Pilot a non-club-based volunteer model at a regional sprint event.
- Develop a sponsorship toolkit and begin outreach to local businesses in target cities.
- Tie-ins with elites / high profile events: For example, during UK orienteering major events, arrange parallel “fun / discovery” courses for locals and non-orienteers, so they can spectate elites and participate themselves.

Great to hear that you want to help with the organization of the European Sprint Orienteering Championships in 2025!

The EOC will take place from August 27 to 31. However, there is already a lot to be done in preparation.

Through this form, we would like to find out how many helping hands we can count on and when you'll be available to assist.

What's in it for you?

- A unique opportunity to be part of the organization of a European Championship!
- An EOC tshirt from our partner CRAFT.
- Meals and drinks during the EOC2025 races.
- Free participation in the races of the EOC Tour (not an option for all tasks, but for most tasks it is! For each day worked, you get one free entry).
- Accommodation, if desired.

What do we expect from you?

Availability on the following days (times are approximate and broadly calculated; your specific hours will depend on your assigned task):

- **Wednesday, August 27:** from 2 PM to 10 PM
- **Thursday, August 28:** from 11 AM to 6 PM
- **Friday, August 29:** from 11 AM to 6 PM

A volunteer sign up form was available on the EOC website 6 months prior to the event and promoted at ASOM. Incentives included free EOC Tour race entry, meals and drinks and sportswear. 350+ people were recruited.

The unique thing about volunteers at ASOM is that they are not club-based: they are volunteers from all clubs in Flanders / Belgium. In 2022 after Covid when we restarted ASOM, I asked my friends and family inside and outside of orienteering if they wanted to be a part of the ASOM team.

Now, after 4 years every team leader has their own dedicated group (from all ages and even a lot of non-orienteers) who just like to be a part of this event and love showing our sport and being part of something bigger. They show up every year for only this event.

I am very grateful for that because in 2022 I was doing everything from guarding the info@ mailbox to making the agreements for the bar to even briefing the stewards during the event.

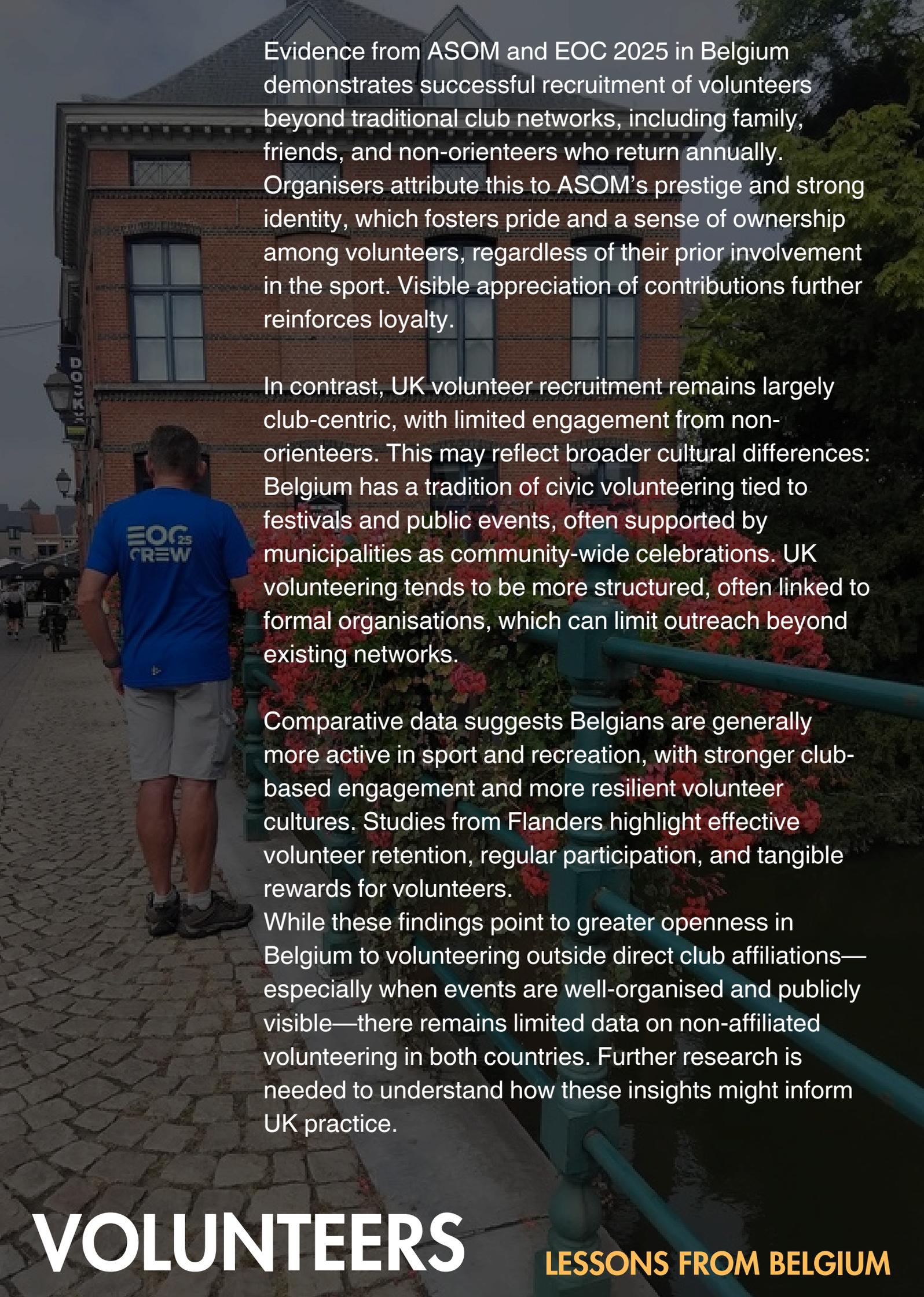
This year it was still very busy, but I could focus a bit more on sponsors, the city of Turnhout, contacting private areas, etc...

It was fantastic to see this team grow into something 'well oiled' and also to see them having a lot of fun.

Jeremy Genar

ASOM's volunteer base is not club-dependent. Volunteers are recruited from across Belgium, including non-orienteers, and return annually due to strong team identity and positive event culture.

VOLUNTEERS



Evidence from ASOM and EOC 2025 in Belgium demonstrates successful recruitment of volunteers beyond traditional club networks, including family, friends, and non-orienteers who return annually. Organisers attribute this to ASOM's prestige and strong identity, which fosters pride and a sense of ownership among volunteers, regardless of their prior involvement in the sport. Visible appreciation of contributions further reinforces loyalty.

In contrast, UK volunteer recruitment remains largely club-centric, with limited engagement from non-orienteers. This may reflect broader cultural differences: Belgium has a tradition of civic volunteering tied to festivals and public events, often supported by municipalities as community-wide celebrations. UK volunteering tends to be more structured, often linked to formal organisations, which can limit outreach beyond existing networks.

Comparative data suggests Belgians are generally more active in sport and recreation, with stronger club-based engagement and more resilient volunteer cultures. Studies from Flanders highlight effective volunteer retention, regular participation, and tangible rewards for volunteers.

While these findings point to greater openness in Belgium to volunteering outside direct club affiliations—especially when events are well-organised and publicly visible—there remains limited data on non-affiliated volunteering in both countries. Further research is needed to understand how these insights might inform UK practice.

VOLUNTEERS

LESSONS FROM BELGIUM



Event leadership requires months of intensive work.

“4 months prior to EOC, the Administrative lead, spent around 3 hours a day (apart from her normal job), for the last 2 weeks it was around 5h/day for her.”

Test races and smaller events are used to train teams and refine operations.

“We trained most of those teams at ASOM in April and at the Test Races 2 weeks ago. These tests were crucial and I can't imagine not having done them.”

Implications for BOF

- Recognition that major events require **professional or semi-professional** input is essential.
- British Orienteering could explore **contracting dedicated event** professionals.
- Test races can prepare volunteers and reduce risks for high-profile competitions.

TIME & RESOURCE



Volunteers: Build networks beyond clubs; foster pride and recognition.

Sponsorship: Approach businesses outside traditional sport sectors with a clear win-win proposal.

Municipal Support: Position events as cultural/tourism showcases and increased money into the local economy.

Access to Areas: Take calculated risks to elevate event quality. Can two opened gates, create an exciting route choice? Simple to them, memorable for us.

Event Experience: Prioritise participants and create festival-style environments. Make an area social, a play to stay where the race is only part of the offer.

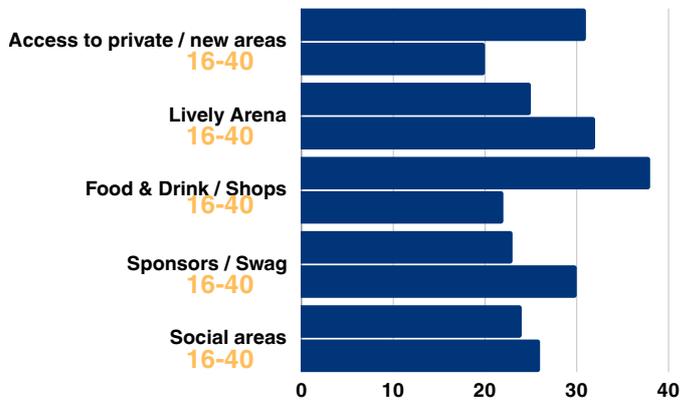
Professionalisation: Acknowledge full-time commitment required and rewarded.

ASOM prioritises participant experience over profit, resulting in high satisfaction and repeat attendance. The event is known for its atmosphere, urban exploration, and international appeal.

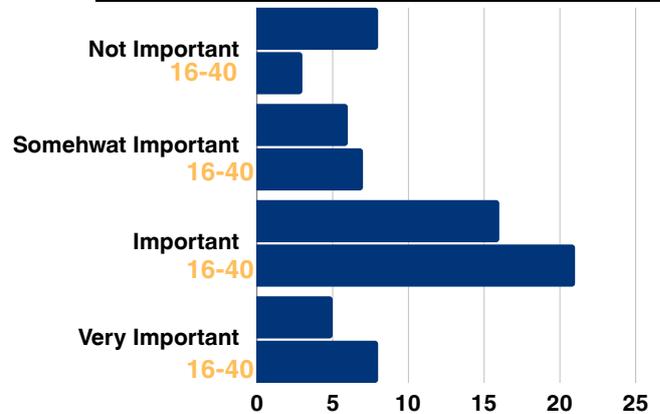
KEY TAKEAWAYS

PARTICIPANT INSIGHT

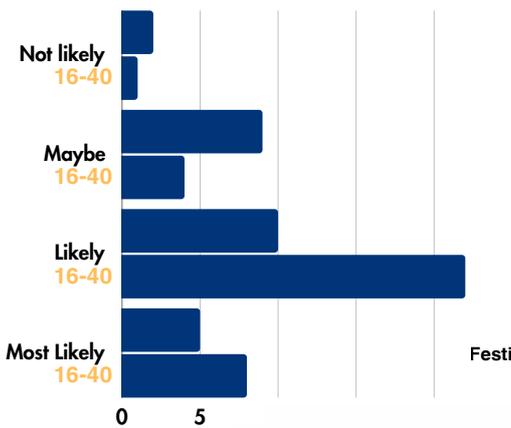
Which of the following features make you more likely to attend a sprint orienteering event?



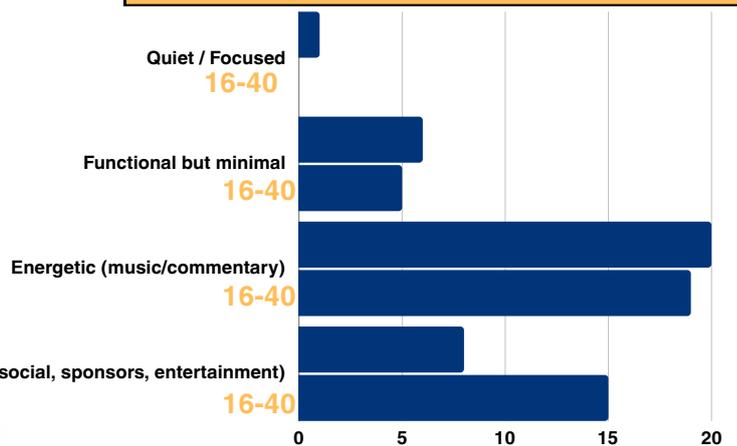
How important is it for the event to offer an experience beyond the race (social activities, entertainment)?



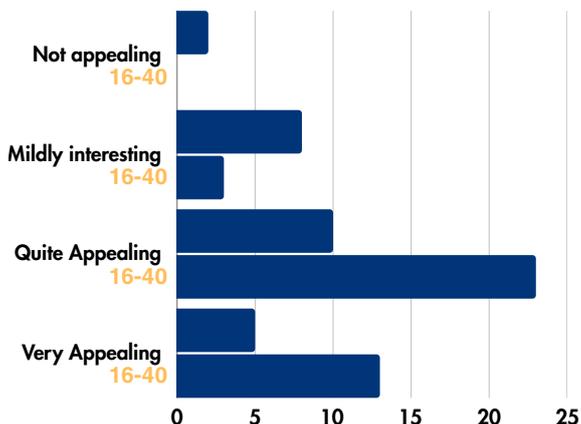
Given a choice, would you be more likely to attend a multi-day orienteering festival that includes a social vibe, over one that doesn't?



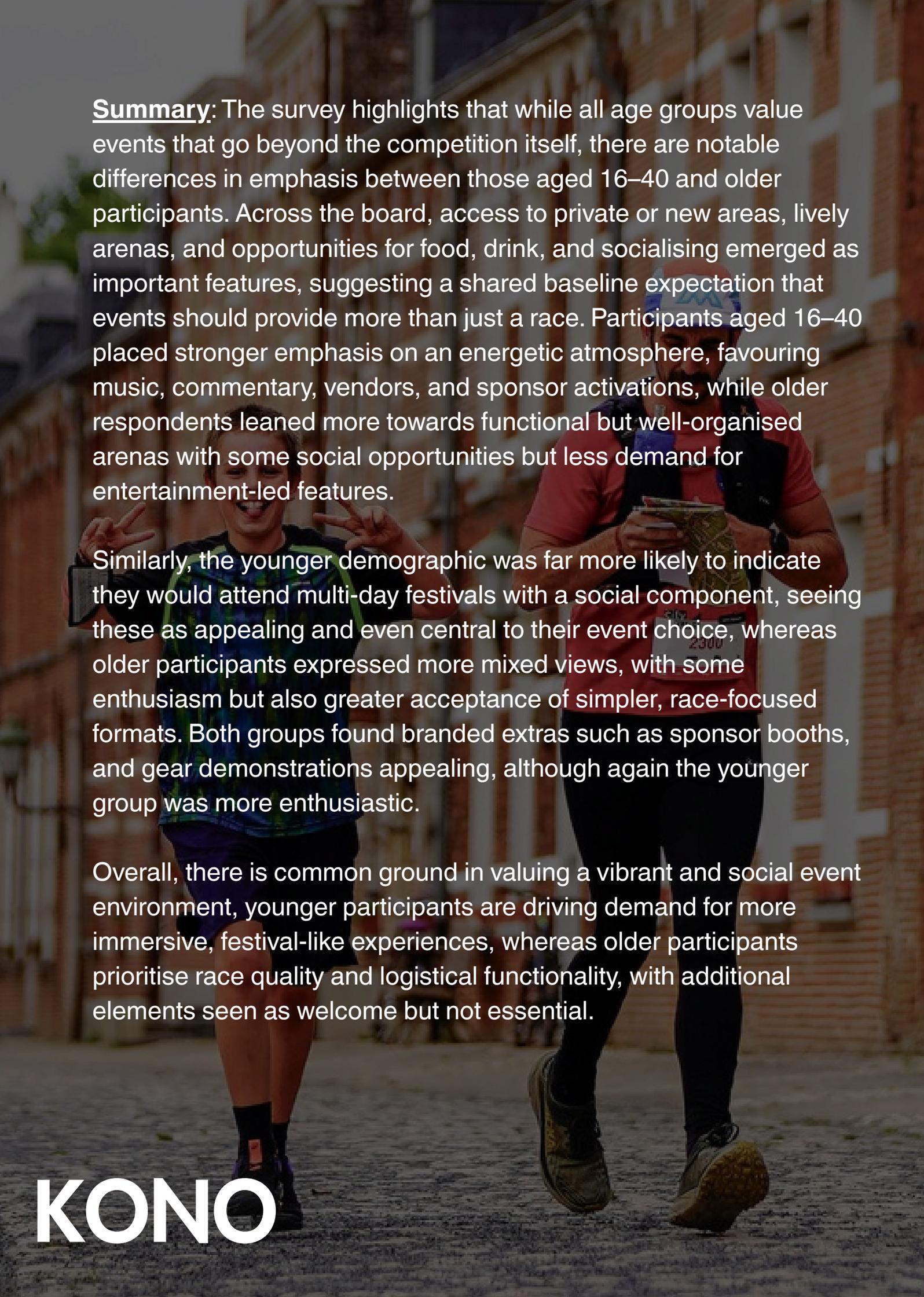
What kind of arena atmosphere do you prefer at sprint events?



How appealing are branded extras (e.g., sponsor booths, gear demos, shake-out runs) at orienteering events?



74 people (16+) were questioned about **event experience** at the EOC Tour Events. They were asked 5 simple questions. The results are categorised by overall (excluding 16-40 year olds) and those in the the 16-40 age range.



Summary: The survey highlights that while all age groups value events that go beyond the competition itself, there are notable differences in emphasis between those aged 16–40 and older participants. Across the board, access to private or new areas, lively arenas, and opportunities for food, drink, and socialising emerged as important features, suggesting a shared baseline expectation that events should provide more than just a race. Participants aged 16–40 placed stronger emphasis on an energetic atmosphere, favouring music, commentary, vendors, and sponsor activations, while older respondents leaned more towards functional but well-organised arenas with some social opportunities but less demand for entertainment-led features.

Similarly, the younger demographic was far more likely to indicate they would attend multi-day festivals with a social component, seeing these as appealing and even central to their event choice, whereas older participants expressed more mixed views, with some enthusiasm but also greater acceptance of simpler, race-focused formats. Both groups found branded extras such as sponsor booths, and gear demonstrations appealing, although again the younger group was more enthusiastic.

Overall, there is common ground in valuing a vibrant and social event environment, younger participants are driving demand for more immersive, festival-like experiences, whereas older participants prioritise race quality and logistical functionality, with additional elements seen as welcome but not essential.



ASOM (Antwerp Sprint Orienteering Meeting) and KONO have developed a successful model for delivering high-quality orienteering events in a country with limited public awareness of the sport. Their approach offers valuable lessons for British Orienteering, particularly in areas such as volunteer mobilisation, sponsor engagement, pricing strategy, and access to private and urban spaces.

Volunteer Strategy: Building Loyalty Beyond Clubs

Key Insight:

ASOM's volunteer base is not club-dependent. Volunteers are recruited from across Belgium, including non-orienteers, and return annually due to strong team identity and positive event culture.

BOF Application:

- Consider creating a national volunteer pool for flagship events, independent of club structures.
- Create a national volunteer database with opt-in interest for flagship events.
- Ensure volunteers feel valued and supported—clear communication, defined roles, and visible appreciation are essential.

Operational Tip:

Use test events or smaller lead-in activities to train volunteers and build cohesion before major competitions.

Sponsorship: Local Business Engagement

Key Insight:

KONO secures sponsors by offering visibility in high-footfall urban arenas and emphasising community engagement. Many sponsors had no prior knowledge of orienteering.

BOF Application:

- Approach local businesses with tailored sponsorship packages that highlight exposure, community goodwill, and alignment with health and wellbeing.
- Use competitive pressure (e.g. "another sponsor is interested") to accelerate decision-making.
- Focus on modest sponsorship tiers (£500–£2,000) to broaden appeal.

Operational Tip:

Develop a reusable sponsor pitch deck that includes visuals, audience data, and testimonials from past partners.



Access to Private and Urban Spaces

Key Insight:

ASOM opened over 100 gates and doors across private and municipal properties, enabled by strong relationships with city officials and clear communication with residents.

BOF Application:

- Build early relationships with councils, mayors, and local authorities—emphasise the sport’s low environmental impact and community benefits.
- Offer to co-brand communications with councils (e.g. resident letters) to build trust.
- Accept logistical risks (e.g. stewarding gates) when they significantly enhance course quality.

Operational Tip:

Create a standardised “Local Authority Engagement Pack” with example letters, maps, and FAQs to streamline permissions.

Event Identity and Participant Experience

Key Insight:

ASOM prioritises participant experience over profit, resulting in high satisfaction and repeat attendance. The event is known for its atmosphere, urban exploration, and international appeal.

BOF Application:

- Focus on creating memorable, well-branded event villages with social spaces, food, and entertainment.
- Use urban venues to attract non-orienteeers and increase visibility.
- Ensure course design reflects the effort participants make to attend—quality and novelty matter.

Operational Tip:

Gather feedback from international participants to understand what makes UK events worth travelling for—and what doesn’t.

Year-Round Engagement and Multi-Year Planning

Key Insight:

KONO maintains visibility through city runs, team-building activities, and a multi-year ASOM calendar.

UK Application:

- Develop a rolling calendar of urban events in iconic UK locations to build anticipation and continuity.
- Explore partnerships with corporate wellness programmes and tap into CSR budgets.
- Use smaller events to test new formats and build local relationships.

Operational Tip:

Create a “City Series” brand that links events across different regions under a unified identity.



FINAL THOUGHTS

The experience of ASOM and the wider work of KONO in delivering EOC 2025 demonstrates that high-quality orienteering events can thrive even in countries without deep traditions in the sport, provided there is a clear focus on participant experience, civic engagement, and professional standards. Belgium has shown that a culture of civic volunteering, supportive local authorities, and businesses seeking community visibility can be harnessed to create vibrant, festival-like events that attract both elite competitors and newcomers. The lessons for British Orienteering lie in adapting these practices to the UK context: developing a broader volunteer pool beyond club structures, approaching sponsors with accessible and community-focused packages, and working proactively with local authorities to open up urban and private spaces. These learnings will be seen ‘in practice’ with the Quid Games II event at the Kendal Mountain Festival in November.

The insights underline that participants, especially younger ones, value more than just a race—they want social, cultural, and entertainment elements alongside competitive sport. This aligns with the Belgian model, where city runs, festival arenas, and accessible pricing have built strong public engagement. For the UK, the opportunity is to embrace a similar approach: positioning orienteering not only as a sport but also as a civic and cultural event. By doing so, British Orienteering can enhance visibility, secure sustainable funding, and create experiences that attract repeat participation and long-term loyalty, ensuring that orienteering continues to evolve as a modern, engaging, and community-anchored sport.

FUTURE ROUTE CHOICE

- Develop a UK Major Events Framework with sponsorship strategies, volunteer recruitment outside clubs, and local authority engagement.
- Pilot a UK Urban Orienteering Festival in partnership with a major city.
- Develop sponsor marketing packs with data on international reach and community impact.
- Create a national volunteer pool for major events with structured leadership roles.
- Consider contracting professional staff for sponsorship, mapping, and coordination.
- Introduce test events as standard practice for refining logistics and training volunteers.

MODERN ORIENTEERING | DELIVERED