

Analysis of member attendance at Branch events

Update – November 2023

1 Background

The pattern of ringing in the Branch changes over the years. For example in the 1980s, we had a similar number of members to recent years (160 – 170) but it was quite common for 30 people to attend the monthly Branch practices whereas in the last decade attendances have been less than half that.

The number and type of practice has also changed. Historically the only regular events were on the third Saturday of the month: eight ringing practices, two striking competitions and two meetings (though the meetings were usually followed with general ringing).

Between 1979 and 1988 the Branch also ran a monthly Surprise Major practice. In 2006 the Branch introduced the Tuesday afternoon practice¹ that still runs. In 2014 the Surprise Major practices were re-introduced broadened to an Advanced practice a couple of years ago. Branch Youth practices were introduced in 2018. Finally in 2019 the Branch began Elementary practices, which now run twice a month.

2 Recent trends

Covid disrupted ringing but even before that some practices were cancelled because too few people were intending to attend. We are nominally back to normal after Covid but subjectively numbers don't seem quite back to normal.

This note looks at attendance at Branch events in recent years: in 2019 (the last full year before Covid), in 2022 and in 2023. So far we only have 10 months of data for 2023 and to make comparison easier I have included some figures increased pro-rate for a whole year as well as the actual (January – October) figures.

Youth practices have waxed and waned but were boosted with the introduction of regular joint activities with both Reading Branch and Berks & Bucks Young Ringers (based in EBSB). There are now one or two events per month. Records of Youth activities are separate from other Branch events so not considered in detail in this analysis.

3 Branch events

The Branch organised 50 events in 2019, 39 in 2022 and 43 so far in 2023 (just over 50 in the whole year). The number dropped after Covid but is now slightly above 2019 (despite 7 cancelled practices). Daytime and weekend practices show a similar pattern. Advanced practices suffered more but have recovered slightly. Even so nearly half had to be cancelled. The main growth is in elementary practices, introduced at the end of 2019 and now two per month. Youth activity has grown. The 2020 gap represents a lack of records, not zero activity.)

	Daytime	Advanced/ Surprise ²	Youth	Elementary	Weekend	Striking competition	Meeting	Total
2019	12	12	12	2	9	1	2	50
2022	9	5	?	15	7	1	2	39
2023 (Jan-Oct)	9	6	15	19	8	1	1	43
2023 estimate	10 – 11	7 – 8	18	22 – 23	9 – 10	1	1	~70

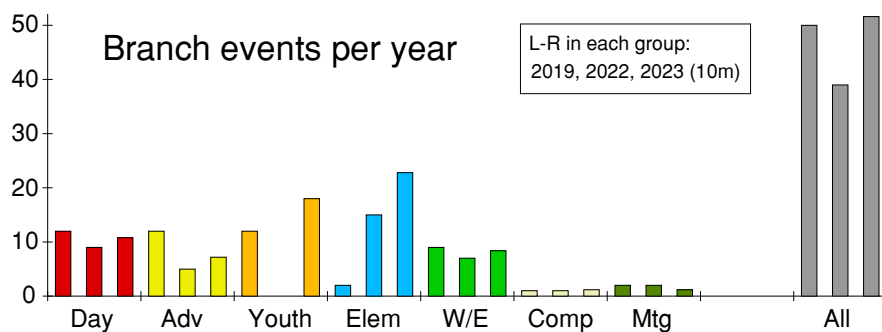


Figure 1: Events run during 2019, 2022 & 2023

¹ Initially at All Saints Wokingham but it moved to Binfield after 4-5 years.

² The name change and broadened scope came at the end of 2019.

4 Average attendances

To allow for the different numbers of each type of event I calculated attendances per event as well as total attendances. I also included non-members, typically ringers from outside the Branch. Note that the data for youth events is incomplete so can't really be compared here.

Engagement

The plots show the number of members who attended one or more of each type of event in each year.

In 2019 slightly more members attended a weekend practice than any other but in 2023 significantly more members attend an elementary practice³

Fewer non-members attended events in 2023 but that might be because of mis-allocation⁴.

The totals for all events are given below. Note that around half of the members never attended anything.

Year	Members	Fraction of membership	Non-members
2019	90	59%	17
2022	71	42%	16
2023	81	48%	7

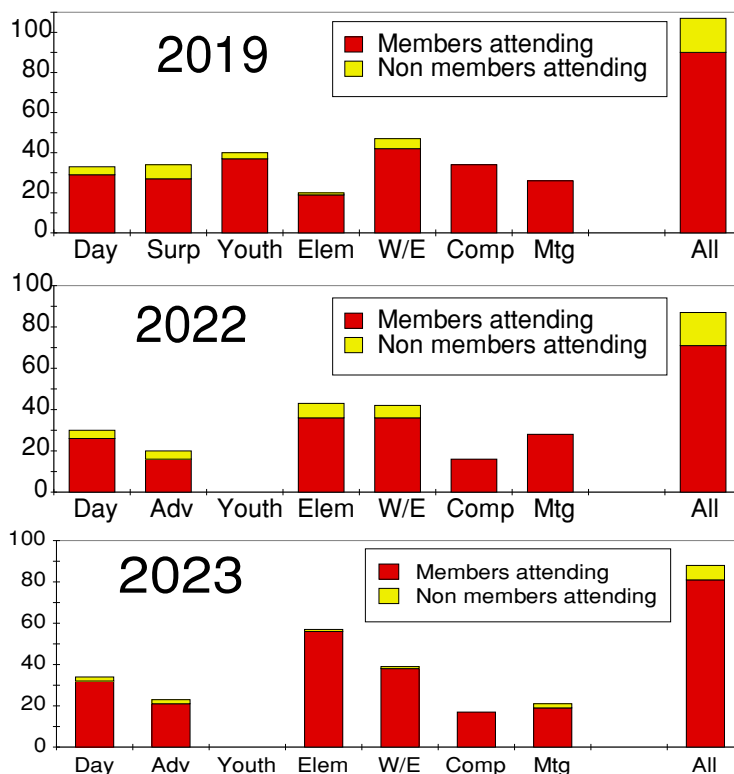


Figure 2: Numbers attending each event type

Turnout

The plots show the average number of members and non-members each type of event in each year.

Competitions have higher turnouts than any practices, especially in 2019 where seven teams competed. Meeting attendance is also higher than practices but 2023 is anomalously high because it only includes the AGM, not the smaller November business meeting.

Practices cancelled for lack of support are excluded so over estimate support (especially 2023 advanced).

The average attendance across all events was similar in 2022 to 2019 and slightly higher in 2023, probably because there are now far more elementary practices, where attendance has become very high.

Year	Members	Non-members
2019	10.9	0.9
2022	11	0.9
2023 (10m)	13	0.3

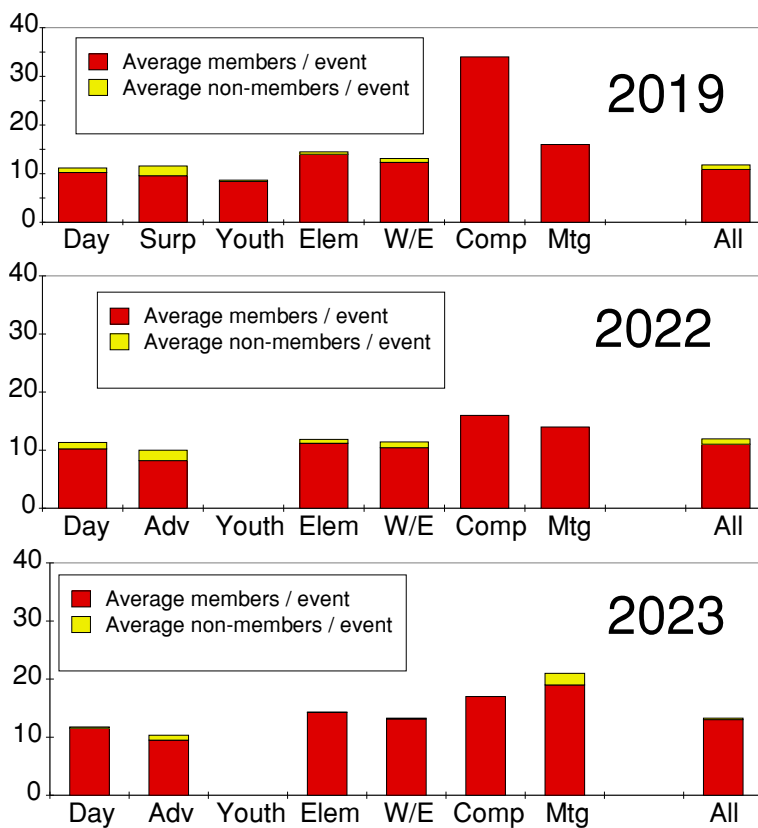


Figure 3: Average attendance by event type

³ 2019 is not representative because there were only two elementary practices at the end of the year.

⁴ Counting new ringers who are not yet members as non-members earlier but as members in 2023 (I haven't cross checked the attendance records against the membership list).

Individual attendance

The plots show the average number of each type of event attended by those who attended at least once.

At advance practices non-members are nearly as regular as members. There is a similar effect for weekend practices in 2019 and 2022 but for some reason not in 2023.

Non-members feature much less in elementary practices.

These plots are less useful for comparing between types of event because the maximum attendance possible is determined by the different number of each type of event.

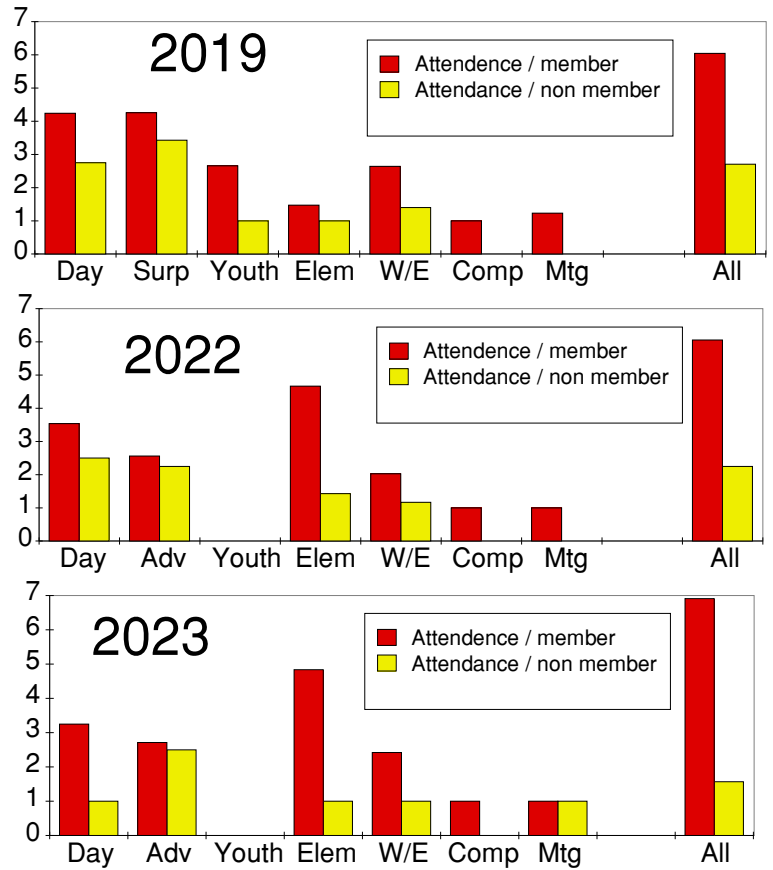


Figure 4: Individual attendance at different types of event

Regularity

These plots show the proportion of each type of event that people attended rather than just the number attended. That compensates for the different number of events held, and enables the regularity of those who attend different types of event to be compared. Again they only include people who attended (at least one of) each type of event during the year.

In 2019 & 2022 the regularity of ringers at elementary practices was far higher than for other practices. In 2023 it is lower, but that probably reflects the introduction of two practices each month (one Tuesday and one Wednesday) because some people cannot manage one or other day. For such people 100% turnout on that day is 50% of the whole.

The proportion attended for all events is shown below for those who attended at least one event of any kind. It does not include all those who attended no events.

Year	Members	Non-members
2019	12%	5%
2022	12%	5%
2023	17%	4%

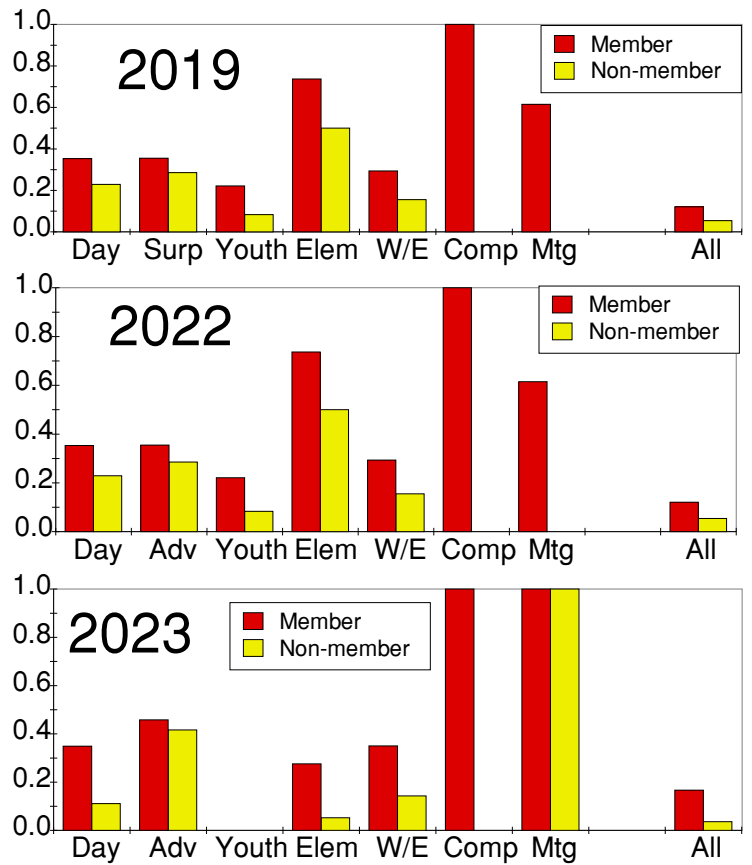


Figure 5: Proportion of available events attended on average

5 Variation across individuals

Attendance at all events – A few members attended a lot of events while some attended only one and there was a continuum in between. A lot of members never attended anything, and although they were ignored in the analysis above they are included here.

Each vertical slot represents an individual, and attendances at different events are shown stacked in different colours. The empty area in the middle represents members who didn't attend anything, and the extreme right hand portion represents non-members who attended one or more events.

Allowing for the different number of members, and the number of events in each of the three years (see below) the overall pattern looks similar, but with the 2023 curve a bit steeper than in 2019.

Year	Membership	Events
2019	171	50
2022	153	39
2023 (10 months)	168	43 (10 months)

2023 also saw significantly less involvement of non-members than in the earlier years.

The predominance of blue in 2022 & 2023 shows the increased number of the (well attended) elementary practices.

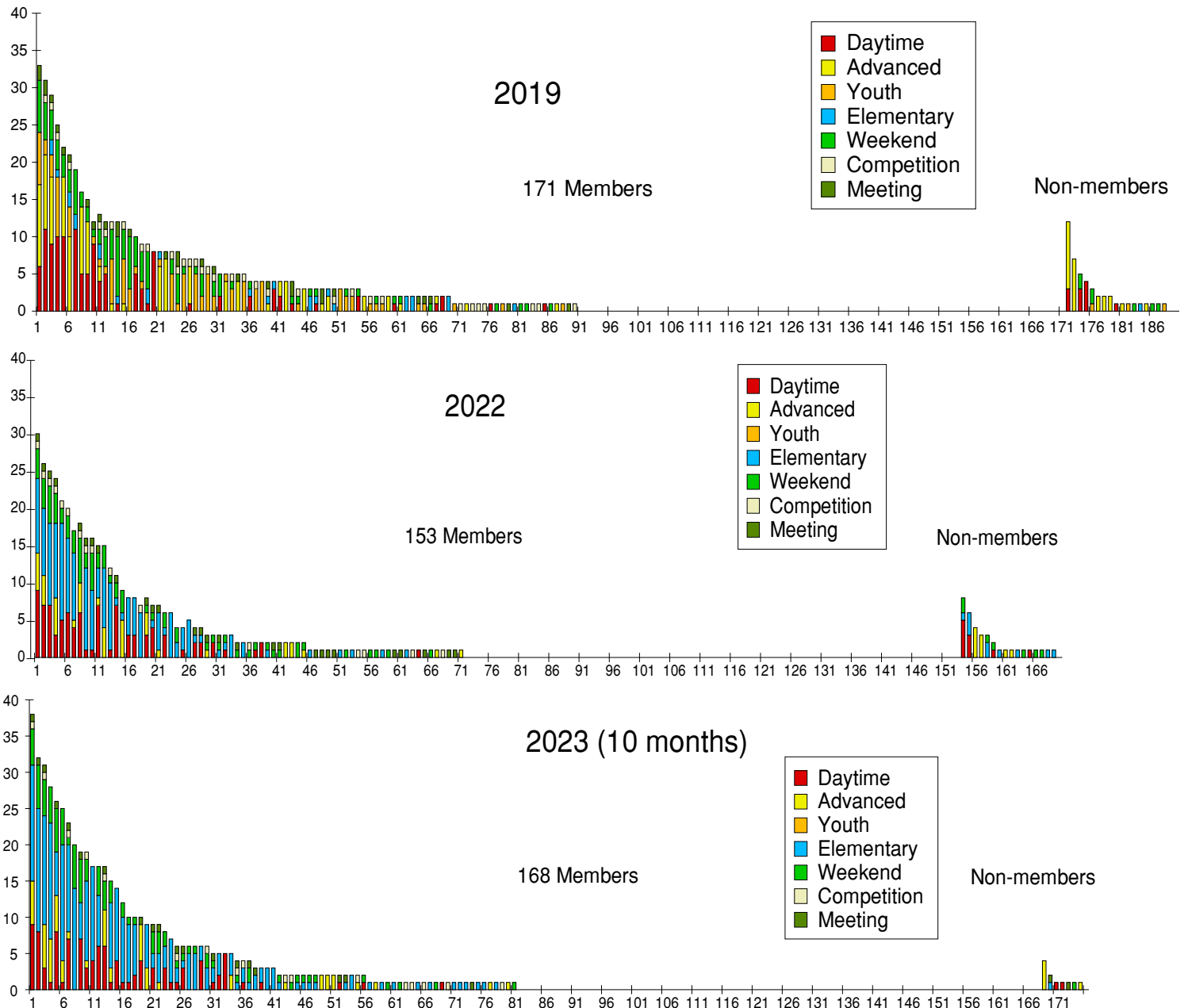


Figure 6: Attendances at all events sorted by individual members

Elementary practices

The plots below for Elementary practices also show individual ringers, but only those who attended at least one.

2019 is anomalous because there were only two practices. 2022 and 2023 have similar numbers of participants but the shape is significantly different with a steeper fall off from those who attended most practices to those who attended relatively few, and a longer tail, ie more people only rarely attending.

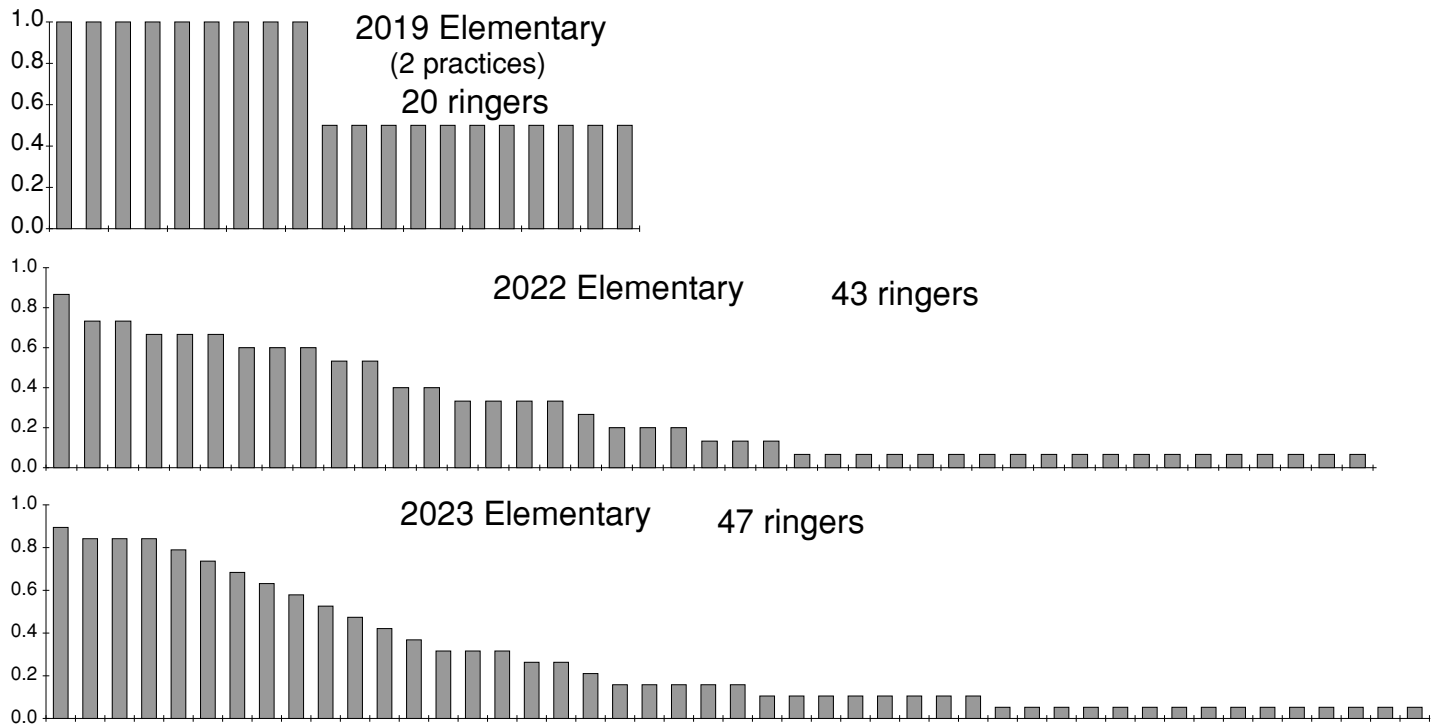


Figure 7: Fraction of elementary practices each year attended by individual ringers

Advanced practices

The plots for advanced practices show a marked difference between 2019 and 2022/2023, ie pre and post Covid, with far fewer ringers involved overall, and a slightly steeper fall off. There is some improvement between 2022 & 2023 but not a lot.

What the graphs don't show is the number of cancelled practices where fewer than eight people were available. None were cancelled in 2019, 7 were cancelled in 2022 and 6 (out of 10 in the period covered) were cancelled in 2023.

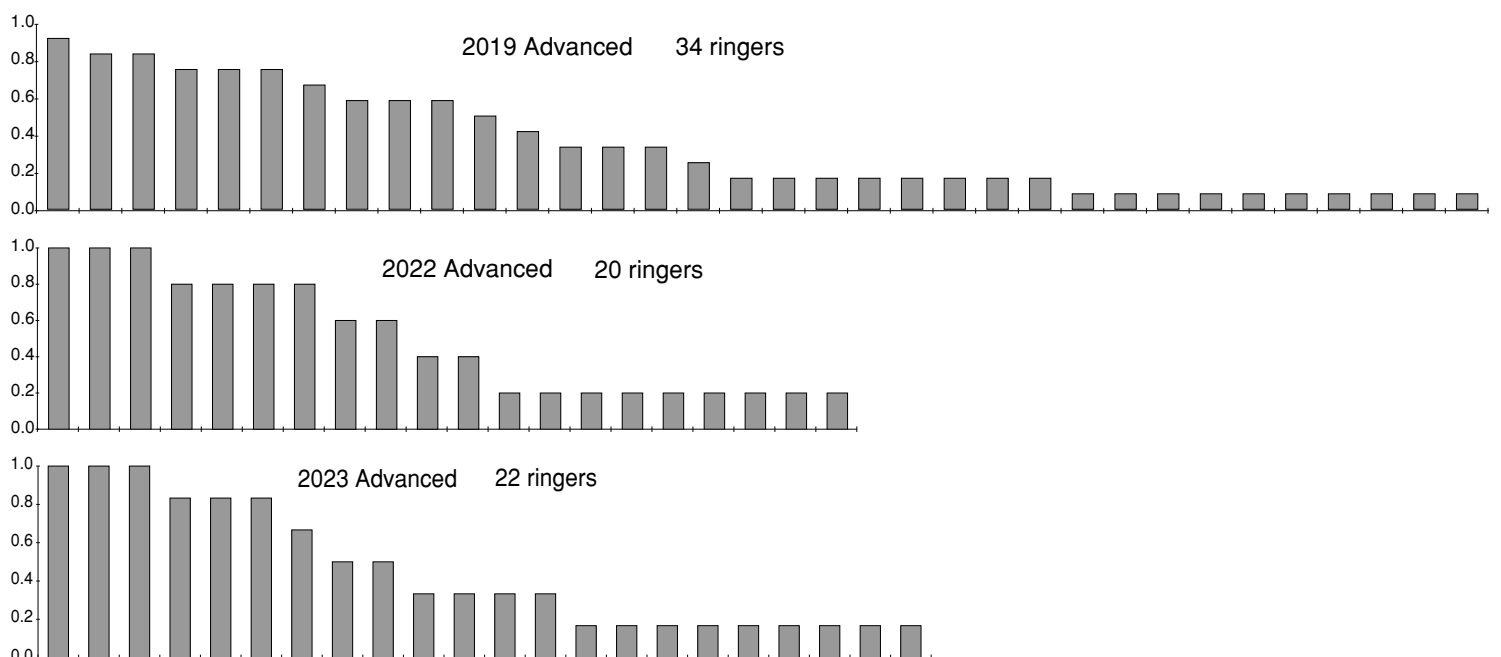


Figure 8: Fraction of advanced practices each year attended by individual ringers

Daytime practices

The plots for daytime practices show some slight differences. More ringers were involved in 2019, and the curve falls a bit more steeply in 2023 than in 2022.

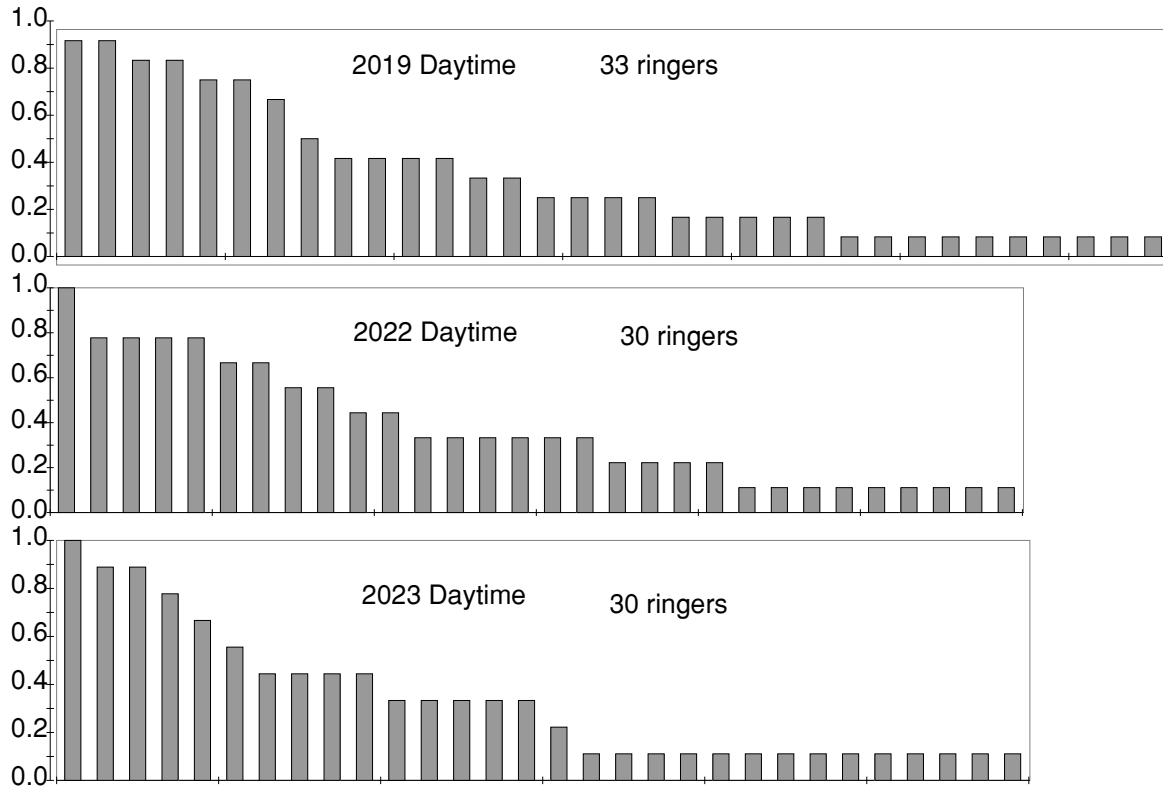


Figure 9: Fraction of daytime practices each year attended by individual ringers

Weekend practices

The main feature of the plots for weekend practices is a progressive reduction, not just pre and post Covid but also between 2022 and 2023, with an overall reduction of a third.

Unlike the other practices, the reduction from from the peak is shallower in 2023 than in previous years, implying that of those who attend several practices, more of them attend a few more .

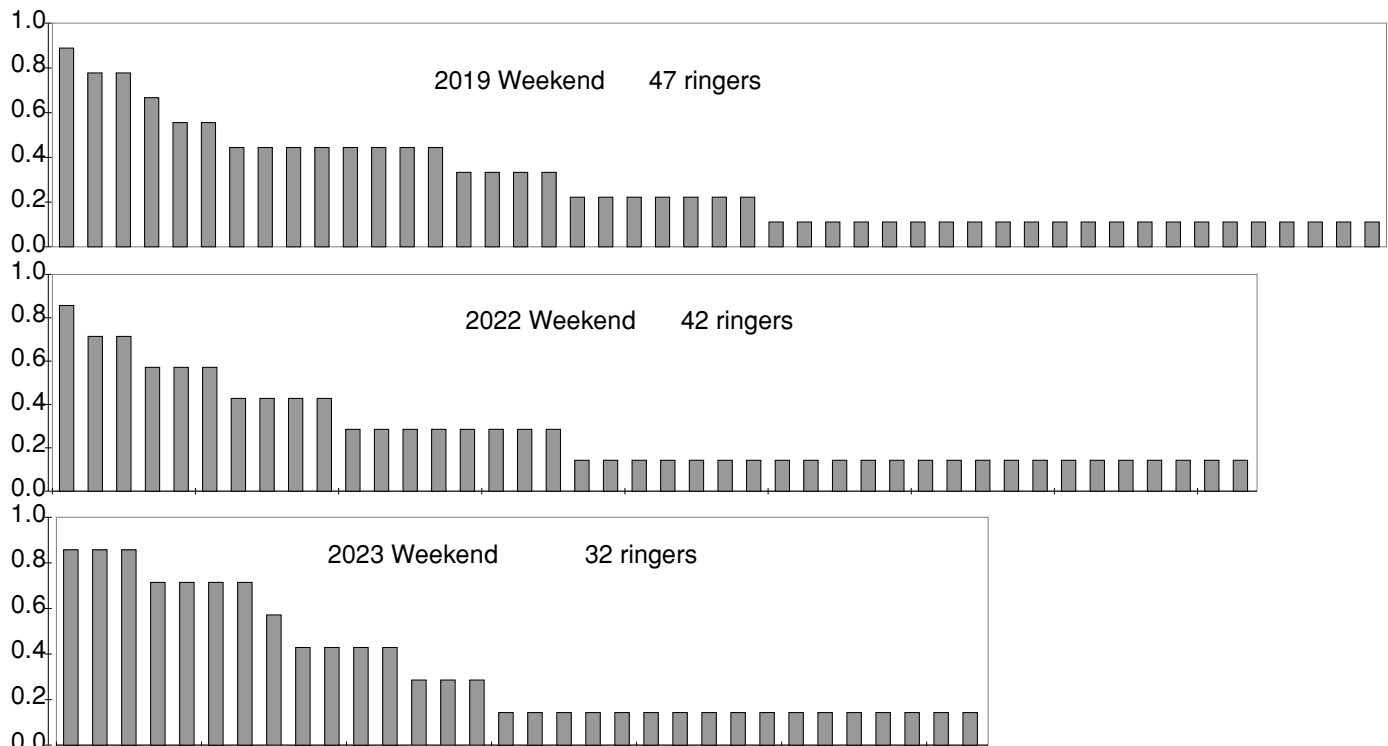


Figure 10: Fraction of weekend practices each year attended by individual ringers