

British Baseball Data CENSUS REPORT December 20th 2020

Data Collected by Richard Evans & Rhodri Theaker

Report Written by Tom Thornhill

Introduction

This analysis has utilised data collected and put together by Rhodri Theaker and Richard Evans and has been written up by Tom Thornhill. It covers adult baseball teams only. A separate piece of work would need to be done to cover formal university and youth teams.

This data was split into separate columns on an excel spreadsheet that segmented every British Baseball adult team by club, affiliation, level & region. The regions used are the UK local government regions apart from London and the Surrounds which were originally grouped to cut travel distances for competition.

This information has been verified by the individuals listed below and is as accurate a census as can be for the middle of the offseason. For example, The West Midlands Baseball League are already aware of their 2021 teams whereas this is not the case for the BBF or other independent leagues

For the BBF, team numbers will be easier to obtain at the beginning of season and this analysis will have to be updated. For simplicity this analysis focuses on British Baseball Clubs rather than include Northern Ireland or Baseball Ireland's clubs.

BBF **British Baseball Federation (From Website & Selected Clubs)**

BBL **British Baseball League (Verified by Ian Blease)**

WMBL **West Midlands Baseball League (Verified by Luke Borton)**

EMBL **East Midlands Baseball League (From Website)**

SWBL **South West Baseball League (Verified by Richard Evans)**

BS **Baseball Scotland (Verified by Paul Convoy)**

EEBL **East of England Baseball League (Verified by Tom Thornhill)**

We hope this analysis can paint as accurate as possible picture of the landscape of British baseball and identify areas for clubs, affiliations, governing bodies and regions to focus their efforts for ensuring the sustainability and growth of the sport in the country.

A next step for this analysis would be to compare historical data and trends to compare the true impact for the affiliations split from the National Governing Body (NGB) and any impact of clubs and teams moving from independent leagues to the NGB.

An additional insight would be to compare and provide valuable feedback on the NGB's own performance as the figurehead organisation for the sport in the UK as well as looking at the performance of the independent leagues over the same period.

Summary

This report provides an overview of the state of adult baseball in the UK (not incl Northern Ireland).

Key points:

1. There are **56 clubs, 95 teams** and around **1274 adults** playing baseball in the UK. These figures do not include university or youth teams. These are split across seven different leagues.
2. **London & the Surrounds** and the **South West** have the **highest** number of clubs (11) of all the regions. When looking at teams, London & the Surrounds, the South West and the East of England have the highest number of teams.
3. **Over half** of UK players compete at the **Single A level** with standards defined by each of the seven leagues. It should be noted that what is **Double AA** in the north east may not be the same as **Double AA** in the West Midlands for example.
4. The pyramid of standards is in line with other sports.

1. Number of Clubs (Figure 1) Page 5:

There are 56 clubs within all seven of the affiliations. 23 of these can be found inside the BBF and 33 divided among the six independent leagues.

Club affiliation can be defined as the affiliation of a club's highest team. For example, the Norwich Iceni, Bristol Badgers, Milton Keynes Bucks, Essex Redbacks and Cambridge would be defined as affiliating with the BBF as they have their top team in the BBF's divisions despite also featuring a lower single side in an independent league.

This does not include Cartmel, Brentwood or Manchester's BBF affiliation as a separate BBF team as they have not submitted a team to participate in those leagues and are affiliated elsewhere.

2. Number of Teams (Figure 2) Page 6:

There are 95 Teams within all seven of the affiliations. 42 (44%) of these can be found inside the BBF and 53 (56%) among the independent leagues.

This does not include Cartmel, Brentwood or Manchester's BBF affiliation as a separate BBF team as they have not submitted a team to participate in those leagues and are affiliated elsewhere.

3. Clubs & Teams by Region (Figure 3) Page 6:

Across the country there is a range in the number of clubs per region from 4 in Yorkshire, East Midlands and Scotland up to 11 in the South West and London & Surrounds.

London & Surrounds are more likely to have multiple teams per clubs averaging at 2.37 teams per club compared to 1.419 teams per clubs across in the independent teams in the county.

4. Team Level (Figure 4) Page 8:

The split in team level found in the data indicates that 78% (74) of teams compete in the bottom half of the British baseball tiers (Dev, A & AA). The majority of this proportion is made up of Single A teams which include 50% (47) of teams compared to 24% (23) in Double A and 4% (4) in development.

Development teams are defined as those teams that are affiliated to a league and have the intention to join the league at the beginning of, or halfway through, the next season.

5. Team Level by Affiliation (Figure 5) Page 9:

What the figures show is that a sizeable majority of lower tier baseball exists outside the remit of the national governing body.

We can take an average team level between the affiliations if we look at the median. If we take the median of both sets of numbers, we find that the BBF's medium is halfway through Double A whereas the Independent leagues is heavily entrenched in Single A.

Looking at the range as well the BBF has a more concise range across the levels with a range of 10 teams compared to 29 in the Independent leagues (discounting development teams).

6. Total Participants (Figure 6) Page 11:

Assumed 14 per Team 14×91 (-4 Dev Teams) = 1274 playing participants In British Baseball Clubs

The results show that across the UK there are roughly 10 times as many players in the Single A level than at the NBL level. The Single A and Double A make up 79% (658) of the playing population.

As a disclaimer, this method of calculating player numbers is likely to be unreliable and is only meant to act as a guide figure. It is also important to note that baseball playing participant numbers and participants in British baseball teams are quite different and should not be used comparably.

Figure 1: Number of Clubs

There are 56 clubs within all seven of the affiliations. 23 of these can be found inside the BBF and 33 across the six independent leagues.

When you look at the level of each clubs' highest teams, the majority play in the BBF.

Club affiliation can be defined as the affiliation of the club's highest team. For example, Norwich, Bristol, Milton Keynes, Essex and Cambridge would be defined as affiliating with the BBF as their top teams are affiliated to the BBF despite also featuring one or more lower sides in an independent league.

This does not include Cartmel, Brentwood or Manchester's BBF affiliation as a separate BBF team as they have not submitted a team to participate in those leagues and are affiliated elsewhere. The Nottingham Rebels 'EMBL teams has been counted as one club with three separate teams that make up the league.

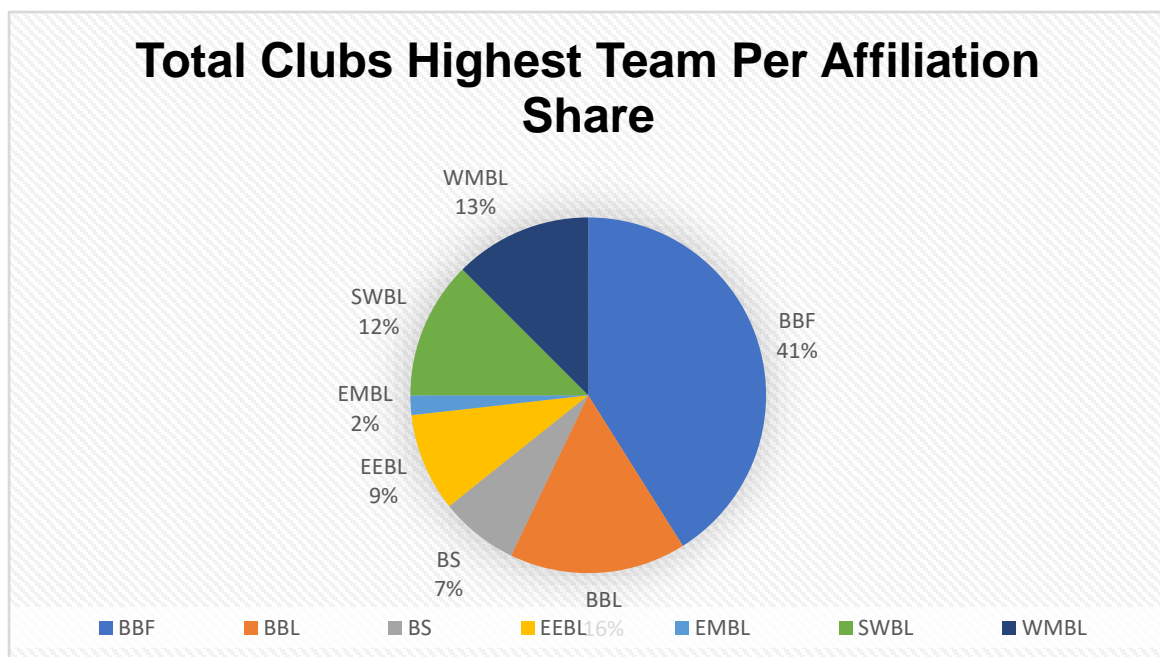
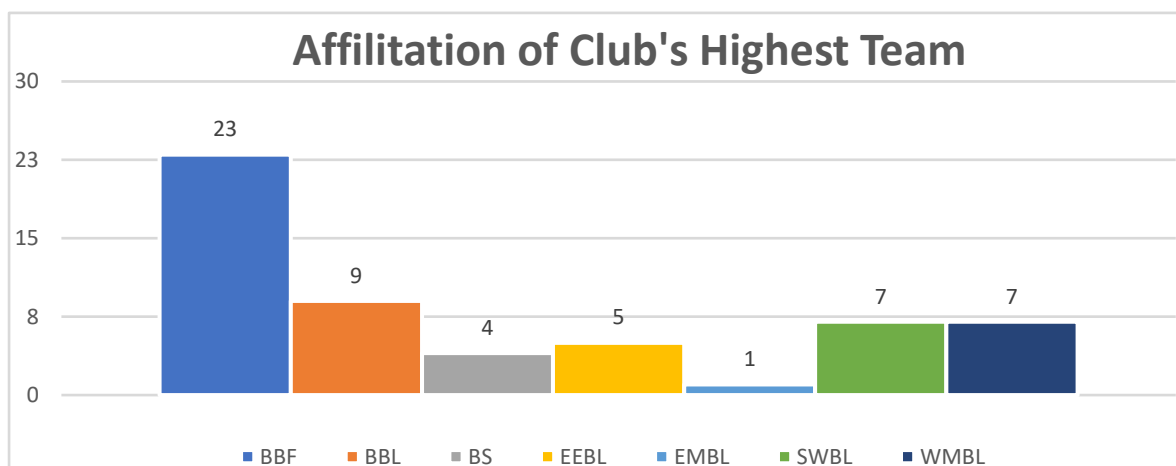


Figure 2: Number of Teams

There are 95 Teams within all seven of the affiliations. This does not include Cartmel, Brentwood or Manchester's BBF affiliation as a separate BBF team as they have not submitted a team to participate in those leagues and are affiliated elsewhere.

What these charts also show us is that a majority of teams compete across the independent leagues. 42 (44%) teams compete inside the BBF compared to 53 (56%) split across the independent leagues. On average there are 8.333 teams affiliated to each of the independent affiliations.

It would be difficult to take an average for the number of teams per affiliation due to the crossover of a number of teams mentioned in figure 1. This has instead been analysed on a per region basis which can be found in figure 3.

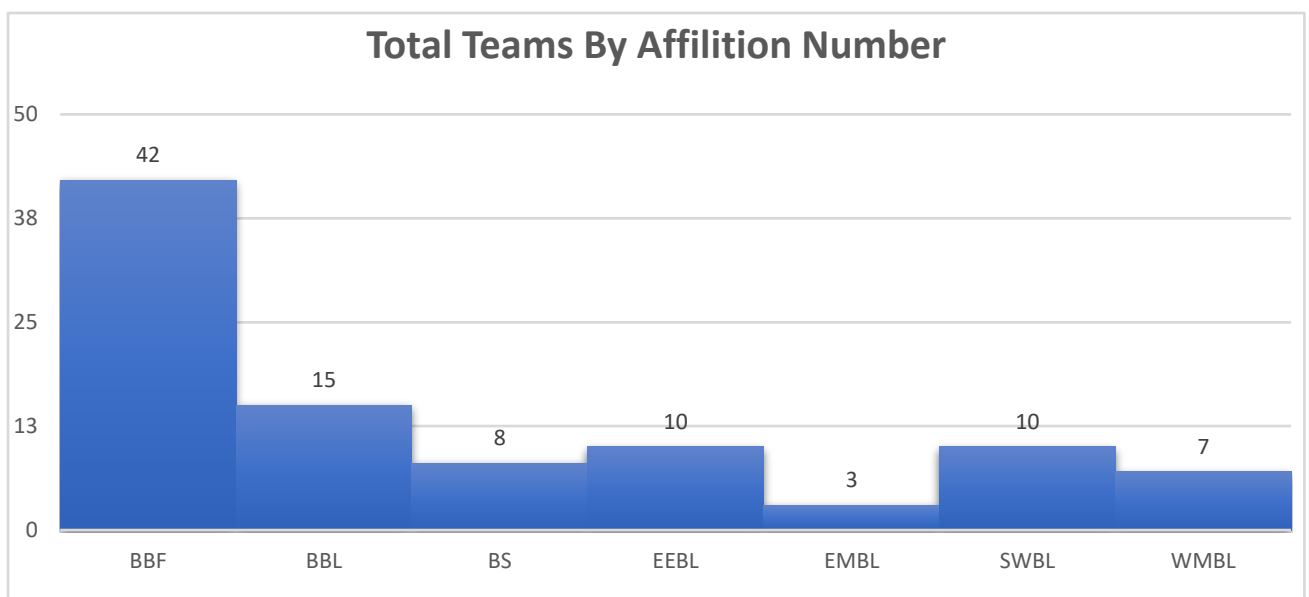
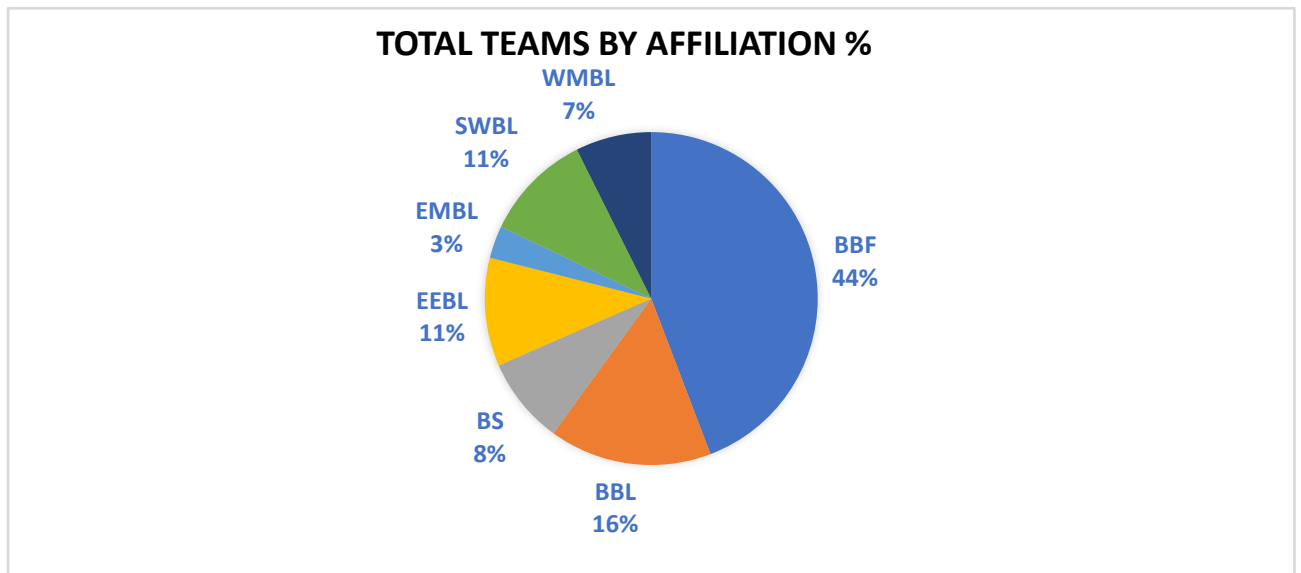


Figure 3: Clubs & Teams by Region

Splitting clubs and teams down by region can give us a better picture of the main locations of clubs as well as those areas with more populous clubs.

Definitions of what constitutes a region as a means of sorting our clubs are sourced from the governments highest tier of sub-national divisions. The exception to this is London and the Surrounds which was done for ease of travel for matches.

What we find is that there is a range of clubs across the UK regions ranging from 4 in Yorkshire, East Midlands and Scotland up to 11 in the South West and London & Surrounds.

London & Surrounds as well as the South West have the greatest number of clubs compared to the rest of the country. The main distinction between these two areas is that London & Surrounds has nearly double the number of teams per club compared to the South West.

What these graphs show us is that clubs in London & Surrounds are more likely to have multiple teams per clubs averaging at 2.37 teams per club compared to 1.419 teams per club across in the independent teams in the country.

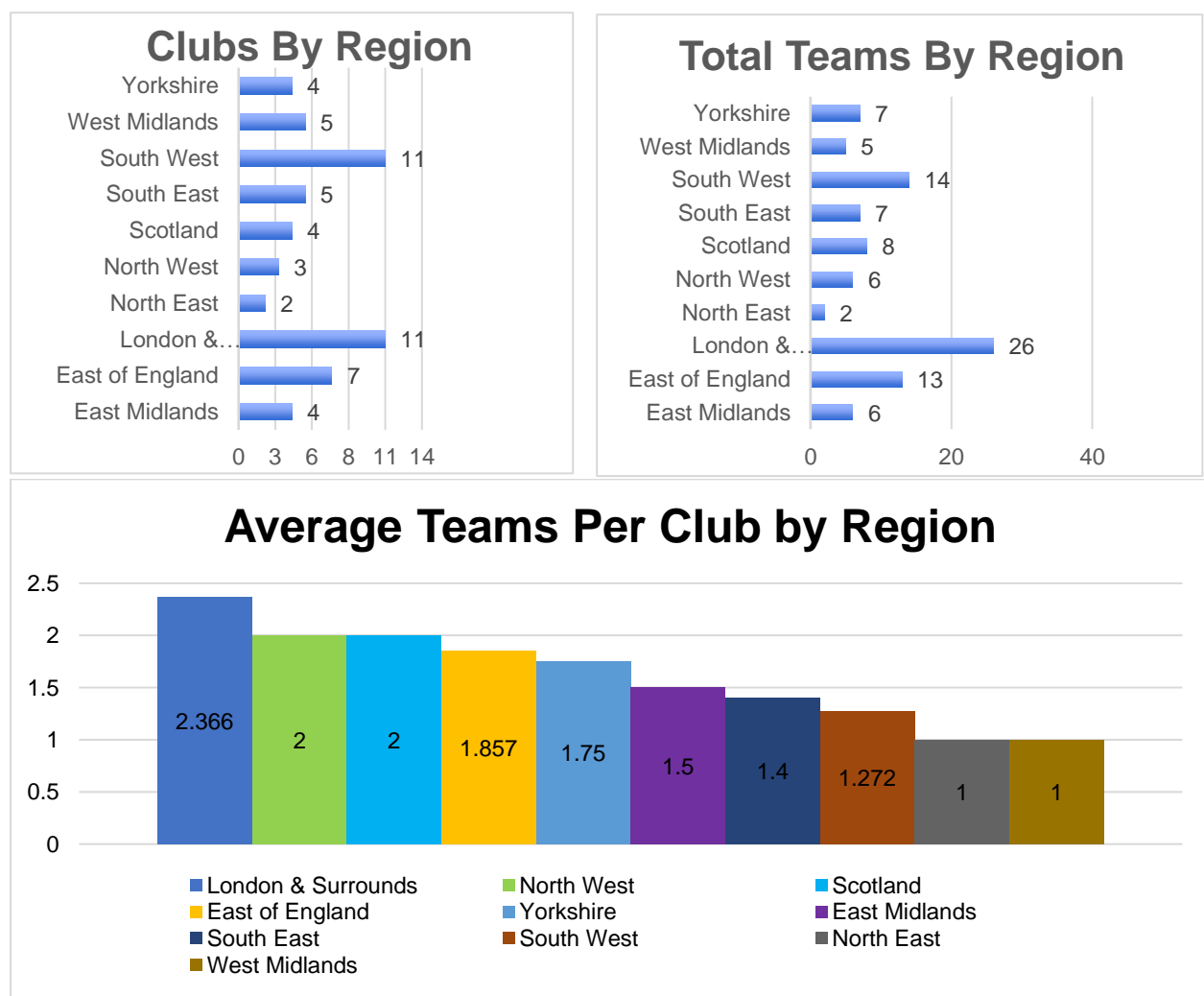


Figure 4: Team Level

Team levels can vary from affiliation to affiliation as there are no acceptable mechanisms apart from the affiliation's definitions themselves. There is not too much clear evidence to prove what constitutes a Double AA in any league when comparing it to others.

The BBF Open Tournament in 2020 provided some clarity on this. Three teams entered from SWBL, two of which can be said to be among the better teams in the South West. Taunton Muskets were third in the A national playoffs and confirmed SWBL is a A league.

As a result, the levels, as shown below, are taken from what the affiliations would define them to be.

The split in team level found in the data indicates that 78% (74) of teams compete in the bottom half of the British baseball tiers (Dev, A & AA). The majority of this proportion is made up of Single A teams which include 50% (47) of teams compared to 24% (23) in Double A and 4% (4) in development.

Just as a note, development teams are those teams that are affiliated to a league and have the intention to join the league at the beginning of, or halfway through, the next season. This is the case with 3 EEBL teams (Ipswich Blackfriars, Bedford Muntjacs & Dovercourt Blue Areas Blues) and 1 BBL team (Leeds Locos).

The elite leagues in British Baseball (Triple A & NBL) make up 22% (21) of the number of teams in the county.

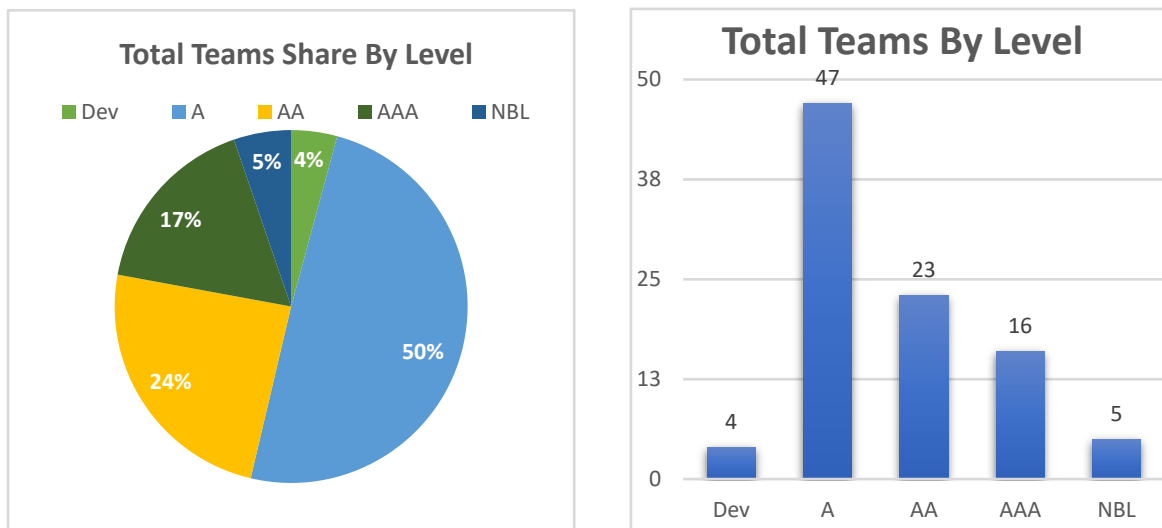


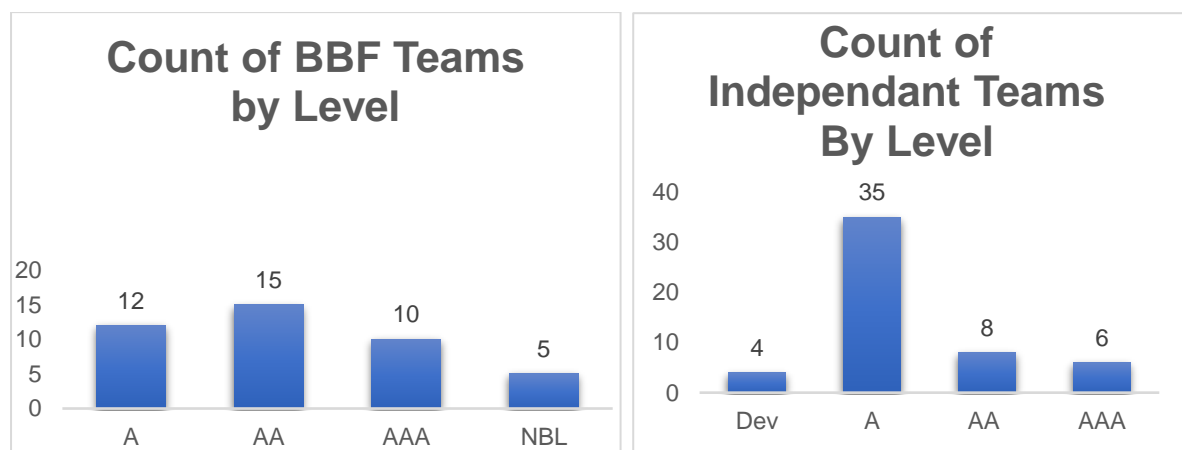
Figure 5: Team Level by Affiliation

Taking figure 4's analysis further, we can break down these levels by individual affiliation.

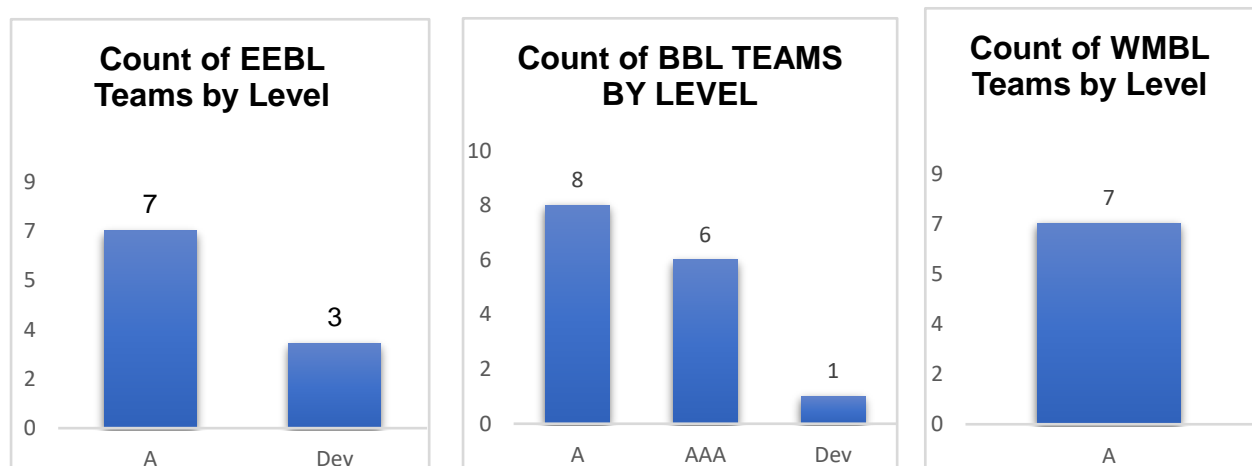
We can take an average team level between the affiliations if we look at the median. If we take the median of both sets of numbers, we find that the BBF's medium is halfway through Double A whereas the Independent leagues is heavily entrenched in Single A.

Looking at the range as well, the BBF has a more concise range across the levels with a range of 10 teams compared to 29 in the Independent leagues (discounting development teams).

What these figures do show is that a sizeable majority of lower tier baseball exists outside the remit of the national governing body. We can conclude several issues with this analysis that we shall not go into it here.



In addition, we have also split down the separate independent league affiliation by their individual levels:



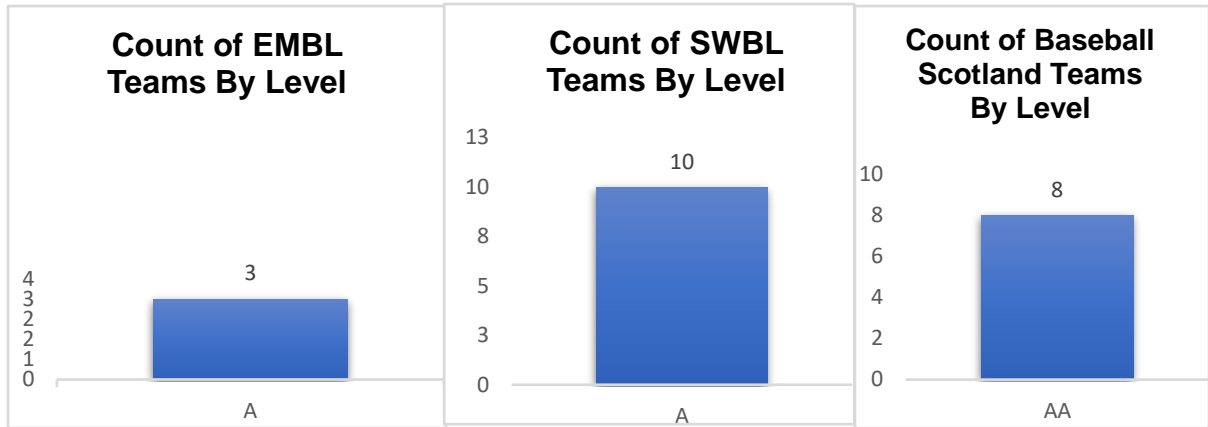


Figure 6: Total Participants

In order to calculate rough participants numbers in British baseball teams, we will have to make an assumption on the number of average players per team.

As a disclaimer, this method of calculating player numbers is likely to be unreliable and is only meant to act as a guide figure. It is also important to note that baseball playing participant numbers and participants in British baseball teams are different and should not be used comparably.

We will also exclude the development teams in order to boost the accuracy of the sample.

Based on average numbers taken from the EEBL, if we assume there are 14 players per team roster 14×91 (-4 Dev Teams) = 1274 playing participants In British baseball clubs.

The results show that across the UK there are nearly 10 times as many players in the Single A level than at the NBL level. The Single A and Double A make up 79% (658) of the playing population. The elite leagues in British Baseball (Triple A & NBL) make up 21% (280) of the participants in the county.

This is not surprising when compared to other sports where the elite levels contain a smaller number of players.

