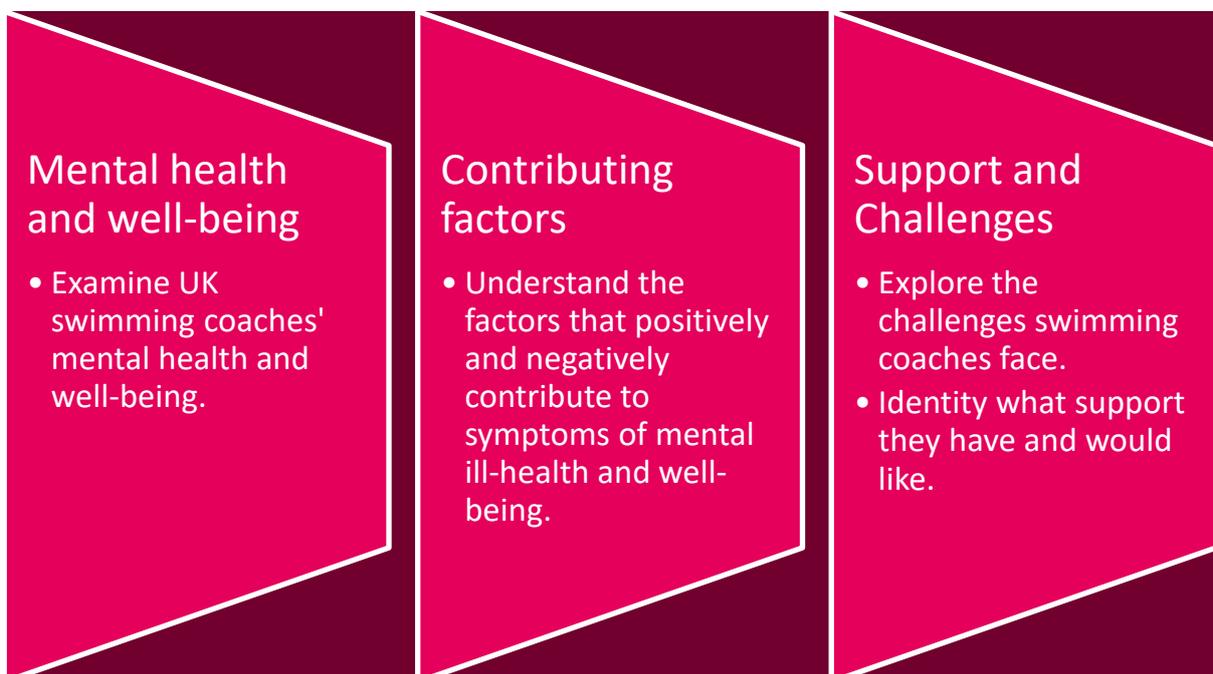


Executive Summary

1. Context and Aims

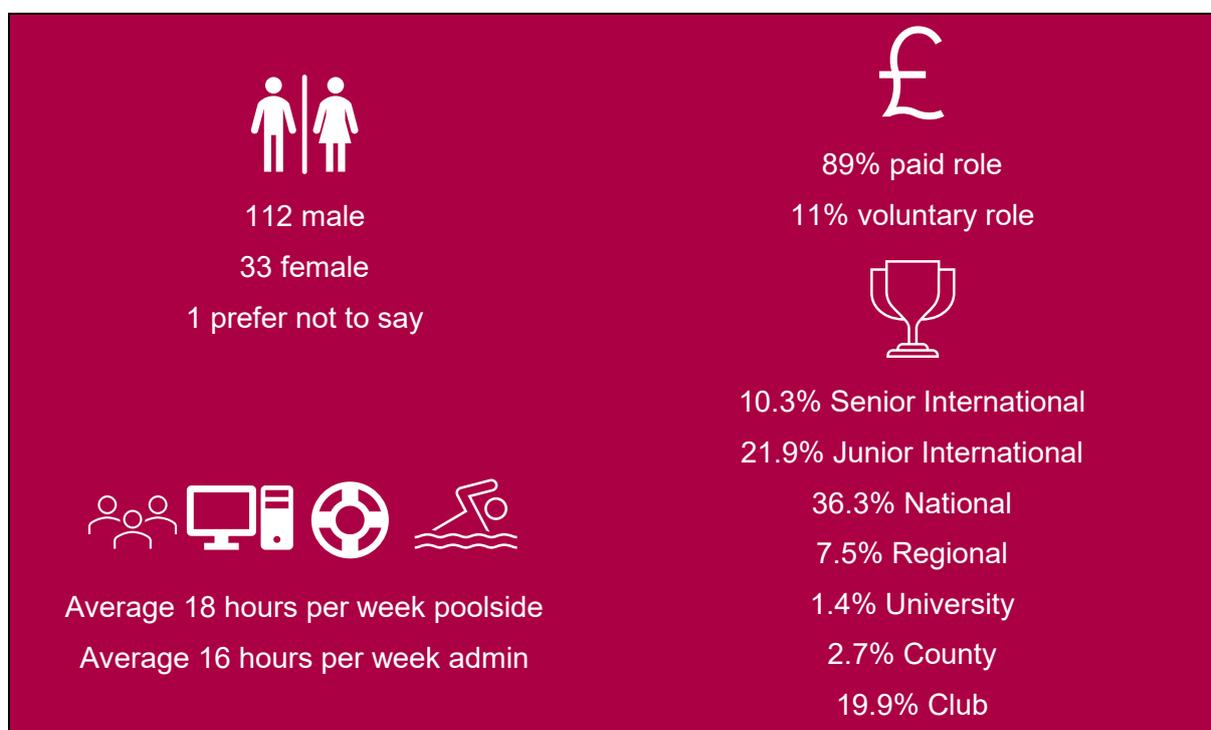
The British Swimming Coaches Association (BSCA) commissioned Nottingham Trent University to conduct research examining the mental health and well-being of swimming coaches in the United Kingdom. This was driven by a recognition that increasing numbers of BSCA members were seeking support for their mental health and well-being. While mental health in sport has become increasingly more important, attention has focused on athletes. The experiences of coaches have been overlooked. Coaches perform in rapidly changing roles, often prioritising the well-being of others over their own. They experience a range of stressors related to daily and personal life, their sporting role, and stressors like job insecurity and long working hours. The unsociable hours worked by swim coaches may be an additional stressor. It is important to understand the current experiences of coaches so appropriate actions can be taken by organisations to better support their mental health and well-being.

Aims



2. Research Summary

146 swimming coaches aged 19-80 years old with an average 17 years of coaching experience completed an online questionnaire about their mental health and well-being. This included standardised surveys as well as open-ended questions.



Participants reported mild symptoms of **depression** and **anxiety**, and relatively low levels of **well-being**. However, **63.7 % of coaches** reported symptoms of **depression**. This could include having little interest or pleasure in doing things, feeling down or hopeless, sleeping problems, tiredness or low energy, poor appetite or overeating, or trouble concentrating. These symptoms ranged from mild (25.3%), moderate (18.5%), moderately severe (11%) to severe (8.9%). **67.1% of coaches** reported symptoms of **anxiety**. This was feeling nervous or on edge, not being able to stop or control worrying, trouble relaxing and restlessness, becoming easily annoyed or irritated, and worrying something awful might happen. Symptoms ranged from mild (30.8%), moderate (20.5%) to severe (15.8%).

Analysis determined that **workload, support and relationships**, and a **lack of autonomy** and **feelings of competence** were the key drivers for increased feelings of depression and anxiety and decreased well-being.

Workload

- When coaches felt the **demands** of their role were high, they reported higher symptoms of **depression, anxiety, and burnout**.
- Burnout** was higher when coaches **worked longer hours on poolside**.
- 31.1%** of coaches felt there was a poor work-life balance.

Support and Relationships

- When coaches felt **supported by management**, they reported **lower** symptoms of **anxiety and burnout**, and **higher** levels of **well-being**.
- Burnout** was higher when coaches felt working **relationships** were strained, and lower when they felt **strong connections to colleagues**.
- Well-being** was lower when coaches didn't feel **strong connections to colleagues**.
- Coaches mentioned feeling **lonely** and **isolated** in their role.
- 28.8%** of coaches wanted more support.

Competence and Autonomy

- When coaches felt they had more **autonomy**, they reported **lower** symptoms of **depression and burnout** and **higher** levels of **well-being**.
- Coaches **doubting their ability as a coach** was linked to higher **burnout** and **well-being**.
- Feeling undermined by **parents and parent-led committees** seemed to impact coaches feeling less **competent** and less **autonomy**.

Awareness of Support Services

37.6% of coaches were not aware of any services available to them to support their mental health. Support services that were mentioned included those within swimming such as the **BSCA** (mentioned by 26.7% of coaches), **mentors** (3.5%), **formal training** (6.1%) and **Swim England** (7.5%). Coaches also cited **informal coaching peer support** (15.7%), **employment services** (4.7%) and **services outside of swimming** (3.4%).

The most common support that coaches would like to improve their mental health was a specific coaches' welfare service (mentioned by 31.5% of coaches). Other sources of support included an acknowledgement of coaches' work from National Governing Bodies, as well as both formal (10.2%) and informal education (26%). The latter included coaches' networks and forums as well as mentoring. 13.3% of coaches did not know what services they needed.



3. Recommendations

Based on our analysis of the views of BSCA members, there are several recommendations for National Governing Bodies to improve swimming coaches' mental health and well-being.

