



Results from the “Introduction to the card game bridge “ survey: Norwegian pupils’ attitudes towards bridge and mindsport education

Survey administered by [Norsk Bridgeforbund](#)

Co-analysis and report by [Bridge: A Mindsport for All \(BAMSA\)](#)

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Introduction

In this report, the results of a survey administered to 135 pupils studying at three Norwegian schools are presented. The survey was developed by “Bridge: A Mindsport for All” (BAMSA) and disseminated by Norsk Bridgeforbund (NBF) in 2023 for the purposes of understanding the motivations of young people who play or do not play bridge at school. The data analysis was undertaken in 2024. In the sections that follow, the main findings of the survey are detailed, and recommendations for the improvement of young people’s participation in bridge are advanced.

Background

The survey “Introduksjon til kortspillet bridge” (English translation: Introduction to the card game bridge) contains three closed questions, six open questions, and two demographic questions (relating to the participants’ age and gender):

- Age
- Gender
- What do you know about the game Bridge?
- Before today, have you ever played Bridge?
- Have you ever played other card games?
- If you have answered yes to any of the questions above, tell us briefly about your experiences playing bridge and/or other card games.
- Are you interested in playing Bridge after school?
- What is the reason why you don't want to play bridge after school?
- Why do you want to start playing bridge after school?
- What do you think you will enjoy about learning and playing Bridge?
- What do you think you might not enjoy about learning and playing Bridge?

The survey responses were collected from 135 pupils studying at three Norwegian schools: Vågsbygd skole, Fjellhamar skole, and Tindlund barneskole (Fig.1). The largest proportions of students originate from Fjellhamar skole (50% of respondents, N=67) and Tindlund barneskole (36% of respondents, N=48). The least-represented school in the sample is Vågsbygd skole (13% of respondents, N=18).

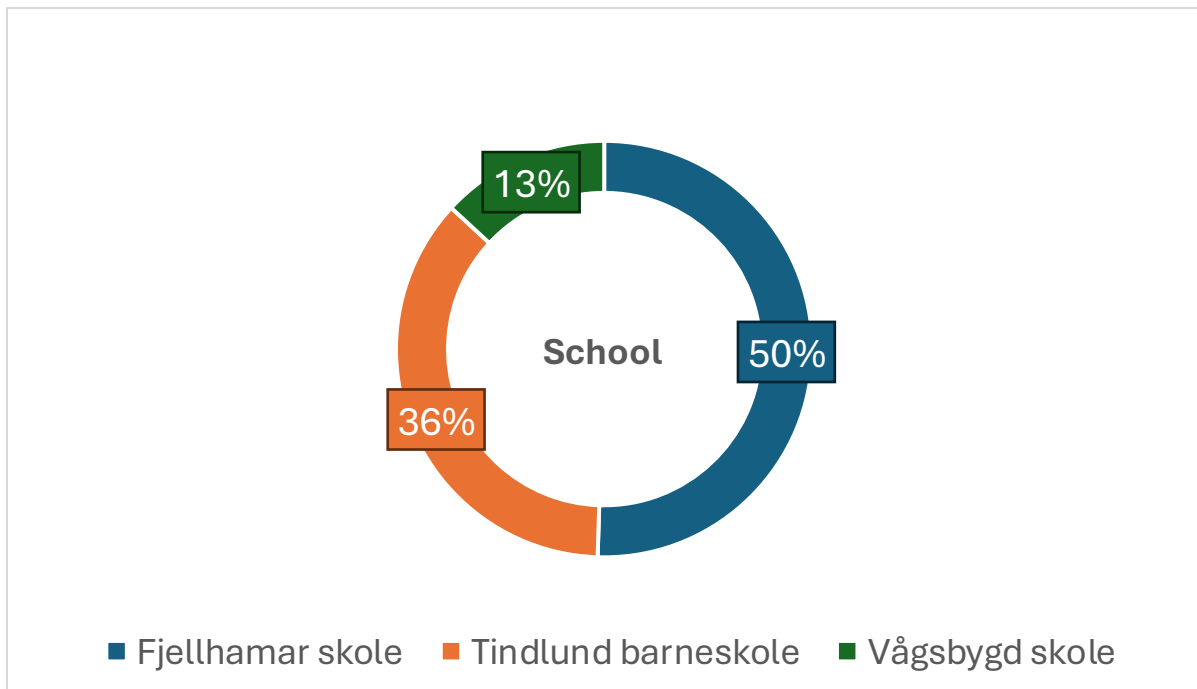


Figure 1. Schools participating in the survey research

The survey sample comprises young people aged 10-12 whose mean age is 11 years old. 74% of sample were 11 years old when they completed the survey. 42% of them identified as female (N=56), 51% identified as male (N=69), and 7% identified as 'Other' (N=10) or did not provide a response (Fig. 2).

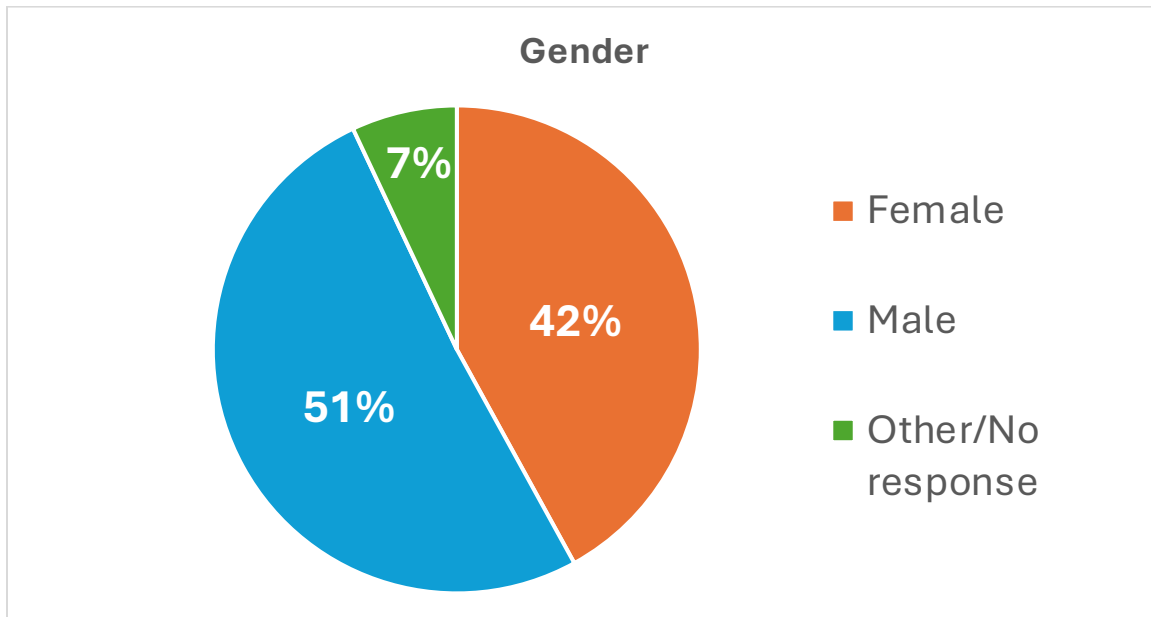


Figure 2. Gender composition of the sample

Young people’s bridge-playing experience

Of the young people surveyed, 22% had played bridge before, and 78% had not (Fig.3). A higher percentage of boys had played bridge overall: 25% of boys had played bridge before as compared to 16% of girls who had played bridge before (Fig.4).

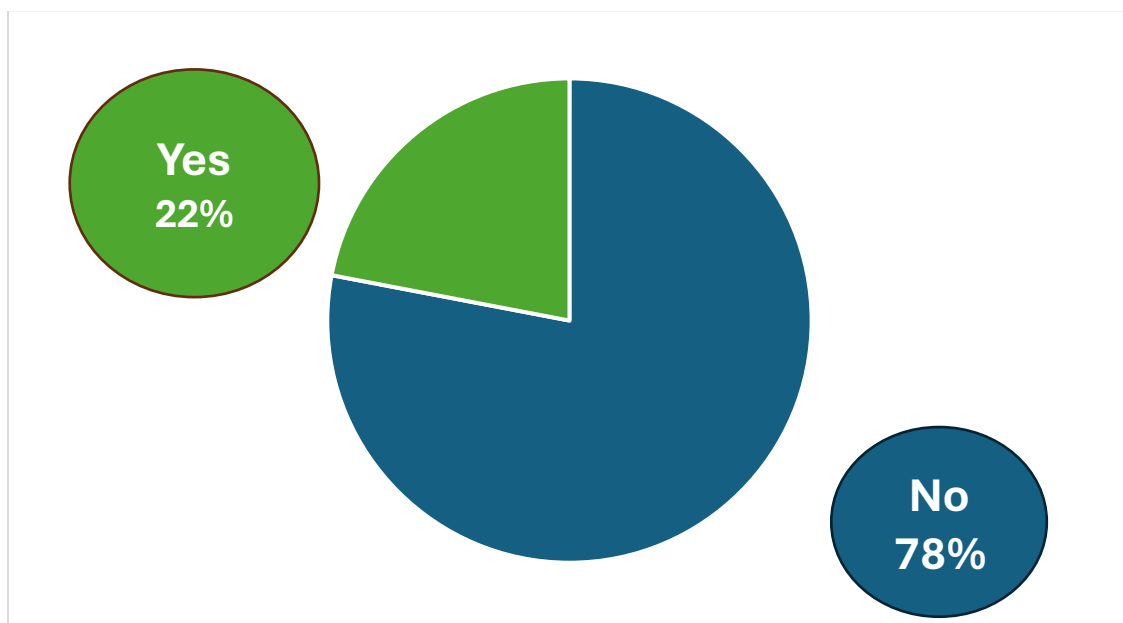


Figure 3. Percentage of young people who had previously played bridge

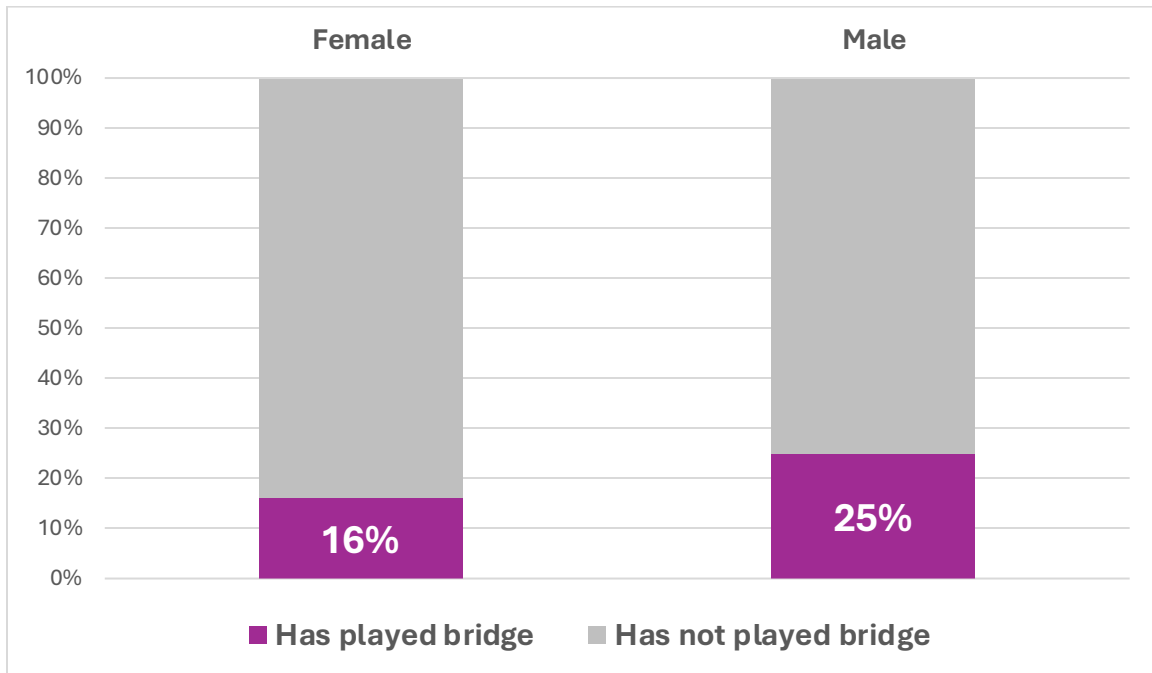


Figure 4. Percentage of girls and boys who have played bridge before

The vast majority (95%, N=128) of young people had played card games other than bridge before (Fig.5). A higher percentage of boys had played card games other than bridge before. 97% of them had played card games as compared to 93% of girls (Fig.6).

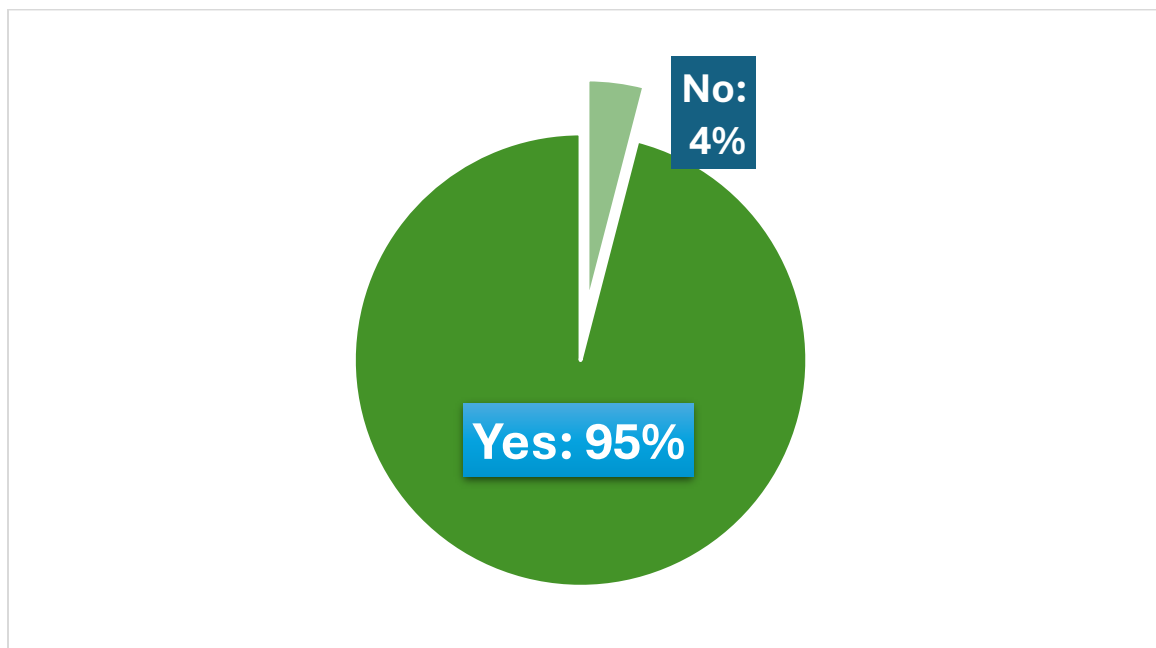


Figure 5. Percentage of pupils who had played other card games

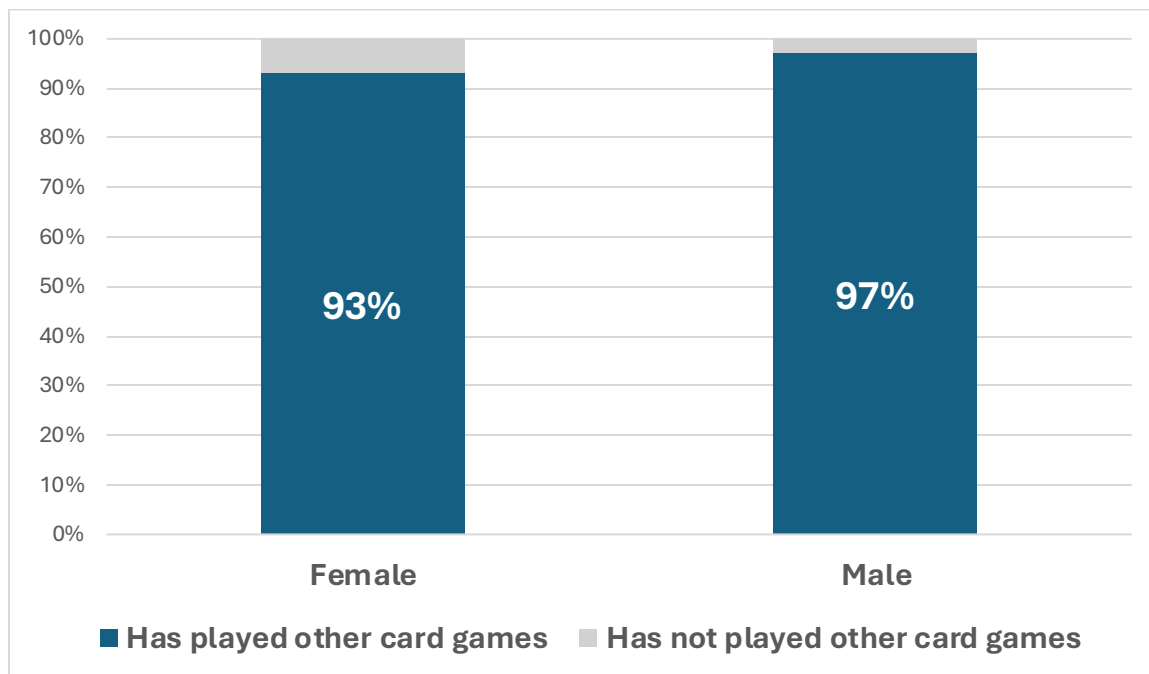


Figure 6. Percentage of girls and boys who have played other card games before

This pattern of responses suggests that although the degree to which young people in Norway play bridge at the moment is relatively low, there is a card-playing culture that introduces a high number of young people to card games overall. The high level of background interest in card games other than bridge can be leveraged towards the promotion of bridge itself, perhaps through the emphasis of the similarities between bridge and other card games.

There can also be a reasonable expectation that Norwegian pupils might find it straightforward to learn bridge, due to their existing familiarity with other card games. They may possess transferrable skills and reasoning that may facilitate their bridge-learning progress. Although some differences between boys' and girls' propensity to play bridge and other card games are evident, these differences are not particularly pronounced. It can therefore be deduced that gender is not a strong determinant of young people's card-playing experience in Norway.

When asked about their previous experiences of playing bridge and other card games, most of the young people surveyed stated that they had played at least one card game before, with some of them having played more than one card game before. They reported that card games had been introduced to them early on by family members. For example, one pupil said that they had "played card games a lot" (P43) and started when they were 4 years old, and another said that they already knew about "tricks and what all the cards are called and things like that" (P37). A third pupil detailed that they had learnt different games from different family members and school staff:

“I learned Idiot from my dad. I learned Twist 8 from my grandfather. I learned the Queen of spades from my dad. I learned Jumping in the sea at a sports school from someone who worked there” (P42)

In respect of the specific card games played by young people, a word frequency query revealed that six games were commonly mentioned:

- Idiot - 25 mentions (4% of responses)
- Uno – 25 mentions (4% of responses)
- Pig - 17 mentions (2.8% of responses)
- Jump in the Sea - 15 mentions (2.4% of responses)
- War – 15 mentions (2.4% of responses)

18 other card games were also mentioned, albeit less frequently: American, BlackJack, Blackmail, Briskola, Bubble, Chicago, Ghost, Hop i Havet, King, Kirig (Nervous), Ligretto, Poker, Queen of Spades, Skip-bo, Solitaire, Twist Eights, Virus, and Volley Yak.

Overall, 32 participants held the belief that card games are fun, with 5.2% of responses incorporating direct mentions of the word “fun” (Fig.7).



Figure 7. A word cloud of the mentions of the word “fun” and the most commonly played card games

Interestingly, whilst several participants noted that they have played other card games before, only a smaller proportion of them had played bridge. The circumstances surrounding their bridge-playing were reported to be, for example, playing with family at the cabin, playing bridge on one's mobile phone, and playing bridge when this was demonstrated at the school¹. When comparing bridge to other games, the young people expressed different sentiments. Whilst some thought that bridge is great fun (N=6), others thought that bridge can be boring at times, or its pace can be too slow (N=3). Upon reflecting on their knowledge of bridge, only 22 respondents said that they did not know much about it. Most had some prior conception of the existence of bridge and of the general principles of its gameplay. A thematic analysis of their responses indicated that their general knowledge of the game is split along the following parameters:

- Bridge is a team game (N=16)
- Bridge is a card game (N=12)
- Bridge is a short game (N=7)
- Bridge is a strategic game that requires thinking (N=4)

Specific examples of the gameplay were also given (N=33), and it was revealed that although only a few of the young people who completed the survey had played bridge, a much higher number of them knew, at least to some extent, how to play bridge. The examples of gameplay principles given were sorted into the following themes:

- Bridge is a game about getting tricks
- There are North, East, South and West
- Each player gets 13 cards each
- Those who have the most tricks win the round
- Whoever wins begins the next round
- It's good to have high cards such as Ace as the highest card wins
- You can have a 'trump'
- You need to sort your cards by colour
- You can win with any 'number' of card (i.e. the suit determines the strength of the card)

The total percentage of pupils who have some knowledge of bridge, as reported above (53%, N=72) exceeds that of the pupils who had played bridge (22%, Fig.3)². This is a compelling

¹ In practice, that meant that bridge was quite novel to some of the survey respondents. The survey was administered as part of their two-hour introductory session to bridge at school. Had this introduction not occurred, the reported percentage of young people who had played bridge before (22%) would likely have been lower. Even though the respondents were asked if they had played bridge 'before today' (i.e. before the day of the introductory session), it is possible that some of the responses were influenced by the introductory session.

² Pupils' knowledge of bridge most likely exceeds their bridge-playing experience because they had received an introduction to bridge at school (as outlined in Footnote 1 above). Some of their responses to the survey might indicate their familiarity with bridge in the context of this introductory session.

finding that uncovers a disconnect between knowing, at least in part, how to play bridge, and playing bridge. One plausible explanation for this documented effect is that the pupils might have observed bridge gameplay sessions without having participated in the gameplay themselves. If that is indeed the case, then bridge education and promotion efforts should focus on exposing learners not only to vicarious learning, but also to direct learning, in order to increase the number of young people who not only know how to play bridge, but who also actively participate in bridge games. It can be further presumed that this direct gameplay experience might positively influence young people's intentions to become fully committed to learning and playing bridge on an on-going basis.

Young people's bridge-playing intentions

With regards to young people's interest in playing bridge after school, 41% are interested in pursuing this, and 57% are not (Fig.8). A higher percentage of girls (43%) are interested in learning bridge than boys (39%) (Fig.9).

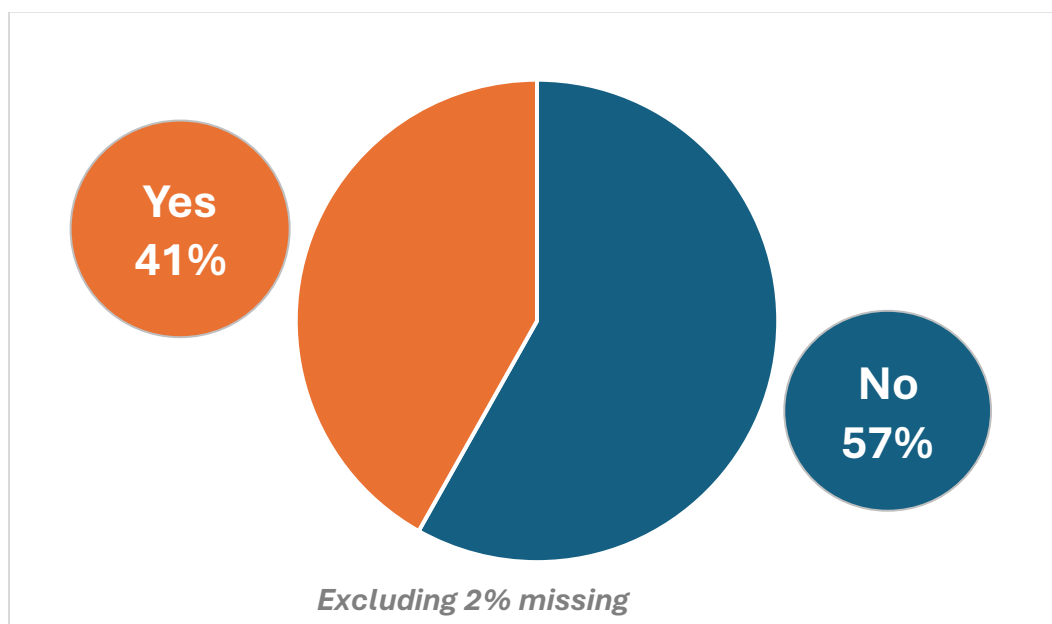


Figure 8. Young people's interest in playing bridge after school

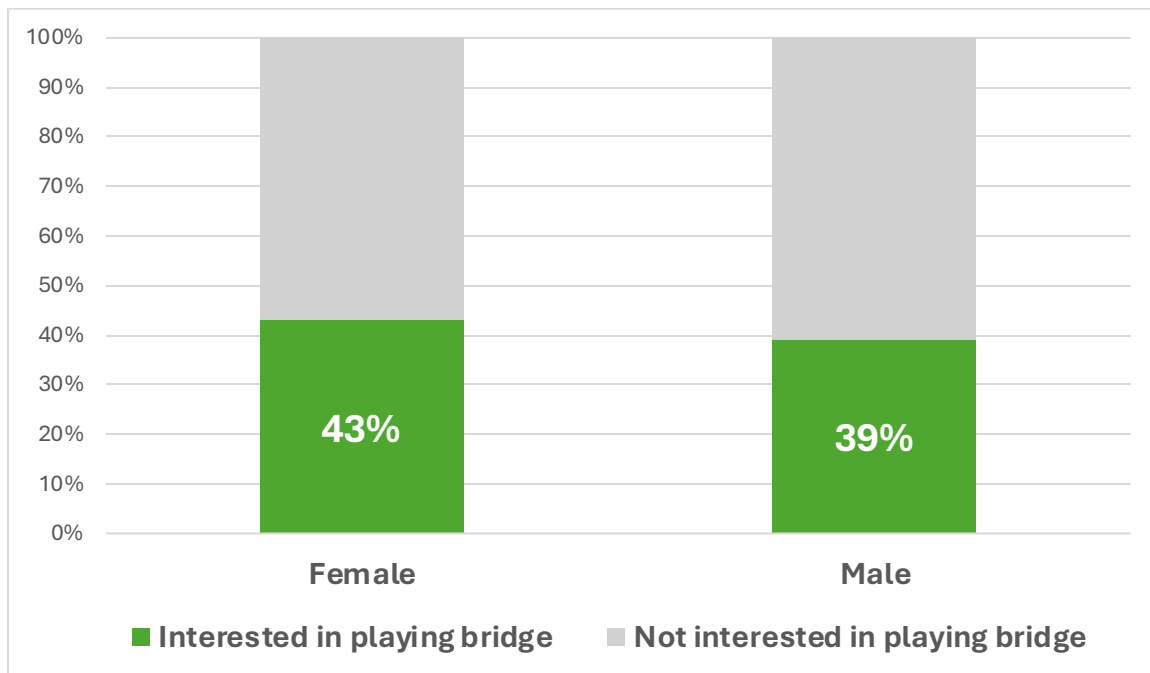


Figure 9. Percentage of girls and boys who are interested in playing bridge

Although the difference between the percentage of girls and boys who would like to learn bridge is not significant, this might speak to interesting contextual differences. For example, on the basis of boys' slightly higher propensity to have played bridge or other card games before, it can be expected that they would be more likely than girls to express an interest in learning bridge, since their higher familiarity with bridge may lead them to develop an increased willingness in engaging in the mindsport. This was not found to be the case, however. The finding that girls are more likely than boys to be interested in playing bridge suggests that factors other than one's prior knowledge of bridge may influence their intention to commence learning and playing bridge. For example, girls may be more likely than boys to be open to new experiences, or perhaps they may be more likely to have more spare time to take up new extracurricular activities. These contextual differences are worthy of further exploration.

Important contextual information was also provided on the reasons behind young people's decision to play (or not play) bridge after school. On one hand, 51 participants (26% of the sample) referred to 'fun' as being their main motivator to play bridge. Some stated that they are intrigued by the game, and others were excited to learn new skills, to get to know more people, and to teach their family bridge. On the other hand, several pupils (N=25) felt that they had no time to play bridge or that they would be too tired to do so as their time after school is typically spent on homework and on going to sports training or music practice.

One pupil said "I have training on the day we have it after school" (P118), whilst another two said "I want to, but I don't have time, but I want to do it at home" (P48) and "I don't have time. But I think it was fun to try bridge" (P71). It was further noted that even when there is spare time to play bridge, other priorities can take precedence (N=20). For instance, pupils referenced priorities such as wanting to be with friends, wanting to go home and eat, wanting to relax at

home and watch TV, and engaging in athletic sports such as football or hockey practice. Some pupils also held the view that bridge is fun, but not ‘fun enough’ (N=24). As an illustration, one pupil said “It was fun but not so much fun that I want to do it” (P38), and another said “I thought it was fun, but not so much fun that I want to play it after school” (P98).

It therefore becomes evident that even when there is willingness to play bridge, this can be hindered by a range of internal and external factors, such as the amount of spare time available to young people, the value of bridge as compared to that of other activities, and the degree of enjoyment of bridge being insufficient to reach the threshold required to play bridge after school. These effects have important implications for the design and delivery of youth bridge initiatives:

- Firstly, **the value of bridge** needs to be made readily apparent, so that this is seen as being on par with other competing alternatives. The delivery and timing of bridge education could also be coupled with other sporting initiatives and extracurricular activities, so that mindsports are offered as part of a package of activities, and not as a standalone offering. In such circumstances, young people would not be faced with the prospect of making difficult choices on how best to spend their time.
- Secondly, **more flexibility** should be offered to young people with regards to the scheduling of bridge play sessions and the ways in which these can be accessed, so that these are convenient to access by all kinds of pupils (including those who may be busy on a certain recurring date or who would like to tune in at home on occasion).
- Thirdly, **ways of making bridge more fun** can be explored, so that it is perceived as ‘fun enough’ to devote time and attention to. Whilst this mindsport clearly has appeal, and is already labelled by many as ‘fun’ (Fig.7), an additional push to increasing the fun factor would be beneficial. Understanding what makes games and mindsports ‘fun’ for the current generation of young people could be a good starting point to achieving this.

In response to the questions inviting them to envision what they think they might enjoy (or not enjoy) about learning bridge, the pupils provided a host of examples (Fig.10). Among the positives listed were the social, intellectual, educational, and competitive aspects of the game. The negatives listed pertained to the commitment, concentration, memorisation, and patience required to play the game at a decent level, and the need to cope with the prospect of losing. These factors lay the groundwork for the development of bridge education initiatives whose appeal is optimised, and whose perceived negative connotations are minimised.

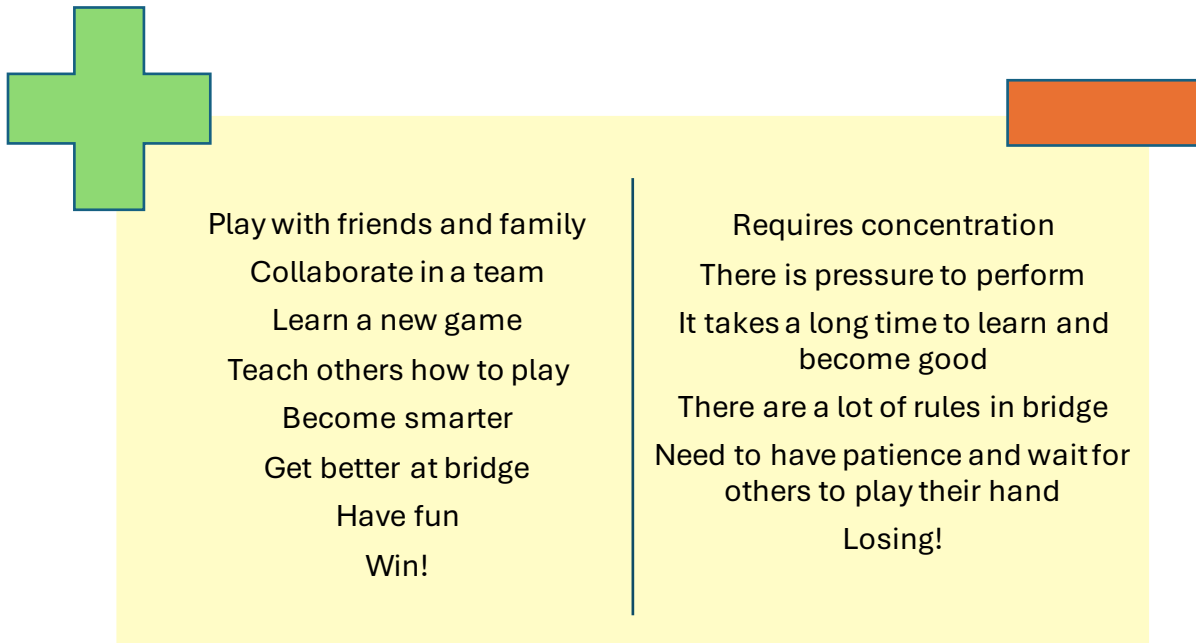


Figure 10. Anticipated enjoyment (or lack of enjoyment) of bridge

Conclusion and next steps

This report has outlined the key findings from a survey conducted with 135 pupils studying at three Norwegian schools. These findings detail the young people's bridge-playing experience and their future bridge-playing intentions.

While the vast majority (95%) of the young people surveyed as part of the research had played card games other than bridge in the past, only a small proportion of them (22%) had played bridge before. There is, therefore, a clear opportunity to enhance the provision of bridge education in schools.

Much of the groundwork for this undertaking is already in place. Card games are seen as 'fun', 41% of the survey respondents are interested in pursuing further bridge education, and there is a widespread card-playing culture in Norway that introduces young people to card games from a young age.

The findings highlight some key indications and recommendations to inform the design and delivery of educational bridge initiatives. Because priorities other than bridge education can take precedence after school, the value of bridge needs to be made more readily apparent, and more flexibility should be offered with regards to the scheduling of bridge play sessions. In addition, while bridge is thought to be fun, at times it can be perceived as not being 'fun enough', and ways to make it more fun can be explored.

The summary of positives and negatives of bridge (Fig.10) provides some pointers as to how this can be achieved.