



Bridge: A MindSport For All

Connects People, Challenges Minds

“My grandma plays that”:

Marketing and promotion of bridge to young people

BAMSA Report (2026)

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings of 40 interviews with young bridge players aged 13 to 31 conducted across seven countries as part of the “Bridge, Youth and Mindsport Education” research project. The analysis focuses on how bridge might be more effectively marketed and promoted to young people, and reveals a game caught between contradictions. Bridge can be seen as both: exclusive or invisible; analytical or

casual; old-fashioned or youth-friendly; a mindsport or a game (that occasionally evokes associations of gambling).

The pluralistic identity of bridge – evident in the many kinds of labels it attracts – and its longstanding tradition as a game enjoyed across past generations appear to act as barriers and not boons to its growth. Rather than attracting diverse players by virtue of its breadth and depth (e.g. being able to serve both competitive and social/casual goals) and enjoying wide public recognition as a function of its traditional roots, bridge lacks a strong identity aligned with youth culture.

The suggestions for revitalising bridge offered by the young bridge players in this study depart markedly from how bridge has been taught and promoted in the past and show that common approaches to attracting new players need to be reimagined. The young players place great importance on:

- Low barriers to entry, low pressure, and enjoyment over mastery
- Community, socialisation, and peer-led initiatives (with food as incentive)
- Local and plentiful events, combined with the ability to travel
- In-person play as default supplemented with online offerings
- More modern digital platforms and resources for both play and learning

Two findings warrant particular emphasis. First, bridge can be absent from public knowledge unless encountered somewhat serendipitously through social networks (e.g. bridge-playing families, schools, or friends). The invisibility of bridge means that many young people may never encounter bridge at all. This is a critical issue in need of consideration because the public awareness of bridge as a mindsport is a precursor to participation. There should be more structured and widespread ways of exposing young people to bridge. Since bridge lacks a fixed identity beyond being associated with older players, there can be a lot of freedom in shaping the messaging employed in promotion and marketing campaigns.

Second, the preference for in-person play amongst digital natives defies a reasonable assumption that young people would favour online engagement. The participants reported diminished concentration, weaker social bonds, and a less authentic experience when playing digitally, whilst also expressing a preference for more opportunities to attend events, travel, compete, and socialise with peers. It is recommended that bridge organisations should prioritise awareness-raising and community-building initiatives.

Introduction

The promotion and marketing of bridge is a key consideration for bridge clubs and governing bodies faced with a reduction in player numbers and a limited influx of new cohorts. The classic game of bridge, albeit enjoying widespread appeal for much of the 20th century, has seen a gradual reduction in players, with fewer young players learning and playing bridge since the 1970s.

To understand the current perception and awareness of bridge amongst young people and identify means of expanding youth bridge, this report presents a thematic analysis of interview data gathered from young bridge players across Scotland, England, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, India, and the United States. The interviews explored young people's views on how bridge might be more effectively marketed and promoted to young people and the wider public. A total of 40 participants, ranging in age from 13 to 31, took part in the research.

When asked about the common perceptions or stereotypes associated with bridge, the young bridge players who took part in this study explained that there are two main issues facing bridge today: the perception of bridge as an older person's game and the invisibility of bridge in public consciousness. Together, these constitute a compounded effect: on one hand, age stereotyping narrows the notion of who belongs in bridge, and on the other hand, invisibility means that many young people have no meaningful exposure to the game during their formative years. The combination of these effects is such that young people and their wider social circles tend to hold either negative associations with bridge or none at all. By comparison, positive associations are rarer and likely to emerge when young players have been introduced to bridge through family members or bridge clubs in schools.

The findings also indicate that bridge occupies a paradoxical position in public perception. On one hand, its associations with exclusivity, whether rooted in social class or the assumption that it demands analytical aptitude, may lend bridge an air of inaccessibility that may deter potential newcomers. Albeit less common than ageing stereotypes, these perceptions nevertheless seem to still exert an influence. On the other hand, bridge may be dismissed as a less serious intellectual pursuit relative to other mindsports (such as chess) and framed as a casual or social pastime rather than a competitive and respectable game. The occasional associations of bridge with gambling, especially in some cultural settings, can be damaging to its image as a mindsport.

This combination of factors has the potential to translate into decreased participation in the future. However, it also presents an opportunity. For the young people who have never encountered bridge, the absence of prior knowledge or reference points effectively renders them 'blank slates'. This creates space for the bridge community to

reimagine and reinvent the image of bridge, almost as if introducing a brand new game to young cohorts. There is ample opportunity to redefine what bridge signifies and to curate the messaging that will be passed down to future generations.

The current perception and awareness of bridge amongst young people

Bridge as an older person's game

A key feature of the participants' accounts is the uniformity with which people from many different countries express similar reactions or associations with bridge, often through a reference to an older person whom they know. Across the interviews, young people often made reference to ageing. Benjamin's quote captures this well:

The number one thing people say to me when I say I play bridge is, oh, my grandma plays that, like literally that same one. And it definitely is associated with retirement home type things. (Benjamin, 21, USA)

Lucas (21, Sweden) echoes him almost verbatim, saying: "It's an old people's game, for sure. My grandmother plays bridge. It's probably the most common thing." Catherine and Keith add:

I would say I've spent just over a decade now talking to peers and meeting new people who have to react in some way to the fact that I play bridge. And I think the reactions have been reasonably consistent, like, "oh, isn't that game that old people play?" Or "aren't you a bit young to be playing? I didn't know anyone our age played" or something like that. Or the people who go, "bridge, what's that?" (Catherine, 31, England)

I think a lack of bridge at school means that people never get into it and then when they do hear about it, they hear about it as an old person's game. Oh yeah, my gran plays bridge or, my grandad plays bridge with all of his friends and so it's seen as that is something to do later on in life. I suppose it is not seen as available to young people. (Keith, 22, England)

The common labelling of bridge as an 'old person's game' has profound implications because this can also translate into a broader constellation of meanings. It is not just that bridge is associated with old age, but that this association then activates secondary associations with other undesirable characteristics such as being 'boring'. Charlotte (16, England) reflects on this dynamic:

The stereotype was probably the biggest thing, for some reason it was kind of embedded in my brain. And I used to be quite embarrassed to tell people that my dad was a bridge teacher because it's you know, boring. (Charlotte, 16, England)

The association with boredom that Charlotte describes is reinforced by Darren (23, Scotland), who notes that some non-players tend to assume that people who play chess or card games "*lead lives that they wouldn't find interesting.*"

These accounts show that young people's participation in bridge prompts surprise and even disbelief amongst peers. As a result, they may choose to conceal or not boast about their involvement in it. The stereotypical view of ageing carries over to bridge, and in doing so, has tangible consequences for young people's identification with the game, since playing a game associated with old age may affect their status and belonging within peer groups. By being associated primarily with older cohorts, bridge is at odds with becoming integrated into youth culture.

The invisibility of bridge

Alongside the age stereotyping of bridge, a second fundamental effect is also evident in the data: that many young people do not know what bridge is. When asked about the common perception of bridge, the participants explained that many young people, and indeed members of the public more broadly, have no particular associations with bridge:

I just think they don't know about it. I think that's the biggest thing. It's so small, there's not enough people talking about it. (Rhiannon, 26, USA)

Keane (20, Scotland) illustrated the invisibility of bridge by recounting that at a pub quiz, a bridge-related question "*ended up being a decisive question*" where he was "*the only person in the whole place who knew the answer*". This suggests that bridge is disappearing from general public knowledge, and not just amongst young people. This invisibility does not apply to all mindsports, however, as many people have heard of chess:

I talked to lots of friends at uni and they just didn't know what bridge really is about. And I mean, well, chess is popular, right? It's not like everybody knows how to play it, but everybody knows of it. So they know what chess is about. (Harry, 23, Scotland)

Everyone has heard of chess, but not many people have heard of bridge. So I think that's another factor why it's difficult to get a lot of young players. (Virginia, 20, USA)

The contrast with chess is significant and recurrent across the interviews. Whilst chess has achieved visibility, bridge remains largely invisible to those who have not encountered it through word-of-mouth or serendipitous exposure. Shayla reflected on the changing cultural significance of bridge, noting that the game had a broad appeal in the past:

It's not a cultural thing anymore like back in the day, you know, 75% of people would play bridge and then they teach you. So, it was just something big that just keeps itself going. (Shayla, 20, USA)

The pathways through which the young interviewees did gain exposure to bridge are particularly poignant to consider in relation to the invisibility of bridge, because they illustrate how narrow the routes to exposure and participation can be. Becoming aware of bridge through family networks is most common. Lauren (18, Scotland), noted that without her grandmother's involvement in a local club, she was *"not really sure"* how she *"would have gotten into it."* Alannah (15, Scotland) similarly traces her participation through a family lineage of bridge players. She acknowledges that this has shaped her perception of bridge, *"but not a lot of my friends play"* (Alannah, 15, Scotland) and they have had little to no exposure to bridge when growing up. She concedes that her experience as a bridge insider is unique, and not many young people play bridge.

The lack of awareness of bridge and its benefits can also become stratified within social and organisational structures, creating obstacles for players who attempt to start new bridge clubs or advocate for bridge. For those without prior exposure to bridge through family, school is the principal route of hearing about bridge. Yet when Cassie (19, England) looked to establish an after-school bridge club, she found that school staff *"were really adamant against doing it"* because *"they didn't have a teacher who knew it, so they would have to bring somebody outside of school to then teach the kids."* The institutional barriers to school-based bridge are thus rooted in the problem of social invisibility. Busy educators and administrators are rarely willing to create space for an unfamiliar activity such as bridge in schools.

The problem of invisibility is linked, in part, to a recurring critique of the governing bodies of bridge, thought to be more reactive than proactive and insufficiently coordinated in their approaches. Bruce (19, Scotland) shared his view, saying that *"we have seen sort of systemically in bridge organisations that they are often reactive and not proactive especially when it comes to recruitment."* Edwin (18, England) also gave a specific example that relates to the invisibility of bridge clubs:

In general, the clubs aren't advertised that well, to be honest. I didn't realise until about a year ago that there was a bridge club that runs a session once a week, a five-minute walk away from my house. And I never actually realised that because it wasn't on the England website. And I just found out because I found it on some random website that they were running a session once a week. And then I asked the teacher and he said, "oh yeah, there's a session that runs over there". Exposing clubs to new players is probably where England Bridge in general needs to improve. (Edwin, 18, England)

Furthermore, it was thought that the existential threat to bridge and the scope of changes required to revitalise the game is not commensurate with the current efforts of bridge organisations:

I think that it's not necessarily clear that there is an appetite for expanding youth bridge, at least with the administrators and the people who are trying to teach it. I think only lip service is paid to this idea. Most teaching materials that the EBU produces and lots of other bridge unions is aimed at people in their 60s. And then the teachers are taught this material, and they teach to those people. So even when children come and learn from them, it's not something that's going to make them want to stick around.

Over the decade that I've been playing bridge, numbers have dwindled a lot. And maybe competitive bridge and kitchen bridge is fine, but everything in between is not doing very well, which is sad. And I, at some point in time, thought, maybe card games just won't exist in the future. Poker is also getting smaller, although not in the desperate kind of way that bridge is. (Damian, 31, England)

Freyja (27, USA) corroborated the discoverability problem, and described how she and her fiancé had been unable to locate basic information about local bridge games when moving to Canada:

The bridge club scene is so hard to figure out here. And my fiancé is from here and he's been to all these bridge clubs for so long and everything. And we just have no idea when the games are. There's no easy way to find out. I don't know if there's like a central place where these things are listed anymore because everything seems outdated. I click on links and it's like, last updated 2017, and it's like, oh my God, what?

Thus bridge is not invisible only because it has fallen out of fashion or not kept up with the times, but also because of pragmatic reasons and poor communication strategies. The pathways for playing bridge, both amongst newcomers and established players, can be unclear, and the ease of discovery of bridge clubs can be hindered by poor marketing and visibility.

Bridge as an exclusive pursuit

Additional associations of bridge with certain notions were also evident in the data, with less frequent references being made to the intersection between age stereotyping and the perception of bridge as being an upper- or middle-class pursuit or a pursuit reserved for 'smart' people. Several participants articulate an awareness of the historical positioning of bridge; Hussain (20, England), for instance, says that this is “*fading*” but

not yet entirely dissolved. It is important to note, however, that bridge is associated not just with wealth and success, but also with expertise and prestige, and this is not always seen as a negative association:

You have to understand that people have had more life experience than you and their opinions and understanding is valuable. You don't have to make them your own, just listen. And I learned all that in the bridge world. There's a lot of very wealthy and successful people. And whatever their niche is, you kind of want to listen to what they have to say about it, just because it'll help your own life.
(Lenny, 28, USA)

With regards to the qualities ascribed to bridge players and the people who tend to be attracted to bridge, some of the participants identify bridge as a mathematical and analytical pursuit. Tasneem (21, USA) explained that "*a lot of college students get into it because of something outside of bridge, like the math of it, or like probability*". When speaking about his own profile and that of his friends, Benjamin (21, USA) said "*loosely, I think all of us have some sort of other math background or had grown up playing some type of cards or strategy game or chess*". Yet some of the participants are also cautious to avoid associating bridge only with mathematics, because the gameplay is much more nuanced. Dale describes this well, saying:

Although it's a mathematical game, you don't need to use math at the table constantly. It's just the logic and the thinking about it. (Dale, 18, India)

Cole (30, USA) is also critical of this kind of categorisation. Drawing on his own background as a mathematician, he elaborates that "*stereotypes can be very harmful*" and that narrow narratives around who "*fits*" a game can have exclusionary effects. Like Dale, he sees bridge as being multifaceted:

I can show you some mathematics but until you have the actual card play experience it's not going to make a whole lot of sense to you. (Cole, 30, USA)

It can be seen that the meanings described by the young players are layered and allude to a landscape of perceptions where age, social class, and even mathematical or analytical aptitude may function as inclusionary or exclusionary devices. These meanings may carry both positive and negative connotations depending on observers' interpretation from their own subjective positions.

Comparing bridge to other mindsports

The participants sometimes mentioned the term 'bridge person' as a moniker for those who strongly identify with the designation of bridge as an analytical card game:

I have definitely heard several people say, oh, my friends aren't like bridge people, like they wouldn't get it. Like it's just not their type of thing. And that might be true. It's not an uncommon type of person, but I do think there are lots of

people that wouldn't really like playing bridge. Like if you're not a games person at all or you haven't played any card games, it's definitely a lot to jump into, if bridge is your first analytical card game. (Stuart, 26, USA)

This suggests that bridge may be dismissed simply on the grounds of being an analytical game requiring focus and concentration, regardless of its association with mathematics. Upon comparing bridge with other games, however, the interviewees revealed that the perception of bridge is in some ways distinctive to that of chess or other mindsports. Macy's brother, who grew up in a family of bridge players, refused to play bridge even though he liked chess:

I think the problem is that once he decided he didn't want to play, now it's kind of a cause for him to not start playing. So, 'no, I'm not going to play bridge'. I'm not sure [why] because he really likes chess and he games a lot. So I think he would love bridge, but he doesn't really say why he doesn't want to play. He just says, no, it seems boring. (Macy, 23, Norway)

Disentangling the perception of bridge and other analytical games further, it becomes evident that bridge and chess are seen as equally analytical and competitive games. For some, however, bridge offers more novelty and complexity than chess:

There are definitely a lot of parallels in my mind between chess and bridge which is why I think my dad thought it was a natural transition. He's like, both of these are likely pretty deep thinking games. I think they're pretty complicated. (Ajay, 18, USA)

I was in chess club for one year, but I loved bridge more, so I stuck with bridge. I felt like I was learning something different or new every time I was at bridge. Like it wasn't the same for me as it was with chess. (Sadie, 22, USA)

I think bridge is a more dynamic game than chess, you know? In chess, the pieces will do the same thing all of the time. In bridge, the same cards aren't going to do the same thing all of the time. It might be that the very next game, the cards that you had right now which won you the game, mean nothing in the next game. (Anthony, 24, USA)

Furthermore, partnership is a defining characteristic of bridge, and one that distinguishes it from chess. The appeal of partnership is thought to extend far beyond the opportunity to socialise. It introduces an additional layer of complexity, strategy, and skill to the game of bridge, demanding trust, empathy, and resilience from both players:

I really like how it's a partnership game. ... That partnership communication, that empathy, building trust, knowing your partner and being able to play based on your knowledge of your partner is just another layer of complexity that I really enjoy in the game. (Virginia, 20, USA)

A good partner needs to be on the same page as you. They also need to respect what you know and try to teach you more things about what you don't know, but they must know. They must go, 'will my partner know what I'm trying to say if I do this?'. And if the answer is probably not, they shouldn't bid this and think of something else to bid. That's basically how you establish partnership trust. Trust is very important in partnerships. (Francis, 16, USA)

I love being able to play with other people without having to be really non-social the whole time. That's why I don't play chess. (Donovan, 13, England)

An asymmetry in perceptions, however, is apparent in the participants' responses: even though both mindsports command a degree of analytical rigour, chess has established its cultural presence to a greater extent. The partnership aspect of bridge is unique and highly appealing to players, yet bridge has a more ambiguous status as a mindsport. Participants attribute this difference, in no small part, to awareness and popularity:

I feel like a lot of people know what chess is, but they don't necessarily know what bridge is. And I don't think that they're not that dissimilar, in terms of the idea of what they are. (Liyana, 15, England)

Chess has so much of an image. Now they have the Botez sisters, they've got Gotham Chess. I mean they have these couple of streamers that are just so like excited or they're giving this air of 'we're world champions' and it makes chess more attractive because you have these exciting videos and these exciting things happening. (Freyja, 27, USA)

Thus it can be proposed that there are two factors that shape the differing perception of bridge and chess: their intrinsic qualities (e.g. individual vs partnership gameplay mechanics) and their relative positions in public awareness. Although both mindsports can be characterised as intellectual pursuits, their public image is determined to some extent by their popularity. In addition, their relative status may be affected by the availability of academic studies on each mindsport. Chess has decades of research demonstrating its associated benefits, whereas bridge has only recently begun to expand its number of published studies. Furthermore, the partnership aspect of bridge appears to be underutilised in the promotion and marketing of bridge as a mindsport. Bringing this dimension to greater public attention may not only attract young people who already play chess, but also contribute to a fuller understanding of the distinctiveness and value of bridge in its own right.

Bridge as a mindsport

In addition to comparing bridge to other mindsports, the young players were asked about the sports recognition of bridge and its framing as a mindsport for the purposes of exploring how this categorisation might affect public perception and participant identity. Many did indeed see bridge as a mindsport and emphasised the skill and endurance required to play, whilst contrasting bridge with games of chance such as poker. However, it is competitive and not casual bridge that most resembles a mindsport:

It's something that you learn and you practice because you can practice it, whereas you can't really practice Poker or Pontoon. (Charlotte, 16, England)

I think maybe higher up I would call it a mindsport, but if people are just learning and playing at home, then to them it is a game because it's far more casual. (Cassie, 19, England)

Macy (23, Norway) drew on a specificity of the Norwegian language, explaining that there are two words for sports in Norwegian: “*sport*” (a broad term for all kinds of sports) and “*idrett*” (physical sports). Her view was that bridge qualifies as the former by virtue of its competitiveness and skill-dependent conditions for performing well: “*You have to be good to win. It's not a lot of luck.*”

Dale (18, India) was a staunch advocate for treating bridge with the seriousness of a physical sport, describing his work with a sports psychologist who had “*worked with a lot of Olympic athletes and world champions in other sports.*” The psychologist was struck by “*the endurance aspect*” of bridge, which, in youth international championships, involves both cognitive and physical endurance due to “*sitting for 10 hours a day for seven days in a row*”. Even though the physical exertion in bridge is different to that of what is typically considered ‘sport’, the avoidance of burnout and the need for maintaining healthy routines is common to both sports and mindsports:

What actually may matter a lot more during your performance in the finals is how tired you are or how well rested you are over how good you are at the game. And so some of the things that help you maintain this endurance are similar in bridge and other sports. (Dale, 18, India)

The sports psychologist had also observed Dale’s play, pointing out that he plays “*a little easier against weaker opponents and then playing well against stronger opponents*”, which resulted in him losing points to weaker opponents. The psychologist identified this as an energy conservation tactic, documented also in other sports.

It was noted that the status of bridge as a mindsport, however, is incompatible with its occasional framing as ‘gambling’. Not only does this wrongly suggest that bridge is a game of luck and not skill, but gambling is also a socially marginal and stigmatised

pursuit. This is rooted in bridge being a card game – a designation that may result in automatic generalisations and associations with other card games:

I think my friends at school didn't really know what I was doing. They didn't really understand but because they knew I was playing cards, I think a lot of them thought I was sort of gambling with older people. (Cassie, 19, England)

I have always enjoyed games, card games. I've never been hugely into sort of poker and gambling-style card games, I just never really liked it, but when I found bridge, it is one of the ones I've enjoyed. (Keith, 22, England)

Another problem is that bridge is a card game. It kind of has the gambling vibes to some schools. I think that's another difficulty. They don't want to be like, 'oh, we're going to teach our kids gambling'. I feel when we say 'oh, we want to start a bridge club at the school', they hear 'we're going to start a poker club, we will have kids gambling'. (Stuart, 26, USA)

This was identified as a particular difficulty in Middle Eastern and Eastern cultures:

I think that in India, there's a serious stigma associated with cards because people think that anything to do with cards is gambling and that children should be kept away from cards at all costs. And to some extent there is a legitimate fear that if you give kids cards in the hope that they learn bridge, they'll start gambling and get addicted to that. But the perception that needs to be changed is that bridge is not gambling and that it is a mind sport and that it is good for your academics. Because for Indian parents and students, academics are probably the highest priority. (Dale, 18, India)

To establish bridge as a mindsport worthy of consideration, bridge stakeholders should therefore emphasise its competitiveness, and convey the high extent of focus, skill, and endurance required. A campaign to differentiate bridge from chance-based card games may be beneficial to dispelling its labelling as a gambling game.

Young people's suggestions for the promotion and marketing of bridge

Fun, low pressure, and enjoyment over mastery

The single most frequently cited theme across the dataset is the notion that bridge must be experienced as enjoyable, social, and free from excessive pressure – particularly at the point of entry into bridge – in order to attract and retain young people. Keith (22, England) argued that "*the most important thing is to make sure you have an opportunity for it to be casual because young people, clubs at any level especially at a younger age, they're only going to do something if it's fun.*" He drew parallels between bridge, learning French, and rugby, saying:

When you learn French, you don't start by sitting in front of a person from France and having a conversation when they can't speak English. You start at school learning the colours and the days of the week. And, it is the same with anything you know? Whether you are playing rugby, you don't instantly launch into Surrey County rugby team. You start with your mates in the park or at school with a little bit of touch rugby and whatever. So yeah, keep it fun. Keep it casual, keep it social at the start. (Keith, 22, England)

Bruce (19, Scotland) reinforced this point, emphasising that the bridge teachers' pedagogical approach and the structure of events and lessons should prioritise active learning and socialising over formal instruction. He contended that newcomers' experience should involve playing cards from the outset and explained that understanding should not be the primary goal of the introduction to bridge:

I think when people are playing cards, taking tricks, there is an enjoyment there even if there's not a huge degree of understanding. Understanding can be built, but that has to be predicated on enthusiasm and willing. So I think it's about getting people in and being active because no one wants to go along really I think to a bridge club to listen to lectures on 'this is what you do in this scenario, this is what you do with this' as if it's a night time class at college. (Bruce, 19, Scotland)

The settings in which play is situated can enhance the experience of bridge as a fun and casual leisure pursuit. Informal settings and alternative formats of play are seen as being particularly accessible, creating expectations of fun and relaxation by virtue of their intrinsic properties. Hence, the seriousness often ascribed to bridge may be less prominent if it is played in spaces not traditionally associated with bridge, such as pubs or bars:

At least when you're getting people to go to a bar they know it's going to be laughs... you're saying something about the game without having to say it's a social game. (Jon, 29, Ireland)

Sean (28, Ireland) described a similar format in which his group plays in a pub on weekday evenings, observing that "*it's useful to have it in a kind of very chill environment*" and "*watch people play*". This creates a more widespread awareness of bridge that could be a precursor to learning and then playing it. Jon (29, Ireland) provided more context for the visibility argument, describing how he deliberately played bridge in a "*cooler bar in Dublin*" near a window, so that passers-by could see the game in action. On that occasion, some older men "*stopped and looked*" at the table of players "*for a few seconds*" and "*laughed to each other*" when they recognised the dummy on the table. Sean (28, Ireland) also elaborated on the Australian model of subsidised sport and social clubs, where tax concessions on alcohol attract patrons to

venues that host lawn bowls and other activities, and suggested that a similar approach could work for bridge.

Whilst this approach would not be applicable to underage players due to drinking age limits, and to some players for other possible reasons (e.g. sobriety), food as an incentive was a recurrent theme in the interviews. Often treated as more tangential than central to the experience of playing bridge, food was elevated from simple sustenance (or indeed nutrition for competitive mindsport players) to an incentive for newcomers. Participants from multiple countries confirmed its effectiveness; Macy (23, Norway) reported that two of her teammates *"started bridge solely because they were offering free pizza. And now they're really, really, really into it."* She explained that the merits of bridge itself may not need to be the initial draw, and that food is in fact a sufficient motivator: *"if you get them there, you can convince them that the game is fun. If you can't get them there, they will never know."* Liyana (15, England) confirmed that using snacks *"to bribe people to come"* has been effective. Edwin (18, England) observed that across clubs at his school, *"food and snacks"* were the standard mechanism for making an activity *"seem like a more welcoming sport."*

Community and peer-to-peer recruitment

A closely related finding, mentioned by many of the young interviewees, is that the social dimension of bridge – as opposed to the analytical depth of the game – is the primary mechanism through which bridge can spark young people's interest. Lucas (21, Sweden) said: *"you must make them [young people] feel welcomed by the environment, not the game."* In his view, the game of bridge may not be fun enough to appeal on its own, and the community that surrounds leisure activities can be even more critical to continued engagement than the activities on their own merit:

I can't make the bridge fun. That's impossible. So whenever I get a new student, like someone showing up for the first or second time, I will just try to focus as little as possible on the bridge. Like, of course, I must teach them basics because they won't get forward otherwise. But the main part for me, when I pick up someone new, especially when they're younger, is to make them feel included, give them context.

Like, for example, when we have these youth Fridays, it's typically a very good timing because people just finish their school week or their work week, which means they're kind of free for the weekend. So when we finish Bridge, we play from approximately 4 to 7, we go out and do something; sometimes we go out to eat, we can play pool, something similar to that. (Lucas, 21, Sweden)

Tasneem similarly attributes the growth of their university bridge club to the socialisation aspect, which helps create a casual and inviting atmosphere and dispel

conceptions of seriousness related to old age. In a three-hour window, socialisation is favoured over play to a ratio of 80:20, and this has led to a tripling of numbers in the past year alone:

The University bridge club, we meet for a couple of hours once a week at night. I think one of the reasons the club has grown so big in the past year, and I think it's what the university club does well, it's a very welcoming social environment. It's very much 'hey, we're all here to play, of course, but also get to know each other'. And it's very much a social club as well, which I think really helps sell it for youth bridge because from what I've heard from people, when they imagine bridge, they imagine serious, they imagine people, you know, sitting down, like older people who are much more focused and everything.

We'll play a board, talk for five minutes, not even about the board. Sometimes we'll ask questions while we're playing. It's a very educational environment. So if I'm there and I'm sitting with my cards, I might just ask like hey, what's a good bid here? And someone may help me. And that's very helpful to get into the game. (Tasneem, 21, USA)

The social fabric of bridge is thought to be so fundamental to youth outreach because it helps sustain participation over time and lessen the impact of any perceived barriers to entry. By making provisions for socialising before, during or after bridge lessons, young people form new friend groups centred around bridge and maintain existing connections. An effective way of attracting young people is to recruit in groups of friends or siblings, so that they may 'push each other on':

I think it's always easier said than done, but one of the things I think is probably best to try and find a group of people as opposed to going individually. From my personal experience, my partner and I, we basically took up the game together. We'd found a connection over it and we both developed at similar speeds. And I think we pushed each other on. (Ben, 31, Scotland)

This relates to the idea, expressed by the participants, that recruitment should feel organic and not forced, which also applies to the manner in which learning occurs: "*I think learning bridge needs to be kind of like a flow and not something that is pressurised because I think if you push too much you are going to push them [young people] away*" (Alannah, 15, Scotland).

By extension, the participants suggested that peer-to-peer recruitment is underutilised, and that by sharing examples from their lived experiences with others, young bridge players may be best placed to act as ambassadors for the game:

I personally think that a lot of the responsibility is also on us young people. I've done a lot in terms of promoting bridge and trying to share the game. And it's just

because I wanted to. And I think maybe we could try to encourage our current young players who are really involved in the game. Certainly, I think everyone on the US national team, we should encourage them to feel like they ought to share the game, spread the game.

For me, I don't worry too much about like what's going on globally, because I don't really know how to affect that. All I do is try to affect, you know, my local community. That's my own philosophy from my personal life. (Kurtis, 21, USA)

These findings provide useful insights both for the rebranding of bridge and the means of engaging young people. The development of youth bridge can be effectively facilitated through approaches that leverage existing youth cohorts to foster community and peer-to-peer interactions, and position bridge as a way to socialise and make friends.

Expanding the calendar of youth events

A high number of interviewees identified the insufficiency of youth events as an area in need of improvement, and especially in-person, local, regional, and competitive events. In Jon's (29, Ireland) words, "*Kids don't need a lot. They just need one thing.*" He recalled the Irish schools championship as "*a really rewarding experience*" precisely because it provided "*one weekend*" to meet similar young players. Stuart (26, USA) also found that one of the best ways to attract young players is to host youth tournaments and competitions:

I still think funding people to come to the Nationals is a huge one. I just think that getting people to go to big bridge events with other youth players is the best thing to hook people. Once they kind of know how to play, what local opportunities do they have? ... That seems like the hardest one to really get good local opportunities all across the country.

I just think since the ultimate goal is still to get them to go to tournaments, I want them to have local opportunities to play in person that they're attractive for them to do. (Stuart, 26, USA)

Edwin (18, England) was a strong advocate for this proposition, saying that "*children need to have a tangible goal that they want to work towards*" and proposing that "*in-person events probably need to happen once a month.*" He shared his views on the frequency and types of events that can be offered:

I think firstly, you can run a session that's purely based on teaching. So you can run one session per week, maybe probably online is best, on purely teaching and helping people. You can start from absolute beginners and then you can help people improve with bidding systems, card play, etc.

And then you should also run a social session where people might play 8 or 10 boards in two hours, but where they can talk about the hands and they can help each other improve. And then they can also have like their inter schools league, which is, obviously more serious and for more competition. And then you can have the in-person events once a month where people play against each other, which is obviously, again, a more serious form of competition.

I think everything just boils down to just running more events in a sense, more in-person events, more online events. (Edwin, 18, England)

The importance of events and local community hubs was also elucidated by young people who had been involved in organising events, such as Hussain (20, England). By occupying the same spaces, young people are able to create common frames of reference, which sustain social ties:

When you're playing within a group of people that have a common base, you might think 'Cambridge has been really busy over the last couple of weeks', there is a theme you can talk about over the table because you know everyone will know about it. It comes back to the social aspect that I think has been missing from lots of the strategy to date. People like to talk about things. If you have some sort of common base like geography, or in our case all being juniors playing together, it's something you want to talk about. (Hussain, 20, England)

Much like the personal involvement of young people seen in peer-to-peer recruitment, it was also considered that young people should become more involved in not just attending, but also shaping and coordinating events:

If we didn't have a couple of passionate kids at the university and we just tried to have an adult whom we pay a stipend to go and teach a bridge class, we're not going to retain a lot of the students. We need a peer organiser and someone who shows how passionate they are about making sure these kids all have housing and fundraising. I'm thinking of Shayla, she's put so much effort into tracking which kids are coming to get the stipend but then also helping them organise their housing and flights to go to the collegiates and organising all these extra long play sessions. That's not something you can just pay anyone to do. (Rhiannon, 26, USA)

In addition, the timing of events should be tailored to the availability of young people, since the practice of running events at "noon on a Tuesday" (Shayla, 20, USA) is not youth-friendly:

There should be more evening games because you need that for the students, you need that for the parents. You need more evening and weekend games because just having it at 10 am or 1 pm, this is only catering to the retired community. (Freyja, 27, USA)

The cost of attending competitive events, relative to the value of the prizes offered, was a relatively minor but non-negligible issue raised by several participants. Although the ACBL offers free entry for under-25s at national events, local and regional tournaments may not provide concessions, and it was argued that fees can add up:

You know, for someone paying \$6 or \$10 or \$15 playing once a week, it's not that problematic. But if I'm a college student for example and I want to go play in a tournament, the fees here are \$32, \$35 ... If you want to be playing every single day all week long, that adds up (Cole, 30, USA)

This cost does not tend to be offset by the potential prize winnings in most countries. Damian (31, England) offered an international comparison, contrasting the negligible prize money in English bridge with the culture in Spain and Scandinavia where tournament entry fees may be returned as prizes: *"I came third in the Portland Pairs, which had 400-odd entrants and I got like 80 pounds."* He argued that even modest prize money at youth events could make a difference to retention, recounting a Norwegian tournament where *"the kids got to collect their prizes on stage in front of all the adults"*.

Financial incentives for travel and learning also featured in the data. Kurtis (21, USA) described how his university club initially grew through a sponsored programme run by Mitch Dunitz that paid students to learn. Shayla (20, USA) confirmed that the offer of *"\$15 a session"* was an effective initial draw. Travel emerged as a particularly powerful motivator in the North American data, and one that was closely linked to the need for funding and financial support for young players (due to the costs involved). Young people cited travel as one of the primary attractions of bridge, affording them opportunities to see the world and expand their horizons that they might not otherwise have had, or at least not so early in life. Sadie (22, USA) recounted the positive effects of travel, manifest not only in her own experiences but also in her schoolmates' reactions:

We're from an urban community. Going to Vegas, we would have never thought that we would even make it that far until we were older, but we were 12 years old in Vegas. They [my classmates] were a little jealous. I'm telling you, once we started going on trips, sometimes right after school we'd leave five minutes early, they'd see us going to events and going to our tournaments and they were like 'Where are you guys going'?' (Sadie, 22, USA)

This testimonial shows that travel elevates the status of bridge amongst other after-school activities, framing it in more aspirational terms and positioning it as offering unique benefits. The financial aspect should not be overlooked; when travel is made possible through fundraising, it strengthens young people's enjoyment and commitment and generates greater visibility for bridge in the school setting overall. Moreover, through travel, young people realise that the youth bridge community is much

larger than previously thought, and it expands their networks internationally. This contributes to a sense of community and motivates the young players:

I'm happy to hang out with my friends and play card games, but I wasn't thinking, 'oh, this is a whole world or I could travel and play this or this is a game I'll play forever'. It was more like, oh, yeah, I'm just doing it because my friends are doing it and anything with my friends is fun. But once I got to play internationally, I realised there were other young people playing. (Jon, 29, Ireland)

A preference for in-person bridge

A frequently discussed theme across the dataset was the relationship between online and face-to-face bridge, mentioned by over three-quarters of participants across all countries. The consensus decidedly favoured in-person learning and play, with young people citing the social dimension and ability to better concentrate as the primary reasons. In Ajay's (18, USA) view, "*online bridge is so much worse than in-person bridge*" because he can "*never focus when playing online bridge*". When speaking about the differences between in-person and online bridge, he said:

You can get that community, that in-person connection, I feel. And in online bridge, even if you're playing on RealBridge, people are turning off their camera, turning off their microphone, they're not talking half the time. I feel like in an in-person game, by design you're sort of forced to talk with people more. People are more willing to check in with you, like, hey, how's it going. Online bridge, it just doesn't compare to holding cards. (Ajay, 18, USA)

Lenny (28, USA) held a similar view of online bridge offering a diminished experience:

Online is no fun. There's no social aspect of the game of bridge online. You can play bridge online on a Zoom and it sucks because at the end of the day, if you're having a drink with your friends, you're still drinking by yourself. (Lenny, 28, USA)

This finding defies the reasonable expectation that digital natives might favour online play or digital marketing via social media. When asked about the role of social media in the promotion of youth bridge, some participants said that "*word of mouth would be better than social media and flyers*" (Myles, 18, England), while others thought that it might be effective:

A strong media campaign through Twitch and social media and even a major news network and whatnot could spread the word of bridge abroad and what it does for people. (Anthony, 24, USA)

I've had a couple of students come from the social media, which has been nice. I think that it's probably the way of the future for marketing yourself for bridge

teaching as well, because if you can showcase some of your skills in a short time frame, that might encourage more people to try your class. (Freyja, 27, USA)

Some of the countervailing arguments for social media were:

I noticed that I'm kind of tired of social media, but I still keep going into social media. So I think social media is important, but also combining it with other things would be good. (Macy, 23, Norway)

I would say that social media is not as important because you need to motivate adults to get their children into playing bridge, you need to get their parents first. The children aren't really going to be using social media that much. As in, I've seen the bridge post on social media, but it doesn't really affect whether I want to play or not. (Edwin, 18, England)

Furthermore, the physicality of handling cards emerged as a surprisingly important factor for many participants. Harry (23, Scotland) explained: *"I want to touch the cards. It's like a different game for me, really. When I touch the cards, it feels more realistic and I can picture things in my head."* Kurtis (21, USA) also offered an example of this effect:

When I'm dealt a 5-5 hand in person, I'm like, oh my gosh, such a shapely hand. How exciting. What am I going to do with it? But then when I'm dealt a 5-5 hand on BBO, I'm like, okay, it just feels like a 5-4-2-2 hand in person. (Kurtis, 21, USA)

Macy (23, Norway) contributed an argument about digital well-being, noting that face-to-face bridge provides a rare opportunity for digital disconnection: *"I can put my phone away. I will go 10 hours without looking at my phone and it's really relaxing."* Rhiannon (26, USA) also justified her aversion to online play by saying: *"I work on a computer all day, every day, and I really don't want to see one again."* A strong aversion to online learning in pupils who had learnt through Zoom lessons during COVID was predicted by Benjamin:

Maybe my age is a little more scarred from Zoom lessons from COVID at school, but I just can't imagine that being too engaging where you have to sign on at a certain time and then need to pay attention. (Benjamin, 21, USA)

Across the responses, the two factors that were identified as being most impacted in online play are concentration and socialisation. With regards to concentration, Terry (17, Scotland) observed that bridge requires undivided and sustained attention in a way that chess does not. He could *"bash out a one-minute game of chess"* while multitasking but found that *"bridge is different"*. Keane (20, Scotland) confessed to having been *"eating dinner while playing"* an online match, acknowledging this was *"obviously not ideal."* Similarly, Cassie (19, England) reported that she can't play as many boards online as she usually does in-person because she loses concentration *"a lot faster"*.

The social aspect of in-person play was also contrasted unfavourably with that of digital platforms. Hussain (20, England) observed that in a physical club, "*you can have a funny moment and everyone laughs and another table will say, 'well, what's happened there' and everyone will crowd around*", whereas online play narrows down the interaction to smaller groups, and the community surrounding bridge is not as visible or prominent. Virginia (20, USA) noted that face-to-face bridge offers "*more cues to pick up on*" when reading one's opponents, including "*hesitation*" and "*a nervous tick from your opponents*", adding a layer of engagement that can sometimes be absent from digital play. Liyana (15, England) expressed frustration with Bridge Base Online (BBO) specifically: "*I hate on BBO how you can't see other people's faces because it's like... this is bridge, this is a social game.*"

The socialisation within digital settings is therefore not seen as equivalent to that in physical settings, because experiences are more fragmented and do not convey relevant social cues. As a game relying on teamwork, co-operation, and partnership, bridge requires in-person interaction to be experienced authentically and in its completeness:

If you have the online teaching sessions, you're solely focusing on the bridge part. There's nothing social about that whatsoever. And I just think if you have something that's very difficult and it's online, it's very easy to just shut your computer and never think about it again. (Lucas, 21, Sweden)

However, online learning and play can suit some people and circumstances. Participants agreed that young people's initial engagements with bridge should be face-to-face, and that some of their later learning and practise, especially with geographically dispersed teammates and teachers, can be digitally mediated. In continuation of his earlier account, Lucas said:

I think the online parts of teaching can be better used for people who actively want to learn, who are there on their own will and have played for maybe a year or so. (Lucas, 21, Sweden)

Several other participants added to this perspective. Craig (15, England) noted that, when representing England, his first partner lived two and a half hours away, and that playing online was their only viable option: "*I mean we could only play digitally. We basically only did play digitally.*" He concluded that "*in-person is better if you can do it, but digital is not a bad substitute.*" Keith (22, England) further stated that online play had brought together players from across the UK who would never otherwise have met: "*You're no longer limited by location, which I quite like.*"

Online platforms also received positive reviews for practise and self-improvement, once players have reached a certain level of competence. Shayla (20, USA) and Benjamin (21, USA) described how their university clubs use BBO to supplement learning:

A lot of people play it almost like every day and then we discuss the hands, which is also nice. (Shayla, 20, USA)

Once you kind of get a grasp, you just want to keep playing... The younger club members at our bridge club, every time I walk in the dining hall, like they're always on BBO. (Benjamin, 21, USA)

Sean (28, Ireland) reported using the Funbridge app to maintain familiarity with bidding between sessions, saying that he could "*just play a round in like a couple of minutes*" during spare moments.

Charlotte (16, England) also contributed a lesser-mentioned benefit, that online play can alleviate some of the social anxiety associated with transitioning to club play for the first time:

The anonymous side of it is so much more enjoyable and doesn't give me anxiety like the idea of going into a bridge club does, that kind of fills me with dread. (Charlotte, 16, England)

This quote suggests that online settings may offer a balance between digital anonymity and some of the social richness of club play, particularly for individuals who are anxiety-prone or neurodivergent. It is nevertheless important that online play does not come to substitute in-person engagement, and that face-to-face opportunities remain accessible to those who wish to pursue them.

Gamification and modernisation

Several of the participants discussed the potential for gamification and improved digital interfaces to transform how young people learn and play bridge. For instance, Damian (31, England) argued that existing platforms are visually unappealing to young users and not "*condensed or taught in a fun, interactive way*":

I think that there's not enough interactive content and ways of playing bridge. I think gamifying Bridge, the early stage of Bridge, with tutorials would be really helpful. I mean, stuff like Bridge Master is really good. The way that BBO or Funbridge looks, I think is going to be not appealing to someone who's 15. They're just going to think, oh my God, this looks ancient. (Damian, 31, England)

When asked about potential innovations and improvements to existing offerings, the young bridge players proposed multiple solutions. Benjamin (21, USA) suggested a "*Duolingo style app*" where players gain experience and progress through levels. He cited his dissatisfaction with the way that bridge is taught, saying that he had to "*do a lot of work when learning to jot down things*":

I notice the way they teach bridge is just like, oh, there's a textbook. It's the same with chess. It's like, there's a textbook, there's, and you need to bring in all this assorted knowledge. Like what is defense? What is leads? What are these different systems that you can learn? (Benjamin, 21, USA)

Some of the young players also praised innovations such as BridgeBattle but critiqued their execution. When he tried BridgeBattle, Jon (29, Ireland) thought that Tricky Bridge is superior:

The one hand I tried, it was like 13 top tricks. My hand was like Ace King Queen or something like that, which is not appealing for me as a 29 year old. ... I think Tricky Bridge does it better in that you start with two or three cards, don't start with 13 cards, and I also didn't really connect with what the characters were. (Jon, 29, Ireland)

This suggests that there is a need for more youth consultation during the prototyping and testing of bridge apps and platforms, so that the messaging can be tailored to younger audiences.

The players also requested better teaching resources such as "*instructional videos on bidding systems and card play*" (Edwin, 18, England) and board-game-style versions of bridge, "*a little bit like a Scrabble board where instead of bidding boxes you can, you know, put pieces and move them around*" (Dale, 18, India), designed to make the game more accessible and engaging for young children. Liyana (15, England) praised CueBids as a practice resource, noting that this is free to access for juniors, but observed that existing platforms are better suited to practising than teaching: "*Cuebids is great, but it's not really a teaching resource. It's more of a practicing resource to people who already play.*"

Recommendations

1. Reframe bridge as a game for young people

The association of bridge with old age is a pervasive stereotype. Marketing and promotional materials should feature young people prominently and craft narratives around the messages that resonate most with young people: fun, friendship, travel. The game of bridge should become more integrated within youth culture, and through youth-facing outreach, become more known for its emergent youth scene.

2. Increase the visibility of bridge

If many young people have never heard of bridge, then the game must be taken to where they are: public spaces, university campuses, pubs, cafes, community centres, festivals, and other venues where it may gain more visibility. Community marketing

campaigns, partnerships with schools and universities, and the hosting of taster events in non-traditional spaces can make room for bridge in the public imagination.

3. Counter exclusivity by showing diversity

Promotion should convey that bridge is not just a game for older people, people belonging to a certain social class, people who are intellectual or skilled in mathematics, or keen players of games overall. While such perceptions are less common than the ageing stereotype, they may nonetheless narrow the perceived audience for bridge. A diversity of players should be showcased: people of different ages, backgrounds, and skill levels engaging with bridge in different ways and for different reasons.

4. Position bridge along a serious leisure continuum

Chess has achieved a broad cultural appeal and positioned itself as a serious intellectual pursuit. The data indicates that bridge can attain a similar status because it is at least as complex as chess – if not more so in certain respects – yet suffers from an ambiguous public status. A potential solution is to communicate that bridge operates across a spectrum:

- (1) Its casual scene is welcoming, open to newcomers, and demands no particular expertise
- (2) Its competitive scene demands the kind of skill, focus, and endurance that would qualify it as a mindsport

The unique partnership aspect of bridge is a particularly promising avenue for its promotion and marketing as a mindsport since this requires the development of additional strategic and social skills such as co-operation, empathy, and teamwork.

5. Seek sports recognition for bridge and establish bridge as a mindsport

Because bridge is played with cards, it may be automatically grouped together with other chance-based card games or associated with poker and gambling. This association may be shifted by demonstrating the competitiveness of bridge and the mechanics of its gameplay. This may be achieved, for example, by drawing attention to groups of players competing against each other in tournaments, explaining how the play unfolds, and asking them to share the strategies that they use in order to win. Pointing out that players play the same bridge deals can be helpful as it shows that the luck element is minimised and skill becomes more important.

6. Prioritise fun, low pressure, and enjoyment over mastery

The participants noted that initial encounters with bridge should be enjoyable and social, and that understanding should not be the main goal at this early stage.

Introductory sessions should foreground card play, and the learning environment should be informal, meaning that conversation, jokes, and even lapses in attention are welcome. The use of informal spaces and snacks or drinks as incentives can also be beneficial.

7. Build community through peer and group recruitment

The social aspect of bridge is highly valued by young people, and a sense of community and relatability can be fostered by recruiting groups of players together and utilising peer-to-peer outreach and recommendation. Social events and social segments before, during, and/or after play sessions can contribute to the development and maintenance of friend groups. These friend groups, in turn, sustain engagement over time.

8. Expand the calendar of youth events

The insufficiency of youth events was highlighted by the participants. Different kinds of regular, local, regional and in-person events, such as teaching sessions, competitions, and social events can give the young players something tangible to work towards or aspire to. Evening and weekend games are essential, and concessions or modest prizes for young players can increase attendance rates. More broadly, subsidised travel costs and fundraising for youth can help ensure that the compounded cost of event attendance does not preclude on-going participation.

9. Focus on in-person play where possible

The interviewees reported that in-person bridge offers a welcome respite from screen fatigue, and several spoke of the value of shared physical presence: handling the cards; reading their opponents; being able to concentrate better face-to-face. Online platforms are valuable supplements to learning, but the primary mode of play (even for digital natives) should be in-person so that players can derive full enjoyment from the experience. Social media may be used for promotion and marketing but may not be effective as the sole mode of recruitment.

10. Modernise digital platforms and teaching resources

There is an opportunity to modernise digital offerings so that they do not cause frustration (for example, due to being visually outdated or difficult to navigate). Bridge organisations (collaborating with each other to minimise costs) may consider prototyping gamified learning tools and youth-friendly teaching resources that are directly shaped by the input and feedback of young people.

Conclusion

The young people in this study represent diverse backgrounds, drawn from seven countries and spanning nearly two decades of age, yet describe with a high degree of agreement a game that the general public either does not know about or associates primarily with old age. Bridge is simultaneously burdened both by an image problem and a problem of lacking an image: on both accounts, this distances bridge from youth culture. In addition, bridge organisations are thought to be insufficiently proactive at times, and not always attuned to the needs and preferences of young people.

The participants have offered not only their experiences and perceptions but also a set of practical, and in some cases, low-cost interventions, such as utilising young bridge players as ambassadors and encouraging them to become more involved in recruitment, teaching, and organising youth events. Such contributions might be linked to financial incentives in a reciprocal arrangement, whereby subsidised travel or other concessions are offered on the understanding that young players take an active role in recruiting and retaining their peers.

The recommendations presented in this report speak to the awareness and perception of bridge and call for a prioritisation of social, casual, and in-person bridge as the primary entry point for young newcomers. The image problem of bridge – namely, the association between bridge and old age – is one that should be addressed as a priority because the findings suggest that this may impact young participants' sense of status and belonging within peer groups and discourage their participation. Addressing the image problem requires an effort to foreground the aspects of the game most likely to resonate with younger audiences: its competitiveness, its potential for travel, and its social and intellectual benefits. Shifting public perception in this direction would not only aid recruitment but also enable those who already play to take pride in playing bridge.

An important consideration is also the invisibility of bridge, manifest in the narrow routes to exposure and participation in bridge in general, and the difficulty of accessing information about clubs and events, in particular. This has clear implications for the bridge community, pointing to the need for more creative and expansive outreach strategies, such as partnering with chess and other mindsport communities or engaging with the broader gaming community. It remains crucial that the remit of communication strategies should extend beyond the existing bridge membership and target young people within youth spaces. It is also recommended that the existence of clubs and events should be better communicated to the general public.

These recommendations are offered with an awareness of the realities that many bridge clubs and organisations face. They have been chosen for their feasibility, keeping in mind the financial constraints and limited volunteer capacities across many contexts.

To achieve change, it appears necessary that more volunteers should be recruited, trained, and appointed across various capacities. Even where young people themselves take on outreach and peer-to-peer roles, a degree of adult oversight and support is likely to remain necessary. For bridge clubs and organisations, utilising the skills and knowledge of young players to attract and retain new young recruits will be a promising way forward for the growth of youth bridge.