

RSCDS New York Branch Survey of Dancers – Spring 2019

Summary

About the survey:

This survey was similar to the survey conducted in 2014. Where the same question was asked in both surveys, the results are shown side-by-side. 45 responses were received on-line in 2019, through surveymonkey. No-one availed of the option to respond with a hard copy, whereas the 2014 survey was hard copy only. The 2019 response rate was considerably higher than in 2014, quite possibly due to it being online and easy to complete. The 2019 survey included demographic questions which, using surveymonkey's functionalities, permitted breakdowns according to length of time the respondent has been doing SCD, whether they are a teacher, etc.

The branch classes – 2019 and 2014 compared

Dancers rated the classes more favourably in 2019 than they did in 2014. The teachers seem to have successfully addressed concerns regarding the number of dances done per evening, the pace of the classes, and ensuring that dances in upcoming ball programmes are taught.

There were mixed views on whether the right amount of attention is being paid to footwork and handing. Most felt they were getting the right amount, although some dancers would like more. In contrast to 2014, no-one felt that too much attention was being paid to these topics. Perhaps the amount of technique could be raised a little? This may present a challenge for the teachers of both classes: how to include more technique without reducing the number of dances or doing easier dances. The teachers' committee could be invited to discuss this topic.

The current members of the basic class gave especially favourable feedback, all of them giving a 'very satisfied' rating for their first hour class. Lessons could be drawn from the success of this class for future reference by the teachers and the Executive Committee.

Regarding the social hour, dancers indicated that the overall pace and the number of dances included was significantly improved compared with 2014, and they were evenly divided as to whether one or two dances should be reserved for

experienced dancers. Several dancers commented that teachers should be flexible and adapt their programs according to the capabilities of the dancers actually present.

While the survey had many encouraging messages for the teachers, there were a few topics on which they appeared 'out of step' with the dancers. For example, 4 out of 7 teachers said there was not enough attention given to footwork and handing in the experienced class, but only 3 out of 16 dancers answered the question that way – see question 12. There were also discrepancies in terms of views on the dance list.

The New York Branch Dance List

As regards the New York Branch dance list, all non-teachers who expressed an opinion said they liked the list. This contrasts with the teachers, four of whom said they did not like it. Also, a large majority of dancers favored repetition of dances. Most dancers said they liked repetition of dances on social programmes, and some also suggested that challenging dances could be taught one week in the first hour and then in the social hour the following week.

What could encourage dancers to come more often

A final aim of the survey was to determine if there were any changes that might encourage dancers to come more often. Three people suggested beginning 30 to 60 minutes earlier, while two indicated they would prefer a location on the West Side. One dancer was motivated by teachers who choose a focus (arms, eye contact, a selected formation, etc) for their class, which may "make the class more interesting, and can make that thing easier to keep in mind in the future." Another mentioned "strong teachers who select interesting/fun dances". Two people explained that health issues were preventing them from coming more often. Most people seemed content with the way things are.

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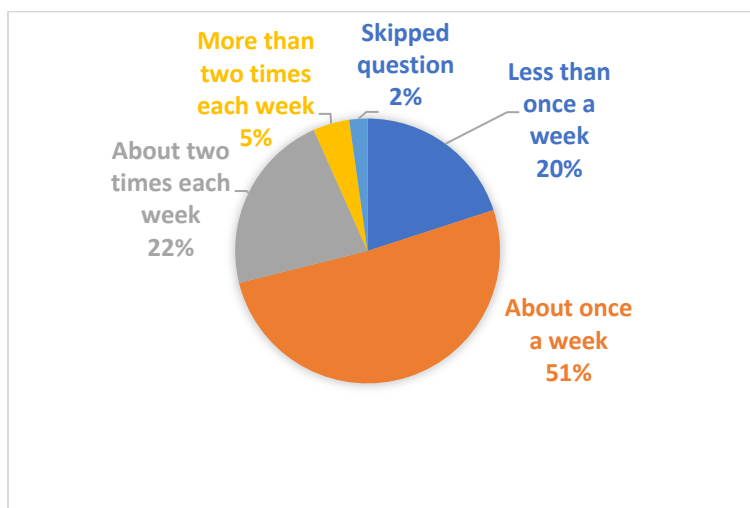
Main Report

This survey was similar to the survey conducted in 2014. Where the same question was asked in both surveys, the results are shown side-by-side.

Altogether 45 responses were received on-line, through surveymonkey. No-one availed of the option to respond with a hard copy. The response rate was considerably higher than in 2014, when 25 responses were received. The 2019 survey included demographic questions, enabling us to break down the responses by such characteristics as length of time the respondent has been dancing, whether they are a teacher, etc.

A. Demographic Questions

1. How often do you dance?



... in numbers:

Frequency	Number of respondents
Less than once a week	9
About once a week	23
About two times each week	10
More than two times each week	2
Skipped question	1
Total	45

Anticipating question 8 below, one respondent said: "I had to discontinue Scottish, too vigorous. Intend to try English..."

2. Where do you usually dance?

For this question, respondents could choose more than one location, so the total adds up to considerably more than 45.

Location	Number of respondents
New York Branch in Manhattan	33
New York Branch in Brooklyn	1
Scotia Dancers	16
New Jersey Branch - HoHoKus	8
New Jersey Branch - Fanwood	0
New Jersey Branch - Hightstown	0
Westchester SCDS	4
Mystic, Connecticut	1

3. For how long have you been doing Scottish country dancing?

Length of time	Number of respondents
Less than 2 years	7
2 to 5 years	7
5 to 10 years	7
Over 10 years	24
Total	45

4. Do you hold an RSCDS teaching certificate?

Of the 45 respondents, ten stated that they have an RSCDS teaching certificate.

5. Please choose the option below that best describes your dancing:

Length of time	Number of respondents
Experienced – strong technique	14
Experienced - social	14
Intermediate	9
Basic	7
Other – “only strathspeys”	1
Total	45

6. How often do you come on a Thursday?

Frequency	All respondents	Respondents who “usually” ¹ dance on Thursday in Manhattan
3 to 4 times a month	22	22
1 to 2 times a month	3	3
Only on party nights	0	0
Rarely	11	6
Never	7	0

¹ As stated in response to question 2 above.

Skipped question	2	2
Total	45	33

The table shows that 9 dancers “usually” dance at the Branch (as opposed to one of the other venues) but come only once or twice a month (6) or rarely (3). In question 8 below we enquire what might encourage them to come more often.

One respondent mentioned that: “the location of [the Thursday] class is farther from home than Scotia's class and so, for that reason, I prefer to attend Scotia. It takes longer to get home if I have to cross town to get to the Westside to get a bus to NJ.”

7. Has your attendance on Thursdays changed? Please choose one of the following:

Frequency of attendance	All respondents	'Thursday dancers'
I am attending more frequently than two years ago	4	4
I am attending with approximately the same frequency as two years ago	17	13
I am attending less frequently than two years ago	12	9
I have been dancing for less than 2 years	6	6
Skipped question	6	1
Total	45	33

Dancers who skipped the question were mainly those who said they never dance at the Branch on Thursdays. The next question offers insights into why some dancers are coming less often to the Branch on Thursdays.

Question 8: What changes would make it likely that you would attend more often?

Some dancers mentioned that their attendance was affected by health issues. Dancers who live in New Jersey mentioned that they would prefer a West Side location (for example, see the response to question 6 above). Some respondents commented that they would prefer the classes to begin at 7pm or even 6.30pm, while keeping the overall length to two and a half hours. One dancer commented “A little more creative teaching would be cool too. Occasionally classes have had a sort of particular focus (arms, eye contact, etc), I think focusing on some particular thing to improve on can make the class more interesting, and can make that thing easier to keep in mind in the future.”

Question 9:

Overall, how satisfied have you been with the classes at the New York Branch during the past year?

A similar question was asked in 2014, and the responses for both years are shown below. Comparing the two periods is tricky because the option ‘satisfied’ was not available in 2014. Nonetheless, a fall from 50% to 7% in those who were no more than ‘somewhat satisfied’ looks like a meaningful improvement in the dancers’ level of satisfaction. This interpretation is strengthened by the improved

ratings given for the specific aspects of the classes, such as their pace, as detailed in questions 14 and 18 below.

How satisfied?	2014		2019	
	#	%	#	%
Very satisfied	11	50	16	53
Satisfied ²			12	40
Somewhat satisfied	11	50	2	7
Not satisfied at all	0	0	0	0
Total	22	100	30	100

The breakdown of the 2019 data according to whether the respondent was a teacher reveals that only one out of six teachers was 'very satisfied'. One of them explained: "More people attending on a regular basis would make it more enjoyable. Intermittent attendance means I need to help less experienced dancers through dances."

How satisfied (2019)?	Non-teachers	Teachers	All
Very satisfied	15	1	16
Satisfied	8	4	12
Somewhat satisfied	1	1	2
Not satisfied at all	0	0	0
Total	24	6	30

Among the satisfied dancers, an intermediate dancer commented: "I like that teachers try to pick dances with the same figures in a class to practice that figure." A new dancer (basic class) mentioned: "The teaching is really good. You emphasize footwork, but don't belabor it because you know that it takes a while to develop good body control. You are inclusive and no nonsense. Dancing with you is a superior experience. Thank you so much for providing a safe dance."

B. The next six questions (10 to 15) refer to the classes in the first hour.

Question 10: Overall, how satisfied have you been with the first hour classes during the past year?

How satisfied with first hour classes?	2014		2019	
	#	%	#	%
Very satisfied	11	50	15	50
Satisfied ³			13	44
Somewhat satisfied	11	50	1	3
Not satisfied at all	0	0	1	3
Total	22	100	30	100

This table shows a major improvement in level of satisfaction of dancers with the first hour classes: only 6% said in 2019 that they were only somewhat satisfied or not satisfied at all, whereas 50% were only

² This option was not available in 2014

³ This option was not available in 2014

somewhat satisfied in 2014. This improvement closely mirrors the results for the evening overall (question 9 above) and tends to confirm there has been an overall increase in satisfaction.

The breakdown of the 2019 data according to type of dancer is as follows:

How satisfied with first hour classes?	Basic class	Experienced class ⁴	Teachers	All
Very satisfied	7	8	0	15
Satisfied	0	7	6	13
Somewhat satisfied	0	1	0	1
Not satisfied at all	0	0	1	1
Total	7	16	7	30

There are several striking features to this data. First is the fact that every one of the basic class dancers who completed the survey was ‘very satisfied’ with the class. This is a ringing endorsement of current Branch policy regarding the basic class, and of the contribution of the two basic class teachers over the last year. One basic class member stated: “You guys are all doing great in my book! It’s one of my most favorite recurring activities. Thanks for all you do!”

As for the experienced class, the respondents were about evenly split between those who were ‘very satisfied’ and those who were ‘satisfied’. One member of this class suggested that teachers might “choose a more challenging dance in the first hour, and then repeat that dance the following week in the social hour in order for the experienced dancers to practice and remember it.” This comment resonates with the desire of many dancers for more repetition of dances – see questions 25 and 26 below.

At the other end of the scale, none of the teachers said they were ‘very satisfied’. A teacher commented that most teachers were fine, but one “talked too much” which meant the class did not end up dancing so much. Another teacher wished to see more “focus on dancing skills rather than rushing through dances.” The survey has specific questions about the pace of the classes: see questions 14 and 18 below.

Question 11. Regarding the number of dances in the first hour classes, do you feel that in general there were:

Number of dances taught in the first hour classes	2014		2019	
	#	%	#	%
Too many dances	0	0	2	7
Too few dances	5	29	1	3
About the right number	12	71	27	90
Total	17	100	30	100

The table shows the results of the surveys in both 2014 and 2019. In 2019, the overwhelming majority of dancers (90%) stated that the first hour classes include about the right number of dances. This reflects a notable improvement on 2014 when only 71% of dancers felt that way. This trend is

⁴ Excluding teachers

consistent with the trend seen in question 10, in which dancers indicated that they are more satisfied with the classes than they were in 2014.

The result mentioned above regarding the number of dances taught in the first hour classes was quite consistent across all levels of dancers, as the table below shows:

Number of dances in the first hour classes	Basic class	Experienced class⁵	Teachers	All
Too many dances	0	1	1	2
Too few dances	0	1	0	1
About the right number	7	14	6	27
Total	7	16	7	30

Again, the basic class members appear to be the most satisfied. The general sentiment seemed to be captured nicely by one of the experienced dancers who wrote: "I'd be up for more dances, but I don't want to sacrifice technique work nor do I want to just do a bunch of easy dances for the sake of doing more dances. However, I definitely don't think we should do fewer."

Question 12. The attention given to footwork and handing in the class was:

The results for both 2014 and 2019 are shown below:

Attention given to footwork and handing	2014		2019	
	#	%	#	%
Too much	2	12	0	0
Too little	5	29	9	30
About right	10	59	20	67
Skipped question	-	-	1	3
Total	17	100	30	100

The table indicates that a majority of dancers continue to feel that about the right amount of attention is paid to footwork and handing, although a minority of nearly one-third (30%) indicate that too little attention is paid to it. The figure of 30% masks differences according to the category of dancer. As the table below reveals, 28% of basic class members would like more attention to footwork and handing, but only 19% of members of the experienced class would like it.

Attention given to footwork and handing	Basic class		Experienced class⁶		Teachers		All	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Too much	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Too little	2	29	3	19	4	57	9	30
About right	5	71	12	75	3	43	20	67
Skipped question	0	0	1	6	0	0	1	3
Total	7	100	16	100	7	100	30	100

⁵ Excluding teachers

⁶ Excluding teachers

Intriguingly, 57% (four out of seven) of teachers say they would like more attention to footwork and handing! This is a much higher percentage than for the other dancers. It seems unlikely that the teachers are seeking more technique work for themselves. It is presumably what they would like the dancers to be given. A question for the Executive Committee might be: should the teachers give dancers what they want, or give what they think the dancers should get?

From the point of view of giving the dancers the best experience, the above figures suggest that even in the experienced class a little more attention might be paid to footwork, handing and other aspects of dance technique. Unlike in 2014, no-one is now saying that there is too much stress on technique. At the same time, the dancers do not want to be doing fewer dances or easier dances. There is a challenge for the teachers of both classes: how to include more technique without reducing the number of dances or choosing easier dances. The teachers' committee could be invited to discuss this topic.

Question 13. I found the dances in the class were mostly:

Dances were mostly:	2014		2019	
	#	%	#	%
Too easy	5	29	4	14
Too difficult	1.5	9	1	3
About right	10.5	62	25	83
Total	17	100	30	100

This table suggests another notable improvement over the situation five years ago: 83% of dancers feel the level of difficulty is about right, compared with 62% in 2014. The breakdown by category of dancer is below:

Dances were mostly:	Basic class	Experienced class ⁷	Teachers	All
Too easy	0	2	2	4
Too difficult	0	1	0	1
About right	7	13	5	25
Total	7	16	7	30

One teacher who said "too easy" clarified that they meant too easy for them, but acknowledged that the dances may not have been too easy for the class. Most teachers seemed to be responding based on what they felt was the right level of difficulty for the class. The results on this question suggest that the teachers over the last year could hardly have got a better balance in terms of the level of difficulty. Considering the diverse abilities and interests of the dancers, this is a big compliment to those who were teaching.

Question 14. I found the pace of the class to be:

Pace of the class:	2014	2019
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⁷ Excluding teachers

	#	%	#	%
Too slow	7.5	42	4	14
Too fast	0	0	0	0
About right	10.5	58	25	83
Skipped question	-	-	1	3
Total	18	100	30	100

The table indicates that pace of classes is another area where there has been a substantial improvement compared with five years ago. Several dancers commented that it depends on the teacher.

The table below indicates that the issue of slowness applied to some extent to the experienced class, but not to the basic class. One member of that class commented: "I am enjoying the 'no brand-new beginners' in the beginner's class - I feel like it's helping me to progress a bit faster."

Pace of the class:	Basic class	Experienced class⁸	Teachers	All
Too slow	0	3	1	4
Too fast	0	0	0	0
About right	7	13	5	25
Skipped question	0	0	1	1
Total	7	16	7	30

Question 15: The attention given to upcoming ball programmes was:

Attention to upcoming ball programmes:	2014		2019	
	#	%	#	%
Too much	0	0	0	0
Too little	3	18	0	0
About right	14	82	29	97
Skipped question	-	-	1	3
Total	17	100	30	100

Preparing dancers for upcoming balls and social dances is another area where the dancers appear to be getting more of what they want, compared with the situation in 2014. There had been complaints about ball dances not being sufficiently taught in some years up to 2014, which led the Branch Executive Committee to lay down guidelines addressing this concern.

In the current survey, dancers were unanimous in saying that about the right amount of attention was being given to preparing for balls, etc. One teacher commented: "if the new list dances were taught right from the beginning of the year, less time would be needed to teach these dances when a ball is approaching."

⁸ Excluding teachers

C. The next five questions (16-20) refer to dancing in the social hour

Question 16. Did you feel that in the social hour you generally did:

Number of dances taught in the social hour	2014		2019	
	#	%	#	%
Too many dances	0	0	2	6
Too few dances	3	19	0	0
About the right number	13	81	29	94
Total	16	100	31	100

The responses to this question indicate, again, that the teachers are achieving an improved balance in terms of number of dances done in the social hour. The two dancers who felt there were “too many dances” also stated that they found the dances to be “too difficult” – see the next question.

Number of dances taught in the social hour:	Basic class	Experienced class ⁹	Teachers	All
Too many dances	1	1	0	2
Too few dances	0	0	0	0
About the right number	6	16	7	29
Total	7	17	7	31

Question 17: I found the dances in the social hour were mostly:

Dances in the social hour were mostly:	2014		2019	
	#	%	#	%
Too easy	0.5	3	1	4
Too difficult	0	0	3	11
About right	14.5	97	23	85
Total	15	100	27	100

Given the diverse interests and levels of attainment, it is not easy to please everyone in this session. The recent influx of new dancers probably adds to the challenge. Predictably, a few less experienced dancers found the dances “too difficult”.

Dances in the social hour were mostly:	Basic class	Experienced class ¹⁰	Teachers	All
Too easy	0	0	1	1
Too difficult	2	1	0	3
About right	5	13	5	23
Total	7	14	6	27

⁹ Excluding teachers

¹⁰ Excluding teachers

The following optional comments were provided:

- Challenging, but seeing the videos ahead helped a lot
- Good that there are dances for all, and dances for experienced dancers
- Varied from series to series. I like the ratio 3 for everyone; 1 for the more experienced!
- It depended on the program. Most were about right, but sometimes one or two were difficult. Generally, the teaching was very good, and the difficult ones were demonstrated thoroughly.
- It's great to include the newer dancers.

Question 18. I found the pace of the social hour to be:

Pace of the social hour:	2014		2019	
	#	%	#	%
Too slow	4	22	1	3
Too fast	0	0	1	3
About right	14	78	28	94
Total	18	100	30	100

Again, the pace of social hour class seems improved, with 94% saying that it is about right, compared with 78% in 2014. Under optional comments one respondent said “I think this has improved this year!” The only respondents who did not agree were a teacher who said “too slow” and a less experienced dancer who said “too fast”.

Question 19: The attention given to upcoming ball programmes in the social hour was:

Attention to upcoming ball programmes:	2014		2019	
	#	%	#	%
Too much	0	0	0	0
Too little	2	13	0	0
About right	14	87	31	100
Total	16	100	31	100

As with the responses to question 15 above, on the same topic, dancers appear now to be getting more of what they want in terms of ball preparation, compared with the situation in 2014.

A thoughtful comment came from one teacher, who said “I think more challenging/newer/unfamiliar dances on upcoming programs could be taught in the experienced class.” It makes sense for such dances to be properly taught, which means they should be covered in the experienced class, not in the social hour. (The current policy regarding the social hour is that there may be two dances for experienced dancers only, but they should be familiar dances, or dances that can be taught quickly, so that newer dancers do not have to sit around for too long.) Challenging dances can be reviewed in the social hour when the time of the applicable ball approaches. This comment resonates with the comment made by another teacher under question 15: “if the new list dances were taught right from the beginning of the year, less time would be needed to teach these dances when a ball is approaching.”

Question 20. This question relates to the participation of basic class members in the social hour. Please select the option that best reflects your views:

Number of dances in the social hour that are suitable for basic class members	Basic	Exper- ienced	Teachers	All
All dances should be accessible to basic class members as long as they are present	1	0	0	1
One dance should be for experienced dancers only	1	8	3	12
Two dances should be for experienced dancers only	4	7	2	13
All but one dance should be for experienced dancers only	0	0	0	0
Skipped the question	1	1	2	4
Total	7	16	7	30

During the last two series of classes, the practice has been to indicate that two dances are for more experienced dancers, with the qualification that the dances should be familiar, or dances that can be taught quickly, so that newer dancers do not have to sit around for too long. Moreover, in practice some of the newer dancers have been included in one or both of the dances intended for experienced dancers. The results from this question appear to be supportive of the current approach to the class.

It is gratifying that experienced dancers and teachers are not asking for more dances to be geared towards themselves. This suggests they fully understand the importance of being inclusive.

Under optional comments, two teachers stressed the need for flexibility, to adjust the selection of dances to suit the interests and abilities of the dancers actually present.

A number of thoughtful comments were made by other dancers too.

By the basic class members:

- There should be at least two dances (out of how many?) that the experienced dancers would be willing to suffer through for the beginners. It's also nice to sit and watch the tougher dances being danced so well.
- 1) It's helpful and enjoyable to watch some of the more difficult dances. 2) As a beginner, my ability to absorb new patterns and dances slows as the night progresses. Having a break watching the advanced dancers helps to mitigate this.
- As a beginner, watching 2 experienced dances back-to-back was educational, but I cramped up by sitting so long, and sometimes, could not rise to the occasion for the last simpler last dance.
- You can learn by watching also.

By the experienced dancers (non-teachers):

- It seems to me that there is an attempt to alternate easier and challenging dances in the social hour, and that mix seems about right. They should be able to see tough dances and at times see experienced sets fall apart. It happens! That can sometimes be even more fun - and to see how to recover can be the best lesson for newer dancers.
- I think it's best to keep the beginners dancing, but one more challenging dance for experienced dancers only is appreciated! (Also, I hope beginners find it inspiring to see what they are working toward, but can't speak for how they actually feel about it.) I'm fine with teachers varying this depending on who is there, of course.

- I'd rather see a nuanced approach rather than a rigid rule for this matter. For example, two for experienced dancers could be fine, depending on who is present and just how challenging the dances are. Generally, the Basic class members should be encouraged to participate as much as possible, but experienced dancers shouldn't be left bored-unsatisfied.

The New York Branch Dance List

Question 21 - Did you know there was a list of dances from which most of the dances are chosen for parties and balls?

Did you know about the dance list?	Basic class	Experienced class ¹¹	Teachers	All
Yes	4	17	7	28
No	3	5	0	8
Total	7	22	7	36

It is not surprising that some basic class members have not heard about the list, since it is of limited relevance to that class. It is more surprising that five experienced dancers have not heard about it, although they all dance at either the Branch on Thursdays or at Scotia Dancers.

Question 22 – Do you like having a dance list?

Among the dancers who expressed an opinion on this question, 87% (26/30) said they liked the list. If teachers are excluded, 100% of dancers said they liked the list. In other words, the only disliking of the list came from teachers – who were divided on this subject. All others were in favour. The general liking of the list seems related to the preference among most dancers for repetition of dances (see questions 25 and 26 below), which the use of the list encourages.

Do you like having a dance list?	Basic class	Experienced class ¹²	Teachers	All
Yes	6	17	3	26
No	0	0	4	4
Don't know	1	5	1	7
Total	7	22	8	37

Opinions on this topic have changed little in the last five years. In the 2014 survey, 91% stated that they liked the fact that the New York Branch has an annual dance list.

Some interesting optional comments were provided by experienced dancers:

¹¹ Excluding teachers

¹² Excluding teachers

- I like it in theory, but I wonder if there are too many dances on the list to make it useful? On the other hand, I think we currently repeat dances roughly the right amount and I wonder if we're cutting out the possibility of doing more unusual/interesting dances by restricting it to a list? But then if we didn't have a list, would we never repeat dances? (I do appreciate some repetition so I can get comfortable with dances before balls/parties.)
- Since not all ball dances etc are taken from it I am not sure what really the purpose of it is.
- Although I also think teachers should have latitude to choose dances not on the list based on the interest and needs of their particular class, and to provide a bit more variety for more experienced dancers.
- Nice to expand the list of dances I am confident about.

Question 23. Do you think 60 dances (with one-third changing each year) is... (Please check the website to see the current list)

Sixty (60) dances on the list is:	Basic class	Experienced class¹³	Teachers	All
Too many dances	0	2	2	4
Too few dances	0	1	2	3
About the right number	2	12	2	16
Don't know	5	7	1	13
Total	7	22	7	36

This data suggests that 60 may be about the right number of dances for the list. (Note: The three Southern California RSCDS branches, which have been using dance lists for decades, have between 50 and 60 dances on their lists.)

There is a notable lack of consensus among teachers on the right number of dances for the list. Three teachers provided comments:

- At present, the new list dances are not being systematically taught. Also, some NY area groups (eg NJ and Westchester) only follow the list partially, if at all, which means that in the course of a year dancers have to become familiar with many more than 60 dances if they want to attend parties, balls, etc.
- I'd prefer 3x15 with options to add easier/well known dances to programs.
- I think the list should include more dances from RSCDS sources earlier than Book 40 and later. 6 jigs, 4 strathspeys and 3 reels are from earlier RSCDS sources.

Two experienced dancers also provided comments:

- I think that the 20 dances that change should include half dances that are better known and no more than 10 should be new to most people.
- I can see the value of limiting dances for newer dancers, but - how do you choose - when there are so many GREAT, fun dances from which to choose?!?!?

¹³ Excluding teachers

Question 24. Do you feel the level of dances on the list is generally:

The level of dances on the list is generally:	Basic class	Exp'd class¹⁴	Teachers	All
Too difficult	0	1	3	4
Too easy	0	0	0	0
About the right level of difficulty	4	12	5	21
Don't know	2	8	0	10
Total	6	21	8	35

These responses suggest that the selection of dances on recent lists may have been a little too difficult overall. One dancer who said the level was about right added "As long as teachers are careful not to make the programs too difficult!" Another comments was: "It varies - some are too easy and some too difficult and some just right!" A third dancer pointed out that "Level of difficulty can be level of familiarity." This comment ties in with the suggestion – under the preceding question – that, among the 20 new dances each year, ten should be better-known dances.

Also, as was the case with both preceding questions, a significant proportion of experienced dancers responded with 'don't know'. This suggests that more could be done to enable dancers to become familiar with the dances on the list.

Question 25. Based on the list, dances may appear on the program of more than one event in the course of a year. Do you like having some dances repeated?

Like having some dances repeated:	Basic class	Exp'd class¹⁵	Teachers	All
Yes	6	19	4	29
No	0	0	1	1
Don't know	1	2	0	3
Total	7	21	5	33

The data shows that there is strong support for repeating dances. Three of the teachers who answered the preceding question did not check any box in this question. One of them commented "I don't but many dancers do." A teacher who supported repetition explained: "The more that people are familiar with dances on a program, the more enjoyable it is for everyone, and at events it is easier to focus on the music. A lot of unfamiliar dances means I spend a lot of time helping other dancers, which lessens my enjoyment."

Non-teachers added these comments:

¹⁴ Excluding teachers

¹⁵ Excluding teachers

- Though I'd rather these be the more challenging dances. That way I feel like I get to know them better and enjoy them, whereas if easy dances are repeated, I get bored of them.
- Yes, because the more familiar you are with a dance, the more confident you will be dancing and it will show in your performance of it.
- Some repetition is good, though by the third year, some of the easier dances have been repeated too much.
- Repeating dances can be a very effective way to improve one's dancing in general, i.e., not only in that particular dance.

Question 26. Concerning the repetition of dances, from the options below, please choose the one that best reflects your views:

Repetition of dances	Basic class	Exp'd class¹⁶	Teachers	All
I would prefer that no dances are repeated	0	0	1	1
I feel there is about the right amount of repetition of dances	2	13	2	17
I would prefer more repetition of dances	4	6	3	13
Total	6	19	6	31

The data in this table suggests that a considerable proportion of dancers feel that there is not enough repetition of dances at present. This is something on which the Executive Committee could give guidance to the teachers. A relevant suggestion was made under question 10 above - that it would be good to repeat a more challenging dance in the second hour in the week after it is taught in the first hour.

A further measure that the Executive Committee might consider would be reaching out to New Jersey and Westchester to encourage them to include more dances from the list at their special events (Rerr Terr and Westchester Ball) and to invite them to participate in drawing up the list, so they have ownership of it along with the New York Branch and Scotia Dancers.

The following optional comments were made by teachers:

- From a teaching point of view [more repetition of dances] would mean I would spend less time preparing my class for upcoming events and more time working on special aspects of the dancing that I would like to focus on and feel the class needs.
- Don't mind repeats of good dances.
- Could have a little less.

Other experienced dancers added the following comments:

¹⁶ Excluding teachers

- I wouldn't require teachers to repeat any specific number. Some teacher freedom of choice is important but I do think some repetition allows more opportunity for dancers to retain the dances.
- However, I would prefer a little more variety in dances chosen for classes.
- I would prefer repetition of only my favorites. But then so would everyone else...

Two members of the basic class offered comments, as follows:

- Only because I am learning, and so many dances makes it hard.
- There seems to be a finite (and numerous) amount of dance steps and moves that are creatively choreographed into many, many dances. As a beginner, sometimes I see an overlap that is helpful from one dance to another; sometimes it becomes a muddle.

Question 27. Are you more likely to attend an event if you are familiar with most of the dances on the program?

As the data in the table below shows, familiarity with the dances is factor that influences many dancers who might consider attending an event. The table below shows that a large majority of dancers who have graduated from the basic class but have no more than five years' experience **is** influenced by the familiarity of the dances. Nearly half the more experienced dancers are also be influenced by familiarity with the dances, while the other half say it would probably make no difference to them.

Repetition of dances	Basic class	Experienced class ¹⁷		Teachers	All
		<5 years	>5 years		
Yes	5	6	6	1	18
I prefer a program with a lot of less familiar dances	0	0	2	1	3
It would probably make no difference to me	2	1	6	5	14
Total	7	7	14	7	35

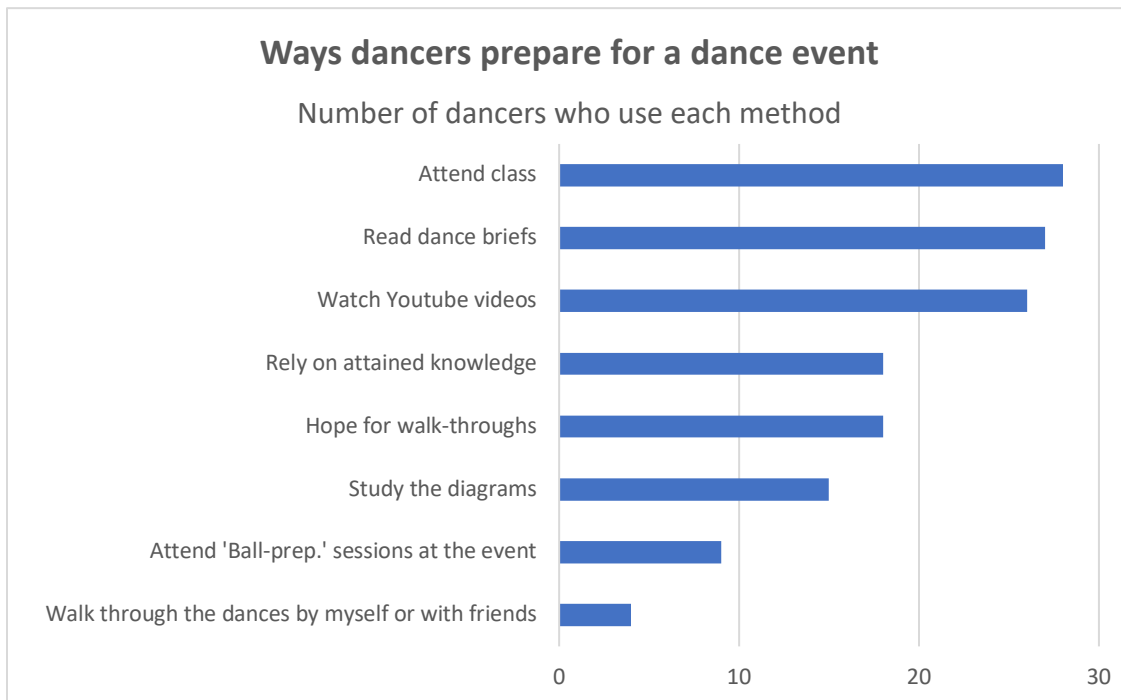
Two dancers provided supplementary comments:

- I do have my favorites, but am always eager to learn new dances, as well, whether in a party evening or in a class setting.
- I don't attend many special events, but if I did, I would want to be as familiar as possible with the dances.

¹⁷ Excluding teachers, and divided into those who have been dancing for less than five years and those who have been dancing for more than five years.

Question 28. How do you prepare for an event? Please choose all that apply.

The responses to this question are set out in the chart below. The most popular way to prepare is attending class, which underlines the importance of preparing dancers in class for upcoming events. Second was reading the briefs. Close behind was watching videos, which has grown in popularity as more and more videos get put on the web. Among dancers who began dancing in the last ten years, watching videos proved to be slightly more popular than reading briefs. This highlights the value of providing dance lists with links to the videos.



Question 29. Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns about dancing at the New York Branch or about this survey?

Several dancers responded to this final question:

- It's good to repeat the survey from time to time.
- My main concerns are poor weekly attendance and that fact those who come for the beginner sessions rarely become committed dancers and 'graduate' to the experienced class. The new basic class formula, however, is very satisfying to teach compared to the previous situation where new dancers drifted in and out on a weekly basis. Most dancers come to enjoy the dances and to socialise. I believe it is important, though, to offer technique work to the minority that want it and the Branch has to continue to find ways to satisfy that need. A demonstration team that meets on a second night in the week, or once every two weeks, may be attractive for some. We would need to find ways of ensuring, though, that dancers on the dem team continued to support weekly classes. The presence of dem team dancers in a regular class can raise the overall standard of dancing of all class members.

- You might ask regular attendees if they have any interest in teaching in the future. The response might suggest that prospective teacher training candidates be actively encouraged to become "helpers" in the basic class. Helping in the basic class encourages prospective teachers; those dancers test out their interest & the teacher may give feedback or support towards that end. This has been happening organically already but I think we can become more mindful about the process as we shall always need new teachers.
- I thought [the survey] was good and an excellent idea.
- I think it is a wonderful group and I'm totally thankful of all the people who put their time and effort into it. I think we have to remember that it should be fun and not too serious. Thank you to everyone who contributes so much.
- This survey is pretty comprehensive!