

CAMDEN SHORINJI KEMPO: Leadership Survey

Background

In February 2020, Camden Shorinji Kempo Club received a grant from Camden Giving. We proposed that the money from this grant would go towards two courses: a six-week Leadership Course for women and LGBTQ+ people in the Camden area and a three-hour seminar for Shorinji Kempo instructors.

As part of our research, we surveyed female and LGBTQ+ 1st Kyu and Dan grades. The aim of these surveys was to learn about their relationships to leadership in Shorinji Kempo as well as discovering what they wanted to learn about teaching Shorinji Kempo.

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Summary

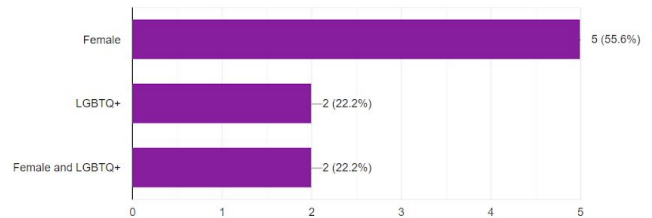
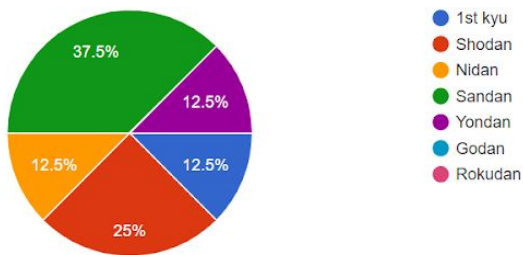
The majority of our respondents trained in Shorinji Kempo on a weekly basis and felt like they were sometimes able to lead and teach classes. Their key concerns centred around not knowing the right language or teaching strategies, struggling to maintain authority and not having confidence in their ability to lead.

Many respondents also commented that they would like to learn about how to apply techniques on different body types; specifically in regards to the female body. Although most respondents were committed to training, they cited a variety of reasons for being deterred from class. These ranged from dealing with difficult kenshi to gendered assumptions in regards to teaching children's classes.

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Results

1. Survey respondents



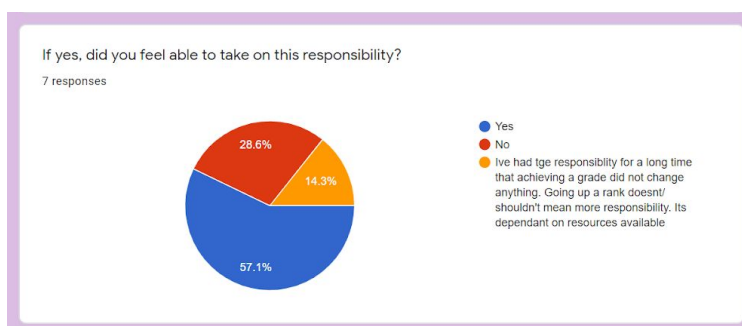
We received responses from nine people who identify as female and/or LGBTQ+. Our respondents ranged from 1st Kyu kenshi to those who have achieved Godan.

2. Relationship to Shorinji Kempo

The most common reason for starting Shorinji Kempo was to try something new or to learn self-defence. All our respondents enjoyed their first class and reported that it met or exceeded their expectations. Most respondents mentioned that their first class was very friendly and welcoming; the strong sense of community in the dojo seems to be a key reason that respondents continued to train.

62% of respondents practice Shorinji Kempo on a weekly basis while 25% had discontinued training at the time of taking the survey. All respondents who no longer train in Shorinji Kempo cited family reasons or time constraints as the reason that they stopped attending class.

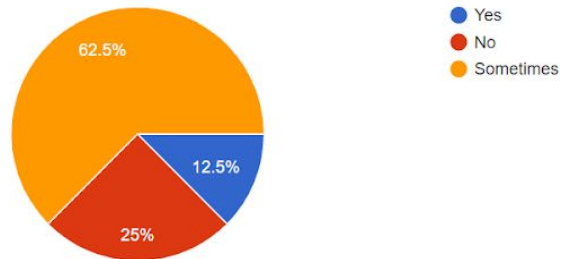
3. Current Responsibilities



63% of respondents said that they were given more responsibility when they achieved their current grade. Over half of respondents said that they felt able to take on this responsibility.

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However, when asked the question “**Are you confident in your ability to teach kempo and lead sessions?**” only 12% stated that they were confident in their ability to do so. The majority of respondents (63%) said that they were only sometimes confident to do so, while 25% said that they were not confident enough to teach or lead a class.



One respondent said:

“No training was given in instruction, leadership, or how to teach, it was expected that we would just copy those who went before us.”

Another explained that they “would struggle to explain the technicalities behind certain techniques”. These responses suggest that it would be beneficial to provide training in teaching strategies for Shorinji Kempo.

4. Authority

We asked our respondents the question: “**Have you ever felt like your authority is questioned or challenged?**”

Over half of respondents (57%) said that their authority had been questioned or challenged, while only 43% said that it had not. Respondents who did not feel that their authority had been questioned said that they had already learnt leadership skills in the workplace.

The 57% who felt as if their authority had been challenged cited a number of reasons. Many felt that their authority was questioned on techniques that they were confident in. One respondent said:

“as a small [...] woman my ability to effectively execute techniques was constantly questioned, by beginners as well as more experienced kenshi”.

Another respondent gave the example that:

“When teaching a technique to a new blue belt, I was told that I was not teaching that technique and was wrong. Upon justifying myself and proving I was right, I could still feel distrust.”

One respondent said that the reason they did not feel confident to teach or lead was that they:

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“used to teach regularly but I'm now out of the habit. I find it harder when a higher grade is there as I think they are judging me.”

These answers suggest that respondents feel that they are judged and questioned by both senior and junior kenshi. It appears that this affects their confidence in their ability to lead and teach Shorinji Kempo.

5. Demographics of training

We asked the question: **“Is there anything that you feel you can't learn or ask in a class led by (and attended largely by) men and/or straight cis-people?”**

The most common response was that respondents did not feel that they were able to learn how to execute techniques on different body types - specifically for those with female anatomy. Respondents commented that:

- a) “When told to do kagete against the chest it is difficult when I have boobs! It can be awkward to ask”
- b) “How to apply / receive techniques on the female anatomy - many were clearly clearly designed with only men in mind so didn't account for the presence of breasts”
- c) “How to make techniques work on people who are much larger than you. No problem asking, but they don't always know the answer!”

Respondents also said that it can be hard to ask not to do some exercises if they are on their period. One respondent said that they “feel a bit uncomfortable using that as a reason”.

6. Deterrents to training

We asked our respondents if there were **“any aspects of kempo classes that have put you off training?”**

Two of the respondents said that there was nothing that deterred them from training. The others offered a variety of reasons - from dealing with aggression to gendered assumptions. Due to the variety of these responses, they are shown in full below:

- a) “When I got my shodan I was constantly being asked if I would start a children's class, I felt this was expected of me, encouraged even though i had shown no interest in doing so.”
- b) “I had sometimes felt it was a hassle to deal or teach perverse people.”
- c) “Sometimes stronger people can be more aggressive than I am comfortable with.”
- d) “I need to feel valued and I have moved clubs when club leaders are aloof.”

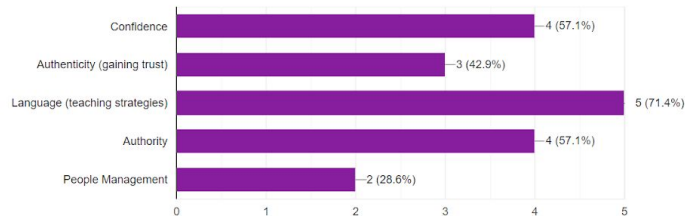
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- e) “Definitely politics. It’s an organisation but you can be judged as not loyal if you chose to train in different dojos due to life style”

7. Camden Shorinji Kempo’s Leadership Course

Our Leadership Course will focus on five aspects. Which would you be interested in learning (tick all options that apply).

7 responses



We asked our respondents what skills they would like to learn in our leadership course. We offered five options: Confidence, Authenticity, Language (teaching strategies), Authority and People Management.

The majority of respondents stated that they would like to learn

Language (teaching strategies), a

view reflected in earlier answers. **Confidence** and **Authority** were also shown to be key concerns in this question, with over half of respondents saying that they would be interested in learning these skills.

Additional suggestions for our leadership course included training on how to support students for grading. One respondent also said that they would like to learn how to give more pastoral support, such as “supporting with students who are coming out” and ways to look after the “general mental health of my students”.