



PARA-WRESTLING SURVEY

REPORT 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2025, United World Wrestling (UWW) launched a global initiative to assess the state of Para-Wrestling across its affiliated national federations. Recognizing the importance of inclusion and equality in sports, the survey aimed to better understand the landscape of Para Wrestling, including existing programs, challenges faced by federations, and the support needed to grow the discipline globally. The insights gathered will guide UWW's strategic planning to support the development of Para Wrestling and empower athletes with disabilities to participate fully in the wrestling community.

Given the complexity of classification based on different levels of disability, the survey focused specifically on para-wrestling for athletes with visual impairments. Throughout this survey, the term "para-wrestling" referred mainly to wrestling for visually impaired athletes.

2. METHODOLOGY

The UWW Development Department distributed a structured survey to all national federations at the beginning of 2025. The survey was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, focusing on key themes such as:

- The level of interest in launching such programs;
- The existence of Para Wrestling programs;
- Barriers encountered in implementation; and
- Suggestions on how UWW can provide assistance and guidance.

The survey was open for two months, from 14 March to 15 May 2025, and follow-up reminders were sent during this period to encourage broad participation.

In total, 48 federations responded out of 190 affiliated national federations, representing all five continental regions – Pan-America, Asia, Europe, Africa, and Oceania. This corresponds to an overall response rate of 25%, ensuring a globally representative overview of current Para Wrestling engagement and development.

Details as follow:

<i>Con.</i>	<i>Survey received</i>	<i>No. of federations</i>	<i>Receiving rate</i>
<i>AF</i>	8	51	16%
<i>AM</i>	13	32	41%
<i>AS</i>	9	41	22%
<i>EU</i>	14	48	29%
<i>OC</i>	4	18	22%
<i>Total</i>	48	190	25%

The Americas (41%) achieved the highest response rate, suggesting strong engagement and communication between federations in that region.

Europe (29%) and Oceania (22%) also demonstrated good participation, indicating active involvement in para-wrestling initiatives.

Asia (22%) and Africa (16%) recorded lower response rates, highlighting the need for improved outreach and support mechanisms to encourage participation in future surveys.

The overall global response rate of 25% reflects moderate engagement across federations, providing a representative yet improvable sample for analysis.



3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The survey revealed significant global momentum for the development of Para Wrestling. Many national federations have either already initiated programs or expressed strong interest in launching them.

The majority of the national federations that participated in the survey expressed a clear interest in developing Para Wrestling in their countries. Those that indicated they are not yet ready to initiate Para Wrestling development cited reasons such as limited organizational capacity, resource constraints, or strategic priorities that currently do not include Para sport initiatives.

Europe, submitted the highest number of survey responses and demonstrated one of the strongest levels of interest in Para Wrestling development. Notably, more than 50% of the European National Federations that completed the survey reported that they already have existing Para Wrestling programs—an important and encouraging finding.

In contrast, Asia and Oceania show the lowest levels of awareness and the fewest existing Para Wrestling programs. Surprisingly, a large number of Asian NFs indicated no interest in developing Para Wrestling at this stage, with only 56% expressing positive interest.

Although the overall responses were largely positive, the survey also identified several widespread challenges that continue to hinder the global progress of Para Wrestling development. These include:

- **Finance** - limited funding and sponsorship opportunities, restricting program implementation and athlete participation;
- **Education** - insufficient technical resources and knowledge, particularly in coaching methods tailored for Para Wrestling and for supporting athletes with disabilities; and
- **Competition** - unclear athlete classification systems, combined with a lack of defined goals and competitive opportunities for Para athletes.

Despite these obstacles, respondents expressed optimism and strong motivation to collaborate with UWW in expanding opportunities for athletes with disabilities. The findings highlight a clear need for both financial and technical support to help federations establish sustainable Para Wrestling structures worldwide.

4. DETAILED ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESPONSES

4.1 Interest and Readiness to Develop Para Wrestling

Surveyed national federations generally indicated a strong willingness to introduce or grow Para Wrestling domestically:

<i>Con.</i>	<i>Survey received</i>	<i>Interest of Para-wrestling development</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
AF	8	7	88%
AM	13	11	85%
AS	9	5	56%
EU	14	12	86%
OC	4	3	75%
<i>Total</i>	48	38	79%

Out of the 48 federations that responded, 38 federations ($\approx 80\%$) responded positively toward developing Para Wrestling activities within their countries. Meanwhile, 10 federations ($\approx 20\%$) indicated that they are not yet at the stage of developing Para Wrestling.

Surprisingly, a large number of NFs in Asia indicated that they are not interested in developing para-wrestling, with only 56% expressing positive interest.

Europe, on the other hand, submitted the highest number of survey responses and showed one of the most positive levels of interest in para-wrestling development.

The following federations have reported that they are not yet in a position - whether due to limited interest or capacity - to pursue further development of para-wrestling:

- Dominican Republic
- Guatemala
- Hong Kong, China
- Iraq
- Japan
- Syria
- Israel
- Ukraine
- Namibia
- New Zealand

The main reasons include limited organizational capacity, a lack of resources, and existing strategic priorities that do not currently include Para sport. Although these challenges were reported primarily by smaller federations with fewer resources or developing wrestling structures, some well-established federations, such as Japan, also indicated that they are not currently interested in engaging in para-wrestling development.

Ukraine is also not currently interested in developing para-wrestling due to concerns over its negative perception in the country.

4.2 Existing Programs

Based on the 48 surveys received, 27% of the NFs have existing para-wrestling programs in the country.

<i>Con.</i>	<i>Survey received</i>	<i>Existing Programs</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>AF</i>	8	1	13%
<i>AM</i>	13	4	31%
<i>AS</i>	9	1	11%
<i>EU</i>	14	7	50%
<i>OC</i>	4	0	0
<i>Total</i>	48	13	27%

The following 13 federations reported having existing para-wrestling programs, primarily in Europe and a few in the Pan-American region:

<i>Con.</i>	<i>NF</i>	<i>No.</i>
Pan-AM	Brazil	4
	Chile	
	Costa Rica	
	Venezuela	
AS	Afghanistan	1
EU	Finland	7
	France	
	Italy	
	Norway	
	Spain	
	Sweden	
	Ukraine	
AF	Cape Verde	1
Total		13

7 federations in Europe already have established Para Wrestling programs, along with 4 federations in Pan-America. Europe is expected to be more advanced in this discipline, as the region generally has stronger human development capacity and broader public awareness of Para sport.

Furthermore, the following 6 federations have existing local or national competitions:

Con.	NF	No.
Pan-AM	Costa Rica	2
	Venezuela	
AS	Afghanistan	1
EU	France	3
	Norway	
	Spain	
Total	6	

2 federations in Pan-America - Costa Rica and Venezuela reported active Para Wrestling programs.

With four federations in Pan-America previously identified as active, these two responses reinforce the region's emerging leadership outside Europe. This demonstrates a growing interest within the Pan-American region, complementing the broader trend of increasing Para sport development.

3 federations in Europe, France, Norway, and Spain reported existing programs, representing half of all active Para Wrestling programs in the dataset.

Europe remains the most advanced region in establishing Para Wrestling structures, consistent with earlier findings showing higher readiness, stronger institutional capacity, and greater awareness of Para sport.

The concentration of programs in Europe suggests that the region could serve as a model or hub for knowledge-sharing and technical support.

4.3 Main Challenges

Although the overall responses were largely positive, the survey also identified several widespread challenges that continue to hinder the global progress of Para Wrestling development. These include:



- **Finance** - limited funding and sponsorship opportunities, restricting program implementation and athlete participation;
- **Education** - insufficient technical resources and knowledge, particularly in coaching methods tailored for Para Wrestling and for supporting athletes with disabilities; and
- **Competition** - unclear athlete classification systems, combined with a lack of defined goals and competitive opportunities for Para athletes.

Some of the biggest wrestling federations expressed their concerns and suggestions.

For example, USA Wrestling, one of the strongest wrestling federations globally, with its United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC) being a major supporter of the Paralympic Movement, indicated that disabled athletes are currently training alongside able-bodied athletes. However, to further advance Para-wrestling development, a clear and structured pathway must be established to ensure athletes have defined progression opportunities and long-term goals.

In some countries, the development of parasport must be approved by national authorities. For example, in China, authorization from the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF) and the Chinese Olympic Committee (COC) is essential for the inclusion and development of Para Wrestling.

Overall, despite these obstacles, respondents expressed optimism and strong motivation to collaborate with UWW in expanding opportunities for athletes with disabilities. The findings highlight a clear need for both financial and technical support to help federations establish sustainable Para Wrestling structures worldwide.

5. CONCLUSION

The survey results demonstrate a clear and growing global interest in developing Para Wrestling, with 80% (38 out of 48) of responding national federations expressing willingness to establish or expand Para Wrestling programs. This widespread interest reflects strong recognition of the importance of inclusive sport and the desire to provide opportunities for athletes with disabilities.

However, interest varies significantly by region. While Europe, Pan-America, and Africa show high levels of readiness—each exceeding 75% positive interest—Asia presented a comparatively lower interest level (56%), indicating uneven development and differing strategic priorities across the continent. Notably, several smaller federations, as well as some well-established ones such as Japan, reported that they are not currently prepared to pursue Para Wrestling development due to capacity limitations, resource constraints, or national-level perceptions.

In terms of existing implementation, only 27% (13 federations) currently operate Para Wrestling programs, with Europe leading by a considerable margin (7 programs), followed by Pan-America (4 programs). The remaining regions show minimal or no existing structures. A similar pattern is observed in the availability of local or national competitions, where Europe and Pan-America once again dominate. These findings indicate that while global interest is high, actual Para Wrestling implementation remains in early stages, with few established pathways for athlete development, competition, or classification.

Across all regions, the survey highlights three consistent barriers: limited financial resources, insufficient technical and coaching expertise, and the absence of clear competition frameworks and classification systems. These gaps collectively hinder the ability of national federations to move from interest to practical implementation. Despite these challenges, the overall tone of the survey demonstrates optimism and willingness among national federations to collaborate with UWW, provided that adequate guidance and support mechanisms are offered. The global appetite for Para Wrestling is strong—but coordinated, strategic, and resource-supported action is essential to convert this momentum into tangible, sustainable growth.



6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Leadership buy-in is the top priority for advancing Para Wrestling globally. Strong commitment from the UWW Bureau is essential to establish clear direction, create a Para Wrestling Development Commission, allocate resources, and integrate Para Wrestling into broader development strategies. With leadership engagement as the foundation, the following recommendations are proposed to guide UWW's strategic development of Para Wrestling worldwide:

1. Strengthen Financial Support and Resource Mobilization

Allocate a dedicated Para Wrestling development fund to support the creation of foundational structures, including program frameworks and educational materials. Possibility of facilitating partnerships with international organizations and potential donors to expand financial capacity for long-term development.

2. Build Technical Expertise Through Structured Education

Develop a standardized Para Wrestling Coaching Curriculum covering safety, adaptation, athlete support, and inclusive coaching methodologies. In addition to coaching competencies, establish clear standards and toolkit for Para Wrestling competition organization and event management, providing guidance to national federations for understanding how to structure inclusive, safe, and rule-compliant competitions. Provide certification pathways, workshops, and accessible learning materials to expand the pool of qualified coaches and technical officials worldwide.

3. Establish a Clear and Practical Classification Framework

Collaborate with leading international Para sport organizations to create a transparent, consistent, and easy-to-apply Para Wrestling classification system. Ensure federations have access to trained classifiers and clear operational guidance.

4. Create Competitive Pathways to the Paralympics

Design a long-term competitive roadmap for Para Wrestling, beginning with integration into existing national wrestling events and gradually expanding toward dedicated regional and international championships. Establish structured pathways that enable athlete progression from grassroots participation to elite levels, improve athlete visibility, and ensure alignment with future Paralympic inclusion efforts.



5. Promote Knowledge Sharing and working with European council

Given Europe's leading position in Para Wrestling development, UWW should work closely with the European Council to establish a structured knowledge-sharing network. This includes organizing regional training camps, technical workshops, and educational exchanges coordinated through European expertise. Additionally, mentorship partnerships should be encouraged between more advanced federations and those in earlier stages of development to accelerate skills transfer, build capacity, and ensure consistent global progress.

6. Expand Global Awareness and Advocacy Efforts

Develop a comprehensive Para Wrestling communication strategy that highlights the sport's value in inclusion. Share athlete stories, national successes, and program breakthroughs to elevate global visibility and encourage broader engagement.

7. LIMITATIONS

Only 48 out of 190 federations responded to the survey, and several major wrestling nations did not participate. As a result, the findings may not be fully representative or comprehensive.

Report by:

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