



# LGBT+ END OF SEASON SURVEY

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**A Pride in Football and  
Football v Homophobia report**

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# SETTING THE CONTEXT

While the social and legal climate in the UK has improved for LGBT+ people, there are still incidents of homophobia and transphobia throughout society. Football matches are one place where behaviours such as homophobic chanting continue to occur. While there has been no openly gay professional male football player in the UK since Justin Fashanu came out in 1990, there are increasing numbers of LGBT+ football fan groups focused on the men's game. Football is the largest spectator sport in the world and has an increasingly diverse range of fans. Football clubs cannot ignore this, and many are taking action to end homophobic and transphobic behaviours taking place at their clubs. However, while progress has been made, there are still too many incidents occurring that go unreported.

This survey seeks to explore the experiences of LGBT+ football fans at both home and away matches throughout the 2017/18 season.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The LGBT+ End of Season Survey is an initiative of Pride in Football and the Football v Homophobia Campaign. The research was conducted by Doctor John E. Goldring, a Senior Lecturer in Sociology Statistics and Quantitative Methodology at Manchester Metropolitan University. Launched at the end of the 2017/18 season, it is intended that the survey will improve our understanding of the experience of LGBT+ fans while at home and away matches.

Distributed via social media and through LGBT+ fan networks, the survey sought to capture experiences of LGBT+ fans in relation to homophobia and transphobia while attending football matches. Representatives of LGBT+ fan groups were asked to promote this e-survey with their members. Sampling was therefore opportunistic and self-selecting. In addition to capturing demographic information, the survey asked respondents if they had experienced anything that could be considered to be either homophobic or transphobic. The survey was open for five weeks from June 2018 – July 2018 and was completed by 173 respondents. Three incomplete responses were removed from the findings, leaving 170 respondents representing views from 48 different football clubs.

The valid percentage is used throughout the findings resulting in only the number of responses to each question being presented. Where responses are not provided, these are considered missing data and are not added to the count. Missing data is therefore not reported. The count will accompany the valid percentage to provide the reader with the necessary number of responses.

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# FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

## HIGHLIGHT THE FOLLOWING:



Homophobia and transphobia continues to be experienced by LGBT+ fans at both home and away games with 63% (n85) of respondents experiencing incidents of physical and verbal abuse, comments from other fans and/or homophobic/transphobic chanting.



Respondents experienced a higher percent of discriminatory behaviours at away matches 60% (n47) compared to 55% (n72) at home matches.



A higher percentage of supporters experienced homophobic/transphobic chanting when attending away games 45% (n37) compared to 29% (n40) at home games.



Reporting remains problematic for LGBT+ fans with 65% (n26) of home attendees and 72% (n26) of those attending away matches stating they did not report homophobic/transphobic chanting.



There is a clear disparity between the home and away experience of reporting serious incidents of physical or verbal harassment. For home attendees, 38% (n5) stated they did not report such incidents compared to 75% (n3) of those attending away matches.



Both home and away respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the action taken following reports of homophobia and transphobia.



Being part of an LGBT+ fan group increases confidence to attend home (51% n40) and/or away (44% n35) matches.

# IN RESPONSE TO THESE FINDINGS, THE SURVEY PARTNERS MAKE THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:



Support for a season on season survey to track the experiences of LGBT+ fans so that richer longitudinal data can be collected along with an increase in supporters targeted to take part in the research.



Robust action to be taken by football authorities and clubs in consultation with campaign groups and fans to ensure reporting systems are fit for purpose.



Initiate or increase support from clubs, leagues and football authorities for Pride in Football and the establishment of LGBT+ fan groups, which provide many fans with the confidence to attend games.



Greater investment in anti-homophobia/transphobia campaigns targeting all fans.



National publishing of outcome data in relation to reports of homophobia and transphobia at games. Fans would benefit from knowing appropriate action is taken which could encourage greater reporting in the future.

# KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Exploring the demographics, the findings below come from the 170 respondents who took part in the survey. The mean age of respondents was 38 years old with the youngest person being 16 years old and the oldest being 70 (range 54). Cis or Trans males were overrepresented in the sample with 68% (n117). There were 18% (n31) cis women, 8% (14) trans women and 5% (n8) respondents who identified as non-binary.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual accounted for 85% (n143) of respondents. The remaining identified as asexual, heterosexual, pansexual or queer. 19% (n33) declared a disability.

Respondents supported 48 different football clubs. The three most supported clubs were Tottenham Hotspur (14% n24), Manchester City 13% n22), and Liverpool (12% n20). Over half of those taking part in the survey (52% n88) also belonged to a LGBT+ supporters club. The vast majority of respondents attended some or all of the home matches (84% n142) with 53% (n84) also going to away matches.

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# KEY FINDINGS

Attending home or away matches exposed 63% (n85) of respondents to some form of homophobic or transphobic discrimination. This could be in the form of either or all of the following areas:

- Homophobic/transphobic physical or verbal harassment from other fans;
- Homophobic/transphobic chanting from other fans;
- Homophobic/transphobic comments from other fans.

Attending away matches has slightly increased exposure to any or all of the above discriminatory behaviours with 60% (n47) of away match attendees reporting it compared to 55% (n72) of respondents experiencing it at home matches.

## **The more extreme forms of discrimination are experienced less**

When exploring the data at the different levels of discrimination, physical or verbal harassment has the lowest reported incidences at **home** matches 10% (n13) compared to 29% (n40) witnessing homophobic/transphobic chanting; and 50% (n66) hearing comments from other fans that could be considered as homophobic or transphobic.

Similarly, while at **away** matches, only 6% (n5) of respondents reported experiencing physical or verbal harassment. This is compared to 45% (n37) witnessing homophobic/transphobic chanting; and 54% (n42) hearing comments from other fans that could be considered homophobic or transphobic.

Whilst verbal and physical harassment of fans and homophobic/transphobic comments from other fans remains consistent either at home or away games, there are higher rates of homophobia/transphobic chanting at away games than when compared to home matches (29% n40 home versus 45% n37 away).

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## Reporting differences at home versus away matches

Incidents of physical and verbal harassment at **home** matches were more likely to be reported compared to homophobic/transphobic chanting or hearing comments from other fans (see table 1 below).

Table 1 -The Home Experience

HOME	Experienced		Reported		Appropriate action taken	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Verbal or physical harassment	10% (n13)	90% (n123)	62% (n8)	38% (n5)	62% (n5)	38% (n3)
Homophobic/transphobic chanting	29% (n40)	71% (n99)	35% (n14)	65% (n26)	77% (n10)	23% (n3)
Homophobic/transphobic comments from other fans	50% (n66)	50% (n50)	31% (n20)	69% (n45)	95% (n18)	5 % (n1)

Meanwhile, fans at **away** matches were less likely to report all types of incidents compared with home games.

Table 2 - The Away Experience

AWAY	Experienced		Reported		Appropriate action taken	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Verbal or physical harassment	6% (n5)	94% (n73)	25% (n1)	75% (n3)	N/A	100% (n1)
Homophobic/transphobic chanting	45% (n37)	55% (n45)	28% (n10)	72% (n26)	50% (n5)	50% (n5)
Homophobic/transphobic comments from other fans	54% (n42)	46% (n36)	20% (n8)	80% (n33)	75% (n6)	25% (n2)

This indicates fans willingness to report incidents while on home turf compared to when away. This data also demonstrates the readiness to report the more serious incidents of homophobia/transphobia. When an incident is reported, the evidence is mixed as to whether appropriate action is taken. More often than not however, respondents indicated that they felt it was appropriate.

## Opportunities to report experiences of discrimination

The majority of respondents who did not report their experienced discrimination while at home or away matches felt they did not have opportunity to do so both at home and away matches.

Table 3 - The Home Experience of Reporting

HOME	Experienced		Reported		Felt they had opportunity to report?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Verbal or physical harassment	10% (n13)	38% (n5)	N/A			100% (n5)
Homophobic/transphobic chanting	29% (n40)	65% (n26)	35% (n9)			65% (n17)
Homophobic/transphobic comments from other fans	50% (n66)	69% (n45)	45% (n19)			55% (n23)

Table 4 - The Away Experience of Reporting

AWAY	Experienced		Reported		Felt they had opportunity to report?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Verbal or physical harassment	6% (n5)	75% (n3)	33% (n1)			67% (n2)
Homophobic/transphobic chanting	45% (n37)	72% (n26)	15% (n4)			85% (n22)
Homophobic/transphobic comments from other fans	54% (n42)	80% (n33)	18% (n4)			82% (18)

The lack of opportunity to report acts of homophobia or transphobia raises concerns as the systems set in place such as texting reporting lines or the Kick It Out app are not being used.

## Free text responses

Respondents were also given the opportunity to write about the highlights of the season. Many fans commented on their team's success, be it winning the league, winning a particular game or not being relegated. A key theme to also emerge from the text is how fans really appreciated being visibly supported by their club on LGBT+ issues. For example, visibility initiatives such as players wearing rainbow laces or a rainbow armband was mentioned as evidence of the club showing their support for LGBT+ issues:

**“Seeing the players wearing the rainbow laces (and captain’s armband), despite it only being for one game”**

Respondents also commented that seeing LGBT+ publicity/banners around the ground demonstrated their inclusion and the feeling of being more accepted in the club adding to their overall enjoyment and feelings of safety:

**“Being able to enjoy football matches travelling up down country with gay [and] straight friends being accepted [by]... straight football fans”**

Public support by high-ranking officials was also mentioned. For instance, Leeds supported the pride event. Another example is:

**“The photo of the Spurs first teams with the Proud Lilywhites and banner”**

Such visibility appears to have given fans a sense of pride being involved with LGBT+ supporters clubs. For instance:

**“I was very proud to be standing above the Canal Street Blues banner at Wembley and it reminded me how far we’ve come in terms of sexuality and football compared to the dark days of the 70’s when I used to go as a child”**

Being able to meet up with other LGBT+ supporter groups was also mentioned as a season highlight.

# Moving forward

Whilst we acknowledge that the role of a football club cannot be to act as sole agents of societal change, they must nevertheless play their part in tackling areas of discrimination experienced by their home or visiting fans. No fan, whatever their sexual orientation or gender identity should have to endure acts of homophobia or transphobia. Preventative measures promoting awareness campaigns such as Football v Homophobia that highlight the inappropriateness of homophobic/transphobia behaviour could be beneficial. Yet this report demonstrates this type of antisocial behaviour is occurring far too frequently.

It is clear from these findings that too many supporters experience some form of homophobia or transphobia at matches. Far too often, such behaviour goes unreported. In response, clubs need to begin to explore potential barriers to LGBT+ fans reporting such incidents. It cannot be the sole responsibility of LGBT+ fans to 'call it out', not least as this could expose or 'out' them to those fans who are acting in a discriminatory way. Equally, LGBT+ fans, like all other fans, don't want to spend protracted amounts of time reporting incidents of abuse when they could be watching a game they have paid to attend. Whilst reporting initiatives such as the Kick It Out app and text reporting lines around grounds have improved potential reporting for fans in recent years, there remains an issue of signalling at many grounds, which may prevent fans from accessing online or mobile phone systems. For fans who do report homophobia and transphobia at games, ensuing that appropriate action and resolution can be a huge incentive/disincentive to future reporting. And while on the whole, more fans did feel that appropriate action was taken, there are still too many respondents who felt quite the opposite. This sends a very poor signal to others who might witness acts of homophobia and transphobia which in and of itself could act as a future barrier to reporting such acts.

What is also clear from the qualitative findings is the sense of pride that supporters feel when their clubs do act in ways that are perceived as positive to LGBT+ supporters. This could be via the Rainbow Laces campaign, by sponsorship of pride events or by simply seeing LGBT+ supporter banners around the ground. Such actions send a very positive signal to LGBT+ fans that they are both welcome and valued. As such, clubs could be encouraged to promote LGBT+ supporters clubs where there are currently none.

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FOOTBALL  
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HOMOPHOBIA

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