

GRASS- ROOTS & RACE

RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION IN LOCAL FOOTBALL

A report to explore how people feel about discrimination and racism in local football, and the campaigns and governing bodies that surround football - With a focus on ethnically diverse people.

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FORE- WORD



IT WOULD SEEM LIKE AN OBVIOUS STATEMENT FOR ANYONE TO MAKE IF THEY SAID 'RACISM IN FOOTBALL IS NOT SOMETHING I CONDONE'.

With this being true of most people, we must all play our part to now review the processes that make such a statement superficial. As a child who faced the trauma of racism, I clearly remember being told to go back to where you came from – go back to Africa – go back to the jungle, amongst other unsavoury comments. I remember thinking, I am from none of those places neither have I even been to any. The memory of those events still remain with me as an adult. I clearly remember where those events happened and how I felt returning to the places where grown adults, parents and even grandparents committed what would now be a hate crime towards me as a minor. The sadness is that young people are still experiencing the horrific events that I once suffered.

These moments of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) and trauma that young people face can have a dramatic effect on them later in life. With safeguarding being such an important part of today's society, the element of contextual safeguarding is omitted from the conversation. What are the actions we are taking as a system to mitigate these events in the future. Where is the public health approach to addressing some of the root causes and putting in place a long term strategy to prevent and reduce further trauma.

In all other areas of interest in football, the data is clear. How many south Asians are in the football leagues, how many black managers etc. However, when we discuss these issues at a deeper level, the data is non-existent. There must be a set baseline of data to understand from a local level, where incidents are taking place, who the perpetrators and victims are, and what outcomes are being decided. My question is, how do we move and show progress without it?

Ivan Liburd
Chair of the BFF

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INTRO- DUCTION

CURRENT RESEARCH SURROUNDING RACISM IN FOOTBALL TENDS TO FOCUS ON HIGH PROFILE FOOTBALL PLAYERS AND THE SUPPORTERS, MAINLY CONSIDERING THEIR VIEWS ONLY.

Although these are hugely important perspectives, the opinions and knowledge of the general public is rarely considered. A concerning trend is evolving in professional football, whereby discrimination was up in 2019/20 by 42%, with racism reports increasing by a staggering 53% from the previous year according to Kick it Out, 2021¹. The purpose of this research was to capture and analyse data upon a particularly neglected sample in the current literature available.

The introduction of the Football Association in 1863² to regulate football globally, coincided with the gradual diversifying of players across different levels of the footballing ladder. However, this led to growing inequalities such as racism³. Numerous assumptions have been made that inequities no longer exist in the game, and this can sometimes be due to minority ethnic players, such as Kylian Mbappe and Marcus Rashford, playing and competing at the highest level⁴. However, research demonstrates that players still face racist hostility and other forms of targeted harassment on and off the pitch.

Much of the overt racist abuse within the reigns of football seem to have gradually decreased since the 1970s, yet more covert forms still seem to be prominent⁵. Many anti-racism campaigns have attempted to tackle the issue by being a catalyst for social change⁶. However, whilst raising awareness may be influential, the elimination of this form of prejudice is not following in the same manner. With this taken into consideration, this study will provide an examination into racism in football, by exploring perceptions of how effective the processes are that have been implemented to eliminate racist incidents. Furthermore, this study will use newly collected data from BAME Football Forums' questionnaire, to help delve further and provide vital insights.

Presently, many people perceive society to be at a post-racial stage⁷. Sport is considered to be meritocratic, eliminating the outside concerns that society has with inequality against individuals. Achievement of athletes is an example of the idea that society is past the discrimination and prejudice

of individuals. Arguably, racism is no longer as much of a significant problem in the reduction of success as it once was⁸. A study in 2019⁹ provides a large degree of validity as it also discusses strategies for resisting racial injustice but notes that it is not easy to overcome these challenges. Therefore, this provides insight into the notion that racism is a complex issue within sport.

It is apparent that racism continues to impact the best, and most talented, sportsmen and women, such as the ability to be able to access the highest managerial positions. In 2018, the Independent wrote an article that asked football to face up to an indisputable truth: black managers do not get the same chances as white managers¹⁰. Therefore, White individuals are seen to be in a superior position overseeing Black individuals. Nevertheless, it may be problematic to assume that race is the only contributing factor here. To determine that Black individuals are not in managerial positions purely because of their skin colour may be simplistic, and more qualitative research into this issue is required. Other factors, such as age, gender, qualifications and experience may need to be considered.

A recent report¹¹ analyzed 2,073 statements from commentators in 80 soccer matches from the 2019/20 season. The report questioned if there is a difference in the way the soccer media talks about players of different skin colour. The findings show bias from commentators who praised players with lighter skin tone as more intelligent, as being of higher quality, and harder working than players with darker skin tone. Players with darker skin tone were significantly more likely to be reduced to their physical characteristics or athletic abilities -- namely pace and power -- than players with lighter skin tone players were.

¹ Kick It Out Annual Report 2021

² Buraimo et al., 2006

³ Garland and Rowe, 2001

⁴ Bradbury, 2013

⁵ Dixon et al., 2016

⁶ Garland and Rowe, 1999

⁷ Dawson et al., 2009

⁸ Love et al., 2019

⁹ Love et al.'s (2019)

¹⁰ Independent article 2018

¹¹ RunRepeat 2019



NUMEROUS ASSUMPTIONS HAVE BEEN MADE THAT INEQUITIES NO LONGER EXIST IN THE GAME...HOWEVER, RESEARCH DEMONSTRATES THAT PLAYERS STILL FACE RACIST HOSTILITY AND OTHER FORMS OF TARGETED HARASSMENT.

METHODS

AIMS

The primary aims of the project were to:

- Capture the views and opinions of people from minoritised ethnic groups and those identified as White on discrimination in football;
- Identify recurring patterns and trends through a lenses of race, experience and age;
- Inform football stakeholders and governing bodies on the perceptions and beliefs of people on discrimination from a local level but not excluding a world platform.

BACKGROUND

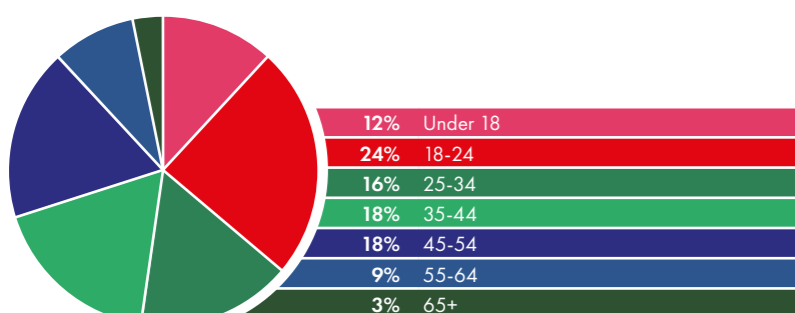
This following section highlights the backgrounds of the participants. These are important statistics to raise as they will aid in demonstrating the potential differing perspectives which may be influenced by demographics. Exactly 50% of the participants within this study were white. This is crucial to note.

Experiences of white individuals may be different to those of minority ethnics. Nevertheless, these perspectives do hold vast value in allowing for comparisons to be drawn across groups. In addition to this, the age of the participants collected across the questionnaire, provides a representative sample of individuals in the local area.

ETHNICITY BREAKDOWN

50%	White English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
1%	White Irish
0%	White Gypsy or Irish Traveler
1%	White and Black Caribbean
1%	White and Black African
3%	White and Asian
26%	Indian
4%	Pakistani
0.5%	Bangladeshi
0%	Chinese
2%	African
4%	Caribbean
0.5%	Arab
7%	Any other ethnic group please describe

AGE BREAKDOWN



METHODOLOGY

The methodology was as follows:

222

Sample: 222 responses



Data collection and analysis
– In depth survey using
Survey Monkey

18-65+

Ages – from under 18 to 65 plus



Timescales – Open survey
between June 2021 to June
2022



Respondents – Open to
anyone with an interest in
local football



SURVEY FINDINGS

1 IN 2

1 IN 2 RESPONDENTS SAID THEY HAD WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION OF A RACIAL KIND IN LOCAL FOOTBALL IN THE LAST 3 YEARS.

1 in 2 respondents said they had witnessed or experienced discrimination of a racial kind in local football in the last 3 years.

Only **6%** of respondents said they had reported a racist incident that happened in local football to the Police, with an overwhelming **94%** saying they had not reported an incident ever.

1 in 10 respondents felt unsafe or very unsafe in the local football context in their area.

When we asked respondents what they thought about the situation regarding discrimination of a racial kind in local football in their area, **21%** said it had got better, just over **a quarter (26%)** said it had got worse and **over half (54%)** said it had stayed the same.

1 in 3 respondents said their club had experienced racial discrimination from the same club more than once in the past 3 years, and **two thirds (68%)** said they had not.

We asked respondents if they had witnessed or experienced discrimination of a racial kind in football, who it was mainly targeted at. **20%** Adults teams above 18 years, **12%** junior teams below 18 years, **35%** Both Adults and juniors and **33%** not witnessed or experienced it.

We asked respondents if there were any initiatives currently in place, locally or nationally, that they thought were working well to break down barriers or reduce discrimination in football. **16%** said yes and **41%** said no. the other **43%** said they do not know.

Three quarter (74%) of respondents were extremely concerned or very concerned that BAME children may face racism in local football in the future. **22%** were moderately concerned or slightly concerned and **4%** were not at all concerned.

We asked respondents that are parents if their child/children had ever faced racism or discrimination in local football. **50%** were parents, of those, **almost a quarter (23%)** of them said that their child/ children had faced discrimination in football.

We asked respondents if they were concerned that BAME mental health may be suffering from witnessing/ experiencing racism or discrimination in local football. **77%** were extremely concerned or concerned. **7%** were slightly concerned and **6%** were not at all concerned. **10%** of respondents were neither.



SURVEY FINDINGS

WE ASKED RESPONDENTS WHICH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING THEY SAW AS A PRIORITY OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS FOR GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL.

THEY WERE ABLE TO CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLIED TO THEM.

77%

said increased sanctions and punishment for racism

50%

said more campaigns to highlight racism experiences

76%

said crackdown on racism in social media

44%

said bans on local clubs who regularly offend

72%

said more Police action on racism incidents

38%

said more BAME staff in County FAs

63%

said more educational programmes for offenders

38%

said recruitment of BAME match officials

52%

said more BAME Board representation

31%

said more funding for BAME club facilities

RESPONDENTS WHO HAD EXPERIENCED RACIAL DISCRIMINATION FROM THE SAME CLUB MORE THAN ONCE IN THE PAST 3 YEARS

Of those that had received discrimination of a racial kind from the same club, a massive **84%** were extremely or very concerned that BAME children may face racism in local football in the future.

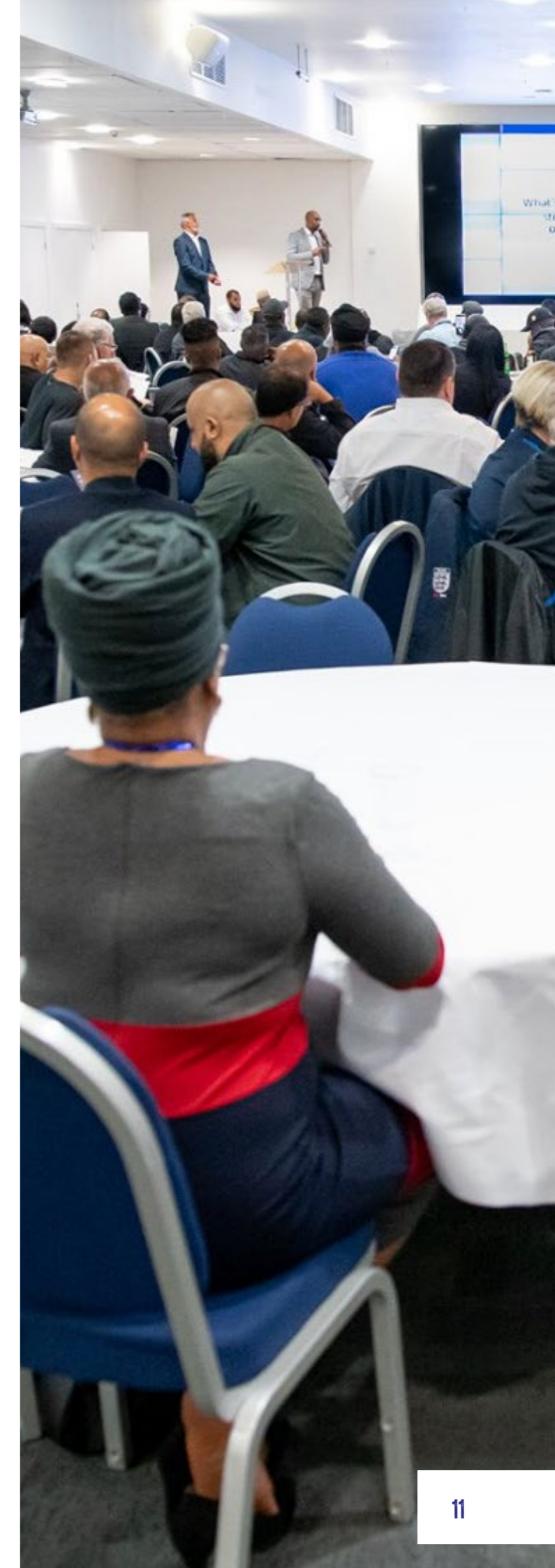
Of those that had received discrimination of a racial kind from the same club, **16%** of respondents said they had reported the event to the Police. As oppose to **6%** of all respondents.

57% of all respondents felt Very safe or Safe in the local football context in their area. As opposed to **39%** of those that had received discrimination of a racial kind from the same club.

Of those that had received discrimination of a racial kind from the same club, only **7%** of respondents felt it was getting better.

OTHER

Of those who said discrimination of a racial kind in local football in their area was getting worse, **83%** had witnessed or experienced discrimination of a racial kind in the last 3 years. **23%** felt unsafe which, is **13%** higher than the overall response.

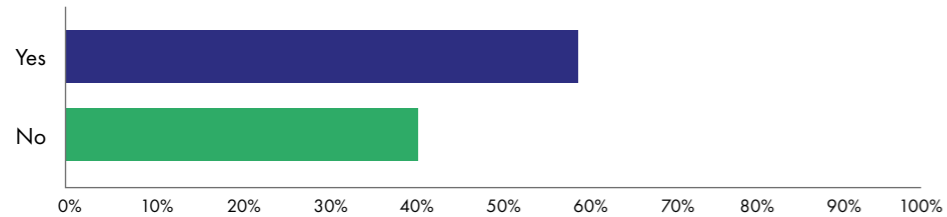


REPORTING RACISM

THIS SECTION WILL CONSIDER HOW MUCH THE RESPONDENTS KNOW ABOUT HOW TO REPORT RACISM IN FOOTBALL AND WHETHER THEY WILL BE WILLING TO DO SO.

This table shows that 59.07% (n = 127) of individuals who have experienced racism in various forms, tend not to report it. Only 6.51% (n = 14) have reported it. Therefore, a staggering 93.49% (n = 201) of individuals tend not to report incidents, thus, this concerning figure needs to be examined.

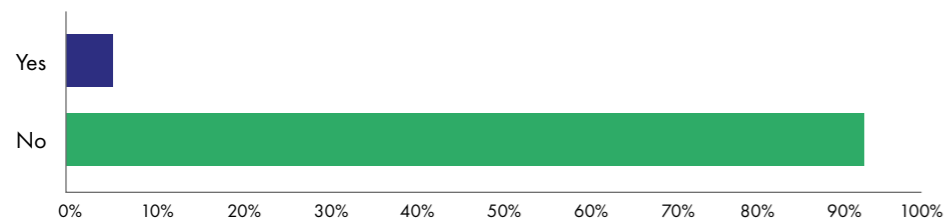
HAVE YOU WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION OF A RACIAL KIND IN LOCAL FOOTBALL IN THE LAST 3 YEARS?



Answer choices	Responses
Yes	59.07% 127
No	40.93% 88
TOTAL	215

Answered: 215 Skipped: 6

HAVE YOU EVER REPORTING A RACIST INCIDENT THAT HAPPENED IN LOCAL FOOTBALL TO THE POLICE?



Answer choices	Responses
Yes	6.48% 14
No	93.52% 202
TOTAL	216

Answered: 216 Skipped: 5



A STAGGERING 93.49% OF INDIVIDUALS TEND NOT TO REPORT INCIDENTS OF RACISM

It is unclear as to whether this is due to a lack of knowledge, lack of willingness to engage or ignorance. It could also be that the participants have not experienced a racist incident at a football game. From previous results, it has been discussed that respondents believe that racism is prominent in football. However, their willingness to report is particularly low. This relates, and supports, Nelson et al.'s (2011) study, whereby they concluded that many individuals are bystanders. Although they may not agree with this behaviour, they do not feel the need to intervene or address it. Additionally, some respondents may feel empathetic but do not take action¹². Unfortunately, from the results above it is unclear as to why individuals may not want to take action. Wanting to fit in¹³, not being impacted by racism, having a lack of trust in authorities to deal with it, or choosing to ignore it are all potential reasons. From the respondent's comments, the most common views were that:

1. Reporting would not be taken seriously
2. There is a lack of faith in authorities to sanction alleged perpetrator
3. There is still an element of not knowing what to do as a bystander

From those that had witnessed or experienced discrimination of a racial kind in football, 10% had reported it to the Police,

which is 4% higher than all respondents. In addition, Just over half (51%) of those that had witnessed or experienced discrimination of a racial kind had experienced it from the same club, as opposed to 32% of all respondents. This could suggest that the more an individual experiences or witnesses racial discrimination, the more likely they are to report it to the Police.

Although age did not have a significant relationship to reporting racism, 81% of those under the age of 18 said that discrimination of a racial kind in local football has stayed the same. This is 28% higher than those above 18 years of age. 19% said it had got worse as opposed to 31% of those above the age of 18.

Nevertheless, ethnicity was statistically significant with previously reporting racism. Overall, this signifies that individuals from a different ethnic background have reacted differently when experiencing racism, and ultimately reported it.

¹² Neto et al., 2013

¹³ Ellemers et al., 2000

PERCEPTION OF STAKEHOLDER PERFORMANCE

WE ASKED RESPONDENTS WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS THEY AGREED OR DISAGREED WITH.

Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.1.1 Over the last two years, my local County FA has worked hard on tackling BAME issues	3%	24%	41%	18%	14%
1.1.2 Over the last two years, the English football authorities have worked hard on tackling BAME issues	8%	39%	22%	17%	14%
1.1.3 Over the last two years, UEFA have worked hard on tackling BAME issues	2%	16%	30%	32%	20%
1.1.4 Over the last two years, FIFA have worked hard on tackling BAME issues	2%	16%	32%	31%	19%
1.1.5 Taking the Knee has been an effective way of highlighting racism in football	25%	41%	19%	7%	8%
1.1.6 The experience of racism in local football is being highlighted more effectively today	12%	46%	23%	14%	5%
1.1.7 I am clear how my local County FA deals with disciplinary issues involving race	3%	11%	28%	37%	21%
1.1.8 I feel more confident now around racism issues in the local game than I did two years ago	2%	23%	39%	22%	14%
1.1.9 My local County FA is working hard to promote Football among BAME women	2%	13%	46%	27%	12%
1.1.10 My local County FA is working hard to recruit more BAME match officials	2%	12%	46%	28%	12%
1.1.11 My local County FA is working hard to train more BAME coaches	2%	17%	47%	24%	10%
1.1.12 When I look at my County FA today, I feel more confident it represents me and my community	3%	24%	40%	18%	15%

- 1.1.1 This signifies that on the whole, the alarmingly low percentage of strongly agree responses suggests that the County FA's are not working hard enough to tackle BAME issues. Over 40% of respondents selected neither agree or disagree option, highlighting they may not have enough knowledge to have selected an option less on the fence. This is problematic, even if the local county FA's were tackling issues, the awareness and publicity to the general public is not widespread.
- 1.1.2 Approximately 48% of respondents believe that the footballing authorities have worked hard on tackling BAME issues. This may be due to the publicity generated by schemes such as Black Lives Matter and Say no to Racism. Before the start of every Premier League match, every player takes the knee to signify solidarity and opposition to discrimination. Therefore this may be the reasoning behind many participants' views.
- 1.1.3 The perception of UEFA overall is largely negative. Due to the scandals with corruption their name has been tarnished. Over 50% of the respondents either disagree or strongly disagree that UEFA has worked hard on tackling BAME issues. Only 2% of respondents strongly agree they have done a good job, and this therefore signifies that across Europe a lot more work needs to be done.
- 1.1.4 Similarly to UEFA, FIFA has a negative label for many. 50% of participants disagree or strongly disagree that FIFA have worked hard on tackling BAME issues. This therefore highlights that the English authorities to many, have attempted to eliminate racism, but significant efforts need to be administered across the rest of the world.
- 1.1.5 Over 65% of individuals deem the taking of the knee to have been an effective way of highlighting racism in football. This therefore signifies that initiatives like this do raise awareness across the globe, but especially in England. The 7% of individuals who strongly disagree are likely to interpret the taking of the knee as not really changing anything, or likely to have seen the effectiveness diminish as it has almost become routine and lost its meaning. Therefore, a fresh new initiative may be beneficial to keep the message fresh and to continue in the fight to tackle racism.
- 1.1.6 Approximately 58% of individuals strongly agree or agree that racism in football is being highlighted more effectively today. This is likely due to the recent campaigns such as Black Lives Matter and the taking of the knee. This has received a lot of online traction and attention, and therefore from the results of this survey it can be suggested that, although racism is not directly tackled by these campaigns, a lot of awareness is revealed.
- 1.1.7 Only 14% of respondents strongly agree or agree that they know how their local county FA responds to racist incidents. This is an incredibly low figure revealing that the practices undertaken by the authorities are not well known or as discussed earlier, ineffective. As a result of this, many individuals tend not to have faith and therefore let incidents slide. This is not the way in which racism should be dealt with, if the authorities are not doing their jobs correctly, racism is never going to be tackled effectively.
- 1.1.8 Three quarter (75%) of respondents neither agree or disagree or disagree that they feel more confident regarding racist issues in the game than what they did two years ago. Of this 75%, approximately 39% neither agree or disagree, this signifies those respondents felt the need to sit on the fence, and although this may not reveal much to many, it does tell a story. It reveals that many individuals believe that authorities especially in England are trying to tackle racist issues, however, the effectiveness is still really low. Much more needs to be done to raise awareness and systematically eliminate racism at all levels.
- 1.1.9 Approximately 85% of respondents neither agree or disagree or disagree that the local county FAs are working hard to promote BAME women in football. This figure is staggeringly high. This may be because the women's game does not receive much traction or support in the media or in general and therefore, much of the public have no real idea of the ins and outs of the women's game. BAME women, are a particularly marginalised group within the sport and therefore much more needs to be done at grass roots level to encourage them to get involved. More BAME board representation at a local level is crucial for this development.
- 1.1.10 Less than 15% of individuals strongly agree or agree that the local FAs are working hard to recruit more BAME match officials. Although many of the respondents may not actually know the ethnicity breakdown of officials at all levels, officiating at the highest level, and within the media, are all of white ethnicity, This is hugely problematic, to combat racism, diversity at all levels needs to be implemented. Seeing minority officials at the highest levels of the game will provide encouragement to those who want to become involved and also breaking down the racist stigma associated with BAME officials.
- 1.1.11 Similar to 1.1.10, less than 20% of respondents strongly agree or agree that local county FAs are working hard to train BAME coaches. This may be similar to the aforementioned point regarding BAME officials in the media and on TV, but this is hugely problematic. Patrick Vieira became only the 10th BAME manager ever to have managed in the Premier League since 1992. If BAME individuals feel susceptible to abuse and discrimination at all levels it is unlikely that they will want to coach. As previously mentioned more BAME board representation is crucial.
- 1.1.12 A large spread of responses for the question 'when I look at my county FA today, I feel more confident it represents me and my community'. 40% of respondents neither agree or disagree and this reveals that many of the participants were unsure. Alarmingly only 3% of respondents strongly agree, this therefore reveals that, with the ever-growing diversity across the country, the representation of this diversity is not correlating with Local County FAs.

WITNESSING OR EXPERIENCING DISCRIMINATION



ONE RESPONDENT TOLD US THAT THE PARENTS OF THE OPPOSITION TEAM REFERRED TO THEIR TEAM AND PARENTS AS “YOUR SORT OF PEOPLE”.

OVER HALF OF RESPONDENTS (59%) TOLD US THAT THEY HAD WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION OF A RACIAL KIND IN LOCAL FOOTBALL IN THE LAST 3 YEARS.

Of those, just over half (51%) had experienced it from the same club, as opposed to 32% of all respondents. This tells us that the majority of people who witness or experience discrimination, are not isolated experiences and that there are definite areas where discrimination will be more consistent.

Respondents spoke about racial bias in the game due to the colour of their skin, as well as racial slurs about race and religion. One respondent told us that the parents of the opposition team referred to their team and parents as “your sort of people”.

We know from our findings that **a third (35%) of respondents who had witnessed or experienced discrimination of a racial kind said racism in football felt it getting worse**, (as opposed to 26% of all respondents). And that 10% of those that had witnessed or experienced discrimination, had reported it to the Police. Which is 4% higher than all respondents and tells us that there is a clear audience for hate crime officers to engage with in order to report more hate crime in football.

78% of those who had witnessed or experienced racism in football said that they are concerned or extremely concerned that BAME mental health may be suffering from witnessing/ experiencing racism or discrimination in local football.

According to the charity - Mind, who provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem of some kind each year in England, with 1 in 6 people experiencing a common mental health problem like anxiety and depression in any given week. With the likelihood that those who are ethnically diverse having a greater risk of witnessing or experiencing discrimination; makes the issue of mental health even more worrying.

“Experiencing this could literally shatter someone’s dreams of making it to the top level... as could prevent a BAME individual from being brave enough to block out racism”

“I was called many racist remarks from opposition players even though I am a parent coach.”

“I was verbally abused by another player who used a racial slur right in front of a referee. When I asked the referee to stop the game and investigate I was told to “get on with the game and stop moaning”

“Witnessed many forms of racial discrimination at premier league, championship, league 1 and none league football. I also participate in 6 a side football weekly, and have been a witness to such discrimination there.”

Other analysis found that:

- Over three quarter of respondents (86%) said they were very concerned or extremely concerned that BAME children may face racism in local football in the future, which is 12% higher than all respondents.
- 52% of those that had witnessed or experienced discrimination of a racial kind are parents, and as parents, 34% said their child/children had faced racism or discrimination in local football.

COMPARISONS OF RACE

YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 18

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION OF MENTAL HEALTH, 81% OF THOSE WHO IDENTIFIED AS ETHNICALLY DIVERSE SAID THAT THEY ARE CONCERNED OR EXTREMELY CONCERNED THAT BAME MENTAL HEALTH MAY BE SUFFERING FROM WITNESSING/ EXPERIENCING RACISM OR DISCRIMINATION IN LOCAL FOOTBALL; COMPARED TO 74% OF THOSE WHO IDENTIFIED AS WHITE.

This is very telling and must be part of a watching brief on this agenda.

80% of those who identified as white agreed that taking the Knee has been an effective way of highlighting racism in football, as appose to 51% for those who are ethnically diverse. Furthermore, when we asked those who had witnessed or experienced discrimination if they agreed that taking the Knee has been an effective way of highlighting racism in football, the figure was 58%. This also relates to the fact that those from minoritised ethnic communities have a lack of faith in the system even when a national campaign has so much coverage.

To further support this claim, overall, 27% agreed that over the last two years, local County FA's have worked hard on tackling BAME issues in football. This dropped by over half to 11% for those from ethnically diverse backgrounds. When asked about English football authorities, 47% agreed that they had worked hard on tackling BAME issues. This dropped dramatically to 24% for those from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Unsurprisingly, 6% of parents that identified as white said their child/children have faced racism or discrimination in football, compared to a massive 41% of those from an ethnically diverse background. It was not identified if parents had dual heritage children.

There is an ongoing social debate that discusses if racism is getting worse or not, and therefore we asked this in our research. Of those who identified as white, 13% said discrimination of a racial kind in local football was getting worse, as appose to a massive 41% of those from an ethnically diverse background. Again, this highlights the different perspectives that race can have on the same question or experience.

"People are becoming more accepting I think, but will never be completely eradicated not just in football but in general life itself".

"It's more apparent with high profile players being targeted, even by their own fans in stadiums. We have had many campaign groups before to work through this agenda but nothing ever actually comes to fruition. Lots of conversation but no actual permanent action on the perpetrators".

"Racism in football is secondary to tackling racism in wider society first".

"IT'S MORE APPARENT WITH HIGH PROFILE PLAYERS BEING TARGETED, EVEN BY THEIR OWN FANS IN STADIUMS...LOTS OF CONVERSATION BUT NO ACTUAL PERMANENT ACTION ON THE PERPETRATORS."

62% OF RESPONDENTS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 SAID THEY HAD WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION OF A RACIAL KIND IN LOCAL FOOTBALL IN THE LAST 3 YEARS.

This is 3% higher than all respondents. This is further compounded by 25% of those under the age of 18 stating that they had experienced racial discrimination from the same club in past 3 years.

The under 18s sample (21 respondents) revealed that all of the individuals have never reported a racist incident to the police. Many of these individuals go on to state that they would not know what to do or believe their case would be undermined because of their age.

The main arena of players under 18 is grassroots football. Therefore we draw the conclusion that 81% of those under the age of 18 said that discrimination of a racial kind in local football has stayed the same, were in main from grassroots football. This is 28% higher than those above 18 years of age. The reason it is important to draw the attention of grassroots football is because there is less regulation and resource than the professional game.

More needs to be done to incorporate ethically diverse youth into the game effectively. The data set reveals that the Under 18 sample group believe that punishment of offenders is the most imperative action required in moving forward in comparison to those who are 18 or above. This may be because increasing BAME board representation for those who are under 18 does not seem like a fast and effective way forward. Those of an older age group may be able to understand better how increasing BAME representation in the game may provide more drastic change. Across most of the questions, much of the patterns in the data seem to follow the same trend. This therefore indicates that age is not a differentiating variable, unlike ethnicity in the data.

Even more so than the adults, 90% of those under 18 were concerned that BAME mental health may be suffering from witnessing/ experiencing racism or discrimination in local football. Compared to 81% from those between the ages of 18 to 24 years. Which is still considerably higher than the overall figure (77%).



WHY PEOPLE DON'T REPORT RACISM

NO, IT'S DIFFICULT TO PROVE RACIAL ABUSE AND IT ALMOST FEELS LIKE IT WILL **NEVER GET TAKEN SERIOUSLY** WHICH STOPS ME FROM REPORTING.

I FIND IT **POINTLESS** REPORTING THESE BECAUSE THE POLICE OR THE LOCAL COUNCIL AUTHORITY DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS NOR WILL THEY DO ANYTHING.

DIDN'T BECAUSE OF PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE, REPORT WAS **IGNORED** OR NOT ACCEPTED.

NO CONFIDENCE IN THE AUTHORITIES.

WOULD NOT KNOW HOW TO, ALSO FEEL AS IF IT WOULD **NOT BE DEALT WITH EFFECTIVELY**.

YES BUT DID NOT HEAR ANY MORE ABOUT IT, SO **NOT CONFIDENT** ANYTHING WAS DONE ABOUT IT.

WOULD NOT KNOW **WHERE TO START**.
THE SYSTEM IS **BROKEN**.



COMMENT FROM THE CENTRE FOR HATE STUDIES AT UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

In the context of hate crime, the victim is being targeted because of who they are, because of the community they are perceived to belong to or because of the way that they live their life. For these reasons, hate crimes are inherently personal and distressing.

Research by the Centre for Hate Studies found that the majority of hate crime victims do not report their experiences to the police or to another relevant organisation. Approximately one in five victims of hate crime report their experiences to the police. Of those victims who had not reported racist abuse to the police, the most frequently occurring explanations were that the police would not take it seriously, that the respondent dealt with it themselves or with the help of others, and that the police could not have done anything in any case. Many participants have described reporting structures as being 'confusing', 'complicated', 'time-consuming', 'daunting', 'stressful', and 'emotionally draining'.

Our research also revealed how the experiences of being verbally abused and harassed had left a mark on the victims. Even years after an incident had taken place, victims spoke of still feeling angry, hurt and affected by their experience. Specifically in relation to racist verbal abuse and harassment, our research found that four in ten victims were left feeling anxious as a result of an incident they had experienced.



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Please visit our website if you would like to read more about our work or access our various reports:

<https://le.ac.uk/hate-studies>

DISCRIMINATION AND RACIST ABUSE

Discrimination is a legal term that is most commonly associated with organisations/ institutions with the power to omit or exclude on the basis of a protected characteristic and is illegal. Racist harassment can sometimes come in the form of hate crime which is also illegal but it might also be something that falls into a grey area that may or may not meet a criminal threshold.



If the victimisation is coming from an individual or a group of players/ fans, it's more likely to be racist harassment rather than discrimination. Discrimination from the club, league, manager, coaching staff or a body with power could still be racist harassment but could also be discrimination.

QUOTATION ANALYSIS

PARTICIPANT A MENTIONED:

“RACISM IN FOOTBALL WILL ALWAYS BE ALIVE UNTIL IT IS EDUCATED INTO CHILDREN THROUGH SCHOOLS, AND THEY ARE ENCOURAGED TO REPORT ANYTHING THAT IS DISCRIMINATORY”.

This shows that some participants believe that children in schools should be exposed to reporting techniques in order to combat racism, suggesting that the potential fault is in education. This quote supports the notion that individuals will not report racist incidents at football until they are fully aware about the process and how to undertake a complaint.

PARTICIPANT B MENTIONED THAT THEY:

“...WOULD CONFRONT THE RACIST PERSON”.

This demonstrates that they would prefer to take the situation into their own hands, rather than officially report it. This therefore goes against the previous findings from Nelson et al. (2011), Neto et al. (2013) and Ellemers et al. (2004) who suggest that football fans are willing to ignore racism to fit in. However, it could highlight that some respondents, once again, do not feel comfortable enough to officially report this behaviour, but likewise, do not feel comfortable sitting back and ignoring it. This is a huge development in the literature, as it demonstrates that more individuals today are willing to at least do something to intervene on most occasions. The trust and confidence in the police to deal with hate crimes, particularly racism, has not been investigated thoroughly in this research. However, it is widely accepted that there is a strain between the relationship between the police and BME communities for many reasons¹⁴.

¹⁴ Myers and Lantz, 2020

PARTICIPANT C MENTIONED:

“I HAVE PLAYED IN MANY LEAGUES WHERE I HAVE BEEN TAUNTED VERBALLY WITH OPPOSING PLAYERS THROWING RACIAL SLURS WHILST YOU’RE PLAYING. I HAVE EVEN NOTICED OPPOSING PLAYERS GO IN HARDER ON PEOPLE FROM ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS WITH THE INTENTION TO HURT THEM, AS WELL AS THIS I HAVE NOTICED ERRORS FROM SOMEONE WHO IS FROM AN ETHNIC BACKGROUND ARE MAGNIFIED COMPARED TO SOMEONE WHO ISN’T”.

This highlights that those from minoritised backgrounds have to deal with situations such as the aforementioned on regular occasions. The issue with incidents like this, is that the lack of faith in the authorities to deal with, or provide a positive outcome, is so low.

Reoccurring themes within these quotations occur many times. Many individuals just do not feel as if their case will be dealt with appropriately, and therefore already have the assumption that they will not bother. This is extremely concerning; the fact there is a preconception before even reporting an incident that it will not be dealt with is hugely problematic, and something the authorities need to do something about as a matter of urgency. The stigma associated with these authorities is one of the major areas whereby improvement can be made. In addition to this, multiple participants mentioned that action would not be taken on anti-white racism. Therefore, the privilege and discrimination within the authorities needs to be abolished as well as within the wider society. If the agencies who are responsible for tackling racism are systematically racist and their underlying views are pro-white, potentially due to recruitment and the makeup of employees, this has to be challenged.



In the questionnaire that was distributed, there was only one positive response to the question, have you ever reported a racist incident that happened in local football to the Police?

“I WAS SUBJECTED TO RACIAL ABUSE BY A PLAYER AND ATTACKED ON A FOOTBALL PITCH. REPORTED IT. THE PLAYER WAS INTERVIEWED BUT HE DENIED THE OFFENCE, AND NOTHING WAS DONE BY THE POLICE. HOWEVER, I DID FIND OUT A FEW MONTHS LATER THAT THE LOCAL COUNTY FA HAD BANNED HIM FOR 2 YEARS FROM ANY LOCAL FOOTBALL IN ANY COMPETITIONS”.

IN CONCLUSION

THERE ARE MANY WORRYING FACTORS THAT WERE CAPTURED BY THIS RESEARCH, WITH ONE OF THE MOST WORRYING BEING THAT OVER HALF OF THOSE WHO ARE UNDER THE AGE OF 18, EXPRESSING THAT THEY HAD WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION OF A RACIAL KIND IN LOCAL FOOTBALL.

With such high percentages of minors experiencing this hate crime, this is definitely an area to be explored through a criminal and enforcement lenses.

Since the Premier League introduced taking the knee before matches, it has sparked major debate with arguments for and against the action. However, it has raised the attention of racism in football. In our research, although respondents from an ethnic background supported the taking of the knee as an effective way of highlighting racism in football; this was still far below those who identified as white, compounding the understanding there is an inherent lack of faith that campaigns will result in positive change.

It is clear from our research that those from ethnically diverse backgrounds not only have a different experience in football, but their perception and faith in various football bodies to work proactively on the agenda of race is far lower than those that are white. More worrying, those from ethnic minorities felt less safe in a football environment and were extremely concerned about the future mental health of ethnic players, ethnic communities and children.

We know through a number of reports that the COVID pandemic had a negative effect on the mental health of adults and young people. We also know that many professional footballers have admitted to having periods where they have struggled with their mental health. This coupled with the findings of this research, sets us on a possible path of upward trajectory of low level mental health cases, such as anxiety and depression.

"My son is unable to finish one season due to discrimination so has to keep changing clubs."

"NOT ENOUGH IS BEING DONE AT GRASSROOTS TO FIGHT RACISM."

RECOMMEN- DATIONS

THE FOLLOW POINTS HAVE BEEN DIRECTED BY THE INSIGHTS OF RESPONDENT'S VIEWS, OPINIONS AND EXPERIENCES.

FEELING SAFE

1. Local Safeguarding boards to address the issue of contextual safeguarding on playing fields, public parks and open spaces, particularly around young people and football.
2. The FA/County FA's (CFA's) to monitor the repeat offender clubs in regards to racism, and apply additional sanctions.
3. The FA/CFA's to work with clubs and the Police to forge accessible and safe reporting practices, including how to report hate crimes.
4. The FA/CFA's to report on the number of alleged and proven cases of racism that are reported each season, including club and location of alleged crime.

WELLBEING

5. The FA/CFA's to work in partnership with specialist providers to develop further training and CPD around mental health and how to deal those who are suffering from poor mental health. From a coach and player perspective.

DISCIPLINE

6. The FA/CFA's to review the burden of proof and the framework around the discipline process to achieve better outcomes for ethnically diverse communities.
7. Further campaigns that celebrate the positive proactive measures being developed to benefit ethnically diverse audiences.

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RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION
IN LOCAL FOOTBALL

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