



Annual Fan Survey 2023

Results summary

levelplayingfield.org.uk

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Annual Survey overview



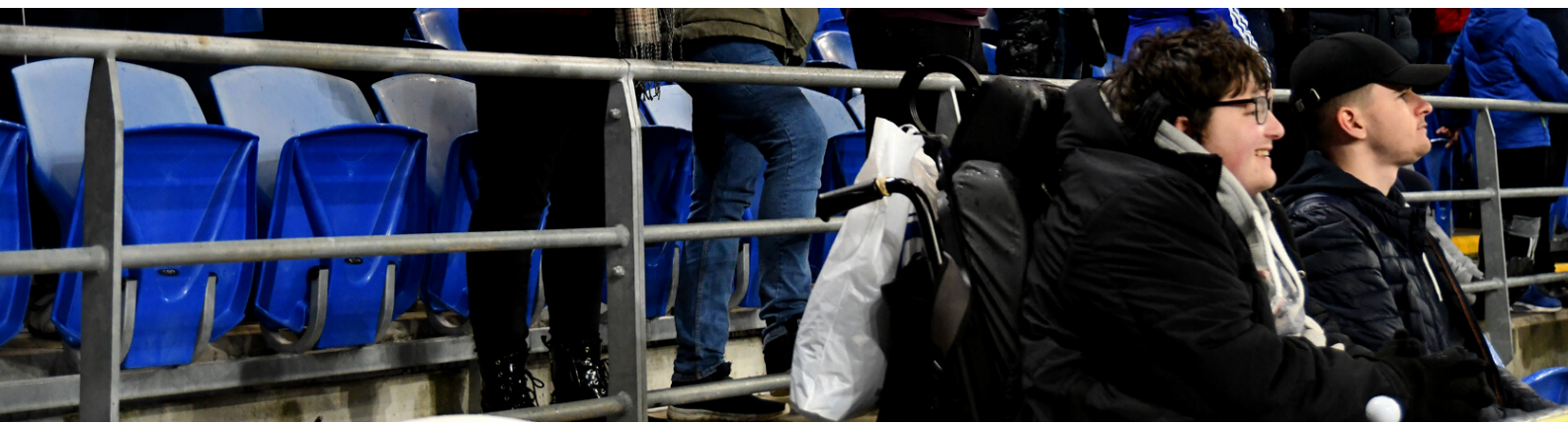
Level Playing Field is a registered charity in England and Wales that exists to improve the experience of disabled fans attending live sporting events. As a campaigning and advisory charity, we work with both fans and organisations across all sports to help drive these improvements.

One of the key ways that we do this, is by engaging with disabled spectators to better understand their experiences and to ask what they require on matchdays. The annual survey helps us to gather this information and is the most significant survey in our calendar. This is the third year we have run the survey, and with almost 1800 responses from disabled sports fans, it is our biggest one to date.

The survey was conducted online and was sent out to disabled supporters through disabled supporters' associations (DSAs), club contacts and also via social media. The survey was live for a month, running from Thursday 25th May through to Friday 30th June 2023. Responses were anonymous unless the respondent chose to give their name.

This report summarises the results of the survey and compares many of these results with the last two years' findings. Throughout this report, the term 'pp' will be used as an abbreviation for percentage points when comparing percentages. For example, an increase from 10% last year to 15% this year would be 'Up 5pp'.

The results of the survey will be used to advise clubs on how best to improve the matchday experience of disabled fans. It will also be used to advise governing bodies, DSAs and non-disabled supporter groups on disability access & inclusion.



Key findings

Travel barriers

The percentage of disabled fans for whom 'inaccessible public transport is a barrier to attending live sport' has increased year-on-year, from 16% to 17.5% to 20%.

This is similar to the year-on-year trend for those who said that being 'unable to travel to stadiums' was a barrier:- 15.5% of fans in 2021, now up to 18% in 2023.



Disability Abuse

Another year-on-year increase is the number of disabled fans who said that 'disability abuse is a barrier when attending live sport' - from 5.5% to 6.5% to 7% this year.

The 'attitudes of others' remains a significant barrier to disabled fans, with 25.5% of respondents saying it was a barrier to them attending.



Additional disability-related costs

We asked respondents if there were any additional costs for them when attending live sport, because of their disability. Over 53% of fans identified additional costs, including equipment, support, and appropriate travel.

For those who did have additional disability-related costs, they averaged £66 for home games and £111 for away matches.



About the respondents

Disabilities represented



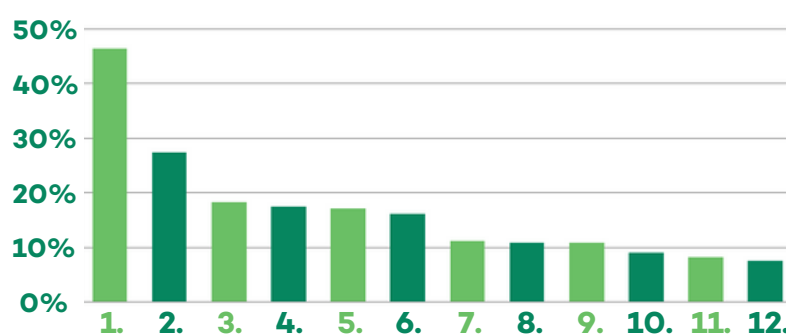
This year, fans were given the opportunity to provide an additional set of responses for a second team that they support, meaning that we received 1791 survey responses from 1651 individual fans, who between them support 115 different clubs. This response rate is up 37% from last year.

1791 survey responses

The first three questions of the survey were about these fans who took the survey - their age, disability and how often they attend live sport. The results to these three questions are shown below and on the next page, with previous year comparisons.

We asked supporters 'What do you consider your disability to be?' and provided them with several disability categories to select from. Respondents were asked to select all categories that applied. This question was optional, but was answered by the large majority. The results are shown below.

Figure 1: Disabilities represented



- 1. Ambulant disability - 46%**
- 2. Wheelchair user - 27%**
- 3. Non-visible disability - 18%**
- 4. Mental health condition - 18%**
- 5. Pain or nerve related - 17%**
- 6. Neurodivergent - 16%**
- 7. Hearing disability - 11%**
- 8. Neurological condition - 11%**
- 9. Fatigue/low immunity - 11%**
- 10. Learning disability - 9%**
- 11. Sight disability - 8%**
- 12. Motor skills/speech related - 8%**

Overall, there are a wide range of disabilities represented by the survey, and many respondents selected multiple categories. As with previous years, the highest represented disability categories were ambulant disabled people (46%) and wheelchair users (27%), however there was actually a small increase from last year in each of the other categories, except for sight disability, which remained the same.

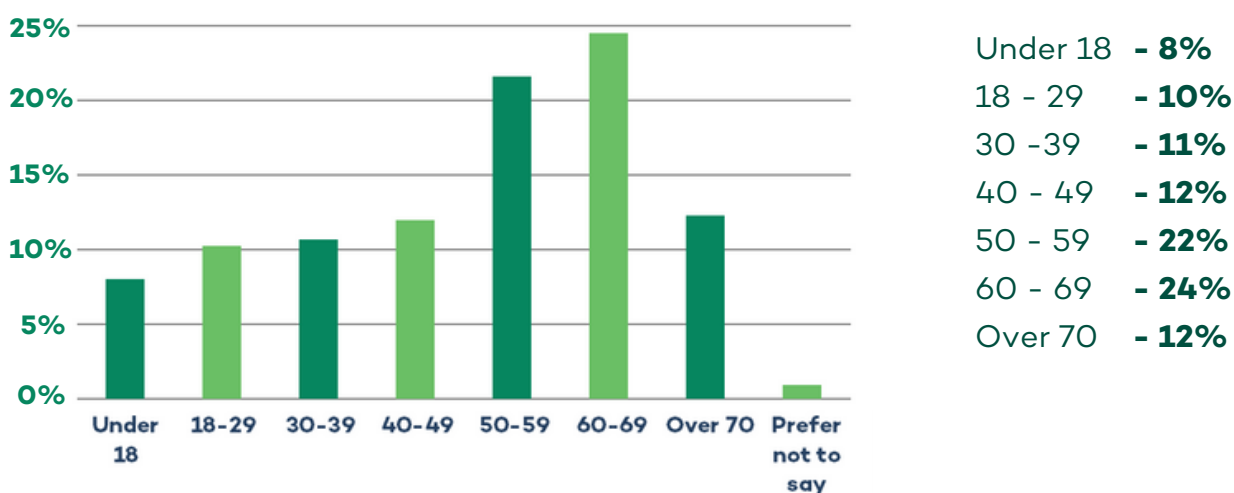
About the respondents

Ages & leagues represented



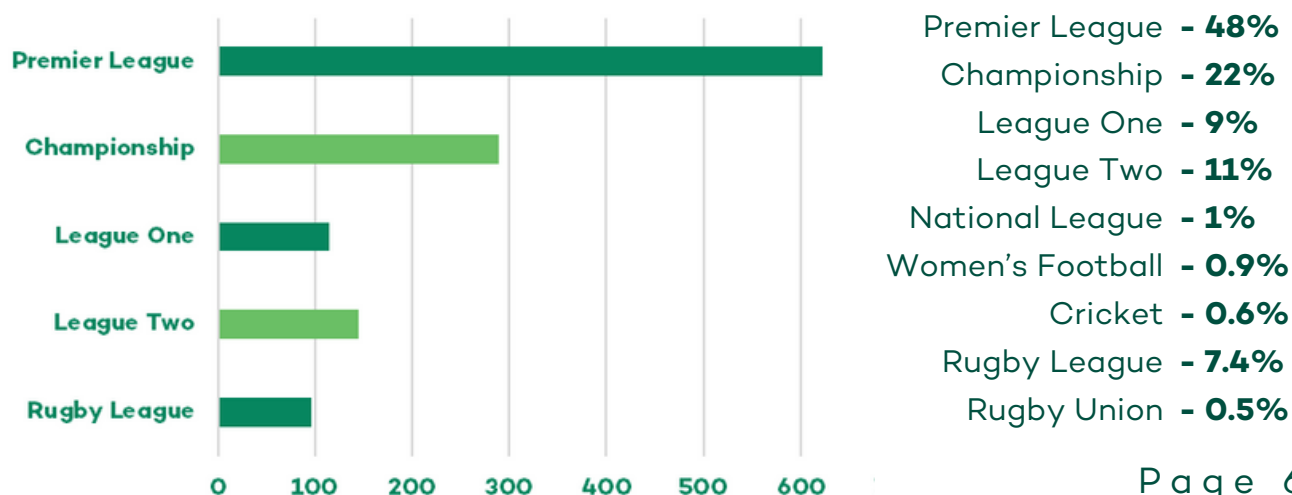
There was a good spread of ages represented in the survey, with over 130 respondents from each age bracket. As with previous years, the highest response rate was from those between the ages of 50-70. People are more likely to become disabled as they get older, hence the peak in those older age ranges. Overall, the results are very similar to those from the previous two years. The full results are shown below.

Figure 2: Ages represented



We asked respondents to identify which team they support. The chart below shows how many respondents there were from different leagues/sports.

Figure 3: Number of survey responses by league/sport



About the respondents

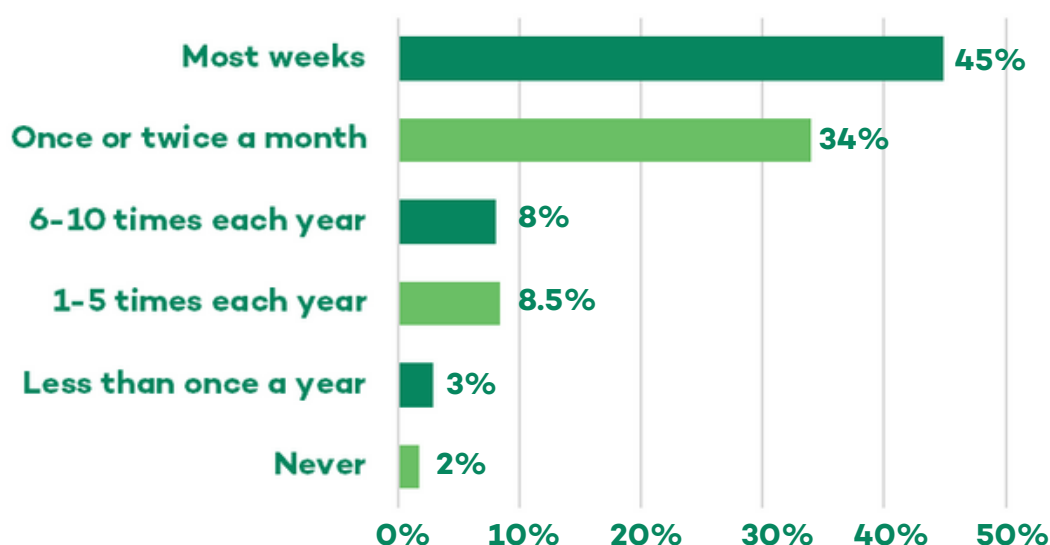
Attendance



The number of responses overall were well up from last year, with significant increases in responses from the Premier League, League Two, and most notably from supporters of Rugby League teams; though there was a notable decrease in cricket responses. For the first time, we also had responses from women's football fans.

We asked respondents how often, on average, they attend live sporting events. The chart below shows the results.

Figure 4: Frequency of attendance



Just under half of the respondents who participated in the survey said that they attended live sport 'most weeks'. This is actually a year-on-year decrease, with 56% attending 'most weeks' in 2021, then 50% in 2022, and now just 45% this year. Most of those respondents now appear to be attending 'Once or twice a month' instead, as there was a notable increase of 8.5pp in this category from last year. It's not evident what the cause of this reduced attendance is, but it could be due to some of the barriers identified on the following pages, including cost.

There was a slight increase from last year in the number of disabled fans who said that they 'never' attend live sport too, but not significantly so.

Barriers to attending

Top 10 barriers



We asked respondents to identify all of the disability-related barriers they face when attending live sport. The ten most-selected barriers are shown below, and comparisons with the 2022 results are shown in brackets:

- 1 Physical access at stadiums – **29.5%** (Down 7pp)
- 2 Attitudes of others – **25.5%** (Down 3pp)
- 3 Difficulty purchasing tickets – **23.5%** (Down 0.5pp)
- 4 Anxiety or lack of confidence – **23%** (Down 3.5pp)
- 5 Inaccessible public transport – **20%** (Up 2.5pp)
- 6 "I don't think stadiums are inclusive for disabled people" – **18.5%** (Up 1.5pp)
- 7 Unable to travel to stadium – **18%** (No change)
- 8 Cost of attending – **17%** (Down 3pp)
- 9 Lack of information – **15.5%** (Down 0.5pp)
- 10 Lack of support from club staff – **11%** (Up 0.5pp)

In last year's results, we saw an increase across the board in the different barriers that disabled people face, compared to 2021. This year, the results are more mixed with some increases and some decreases. The biggest change was the decrease in the number of supporters who identified 'Physical access at stadiums' as a barrier – from 36.5% in 2022 down to 29.5% this year. Though it should be noted that this remained as the biggest barrier overall.

Year-on-year trends - Disability Abuse and Public Transport getting worse.

Whilst many of the results have varied over the three years we have run the survey, there are some trends starting to develop in regards to these barriers. Below are three of the year-on-year trends that are particularly concerning:

- Disability abuse has increased from 4.5% to 6.5% to 7%.
- Public transport inaccessibility has increased from 16% to 17.5% to 20%.
- A lack of support from club staff has increased from 7% to 10% to 11%.

Barriers to attending

Recommendations



It is very possible that these particular trends are contributing factors to the decrease in attendance over the last couple of years, as detailed on page 7. It is certainly very likely that an increase in disability abuse, public transport inaccessibility, and a lack of support from club staff are negatively impacting the matchday experience of disabled fans. So what can clubs do?

Disability abuse

Clubs should ensure there is a clear process for fans to report any disability discrimination they experience on a matchday, and that this process is known to fans. All reports should be taken seriously, investigated, and responded to. Stewards should be given appropriate training to recognise and act on any disability abuse.



Inaccessible public transport

Disabled fans often have different access requirements when travelling to matches. If these are not taken into account by local bus, train and tram services, then it may prevent disabled fans from attending. Find out from your disabled supporters whether local services are suitable. If not, clubs should raise this with their local council and public transport providers to highlight inaccessibility.



Lack of support from club staff

We recommend that all stewards and customer-facing staff receive some level of disability awareness training. It's also very important for clubs to have a named, and contactable, Disability Access/Liaison Officer who can answer any accessibility questions they may have.



Barriers to attending

Fan feedback



Several respondents provided comments about the barriers they face. These include a lack of accessible parking, or the distance from parking to the entrance; lack of information or communication from clubs about the services and facilities; fan behaviour (standing); having to queue or walk for extended periods; and an overall lack of services and facilities.

“

Accessing most venues is difficult as I find it hard to get through turnstiles and not all grounds are sympathetic to ambulant disabled people entering through gates.

”

“

Any event when I don't know where I'm parked due to extremely poor management.

”

“

We often have to be dropped off some way from the away stadium & expected to walk. My walking is slow & painful so I often go the wrong way because I can't keep up with others.

”

“

Older Venues where the access is via grass. My mobility scooter does not like going on grass. It kills the battery.

”

“

Not all Train Stations are accessible for an electric wheelchair user. Some events can be costly.

”

“

Several football stadiums have very poor accessibility and you have to sit with home fans which is not always pleasant - we avoid going to stadiums like this.

”

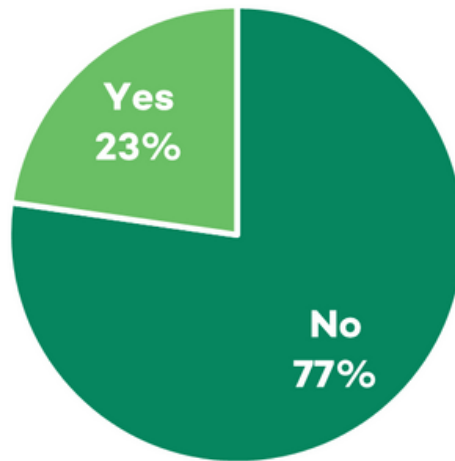
Barriers to attending

Inaccessibility



We asked respondents "Are there any sports or sporting venues that you feel unable to attend because they are inaccessible?" The results are shown below.

Figure 5: Supporters unable to attend a sport or sporting venue



Over the three years that we have run this survey, the results to this question have been 30.5% 'yes' in 2021; then 36.5% 'yes' in 2022; and now 23% 'yes' this year.

This year's result therefore represents a significant decrease of 13.5pp from 2022. It's possible that this drop may be due, in part, to a slight rewording of the question. The question changed from "...unable to attend due to lack of access for disabled spectators?" to simply "...unable to attend because they are inaccessible?"

Irrespective of the decrease from last year, it remains unacceptable that almost a quarter of disabled fans are unable to attend some sports venues and stadiums because of inaccessibility.

Whilst this figure represents the percentage of supporters rather than the percentage of stadiums that are inaccessible, it's clearly unacceptable for ANY sports venue to be considered entirely inaccessible to disabled fans.

Smoke bombs and flares

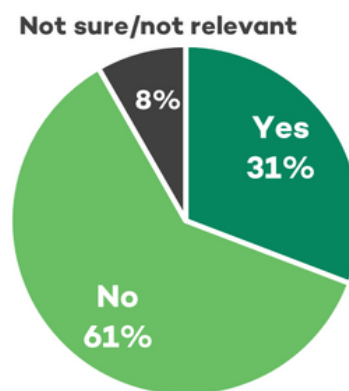
Additional barrier questions



In response to incidents involving disabled supporters over the last 12 months, we decided to include questions about the use of smoke bombs/flares at matches.

We asked respondents "As a disabled fan, have you been impacted by the use of flares, smoke bombs, and other such pyrotechnics (by other fans) when attending live sport?" The results are shown below.

Figure 6: Supporters impacted by smoke bombs when attending live sport



With just under a third of respondents stating that they have been impacted by the use of smoke bombs or flares at live sports events, this represents over 500 disabled supporters from the survey alone.

We also asked fans about the seriousness of that impact for them personally, in relation to their disability. Respondents were asked to rate the severity on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not serious whatsoever' and 10 is 'incredibly serious'.

Those who stated that they were impacted by smoke bombs and flares in the first question, gave an average seriousness rating of 7 out of 10, indicating quite a high level of seriousness. Included within that were 122 individual supporters who rated the severity as 10 out of 10.

Whilst we appreciate that these are banned items in stadiums, it should be noted that their illegal use does disproportionately affect disabled fans.

Cost of attending

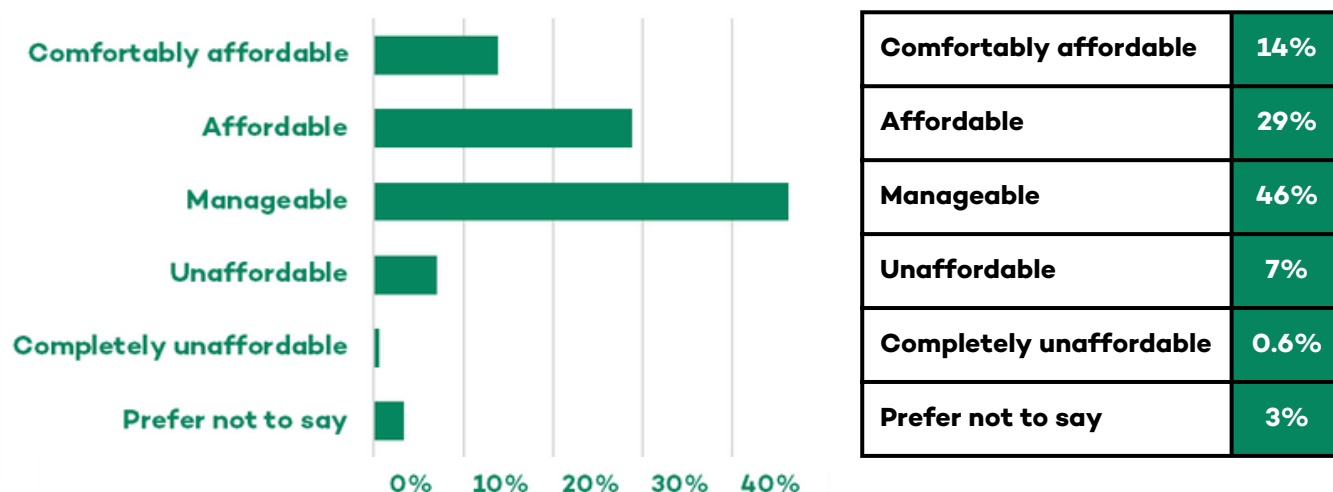
Affordability



One of the issues that disabled supporters often raise with us is the cost of attending live sport. This year, we decided to ask some dedicated questions regarding this, and in particular the additional costs for disabled people to attend.

We asked respondents "Which of these best describes the cost of attending live sport for yourself?" with several options available. The results are shown below.

Figure 7: The affordability of attending live sport



Almost half of respondents stated that the cost of attending live sport was 'manageable' for them, which was clarified as meaning "I can afford to attend some live sport, but not as much as I'd like."

Only around 8% of respondents described attending live sport as 'unaffordable' or 'completely unaffordable'. Given that the annual fan survey is more likely to be taken by disabled fans who regularly attend live sport, the results to this question may not be reflective of all disabled people.

This question ties in with one from earlier in this survey summary (page 8) where 17% of respondents said that the 'cost of attending' was a barrier to attending live sport. This is down slightly from 20% last year and 19.5% in 2021. Hopefully this figure will continue to drop in future years.

Cost of attending

Disability related costs



We know from speaking to disabled fans that there can often be additional disability-related costs incurred when they travel to watch live sport. We wanted to find out what those costs related to, and how much they added up to.

We asked respondents "Are there additional costs for you to attend live sport because of your disability? (tick all that apply)" The results are shown below.

Figure 8: Additional disability-related costs to attend live sport

Accessible travel & parking related costs	36%
Costs for a companion/PA to attend	30%
Food/drink (specific dietary requirements)	10%
Accommodation costs	10%
Medication / disability equipment costs	6%
Other costs	3%
No disability-related additional costs	46%

Only 46% of respondents said that there were no additional disability-related costs for them to attend live sport, meaning that 54% of respondents experience additional costs. These costs are most commonly related to travel/parking and additional costs for a companion/PA to attend.

For disabled fans who require a companion/PA to access live sport, in many cases the cost of the PA's time, travel, food, etc would need to be met by the disabled fan.

We then asked respondents to provide a specific numerical total for the additional costs selected above, for both home and away games. The average costs were:

£66
for home games*

£111
for away games*

*this is in addition to regular matchday costs, including tickets.

Services and facilities

Matchday planning & travel



There are often significant considerations for disabled fans when planning for their matchday and travelling to the venue, as has already been seen. Even before entering the stadium, disabled fans will often have certain access requirements. We asked respondents which of the following services and facilities they might benefit from when planning for and travelling to matches. Below are the results.

- 1 Accessible parking – **65%** (Up 1pp)
- 2 The option to bring a PA – **54%** (Up 1pp)
- 3 Accessible entrances – **48%** (Up 2pp)
- 4 Accessibility information – **41%** (Down 3.5pp)
- 5 Contactable Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) – **40.5%** (Up 2.5pp)
- 6 Accessible transport for away matches – **28.5%** (Up 4.5pp)
- 7 Drop-off and pick-up points – **24%** (Down 1.5pp)
- 8 Visiting the stadium on a non-matchday – **14.5%** (Up 1pp)
- 9 Additional communication support – **5.5%** (Up 1pp)
- None of the above – **5.5%** (Down 3pp)

As with last year, the top three responses were accessible parking, the option to bring a PA and accessible entrance, with a small percentage increase for each. There was a notable drop, as there was last year, in the percentage of respondents who said that 'none of the above' services would benefit them on a matchday.

Once again travel is highlighted as a key issue, with the number of fans saying they would benefit from accessible transport for away matches rising from 24% in 2022 to 28.5% this year. Clubs need to consider how their disabled fanbase can travel to matchdays.

The requirement for accessible parking has increased each year, from 57% in 2021 to 65% this year. It's likely that many clubs won't meet the demand, so it is important that they consider how they can increase their provision and also how they can provide suitable alternatives, like drop off points or accessible 'park & ride' services.



Services and facilities

Stadium services



We asked respondents which of the following 19 services and facilities they might benefit from whilst inside stadiums. The results are shown below.

- 1 Accessible toilets – **57%** (Up 3.5pp)
- 2 Easy access seating – **43.5%** (Up 2.5pp)
- 3 Accessibility stewards – **40%** (Up 1.5pp)
- 4 Additional legroom – **36.5%** (Up 0.5pp)
- 5 Priority use of lifts – **36.5%** (Up 2pp)
- 6 Disability identifiers – **29.5%** (Up 3.5pp)
- 7 A wheelchair user space – **29%** (Down 2pp)
- 8 A seat near to toilets/food – **26%** (Unchanged)
- 9 Easy-access toilet cubicles – **24.5%** (Down 0.5pp)
- 10 Low-level counters – **18%** (Up 0.5pp)
- 11 Quiet room/area – **14%** (Up 1pp)
- 12 Changing Places toilet facility – **9.5%** (Unchanged)
- 13 Sensory room – **8%** (Up 1.5%)
- 14 Sensory pack – **7%** (Up 1pp)
- 15 Audio descriptive commentary (ADC) – **6%** (Up 0.5pp)
- 16 Hearing loops – **6%** (Up 2pp)
- 17 Provisions for assistance dogs – **4.5%** (Up 1pp)
- 18 Colour contrast in key areas – **4%** (Up 1pp)
- 19 Additional communication support – **3.5%** (Up 0.5pp)
- None of the above – **5%** (Down 1pp)

Of the 19 different services and facilities that we asked about, there was an increase from last year in the percentage of disabled fans who would benefit from 15 of them. Two of the services remained the same, and two - wheelchair user spaces and easy-access toilet cubicles - were slightly lower than last year. The results show how varied disabled fans' access requirements are on matchdays.

Services and facilities

(continued)



The services and facilities with the biggest percentage increases from last year were accessible toilets and disability identifiers, both of which increased by 3.5 percentage points. The percentage of fans who would benefit from accessible toilets has increased each year, from 45.5% in 2021, to 53.5%, and now 57%. It's likely that this increase is due, in part, to disabled fans who are not wheelchair users being able to make use of these facilities.



There was also an increase in the percentage of respondents who said they would benefit from sensory/quiet rooms and sensory packs. This ties in with the increase in the number of supporters who stated they were neurodivergent (page 5), and the growing acceptance and understanding of neurodiversity in society.



There have also been year-on-year increases in the percentage of fans who said they would benefit from accessibility stewards (31.5% to 38.5% to 40%) and having a contactable Disability Liaison Officer (31.5% to 38% to 40.5%), illustrating their value.



Some fans also commented about additional services and facilities they benefit from. Here are some of their comments:

“

Captions for deaf people and space for hearing dogs.

”

“

A circular minibus service would be so helpful.

”

“

Greater range of accessible spaces and an ability to book them easily online.

”

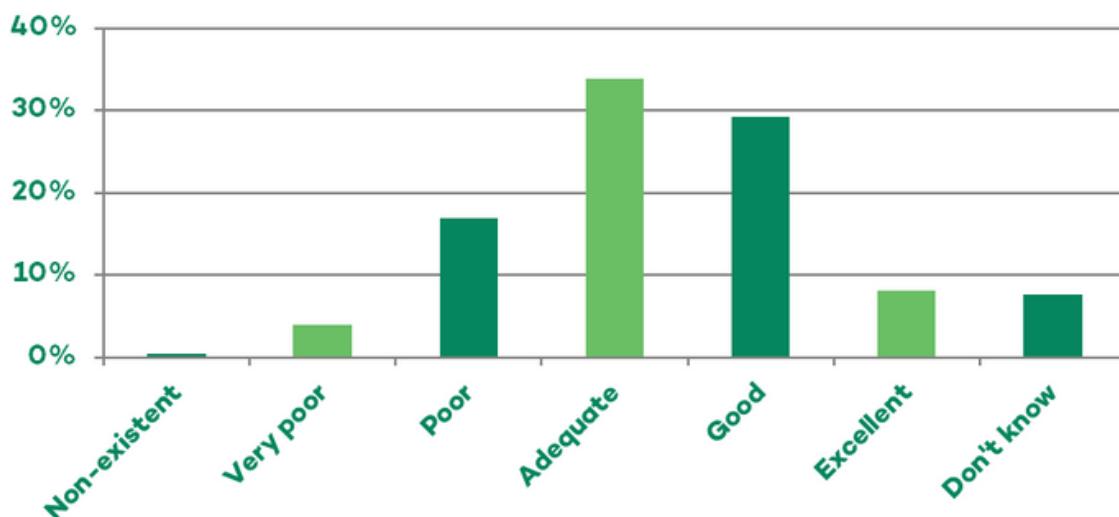
Club ratings

Nationwide accessibility



We asked respondents "Overall, how would you rate sports stadiums / clubs in England and Wales on access and inclusion?" The chart below shows the results.

Figure 9: Accessibility ratings for stadiums in England and Wales



- Non-existent – **0.5%** (Unchanged)
- Very poor – **4%** (Down 0.5pp)
- Poor – **17%** (Down 1.5pp)
- Adequate – **34%** (Up 0.5pp)
- Good – **29%** (Unchanged)
- Excellent – **8%** (Unchanged)
- Don't know – **7.5%** (Up 2pp)

Overall, fans gave an average rating of between 'Adequate' and 'Good', which is the same as the previous two years.

Encouragingly, there was a slight decrease in the number of supporters who rated accessibility as 'poor' or 'very poor', with a slight increase in those rating it 'adequate'. The biggest change from last year is the increase in supporters who selected 'Don't know/prefer not to say'. It's not immediately obvious what the reason for this is, but it may be linked to the reduced frequency of attendance highlighted on page 7.

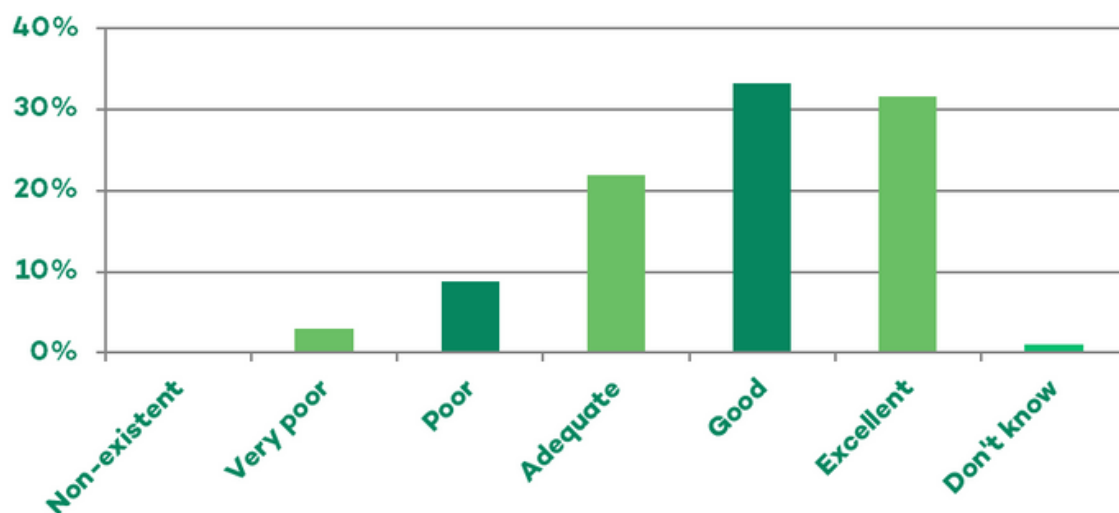
Club ratings

Club's accessibility



We asked respondents "Overall, how would you rate your club/stadium on its access and inclusion for disabled fans?" The chart below shows the results.

Figure 10: Accessibility ratings for the respondent's own club



- Non-existent – **0.2%** (Down 0.3pp)
- Very poor – **3%** (Down 0.5pp)
- Poor – **9%** (Down 2pp)
- Adequate – **22%** (Down 1.5pp)
- Good – **33.5%** (Up 1pp)
- Excellent – **31.5%** (Up 4pp)
- Don't know – **1%** (Down 1.5pp)

As in previous years, fans tended to rate their own club more highly than stadiums generally, giving an average rating of between 'Good' and 'Excellent'. We know, from previous research, that disabled fans typically have a worse experience as an away supporter, which goes some way to explain this.

Compared to last year these ratings have improved, with fewer fans giving a rating of 'Non-existent', 'Very Poor', 'Poor' and 'Adequate', and more fans giving a rating of 'Good' and 'Excellent'. However, it should be noted that these results are more similar to the 2021 results, so these improvements are not a trend.

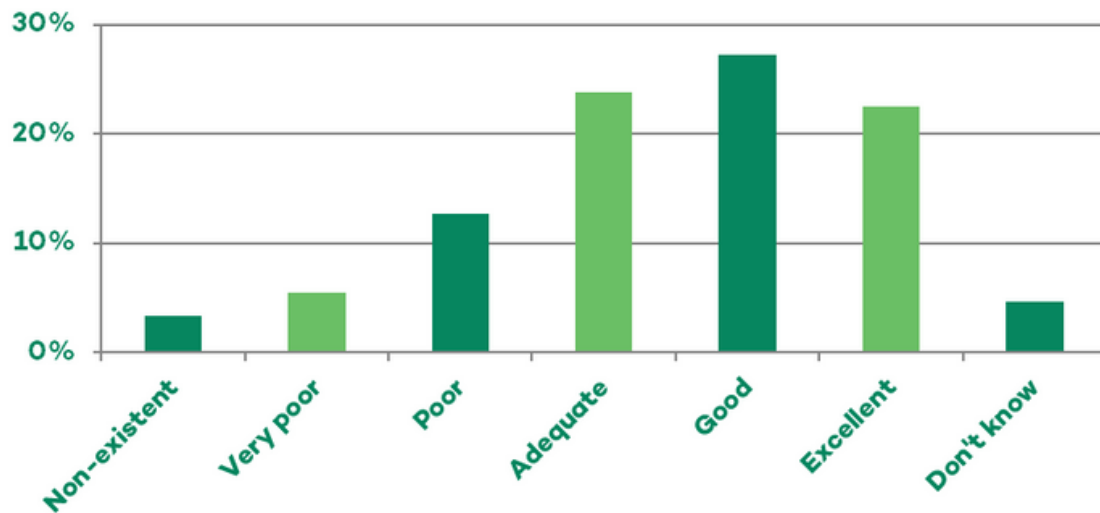
Club ratings

Club communication



We asked respondents "Overall, how would you rate your club on its communication to disabled fans?" The chart below shows the results.

Figure 11: Communication ratings for the respondent's own club



- Non-existent – **3.5%** (Up 1pp)
- Very poor – **5.5%** (Up 1pp)
- Poor – **12.5%** (Unchanged)
- Adequate – **24%** (Up 1pp)
- Good – **27%** (Up 0.5pp)
- Excellent – **22.5%** (Up 1pp)
- Don't know – **4.5%** (Down 5pp)

As with previous years, the rating that fans gave for their clubs' communication was lower than the rating they gave for its access and inclusion for disabled fans.

As with previous years, the rating that fans gave for their clubs' communication was lower than the rating they gave for its access and inclusion for disabled fans. The most notable change this year was the decrease in the number of fans who selected 'Don't know/prefer not to say', down from 9.5% to 4.5%. Presumably this means that more disabled fans are receiving some forms of communication from their club or that more fans have confidence to rate their club comms.

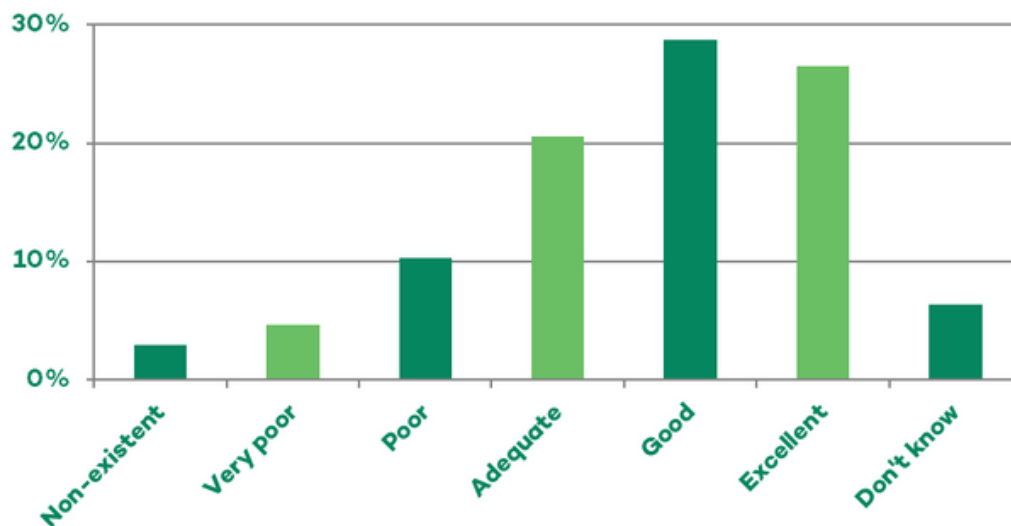
Club ratings

Club's stewarding



For the first time this year, we also asked fans to provide a rating for their club's stewards. We asked respondents "Overall, how would you rate your club on its stewards' interactions with disabled fans?" The chart below shows the results.

Figure 12: Stewarding interaction ratings for the respondent's own club



- Non-existent – **3%**
- Very poor – **4.5%**
- Poor – **10.5%**
- Adequate – **20.5%**
- Good – **28.5%**
- Excellent – **26.5%**
- Don't know – **6.5%**

The ratings given for stewards' interactions with disabled fans are similar to those for access and inclusion for disabled fans, on page 19, but with a few more responses saying 'don't know' or 'non-existent'.

Overall these results are quite encouraging, with 55% of respondents rating their club's stewards' interactions with disabled fans as either 'good' or 'excellent'. That said, it is still concerning that over 1-in-6 disabled fans gave a rating below adequate, including 3% of fans who gave a rating of 'non-existent'. It is important that stewards have the confidence and training to interact with and support disabled fans on matchdays.

Fan comments



Throughout the survey, fans were given the opportunity to provide additional comments, to give greater insight into their experience as a disabled supporter. Below are some of the responses we picked out.

“ I struggle financially as I can't work. The club charge blue badge holders for parking and eventually I will have to stop going - just can't afford it. I only wish I could park elsewhere and walk. ”

“ Lack of education and understanding from stewards. Not knowing accessible routes, and standing in front of wheelchair users. ”

“ I may want to take medication while I'm at the ground and find that difficult if I'm not allowed to bring in a bag. ”

“ Every week, we get challenged on where we access the stadium [the accessible entrance] as my son's disability is not visible. Every week this causes unwanted distress. [We] have also been shouted at numerous times. ”

“ Late fixtures sometimes mean staying over and hotels with accessible rooms are generally much more expensive. ”

“ A lot of clubs seem to be unable to deal with wheelchair users and it seems when we turn up, it's like it's the first time it's ever happened!!! I guess a lot more training and understanding is needed to make a visit more enjoyable, instead of feeling like an annoyance. ”

Fan suggestions



We asked the survey respondents "If you could suggest one improvement to make matchdays more accessible and inclusive for disabled spectators what would it be?" Below are some of the responses we picked out.

“ Use the ability to have subtitles provided for all spoken words at the Stadium. Ideally British Sign Language would be best but text would be a good start. ”

“ Ambulant disabled seating would help - near the entrance / exit and not 57 rows up. ”

“ Accessible toilets at drop off points for supporters coaches. Information about venue layouts such as how many steps to a seat, and are there handrails. ”

“ FAQs, do's and don'ts, simple explanation of stadium rules that aren't buried in small print. ”

“ Match commentary service provided by the club, and brought to the seat by a steward, before the match. ”

“ Make access more visible as I have restricted height I can't always see where accessible areas are due to large crowds. ”

Conclusion



Following the survey, clubs were sent a club-specific report with just their supporters' responses. Clubs who had at least one respondent were sent a report - 118 clubs in total (up 7 from last year). We hope that by sharing the results and comments from this survey, clubs will be better informed and can make the improvements to their services and facilities that will most benefit their disabled fans.

Level Playing Field will continue to support and advise sports organisations and governing bodies around the removal of the barriers we have highlighted. In particular, we would encourage them to consider the following:

- ▶ Be mindful of the significant additional costs that many disabled fans face to attend live sport, and ensure that the club are not adding to this at all.
- ▶ Given that disabled fans are disproportionately affected by the use of smoke bombs, many severely so, this is an issue clubs must take seriously. Also warnings should be given prior to licensed pyrotechnic use by clubs.
- ▶ The requirement for accessible toilets continue to rise. Clubs should ensure they have adequate provision, and understand who may require use of one.
- ▶ Stewards should be given appropriate training around disability, to have confidence interacting with and supporting disabled fans. In particular, they should be confident to recognise and act on any disability abuse.
- ▶ Travelling to matches, particularly by public transport, was highlighted as a growing issue. Find out from your disabled fans whether local services are accessible, and if not, consider what the club can do to mitigate or fix this.
- ▶ Club communications to disabled fans is still an area for improvement.
- ▶ Clubs and service providers should review the individual venue-specific report shared by Level Playing Field, to better understand specific access requirements and suggested improvements of their disabled fanbase.
- ▶ Engage with Level Playing Field for support in enhancing fans' experience.

Chair's review

Tony Taylor



The impressive tally of responses to this year's survey have provided us with a powerful set of informative results. Being able to present a collective voice through data is a useful tool, which will be harnessed to bring about improvements in accessibility and inclusion for disabled fans.

I am thankful to every fan that completed this year's survey, as well as the disabled supporters' associations, clubs, partners and governing bodies that shared the opportunity. In addition to our best sample size to date, the respondents represented a widespread of disabilities, sporting divisions and ages, which is important for a reflective set of results.

Information gathered has already been serving a purpose, with clubs sent individual reports at the earliest opportunity. This has enabled them to see areas specific to them which need to be addressed urgently, and other areas where disabled fans are satisfied that their requirements are being met. When examined alongside their results from previous years, it also allows clubs to measure the effectiveness of action they have taken since our first annual survey in 2021.

A key development in the analysis of this year's results has been our ability to monitor trends across the three years. That has been useful, not only in seeing isolated successes for specific improvements, but also in raising serious concerns around barriers which are impacting an increasing proportion of disabled fans across England and Wales.

Inaccessible public transport and disability abuse have both seen year-on-year increases in the percentage of disabled fans for whom they act as a barrier when attending live sport. These are key areas of work for Level Playing Field to focus on, and the results provide us with unquestionable evidence to utilise in discussions with other stakeholders, in order to bring about meaningful action.

Chair's review

(continued)



On the biggest barriers there were some positives, with the percentages for 'physical access at stadiums' and 'attitudes of others' both having noticeable drops. It is important to reiterate that these remain the top two overall however, and a situation where more than a quarter of disabled fans consider each of those to be barriers is never something to be celebrated.

Sections on pyrotechnics and the cost of attending were included in the survey this year. They have been key discussion points for disabled sports fans in recent years, but without a data set, we were working from individual reports, therefore these findings will be essential for future projects in these areas.

The data collected by each annual fan survey is invaluable. It informs our work and is hugely influential when developing understanding around access and inclusion with external bodies. I hope disabled fans themselves find the results directly useful and invite anyone with queries to get in contact with us for support.

Tony Taylor

Level Playing Field Chair

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