



Level  
Playing  
Field

Annual fan survey 2021

# Summary results



# Contents

<b>03</b>	Survey overview	<b>12</b>	Services and facilities
<b>04</b>	Key findings	<b>18</b>	Supporters' ratings
<b>05</b>	About the supporters	<b>22</b>	Fan's return to live sport
<b>08</b>	Barriers to attending	<b>26</b>	Conclusion

Level Playing Field is a registered charity in England and Wales that works within sport to bring about greater access for disabled supporters. As a campaigning and advisory organisation, we exist to support both fans and organisations across all sports to improve accessibility.

We want to ensure that whenever disabled fans attend live sport, their matchday experience is equivalent to that of any other fan. One of the key ways that we do this is by engaging with disabled spectators. Interaction with fans is vital to our work as we seek to understand what disabled fans want and what their access requirements are. That is the purpose of this survey.

Fans were surveyed on three areas: general questions about the respondent and access requirements; questions about the return of fans to stadiums following the Covid-19 pandemic; and questions about the particular club that the respondent supports. This report summarises their responses.

Due to the widespread impact of the pandemic, fans, for the most part, have been unable to attend live sporting venues since March 2020. Whilst we hope that our fan survey will not be as affected by Covid-19 in future years, it seemed appropriate to include questions about it in this year's survey.

The survey was conducted using SurveyMonkey and was promoted by clubs, Disabled Supporters Associations (DSAs) and on social media. It was live from Thursday 20th May to Sunday 20th June 2021. Respondents had the option to remain anonymous. The results presented in this survey summary are being used to advise and support clubs, leagues, DSAs and sports governing bodies, where possible.

**1408**  
responses

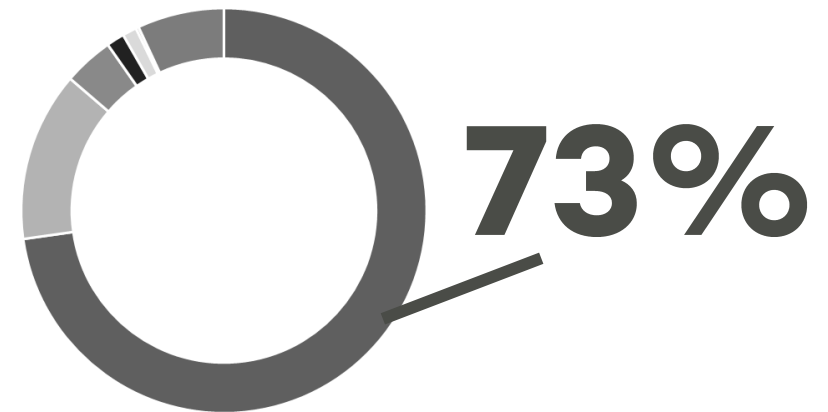
**Thanks to everyone  
who participated**



# Key findings



of respondents said that 'anxiety or lack of confidence' was a barrier when attending live sport.



**Almost a third** of respondents said there were certain sports or sporting venues they felt unable to attend due to lack of accessibility.



Following lengthy restrictions on attending live sport, 73% of the supporters surveyed said they would want to attend a match 'right away' once permitted.



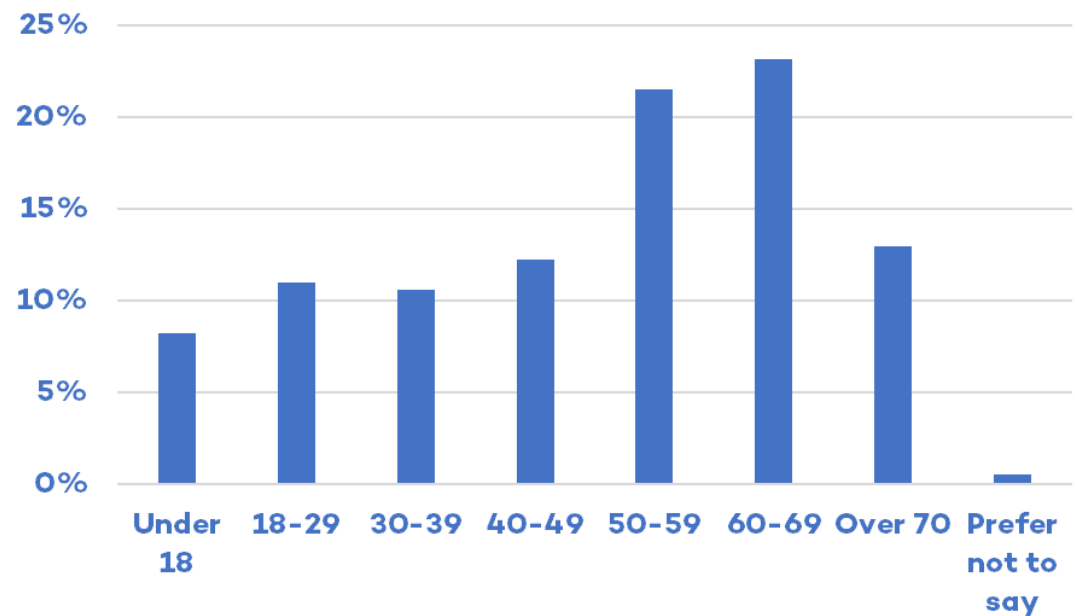


# About the supporters

## Age

There was a good spread of ages represented in the survey, with over 100 respondents from each of the seven different age categories.

See the full results on the right.



**45%**

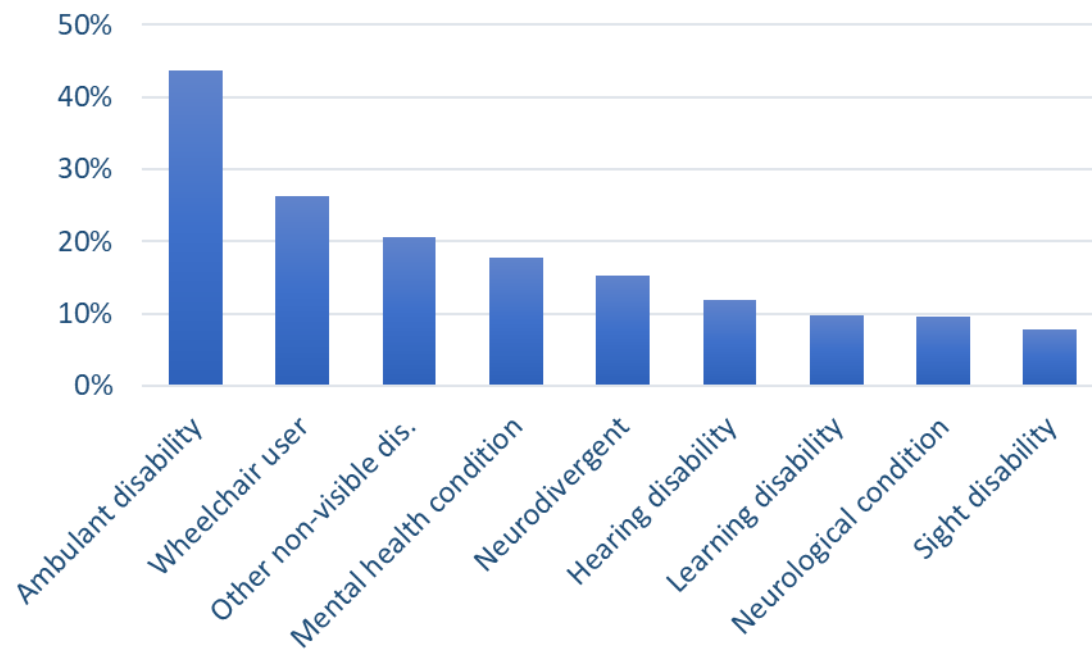
**of respondents  
were aged  
50-69**

This was expected, given that many people become disabled in later life. It has also been suggested that the average age of those who attend live sport regularly is increasing generally.

# About the supporters

## Disability

We gave fans the option to tell us what they consider their disability to be. The very large majority of respondents gave an answer, ticking all that applied to them.



Many respondents selected multiple options, with 44% saying they were ambulant disabled and 26% of fans being wheelchair users.

Overall, we had responses from supporters with a wide range of disabilities, so the survey results represent a true pan-disability perspective.

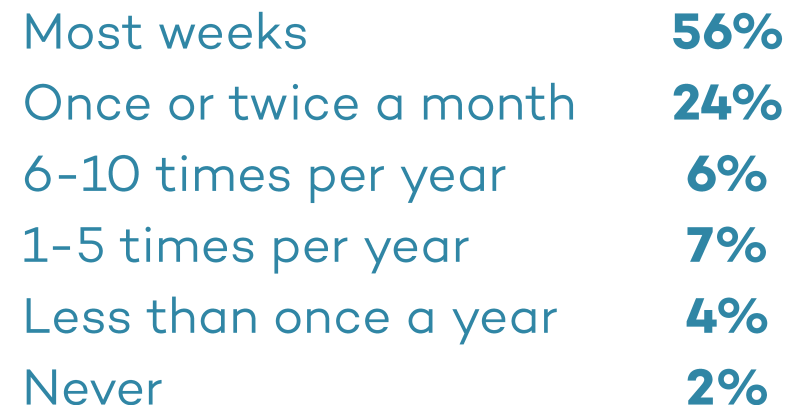
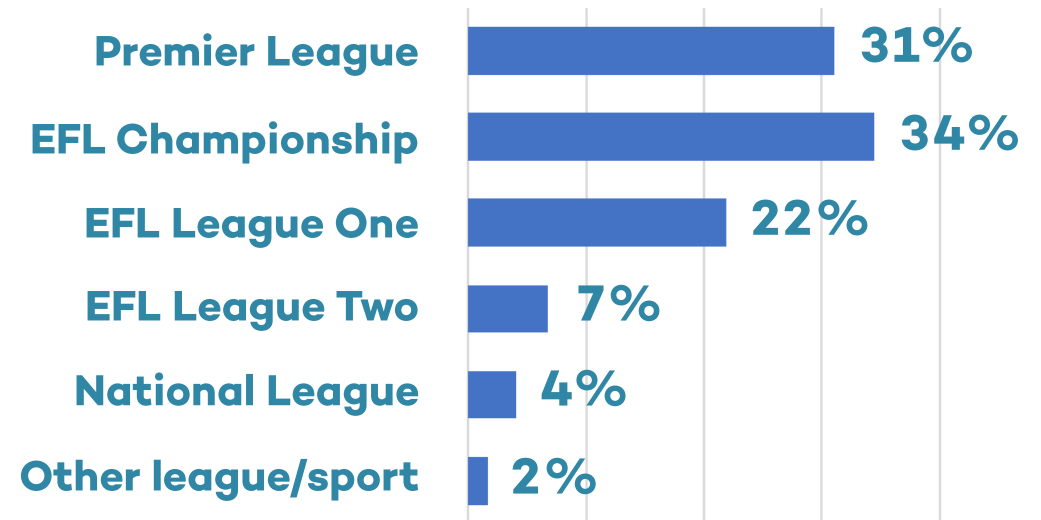


# About the supporters

## Attendance

We asked fans to tell us which club they support, enabling us to provide specific feedback to each club. The league breakdown is on the right.

We also asked fans how often they typically attend live sports events.



**80%**

of the disabled fans surveyed attend live sport 'regularly' (at least monthly)

# Barriers to attending

## Top 10

We asked supporters which of the following, if any, were barriers to them attending live sport. Here are the 10 most selected barriers:

**1**Physical access at stadiums **32%****6**Inaccessible public transport **16%****2**Anxiety or lack of confidence **25%****7**Unable to travel to stadium **16%****3**Cost of attending **19%****8**Attitudes of others **15%****4**Difficulty purchasing tickets **17%****9**Lack of information **11%****5**"I don't think stadiums are inclusive for disabled people" **16%****10**Stadium policies and rules **9%**



# Barriers to attending

## Additional

Several fans also left additional comments about the barriers they face. These include inappropriate seating; unclear announcements; people stood blocking views; lack of services and facilities; and not being seated with family.

### Two fan comments...

“I need my husband to help me and we have a 12 year old son, we cannot get 3 tickets together.. I may be able to get to a seat however everybody stands and I end up not seeing anything as I can't stand. We want to be seated together or we lose our family enjoyment.”

“Bringing my guide dog along can bring it's own problems - not everywhere is able to easily accommodate both of us or provide care for the dog if required.”

# Barriers to attending

## Confidence

With 25% of respondents saying that 'anxiety or lack of confidence' is a barrier, much more needs to be done to give disabled fans greater confidence when attending live sport. This could include...



25%

### **...non-matchday stadium visits**

Inviting fans to visit a stadium before they attend a match can be helpful.

### **...up-to-date club information**

Fans have greater confidence when they can access accurate information.

### **...virtual navigation tools**

Many disabled fans benefit from being able to look around stadiums virtually.

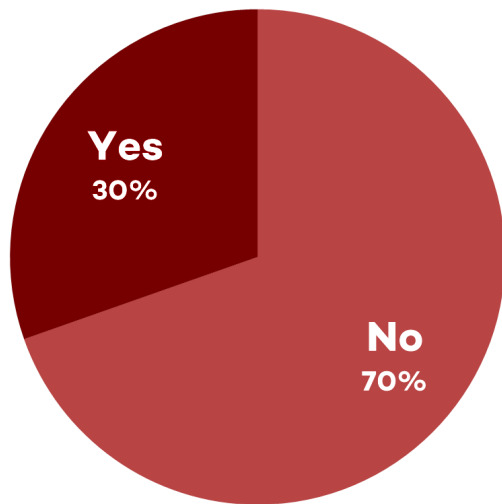
### **...provision of services and facilities**

Fans have greater confidence knowing their access requirements can be met.



# Barriers to attending

## Venues



Just over 30% of respondents told us that there were sports or sporting venues that they **felt unable to attend** due to poor access for disabled supporters.

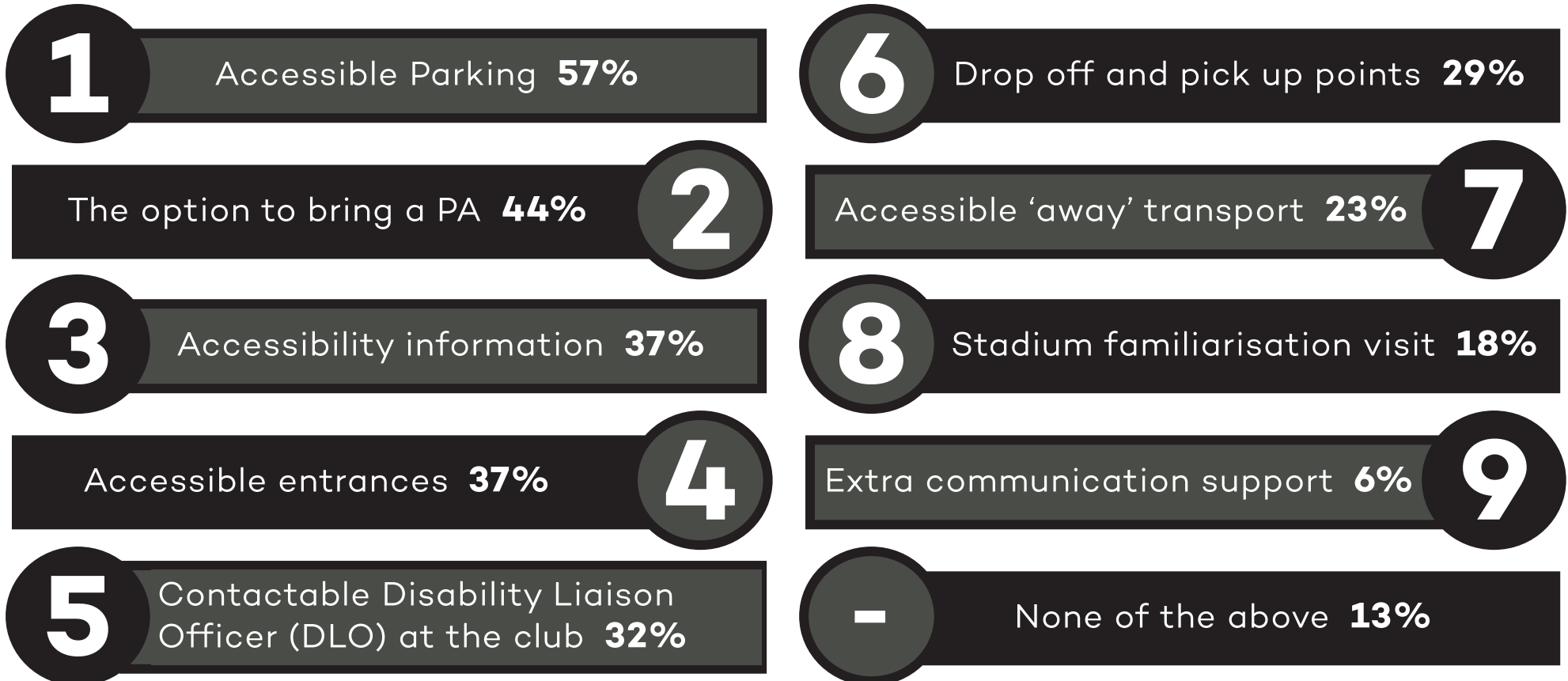
If **almost a third** of disabled sports fans feel excluded from some venues because of poor access, then clearly there is still lots of work that needs to be done across the country to improve accessibility.

There is some encouragement from the fact that 70% of disabled supporters feel able to attend all sports venues, and also that 27% said they *'don't experience any barriers'* when attending live sport. However, this needs to be considered alongside the above statistic and the fact that 16% *'don't think stadiums are inclusive for disabled people'*. This shows the inconsistency of accessibility provisions and the contrasting experiences of disabled supporters.

# Services and facilities

## Planning & getting to matchdays

We asked which of the following nine services and facilities respondents may benefit from when planning and getting to matchdays:



# Services and facilities

## Planning & getting to matchdays



With over half of disabled supporters benefitting from accessible parking, it is likely that many clubs will struggle to meet the demand. This highlights the importance of clubs providing suitable alternatives, like drop off points or accessible 'park & ride' services.

With 37% of respondents saying they benefit from 'accessibility information' and 32% wanting to have a contactable DLO at the club, it is clear that access to information is vital for fans. This information should be clear, relevant, up-to-date and easy to find.



# Services and facilities

## At stadiums

We asked which of the following 19 services and facilities fans may benefit from inside stadiums. Here are the results in order:

**1**Accessible toilets **46%****6**Disability identifiers **26%**Easy access seating **40%****2**A seat near to toilets/food **25%****7****3**Additional legroom **38%****8**A wheelchair user space **25%**Accessibility stewards **32%****4**Easy access toilet cubicles **25%****9****5**Priority use of lifts **28%****10**Low-level counters **15%**

# Services and facilities

## At stadiums

We asked which of the following 19 services and facilities fans may benefit from inside stadiums. (continued from page 14):

11

Quiet room/area 15%

16

Audio descriptive commentary 4%

Changing Places toilet facility 9%

12

Colour contrast in key areas 4%

17

13

Sensory room 7%

18

Provisions for assistance dogs 4%

Sensory pack 5%

14

Extra communication support 3%

19

15

Hearing loops 5%

-

None of the above 11%



# Services and facilities

## At stadiums



Accessible toilets are the facility that would benefit most of the survey respondents (46%). One in four fans would benefit from easy access toilet cubicles, whilst 9% would benefit from a Changing Places facility. That 9% equates to 123 survey respondents!

From the results, it's clear that appropriate seating is one of the things that most benefits disabled fans. Easy access seating and additional legroom were both in the top three services and facilities, whilst one in four respondents benefit from a wheelchair user space.



# Services and facilities

## Additional

Dozens of fans also commented about the additional services and facilities they benefit from. These include accessible ticketing; space for accessibility equipment; medication help; extra handrails; and protection from weather.

### Fan comments...

“Never underestimate the need for good signage and people to ask. I don't want to get lost because I then have to walk further than necessary and get tired.”

“Being able to take in extra bags past security to include all items I need linked to my medical conditions.”

”A room to take insulin - not very hygienic having to use a toilet.”

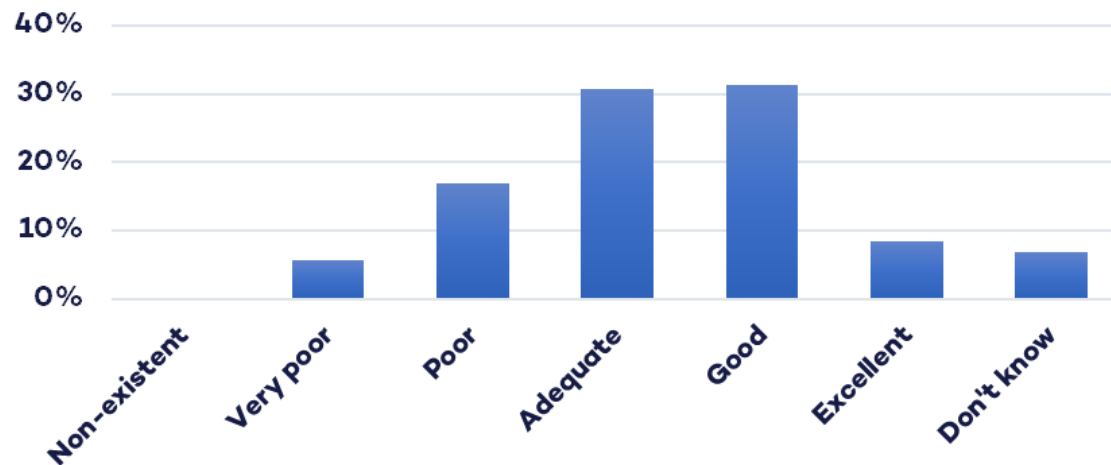
“More handrails need to be provided.”  
“Handrails inside the ground on stairs.”  
“Handrails on terrace stairways.”

# Supporters' ratings

## Nationally

We asked respondents the following question to see how accessible and inclusive stadiums are nationwide.

Overall, how would you rate sports stadiums / clubs in England and Wales on access and inclusion?



Overall, fans gave an average rating between 'Adequate' and 'Good'.

There were twice as many fans who rated access and inclusion across the country as 'Poor' than rated it as 'Excellent'.

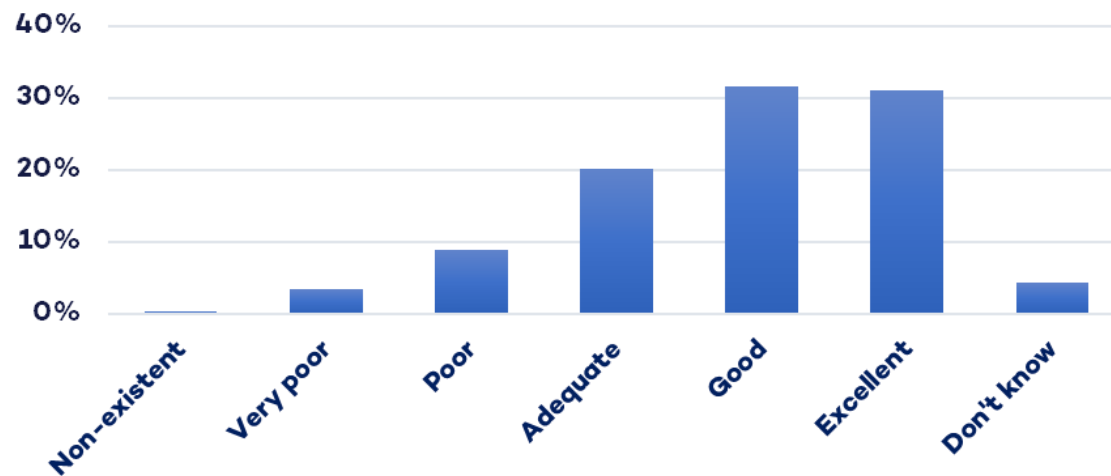
80 respondents (6%) rated it as 'Very poor'.

# Supporters' ratings

## Their club

We asked respondents the same question, but just for the club that they support rather than all clubs nationally.

Overall, how would you rate your club/stadium on its access and inclusion for disabled fans?'



Interestingly, fans tended to rate their own club much higher than they rated stadiums nationally, with significantly more 'Excellent' ratings.

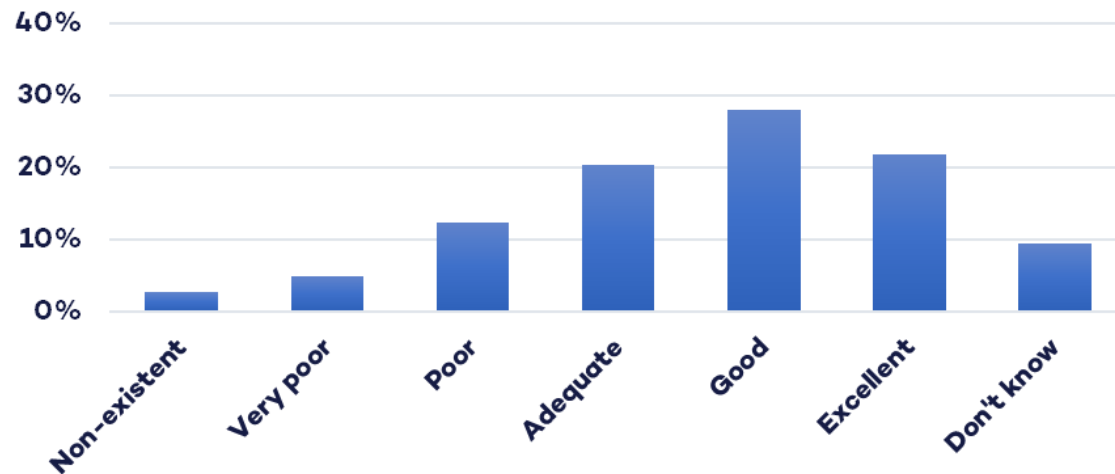
This could be due to supporter bias, it could be that facilities for 'home' fans tend to be better than for 'away' fans, or it could be for other reasons.

# Supporters' ratings

## Communication

We also asked respondents to rate their club on its communication to disabled supporters.

Overall, how would you rate your club on its communication to disabled fans?



Whilst there was an overall rating of 'Good' for club's communication to disabled fans, the ratings given were notably lower than for access and inclusion, and included some ratings of 'Non-existent'.

These results were more mixed on the whole.



# Supporters' ratings

## Analysis



Whilst fans tended to rate their own club reasonably highly, there was a notable drop in the ratings for club communication. Many fans gave a rating of 'Don't know/prefer not to say' too. Clubs really need to ensure they're making communication a priority.

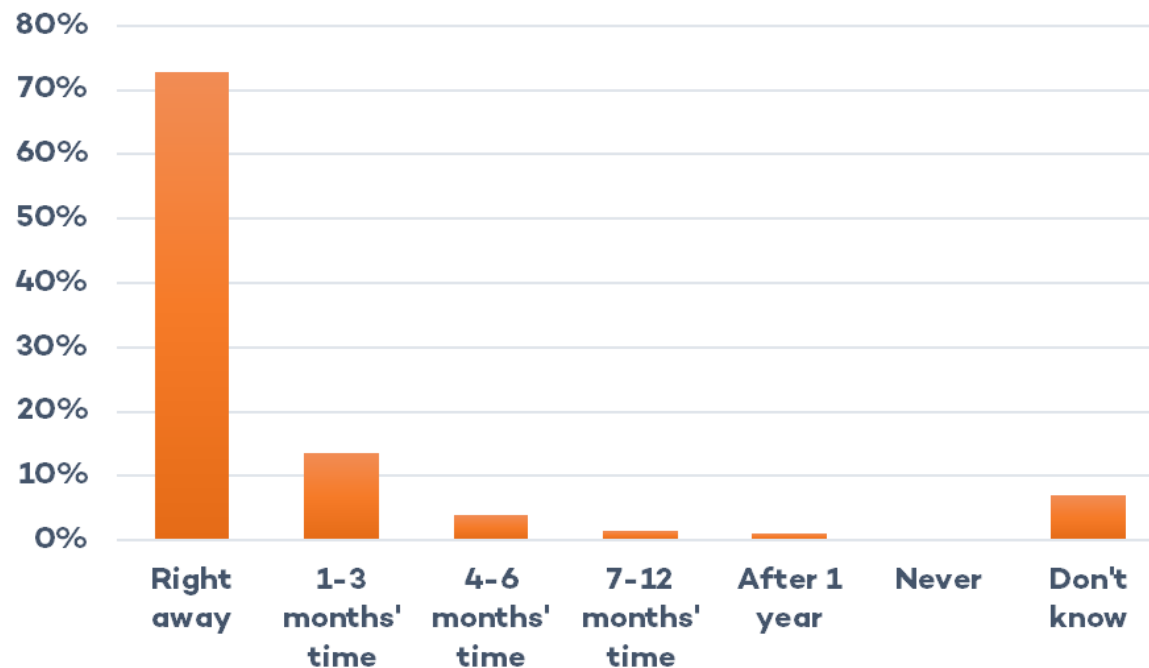
It is not certain why fans rated their own club more highly on access and inclusion than UK stadiums generally. If fans' experience as a 'home' disabled supporter is significantly better than as an 'away' disabled fan, then clubs need to work to redress this.



# Fans' return to live sport

## How soon?

We asked 'When fans are permitted to return to stadiums, how soon would you want to attend a match?' The results are shown below.



A large majority of those who took the survey said they would want to return to live sport 'right away'.

Almost no fans said they would 'Never' return, but around 7% said that they didn't know at this stage how soon they would want to attend a match.

# Fans' return to live sport

## Analysis

Following lengthy restrictions on attending live sport, 73% of the supporters surveyed said they would want to attend a match 'right away' once permitted. This is encouraging that most disabled fans are eager to return.



73%

### Fan choice

It's important for clubs to be understanding during this time. Whilst most disabled fans are keen to return right away, there are still significant numbers (362 respondents) who are not. Many fans are not ready to return, and around 7% don't know when they will be ready. Clubs should not be putting undue pressure on disabled fans to return before they're ready and fans shouldn't be penalised for choosing not to return at this stage.

# Fans' return to live sport

## Covid measures

We asked 'What measures would need to be in place before you'd return to stadiums? Here are the top 10 answers:

**1**Hand sanitising stations **62%****6**Strict social distancing **35%**Hand washing facilities **45%****2**Vaccinated fans only **35%****7****3**Mask wearing (bar exemptions) **43%****8**Track & trace in place **32%**Regular testing of staff **38%****4****8**Food outlets to be open **32%****9****5**Temperature checks **37%****10**Option not to wear a mask **28%**

# Fans' return to live sport

## Analysis



The two measures that fans most said would need to be in place before returning were to do with hand hygiene. Clubs should provide suitable hand washing facilities in their accessible toilets as standard, including hot running water and soap.

**32%** of fans said that food outlets would need to be open before returning, compared to just **5%** who said they'd need to be shut.

**24%** of fans wanted cashless payments only, whilst **15%** wanted the option to use cash in stadiums. We'd suggest clubs have at least one cash till available.





# Conclusion

There are many barriers that disabled people face in life, but most of these barriers can be removed through effective dialogue and good practice.

Following the conclusion of the survey, individual clubs were sent a report with just their supporters' responses. Clubs who had at least one respondent were sent a report - 104 total. Our hope is that by communicating the results and comments from this survey, clubs can be better informed and can make improvements to their services and facilities that will most benefit their own supporters.

This is the first year that Level Playing Field has conducted this annual fan survey, but the intention is to repeat the survey year-on-year to measure the changes and hopefully see an improvement to access for disabled supporters. In particular we'd hope that future years would see a reduction in the percentage of supporters who experience 'anxiety or lack of confidence' when attending live sport and

a reduction in the percentage of fans who feel unable to attend certain sports or sport venues due to lack of accessibility.

We don't know the long-term impact of Covid-19 at this stage, but we hope that the results from the questions about fans returning to live sport will be helpful to clubs and governing bodies as they make decisions at this time that will impact disabled fans.

If you have any questions about any of the results from this report, or if you'd like to discuss any of the answers in more detail then please get in touch.

You can find our contact information on the last page of this summary report.



“This first Level Playing Field annual fan survey provides a great insight into the experiences of disabled supporters as they attend live sport.

We are grateful to the 1408 fans who took the time to share their experiences with us. It is our hope and expectation that their responses will serve to bring about improvements to services and facilities as clubs see their feedback and comments.

With 73% of disabled fans eager to return to live sport ‘right away’ following various restrictions on attending, clubs need to ensure that they are ready, and this report can help with that preparation.

There is clearly much that still needs to be done to ensure that disabled fans have an equal matchday experience to non-disabled fans. The fact that 30% of respondents said there was a sport or sports venue they felt unable to attend, due to poor access, highlights this inequality. Level Playing Field will continue to promote full access and inclusion for disabled fans and we expect that will be reflected in the results of our future fan surveys.”



- Tony Taylor  
Level Playing Field Chair



# Annual fan survey 2021

for disabled sports fans

## Level Playing Field

The Junction, Station Rd  
Watford, WD17 1ET

[levelplayingfield.org.uk](http://levelplayingfield.org.uk)  
01923 545370  
[info@levelplayingfield.org.uk](mailto:info@levelplayingfield.org.uk)



[levelplayingfield.org.uk](http://levelplayingfield.org.uk)



[@lpftweets](https://twitter.com/lpftweets)



[@levelplayingfielduk](https://www.instagram.com/levelplayingfielduk)



[/lpftweets](https://www.facebook.com/lpftweets)