

JUST A BALL GAME?

# HOMOPHOBIA IN SPORT

The Survey.

Lindsay England

2011

[justaballgame.co.uk](http://justaballgame.co.uk)

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## **Forward by Peter Purton**

Over the last two decades, massive steps forward have been taken towards the achievement of legal equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Over the same period, public acceptance of LGBT people as equals has moved from being in a minority to being the clear majority. But homophobia and transphobia have continued without effective challenge in a number of areas, and amongst these, football (the nation's favourite sport) stands out. Lindsay England's survey provides the evidence to help convince everyone involved in football of the urgency of a concerted effort to carry out policies that already exist and to make football a safe place for LGBT players, staff and fans. The TUC has worked hard to eliminate discrimination in workplaces - now, working with Government, trade unions, the football industry and many other allies, we want to ensure that football terraces no longer offer a hiding place for prejudice that is rightly both illegal, and unwelcome, elsewhere in British society.

Peter Purton

LGBT policy officer, Trades Union Congress

## Introduction

The research published in this documentation was conducted by Lindsay England founder of “*Just a Ball Game?*” (“*JBG?*”) in partnership with the TUC’s LGBT Committee. This survey is the second phase of three pieces of research conducted by “*JBG?*”. The first being a report titled “We’re not homophobic.”

Although much of the content is already known to those involved in challenging homophobia in sport, it was felt there was a need for concrete evidence to be provided for reference. Documented evidence is of vital importance when raising issues and concerns to those involved in sport at NGB’s (National Governing Bodies), the Governments Equalities Office, press and media, education establishments, as well as grass roots and professional participants who identify as both LGBT and non-LGBT, and the wider public in general who have an interest in the industry and the issues raised in this survey.

## 1. Key Statistical Summary

- a. Just over a third, 34%, feel the need to participate in sport or leisure activities in a 'safe space' by being part of LGBT/LGBT friendly clubs or groups solely .
- b. Over 2/3rds stated they experienced homophobia in sport.
- c. Only 26% of respondents to the survey reported any of the homophobia they witnessed to an appropriate body.
- d. Only 8 out of 92 who responded to the question "Do you feel satisfied with the responses you got when you reported the homophobia?" felt that the response they got after reporting the homophobia was satisfactory.

## 2. Methodology

The research was conducted over 8 weeks during the summer of 2011. There were over 200 respondents- the first 200 were used for the survey itself. Online responses made up 4/5th of the total content; the rest was done on hard copy with the author present. The on-line survey was anonymous with only the IP addresses available. Although the majority of those who took part were from the UK (76.5%), there were sizeable contributions from North America and Europe from those who participated from further afield. Qualitative and quantitative answers, and both summary and percentage responses are given in the report.

It was pleasing to see that those who identify as both LGBT and non-LGBT were respondents to the survey. Also, it was important to have participants take part who were from both the grass roots and professional areas of sport.



### 3. Survey Questions and Responses Received

The first 200 completed responses were used for this analysis

#### 1. Which gender do you identify as?



Variable	Responses
Male	107
Female	89
Other	1

#### 2. Do you identify as being LGBTQI?

Response	Chart	%	
Yes		84.5%	
No		15.5%	
Total responses			195

97.5% of those questioned responded to this question

**3. Do you play a sport or take part in a leisure activity?**

Response	Chart	%	
Yes		88%	
No		12%	
Total responses			176

88% of those questioned responded to this question

**4. Which sport or leisure activity do you play? Please state.**

Variable	Responses
	177
Number of different sports played	25
Number who play more than one sport	25%

85% of those questioned responded to this question

**5. Do you take part in a sport or leisure activity as an individual or as a team member? Please state.**



Variable	Responses
	176
Team	75
Individual	45
Both	56



**6. Do you take part in sport or a leisure activity as a coach, manager, official, or administrator? Please state.**

Variable	Responses
Total	138
No	59
Player	18
Manager	8
Coach	27
Admin	20
Referee	6

**7. Do you attend any sport or leisure activity on a regular basis as a spectator?**

Response	Chart	%	
Yes		61%	
No		39%	
Total responses			193

96.5% of those questioned responded to this question



**8. Which sport or leisure activity do you attend? Please state.**

Variable	Responses
	188

The top five responses to this question

Sport	Responses
Total for Top 5 Responses	115
Football	71
Rugby	17
Swimming	10
Cricket	9
Netball	8

**9. Is your club/group an LGBT club/group?**



Response	Chart	%	
Yes		34%	
No		66%	
Total responses			181

90.5% of those questioned responded to this question



**10. Are you, or is your, club/group a member of a local/national league/organisation or association/national governing body? Please state.**

Variable	Responses
Total	137
Local	63
National	29
Association	12
NGB	28
No	5

**11. Have you witnessed homophobia in sport?**

Response	Chart	%	
Yes		68%	
No		32%	
Total responses			195

**12. Have you experienced homophobia personally while playing sport?**

Response	Chart	%	
Yes		32.5%	
No		67.5%	
Total responses			194

97% of those questioned responded to this question



**13. Was your experience of homophobia while you were playing, coaching/managing, officiating/ administrating, or watching? Please state.**

Variable	Responses.
Total	123
Many of these	6
Watching	48
Playing	52
Coach/Manager	7
Admin	2
No	8

**14. Did the homophobia come from fellow team member, opposition player, coach/manager, official/administrator, or supporter? Please state.**

Variable	Responses
Total	157
Many of these	4
Supporter	68
Opposition	33
Fellow Players	21
Coach/Manager	15
Official	5
None	11

**15. Was any of the homophobia reported?**

Response	Chart	%	
Yes		26%	
No		74%	
Total			159

79.5% of those questioned responded to this question

**16. Who was the homophobia reported too? E.g. team /manager/coach, official/administrator, league, organization/association, NGB, Police?**

Variable	Responses
Total	96
League/association	13
Team/Club	8
Official	7
Manager	3
Police	3
Stewards	2
Solicitor	1
None	59

**17. Do you feel satisfied with the response you got when you reported the homophobia?**

Variable	Responses (some with further explanation)
Total	92
N/A as not reported	51
No	33
Yes	8

#### **4. Good Practice/Positive Experience.**

Sadly only a few of the answers and comments which accompanied them were of the positive nature. These are listed below.

- a. "I have never thought about reporting this before, but this survey has made me think maybe I should challenge it."
- b. "Not tolerated after discussion with players and manager."
- c. "Endurance Riding is one of the most lesbian friendly equestrian sports, loads of us just getting on with it."
- d. "Satisfied the supporters sorted it out."

## 5. Bad Practice/Negative Experience.

For this there were five which stood out as being of a serious abusive nature. In addition there were more than a dozen which could be described as 'softer' 'milder' comments, often referred to as 'banter', that many LGBT people seem to take on board as par for the course and tolerate. Many further comments showed that supporters, opposition and or fellow players were the biggest culprits when dishing out homophobia. Watching and playing counted for over 4/5th of the situations when the acts of homophobia occurred.

a) "Someone on team had the nickname 'GAY LORD' so it was shouted many times during games."

b) "Head of school (secondary) said it was ok as it was a nickname."

c) "No didn't report, FA charter standard clubs, it's all BO\*\*\*cks, forget it for reporting."



d) "(As far as I know) we don't have any LGBT members, although we would be happy to diversify."

e) "I think it's appalling how little awareness and acceptance there still is especially in sport, makes me ashamed when you see how intolerant a lot of people are."

f) "Verbal bullying in the changing rooms, before and after training and in competitions."

g) "Referee not taking my complaint seriously."

h) "Threats of violence towards myself and others, from touchline and those watching football on numerous occasions."

i) "You wouldn't dare to say anything."

## 6. Conclusions

a) Very few LGBT people (or those perceived to be LGBT) think they are safe enough to challenge any of the homophobia themselves at the time of it occurring. So it's possible there will be numerous repeat offenders, who think what they are doing has no consequences.

b) Most people don't see there is any point in reporting any of the homophobia, as sport with its officials and administrators and beyond don't think that homophobia needs to be addressed.

c) It seems that many still conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity while participating in sport, and fear discrimination if they are 'out' to anyone.

d) Many (over 2/3rds) of LGBT people surveyed stated they attend live sport on a regular basis despite the levels and amounts of existing homophobia.

e) More LGBT people would feel comfortable to play in mainstream sports if there was less homophobia and stereotypical behaviour.

## 7. Recommendations

- a) Perhaps more LGBT people need to take more responsibility themselves (if they feel safe to do so) and make a stand to say 'enough is enough' and challenge the homophobia within sport.
- b) Sport as a whole HAS to take a ZERO tolerance approach to homophobia in all its guises.
- c) Sport needs to step up its equality and diversity training, both at the grass roots and professional levels.
- d) Better reporting systems need to be introduced, with the reports handled in an appropriate manner and sanctions applied, even if this for a first offence which entails education or re-education. Repeat offenders could be given more severe punishment in proportion to the severity of the incident.

- e) Various resources could be applied to highlight equality laws, and hate incidents/hate crimes, warning people of the consequences of their actions and the serious nature of their offence.
- f) Mainstream sport needs to recognize and promote athletes who are 'out' or be supportive of LGBT people to help provide a younger generation with LGBT role models.
- g) Information needs to be readily available to LGBT people which demonstrate that their chosen sport or leisure activity is inclusive of LGBT participation.

**JUST A BALL  
GAME?**

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