

SHOW RACISM THE RED CARD 

2023 FAW REPORT

EXPLORING RACISM IN
GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

After conducting research in the form of surveys and interviews with individuals involved in grassroots football in Wales, Show Racism the Red Card Wales (SRtRC) has key recommendations for combating racism within grassroots football in Wales.

This report is divided into two primary sections:

- ✓ Policies, Procedures, and Governance
- ✓ Education and Training

We believe breaking down recommendations into these two focus areas will offer clarity on what must be adapted and changed to move forward. This will provide clear improvement goals and actions for the Football Association of Wales (FAW) to implement.

POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND GOVERNANCE

Under Policies, Procedures, and Governance, SRtRC suggests focusing on the following areas to enhance efforts to combat racism in Welsh grassroots football:

✓ **Creation of guidelines for Area Associations if teams walk off the pitch due to a racist incident**

Clear guidelines are lacking for Area Associations on how to manage players or teams who leave the pitch due to racial abuse. This can result in matches being abandoned with the racist incident being overlooked subsequently when the decision-making processes are being carried out on the outcome of the match. The sanctions are then wrongly given to the team that has been targeted with racial abuse for leaving the pitch.

✓ **Disciplinary charges and subsequent actions should be completed in agreed time frames**

SRtRC has received multiple reports of racist incidents from clubs and community members. Regrettably, some of these cases have not resulted in any action being taken, and the process has taken a considerable amount of time to be addressed by the league, local FA, or FAW. This has caused a lack of trust in the system, which is concerning. SRtRC recommend there be a maximum time period for an investigation to be completed and updates to be provided to clubs involved in a timely manner. Our recommendations would be for the investigation to be completed within 28 days of the report.

✓ **Stricter enforcement of reactive anti-racism educational workshops**

Organisations such as leagues, local area associations, and the FAW use SRtRC to provide reactive education workshops for clubs following their receiving a charge. However, it has been noted that some clubs delay scheduling these sessions, which can result in players not receiving timely education. This delay can potentially lead to further incidents if players are not educated promptly. SRtRC recommend that players or clubs sanctioned with a charge are unable to play again until their education session has been booked in and confirmed with SRtRC.



✔ **Reconsider the duration of ban for a racist incident**

The FAW has made it mandatory for perpetrators of racial discrimination in football to be banned for a minimum of 10 matches. Although this ban is the longest of all the home nations, SRtRC recommend that this ban is increased to at least 15 games with guidelines of how leagues can impose longer sanctions rather than the basic mandatory ban based on evidence.

✔ **Create clear policies and procedures on investigating racist incidents for all local leagues, area associations and the FAW**

Many people we spoke to express a lack of confidence in the disciplinary departments of the leagues/local FA and the FAW, which led to them not reporting incidents of racism they experienced. They feared that their cases may not be heard promptly and investigated in a professional manner. SRtRC propose that there are clear policies and procedures on investigating racist incidents for all local league, local FA and FAW to ensure the process is robust. We recommend a 360-feedback process to be brought in to monitor the confidence of individuals in the processes.

✔ **Improve confidence in reporting systems to bring cases to the attention of SRtRC**

Sometimes individuals or clubs who racially abuse people within football are not held accountable because people might not feel confident enough to report the issue directly to the club, league, or FAW. As a result, these individuals do not receive any consequences or training for their actions.

✔ **Create a wellbeing support mechanism**

Individuals that have been targeted with racial abuse believe not enough is being done to support the targets. SRtRC recommend that the FAW create a support mechanism with the primary aim of is to support targets of racism.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In the Education and Training aspect of the recommendation, SRtRC delves into the groups that need support and considers how to provide them with the best outcomes to meet their requirements.

✔ **FAW Staff and council members should receive anti-racism training from SRtRC**

A robust governance structure is paramount. With the FAW staff and council members presiding over the final appeal process, they must possess the capacity to comprehend and empathise with individuals to make impartial and well-informed decisions on cases they are hearing. This is crucial to ensure effective and equitable rulings - thus providing confidence in the FAW and the reporting system.

✔ **League and Area Association council members should receive annual anti-racism training from SRtRC**

These individuals must comprehend their responsibilities as the initial point of contact for any disciplinary issues raised by clubs and match officials. This will ensure that cases are handled accurately without the need for higher-level appeals - potentially avoiding more traumatic experiences for individuals involved.

✔ **Referees should participate in annual anti-racism training**

All match officials must comprehend the significance of the need to report accurately in line with the FAW reporting procedures and their responsibilities under the UEFA three-step process for handling racist incidents during matches. In addition to the guidance of policy and protocol for abandonment of games in the above recommendations, SRtRC propose that all referees receive anti-racism training understanding how to recognise, respond to, record and report instances of racism.

✔ **Increase education opportunities for grassroots clubs**

Over the past two years, SRtRC has worked with FAW accredited academies and girls development centres across Wales to deliver educational workshops to over 2,500 players. These workshops have been extremely effective with 96% of attendees reporting an increase in their understanding of racism and how to report incidents. Moreover, 97% of players would encourage others to attend. Based on these positive outcomes, SRtRC recommends broadening the initiative to include grassroots clubs in Wales, as well as academics, professional clubs, and individuals who have been accused of racially abusing an individual on the pitch. As part of the research, we found that 84% of participants said that training should be mandatory for grassroots coaches.

INTRODUCTION

SRtRC is a charity that has been working to educate people about anti-racism for over 27 years. More than a million children, young people, and adults have participated in Show Racism the Red Card's educational programmes so far.

In the 2022/23 football season alone, the charity's Welsh arm directly engaged with over 50 clubs and provided education and training workshops for more than 2,000 young people and coaches within the football environment across Wales.

In addition, we interacted with 238 clubs and over 25,000 players, coaches, match officials, and supporters during an annual October awareness-raising initiative, 'Month of Action'. The charity uses the power of football and other sports to work towards combatting racism in both sports and society.

In response to feedback received during the 2021 Month of Action, which revealed that 13% of registered clubs had reported witnessing a racist incident in the previous three years, SRtRC made the decision to undertake an extensive research study. The scope of the study was expanded to encompass players, coaches, spectators, and other individuals within the football community in Wales, with the aim of gathering their perspectives on the issue. This research initiative spanned a period of 12 months, commencing in April 2022 and concluding in April 2023, and was conducted through online surveys and follow-up interviews.

Using the findings of the survey, SRtRC has offered recommendations based on the findings and hopes to support the FAW in creating an action plan to address any identified issues.



Acronyms

SRtRC – Show Racism the Red Card Wales
FAW – Football Association of Wales

Definitions

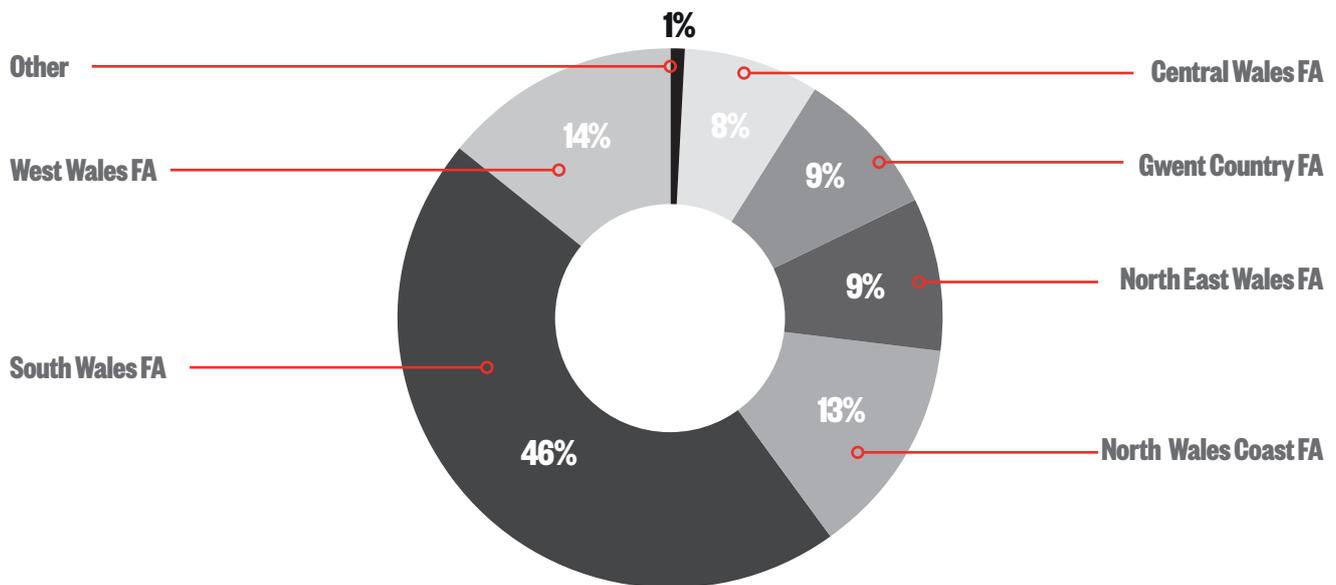
For the purpose of this report, we define a racist incident using definition in the Macpherson's Report which is 'any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person', as articulated during the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. Put simply, racism is treating someone differently or regarding them as inferior because of their skin colour, religion, nationality, or culture.

METHODOLOGY

Over the span of 12 months, from April 2022 to April 2023, SRtRC conducted extensive research involving clubs and individuals engaged in grassroots football. The aim of this research was to assess the current state of racism within the grassroots game in Wales. The research methodology included an online survey form followed by interviews with participants.

As a well-established charity in Wales, SRtRC has established positive working relationships with various stakeholders. Through initiatives like the Month of Action and proactive education workshops for young people, coaches, and clubs, the charity has achieved a significant reach across Wales. Leveraging these networks, the research gathered the perspectives of 196 players, coaches, parents, and club officials representing every area association in Wales (**Figure 1**). Survey questions can be found in **Appendix 1**.

FIGURE 1 - RESPONDENTS BY AREA ASSOCIATION



The data in this report was collected through an online survey that was shared directly with clubs via SRtRC databases and social media, as well as through contacts at the FAW.

Although the sample group was self-selecting, which may mean that participants had a pre-existing interest or experience with racism, this method was chosen due to its ease of delivery, convenience for respondents, and the ability to include both quantitative and qualitative questions. A large proportion of the participants were from the South Wales region which coordinates with the size of the region, however we acknowledge that there was a lack of respondent from the smaller regions which we have identified as a weakness when looking at the data as a whole.

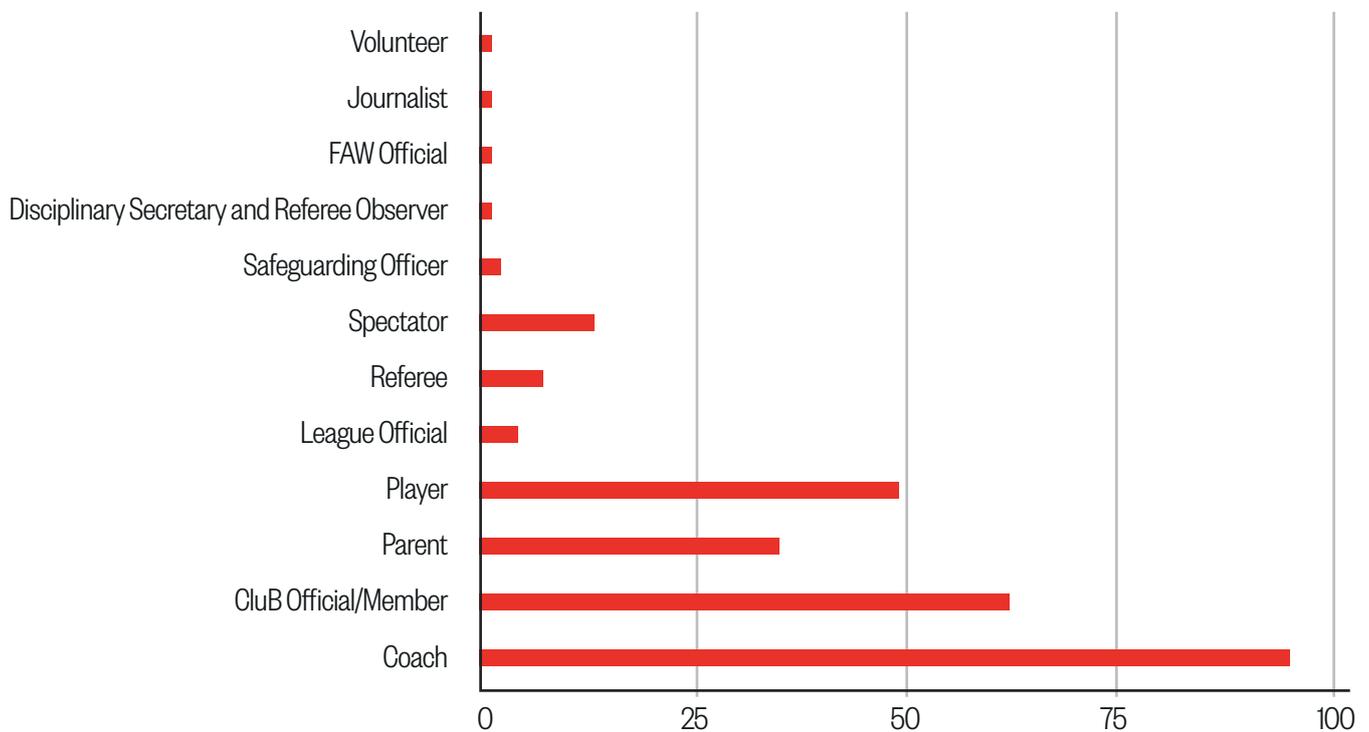
The survey responses were categorised by the different roles within the clubs, as shown in **Figure 2**.

METHODOLOGY



FIGURE 2 - ROLE WITHIN THE CLUB

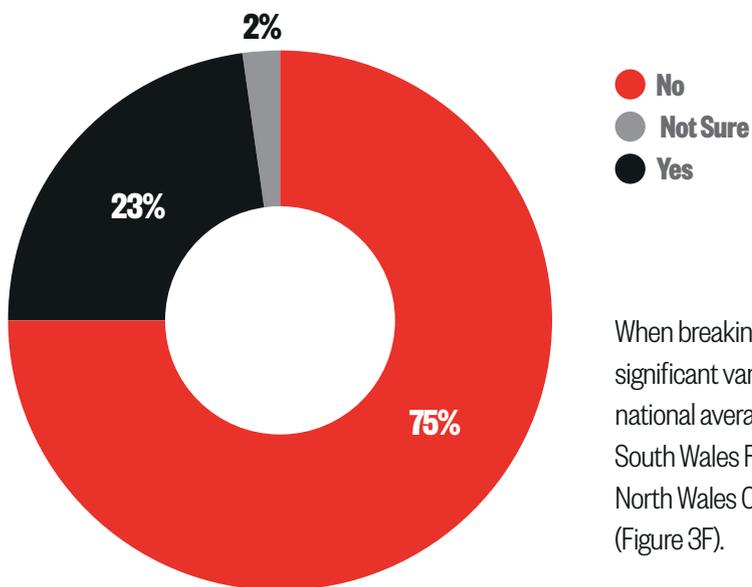
We observed that out of the 196 responses, a significant portion of the participants (60) indicated that they hold multiple roles within the club. This data indicates that there may be capacity issues at clubs when looking at the support and time commitment provided to the targets of racism.



RESULTS

The survey was completed by a total of 196 individuals, including players, parents, coaches, spectators, referees, club officials/members, as well as league and FAW officials. **Figure 3** shows that 23% of respondents reported witnessing racism in grassroots football clubs or teams within the past 36 months.

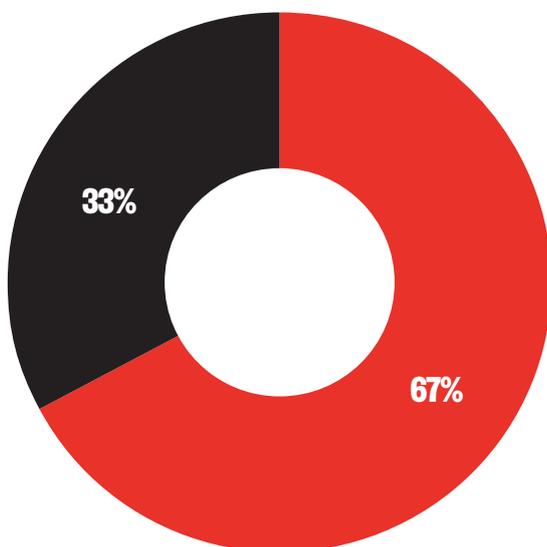
FIGURE 3 - HAVE YOU WITNESSED AN INCIDENT OF RACISM OR RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AT YOUR GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL CLUB OR TEAM IN THE LAST 36 MONTHS?



When breaking down this data by area association, it was clear that there was significant variation. Three area associations reported higher numbers than the national average - Central Wales FA (Figure 3A), North East Wales FA (Figure 3B) and South Wales FA (Figure 3B), whilst the other three had significantly lower numbers - North Wales Coast FA (Figure 3D), West Wales FA (Figure 3E), and Gwent County FA (Figure 3F).

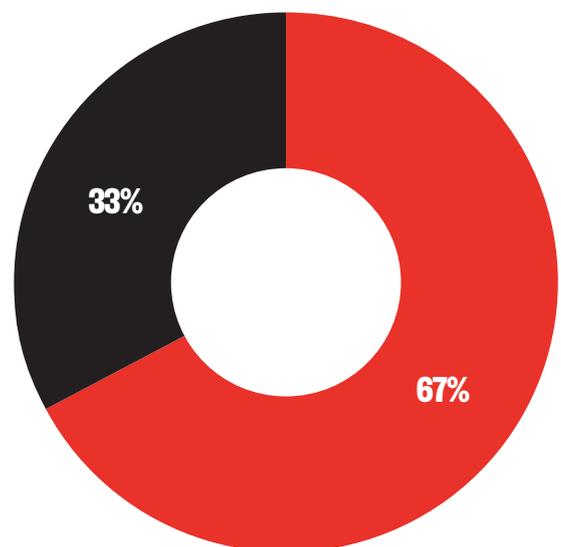
Central Wales FA (Figure 3A)

● No ● Not Sure ● Yes



North East Wales FA (Figure 3B)

● No ● Not Sure ● Yes

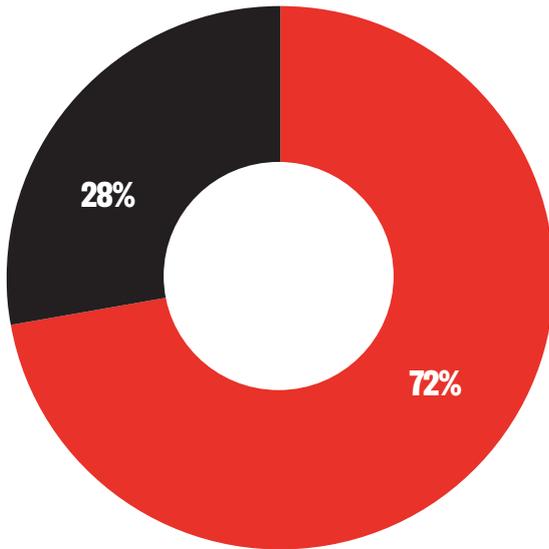


RESULTS



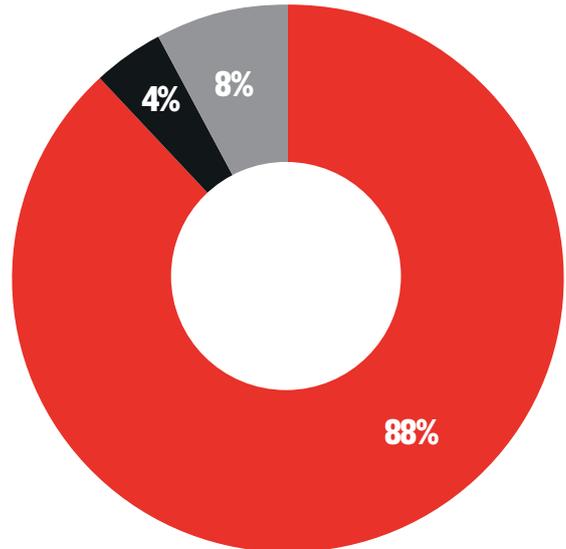
South Wales FA (Figure 3C)

● No ● Not Sure ● Yes



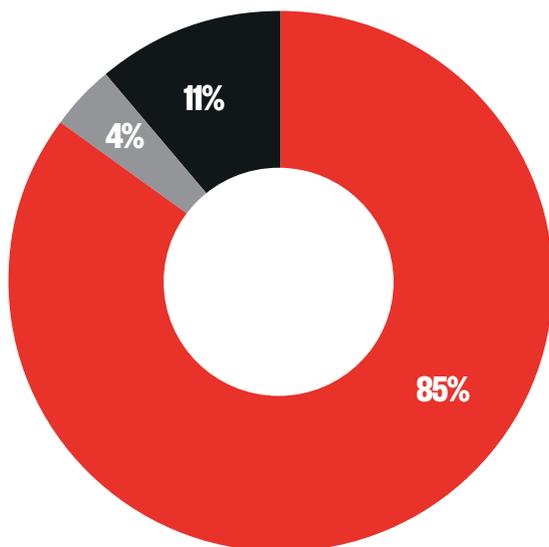
North Wales Coast FA (Figure 3D)

● No ● Not Sure ● Yes



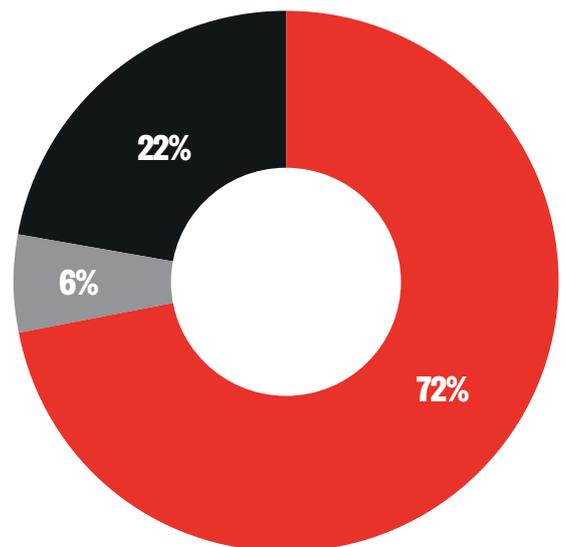
West Wales FA (Figure 3E)

● No ● Not Sure ● Yes



Gwent County FA (Figure 3F)

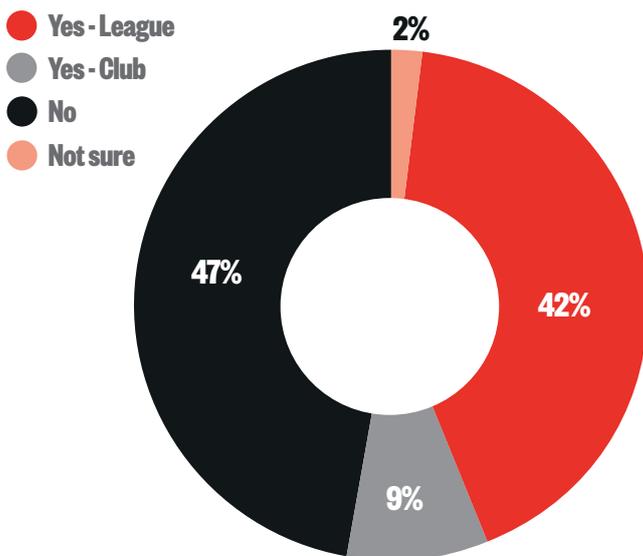
● No ● Not Sure ● Yes



During the reporting process, many local community groups were contacted to see if they would like to share their experiences. Unfortunately, they did not feel comfortable discussing their thoughts as they believed that their concerns would not be taken seriously. In the past, they reported similar issues, but found that nothing had been done to tackle them. This reluctance to report can be seen in the data. Of the 23% of respondents who witnessed racist incidents, only 51% reported the incident to their club or league. **Figure 4** clearly shows that there is a significant reluctance to report such incidents.

RESULTS

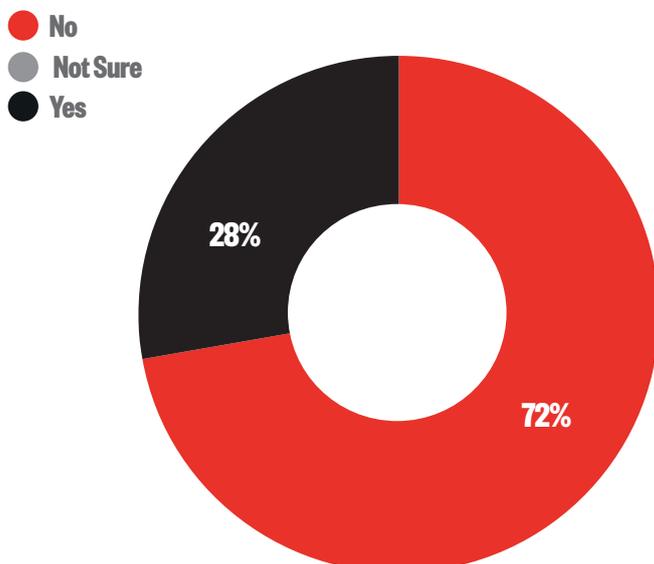
FIGURE 4 - FOR THOSE WHO HAVE WITNESSED RACISM, HAVE YOU REPORTED AN INCIDENT OF RACISM TO THE LEAGUE OR CLUB IN THE LAST 36 MONTHS (3 YEARS)?



Of the 23% of those who said they both witnessed and reported racism (**Figure 3**), only 5% of those individuals believed that enough support was being provided to those who had experienced such incidents (as shown in **Figure 5**). A majority (62%) felt that more support was needed to support targets of racism.

Among the remaining 77% of respondents, 55% were unsure whether enough was being done to address the issue. During the interviews participants disclosed that they felt not enough pro-active work was being done to tackle racism within grassroots football and that there was little or no follow up support for the individuals reporting being the target of racism. This tells us that more work needs to be done to raise awareness of racism within grassroots football and publicise the steps that are being taken to tackle racism. This will help inform the football family on how seriously the FAW and league association are taking instances of racism.

FIGURE 5 - DO YOU FEEL ENOUGH IS BEING DONE TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED RACIAL ABUSE/DISCRIMINATION WITHIN GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL IN WALES?

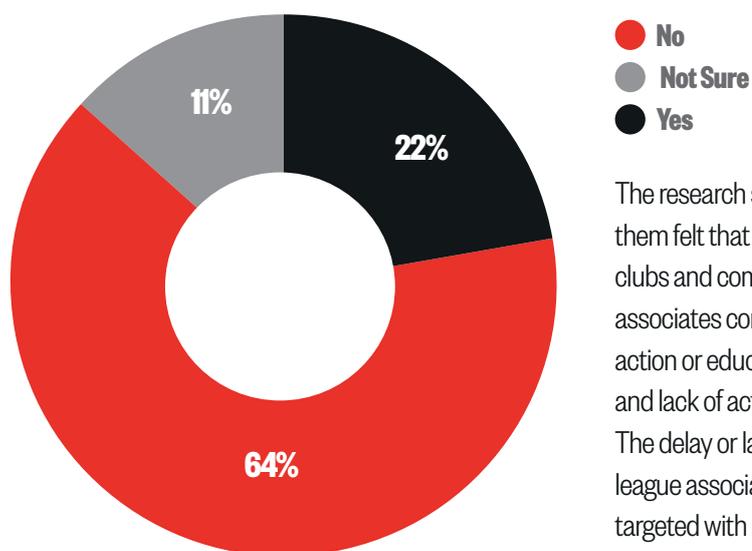


During the interview stage we spoke with a team who had decided to walk off the pitch due to racial abuse being directed at a junior player from a coach but there were no clear guidelines for Local Football Associations on how to manage players or teams who leave the pitch due to racial abuse. Sanctions were given to the team that was targeted with racial abuse for leaving the pitch which led to lack of trust in the process of reporting and understanding of the league and FAW of racial trauma.

National Governing Bodies have a responsibility to introduce robust safeguarding measures to protect young people and adults from harm. Safeguarding is defined as to 'protect from harm or damage with an appropriate measure'. SRtRC believes and educates people that racist incidents should be classed as safeguarding concerns. SRtRC believes these incidents should be reported as safeguarding concerns due to the that trauma racism can cause to the target. From the research findings we can see that people feel that not enough is being done to safeguard participants from racial abuse.

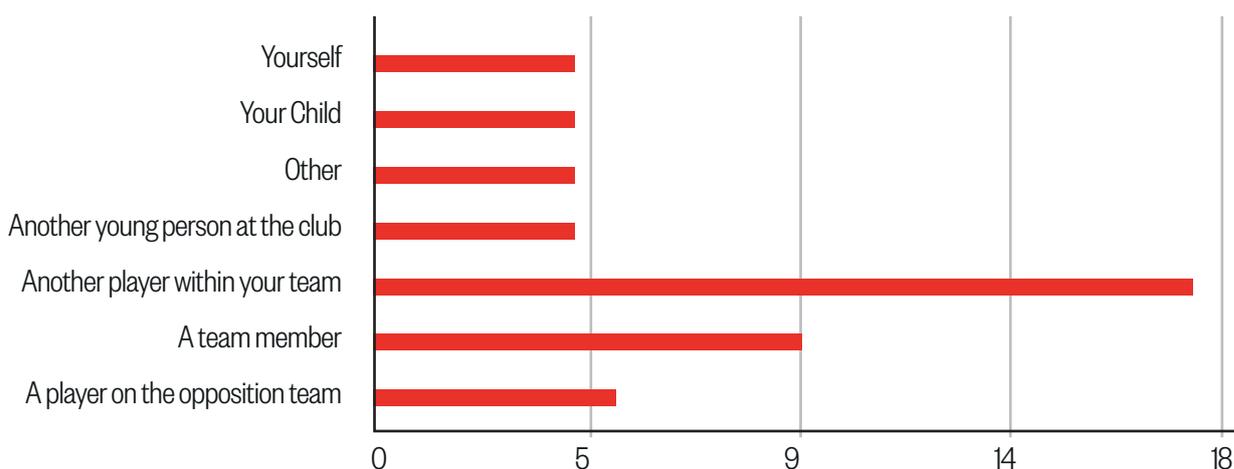
RESULTS

FIGURE 6 - DO YOU FEEL THE INCIDENT/REPORT WAS DEALT WITH APPROPRIATELY, TAKEN SERIOUSLY, AND WITH PROFESSIONALISM?



The research showed that 23% of people reported a racist incident, but 64% of them felt that the incidents were not handled professionally (**Figure 6**). Reports from clubs and community members who reported incidents to the FAW or local area associates confirmed this. They had to wait for several months for a hearing, and no action or education was taken during this time for both parties involved. This delay and lack of action make people reluctant to report similar incidents in the future. The delay or lack of professionalism in the process decreased trust in the process, league association and FAW which in turn has led to individuals that have been targeted with racial abuse deciding not to report these incidents.

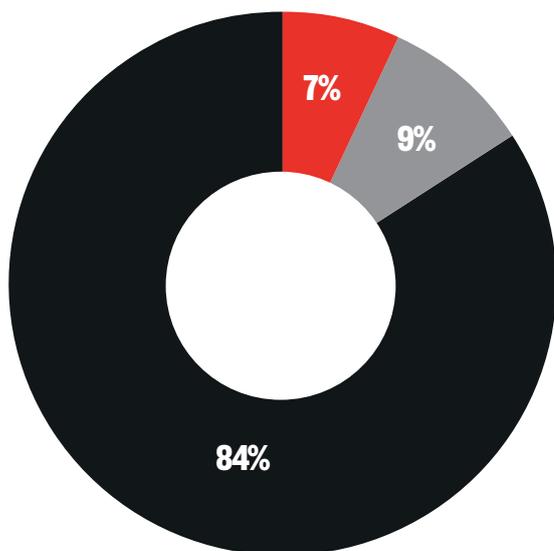
FIGURE 7 - WHO WAS TARGETED BY THIS INCIDENT WITHIN GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL IN WALES?



When people who had witnessed a racist incident were asked who it was targeted at, the majority of people said that it was another player within their club (**Figure 7**). From the interviews it was clear that a lot of players being targeted with racial abuse weren't willing to report the incident themselves due to the lack of trust in the reporting process, the emotional toll of reporting the incident and having to relive the racial trauma through the investigation process combined with the normalisation of racism within society and football.

RESULTS

FIGURE 8 - DO YOU THINK TRAINING SHOULD BECOME MANDATORY FOR ALL GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL COACHES?



- No
- Not Sure
- Yes

When respondents were asked if they thought anti-racism education should be mandatory for all grassroots coaches, 84% believed that it should be (Figure 8). A common theme that emerged from the interviews detailing anti-racism education becoming mandatory, interviewees felt that it should be as important as first aid for all grassroots coaches. One participant said

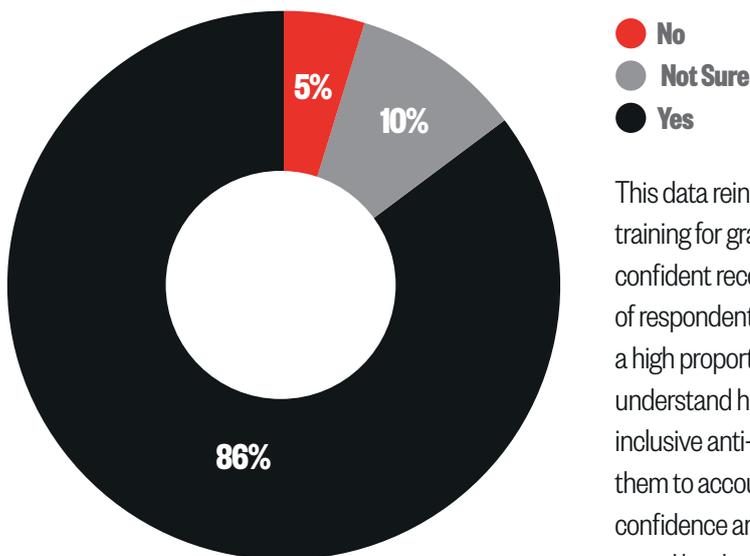
“All coaches have to complete their football leaders coaching course and first aid to be able to coach children, I think that anti-racism is just as important and if coaches did the training, they would have a better understanding of racism”.

During the interviews, participants also mentioned a lack of understanding from referees as to what was deemed a racist incident and what powers the referees had to tackle racist incidents. Targets of racial abuse had informed referees of the language that had been used towards them but often referees reports didn't reflect what had happened in the matches and the perception was that some referees didn't have the skills or understanding to action racist incidents professionally. One participant described

“I had reported the incident to the referee after the racist language was used, when I saw the match report the referee hadn't included anything about the racist incident even though I was told they had to include it even if they had been told and not heard the comments.”

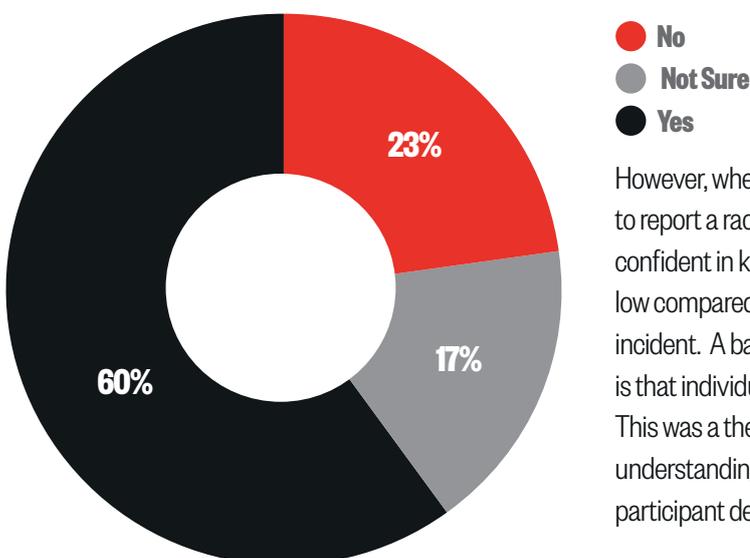
RESULTS

FIGURE 9 - WOULD YOU FEEL CONFIDENT RECOGNISING RACISM OR RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL?



This data reinforces the recommendation to increase the provision of anti-racism training for grassroots coaches. When respondents were asked if they would feel confident recognising racism or racial discrimination in grassroots football, 86% of respondents said 'Yes' they would feel confident (**Figure 9**). Although this is a high proportion of the individuals surveyed, it is essential that all participants understand how to recognise a racist incident to ensure they are demonstrating inclusive anti-racist behaviours but also feel empowered hold others around them to account for their actions. A limitation of the data on participant levels of confidence and knowledge was the lack of standardised questions to access the actual levels of understanding so it may vary.

FIGURE 10 - WOULD YOU FEEL CONFIDENT IN HOW TO REPORT AN INCIDENT OR RACISM OR RACIAL DISCRIMINATION?

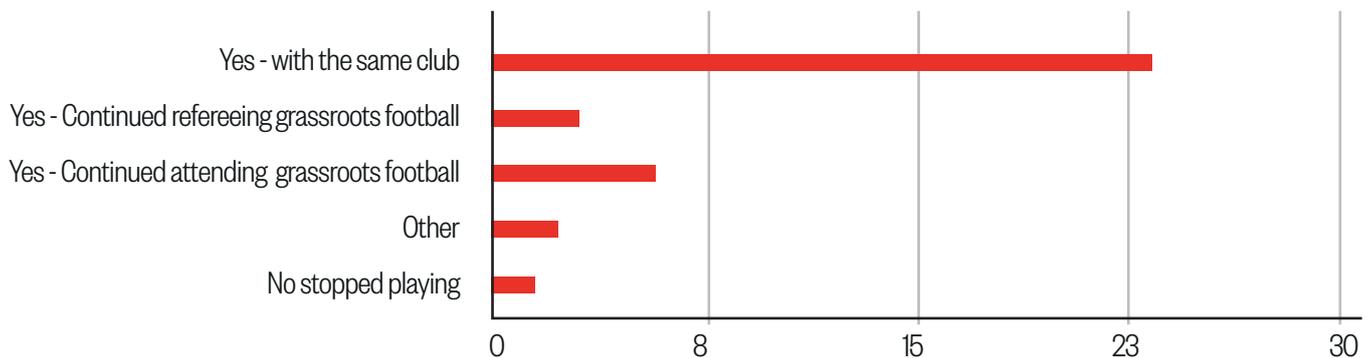


However, when respondents were asked 'would you feel confident in knowing how to report a racist incident?' only 60% of participants in **Figure 10** described being confident in knowing how to report a racist incident. This figure seemed particularly low compared to the 86% of participants that were confident in recognising a racist incident. A barrier to responding to racist incidents in a timely and effective manner is that individuals don't have the knowledge or how to report a racist incident. This was a theme through the interviews that even club officials didn't have the understanding of who to and how to report a racist incident. An example was a participant described a situation

"I reported a racist incident to the coach at my club and he said I'll have to try and find out who to report this to as I'm not sure who deals with complaints of racism."

RESULTS

FIGURE 11 - FOLLOWING RECEIVING RACIAL ABUSE OR DISCRIMINATION DID YOU CARRY ON PLAYING, COACHING, REFEREEING, BEING INVOLVED WITH GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL WITHIN WALES?



According to the findings shown in **Figure 11**, individuals were asked about their continued involvement in grassroots football following instances of racial abuse or discrimination. The majority indicated that they continued to play, coach, referee, or remain involved. However, one individual reported that they chose to discontinue their involvement due to the abuse they experienced.

INTERVIEWS

- ✓ During the interviews, several key themes emerged regarding the seriousness of addressing racial abuse
- ✓ Participants expressed the need for more severe penalties for perpetrators of racism. Suggestions included doubling or increasing the length of bans to a minimum of 15 games.
- ✓ While education was seen as crucial for offenders, participants emphasised the importance of holding individuals accountable for their actions when displaying racist behaviours. They highlighted a new approach adopted in various sports, where perpetrators of racism, after receiving education, are required to deliver a 20-minute presentation to their team, addressing the impact of racism and sharing what they have learned from mandatory anti-racism education.
- ✓ The discussion also focused on the timeframes involved in investigating and charging individuals responsible for racial abuse. Participants expressed concern about lengthy investigation periods, with cases often taking months to conclude. As a solution, the recommendation put forward was for investigations to be completed within 28 days from the incident's date to ensure timely resolution.'

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.** FAW to create guidelines for league associations if teams walk off the pitch due to a racist incident
- 2.** FAW to aim for all disciplinary charges and subsequent actions to be completed within 28 days
- 3.** FAW ensure stricter enforcement of reactive anti-racism educational workshop following a charge. Teams are unable to play until an anti-racism workshop has been booked in
- 4.** FAW to reconsider the duration of a ban for a racist incident
- 5.** FAW to create clear policies and procedures on investigating racist incidents for all local leagues, area associations and staff at the FAW on appeals
- 6.** FAW to introduce a wellbeing support mechanism to support targets of racism in Welsh football
- 7.** FAW Staff and council members to receive anti-racism training from SRtRC
- 8.** League and area association council members to receive annual anti-racism training from SRtRC
- 9.** All active referees to participate in annual anti-racism training
- 10.** FAW to focus educational funding on increasing education opportunities for grassroots football clubs



APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONS ASKED ON THE INITIAL SURVEY

1. What is your role within football?

.....

2. I identify my gender as

.....

3. Age group affiliated with

.....

4. Ethnicity

.....

5. Club location information

.....

6. If other, please specify

.....

7. Have you witnessed an incident of racism or racial discrimination at your grassroots football club or team in the last 36 months?

.....

8. Can you provide details of the incident?

.....

9. Who was targeted by this incident within grassroots football in Wales?

.....

10. If other, please specify who

.....

11. Have you reported an incident of racism to the league or club in the last 36 months (3 years)?

.....

12. If you've observed racism within grassroots football and haven't reported it, can you give the details why you haven't reported it?

.....

13. Do you feel the incident/report was dealt with appropriately, taken seriously, and with professionalism?

14. If no, can you provide details of why?

.....

15. Do you feel enough is being done to tackle racism within grassroots football within Wales?

.....

16. What more do you think can be done to tackle racism within grassroots football?

.....

17. Do you feel enough is being done to support individuals who have experienced racial abuse/discrimination within grassroots football in Wales?

.....

18. What do you think can be done to support individuals that have experienced racial abuse/discrimination within grassroots football in Wales?

.....

19. Has your club been involved in Show Racism the Red Card's month of action in the last 36 months (3 years)?

.....

20. Have you received training or attended a workshop on how to recognise, respond to, report and follow up on suspected incidents of racism or racial discrimination within football or society?

.....

21. Did you find the training or workshop beneficial and improved your knowledge or understanding of racism and racial discrimination?

.....

22. Would you be interested in participating in anti-racism training?

.....

23. Do you think training should become mandatory for all grassroots football coaches?

APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONS ASKED ON THE INITIAL SURVEY

24. Would you feel confident recognising racism or racial discrimination in grassroots football?

.....

25. Would you feel confident in how to report an incident or racism or racial discrimination?

.....

26. What training do you believe would benefit you as a grassroots football coach/referee?

.....

27. If other please specify

.....

28. Following receiving racial abuse or discrimination did you carry on playing, coaching, refereeing, being involved with grassroots football within Wales?

.....

29. If other, please specify

.....

30. Are you willing to share your experience of racial abuse or discrimination to a member of Show Racism the Red Card through a zoom/team or face to face interview?

.....

31. If yes, please provide an email address and name where a member of the team can follow up with dates and times for an interview

.....

32. In your opinion how can we make football a more inclusive & more positive environment to offer great experiences to all involved?



SHOW RACISM THE RED CARD 

GET IN TOUCH

For any further support or advice, please contact us at:

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