



What people think,
feel and do



Opinium

The State of the Game: Women's World Cup 2023



Key findings

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Half of Brits plan to tune into the 2023 Women's World Cup despite time zones

UK football fans underestimate the nations engagement in the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup. Half (51%) of UK adults said they'll be watching the football tournament, while UK football fans predict this proportion to be much lower (36%).

Additionally, more men (59%) are planning to watch than women (43%). This compares to one in four Brits (21%) who regularly follow women's football, again with men (27%) more likely to do so than women (15%).

When considering who will win, UK football fans are most likely to believe that England will win the tournament (39%). This is compared to just 20% who said the USA will win. They were also far less likely to believe the hosts Australia (6%) could cause an upset.

This tournament comes on the back of Euro 2022, which saw England lift the trophy on home soil. Of those who watched Euro 2022, two-fifths (43%) feel that it improved the reputation of the women's game and over a third (37%) believe increased their interest in women's football. On the back of England success, six in ten (60%) football fans believe Women's Super League coverage being moved to free-to-air TV has aided the growth of the sport.

The World Cup is being held in Australia and New Zealand. As a result, the majority of the games will be played in the morning. England could be playing as early as 7:30am UK time, despite this, two-fifths (41%) of UK football fans say they'll get up early to watch a game, further demonstrating the level of support. Young people are even more inclined to wake up early to watch England play with 55% of football fans aged 18 to 34 saying they're likely to.

Fans want to see more diversity on their screens when watching

When it comes to coverage of the tournament, two in five (39%) football fans still believe they don't see enough women commentators and pundits covering sports in general.

A third (34%) of female football fans would be more likely to get involved in a sport if they saw more representative on screen. The same number (34%) of female football fans believe gender stereotypes are a barrier to engagement to the sport so great representative could overcome deep rooted stereotypes. Similarly, one in five (21%) football fans believe a lack of role models and visibility of the sport in the media is a barrier for women engaging with the sport. As fans understand the notion that greater coverage leads to greater engagement with the sport, this makes FIFA's delays in selling broadcasting rights for this year's tournament even stranger.

A third of football fans (34%) are aware of the broadcast rights saga which saw FIFA withhold rights to show the tournament in order to get a higher price. Almost half (48%) feel it is unfair that women's TV rights was sold for significantly less than of the men's tournament and two in five (43%) believe broadcasters should pay the same price for the women's as the men's World Cup to support the sport.

But three in five (60%) do understand broadcaster's desire to pay less for the Women's World Cup as most kick-off times will involve Europeans watching in less than primetime early morning slots.



Fans recognise the inclusive nature of women's football and want to see it reflected into the men's game

Two in three (66 %) fans believe that women's football is inclusive of those from the LGBTQ+ community higher than those who believe the same of the men's game (55%). While this is high percentage, 40% agree that they wish was more LGBTQ+ representation in men's football.

Over a third (37%) of fans agree that the inclusive culture of women's football makes them want to engage more and 53% think men's football could learn from the inclusive culture of women's football.

This is also reflected within the match day experience, 72% of football fans have been to a men's professional football match compared to a fifth (19%) who've attended a women's match. But of those who attended, 42% said they're match day experience at women's professional football was good value for money while 28% said the same for men's. For personal safety and general inclusivity, half (51%) rated women's football as being good for their match day experience compared to just 40% of those who have attended a men's game.

Within the sport itself interestingly there have always been many men's coaches working within the women's game, but there has never been a woman as a permanent manager or head coach of a professional men's team. Asked when a woman will finally get a chance to permanently manage or coach a professional men's team, 59% said within 5 years, but 31% believe it will take longer than 10 years. Just over a quarter (28%) believe this will happen with the next 2 years.

Progress has been made in engaging young women in football but there's plenty of work still to do

A (37%) third of women agreed that if they were at school now they would be more likely to get involved in football. Two thirds (63%) of those with daughters say that their daughters have had more opportunities to play footballs or sport in general compared to their generation. A further 70% think there's less stigma around women playing sport today compared to when they were younger.

But even with this progress, more than three in five (62%) believe more work needs to be done to help young women engage with sport.

A third think that limited local opportunities (33%), for example, a lack of local clubs and / or facilities as well as gender stereotypes are still a barrier for women engaging in the sport (33%). While a fifth (21%) believe not knowing how to get involved is a key barrier.

When asked what would help women engage in the sport, football fans said it should be integrated into school, gender stereotypes and equality in opportunities and pay should be addressed, while others called for more representation across the sport as a whole.

"Better Facilities. More grassroots. More female Coaches and Managers. More female Referees. More comfortable spectating facilities."

"End the macho culture"



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Winner
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“Football should be offered in all secondary schools to girls.”

“Address the pay gap between female and male stars.”

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