

Injuries at football grounds 2018/19 (revised)

July 2023



Introduction

This report details the spectator injuries at football grounds for the 2018/19 season that were reported to the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) by those football grounds in England and Wales that are subject to SGSA licensing.

This revised report addresses a coding error by our outsourced data analysis provider, NatCen. This was identified in May 2023 and resulted in the underreporting of spectator injuries for 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21. The error has been rectified in the figures and supporting commentary included in this report. It has also been corrected in the other two reports and revised reports published.

The amended rate for injuries per 100,000 is 6.5 (revised from 5.4). The rate of eligible injuries is 37% (revised from 31%). The revised rate of hospital visits per 100,000 spectators is 0.5 (compared with 0.4 previously reported).

These corrections do not change our overall conclusions about trends and patterns of injuries.

Key Findings

In the 2018/19 season, there were:

- 38,073,988 spectators at matches in the Premier League¹, Championship and Leagues One and Two.
- 2,477 spectators were treated for injuries.
- This equates to 1 injury per 15,371 spectators, or 6.5 injuries per 100,000 spectators, a higher rate than the overall figure of 6 injuries per 100,000 spectators for the 2017/18 season (see Table 1 and Figure A for additional detail).
- 200 spectators taken to hospital. (see Table 4 and Figure B).
- Slips, trips and falls were the cause of 30% of all recorded injuries – the highest ‘known’ category (see Annex A, Table 5 and Figure C for additional detail).

Commentary

Reported injuries are low and relatively stable. Even where there were injuries, they were rarely sufficiently serious to require a spectator to be taken to hospital. However, there is no room for complacency and the SGSA continues to work to improve the quality of the data, to help aid future analysis and commentary and inform future regulatory activity (see also Continuous Improvement below).

¹ Including football matches played at Wembley Stadium and the Principality Stadium, Cardiff.



A summary of the reported spectator injuries for the past three seasons across all grounds subject to SGSA licensing in the 2018/19 season is shown in the results section (Table 1 and Figure A). This is broken down by each division, as well as a cumulative number for all.

Additionally, the results section includes details for the 2018/19 season with more in-depth analysis of the injury data than has previously been available as follows:

- Table 2: Location in ground where injury occurred
- Table 3: Time period when injury occurred
- Table 4 and Figure B: Number of injuries requiring the spectator to be taken to hospital
- Table 5 and Figure C: Common causes of injury
- Table 6 and Figure D: Age breakdown of spectators who suffered an eligible injury
- Table 7 and Figure E: Common types of injury
- Table 8 and Figure F: Eligible and non-eligible injuries

Continuous Improvement

Since the 2016/17 season, spectator injury statistics reporting has been fully integrated into the license application process in a more controlled format than in previous seasons, with SGSA supplying additional guidance to clubs ahead of the injury data collection period. Although provision of the data is not a formal requirement of SGSA licensing, these changes have helped to generate more accurate and standardised data.

The SGSA has recently published strategic objectives governing the collection and analysis of spectator injury data for the 2020/21 season onwards. These can be accessed on the research section of the SGSA website: [SGSA Injury Data Strategic Objectives](#).

Additionally, the SGSA has ongoing work to identify and implement ways of further improving data quality and thereby help ensure the safety of all those who use football grounds subject to SGSA licensing. For example, there is a compositional effect in the data, whereby individual leagues change from season to season due to promotion/relegation. The SGSA will consider how to take account of that effect when undertaking future longitudinal analysis across a number of seasons.

Methodology

At the end of each season the SGSA asks all football grounds in England and Wales



subject to its licensing (those grounds at which designated football matches^{2 2} are played) to provide details of the number of spectators treated for injuries at their grounds during that season. This forms part of the SGSA licence application process for the next season and helps inform SGSA regulatory activity under the Football Spectators Act 1989³.

The figures for the 2018/19 season are based on complete spectator injury data returns from 92 of the 94 grounds in England and Wales subject to SGSA licensing, and complete actual attendance figures from 89 of those grounds. The data has been weighted to account for missing/incomplete data from a handful of grounds as necessary.

For the purposes of these statistics, an eligible injury is classed as a wound or trauma, hurt or harm, usually applied to damage inflicted on a spectator by an external force within the curtilage of a ground on matchday. Injuries to staff/players are excluded. Illnesses are by their nature excluded. Pre-existing injuries are also considered ineligible as they did not occur within the curtilage of a ground on matchday. Additionally, any injuries which can be attributed to the intoxication of the spectator are excluded.

Table 8 and Figure F provide further details on eligible and non-eligible injuries based on the above criteria.

² A designated match is defined under the Football Spectators (Designation of Football Matches in England and Wales) Order 2000 as “any association football match which is played at Wembley Stadium, at the Principality Stadium in Cardiff or at a sports ground in England and Wales which is registered with the Football League or the Football Association Premier League as the home ground of a club which is a member of the Football League or the Football Association Premier League at the time the match is played”.

³ Under the Football Spectators Act 1989, SGSA’s regulatory role is to issue licences to all Premier League and English Football League grounds in England and Wales, along with Wembley and the Principality Stadium to allow them to permit spectators to watch matches; and oversee local authorities in their duties to sports grounds safety and safety certification.



Results

Prevalence of injuries across all leagues

In the 2018/19 season, there were:

- 38,073,988 spectators at matches in the Premier League⁴, Championship and Leagues One and Two.
- 2,477 spectators treated for eligible injuries.
- 200 spectators taken to hospital.
- This equates to 1 injury per 15,371 spectators (see Table 2 below).
- Slips, trips and falls were the cause of 30% of all recorded injuries – the highest ‘known’ category.

Notes to the results

1. The above figures for the 2018/19 season are based on complete spectator injury data returns from 92 of the 94 grounds in England and Wales at which designated football matches⁵ are played and complete actual attendance figures from 89 of those grounds. The data has been weighted to account for missing/incomplete data from a handful of grounds as necessary.
2. For the purposes of these statistics, an eligible injury is classed as a wound or trauma, hurt or harm, usually applied to damage inflicted on a spectator by an external force within the curtilage of a ground on matchday. Injuries to staff/players are excluded. Illnesses are by their nature excluded. Pre-existing injuries are also considered ineligible as they did not occur within the curtilage of a ground on matchday. Additionally, any injuries which can be attributed to the intoxication of the spectator are excluded.
3. In order to gather more consistent spectator injury data, the SGSA provided additional guidance to football clubs in advance of collecting data in the 2016/17 season. Additionally, the reporting of injury statistics was fully integrated into the 2017/18 SGSA license application process using a more restrictive format than in previous years to generate more accurate and standardised data. The figures for the 2015/16 season are therefore not directly comparable with those for the 2016/17 and 2017/18 seasons.
4. Although spectator injury data collection forms part of the license application process for ease of administration as part of a broader area of SGSA work, it is not a formal or statutory requirement for such data to be included in the licence application.

⁴ Including football matches played at Wembley Stadium and the Principality Stadium, Cardiff.

⁵ A designated match is defined under the Football Spectators (Designation of Football Matches in England and Wales) Order 2000 as “any association football match which is played at Wembley Stadium, at the Principality Stadium in Cardiff or at a sports ground in England and Wales which is registered with the Football League or the Football Association Premier League as the home ground of a club which is a member of the Football League or the Football Association Premier League at the time the match is played”.



Table 1: Summary of reported injuries for the 2018/19 football season, by league (including historical data for the 2016/17 and 2017/18 football seasons)

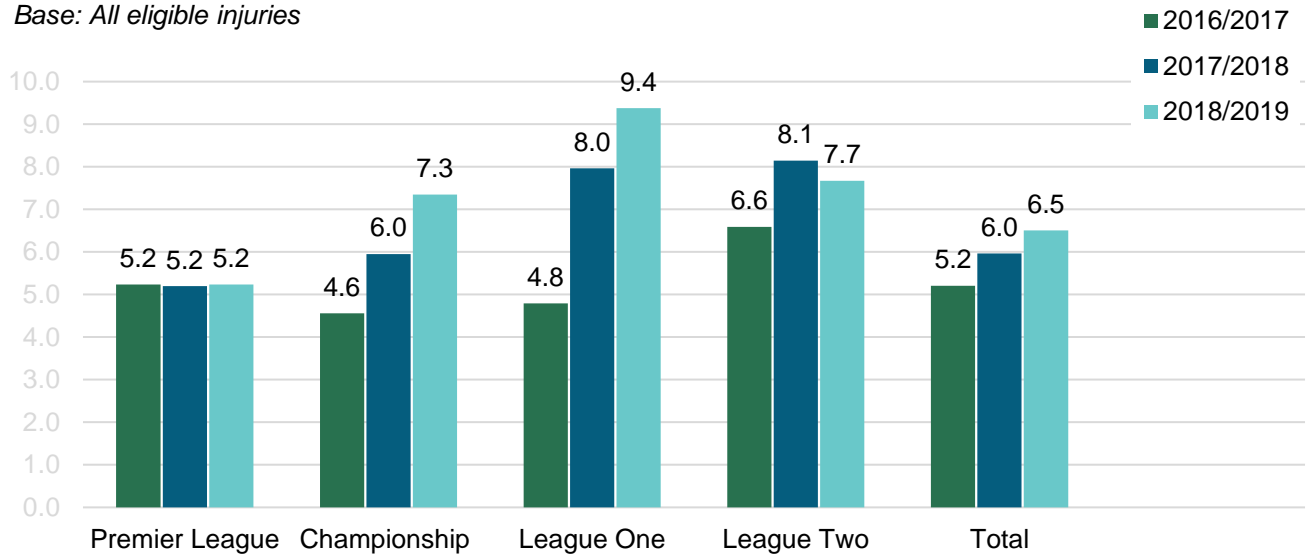
Football season	Total spectators treated for injuries	Total spectators taken to hospital	Total attendance	Injury ratio per spectator	Hospital attendance amongst spectators treated for injuries	Injuries per 100,000 spectators	Hospital visits per 100,000 spectators
Premier League (plus international stadia)							
2018/19	1048	84	20,026,604	1 injury per 19,109	1 in 12 went to hospital	5.2	0.4
2017/18	900	67	17,327,023	1 injury per 19,252	1 in 13 went to hospital	5.2	0.4
2016/17	854	30	16,314,381	1 injury per 19,103	1 in 28 went to hospital	5.2	0.2
Championship							
2018/19	776	55	10,564,716	1 injury per 13,614	1 in 14 went to hospital	7.3	0.5
2017/18	635	48	10,670,158	1 injury per 16,803	1 in 13 went to hospital	6.0	0.4
2016/17	502	25	11,015,908	1 injury per 21,944	1 in 20 went to hospital	4.6	0.2
League One							
2018/19	435	46	4,639,264	1 injury per 10,665	1 in 9 went to hospital	9.4	1.0
2017/18	319	22	4,006,622	1 injury per 12,560	1 in 15 went to hospital	8.0	0.5
2016/17	222	17	4,633,424	1 injury per 20,871	1 in 13 went to hospital	4.8	0.4
League Two							
2018/19	218	15	2,843,404	1 injury per 13,043	1 in 15 went to hospital	7.7	0.5
2017/18	208	9	2,553,647	1 injury per 12,277	1 in 23 went to hospital	8.1	0.4
2016/17	182	14	2,761,318	1 injury per 15,172	1 in 13 went to hospital	6.6	0.5
Total (including international stadia)							
2018/19	2477	200	38,073,988	1 injury per 15,371	1 in 12 went to hospital	6.5	0.5
2017/18	2062	146	34,557,450	1 injury per 16,759	1 in 14 went to hospital	6.0	0.4
2016/17	1865	92	35,816,919	1 injury per 19,205	1 in 20 went to hospital	5.2	0.3

Source: SGSA Injury Data



Figure A – Eligible Injuries per 100,000 spectators

Base: All eligible injuries



Source: SGSA Injury Data

The reported overall injury ratio per spectator is higher than last year. The rate is one injury per 15,371 spectators, in comparison with one injury per 16,759 spectators in 2017/18 and one injury per 19,205 spectators in 2016/17.

This equates to 6.5 injuries per 100,000 spectators for 2018/19; a higher rate than the overall 2017/18 figure of 6 injuries per 100,000 spectators. There were 5.2 injuries per 100,000 spectators in 2016/17.

Table 2: Location by division (eligible injuries)

Base: All eligible injuries	Premier/ International %	Championship %	League 1 %	League 2 %	Total %
In the stands	54	57	60	72	58
Other inside ground	11	10	11	11	11
Gate/turnstiles/exit	7	4	8	3	6
Concourse	7	5	3	4	5
Car park	2	5	3	3	3
First aid	1	8	3	0	3
Hospitality	2	2	3	1	2
Other offices in ground	2	1	2	1	2
Bar/café/kitchen	1	1	1	2	1
Not known	14	7	6	2	9
Base	1048	776	435	218	2477

Source: SGSA Injury Data 2018/19

Over half (58%) of injuries took place in the stands.



Table 3: Time period by division

Base: All eligible injuries	Premier/ International %	Championship %	League 1 %	League 2 %	Total %
Before the match	19	22	25	34	22
During the match	27	37	37	36	33
Half time	6	6	10	13	7
After the match	7	7	9	12	8
Not known	40	28	20	5	30
Base	1048	776	435	218	2477

Source: SGSA Injury Data 2018/19

Most incidents took place either before (22%) or during (33%) the match, with only 8% of all total cases recorded as having happened after the match.

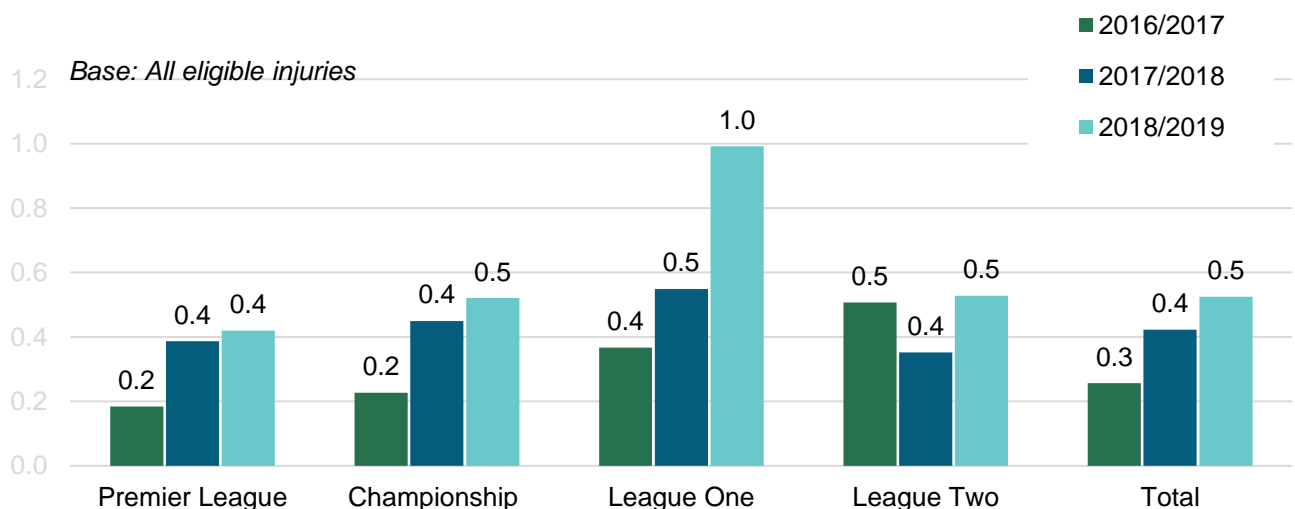
Table 4: Hospital visits by division (eligible injuries)

Base: All eligible Injuries	Premier/ International %	Championship %	League 1 %	League 2 %	Total %
Yes	8	7	11	7	8
No	86	91	86	89	88
Not known	6	1	3	4	4
Base	1048	776	435	218	2477

Source: SGSA Injury Data 2018/19

Across all leagues, 8% of spectators reporting an injury were sent to hospital. The chart below shows that hospital referrals have risen slightly since 2016/17, particularly in League One.

Figure B – Hospital visits per 100,000 spectators



Source: SGSA Injury Data

**Table 5: Cause by division (eligible injuries)**

Base: All eligible Injuries	Premier/ International %	Championship %	League 1 %	League 2 %	Total %
Slip / trip / fall	28	29	35	34	30
Celebration	7	4	3	5	5
Hit by football	3	4	9	10	5
Hot food/drink/ liquid spillage	5	3	5	9	5
Assault	4	3	1	1	3
Seat injury	2	4	2	4	3
Hit/knocked (accidental)	2	3	3	3	3
Insect bite / sting	1	3	3	3	2
Pushed (accidental)	2	3	1	-	2
Fire/smoke/flare	1	2	1	2	1
Turnstile	2	1	1	1	1
Crowd surge	1	2	1	-	1
Other	28	19	18	24	23
Not known	15	19	17	5	16
Base	1048	776	435	218	2477

Source: SGSA Injury Data 2018/19

Figure C below shows the most common causes of injury were, as in previous years, slips, trips and falls. These account for 30% of total eligible cases, the same proportion as the previous year.

Prevalence of injuries caused by assault were low: 3% in total and similar across the four leagues.

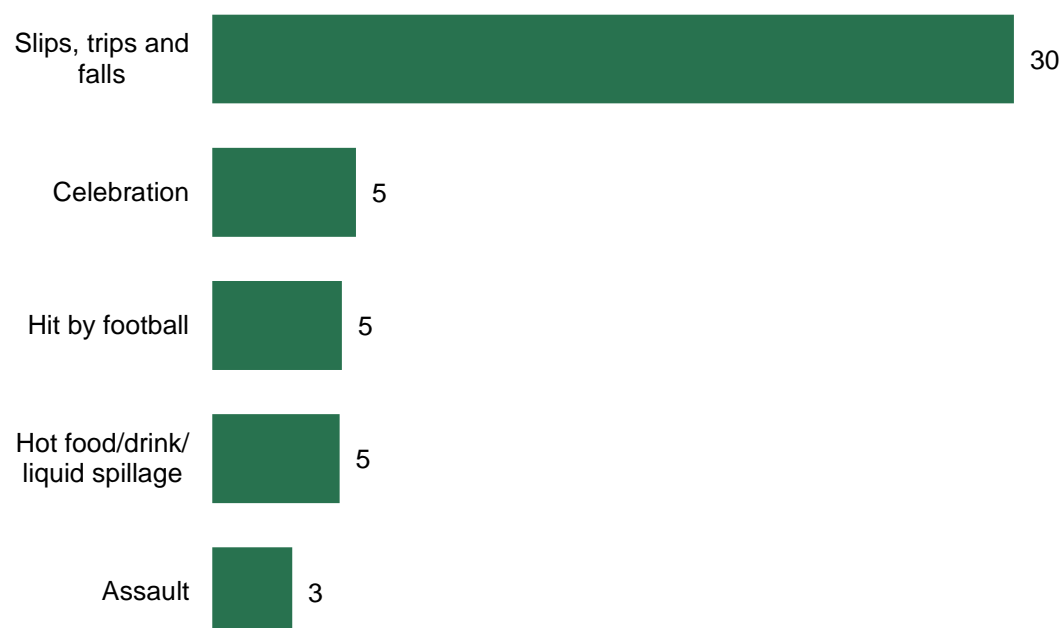
Across all leagues there were very few incidents caused by crowd surges or crushing. Flare and fire related incidents were also uncommon.

Note that Figure C does not include injuries for which the cause was unknown (16% of all eligible injuries).



Figure C – Most common causes of injury (as percentage of all eligible injuries)

Base: All eligible injuries



Source: SGSA Injury Data 2018/19

Table 6: Age group by division

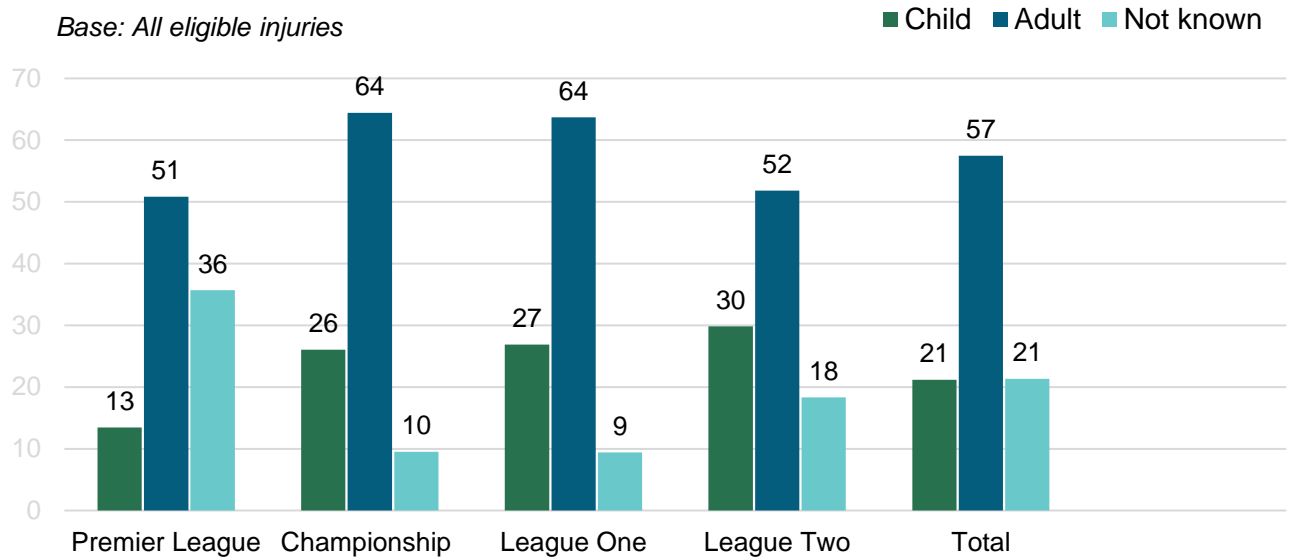
Base: All eligible Injuries	Premier/ International %	Championship %	League 1 %	League 2 %	Total %
Child (<18)	13	26	27	30	21
18-24	8	10	11	7	9
25-59	26	29	28	28	28
60+	17	19	25	16	19
18+ (unspecified adult)	0	6	0	0	2
Not known	36	10	9	18	21
Base	1048	776	435	218	2477

Source: SGSA Injury Data 2018/19

Across all leagues, an age or age group of the spectator treated for injury was given in 77% of cases. Across the Premier League, however, the proportion of injuries where the age was 'not known' was much higher: only 64% of injuries had the age recorded. Across all leagues, just over a fifth (21%) of injuries were recorded as happening to children.



Figure D – Adult and child injuries (as percentage of all eligible injuries)



Source: SGSA Injury Data 2018/19

Table 7: Injury type by division (eligible injuries)

Base: All eligible injuries	Premier/ International %	Championship %	League 1 %	League 2 %	Total %
Cut/laceration	27	30	31	31	29
Bruise	15	14	18	23	16
Sprain/strain	7	4	6	7	6
Burn/scald	7	4	6	9	6
Head injury	5	3	8	7	5
Fainting/dizziness	3	4	5	6	4
Asthma/trouble breathing	2	3	2	3	3
Dislocation	2	2	1	1	2
Broken/fractured bone	1	2	2	1	1
Graze/abrasion	1	1	1	0	1
Other	27	26	15	9	23
Not known	4	8	4	3	5
Base	1048	776	435	218	2477

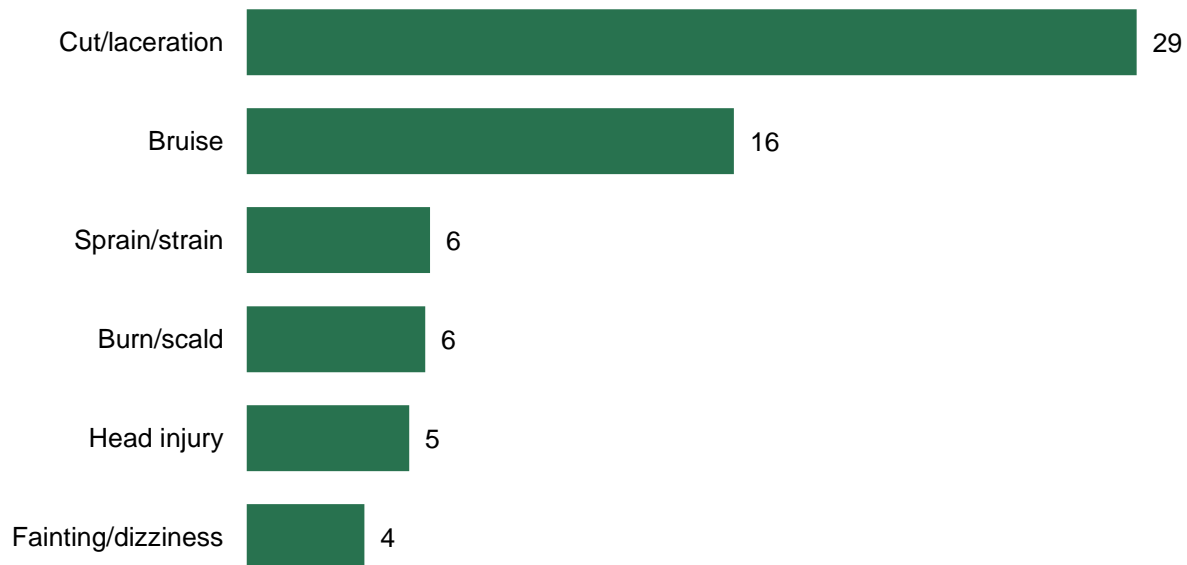
Source: SGSA Injury Data 2018/19

The most common type of injury was ‘cut/laceration’, accounting for nearly a third of all eligible injuries (29%).



Figure E – Most common types of injury (as percentage of all eligible injuries)

Base: All eligible injuries



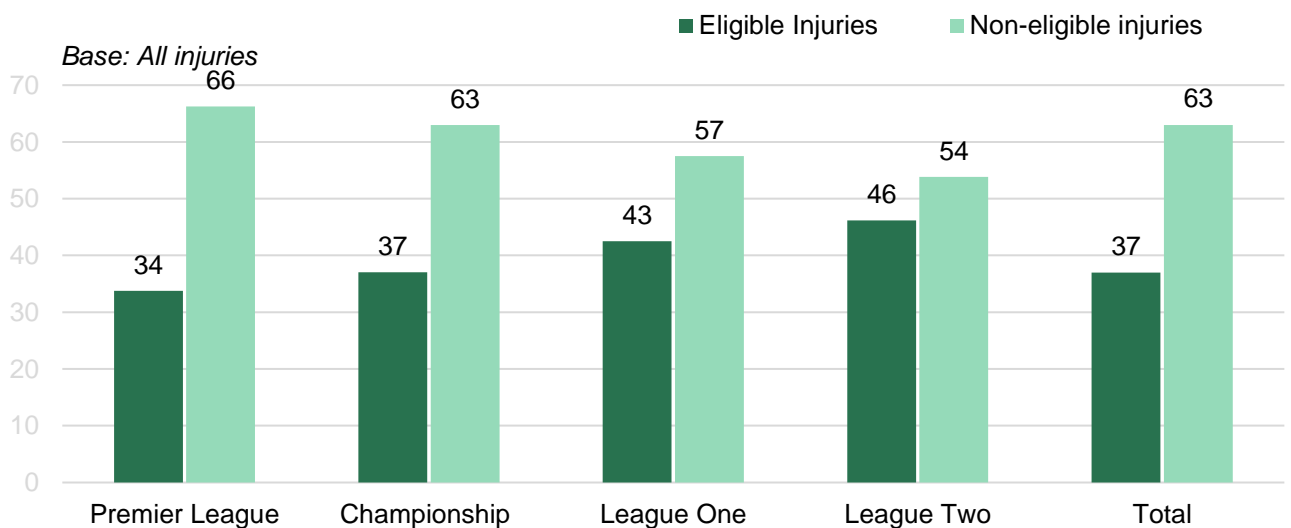
Source: SGSA Injury Data 2018/19

Table 8: Eligible injuries by division for 2018/19 season

Base: All	Premier/ International %	Championship %	League 1 %	League 2 %	Total %
Eligible	34	37	43	46	37
Ineligible	66	63	57	54	63
Base	3105	2095	1023	472	6695

Source: SGSA Injury Data 2018/19

Figure F – Eligible injuries, by division



Source: SGSA Injury Data 2018/19