

Injuries at football grounds 2019/20 report (revised)

Introduction

This report details the injuries that occurred at football grounds for the 2019/20 season, and which were reported to the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) by the 92 football grounds¹ in England and Wales then subject to SGSA licensing.

This revised report addresses a coding error made by our outsourced data analysis provider, NatCen. This was identified in June 2023 and resulted in the underreporting of spectator injuries for 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2021/22. 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 6.8 (revised from 5.7). The rate of eligible injuries is 33% (revised from 27%).

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

Reporting period

The report for this season is based on injury data from the first six months of the 2019/20 season only (termed Tranche 1), covering the start of the season to 31 January 2020². From mid-March 2020 onwards the 2019/20 season was played without spectators present due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report does not include any data from 1 February 2020. It was judged that given the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be unfair on clubs to request the data from 1 February until the middle of March as this would create an unfair bureaucratic burden and additional pressures at a time when a number of clubs had furloughed staff.

In the report, comparisons are made to both the full 2018/19 season and the first six months (Tranche 1) of that season where appropriate. Note, however, comparisons between previous seasons and the 2019/20 season, for which only partial injury data is available, should be treated with caution because matches were only played in front of spectators for the first six months of the 2019/20 season.

¹ During the 2019/20 season there were 92 rather than 94 football grounds in England and Wales subject to SGSA licensing. For further details, see Annex A, Additional Note 1.

² SGSA asks grounds subject to its licensing to submit injury data for each season in two tranches. The first tranche covering the start of the season to 31 January is submitted to SGSA alongside the ground's application for a new licence by end February each year. The second tranche, covering 1 February to the end of the season, is submitted to SGSA by end July each year.

Key findings

In the first six months of the 2019/20 season:

- 21,479,064 spectators attended matches in the Premier League³, Championship and Leagues One and Two.
- 1,462 spectators were treated for eligible injuries. This equates to one injury per 14,692 spectators and to 6.8 injuries per 100,000 spectators (see Annex A Table 1, and Figure A for additional detail).
- 86 spectators were taken to hospital (see Annex A Table 1, Table 4, and Figure B).
- Slips, trips and falls were the cause of 33% of all recorded injuries – the highest ‘known’ category (see Annex A Table 5, and Figure C).
- Cut/laceration was the most common type of recorded injury across all leagues, rating 23% overall (see Annex A Table 7, and Figure E).

Commentary

Reported injuries to spectators continue to be low and relatively stable. Where injuries do occur, they rarely require a spectator to be taken to hospital. However, there is no room for complacency. The SGSA continues to work to improve the quality of the data, to help aid future analysis and commentary, and thereby inform future regulatory activity which seeks to maintain spectator safety at SGSA licensed grounds (see also Continuous Improvement below).

A summary of the reported spectator injuries for the past four seasons across all grounds subject to SGSA licensing is shown in Annex A (Table 1 and Figure A). This is broken down by each league, as well as a cumulative number for all.

Additionally, Annex A includes detailed analysis and results for the 2019/20 season:

- Table 2 – Location in ground where injury occurred
- Table 3 – Time period when injury occurred
- Table 4 and Figure B – Number of injuries requiring a hospital visit
- 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/presentation of Injury
- Table 8, Figure F and Figure G – Breakdown of eligible and non-eligible injuries

Continuous improvement

Since the 2016/17 season, the reporting of spectator injury statistics has been fully integrated into the SGSA licence application process in a more controlled format

³ Including football matches played at Wembley Stadium and the Principality Stadium, Cardiff.

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 published strategic objectives governing the collection and analysis of spectator injury data for the 2020/21 season onwards, which can be accessed on the research section of the SGSA website here: [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, the SGSA is trialling a new incident report form for the 2020/21 season.

Methodology

At the mid-point and end of each season, the SGSA asks all football grounds in England and Wales, subject to its licensing (those grounds at which designated football matches⁴ are played), to provide details of the number of staff and spectators treated for injuries at their grounds during that season. Injury data is then sent to NatCen Social Research for analysis and commentary. To aid administration, this injury data request forms part of the SGSA licence application process for the next season and helps inform SGSA regulatory activity under the Football Spectators Act 1989⁵. The injury data request, however, is not a formal or statutory requirement.

The figures for the 2019/20 season cover the first six months of the season to 31 January 2020 only, because from mid-March 2020 onwards the season was played without spectators present in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The figures are based on injury data returns from all 92 of the grounds in England and Wales subject to SGSA licensing, and complete actual attendance figures from 90⁶ of those grounds.

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. Eligible injuries must have occurred to spectators – those to staff and players are excluded. A detailed description of eligible injuries is to be found in, page 14.

⁴ 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”.

⁵ 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.

⁶ For further details, see Annex A, Additional Note 2.

Annex A Table 8, Figure F and Figure G provide further details on the 2019/20 statistics for eligible and non-eligible injuries, based on the above criteria.

Annex A – Injuries at football grounds, 2019/20 season

Prevalence of injuries across all leagues

In the first six months of the 2019/20 season for which data is available:

- 21,479,064 spectators attended matches in the Premier League⁷, Championship and Leagues One and Two.
- 1,462 spectators were treated for eligible injuries⁸. This equates to one injury for every 14,692 spectators and 6.8 injuries per 100,000 spectators.
- 86 spectators (one in every 17) who were treated for injuries were taken to hospital. This equates to 0.4 hospital visits per 100,000 spectators.

This prevalence of all injuries varied slightly across leagues, with rates higher in Leagues One and Two than in the Premier League and the Championship. See Table 1 and Figure A below for more detail.

⁷ Including football matches played at Wembley Stadium and the Principality Stadium, Cardiff.

⁸ See eligible vs non-eligible section on page 13 for the definition of 'eligible injury'



Table 1: Summary of reported injuries for the first six months (Tranche 1) of the 2019/20 football season, by league (including historical data for Tranche 1 of 2018/19 season, as well as for the 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 full football seasons)

Football season	Total spectators treated for injuries	Total spectators taken to hospital	Total attendance	Injury ratio per spectator	Rate of hospital attendance amongst spectators treated for injuries	Injuries per 100,000 spectators	Hospital visits per 100,000 spectators
Premier League (plus international stadia)							
2019/20 (Tranche 1)	705	42	10,913,418	1 injury per 15480 spectators	1 in 17 went to hospital	6.5	0.4
2018/19 (Tranche 1)	611	49	11,437,693	1 injury per 18720 spectators	1 in 12 went to hospital	5.3	0.4
2018/19	1048	84	20,026,604	1 injury per 19109 spectators	1 in 12 went to hospital	5.2	0.4
2017/18	900	67	17,327,023	1 injury per 19252 spectators	1 in 13 went to hospital	5.2	0.4
2016/17	854	30	16,314,381	1 injury per 19103 spectators	1 in 28 went to hospital	5.2	0.2
Championship							
2019/20 (Tranche 1)	405	21	5,988,799	1 injury per 14787 spectators	1 in 19 went to hospital	6.8	0.4
2018/19 (Tranche 1)	436	30	6,615,734	1 injury per 15174 spectators	1 in 15 went to hospital	6.6	0.5
2018/19	776	55	10,564,716	1 injury per 13614 spectators	1 in 14 went to hospital	7.3	0.5
2017/18	635	48	10,670,158	1 injury per 16803 spectators	1 in 13 went to hospital	6.0	0.4
2016/17	502	25	11,015,908	1 injury per 21944 spectators	1 in 20 went to hospital	4.6	0.2
League One							
2019/20 (Tranche 1)	225	11	2,829,337	1 injury per 12575 spectators	1 in 20 went to hospital	8.0	0.4
2018/19 (Tranche 1)	242	22	2,816,397	1 injury per 11638 spectators	1 in 11 went to hospital	8.6	0.8
2018/19	435	46	4,639,264	1 injury per 10665 spectators	1 in 9 went to hospital	9.4	1.0
2017/18	319	22	4,006,622	1 injury per 12560 spectators	1 in 15 went to hospital	8.0	0.5
2016/17	222	17	4,633,424	1 injury per 20871 spectators	1 in 13 went to hospital	4.8	0.4
League Two							
2019/20 (Tranche 1)	127	12	1,747,510	1 injury per 13760 spectators	1 in 11 went to hospital	7.3	0.7
2018/19 (Tranche 1)	152	13	1,889,127	1 injury per 12428 spectators	1 in 12 went to hospital	8.0	0.7
2018/19	218	15	2,843,404	1 injury per 13043 spectators	1 in 15 went to hospital	7.7	0.5
2017/18	208	9	2,553,647	1 injury per 12277 spectators	1 in 23 went to hospital	8.1	0.4
2016/17	182	14	2,761,318	1 injury per 15172 spectators	1 in 13 went to hospital	6.6	0.5
Total (including international stadia)							
2019/20 (Tranche 1)	1462	86	21,479,064	1 injury per 14692 spectators	1 in 17 went to hospital	6.8	0.4
2018/19 (Tranche 1)	1441	114	22,758,951	1 injury per 15794 spectators	1 in 13 went to hospital	6.3	0.5
2018/19	2477	200	38,073,988	1 injury per 15371 spectators	1 in 12 went to hospital	6.5	0.5
2017/18	2062	146	34,557,450	1 injury per 16759 spectators	1 in 14 went to hospital	6.0	0.4
2016/17	1865	92	35,816,919	1 injury per 19205 spectators	1 in 20 went to hospital	5.2	0.3

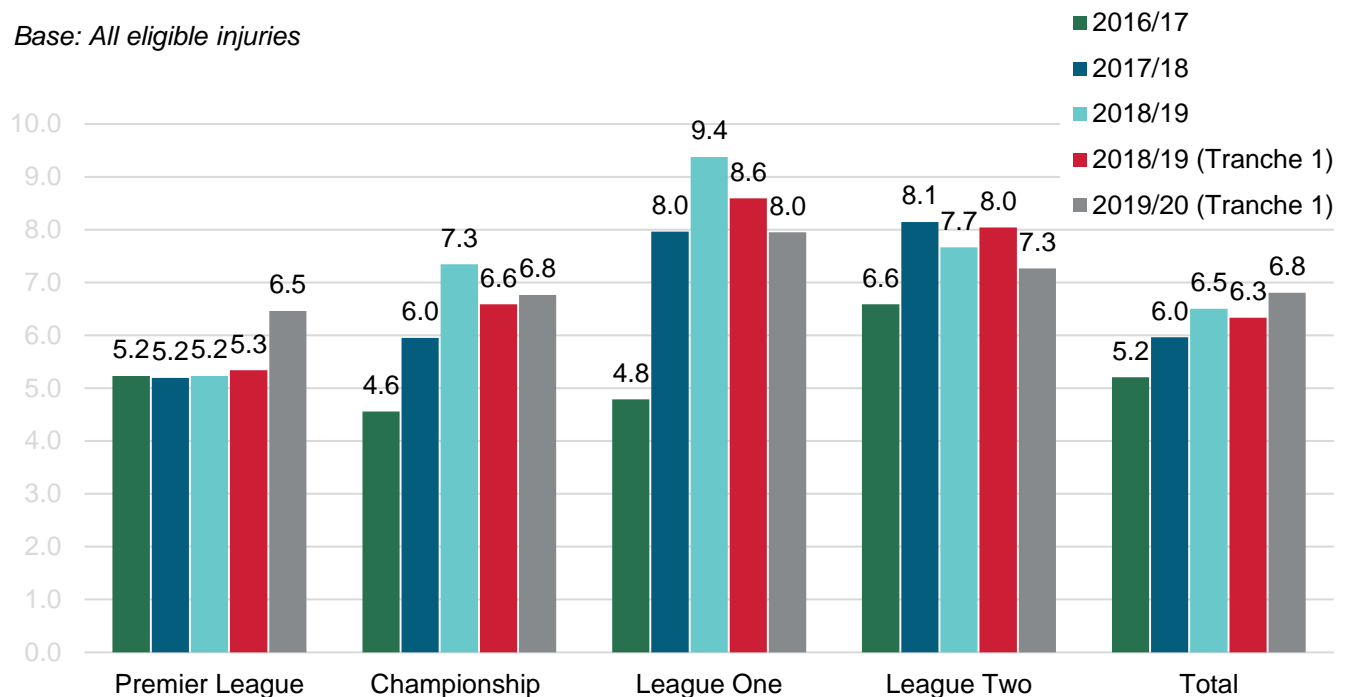
Source: SGSA Injury Data; Base: All eligible injuries

Comparisons between the available data for 2019/20 and previous seasons should be treated with caution – matches were only played in front of spectators for the first six months of the 2019/20 season.



Figure A – Injuries per 100,000 spectators

Base: All eligible injuries



Source: SGSA Injury Data

Note: Comparisons between previous seasons and the available data for the 2019/20 season should be treated with caution because matches were only played in front of spectators for the first six months of the 2019/20 season.

- Although the total injury rate remains low, there has been a gradual increase across the years and injury rates were higher in the first half of the 2019/20 season (Figure A) than for any other season reported on here.
- There was an increase from 2018/19 Tranche 1 to 2019/20 Tranche 1, with rates of 6.8 and 6.3 injuries per 100,000 spectators for the first six months of the 2019/20 and 2018/19 seasons, respectively.
- This similarity is further supported by the figures of 1 injury per every 14,692 spectators for 2019/20, in comparison to 1 injury per 15,794 spectators for Tranche 1 in 2018/19 (see Table 1).



Injury location

Table 2: Injury location by league

	League				
	Premier/ International %	Championship %	League 1 %	League 2 %	Total %
Base: All eligible injuries					
In the stands	55	52	68	72	58
Concourse	7	10	7	6	8
Gate/turnstiles/exit	5	6	7	5	6
Car park	3	9	1	1	4
Hospitality	2	2	2	3	2
Bar/café/kitchen	2	1	1	1	1
Other inside ground	3	6	11	8	6
Other offices in the ground	1	2	1	2	1
Not known	9	6	2	2	7
Base	705	405	225	127	1462

Source: SGSA Injury Data: 2019/20

- Over half of all injuries (58%) took place in the stands (Table 2).
- This figure is similar to that recorded in the 2018/19 season, when for the first six months of that season 55%, and for the whole of that season 58% of all injuries took place in the stands.
- Additionally, a higher overall percentage of injuries took place on the concourse (8%) than the previous year. 2018/19 Tranche 1 figures for concourse injuries were 6%. All other locations showed similar injury incidences for 2019/20 to 2018/19.
- Injuries were not classified as 'eligible' if they took place outside the ground.
- A proportion of injury locations were reported as 'not known'. It is therefore important to ask clubs to keep more careful records in the future to aid statistics and for appropriate preventative measures to be put in place.



Injury time period

Table 3: Injury time period by league

	League				
	Premier/ International	Championship	League 1	League 2	Total
Base: All eligible injuries	%	%	%	%	%
Before the match	25	35	24	29	28
During the match	38	41	48	43	41
Half time	6	8	10	11	8
After the match	10	9	6	9	9
Not known	22	6	12	8	15
Base	705	405	225	127	1462

Source: SGSA Injury Data: 2019/20

- Most incidents with a recorded time period took place during the match (41%). This was most common for League One injuries (48% of all eligible injuries), although a high proportion of Premier League injuries did not have a recorded time period (Table 3).
- 28% of all recorded incidents occurred before the match, with only 9% happening after the match.
- Injuries must have taken place on match day and within the curtilage of the ground to be eligible.

Injuries requiring hospital visits

Table 4: Injuries requiring hospital visits by league

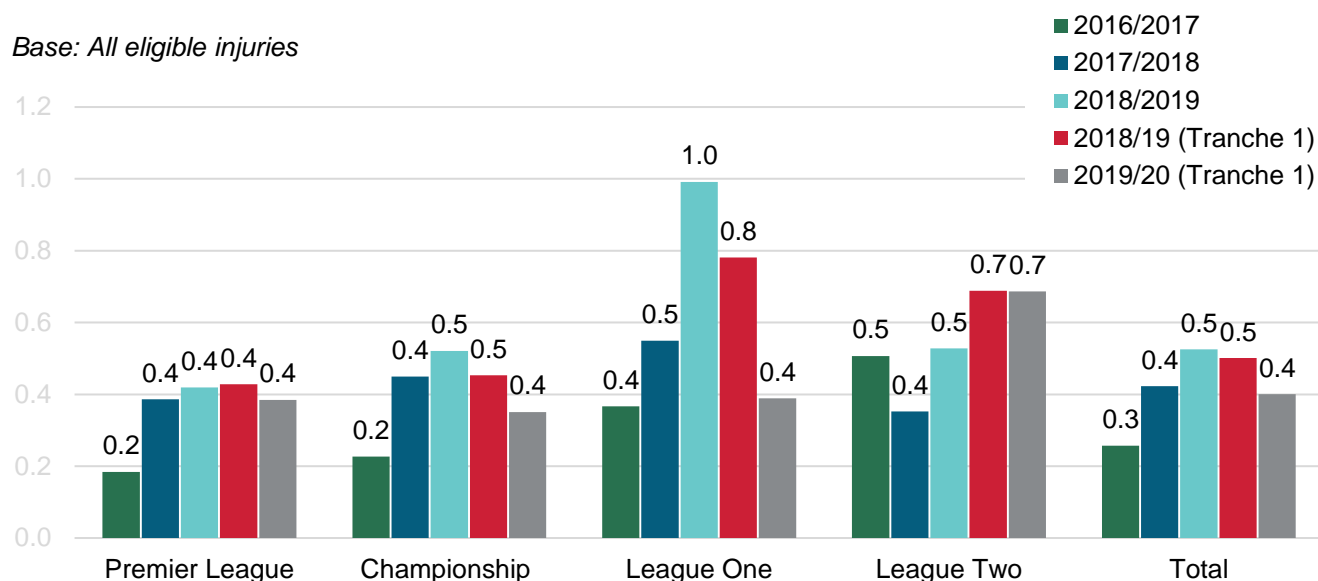
	League				
	Premier/ International	Championship	League 1	League 2	Total
Base: All eligible injuries	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	6	5	5	9	6
No	94	94	95	89	93
Not known	0	1	0	2	1
Base	705	405	225	127	1462

Source: SGSA Injury Data: 2019/20

- Across all leagues, 6% of spectators reporting an injury were sent to hospital, with rates highest for League Two (Table 4).
- These total figures are comparable to that for the first half of the 2018/19 season (8%).



Figure B – Injuries requiring hospital visits per 100,000 spectators



Source: SGSA Injury Data

Note: Comparisons between previous seasons and the available data for the 2019/20 season should be treated with caution because matches were only played in front of spectators for the first six months of the 2019/20 season.

- The 2019/20 Tranche 1 hospital referral ratio was comparable to the same period in 2018/19, at 0.4 hospital visits per 100,000 spectators in 2019/20 Tranche 1 compared to 0.5 in 2018/19 (Figure B).
- Given the similar overall ratio, Premier League, Championship, League One and League Two changes from previous years are in line with expected fluctuations. League One injuries requiring hospital visits have reduced since this time last year, however they are comparable to that seen across the 2017/18 and 2016/17 seasons.
- Table 1 on page 5 however, highlights that the total number of spectators taken to hospital in the first six months of 2019/20 were lower than that recorded for the first six months of 2018/19, with a rate of one in every 17 spectators (19/20) versus one in every 13 spectators (18/19).

Causes of injury

- Table 5 and Figure C highlight that, in line with previous years, the most common causes of spectator injury were slips, trips and falls. These accounted for 33% of total eligible cases.
- This is slightly higher than that recorded for the first six months of the 2018/19 season, which reported a slips, trips and falls rate of 29%.
- Across all leagues, there were very few incidents caused by turnstiles, accidental pushes or fire/smoke/flare. Injuries caused by crowd surges or crushing were also uncommon, with low incidences reported in the Premier League and League One only.



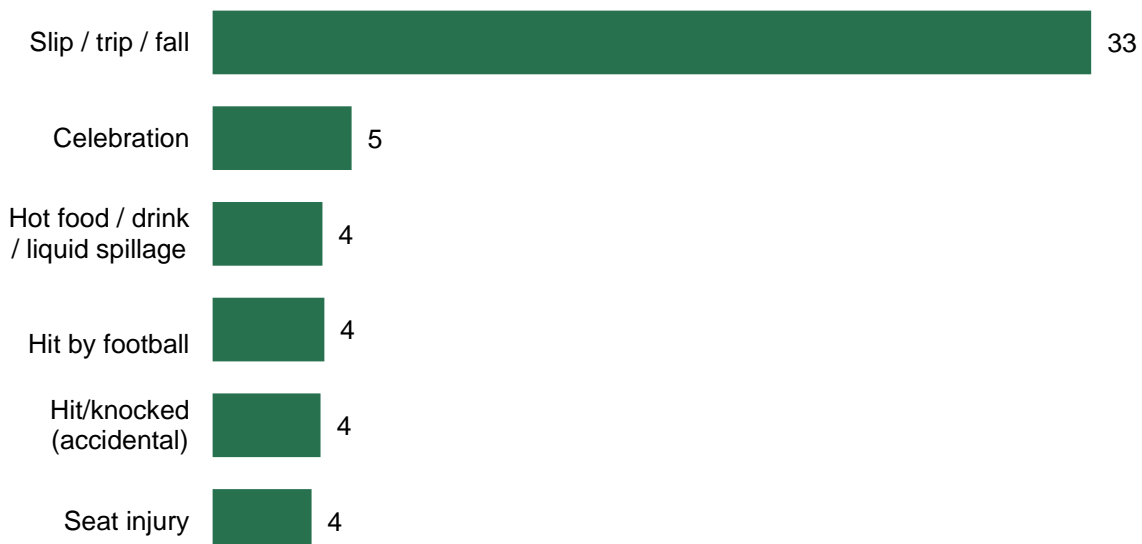
Table 5: Injury cause by league

	League				
	Premier/ International	Championship	League 1	League 2	Total
Base: All eligible injuries	%	%	%	%	%
Slip / trip / fall	31	32	37	40	33
Celebration	5	5	8	3	5
Hit by football	3	1	10	9	4
Hot food/drink/ liquid spillage	3	6	4	5	4
Hit/knocked (accidental)	4	6	4	2	4
Insect bite / sting	2	6	4	4	4
Seat injury	3	3	5	5	4
Assault	3	2	3	3	3
Turnstile	2	2	1	3	2
Pushed (accidental)	1	0	2	3	1
Fire/smoke/flare	1	1	1	1	1
Crowd surge	1	0	3	0	1
Other	21	14	12	12	17
Not known	20	21	7	9	17
Base	705	405	225	127	1462

Source: SGSA Injury Data: 2019/20

Figure C – Most common causes of injury, across all leagues (percentage of all eligible injuries)

Base: All respondents



Source: SGSA Injury Data:2019/20



- Again, it is important to note that a large proportion of injury causes were either 'not known'/reported (17%) or coded as 'other' (17%).
- Injury cause categories with very low prevalence have been grouped into the 'other' category for the purposes of the report. This included, for example, injuries caused by foreign objects, or other public order.
- Injuries were classified as 'not eligible' if they were caused by general illness, alcohol/intoxication, or other pre-existing conditions.

Age of spectators

Table 6: Age group by league					
Base: All eligible injuries	League				
	Premier/ International	Championship	League 1	League 2	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Child (<18)	17	25	29	26	22
18-24	8	7	9	10	8
25-59	29	25	25	29	27
60+	18	22	23	25	21
18+ (unspecified adult)	1	9	0	0	3
Not known	27	11	14	9	19
Base	705	405	225	127	1462

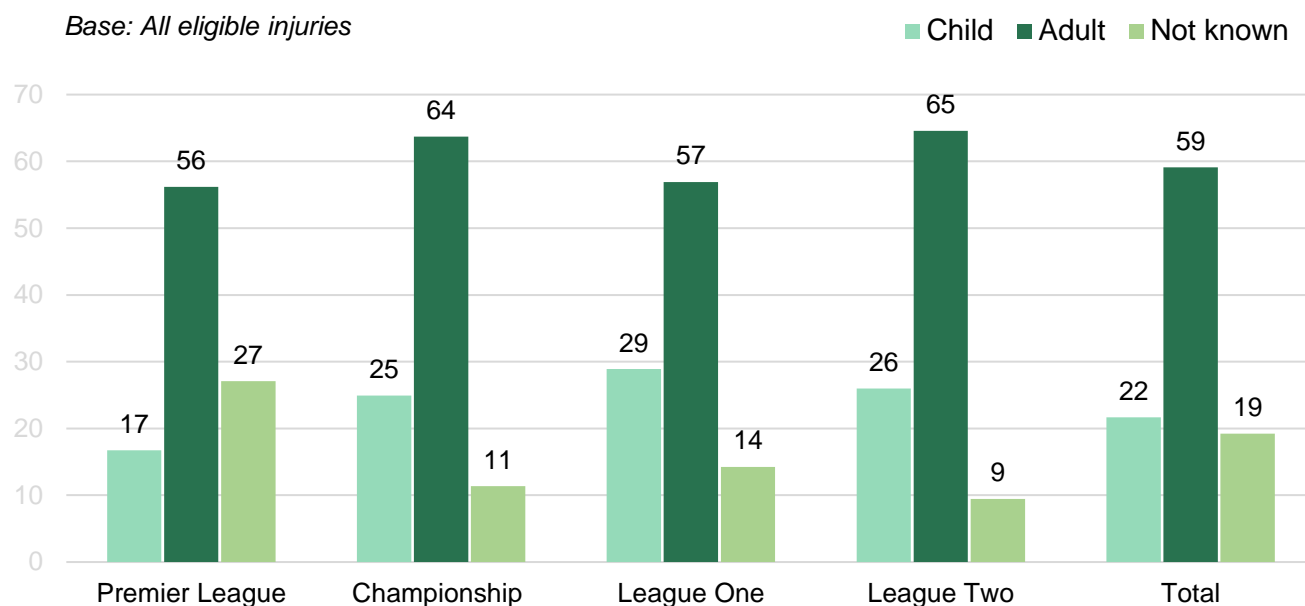
Source: SGSA Injury Data: 2019/20

- As in previous years, across all leagues there was a proportion (19%) of cases where spectator age had not been reported (classified as 'not known') (Table 6). This was particularly the case in the Premier League, whereby 27% of cases had no reported age. See Table 6 (above) and Figure D (below). It is recommended that clubs, particularly those in the Premier League, take care to record the spectator's age.



Figure D – Adult and child injuries

Base: All eligible injuries



Source: SGSA Injury Data: 2019/20

Types of injury

Table 7: Injury type by league

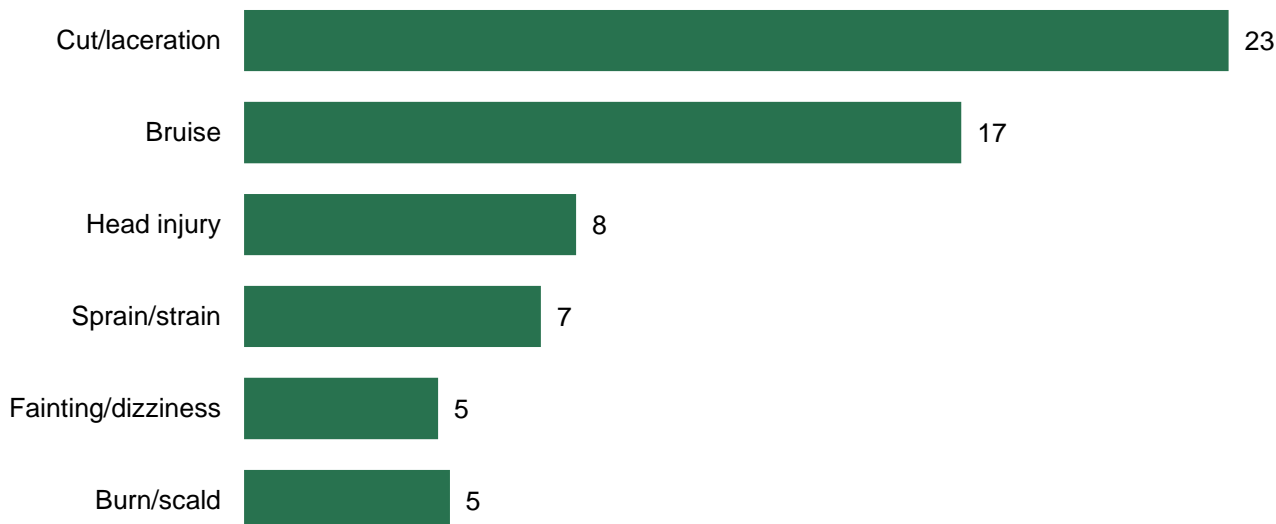
Base: All eligible injuries	League				
	Premier/ International %	Championship %	League 1 %	League 2 %	Total %
Cut/laceration	23	21	26	20	23
Bruise	14	16	23	24	17
Head injury	7	6	11	9	8
Sprain/strain	8	3	9	9	7
Burn/scald	5	5	4	6	5
Fainting/dizziness	5	3	5	7	5
Asthma/trouble breathing	2	1	2	2	2
Broken/fractured bone	1	1	1	2	1
Dislocation	1	1	0	1	1
Graze/abrasion	0	0	0	6	1
Other	7	4	5	5	6
Not known	27	37	13	11	26
Base	705	405	225	127	1462

Source: SGSA Injury Data: 2019/20



Figure E – Most common types of Injury, across all leagues (percentage of all eligible injuries)

Base: All respondents



Source: SGSA Injury Data: 2019/20

- As with previous years, the most common type of recorded injury for all leagues was cut/laceration (Table 7, Figure E). This was the case for 23% of total injuries, which is lower than the 27% recorded after the first six months of the 2018/19 season.
- Notably, the prevalence of head injuries increased across all leagues. A total of 4% was reported for both the first six months of the 2018/19 season, in comparison to the 8% found for 2019/20.
- A high percent of injury types were 'not known' or recorded (26% total). This was particularly the case for the Championship (37%) and Premier League (27%) clubs. It is recommended that those clubs keep more careful records in the future to aid statistics and for appropriate preventative measures to be put in place.

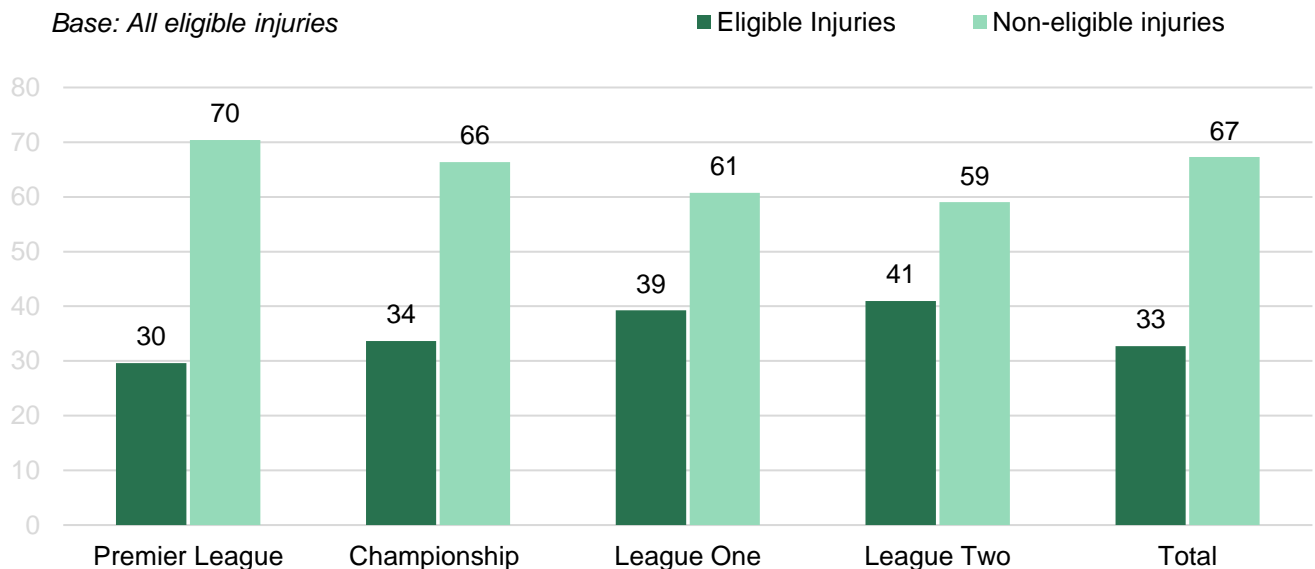
Eligible vs. non-eligible injuries

- 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.
- Eligible injuries must have occurred to spectators – those to staff and players are excluded.
- Illnesses and pre-existing injuries are by their nature excluded.
- Injuries which can be attributed to intoxication of the spectator are excluded.
- Injuries which did not occur within the curtilage of the ground, and on matchday are excluded.
- On average, across all leagues, 33% of recorded injuries were considered eligible according to the criteria outlined above.
- This is slightly lower than that recorded for the first six months of the 2018/19 season, during which 37% of injuries were considered eligible.



- Figure F and Table 8 below shows the percentage of eligible and ineligible injuries in returns submitted for the first six months of the 2019/20 season, broken down by league.

Figure F – Percentage of eligible injuries, by league



Source: SGSA Injury Data: 2019/20

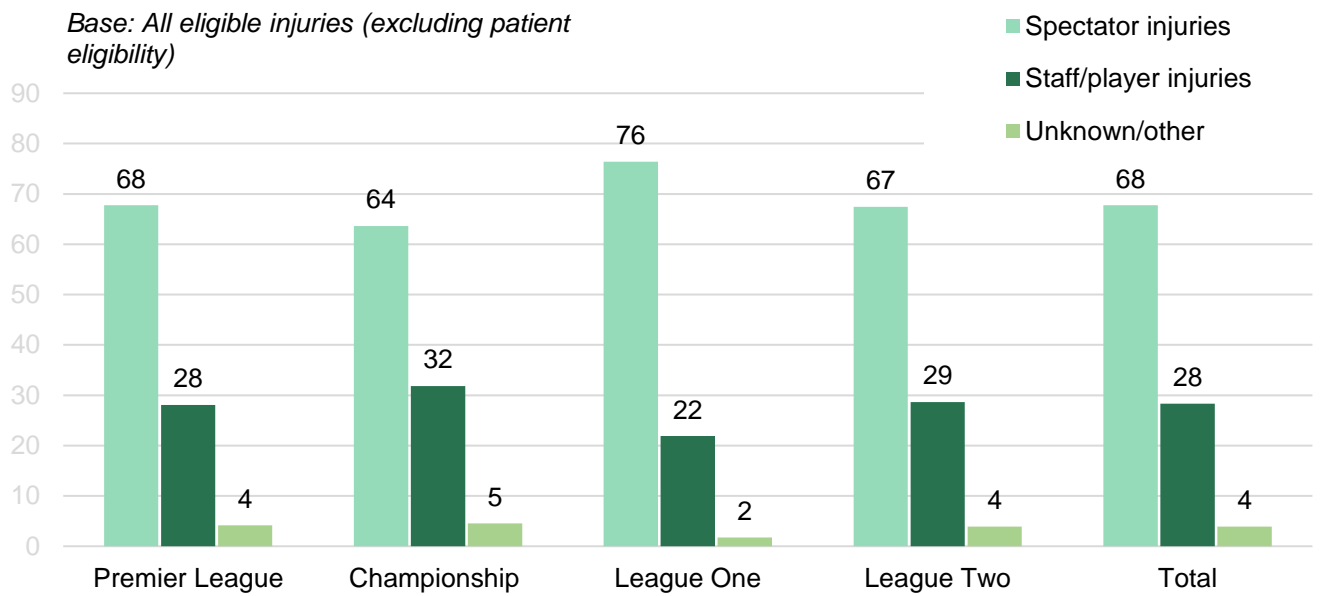
Table 8: Eligible injuries by league					
Base: All	League				Total
	Premier/ International	Championship	League 1	League 2	
	%	%	%	%	%
Eligible (including spectator group eligibility)	30	34	39	41	33
Ineligible	70	66	61	59	67
Base	2380	1204	573	310	4467

Source: SGSA Injury Data: 2019/20

- As outlined on page 13, injuries to staff and players are not considered eligible and not included in the presented findings. However, it is important that football grounds subject to SGSA licensing provide complete records of all injuries and illnesses. Therefore, a figure outlining non-spectator injury rates for the first six months of the 2019/20 season is presented below in Figure G.
- The average Tranche 1 staff/player injury rate for the 2019/20 season of 28% was the similar to that recorded for Tranche 1 of the 2018/19 season (27%).
- Comparable rates from 2018/19 to 2019/20 were apparent in the Premier League and League One, with figures previously at 30% and 23% respectively. However, rates increased in the Championship (previously 26%) and League Two (previously 23%).



Figure G – Percentage of non-spectator vs spectator injuries, by league



Source: SGSA Injury Data: 2019/20



Additional notes

1. The above figures for the first six months of the 2019/20 season are based on complete injury data returns from all 92 grounds in England and Wales at which designated football matches were played. Bury FC ceased to be a League One club; and Coventry City FC (League One) had a ground sharing arrangement with Birmingham City FC (St Andrew's, Championship) during the 2019/20 season. The above figures reported for League One include attendance and injury data for Coventry City's home matches at St Andrew's, with the corresponding data for Birmingham City's home matches included in the above figures for the Championship.
2. Complete actual attendance figures for the first six months of the 2019/20 season were provided by 90 of the 92 grounds. Leyton Orient FC (League Two) and Hull FC (Championship) did not provide attendance data and therefore figures are based on externally published information only.
3. In order to gather more consistent spectator injury data, 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, 2018/19 and 2019/20 SGSA licence application process, using a more restrictive format than in previous years to generate more accurate and standardised data.
4. Although spectator injury data collection forms part of the licence 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.

July 2023, NatCen