

Spectator Injuries at Football Grounds 2021/22 Report (revised)

Introduction

This report details the spectator injuries that occurred at football grounds for the 2021/22 season, and which were reported to the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) by the 93¹ football grounds in England and Wales subject to SGSA licensing.

This revised report addresses a coding error made 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 6.7 (revised from 5.4). 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 full 2021/22 season, covering the start of the season to end of June².

This is the first full season of data collected since 2018/19. This was due to the second half of the 2019/20 season being played without spectators as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2020/21 season being similarly disrupted by social distancing restrictions. Therefore, comparisons to the 2019/20 and 2020/21 seasons are not possible. Rather, comparisons are made with the 2018/19 season.

Key findings

The total number of injuries was lower than in the 2018/19 season. The pattern of injuries recorded is similar to the 2018/19 season.

In the 2021/22 season:

- 34,317,374 spectators attended matches in the Premier League³, English Football League (EFL) Championship, and Leagues One and Two.
- 2,289 spectators were treated for eligible injuries. This equates to one injury per 14,992 spectators and 6.7 injuries per 100,000 spectators (see Table 1, and Figure A for additional detail).

¹ No designated football matches were played at the Principality Stadium during the 2021/22 season.

² SGSA asks grounds subject to its licensing to submit injury and attendance 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 of June each year.

³ Including football matches played at Wembley Stadium.

- 177 spectators were taken to hospital (see Table 1 and Figure B).
- Slips, trips and falls were the cause of 29% of all recorded injuries – the highest ‘known’ category (see Table 5, and Figure D).
- Cut/laceration was the most common type of recorded injury across all leagues, rating 28% overall (see Table 7, and Figure F).

There is a mixed picture in terms of data recording quality standards. There is some evidence that clubs’ recording of injuries occurring has worsened in 2021/22 as there are higher entries recorded as ‘not known’ for injury type, cause of injury and location of incident. However, ‘not known’ responses declined for recorded age and time of incident.

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 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 section below).

A summary of the reported spectator injuries for the two previous years where spectators were present for the full season across all grounds subject to SGSA licensing is shown in Table 1 and Figures A and B. This is broken down by each league, as well as a cumulative number for all.

Additionally, the findings include detailed analysis and results for the 2021/22 season broken down by league and overall comparisons (figures combined across all leagues) with the 2018/19 season:

- Table 2 and Figure C – Location in ground where injury occurred
- Table 3 and 4 – Time period when injury occurred
- Table 5 and Figure D – Common causes of injury
- Table 6 and Figure E – Age breakdown of spectators who suffered an eligible injury
- Table 7 and Figure F – Common types/presentation of injury
- Table 8 and Figure G and Figure H – 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, 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. It must be noted from the outset that the data relies on the self-reporting of injuries by spectators.

The SGSA has published strategic objectives governing the collection and analysis of spectator injury data, 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.



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 the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) 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 in this report cover the full 2021/22 season. The figures are based on injury data returns from 91 of the grounds⁶ in England and Wales subject to SGSA licensing, and complete actual attendance figures from 92 of those grounds⁷.

For the purposes of this report, 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 and players are excluded. Illnesses and pre-existing injuries are by their nature excluded. Injuries which did not occur within the curtilage of the ground, and on matchday are excluded. Additionally, any injuries which can be attributed to the intoxication of the spectator are excluded.

Table 8, Figure G and Figure H in the findings provide further details on the 2021/22 statistics for eligible and non-eligible injuries, based on the above criteria.

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 in Cardiff to allow them to permit spectators to watch matches; and oversee local authorities in their duties to sports grounds safety and safety certification.

⁶ Full season injury data were returned for 91 of the 93 grounds. Further details in additional notes section below.

⁷ Full season attendance figures were returned for 92 of the 93 grounds. Further details in additional notes section below.



Findings

Prevalence of injuries across all leagues

In the 2021/22 season:

- 34,317,374 spectators attended matches in the Premier League⁸, EFL Championship, and Leagues One and Two.⁹
- 2,289 spectators were treated for eligible injuries¹⁰. This equates to one injury for every 14,992 spectators or 6.7 injuries per 100,000 spectators.
- 177 spectators (1 in every 13) who were treated for injuries were taken to hospital. This equates to 0.5 hospital visits per 100,000 spectators.
- The overall injury rate for 2021/22 slightly increased from 2018/19 when it was 6.5 injuries per 100,000 spectators. The hospitalisation rate was 0.5 per 100,000 spectators in both 2018/19 and 2021/22.
- Prevalence of injury and hospitalisation varies slightly across leagues, as shown by the charts below. The injury rate at Premier League matches increased from 5.2 per 100,000 spectators in 2018/19 to 6.6 per 100,000 spectators in 2021/22, but during this time period the hospitalisation rate for such matches remained constant at 0.4 per 100,000 spectators. Between 2018/19 and 2021/22 the injury rate dropped in the Championship from 7.3 injuries per 100,000 spectators to 6.8 but hospitalisation rates doubled from 0.5 to 1 per 100,000 spectators. The injury and hospitalisation rates fell in both League One and Two.
- It is worth noting that injury/hospitalisation rates for individual leagues, especially the lower leagues, will be subject to greater fluctuations year on year because of lower base sizes (spectator numbers).

See Table 1 and Figures A and B below for more detail.

⁸ Including football matches played at Wembley Stadium.

⁹ Due to COVID-19 restrictions some matches at grounds in Wales were played behind closed doors. Spectator figures will, therefore, not be directly comparable with previous years.

¹⁰ See methodology (page 3) and eligible vs non-eligible section (page 12) for the definition of 'eligible injury'.



**Table 1: Summary of reported injuries for the 2021/22 football season, by league
(including historical data for 2018/19)**

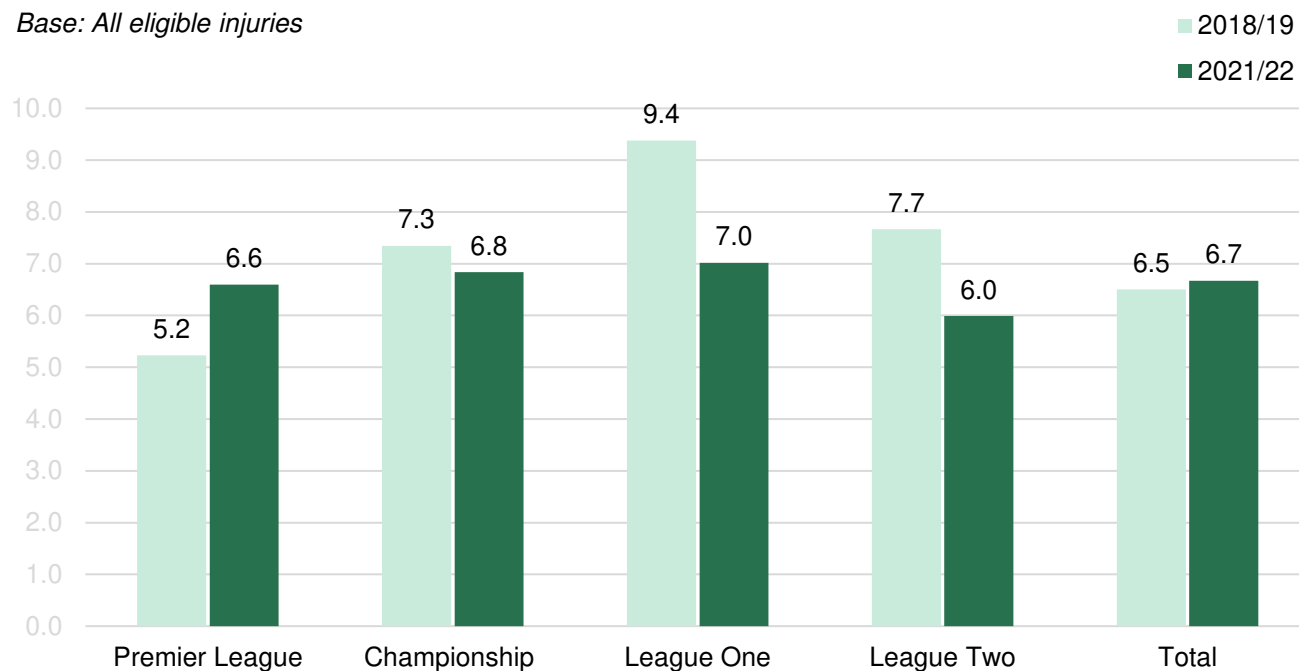
Football season	Total spectators treated for injuries	Total spectators taken to hospital	Total attendance	Injury ratio per spectator	Rate of hospital attendance amongst spectators treated for injuries	Injuries per 100,000 spectators	Hospital visits per 100,000 spectators
Premier League (plus international stadia)							
2021/22	1207	72	18,294,496	1 injury per 15157 spectators	1 in 17 went to hospital	6.6	0.4
2018/19	1048	84	20,026,604	1 injury per 19109 spectators	1 in 12 went to hospital	5.2	0.4
Championship							
2021/22	564	84	8,250,068	1 injury per 14628 spectators	1 in 7 went to hospital	6.8	1.0
2018/19	776	55	10,564,716	1 injury per 13614 spectators	1 in 14 went to hospital	7.3	0.5
League One							
2021/22	359	11	5,117,326	1 injury per 14254 spectators	1 in 33 went to hospital	7.0	0.2
2018/19	435	46	4,639,264	1 injury per 10665 spectators	1 in 9 went to hospital	9.4	1.0
League Two							
2021/22	159	10	2,655,484	1 injury per 16701 spectators	1 in 16 went to hospital	6.0	0.4
2018/19	218	15	2,843,404	1 injury per 13043 spectators	1 in 15 went to hospital	7.7	0.5
Total (including international stadia)							
2021/22	2289	177	34,317,374	1 injury per 14992 spectators	1 in 13 went to hospital	6.7	0.5
2018/19	2477	200	38,073,988	1 injury per 15371 spectators	1 in 12 went to hospital	6.5	0.5

Source: SGSA Injury Data; Base: All eligible injuries



Figure A – Injuries per 100,000 spectators

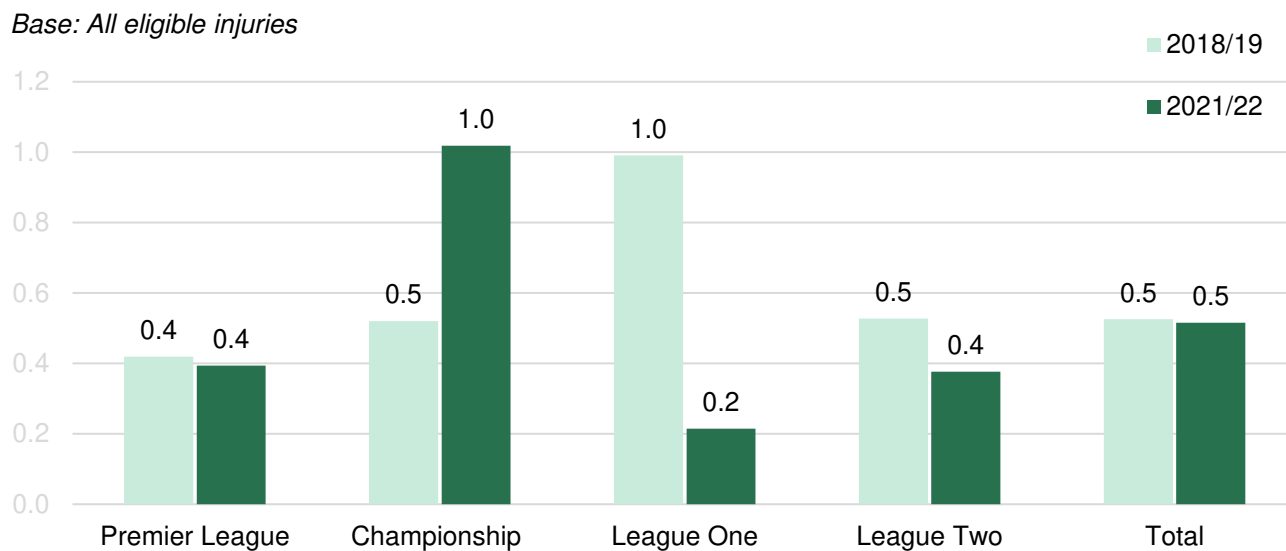
Base: All eligible injuries



Source: SGSA Injury Data

Figure B – Hospital visits per 100,000 spectators

Base: All eligible injuries



Source: SGSA Injury Data



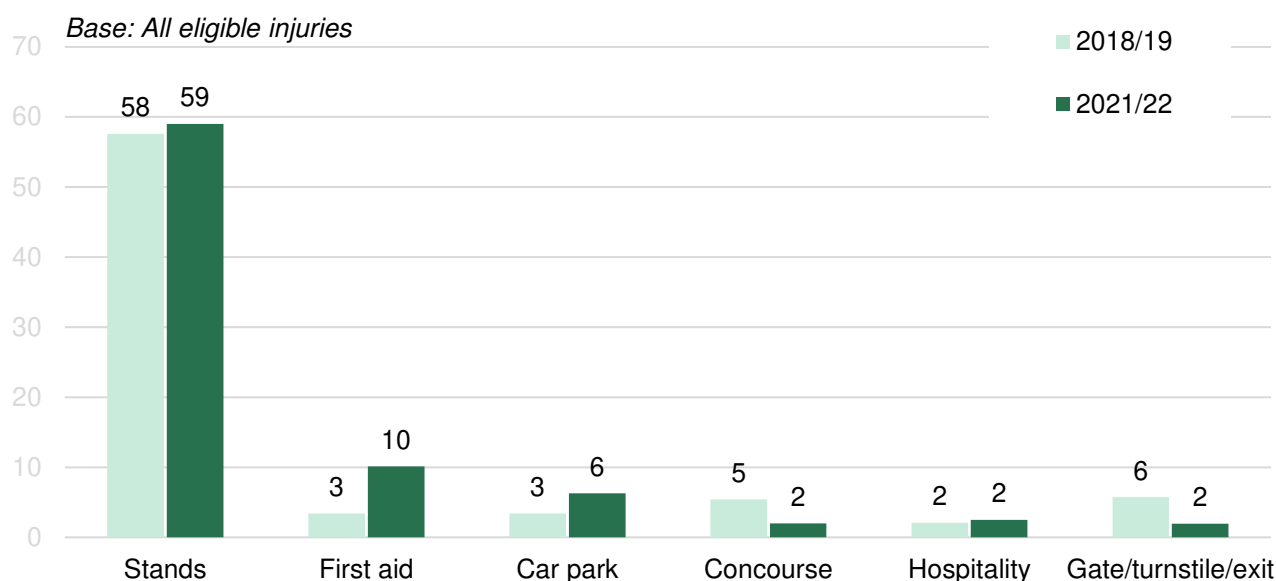
Injury location

Table 2: Injury location by league

	League				
	Premier/ International	Championship	League 1	League 2	Total
Base: All eligible injuries	%	%	%	%	%
In the stands	55	56	65	84	59
First aid	18	3	1	-	10
Car park	5	8	9	8	6
Hospitality	3	2	2	2	2
Concourse	3	2	1	-	2
Gate/turnstiles/exit	3	1	2	-	2
Bar/café/kitchen	1	-	2	-	1
Other inside ground	8	4	5	6	6
Not known	5	25	14	1	11
Base	1207	564	359	159	2289

Source: SGSA Injury Data, 2021/22

Figure C – Location of injury across all leagues (percentage of all eligible injuries)



Source: SGSA Injury Data

The pattern of location of injuries was broadly similar between the two seasons with most injuries occurring in the stands 59% in 2021/22 and 58% in 2018/18.

First aid featured more prominently as a location in 2021/22 (10%) compared with 2018/19 (3%) though 'Other inside the ground' was less prominent, from 11% in 18/19 to 6% in 21/22. This suggests an alternative approach to location recording in relation to the First Aid post at some grounds.

There was a decrease from 2018/19 in the proportion of injuries occurring in the gate/turnstiles/exit (from 6% to 2%) but an increase in injuries occurring in the car park (from



3% to 6%).

The high proportion of incidents where the location was recorded as 'not known' (23%) indicates that there is room for further improvement when recording injuries.

Injuries were only classified as 'eligible' if they took place inside the ground.

Injury time period

Table 3: Time period by division					
Base: All eligible injuries	League				
	Premier/ International	Championship	League 1	League 2	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Before the match	22	20	21	23	21
During the match	43	39	47	45	43
Half time	6	7	7	11	7
After the match	10	11	10	9	10
Not known	18	24	16	11	19
Base	1207	564	359	159	2289

Source: SGSA Injury Data, 2021/22

Table 4: Injury time period by year (all leagues)		
Base: All eligible injuries	2018/19	2021/22
	%	%
Before the match	22	21
During the match	33	43
Half time	7	7
After the match	8	10
Not known	30	19
Base	2477	2289

Source: SGSA Injury Data

Most incidents took place during the match (43%) (Table 3).

21% of all recorded incidents occurred before the match, with only 10% happening after the match. This likely reflects the exclusion of cases occurring outside of the grounds.

In 2018/19, most injuries also took place during the match, however the proportion was lower at 33%. The proportion of injuries where the time period was 'not known' decreased from 30% in 2018/19 to 19% in 2021/22, which suggests some improvement in injury recording in 2021/22 and may explain the increase in injuries occurring during the match in 2021/22.

Injuries must have taken place on match day and within the curtilage of the ground to be eligible.



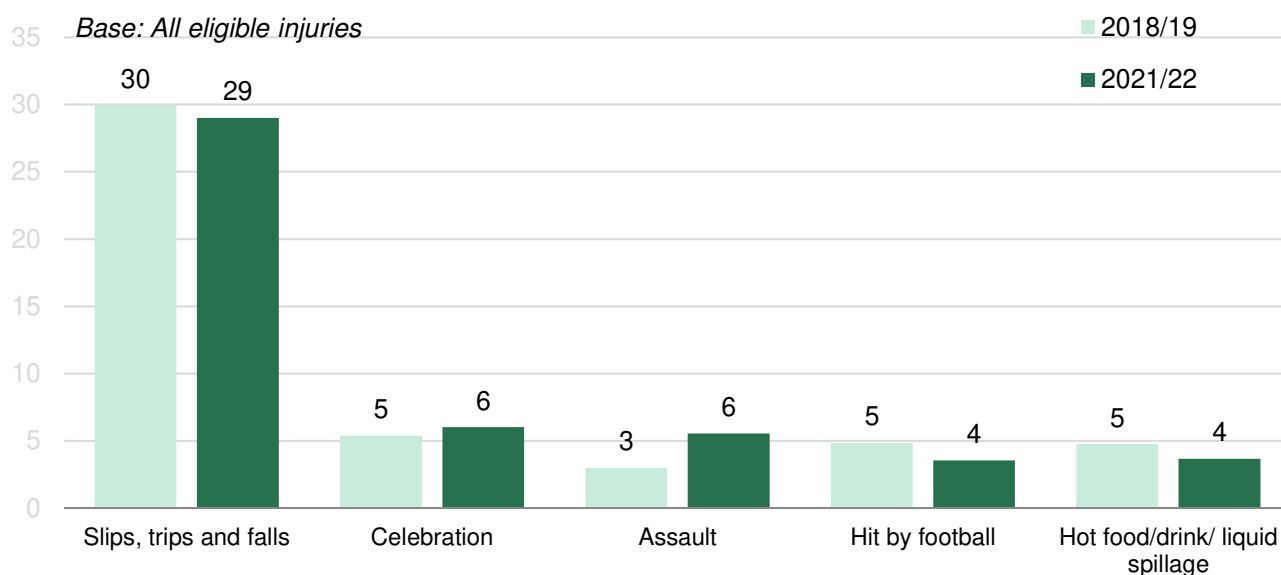
Causes of injury

Table 5: Injury cause by league

	League				
	Premier/ International	Championship	League 1	League 2	Total
Base: All eligible injuries	%	%	%	%	%
Slip / trip / fall	29	31	28	30	29
Celebration	6	6	6	6	6
Assault	6	7	3	3	6
Hit/knocked (accidental)	5	5	5	3	5
Hot food/drink/ liquid spillage	2	5	4	7	4
Hit by football	2	4	6	7	4
Seat injury	3	4	4	4	3
Fire/smoke/flare	1	2	1	3	1
Insect bite / sting	1	2	1	3	1
Turnstile	1	1	1	3	1
Crowd surge	1	1	2	1	1
Other ¹¹	10	10	9	8	10
Not known	33	22	31	23	29
Base	1207	564	359	159	2289

Source: SGSA Injury Data, 2021/22

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



Source: SGSA Injury Data

¹¹ 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.



Table 5 and Figure D highlight that, in line with 2018/19 season, the most common cause of spectator injury in 2021/22 was slips, trips and falls, accounting for 29% of total eligible injuries.

Around 6% of injuries were caused by assault in 2021/22 compared with 3% in 2018/19.

As in 2018/19, very few injuries in 2021/22 were caused by crowd surges, or fire/smoke/flare.

A relatively large proportion of injury causes were 'not known'/reported in 2021/22 (29%). It would be helpful if clubs were able to provide more information on the cause of injuries which might enable more of them to be coded into one of the existing or new specific codes for analysis.

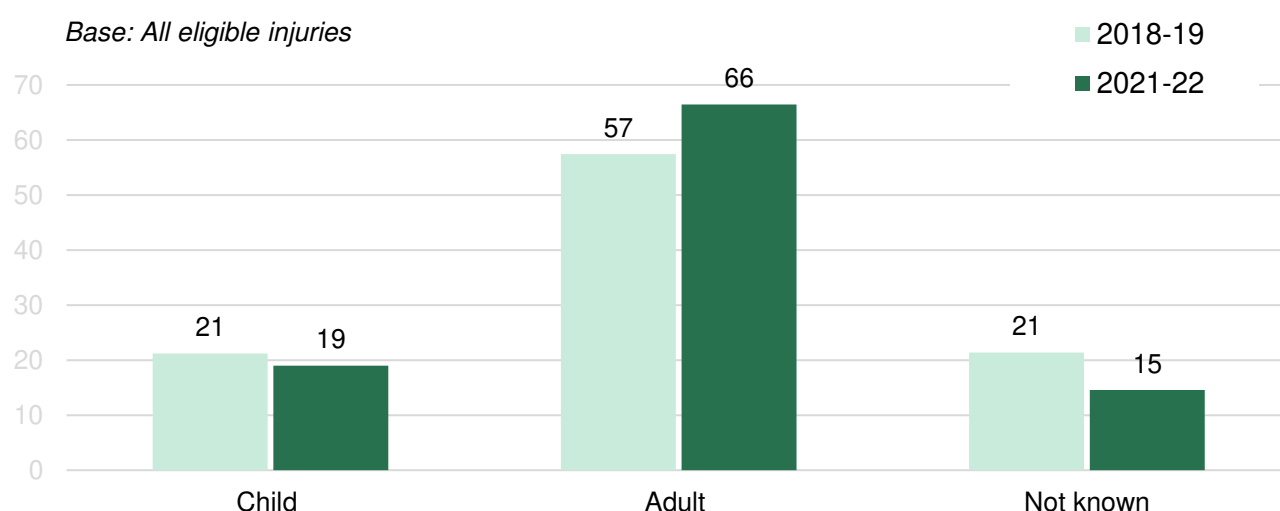
Injuries were not eligible if they were caused by general illness, alcohol/intoxication, or other pre-existing conditions.

Age of spectators

Table 6: Age group by league					
Base: All eligible injuries	League				
	Premier/ International %	Championship %	League 1 %	League 2 %	Total %
Child (<18)	16	20	23	31	19
18-24	11	10	12	10	11
25-59	30	27	31	31	29
60+	20	19	20	9	19
18+ (unspecified adult)	7	8	7	9	7
Not known	16	17	8	9	15
Base	1207	564	359	159	2289

Source: SGSA Injury Data, 2021/22

Figure E – Adult and child injuries across all leagues (percentage of all eligible injuries)



Source: SGSA Injury Data



The majority of incidents across all leagues in the 2021/22 season occurred among adults (66%), with most of those occurring among adults aged 25-59 (Table 6).

The proportion of injuries occurring to children under 18 in 2021/22 (19%) has fallen slightly when comparing to 2018/19 (21%). The proportion of injuries to children was highest in League 2 (31%) and lowest in the Premier League (16%) in 2021/22. A similar pattern, that is a higher incidence of injuries among children in lower leagues, has also been found in previous years.

The proportion of age 'not known' records declined from 2018/19 to 2021/22 (21% to 15%), although this remains higher than is ideal.

Types of injury

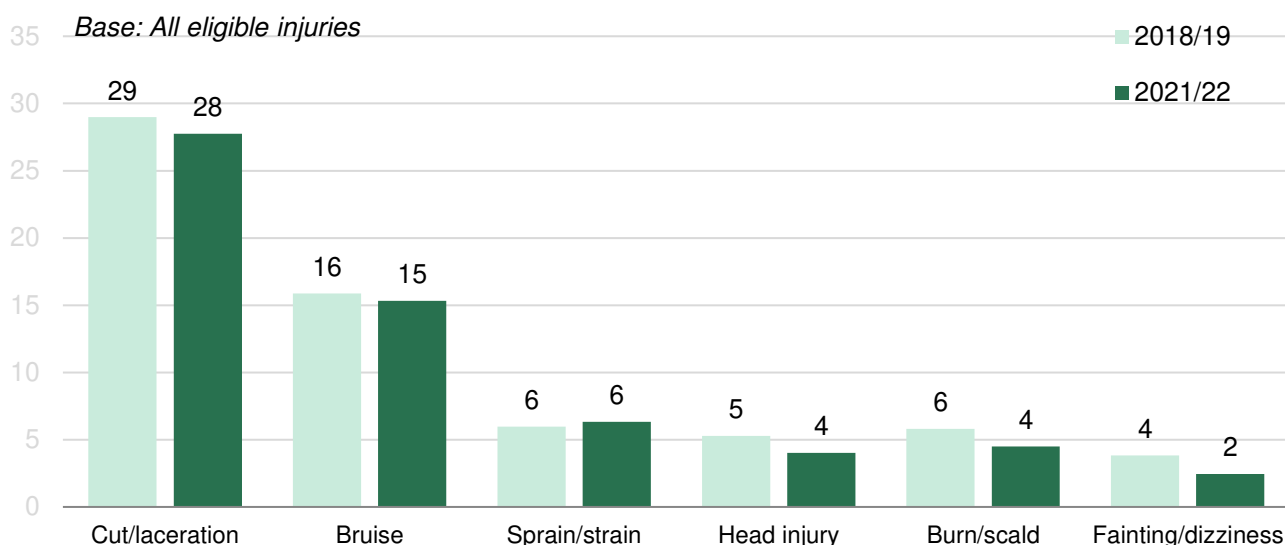
Table 7: Injury type by league

	League				
	Premier/ International %	Championship %	League 1 %	League 2 %	Total %
Base: All eligible injuries					
Cut/laceration	30	25	26	24	28
Bruise	12	18	16	26	15
Sprain/strain	6	7	6	7	6
Burn/scald	4	5	4	7	4
Head injury	4	5	5	3	4
Fainting/dizziness	2	3	2	8	2
Dislocation	1	3	1	1	1
Broken/fractured bone	2	1	1	2	1
Asthma/trouble breathing	1	2	1	2	1
Graze/abrasion	0	1	1	0	1
Eye problem	0	1	0	0	0
Other	21	15	12	17	18
Not known	17	14	25	4	17
Base	1207	564	359	159	2289

Source: SGSA Injury Data, 2021/22



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



Source: SGSA Injury Data

In 2021/22, the most common type of recorded injury for all leagues was cuts/lacerations. (28%) (Table 7 and Figure F).

Bruises remained the next most common injury, accounting for 15% of all eligible injuries in 2021/22 and 16% in 2018/19.

The proportions of all other injuries were also similar between the 2021/22 and 2018/19 seasons.

In 2021/22, more injury types were recorded as 'not known' (17%), than in 2018/19 (5%), though the proportion of injuries categorised as 'other' was slightly lower in 2021/22 than 2018/19 (18% compared with 23%). Therefore, it is recommended that clubs continue to improve their record keeping aiding data analysis and to help inform clubs about the most appropriate preventative measures to 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.

Player injuries do not extend to any injuries inherent from participation in the sporting or



competitive activity.

The overall total number of injuries (eligible and ineligible) occurring to spectators, staff, players and other individuals was 6,881 in 2021/22 (Table 8), a slight increase on the 6,695 recorded in 2018/19.

On average, across all leagues in 2021/22, 33% of recorded injuries were considered eligible according to the criteria outlined above.

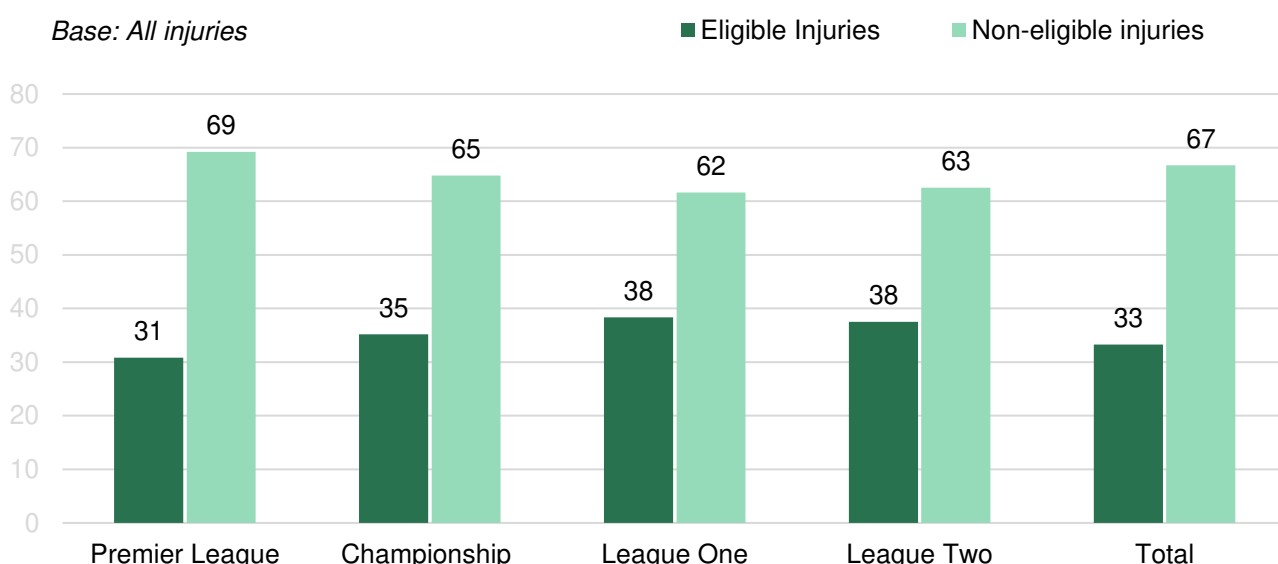
This is slightly lower than recorded injuries for the 2018/19 season, during which 37% of injuries were considered eligible (Table 8).

Figure G below shows the percentage of eligible and ineligible injuries in returns submitted for the 2021/22 season, broken down by league.

Table 8: Eligible vs ineligible injuries, by year		
Base: All injuries	2018/19	2021/22
Number eligible injuries	2,447	2,289
Number of ineligible injuries	4,248	4,592
Total injuries	6,695	6,881
% injuries that are eligible	37	33
% injuries that are ineligible	63	67

Source: SGSA Injury Data

Figure G – Percentage of eligible injuries, by league



Source: SGSA Injury Data, 2021/22

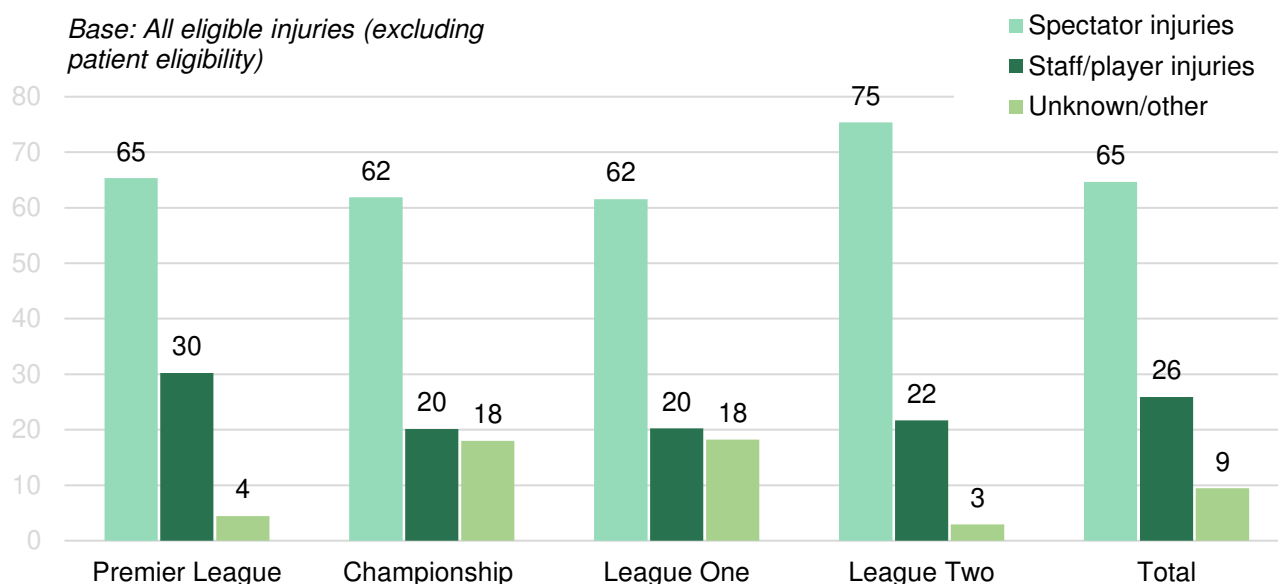
As outlined above, injuries to staff and players are not considered eligible and not included in the presented findings. However, it is important that football grounds subject to SGSA licensing provide complete records of all injuries and illnesses. Therefore, a figure outlining non-spectator injury rates for the 2021/22 season is presented below in Figure H.



The average staff/player injury rate for 2021/22 was 26%, similar to the rate in 2018/19 (25%).

In the Premier League, 30% of all injuries reported were to staff/players, higher than in any other league.

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



Source: SGSA Injury Data, 2021/22

Additional notes

1. The above figures for the 2021/22 season are based on complete injury data returns from 91 grounds in England and Wales at which designated football matches were played. Tranche 1 data were not received from one League One ground and one League Two ground. Additionally, no designated football matches were played at the Principality Stadium during the 2021/22 season.
2. Complete actual attendance figures for the 2021/22 season were provided for 92 grounds. Tranche 2 data were not received from one Championship ground. Additionally, no designated football matches were played at the Principality Stadium during the 2021/22 season.
3. 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.
4. The spectator injury data collation, analysis and commentary for this report has been undertaken by NatCen working in partnership with SGSA.