



17 November 2021

IOMFA PUBLISHES DIVERSITY & INCLUSION REPORT

Background

The issue of racism in football in the UK has recently become more high profile and this has highlighted that racism in football persists, leading to many well-known footballers speaking out.

At the Isle of Man FA, we support the principle of football being a game for all, regardless of age, sex, gender, disability, marital and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, religion, race or sexual orientation.

As few racist incidents are reported, it would be easy to assume there is no problem in IOM football, so with the help of local footballer Furo Davies, the IOMFA decided to address the issue.

Although this was a fact-finding exercise, our core objectives were to find out the following:

- Is racism a problem in IOM football?
- Do people find IOM football a welcoming place, regardless of ethnicity?
- What could the IOMFA be doing to improve this?

The scope of this campaign was specifically to address the issue of ethnic diversity. However, other areas of equality and inclusion are important and are being addressed as part of the FA's Equality Standard.

We are grateful to all the players, parents, referees, coaches and others for giving their views and especially to those who shared their personal experiences.

Methodology

We asked some specific Yes/No questions to establish some quantitative data that we can revisit at a later date. In addition, we gave respondents the option to recount their own experiences. The survey was done anonymously to encourage frank and honest input, however we did ask some basic demographic questions to help give context. Consequently, the full survey results are not being shared publicly.

As racial diversity is not an area that the board had a lot of expertise in, we sought help and direction from several England FA and Kick It Out professionals. Thanks particularly to Steve Smithies and Arran Williams from the FA for their support and help in formulating this initiative.



Highlights

- 247 responses - 5.3% of all IOM players; this covers players, coaches, referees and others
- 75 parent/carers as well as 18 junior players responded, so juniors were well represented
- 7% identified as ethnic minority; this is roughly consistent with the IOM population
- 94% rated the importance of diversity and inclusion as either Quite Important or Very Important
- 92% think IOM football is a welcoming environment (90% for those identifying as ethnic minority)
- 29% have seen or experienced racism in IOM football (55% for those identifying as ethnic minority)
- Most respondents (74%) are not sure how to report a racism incident (59% of referees)
- Only 57% are confident that the IOMFA would deal with a report of racism effectively

Summary of findings

Overall, it is a positive result that the vast majority (92%) of people involved in IOM football think it is a safe and welcoming place. It is particularly pleasing that this figure was 100% for junior player and parent/carers which is encouraging for the future. However, with 8% of all respondents disagreeing, there is no room for complacency.

Despite the overall positive view of IOM football, 22% of respondents had seen or experienced racist abuse in the past. In addition, another 7% thought that *maybe* they had, which highlights what a sensitive and complex area this is. There were many stories recounting incidents from the past as well as more recent experiences.

These stories varied a lot in nature from the worst kind of racist verbal abuse to more subtle, inappropriate comments from spectators, opposition and even team-mates. Some players and referees felt race had been used to influence refereeing decisions. There were several comments made implying that lack of footballing success or progression was due to ethnicity. Several comments referred to “banter”: some suggested that a bit of banter is okay; others said that excusing racist comments as banter is unacceptable. In addition, there were a few comments alluding to sexist and homophobic behaviour from spectators and players.

Responses from those identifying as ethnic minority were generally similar to overall responses. However, personal experiences of racism among ethnic minorities were understandably at a much higher level. There were many different views on the seriousness of racism in IOM football, ranging from racism being defined as a major problem to it being something we shouldn't be highlighting. Some comments suggested that there are certain settings, off the pitch, where some people in football may feel safe to use racist language. There were also instances of racist behaviour being dealt with by teams on the spot, showing a determination by some clubs not to tolerate this kind of behaviour.

When it comes to reporting and dealing with racist incidents, many respondents did not have confidence that the IOMFA had the expertise or the will to take appropriate action and did not have confidence that racism in football is taken seriously. Only 57% believed a racism complaint would be



dealt with effectively, in some cases, from past experience. Several comments described how difficult it is to handle this sort of complaint on a small island where everyone knows each other.

Most people stated that reporting racist incidents is done through the IOMFA Welfare Officer, however it can also be reported directly through the English FA or through Kick It Out. Discrimination complaints are overseen by representatives of the FA.

There were many comments made about and by referees regarding racism. This highlighted how difficult it is for referees to deal with allegations on the spot, especially if they have not heard or seen a specific incident. There were suggestions that in the past, some referees found it easier to ignore such behaviour and get on with the game. Several referees had never actually observed racist abuse during a match but where they did, they were clear that it would be recorded in their match report.

Quotes

The following is a selection of the overall comments made and broadly represents the opinions of respondents and the themes coming out of the questionnaire:

Instead of addressing players by names, ethnic minority players are referred to as "That Black player". You can hear parents, coaches, spectators, supporters making racial and demeaning comments at football matches.

Racism exists at all levels. Personally racially abused as a player/coach and volunteer.... Reported it and had hearings ... Racism from coaches and players who think they are joking about but it's racism.

Historically I've heard the odd comment or name thrown around however this has over time petered out.

One of our players was verbally abused at a game. The referee did not do anything about it but the culprit was identified and his club banned him.

Racist remarks are thrown as banter. It's unacceptable.

In the first instance [to report racist abuse] I would submit a written statement to the IOMFA's Welfare Officer.

Every establishment can improve and do better in the way it handles racist incidents. There are always things to learn. I think it's important to consult the BAME community to look at ways to improve procedures/how things are dealt with.

Past experience [of the IOMFA dealing with reports of racist abuse] does not give me much confidence.

Due to the close knit society on the IOM, many of the witnesses that would be called, would, most likely and from experience, side with their mate/abuser so as not to be seen as a grass and lose the respect of the group.



Conclusion

Racial diversity and inclusion has not been a high profile issue for IOM football in the past, probably because the IOM is a not a racially diverse place. While this survey did not demonstrate that there is a major problem with racism in IOM football, there are evidently players and others involved in football who have felt uncomfortable and even intimidated by racist behaviour and there is every chance that this has put some people off football in the IOM.

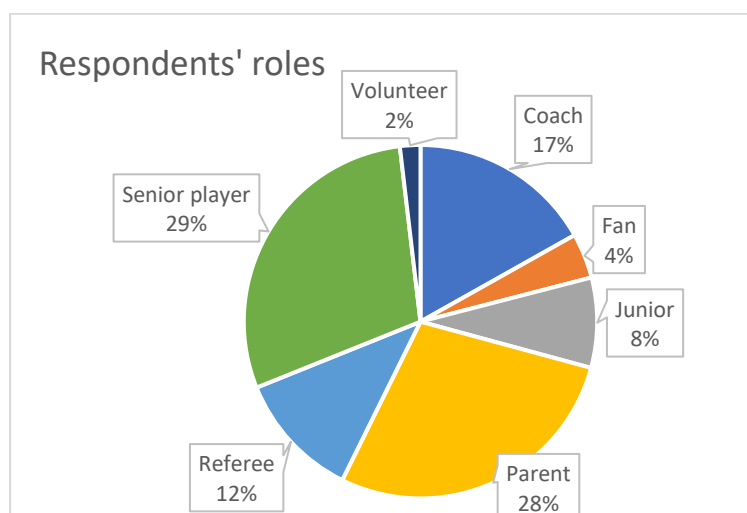
For those who lack confidence in the IOMFA's ability or desire to take diversity and inclusion seriously, we hope that this report and subsequent actions give some reassurance.

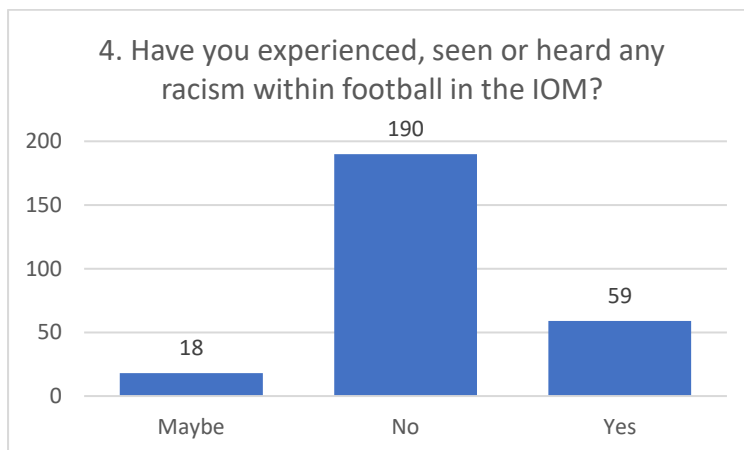
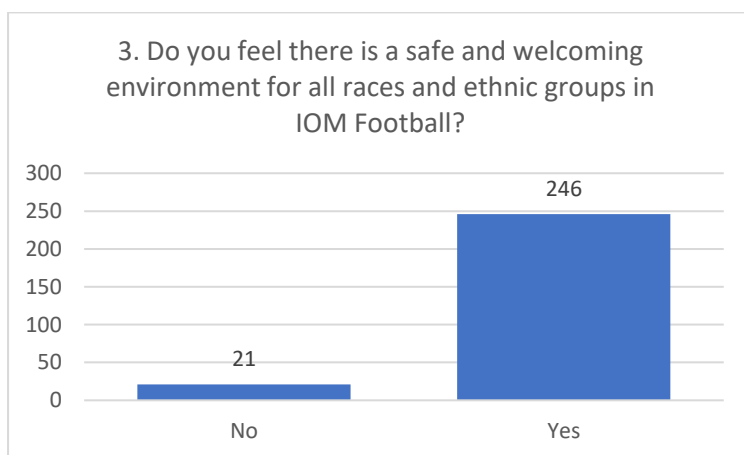
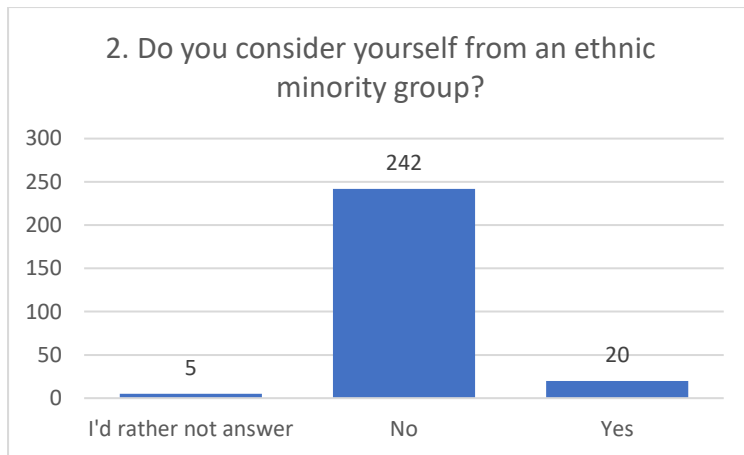
It was reassuring that most people who responded think this is an important issue and while it is up to individual clubs and players to model inclusive behaviour there are specific actions the IOMFA can take to support this.

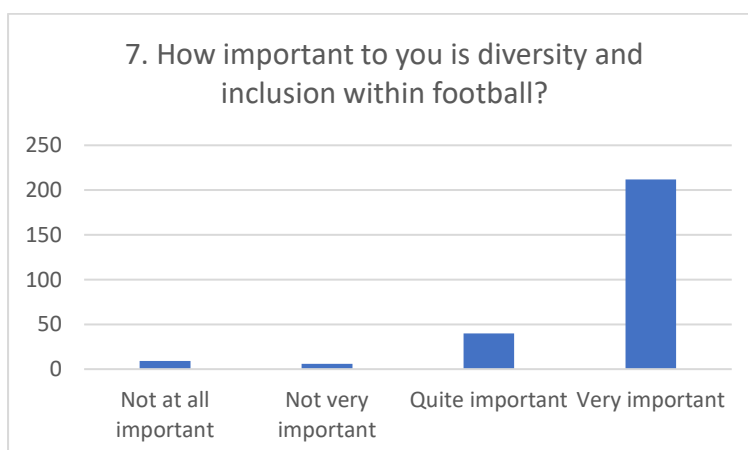
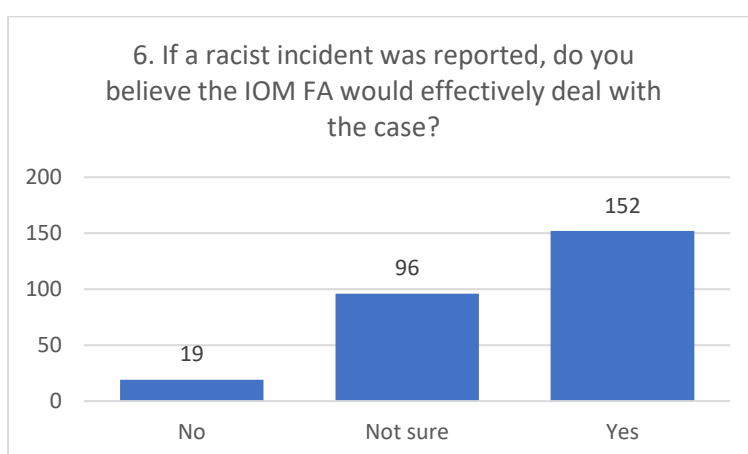
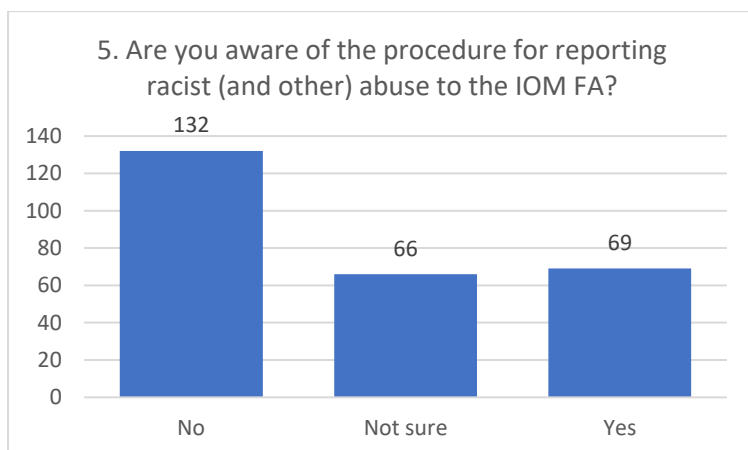
Actions

| Action | Complete |
|---|----------|
| Provide educational resources for IOM clubs on diversity and inclusion | |
| Appoint of an <i>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</i> lead on the board | Yes |
| Publish an Equality Statement for the IOMFA | Yes |
| Publish an Equality Policy for the IOMFA | |
| Set up an Inclusion Advisory Group | |
| Clarify procedure for reporting racist incidents. Publish this on the IOMFA website and promote this to the IOM football community. | |
| Source training and educational material for referees | |

Data









Notes

- FA Procedure (link on the IOMFA website):
<https://www.thefa.com/get-involved/respect/anti-discrimination/what-happens-next>
- Grassroots Disciplinary Guide 2021-22 (See p.42-48)
<https://en.calameo.com/read/001230235eef6e73a2e79>
- FA Reporting Grassroots Discrimination (online) Form (link on the IOMFA website):
https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=kCXJRcbM-UaA_5_I2e3eOTrOR24iAzJjAGvtwLuBZhUQThUNFgxOEIJTOVOTUIKRzU5VEQ4WDIwTC4u

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