

Standing at Football

A Rapid Evidence Assessment

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Executive summary

This document summarises the findings from a rapid review of evidence relating to standing at football and the all-seater policy.¹ The review was commissioned by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and undertaken by CFE Research between November 2018 and January 2019.

A Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) was undertaken, implemented according to a structured and rigorous search and review strategy. 79 sources were identified for inclusion in the review (obtained through systematic searches of published material, or provided by stakeholders in the football sector). Consultations were also carried out with key stakeholders to inform the review.

The safety risks and management of standing in all-seater stadia

Persistent standing² in seated areas happens at the majority of football grounds, although the extent of this varies by match, club, stand, and even within a game. There is a lack of sector consistency around what is meant by “persistent standing”.

Assessments at two individual clubs concur that standing in seated areas is most dangerous during moments of excitement, followed by when leaving the stadium – both of which are permitted under the all-seater policy and therefore a risk that is unrelated to persistent standing.

Current evidence included in this review cannot fully assess the safety risk of persistent standing. Risk modelling suggests that there is a low risk of progressive crowd collapse as a result of standing during normal play, but that this risk increases depending on other factors (e.g. rake, crowd instability) and is considered to be higher at times of excitement. Since the all-seater policy has been introduced there have been no major football stadium disasters or reports of significant incidents of spectator injury.

Data on injuries sustained by supporters inside football stadia does not evidence a link with standing in seating areas. Of 1,550 injuries recorded by Premier League clubs during the 2017/18 season, none were attributed to persistent standing and 84% were reported as having no link whatsoever to standing. However, data is not currently collected in a way that can fully investigate any causal relationship between persistent standing and injuries.

Persistent standing is associated with other hazards, such as standing on seats, blocking gangways, overcrowding, and disputes. Measures to prevent persistent standing have had limited success; football clubs typically focus on keeping aisles and gangways clear to enhance spectator safety. One club has adopted a managed standing area, with an independently endorsed approach to risk management. However, this

¹ All relevant clubs promoted to the top two tiers of football – The Premier League and the English Football League Championship – provide all-seated spectator accommodation and that spectators watch from seated accommodation.

² For the purposes of this review, persistent standing is defined as standing outside of moments of excitement, i.e. during normal play.

approach relies on particular stadium characteristics and so may not be replicable elsewhere.

UK clubs which have implemented dual purpose/standing areas demonstrate clearly articulated risk assessments and operational plans for these areas comparable with seated areas. The impact this may have had on safety has not been evidenced.

Developments in football spectating and safety since the introduction of the all-seater policy

Significant developments in stadium design are widely acknowledged to have improved spectator safety, as have comprehensive crowd management approaches, but it is very difficult to isolate the impact of individual changes on safety.

A number of options for standing in all-seater stadia have been implemented in UK clubs, including rail seating (Celtic FC, Shrewsbury Town FC), 2020/Grandstand seating (Wycombe Wanderers FC) and OxRails (Oxford United FC). Tottenham Hotspur FC have installed areas of “stadium seating with an integrated bar” in their new stadium. All of the above still allow for spectators to be seated. This review found no research that examines whether this modern infrastructure is more or less safe than current accommodation.

The wider impact of the all-seater policy

Despite suggestions that football now attracts a more affluent and diverse crowd, there is no indication of a causal relationship between this and the all-seater policy. Indeed there have been significant wider contextual changes related to fandom and the consumption of sport since the Taylor Report. It is difficult to predict whether managed standing areas would have an impact on crowd diversity.

There is a high level of fan support for the introduction of standing areas in all-seater stadia, and the choice to sit or stand in principle. A smaller proportion express that they themselves would actually like to stand, and there is emerging evidence that very few fans currently *only* sit, or *only* stand for the duration of a match. A small minority of respondents to fan surveys are opposed to standing areas.

Disorder in football stadia is a complex issue which occurs in both seating and standing areas, and cannot be attributed to any one factor. Data suggests that arrests and disorder do not occur any more frequently at grounds with licensed standing than those that are all-seater. Some suggest that a standing crowd is more difficult to manage, but we are aware of no research to indicate whether permitting standing areas in all-seater stadia might impact fan behaviour.

Conclusions and recommendations

Arguments about whether changing the all-seater policy would make stadia more or less safe appear to be based mostly on logic, theoretical notion or perception. There is not a robust body of evidence reviewed here to suggest that standing in its current form, either on traditional terracing or modern dual purpose options, is any more or less safe than sitting.

The risks associated with standing in seated areas are greatest at moments of excitement, which is not mitigated by the all seater policy. It is a reasoned argument that developments in seating technology (such as barriers to prevent forward movement) could reduce the impact of progressive crowd collapse, irrespective of where in the ground it occurred or whether at moments of excitement or otherwise.

Stadium safety management guidelines and licencing agreements require all spectator accommodation to be risk assessed, managed appropriately and licence compliant. Persistent standing raises issues associated with safety, crowd management and customer care. The tension between enforcement of the policy, and the measures required to ensure spectator safety, is evident in the crowd management approaches adopted by a number of clubs that focus predominantly on keeping aisles and exit routes clear, and may suggest that the policy is challenging to implement.

However, any change to current policy must be based on robust evidence that such a change would ensure equivalent or improved spectator safety. There is significant scope for further research to build this evidence base, requiring tolerance within existing policy to trial different standing areas - alongside monitoring clubs taking different approaches to the management of standing - to provide evidence of impact.

This report

This report reviews the current evidence base relating to standing at football and the all-seater policy, as identified through a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) undertaken on behalf of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The rapid evidence assessment approach is characterised by a short but systematic assessment of evidence concerned with a specific topic. It is not intended to map all available evidence (as might be expected with a full systematic review). As such, the evidence presented in this report reflects only that which was identified against the specific research questions addressed within this review. The report is structured in four chapters:

- Chapter one provides an introduction to the background and context for this review, and the specific research questions it seeks to address. Chapter one also outlines the methodological approach taken to identify and analyse evidence for this review (with further technical information provided as an Appendix).
- Chapter two collates evidence relating to the primary research questions (those focused on safety), considering the implications of persistent and licensed standing, and developments in safety at football stadia since the all-seater policy was introduced.
- Chapter three collates evidence relating to the secondary research questions (those concerned with the wider impact of the all-seater policy), and other impacts of introducing standing areas to all-seater stadia.
- Chapter four concludes by summarising the evidence relating to the overarching research questions, namely; ‘Is the all-seater policy still fit for purpose in the current football spectator climate?’; and ‘What evidence exists, domestically or internationally, that the reintroduction of standing could lead to equivalent or improved spectator safety at football stadia?’ Finally, this chapter highlights current gaps in evidence and provides research and policy recommendations.

01. Introduction

This chapter describes the background and context for this review of standing at football, articulating the specific research questions it seeks to address, and outlines the methodological approach taken.

1.1 Background

The Football Spectators Act 1989 provides that premises at which “designated football matches” take place must have a licence to admit spectators to watch such a match. A designated football match means 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.

From 1 August 1994 relevant clubs have been required to provide all-seated accommodation at their home grounds. Clubs promoted to the Championship for the first time have up to three years to convert any standing areas to seats. Once a ground has converted to all-seater accommodation the ground remains all-seater regardless of whether the club is relegated below the Championship in future years.

The 1989 Act set up the Football Licensing Authority (FLA) to operate a licensing system for grounds used for designated football matches and to monitor local authorities' oversight of spectator safety. From November 2011, FLA responsibilities passed to the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA). It is an offence to admit spectators to a designated football match without a licence - issued by the SGSA - being in force.

The Football Spectators Act 1989 provides the Secretary of State for Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) with the power to direct the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) to include various conditions in the licence a relevant football club has to obtain from the SGSA to admit spectators to watch designated football matches. The 1989 Act only applies in England and Wales.

Section 11(1) of the Football Spectators Act 1989 empowers the Secretary of State to direct by order that the licences issued to relevant football clubs by the SGSA should include “a condition imposing requirements as respects the seating of spectators at designated football matches”. An order is a statutory instrument which is a form of legislation which allows the provisions of an Act of Parliament to be subsequently brought into force or altered without having to pass a new Act of Parliament. To date, there have been 22 orders made in relation to seating accommodation at licensed stadia.

Since the introduction of the all seater policy the Secretary of State has imposed two requirements in respect of seating of spectators at designated football matches which is included as part of the licence:

- only seated accommodation shall be provided for spectators at a designated football match; and
- spectators shall only be admitted to watch a designated football match from seated accommodation.

These two conditions impose the all-seater policy on relevant grounds.

The all-seater policy was a move to enhance stadium safety in response to the Taylor Report into the Hillsborough disaster. Lord Justice Taylor noted that “there is no panacea which will achieve total safety and cure all problems of behaviour and crowd control. But I am satisfied that seating does more to achieve those objectives than any other single measure”.¹

The policy, primarily intended to address the safety, behaviour and crowd management of spectators at football matches, has been delivered through the licensing of only all-seater accommodation in the top two tiers of English football. The policy was last reviewed in 1992, which exempted clubs in (what is now) Leagues One and Two from the all-seater requirement.²

The context of football fandom, crowd safety and stadium design has changed considerably since the early 1990s, and supporters have increasingly called for the introduction of standing areas in the top two divisions. In June 2018, an online petition to allow Premier League and Championship clubs to introduce ‘safe standing’ received 112,026 signatures, triggering a parliamentary debate. MPs supported a reconsideration of the all-seater policy whilst acknowledging the need to remain sensitive to those affected by the Hillsborough disaster.³

Any changes to the all-seater policy must be based on careful consideration of the evidence, such that it may be demonstrated that the introduction of standing areas in all-seater stadia will improve safety. As such, the Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) commissioned CFE Research to undertake a review of existing data and research relevant to the matter of standing at football matches and the all-seater policy.

1.2 Research questions

The evidence review sought to address specific research objectives, divided into primary (related to safety) and secondary (related to wider impacts) questions (see Table 1).

Primary research questions (related to safety)

1. Based on existing evidence, is the all-seater policy still fit for purpose in the current football spectator climate?
2. What evidence exists, domestically or internationally, that the reintroduction of standing could lead to equivalent or improved spectator safety at football stadia?
3. What is the extent of persistent standing at all-seater football stadia?
4. What is the risk to spectator safety as a result of persistent standing in all-seater football stadia?
5. How do football clubs manage persistent standing?
6. What evolutions in the following areas have there been since the introduction of the all-seater policy?
 - a) Stadium design;
 - b) Seating technology; and
 - c) Modern crowd management approaches.
7. How have evolutions in the above areas impacted on safety at football stadia?

Secondary research questions (related to wider impacts)

8. What is the impact of the permanent application of the policy once a stadium is brought into scope?
9. What is the wider impact of the all-seater policy, and what might the wider impact of reintroducing standing be, on:
 - a) Diversity of spectators;
 - b) Stadium atmosphere;
 - c) Spectator behaviour;
 - d) Consumer choice, ticket prices and customer service for fans;
 - e) The stewarding and policing of matches;
 - f) The management of high-risk football matches; and
 - g) Crowd disorder.

Table 1: Research questions

1.3 Methodology

Stakeholder consultations

Telephone consultations were conducted with a number of stakeholders from across the sector to inform contextual understanding and research design. Specifically, these stakeholder interviews sought to identify any explicit knowledge (e.g. identifiable sources of evidence) and tacit knowledge (e.g. working assumptions or hypotheses) to be reflected in the review. Interviews were conducted by telephone, following a discussion guide. Stakeholders from the following organisations were consulted:

- The Premier League (PL)
- The English Football League (EFL)
- The Football Supporters' Federation (FSF)
- The Football Association (FA)
- The Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA)
- The UK Football Policing Unit (UKFPU)
- Level Playing Field (LPF)

As the review progressed, direct approach was also made to individual UK football clubs where alternative accommodation has been installed/considered in all-seater stadia. Informal conversations were held with representatives from Celtic FC, West Bromwich Albion FC and Oxford United FC. Shrewsbury Town FC, Tottenham Hotspur FC and Jon Darch (representing Ferco) were also consulted, as well as academics and experts working in the sector.

Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA)

An REA was undertaken to identify and synthesise the available evidence relating to the research questions. REAs provide a balanced assessment of evidence, to produce timely information on a given policy issue. The systematic approach adopted in an REA is designed to be rigorous, but concessions to the depth and/or breadth of study limit aspects of the review so that results can be delivered within time or other constraints.⁴ Figure 1 outlines the approach taken, and a full overview of the process is provided in Appendix 1.

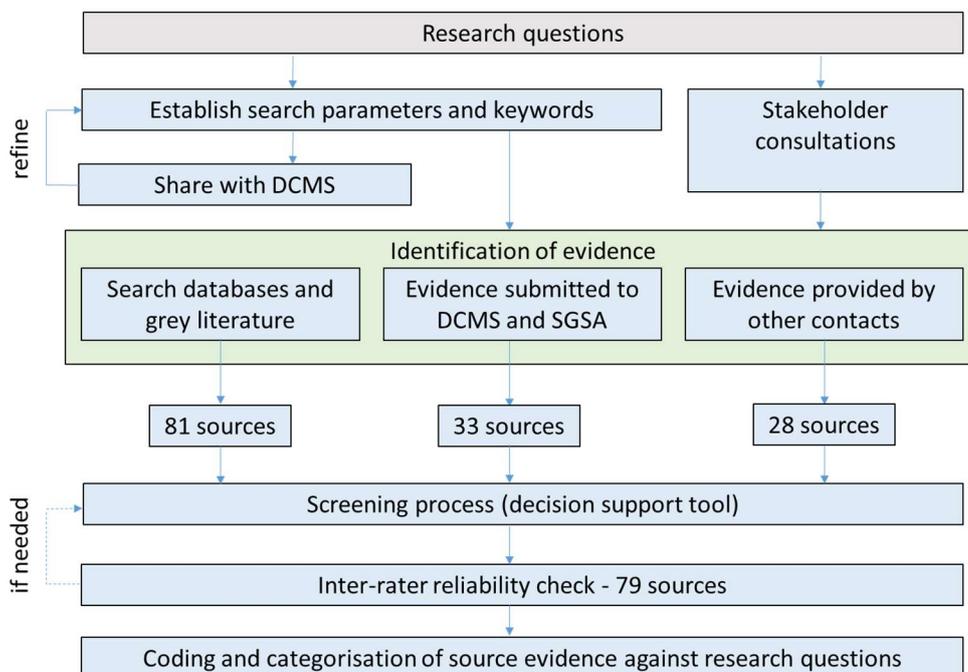


Figure 1: Overview of the methodological approach to the review

A considered evaluation of robustness and relevance was also undertaken for each source, to enable observations on the quality of the evidence base as a whole. For robustness, each source was judged on independence, methodological basis and reporting; for relevance, each source was judged on context and relevance to research questions. Table 6 in Appendix 1 gives more detail on this process and the criteria upon which judgements were made.

The overall quality of the evidence base as a whole is indicated in Figure 2.

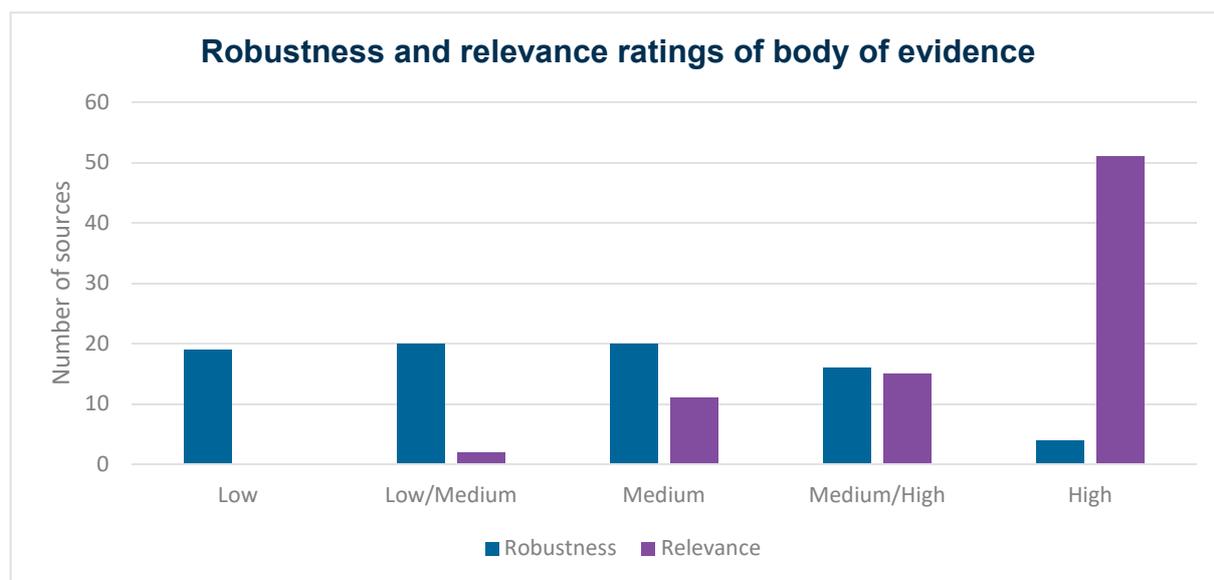


Figure 2: Overview of robustness and relevant ratings of evidence sources

It should be noted that a considerable number of unpublished sources (33) were included in the review. This included data provided by clubs and leagues, which although highly relevant to the research question, provided limited information on which to base methodological evaluations.

02. Summary of evidence: Spectator safety and the all-seater policy

Arguments that the all-seater policy should be reviewed typically centre around the extent of persistent standing in seating areas, the associated safety risks of this, and the challenges clubs face in attempting to manage it.

2.1 The extent of persistent standing in all-seater football stadia

For the purpose of this review, the SGSA definition “when individuals in seated areas stand for prolonged periods of time other than at moments of excitement” is used to describe the practice of persistent standing.⁵ However, there is little consensus around this definition,⁶ so it is to be expected that individuals, clubs and organisations - including those collecting data relating to persistent standing - may define or understand it differently. This makes it difficult to report accurately the current extent of persistent standing.

The findings of this review echo those of the SGSA, that good historical data on the scale of persistent standing is not available.⁷ Where persistent standing is recorded by SGSA inspectors this is considered “a very rough estimate” and based only on those matches that inspectors attend.⁸ This reporting also inconsistently records in what area of the ground persistent standing occurred, total attendances, influencing factors (e.g. weather, kick off time), and duration of standing, making it difficult to compare data or accurately examine any trends. However, based on the limited historical data included in this review, there is little to suggest that persistent standing is increasing at any significant rate. EFL figures⁹ suggest that any increase in persistent standing since 2011 appears to be only very slight (see Figure 3).

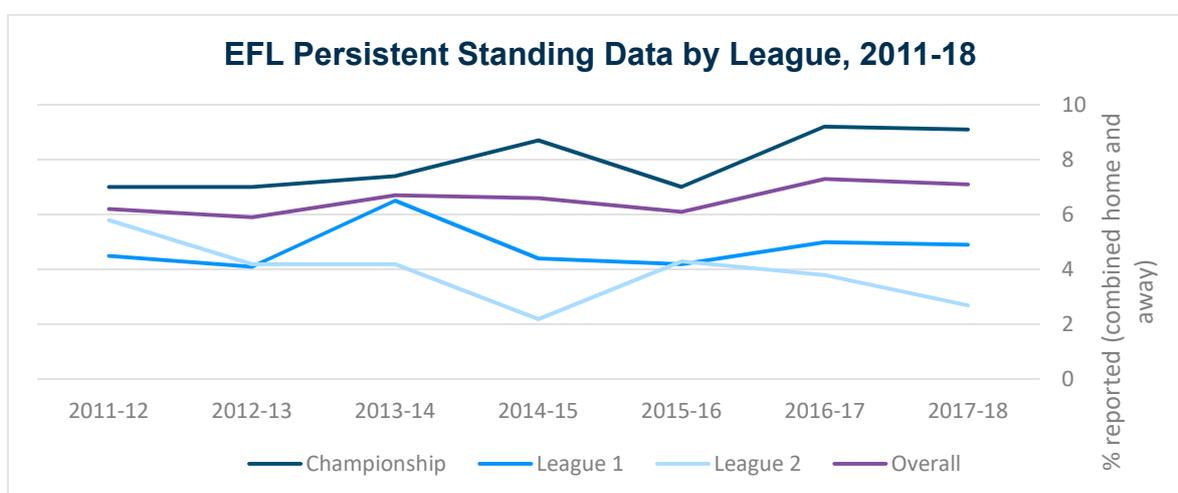


Figure 3: EFL reported persistent standing data, 2011-2018, compiled by the EFL

Whilst acknowledging the challenges in collecting and reporting consistent data, some tentative conclusions can be drawn from the existing datasets. Football supporters are recorded persistently standing in seating areas at the vast majority of grounds, and this is less frequent where licensed standing is available.¹⁰ A conservative SGSA estimate suggests that 40,000-60,000 supporters persistently stand at football matches every weekend across all four professional leagues.¹¹ Data collated by the SGSA also shows that the percentage of supporters persistently standing in seated areas is higher amongst away fans, with some clubs reporting 100% of away supporters standing (see Table 2 below and Appendix 2).

League	Home supporters	Away supporters	Overall stadium
Premier League	2%	73%	7%
Championship	3%	62%	10%
League One	3%	59%	12%
League Two	1%	40%	9%

Table 2: Percentage of recorded persistent standing in seated areas at clubs across all four professional football leagues, 2014-2016, compiled by the SGSA⁹

Furthermore, the extent of persistent standing can vary significantly even within a particular stadium. Low numbers of reported persistent standing by home fans (often less than 4%) will likely mask the particular stands or blocks where observed persistent standing is much higher - reports into persistent standing at particular grounds suggest that the high numbers seen in away areas are also evident in certain blocks or stands where home fans who wish to stand congregate.¹² Season figures also fail to show considerable variation by match; for example, reported persistent standing numbers at Anfield matches for the 2007-08 season ranged from 200 to 15,500.¹³ This wide range suggests that there can be significant variances in the numbers of supporters persistently standing across a season, and that there is likely a variance in the reporting of persistent standing across a season – even at the same club.

Data collected on persistent standing historically records only whether a spectator is or is not persistently standing during the match. Therefore the extent to which persistent standing varies over the course of a match is unclear. Interim findings from current research being conducted on behalf of the Premier League using CCTV footage demonstrate that very few supporters sit or stand for a full 90 minutes. For example, whilst standing in away areas is very prevalent, standing was observed for 80 minutes or more in only one in five away seats. Furthermore, the analysis shows that 25% to 35% of home seats were occupied by a standing fan at any given time.¹⁴

Overall, evidence examined for this review suggests that persistent standing in seated areas happens at the majority of football grounds and is much more prevalent in sections accommodating away supporters. It can however vary greatly by match, club, area of the stadium and even within a given match.

2.2 Persistent standing and spectator safety

The safety risk that persistent standing in seated areas poses to supporters (and others within football grounds) cannot be definitively concluded from the evidence reviewed in this report. This review has not identified any incidents leading to serious injury or fatalities at football grounds in the UK related to persistent standing in all-seater stadia. Independent reports¹⁵ suggest that persistent standing, when managed correctly, may not be inherently unsafe, and that the risk is dependent on certain conditions. For example, the highest risk to spectator safety is at moments of excitement (e.g. celebrating a goal).¹⁶ Therefore, any standing in seated areas that occurs during normal play but is *outside* times of excitement is generally considered in the evidence as low-risk. However the SGSA asserts that “it is still important to recognise the significant level of risk associated with persistent standing in seating areas” (Scott, 2017: p4).¹⁷ This assertion is made with reference to the range of associated hazards which are not fully understood (see page 17), and the potentially serious impact in terms of injury, should a standing crowd collapse.

Progressive crowd collapse

Forward movement by spectators standing in seated areas creates a risk of a ‘progressive crowd collapse’, where there is no restraint to prevent fans falling over the seat in front of them onto other people in a cascading effect.¹⁸ Due to its potential serious impact, and because “one person deliberately jumping on the back of the person in front can instigate a progressive crowd collapse” (Still, 2009: p3),¹⁹ the SGSA asserts that progressive crowd collapse should be regarded as a significant risk to safety.²⁰ Serious injuries have been reported as a result of progressive crowd collapses at football stadia in other European countries,²¹ although we have no information in this review as to how the circumstances leading to these, and the physical aspects of stadia, would be comparable to persistent standing in UK grounds.

In the absence of real-world data to inform the risks that this presents in UK stadia, research using computer modelling and simulation on behalf of the Premier League in 2009 explored the factors that might lead to a major progressive crowd collapse in areas of persistent standing.²² This concluded that risks increase with stand gradient and at times of excitement, and that there was overall “a negligible statistical likelihood of a progressive crowd collapse” from standing in seated areas during normal play (Still, 2009: p15). Assessments at two individual clubs concur that standing in seated areas is most dangerous during moments of excitement, followed by when leaving the stadium²³ – both of which are permitted under the all-seater policy and therefore a risk that is unrelated to persistent standing. However, as the crowd modelling research was conducted a decade ago, it would be wise to consider changes in fan behaviour since that time, for example, the ‘Poznan’ – a celebration where supporters stand with their backs to the pitch, place their arms over the supporters at either side, and jump on the spot in unison – as observed at Manchester City FC.²⁴

Independent reports²⁵ into the management of persistent standing at one club where standing in certain seated areas is managed in a particular way (discussed further below) propose that due to a low rake and generous seating row depths in the area where persistent standing occurs, “this does not pose a risk of progressive crowd

collapse”.²⁶ This assertion is based on the guidance stated in the SGSA *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds* (the Green Guide), that standing accommodation should have a maximum rake of 25° (Figure 15 and Section 11.8, Green Guide, 6th Edition).²⁷ However, this guidance on the maximum rake relates to the gradient of the terrace or viewing slope of properly constructed terracing with crush barriers, not seated areas with no barriers.

The evidence identified by this review, whilst not extensive, suggests that the risk of progressive crowd collapse *as a result of persistent standing* is low, and that the risk increases during sudden movement at times of excitement. Still (2009: p.15) argues that “appropriately positioned barriers could have a marked effect on the impact should a progressive crowd collapse occur”, mitigating the risk irrespective of whether it would result from standing during a moment of excitement or not.²⁸

Injuries sustained from standing in seated areas

Of 1,550 injuries recorded by Premier League clubs during the 2017/18 season,²⁹ none were attributed to persistent standing and 84% were reported as having no link whatsoever to standing.³⁰ Statistical analysis of SGSA injury data across all four leagues suggests a higher incidence of injuries at grounds with terracing than those without,³¹ but this does not indicate causation as data does not show where exactly an injury occurred. Further, any relationship between injuries and grounds with terracing is not relevant to modern standing accommodation such as rail seating. It is acknowledged by the SGSA that historical data collected on injuries to spectators at football matches lacks the consistency and detail required to attribute injuries directly to persistent standing.³² Injury data examined for this review³³ supports this lack of consistency.

It has been suggested in research and briefings that fans can sustain injuries from tripping and falling over the backs of seats, particularly during goal celebrations.³⁴ The only study in this review that investigated this found that 11.5% of 1,072 football fans completing an online survey into standing at football reported that they had suffered some form of injury when standing in a seated area, including injuries to lower legs, shins and ankles when celebrating a goal.³⁵ One complaint handled by the Independent Football Ombudsman in 2018 involved an injury to one supporter sustained when others toppled into her from the row behind during a goal celebration.³⁶ It was suggested by stakeholders that minor injuries resulting from standing typically go unrecorded as they would be unlikely to be reported by fans.

Current data and research into standing in seating areas is limited and so the extent to which standing in seated areas, persistent or at times of excitement, might cause injuries is difficult to assess. Given that research suggests standing at times of excitement poses a higher risk of injury than standing during normal play,³⁷ it is even more challenging to relate this to *persistent* standing. At one club where persistent standing is managed in a particular way (see below), there have been no reports of injuries received through bumps and scrapes, though it is acknowledged that minor injuries tend to go unreported.³⁸ This review did not identify any evidence which examined whether injuries due to standing in seating areas at times of excitement are more or less likely to occur if the supporter is already (persistently) standing.

Other hazards associated with persistent standing

Persistent standing in seated areas is associated with other hazards such as standing on seats, blocking gangways, migration and overcrowding, and disputes as stewards try to enforce seating which may pose a more significant risk of injury than standing itself.³⁹ It is suggested that the latter can lead to confrontation and a greater threat to supporter safety than allowing fans to continue to stand,⁴⁰ and that conflict situations relating to persistent standing only arise when a club/steward takes action.⁴¹ It has been acknowledged that fans who are standing in front of seats take up more room than when they are sitting down, which could lead to lateral movement into aisles and blocking routine and emergency access routes, creating the need for “an absolute requirement to keep gangways and vomitories clear” (Frosdick, 2018: 7).⁴²

On examining the limited evidence base on the risks associated with persistent standing as a whole, it is perhaps understandable that managing the risks associated with persistent standing – migration, overcrowding, and blocked gangways, for example – is considered a greater priority than managing the act of standing in itself, given the low risk of injury associated with standing during normal play.

2.3 Managing persistent standing

The SGSA reports that football clubs have tried a range of measures to prevent persistent standing, with limited success, and that clubs now focus on keeping aisles and gangways clear.⁴³ The FSF similarly report that standing is now “unofficially tolerated” at nearly all grounds in the top two divisions.⁴⁴ Where the SGSA is satisfied that spectator accommodation meets the licence conditions and that appropriate safety management arrangements are in place, clubs have installed barriers (independent, or part of dual purpose seating areas) to manage persistent standing in certain areas of the stadium. In the case of Celtic FC, Shrewsbury Town FC and Oxford United FC, these measures have been introduced to improve spectator safety in areas where persistent standing was prevalent and challenging to manage, and accommodate the wishes of fans – although in home areas only.⁴⁵ There are international examples of safety concerns around persistent standing prompting the introduction of rail seating areas,⁴⁶ although this review did not locate evidence as to how this has affected the management of standing or the safety of supporters.

Cardiff City FC have developed a customer-focused approach to managing persistent standing. By managing standing in the Canton Stand, the club allows fans who wish to stand to do so whilst also meeting the wishes of those elsewhere who prefer to sit. Independent reports⁴⁷ suggest that this approach to managing persistent standing is successful in managing the greatest risks to spectator safety; a shallow rake combined with ticket sales policies and stewarding practices mitigate the risks associated with persistent standing, with no reported safety, security or service issues. This approach may not be replicable elsewhere as it depends on the physical structure of stands, as well as comprehensive safety management approaches.⁴⁸

Example 1: Management of standing at Cardiff City FC

Stakeholders suggested that this tolerance is also evident at other all-seater grounds. Such examples indicate an inconsistency with the application of the all-seater policy and the management challenges faced by clubs. The tension between enforcement of the policy, and the measures required to ensure spectator safety, is evident in the crowd management approaches adopted by a number of clubs, and may suggest that the policy is challenging to implement. Advocates for introducing standing in seated areas argue that this indicates a need to review the all-seater policy.⁴⁹ It has also been suggested that demonstrating a tolerance of standing in certain areas may make it more difficult to enforce it elsewhere in the stadium,⁵⁰ contributing to further management challenges.

Despite recognised difficulties, a multi-faceted management approach can in some cases successfully reduce persistent standing. The SGSA cites one club where intense communication with fans through various channels about the consequences of persistently standing, combined with identifying and banning non-compliant fans using CCTV footage, reduced persistent standing by 80%.⁵¹ It is recommended that any persistent standing management strategies incorporate a combination of design, information and management elements to minimise any safety risks.⁵²

2.4 Managing standing areas and spectator safety

Clubs in the UK that are permitted to provide standing accommodation in licensed dual purpose seating areas have demonstrated how, through risk assessments and operational plans, a clearly articulated approach to managing risk can (and has) been implemented. On the basis that all areas of modern stadia, whether seating, standing or dual purpose, require the same high level of stadium and crowd management,⁵³ standing areas that are properly managed *should* be no less safe than seating areas. However, this review did not identify any evidence that examined this.

Risk management strategies in rail seating areas at Celtic FC and Shrewsbury Town FC include easily identifiable tickets, single-use wristbands and restricted entrance points to the area to control the number of spectators entering, as well as search on entry, a code of conduct and steward training specific to that area.⁵⁴ Shrewsbury Town FC reported no incidents that posed a risk to safety or security from the first six games their dual purpose seating area was in use.⁵⁵

Four sources of evidence for this review include case studies of standing areas at Borussia Dortmund in Germany.⁵⁶ Whilst contextual and cultural differences discourage comparison between all-seater English stadia and elsewhere in the world, Germany provides examples of how standing areas can be managed. An overview of the approach by Borussia Dortmund is included in Appendix 3.

2.5 Developments in football spectating and safety since the introduction of the all-seater policy

There have been considerable developments in football spectating since the Taylor Report was published. The all-seater policy led to the building of new stands, stadia and the conversion of former standing areas. This, however, occurred alongside a

range of other crowd management measures, making it difficult to isolate improvements in safety with any individual developments.⁵⁷ A survey of 1,500 football supporters about their experiences of football violence found that 89% of fans report a decrease in violent behaviour from the 1980s, which was attributed to better policing (56%), improvements in stadia (56%), the deterrence provided by CCTV (50%) and a more civilized supporter base (49%).⁵⁸

Stadium design

There have been a significant number of developments in stadium design since the 1990s. Having an identified seat for each spectator has made it easier to control, identify and monitor spectators.⁵⁹ As part of the stadium safety certificate, each club is required to have a computerised turnstile counting system, CCTV cameras and a stadium control room with radio communications links to steward supervisors and police, CCTV display monitors, and links to the computerised turnstile counting system.⁶⁰ Whilst we have not identified any evidence that has measured the extent to which changes in stadium design have improved spectator safety, it is widely acknowledged that modern football stadia are significantly safer than at the time of the Taylor Report.⁶¹

Crowd management

Crowd management developments since the introduction of the all-seater policy include the implementation and use of football banning orders, the establishment of the UK Football Policing Unit, Football Intelligence Officers, the use of segregated areas, CCTV with high quality imaging, steward training programmes, and stadium safety certificates.⁶² This review found little in the way of research that measures the impact that modern crowd management strategies have had on safety at football stadia. However, one piece of primary research in Sweden found that matches in stadia with surveillance cameras had 65% fewer incidents of missile throwing inside the stadium compared to before installation, and that this behaviour was not displaced to outside of the stadium.⁶³

Seating technology

There are a number of modern options for standing areas in football stadia. Traditional terracing is licensed for safe use at 22 current football league grounds and the vast majority of non-league ones. Modern technology, however, allows for dual purpose areas that can be used for either sitting or standing, with barriers to prevent the forward movement of spectators. Table 3 describes several options currently installed in the UK.⁶⁴

Stakeholders involved in the consultation stage of this review remarked that there is no 'one size fits all' technology solution that would meet the needs of all clubs. Preference would depend on a number of factors including local needs, stadium geography, the views of supporters, and financial considerations.⁶⁵ The EFL and the FSF argue for clubs, in partnership with their local Safety Advisory Group (SAG), to be able to determine stadium arrangements at a local level.⁶⁶

Option	Description
Rail seating (Celtic FC, Shrewsbury Town FC)	<p>Individual metal seats with a rail incorporated, which together form a continuous rail along the length of the row.</p> <p>Can be bolted upright to provide standing only accommodation, or used as seats.</p> <p>Depending on the stand, rail seating can be configured to allow a greater standing capacity than seating, though Celtic FC and Shrewsbury Town FC both use rail seating with a seating:standing ratio of 1:1.</p>
2020/Grandstand seating (Wycombe Wanderers FC)	<p>Elevated seats incorporating barriers are designed to ensure supporters' eye levels are the same regardless of whether they sit or stand, allowing a combination of both in the same area of the stadium.</p> <p>Seats are off-centred in alternate rows, which further improves sightlines.</p>
Independent rail (Oxford United FC)	<p>A continuous barrier in front of existing seats can be installed to prevent forward movement by fans standing in seating areas.</p> <p>This does not involve taking out and replacing existing seats.</p>
Stadium seat with integrated bar (Tottenham Hotspur FC, not yet in use)	<p>Tottenham Hotspur have installed two areas of purpose-built and designed "seats with integrated bars" at their new stadium, which is not yet in use.</p> <p>A profiled bar and slim seat maximises stepping clearway and the seats are the same as the rest of the stadium.</p>

Table 3: Current dual purpose accommodation installed in UK stadia

Guidelines for seats incorporating barriers have been included in the most recent edition of the Green Guide.⁶⁷ The relevant section states:

“In areas of seated accommodation where spectators persistently stand, an alternative to independent barriers in front of seats is to install seats incorporating barriers. It is stressed that such installations should only be considered where prevailing legislation and competition rules allow. Moreover, unless stated otherwise, their design should meet the recommendations outlined in this chapter and other chapters in respect of sightlines, viewing restrictions, seating row dimensions, gangways, the number of seats between radial gangways and in all matters relating to circulation.”

The inclusion of seats with barriers in the Green Guide implies that this type of accommodation would comply with current stringent safety regulations for sports stadia in England and Wales. Furthermore, it has been argued that rail seating, or indeed the other forms of seating incorporating barriers as outlined in Table 3, does not conflict with the reasons for proposing all-seater accommodation in the Taylor Report. Such solutions would provide each spectator with an area of territory (when

configured 1:1), prevent the spectator being subject to pressures of those behind or around them, and/or being bent over a crush barrier, control density problems and enable the identification of individuals through CCTV and numbered ticketing; all considered benefits of seated accommodation by Taylor.⁶⁸ However, this review found no research that demonstrated whether, or the extent to which, modern standing infrastructure is more or less safe than when fans are seated in current accommodation.

03. Summary of evidence: The wider impact of the all-seater policy

Evidence relating to the wider impact of the all-seater policy was considered in terms of the permanent application of the policy, spectator diversity, consumer choice, ticket prices, stadium atmosphere and behaviour and disorder.

3.1 The impact of the permanent application of the all-seater policy

The permanent application of the policy can require extensive facility development which in turn has a significant financial impact for clubs promoted to the Championship who have licensed standing areas. The EFL proposes that this is a considerable problem for clubs within their leagues, particularly if they are subsequently relegated out of the Championship yet remain subject to the all-seater policy.⁶⁹ Such clubs can only offer seated accommodation to fans, despite playing at a level where standing accommodation is licensed to other clubs.⁷⁰ Brentford FC are currently in their fourth season in the Championship with terracing having been given dispensation whilst their new stadium is built,⁷¹ which reflects an attempt to prevent any unnecessary financial burden on the club.

3.2 The changing nature of football crowds

A small body of academic literature on the changes to football fandom, fan behaviour and the nature of crowds since the introduction of the all-seater policy suggests that football now attracts a more diverse and affluent crowd, and young, working class supporters have been priced out.⁷² However, this is not evidence of a causal relationship between the changing nature of football crowds and the all-seater policy. It should be noted that there have been significant wider contextual changes related to fandom and the consumption of sport in general and football in particular over the same time period. The EFL notes that clubs with standing areas have seen their grounds become more diverse in the same way as those who have become all-seater, suggesting that this cannot solely be attributed to the all-seater policy.⁷³

It is difficult to predict from current evidence whether permitting standing areas in all-seater stadia has any potential to either encourage or discourage particular groups from attending matches. A Premier League survey found that those who opposed permitted standing in grounds felt that it would make Premier League stadiums *less* welcoming for minority groups (in ascending order: young people, ethnic minorities, LGBT people, women, families, older people, young children and disabled people). Yet those who supported the introduction of standing areas conversely felt that it would make stadiums *more* welcoming to some minority groups (young people, ethnic

minorities, LGBT people and women, as well as men). The reasons for this were not reported.⁷⁴

Research with female supporters has demonstrated that some female football fans would be in favour of introducing limited standing areas in grounds.⁷⁵ The same study also noted that some female rugby fans were not in favour of ground sharing with football clubs as this could lead to the loss of standing areas. A recent EFL survey found that 44% of female respondents preferred to stand (compared to 71% of male respondents);⁷⁶ a smaller survey of Scottish supporters reported that 84% of female respondents were in favour of a 'safe standing' area in grounds.⁷⁷ A Football Supporters' Federation (FSF) survey found that the high level of support amongst respondents for a choice to sit or stand was consistent across gender (with 92% of female respondents backing the choice to sit or stand).⁷⁸ Together, these findings suggests that there is an appetite for a choice to stand amongst female fans, but less is known about whether this would in fact impact on their attendance. It is unclear (from the surveys undertaken) whether attitudes towards the reintroduction of standing reflect an understanding of how this would be implemented in today's context, or whether fans are reflecting on their understanding or memory of historical terracing (pre-1990).

Little is known about whether standing areas in current all-seater stadia would have an impact on the different groups who attend matches. A stakeholder representative of Level Playing Field suggested that they would want to investigate this with disabled fans to understand this further. Advocates for disabled football supporters claim that persistent standing can negatively impact their experience by obstructing sightlines, and that some do not attend away matches due to the higher chance of this being an issue.⁷⁹ Persistent standing can force others to stand in order to be able to see, including those who might find it difficult to stand for long periods such as children and the elderly, with the EFL suggesting that this is "unacceptable at a time when football is so focused on promoting inclusion at matches".⁸⁰ The practice of standing on seats has been observed by children whose view is blocked by other supporters standing in front of them, which is a risk of injury if they were to fall off.⁸¹

3.3 Customer care and choice

All of the evidence reflecting on fan perspectives that was considered within this review asserts that there remains a proportion of football fans who prefer to stand at football matches. Persistent standing data shows that a small minority of home fans and a large majority of away fans can be observed standing in seated areas at matches in all-seater stadia, which supports this view, although it is less clear how many stand for the entire match and therefore never use a seat (as discussed in section 2.1).

Advocates for standing argue that this is now a significant customer care issue and clubs should be allowed to cater for the varying demands of their paying customers.⁸² Reports into the management of standing at one Premier League club state that the club's desire to deliver a range of products and services to meet the diverse expectations of its customer base is central to the management of standing in one particular stand.⁸³

Evidence considered within this review identifies a number of reasons why supporters stand outside of times of excitement, and these should be considered important to the debate. These include tradition and culture; a personal preference; to improve the atmosphere; in protest at regulations to sit; seeing other (opposition) fans standing; to improve sightlines; because others are standing and obstructing their view; inclement weather; and to be more comfortable.⁸⁴ These reasons demonstrate that some stand through choice and others through necessity.

A number of fan surveys have been conducted by various bodies including leagues and supporter groups (at national and club level) to understand fan preferences on this issue. Key findings from a number of these surveys are summarised in Appendix 4. Typically, such surveys show a high level of support for the introduction of standing areas in all-seater stadia in principle, and specifically the choice to sit or stand,⁸⁵ with figures in support of this ranging from 62% to 97% of respondents. The Liverpool supporter group Spirit of Shankly reported that 88% of almost 18,000 fans surveyed were in favour of the introduction of rail-seating areas in football grounds.⁸⁶ When questioned on personal preferences (which is less common in surveys), however, a lower percentage report that they themselves would wish to stand (26%-82%), with the lowest end of this range reported in Premier League surveys. A small minority of respondents to all surveys oppose standing areas; reasons for this have not been fully explored, although The Premier League report that in their survey, among those who oppose standing, the main reason is the perceived safety risks (50%).⁸⁷ Whilst fan surveys provide a useful body of evidence relating to consumer choice, it should be noted that there are limitations in the extent to which findings can be extrapolated more broadly across the sector.

Two waves of Premier League supporter surveys asked whether fans would prefer to *only* sit or stand, or *mainly* sit or stand. Just 5% of fans reported that they would *only* stand, 27% that they would *only* sit and the majority (68%) wishing to *mainly* sit (47%) or *mainly* stand (21%).⁸⁸ This concurs with interim findings from CCTV behaviour analysis at Premier League grounds demonstrating that the vast majority of supporters engage in a combination of sitting and standing⁸⁹ (see section 2.1).

The Independent Football Ombudsman (IFO) highlight a small number of complaints to them per season related to standing negatively impacting the experience of supporters who wish to sit.⁹⁰ The IFO, along with advocates for standing, argue that allowing those who wish to stand to do so in a designated area would make it easier for clubs to enforce the seating ground regulations elsewhere in the stadium, and reduce the likelihood of conflict between those who wish to stand and those who do not, or cannot.⁹¹

3.4 Spectator numbers and ticket prices

Fan surveys suggest that more people might attend football matches if they had the option to stand, with 47% of respondents to the EFL survey claiming they would attend more games if licensed standing was available (this was more prevalent among young males and lapsed season ticket holders).⁹² This may however reflect perceptions that standing areas would be associated with increased capacities and lower ticket

prices. For instance, the Premier League report that 73% of survey respondents believe permitted standing areas would be able to accommodate more fans and therefore increase capacities, and 69% believe match tickets in standing areas would cost less than those in seated areas.⁹³

In international contexts where standing is permitted, such as the German Bundesliga, tickets are offered at a lower price band in standing areas.⁹⁴ However, it is unclear whether this would also be the case in the Premier League and/or Championship. EFL clubs with terracing largely offer these tickets at a lower price;⁹⁵ however, Shrewsbury Town FC are at the time of writing selling 2018/19 half-season tickets for their rail seating area at a similar price to seats in the same stand.⁹⁶ The EFL report that some of their clubs feel there is a scope for reduction in ticket prices for standing areas, but this would depend on a number of factors including the cost of stadium reconfiguration.⁹⁷

Although the current edition of the Green Guide would allow for standing capacity to be greater than seating capacity, where dual purpose seating options have been installed in the UK, unlike in Germany, there has been no increase in capacity when configured for standing.⁹⁸ Any increase in capacity would be dependent on meeting stringent safety guidelines, particularly that rows must have sufficient depth to safely accommodate extra spectators. It is therefore unclear as to whether the introduction of standing areas in current all-seater stadia could increase crowd numbers. The EFL state that the current occupancy rate is around 60% at their clubs, and that therefore in the majority of cases, any standing areas would not replace seats in regular use.⁹⁹

3.5 Stadium atmosphere

Advocates for standing assert that there is a positive association between standing and stadium atmosphere.¹⁰⁰ It is perceived that those supporters who stand are also often those who sing, thus creating a positive atmosphere – for example, Celtic FC Chief Executive Peter Lawwell (2016, p.1) stated in response to the challenges of managing standing in their all-seater stadia that “we must also understand the positive effect that these areas [where some supporters choose to stand] have on atmosphere at matches”.¹⁰¹ A number of qualitative papers highlight that supporters associate standing at football with a positive atmosphere and that modern all-seater stadia can suffer from a lack of atmosphere.¹⁰² For example, one supporter is quoted as stating “A lot of fans stand even though they’re told to sit. Fans only sing when they’re standing, so it’s a problem trying to get an atmosphere going”.¹⁰³ This association appears to be based on perception only – we found no research that investigated any causal relationship between standing at football and the stadium atmosphere.

The Premier League fan survey suggests that this viewpoint is prevalent amongst some football supporters, with 41% of respondents citing “better atmosphere” as the main reason for supporting standing at football.¹⁰⁴ The survey summary reports that on average, respondents believe that standing would improve the atmosphere at football matches, regardless of whether or not they themselves support the introduction of standing areas at Premier League grounds. Furthermore, 88% of Scottish fans surveyed believe that ‘safe standing’ would improve stadium atmosphere.¹⁰⁵ Both

Celtic FC and Tottenham Hotspur FC cited the positive effect that fans who stand have on the atmosphere in their reasoning for wishing to introduce standing areas.¹⁰⁶

German football is often used as an example of the association between standing and a positive atmosphere.¹⁰⁷ One research paper from Germany asserts that fans there strongly associate standing areas with a place where fans can show their enthusiasm and excitement.¹⁰⁸ A German FA document on stadium safety alludes to the positive atmosphere coming “especially from the standing areas” that “create and shape the special atmosphere that fascinates all onlookers inside and outside the grounds”.¹⁰⁹ However, there are a number of differences between the football supporting cultures – as well as legislation and crowd management – of the UK and Germany that make any direct comparisons unwise.¹¹⁰

3.6 Behaviour and disorder

Stakeholders within the sector caution of the need to understand any unintended consequences that might be a risk of the introduction of standing areas, such as the potential impact on crowd behaviour. The SGSA reports that a standing crowd can be more difficult to manage than a seated crowd, and “some groups of standing spectators [in seated areas] regularly adopt a hostile attitude to stewards and to the authorities generally”.¹¹¹ This is also a primary concern of the UKFPU. One piece of research into the role of the police in the ‘safe standing’ debate found a strong link between the police perception of standing and a negative view of spectator behaviour, but acknowledged that this could stem from historical conflicts.¹¹²

Academic research has investigated the changing nature of football fandom and fan behaviour in the time since the introduction of the all-seater policy. In a review of the relationship between disorder and the introduction of licensed standing areas in England and Wales, Pearson & Stott (2018: 1) state that there is no research investigating this relationship in the UK and that “there is no evidence of a direct association between standing and likelihood of disorder”.¹¹³ They assert that disorder in football stadiums is a complex issue which cannot be attributed to any one factor, and that it occurs in both seating and standing areas. We have found no evidence through this review to challenge this, as any suggestion of a relationship between standing and disorder does not examine causality.

For example, the 2002 risk assessment of standing in seating areas at Manchester United reported a positive relationship between the occurrence of persistent standing and the occurrence of anti-social behaviours at observed matches. Causality was however not implied, as both were evident at category C and C+ (high risk) matches and the location in the stadium of anti-social behaviours was not recorded.¹¹⁴ Reports of an isolated incident of pyrotechnic use in the rail seating area at Celtic FC provide conflicting accounts of the action taken by the club in response to the incident. The use of pyrotechnics in this context cannot be attributed to the standing area, given that a number of incidents of pyrotechnic use were also reported in Scottish all-seater stadia in the same season.¹¹⁵

The EFL uses data on arrests and disorder incidents at clubs with and without terracing across the Championship, League 1 and League 2. This reports that both

average arrests in the three seasons 2014/15 to 2016/17 and the disorder index for the 2016-17 season across all three of their leagues are lower at grounds with standing areas than all-seater stadia.¹¹⁶

Examples from Cardiff City FC, Celtic FC and Shrewsbury Town FC highlight how stewarding plans and ticketing controls have been put in place to mitigate the potential for disorder in standing areas. These clubs also engage directly with supporters in their approach to standing. The most recent assessment at one Premier League club states that “there have been no incidents of disorderly conduct in the [name] Stand since the new management arrangements were introduced in 2013”.¹¹⁷

Overall it is not possible to determine, on existing evidence, whether the reintroduction of standing would have any impact (positive or negative) on behaviour and disorder at football grounds. Evidence in this review suggests that there is no association between rates of arrests or disorderly incidents and whether a ground has standing accommodation or not, and no research to examine whether incidents are more or less prevalent in licensed standing, persistent standing or seating areas.

3.7 Crowd management

It is a reasoned argument that a standing crowd has the potential to be more difficult to monitor for safety purposes, particularly if this is exacerbated by overcrowding.¹¹⁸ Police and safety officers who participated in one qualitative study reported that it can be more difficult to detect spectators causing trouble in standing crowds.¹¹⁹ However, given the advances in crowd management, particularly CCTV and numbered ticketing, it is safe to assume that in dual purpose seating areas this would be a very different context than traditional terracing.¹²⁰ One survey reported that supporters would perceive a return to standing to worsen safety and crowd control/stewarding,¹²¹ although reasons for this were not explored.

Overall, the current evidence base related to the wider impact of the all-seater policy and any return to standing is currently limited, preventing any robust conclusions from being drawn. There is a clear demand from the football supporter base for the choice to be provided to sit or stand across all professional leagues, however there are likely nuances within this demand that have not been fully explored. The perceived link between standing and negative fan behaviour has not been examined in research and therefore there is no current evidence to determine if the reintroduction of standing areas would have an impact on supporter behaviour and disorder.

04. Conclusions and next steps

Reflecting on the evidence presented in this report, this chapter seeks to address the two overarching research questions: ‘Is the all-seater policy still fit for purpose in the current football spectator climate?’, and ‘What evidence exists that the reintroduction of standing could lead to equivalent or improved spectator safety at football stadia?’ Finally, this chapter considers evidence gaps and how they might be filled.

4.1 Overarching research questions

Based on the existing evidence, is the all-seater policy still fit for purpose in the current football spectator climate?

Whilst no evidence reflected in this review definitively demonstrated that the all-seater policy is no longer fit for purpose (in terms of measurable impact on safety or spectator experience), the literature examined certainly calls this notion into question. Widespread acceptance of the managed standing area which has been adopted at one Premier League club to address persistent standing epitomises the challenge to the all-seater policy in its existing form. The tension between enforcement of the policy, and the measures required to ensure spectator safety, is evident in the crowd management approaches adopted by a number of clubs. This suggests that in some cases, the policy may be challenging to implement.

What evidence exists, domestically or internationally, that the reintroduction of standing could lead to equivalent or improved spectator safety at football stadia?

Arguments about whether changes to the all-seater policy would make stadia more or less safe are typically based on logic, theoretical notions or prevailing perceptions. The findings of this review suggest that there is no body of evidence which convincingly demonstrates that standing at football in the current football spectator climate, either on traditional terracing or modern dual purpose options, is any more or less safe than sitting. It has also been proposed that standing during normal play (i.e. outside of moments of excitement) is low risk. It is standing at moments of excitement and during exit which carry a higher risk of injury; both of which are permitted and unavoidable risks, even under the all-seater policy.

However, this is a complex issue where the level of risk is dependent on a number of variables. There is evidence from overseas¹²² that progressive crowd collapse could result from persistent standing in all-seater accommodation. We have reviewed no evidence of progressive crowd collapse causing serious injury in England and Wales, but incidents and injuries to supporters standing in seated areas have been reported

by stakeholders and via social media channels, which although outside the scope of this review, indicate that it warrants further investigation.

Stadium safety management guidelines and licencing agreements require all spectator accommodation to be risk assessed and managed appropriately, regardless of seating or standing, or league level. Case study examples demonstrate that standing at football grounds can be appropriately risk assessed and managed to reduce the likelihood of injury. However, there is limited evidence to suggest that such arrangements either have or have not improved spectator safety, as this has not been studied in depth.

4.2 Evidence gaps

This brief but systematic review indicates that the empirical evidence on standing at football in all-seater stadia, particularly that focuses on spectator safety, is limited. Despite the strength of opinion on this matter across the sector, there is not a substantial body of empirical evidence from which meaningful conclusions or policy recommendations may be drawn.

One overarching limitation with the current evidence base is that there is no consistent measure of persistent standing which has been applied across the sector. Low reported figures for home fans may not represent the full extent of the issue. This limits both the potential to draw cross sector conclusions, and the extent to which such measures can be usefully compared to other data sets (e.g. incidence of injury and disorder). Furthermore, the evidence available does little to unpack or explain the differentiation in persistent standing. Differences *between* stadia (i.e. comparing individual clubs), *within* stadia accommodation (i.e. comparing stands where there is an issue with persistent standing to those where there is not) and across seasons (i.e. comparing the unique circumstances at individual matches) are not well understood. The definition of persistent standing itself (i.e. standing outside of moments of excitement), excludes the very times when the risk of accident or injury is elevated. Arguably, in ensuring spectator safety, crowd movement during moments of excitement and when exiting are more critical scenarios to understand.

The evidence identified by this review does not permit in-depth analysis of any relationship between standing at football and injury or disorder. Although historical data is available on both, such data does not consistently record the necessary contextual information (such as location and contributing factors) to identify any associations which may exist. Stakeholders suggest that injuries, and unsafe practices, are shared on social media but do not make their way into official reports. There is considerable scope for the collection of more comprehensive injury data which would further current understanding of the extent to which current practices of standing in seating areas can be linked to injuries. Indeed, improving intelligence on the potential link between standing at football and injury is a current focus for the SGSA. There is also a gap in the evidence around whether supporters behave differently in different types of accommodation and the safety implications of any potential differences.

Whilst no evidence was identified in this review to unequivocally demonstrate that managed standing areas provide equivalent or improved spectator safety, it should be noted that the opportunity to do so empirically is inherently restricted by current

policy. Clubs that have installed barriers in areas with persistent standing perceive this as an effective risk management strategy, and whilst there will be learning occurring as to the impact and management of this, it remains a gap in the current evidence base.

4.3 Recommendations for research and policy

The aim of this report was to review and present current evidence relating to standing at football through a rapid evidence assessment, and identify gaps in the evidence base. To build upon this, we recommend ways in which these gaps could be addressed, alongside a review of the all-seater policy involving a wide and thorough consultation.

Policy recommendations

The findings of this review suggest that the relevance (and practicality) of the all-seater policy to the current football spectator climate warrants further attention, from researchers and policy makers alike. This should include full consultations with key stakeholders as well as the diverse groups of people who attend football matches to understand the potential impact that any change might have. It should also involve engagement with experts in the field to explore potential nuances in the current evidence base. There is considerable knowledge across the sector, beyond what is reported in existing evidence sources, which should be utilised when considering the next steps.

In particular, there needs to be increased clarity around the management of standing in seated areas, risks associated with this, and the potential for barriers to improve safety at stadia (regardless of any potential future change to policy). Barriers would prevent forward movement and therefore could reduce the risk and impact of a progressive crowd collapse, irrespective of whether that collapse occurred whilst spectators were standing or sitting, during a moment of excitement or otherwise. Collecting the type of evidence necessary to demonstrate the impact of different standing options would be beneficial in advancing understanding of the potential safety impacts of these. This would require some tolerance within current legislation to trial alternative accommodation (with careful planning and considerable consultation).

Research recommendations

This review suggests that there are significant gaps in the current understanding of standing at football, confounded by prevailing perceptions. As such there is a strong argument for taking steps to advance knowledge of this issue. This is a complex subject which evokes strong feelings across the football sector and there is significant scope for further research to build a more robust evidence base.

In order to do this, research questions might focus on understanding the perceived differences in standing behaviour as well as seek a more accurate and consistent picture of current levels of standing at football. Why do some people stand, whilst others do not? Why do some clubs have a more significant problem with standing in seated areas than others? Why have some attempts to address this problem succeeded where others have failed? How does the behaviour of fans differ in different areas of

the stadium? What are the various ways in which clubs are effectively managing this? Would modifying a section of a stand to create a ‘standing’ area, officially or unofficially, impact how this area is perceived, by supporters and those responsible for crowd management? These should focus on the behaviours of both home and away fans. Such questions would be best understood through in-depth observational study across a range of stadia and matches.

Conversely, to understand further the potential implications of introducing permitted standing areas, research should be framed around the safety implications of standing in all-seater stadia, versus managed standing in alternative accommodation. Given the serious impact that a progressive crowd collapse could have, strengthening evidence on the extent to which this is a risk in different stadia with different types of crowd, and the role that crush barriers could play in preventing this, appears to be a priority.

Regardless of the focus, it is clear that cross-sector engagement (with key stakeholders, spectators and experts in the field) will be necessary to establish a common understanding of persistent standing in seated areas, the risk this poses to safety, and possible solutions including any introduction or trial of standing areas. A greater understanding of persistent standing would be necessary to judge any impact that standing areas might have on this. Table 4 below provides some specific recommendations for future research and engagement activity arising from this review, which could be conducted concurrently.

Requirement	Research/policy recommendation
Develop a cross-sector strategy for generating evidence by ensuring consistency of measures and data collection	Establish a stakeholder steering group to inform the strategy. Collaborating across the sector to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on a (measurable and risk-based) working definition of persistent standing, define consistent measures of persistent standing, and data collection processes appropriate to the working definition, that can be implemented across the sector • Establish data collection and reporting requirements for the monitoring of standing in seated areas (and other data relevant to safety, e.g. injury, incidents of disorder) • Establish responsibility for the collection/reporting of this data, and governance to oversee the process (empowering stakeholders to engage and invest in building evidence) • Implement over the course of 1-2 seasons to generate a robust data set for analysis and monitor changes as a result of any alternative approaches trialled at individual clubs
Undertake a large-scale consultation to more fully understand attitudes and	Cross sector observational study and consultation to understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes and behaviours of spectators e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why persistent standing occurs

<p>behaviours across the sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Perceptions of and attitudes towards standing, and attempts to address this ○ Consumer choice (i.e. preference for enforcement of all-seater policy versus amendments to all-seater policy) across all groups who attend football ○ The behaviour of fans in different areas of stadia – sitting, persistent standing and licensed standing ● Club (including stadia staff and stewards) attitudes and behaviours: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Extent to which standing is considered a problem ○ Challenges (and/or successes) in enforcing all-seater policy ○ Measures taken currently to ensure safety, and suggestions for enhancing this at club level ○ Appetite for change, and support required ● UK Football Policing Unit/Football Intelligence Officers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ On the risks associated with persistent standing ○ On the risks which should be managed/any anticipated unintended consequences associated with managed standing areas
<p>Take advantage of existing opportunities to better understand the impact of managed standing areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use clubs where managed standing areas are already operational to trial the impact on safety. Produce case studies, based on consultation with clubs (including stewards), fans, and police ● Identify other opportunities to extend this activity (e.g. Tottenham Hotspur, rail seating.) Provide clarity and consistency around tolerance levels of standing to encourage clubs to be open about their management approach
<p>Create tolerance within the policy to trial different approaches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To enable data collection through experimental methods, e.g. randomised control trial, which could demonstrate impact of alternative accommodation ● Consider how trials would best be managed and monitored, including a full consultation with safety experts and engagement with supporters

Table 4: Recommendations for future research and engagement activity

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- ¹ Taylor, L.J. (1990). *The Hillsborough Stadium Disaster: 15 April 1989*. Inquiry by the Rt Hon Lord Justice Taylor, Final Report. London: HMSO, p.12
- ² The exemption does not include League 1 and 2 clubs who have played in the upper two divisions for at least three seasons since the start of the 1994-95 season.
- ³ House of Commons. (2018). *Parliamentary Debate: Safe Standing*.
- ⁴ <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140402163359/http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/networks/gsr/resources-and-guidance/rapid-evidence-assessment/what-is>
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Appendix 1: The Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) process

This section outlines the REA method used for this review.

REAs provide a balanced assessment of evidence, to produce timely information on a given policy issue. The systematic approach adopted in undertaking an REA is designed to be rigorous, but concessions to the depth and/or breadth of study limit aspects of the review so that results can be delivered within time or other constraints.

In this case, the following limitations should be noted:

- The number of synonymous search terms was limited (to enable a greater number of independent search terms to be combined so as to address the breadth of research questions);
- The contexts included for consideration were limited to football grounds in the UK, or in other countries with a comparable football sector to the UK (i.e. other crowd contexts were beyond the scope of this review); and
- Quality assessments were simplified to accommodate a wider range of projects, and to mitigate against the exclusion of highly relevant material from sources which are not readily assessed against standard inclusion criteria.

Such limitations inevitably introduce some risk of bias,¹ although every effort has been made to minimise this through the adoption of rigorous and replicable search and selection processes (as described in the sections which follow).

It should be noted that this review does not seek to provide an exhaustive overview of *all* the evidence of potential relevance to this policy issue. Rather, it summarises the findings of a systematic evidence gathering exercise (undertaken to address the specified research questions), and identifies any limitations or gaps within this evidence.

Establishing search parameters

Informed by the research objectives and consultation with DCMS, a replicable search strategy was developed which defined:

- the contexts in scope;
- sources which should be searched (e.g. journals, websites, academic databases);
- specific search terms which should be used to identify evidence within those sources;
- inclusion and exclusion criteria to determine which evidence to select for full review; and
- a standardised approach to evaluating the quality of evidence.

Search parameters were developed in consultation with DCMS, based on discussions at a project inception meeting and a subsequent review and sign-off process.

Contexts in scope

It was agreed that the review should consider international evidence within those countries which are known to permit standing (e.g. Germany), but that consideration should be given to the extent to which such evidence may be extrapolated to a UK context. The extent to which football fandom in any given country was comparable to the UK context was therefore taken into account.

Although other contexts (such as different sporting sectors, or live music events) could yield additional evidence relating to crowd behaviour and crowd management, it was agreed that such contexts should be out of scope. Although such wider contexts have some potential relevance, it was necessary to prioritise those search terms which addressed the primary and secondary research questions directly within the resource and time constraints of this review.

Specific search terms

Systematic searches implemented the search terms included in Table 5 below.

A: Overall topic	B: Primary topics	C: Type of document	D: Secondary topics	E: Specific contexts
Football match Football ground Football stadium Essential keyword: Safety	All seater	Policy	Ticket prices/ing	Celtic
	Safe standing	Data	Stadium atmosphere	Shrewsbury Town
	Persistent standing	Evidence	Spectator diversity	West Bromwich
	Injury	Research	Spectator behaviour	Albion
	Risk	Analysis	Consumer choice	Netherlands
	Stadium design	Review	Supporter groups	Eredivisie
	Stadium innovation		Fan perspective	Germany
	Seating technology		Disorder	Bundesliga
	Seating system			Premier League
	Crowd management			Championship
	Crowd movement			
	Stewarding			
	Policing			
	Rail seat/ing			
Standing area				
Terrace/ing				

Table 5: Search terms

These terms were utilised in combination to undertake a range of searches within the parameters of the method.

Identification of potential evidence

Publically available evidence was identified through systematic searches of peer and non-peer reviewed literature. A total of 360 unique search combinations were applied across academic databases (including Lexislibrary, ProQuest, Science Direct,

and SportDiscus), and online searches of unpublished ‘grey’ literature (documents and research produced by organisations outside of the traditional commercial or academic publishing). Titles and abstracts or summary information were reviewed, with 81 sources saved for consideration based on potential relevance to the research questions.

Systematic searches were supplemented with targeted searches (of specific websites), and direct approach made to stakeholders to identify any evidence not available in the public domain. This included stakeholders from SGSA, DCMS, national football associations, supporter organisations, individual football clubs, and academics and other experts known to work in this field. Targeted searches and direct approaches generated a further 44 documents, bringing the total to 125 unique sources identified for consideration.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The criteria which were considered to determine which evidence to select for full review included;

- Publication language (English only);
- Publication date (last twenty years only);
- Country (UK, or other country with comparable football sector / fandom);
- Evidence type and method, to include data, survey analyses, case studies, discussion and briefing papers, academic articles, safety guidance documents and risk assessments/exclude evidence reflecting only author(s)’ opinions (with no basis for evidence (whether identified through systematic searches, or provided by stakeholders/individual clubs); and
- Relevance (to at least one primary, or two secondary research questions).

Sources that contained no text (photographs and videos) were excluded as these require different analysis techniques² that were outside of the scope of this review.

Initial screening and evidence selection

The 125 sources were subject to an initial screening process, to select a shortlist of evidence to be considered for the detailed review. Given the diversity of evidence to be included, traditional REA screening and quality assessment frameworks (such as those which apply the Maryland Scale³ as a measure of methodological quality) were not deemed suitable. For example, such an approach would not permit the inclusion of much of the evidence provided by football clubs and organisations (which was not collected or presented in a format that would typically be shared with an external audience). Since such sources of evidence were critical to furthering our understanding in this review, a decision support tool was developed instead, which provided a consistent and replicable way to screen a wider range of evidence types (see Figure 4 below). This tool enabled us to shortlist evidence by prioritising relevance to the research questions, and excluding any sources which presented an obvious bias (based on stated purpose, abstract/summary information, and/or methodological detail).

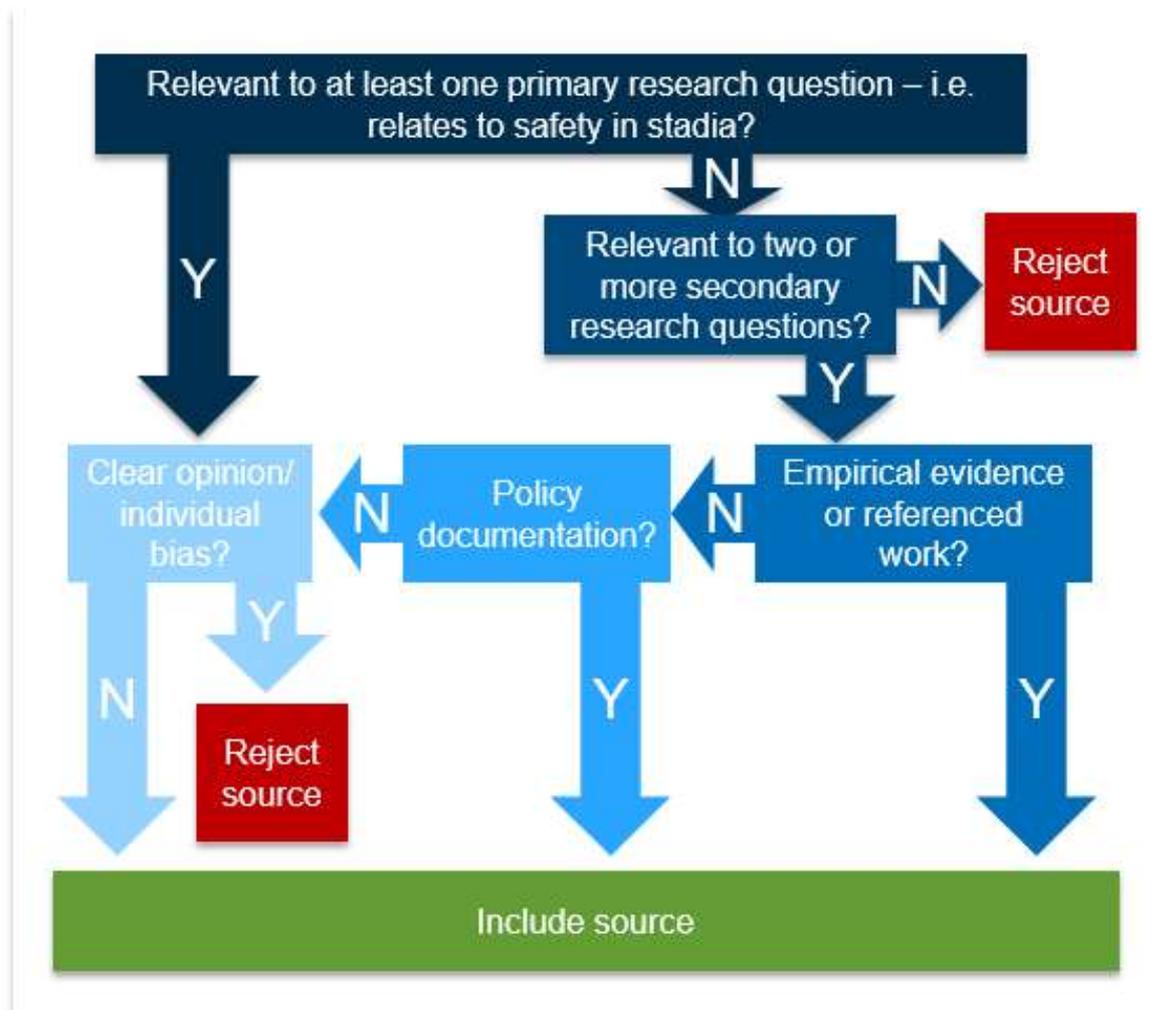


Figure 4: Decision support tool

Assuring inter-rater reliability

To mitigate against the risk of any selection bias, results of the initial screening process were subject to inter-rater reliability checks (where a second researcher re-applied the decision support tool selection criteria to a sample of results, to ensure consensus of outcomes). Had these checks highlighted discrepancies in the selection of material, this process would have been scaled-up across the initial screening results in full. However, the checks produced almost identical results, providing assurance of the validity of the initial screening process.

The resulting shortlist of sources included primary data, survey analysis, case studies, discussion and briefing papers, academic articles, safety guidance documents and risk assessments. Stakeholders supplied relevant evidence sources following consultations. Each additional source received was subject to the same initial screening process before being included. In total, 79 sources were fully reviewed.

An annotated bibliography was produced and shared with DCMS, to document evidence proposed for inclusion in the full review (and that which was excluded), with a brief explanation of rationale for this selection.

Evaluating the quality of evidence

Whilst traditional methods of assessing quality of evidence were deemed unsuitable for the *selection* of evidence in this review, the principles upon which such frameworks are based were applied to create a framework against which quality could be considered at the analysis stage (see Table 6). The framework criteria below include relevance (to research questions and context), independence, methods used (if known) and whether the study has been externally appraised. This should be understood as a weighting of evidence⁴ rather than a system for including or excluding sources.

Framework 1: Confidence in the relevance of selected articles				
	<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>	
Direct relevance to research questions (which are divided into primary/secondary research objectives)		Relevant to three or more secondary research questions Or two secondary RQs and direct relevance to the all-seater policy <i>and</i> safety		move to medium
<i>Overall</i>				
<i>Component</i>	<i>No quality assessment possible</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>
Independence / neutrality		Collected and reported by stakeholder ⁵	Collected by an independent body, ⁶ reported by stakeholder (or vice versa)	Collected and reported by an independent body
Methodological basis for evidence (described approach)	No methodological information provided	Explorative evidence Case study Low sample sizes, qual or quant, with no indication of representativeness	Analysis of monitoring data provided by e.g. individual clubs, relevant bodies Medium sample sizes, qual or quant, low/no indication of representativeness	Evidence based on quantitative empirical study Large representative sample
Reporting		Unpublished, subject to no peer review	Reported in grey literature	Reported in peer-reviewed literature
<i>Overall</i>	<i>Average across the three components</i>			

Table 6: Framework for assessing quality of evidence. Adapted from Gough (2007)

Coding and categorisation

Each of the 79 documents selected for review was read in full, and analysed against the specific research questions to be addressed. For this purpose, a classification database was developed to code the specific evidence relating to each research question and capture key document information. Each report was classified according to the following details, incorporated into a framework for analysis:

- Bibliographic reference details;
- Author;
- Year of publication;
- Title;
- Country;
- Type of document;
- Type of data;
- Relevance to RQs;
- Abstract (where available);
- Methodology (where available);
- Critical evaluation of quality; and
- Key findings and outcomes of the research (categorised against the research questions).

A considered evaluation of quality was also undertaken for each source. The purpose of this evaluation was to enable observations on the quality of the evidence base as a whole, and ensure that the weight given to specific sources of evidence during analysis appropriately reflected its relative quality. To ensure consistency in the evaluation of evidence, notes were made for each source on each of the criteria in Table 6 above.

Following the selection and categorisation of evidence, findings from the sources were extracted and grouped together, mapping results against research questions to identify any gaps in the evidence base.⁷

The synthesis of knowledge extracted through this process provided the foundation for this report.

¹ <https://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/assets/Alliance-final-report-08141.pdf>

² See for example Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Leech, N. L. & Collins, K. M. (2012). Qualitative analysis techniques for the review of the literature. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(28), pp.1-28.

³ See for example, Madaleno, M. and Waights, S. (no date) *Guide to scoring methods using the Maryland Scientific Methods Scale*. What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, <https://whatworksgrowth.org/public/files/Scoring-Guide.pdf>

⁴ Gough, D. (2007). Weight of Evidence: a framework for the appraisal of the quality and relevance of evidence. *Research Papers in Education*, Vol. 22, pp.213-228

⁵ This refers to a stakeholder organisation who has a vested interest in the research

⁶ This refers to an independent individual or organisation tasked with carrying out research or collecting data

⁷ This process identified a notable absence of international evidence, prompting additional systematic searches to target countries or leagues which are known to permit standing in their top division(s) (e.g. Germany)

Appendix 2: Persistent standing data

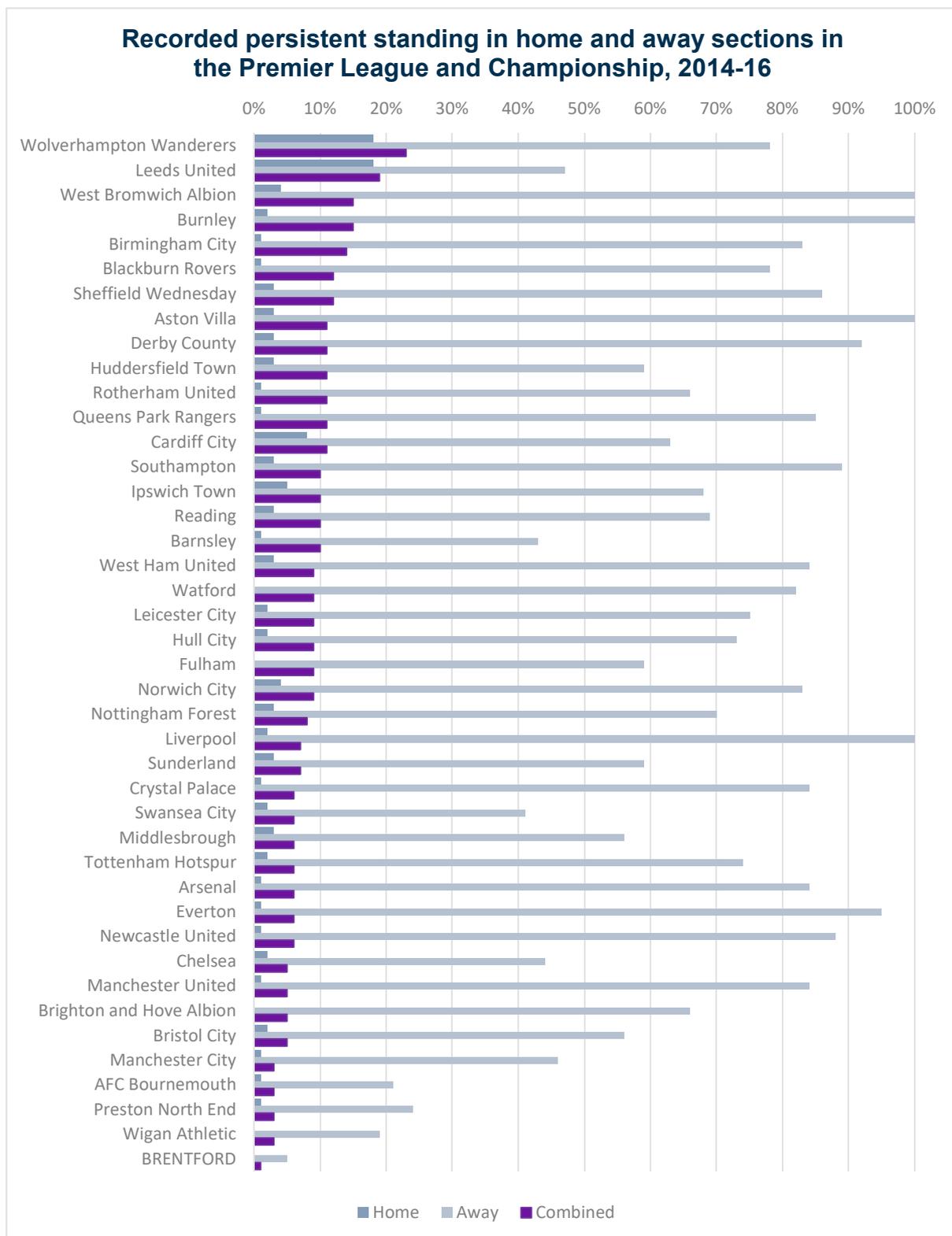


Figure 5: Source: SGSA, *Persistent Standing Data 2007-16*. Brentford (highlighted in capitals) is the only club on the list with a standing terrace.

Appendix 3: Borussia Dortmund

How does Borussia Dortmund manage standing at the Signal Iduna Park?

Based on case studies in Chalmers and Frosdick (2011); Premier League (2017); EFL (2013); and FSF (2007).

Stadium Design

The Südtribüne, the south side stand, has standing accommodation for over 20,000 spectators, in a combination of two types of design: rail seating in Blocks 80-84 (higher terrace) and traditional standing areas in Blocks 10-15 (lower terrace). In total there are eleven self-contained blocks, and the lower terrace has 170 crush barriers. Fans are allocated a ticket in a block and are free to stand where they please within this. Each row has two steps to allow for a greater standing capacity than seating. As a result of problems with crowd migration towards the central blocks, which can become overcrowded, the radial and lateral fences were heightened to stop people climbing in. The stadium has two further rail seating areas, one for away fans and another for young adults, designed as a transition space between the family stand and the Südtribüne.

Although the majority of case studies report the effectiveness of the facility, the EFL (2013: 11) highlight an issue with the older section of rail seating that could not be locked: “a number of people were sitting in seats pre-match, effectively occupying two spaces. This in turn led to a number of people standing in the aisles as this was the only place in which they were able to fit.” However, during a match, the rail seating did prevent crowd surges with no forward movement after goals were scored and having a standing area “did appear to eliminate the issue of people standing in seated areas in other parts of the ground” (p11).

Crowd Management

Rail seating accommodation requires specific management through the match-day operation both via the stewards and supervisors and through the control room. The Südtribüne has 92 stewards on a match-day, as well as a number of undercover stewards deployed wearing plain clothes. The lower terrace has no aisles as they can slow evacuation times. Stewarding is therefore largely limited to vantage points at entrances and pitch-side. There are two camera systems that monitor standing area, and there are also four on-duty supporter liaison officers at every match.

Stewards are responsible for ensuring ticket holders enter the block they are allocated to stand. Stewards check tickets at a number of points. The first point is on entrance to the ground via electronic turnstiles. Further ticket checks are then made at the entrance to each block, where strict penalties are imposed for ‘pass backs’ to prohibit migration of supporters to other blocks.

Appendix 4: Fan surveys

Survey	Year	Personal preference			Overall choice to sit or stand / provide standing areas			Sample size / notes
		Sit	Stand	Varies / no view	Yes / support	No / oppose	Unsure / no view	
EFL Stand Up For Choice Survey	2018	22%	69%	9%	94%			33,405 responses Carried out by marketing/research agency
Premier League Standing Fan Survey	2018	73%	27%		72% ¹	14%	14%	504 PL 'fan attenders' ² Carried out by research agency
	2017	74%	26% ³		62%	19%	19%	1,003 'fan attenders' Carried out by research agency
	2016-17	61% ⁴	29%	10%	69%	13%	19%	1,301 'fan attenders' Carried out by research agency
FSF National Supporters Survey	2017	27.8%	48.5%	23.7%	94.7% ⁵			7,206 responses
Spirit of Shankly (Liverpool FC Supporters)⁶	2017				88.2% ⁷	5%		17,910 responses
Welsh Conservative Party	2014	14%	82%	4%	97% ⁸	3%	0%	2,364 responses Carried out in association with the FSF and Safe Standing Roadshow
Supporters Direct Scotland⁹	2014				90.7% ¹⁰	7.9%	1.4%	2,875 responses Carried out in association with the Scottish FA

Table 7: Overview of fan surveys

¹ Question: "To what extent would you support or oppose the introduction of areas in football stadiums where standing would be permitted?"

² For all three Premier League surveys reported here, 'fan attenders' are defined as fans who support a Premier League Club and attended at least one of its Premier League matches in the past 12 months. All Premier League samples are also reported as being representative of match-attending Premier League fans by gender, age and socio-economic grade.

³ In 2017 and 2018, 5% of respondents indicated that they would want to ONLY stand (see footnote 4).

⁴ In the 2016-17 wave, fans were asked if they would 'mainly' want to sit or stand. In the following two waves (2017 and 2018), fans were asked to choose one of 'only sitting', 'mainly sitting', 'mainly standing' or 'only standing'.

⁵ "94.7% thought fans should be given the choice to sit or stand", FSF *Stand Up For Choice*, p.3.

⁶ Cited in FSF (2018), which references an article from The Guardian, 31st July 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2017/jul/31/liverpool-fans-88pc-safe-standing-rail-seating-spirit-of-shankly>. This is the only survey included in the table where findings are only briefly reported in evidence for this review, but is included due to the sensitivity of this subject on Merseyside.

⁷ Cited as "In favour of rail seating being introduced in football stadiums", although actual question not reported.

⁸ Question: "Should supporters have the choice whether to stand or sit at football matches?"

⁹ Cited in Foy (2014).

¹⁰ Question: "Would you be in favour of seeing an introduction of 'safe-standing' areas in Scottish football?"