

## **\*\*Football and discrimination: A players' perspective**

**Report.** FIFPRO (2021). What equal playing field? Players' perspectives on discrimination in football.

**Link.** ['What equal playing field? Players' perspectives on discrimination in football' - FIFPRO World Players' Union](#)

**Aim.** The report aims to reveal the discriminatory abuse faced by professional footballers worldwide. Organizations leading such investigations, such as the players' union FIFPRO and anti-discrimination groups like FARE, seek to create a more equitable and inclusive environment for all involved in football.

**Method.** The report relies heavily on listening to players – both those who have publicly faced discrimination and those who haven't – through interviews and personal accounts. The researchers also analyzed documented incidents, media coverage, and existing data on reported abuse, alongside research on diversity and inclusion in other sectors.

**Key findings.** The findings consistently reveal that discrimination is widespread in professional football, manifesting as racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of abuse. This occurs both on the pitch, from fans, and increasingly online, with social media amplifying harassment. Players often face a difficult choice between enduring abuse and risking their careers by speaking out. The report highlights a significant mental health toll on players, with some experiencing depression, anxiety, and considering leaving the sport. A critical issue identified is the lack of diversity within football's leadership. Those in power often lack direct experience of discrimination, leading to inadequate policies and a failure to address the root causes. Diverse leadership teams are demonstrably more innovative and effective, and their presence is seen as essential for creating lasting change. The report emphasizes the need for stronger action from governing bodies and social media companies, including better reporting mechanisms, consistent disciplinary measures, and a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination. Crucially, the report calls for increased representation of underrepresented groups – particularly people of color and women – in leadership positions.

**Limitations.** A limitation concerns the lack of comprehensive global data on discrimination in football, making it difficult to fully grasp the scale of the problem. The report also relies heavily on reported incidents and player testimonies, which may not capture the full extent of abuse occurring behind the scenes, particularly in women's football and lower leagues.