



UEFA competitions away fans experience survey

February 2024

Manchester United Supporters Trust

Overview

We undertook this short survey in response to a request from the National Football Policing Unit that was seeking to collate the experience of English clubs' fans across different European cities and countries, with the aim of escalating the issue to both the European Police Network and UEFA. It was particularly timely for us to undertake the survey for our own purposes given the recent major issues that we experienced in Istanbul, on which we have already produced and escalated a report.

With the support of the Club, we sent the survey to the 3000 supporters who had attended three or more away matches in Europe in the last three seasons, from which we received over 1000 responses. The results highlight starkly the best and worst of away fan experiences with huge differences across countries and some major concerns across Safety, Security and Service #

This report shows how respondents rated those three parameters for our 13 matches across the last three seasons followed by a range of comments that explain those experiences. We then provide some conclusions and set out the further actions that we are taking to ensure that they are considered at the highest level.

The three pillars established in The Council of Europe 'Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events'

Definitions

Safety: Considering entrance, the match and exit, did you feel safe?

e.g. Access into the stadium (perimeter, turnstiles & stairwells). Inside the stadium (concourses & terraces). Exiting the stadium and its perimeter. Any major concerns over congestion/crushing, narrow pinch points, communications & signage) or unsafe seating.

Security: did you feel safe before, during, and after the match?

e.g. Effectiveness and proportionality of pre-entry searches. Instances of confrontation with home fans or local groups in the town/city. Conduct of police including in the town, travel to and access into stadium. Role of police and stewards inside the stadium.

Service: were you made to feel welcome and given an enjoyable experience?

e.g. Planning and execution of travel to the stadium, speed and effectiveness of stadium entry. Use and execution of holdbacks and post exit dispersal. General feeling of being made welcome potentially including assistance, signage & communications, comfort, food & drink, toilets etc

Rating for each theme: Good / Mediocre

2023/24: UEFA Champions League away games

Safety: considering entrance, the match and exit, did you feel safe?

Security: did you feel safe before, during, and after the match?

Service: were you made to feel welcome and given an enjoyable experience?

Bayern Munich
Germany, 20th Sep 2023



FC Copenhagen
Denmark, 8th Nov 2023



Galatasaray
Turkey, 29th Nov 2023



- Good (positive experience, felt safe and welcomed)
- Mediocre (some good, some bad. Nothing positive or negative of note)
- Poor (felt unsafe and unwelcome at times)

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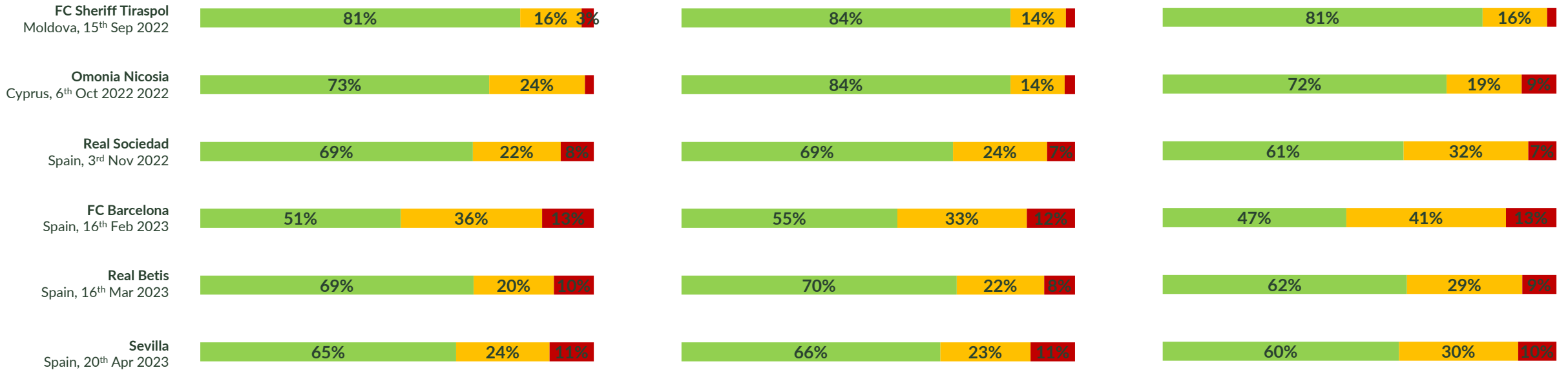


2022/23: UEFA Europa League away games

Safety: considering entrance, the match and exit, did you feel safe?

Security: did you feel safe before, during, and after the match?

Service: were you made to feel welcome and given an enjoyable experience?



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2021/22: UEFA Champions League away games

Safety: considering entrance, the match and exit, did you feel safe?

Security: did you feel safe before, during, and after the match?

Service: were you made to feel welcome and given an enjoyable experience?

BSC Young Boys
Switzerland, 14th Sep 2021



Atalanta
Italy, 2nd Nov 2021



Villarreal
Spain, 23rd Nov 2021



Atletico Madrid
Spain, 23rd Feb 2022



- Good (positive experience, felt safe and welcomed)
- Mediocre (some good, some bad. Nothing positive or negative of note)
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Responses overview ranked best to worst

| Season | Opponent | Country | Date | Number of responses | Ratings (1 = good, 3 = poor) | | | Aggregate Rating 3 = Good 9 = Poor |
|---------|---------------------|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|----------|---------|---------------------------------------|
| | | | | | Safety | Security | Service | |
| 2023/24 | Bayern Munich | Germany | 20 th Sep 2023 | 463 | 1.16 | 1.10 | 1.20 | 3.46 |
| 2021/22 | BSC Young Boys | Switzerland | 14 th Sep 2021 | 156 | 1.17 | 1.17 | 1.22 | 3.56 |
| 2022/23 | FC Sheriff Tiraspol | Moldova | 15 th Sep 2022 | 143 | 1.22 | 1.18 | 1.20 | 3.60 |
| 2023/24 | FC Copenhagen | Denmark | 8 th Nov 2023 | 553 | 1.32 | 1.17 | 1.22 | 3.71 |
| 2022/23 | Omonia Nicosia | Cyprus | 6 th Oct 2022 | 281 | 1.28 | 1.19 | 1.35 | 3.82 |
| 2022/23 | Real Betis | Spain | 16 th Mar 2023 | 413 | 1.38 | 1.36 | 1.45 | 4.19 |
| 2022/23 | Real Sociedad | Spain | 3 rd Nov 2022 | 483 | 1.38 | 1.37 | 1.45 | 4.20 |
| 2022/23 | Sevilla | Spain | 20 th Apr 2023 | 475 | 1.45 | 1.45 | 1.50 | 4.40 |
| 2022/23 | FC Barcelona | Spain | 16 th Feb 2023 | 619 | 1.62 | 1.56 | 1.65 | 4.83 |
| 2021/22 | Atletico Madrid | Spain | 23 rd Feb 2022 | 554 | 1.57 | 1.65 | 1.65 | 4.87 |
| 2021/22 | Atalanta | Italy | 2 nd Nov 2021 | 259 | 1.74 | 1.72 | 1.75 | 5.21 |
| 2021/22 | Villarreal | Spain | 23 rd Nov 2021 | 388 | 1.91 | 1.90 | 1.87 | 5.68 |
| 2023/24 | Galatasaray | Turkey | 29 th Nov 2023 | 429 | 2.52 | 2.23 | 2.48 | 7.23 |

Ratings: defined as mean average of all scores collated (1 = good, 3 = poor).

Respondent Comments – Good Experiences

In Munich and Copenhagen they actively tried to enhance the away fan experience. There was no trouble because police presence was minimal and the hosts welcoming

Bayern one of the best euro away days for a very long time. We were treated with respect everywhere we went, even by the police which is very unusual

Bayern Police were fantastic unlike some other European aways I have done. Very organised

Copenhagen stewards were unreal, absolutely superb. Told us we were allowed to drink and smoke in the stands. They chatted to everyone upon entry. Seen us out ok and wished us goodbye.

German policing, security and safety measures are the gold standard and have been for the near 20 years I have been travelling to European away matches. The Danish authorities also matched this high standard

There was no hold back at Munich or Copenhagen, which was very refreshing and improved the experience a lot

Switzerland deserves acknowledgement for the outstanding treatment we receive here consistently

Sheriff - best of them all. No issues before and post match. Entry easy and police were friendly

Atletico Madrid assistance was excellent, taken into accessibility area and provided with seats there, to save climbing stairs. Also helpful getting onto metro after the game

Experiences in Bayern, Copenhagen, and to a large extent, Sociedad, show how European away matches should be handled. Most attendees want to have a good time, enjoy the place and the football

Respondent Comments – Bad Experiences

Entering the RAMS Park Galatasaray was a shambles. Queues were not flowing to let fans into the stadium. I didn't get into the ground till around 30 mins into the first half and the hold back after the game felt way too long with not enough communication

Galatasaray was very close from a serious accident occurring on entrance through the turnstile

Could not overstate how poor Galatasaray was, it was unsafe getting in with all stewards stood on the other side and nobody supporting people getting in when there were so many tickets not scanning. It was unsafe and there was a crush forming, I wouldn't of been surprised if something serious happened

(Our separate report on Galatasaray provides many more testimonies of this nature)

Policing in Villarreal was outrageous- deliberately provocative, meant that entering and leaving the stadium was dangerous- narrow and overcrowded. Ridiculously lengthy holdback

Villarreal was appalling saw people being beaten with batons for standing in the aisle slightly

Stewards at Barcelona lied that the lift to the seating area wasn't working meaning a long uphill trek for disabled fans

At Atletico Madrid the police came into the crowd and attacked the United fans in full riot gear using batons

Spanish police were as always aggressive, violent, hid their identity by removing badge numbers on clothing and masking their faces with balaclavas. Hit out with batons with no need or provocation

Atalanta - held back so long that public transport ceased and a very long walk at night back to the hotel

Kettling and holding back fans after matches are counter-productive and unnecessary, particularly when it makes it difficult to return to the city centre as public transport closes. The general ban on mobile phone chargers is also unwarranted, particularly with e-tickets likely to become inevitable

Something that infuriates me is alongside getting kept in grounds for longer than necessary sometimes is keeping us long enough for the public transport to finish. This leaves us no way of getting back into the centres for a lot of grounds and providing NO transport back in

Respondent Comments – Comparisons

Wish more stadiums particular Italy, France, Spain can treat fans with the respect the Danish people, police and stewards did

The Spanish riot police are NOT needed. They are aggressive and intimidating and just presume we're there to fight. They ruin the vibe and the atmosphere. Copenhagen a perfect example. Friendly chatty police/stewards which was reciprocated back by us

Copenhagen set a shining example on how to police a game and treat fans, really enjoyed it. But as per usual the Spanish and Italian policing/stewards aggressive, dangerous and idiotic

Please stop punishing us for things British fans did nearly 50 years ago by ruining our trips and forcing us to stay in the stadiums for so long after every game. It's unnecessary

I genuinely believe 99% of our fans are well behaved and respectful of the locals . It's pity the police and local authorities police games on the basis of the 1% which may step out of line. The majority of cases we can police the idiots

Our Manchester police escort European away fans in Manchester to old Trafford without intimidation and with professionalism so why can't that be the case when United fans are away in some of the Spanish or Italian away football matches

Spanish police treat us fans absolutely shockingly. They're horrible and start hitting us with baton's for no reason. Whereas in contrast when rival fans come to old Trafford they're allowed to do pretty much whatever they want

Seems to me that Utd (English) fans are treated poorly away. The supporters that come to Old Trafford are quite rightly treated with respect and we help them.

I think most regular euro away travellers "accept" over zealous policing and intimidation incidents as the norm as nothing seems to be done about it with everyone shirking responsibility (from local police, the local club whoever it is, UEFA, and the United club who in my opinion should do more to represent and look after the interests of their loyal and regular euro away supporters

Conclusions

There is a stark contrast between how our travelling fans (and those from other English clubs) are treated in different cities and countries across Europe, particularly with regards to policing and stewarding. In the worst instances they are exposed to unjustified violence and safety risks.

By contrast the positive experience, in particular the style of policing and stewarding in other countries, shows that our fans do not need to be treated collectively as 'high risk'. It's worth noting that away fans visiting Old Trafford, some of whom are genuinely higher risk, are policed proportionately, positively and largely without incidents.

The range of negative experiences reported include clear failures of clubs and police authorities to adhere to current UEFA Safety & Security Regulations as well as gaps and weaknesses in those guidelines. A particular concern is where home clubs fail to respond to issues raised by the away club's delegates at and around the stadium or otherwise fail to adhere to previously agreed operational plans.

This is a long-standing issue that, if not addressed may well lead to serious incidents. We would like to see actions including:

- Strengthening UEFA's Safety & Security Regulations, particularly around the safe and efficient access to the stadium for away supporters and the operation of holdbacks
- Increased recognition of the role of away team security and police liaison staff in the planning and oversight of matches
- An increased focus by the attending UEFA match delegate to issues identified relating to the treatment of away fans
- Fines and other sanctions imposed on home clubs for significant breaches of the regulations relating to away fans

Next steps

We are making use of all possible channels to highlight the issues that our fans face and to make the case for positive changes.

Our summary results are included alongside those from other clubs in the report that the Football Policing Unit has just produced, and which they have now raised with UEFA and with the European Police Network.

We are forwarding the report to Football Supporters Europe (FSE) to sit alongside our report on the issues around our recent match in Galatasaray (unsurprisingly the lowest ranked stadium in this report) that we have already escalated. FSE, which now has official UEFA partner status, will be raising these through their own channels into the UEFA hierarchy.

We hope that these parallel approaches will result in UEFA strengthening their Safety & Security Regulations applicable to club competition matches.

We will work with the club and with our GMP Liaison team to explore what further actions could be taken around the planning of our away matches in Europe, and any other routes through which they may be able to support the need to address these ongoing concerns.