



# MISOGYNY AND SEXISM

A guide for clubs



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**Please note:** Some of the language used throughout this document is derogatory and offensive. This language has been used for educational purposes and to create awareness.



# INTRODUCTION

Kick It Out is working to raise awareness of sexism and misogyny, challenge sexist behaviour, encourage women to report sexism and call on football to take action when reports are made.

This guide provides an oversight into what sexism and misogyny could look like on match days, how clubs can deal with incidents of sexism and how to support those who have witnessed or experienced sexist or misogynistic abuse.

This comes after Kick It Out research underlined the importance of football clubs and authorities acting on reports of sexism, with many women saying they wouldn't feel safe calling it out or didn't think reports would be taken seriously.



# FINDINGS OF KICK IT OUT RESEARCH:

New research of 1,502 women and non-binary fans surveyed by Kick It Out (September 2024) showed that **over half (52%) of women fans have experienced sexist behaviour or language on matchdays.**

Moreover, **85% of those who experienced or witnessed sexism said they had never reported sexist or misogynistic abuse**, with many saying it was because they didn't think it would be taken seriously or make a difference.

**Almost one in four of the women surveyed said they felt unsafe at games.** The research also overwhelmingly found that underrepresented groups, including ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ and disabled fans, as well as younger supporters, were more likely to feel unsafe on matchdays and experience sexism in a football setting.

[FULL FINDINGS HERE](#)



# WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SEXISM AND MISOGYNY?

Sexism and misogyny are often used as if they are the same thing, but they have distinct meanings. Below, we have outlined some of the differences between the two terms:

## SEXISM

Prejudice, discrimination or unwanted conduct based on sex or gender and often involves ideologies and attitudes that one sex is superior to the other. Sexism can be conscious or unconscious.

## MISOGYNY

Refers to the hatred, dislike, or ingrained prejudice directly against women and girls. It is a form of sexism that keeps women at a lower social status than men. It is distinguishable by the intense discrimination and the blatant disregard for women.



# EXAMPLES OF SEXIST BEHAVIOUR AND LANGUAGE

Sexist behaviour and language can manifest in various ways, including actions or words that demean, threaten, or exclude women.

On the next few pages we outline some examples and corresponding explanations.



# BEHAVIOUR

## WHISTLING/WOLF WHISTLING

Often aimed at drawing attention to women in a crowd, this behaviour can make individuals feel objectified and uncomfortable, particularly in public spaces like stadiums.

## THREAT OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

This includes direct or implied threats, such as aggressive gestures, comments, or posturing intended to intimidate women.

## PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Any physical act of aggression, such as pushing, shoving, or striking, often stemming from sexist attitudes or hostility.

## PERSISTENT HARASSMENT OR BADGERING

Persistent unwanted attention or attempts to engage a woman after being asked to stop. This can include following someone or repeatedly trying to initiate unwanted conversations.





### TARGETING A FEMALE OFFICIAL WITH ABUSE

Disparaging or abusive comments specifically aimed at a female referee, assistant, or other match officials, often criticising their gender rather than their decisions.

### INAPPROPRIATE TOUCHING

Any physical contact without consent, such as touching a woman's shoulder, arm, or lower back, under the guise of friendliness or familiarity.

### SEXUAL ASSAULT OR HARASSMENT, OR THREAT OF SEXUAL ASSAULT OR HARASSMENT

Includes both physical acts and verbal threats of a sexual nature, ranging from groping to overtly threatening comments about sexual violence.

### SEXIST MASS CHANTING

Collective chanting by groups of fans that includes derogatory or demeaning language directed at women, perpetuating a hostile and unsafe environment. **Some examples are listed on the following page.**





# EXAMPLES OF **SEXIST CHANTING** HEARD AT MATCHES

"The goalie  
wants to see  
your tits"

"Get your tits out,  
get your tits out,  
get your tits out  
for the lads."

Chants referring to a woman associated with a player, often wife or girlfriend, which refers to them in a degrading manner.

"Oh Harchester (eg), oh Harchester, oh Harchester, oh Harchester is wonderful, oh Harchester is wonderful, it's full of tits, fanny and United, oh Harchester is wonderful."

Chants referring to sexual abuse or rape, such as the "she said no" chant that has been heard at various grounds.



# LANGUAGE

## BEING TOLD WOMEN SHOULD BE ELSEWHERE

Comments like “Get back in the kitchen” or “Football isn’t for women” are attempts to exclude or undermine women’s presence in the sport, whether as fans, officials, or players.

## LEWD REQUESTS

Statements such as “Get your tits out” are overtly sexual comments designed to degrade and objectify women.

## SEXUALLY AGGRESSIVE LANGUAGE

Includes comments with explicit sexual content, often combined with hostility, such as graphic descriptions of sexual acts or intentions.



## PHYSICALLY AGGRESSIVE LANGUAGE OR VERBAL THREATS

Statements like “I’ll smash your face in” or “You better watch yourself” serve to intimidate and silence women through fear of physical harm.

## KNOWLEDGE-QUESTIONING BEHAVIOUR (SEXIST GATEKEEPING)

Questions like “Bet you can’t name the starting 11” or “Do you even know the offside rule?” are intended to undermine women’s knowledge or passion for football, suggesting they do not belong in the space.





# WHAT CONSTITUTES A CRIMINAL OFFENCE?

At present, misogyny is not considered a hate crime. However, several laws deem that certain sexist behaviours are considered a criminal offence.

These laws include:



## MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS ACT 1988

Any person who sends to another person— letter, electronic communication or article of any description which conveys—a message which is indecent or grossly offensive with the purpose of causing distress or anxiety to the recipient or to any other person to whom he/ she intends that it or its contents or nature should be communicated.

## SEXUAL OFFENCES ACT 2003 [SEXUAL ASSAULT BY TOUCHING]:

Section 79 (8) of the [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#) states that: 'Touching includes touching: (a) with any part of the body, (b) with anything else, (c) through anything'.

Under the same act, a person commits an offence if:

- They touch another person intentionally
- The touching of that person was sexual in nature
- The person touched did not consent to being touched.

## PROTECTION FROM HARASSMENT ACT 1997 [STALKING AND HARASSMENT]:

In cases of stalking there is a pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behaviour that is intrusive. Harassment is described as unreasonable and oppressive behaviour that is repeated and may cause alarm, distress or fear of violence in the victim.



## PUBLIC ORDER ACT 1986

**SECTION 4** of the Public Order Act 1986 can be applied where there has been a fear or provocation of violence. This offence consists of the use of threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour.

**SECTION 4A** of the Act involves the intentional causing of harassment, alarm or distress through the use of threatening, abusive and insulting behaviour by words, gestures or signs.

**SECTION 5** of the Act covers the use of words, behaviour, gestures or signs where the defendant is aware that someone may be within hearing distance. This offence is very different from Section 4 and 4A because there doesn't need to be any intention to cause harassment, alarm or distress.

**This includes shouting abuse towards another person intending that they feel insulted. For example:**

- Abusive language towards female fans, officials, players etc.
- Sexualised language or comments towards female fans, officials, players etc.
- Sexist mass chanting may constitute as a criminal offence.



# WHAT ACTIONS CAN BE TAKEN WHEN IT DOESN'T REACH A CRIMINAL THRESHOLD?

If the incident doesn't meet the criminal threshold, or the sexist/misogynistic behaviours do not fall under the category of a hate crime, this does not mean it is not discriminatory. Clubs can still take action against offenders.





**Clubs should have their own code of conduct/sanctioning policy, which sets clear guidelines on behaviours that are not tolerated and the respective consequences for said behaviours. Consequences can include, but are not limited to:**

- Ejection/removal of fans
- Club bans
- Fan education

Clubs should ensure there is explicit mention of sexist and misogynistic behaviours within their code of conduct/sanctioning policy.

If a club is unsure on what course of action to take in the event of a misogynistic or sexist incident, or whether the offence reaches a criminal threshold, they can contact **Report@kickitout.org** for further advice and information.



# BEST PRACTICE FOR RESPONDING TO SEXISM & MISOGYNY

When individuals use sexist language or gestures, it is crucial for clubs to address these incidents consistently, just as they would with other forms of discrimination. Taking a firm and uniform approach sends a clear message that sexism is unacceptable and reinforces the commitment to ensuring football remains a safe and inclusive space for everyone.





## CLUBS CAN TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO ADDRESS SEXISM AND MISOGYNY EFFECTIVELY:

**1**

### BRIEF STAFF AHEAD OF MATCHES

Brief match day stewards and security staff as well as offering guidance to staff on how to address sexist abuse and chanting.

**2**

### RELEASE A CLEAR PUBLIC STATEMENT

Take an unequivocal stance against sexism and misogyny to show commitment to creating a safe and discrimination free environment for female fans.

**3**

### CONDUCT A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION

Identify those responsible for incidents and ensure fairness in the process.

**4**

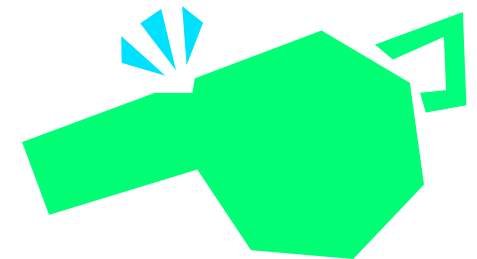
### TAKE DECISIVE ACTION

Ban individuals who refuse to engage or continue problematic behaviour.

**5**

### DEMONSTRATE ACCOUNTABILITY AND EDUCATION

Balance sanctions with educational initiatives to foster understanding, such as through Kick It Out's Fan Education programme.



## GUIDANCE FOR CLUBS ON WRITING AND ISSUING COMMUNICATIONS

Clubs should adopt both proactive and reactive approaches to communications:

### BE PROACTIVE

Issue a statement ahead of matches where issues may arise (e.g., a female referee officiating or a game with a history of sexist chanting).

Example: “[Club Name] reaffirms our zero-tolerance policy on sexism and misogyny and will take action against discriminatory behaviour.”

### BE REACTIVE

Release a clear statement after incidents to reinforce that sexist behaviour won't be tolerated.

### PROMOTE REPORTING TRANSPARENCY

Signpost reporting processes across stadiums and matchday programmes to encourage reporting.

In some instances, reporting to a steward may not be the best course of action. An alternative could include reporting to a text line or to Kick It Out. Clubs can also signpost how to report throughout stadiums and in matchday programmes.

For additional reporting assets, please contact [Report@kickitout.org](mailto:Report@kickitout.org).



# REPORTING PROCEDURES

Kick It Out research found that **85% of women who had experienced or witnessed sexism didn't report it**, often because they felt they wouldn't be listened to or that no action would be taken. A clearly signposted and robust reporting system helps create an environment where women feel confident to come forward, knowing their concerns will be taken seriously and action will follow.

Reporting to Kick It Out ensures the right people are involved and that those affected receive support. It also helps us understand what's happening in stadiums, so we can continue driving positive change.



# WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR REPORT?

## THE ABUSE MIGHT BE...

## WE CONTACT...

## WE KEEP ON IT...



[MORE INFORMATION HERE](#)



When reporting through Kick It Out, all witnesses and victims of misogynistic and sexist discrimination can access direct victim support through [Her Game Too](#).

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To find out more about Kick It Out's reporting processes, scan the QR code below. Or if you have any questions, please contact [Report@kickitout.org](mailto:Report@kickitout.org).



**WHAT HAPPENS  
WHEN YOU REPORT IT**



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you would like to find out more information or support to tackle sexism and misogyny, there are organisations that can provide support and guidance. Below are some key resources, but this is not an exhaustive list:

## HER GAME TOO

Her Game Too is a movement run by female football fans, dedicated to supporting women affected by sexism in football and increasing female attendance at stadiums.

 [MORE INFORMATION](#)

Follow them on X and Instagram: [@hergametoo](#)

## WHITE RIBBON

White Ribbon is the UK's leading charity engaging men and boys to end violence against women and girls.

 [MORE INFORMATION](#)

## WOMEN'S AID

Women's Aid is the national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children. Football United Against Domestic Abuse is a campaign by Women's Aid, which sends a clear message that domestic abuse is always unacceptable.

 [MORE INFORMATION](#)



For more information please contact  
[media@kickitout.org](mailto:media@kickitout.org)

*This document has been compiled by Kick It Out, with support from  
Her Game Too and West Midlands Police.*

