



## CHELSEA SUPPORTERS' TRUST ANNUAL SURVEY - 2019

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### ABOUT THE SURVEY

Welcome to the results of the annual survey organised by the Chelsea Supporters Trust. This is the seventh year that the survey has been conducted, and unusually this year it was conducted prior to the end of the season; the survey closed at the end of April with the team about to play in the semi-finals of the Europa League and competing with three other teams for the last two Champions League qualification spots. The survey was again open to members and non-members alike and two thousand responses were received.

### SUMMARY

**On Pitch Success** and **Development of Young Players** remain the most important issues amongst Chelsea supporters, but the emerging issue this year was **Administration of the Club** which is now second only to On Pitch Success as the most important issue.

[Chapter 1]

Clearly all is not well when, at the tail end of a fairly successful season, the rating for **Management of Footballing Issues** is one of the worst for Club administration seen to date. Only 8% of respondents agree that there is a **Long Term Vision** and 14% that the Club is **In Touch with Fans**. It may be surmised that the appointment of Mr Sarri with a subsequent major change to the playing style was viewed by many supporters as (at best) a poorly executed and communicated move. [Ch 2]

It is evident that the fans **did not enjoy watching** the team play, with a degree of disillusion with the team and coach evidenced by the fact that season and match **ticket buying intentions** for the new season had been affected by the team's play more than any year since 2013. In this curate's egg of a season, Mr Sarri may just have been a bad fit for the Club. [Ch 10]

Supporters continue to complain about the **pricing of Premier League** matches at Stamford Bridge, and the satisfaction with Season Ticket prices remaining unchanged was balanced by widespread discontent with the price rises for members and the general public, and the reintroduction of a ticket purchase **administration fee** was widely condemned. [Ch 3]

The lack of options for **younger supporters** to buy discounted tickets around the ground remains a source of friction [Ch 3]; at a time when supporters are concerned about the **decline in atmosphere** at Stamford Bridge (and elsewhere) younger more boisterous fans are seen as part of the solution. Introduction of a drummer or band is definitely not seen as a good move however! [Ch 7]

In terms of match day **atmosphere**, the 2019-20 season was exceptional in all the wrong ways; it produced the **lowest ever ratings** for both home and away matches despite a reasonable league finish and good cup runs. The possession-based style of football played increasingly grated with fans as the early promise failed to evolve once the opposition learned to negate it, and the team's appalling away form contributed. [Ch 7]

Fans are getting increasingly frustrated with **ticket collection** arrangements for games in Europe, whereby they have to collect their tickets individually at a location nowhere near the stadium on the day of the game. There is a feeling that everyone is being unfairly punished for the actions of a handful of people several years ago. [Ch 3]

Of course, getting hold of tickets remains frustration for many fans. In particular, access to **PL away games** is a source of discontent. The mechanics of ticket buying, in particular the **07:00 'scramble'** when tickets are put on sale and the **Virtual Waiting Room** then encountered come in for criticism, as does the operation of the **Loyalty Points scheme**. There continues to be a demand for LPs to carry over instead of evaporating at the end of August each year. [Ch 4]

Although supporters would like to see Premier League ticket prices reduced, they strongly support the Club continuing to spend money on arranging subsidised **Transport for all away games** outside London. There were comments that trains are preferable, particularly for longer trips, and disappointingly few ran last year but we do understand that the Club is restricted by the rail companies and network to a degree. Supporters also feel that money should be spent compensating supporters when **games are moved for TV coverage**, due to the increased transport costs incurred, sometimes even having to take leave. [Ch 3]

**Overseas Supporters** biggest concerns are both watching the team play: availability of **TV coverage** and **access to tickets**. Realistically the former concern is not directly in the Club's hands in most cases, however there is genuine frustration at the LP requirements for overseas fans, who may struggle to attend even one game a year. [Ch 9]

The **Ticket Exchange**, an initiative originally driven by the Trust to replace the extremely unpopular collaboration with a ticket reselling company, continues to be popular but could do with some tweaks, particularly in respect of purchase restrictions, multiple tickets and concessionary seats. [Ch 4]

**Kick Off Times** continue to provoke much discussion. Friday and Monday night games are the least popular, as is the to date untried Sunday evening slot. Saturday afternoon and early evening remain the most popular. More than half of the respondents feel that **more notice** should be given of fixtures being moved for TV coverage, with 20% favouring the full schedule being fixed at the start of the season. The Trust also feels that the handling of the newly introduced **mid-winter break**, where fans won't even know which weekend their team is playing on until mid-December, is unacceptable. [Ch 5]

**Safe Standing** is now moving from theory to practice as clubs are starting to introduce it including at least one Premier League club; there is strong support for its introduction at Stamford Bridge even in its current configuration, and continued very strong support for it at a redeveloped ground. [Ch 6]

With the introduction of **VAR** into the Premier League in the coming season, there is an acceptance that it is going to happen. However to date the VAR experience has only rated as satisfactory with a third of TV viewers, with that dropping to a quarter amongst match going fans. There is strong support for supporters and TV viewers alike being able to **see the review** being conducted, and in a wide ranging selection of comments there is a genuine fear that it will ruin the game; celebrating a goal may never be the same again. [Ch 8]

The Club receives strong support for being a **Living Wage Employer** and its stance against **discriminatory language**. Supporters attending games do not agree that there is a problem with discriminatory language in the ground, although opinion is divided in respect of the 'Y word'. The vast majority agree that it has improved over time. [Ch 7]

Finally a third of respondents intend to donate to the Hammersmith & Fulham **Food Bank collections** that the Trust organise on match-days, and the Trust is working with the Club to organise a 'Sleep Out' in the autumn to raise awareness of and money for charities for the homeless. [Ch11]

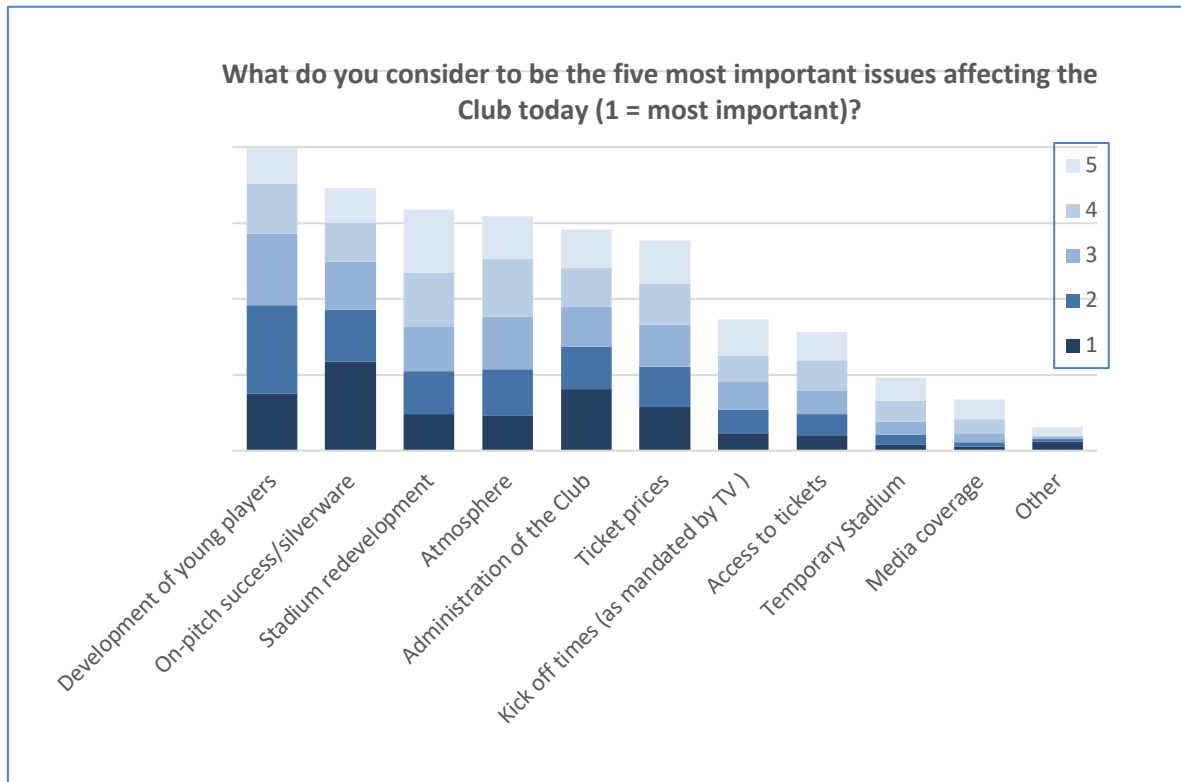
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## 1 KEY ISSUES

Members were asked to rank in order of importance what they considered to be the five most important issues. The rest of the survey explores these key issues in greater depth.

**On-pitch success** was once more voted the most important issue, and **Development of young players** again got the most votes overall. However, there are clearly growing concerns with the **Administration of the Club** which has now overtaken Development of Young Players as the most important issue after On-pitch success; this continues a trend of the last few surveys. Unsurprisingly perhaps in the current climate, the importance of stadium redevelopment and the temporary stadium issue have dropped down the rankings slightly as the prospect of work commencing has receded for the time being.



Amongst the other topics brought up this year, a recurrent theme was the concern at the lack of a long term strategy, or at least a publicised one, with the desire for a Director of Football again at the fore. Transfer policy and the quality of players acquired continues to be a source of concern.

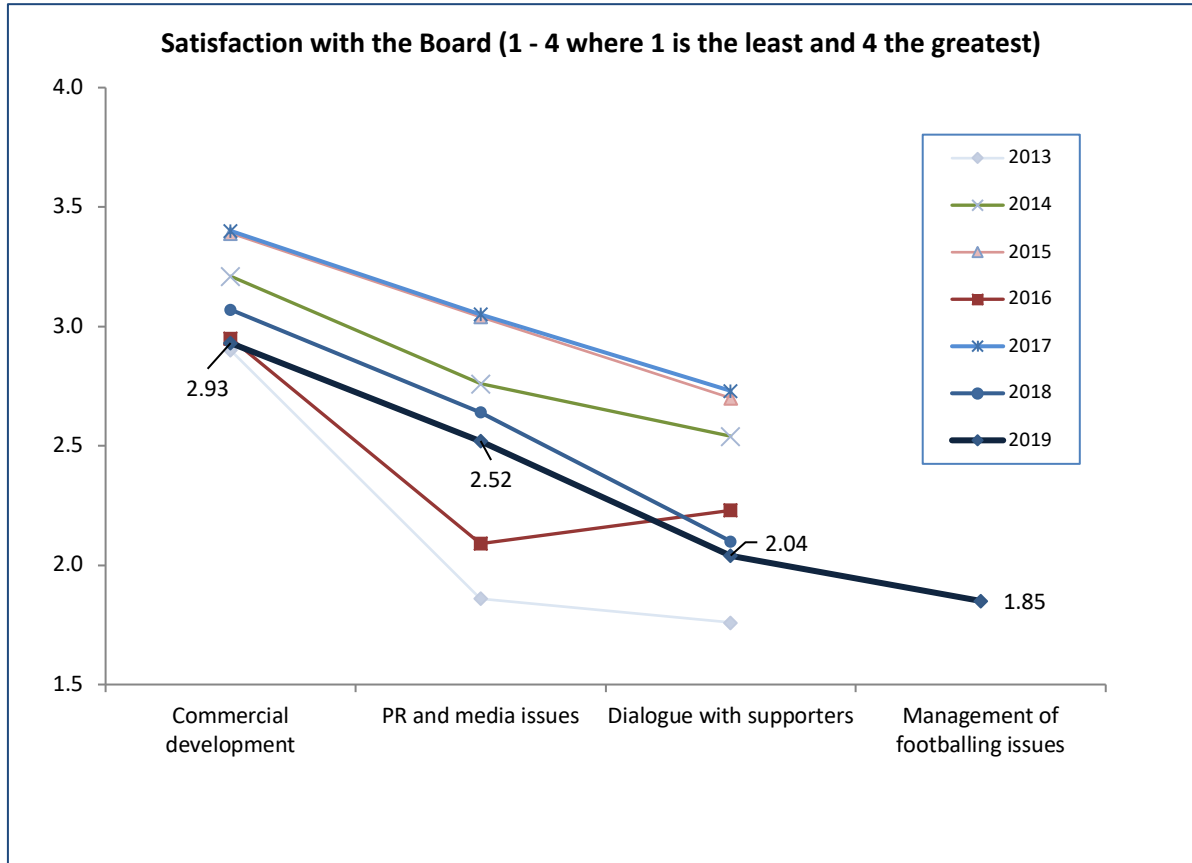
For the first time, a few people questioned Mr Abramovich's commitment to the Club or his ability to run the Club effectively in his enforced absence.

In the light of a small number of well publicised incidents or alleged incidents this year, it was not surprising that some comments referred to fan behaviour, and the Club was largely commended for its approach in challenging anti-Semitic and other racist chanting.

There were also a number of comments to the effect that the Club does not appreciate or recognise the match going supporter sufficiently and on a wider scale, fans are finding the 'connection' with the Club weakening.

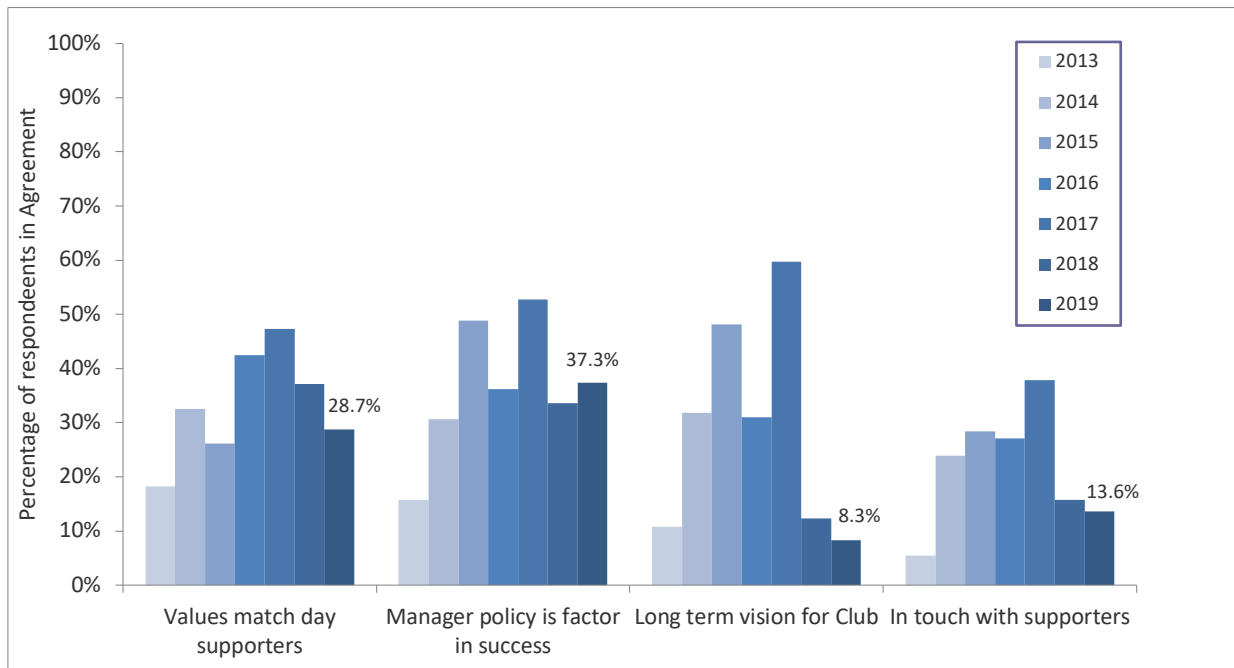
## 2 CLUB ADMINISTRATION

Members have been asked to rate their satisfaction with the Club Board over the last 5 years in relation to a number of issues; the higher the rating value (maximum 4), the greater the level of satisfaction.



The survey this year was completed before the end of the season and so preceded success in the Europa League and Champions League qualification. Consequently a lot of the survey reflects the feel of the season which was unusual even by Chelsea's standards; **communications** between the Club and the supporters received the lowest rating since 2013, whilst the new category of **Management of Footballing Issues** scored very badly. Although lower than previous years, supporters recognise that commercial development of the Club continues to be satisfactory.

Respondents were asked to select their agreement with a number of statements:



Typically the results tend to follow the success of the team for these questions to a degree, as can be seen for 2015 and 2017, for example. This season has been reasonably successful; the team achieved a 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish in the League, winning the Europa League and losing to Manchester City on penalties in the League Cup. However by running the survey until the end of April, we were able to get a clearer picture of supporters' feelings undistorted by the final result.

Match day supporters are seen as considerably less valued by the Club than in the three previous; in fact you have to go back to the first Trust survey in 2013 to find a significantly lower score. As may be observed above, only 14% of respondents agreed that the Club is in touch with supporters, an awful score which is again only undercut by 2013.

Disillusion with the apparent absence of a long term strategy at the Club has hit rock bottom; when only 8.3% of supporters agree that there is a long term vision for the Club (the new low tide mark for this question) it is only possible to conclude that either there is no long term vision for the Club or that there has been a complete failure by the Club to communicate it to the fans.

The appointment of a Coach (the term 'Manager' no longer seems to apply at Chelsea FC) with an almost fanatical devotion to a radically different playing style to that which had brought so much success to the Club *without a clear unequivocal statement explaining the vision of the Owner and the Board* only added to the pressures on Mr Sarri; instead of explaining the reasoning behind his appointment, supporters were left to draw their own conclusions. One of the conclusions drawn appears to be that the Club does not have a destination in mind, let alone a plan to get there.

## 2.1 Supporter Liaison Officer

Respondents were asked to indicate their awareness of the role and identity of the Club's appointed Supporter Liaison Officer (SLO). Once more awareness of the SLO role amongst supporters has failed to improve.

- Just 20% of fans are aware of the SLO role
- Only 6% know how to contact the SLO
- 95% cannot name the SLO
- 80% agree that the role should be performed by an independent supporter or supporters, rather than someone already employed by the Club as is currently the case.

According to the UEFA Supporter Liaison Officer Handbook, the SLO role includes the following responsibilities: being a bridge between the fans and the club; informing supporters of club decisions and communicating the fans' point of view to the club; and building relations with fan groups and initiatives as well as with police and security. The figures above suggest that this is nowhere near being achieved at present.

### 3 TICKET PRICES

Supporters were asked to rate their satisfaction with regard to the price of match tickets. The rating value ranges between 1 (Very Dissatisfied) to 4 (Very Satisfied):

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Home league games	2.17	2.39	2.44	2.36	2.54	2.31	2.30
Away league games	2.22	2.41	2.21	2.59	3.09	2.92	2.98
Home domestic cup games	2.90	3.03	3.07	2.97	3.08	2.89	3.08
Junior/juvenile pricing	2.69	2.71	2.66	2.57	2.84	2.80	2.83
Cost of season ticket	2.34	2.58	2.61	2.48	2.64	2.42	2.52
Cost of membership	2.86	2.89	2.92	2.84	2.96	2.79	2.81
Categorised pricing for league games	1.97	2.06	2.00	2.05	2.21	2.42	2.39
Cost of travel to domestic away games	2.25	2.48	2.32	2.28	2.56	2.86	2.88
Home European games	2.58	2.59	2.68	2.55		2.59	2.97
Away European games		2.26	2.36	2.32		2.18	2.65
Cost of travel to European games		2.68	3.11	3.19		2.27	2.27
Ticket collection for Euro aways			2.50	2.37		2.20	2.22

Satisfaction with pricing this year is largely unchanged on last year, with the exception of European ticket prices, home and away which improved considerably; this is almost certainly due to the fact that the team were participating in the Europa League. The Club very sensibly set prices considerably lower than for the previous Champions League and this was largely the case until the latter knockout stages for away tickets. The £1.50 ticket for the game at Kiev was appreciated by all who went!

The lower pricing for domestic cup games and the freezing of season ticket prices once again contributed to small improvements in supporter satisfaction.

Ticket collection and the price of European travel with Thomas Cook remain unpopular, with very little change, the former in particular being commented on widely in the survey.

However it must be pointed out that the survey was completed before May and the **fiasco** that was the Europa League final in Baku. Were that not the case, it is fair to say that the levels of satisfaction would almost certainly have plunged even further. Many fans were shocked to when Thomas Cook decided to charge £979 for a flight-only trip, having banked on Chelsea's Official Travel Partner to get them to the game should the team reach the final. It should be borne in mind that with some subsidy from the Club, Thomas Cook charged £359 for the trip to Baku for the match against Qarabag just 18 months previously, and that *included* one night's accommodation.



When asked for their thoughts on the subject of ticket pricing, the results were very much the same as last year, with the major themes being:

- Pricing for Premier League tickets is too high and an inhibitor to going to games. The multiple categories for PL games at Stamford Bridge was also unpopular.
- On the whole, the lower prices set for domestic cup games and Europa League ties were appreciated by match going supporters.
- Although the freezing of season ticket prices next season was welcomed, the price increase for members has been widely condemned by members and season ticket holders alike. The reappearance of an administration fee has also angered many fans, resulting as it does in an additional cost of 50p to £2 per ticket.
- The concessions and options (or lack of them) for younger fans and young adults are seen as an obstacle to allowing a younger demographic to develop.
- The collection arrangements for match tickets at European away games continue to irritate supporters, in some cases sufficiently to prevent them travelling.

A selection of comments is presented below.

### Pricing & Categories

*"The season ticket is very expensive and given some of the lacklustre performances often not worth the money. I love football & my blue boys but the financial side of players' completely ridiculous wages coupled with expensive tickets makes it hard for supporters."*

*"Home tickets are extortionate. It's like the club are attempting to alienate members who want to attend games as often as season ticket holders. Dropping the ticket price by £10/£15 would be a huge difference for the average person but not overly affect the club."*

*"It's a disgrace that prices have not come down with all that tv money sloshing about"*

*"Unreasonable ticket categories e.g. large increase in price from 19 years old to 20."*

*"Should just be 2 categories. Top 5 competitors at one price the other 14 all same price."*

*"The categorising of tickets for premier league games is astonishing, clubs like Southampton, Burnley and Newcastle to name a few being classed as 'category A' seems very unfair"*

*"Our FA Cup, Carabao Cup, Champions League group stage, and Europa League prices are very fair and acceptable. However the Premier League prices are ridiculously high, and the introduction of transaction fees is terrible."*

*"Having no Booking Fee was great this season. To bring it back next year is awful and unjust and belongs in a bygone era."*

*"2019/20 increase in members' ticket prices... the only message I can take from the Club for targeting just members for 2019/20 Premier League price increases is that our support is no longer welcome. It is a policy that clearly seems to suggest the club would prefer to seats to go on general sale to 'once-a-year' visitors who will spend more on merchandise etc."*

## Younger Fans

*"There should be junior pricing in every section of the ground. I have three kids and getting tickets in the Family section is very difficult so the only games I can take them to are cup matches since these are reasonably priced for kids, though unfortunately most such games take place midweek evenings which is not appropriate for young schoolkids."*

*"We like to go as a family, one adult, two teens and one junior... not a cheap day out."*

*"How for premier league matches, juniors are only allowed in the east stand but the MH or Shed should be allowed. Teens generate atmosphere which this club needs."*

*"People without juniors in their party should not be allowed to buy family stand tickets. Most juniors are having to pay the price to sit in other more expensive seats because the family stand is full of adults without kids."*

*"A radical discount scheme for young supporters to attract them to improve our supporter atmosphere and reverse our ageing profile."*

*"We used to get Rota disabled tickets free and now disabled members pay full price."*

*"A student ticket category has proven popular at other clubs."*

## Euro Ticket Collection

*"The policy of forcing fans to collect from specific points has stopped me travelling with the club due to the risk of being removed from Scheme for non-collection. My business may prevent me traveling at the last minute. I now source tickets via a different route."*

*"Collection process is driven by one event by a handful of individuals so we've all been tarred with the same brush by our own club"*

*"I have two season tickets in my name and can't take a girlfriend to a European away game. Childish knee-jerk [treatment by the Club]"*

*"I don't bother with Euro away games anymore as the ticket collection nonsense was the last straw for me, coupled with the clubs repeated failure to protect the interests of its supporters at these fixtures"*

### 3.1 Supporter Subsidies

We asked supporters how they felt about the spending of money on supporters.

- Fewer than 10% of respondents disagreed with the statement that “Chelsea should use money from the TV deal to reduce all ticket prices”, with an overall score of 4.0 out of 5 (where 1 is strongly disagree, 5 is strongly agree). This continues the theme that the price of tickets for Premier League games in particular is too high.
- The statement “Away supporters should benefit from cheaper prices than home supporters for the equivalent seats” received a broadly neutral response, scoring 3.1.
- Only 11% of respondents agreed with the idea of removing the £30 away cap, with an overall score of 2.0; despite some misgivings about the impact on away ticket access and the apparent contradiction of fans in ‘identical’ seats paying significantly different prices, fans feel that the cap should stay.
- The strongest support was for the statement “Chelsea should continue to arrange and subsidise travel to Away games for supporters”, scoring 4.2 overall with 85% agreeing and only 3.5% against. The provision of cheap transport to games outside London, particularly trains, continues to be well received. This is of course vital for many travelling supporters when games are moved for TV coverage; this results in increased costs using public transport (fans cannot take advantage of cheap deals months in advance) or even in many instances no options to get home via public transport at all

When asked to comment on how TV Money should be spent, a significant number of people felt that some should be spent on reducing the cost and improving the range and quality of the food and drink served in Stamford Bridge.

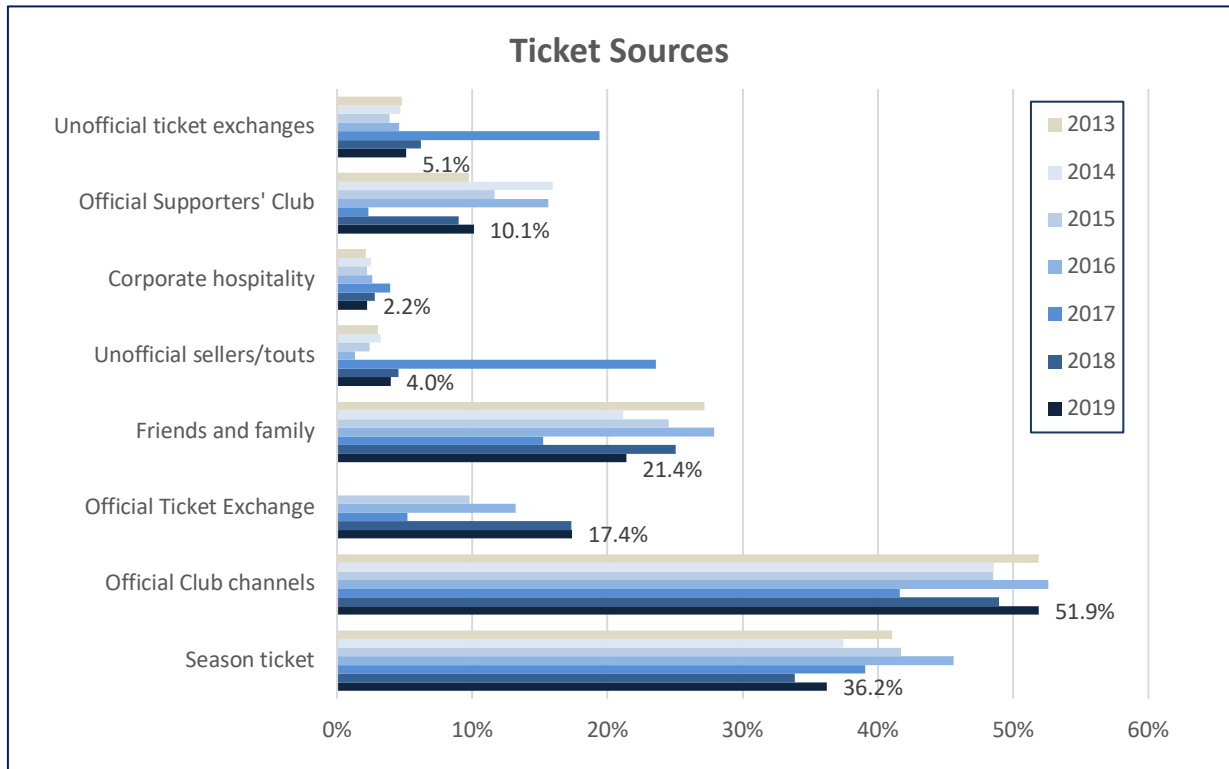
A number of respondents reiterated their support for reducing ticket prices, often with reference to improving the availability of tickets for younger supporters.

There was also a significant number of references to the need to compensate fans when games are moved for television coverage.

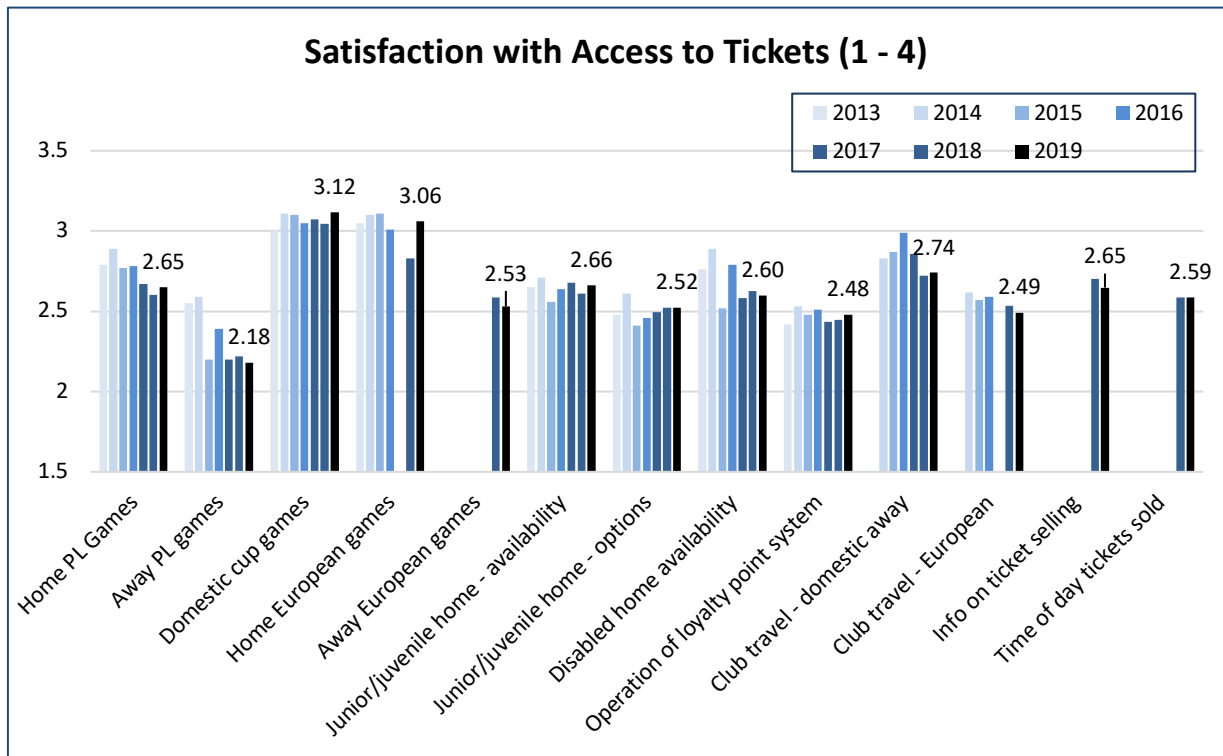
Other topics raised included improving the atmosphere, introducing safe standing and more on away travel, while a few preferred the money to be spent on the team, not the fans.

### 4 ACCESS TO TICKETS

Respondents were asked how they obtained their tickets, selecting all options that applied. Again, more use has been made of official channels including the Official Ticket Exchange in the last year, with another fall in the use of unofficial exchanges.



Respondents were again asked to rate their satisfaction with regard to acquiring tickets; the range of values is 1 (Very Dissatisfied) to 4 (Very Satisfied).



The level of satisfaction with access to home Premier League games approved marginally to 2.65, sitting just above the middle value of 2.5. However the impact of the £30 price cap continues the trend of dissatisfaction in terms of access – the greater demand brought about by the lower cost has led to far greater frustration as more fans find it difficult to get tickets.

Access to domestic Cup games has met with approval, with a noticeable jump in respect of Europa League tickets compared to the previous season's Champions League price model; hardly surprising in that the Club had to work harder to sell out most of these games.

There was a small decrease in satisfaction with away games in Europe, which judging by the comments in the survey is most likely due to the number of games played in fairly small capacity grounds.

Based on the comments made, the biggest single concern was the purchasing of tickets at 07:00. The operation of the Virtual Waiting Room (VWR) and the selling process in general also comes in for criticism, with some suggesting that a queue is opened up at 07:00 and supporters will then see their place in the queue and/or estimated time to purchase – enabling them to recognise whether or not they are likely to have a chance of a ticket. The idea of application windows or away ticket ballots was also mentioned.

*"I'm travelling to work at 7am so it's a really bad time for me to be sat in a virtual waiting room."*

*"7/8am is normally mid commute for me meaning I may be on the underground so no chance of getting tickets then. I much prefer when they sell them during the day."*

*"some of us only return home by 2:00 am the day after a match and tickets for upcoming match go on sale at 7:00 am that day, a little more consideration would be of benefit"*

*"Prefer on sale before 7am given how long it can take to connect"*

*"Due to difference in time zone the typical 7:00 am on sale time is far too early as it is 2:00 am EST and earlier in other time zones"*

*"The VWR, as a 21st century method of administering match tickets, is an embarrassment to any so-called big club."*

The usual question of the role that Loyalty Points play was raised, with the whole range of opinions expressed: LPs should carry over for a few or many years; all games should be sold on LPs; only quarter finals and beyond should be sold on LPs; Season ticket holders should have complete or greater priority over members for away tickets; all games should award the same number of LPs; LPs should not carry over at all; the system should be scrapped.

The idea that gained the most support was that Loyalty Points should carry over for several years (helps to alleviate 'early season syndrome' whereby if you miss out early on the season, you can struggle to get tickets thereafter). This is seen by a few as a way of giving long term regular fans a chance to buy a season ticket, although arguably they will still be competing with each other.

Many fans clearly understand however that the root of the problem in respect of away games is that there simply aren't enough tickets to meet demand; until home fans get the same pricing structure or cheaper, the clubs aren't going to countenance increasing the away allocations when it will cost them money (in addition to lost merchandising etc).

*"Loyalty points should also be given at start of the season based on how long you've held your season ticket e.g. 2 points for every year held. There is no recognition of length of loyalty"*

*"From about mid-season onwards, it can become impossible to get tickets to away games if you haven't got loyalty pts yet"*

*"All games should carry the same points. Might stop people buying for a cup game and selling to touts for them to sell to tourists"*

*"The person who attends the match should receive the points. A membership card attached to an account/app, where members/STH could transfer tickets between, and whoever's card and ticket is used at gate get the points. Also, only home match attendance should count for home season tickets."*

*"The loyalty points is a needed system to reward those diehard fans but for those of us with less money to go to every game it becomes harder and harder to get any tickets..."*

*"Loyalty points should be on a rolling basis"*

*"ALL away games should be done on LP basis. It also works better when timing of tranches are staggered"*

*"The loyalty points system is very unfair as many games now are allocated on a points system, I believe this should only be applicable to semis and finals"*

*"Loyalty points from previous season should NOT carry over to next season. Everyone should get a chance from day one."*

One subject was that to the fore this year was information regarding on sale dates, with a lot of respondents referring to the fact that they don't seem to be getting notification emails in advance of ticket sales starting, or indeed at all. Also the revamped website, having been running for about a year now received criticism: not only is it hard to find ticketing information, with the on-sale dates not always in synch with news updates, but also news items don't always land at the top of the news page or very quickly get pushed down for older articles, not to mention the appearance of media gossip on the website!

*"Why did the club stop sending tickets on sale e-mails to season ticket holders? The marketing team seems able to find me for everything else!"*

*"Ticket availability information is awful. Since the club website has been revamped it has become almost impossible to navigate to ticket info pages. Ticket info also often produced at very short notice and inconvenient times."*

*"Club e-mails regarding tickets going on sale often seem an afterthought. There are myriad stories of ST holders missing out on their own seat for cup ties. There should be a 3-day window for away games, as carried out by Tottenham"*

*"Recently emails are being sent at 7am the very day the tickets are going on sale!"*

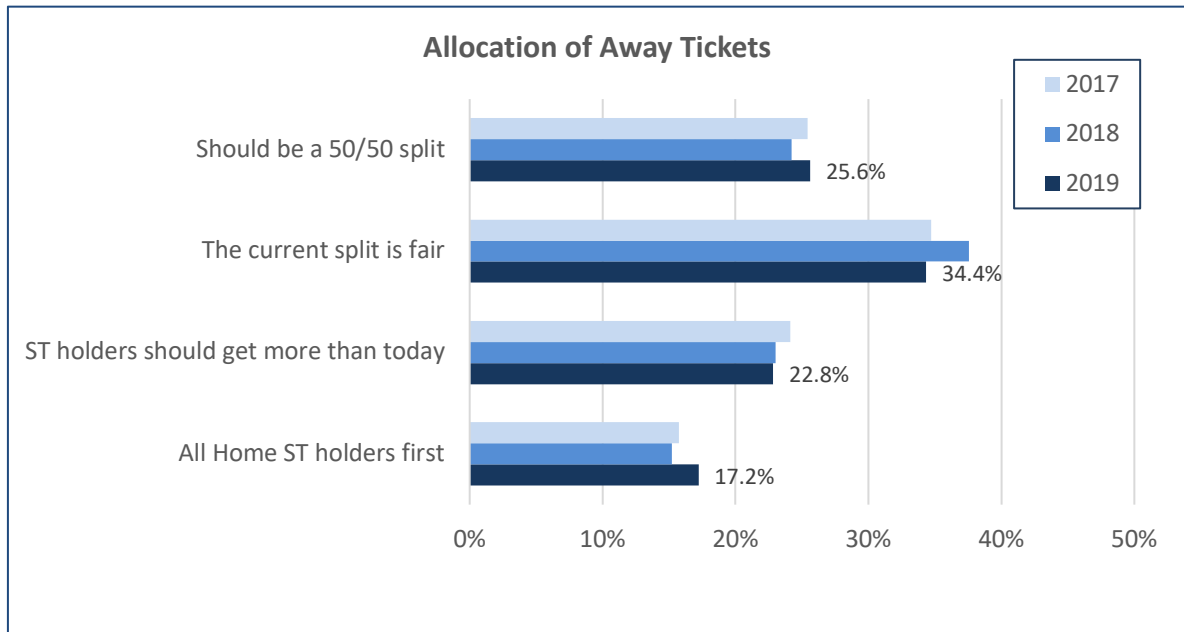
*"Also the ability to subscribe to a publicized, internet-based and regularly updated Club Calendar with reminder notifications when match dates/times are publicized and when tickets/loyalty points details and On-Sale details are known and made public. All subscribing would receive updates to the Mobile Phones and or Email as Subscribers to the Club Calendar."*

*"Signed up for email notification of on sale dates but don't receive it. My partner receives emails but only after sales underway. Notice of on sale dates on web site is opaque"*

Overseas fans continue to complain about their lack of access to tickets with the points requirement coming under fire. Many commented that there needed to be more options for younger supporters to accompany adults at cheaper prices

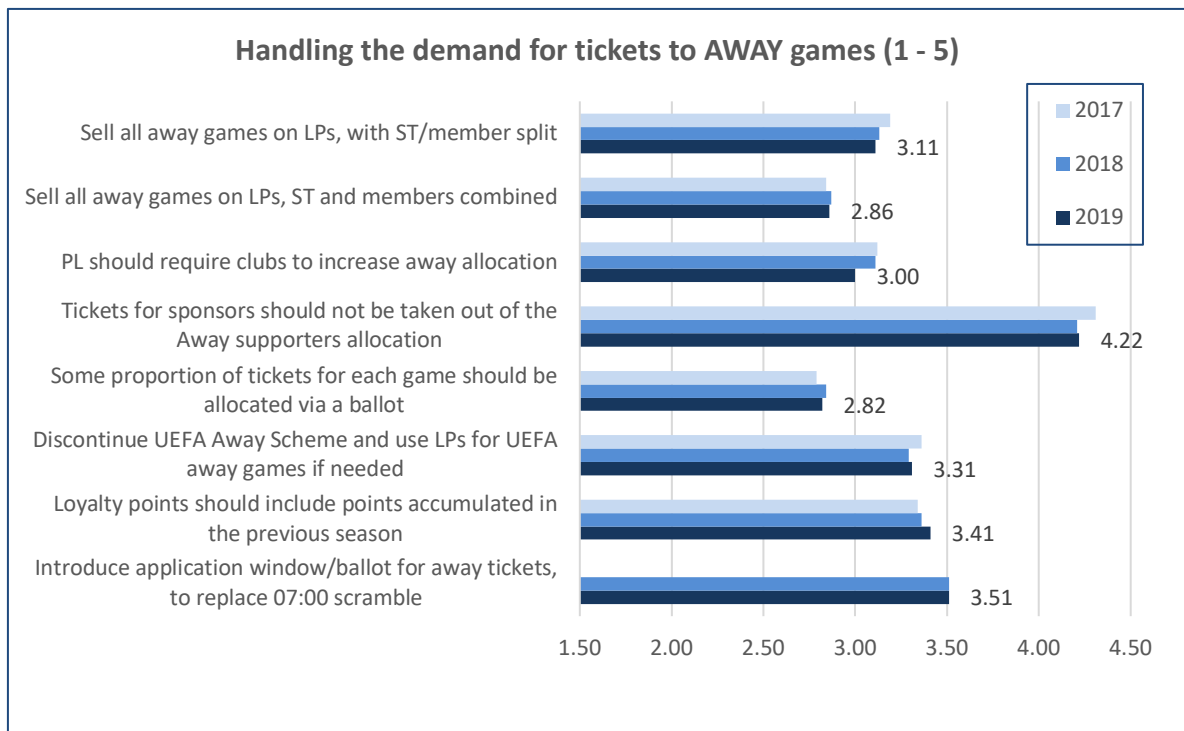
**4.1 Away Match Tickets**

The current 60/40 split between season ticket holders and members was looked at. The following four options were presented:



Whilst the most popular option remains ‘leave it as it is’, this has reduced in popularity with opinion divided, in that the proportions in favour of having a 50-50 split and having all home season ticket holders ahead of members increased by similar amounts.

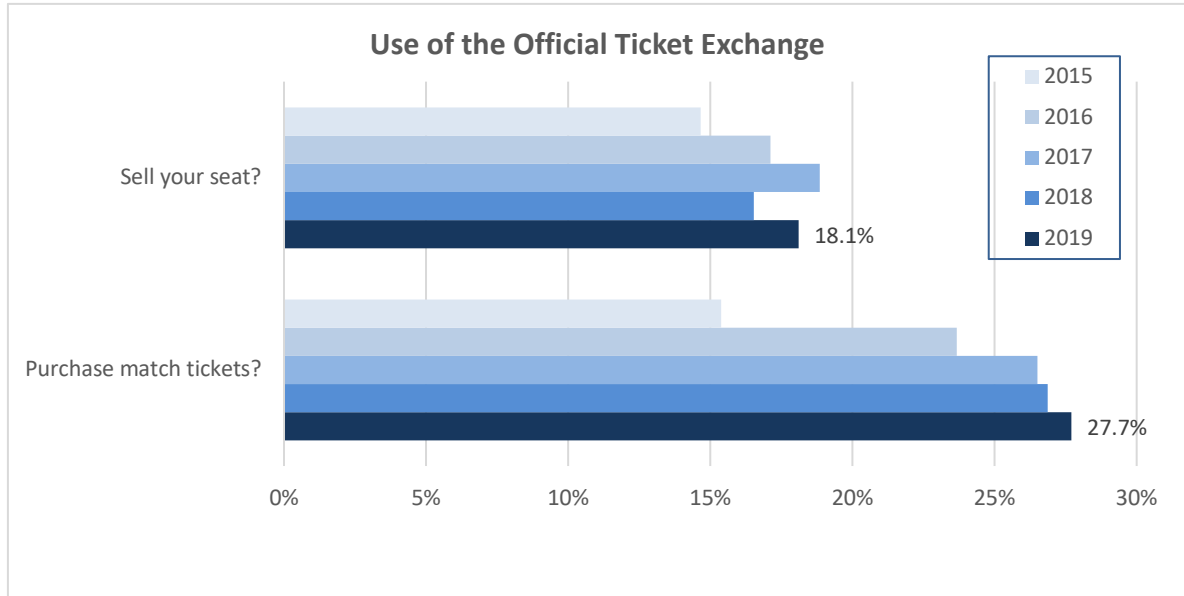
Some suggestions for changes to the distribution of away tickets were presented:



The results have not changed significantly from last year. Evidently tickets for sponsors should not be provided from the away supporters’ allocation. There is less support for increased away allocations and a small increase in the support for the retention of LPs from the previous season.

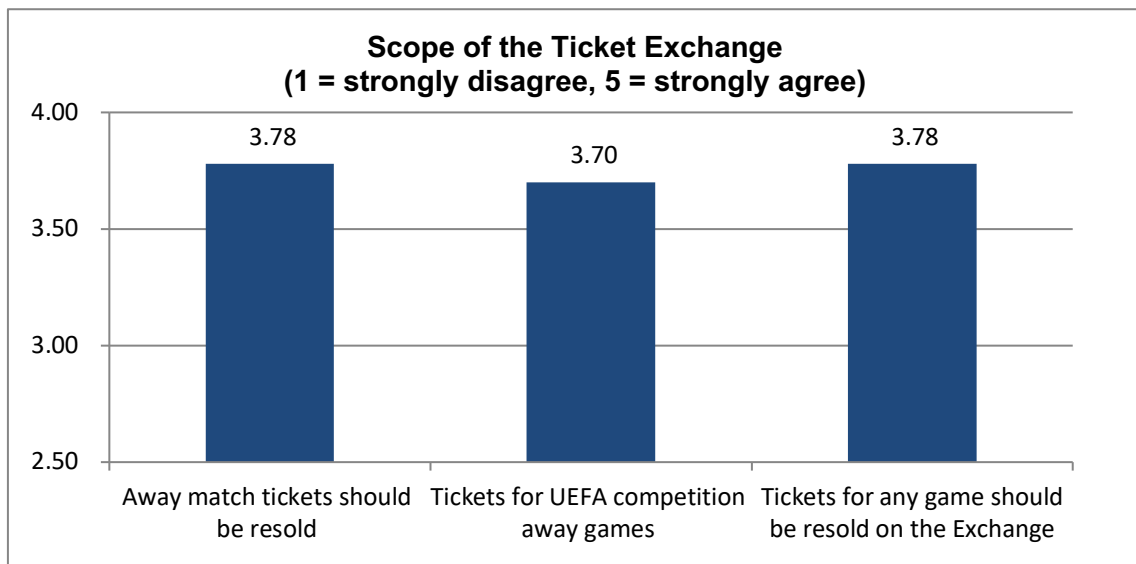
### 4.2 Official Ticket Exchange

The Club run ticket exchange has now been operating for five seasons, offering season ticket holders the ability to resell their seats safely when they cannot make a specific game whilst members can buy these tickets at face value, with the same transaction fees as they would incur buying directly from the Club in the normal fashion. We asked whether people have used the service to sell their seats or buy spares.



Use of the Exchange for the purchase of tickets continues to grow, and the selling of seats rebounded this year. Respondents also indicated that people buying tickets through the Exchange should get the loyalty points. This received an approval rating of 3.7 out of 5, as in previous years.

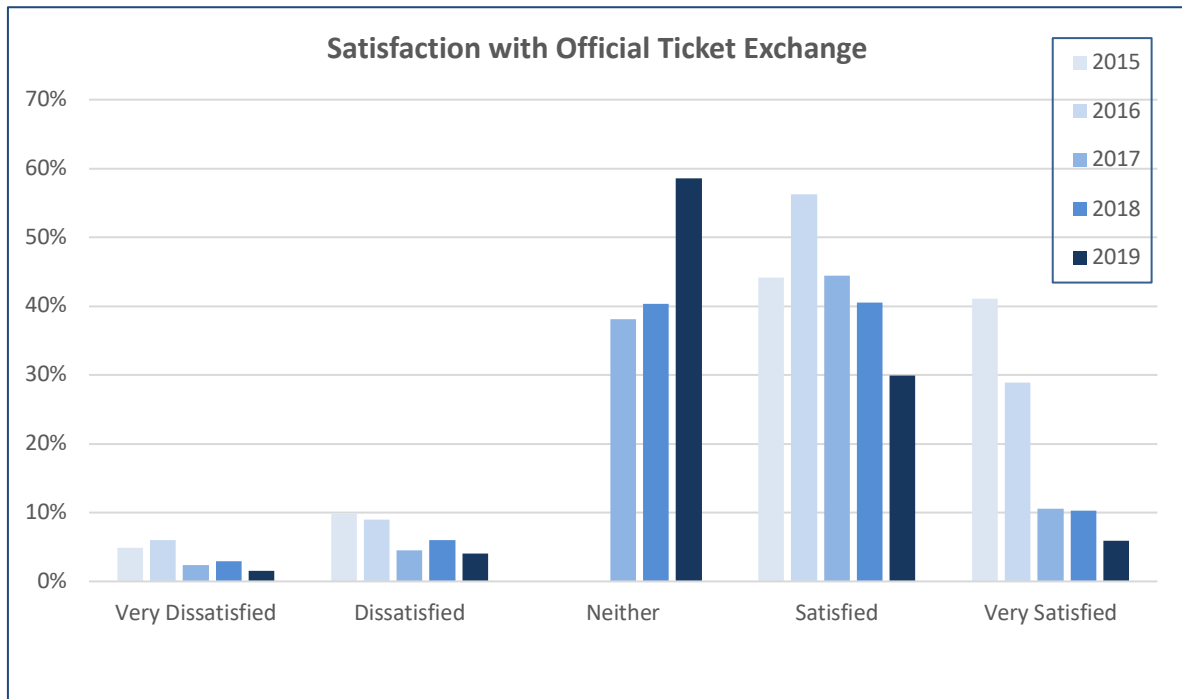
We also canvassed opinions on the matches to be covered by the Exchange.



There is clearly a feeling amongst supporters that the scope of the Exchange should be grown for all games; the justification for this is that people need a legitimate way of selling tickets when work, family, travel issues or other matters mean that with the best will in the world, they cannot get to a game that they planned to attend.



We asked respondents to indicate their overall satisfaction with the Ticket Exchange, and the results are presented below.



Although it looks as though the Exchange has dropped in popularity, this is most likely due to the removal of the *Not Applicable* option in the survey and if the *Neither* option is ignored for this reason, the percentage of respondents expressing satisfaction has actually gone up.

The landscape of comments is fairly familiar to readers of this survey, and a lot of comments incorporate praise when making suggestions. However the fact that 5 years into the operation of the system, some respondents are still responding that either this survey is the first time that they had heard of it or that they have friends who are unaware of the system must be recognised as a failure by the Club to spread the message. The Club *do* refer to the Exchange in ticket news for every PL home game, but which Season Ticket holders will be reading this news? The Trust will attempt to boost awareness of the system but a push from the Club to Season Ticket holders might have the desired impact.

The debate regarding the Loyalty Points awarded continues to rage, with many feeling that buyers should get loyalty points, with some feeling that the seller should also lose them or a sharing of points could occur. In a perfect world the person using the ticket would get the points for attending but of course, some season ticket holders might be reluctant to list spare tickets if it hampered their chances of getting tickets for games later in the season.

There was a lot of comment in favour of widening the range of games covered to include all home games or even all games full stop. This reflects the desire expressed above to see more games covered.

A negative issue that is increasingly frustrating users, or would be users, of the Exchange is in the handling of concessionary categories, including listing/buying multiple tickets. Whilst the system generally seems to work well for season ticket holders or members seeking to buy a single ticket, attempting to sell or buy more than one ticket is not well supported, whilst the restrictions on who can buy which tickets are proving intractable for many.

*“Allow adult members to buy senior\junior tickets with a price adjustment. Allow juniors\seniors to buy senior\junior seats because the price is the same”*

*“The option to purchase tickets in the family section should be available for adult tickets only as well. Not everyone has a child to take along OR sometimes no junior tickets are available to buy along with an adult ticket. How are these sold on the exchange? Do these seats go unoccupied? Total waste if that’s the case.”*

*“Want to be able to buy sets of tickets. Currently have to buy individual seats. I always attend with my family so can’t use the exchange.”*

*“Too strict wrt member status. Junior has to buy Junior ticket, Senior senior. Adult adult. Maybe price shouldn’t be reduced but Adult must be able to buy concession seat for the price, even if the club keeps the extra (ST holder still reimbursed pro-rata to ST price)”*

*“Family ST’s in the East Stand Lower should be linked so they can only be sold together as a pair (or group if 3 or more). At the moment, junior and adult tickets sat together are listed individually. If the junior ticket is purchased on its own, you are left with an unsellable adult ticket, as single adult tickets cannot be bought in the family area”*

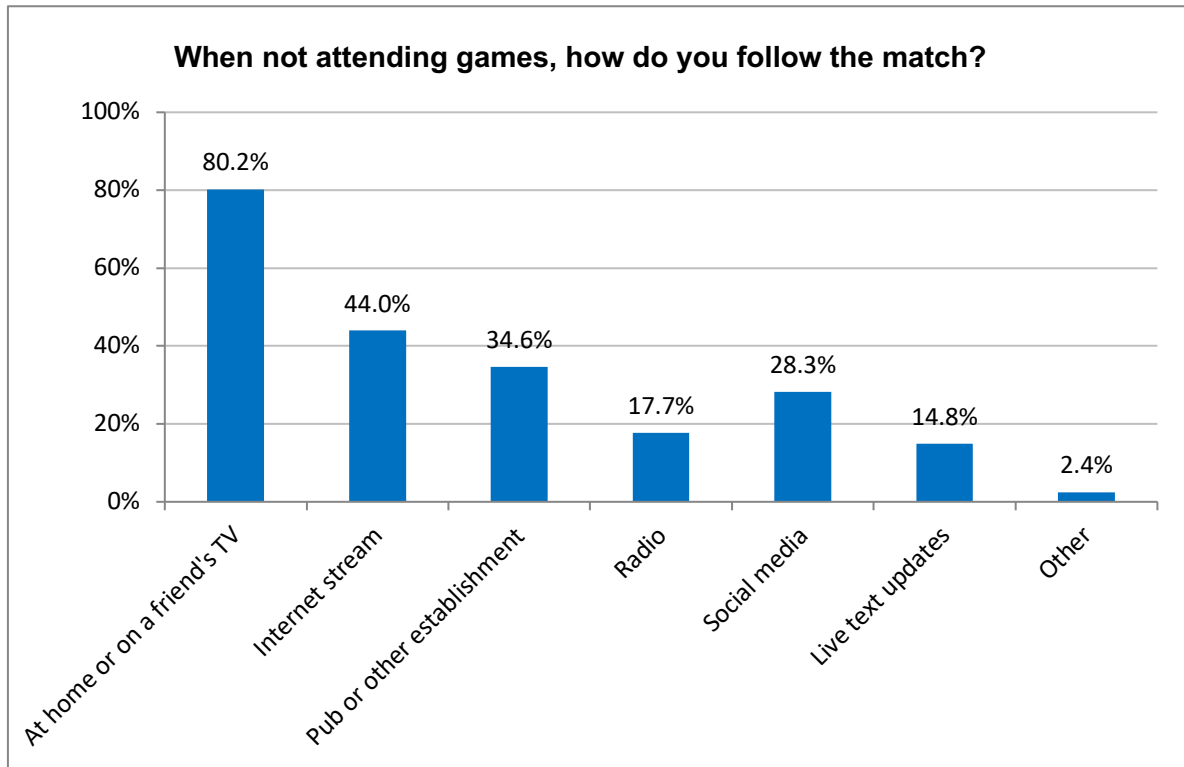
*“Allow senior and juvenile tickets to be resold as standard adult tickets”*

*“Buyers should be able to buy tickets in pairs. As an overseas member I travel twice a year to the Bridge for 2-4 matches and often have to attend alone or resort to other means...”*

*“When there are a pair of tickets available I cannot see the point in differentiating between adult, juvenile or OAP. Just sell the seats to the person who wants them and fill the stadium up.”*

4.3 Following the Game

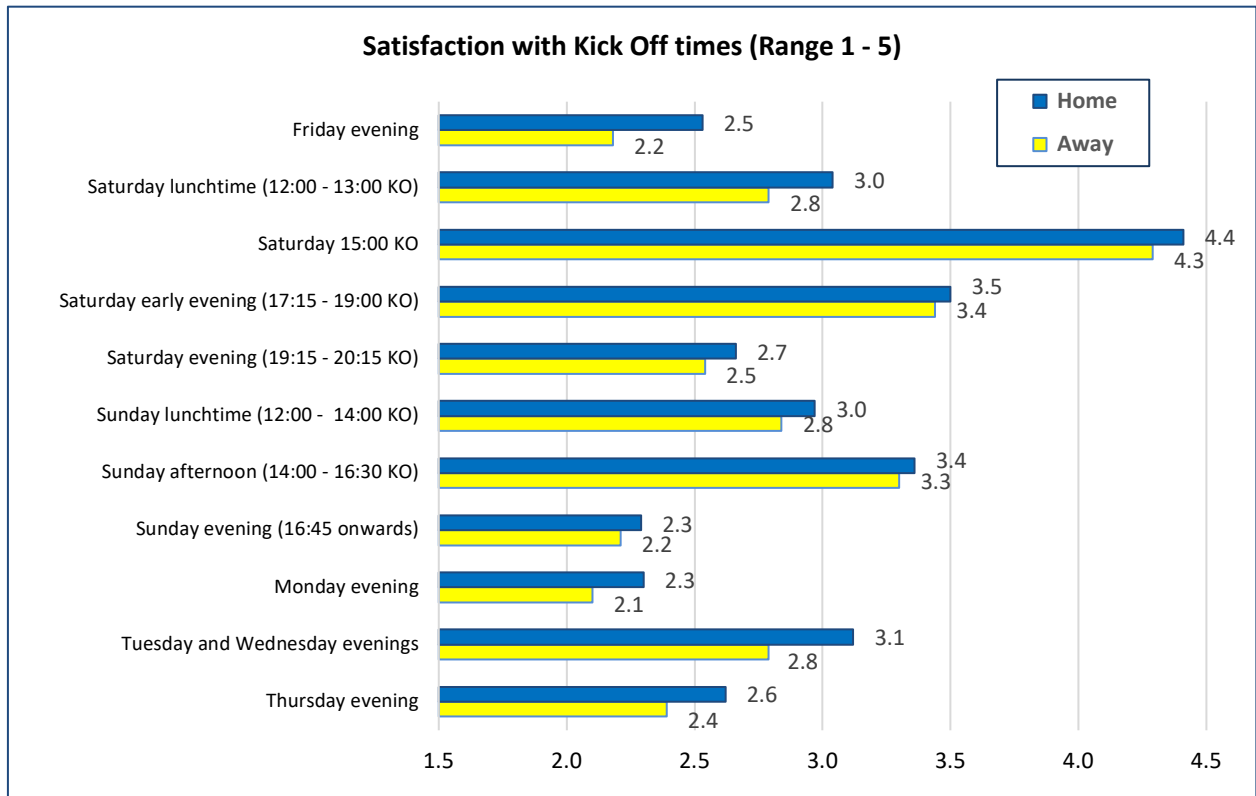
We asked how people followed games when they were not able to attend:



Watching at home remains the most popular option. Amongst the Other options, the newly introduced Fifth Stand application was mentioned a number of times, and appears to have been a popular addition for supporters to follow a game.

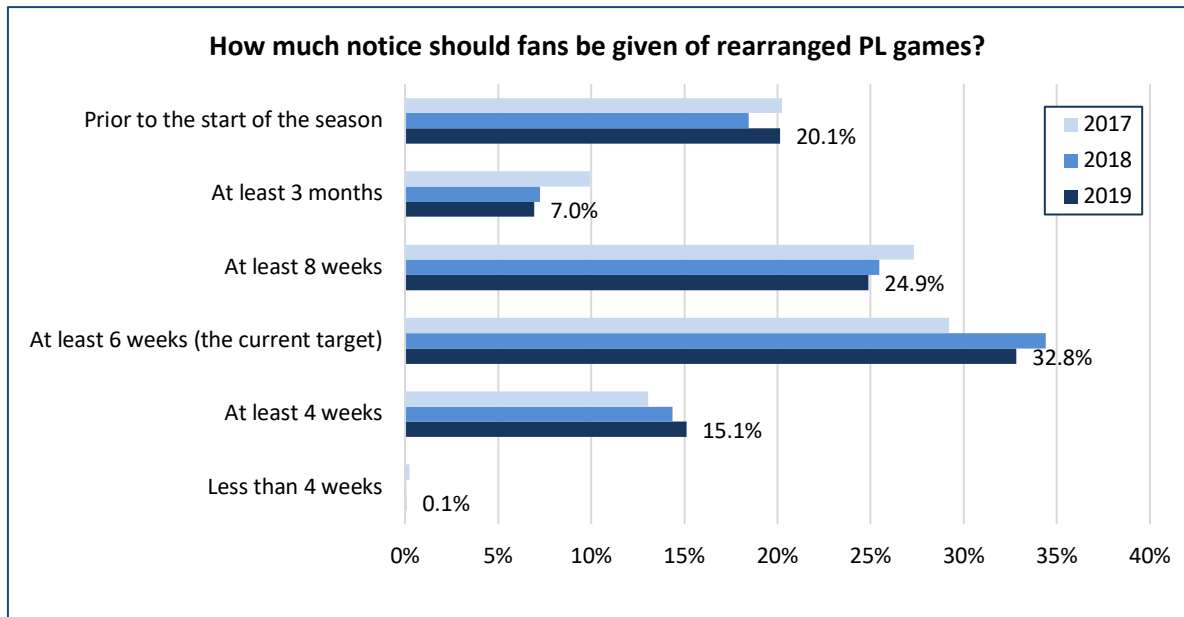
## 5 KICK OFF TIMES

The survey included a review of the attitudes to the various kick off times seen to date in the Premier League.



Once more, there is a reasonably close correlation of opinions between home and away kick offs. The Europa League experience has resulted in improved opinions regarding Thursday nights but the both Friday and Monday evening home games have fallen even further in the popularity stakes. Even the (as yet) untried idea of kicking off Sunday games later than 16:30 is also very unpopular, as kick off times on Sunday have perniciously crept later from a de facto standard of 16:00 to 16:30.

There remains a clear desire to see more games kick off at 3pm on a Saturday afternoon, and this yet again is the only kick off slot to score above Satisfied (4). For Saturdays, the early evening kick off is reasonably popular, and the lunchtime kick off still divides opinion but is broadly neutral. The introduction of Saturday night games still does not appear to be popular; as with Monday and Friday nights and late Sunday games, transport problems may well be to the fore, with school or work the next day an issue for Sunday and Monday night matches.



The movement of fixture dates and kick off times to accommodate TV coverage also impacts supporters, both match-going and TV viewers, home and abroad; the survey questioned how much notice of such changes was reasonable.

The results show that there is a desire for fans to be given more notice of fixture changes than the current target of 6 weeks. Whilst 15% of respondents support a shorter notice period than at present, 52% favour a longer period.

Alternatively 58% favour 6 – 8 weeks’ notice.

On the same topic, the mid-season break introduced for the coming season represents an opportunity for players and fans alike to enjoy a weekend off and recharge the batteries. Due to the demands of TV no doubt, the break has been staggered over two weekends. From a match going supporter’s point of view, this is not so bad; however what is completely unacceptable is that supporters won’t even find out which weekend they are playing on until mid-December making it impossible to plan for both weekends until then.

## 6 SAFE STANDING

Recently the safety governing body (SGSA), updated its guidance for football grounds to include the possibility of seating with barriers (safe standing). This has encouraged clubs in the Premier League such as Wolves to plan the introduction of safe standing areas in their existing grounds.

Prior to the announcement that the redevelopment of Stamford Bridge had been put on hold, it had been assumed that no changes would be considered to the configuration of Stamford Bridge in its current form given the imminent demolition and rebuilding of the ground.

We asked for agreement with a number of statements in the survey:

1. Chelsea should develop safe standing areas within the current ground (average 4.0)  
78% agreed or strongly agreed, only 11% disagreed or strongly disagreed
2. Standing areas should be introduced in the lower tier behind both goals (average 3.9)  
72% agreed, 15% disagreed
3. Standing areas should be introduced in the upper tier behind both goals (average 2.9%)  
44% disagreed, with 33% in favour
4. Standing areas should be introduced in both tiers behind both goals (average 3.0)  
40% disagreed, 38% agreed
5. Standing areas should be introduced behind the goal at one end (average 2.7%)  
49% against, only 23% in favour

It is clear that there remains very strong support for the introduction of safe standing at Stamford Bridge, with a clear push towards its introduction in the lower tier behind the goals, i.e. the Shed and Matthew Harding ends.

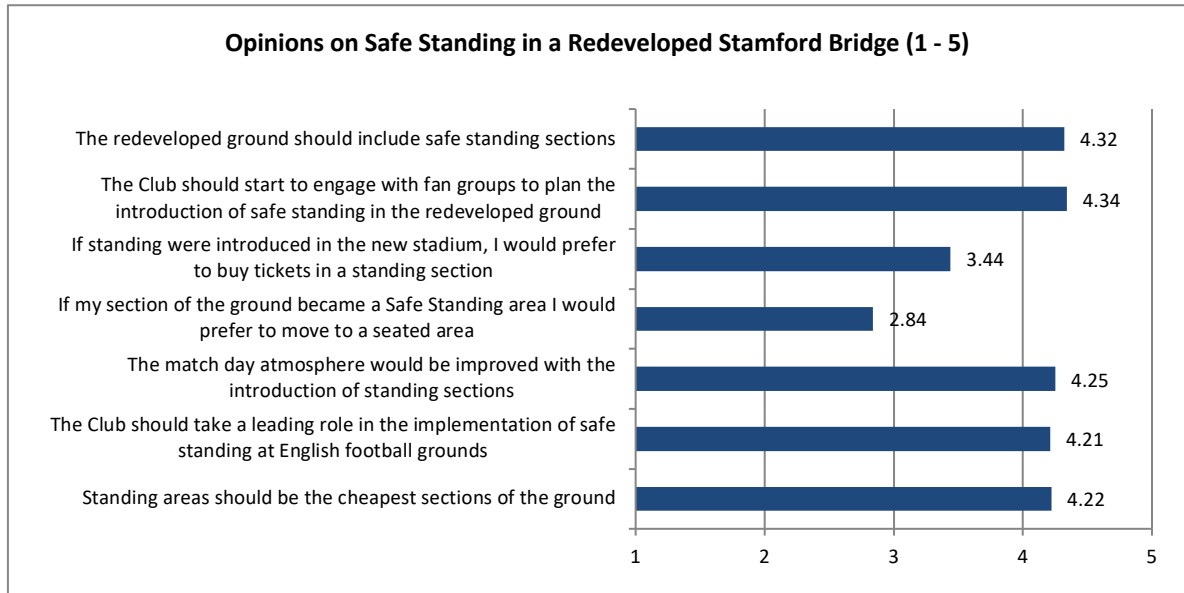
A few correspondents made the point that fans should have the choice to sit or stand, and there is little doubt that, were it to be introduced at the Bridge, safe standing would not be introduced in the side stands (East and West).

Overall however there is demand for its introduction. As one respondent put it, *"It is important that the right type of standing area is incorporated, i.e. one that actually increases capacity as per many of the current designs available... ..like the ones in Germany... This way a price reduction can also be incorporated and the club would still maintain ticket revenues whilst increasing other potential revenue from food and drink sales etc."*

Finally, 30 years after the Hillsborough tragedy, we should remember that improving safety is vital. As another person put it, *"Away fans stand anyway. The MHL fans appear to stand anyway so **it would be safer to have the appropriate rails etc. than the current situation** where people can easily fall over seat backs in to the row in front."*

6.1 At the Redeveloped Ground

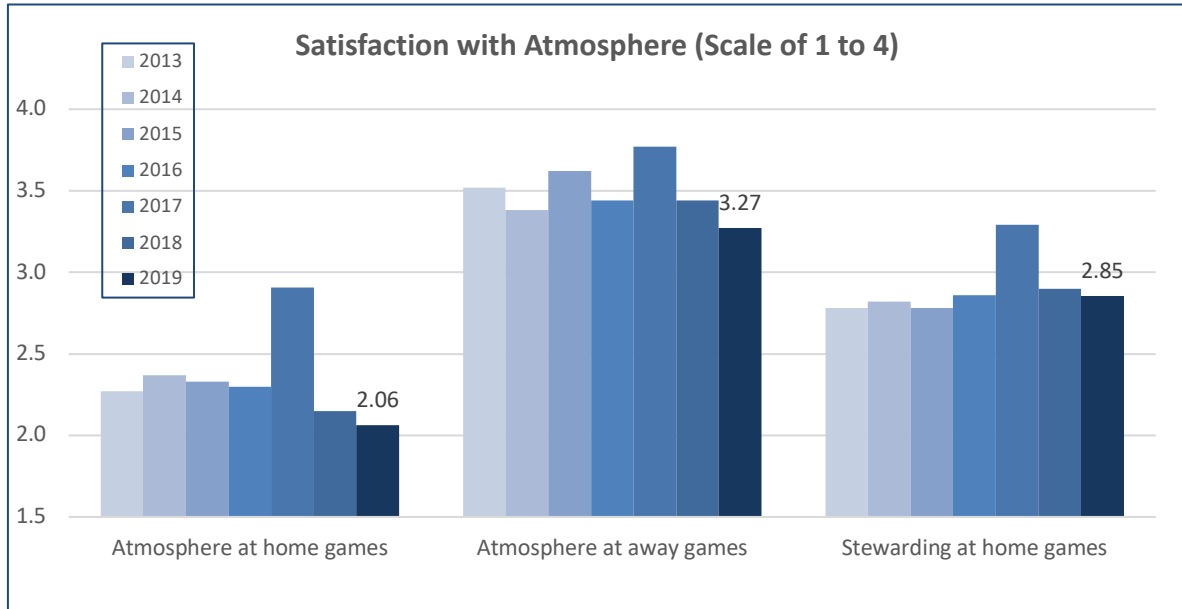
Although there is a delay in the Club proceeding with the redevelopment of Stamford Bridge, it is assumed that the project will come to fruition sooner rather than later. When the Club proceeds with the redevelopment of Stamford Bridge into a world class ground fit for the 21st Century, rail seating is expected to play its part in making it a stadium with a fantastic atmosphere.



As in previous years, there is a clear message that the Club should work with supporters to deliver safe standing in the redeveloped stadium.

## 7 ATMOSPHERE

As has been the case every year, we asked about satisfaction with the atmosphere at matches:



The decline in atmosphere to the lowest levels ever measured in the survey, during a season in which the team ultimately finished third and won a European trophy, shows that something has gone badly wrong. Whilst the Trust avoids speculation on playing matters in general, there is plenty of evidence anecdotally, on social media and in sundry comments made in answering the survey that the attempt by the Head Coach to introduce a new and apparently very rigid (or rigidly implemented) possession-based playing style was not well received.

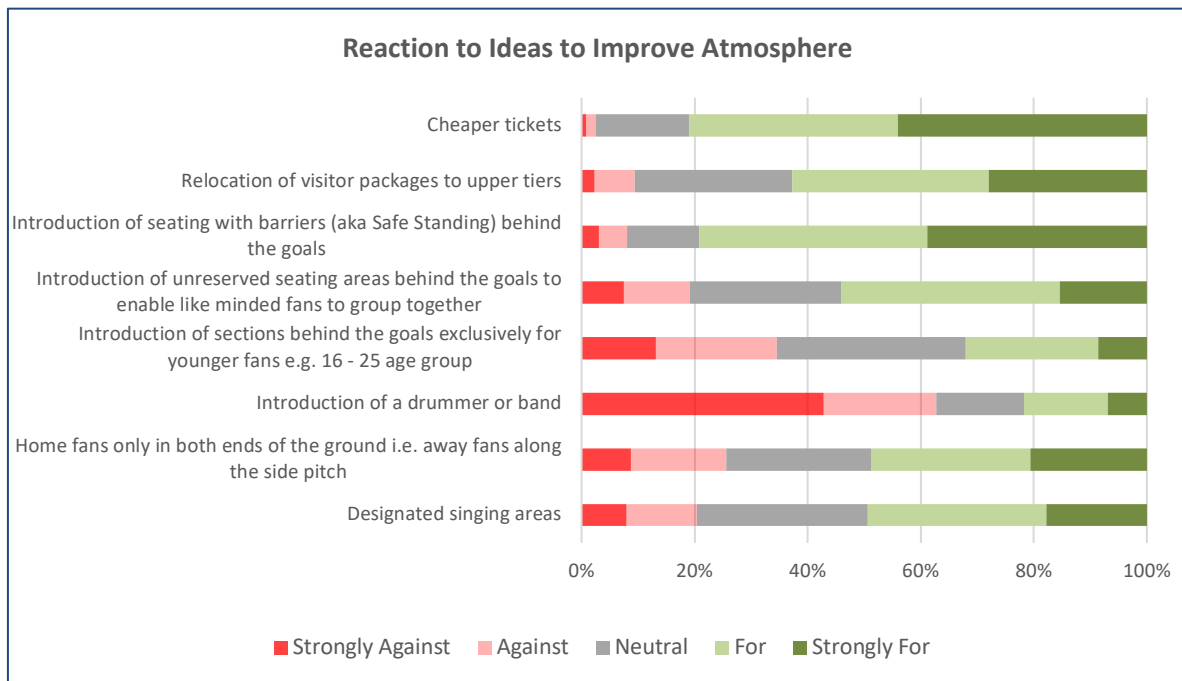
The fact that the atmosphere at away games slipped again is hardly surprising when you consider the away fans did not see their team win at a single top ten team, and suffered record premier league defeats at Bournemouth and then Manchester City. By the end of the season, there was little belief in the team’s ability to turn a game around which for a group of supporters known for never giving in was unacceptable.

In contrast, at the time this report is being written, with Mr Sarri’s return to Italy, and the appointment of Frank Lampard as Head Coach with former players returning to the Club in a variety of roles, there appears to be a buzz amongst the supporter base despite (or in some cases possibly due to) the imminent transfer ban. It would be a major surprise if the atmosphere does not improve markedly in 2019-20.



### 7.1 Improving the Atmosphere

Based on ideas put forward in previous surveys, we asked people to give their support or opposition to a number of ideas to improve the atmosphere at the Bridge on match-days:



The results show that cheaper tickets and the introduction of safe standing are the most popular ideas and there would be little opposition in moving visitor packages to the upper tiers. Unreserved seating in some sections might also be popular. Designated singing areas received some support, but there is limited support for the introduction of a drummer.

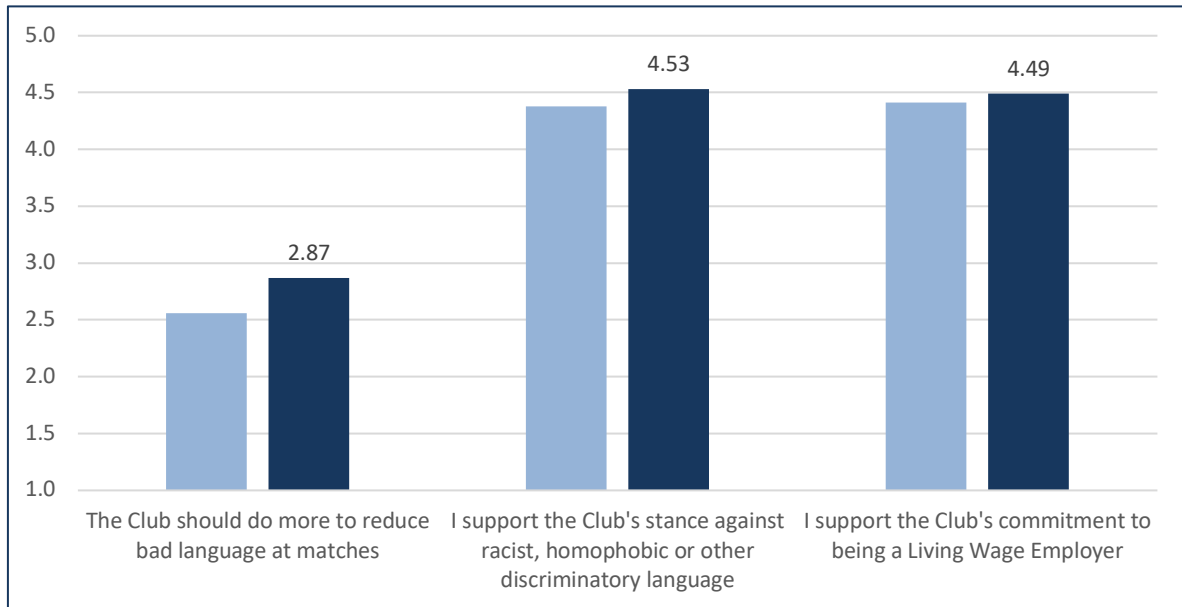
Amongst the other ideas floated, the most widely suggested this year was playing better or more entertaining football, another indicator of the frustration many felt at matches. A reduction in the number of tourists and hospitality seats was also widely mentioned, as was specifically targeting younger supporters, particularly young adults, for cheaper tickets with regular access.

Quite a few suggestions centred around the idea of having one or more individuals lead the singing, not even watching the game whilst doing so! Some fans wanted more new songs, and one interesting idea was to use an app for the sharing of new songs to help develop and then spread them – given that it now carries media gossip, perhaps the Fifth Stand application could be extended for this.

It was also noted that some kick off times could be an inhibiting factor – Saturday lunchtime and Sundays were specifically mentioned. There were also a few strongly dissenting voices in respect of relocating fans away from their long held seats behind the goals to accommodate some of the ideas being bandied around.

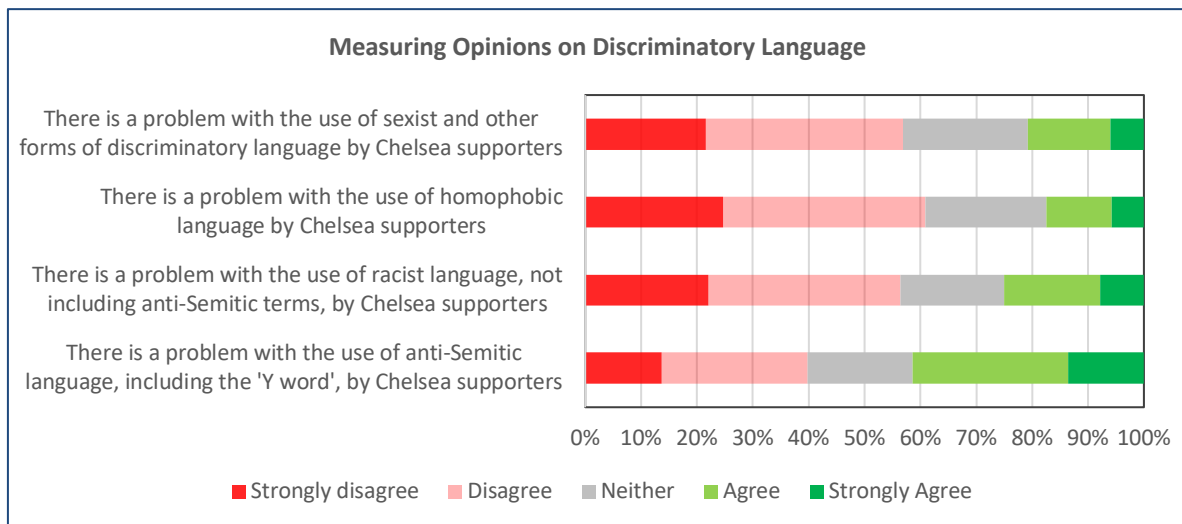
### 7.2 Club Initiatives

We repeated last year's questions on certain Club initiatives, and the results below are largely unchanged. Supporters continue to support a strong approach towards discriminatory language and the commitment to the Living Wage.



Although the score for bad language has risen, it is still under the mid-point with less than a fifth of respondents agreeing that more should be done, which is in line with last year's findings.

Bearing in mind that there were a small number of well-publicised (some might say over-publicised) events last year, we asked supporters who had attended a game in the preceding 12 months how they felt about the language that they had encountered.



The results indicate that supporters themselves do not believe that there is an issue with discriminatory language of a sexist or homophobic in use at Chelsea matches, scoring 2.5 and 2.4 on a scale of 1 to 5 respectively. Excluding anti-Semitism from the question, supporters also do not feel that there is a problem with another score of 2.5, well below the midpoint of 3.

This one figure that deviates significantly is the response to the question of anti-Semitism. This is the only question with the number of people agreeing exceeding the number disagreeing, albeit by a small margin and the overall result is 3.0 – right in the middle.

Whether the Trust agrees with it or not, several respondents commented that other fans would continue to use the 'Y word' as long as Spurs supporters use it.

Finally in respect of all forms of discriminatory language, we asked how it had changed over the time supporters had been attending games. The vast majority (72%) felt it had got better over time, with only 6% expressing the opinion that it had got worse.

## 8 VIDEO ASSISTANT REFEREE (VAR)

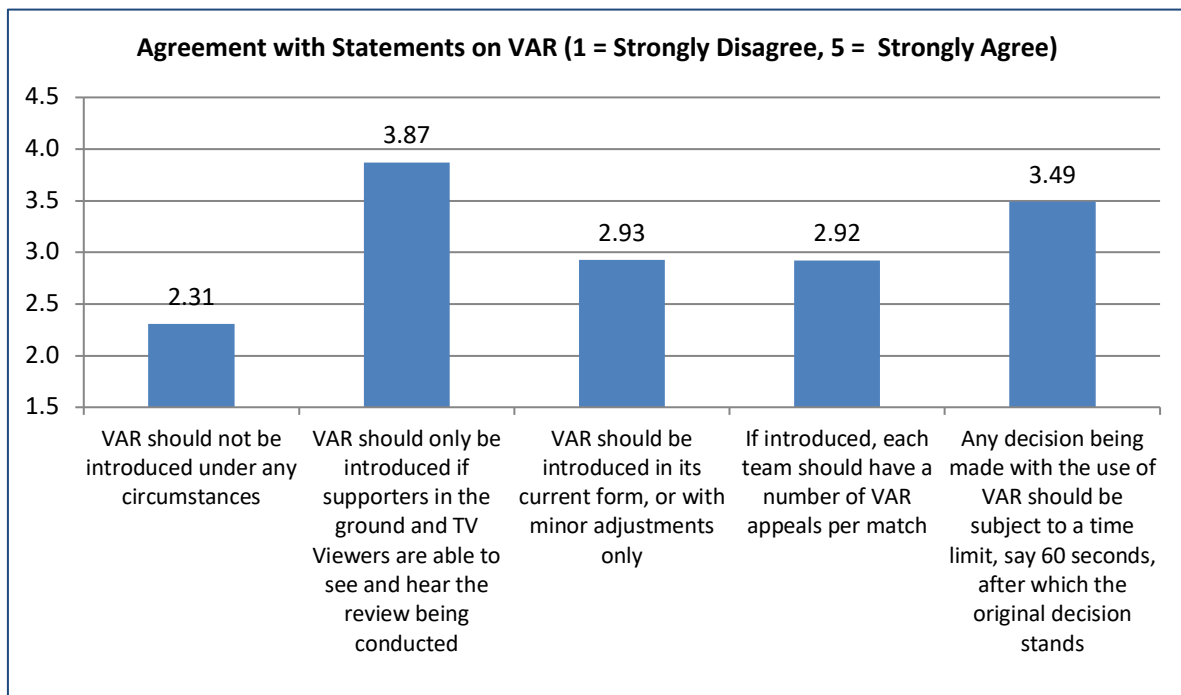
With the introduction of VAR into the Premier League, we asked how people felt about a change that may alter the experience of watching football forever.

Two thirds of respondents had attended at least one game where VAR had been available and 98% had watched at least one such game on TV. How did they enjoy the experience?

	Attended Live	Watched On TV
Extremely satisfied	3.1%	4.4%
Satisfied	23.4%	29.9%
Neither	18.0%	16.5%
Dissatisfied	33.4%	31.8%
Extremely Dissatisfied	22.1%	17.3%

Clearly the TV viewer feels that they get a better experience, presumably as they have access to some footage of the decision being discussed whereas fans in the ground have little or no idea what is going on; even with this advantage, the TV viewing experience rated at 2.7 on a scale of 1 - 5 i.e. less than the midpoint. The match going experience rated at 2.5. in both cases there was a significant number of extremely dissatisfied customers.

We put a number of ideas into the survey to gauge supporters' feelings in respect of VAR:



There was clearly recognition that there is a future for VAR with fewer than 20% of respondents being against its introduction under any circumstances.

The strongest positive response was to the suggestion that, both in the ground and at home, supporters can watch the VAR review being conducted as it is today in rugby union for example. This can be seen as a clear indication that fans want the game to be conducted in a clear and transparent fashion – and they want to see all aspects of the game that they have paid good money and potentially travelled huge distances to watch!

The idea that reviews should be time limited also held some attraction; many fans are concerned that the operation of the system witnessed to date has been too cumbersome, destroying the flow of the game.

We invited comments on the introduction of VAR, and a selection is presented below:

*"It's the only way forward to football and after the 2009 Chelsea v Barcelona all Chelsea fans should back it."*

*"Fans in the ground need to know what is happening. Decisions are taking too long."*

*"It is important for offsides and red-card decisions, but can be misleading with regards to incidents like handballs. I think in its current form though, the positives outweigh the negatives."*

*"If it could be used in a way which would keep fans both in the stadium and at home in the loop it would be less disruptive. At the moment there is a pause where nothing is clear for supporters of either team"*

*"Having it for some games in FA Cup tournaments is unacceptable. This needs to be used continually throughout or for finals only"*

*"It's rubbish. Just someone deciding from many different angles. Mistakes still being made."*

*"It's only meant to be used to correct obvious mistakes, not review marginal calls as is currently being done. It will ruin the game"*

*"Quite a few VAR decisions are subjective calls and have led to more problems than they have solved. The new handball law next year along with VAR will lead to 5 plus penalties per game!"*

*"Having the evidence screened to the crowd will help reduce questions and frustration from fans as to what is going on"*

*"Rules in football are open to interpretation. Until a correct, standardised process has been decided and thoroughly tested, then VAR should only be used for offsides"*

*"The use of super slow motion to give penalty decisions makes every handball look deliberate and the rule is far too vague currently so it leads to questionable penalty calls"*

*"Hate VAR. You attend a game in reality to watch your team score goals. We all jump around like fools only then to be put on hold. It's not so bad if the flags up....the disappointment is instant and funny if it's the away team. But VAR in my opinion will ruin our beautiful game."*

*"It needs a lot of improvement to speed it up and stop it disrupting the game. Needs much better communication with attending fans which currently is poor - should be part of the game like in cricket/tennis. Not good enough now but I have always thought it is wrong that millions round the world can know what really happened - except for the man who matters"*

*"Better decisions do not make a better game"*

*"Officials need to be up to speed. The use of VAR in the Carabao Cup final cost us a goal scoring opportunity, when the assistant ref flags an offside when he should have allowed play to continue, and then check VAR."*

*"Essential and long overdue! Justice for all and the more refereeing errors eradicated the better."*

*"VAR currently isn't at a level it needs to but however it will get there just like goalline technology."*

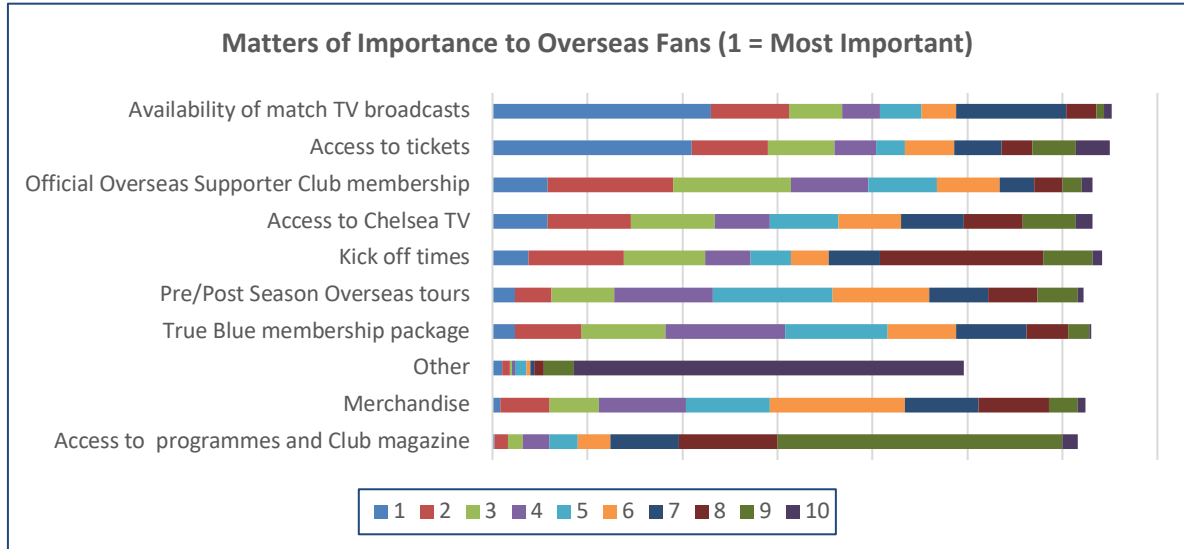
*"I've rarely seen drawn out VAR reviews. 60 seconds to review is a great idea - if no conclusion can be found, let the play stand."*

*"Would prefer no VAR. It's not resulted in 100% of decisions being awarded correctly and it's use has been inconsistent. More infuriating when mistakes are made with the gift of hindsight."*

***"It's killing the best moment of going to a football match, celebrating a goal."***

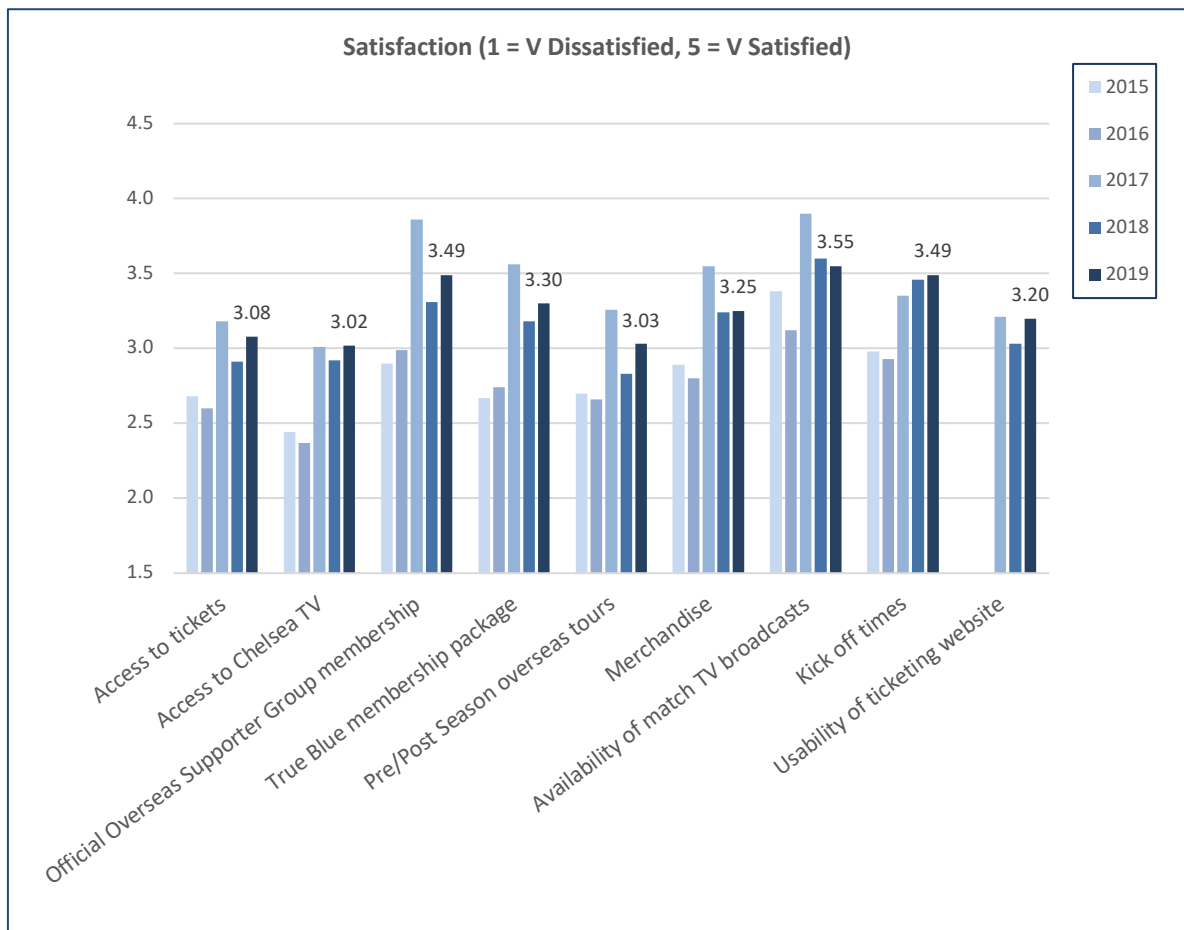
## 9 OVERSEAS SUPPORTERS

We asked overseas supporters to rank and compare both importance and satisfaction with aspects that are unique to their situation.



There are two stand out matters of importance for overseas fans this year, both relating to watching the team play: availability of TV broadcasts and access to tickets. The topic of merchandising having shot to the fore last year has returned to minor importance this year.

We then asked about their satisfaction with these topics



A general trend of slight improvement over last year for most items may be discerned. Of the two most important items, access to tickets registered an improvement whilst availability of match broadcasts declined slightly; both were on the satisfactory side, although not by much in the case of ticket access.

There were a number of comments regarding access to matches through multiple TV packages, clearly a source of frustration for many, and online or via the new Fifth Stand application, such as:

*“Access to the Carabao and FA Cup should be easier.”*

*“NBC sports not carrying Chelsea games and forcing me to pay for Gold is extremely annoying.”*

*“Watching matches overseas require several different tv packages due to the league’s money-mongering. The more competitions we’re in, the more we have to pay to watch. Then if we don’t go through in the competition, we have to keep paying for the service anyway.”*

*“Here in Australia, Foxtel used to show all the prem games, but they lost the rights to Optus. So now you (generally) have to be an Optus customer to get the games. It’s a never-ending expense. Chelsea TV should be allowed to show the games live”*

*“I am irate about more North American games being included on premium channels. Carabao cup on ESPN+ prime example. Do everything you can to make games watchable without walls and walls of paid services.”*

*“Coverage of European soccer in Canada is very poor since moving to online streaming”*

*“Only having access to commentary via the 5th stand app is annoying”*

*“Continue the (free) audio broadcast of all matches through The 5th Stand app. As weekday matches occur when I am at work, I have come to rely on this form of media to listen to the matches live.”*

*“Make every game legally watchable/streamable. It’s currently impossible to watch all games legally in Belgium.”*

Quite a few comments related to the governance and operation of Official Supporters Groups, and the benefits they convey, such as:

*“The government of official supporters clubs should be more closely regulated by the club in regards to items directly related to Chelsea, such as ticketing, events (planning and access) or merchandise (i.e., signed shirt as a prize for a competition). Leaving it in the hands of unelected, inefficient club secretaries has caused multiple blunders and various grievances in the last season alone.”*

*“Need to have a lottery for Platinum Status for official clubs. Clubs should not be able to retain status year after year just because you have 50 ROW True Blue. Why should I continue to work to have 50 ROW True Blue sign up if I will never get a chance to be a Platinum Club. Might as well get 30 Members and stay Gold.”*

*“Split the groups more. I know it’s the same for European platinum members as for English platinum members. Which means Swedish supporters have the same criteria as England supporters but the difference in travel is huge.”*

*“I am disappointed I have to pay extra for Chelsea TV. It used to be included in the price of my International True Blue membership.”*

*“Let’s start with answering my emails in a timely manner or even at all. I run a Gold Tier club and as secretary, it seems they are so busy it takes some time, like days, if I get a response to my inquiry from time to time.”*

*“We have a very good supporters group in Thailand. they arrange many events and keep supporters well informed, if the club supported them more it would make it easier to attract more fans”*

Regarding access to tickets, there are probably as many different opinions as there are amongst domestic supporters. The frustrations getting hold of tickets combined with the rare opportunity for visits to Stamford Bridge for a lot of overseas fans lead to comments such as:

*"Please allow purchase of 2 tickets on the ticket exchange to overseas members"*

*"Overseas loyalty point system would be nice but priority still to local match day fans."*

*"Overseas supporters should have their LPs transferred year to year (or at least 50%). I hate buying tickets for matches I cannot attend just to get LPs. Most of the time I'm buying European or domestic cup tickets to get to 5 LP so I cannot use the ticket exchange to fill my seat."*

*"While I don't think Loyalty Point system for International Supporters is unfair, I do believe registered Int'l Supporters who buy tickets and travel internationally to attend matches (both Domestic & UEFA) should be rewarded with either additional or bonus Loyalty Points, whether per-match attended or in aggregate for all attended matches as it relates to Loyalty Points req'd for Int'l Matches and Cup Quarter/Semis and Finals."*

*"Perhaps have an allocation of tickets for overseas travellers that can be purchased day-of or through a different channel rather than relying on loyalty points or the exchange. It is tragic to come to London and being unable to attend due to ticket availability (or lack thereof) or lack of points that are impossible to obtain when one can only travel to London once every two years."*

*"Lower loyalty points for access to big matches for those outside of England."*

*"Tiered overseas supporters club membership - instead of an arbitrary LP system and ticket request requirements, tiered membership statuses should be available to overseas fans based on the number of matches they attend per season (as per the number of tickets purchased/matches attended on average in prior seasons), also taking into account the country in which the fan is based (distance, ease, cost of travel)."*

*"The club should have a planning committee taking care of the affairs & headache of overseas supporters."*

However a couple of American correspondents observed that they felt that too much attention is paid to ticket access and not enough to other aspects:

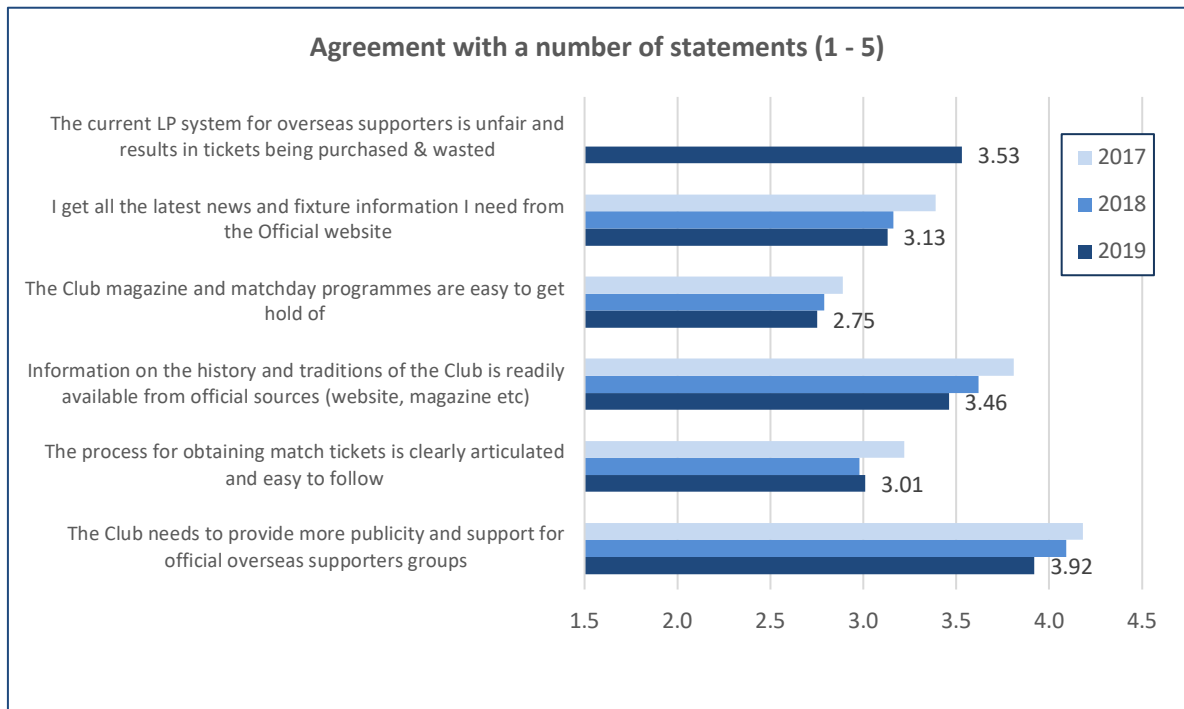
*"I will likely visit the bridge twice in my life. Therefore ticket availability is essentially irrelevant. I have not seen any other reason to become an official supporter through the club. I am a member of Chelsea in America but would happily give money for a membership that may allow for access to club material, discount on official merchandise, etc."*

*"Chelsea are wasting the potential money to be made for non-match going overseas supporters... If you all would sell some overseas fan membership with little to no focus on tickets (like 10% off official merchandise or something) I would buy two-three times as much directly from Chelsea megastore (which drastically needs a revamp). I'm shocked the club doesn't realize how much money is to be made in selling and promoting the club in America without focusing nearly exclusively on tickets."*

Finally a number of overseas fans based outside the US and Asia unsurprisingly felt that their regions were neglected when it comes to pre- or post-season tours. Some fans also commented that the Club could do more to raise their standing with UK based fans, feeling that they are sometimes looked down upon.



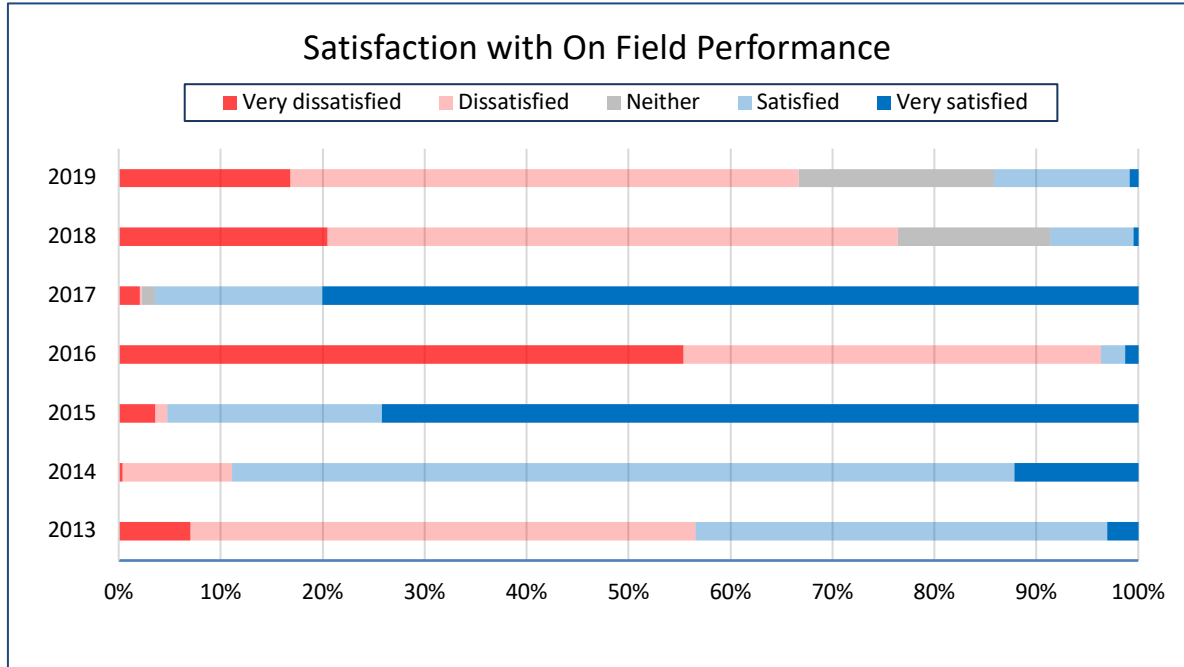
In response to a number of statements for Overseas supporters, the Club has overseen a continuing decline in performance. A new statement this year received a degree of agreement but it was in respect of the unfairness of the Loyalty Point system for overseas fans.



## 10 ON FIELD PERFORMANCE

### 10.1 Team Performance

Participants were asked how satisfied they were with Chelsea’s on-field performance in season 2018-19, bearing in mind that the survey closed at the end of April:



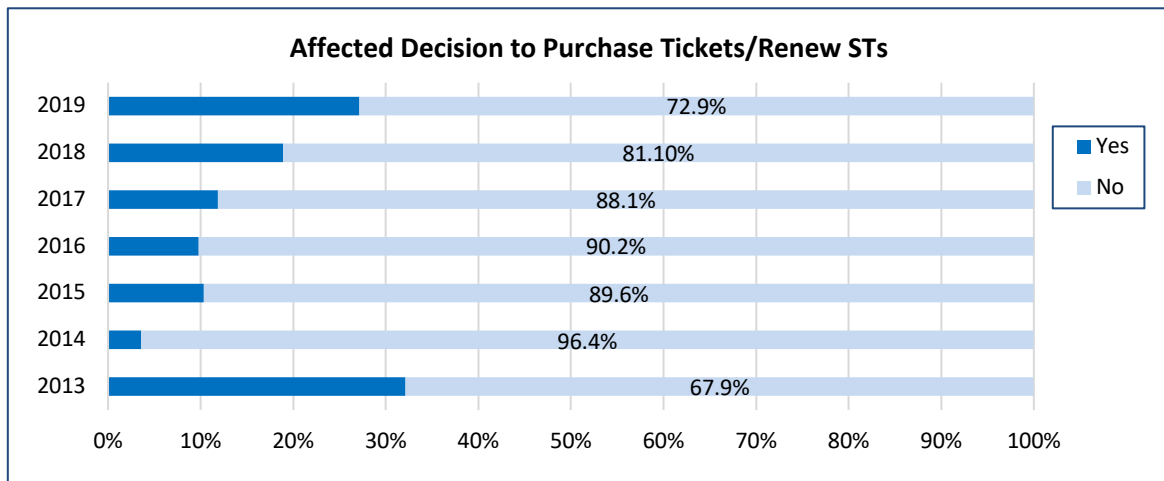
This was an intriguing result. Typically the result of this question mirrors league position/success of the team (with the exception of 2012-13, the ‘Benitez season’), but this year the team were competing hard for Champions League qualification and a European final, and very narrowly lost out in the League Cup Final.

The attempt to change the playing style to (literally) one of Mr Sarri’s choice has been very badly received by supporters, despite measurably succeeding by the end of May.

Since the survey was conducted, Mr Sarri has chosen to return to Italy and Mr Lampard has been appointed.

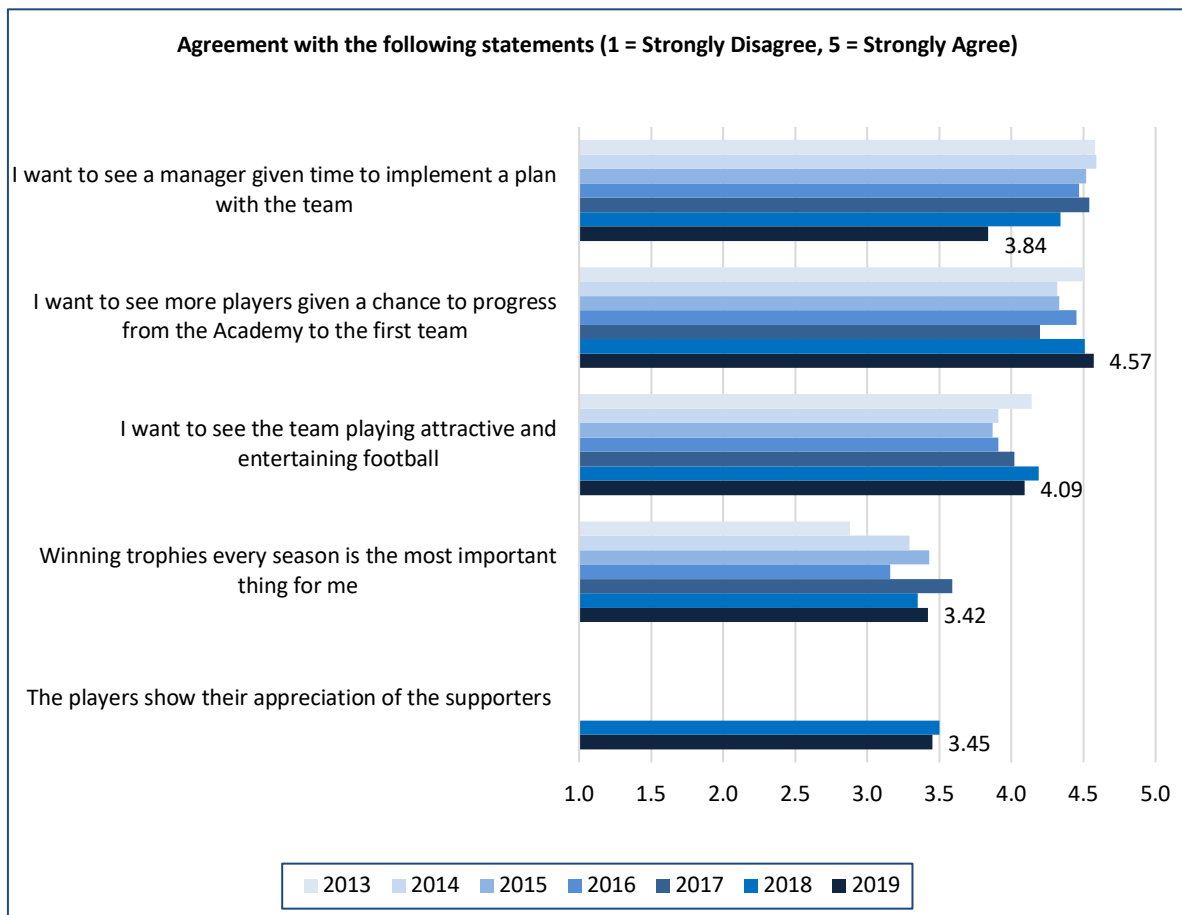
### 10.2 Impact on Ticket Buying

Respondents were asked whether their feelings about the past season had affected their decision to purchase tickets to games or renew their season ticket.



This again is a shocking indictment of the loss of connection between the Club and the supporters. Following on from the disillusion evidenced in the latter stages of Antonio Conte’s reign, the initial enthusiasm for a more adventurous playing style this season was soon lost once it became apparent that the team’s playing style was being worked out yet nothing appeared to be done to adapt the way the team was set out. Rightly or wrongly, some fans concluded that either the manager or the players, possibly both, did not care enough to turn things round.

Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with a series of statements concerning the on-field performance and strategy.



Whilst there is still strong support for giving managers longer to build a team, this dropped noticeably in this year’s survey. Could it be that while people agree with the sentiment, some did not want the *current* manager at the time to have any more time?

Demand for more opportunities for Academy players, always a popular idea, strengthened again; it surely cannot be coincidence that with the Club facing a transfer ban, many feel it is now or never in terms of giving more opportunities to break through into the first team squad.

## 11 FOODBANK COLLECTION

The Supporters Trust regularly organises a collection for the **Hammersmith & Fulham Food Bank**, usually up to an hour before kick-off for weekend matches. Donations of food and money can be made at the collection point, which is currently the *cfcuk* stall located opposite the main entrance to Fulham Broadway station.

We wanted to gauge how aware supporters are of this scheme:

- 64% were aware of the Foodbank Collection organised by the Trust, a pleasing response and one the Trust will look to build in in the coming season
- 13% had made a donation to the collection last season, whilst a third of respondents intend to in the future.
- 18% indicated that they would like to make a donation but don't know how to, something we will work on as we try to build awareness.

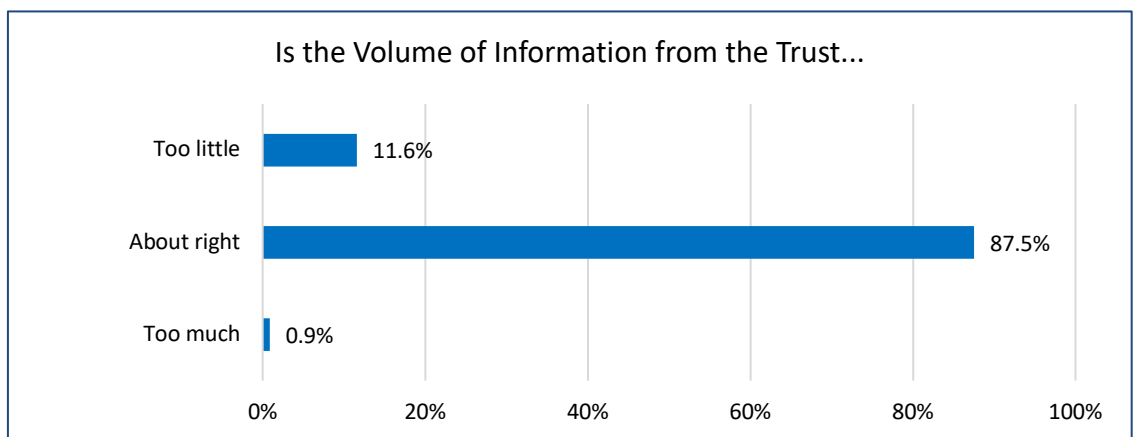
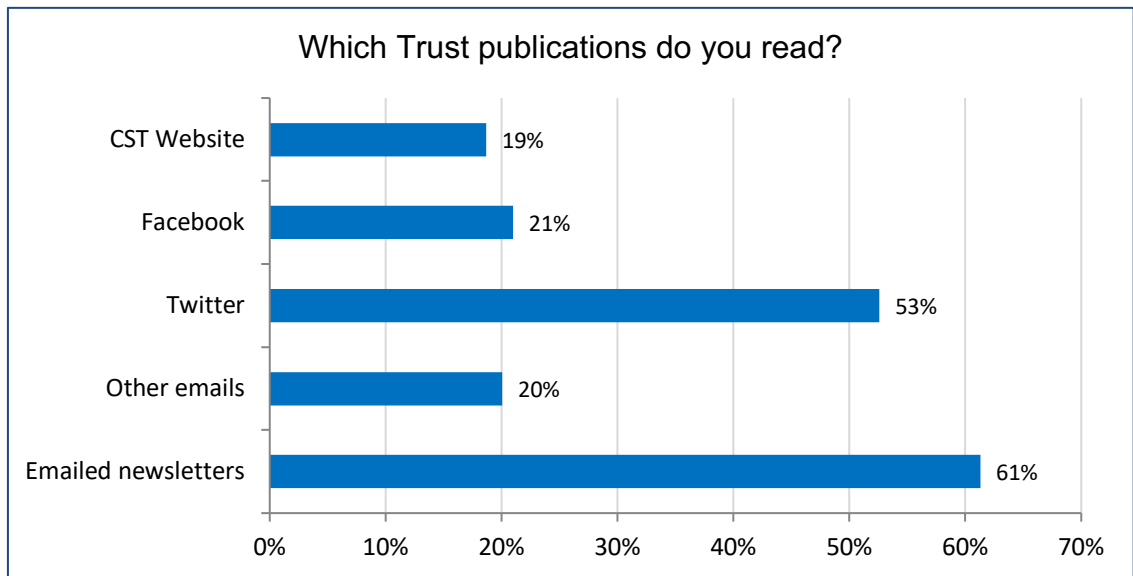
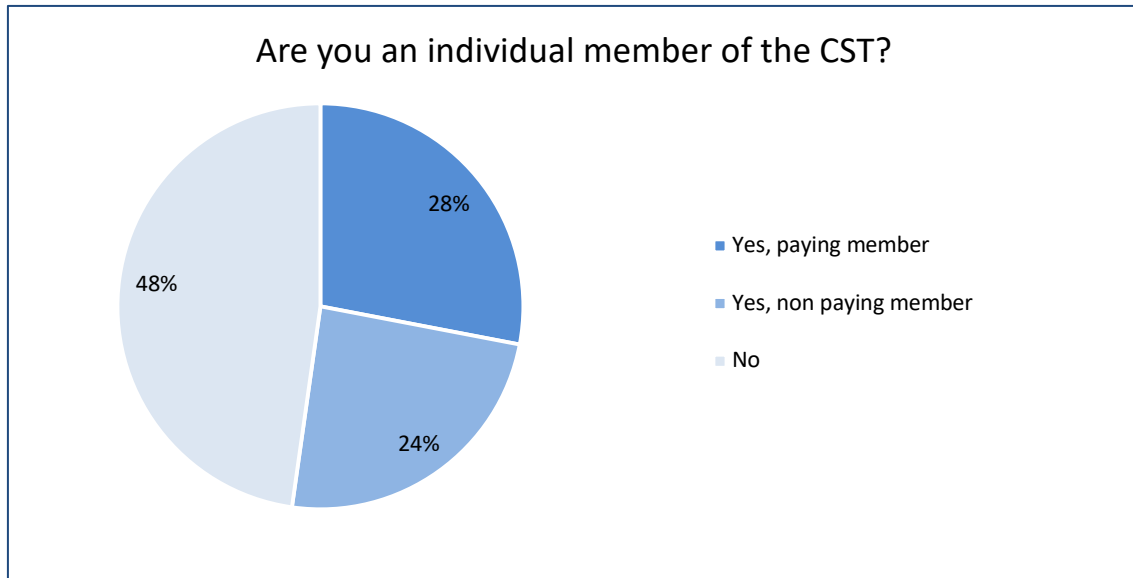
Despite the collections only running for a handful of weekend games from Christmas onwards, the Trust were able to provide approximately 20 families of four with 10 meals each and additionally collected almost £600 in cash donations to help the Food Bank with their work.

Collections will continue in the new season, hopefully with greater consistency than before now that we have been given storage space by the Club, for which the Trust is very grateful. Of course, as with many other areas of the survey, the rearrangement of games for TV can cause logistical problems!

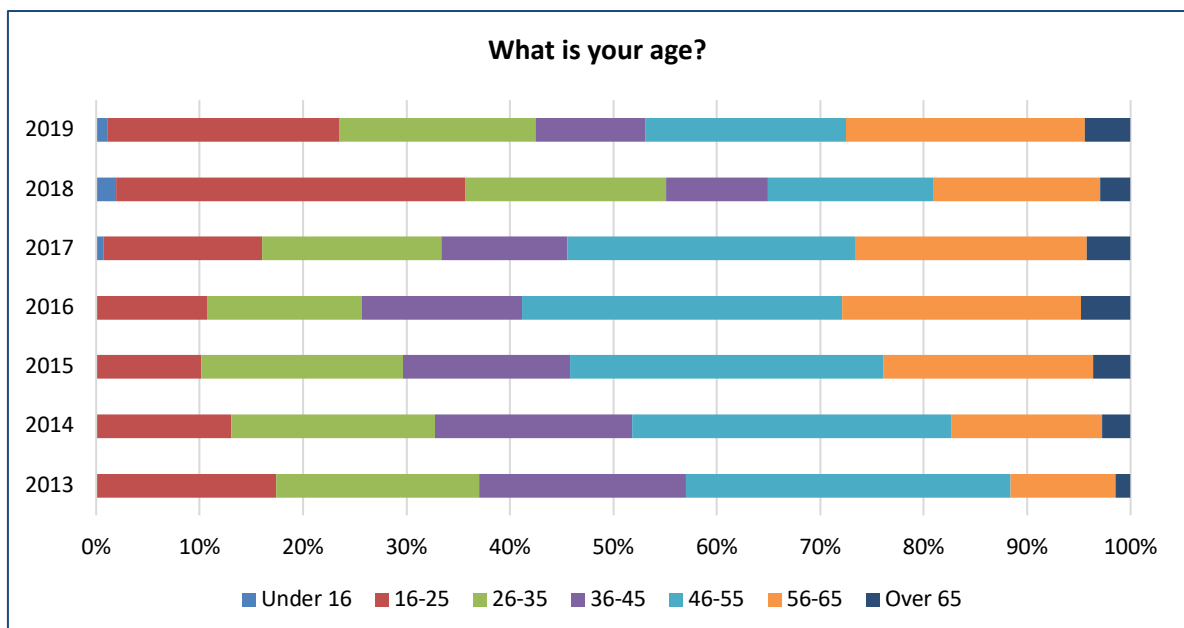
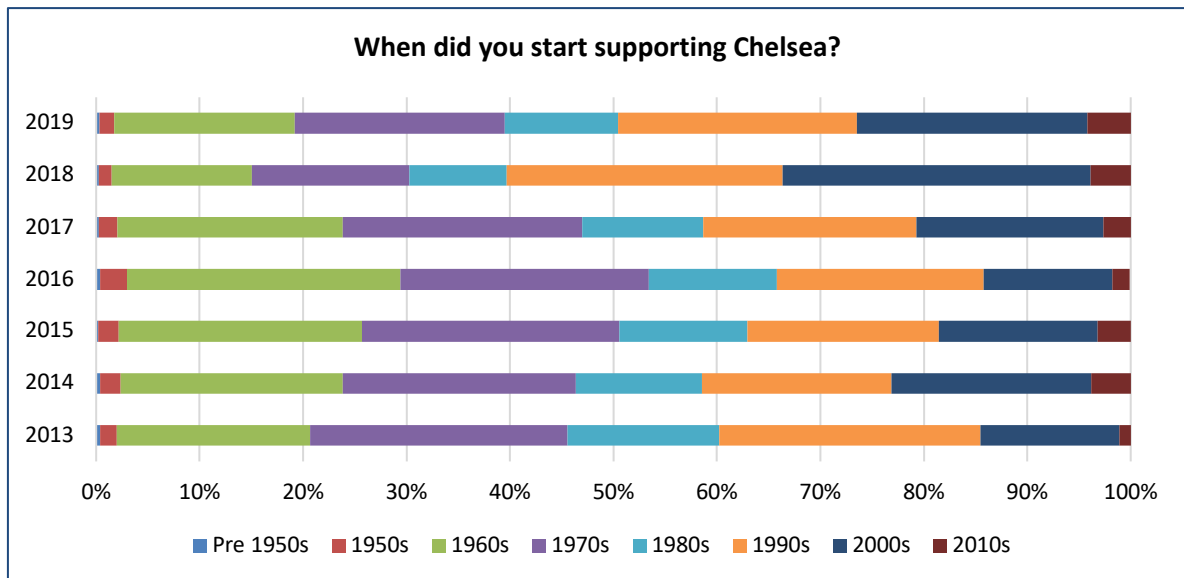
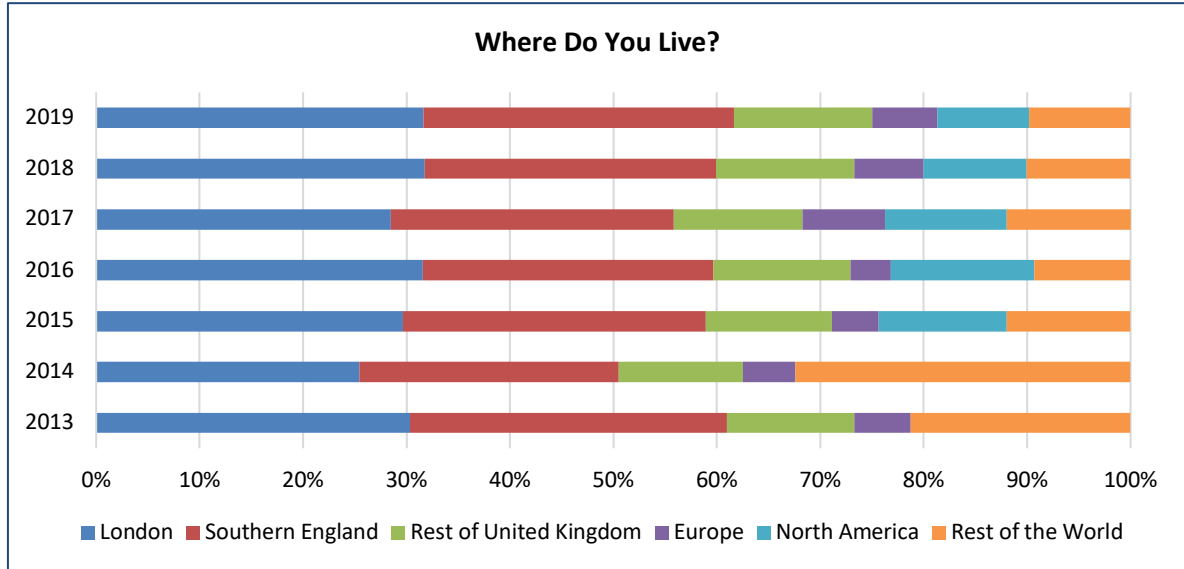
The Trust is also working with the Club to organise a Sleep Out at Stamford Bridge one night later in the year, details to be announced once confirmed. The intention is to get as many people as possible to spend a night sleeping rough in an attempt to raise awareness of the problems facing the homeless as winter approaches, and of course raise money for one or more appropriate charities.

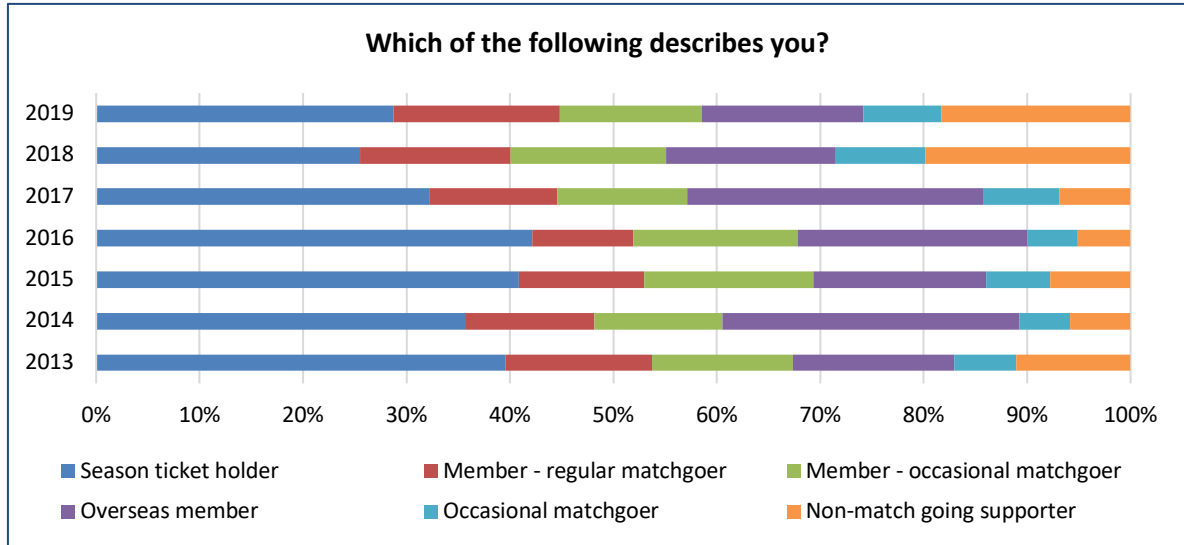
## 12 CHELSEA SUPPORTERS TRUST

The profile of people answering the survey this year was as follows:



### 13 DEMOGRAPHICS





To learn more about the Chelsea Supporters Trust visit the official website at <https://chelseasupporterstrust.com> or scan the QR code below.

