



## CHELSEA SUPPORTERS' TRUST 2018 ANNUAL SURVEY

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### ABOUT THE SURVEY

The sixth annual Chelsea Supporters' Trust Membership survey was conducted from mid-April until the end of May. In addition to the Trust membership the survey was available to all Chelsea fans, and this year almost 3,000 responses were received. This is significantly more than the previous year, with a large increase in younger respondents. The survey closed shortly before the announcement by the Club that the stadium development plans were on hold for the foreseeable future and of course the replacement of Antonio Conte as team manager/coach.

### SUMMARY

[On-pitch success](#) was again the issue voted the most important, followed by [development of young players](#) and this year [administration](#) of the Club. The [development of young players](#) attracted the most votes overall. [Chapter 1]

Considerable disquiet was expressed this year with the running of the football side of the Club, notably [player recruitment](#) and the Club's operation in the [transfer market](#), and the perception that there is a [lack of football expertise](#) at Board level. [Ch. 1, 10] There was also a clear message that the style of football had become too negative. [Ch. 1, 2, 10]

Awareness of the [Supporter Liaison Officer](#) role at Chelsea remains very low, and three quarters of respondents felt that the role should be performed by an [independent supporter](#) rather than a full-time employee of the Club. [Ch. 2]

A recurrent theme across topics, initially in response to ticket pricing, but also supporter subsidies and atmosphere, was the need to improve the [opportunities for younger supporters](#) to attend matches. Many commented that there need to be affordable tickets made available to young adults to grow the base support for the future and improve the atmosphere. [Ch. 3, 8]

Although now overtaken by events, supporters were again asked to assess the three major stadia considered likely to host the team on a temporary basis; results were unchanged from last year with [Twickenham](#) remaining the preferred option for almost half the respondents, with Wembley second and Stratford a distant third. [Ch. 6]

Interestingly given the timing of the Club's announcement, many fans expressed [opposition to the redevelopment](#) as proposed, feeling that there was little benefit to ordinary fans. [Ch. 6]

Although framed in respect of a redeveloped Stamford Bridge, the questions on Safe Standing indicated a burgeoning desire amongst fans for Chelsea to take a leading role in the [introduction of rail seating](#); the Trust believes the Club should seize the opportunity to look into the introduction of Safe Standing as soon as possible, now that the stadium rebuild is off the agenda. [Ch. 7, 8]

In respect of kick off times, [Saturday afternoon remains the most popular time](#), with other Saturday times scoring reasonably although the new 19:45 time is least popular; midweek kick offs for PL games are unpopular, [Monday and Thursday night games being particularly unwelcome](#). As was the case last year, more than half the respondents felt that [6 – 8 weeks' notice](#) was the minimum for the moving of games for TV coverage. [Ch. 5]

The announcement of a winter break in 2019-20 came after the survey closed; our fans were in favour of a break by just over two to one, preferring a single weekend break rather than the two-week staggered break which has subsequently been proposed. [Ch. 5]

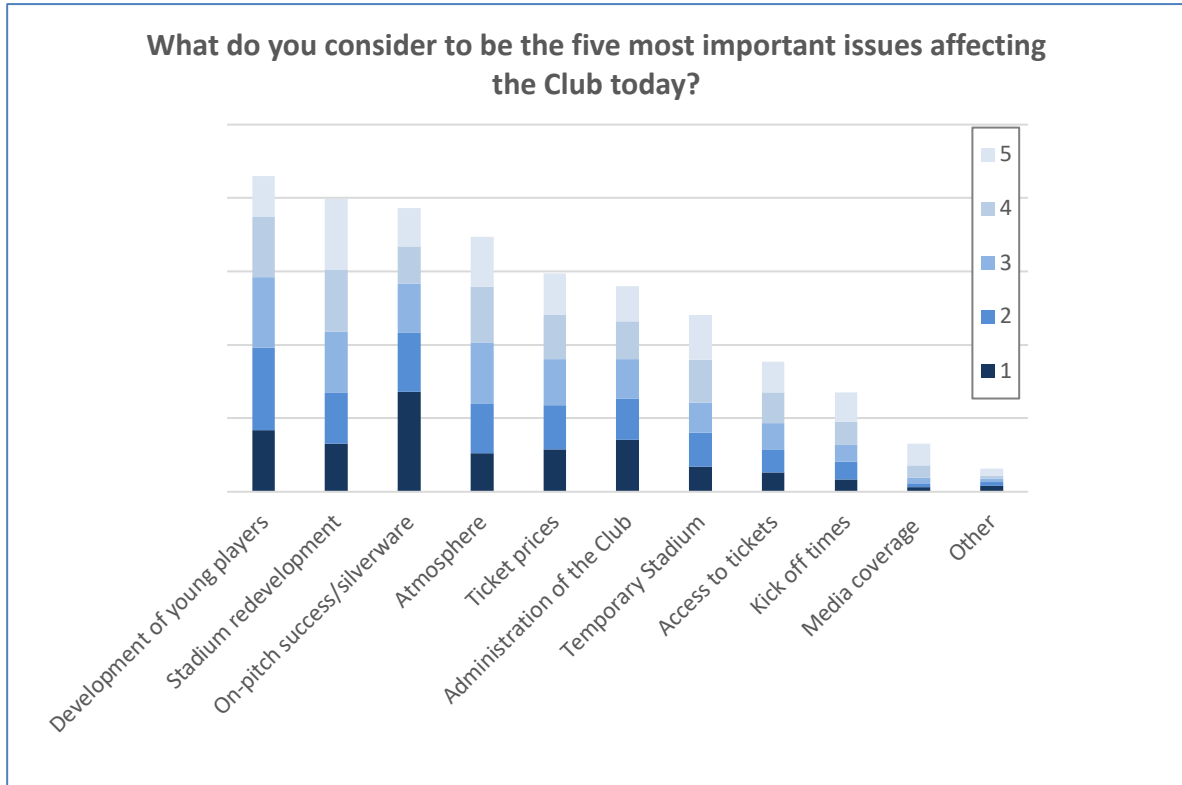
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## 1 KEY ISSUES

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.

As was the case last year, **On-pitch success** was voted the most important issue, followed by the **Development of young players** which received the most votes overall. **Administration of the Club** has become a significant concern for many, followed by **Stadium redevelopment**. Note that the survey preceded the announcement of the stadium plans being put on hold by the Club.

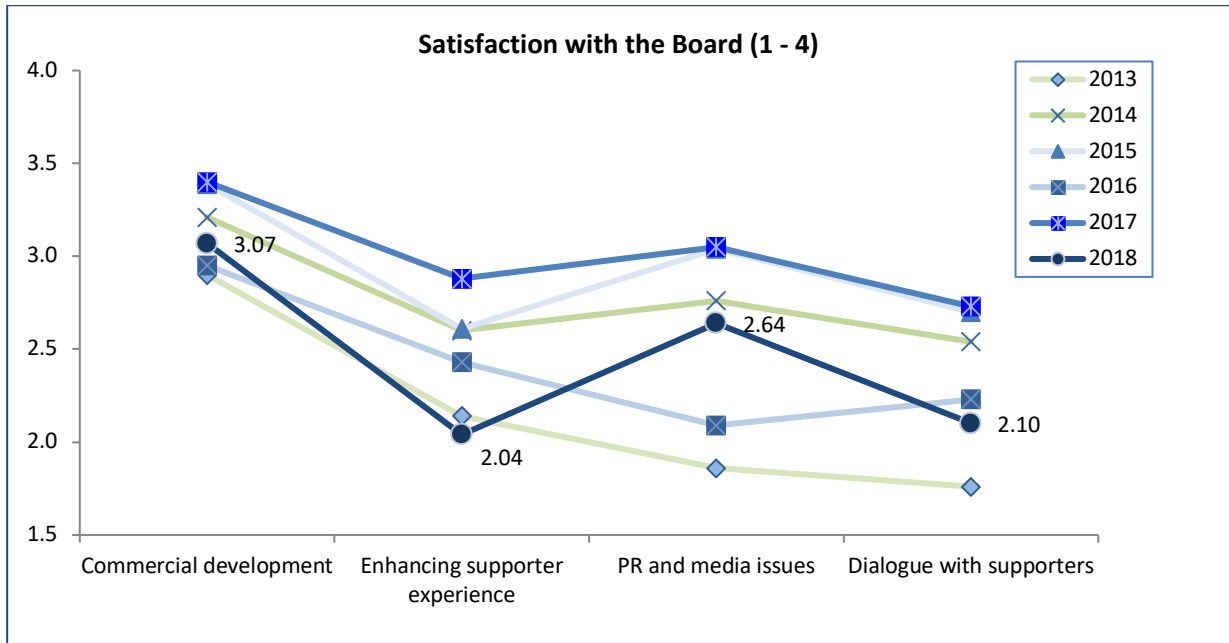


Amongst the other topics raised in responses to this question, there is a clear theme of dissatisfaction with aspects of Club administration. There is concern regarding the execution of the transfer window and the quality of player recruitment in general; a lack of support from the Board for the manager and the lack of a technical director or 'football man' at Board level; a desire for a more attractive playing style and disappointment with current or recent choices of manager; and a desire for greater stability of management.

There were a significant number of requests for the introduction of Safe Standing.

## 2 CLUB ADMINISTRATION

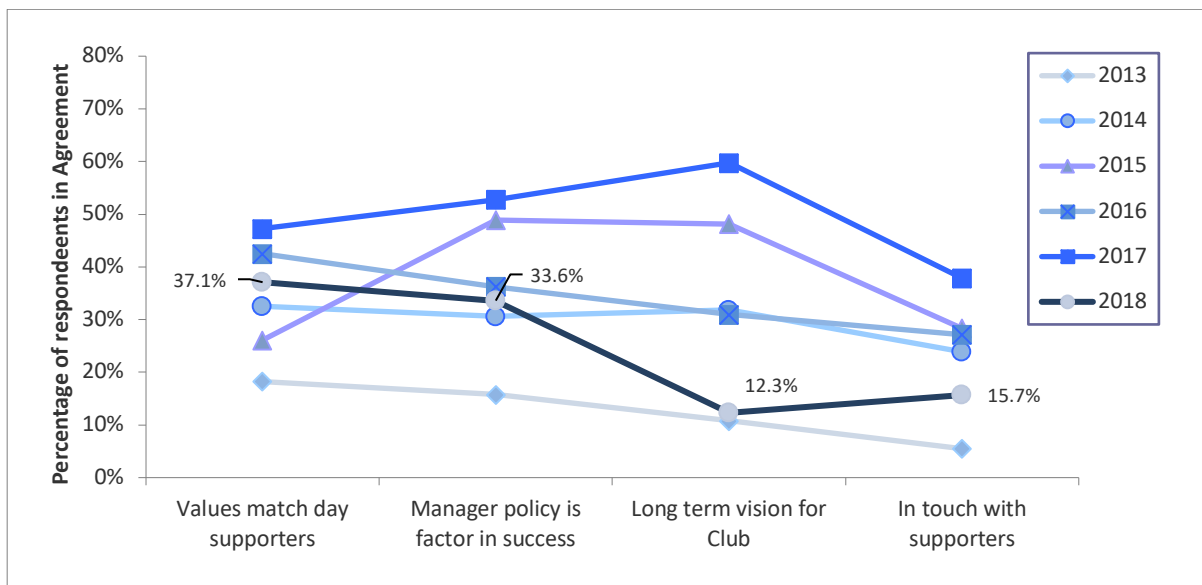
Members have been asked to rate their satisfaction with the Club Board over the last 5 years in relation to a number of issues; the higher the rating value (maximum 4), the greater the level of satisfaction.



Whilst satisfaction with commercial activities has held a strong performance, and PR handling although down is just above the average position, the supporter experience has plunged to its lowest ever level. The numerous comments raised about playing style may be a factor. There has also been a drop in satisfaction with the level of dialogue with fans; more than a few have commented on the lack of a communication of a clear strategy at the Club.

### 2.1 Club Policies

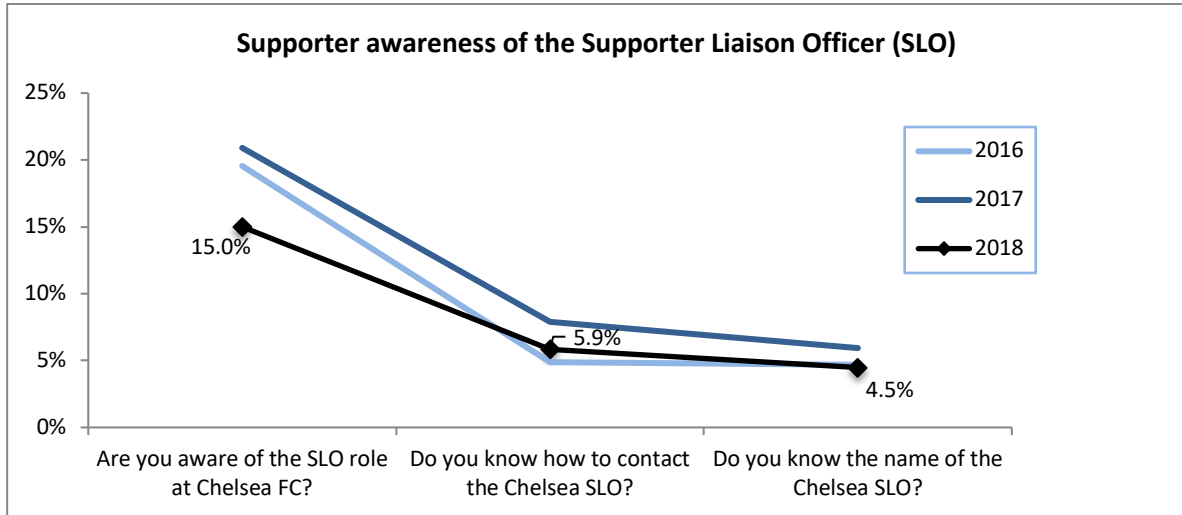
Members were asked to select their agreement with a number of statements:



As is often the case, the agreement levels tracked the fortunes of the team after a disappointing PL season. The fact that the survey shows fewer than 1 in 8 agreeing that there is a long-term vision for the Club, mirroring the low tide mark of 2013, must be viewed as either a lack of a vision or a failure of communications by the Club. Similarly, fewer than 1 in 6 feel that the Club is in touch with Supporters.

## 2.2 Supporter Liaison Officer

Respondents were asked to indicate their awareness of the role and identity of the Club's appointed Supporter Liaison Officer (SLO).

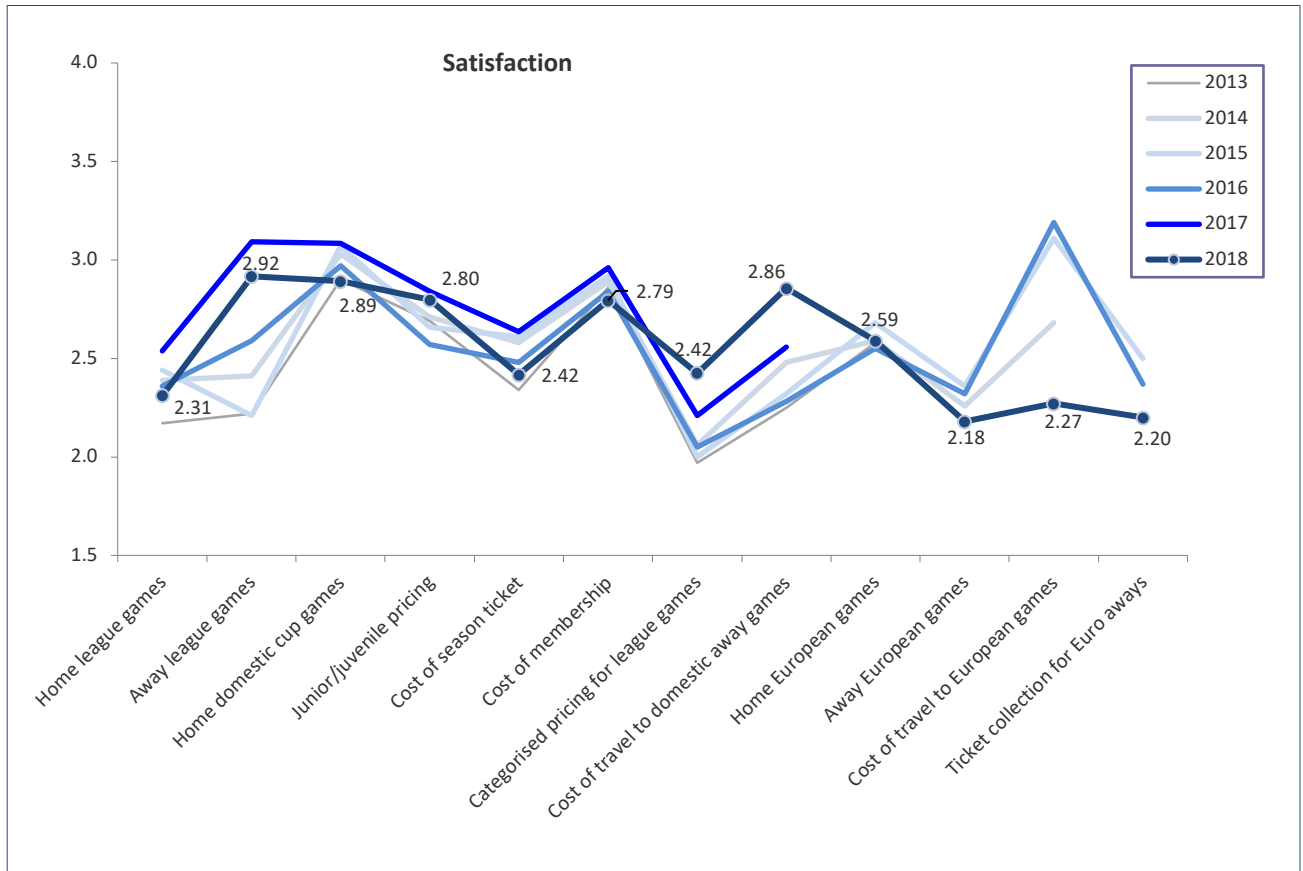


Awareness of the SLO role has failed to improve. The Trust regrets that their offers of assistance to the Club in raising the profile of the SLO were not taken up last season. Furthermore 76% of respondents felt that the SLO role should be performed by an independent supporter, not a full-time Club employee, as at many if not most other clubs.

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

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



Satisfaction has fallen with Premier League and domestic cup pricing, and the cost of season tickets and membership. However respondents are satisfied with the price of away PL, home domestic and European cup ties, juvenile pricing, membership and away match travel.

The least satisfactory scores were for European away ties, both ticket pricing and collection arrangements, and indeed the cost of away travel packages.

Respondents were asked to add their own comments and a number of themes emerged:

**Ticket Pricing.** Whilst a few people were happy with the price of watching football at Chelsea, particularly if they benefited from senior discounts or frozen season ticket prices,

With the injection of TV money it is great that ticket prices for away fans has been addressed, but what about a review of ticket prices for home fans?

they were overwhelmed by respondents who felt that prices were just too expensive, prohibiting them from attending as often as they would like.

...personally I can afford, and understand that demand is high so club can charge more but this is a major cause in decline in atmosphere

... I am a senior citizen. If I had to pay the normal adult price I would not be so satisfied

I strongly believe that the club should lower the ticket prices so that youngsters can get in and create a better atmosphere

Attracting a considerable volume of comment again this year was the topic of **Youth pricing**. There is a genuine groundswell of opinion that the lack of low cost options or ticket availability for younger supporters means that the Club will lose out on generations of regular supporters in the future, to the detriment of the Club's support and atmosphere within the ground.

There was also concern that with the cost of living and working in and around London, there is a brutal transition from junior pricing to adult, and that there should be some transitional pricing to enable enthusiastic young supporters to become regular adult supporters.

I am 28 years old and I cannot afford to go to games regularly

Should be a young adult price category i.e. 21-25 years old. Vital for our fanbase down the line

European football was another popular topic for comment, in particular the ticket collection process and the treatment of away fans.

**Ticket collection** is extremely unpopular amongst match going fans, who resent the inconvenience and time pressures caused as well as the feeling of being punished for the behaviour of others in the past.

The ticket collection arrangements [are] one of the things that put me off from going

My gripe is collecting away European tickets many miles from the ground e.g. Madrid and Rome this season

Although there were a few complaints about the ticket prices for home Champions League games, particularly the knockout match, there were a considerable number of complaints about the charges being paid for tickets at **away matches** in the competition.

Barcelona charging €85 for away tickets, to sit in a remote part of their stadium, was a disgrace in my opinion

£75 for Barca away - ridiculous, particularly considering how hazardous the wonky bridge was!

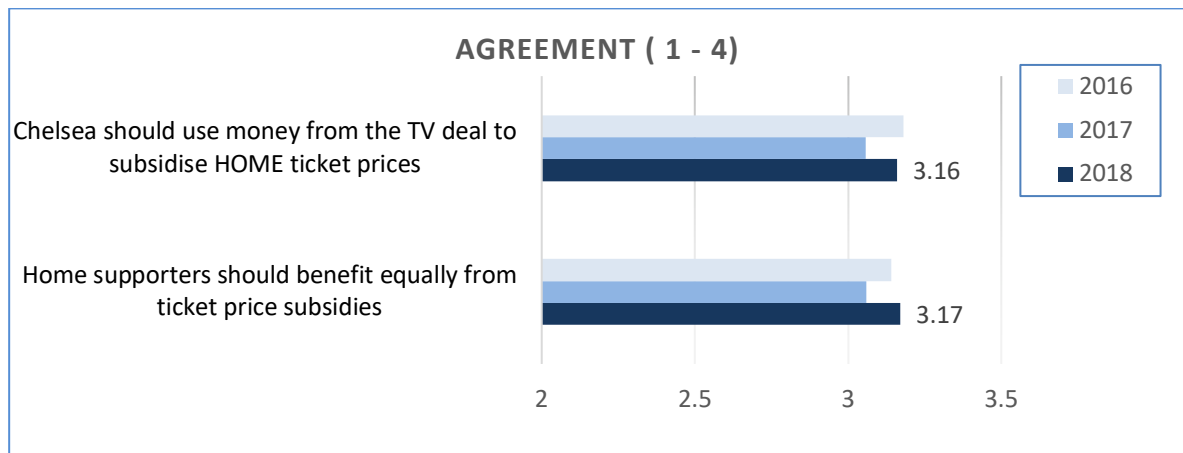
The Barcelona game came in for particular criticism on pricing, combined in many cases with comments on the appalling view, the treatment of supporters and the dangerous bridge.

Fed up with getting ripped off by clubs like Barcelona for the privilege of getting beaten up by police/stewards

Other topics frequently raised by respondents include the dismay at **FA Cup Final prices**, and disappointment with the pricing of the Norwich **FA Cup replay** at Stamford Bridge.

### 3.1 Supporter Subsidies

We asked whether more should be done to help supporters attending home games, given that tickets for away games are now capped in price:



Surveys continue to show that supporters feel that more should be done to help home supporters as well as fans that travel to away games. We asked for comments on how the TV money should be spent.

Not surprisingly, given the above results, a swathe of comments supported the cutting of ticket prices at Stamford Bridge, whether for Premier League games, cup ties, European ties or across the board. Further subsidising of tickets for young supporters including young adults would be a popular move.

A number of initiatives to encourage young supporters were suggested including 'kids for a quid' matches, pre-match giveaways aimed at younger supporters and so forth.

One theme that received a lot of mentions this year was the quality and particularly the price of food and drink within the ground, and it was felt that this is something the club should address. It was also noted that more staff were needed behind the counter, especially at half time.

As was the case last year, there were calls for transport cost subsidies in a way that benefited fans not just based in London, and for European away games. A few people observed that free or reduced price transport around Stamford Bridge on matchdays upon production of a match ticket would be much appreciated, citing examples such as Brighton where such a scheme was operated.

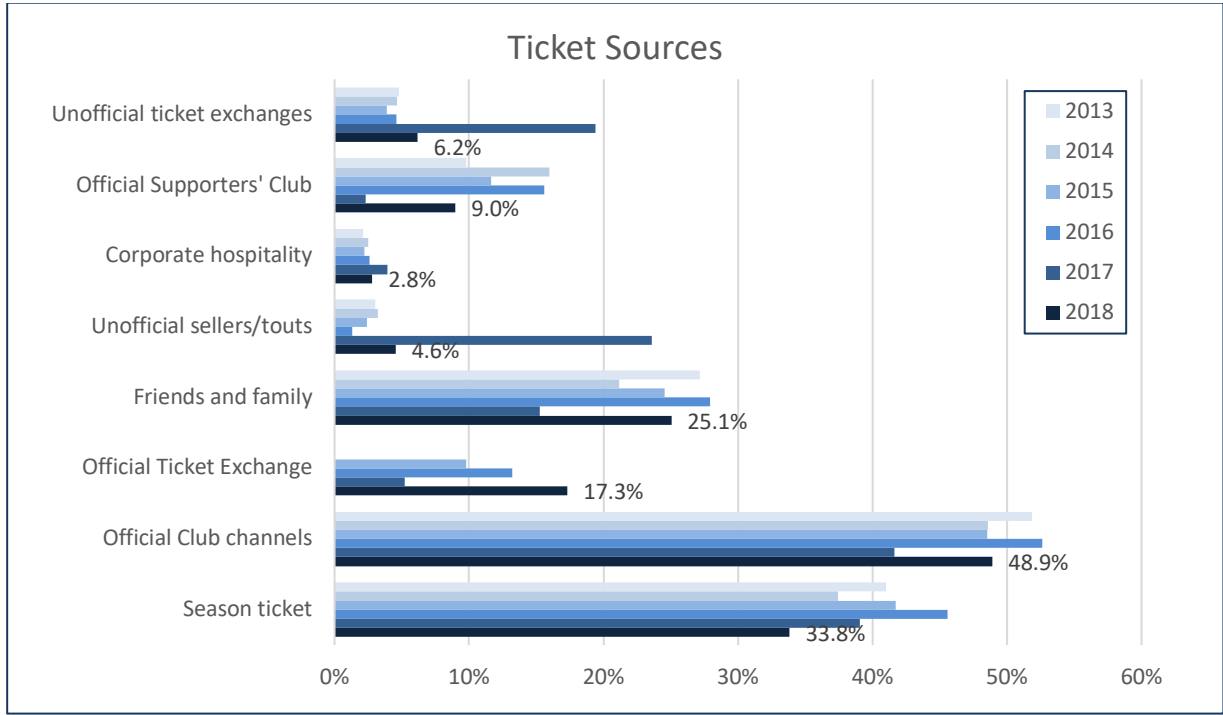
It should also be noted that a number of respondents wanted the Club to keep all the money for themselves to invest in player purchases and development. Implementing safe standing was also mentioned by more than a few.

Other ideas put forward included: in ground displays; fan events; discounts for local residents; free ticket giveaways; and the perennial free beer!

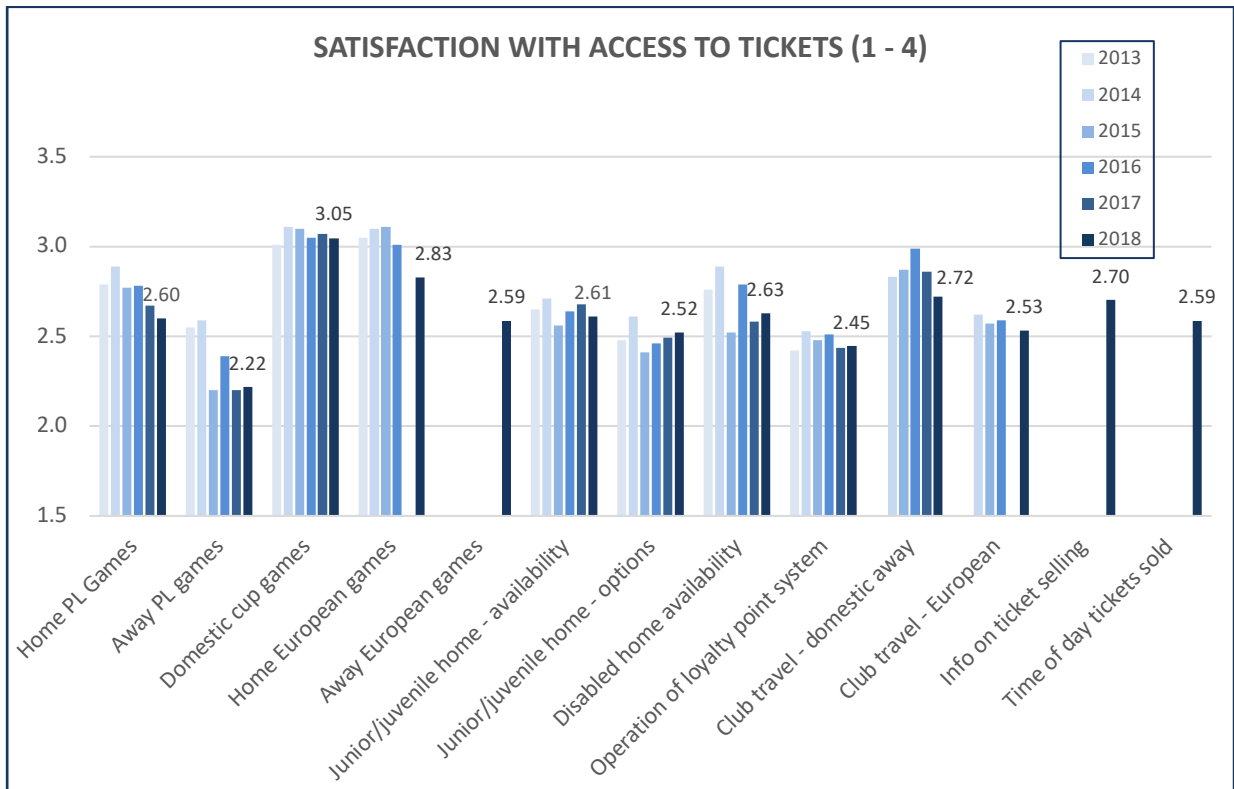


### 4 ACCESS TO TICKETS

Respondents were asked how they obtained their tickets, selecting all options that applied. It may well be reflective of the wider audience for this year’s survey that there has been a fall in the number of season ticket holders responding. However more use has been made of official channels including the Official Ticket Exchange in the last year, with a 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).



Satisfaction with the availability of Premier League tickets at Stamford Bridge continues on a downward trajectory, whilst the price cap on away tickets sees it retain the lowest score at 2.22. Home cup games give the highest satisfaction levels. The level of satisfaction with away travel appears to be declining.

We asked this year about the availability of information regarding when tickets will go on sale, and the time of day tickets go on sale; both scored just above the mid-point.

The comments this year were largely a repeat of the issues from previous surveys, although there was one new topic of conversation, presumably prompted by its inclusion in the survey options: the 07:00 on-sale time was almost unanimously unpopular amongst those that commented. The opinions expressed most frequently were that people were preparing for, or travelling to, work at this time, or getting the children ready for school, or even that it is just too early. Suggestions for a better time tended towards either 09:00 or early evening, 7 – 8pm.

As usual the topic of **Loyalty Points** featured widely, and the frustration with the current remains prominent.

This seems to be particularly felt in respect of away games, and many commented that they felt that all or most tickets should go to season ticket holders ahead of members. A lot of people are frustrated by games **not** being sold on LPs, and specific mention of Brighton came up repeatedly i.e. a ground with a small allocation being a free for all.

The reset of loyalty points each season was also commented on unfavourably by a number of people, as in previous years, with the sentiment being expressed that the rolling of points over a number of years would be fairer to regular fans.

“Early season syndrome”, the inability to get tickets during the season if you miss out on the first couple of away games, was again commented upon.

As was the case last year, some respondents commented that people were buying tickets for LPs and immediately reselling with no intention of going to the game, i.e. farming LPs. A few also suggested that a lot of Away season ticket holders sell on most of their tickets.

**Overseas supporters** continue to complain that they have too many obstacles to overcome when trying to obtain tickets. A few commented that they need to be able to buy two tickets on one membership when they get the chance, given that the trip abroad is usually with a spouse or partner.

There was frustration in some cases that they cannot accumulate loyalty points without buying tickets for games that they have no intention of going to, in order to go to games later in the season. This clearly benefits no one, with other fans missing out on the unused tickets.

The practical issues of arranging leave, transport etc involved in major trips has led to requests for much earlier sales windows for overseas supporters.

A selection of comments regarding ticketing is presented below.

"How we are treated at European aways is disgusting"

*"With the team playing in the Europa League next season the board must reduce the price that was set in place for champions league games."*

"The Thomas Cook sponsored trips this season were a disaster. As someone who booked early to travel from the USA to Baku via the TC charter, only to learn late on that there was no more space...I spent an additional \$1500 U.S. to travel independently at the last minute."

*"7am waiting room is a joke. Most people on way to work just make it more like 10am"*

"Please don't put tickets onsale at a later time as most people will leave for work by 7.30 a.m."

*"When will the club begin to recognise long term loyalty via an on-going scheme that covers more than just the current season that treats and rewards the new fans in the same way as long term loyal supporters? A rolling scheme averaging across 3-5 years would make the allocation of high demand tickets much fairer and finally see the club properly recognise its core supporter base."*

"Information regarding tickets is often up very late in the day, this includes waiting until 6pm to find out the points required for the next morning..."

*"Earlier this year we were not alerted about tickets which went on sale the morning after a Wednesday night game against Maribor which caused us to miss the game. This is unacceptable"*

"Instead of having everyone get up and log into the website at 6.50am to get tickets and then wait in the virtual waiting room for ages, why not have a ballot system? Every ST holder/ member who wants to go the game applies"

*"Hardly any benefit to being a season ticket holder when members get equal split of away tickets. Social media full of people who can 'No longer make the game' once they have bagged their loyalty points for the lesser games."*

"Cup final went down to 70 points...then to all members so I had 60 and couldn't get a ticket, my mate ... with 0 points gets one. LP system for the biggest game of season... utter insult"

*"The online ticketing system is terrible."*

"A proportion to all games should be sold on points. It only has to be a small percentage. It is so much fairer. It does not need to be closed shop where all tickets are sold on points. Also, games sold on points should not result in additional points being gained."

*"The time of [Club organised] train departures & arrivals [needs] to be stated when buying train ticket"*

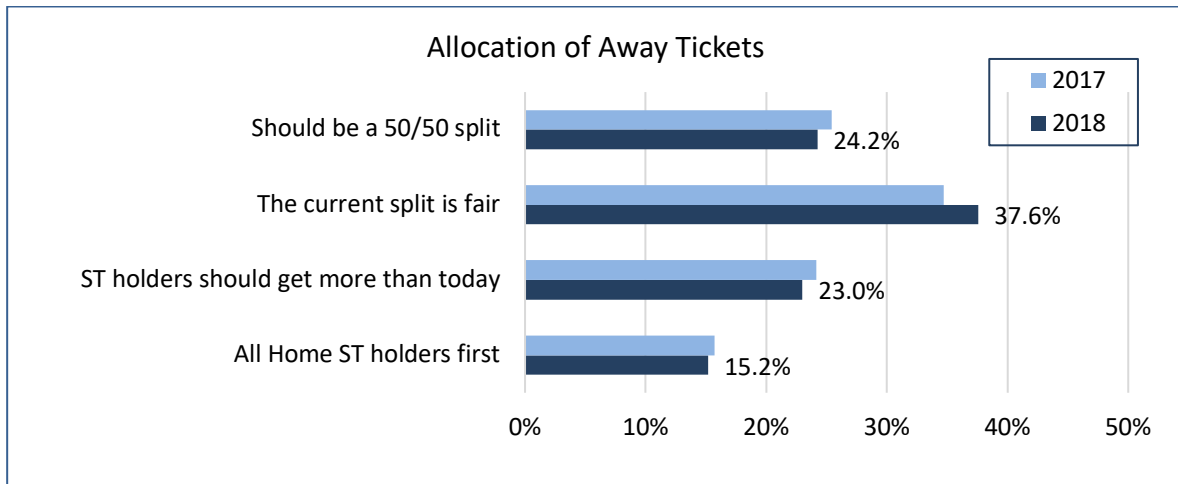
"The LP system does not work as it is easy for touts to build up loyalty and purchase tickets at the highest priority. Every single game outside Fulham Broadway touts are selling tickets to tourists who are willing to pay 3 times the face value. It's absolutely disgraceful that proper Chelsea supporters are not able to attend matches because these tickets are being monopolised by ticket touts. I cannot stress how much this disgusts me."

*"The season ticket system needs an overhaul. It should be a waiting list rather than loyalty points as this is a much fairer system that is used by other top clubs."*

"1) Junior tickets should be available in all areas of the ground. 2) There should be an element of loyalty points for every domestic away game. Not for all tickets, but someone who's been everywhere shouldn't have the same chance of attending Brighton (A) as someone who's not done a single away. 3) Stop splitting up members and STHs when buying away tickets. Just add STH's home league game LPs as they go and do them together. ATM it's disproportionately easy for members to get away tickets. 4) Change the points system - makes no sense that an easy game like a London away FA Cup tie is 5 points, while Man City away at midday on a Saturday is 1 point. 1 point per domestic and 2 points per European would be my suggestion"

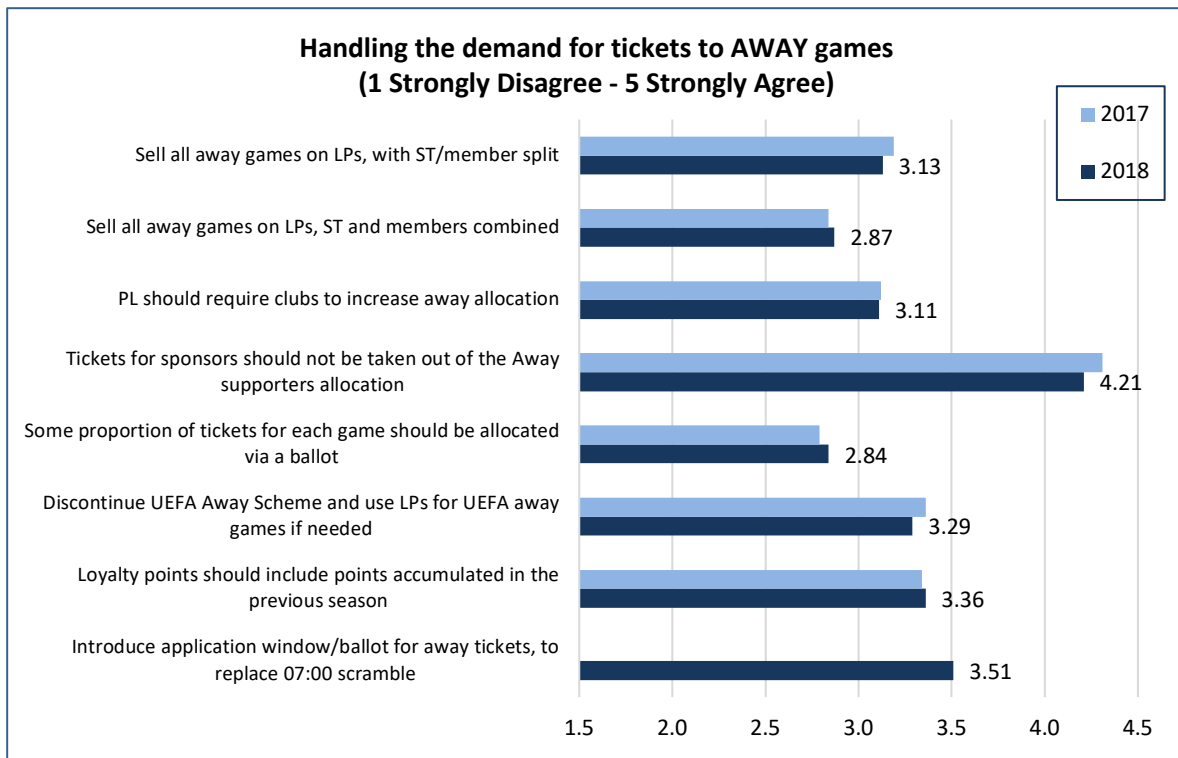
**4.1 Away Match Tickets**

A more detailed review of opinions on the distribution of away tickets was conducted. Firstly the current 60/40 split between season ticket holders and members was looked at. The following four options were presented:



There has been a small change in opinions this year, in that more people favour retaining the existing arrangement which was already the single option attracting the most votes.

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

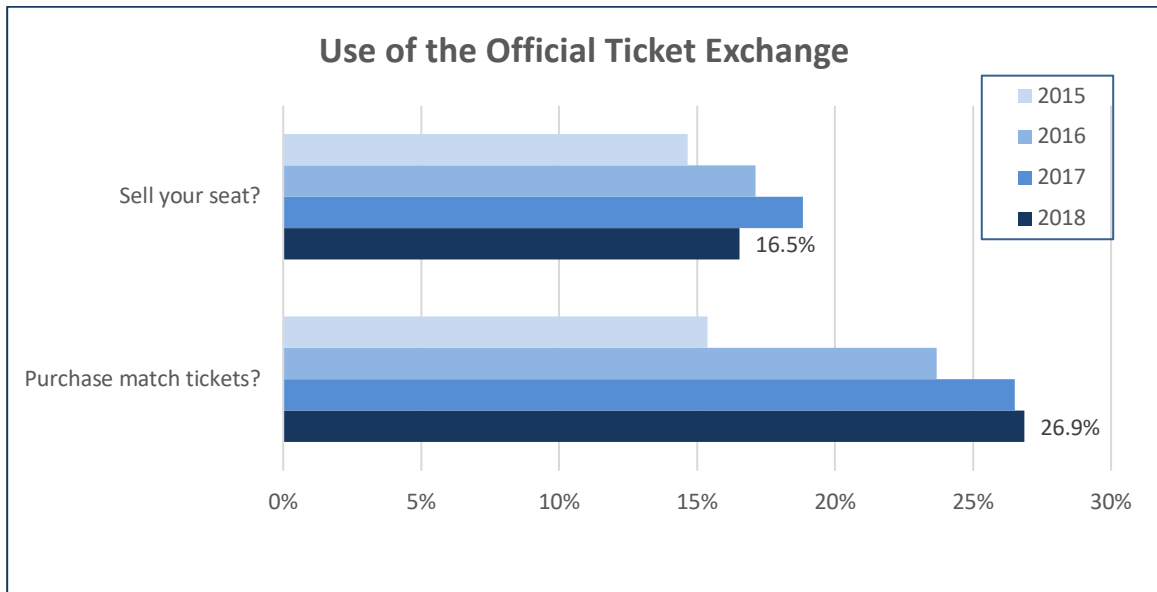


The results are very similar to last year with a clear message that tickets for sponsors should not be provided from the away supporters allocation. There was some support evident for the replacement of the 07:00 sales window with a window for supporters to apply in, at which point Loyalty Points could be applied if needed and a ballot used to resolve oversubscription.

72.5% of respondents are in favour of a more detailed survey on ticket sales.

### 4.2 Official Ticket Exchange

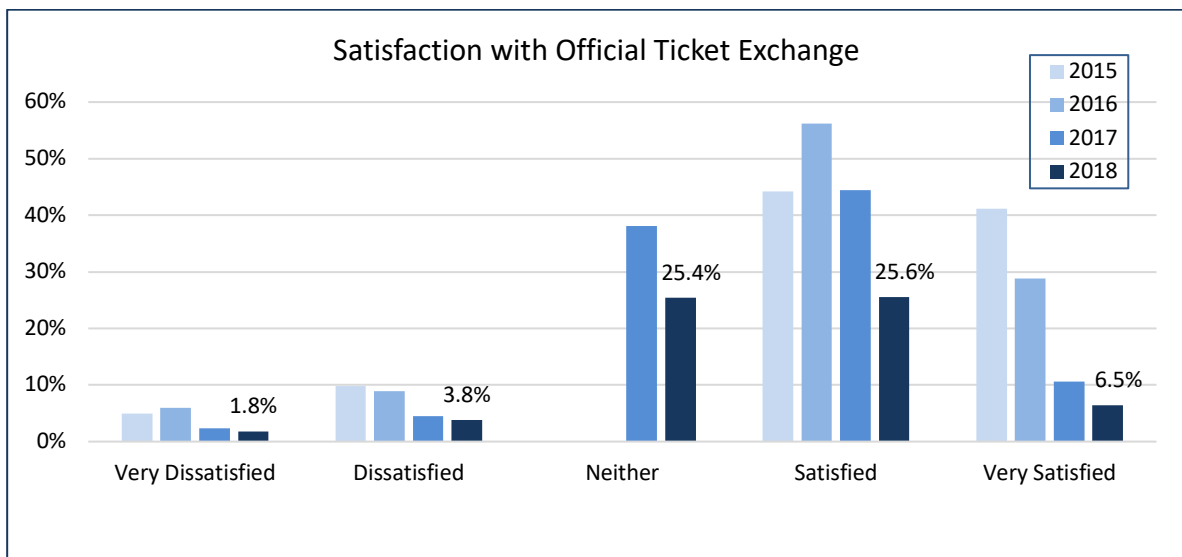
The ticket exchange has now been operating for four seasons. We asked whether people have used the service and what they thought of it.



Use of the Exchange for the purchase of tickets continues to grow. The lower percentage of respondents is easily explained, as the growth of the survey since last year has reduced the percentage of season ticket holders answering from 32% to 26%; effectively the use of the Ticket Exchange to sell tickets has also increased.

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 was the case last year.

We asked respondents to indicate their overall satisfaction with the Ticket Exchange, and the results are presented below. It seems clear that the introduction of the Exchange has been a success, with very few expressing dissatisfaction with the system.



We asked people to say how they would improve the system. The topic most frequently commented upon was the Loyalty Points associated with tickets bought through the Exchange, with almost everyone who commented on it favouring the buyers receiving LPs. Of these, a large majority thought the seller should lose them all, with some favouring a split between buyer and seller. A few commented that the system was fair as it is.

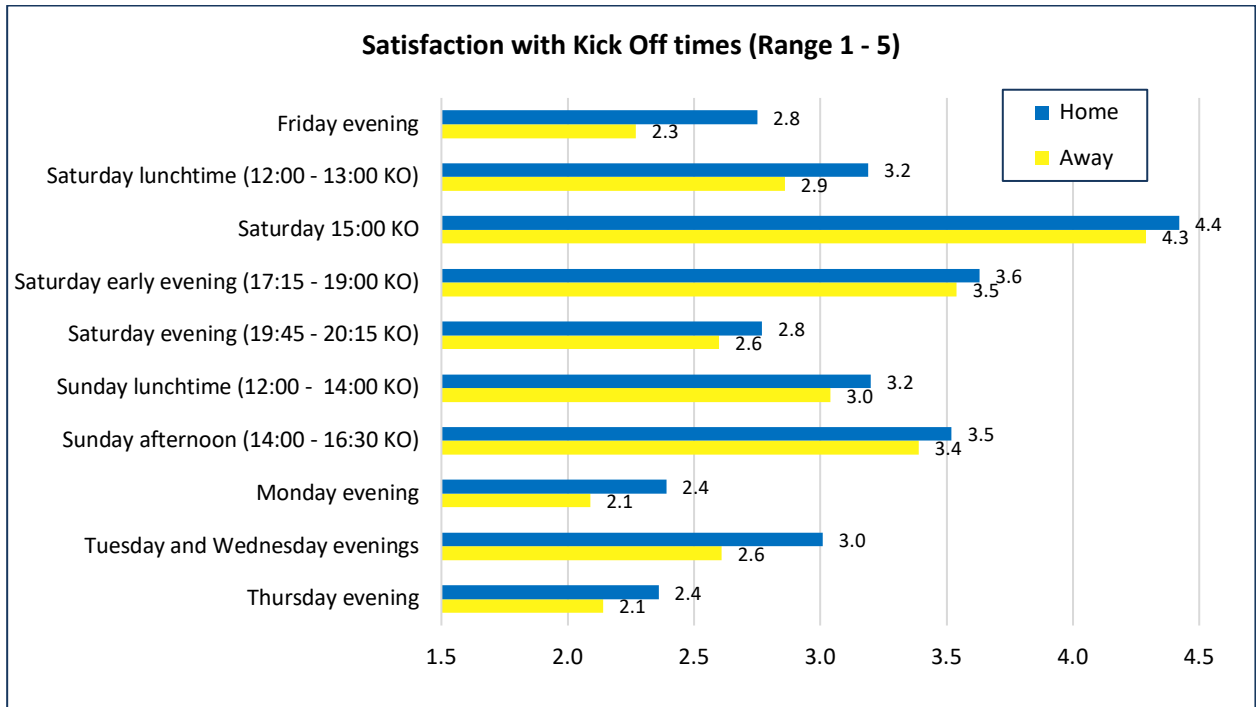
Another popular request was to broaden the range of tickets sold via the Exchange, with a lot of mentions for the inclusion of away tickets in particular. More than a few requests were made for members to be able to sell tickets on the Exchange when they find they cannot go. Included in this was the annual comment from a member of an overseas group that they would like to resell tickets they buy early in the season purely for LPs with no intention of going to the game, as they need these to get tickets later in the season.

One disappointing theme which emerged was some people only finding out about the Exchange as a result of the survey, with others pointing out that it receives far too little coverage from the Club on official platforms including social media; these tools could be used to drive a lot more traffic through the system.

Comments on other subjects which cropped up more than a few times included: faster payment to ticket sellers; making it easier to list or buy multiple tickets; allowing resale of tickets bought on the Exchange; the difficulty in respect of acquiring Junior tickets/tickets in the Family section, and seniors being able to buy full price tickets when no senior tickets are available; and a limit to the number of times a season ticket holder can list their seat in a season.

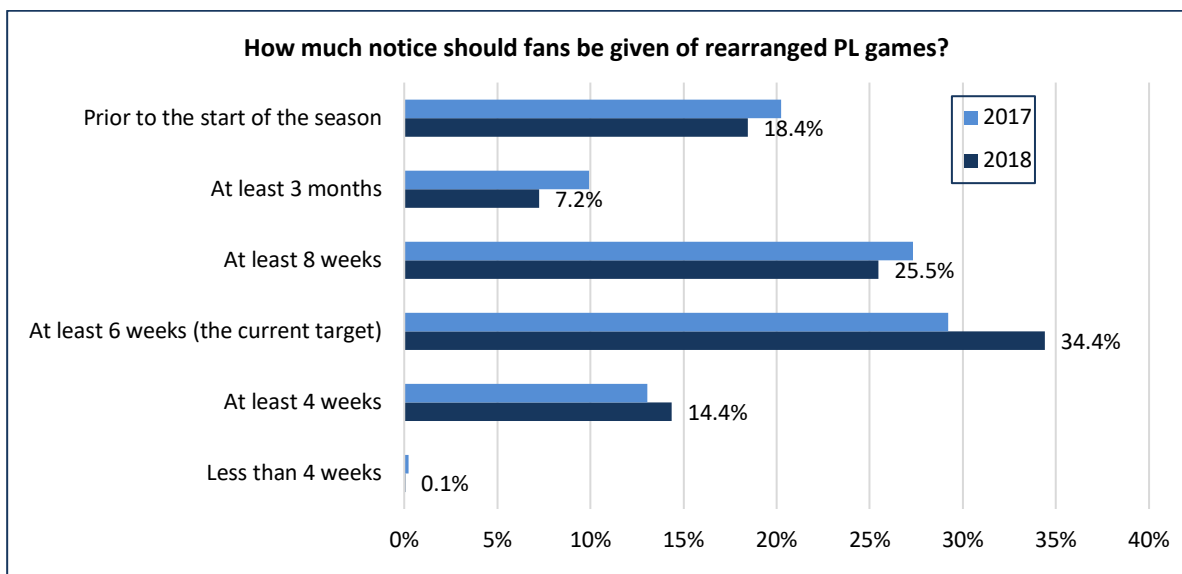
## 5 KICK OFF TIMES

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



As we found last year, there is a reasonably close correlation of opinions between home and away kick offs. The biggest difference to be observed is for the least popular kick off times; Friday, Monday and Thursday evenings are unpopular for home games but very unpopular for away games.

There is a clear desire to see more games kick off at 3pm on a Saturday afternoon, the only KO time to score above Satisfied (4). For Saturdays, the early evening kick off is reasonably popular, and the lunchtime kick off divides opinion but is broadly neutral. The introduction of Saturday night games does not appear to be welcomed, the only Saturday kick off time scoring less than the centre point.



The movement of 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 14.5% of respondents support a shorter notice period than at present, 51% favour a longer period. Alternatively 60% favour 6 – 8 weeks' notice.

Some comments included the following:

"Important to me since I'm traveling from overseas I need the biggest windows possible to determine plane flights"

"Which ever one is selected it should NOT be a target, it should be met."

"There should be a compensation scheme for supporters when matches are re-arranged at short notice and subsidised travel laid on by the TV companies"

"Apart from April & May games I don't understand why 3 months or so notice can't be given"

"It depends on what the game means i.e. is it a top table clash, relegation, derby etc. At least 3 weeks *before tickets go on sale for the game.*"

"The number of concert tickets given away due to clashing is getting ridiculous"

## 5.1 Mid-Season Break

Somewhat presciently, given the announcement after the survey had completed that the Premier League was to have a mid-season break from 2019-20, we asked for opinions on the introduction of a winter break. Three options were presented and the results were as follows:

- 48% were in favour of a break with all teams resting on the same weekend
- 29% felt there should not be a break
- 21% were in favour of a staggered break so that some games are played every weekend.

There is clearly a sizeable number opposed to a winter break, but generally the idea is well received. Unsurprisingly for seasoned Premier League observers, the option selected for the break from 2019-20 is the one least popular with the fans!

Asked if there *were* to be a break then when would they prefer, respondents gave the following results:

- |                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| - December before Christmas | 12% |
| - Around Christmas Day      | 29% |
| - Around New Year's Day     | 13% |
| - January                   | 44% |
| - Other (comment)           | 3%  |

We did not anticipate the February option, but of the Others there was a fairly even distribution over three options which were broadly speaking:

- February including late January/early February
- January, typically after the FA Cup third round
- Between Christmas and New Year



Comments on timing included:

"Around Christmas or New Year's Day, the players deserve to spend time with their families and so do the fans who strongly support their club"

*"Not around Christmas. Boxing Day football is a tradition"*

"Early February would be the perfect time to have the winters break allowing club to rest before the important European schedule"

*"Between FA cup rounds 3 and 4."*

"It should be in February when the weather is usually at its worst."

*"During the winter transfer period. Concentrate on the market alone and don't have fixtures scheduled when we are uncertain of our squad"*

"There should not be any games when there are no trains."

And more generally:

"There should be a break but clubs would only use this as an opportunity to play additional matches anyway. The solution is to reduce the premier league in size"

*"...If the players truly need a break then give them one but don't take the mickey out of supporters by going on an exhibition tour and then making us travel in midweek for the fixtures that would have otherwise been played"*

"No winter break but fixtures are arranged to keep teams as local as possible and all at one kick off time (3PM would work)"

*"Our weather is too unpredictable to have a mid-season break."*

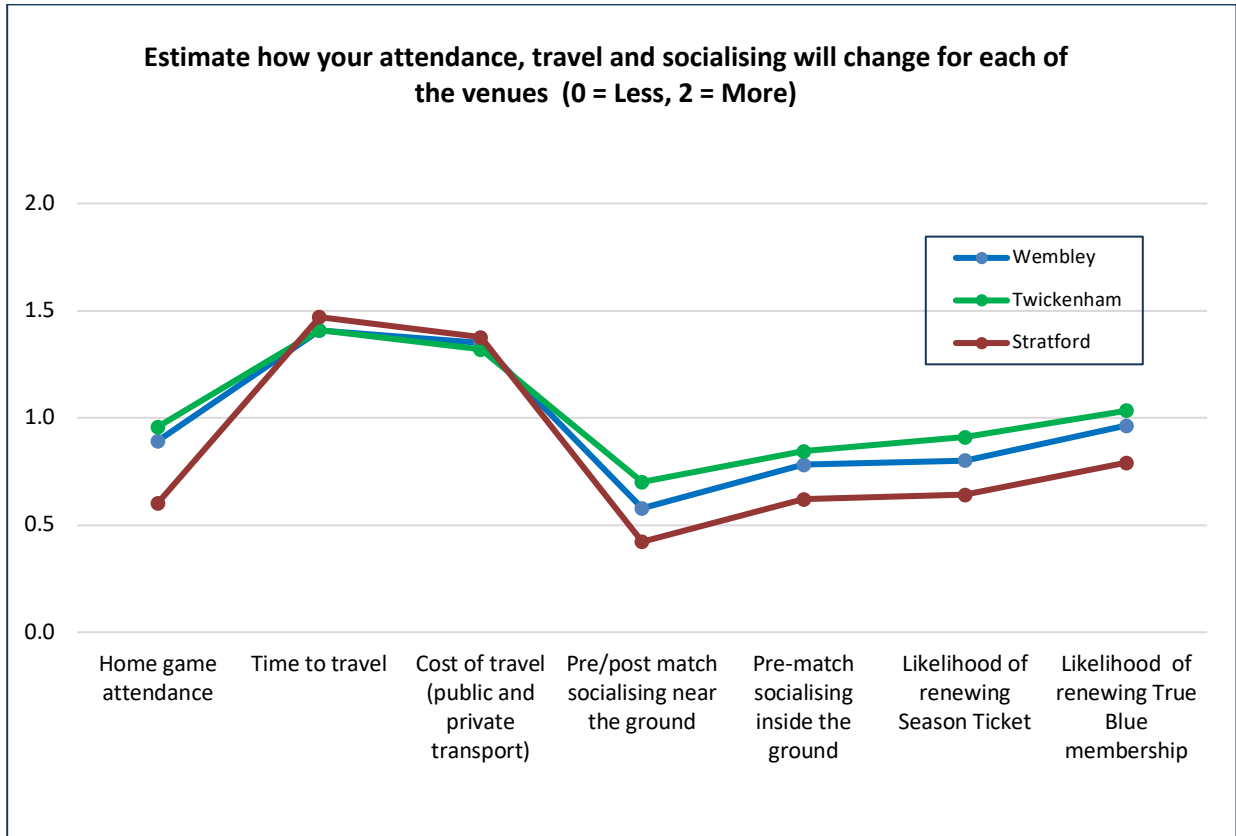
"Rotate!! Plus - they're paid enough!"

*"League cup should be scrapped. This would result in less fixtures and so reduce need for winter break. This would also give the FA cup more value."*

"Agree with the concept of a break but I would be happy to forego the Christmas fixtures [rather] than have the break in January. Christmas represents a chance to focus on things other than football while January can be dull and boring and football is a saving grace!"

## 6 TEMPORARY STADIUM

The survey completed at around the time of the announcement that the development was being put on hold. The Trust again asked respondents how they thought their match day attendance and behaviour would be affected by the three venues currently featuring most strongly in speculation regarding the location of the home stadium whilst Stamford Bridge is being reconstructed. The following chart summarises the findings:

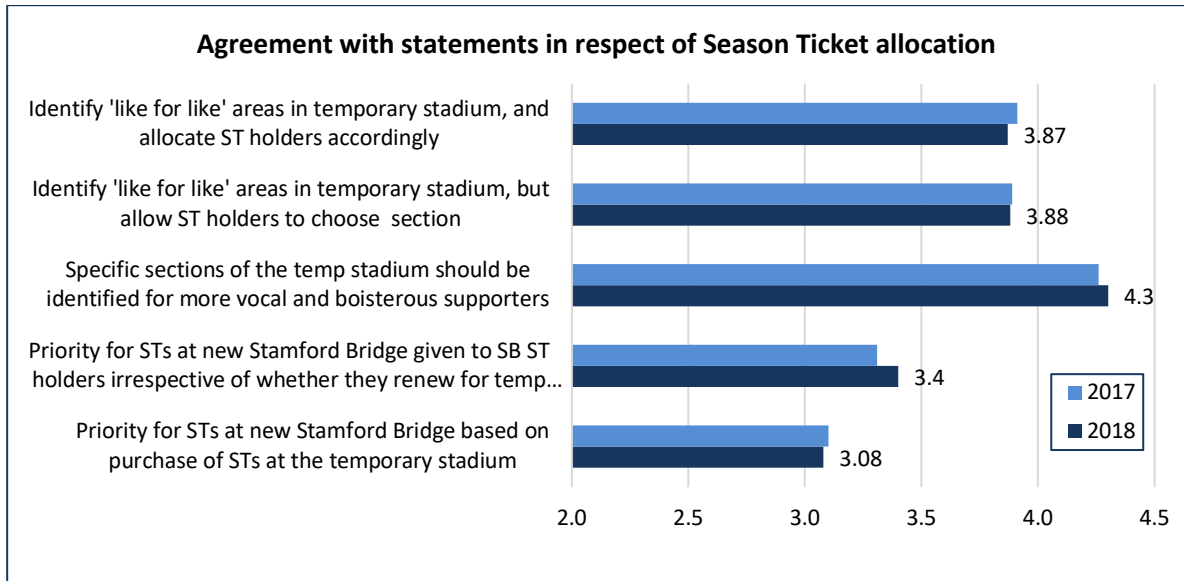


The findings are remarkably consistent with previous years. A move to Stratford would have the greatest impact on match attendance, whilst fears are clearly expressed for the time taken and cost involved in travelling to the temporary stadium. The social aspects of watching football would also be hit by the move to a temporary stadium.

The Trust again asked respondents to express a simple preference covering the three stadia listed, and the figures are virtually identical to last year: Stratford unpopular at 11%; Twickenham the most popular at 48% with Wembley close behind at 41%.

### 6.1 Seating & Season Tickets

We asked the respondents to indicate their level of agreement with some statements on the issues of seat positioning in the temporary stadium and season tickets in the rebuilt Stamford Bridge. The results are shown below (where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree):

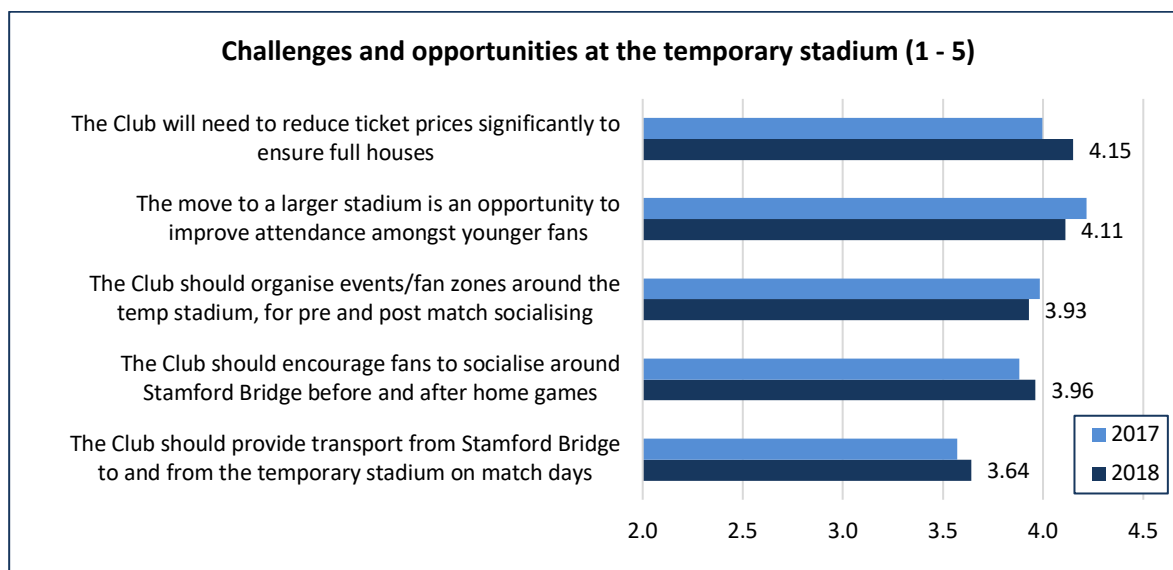


As with last year, there is a clear indication from respondents that sections in the current ground should be mapped to equivalent areas of the temporary stadium. Once more the most positive response was to the proposal that certain sections should be designated for more boisterous behaviour, which can reasonably interpreted as replicating the relaxed stewarding shown nowadays in the Lower tiers of the Matthew Harding and Shed Lower stands at Stamford Bridge.

Many will have seen the problems caused when supporters of vastly differing expectations were scattered across the London Stadium in West Ham’s first season there, and to a lesser extent in the early weeks of Tottenham’s temporary stay at Wembley.

## 6.2 Miscellaneous Challenges

Moving a significant distance from Stamford Bridge for a minimum of three years will present a number of significant challenges and opportunities.



There remains agreement with all of the above statements, all figures scoring well above the mid-level. Every year the survey highlights the desire of supporters to find ways of enabling more young supporters to attend, and this year is no different. The temporary stadium represents an opportunity for the Club to help achieve this, as well of course as an enlarged Stamford Bridge.

There is also agreement that, with ticket pricing being a regular concern, not to mention the additional costs and effort associated with getting to the temporary stadium, the pricing of match tickets should reflect the need to grow the match going fan base and ensure full houses week in, week out.

Club organised activities on match days around the temporary stadium and Stamford Bridge were popular ideas, although there was less support for the provision of transport from Stamford Bridge to the match.

## 6.3 Comments

Concerns and ideas expressed included:

- Strong opposition to the redevelopment as proposed; many supporters feel that 60,000 is unnecessary, particularly when feeling that the increase in the number of corporate seats means there is no benefit to ordinary fans, members aspiring to season tickets etc.
- Following on from the above point, a popular suggestion for more than a few supporters was the redevelopment of the existing ground, particularly/initially at the Shed end where the hotel would be demolished to make room for a much larger (possibly single tier) Shed.
- The atmosphere at both the temporary stadium and the rebuilt SB remains a concern. A common suggestion was *well defined* singing sections, or at least areas where the atmosphere and behaviour of the MHL and Shed Lower can be continued, to avoid conflicting expectations of behaviour.
- The lack of news including firmer timescales was cited as a concern, alongside a lack of consultation. This may be in part explained by the recent news that plans are on hold, but it does appear to be another case where a lack of communication from the Club is frustrating fans.

- Worries were also expressed about the financial risk of the complete rebuild, including concerns about who will be financing it and the possibility of the ground being lost forever once demolition starts.
- Fans want the ability to choose to sit with their existing friends and neighbours at both the temporary stadium and the rebuilt SB.
- Some Season Ticket holders expressed the difficulties they would face away from SB and wanted a 'Season Ticket break' while away from SB; and a few respondents explicitly felt that this should not happen!

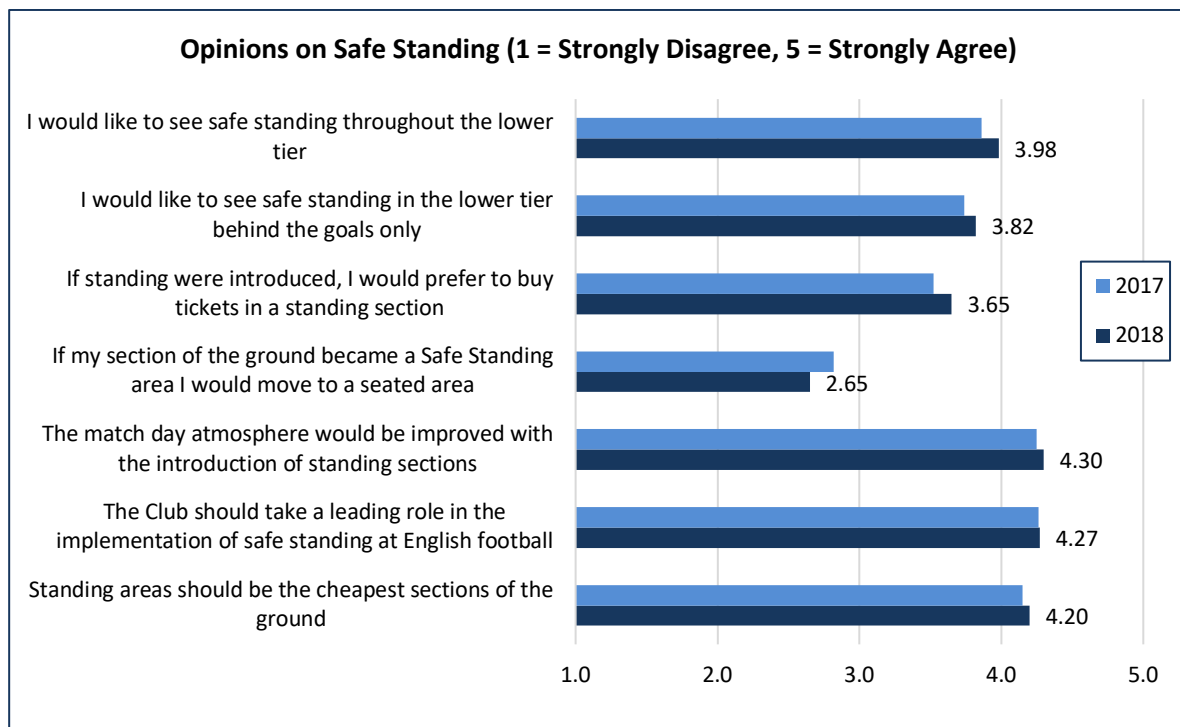
Other concerns include choice of temporary ground, with Craven Cottage a popular choice; costs of tickets and food/drinks at temporary location; making more tickets available for youngsters (one suggestion was a new type of Season Ticket for local schools, which would go to different children each match); getting back from evening games; and the loss of local pubs, bars and businesses while away from SW6.

## 7 NEW STADIUM

### 7.1 Safe Standing

The recent announcement that the redevelopment of Stamford Bridge has been put on hold changes the narrative in respect of safe standing. To date it has been assumed that no changes would be considered to the configuration of Stamford Bridge in its current form, with the move to a temporary stadium imminent.

It is now time to reconsider the introduction of Safe Standing at Stamford Bridge. There is a clear message coming from the fans across the country, and that is evident in the response of Chelsea fans to the following questions. Support for the introduction of rail seating is burgeoning, as the responses clearly show.

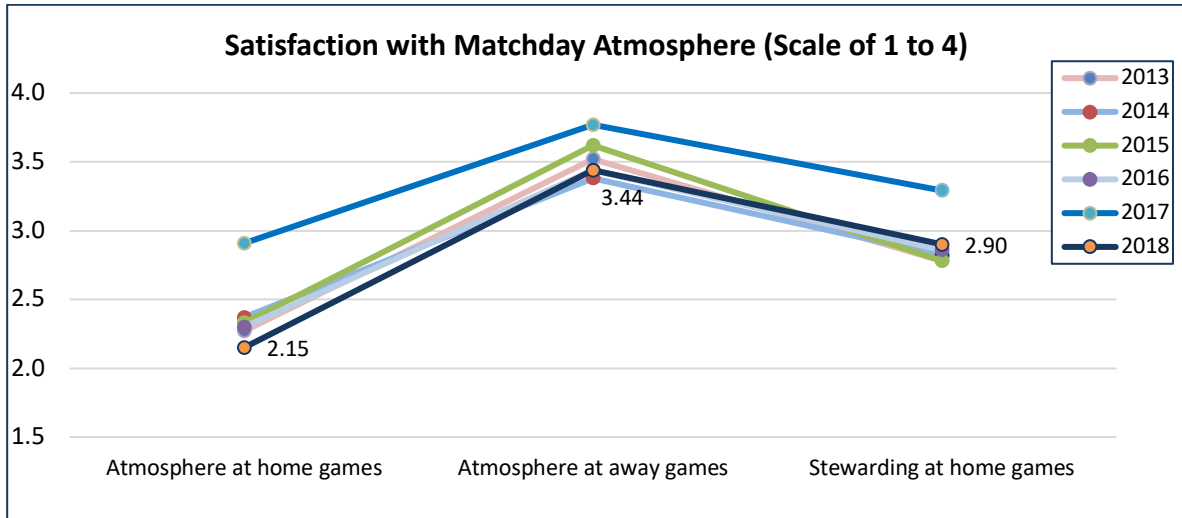


The only difference to last year’s results is that support has strengthened for Safe Standing on every question and supporters want the Club to take a leading role in its introduction. It will improve the atmosphere in the ground, making it easier for the more voluble and boisterous fans to gather together in clearly identifiable locations, and additionally represents an improvement in supporter safety.

The Trust calls on the Club to start working towards the introduction of rails seats at the Bridge.

## 8 ATMOSPHERE

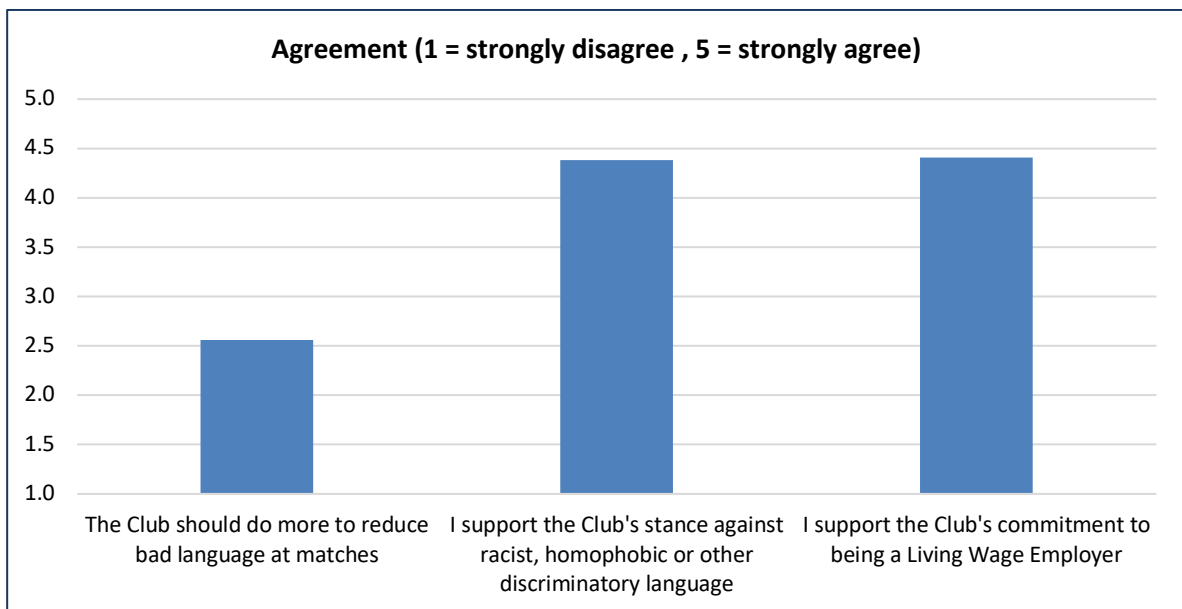
The survey asked about satisfaction with the atmosphere at matches:



Whilst no one could deny that the team’s performances failed to reach the heights of the previous season, the drop in satisfaction with the atmosphere at home games is still startling. However it surely comes as no surprise to anyone who attended the Bridge on a regular basis, as frustration with both the Manager and the Club’s hierarchy was at times palpable.

Atmosphere at away games and home stewarding returned to their more regular levels, the former as usual showing a far higher degree of satisfaction than the home games.

This year the Trust asked about a number of Club initiatives as illustrated below:



There is clearly strong support for action on discriminatory language with only 3.5% disagreeing to some degree. However the use of bad language at games was seen as a problem by fewer than 19% of respondents. The Club’s commitment to being a Living Wage Employer is very popular amongst supporters, with only 1% expressing opposition and the Club is to be congratulated for setting an example to others.

When asked how the atmosphere might be improved at Stamford Bridge, the most popular responses were:

- Allow standing in specific areas of the ground and/or introduce Safe Standing. About a fifth of the people who commented thought that this would make an important contribution to improving the matchday atmosphere, and with the plans for the redevelopment of Stamford Bridge put on hold for the foreseeable future, it must now be time to evaluate the introduction of rail seating into the Bridge as it is today.

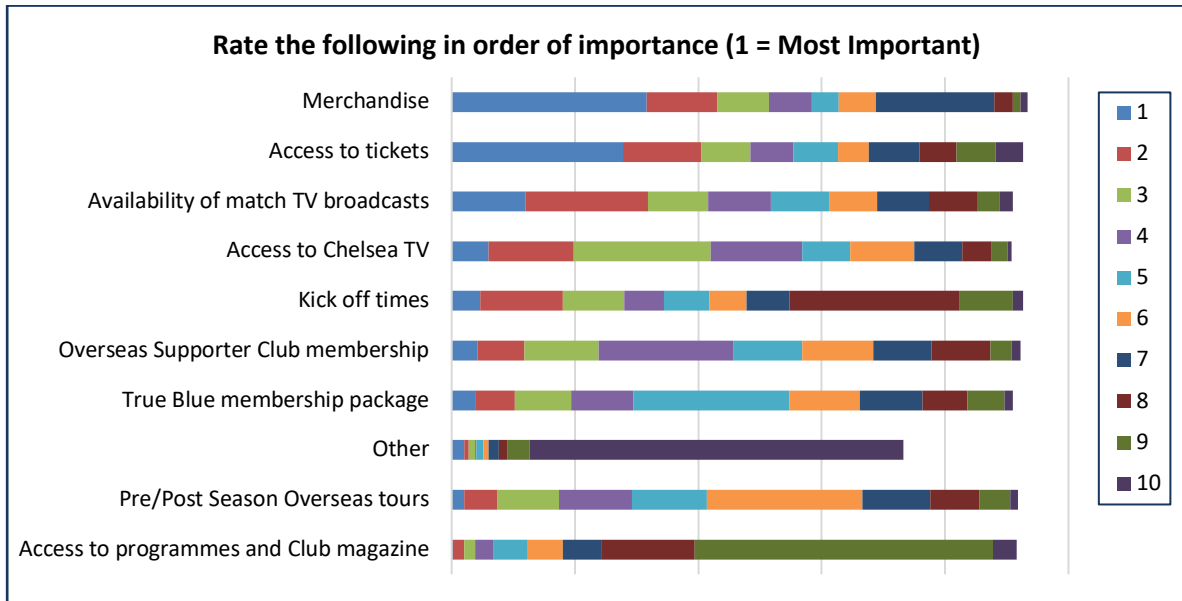
There is a clear mandate from supporters for the Club to take a leading role in the introduction of Safe Standing (see section 7.1) and the news on the redevelopment of the ground should be viewed as an opportunity to move ahead with this now rather than wait 5 – 10 years. It is time to recognise the nature of football supporters as we approach the 2020s rather than maintain the perceptions of the 1990s.

- The designation of singing areas or sections in the ground was the next most popular idea discussed by respondents, with suggestions of building on previous attempts e.g. Shed 100, but on a larger scale. Many of the people who suggested this also expressed the view that this should be combined with Safe Standing, and also allowing people to relocate to be with their mates, which would help get songs going.
- The price of tickets remains a source of frustration for many, as it is a barrier to the attendance of local fans at the expense of what are almost universally referred to as 'tourists'. A lot of such comments were less in respect of themselves but more regarding the need to get more youngsters into the ground with the enthusiasm that they would bring. Many highlighted the need to ensure that young adults as well as teenagers could access affordable tickets, with more than a few suggesting a dedicated singing area for say 16-25 year olds, priced accordingly.
- Inevitably there were a lot of comments that there were too many corporate tickets and too many tourists in attendance, with the latter linked to high levels of touting and frustration at the Club's apparent inability to get to grips with this. The Trust is aware that some initiatives were being tried out in respect of touting and remains hopeful that something can be done to reduce the scale of the problem. In respect of atmosphere, there was a lot of antagonism towards people filming games or themselves rather than supporting the team and a number of suggestions that package seats should be grouped together in the upper reaches.
- A lot of people felt that it is time to move away fans out of the Shed; now that the redevelopment plans are on hold, this can be looked at with renewed interest by the Club as getting two full home ends will undoubtedly help the atmosphere.

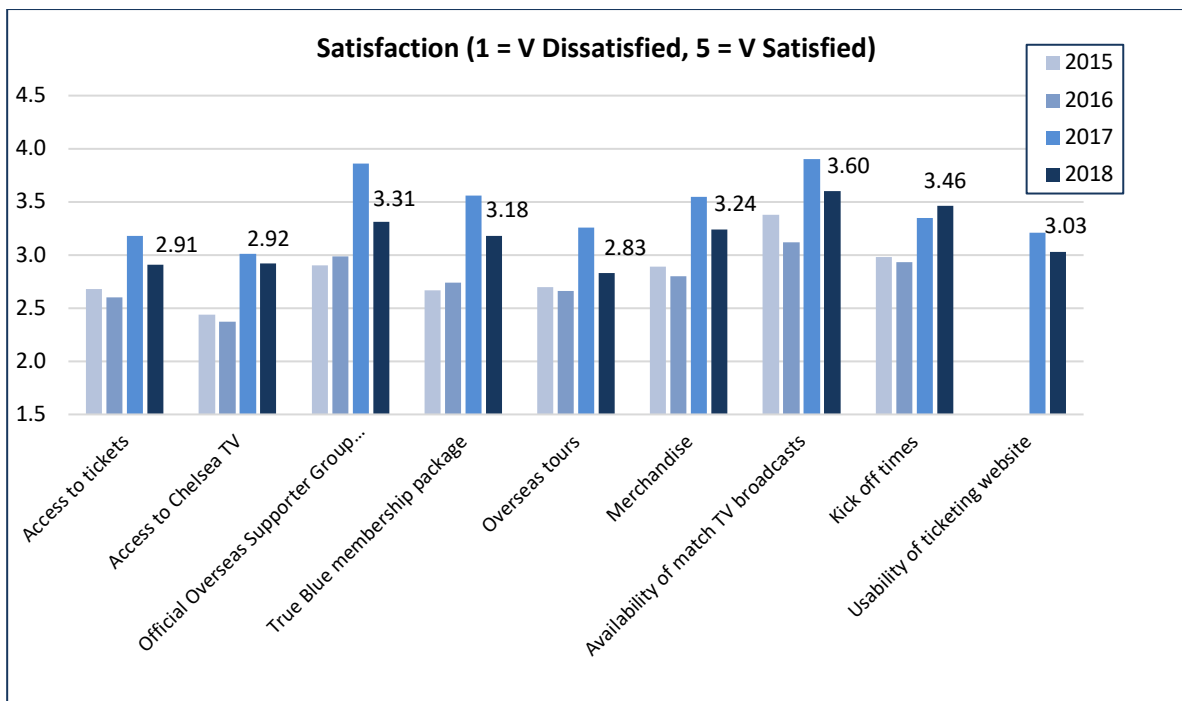


## 9 OVERSEAS SUPPORTERS

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



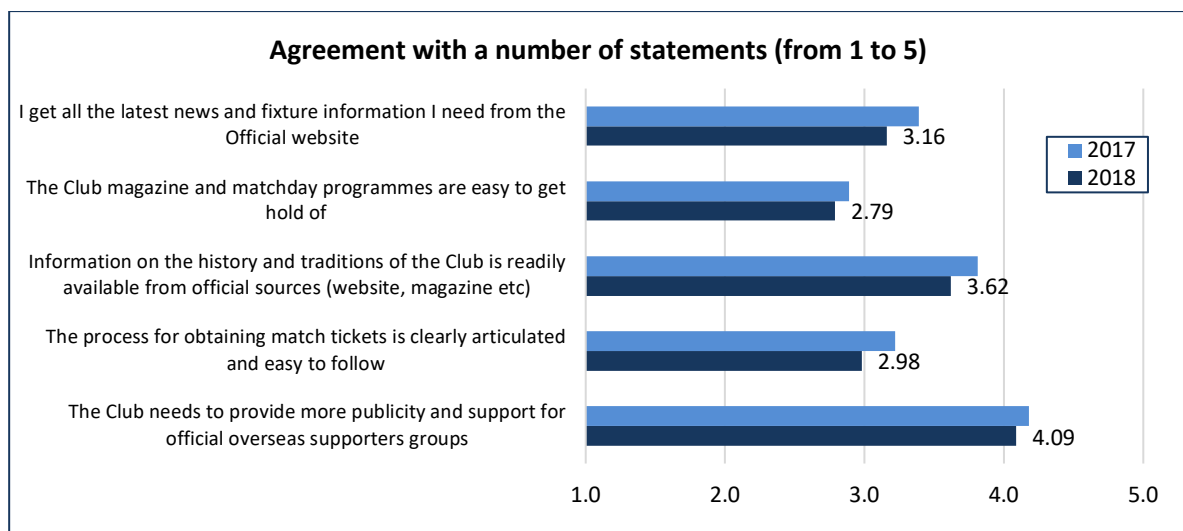
Merchandise has emerged strongly this year as an important issue, having barely registered in last year’s survey. Of the Other category, the issue of Kick Off times was identified: overseas fans face enormous problems booking affordable trips when they cannot be sure when the games are to be played, the difference between 12 and 6 weeks’ notice can be a trebling of price.



A general trend of dissatisfaction can be discerned from the results this year, with almost every category scoring lower than last year.

Amongst the comments by overseas fans, the following topics were raised most frequently:

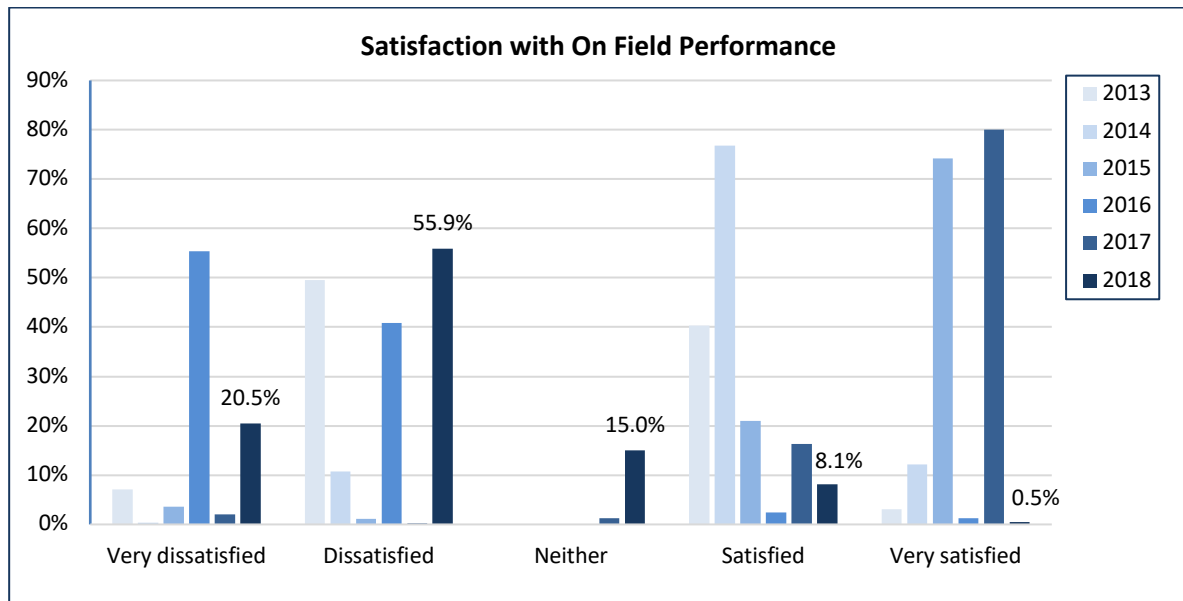
- Kick off times. Whilst recognising that different regions around the world favour different kick offs, the rearrangement of games for TV presents two main problems: difficulty attending games as mentioned above, with the need to incur additional cost and use more holiday to cover the possibility of moving a game; and difficulty in even watching games on TV which have been moved to weeknights from the weekend.
- The range, availability and price of merchandise from Nike was heavily criticised. This may explain why merchandise has become the most important single topic this year.
- Coverage of games by NBC was specifically mentioned by a number of respondents, the new NBC Gold service requiring additional payment for some games to the frustration of many fans.



## 10 ON FIELD PERFORMANCE

### 10.1 Team Performance

Participants were asked how satisfied they were with Chelsea's on-field performance in season 2017/18:



Predictably, whilst not as bad as the 2015-16 season, the results for 2017-18 indicate the disappointment felt that the team did not capitalise on the Premier League winning campaign that preceded it.

The question inviting explanations or opinions for the (largely) dissatisfied response above received more comments than any single open ended question for years, possibly ever. Well over 800 responses were given and whilst there was a wide range of comments, certain themes emerged time and time again.

- **Poor transfer business/recruitment policy.** This was the most commonly commented on topic, with many expressing dissatisfaction with the players leaving the Club, notably Diego Costa and Nemanja Matic (selling to a PL rival was not popular), and with the quality and fitness of many of the players coming in. Ignoring comments on individual players, many observed that the players coming in did not seem to raise the quality of the squad and that many were injured or coming back from significant injuries and thus not ready for action immediately.

There was a great deal of support for the appointment of a Technical Director with experience of playing the game at the highest level, preferably with a Chelsea connection. It was also observed that the manager should have a lot more, or even complete, control of transfers in and out of the Club.

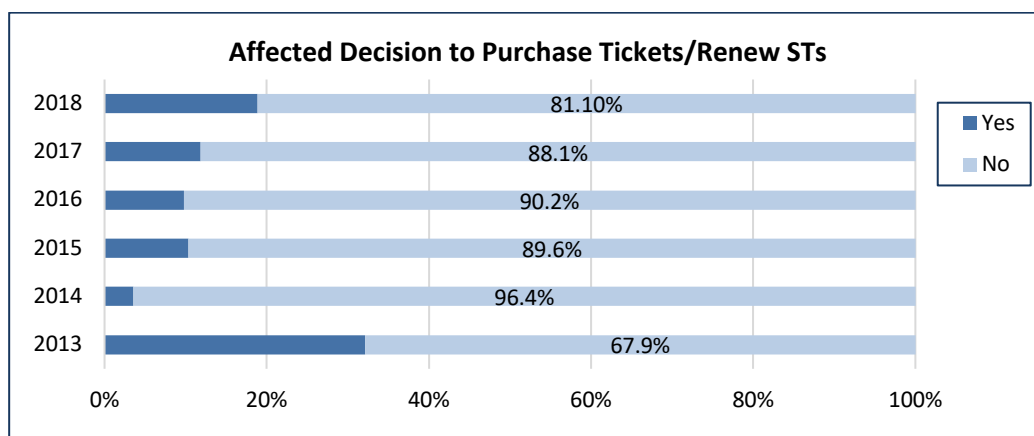
- **Negative or boring football.** There was a frustration with the style of play adopted for many games, often citing a cautious approach against 'lesser' teams and showing undue respect when playing rivals. Whilst it has been unusual for specific games to get much attention in the survey previously, this year was very different. Team selection, unnecessarily rigid tactics and poor game management were all cited as a problem. Whilst a lot of fans expressed dismay at losing the unbeaten record at home to Spurs in particular, with some critical of the performance, there was a great deal of outright condemnation of the negative approach taken in the game away to Manchester City in particular.

- **Conflict between the Coach and the Club.** There was a very clear message that supporters witnessed what seemed to be a breakdown in relations between Antonio Conte and the Club Management, and indeed between the Coach and the players at times. This was felt by many to be the result of the Board failing to back the manager during the summer after the relatively unexpected PL triumph last season; there was also a great deal of blame for Antonio Conte, in his attitude for much of the season and apparent loss of interest or ability to motivate the players – indeed falling out with some of them, or so it appeared from the outside.
- **Lack of opportunity for young players.** As is absolutely clear, Chelsea has an outstanding record of achievement at the Academy/Youth level and, whilst delighted to see Andreas Christensen getting plenty of opportunities and the emergence of Ethan Ampadu, fans are frustrated that young players are getting relatively few opportunities. A frequent comment was that fewer but higher quality players should be purchased, with the squad enlarged by giving younger players from the Academy an opportunity.
- **Lack of Commitment or Effort.** As with two years ago, many supporters felt that some of the players were guilty of showing a lack of effort and a lack of passion, basically accusing some of them of not playing for the shirt. Regardless of the state of relations with the manager, fans expect Chelsea players to show commitment to the cause; a lack of commitment and a lack of leadership on and off the field were noted.
- **Underperformance/Inconsistency.** There was a great deal of frustration that many players in the team seemed to fail to reach the standards expected after the previous season. The period when defeated by Bournemouth and Watford in close succession was cited by many as completely unacceptable.

Since the survey was conducted, Mr Conte has left the Club and Mr Sarri has been appointed; of those expressing a discernible in/out opinion, there was a ratio of 3:2 for Mr Conte to be replaced.

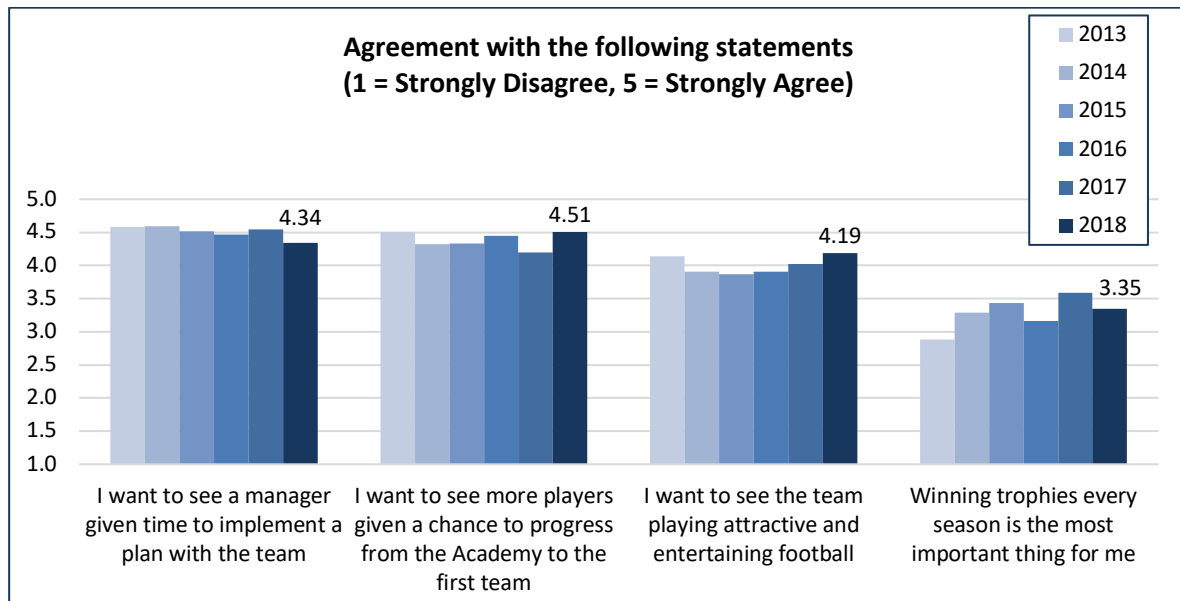
## 10.2 Renewal

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



The intention to buy tickets or renew season tickets has generally remained static in the three seasons preceding 2017-18, but there has been a worrying increase in the number of people reconsidering renewing season tickets or purchasing tickets following a disappointing campaign. Whilst not as volatile as in 2013, the number reconsidering purchases has grown from about 11% to 19%.

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



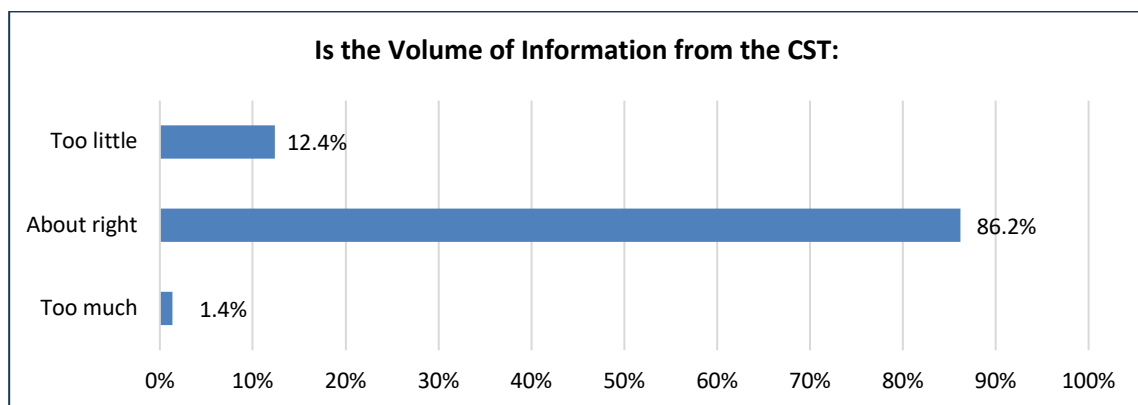
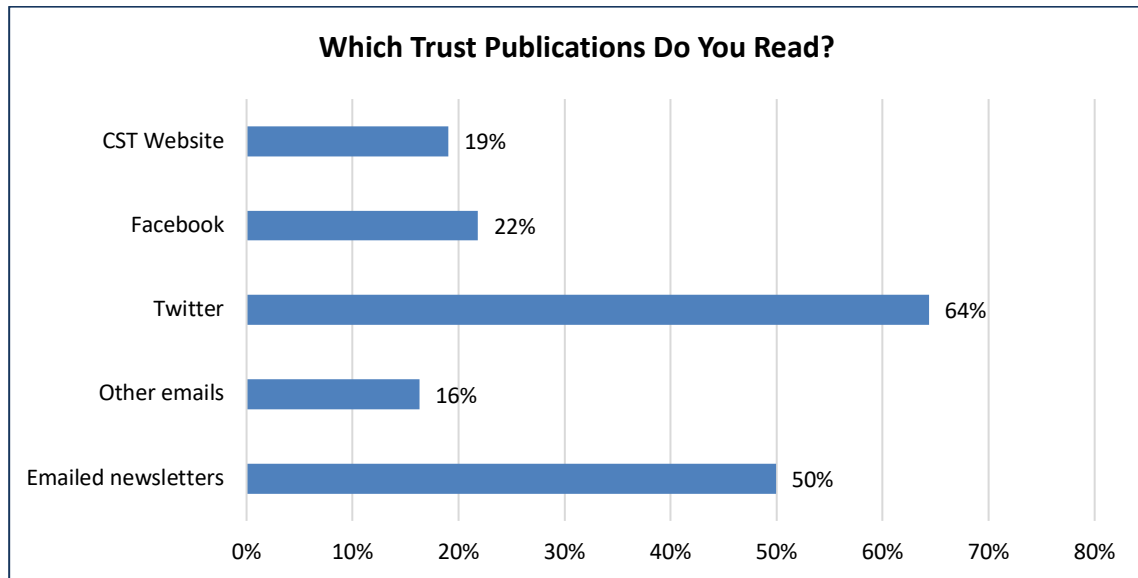
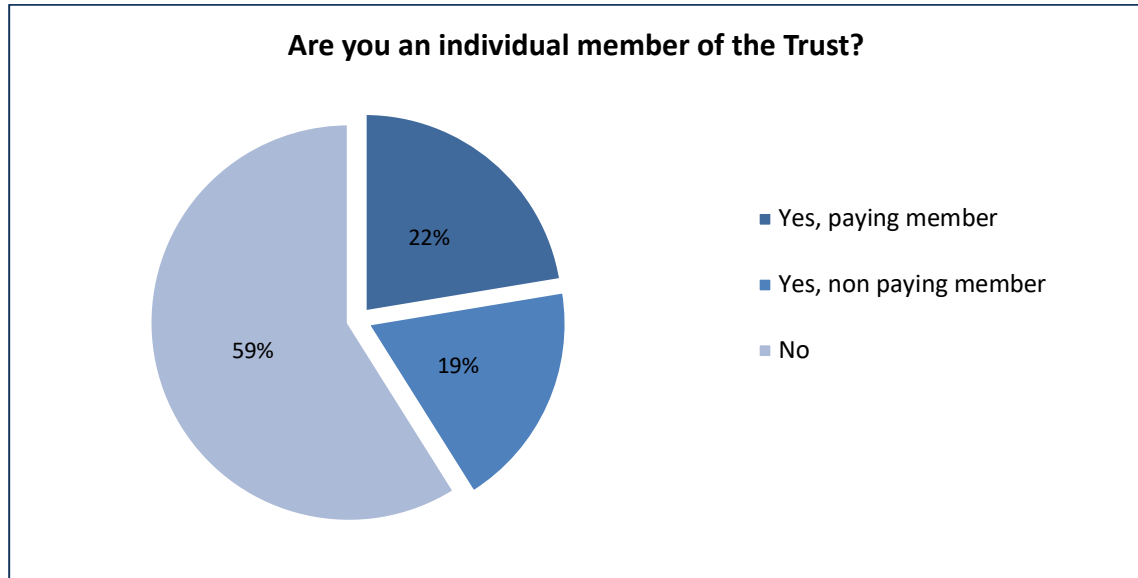
There was an increase in agreement with the desire to see the Club bring through young players from the Academy into the first team, as there was with the sentiment that fans want to see attractive football; this will come as no surprise to anyone reading Section 10.1. Both of these are at the same 'high tide' mark as 2013.

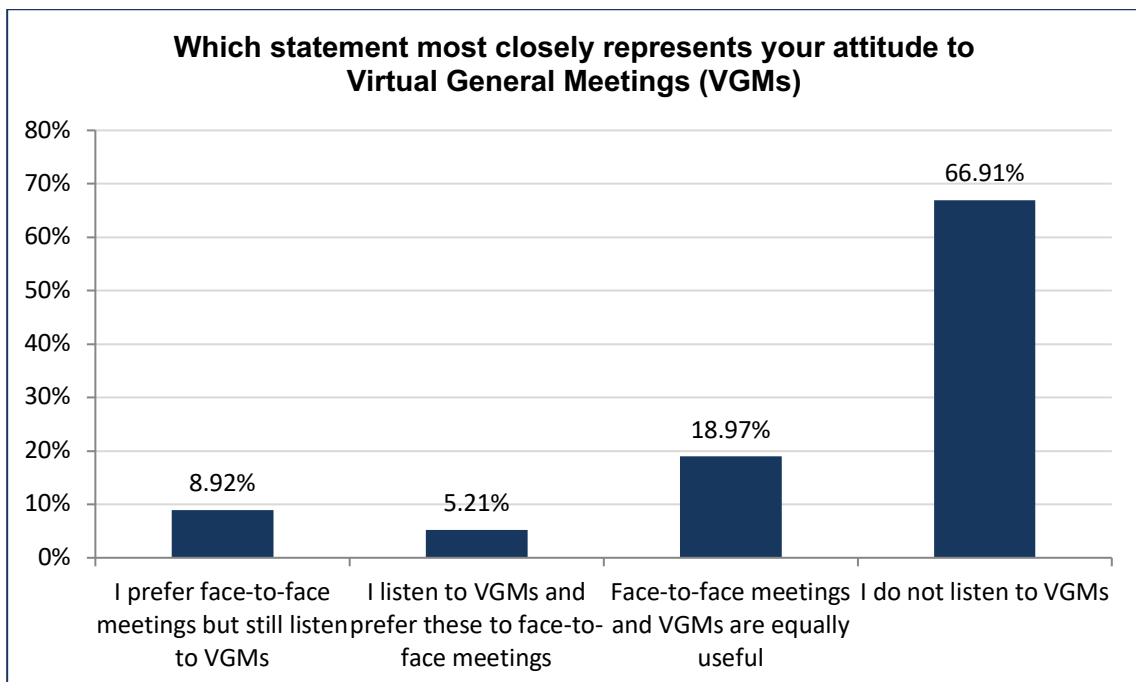
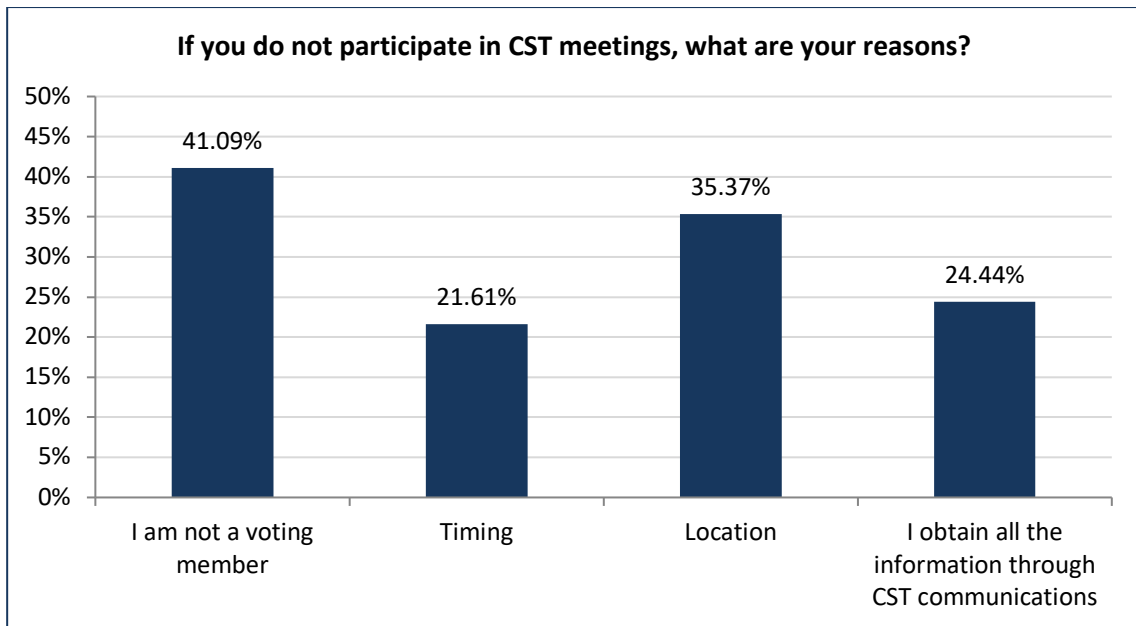
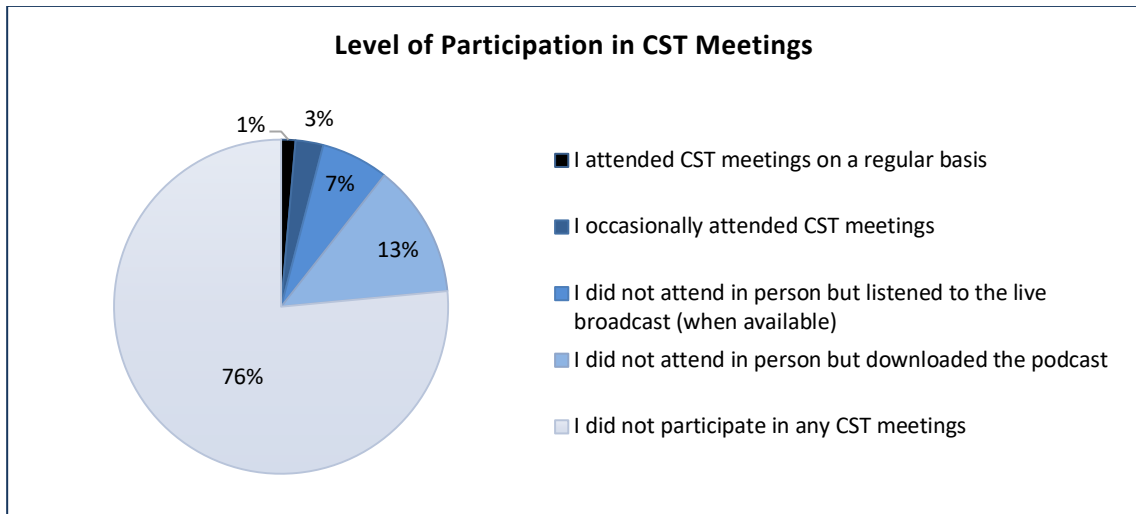
There was a fall in support for the sentiment that the manager should be given time, although this retains support. There was a fall in agreement that winning trophies every season is the most important thing.

The statement "The players show their appreciation of the time, cost and effort that the supporters expend to watch them play" received mild agreement, scoring 3.5; over a quarter of respondents disagreed to some extent with this statement.

### 11 CHELSEA SUPPORTERS TRUST

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





## 12 DEMOGRAPHICS

