




# SURVEY ON HOMOPHOBIA IN FRENCH PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL

In the context of diversity studies and anti-discrimination policies.



*For the first time and at the request of Paris Foot Gay, we undertook this assessment on intolerance and in particular homophobia in French professional football. Thirteen First, Second and National League clubs accepted to join this project. Our results show that homophobia ranks first among all discriminations in this sphere. This record is even worse in training centers where prevails a general intolerance. Even if we note a better acceptance of homosexuality in football, all conditions are not fulfilled to allow the coming out of a French gay footballer. This document summarizes our survey and our recommendations.*

Summary Report – April 2013

*This survey has been managed by Anthony Mette, at the request of Paris Foot Gay and The Institut Randstad and with the cooperation of Bordeaux University (Segalen) and the Psychology Unit EA 4139.*

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## BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The *Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe* reckons that homophobia in sport must be overcome as a form of discrimination. In France, the NGO *Paris Foot Gay* is a pioneer in fighting homophobia in sport. With the support of *Institut Randstad*, this organisation set out to carry out a survey on the grounds of homophobia and discrimination in French Professional Football.

This survey dealt with three research issues :

- <sup>35</sup>/<sub>17</sub> How to evaluate discrimination in Professional Football?
- <sup>35</sup>/<sub>17</sub> Is there homophobia and why?
- <sup>35</sup>/<sub>17</sub> Are football players ready to accept the coming out of a footballer?

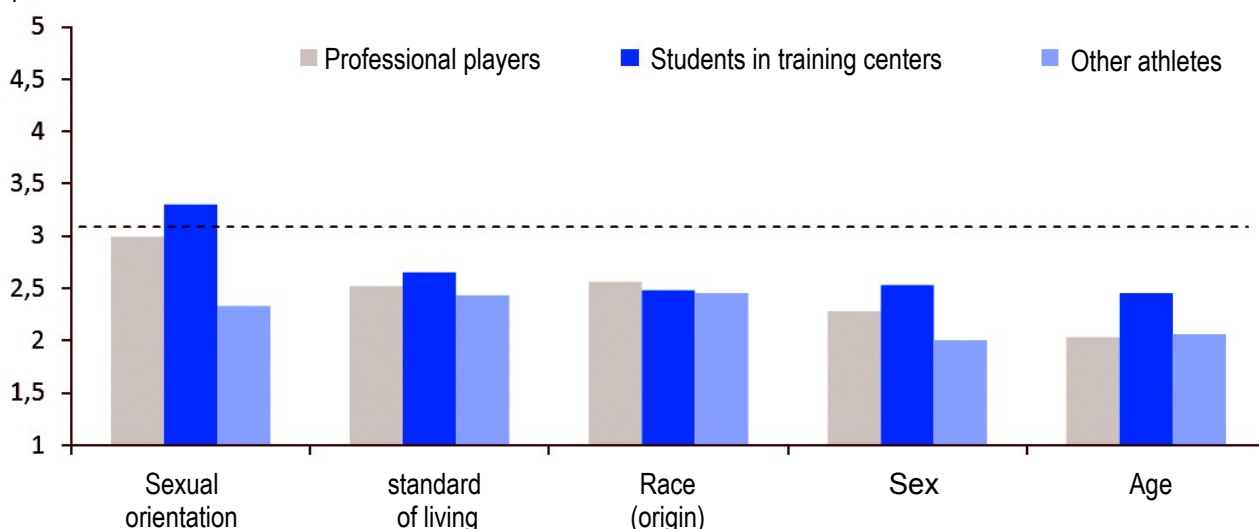
As far as we know, no survey had addressed directly these questions. A subject matter search, lists four scientific publications (Adams & Anderson, 2012; Cashmore & Cleland, 2011, 2012; Caudwell, 2011). These authors described homophobic behaviors of supporters in football stadiums. They also underlined the superficial progress of acceptance of homosexuality. But none of these studies focused on football players.

Thirteen clubs contributed to the survey and the sample population included 363 athletes: 121 professional players, 129 students in football training centers and 113 athletes practicing other sports. All of them filled the same form; here are a few examples of items:

	Agree					Disagree				
Marriage between two women should be legalized	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Gay men are disgusting.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Unemployed persons don't really want to work.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
It is easy to understand the anger and the claims of immigrants living in France.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Homosexuality is one of the normal version of human sexuality.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

## DISCRIMINATIONS ANALYSIS

Five discrimination criteria has been assessed : sexual orientation, standard of living, ethnic origin, sex and age. An average result for each issue has been calculated with a maximum of 5 points. The closer a result is to 5, the more negative the opinion is.



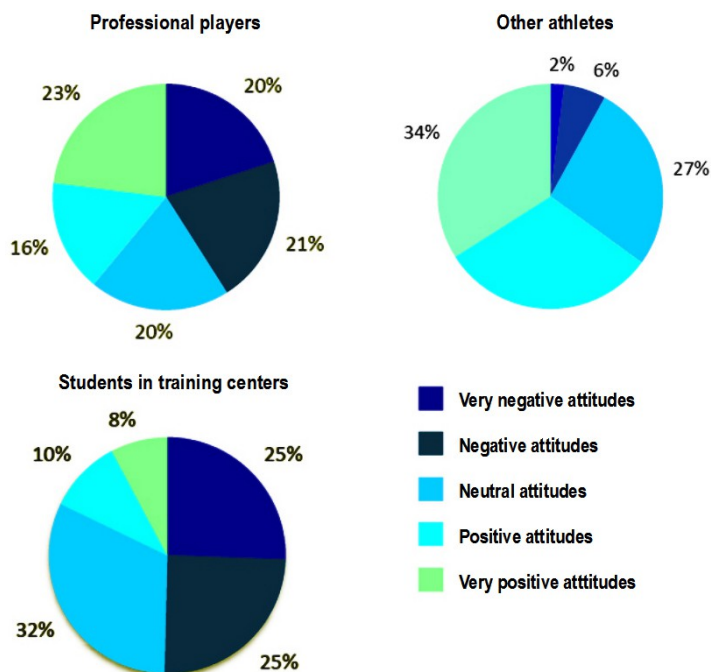
**CHART 1: comparison of discriminating perceptions between the three panels.**

Professional footballers reported more homophobic and sexist attitudes than other athletes. On other criteria, their opinions are practically identical. Young students are clearly more discriminating than adults professionals. Their results are higher for four criteria : sexual orientation, standard of living, sex and age.

**Homophobia at every level ranks first in football.** Other criteria show more subtle scores.

## WHY HOMOPHOBIA ?

With the purpose of understanding why homophobia is so important in professional football, we tried to identify what factors are linked with players opinions. Factors analysed could be considered as causes or consequences of this homophobia.



For every footballers, adult professional or young student, homophobia seems to be a common attitude.

### Homophobia is a norm.

With reference to the Primus Inter Pares effect, it is possible that footballers which sense this norm and want to fit in it, overplay their own feelings. Necessarily, accepting homosexuality will be equivalent to "breaking this rule". Likewise, masculinity seems to be linked to homophobia and should be investigate.

## WHAT ABOUT A COMING OUT ?

Footballers expressed negative opinions about homosexuality. Could we say that it would determine their reactions if a team mate declare his homosexuality ? And how would their behaviour be in this situation ?

	Professional players		Training centers	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
I would be surprised, because it is taboo in football.	63%	33%	74%	22%
It's not about to change	67%	30%	43%	54%
I'll be afraid to shower with him	25%	71%	55%	43%
I won't speak to him again	9%	86%	19%	79%
It would not upset me, but I think that it would be difficult for him to carry on his career.	32%	63%	47%	50%
I'll ask to change teams.	3%	91%	8%	90%
I would prefer he would change teams.	15%	80%	22%	76%
I would worry for our team to be less efficient.	7%	87%	23%	74%

Behavioral data we have analysed seem to allow a foreseeable coming out of a gay player. This statement could be surprising, as it is shown that 41% of the footballers have declared to be hostile to homosexuality. However, There is a tale tell difference between opinions about homosexuality in general, and "what I do think about my gay team mate". The majority of footballers would be open minded enough to play with a gay team mate. He would be viewed as a professional player, member of the team, before being viewed as a gay person.

Young students in training centers gave more extreme answers. It is difficult to foresee their true reactions if a team mate came out, when they have not considered this eventuality. Consequences of homophobia during teenage years have been the theme of many studies (Verdier & Firdion, 2003). Results we have obtained in this survey should raise awareness among trainers. It seems unbearable that a young gay footballer could be open up in the current atmosphere of training centers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into account the national action plan *b. YOURSELF* from the NGO *Paris Foot Gay*, and the structure of the French Professional Football, we would like to propose actions which could promote sexual diversity at any level of French football, professional or amateur clubs and training centers.

### A taboo subject

- Relying on (existing or to be created) communication tools and on social networks.
- Transmitting these results in scientific congresses.

### Active clubs and institutions

- Promoting cooperations between professional clubs and NGOs.
- Taking inspiration from action plans developed in Belgium, Germany, UK and Netherlands.

### Discriminating atmosphere in training centers

- Training and raising awareness of active instructors
- With the agreement of the French Football Federation, incorporating training sessions on homophobia and diversity inclusion in trainers qualification curriculum.

### Negative but progressing opinions

- Proposing events to raise awareness of young footballers, professionals, referees, such as those of Paris Foot Gay.
- Creating and promoting in-line information and training tools, in cooperation with the *Fondation du Football*.

### A possible coming out, but needing supports

Foreseeing the potential coming out of a professional player.

Guaranteeing, in an official declaration, concrete and legal support to gay players

There is no question that fighting against homophobia, and any discrimination in football requires a collective effort. Every stakeholders institutional, athletes and politicians must be active in this project They must, we must focus our collective action on the fields reality.

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*b. YOURSELF !!*



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