

Cocaine drives supporters' aggression in football, study finds

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Cocaine use may be associated with aggression between rival football fans, according to a new paper published by Dr. Martha Newson, an expert in group bonding and conflict, with the Universities of Kent and Oxford.

Based on an [online survey](#), published in the *International Journal of Drug Policy*, the report found higher-than-national [cocaine use](#) among football fans. More than 30% of those taking part reported witnessing supporters taking the Class A drug at matches in the last 12 months. Just over 6% reported personally taking [cocaine](#), but only around 1% admitted to taking cocaine in stadia. These data were collected at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and participants were asked to reflect on the previous 12 months.

Dr. Newson says, 'The results suggest that highly bonded fans were particularly likely get tied up in aggressive behaviours—especially if they used cocaine. However, the vast majority of fans reported very low levels of actual violence.

'Importantly for policing and stadium management,

women were much less likely to report aggressive behaviours than men. Young people were also slightly more aggressive than older people.'

As an anthropologist, Dr. Newson has written extensively about the relationship between highly-committed football supporters. Previous research has shown that bottom of the league supporters tend to be even more committed to their fellow fans than those of the top-flight. Supporters with whom she worked in Brazil also demonstrated that the most bonded [football fans](#) experience a surge in stress hormones during World Cup matches.

Dr. Newson's latest study, which sampled over 1,000 British fans across leagues, concludes, that football mirrors wider society, be it in social issues or drug use. The widespread availability of cheap but high purity cocaine may be associated with fan aggression, especially among fans who are highly bonded to their clubs and fellow fans.

More information: Martha Newson. High and highly bonded: Fused football fans who use cocaine are most likely to be aggressive toward rivals, *International Journal of Drug Policy* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.drugpo.2021.103263](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2021.103263)

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