ISLAMOPHOBIA AWARENESS MONTH

ISLAMOPHOBIA: SPORTS

Sport has the capacity and potential to create a strong sense of community, identity, and belonging for people all over the world. However, even at grassroots level, Islamophobia exists and needs to be addressed.

WHAT DO THE STATISTICS SAY?

Kick It Out received a new high of 1,744 reports of discrimination during the 2025-26 season, a 25% increase on the previous campaign, with the number of incidents reported also reaching a record 1,255. [1]

The figures are drawn from reports across the professional game, grassroots football and online spaces.

They show discrimination remains a serious and growing issue in football, but the record reporting numbers suggest a continued willingness to call it out.

Racism remains the most reported form of discrimination, with 792 reports, up 19% year-on-year and making up 45% of the total.

Reports of Islamophobia rose 88% to 60 - a new high over the five years since Kick It Out has been tracking data more extensively.

Interviews with 40 British Muslim footballers reveal that Islamophobia in football is intersectional, shaped by the overlapping effects of race, religion, gender, and the spaces in which it occurs, both online and offline. The findings also show that Islamophobia has become normalised within football, to the point where it is seen as an expected ‘part of the game’. [2]

ISLAMOPHOBIA AWARENESS MONTH

MUSLIM WOMEN IN SPORT

A Muslimah Sports Association (MSA) report found that: **43% of British Muslim women do not think that current sports facilities are appropriate to them.** [3]

65%

of respondents agree that there are religious/cultural barriers that limit/stop their participation in sports.

97%

of British Muslim female respondents said they want to increase their participation in sport.

33%

said that past experiences have negatively impacted their experience in sport.

EXAMPLES OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN SPORT

Azeem Rafiq, a former professional cricketer for Yorkshire, spoke publicly about his experiences of racism within cricket. His case highlighted how racist and Islamophobic attitudes can affect athletes' careers, confidence and sense of belonging in sport.

Rafiq's experiences also brought greater attention to the need for sporting organisations to challenge discrimination, support victims and create environments where everyone is treated equally and with respect. His case shows that racism and Islamophobia are not only individual problems but can also expose wider issues within sporting institutions.

"I used to play netball for a semi pro club in [the] east of England when I was 18 and I was wearing hijab and I got discriminated by my coach and other players as everyone else was white. No one stuck up for me. So I left and my opportunity to go pro."

- 25-34yrs, London
(Muslimah Sports Association)

Everyone, including Muslims, should be able to enjoy, participate in, and belong in sport

[1] Reporting statistics from Kick It Out (2025-26)
[2] "Muslims are Leaving Football, They Think 'What is the Point?'": A Qualitative Study on Islamophobia in Grassroots Football in England and Wales; Imran Awan and Irene Zempi (2025)
[3] Muslim Women in Sport Report; Muslimah Sports Association