



Levelling the playing field?

The impact of The Hundred, Year One





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# 1. Authors

## 1.1 Dr Raf Nicholson

Raf Nicholson is a researcher who specialises in issues relating to sport and gender, and a writer on the contemporary women's game, who writes for *The Guardian* and ESPNcricinfo, amongst others. Her book *Ladies and Lords* (Peter Lang, 2019) is the first ever history of women's cricket in the English context. She is the editor of the women's cricket website CRICKETher.com, and she has covered every women's international in England since 2013, as well as the 2017, 2018 and 2020 World Cups.

Dr Nicholson covered the first year of The Hundred from the press box, and thus brings first-hand experience of the tournament to this research.

## 1.2 Dr Keith Parry

Keith Parry is an internationally renowned sport sociologist with expertise in the areas of sport and identity. He has previously provided research reports for sport organisations such as the Sydney Sixers, Cricket Victoria and Football Federation Australia. The report for the Sydney Sixers, "Smash 'Em Sixers", examined the match day presentation of the Sydney Sixers WBBL team based on observations at four WBBL matches and an online survey. The report outlined key differences between the presentation of BBL and WBBL matches, and the findings were subsequently used by the Sixers to improve their overall fan experience on Sydney Sixers WBBL match days.

## 1.3 Dr Aravind Reghunathan

Aravind Reghunathan is a lecturer in marketing at Bournemouth University. His research addresses issues related to technology consumption and participation, the influence of social perceptions on brand management, and interactions between sports fans and entities such as organisations and brands. Aravind's work has featured in marketing and sports journals such as *Advances in Consumer Research* and *International Journal of Sports Management and Marketing*.

## 1.4 Women in Sport

The charity Women in Sport was founded in 1984, and has a track record of success in securing change based on its deep understanding of the needs and aspirations of women and girls at each life stage and its determination to break down stubborn gender inequalities through its work within the sports sector and beyond.

Women in Sport has developed insights and shared knowledge with the sport sector and beyond for over 35 years to achieve a vision of a society where women and men have equal opportunities. They are the only UK organisation that researches sport purely from the perspective of women and girls.

WiS has collaborated with Bournemouth University throughout the research process, offering advice and expertise at each stage.

## 2. Executive Summary

### 2.1 Key findings



# Levelling the playing field? The impact of The Hundred, Year One



Overall, the ECB was successful at creating a positive, family-friendly experience at The Hundred. The Hundred is seen as more welcoming and attractive for new fans than other formats of cricket.

Overall levels of satisfaction with the match-day experience were high, both amongst existing cricket supporters and new fans.

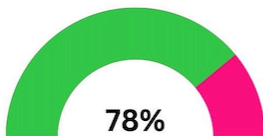


Poor/drunken crowd behaviour detracted from the match-day experience for some spectators.

Some fans also felt that the entertainment on offer (including the live music and mid-phase entertainers) detracted from their match-day experience.

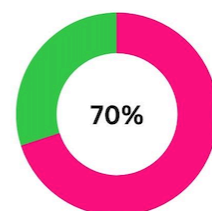


Marketing was seen as more inclusive, particularly by women. This promoted a sense of The Hundred as providing a more welcoming and open environment for fans than other cricket



78% of those who attended with children or teenagers said they planned to attend with children or teenagers again in 2022.

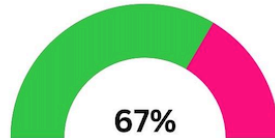
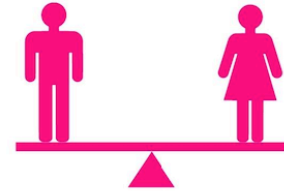
70% started supporting a team from The Hundred. However, long-lasting emotional connections to these new teams will take longer to achieve, while loyalty to traditional men's county cricket dies hard and in some cases conflicts with support for The Hundred.





The level billing given to men’s and women’s players was particularly important for young girls, who were able to see themselves represented on the pitch for the first time.

The Hundred has helped change perceptions of women’s cricket, especially amongst men. For men, the standard of elite women’s cricket was higher than expected. The Hundred has also encouraged men to begin to appreciate and critique existing gender disparities within cricket.



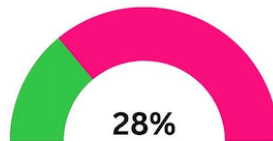
67% planned to attend The Hundred in 2022.



63% of men planned to attend in 2022.



77% of women planned to attend in 2022.



The Hundred changed the perceptions of cricket for 28%. Reasons for a change tended to focus around the diverse and inclusive nature of The Hundred, which clearly marked a break from other forms of cricket.



The Hundred changed perceptions of cricket for 24% of males.



The Hundred changed perceptions of cricket for 36% of women.

## 2.2 Recommendations for the England & Wales Cricket Board

We recommend:

- A focus on more effective and gender-equitable marketing of other cricket tournaments, in order to replicate some of the success of The Hundred elsewhere;
- Targeting these campaigns specifically as follow-up marketing with those who have attended The Hundred as a way to attract them to attend other formats of cricket, especially women’s cricket;

- The adoption of double headers in other formats of domestic cricket, in particular with the T20 Blast and the Charlotte Edwards Cup;
- The closer alignment of men's and women's team "brands" in English domestic T20 cricket - this has been a critical aspect of the success of double headers in The Hundred;
- Steps be taken to ensure that the atmosphere during the men's games remains as positive as it was for the women's games;
- This could include limiting the sale of alcohol, creating more family-only areas and ensuring stewards are better trained and have a zero-tolerance policy towards aggressive behaviour;
- There is also a need to ensure that the music and in-match entertainment provided complements the match-day experience, rather than distracting from the cricket;
- Double-headers should be maintained for the foreseeable future as the centrepiece of The Hundred;
- An equal number of men's and women's matches should be played in the prime-time spot in future iterations of The Hundred;
- The ECB should consider the possibility of holding double header matches at a wider variety of grounds (for example Taunton for Welsh Fire), as a way to placate some existing county supporters and encourage a wider geographical support base for The Hundred teams;
- Making every effort to resolve these existing tensions by articulating more clearly the benefits of The Hundred to existing cricket supporters;
- Curating and directing supporters of cricket more towards formats which they will enjoy - with The Hundred aimed more clearly at new fans;
- In response to the desire of cricket fans, promoting and delivering on gender equality across all forms and formats of cricket.

## **2.3 Recommendations for other sports**

We recommend:

- Sporting organisations should focus on finding practical ways to overcome initial resistance to attending women's sport - this is the most effective way to build a sustainable support base;
- Sporting organisations should consider the possibility of staging double header matches across all types of competition;
- This should be done in a way which ensures that the women's game / team is not seen as either a warm-up "curtain-raiser" act or as an afterthought;
- Sporting organisations should consider launching new competitions, as opposed to simply adapting existing ones, in order to inculcate gender equality as a leading principle from the outset and allow for the creation of aligned men's and women's teams;
- Sporting organisations should market men's sport in way which is more in line with the way in which women's sport is marketed - as family-friendly, wholesome and a good entertainment. This is the best way to ensure bigger crowds and a more positive match-day experience for fans;
- Ticket prices should be set in an affordable way - there are other considerations than profit at play;
- When considering ways to achieve gender equality within sport, sporting organisations should work more closely together and formulate common strategies.



## 3. Context

### 3.1 The radical nature of The Hundred

English cricket's flagship new domestic competition, "The Hundred", was launched in July 2021. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) have described the tournament as part of their "long-term commitment to making cricket a gender-balanced sport".<sup>1</sup>

The Hundred is the first sporting tournament in the world which from the outset featured **fully aligned competitions** for both men's and women's teams. **Equal prize money** (£300,000 apiece for the men and the women) was one of the founding principles of the competition.<sup>2</sup>

The tournament was launched on the back of internal research by the ECB carried out in 2018, which suggested that audiences for cricket remained overwhelmingly male (82%), white British (94%) and had an average age of 50.<sup>3</sup> The Hundred therefore aimed to attract a more diverse audience, and was marketed explicitly as being family-friendly.

Another key component of The Hundred was coverage on the BBC - the first time cricket had featured on free-to-air television since 2005. In the first year of the tournament, the BBC broadcast 10 men's games and eight women's games, including both finals.

### 3.2 The format and structure of The Hundred

The tournament is a professional franchise competition involving eight city-based teams:

- Birmingham Phoenix
- London Spirit
- Manchester Originals
- Northern Superchargers (Leeds)
- Oval Invincibles (London)
- Southern Brave (Southampton)
- Trent Rockets (Nottingham)
- Welsh Fire (Cardiff)

The women's and men's teams compete in separate competitions, but with the guiding principle of "**one team, two squads, one fanbase**". Each men's and women's squad is made up of 15 players, of whom a maximum of four can be overseas players.

The format, which consists of 100 balls for each side, is a brand-new version of cricket. The aim is to simplify a complex sport for a new audience.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thehundred.com/news/1634166/men-s-and-women-s-competitions-to-have-equal-prize-money->

<sup>2</sup> However, there remains a significant disparity in salaries - in Year One, the women's salary bands ranged from £3,000 to £15,000; while the men's ranged from £24,000 to £100,000.

<sup>3</sup> Nick Hoult, 'The birth of The Hundred', 15 June 2020, <https://wisden.com/stories/county-cricket/the-hundred/the-birth-of-the-hundred-bitterness-bullying-accusations-betrayal-almanack>

Due to Covid, the launch of the tournament was delayed by a year. The first tournament took place in July and August 2021, coinciding with the school summer holidays in England. The women's matches were originally scheduled at separate, smaller grounds; but due to concerns about biosecurity, all matches in the first year of the competition (except for the opening game) were “**double headers**” with the women and men playing at the same ground on the same day. One ticket gave access to both the women's and men's games.

### **3.3 The success of The Hundred**

The first year of The Hundred was successful both in terms of **reaching a new audience** for cricket, and **building a new fanbase for women's cricket** specifically. According to ECB data, 55% of tickets were bought by people who had never purchased one before. In contrast with cricket's existing skew towards a male, older audience, The Hundred appears to have attracted more diverse, younger crowds:

- 19% of ticket-holders were children;
- 21% of ticket-buyers were women;
- 36% of ticket-buyers were families.

This was also the case with TV audiences: of the 16.1 million people who watched the first year of The Hundred on television, 57% had not watched any other live cricket in 2021.

The crowds for the women's matches were particularly astonishing. In total, 267,000 people attended - a global record for a women's cricket competition, outperforming the 2020 Women's T20 World Cup in Australia. Average attendance at women's matches was 7,500; while the final at Lord's attracted a crowd of 17,116 - the highest crowd ever recorded anywhere in the world for a domestic women's cricket match.<sup>4</sup>

This success subsequently continued into the second year of the competition, which saw more women (28%), children (22%), and families (41%) attending than in the first year, while a total of 271,000 people attended the women's competition - another global record.<sup>5</sup>

### **3.4 Our research**

Although it is apparent that The Hundred has attracted a new audience to cricket, there remains a lack of understanding about the spectator experience. Our research therefore set out to discover:

- Why did members of the public choose to attend The Hundred, especially if they had never attended cricket before?
- What did the match-day experience look and feel like, and what could be done to improve the experience?
- How family-friendly was the tournament in reality? How did children who attended respond to the match-day experience?

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ecb.co.uk/news/2230059/more-than-16m-tune-in-to-the-hundred-as-competition-welcomes-new-fans-to-cricket>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ecb.co.uk/news/2779653/second-year-of-the-hundred-sees-even-more-families-watching-live-cricket-as-attendance-tops-500000>

- Did the tournament change perceptions of cricket as a sport?
- Did the tournament change perceptions of women's cricket (and female athletes in general)?
- To what extent has The Hundred served as a gateway into engagement with other forms of cricket?

The overall intention of the research was to establish how we can build on the success of The Hundred in future iterations of the tournament. Additionally, we were keen to understand the lessons for other sports, especially those which have historically been similarly male-dominated. What might other sports learn from the success of The Hundred, in order to challenge the structural inequality between men's and women's sport across the sector as a whole?

## 4. Data Collection

### 4.1 Survey

We devised a survey aimed at capturing the experiences of those who had attended the first edition of The Hundred in 2021. An initial filter question (“Did you attend one or more matches in The Hundred in 2021?”) was used to ensure only those who filled this criteria responded to the survey.

The survey was administered via Jisc Online Surveys and ran for six weeks between 21 April 2022 and 2 June 2022 - thus it took place **before** the second edition of The Hundred occurred. The survey was advertised using social media, including via the Women in Sport Twitter account (@WomeninSport\_uk).

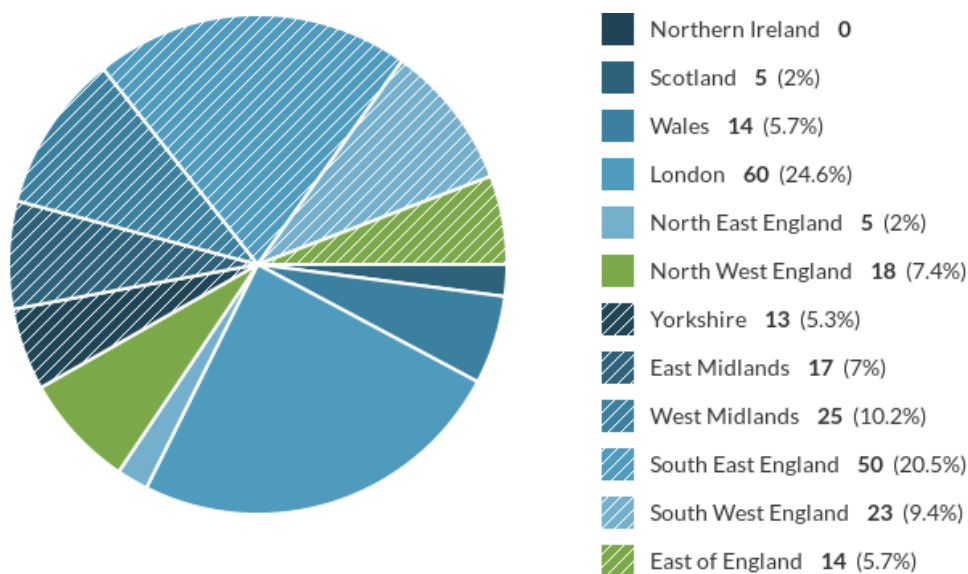
The survey focused on the match-day experience of respondents, and offered the chance to compare their exposure to cricket before and since attending The Hundred. (For a full set of questions, please see Appendix 1.)

We received 245 responses to the survey. There were 163 responses from men, 78 from women, and 1 from a non-binary individual.

The overwhelming majority of respondents were white (n: 229) and non-disabled (n: 232).

The majority of survey respondents were located in London (n: 60) and the South West of England (n: 50), but there was a good geographical spread of responses from across the UK. We had no responses from Northern Ireland, and only 5 from Scotland (perhaps unsurprisingly, given that The Hundred matches all took place in England and Wales).

*Figure 1: Geographical distribution of survey respondents*



## 4.2 Focus Groups

Drawing from respondents to the survey who indicated their willingness to participate in follow-up research, we formed focus groups using survey data to examine specific sub-groups who we felt were of particular interest. The sub-groups represented:

1. Those who were already engaged with both men's and women's cricket;
2. Those who had never watched any cricket before;
3. Those who had never watched women's cricket before and were exposed to it for the first time because of The Hundred;
4. Those whose involvement with cricket had increased since attending The Hundred;
5. Those who had attended The Hundred with children.

In total, 18 people attended the focus groups (11 men and 7 women).

The focus groups took place in July 2022 (prior to the second edition of The Hundred), via Zoom. They were carried out by a Research Assistant employed by Bournemouth University. Discussion was structured around why participants chose to attend The Hundred, the quality of their match-day experience, and whether the experience had changed their subsequent view of cricket and / or women's cricket. (For a full set of discussion points, please see Appendix 2.)

The focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Finally, the transcripts were analysed thematically to allow for the emergence of common issues and concerns.

## 5. Key Findings

### 5.1 Did The Hundred reach a new audience, who had previously not engaged with cricket?

Amongst our survey respondents, involvement in cricket before The Hundred was split roughly 50-50, with 51% of respondents indicating that they had been involved in the sport in some capacity (e.g. as a player, club member, scorer, or coach).

77% (n: 187) of respondents indicated that they already supported a cricket team before attending The Hundred - many appeared to have existing loyalty to men's county cricket, with 158 stating they already supported an existing county.

119 of our respondents indicated that they had no involvement at all with cricket before The Hundred - however, the vast majority (91%) had watched cricket on television prior to the tournament. This suggests that **cricket did reach a significant new audience through The Hundred, largely by activating those who were already watching on television to come along in person.**

### 5.2 Why did spectators choose to attend The Hundred, especially if they had never attended cricket before?

In the survey, we asked respondents why they chose to attend The Hundred. Respondents could tick as many answers as were applicable.

*Table 1: Reasons for attending The Hundred*

Option	Count
Love of cricket	182
To experience a new format of cricket	169
Socialising (with family / friends / colleagues)	127
To see my favourite player(s) in action	97
It was cheaper than other cricket matches	70
I thought it would be family-friendly	63
The shorter length of the matches was appealing	49
To give my child the chance to attend live sport	47
It was cheaper than attending other live sport	36
Live music / entertainment	29
I wanted to support my city	24

75% of respondents said that an existing love of cricket was a key reason, while 40% were keen to see their favourite player(s) in action, underlining that **The Hundred was attended by many existing cricket fans, as well as new fans.**

However, 70% of respondents said that they wanted to experience a new format of cricket. There was a clear sense in the focus groups that **The Hundred would provide a more welcoming and open environment for fans** than other cricket matches:

*“I think that’s one of the reasons we chose to go to so many Hundred games and why we don’t - I’ve only ever been to, like, one Test game... me and my friends who I went with, we find it [Test cricket] can be quite guarded... like there’s certain identity characteristics that... you’d have to kind of meet, in order to go and be able to sit in a stand and watch a Test game... I think it [The Hundred] just felt a lot more... it was going to be - it was open to everyone. I think that probably was one of the reasons we were so keen to go and see as many games as we probably could.”*

Socialising was another key reason for attending The Hundred, highlighted by 52% of respondents. This may have been linked to The Hundred being the first big sporting event staged in the UK after the Covid lockdowns. One focus group attendee reported: “I probably wouldn't have gone to The Hundred if Covid hadn't happened because it came after a year of total cricket starvation - I was just going for everything.”

29% of respondents highlighted the cost of tickets as being an important factor, which was supported by comments in the focus groups about **the excellent value for money which double headers represented:**

*“That was, for me anyway, the main driving force. I was like, you get to see two cricket matches for the price of one... It was a great deal.”*

*“The price of it was really great... I didn’t have to restrict and budget. I could still have a normal summer of what I like to do without having to break the bank for The Hundred - that was really cool.”*

*“The fact that I can pay twenty-five, thirty pounds and watch an entire afternoon of both men’s and women’s cricket to me is good value and I am going to utilise it as much as I can.”*

Only 29 of our respondents said that the live music at The Hundred was a motivation to attend, and only 24 wanted to support their city, suggesting that **these aspects of the tournament were less important to attendees.**

### **5.3 Was the marketing of The Hundred successful?**

The intention behind the ECB’s marketing of The Hundred was to attract a new, younger, more family-focused audience to cricket; and to market the men’s and women’s teams on a more equal basis.

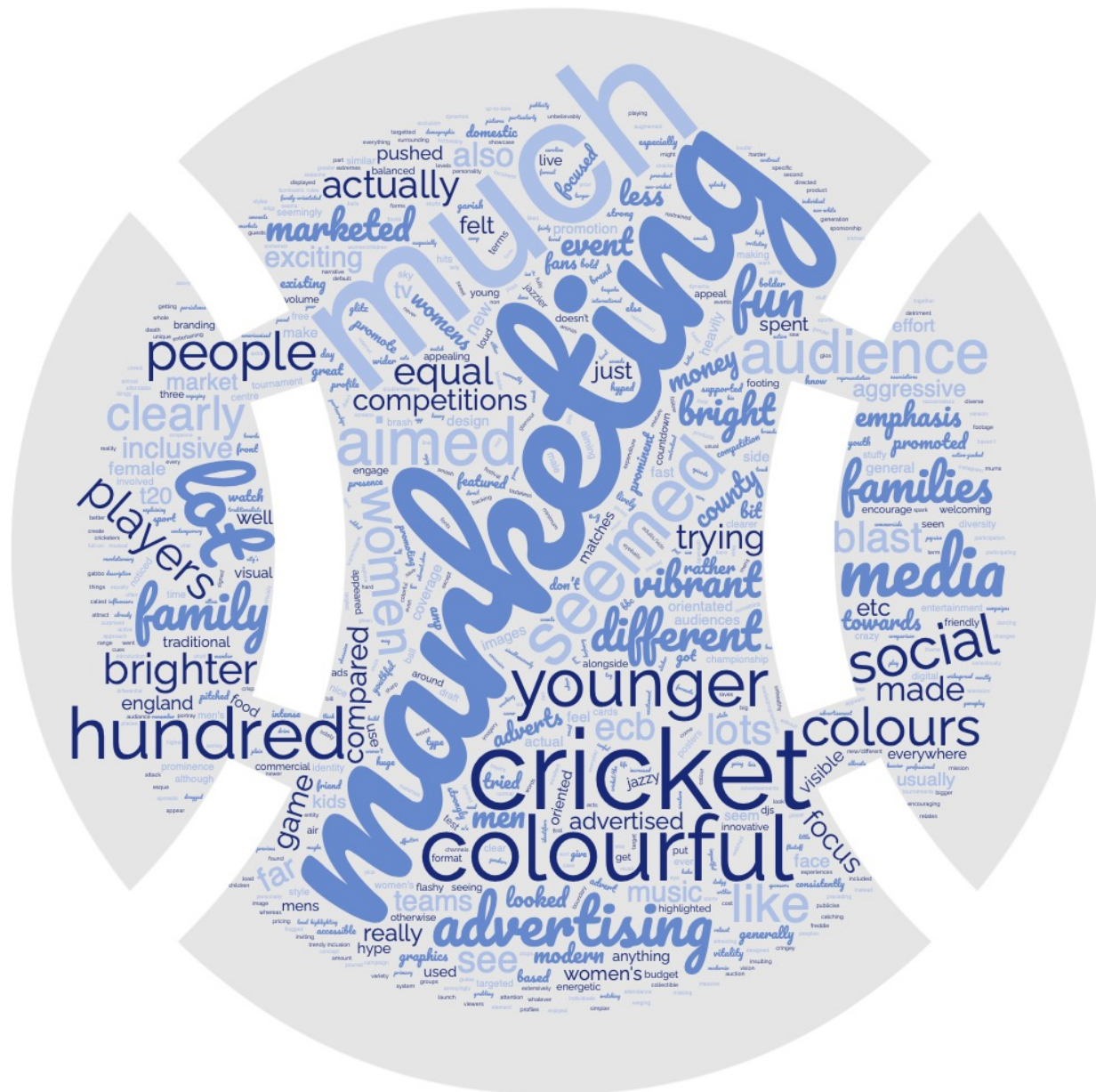
The vast majority (86%) of our respondents agreed that the marketing of The Hundred had been different compared to the marketing of other cricket. Respondents tended to

highlight the colourful and prominent nature of the marketing, as well as the equal promotion of the men's and women's competitions:

*“It wasn't just a Joe Root and Jos Buttler and people on the marketing, they were putting the women in the forefront... They weren't being treated from that perspective, as an afterthought. They were going, 'no, people are coming to see them, we are not kind of shoehorning them in... people are actively buying tickets to this because they want to see the women play.' And so people were buying tickets because they wanted to see the women play.”*

Several respondents highlighted the more inclusive nature of the marketing, and the ECB's effort to showcase non-white players.

Figure 2: Ways in which the marketing of The Hundred was different from other cricket





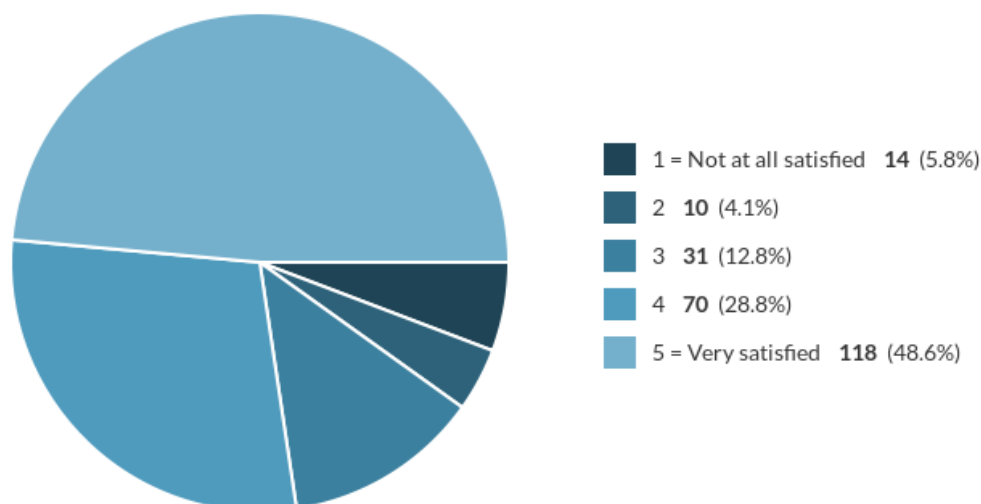
The success of the ECB’s marketing strategy, which particularly targeted women and children, was highlighted by the story of one focus group respondent whose only previous exposure to cricket had been via her cricket-loving husband. However, the marketing of The Hundred caused a recalibration:

*“So my husband is very interested in cricket... but I am not a big aficionado of it. We go occasionally to the Ageas Bowl to see one day internationals etcetera. And it was me that pushed us to go to The Hundred, because I saw the adverts. And I was like this is new, let’s get into this, you know, super exciting and I love a new format... And I thoroughly enjoyed it... And we are going again this year to see the Southern Brave.”*

#### 5.4 What did the match-day experience look and feel like, and what could be done to improve the experience?

The vast majority of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with their experience of attending matches.

Figure 3: Levels of satisfaction with the match-day experience



Levels of satisfaction were similar amongst those who had been involved with cricket before The Hundred (of which 47% were very satisfied), and those who had NOT been involved with cricket before The Hundred (of which 50% were very satisfied). This suggests that **the matchday experience was similarly positive for those who were already engaged with cricket and those who were not.**

We conducted an independent samples t-test to determine whether overall satisfaction levels vary based on ethnicity. The results indicated a significant difference in the satisfaction expressed by white and non-white spectators. Specifically, **spectators from non-white ethnicities had a lower satisfaction (M=3.35) when compared to satisfaction level of white spectators (M=5.00).** However, this finding suffers from the limitation that our sample size was skewed towards white spectators. **We would recommend more research in this area.**

We asked respondents to identify which parts of the day they had **most** enjoyed. The most common response was **the quality of the cricket** (72 respondents). Many existing cricket fans stated that they were reassured that it was “still cricket” and “Fundamentally it’s the same game as T20”. However, it was acknowledged that crowds were far more diverse and younger than those seen at other cricket matches:

*“It was probably the most diverse crowd I have seen at a cricket match... in terms of age and gender and skin colour, completely mixed... it was quite nice. Especially being in Birmingham, it’s nice to have something that reflects the makeup of the city.”*

*“The general vibe about the place was on a different level... very much like a family gathering type thing, not that families don’t go to a Blast game but it just had that difference, it felt like something fresh was going on for sure.”*

24 respondents specifically highlighted the double-header model as a positive aspect of their experience, with several stating that **being exposed to women’s cricket for the first time** was the most enjoyable aspect.

Table 2: Aspects of the match-day most enjoyed by fans

*Being back in a live sport crowd for the first time since the start of the pandemic, and meeting people who had been drawn to the new tournament. First game I went to (Invincibles vs. Fire) I sat next to a man and his father who were big cricket fans (and supporting local player Mady Villiers) but hadn't been to the ground for 30-ish years; at the final I was near a man and two kids who were Southern Brave die-hards having travelled up from Southampton to cheer on the teams.*

*I was never interested in cricket before, The Hundred made it fun and way easier to understand. As a result of watching The Hundred I now watch test matches, T20, etc. The Hundred was a good gateway. Short matches, fun stadium atmosphere, lots of action, safe and friendly venue.*

*Excellent atmosphere and my partner loved seeing the Women playing, plus as she is Swedish she understood the rules very quickly!*

*The energy and liveliness of the crowd, players and commentators brought a lovely, fun and exciting atmosphere. The cricket was great to watch and easy to pick up. We went from never having watched much cricket before to being hooked and even willing to pay extortionate resale prices to get to the final!!*

*It was super lively... it went by really quickly... at T20 cricket these days, it kind of drags a bit the last five overs, but it just went bang, bang until the 100 balls were finished. That was a huge appeal getting there, because I knew exactly what time I could have off and be gone by, and I just kind of liked the whole quick noisy vibe nonstop.*

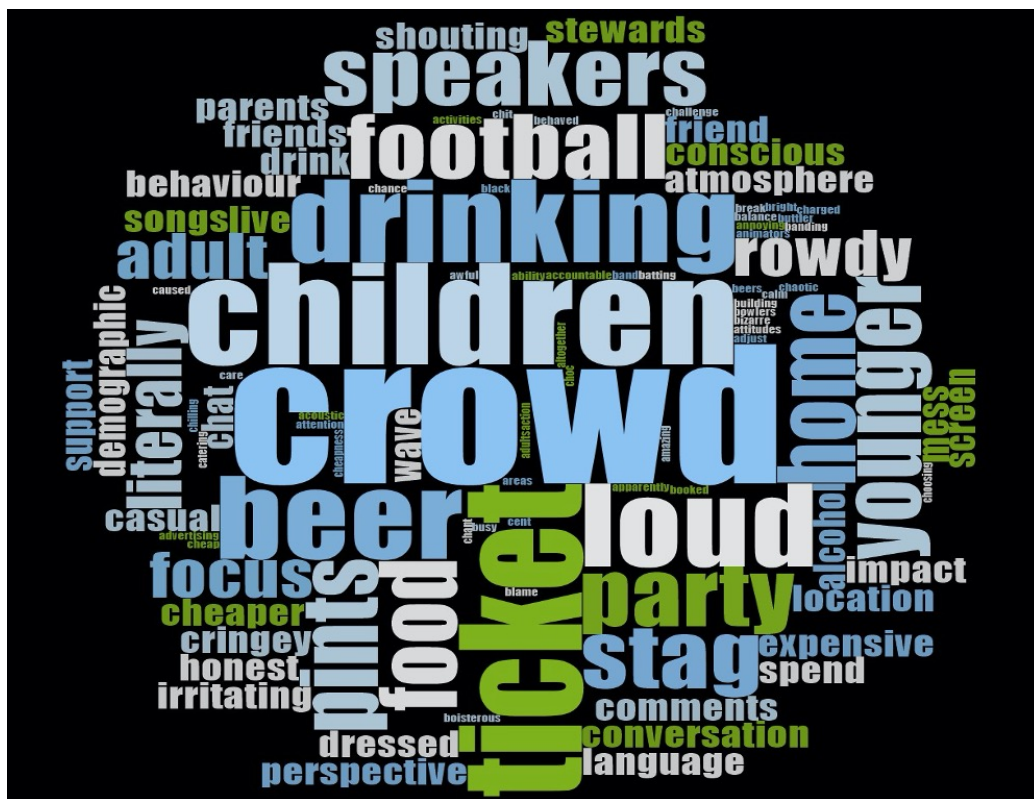
*It was a sort of a fun quick summer activity that I could fit in between half days at work, which isn't always the case watching cricket*

*I liked being able to go into Lord's without a tie on.*

*One of the positives was the fact that it was on for so many days in the row that it was constant for that month or whatever because it allowed me to go and watch five games in six days. So say for example I wanted to watch England Women, it's on the Wednesday, the Friday and the Monday - well I probably watch one of those games... As somebody who works and lives really far away I can't just get a half day and nip down, like it would take me my half day to get there and I would miss it... So having the opportunity to take a week off and see five games in six days was a massive selling point to me.*

We also asked respondents to identify which parts of the day they had **least** enjoyed. The most common response related to drunkenness, “laddishness” and / or poor crowd behaviour, which was identified as a factor by 38 respondents.

Figure 4: Aspects of the match-day least enjoyed by fans



This is a particular concern given that the tournament was explicitly marketed as being family-friendly. Several respondents highlighted this **clash between the two visions of the tournament - a boozy, social occasion; and an enjoyable day out for families:**

*“I did notice a bit of a change during the game whereby after about 7 o clock what was a nice family atmosphere for the women's game descended a bit into a typical t20 (more male, more alcohol being drunk). This is probably a reflection of kids going home to bed I guess and people coming in after work. But as a fan, it felt like an event of two halves without much integration/ middle ground between the two”*

*“A lot of people only came to the Men's game and got very drunk. There is nothing wrong with a rowdy crowd, as such, but I felt large sections of the crowd were disengaged from the cricket. It was not a family friendly atmosphere. I have attended many sporting events including a lot of football so I am no stranger to lively crowds but there was something different about this crowd. High levels of drunkenness and bad behaviour. I also witnessed a bloody fight within Lord's. I tell people now in all my time viewing live sport this is the most violent thing I have experienced at a sporting event”<sup>6</sup>*

*“My wife is an ex teacher and she had to give these Birmingham fans a telling off... they were all drinking heavily and not moderating their language in their conversation either. You just think, come on guys. And there was nothing, there was no intervention from the stewards, nothing at all, which was a bit bizarre because we go to Trent Bridge a lot and the stewards are normally really good.”*

This clash between visions is something the ECB will need to address in future iterations of The Hundred.

Many established cricket fans found that the entertainment on offer (including the live music and mid-phase entertainers) detracted from their match-day experience. The more “interactive” audience engagement attempted during Hundred matches was felt to be inauthentic and awkward by some:

*“you can feel the whole crowd is sort of just [cringing]. And when like twenty thousand people, thirty thousand people are cringing at the same time you can feel it. It's not a baseball game... It's like someone has just got a checklist of things, ‘this is how we make sport fun and engaging’, and they have just followed it.”*

Others felt it added nothing to and in some cases actually detracted from the family-friendly nature of the experience:

*“They [the children I attended with] loved it [the experience]. But again when you are a cricket mad ten year old, first of all the fact that you were in the [Lord's] pavilion is pretty cool, and then you are, again it comes down to the quality of the cricket, you are seeing some really high standard of cricket. These kids particularly didn't seem to be bothered by all the enforced fun.*

*“At Lord's there was a sort of a bit of a smart aleck guy and a fairly laddish women and some of what they were doing wasn't really very wise. For example at one match the guy seemed to encourage throwing a ball across the crowd and it turned out a few minutes later that with alcohol playing a part there was rather more than balls being thrown and it caused a bit of ruckus. So there needs to be much better control of what the in between phase entertainers say and do I think.”*

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<sup>6</sup> This appears to be a reference to an incident which occurred during the London Spirit v Southern Brave men's match on 1 August 2021, whereby the police had to be called to eject a number of drunken spectators from the ground. See <https://crickether.com/2021/08/02/exclusive-police-called-to-lords-during-the-hundred-double-header-as-ecb-family-friendly-claims-come-under-scrutiny/>

Given that the quality of the cricket was the key draw factor for most attendees, there is an argument that the ECB should invest more of their budget in player salaries and effective stewarding, and less in entertainment which is seen by many as peripheral to their overall experience.

On the other hand, there is some evidence that this dislike of the music was reflective of a **broader culture clash between established and new cricket fans attending The Hundred**. For example, women enjoyed the live music more than men did - 47% reported being satisfied or very satisfied with this element of the match-day, compared with just 29% of men. One female focus group participant who experienced cricket for the first time via The Hundred said that she was keen on the pyrotechnics: *“every time they hit a six or a four, there would be like fire that would go around it and it just adds to the drama of it all”*. It may be that some of those attending The Hundred are less attached to existing ideas about what a “day at the cricket” feels and sounds like.

### **5.5 How family-friendly was the first year of The Hundred?**

51 of our respondents attended with younger children, while 29 attended with teenagers. **Their experience was overwhelmingly positive**. 80% of those who attended with children said the children either enjoyed attending or enjoyed attending very much. Of those who attended with teenagers, the figure was even higher - 86%. This was reflected in the fact that **78% of those who attended with children or teenagers said they planned to attend with children or teenagers again in 2022**.

Those who attended with children or teenagers were also more likely to report an increased involvement with cricket. For example, 11 respondents have taken their children to watch other cricket since The Hundred. One respondent indicated:

*“I’m taking my daughters to a local cricket club and I’m helping coach. I’ve booked tickets to lots of women’s games this coming season. Hoping to start playing myself too.”*

Overall, this points to success by the ECB at achieving a positive, family-friendly experience; such that they would want to return again in 2022 with those same children or young people, and that some younger people had been inspired to become more involved with cricket as a result.

The accessible nature of the tournament and the level billing given to men’s and women’s players seems to have been particularly important for young girls. In the survey, proximity to players and the ability to interact with them ranked highly as aspects of the match-day which were most enjoyed by fans. One focus group attendee highlighted the importance for his daughter of seeing herself represented on the pitch:

*“I like Test Cricket. My daughter, you know, she gets frustrated when she comes in, and it’s the morning of day three and she says, ‘Are we winning?’ I go, ‘Don’t know yet.’ The Hundred’s a lot more understandable... I was keen to have, after Covid, a big family trip out to go to a sports event because it wasn’t something we had done before. The fact that it was the women’s and the men’s was actually really important because... she likes seeing that representation...”*

*She's got super into the [Women's] Euros this month... Normally she wants Villa [men] to win but she doesn't want to sit and watch the whole match. But the women's football, she's been properly into. So that [representation] was actually really important for us."*

In a reverse of prevailing gender dynamics, another focus group attendee said that his daughter had actually been more inspired by attending the tournament than his son:

*"My daughter absolutely adored it and she has now joined a cricket club and I'm taking her again, later on this summer, with one of her friends. My lad who hates all sports actually quite got into it when it was the last three or four overs, when it was all very tense... he decided not to go back to it this year... But me and my daughter are looking forward to going back to it again later this year."*

There is evidently a virtuous circle here for the ECB - **if girls have more opportunities to see women play cricket via The Hundred (and other tournaments), they will be more likely to play themselves;** leading to more girls entering talent pathways, and ultimately a bigger player pool.

## **5.6 Did women experience The Hundred differently to men?**

In keeping with the ECB's own internal research (see Section 3.1 above), we found that women were significantly less likely to have watched cricket on television or to have supported a cricket team or club prior to the launch of The Hundred. **Women seem to have been drawn to the tournament partly because of the gender-equitable marketing strategy** - 18% of our female respondents highlighted that more women were featured than in "traditional" cricket marketing (compared with just 5% of male respondents).

Women were significantly more satisfied with several aspects of The Hundred than men, including the family-friendly atmosphere, the explanation of the rules at the venue, and (interestingly) the quality of the cricket. **More women (77%) than men (63%) said that they would be attending The Hundred in 2022**, perhaps reflecting the higher levels of satisfaction felt amongst women.

Another interesting finding came from the chi-square test that found a significant relationship between gender and a change in perceptions of cricket. More precisely, we observed that **The Hundred changed perceptions of cricket significantly more for women (36%) than for men (24%)**.

Responses from women whose perceptions had changed included:

*"I liked that this tournament attracted a wider more open audience"*

*"Not just for old white men"*

*"Don't have to be an MCC [member] to enjoy!"*

*"It's made more fun"*

*"More fun for all the family and for non-loving friends"*

*"It was such a family-orientated format"*

*“It gave me hope that young people can look up to women's cricket and not see it as lesser and instead see it as equal and maybe even better with the qualities it promotes that men's cricket does not.”*

*“Don't have to be a huge lover of the game and know all techniques to enjoy watching and get involved.”*

*“More exciting and inclusive”*

This all points to a big success story for the ECB, and suggests that **the deliberate targeting of women via marketing can help to diversify sport's traditionally male-dominated fanbase.**

Interestingly, women appear to identify more strongly as fans of the women's teams in The Hundred than they do of the men's teams, as measured by player recognition. 27% of women say they can name 11-15 of the women's team they support, while only 9% can name 11-15 of the men's team they support. This perhaps suggests that seeing oneself represented on the pitch can be as important for adult women as it is for young girls.

### **5.7 How strong are fan allegiances in The Hundred?**

164 of our respondents (70%) stated that they started supporting a team from The Hundred. The vast majority chose to support the team which matched their existing county allegiance - for example, 81% of Hampshire fans were supporters of Southern Brave, and 77% of Warwickshire fans were Birmingham Phoenix supporters.

Those who supported a county without a corresponding Hundred franchise attached were more likely not to identify with any team. For example, of the 12 Somerset supporters who responded to our survey, 9 of them said they did not support any team in The Hundred (only 2 of them supported their “local” franchise, Welsh Fire, while the other one said he was a Birmingham Phoenix fan). As one focus group participant explained:

*“As a Somerset fan I don't really have a team like, which is not a huge problem but it means I don't really have anyone to, like I really dipped in and out of, probably watched three games on TV and went to one game and that was it. I saw Birmingham because Moeen Ali plays for them and I love Moeen Ali but that was my only reasoning. I'm not Welsh so Welsh Fire didn't seem right and none of the others did really either.”*

Amongst those who follow cricket, existing county loyalties evidently die hard. This is an issue for The Hundred, which is based on brand new teams. Additionally, these new teams are city-based, yet we found that very few of those who attended The Hundred did so because they wanted to support their city (see Section 5.2). **Creating long-lasting attachments to these new teams may therefore be difficult.**

This was borne out by responses from several of those in the focus groups, who highlighted the lesser emotional connection they felt to “their” Hundred team compared to other sporting allegiances:

*“You've got that emotional connection with your football or rugby team don't you as well... I will go to the other end of the country to watch my football team. But I probably wouldn't want to go more than an hour and a half to watch a Hundred game because I just don't care enough about the result.”*

*“Even though the atmosphere was great, I didn’t feel like everybody was like, ‘go Manchester Originals’, you know. I mean that’s the team I adopted as my local team but it’s definitely much more kind of crazier and hyped at Manchester Thunder, my netball team, it’s a lot older... Whereas I felt with The Hundred you know if it was a good game and Birmingham won then I was pretty happy for Birmingham you know I didn’t feel that sad about Manchester losing or anything, I don’t really have that passion for my local team yet in that sense... I’m still very like, I just want to see all the teams playing cricket rather than my soul is Manchester Originals, I’m not really there yet. I don’t know if I’ll ever be but we’ll see.”*

It is important that the ECB works hard to develop these emotional connections, because there appears to be a connection between fan loyalty to Hundred teams and increased involvement in cricket since The Hundred. (For example, 91% of those who did not support a specific team in The Hundred have also not increased their involvement with cricket; compared to just 47% of those who do support a team.)

It is also clear from the academic literature on fandom that those who form strong team allegiances are more likely to attend future matches.<sup>7</sup> The opposite is also true, as one focus group participant explained:

*“I remember in the ladies’ match, I have no idea who the northern team were playing, I know we won. The men’s game I had even less idea who we played and even less idea what the result was. Even though I think actually we lost, I could be wrong on that. Didn’t particularly enjoy it and I’m not going back this year.”*

This particular focus group participant had supported Yorkshire for 25 years and expressed resentment towards the new 100-ball format: “Having been, I don’t really see that there’s that much that this is doing that the Blast didn’t do.” This is a good example of the entrenched resistance that existing supporters of county cricket have demonstrated towards The Hundred (as of 3 November 2022, the Twitter account @opposethe100 had 5,810 followers). Several of our focus group participants remain sceptical about the tournament:

*“I mean the amount of money that’s gone into The Hundred is at least £60 million from what I’ve read and what I understand, and for that we’ve got another format that is basically the same as one that already existed. We were selling this new format as something that could go to after schools yet it doesn’t start until half past six, it is supposed to finish at nine o’clock and yet it doesn’t, it is supposed to be on terrestrial TV, yet the vast majority it isn’t... It’s changing things for the sake of changing things which probably didn’t need to be changed.”*

*“Although The Hundred is a success, at what cost, what cost financially to the ECB and the counties? And to what opportunity cost to other things that could’ve been done to promote the game such as simply beefing up the*

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<sup>7</sup> Funk, D. C., & James, J. (2001). The psychological continuum model: A conceptual framework for understanding an individual’s psychological connection to sport. *Sport Management Review* 4:2, 119-150.



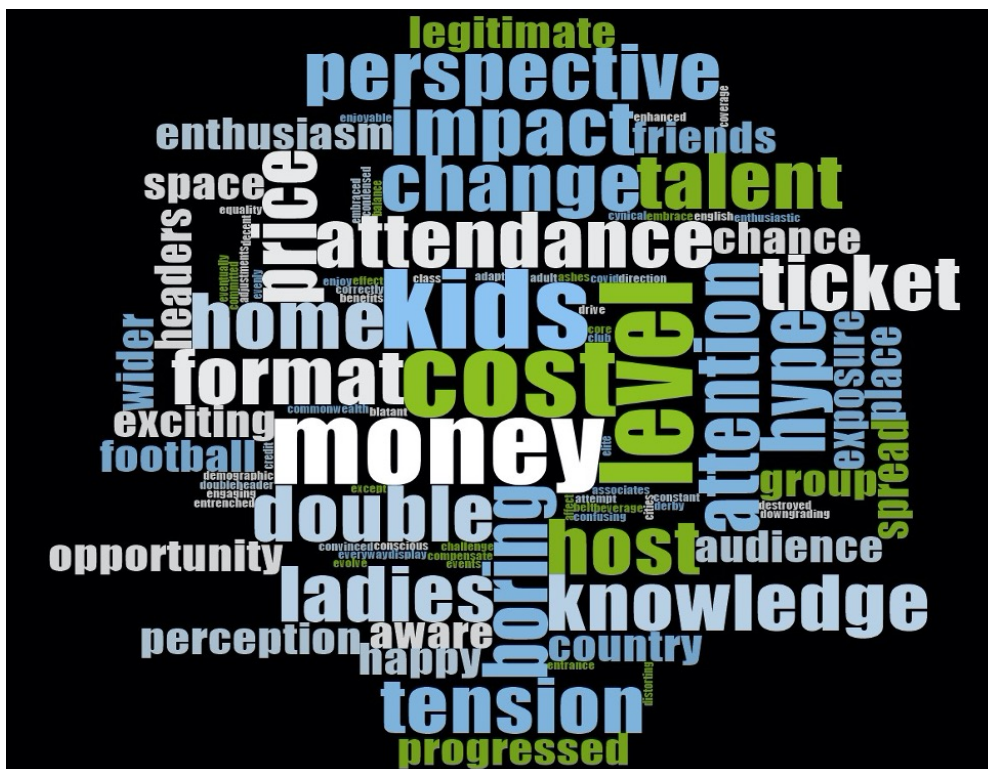
*Twenty20 Blast? As a member I'm losing a lot, I'm losing the entire August for red ball and white ball cricket at the highest level of the English game in order to slot this thing in."*

*"Someone has clearly said like, 'let's design this to piss off the people that really like cricket because we are deliberately looking for a different audience'."*

There appears to be a divide between more traditional cricket supporters who remain sceptical about the tournament, and those who are brand-new to cricket who found it more accessible than other formats. As one Yorkshire supporter put it: "Basically, The Hundred was everything the county championship isn't." This could be viewed as a challenge for the ECB, but it is also an opportunity. **Not every format of cricket has to appeal to everyone, but it may be that the ECB needs to curate and direct supporters more towards formats which they will enjoy.**

### 5.8 Did The Hundred change perceptions of cricket as a sport?

Figure 5: Changing perceptions of cricket



The majority of our survey respondents (72%) said that The Hundred had **not** changed their perceptions of cricket, although 69 respondents (28%) said that it had done so.

Those who were new fans were more likely to have had their perceptions of cricket changed - 43% compared to 23% of existing supporters. Those whose perceptions had not changed tended to be existing fans who did not see The Hundred as different from other forms of cricket. Reasons for a change tended to centre around the diverse and inclusive nature of The Hundred, which clearly marked a break from other forms of cricket:

*“I’ve spoke to a lot of people about the fact that I went to The Hundred and they’ve been like, ‘I’ve watched some of that on the telly’. Now a lot of these people know I’ve played cricket for 30 years and have never told me that they’ve watched a cricket match in their life... people were willing to embrace cricket that have never embraced cricket before.”*

It is interesting to note that **a higher percentage of women (36%) than men (24%) said that The Hundred had changed their perceptions of cricket.** Again this can be seen as a success story for the ECB, in their attempt to reach a more diverse and more female audience.

*Table 3: Changing perceptions of cricket*

<b>Reasons for a change in perceptions of cricket</b>	<b>Reasons for perceptions of cricket remaining the same</b>
<i>It helped me understand cricket and recognise the players</i>	<i>I'm a fan of any style of cricket</i>
<i>I watched a lot of the tournament at home and I thought the coverage was different in a good way and inclusive. My partner also watched with me and enjoyed it more where she never really has before</i>	<i>Was almost just another tournament, same players, Same standard of cricket, enjoyed it and am going again. But didn't change it for the better or worse, perception was already pretty good</i>
<i>I was previously not very interested in cricket, now I am HOOKED.</i>	<i>I have been a player and fan for years so whilst it was fun tournament it didnt add/limit my perceptions of cricket. Still a badger!</i>
<i>It was the first time I felt able to take my children to a game where they were welcome and could enjoy the entire experience</i>	<i>I watch a lot of cricket. Fundamentally it's the same game as T20</i>
<i>I thought it was dull, confusing and for posh boys beforehand. Now I understand it and really enjoy it!</i>	<i>It's just normal cricket, people who think otherwise are being bonkers.</i>
<i>I always thought cricket in England COULD be more diverse and welcoming but I wasnt sure enough decision makers wanted it to be</i>	<i>I loved cricket before it, I like the competition, but it didnt change anything massively.</i>
<i>It showed that the game can reach more people and be far more inclusive than it already is. The crowds were diverse and enthusiastic and it felt like such a big shift from the overwhelmingly middle class, middle aged and white audience usually found at county matches.</i>	

## 5.9 Did The Hundred change perceptions of women's cricket?

68 (28%) of our survey respondents had never watched women's cricket before The Hundred, yet 212 (87%) of respondents indicated that they had watched both women's and men's games during the tournament. This suggests that **the double-header model was successful in exposing a significant number of individuals to women's cricket for the first time.**

Respondents were roughly split between those who felt the tournament had changed their perceptions of women's cricket (n: 111) and those who felt it had not changed their perceptions of women's cricket (n: 133). Within the focus groups, numerous participants highlighted the significance of double headers in forcing them to engage with women's cricket:

*"I was kind of strong armed into watching a women's event but I was really glad that I was."*

*"If it had been one or the other, I probably would've gone, 'well I want to go and watch Joe Root, I want to see the men's match', which maybe reflects how I'm maybe being old-fashioned... now, I would be like 'actually, I want to go and see Nat Sciver and I want to go and see Katherine Brunt and all those people'... I thought it [the double header] was brilliant. I think I read somewhere that they would think about not doing that for the second season... I was a bit like, 'oh no, I really liked that, I want you to keep that'."*

Interestingly, a higher percentage of men (49%) than women (40%) said that The Hundred had changed their perceptions of women's cricket. Within the focus groups, many men expressed surprise that **the standard of elite women's cricket was higher than they had expected:**

*"I did find that the women's games were more enjoyable in some aspects because it's been quite a while since I've seen women's cricket and it was back in the early 2000s I watched a day of it, a match between England and India, and the standard has come on massively since that time."*

*"The amount of advance in the women's game in the last twenty years is astronomical and it's a brilliant watch."*

Perhaps for the first time ever, there was a name awareness of individual players who had not (at the time of the focus groups) represented England internationally. Women's sport often struggles for this type of name recognition, so **to hear men casually name-dropping Alice Capsey, Lauren Bell and Issy Wong in focus groups can be considered a breakthrough moment in terms of public awareness of women's cricket.**

It was also interesting to hear multiple participants say that **they preferred the women's competition to the men's competition**, to the extent that **they would be happy in future to attend single-header women's matches.** The women's game was seen as "more relatable" and less "brutal" than men's cricket. There was also a feeling that the women's competition was a higher standard than the men's competition due to the greater availability of elite players:

*“I enjoyed the women’s games perhaps more than the men’s. As far as the women are concerned I liked the fact that apart from Australia I felt I was looking at the sort of truly elite players. Whereas despite all the marketing and hype, the men teams in The Hundred were not really that world class to a large extent.”*

The availability of elite players in the men’s competition is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. This represents something of a challenge for the ECB - it means that the men’s competition is likely to be viewed as “second-rate” by established supporters - but it is also **an opportunity for the women’s competition to continue to push its case as the superior product.**

It was pleasing to hear many men in the focus groups actively pushing for greater moves towards equality for men’s and women’s cricket. Several expressed support for moves towards more equal pay between the men’s and women’s teams, while another was outraged at one incident which he felt suggested that the ECB was not placing enough value on the women’s tournament:

*“I thought by miles the worst thing that happened for The Hundred last year, there was a game at Lords where the women’s game was completed, a hundred per cent, it was fine. Then it rained and the men’s game didn’t even start. And the ECB decided to give one hundred per cent ticket refunds, which was not a good look. Like there were ten thousand people there that had watched the whole of the women’s game and it was great and they enjoyed it and they were given all their money back. As a way of saying, ‘well obviously the value that we place on this game is nothing, so have all your cash.’”*

The evidence suggests that **The Hundred has not just broken down negative preconceptions of women’s sport, but actually encouraged men to begin to appreciate and critique existing gender disparities.**

#### **5.10 To what extent has The Hundred served as a gateway into engagement with other forms of cricket?**

64 of our survey respondents (25%) said that their involvement in cricket had increased since attending The Hundred. 40 of these were men, and 22 were women. This increased involvement manifested itself in different ways:

- 20 said they were now taking children or family members to cricket
- 9 said they were now playing
- 7 said they were now coaching and 5 scoring
- 3 had become club members
- 1 was now an umpire.

Within the focus groups, many attendees talked about The Hundred as a way to encourage their friends and family to come along to cricket for the first time:

*“A couple of occasions I took some friends who’ve never been to cricket before and I didn’t worry, I mean when I’ve done that in the past for a [women’s] regional game or something they have sometimes tuned out a little bit... But*

*there was enough to keep them absorbed and to talk about cricket a bit more and want to go next time as well.”*

*“The first one we went to as a kind of family unit, I went with my partner and her parents and we made a day of it. So that was good fun and it was kind of something that we hadn’t done as a family before, that was K’s first cricket match that she had ever been to... that was her first like proper cricket game. And she really enjoyed it and even said she would go back and do it again.”*

However, while the majority of our respondents (67%) stated that they are planning to attend The Hundred again in 2022, **there has only been limited engagement with and attendance at other forms of cricket since The Hundred.**

85 of our respondents (35%) had not attended any other live cricket since The Hundred. Of those who have done so, the majority are men watching men’s cricket (42% of men say they have attended men’s cricket since The Hundred, compared with the 25% of men who say that have attended both men’s and women’s cricket). **49% of women have not attended any other form of cricket since The Hundred.**

We can infer that **other forms of cricket are not as attractive to female audiences as The Hundred.** This was borne out in some of the focus group discussions. One female participant said that although she had recently been to see a day of England men’s Test cricket:

*“I prefer The Hundred. I think it’s like the best. I’m obsessed... I used to find it [cricket] really boring, basically... But since The Hundred, it really has changed my perspective on cricket... I still can appreciate like Test Cricket and T20 as well along with it and like would happily go and watch a game, but The Hundred will always have a special place in my heart.”*

There was a definite feeling within the focus groups that The Hundred was more welcoming and attractive to new fans than other formats of cricket. For some, there was a feeling that existing gatekeepers within the sport would not welcome those whose only experience of cricket had been The Hundred:

*“Even though I’ve watched The Hundred, I still probably wouldn’t feel comfortable going to a cricket club on a Saturday. I still would find it quite guarded that I didn’t quite, maybe have the same knowledge as someone or I didn’t view it in the same way... my brother who does play and I’ve been down the cricket club with him on a weekend, he plays the Saturday and Sunday, and their kind of attitude towards, even just one day cricket, makes me think that I probably wouldn’t necessarily feel comfortable in that situation, I think.”*

The ECB needs to consider **how these new fans can be made to feel equally welcome in other forms of cricket**, in order to convert interest in The Hundred into more sustainable interest in the sport as a whole.

One area of focus should be marketing, outside of the context of The Hundred itself. Several focus group respondents reported that there had been no follow-up marketing directing them to other cricket since The Hundred took place. Some survey responses also

indicated that the ECB's existing marketing of other cricket competitions left a lot to be desired:

*“Advertisements for other cricket events in the UK are very stale (verging on cringey) - see the advert for the Blast this year. The Hundred [marketing] was ‘bright’ and ‘flashy’.”*

### **The ECB could do more to market cricket more effectively beyond The Hundred.**

Some fans were also prevented from accessing other cricket on television due to it only being available on pay-per-view services like Sky and BT Sport. Numerous focus group participants suggested that the accessibility of The Hundred on the BBC had been crucial to maintaining their interest throughout the tournament:

*“I always when I watched it on TV made a point of tuning into the BBC broadcast and I noticed a lot of, I’d be chatting to a lot of friends at dinner and stuff and they just had it on. Or for instance my dad, he’s checking out this Hundred and he’s grumbling about it, but he came back and watched it the next day and things like that... To have its own proper slot in the evening every day, it sort of became like the landscape... that felt kind of unique to me, I didn’t have to pay twice for it.”*

For as long as The Hundred remains the only cricket competition available to watch on free-to-air television, some fans will be prevented from extending their interest in cricket across into other formats.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Note: the BBC also have the rights under the current broadcast agreement to show two men's T20 internationals and one women's T20 international per year. However, this is still extremely limited in comparison to their extended coverage of The Hundred.

## 6. Recommendations for the ECB

### 6.1 Marketing

Much of the success of The Hundred has resulted from the investment in marketing by the ECB and the conscious decision to market the competition in a family-friendly, gender equitable way. We therefore recommend:

- A focus on more effective and gender-equitable marketing of other cricket tournaments, in order to replicate some of the success of The Hundred elsewhere;
- Targeting these campaigns specifically as follow-up marketing with those who have attended The Hundred as a way to attract them to attend other formats of cricket, especially women's cricket.

### 6.2 Double headers

Double headers have been one of the biggest successes of The Hundred: fans feel they are good value for money, and they are an effective way to encourage greater attendance at women's matches. We therefore recommend:

- The adoption of double headers in other formats of domestic cricket, in particular with the T20 Blast and the Charlotte Edwards Cup;
- The closer alignment of men's and women's team "brands" in English domestic T20 cricket - this has been a critical aspect of the success of double headers in The Hundred.

### 6.3 The match-day experience

Although the match-day experience for those attending The Hundred was largely positive, some tensions remain between those looking for a social and boozy day out, and those wanting a family-friendly experience where they and their children feel safe. Currently, there is a risk that The Hundred is only 50% family-friendly and some fans are put off by the atmosphere during the men's matches. We therefore recommend:

- Steps be taken to ensure that the atmosphere during the men's games remains as positive as it was for the women's games;
- This could include limiting the sale of alcohol, creating more family-only areas and ensuring stewards are better trained and have a zero-tolerance policy towards aggressive behaviour.
- There is also a need to ensure that the music and in-match entertainment provided complements the match-day experience, rather than distracting from the cricket.

### 6.4 Scheduling and locations

While our research showed very clear support for double headers, the issue with this format is that the women's game could be reduced to a "warm-up" and misses the opportunity to be televised during prime-time. Additionally, some of those in the focus groups expressed a dissatisfaction with having to travel beyond a certain distance in order to access The Hundred. We therefore recommend:

- Double-headers should be maintained for the foreseeable future as the centrepiece of The Hundred;
- An equal number of men's and women's matches should be played in the prime-time spot in future iterations of The Hundred;
- The ECB should consider the possibility of holding double header matches at a wider variety of grounds (for example Taunton for Welsh Fire), as a way to placate some existing county supporters and encourage a wider geographical support base for The Hundred teams.

## **6.5 Cricket's culture war**

Our research has laid bare an existing tension between traditional and newer supporters of cricket, as one quote from the focus groups highlights:

*“As a women's cricket fan I love The Hundred... Whereas as a men's fan I don't like The Hundred at all. I think, I don't like the gimmicks of the format... And really I want to see my county play, I don't want to see the franchise cricket and I am genuinely torn.”*

It is especially unhealthy for women's cricket to be caught in the middle of this kind of “culture war”, as it will alienate some potential supporters. There is also a feeling of discomfort amongst some newer supporters of cricket, who are made to feel like “second-class citizens” in a pre-existing cricketer supporters' hierarchy. We therefore recommend:

- Making every effort to resolve these existing tensions by articulating more clearly the benefits of The Hundred to existing cricket supporters;
- Curating and directing supporters of cricket more towards formats which they will enjoy - with The Hundred aimed more clearly at new fans.

## **6.6 Promoting gender equality within cricket**

Overall, our research strongly suggests that there is an appetite amongst cricket fans to move faster on gender equality. Perhaps for the first time, The Hundred has created a situation whereby fans have not just begun paying attention to the women's game but are also now critiquing the ECB when it fails to deliver on gender equality (see section 5.9). There is therefore a need for the ECB to live up to their expectations and deliver gender equality across all forms and formats of cricket.



## 7. Recommendations for other sports

### 7.1 The importance of initial exposure to women's sport

The professionalisation of elite women's sport in recent years has led to a sea-change in improvements in standards on the pitch. The Hundred demonstrates the importance of getting fans (especially men) to attend matches, to showcase these improvements. As one focus group participant told us:

*"I watched women's football quite a lot a few years ago because Nottingham hosted the FA Cup Final for women... that was probably in the mid-2000s... and the standard then was you had to be kind of, you were giving them the benefit of the doubt by watching them, if that's not sounding too condescending... That's changed dramatically... to the point where you never feel like you're there because it's the right thing to do. You're actually watching it because it's really entertaining and the standards are really high and it's the same with cricket and football for me... It's like any sport, you can just say, 'right, I'm going to watch this for the next hour and really enjoy it'."*

Even those who initially held negative views of women's sport were converted to its cause by attending The Hundred; many said that they had enjoyed it more than the men's competition, while the vast majority were intending to return in future seasons. We therefore recommend that:

- Sporting organisations should focus on finding practical ways to overcome initial resistance to attending women's sport - this is the most effective way to build a sustainable support base.

### 7.2 The double header model

The double header model was viewed by our focus group participants as a unique aspect of The Hundred, when compared to other sports. Double headers are an important way to ensure women's sport gains a new audience. Fans view them as excellent value for money - a factor which will become increasingly important during the current cost of living crisis.

Although other sports (for example football and rugby) have attempted to organise double headers, The Hundred can be seen as a model example of how to ensure that they achieve their purpose. As one focus group participant explained:

*"If you put them in the larger venues and market them to an audience who is interested, you will get rid of those tickets, you will get people attending. But if you put them in a smaller ground and just kind of mention it as an afterthought and don't show them on the television, then you are not going to build that level of support who will then come back next year and make it bigger and just grow it there."*

Having fully aligned team brands and equal marketing of male and female players are other important aspects of making double headers a success. We therefore recommend:

- Sporting organisations should consider the possibility of staging double header matches across all types of competition;
- This should be done in a way which ensures that the women’s game / team is not seen as either a warm-up “curtain-raiser” act or as an afterthought.

### **7.3 The importance of adaptability and innovation**

A clear message from our research is that fans appreciate the way cricket has shown itself to be adaptable by organising a brand-new, radical competition like The Hundred, and are keen to see this type of innovation in other sports. As one focus group participant told us:

*“It really feels like cricket is really well placed to, kind of deal with that change in wider society... football is very much kind of digging its heels in and being reluctant to change. It was nice to see a sport that was prepared to at least just try a different format and see if it worked, and it’s good that it’s been a success.”*

Cricket is one of the oldest codified sports in the UK, and has always been a very conservative and traditional sport. The fact that the ECB found the money and the political will to organise a competition as innovative as The Hundred should be an encouraging sign for other sports who may be nervous about “rocking the boat”.

Our research suggests that one of the reasons The Hundred has been successful in reaching out to a new audience is that it is a brand new competition, and the organisers have therefore been able to deliberately embrace women and families from the outset, for example via targeted marketing and aligned men’s and women’s teams. We therefore recommend:

- Sporting organisations should consider launching new competitions, as opposed to simply adapting existing ones, in order to inculcate gender equality as a leading principle from the outset and allow for the creation of aligned men’s and women’s teams.

### **7.4 The importance of family-friendly marketing and ticket pricing**

Our research suggests that one of the main attractions of attending The Hundred was that it was perceived to be family-friendly. This chimes with previous studies of women’s football and specifically the 2022 Women’s Euros - there is good evidence that the public want to attending sporting matches which are safe and where they will not encounter vulgarity or aggression.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, encouraging more families to attend live sport is an important way of growing fan-bases. For girls, exposure to elite women’s sport from a young age is also crucial - seeing themselves represented on the pitch will ensure that more enter the talent pathway, thus helping to grow the sport.

Our research also suggests that the pricing of tickets is crucial in shaping perceptions of a sport. Fans equate this with inclusivity:

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<sup>9</sup> Cahal Milmo, ‘Euro 2022: What men’s football fans have to learn from followers of the women’s game’, <https://inews.co.uk/news/long-reads/euro-2022-mens-football-fans-learn-from-womens-1765124>, 18 July 2022.

*“I think it [The Hundred] just stands apart from so many of the other major sports. When you think about things like football and F1 or whatever, where tickets are just getting more and more expensive to see a sport, where the tickets are really cheap and they are actively aimed at people who are interested in the sport or, you know, people who aren’t made of money or whatever like. I just think it is one of the most inclusive formats of sport that I’ve come across... I don’t think they could have made it more accessible or more friendly and it just feels completely different to the way that many other sports are going, which are just trying to profit for profit’s sake and they don’t care that much about the fans or local people.”*

We therefore recommend:

- Sporting organisations should market men’s sport in way which is more in line with the way in which women’s sport is marketed - as family-friendly, wholesome and a good entertainment. This is the best way to ensure bigger crowds and a more positive match-day experience for fans;
- Ticket prices should be set in an affordable way - there are other considerations than profit at play.

### **7.5 The women’s sport movement is a winner for everyone**

Our research demonstrates that when one sport attracts a greater female audience and a greater audience for women’s sport, this can benefit women’s sports across the board. For example, some of those in our focus groups reported increased interest in other women’s sport as a result of attending The Hundred:

*“It has probably helped us get more into the women’s football. We went to see the Euro’s match, England versus Northern Ireland last week, which was really fun.”*

*“I’ve become a lot more interested in women’s sport I think probably since watching it actually, just generally. And not just cricket... even the Euros this year and women’s football on that side of things, like since actually seeing and kind of sitting down and watching continuously a couple of fixtures of female sporting events, I’ve become a lot more, I guess, invested again in that as well.”*

Promoting women’s competitions and female athletes should therefore never be seen as a zero-sum game: a successful competition like The Hundred is beneficial to the women’s sport movement as a whole. We therefore recommend that:

- When considering ways to achieve gender equality within sport, sporting organisations should work more closely together and formulate common strategies.

# Appendix 1 - List of Survey Questions

## Demographics

To which gender do you most identify?

How old are you?

What is your ethnicity?

Do you currently have a disability?

Where do you currently live?

## Before The Hundred

Before the launch of The Hundred, did you watch cricket on television?

Before the launch of The Hundred, were you involved in cricket (other than as a spectator/viewer)?

Please specify your involvement in cricket prior to The Hundred. Please select all options that apply:

*Player / Member of local club / Coach / Umpire / Scorer / Groundstaff /  
Taking children or family to cricket / Other*

Had you watched women's cricket before The Hundred?

Prior to the launch of The Hundred, did you support a cricket team/club?  
Please specify the team/club that you supported.

## Marketing

How did you hear about The Hundred? (Please select all that apply.)

*From a club / Television / From a county or region mailing list / Social media / Radio /  
Word of mouth / Newspaper / On the ECB's website / On a different website /  
I saw a poster*

Did you notice anything different in the marketing of The Hundred compared to the marketing of other cricket?

Please explain your answer to the above question.

## **Choosing to attend**

Did you watch The Hundred on television?

Before attending The Hundred, how well did you understand the playing regulations/rules of The Hundred?

Why did you choose to attend The Hundred? (Please select all that apply)

*Love of cricket*

*To experience a new format of cricket*

*Live music / entertainment*

*To see my favourite player(s) in action*

*Socialising (with family / friends / colleagues)*

*The shorter length of the matches was appealing*

*I wanted to support my city*

*I thought it would be family-friendly*

*It was cheaper than other cricket matches*

*It was cheaper than attending other live sport*

*To give my child the chance to attend live sport*

Which venue did you primarily attend?

Who did you attend with? (Please tick all that apply)

*By myself*

*With my partner*

*With my family (excluding children)*

*With my friends*

*With colleagues*

*With team mates*

*With younger children*

*With teenagers*

## **The match-day experience**

If you attended with children, in your opinion, how much did those children enjoy attending The Hundred on a scale of 1 to 5?

Did you attend:

Only women's games

Only men's games

Both women's and men's games

At the venue, how well were the playing regulations/rules of The Hundred explained?

1 = Poorly

3 = Reasonably well

5 = Very well

Overall, how satisfied were you with your experience attending The Hundred?

1 = Not at all satisfied

5 = Very satisfied

Overall, how satisfied were you with each of these aspects of The Hundred?

Quality of cricket

Live music / entertainment

Choice of food and beverages

Price of food and beverages

Crowd control

Organisation of the venue

Feeling at home in the venue

Family-friendly atmosphere

Value for money

Which parts of attending The Hundred did you most enjoy (if any)?

Which parts of attending The Hundred did you least enjoy (if any)?

### **Since The Hundred**

Since attending The Hundred, have you watched any other cricket on television?

No

Yes, women's cricket

Yes, men's cricket

Yes, both men's and women's cricket

What men's cricket have you watched on TV since The Hundred? (Please tick all that apply.)

*Test match / ODI / T20 international / First class / Domestic one day / Domestic T20 Blast*

What women's cricket have you watched on TV since The Hundred? (Please tick all that apply.)

*Test match / ODI / T20 international / Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy / Charlotte Edwards Cup*

Have you attended any other forms of cricket since The Hundred?

No

Yes, women's cricket

Yes, men's cricket

Yes, both men's and women's cricket

Which form(s) of women's cricket have you attended since The Hundred? (Please tick all that apply.)

*Test match / ODI / T20 international / Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy / Charlotte Edwards Cup*

Which form(s) of men's cricket have you attended since The Hundred? (Please tick all that apply.)

*Test match / ODI / T20 international / First class / Domestic one day / Domestic T20 Blast*

Since The Hundred, has your involvement in cricket increased?

Yes / No

Have you become involved with cricket as:  
*Player / Member of local club / Coach / Umpire / Scorer / Groundstaff /  
Taking children or family to cricket / Other*

### **Fandom**

Did you start supporting a team from The Hundred?

No

Yes, Birmingham Phoenix

Yes, London Spirit,

Yes, Manchester Originals

Yes, Northern Superchargers

Yes, Oval Invincibles

Yes, Southern Brave

Yes, Trent Rockets

Yes, Welsh Fire

How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of this team?

1 = Not at all

5 = Very much

For the team above, how many women's players can you name?

0 / 1-4 / 5-10 / 11-15

For the team above, how many men's players can you name?

0 / 1-4 / 5-10 / 11-15

### **Perceptions and future engagement**

Did The Hundred change your perceptions of cricket?

Please explain your answer.

Did The Hundred change your perceptions of women's cricket?

Please explain your answer.

Do you plan to attend The Hundred in 2022?

Yes / Maybe / No

Who do you plan to attend with? (Please tick all that apply)

By myself

With my partner

With my family (excluding children)

With my friends

With colleagues

With team mates

With younger children

With teenagers

## Appendix 2 - Focus Group Discussion Topics

### Opening Question:

Tell me about your experiences of The Hundred (e.g. which matches & venues did you attend, with who, what was it like overall).

### Choosing to Attend:

Why did you choose to attend The Hundred? (Use this to bring out any perceived differences between The Hundred and other sporting events / other cricket matches.)

### Match-day Experiences:

What did you enjoy about the match-day experience?

What did you dislike about the match-day experience?

How did it compare to other live sporting events which you have attended (especially cricket matches)?

What could be done to improve the experience?

*Specific components to bring out, if not already covered in the discussion:*

What did you think of the music / fireworks / entertainment?

Talk about your experiences of crowd behaviour. How did this compare to other live sporting events you have been to?

(If relevant) For those who went with children, including teenagers - what was their experience like? How did it compare to other experiences your children have had of live sport? Was there anything about The Hundred which particularly ignited their excitement? (Make sure to ask about ages and genders of children, and to discuss any differences between the experiences of boys and girls.)

### Impact of The Hundred:

Have your feelings about cricket changed since The Hundred? (Explain why / why not.)

(If relevant - i.e. for women's group) In the survey, some of you indicated that you went to The Hundred to show your support for women's sport - how do you feel about men's cricket?

Have your feelings about women's cricket changed since The Hundred? Explain why. (Use this to draw out overall feelings about women's cricket & women's sport. e.g. for



those with positive views - what was it that made you feel positively about women's cricket? For those with negative views - what did you dislike?)

(If relevant) What impact did being exposed to women's cricket for the first time make to you?

Have you **played** cricket since The Hundred? Why / why not? (Use this to explore barriers to participation e.g. accessibility, image of the sport, cost...)

Has your **involvement** in cricket increased in other ways? (Again, use this to explore any barriers to involvement.)

(If relevant) What was it about The Hundred that made you want to increase your involvement in cricket? What was different about The Hundred?

Have you **attended** other cricket matches since The Hundred? Would you attend cricket other than The Hundred in future? Why / why not? (Use this to bring out any perceived differences between The Hundred and other types of cricket.)

Did the ECB offer any follow-up marketing to try to get you to attend other cricket matches?

(If no) - If they had done so, would you have gone along to other matches?

What can the ECB do to attract you to attend other cricket that is not The Hundred?

(If relevant) For those who went with children, including teenagers - has their involvement in cricket increased? Why / why not?

### **Closing Questions:**

What, if anything, do you think is unique about The Hundred compared with other sporting events?

Are you planning to attend The Hundred in 2022? Why / why not?

