

# English Premier League during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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# English Premier League during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Bachelor Thesis

University of Zagreb  
Faculty of Economics and Business

Course: Sports Economics

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## 1. Introduction

The year 2020 marked the birth of a new pandemic around the world called the COVID-19. The pandemic imposed many restrictions and rules that had a significant impact on our everyday lives. It also impacted different sectors of the economy causing some to have huge consequences. Businesses such as restaurants, bars, and other catering services were forced to completely shut down during the pandemic and experience huge losses due to loss of business. The result of this is that global economy is said to decrease by 3% by the end of 2020.<sup>1</sup>

The world of professional sport was no exception to the financial crisis of the COVID-19 Pandemic, including professional football. Many clubs are facing a new situation which they have not encountered before and are struggling to find a solution for this problem, English Premier League included. Matches are played on empty stadiums with no fans, which are the curtail part of any Football Club, especially EPL which is one of the most famous and competitive football leagues. Clubs are also struggling to make ends meet, since their revenue structure has dramatically changed over the past year. All of this has caused teams to change their original plan and try to adapt to the ongoing situation.

The purpose of this paper is to see exactly how EPL has adapted to the new environment that is COVID-10 pandemic. By looking at exact changes in their revenues, how this crisis has impacted the English Premier League clubs, and their way of doing business we are going to be comparing previous years to 2020 to see exactly what aspects have changed and how has EPL and their clubs adapted to these new circumstances. Through the survey conducted on the fans of the EPL clubs we are going to examine how they feel about the whole situation, and how has the pandemic affected them and their views on their favourite clubs. The aim of this paper is to conclude what the main weak points of EPL are, how can the situation caused by the pandemic be improved in hopes that the EPL can survive this crisis and get back to normal as soon as possible.

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization, <https://covid19.who.int/>

## 2. Organisation of EPL

English Premier League is one of the most popular leagues in the world and is watched across the globe by many fans worldwide. The Premier League contains 20 of the top English football clubs, which can either work their way up or down along English Football League pyramid. A typical EPL season consist of teams playing 38 matches, with matches being usually played on a Sunday or Saturday. English Football experienced great success in the 1970s, but unfortunately the 1980s were faced with a downturn. The downturn in the 1980s was the exact reason for the formation of EPL. In the 1980s, stadiums were crumbling, hooliganism was on the rise and English clubs have been banned from any European competitions due to the incident that occurred during the 1985 European Cup Tournament in Brussels. The English top league was far behind Italian, Spanish, and German leagues, both in terms of revenues, attendance, and performance. During the 1980s, most of the biggest clubs began to transform into business ventures. Martin Edwards and David Dein were the leaders of this transformation. This led to the top clubs seeking to increase their power and revenue. The clubs which played in the Division One, threatened to break away from the Football League, and by doing so they managed to increase their power and gained a more favourable financial arrangement.

In the 1990s a proposal was offered for the establishment of the new league that would ultimately bring more revenues into the overall game. The Founder Members Agreement was signed in July of 1991, which established the basic rules for the setup of FA Premier League which included:

- “(a) constitutional and commercial independence of the Premier League.
- (b) a system of promotion from and relegation to the Football League.
- (c) conduct of the business of the Premier League based on "one club one vote “.
- (d) there would be no management committee, policy agreed by the clubs being implemented by "a competent executive team “.

(e) revenue from domestic television contracts would be shared as follows- 50% would be divided equally amongst the member clubs; 25% would be shared based on the league position of each member club at the end of the season; 25% would be allocated as facility fees to be divided equally between the home club and its visiting team, the intention being that each club would appear in at least one televised match each season.

(f) revenues from sponsorship and overseas television contracts would be shared equally amongst the clubs.”<sup>2</sup>

The newly formed top league was set to have complete commercial independence from The Football Association and The Football League, giving The Premier League freedom to set its own broadcasting and sponsorship agreements. In May of 1992, the English Premier League was born as a limited company, working out of The Football Association’s office in Lancaster Gate. Originally, there were 22 clubs in the league. The most well-known were the “Top Four” which were Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester United, and they saw great dominance in the 2000s. The first season was held in 1992/1993 and the first goal was scored by Brian Deane of Sheffield United.

## 2.1. Structure of EPL

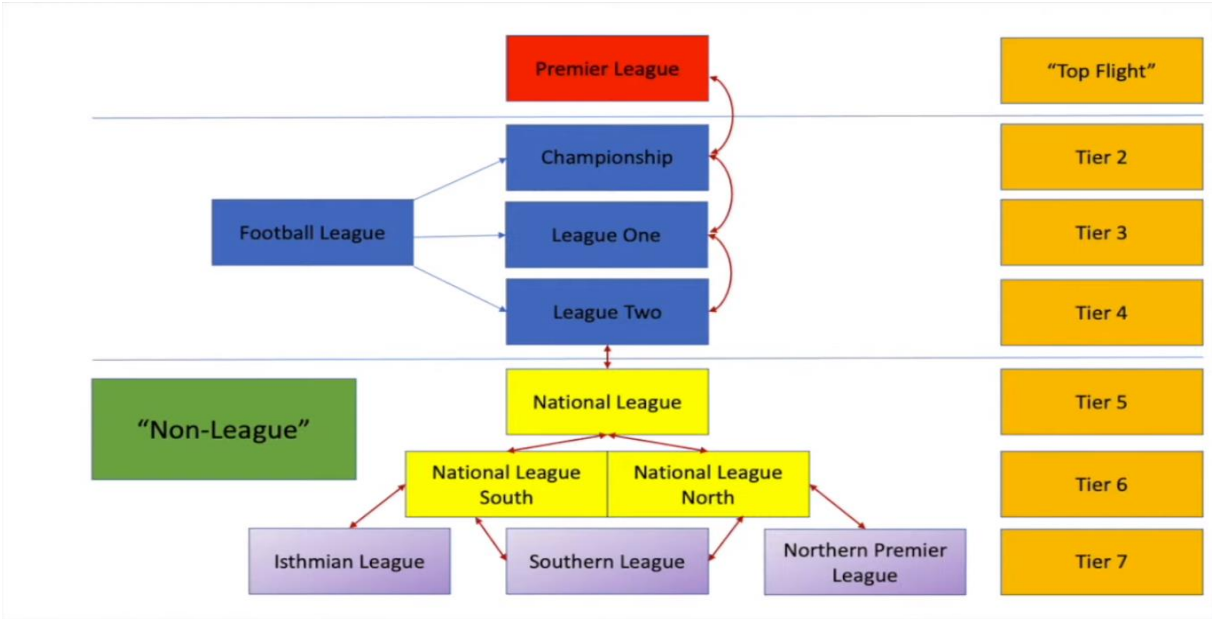
The English Premier League is part of the so called “The English Football League pyramid”, which is one of the most watched sports leagues in the entire world. The leagues are run in a system of hierarchy, with promotion and relegation being the main indicators if the clubs move up or down the pyramid. This system of promotion or relegation is the exact factor that is the most entertaining to follow, and fans can follow their clubs as they progress in this system. This way clubs are forced to constantly improve and

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<sup>2</sup> The Hon. Mr. Justice Ferris, Mr. B. M. Currie, and Mr. D. L. Summers (1976). “In the matter of an agreement between the Football Association Premier League Limited and the Football Association Limited and the Football League Limited and their respective member clubs”. <https://web.archive.org/web/20070927222536/http://www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/judgmentsfiles/j9/pljmtint.htm>

stay on top of their game, with every club having equal opportunity to play in the Premier League and therefore have access to greater income.

Figure 1: English Football League Structure



Source: A Guide to the Leagues and Cups of English Football<sup>3</sup>

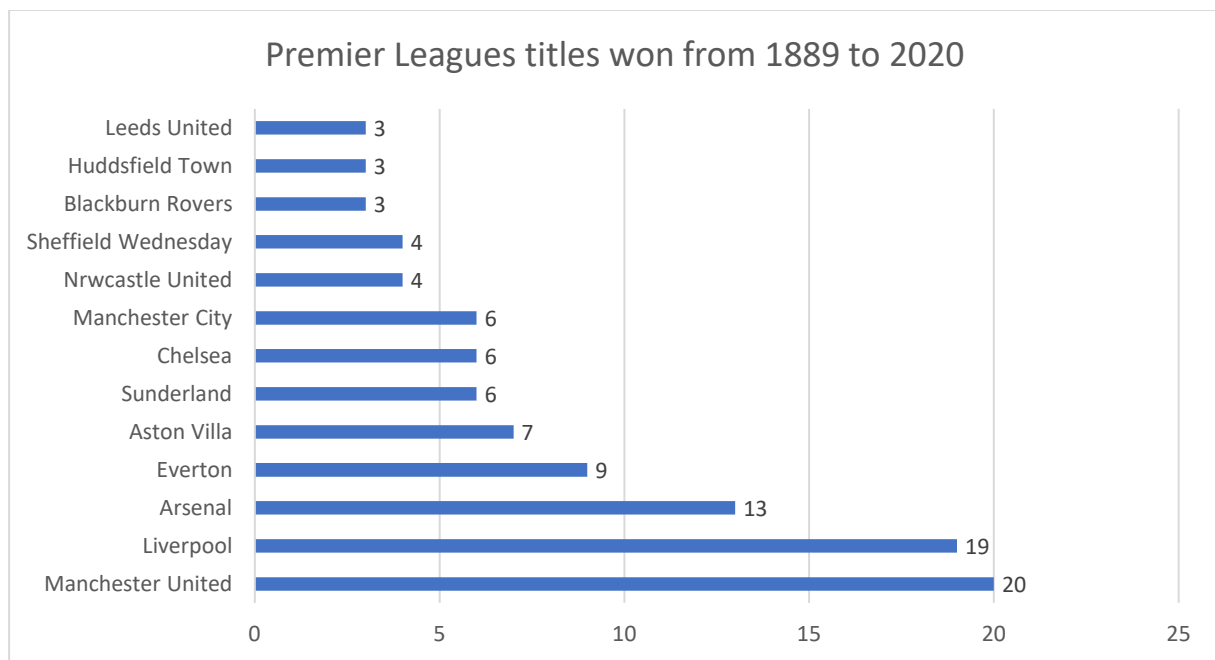
There are currently 20 clubs in the EPL. During one season, each club play each club two times, once at their own playing ground and once away at the opponent’s stadium. Total of 38 games are played, with each team receiving three points for a victory, one point for a draw, and no point being awarded for a loss. Teams are ranked by total points they collect over the season, then goal difference between each opponent, and then total number of goals scored.<sup>4</sup>

A system of promotion and regulation connects the EPL and EFL Championship. Three teams that are lowest on the table in the Premier League are relegated to the Championship League (see Figure 1), and the top two clubs in the Championship league are promoted to the Premier League, with an additional team being promoted after the after a series of play-offs between third, fourth fifth and sixth placed clubs.

<sup>3</sup> <https://groundhopperguides.com/guide-leagues-cups-english-football/>

<sup>4</sup> Barclays Premier League. Sporting Life. <https://www.sportinglife.com/>

Figure 2: Premier Leagues titles won from 1889 to 2020.



Source: Statista<sup>5</sup>

While Manchester United lead the way in terms of league titles, it is their historic rivals Liverpool FC who have claimed the most Football League Cup trophies. The team from Merseyside has lifted the cup a total of eight times, most recently back in 2003. The other domestic trophy that is up for grabs each year is the FA Cup, the world's oldest club soccer competition. Arsenal FC have a record 13 FA Cup wins to their name, with the club's most recent title coming in 2017. Hot on Arsenal's heels is Manchester United, whose 2016 victory marked their 12th victory in the cup.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/383696/premier-league-wins-by-team/>

<sup>6</sup> Football History. <https://www.footballhistory.org/league/premier-league.html>



When it comes to the corporate structure of EPL, it consists of:

- Chairman – The chairman oversees all the business operations of the Premier League. Activities that are also included are reviewing the accident reports, processing the insurance claims of the players, securing fields, and providing support to the association secretary.
- Vice-chairman – The Vice-chairman replaces the Chairman in the situation of their absence. They are also in charge of managing the inventories, checking the status of the sporting equipment, etc.
- Treasurer – The treasurer oversees dealing with the financial reports of the company. They maintain the accurate accounts of all the business transactions and reports the financial status to the Board of Directors.
- Athletic Director – The athletic director manages all team assignments. They recruit the coaches for the corporation to convey quality training to the players.
- League Secretary – The league prepares an agenda for the scheduled Board meetings and carry out all the functions as directed by the Board members and the Athletic director.
- Little Scholars Coordinator – The coordinator collects report cards from each participant. They manage all the paperwork of the award and scholarship programs that are held in the association.

Figure 3: Premier League Hierarchy



Source: Hierarchy Structure

Source: Hierarchy Structure<sup>7</sup>

Premier League is operated as a corporation and is owned by 20 member clubs. Each club acts as a shareholder, with each one having one vote for any related issues. The Football Association does not have control over the Premier League but has veto power in case they need to use it to prohibit EPL from going through with something that is not in accordance with the rules. Clubs can propose new rules or amendments at the Shareholder meeting. A club is entitled to one vote, and every change to a certain rule or a contract requires at least two-thirds of the votes, for the rule to be accepted.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.hierarchystructure.com/premier-league-hierarchy/>

<sup>8</sup> E. Monroe Olson, R. Duray, C. Cooper, K. Monroe Olson (2016). "Strategy, structure, and culture within the English Premier League: An examination of large clubs".

<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/SBM-11-2013-0040/full/html>

## 2.2. How do EPL clubs make money?

Premier League is one of the most watched leagues in the world, with more than 3 billion people across more than 180 countries tune in to watch the greatest football league in the world. As mentioned above, the Premier League was created in 1992, and gave the clubs complete freedom to set its own broadcasting and sponsorship agreements, and the EPL surely capitalized on that. The Premier League built a business model which is mostly focused on broadcasting and broadcasting rights. In the past 2 decades a lot has changed. Clubs used to rely on ticket sales, jersey sales, and on-stadium purchases. But since the rise of internet and television, their streams of income have drastically changed. The commercialization of the TV rights represents the highest source of income for most clubs, including the Premier League.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 4: EPL Business Model



Source: Start up Sapience<sup>10</sup>

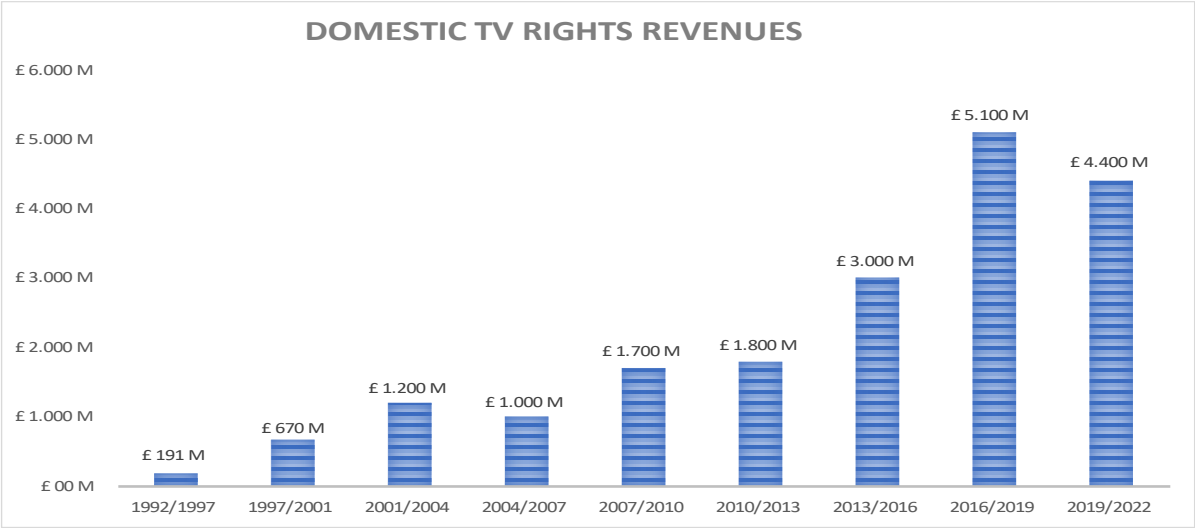
Looking at Figure 4, we can see that Premier League clubs give their broadcasting rights to the league, which then licenses the rights to broadcasters such as Sky Sports

<sup>9</sup> D.Efendi (2017). Identifying Factors Affecting Changes in Financial Situations of Football Clubs from EPL". [https://www.academia.edu/37822668/Identifying\\_Factors\\_Affecting\\_Changes\\_in\\_Financial\\_Situations\\_of\\_Football\\_Clubs\\_from\\_EPL](https://www.academia.edu/37822668/Identifying_Factors_Affecting_Changes_in_Financial_Situations_of_Football_Clubs_from_EPL)

<sup>10</sup><https://startupsapience.medium.com/how-does-the-english-premier-league-make-money-d1d10e7963e0>

and British Telecom. These broadcasters need to earn their spot, usually by bidding, to become the official holders of the games, and ultimately charge subscription fees to their audiences and advertisers to make a profit themselves. The proceeds that are collected from the domestic TV rights is setup so that 50% of the proceeds are shared equally among the 20 clubs, 25% are allocated to “Merit fees” which is determined by the clubs’ position in the league at the end of the season. So, the better the club positions at the end of the season, the more merit fees they will receive. The past four seasons show that there is still competition, and that Monopoly power does not exist, with having four different championship winners and seven different teams finishing in the top-four of the Premier League. Finally, the last 25% is distributed to facility fees, which varies on how often the games are being broadcasted on TV. As far as for international broadcasting rights, all the revenue is shared equally, but as from the 2019/2020 season any increase will be distributed to clubs based on their placement in the league table.

Figure 5: EPL Domestic TV Rights Revenues



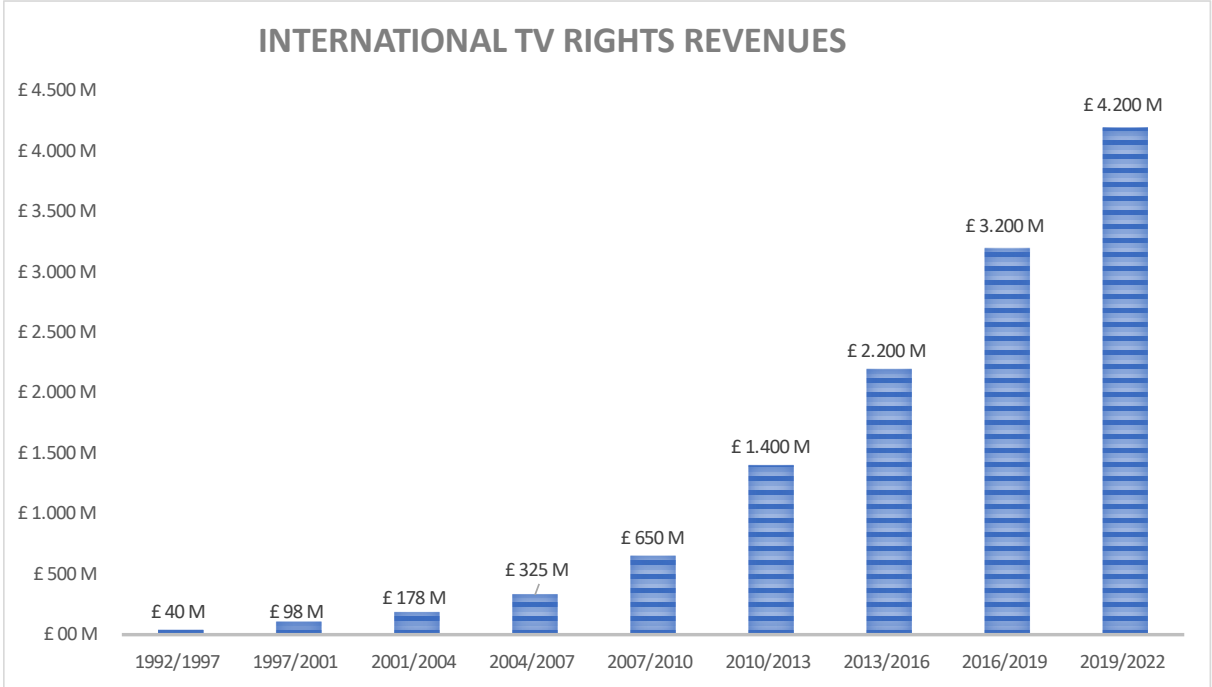
Source: BBC Sports<sup>11</sup>

If we look at Figure 5, we can see domestic broadcasting rights, and we can observe the huge growth form 191 million pounds for the 1992/1997 cycle to 5.1 billion pounds for the 2016/2019 cycle. We can already notice the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic in the 2019/2022 cycle, as the 13% less revenues have been collected.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/sport>

Overseas broadcasting has also been on the rise. Since Premier league is one of the most popular leagues on the globe, people from all over the world tune in to watch their favourite club play. This popularity has caused the overseas broadcasting to drastically increase in the last 30 years. Jumping from a low 40 million in 1992/1997 cycle, to a staggering 4.2 billion in 2019/2022 cycle (Figure 6).

Figure 6: EPL International TV Rights Revenues




Source: BBC Sports<sup>12</sup>

If we look at other revenues, EPL also makes individual payments to clubs. If we look at Payments to clubs (Figure 7), we can see that for the 2018/2019 season, Manchester City led the way in the most revenues, followed by Liverpool and Chelsea.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/sport>

Figure 7: EPL Payments to clubs for 2018/2019 season



### 2018/19 Payments to Clubs

Club Name	UK Live	Equal Share	Facility Fees	Merit Payment	International TV	Central Commercial	Total Payment
Manchester City	26	34,361,519	30,104,476	38,370,360	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>150,986,355</b>
Liverpool	29	34,361,519	33,461,785	36,451,842	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>152,425,146</b>
Chelsea	25	34,361,519	28,985,373	34,533,324	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>146,030,216</b>
Tottenham Hotspur	26	34,361,519	30,104,476	32,614,806	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>145,230,801</b>
Arsenal	25	34,361,519	28,985,373	30,696,288	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>142,193,180</b>
Manchester United	27	34,361,519	31,223,579	28,777,770	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>142,512,868</b>
Wolverhampton Wanderers	15	34,361,519	17,794,343	26,859,252	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>127,165,114</b>
Everton	18	34,361,519	21,151,652	24,940,734	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>128,603,905</b>
Leicester City	15	34,361,519	17,794,343	23,022,216	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>123,328,078</b>
West Ham United	16	34,361,519	18,913,446	21,103,698	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>122,528,663</b>
Watford	10	34,361,519	12,198,828	19,185,180	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>113,895,527</b>
Crystal Palace	12	34,361,519	14,437,034	17,266,662	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>114,215,215</b>
Newcastle United	19	34,361,519	22,270,755	15,348,144	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>120,130,418</b>
AFC Bournemouth	10	34,361,519	12,198,828	13,429,626	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>108,139,973</b>
Burnley	11	34,361,519	13,317,931	11,511,108	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>107,340,558</b>
Southampton	10	34,361,519	12,198,828	9,592,590	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>104,302,937</b>
Brighton & Hove Albion	13	34,361,519	15,556,137	7,674,072	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>105,741,728</b>
Cardiff City	12	34,361,519	14,437,034	5,755,554	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>102,704,107</b>
Fulham	13	34,361,519	15,556,137	3,837,036	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>101,904,692</b>
Huddersfield Town	10	34,361,519	12,198,828	1,918,518	43,184,608	4,965,392	<b>96,628,865</b>
All figures in £		<b>687,230,380</b>	<b>402,889,186</b>	<b>402,888,780</b>	<b>863,692,160</b>	<b>99,307,840</b>	<b>2,456,008,346</b>

Source: Premier League<sup>13</sup>

“The collective and central way the Premier League markets rights and distributes revenues to Clubs supports them in their efforts to develop and acquire talented players as well as build and improve stadiums. In its payments to Clubs the Premier League is the most equitable of Europe's major leagues and makes a huge contribution to the entire football pyramid and a range of community programmes and good causes.”<sup>14</sup>

Before the modern times and the Internet revolution, clubs used to make money from match day revenues. This included many different aspects like ticket sales, club jerseys, food, and drink. Bigger stadiums have the advantage as they can take larger crowds and therefore earn greater revenues. Clubs have their own right to set prices accordingly for beers, hot dogs, popcorn, or any other consumables which are sold in the stadiums during the matches. Clubs also make money from their sponsors such as the kit manufacturer and shirt sponsors. Kit manufacturers pay the clubs to design the kits in exchange for a percentage of sales to fans. As for shirt sponsors, they pay the club to have their logos printed on the shirts.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.premierleague.com/news/1225126>

<sup>14</sup> Premier League. <https://www.premierleague.com/news/1225126>

Another crucial element to earning revenue for clubs is the player transfers. The money that the clubs earn for the transfer of a player to another club, are often invested again for that club to bring a different strong player into their line-up. Smaller clubs often insure themselves in case they player decides to move onto a different club that is much bigger and generates greater revenue than the smaller club. That means if a player moves from a big club to another big club, and was initially bought from a smaller club, the smaller club will earn a percentage of the transfer from one big club to another. Football is a competitive industry, with each place closer to the top ensures that you therefore earn more money. When it comes to the Premier League each place closer to the top at the end of the league, is worth around £1.9 million, so it is natural that it is in club's best interest to ensure their financial stability and perform as best as they can throughout the season, to earn more money in the end.

### 3. EPL Dealing with COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted all sports around the world and therefore the English Premier League. Football plays a huge part in the welfare of that city, not only as means of making money. Many people dedicate their whole clubs to one Premier League team, and live and breathe it. So, to not have chance to support their favourite club on stadium, or even watch the matches being broadcasted, was very hard for some people, and did not make the current situation in the world any easier. Many matches have been postponed or even cancelled, due to safety measures. In the second two months of the 2020, matches were either played without any fans, and with empty stadiums, or completely cancelled and never played at all.<sup>15</sup>

English Premier League returned on June 17th of 2020, after a 100 day pause and were played behind closed doors. Fortunately, things are starting to look better, and fans are slowly starting to get back into the stadium, with the UEFA Champions League allowing a certain number of fans to enter the match. However, matches played with

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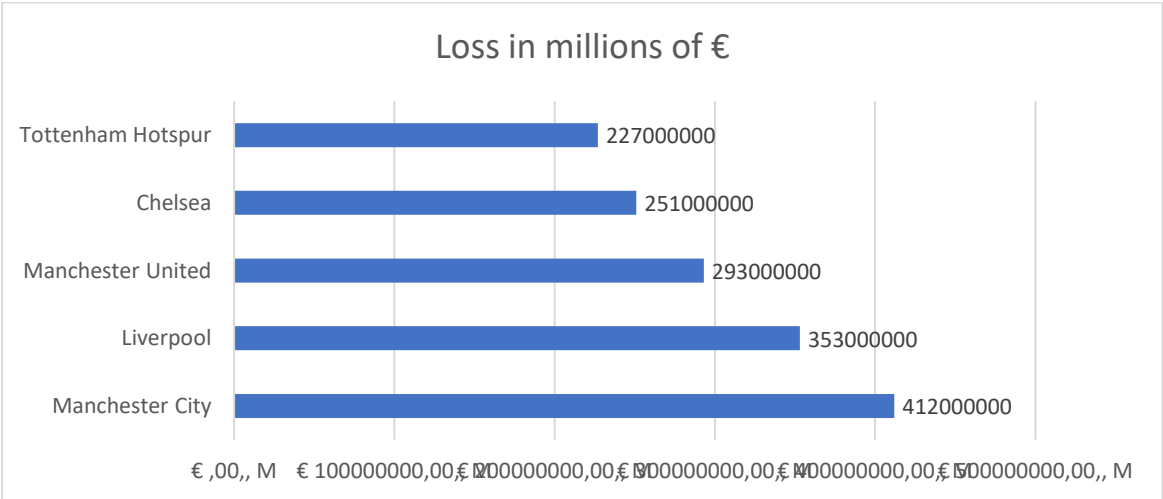
<sup>15</sup> M. Drewes, F. Daumann & F. Follert (2021). "Exploring the sports economic impact of COVID-19 on professional soccer", Soccer & Society.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14660970.2020.1802256>

empty stadiums, and not fans to support their clubs have been hard on the clubs especially the players, which sometimes get an extra boost of confidence when the whole stadium is singing and cheering them on. What makes football, and especially EPL, so exciting to watch are many passionate fans, with the typical stadium atmosphere, being fans applauding, booing, singing, and supporting their favourite clubs the best they can. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, and fans being unable to attend the stadiums, that atmosphere that they brought, has been completely lost. Unfortunately, due to these circumstances, EPL clubs were forced to cut down on non-playing staff, which has been met with major criticism towards those clubs.

The Premier League set to lose up to billions of dollars from Covid-19, and most of that is due to a loss from broadcasting revenue and loss of player transfer value. With some players' contracts running out at the end of season and no decision yet on whether the soccer season will even be played to a conclusion, huge question marks remain about player transfers and contracts. If no further matches are played this season and no contracts are extended until the end of June, the English Premier League would lose more than 1.5 billion of dollars (Figure 8), Manchester City alone stands to lose 412 million euros of its players' transfer value.

Figure 8: Loss of player transfer value due to COVID-19 (millions of €)



Source: Statista<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1109349/coronavirus-transfer-value-loss-soccer-teams/>



Even in these tough times, EPL clubs were there to help those in need. EPL clubs shined even in these tough times of financial struggle for many people and provided their support to the community battling with the COVID-19 Pandemic. These deeds include:

- Providing free lunches to organizations and families in need
- Supplying schools needed for proper primary and secondary schools.
- Taking care of older generations in need
- Distributing food to those in need and working with local food banks
- Providing hotel stays for key workers.
- Helping in delivering the food packages
- Helping people struggling with mental health issues, by providing help and advice.
- Providing advice to vulnerable adolescent people
- Offering the supply of equipment for protection to key workers
- Helping refuge centres, and donating to domestic abuse facilities
- Offering financial support, technological equipment, vehicles I support of local welfare.
- Providing health and medical support<sup>17</sup>

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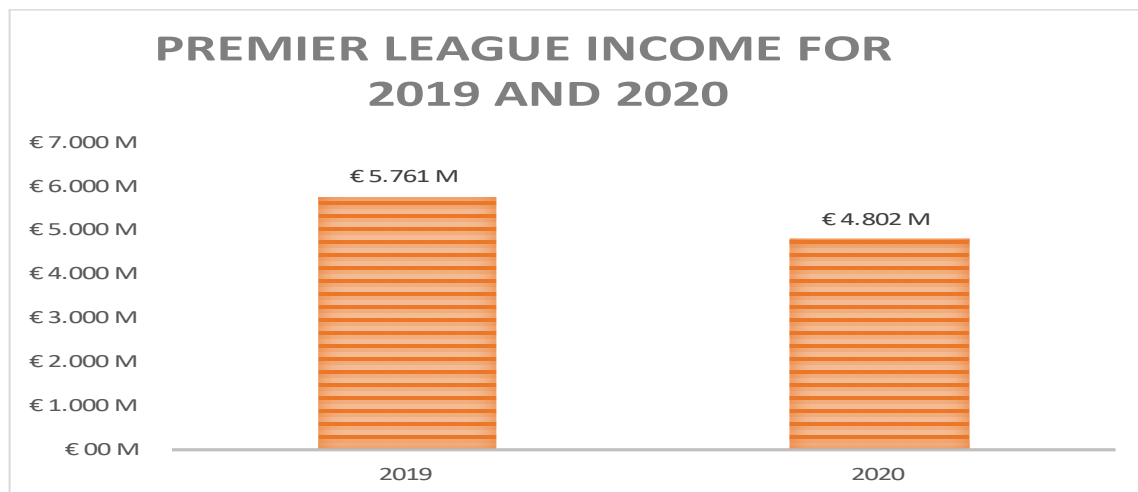
<sup>17</sup> D. Kennedy & P. Kennedy (2021). "English premier league football clubs during the covid-19 pandemic: business as usual?" Soccer & Society.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14660970.2020.1797498>

### 3.1. EPL Changes in Income

Financial performance is the main concern that affects any company, even the Football clubs. In the COVID-19 era the main concern is large drops in consumption. A considerable number of European football clubs showed a difficult financial situation after suffering declines in their financial performance, declaring losses due to poor performance, including the Premier League. EPL has reported a loss of total turnover of over £2.884 billion.<sup>18</sup> In the Figure 9 we can see total loss of total income from 2019 to 2020. Manchester United will experience the greatest loss of income of over 116 million British pounds, followed by Manchester City and Liverpool.

Figure 9: Premier League Income for 2019 and 2020



Source: Statista<sup>19</sup>

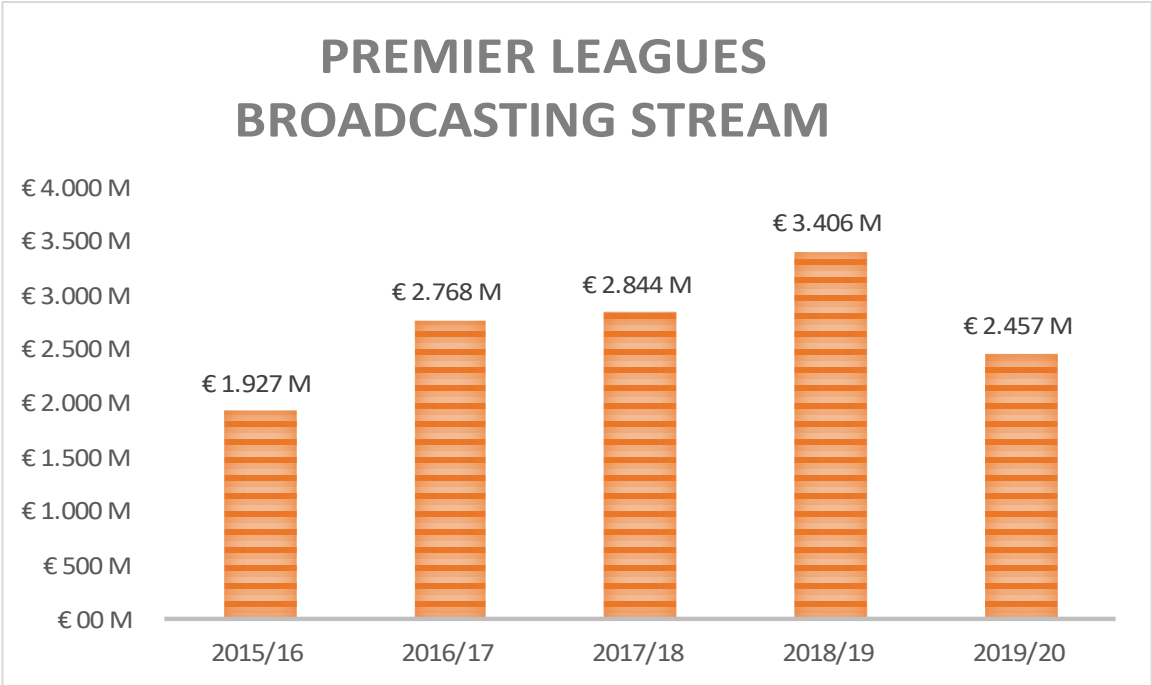
This was largely due to money paid back to broadcasters due to the matches not being played. We have previously discussed the importance of broadcasting and broadcasting right for Premier league clubs, and that it is mainly how they make money. The EPL broadcasting deal is one of the world's largest broadcasting deals in football. It generates just over £3 billion annually and is spread relatively evenly between clubs. Additionally, four EPL clubs qualify each year for the UEFA Champions League, and an-

<sup>18</sup> M. Drewes, F. Daumann & F. Follert (2021). "Exploring the sports economic impact of COVID-19 on professional soccer". Soccer & Society. 22:1-2, 125-137, DOI: 10.1080/14660970.2020.1802256. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14660970.2020.1802256>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/556893/premier-league-clubs-revenue-by-stream/>

other four for the UEFA Europa League, which additionally generates up to €110 million in broadcast rights for a club that wins the Champions League. If we look at the Figure 10 below, it is obvious that broadcasting revenue has dramatically decreased since the COVID-19 Pandemic, by more than 27% from 2018/2019 season. This is largely due to games not being played or being postponed for a future date. Naturally, broadcasters were not too happy about the whole situation and the disruption of games for which they paid for. Many of those broadcasting companies, such as Sky Sports and BT Sports rely on the subscription of the fans who want to watch their favourite league. Premier League has provided £330 million back to the broadcasting companies following not being played on dates agreed upon in their contract with broadcasting companies. To avoid any cash flow problems for clubs which already earned small matchday revenues, the broadcasting companies agreed to let the pay back the money for matches not being played over three-year period. The relationship between the Premier league and its broadcasting partners largely strengthened due to increase in number of matches made available to broadcasters, with no additional charges.

Figure 10: Premier Leagues broadcasting stream



Source: Statista<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/556893/premier-league-clubs-revenue-by-stream/>

International broadcasting deals have unfortunately been no different. The Premier League's recent contract with Chinese broadcaster PPTV, was cancelled after the broadcasting company failed to make do payments to the Premier League. The PPTV deal was worth around \$700 million and was scheduled to last for 3 years.<sup>21</sup> Many Premier League clubs rely on the broadcasting revenue, more than 75%. Therefore, it was important that matches take place in any way possible, or broadcasting partner could request even higher rebates for the not played matches. Regarding to the UEFA competitions, clubs have also been subjects to reduction in broadcasting payments. This is due to UEFA matches not taking place on previously agreed upon dates due to the ongoing pandemic, or one match being played instead of two. EPL broadcasting deal is worth around. EPL has tried to make thing better by introducing the pay-per-view (PPV) for Premier League matches in 2020/21. The fans were not too happy about the steep price point of £14.95 which was deemed to be too high. Fans of Premier League clubs refused paying so much when clubs were already generating large sums from existing revenue sources and many fans also had subscriptions with broadcasters.<sup>22</sup>

Possibly the biggest change on Income in EPL has been the empty stadiums and the lack of matchday revenues. Matchday revenues in the EPL account for an estimated of 14% of total income in 2018/19, which may vary from club to club. When combining all the clubs, matchday revenues reached £680 million for Premier League clubs in 2018/19 which is a big loss compared to 2020's £335 million. All matches were suspended on 13 March 2020 and when they returned, it was to empty stadiums. Clubs are not only missing on the revenue provided by the ticket sales, but also on sale of food and drinks which many fans enjoy during and even after the match, while there are other small revenue sources that support the matchday revenues. "All football clubs continue to suffer significant financial losses as a result of the pandemic, but Premier League shareholders today unanimously agreed to provide additional funding

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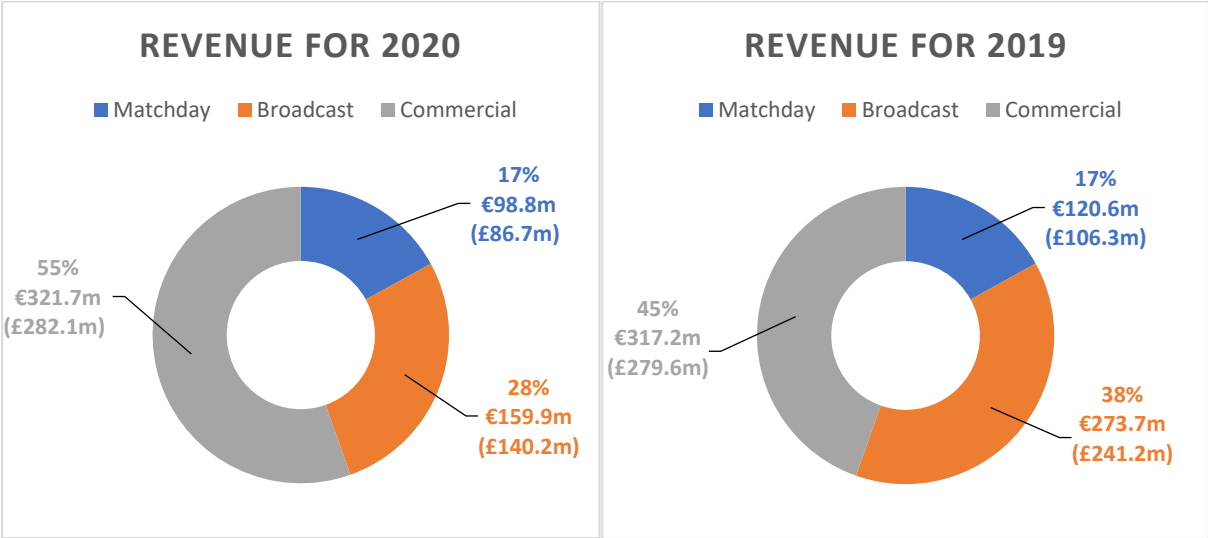
<sup>21</sup> K. Maguire (2021). "Covid-19 and Football: Crisis Creates Opportunity".

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1467-923X.12961>

<sup>22</sup> A. E. Manoli (2020). "COVID-19 and the solidification of media's power in football", *Managing Sport and Leisure*. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23750472.2020.1792802>

and support for EFL clubs in real financial distress".<sup>23</sup> However, Premier League teams have still been affected by the loss of revenue, and the entire cost of going over a year without matchday income has been tough on the EPL clubs. Manchester United re hardest hit by the loss of matchday revenue. Red Devils are a home to many passionate fans and usually the Old Trafford is almost sold out for any game. Old Trafford is the largest football club stadium in the Premier League, that can accompany 76,000 visitors. Due to them being such a big and well-known club, the pandemic has had a significant impact on the club's matchday revenue. Figure 11 shows us that their total matchday revenue has decreased by 18% or by £19.6m from 2019 to 2020 because of COVID-19, with all home matches from mid-March being played behind closed doors and all bar one of these being deferred into the financial year ending in 2021.

Figure 11: Manchester United revenue distribution



Source: Deloitte Football Money League<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Richard Masters for GOAL.

<https://www.goal.com/en-gh/news/assessing-the-covid-19-impact-on-premier-league-gate/1brd0t664hutf1oy9baeann8vh>

<sup>24</sup>.<https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/sports-business-group/articles/deloitte-football-money-league.html>

Manchester United is ranked at the fourth place in top 20 of Deloitte's Football Money League for 2020, which was a decrease from the 2019's third place. They have faced a tough year and experience a total loss of a £118.1m (19%) decrease compared to 2019. 86% of this decrease can be contributed to decrease in broadcasting revenue. The main reason behind this decrease was the suspension of UEFA Champions League and the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Unlike the matchday and broadcasting revenue, United's commercial revenue has remained stable, and even managed to increase from €317.2 million in 2019 to €321.7 million in 2020. This was mainly the cause of the club's investing in digital resources, such as global mobile application, ecommerce and MUTV has been a major factor in the continuous growth of commercial revenues and has enabled them to remain the top commercial revenue generating Premier League club. Due to the pandemic and the present circumstances, Manchester United has extended their deal with their main sponsors Chevrolet till the end of 2021. This can be seen as evidence that even big clubs such as Manchester United, which is recognized worldwide, are having trouble during the pandemic, and are trying their best to survive. Manchester United have returned to the Champions League in 2020/2021 which has boosted their broadcasting and commercial income for 2021.

Transfer fees and salaries are most significant costs for football clubs related to players. In the past 30 years salaries have jumped from £97 million in its first season, 1992/93, to £3,120 million in 2018/19, which is an increase of 2,811%. These days, wages are often considered to be too high, they are presently lower in the Premier League as a proportion of income (59%) then they were in 2003 (61%). When it comes to COVID-19, here have been no wage cuts for players in the Premier League except at Arsenal. The reason for that is that players have contractual wage agreements for fixed time periods. If the club breaches the terms, the player would in theory be able to walk away from the contract, and the club would not be entitled to compensation in the form of a transfer fee. That loss of transfer fee would probably be much greater than cash that would be saved by the pay cuts. So, in theory, it is unprofitable for clubs to practice of giving pay cuts to players. There is also the possibility of loss of moral for the players. In the Premier League, each individual place in the table is calculated to be worth just under £2 million, so unhappy players who are not giving their full effort could result in significant sums of money being lost by clubs. However, Executives and managers at Premier League clubs have taken pay cuts, and some players agreed to

deferrals. Meanwhile, some clubs have also utilised the government's Covid-19 furlough scheme, such as Liverpool, Spurs and Bournemouth. This pandemic has brought light to gaps between individual divisions. This was the perfect opportunity to bridge those gaps between The Premier League and lower leagues and within divisions themselves, where there is great inequality between those at the top and the bottom.

When it comes to transfer fees, Premier League clubs collectively spent an estimated £1,200 million on player recruitment during the summer 2020 transfer window. Those actions were met by many critics especially since the UK government was considering financial support for sport. Premier League responded by stating that they do not desire that financial support from central government during 2020 other than a desire to be able to generate revenue from having fans attend matches during periods when the level of infections was relatively low.<sup>25</sup> EFL clubs have received significant sums of money from selling their player to the richer Premier League clubs. However, other big European leagues such as La Liga, Seria A and Bundesliga, experienced significant drops in transfer spending, which reflects their greater dependence on non-broadcasting income.

UK Central government has provided financial support to the football industry in the form of furlough and tax delays. These have been a massive help to the EPL clubs who have been struggling, especially in the early months of COVID-19. Premier League has also advance broadcasting revenue to EFL clubs through solidarity payments, that would usually be spread over the 2020/21 season. The Premier League's generosity does not stop there. The Premier League has also offered £50 million to clubs in Leagues One and Two, with extra funding in the form of grants which will help these clubs meet their obligations over the rest of the season as well as offering a £200 million loan to Championship clubs to help them pay outstanding employment taxes owed to HMRC.

PBP or Project Big Picture was an action taken by American club owners to try and take control over the Premier League. PBP proposed to make immediate emergency

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<sup>25</sup> K. Maguire (2021). "Covid-19 and Football: Crisis Creates Opportunity".

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1467-923X.12961>

funding of £250million available to EFL clubs starved of matchday income by the coronavirus pandemic and a further £100million to the Football Association. It also proposed a redrawing of the revenue distribution model under which the EFL would receive 25 per cent of future Premier League broadcast earnings. It was also reviled that PBP would have caused disruption in income distribution in the Premier League between the 'Big Six' clubs (Arsenal, Manchester United, Liverpool, Spurs, Manchester City, Spurs, and Chelsea) and the rest of the clubs. It presently averages £350 million a year and was said to increase if the contract was to go forward. The EPL has given the following statement regarding the situation: "In the Premier League's view, a number of the individual proposals in the plan published today could have a damaging impact on the whole game and we are disappointed to see that Rick Parry, Chair of the EFL, has given his on-the-record support. The Premier League has been working in good faith with its clubs and the EFL to seek a resolution to the requirement for COVID-19 rescue funding."<sup>26</sup> The main problem was that only six votes would have been required to change policies and agreements in the Premier League, which would mean that control of the game would be in the hands of few powerful individuals, whose motives might be self-centred rather than for the football as a whole.

### 3.2. The power of fans in EPL

Fans are arguably one of the important aspects of football and the Premier League. They are the backbone to any club and can even make or break the football match. Due to the COVID-19 situation and them not having been able to attend the stadiums has been hard for the fans but also the clubs. EPL clubs gain revenue from three main sources which is broadcasting, commercial and broadcasting and matchday revenue. EPL clubs coexist with their fans, they give them strength in the tough matches and support them no matter what. Many fans devote their entire lives to a club and support it no matter what. That also means the greater the loyalty to the club the more resources will also flow from fans to the football club. Fans and spectators are directly involved in value creation process for the clubs. Broadcasters are aware that due to COVID-19 and no fans allowed in the stadiums, much less people watch the games

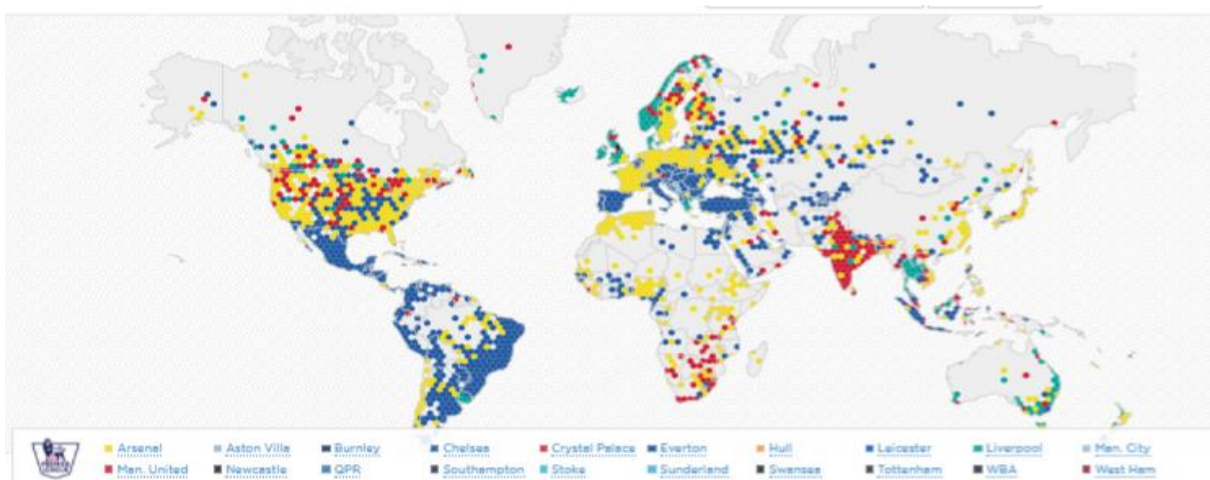
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<sup>26</sup> Premier League. <https://www.premierleague.com/news/1860125?sf238717394=1>



and fully enjoy it. Many broadcasters have tried their best to insure the best possible experience for the fans at home. Across the Premier League, broadcaster have started to introduce video walls, showcasing fans at home who are supporting their club. Fans at home have replaced the fans on stadiums and that has become a new standard. Passionate fans can still show their excitement and support for their club through these video walls, which allows them to be a part of the matchday experience.<sup>27</sup> Anyone with a smartphone can record and send their reaction which will be showcased on the video wall either when their team scores a goal or during a break. This is not the perfect scenario, but it allows fans to interact in some way with their club and make them feel more connected to it. This is something that can completely transform the way usually watch the premier League and is something that can even be implemented once the fans return to the stadiums. It will give the opportunity for people who cannot make it to the game or live in a completely different part of the world, to have a heightened interactive experience. Premier League is watched by more than 2.7 billion people around the world, most of it comping from Asia and Oceania. If we look at the Figure 12 bellow, we can see that EPL clubs have supporters from all over the world, with many of them being unable to attend matches. It would give the chance for millions of people around the world to tune in and participate in a live EPL game.

Figure 12: Premier League follower maps



Source: Premier League<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> B. Majumdar & S. Naha (2020). "Live sport during the COVID-19 crisis: fans as creative broadcasters" <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17430437.2020.1776972>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.premierleague.com/>

Many fans are unable to attend these matches due to living abroad and not being able to afford the cost of tickets and are therefore completely excluded from the match experience. The nature of their engagement is mostly passive, and they usually have no way of interacting with the live match. If they were given more options and variety over how they express their loyalty and support for their club, it will massively benefit the sports broadcasting, and incite more fans actively to the process of match creation. For example, game taking place in Liverpool will no longer be just about the fans that are present at Anfield stadium. Modern technology will enable fans to see what other supporters across the world are doing and how they express their support for the club. It is the perfect scenario to bring people from all over the world closer together, in a shared passion that is football. Another innovation that could be implemented is opening a chat for fans, in which they can discuss about the match being currently played, and it could be shown, in the corner of the screen. One issue that may arise from that is moderators will need to keep an eye on it and filtering the content. All of this gives broadcaster the opportunity for increasing the matchday participation, for fans across the world regardless from where they are watching the match and create the feeling of participating in the match and providing the best possible experience.

### 3.3. Super league – The Future of Modern Football

The COVID-19 Pandemic has certainly had a huge impact on many European clubs, including the premier league. Clubs are struggling financially and are trying to find a way out of this situation. On 18 April of 2021, 12 of Europe's top soccer clubs announced they were launching a breakaway league called The European Super League. The league was to include fifteen founding clubs, who would be permanent participants in the competition and governing partners, alongside five other European football clubs, who could qualify based on their performance in their domestic league's most recent season. It was planned as a breakaway competition to either rival or replace the UEFA Champions League, Europe's premier club football tournament organised by UEFA. The proposed format for the Super League was as follows:

- Teams will be placed in two groups of 10.
- Teams will play each other home and away in their groups, followed by a knock-out stage.

- All games will be played midweek and the competition will run from August until May.
- 15 founding clubs will govern the tournament and five other teams will have to qualify each season.

The founding clubs were the Europe's elite clubs involving the Premier League's big-six clubs - Manchester United, Manchester City, Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham plus AC Milan, Arsenal, Atletico Madrid, Chelsea, Barcelona, Inter Milan, Juventus, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United, Real Madrid and Tottenham Hotspur. Real Madrid president, Florentino Perez, recently said the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on European football has provided the cause for the European Super League to emerge: "Nothing will ever be the same. The pandemic has changed everything; it has made us all more vulnerable and football. Football needs formulas that make it more competitive and exciting. Madrid has participated in all the innovations and has protected these innovations in our sport. The club was the sole founder of FIFA in 1904 along with seven country federations, and in 1955 collaborated with L'Equipe to promote the creation of the European Cup, a revolutionary moment that changed the history of football. Without all these changes, football could not have been what it is today, but we need a new change".<sup>29</sup> Participating clubs were set to receive an initial €3.5 billion, with the winner of the league earning approximately €400 million. This is between three and four times as much as the current UCL winner prize money. The Super League was supposed to directly rival the UEFA Champions League, or even replace it. UEFA immediately responded saying that clubs who would join the European Super league, would automatically be suspended from playing the UEFA or FIFA competitions including the Champions, the European Championships and World Cup. This has also affected broadcasters such as Sky Sport and BT Sport. Sky Sport has denied the involvement in the Super League by stating that they give their full support to their partners in the UK and Europe, and that they already provide fans with the best with the best experience of English football, and do not wish to participate in any involvement with the Super League.<sup>30</sup> BT Sport has been more

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<sup>29</sup> Florentino Perez. Football Espana. <https://www.football-espana.net/2020/12/20/florentino-perez-on-european-super-league-the-pandemic-has-changed-everything>

<sup>30</sup> Sky Sports on the Super League. Sport Broadcast.

explicit and clearly stated their dissatisfaction with the whole situation, stating that the creation of the Super League could have negative effects to the whole football industry.<sup>31</sup> The announcement of the European Super League received almost unanimous hostility from fans, players, managers, and other clubs not involved in the Super League as well as from UEFA and FIFA, who were probably hit the hardest by these news. The biggest concern is about it being completely elite and without any competition, as only the Europe's biggest and richest clubs would participate, who are all very powerful and often put money as their primary goal. On 19 April, a crowd of about 700 fans appeared outside Elland Road ahead of the scheduled match between Leeds United and Liverpool, to protest the European Super League. While warming up, Leeds United players wore a shirt that read "Football is for the fans" on one side and "Earn it" with a Champions League logo on the other showing their disapproval against the creation of the Super League.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, Football Supporters Europe (FSE), a body representing supporters in 45 UEFA countries, issued a statement: "Along with the overwhelming majority of fans, Football Supporters Europe is wholly opposed to plans to create a breakaway Super League. However, the possibility of European Super League was short lived. The main reason behind the collapse of the European Super League was that all Premier League clubs involved in it, have completely left the competition. Manchester City were the first club to pull out followed by Chelsea which signalled their intent to do leave by preparing documentation to withdraw. Reaction to news of the Super League's creation was quick and devastating, with fans staging protests across the globe. Many clubs as well expressed their dissatisfaction with the creation of Super League. They have come out and publicly apologised to fans and other clubs not involved in the league, one of them being Arsenal chief executive Vinai Venkatesham, who met with Arsenal fans and apologized for to other clubs, stating that this was a mistake. Many saw this as a cynical project and highly controversial, as the permanent members of the league could not be relegated and having the ultimate power and control.<sup>33</sup> Ultimately, it was about bringing football away from the

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<https://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/broadcasting/sky-sports-distances-itself-from-european-super-league/5158964.article>

<sup>31</sup> BT Sport. Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/european-super-league-bt-sport-b1833892.html>

<sup>32</sup> BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-leeds-56805822>

<sup>33</sup> Sky Sports. <https://www.skysports.com/football/news/11670/12284182/european-super-league->

beauty of the game and the fans and stirring it towards profit and power.

#### 4. Methodology

Google Form Survey, titled English Premier League during COVID-19 Pandemic, was created for the true fans of the Premier League as well as occasional watchers. The data has been collected in the form of a Google Forms questionnaire and the participants were contacted and responded through email. The survey's purpose is to collect information about how fans feel about the premier league, their financial struggles during the COVID-19 Pandemic and the importance of fans for EPL clubs. The sample has been chosen from people who live in Croatia and support a certain club in the Premier League. As fans of the EPL, they are one of the most important aspect and it is very important how they feel about their actions.

The questionnaire is made from seventeen questions. 16 mandatory questions and 1 optional one. 11 questions are multiple choice questions, where participants need to select one answer, 5 have the format of a Likert scale and 1 is an open-ended question. Likert scale is a point scale which is used for the individual to express the level of their agreement or disagreement with a certain topic. The scale used in this questionnaire ranges from 1 to 5, from which then we can conclude a middle ground out of all the answers. From the questions, a point of view of each participant can be established and then a group opinion based on the collective answer pattern can be formed. The main idea is to gather information from fans on the state of EPL during the Pandemic, to see if they think that EPL clubs will survive this crisis, how they feel about their role as fans regarding the success of a club, and if they support the idea of the European Super League. Figure13 presents the basic introductory questions: gender, the club they support and how often do they watch the Premier League. In Figure 14, the set of questions is about the financial performance of EPL, the income distribution between EPL and the lower leagues, and the introduction of wage cuts for EPL player during the pandemic. The Figure 15 revolves around the importance of fans for the EPL, how often do they watch the Premier League and if they would be interested in more active

fan participation, such as video walls showcasing EPL fans around the world supporting their club. The last 3 questions in Figure 15 are entirely dedicated to the creation of the Super League, if fans support this decision, would they watch if it were to happen and would they prefer the UEFA Champions League over the European Super League.

Figure 13: Survey – English Premier League during COVID-19 Pandemic

## English Premier League during COVID-19 Pandemic

The survey consists of 17 questions for the purpose of conducting research for the Undergraduate Thesis

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1. Gender \*

Female

Male

---

2. Age \*

15-19

20-24

25-29

30-34

35-40

40-50

50-60

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3. What club in the EPL do you support? \*

Manchester United

Chelsea

Liverpool

Arsenal

Manchester City

Tottenham

Other

Source: <https://forms.gle/mPr9Qspv7rtHo6Uv9>

Figure 14: Survey – English Premier League during COVID-19 Pandemic

4. How often do you watch the premier League? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Regularly

---

5. Do you think that EPL player are paid too much? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

---

6. Do you think that clubs in the EPL deserve to earn more than clubs in lower leagues, such as the Championship or League One? \*

Yes, I think they deserve it

No, I think it is not fair

---

7. Do you think EPL players should have received wage cuts during the COVID-19 Pandemic? \*

Yes

No

---

8. If No, why not?

Tekst dugog odgovora

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9. Do you think that EPL clubs will survive the financial struggles during the Pandemic? \*

Yes

No

---

10. How important do you think that fans are for the success of an EPL club? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely important

Source: <https://forms.gle/mPr9Qspv7rtHo6Uv9>



Figure 15: Survey – English Premier League during COVID-19 Pandemic

11. Do you live outside of the UK? \*

Yes

No

---

12. How often do you attend EPL matches? \*

Never      1      2      3      4      5      Regularly

---

13. In your opinion, how many people in your country follow the Premier League? \*

Less than 20%

30%

50%

70%

More than 90%

---

14. Would you be interested in more active fan participation, such as video walls showcasing EPL fans around the world supporting their club? \*

Not at all      1      2      3      4      5      Very Interested

---

15. Do you support the idea of creating the European Super League? \*

Yes

No

---

16. If the Super League were created, would you watch it? \*

Yes

No

---

17. If you could choose between the two, what would you rather watch? \*

UEFA Champions League

European Super League

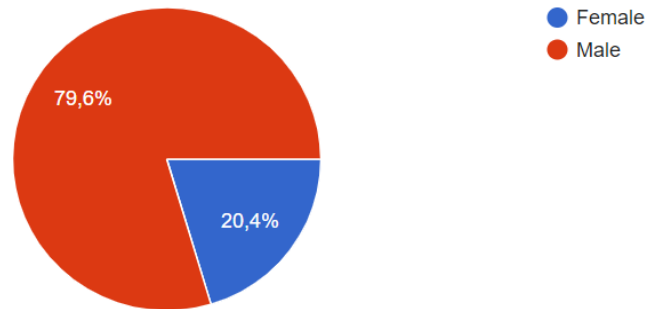
Source: <https://forms.gle/mPr9Qspv7rtHo6Uv9>

## 5. Results

Figure 16: Survey question number 1

1. Gender

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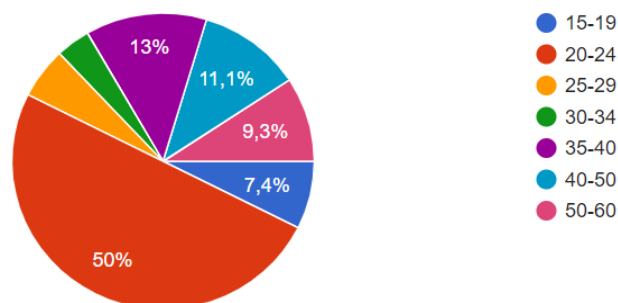
Source: <https://forms.gle/mPr9Qspv7rtHo6Uv9>

There were 54 participants in the survey. Most of them were male (79,6%) (as can be seen in the Figure 16). Looking at Figure 17 it can be concluded that they belong to different age groups, with most of the participants being between 20-24 years old. We can also conclude that almost one third of the participants support Liverpool (16 respondents), with Chelsea being a close second with 11 supporters. Looking at Figure 18, by using the Likert scale, we can conclude that most of the participants of this survey watch the Premier League occasionally or 50% of the time, with only 13% being regular watchers.

Figure 17: Survey question number 2

2. Age

54 odgovora

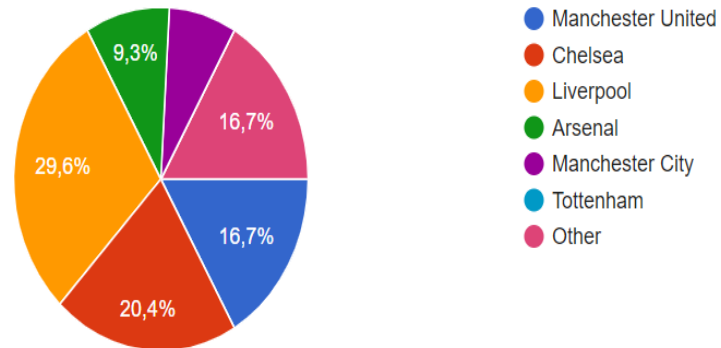


Source: <https://forms.gle/mPr9Qspv7rtHo6Uv9>

Figure 18: Survey questions number 3-5

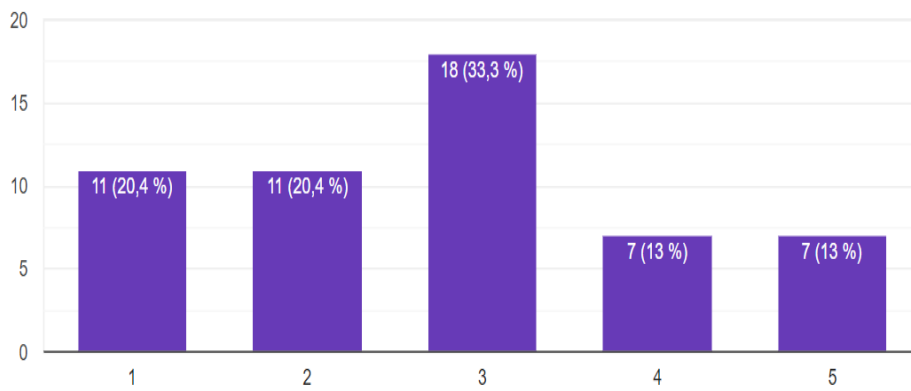
3. What club in the EPL do you support?

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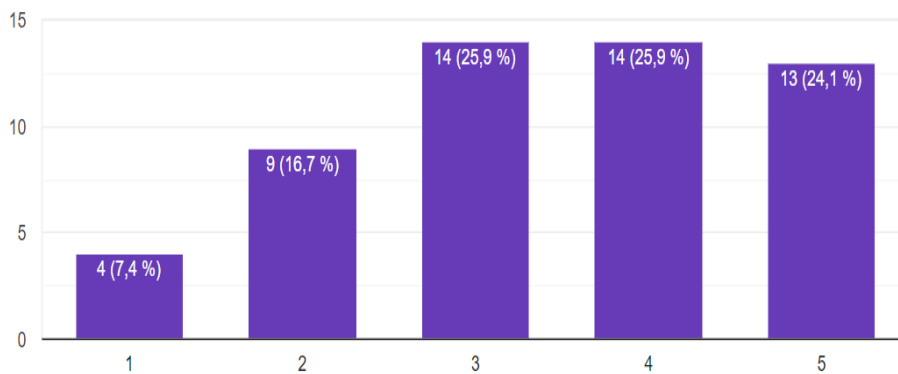
4. How often do you watch the premier League?

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5. Do you think that EPL player are paid too much?

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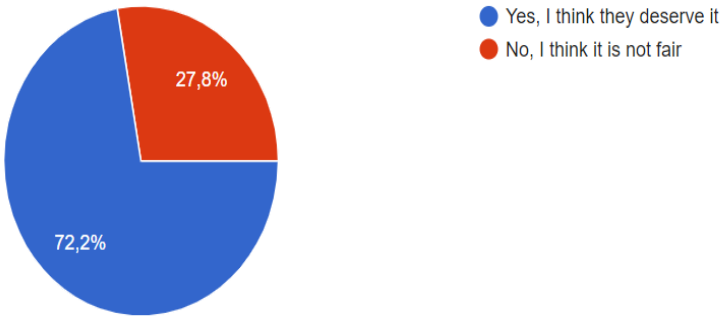
Source: <https://forms.gle/mPr9Qspv7rtHo6Uv9>

In Figure 18, from the collected data it is evident that most of the participants agree that in some degree EPL players are paid too much. This is a good representation of how the people who regularly or occasionally feel about wages in the EPL. Since most of the participants in this survey support a big club like Liverpool or Chelsea, who have huge spending power and income. This could be seen as possible troubles for clubs in the future because unhappy fans mean they have the power to boycott matches or call for wage caps, which means loss of matchday revenue for the club or the player. However, equal number of participants (14) agree that EPL wages are fair and do not think that their salaries are too high. The reason for this may be that most of the player in EPL are top quality and are some of the bests in the world. Therefore, they agree that those players deserve the wages they have because they have earned them with their performance and quality.

Figure 19: Survey question number 6

6. Do you think that clubs in the EPL deserve to earn more than clubs in lower leagues, such as the Championship or League One?

54 odgovora



Source: <https://forms.gle/mPr9Qspv7rtHo6Uv9>

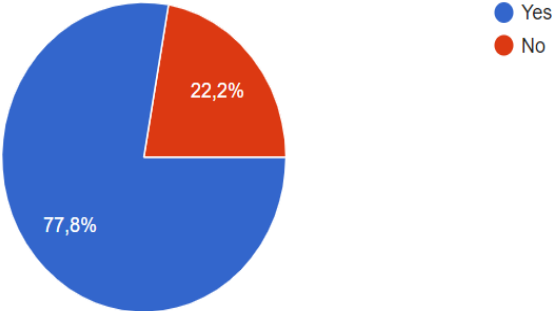
Figure 19 shows us that 72.2% of participants agree that clubs in the EPL deserve to earn more than clubs in lower leagues. Even though many people agreed that EPL wages are too high, they still feel as though EPL rightfully earns much more than the lower leagues. This is probably since the Premier League is one of the most watched leagues in the world. Not many people watch the other English League and stick like Championship or League One. As we discussed earlier, most of the Premier League's revenues comes from broadcasting rights. Broadcasters depend on the fans who will pay to see their favourite EPL club play. Therefore, they are ultimately the biggest

contributors to the income of the Premier League. Participants of this survey feel that due to its popularity and massive reach, the EPL is rightfully financed.

Figure 20: Survey questions number 7 and 9

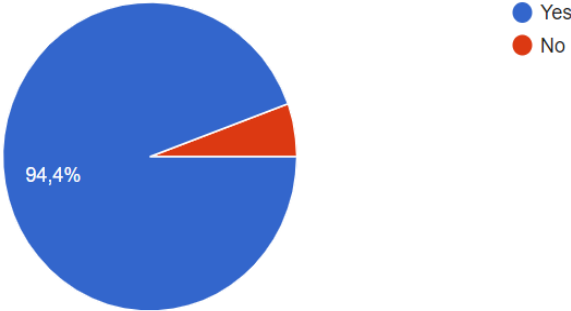
7. Do you think EPL players should have received wage cuts during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

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9. Do you think that EPL clubs will survive the financial struggles during the Pandemic?

54 odgovora



Source: <https://forms.gle/mPr9Qspv7rtHo6Uv9>

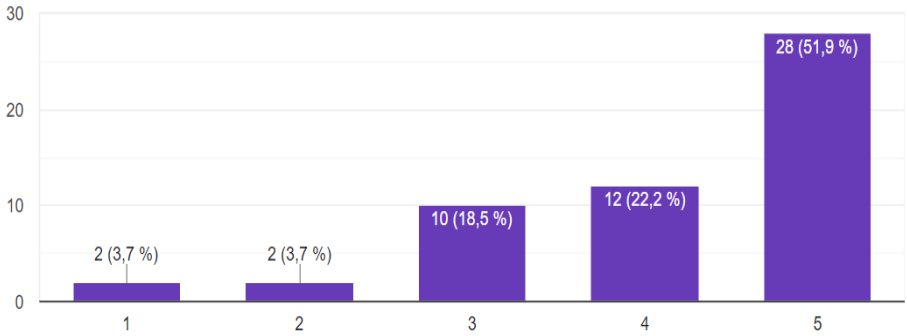
From Figure 20, we can conclude that most of the participants (77.8%) think that EPL players should have received wage cuts during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This is no surprise, considering that many people are struggling to survive through these tough times, when EPL players, who already earn huge salaries, did not receive any sort of financial reductions in their salaries. The Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) stated that many people are making many sacrifices and that Premier League clubs

should help support local welfare and said that if the Premier League clubs broadcasting the financial means to pay salaries to their players and staff that they should.<sup>34</sup> However, 22.2% participants feel as though players did not deserve the wage cuts. Most of them think that the Pandemic is not their fault and therefore they do not deserve the cuts in their salaries and that they still did their part of performing and training, so the wage cuts should not be introduced. Looking back at Figure 20, we can see that more than 94% participants feel that the Premier League will survive through the financial struggles of COVID-19. This is rightfully so, since EPL clubs are multibillion dollar companies with powerful people on top of them. They have surely felt the effects of the Pandemic, and have been affected by it, but they will not go bankrupt because of it. Even though their revenues have decreased in the past year, they will make it through the financial crisis, and come back on the other side even stronger. People who have been unable to attend EPL matches, surely cannot wait to get back on the stadiums and support their favourite club, meaning more revenues for the clubs.

Figure 21: Survey question number 10

10. How important do you think that fans are for the success of an EPL club?

54 odgovora



Source: <https://forms.gle/mPr9Qspv7rtHo6Uv9>

By using a Likert scale that can be seen in Figure 21, the respondents were asked to rate from 1 (Not important at all) to 5 (Extremely important) to rate the importance of fans for the EPL clubs. Majority of respondents fall into the category that they strongly or mildly believe that fans are very important. Fans are the backbone of any club and

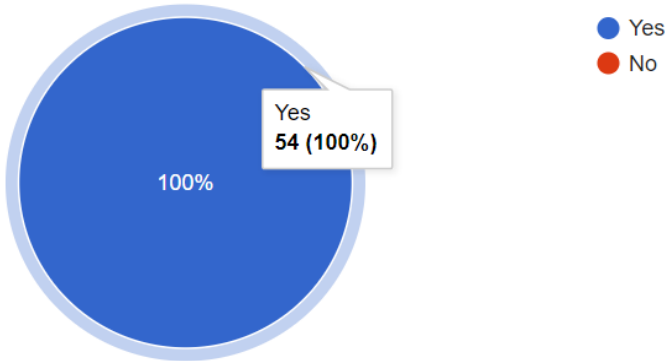
<sup>34</sup> The PFA. <https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/52142267>

are the main drivers behind their success. So, it is not surprising to see that respondents feel strongly about the position of fans. “The most important relationship at a football club is not between the manager and the chairman, but the players and the fans.”<sup>35</sup>

Figure 22: Survey questions number 11-14

11. Do you live outside of the UK?

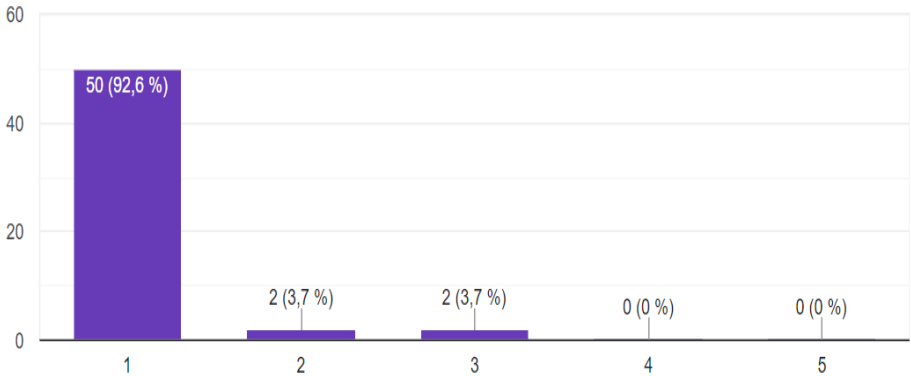
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12. How often do you attend EPL matches?



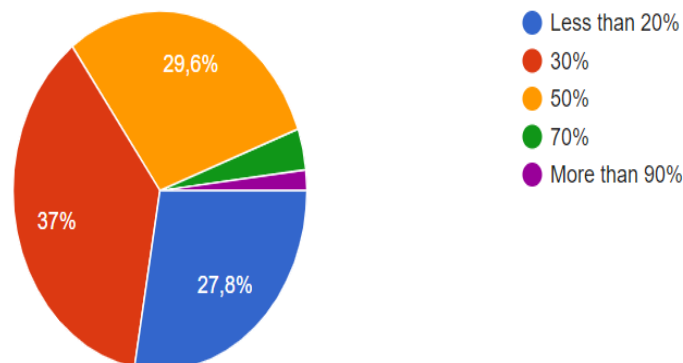
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<sup>35</sup> John Toshack, former Welsh player

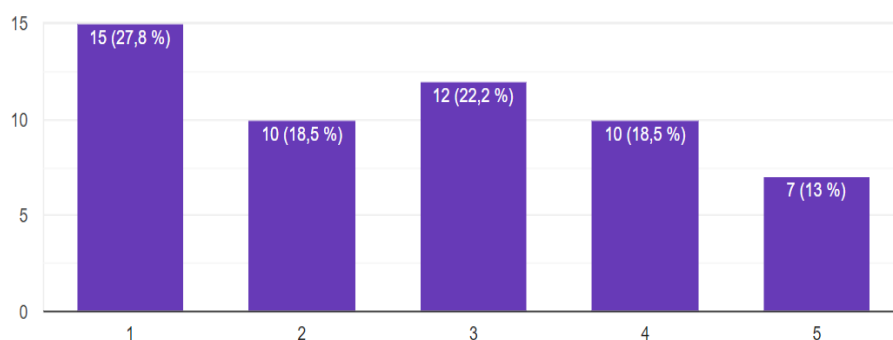
13. In your opinion, how many people in your country follow the Premier League?

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14. Would you be interested in more active fan participation, such as video walls showcasing EPL fans around the world supporting their club?

54 odgovora



Source: <https://forms.gle/mPr9Qspv7rtHo6Uv9>

From Figure 22 we can see that all the participants live outside of the UK, since this survey was collected from all the participants living in Croatia. If we look at how often the participants attend the EPL matches (Figure 22), more than 92% of participants never attend the EPL matches, with only 3.7% occasionally going to matches. This is actually pretty good number considering that Croatia is far from the UK, so to see that 2 participants occasionally attend the Premier League matches is an astonishing. From Figure 22, we can see that 20 participants (37%) believe that around 30% of people in their countries follow the Premier League, with 29.6% of participants believing that that number is around 50%. According to the premier League. They have reached a cumulative global audience of 3.2 billion for all programming watched during the 2018/19 season. "The Premier League was shown in a total of 188 of the world's 193 countries



recognised by the United Nations. Afghanistan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, North Korea, and Cuba were the five countries without coverage in 2018/19. There were 262,102 hours of Premier League coverage broadcast around the world last season, reaching 1.03 billion homes for all broadcast types. The household reach for live coverage only was 978 million homes.”<sup>36</sup> Figure 22 also shows us the results of interest in more active fan participation, such as video walls. Most of the participants (27.8%) are not interested at all in such participation, with 22.2% being moderately interested and only 13% of participants being very interested. This is surprising, considering that all the participants live outside of the UK and almost never attend the EPL matches, and this being the perfect opportunity for them to be more involved in the whole experience and support their favourite team from the complacency of their home. However, most of the participants do not express any interest in such participation and feel more comfortable by simply watching the games and supporting their club.

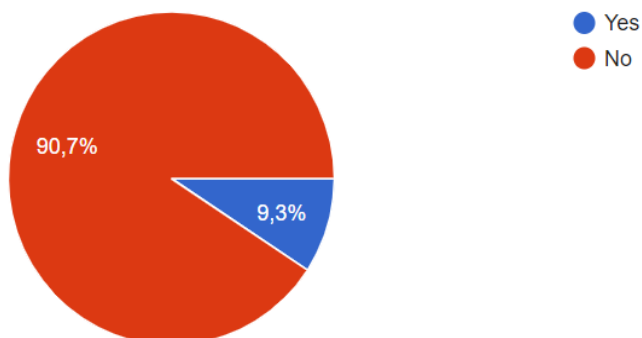
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<sup>36</sup> The Premier League. <https://www.premierleague.com/news/1280062>

Figure 23: Survey questions number 15-17

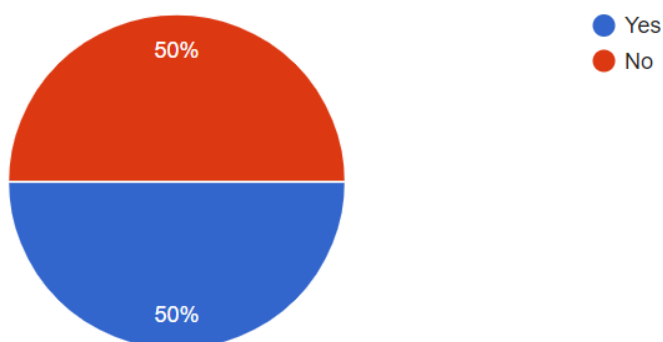
15. Do you support the idea of creating the European Super League?

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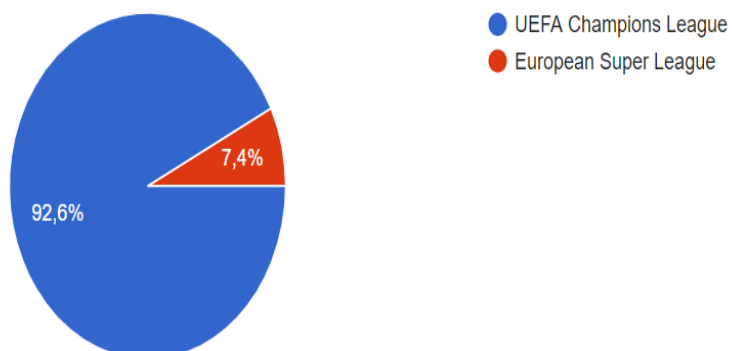
16. If the Super League were created, would you watch it?

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17. If you could choose between the two, what would you rather watch?

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Source: <https://forms.gle/mPr9Qspv7rtHo6Uv9>

The next of questions are all connected to the creation of European Super League and how fans feel about that. Looking at Figure 23, participants were asked if they support the creation of the European Super League, majority of the participants (90.7%) said that they are against their creation, and only 5 participants (9.3%) said that they are all for it. May fans all around the world have been very upset when the news of the creation of the Super League first hit the news, so it is not surprising to see that the participants of this survey belong to them as well. Garry Neville, a former Manchester United player said: "I'm disgusted with Manchester United and Liverpool the most," Neville said. "They're breaking away to a competition they can't be relegated from. It is an absolute disgrace. We must wrestle back power in this country from the clubs at the top of this league – and that includes my club. It is pure greed, they are impostors. The owners of Man United, Liverpool, Chelsea and Man City have nothing to do with football in this country. Manchester United, Arsenal, Tottenham are not even in the Champions League. Have they even got the right to be in there? They are an absolute joke. Time has come now to have independent regulators to stop these clubs from having the power base. Enough is enough."<sup>37</sup>

However, when participants were asked if they would still watch the Super League if it were created (Figure 23), 50% said that they would watch it if it were created and 50% said that they would not. This is very interesting, since majority of the participants said that they are highly against the Super League, they would still watch it and therefore provide revenue for the broadcasters. This tells us that there still exists a chance for the Super League to come back, because if the fans are willing to pay to watch those games, the model stands, and the European Super League could come to life again. However, Figure 23 also shows us that if they had to choose between the UEFA Champions League and the European Super League, 92.6% of participants would stick to the Champions League. The reason for this is that the Champions League is far more entertaining. Every year, there are smaller clubs, which are underdogs, who could come up on top, whereas in Super League, it would be just another big club. Even though all the odds are stacked against them, there is always a chance that they will prevail and come out as champions.

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<sup>37</sup> Garry Neville for Sky Sports. <https://www.skysports.com/football/news/11661/12279996/gary-neville-on-european-super-league-plans-im-fuming-but-it-wont-go-through-not-a-chance>

## 6. Conclusion

Finally, to conclude. After careful analysis of the events in the English Premier League, it is safe to say that even though the Premier League has experienced some heavy financial difficulties during the COVID-19 Pandemic they will surely survive this crisis. The main reason for their financial loss is due to Empty stadiums and failed broadcasting deals. The EPL broadcasting deals is one of the world's largest broadcasting deals in football. The main source of income for EPL clubs is their broadcasting deals which are paid by broadcasting companies to clubs in order that they can stream their matches. Since matches have not been played, they could not hold up their end of the deal that they have made with broadcasting companies and were charged with rebates. Also, since matches were not played, they did not earn any money from match-day revenues which on average account for 14% of their total income. Apart from the EPL clubs, fans have also been affected by the pandemic. Without the possibility of attending the games, many fans missed the chance to support their clubs in these tough times. Empty stadiums have led broadcasters to come up with creative solutions which enables fans to support their clubs from home, such as the introduction of video walls, which might be a great idea for the future when football returns to normal. It would enable fans who live far away to still show their support and be a part of the matchday experience. The consequence of the COVID-10 Pandemic on EPL was the attempt at creating an elite breakaway league The European Super League, which consisted of Europe's elite clubs involving the Premier League's big-six clubs - Manchester United, Manchester City, Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea, and Tottenham. The league was met with major criticism both from fans, from former football players and clubs not involved in the league. The biggest criticism against the Super League that it was an attempt of powerful club owners to take control of the football, with the main intention of earning more money. From the survey it is evident that most of the participants are strongly against the creation of the Super League and much more prefer the Champions League. I believe that the Premier League has had a lot to learn from the pandemic, and that through effort and collective participation from all the clubs, they will come out stronger and improve on their flaws and weaknesses.

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